ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: "BARBAROUS BERLIN": NARRATIVES OF QUEERNESS, SPACE, SURVIVAL, AND MEMORY IN A LIMINAL CITY

Raleigh Joyner, Master of Arts, 2018

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The intent of my work is to explore the relationships between history, space, community, and movement in and through the city of Berlin throughout the last century. I trace common threads of liminality, memory, survival, and the relationships between the urban space and the individual over a 100-year period. The three periods that I particularly focus on are the Weimar era (1919-1933), the division of Germany and Berlin (1961-1989), and the reestablishment of Germany as a united country (1990-present).

“BARBAROUS BERLIN”: NARRATIVES OF QUEERNESS, SPACE, SURVIVAL, AND MEMORY IN A LIMINAL CITY

by

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Dedication

For Dörte Elisabeth Anne Roberts
1944 - 2018

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Introduction

Berlin's history defines its spaces in that every square meter of the city is loaded with its substantial past. In Berlin, it is impossible to exist in the present without the past punching through space, perception, and concepts of community at any and all times – thanks to Berlin's history and its consequent tendency toward radical politically-charged (often queer, or *queered*) social movements that push back against capitalist and neoliberal influences over the usage of "burdened" (to use urban sociologist Claire Colomb's term) spaces. Throughout the 20th and into the 21st centuries, the liminal and transient nature of Berlin has therefore informed its attractiveness to people whose identities – as queer people, expatriates, artists, and people who occupy social spaces and identities that are somehow "in-between" – parallel the essence of the city itself. City and people alike are informed by the effects of political vacuums, producing a slippage in the ordinary relationships between people and the times and spaces they inhabit. Do the spaces and history of Berlin inform and attract these people, or do these people shape and inform the city? Or is there a constant exchange in which both of these phenomena happen concurrently? Through meditations on spaces dominated by queer expatriate communities and the people who forge and inhabit these spaces, I intend to explore the roles that "hyphenation" and hybridity have in this relationship of mutual intervention between people and place. Berlin passes through people and communities in the same way that those people and communities pass through Berlin; neither is ever quite the same afterwards.

My focus will be on three "chapters" in the city's recent history that have been especially conducive to this relationship: the Weimar era, the period between the

construction of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany, and the period since Berlin was again made the German capital in 1999. As many of my driving ideas and theoretical approaches emphasize the importance of fusion and ambiguity, it feels right that the form and content of my thesis should reflect these same concepts. Therefore, I have chosen to write my thesis in the form of creative personal reflection (very much in the manner of those who have written on Berlin before me) with theoretical background rooted in queer theory, narrative theory, urban social theory, and intersectional feminist theory woven into the narrative.

Chapter One: Weimaresk

"Das Nachtgespenst"[1]

During my first several months in Berlin, I lived near Mexikoplatz, in a wealthy neighborhood only convenient in that it was fifteen minutes away from the university where I studied. A sprawling arboretum dotted with mansions reflected in blue-glass-smooth glacial trough forest lakes, it rousted old romanticized teenage daydreams I had presumed very long dead, reasoned-past, moved-on-from. Images of 1920s post-Prussian suburban affluence and idealistic rebels at repressive private schools came back to mind in a storm of age-regressive reverie.[2] The sumptuous façades of houses on the Spanische Allee and Lindenthaler Allee shook awake sleepy short story synopses about depressed queer barons and their flighty lovers whiling summers away in lush back gardens, the adolescent children of merchant families languishing in early August in the Grunewald (it was still fingertip-numbing, hateful March), husks of characters and half-developed plots informed entirely by the books and films I consumed in my bedroom at fifteen.[3] Finally, at twenty-one, I could walk into the world that shaped the brooding youthful foolish martyrdom of the 1927 *Steglitzer Schülertragödie* suicide pact gone awry at Albrechtstraße 72, four stops away from me on the S1[4] – now the address of an optician's office. Once I went slightly out of my way to find it while visiting the Botanischer Garten and stood before a window bearing giant decals of eyeglasses, squinting up at unassuming balconies and tall obsidian-black shut windows, as if expecting some life-changing realization about the state of the young and moneyed reckless of the Weimar Republic.[5] Nothing came to me.

In time, my neighborhood made it abundantly clear that it did not want me there.

On the bus toward the Wannsee, or on the U3 heading toward the University or further on to the Schwules Museum where I worked in Tiergarten, I engaged in regular stare-downs with old people clutching rolling collapsible grocery carts. Growing up taking the Green Line through Suitland and Anacostia to reach any destination in D.C., I quickly learned that minding my own business was a waterproof way to avoid conflict on what many D.M.V. transplants described to me as the *most dangerous* Metro line. Only dangerous if you can't mind your business, especially with your eyes. On D.C. public transit, the kind of staring Germans were prone to would be taken for an invitation to brawl.[6] Nobody toting a wheeled grocery dolly down the Potsdamer Chaussee stared because they wanted to brawl, though, however malicious I found their looks, however surprised I was to be faced with no confrontation after barking a knee-jerk "*FUCK YOU!*" to a preteen boy who bumped into me while walking in the wrong direction and sneered "*Augen im Kopf*."[1] The chip on my shoulder was bigger than whatever collective malevolence my neighbors might have harbored.[7]

When I took walks around the Schlachtensee or along the Niklasstraße, especially at night, I learned but ignored the pointlessness of countering every curious, disdainful, or fearful stare with a scowl. What was I expecting from these people? I wore long black coats and my boots were noisy on street cobbles, and I took a lot of walks at night, and at two or three houses the curtains of a bedroom window never failed to twitch aside. Once someone even put the effort into raising up the rolling blackout shutters that make German houses at nighttime look like closed mall shops, peering out of a five-inch crack

[1] Presumably a shortened version of "*hast du keine Augen im Kopf?*" meaning "*do you have no eyes in your head?*" The German equivalent of brusquely telling someone to watch where they're going.

to see what was tromping down the street at 1:00 AM disturbing the idyll. This kind of behavior was not tolerated in Steglitz-Zehlendorf, these gestures said to me. You came to the wrong part of Berlin.[8] Take your Nick-Cave-W.H.-Auden-wannabe-strung-out-looking-ass tortured flâneuring to Friedrichshain where it belongs. The Spanische Allee is asleep before the bells at the Evangelical church stop clanging at eight. You, though, three nights into another bout of not sleeping or eating because the Bupropion makes it hard to lie still or even keep food down, surely there's a bench for you to slouch on somewhere near the McDonald's at Hermannplatz. Among the pushy drug dealers in the Revaler Straße. But not here.[9]

The goal, though, was not to scare, but to distract myself by compulsively moving. If I kept moving through these neighborhoods that were not mine at socially unacceptable hours, I could ignore the mysterious persistent cold-sweats, the drastic weight loss that explained the absence of my face on social media despite the promises to post photos, the fact that my flatmate was perfectly content to flood our bathroom with three inches of water each time she showered instead of asking the Hausmeister to fix the drain she had clogged herself. If I walked enough, I eventually had no choice but to stop and sleep, I figured. It was like that famous Van Gogh painting of the prisoners walking in a circle, bricked in by the tiny jail courtyard, except every person in the circle was me, each one a separate specter of me reminding me why coming here was a stupid idea: there was me on bad meds, anorexic me, panic-disordered me, trans-and-hating-it me, and more iterations of me, shuffling around and around with heads down and shoulders folded in.[10] I remembered reading Kerouac as a freshman and thinking it was idiotic to romanticize a bunch of fucked-up people picking up and going somewhere new and

hoping their issues would not be right there standing next to them at the baggage carousel when they disembarked in some new and foreign airport terminal, waiting right with them for their American Tourister to come skidding down a luggage chute like a bulky black turd. Now I was doing exactly that which I couldn't fathom a smart person doing. And so I walked, feeling stupid and water-retentive, an irritating reminder that I was required to occupy physical space at all times. I thought of the distorted angular hollow-eyed faces that glowered from Otto Dix and Jeanne Mammen portraits, Conrad Veidt's razor-sharp jawline and glass-cutting cheekbones in *Anders als die Andern* and *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari,* the expressionless enormous eyes of Schad paintings that made me decide Weimar glam meant thin, haggard, spidery. Well, I looked like that now. Years spent putting considerable effort into banishing the softness from every aspect of myself to achieve the face and body of an infirm era. It was working, I was dying! Scaring and dying and failing. Only solution to that was to keep moving.

During the daytime, I took my walks around the Rehwiese, sometimes accidentally turning into people's private driveways only to be browbeaten away from behind a sitting-room window, always blatantly reading the nameplates on the front gates to the mansions I passed as if casing properties for a heist. Really I just wanted to know what these people did for a living, so that I might know what to do in life to afford a *fin-de-siècle* country house that straddled a bizarre line between *Heimatschutzstil* and *Jugendstil* – or at least find some friends who would invite me to theirs. ", *Arzt*" and ", *Rechtsanwalt*"[2] were two of the most common pronouncements I found attached to

[2] *Doctor* and *Lawyer*, respectively.

these names, all of which were male. “, *Architekt*” was another. Some particularly manic episodes crossed over into the theatrical, involving the charade of me finding a bench and attempting to read a book there because it looked like I had a purpose being in the space, the book and all, I looked a little more like a pensive intellectual than a starving greasy piece of human garbage, synapses firing uncontrollably and skull throbbing from levitating-anxiety jaw-clenching. This spectacle was officially met with thorough disapproval from the universal powers themselves when I was shit upon by a bird while reading the first sentence of *Fabian* by Erich Kästner over and over again.

I ditched the sitting and went back to walking after that, reassuming my tough D.C.- Metro-rider performance by glaring at anyone who held eye contact with me for more than two seconds. Another reason I preferred walking at night; unfortunately, the Rehwiese was not lit. The one time I did try to walk there at night I nearly fell down a deep ravine. The neighborhood was doing its damnedest to reject me like a healing wound rejects a suture. It wasn’t until much later that I learned this particular meadow was called *die Rehwiese*, which in German means “the roe deer meadow.” In Old English my name means the exact same. So, by night or by day, it had always been my meadow either way.

In January of 2018, a good friend from England visited me in Berlin, noting that it was cheaper to fly from Manchester to Schönefeld than it was to fly from Manchester to anywhere else within the United Kingdom (later another friend in Munich and I decided to meet each other in Prague for similar reasons). She had never been to Berlin before, and I had long since settled into the contentment of not straying far from Neukölln for an entire month. Somehow, though, I one day found myself pitching a plan to take the S1

down to Mexikoplatz and revisit my old (literal) stomping grounds for the first time since 2015, to take a walk along the half-frozen Schlachtensee, the skeletons of trees laying bare the little bowers where summer bathers holed up in the foliage along the banks. I had recently been researching many of the houses I snatched photographs of in passing, namely a particularly ornate house at Lindenthaler Allee 30, built in 1908, that seemed to fall apart a little more whenever I walked by it. Through a *Spiegel* article[11] series on "unsung" wartime heroes of Steglitz-Zehlendorf, I learned that it had been home to the family of a Jewish woman, Anneliese Gutkind-Mendel, a villa rented out to three boarders active in the Nazi Party. Gutkind-Mendel and her daughter, with few places or people to turn to in a neighborhood teeming with Nazis, sympathizers, and equally-jeopardized Jews, hid from the Gestapo in the nearby home of a neighbor on Niklasstraße until they could secure false identity papers and live out the remainder of the regime in open concealment. The house remains in the possession of Gutkind-Mendel's descendants. This is the history of many homes in the area built by architectural firm Bastian & Kabelitz, whose style centered around the concept of *Heimatschutzstil* as a reaction to the prevailing aesthetics of modernity.[12] Still, the ornamentation of the house was undeniably *Jugendstil* in its curvature, the little triumphs of decoration for decoration's sake visible wherever the eye landed.

"I think this is my favorite house," I said. We were stopped in front of the open, broken gate that separated the front garden from the sidewalk. I pointed out the elements that I loved the most: the teal shutters, many of which had shed slats since 2015 and now hung from one hinge, the recessed sculptures embedded in the outer walls, the curved pediment over the double front doors, the turret evoking the medieval. I told my

friend about the woman who lived here and the neighbor on Niklasstraße – Hilde Otte – who saved her, and pointed across the street. There, embedded into the sidewalk, were *Stolpersteine* dedicated to Georg and Hedwig Flatow, another couple Otte had attempted to save but could not.

"It's so damn *busy*," I gushed, indicating the curlicued window grates, the sinking stone birdbaths sprouting up from winter weeds. Under one of the windows was inscribed an adage taken from Emanuel von Geibel, a 19th-century poet who had in his lifetime somehow supported both the 1848 Revolution and the 1871 establishment of the German Empire: "*Am guten Alten in Treue halten*." "Keep faith in the good old ways," I translated roughly. Knowing no Latin, I could not translate the axiom carved over the doorway: *NUNQUAM RETRORSUM*, rendered in the watery lettering popular in the age of Mucha. I typed it into Google and waited for a result.

"Never go backwards."[13] [14]

"Kinder, heut' abend, da such ich mir was aus"[15]

Being there was fun, but it was lonely. Or: being there was fun, *and* it was lonely. A few weeks after my initial arrival, I had been tending to a few friendship seedlings, a few of which ended up as fully-realized friendships, which I still do not know how I managed to cultivate and keep alive. Normally I put strenuous effort into not getting close to others. I somehow do anyway. These new friends I would hang out with periodically throughout my first weeks in Berlin, but I've always been one of those types who can't understand why anyone would want to hang out with me. So when someone actually did want to hang out with me, I was clunky and awkward and navigated meeting their friends and then their friends-of-friends as if there had been a whole Tarot deck of Berlin

scenesters laid out before me, and someone was just chucking cards with names and faces and slang and résumés at my forehead Frisbee-style: THE TRANSPHOBIC GAY DANCEPOP MUSICIAN. PEACHES, AGAIN. THE SELF-IMPORTANT ASSHOLE FILMMAKER. Most of them I missed, they bounced off my forehead and spun off into the abyss of some Neukölln bar or fetish club and I never spoke to them again.[16]

There was a lot of that, just these one-off conversations of intense interest followed by a mutual agreement of continued contact followed by dead-ass nothing. Then, if I'd see them again months later at some event that drew in the entire gamut of the scene, from the bullseye (see: Peaches) on outward to the fringes of the established anti-establishment, the acknowledgement would be nonexistent, and if it did happen it was weird. Did some of these people charge you seventeen Euro for showing that they recognized you in public? Had the MDMA already eaten some of their brains away to sponge? The next thing I'd know, they were a suggested friend on Facebook with fourteen mutual friends. *Fourteen?* How the fuck did they know *that* person? Or any of these people? I thought these were *my* new people. Why hadn't we talked about this yet? Were there any people here except for me who didn't know everyone else's people already? Fostering my own circle of friends independent of the scene proved to be an exercise in adding merely another circle to the unbounded Venn-Diagram of Berlin cliques.

Some of these people, I took entirely too long to realize, had never been interested in being my friend at all. I was apparently dumb enough to forget, or to never know in the first place, that some people only talked to you if they wanted to sleep with you or if they thought you might have connections they could take advantage of. I had nothing to offer

in either department. I spent the latter half of my teenage years putting so much labor into being unattractive in appearance and comportment, never making eye contact for too long, and deflecting amorous attention that I hadn't even considered the possibility that in a new environment all those years of hard work meant nothing. When people watched me or smiled at me, I glowered back in the same way that I glowered at the Dahlem meddlers. When people's body language or eye contact changed noticeably over the course of a boilerplate first conversation, I suddenly gave flat, monosyllabic answers to questions about my clothing or hairstyle choices or what I was doing in the city. When people moved close to me, I got up and walked away. If they touched me, I recoiled before disappearing. In Berlin queer bars, if you're pale, emaciated, wearing dark clothes, and unmasculine, disappearing is not difficult, or shouldn't be. Being pursued as an object of sexual desire was not something I planned ahead for because I didn't pursue other people as objects of sexual desire. I considered myself nonsexual, outside of the dating and sex realm and for whatever reason assumed everyone could figure that out immediately. I wanted to emit some kind of pheromone that made everyone stay away from me. Simply not showering did not suffice; everyone stunk.

"I don't know why I recorded this in English and not German," Sam once told me much later as we sat sharing YouTube videos in their kitchen. "But I recorded this long-ass story about this weird night I had at Ficken, when like, three separate guys hit on me. That never happens." Sam was one of the first friends I made in Berlin. Born only sixteen days apart, we were both slouchy, lizardy, DIY-blond Bowannabes whose gender was anyone's guess. They hit the Play button and a tinny version of their voice began relating a tale of cisgender men in the tiny gay bar on Urbanstraße throwing their *NO FATS*

NO FEMMES NO TRANS Grindr refrains to the wind and endeavoring to win Sam's affection. Two of the men were described as having wax mustaches; "what's with all the wax mustaches?" Sam howled. "I didn't even remember that." I erupted into laughter at a recounted exchange of one waxed mustache brushing his hand against Sam's leg, which they chalked up to being an accident until the man asked: "Was that alright with you?" Sam's voice on the recording continued, "I said, 'I mean, it didn't really do anything for me either way.'" We both hooted. "I was, like, 'Why would you just do it and *then* ask if it was okay?'" Sam's voice went on to describe the third man, who had proclaimed out of the gate that he was in a bar called *Ficken 3000* not because he was gay but because he loved the atmosphere. "I said, 'Yeah, I guess it's cool here,' and then he started messing with his watch and holding it up to me and complaining that it wasn't comfortable. I said, 'If it's that much of a problem maybe you should just take it off.' He said, 'I can't, I'm afraid it will get stolen, it cost 200,000 Euro.' I was like, 'I can't even think of anything I'd *want* to buy worth 200,000 Euro.'" We shrieked. Somehow I had found a friend who was just as clueless about social signals, even inept ones, as I was. "He totally wanted you to be impressed by that watch," I said, wiping at tears.

"I was completely unaware of it at the time," Sam insisted. "I was just thinking, *why keep wearing something that's bothering you that much? Just fucking take it off and shut up!*"

Their recorded voice continued on in its quiet monotone. "And then he just suddenly asks me: 'How do I *get you?*' And I kind of laugh and tell him, uh, I'm not really out to be gotten."

"This reminds me of the guy who kept trying to hug me," I said. "When I dodged

him the first time he said, '*Ich bin Schwul!*' and I said, 'Good for you.' Then he tried again and said, 'No, I'm gay, I don't want to have sex with you!' As if the language was the issue here. I asked him what he thought *I* was and why he was so keen on hugging me if he thought I was something other than a man. When I left he, like, materialized again in front of the door for one more attempt at a hug. I think I raised up my foot and told him I was going out the door one way or another. Have you ever seen a video of someone getting kicked by an ostrich?"

"I remember that. I left a little after you and saw him throwing up outside. Alone."

"You'd think they'd get the picture."

But they didn't all get the picture. Via social media I met a filmmaker, Yony Leyser, American by way of Palestine, who made a documentary on William S. Burroughs that I had illegally downloaded and watched at least fifteen times. Yony had moved to Berlin very young and had infiltrated the Peaches circle by his late twenties, he was working on a feature film that starred all of his cool sexually-liberated artist friends. I was very impressed with him. Online we talked Burroughs briefly, but ultimately he did not seem interested in talking Burroughs. See, though, I was interested in talking Burroughs. I wanted to know what interviewing Iggy Pop was like. I wanted to know what it was like to talk with John Waters for more than thirty seconds at a book-signing in Baltimore after smoking three bowls.

By chance, we ran into each other two days later at a *RuPaul's Drag Race* viewing party in Südblock, a bar I never set foot into anymore. We recognized each other, and he seemed genuinely interested in meeting me. We shook hands, he was drunk, I was running off of fruit and quark and an U-Bahn-platform-vending-machine

Cola Lite. My handshake was like a wet washcloth and I apologized for that, made some self-deprecating comment about how creepy my hands probably were. “Your hands give me *life*,” he clucked, not having looked at them. Within five seconds that conversation was over, the fight-or-flight reaction that resulted from me initiating a conversation had subsided, and he was gone. The next time I saw him, he was surrounded by an entourage at another club, no shirt on, perfectly sober. By that point I knew better than to say hello, but he saw me from across a swimming pool that took up the entire center of the room, which had some faux-seraglio gold-and-burgundy-wicker-and-elephants vibe, and he said nothing, which I can’t be bitter about, because I also said nothing. It wasn’t until then that I pointed him out to Tanno and mentioned the first encounter. She said quite simply that he probably was just looking for sex and had lost interest. “Most of these Berlin party people are looking to fuck around, not to be friends.”

Tanno, six years older than me and the lead singer and songwriter of Jolly Goods – a duo comprising her and her younger sister Angy – became a figure of mordant forthrightness whose acuity cut through bullshit like a scalpel. She had just ended a relationship of nine years with Hans, another musician, who had expressed similar wishes to “fuck around,” and his proposal of an open relationship was met with an invitation to move out of Tanno’s apartment near Treptower Park. The breakup had happened only two weeks before we met, and throughout the summer she noted Hans’s awareness of me through the modicum of contact they still maintained. We joked that he most likely thought I was her new boyfriend. “Every time I try to go out and sort of get back into the Berlin queer party scene I’m reminded why I shouldn’t,” she said later as we ate vegan brunch at Vux after being rejected from Berghain. I asked her about one of the times Jolly

Goods played with Peaches in 2010, opening for her rock opera *Peaches Does Herself* at HAU Berlin.

"I see her all the time at these bars," I said. "She's always at the top of the GOING list for these Facebook events. Merrill Nisker, right there at the top. I guess Facebook thinks this is important to me because we have mutual friends." I mention how strange it is to see the person whose song, "Operate," my older brother and I imitated for years after hearing it in *Mean Girls*.

"Angy and I rode in the limousine with her to the theatre," Tanno said. "I remember thinking, wow, I'm going to be in the limousine with all these rock stars! They were drunk and playing Nintendo games on this TV hooked up in the back seat. Someone put on Aaron Carter music and everyone started screaming. I thought, this is what famous people do in these limousines? I could stay home and do this and have more fun than this. Angy and I just sat there talking to each other. These party people are more boring than we think. Like this filmmaker, Yony. He wasn't wanting friends. Just people to spread his work around and have sex with."

I had not thought of this. What gave him the impression that I was interested in sex to begin with? I wanted to talk Burroughs, interviewing Patti Smith. I wanted to tell somebody that I thought Peter Weller sounded like a pretentious douchebag and ask if talking to him was the chore it seemed to be. At any rate, I was baffled. Then I got angry. So he found a problem with me when we talked in person? Well, what the fuck was it? My giant head and stick body? Did my face look more or less cadaverous than it had in pictures and that was a deal-breaker? Was I too short, bad-postured, sickly, monotone, strange-behaving, greenhorn, too not among the established cosmopolites and freelance

artists raising the rents in Kreuzkölln? Was my personality just that terrible? Had the stay-away pheromones worked after all? This was one of a few lessons I had on the value of both sexual capital and artistic clout in the Berlin scenester circle. Who were you fucking and what kind of art were you making? Well, I wasn't fucking anybody and I wasn't making any art. In advertising myself as a nonsexual entity swimming in everyone else's politically oversexed artistic output I brought even more attention to my presence in a sexual framework. The concerted effort at asserting an absence of sexuality made the absence noisy, innavigably so.[17] Luckily I found Sam and Tanno, who also weren't fucking anybody, and I ended up making art with them. Messy glitter photoshoots, short film scripts, pipe dreams about opening a cabaret called "Old Bill's Foxhole" revolving around disgusting premises of Burroughsian absurdity. They're why I still go back. Early on, I half-joked to Tanno that my friends back home urged me not to come back from Berlin without finding a "sugar parent" who insisted on supporting me financially for no other reason than that they found me interesting. "Everyone in Berlin is poor," Tanno said. "Or they tell you they are, anyway." Needless to say, I still have a 28K student loan.

"Raus mit den Männern"[18]

With Tanno, I did a lot of uncharacteristically bold shit in the name of performance disguised as social experimentation and boredom- or bitterness-driven empirical research. Surprisingly, I did not always do stupid things alone. Eventually, I had people to necessarily call friends and could distinguish my relationships with them from those I had with the many other people who existed in the "demi-monde" and collected useful acquaintances like Pokémon. Tanno and Sam were and continue to be the closest of these friends. Both German, they did not like to be reminded that they were German:

Tanno was from Rimbach, an apparently soul-sucking village in Hesse which she had left at seventeen. Sam, a fellow Bowannabe, was born and raised in Charlottenburg in a house now completely devoid of all tenants except their father. The three of us formed a sallow trio of undereye circles, malnutrition, neglected hygiene, nonexistent sex drive, acrimony, side-eye, and, above all, a shared disdain for things advertised as "queer" but which were decidedly not. To some extent these two saved me. Meeting them meant my nights were no longer consumed by feverish walks powered by neurotransmitters gone haywire; now, I could let the neurosis manifest itself in other, more social ways, crossing our legs at the knee and jiggling one foot in a smelly bar like Ficken and chewing entire packs of gum at once and grumbling about how every bar boasted queer-friendliness but was actually just a macho meat market. Our usual routine was to wear the same reeking outfit and sit in the corner of this or that bar drinking a Club Mate or an orange juice until somebody talked to us, inevitably making a really fatuous comparison to David Bowie or Gary Numan, to Kraftwerk. We moved from bar to bar that way, inciting some interest in people sometimes and then eventually leaving the bar and leaving them with no contact information because we wanted to go to bed at midnight and our throats and eyes were sore from secondhand smoke. This isn't to say that we didn't also take interest in people we saw, because we certainly did, but I guess we were all prepared to make no attempts at talking to them and had resigned ourselves to the idea that any new friends we would make would come to us. It seemed we had forgotten how we had even become friends with each other, that the process could be replicated; Sam had first messaged me on Facebook through a "Homes for Queers Berlin" Facebook group, asking me whether reading *Naked Lunch* was worth it. Tanno later told me she had approached me in the

KitKatClub "because you looked like you hated being there just as much as I did."

But sometimes we didn't just sit in the corners of establishments hoping for friendships to strike up. After all, I had found them because they had decided to talk to me, thankfully, mysteriously. Sometimes, though, we got bitter and curious. Sometimes we went to the parts of bars and clubs where we knew damn well we had no business being, as non-cis people, as people who looked feminine or at least androgynous, as people existing outside of the macho meat market. We would take our drinks and plop ourselves down in the middle of a fuckdungeon or a darkroom and just watch people. We agreed that we were simultaneously interested in what exactly drove cisgender gay men to seek out anonymous sex and horrified at the way the sticky floor squelched beneath our shoes. Tanno wore a penciled-in beard and mustache combination that made her look like an angry prepubescent boy from Marzahn,[19] glaring from beneath a knit cap. Sam wore a baker boy cap pulled low over their eyes. I slicked back my nicotine-yellow hair, lit cigarettes, and just held them burning. We all had different methods of making it look like we had our own purposes, thinking that somehow let everyone else know that we were exempt from participating in the generally-expected activity but nevertheless allowed to be there. I declared that this was "taking up space" and sometimes we accomplished just that. Sometimes we sat, I fake-smoked, I drank a Coke, we watched a man get spit-roasted in the corner like someone watches Animal Planet. Then we would get up and walk out. Other times I sat, fake-smoked, drank a Coke, a fifty-year-old man would walk up to us mouth-breathing and rubbing his crotch and we would get up and haul ass out. Intimidation or invitation? Other times a young man would approach us and loudly say in English that this was a space for *gay men* to have *sex*, and that we should go back upstairs

to the main dance floor and bar instead of staring silently at everyone and "ruining the vibe," and I would loudly tell them he was ruining his own vibe by bothering us instead of servicing the glory hole, and we would get up and take just enough time getting out of sight to make a point. The "space" we had occupied was now occupied by a blowjob delivered with enthusiastic showmanship (blowmanship?), we were gone, order was restored, all was again as it should be. The space was again filled.

"I think I've had enough of the voyeuring," Tanno finally said one day. I had, too. "I say we just leave them to their wall-fucking."[20]

"Die Notbremse"[21]

I do not feel uncomfortable recounting all the aspects of my time in Berlin, illness and embarrassment and stupidity included. For all intents and purposes the "me" and "I" are the same me and I that still exist, but I also feel that *that* version of me and I has been left behind there, which is why I don't feel like an oversharer when I describe all the ways in which I was a mess. For me many of these memories are dreamlike impressions that have been rewritten in my head numerous times, not really glamorized or embellished, but tweaked as if I'm just another character I'm working with in my own fiction, as if the plot is something I made up and not something that actually happened to me.[22] The places I frequented then and still return to reorient themselves in my mind as soon as I leave Berlin again and again and I describe them slightly differently to people each time I retell the same stories. Of course, there were times that were not necessarily dreamlike; buying rolls and water at a discount Aldi is not that different in Berlin than it is anywhere else, except that you really have to make sure to lay the bottles down on their sides or they'll topple over on the conveyor belt with a loud dense thud. In a way the

Aldi was a liminal space all its own, though; it was a discount Aldi – where the surplus cereals with peculiar names and unattractive produce were sold, packages of chocolates and gummis with holes torn in the plastic – into which every elderly wealthy Berliner crowded themselves smack in the middle of every weekday, leaving me to wonder again what everyone did for a living (I know why *I'm* here, but why the hell are *you*?).[23]

In Berlin, one trick to determining which place was liminal became simple: where were people the angriest? The discount Aldi, the Ausländerbehörde, the Bürgeramt, the endless stretch of S-Bahn between Nikolassee and Grunewald that was so long and godforsaken I was convinced all manner of time and molecular structure at its most fundamental had been suspended and no one was breathing. Any Spätkauf or Spielothek on the Sonnenallee or in the Skalitzer Straße, where the guys who perpetually loitered outside stopped you to ask if you're a faggot when you just want to buy a Kinder Egg for dinner at 3AM alone at Görlitzer Bahnhof: did that actually happen? Was I ever actually there? If I write that I was, I was. If I tweet that I was, I definitely was.

