

Cinema and Berlin's Spectacle of Destruction: The "Ruin" Film, 1945-1950

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The new reality. The sign of our time is the ruin. She surrounds our life. She lines the streets of our cities. She is our reality. In her burned-out façades blooms not the blue flower of the Romantics, but the demonical spirit of destruction, collapse and Apocalypse. This is the outer sign of the inner insecurity of the people of our age. The ruin lives in us as we live in her. She is our new reality, one which wants to be designed.

Hans Werner Richter¹

ARCHITECTURE, DESTRUCTION AND VISUAL CULTURE

The destruction of New York's World Trade Center brought with it unprecedented coverage of both the unfolding tragedy and the aftermath of clean-up and recovery. Images of these events have already taken their place as markers of a particular historical moment, serving as constitutive elements of an "urban imaginary" specific to New York and underlining the vulnerability of any great urban center to violent change. As documents of conflict, they will take their place alongside other images of tragic and large-scale urban destruction such as London during the Blitz, the levelling of Rotterdam and Warsaw as well as the erasure of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Each of these might be considered as sites which the French historian Pierre Nora has termed a *lieu de mémoire*; a site of memory where, in these instances, place and image are fused.

To this list must be added Germany's major metropolitan centers destroyed during the Second World War. However, unlike New York, London or Warsaw, Germany's devastated cities elicited little sympathy from the victorious Allies. Conceived of in British circles as a war of terror against a civilian population, the air war was

deemed a justifiable act of retribution against a ruthlessly aggressive opponent.² By the close of the war, the scale of destruction inflicted by the Allies was immense: of Germany's 19 million residences one quarter were destroyed. Cities were filled with 400 million cubic meters of rubble, creating an "everyday psycho-topography of German cities [...] dominated by ruins."³ Housing the psychological trauma of those who had experienced the destruction, this topography also had a distinctive ethical dimension. For Germans, their ruined cities symbolized a profound social and moral collapse; they were the "moral ruins" of National Socialism. As a topography of moral debris, the ruins carried a unique metaphorical charge; one that would be deployed in various social and political discourses seeking alignment with the new regimes of either east or west. Germany's ruined cities can therefore be seen both as an emotionally-charged psycho-topography and as a potentially explosive ideological terrain, the ground on which the Cold War would later be fought.

To the psychological and ideological connotations of the topography of ruins a third dimension must also be added, one of particular interest within the realm of urbanism and urban representation. In many respects the topography of ruins fulfilled the utopian dream of the dissolution of the city; the *Auflösung der Städte* as had been formulated by architects such as Bruno Taut. For those architects belonging to earlier expressionist utopian movements rejecting "cities of stone", the destruction of war inadvertently offered the possibility of a radically new and "democratic" urban landscape (*Stadtlandschaft*) liberated from the confining scale of the mediaeval city and rigid structure of the nineteenth-century perimeter block. In this utopian vision, buildings, like individuals, were to stand free in the *Stadtlandschaft*. These were the *Träume in Trümmern*, the "dreams in the ruins" dominating much post-war

architectural discourse.⁴ Comprising stark silhouettes, free-standing façades devoid of ornament, and a ground-plane defined by a rolling, landscape-like topography of rubble, urban ruins evoked a distinctive visual and spatial regimen that in many respects resembled the ideals of modern architecture. Therefore, despite their associations with hardship and tragedy, these traits lent the urban ruins of post-war Germany a dual resonance understood either as a condition of retribution and destruction or as the promise of reconstruction and moral rebirth; a promise rejecting the ordered, monumental and repressive systems of representation associated with fascism and the National Socialist state.

Removed from fascist codings, the topography of urban ruins lent themselves to representational systems ranging from expressionism to neorealism, thereby linking the liberating aspects of early twentieth-century utopianism with those of mid-century modernism. And, although all of Germany was in a state of ruin, the specific intersection of the psychological, the ideological and the representational (whether urban, architectural or cinematic) was nowhere more apparent than in the physical, and very contested, terrain of Berlin. While other German cities suffered a greater percentage of destruction, Berlin lost the greatest number of structures. The statistics are staggering: of its 248,000 buildings, 28,000 were destroyed, another 20,000 were completely beyond repair, and a further 178,000 were damaged. In 1945 Berlin was a city in which one could travel for kilometers and see nothing but ruins.

