film. Soldiers try to hold them back and explain that only bombs go east, taxis go only to the border. Later Omar and Tarek join a demonstration without knowing what it is about. When the demonstrators are fired on, Tarek hides in a car and by accident gets driven into the eastern part of the city where he ends up in the mythical brothel of Oum Walid. When later he attempts to revisit the brothel with his friends we learn, with them, that the center of Beirut "is a no-go area." But Tarek has learned that in order to get to the brothel he has to walk through the area with the bra in the air, illustrating the absurdity of the situation. The owner of the brothel kicks the young teenagers out because one of the women had sex with two men of different religions, which destroys Tarek's hope for Beirut.

The film creates the city as militarized space increasingly divided, in which the exterior militarization and the interior tension mirror each other. Airplanes turn the sky into a militarized zone and the opening of *West Beyrouth* creates the school also as a militarized institutional space. The opening serves to construct the main character Tarek as a young troublemaker and situates the 1970s in the history of colonialization by the French, since he rebels against the French school system. France received Beirut with all of Lebanon after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire following the First World War, and Lebanon gained independence after the Second World War. When the civil war broke out in 1975, the city was divided into the western Muslim and the eastern Christian part, leaving the center an empty space (similar to Berlin).

The border interferes with the characters' daily lives and disorients them in the city. When the parents try to bring Tarek to school they cannot get through the policed border even though they invoke Beirut as their home town. They are told that "there is no Beirut, just East and West." Tarek's mother asks: "Which Beirut are we in?" and the father guesses: "West." This film foregrounds the characters' deep attachment to the city that goes beyond religious, political, or national affiliation. The exterior – the neighborhood – is slowly transformed into a landscape of war while the interior space – their apartment – is the site of the fighting between the parents. The film takes the convention of the coming-of-age story and complicates it through the political division of the city. At the end of the film Omar and Tarek reminisce how their lives have quickly changed from their innocent childhood, with which the film has started: Omar's sister ran away with a guy from East Beirut and his father went crazy, while Tarek's father is unemployed and hopeless and they have no money or food. Towards the end, they share mature and sad thoughts while bombs explode in the background. The film ends with a montage of vignettes of characters and documentary images of war, claiming a simultaneous realist and fantasy depiction of historical circumstances and individual att...

The cityscape of war articulates the dynamics of resistance against occupation; the rubble film becomes the setting for a moral engagement with reconstruction, in contrast to the retro-rubble film that invokes but disavows the past. The divided cinematic city is either used for a state-sanctioned position in state-produced films or as a biographical investigation of individual attachment and despair in relation to the divided city.

Case Study 5 Carol Reed's *The Third Man* (1949)

The Third Man brings together the two functions of ruins and rubble discussed above: to identify a specific postwar moment, and to create a landscape in which to negotiate moral questions. It was produced by Alexander Korda, who was born in Austro-Hungary but then became an important film producer in England, and the screenplay was written by Graham Greene; both men were active in the discourse around the Second World War in Britain.

The Third Man, based on a novel by Graham Greene and directed by Carol Reed, features Orson Welles, Joseph Cotton, Trevor Howard, Wilfred Hyde-White, and Bernard Lee, and was produced by David O. Selznick and Alexander Korda. It tells the story of Holly Martins, an American writer who arrives in Vienna to visit his friend Harry Lime but discovers that his friend is dead. At his funeral, Martins meets Harry Lime's friends and his former girlfriend Anna, and in the course of things hears differing accounts of Lime's death. Ultimately, he learns that his friend is not dead after all, and he arranges a meeting. In the meantime, the military commander informs him that Lime is involved in the black market, diluting and selling penicillin, and is therefore responsible for many deaths. Finally, Martins is persuaded to betray his friend, who is then trapped in the sewers of Vienna.