I have been on a lot of unnecessarily long bus- and train- and plane-journeys because I'm cheap and would apparently sooner take a bus from Paris to Berlin than fly. Yet I am still convinced that the stretch on the S7 line between S-Bahnhof Nikolassee and S-Bahnhof Grunewald is the longest I have ever experienced in my entire life. Aside from it being one of the prime stretches during which it was popular for ticket agents to slither out of the cut and start checking for proof that you were truly allowed to be there, because they knew you couldn't escape during the suspension of time and civilization and sunshine and molecular structure and oxygen that occurred in that really wretched sliver of misery, it was also one of those liminal mires in the world where you sense that

the veil is thin and someone dead from any point or place in history could just materialize across from you reading the *Bild-Zeitung* and wearing a Jack Wolfskin half-zip. Staring out the window is actually not something I remember doing much; I feel like it took a while for me to finally *look* and realize that the stretch was so long precisely because we were going through the middle of the fucking forest. When I finally did look, it wasn't even remotely pretty. To my left I could see the Autobahn in the far distance, which was an especially depressing sight on rainy days. Dreary standstill Brandenburg traffic made me think of the DDR, the overwhelming ugliness of Checkpoint Bravo, the plodding buses that advertised their final destination as Kleinmachnow. I tweeted, to all my friends back home who had no idea what I was talking about, that "the stretch on the S7 between Nikolassee and Grunewald is one of those places that prove god has abandoned the earth." Reaching Grunewald brought no relief. It wasn't until you got to Westkreuz that you felt you'd crossed some frontier back into the corporeal.

When I had finally made friends, this was one of the easiest ways for me to reach Wedding or Mitte if we had plans to meet there. The Grunewald was a reminder that it was an Old Testament book for me to get anywhere and that I was an idiot for choosing a flat where I had. Getting to any of my destinations was always like reaching Canaan because I missed trains, I got on buses that traveled *away* from where I needed to go, I always managed to end up going in the wrong direction on the Ringbahn. I think for a few months I actually spent more time entangled with the BVG than I did scowling in the corner of any bar or drinking unsweetened hot water with ginger and squeezed lemon in Tanno's flat. One day, Sam, after taking the S7 from their flat in Charlottenburg to visit a friend who lived in a Potsdam suburb for the weekend, commented to me in passing

about the excruciating nature of the trip in general. I had to bring up the seven-thousand-kilometer stretch.

Yes, they remembered one particularly long period of time between stops, but overall they just remembered the entire trip being a haul.

Yes, but hadn't that one specific expanse of track been a special kind of dismal?

Yes, now that they thought about it. Yes. People in general were strange on the S-Bahn, they said – coming from a lifelong Berliner I didn't question this – but people going toward Potsdam were especially uncanny.

I don't think it's Potsdam, I remarked, never having yet been to Potsdam. I think it's got to do with the damn Grunewald.

Definitely Potsdam. East Germans,they said. They're still East Germans. And West Berliners are West Berliners. Who are, by the way, nothing like West Germans.

I was not convinced that it was definitely Potsdam. Didn't it seem like, if someone dead from any point or place in history were to pick any spot in the city to manifest themselves physically before your eyes, it would be there?

We both agreed on that. When Bowie died months later, we went for a walk at night and attempted to enter the Heinrich-von-Kleist Park through the Königskolonnaden by hobbling across an expansive layer of ice that rivaled a hockey rink's. By the time it became clear that breaking a hip or two was a real possibility, we were too far into the park to turn back, practically skating across the concrete in our boots and had only each other's arms to hold onto for dear life. I ventured that, should we ever want to summon Bowie with a séance, best that it be carried out on the S7 between Nikolassee and Grunewald. I'm not entirely convinced that we won't actually try it someday.

Later I learned that the Grunewald train station was a major hub for the deportation of Jews who lived in Berlin and its suburbs. I thought of the woman who lived at Lindenthaler Allee 30 and the woman on Niklasstraße who hid her, and the couple whom she could not save memorialized in the sidewalk, of all those short stories preserved on my old MacBook like historical documents testifying to a longstanding obsession with Weimar Dionysian decadence and the blurred lines between self-destruction and rebellion. I was not entirely wrong about it being a place where god had abandoned the earth. A place without sunshine, definitely.

"Ich weiß nicht, zu wem ich gehöre"[24]

Berlin seems to exist almost exclusively as a place preceded by prefixes. "Pre" or "post" or "inter": post-World-War-One, interwar, pre-World-War-Two, post-World-War-Two, pre-Wall, post-Wall, post-Reunification, pre-Migration Wave. It is a city often delineated by what it is about to experience, what it is between experiencing, what it has just experienced. Often it feels like there is decidedly not a lot of space for the present, like the present isn't physically allowed to exist there. You're wandering along, or riding a train somewhere, or finding your way to a friend's place, at some point in the perceived present, and then suddenly the past punches right through into your personal space and confronts you when all you wanted to do was futz with Google Maps to find some vague friend's flat near U-Südstern or get to class or get to the appointment you set up to get a large photorealistic potted cactus gouged into your upper arm. That is the type of place Berlin is. Riding a bus down the Columbiadamm, you look up from your magazine and are considerably disturbed to notice – it doesn't matter how many times you've already been through this – that you're being shuttled through a corridor of hideous

yellow concrete buildings of the National Socialist architectural style. This never stops being creepy and never fails to yank you away from the magazine, out of the sealed air-conditioned fart-can hurtling toward Julius-Leber-Brücke. The same *Reichsadler* that sits on the corner of a building across from U-Platz der Luftbrücke – devoid of any obvious Nazi symbolism to the point that it challenges *you* to picture to yourself where the swastika most likely was back in the day. It leaves the completion of the picture to you, cruelly. I know that it would most likely have been on the breast of the eagle or under its feet, and I know at some point since 1945 this part must have been sliced off the way a dermatologist removes a malignant mole with a sharp blade in one motion. Why isn't the hideous god damn thing ever just taken down altogether? Is it holding the entire building together?

"Punch" through, because it is not polite or very warm and welcoming when it happens. It is jarring, it is invasive, violent, it demands to be acknowledged and mulled over. When I am there and actually pay attention, moments like this happen all the time. In the "West-End," as Isherwood refers to the Steglitz-Zehlendorf and Schöneberg boroughs in *Goodbye to Berlin*,[25] you see the ornate leftovers of a thriving bourgeois merchant class now long gone; there are many *Stolpersteine* – plaques left in front of the homes and workplaces of Jewish people who were killed in the Holocaust, often at Theresienstadt or Auschwitz – like those of the Flatows who could not be saved by Hilde Otte – embedded into the sidewalks in front of these houses. Sometimes the house is not there anymore at all, or it is now not even a house, it's a hair salon boasting a stock photo of a young man with an asymmetrical razor-cut. Sometimes the plaques are in clusters of six or seven and you know that means an entire family was there. You notice

this kind of stuff on your way to the Edeka or the discount Aldi, where until now your mind was preoccupied with buying an obscenely large vat of strawberry quark, to be your meal for the next four days. You notice it when you are limping toward the Berlinische Galerie in ninety-degree heat, late for a class trip, and are again accosted by the bleak blasted-out remains of the old Anhalter Bahnhof. You notice it when you look up at the new Nollendorfplatz dome and recall photos taken in the spot where you're standing, which show a bombed-out landscape across which you could walk to the Siegessäule in a straight line with no obstacles. The glassless skeleton of the old art nouveau dome stands out against the sky like twisted trees in a Caspar David Friedrich painting.

You don't ever really get over it. You see the crest of the Royal Prussian Railway Administration still on the bridge at Mexikoplatz over which the S1 towards Oranienburg passes. You're surrounded by the excessive architecture of dead Prussian aristocracy and picture destitute landladies behind building fronts loaded with decorative plaster who yearn for lodgers to take up rooms in their dingy flats, heavy with medieval furniture and reeking of mold, coal dust, the stinking detritus of bygone Kaiserreich. You're under siege by the odor of Prussian aristocracy hammered out of existence like water pounded out of an ear after swimming, like it's something that happened the other day and not almost 100 years ago. You remember that Oranienburg, a suburb beyond the far northern reaches of the city, is where Sachsenhausen is. This is what I mean by the past punching through.[26]

In Mitte or Kreuzberg, around Hallesches Tor, Schlesisches Tor, Kottbusser Tor (these areas all end with "Tor," I learned once, because they indicate a no-longer-existing demarcation of the original Berlin city limits, which were surrounded by a wall

and outfitted with gates), where many of the original tenements or *Mietskasernen* still are, you sometimes see those plaques lining the entire front entrance of a house. And you're standing there holding a sack of overpriced vegan cookies from the corner Bio Company or something else stupid you felt obligated to bring to the birthday party of someone you hardly know, and you don't know how to cross over those plaques. It's silly to live in Berlin and keep thinking that way, that passing over or through certain spaces is somehow wrong, because you'll never physically get anywhere.

The quasi-friend throwing the no-edible-death-allowed birthday party is British and lives in an attic dwelling at the top of the tenement and probably pays four-hundred-seventy Euro per month to live there. They teach yoga and translate a music blog or some shit. Somehow that brings in enough money to subsist on from month to month and suddenly you're wondering again what you need to do to end up here by *your* 32nd birthday. They are subletting from another British person who is currently in Paris and has been writing and making films there for two years after being in Vienna for one. He got tired of Berlin, this quasi-friend says. They don't know when he'll be back. They have never met him and have never seen any of his films. No one has. But they *are* Facebook friends, hosanna. He does exist.

Based on the principle that every tenant should have access to a window and fresh air, from above the Berlin tenement complexes looked – or still do look, as a number of them in their original form do still exist, though because they took up entire city blocks many now only exist fragmented by bombings and patched together with new structures wedged in, the way you have to get a prosthetic when a tooth is pulled or everything else will fall out of alignment – like Belgian waffles. The people whose windows faced

the street were the luckiest, had access to the freshest air and the most sunlight, did not have to walk through labyrinthine piss-smelling garbage-strewn stairwells and courtyards separated by enormous gates, like an *Indiana Jones* trapdoor tunnel, to reach the street. The poorer folks did have to do this, as the closer to the interior of the waffle you lived, the poorer you were, the more your fresh-air "courtyard" was rather like a crematorium chimney and funnel for unwanted noise and miasma than a bone tossed your way by society, your little allotted parcel of sunshine and slice of smudged grey sky.

At the very top of the innermost *Hof* lives the quasi-friend; their kitchen window was once black with scum from someone burning garbage in a barrel far below while wild dogs bayed around him. The garbage-burner laments the Weimar government and the value of the Mark and the fall of the Kaiserreich, he fought in the Great War and proselytizes to the entire slum by sounding off on anything from Jews to communism to Hindenburg. This courtyard was once one of the many cauldrons in which Nazi ideology and ultimately action came to a slow boil, a forge where the destitute working class ate lung hash and went to night school and fixed their neighbors' broken locks to make money during long stretches of unemployment and reminisced and desperately waited for someone to come along and give them a group or several to blame, to promise change.

Now many of these places are called *Altbau* and they are highly desirable, so desirable that quasi-friend's British filmmaker Facebook friend has felt compelled to lift his leg and piss on the one flat he snagged but hasn't returned to going on three years now. Expats moving to Berlin are initially confused over the curious location of the shower in the kitchen, not seeming to consider that the entire place was retrofitted because at some point there wasn't a shower anywhere. Why is the toilet at the complete

opposite end of the flat? Never mind that all ten people who once occupied this attic had to share a toilet with five other units on the floor below. It's quirky and makes for good conversation fodder when you're older and as long as you're in your twenties or thirties and mobile and healthy you don't have to worry about how you'd get on and off a toilet in a three-foot-wide bathroom nook. Not having a window that opens out onto the street is now something of a commodity; in Neukölln or Kreuzberg or Friedrichshain it's too noisy to live on the street, especially on Silvesterabend. God help those who live on the ground floor or the first floor. A flat that looks out over the innermost courtyard, one at the very center of the waffle, is a blessing now – only occasionally do you hear a shout up to a window from a pile of bicycles framed by the seventeen different dumpsters Germans use to separate their trash. The slamming of a courtyard door to get out to the street or to walk through another courtyard is everyday percussion to be blocked out easily. There are no pots of shit and urine being tossed out of windows or beggars making a racket on the violin or proto-Nazi trash-burners. Or are there?

Now the innermost courtyard is so quiet you can hear snow falling in the moment just after everyone has finished singing happy birthday to quasi-friend in the tiny kitchen. The window is clean and open, and the clean windows across the way look into kitchens very much like the one you're in and nobody inside them is doing anything interesting or worth venturing into voyeurism for. Every now and then, though, a dog howls, someone shouts a curse word with a distinctly Berlin flavor and it makes it up to the window as clear as if it had been hollered through a cone into your ear. It could be one friend calling up to another, it could be the proto-Nazi trash burner. It could be the past punching through.

Chapter One Endnotes

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[1] "Das Nachtgespenst" ("The Night-Ghost") is a 1930 cabaret *chanson* with lyrics by Friedrich Hollaender and melody by Rudolf Nelson. The nature of the lyrics, as with many cabaret songs, is overtly sexual with thinly-veiled double entendre – the "night ghost" being the man who lurks outside, waiting for the mother of the girl he's interested in to lock the door and go to bed so that he can surreptitiously enter the girl's room. The intent of this song is supposed to be playful and amusing, but the lyrics carry an ambiguity that suggests predation, force, and violence. The lines "Sei bloss nicht so erschreckt, du wirst nur aufgeweckt / Und wenn du aufgedeckt, dann wirst du wieder zugedeckt" / "Don't be so scared, it's only me waking you / and after you have been uncovered, you will get tucked in again" strongly suggest an unexpectedness in the sexual liaison that evokes rape, imminent danger, nonconsensuality. Here is a parallel between three types of insidious night-prowlers – the "spirit," the burglar, the rapist – bundled into one. I chose this song to title this section in part because the nature of my own nighttime walks made me wonder whether I was being perceived as a similar danger of some kind, whether there were times where I passed as a cisgender male and a potentially bigger threat than I am. I also found in the *flâneuring* nature of the song's speaker ("Ich nehm als Nachtgespenst kein Stückchen mit, was glänzt / Ich brauch wirklich nur das Fahrtgeld retour" / "As a night ghost I don't take any shiny jewels; only enough for the return fare") a privileged invisibility in moving through the day and night without confronting a counter-gaze, an attitude that reveals one performing actions that belong to a demographic and privilege that are not theirs, and feeling called-out for it. *Flânerie* in the traditional sense of the conversations that unfolded through time between Baudelaire, Proust, Walter Benjamin, Arthur Schnitzler, and Samuel Beckett, is a way of moving through urban space that belongs primarily to cisgender white men.

English lyrics translated by Inge Spiegel.

[2] In *Goodbye to Berlin* from Christopher Isherwood's *The Berlin Stories* (1939), Isherwood opines on the homes in the Grunewald, which is where one of his English pupils lives, and the people who occupy them:

> Frl. Hippi Bernstein, my first pupil, lives in the Grunewald, in a house built almost entirely of glass. Most of the richest Berlin families inhabit the Grunewald. It is difficult to understand why. Their villas, in all known styles of expensive ugliness, ranging from the eccentric-rococo folly to the cubist flat-roofed steel-and-glass box, are crowded together in this dank, dreary pinewood. Few of them can afford large gardens, for the ground is fabulously dear: their only view is of their neighbour's backyard, each one protected by a wire fence and a savage dog. Terror of burglary and revolution has reduced these miserable people to a state of siege. They have neither privacy nor sunshine. The district is really a millionaire's slum. (14)

The cloistered and self-ghettoizing nature of the Grunewald community, mostly occupied by wealthy Jewish Berliners, foreshadows the involuntary ghettoization Jewish people would soon face at the hands of the Nazi regime, but it also foreshadows a modern ghettoization trend that occurs in Berlin through processes of gentrification and "neighborhood-flipping" that cause rents to rise and push long-time residents out of their apartments. Isherwood, who concerned himself much with aesthetics in his writings and observations, sees no more fulfilment in the misery of the opulent Grunewald than he does in the misery of the teeming, shabby Wedding tenements.

In his reflections on *flânerie* as an early attempt to theorize how we move through and subsequently narrate urban spaces, Baudelaire also comments on the process of *reverie* as one of losing the "I" in order to become immersed in a space entirely: "…all these things think through me or I through them (for in the grandeur of reverie the ego is quickly lost!); I say *think*, but musically and picturesquely, without quibblings, without syllogisms, without deductions" (*Paris Spleen,* 1869). Spaces pass through us as we pass through them; the act of walking through the urban space offers many opportunities for the construction of the self to collapse, or be suspended, and for passers-through to eschew pretensions and identity constructions to mold themselves to their surroundings, a common sentiment and practice in tourist and expatriate lifestyles. In Isherwood's writings we see an ambiguity in the "I" behind the voice; all at once he is a confidante, a critic, a friend, a communist – he allows the self to be taken in the directions that feel right at the moment, the "Bradshaw" or the alter-"Isherwood" are merely membranes through which other people and places pass.

[3] Walter Benjamin's *Berliner Chronik* (*A Berlin Chronicle*), an essay from 1932, reflects on relationships between space, memory, and narrative through the stream-of-consciousness voice of the *flâneur*, an on-foot observer and thinker who assumes a voyeuristic role in *bearing the look* (to use Laura Mulvey's term, as this is a primarily cis-male archetype), while simultaneously exercising control over when the gaze is returned. For the flâneur, all returned gazes except the welcome ones (namely in the form of welcome sexual advances, as with the protagonist of Arthur Schnitzler's *Die Nächste* ("The Next [Woman]," 1899)) are insignificant, as the relationship exists principally between the flâneur, the space through which he moves, and the objects he gazes upon. His "visibility" can be turned on and off depending on the extent to which he wants to blend in. The flâneur can be willfully invisible while still being present in a space, he can physically occupy space without being regarded as not belonging. In the ongoing conversation about the movement of flâneurs through urban spaces in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the role of the flâneur within the urban space and within the societal hierarchy became evident: the flâneur could blend in when *he* wanted to, he could stand out when he wanted to, he could gaze freely without fearing confrontational or hostile gazes in return.

By the time Benjamin began contributing to the conversation on *flânerie*, notes Sven Birkerts ("Walter Benjamin, Flâneur: A Flânerie," 1983), he was well aware that the flâneur was an "extinct species" (166) in Berlin during the Weimar era: "Benjamin discovered that in tracking the gradual extinction of the historical flâneur he was able to diagram the progress of the 'modern': mechanization, urbanization, the incorporation of 'shock' into daily life, and the erosion and withdrawal of spirit ('aura') from the interaction of man and his environment." By the early 1900s, the constant pushing-in of the "modern" restricted the flâneur's ability to control exactly what passed into his conscience, and Benjamin realized that the flâneur as a "species" was one that could not coexist with the modern era. Baudelaire's shedding of the ego in the "grandeur of the reverie" was no longer possible, especially not in Berlin, where by the 1920s a state of perpetual flux had already been established.

[4] The 1927 *Steglitzer Schülertragödie* (Steglitz Student Tragedy) entailed a suicide pact between 18-year-old Paul Krantz and 19-year-old schoolmate Günther Scheller, who, during an alcohol-fueled summer party at the country house of Scheller's parents in Mahlow, decided to form an intricate murder-suicide plot. Scheller was to shoot Hans Stephan, a capricious friend and unrequited love, before Krantz shot both Scheller's younger sister Hildegard (an unrequited love of Krantz's) and Scheller before shooting himself. On 28 June 1927, the suicide pact fell apart in the Steglitz apartment of Scheller's parents as Krantz decided against upholding his half of the pact. Scheller shot Stephan, and then himself, with Krantz's pistol. Krantz was arrested and put on trial for the possession of an illegal weapon, which he had acquired through his membership in a right-wing youth organization. A 2003 film adaptation of the events, entitled *Was nützt die Liebe in Gedanken* (*Love in Thoughts*), suggested that a disillusionment with Weimar upper-class society led to a romanticized and idealistic view of death in which the two young men agreed to kill themselves once they felt that a peak moment of intense love (however unrequited) and euphoria in their lives had come and gone:

> Vielleicht ist es so, dass wir nur einmal in unserem Leben richtig glücklich sind. Nur einmal. Und dann werden wir bestraft. Die Bestrafung ist, dass wir immer an diesen Moment denken müssen. Ich denke, man sollte sich im richtigen Moment verabschieden. Und zwar genau dann, wenn man am glücklichsten ist. Genau dann. Am höchsten Punkt.
>
> (Perhaps it is true that we are only truly happy once in our lives. Just once. And then we are punished. The punishment is that we must always think back on that one moment. I think one should take his leave in the right moment. Precisely then, when one is at his happiest. Precisely then. At the highest point.) (Own translation)

This sentiment, especially the opinion that one moment of youthful bliss indicates that

life will only get worse from that point onward, indicates a dangerous overlapping of the romantic and the tragic, which appears earlier in German history with Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774), in which the protagonist's suicide over unrequited love led to a wave of copycat suicides incited by a similar conflation of love's transience with suicide's permanence.

[5] The aftermath of the *Steglitzer Schülertragödie* involved a major debate over the mental welfare of young people in the Weimar era. The older generations blamed the tragedy on an absence of morality among the younger generation; reformists, sexual educators, and researchers like Magnus Hirschfeld came to the defense of Paul Krantz and the generation he represented, claiming that the sexually repressive sheltered nature of the German upper class – and the older generations' imposition of their strict sexual mores and confining principles of sexual decency upon the youth – operated in connection with the "*geistige Frühreife und körperliche Unreife*" (*spiritual/mental ripeness and physical unripeness*) that led to the alienation of adolescents from their own bodies. Hirschfeld, a pioneering researcher in adolescent sexuality, homosexuality, and other social taboos of gender and sexuality, testified on Krantz's behalf at his trial. He argued that this split between perceived mental maturity and perceived lack of physical maturity, as informed by societal expectations, inevitably led to tragedies of ill-directed passion like this one.

[6] Birkens quotes Benjamin's meditations on aura and the act of looking: "To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return. This experience corresponds to the data of the *mémoire involuntaire*" (176). Birkens notes that Benjamin connects his concepts of the *aura* – which "designates authenticity, an original or preliminary relation of man to his world" – to the *shock factor*, "the collision of the adaptive faculties and stimuli of a rapidly changing environment." The relationship between aura, shock, and modernity is therefore underscored by the constant shock of modernity inhibiting the ability to perceive the world authentically, thus diminishing the aura. This is why Benjamin argued that true *flânerie* died with the 19th century. Anything that attempts to mimic the motions of true *flânerie* is performance, one that may be met with scorn or exposure in the same way that an "unacceptable" performance of gender or social comportment could be met with this reaction.

[7] In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler describes the performativity of gender as "not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (xv). I found the parallels between the performance of gender and sexuality with the performance of a public persona – performing flâneuring, performing "passing," anger, *shocking* – compelling, especially in my considerations of the walk through the urban space as something that a cisgender white man may feel entitled to do without confrontation, takes for granted. Butler's commentary on drag as parody and satire also came to mind, as I (and many trans people) often overacted stereotypical

superficial traits of masculinity (mainly in facial expressions, voice, posture, and gait) when I felt I was being perceived as female or "other."

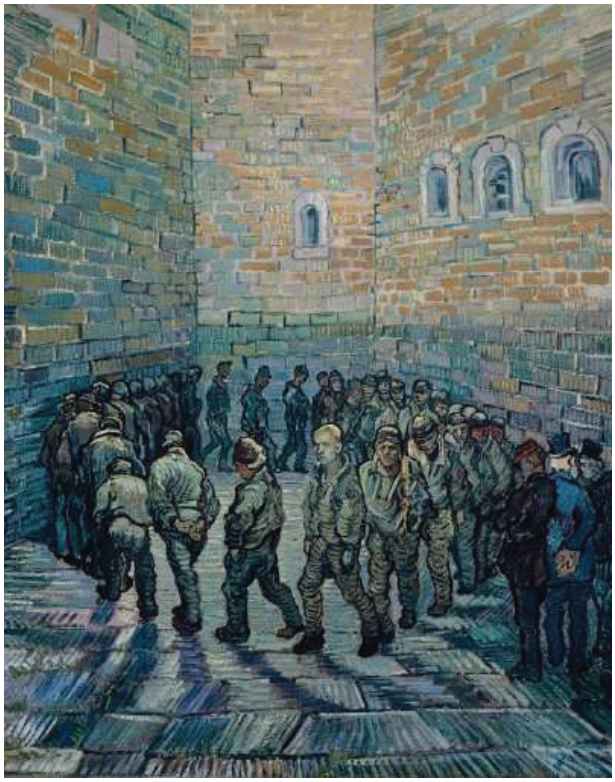
[8] In *A Berlin Chronicle*, Benjamin describes a cultivated manner that he had developed in his childhood, a "habit of seeming slower, more maladroit, more stupid than I am" (5), which "had its origins in such [childhood] walks, and has the great attendant danger of making me think myself quicker, more dexterous, and shrewder than I am." This description struck me in its admission of inauthenticity, something that I connected with in feeling like there was something to be pre-defensive about while existing in Steglitz-Zehlendorf and also in feeling like I could draw conclusions about why I was being stared at. The stares felt like an acknowledgement of conspicuousness but not of visibility, of an out-of-placeness, a perception informed entirely by my past experiences and my ongoing perception of myself. When I felt I was being perceived as "other," I reacted with an instinctive sense of indignation over feeling called-out for engaging with the space in a way I felt as entitled to do as anybody else, causing a positive feedback loop of more performing.

[9] In "Gender, Urban Space, and the Right to Everyday Life" (2017), Yasminah Beebeejaun responds to Michel de Certeau's "conceptualizations of space and his focus upon everyday activities of the city as a site of ordinary political action, embodied activity, and emotion." (326) She highlights that de Certeau's analysis of walking through the city is an act "full of meaning that destabilize[s] the unified vision of place that emerges through planning visions." However, Beebeejaun notes that de Certeau characterizes "walking, wandering or window shopping" as a pleasurable and political act for the "ordinary practitioners" (dwellers) of the urban spaces, whereas walking with its most obvious intention – to get somewhere cheaply and directly – is not acknowledged. The privilege of analyzing walking on a heightened, more cerebral level is exposed here, not only in de Certeau, but in Benjamin and his ongoing conversation about the flâneur as well. Class-related implications for walking, for instance, or the acknowledgment that many people cannot "wander" or "get lost" without having to worry about their personal safety, are often left out of discourses on the movement of people through urban spaces.

[10] Walking to distract, or walking to forget, is part of a larger discussion of how an individual's movement through space informs the space, although in an ephemeral way: "The walker is able to temporarily, at least, take over the spaces she or he moves through and imbue them with their own meanings, bringing past memories and present emotions with them," Beebeejaun writes (326). "Rather than operating within fixed or static space, the walker dynamically inhabits it, shaping its qualities. For the moment it is his space filled with meaning or emotional attachment he ascribes to it, and through repetitive use of space an embodied sense of belonging develops." This exchange of meaning-making becomes mutual when the space in turn moves through the individual, who is consequently affected by the history that the space possesses. The visualization of mental illness not only "coming along" for the walk, but briefly filling the space through

which the ill walker passes – the space's illnesses and baggage having the same effect on the walker in return – reveals a space in which the marginalized person can insert their own identity and experiences momentarily, fill a void with an experience and meaning that is theirs. I found this exchange especially important in my navigation of a wealthy neighborhood like Nikolassee, which bears a loaded past even before World War Two – Prussia, gentry and aristocracy before and after World War One, economic prosperity and a growing sense of division between the *Großstadt* and the suburbs.

Figure 1: Vincent Van Gogh, *Prisoners Exercising (after Dore)*. Oil on canvas, 1890.



[11] See: "Mit Vatis Bergseil vom Balkon geflüchtet" (28 April 2014) from *Der Tagesspiegel*, blog series entitled "Stille Helden Zehlendorfs": http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/bezirke/steglitz- zehlendorf/stille-helden-zehlendorfs-teil-5-der-serie-mit-vatis-bergseil-vom-balkon- gefluechtet/9816938.html

[12] This bizarre combination of architectural styles – one a reactionary movement against the creeping-in of Parisian and Viennese aesthetics, the other embracing the onward movement of Germany into the modern era – could be one example of Benjamin's "*Schockerlebnisse*," which rip the walker out of reverie and disrupt the fostering of pleasure, reflection, and meaning-making while moving through space. It certainly did for

me, and furthered my perception of Berlin as a place existing perpetually between times, styles, eras.

[13] Figure 2: Lindenthaler Allee 30, "Landhaus Moster," built 1908, designed by Bastian & Kabelitz (own photo, taken in January 2018)



[14] In "'The Shape of a City': Recollection in Benjamin's 'A Berlin Chronicle' and Breton's 'Nadja'" (2003), Adam Woodruff comments on Benjamin's personal memories of a childhood in early-1900s Berlin as pointing "toward a form of recollection beyond the personal" (187): instead, Benjamin's recollections reveal a sense of collective memory, an "associative weave of reflections and images" that "question the concept of a purely individual unconscious, located beyond the urban and textual figures." The phrase *nunquam retrorsum* is the motto of the House of Welf/Guelf/Guelph, a mainly German and British dynasty that ruled Bavaria and Saxony at various points between the 11th and 20th centuries. I found it ironic that a house with such a history, in a neighborhood with an even greater collective history, would bear this motto over its doorway, especially in a present-day Germany that continues to come to terms with its Nazi past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*).