BERLIN: "ILLUSIONS IN STONE" AND THE THEATER OF WAR

A little more than a decade before the end of the war, Albert Speer, Hitler's personal architect, had developed a "Theory of Ruin Value" (*Theorie vom Ruinenwert*) which in its essentials followed Gottfried Semper's views on the value of natural material, particularly stone.⁵ To illustrate this point, two picturesque paintings of the ruins of the Roman Forum by the eighteenth-century painter Hubert Robert were hung in the Cabinet room of Speer's new Chancellery.⁶ The construction site of the Chancellery itself was the subject of two paintings by Paul Hermann, which served as color illustrations in Speer's sumptuous publication *Die neue Reichskanzlei*. Appearing in 1940, by 1942 this monograph from the NSDAP Press had reached its third printing with a total run of forty thousand copies. Architecture, together with its illustration and dissemination, was clearly central to the programmatic efforts of the Third Reich to synthesize and control all areas of visual culture.

Coupling ideological goals with modernist technologies appropriate for mass consumption, this culture reached its apotheosis in the medium of film. Whether as "illusions in stone" or as the "architecture of light" used by Speer in staging party rallies, cinematic efforts were deployed less for purposes of entertainment or historical documentation than as active agents in the construction of a total work of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) in which stagecraft and statecraft were ultimately synonymous.⁷ Incorporating and subverting the resources of Weimar's progressive film industry, the Third Reich transformed Berlin into the heart of a propaganda machine that created its own cinematic regimen and successfully perpetuated this "scopic regime" to the very end. "Germany as the location, Hitler as the producer, Goebbels and his officers as directors and stars, Albert Speer as set designer, and the rest of the population as extras" is Anton Kaes' biting indictment of the Third Reich and its intertwining of politics, architecture and film.⁸ Already in the first weeks after Hitler's ascension to power, Joseph Goebbels, Germany's Minister of Propaganda and responsible for the Reich's film production, "placed a determined value on synthesizing all the possibilities of propaganda into a singular effect."⁹ Films such as Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1934) fused the architecture and choreography of Albert Speer with the technology of montage to produce vast spectacles of power. Even in the closing hours of Berlin's rule, this endeavor never diminished in importance. As the Russians were almost within firing range of Berlin, Goebbels addressed a group of colleagues with the following challenge:

"Gentleman, in a hundred years time they will be showing a fine color film of the terrible days we are living through. Wouldn't you like to play a part in that film? Hold out now, so that a hundred years hence, the audience will not hoot and whistle when you appear on the screen."¹⁰

Under the auspices of the Third Reich, war, destruction and cinema were fused into a seamless whole; a whole in which everyone had to literally play a part. In the "ruin" films of the immediate post-war era, such a synthesis was neither possible nor desirable: no one wished to admit having played a rôle in this particular spectacle, one in which the props as well as the actors had all become suspect.

BERLIN: FROM GROßSTADT TO GRAVEYARD

In 1927 Walther Ruttmann directed his seminal *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*. The film opens with a sequence depicting the arrival in Berlin by train; travel-

ing first through suburbs, then approaching the center city with the tempo of the great engines and finally entering the dark womb-like enclosure of Anhalter Bahnhof. Disembarking passengers pass through the dark interior of Berlin's international train station, emerging as the newborn citizens of a great modern metropolis; the flickering light of the city analogous to the flickering light of its cinematic representation. A decade later Riefenstahl, in the opening minutes of *Olympia. Festival of People* (1936), linked Berlin less to modernity than to antiquity, depicting the athletes of ancient Greece, born of stone, traversing the route northward to Berlin. Continuing with an aerial shot reminiscent of *Triumph of the Will* (1934), Riefenstahl's camera slowly circles Werner March's new Olympic Stadium before descending to the "Parade of Nations" executed under the approving gaze of *Volk and Führer*. In *Olympia* the steel of the modern train station and the fragmented activities of the modern metropolis evident in Ruttmann's *Symphony* are replaced with the stone of the (ancient) stadium and the collective experience of a people united in spirit and purpose. Fast-forwarding another ten years to Wolfgang Staudte's *The Murderers are Among Us* (1946), we are presented with a double-opening. The first sequence depicts a once-metropolitan city, now littered with the debris of war: the shell of a tank, a grave marked with an improvisational cross, dirty children playing in front of an improvised honky tonk. Coming towards us is a lone figure with a wild stare, a soldier dressed in a shabby civilian coat returning to Berlin. The second sequence once again uses the vehicle of a train on its way to Anhalter Bahnhof. Reversing Ruttmann's *Symphony*, the train, crowded with refugees, arrives in a severely-damaged station devoid of roof as cripples crowd past an old travel poster announcing *Das schöne Deutschland*. Three films, each constructed a decade apart, and four cinematic sequences depict the transformation of Berlin from a world city to a world without apparent hope. Regarding the Berlin of 1945, contemporary descriptions confirm that this was no cinematic invention:

