

A Tour

Enormous cars are parked on either side of Unter den Linden near Friedrichstraße. Liveried men with gold letters on their caps stand before them, inviting passers-by on a tour; over there, one of the firms is called 'Elite'; over here, 'Cheese'. Do I want a life of ease, or guileless petty bourgeois existence? — I'll take 'Cheese'.

So now I'm seated on a leather seat, surrounded by real foreigners. They all seem sure that they'll finish the tour between eleven and one; the family of hyphenated Americans to my right even speaks of continuing on to Dresden in the evening. In multiple languages, the driver asks the guests he's just lured in if they understand German and if they are hard of hearing; it's nothing to be ashamed of, it just affects where you're seated. You get more air up front, but in back you can hear better.

Red writing in English on the white flag in front of me: 'Sightseeing'. What insistent redundancy! All at once, the entire right half of our travel group rises, while I and the others on the left are commanded to remain seated and present our faces to the photographer, who is lifting the cap from his lens there on the side-walk, turning me into a permanent piece of tourism in his group photo. From out of the depths, a native hand reaches

up with picture postcards. We lord over it all, we tourists, we foreigners! The lad in front of me, who looks like a dentist, purchases an entire album, first for the memories, then later probably for his waiting room. He compares Old Fritz¹ on glossy paper with the real bronze statue, which we're slowly driving past — he's sitting up very high on his steed in an unforgettable posture, arms akimbo under his broad coat, with a walking stick, and his famed tricorner slanting a bit across his head. He looks over our heads at the pilasters and windows of the university, which was once his brother's castle. He doesn't look benevolent, at least as far as we can tell from below. We're nearly eye-to-eye with the crowd of peers and heroes that decorate his pedestal. Things are a bit tight for them between the wall and the stone precipice. They're held together by four horsemen at the corners of the pedestal, who aren't letting anyone off.

Now we're gliding past the long facade of the library, its sunny side. Silks, leathers, and metals entice from the marquees of elegant shops. The lace curtains at Restaurant Hiller awaken distant memories of happy hours, the nearly forgotten fragrance of lobster and Chablis, the old porter who led you so discreetly to the *cabinets particuliers*. I tear myself away — I'm a foreigner here, after all — only to be caught up again. Travel agencies, mesmerising displays of world maps and globes, the magic of the little green books with red notes,² seductive names of distant cities. Ah, those blessed departures from Berlin! How

1 For a time, Berliners called the equestrian statue of Friedrich the Great on Unter den Linden by his nickname *Alte Fritz*, 'Old Fritz'.

2 Griebens travel guides were popular in Germany between the wars (during which time Michelin did not update its famous red guides for Germany).

callously one leaves our beloved city.

But pay attention now. We're turning onto Wilhelmstraße. Our driver announces in strange American-sounding German: 'We are now approaching the street that houses the government of Germany.' It's quiet here, almost like a private driveway. Two large-paned lanterns extend an old-fashioned invitation in front of the pastel-yellow facade, behind which Germany's foreign policy is decided. What mellow oil-light might have burned within them, back when they were new? But our driver doesn't allow us to sink into this peace; he draws our gaze to the enormous building complex across the way and cries, himself impressed: 'All that's the judiciary!' — 'And here,' he continues, 'filled with gold from cellar to ceiling, the Ministry of Finance.' That's a joke that only the real foreigners can laugh about.³ But I comfort myself with the lovely expanses of Wilhelmplatz, the flags fluttering on the Hotel Kaiserhof, the green flourishes growing about the rafters of the pergola at the entrance to the subway, and with General Zieten's hunched Hussar back.⁴

A chaos of towers, bulges, parapets, and wires: 'Leipziger Straße, the most important shopping street in the metropolis!' But for the time being, we're only crossing it. We drive farther down Wilhelmstraße, past many antique stores. (A memory surfaces of the criminally beautiful days of inflation. Wendelin,

3 During the period in which this book was written, the Weimar Republic struggled with war reparations, racing inflation, and the global economic depression.

4 Wilhelmplatz was renamed Thälmannplatz by the GDR, and in the 1980s was covered with apartment complexes. Before its destruction, it featured a number of bronze sculptures of Prussian generals, Hans Joachim von Zieten among them.

do you still remember Mr. Krotoschiner back then in his store, staring at the chair with the crest between the Pomeranian cupboard and the Trentino table!)⁵ We pass a building by a well-known architect. Older memories of ambitious youth arise, when all one needed to do was study. It was here I heard many instructive lectures.

At Prince Heinrich's palace, we stop for a moment to look through the beautiful hall of columns into the old courtyard and its windows, as well as at the simple building adjoined to it. Both have the light-brownish colour that the poet Laforgue noticed in many Berlin palaces when he came to Berlin in the 1880s, to read to the Kaiserin. He called it *couleur café au lait* and it seemed to him to be the predominant colour of the capital. In the world of Wilhelmstraße and many other parts of the city, that is still true today.

Our hasty driver doesn't stop at the well-known museums on Prinz Albrechtstraße. Most of the passengers look over at the big garden behind the state parliament building. I look into the windows of the National Library of Art, where collections await tranquil visitors, with beautiful images of masquerade costumes from the magnificent Lipperheide Collection. What I'd really like to do is get out of the car and go see my dear pictures, but today my duties are that of a foreigner, and I shouldn't linger too long on the site of the old Museum of the Decorative Arts, which itself has been uprooted so often.⁶

⁵ Hessel is mischievously inserting a scene from his 1927 novel *Heimliches Berlin*.

⁶ The Museum of Decorative Arts was founded in 1868, relocated in 1881 and again in 1921.

Most of its collection is now in the castle. The students of the decorative arts once threw the best *Karneval* celebrations in Berlin, but those now take place in Charlottenburg since the art schools have been relocated there. As a true *laudator temporis acti* (one who praises times gone by), of course I shan't believe that they're as good there as they were here. Oh, even the little parties that were thrown on the top floor here after the art school moved were unforgettable. We glide past the bulging High Renaissance structure of the Ethnological Museum. It too is only named; nothing is said of Turfan or Gandhara, Inca or Maori. Our leader is more interested in announcing, far in advance: 'Vaterland, Café Vaterland, the biggest café in the capital city!' The foreigners stare at the building's gaudy cupola, and those who have already experienced some Berlin evenings advise the others to visit this monster establishment with its many departments, this culinary ethnological museum by Kempinski, with its panoramas lit up at night.⁷

Yes, they should visit. What good do our old palaces and museums do them? What they want is colossal Germany. So, just venture there this very evening, my good people, in the old Piccadilly, now known as Haus Vaterland! You'll find food from the fatherland and abroad. Once the elevator has carried you up from the opulent foyer, you can drink a traditional vintage and gaze into the panorama, while a thunderstorm is enacted for you over hilly vineyards, rivers, and ruins. Once the sky clears,

⁷ Haus Vaterland featured various ethnically themed restaurants, with panoramic scenery and lighting displays. It was opened by the Kempinski family of restaurateurs in 1928. It had previously operated under various concepts and names, including Picadillyhaus.

Rhenish girls will do a jig for you under clusters of grapes to a tune played by students in velvet jackets. You must see it. From there, please stroll into the bodega, where menfolk with brightly coloured cloth wrapped about their heads and torsos will bring you something fiery to transport you to a Spanish *taberna*. The two bashful Spanish ladies from Ackerstraße, sitting in the corner there, will have their spirits raised by a dance performance. When you enter the Wild West bar, according to the program, you'll experience all of the romance of the American prairie. Buy the program, by all means! Then you'll know right away how you're supposed to feel. What is charming Vienna like at the Grinzing Heuriger restaurant? Dusk falls before the visitor's eyes. What does Hungarian wine on a sun-smouldering Hungarian grassland make your heart ache for? To linger, that's what. What awaits us in a Turkish cafe? Fairytale magic from the *Thousand and One Nights*. Don't miss out on sitting on a taboret at tables with genuine Arabic writing on them, drinking the strongest Berlin-Turkish *mokka double* anywhere. You can see your neighbour with his cigar stub mirrored in the glass wall that separates the guests from the Bosphorus panorama, as if he were sitting in the foreground of the picture, at a table with a hookah.

But now you're thirsty for a beer, and you'll find it at the Munich Löwenbräu, which according to the program, is decorated with *joie de vivre*. The girls waiting on you speak with a more Bavarian accent than the Bavarians do, just for your benefit, and they wear straw hats with feathers, blue jackets, and ruffled striped skirts. Sometimes they yodel along if it

suits the music, which is played by the Buam brothers, who are wearing suspenders. Their pants are patterned with a decorative Bavarian design. There is also an artistically executed glass window here with a view of the 'romantic wilderness scenery around the Eibsee'. And the show is already getting started. The hall darkens. Lights go on in the Eibsee Hotel. Sparing no costs, the management provides *alpenglou*. As soon as the hall brightens, a trio takes the stage: lad, lass, and fool, as if they'd come straight from the now-defunct Oktoberfest exhibition on Kaiserdamm. The two competing suitors hit each other over the head with real barrels. No, the management doesn't spare any costs. If you still want to go into the big ballroom, which 'is a deserving equal to the glamour of the most beautiful ballrooms in the world', and you want 'the opportunity to dance on incandescent parquet', you'll have to pay three marks extra, but they'll be taken off your food and drinks total. In exchange, you'll see a ceiling of polished polychromatic mirrors, upheld by palm trunks as columns. 'Deutsche girls' in veils of gauze brush against you on their way up to the stage. A muscular, bathing-suited young man dances for you with a lady who, apart from a pair of bathing trunks, is only wearing something like a brassiere; he dances with her, spins her as she hangs with just her wrists looped around his neck, performs manoeuvres with her. Then the German girls slip down to perform a sort of synchronised swim routine on the floor and sing about our age, the age of sports.

Now you are granted relief from so much performance. A larger-than-life teddy bear sits by the window, which the girls

hug as they brush by, and you walk past it out onto the open balcony. In the bright night you see old Berlin's yellow-brown Potsdam train station, the same sober one that our guide is pointing to now in the daylight.

Excursioners in light-coloured skirts and shift dresses climb the steps leading up to the station. Those lucky things, enjoying such a nice autumn day. Some also go through the narrow entrance to the little Wannsee train station. What I'd really like to do is follow them. A sailboat, or even just a paddleboat.⁸ Potsdam and the Havelsee, the secret soul of Berlin, otherworldly places here on earth! And today a weekday. But now we're arriving at Potsdamer Platz. The first thing to say about it is that it isn't really a plaza at all, but rather what they call a *carrefour* in Paris, a crossroads, an intersection; we don't really have the right word for it in German. That Berlin once came to an end at the city gate here, with country roads branching off from it — you'd have to have a well-informed eye to recognise that from the shape of the intersection. The traffic here is so heavy in such a tight space that I'm often impressed at how smoothly it flows. The many flower baskets and flower saleswomen are soothing. And in the middle stands the famed traffic-light tower, watching over the action in the streets like a referee's chair in tennis. The huge advertisements on the buildings' walls and roofs look strangely sleepy and hollow in broad daylight. They're waiting for nighttime to awaken. Sharp and smooth, the glass form of the renovated Telschow confectionary building represents the

⁸ Wannsee and Havelsee are lakes that were day-trip destinations that could be reached by train.

newest Berlin. The corner with Cafe Josty remains in the old days. But on the other side of Bellevuestraße — once concealed behind a high wall covered in posters — there's something completely new, a department store with a Parisian name. Will it be as beautiful as the Wertheim department store, Messel's masterpiece behind the foliage on Leipziger Platz? We're allowed to cast a quick glance down Bellevuestraße, which is increasingly becoming a Berlin Rue la Boétie. Art gallery sidles up to art gallery. And the window displays in the fashion boutiques become ever more exquisite, more like still-lives. Even the private cars, big and small, waiting in the bay of the driveway in front of Hotel Esplanade seem to have benefitted from modernity. Their bodies are ever-improving combinations of hull and cap, with wonderful colours.

A green light in the traffic tower. We circle Potsdamer Platz and drive along the white columns of the two little gateway temples. According to colloquial Berlin humour, the bronze General Brandenburg is talking to his counterpart General Wrangel about the weather. ('Rotten weather we got t'day,' says Wrangel, extending a hand, holding his ceremonial field-marshal's baton, in front of him. 'Utter shit,' replies Brandenburg, keeping his right hand flat.) More ladies selling flowers stand in long rows to the left and right of these warriors. The side entrance to the Wertheim department store stands before us with narrow, proud buttresses and metal ornamentation. The gaze wanders from the shining new materials in its tall display windows to the bowls, plates, and cups made of white or subtly coloured old-Berlin porcelain there in the building that houses

the national — once royal — factory.

The lordly manor nearby seems empty, as if it were for rent; supposedly they've got the State Council and the Social Welfare offices quartered there for want of lords at the moment.

