

Into the Groove

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*Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture*

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Into the Groove

Popular Music and Contemporary German Fiction

Andrew Wright Hurley

 CAMDEN HOUSE
Rochester, New York

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*For Meredith, Emil, Arno, and Clemens*

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Introduction

IN LATE 1989, just as what Peter Handke called Europe's "Jahr der Geschichte" (year of history) was coming to a close, the forty-seven-year-old author set about writing a curious short story-cum-essay titled *Versuch über die Jukebox* (translated as *The Jukebox*, 1990), which reflected on the protagonist's musical socialization, and in particular his relationship to the jukebox.¹ In the context of the changes underfoot in Europe, the protagonist felt that he had to justify writing about something so seemingly frivolous. The next few years would be significant ones for the German literary scene, as it struggled to come to terms with the effects of that "year of history." A series of literary debates about such things as East German writers' involvement with the secret police, and about the idea of a moralistic literature, destabilized the position of many of the established writers on both sides of the former inner-German border. Like other German markets the literary market was also subjected to economic rationalization. In this context, various interested parties put forth their views on the direction that German literary writing should now take. Soon, what had seemed to Handke to need defending against charges of being frivolous would become far more common.

For example, one of the important voices in the discourse about the renewal of German literature was Matthias Politycki. In October 1995, he boldly declared that "Literatur muss sein wie die Rockmusik" (literature must be like rock music).² Two years later, he published *Weiberroman* (A Novel of Women), a work that was redolent with references to popular music. Although they may not have agreed exactly with Politycki's musical tastes, or with his literary approach, in the years to come various younger German writers—many grouped under the problematic rubric *Popliteraten* (pop writers)—thematized popular music or otherwise borrowed from it in ways and to an extent that was significant.³

The year 1998 marked an early high point in this development. That year, Suhrkamp published "pop" novels by three writers—Rainald Goetz's *Rave*, Thomas Meinecke's *Tomboy*, and Andreas Neumeister's *Gut Laut* (Real Loud). *Rave* threw light on the rave culture revolving around electronic music. *Gut Laut* reflected on various aspects of the musical socialization of a Munich resident and his friends. Of the three novels, *Tomboy* was ostensibly less closely linked to music, although there were references throughout to obscure currents in music from US "riot grrrl" punk to West German modern jazz, which revealed an author with

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extensive knowledge about popular music—not surprising given the fact that Meinecke is not only a radio deejay and music columnist but also a member of *Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle*, a long-lived and adventurous German “indie” group. This type of dual artistic career was shared by other writers, including Sven Regener, author of *Herr Lehmann* (translated as *Berlin Blues*, 2001) and long-running head of the band Element of Crime. Music journalists wrote novels too. For example, Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre’s *Soloalbum* (1998) portrayed the existence of a sometimes music journalist and music-label employee. Others, like Kerstin Grether, have walked the line between music journalism and literature. Popular music proved worthy of literary attention on the other side of the former German-German border as well. Thomas Brussig—himself a music aficionado and one of the most prominent of the younger East German writers—wrote *Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee* (At the Shorter End of Sonnenallee, 1999), which reflected on the value of popular music to East German young people before 1989.

Some of these novels “merely” thematize popular music, as with Brussig, for example. Other novelists attempted to move beyond this. One reviewer even pithily observed that both Stuckrad-Barre and Neumeister had written novels that would actually have preferred to be records!⁴ Several would take seriously the idea of borrowing aesthetically from popular music of one kind or another. In particular, the construction of Meinecke’s novels, especially from *Tomboy* onward, would be associated with the notions of “deejaying” or “sampling.” He and others would also experiment with multimedia combinations of music and text in the radio play genre. By contrast, some musician-novelists like Regener studiously avoided music as a theme in their fiction, at least initially, and for reasons that are themselves telling.

Yet even if these authors did not deeply engage with popular music, there were often clear efforts by the industry and by critics to position their “products” closer to popular music. This was so in relation to important paratexts, including titles. Take, for example, some of Stuckrad-Barre’s publications from the period between 1998 and 2001: *Soloalbum*, *Livealbum*, and *Remix*. Cover designs also featured certain “musical” motifs, especially the vinyl record (see figure I.1). Publishing houses were also keen to discursively stress the pop musicality of these novels. The critic Klaus Nüchtern cynically summed up the situation in 1998: “Literatur ist nicht sexy. . . . Will ein Buch ein Publikum erreichen, das über die Zielgruppe der Berufsrezensenten und pfeifenrauchenden Feuilletonleser hinausgeht, werden dessen genuin literarische Qualitäten ängstlich verschwiegen: Eigentlich sei es, so wird versichert, mehr wie ein Film von Quentin Tarantino oder ein Album von, sagen wir, Prince.” (Literature is not sexy. . . . If a book wishes to reach a public extending beyond the target audience of professional critics and pipe-smoking

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Fig. I.1. Covers for *Liegen lernen* (a), *Musik* (b), and *Sonnenallee* (c). Images used with permission of the Heyne Verlag (Random House GmbH), Suhrkamp, and S. Fischer.

newspaper feature readers, then its genuine literary qualities are anxiously hushed up: we are assured that, in fact, the book is more like a film from Quentin Tarantino or, say, an album from Prince.)<sup>5</sup> Publishers emphasized the musical credentials of “young (wannabe) authors,” often identifying that they were also deejays.<sup>6</sup> At the level of performance, too, it now became common for authors to combine a literary reading with a deejay set. Some authors, such as Stuckrad-Barre, who “toured” his novel, became past masters at styling themselves as if they were not mere authors, but rather literary “pop stars.”<sup>7</sup>

Looking back on the period since the late 1990s, then, four general points might be made. First, a sector of the German media market is characterized by an interlinking of “products,” including novels, spoken-word CDs, films, and soundtrack or music CDs, and the novel by no means always takes the most important position in that bundle of products.<sup>8</sup> Second, a certain type of contemporary German literature became very popular during the late 1990s; tellingly, one scholar suggests that it “became the new rock and roll.”<sup>9</sup> Third, a proportion of this new literature came from individuals who were active in the popular music scene as musicians and/or as journalists. Finally, there has been, in some cases at least, a sophisticated intermedial “Szenewirren” (entanglement of the spheres) of literature and popular music.<sup>10</sup> This book seeks to make sense of that “entanglement of the spheres,” as broadly understood. I use the somewhat unfamiliar term “musico-centric” fiction here, rather than an alternative like “musical novel,” which Emily Petermann has recently advanced.<sup>11</sup> The latter term designates literature that invariably borrows from music at a structural level. This is not always the case with the fiction

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I analyze; some of these novels deal with popular music at a thematic level only. Such novels are not “musical” in a structural sense, but they are “musico-centric.” More controversially, I also use the term “musico-centric” to refer to individuals who are musician-authors or music journalist-authors, even though they may write fiction that does not appear to borrow from popular music at a thematic or a structural level. Here it designates a hybrid career that has benefitted from the individual’s background in the popular music scene.

Making Sense of Recent Musico-Centric Literature

Why is this spate of musico-literary activities important? How might we make sense of it? What approaches lie at our disposal? This study takes a variety of perspectives that relate to markets, literary form, and finally to content, and I will combine each of them to differing degrees as my analysis progresses.

I posit that there was at least a partial symbiosis between two spheres that had hitherto been seen as quite separate. By focusing on the literary and popular music markets, and on individuals who were active in one or both and translated principles across markets, we can examine how both markets benefited from that symbiosis. We can also discern limits to the symbiosis. My analysis here combines theoretical approaches from the sociology of both literature and popular music. Why did a given musician opt to write a novel when he or she did? Why did music journalists do so? Why did writers attempt to borrow from modes of performance and presentation common within the popular music sector? To what effect? What was it about the literary and music markets in this particular time and place that encouraged or welcomed such attempts?

During the 1990s popular music was an important site at which various new technologies—like sampling—were introduced or popularized. In that context, fresh utopian vistas of sociality, transnational identification, and engaging with the past also opened up. Formal musical and music-technological principles duly became an important source of literary innovation for some of those authors who wrote musico-centric novels. (This is not to say that contemporary music and digital technologies were the only sources of literary innovation, however; some authors also borrowed from music technologies, like the jukebox, that were in decline.) Another line of inquiry is therefore into this literary innovation. What techniques were borrowed? Why? Were they “successful”? On whose terms? At what cost to “traditional” literary qualities?

This line of inquiry will also be interested in the pre-history of such attempts. It would be wrong to assume that the literary focus on popular music is a new phenomenon dating to only the 1990s. In the late 1960s there was a first incarnation of so-called *Popliteratur*—often referred to

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by critics and academics as “Pop I”—and some of it engaged with popular music.<sup>12</sup> Under various influences, from the Beats to Andy Warhol and the critic Leslie Fiedler, Pop I writers including Rolf-Dieter Brinkmann, Hubert Fichte, and others sought to expand literary form as well as the-matics. They combined lyric poetry with prose, poetry with song lyrics, literature with theory, and also incorporated visual material into written works. Writers like Fichte and Handke linked literary readings with music performances. Others like Jürgen Ploog adapted “cut-up” techniques that William S. Burroughs had pioneered, assembling their texts from cut-up fragments of preexisting texts, perhaps anticipating in the process the more recent notion of “literary deejaying” whereby an author crafts a text from range of third-party intertexts, juxtaposing those constituent parts in a way that is thematically or rhythmically suggestive, thereby evoking the “mixes, cuts, and scratches” of a deejay.<sup>13</sup> On the whole, these Pop I authors engaged with subject material that had been seen by many as “trivial” and concentrated on the sensually pregnant as well as on the here and now, and on global (and particularly American) influences and trans- or polymedial forms.

Beyond this significant history of Pop I, we also need to bear in mind the history of Romanticism, as well as post-Romanticism and literary modernism. As Steven Paul Scher observed long ago, “music and its effects seem to hold a particular fascination for German writers.”<sup>14</sup> We find that scholars within “word and music studies” have quite fruitfully examined just these earlier periods, although most have been far less interested in *Popliteratur*.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, some of the studies of the latter seem to be relatively unaware of the methodological approaches of the former. This is partly due to the breadth of the term *Popliteratur*.

Studies of *Popliteratur* exhibit little consensus about the term.<sup>16</sup> Some have considered it easier to define *Popliteratur* by what it is not than by what it is.<sup>17</sup> Others have sidestepped a definition by opting for a “discursivist” approach; it is simply everything that has been called *Popliteratur* over the years.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, “descriptivists” have offered definitions in terms of content and form, as well as the hierarchization of the literary field. For his part, Thomas Jung places *Popliteratur* in a hybrid zone between avant-garde art and mass culture.<sup>19</sup> Most scholars affirm that *Popliteratur* thematizes aspects of everyday experience (the *Alltag*) that have tended to be excluded from “high” literature. These aspects include popular culture and music.<sup>20</sup> Which is not to say that a novel must thematize popular music to be considered *Popliteratur*.

Stylistically, *Popliteratur*, and in particular texts like Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre’s tale of postadolescent ennui, *Soloalbum*, have sometimes been described as revolving around a “minimal self,” one that does not engage in any significant acts or display any psychological development.<sup>21</sup> These texts are thought to exhibit a strong link with the *Zeitgeist*

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as well as a superficial type of description that “refrains from ascribing a deeper meaning.”<sup>22</sup> Moritz Baßler points out that these contemporary writers recognize that any literature of “first words”—the position held by an old guard of critics and writers that maintains that literary language should not be corrupted by the *Zeitgeist*, but should itself be constitutive and authentic, and, in a word, the work of a genius—is not possible, given that the present and our language is already mediated and discursively preformed. For that reason they prefer what Baßler calls a literature of secondary words that makes thorough use of the cultural encyclopedia of the present.<sup>23</sup> Baßler focuses attention on the “new archivists” of the *Popliteratur* renaissance that began in the mid-1990s and that is often circumscribed under the term “Pop II.” Various other scholars have retained this general periodization and have sought to differentiate between several strands of Pop II. For example, Stuart Taberner usefully suggests three subgroups: The stylistically “advanced pop” of Goetz, Meinecke, and Neumeister; *Erinnerungsliteratur* (a literature of memory), like Frank Goosen’s *Liegen lernen*, which involves the nostalgic invocation of various popular cultural trends, particularly of the 1980s; and finally, what Thomas Ernst has called “mainstream pop literature,” novels like *Soloalbum*.<sup>24</sup> In this last subgroup, the focus is less nostalgic than with *Erinnerungsliteratur* and attention is given to present-day “lifestyle” and consumption. Another less well-known subfield of Pop II discerned by some scholars is that emerging from the so-called trash, social beat, and slam poetry scenes, or what Ernst calls the “pop underground.”<sup>25</sup> Some scholars, like Sascha Seiler, have undertaken more longitudinal surveys than has Baßler, examining *Popliteratur* of the 1960s as well as more recent manifestations.<sup>26</sup> Eckhard Schumacher also casts his purview back to Brinkmann, Fichte, and others, as well as forward to Goetz and Meinecke. He does not actually use the term *Popliteratur*, but rather the notion of *Gegenwartsliteratur*—literally, “contemporary literature,” but here used in the sense of a presentist literature of the moment. Although Schumacher, like other scholars of *Popliteratur*, acknowledges certain affinities with popular music among these writers, his central focus is by no means the musico-centrism of *Popliteratur* or its novels. He also avoids considering—other than to dismiss them—those contemporary writers like the Englishman Nick Hornby and his German admirers who have engaged with popular music, but in more conventional ways.<sup>27</sup>

My argument in relation to the term *Popliteratur* is that it is too broad to be useful. There are some points of similarity and contact between these authors, their approaches, and the ways in which they have been marketed. However, there are also significant differences informed by a range of factors. For example, Sascha Seiler suggests that the sub-cultural context of Pop I has been lost, such that the bulk of Pop II only superficially resembles it.<sup>28</sup> Diedrich Diederichsen also notes that by the

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1990s “pop” had become a “dummy term” signifying almost anything to do with the mass media.²⁹ Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre has also rightly criticized the term as being in effect an abjecting term applied by older literary critics who were clueless about and arrogant toward popular culture. Another issue is that of timing. There has been for some time a sense that we are now “beyond” pop. The Pop II boom showed signs of abating around the turn of the millennium, and some of its leading protagonists have had to face personal demons, have declined in popularity, diversified into more “weighty” fields, or at least declared that the time for “pop” was over.³⁰ Frank Finlay considers that a range of factors burst this “South Sea bubble,” including market saturation with debut and emerging writers, a new mood for questioning the idea of following Anglo-American models too closely, the reduction in marketing budgets after the demise of the dot-com boom, the souring of the “hedonist society” after the terrorist attacks on the United States, and the rediscovery of older “readable” writers, such as Uwe Timm.³¹ In these circumstances, some of the authors who now thematize popular music, such as Karen Duve, have been regarded as being “postpop.”³² Other novelists who have just as much claim to be classified as Pop II—Kerstin Grether, for example—only emerged after its would-be “end.”³³

Focusing on the thematization and “realization” of popular music in contemporary musico-centric literature rather than on the vague concept of *Popliteratur* offers a fruitful alternative, for reasons that I will elaborate shortly. I am not alone in taking this view. In studies of *Popliteratur* there is often a recognition of the importance of popular music to some *Popliteratur*, and sometimes also a sense that this relationship needs to be explored in more detail. Writing in 2007, for example, Enno Stahl tackled the difficulties involved in arriving at a useful definition of *Popliteratur*, and suggested that it might be worthwhile to focus, inter alia, on music.³⁴ In his 2009 dissertation Geoffrey Cox has contemplated the place of popular music in a few selected works of German and Anglophone literature, including Thomas Brussig’s *Sonnenallee*, Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre’s *Soloalbum*, and Andreas Neumeister’s *Gut laut*.³⁵ Markus Tillmann has also begun to address the lacuna by contemplating some musico-centric *Popliteratur*, particularly the works of Rolf Dieter Brinkmann and Rainald Goetz. He does not consider writers such as Thomas Brussig or Kerstin Grether, whose novels engage with popular music on a purely thematic level.³⁶ My study considers these authors and others, and does so within the wider context of contemporary German fiction since 1990 that has been written by musicians or music journalists, that has thematized or otherwise engaged with popular music, and that may not have been considered under the rubric *Popliteratur*.

As I suggested earlier, “word and music studies” can assist in attending to such literature. This scholarship shows that some of the aims and

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tropes of more recent musico-centric writers were not particularly new, even if the immediate pop-musical or technological trigger might have been.³⁷ “Word and music studies” can therefore contribute not only to our sense of the genealogy of some of the more recent attempts but it can also supply a critical vocabulary for speaking about this literature. And it can give a prehistory of some of the thematic figures and tropes that emerge in recent musico-centric literature.

Word and Music Studies

There is an established secondary literature on German musico-literary phenomena, from Romanticism through to modernism, which has also sought to theorize the field. A pioneer in the English-speaking world was Steven Paul Scher, who built on the work of Calvin S. Brown to move beyond earlier hermeneutic studies that sought to place individual authors’ “musical” works in their biographical context, or focused, for example, on the figure of the musician in literature.³⁸ Scher has advanced the term “melopoetics” to describe a field that analyzes the links between music and literature.³⁹ He includes three subfields within it. First, there is “literature in music,” which analyzes musical compositions that have been inspired by literature. Second, there is “music and literature,” which focuses on so-called dual genres, like opera and the *lied*, in which there is both a literary and a musical component. Both of these subfields have, traditionally, been the academic province of musicology. Finally, there is “music in literature,” which is of greatest interest for the present study. As Scher and others have outlined it, “music in literature” may include the thematization of music in literature. But it also can exceed that to include the creation of “word music,” where an author “attempt[s] to evoke the auditory sensation of music” through the use of onomatopoeic words and clusters.⁴⁰ In addition, there is what Scher calls “verbal music,” where formal musical devices like repetition, leitmotif, counterpoint, and modulation can be borrowed or suggested in a literary setting. This evokes typically musical dimensions of time, simultaneity, and space within a narrative context.⁴¹ Finally, there can be attempts to use or approximate in literature larger musical forms and structures such as the sonata, fugue, or the “theme with variations.”⁴² Traditional word and music studies tend to focus on such structural aesthetic borrowings, or what Hansen-Löve and the literature on intermediality would call literary “realizations” of music.⁴³

Like the word and music studies with which it is associated, intermediality studies has its own extensive literature. It attempts to build a theory that is more generalizable between media than the more specific word and music studies. As Emily Petermann has shown, however, there is some debate about just how narrowly to define the term “intermediality.”

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Scholars like Irina Rajewsky tend to construe it broadly, as covering all products somehow relating between media, including things that Petermann considers more appropriate to classify as multimedia (media products that involve more than one media, and where there may be a juxtaposition rather than any true intermediality). Petermann also considers that transmedia products (like film adaptations of novels) do not always involve intermediality proper. According to Petermann, who is mainly interested in the question of realization, intermediality proper refers to “the relationships between media that are visible within a single media product.”<sup>44</sup>

Word and music studies demonstrates that authors’ intentions can vary significantly in relation to realizing “music in literature.” According to Werner Wolf, who has given more precise consideration to the matter than Scher, the reasons for what he calls “musicalizing” literature might encompass a joy in experimentation, a search for structural possibilities beyond the traditional model of mimesis, a desire to “resensualize” literature, or a wish to create a meta-aesthetic space for reflection.<sup>45</sup> Intermediality of this sort may be more or less covert too, which can have important implications. As Wolf suggests, using covert intermediality, and deploying suitable hints—be they in a title or in some form of thematization of music—may encourage a more active mode of readership.<sup>46</sup>

As important as structural studies of the literary realization of music might be, they tend to leave some important aspects less well illuminated. For his part, Martin Huber is not only interested in establishing the formal parallels between musical and literary texts but also in exploring a range of ideological aspects and contexts, including why German writers might have been so keen that their literature be likened to music.<sup>47</sup> (As we will see, the converse inquiry might also be relevant: why might certain musician-authors like Sven Regener be keen that their novels *not* be likened to music?) Marc A. Weiner takes an equally useful approach. Like the New Musicologists who have been active since the 1980s, Weiner is interested in music not so much as an autonomous artwork that should be analyzed in a purely immanent, structural fashion, but rather as expressing a semiotic code rooted in the ideological forces of its societies. His argument is that literary modernists skillfully juggled with and laid bare the ideological implications inherent in music’s “cultural vocabulary” so as to encourage the reader to participate in a more active and critically minded act of reading. He contrasts this with the blunt polemics of music critics, but also with the more mimetic music-themed German literature of the early to mid-twentieth century. Although Weiner was examining modernist literature, and the literature that I analyze comes from a different, postmodern era, I will contemplate whether some contemporary musico-centric literature is analogous to what Weiner proposes.<sup>48</sup>

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“Webs of Signification” in 1990s and 2000s Popular Music

This brings us to the final analytic perspective that is of interest to me—detailed attention to content, to the literary thematization of popular music, which has been of comparatively less interest to traditional word and music and intermediality scholars, who tend to regard it as “intermediality light.”⁴⁹ Yet we should not be indifferent to what novelists have written about music. My contention is that the “entanglement of the spheres” can tell us not only about the literary craft but also about contemporary popular music and, especially, about important extra-musical themes that Germans have associated with it. As a prelude to why and how we might use these novels as a source on musical meaning, it is worth reminding ourselves why popular music matters.

For many—especially younger—people, popular music now appeals as much as, or more than, other forms of culture, including literature. As we will see in chapter 1, this pattern already emerged in Germany in the 1960s, and it has continued to the present day.⁵⁰ One corollary of the rise of interest in popular music (and the new media) seems to have been a relative decline in interest in reading. Thomas Ernst has noted that young German people’s consumption of books has declined significantly in recent decades. In 1980, they spent 56 minutes per day reading books, whereas by 1995 it was only 24 minutes per day.⁵¹ Many young people are hence just as likely to find a source of identification in media products other than the novel. As the novelist Uwe Timm observed in an interview in 2000: “Es gibt bestimmt andere Formen, die ähnliches [wie Literatur] leisten, Gespräche, Diskussionen, Filme, Musik. . . . Das muß man sehen.” (There are certainly other art forms that accomplish something similar [to literature]: conversations, discussions, films, music. . . . You have to admit it it.)⁵² This is not to say that such a recognition was always an easy one to admit in Germany. The music writer Konrad Heidkamp has spoken, for example, of how in the 1950s “die aufgeklärten Oberschüler” (enlightened secondary school students) were shocked “dass sie von einer Musik so tief gerührt und gepackt wurden, wie es später kein Joyce, kein Mann, kein Böll je vermochte [und dass] eine Welt, wie sie in allen Flauberts und Tolstois zu spüren war, auch in zweieinhalb Minuten Elvis steckt” (that they could be gripped and moved more deeply by music than by a Joyce, a Mann, or a Böll [and that] two and a half minutes of Elvis could also create the same type of world as that which existed in the novels of Flaubert and Tolstoi).⁵³ Heidkamp’s assertion may still seem anathema to many older Germans; however, it hints at a new approach to the consumption of culture in the postmodern era, whereby “high” and “low” cultural offerings may be compared in the same sentence and consumed by an individual for whom they may have

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similar use-values. In this context Konstanze Marie Kendel speaks of a new, young metropolitan elite for whom legitimate taste—or to use the term advanced by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, whose work also informs my study, the distribution of “symbolic capital”—is no longer defined by one’s distance from popular culture, as was the case with earlier elites like the *Bildungsbürger* caste, but rather involves engaging with popular culture, albeit often on self-ironic terms.<sup>54</sup> The sociologists Richard A. Peterson and Narasimhan Anand have introduced the concept of the “omnivore” to refer to newer patterns of cultural consumption: “Now persons and groups show their high status by being cultural omnivores, consuming not only the fine arts, but appreciating many, if not all . . . forms of popular culture.”<sup>55</sup> Peterson’s and Anand’s conclusions are also reinforced in the German setting by the findings of Volker Wehdeking and others, which establish that literature remains important, albeit in conjunction with other media. Wehdeking identifies a young, “hedonistic” metropolitan readership that emerged around 1980 and has persisted ever since.<sup>56</sup> As of 2006, this sector accounted for 22 percent of the German reading market. It is precisely this readership that is especially involved in the consumption of multiple cultural forms from film through music to literature. Such an audience has driven the increasing intermediation of German literature that Wehdeking has analyzed, focusing mainly on its correlations with film. In one sense, my study simply wishes to take seriously the interest in popular music exhibited by many contemporary German novelists.

The literary thematization of popular music can tell us about many things beyond music itself. I do not wish to deny the notions, long adhered to by traditional musicologists, that music has some meaning located in its structure, or in physiological responses to sound and musical stimuli.<sup>57</sup> Composers and listeners can share a set of codes that affix certain meanings to a particular type of music. Understandings of genre, from classical through free jazz to heavy metal—in flux though they might be—also guide listeners’ responses to music.<sup>58</sup> However, it should by now be evident that I am deeply interested in the cultural, extra-musical meanings that listeners associate with popular music. Popular music provides a vessel—and an often remarkably open one—for individuals, collectives, and institutions to fill with meaning. Although parts of these extra-musical “webs of signification” (the term is William Washabaugh’s) can diverge significantly from one another, they are not arbitrary.<sup>59</sup> They fulfil a specific ideological purpose in a specific time and place: “Music’s materials provide *resources* that can be harnessed in and for imagination, awareness, consciousness, action for all manner of social formations. . . . [L]isteners [draw] upon musical elements as resources for organizing and elaborating their own perceptions of non-musical things.”<sup>60</sup> Anglo-American rock from the late 1960s and early 1970s, “GDRock,” techno, and “intelligent

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electronica”—to name a few of the types of music that have featured in recent musico-centric literature—have mattered in myriad extra-musical ways to different German audiences and commentators. For example, techno’s enthusiasts associated it with a gateway to new forms of sociability, whereas its neo-Adornian opponents viewed it as symbolizing all that was bad about contemporary German society during late capitalism. Techno also provided new materials with which to imagine Germanness, as well as, potentially, something transnational. By contrast, the current widespread but less well understood consumption of “classic” rock can tell us about deeper attitudes to the past and future. These extra-musical concerns are clearly not ephemeral; they tell us about very real concerns in the postunification period—relating to such key concerns as globalization, German national identity, and German history. Popular music discourse engages with and records these extra-musical concerns.

In turn, musico-centric literature can have a privileged role in relation to exploring these extra-musical meanings. Thomas Swiss reminds us that language is very important in helping “shape how we hear and value music,” and Marc A. Weiner points out that literature is one of the important “secondary texts” that are directly linked to, and constitutive of, music’s social reality.<sup>61</sup> There is something particular to the novel format. It can allow extended, “quiet” reflection on the meaning and significance of music.<sup>62</sup> A literary source may be an important contribution to a wider discourse about music; not taking it into account would be to only partially grasp the music’s significance. In the case of techno, for example, a writer like Rainald Goetz was central to the verbal discourses about it in Germany. He was involved in the “scene,” and his preexisting reputation and status as a Suhrkamp author meant his contribution was taken note of in a certain way. But musico-centric fiction also illustrates aspects of popular music’s social reality in Germany that are comparatively less well known. For example, whereas a great deal of journalistic writing about music has a specific music-industrial purpose (even when it seeks to mystify that function), Stuckrad-Barre’s novel *Soloalbum* deliberately uncovers the poverty of German music journalism and its complicity with music-industrial objectives.<sup>63</sup> The fictional form offers him certain liberties to “tell the truth.” Finally, some musico-centric literature casts light on the reception of popular music outside that canon of the “cool” established and maintained by predominantly male music journalists.<sup>64</sup> For example, novels like Politycki’s *Weiberroman* and Karen Duve’s *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* illustrate the latterday consumption of “classic” rock, and female-coded modes of reception, respectively.

There are, of course, also theoretical difficulties in taking novels at “face value.” Whatever their gestures toward realism, “archiving” discourse, or ethnography, texts like *Soloalbum*, *Rave*, or Thomas

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Meinecke's *Hellblau* ought not to be treated as fully mimetic of any social reality pertaining to the consumption or production of popular music. As one check and balance, I will use the critical reception of these novels to determine the extent to which critics and peers concurred with the particular image of music production or consumption portrayed. Highlighting the novels' mixed reception also allows us to see how arguments about popular music are not just petty differences about taste, but are, as Simon Frith reminds us, "about ways of listening, about ways of hearing, *about ways of being*."⁶⁵ I will also compare literary portrayals with the popular and academic discourses about the relevant musics, technologies, and tropes. Such cross-referencing serves several purposes. I will use the secondary literature to introduce those special musical and music-technological qualities that writers sought to "realize" in their novels. In a second step, I will use it to explore how and why literary readings feed into or strategically diverge from other discursive elaborations of musical meaning. This interlinked methodological approach is apposite to the partial symbiosis between the literary and musical subfields posited, as well as to the notion of intermediality itself.⁶⁶ As Sara Cohen and John Street put it in their introduction to a special edition of the journal *Popular Music* devoted to literature and music, looking at both in conjunction is a "research agenda that ought to be pursued further, as a way of enriching both our understanding of music and literature, and of the way the two play off each other."⁶⁷

In the course of this book, then, I will contribute to a deeper understanding of both the meaning of popular music in contemporary Germany and the current literary market. I will explore such matters as changes in the literary and popular music markets, German and transnational identity, reckoning with the German past, contemplating the technologization of modern life, and how some authors have sought to forge a new feminism through popular culture.

Sources and Structure

Even though the bulk of recent musico-centric fiction began to emerge only in the late 1990s, I started my survey with the "Jahr der Geschichte" (1989), partly because this is a common periodization in German literature. As we will see in chapter 2, it was the aftermath of 1989 that led to the commercialization and mediatization of the literary field, as well as to a more general questioning of what German literature should be, and this, in turn, created a larger space for the reemergence of musico-centric literature. The year is still rather arbitrary, however, and it will from time to time be necessary to look back to some salient works of literature from the 1960s through 1980s in order to contextualize and "locate" that more recent musico-centric literature.

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To make this project manageable, I have focused on longer prose, and especially novels, rather than poetry. I have not examined some forms of musico-centric literature that are less well documented, such as social beat, or that are closer to poetry than prose. In general, I chose novels that made some overt reference in their title or plot to popular music. I also focused on certain authors like Politycki, Meinecke, Stuckrad-Barre, and Grether, either because they participated in the call for a “musicalization” of literature or because they are “hybrid” figures who are active in both literature and music or music journalism or have transitioned from one of those fields to the other. Nevertheless, given the number of recent novels that have engaged with popular music in some way, it was necessary to be selective.

The first chapter focuses on Rolf-Dieter Brinkmann’s short story *Wurlitzer* (1966) and on Handke’s *The Jukebox*. These texts are from key writers who participated in Pop I and engaged with popular music at that time. They provide an opportunity to reexamine some salient points of that earlier phase in the “musicalization” of German literature, as well as their authors’ stylization as “pop stars.” Moreover, the two texts revolve around a piece of music technology and illustrate attempts to find a suitable way of writing about it, a move that has significance for the later musico-centric literature of the 1990s. *The Jukebox* introduces the key themes of music, memory, and nostalgia, which are of importance to much later musico-centric literature as well. Paradoxically, however, the late-career Handke would prove to be a point of negative reference in the debates that preceded the emergence of Pop II.

Chapter 2 examines the contemporary German popular musician-cum-novelist, a hybrid figure who had his or her origins in the late 1970s and 1980s, but who emerged or rose to wider prominence in the 1990s and 2000s. Performing a case study of Thomas Meinecke and Sven Regener, I discuss how members of a certain German “postpunk” generation have been pulled toward novel writing, and why. The chapter looks at the advantages—including the transferability of cultural capital from one field to the other—as well as the drawbacks of such dual careers. What do these cases tell us about changes in, and the symbiosis between, the literary and popular music fields since the 1990s?

Chapter 3 is a necessarily lengthy one and focuses on the diverse literary engagement with “techno” and its social environment during the 1990s, especially among the “advanced pop” camp. I explore how and why writers like Rainald Goetz, Thomas Meinecke, and Andreas Neumeister were drawn to techno. I elucidate how Goetz attempted to “defend” a certain reading of techno against its German critics, as well as reconcile the paradox of rendering lived “rave” experience in an apposite literary form. I examine how Neumeister attempted to borrow principles from techno and digital music technology—especially repetition

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and sampling—in fashioning a literary “autodiscography.” Finally, I focus on two important aspects of Thomas Meinecke’s highly complex engagement with music, namely, his radical intertextuality as a form of what Florence Feiereisen calls “deejay literature,” as well as his advancing of the techno genre as an important site of the post- or transnational.⁶⁸

Chapter 4 begins by considering Matthias Politycki, who was left cold by techno, and instead engaged with old-fashioned classic rock. I contextualize his popular, rock-inflected *Erinnerungsliteratur* within a setting that, paradoxically, many contemporaries regarded as “postrock.” This sets the scene for an examination of Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre’s conflicted “literature pop”: Stuckrad-Barre was aware of the problems with rock’s ideology of “authenticity” in the “postrock” era, and identified more with a certain notion of “pop” that revelled in posture, artifice, affirmation, and irony. Yet this could not displace his dissatisfaction with irony as a strategy, or his impossible yearning toward the would-be authenticity of rock.

Chapter 5 moves the focus to the former GDR, to the aftermath of a very specific history of popular music under state socialism and to interworkings between politics and popular music. In particular, I examine how Thomas Brussig’s works recalled a heroic mode of engagement with certain rock music in the GDR. His novels and plays illustrate how some popular music could provide a potent rallying point during the key period of late 1989, but also how the attribution of any special political qualities to popular music came to be queried in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Wall. Brussig’s fiction gently undermines any unreflective “Ostalgie” (nostalgia for the East).