"Slowly our train wound its way through Friedrichsfelde towards Lichtenberg. It was an infernal picture. Fire, rubble, ghostly starving people in rags. Lost German soldiers who no longer knew what was happening. Red Army soldiers singing, celebrating and often drunk. Long lines of people patiently waiting in front of water pumps in order to fill small containers. All looked terribly tired, hungry, exhausted and decrepit."¹¹

Willy Brandt, who was to become Mayor of Berlin before becoming Chancellor of West Germany, recounted that:

"Craters, caves, mountains of rubble, debris-covered fields, ruins that hardly allowed one to imagine that they had once been houses, cables and water pipes projecting from the ground like the mangled bowels of antediluvian monsters, no fuel, no light, every little garden a grave-yard and, above all, like an immovable cloud, the stink of putrefaction. In this no man's land lived human beings."¹²

And Hans Speier, also returning to Berlin in 1945, told of similar scenes:

"Anything human among these indescribable ruins must exist in an unknown form. There remains nothing human about it. The water is polluted, it smells of corpses, you see the most extraordinary shapes of ruins and more ruins and still more ruins; houses streets and districts in ruins. All people in civilian clothes among these mountains of ruins appear to merely deepen the nightmare."¹³

If the relationship between the city and cinema can be considered as one in which lived social realities can be both depicted and constructed, what, then, was the social reality of this nightmare of indescribable ruins and what might comprise its relationship to cinema?

"THEY OUGHT TO SCRAPE IT PLUM CLEAN"

For film directors such as Roberto Rossellini, renowned for his portrayal of Italian life under German occupation in *Rome Open City* (1945), Berlin was a shattered city; it was *Germany Year Zero* (1947). Carrying the working title of *Berlin Year Zero*, Rossellini's film paints a bleak picture of a city populated by "rubble women" (*Trümmerfrauen*), the helpless and hapless elderly, and traumatized veterans. It is a city in which the black market is rampant as the ruins team with rats, women selling themselves, and children "orphaned" by the generation that has failed to provide them with a future. As the camera unflinchingly pans across scenes of devastation, a recorded speech by Hitler promising the Germans a victorious future echoes from a gramophone in the great gallery, now bare, of Speer's Chancellery; the emptiness of the gallery analogous to the vacuous flourishes of fascist rhetoric.¹⁴ The record is sold as a souvenir to British soldiers with the ruins of Hitler's bunker serving as background for snapshots of the occupying forces as tourists in an apocalyptic land.¹⁵

In contradistinction to the neorealism of the Rossellini film, Wolfgang Staudte's *The Murderers are Among Us* depicts Berlin in a neo-expressionist idiom, emphasizing

the ghostly shapes of the ruins through dramatic angle shots or night-time illumination. Opening with the title card "Berlin 1945-Die Stadt hat kapituliert" (The City has Surrendered), the film is visually striking and references another story of the murder of innocents in the labyrinthian city. Fifteen years earlier, as Fritz Lang began work on the film of a pathological child-murderer that came to be titled *M. Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder* (1931), Lang had used the working title of "The Murderer Among Us". Lang later recounted receiving much resistance to this title as, apparently, the National Socialists suspected this implicitly referred to them. In the Staudte film the "murderers" are explicitly Nazis who survived the war, seamlessly returning to positions of social prominence and wealth. A film with socialist aspirations, it articulates the fight against both a fascist past and a capitalist future. Regardless of its ideological bias, the film makes an important point against the notion of a "year zero", arguing along the lines later articulated by Günter Grass in which the immediate postwar years exhibit "no collapse, no absolute beginning, just sluggish and murky transitions."¹⁶ Indeed, the casting of Ernst Borchert as a leading figure in the film is itself strikingly illustrative of this murkiness.¹⁷ However, unlike the Lang film in which the clearly defined spaces of Weimar Berlin are characterized by a profound moral ambiguity, or the Rossellini film in which spatial and moral ambiguity coalesce, Staudte's representation insists on the need for moral clarity and precision within the physical ambiguity of the destroyed city.