The Ministry of War next door also seems rather outmoded. Even most Reichswehr proceedings are handled elsewhere. A couple of tiny stone soldiers in old-fashioned uniforms stand over the entryway like the toys of bygone royal children, in whose palaces and gardens toy cannons were to be seen. A few giants or Atlases carry a huge stone globe above the Ministry of the Postal Service, which our guide points out to us on the next corner. Hopefully, they won't disrupt traffic by dropping it in the street. Such globes are to be found at several locations in Berlin; they are among the horrors of the last years of the previous century, which now are being cleared away from various privately owned buildings, in massive clean-up efforts. I personally know of one on a major commercial street in Schöneberg, and a no less imposing one of glass stands in the Bavarian Quarter. Since it's not even supported by a reliable colossus like the one here over the postal ministry, I'm always afraid that it will come rolling down, and I hope that it will be eliminated with the next major renovation. It could be put to use in a museum for neo-Wilhelmine architecture and sculpture; this could ultimately be a repository for much of the irritating public and private ostentatiousness lying around the city. The best thing about this massive corner building is that it houses a collection of old vehicles; there are postal coaches and early locomotives in miniature, and above all, a lot of old stamps and

seals, a feast for the memory of anyone who 'traded' Thurn-and-Taxis' and Old Prussia for Guatemalan hummingbirds and the swan of Australia.

Mauerstraße curves off to the left and around the corner to the right, a pleasant break from this world of right angles. It traces the path of the old city wall, and it is said that the soldier-king Friedrich Wilhelm I, who blanketed all of Friedrichstadt with lovely buildings in rank and file, was vexed by the inevitable curvature of the old street. Before we've gotten a closer look at either of the (also round) domed churches — Bethlehem Church to the right, and Schleiermacher's domain, the Holy Trinity Church,¹⁰ to the left — our driver is already moving on. And instead of gazing at old church walls, we're looking at the fur, linen, silk, and steel of extravagant window displays. Before the massive naked stone girls over the entryway can lure us into the Tietz department store, we turn toward Gendarmenmarkt. Even from afar, the two patina-ed church domes and the green winged horse on the roof of the theatre gleam against the dust-blue sky. Now we stop. I stare at the 'stage entrance'. You others, you real foreigners, have never stood waiting here, as students, to see the sublime actress from the *Maid of Orleans* emerge. You are shown the two churches with the famed domed towers by Gontard, which Friedrich the Great had him add there,¹¹ and it

9 'Thurn-und-Taxis', a German noble family who operated postal services in Europe between the 16th and 18th centuries.

10 Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), theologian and philosopher, preached in the Holy Trinity Church from 1809 to 1834.

11 Carl von Gontard (1731–1791) was a German architect. Though he did not create either church on Gendarmenmarkt, he designed the towers added to both in 1785.

is emphasised that the one is a German and the other a French cathedral. Both church towers are significantly more grandiose than the older churches huddled shyly next to them. Happily, the theatre is a wonderful unity. Schinkel erected it on the remaining walls of the national theatre, from the Iffland-era,¹² that was destroyed in a great fire. Oh, the beautiful stairway up to its proud front hall with the slender Ionian columns! Though you've never climbed it. Access for your basic visitor was there under the stairs. Ultimately, the stairway was reserved for the royal court, back when this was still a royal theatre. Begas's statue of Schiller stands somewhat haplessly before the whole thing. He would have preferred to be a plain old mossy Triton fountain. Instead, he stands there performing his social duties in a toga, with several pretentious ladies on his pedestal, representing poetry, drama, history, and philosophy.

The foreigners are made aware of the State Bank of Prussia, formerly the 'Royal Prussian Maritime Trading Company', while I peer over at the famed wine tavern where Ludwig Devrient¹³ liked to tipple with E.T.A. Hoffmann, who lived on this square at a time when the Gendarmenmarkt was surrounded by palatial state-owned buildings. You must think of Hoffmann's 'My Cousin's Corner Window' and how, in his Warsaw dressing gown with his big pipe in hand, he looked out

¹² August Wilhelm Iffland (1759–1814), actor and playwright, was director of the national theatre from 1796 until his death.

¹³ Ludwig Devrient (1784–1832), German actor. There is a famed watercolour of Devrient and Hoffmann drinking together at the sekt bar Lutter & Wegner, the establishment Hessel is hinting at.

over the lively Berlin marketplace.¹⁴

We go around a corner and now we're on one of these strange oblique-angled plazas. A horrid building used to stand nearby where political prisoners were interned. Now an industrious business quarter has sprung up all around. The only old-time things left are the plots of land; this is where the various incarnations of Wallstraße begin, as well as the terrain of the old Friedrichswerder quarter. This is the third Berlin, outside both of the old cities that combined to form it: the old Berlin on the far side of the river and the nearer old city of Cölln on the Spree. Here we take a right, past the angels praying before the transom windows of the hospital run by the grey sisters of holy Elisabeth.¹⁵ Farther along Alte Leipziger Straße, we pass the wonderful corner at Raule's Hof.¹⁶ Our leader turns onto the broad avenue leading north, past the reddish brickwork of the Reichsbank, designed by Hitzig. He also built the stock exchange, which spurred a veritable renaissance in business and industry for a Berlin whose wealth was accumulating in the eighteen sixties and seventies. Both buildings shook off the modest classicism of the Schinkel school, and were in any case better than that which came afterwards, though they did clear the way for the Wilhelmines to dabble in the old styles.

¹⁴ Ernst Theodor Amadeus (E.T.A.) Hoffmann (1777–1826) was a Prussian Romantic author, a jurist, composer, music critic, draftsman, and caricaturist. His short story 'My Cousin's Corner Window' is essentially an extended description of the marketplace.

¹⁵ The Elisabeth Hospital, today known as the Evangelische Elisabeth Klinik.

¹⁶ Benjamin Raule (1634–1707), entrepreneur, erected a residential building on Alte Leipziger Straße and created a narrow lane connecting it to Adlerstraße. Both the building and lane bore his name. Neither exist today.

Our next destination, the Friedrichswerder Church on Werderscher Markt in Schinkel's so-called 'modified gothic' style remains absolutely innocent. It is an upright old Prussian construction, in the brown brick that we know from a host of other churches and train stations in our good city, which looks more dutiful than devout, commemorating 'loyalty and frankness'¹⁷ more than mysticism. Above the entryway, a stern iron angel slays a trespassing dragon, not gazing dreamily into the distance — unlike his older kin of wood, stone, or paint — but staring directly at his victim. Do the elegant saleswomen and clients of the large fashion house across the street ever look up at him? Do they sympathise with the fact that he's so occupied with his mission, or would they rather he dreamed a bit into the unknown, and beyond?

Across the way is the Schleusen Bridge over the Spree and the Schloßplatz, the palace square. For those who are craning their necks to observe the construction, our guide promises that afterwards we'll come back, but first we want to take a little tour through old Berlin. Then suddenly we have to skip that because there's so much else we have to do. But take my advice, foreigners and fellow tourers: if you're in the area again and have the time, get a little lost here. Here, where there are still real lanes, little buildings huddle up against one another, thrusting forth their gables, completely unknown except to a few connoisseurs, neither as empty nor as far away as the really notable buildings are. No, they are densely populated by

17 From the 18th-century folk song 'Üb immer Treu und Redlichkeit' ('Always Be Loyal and Frank').

naive people who descend steep staircases with broad wooden landings, or look out of beautifully framed windows, over flower baskets and birdcages.

Peter is the patron saint of fishermen, and the church we're driving around is named after him. It is the sanctum of the fishermen of old-Cölln. Another holy entity enshrined in the hearts of the Cöllners and Berliners is there on the bridge. It's Saint Gertrude, the abbess who founded hospitals and hospices for travellers. Spittelmarkt takes its name from the Hospital of St. Gertrude, a remnant of which stood in the form of the little St Gertrude's Church in the middle of the idyllic marketplace until the 1880s. It has become one of the busiest squares, surrounded by the tallest commercial headquarters in the city. A student kneels before the saint on the bridge, and is offered a libation. Doesn't she see that he's leading a stolen goose on a line, or could it be that she mercifully overlooks it? A friend to the wanderer, she is also dear to the souls of the dead on their journey. According to a folk legend, they turn into mice and come to St. Gertrude in the night following their death, to St. Michael the night after, and on the third night to their eternal hereafter. That's why there's a herd of mice on her pedestal. St. Gertrude holds a distaff. She is a relation of Mother Hulda and the pagan goddess from which Mother Hulda developed,¹⁸ and she watches over the flax harvest and the spinner women. But the spring flowers at her feet represent the gratitude of

18 A figure from *Grimm's Fairy Tales* who was probably originally derived from the Germanic goddess Frigg, Mother Hulda (also Frau Holle) is a sage-type character who rewards a hardworking stepdaughter in a story similar to *Cinderella*.

the country folk, whose fields and meadows the Mistress of the Mice protects from the animals under her spell. The statue described here so extensively is no great masterpiece, but so much happens around it that I can report on it as Pausanias did on the sacred masonry of Greece.

Gertraudenstraße leads us to the Cölln fish market, which was once Cölln's main square along the Spree. Until thirty years ago, the Cölln city hall stood here. But a more peculiar building from olden times disappeared nearly a hundred years ago. I'm referring to the madhouse, where they used to put drunks in the old days, so that they could sleep off their inebriation. Though the madhouse is no longer standing, not far from here is another ancient building where things can get really mad. It's at the end of Fischerstraße, which leads from the fish market past old lanes to Friedrichsgracht — the Nußbaum Inn. They claim that it's Berlin's oldest building, and that *Landsknechte*¹⁹ swilled there with the wenches of Berlin-Cölln. It has a high medieval gable. If you really want to understand it, you have to go there late at night, when a peculiar group of guests has gathered. You'll see silk blouses and aprons next to each other at the same table, fishermen's and wagoner's smocks alongside frock coats. Under the innkeeping certificates on the wall hang genuine pictures by Zille, given as a gift by the master himself.²⁰ It was here that I first heard the modified 'Lorelei' song, with proud addendums to each strophe:

¹⁹ German mercenary soldiers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

²⁰ Heinrich Zille (1858–1929), an illustrator and photographer most famous for his humorous sketches and caricatures.

She combs it with a comb then soaps herself with foam²¹

It's also where I met Ludeken, who called herself 'a pal of Zille's'. After everything she said, she put a finger mysteriously into her mouth, and when she was in high spirits, she would alternately show off the papers that allowed her to practice her profession²² and her white underwear. Everyone bought her drinks, but in her corner she still secretly poured together what was left by other guests. She sometimes danced with gentlemen; sometimes she danced alone, which was always an uplifting sight. Only when her 'boss' came by did she cower meekly in her corner. She would have to tend to his horses at the crack of dawn, and that wasn't an easy thing to be sober for.

Our car rolls over Mühlendamm: the bridge that connected Cölln and Berlin when they were separate cities, the bridge that connected and separated them. For, at this very spot, the citizens of the two neighbouring cities often beat each other bloody. Two bronze margraves stand at the edge of the bridge: Albert the Bear and Waldemar. They're not in the way, but they don't really need to be here either. They already have their territory throughout our whole Siegesallee.²³ Judging by the old pictures, this Mühlendamm must have been pretty when it was still surrounded by arching depots and junk shops. And the mills to which its name refers were surely more visually pleasing

²¹ A spoof of Heinrich Heine's poem 'The Lorelei'; Heine does depict the siren combing her hair, but he makes no mention of further personal hygiene.

²² Ludeken was a prostitute.

²³ A boulevard through the Tiergarten that once featured around one hundred white marble statues.

than the municipal Dammühlen Building, that fake fortress from the 1890s that now houses a city bank. If the construction of Berlin's network of waterways really is completed, and the Mühlendamm lock is renovated to meet the demands of larger ships, this building, among others, will fall, and our city planners and architects will have lovely tasks on their hands.

We stop at Molkenmarkt. We notice a beautiful house there from the Frederician era, Palais Ephraim. Ephraim was the great king's infamous 'Lender Jew', manufacturer of the Friedrich d'or coin, called 'green jackets'. There's a little rhyme about them:

Inside it's dull, outside it gleams,
Outside it's Friedrich, inside Ephraim.²⁴

You can't look inside this beautiful building — government offices are located there. Outside, the corner building forms a sublime semicircle, with balconies resting on Tuscan columns, Corinthian pilasters, and dainty cherubs over the grillwork. The oldest settlement on the Berlin side of the Spree was around Molkenmarkt, and it's here that we also find the only completely preserved medieval lane, the oft-described and oft-depicted Krögel, so famous that our car stops at the beginning of the street and the passengers get out to walk along this narrow lane next to the water. Supposedly, there was once a canal or arm of the Spree here that was already filled in in the olden days,

²⁴ Veitel Heine Ephraim (1703–1775) was Mint Master to Friedrich the Great. He used dubious methods to finance the Seven Year's War, creating the Friedrich d'or coins by stamping Friedrich's image onto Saxon coins, hence the rhyme.

and which allowed traffic to flow from the market and depots to the river. A gateway led to the lane's inner courtyard. In the middle ages, Berlin's only public baths were here. The bathers were served there by the daughters of the city, of whom it was said they 'sat upon dishonour'. They had a sort of uniform, short coats, and they had to wear their hair shorn. So it was a great insult in 1364 when the 'in the know' secretary of the Archbishop of Magdeburg, a frivolous *bon vivant*, called upon an honourable citizen's daughter to accompany him to Krögel. The citizens' rage was understandable, as they marched to the great house where the bishop's retinue was staying, tore the offender from his banquet, and beat him to death in the market. However, on certain occasions, honourable women also came to Krögel. It was customary for bridal festivities to begin with breakfast and a bath there. Then a vibrant, lively procession went down the old lanes, with musicians and jesters at the fore. Their antics were indiscreet, but the bride had to put up with them.