The sixth chapter contemplates how female authors, including Karen Duve and Kerstin Grether, have negotiated with the gendering of popular music consumption and production and “written back” to some of their male musico-centric colleagues. Have they succeeded to the same extent as their male colleagues, and why or why not?

A short conclusion reconsiders why and how various forms of popular music emerged as literary concerns during the 1990s and 2000s. It reaches conclusions about the images of popular music consumption and production that the novels considered have provided. It poses the question whether this field of musico-centric literature might develop in the future, and if so, how.

Notes

¹ Peter Handke, *Versuch über die Jukebox* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), 26. Translations of *The Jukebox* are from Peter Handke, *The Jukebox and Other Essays on Storytelling*, trans. Ralph Manheim and Krishna Winston (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994), here 57.

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² Matthias Politycki, "Literatur muss sein wie Rockmusik," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, October 7, 1995. Included in Matthias Politycki, *Die Farbe der Vokale* (Munich: Luchterhand, 1998), 65–74. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

³ As we will see, much of this literature has been subsumed under the broad and in my view problematic term *Popliteratur*, which I resist translating. I prefer the term "musico-centric literature." The term "popular music" is likewise problematic, yet I prefer it to the term "pop music." As an insightful exchange between the editors of the journal *Popular Music* in 2005 shows, there is a great deal of debate about the term "popular music," partly because there is no sense of what "unpopular music" is. Following Helmi Järviuoma's contribution, I will opt for the term "popular music," and both "use" and "trouble" the term, investigating how its meaning has been used and contested in the German setting. I will also approach subgenres of "popular music" like "rock," "pop," and "techno" in a similar way. See International Advisory Editors, ed., "Can We Get Rid of the 'Popular' in Popular Music?," *Popular Music* 24, no. 1 (2005): 140.

⁴ Kolja Mensing, "Endlich einmal alles gut finden," *Der Tagesspiegel*, November 8, 1998, W7.

⁵ Klaus Nüchtern, "DJ Gender Studies," *Falter* 39 (1998): 67–68.

⁶ Dieter Stolz, "A Matter of Perspective: Prose Debuts in Contemporary German Literature," in *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation*, ed. Stuart Taberner (Edgbaston: University of Birmingham Press, 2004), 117.

⁷ Ute Paulokat, *Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre: Literatur und Medien in der Pop Moderne* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006).

⁸ Konstanze Marie Kendel, *Let Me Entertain You!: Die Inszenierung der Popliteratur im Literaturbetrieb der Gegenwart* (Bremen: Institut für kulturwissenschaftliche Deutschlandstudien an der Universität Bremen, 2005); Volker Wehdeking, *Generationenwechsel: Intermedialität in der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2007).

⁹ Frank Finlay, "'Dann wäre Deutschland wie das Wort Neckarrauen': Surface, Superficiality, and Globalisation in Christian Kracht's *Faserland*," in Taberner, *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation*, 190.

¹⁰ "Böt" [=Helmut Böttiger?], "Szenewirren," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, February 8, 1999, 9.

¹¹ Emily Petermann, *The Musical Novel: Imitation of Musical Structure, Performance, and Reception in Contemporary Fiction* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2014).

¹² The following account is derived from Johannes Ullmaier, *Von ACID nach Adlon und zurück* (Mainz: Ventil, 2001), as well as Jörgen Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur: Rolf Dieter Brinkmann und das Verhältnis zur Populärkultur in der Literatur der sechziger Jahre* (Stuttgart: M & P Verlag, 1998), and Jörgen Schäfer, "'Neue Mitteilungen aus der Wirklichkeit': Zum Verhältnis von Pop und Literatur in Deutschland seit 1968," in *Pop-Literatur*, ed. Heinz-Ludwig Arnold and Jörgen Schäfer (Munich: Ed. Text + Kritik, 2003), 7–25. Among those who make such a distinction between two generations of *Popliteratur*—late 1960s versus mid-1990s onward—are Kathrin Ackermann and Stefan Greif. Ackermann and Greif,

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“Pop im Literaturbetrieb: Von den sechziger Jahren bis heute,” in Arnold and Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 65.

<sup>13</sup> Ullmaier, *Von ACID*, 189. On Burroughs’s and Ploog’s cut-ups, see, e.g., Markus Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur: Zur Intermedialität literarischer und musikalischer Produktionsästhetik in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2013), 35–44. On literary deejaying, see, e.g., Florence Feiereisen, *Der Text als Soundtrack—Der Autor als DJ: Postmoderne und postkoloniale Samples bei Thomas Meinecke* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Steven Paul Scher, *Verbal Music in German Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 10. See also Martin Huber, *Text und Musik: Musikalische Zeichen im narrativen und ideologischen Funktionszusammenhang ausgewählter Erzähltexte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992), 38.

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., Marc A. Weiner, *Undertones of Insurrection: Music, Politics, and the Social Sphere in the Modern German Narrative* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), xii. See also Petermann, *Musical Novel*. This deficit relates to the historically structural focus of word and music studies, and the fact that popular music has long been regarded as structurally unsophisticated by comparison with “classical” music. As a discipline, structural popular musicology has only established itself in the last decade. See, e.g., Allan Moore, “Introduction” to *Critical Essays in Popular Musicology*, ed. Moore (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), ix–xxii.

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., Stuart Taberner, *German Literature of the 1990s and Beyond: Normalisation and the Berlin Republic* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005), 82; Frank Finlay, “Literary Debates and the Literary Market since Unification,” in *Contemporary German Fiction: Writing in the Berlin Republic*, ed. Stuart Taberner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 34.

<sup>17</sup> Ullmaier, *Von ACID*, 12.

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., Kerstin Gleba and Eckhard Schumacher, eds., *Pop seit 1964* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 2007). I borrow this term, and the opposing term “descriptivist,” from Richard Middleton’s analysis of approaches to the term “popular music” (contribution to International Advisory Editors, ed., “Can We Get Rid of the ‘Popular’ in Popular Music?,” 143–45).

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Jung, ed. *Alles nur Pop?: Anmerkungen zur populären und Pop-Literatur seit 1990* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), 50. See also Taberner, *Contemporary German Fiction*, 15.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 16; Jung, *Alles nur Pop?*, 40–42, 51; Finlay, “Literary Debates,” 34; and Sabine von Dirke, “Pop Literature in the Berlin Republic,” in Taberner, *Contemporary German Fiction*, 108.

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., Wehdeking, *Generationenwechsel*, 15, 171.

<sup>22</sup> Von Dirke “Pop Literature,” 110. See also Jung, *Alles nur Pop*, 42.

<sup>23</sup> Moritz Baßler, *Der deutsche Pop-Roman: Die neuen Archivisten* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2002), 184–85.

<sup>24</sup> Taberner, *German Literature of the 1990s*, 81–93; Thomas Ernst, “German Pop Literature and Cultural Globalisation,” in Taberner, *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation*, 177–80.

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- ²⁵ Ernst, "German Pop Literature," 169. See also Ullmaier, *Von ACID*, 130–69.
- ²⁶ Sascha Seiler, "Das einfache wahre Abschreiben der Welt": *Pop Diskurse in der deutschen Literatur nach 1960* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).
- ²⁷ Eckhard Schumacher, *Gerade Eben Jetzt: Schreibweisen der Gegenwart* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003).
- ²⁸ Seiler, "Einfache wahre Abschreiben der Welt," 275, 324.
- ²⁹ Diedrich Diederichsen, "Pop—Deskriptiv, normativ, emphatisch," *Literaturmagazin* 37 (1996): 36–44. See also Baßler, *Deutsche Pop-Roman*, 165; Peter Kemper et al., eds. *Alles so schön bunt hier* (Leipzig: Philipp Reclam, 2002); Ernst, "German Pop Literature," 177.
- ³⁰ Florian Illies, *Generation Golf zwei* (Munich: Goldmann Verlag, 2003); Ernst, "German Pop Literature," 179; Seiler, "Einfache wahre Abschreiben der Welt," 16.
- ³¹ Finlay, "Literary Debates," 35. See also Baßler, *Deutsche Pop-Roman*, 130–34; and Ernst, "German Pop Literature," 179.
- ³² See, e.g., Gustav Seibt, "Da! Da ist Diedrich Diederichsen," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, October 10, 2002, 16.
- ³³ For a more nuanced view on the "death" of *Popliteratur*, see André Menke, *Die Popliteratur nach ihrem Ende: Zur Prosa Meineckes, Schamonis, Krachts in den 2000er Jahren* (Bochum: Posth Verlag, 2010).
- ³⁴ Enno Stahl, "Popliteraturgeschichte(n)," in *Popliteraturgeschichte(n) 1965–2007*, ed. Joseph A. Kruse (Düsseldorf: Heinrich Heine Institut, 2007), 26–27.
- ³⁵ Geoffrey Cox, "Playlists: Music, Narrative, and Structure in the Contemporary Novel," PhD thesis (University of Washington, 2009).
- ³⁶ Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur*.
- ³⁷ Emily Petermann also points out in her study of two disparate groups of musical novels—jazz novels and novels that engage intermedially with J. S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations*—that despite some differences between the two groups of novels many individual techniques are shared (Petermann, *Musical Novel*).
- ³⁸ Calvin S. Brown, *Music and Literature: A Comparison of the Arts* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1948). George C. Schoolfield, *The Figure of the Musician in German Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956).
- ³⁹ The following sketch of "melopoetics" is derived from the introduction to Steven Paul Scher, ed., *Literatur und Musik: Ein Handbuch zur Theorie und Praxis eines komparatistischen Grenzgebietes* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1984).
- ⁴⁰ Scher, *Verbal Music*, 3.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., 5; Huber, *Text und Musik*, 37.
- ⁴² See, e.g., Horst Petri, *Literatur und Musik: Form- und Strukturparallelen* (Göttingen: Sachse & Pohl, 1964); Huber, *Text und Musik*; Albert Gier and Gerold W. Gruber, eds., *Musik und Literatur: Komparatistische Studien zur Strukturverwandschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997); Andreas Sichelstiel, *Musikalische Kompositionstechniken in der Literatur: Möglichkeiten der Intermedialität und ihrer Funktion bei österreichischen Gegenwartsautoren* (Essen: Blaue Eule, 2004).

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<sup>43</sup> A. Aage Hansen-Löve, "Intermedialität und Intertextualität: Problem der Korrelation von Wort- und Bildkunst—Am Beispiel der russischen Moderne," in *Dialog der Texte: Hamburger Kolloquium zur Intertextualität*, ed. Wolf Schmid and Wolf-Dieter Stempel (Vienna: Gesellschaft zur Förderung Slawistischer Studien, 1983), 291–360.

<sup>44</sup> Petermann, *Musical Novel*, 17; Irina Rajewsky, *Intermedialität* (Tübingen: Franke, 2002).

<sup>45</sup> Werner Wolf, "Musik und Literatur," in *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie*, ed. Ansgar Nünning (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001), 460–61. Wolf's classic text is *The Musicalization of Fiction: A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999).

<sup>46</sup> Werner Wolf, "Intermedialität," in Nünning, *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie*, 284–85. See also Weiner, *Undertones of Insurrection*; and Siobhán Donovan and Robin Elliott, eds., *Music and Literature in German Romanticism* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004).

<sup>47</sup> Huber, *Text und Musik*.

<sup>48</sup> Weiner, *Undertones of Insurrection*.

<sup>49</sup> The term is posed as a question in Irina Rajewsky, "Intermedialität 'Light'? Intermediale Bezüge und die 'bloße Thematisierung' des Altermedialen," in *Intermedium Literatur: Beiträge zu einer Medientheorie der Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. Roger Lüdeke and Erika Greber (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004), 27–77.

<sup>50</sup> Kemper et al., *Alles so schön bunt hier*, 19.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Ernst, *Popliteratur* (Hamburg: Rotbuch, 2001), 86.

<sup>52</sup> Daniel Lenz and Eric Pütz, "Teilnehmendes Beobachten: Gespräch mit Uwe Timm," *neue deutsche literatur* 48 (2000): 76.

<sup>53</sup> Konrad Heidkamp, *It's All Over Now* (Reinbek: Rowohlt Taschenbuchverlag, 2007), 31.

<sup>54</sup> Kendel, *Let Me Entertain You!*, 53. Bourdieu uses the term "symbolic capital" in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. R. Nice (London: Routledge, 1984).

<sup>55</sup> Richard A. Peterson and Narasimhan Anand, "The Production of Culture Perspective," *Annual Review of Sociology* 30 (2004): 322.

<sup>56</sup> Wehdeking, *Generationenwechsel*. On the rise of "hedonism" and its importance in relation to the reception of popular music since the 1960s, see chapter 1.

<sup>57</sup> Cf., e.g., Moore, "Introduction," xiii.

<sup>58</sup> See, generally, Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>59</sup> Washabaugh uses the term "webs of signification" in *Flamenco: Passion, Politics, and Popular Culture* (Oxford: Berg, 1996), x–xiii.

<sup>60</sup> Tia de Nora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 24–25.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas Swiss, "That's Me in the Spotlight: Rock Autobiographies," *Popular Music* 24, no. 2 (2005): 287; Weiner, *Undertones of Insurrection*.

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⁶² Hubert Winkels, *Gute Zeichen: Deutsche Literatur, 1995–2005* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 2005), 365.

⁶³ On popular music journalism, see, e.g., Jon Stratton, “Between Two Worlds: Art and Commercialism in the Record Industry,” *Sociological Review* 30 (1982): 267–85. Musicians often feel constrained by their position vis-à-vis the industry and adopt a mystifying tone in their public utterances. Sara Cohen, *Rock Culture in Liverpool: Popular Music in the Making* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 201–22.

⁶⁴ On this canon, see, e.g., Sarah Thornton, “Strategies for Reconstructing the Popular Past,” *Popular Music* 9, no. 1 (1990): 87–95.

⁶⁵ Frith, *Performing Rites*, 8. My emphasis.

⁶⁶ Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 176.

⁶⁷ Sara Cohen and John Street, Introduction to Literature and Music Special Issue. *Popular Music* 24, no. 2 (2005): 164.

⁶⁸ Feiereisen, *Text als Soundtrack*.

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# 1: Preludes and Returns: Popular Music, the '68 Generation, and the Literarization of the Jukebox

AFTER ESTABLISHING the increasingly important yet contested relationship between members of the '68 generation and Anglo-American popular music during the late 1960s, this chapter will consider two different literary engagements with the key technology of the jukebox. I have selected Rolf Dieter Brinkmann's *Wurlitzer* (1966) and Peter Handke's *The Jukebox* (1990) for several reasons. Both authors are significant figures within the pop-musicalization of literature during what scholars in the 1990s and subsequently called "Pop I," that is, the first flush of so-called *Popliteratur*. Both were performance-aware writers during the late 1960s. They give us an opportunity to look back on some salient elements of that earlier phase of literary pop-musicalization. *Wurlitzer* reflected the rise in importance of popular music consumption among young Germans during the 1960s, as well as the recognition that the jukebox possessed special qualities and that technologies like it might be as important as the music they played. Brinkmann gave the jukebox a literary existence, and straddled the opposite poles of critique and affirmation during its zenith as a technology. *The Jukebox* is significant because it postdates *Wurlitzer* and Pop I by two decades, and marks a return of sorts to that earlier phase. Handke reengaged with the analogue jukebox on the eve of its demise and, adopting a cooler tone than Brinkmann, reflected on the memories and affects that might still reside in the vestiges of an antiquated technology. *The Jukebox* is also significant because it slightly predates the flood of musico-centric literature during so-called Pop II. It offers a useful touchstone, both thematically and aesthetically, for some of the musico-centric literature that followed. *The Jukebox* not only establishes the key theme of popular music and memory. Like *Wurlitzer*, it also prefigures the ways in which later writers would attempt to functionalize music technologies and media as a source of literary form.

## The '68ers: For and Against Popular Music

Many of those West Germans born between 1940 and 1950 belong to a generation for whom Anglo-American popular culture and music has had a special, if complicated, significance.<sup>1</sup> They might have enjoyed the

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sense of fun and exhilaration that came with this music, but in a context where categories of “*E*” (the *Ernste*, or serious, high art) and “*U*” (*Unterhaltung*, or low entertainment) were firmly entrenched there was often a hostile environment toward any such enjoyment. Older members of the educated bourgeoisie harbored various objections toward popular music, and there was also the issue of potential hangovers from National Socialist strictures against jazz and swing.<sup>2</sup> The circumstances of Germany’s loss of the war intensified conservative responses. Uwe Timm’s *In My Brother’s Shadow* (2003) reveals, for example: “My father hated American music, movies, jazz, Americanism. Our fathers had lost the power of command in public life and could exercise it only at home, within their own four walls.”<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding this background, there was a growing tolerance among many elder Germans toward young people during the 1960s, but certain Anglo-American music, including Jimi Hendrix and the Beatles, very much continued to test the limits.<sup>4</sup> One of the entries in F. C. Delius’s *Die Minute mit Paul McCartney* (The Minute with Paul McCartney, 2005) captures this conservative attitude well: “[Die Beatles haben] massgeblich zum Verfall der Sitten, der Bildung der Moral, der Verantwortung und der Erziehung und in Europa und in der Welt beigetragen” ([The Beatles have] significantly contributed to the decline of manners, of moral development, of responsibility and of education [here] in Europe).<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately for German popular music enthusiasts, there were also objections from the left of the political spectrum. These extended back to Theodor Adorno’s long-standing rejection of jazz culture, as well as his and Max Horkheimer’s *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (*Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 1947), in which they advanced the notion of a “Culture Industry” that was understood to be standardizing the production of culture. In this scheme, popular music was thought to have a particularly stultifying effect on consumers’ critical faculties. As Adorno later observed in his *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, “the mass phenomenon of popular music undermines the autonomy and independence of judgment.”<sup>6</sup>

This hostile environment surely had the unintended effect of encouraging attachment to Anglo-American popular music among adolescents. Timm’s and Delius’s texts also hint at a related reason for this music’s appeal: during a moral crisis in Germanness, Anglophone popular music was a cipher for the *non*-German. Indeed, for some it offered “the possibility of being Germanless.”<sup>7</sup> Peter Kemper discerns another appealing factor: consuming the Beat and rock genres was a way of countering the “inner vacuum” accompanying the increased prosperity of postwar West Germany.<sup>8</sup> The aesthetic changes associated with Beat and rock ought not to be underestimated. Jörgen Schäfer points out that young Germans regarded music by bands like the Beatles and especially the Rolling Stones as embodying “rhythmische Aggressivität, Tempo, Lautstärke und expressiver

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Show” (rhythmic aggressiveness, tempo, volume, and expressive show) and that they increasingly associated such music with “die Lebensphilosophie von Antiautoritarismus, Gegenkultur und individuelle Freiheit” (the life philosophy of antiauthoritarianism, counterculture and individual freedom).⁹ There are also structural reasons why Anglo-American popular music proved key to German youth culture during the 1960s. Increases in leisure time, education, and disposable income heralded a new postmaterialist “*Erlebnisgesellschaft*” (experience society), which increasingly displaced the old “*Produktionsgesellschaft*” (production society), and a new “*Selbstverwirklichungsmilieu*” (self-realization milieu) emerged that was comparatively more interested in enjoyment of the here and now.¹⁰ Higher disposable incomes now allowed young people to purchase more recorded music to service that interest.¹¹ As a result, popular music duly increased in importance. By the early 1970s it was by far the most important leisure activity among West German teenagers, a trend that continued over the course of the decade.¹² At the same time, a younger generation of German music critics were beginning to differentiate between different genres of popular music, and take some of them more seriously than others.¹³ This is not to say that young West Germans universally heralded Anglo-American popular music or the idea of “self-realization” through consumption. Indeed, the political wing of the 1968 generation reengaged with critical theory to oppose such things.¹⁴ Delius’s *Die Minute mit Paul McCartney* reflects this sentiment too, when it adopts the voice of a member of the Socialist German Student League:

Statt endlich die radikale Demokratisierung in allen gesellschaftlich relevanten Bereichen zu fordern und die verstaubten autoritären Strukturen entscheidend zu entlarven, lässt sich die Studentenschaft von Psycho-Gurus wie Ronald D. Laing, von indischer Philosophie und scheinbar fortschrittlichen Organen wie ‘it’ (international times) einfangen, die individuelle Bewusstseinsweiterung predigen und somit von den objektiv notwendigen emanzipatorischen Aufgaben ablenken. Verschärft wird dies durch eine fast psychotische Begeisterung fuer die aktuelle Pop-Musik, Drogen, Happenings, Performances und andere Moden.

[Instead of finally demanding radical democratization in all societally relevant realms and decisively unmasking outmoded authoritarian structures, the student body is being ensnared by psycho-gurus like Ronald D. Laing, by Indian philosophy, and by supposedly progressive media like ‘it’ (*international times*), which preach the expansion of an individual’s consciousness, and thereby distract from the objectively necessary tasks of emancipation. The whole process is exacerbated by an almost psychotic enthusiasm for the latest popular music, drugs, happenings, performances, and other fads.]¹⁵

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This fraught setting contextualizes the efforts of young writers like Brinkmann and Handke to engage with Anglo-American popular music and its technologies in a literary setting.

### Brinkmann's *Wurlitzer*: Jukebox as Distraction or Gateway?

The late 1960s were an especially heady time in Germany in both popular music and contemporary literature. In popular music, an experimental German rock underground emerged, which is often subsumed under the name "Krautrock." The sociocultural significance of this underground was fought over at the legendary Essener Songtage in 1968.<sup>16</sup> However, there were also radical changes afoot in other fields of popular music. For example in 1968 and 1969 both the Burg Waldeck Folk Festivals and the Berliner Jazztage were sites of intense debates about the role and function of music in society.<sup>17</sup> Leaving to one side those sophisticated *Liedermacher* (sometimes called *Dichtersänger*) who operated in a type of "music and literature" dual genre, there was also a great deal of debate and experimentation in the literary field at this time, especially in relation to what was called underground literature or *Popliteratur*. Although the genre had a larger, diffuser meaning, so-called *Popliteraten* did engage with popular music, and they did so in all sorts of different ways.<sup>18</sup> Rolf Dieter Brinkmann (1940–75) played a key role in the polarized German debates about *Popliteratur* that emerged in the late 1960s, and he was a staunch popular music enthusiast at the time, enjoying modern jazz and then Anglo-American Beat and rock.<sup>19</sup> In his polemical essays from 1968 and 1969 on the emergent "pop" sensibility, he often pointedly referred to rock. For example, in his positive response to the American critic Leslie Fiedler's 1968 "Cross the Border" article—the galvanizing text that attacked "neo-aestheticist" literary modernism for being elitist and unable to provoke and shock, and that promoted a "post-modernist," "pop" literature that was hybridized with popular genres like the Western, science fiction, and pornography—Brinkmann keeps returning to the music that he was listening to when writing; he also reflects on the temptation to stop writing his response altogether and just listen to the music.<sup>20</sup> In this way, he revealed his strong affective attachment to rock and suggested that the new German *Popliteratur* could learn from it, thus prefiguring Matthias Politycki's 1995 manifesto "Literatur muss sein wie die Rockmusik" (Literature Must Be Like Rock Music).<sup>21</sup> Indeed Ralf Bentz views Politycki's statement to be just a knock-off of Brinkmann's idea "daß im ekstatischen Stammeln eines Songrefrains mehr Leidenschaft, mehr Schönheit und . . . mehr Wahrheit liegen kann als in hundert öden Seiten Kunstprosa" (that there can be more passion, more

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beauty, and . . . more truth in the ecstatic stammer of a song's refrain than in one hundred dreary pages of arty prose).²² But Brinkmann's response to Fiedler also squarely raises language's possible inadequacy in capturing the essence of rock, as Markus Tillmann points out.²³

Brinkmann was impressed by rock's sensual qualities and its potential to enliven literature by investing it with a new intensity, by enabling what Tillmann calls "multisinnlich-synergetische" (multisensual-synergistic) texts.²⁴ But he also marveled at how rockers were experimenting with technology in ways that contemporary writers were not.²⁵ During the late 1960s, Marshall McLuhan had advanced the idea that new technologies and media were just as important as the content they conveyed, and Brinkmann also foregrounded this notion within his concept of *Popliteratur*. "Um den neuen Trend der [Pop]Literatur zu verstehen, ist es wichtig nach der Auswirkung der neuen technischen Apparate zu fragen" (In order to understand this new trend of [*Pop*]literatur, it is important to look into the effects of [the] new technical apparatus).²⁶ Indeed, Brinkmann's polemic about *Popliteratur* was based on his rejection of late modernist literary culture in postwar Germany, and what he saw as its failure to engage with what had become ubiquitous technologies of entertainment and communication.²⁷ In his view these technologies impacted significantly on how people engaged with the world, and literature needed to reflect that.²⁸ The jukebox was by no means a peripheral technology at the time, either. Together with the radio and cinema it was a central part of the culture industry's "ensemble."²⁹ After the war, German bars had rapidly taken up the juke as a way of attracting patrons, viewing it as able to create cheaply an intimate and communication-friendly atmosphere.³⁰ The new technology had an impact on recording and performance: the record industry greeted the development, as it contributed to the sales of singles, but opportunities dried up for live musicians.³¹ For patrons, the jukebox had many advantages. It mediated new hits at a time when German radio only offered spotty accommodation of youth tastes; it also offered an attractive "semi-public" mode of engagement with music. It offered individual choice, but the juke was a device that you used in a social setting. Some commentators even thought that the jukebox offered a "humanized" experience of music technology.³²

However, the jukebox was not only received in a positive way. Critical voices could be heard on both the Right and the Left, and these views dovetailed with a range of other discourses, including those in relation to popular music, as well as technology, more broadly. Criticisms of technology were, in turn, part of a longer German tradition of dichotomizing culture and civilization. Hence, cultural pessimists viewed the embrace of the jukebox by young people as part of a worrying alienation from the more important problems of life, especially history and politics. Indeed, some considered the jukebox to be among the most dangerous

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technologies around. For the pedagogically inclined magazine *Ruf ins Volk* (1966), for example, the jukebox was a device, not unlike a poker machine, that only allowed a short and abruptly ending period of enjoyment. Patrons could not deepen the experience in any way and they could only make “Pseudo-Entscheidungen” (pseudo-decisions) from the pre-determined selection of singles that had been loaded into the machine.³³ The music critic Siegfried Schmidt-Joos also considered jukebox users to be “Sklaven der Automat” (slaves of the machine).³⁴ Lurking behind some of this critique was a form of anti-Americanism, given the fact that the jukebox was an import from America. Handke would even note how some Europeans viewed the jukebox as “die amerikanische Fortführung des Krieges mit anderen Mitteln” (an American continuation of the war by other means).³⁵ For leftist critics like Hanns-Werner Heister, however, the jukebox commercialized leisure and was inherently conservative in that it only played singles. There was a reprise here of Adorno’s ideas about distracted and atomized forms of listening, which supposedly prevented listeners from perceiving “die Möglichkeit einer anderen und oppositionellen Musik” (the possibility of an other, oppositional music).³⁶ In his 1962 *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, Adorno also denigrated “entertainment” listeners who used “music as a comfortable distraction,” and who attached themselves affectively to music technology.³⁷

Brinkmann wrote *Wurlitzer* in 1966, and hence the text pre-dates his *Popliteratur* polemics of 1968.³⁸ The secondary literature tends to focus on how Brinkmann realized aspects of modern jazz in this text, especially in its “nervös-abgehackten Stil” (nervous-chopped up style).³⁹ Nevertheless, there is something quite protopop about *Wurlitzer*. Brinkmann’s focus on the jukebox was congruent with the *Popliteratur* idea of attending to important media and technologies. The chopped-up style of *Wurlitzer* realizes some aspects of the jukebox and its effect on people, in a way that was consistent with his nascent notion of *Popliteratur*.⁴⁰ Furthermore, *Wurlitzer*’s distance from the prominent cultural pessimism about the jukebox is also especially “pop.” Despite reflecting some of the matters of concern to the jukebox’s German critics, Brinkmann refuses to be drawn into the “kulturpessimistische ‘Schmollecke’” (the pouting corner of cultural pessimism).⁴¹ *Wurlitzer* therefore illustrates Pop I’s distance from both liberal-conservative and leftist-Marxist value systems, and its combination of critique and affirmation of the jukebox demonstrates why *Popliteratur* was so controversial at the time.⁴²

Wurlitzer is set in a rather down-at-heel bar and is a combination of the narrator’s observations about its jukebox and habitués and a depiction of a live jazz concert. At a basic level, the story reflects the transformative value of the jukebox. Except for the jukebox, the bar is very sparsely furnished. It is also grubby, which is consistent with the juke’s early association with seedy bars. Yet this setting by no means impacts

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the patrons' ability to enjoy themselves. Indeed the jukebox offers a clear focal point, attracting patrons, some of whom also seem to be united through their engagement with the machine: "Am Musikautomaten lehnte ein Mädchen. Es stand vornübergeneigt und sah in den Kasten, es wippte locker im Rhythmus mit, . . . Das Mädchen stand allein da, und um es herum war ein Loch, eine Art Hohlraum, der dann von [einem] Jungen eingedrückt wurde. Er stand plötzlich neben dem Mädchen, und sah wie es in den Kasten hinein" (A girl was leaning against the jukebox. She was bent forward, looking into the juke, and rocking casually to the rhythm, . . . The girl was standing alone, and there was a void surrounding her, a type of hollow space, which was then pushed in by a boy. Suddenly he was standing next to the girl; like her, he was peering into the juke).⁴³ This aid to easy sociability exists despite the fact that the jukebox actually distorts the aural qualities of the music and noisily impacts on interpersonal communication. *Wurlitzer* suggests how the jukebox can contribute to atomizing music and communication:

Durch den Wirrwarr der Stimmen und das Gedränge, dem zusammengeschobenen Gewoge von Köpfen, Armen, Rücken und Beinen war die Musik in dem kleinen Raum eine zerstoßene Masse von Tönen, die sich durcheinanderbewegten und ineinander übergingen, die sich andauernd vermischten, sich klumpten und wieder auseinanderfielen, auseinandergerissen von einzelnen Stimmen, von Gelächter, das sich vorschob, von Rufen und Schreien, Musik, die sich damit aufblähte, die anschwell und sich hochwölbte, und in der sich dann wieder zeitweilig die durcheinanderwirbelnden Stimmen, der allgemeine, kreisende Wirrwarr auflöste, sich darin verlor oder damit verschmolz zu einem Wust, Stimmen, wässrige Stimmen, die flüssig geworden waren, aufgeweicht von der Musik.