Germany Year Zero was produced with the assistance of the *Deutsche Film AG*, or DEFA, a film company founded by the Soviets in 1946 to replace the defunct Ufa, the latter hopelessly compromised by its incorporation into Goebbels' propaganda machine and robbed of all equipment and film stock during the first weeks of Russian occupation. Staudte's *The Murderers* was the first film produced by DEFA, the only company licensed to produce films in the Soviet Sector and (later) East Germany. DEFA did not make a practice of employing personell with a clouded past. The situation was markedly different in West Germany, where many stars and directors of the National Socialist period continued their careers with little interruption. DEFA, distancing itself from the "murderers" of the recent past, also paid greater attention to the problems of living in the ruined city, completing the films *Somewhere in Berlin* (1946), *Razzia* (1947), *Street Acquaintance* (1948), and *Our Daily Bread* (1949). Contrasted with these, the first film to be released in the West, *Say the Truth* (1946), was an uninspired comedy begun in late-1944 under the National Socialists and still being filmed in the Ufa's Tempelhof studios when the Russians rolled into Berlin.

Three-quarters complete at the time of Soviet occupation, it was largely recycled under British license. Its release met with severe condemnation from critics, but in the West there was little interest in breaking with the compromised legacy of the late Ufa years; a situation which, as the architectural historian Werner Durth has shown, was mirrored in many architectural careers.¹⁸ West Germany would wait until the 1960's, and the rise of the New German Cinema before making a decisive break with this tradition.

Appearing the same year as both *Say the Truth* and *The Murderers are Among Us, Somewhere in Berlin* was directed by Gerhard Lamprecht, who in 1931, had made *Emil and the Detectives*, an entertaining and compelling film scripted by Billy Wilder of children in the rôle of detectives following a criminal through the streets of Berlin. In *Somewhere* Lamprecht again develops his action around children and a common thief, but instead of following the criminal through well-defined public spaces as depicted in *Emil*, Lamprecht uses the ruins; deploying them as both a no-man's land full of hidden spaces and dangers accessible only to the naive or the outlaw. Here the ruins are depicted as active agents in the destruction of innocent life; agents which must themselves must be destroyed. The film concludes with the children uniting behind their fathers to begin the arduous task of clearing ruins both literal and figurative as they strive to found a new state.

National Socialists used film as a tool of fascist propaganda and the new DEFA company used film both to distance itself from the fascist past and to illustrate the potentials of a socialist future. Americans, highly sensitive to threats of residual fascism and encroaching socialism, also used cinematic representation as a tool of propaganda and moral re-education. American films such as the *Grapes of Wrath* (1940) and *Gone with the Wind* (1939), were not allowed to be shown in post-war Germany because they presented an all-too critical image of American democracy.¹⁹ These complex circumstances of film understood as both a tool of propaganda and as a subject of censorship met Billy Wilder as he returned to film in Germany. Prior to his rôle as scriptwriter for *Emil*, he held a similar position for the documentary-like *People on Sunday* (1930), a "cross-section" film depicting the everyday life of Berlin. Leaving Berlin as a refugee and making his way via France to America, Wilder quickly rose to prominence with his groundbreaking *film noir* Los Angeles thriller *Double Indemnity* (1944). In the following year he had further success with the Academy Award honored film set in New York-*The Lost Weekend* (1945). In the summer of 1945 Wilder was in Berlin working as a U.S. Military Government Film Officer, making recommenda-

tions for the reorganization and de-nazification of the German film industry. On 16 August, Wilder wrote a brief report on the subject of "Propaganda through Entertainment". In it Wilder records his fascination with the destroyed city: "I have spent two weeks in Berlin [...] I have found the town mad, depraved, starving, fascinating as a background for a movie. My notebooks are filled with hot research stuff. I have photographed every corner I need for atmosphere."²⁰ Wilder was not interested in exploiting this condition, rather his concern was for re-education through film and, quoting General Eisenhower, he insisted that: "we are not here to degrade the German people but to make it impossible to wage war", giving Germans "a little hope to redeem themselves in the eyes of the world."²¹ Finally, not only providing hope of redemption but for existence itself was Wilder's objective:

