

*Soundtracking Germany: Popular Music and National Identity*. By Melanie Schiller. London: Rowman and Littlefield. 2018. ix + 277 pp. £85.00 (hardback).

Melanie Schiller has made an important contribution to the discipline of popular music studies, and to our understanding of German *Zeitgeschichte* in her book, *Soundtracking Germany*. She explains how the national has been neglected by the field of popular music studies, which is more interested in either the local or subcultural, or conversely in much larger flows involved in the globalisation of the popular music industry. Her five chronologically arranged and well-contextualised case studies of popular songs come from the fifty years between the immediate postwar and the 2000s. They establish how the national has indeed been important in the West German and post-*Wende* Federal Republic setting, both in a positive sense when Germanness is an overt theme, as well as when it is noticeably omitted. These case studies start with Karl Berbuer's Cologne Karneval hit *Trizonesien-Song* of 1948, which functioned as an alternative, humorous-*Schlager* national anthem from below, at a time when the *Deutschlandlied* was officially out of bounds. Schiller then moves on to mid-1960s beat music by groups who performed in a style and language borrowed from British invasion bands like the Beatles and Rolling Stones, and avoided plays on Germanness. In chapter 3, Schiller examines 1970s Krautrock by bands like Kraftwerk and focuses on their iconic song *Autobahn*, which sonically portrays an open-ended journey, and negotiates its way through selected elements (the Autobahn, the KdF-Wagen/Volkswagen, the Mercedes Benz) that bridge the recent German past and the present. The following chapter considers late 1970s and 1980s Neue Deutsche Welle and particularly the controversial hit *Der Mussolini* (with its barked order to "Tanz den Adolf Hitler!"), by Deutsch Amerikanische Freundschaft (DAF). Schiller argues that this is a song which masquerades as nationalist fascism, but subverts it from a queer perspective. Schiller's study closes with the affirmative 2004/05 trance anthem *Wir sind wir* by techno musician Paul van Dyk and the lyricist Peter Heppner.

Schiller undertakes a close reading of this relatively small number of sources, drawing on the implied narratee addressed by the lyrics, as well as (although to a lesser extent) the musical substrate of each song, and finally visual elements such as album covers and music videos, where these exist. In doing so, she uses and extends a theoretical approach embedded in cultural studies and psychoanalysis. She argues that the 'narrating the nation' concept advanced by the British cultural studies scholar Homi Bhabha, which involves hegemonic ('metaphoric') and more marginal, performative ('metonymic') dimensions, ought to be expanded into a tripartite scheme for the postwar West German setting. The new element, which will be familiar to readers of the Mitscherlichs, holds that postwar West German narrations of the nation include not only Bhabha's, but also a 'melancholic' dimension, which is determined by the trauma of the recent German past. That past remains ineluctably present via elements such as repetition (in music and in music video), but also through what Schiller calls 'uncanny silences' (p. 85), such as when the 1960s German beat band, The Lords, mimicked British beat in a way that drew attention to Germanness, even whilst it tried valiantly not to.

Schiller's readings are perceptive and well-made, even though the interpretation of elements like silence and repetition is not a straightforward (or uncontested) matter. She does not focus on the national to the exclusion of other determining factors. For example, she interprets how bands like Kraftwerk and DAF were engaged in constructing and

performing German identity in ways that drew attention to that very performativity, and were also involved in knowing self-exoticisation for an Anglophone music audience. She identifies some areas where further research is needed, such as the active reception of these songs by historical audiences in ways that may or may not have followed the transcript, and alternative narrations of nation (or anti-nation), e.g. in the German Democratic Republic during the relevant period, or amongst music-producing migrant communities in the Federal Republic. Notwithstanding these lacunae, Schiller's book is an excellent study, and her finding that even the seemingly most affirmative of these (West) German songs contain different and sometimes countervailing aspects of national narration, and that they therefore possess ambiguity, is nuanced and valuable. Overall, her book contributes admirably to our understanding of the complicated ways in which questions of nation and identity played out in West German popular culture in the decades after World War Two. In addition to its value as a work of scholarship, *Soundtracking Germany* would be suited for use in undergraduate and postgraduate teaching.

Andrew Wright Hurley, University of Technology Sydney