[In the small room, and as a result of the hubbub of voices and the crush, the surging mass of heads, arms, backs, and legs, the music was a pounded mass of notes, which moved through each other and devolved into each other, which continuously merged with each other, which clumped together and then fell apart again, torn apart by solitary voices, by laughter which shot forth, by calls and screams, music which swelled up, bulged out, and vaulted high, and in which the maelstrom of voices, the general swirling hubbub occasionally dissolved itself again for a moment, lost itself, or thereby melted into a tangled mass, voices, watery voices, which had become fluid, softened up by the music.]⁴⁴

Brinkmann registers this interruption—including in the fragmentary chopped-up grammatical form he uses—but he does not judge it negatively, as might leftist critics of the jukebox following in the tradition of Adorno. His 1965 short story *Weißes Geschirr* (White Crockery) had

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also contained reflections on how a jukebox could furnish a space with “[Musik] stöckerig und gefällig, . . . worauf sie schon gar nicht mehr hörten, zwischendurch wohl den Rhythmus mitklopfen mit Schuhspitzen oder den Fingerknöcheln, und das sich völlig vermengte mit den anderen Geräuschen” ([music], stilted and agreeable . . . to which they were not even listening any more, but to which they occasionally tapped out the rhythm with the tips of their shoes [. . . music] that completely mingled with the other sounds).<sup>45</sup> This notion of a pleurably distracted attention to popular music was not unrelated to that which Walter Benjamin had described in relation to the cinema-goer in his famous 1936 essay on the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction, although Brinkmann himself does not ascribe any particularly democratic potential to it.<sup>46</sup> It was also an attitude that the maverick American composer and musician Frank Zappa would foreground years later in relation to popular music when he said: “at its best, listening to popular music creates a state in which you don’t really have to listen, but where you feel that something is happening.”<sup>47</sup>

Much like the musical notes and scraps of conversation, many of Brinkmann’s figures float in and out of the hubbub surrounding the Wurlitzer, and in and out of interpersonal situations. The boy and the girl who had been united by the jukebox soon go their separate ways. However, this superficiality—from which Brinkmann abstains from judging—is not the only mode of interaction with the jukebox that he depicts. A rather more lonesome patron has a far deeper engagement with the jukebox, slumping into a reverie, albeit paradoxically one in which his senses are heightened and made immediate. His character is the hinge-point of *Wurlitzer*; after he is introduced, the narrator switches from a description of the jukebox and its milieu to a description of this subject’s appreciation of a jukebox song, which we can assume is by the jazz pianist Thelonious Monk. Despite the juke’s less than perfect tone—its “hohlen, zittrigen Beiklang” (hollow, jittery overtones)—the short “single” format, and the simultaneously disrupting and disrupted setting, the Wurlitzer is able to carry this listener away into another realm, a live concert by Monk. It brings the jazzman’s music to life—gives it a “schwere Masse” (heavy mass)—if only for a short period of time. Hence, if Brinkmann’s jukebox represents a social aid to some listeners, albeit one that only seems to aid superficial encounters, then it can also allow an individuated form of listening, notwithstanding the social or “semi-public” setting: “Er trank ruhig, offenbar ungestört durch den Lärm um sich herum, aus dem nach und nach das Trommelsolo deutlicher hervordrang” (He was drinking quietly, obviously not at all troubled by the noise surrounding him, [the noise] from which the drum solo pushed itself forth bit by bit, and ever more clearly).<sup>48</sup>

For Brinkmann then, the jukebox is several things. Although the juke is noisy and an atomizer of music, voices, and communication, it

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is paradoxically also a device that can aid social interactions, albeit on a superficial level. In the latter respect, however, it is replaceable; toward the end of *Wurlitzer*, the bulk of the bar's patrons move away from the jukebox to turn their attention to another automated leisure device, the poker machine. Here, Brinkmann seems to acknowledge the views of those German critics who likened the jukebox with the poker machine. After the song ends, the hubbub in the bar dies back momentarily, but other noises soon fill the void. Popular music and the jukebox are not the only noisemakers in modern life, then. For other listeners like the Thelonious Monk fan, however, the jukebox can be a gateway to an immediate, "live" experience of music that is valuable in a time when real live music is unable to satisfy. Another of Brinkmann's early short stories, *Wenn sie morgens singen* (Whenever They Sing Mornings), written between 1959 and 1961, depicts the narrator's dissatisfaction with the music performed by a local dance band, "die fast immerzu Chachacha spielte und nicht einen Jazz . . . mir war doch mehr nach Jazz zu Mute, solch einen Jazz wie ihn Art Blakey spielt, ein zündender, provokativerischer Jazz" (which practically always played cha-cha and not jazz. . . . I was much more in the mood for jazz, jazz like Art Blakey plays it, explosive, provocative jazz).⁴⁹ *Wurlitzer*'s music enthusiast can employ the jukebox to hear "anständigen Jazz" (decent jazz) on demand, and in a semi-social setting, which with a little imagination could be almost concert-like.⁵⁰ Little wonder, then, that the jukebox contributed to the death of live music clubs. Brinkmann, with his chopped-up combination of critique and passionate affirmation, was writing at a time when the jukebox was still in its ascendancy, and it was the subject of controversy—as "hot" and "explosive" as the driving, rhythmic hard bop *Wurlitzer*'s protagonist favors.⁵¹ Twenty-five years later, when Handke wrote *The Jukebox*, he was living through a much cooler phase in the life of the technology. Replaced by other digital formats, the analogue jukebox was about to recede from sight, its passing hardly noticed, let alone commented on. Brinkmann's nervous pace yields to Handke's deliberately slower, quieter tone.

Peter Handke: The First Pop Star of German Letters?

Born two years after Brinkmann in 1942, Handke is often regarded as a slightly more ambiguous figure in relation to *Popliteratur*, as someone who never "completely subscribe[d] to the pop culture fad."⁵² His early texts are routinely included in *Popliteratur* anthologies, but the "pop impulses" behind his work have, until recently, tended to be overlooked or dismissed by the Handke scholarship.⁵³ However, his marked engagement with popular music is undeniable. Like Brinkmann, Handke was an

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avid collector of Beat and rock during the late 1960s, and he was apparently often more interested in discussing it, rather than literature, with his fellow writers.⁵⁴ At a personal level, this music provided a certain relief. Together with film, it acted as “Gegenmittel zu all den Einengungen und Abstumpfungen . . . , die [Handke] lange bedrohten und belasteten” (a counterweight to all of the restrictions and the deadening that threatened and burdened [Handke] for so long).⁵⁵ Or as *The Jukebox* puts it, Beatles’ songs “[nahmen von ihm] alles Gewicht der Welt” (lifted all the weight in the world from his shoulders).⁵⁶ Handke also admired what he thought was key to the Beatles’ appeal with young fans, the band’s call to exercise “Widerwille gegen einen scheinbar unveränderlichen Lebenszustand, Trotz, Ungehorsam” (unwillingness toward an apparently unchanging condition of life, defiance, disobedience).⁵⁷ Handke himself famously performed such qualities at a meeting of the Gruppe 47 in Princeton in 1966, when he attacked his hegemonic elder colleagues for their “Beschreibungsimpotenz” (descriptive impotence) and literary critics for being just as “läppisch” (wishy-washy).⁵⁸ This performance was a publicity coup. Together with a string of theater successes during 1966, and a series of reading engagements, sometimes in the accompaniment of a Beat band, it led Handke to be feted as a “Beat author” and literary “pop star.”⁵⁹ Such titles were not coincidental, given the different ways in which Handke’s texts engaged with Beat music at the time.

In Handke’s debut play, *Publikumsbeschimpfung* (*Offending the Audience*, 1966), for example, his “Rules for the Actors” directed them to listen songs by the Rolling Stones, and to watch Beatles’ movies to prepare for performance.⁶⁰ It is even possible to read the play as the realization of a “pop-fugue,” combining a series of voices against a basic continuous rhythm.⁶¹ Some of Handke’s early ready-made poems also thematize Beat music. For example, *Der Text des rhythm-and-blues* (1966) reproduces in German translation the lyrics of an R&B song: “Alles ist in Ordnung / Sie geht die Strasse hinunter / Fühlst du dich wohl? / Ich möchte nach Hause gehen” (Everything is OK / She’s going down the street / Are you feeling well? / I want to go home).⁶² The ready-made is commensurate with Andy Warhol’s “pop” imperative to fanatically collect the everyday, and also with the notion of valorizing the supposedly worthless as a way of devaluing the traditional canon, which Anja Pompe sees as being critical to Handke’s avant-garde “pop project.”⁶³ On its face, *Der Text des rhythm-and-blues* does little to explain how one could be attached to Beat or rock, as Handke undeniably was: indeed the translation seems very bland. However, a radio program, “Von der Schwierigkeit, einen Schlagertext zu schreiben” (On the difficulty of writing a *Schlager* lyric), helps us decode *Der Text des rhythm-and-blues*, and reveals part of Beat’s appeal to Handke as a writer. For Handke, Beat—he mentions the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and the Kinks—exhibits

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important textual and rhythmic innovations that expose the clichés of sedimented German popular song convention. Beat shows how an effective new song language can be constructed, one that at its most rhythmic bypasses semantics and approaches what Steven Paul Scher would call “word music.” However, Handke takes the view that Beat is impossible in German because the language is simply too “belastet . . . von den vielen Mißbräuchen” (burdened . . . by its manifold abuse).<sup>64</sup> This stance contextualizes the banality of the German *Text des rhythm-and-blues*. Its lack of success in “realizing” rhythmic Beat in German is consistent therefore with his interest in the impossibility of language in his early work—with what Görlich calls the “Divergenz zwischen dem ‘Sagen-Wollen’ und ‘Sagen-Können’” (discrepancy between what one “wishes to say,” and what one is “capable of saying”).<sup>65</sup> This notion of the impossibility of language, especially in the face of music, was an important theme not only for Handke and Brinkmann but also for several later German musico-centric writers.

Although Handke continued to make passing references to popular music in his work during the 1970s and 1980s, his primary interest lay now with language.<sup>66</sup> Handke’s new distance from popular music was telling of changes in music, as well as in the contemporary German literary field. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, many rock musicians lapsed into drug addiction and died; others were perceived as having all too easily accommodated themselves within the commercial music industry. For many of the ’68 generation, there was a concomitant breakdown of the utopian associations with rock, as the German music critic Konrad Heidkamp put it years later: “als hätte man mit dem Herzen schon gefühlt, was keiner einlösen konnte, als habe man für Wirklichkeit gehalten, was doch nur in der Musik zu hören war” ([It was] as if you had already felt in your heart something that no-one could actually realize, as if you had confused for reality something that you could actually only hear in the music).<sup>67</sup> In *Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied* (1972), Handke’s narrator also reveals a new distance from popular music. There he notes how rock music had become “immer gleichgültiger” ([a matter of] more and more indifference) to him.<sup>68</sup> Concurrently, the conglomeration of voices associated with Pop I in the late 1960s also rapidly fell apart. Gleba and Schumacher suggest that by the time the genre was being reflected on and criticized by academics like Jost Hermand (1971) it was already “over.”<sup>69</sup> For a while, a disparate group of individuals had shared an opposition to the institution of literature, and they were subsumed under the rubric of *Popliteratur*. Yet the mood dissipated, as prime movers like Brinkmann began to distance themselves from *Popliteratur*, even though others persisted for a while.<sup>70</sup> Significantly, the first wave of *Popliteratur* led to something of a normalization of popular culture as subject matter within German literature.<sup>71</sup> However, deploying such

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content was no longer celebrated in the same way as it had been during the late 1960s. In a sense, *Popliteratur* was seen as having been a fad, and it was not thought interesting enough to warrant sustained commitment.<sup>72</sup> In terms of new literary directions for the 1970s, one of the strands discerned by critics was the “new subjectivity,” with which, of course, Handke was associated.<sup>73</sup>

So if Handke did not concern himself as a writer too much with popular music during the 1970s and 1980s, why did he return, in 1990, to the music of his youth, and to the jukebox? His reengagement was prompted, in large measure, by the progressive disappearance of the jukebox, that once important and controversial music technology. *The Jukebox* is the writer-narrator’s personal meditation on the significance of what is now a “fast schon urtümlich gewordene Sache” (almost ancient object). “Er wollte nur, bevor es auch ihm selbst aus dem Blick geriet, festhalten und gelten lassen, was ein Ding einem bedeuten und, vor allem, was von einem bloßen Ding ausgehen konnte” (He merely wanted to capture and acknowledge, before even he lost sight of it, what an object could mean to a person, above all what could emanate from a mere object).<sup>74</sup> The story-cum-essay presents various personal memories and affects the protagonist associates with the jukebox, but it also portrays his difficulties in finding an appropriate literary form to do so, during the several weeks he has set aside to spend on the task in regional Spain. Significantly, the writer searches in vain to actually find a functioning jukebox there. As he notes, the jukebox’s place is now occupied by cassette players, televisions, and—*pace* Brinkmann and the juke’s German critics—poker machines. In the narrator’s experience, jukeboxes now only exist in dives and non-places, where outsiders and itinerants may be found. But it is not just a question of quantitative demise and marginalization. The jukebox has also changed with the introduction of digital technology. To the extent that they still exist, the jukebox nowadays contains a rather limited number of CDs, somehow rendering it more standardized and less individual.

As I will show in the following analysis, Handke’s story-cum-essay is consistent with the tendency that Sascha Seiler notes of the post-Pop I period, where writers referenced popular culture, including music, in the context of their subjective memories of an earlier period.<sup>75</sup> Rather than being associated with a collective “antiauthoritarian spirit of progress,” popular music has now become a more private matter.<sup>76</sup> As Martin Büsser has observed, this type of change often occurs when an individual continues to engage with popular music as an adult, and the new mood is frequently nostalgic in tone. Yet that nostalgia is often seen as somehow illegitimate.<sup>77</sup> This is a tension that is sometimes thematized in the musico-centric literature examined in this book, including in *The Jukebox*. In Handke’s case, however, *The Jukebox* is not just a work of “technostalgia” by a self-confessed “Hobbyarchäologe” (hobby archaeologist).<sup>78</sup>

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The text also examines the value of the jukebox in the writer's current life. My analysis will make three points about Handke's text, then: that it elaborates on the liberating space revolving around the juke; that it reveals how the disappearing juke can still have value as what I call a "memory trigger"; and that Handke's writer-protagonist attempted to find an appropriate writing style to "realize" the jukebox's essence and his interactions with it.

Freedom to Consume, Feel, and Create?

In the protagonist's recollection of his younger years, he portrays the jukebox as a means of liberation from restrictive taste regimes. It represents quite a different mode of musical consumption compared with the table-top radio set associated with home. In fact, Handke spatializes the hierarchy of musical technologies present in his writer's youth. The parental radio set had an elevated position in the "Herrgottswinkel" (the corner with the shrine).⁷⁹ Its use was dictated by the protagonist's parents, who stipulated what was appropriate listening and what was "Un-Musik" (nonmusic). By contrast, the jukebox existed on quite a different level. Its speakers were mounted low and were felt with the whole body: it had a "Bauchklang" (belly resonance).⁸⁰ This spatial organization was not only a matter of acoustics, but was related also to repertoire. The music played on the jukebox was not typically music for the head—as was presumably the case with the protagonist's conservative parents and their favorite radio programs—but rather rhythmic popular music that moved the body.

The jukebox provided a new space in which the protagonist could leave behind, if only for a moment, the ingrained habits and prejudices inherited from his parents. Should he, by chance, hear one of his jukebox favorites on the radio at home, he would instinctively wish to turn up the volume, but not without a bad conscience. Even when he was a student and could finally afford his own record player, for a number of years he only felt comfortable buying "[das], was nach der Übereinkunft den Namen Musik verdiente" (what was conventionally felt to deserve the name music). By contrast, the jukebox remained a welcome technology of transgression. It allowed for, and even encouraged, a different repertoire and mode of reception: "Aus der Jukebox . . . ließ er selbstbewußt tremolieren, heulen, brüllen, klirren und wummern, was ihn—nicht bloß erfreute, sondern auch mit Schaudern der Wonne, Wärme *und des Gemeinschaftsgefühls* überzog" (from the jukebox . . . he boldly unleashed the trills, howls, shouts, rattling, and booming that not merely gave him pleasure but also filled him with shudders of rapture, warmth, *and fellowship*).⁸¹ A far cry, certainly, from the more staid modes of music reception associated with older cultured bourgeois citizens. Here, too, we get that sense of the jukebox as a "semi-public" locale for music consumption. We

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can see how it invoked a sense of community, which allowed it to have a life after the rise of cheaper personal radios and hi-fi equipment. As the rock sociologist Simon Frith has observed, “dancing in public—listening in public—this seems to be more expressive of how we feel about our music, more truthful, than dancing, listening alone.”<sup>82</sup>

Nevertheless, just as Brinkmann had identified different types of jukebox users, *The Jukebox* revealed a perhaps atypical mode of interaction with the technology. Handke’s protagonist may indeed have been literally “moved” by the music he heard, but this was more in an inward and uplifting direction rather than toward the dance floor. For him, the jukebox was “ein Ding der Ruhe, oder etwas zum Ruhigwerden, zum Stillesitzen, in ziemlicher Reg- und fast Atemlosigkeit” (a source of peace, or something that made one feel peaceful, made one sit still, in relative motionlessness or breathlessness).<sup>83</sup> This moment had, or could have, a spiritual significance. For example, the protagonist’s first, epiphanic, jukebox experience of the Beatles—“der Chor der frechen Engelszungen” (that choir of sassy angelic tongues)—is described in quasi-religious, transcendent tones:<sup>84</sup>

Eine Musik, bei der er zum ersten Mal im Leben, und später nur noch in den Augenblicken der Liebe, das erfuhr, was in der Fachsprache “Levitation” heißt, und das er selber mehr als ein Vierteljahrhundert später wie nennen sollte: “Auffahrt”? “Weltwerdung”? Oder so: “Das dieses Lied, dieser Klang—bin jetzt ich; mit diesen Stimmen, diesen Harmonien bin ich, wie noch nie im Leben, der geworden der ich bin; wie dieser Gesang ist, so bin ich, ganz!”? (Wie üblich gab es seine Redensart, aber, wie üblich entsprach sie nicht ganz: “Er ging in der Musik auf.”)

[A kind of music that made him experience, for the first time in his life, as later only in moments of love, what is technically referred to as “levitation,” and which he himself, more than a quarter of a century later, would call—what? “epiphany”? “ecstasy”? “fusing with the world”? Or thus: “That—this song, this sound—is now me; with these voices, these harmonies, I have become, as never before in life, who I am: as this song is, so am I, complete!”? (As usual there was an expression for it, but as usual it was not quite the same thing: “He became one with the music.”)]<sup>85</sup>

In this key passage, several important themes coalesce, including the epiphany—a recurring theme in the later Handke—and the possibility of having such a quasi-religious experience while listening to popular music.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, Handke again points to the inadequacy of language, particularly language sedimented by usage, to capture an ineffable and pre-linguistic musical experience. Notwithstanding the popular music signifiers, these

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topoi have a clear Romantic heritage. As George Steiner has observed: “Music *means*, even where, most especially where, there is no way whatever to paraphrase this meaning, to restate it in any alternative way.”⁸⁷ For many of the early Romantic writers, it was just this “primacy” of music that lent it its appeal—music was seen as an expression of the absolute and metaphysical. Ludwig Tieck, for example, saw it as an example of “revealed religion.” Associated with these ideas is what Martin Huber, following the musicologist Carl Dahlhaus, calls the “Unsagbarkeit Topos” (topos of unsayability): “Musik drückt aus, was in Worten nicht mitgeteilt werden kann, in ihr wird das Unsagbare zur Sprache” (Music expresses that which cannot be conveyed in words; the unsayable becomes speech).⁸⁸

If the jukebox could sometimes allow Handke’s writer to experience an epiphany and usurp the family radio in the “corner with the shrine,” then its presence also offered him an ostensible sharpening of his mind and creative faculties: “[es] ließ ihn sich buchstäblich sammeln, weckte oder oszillierte, in ihm einzig seine Möglichkeitsbilder und bestärkte ihn darin” ([it] literally caused him to collect himself, and awakened, or activated, his images of what might be possible and encouraged him to contemplate them).⁸⁹ In this way the jukebox perversely seemed to present itself as an aid to his learning and intellectual endeavours—contrary to those voices who took a critical attitude to the distractive force of popular music and the jukebox.

Maturity and Memory, or the Advantages and Dangers of Music

This association between listening to a jukebox and achieving an optimal mental state reveals something of the significance of the jukebox as a comforting factor to the writer later in life—as an aid to achieving what I call a writerly equilibrium. One might have expected the protagonist’s fixation with the jukebox, and even with popular music itself, to be cast aside upon maturity or with better access to other means of musical reproduction. However, he expressly rejects the notion that he has grown out of it. Even if jukebox listening reduces in quantity, it remains as a constant. As the critic Andrea Köhler observed in her review, *The Jukebox* thereby avoids being a mere exercise in nostalgia, or what she memorably calls a “romantische Rekonstruktion des verlorenen Paradieses der pop-beschwingten Pubertät” (romantic reconstruction of some lost paradise of pop-enthralled puberty).⁹⁰

The peripatetic author functionalizes the jukebox in his later life. It can give him a paradoxical sense of being at home on the road. Similarly, a jukebox can center him when he arrives home after his travels, making him “weniger fremd und ungelenk” (less foreign and maladroit).⁹¹ Perhaps

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most important, however, the protagonist seeks to integrate jukebox listening into his workday. At the end of a day's work, hanging out in a bar with a jukebox fulfills a special purpose distinct from any need for distraction, and from his earlier aim of actively gathering his thoughts to jukebox accompaniment. Rather, it allows him to relax into a more passive, meditative state in which inspiration will spontaneously bloom inside him, and in which his interest in and perception of the here-and-now and the everyday is reawoken: "der Gegenwart wurden die Gelenke eingesetzt" (the present was equipped with flexible joints).⁹² In this context, Markus Barth has called Handke's jukebox "Sakrament der Gegenwart" (a sacrament of the present).⁹³ This effect is demonstrated by Handke's inclusion in *The Jukebox* of several tableaux where he depicts everyday scenes in bars or at railway stations with a vivid quality, with "bisher übersehene Gestalten" (figures, previously overlooked) emerging from the scenery as soon as the "Jukebox-Klang" (sound of the jukebox) sets in.⁹⁴ It is when calling forth jukebox-bound tableaux from his memory that the author of *The Jukebox* switches to the present tense, thus designating the immediacy of these discrete memories. At a meta level, then, although the jukebox is a "mere thing," it is also an important repository of memory. The protagonist can trigger these memories—bring them to life—when he turns his mind to the jukebox. This reflects the fact that music can be a very effective "placeholder" for memory, as Geoffrey Cox argues: each of the tableaux is linked very specifically to a particular song playing on the jukebox at a past moment in time.⁹⁵ It also suggests that music reproduction technologies can likewise function as very effective memory triggers, perhaps especially when they themselves are disappearing. Colin Symes points out that recorded music is especially useful as a mnemonic and can have special precision and force because it can be repeated.⁹⁶

And yet the jukebox and its repertoire fulfill ambiguous roles for Handke's protagonist throughout, which does not surprise, given that self-criticism is a recurring theme in Handke's oeuvre.⁹⁷ At the time of writing, he admits that the jukebox is a "weltfremde[r] Gegenstand . . . eine Sache 'für Weltflüchtlinge'" (unworldly topic . . . , suitable for "refugees from the world").⁹⁸ Its seeming benefits also occasionally reveal themselves to be illusory. The jukebox café seems to be an ideal place for the young protagonist to study, for example, but he finds that little of what he studies under the jukebox's influence sticks. Admittedly, this forgetting effect attenuates in his later life, but he still exhibits an underlying ambivalence toward music. *The Jukebox's* protagonist is wary, for example, about the ecstasy-inducing effects of music: "Gefährlich am Musikhören, hatte ihm einmal jemand erzählt, sei dessen Vorgaukeln eines erst noch zu Tuenden als bereits Getanem" (the dangerous thing about listening to music, someone had once told him, was the propensity it had to make one perceive something that remained to be done as already done).⁹⁹

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This notion reaches back to Nietzsche's "*Cave Musicam*" (Beware of Music), but it is also consonant with Konrad Heidkamp's comments about the disappointments of music in the aftermath of 1968, when many of Handke's generation realized they had "confused for reality something that you could actually only hear in the music."<sup>100</sup> Gerhard Melzer has observed that there is a basic mistrust in Handke's writings of the way in which music plays on the emotions of the listener.<sup>101</sup> If, at its best, music might allow access to an epiphanic and Romantic experience of the absolute, then the converse mistrust of music is actually also a Romantic trope. For the Romantics, music might have taken up a position at the top of the hierarchy of the arts; however, it was ambiguous: for Tieck and Wackenroder, for example, music may have had divine qualities, but it also had demonic potential.<sup>102</sup> In a 1994 interview with his friend and collaborator Wim Wenders, Handke touches on music's demonic potential for him: "Die Musik gibt nicht nur oft eine falsche Atmosphäre oder überhaupt eine Atmosphäre, die stören könnte, sondern gibt auch eine falsche Kraft manchmal. . . . Ich bin selber irgendwie verkommen durch Musik, so daß ich manchmal fast süchtig nach Musik werde, wenn nur Geräusche kommen oder die Stille mir zu hohl vorkommt" (Not only does music commonly put you into a false state, or into some other state that might disturb, but it occasionally also gives you a false sense of power. . . . Somehow I myself have become degenerated by music, such that sometimes I almost feel addicted to it, when for instance I can only hear noises, or when silence seems too hollow).<sup>103</sup>

Moreover, even though *The Jukebox* reveals that technology to be an effective memory trigger, Handke has elsewhere queried the quality of memory associated with music: "Habe ich mich in der Musik nicht immer wieder (schlecht) vergessen? Statt daß sie mich erinnert hätte, an das, was ich vergessen habe?" (Is it not always the case that music has subjected me to a (shoddy) process of forgetting? Rather than having caused me to remember that which I have forgotten?)<sup>104</sup> As for the jukebox's value as a generator of a writerly equilibrium, music is only useful to the protagonist in small doses at the end of his workday. His house has otherwise become "ohne Musik . . ., ohne Plattenspieler und dergleichen; sooft im Radio nach den Nachrichten gleich welcher erste Takt einsetzte, schaltete er ab" (without music, without a record player and the like; whenever the news on the radio was followed by music, of whatever kind, he would turn it off).<sup>105</sup> Given that it is now almost impossible to find an old-fashioned jukebox, it is not so reliable a source of writerly equilibrium, either. It is not without importance that *The Jukebox* is characterized by his repeated attempts to make a proper start, and ends with the protagonist's encountering not the long-sought-after jukebox, but a Chinese restaurant. Just such a restaurant had, in the past, "ein ähnlicher Ort der Ruhe . . . wie die Jukebox" (sometimes [been] a place of peace . . . like the jukebox).<sup>106</sup>

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Again it seems to provide a similar sense of ease. In other words, it is not a means of musical reproduction beckoning as a surrogate for the dying jukebox, but rather something completely unrelated to music. In this case it is, as Wolfram Schütte points out, also a more human source of comfort.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps the protagonist is therefore on the way to making his whole life “without music.”

A Jukebox of Fragments?

For the most part, the protagonist’s desire to use the jukebox as a source of literary aesthetic innovation “dem speziellen Objekt gemäss” (appropriate to the particular subject matter) evades him.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, a large part of *The Jukebox* reflects on the difficulties he encounters in his search for a congruent format. He is not interested in a nonfictional, linear account of the rise and fall of the jukebox, just as he objects, in the literary realm, to the “ahnungslosen Totalitätsanspruch vergangener Epochen [des epischen Schreibens]” (claim to totality, as amateurish as it was naïve, of the narrative forms of previous eras).¹⁰⁹ Such a form is simply not commensurate with the technology, or the times, in the protagonist’s opinion. Nor is he interested in the arcane accounts published for “technostalgic” collectors, or what Andrea Köhler calls a “larmoyant-pinseliger Antiquitäten-Kult” (lachrymose and pettifogging cult of antiquities).¹¹⁰ The protagonist finally opts for a hybrid form: a narrative relating his time in Spain, interspersed with a series of fragments about the jukebox, including historical information on jukeboxes, his thoughts on its repertoire, and his reflections on its place in his past and present. In this way, the protagonist retains some of the radical aesthetic of fragments with which he had toyed early on, when he had had a revelation that he should use an “unverbundenes Miteinander vieler verschiedener Schreibformen . . . wie es ja, schien ihm, auch den so, wie sollte er es nennen?, ungleichen? arrhythmischen? Weisen entsprach, in denen er eine Jukebox erlebt hatte und sich an sie erinnerte” (unconnected composite of many different forms of writing, corresponding to the—what should he call it?—uneven? arrhythmic? ways in which he had experienced a jukebox and remembered it).¹¹¹ That form would reserve space for a final “‘Ballade von der Jukebox,’ einen singbaren, sozusagen ‘runden’ Liedtext auf dieses Ding” (“Ballad of the Jukebox,” a singable, so to speak “rounded” song about this thing).¹¹² He jettisons much of this form when he discovers “ein ganz anderer Rhythmus . . . kein wechselnder, sprunghafter, sondern ein einziger, gleichmässiger, und vor allem, einer, der anstatt zu umzirkeln und zu umspielen, geradlinig und vollkommen ernst in einem fort *in medias res* ging: der Rhythmus des Erzählens” (an entirely new rhythm . . ., not an alternating, sporadic one, but a single steady one, and, above all, one that, instead of circling and flirting around, went

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straight and with complete seriousness in media res: the rhythm of narrative).<sup>113</sup> However, this too seems to represent a false approach to the protagonist, as he settles on the aforementioned hybrid form. As some commentators have observed, it is possible to conceive of the series of self-contained tableaux as being like singles being played on a jukebox.<sup>114</sup> They are short, self-contained literary pop singles: “übergangslos, ohne harmonisierende Verknüpfung” (without transition, without harmonizing linkage).<sup>115</sup> Yet these “Augenblicksbilder” (momentary images) and “Bildsprünge” (leaps in imagery) are also consistent with a filmic aesthetic, as Klaus Modick has noted.<sup>116</sup> Indeed, the protagonist himself refers to “fragmentarischen Filmszenen” (fragmentary filmed scenes).<sup>117</sup> In other words, his attempt to find a literary format tailored to the music technology that he is contemplating, and to his mode of engagement with it, is only partially successful, and may just as easily be interpreted as linked with a medium other than the jukebox. Nevertheless—and this is a point Markus Tillmann makes about other writers who have attempted to “realize” music—trying to do so can be an important motor of literary innovation, even if it is only partially successful.<sup>118</sup>

### Beyond the Jukebox?

Although over twenty years—and the life span of a music technology—separates them, *Wurlitzer* and *The Jukebox* reveal a common fascination with the effect that a technology has on music consumption, and on writing. They illustrate a common awareness that the technology might be just as important as the music. Both texts share a focus on fragmentation: the chopped up *Wurlitzer* investigates how the jukebox can contribute to an atomization of language and music; *The Jukebox* toys with the idea of constructing a text out of fragments of a different kind. Brinkmann and Handke therefore both registered in different ways the German cultural pessimists’ idea that the jukebox fragmented existence, but they query whether that was necessarily a negative thing. Both showed how individuals could employ technology to yield a pleasant state, in which one might, at best, also have a transcendent experience in which one’s sense of the here and now might be heightened.

Yet there is also much to separate the two texts. Brinkmann’s text is faster paced; its habitués flit to and fro between the jukebox and the poker machine. His *Wurlitzer* is a far more social machine too. By contrast, Handke’s protagonist is a very isolated figure, and one whose mood is part nostalgic. For him, the jukebox is disappearing, and with it a certain pathway to writerly equilibrium. What remains is the material vestige of the technology and the memories to which it can give access. His task is to gather together those memories, and although he feels an inner compulsion to do so, his narrator is in no hurry. In the face of that

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“dromocratic” process whereby technological change seems to be speeding up in the postmodern era, and older technologies are jettisoned for faster, more standardized ones, his solution is an emphatically “slow” one: he meticulously documents all of the significance that this object has had for him in the past, and he also tries at length to find the best literary format to do so.¹¹⁹ This deliberately slow pace is consistent with the notion of nostalgia, which is an important part of Handke’s story-cum-essay.¹²⁰

While Handke’s *Jukebox* was in one sense late, it was also anticipatory. His protagonist may have struggled with the seeming inconsequentiality of his writing project, undertaken as it was in the wake of the “Jahr der Geschichte” (year of history), 1989.¹²¹ In moments of doubt the jukebox was quite “nichtig” (insignificant): “Gab es in der Jetztzeit, da jeder neue Tag ein historisches Datum war, jemand Verranteren als gerade ihn?” (Was there anyone in the present time, when every day was a new historic date, more ridiculous, more perverse than himself?)¹²² His protagonist also encountered “Unkenntnis und Gleichgültigkeit” (ignorance and indifference) when he first raised with contemporaries his interest in writing about the jukebox; however, critics and readers ultimately welcomed the book.¹²³ As Peter Görlich observed in his review, the sense of historical turn associated with 1989 and 1990 offered an opportunity, and even the imperative, to take stock of one’s own past.¹²⁴ It is evident among reviewers of Handke’s period, or a slightly older vintage—like *Der Spiegel*’s Hellmuth Karasek, for example—that there was a distinct collective pleasure to be had in revisiting the jukebox culture of one’s youth.¹²⁵ Volker Hage suggested that one of the book’s attractions was that it allowed a reader access to his or her past, and a prompt to “read him or herself.”¹²⁶ Hage also thought the time was already ripe, after the euphoria of the autumn of 1989, for Handke’s seemingly “abseitiges” (obscure) book.¹²⁷ The reading public did not disagree; the book quickly went into its second printing and by 1993 had sold between thirty thousand and forty thousand copies.¹²⁸ The nostalgia in relation to one’s musical past that the text could engender was consonant with a broader post-1989 turn. As Svetlana Boym has observed in *The Future of Nostalgia*: “The twentieth century began with a futuristic utopia, and ended with nostalgia.”¹²⁹ The postunification period, and the sense of an “end of history,” signaled a time to take stock, including for members of the 1968 cohort, many of whom were now ensconced in establishment positions, or under attack from the younger generation, or both.¹³⁰ As various commentators have shown, the postunification period experienced something of a “memory boom,” and this manifested itself in a great deal of contemporary German literature.¹³¹ Much of this memory-boom literature was devoted to the Nazi era; however, some would recall the socialist past of the GDR, or the “old” Federal Republic. It is even possible to situate the “Pop II” that began in the mid-1990s within a broader *Prinzip Erinnerung* (memory

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principle) in post-*Wende* literature.<sup>132</sup> While Handke's protagonist occasionally thought his topic risible, the next ten to fifteen years were to prove that other writers of the same vintage would join him in returning to the music of their youth, its milieu and its technologies.

If Handke was joined by members of his own cohort in writing about their musical socialization, and about technologies of music consumption and production, then many younger writers would also do so. Not that they would feel as much hesitation as *The Jukebox's* protagonist. This second wave of musico-centric literature was extremely heterogeneous, but more than a few resonances can be found with *The Jukebox*. If Handke was partly motivated to write about the jukebox because he did not share the orthodox view that literature ought to have a "gesellschaftliche Präzeptorenrolle" (role as social preceptor), or because he objected to previous narrative forms' "claims to totality," then many later musico-centric writers also criticized established literary formats.<sup>133</sup> Some would exhibit a similar, but perhaps more foreshortened, type of musical nostalgia. Some would share Handke's and Brinkmann's interest in music's links with the here and now. Some would exhibit a hesitance in relation to music, albeit different in emphasis from Handke's. The early Handke also remained a point of reference, furnishing a model for latterday literary "performers." Not all later musico-centric writers would attempt to "realize" musical or technological form, but some would. As we will see, Handke's rudimentary and "analog" attempt at a "literary jukebox" would be superseded by "digital" modes of literary "deejaying" and "sampling."