"I have met [...] a Frau in Berlin-she was working in a bucket brigade cleaning up the rubble on Kurfürstendamm. I had thrown away a cigarette and she had picked up the butt. We started a conversation. Here it is: "I am so glad you Americans have finally come because...." "Because what?" "because now you will help us repair the gas." "Sure we will." "That's all we are waiting for, my mother and I...." "I suppose it will be nice to get a warm meal again." "It is not to cook...." There was a long pause. I kind of felt what she meant, and I wished she would not say it. She did. "We will turn it on, but we won't light it. Don't you see! It is just to breath it in, deep." "Why do you say that?" "Why? Because we Germans have nothing to live for any more." "If you call living for Hitler a life, I guess you are right." I held out a brand new Lucky Strike to her. She did not take it. She just picked up the bucket and went back to the rubble."²²

In *A Foreign Affair* (1948) Wilder would reference this conversation through an American Officer's remark that the repair of gas lines had brought with it an increase in suicides. Wilder believed that an "entertainment film" involving a love story and, in contrast to the documentary-like character of Rossellini's film, the "highest possible level [of] technique, writing, casting, etc." would be the most effective means to achieve "our program of re-educating the German people."²³ However, it was not his intention to depict the American G.I. as a "flag waving hero or a theorizing apostle of democracy. As a matter of fact, in the beginning of the picture I want him not to be too sure of what the hell this war was all about. I want to touch on fraternization, on homesickness, on black market. [...] There shall be no pompous messages."²⁴

To achieve his objectives Wilder assembled an impressive cast including Marlene Dietrich, who, like Wilder, had fled the National Socialists. It is from Dietrich's complicated figure of Erika von Schlütow, fallen aristocrat and one-time mistress of a ranking NS official, that we hear a succinct recapitulation of Berlin's recent history:

"Bombed out a dozen times, everything caved in and pulled out from under me, my country, my possessions, my beliefs. Yet somehow I kept going. Months and months in air raid shelters, crammed in with five thousand other people. I kept going [...] it was living hell."²⁵

The response of the newly arriving American Congressional delegation to this trauma has its own twists. The opening sequence depicts an American plane flying first through the clouds and then over Berlin. The scene is a remarkable reversal of the opening sequence of Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, which documented Hitler's triumphant Nuremberg rally of 1934. Here, rather than a triumphant Hitler passing over the holistic contours of Nuremberg, the Americans pass over Berlin's sea of ruins. Nonetheless their supremacy is undercut as the leader of the delegation is beset with airsickness. Other members of the delegation voice various opinions as to what should be undertaken with ruins in which "life goes on", the drawling Texan suggesting that: "They ought to scrape it plum clean, plant some grass and move in a herd of longhorns."²⁶ But it is the Republican Congresswoman Frost who informs us as to "why we were sent to Berlin." In her words:

"We're here to investigate the morals of American occupation troops. There are 12,000 of our boys policing that pesthole down there and according to our reports, they are being infected by a kind of moral malaria. It is our duty to their wives, mothers and sisters, if these facts are true, to fumigate that place with all the insecticides at our disposal."²⁷

Berlin as a "pesthole", the site not only of a "moral malaria" but of venereal disease and the often venal trade of the black market from which much of the city lived and which measured the price of goods in American cigarettes. The primary center of the black market, both in fact and as depicted in the film, was the Brandenburg Gate and the area immediately adjacent to the Reichstag. It was so accepted as a fact of post-war existence that, once bus service began again, Berlin's drivers would announce the stop as "Black Market" (*Schwarzmarkt*). Post-war Berlin was a site of trade and not one of currency; life in the city concerned less with

regulation than negotiation. In *A Foreign Affair*, Marlene Dietrich sings of the *Black Market*:

"I'm selling out. Take all I've got.
Ambitions, convictions, the works, why not?
Enjoy these goods
For boy, these goods-are *hot*."²⁸

In her encounter with the complexities of occupier and occupied as they negotiate for advantage in a Berlin dominated by the black market and ruins, the frosty Congresswoman Frost inevitably thaws. On June 25th, 1948, Berlin's black market ended with the introduction of the Deutsche Mark, the circulation of the new currency slightly preceding the film's premier. Opening in the summer of 1948, *A Foreign Affair* received favorable audience response and French papers viewed it as an ironic version of Rossellini's *Germany Year Zero*. However, the general American press was more critical, *Time* calling it "too inhumane" and the *Saturday Review* insisting that "the trials and tribulations of Berlin are not the stuff of which cheap comedy is made and rubble makes lousy custard pies."²⁹ But it was Wilder's distancing himself from the notion of re-education as he depicted American forces as frequently opportunistic that brought down the wrath of elements of the American government on the film. At this time the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was opening its investigations into Hollywood and within this context an "indignant attack on the film was delivered from the floor of Congress."³⁰ Given the context of Berlin, and the long, costly war against the dictatorial control exercised by the National Socialists on all areas of visual culture, the deep irony of HUAC's attack on this film is only too clear. At this historical juncture the American government was not prepared to accept its often ambiguous rôle as occupier of a ruined city.