[15] A cabaret song (title translates roughly to "my children, this evening I am in search of…") with lyrics by Hollaender, released in 1930. The song was subsequently made famous by Marlene Dietrich's performance in *Der Blaue Engel* (1930, dir. Josef von Sternberg). Sung from the point of view of a woman, the song exhibits many traits of the *Neue Frau* – sexually uninhibited and determined to take initiative, the power to choose

her own sexual partners – while simultaneously adhering to traditional expectations of masculinity and qualities of an effective male lover ("*einen Mann, einen richtigen Mann*" – "*a man, a real man*").

[16] In *The Berlin Stories*, Isherwood twice alludes to Berlin as a *demi-monde* – the first is when he introduces Bobby, a hustler in a West-End bar called the Troika. "I don't know his real name," Isherwood writes. "He has adopted this one because English Christian names are fashionable just now in the Berlin demi-monde" (6). The second time is in reference to Sally Bowles: "Sally seemed to know everybody in the place. She called them all Thou and Darling. For a would-be demi-mondaine, she seemed to have surprisingly little business sense or tact. She wasted a lot of time making advances to an elderly gentleman who would obviously have preferred a chat with the barman" (25). Isherwood is aware of and critiques a falseness that exists in the spaces (and people) he moves through, noting the affectations they take on to assert a right to occupy the non-space of the underground nightlife. Throughout Isherwood's writing, there is a consistent unveiling of the phoniness he sees in others that reveals just as much about himself as it does them – what is he doing around them? What does he want out of these associations?

[17] In *Christopher Isherwood: His Era, His Gang, and the Legacy of the Truly Strong Man* (2001), David Izzo writes of Isherwood's life – and, by extent, his work – being "one of continual searching" (161), an endeavor to "fill a void" in his life by creating autobiographical protagonists who lived vicariously through the people with whom he associated while drawing more attention to the imprecision of his own identity. He often achieved this by ensuring the absence of many or all parts of himself from the narrative. "His emptiness was caused by the death of his father and his mother's emotional retreat," writes Izzo. "His rebellion amounted to a cry for approval, a desperate plea to regain the nurturing womb-cocoon of his early childhood." In seeking this, Isherwood employed a number of proxy-selves in his fiction, "various vicarious substitute milieus and poses, both artistic and amatory, [including] the rebel, the friend, the artist, the martyr, the older brother, the satyr, the lover […]." Isherwood's "I" in *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* is at once gracious and censorious toward his bumbling fellow-expatriate friend, keen on expressing his sourness at him when applicable and relishing in Mr. Norris's attempts to win back the friendship. This "I" is hardly ever at fault; events and people merely pass through him as he reacts – with absolute disdain toward Mr. Norris's conniving secretary, for instance (who proves to be just as scheming as he suspected), or with his reciprocation of the wealthy but melancholy Bernhard Landauer's mysterious interest in his friendship. In all relationships, the absence of what was most likely a sexual connection makes the reader's suspicion noisier.

A similar friendship dynamic is at play with Sally Bowles in *Goodbye to Berlin*, although Sally is increasingly less desperate to win back the friendship each time she leaves Isherwood's "I" slighted (or vice-versa). As she moves on to other possibilities to advance

herself through relationships, her reliance on the moody protagonist who constantly appraises her performances diminishes, and the friendship dwindles. Through both Mr. Norris and Sally, as well as through Otto Nowak – the young hustler whose tumultuous companionship with another older British man on Rügen Island the protagonist follows closely – Isherwood's "I" finds ways to perform his own autobiographical experiences, from his smooth handling of Baron Pregnitz's awkward sexual proposition (109) to his uncanny ability to win over the lovers and friends of his characters as a clever and charming English expatriate. Knowing that the "I" represents himself to the reader, Isherwood does not express his own "taboo" sexuality through his character's actions, but through those of others. In noting this conspicuous absence, we begin to look elsewhere for its manifestation. "Different masks were worn to hide his private escape into the secondary worlds based on his fear of the primary world as constituted by the Public, particularly The Others," Izzo writes (161). Yet he appears elsewhere in his narratives: "Isherwood would regard [his characters] as object lessons from which the aspiring Truly Strong Man could learn about himself and others. He had begun to do so in the Berlin stories when he was able to see who Sally Bowles and Bernhard Landauer really were behind their masks. He recognized that their particulars mirrored his own particulars, which were really not particulars at all, but universals replicated in the perpetual continuum of evolving consciousness." Isherwood infiltrates the *demi-monde* when he wants to and withdraws when he wants to. One problem with that is that the "real" *demi-monde* forgets you when you withdraw, that others too withdraw and vanish, and that it is not always so simple to re-immerse when you're ready again. People move on very quickly, as does space. In Isherwood's *demi-monde*, people and places do come and go, though always in ways that draw more attention to something about himself.

[18] "Raus mit den Männern" ("Chuck Out the Men," title translation by Jeremy Lawrence) was written by Hollaender in 1926 for Claire Waldoff, a popular cabaret singer of the 1910s and 1920s. The song is an early call to dismantle patriarchy and tear down male-dominated power structures and replace them – in politics, in determining societal norms and rules, and in men's dominance of both private and public spheres – with the influences of women instead. The song's refrain sounds like something that still could be heard chanted at a Women's March today: "Raus mit den Männern aus dem Reichstag, und raus mit den Männern aus dem Landtag, und raus mit den Männern aus dem Herrenhaus, wir machen draus ein Frauenhaus! Raus mit den Männern und dem Dasein, und raus mit den Männern aus dem Hiersein, sie müten schon längst fort sein. Ja: raus mit den Männern aus dem Bau, und rein in die Dinger mit der Frau!"

English translation: "Out with the men of the Reichstag (congress), out with the men of the Parliament, out with the men of the *man*or-house, we'll make out of it a *wo*-manor-house! Out with the men and their there-ness, and out with the men and their here-ness, they should have been gone long ago. Yes, out with the men from the establishment and in with the woman!"

The ongoing sentiment of women having had enough of men's dominance in all spheres of society rings especially relevant today, especially in the core frustration that the singer expresses: men take up *too much space*. Their voices, their physical presences, their opinions, their power, the social spheres where they are allowed to exist without risk of harassment or scorn, all of these characteristics of male privilege are being called into question and challenged in the song – which, ironically, was written by a man. However, being a Jewish satirist in Weimar Berlin during the rise of the Nazi party, Hollaender no doubt experienced his own share of discrimination and scorn as an "other" in a city growing increasingly hostile toward his work and existence in general. This added an additional layer of grievance to the lyrics; not only is Hollaender criticizing the male-dominated private and public spheres, he is highly aware of the dominance that white, "Aryan" German men already hold in German society, even in the midst of a democratic government (or an attempt at one). My decision to use this song title to lead into my next section lies in this exhaustion and annoyance that non-cis-male people continue to express with the exclusionary nature of social spaces. The fact that this song was confined to the walls of the cabaret, where social satire and parody were welcome, parallels interestingly with the confines of the sex-oriented gay bar, where (in my experience) loud, radical, and queer criticism – and, by extention, the people who represent this – is met with more hostility than eager reception.

[19] Figure 3: Tanno and I with our fake facial hair before going to Ficken 3000. (Taken by Tanno Pippi, 2015)



[20] The flâneur is presented to us as a passive receptacle into or through which experiences, spectacles, people, spaces, or ideas pass. However, the gaze of the traditional flâneur confronts, asserts, and objectifies more than Benjamin and Baudelaire may suggest. The male flâneur in literature is voyeuristic, he pursues, he awaits a returned gaze; the agency

to act upon that returned gaze is entirely his own, and his unrestricted movement through the urban space is not (or is less likely to be) hindered or confronted by his exposure as an "other." Meanwhile, the voyeur who is "other" assumes a more passive role, even when they are also out to confront, to assert – in the case of my friends and I, we felt like challenging the homogeneity of the space, disrupting the "vibe" simply by existing there. In spite of this, our right to be there was up for debate by the disapproving majority. Whether this makes us counterpoints to the flâneur or failed flâneurs, I am not sure, but the idea plays with the title of the section – *Raus mit den Männern* – it was the men who wanted to be rid of us. There are certainly spaces in Berlin today that mimic the watershed of identities and presentations and performances that could have been found in the Eldorado in 1931 – where Sylvia von Harden may have sat expressionless with her monocle and cigarette in a corner, where Sally Bowles clones flitted around with their "finger-nails […] painted emerald green, a colour unfortunately chosen, for it called attention to her hands, which were much stained by cigarette-smoking and as dirty as a little girls," their faces "powdered dead white" (Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin*, 21). But darkrooms and spots exclusively intended for gay sex were also not scarce in Weimar Berlin.

[21] "Die Notbremse" ("The Emergency Brake") is another Hollaender song from 1932, written for the musical review "Die höchste Eisenbahn." The "I" in the song, a woman, is pleading to not be arrested by the police after pulling the emergency brake on a moving train. As with many cabaret songs, the meaning is thinly-shrouded sexual allusion. The speaker, in pleading her case to the *Stationsvorsteher*, claims: "Denn, ach, verbotene Bremsen / Die schmecken ja so süß / Mit den verfluchten Dingern / Passiert mir was, zentral / Und dann kribbelt's in den Fingern / Und dann muss ich eben mal." In having some sort of sexual encounter on the train, she has grabbed the emergency brake by accident and halted the train entirely (parallel to Big Orgasm).

English translation: "Then, oh, forbidden brakes / They taste so sweet / With the damned things / Something crucial happened to me / And then it tingles in my fingers / And then I have to… [pull the break]."

[22] Woodruff notes the inception of the diary-keeping which led to Benjamin's *Berlin Chronicle*, which Benjamin described as "in a loosely subjective form" (185), and how "ordering his recollections in a series of glosses […] proved more problematic than it had first appeared:"

> I believed a retrospective glance at what Berlin had become for me in the course of years would be an appropriate "preface" to such glosses. If the preface has now far exceeded the space originally allotted to the glosses, this is not only the mysterious work of remembrance – which is really the capacity for endless interpolations into what has been – but also, at the same time, the precaution of the subject represented by the "I," which is entitled not to be sold cheap. (185)

Both Benjamin's and Isherwood's intense preoccupations with their own impressions, recollections, and iterations of the self while moving through the urban space reflect a perceived entitlement to express "I," to give that "I" *permission* to become universal experience in a narrative. Isherwood's "I" is conspicuously devoid of negative characteristics or of explicit identities that would create distance for a reader, and Benjamin's "I" is something he guards, entitled to space and reflection but not something the narrative is entitled *to.* This is a distinctly cis-man problem to me, considering that the permission to assert the "I" – and to even suggest that it is universal – is much more precarious for everybody else.

[23] Woodruff comments that Benjamin's performance of recollection in *A Berlin Chronicle* and other texts "consists of a fragmentary and elliptical set of thoughts and images that refuses to be ordered by autobiographical conventions of narrative and chronology" (185). In expanding his personal reflections on past experiences to theoretical musings on the movement of thought and physicality through space, Benjamin reveals (much like Beebeejaun does, although she enumerates on why early philosophizing was problematic because it fails to consider the role of women and other marginalized people) the exchange of identities at play resulting from the transience of the walker – and, by extent, the expatriate – who occupies a space in passing and becomes occupied by that space in return.

[24] Another Hollaender cabaret song, the title translates to "I don't know to whom I belong" – the speaker, a woman, debates the pros and cons of gentle men, macho men, monogamy and polyamory, and quips that if she gave herself to just one person another would be lonely ("Wenn ich jetzt grad' dir Treue schwöre, wird wieder ein And'rer ganz unglücklich sein" / "If I were to swear my loyalty to you now, yet another would become incredibly unhappy"). Ultimately she asserts the same agency of the *Neue Frau* that we see in "Kinder, heut' abend" – in concluding that she only truly belongs to herself. "Ich weiß nicht, zu wem ich gehöre, ich glaub', ich gehöre nur mir ganz allein" / "I don't know to whom I belong, I believe that I only belong to myself"). For this particular section, the title of the song felt like an interesting play on the concept of *belonging* to a space, a community, especially in a place that is constantly being shaped by ongoing history and the people who pass through it.

[25] Isherwood characterizes Berlin's "West End" as luxurious, a bastion for the wealthy. In *Goodbye to Berlin*, Otto Nowak – the young hustler who lives with his family in a leaky attic tenement – shows "Christoph" a photo of Trude, a young woman he's been dating. "And here's Trude," he says. "Honestly, Christoph, would you believe she was twenty-seven? It's a fact! Hasn't she a marvelous figure? She lives in the West End, in a flat of her own! She's been divorced twice. I can go there whenever I like" (114). Another time, Isherwood characterizes the scenery change at the Alexander Casino when inhabitants

of the West End flood the establishment on Saturdays and Sundays. “Visitors from the West End arrived, like ambassadors from another country. There were a good number of foreigners – Dutchmen mostly, and Englishmen. The Englishmen talked in loud, high, excited voices. They discussed communism and Van Gogh and the best restaurants.” (125) Isherwood, himself an Englishman and expatriate from a well-to-do background, interestingly distinguishes between himself and the “Englishmen” who enter the space with their high, loud voices. It is evident that he not only views these men as part of a group he is not a part of – or does not want to claim membership of – but that he has absorbed the Berliner’s attitude toward the West End as a far-off, glamorous, unattainable locale on some far side of the city, which simultaneously intrigues him (it represents the exotic, prosperity) and stands for something he wants no part of (it does not seem somehow authentic to him, as the haunts of his Schöneberg and Tiergarten stomping grounds do).

[26] Samuel Beckett, also a later voice in the conversation on flâneuring as it related to movement through space and memory, commented in response to Proust on the power of “involuntary memory,” which “[obeys] laws of its own, [ignores] every command of the will, is our sole contact with the real experience of the past” (Woodruff 176):

> Involuntary memory is explosive, ‘an immediate, total and delicious deflagration.’ It restores, not merely the past object, but the Lazarus that it charmed and tortured, not merely the Lazarus and the object, but more because less, more because it abstracts the useful, the opportune, the accidental, because in its flame it has consumed Habit and all its works, and in its brightness revealed what the mock reality of experience never can and never will reveal – the real.

Woodruff argues that “the life of the past concentrates its essences into detail. […] And just as there is no telling *when* the involuntary memory will yield its hoard, so there is no knowing which stray detail will bear the impress of a world.” Flânerie in a traditional sense concerns itself primarily with the wondrousness of these encounters with the past, the *authentic*, the “delicious” (Proust, for instance, contextualizes involuntary memory as a welcome distraction from the present that can be brought on by “the taste of the madeleine cake,” which “unfold[s] a forgotten world around the narrator […].” It is difficult to contextualize involuntary memory in Berlin in the same way when it comes to collective memories of the city – war, genocide, bombs, violence, rebuilding, police brutality – although when associations become personal ones between the walker and the place, this may be true. In the same way that the concept of flâneuring must be reworked in considering the privilege of the cisgender male as he moves through urban spaces, we must also consider that these involuntary memories are not always so delightful. They’re often awful.

Chapter Two: Weeping Wall

“a space, some temporary abode,”[27]

The IKEA overlooked train tracks that rumbled into Südkreuz from points south, a vast expanse of land that boasted uninviting allotment gardens and a large cemetery, and of course the IKEA’s own massive parking lot over which a series of colossal colorful flags flapped hospitably under a dishwater-colored windy March sky. There is no convenient way to get to any IKEA in the world using public transit, because usually it *also* means you have to get back home using public transit, schlepping along all of the IKEA wares you just bought. Nevertheless, I arrived on foot from Südkreuz after what felt like five near-death experiences sprinting across busy thoroughfares and reaching that parking lot, half-empty like something out of an anticapitalist photo series on urban decay and abandoned American shopping malls, empty perhaps because it was the middle of a weekday in March, perhaps because this was Berlin and what percentage of people even had a car to park? If you lived in Berlin and could afford a car, were you shopping for your furniture at IKEA? Did this IKEA even want anybody shopping there in the first place? To my right, at the furthest corner of the parking lot, stood an outstandingly ugly stone structure about my height, shaped like a middle-schooler’s tri-fold science fair board. The black letters looked as if they had been set into the concrete by a drunken gas station attendant, poorly spaced and crooked; half were missing with only minimal context and outlines of the lost letters remaining to fill in the rest of the meaning. From left to right, the panels of this strange brutalist triptych declared:

Von unseren befragten Werkangehörigen waren folgende Verluste durch den letzten Krieg zu verzeichnen [3]

Todesopfer: 185
Körperbeschädigte: 62
Ausgebombte: 280
Umsiedler: 11
Vermisste: 61

Somewhere here was reprimand, to whom or what I was not sure. I was tired. How often was anyone in this corner of this parking lot? Who was the last person to have noticed this before me? Whose *Werkangehörige* had been polled? The middle panel, bearing larger letters and an exclamation point, thrust a finger at you, seized you by the scarf, hollered and shook you desperately until your skeleton rattled:

Die Toten des Bombenkrieges mahnen uns![4]

Did the people at the IKEA headquarters somewhere in Sweden even know that this was here? Did the people who worked at *this* IKEA know? Were they the ones who put it up? Lastly spoke the right panel, a voice high and plaintive like a distant and old relative wine-drunk and despairing and ignored at a family function:

Du darfst nicht der Nächste sein

Darumkämpfemit uns für den Frieden[5]

Those dead from the bombings implore us! Thereforefightwithus for peace The seizing hands lengthen into arms and develop a body and a yawning yelling toothless mouth from which no sound comes. No eyes, no hair or clothes, decayed, yellowed as this concrete

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[3] *From our polled employees, the following losses due to the last war were recorded: Casualties, bodily injuries, bombed-out, displaced, missing*

[4] *Those dead from the bomb-wars implore us!*

[5] *You cannot be the next*
Therefore fight with us for peace

science fair board.[28]

Getting to the IKEA in Tempelhof is a Homerian epic. Like most IKEAs do, this one needed a remarkable amount of space to accommodate its sprawl, like a man taking up too much of a seat on the train. It jutted up out of a wasteland dominated by behemoth furniture stores, home improvement and homeware mausoleums, and lifestyle emporiums like BAUHAUS and MÖBEL-KRAFT, a quasi-suburban mountain range overlooking a snarl of highways that clashed at one central point far below, seeming to tumble over one another like cobras before charging onward in differing directions, bound for the suburbs. Out to Brandenburg, where prototypical Prussian farmhouses with steep-pitched roofs dotted the outskirts of towns alongside concrete East German *Plattenbauten*. For about half a mile, the Sachsendamm ran parallel to the southwestern boundary of Tempelhofer Feld, where the *Junikäfer* larvae slumbered in the dirt, waiting to emerge months later, winged, from the tall grass at dusk on a summer day and ruin everybody's barbecues unwittingly. This was the kind of area left strategically drab because for decades no one wanted to live within earshot of roaring Pan Am jets bringing Americans into West Berlin on business, C-54 supply planes dropping food from the sky like manna, *Junikäfer* dive-bombing their barbecues. Now the jets were gone, as were the supply planes, but the *Junikäfer* slept under lone kites that quivered against the sky, Tempelhof remained quiet, still crouched in a cellar with its ears covered, wondering when to resurface, unaware that within less than a year its hangars would house refugees from Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan. Still a place of flight, even when the planes have stopped flying.[29]

The closest S-Bahn station to IKEA was Südkreuz; like Westkreuz and Ostkreuz, it was a frontier hub occupying a nebula where nothing substantial existed and no one

stayed for long. Not one of the *Kreuze* was anyone's final destination; they were all points on the Ringbahn where nobody got off to go home, but rather to transfer lines or switch over to buses or bikes. Or to go to IKEA. What would have been *Nordkreuz* was actually S-Bahnhof Gesundbrunnen, translating to something like the *fountain of health* or even the *fountain of youth*. Not only a disruption in an otherwise orderly method of demarcating the four limits of the city proper like compass points, but a lie also. Health and youth are nowhere to be found on the Ringbahn, only this sense of both the unceasing and the all-consuming at once, two tracks running nonstop, one clockwise, the other counter-clockwise, like two nestled snakes devouring their own tails in opposite directions. The stops were more spaced out than the stops on the U-Bahn, so if you weren't mindful and didn't pay attention to when your stop was next, you were suddenly at Messe Nord/ICC, then at Westend, then hurtling toward Jungfernheide and being assaulted from all angles with advertisements for weekend family vacations to the middle of the woods. Zip-lining, tree-climbing, rock-climbing, enormous campgrounds in the middle of a heathland. You are definitely going in the wrong direction, all of this says. Now you must get off, cross over to the other platform, board the other purgatory-carousel plunging in the opposite direction. That's an extra thirty minutes at least, filched from your life by the Ringbahn, vanished, nothing to show for it except inexcusable lateness to your ultimate destination. There is no non-stupid way to explain away having your time swallowed by the Ringbahn.[30]

Your time cannot be swallowed by *this*, either, whatever *this* wants to tell you about *die Toten des Bombenkrieges*, not if you can help it. If you lurched to a stop upon every crossing of the past as if freezing in place upon encountering a grimacing hunched

wild animal – muscles adrenaline-locked, not knowing whether to step left or right, run, ostrich-kick, reach forward to make peace – you will never get anywhere in this city. You do not have enough spare change to place into everybody's cup. Your coat lapels are released, you straighten the strap of your bag across your chest and you remember that you're here to buy a blanket, a rug, a pillow, and six cactuses to put on your windowsill. The hands retreat back into the cement, back into the empty spaces left by the missing letters, the mouth closes, allows you to walk away without having had the chance to finish pleading its case to you.[31]

But I could not continue toward my destination without taking a photo first. On March 12, 2015 – nine days after arriving in Berlin – I uploaded it to Instagram with the caption: "some kind of war memorial in the, uh, IKEA parking lot." During later research I found a photo of the same monument taken just four years before, in much better condition then – all letters present, all words spaced reasonably and coherently. Berlin is not a city that falls to the elements; to bombs and regimes, but not to Baltic cold, "Prussian" snot-freezing cold. Wind did not blow those letters off and out of alignment. Fingers wrenched them off and flicked them to the ground like crumpled cigarette butts.[32] Who else had been there? Every time I go back to Berlin, I wonder whether it will have been restored or whether its appeal for the eradication of war will have been pried at even more, the way a crow pries at a scrap of trash. I won't know unless I go out of my way to check. Berlin I intend to visit again and again, the IKEA in Tempelhof not so much. As I befriended more and more Berliners, I asked them about this sometimes; after all, there were only two IKEAs in Berlin at the time, so someone else had to have seen it. But no one recalled it. I know I did not imagine it, but I also know I would not have seen it either

if not for the circumstances – I only happened to find it at the edge of that godforsaken parking lot because I walked all the way there from fucking Südkreuz. Who else had been there?

From my seat in the upstairs cafeteria, where I ate my first full meal since arriving in Berlin, that far corner of the parking lot was still visible. It ate my plate of fries and my quark dessert alongside me like a self-invited guest.[33] It had been over a week since I had arrived at my apartment, and until then I'd been subsisting off of leftover complimentary bagels from my interminable journey with Aeroflot, rock-hard rolls from the discount Aldi next door. My priorities were the tasks that comprised the post-arrival checklist the Freie Universität Berlin had sent me back at the beginning of February, when I was spending most of my days at home watching HGTV and *Are You Being Served?* after being rejected for a winter internship at the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. Enroll at the University some point before the semester begins, notify the authorities that I have established a new place of residence within two weeks of my arrival date, pay semester fee of 368 Euros, obtain matriculation certificate, cafeteria card, student I.D. which doubles as a public transit ticket. All done within a week, yet I had still not eaten a meal. I had already enrolled as a student at Freie Universität Berlin, I had already registered my new address at the Bürgeramt Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf after unleashing a torrent of insults at the rude man who worked at another Bürgeramt in Zehlendorf and storming out, but I had eaten nothing except cereal and bread. Until my journey to IKEA, I went everywhere on foot, ten miles or more per day, paralyzingly afraid of figuring out the transit system. I hadn't considered that you can't necessarily take twenty credits of coursework and immerse yourself in a target language if you starve

to death or die of exhaustion first.[34]

Later, I told Sam that I felt like the Thin White Duke around then, subsisting off of "chili peppers and milk." "It was *red peppers*," they corrected. "*Red* peppers! Oh my god, who can just eat raw *chili peppers*? That plus *milk* would have made his diarrhea, like, fifty times worse." Bowie had come here to kick a cocaine habit; Iggy had come to kick a heroin one. Which habit had I come to kick? Bowie and Iggy would both would later say, separately, that their time in Berlin had saved them, wrenched them out of the rockstar half-world and back into reality like a blast of frigid air to the lungs and the hollows behind the eyes.[35] My time here could save me, too, I thought, and not be swallowed by dwelling, wallowing, starving. *Swallow!*

"hyphenated people"[36]

I like tattoo shops in Berlin. In Berlin, tattoo artists, too, migrate, going wherever their work is in demand and wherever they can convince clients that only *they* can do what the client wants the *right way*. About half of the artists in the shop at Yorckstraße 44 were Americans. There was also a South African of Polynesian descent, a Frenchman, two or three Germans. They had all assembled themselves as a family of non-native species whose only notion of *nation* was the shop in which they found themselves working, content with displacement, like the collection of cactuses I had amassed on my bedroom windowsill. Cactuses because they take forever to die, because they don't wither after just a day of no nourishment and are stubbornly determined to go marathons without consuming water, because of their sharp spines, because they are lousy Americans in places that are not America. "Remember that you are representing not only your university while studying abroad," we had all been told at the pre-departure orientation

in November, those of us who were headed to Germany for the spring 2015 semester. "You are also representing your *country*." *My* country? Why's it got to be mine? "You don't want your actions abroad to perpetuate negative stereotypes of Americans." How American do I act? What is acting like a lousy American versus acting like any other kind of jackass? What is acting like a good one? It is only the element of being placed into another country that turns what would ordinarily be viewed as acting like a jackass into acting like a lousy American. "Part of the culture-shock process is realiz–"[37]

That something so small, wild, and hostile could be corralled into a small pot, sometimes given googly eyes and pipe-cleaner mustaches and plastic sombreros, was both sad and compelling. Whenever I went to live somewhere new, whether it was a fluorescent-lit dormitory or a humid WG flooded by a clogged shower left running and running, I bought more cactuses to welcome myself home. At the Tempelhof IKEA, I bought six, and I sat across from them all as I wolfed my cafeteria meal – a plate of fries, a bowl of fresh fruit, a large quark dessert parfait, and an apple juice, attempting but unable to ignore the *Gedenktafel* out in the parking lot. *irgendwo*, *anderswo*, *nirgendwo*, *hin*, *her*, *hier*,[6] I named them, German words in lowercase that sit quietly between their capitalized counterparts but without which full meaning cannot be made. I wasn't thinking about all of this when I bought them, of course. I just wanted a windowsill laden with plants. Like any non-lousy German.

The following month, I walked into the tattoo shop at Yorckstraße 44 with a printed-out photo of my favorite cactus. I began speaking hesitant German to the woman

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[6] *Somewhere, elsewhere, nowhere, to, fro, here*

at the desk, one of the resident artists there, before she stopped me with our distinctly millennial hella-chill politeness. “Sorry, man, I actually don’t speak any German. Do you know English?”

“Oh, yeah. English is fine. Probably better. I was interested in getting a tattoo here.”

“Right on! What of?”

“A cactus.”

“No kidding. Are you a desert rat, too? I’m from Arizona.”

“Not quite. East Coast.”

“I’ve got a cactus, too,” she says, hiking up her sleeve and torqueing her arm into a position that only people with tattoos wanting to show their tattoos to other people with tattoos can manage to achieve. “But it’s part of a larger piece. It’s more of a full desert-scape, but they’re in there. Helps me when I’m homesick. Did you have a specific style in mind, or?”

Neither of us pretended that it wasn’t at least a little funny that I, with my print-out, actually had a specific *cactus* in mind. Mine. When I get tattoos, I try to avoid explaining my reasoning behind them as much as I possibly can. I don’t like my arms; putting something beautiful on my arms makes me like my arms more. That is usually about as much as people get out of me. Bringing a reference photo is not an oddity, but the reference photo is not usually an iPhone 4 snapshot of your own houseplant. I wasn’t about to explain to a Southwesterner why I was getting a *potted* cactus on my upper left arm, not one found in the wild. Southwesterners are supposed to be pioneers,[38] nomads, can’t-be-pinned-down-ers, East-Coasters settlers, nesters, commuters. Right? All of the

artists in the shop amicably agreed that they had inked countless saguaros onto leathery bikers and dusty desert dogs, but never a potted barrel cactus. In any other space I would have felt more awkward than proud.

It was one of the Germans – Phil, a chain-smoker in a leather jacket whose station was papered with black-and-white photorealistic sketches of macho motifs like lions and skulls and dragons – who accepted the assignment. "This is maybe the first one I've done in color since years," he said. "I like working in color. But, you see," he gestured to the wall-of-macho-tattoos-past, "most who come to me prefer no color." He looked at my other tattoos, all with some degree of coloration. "Your skin takes colors well, though. I'm excited about this." We made the appointment outside while he smoked a cigarette.[39]

The piece itself took about four hours. We talked a little, but Phil was deeply entrenched in the cactus, and I imagine talking too much to a tattoo artist is like talking too much to a barber or hairdresser, in that you think you're successfully avoiding excessive uncomfortable silence with your yammering but are actually just being irritating and distracting. Fucked-up hair fixes itself eventually, however, and fucked-up tattoos do not. Phil's conversational approach consisted mainly of him narrating to me the tattooing process itself: "This new gun is the best. It's my baby." "For the plant pot I use this orange. It has a bit of red in it. Like brick, or?" "For this flower I use chili-red." I followed the materialization of the cactus on my skin with great interest. Me being an American in Berlin was not interesting to him and he asked no questions about it. I asked no questions about his life, either. The quietly enthusiastic descriptions of yellow-green and chili-red sufficed for discourse. Yellow-green, green-yellow, orange with a bit of red, chili red. Chili red, like the chili peppers the Thin White Duke ate but didn't because it

would have only made his diarrhea worse, according to Sam. Was getting this tattoo a step toward me being saved by Berlin after spending almost a decade being something that was sentient but not necessarily alive? Anything could have been.