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Although Handke is an Austrian writer, the sketch here relates to West German attitudes to popular music, many of which also had currency in the Austrian setting. On the comparable would-be "Coca-colonization" of postwar Austrian society, see, e.g., Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War*, trans. Diana M. Wolf (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994). By contrast, the situation in East Germany was complicated by various factors that I will elaborate on in chapter 5.

<sup>2</sup> See generally Kaspar Maase, *BRAVO-Amerika: Erkundungen zur Jugendkultur der Bundesrepublik in den fünfziger Jahren* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 1992); Uta Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Andrew W. Hurley, *The Return of Jazz: Joachim-Ernst Berendt and His Role in German Cultural Change* (New York: Berghahn, 2009), 19–21.

<sup>3</sup> Uwe Timm, *In My Brother's Shadow*, trans. Anthea Bell (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), 59.

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⁴ Detlef Siegfried, *Time Is On My Side: Konsum und Politik in der westdeutschen Jugendkultur der 60er Jahre* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2008), 64–65.

⁵ Friedrich C. Delius, *Die Minute mit Paul McCartney* (Reinbek: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2005), 42. Delius's humorous so-called *Memo-Arien* (memo arias) retell a chance encounter between a young German and Paul McCartney from a variety of perspectives and using a multitude of grammatical and literary styles.

⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 38. See also Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1969).

⁷ Richard Langston, "Roll over Beethoven! Chuck Berry! Mick Jagger!: 1960s Rock, the Myth of Progress, and the Burden of National Identity in West Germany," in *Sound Matters: Essays on the Acoustics of Modern German Culture*, ed. Nora M. Alter and Lutz Koepnick (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 191.

⁸ Kemper et al., *Alles so schön bunt hier*, 17–18. "Beat" generally refers to English popular music from the earlier part of the 1960s, especially to "English invasion" bands like the Beatles. Over time, and by the late 1960s, this name ceded to "rock," which is less tied to the British association.

⁹ The terms are originally Gerhard Schulze's. Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 117–18.

¹⁰ Gerhard Schulze, *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2000). See Siegfried, *Time Is On My Side*, 56, on the rise, among young people in the 1960s, of "hedonism," a term understood to mean giving preference to the enjoyment of life, which may not necessarily have been at the expense of other values like achievement.

¹¹ Kemper et al., *Alles so schön bunt hier*, 17.

¹² Siegfried, *Time Is On My Side*, 80–81.

¹³ See, e.g., Siegfried Schmidt-Joos, "Ein Votum für populären Jazz," *Jazz Podium* (December 1965), 320–21; Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 117; Ralf Hinz, "Pop-Theorie und Pop-Kritik: Denk- und Schreibweisen im avancierten Musikjournalismus," in Arnold and Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 297–310; Schäfer, "Neue Mitteilungen aus der Wirklichkeit," in Arnold and Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 7–25, especially at 14; Andrew W. Hurley, "Joachim Ernst Berendt—Jazz, U-Musik, Pop-Jazz und die Ambivalenz (1950–70)," *Darmstädter Beiträge zur Jazzforschung* 9 (2006): 37–59; Seiler, "Einfache wahre Abschreiben der Welt," 43.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Rob Burns and Wilfried van der Will, "The Federal Republic 1968–1990: From the Industrial Society to the Culture Society," in *German Cultural Studies*, ed. Rob Burns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 274.

¹⁵ Delius, *Die Minute*, 44–45.

¹⁶ For a discussion of *Krautrock*, see, e.g., Henning Dedekind, *Krautrock: Underground, LSD und kosmische Kuriere* (Höfen: Hannibal, 2008). On the *Essener Songtage*, see, e.g., Detlev Mahnert and Harry Stürmer, eds., *Zappa, Zoff und Zwischentöne: Die internationalen Essener Songtage 1968* (Essen: Klartext, 2008).

¹⁷ On the Burg Waldeck Festival, see, e.g., Eckard Holler, "The Burg Waldeck Festivals, 1964–1969," in *Protest Song in East and West Germany since the 1960s*,

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ed. David Robb (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007), 97–131. On the Berliner Jazztage, see Hurley, *Return of Jazz*, 116–35.

<sup>18</sup> See generally Arnold and Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*; Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*; Seiler, “Einfache wahre Abschreiben der Welt”; Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur*; Ullmaier, *Von ACID*.

<sup>19</sup> Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 110–11.

<sup>20</sup> Gleba and Schumacher, *Popliteratur seit 1964*, 39.

<sup>21</sup> Politycki, “Literatur muss sein wie die Rockmusik,” ZB 2.

<sup>22</sup> Ralf Bentz, “To a World Filled with Compromise, We Make No Contribution (Zwischen Pop-Affront und Punk-Habitus: der Schriftsteller Rolf Dieter Brinkmann),” *Testcard 7* (1997): 179.

<sup>23</sup> Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur*, 79.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>25</sup> Gleba and Schumacher, *Popliteratur seit 1964*, 39.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Gleba and Schumacher, *Popliteratur seit 1964*, 44–45. See also Bentz, “To a World Filled with Compromise,” 179–80; and Anja Pompe, *Peter Handke: Pop als poetisches Prinzip* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2009), 172.

<sup>27</sup> Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 19.

<sup>28</sup> Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur*, 73.

<sup>29</sup> Siegfried, *Time Is On My Side*, 73.

<sup>30</sup> The number of jukeboxes in the Federal Republic rose from 12,000 (1957) to 50,000 (1960) to 105,000 (1972). Siegfried, *Time Is On My Side*, 95.

<sup>31</sup> This account of the rise and reception of the jukebox is derived from Siegfried, *Time Is On My Side*, 93–96. On the death of live venues, see, e.g., Ekkehard Jost, “Jazz in Deutschland von der Weimarer Republik zur Adenauer Ära,” in *That’s Jazz: Der Sound des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Klaus Wolbert et al., 2nd ed. (Darmstadt: Verlag Jürgen Häusser, 1997), 376.

<sup>32</sup> Siegfried, *Time Is On My Side*, 96.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 94.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Handke, *Versuch*, 55; (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 73).

<sup>36</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, “Über den Fetischcharakter in der Musik und die Regression des Hörens” (1938), in Adorno, *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 14, 34.

<sup>37</sup> Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, 15.

<sup>38</sup> In terms of timing, the text might be reckoned to his early “pre-pop” works, which are generally ascribed to the *nouveau roman* genre (Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 24). Brinkmann’s thematization of the jukebox in *Wurlitzer* is consistent with the “perception of the everyday” advanced in that context. There is also not any obvious re-coding of the popular culture signifiers—and it is this *re-coding* of “pop” signifiers that Schäfer considers central to Brinkmann’s notion of “*Popliteratur*.” Jörgen Schäfer, “‘Mit dem Vorhandenen etwas anderes als das Intendierte machen’: Rolf Dieter Brinkmanns poetologische

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Überlegungen zur Pop-Literatur,” in Arnold and Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 69–80, especially 74, 78.

³⁹ Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur*, 86. See also Olaf Selg, *Essay, Erzählung, Roman und Hörspiel: Prosaformen bei Rolf Dieter Brinkmann* (Aachen: Shaker, 2001), 167. This style is often associated with the music of the bebop pianist Thelonious Monk, who features in *Wurlitzer*. On the then current German understanding of how Monk chopped up regular jazz phrasing, see, e.g., Joachim-Ernst Berendt, *Das neue Jazzbuch* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1959), 31.

⁴⁰ Admittedly, Brinkmann would mostly focus in the *Popliteratur* context on realizing film and the visual.

⁴¹ Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 21.

⁴² On this aspect of Pop I, see Gleba and Schumacher, *Popliteratur seit 1964*, 19; Pompe, *Peter Handke*, 41.

⁴³ Rolf-Dieter Brinkmann, *Wurlitzer*, in Rolf-Dieter Brinkmann, *Erzählungen* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1985), 256–57.

⁴⁴ Brinkmann, *Wurlitzer*, 253.

⁴⁵ Rolf-Dieter Brinkmann, *Weisses Geschirr*, in Brinkmann, *Erzählungen*, 118.

⁴⁶ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” trans J. A. Underwood, in Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (London: Penguin, 2008), 1–50.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Kemper et al., *Alles so schön bunt hier*, 13.

⁴⁸ Brinkmann, *Wurlitzer*, 254–55, 258, 264.

⁴⁹ Rolf Dieter Brinkmann, *Wenn sie morgens singen*, in Brinkmann, *Erzählungen*, 364.

⁵⁰ Brinkmann, *Wurlitzer*, 368.

⁵¹ In contradistinction to the “cool jazz” of the early mid-1950s, soul jazz and hard bop emerged in the latter part of the 1950s and the 1960s as idioms that placed greater stress on rhythm, higher tempi, and, in some forms, on danceability. As we have seen, Brinkmann regarded hard bop at the time as “explosive, provocative jazz.”

⁵² Dirk Frank, *Popliteratur: Arbeitstexte für den Unterricht* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003), 12.

⁵³ Anja Pompe is the first Handke scholar to place his larger oeuvre within a “pop project” (Pompe, *Peter Handke*, 11).

⁵⁴ See, e.g., Georg Pichler, *Die Beschreibung des Glücks: Peter Handke: Eine Biographie* (Vienna: Überreuter, 2002), 51. 3 *American LPs*, Handke’s 1969 short film collaboration with Wim Wenders, illustrates this musico-centrism, and how popular music could be a type of social glue between the similarly minded. It features shots of Munich suburbs, for example, mixed with music from the three LPs (Creedence Clearwater Revival, Harvey Mandel, and Van Morrison) and Handke’s and Wenders’s conversation about the music.

⁵⁵ Helmut Schmiedt, *Ringo in Weimar: Begegnungen zwischen Hochkultur und Populärkultur* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1996), 35.

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- <sup>56</sup> Handke, *Versuch*, 89 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 92).
- <sup>57</sup> Handke, quoted in Pompe, *Peter Handke*, 7.
- <sup>58</sup> Quoted in Pichler, *Beschreibung des Glücks*, 69–71.
- <sup>59</sup> Pichler, *Beschreibung des Glücks*, 79; Pompe, *Peter Handke*, 7.
- <sup>60</sup> Peter Handke, *Publikumsbeschimpfung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966).
- <sup>61</sup> Pompe, *Peter Handke*, 142–48. See also Mireille Tabah, *Vermittlung und Unmittelbarkeit: Die Eigenart von Peter Handkes fiktionalem Frühwerk (1966–1970)* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990), 161; and Fabjan Hafner, “Peters Musiktruhe oder Handke’s Jukebox: Wie ein Schriftsteller Musik hört,” *Zeitschrift für den Deutschunterricht in Wissenschaft und Schule* 4 (2001): 62–81, especially 64.
- <sup>62</sup> Peter Handke, *Die Innenwelt der Außenwelt der Innenwelt* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969), 36. Schäfer suggests that the translation is based on The Rolling Stones song “Goin’ Home” from the 1966 album *Aftermath* (Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 215).
- <sup>63</sup> Pompe, *Peter Handke*. On this aspect of Warhol, see, e.g., Schumacher, *Gerade Eben Jetzt*, 31–33.
- <sup>64</sup> Peter Handke, *Über Musik*, ed. Gerhard Melzer, *Libell* 4 (Graz: Franz Nabl Institut für Literaturforschung, 2003), 46.
- <sup>65</sup> Peter Görlich, “Peter Handke: Versuch über die Jukebox,” *Weimarer Beiträge* 37, no. 4 (1991): 588. See also Frank, *Popliteratur*, 50.
- <sup>66</sup> Gerhard Melzer, “Fragezeichengewitter: Zu Peter Handkes Musikverständnis,” in Handke, *Über Musik*, 93.
- <sup>67</sup> Heidkamp, *It’s All Over Now*, 18. See also Helmut Schmiedt, “No Satisfaction oder Keiner weiß mehr: Rockmusik und Gegenwartsliteratur,” *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 9 (1979): 11–24; and Langston, “Roll over Beethoven.”
- <sup>68</sup> Peter Handke, *Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 22.
- <sup>69</sup> Gleba and Schumacher, *Popliteratur seit 1964*, 23. Jost Hermand, *Pop international: Eine kritische Analyse* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum-Verlag, 1971).
- <sup>70</sup> The secondary literature generally asserts that Brinkmann turned away from the notion of *Popliteratur* in 1970. It is no coincidence that this turn occurred at the same time that he too became disillusioned with rock. Brinkmann’s disappointment upon the death of some of his favorite musicians and his disillusionment with the ascendant commercialization and professionalization of the music scene is reflected in some of his later notebooks and poems. In 1970 he sold off his record collection, and although he continued privately to listen to rock for a little while yet, he later declared that he “discontinued” his interest in it in 1972 (Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 252, 110). His latter works still paid attention to popular culture, but viewed it as “Instrument einer behaviouristischen Fernsteuerung des Individuums” ([an] instrument by which the individual is behavioristically controlled) (*Pop-Literatur*, 27). For a slightly divergent view, suggesting that the later Brinkmann remained fond of popular music, see Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und*

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Pop-Literatur, chap. 3. Brinkmann died in 1975 at the age of thirty-five. Ullmaier and others note the continuation of a “pop attitude” among some authors such as the “Underground-Junk-Poet” Jörg Fauser, and Wolf Wondratschek. Ullmaier, *Von ACID*, 185; Jung, *Alles nur Pop?*, 37; Schäfer, “Mit dem Vorhandenen,” 71. Wondratschek also eventually took his leave from the notion too (Seiler, “Einfache wahre Abschreiben der Welt,” 230–33).

⁷¹ Schmiedt, *Ringo in Weimar*, 31; Seiler, “Einfache wahre Abschreiben der Welt,” 14.

⁷² Seiler, “Einfache wahre Abschreiben der Welt,” 230.

⁷³ Gleba and Schumacher, *Popliteratur seit 1964*, 23; Pompe, *Peter Handke*, 10.

⁷⁴ Handke, *Versuch*, 59, 110–11 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 75, 103).

⁷⁵ Seiler, “Einfache wahre Abschreiben der Welt,” 322.

⁷⁶ Langston, “Roll over Beethoven,” 194.

⁷⁷ Martin Büsser, *Wie klingt die Neue Mitte?* (Mainz: Ventil, 2001), 108.

⁷⁸ Pompe, *Peter Handke*, 127 n. 207. I borrow the term “technostalgia” from Trevor Pinch and Frank Trocco, who use it in their book *Analog Days: The Invention and Impact of the Moog Synthesizer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁷⁹ Handke, *Versuch*, 79 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 86).

⁸⁰ Handke, *Versuch*, 83 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 88).

⁸¹ Handke, *Versuch*, 83–84 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 88, 89). Emphasis added.

⁸² Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 239.

⁸³ Handke, *Versuch*, 85 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 89).

⁸⁴ Handke, *Versuch*, 89 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 92).

⁸⁵ Handke, *Versuch*, 88 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 91).

⁸⁶ On the epiphany in late Handke, see, e.g., Wolfram Frietsch, *Die Symbolik der Epiphanien in Peter Handkes Texten: Strukturmomente eines neuen Zusammenhangs* (Sinzheim: Pro Universität Verlag, 1995); and Herwig Gottwald, “Das fragile Gleichgewicht des epischen Prozesses: Beobachtungen zu Peter Handkes ‘Versuchen,’” *Studia Austriaca* 5 (1997): 135–68. It may not surprise that Handke had elsewhere linked an experience of popular music with religion. This occurred most memorably in his *Hörspiel Nr 2* (Radio Play No. 2) (1969), which superimposes “Ave Maria” onto Jimi Hendrix’s “Hey Joe” (see Handke, *Über Musik*, 25).

⁸⁷ Quoted in John A. Hargraves, *Music in the works of Broch, Mann, and Kafka* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2001), xiv.

⁸⁸ Huber, *Text und Musik*, 17–18.

⁸⁹ Handke, *Versuch*, 86 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 90).

⁹⁰ Andrea Köhler, “Was von einem bloßen Ding ausgeht,” *Badische Zeitung* (Beilage), December 19, 1990, 3.

⁹¹ Handke, *Versuch*, 91 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 93).

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<sup>92</sup> Handke, *Versuch*, 103 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 99). The notion that jukebox listening can heighten one's perception is a theme in other works by Handke, including *Der Chinese des Schmerzes* (1983) (Gottwald, "Fragile Gleichgewicht," 138, n21). In *Nachmittag des Schriftstellers* (1987), he also reflected on the benefits of pushing jukebox buttons after a "Wortsuchtag" (day of searching for words) (Handke, *Über Musik*, 37). On the importance of the aesthetics of meditation to his subjective concept of literature, see Gottwald, "Fragile Gleichgewicht." On other passing references to the jukebox in Handke's oeuvre, see Markus Barth, *Lebenslust im Alltag: Analyse der Werke von Peter Handke, Thomas Bernhard und Brigitte Kronauer* (Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitätsverlag, 1998), 115.

<sup>93</sup> Barth, *Lebenslust im Alltag*, 110.

<sup>94</sup> Handke, *Versuch*, 117 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 106).

<sup>95</sup> Cox, "Playlists," 11.

<sup>96</sup> Colin Symes, "From *Tomorrow's Eve* to *High Fidelity*: Novel Responses to the Gramophone in Twentieth-Century Literature," *Popular Music* 24, no. 2 (2005): 203.

<sup>97</sup> Gottwald, "Fragile Gleichgewicht," 140–41.

<sup>98</sup> Handke, *Versuch*, 27 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 58).

<sup>99</sup> Handke, *Versuch*, 85–86 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 90).

<sup>100</sup> On Handke's attribution of this attitude to Nietzsche, see Handke, *Über Musik*, 2.

<sup>101</sup> Melzer, "Fragezeichengewitter," 95.

<sup>102</sup> Donovan and Elliott, *Music and Literature in German Romanticism*, xii. See also Schoolfield, *Figure of the Musician in German Literature*, 7.

<sup>103</sup> Handke, *Über Musik*, 9.

<sup>104</sup> Handke, *Über Musik*, 10.

<sup>105</sup> Handke, *Versuch*, 98 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 96).

<sup>106</sup> Handke, *Versuch*, 138 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 117).

<sup>107</sup> Wolfram Schütte, "Errettung der physischen Realität?" *Frankfurter Rundschau*, October 4, 1990, 2.

<sup>108</sup> Handke, *Versuch*, 69 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 81).

<sup>109</sup> Handke, *Versuch*, 70 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 81).

<sup>110</sup> Köhler, "Was von einem bloßen Ding ausgeht."

<sup>111</sup> Handke, *Versuch*, 68 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 80).

<sup>112</sup> Handke, *Versuch*, 69 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 81).

<sup>113</sup> Handke, *Versuch*, 70–71 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 82).

<sup>114</sup> See, e.g., Pompe, *Peter Handke*, 178–82.

<sup>115</sup> Handke, *Versuch*, 68 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 81).

<sup>116</sup> Handke, *Versuch*, 68, 69 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 80, 81). Klaus Modick, "Inbilder: Kleiner Versuch über Peter Handkes 'Versuche,'" *Merkur* 47 (1993): 332–39.

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¹¹⁷ Handke, *Versuch*, 69 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 81). On Handke's use of "filmic writing" at other points in his career, see Pompe, *Peter Handke*, 165–70.

¹¹⁸ Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur*, 79.

¹¹⁹ On "dromocracy," see Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology*, trans. M. Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 1986).

¹²⁰ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xv.

¹²¹ Handke, *Versuch*, 26 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 57).

¹²² Handke, *Versuch*, 25, 27–28 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 57, 58).

¹²³ Handke, *Versuch*, 12 (Handke, *The Jukebox*, 50).

¹²⁴ Görlich, "Peter Handke," 587.

¹²⁵ Hellmuth Karasek, "In unvergleichlicher Fremde." *Der Spiegel*, August 27, 1990, 199–201.

¹²⁶ Quoted in Pompe, *Peter Handke*, 178.

¹²⁷ Volker Hage, "Schreiben in Soria," *Die Zeit*, August 10, 1990, 41.

¹²⁸ Klaus Ziermann, "Gesang auf einen weltfremden Gegenstand," *Neues Deutschland*, February 9 and 10, 1991, 14; Modick, "Inbilder."

¹²⁹ Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, xiv.

¹³⁰ On the new "'68 dissing," see, e.g., Taberner, *German Literature of the 1990s*, 26; and Sabine von Dirke, "Pop Literature in the Berlin Republic," in Taberner, *Contemporary German Fiction*, 108–24, especially 121–22. The displacement of the '68 generation by a younger generation, and the notion of returning, in this context, to pass review over one's younger years, is also specifically thematized in Uwe Timm's novel *Rot* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2001). Timm's text examines the way in which the '68 protagonist is confronted by his own political past when a former associate (and die-hard radical leftist) requests that the protagonist hold the eulogy at his funeral.

¹³¹ See, e.g., Carsten Gansel and Pawel Zimniak, "Zum 'Prinzip Erinnerung' in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur nach 1989: Vorbemerkungen," in *Das 'Prinzip Erinnerung' in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur nach 1989*, ed. Carsten Gansel and Pawel Zimniak (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht uni-press, 2010), 11–15.

¹³² Lothar Bluhm, "Popliteratur und Erinnerung—Kritische Anmerkungen zu einer Entgegensetzung." In Gansel and Zimniak, *"Prinzip Erinnerung,"* 47–58.

¹³³ On Handke's objection to literature's role as "social preceptor," see Modick, "Inbilder," 334.

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## 2: Enter the Double Agent: The German Popular Musician as Novelist

ALTHOUGH THE TERM “POP” fell out of favor with many in the German literary field during the early 1970s, it continued to have a life in the music scene, initially designating a genre conceived of as an “other” to rock. Then, in the wake of socio-musical developments in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which saw the bombastic “progressive rock” of the day challenged by punk and postpunk, the term “pop” was reinvested with meaning. As Ralf Hinz and others have shown, the term was used with new vigor in the postpunk and new wave era, and in Germany reached a high point during the so-called pop summer of 1982.<sup>1</sup> This usage is associated, in particular, with *Sounds*, which was edited at the time by Diedrich Diederichsen, as well as with *Spex*, founded 1980 and later edited for many years by Diederichsen. These magazines were the vanguard of advanced music journalism in West Germany, a milieu that reconceived the ways in which popular music was discursively mediated, and in turn proved to be rather productive as a breeding ground for various individuals who would later emerge or come into their own as literary aspirants.

The purpose of this chapter is to turn the focus to this younger generation of postpunk socialized authors. Rather than examine some of their key thematic and aesthetic concerns—a matter to which I will turn in the next chapter—I will consider their postpunk habitus, and the ways in which certain figures have been able to carve out durable, dual careers between music and literature. We do need to register here that the popular musician-cum-novelist of whom I will speak is not an entirely new phenomenon, or, for that matter, an exclusively German one. Earlier epochs of German literature have had their own isolated “hybrid” figures. For example, Günter Grass was a semi-professional jazz musician in the early 1950s, and even after his career as a novelist took off, he continued to engage intermittently in jazz and literature type activities. In the Anglo-American world, the 1960s saw the emergence of musicians like Bob Dylan, John Lennon, and Leonard Cohen, who either dabbled in literature or whose literary careers pre-dated their music careers—these were the “double agents” to whom Leslie Fiedler had referred in his plea for a new “post-modernist” literature.<sup>2</sup> Beginning in the early 1970s, *Liedermacher* like Franz-Josef Degenhardt wrote novels. The

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singer-songwriter Thommie Bayer also began to do so in the 1980s. Thomas Meinecke, a songwriter with Freiwilige Selbstkontrolle (FSK) and the author of *Tomboy* (1998) and various other novels, wrote his first extended literary text in 1988. However, the situation modulated in the 1990s, when hybrid figures like Meinecke gained a certain prominence. In particular, he and Sven Regener, a songwriter with Element of Crime and the author of the *Herr Lehmann* (translated as *Berlin Blues*) trilogy (2001, 2004, and 2008), have attained a noticeable and sustained degree of fame or critical success as novelists. Again, their hybrid careers ought not to be viewed in isolation from the Anglo-American popular music scene. Other musicians from Meinecke's and Regener's postpunk generation, such as the Australian Nick Cave, have also established co-careers as writers.³ However, Meinecke's and Regener's seemingly durable, hybrid careers are a new phenomenon and tell us about important changes in the contemporary German literary market and about the cultural trajectory of certain types of German popular music. Using Meinecke and Regener as case studies, then, this chapter examines a fruitful and increasing symbiosis of two cultural subfields and markets that, inter alia, calls into question the traditional hierarchization between literature and sophisticated popular music, and perhaps even the strict separation of both. I also establish that there are still limitations set on that symbiotic relationship and they require a certain degree of skill to navigate.

Changes in the Literary Field

If one leaves aside isolated exceptions like Grass, Degenhardt, or Bayer and those musicians who have published memoirs “for the fans,” then the emergence or career consolidation of figures such as Meinecke and Regener since the mid-1990s is noteworthy. In addition to Meinecke and Regener, other contemporary hybrid figures could be mentioned, although not all have had the same degree of success, and the novels of some have been much closer to the traditional genre of musician's autobiography than Meinecke's and Regener's. This list includes Max Goldt, Kathrin Achinger, Françoise Cactus, Judith Hermann, Rocko Schamoni, Heinz Strunk, and even Charlotte Roche, all of whom are or have had careers as musicians.

Several factors, on both the musician-author's and the markets' side, contributed to the emergence of crossover figures like these. From the perspective of the musician-authors, examples from the Anglo-American world suggest that some universal factors may be involved, relating, for example, to the shorter half life of a music career or to the aging process. The popular music market has a greater degree of speed to it; a career can be made as a musician relatively quickly, but the popular music audience tends to be far more fickle than a literary readership. Hence pop musicians might—like elite sportspersons—find themselves at a loss at

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a comparatively young age. Even if a continuing career in music is an option, it might be rather unappealing: “It’s fine to grow old as a writer, but it’s harder for a performer and impossible for an enfant terrible.”<sup>4</sup> Having once tasted fame, a midcareer musician may well aspire to fame in another field, especially one in which it is more durable, and literature may well suggest itself, especially to the songwriter. A literary dalliance can also be a tonic for the midcareer musician: Nick Cave finds it “incredibly liberating” compared with the songwriting, for example.<sup>5</sup> Writing a novel can also be a way of alleviating the routine or boredom that goes hand in hand with the life of a touring musician.<sup>6</sup>

Yet there are also some German factors giving rise to hybrid figures like Meinecke and Regener. Some are specific to a literary market that underwent significant changes in the wake of unification. Various factors contributed to the emergence and popular success of so-called Pop II in the mid- and late 1990s. Many of these factors related to the repercussions of unification, and they were of both a moral and an economic character. First, a series of literary scandals destabilized the position of many established writers on both sides of the former inner-German border. As Stephen Brockmann has shown, older, established writers in the old West Germany, such as Günter Grass, effectively acted as a punitive conscience or superego for the German people.<sup>7</sup> It was this aspect that Klaus Modick had in mind when he referred to Peter Handke’s objection to German literature’s “gesellschaftliche Präzeptorenrolle” (role as social preceptor).<sup>8</sup> In the East, writers had also been important, providing a public sphere for the debate of important issues, which otherwise did not exist within the political system. Provided they were prepared to toe the line, Eastern writers also held a privileged position in the hierarchy of the state. Yet unification and the so-called *Literaturstreite* (disputes about literature) of the early 1990s eroded that influence. The first of these controversies was over Christa Wolf’s *Was bleibt* (*What Remains*), a text critical of the GDR, which Wolf was only comfortable publishing after the fall of the Wall; the second concerned the links between East German writers, including Wolf herself, and the East German secret police.<sup>9</sup> In the wake of these controversies, as well as of the collapse of the GDR itself, the credibility and prestige of the older, politically committed authors was reduced—not just for those from the East but also for those from the old West.<sup>10</sup> This is not to say, however, that older writers stopped intervening in political or social debates. Hubert Winkels observes that many continued to do so, even to a greater extent than previously.<sup>11</sup> Almost necessarily however, unification and its aftermath gave rise to a series of fundamental questions about what German literature was and what it should be.<sup>12</sup> The idea that moralizing authors ought to stand in some ways as the “punitive superego” of the nation was called into question, but so too were aesthetic paradigms of what its critics called “difficult” postmodernism.<sup>13</sup>

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At the same time, a “globalization shock” was taking place and the chill winds of economic rationalism were blowing over the German literary scene.¹⁴ Although the old Federal Republic, and even more so the GDR, had been able to support a literary culture that was comparatively less exposed to the vagaries of literary markets elsewhere in the world, the higher than expected costs of unification and a general economic downturn led to a new economic rationalization, including in relation to the literary market. This brought about an economic rationalization of the German literary field and, indirectly, the emergence of alternative forms of cultural capital that bypassed both the traditional markers of prestige, such as literary prizes and favorable reviews in the bourgeois press, and the traditional mediators of prestige, that is, the literary critics.¹⁵

There were various reasons why younger Germans were not reading as much as they used to—the rise of new media and other competing leisure pursuits, including popular music, being important ones—but the character of German literature was seen by some vocal editors and authors as being part of the problem. As Andreas Neumeister put it in 2003:

Das Literatenghetto war Mitte der Neunziger zu einem Rückzugs- und Schutzgebiet geworden, für das sich außerhalb eines engen Kreises schrullig Literaturbegeisterter kaum mehr einer interessierte. . . .

Es ging um Fragen wie diese: Schreibt ihr für 50-Jährige Feuilleton-Redakteure oder eher für Leute, denen die Ramones mehr bedeuten als sensationelle Klassiker-Neuinszenierungen? Wollt ihr überhaupt mit jemandem kommunizieren?

[By the mid-1990s, the literary ghetto had become a type of retreat or protected area. Scarcely anyone was interested in it, apart from a small circle of eccentric literature enthusiasts. . . .

Some of the pertinent questions were: are you writing for fifty-year-old feature-page editors or for people to whom the Ramones mean more than sensational new stagings of the classics? Do you want to communicate with anyone at all?]¹⁶

To the extent that they did read, many younger Germans appeared to be drawn to Anglo-American literature in translation, and obtaining translation rights was expensive for the German publishing houses, a factor that in turn actually led to something of a bull market for emerging German authors in the latter part of the 1990s, especially ones who might be able to replicate the appeal of the Anglo-Americans.¹⁷

In this context, various voices—some closely involved with the literary industry and its commercial interests—called for a rejuvenation of German literature. Uwe Wittstock and Martin Hielscher, then commissioning editors with Fischer and Kiepenheuer und Witsch, respectively,

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urged for a “neue Lesbarkeit” (new readability) and a return to narrative.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, there were two generations of emerging writers “die selbstverständlich mit Popmusik sozialisiert wurde[n]” (who were socialized with popular music as a matter of course)—a socialization that could not be guaranteed for their elders.<sup>19</sup> Recall, for example, that Rolf Dieter Brinkmann actually came to Beat and rock relatively late, and that some of his contemporaries, be they conservatives or leftists, were thoroughly indisposed to popular music. Brinkmann himself would also subsequently discontinue his interest in rock. This ’68 generation of young German music enthusiasts had had to contend in some cases with significant opposition from their elders. By contrast, Andreas Neumeister observed of his own younger generation that the worst a young person might fear was a family indifferent to music.<sup>20</sup> The “as a matter of course” socialization with popular music came to light among some of the new calls for rejuvenation; as we saw in the introduction, Matthias Politycki (born 1955) stated in 1995 that “literature needed to be like rock music,” for example. For his part, Hielscher also urged that the new German writing he had in mind ought to productively engage with various other media, and, significantly, popular music was at the top of his list.<sup>21</sup> This ought not surprise: given the importance of popular music in the new “experience society” (Gerhard Schulze), engaging with it was presumably seen by publishing houses as a surefire way of attracting readers. It was in this context that Meinecke’s literary career broke through and that Regener emerged as a writer. Given the calls of people like Hielscher and Politycki for literature to engage with popular music, it is not surprising that the publishing prospects of musicians with literary ambitions improved in the mid-1990s. And improve they did. As Helmut Böttiger observed, it was a considerable milestone that a musician like Meinecke had made it into the august Suhrkamp imprint.<sup>22</sup>

### Crossing Over

Before considering Meinecke’s and Regener’s motivations to seriously pursue a literary career, it is necessary to take into account their musical socialization, particularly around the key years of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Both Meinecke (born 1955) and Regener (born 1961) came of age when the results of the 1976–77 punk rebellion were making themselves felt in West Germany’s music scene. Even if Meinecke has said he was marginally too old to have participated in the punk movement, he was young enough to see its significance and he shared some of its attitude, including the opposition to the dominant “late hippie” culture of the Federal Republic.<sup>23</sup> Regener has distanced himself from the punk subculture.<sup>24</sup> Notwithstanding this estrangement, his musical roots are within the postpunk moment.<sup>25</sup>

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As Jürgen Teipel, Cyrus Shahan, and Markus Tillmann have shown, the West German punk and postpunk movements were very productive, especially in the epicentres of Düsseldorf, Hamburg, and Berlin.²⁶ In a relatively short time, a new energy and approach was imparted into and beyond the popular music scene. Encouraged by British punk ideology, many young Germans adopted not only the desire to “épater les bourgeoisies” but also a faith in the ability to form a band, while possessing only the most rudimentary of musical skills: in fact “dilletantism”—deliberately misspelled—was, quite literally, worn on one’s sleeve.²⁷ If some earlier musically inclined Germans had been tempted to write literature—including, say, Günter Grass—this was generally far less attractive to the postpunk generation; literature was “alles andere als hip” (anything but hip), as Peter Glaser notes.²⁸ In other words, many artistic young people of the punk and postpunk generations were disinclined to have literary aspirations. A career in music was much more appealing, and seemingly far more available, especially after the “*Neue Deutsche Welle*” (NDW; New German Wave) gained prominence and the backing of the mainstream music industry in the early 1980s.²⁹

For those whose skills or aspirations did not extend to being a musician, but who were still passionate about the new music, an appealing journalistic alternative beckoned: under the stewardship of the editor Diedrich Diederichsen, *Sounds* magazine and, a little while later, the Cologne-based *Spex* became venues for a high-quality, advanced music journalism. This new “pop” journalism existed in quite a different milieu from that of the mainstream newspaper feature pages, which for *Spexler* and their readership remained the province of the so-called boring old farts.³⁰ *Spex* developed a theory-laden house style that aligned the hedonism of popular music with a Marxist-based criticism of capitalist society. According to this view, some “pop” could seem to be affirmative, and could be distributed within the mainstream industry, yet it was very much open to subversive readings. In distinction to, say, Brinkmann, Diederichsen saw some pop music as being art in its own right, not just an everyday thing to be “incorporated” into literature.³¹ Following from the subcultural studies associated with Birmingham’s CCCS, Diederichsen and other German “pop Leftists . . . worked to locate and analyse residues of resistance within contemporary forms of popular culture.”³² Diederichsen combined a solid authority on musical developments, a strong interest in critical theory, and a highly subjective, occasionally self-ironic tone. He also represented a new type of journalist—one who wrote in the knowledge of being a “Schreiber-Star” (star writer).³³ He thereby made a name for himself as the “pop intellectual,” and even the “pope of pop.”³⁴ The *Spex* milieu sustained pop’s subcultural value throughout the 1980s. As we have seen, it was also to prove a breeding ground for a range of music journalists who would later make debuts as novelists.