• An old sundial we see on a wall comes from a later time. It told the hour to attendants of foreign royalty, who were quartered here while their lords were guests of the prince. Today, there are workshops and small apartments in the prominent upper stories and behind the little windows of the ground floor. One of the residents of this living artefact from the Middle Ages owns a museum with weapons, engravings, and old household items. In the summer, sometimes, the racket from the nearest beach echoes over. Just past the Waisen Bridge, across from Neukölln am Wasser, a subway tunnel emerges

from the water, and gravel from its renovations forms a sort of beach. The young folk made use of it, and Paddensprung Beach was opened. Otherwise though, it's very quiet on the Krögel, and at night, in the dying light, when there is no sound from the workshops, the real 'old Berlin', with its timber framework and gables, can emerge here.

A lane leads around from the lively Molkenmarkt to a quiet square where the city's oldest church stands. It is dedicated to the patron saint of travellers and merchants, Saint Nicolas. The massive foundations of a granite tower are all that's left of its old walls; the rest burned in 1380, in one of the many fires that ravaged Berlin. The later parts, chancel and nave, have been heavily renovated. You have to come here some weekday afternoon when the organist is playing in quiet devotion. In the twilight, you can recognise the outlines of a family vault that was carved by Schlüter's chisel.²⁵ The longer you look at them, the more pronounced the curves of the vases and the baroque draperies become. The gothic hall has many chapels, large and small, with statues from all of the great artistic periods, and it sanctifies the memories of several men who are famous well beyond the bounds of the city. There are portraits of military men, provosts, scholars, councilmen, and their wives. Many bearded heads in ruffed collars and periwigs, crowned with laurels by allegorical female hands, or with halos of stars by cherubs. The crests on the urns are framed in acanthus. A little cupid cries over an hourglass and a dimming torch. A portrait

²⁵ Andreas Schlüter (1659–1714), German sculptor and architect, who created important works in Berlin as court sculptor to Friedrich III.

is ringed by the serpent of eternity under winged skulls, all on a dark background.

Like St Mary's Church and Cloister Church, *St Nicolas's* Church became a protestant church, and like the others it also kept some of its old pomp. It's a shame that their halls no longer smell of incense. It's interesting to think that the indulgence-hawking *Tetzel*²⁶ preached here, thronged by *tout-Berlin* of that time, who later threw him out of the city gates along with church dignitaries, tradesmen, and White and Black Monks.²⁷

The quiet square surrounding the church — this island of dreaminess in the noise of the big city — was once called *Nikolai Graveyard*, along with the many tombs in the church and outside along its walls. A few very small old buildings still stand here, and when you go into one of them, you can look down into a tiny courtyard. Steep staircases lead up to the apartments, and some of the buildings don't have their own gable walls, they're just 'stuck' to the next building. One of them claims to be Berlin's smallest house, offering private-lunch specials, though it doesn't have an address and it can only be entered via the building next door. On a walk through the old city you can still find houses like that here and there. Often they're just three windows wide. The double front door opens directly onto the ground-floor apartment on the right, and on the left it connects to the narrow staircase that starts at the doorsill and climbs to the upper floors.

²⁶ Johann Tetzel (1465–1519), Dominican friar. Martin Luther drafted his '95 Theses' partly in reaction to Tetzel's selling of indulgences.

²⁷ Cistercian and Benedictine monks, respectively, called so because of the colour of the choir robes worn over their habits.

We drive back to Mühlendamm, then down An der Eischerbrücke Straße, and cross the island bridge to Neukölln am Wasser. Here, and across the way on Friedrichsgracht, there are a few old buildings, some with pointy, pitched roofs, some with lovely mansard roofs from the baroque era with garlands under their windows and pilasters subdividing the house fronts. Our car drives too fast to have a look at all of that; we'll have to postpone it until we can walk down the streets and the lanes near the river. Then you'll see curiosities nestled in among the picturesque, like this gigantic rib bone on one of the corner buildings of the Molkenmarkt, or the relief of a man carrying a door on his back on Wallstraße. He's nicknamed Samson because of the story about the city gate of Gaza. According to folklore, this figure is supposed to remind us of the days when the Köpenick Gate stood here, and in its day, the hasp was stored in this building. But the more entertaining version goes: a poor cobbler eked out a meagre existence here with his wife and many children. When Friedrich the Great and his lottery director Casabigi — whom we know from Casanova's memoirs — set up a big sweepstakes that earned him a great deal of money and cost his citizens an equally great amount, this cobbler is said to have bought a ticket and glued it to the narrow door out of fear that his children would lose it while playing. It was precisely this poor wretch who had bought the winning ticket. And to prove it, there was nothing left for him to do but to lift the door from its hinges and carry it on his back. And so he trekked, much to the astonishment of his fellow citizens, to the lottery offices. And

after he had received his money, he had the image mounted on the wall of the building.

Such tales are plentiful in our storied city. The most famous of them is the oft-told anecdote about the bust of jealousy in Poststraße: the story goes that the soldier-king and upstanding paterfamilias Friedrich Wilhelm I had it mounted on the house of a hard-working goldsmith in order to punish the goldsmith's jealous neighbour.²⁸

Now we'll at least want to cast a glance at the bridges while driving by: Waisen Bridge, Insel Bridge, and the beautiful Roßstraßen Bridge, which Chief Municipal Planning Officer Ludwig Hoffmann built, a man to whom Berlin owes much. Nowhere else was and is the Spree so integrated into the city landscape as here. Hoffmann and his staff knew what should be rebuilt in order to match the old, without falling into historicism and dependence like Wilhelm II's 'romantic' planning officer. We come to one of the masterpieces of this artistic scene, Märkisches Museum. The garden around this proud structure is called Köllnischer Park, and you can stroll among chunks of columns and crumbling angels in the greenery, watch children playing, or look at one side of the fortress-museum. All around the thick, angular tower, the various stylistic periods of the area are represented in

28 According to legend, Friedrich Wilhelm I was walking down Poststraße late one evening when he saw an industrious goldsmith still hard at work. He rewarded his diligence with commissions from the palace. When the king returned one day, he noticed the wife of a goldsmith across the street making a mocking face at his favoured goldsmith. To punish her, he had a grotesque sculpture of a woman's head mounted on the side of the building with snakes for hair, sticking out a tongue that was also a snake.

brickwork, as they appear in wealthier places: Tangermünde, Brandenburg, etc. And this diversity of forms fits perfectly with the whole building's museum character. Inside is a wealth of knowledge about our city, from the beginning of history here to the days of Theodor Fontane. You can get to know the common people of Hosemann's Berlin,²⁹ view Berlin interiors from the Biedermeier period, including a parlour of the sort Felix Eberly describes, though in truth you could collect far more Biedermeier items from Berlin's private owners: all of the odds and ends of wallets and silverware, rosewood music boxes, pictures from family registers, autumnal-yellow birchwood furniture, and mahogany cabinets. Yes, I could imagine an entire Museum of Berlin Interiors, where other curiosities from the late nineteenth century could be seen trimmed in plush and hung with tchotchkes, tinted crown-glass windows, plaster angels, and vacation-photo albums. The flora and fauna collection is another extremely exhilarating department of the Märkisches Museum: lovely puzzlegrass and meadow species; reeds, ferns, and grasses; snails and the wonderful ornaments that are wasps' nests.

In front of the museum stands a statue of Roland that is modelled on the Roland of Brandenburg. Cölln's medieval-counterpart city of Berlin lost its Roland very early on. It is said to have stood on or near Molkenmarkt as a symbol of the city's independence. And Friedrich II the Elector robbed the city of her power and forced the bear to subjugate its emblem to his

²⁹ Theodor Hosemann (1807–1875), an illustrator and painter who depicted scenes from the lives of Berlin's working classes.

own eagle,³⁰ removing the statue from the city and hiding it in his fortress. Since no trace of this Roland statue was ever found, the legend arose that the prince had thrown it into the Spree. Since recently, Berlin has a Roland again, on Kemperplatz, which ousted the dreamy green Wrangel fountain of our childhoods, with its friendly sea gods. Now it stands in front of one of the regrettably Romanesque buildings near the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. But we learn that, due to rampant traffic, it too will soon be cleared away.

We drive back over the Waisen Bridge. To the right, the old Jannowitz Bridge is broken off, a wonderful theatre of ruins and new construction. Between cranes and barges, mountains of rubble and backhoes, the wrecked remains of the old bridge jut out, a Ponte Rotto in the middle of the Spree. They're also working on the city railway arches, whose disrupted brickwork is an incense-scented Temple of Steam, dedicated to that already antique method of 'locomotion'.

Stralauerstraße leads us past the massive city hall that Ludwig Hoffmann built. We look up at its tall tower, two stories of columns capped with a Mediterranean canopy. We turn down Jüdenstraße, and the bronze bears made by Wrba³¹ guard the entrance to the city hall's ballroom, valiant totem animals of the people of Berlin. The good old bear of Berlin; he must have become the city's symbol through some slip of

³⁰ Roland statues (a statue of a knight bearing a sword) were often placed in medieval northern German cities as symbols of their freedom and rights. The bear is the symbol of Berlin, the eagle of Brandenburg.

³¹ Georg Wrba (1872–1939), a prolific German sculptor. The bears described in front of the Rotes Rathaus were created in 1906–1907.

folk etymology. Because the word 'Berlin' has nothing to do with bears, the scholars tell us, but rather — here as elsewhere — it is the Wendish word for levee.³² And just such a levee or dam connected the left and right banks of the Spree in Wendish prehistory, so that even before the days of the Mühlendamm, a union existed between the towns that were later called Berlin and Cölln. But now the bear is our city animal, and the ones by Wrba are particularly charming. The pointy green tower of the Parochial Church is peering down at us. Lovely bell music rings out from it on Sundays and Wednesday afternoons.

There are a couple of ancient buildings on the neighbouring Parochialstraße that will be torn down soon. It's so long overdue that the building inspectors can no longer let people reside there. But often no one really knows who lives in a building, and so posters direct the occupants to vacate the premises. Neighbours call one of them 'the haunted house', because its squatters never show their faces by the light of day. Some of its doors and windows have been removed. Another house is the makeshift site of a strange exhibition. A peace lover has set up his Anti-War Museum there.³³ Outside, he's hung up helmets as flowerpots, the sort they wore in the trenches. Many promising-looking books lie in the window

³² 'Wendish' is a flexible term for Slavic cultures historically located in what is now Germany. 'Wendish' is sometimes also used to refer specifically to the Sorbian language, but most sources trace the etymology of 'Berlin' to the word for swamp in the now-extinct Polabian language.

³³ Ernst Friedrich (1894–1967) was an anarchist pacifist who opened the Anti-War Museum in 1925. It was destroyed by the Nazis in 1933, and he later fled Germany. In 1982, Friedrich's original museum was re-established in Berlin, where it is still in operation.

display. Steps lead down to a cellar-like room, which abuts the crumbling wall of another building to the rear. Death grins from grisly photos of wounded soldiers, weapon parts, munitions, mobilisation orders, and war bonds promising a golden era. Little helmets and sabres for the dear children at Christmas, pillows embroidered with 'For our brave warrior', ID tags, caricatures of the foreign leaders of that great era, soap-ration cards, tickets for firewood, 'German' tea next to tin soldiers and cups inscribed with 'God punish England'. An instructive collection that will hopefully find a worthy home after this place has been torn down.

A few paces down Jüdenstraße, the entrance to Großer Jüdenhof³⁴ opens between two buildings — as the epithet suggests, there once was a small Jüdenhof not far from here, which has since fallen victim to a street-widening initiative. But the big one is still quite intact, encompassing a dozen buildings around a courtyard-like square. A stairway with iron latticework leads up to the stateliest building, before which stands an old acacia tree. And under this tree in front of 'the house with the staircase', it is said that the Jews, when they were once again driven out, buried their gold — they certainly knew that the nobleman or prince who chased them away wouldn't be able to do without his 'servants of the royal chamber', as they were

³⁴ Großer Jüdenhof was a gated residential area founded by Jewish families in the 12th century. The Jews were expelled from Berlin in the 16th century, the old buildings demolished, and new ones constructed, though the name of the square was not changed. The structure of the Jüdenhof remained until it was partially demolished in 1937. The rest was destroyed by bombing in the Second World War.

called, for long.³⁵ That was back in the times when they resided here behind an iron gate that was locked and guarded at night. They were only allowed to show themselves on the streets wearing their obligatory uniforms: kaftans in certain colours and pointed hats. They weren't allowed to secure a permanent residence, or to do business at markets or trade fairs, and they had to pay large sums of money for protection. Apparently, though, they liked it here: each time they were expelled they came back again as soon as they could, made fortunes, aroused suspicion, and were tortured. The story of a certain Lippold³⁶ is preserved in detailed description and images: he was held in high regard by the princely court, but was harshly accused by his patron's son and successor, and was sentenced to an agonising death. The executioner, in a light-grey hat with a red band, had to take him from place to place on a special cart for those condemned to death, stopping here and there to subject him to hideous tortures before finally quartering him at the marketplace. The street children ran behind him from corner to corner, having a field day watching the executioner giving the condemned the rod. When more humane days arrived, the Jews moved out of the old ghetto, which has become an utter idyll in the middle of the chaotic city.