By this point I had long since decided that small-talk in Berlin regarding where you're "originally" from can elicit either a deeply compelling discussion or a painful exchange best cut short by simply disappearing. On Sundays, Ficken 3000 (I still carry around their €1 vending- machine lighter emblazoned with the bar logo and slogan "SHARE THE BLAME") threw a dance party called ICKY, which was more or less how I usually felt coming into, being in, and leaving the place. Still, Sam always "knew the DJ" playing there or "heard this DJ was really good," so I would go, usually with them, on Sundays only, when everyone was *welcome* and I could sit and watch people other than naked men with door-knockers through their nipples navigate the tiny dance floor. The first night I went there, I had for about a week been preoccupied with the Baltimore protests, trying to get as much information about them as I possibly could. There was nobody around with whom I could compulsively verbalize and onto whose lap I could upend all of my thoughts on this subject. Then I was spontaneously invited to Ficken by Sam, who had "heard this DJ was really good." "She's from Baltimore, actually. You should go introduce yourself to her."

I introduced myself in the same limp-handshake anemic manner I had introduced myself to Yony the Burroughs documentarian at Südblock a few weeks earlier. I told her that I, too, was a Marylander, a D.C.-area Marylander (there is a difference), but a Marylander nonetheless. I wasn't sure how to bring up with a stranger a deeply complex and emotionally-charged issue that I was myself still processing. "Hey, I like the fire

you're throwing down on the AUX. By the way, are you working through all this shit with the police in Baltimore, too? Are you as angry as me? Is everyone you care about okay?" No. Of course, there was no way we could have navigated that conversation successfully. Neither of us was *there*. Like the rest of the world we both had to stand at a distance and watch what happened on our screens, let our friends report to us from their Twitter accounts and Facebook newsfeeds about pushing through police barricades and pouring milk into the eyes of their fellow protestors. There was no conversation that could possibly be had.

"Oh, cool," she said.

"How long have you been here?" She looked between her laptop and the dance floor, doing that survey-the-crowd-coolly thing DJs do, as if scanning for signals that someone on the dance floor was not presently experiencing or approaching a full-body orgasm to their remixes.

"Ten years." She did not look at me. Click, dial tone, I walked away.

This was probably the last time I attempted to make a friend by asking them this question. As a general rule, beware asking any Berliner where they are originally from, for instance, if you suspect that the answer might be "the Ruhrgebiet." With this answer comes unfailingly a note of resentment directed at you, resentment because you just *had* to ask and they therefore just *had* to answer. Essentially the Rust Belt of Germany, the Ruhrgebiet is spoken of as a grim split-place in Nordrhein-Westfalen, a region delineated by the rivers that encircle it and by the teeming industries that shape its topography. No one in Berlin likes admitting to being from the Ruhrgebiet, and their disdain somehow also becomes my own.[40] It is the same Ruhrgebiet through which my grandmother and

her family passed on their flight out of the DDR in 1953, having left Mecklenburg-Vorpommern with the Soviets at their heels, passing through multiple displaced persons camps until they were shunted all the way down to Göppingen in Baden-Württemberg. "Those camps," she used to tell me, "are the reason I developed M.S. Black coffee and black bread every single day, the West Germans already resenting us because they were hungry enough and now *more* came, hungry, and what had *we* to give?" No protein, no vitamins, no electrolytes. Where Prussia went to die again, where the name "von Flotow" became a vestige, where my grandmother and her sister would meet and marry a Black G.I. and a Sardinian *Gastarbeiter*, respectively, have children, two daughters hacking that name and lineage into carnage.[41] The Prussian Empire perished four times in my family: the initial fall, the occupation, the flight, the death-blow, the bearing of brown and olive-skinned children to the Fatherland, a black-and-white photograph of my great-grandmother who had traveled all the way from Germany only to smile down bemusedly at the three "*Mischlingskinder*" who bounced in her lap: my distracted uncle, my howling aunt, my pensive mom.[42]

Four hours to carve a highly-detailed barrel cactus[43] in a weathered terracotta pot into my arm, wrapped in cellophane and weeping plasma. I went straight to class afterwards, late, with my upper arm packaged like a thawing chicken cutlet under my coat.[44] Throughout the summer, I went back twice, feeling like Phil deserved to see his final product healed and doing well. Both times we met he was in front of the shop with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth. "Wow, this has turned out great. If you want, I could do some more shadow here to bring out the thorns." "I could add some shading here to make the pot more 3D." Standard half-hour touch-ups were free of charge, so there was

nothing to risk; he kept seeing things he could make better somehow, so it wasn't as if I could walk away with a butcher job. When I showed up to my touch-up appointment, I was pleased to see that at the very center of all the black-and-white macho tiger motifs pinned to the wall over his station, my cactus was at the center. The only one in color. Shortly after Bowie died in January 2016, I got two more small tattoos from him, the cactus still the central focus of his growing sketch wall because it was still the only one in color. When I returned again in January 2017, planning to get some new work done, he was gone.

"the process of shattering and passing beyond"[45]

Two Days a Week is a music festival in the middle of the woods outside of Wiesen, an Austrian town close to the Hungarian border. The intense late-July hot spell that gripped Central Europe had not yet taken hold of Berlin, but Sam and I simmered outside the Vienna Hauptbahnhof as we sat waiting for four hours for the driver of what looked like an unmarked charter bus to allow us and three other people to board. We were bound for a town one hour deeper into one devil's asscrack of a heat wave, a valley boiling like a mug of scalding tea, craving a cold rain despite the risk of it shattering upon the collision of two extreme temperatures. We had been traveling since the night before, when we left the Berlin ZOB on an overcrowded FlixBus with fogged windows, breathing as through a hot wet rag. At our stops in Dresden and Prague we were jerked to attention by the sound of the man behind us waking up and belching thunderously, and we drifted back into restless sticky sleep to the lullaby of his chainsaw snoring. Dawn came early and hazy over the hills of the Czech countryside as we moved further out of one fractured former empire and plunged more and more into another. Between

unrefreshing naps I stared out the window as the collapsed Deutsches Kaiserreich, collapsed Austria-Hungary, rolled by, thinking about the names of regions we only know of now in books and through Wikipedia research – Galicia, Bohemia, Ruthenia, Moravia – thinking of the young protagonist in *Dracula*, working his way down to the Carpathians with his crisp mastery of German, not knowing at all what awaited him. What awaited *us* was Iggy Pop, and we sat on a bench in the Südtiroler Platz squinting up the Favoritenstraße, a procession of currency-exchange kiosks lining a street already one thousand degrees and wobbling in the purplish morning mist, waiting to be taken to him.[46]

FlixBus always knows to drop you off in the armpit of the city you're visiting, and U-Wien Erdberg near the tail end of the U3 was no exception. Signs for Gasometer and Simmering felt aptly alien,[47] considering the weather and the filth-brume canister we had just been trapped in for nine hours. After agreeing that the single-use bathroom was probably a worse idea than holding it or being forced to use a gender-specific bathroom (this was when I learned the term *Sprühdurchfall* from Sam), we moved onward to the Hauptbahnhof, where clean, for-rent, gender-specific toilets awaited.[48] Having now spent one night nodding off on a bus in our day clothes, we felt blearily alert and prepared never to sleep or shower ever again, emboldened by the CLIF bars, dried fruit, nuts, vitamins, and other high-energy foods we stuffed into a knapsack before setting off from Berlin to ensure that neither of us passed out. The prospect of bed and clean clothes was 24 hours away at least, so we staked out our bench, overdressed, delirious.

"What the hell are these?" I plucked a bitter crusty red-orange dried fruit from a handful of trail mix out of a giant bag we were sharing. "These look gross, they taste gross."

Sam pulled a similar fruit from the bag and examined it. “It’s a physalis. They’re supposed to be really sour when they’re dried. You don’t have these in the States?”

“We might. I’ve never seen one, but that doesn’t mean anything.”

“I think they taste better not dried.”

I turned the physalis over in my fingers. “It looks like an anus.”

“*No!*” Sam chucked theirs out into the street, then slapped mine out of my hand. “*No!* It does! God, I’m never eating these again.” We began plucking all of them out of the bag and flicking them in the direction of the idling bus. It was not quite 9:00 in the morning, and we had no interest in moving from our bench until it was time to move further out of Vienna.

In those moments, I felt as though I had reduced my perception of the German-speaking world entirely to Berlin. I was disappointed to realize my indifference to all of the other major cities. Maybe it was because Berlin was where my friends were – my family members are elsewhere in Germany, and I have met them, but we silently agreed then that we didn’t like each other, so no one appears to be in a hurry to meet again. When I ask friends in Berlin what other cities they could see themselves in if they had to leave Berlin, their responses are inevitably Hamburg, Leipzig, Potsdam, “because I could still get to Berlin within an hour or so.” This seems like a pattern among people who presently do or have ever considered themselves Berliners in some way. The rest of Germany, Austria, Switzerland, all seem insignificant. What’s out there for the queer itinerant who left somewhere else to come here in the first place? Other Berlin friends to whom I’ve posed the same question about *having* to leave Berlin named Warsaw, Krakow, Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm, London, Montreal, New York, Portland, Tel

Aviv, Melbourne. But Bremen? What in fucking tarnation was there to do in Bremen, they countered. Literally nowhere else in Germany if not Berlin, they say, then proceed to curse the rising rents around Weserstraße, the fact that Neukölln has made it onto all the alternative travel blogs as must-check-out neighborhood for tourists in Berlin who needn't waste their time waiting in the line at Berghain to enjoy themselves, or who learn very quickly that standing in front of the Brandenburg Gate gets old after about five minutes. Many of my friends roll cigarettes in GELEGENHEITEN and gripe about being called "the young creatives" by *EXBERLINER*. There is no shortage of tall things to go to the top of in Berlin – the Brandenburg Gate, the Dom, the Fernsehturm, the Reichstag dome, the Siegessäule – from all of which you get a slightly different view of the same city from a slightly different angle. Many of my friends are proud of the fact that they have never seen the city from any of these vantage points, that they have never even been to another part of Germany in a decade or more. So when I ask them where they would go if they couldn't live in Berlin anymore, they name cities that have been favorably compared to Berlin in various ways. Often they learn this from the very people who come from these cities, having left them because they got bored and wanted to check out the terrain of another city that had similar vibes. "Eventually Montreal felt like a dead-end for me, so I picked up and relocated to Berlin because I was told it was a lot like Montreal." As if that does not tell you all you need to know about how you'll fare in Berlin. Whatever ill wind blew you in here is the same one that will blow you out. But it's understood many of these people will not be in Berlin forever; they do not attempt to learn German, they befriend only English-speakers, they do some freelance work, in six months they're blown on to Tel Aviv.[49]

The bus ride to Wiesen was air-conditioned and mystifyingly free of charge. The bus station there sat atop a small mountain and consisted of a single bay marked by a Plexiglas shelter infested with small spiders. A few other people mingled around, each one having slipped into the shelter to find respite from sun rays so intense you could hear them, only to stumble right back out upon discovery of the spider infestation. Sam and I stood staring down the long winding road that led to the festival, breathing shallowly like reptiles. I thought about how I'd had surgery at eighteen and declared then to myself that *these* were the kinds of days when wanting to take my shirt off would come especially in handy, *these* were the days surgery would be making easier for me. And yet the shirt stayed on. It had never come off. Not at Pride parades, not at *Rocky Horror* performances, not on beaches. It was almost as if surgery had done little to save me in any way I thought it would. Even on a 105-degree day, I could not divorce my wilting in the heat from my "if everyone doesn't get to feel comfortable taking their shirt off then neither do I" convictions about taking up more space than I need to; even in spaces where everyone *does* feel comfortable taking their shirts off, I still don't, feeling as though the ever-fading surgery scars will nonetheless mark me as a spectacle, or that my discomfort-inducing thinness will achieve the same effect. What place does the transgender and ill body have being exposed at the top of a scorching mountain in Southeastern Austria, at a music festival filled with drunk Austrians chanting "*DEN BECHER NACH VORNE*"?[7] I let the cotton glue itself to my skin and sweltered.

"If we try to walk there, we're gonna die," I said. "It's almost two kilometers."

[7] Meaning "[throw] the [beer] tumbler to the front," as we'd just come from a music festival where people were chucking huge beer cups around.

"That's, like, kind of doable," Sam said. They looked back in the direction of a small group of festival-goers not appearing to even consider tromping down the mountain. "I wonder if they know about some shuttle that we don't." Neither of us moved to ask. We waited for some change in the status quo, standing as still as possible – again, reptiles.

Having spent time in Vienna and Prague, I became determined to reconfigure my conception of how far the German-speaking world reached, despite already knowing how far it did, to reconfigure points of reference and connections. Lemberg, the birthplace of Sacher-Masoch, is now Lviv, Ukraine. Kafka, a Czech Jew, lived in Prague and wrote in German. Liszt, Schiele, Klimt, all Hungarian or Austrian but also Austro-Hungarian, German-speaking but not German. Austro-Hungarian. All hyphenated folk with hyphenated identities: German-language, Austro-Hungarian, Jewish-Czech, Jewish-Hungarian, Ukrainian-Hungarian, Galicia-Volhynia, Polish-Lithuanian, Croatian-Hungarian, Sacher-Masoch, Habsburg-Lorraine, cracked in half right at the hyphen by the outcome of the war like the shell of a nut, cracked and cracked again as men played with borders like an interior designer muddles over a floor plan.[50]

The audible sun rays were still bearing down on the small clearing where the music festival was being held. Sam and I had waited long enough and a shuttle, another unmarked charter bus, came to the rescue for everyone stranded at the Wiesen bus station. I began singing "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" as it swung slowly into the bay, displaying a sign for the festival in the front window; within fifteen minutes we had completed our pilgrimage to Iggy. He was somewhere within 100 yards of us. In the meantime, we sat through a lineup including Swedish and German death metal bands and a Spanish ska

band, wondering about the rhyme or reason driving the curatorial decisions behind this peculiar combination of musical acts. Eating CLIF bars and chugging water, we sat in the shade and watched walls of death materialize and explode with moshing metalheads who scrambled to help fallen strangers off the ground. Iggy was still a good seven hours away; in the meantime, we rested, not moving when the sky finally opened up and poured rain, leaving the vast open lawn muddy and steaming. The ska band began to play.

The Germanophone world has always been one of hyphens; the salience of Joseph Roth's reflections on Bruck-Kiralhyda (now Bruckneudorf), a city separated post-war by a bridge on which one side sits Austria and on the other sits Hungary, has not diminished. Roth, an Austrian Jew, does not necessarily lament the collapse of the dual monarchy. Instead he speaks of the marked discomfort present in the city, the palpable disjointedness of a city that once was exactly the city that it presently was. Just without the hyphen. That damn hyphen. Austro-Hungarian, Bruck-Kiralhyda, with the collapse of the hyphen the political and monarchical link is gone, but there is the city still, and there are the people, and they have not changed but for this void created by the downfall of a colossal political impediment. It is the only reason the city feels different, the only reason Roth never wants to go back. What about this change on paper in political and geographical designation changes the city? What about the separation of Berlin by a wall changes the perception of the East Berliner or the West Berliner? Surely there was no difference at the beginning of the Soviet occupation, although one certainly did develop as a result of propaganda and physical separation and time. How do these physical spaces – walls, bridges, border crossings – inform our perception of a space that once was one way and is not that way any longer? How has it really changed since? I still feel a distinct

sense of the uncanny while walking down the Karl-Marx-Allee from Alexanderplatz, the yellowed bathroom-tile detailing of the building façades giving the impression that you're entering a communal shower in a prison. Which side of this city makes me less ill-at-ease?[51]

It was 9:00 at night by the time Iggy took the stage. We had not slept in at least 36 hours and had spent the last two hours standing at the security barricade with our arms tightly crossed, shaking our upturned heads in disapproval among a surging crowd of flailing Austrians enamored with The Baseballs, an appalling Berlin-based group that sung pop hits in a rockabilly-swing style. The rockabilly fan in me wanted to give them a chance, but the rockabilly snob hated every second of it, the wrongness of the hair, the clothes that were entirely H&M David Beckham Collection and not at all Johnny Horton. We cringed at the conspicuous exclusion of Lady Gaga's anthemic verse on transgender and gay acceptance in their cover of "Born This Way." Why cover the fucking song at all? We stayed planted, however, relishing the coolness that nighttime in the mountains after a second rainstorm had brought in, knowing it had blown in Iggy along with it. He smiled at us. At *us*![52]

"incite, literally incite, like a riot"[53]

Sam had decided to go back and finish their Abitur and now attended the Schule für Erwachsenenbildung in Kreuzberg, an autonomous school originally founded in a 1970s squat on Gneisenaustraße. When I arrived in January 2018, they invited me to join them for a school day. The most I had gleaned about the place was that the inside was covered with graffiti, at least two communal dogs roamed the buildings, the students shared chores in maintaining the cleanliness of the school's shared spaces, and the

teachers were chosen and de-chosen through a direct democratic process based on how the students felt about the effectiveness of their educators.

The day before I agreed to meet Sam at school, I mentioned my plan to Tanno, with whom I was again staying. I described some of the school's characteristics, that it was in Kreuzberg. "Oh, that's the one they did the documentary on," she said.

"What documentary?" For the first time, I searched the school on Google to find more information than what Sam had told me. Sure enough, there were the Vimeo trailers and the IMDb page: *Berlin Rebel High School*.

"*Es gibt keine Sitzordnung, es gibt keine Noten*,"[8] narrated one of the main subjects of the documentary, a young person with a fire-engine-red blunt fringe and several spiked piercings protruding from either side of their nose. The voice of another young person in the trailer, wearing a t-shirt that said NEW YORK FUCKING CITY, took over: "*An einem Tag ist man hier Schüler, am nächsten Tag oder an der nächsten Stunde ist man Lehrer –*"[54]

My visit to the school was also my first time seeing Sam again after a year. This time, both of us had given up on maintaining the steel-colored hair we had taken turns sporting since 2015: last year, it was me, the year before, it was them, the year before, both of us. Now we were both back to dark-haired and not trying at all. Sam had become a Trotskyite; I joked that a darker aesthetic was more suitable for the year I'd spent in mourning.[55] After being late to a German literature class in which the students had pulled *Effi Briest*[56] up on Projekt Gutenberg and took turns reading it aloud, and doodling on

[8] English translation: "*There is no seating chart, there are no grades […] On one day a person is the student here, on another day or in another lesson that person is the teacher.*"

spare notebook paper through a math lesson on linear functions, I trailed behind Sam around Kreuzberg and Neukölln as they hung posters for an upcoming demonstration against the eviction of a refugee community squatting in a former school near Kottbusser Tor.[57]

"So every year we have this queer zinefest," Sam was saying, taking pieces of rolled-up tape from me as they went through a stack of thirty posters. We'd developed a system. "And this year the school is trying to put a rule in place that turns people wearing culturally appropriative hairstyles, accessories, or clothing away at the door. So white people with dreadlocks, wearing dashikis, bindis, henna tattoos." We hung a poster in an open gate that led into a courtyard of punk cafés and students' apartments, then quietly moved on. "Everyone's getting pissed about it. Some of the white students who *do* have dreadlocks are saying, so this means I can't even go to a zinefest being held by my own school? Our last school-wide meeting focused a lot on that. Within five minutes, an action committee of, like, thirty people dedicated to further discussing the dreadlocks issue was formed on the spot. Then I brought up this demonstration against the eviction and two people showed some interest and haven't contacted me since."

We both agreed that we didn't know where white-passing people of mixed-race descent fit into this equation. Sam had a Turkish mother and a German father and had told me stories of many people mistaking their mother for their nanny when they were a child. I had told Sam stories about the same with my bright-red-haired older brother, of my mother being asked if my oldest brother was adopted from China when all three of us were with her in public, of the times strangers in public spoke about her in English because they assumed she didn't understand them. Who was going to determine that

a stranger wasn't of an identity that their appearance represented? How was this any different from the man who sat on the stool between the toilets at KitKatClub and decided which one you could use?[58]

"I mean, my hair would be disgusting if I tried to put it into dreadlocks," I said. "So I'm not going to pretend like that would suit me. But no one *raised* me white. No one raised *you* white. So who at the zinefest gets to decide you were raised white and *are white*?"

"I don't know," Sam said. "I was thinking the same. Obviously cultural appropriation is fucked, but what if that's *your* culture? Is it your fault that other people can't tell it's *yours* any more than it's your fault if other people can't tell what your gender is?"

"Sometimes I feel like there's no nuance allowed." I handed over another roll of tape and Sam tacked another poster onto the bathroom door of a leftist café we'd walked into. "The very same people who want to tell everyone not to assume gender or sexuality are doing the same with race and ethnicity. They've hyperextended their own logic. You can acknowledge privileges you have and still hold the right to claim an identity that's yours." I thought of current pop culture figures like Halsey, Logic, Gigi Hadid, Charli XCX, Drake, all of whom have one white parent and one nonwhite parent, all the Twitter policing of their permission to embrace a biracial identity predicated solely on their physical features.[59]

"What annoys me," Sam said, "is that the students who are mad at the rule aren't even mad at it because of *that*. They're mad because they're white and don't want to be told they can't wear something. I stood up in the meeting after getting my *two* volunteers and said, you know, it really pisses me off that so many people are forming an action

committee for this dreadlocks issue – you know, the zinefest isn't even until May – but no one is interested in helping out with this demonstration. These people could be evicted tomorrow, you know? Before we even get to demonstrate. The cops have been harassing them every day. We might be too late."

"What did they say to that?" I asked.

"This one girl just said, well, there's not much we can do about that. They've been there for years and this threat of eviction comes up every couple of years. They're never actually kicked out." We had attached our last poster to an already-covered electrical box near Hermannplatz after ensuring that the events advertised by the posters underneath had already happened. "And that was it."

We continued our conversation in Sam's flat near Leinestraße as they chipped away at a pile of unwashed dishes. I ate handfuls of stale sweetened puffed-oat cereal. Pointing to the loft space over the narrow kitchen, I asked if anyone ever slept up there.

"No, that was Angel's work space," they said, rummaging through drawers for IKEA bag clips and putting opened packages of uncooked bulghur back into the cabinets. They started sweeping while I got up to wipe the countertop. I had been regaled before with tales of Angel and Laura, the couple who shared the flat before subleasing their space to a new flatmate without asking Sam anything in advance. "The only person who slept up there was that homeless man I brought back here once." This was an iconic story about a Sudanese-German man who struck up a conversation with Sam on the U-Bahn near Boddinstraße in the dead of winter, who carried a sack of groceries along with the rest of his belongings and warned Sam of the dangers of drinking water because it slowed your energy down and hindered your ability to react to and engage with your

surroundings. Sam asked if he wanted to cook his food in their WG while Laura and Angel weren't home and he obliged; they both cooked and ate, he climbed up into the kitchen loft and fell asleep. Laura and Angel, both trans-identifying, arrived home to find a strange man asleep above their kitchen. Because this was an FLT (*FrauenLesbenTrans*) space, the proper protocol was to ensure that the entry of a cisgender man into the space was approved of by everyone who lived there. To say the least, Laura and Angel were not enthused about this stranger in their kitchen loft and demanded that Sam show him the door. "I mean, yeah, I should have asked them first, but it was *freezing*."

"And how could they or anyone else have known for sure that he was cis?" I ventured, thinking of the zinefest again. To what extent are you required to prove or disclose that? I had often wondered how well I would pass for cis if I went on testosterone and started wearing cargo pants with SKATE OR DIE t-shirts, whether I would be welcomed anymore in some of the spaces I am currently welcomed. Does a year on testosterone erase ten years of appearing "visibly" queer on the outside?[60]

"I mean, yeah, he could have been for all they knew," Sam said. "He could have not even identified as a man. I told him I was trans and he didn't seem to know what that meant, but I was still trans before I knew what trans meant." They settled into their chair at the kitchen table and opened their laptop. "*And then*, a week later, they bring a dog in here, knowing I'm terrified of dogs," they added. There had been other issues: Laura's acceptance of money for a washer repair despite the washer not being hers, the couple's affinity for keeping pet rats without maintaining a clean cage, the non-necessity of alerting their flatmate about the incoming subletter. Sam laughed and shook their head, then chanted out one of their new favorite demonstration paroles they'd recently picked

up: "*WIR! WOLLEN! ALLES! KA-PUTT MA-CHEN!*"[9]

"everything is going to get worse"[61]

"Bowiemas" was what it was being called, because Bowie fans are nuts. Bowiemas consisted of a three-day period culminating on Bowie's 69th birthday and the release of ★ on the same day, a period throughout which small bars in Schöneberg like Neues Ufer held endless karaoke nights where you quietly and slowly asphyxiated from secondhand smoke and felt your clothes and hair growing filthier, Hansa Studios offered special tours for outrageous prices to British tourists who were in town for the occasion, because the Bowie they loved the most was not London or L.A. Bowie but Berlin Bowie, where Tony Visconti and Nile Rodgers seemed to take great pleasure in popping up and saying hello at various release parties for ten minutes before slipping into the backs of dark unassuming cars, dissolving into the traffic of Hauptstraße, and materializing somewhere else nearby less than an hour later.

They knew. I found myself mired in this thought for days after. They celebrated, they dropped in, they mingled and then dissolved, and they *knew*. How could they celebrate? We could celebrate, of course. But none of us knew. "Lazarus" was still a dark and tenuous concept video we were attempting to wrap our heads around, not a prophecy, a warning, farewell. Were we just stupid? Were we being spoon-fed a final bow and refusing to accept that someone who had saved us, who had been saved by Berlin, could no longer be saved? We celebrated! I think it was executed exactly the way he wanted it to be, Sam said later as we sat in Neues Ufer, wearing a path between the entrance to

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[9] *English translation: "We want to tear everything [re: the establishment] down!"*

the bar and the apartment building at Hauptstraße 155. I'm being selfish as fuck, though, they continued. We all kind of are. I agreed. It wasn't our business to know everything about him. He was of us but did not belong to us, nor did his life, his choices, his pain. I thought of another enduring hero of mine, Freddie Mercury, and the brutal battle with the British tabloids that he waged in his graceful and gracious way as they pursued him relentlessly through London, commenting on his weight loss, battering him with questions about his illness until he died in November of 1991. "FREDDIE IS DEAD," *The Sun* then proclaimed. "AIDS KILLS THE KING OF ROCK: MUSIC WORLD IS IN MOURNING FOR QUEEN'S SUPERSTAR SINGER," screeched *The Daily Star*. *Christ*, you know it ain't easy…

I had to choose where to be and when I wanted to be where, which was stressful because it was dark and cold and I was always tired, never enough food to last me through these days that became nights at 3PM. With Sam I hopped from bar to bar, got into places I otherwise would've been rejected from because Sam knew folks I didn't through the Bowie fan networks, got into special dance parties revolving around the ★ release, the birthday, I got even more tired. After two straight days of this I slept for eighteen hours, woke up early the morning of the 10th as if instinct had been telling me to check my messages.

"Bowie's dead," Sam said. "I don't even know what to say."

I had to take a shower. I smelled like a burned-down tobacco barn and my hair looked like the cover of David Lynch's *Eraserhead*. Tanno had left the flat for the morning to run errands and go to a doctor's appointment and I was alone, washing off Bowiemas in the shower. I had not gone online to verify the statement; if Sam said he was dead, he was dead. Still, I had to take a shower. I had to eat the last of my mango

tofu on toast before it got soggy and discolored, a small pile of wasted Euros thrown in the trash. Fifteen minutes away, people were already piling so many wreaths and flowers on the stoop at Hauptstraße 155 that the residents of the actual building had demanded a path be cleared for them to walk through – hasty drawings, candles, notes all had to be shoved to one side or another, these people's lives went on, Tanno's errands had to be run, her doctor's appointment could not be canceled, Bowie or no Bowie.

Post-shower, I dressed and flopped back onto the bed. I had no interest in what social media was saying about anything. I answered Sam, finally, who told me that they would be at Neues Ufer all day and that I should come by and share in their sad-sackery, which I agreed to. But there was no rush. Bowie would still be dead if I waited an hour. Instead I plugged my iPod into Tanno's speaker system and blasted "Five Years." I was committed to not crying, just being deeply bummed that a hero of mine had died quietly, one who had demonstrated to a very-young-me that you could be a man without having to be particularly good at being a *man*, who left a slew of clues as subtle as a brick through a window that we all took for art and not for farewell, or both.

Well into the song, I sensed a syncopation of identical rhythms that suggested the same song was playing elsewhere in the same building. Upon turning down the volume a smidgen, I realized that this was in fact what was happening. People in at least two other units in the building were also playing "Five Years," the song blasting through the walls and floors and ceilings of the entire house like some kind of tenement-living cacophonic symphony. I learned that day, then, that thin walls are good for at least one thing. I was committed to not crying. Just deeply bummed, deeply bummed, then crying, fucking *crying*. Crying!