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This list includes Diederichsen himself and Wolfgang Welt in the 1980s, and, later on, Dietmar Dath and Kerstin Grether. *Spex*-schooled “popists” would also later take up roles in the feature pages of the bourgeois press. The seeds were thereby sown for the subsequent legitimization of some German popular music.

Like Peter Glaser, Meinecke (figure 2.1) was something of an exception to the rule about the preeminent appeal of music over literature as a “career” in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Although his establishment as a novelist came much later with the publication, in 1998, of *Tomboy*, he was already active as a writer in the late 1970s, albeit underground. Together with several colleagues, including those with whom he would soon form FSK, he wrote very short stories for the Munich-based underground magazine *Mode und Verzweiflung* (Fashion and Disenchantment). However, this embryonic literary career was put into the shadows by his blossoming “indie” music career. By the mid-1980s, Meinecke’s career with FSK had taken precedence over his career as a writer, even if the latter activity was never fully extinguished. At this stage, FSK was recording approximately one album per year, had begun touring the United Kingdom, recording sessions for John Peel’s BBC radio show and releasing albums there. By 1990, it would also have visited the United States and commenced its collaboration with David Lowery, which led to American distribution and a certain degree of “indie” fame. Meanwhile, after *Mode und Verzweiflung* folded in the mid-1980s, Meinecke contributed a few new short stories to the weekly *Die Zeit*. A literary scholarship granted by the city of West Berlin in 1986 yielded the slim novella *Holz* (Wood, 1988). Quantitatively, his literary output was relatively slight in comparison with FSK’s activities. That a breakthrough would come earlier in an “indie” music career than in a literary career ought not surprise. As the Australian postpunk-era musician Robert Forster has identified in relation to himself, “recognition, creative adventure, the instant smell that we were going places” came at twenty, whereas it was clear one would have to wait longer as a writer or filmmaker.<sup>35</sup>

Notwithstanding Meinecke’s early musical successes, the foundations of his current career diversification were laid in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Several factors coincided during this period. One was a political one. Meinecke had become disillusioned with the “pop” strategy of “subversive affirmation,” which had characterized his early career, and which was illustrated and plumbed in some of the early *Mode und Verzweiflung* pieces, as well as in some FSK lyrics. As Thomas Harms has written of the later 1980s: “Das waren diese Mode-Waver, die anfangen, die neue Zeit positiv zu definieren. Anfangs ist das alles angeblich noch total ironisch, wird dann aber immer weniger ironisch. . . . Das war der Beginn der saturierten Yuppie-Phase der 80er Jahre.” (It was the fashionable [new] wavers who began to define the new era in a positive light. To begin with

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Fig. 2.1. Thomas Meinecke and his music and life partner Michaela Melian at the club. Copyright Volker Derlath. Used with permission.

it is allegedly all totally ironic, but then it becomes less and less ironic. . . . That was the beginning of the saturated yuppie phase of the 1980s.)³⁶ Meinecke also discovered cultural studies at this time, which allowed for a deeper politicization in his approach to culture; one that was based on the analysis of a range of popular texts, including his first love, music, but that begged for exploration in the written word. Yet he was increasingly uncertain about the power of the written word in a musical setting. Writing of a so-called Songkrise (song crisis), he noted: “Ich [finde] es momentan verdammt schwierig, Texte zu machen, weil Text in der Sloganhafteigkeit das nicht leisten kann, was intellektuell und politisch geleistet werden müßte. Von daher ist die Verlockung groß, nur noch elektronische, repetitive Musik zu Machen.” (At the moment [I am finding it] damned hard to write lyrics because lyrics are too slogan-like to achieve what needs to be achieved intellectually and politically. From that perspective it is very tempting just to write repetitive electronic music.)³⁷

Meinecke clearly could not leave it at instrumental music, though; it was around this time that he also seems to have concentrated just as much on writing novels as on performing and recording music.

Structural factors relating to the life of a German musician may have contributed to the diversification, even if Meinecke has not extensively reflected on it in interviews. First, there was the ebbing away in popularity in the mid-1980s of the NDW, with which FSK was then associated. As Tobias Levin has observed, “so eine normale Aftershow-Depression

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hatte eingesetzt” (the usual after-show depression had set in).<sup>38</sup> This may have acted as a stimulus driving Meinecke to seek literary publication in established and comparatively well-remunerating venues—certainly this is Michael Bauer’s suspicion.<sup>39</sup> The timing of Meinecke’s more concerted engagement with a literary career is also not atypical for a popular musician. As Robert Forster notes, ten years represents “a vital point in the arc of a recording artist’s life,” at which stage many musicians are at something of a crossroads.<sup>40</sup> In a review of Meinecke’s 1988 novella *Holz*, Thomas Groß infers that turning thirty might have had something to do with the literary move: “Die [Pop-] Strategen von einst . . . heute um die 30, kratzen sich am Kopf und greifen, wenn auch zögernd und wie mit schlechtem Gewissen, aufs Buch zurück” (Having reached thirty . . . , the [pop] strategists of yore are scratching their heads, and returning to the book, albeit tentatively and with a bad conscience).<sup>41</sup> In Meinecke’s case however, we should not associate this step with any generalized move among thirty-somethings away from popular music, now somehow associated with a concluded youth. Although he has observed this tendency in others, and this is also a theme of various pieces of musico-centric literature, Meinecke himself has maintained an interest in current popular music (see chapters 3 and 4). For him, music continues to have an importance beyond any nostalgic use value, and he has continued to record and tour with FSK up to the present day.<sup>42</sup>

Sven Regener’s reasons for diversifying into literature are less clear, partly because he has resisted expounding on biographical matters in interviews. Perhaps it is not coincidental that he too was turning thirty, as was the protagonist of his first novel, Frank Lehmann, when he first began to write.<sup>43</sup> Unlike Meinecke, who embraced cultural studies, Regener strenuously eschews the political in his artistic practice. He considers that the artistic is the realm of emotion and the political is the realm of rationality, and that the two should be rigorously separated.<sup>44</sup> So whereas a reevaluation in political outlook contributed to Meinecke’s new emphasis on literature, we cannot easily make the same argument for Regener. This is not to say that Regener is not a political person, or that the Herr Lehmann novels are without a political message, however diffuse; indeed they suggest that individuals should seek their own equilibrium without the assistance of collective identity, be it subcultural or party-political. Economic factors also seem to have played little part in Regener’s move to literature. Even though Element of Crime formed at a rather difficult time for German bands, during the post-NDW “depression,” and the sales of its first album were low, the band persisted and album sales picked up in the late 1980s and early 1990s, especially after it started recording songs in German rather than English. By 1989, Regener could make a living entirely from his music career.<sup>45</sup> On Regener’s own account, the switch to literature was borne of a whim, as well as by his own ambition,

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albeit one tempered by the desire not to be seen as a “Hans-Dampf-in-allen-Gassen” (jack-of-all-trades).⁴⁶

Transferable Competencies and Subcultural Capital

To leave aside for one moment the important question of the transferability of audience from one medium to the other, Meinecke’s and Regener’s literary careers illustrate how certain competencies that are the stock in trade of the performing musician can be capitalized on in the new literary field, where there has been what Anke S. Biendarra calls a “celebrification” of the author.⁴⁷ Various qualities germane to the life of a German postpunk musician have indeed propelled or otherwise assisted Meinecke’s literary career. First, there is that postpunk habitus, with its combination of chutzpah and stylized dilettantism, which has doubtless encouraged his literary endeavours, which do not strive for “perfection,” particularly in relation to such traditional writerly concepts as a well-crafted narrative or the psychological depiction or development of his protagonists.⁴⁸ Second, there is an ease in relation to the market. By definition, a career as a popular musician—even an “indie” one—necessitates being alive to markets, given that there are few equivalents to literary prizes and stipends in the popular music world.⁴⁹ Successful popular musicians have commensurate market experience, although this does not necessarily mean that they are simply handmaidens of industry. As Hubert Winkels notes, the German popular music world was aware of the possibility of subversion from within a market well before the literary field was.⁵⁰ Meinecke, an erstwhile exponent of “subversive affirmation,” learned this lesson early, and has never been reticent to engage with “low” cultural signifiers, which is not to say that his music or literature has achieved mass popularity.⁵¹ Regener’s career as musician likewise conditioned him to accept the state of the newly commercialized literary market, perhaps even more so than Meinecke. In his musical career, Regener has been quite happy to work with a major label as a distributor, and he is quite clear-eyed about commercial realities.⁵² Whereas Meinecke’s more challenging literary style remains compatible with the vestiges of German extra-commercial literary culture—indeed his novels have been widely praised by broadsheet critics, and he has also received several literary awards—Regener’s highly “readable” novels reflect his eschewal of the notion of “l’art pour l’art.”⁵³ For Regener, as musician and as writer, entertainment is a value in itself, and he has even gone as far as suggesting that the state has no role to play in the sponsoring of art.⁵⁴ This is not to say that his literature is “trivial”; various critics have noted its elevated entertainment value or suggested that he has succeeded in breaking down the *E/U* divide.⁵⁵ The sometimes performer of Brecht/Weill tunes clearly has a similar degree of comfort with the popular as his forebears, a quality that his publisher must welcome.⁵⁶

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In the market-based context, seasoned popular musicians also have a honed sense for the value of self-publicity and corresponding experience with formats like the interview. Marion Leonard has shown that the press interview is a key type of “performance site” for the popular musician, and that many popular musicians have a correspondingly “high media literacy.”<sup>57</sup> In the German literary field, the author interview has become an important new genre since the mid-1990s, and it has increasingly come to supplement older styles of literary criticism.<sup>58</sup> Clearly “high media literacy” is transferable, which is not to say that the music interview genre is identical to that of the author interview—a different degree of familiarity is used in music interviews, for example. However, the basic genre is the same. The affable Meinecke clearly knows the value of an interview, and gives them frequently, even if this practice is ultimately at odds with his espousal of a postsovereign author function.<sup>59</sup> Regener presents a different, more enigmatic type of figure in interview, but one no less polished by experience. Though he claims that he does not wish to be a public figure, interviewers and reviewers have noted that he is a “Rampensau” (creature of the spotlight) who knows well how to handle an interview and to project a certain image.<sup>60</sup>

Similarly, Meinecke’s and Regener’s backgrounds as musicians and their understanding of how to entertain a live audience have aided their literary “performances” too. Meinecke’s public readings have occurred just as frequently in clubs and discos as in schools and libraries, and have often been accompanied by a deejay set.<sup>61</sup> In this respect, he has taken a leaf from the page of Handke and Brinkmann, who both gave readings in conjunction with Beat and rock in the late 1960s.<sup>62</sup> Yet Meinecke’s activities were also consistent with a more widespread trend in the late 1990s, as authors like Stuckrad-Barre, Brussig, and Wladimir Kaminer combined readings with deejay sets. Regener also knows how to put on a show, even if he does not, to my knowledge, deejay afterward; he knows his audience and how to play to it with his laconic, self-deprecating humor. As a result, his public readings can take on something of “die Atmosphäre eines Rockkonzertes” (the atmosphere of a rock concert).<sup>63</sup>

Finally, one of the most beneficial qualities that Meinecke especially has been able to transfer from his music career into his literary career is something of popular music’s actuality. Meinecke, the dedicated follower of new music, has been able to harness this actuality very effectively in his novels: “Ich habe mir meine Themen noch nie von weit hergeholt oder ausgedacht. Sie werden mir quasi gestellt durch den Diskurs, den andere führen, den ich dann mitführen möchte oder in dessen ästhetischen Koordinaten ich mich bewege. Und zuerst kommt die Musik. Ich finde immer noch, dass Musik am allerschnellsten jeweils am Ort des Geschehens ist.” (I have never resorted to far-fetched themes, or had to dream anything up. In a sense the [themes] are put to me by the

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discourse that others conduct, and in which I also wish to participate, or in whose aesthetic coordinates I move. And music is first and foremost among those [discourses]. I still consider that music is the fastest to arrive at where it's happening.)⁶⁴ Whether other aspects of the popular music scene—including the corollary of it being a “faster” medium, namely, an individual's shorter lifespan in the limelight—have also been transferred into the new literary field is another matter and remains to be seen. For his part, Meinecke is hopeful: “als Autor hat man doch ein treueres Publikum, während die Leute im Pop wenig Geduld mitbringen” (whereas pop people have little patience, one does have a more loyal audience as an author).⁶⁵

A Symbiosis with Limitations

It is without doubt that both Meinecke's and Regener's co-careers have had a symbiotically beneficial relationship, with the one cross-publicizing the other. Meinecke's background as a musician and broadcaster clearly brought a preexisting audience to his literary oeuvre, albeit a relatively specialized one, given FSK's circumscribed “cult” status.⁶⁶ Although it is somewhat synthetic to divide Meinecke's literary audience into “readers” and “listeners”—the metropolitan, “hedonist” sector of the literary market does not restrict itself to reading—it remains an instructive exercise, since Meinecke's reviewers have noted a division in the past. Given FSK's reputation as “eine Band für die deutsche Intelligenz” (a band for the German intelligentsia), it was not too great a step for many of the band's fans to follow the group's lyricist into the literary format.⁶⁷ This is especially so given the ways in which the “musicality” of many of his books—particularly the latter ones—has been signposted, both by means of titles like *Musik* (2004) and other paratexts, including cover illustrations, and also in author interviews, where Meinecke has pointed out the parallels between his literary technique and that of deejaying or sampling (see chapter 3). In general, Meinecke's novels are directed at an ideal reader who has a thoroughgoing and omnivorous interest in music, rather than the bookworm: “Mit Leuten, die dauernd lesen, aber keine Platten kennen, komme ich einfach nicht auf ein Koordinatensystem. Ich finde Musik einfach besser als Literatur.” (I just don't find myself on the same wavelength as people who are always reading, but who don't know any records. I simply find music better than literature.)⁶⁸ Unsurprisingly, music enthusiasts are also precisely the sort of readers whom Meinecke's novels tend to attract, a sector of the book-buying public that the critic Klaus Nüchtern also separates from the mainstream *Popliteratur* segment.⁶⁹ Meinecke's most thematically musico-centric novels can even ward off those whose interest in music is less than thoroughgoing. As a reviewer of *Hellblau* (*Pale Blue*, 2001) put it: “Der Strom von Künstlernamen, Plattentiteln

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und Labels hat ein rapides Tempo, und wenn man nicht selbst ein absoluter Fachmann ist auf diesen Gebieten, könnte der Text schnell hermetisch werden" (The stream of musicians' names, records, and labels is rapid, and the text could quickly become hermetic if one is not an absolute specialist in the field).<sup>70</sup>

In Regener's case, music has not featured, thematically or formally, to the same degree as it has done with Meinecke, and he has also stressed a disconnect between his novels and his music (see below). His books have also been far more popular than his music in terms of sales, such that there is a large numerical discrepancy between his readership and Element of Crime's audience.<sup>71</sup> For all of these reasons, the contribution that his listenership may have made to his readership—one which, as in Meinecke's case, certainly can be made out—is perhaps an academic one, although this is a point that can only be made in retrospect.<sup>72</sup> Before *Herr Lehmann's* release and its runaway success his publisher would have ogled the band's fan base.

The symbiosis has worked in the other direction too. FSK has gained in profile since Meinecke's career diversification in the late 1990s. In terms of popular success, the band's concert audiences expanded to include those whose interest is based on their familiarity with his novels.<sup>73</sup> This is a function of the fact that music, while very important, has never been Meinecke's sole literary province. If anything, the broad success of his breakthrough novel *Tomboy* (1998) related to its engagement with gender theory rather than with music, which, thematically, actually plays a relatively minor role in the novel. Yet it is only natural that those of Meinecke's readers who discovered his books first would become interested in his music too, given the thematic crossovers between his novels and his records.<sup>74</sup> In Regener's case, the success of the Lehmann books has likewise been a boon to Element of Crime.<sup>75</sup> This is evident in both album sales and concert attendances. The post-Lehmann album *Mittelpunkt der Welt* (2005) sold more than one hundred thousand copies, for example, indicating a significant increase on the sixty thousand sales of pre-Lehmann albums.<sup>76</sup> A pre-Lehmann concert in Freiburg attracted some four hundred attendees; a post-Lehmann concert in the same city attracted double that number.<sup>77</sup> Even accounting for the natural fluctuations in popularity from album to album, a noticeable Lehmann effect gives the lie to Regener's claim that his bandmates are completely uninterested in his literary success.<sup>78</sup>

In terms of critical success beyond the advanced music journalism underground, FSK's music has now been lifted into the feature pages of the mainstream newspapers, a matter about which Meinecke has mixed feelings.<sup>79</sup> In the late 1990s, he relished the fact that his musical efforts were not the subject of feature-page articles. As he pointed out, popular music was best able to do its partisan work without having to pass

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through the feature pages.⁸⁰ The fact that FSK's music is now the subject of feature-page articles indicates first a change in the personnel of the newspapers and the rise of figures like the literary critic Hubert Winkels, who is a similar age as Meinecke and shares a similar postpunk music socialization.⁸¹ Many feature-page writers were, by the late 1990s, thirty-something "popists" rather than the dyed-in-the-wool literary critics of the 1980s, who were disinclined to accept texts from the likes of Meinecke.⁸² Broadsheet coverage of FSK also reflects a relaxation of older hierarchies between literature and certain types of sophisticated popular music. Conversely, it undoubtedly also reflects a "legitimation" of FSK, in part by virtue of the fact that Meinecke is a Suhrkamp writer.⁸³ It is not without significance that Meinecke's lyrics for FSK have now been published in the same Suhrkamp edition as his novels. Regener's *Element of Crime* activity has likewise been the subject of bourgeois legitimation resulting from his literary success. Like Meinecke, his music is now covered in the feature pages.⁸⁴ The poetic quality of his lyrics has been praised in the journal *Merkur* and an anthology of lyrics to rival Meinecke's is surely just around the corner.⁸⁵ Regener is clearly not as uncomfortable about his music being the subject of the feature pages as is Meinecke—perhaps because he does not espouse any "partisan" political intentions for his music—although he is peeved by one corollary of the greater bourgeois acceptance of *Element of Crime*: namely, that his lyrics have become subject to classroom analysis.⁸⁶ To borrow Glaser's terms, "anything but hip!"

Although this account has largely been one of the compatibility of the two careers, the transferability of accumulated subcultural capital and audience, and the successful capitalization of competencies developed in the "other" career, I do not wish to suggest that the symbiosis is perfect or that there has been a conflation of the norms applicable in what remain two different cultural fields.⁸⁷ Certainly, a partial conflation of Meinecke's "listening" and "reading" audience and of his thematic interests may be discerned in his midcareer, around the books *Hellblau* (2001) and *Musik* (2004). Nowadays both legs of Meinecke's career are analyzed in the feature pages. FSK lyrics are published in book format by Suhrkamp, although we have yet to see Suhrkamp distributing FSK records. Furthermore, his novels are now often read as a continuation by other means of FSK's musical themes, and vice versa. As reviewers from the mid-2000s pointed out, those listeners whose interest was piqued by FSK's record *First Take Then Shake* (2004) could now await the publication of Meinecke's literary continuation of the "Afro-German experiment."⁸⁸ In this way, the notion of the novel as an unorthodox, extended liner note to the FSK album, and the FSK album as an oblique "illustration" of the novel, which Meinecke had pioneered with *The Church of John F. Kennedy* and FSK's accompanying albums *Original Gasman*

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*Band* (1989) and *Son of Kraut* (1990), has been consolidated. However, distinctions remain between the two fields, and even while a preexisting music career has brought many benefits, it has also involved challenges, some of which have had to be actively managed.

The challenges have been on both the musical and the literary sides. As we have seen, establishment as a writer can have a collateral effect on what I call a musician's "hip coefficient" and on his or her ability to do underground, partisan work beyond the scope of the feature pages. Attempts to counter this effect by utterances in interviews—such as Meinecke's curious attempt to liken Suhrkamp to an "indie" record label—are probably of little effect.<sup>89</sup> Still, this seems to be a price both Meinecke and Regener have been prepared to pay, unsurprisingly, given the various other benefits of a literary career discussed above. A younger musician, at an earlier point in his or her career and more dependent on the hip coefficient, may be less ready to do so. On the literary side, the challenges are more complicated. Notwithstanding the inroads made by *Popliteratur* in the last decades, or the transferable subcultural capital and competencies that a popular musician may bring, there is still something of a residual prejudice in the literary field against the popular musician-cum-writer, or at least there is perceived to be one. Of the two musician-authors considered here, Regener is the one who has grappled most with the issue. As he notes, it is not unknown for rock stars to get "Omnipotenzphantasien" (delusions of omnipotence) that make them think they can easily tackle a film or a book.<sup>90</sup> That these books—usually some form of autobiography—are not always successful in literary terms goes without saying.<sup>91</sup> This reputation may well contribute to the reasons why literary critics do not always take the musician-cum-author too seriously.<sup>92</sup>

It is therefore not without significance that both Meinecke and Regener—neither of them "rock stars" per se—avoided thematically foregrounding music in their first novels. This is so even with Meinecke, whose literary oeuvre is generally closer to music; only a fan of FSK would have noticed that there were thematic resonances between FSK songs and some of the content of *The Church of John F. Kennedy*. As Regener notes, it is no coincidence that he did not make Frank Lehmann a music fan: "So konnte keine Verbindung zu meiner Tätigkeit bei Element of Crime gezogen werden, und ich kam nicht in die Verlegenheit, groß über Musik zu schreiben" (By doing so, no one could make a connection with my activities in Element of Crime, and I would not be tempted to write anything great about music).<sup>93</sup> He takes the view that had he taken this route, or written a musician's autobiography, he would simply have offered critics an "Angriffsfläche" (target).<sup>94</sup> On this interpretation—which Regener overstates in my view—the second career is actually a liability rather than a boon. This attitude also explains Regener's never entirely successful efforts in interviews to resist those who would draw comparisons between

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his music and his novels. He has pointed out, for example, that he wrote *Herr Lehmann* in periods sequestered from his activities with Element of Crime, and that the writing of lyrics and of novels are two completely different activities.⁹⁵ This chapter is not the place to analyze the overt pop-musicalization of Regener's novels; however, it is worthwhile registering what some literary critics have claimed. Their comments tend to belie the putative disconnect between the novels and the song lyrics. For example, Peter Henning considers that the novels and songs share a common "Lust am Erzählen" (joy in narration) as well as attention to detail and love of language.⁹⁶ Thomas Groß identifies a shared focus on the "loser." For Michael Pilz the commonality is "barocke Lakonie" (baroque laconicism), whereas for Dirk Knipphals it is a "Scheißegal-Haltung" (don't-give-a-damn attitude).⁹⁷ Some of Regener's own utterances even indicate that we might read his literature in musical terms. He speaks, for example, of having found a "Lehmann sound" or of *Der kleine Bruder* being like "eine dunkle Ballade" (a dark ballad).⁹⁸ Elsewhere, he admits that the expression "dachte er" (so he thought), which is repeatedly used in *Herr Lehmann*, determines both the melody and the rhythm of the story.⁹⁹ Regener also confesses to the musicality of the Lehmann trilogy, given that it is based on spoken language.¹⁰⁰ Even the decision to write *Herr Lehmann* was based on the idea that there was "Musik drin" (music in it).¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, his rhetorical tactic of maintaining a strict distinction between the two careers seems to have paid off—according to the critic Edo Reents, it is the lack of thematic musico-centricity that gives a novel like Regener's *Der kleine Bruder* its poise.¹⁰² With the Lehmann trilogy completed in 2008, Regener's next literary step brought him back to music. *Meine Jahre mit Hamburg-Heiner* (My Years with Hamburg-Heiner, 2011) is a "logbook" that collates various blogs Regener conducted while he was recording and touring with Element of Crime, and in one case, when he was attending the Frankfurt book fair.¹⁰³ His 2013 novel *Magical Mystery Tour* is also squarely musico-centric in thematic terms.¹⁰⁴ It records the adventures of Frank Lehmann's old friend Karl, who falls in with a group of techno entrepreneurs and deejays and accompanies them on a tour of Germany, overcoming his mental instability in the process. In choosing to portray the techno scene on tour, Regener is able to capitalize on his many years of experience while touring with Element of Crime and to point toward the redemptive qualities that music can have, but still to maintain a divide between the novel and his own "indie" musical oeuvre. A gulf divides Element of Crime from electronic dance music, or what the novel calls "bumm-bumm" music. Like Meinecke before him, then, Regener has been able to relax a little and find a way of thematically referencing his first love, music.

If Regener did not wish to be seen as a "jack-of-all-trades," then Meinecke seems more comfortable about his situation. Being a

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“Doppelagent” (double agent) or “Grenzgänger” (border crosser) can be synonymous with a literary dilettantism that would not be accepted from a pure writer.<sup>105</sup> But, as Meinecke is well aware, being a double agent has a positive, liberating side: it means that he does not need the approbation of literary critics. “Einer wie Meinecke macht einfach sein Ding” (someone like Meinecke just does his thing), as a *Süddeutsche Zeitung* critic has noted.<sup>106</sup> His other career as a musician and radio deejay means that “es wäre nicht der Untergang der Welt, wenn es [sein Buch] keiner lesen oder verlegen würde” (it would not be the end of the world if no one were to publish or read [his novel]).<sup>107</sup> Although he has received literary prizes, he is less dependent on this older form of cultural capital. His preexisting reputation as a musician has created an alternative form of cultural capital that will attract readers. Regener, otherwise highly wary of being seen as a “jack-of-all-trades,” also retains this dilettante’s prerogative.<sup>108</sup>

### A Pathway to Follow?

Among other things, Pop II involved an entanglement of the spheres of literature and popular music, and was accompanied by a commercialization and a mediatization of literature that has continued into the present day. Figures like Meinecke and Regener have been able to benefit from this state of affairs, bringing to their literary careers certain competencies gained in the world of popular music, not to mention a fan base that was prepared to buy their books. To a large extent the subcultural capital they had accumulated in the one field was transferable to the other. Not that making the crossover was unproblematic. The entanglement of the spheres has not been such that a complete conflation of the two separate fields has occurred. Regener, especially, negotiated a residual prejudice against musicians who write. Yet it has clearly been worth it. In establishing careers as writers, and enjoying the fruits that have come from that, both he and Meinecke have also been able to gain spin-offs for their “other” careers, even if there has also been some collateral damage to those careers. In their way, both Meinecke and Regener therefore stand as personifications of the intermedialization of German literature in recent times.

Meinecke’s music and literature may be idiosyncratic—one critic has aptly summed up his habitus as “nur nie da sein, wo alle sind” (never wanting to be where all the others are)—however, the number of other musicians who follow an analogous career path, beginning with Regener, Schamoni, and Strunk, seems only likely to increase in the future.<sup>109</sup> This seems especially likely in relation to the younger protagonists of sophisticated musics like “Diskursrock” (discourse rock) of the 1990s and 2000s (see chapter 4). This is for the simple reason that popular musicians are not “weltfremde Dachkammerpoet[en]” (unworldly attic poet[s]); they

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can bring a fan base and celebrity experience with them, as well as a touch for the performative, to which many, particularly younger people, respond in an increasingly less book-centred leisure world.¹¹⁰ The extent to which these newer entrants will feel the same barriers to writing about music that Regener experienced remains to be seen, but then so too does the durability of a literary career that is too musico-centric. After all, the purpose of this chapter has not been to suggest that it has become any easier to write something “really great about music.”

Notes

¹ Ralf Hinz, “Pop-Theorie und Pop-Kritik: Denk- und Schreibweisen im avancierten Musikjournalismus,” in Arnold and Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 297–310.

² On Fiedler’s calling upon such figures, see, e.g., Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 33.

³ Interestingly, Cave has long been associated with the German postpunk scene too. He lived in Berlin during the early 1980s, and various German musicians have been members of his band, the Bad Seeds.

⁴ Mark Dapin, “Sowing New Seeds,” *The Sydney Morning Herald (Good Weekend)*, August 1, 2009.

⁵ In *ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*; Sarah L’Estrange, prod., “Interview between Iain Shedden and Nick Cave,” Radio National (Australia), August 3, 2009.

⁷ Stephen Brockmann, *Literature and German Reunification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁸ Modick, “Inbilder,” 334.

⁹ Thomas Anz, ed., “*Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf*”: *Der Literaturstreit im vereinigten Deutschland*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1995).

¹⁰ Andrea Köhler and Rainer Moritz, eds., *Maulhelden und Königskinder: Zur Debatte über die deutschsprachige Gegenwartsliteratur* (Leipzig: Reclam Verlag, 1998); Taberner, *German Literature of the 1990s*, 2.

¹¹ Winkels, *Gute Zeichen*, 44–48.

¹² Alison Lewis, “The Twilight of the Public Intellectual: Germany’s Literary Intellectuals and the End of the Cold War,” *Portal* 1, no. 2 (2004): <http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/portal/article/view/59>; Winkels, *Gute Zeichen*, 34–54.

¹³ Köhler and Moritz, *Maulhelden und Königskinder*; Brockmann, *Literature and German Reunification*. See my further discussion in chapter four.

¹⁴ The term “globalization shock” is Ulrich Beck’s, in Anke Biendarra, *Germans Going Global: Contemporary Literature and Cultural Globalization* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 2.

¹⁵ See Winkels, *Gute Zeichen*; Erhard Schütz, “literatur.com: Tendenzen im Literaturmarketing,” in *literatur.com: Tendenzen im Literaturmarketing*, ed. Erhard

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Schütz and Thomas Wegmann (Berlin: Weidler, 2002), 5–9; Kendel, *Let Me Entertain You!*; Finlay, “Literary Debates,” 31.

<sup>16</sup> Carsten Gansel and Andreas Neumeister, “Pop bleibt subversiv: Ein Gespräch,” in Arnold and Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 186.

<sup>17</sup> Finlay, “Literary Debates.” See also Biendarra, *Germans Going Global*, 21.

<sup>18</sup> Köhler and Moritz, *Maulhelden und Königskinder*; Biendarra, *Germans Going Global*, 67–76.

<sup>19</sup> Helmut Böttiger, “Theorie ist Pop,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, August 29, 1998, ZB 4. Emphasis added.

<sup>20</sup> Andreas Neumeister, “Der Dual Plattenspieler,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, April 18, 2001, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Martin Hielscher, “Nachwort,” in *Wenn der Kater kommt: Neues Erzählen*, ed. Hielscher (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1996), 317–21.

<sup>22</sup> Böttiger, “Theorie ist Pop.”

<sup>23</sup> Frank Witzel, Klaus Walter, and Thomas Meinecke, *Plattenspieler* (Hamburg: Nautilus Verlag, 2005).

<sup>24</sup> Helmut Ziegler, “Punk ist wie das Militär,” *Frankfurter Rundschau* (Magazin), September 1, 2008, 32.

<sup>25</sup> Martin Büßer et al., “Auswahldiskografie zur deutschen Popgeschichte,” *Test-card 2* (1996): 211.

<sup>26</sup> Jürgen Teipel, *Verschwende Deine Jugend* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001); Cyrus Shahan, “The Sounds of Terror: Punk, Post-Punk, and the RAF after 1977,” *Popular Music and Society* 34, no. 3 (2011): 369–86; Cyrus Shahan, *Punk Rock and German Crisis: Adaptation and Resistance after 1977* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013); Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur*, 115–67.

<sup>27</sup> Blixa Bargeld, the leading member of (West) Berlin’s Einstürzende Neubauten, was fond of wearing a “Geniale Dilletanten” (brilliant dillettants) badge; the concept was later picked up by some of his peers.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Teipel, *Verschwende Deine Jugend*, 262.

<sup>29</sup> On the NDW, see Barbara Hornberger, *Geschichte wird gemacht: Die Neue Deutsche Welle: Eine Epoche deutscher Popmusik* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2010).