BORDERS, BLOCKADES AND THE END OF THE RUIN FILM

The topography of ruins with its dissolution of boundaries between public and private, right and wrong, east and west-with its inherent porosity-was understood by the Germans as a symbol of moral collapse and by the Americans as a preamble to the Cold War. As venereal disease infected the bodies and "moral malaria" the spirit of the occupying Allies, alien "agents," whether as Allied defectors, Russian spies or Hollywood directors, would be seen as destructive to the health of the body politic and the nation. As a primary point of contact between East and West, Berlin's permeability remained a primary source of contagion for both sides. Whereas

Americans responded to this perceived threat with a program of re-education, the Soviets took an explicitly spatial approach by initiating, during the spring and early summer of 1948, the Berlin Blockade.

Berlin's blockaded isolation was compounded by increased attention to exact lines of demarcation and control within the city; a condition depicted in George Seaton's *The Big Lift* (1950). Beginning in Hawaii, we follow the organisation of American aircraft flying once again to Germany; this time to participate not in Berlin's destruction but in the Berlin Airlift. Starring Montgomery Clift and Cornell Borchers, the film incorporates a great deal of documentary footage and technical information pertaining to the logistics of the Airlift and relieving the blockaded city. Cast as a member of the U.S. Airforce flying to Berlin, Clift encounters the character played by Borchers, a *Trümmerfrau* highly adept at negotiating the complicated territory of occupied Berlin. Striking scenes of Berlin's *Tiergarten*, replete with the great flak tower that would be demolished a short time later, impart the sense that much of the city is still a no-man's land. *Trümmerfrauen*, however, have succeeded-at least in the western sector-in ordering the destruction into specific sites waiting to be cleared. Of interest is a scene at Potsdamer Platz which, once again a busy crossing point, is depicted as a site of control and confrontation between East German and British military police. In the heart of old Berlin, what is of importance in the years 1949-50 is the exactness of the lines of demarcation between the controlling authorities; precision being of paramount concern as a few meters make the difference between arrest and freedom. The film depicts confusion as to the exact line of demarcation, but given its 1950 production date, this is a remarkably prescient scene prefiguring the final partitioning of Berlin a decade later. Thus Berlin, considered in fact, in the urban imaginary, and in its cinematic representation, experienced repeated transformations; shifting first from the ruined to the blockaded city and, finally, on 13 August, 1961, to the divided city.³¹

CONCLUSION

Even though ruins remained in the city well into the post-reunification period, the topography of ruins as a terrain without borders in which the realms of private and public, legal and illegal, life and death were continually negotiated came to an end with the reestablishment of decisive lines of demarcation and control. Similarly, the ruin film as both a reflection of a particular historical moment and as a potential agent for envisioning and fashioning an urban landscape, a

Stadtlandschaft as envisioned by many of Berlin's early modernists, was replaced by the images associated with the early phases of the West's Economic Miracle and the East's increasing political and spatial isolation. Therefore, despite the relatively brief period during which these films were made, the depiction of the disintegration of social and familial structures as analogous to the dissolution of the city by Rossellini and the more complex relation of past and present, memory and identity, and of the individual and the collective as construed amongst the ruins by Staudte, Lamprecht and Wilder. Together with a handful of other films produced immediately after the war, they are both valuable historical documents and remarkable examples of urban representation.