Chapter Two Endnotes

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[27] The construction of this chapter was influenced heavily by Joseph Roth's meditations on the spaces he passed through while traveling in *The Hotel Years: Wanderings in Europe between the Wars* (2015), which led him through three recently fragmented empires: the German Empire, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire. Roth, an Austrian-Jewish writer and himself a person of hyphenated identity, contemplated the parallel wanderings of Jewish diasporic groups he encountered throughout Central and Eastern Europe as they searched for new homes and migrated from small villages to larger cities in search of work. The title of this particular section, "*a space, some temporary abod*e," comes from Audre Lorde's 1982 autobiography *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. Lorde, whose parents were both of Afro-Caribbean diasporic background, describes her mother's reminiscences of Grenada:

> Once *home* was a far way off, a place I had never been to but knew well out of my mother's mouth. She breathed exuded hummed the fruit smell of Noel's Hill morning fresh and noon hot, and I spun visions of sapodilla and mango as a net over my Harlem tenement cot in the snoring darkness rank with nightmare sweat. Made bearable because it was not all. This now, here, was a space, some temporary abode, never to be considered forever nor totally binding nor defining, no matter how much it commanded in energy and attention. For if we lived correctly and with frugality, looked both ways before crossing the street, then someday we would arrive back in the sweet place, back *home*. (13)

This longing for home in the midst of rootlessness is portrayed similarly in Roth's *Hotel Years*, especially in one description of a steamer ship, the *Pittsburgh*, preparing to leave Bremerhaven for the United Kingdom and the United States: "The ship (it has a tonnage of 16,000) carries 1,800 passengers. About a third of these are emigrants. They come from Russia and the Successor states, Poland and Lithuania. The East of Europe pours them out. These Eastern Jews and peasants have been emigrating westwards for hundreds of years, leaving their old homes behind, looking for a new one." ("The Emigrants' Ship," *Prager Tagblatt*, 1923) This ongoing theme of a search for *home*, the status quo being transience but the ultimate goal being arrival home after drifting – temporary or endless, chosen or forced – is well-captured by both Lorde's and Roth's thoughts on the relationships between space, memory, identity, and displacement.

[28] Figure 4: My Instagram post from March 2015:



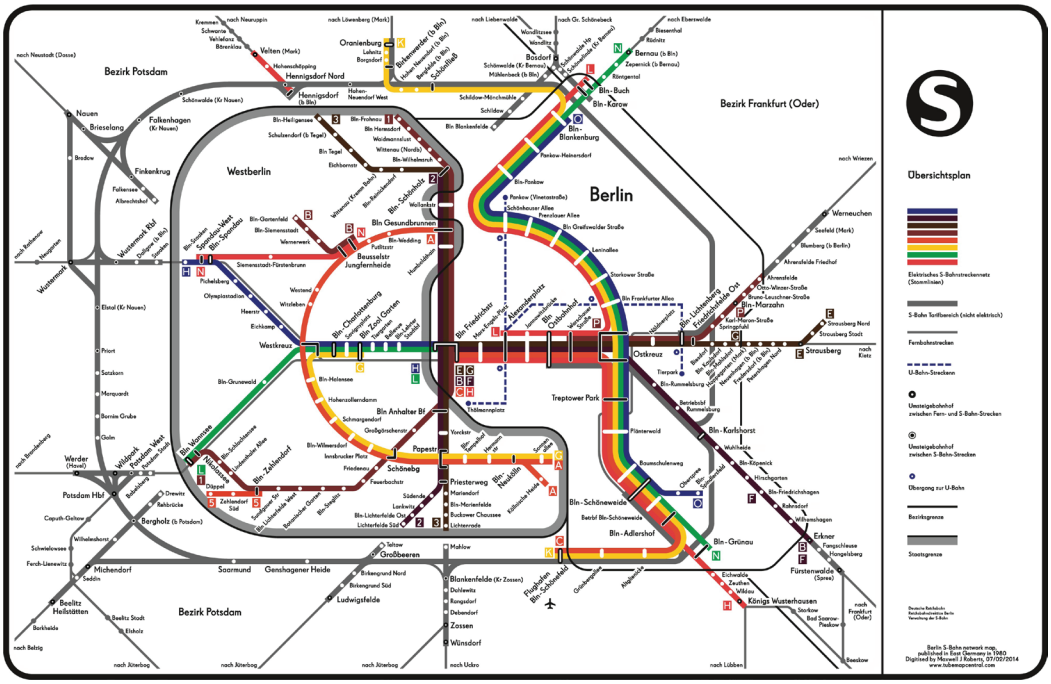
[29] In her "Pushing the Urban Frontier: Temporary Uses of Space, City Marketing, and the Creative City Discourse in 2000s Berlin" (2012), Claire Colomb discusses the neoliberal philosophy driving the impulse to expedite Berlin's development into a city that can compete with other major economic, cultural, and political centers of Europe:

> For many politicians, public officials, planners, and city marketers, the vast quantity of "urban voids" which remain in reunified Berlin is considered to be a negative feature of the cityscape. Urban voids, for them, represent the ruins and ghosts of burdened, unwanted pasts, or the failure of the contemporary urban economy in bringing expected amounts of investment and growth. (135)

Upon its closing in 2008, Berlin Tempelhof Airport was a subject of intense discussion over the future usage of the space, which was heavily loaded with historic significance – including its use as a major transportation center during Nazi rule, and as the hub of the Berlin Airlift between 1948 and 1949. Disagreements over this economically and spatially void hole in the center of Berlin dealt with the public's right to use Tempelhofer Feld as a shared park, whether the former terminal and hangar buildings would be used as museums and places of remembrance, or whether the area would be redeveloped entirely. Given that the area around Tempelhofer Feld was left intentionally underdeveloped due to nobody with money wanting to live near a noisy airport, the immediate surrounding neighborhoods now have entered a strange state – suddenly the neighborhoods bordering on Neukölln are desirable and rents are surging, while at the same time the patchy terrain generally retains an industrial hellscape vibe.

[30] From its inception, the Ringbahn has been an eternal disruption in the lives of Berliners for numerous reasons. The first major points on the Ringbahn were constructed between the 1850s and the 1870s, running right into the *Gründerzeit*, and many stations were originally stops on the Prussian *Königliche Bahnhofs-Verbindungsbahn* (Royal Station Connection Railway). The construction of the S-Bahn disrupted all street traffic, and the close proximity of some tracks to apartment buildings also disrupted residents. After the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the Western half of the Ringbahn had to be rerouted through the center of the city, running between Gesundbrunnen and Sonnenallee, whereas the Eastern half was rerouted between Schönhauser Allee and Treptower Park. Because of disputes over ownership, boycotts, and strikes, neither West Berlin's nor East Berlin's Ringbahn operated smoothly, and the line operated in partial capacities until the fall of the wall. ("Aus der Geschichte der Berliner Ringbahn: Der 'Hundekopf' entsteht wieder," *Berliner Zeitung*, 9 September 2001).

Figure 5: In 1980, the Ringbahn looked like this (image by Max Roberts, featured in an April 2014 article on CityLab, inspired by a visit to the Berlin S-Bahn Museum in which Roberts was struck by the visual representation of political disruptions having an effect on spatial usage):



[31] Proust's distinction between voluntary and involuntary memory, based on philosopher Henri Bergson's theories of "immediate experience" and sensory perception, is elaborated upon by Woodruff as related to authenticity, spontaneity, and willingness to receive a memory:

> Voluntary memory, habit-conditioned, depending on the projection of a chain of cause and effect upon one's own past, has no bearing upon the real 'lived' contents. It represents the destruction of the aura of the past; its premise is explanation. Involuntary memory, on the other hand, obeying laws of its own, ignoring every command of the will, is our sole means of contact with the real experience of the past. (176)

In these early attempts to define what it means to "stumble" over and feel accosted by memory while otherwise minding your own business, I cannot help but notice the similarities between these descriptions and those of the involuntary Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder flashbacks that grip people who have lived through distressing and life-altering traumas. In the same way that the slightest sensory prompts can trigger unwanted PTSD flashbacks, I feel that movement through Berlin is conducive to similar unplanned (and often unpleasant) encounters between the individual and the past. This phenomenon also intersects with Beebeejaun's commentary on the white-centric, male-centric, classist discourses on walking through the urban space as a luxury many people cannot afford; walking through the city is still in its most common form used as a means of getting to a destination and nothing more. Even in this situation, however, where no attempts at trying to flâneur were being made, I nonetheless came across this disturbing imagery.

[32] Figure 6: The same IKEA *Gedenktafel* in 2011: retrieved from Flickr account "Berlin bleibt Berlin":



[33] In "Melancholy of a Tram Car in the Ruhr" (*Frankfurter Zeitung*, March 1926), Roth describes a plodding journey through a town that "refuses to end" somewhere in the industrial Ruhrgebiet. His dismal characterization of the entire region echoes Isherwood's reflections on the "millionaire's ghetto" of the Grunewald in Berlin – ugly, claustrophobic, devoid of humanity. At one point, Roth's account of an "unscheduled stop" on the tram illustrates a curious suspension of time and space that reveal his perception of any distinguishing features of the town dissolving:

> Next comes a completely unscheduled stop. The driver gets out, the conductor follows suit, they meet somewhere in the middle. We listen to the rain. There are no signs anywhere. Chimneys, some stout, some slender, puff away in unrelieved torment. The rain shreds the thick smoke, pulverizes it, evenly, without rancour. The rain pulls curtains in front of the scene, curtains without ornaments. There is no landscape, just a kind of extended townscape, industrial-scape – punctuated with flowering garden locations.

Many moments in *The Hotel Years* are underscored by Roth's keen awareness of an indiscernibility in his surroundings, an uncanny sameness that makes his journey from town to town seem repetitive, cyclical, purgatory-like: "We reach our destination. It looks like where we began from. It's as though there are no spatial destinations here, only temporal ones, like the certain, final and irrevocable death on the last patch of native earth." This imagery reminded me of the moment in the IKEA cafeteria; every IKEA cafeteria I've ever been in has been exactly the same, bright yellow and blue and white plastic, giant windows looking out over a vast parking lot. This IKEA could have been in any town, but for the presence of the *Gedenktafel*, which remained visible from where I sat (thanks in part to the emptiness of the parking lot).

[34] Referring back to chapter one's analysis of Beebeejaun's argument that "the walker is able to temporarily, at least, take over the spaces she or he moves through and imbue them with their own meanings, bringing past memories and present emotions with them" (326) and "dynamically [inhabiting] [the space]" as they move through it, I am again expanding this observation to the reality of an individual already bogged down by mental illness attempting to move through an already-loaded space and bringing their own baggage along with them. Trauma is lugged around, too, disrupting the hoped-for experience of reverie, of running errands; the inconvenience of reality punches through as much as the past does, in the same way that Beckett's enchantment with involuntary memory reinforces the authenticity of the walker's intake of their surroundings and the subsequent filling of those surroundings with the walker. To Beckett, these wonderful moments make the flânerie more *real*, but the horrible ones do too.

[35] In 1976, both David Bowie and Iggy Pop had hit rock bottom in their own ways. Bowie, having immersed himself entirely too far into his enormously popular Thin White

Duke persona in the same way that Ziggy Stardust and Aladdin Sane had previously consumed his identity, really was – according to his own account, which is not always reliable, since he has admitted to not remembering most of 1975-1976 – living off a diet of red peppers, milk, and cocaine. Iggy Pop, on the other hand, had not toured in two years, and had had multiple unsuccessful stints in rehab to address his alcoholism and heroin addiction. Upon meeting Christopher Isherwood, who regaled Bowie with his experiences of pre-War Berlin, Bowie and Iggy Pop decided to relocate to West Berlin in order to kick their addictions and take new turns in their careers. Bowie experimented with Krautrock, instrumental, and ambient music, and developed three albums (*The Berlin Trilogy*) inspired by the fractured landscape of West Berlin and his perceived hopelessness of those living in the shadow of the Wall: *Low* (1977), *"Heroes"* (1977), and *Lodger* (1979). Iggy Pop began a new period of creativity in his solo career without The Stooges, recording *The Idiot* (1977) and *Lust for Life* (1977) at Hansa Tonstudio in Kreuzberg.

In a 1980 interview with Angus MacKinnon of *New Musical Express*, Bowie recalled that the transition from Los Angeles to West Berlin was "[the] best thing that could have happened to me" (116), and that "suddenly I was in a situation where I was meeting young people of my age whose fathers had actually been SS men. That was a good way to be woken up out of that particular dilemma, and start to re-function in a more orderly fashion – not totally ordered, but you know…yeah, I came crashing down to earth when I got back to Europe."

My friendships with both Sam and Tanno, especially, wrenched me back from what would have been a self-destructive spiral of my own if I'd remained entirely alone and unchecked in my illnesses. Sam and I in particular joked about being "Bowie and Iggy," both trying to help each other out of unhealthy habits and episodes.

[36] In the English translation of *Farbe bekennen* (1986), edited by May Ayim, Katharina Oguntoye, and Dagmar Schultz, Audre Lorde's foreword expands upon the term "hyphenated people":

> Afro-Europeans incorporate within our consciousness certain splits and alienations of identity. At the same time we concentrate within our being the possibility of fusing the best of all our heritages. We are the hyphenated people of the Diaspora whose self-defined identities are no longer shameful secrets in the countries of our origin, but rather declarations of strength and solidarity."

Lorde, Ayim, and Oguntoye elaborate further in Dagmar Schultz's documentary *Audre Lorde – The Berlin Years 1984 to 1992* (2012) by noting that, before Lorde's visiting

professorship at Freie Universität Berlin, the best term for Afro-German people they had heard was "mulattoes" and "war babies," the former term having its origins in the Spanish and Portuguese words for "mule," the latter being an altogether inaccurate umbrella term as many Afro-German people could trace their Black lineage to well before both world wars. The hyphen bridges two or more concepts while maintaining the presence of and changing the meaning of each concept within the hyphenation, creating at once a hybridity and a sense of neither-nor also explored by the Third Space as discussed in Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994).

[37] In much the same way that Butler discusses the performance and realization of gender through repetition in *Gender Trouble*, I have also observed and engaged in various performances of culture and nationality in the expatriate scenes of Berlin and other cities. The self-conscious expatriate or tourist – I've paid attention to American ones in particular, since I'm American – goes to great lengths to avoid being labeled as the obnoxious foreigner in bars, clubs, on trains. I've witnessed more obnoxious Germans in Berlin than obnoxious Americans, many of whom have been warned about the dreaded consequence of being dismissed as a negative stereotype of a nation. The Americans I know in Neukölln reject *nation*, talk quietly, dress in all black, bristle at being asked where they're from, smoke rolled cigarettes, are not friendly. I don't know if this is because Neukölln attracts people like that, or because these (mostly white) Americans have recognized and taken on the characteristics they must adopt to fit in at a most superficial level.

[38] As much as places like tattoo shops can be viewed as intercultural spaces and bastions of hybridity, nomadic lifestyles, rootless existences, they also can represent the insidiousness of gentrification. In the introduction to *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others*, Haritaworn cites the misappropriation of the word "pioneer" in the *Khalass!!! We're vex!* manifesto:

> You consider yourself and your bourgeois squats to be 'pioneers' and you don't even realize how colonial your language is, you do not see the civilizing mission you are part of and that you prepare the ground for other white settlers to come. What do you think [Berlin-] Kreuzberg looked like 30 years ago? It was poor, run-down and at the margin of Westberlin. That is exactly why landlords allowed Blacks and PoC to live there. Have you ever noticed that there aren't any neighbours of color in your organic food stores and your queer bars? Do you prefer it this way? (Kindle File, location #54)

Later, Haritaworn takes on Manuel Castells' prototype of the "gay pioneer" diversifying a neighborhood with his presence in the same way that Beebeejaun challenges de Certeau's conceptualization of urban space in a Eurocentric, bourgeois framework. Despite his gayness, the "gay pioneer" is nevertheless entrepreneurial, race- and class-privileged, similar to Harvey Milk, and determined to overcome discrimination by pushing through

obstacles to create a space for himself in a neighborhood. “This celebratorial figure is devoid of any connotations with either gentrification or the settler colonialism in whose architecture displacement and dispossession occur,” Haritaworn writes (Location #1130). Castells, who attempts to trace the queer-friendly nature of San Francisco back to the settlement’s “easy moral standards” during the California Gold Rush era, nevertheless invokes colonialist discourse in attempting to make a glowing case for the abolition of ghettoization and segregation within urban spaces.

[39] Although many of the people who came to Phil for tattoos sought designs that reflected notions of (fragile) masculinity, Phil himself did not strike me as the type of person who felt the need to perform masculinity or Berliner-ness to an extreme with a massive SO36 neck tattoo; however, based on the nature of the tattoos he was used to doing, it was evident that his ability to deliver the necessary machismo present in his tattoo designs helped build his customer base. However, it is interesting that – like the tourist who enters Ficken 3000 pretending to not be completely aware of the bar’s purpose – tattoo parlors allow for an interruption in the performance of fragile masculinity when another factor is at play. In the case of Ficken 3000, that factor is the ability to pass through unnoticed and cloaking curiosity as cluelessness. In the case of the tattoo parlor, that factor is capitalism, the economic exchange involved in getting tattooed.

[40] In *The Hotel Years*, Roth elaborates further on the Ruhrgebiet in “Smoke Joins up the Towns” (*Frankfurter Zeitung*, March 1926):

> Also filled with [the sky over the Ruhrgebiet] is the metropolis that is made up of all the towns of the Ruhrgebiet. An unholy expanse of greater and lesser conurbations, linked by rails, wires, interests, and surrounded by smoke, cut off from the rest of the country. If it was just one single, great, gruesome city, it would still be a fantastic place, but not so menacingly ghostly. A big city has centres, rows of streets joined up by the sense of a structure, it has history, and its checkable expansion is somehow calming. It has a periphery, a limit, a line where it stops and goes over into the country. Here, though, are a dozen beginnings; and it ends a dozen times. Land wants to resume, poor, smoke-pregnant land, but along comes a wire and says: not here you don’t.

Unlike the streets of Paris, which were conducive to the flâneries and reveries of Proust, Baudelaire, and Beckett, Roth reflects on the Ruhrgebiet as a space that makes the thoughts of the passer-through disjointed, disoriented, frustrated with a landscape they cannot make sense of. Many of the people I’ve met from the Ruhrgebiet and other parts of provincial Germany cite the same reasons for wanting to uproot and relocate to Berlin: the terrain of their childhood was simultaneously lethargic and dynamic, a churning center of industry and finance in the middle of the so-called “Blue Banana,” but stagnant, unchanging, “too German.” It was not the lack of city life that drove them out

of the Ruhrgebiet and into Berlin, but that the cities of the Ruhrgebiet did not offer them the community and solidarity they found in Berlin. Similarly, the Afro-German women brought together by Lorde at the F.U. Berlin (including May Ayim, who grew up in provincial Westphalia) found like minds only after migrating to West Berlin.

[41] In 1953, my grandmother's family arrived at a resettlement camp in Gießen, Hesse – the same town in which a subcamp of Buchenwald concentration camp existed during World War Two – by way of the resettlement center in Marienfelde, West Berlin. In Gießen, they awaited further resettlement in West Germany while friends and family who remained in East Germany sent jewelry, silverware, china, and photo albums piecemeal over a number of years. Among the items sent along was my great-grandmother's garnet necklace, missing its stone after a Red Army raid of the home in 1945 left many family heirlooms destroyed. My grandmother is 73 now and still harbors an intense dislike for Russians and vegetarians ("anyone who can eat meat whenever they want to and chooses not to is an idiot").

This same enduring stubborn nature, however, was apparent in both my grandmother and her sister: my grandmother, upon learning of her pregnancy with my uncle, insisted upon a marriage with my grandfather. My great-aunt did the same. Both women, against the wishes of their mother (who carried the von Flotow name), became Roberts and Carta, respectively, effectively extinguishing the matrilineal bearing of the noble heritage in multiple ways. Having been born after the war to a Nazi-sympathizer mother and a deadbeat soldier father, I like to think of their actions as something of a middle finger to their parents' generation.

[42] Figure 7: My great-grandmother Karla Matthies (née von Flotow) with my uncle, aunt, and mother. Photo taken ca. 1968.



[43] Figure 8: Barrel cactus in terracotta pot tattoo, done by Phil at B52 Tattoo in April 2015.



[44] Colomb writes of the "*be Berlin*" international marketing campaign launched by the city marketing organization in 2009, which attempted to seize upon the difficulties of "selling" Berlin as a center for tourism and economic growth and make them the very selling points of the city:

> [The campaign] featured entertainment-related temporary uses quite prominently, advertising the "rough façades, cracks, contradictions," and "fractures" of the city as assets. Berlin's "urban voids," previously left out of the promotional imagery of the 1990s, are now presented as new urban playgrounds for artistic production, consumption, creativity, entertainment, and leisure […]." (143)

Among the neighborhoods targeted as thrumming "playgrounds" for "young creatives" were parts of Schöneberg, Kreuzberg, and Neukölln along the U-7, bound by Yorckstraße and Hermannplatz. The gritty tattoo parlors, bars, art spaces, and venues that had always been part of these neighborhoods' "trashiness" became their charms instead, drawing whole new sets of eyes to Neukölln and "Kreuzkölln." Many of the people who relocated were left-leaning expatriates who were simultaneously aware of their contributions

to gentrification and determined to live where the center of the nightlife was. Having never lived in Neukölln myself despite having spent lots of time there, I've wondered about my own contributions to Neukölln's evolution from the "migrants, dog-shit, and unemployment"-Kiez to a hotspot for "all these fucking students, artists, layabouts, the complete mob called *creative class*, always and permanently with these small suck-beer Club Mate bottles in their hands" (from *Offending the Clientele*, Sender Freies Neukölln / Retsina-Film, 2010).

[45] Audre Lorde in a letter to Mary Daly, a white radical feminist and contemporary of Lorde's:

> This letter has been delayed because of my grave reluctance to reach out to you, for what I want us to chew on here is neither easy nor simple. The history of white women who are unable to hear Black women's words, or to maintain dialogue with us, is long and discouraging. But for me to assume that you will not hear me represents not only history, perhaps, but an old pattern of relating, sometimes protective and sometimes dysfunctional, which we, as women shaping our future, are in the process of shattering and passing beyond, I hope. (*Sister Outsider* (1984), p. 67)

The goal of this chapter is to string together multiple narratives of hyphenation and movement through spaces that exist in states of flux throughout three distinct periods of history. Lorde's feminist dialogues highlighting the necessity for more conversations about Black women's rights in particular reveal a fragmentation within women's rights movements; many white feminists saw this emphasis on race to be divisive within the context of gender equality, many Black men saw this emphasis on gender to be divisive within the context of racial equality. Lorde herself, however, believed this emphasis on specifically Black women's advancement only helped movements toward gender and racial equality. In her hope to "shatter" and "pass beyond" her assumption that Daly will dismiss what she has to say, Lorde seeks to rebuild a discursive relationship between Black feminists and white feminists that was previously (and continues to be) inharmonious due to its lack of inclusivity. She seeks to dismantle what is old and move not through it, but *beyond* it, not only leaving it behind, but fixing it going forward.

[46] In many of my experiences reading the travel writings of Ida Hahn-Hahn and Lady Mary Wortley Montague, Vienna is presented to the reader as a frontier city passed-through by western travelers. Much like Berlin, it is a "gateway to," although Vienna has often been seen as a gateway city to the South and to the "Orient," the first stop on a journey down through Hungary, to Athens and Odessa, and on to Istanbul. The imagery of the "frontier" echoes with the imagery of the "pioneer," both of which represent expansion beyond borders, passing through memory-loaded space with a further destination in mind. Roth evokes frontiers in the former Austrian Empire multiple times

in *The Hotel Years*: in visiting a formerly Austro-Hungarian town once bridged by both a hyphenated name and a physical bridge, Roth notes that the hyphen post-World-War-One has become a "line of separation," an "armed frontier."

[47] Haritaworn notes that Simmering is a neighborhood with an especially high Serbian population (Location #3871); many of these FlixBus drop-off spots are in neighborhoods that have large populations with migrant backgrounds – including Gare du Nord in Paris (10th arrondissement, with a large North African population) and Sloterdijk station in Amsterdam (in Bos en Lommer, with large Turkish and Moroccan populations).

[48] On her criticism of the male-centric configuration of flânerie, Beebeejaun analyzes the ability of women and queer people to move through spaces on a much more utilitarian and practical level than that which Baudelaire and Proust envisioned. One of the matters she touches upon is the issue of public toilets: "Quasipublic spaces such as department stores or malls provide toilets and other women-friendly amenities, but these are more accessible to wealthier socio-economic groups" (329). The "for-rent" jab at the Vienna Hauptbahnhof toilets refers to something I had actually never seen before: coin-operated turnstile-access toilets. Pay to pee.

[49] From "The Tel Aviv Takeover" by Robert Rigney for *EXBERLINER*: "Aside from the beach and the ever-present Israeli-Palestinian tension, Tel Aviv might as well be Berlin's sister city: laid-back vibes, a young, creative population, widespread LGBTQ acceptance and legendary nightlife" (February 7, 2017). And then people ask me why I hate *EXBERLINER*.

[50] In "Bruck and Kiralhyda" (*Der Neue Tag*, July 1919), Roth comments on the hyphen as political, geographical, representing before a link and after a line of division between two halves of a shattered former empire:

> Bruck-Kiralhyda was once like so: hyphenated. Then came the revolution, it washed away the hyphen, and with that the Dual Monarchy was finished. If the hyphen remained, we might still have had the Duality today. […] Back then the bridge still signified the place where Austrians and Hungarians rubbed shoulders, to fight and give their lives for the joint fatherland. The ones for the Kaiser, the others for their king. Back then, it was still one person. Now one has become two. The hyphen is gone.

Only eight months had passed between the end of World War One and Roth's composition, yet he writes of the Dual Monarchy as "back then," a time much longer ago than it actually was, suggesting that the shock of massive change in a relatively short period of time fosters the illusion that time is actually passing slower. In this small

"frontier town" (presently entirely within the borders of Austria), the dropping of the hyphenation represented by the bridge is reflected in the ensuing entropy that lingers: currency exchange between Bruck and Kiralhyda is still muddled, in Bruck they speak "German and Hungarian" while in Kiralhyda they speak "Hungarian and German." The political has shaped the geographic through a small alteration in language; now communist and fascist agitators roam the streets, looking for the next revolution.

Both Roth's and Lorde's analysis of hyphenation accomplish a common mission: emphasizing the importance that a mere hyphen conveys, the weight of identity and politics and history all packed into this tiny punctuation mark. "When I wanted to stretch out at night in the too-short bed," Roth writes, "I dreamed that my nose collided with a hyphen, at the very point where the Red Guards are. […] I will never go to Bruck on the Leitha again. Ever since it's stopped being Bruck-Kiralhyda, it's become a little edgy. And all on account of one hyphen. It's too bad about the hyphen."

[51] Colomb comments on the argument for Berlin as "an atypical case study in urban research because of its peculiar history as a divided city in a divided country and of the legacy of past authoritarian regimes on its urban form" (132). Over the last century, Berlin's oscillation between totalitarianism and power vacuum has led to a cultivation of a cityscape that enables the ebb and flow of expatriate communities, queer communities, communities of color, and intersecting communities, in part because its lack of a distinct and unchanging city center still lends itself to a sense of fragmentation that renders it unlike any other city.

[52] Haritaworn's commentary on the notion of pioneering and its colonialist implications gave me a lot of thoughts about the term "pilgrimage" and its consequent imagery of border-crossing, traversing space, passing through memory-laden places that are formerly one thing and presently something else, all for the purpose of visiting something of spiritual significance. I wouldn't necessarily say that Iggy Pop is of "spiritual significance" to me or Sam, but we wouldn't have gone through the lengths we did to reach that festival if he hadn't had some kind of impact on our perceptions of ourselves, our growth as young people, and our identification with the urge to relocate somewhere entirely new in search of a "New Career in a New Town" (last track on side one of Bowie's *Low*, 1977).

[53] In *Sister Outsider*, Lorde describes the learning process as one that is visceral, passionate, furious: "The learning process is one you can incite, literally incite, like a riot. And then, just possibly, hopefully, it goes home, or on." (98)

[54] Vimeo trailer for *Berlin Rebel High School* (2016, dir. Alexander Kleider): https://vimeo.com/216666401

[55] It is interesting to look back on how both my friends and I have taken on certain performances and shed others since we first befriended each other in March 2015. As an exchange student in 2015, I was "ice-blond," regularly wore a black blazer embellished with brooches and badges, very much aspiring to a Bowie look – Sam and I, who both dressed this way, would call other people we saw attempting the same "fellow Bowie clones." The hair, especially, was an unsustainable performative trait which we both decided at separate times to finally retire (for now).

[56] The reading-aloud of a bourgeois realist novel from 1895 in the middle of a graffiti-scrawled alternative school struck me as ironic, and I later asked Sam why they were reading *that* book, of *all* books. Sam told me that, at the end of the day, the students had to prepare for the Abitur by familiarizing themselves with the canon (whether they liked it or not), since most of the literature section on the exam drew from the German canon.

[57] In "Squatting and Urban Renewal: The Interaction of Squatter Movements and Strategies of Urban Restructuring in Berlin" (2010), Andrej Holm and Armin Kuhn write on squatting as a political strategy and critical approach to countering rising rents and occupying the non-lucrative "urban voids" Colomb discusses in a way that eschews hierarchies, power structures, and the monetary valuation of space in Berlin. In Kreuzberg, especially around Kottbusser Tor, Mehringdamm, Gneisenaustraße, and Hallesches Tor, this history of squatting goes back to the 1970s. As Haritaworn notes in *Queer Lovers*, the housing close to the Wall was cheap and shabby, which made landlords feel comfortable allowing communities of color to settle there. Squatters, too, settled in condemned buildings and structurally unsound buildings left mostly untouched since the end of the war. Since the burgeoning squatter movements of the 1970s, regular attempts have been made to evict major squats, labeled as "lawless spaces" (Colomb 10), in Kreuzberg. Countercultural squatter communities and communities who squat out of necessity exist on different planes; countercultural squats like the "Berlin Rebel High School" were among the privileged given the opportunity to purchase their space, make it "legal," and meet the "prerequisites for immediate renovation" (5) necessary to keep the space. Other squats, which house low-income immigrants and homeless people, are still constantly at risk of eviction.