<sup>30</sup> On *Sounds*, *Spex*, and German advanced music journalism, see Hinz, “Pop-Theorie und Pop-Kritik”; Seiler, “Einfache wahre Abschreiben der Welt,” 89–102.

<sup>31</sup> Seiler, “Einfache wahre Abschreiben der Welt,” 15, 235.

<sup>32</sup> Ernst, “German Pop Literature,” 173. Johannes Windrich notes that the German advanced music journalism discourse had a slightly different accent from the classic British subcultural studies of the late 1970s. Diederichsen placed the subcultural “hipsters” in less of an antagonistic and more of a symbiotic relationship with the “normal” young people. To a certain extent, the hipsters benefited from the adulation attributed to them by the normal young people, who followed their lead. In general, however, the thrust was the same as

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with CCCS: In the era after big ideologies, (life)style had become an important field, and the subcultural hipster/innovator conveyed a sense of a better future and the necessity of progress. Johannes Windrich, *Technotheater: Dramaturgie und Philosophie bei Rainald Goetz und Thomas Bernhard* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2007), 103–10. See also Diederichsen, “Pop: Deskriptiv, normativ, emphatisch,” in *Literaturmagazin 37: Pop Technik Poesie: Die nächste Generation*, ed. Marcel Hartges, Martin Lüdke, and Delf Schmidt (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1996), 36–44.

<sup>33</sup> Klaus Walter, quoted in Witzel, Walter, and Meinecke, *Plattenspieler*, 90.

<sup>34</sup> Ernst, “German Pop Literature,” 174. See also Hinz, “Pop-Theorie und Pop-Kritik,” 302–3; and Seiler, “Einfache wahre Abschreiben der Welt,” 89–102.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Forster, *The 10 Rules of Rock and Roll: Collected Music Writings, 2005–2009* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2009), 220. Forster too is knowledgeable about the German scene: he has lived in Germany and is married to a German.

<sup>36</sup> In Christoph Twickel, ed., *Läden, Schuppen, Kaschemmen: Eine Hamburger Popkulturgeschichte* (Hamburg: Edition Nautilus, 2003), 75.

<sup>37</sup> In Martin Büsser, “Ich finde Musik eigentlich besser als Literatur: Ein Gespräch mit Thomas Meinecke,” *Testcard 6* (1998): 133.

<sup>38</sup> In Twickel, *Läden, Schuppen, Kaschemmen*, 129.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Bauer, “Modisch verzweifelt,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, February 28, 1989, 34.

<sup>40</sup> Forster, *10 Rules of Rock and Roll*, 95.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas Groß, “Zwischen Elfenbeinturm und Kellergeschoss,” *Basler Zeitung*, January 8, 1988, 43.

<sup>42</sup> Sebastian Fasthuber, “Diskurs-Disco-Türsteher,” *Falter*, September 3–9, 2004, 53; Witzel, Walter, and Meinecke, *Plattenspieler*.

<sup>43</sup> The first chapter of *Herr Lehmann* (2001) dates back to the early 1990s, when it was written for a friend (also turning thirty). It was then published as a short story in 1997, after which Regener signed a contract with his publishing house and set about writing the novel.

<sup>44</sup> Dirk Knipphals, “Politik hat in der Popmusik nichts zu suchen,” *Die Tageszeitung*, October 6, 2005, 12.

<sup>45</sup> Matthias Hannemann, “Wieso kann man Romane nicht singen, Herr Regener?,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 23, 2008, Z6; Jennifer Wilton and Peter Beddies, “Herr Lehmann ist ein guter Freund von mir,” *Die Welt*, August 23, 2008, 19.

<sup>46</sup> Sebastian Fasthuber, “Für Romantik und Vernunft,” *Falter*, November 23–29, 2001, 69.

<sup>47</sup> Biendarra, *Germans Going Global*, 14.

<sup>48</sup> Significantly, this would-be literary “dilettantism” was also an aspect that Brinkmann had called for during “Pop I” (Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 80). Brinkmann has been an enabling figure for Meinecke. See, e.g., Thomas Meinecke, “From A to B and Back Again,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, November 25, 1998, 3; Thomas Meinecke, “Er hat mich einen Mörder genannt,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine*

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Sonntagszeitung, February 26, 2006, 27; Thomas Meinecke, *Lookalikes* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011); and Schäfer, “Mit dem Vorhandenen,” 69–80. For an exploration of Meinecke’s literary aesthetic, see chapter 3.

⁴⁹ The market setting is central to Simon Frith’s definition of popular music: “Music made commercially in a particular kind of legal (copyright) and economic (market) system; music made using an ever-changing technology of sound storage; music significantly experienced as mass-mediated; music primarily made for social and bodily pleasure; music which is formally hybrid.” See Simon Frith’s contributions to International Advisory Editors, ed., “Can We Get Rid of the ‘Popular’ in Popular Music?,” 133–34.

⁵⁰ Winkels, *Gute Zeichen*, 111–56.

⁵¹ Daniel Lenz and Eric Pütz, “Ich bin so ein Pop-Sommer-1982-Typ: Ein Gespräch mit Thomas Meinecke,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, August 23, 1999, 21.

⁵² Knipphals, “Politik hat.”

⁵³ See, e.g., Sebastian Fasthuber, “Der Inhalt ist oft wurscht,” *Falter*, October 26, 2008, 28, 30.

⁵⁴ Tino Hanekamp, “Man kann auch einfach mal die Klappe halten,” *Galore*, December 2004/January 2005, 40–44; Jan Ulrich Welke, “Rauchende Trümmer,” *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, September 8, 2004, 25.

⁵⁵ See, e.g., Sebastian Fasthuber, “Pointen ohne Witze,” *Falter*, October 8–14, 2004, 12; Susanne Ostwald, “Schule der Trunkenheit,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, October 5, 2004, B5; Wolfgang Höbel, “Luxuriöse Wurstigkeit,” *Der Spiegel*, September 28, 2004, 140; Ursula März, “Bremen an sich,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, September 7, 2004, 17; Michael Kohtes, “Die Jugendjahre eines schlauen Schlafis,” *Die Zeit*, September 16, 2004, 59.

⁵⁶ At the end of 2008, his debut novel had sold 1.7 million copies.

⁵⁷ Marion Leonard, *Gender in the Music Industry: Rock, Discourse, and Girl Power* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 105–8.

⁵⁸ Winkels, *Gute Zeichen*, 49–50; 347–65.

⁵⁹ On his notion of the author, see chapter 3. Thanks to Thomas Ernst for pointing this out.

⁶⁰ See, e.g., Nadja Klinger, “Kreuzberger Mächte,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, November 3, 2001, 31; Fasthuber, “Pointen ohne Witze.”

⁶¹ See, e.g., Ralph Hammerthaler, “Schreiben ist wie Plattenauflagen,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, June 26, 1997, 15; Jamal Tuschick, “Mehr Groove im Diskurs,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, December 8, 1998, 24.

⁶² Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 106.

⁶³ Dieter Wolf, “Piaf statt Punk,” *Rheinischer Merkur*, January 4, 2002, 31. See also Klinger, “Kreuzberger Mächte.”

⁶⁴ In Ulrich Rüdenauer, “Essen Sie mit dem Kanzler, Herr Meinecke?,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, November 21, 2001, 26.

⁶⁵ In Büsser, “Ich finde Musik,” 132.

⁶⁶ “Böt,” “Szenewirren,” 9.

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<sup>67</sup> The quote stems from Diederich Diederichsen, who coined it in 1982. See Diederichsen quoted in Tobi Müller, "Der Very German Sound," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, February 22, 2011: <http://www.fr-online.de/musik/30-jahre--f-s-k---der-very-german-sound,1473348,7220250.html>. On the intellectual rewards of FSK's music, see, e.g., Eckhard Schumacher, "Deutsch als Fremdsprache," afterword in Thomas Meinecke, *Lob der Kybernetik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007), 231–42; Shahan, "Sounds of Terror," 378–83.

<sup>68</sup> In Büsser, "Ich finde Musik," 134.

<sup>69</sup> Nüchtern, "DJ Gender studies," 67–68.

<sup>70</sup> Jörg Drews, "Venus ist ein Mann," *Badische Zeitung*, September 15, 2001, iv.

<sup>71</sup> During the 1990s, prior to Regener's literary breakthrough, *Element of Crime*, sales were estimated to be around sixty thousand per album. His readership is in the millions. Hannemann, "Wieso kann man Romane nicht singen"; Wilton and Beddies, "Herr Lehmann ist ein guter Freund von mir."

<sup>72</sup> Klinger, "Kreuzberger Mächte."

<sup>73</sup> "Böt," "Szenewirren."

<sup>74</sup> See also chapter 3.

<sup>75</sup> Stefan Rother, "Herzerwärmend," *Badische Zeitung*, March 28, 2002, 30; Harald Peters, "Früher ist heute," *Berliner Zeitung*, September 30, 2004, 1.

<sup>76</sup> Wilton and Beddies, "Herr Lehmann ist ein guter Freund von mir."

<sup>77</sup> Rother, "Herzerwärmend"; Dirk Peitz, "Hinterm Getränkemarkt, wo die Neurosen blühen," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 28, 2005, 15.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Hannemann, "Wieso kann man Romane nicht singen."

<sup>79</sup> See, e.g., Clemens Niedenthal, "Das, was wir auflegen, ist EU-Musik," *Die Tageszeitung*, April 23, 2004, 13.

<sup>80</sup> Charlotte Brombach and Ulrich Rüdenauer, "Gesamptes Gedankenmaterial," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, March 21, 1998, ZB 3.

<sup>81</sup> On Winkels's background, see Winkels, *Gute Zeichen*, 13–33.

<sup>82</sup> Lenz and Pütz, "Ich bin so ein Pop-Sommer-1982-Typ"; Böttiger, "Theorie ist Pop."

<sup>83</sup> Marko Hild, "Abwechslungsreiche Kontinuität: Ein Interview mit Thomas Meinecke," *Satt.org*, September 2004, [http://www.satt.org/musik/04\\_09-meinecke.html](http://www.satt.org/musik/04_09-meinecke.html).

<sup>84</sup> See, e.g., Thomas Groß, "Abgrund ist ein schönes Wort," *Die Zeit*, November 29, 2001, 54; Jens Balzer, "Weh, Wind, weh," *Berliner Zeitung*, January 14, 2002, 14; Wolfgang Höbel, "Nur die Ruhe, Sportsfreunde," *Der Spiegel*, October 1, 2005, 207; Wilton and Beddies, "Herr Lehmann ist ein guter Freund von mir."

<sup>85</sup> Dirk von Petersdorff, "Der Apfelmann aus Delmenhorst: Gegenwartsdiagnostik in der deutschen Popmusik," *Merkur* 62, no. 2 (2008): 123–31.

<sup>86</sup> Hannemann, "Wieso kann man Romane nicht singen."

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⁸⁷ The term “subcultural capital” is borrowed from Sarah Thornton’s analysis of the electronic dance music culture scene. Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995).

⁸⁸ See, e.g., Peter Abs, “Shakehand im Boogieland,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, March 16, 2004, 5; Thomas Groß, “Erst Bastard-Walzer, jetzt Bastard-Techno,” *Die Zeit*, April 7, 2004, 46. See also chapter 3.

⁸⁹ “Böt,” “Szenewirren.”

⁹⁰ In Matthias Ehlert, “Kreuzberg war Ausland,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 14, 2001, BS4.

⁹¹ Thomas Swiss notes that rock autobiographies usually have commercial objectives and that they are often combined with a questionable “desire to seize narrative authority and bring the writer into a dialogue with history.” The results are only sometimes seen by critics as having “literate” qualities. Swiss, “That’s Me in the Spotlight,” 288.

⁹² See, e.g., Jakob Hein, “Heldensagen,” *Berliner Zeitung*, September 7, 2004, 25; Matthias Wulff, “Neue Geschichten von einem strahlenden Helden,” *Welt am Sonntag*, August 24, 2008, 75.

⁹³ In Peitz, “Hinterm Getränkemarkt.”

⁹⁴ In Markus Schneider, “Ein Held redet sich durch die Welt,” *Die Wochenzeitung*, September 23, 2004, 25, 27.

⁹⁵ See, e.g., Wolf, “Piaf statt Punk”; Sascha Batthyany, “Das bringt doch alles nichts,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, April 2, 2006, 19; Hannemann, “Wieso kann man Romane nicht singen.”

⁹⁶ Peter Henning, Review of *Herr Lehmann*, *Die Weltwoche*, September 6, 2001, 41.

⁹⁷ Gross, “Abgrund ist ein schönes Wort”; Michael Pilz, “Wer ist hier der Einheimischste?,” *Die Welt*, August 30, 2008, 8; Dirk Knipphals, “Transit in ein neues Leben,” *Die Tageszeitung*, August 30 and 31, 2008, 16.

⁹⁸ In Erik Brandt-Hoege, “Mein Sound,” *Neues Deutschland*, September 16, 2008, 10; and Jens Poggenpohl, “Für mich ist er ein Erleuchteter,” *Seite 4* supplement (Autumn 2008): 12, 13.

⁹⁹ In Tomo Pavlovic and Anja Wasserbäch, “Helden wie wir,” *Sonntag Aktuell*, August 31, 2008, 7.

¹⁰⁰ Tanja Kokoska and Stephan Hebel, “Bloss kein Lampenfieber,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, July 8, 2004, 30.

¹⁰¹ In Jan Hauser, “Jetzt machst du mal eine Sache richtig,” *Spiegel online*, July 8, 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/unispiegel/wunderbar/studienabbrecher-sven-regener-jetzt-machst-du-mal-eine-sache-richtig-a-560545.html>.

¹⁰² Edo Reents, “Lenin mit h—Die spinnen doch!,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 13, 2008, Z7.

¹⁰³ Sven Regener, *Meine Jahre mit Hamburg-Heiner* (Berlin: Galiani, 2011).

¹⁰⁴ Sven Regener, *Magical Mystery Tour* (Berlin: Galiani, 2013).

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<sup>105</sup> Susanne Messmer, "Eine elegante Einladung zum Dialog," *Die Tageszeitung*, September 3, 2001, 13–14; Winkels, *Gute Zeichen*, 111–56.

<sup>106</sup> Hammerthaler, "Schreiben ist wie Plattenauflegen."

<sup>107</sup> Lenz and Pütz, "Ich bin so ein Pop-Sommer-1982-Typ" See also Tuschick, "Mehr Groove im Diskurs."

<sup>108</sup> See, e.g., Wolf, "Piaf statt Punk"; Thomas Groß, "Finger weg von meiner Paranoia!," *Die Zeit*, September 29, 2009, 36; Batthyany, "Bringt doch alles nichts"; Wilton and Beddies, "Herr Lehmann ist ein guter Freund von mir."

<sup>109</sup> Wieland Freund, "Nur nie da sein, wo alle sind," *Die Welt*, October 6, 2001, 2.

<sup>110</sup> Cord Beintmann, "Laufmaschen sind sexy," *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, September 22, 1999, 34.

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3: Techno-Lit: Electronica and Its Impacts on Fiction

AS WE SAW IN CHAPTER 2, late in the 1990s Thomas Meinecke observed a “Songkrise” (song crisis), noting that in his view conventional lyrics were inadequate to the necessary political task, and that as a result he was tempted to compose wordless electronic music. His comment was not the throwaway line it might first seem to be. In fact, it betrays some of the importance Germans have invested in electronic music. If we survey the last twenty years of developments in popular music in Germany, then a significant segment of that music has been in the genre variously referred to as electronica, electronic dance music (EDM), and perhaps most lastingly, “techno.” In the era of postmodernity, when the “new” itself was anachronistic, techno “sound[ed] different” and did seem quite new.¹ Not only was the music occasionally imbued with a futuristic aesthetic that was deliberately not of this world, but it was also increasingly created on new, digital technology. In addition, it was associated with a euphoric mode of consumption—the “rave”—that broke with older patterns, and to its celebrators ushered in utopian models of sociality. Moreover, techno had an ambiguous relationship with history and with the “German” at a time when the German nation had just been unified, and the question of a German “normalization” was topical. This multipartite signification—underpinned by techno’s predominant wordlessness, and by the fact that it was “übersät mit Zeichen” (peppered with signifiers)—gave the music considerable appeal to many younger people.² However, techno had its anxious German observers too.

Under these circumstances, it was inevitable that techno would inspire literature, just as Beat and rock music had done in the 1960s. Yet the literarization of EDM has not proceeded in a uniform fashion, and in some respects we can see a repeat of what Marc A. Weiner has observed in relation to jazz and literature in the Weimar era.³ Whereas some authors used techno as “scenery,” that is, as a simple signifier in the same fashion as some of the jazz-tinged novels of the 1920s, the “advanced pop” writers who published with Suhrkamp were more sophisticated. Focusing on Goetz, Meinecke, and Neumeister, I will make several arguments in this chapter. At a broad level, I suggest that musico-centric literature reflects a transition from a “hot” to a “cooler” discourse about EDM, as typified by the distinctions between the novels of Goetz, Neumeister, and

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Meinecke. Second, I demonstrate how Goetz defended EDM against its German opponents and wrestled with finding an appropriate literary form to “realize” the music’s rave context. Third, I explore how Neumeister and Meinecke sought out literary formats that might “realize” some of EDM’s technological and philosophical dimensions. In doing so they problematized dominant notions of history, teleology, and authorship, and otherwise drew on what they saw as the progressive potential inherent in minimalist techno. Finally, I show how EDM offered Meinecke an ideal site at which to explore notions of transnationalism. Before opening these arguments, however, it is necessary to sketch out some of the salient features of EDM that these authors would draw on.

Aesthetics, Technology, and a New Musical Hero

Electronic dance music came to represent an important set of genres in Germany’s popular culture during the 1990s. Two main subgenres of electronic dance music existed in this context—“house” and “techno”—both of which came into being in the United States in the 1980s, but which had important German precursors, including Kraftwerk’s electronic pop and Giorgio Moroder’s Munich disco. House music has been described as a “technologically advanced form of disco.”⁴ It features a regular 4/4 beat and a high level of beats per minute. It often includes vocals. Techno is an arguably more radical form. It is typically instrumental, featuring synthesizers and drum machines, and it appears to evacuate the “human” dimension even further than house. Hence, one British writer has described it as “music made by humans; [but] in its most definitive forms it sounds like it could have been made by machines.”⁵ Repetition is especially critical here. I will return to it, and its problematic relation to time and to history, in the context of my discussion of Andreas Neumeister’s “verbal minimalism.” Musicologically, Philip Tagg has identified that EDM marks an important shift from other types of popular music: it involves “so little tune and so much accompaniment,” which he links with a different attitude to the individual among EDM’s adherents, as signified musically by the less important tune or “figure.”⁶

The new electronic dance musics brought with them a series of innovations, both in musical protagonists and technological advances. Significantly, EDM ushered in the deejay, a new type of musician-hero who was both consistent with and at odds with the “decline of figure” identified by Tagg. On the one hand, the deejay is not typically an author in the traditional sense; he or she does not necessarily play any of his or her own compositions. This is not to say that the work is unskilled. Deejaying involves spontaneously reading and responding to the audience to an extent that, in its most sophisticated form, EDM’s adherents

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discern a new “dialogic” relationship between deejay and audience.<sup>7</sup> By skillfully beat mixing and cross fading—“mixing, cutting, and scratching”—deejays are able to layer different tracks, thereby creating a new sum sound and an additional “vertical” dimension to the music.<sup>8</sup> With these techniques, as well as the all-important acts of reading the crowd and swiftly selecting the appropriate track, they can keep dancers entertained for long periods. For all of these reasons, there was often an adulation of the deejay, contradicting the “decline of figure.” In the mid-1990s German deejays such as Westbam and Sven Väth could be paid up to DM 15,000 per hour for their services.

Another important innovation, without which much EDM and other recent musics would be unthinkable, was a technological one. Whereas the deejay used pitch-controlled turntables and the mixing desk in order to combine separate tracks, a recording artist was now able to use the sampler to record, manipulate, and combine snippets of music or sound. The use and manipulation of taped sounds had long been possible, but the sampler made the whole process much easier.<sup>9</sup> This technology, which became very popular during the late 1980s and 1990s, and especially propelled the hip-hop genre, made a massive archive of recorded sound readily available for musical “recycling.” As with the deejay, one’s knowledge of the recesses of music history and one’s archive of music became comparatively far more important. Sampling thereby has a janus-like nature; it creates new music by plundering and manipulating music history. The practice of sampling—which ranges from a respect for the sample that seeks to maintain the noises, sounds, and emotions associated with the original, to “murdering” the sample, in the phraseology of British group Coldcut, or even to aestheticizing the act of theft—could not but call into question the matter of authorship of the resulting piece and the notion of the composer as “artistic genius,” queries very much at the heart of contemporary poststructuralist discourse.<sup>10</sup>

### Rainald Goetz: Textualizing the Rave

Rainald Goetz came to EDM quite early in its lifespan, first writing articles on the subject in the late 1980s. He consolidated his public enthusiasm for the new music with a 1994 report on a trip to Japan with DJ Sven Väth, then with a recording, *Word*, on which he recited text to EDM accompaniment. He, too, is a type of “double agent.”<sup>11</sup> Goetz then stepped up his textual engagement toward the end of the decade. In 1997, he published a controversial article on the eve of that year’s Love Parade, as well as the lightly “arranged” transcript of an extended interview with DJ Westbam. In 1998, he published the novel *Rave*, which is an unorthodox participant-observer report into various aspects of the rave scene, both in Germany and abroad. There is little

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suggestion in the novel of narrative and “characters” are often just a name mentioned in passing; they are by no means subjected to any sort of psychological development. *Rave* is rather a fragmentary, ethnopoetic account of EDM culture. I have chosen to focus in this chapter on *Rave* because it represents Goetz’s most concentrated and radical attempt to find a literary form with which to grapple with techno and its lived environment, and I will treat the other important texts and activities as paratexts to *Rave*. I will make two main points. First, *Rave* and the paratexts are, at a thematic level, a defiant attempt to identify and correct “blindspots” in the journalistic and, especially, pop-leftist coverage of the techno scene during its boom years in the 1990s. Second, *Rave* attempts to borrow aesthetically from the music, and especially its social context, so as to “realize” EDM culture. However, there is tension here. It is arguable that Goetz’s success in realizing techno and its lived environment almost necessarily excluded answering the critics in any sustained way. As Thomas Groß memorably noted in his review, *Rave* does not make arguments as such, but rather argues by means of the nondiscursive beat.¹²

Goetz (born 1954) was no newcomer to German letters when he began to write about techno. Indeed, he has published since the late 1970s.¹³ Understanding this background is vital to contextualizing his engagement with EDM and the disagreements he was to have about it with former friends among the pop Left. Goetz’s first novel, *Irre* (Crazy, 1983), was published on the heels of his now legendary appearance at the Klagenfurt literary festival. At the conclusion of reading, Goetz slit his forehead with a razor blade, bleeding onto the manuscript and shocking many of those present. He was promptly dubbed a “new Handke,” partly because of the music-centrism of both authors at the time of their scandalous performances. But whereas Handke was a Beat enthusiast when he addressed the Gruppe 47, Goetz’s more radical performance is unthinkable without the influence of punk, with its motif of self-administered safety-pin piercings, or Iggy Pop’s example of self-harm while on stage.¹⁴ Critics accordingly referred to Goetz as a “punk” novelist.¹⁵ This was not only because of his performance and appearance at Klagenfurt. Thematically, *Irre* reflects Goetz’s proximity to the German punk subculture. The semi-autobiographical protagonist, Raspe, works by day as a psychiatrist and spends the night in punk bars. But the punk aspect of the novel transcends its themes too. There is also the narrator’s aggressive and hate-laden tone, which is directed at almost everyone.¹⁶ The novel’s dialectic combination of *Weltsucht* (addiction to the world/life) and *Weltverweigerung* (refusal of the world/life) is also characteristically “punk.”¹⁷ In this context, many found it curious that the once hypercritical author of *Irre* became Germany’s leading “intellectual advocate” for techno.¹⁸

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## Deejay Practice and the Experience of the Rave

For a novel that was seen by critics as being so affirmative, *Rave* actually spends considerable time venting spleen, and in this respect is not so far from *Irre* after all. Although the notion of a rational argument, let alone a sustained one, was inimical to Goetz's aesthetic and to the so-called wordless insurgency of techno, *Rave* and its paratexts quarrel with two parties in particular: with mainstream journalists who sought to cover the EDM scene, and even more acutely with the pop leftists who either took outright umbrage at techno or were only interested in promoting its "intelligent" forms. Goetz thought the journalists were blind to the practical and experiential sides to EDM and the rave, and considered the pop leftists to be out of touch in an even more fundamental sense with a very real and significant change in youth culture.

*Rave* cites a large number of journalists who have written about EDM; however, it deems Ulf Poschardt worthy of particular mention. Poschardt (born 1967) is a journalist who completed a PhD in media theory under Friedrich A. Kittler, with a thesis later published as the now widely cited *DJ Culture*. Although *DJ Culture* is popular in register, it retains the structure of a treatise, with well-sourced sections on the history of various types of electronic music, an overview of developments around the world, and an attempt at a theory of "DJ culture." In *Rave*, however, Goetz's narrator identifies what he considers to be a central weakness in Poschardt's account: "Was da total fehlt ist die reale PRAXIS, die Kultur und Kunst des handwerklichen Tuns des Mischens und des Mixens, des Cuttens und des Scratchens" (What is completely lacking there is real PRAXIS, [that is] the culture and art [involved] in the handiwork of mixing, cutting, and scratching).<sup>19</sup> *Rave* then canvasses skills like beat mixing, as well as the importance of risk taking and gauging and reacting to the atmosphere on the dance floor. This may have been a legitimate correction to the broader German mediation of EDM; however, the criticism came in a context where the EDM scene tended to regard journalistic coverage as an evil, and Goetz's move was partly a play for "subcultural capital" and distinction.<sup>20</sup> By attacking the lack of practical knowledge on the part of the "illustre Runde" (illustrious circle) of journalists and "biedere Ausgeschreiber" (square nightclubbers-cum-hacks), Goetz wished to foreground his own proximity to the scene and his authority to speak on its behalf.<sup>21</sup> It is no coincidence that *Rave*'s narrator draws attention to his personal connections with important figures within the scene, like Vöth and Westbam. Mirko F. Schmidt takes the view that Goetz's earlier CD, *Word*, which was published on Vöth's then prominent Eye-Q label, was also largely a performance of being in the scene.<sup>22</sup>

If *Rave* attempts to address the question of deejay practice from an insider's viewpoint, then the novel also seeks to fill other holes in the

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journalistic discourse about EDM. It is not at all interested in typical modes of coverage: the biographical sketches of musical innovators, the musical genealogies, and so forth. Rather than giving order to chaos in this way, Goetz's narrator is concerned with the experiential side of EDM culture, and at a somehow more profound level than the "square nightclubbers-cum-hacks." For example, one of his *bêtes noires* seems to be the way in which journalists write about drug use in the EDM context. *Rave* shows that he opposes those who would engage in mere "Journalismus" (journalism) about drugs; for him, this evades "Wahrheit, die Erfahrung, das Erleben" (211; truth, experience, living experience). Yet, if he is critical of these approaches, then it is by no means clear that he himself has found any more appropriate language. *Rave* abounds with passing drug references; however, the novel's fragmented form (see below) could also be criticized for the very thing that the narrator dislikes in enthusiastic drug talk, namely, "Poesie, Wirrnis" (211; poetry, confusion). Another not unrelated experiential aspect that he touches on in his own way is the spiritual dimension of the rave. *Rave* contains variously religiously laden words such as "Hallelujah" and "Ave" (19, 20, 79, 270). Participating in a rave and consuming the rave drug ecstasy (MDMA) can indeed be associated with a spiritual experience.²³ Ronald Hitzler has noted, for example, that EDM culture can fill a vacuum felt in posttraditional society, where individuals otherwise lack a sense of unity or belonging.²⁴ Oliver Dumke even refers to the "säkulare Liturgie" (secular liturgy) that some associate with dancing to repetitive music.²⁵ In this context, Goetz saw his task as one of revelation: "Ich finde es schön ein spirituelles Moment spüren zu lassen, wenn es um die Finsternis und Unerkennbarkeit der Gegenwart geht, durch ein Wort wie Halleluja. Meine Erfahrungen sind gross, und ich suche nach Entsprechungen, die das aufschwingen lassen." (I think that when you are concerned with the darkness and unknowability of the present it is fine to hint at a spiritual moment by using a word like hallelujah. My experiences have been great, and I am interested in finding [linguistic] correspondences where that can emerge.)²⁶

For Goetz, rave culture involved a type of spiritual awakening or conversion, and this, in turn, explains some of his zeal both as an advocate for techno and someone who tried to literarize it. He had this impulse in common with various English-language authors during what Simon Reynolds calls a "post-Irvine Welsh mania for 'rave fiction.'"²⁷ (Welsh was an enabling figure for Goetz, although the latter's chosen form would be more complex than English-language "rave fiction.") As Goetz was to note of the period after his first exposure to EDM culture, "Incipit vita nova."²⁸ Yet there was also a special irony in Goetz's spiritualizing of techno, and in his calling on Judaeo-Christian terms such as "Ave" and "Hallelujah" to do so. The above quote suggests that EDM culture is in touch with the absolute in a profound way, and this is thoroughly akin to the Romantic

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concept of music as “revealed religion” and “unsayable.” As Thomas Groß sardonically observed in a review of Goetz’s CD *Word*: “Mitten im Techno-Heidentum erblüht eine romantische Form der Religiosität, eine fließende Stammesmusik, die alles mütterlich versöhnt” (A Romantic form of religiosity is blooming in the midst of techno-heathenism, [it is] a flowing tribal music that reconciles everything in a motherly fashion).<sup>29</sup> And yet, techno culture’s “animosity toward the word” and its would-be absoluteness does not prevent Goetz from feverishly trying to render it verbally. Ironically, he calls on terms from a tradition that foregrounds the primacy of the word in order to do so.

