

Excerpted from
“The Year in Books—Under the Covers, Between the Lines”

By The Editors of *ARTnews*

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Escape to Berlin: A Travel Memoir, Adrian Piper

(Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin)

If you were not sated this year by the Adrian Piper retrospective at MoMA, a beautifully illustrated catalogue to go along with it, and a new book of essays about her work, there is this book, which bills itself as a “travel memoir” but functions more as a long-form explanation for why Piper left the United States for good. Critics do a lot of speaking for Piper, so I was glad to see her put into writing her own account of self-exile. I was glad, too, to see it done with such style. *Escape to Berlin* merges poetry, Kantian philosophy, Hindu scripture, and much more into a tricky statement about how to maintain your identity when everyone wants to define it for you. Some might find it bitterly humorous, too. As Piper puts it, speaking of one of her masterpieces in which she renounced her blackness, “It is only funny if you are sane enough to get the joke.”

—Alex Greenberger