[58] Haritaworn writes that cultural appropriation has a close relationship with gentrification: "[…] early-wave gentrifiers – who included white queers and other 'alternatives' – appropriated racialized styles and made them 'cool' to the 'hipsters' who followed in later waves of gentrification. While racialised styles were now everywhere, the subjects who had invented them for collective survival were finding it hard to stay" (Location #217). This was also the driving philosophy behind the school's choice to ban white people displaying culturally appropriative styles from entering the zinefest; an alternative school in Kreuzberg, a neighborhood rife with gentrification, could not allow itself to be complicit in harmful practices that further marginalized the people who had

been forced to move out of the area (or further into specific pockets of Kreuzberg, like the estate housing around Hallesches Tor).

[59] So far I have used the term "passing" in a very literal sense – passing through space, being passed through by space – but the concept of "passing" in a context of racial or queer discourse is also very important when discussing privilege, the ability to move through space unbothered or being afforded advantages that others have not. I have often questioned subjective claims of "white-passing" about mixed-race, light-skinned celebrities like Drake, Logic, and Halsey, all of whom have been referred to as white simply because they *look* white. Although colorism and the benefits white-passing or lighter-skinned people enjoy are serious issues that need to be discussed, there is a line between acknowledging layers of privilege among communities of color and people of mixed-race heritage, and entirely erasing the identity of a mixed-race person because they pass for one race most of the time. I have found some people in radical queer-friendly, PoC-friendly spaces to be hypocritical in their emphasis on not assuming anything about a person's identity, only to assume that a white-passing Afro-German person with dreadlocks (for instance) is appropriating a culture that is not theirs, or to assume that a transwoman who "passes" for cisgender enjoys (and has *always* enjoyed) advantages that non-passing transwomen do not. This practice of assumption and hasty assignation deletes the individual's entire personal history, one that they do not even have an obligation to share with anybody. It is something that I see a lot, although I do not have a solution to it – on one hand, privileges should be acknowledged and cultural appropriation should be called out as much as possible. On the other hand, I do not want to assume anything about the person I'd be calling out.

[60] Haritaworn writes of "the kitchen table" as a "key site of mobilising that is often unacknowledged in social movements" (Location #142), and in Schultz's documentary May Ayim similarly notes that the beginnings of difficult conversations about race, class, and change begin "around coffee tables" in apartments. This movement of the political into the domestic or private sphere is especially salient for marginalized groups who feel they have no other space to safely (or at all) hold these conversations.

[61] Audre Lorde in Schultz's documentary: "Everything is going to get worse. Okay? You have to accept that. It's going to get worse! That does not mean, *don't fight*! That means I don't think it's going to be easy. Because it's not. It's not!"

Chapter Three: Where Are the Queers?

GEGEN ASS[62]

A *Dazed* article comes across my Facebook newsfeed: "Shooting Sexual Liberation Inside Berlin's Gay Underground."[63] The photo gallery comprises approximately 700 photos of gaunt wan cis gay men with crudely shaved heads and stick-and-poke tattoos, dancing to house beats in sneakers and jockstraps. "We all know Berlin as a clubbing paradise," the article begins. "The city of total sexual liberation and the place where one goes to go truly wild. The throbbing feeling of freedom upon entering Berghain at 2PM on a Sunday is hard to – " Complementing the phallic exaltation of these concrete thumping-headache cathedrals are snapshots of their acolytes: shirtless, wearing white tank tops, leather chest harnesses. "In Berlin you can always expect the underground scene to be at the vanguard of European nightlife, especially in the queer community." Nike swooshes peek out above a row of well-worn black combat boots.[64] No one has ever worn fetish gear before the men in these photos have. This photo gallery of 8,000 identical gaunt wan cis gay men with crudely shaved heads, stick-and-pokes, and chest harnesses, on Special K, dancing in an abandoned East Berlin S-Bahn station, wearing only sneakers and jockstraps, shows you just how dynamic the Berlin party scene is. Here you see four of them sharing a single French kiss as a rejection of monogamy. Here you see six leather daddies tag-teaming a seventh leather daddy in a restraint sling as a critique of toxic masculinity. There is not a Black or a Brown face to be seen for miles. That's how far underground we are!

A Facebook friend, a permanent fixture in the D.C. club scene who doesn't care about what pronouns you use in reference to him because he has smashed the gender

binary by wearing lipstick while working the door at TRADE – it's easy to not care about what pronouns someone uses in reference to you when you've never had pronouns used against you as a verbally abusive tactic – has shared the link, and that is why I see it. He asks: "So, who's going to Berlin with me?" *Sie haben's geschafft! Dazed* has done it! *VICE* has done it! *Buzzfeed*! They've captured the spirit of big-middle-finger Berlin queerness and presented it to us as photo-reportage paired with orgasmic homily. It is *queer*. It is gaunt, it is white and gay, it is cis, it got into Berghain on a throbbing Sunday afternoon at 2:00, it's being penetrated at the glory hole right now, and it is *queer*. The abandoned S-Bahn stations and factories where the homeless once slept are now "temples," the undesirable neighborhoods inhabited by the enthusiastically undesired are now the "playgrounds" of the queer revolution. *Es lebe die gequeerte Revolution!*[65]

"Queer" is a verb now. An action, something done-unto. It has been for some time. Spaces are queered, revolutions are queered, ideologies are queered, bodies are queered, race is queered. It is also a gerund, it is a participle adjective, implying that the done-unto noun has arrived at queer. The queering is finished; the thing is now queered. Who did the queering? How was the queering done? Since when has the queering been complete? Passive voice, always. Who's going to assume the responsibility for a queering gone wrong, a queering not seen through to the end? The word often feels like a sticker slapped onto an electrical box by a bicyclist who pedals on without looking back. To queer is an infinitive applied to infinite done-untos, it is to punk (another emerging infinitive), to queer is a home-run sales pitch, to queer is a tourist attraction. A queered space – a museum, bar, club, party, café – can be queered in the same way that you can wake up one day and decide to go around telling people you're now a venture capitalist

or a real-estate developer. Or a communist, or an opportunist, or a classical violinist. You can repeat it until you're convinced you're understood, you're believed. There is nothing different about you except that you are now this thing because you said you were. Nothing has changed about this party, its patrons, except that it has been queered on paper, in the Facebook event description and the title. So let it be written, so it shall be queered.[66]

But a queered space is not one where a man now sits between two previously gender-nonspecific bathrooms and determines which one you are allowed to go into based on what genitalia he thinks you have. It is not a museum where you realize, three months into your work there, that the entire staff has been assuming you are trans without ever actually asking you, and without you ever actually telling them. Perhaps a fundamental difference in understanding of language is a core issue here, that many native-German-speaking peoples' understanding of queer still goes as far as "not gay as in happy, but queer as in fuck you," that queer sounds better than gay now because *queer* is the gritty anti-anti-pride parade in Neukölln,[67] it is GEGEN, and *gay* is the ungainly lurching caravan of problematic white commercial excess that slogs down the Kurfürstendamm while tourist twinks in sparkling fairy wings and assless underwear lie passed-out on the sidewalk.[68] Me, late for my shift at the Schwules Museum, accidentally charging straight through the parade I was determined to avoid, noting the passed-out tourist twink in assless underwear and fairy wings having a pilsner dumped over him. Has anyone checked to make sure he isn't dead? A funeral procession for unsanitary political radical queer anything that plods past Nollendorfplatz and on toward the Siegessäule, a giant commemorative Prussian penis a straight shot down the Straße des

17. Juni from the Brandenburger Tor, where the whole affair finally comes to an end. *Wir haben's nochmal geschafft!* Straight through the Tiergarten, where you can still spot the cruisers strolling nude between the trees from the windows of a bus, where the working boys of Isherwood's *Mietskasernen* once traipsed at nightfall, the lights of their cigarettes tracing their paths. Wraiths of spectral cigarette smoke from the patrons of the Eldorado, curling up into the sweltering blue sky as apparitions of bygone Berlin look out from windows long bombed-out, bearing pink triangles, crudely shaved heads, rough-hewn tattoos, gaunt, wan, naked. Berlin's Booming Underground Queer Scene, bound for Sachsenhausen, for Dachau, what do they think of all this?[69]

Christopher Street Day, named for the uprising originally led by the very same people who have since defected from this entire enterprise altogether. What's left of anything queer on the Kurfürstendamm is paltry little. It has taken the first brick thrown at Stonewall and hurled it right back into the faces of the first ones to throw it – Black and Brown, trans, poor sex workers, hermits.[70] I cannot avoid thinking this when I look out at a sea of white cis male naked bodies and realize much of my perception is rooted in assumption. For that reason, my own frustration can frustrate me. I feel like a hypocrite. I cannot decide which community irritates me more: the people who preach of the violence and prejudice inherent in assigning an assumed identity to a stranger only to do it themselves to others, or the people who parade *queer* around without having actually done any *queering* at all, who turn spaces *queer* as a marketing ploy, because someone realized it got more asses through the door than *gay*. Often I ultimately side with the former, because assuming to survive is not the same as assuming to exclude; assuming to protect an existence is not the same as assuming to discount an existence altogether.

The person who assumes about the white-passing person with dreadlocks attempts to say: *people who look like you have threatened my right to exist more often than not*. They are always at risk of being wrong. The person who follows me out of a dusky park at the tolling of the meat-market hour attempts to say: *people like you cannot exist here*. They are still not the ones at risk. I could yank my hair out over all the grey areas. I could give up.[71]

GEGEN means *against*. An accusative preposition. Just like *against* in English, it can be used concretely – *Ich fahre mein Auto gegen einen Baum* – or abstractly – *Ich bin gegen Atomkraft*. It is also a themed party that takes place on the first Friday night of every other month at the KitKatClub on Köpenicker Straße. Sam and I quickly developed an inside joke over how absurdly seriously the party planners took themselves: the theme of the next party is revealed when the Facebook event goes live at a predictably late or otherwise dull point in the day or night, attempting perhaps to emulate the continuing seismic shockwave of Beyoncé releasing *Beyoncé* unannounced on iTunes. Everyone goes wild every time. The accompanying Vimeo promotional video is cryptic: writhing bodies, copious ejaculation metaphors, nipple and septum piercings, asses in jockstraps. The "concept" text – each theme has an accompanying manifesto credited to no one, as if to insist that it has been collectively written by us all – is dense in wording and hollow in meaning. We roll our eyes and go anyway, hoping that something of the queering incessantly referred to in each manifesto (in the very description of the party itself, in fact, which name-drops but does not further elaborate on "queer narratives") will this time be made manifest. GEGEN AMT. GEGEN RIOT. GEGEN DESIRE.[72] "Are you *GEGEN DESIRE* or is your *DESIRE GEGEN*?" For weeks Sam and I would walk down

streets pointing at arbitrary objects and pose this question to each other. Pointing at an overflowing bright-orange trash can in front of Ä-Bar: "Are you *GEGEN TRASH* or is your *TRASH GEGEN*?" Pointing at a pile of dog shit along the Weigandufer: "Are you *GEGEN DOG SHIT* or is your *DOG SHIT GEGEN*?" GEGEN, much like many of these itinerant Berlin parties, occupies only the space that its timeline allows: one all-nighter on the first Friday of every month, chugging onward to 11:00 Saturday morning. It delineates itself from Berghain in that it is an *event*, it is *pop-up*, it is not an institution or a tourist destination. Its timing ensures that you can only catch GEGEN if you are in Berlin when it happens. GEGEN seeks *you* out! Not the other way around!

When I left Berlin at the end of August 2015, the theme for September's party had just been announced. From my parents' house in Charlotte Hall, I commented, "I'm disappointed it isn't going to be GEGEN ANUS," to no acknowledgment. Two months of the fall semester trudged by before I received a new notification from GEGEN. The beast had reawakened and announced its November theme: GEGEN ASS.[73] I began bugging in my Oakland Hall dorm room, recalling my smart-ass remark from what felt like ages ago. Could it have possibly been a coincidence? "Man becomes male when he penetrates," the dissertation-length manifesto began. What? No! It was a joke! "Perpetrating an assassination in the clothing of procreation – the enactment of death passing through the slavery of life." *Slavery?* "This process is then validated in a naturalistic logic by the spermatozoa forged by the power of lust as the only tool perpetuating human life." It was a joke! "Man is male when he penetrates – it's the only way he can express that natural cycle, thus the universality of his power. ANUS is a wound – " It! Was! A! Joke! I fired off messages to Sam and Tanno and my other best Berlin friends, all of whom were

already in bed. Nobody in or near College Park knew anything about GEGEN, explaining it to them would have taken too long. Me, back in my residence hall that offered the same fluorescent sterility that a hospital room does, potentially responsible for GEGEN ASS, no one to tell this news to, withdrawing from Bupropion, clutching at my pounding whirring brain, watching that world go on without me through a screen. Screaming would have felt like screaming through ten thousand layers of cotton. Ball-gagged.

GEGEN FAMILY[74]

It is January and another GEGEN is on the horizon. GEGEN BIRTHDAY. One more year of successful queering has passed. It's time for a celebration of the celebration itself, one giant self-pat on the back. The words of Willam from *Rupaul's Drag Race* echo in my mind: "I'm trying to bring attention to one of my favorite causes, which is me." Apparently queer narratives and the GEGEN narrative are two interchangeable things now. I'd later go alone and lose my phone. Bowie would die two days later. GEGEN OMEN! GEGEN DEMISE!

Over aluminum to-go containers packed with basmati rice and Vietnamese curry from Hamy on Hasenheide, Tanno and I sit on the floor of her kitchen and flip through an issue of *Siegessäule* magazine. One of us has probably picked it up from the counter at Silver Future, a dive we frequent on Weserstraße "for Kings and Queens and Criminal Queers." A magenta-and-old-wall-paper cranny with fairy lights and trays of free nail polish, it's actually one of the places where I sense queerness somehow.[75] Same with K-Fetisch, a leftist café on Wildenbruchstraße, where the bathroom with toilets is marked by a snail sitting to pee, the bathroom with urinals is marked by a snail standing to pee, and the physical-disability-equipped bathroom is marked with a snail sitting on a toilet

outfitted with a grab bar.[76] These are the best bathroom signs I have ever seen. Evidently we are all slugs carrying our houses on our backs in search of safe places to piss and shit. I have spent hours at a time in both spots, parked in front of a cold ginger tea, dipping my fingertips into melted white candle wax and watching it dry, then popping the wax shells off like tiny rose petals and dropping them back into the hot wax to melt again. Silver Future and K- Fetisch do not move around as GEGEN does; they are open daily, there is no door policy, no cover. The bars and sideboards are laden with zines, political pamphlets, fliers for demonstrations. Posters and stickers coat the walls near the bathrooms. Here are physical spaces that have truly dedicated every square inch that they occupy to their politics, their ideology. GEGEN has much the same opportunity to do so through their massive Facebook presence. They do not.

A full-page advertisement in *Siegessäule* invites us all to attend an upcoming screening of Yony Leyser's *Desire Will Set You Free*. "I still haven't watched this," I said. "It's like, just when I thought this film couldn't sound any worse, I realize the title is playing on *Arbeit macht frei*. *Lust macht frei!* If I ever do watch it, it'll have to be through a stream or torrent that just falls into my lap, because I'm not going out of my way to watch it."

"Markus watched it online somewhere," Tanno said, prodding at a tofu chunk. "He said it was really shitty. The main character rapes the transwoman he's dating. There's no explanation for it. Then nothing happens from that. That part of the plot doesn't go anywhere from there."[77]

Siegessäule is a monthly report on what the scene is up to. Where is Alexander Geist performing tonight and which vaguely Oriental cultural costume will they be

appropriating this time? A turban? A kimono? Painted-on top surgery scars? Yony Leyser is making another film. Any updates on it since we last spoke with him a month ago? Since Tanno and I last saw him making out with a blond phantom on a divan in SchwuZ last week? A new documentary in the works about what makes queer punk, or what makes punk queer, in which he interviews the same group of people he interviewed for his Burroughs documentary.[78] Peaches was spotted going into the bathroom at Veganz on Warschauer Straße. Mika Risiko was at Berghain again, sauntering across the steaming pulsating dance floor in a faux-fur coat. "WE ARE QUEER BERLIN,"[79] the slogan blares beneath the title of the magazine, named for the victory column just down the boulevard from the Brandenburger Tor, the giant Prussian phallus of triumph at the center of the *Großer Stern*, an asterisk- (anus-) shaped point where numerous major Berlin thoroughfares convene. At its very summit stands Victory herself, all gold, a huge and grand Christmas tree ornament. A solid gold woman perched atop a 27-foot-tall penis placed – by the Nazis, who moved the entire thing to its current location from the Königsplatz in 1939[80] – at the center of one of the city's many anuses. Just as the past and the penis can be found anywhere in Berlin as long as you're paying a modicum of attention, so too can the anus. The tunnel from which the U7 toward Rudow bursts as you're cold-sweating under five layers while standing on the platform at Hermannplatz? Anus. Your own mouth into which you're shoving kebab after not eating solid food for three days? Anus.[81]

We flip through a rundown of important events happening throughout the entire month, including every DJ set to spin at the Panorama Bar, the smaller and easier-to-get-into upper level of Berghain, the space you're actually talking about when you tell people you've gotten into Berghain before. I'd never had any trouble getting in there. The one

Sunday afternoon at 2PM in July where Tanno and I had agreed to give the main club a try, however, was a different story. We met next to a chain-link fence around the side of the giant dirt lot occupying the address designated simply "*Am Wriezener Bahnhof*," no street number, like the Berliner Dom,[82] Tanno having taken her bike and me having taken the S-Bahn all the way to Ostbahnhof, both of us dressed in our interpretation of how people who wanted to get into Berghain but didn't want to make it obvious dressed. "Don't speak English in the line!" commanded most How-To-Get-Into-Berghain articles I'd read. "Don't speak in the line at all! No laughing! Don't go in big packs! Dress like you look like you want to dance but don't look like you tried too hard! Know the names of the DJs playing! It's best if you have a stamp on your hand from two nights ago, or two weeks, so go however long you can without washing your hands! Try not to make it obvious you're an American, even when you're asked for your American passport as a form of I.D.! Don't smile! Don't make eye contact with anybody but also don't look shy! Look bored but not too good to be there! Otherwise they'll assume you wasted your time waiting in a line that long for some other reason! All of this culminates in a one-second once-over that determines whether you're in or you're out. If you're in, stay quiet and move through the doorway. If you're not, don't be a bad sport about it. Go across the street to ://about blank where all the other rejects go."[83]

As we stood facing the front façade of the former power plant, however, there was no line. Everything we had read prepped us for a line of some kind and now that rug had been snatched out from underneath us. The line was part of the institution. It had more rules and etiquette than a military flag-raising ceremony. A Sunday at 2PM was the popular unpopular time to get in, when the Friday-night shoo-in masses had finally

thrown in the towel and slept in piles on a floor in Prenzlauer Berg until they were ready to return for one final round Sunday night. But there was still supposed to be a line. The line was where you picked up your conduct cues and adjusted yourself accordingly. But there was no line. Instead sprawled before us was a maze of crooked steel crowd-control barricades, a few Fahrrad-Rowdys slouched against trees along the fences like resting savanna animals, a sandy weed-choked eight-hundred-yard walk to the front door, where a deeply tanned man in a Hugo Boss polo already eyed us.

"Should we just start running toward the door?" I asked Tanno. "Would that get us in?"

"We can Nordic walk," she said.

We drifted through the barricades in silence, thoroughly expecting Hugo Boss to give us a clipped "*nein*" as soon as we got within earshot. My clothes, which were no different than anything else I wore, became increasingly uncomfortable the closer I got. I became hyper-aware that there was a difference between hospital thin and party thin, that Tanno was 27 but looked fifteen, that my age couldn't even be ball-parked because I'd meticulously eradicated every secondary sex characteristic I could. I patted my pocket for my passport and cash, recalling that carrying bags tipped the scales against you if they were already inclined towards a *nein*.

Hugo Boss did not wave us in or wave us away. He stood before us, looking like he'd spent the last two weeks butt naked on Mykonos, surveying the both of us. Tanno and I looked at each other sideways. This wasn't in the handbook, either. No one had ever reported that their Berghain rejection experience involved anything but a twitch of the head and hand.

Er fragte: "*Wart ihr schon drinnen?*"

"*Nein*," haben wir gesagt.

"*Stempel?*" Er guckte flüchtig unsere Handrücken an.

"*Nein,*" haben wir gesagt.

Dann: "*Woher kommt ihr?*"

Tanno: "*Deutschland*."

Ich: "*U.S.A.*"

Hugo Boss: "*Du kannst Deutsch?*"

Ich: "*Ja.*"

Hugo Boss: "*Wie alt bist du?*"

Ich: "*Einundzwanzig.*"

Hugo Boss: "*Und du?*"

Tanno: "*Siebenundzwanzig*."

Hugo Boss: "*Kann ich mal eure Ausweise sehen?*"

I handed over my passport while Tanno handed over her I.D. I felt like I was standing at the Ishtar Gate, entreating entrance to Nebuchadnezzar's innermost city after walking a Processional Way of crowd-control barricades and Fahrrad-Rowdys. Hugo Boss turned and disappeared into a vestibule to confer with other unseen guardians of Babylon.

"This is fucking stupid," I muttered. Two people had materialized in line behind us.

A solid thirty seconds passed before Hugo Boss reemerged and handed our identity papers back to us with a sort of strangely disheartened expression.

"*Es geht nicht?*"

"*Nein. Tut mir leid.*"

We shrugged, took our papers, and turned to make our way back down the

Processional Way. I am already writing my *Dazed* article in my head: The throbbing feeling of freedom upon walking away from an exchange like that is hard to – Tanno and I had already agreed that, in the likely event we were turned away, we would get brunch. I would take the Ringbahn to the restaurant in Neukölln and Tanno would bike there. Before we parted ways, I finally laughed and blurted out: "So what in the hell was *that*?"

Tanno rolled her eyes and laughed too. "An interrogation."

"Maybe we should've ordered Berghain merch off their website and worn that instead."

"See you at Vux," she said. Then rode away.

Since then, we joked that we'd become subjects of something like wonder among our other friends for being the only people they'd ever known to be rejected from Berghain after an interview that lasted the equivalent of an hour in Berghain time. One that ended in an *apology* at that. We continue thumbing through *Siegessäule* on the kitchen floor. The cover graphics of this particular issue, as luck would have it, are those of Stefan Fähler, a Berlin-based artist whose obsession with gaping mouths as anuses and anuses as gaping mouths, staticky-surrealism-meets-confetti-butt-plug-themed-pop-art, make him a perennial figure in the scene. He does artwork for all of GEGEN's promotional materials, for Ficken 3000's ICKY party. Wherever a phallus is needed, Stefan is summoned to render it in hues of in-your-face pink and radioactive green, erupting neon-yellow and blue-polka-dot cum. Everything he draws, from dildos to tits, bears a blood-red yelling mouth. Yelling that *WE ARE QUEER BERLIN*.[84] At the Schwules Museum, I would perch on the stool at the cash register and flip through the latest issue, which was stacked alongside *EXBERLINER* and other

Denglisch publications intended for the consumption of German-speakers and English-speakers alike, tourists or permanent denizens of the city who found ways to navigate the bureaucratic mire of the Ausländerbehörde without needing to speak any German. Every month the same cast of characters parades across the pages: this one DJ'ing at Schokoladen, that one premiering a short film at Villa Neukölln, another celebrating an album release at Das Gift. Some of my friends' performances and art installations have made it into the list of shit to do if you don't make it into Berghain, which you probably won't, without even the courtesy of an extended interview and a *tut mir leid* – Tanno's band performing at Urban Spree, Nika's gallery in Kreuzberg. Fringe scene. It's the best place to be situated socially, Tanno says. No pressure to be anywhere ever or pretend to like anybody.

I flip to the back of *Siegessäule*, which includes a large map of the city with an old-fashioned coordinate system and corresponding key below. Each queer(-ed) establishment in the city is sub-divided into several categories: bars, clubs, museums and cultural institutions, bath houses, darkrooms, dungeons, sex clubs, cafés. I'm struck upon realizing for the first time that many of the nightlife spaces are annotated with a tiny Mars symbol, a Venus symbol, or both – demarcating those spaces which are strictly male, those which are strictly female, and those which are open to everyone. I point this out to Tanno, who also never noticed this. "I don't even look at this part of the magazine. I flip through it and then just leave it on a table somewhere."

I reach into my bag, pull out a pen, and proceed to circle each establishment that allows men only. I mark the women-only establishments with asterisks and underline the ones that claim to allow both. I squiggly-underline the ones that *claim* to allow

both, but where I or non-cis-male friends have been and personally felt unwelcome. In the magazine, Ficken 3000 is marked as welcome to everyone, although I have been told that if you ring their buzzer on any day that isn't Sunday, the doorman gives you a cursory evaluation on a surveillance monitor and leaves you out in a tornado of trash and snowflakes swirling down Urbanstraße. Even on Sundays it feels like a great effort is put into making anyone unwanted in the space feel *particularly* unwanted. According to Fran, a Canadian painter who had arrived in Berlin around the same time I did and returned to Canada in mid-2017, the scuttlebutt was that one of Ficken's most notorious resident exhibitionists, who sat half-naked alone at a corner booth stroking his erect cock the entire night, was *paid* to do so in order to turn off and ward off undesired visitors. Some even said he was straight. What a gig. Fran and Hari and I had once sat crammed around a corner table there, noting how three of the four booths in the tiny bar were each occupied by two men or less. "*This* pisses me off," I shrieked above the music, pointing a finger. "Six people our size could fit in that booth comfortably." Squiggly line.

When we have marked every establishment listed, we note that eleven places are designated strictly women-only. Our count for strictly men-only spaces, including the squiggly- underlined ones, is well into the forties. Tanno and I both agree on penning a letter to *Siegessäule*, in English, addressing both its lack of variety in coverage of the supposed queer scene and the irony of a queer underground out of which many are actively shut. We write two sentences and give up. "Calling a space queer without doing anything to *actually* queer it doesn't make it any less exclusionary than it was before it was queered," I jot down in the margins of an article I have childishly defaced: "Stefan ~~Fähler~~ Fehler ist ~~der Künstler~~ das Arschloch – "

GEGEN SHAME[85]

Serafin came to Austria or Bavaria from Spain in the 1970s and had worked in a factory as a *Gastarbeiter*. He spoke German with a distinctly southern dialect; the Spanish accent added a colorful layer to the greetings he threw around at every shift and volunteer meeting: *Grüß Gott* when he entered, *Servus* when he left. He could not be considered bald, necessarily, because a vaporous atmosphere of hair, or the suggestion of hair, surrounded his entirely-visible scalp, like dandelion puffs. His eyebrows were penciled-in and his lashes caked in mascara, his cheeks and lips rouged. When we worked shifts together I found myself feeling like Aschenbach in *Der Tod in Venedig*, watching in rapturous unease an old man with wooden teeth and pancake makeup, brazenly flirting with the youths aboard a vaporetto. Later, of course, Aschenbach would himself become this uncanny man in his pursuit of Tadzio through the evil-smelling choleric streets, across the medieval bridges, swept along by the sirocco winds to his inevitable death in a beach chair.[86] Was that a sign of things to come for me?

The Schwules Museum had no air conditioning. In order to breathe, we often left the door propped open to the quiet traffic of Lützowstraße, as well as the doors to the outdoor café seating in a back garden shared with several new apartment buildings. The heat wave had hit Berlin with great gusto by the beginning of August and our latest exhibition, *Homosexualität_en*, had been well underway since the end of June. After a month of complete quiet in the exhibition space while the new displays were constructed, our partnership endeavor with the Deutsches Historisches Museum had been kicked off with a tour exclusive to staff, administration, and friends of the S.M. and the D.H.M. alike, along with the ceremonial cuttings of three different cakes in one afternoon: one

to commemorate the S.M.'s new exhibition, one to commemorate the S.M.'s partnership with the D.H.M., one to commemorate the S.M.'s partnership with the Pink Pillow Project, which promoted queer-friendly tourism in the city. Although we had a strict no-food-outside-the-café rule for visitors, it seemed senseless to serve us all heaps of cake and then tell us we couldn't bring it along on the exhibit walkthrough. So I did the first of many tours heaving along a mountain of yellow cake piled with brightly-colored fondant testing the physical limits of my flimsy paper plate. Andy Warhol's 1964 experimental film *Blow Job* played on a loop, projected onto the first wall we encountered after passing through the velvet curtains. One of the visual displays – I could never determine which – emitted a recording of Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, known to me for most of my life as "the *Platoon* music," in an inescapable undying loop that pervaded the entire exhibit space. We passed from one visual media loop portraying gay sex to another, an LED-lit fuckdungeon, the Ficken darkroom, where I had gotten into a noisy argument simply for being there. Aside from the resident masturbator, another reason for that squiggly line.[87]

One room, the most dimly-lit, would end up being a dungeon of my own for the remainder of my time in Berlin, because my position as *Aufsicht* essentially translated to "make sure people don't touch the shit," and the shit that was especially not-to-be-touched was in this particular windowless cell. In the corner, a glass dildo sat on a brightly lit pedestal about half my height. There, without looking up from a book, I would tell an unending succession of visitors that they could not touch it or pick it up; if you drop it or knock it on the floor, it'll be us having to explain to the artist why their dildo broke, not you. On the other side of the room, a modified bunk bed with the top bunk

flipped upside-down, surely conveying some kind of message about first-time sexual experiences at summer camp or boarding school or any other homosocial space. No, you cannot sit on it, I would tell people time and again. My Ficken lighter tells me to SHARE THE BLAME, but I will not take the blame for the final ass that collapses a rickety altered bunk bed. Do they think they let you sit on the sofas in Sanssouci?[88]

The heat wave made the dildo-dungeon feel even more like a torture cell. It had no windows and therefore no cross-breeze, it smelled of whoever was passing through and not wearing deodorant at any given time, it had no WiFi. I spent four hours at a time perched on a chair next to the dildo-pedestal, reading books with what light I did have. I read *The Bell Jar* three times over, *Das Kunstseidene Mädchen* by Irmgard Keun. Both novels about young women alone in large cities. Serafin flitted in and out of the rooms, aerating himself with a starchy paper fan that he twirled between his fingers expertly. He did not know that I spoke German. He did not ask. He addressed me in English, always exclaiming that he kept finding me in the darkest and most hard-to-access corners. What was I hiding from? I triangulated between three chairs in the museum and went nowhere else, always inevitably taking up vigil again at the dildo.