Today, there's something similar to a ghetto in another

³⁵ *Kammerknechte*, the status of the Jews in medieval Europe, which placed them under a ruler's protection but also gave him the right to tax them.

³⁶ Lippold Ben Chluchim (1530–1573) was a court Jew and mint master under Joachim II Hector, who accumulated large sums of debt during his reign. When the ruler's son, John George of Brandenburg, came to power, he persecuted many people formerly under his father's protection, including particularly harsh treatment of Jews.

location, but only for a short while longer: the Scheunenviertel, which houses a voluntary ghetto in its many little lanes between Alexanderplatz and Bülowplatz, is just about to be wiped from the face of the earth. You'll have to hurry if you want to see the life on its streets, which have strange, militaristic names that don't sound medieval in the least: Dragoon Street, Infantryman Street. The new buildings are already rising, towering over the remains, which are slowly becoming ruins. But for now the men with the old-fashioned beards and sidelocks still walk in slow-moving groups down their streets, speaking Yiddish, while groups of black-haired butchers' daughters are generally lively. Hebraic inscriptions are to be found on the shops and the taverns where people stand up to drink their beer. These streets are still a world of their own, home to the eternal wanderers, who long ago were propelled out of the east in one great wave. Eventually, they will have so acclimated themselves to Berlin that they can be tempted to push farther into the west of the city and to discard the most evident signs of their peculiarity. And it's too bad; the way they live in the Scheunenviertel is nicer than the way they may live later in the clothing factories or the stock exchange.

Our car drives rapidly down Klosterstraße. It doesn't stop before the colonnade of the old Gymnasium zum Grauen Kloster, the oldest secondary school in Berlin. The school grew out of the monastery of the Franciscans, also known as the Grey Friars, and it still houses a formal assembly hall and chapter house within its walls, and a monastery church in its courtyard. It survived a great fire in the year 1380 unscathed, and its walls

have preserved more of the Middle Ages than any other church in Berlin. In the dusky chancel, the visitor can admire the monks' fifty pews. They're made of oak and richly decorated with labyrinthine carvings. Symbolic figures are carved into the wall panels above them: strange allegories of the passion story, a money tray with pieces of silver, Judas's betrayal, two faces nestled together that signify his kiss. Torches and lanterns recall the nighttime arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, chains represent Jesus's shackles, a sword and a clock symbolise Petri's blow at the high priest's servant.

When the Gymnasium was founded, it only took up half of the monastery buildings. The others, up to the storehouse, went to Leonhard Thurneysser, the polymath from Basel. He operated his own book-printing press, type foundry, and workshops for making woodcuts and copper engravings there and in the storehouse. He made gold tinctures and pearl elixirs, essences of amethyst and amber, as well as beauty potions for high-society ladies, each of whom sent him thank-you letters requesting that he not provide the same potion to anyone else. It was said that he had caught Satan in the form of a scorpion in a glass, and that three black monks dined with him daily, who were certainly emissaries from hell.

Past the imposing building that houses the district and local court, we come to the city railway arches and Alexanderplatz, where things currently look disorderly because the whole quarter is being torn up and rebuilt. For this car full of foreigners, there is no time to delve into the secrets of the area surrounding the square. That will have to wait until I take a

stroll in the east. We drive a bit down Neue Friedrichstraße, and a bit down Kaiser Wilhelmstraße, until we reach Neuer Markt. Had we been on foot, we would have walked down the narrow Kalandsgasse, recalling the somewhat mysterious Kaland brotherhood which lent it its name, and whose Kalandshof stood in the shadows of St. Mary's church. At first, this old charitable association, whose name still lies in question (the common interpretation that it stems from the word *calendae* is contested), was a brotherhood of 'wretched priests of the priory' who lived according to stringent rules recalling those of the Templars. But it transformed into an obscene group whose lifestyle was so shocking that today, in our country, the term 'Kaland' still evokes a particularly depraved form of idleness.

At Neuer Markt, a large monument to Luther stands in front of St. Mary's church. There, the reformer is outfitted with his obligatory Bible, along with his entire cadre. His comrades-in-arms stand and sit along the broad pedestal of the great stone structure, and two of them are even perched on the sides of the stairs leading up to it.

In the olden days, a gallows stood here for soldiers who had been sentenced to an ignominious death. When it was erected, Peter the Great of Russia was visiting King Friedrich Wilhelm I. The Tzar was very interested in this new execution device, and asked the king to try it out on one of Friedrich Wilhelm's tall soldiers. When the king refused in outrage, Peter said, 'Well, then we can try it with a member of my retinue.' The monarch politely refused this offer. And anyway, it's better that a monument stands there now instead of a gallows. But the very best thing would be

nothing at all, or just the colourful market booths of an earlier era. St. Mary's Church is made of broad stone cubes, granite from before the time when they built with brick in Brandenburg.

My dear foreigner, you must see this church from the inside if you have the time. There's a wonderful pulpit designed by Schlüter. And the most stirring things about the pulpit are the two big angels, in throes of ecstasy from their outstretched toes to their upturned necks. Rapture shivers through their downy marble wings. There are beautiful tombs in the chapel: behind the wrought-iron grate, the richly ornamented, sepulchral stone of a patrician couple. Here, like at St. Nicolas's Church and Cloister Church, nobles and patrons were surrounded by the tombs of their ancestors. These churches are a world of their own: the upright gravestones on the walls, the worn sandstone slabs whose coats of arms and helmets become more distinct once you've looked at them for a while, the wooden panels with portraits of the benefactors engulfed by allegory in stone. In addition to all of the tombs in the church and its external walls, you must also imagine the graves of the common folk, which were located on the square in front of the church, where herds grazed and which also served as a space for making rope and bleaching cloth. Increasingly, these graveyards migrated away from the churches. Only a few remain by their house of worship, such as the old parochial cemetery. As early as the reign of Friedrich Wilhelm I, they began to shift the congregations' gravesites out beyond the city gates.

There's one thing left in St. Mary's Church that I need to talk about. In the base of the tower, a twenty-metre long fresco

runs the length of the church wall. It was discovered just half a century ago beneath the whitewashing with which it had been concealed in times less sympathetic to images. Clerics and laypeople alternate with Grim Reapers, leading a dance before a blue sky and a green town common. A grimacing monstrosity follows the dance, lurking, making music at the feet of a brown-frocked Franciscan. Next to his pulpit, the roundel (a round dance) of the surplice-clad sacristans begins. A death figure gropes at them, while also reaching his left hand toward the next cleric, connecting the grey Augustinian monk to his mortal neighbour, who, in turn, is linked by death to a church patron in red robes, and so it continues with a Carthusian monk, a doctor — in the Middle Ages, he was counted among the clerics, and here he regards the liquid in a glass with pious dread — the petite canon, the feisty abbot, the flashy bishop, the red hat of the Cardinal, all the way up to the pope's triple tiara. The wall comes to a corner behind the pope, and there the dance is interrupted by an image of He who was crucified. His mother and closest companion raise their praying hands to Him. Then come the worldly: first the emperor with sceptre and crown, clothed in blue-gold and led by Death toward the empress, gathering the train of her dress. The king appears very young in his light-coloured cloth boots. The knight must dance in his armour, the mayor in a fur-trimmed overcoat — and the mayor must put up with the fact that just a Death's-arm's-length away from him, a usurer is dancing the same step: a genteel, fur-trimmed man, no less. A squire in a heavy jacket and bulging stockings, a craftsman in a smock, and a poor blundering farmer

follow. The fool in a jingling costume brings up the rear. Many versions of Death — some striding, some creeping, some with one uplifted foot — unite the children of man in the dance. They're not depicted as skeletons, as in most depictions of the Dance of Death, whose bony faces display a rich variety of stiff, derisive grimaces. Here, their gaunt bodies are merely outlined. A white shroud hangs about their shoulders as a cape, leaving their bodies uncovered. And the figure of Death who reaches toward the Holy Father is completely naked.

This is the oldest painting you'll see on any gloomy church walls in Berlin. And beneath it are bitter rhymes in old Low German, partly smudged out, that speak of the inescapable nature of the dance. Though it may not be as famous as the Dance of Death murals in Lübeck, Strasbourg, or Basel, it is grippingly true to life and possesses an authentic Berlin brightness and coolness. The people in the picture actually *did* dance a roundel in celebration of the inevitable loss of life. After one of the great plague years, the joy of existence was particularly strong, as is always the case after that terrible pestilence (and often even as it is raging, to spite it). During this dance, young and old came together in rejoicing and laughter. The cheerful music cut off suddenly with a shrill dissonance, and a quiet, sombre melody rose slowly and transformed into a funeral march. Meanwhile, a young man lay down on the ground and remained there, motionless, like a corpse. The women and girls danced around him, jeering and singing a comic dirge, which was echoed in laughter from all sides. Then, one after another, they approached the corpse and tried

to revive him with kisses. After the first part of this grotesque ceremony, all danced a roundel together. During the second part, the men and boys danced around a woman pretending to be a corpse. Then came the kissing, and the rejoicing knew no end.

We cross Spandauerstraße. Before turning south, we catch a glimpse of the Chapel of the Holy Spirit. It was preserved when a new building, the Berlin School of Commerce, was built around it, so that its deeply dipping tiled roof is level with the School's mansard roof. Inside, there's now a lecture hall. Lectures about balance sheets, bookkeeping, and banking echo up to the gothic stellar vault. In the Middle Ages, it belonged to the Pauper's Hospital of the Holy Spirit. Much ivy is twined about the pointed arches of the windows.

We pass the main post office and the city hall, that 'red hall' made of brick and terracotta. A few times on our tour already, we've seen the high tower jutting out over the rooftops, with little columns on its open-work corner ledges, and it will be peering down over us for a while still. Parts of the old town hall, in whose stead this building was erected in the 1860s, were moved to the park of the Babelsberg Palace in Potsdam. The Gerichtslaube, for example, a loggia with allegorical decorations: the ape of lust, the eagle of theft and murder, the boar of debauchery, and a strange bird with a human face and the ears of a donkey, the blood-sucking vampire of avarice and usury.

Alternately heraldic and recapping, the guide shows us the Dammühlen Building, the town hall, and the oldest parts of the

palace: the 'green cap' tower and palace apothecary. A couple of street urchins listen in for that one. We poor foreigners seem downright laughable to them. They imitate the guide's explanatory gestures and call out, 'Ya see, that there's water, 'n' in the car's the Zoo-logical Gart'n.'

We suffer in silence until the car drives on, stopping again in front of the Neptune Fountain and the magnificent columns and pilasters on the southern facade of that beautiful building by Schlüter.³⁷

Our guide lingers a bit too long by the fountain, which at least has a well-situated water sprite at its edge, with a fishing net in her lap. Beyond her are the former royal stables, about which there is nothing to note except for their imposing dimensions, and which now house a city library with many interesting books about Berlin. During the guide's explanations, my eyes remain on Schlüter's pilasters and window frames, and the statues on the balcony railing. On 19 March, 1848, King Friedrich Wilhelm IV must have appeared on this balcony in order to view the corpses of the citizens that had been brought to the palace from Straße.³⁸ The crowd of people sang and cried out and all were bareheaded, except for the king, who still had his cap on. Someone cried out 'Hat off!', and he took it off. The bodies were driven through the palace to the cathedral. The procession paused in the castle courtyard, where the king once again had to appear on the gallery, listen to an earful from the crowd, and bare his head.

³⁷ Hessel is referring to the Berlin City Palace visited earlier on the tour.

³⁸ This is a reference to the March Revolution, during which Friedrich Wilhelm ceded to public demands for governmental reform, and participated in the public mourning of those killed during the uprisings.

The guide claims that the Eosander Portal and the chapel cupola above it have really only come into their own since the national monument replaced the buildings around the square, which was once called Schloßfreiheit.

Some of us are of another opinion — we long for that modest freedom that can be seen on the old copperplates. It certainly ennobled the palace, just as the cathedrals in old cities were dignified by the market stands and bevy of houses leaning against them, in the days when true splendour dwelled amid true poverty.

Below the portal is the entrance to the palace museum. For the past few years, the decorative arts have been housed on the ground floor and part of the upper floor. And it wasn't so long ago that the palace housed the last members of the family for which it was built. We saw them exiting via the portal and standing on the balcony, where they could speak to the populace. Now all of the rooms in the gigantic construction form a museum. Besides the rooms that have *really* been outfitted as a museum, you can also look at the others whenever you'd like: the king's chambers and staterooms, and even historically preserved living quarters.

Unfortunately, a tour guide is usually around. They don't make it easy to visit palaces. In some of them, such as the delightful garden palace Monbijou, which houses the Hohenzollern Museum, you can wander around undisturbed and observe Old Fritz's walking sticks in peace; his clocks, porcelain, embellished tobacco tins; his mother's rooms, the Chinese cabinet, and the curious wax figures of the princes and princesses. But you rarely have it so good in Berlin, Charlottenburg, or Potsdam. Mostly

you're led around, and whatever the guide may say, a better, pithier, and more authoritative version can be found in Baedeker. The worst part is that the pace of the visit depends completely on the guide and his herd. If you aren't lucky enough to get a private tour, you have no choice other than to haphazardly linger in front of a beautiful piece of furniture or painting while the Keeper of the Foreigners rattles off his lines about the whole room. Sometimes you're better off contemplating the amusing presence of this guide — his herd shuffling on felt-slipped feet, appraising notable objects with strange cries and interjections — instead of the relics he oversees.