### Against the Pop Left

Goetz’s attack on Diederich Diederichsen, and on the approach he and the pop Left represented, concerns not just a public falling out between friends or a small matter of differing musical tastes. At one level, the issue is whether the pop leftist or subcultural studies approach—what *Rave*’s narrator calls “Argumentieren mit Platten” (constructing arguments via records)—is germane to techno, or indeed to the 1990s.<sup>30</sup> Ultimately, the dispute is about progressive personal politics after 1989, and indeed about quite different “ways of being” (Simon Frith).<sup>31</sup>

As I demonstrated in chapter 2, Diederichsen and his colleagues at *Spex* developed a form of advanced music journalism that persisted from the late 1970s until well into the 1980s and acted as an extra-academic medium for subcultural studies discourses. They engaged in theory-informed readings of popular culture that sought to uncover the resistant, subversive potential residing in it. Yet the early 1990s marked a watershed. Diederichsen himself began to distance himself from the “pop” model. He was especially affected by the right-wing extremist attacks in the years following unification, and by the way in which some of the young perpetrators could accommodate an interest in subcultural music with their reactionary politics. Shocked by young white racists who sported “Malcolm X” baseball caps, he famously declared that the “kids are not alright.” This marked, if not an outright leave-taking from the world of popular music, then at least an awareness that it was no longer exclusively the subversive playground of leftist subcultures, as it had been thought to be during the late 1970s and 1980s.<sup>32</sup> Others followed suit. For example, Martin Büsser and Tom Holert both expressed their skepticism about whether the old pop-leftist model continued to apply, a point also raised in recent post-subcultural studies that queries the “static” and “binary” “heroicis[ation of] subcultures as authentic, coherent unities ‘rebelliously’ resisting incorporation by a monolithic mainstream.”<sup>33</sup>

There was also the concurrent, and pressing, question of how to address the burgeoning EDM culture. In the mid-1990s, techno became

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big business in Germany, particularly associated with institutions like the Love Parade—at its height in the mid-late 1990s attracting 1.5 million participants—and with labels like Low Spirit, which had mainstream chart success with its so-called pop techno.³⁴ There were some German pop leftists who would carve out varieties of “intelligent” EDM and continue to apply a sympathetic, theory-informed approach to it. However, many were horrified by EDM, and used theory against it in a neo-Adornian fashion. They associated techno with the notion of a superficial, apolitical, and narcissistic culture of hedonism. They were critical of mainstream techno’s proximity to what Martin Büsser called the neo-liberal “*Neue Mitte*” (new center) character of the new Germany.³⁵ On this view, the Love Parade was a telling “*Leistungsschau der Wiedervereinigung*” (demonstration of reunification’s achievements).³⁶ Other critics were worried by techno culture’s apparent “surrender to the ‘will’ of technology,” and by the music’s seemingly “soulless” nature.³⁷ Synthesizer-based techno was counter to the still hegemonic ideology of rock, with its earthy focus on instrumental prowess and “authenticity.”³⁸ But this was not just a matter of divergent musical tastes. More broadly, some German critics perceived the music to reflect an increasing technologization of human life, which they understood as the cause of a loss of authentic subjecthood in modernity.³⁹ Reprising earlier worried interpretations of “disciplined” dance-floor cultures, going right back to Adorno’s interpretation of jazz and jitterbugging, some even suspected protofascism, especially in relation to large raves.⁴⁰ These types of narratives of techno have their basis in long-standing cultural critical anxieties about repetition and the masses.⁴¹ They also reflect equally long-standing German anxieties about technology that informed earlier debates about things such as jukeboxes.⁴²

Goetz, the erstwhile punk-novelist, had once been relatively closely associated with *Spex*, even if he had also expressed his disdain for the approach of many of its writers at the time. Indeed, in “Und Blut” (And Blood), a *Spex* article from 1985, he had criticized “Popschreibertum” (pop-writerism), suggesting that the only way to write about pop was to express one’s excitement about it: “Pops Glück ist, dass Pop kein Problem hat. Deshalb kann man Pop nicht denken, nicht kritisieren, nicht analytisch schreiben, sondern Pop ist Pop leben, fasziniert betrachten, bessen studieren, maximal materialreich erzählen, feiern. Es gibt keine andere vernünftige Weise über Pop zu reden, als hingerissen auf das Hinreissende zu zeigen, hey, super.” (Pop’s fortune is that it does not have a problem. For that reason, you cannot think pop, or criticize it, or analytically write [about] it. Rather, [you] live pop, [you] observe [it] with fascination, [you] study [it] obsessively, [you] narrate [it] in as voluminous a way as possible, [you] party. There is no other sensible way of speaking about pop than to point in a ravished way toward [what is] ravishing [about it, and say] hey, super!)⁴³

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Goetz's attitude hardened as a result of his engagement with EDM culture and crystallized in a 1997 dispute about the Love Parade. Goetz's article, written for *Die Zeit* on the eve of that year's record-sized event, was a song of praise celebrating the parade's scale and inclusiveness as a modern-day culmination of democracy, as well as a snipe at the pop Left. For him, the emancipatory aims of earlier German generations had largely been fulfilled and a new era ushered in where the old dogmas of the pop Left were no longer commensurate. Moreover, at a time when there was a widespread disengagement with conventional politics, the Love Parade represented a moment when the people came together and "sich trotz allem, irgendwie, ganz diffus bejaht" (despite everything, somehow affirmed itself in a thoroughly diffuse way).<sup>44</sup> Not everyone saw it this way; as a result of the article, Goetz was invited by *Texte zur Kunst* for an interview. The pop-leftist interviewers accused Goetz of a litany of misdeemeanors, including glorifying the masses, polemicizing against intellectuals, being sexist in his portrayal of female ravers, and making techno into an "Ersatzreligion" (*ersatz religion*).<sup>45</sup> The daily *Der Tagesspiegel* might have thought that Goetz had won the contest, however, he actually did not have an answer for much of the criticism.<sup>46</sup> But that was the point; the interview highlights two quite different ways of speaking: one discursive and argumentative, the other apodictic and what Goetz called "punk," yet also hiding beneath a guise of inclusivity borrowed from the slogans of the Love Parade.<sup>47</sup> Goetz's refusal to engage in a sustained discursive argument is telling of the techno culture, in which the sociologist Thomas Lau has discerned a "sprachlose Auflehnung gegen die . . . diskursverwaltenden Erziehungsinstanzen" (wordless insurgency against . . . educational authorities . . . who administer discourse).<sup>48</sup> Importantly, Goetz used the interview to situate his own mode of speaking within the context of pop leftism since 1989. For him, pop leftism had fundamentally broken down, as evidenced by the failure of bodies like the so-called *Wohlfahrtsausschüsse* (welfare committees) that had been ineffectual in their opposition to the outbreak of right-wing extremism in Germany. These pop-leftist groups had simply ended up being exclusive and hamstrung by self-righteous political correctness. Moreover, these new "Lehrer" (schoolmasters) had substituted the real with mere discourse.<sup>49</sup> This comment reveals Goetz's strong interest in the "authentic," even when he admits that it is constructed.<sup>50</sup>

The differences with the pop Left also come to a head in two ways in *Rave*. First, there are thematic restatements of some of the points he made, however fleetingly, in the *Texte zur Kunst* interview. Second, there is a symbolic encounter between the protagonist and Diederichsen at the "Popkomm" trade fair. Thematically, the novel expressly accuses the pop Left of being aloof in a class and intellectual sense. The narrator attacks them for shying away from what could actually be a productive

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tension between their elite position and intellectual approach, and what he calls “realen Körperding des Prolligen” (the real, “prole” body thing) in EDM culture.⁵¹ As with the all-too-pedagogical *Wohlfahrtsausschüsse*, the novel’s narrator had a valid point here: he is in key with Gabriele Klein, who was the first German pop theoretician to take into full account the corporeal aspects of popular music, especially techno.⁵² *Rave* can be interpreted as advancing the idea that the body and the intellect are by no means mutually exclusive: “Ich tanzte mit und fühlte mich nicht gestört von den gleichzeitig mitlaufenden Reflexionen” (I danced along and did not feel disturbed by the reflections that I was simultaneously having).⁵³ Yet the middle-class Goetz cannot hide the fact that he is slumming, a point that he betrays in a comment elsewhere about his decision in the early 1990s to live in a working-class part of Berlin: “Ich muss ein paar Prolos sehen, wenn ich morgens aus der Haustür trete” (I need to be able to see a few “prolos” when I go out my front door in the morning).⁵⁴ In the event, the “prolos” are missing from *Rave*. Instead it is “Luxusversion” (luxury version) populated by a who’s who of raving VIPs.⁵⁵ As with other slumming, then, we get a sense of what the rave lifestyle means to the middle-class protagonist—the “articulation of something otherwise forbidden” by the pop Left—but relatively little about how the “prolos” themselves interpreted or interacted with the music.⁵⁶

Goetz also restates his point about the “masses” in *Rave*. The novel’s narrator overturns the commonly held association between the “masses” and “fascism,” dating back to Adorno. Indeed he suggests that the association has had a “masking” effect:

[Es geht hier um die Beobachtung] daß beim Zusammensein von wirklich SEHR vielen Menschen wahrscheinlich das sich gegenseitig Zivilisierende und Lähmende so dominant wird, daß Handlungsunfähigkeit eintritt. Daß eine sogenannte ‘Masse’ wahrscheinlich noch nie ein einziges Verbrechen verübt hat. . . . die Karriere dieses Begriffs, sein Erfolg [wäre] nicht denkbar . . . , wenn er entgegen seiner kritischen Aura nicht in Wirklichkeit ein Deckbegriff im Dienste der Entschuldigung individueller Verbrechen und individueller Schuld wäre.

[[It all has to do with the observation] that with a really VERY large agglomeration of people, it is probable that the mutually civilizing and retarding [elements] become so dominant that an inability to act sets in. That the so-called masses have probably never committed a single crime. . . . This concept’s career, its success, would be unimaginable if it were not for the fact that—contrary to its critical aura—it is a masking concept used to excuse individual crimes and individual guilt.]⁵⁷

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For *Rave*'s narrator, then, the problem with the "masses" critique is that it is a commonplace and reveals a lack of critical insight into the very concepts on which theory likes to rely. What mostly results from such readings of rave culture is "diesen schlechten, extrem billigen und abgedroschenen Sound gemeinsamer Konsense, vom Herrschenden kollektiv dissidierender Dissenskonsense" (this tawdry, extremely cheap and threadbare sound of common consensus, of the collectively dissenting consensus of dissent by the hegemony).<sup>58</sup> It is possible to interpret *Rave* as suggesting a different, more positive notion of the individual's involvement in the rave crowd. If there is no disconnect between dancing and the intellect, then Goetz himself would suggest that there can be "Abweichung, Individualität, Differenz, die an ihrer Selbstabschaffung arbeitet, um aufgehen zu können selig im Einen eines Gemeinsamen" (deviation, individuality, [and] difference that works toward its own abolition in order to blessedly merge in the unity of the communal).<sup>59</sup> Johannes Windrich refers to this as a "Steigerung der Differenz, die durch das Eintauchen in die Masse bewirkt wird" (heightening of difference brought about by a submersion in the masses), although we are left to wonder just how that "heightening" mechanism takes place.<sup>60</sup>

The textual encounter with Diederichsen at "Popkomm" is also telling. Addled after a night out, *Rave*'s protagonist sinks to the ground when he sees Diederichsen approaching. The ensuing scene portrays the incommensurable gap between the two. The intellectual Diederichsen is oblivious to the narrator's state and holds forth on his latest *Spex*-related endeavors, whereas the narrator feels thoroughly unwell and is only relieved when he comes across "einen normalen Mensch" (a normal person).<sup>61</sup> Applying a Lacanian analysis, Matthias Waltz suggests that this scene highlights a different, somehow more grounded mode of desire than that of the pop leftist, since the techno enthusiast is freed from the need to be critical and can be "glücklich mit der Begegnung mit Körper und Erde" (content in the encounter with the body and with the earth).<sup>62</sup>

Goetz's texts advance some fruitful areas of inquiry into *Rave* culture and into the ways it has been verbally mediated in Germany. He spiritualizes the rave in a Romantic fashion, and, while remaining wary of over-theorizing and explicating, he also suggests some answers to the neo-Adornian pop-leftist critique of EDM. Ultimately, however, a discursive argument is not his concern. He offers only fragments and outlines of ideas. His apodictic tone is also not particularly inviting, as *Texte zur Kunst* rightly observed. Goetz's "answer" is partly just to declare: "I know better, I am a part of the scene." He also hides behind a vitalist pose, rather unfairly impugning his opponents as being "kopfgeboren" (egg-headed), to borrow Dietmar Dath's term.<sup>63</sup> This tone is not just indicative of Goetz's ex-punk habitus; it also indicates the heat of some of the German debates held over techno in the mid-1990s.

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Realizing the Rave

*Das pure Parlament der vielen Stimmen eines kollektiven Glücks:
Monotonie und Einzelworts, Fetzen, Reste. Nichtkohärenz,
Nichttext. Danke.*

[The pure parliament representing the many voices of collective happiness. Monotony and single words, scraps, remnants. Incoherence, Nontext. Thanks.]

—Rainald Goetz, *90s Nacht Pop*

Goetz's greater accomplishment in his literary engagement with EDM culture lies in his attempts to find a form that is consonant with the subject matter, that is, to "realize" it. This subject matter is partly the music, but more particularly the social setting of the music. Ultimately, that social setting is but one aspect of lived experience, and so too is *Rave* part of Goetz's larger desire to reconcile art with life and praxis. What is perhaps most striking about *Rave*'s form is its fragmentedness, unfinishedness, and the haste with which it seems to have been written. It abounds with sentences that either trail off or that end with an "etc.," as the following extract shows:

. . .—aber eigentlich wiegten sich diese Gedanken mehr nur so in mir—
Und es war—
Und mir war so wie—
Und mir fiel ein, eigentlich ohne Hast, dass ich gespannt war, ob ich da morgen—
usw usw—

[. . .—but actually it was more like these ideas only swayed around in me—
And it was—
And I felt like—
And it occurred to me, actually without any haste, that I was curious, whether tomorrow I would—
etc etc—]⁶⁴

There are certainly literary precursors to this form.⁶⁵ However, it is also possible to link the fragmented form with EDM itself. For example, Andreas Wicke takes the view that the significant point about the unfinished sentences is that the author keeps returning to make a new start. This constant "rhythmisierter Neubeginn" (rhythmic new beginning) gives *Rave* a "stakkatohafte Beat" (staccato-like beat) and a sense of repetition, which for Wicke evokes the rhythm and the looping, repetitive nature of techno.⁶⁶

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It is just as possible to read *Rave*'s fragmented form and its interest in constantly returning to the present moment by reference to Goetz's experience of lived rave culture. *Rave*'s "Ringem um Worte (wrestling for words)" was the culmination of almost a decade's engaging with the conundrum of how best to write about the euphoria and living-in-the-moment of the rave.<sup>67</sup> Already in 1993, Goetz saw the need for someone to literarize the EDM scene, but he also grasped for the correct form: "Wie müsste so ein Text klingen, der von unseren Leben handelt?" (how would a text that deals with our lifestyle need to sound?)<sup>68</sup> The "rhythmic new beginnings" and haste of *Rave* do convey well the sense of druggy euphoria and immediacy associated with the dance floor, replete with its stroboscopes, as well as its mode of passing acquaintances and its affirmative "rave talk."<sup>69</sup> This focus on immediacy is certainly consistent with a larger project of Goetz's, as Eckhard Schumacher has shown.<sup>70</sup> Yet the nature of MDMA, repetitive EDM, and the art of deejaying, all especially mandate that project of writing immediacy. As Goetz pointed out in his 1998 *Frankfurter Poetikvorlesung*, for example: nightclubbing is a "Lebensweise, deren ganze Mitte sich um ZEIT genau dreht, um dauernde und absolute Zeitvernichtung" (way of life that centers precisely on TIME, on the constant and absolute destruction of time).<sup>71</sup> A deejay constantly interested in gauging the crowd and reacting to it is also engaged in "Augenblicklichkeitskunst" (the art of momentariness).<sup>72</sup> However, as Andreas Wicke notes, there is a sticking point here. A deejay can react to the audience in real time, the writer of a novel cannot.<sup>73</sup>

This failure goes to an unresolvable tension at the heart of Goetz's project that I have hinted at several times already. On the one hand, he is dedicated to life and to the immediate. Yet this is inimical to too much theorizing or intellectual engagement, including the act of writing. Life is, to borrow one of Goetz's terms for techno, "nontext." Nevertheless, Goetz tries to render a sense or feel for this immediate "nontext" in writing. For example, as Schumacher has shown, he serializes the term "jetzt" (now) to create an effect of immediacy.<sup>74</sup> There is an underlying irony here that various reviewers have noted: "Als wolle Rainald Goetz mit dem geschriebenen Wort zeigen, wie die Wirkung des geschriebenen Wortes nie an die der Techno-Rhythmen heranreicht" ([It is] as if Rainald Goetz wants to show with the written word just how the written word's effect always falls short of that of techno's rhythms).<sup>75</sup> In Goetz's case however, the acts of writing and nightclubbing are not as far removed from each other as we might imagine. He professes to switch off when writing, just as he does when going out.<sup>76</sup> But we have also seen that he does not consider dancing to exclude intellectual reflection either.

Ultimately, we can regard Goetz's writing as a matter of process whereby the final result—the physical Suhrkamp book—is actually secondary. What remains as text is the residue of his performance of lived

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experience, of his ethnopoetic negotiation of what Johannes Windrich calls the “Schnittstelle zwischen äußerer Information und selbstproduzierter Veränderung” (interface between external information and self-produced change).<sup>77</sup> Goetz’s subject matter may be inimical to writing, but he battles with this and reflects on it. In the process, he has produced a text that conveys some of the rhythm and repetition of EDM, as well as the euphoria and chaos of the dance floor, in a way that more conventional narratives, like Markus Siewert’s *IM Techno* (1997), Rainer Schmidt’s *Liebestänze* (2009), and, most recently, Sven Regener’s *Magical Mystery Tour* (2013) do not. Markus Tillmann makes the important point that regardless of Goetz’s success in realizing techno, his wrestling with the task is personally very productive. It may also be that Goetz’s “produktives Scheitern” (productive failure) can impel readers to go out and experience techno and the rave themselves.<sup>78</sup> The critical reception tells a different story. *Rave* did not persuade critics of EDM culture to overturn their preconceptions about it. Goetz’s critics generally thought that *Rave* had succeeded in “realizing” the experience; they just did not think doing so warranted a book-length text.<sup>79</sup>

*Rave* was late in several senses. Although largely set in the present, it looked back on the late 1980s and early 1990s in particular. Philipp Anz, a former advocate of EDM, expressed the view that by 1998 the revolutionary moment of rave culture—when, as he damningly puts it, affirmative superficiality could be liberating—was over.<sup>80</sup> He suggested that individuals had, by now, rediscovered their subjecthood, yet this was not reflected in *Rave*; the novel was just banal. The pop-techno aesthetic of Goetz’s friend, DJ Westbam, and even the Love Parade itself, would also become far less prominent in the near future. By contrast, an “intelligent” EDM culture that Goetz had once denounced as “Art-Scheiss” (arty-farty) was in the ascendancy in Germany. And Goetz, as a Suhrkamp author, was more implicated in this than he might have wanted to admit.<sup>81</sup>

### Cooling It?

Around the turn of the millennium, Germany’s electronica scene went “underground.”<sup>82</sup> Some commentators had already referred to 1997 as the year of the “techno crisis,” since the scene magazine *Frontpage* had folded then.<sup>83</sup> Then, in 2001, the Love Parade lost its status as a political demonstration with ensuing economic benefits, after which it attracted much smaller numbers and a lot less media attention.<sup>84</sup> Notwithstanding flare-ups over things like Goetz’s texts, there seems to have been a general cooling in the way that techno was received in the media too. Albert Kuhn already claimed in 1995, for example, that “der Kampf um diese Techno-Jugend ist mittlerweile voll entbrannt” (in the meantime, the battle about

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this techno-youth has completely subsided), and Ralf Niemczyk identified that for many, “der ‘Feind’ [stand] woanders” (the “enemy” was somewhere else).⁸⁵ The “cooling” also had a musical dimension. With the lessening in importance of the Love Parade, the “pop techno” scene that it carried also declined in importance. On the other hand, Germany became more and more central in the development of electronica’s so-called intelligent forms during the mid- and late 1990s.⁸⁶ New music by groups like Mouse on Mars and Oval clearly had artistic aspirations and was enjoyed away from the dance floor. Figures like Achim Szepanski, who ran a label called Mille Plateaux (founded 1993), gave theoretical consideration to precisely these forms of electronica around this time, interpreting it within a poststructural frame.⁸⁷ Advanced music journalists, who may once have sniffed at pop-techno, now carved out a special place for such “auteur techno.”⁸⁸ In addition to this verbal mediation, attempts had been and continued to be made to combine techno with other, more established or “legitimate” art forms. For example, the Berlin deejay Cosmic Baby (Harald Blüchel) collaborated on a ballet, *Futura*, in 1995, and Sven Väth even performed at an event with the respected classical pianist and jazzman Friedrich Gulda.⁸⁹ The interest of established literary writers in EDM culture is not without import, either. The field may have been inaugurated by the idiosyncratic Goetz—who had no truck either with “intelligent” techno or with the majority of those, other than himself, who attempted to write about techno—but he was followed by others. Thomas Meinecke and Andreas Neumeister offer a less apodictic, more relaxed and cerebral case.

Andreas Neumeister: Minimal Loops and Sampling the Past

Neumeister (born 1959) practices a type of literature that, like Goetz’s, is distanced from conventional narrative and is situated closer to ethnography, which he studied as an undergraduate in Munich. His is also a literary ethnography that does not seek to interpret, or “ausdeutschen” (“German out”), as he put it in the title of a 1994 novel, but rather to poeticize it while remaining true to complexity. Like Goetz, he has been interested in finding an appropriate literary form for reflecting on popular music, including EDM. Nevertheless, his tone is less aggressive or vitalistic than Goetz’s and more that of a “laid-back,” as the critic Jens Balzer quaintly put it.⁹⁰ Neumeister is also more openly interested in and absorbed by musical structures and their implications than is Goetz the raver. In the following section I will explore why Neumeister turned to EDM and how he sought to realize some of its structures. I will demonstrate how his verbal minimalism and his thematic sampling of history

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“resensualize” literature. They also engage with the past in ways that are removed from the “tyranny of history” and from dominant notions of teleology and narrative.

Thematically, popular music was certainly present in Neumeister’s early novels. However, it was referred to in passing, albeit in very telling observations, as in *Salz im Blut* (Salt in the Blood, 1990), where Neumeister’s protagonist declares that the last adventure left in a place like Munich is “Plattenkaufen in einem Second-hand-Laden” (buying records in a secondhand shop).<sup>91</sup> Popular music did not yet furnish a literary model. Rather, Neumeister sought his aesthetic inspiration in the world of photography. The present was characterized by “eine unendliche Flut von Bildern” (an endless flood of images) and he saw himself as a “Welt-Photograph” (photographer of the world).<sup>92</sup> By the mid-1990s, however, popular music gained importance in Neumeister’s oeuvre, at both a thematic and a formal level. It is in the latter dimension that Neumeister became especially indebted to electronica and digital music technology, notwithstanding his omnivorous tastes, his thematization of popular music history, and the ambiguously nostalgic hue of his texts.

In 1996, Neumeister and Marcel Hartges published an important anthology of slam poetry and other documents of what they called “Bewusstseinsstand der Popfraktion” (the state of consciousness of the pop faction). This anthology and other texts revealed that Neumeister was strongly critical of contemporary German literature and suggested where he thought it might be “resensualized.” Neumeister and Hartges greeted slam poetry—an import from the United States—as a renewal: “Mit den Slams hat die Literatur endlich zurück in die Clubs und Bars, zurück ins Nachtleben gefunden” (By way of slams, literature has finally found its way back into the clubs and bars [and] into the night life).<sup>93</sup> Here, they found “Spontaneität, Alltagsnähe, Gegenwartsbezug, Sprachwitz, Lustprinzip und Unmittelbarkeit” (spontaneity, proximity to the everyday, a connection with the present, verbal wit, the principle of fun, and immediacy) rather than “die abstrakte, auf ein Expertenpublikum zielende Kunstanstrengung” (abstract attempts at art aimed at an audience of experts) of what Neumeister elsewhere called “Literatur-Literatur” (literature-literature).<sup>94</sup>

If Neumeister was a slam poetry enthusiast, then he was also an omnivorous music fan. However, his contribution to the *Poetry! Slam!* anthology, “Reichspartygelände” (Reichs-party-field), and various other texts from the mid-1990s reveal his engagement with techno and house music in particular. As he put it in “Der Dual-Plattenspieler” (The Dual Record Player): “Ohne Techno wären die beginnenden Neunziger unerträglich geworden” (The early nineties would have become unbearable without techno).<sup>95</sup>

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Fig. 3.1. Andreas Neumeister at the Munich Union Move.
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Techno had a significant redemptive force for Neumeister, and he linked it with the anti-German, international interpretation of Anglo-American popular music that had been in circulation since the late 1960s. For example, his short text, “Die Spassverteidigungsveranstaltung” (An Event in Defense of Fun)—an aestheticized “defense” of that year’s “Munich Union Move,” Southern Germany’s answer to the Love Parade (see figure 3.1)—took issue with the pop-leftist critique that linked EDM with protofascism. Neumeister argued against this critique, albeit in a less apodictic and more aphoristic fashion than Goetz: “Dies ist kein Marsch zur Feldherrnhalle hin, sondern ein Umzug von der Feldherrnhalle weg. . . . Dies ist ein Umzug zur Abschaffung der Feldherrnepoche. Dies ist ein Beitrag zur Abschaffung des 20. Jahrhunderts.” (This is not a march towards the *Feldherrnhalle*, but rather a procession away from the *Feldherrnhalle*. . . . This is a procession toward the abolition of the *Feldherrn* epoch. This is a contribution toward the abolition of the twentieth century.)⁹⁶ EDM was, in fact, but the latest emancipatory moment to be found in the popular music of the last fifty years. For him, popular music was an “Erlösung im Sinn eines Aufatmens” (salvation in the sense of a breathing in): “Auch wenn die Feuilletons ständig das Gegenteil behaupten: Pop in seinem Kern ist emanzipatorisch-anti-totalitär. Im Pop-Zeitalter wäre Hitler nicht möglich gewesen. Für die Sechziger und Siebziger: Pop als Erretter aus dem McCarthy-Adenauer-Kosmos.” (Even if the newspaper feature pages are always maintaining the contrary: pop is,

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in its very essence, emancipatory [and] antitotalitarian. Hitler would not have been possible during the pop era. As far as the sixties and seventies are concerned: pop as a savior from the McCarthy-Adenauer-cosmos.)<sup>97</sup> For Neumeister, popular music was also nonexclusive, and in that sense fundamentally democratic: “nur wir sind Pop gilt nicht” ([stating that] only we are pop is invalid).<sup>98</sup>

Yet popular music, and especially techno, also emancipated Neumeister in another sense. Never one for a simple teleological narrative—for him, it typified an outdated, nineteenth-century model of literature—Neumeister observed: “Was mich . . . interessiert, ist formale Prinzipien (wie Montage, Wiederholung, Zitat) der aktuellen Musikproduktion auf Literatur zu übertragen” (What interests me is to transfer formal principles from current music production (such as montage, repetition, quotation) into literature). His model was EDM, since it interested him most at the formal level. And yet Neumeister was also aware of the difficulties involved in the borrowing process: “Was bei Tanzmusik funktioniert, Endlosschleifen mit minimalen Variationen, funktioniert in der Literatur nur auf kürzeren Distanzen” (That which works in dance music—endless loops with minimal variations—only works over a shorter distance in literature).<sup>99</sup> In the following, I will elaborate how Neumeister realized “endless loops with minimal variations” and examine some of the philosophical implications in relation to time and history. I will also explore how he alloyed what I call “verbal minimalism” with other techniques, especially the “sampling” of music history. In combination, these techniques revealed a paradoxical attitude to the past involving both an addiction to it but also a desire to be free from it.

Repetition and minimal variation occur at both the macro and the micro levels in Neumeister’s texts. At the macro level, certain key phrases and thoughts return at various parts of the text, in much the same way as other practitioners of musical literature might use the leitmotif. Neumeister’s novel *Gut laut* (*Real Loud*, 2001) provides a good example of this type of repetition.<sup>100</sup> *Gut laut* is a monologue that assembles in collage fashion the thoughts, aphorisms, and observations of a “music addict,” and one who is interested not only in the music of the present but also—particularly—in that of the 1970s.<sup>101</sup> It is, in a sense, an unorthodox “autodiscography,” representative of a generation of music enthusiasts who came of age in the 1970s, but who did not cease to follow popular music developments thereafter.<sup>102</sup> Various repetitions occur in the novel. For example, the phrase “Was ist aus [x] eigentlich geworden?” (what actually happened to [x]?) is constantly reiterated. Sometimes whole paragraphs are repeated too, with or without a minor variation.<sup>103</sup> It is the micro-level repetition, however, which is most evocative of EDM, especially of the minimal techno close to Neumeister’s heart. To give an example of this micro-level repetition:

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Kraftwerks Autobahn als unser erstes Hörspiel
 Kraftwerks Autobahn als unser aller erstes Hörspiel
 Kraftwerks Autobahn als unser allererstes Hörspiel
 Kraftwerks Autobahn als unser allerliebstes Hörspiel.

[Kraftwerk's *Autobahn* as our first radio play
 Kraftwerk's *Autobahn* as the first radio play of all of us
 Kraftwerk's *Autobahn* as our very first radio play
 Kraftwerk's *Autobahn* as our very favorite radio play.]¹⁰⁴

Neumeister also occasionally uses a repetitive form to incorporate two contrapuntal voices:

Immer die längste Version auflegen
 Punk und Disko gleichzeitig denken
 Immer die längste Version auflegen
 Punk und Disko gleichzeitig denken.

[Always spin the longest version
 Simultaneously think punk and disco
 Always spin the longest version
 Simultaneously think punk and disco.]¹⁰⁵

As some critics noted, these micro-level repetitions and minimal variations occasionally resembled German-language concrete poetry.¹⁰⁶ It may also be that such an approach to repetition and variation is especially possible in the German language, with its stricter grammatical structure than English, its smaller basic vocabulary, and its resulting propensity for compound words.¹⁰⁷ In Neumeister's hands, these micro-level repetitions serve several purposes. At a basic level they "realize" minimal EDM. The example I have given of Neumeister's contrapuntal repetition, together with the imperative in its content—"Simultaneously think punk and disco!"—serves a special purpose. The idea of "thinking two things simultaneously" has long been an aspect of music; it represents music's so-called vertical or simultaneous dimension, in which, as with a chord, several individual notes sound at once. It is precisely this vertical aspect of music that many earlier practitioners of musical literature have attempted to replicate or suggest. Here Neumeister has almost achieved that effect by repeating phrases in combination with an entreaty to think a dischord.¹⁰⁸ At a more philosophical level, however, Neumeister's "verbal minimalism" cleverly contributes to the way in which history, and music history in particular, is thematized in the novel.

Minimalist music is "non-narrative and a-teleological."¹⁰⁹ Rather, it involves "duration and stasis, without beginning or end."¹¹⁰ This approach to composition has a profound effect on the listener's sense of time. As the minimalist composer Phillip Glass puts it: "The music

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is placed outside the usual time-scale substituting a non-narrative and extended time-sense in its place.”<sup>111</sup> Simon Frith has argued that EDM—and its culture of extended mixes, twelve-inch singles, and so forth—is an heir to this approach; it is also imbued with that special quality of “moment time” (Jonathan Kramer) and confronts the listener with a deepened awareness of sound and sense of immediacy.<sup>112</sup> (As we have seen, Neumeister’s narrator also wishes to suspend moment time for as long as possible: “Always spin the longest version!”) In a context in which teleological notions of traditional literary narratives were problematic to Neumeister, his reach for the nonteleology of minimal EDM makes perfect sense. However, minimalism’s freedom into the reality and immediacy of moment time is a complicated one. Frith notes that it “makes memory impossible (or, the same thing, irrelevant).”<sup>113</sup> Wim Mertens sees it in more dialectical terms: “This absolute affirmation of reality as it is appears to be the extra-historical realisation of subjective freedom. Yet the freedom this music claims to offer is merely freedom from history as such. It is therefore a negative freedom, paradoxically made possible only by a total addiction to history.”<sup>114</sup> Neumeister exhibits a similarly paradoxical attitude to history, which is borne out by another moment in his engagement with the technologies of contemporary electronic music.