During an especially quiet shift shared by Serafin and me, he referenced me to another staff member in German using "she," quickly self-correcting and switching back over to "he." This happened about five times over the course of an hour before I finally asked him, in German, why he kept doing that. The first response was one of shock; he'd had no idea I spoke German at all. *Doch*. Don't change the subject, though. Why do you keep doing that – calling me *sie* and then switching to *er*?

He snapped the fan open, flustered, began beating away at his face with it, as

ineffective at creating air flow as a moth's wing. He reiterated that he didn't know I spoke German. *Doch*. Why do you keep calling me *sie*?

You know, I think it is your face.

My face?

Yes! It is very – you know what I mean?

No, I lied. I don't. It's very what?

It's got the – like David Bowie.

I don't look anything like David Bowie.

He snaps the fan closed and points at me with it. No, not looking *like* David Bowie. But like both a man and a woman at once. There is a word for it. I've almost got it!

I don't want to give him the word *androgynous*. If he finds it himself, that's fine. Well, I'm not a man and a woman at once, I say. I'm a man.

But you are trans, *oder*?

This bothers me deeply. When I applied to work at Schwules, I had never indicated my status as a trans person. I mentioned that I'd done extensive queer leadership work on campus, that I had a finger in pretty much every queer pie in the D.C. Metro area, that my scholarship project for the Gilman involved documenting the experience of being queer and abroad. But I never once mentioned to any of my coworkers that I was trans. I don't know who told you that, I ventured, but they were wrong. They must have just assumed that I was. Incorrectly.

So you were born a man?

(I don't think anyone is born a man. They're usually born a baby.) But I say, yes.

With a –

Penis.

You were?

Yes.

Born a man?

(A baby.) Yes. With a –

Androgynous!

What about it?

That's the word. You look very feminine.

I know. (What do you want me to do about it?)

From there, the conversation slowly drifted out to sea, Serafin leading me through a cross-examination of my sexual inclinations toward others, of my sexual inclinations toward myself, me wondering who was guarding the glass dildo if the two of us were standing here chin-wagging about whether or not I would ever find someone I wanted to have sex with and the importance of discovering the need for companionship in your sunset years. You are, what, 19? 27, I lie. At some point he informed me that he went through chemotherapy and had been left with one testicle. I wasn't sure what I was supposed to do with this information. I really did think you were trans, he repeated. All of the staff thought so. That's why I was so sure.

The staff all lied, I lied. None of them deserve to know whether I am or not, I want to say. Why is it so infuriating to be clocked as exactly what I am, trans and androgynous, in the Queer Museum, by a Spanish-born *Grüß Gott*-ing former *Gastarbeiter* with one testicle? I sense some attempt by an other to recognize the other in

another and want to burst out of labels as much as I want to burst out of my skin.[89]

At last he senses my rage. He swats me with the fan. You look so serious about this! He laughs. Being open is how we survive, laughing at ourselves.[90] We can talk about this more now than ever before. We mustn't be ashamed of who we are. And who's that again? *We*? *QUEER BERLIN*? I'm screaming through ten-thousand layers of cotton again. Dildo-gagged. Squiggly line for the Schwules Museum in the back pages of *Siegessäule*.

GEGEN FASHION![91]

Mateja was from Nürnberg and had been scouted as a model in her mid-teens. Like most male models with androgynous faces and slender figures, her entire career had been from its inception carefully curated by her agency as informed by the archetypes she could already be placed neatly into, prefabricated and predestined, as laid out for her as the clothing items themselves. She had done H&M campaigns in effete floral blouses, clad in bell-bottom pants and donning Quentin-Crisp-esque scarves and broad-brimmed hats, round sunglasses, ethereal photoshoots standing in meadows, wreathed in lavender. Tresses intertwined with leaves and open shirts slipping off of pale bony shoulders, a glamorous pastoral in which a certain suspended belief in the pervasive existence of masculinity was engineered by an industry presently dominated by pre-transition Andreja Pejić.

At the height of Mateja's career, androgyny was again the trend, because even before I had met her I knew her. Pictures of her crossed my Tumblr dashboard from time to time. She blended in with the thousands of other models being styled exactly as she was, but she was there nonetheless, a part of this bizarre vision someone was fostering,

the ultra-wispy waifish male model clothed in these strange Little Lord Fauntleroy outfits as if he had himself been dressed by some Victorian nanny, given dissolute-1910s-schoolboy floppy haircuts. At one point I felt like a day couldn't pass by without seeing someone reblog a portrait of a glamorous urchin in a sheer button down that showcased his ribs and collarbones, one blue eye peeking at the camera because the other was covered by the hair flop, a boater hat perched on top of that, cultivating the kind of gossamer construct Thomas Mann might have chased through Venice in a 1912 fantasy.[92] Spindly hands, hollow cheeks, emphasized under-eye circles that reiterated the eternal toxic marriage between the consumptive image and the androgynous one. The only way to be a beautiful queer body: rail thin, white as asparagus, high-cheekboned, fey, anemic. Models were scouted, packaged this way, then disposed of once they had aged out of the aesthetic. The images remained, indelible and incorrigible as the eating disorders they helped to influence. But the models moved on. Something about finding them years later on Instagram, sloppy, weird, greasy, chain-smoking, partying, was satisfying. The assumption of the unmarketable identity, the inundation of the Instagram account with memes instead of photoshoot outtakes, the gaining of weight and the growing of patchy mustaches, the eschewing of the sheer blouse in favor of kitschy t-shirts with stock photos of European-Union-themed nail art and Paris Hilton silkscreened across the front. High-waters paired with dirty running shoes. If Thomas Mann had only seen his Polish baron at 23. This is what his Tadzio would become? A smelly queer Prenzlauer Berg hipster in Jeffrey Dahmer glasses? Good.[93]

Mateja was of a slightly different variety of industry pariahs, though. Once she left her representing agency, she grew her hair out, started wearing PVC skirts over black

leotards, changed her name, started her own modeling agency for trans, genderqueer, nonbinary, and otherwise non-cisgender people. That was how we met.

"The agency is called *Das Modell*," she said as we sat at Südblock, casually inhaling an entire Flammkuchen while she talked about her work. "With two L's. You know, like a concept, a theory, not like a person. And *das*, because it's *neutrisch*. So is *das Model*, but the meanings are not quite the same, you know." I thought about the song by Kraftwerk and its rudimentary lyrics – "she is a model and she's looking good / I'd like to take her home, that's understood" – and how I had seen the German title of that song spelled both ways, with and without the extra L at the end. Of course, obsessed with all things robotic and scientific as Kraftwerk were, it would have made sense if the same wordplay had been intended there.

"I just got sick of many things in this mainstream fashion industry," Mateja went on, shaking her head and licking a finger. "I left this agency because I told them I was not male and they didn't know what to do about that. They wanted to sell me like Andreja, but I wasn't like her. She knew she was a woman for many years, you know. She just didn't come out because she knew she could make more money as a *male* model who *looked like* a woman than she could doing the same thing identifying as a transwoman. Her whole career was relying on this one difference. I told them I was not this. So they had no use for me. So I started my own agency."[94]

She preferred spending time behind the camera now. We had done a few photoshoots along various canals in Wedding, all of which involved me in all black with my silver-blond hair, sunken face, and crooked left ear front-and-center. She was a terrific photographer, but I was not shaping up to be a Tadzio. I was 5'6", my personal brand of

androgyny was more evocative of clear and present illness than of foppish troublemaker Oxonian wastrel, my head was the size of a Jovian planet, I had tattoos arranged in the quintessential millennial collage fashion that only makes sense to the bearer, I wore drapey clothing that managed to convey the *suggestion* I had a body somewhere without actually having to show it. My hair, which had held the same side-part for my entire life, would not do anything except lay exactly the way it wanted to. Mateja had been putting me in tight all-black turtlenecks for our shoots because they apparently emphasized my jawline. I hated turtlenecks enthusiastically, but I liked Mateja, so I endured.

By the time we were halfway through one of our photoshoots, roll after roll of film in an empty room at the Neue Schule für Fotografie, walled-in with cracked mirrors that refracted the late-afternoon sunlight across the distinctly DDR parquet flooring, I was ready to shave my hair off and go around for the next months wearing a scarf-wig, Little Edie in *Grey Gardens* style, clad in a monk's robe. In the mirror-walls I had seen myself standing in every unflattering angle I could possibly achieve in every cracked mirror that shot beams of *Minority Report* lighting across my face and washed everything out. I sat on a dinosaur of a desk that had been pushed to the wall while Mateja changed a film roll, squinting out at the sunset over a particularly dingy part of Mitte. I had shown up to the photoshoot with only the clothes I was wearing, an attempt to avoid the bringing-up of a tight black turtleneck. The shirt I had chosen had a band collar and was loose. She did not balk at it, but it was most likely not what she would have chosen, either.

"I think what we concentrate on the most is your face and your hands," Mateja said. She began to take photos of me as I sat on the desk. "These are your best features." My hands? They were German Expressionist monstrosities disproportionate to the

rest of my body, but I did like them. They were the reason why, as a teenager, I could comfortably pound out Rachmaninoff, spasmodic expulsion of angst. My face, though? At times I was at peace with it, at others I wanted to take my fingernails, gore it into unrecognizability. I had strong bone structure because I was sick, not because I was effortlessly beautiful like the Tadzios. But what good would it have done to bring this up to someone who had surely experienced her own share of dysmorphia? She smiled encouragingly in response to my dismissive hand-flap at the best features comment, commented on how good I was at sitting still and catching the best light with the slightest inclinations of my head. Hiding that damn crooked ear.

Later in the summer, Mateja asked me if I was interested in doing a group photo series for a fashion publication called *Achtung,* shot by a Köln-based photographer named Eva, centered around Mateja's fashion endeavor and showcasing some of the agency's talent. As it happened, the photoshoot was to be the day Sam and I left Berlin for our overnight through-the-entire-Czech-Republic odyssey to Iggy Pop. "Eva says she wants to do some shots of us individually, then as groups, just in the apartment, then at night to go out and photograph us at some bars," Mateja said. "I explained to her and the magazine what we expected of pronouns, proper language, things like this. They told us to bring several pieces of clothing that we feel the most comfortable in, our favorite things to wear." I agreed to the daytime photoshoot, noting that I would not make the evening half of the project because I had a bus to catch with a friend. It was July and a massive heat-wave was preparing to seize all of Germany by the throat and hold it fast all the way until the end of August. It was already smoldering in Bavaria and Austria, but had not yet crept up to Berlin. I could still comfortably spend a day outdoors in black

shitkicker Docs, heavy black knee-socks, black schoolboy shorts, a white collared button-down, a crust punk neckerchief, and a black blazer with the lapels covered in buttons and brooches, inspired by Rik Mayall's moody anarchist character from *The Young Ones*. In Berlin nobody looks twice if you wear the same outfit for a month. It felt only right that this should be the ensemble I brought along.

I was the most difficult to style. Putting me into a box for a photoshoot revolving around people who cannot be put into a box proved difficult. In attendance were Mateja, a young transwoman from Munich named Kim, Mateja's chill genderqueer roommate from Brazil, a model and fashion designer named Leni with a look and background very similar to Mateja's, and myself. The two stylists from the magazine looked at what I was wearing, evaluated my face, and made an executive decision: tight turtlenecks. Put him in tight turtlenecks. Screaming. My brief stint in modeling was shaping up to be one backless infinite wardrobe filled with tight Hermès turtlenecks. "These make your face look incredible," said the stylists to me in German. "Much more masculine jawline." I didn't want a masculine jawline. Was I being placed in the masculine box now? "*Was für ein Gesicht*," Eva marveled as she snapped photos.

Exactly none of the clothes I was put into were clothes I brought with me, or would wear in any setting ever. Giant 1970s flared pants with platform-heel boots and turtlenecks, awful leather pants and Gucci jean jackets and turtlenecks, everything shot from the front to avoid acknowledging that Sam and I had cut my hair the night before with what could have been a chainsaw and a cheese knife, the crooked ear front-and-center again. I wanted to demand to know why my own clothes didn't suffice. No, it wasn't sleek, but neither was punk, neither was queer. What was this photoshoot

supposed to be about if not that? I thought about the crust punks who hung out around Warschauer Straße with their dogs and their witty cardboard signs, about the squatters who tromped around Kreuzberg in boots and bandannas, rolled cigarettes and made up their own German pronouns. Did the people from this magazine know nothing about them?

After the main shoot began wrapping up, I got back into my clothes while Mateja and everyone else suited up for their night out, choosing other clothes to bring along for wardrobe changes. Mateja's first outfit was a slim-cut suit with no shirt underneath, and Leni put on a matching ensemble. Together they put on music and danced while Eva snapped photos, them waiting for it to get dark enough for phase two, me waiting for the right time to leave. They moved like dancing witches at a coven, tossing their hair about and embracing each other. I stood to the side, watching and holding my backpack which held enough protein bars to last Sam and me through our entire Austrian trek in the coming 36 hours. At some point Eva noticed me, my buttons, my boots, and called me over to take a picture of me, just standing there, still holding my backpack, in front of a bare whitewashed wall, dance music still blaring. Somewhere out there that picture exists. Months later, when Mateja met up with me to give me a hard copy of the magazine, she sighed and simply said, "I don't know if I'm happy with this series. Eva did very well shooting us, but I think the magazine missed the point."[95]

GEGEN FATE[96]

In mid-June of 2015, I went to the hospital for a panic attack. As is the case with most severe panic attacks, I thought I was going to die, and after regaling the E.R. doctor with a laundry list of pre-existing psychological conditions, I was promptly put into a van

and rerouted to a mental health clinic on the Wannsee. The clinic was not far down the road from my apartment and I had passed it on the bus multiple times, but a navigation error turned what could have been a fifteen-minute looney delivery into an hour-long journey rerouted through Charlottenburg. I don't know how we ended up there. I don't know how I ended up anywhere I ended up that night. I am still not convinced that I was even having a panic attack and have never felt the symptoms I felt that night since then. I was certain that the blood vials I'd had taken from my arm had been chucked straight into the trash, as was the €368 ambulance bill I received in my mailbox two weeks later. After bidding farewell to the E.R. doctor, who complimented my German unironically, I sat in the back of the transport vehicle with a friendly man who indulged my small-talk about how being up for one entire night makes you feel like you never need to sleep again, about how I intended fully to go to class later that day. At the clinic, I spoke in English with a woman whose job was to stay up all night and receive fractured people at 3AM in her small, inviting office. I sat across from her in a t-shirt, gym shorts, a zip-up hoodie, and creepers with no socks, the first things I could find to shuffle into before walking out to the €368 ambulance that took me to the hospital three blocks away. She asked me if I wanted to stay there.

That sounded terrifying. I had work to do and nineteen credits to finish earning. I have always known myself as a person who prioritizes everything except their mental health. No, I did not want to stay there. I would start eating! Regularly! I would take care of myself! She told me I was brave for being in another city for six months with all of the things that I was dealing with, and that it took a great deal of strength and resilience to take all of your problems abroad with you – that many people foolishly thought going

somewhere new meant somehow that those problems would not come with them. I nodded along, thanking, thinking that I did not see myself as brave or strong or resilient. I saw myself sitting in a consultation room in my pyjamas in a psych ward, having a conference about a breakdown while the sun rose out the window over the Wannsee. I wondered whether I would be forced to stay on some legal grounds, put into some ward if I said the wrong thing, whether accepting the invitation to stay was the only right option.

But "no" was accepted. I walked out with a card bearing a handwritten phone number on the back, saying goodbye to the man at the reception desk as if checking out of a Holiday Inn. I walked the Potsdamer Chaussee a few miles until I decided it was time to get on a bus.

"That sounds really awful," Tanno wrote to me on Facebook later that day as I relayed the entire tale to her. "Stay the night at my place if you're still feeling bad by the time your class ends. It'll be a high-school slumber party."

I was still feeling bad by the time my class ended. In my button-and-brooch blazer, knee socks, and boots, I crouched in a quiet corner of U-Rathaus Neukölln while sweat soaked my shirt, rattling off all my symptoms to my doctor, who told me it sounded like I had an infection or the flu. I gathered my backpack, containing only my school materials, and headed to Tanno's.

"I think it's the Bupropion," I said over a glass of steaming water with lemon. "That, plus the stress, plus the eating problem, plus dehydration, no sleep. Or a combination of any of those. Or just one. But it's the drug that causes the jaw-clenching and the hyperventilation. It spikes your anxiety. I'm not going to pull a Stevie Nicks and tell everybody it's more deadly than coke, because who knows who it's helping. But it

isn't me."

"I think it's the eating problem," Tanno said.

"I think so, too. Mostly."

After ensuring that I ate half a pot of spaghetti, I crawled under the duvet at the other end of Tanno's bed and checked Facebook. A message from Sam. "Hey, I hope everything's going alright. Let me know if you need anything." Sam had themselves been in a hospital in their late teens, which was the reason they'd left school in the first place. I still don't know what the exact impetus for their stay was and have never asked. I figure they'll tell me if they want to.

Tanno picked up her acoustic guitar and sat at the other end of the bed. "Do you know Elizabeth Cotten?" She began a brief tuning session.

"I know Freight Train," I said. Elizabeth Cotten, born in North Carolina to a poor family of seven in 1893, had played an upside-down lefty-strung guitar in a self-taught alternating bass technique better and more advanced than any male rock star could ever hope to.

"Angy and I close our shows with the song," Tanno said. "It makes a good lullaby."

Over two years later, I sat on Skype with Tanno proofreading the lyrics for the new Jolly Goods album, my Autoharp in my lap as I picked out chords and sung the songs myself. Before we signed off completely, I blurted out: "Wait. Guess what chord progression I learned the other day? Wait, don't guess. You played this for me on that night I was convinced I was dying, and I didn't die, so now I get to play it for you."

Many late nights I've fleetingly wondered who was sitting in that same chair in

the counselor's office on the Wannsee at the moment, being praised for their resilience. Resilient is well-meaning but ultimately hollow, slowly losing its meaning to me, like queer or punk. Being praised for your resilience is flattering until you realize that you had no say in the matter; you are resilient or you die. It isn't as if there's a third option. What else to do but keep living? Any verb but die. Walk, eat, move, create, complain, endure, survive, exist.

Chapter Three Endnotes

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[62] The titles of this chapter's five sections have all been the themes of actual GEGEN parties. As an ongoing party in Berlin that "[blossomed] from the ashes of the historical and infamous queer techno party called 'SABO°TAGE BERLIN' which characterised fades of mutation in some of the wildest Friedricshain [sic] nights," GEGEN defines itself on its Facebook page as the following:

> Against yourself. Around queer narratives. Gegen is a complex word in German because it has two opposite meanings. Historically speaking it means "against," signifying all the counter-cultural movements since the very beginning of youth cultures but if you apply the word to time, it means "around." One meaning is closed, defined in terms of space. The other is open and undefined in terms of time. […] We want to expose you to your own fears and pleasures by pushing you to understand how your own power mechanisms are produced. This is why we invite you to be GEGEN by performing your own psychosis, by being the enemy of yourself, by thinking and being out of b/order and by destroying every rational thought. (Facebook "Story" Description)

In its language of performance, politicization of word meanings, and pushback against the labeling of Berlin spaces as "queer meccas" and the neoliberal marketing of Berlin as a "creative city" (as noted by Claire Colomb) – demonstrated by "[production of] an oligopoly of empty events repeating themselves until their fast extinction," which refers to the fleeting nature of many Berlin nightlife institutions that collapse and give way to new ones that generate elsewhere months later, new spaces, but the same people, the same dearth of politicized anything – GEGEN is trying to set itself apart from all of the other Berlin parties exactly like it. Unlike strongholds of mindless gay hedonism like Berghain, GEGEN backs up choices like naming its events "GEGEN ASS" with opaque philosophy and esoteric social commentary that is in and of itself alienating. The experience of the party, which is rendered often in religious or mythological language (resurrection, for instance), is unconvincing. The same people who get into Berghain for free are allowed to walk right into GEGEN, which also has a strict door policy and high cover charge. The same sense of boys' club estrangement is palpable in Stefan Fähler's phallic promotional graphics and the overwhelming majority of white, cisgender gay male attendees. As this chapter primarily handles the question of queer survival in an increasingly gentrified and precarious cityscape, titling each of these sections after various GEGEN themes felt like a way to highlight several of the ways in which "queer" Berlin falls short. GEGEN ASS took place at the KitKatClub on Köpenicker Straße on November 6th, 2015.

[63] *Dazed*'s "Shooting Sexual Liberation Inside Berlin's Gay Underground" (Article) with text by Alexandriia Fedorova and photos by Ana Tabatadze and George Nebieridze, zeroes in specifically on a party called Herrensauna, which, similar to GEGEN, has no "home club" and bounces from venue to venue. This is the case more often than not; these concept parties usually have no designated space to occupy, they migrate around Berlin and spring up at different locations. "With its title hinting at a hedonist male sauna, Herrensauna is not just about celebration of the male body and sexuality, it's about creating a community," writes Fedorova. Except the male body has never not been celebrated. In the same article, Fedorova writes of the way in which fixed spaces like Berghain host tourists whose stays are "often too brief to contribute to creating a scene." But this perpetuation of the ephemeral is, in fact, the scene.

[64] There is a performative aspect to participating in every subculture, and Berlin's underground nightclub scene is no exception. There is a "uniform," there are style trends, expected aesthetics that contribute to an overall collective rejection of mass consumerism (big-label and luxury clothing doesn't impress, expensive and impractical shoes don't impress), but at the same time athletic clothing brands like Nike, Adidas, and Puma invariably make up the uniform of the Berlin clubber. Nebieridze's photos, including this one, often zero in (whether intentionally or unintentionally) on the homogeneity of the "underground." It is interesting that there is a definite emphasis on blending into a subculture that seeks to separate itself from all others. Among the many "tips" found online for getting into Berghain and other choosy clubs is the importance of wearing clothes that don't make it look like you "try too hard" – in other words, apparently, dressing like everyone else in the establishment.

Figure 9: By George Nebieridze for *Dazed*, 2015



[65] The form of this chapter was influenced by Joshua Weiner's *Berlin Notebook: Where Are the Refugees?* (2016), namely in Weiner's exploration of Berlin in an investigatory manner through dialogue and movement within the city at the height of Western Europe's "migration wave" in the latter half of 2015. In constantly posing the "where are the refugees?" question, Weiner highlights both the ubiquity of the refugees in Berlin at the time, as well as the populace's awareness of their existence: "The refugee crisis had itself migrated from the political arena to the larger realm of culture. The refugees were now being sheltered all over the city in hotels and public buildings; everyone could answer the question, 'where are the refugees?' Why, down the street, around the corner, not far from here." At the same time, this question also evokes issues of representation and visibility – visibility in terms of surveillance, as the refugees' locations are monitored and tracked by the German government, their movement regulated by bureaucracy, as well as visibility in terms of their acknowledgment (or lack thereof) as valuable members of German society. In my attempt to "find" queer in a number of spaces in Berlin, I found myself on a similar mission. Where are the queers? Where is queer happening? Is it even really happening at all?

[66] The problematics of declaring a space "queered" intersect with issues of *queer* and *gay* being conflated, a distinct lack of backing up spatial transitions from *gay* to *queer* with all of the political and social implications that these transitions should carry, and the practice of continuing to expressly exclude certain marginalized groups from "queered" spaces. The co-opting and appropriation of language commonly used in refugee narratives is especially distasteful in light of the migration influx into Berlin as a result of ongoing wars, genocides, and persecutions in Middle Eastern countries. Persisting harmful assumptions that Muslim Germans of immigrant backgrounds exist constantly at odds with queer communities – Haritaworn in *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others* notes how the "queer kiss" as a marketing element is "[accompanied by] the media dissemination of a psychological study that scientifically proves that youth of 'Turkish' origin hold the most homophobic attitudes and are most likely to be repelled by gay kisses" (Location #809), thereby establishing a binaristic contrast between the "queer lover" and the disgusted ignoramus. Within this framework, it is therefore not possible to allow queer people of refugee status, for instance, into this narrative, because the communities they come from have already been written off as antagonistic, incompatible, unable to intersect. On many other levels, *queer* has failed to successfully intersect as well – many queer people of color do not see themselves represented in the scene, nor do transgender people, women, the body-positive community, and more who do not find validation or acknowledgment in a scene dominated by thin, white, cisgender, gay men.

[67] In "Queer Berlin: Lifestyles, Performances, and Capitalist Consumer Society" (2006), Rolf J. Goebel references a representation of queer Berlin life in popular literature that further highlights a degree of othering that contributes to the rift between many of Berlin's queer communities and Berlin's communities of Muslims, people of color, and immigrants:

> Among the various lifestyles portrayed in [essay collection] *Die bewegte Stadt* we find [novelist] Elmar Kraushaar's portrait of Oliver, who escapes from his provincial origins, lands a job in a large advertisement agency and finds himself a stable boyfriend. His easygoing lifestyle which features shopping sprees around the Kurfürstendamm is suddenly endangered when he is accosted by three young Turkish thugs in the subway. In response to the homophobic assault, Oliver defiantly decides that he wants to stay on in Berlin despite Turks and neo-Nazis, sublimating his anger by focusing on stereotypical aspects of a hedonistic gay consumer culture […]. (485)

In the same way that Pride parades like the T*CSD do more harm than good by occupying and moving through predominantly Muslim neighborhoods while actively excluding members of these very communities from their celebrations, this narrative of the working-class Muslim thug who targets queer people for violent attacks sets up Turkish communities as oppositional to white queer communities. In considering "Turks and neo-Nazis" equals in the threat they pose to his protagonist, Kraushaar does an even bigger disservice to Turkish Berliners by putting them into the same box as the people who also hate them. This attempt to assert Nazis and Turks as an equally threatening entity erases the part of Berlin's history where the *Sturmabteilung* or Nazi paramilitary brute squad was primarily responsible for acts of homophobic violence (while hypocritically tolerating homosexuality as an open secret all the way up to Ernst Röhm).

The language of the queer-identified person's "escape" to Berlin from close-minded provincial confines is loaded; Berlin, aside from being a city that is always pre-, post-, and inter-, also has a history of being a city that is either escaped-from or escaped-to. The Isherwoods and Audens who found refuge in Berlin from the stifling homophobia of 1920s Great Britain, the Bowies and Iggys who looked back on escaping to Berlin as their rescue from drug-related demise, the misfit Germans from the Ruhrgebiet for whom Berlin continues to be an escape, contrast starkly with the narratives of refugees who escape to Berlin in the rawest sense of the word: staying where you are means likely or certain death, relocating is not a choice, deportation is an indelible fear. By the same token, the escape *from* Berlin – by persons fleeing Nazi persecution, East Berliners fleeing into West Berlin – has also been a prominent narrative throughout history. Given the spike in Berlin's refugee population over the last three years, I would not say that words like "escape" and "refuge" and "persecution" can no longer be used by anyone else, but I do think it is important to reflect on the differences between escaping to Berlin from a hostile hometown in conservative Bavaria and escaping to Berlin from a city like Aleppo or Mosul. This is not to say that the person doing the former has never had their existence threatened because of their identities, but recent events have given these words more of an urgency that cannot be ignored.

[68] Of the CSD (Christopher Street Day) and T*CSD (Trans*genial Christopher Street

Day) parades (on the Kurfürstendamm and through the streets of Kreuzberg and Neukölln, respectively), Haritaworn writes:

> On Pride day in summer 2013, flyers rained down from a window onto a majority-white queer parade marching through the Berlin inner-city districts of Kreuzberg and Neukölln. The parade was part of the alternative Kreuzberg Pride or TCSD. […] The TCSD, which separated from the mainstream commercial Pride or CSD […] in 1997, gained currency in 2010, when Judith Butler mentioned it in her speech […] [highlighting] the TCSD as an alternative to the mainstream CSD, whose civil courage award she was refusing to protest against the CSD's complicities in racism (Crasshole 2010; SUSPECT 2010a). Ironically, three years later similar allegations are being made against the TCSD itself, which identifies itself as anti-fascist, anti-racist and 'alternative', but to many queers of colour appears no less white. (Location #125)

The T*CSD is a prime example of an endeavor that started with good intentions, but in time devolved into a mere copy of its more obnoxious counterpart. It is impossible to ignore the utter lack of diversity and intersectionality in a parade that moves straight through neighborhoods that, especially in the 1970s, housed (and continue to house) radical punks, working-class immigrant families of color, homeless people, and other communities considered too undesirable to inhabit the "nice" neighborhoods further from the Wall. In the same way that I have observed a compulsion to hastily "queer" a space without considering what is actually being done to accomplish that, I have also observed the impulse to rush into "alternative" or "punk" without considering that neoliberalism and gentrification cannot coexist with these concepts in their purest forms. Many facets of moving a Pride parade through predominantly Muslim neighborhoods – in which the residents have already been "othered" based on their assumed homophobic attitudes as an entire population – are alienating and exclusionary. In recent years, Pride celebrations that are more inclusive of refugees, people of color, and Muslim people continue to struggle with not producing yet another monolithic Pride event. Usually this is best solved, unsurprisingly, by stepping out of the way and giving the very people who are excluded the resources and platform to organize their own Pride events. Sometimes these events draw harder lines than others, expressly asking people who are not of marginalized groups not to show up. If this is their way of creating space for their communities and asserting their validity, though, it cannot be challenged by the very people whose actions have spurred these measures.