While we're happy to find that the rooms in the Berlin Palace have been restored to the condition they were in when the emperor lived there, our expert, who knew their former glory, opines that the rooms are now somewhat cold, and describes in detail the Persian carpets that lay here ten years ago, the battle paintings and the portraits. He even shows us the spot where the highly modern electric cigar lighters used to be. In the empress's rooms, while the guide talks about her habits and possessions, the art aficionados among us must look at the marvellous Watteau paintings — if they hope to observe them with any degree of thoroughness — which are interlopers in the rooms of this most un-Watteau-esque of ladies. And when the chaperone in the Charlottenburg Palace winds the atrocious trumpeter clock and lets it blow, claiming that it shocked Napoleon awake when he spent the night here, you hold your ears shut and stare at the charming silks that surrounded sweet cheerful Crown Princess Luise in her slumber, her little stoves, or her striking portrait in a

Prussian cavalry uniform. In rooms like that, you have to linger alone or among kindred souls in order to commune with the spirits that inspired the work of Schlüter and Schinkel and their students and assistants, and to experience the great ages of old Berlin: Prussian baroque and rococo and Prussian classicism.

Some things are revealed to you at first glance: the abundant blooming grandeur of Schlüter's four continents in the great hall; the pure forms and pleasant colours of the Parole Hall, with Schadow's marble grouping of young Crown Princess Luise and her sister; the gold and green of the round domed chamber, which was Friedrich the Great's writing refuge. And you can linger to your heart's content in the inner palace courtyard in front of Schlüter's arched halls. No king bars your entry to the courtyard anymore, and no guide forces you to hurry through.

We stop on the side of the palace with the pleasure garden, in front of its two horsemen, which the Russian emperor gave to the Prussian king in the 1840s. Berlin folk-humour named them 'progress reined' and 'regression spurred'.

The freestanding columns of polished granite at the corners of the terrace also date from this era, golden eagles nesting on top of them. Varnhagen,³⁹ a modern and critical observer, found these decorations too elegant for the imposing, cumbersome, gloomy building, and the desire to embellish it tasteless. 'The people,' he wrote, 'stand before it and call it unnecessary. They compare it with the epaulettes of the royal footmen, which were too simple for the king — he had crowns added to them.' At that time, just after the revolutionary days of 1848, groups of

³⁹ Karl August Varnhagen von Ense (1785–1858), historian of the Romantic era.

workers, students, and teachers still crowded under the lindens and in front of the palace. A court marshal had secured iron bars across the palace gates. The Civil Defence Militia⁴⁰ couldn't prevent a large section of these bars being torn down by the workers and thrown into the Spree from the Kurfürsten Bridge. Another, smaller section was carried by the students to the university. Later, people simply accepted things as they were and viewed the bars as a monument to the 18th of March. They turned the palace into a cage, the people said, and made the king pitiable. It was a bit of foolishness on his part to put up the bars after the danger was over. The eagle is still there, though the bars have come down. And viewed from the Lustgarten, the palace is more beautiful, admirable, and historically significant than ever.

Across from the broad palace square, the Lustgarten extends to the steps of the Altes Museum, on a wonderful isle right in the middle of the city. It's not just geographically correct that this district, buffered by water, is called the Museum Island. The world that begins here with Schinkel's hall of Ionian columns is the young Berliner's Platonic Academy — or at least that's what it was for my generation — a hint of what he'll get to see later in the Louvre and the Vatican, in the museums of Florence and Naples and Athens.

But we wanted to stay out in the city and on the street. For a short visit to the museums, Baedeker is excellent; its single and double stars inform us as to what the *consensus gentium* deems

⁴⁰ Civil Defence Militia (Bürgerwehr): 19th-century military units comprised citizens forced into service to defend their cities.

exceptionally beautiful and valuable, although this doesn't prevent anyone from making their own discoveries.

From the foyer of the Altes Museum, the visitor passes under the dome of the rotunda, which welcomes you into the heart of things with mostly Roman imitations of Greek statues. It's lovely to be encircled by these marble beings without inspecting them more closely, saving our energy for all of the wonderful things that await us in the archaeological room and the rooms for the fourth and fifth centuries, the Late Period of ancient Egypt, and the Romans. Ancient handiwork in bronze is collected on the top floor, with gold and silver, jewellery, and the grotesque and thrilling terracottas by the masters of Tanagra and their students. In Stüler's Neues Museum, if I might give you some advice, foreigner, don't stay too long in the big stairway with the gigantic frescoes by Kaulbach. They depict the most significant moments of world history, and they would probably serve quite well for primary schools.

In the Egyptian section, you'll find massive statues and sarcophagi, the fair little heads of the queens Tiye and Nefertiti, and, in front of black-and-red-figured vases, you'll sink into that drowsy state in which you're no longer certain: *is it the Seine flowing by outside or the Tiber? Will we be breakfasting in Posillipo or in the Savoy?* Leave yourself plenty of time for the chamber of copper engravings. Don't just look at what's hanging on the walls or lying in the glass cases. They're happy to give you one of the many beautiful portfolios, and you can while away an hour as a scholar of art. It's worth it. And by the time you read these lines, maybe the new museum that Alfred Messel began

will finally have been completed. Then you'll see the sublime Altar of Pergamon assembled with its gods and giants.

With regards to the National Gallery, as your guide to Berlin, I must recommend those paintings in which the Berlinesque is immortalised: Menzel's wonderful *Balcony Room* and his *Bedroom*, the courtly *Supper at the Ball*, *Palace Garden of Prince Albricht*, the old *Berlin-Potsdam Railway*; furthermore, the painters of the old city and the life of its people, especially Theodor Hosemann, and Franz Krüger's portraits, and his big paintings of parades. You'll discover the Berlin romantic in landscapes by the great Schinkel, who wasn't really a painter, but rather an architect. He painted them for one of the old patrician houses on Brüderstraße, and if you have the leisure for it, read what Hans Mackowsky wrote about it in his *Buildings and People in Old Berlin*,⁴¹ and keep reading what he wrote regarding this building and others. The bygone city hiding within the current one will materialise right before your eyes. The Kaiser Friedrich Museum would be better named after the man who made it world famous — the Wilhelm von Bode Museum⁴² — instead of after that ruler and patron of the arts whose hideous equestrian monument stands before the doors of this chamber of treasures. Regarding this world of paintings and sculptures I have nothing to write here, for although it is Berlin's greatest glory, it nonetheless has nothing to do with our good city itself. You are even farther away from

41 *Häuser und Menschen im alten Berlin*. Berlin: Cassirer, 1923.

42 Indeed, since 1956, the Kaiser Friedrich Museum has been known as the Bode Museum.

Berlin here than in other museums' rooms of Greek sculptures, which Prussian classicism at least displayed a longing toward despite themselves — sensibly faded, restrained, opposed to all pomp, and righteously diligent.

But back to the beautiful expanses of the Lustgarten and our touring car. The square is really an island of peace. Viewed from the long palace facade with its broad gates, not a bit of the present day is to be seen — and hopefully won't be for a long time. The only turmoil in this tranquil setting is the cathedral with its many high-renaissance details, niches, halls, and domes. It spreads across a piece of land where a smaller church from Friedrich's days stood until the 1890s. It covers an area of 6,270 square metres, while the Cologne Cathedral only manages to take up 6,160. It is completely unnecessary to enter it, for this massive structure offends every religious and humanistic sentiment with its sheer quantity, materiality, and poorly applied erudition. The acoustics are supposed to be excellent, and to improve them, cords still hang expressly for that purpose from the inner dome of the central building. A marble angel is right to proclaim, 'He is not here, He is risen.' And it's true, He is surely not here. A few lovely tombs are wasted here, associated with the names Peter Vischer and Schlüter. Maybe there will come a day when we impulsively tear down this building and a few others, just as we do now with objectionable private buildings. Then this site will be completely dedicated to the past and to peace.

This place only comes to life anymore when popular assemblies take it over, and it is perfectly suited for that, since the Lustgarten is nothing more than a sand-paved square. Its

name recalls an entirely different time, an age when parks were an art, an age of grottoes and grotto-makers. In the days of the Great Elector and his son, a colossal Neptune with grotto and waterfalls were to be seen here, along with fountains, and enormous clams adorning Memhardt's Neue Lusthaus. The 'grotto masters, fountain makers, and stuccoers' had plenty of work there, just as they did later under Friedrich the Great, for whom they built a Neptune grotto in Sanssouci, and a clamshell hall in the New Palace. On Remus Island in Rheinsberg they built the Chinese House. And later the builder of the simple little Paretz Palace erected a colourful clamshell-covered Japanese temple in the corner of a park as a sort of relic from the Rococo era. The final echoes of the art of the grotto are to be found in the middle of the big city, in the ghastly dripstone formations on the staircases of aging nightclubs, and framing the stages of dusty music halls.

The sober and sensible Friedrich Wilhelm I was chagrined by his forebears' paradise of parterres and cottages. He called it 'tomfoolery', and turned the orangery into a carpet factory with a sort of trading floor on the top storey, and the flower parterres into a military parade ground for his infantrymen. Since no one parades here anymore, the general public can congregate here for their meetings. You can imagine communists demonstrating with flags and pennants and making their encampments. A red Pentecost; they've come from afar, from every part of Germany. The textile proletariat from the Ore Mountains, miners from the pits of Hamm and the cannon-producing city of Essen, which has become a stronghold of the red front, and the Rote

Marine of the Alliance of Red Front-Fighters⁴³ has come from the North Sea coast. They've also come from the more distant parts of Europe, and the rest of the big wide world has sent its representatives as well; the Defensive Front of the Swiss Labour Force,⁴⁴ a Czech worker's resistance group hoisting flags and placards. The Soviet standard is saluted with reverence. Long processions marched here from all corners of the cities, led by strange instruments: trumpets with multiple bells, jazz tubas, African drums. These fighters are uniformed just like those they would like to oust. The grey shirts and brown tunics are belted in military style. And the processions are now orchestrated by the red armbands of the leading pivots, just like the fraternity leaders' galloons in days gone by. In white collared shirts with fluttering red bow ties, they've scaled the sides of their truck, which bears a sign demanding an end to the degrading abuse.

I once accompanied such a procession from the Bülow promenade in the southwest down Yorkstraße, under the railroad crossing whose iron bridge echoed 'Red Front!' and 'Be prepared!' back at us. Old men and women looked down peevishly at these feisty folk from their middle-class, tacked-on balconies. Perhaps they were retired civil servants who hadn't 'adjusted' to the new times yet. But red flags waved from the buildings on the side street, and a few boys joined us on bicycles with their wheels wrapped in red. It went on like that up the shores of the Planufer, across the bridge over the canal, and into

43 The Alliance of Red Front-Fighters (Roter Frontkämpferbund) held an important annual meeting on Pentecost.

44 Schutzwehr der Schweizer Arbeiterschaft.

the old city. On Alte Jakobstraße, a grizzled woman stood on a roof terrace, hair in the wind, like one of the Fates of antiquity or a Fury of this new zeal. Younger women lay about in Sunday-fashion with their bare arms on their window cushions, enjoying the music and crowds like in the olden days when companies of soldiers were on the march. In the commercial buildings on Markgrafenstraße, not a soul was in sight. Except on top of one high roof, a figure was moving, and waved with a tiny pennant. On Oberwallstraße, the procession drifted through the silence of the archway, which seals the Crown Princesses' Palace against any trace of the present, protecting its languorous driveway and the old balconies and mansard windows. The procession pushed through this gate in order to meet with the processions from the other suburbs on the square in front of the armoury.

• An immeasurably vast crowd filled the whole Lustgarten and Schloßfreiheit square in small groups and processions, from the Palace Bridge up to the Kaiser Wilhelm Bridge. Red banners wrapped along the bars in front of the palace, behind which both the bronze statues of the Dutch princes and Admiral Coligny were nearly rendered invisible, as were the two liberal horsemen, concealed by the fiery letters. On the first steps in front of the cathedral stood a speaker whose declaratory closing speech was repeated by the throng down below like believers repeating the priest's words in the litany. The masses were encamped all around the pedestal of the monument to Friedrich Wilhelm the Just (who apprehensively steps forward into the air), around the granite bowls, on the steps of the museum under the Amazon fending off the tiger, and under

the lion fighter. And the monuments looked down upon the many processions wandering back and forth with their flags and placards and effigies lampooning the League of Nations, and across at the groups convening at the Kaiser Wilhelm national monument on the Schloßfreiheit square.

The tour guide doesn't spare us the cathedral, which I avoid viewing insofar as possible, and for a terrible half a minute he pauses in front of it and calls it 'very pretty, especially inside'. But my consolation has just appeared at the curb in the form of a dainty little vehicle. Two levels of glass panes are balanced on pram wheels. Inside are machines made of glinting nickel, and little cups and spoons. An ice-cream vendor: an adorable miniature enterprise glittering like Snow White's coffin.