The film is famous for its noir aesthetics, but its particular narrative and moral appeal emerges from the connection between those aesthetics that make extended use of the underground sewer system and the city in ruins, as well as the immediate postwar setting of a divided and occupied city. In noir tradition *The Third Man* opens with a deep male voice-over in the simple past, connected to what appears to be documentary footage:

I never knew the old Vienna before the war with its Strauss music, its glamour, and its easy charm. I really got to know it in the classic period of the black market. They could get anything, if people wanted it enough, and

had the money to pay. Of course, a situation like that does tempt amateurs but of course they don't last long, not really, not like professionals. Now the city is divided into four zones, you know, American, British, Russian, and French, but the center of the city, that's international, policed by an international patrol, one member of each of the four powers. Wonderful! You can imagine what hope they had, all of these strangers to the place, no two of them speaking the same language. But they were good fellows on the whole, did their best. Vienna doesn't look any worse than a lot of other European cities, bombed a little, of course. Anyway, I was dead broke when I got to Vienna. A close pal of mine had wired me, offering me a job doing publicity work for some kind of charity he was running. I'm a writer, name's Martins, Holly Martins. Anyway, down I came all the way to ole Vienna, happy as a log and without a dime.

The establishing shot shows us Vienna with its churches and classical statues as backdrop to the voice-over musings. But the footage of war-weary, haggard faces of old men exchanging clothes and wearing four watches on their wrists contrast to the splendor of times past. In a foreshadowing that can be understood only retroactively, we see a dead body floating in the Danube when the voice-over mentions amateurs involved in the black market.

Figure 5.4 Carol Reed. *The Third Man* (1949): The hunt for Harry Lime

The search for Harry Lime takes place in an urban landscape that is marked by the destructiveness of war, on the one hand and, the reality of a parallel, illegal economy, mapped onto the subterranean space of the city, on the other. As in other films noir, *The Third Man* is characterized by oblique camera angles and high-contrast shadows.

Figure 5.5 *The Third Man*: Skewed angles

When Holly Martins has to shout up to a building, he stands on a pile of rubble, and the façade of the bourgeois nineteenth-century house exposes its under-lying brick work, gun-shot holes and damages from bombing. As in *Is Paris Burning?* the film's urban space is characterized by emptiness, which is historically accurate but also takes on an allegorical dimension. The shortage of gasoline and the overall destruction led to a lack of traffic in the cities of Europe. Thus, most of the cars we see in *The Third Man* belong to the military police. Ironically, however, cars are integral to the narrative and appear at important turning points.

Figure 5.6 *The Third Man:* **Holly Martins on a pile of rubbish**

The setting of Austria, and of Vienna as its capital, becomes the backdrop for larger moral questions that flatten out the specific importance of Austria. Martins's voice-over that introduces us to the city reduces Vienna to its pre-war identity characterized by Strauss, glamour, and charm and to contemporary Vienna as "the classic period of the black market," which reflects the ironic distance of the film noir. "Vienna doesn't look any worse than a lot of other European cities, bombed a little, of course," explains his voice-over, which thereby erases the specificity of Vienna's historical and political situation. The shot of Martins standing on a pile of rubble calling up to a window could equally be set in Berlin or Paris. Yet, the political questions at that historical moment were distinctly different in Berlin, Paris, and Vienna. This generalization of Vienna allows the film to create a narrative that is both dependent on the postwar status of Vienna, as well as independent of its specificity in postwar Europe. The city in ruins represents the destroyed social structure of a city that makes unethical behavior possible. Yet resolving the issue of Harry Lime's black-market activities does not resolve Europe's, Austria's or

Vienna's future. In the final shot Martins waits for Anna, who walks away without speaking to him. Anna remains an enigma, her origin and her future unclear; she is a stand-in for the European refugee.[12]

The specificity of Vienna as Austrian is mostly disavowed, except through the music, which is played on a zither, traditional Austrian folk music. The confusion of the political situation is mirrored and expressed through the labyrinth underground. Bare brick, metal and water, and constant darkness characterize those scenes. The topographical labyrinth makes control impossible. Skewed shots emphasize that things are out of order. The world of the underground mirrors the psyche of Harry Lime in the noir aesthetics of ruins and the high contrast of light and shadow. The ruins and the underworld are associated with Harry Lime who takes advantage of the devastation; he thus functions narratively and symbolically as sign of danger, illegality, and threat to the healthy body of the city that the American military wants to guard.