[69] In considering the parallels between queer survival through existing in identical packs that move within the same spaces, social circles, and neighborhoods, I cannot help but note the similarities between the current paradigm of queer attractiveness in Berlin's nightlife scene – pale, waifish, extremely short buzzed hair, DIY tattoos, and an identical

manner of monochromatic, drab dress – and the photos of the prisoners at Sachsenhausen and Dachau, where many gay men, trans women, drag queens, and cross-dressers of Berlin's Weimar nightlife scene were sent. In the concentration camps, the tattoos, shaved heads, and uniforms were concerted efforts at depriving prisoners of their identities and humanity, forcing them to be nobody by making them look like everybody else.

It is interesting to me that this look has found such intense popularity in the present, that looking exactly like everyone else on the dance floor is a desired effect that seems counterintuitive to the surface-level mission of the Berlin nightlife – to "[think] and [be] out of b/order" by being your own enemy as GEGEN suggests, to celebrate queerness by looking like everyone else. Between the people who died in concentration camps for celebrating their queerness and the people whose demands for basic rights have since been placed on the backburner despite spearheading LGBTQ+ rights movements, I wonder why *this* is the look that has been deemed "Berlin." My issue lies not in the choice to dress alike, but the perceived lack of the history that surrounds the people who make this choice, the extent to which this choice calls back to a very specific period in history. I wonder if some of these people know or care about that history at all.

[70] On the capitalist promotion of a neatly packaged queer or gay concept targeted at precisely the community it needs to win over in order for the scheme to work, Goebel writes:

> In a polemical footnote to the introduction to his essay collection *Fear of A Queer Planet*, Michael Warner asserts that one of the obstacles against Marxist sexual politics "is the close connection between consumer society culture and the most visible spaces of gay culture: bars, discos, advertising, fashion, brand-name identification, mass-cultural camp, 'promiscuity' (xxxi)." Warner identifies these spaces (which, one can add, characterize the postmodern metropolis in general and, in a particularly hyperbolic form the literary representations of post-reunification Berlin), as the "most visible mode" in which gay culture is typical of "precisely those features of advanced capitalism that many on the left are most eager to disavow." As he memorably concludes, "Post-Stonewall urban gay men reek of the commodity." (499)

Modern-day commodification of the term *queer* and the emptiness of the intent behind *queering* is present not only in Berlin's (and, indeed, most major cities') Pride parade(s), but also in the neoliberal attempt to altogether de-politicize queerness by asserting its arrival in the world of the mainstream. As soon as I become aware that marketing minds have caught on to words like *queer*, *punk*, *alternative*, *radical*, and are turning them back around to sell a product, ideal, or propaganda to me, I take those words with about a metric ton of salt.

The irony in naming a celebration of "bougie" cisgender gayness after an uprising led by poor, non-white, transgender people is lost on many, since they don't even know that without transgender leaders like Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera there would not have been a Stonewall uprising at all. This ignorance is divisive enough in the United States, but in Germany it is even more disaffecting, as this version of queer history is even less emphasized in Germany (and many other countries where the equivalent of a "Stonewall" does not exist in their histories). In *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others*, Haritaworn writes: "Queer community building here emerges as a raced and classed form of sociality. [...] It further troubles the assimilationist gays versus transgressive queers binary of the queer space literature. Especially in Germany, where there was no trans-of-colour led Stonewall that can be reclaimed as our 'real' origin before the gays turned problematic, the distinction between corporate *racist gays* and radical *anti-racist queers* does not hold." (Location #1530)

[71] This is my own attempt to acknowledge what I realize is a significant contradiction between the logic I presented in my second chapter about assuming identity based on appearance and the logic I am presenting here, where I do just that: assuming, upon looking at a large crowd and deducing a majority – white, cisgender, gay, male – without considering the possibilities for nuance, "passing," factoring in the existences of people who do not need to disclose their identities to anybody, that somebody should not pass assumption on others if they do not want it done to themselves.

However, just as it is the prerogative of the marginalized group to decide whether or not they want to leave their safe spaces open to everybody, at the risk of those spaces becoming overrun with people who take up *too* much space, the instinct to assume is also one that drives the survival of marginalized people in the face of adversity. Not trusting people who visually represent groups they find threatening, living in close proximity, and being forced to assert the value of their existence by organizing events and establishing spaces that expressly exclude anybody who doesn't look like them is a survival tactic. It is a reaction to a white-supremacist, heteronormative, cisnormative societal model that threatens the existence of anyone who does not fall into these categories. When I become frustrated that the logic of many of my own communities strikes me as hyperextended and hypocritical sometimes, I must remind myself that these communities are forced to fiercely defend their spaces and marks of their culture against extinction. Resorting to assumption is therefore more reasonable than, for instance, determining what bathroom a person in a club can use based on how you think they look.

[72] Facebook event pages for: GEGEN AMT, GEGEN RIOT, and GEGEN DESIRE.

[73] GEGEN ASS. Figures 10 and 11: Screenshots from Gegen Berlin's event pages in August and October 2015, respectively (screenshots are my own).



[74] From the GEGEN FAMILY (March 4th, 2016) concept:

> Step One – Think about family in terms of emotionality where to contextualize partnering, parenting and friendship. Step Two - Trash the misery of religious universalisms imposing an heterocentric power model of "natural" reproduction. Step Three - Open yourself to multiplicity, body languages, the building of new uncodified proximities and crossings by mining in the same time social norms and network representations. Step Four - Extend it to a polyamorous and nomadic space, appearing on a certain rhythm of time – say every two months – and focusing on queer subjectivities performing open styles of being through different languages. Step Five – Now think about Gegen as an open fabric whose polyamorous and pandrogynous knots become a transnational open scene. Step Six – Now re-think family and feel the spasm to dance while rubbing silk and synthetic fur.

If there were an award for compressing the least amount of actual meaning into the most buzzwords employed to compose the most convoluted mission statement ever, GEGEN would no doubt be a frontrunner every time. Each event description is similar: evocative of rejecting some hierarchical, oligarchical, patriarchal structure and allowing your experience of the night to replace, aid in the unlearning-of, whatever pre-existing notions

of society you entered with. It is essential to allow yourself to shed an oppression-imposed skin that you wear in your everyday life for a temporary amount of time, and, for GEGEN, the key to this suspension of your everyday-life performativity ultimately boils down to dance, drugs, and sex. One problem with this concept is that its core ideas are inaccessible to most people because they're always cloaked in grandiloquence. Another problem is that GEGEN does not actually achieve anything close to the "chosen family" model that exists in many queer communities, not as long as a man sits in between two bathrooms and decides which one he thinks you can go into. Lastly, as a *business* that *sells* the illusion of liberation to its customers, GEGEN is using theoretical approaches that appeal to its left-leaning customer base – transnationalism, dismantling power structures, rewriting queer narratives in "our" own words – to get paying asses through the door, thereby employing yet again the neoliberal tactic of taking what was once organic and *free* (rebellion doesn't have a cover charge) and selling it to people as a product. No one actually leaves GEGEN having accomplished its loftier goals for its customers, mostly because once you're in there nothing forces or even encourages you to challenge the status quo.

[75] My preoccupation with toilets, because I am trans, informs my subjective perception of a space's "queerness" to a great extent. It is why I rail on GEGEN for its policing of toilet usage. Many queer bars, like Neues Ufer in Schöneberg, are old buildings and still have toilets clearly marked "H" and "D," but the staff and patrons are indifferent as to who actually goes into what toilet (although changing the signage would not take that much effort). As Yasminah Beebeejaun discusses in her article on relationships between "gender, urban space, and the right to everyday life," the paths we make through urban spaces on a daily basis are shaped by our everyday needs (more so than the flâneur's meandering path, shaped by memory and revelation), many of which are taken for granted by people who don't have to worry about them constantly. Flâneurs also need to pee. I, for one, have avoided many places because I don't want to deal with their toilets. Other places I've endured in spite of their toilets.

When I say that K-Fetisch and Silver Future feel representatively queer to me, I am speaking not only of the favorable toilet arrangements there, but also of my own observational evidence. Polyglot bartenders of all body shapes and sizes, gender presentations, national origins, and skin colors, a laid-back and diverse clientele that is not overwhelmingly one demographic, and the lack of particular emphasis on celebrating gay cis male sexuality (as is the case with Südblock or SchwuZ, for example) are some refreshing factors that contribute to my evaluation of these spaces as *queer*. I also take into account how these bars – both being on Weserstraße, which is a (if not *the*) seat of gentrification in Neukölln, respond to social issues in the neighborhood immediately around them, as well as social issues beyond the neighborhood.

[76] Figures 12, 13, and 14: Bathroom markers at K-Fetisch café on Wildenbruchstraße.



[77] This exchange between Tanno and me, much like the exchange between Sam and me in the second chapter over the queer zinefest rules at their school, is another example of the "coffee table" or "kitchen table" conversations on social issues that take place in the "private" (if such a thing really exists) sphere, as mentioned also by May Ayim in *Audre Lorde: The Berlin Years 1984 to 1992* and Jin Haritaworn in *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others*: "In a context where 'queer space' is publicly carved out in ways that mark an area's recovery and the displacement and policing of communities once confined to it," writes Haritaworn, "the kitchen table emerges as a key site of mobilising that is often unacknowledged in social movements." (Location #142) For many communities, the line between the kitchen table conversation as taking place in a "private" space and the demonstration or discourse taking place in "public" is blurred. Refugees, activists, and outspoken critics are all surveilled people for whom the "private" does not truly exist, which is especially problematic when it comes to attempting to mobilize for social change or organize demonstrations and civil disobedience – it cannot be organized in the spaces they are pushed out of, and it also cannot be safely organized at home or via social media. While our conversation here was comparatively low-stakes, it is still worth noting that it stayed between us and a few friends; we never did send the letter or email of complaint to *Siegessäule*, mostly because we didn't want to deal with having our throats jumped down, so what could have been a spur to action remained within the confines of that apartment.

[78] This film was *Queercore: How to Punk a Revolution* (2017).

[79] The use of a collective first-person plural ("WE ARE"), much like the use of "family," underscores a distinct facet of marginalized communities that implies solidarity, commonality, working together toward a shared goal. Just as I see none of this in GEGEN, I see none of this in *Siegessäule*, either. The same array of predominantly white, often

English-speaking, Kreuzberg- or Neukölln-based artists is presented to readers over and over again, so that it becomes less of a resource for Berlin's queer community as a whole – especially in aiding the search for spaces and events that feel safe and accessible – and more of a monthly tabloid that catches up with all of the same people on the scene, a resource that is only really useful if you want to know where you can find the same ten Berlin artists, DJs, performers, party organizers, or filmmakers in the upcoming month. There is little room for exposure to up-and-coming artists, artists of color, transgender artists, and other people who should make up the "WE" in "QUEER BERLIN" but do not. This is another reason why, much like with Berlin Pride, dominant communities should step back entirely. Making room for others in *Siegessäule* does not suffice; it will always be a monthly report on what the scene is up to. Anything aside from that will be an afterthought.

[80] Formerly the Königsplatz (until 1918, when it was renamed under the Weimar government), the Platz der Republik and its surrounding area are and have been loaded with structures and spaces emblematic of Berlin's past – namely the Reichstag building, behind which the Wall ran, the Tiergarten, which has been and continues to be a major cruising spot, and the Siegessäule, which was relocated to the Großer Stern in 1939. As part of Albert Speer's plan to design and erect (no pun intended) the Welthauptstadt Germania, the Siegessäule was enlarged (really) and moved from the Platz der Republik – again renamed the Königsplatz during Nazi rule – and placed at the convergence of several major boulevards, a straight shot from the Brandenburger Tor. The path that the mainstream CSD parade in Berlin takes, which passes through old queer Schöneberg neighborhoods and moves past the Siegessäule, through Tiergarten, ends at the Brandenburg Gate. Phallocentrism is a thread that connects Berlin's landscape, its Pride celebrations, and its queer publications.

[81] Although this is in part a sarcastic reference back to the fixation on the anus as a "scar" or "open wound" in GEGEN's event manifesto on masculinity being performed through penetration, it also refers to the phallus and the receptor of the phallus as diametrically opposed entities in sexual discourse. In binaristic terms, there is the object that penetrates and the object that is penetrated, mutual exclusivity is implied. Naming *the* queer magazine representing the Berlin scene after a phallus-shaped trophy the German Empire awarded to itself feels a lot like GEGEN throwing birthday parties patting themselves on the back for achieving not much in the way of radical queering. Meanwhile, the Fernsehturm at Alexanderplatz, another tall but not phallic structure in former East Berlin (which I at least call "The Big Syringe") is more a symbol of trendy kitschy *Ostalgie*, of Berlin's "trashiness," the post-Wall shift from Schöneberg to Friedrichshain and Mitte as centers of riotous queer nightlife. Yet in keeping the Siegessäule *the* symbol of Berlin's queer legacy, the magazine straddles the past and present in a way that to me suggests more confusion than fusion.

[82] Throughout this chapter, I use a lot of religious language in my analysis and criticism

of the Berlin nightlife scene – the way Berghain's address is very similar to the address of major monuments or cathedrals in a "we don't need a street address, *everyone* knows who we are, we're an institution" sort of manner, the churning-out of articles and literary works that liken specifically the cis gay man's navigation of the sexually-charged Berlin underground to a spiritual or religious experience (language evoking rebirth, out-of-body experience, revelation, redemption, emancipation, etc.). It brings me around to thinking that, in a city where 60% of the population identifies with no religion, Christianity and Islam alike find themselves in the minority. 30% of Berliners identify with Christianity and 8% with Islam (*Statistischer Bericht Einwohnerinnen und Einwohner im Land Berlin am 30. Juni 2016*, Amt für Statistik Berlin- Brandenburg), leaving this preoccupation with euphoria, epiphany, and resurrection in the nightclub very interesting but also odd. In a vastly secular city, what is a "religious experience"?

[83] Tanno and I were not exempt from this performativity highlighted by *consciously* looking like you don't care whether or not you actually get into a club that you might wait four or more hours in line to get into. Among the many bloggers and journalists who have written on the "how to get into Berghain" topic, Joseph Pearson of popular expatriate Berlin blog The Needle discusses the pros and cons of even bothering with Berghain – as someone who has never had any trouble getting into the club, it is easy for him to accept "discriminatory and unsavory" (in other words, xenophobic, transphobic, racist, classist, ageist, and more) door policies when he has only ever witnessed the rejection of others, but not experienced it himself. The doormen at places like Berghain are dismissed as "self-important middle men doorkeepers," although in the same entry he posts a list of things you should and shouldn't do if you want to get in. His tone is very "it might be dumb, but if you want to get in you have to deal with it," and this is true. Part of the hostility you (especially if you're a tourist) face at the door of Berghain, according to every blogger or journalist who writes on this topic, involves Berghain balking at its exposure to mainstream attention and trying to "reclaim" its underground status by tightening the vise on its tolerance of non-Berliners, hence the German-speaking emphasis. Except that's not what queer Berlin has ever been about. Except most of the blocks surrounding Berghain are satellite-dish-laden East-Berlin high-rises now occupied mostly by immigrant families who share this neighborhood with "the world's 'most famous club' according to 'everyone' from the New York Times to Rolling Stone." Except Berghain really does sell merchandise, both online and in the club. So how hard are they really trying to retain as much of their mystique as they can? It is *also* worth noting that this is yet another piece on the industrial alternative clubbing scene in Berlin overloaded with religious imagery: from descriptions of "cathedral ceilings" to Pearson's assessment of Berghain as "a temple to electronica," he seems to want to make it clear to readers that he has what it takes to get in, and indeed has – but don't worry if *you* don't, because the doormen can be snooty and capricious.

We really did feel a little lost without the line, though, because so much of what I had

read prepared me for at least some kind of line to fall into formation with. The complete absence of that line was both relieving and intimidating, an unexpected void that we then had to fill with our own interpretation of "how to act approaching the door at Berghain." We followed the rules, but when I'd had enough I really did – in a more or less indoor voice – proclaim that this was "fucking stupid." And still it took another two minutes for us to be turned down.

[84] Aside from his work for GEGEN, Fähler has done the artwork for Ficken 3000's ICKY parties, Südblock's BOOHOO parties, ://about blank's Room for Resistance parties, and promotional materials for Yony Leyser's *Desire Will Set You Free*. Of course, it makes sense that members of this inner circle would rely on each other for business – it is the same reason why music by Peaches and Michelle Gurevich (formerly known as "Chinawoman") makes up a large portion of the soundtrack. To the inner circle of included people it feels like a labor of love among close-knit friends, to everyone watching the finished product it is yet another product of a transparently nepotistic gate-kept universe. This circles back around to the point I made in my first chapter about how many people of this ilk don't care about you unless you have something to offer them sexually or artistically (and, by extent, commercially). "Party Girl," an early track from Gurevich that reveals much of the shallowness one sees moving through queer party scenes, involves one woman asking another in the midst of an attempted pick-up: "What's your name? What's your art?"

[85] From the GEGEN SHAME (March 3rd, 2017) concept:

> What are you ashamed of? Did you ever hear "shame on you" to criticize somebody? Shame is a complex concept as much as Gegen is. From one side it is an acquired word in the queer political agenda to define insulting, aggressive behaviour such as "slutshaming," "fat shaming" and so forth. From the other side, the idea of "shame" ties itself to a moral system defined by specific religious norms and it is used as a device to manipulate people. It's an operative system installed in human minds since their very first day through specific liturgies, dictating you how to please power through guilt. So this is a call to a focus on the contemporary queer vocabulary as naturalized acquisition, and on the performative joy of the "excessive" as a daily game, the refusal of the norm/transgression/punishment dialectics in the construction of the "moral" body (unless you are adults into S&M). This gegen is about using shame as black humor and excitation. Be Shameless in being Shameful. Be GEGEN. GEGEN SHAME.

In my first chapter, I discuss the shame of being revealed to be something you don't want to be exposed as – the arguments in darkrooms, the stare-downs on buses in Nikolassee

– and reacting to, or preparing for, that exposure by putting on a front that is pre-angry and pre-defensive. This GEGEN concept is one that asserts the reclamation of shame. This is one of the few GEGEN concepts that feels like it's trying to achieve something to me. Maybe that's because it's not written in superfluous language, or maybe because the queer club or party really is still one of the few places where you can *temporarily* allow aspects of your identity deemed "shameful" to show through. It might also be that the reclamation of shame is perhaps the least esoteric and least byzantine of the themes I've described so far. Again, though, my ongoing criticisms of this being a marketing ploy remain.

[86] My comparison of Serafin to the heavily-painted "*Greise*" that Aschenbach encounters shortly upon his arrival in Venice isn't necessarily supposed to reveal any disdain I harbored for him before we had our exchange (whereas Aschenbach openly stares at this character with disgust from the get-go). Rather, the character of Aschenbach as a traditional flâneur, an onlooker whose "vocabulary of visual desire in order to consume the city as a site where the feeling of belonging to the crowds and the willingness to take sexual risks seem at least as erotic as the physical act itself" (Goebel 497), not only views the *Greise* as an embarrassment to those who attempt to age with dignity, but envies and even feels threatened by him. The *Greise*, who jokes and laughs with attractive young men who don't even pay attention to his age, is sort of a bellwether of the protagonist's erotic downfall. He is not interested in Aschenbach's opinion of him. Aschenbach's initial disgust upon looking at this man, however, is in his recognition of the aberrant in himself, and his shame in that recognition, which is latent until later in the novella. At the museum, where the majority of the volunteers were older German- or Austrian-born gay and lesbian white people in casual clothing, both Serafin and I stood out as "others" for different reasons, although I didn't realize this yet when I met him. I just saw him as a "character." I never think of myself as one.

[87] Upon entering the space for the first time – the exhibition space had been closed off for a month while we hosted our events elsewhere – the suggestion of a darkroom throughout the entire space was not lost on me. Using *Blow Job* to welcome you into the space is not a very subtle message; the entire curated experience suggested to me hostile phallocentric gay spaces. Strangely enough, though, the first piece of artwork to be featured upon passing through the curtains was a blown-up photograph of transgender porn actor Buck Angel spreading his legs. What this says to visitors is: "If you can't handle *this*, then turn right back around and leave." And people did. The only thing was, nothing else in the exhibit represented trans bodies in the way that this one photo did. The curators had picked their one most "shocking" piece and put it front-and-center and followed that message up with little else.

[88] Babysitting a glass dildo in a recreated darkroom at a museum for two months felt like my just desserts for disturbing the peace in the Ficken dungeon. Really, though,

constantly passing through the space of an exhibition that in English translated to *Homosexuality_ies*, I repeatedly found only representations of spaces dominated by cisgender male bodies and sexualities: representations of the penis, of first-time adolescent homosexual encounters ascribed throughout literature and history mainly to young men, of cruising. The lighter I bought from Ficken says "SHARE THE BLAME," GEGEN wants us all to revel in our shame together after paying €13, Schwules wants us all to celebrate *Homosexualities* after paying €5, *Siegessäule* wants us to know that "WE ARE QUEER BERLIN." There is a constant back-and-forth between expressly exclusionary practices in queer circles (of Muslim queer communities and communities of color, of trans people, of foreigners at Berghain, of male-only establishments) and the same voices calling out these platitudes of unity, a dynamic that I find only further alienating.

[89] When you are trans, the recognition and exposure of the "other" in you presents danger, humiliation, and violence. When you're "clocked," you suddenly feel someone's entire perception of you shifting, their assumptions about what you were changing irrevocably. Jack Halberstam in "The Transgender Look" (*In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, 2005) comments on the relationship between this exposure and temporality regarding the transgender character reveal in film:

> Whenever the transgender character is seen to be transgendered, then he/she is both failing to pass and threatening to expose a rupture between the distinct temporal registers of past, present, and future. The exposure of a trans character whom the audience has already accepted as male or female, causes the audience to reorient themselves in relation to the film's past in order to read the film's present and prepare themselves for the film's future. (77-78)

For me, in this interaction, this whole process was reversed: I had gone through my time at the museum under the impression that I was assumed cisgender until I indicated otherwise, which I didn't plan to do. To realize that everyone around me had assumed I was *transgender* the entire time meant that *I* was the one who had to reorient myself in relation to every interaction I'd had with every single coworker in the past, and had to do the same in preparation for every interaction I would have throughout the remainder of my time there. It made sense, though, that another "outsider," a flamboyant and outspoken Spanish-German man whose entire presence set him greatly apart from everyone else who worked there, would not only be the one to bring this to my attention, but "clock" other elements of my identity as well: that I chose to remain androgynous, that I made it hard for people to determine my sexuality, if there was one.

[90] Despite the rage and my ongoing critique of "survival" and "existence" discourse in the context of hostile spaces, this interaction was actually one that felt somewhat sweet in retrospect. This was not GEGEN, *Siegessäule*, Schwules, or Ficken yelling "*WE*" and

"*US*" at me about queer survival. This was an older Gastarbeiter, a cancer survivor, a survivor of the AIDS crisis, who looked at me after that entire awkward conversation and still used "*we*," whatever that meant to him.

[91] From the GEGEN FASHION (November 3rd, 2017) concept:

> To design is to realize a project. Project is the suffix of projection. Fashion is projecting oneself through a language of representation. Filtering and refusing all the processes of northern and southern globalization enslaving processes in terms of multicorporations world production, GEGEN FASHION is that reverse engineering of fashion individualization actualized in a bi-monthly space of styles-boiling where designing fashion crosses the boundaries through performance art and sexuality, from Klaus Nomi to Chicks on Speed and viceversa. You are Therefore invited to express your own FASHION GEGEN in the designed space of GEGEN FASHION. Social elegance is required.

The language of "enslavement" attempts to establish a parallel between the enormous human rights violations committed by major clothing companies who outsource their labor to developing countries and exploit their workers for extremely low wages ("southern globalization enslaving processes in terms of multicorporations world production") and the restrictive nature of conforming to social norms and expectations of uniformity ("GEGEN FASHION is that reverse engineering of fashion individualization actualized in a bi-monthly space of styles-boiling where design fashion crosses the boundaries through performance art and sexuality […]"). Not only is it ludicrous to draw a parallel between modern-day slavery and expected manner of dress in Western Europe, but it is also ironic to walk into a party with this theme and see everyone dressed the same, in brand-name clothing, not actually doing anything to cross, blur, or push boundaries. Sometimes I wonder whether GEGEN concepts are parodies of even worse party concept manifestos that I have yet to come across.

Throughout this section, I discuss the use of the transgender or androgynous body in fashion as a marketing ploy; femininity in male models, masculinity in female models, and nonbinary, genderqueer, and other transgender identities being exploited for the *aesthetic* as long as the models themselves are cisgender. For an industry that has for some time been deeply invested in androgyny – seen especially in models like Andreja Pejić, who for many years was known as the androgynous long-haired cisgender male model who dominated couture runways alongside cisgender women. Despite the fashion industry co-opting transgender aesthetics for capital gain, representation of transgender people as models or designers in the fashion industry is extremely low, in the same way that most top designers of womenswear (especially couture) are still men. Having worked

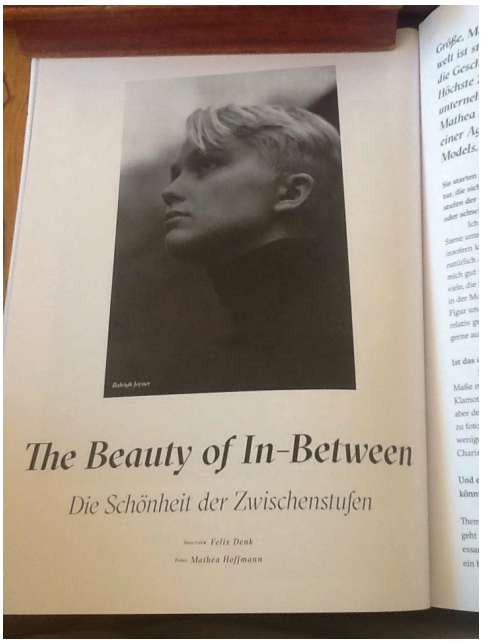
a bit – totally not something that I planned on doing – in modeling while in Berlin, I have observed my friend's attempts to shape a very specific and defined space in the industry for identities and presentations that are inherently indefinable, representative of *queer*, and not manipulated by and for the demands of a magazine or clothing label.

[92] The androgyny of Björn Andrésen, the young Swedish actor who played Tadzio in Luchino Visconti's 1971 film adaptation of *Death in Venice*, had and continues to have an enormous impact on fashion and art, to the extent that it has made the actor himself uncomfortable. Andrésen balked at the effete "pretty boy" image he garnered after doing the film, and fought unsuccessfully to establish a career for himself in music, his true passion. Instead, he continued to be known only for a film role in which he hardly spoke. In 2003, he expressed distaste at his image being used for the cover of Germaine Greer's book *The Beautiful Boy*. In an interview with *The Guardian* ("I feel used," interview with Matt Seaton, October 16th, 2003), Andrésen remarked: "My career is one of the few that started at the absolute top and then worked its way down. […] That was lonely." I see an interesting parallel between this phenomenon and the hype generated around the androgynous male model *du jour*, which Mateja and many of her friends once were, but the fashion industry's emphasis on youth pushes them out of this space as they either age out of it or begin to present differently than expected. That's why I call them the Tadzios. In trends of the Berlin partiers, I see an interesting dichotomy between performing "androgyny" and performing "macho," both mostly done by cisgender gay men.

[93] Ever since Berlin has been designated a "creative city" and marketed as such, Berliners have pushed back against the way in which Berlin's "creative, unplanned, multifaceted, and dynamic diversity of such 'temporary uses of space' was gradually harnessed into urban development policies and city marketing campaigns" (Colomb 132). Much of this pushback has been xenophobic, hostile, and has involved a tendency toward withdrawing and shutting doors in the faces of outsiders. Similarly, those of my friends in Berlin who have worked in the fashion industry do the same when they sense that their bodies have been exploited to an end that harms more than helps them – they change their appearances drastically, they make themselves unmarketable to the mainstream industry, they become unrecognizable. Much of this tactic has to do with shame, perhaps being ashamed of maturing out of an ageist industry, but also out of self-preservation: leaving the industry before it leaves you.

[94] Mateja's determination to carve out a space for transgender-identifying models in the fashion industry through her *Das Modell* project has been met with both fascination and resistance, as she continues to work among the same photographers, models, and designers she worked with in the past. At the moment, the talent she has scouted and brought together for her agency is greatly varied in racial and ethnic identities, national origins, gender identities, and gender presentations. Her agency's presence in the Berlin fashion scene has not gone unnoticed, although the androgynous-presenting and femme-

presenting models in the agency have continued to be subjects of fascination, invasive curiosity, and incorrect pigeonholing that highlights the liminality of our appearances instead of our intent to assert transgender bodies into the world of fashion. The title of this feature story from *Zitty* magazine's 2016 *Berlin Mode Fashion Book* is probably a good example of that major point being missed (Figure 15):



[95] In its supposed goal to feature unmarketable identities in a pages-long editorial, *Achtung* still achieved most of the goals that Mateja and her project want to push against: the equating of gender identity with presentation, the insistence upon taking my strange body and putting it in tailored expensive menswear instead of just letting me wear the clothes that I brought.

[96] The GEGEN FATE (January 9th, 2015) event page has little text:
Free Wardrobe, free fruits buffet, five lounges, fetish balconades, the Gegen underground cittadelle, hugs, hair, genetic manipulations and birthday french kisses. Stay tuned for more Gegen Birthday News On Arrival.

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