A glance across the water at the Berlin Stock Exchange building on Burgstraße. People find the same faults with the National Bank building as with these 'renaissance forms'. It's the first building made of sandstone in the newer part of Berlin. For us, the interior of the building is considerably more interesting than its architecture and style. Once, I was permitted to look down from the gallery into the three great halls where the merchants of Berlin were gathered at midday. I saw the certified brokers at their cabinets, the wild swarm that rallied around its more active members, the gestures of selling and buying, raised hands waving the 'asking price', fingers pointing to signal amounts of money. I saw the niches and the long benches, the tables in the smaller and much livelier room for commercial stocks, the calmer room for the banks, and in the one for grain I saw the bags and little blue boxes with samples of rye and wheat

in the hands of the traders. You could look down for hours on that sea of bald heads, restless shoulders, waving hands; on the fateful numbers on the boards that seem to fall and fall only, on the yellow and blue lights flashing a special signal in the corners. Peddlers and beggars of all kinds wait in front of the doors to Burgstraße; based on the manner in which the exiting business magnates react to their presence, one could conclude whether business was good or bad that day.

Let's now take a look at a Berlin landmark not listed in any guidebook. I'm talking about the thing down there in the water, by the bank of the Spree, near the arsenal: a tethered barge. I just noticed it for the first time recently. I happened to wander by and saw a couple of street urchins standing on the wooden dock leading to the barge. They wanted to see the big whale that supposedly had been housed in the barge for many years. When I was these boys' age, I was also very curious to know if there was really a big whale inside, but no one ever allowed me to satisfy my curiosity. Which is why I took the youngsters to the register. It was very cheap, and I got a pamphlet for free, a particularly pretty one that I recommend to every visitor and even to enthusiasts of old block printing. Its title page reads: 'The largest mammal in the world and its capture. 22m 56cm long, completely odourlessly preserved. Published by the management of the whale exhibition.' Isn't that a tremendous way to begin? Then we learned that this colossus has warm red blood like us and gives birth to live young 'which are nursed by the mother and defended by her with self-sacrifice at the risk of her own life'. It lies there, preserved using a completely new

method, looking as if it were made of papier-mâché, smelling not one mite of blubber though a good deal of barge. You'd like to touch it to convince yourself it isn't really cardboard. But it's written there: 'No touching! Poisonous!' For a while, we look down its throat and at the famed baleen, from which, we learn, whalebone is harvested. Then we enter the special exhibition, where the individual components of the leviathan have been disembowelled and made accessible for us, the general public, to study. For example, there's the throat sack where the animal can store two to three tons of herring. 'For' — as the pamphlet says — 'securing enough sustenance plays a key role for such an enormous animal.' In a separate case, we get to see a tail fin, which — again according to the pamphlet — inspired the invention of the steam turbine. And along with the cartilage, rear fins, ears, and eyes of the whale, there are other sea animals to see, including a few that are simply asking to be turned into nonsense poems: for example, the sea cucumber, sea cow, or the box fish.

I have my reasons for describing this unusual whale exhibition so extensively: I don't trust myself to say anything at all about the neighbouring arsenal.⁴⁵ It's too perfect for praise. It is Prussian and baroque, completely Berlinesque and yet fantastical. Well-arranged elements and beautifully implemented decoration, a broad victory facade and delicate trophies. Schlüter's panoply on the balustrade is magnificent, as are the keystones over the window arches. On all four sides of the exterior, he placed helmets that are living representatives

⁴⁵ Today, home to the German Historical Museum.

of the antique, and inside, in the atrium, there are the heads of dying warriors whose grisly death grimaces ornament the sculpted keystones.

For those who are interested in weaponry and war, the oldest cannons are to be found in the dim halls, under the bays of the vaulted ceiling, along with Arabian sabres, gaudy armour for man and horse, standards, uniforms of generals and kings, Zieten's sable caps and panther skins, and Friedrich the Great's last military garb.

The former Crown Prince's Palace across from the arsenal is not a pleasant sight from the outside. Tall columns bear a wide balcony, which makes the stories below it look low and squat, especially when it's viewed from within such a well-proportioned structure as the arsenal. And it doesn't help to know that this palace was once in better condition, and that it entered its current state in the 1850s when it was renovated for the crown prince, later Kaiser Friedrich III. But since it doesn't lodge any princes anymore, it now fulfils a noble purpose. The modern collection of the National Gallery is housed here. And, in my role as a guide for foreigners, I'll just point out the Berlin-specific items: you'll find many admirable cityscapes, along with Berlin history and Brandenburg landscapes, in the countless sheets of the Menzel portfolios, in some of Liebermann's paintings, those of Lesser Ury, and some younger artists. There are also portraits of prominent Berliners in the extensive collection of impressionist and contemporary paintings.

One side of the palace abuts Schinkelplatz, on whose southern side a more attractive building houses another part

of the National Gallery on its upper floor. It's the large portrait collection, whose painters and paintings represent a good part of Berlin's artistic and cultural history. The building that harbours this treasure is the Bauakademie, which Schinkel built in red brick with beautifully inset terracotta, and inhabited during the final years of his life. The square in front of the academy is named after this master, and besides his statue there are two other bronze ones — a 'founding figure of science-based agriculture' and a moneyed industrialist, men whose monikers we semi-educated folk recognise mainly from street names, which is why I'm reluctant to even give them here. But you must look at the reliefs on their pedestals. There you'll find curious textbook examples of this truly Berlin mixture of classicism and realism — antiquated machines and gentlemen in toga-esque frock coats.

The *Neue Wache*, the guardhouse that no one guards anymore except for two statues, is Schinkel's beautiful 'Roman castrum', with heavy Doric columns. Inside, it's empty now — only the classic rifle stands are left — all monument and antiquity. It's better that way, but some Berliners think back with a certain melancholy to the time when the guards paraded. As long as we're at the *Neue Wache* anyway, let's take a look at the small temple of art over there, half hidden in the foliage. That's the *Singakademie*,⁴⁶ atelier of the master-builder-turned-master-musician Carl Friedrich Zelter — he was a friend of Goethe's. The little bust in the green patch in front of the building is Zelter's mentor and the founder of the musical society from

⁴⁶ Today, the building of the *Singakademie* is home to the Maxim Gorki Theater.

which the Singakademie emerged. But that was long before it occupied this beautiful building that is somehow out of the way in the middle of the city. Much of Berlin's musical history during the era of Zelter and Mendelssohn is connected to this society and its artistic abode hidden behind the bushes. More than that, it's a slice of life from the best Berlin society that had ever existed, which in the first decades of the 19th century was limited to the rather narrowly circumscribed lives of bourgeois people, in whose family registers the best painters daubed landscapes, and the best poets wrote verse in dainty script. To be a connoisseur of all arts, a dilettante in the best old sense of the word, was a pleasant, pointless, ardent custom that may have bordered on the sentimental-comic from time to time, but nonetheless contributed to the city's unity of feeling and conduct, and, consequently, to its identity.

During this period, the neighbouring building (the former palace of Prince Heinrich, brother of Friedrich the Great) was turned into the university. And the Humboldt brothers seated comfortably before it in their marble armchairs raised the intellectual and scientific aspirations of Berlin society, with their work conducted both in this very place and on distant horizons, those of the Romance languages and overseas.

The building forms the northern end of what is now known as Kaiser Franz Joseph Platz, the square once called 'Forum Fridercianum'.⁴⁷ The square's southern half is flanked by the old library — now the university auditorium — and the opera house. Friedrich's master builder, the great Knobelsdorff, had something

47 Now known as Bebelplatz.

more beautiful in mind for this palace than what was actually built. Across from his opera house, he wanted to construct a similar temple-palace, making the entire northern half of the square just as monumental as his opera. Though his big plans were never carried out, something impressive nevertheless did come into being under the supervision of Boumann the elder. But that palace remained mostly deserted, for the prince didn't like Berlin and preferred to stay in his Rheinsberg solitude.⁴⁸ In 1810, the Friedrich Wilhelm University⁴⁹ was founded here, and its first president, chosen by the senate, was Fichte. The three hundred students in its first class grew to over ten thousand with time. We shall reserve judgement as to whether science benefited much from this increase, though I will add humbly that two or three decades ago it was more pleasant to hang around halls of the old alma mater than it is today. Back then there weren't as many exam fanatics. And the front garden wasn't stuffed as full of bronze and marble men possessing neither the dignity of the two Humboldts out front nor the verve of the statues of Savigny and Fichte before the auditorium. This building, once a library, is supposed to have been commissioned by Friedrich the Great in emulation of a Viennese model, with a facade designed by the great Fischer von Erlach. In the vernacular, it's known as 'The Old Wardrobe', because a dubious anecdote claims that the king gave his master builders an ornate piece of rococo furniture as a model.

48 The palace of Prince Heinrich of Prussia at Unter den Linden 6 is now the main building of Humboldt University.

49 Known as Humboldt University since 1949.

There's a similar story told about Hedwig's Cathedral behind the square, which is round like the Pantheon: the Catholics of Berlin came to Old Fritz and asked him to build a beautiful church for them in Berlin. The king was sitting at breakfast just then, in a good mood and feeling 'affectionate'. When they asked him what the church would look like, Friedrich took his coffee cup, turned it over, and said, 'It shall look like this.' And so it was that the master builder made the church completely round, and set a round cupola on top of it. The lamp and the cross that we see on the cupola today were added in the 1880s. Its wonderful green patina also appeared at that time, one of the warmest patches of colour on Berlin's still somewhat grey face.

Our opera, Knobelsdorff's masterpiece, has been changed in all sorts of ways by time and human intervention, and not always to its advantage. But we can delight in the fact that the hideous staircase was gotten rid of during the last renovation. The final owner in the imperial era added the stairs to the exterior in the case of a fire, and as Mackowsky⁵⁰ said, they gave 'the elegant building the appearance of a dummy constructed for fire-fighting exercises'.

The 'wardrobe' stands wall-to-wall with the palace of Kaiser Wilhelm I, a modest castle fit for a prince. Even in his youth, Wilhelm I kept a frugal house, and when this building was renovated in the 1830s from an old private palace, the master builder had to avoid any unnecessary expense. Since it has always been said that it really isn't much to look at inside, I never went in, until recently I read Laforgue's Berlin

⁵⁰ German art historian Hans Mackowsky (1871–1938).

chronicles. He creates such a nice impression of the silence in these rooms, which were occupied only by the royal couple and half a dozen ladies-in-waiting. The rest of the court was housed in the big palace, in the Crown Princesses' Palace, and in the neighbouring Dutch Palace. When Laforgue entered in the morning to present himself to the empress and read to her, he heard only the ticking of the clocks and the trickling of water in the conservatory. And the silence carried through the whole day, broken only for a minute at a time by the clicking of spurs accompanying a military servant entering with an announcement. While there, he read the royal lady the most important tidbits from the Parisian newspapers *Le Temps*, *Les Débats*, *Figaro*, and *Revue des deux Mondes*, along with excerpts from novels and memoirs. He rarely saw the Kaiser. The royal couple lived more or less separately under the same roof. From the ladies-in-waiting, he learned that the old lord was 'a darling' who cared for and respected his wife and her delicate nerves as if she were a saint. When they had differences, and Kaiserin Auguste's mood grew stormy, Wilhelm was in the habit of saying sympathetically, 'Her Russian blood is agitated once again.' But she was generally at ease, brushing her long pale hand along her brow. The elderly lady was very dignified and not at all popular. Berliners said, 'She's not from around here.' Laforgue's comments made me curious about the interior of the old couple's home, and so recently I went in, along with a batch of other observers.

Yes, it really was there, the office with the historic corner window where the Kaiser appeared when the guardsmen were

passing by outside. Supposedly each time he heard the music approaching, even mid-conversation, he buttoned his overcoat across his white vest and straightened his *Pour le Mérite* order between the lapels of his uniform according to regulation. It is the same military decoration that we see in many portraits of his contemporaries. It cuts a good figure at the throats of all of these distinguished men, whose severe good posture is hardly achievable today. One of them, it's said, avoided leaning against the backrest of his chair until just before his death, explaining to his kin that it could turn into a bad habit. Similarly, the old king held himself upright among all of the uncomfortable furniture that overfills his office. It has been maintained in precisely the condition he left it when he died a few doors down in a modest room facing the courtyard in the dim shadow of the neighbouring building. The tables, *étagères*, *Vertikos*, chair, and sofa are all covered in mementos, portfolios, and books. The old lord kept all of this close around him, and oriented himself within it with conscientious precision.

Rarely has a mortal being received so many gifts, framed items, paperweights, such a quantity of worthless and tasteless photographs, vases, pillows, and figurines as this friendly old fogey did, and he kept everything with a deference that is touching. When the table and walls could no longer accommodate anything else, he simply made piles on the floor that stand there today.