The famous final shot of the pursuit of Harry shows a low camera close-up of Harry's grasping fingers through a grid of the sewer system. The majority of the shot is filled with the space of the empty city, with sparse light. The street, as
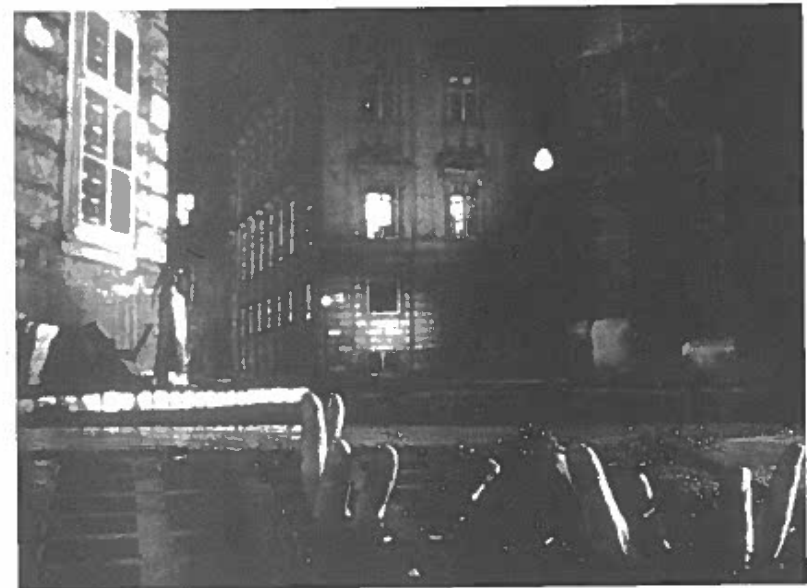

Figure 5.7 *The Third Man:* **The return of expressionism**

throughout the film, is emptied out of life. The city is haunted by Harry Lime's absent presence. His fingers, reaching out of the gutter, show the moment of his death. The shot harks back to the expressionist motif via film noir that has symbolically returned to Europe with the American Holly Martins. The grid of the gutter symbolizes the porous divide between the moral world above and the immoral realm of the underground, but the shot positions us above ground in the space of morality.

The Third Man employs the immediate postwar city for a noir suspense that also communicates a larger moral tale about corruption. That moral tale is played out in Vienna, but the film does not engage with the moral questions of the past for Austrians. The ruins become enigmatic, like Anna Schmidt, sharing noir's conflation of woman and the city, as explained in Chapter 2. The film's appeal lies in the postwar aesthetics of ruins employed for a claim to authenticity and a setting for a moral conflict.

Further reading

Stephen Graham (ed.) (2004b) *Cities, War, and Terrorism: Towards an Urban Geopolitics*, Oxford: Blackwell. This collection addresses new theoretical approaches to war and terrorism in relationship to a range of international cities.

William J.V. Neill and Hanns-Uwe Schwedler (eds) (2001) *Urban Planning and Cultural Inclusion: Lessons from Belfast and Berlin*, New York: Palgrave. These essays provide overviews and historical accounts of planning with an emphasis on cultural diversity in two cities characterized by urban division.

Jane Schneider and Ida Susser (eds) (2003) *Wounded Cities: Destruction and Reconstruction in a Globalized World*, Oxford: Berg. Essays that use the body metaphor to discuss the "wounding" of a range of international cities in the post-9/11 world.

Robert R. Shandley (2001) *Rubble Films: German Cinema in the Shadow of the Third Reich*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press. The only single-authored book on rubble film in the context of German national cinema.

Essential viewing

René Clément. *Is Paris Burning?* (1966)

Ziad Doueiri. *West Beyrouth* (1998)

Carol Reed. *The Third Man* (1949)

Jim Sheridan. *The Boxer* (1997)

Wolfgang Staudte. *The Murderers Are among Us* (1946)