

Berlin

In a humid cellar,
under the city of Berlin,
in a space that was either a bank vault or a bunker
before,
I dance.

Beats thump my eardrums and
excite my adrenaline.

Breaking in a lean
on a support beam,
lungs heaving,
breathing
the bouquet of sweat
and perfumed-puffs from the smoke machine,
I watch white strobe lights flash hands,
eyes, cracked paint, speakers, and cables
climbing low walls
around the room.

Faces shadowing the scene
are like mine, but not.
My eyes outline a man,
svelte and styled,
who looks old enough to have been old enough
to be involved
when the big barrier broke.

Who was he then?
A dissident,
filling up journals with thoughts
of freedom and philosophy,
dreaming of demonstrations he couldn't organize,
signaling to those on the other side
of the great Berlin divide,
who would smuggle him music,
and news,
and candy,
while he whispered plans
to confidants on his side,
who would keep silent
when the police came asking where he went?

Or was he the police,
tracking enemies east of the partition,
fanning suspicion,
keeping records of deeds and misdeeds,
paying loved ones of wreckers
to betray the details that
would crush the revolution
before it got out of hand?

Or was his the hand
on the trigger,
of an armed border guard,
dark cap shielding narrowing eyes,
as he zeroed in on the refugee
through the sight of his assault rifle?

Or was he was just a guy, living
the minutiae of history ...
going every day to work and back,
pining over girls,
joking with friends,
and loving music his parents hated?

He catches me stealing this glance at him
and reaches out his hand.
I loosen my limbs and let the techno pulse
drive me back to dance.

It is too loud for words in here,
and I am glad.
The language barrier moot,
the two of us close,
bodies and minds powered by electronica,
I reach out in all directions
and feel no walls.

Ingrid Anders
1999