On the ledge in front of the bookshelf are photographs of masked family members at a party, an intimate masquerade ball for good bourgeois families. The Kaiser's second breakfast

was served on that same ledge, where he ate while standing. A narrow spiral staircase leads from the library into the upper rooms. Wilhelm I climbed these onerous steps far into old age in order to access his wife's apartments. We took a longer, easier route through the meeting room. Bismarck must once have sat in one of the uncomfortable chairs with a Prussian eagle stamped on the back, turning his masters into loyal servants of his politics. We entered the marble staircase where two Victorias by Rauch⁵¹ raise their wreaths, peaceful-looking goddesses of wars long since passed. The Kaiserin's rooms up above are more welcoming and luxurious. Even when she was a princess, Auguste had taken a great interest in interior furnishings, and it is said that she wished to be a decorator. We outsiders wandered rather apathetically past the prestige and comfort of these bright rooms, past the malachite and alabaster of the typical Russian souvenirs, looking out the window frequently, and only snapped back to attention when someone demonstrated the echo in the ballroom to us, which was built into this space as a matter of coincidence, which is to say by accident. One member of our herd made timid attempts to conjure it himself, which our guide allowed with a smile.

Our tour guide dismissed this noteworthy building with a few words, in order to describe more extensively the 'judicious baroque forms' of the massive new national library across the way. Above the entryway, between one bewigged and one bareheaded forefather, there is a bust of the last

51 Christian Daniel Rauch (1777–1857), the most prominent German neoclassical sculptor.

Hohenzollern prince with a twirled marble moustache. Inside are an unbelievable number of books, and a large collection of manuscripts, music and map departments, and gramophone records in two hundred languages from every institute imaginable. You can look at everything; but best of all is to sit behind a wall of books in the circular reading room and observe all the gals and fellows studying, taking notes, taking breakfast, and daydreaming in concentric rings around the empty centre.

Ah, breakfast! We've arrived back by the statue of Old Fritz, our point of departure. Why don't we head over to Habel's old-fashioned wine tavern in the lovely hundred-year-old building and have a seat at one of the bald-scoured tables to study the extensive wine menu? Sadly, we're driving on, our journey isn't completed yet. We can only cast a quick, longing gaze at the vases, masks, and grape leaves of the relief over the door.

The street Unter den Linden is still the heart and centre of the capital city, with its four rows of trees, pretty shops, embassies, ministries, and bank buildings — to do it complete justice and to experience its present as well as its past, you would have to conjure up all of its epochs, ever since the Great Elector laid it out as a suburban avenue leading to his hunting grounds, the Tiergarten. You must read about Old Fritz's era in Friedrich Nicolai's⁵² superb descriptions of Berlin and Potsdam, capital city and seat of royal power. He records every building on the street, inns such as Stadt Rom, which later became Hotel de Rome on the corner of Stallgasse, now known as

52 Friedrich Nicolai (1733–1811) was a famed Berlin bookseller and author, and a principal figure of the 'Berlin Enlightenment'.

Charlottenstraße. Office buildings and businesses recently had to make room for its majestic renovation. He writes of palaces like the Margrave von Brandenburg-Schwedt's — including a list of all of its previous owners — which later became the old Kaiser's palace; or that of Princess Amalia of Prussia, Abbess of Quedlinburg, near Wilhelmstraße where the Russian Embassy is now located; or the one belonging to a certain von Rochow, or a certain Count Podewils; and so on. Then you'd have to take a look at the famous Linden frieze at Märkisches Museum, which captures all of the buildings on Unter den Linden in the year 1820. Now add to that the image of the present, including the driveways for the Bristol and Adlon hotels (whose renovation ousted the magnificent Redern Palace), the stately Ministry of Culture, and the many well-preserved older buildings that house long-renowned shops and office buildings. Maybe you'll come away with the same impression as Varnhagen, who noted after taking a walk down Unter den Linden to the Brandenburg Gate and back: 'The sight awakened a wonderful series of images in me, of the past and the future, a marvellous historical development which carried the little ship of my own being on its churning sea.'

The degree to which the character of our esteemed main concourse has remained the same or changed is a question best left to experienced researchers of the history of social customs, allowing us to examine the present with the naked eye.

The curious foreigner will above all take an interest in the famous intersection with Friedrichstraße, posing questions about Cafe Bauer and Kranzler. Now, Bauer is no longer called

Bauer, but simply Cafe Unter den Linden; its plucky Dionysian and Elysian murals have disappeared, and to be honest, there's 'more going on' in Cafe König across the street; by which I don't mean to critique the comforts of a sojourn in Cafe Unter den Linden — to the contrary! And Kranzler? It still has those curious little iron stakes and chains that the elegant officers from the old Gensd'armes regiments let hang down next to their tight pants-legs in the days of Queen Luise, but since the last renovation, it's lost its old cachet, by which, again, I mean no criticism of its cakes.

You, foreigner, cast a fervent glance down Friedrichstraße, but I don't want to tell you anything about it yet. You'll have to wait for an evening walk before you experience its aged, ever-ageing yet animated secrets and its observable mysteries.

But I'll gladly lead you a few steps past the gateway, off little Mauerstraße. Once you've entered this world of stone, which is more a passageway than a street — the arches of the gate and above them the rotunda, the balcony railings, the glass corridor, the light grey and 'café au lait' of all of the neighbouring buildings — you're in an image of the unadulterated past. The arched gateway on the other side leads to the 'headquarters of the German monetary transfer system', Mauerstraße, and its neighbouring streets. Most significantly, you'll find the massive Deutsche Bank buildings, which are connected to each other with modern-day Bridges of Sighs.

We pass small, genteel-looking buildings with classical window frames, well preserved between their younger neighbours, and rows of beautiful private cars before the hotel

and in the middle of the divided roadway, to arrive at Pariser Platz. This square — with the gate at one end, the modest palace's receding facades, and the refreshing green grass to the right and the left — safeguards a silence and a self-contained nature that the noise and bustle surging about it cannot disrupt. The unified tranquillity of the buildings is soothing, interrupted only a little by the Friedländer palace,⁵³ while the baroque French embassy blends right in. And it's nice to know that here, next to the academies and embassies, the well-to-do and the nobility, a painter and a poet make their homes.⁵⁴

We circle the plaza in front of the gate. Please don't look at the marble balustrades, benches, fountains, and princely statues bequeathed to us by the Wilhelmine architects and master builders. Take this garish white before the serene green Tiergarten for nothing more than a glaring insult to the eyes! God help us, may the Kaiser-couple Friedrich III and his spouse Victoria be removed by the next time you return to Berlin. Look instead at the pretty trees and bushes along the avenue. But soon that irritating, harsh marble comes shimmering through the green again as we head down Siegesallee. Yes, here to the right and left there are thirty-two Brandenburg-Prussian rulers, and behind each of them a marble bench, and on each bench sits — no, no one can sit there, it's too cold — but perched on each backrest are two busts of contemporaries of the ruler in

⁵³ Not a palace in the traditional sense, this magnificent building was built and occupied by Jewish industrial baron Fritz von Friedländer-Fuld.

⁵⁴ Hessel is surely referring to the impressionist painter Max Liebermann. In their notes to Hessel's collected works, Hartmut Vollmer and Bernd Witte speculate that the poet Hessel refers to is Karl Vollmoeller.

question. There's no avoiding it: our car drives remorselessly past the entire set, and each one is named. The question is whether we can manage to have all of these removed before the next time you visit. Berlin is very capable, after all, when it comes to clearing things away, but marble isn't worth much when it's already carved. Still, we must be able to sell it somehow. Thirty-two rulers plus benches and contemporaries! I don't know where to begin. But maybe you'll get an idea of how beautiful this avenue up to the good old Victory Column once was. So, now we've covered the one side, up to Friedrich Irontooth.⁵⁵ Here we are at Kemperplatz, and this is supposed to be Berlin's new Roland statue, since we don't have the old one anymore. We could enter the somewhat ostentatious Cafe Schottenhaml here on the corner (the name calls to mind something cosily Munich-esque) and then admire the porcelain collection located up above, old samples from the Royal Porcelain Factory. But our car makes a turn and finishes off the remaining sixteen of the thirty-two. We cast a glance at Otto the Lazy, the only one of these gentlemen to enjoy any degree of popularity, as he had such a nice, sullen way of carrying out his civic duties.⁵⁶ And now just sit tight until we come to the Victory Column!⁵⁷ It's not exactly beautiful, no,

⁵⁵ Nickname for Friedrich II, Elector of Brandenburg.

⁵⁶ Otto the Lazy neglected his duties as joint Elector of Brandenburg, and received a large financial compensation from the emperor in 1373 in exchange for his resignation. The statue became the butt of jokes when it was included in the Siegesallee series, and seems to have been cemented in popular humour by an 1899 cartoon of it sleeping on its marble bench.

⁵⁷ Until 1939, the Victory Column stood at Königsplatz in front of the Reichstag, not in the Großer Stern intersection where it is located today.

you couldn't say that. But the tall shaft of the column decorated with cannon barrels is reminiscent of the plant known as a 'horsetail'. And horsetails are beautiful. And the whole thing now belongs to Berlin's garden of monuments. You must admit, despite the cannons, that the column is relatively inoffensive. Oh, and if you love panoramic views, there's one up top with a Baedeker star. You can see the whole Tiergarten toward the south and west, and Moabit to the north, and to the east beyond the dome of the Reichstag you can have another look across the whole old city with its domes and towers, which we saw up close today.

Less harmless, even depicted in Begas's hasty pathos, is the giant on the red granite pedestal.⁵⁸ Confident in his headstrong achievement, the bronze cavalryman, his fist on the proclamation of the German Empire, gazes into the distance, across everything he's accomplished, and everything those who came after him did not achieve. He takes no notice of the folk gathered on his pedestal: Atlas with the globe, Siegfried from the opera forging the sword of the Reich, and the two ladies who symbolise the wisdom and power of the nation. The massive Reichstag building behind him seems to be hunched under its domes and towers. The dome of the Reichstag, by the way, isn't nearly as high as Wallot, the master builder, had planned. But even as it is, this enormous crouching animal has a massive beauty all its own, and it represents a mighty feat for the era that produced it.

⁵⁸ Hessel is referring to the Bismarck Memorial, which once stood next to the Victory Column at Königsplatz. Today, it is also located at the Großer Stern.

If you're pining for windows with Reich eagles on them, murals of cities and landscapes, cardinal virtues, marble and bronze Kaisers, stamped leather upholstery with all of the refinement of an International dining car, 'sumptuous Renaissance jewellery', and allegorical ladies, then take a tour of the lobby, reading rooms, large meeting room, refreshment room, foyers, and committee rooms. It'll take you three quarters of an hour. If you have friends among the legislators or members of the press, have them procure a seat in the gallery for you, and attend a session. But if you do, you must be careful not to confuse right with left. It's like with certain stage directions that are intended from the point of view of the actor and not the audience. Orient yourself properly so that you don't mistake the communists for the nationalists and vice versa. You'll be able to pick out our great and minor politicians from newspaper pictures, weekly theatre newsreels, and caricatures; that's always a good time. I also recommend that you read selected pages of Eugen Szatmari's Berlin book.⁵⁹ That will give you a brisk introduction to this world where I myself always feel a bit foreign.

We drive on across a bridge over the Spree again and arrive at the 'tents'. Big garden restaurants are popping up there now, where there really *did* used to be tents. Old Fritz permitted members of a French colony to pitch canvas tents here and sell refreshments to the people out walking. Later, there was

⁵⁹ Eugen Szatmari was a Hungarian journalist who wrote in German. The book referenced here is *Das Buch von Berlin (Was nicht im Baedeker steht)* [The Berlin Book (What You Won't Find in Baedeker)].

a stage here where musicians performed. In the days of the 1848 March Revolution, the revolutionaries gathered around the stage, debating how to address the king, freedom of press and speech, popular representation, and so on. For a while they were left to their own devices, albeit surrounded by squadrons of cavaliers. Things were still proceeding with judgement and restraint. Varnhagen reports of reticent masses who returned peacefully from the tents in the dark of night, through the Brandenburg Gate and into the city. And in the November Revolution of 1918, silent crowds also advanced along the gardens of the big restaurants, and once again the tents were the site of a cautiously moderate revolution. But, in general, what is to be found here is peaceful bourgeois relaxation, with music, performances, dancing, and massive platters of 'tent pots' and 'set meals', or a packed dinner. The dancing is pretty tame; even the performances are harmless. And so, to this day, in the middle of the city, there's a restful getaway for an endless number of Berlin's petit-bourgeois families, groups, and clubs. The most beautiful bit of quiet Berlin is the street that leads up to the restaurants on the edge of the Tiergarten. But that's not something you can see just driving by — you have to experience it in the morning and at night. Life here is more old-fashioned and homely than in the beautiful, well-known streets at the southern edge of the Tiergarten.

Our car darts with dreadful speed along the Spree, past the gardens and the Bellevue Palace to the Großer Stern intersection; before, you used to peer through the fence to see if the little princelings were out on a walk. Now, you

can ramble along the old garden's alleys, look into the round ground-level room in the side building and imagine the royal summer parties there, decipher the garden tombstones, and gaze over at the old-Berlin street known as Brückenallee, where elderly ladies' flowers linger on weathered balconies. In his final years, depressive if epicurean Friedrich Wilhelm IV often sat on the palace terrace facing the garden, perhaps drafting one of the landscaping leaflets that you can see in the Hohenzollern Museum, receiving his ministers (who had their concerns about his emotional state), and dreaming of his lost empire, in which 'no mere piece of paper should ever come between me and my people', while liberal Berliners grappled with the parliament and freedom.