NOTES

- ¹ Hans Werner Richter in: *Ruf*, 15, (15.03.1947). Translation by the author. The original text is as follows: "Die neue Wirklichkeit. Das Kennzeichen unsere Zeit ist die Ruine. Sie umgibt unser Leben. Sie umsäumt die Straßen unsere Städte. Sie ist unsere Wirklichkeit. In ihren ausgebrannten Fassaden blüht nicht die blaue Blume der Romantik, sondern der dämonischen Geist der Zerstörung, des Verfalls und der Apokalypse. Sie ist die äußere Wahrzeichen der inneren Unsicherheit des Menschen unsere Zeit. Die Ruine lebt in uns wie wir in ihr. Sie ist unsere neue Wirklichkeit, die gestaltet werden will."
- ² In the decades following World War II discussion of Great Britain's air war against civilian population centers and the effects upon the German populace was largely repressed in Germany. The reasons for this are complex with different approaches taken by the former East, which made ample use of the destruction of Dresden as a vehicle for both anti-fascist and anti-capitalist propaganda, and the former West. Neither side, however, wished ever to appear as seeking a legitimization for the horrors of the Holocaust. Recently greater attention has been paid to the ruthless destructiveness of the air war, particularly since the appearance of W.G. Sebald's *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, (Munich: Hanser, 1999). Resulting from a series of lectures held by Sebald in Zürich in 1997, this essay appeared in translation first in *The New Yorker* (Nov. 4, 2002) under the title "A Natural History of Destruction" and then in the collection entitled *On the Natural History of Destruction*, (New York: Random House, 2003). In Germany, Sebald's work prompted further publications addressing this issue such as Jörg Friedrich's factually detailed *Der Brand. Deutschland im Bombenkrieg 1940-1945*, (Munich: Ullstein, 2002). Friedrich's book ran to at least eleven printings in the first year of its printing and was followed by a pictorial account entitled *Brändstätten. Der Anblick des Bombenkrieges*, (Munich: Propyläen, 2003). The German weekly *Der Spiegel* has popularized this topic with *Als Feuer vom Himmel fiel. Der Bombenkrieg gegen die Deutschen*, (Special Issue 1, 2003) and, specific to Berlin, Felix Kellerhoff and Wieland Giebel have edited a series of recollections under the title *Als die Tage zu Nächten wurden. Berliner Schicksale im Luftkrieg*, (Berlin: Giebel, 2003). For a general introduction to the destruction throughout Europe, see Hans Magnus Enzensberger's *Europa in Ruinen. Augenzeugenberichte aus den Jahren 1944 bis 1958*, (Frankfurt/Main: Eichborn, 1990). Most incisive are those texts written during or shortly after the war, particularly Hans Erich Nossack's *Der Untergang*, (Hamburg: Wolfgang Krüger, 1948), Edgar A. Hoffmann's *Hamburg '45. So lebten wir zwischen Trümmern und Ruinen*, (Leer: Gerhard Rautenberg, 1985) as well as Curt Riess' descriptions in *Berlin Berlin 1945-1953*, (Berlin: Non Stop, 1953). Lastly, Heinrich Böll's novel *Der Engel schwieg*, (Cologne, Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1992) is also of note.
- ³ See Rudy Koshar: *Germany's Transient Pasts. Preservation and National Memory in the Twentieth Century*, (Chapel Hill, NC.: University of North Carolina Press, 1998): 200-202.
- ⁴ See for example Werner Durth and Niels Gutschow: *Träume in Trümmern: Planungen zum Wiederaufbau zerstörter Städte im Westen Deutschlands, 1940-1950*, (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1988).
- ⁵ See for example Alex Scobie: *Hitler's State Architecture. The Impact of Classical Antiquity*, (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990): 93-96.
- ⁶ *Ibid*, 94; footnote 5.
- ⁷ See Dieter Bartetzko: *Illusionen in Stein. Stimmungsarchitektur im deutschen Faschismus. Ihre Vorgeschichte in Theater- und Film-Bauten*, (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1985) and D. Bartetzko: *Zwischen Zucht und Ekstase. Zur Theatralik von NS-Architektur*, (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann, 1985).
- ⁸ Anton Kaes: *From Hitler to Heimat. The Return of History as Film*, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1989): 4. Originally published as A. Kaes, *Deutschlandbilder. Die Wiederkehr der Geschichte als Film*, (Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 1987).
- ⁹ *Licht-Bild-Bühne*, 9. March, 1933. Quoted in Joseph Wulf: *Theater und Film im Dritten Reich. Eine Dokumentation*, (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1966): 290. "Über Dr. Goebbels' Pläne ist so viel bekannt, daß er entscheidenden Wert auf die Zusammenfassung aller Möglichkeiten der Propaganda zu einheitlicher Wirkung legen würde."
- ¹⁰ Quoted in: A. Kaes: *From Hitler to Heimat*, 4. For an excellent account of Joseph Goebbels and his official interest in film see Felix Moeller: *Der Filmminister. Goebbels und der Film im Dritten Reich*, (Berlin: Henschel, 1998). For an account of the fate of the Third Reich's film material in the immediate post-war years, particularly films started but not completed under the National Socialists, see Holger Theuerkauf: *Goebbels' Filmerbe. Das Geschäft mit unveröffentlichten Ufa-Filmen*, (Berlin: Ullstein, 1998).
- ¹¹ Wolfgang Leonard. Quoted in Alexandra Richie: *Faust's Metropolis. A History of Berlin*, (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1998): 608.
- ¹² Willy Brandt. Quoted in A. Richie: *Faust's Metropolis*, 608.
- ¹³ Hans Spaier. Quoted in A. Richie: *Faust's Metropolis*, 632.
- ¹⁴ For Rossellini's critique of fascist rhetoric in *Open City*, see Millicent Marcus: *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986): 33-37.
- ¹⁵ For a general discussion of cultural life in early post-war Berlin see also Wolfgang Schivelbush: *In a Cold Crater. Cultural and Intellectual Life in Berlin, 1945-1948*, K. Barry (trans.), (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). Schivelbush devotes a chapter to film, but is not concerned with representations of Berlin in ruin.
- ¹⁶ Quoted in R. Koshar: *Germany's Transient Pasts*, 200.
- ¹⁷ Ernst Borchert starred as the films' primary character Dr. Mertens, an individual traumatized by the inhumanity and brutality of a war waged against civilians. Unlike the fictional Dr. Mertens, Borchert had joined the NSDAP in 1933, making a career for himself by starring in films such as *U-Boote westwärts* (1941). Hardly an innocent, in 1945 he failed to provide proper information to the authorities regarding his past, thus avoiding his "de-nazification" process and risking both an appearance before an American military tribunal and the film's debut.
- ¹⁸ Werner Durth: *Deutsche Architekten: Biographische Verflechtungen, 1900-1970*, (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1986).
- ¹⁹ Ralph Willett: "Billy Wilder's *A Foreign Affair* (1945-1948): "The Trials and Tribulations of Berlin"" in: *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 7:1, (1987): 3-14, esp. 4. Also see R. Willett: *The Americanization of Germany 1945-49*, (London: Routledge, 1989): 28-44. 20. Billy Wilder to Davidson Taylor, 16. August 1945: "Propaganda through Entertainment." Reprinted in R. Willett: "Billy Wilder's *A Foreign Affair* (1945-1948). Wilder's letter, printed with the letterhead "Headquarters United States Airforce, European Theater. Information Control Division" is reprinted on pages 13-14, this quote is from page 14.