In the days of Friedrich the Great, Knobelsdorff, master builder of Sanssouci, had a dairy and country house here. And after his death, it was passed down through various hands until it finally fell to Prince Ferdinand, Friedrich's younger brother, whose palace was built by Boumann the Younger;⁶⁰ but the dainty pavilion with the Corinthian columns is Schinkel's work.

At Großer Stern, we pass the Saint Hubertus fountain and the hunting figures,⁶¹ dutiful bronze you can't really say anything against, though I try to imagine this square in olden times, when real guardians stood here at this crossing of hunting paths, garden gods who later watched over fashionable society's boulevard. Oh,

⁶⁰ Bellevue Palace was designed by Michael Philipp Boumann and completed in 1786.

⁶¹ The fountain, by Cuno von Uechtritz-Steinkirch, was dismantled by the National Socialists and its Hubertus statue lost; the four hunting figures by other sculptors can still be seen near the Großer Stern.

many Berlin Tiergartens and Große Sterns have existed before this one whose roundabout traffic roars through now, and where until recently, as a symbol of this brighter Berlin, a tower of lights once glared.⁶²

On the drive up Charlottenburger Chaussee,⁶³ I quickly point out to the foreigners ~~the way to the old Charlottenhof~~ garden restaurant. It was once a pretty private house, and now it's one of the few inviting cafes in Tiergarten itself. Somehow the Berliners haven't yet cultivated luxury and comfort in their illuminated greenery. What Paris would have made of such well-situated clearings, like this Charlottenhof or the little inn by the boat-landing on the lake!

At the Tiergarten Station, you'll find a small display of the bowls and plates exhibited there by the Porcelain Company; I urge you to dedicate a few of your free hours to visiting the nearby factory. That's a piece from the best of old Berlin. Next to a quiet stretch of the river, a street named after the private founder, Wegley, branches off and leads to the offices and factory. While the sales and exhibition rooms on Leipziger Straße are known to the general public, this out-of-the-way complex with its museum is not as well-known and visited as it should be, with all of its halls and rooms where the porcelain is formed, fired, and painted.

We walk through the garden-like courtyard, by the long, plain buildings and through a gateway into the factory, whose

⁶² The Osram company erected a glowing tower at the intersection for the 1928 Week of Lights.

⁶³ Renamed Straße des 17. Juni in 1953.

construction is also of historical interest. There, we receive a tour of the entire path that the porcelain takes, from wet clay to the flower painter's atelier. In the lower clay cellars, an extensive system of troughs separates the solids from the smoothly flowing mass; liquid streams out into boxes where the finer particles are separated from the water. Feldspar is crushed before our eyes, first coarsely in massive edge mills, then finely in tumbling mills, before being added to the alumite. The whole mass continues on, pressed through filters and agitators, the modern version of the old kneading benches. It's run through a roller-conveyor on round tables. They let us watch as the plaster casters and the workers at the potter's wheels go about their business. We visit the lightly warmed drying rooms where the formed objects stay until they're ready for the first firing; the firing chambers of the gas kilns; the storeys-high round kiln; the final firing room; the cooling room; and the workshops where the barrels for glazing stand. A strange underworld that is half oven, half 'message to the forge'.⁶⁴ Finally we arrive at the painters, where today they still faithfully and earnestly daub on the traditional flowers with pointed leaves in metallic paint, which transforms when it's fired. They show us plates and bowls in every stage of completion, before and after firing, before and after their stay in the muffle furnace, where a weak heat melts the liquefying agent from the paint.

A friendly librarian leads us into the library and grants us a look at the royal decrees made by Old Fritz, who, as an

⁶⁴ Hessel is referencing the ballad by Schiller, 'Fridolin', or, *The Message to the Forge*.

industrialist, concerned himself with all of the details of his 'Porcellainfabrique'. All briefings of any importance had to be sent directly to him, and he ensured their receipt with his staunch 'reminders'. He was a good salesman and knew how to hock his wares. For example, if Jews wanted to take up residence, open a business, or marry, they had to buy royal china. After he had become very famous, twenty solid life-size apes were foisted on the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn.⁶⁵ By presenting large gifts made in his factory, the king spread its fame. The centrepiece that he presented to Empress Catherine II of Russia became world famous. Under the direction of the king, the business grew, new kilns were constantly being erected, and the technical achievements of the early nineteenth century were implemented to the royal factory's benefit. Although it had to endure all of Prussia's economic struggles, its products always retained their artistic quality and unique identity through the years.

A walk through the exhibition halls here will reveal Berliner porcelain to be a faithful reflection of the current inclinations through all stylistic periods — especially when rounded out by a visit to the sales rooms on Leipziger Straße, which owe their new interior design to Bruno Paul and its adornments to him and artists such as E.R. Weiß, Renée Sintenis, Edwin Scharff, and Georg Kolbe. There are the cherubs and the fates of the Rococo period, and allegorical groups such as 'Water' depicted as a shepherdess with a tiny jug, and Cupid as a cavalryman. The New Palace service and the gleaming dark blue Wrocław

⁶⁵ Most sources agree that this is in all likelihood a legend, albeit a popular one.

Royal Palace service feature more picturesque flowers. Then came the beautiful sketch-like bouquets of the Empire, the classical graces, coffee cups whose shapes are based on Greek and Etruscan models, the delicate bisque sculptures based on Schadow's drafts, the busts of Luise, the attractively designed vases by Henkel based on Schinkel's sketches. We are greeted again and again by these familiar forms and figures, in the Berlin City Palace, in Monbijou Palace, in Potsdam, but above all in the items passed down through Berlin families.

At the point where Charlottenburger Chaussee crosses the Landwehr Canal, a somewhat ponderous gatehouse building stands, which is apparently supposed to highlight the fact that another city begins here. It's rather new, and you shouldn't take it at its word. There's just as little proof here as anywhere else that a border exists between Berlin and Charlottenburg. In a sisterly fashion, neighbouring Charlottenburg took on a number of scientific and artistic institutions, for example the Technical University here to our left. With its magnificent columns, cornices, and sculptures, the massive building celebrates a world that really has nothing to do with columns, cornices, and sculptures. In the foyer, a daemon has been cast as a flamboyant bronze monument, like a renaissance hero. A little farther up, Berliner Straße makes a bend that people call 'The Knee'. Fontane said of this Knee, 'today, its curve is utterly unalluring'. It hasn't become any more alluring in the meantime. And its shape dissolves completely in the chaos of cars and trams that traverse the intersection of many streets which cross here. The continuation of Berliner Straße remains

the quietest of these streets. Among the newer houses that line its curbs, a number of smaller, older houses are still present from the time when the journey from Berlin to Charlottenburg was a day-trip made with rented horse-drawn carriages. People drove their coaches through the Brandenburg Gate and across real countryside to get here. They rented summer housing in the idyllic homes that lay on the road connecting the capital city with the royal summer residence, created long ago by the first Prussian king in the little village of Lietzow for his spouse, after whom Charlottenburg is named.

Our arrival at the queen's lovely palace⁶⁶ was somewhat marred by a big 1905 equestrian monument to Kaiser Friedrich, on pylons with gods and adornments. Tear it down! The square and its amenities are dedicated to the good of the public, after all! Across from the palace are two domed structures that — it's hard to believe — were barracks. They're reminiscent of some unplaceable garden architecture drawn by the romantic Friedrich Wilhelm IV, and their reverential faces look onto Eosander's green dome with the god of dance hovering over it.

In the palace, Queen Luise's beautiful, rather empty Empire-style rooms contain many unoccupied armchairs and delicate tile stoves. In the east wing, which Knobelsdorff added for Friedrich the Great, is a large ballroom called the Golden Gallery. And you'll find even older splendour in the chambers on the garden side, in the chapels and porcelain chambers from the first king. Unfortunately, you have to walk through the whole thing in the wake of a shuffling guide. But foreigner,

⁶⁶ Hessel is describing the Charlottenburg Palace.

you are allowed to walk in the big park unmolested. On the way there, you'll pass through a room with pilasters whose ornate capitals and medallions made of stucco look as if they'll crumble in the next gust of wind. They've looked that way for the past two hundred years. This neglected room is especially full of the past.

In the garden, you'll walk along the pretty front of the palace and past the busts of the Roman Caesars and along the quiet paths to the mausoleum. In its newly expanded form, it is also a very dignified building, but it made an unforgettable impression on anyone who saw the original one based on Schinkel's plans. It was the first of his little temples to death, and it harbours only Queen Luise and her Friedrich Wilhelm in their marble sleep. For their son and daughter-in-law, another resting place should have been devised without meddling with Rauch's masterpiece.⁶⁷ In this park, there's also a strange building far beyond the carp pond and near the river: the Belvedere, where in the 1890s, Friedrich Wilhelm II sat at the feet of his 'Countess von Lichtenau'.⁶⁸ Fontane visited the interior of the 'odd, heavily beshuttered construction with the four flat balcony-supporting edifices stuck to the sides and the copper spire'. (Today, it is a residence for public servants and thus inaccessible.) He visited the hall-like round room, and the dim chamber where the king evoked the spirits of the departed, who warned him to return to the path of virtue.

⁶⁷ Christian Daniel Rauch sculpted a sarcophagus for Luise in 1810. Erdmann Enke imitated Rauch's work in 1894 when sarcophagi for Wilhelm I and Auguste were placed in the enlarged building.

⁶⁸ Born Wilhelmine Enke, the Countess was his official mistress.

Today, the spirits, which Fontane also sensed, have been driven out by a rather banal here-and-now, and the past prefers to reside in some of the park's underbrush and paths that stretch away to the west and north.

But our car takes a turn to the south into the newest part of Charlottenburg, on Kaiserdamm up to Reichskanzlerplatz. On Reichsstraße, we glance over and discern the Heerstraße housing estate coming into being behind it. South of Kaiserdamm, we take in the exhibition halls, the great expo centres, the radio hall and tower. The whole street is generously proportioned, beginning at the Brandenburg Gate and leading here and beyond. For good reason is it the pride of the new Berlin. Our return path takes us by the university for music and visual arts on Hardenbergstraße,⁶⁹ a unified complex of buildings in appealing sandstone. Then we cross under the city railway viaduct and over to the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, where our car comes to a halt. The guide explains that this building is one of the most beautiful churches in Germany.

Now, unfortunately, we're standing in broad daylight and you can see it too clearly. Oh, if only one of the true old churches stood here — from a time when one generation handed the fragment of its dreams on to the next for further completion. If only the wild tumult of the roundabout's trams, cars, buses, and crowds echoed against the stony ruins of grey-aged walls and spires, beneath the torsos of angels and the grimaces of devils — then the 'Broadway' of Berlin-Charlottenburg would have a heart, a centre, a significance for its cafes, movie

⁶⁹ Universität der Künste Berlin (Berlin University of the Arts)

theatres, incandescent letters, and scrolling messages. Instead, here stands a textbook example of a 'late Romantic central-plan construction' with its main and side towers, thirty years old and still looking like new, nothing more than a massive traffic obstruction in the centre of the square. Across from the main tower on the one side and the chancel on the other are two similarly romantic buildings by the same architect — may history forget his name. Light from the Capitol, Gloria-Palast, and Ufa am Zoo cinemas must hammer down on this building at night, breaking up some of the ossified school lessons. We older folk sometimes think back on the time when a wonderful tree left over from the old Tiergarten spread its branches here. (Contemporaries of this magnificent tree are still standing today: one on Wichmannstraße, the other on Viktoriastraße.) But it doesn't matter anymore; today is today. Still, if only this cathedral, with its long name, would at least deteriorate and collapse a little ... The way it is, it stands in the middle of the clattering and roaring, utterly unruffled and Prussian, eyes trained on our dear Lord.

And inside? Already in the foyer, which is, apparently, supposed to recall the narthex of a real romantic church, they let loose with the marble figures: as a lad, Wilhelm receives a marble sword from his father, and he rides as a young crown-prince through the battlefield of 1814 behind riflemen on their bellies, who take their marble aim toward the church's inner entryway; he consults with Bismarck and Moltke over a campaign map between stylised flowers, and is seated in marble between son and grandson, all the better to be revered.

Of the many church windows, it can be said that a benefactor is legibly registered under nearly every one. Among them are many princes, but also cities and individual patrons. Until one beautiful day when these inscriptions are blotted out or disappear, for another century their descendants will be able to chafe at the fact that great-granddad and great-grandma sponsored a laughable painted-glass Satan burning next to the peaceful Redeemer. In the great rose window, little painted prophets hoist their banners in emulation of a naive medieval demeanour, and against a gold background on the ceiling mosaics, ambitious people with halos over their heads conduct themselves as Catholically as their Protestant forms will allow. The Redeemer must bless all of this under an electric light. It's on him to take inventory of this genteel stock, along with the statues ringing a baptismal font of precious material, a ring-shaped chandelier with a diameter of 5.5 metres, and an organ with a casing of embossed copper, 80 stops, and 4,800 tones.

So, before the car drives any farther, I'll jump out here, not into the church, but into a romantic cafe. It's late afternoon, and it isn't too full yet. I'm meeting with old friends from Munich and Paris. Drive on without me, you *real* foreigners!