²¹ Ibid.: 14.

²² Ibid.: 13.

²³ Ibid.: 13. Wilder's ideal propaganda film was William Wyler's *Mrs. Miniver* (1942) of which he states "President Roosevelt having seen the first print of Mrs. Miniver urged Metro to put the film on the market as quickly as possible. They rushed it out. It did a job no documentary, no 50 newsreels could have done." Mrs. Miniver was also a film held in highest esteem by Joseph Goebbels who, writing of Veit Harlan's preparations for the monumental film *Kolberg*, writing "Harlan [...] muß von seinen Monumentalplänen etwas herunter und den Film etwas mehr im Stil von "Mrs. Miniver" gestalten." Quoted in F. Moeller: *Der Filmminister.*: 299-300.

²⁴ Ibid.: 14.

²⁵ From Wilder's *A Foreign Affair*.

²⁶ From Wilder's *A Foreign Affair*. Although this assessment seems harsh, it pales next to a comment made by the character of actor

Paul Douglas in George Seaton's *The Big Lift* (1950), cinematography by Charles Clarke. While flying over Frankfurt enroute to Berlin and participation in the air lift, the following conversation occurs between Douglas (portraying a veteran of the war harboring a particular dislike for Germans and Berlin) and another serviceman in the plane. Serviceman: Boy, this place sure caught it, didn't it? Douglas: Not enough, this is where they should have used the a-bomb.

²⁷ From Wilder's *A Foreign Affair*.

²⁸ From Wilder's *A Foreign Affair*.

²⁹ Quoted in R. Willett: "Billy Wilder's *A Foreign Affair* (1945-1948): 11.

³⁰ R. Willett: "Billy Wilder's *A Foreign Affair* (1945-1948): 5.

³¹ Yet another Billy Wilder film, *One, Two, Three*, (1961) depicts Berlin just prior to the erection of the Wall, which was built towards the end of the filming in Berlin and is referenced in the opening narrative.