As Neumeister observed in a 2001 interview with Ulrich Rüdenauer, “verbal minimalism” may well only sustain a reader’s interest over a short period.<sup>115</sup> This should not surprise. There is something inherently unlikely about the idea of using an extended written text to suspend teleological time, foreground moment time, and evoke a sense of stasis. Whether a longer repetitive text can “work” as a spoken performance is another matter; certainly various critics have observed that Neumeister’s texts profit greatly from being read aloud.<sup>116</sup> In order to retain the advantages of short spurts of “verbal minimalism,” however, Neumeister alloys them with a range of other textual “Einschübe und Reflexionen” (insertions and reflections), so as to create longer texts like *Gut laut*.<sup>117</sup> Geoffrey Cox has hence referred to the novel’s construction as being like “a shuffled list of minor players in pop music history.”<sup>118</sup> Here Neumeister’s realization of repetitive EDM breaks down, but he calls on another digital music technique: that of the sampler. Recall that Neumeister had observed that the principles of quotation and collage were also central to electronic music production and lent themselves to literary borrowing. To expand on the “sampling” dimension, it is necessary to delve again into the thematic content of *Gut laut* and the attitude it conveys in relation to music history. Neumeister interweaves passages that capture the sense of enthusiasm for the future, so typical of techno in the 1990s, with various references to older musics, including synthesizer pioneers like Kraftwerk, and to Munich disco. Although an attention to the musical past might attract the criticism of nostalgia—see chapter

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4—*Gut laut* is not a “nostalgische verklärte Milieuschilderung” (nostalgic, misty-eyed portrayal of a milieu), as Hubert Spiegel noted.¹¹⁹ It is too clever for that. Not only does the novel resist nostalgia in the same breath as it admits it.¹²⁰ It also “seeks to establish a sense of the immediacy of memory.”¹²¹ In this way, *Gut laut* is not so far removed from Peter Handke’s *The Jukebox*—indeed critics suggested as much—even though Neumeister’s breathlessness is at odds with Handke’s deliberately slow pace.¹²² There is a different enabling technology at work too. As we saw, sampling enabled hip-hop producers to reach to an archive of materials and reactivate the musical past, especially by cherry picking “breaks” from 1970s recordings. This was also what Neumeister was doing with music history in *Gut laut*: “das analoge Erbe der Siebziger bewahren: zitierend, mixend, digitalisierend” (perpetuating the analogue legacy of the seventies: quoting, mixing, digitalizing).¹²³ Indeed Neumeister’s narrator expressly thematizes the sampler and repeatedly refers to an overwhelming new drive, in the sampler era, to recover, store, and reprocess the best of the musical past.¹²⁴

Just as, philosophically, minimalism engaged with notions of moment time and the end of teleological history, there was also a different, non-teleological attitude to the past behind sampling. As we have seen, Neumeister was no enthusiast of nineteenth-century notions of narrative, and this was consistent with the critique of history and historicism that literary scholars like Hayden White had advanced during the 1960s and 1970s, to the effect that history “fabricates a chronological and teleological frame upon an infinitely plural and decidedly non-teleological reality.”¹²⁵ By contrast, *Gut laut* reflects a layperson’s attitude to the past, where one cobbles together parts of the past in a bricolage that may be “forgetful,” and not make sense of those parts in the teleological manner of the traditional historian, but that, by relying on modes of thought like analogy, “works” for the individual.¹²⁶ So there is an interest in—even an addiction to—the fabric of the past, but not a capitulation to what White calls “the tyranny of the historical consciousness.”¹²⁷ This attitude reflects, so Simon Frith would argue, the fragmented way in which we nowadays engage with music itself, seldom listening to a piece from beginning to end. It is this aesthetic that also operates behind the sampler’s interest in the past insofar as it can be functionalized for the present day; original context is, or can be, irrelevant. For Frith such sampled music is “realistic [because] it represents experience grasped in moments.”¹²⁸

Neumeister’s desire to reflect this new, “sampling” mode of interacting with the past was surely legitimate, yet for many critics it was too forgetful, and too aestheticized. For a critic like Sibylle Cramer, life and time were reduced in *Gut laut* to a frenetic present, with an unacceptable loss of memory and history.¹²⁹ Importantly, however, Neumeister not only “realizes” loss of memory by means of verbal minimalism but

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he also actually thematizes such loss in his novel. One of the macro-level repetitions is, for example, the phrase “Wann war die Ölkrise?” (Just when was the oil crisis?)<sup>130</sup> The narrator also confesses to his memory being a “Sieb” (130; sieve), especially in the face of the recent viral proliferation of knowledge. Yet the criticisms of Neumeister’s text did not merely relate to memory in the abstract. The matter of recent German history also lurked behind those criticisms. Neumeister made no bones about his anticipation of the future as an end to the disastrous twentieth century; recall that he greeted the Munich Union move as “a contribution toward the abolition of the twentieth century.” The way in which he engaged with recent German history in his music-related texts and performances was also significant. *Gut laut* was obsessed, for example, with a certain way of “sampling” the Nazi era—it includes a list of “German charts,” that is, forty-three songs that made some reference to Hitler or the “Third Reich”—yet elsewhere the narrator also makes the point of being on the verge of forgetting the name of the Third Reich (20–21, 133–34). This, together with puns like “Reichspartygelände,” could be attacked for trivializing the Nazi era, or at least for overly aestheticizing it to the point of forgetting it.<sup>131</sup> While there was a popular cultural tradition going back to the punk era of the late 1970s of playing on fascist references, a critic like Ingo Arends was probably in the minority when he thought that Neumeister’s approach did not banalize recent German history so much as make it even more offensive.<sup>132</sup>

Although Neumeister—as with the techno movement in general—seemed to embrace the future, he also ironized such an attitude in his texts, where even the future is occasionally read through the past.<sup>133</sup> In *Gut laut* we can see this in the protagonist’s fascination with Munich in the early 1970s, when its futuristic Olympic city seemed to be the epitome of the future. In Neumeister’s view, it will also be Kraftwerk who will supply the soundtrack to the change of millennium, given that the group had already been doing so for thirty years. As much as this registered that Kraftwerk had been ahead of their time, it also acknowledged that the future might not be all that different: “Alles wird anders klingen, was nicht jetzt schon anders klingt” (everything will sound different to the extent that it does not already sound different).<sup>134</sup> At the same time that he greets the future, then, Neumeister’s protagonist tempers his euphoria, just as Kraftwerk had combined “optimism and despair” in some of their tracks.<sup>135</sup> By pointing to Kraftwerk’s and to Munich’s past versions of the future, he also touches on the paradoxical notion of “retro-futurism.” As Elizabeth Guffey has argued, “retro-futurism” involves a present embrace of a past version of the future, which in its very essence is also in opposition to hegemonic notions of teleological progress.<sup>136</sup> There are a number of these seeming paradoxes in *Gut laut*. As an otherwise critical Hubert Spiegel noted, *Gut laut* was simultaneously “präzise und abschweifend,

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pointiert und kalauernd, zynisch und sentimental, zukunftsbesessen und nostalgisch, furios, harmlos, intelligent und naiv” (precise and digressive, witty and corny, cynical and sentimental, obsessed with the future and nostalgic, frenzied, harmless, intelligent, and naïve).¹³⁷ Together with Neumeister’s playful “Übertreibungskunst” (art of exaggeration), his punning humor, and his success in realizing a fascinating form of “verbal minimalism,” these paradoxes perhaps rendered *Gut laut* the most easily consumable of the “Suhrkamp pop” novels.¹³⁸

Thomas Meinecke: Literary Deejaying and the Postnational

Like his fellow Bavarian Neumeister, Thomas Meinecke’s literary aesthetic is distanced from the crafted narratives and psychological developments of what Neumeister called “literature-literature.” In his search for an appropriate form, Meinecke has likewise been influenced by EDM and its technologies. Yet whereas Neumeister’s texts are characterized as much by “verbal minimalism” as by sampling the past, Meinecke primarily employs what we might best term “literary deejaying.” This approach manifests itself in a different, more concrete fashion too, with Meinecke citing current theory—and actually excerpting and glossing other people’s texts—as much as recalling musical history. By engaging with theory in this way, and by employing elaborate sentence constructions, Meinecke’s texts are the most obviously cerebral of the “Suhrkamp pop” novels, and the hardest work for the reader. His engagement with EDM, especially in the novels *Hellblau* (*Pale Blue*, 2001) and *Musik* (*Music*, 2004), is hence far removed from the “hotter” phase in the German reception of EDM, as typified by Rainald Goetz. As Meinecke has observed, Goetz is far more of a “raver” than he is.¹³⁹ This is not the only distinction; Meinecke foregrounds discourse to an extent that is at odds with Goetz’s faith in authenticity and the autonomous and sovereign subject.¹⁴⁰ Thematically, Meinecke has also more strongly contemplated the “Germanness” or otherwise of EDM than either Goetz or Neumeister. In an experimental way, he has used EDM and the discourses about it to sound out postnationalism after unification.

Around 1995, Meinecke, too, became a fan of minimal techno. In turn, his reception of EDM had a rapid impact on his musical and, subsequently, his literary practice. Indeed, he has spoken of EDM “giving wings” to his writing.¹⁴¹ Minimal techno represented to him a new experience of music, removed from rock’s traditional song forms and its notions of climax and release, as well as of teleological narrative. It was an experience “wo mir die Ohren aufgingen im Sinne von Hören lernen, Zeitbegriffe erfassen, mit Wiederholungen klarkommen, nicht mit den

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schlappen, abendländischen Versprechungen des Abspritzens, der Klimax, sondern eben mit Strukturen” (where my ears opened up in the sense of learning to hear, grasping concepts of time, coming to grips with repetition—not with the limp, occidental promise of coming, of the climax, but rather with structures).<sup>142</sup> These were, of course, also characteristics of nonteleological minimalist music. Meinecke the “omnivorous” music enthusiast was well aware of it, and expressly linked minimal techno to its *E-Musik* forebears.<sup>143</sup> In combination, minimal techno and cultural studies contributed to Meinecke’s repoliticization. He was intrigued by parallels that he discerned between minimal music and, especially, the deconstructivist postfeminism that he had also recently discovered. For him, it too featured a focus on “kleine Unterschiede, im Wiederholen, im Überschreiben von Dingen” (small differences in the repetition and reinscription of things).<sup>144</sup> Meinecke summarizes the “political” aspect of minimal techno as follows: minimalism requires a deeper form of listening, and in this state one’s attention is directed “sich zu überlegen, warum die Verhältnisse eigentlich so sind, wie sie sind. Und das liegt im politischen Detail. In der ganz kleinen Modulation, lässt sich die Welt sukzessive verbessern.” (To consider why conditions are as they are. The answer is in the political detail. It is in the process of minimal modulation that the world can be successively improved.)<sup>145</sup> This combination of electronic minimalism and theory may not surprise. In 1983 Wim Mertens had already located minimalism within a Deleuzian frame of reference that was consistent with Deleuze’s and Guattari’s own interest in musical minimalism.<sup>146</sup> By the mid-1990s, there was also a movement, especially within Germany, to view some EDM in Deleuzian terms.<sup>147</sup> Meinecke was well aware of these activities: In *Hellblau*, for example, his characters refer to Mille Plateaux label boss Achim Szepanski, one of the leading proponents of this discourse.<sup>148</sup>

It is also possible to interpret Meinecke’s style of writing in “rhizomatic” terms.<sup>149</sup> Deleuze and Guattari had defined the rhizome as “[having] neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overspills.”<sup>150</sup> Meinecke’s novels largely eschew a central narrative as well as the notions of a beginning or end; they tend to overspill, as his characters keep spinning discourse via a seemingly endless raft of interwoven intertextual references that lead off in different directions. This raises the question of whether Meinecke’s texts might be a “realization” of rhizomatic EDM. Katharina Picandet thinks not. Although she, too, considers that a novel like *Hellblau* is rhizomatic, and is aware that some EDM was viewed in similar terms at the time, she nevertheless concludes that *Hellblau* is not “techno-like.” For her, it simply does not exhibit the repetitions and variations that would make out the analogy—she is silent on whether Neumeister’s texts might—moreover, wordless techno is, for her, simply too a-semantic to be realized in a literary text.<sup>151</sup>

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Meinecke's texts have a more proximate link with another aspect of deejay culture, however. Around the time of his breakthrough *Tomboy* (1998), he began to make claims in interview and other paratexts about engaging in literary "deejaying" or "sampling."¹⁵² If Neumeister revisited highlights from his generation's musical socialization, Meinecke opted for a radical intertextuality. This "literary deejaying" practice involves what Picandet calls a "Produktionsästhetik" (production aesthetic).¹⁵³ Meinecke assembles a "pool" of other peoples' texts prior to commencing writing and then, in much the same way that a deejay makes on-the-spot decisions about which record to play, he reaches for one or another of these texts and places an excerpt from it into his own text.¹⁵⁴ The resulting assemblage—I resist giving an example here because it extends and unfolds over pages—therefore reflects Meinecke's own on-the-spot reading process. It is often highly associative in that the adjacent excerpts resonate with each other, usually thematically, but sometimes also in a rhythmic way. There may well be a "mix" or "cross fade" from one discrete passage—sampled or original—to the next, with a theme or even an individual key word being carried over. Yet, at other times, there can be a sharp thematic contrast—a "cut" or a "scratch"—between the excerpted or paraphrased texts. It is possible to view this approach as analogous to the approach of a deejay, with the notion of mixing, cutting, and scratching between two tracks, as both Picandet and Florence Feiereisen have shown by way of detailed textual analyses.¹⁵⁵ However, the secondary literature disputes whether Meinecke's technique should be classified as "sampling" or rather as a mere "quotation."¹⁵⁶ Most academic commentators apply a narrow definition of sampling—"murdering" rather than respectfully citing the sample—and suggest that Meinecke engages in a more scientific "quotation."¹⁵⁷ Meinecke himself also stresses that literary deejaying is more referential than the musical practice of sampling.¹⁵⁸ Sometimes Meinecke's protagonists paraphrase their sources. At other times the quote is direct, but without inverted commas and footnotes, and sometimes without any clear identification at all. Yet he does not interfere with the semantic content of the intertext.

If Meinecke's technique has one foot in popular culture, then it is also theoretically informed. As evidenced by his intertexts, it is clear that he is well and truly familiar with a very wide range of theory. For one, Meinecke has made a point of eschewing the author function in interviews and also via his semi-autobiographical protagonist in *Musik*. He prides himself on allowing intertexts to speak for themselves and retreating behind an "ent-subjektiviertes Schreiben" (desubjectivized [mode of] writing): "Mein Text weiß viel mehr als ich" (My text knows a lot more than I do), as he has put it.¹⁵⁹ What makes the assemblage of quotes in Meinecke's novels so engaging is the sweep of his interests, his associative leaps, and the receptive activity that this engenders in the reader. In *Hellblau*, for example, Meinecke is interested in a suite of themes from Detroit techno to the "Afro-Germanic,"

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from orthodox Jewish culture in the United States to German U-boat activities off the US Atlantic Coast. If one is prepared to think by analogy, then somehow these themes do resonate with one another, although the reader is very much left to think through the connections. Among other things, Meinecke challenges the notion that a cultural artefact—be it a literary or a musical text—has any “authentic,” prediscursive meaning. The corollary is that the reader must actively engage in constructing the meaning of that text—for Meinecke, as for the secondary literature relating to the way in which authors like Rolf Dieter Brinkmann engaged with popular culture signifiers, this is also one of the vital characteristics and requirements of “pop.”<sup>160</sup> In this respect, he is both a student of earlier Pop I writers like Brinkmann and Hubert Fichte but also a product of his milieu, that of 1980s German advanced music journalism.<sup>161</sup> And while Meinecke, too, has queried some of Diedrich Diederichsen’s later views, including in relation to EDM, there has been no break of the order of that between Goetz and Diederichsen. In fact, his musico-centric literature has, on the whole, been better received than Goetz’s by both literary critics and by pop-leftist music journalists.

### Electronica: German, Afro-Germanic, or Beyond Category?

Having examined some of the ways in which EDM and deejay culture have influenced Meinecke’s literature at a formal level, I wish now to isolate one theme that he has associated with electronica, especially in the 2001 novel *Hellblau*. It is wrong to identify in Meinecke’s literature only one type of musical taste or one thematic interest. He, too, is a personification of the newly “omnivorous” music listener. Nevertheless, one of the music-related themes that seems to have particularly interested him in the late 1990s and into the 2000s involved a very real issue thrown up, inter alia, by unification: What, if anything, did it mean to be “German”? He did not baldly pose this question, but rather mapped it over understandings of electronica and its putatively German character. Meinecke was far from alone in considering the question—indeed, he would have asserted that his text was just excerpting current music discourse. This is not to say that the question, or some of the answers that he alluded to, were altogether new. German discourse about other sorts of popular music over the last half century had thrown up variants on the same postnational theme, even if they were not as theoretically anchored as Meinecke’s texts are.

Various commentators have discerned a growing affinity between popular music and the German nation that has become stronger in light of a perceived “normalization” of the nation since unification.<sup>162</sup> Many younger West Germans were, by the mid-1990s, seemingly less interested

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in the national socialist past or with any moralizing discourse that sought to problematize the nation, a shift also reflected in the generational switch associated with Pop II and illustrated in Neumeister's texts, as we have seen.¹⁶³ In this context, some German popular music became more proud to be German.¹⁶⁴ The links between popular music and nation took on some extreme forms: by the early 1990s, for example, it was being noted that popular music subcultures could accommodate far right-wing ideologies.¹⁶⁵ Yet a new, more proximate relationship between popular music and the nation was raised in several mainstream settings too. In 1993, the music television channel Viva was launched with a pledge to broadcast 40 percent German productions.¹⁶⁶ Then, in 1994, musicians and industry figures lobbied for a mandatory nation-based *Musikquote* (music quota) in broadcasting.¹⁶⁷ Musicians and politicians, from the SPD and the Greens through to the extreme right-wing NPD, repeated these calls in 2001 and again in 2004.¹⁶⁸ German-language lyrics and a would-be *Deutschpop* (German pop) genre also raised the issue of "Germanness." After earlier high-water marks, such as during the Liedermacher and Deutschrock eras of the 1960s and 1970s, and during the *Neue Deutsche Welle* boom of the early 1980s, German-language lyrics had gone out of vogue prior to the fall of the Wall. There was a clear revival in the early 1990s.¹⁶⁹ A raft of *Deutschpop* acts entered the field, championed by Universal Music GmbH and others who also promoted the *Musikquote*. The notion of *Deutschpop* did not go unchallenged, however. Various parties, including the editors of a programmatically titled 2005 volume *I Can't Relax in Deutschland*, have pitted themselves against it, preferring rather an older-style leftist internationalism that has no interest in cultural or national borders. They see popular music as still having the power to undermine those concepts.

"Techno" has offered another significant domain in which commentators have raised German cultural identity. Indeed EDM was one of the musics that, in 1996, prompted the editors of the popular culture journal *Testcard* to analyze the links between popular music and Germanness. There was a distinct ambiguity in EDM culture about the German nation. Indeed, techno's web of significations could support a range of "German" as well as strongly "international" interpretations. If electronic music was "without tradition" for earlier generations of Germans, and all the more liberating for it, then by the 1990s electronica actually did have something of a tradition, and various commentators were identifying that there was a specifically German dimension to it.¹⁷⁰ Many of the American techno and house innovators of the 1980s and 1990s had been strongly influenced by German music, especially by Kraftwerk. Kraftwerk itself had made a feature of "Germanness," albeit refracted through a camp sensibility that left an appropriately receptive audience wondering just what to make of it.¹⁷¹ Other factors

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contributed to an association between EDM and Germanness. By the mid-1990s, techno was comparatively more popular in Germany than in other countries.<sup>172</sup> Moreover, German musicians were making significant contributions to electronica, particularly in its so-called intelligent manifestations. As the Cologne deejay Hans Nieswandt discovered, his German identity gave him special distinctive kudos internationally.<sup>173</sup> This nationally specific subcultural capital could allow a young German techno fan to be proud of his or her Germanness, if so inclined. Yet any German identification should have been doubly filtered—not only through Kraftwerk’s original irony but also through the international appropriation and recontextualization by African Americans like the Detroit techno pioneers Juan Atkins and Derrick May. Not that all German electronica fans had such scruples; some seemed inclined to celebrate techno’s “Germanness” in a rather unreflective way.<sup>174</sup> The putative Germanness of what some were calling “Teuton techno” could be deeply worrying too.<sup>175</sup> For example, the protagonist in Christian Kracht’s novel *Faserland* (1995) likens the rave crowd to a threatening, Ur-Germanic “Ragnarök.”<sup>176</sup> By contrast, the music journalist Claus Bachor tipped the balance in the other direction, almost totally erasing “German” contributions to techno; for him “real” techno was almost entirely African American.<sup>177</sup> For others, EDM culture could act as a welcome flight from Germanness toward something more international.<sup>178</sup> These commentators built their interpretation on a variety of factors, including techno’s predominantly instrumental (and hence highly mobile) nature, as well as on techno tourism and the international links between different rave scenes.<sup>179</sup> Goetz is a case in point; in 1990, he became depressed by the prospect of German reunification and fled to England to pursue his interest in rave culture there.<sup>180</sup> He accompanied his friend Sven Vāth to various deejay engagements around the world, and techno tourism would also feature in *Rave*—indeed Ibiza is one of the locations depicted in the novel. At a rather more sophisticated level, one could, like Meinecke, also point to the complex “transatlantic feedback” between German and African American electronica. This could be used to plumb notions of progressive transnationalism.

### For a Transnational Techno

Thomas Meinecke has kept a watchful eye on the contemporary political state of Germany. He has expressed concern about a noticeable “Ruck” (lurch) toward the Right, and *Hellblau* bears witness to troubling events such as anti-Semitic attacks in post-Wall Germany.<sup>181</sup> Meinecke identifies with the Left, yet he has criticized the party-political Left.<sup>182</sup> For him, any answer lies not in the mire of conventional politics but rather in inaugurating more fundamental changes in modes of thought. As he

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noted in 1998, “Ich habe das Gefühl, im vermeintlichen Privaten läßt sich Politisches lösen oder angehen” (I have the feeling that it is in the supposedly private that the political may be solved or [at least] approached).¹⁸³ Informed by the theoretical insights of cultural studies, of which he became a “fan” in the mid-1990s, Meinecke broadly wishes to explore how power influences discourse and how performance can be co-opted to lay bare and undermine those links.¹⁸⁴ While much of his literary production—most notably *Tomboy* (1998)—has been devoted to upsetting the ways in which gender has been conceived as “natural,” his artistic oeuvre has also undermined categories such as “nation” and “race.” He has done so in various ways. In interviews, he has distanced himself from *Deutschpop* efforts “den Soundtrack zum Neuen Deutschen Reich (sozusagen) herzustellen” (to [so to speak] produce the soundtrack to the New German Reich).¹⁸⁵ In his music, he has played with, yet radically undermined, German folkloric traditions.¹⁸⁶ He has engaged in complex collaborations with American musicians.¹⁸⁷ Finally, he has advanced a transnational interpretation of electronica that avoids the naïve boosterism of some of rave culture’s German champions.

Meinecke explores electronica as a carrier of transnationalism, especially in his 2001 novel *Hellblau*. Thematically, electronica enters the slight narrative in *Hellblau* via its five protagonists and their joint interests. The German Tillmann, who is currently living off the coast of North Carolina, and the (presumably) African American Yolanda, who grew up as a US Army child in Bitburg and now lives in Chicago, are writing a book that will contain musings on music, “race,” and gender, Germans and African Americans, and more besides. The three other “Ideenträger” (bearers of ideas) in Meinecke’s novel are Vermilion (Tillmann’s Jewish American girlfriend, who is researching orthodox Jewish life in the United States), Cordula (Tillmann’s ex-girlfriend), and Heinrich, Cordula’s current boyfriend (and Yolanda’s ex-boyfriend), who is writing a thesis on Ronald Reagan’s and Helmut Kohl’s 1985 visit to the Bitburg military cemetery. This breadth of interests is matched by the protagonists’ omnivorous music tastes. Most attention is nevertheless given to contemporary electronica, and especially techno, and, to a lesser extent, jazz. Although the musico-centric passages sometimes read like the protagonists’ fan talk, or as a blog, as Cecile Zorach suggests, there is an attempt to use these musics not solely as an excuse for “music-nerdism,” such as the epistemologically fruitless observation that the Detroit techno musician Mike Banks performed with George Clinton’s band, P-Funk, but rather as the springboard for productive “Mutmaßungen” (speculations)—what Christoph Hägele calls “heuristisches Graben” (heuristic digging)—based on extra-musical webs of signification that link in especially with theoretical insights in circulation in cultural studies discourses.¹⁸⁸

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## How “German” Is the Black Atlantic?

What techno and jazz have in common is the way that putatively post-racial and postnational thinking has impacted on their reception in Germany, and might continue to do so.<sup>189</sup> At a personal level, Meinecke found himself initially influenced by racial “authenticist” thinking in relation to both types of music—he was instinctively attracted to those artists whom he knew to be black. However, in the course of his fandom, he also consciously wrestled with and overcame this thinking.<sup>190</sup> Such a trajectory also occurs in relation to the figures in *Hellblau*, as Katharina Picandet has noted.<sup>191</sup> For the musician-cum-author, grappling like this becomes a highly productive space of musical consumption. By excerpting and speculating on some of the more progressive transnational discourse in relation to these two musics—and also in surveying some of the contrary arguments—he hopes to foster a similar intellectual activity among his readership.

Via his attention to electronica and its recent history, Meinecke exposes what we might refer to as Germanic eddies in the black Atlantic. He thereby not only popularizes among his readership Paul Gilroy’s (1993) notion of African diasporic identities on the Atlantic seaboard, which are fluid as a result of capture in the transatlantic slave trade and exile.<sup>192</sup> (Gilroy is referred to by name in *Hellblau*, and his work digested in it at some length.) Meinecke actually takes the figure of the black Atlantic further than Gilroy himself, encouraging his readers to consider transposing it, inter alia, onto German conceptions of culture or ethnicity. Figuratively, the Atlantic—as it features in *Hellblau*—is not simply black. One thematic subplot relates to how the Atlantic was crisscrossed by German submarines during World War II. These military crossings are laid in parallel (or “mixed, cut, and scratched”) with the subsequent transatlantic musical crossings that form an equally important thematic cluster of the book.

In their devotion to electronica, *Hellblau*’s protagonists are especially interested in the so-called Afro-Germanic.<sup>193</sup> The reference here is not so much to the multitude of Afro-German identities in current-day Germany, but rather to ongoing, spiraling “transatlantic musical feedback” between African American and German techno. One of his protagonists, citing a new Detroit remix of a Kraftwerk piece, notes, for example: “we saw electric Germany; they saw electric Detroit.”<sup>194</sup> Here and elsewhere Meinecke’s novel infers that the German reception of Detroit techno—which might otherwise, as with Claus Bächer, have seemed to be another case of mono-directional German “Afro-Americanophilia” (Moritz Ege)—is part of a complex two-way process of continual reception, recontextualization, and mingling.<sup>195</sup> His protagonists do so by referring not only to the way in which Detroit techno,

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and its futuristic iteration of African American identity, has been wrapped up in a Germanophile fantasy revolving around electronic music such as Kraftwerk's. They also show that Germany and its electronica scene have provided a home to many of these African American musicians at a time when it may have been more difficult for them in the United States. Tillmann's and Yolanda's "overspilling" book project, which itself never seems to fully resolve but keeps crisscrossing the German and the African American, is itself a cipher for this productive entanglement. Often we are not sure who is speaking at any one time, the expatriate German Tillmann or the German-born African American Yolanda.

Patently, this discourse does not glorify the "Germanness" of techno. What emerges is rather a messy image of electronica as an inherently transnational music, crossing and recrossing the Atlantic, as do musicians and the records and e-mail correspondence between Tillmann, Yolanda, Cordula, and Heinrich. Like Meinecke himself, these figures and their labors represent the productivity of the transnational. The image of electronica is one in which, at least in its utopian moments, national or "racial" identity seems irrelevant. It is the locus of a "fortschrittlichen Universalismus" (progressive universalism).¹⁹⁶ The character Tillmann observes at one point, for example, that with techno, "Alle tanzen, doch niemand kennt die Platten" (everyone is dancing, but no one knows the records).¹⁹⁷ By extension, they do not know the national identity of the musicians either. Meinecke's novel even suggests that Germany might be especially receptive to the transnational utopia of electronica, given that there has apparently been an avoidance of the musical "segregationism" between black and white artists that has emerged elsewhere.¹⁹⁸ The image here of techno marks a cautious updating of the German celebratory discourse about inherently "international," "colourblinding" jazz that emerged in the postwar era.¹⁹⁹

Nevertheless, *Hellblau*'s protagonists are not as starry-eyed about techno as some of the postwar publicists were about jazz, or indeed as are some of techno's celebrators, including Rainald Goetz. Nor would we expect this to be the case, given Meinecke's postmodern convictions as to the slipperiness of meaning in music and the need for an individual to "read" the text in a cultural studies sense. Making the most of the "deejaying" format, he marshals potentially troublesome aspects of electronica, including, for example, the anti-Semitic attitudes of some of the music's enthusiasts and the apparent coquetting of certain African American musicians with "faschistoid" (protofascist) titles or a militaristic aesthetic (*Hellblau*, 100, 102–3). He forces his protagonists to grapple with these dimensions. Are they camp statements? Can they be read against their apparent grain (*Hellblau*, 125–26)? *Hellblau* also cites critical interpretations of the idea of collegial musical "appropriation" and of electronic dance music itself—including Diederich Diederichsen's notion

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of the subjectless dance crowd as narcissistic mass—even if the book’s protagonists, aligning with Meinecke’s own enthusiasm for electronica, question these arguments from various perspectives, from the anecdotal through to the theoretical (*Hellblau*, 113–15).

At a concrete thematic level, *Hellblau* engages, among other things, with concepts of nation and “race” that were very current at the time of writing. By popularizing and extrapolating on Gilroy’s black Atlantic, he makes an intervention into German debates about postnational identity advanced by public intellectuals such as Jürgen Habermas, as well as by Ulrich Beck and others.<sup>200</sup> He did so at a time when the would-be “normalization” of the German nation, the Germanness of *Deutschpop* and techno, as well as German citizenship laws and the traditional principle of *ius sanguinis* were being debated. By attending to more troubling parts of Germany’s history, including militarism, anti-Semitism, and Reagan and Kohl’s problematic visit to the Bitburg cemetery, Meinecke’s novel stood in opposition to those who unreflectively greeted the “normalization” of Germany. Yet it never descends to older and simpler modes of engagement and critique, to what Büsser calls “Platitüden und abgedroschenen Parolen” (platitudes and threadbare slogans).<sup>201</sup> *Hellblau* evinces an interest in German electronica, yet it does not celebrate the German *per se*; electronica is most often placed within the “Afro-Germanic” context. Hence, it is neither “Teuton techno” nor “black Music.” Instead it is shown to be able to question those categories and the mind-sets that stand behind them. Nevertheless, if pop music is ultimately a text needing interpretation, and open to many such interpretations, so too are Meinecke’s novels. The electronica that he describes remains an open text, even if it points to productive models of postnationalism. “Pop ist Lesen: Diagnose aber nicht Prognose. Nicht Wissen, sondern Fragen.” (Pop is reading: Diagnosis but not prognosis. Not knowledge but questioning.)<sup>202</sup>

### Sophisticated “Techno-Lit”?

For Goetz, Neumeister, and Meinecke, EDM gave wings to a preexisting literary career. By engaging with EDM or its social context at both a thematic and an aesthetic level, these double agents were, at one level, simply trying to convey their enthusiasm for a new type of music within the literary medium. In each case, a quasi-ethnographic impulse existed in relation to EDM culture, albeit a fan-based and poeticized one. It was also one that, at a formal level, engaged with, or attempted to engage with, the very object under observation. It is a testament to the productiveness of EDM, its milieu and its technologies, that each of these authors took a quite different approach to the task. Neumeister opted for a “verbal minimalism” tempered with a sampling of music history, Goetz attempted to produce the “real” experience of the rave, and Meinecke’s

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starting point was a mustering and “deejaying” of music discourse. In Neumeister’s texts, there was occasionally a form of humorous overstatement that simultaneously undermined the fan-based music discourse that it reproduced. For example, Neumeister’s character draws on EDM’s structure to cite and question the present-obsessed ideology of EDM: “Gegenwart ist Alles. Gegenwart als Alles und als Nichts.” (The present is everything. The present as everything and as nothing.)²⁰³ Meinecke’s figures also do not just reproduce the discourse, but live out that discourse, and in his occasional use of irony, they query some of its blindspots.²⁰⁴ In this respect both Neumeister and Meinecke have created a new iteration of the advanced modes of musico-centric literature that Marc A. Weiner has described: they do not just reproduce music discourse; they engage it and play on it, activating the reader in the process.

The impulse to literarize EDM and its milieu was thoroughly legitimate—after all, why should German literature have remained “unplugged,” in Neumeister’s terms? Nevertheless, the project was often underscored by questions of whether “literary deejaying,” a focus on “verbal minimalism,” or the euphoria of lived existence were really transferable into a novel-length text. Goetz’s whole project of finding a language for the rave experience grappled with this conundrum. Neumeister clearly found that the aesthetic of a minimal techno track was not transferable to a longer text, and needed to alloy “verbal minimalism” with an idiosyncratic “sampling” of music history. Meinecke, the would-be textual deejay, found it necessary to retain some vestige of narrative, however slight. One can also observe other disjunctures between an ideal notion of “deejay literature” and Meinecke’s practice. Though he disavowed the author function, and freely borrowed from others’ texts, he did not publish anonymously, as did some of the EDM musicians who captivate his protagonists in *Hellblau*. His most recent novel, *Lookalikes*, even includes a protagonist called Thomas Meinecke. Suhrkamp claims copyright over his texts.²⁰⁵ Meinecke’s fondness of the interview format also tends to detract from the claims of “myself as text.” In these respects, the German literary market has proven that it is not ready to fully adopt extremer models from the world of deejay culture, even if it is prepared to toy with some of its trappings.

It was surely astute of Goetz, Neumeister, and Meinecke, and their publisher, to move with the *Zeitgeist* and link their literary activities with EDM. As the 1997 Love Parade indicated, there was a sizeable market of EDM fans in Germany. This is not to suggest cynical *Zielgruppenliteratur* (literature aimed at a target audience), or to doubt the sincerity of these authors’ engagement with EDM. Although certain aspects of their literary aesthetic were undoubtedly already present prior to the discovery of EDM—for example Meinecke’s literary aesthetic was already consistent with FSK’s earlier “Zitat-Rock” (quotation-rock) practice and with the preelectonica format of his novel *The Church of John F. Kennedy*—EDM

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and digital technologies did offer an important new way of reconceiving and refining their literary practice. They also offered another thematic focus for a series of issues larger than EDM itself.

*Rave* and a text like Neumeister's "Spasverteidigungsversanstaltung" were a defense of EDM in a context where Germany's recent history had colored that country's critical reception of the music. These texts, and Meinecke's "cooler" techno literature from a slightly later phase, when "intelligent" EDM had become more legitimate culture in Germany, touched on a range of significant extra-musical issues, which prevented them from being hermetic. Indeed, Suhrkamp's "pop" authors thereby engaged tangentially, yet in important ways, with pertinent matters such as: "Germanness" in a reunified and globalizing setting; the path of pop leftism after unification; and the impact of a seeming "end of history," and of rapid technological change, on human consciousness. The contested significance of these extra-musical themes, the authors' disregard for traditional literary norms, as well as the sometimes deliberately superficial and affirmative yet apodictic tone, ensured that some of these novels—particularly *Rave*—were criticized. Nevertheless, even the critics noted that these authors had succeeded in "realizing" some aspect of their subject matter. As for an author like Goetz—and all the "double agents" examined here—the approbation of literary critics, or of advanced music journalists, was not altogether important. As Goetz had already noted in 1985, "pop does not have a problem."

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Bradby, "Sampling Sexuality: Gender, Technology, and the Body in Dance Music," *Popular Music* 12, no. 2 (1993): 164. See also Philip Tagg, "From Refrain to Rave: The Decline of Figure and the Rise of Ground," *Popular Music* 13, no. 2 (1994): 209–22.

<sup>2</sup> Diedrich Diederichsen quoted in Tom Holert, "Abgrenzen und Durchkreuzen: Jugendkultur und Popmusik im Zeichen des Zeichens," in Kemper et al., *Alles so schön bunt hier*, 33.

<sup>3</sup> Weiner, *Undertones of Insurrection*.

<sup>4</sup> Ulf Poschardt, *DJ Culture*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (London: Quartet Books, 1998), 147.

<sup>5</sup> John McCready, quoted in Poschardt, *DJ Culture*, 314.

<sup>6</sup> Tagg, "From Refrain to Rave," 216.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Windrich, *Technotheater*, 136–37.

<sup>8</sup> See generally, e.g., Westbam (Maximilian Lenz) and Rainald Goetz, *Mix, Cuts, and Scratches* (Berlin: Merve, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> The process of tape manipulation was pioneered in France by the musique concrète artist Pierre Schaeffer in the 1940s, and these processes were developed and

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continued by a range of minimalist composers and musicians in *E-Musik*, as well as in some genres like Krautrock. See, e.g., Peter Shapiro, ed., *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music* (New York: Caipirinha Productions, 2000). On sampling, see Andrew Goodwin, "Sample and Hold: Pop Music in the Digital Age of Reproduction," in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, ed. Simon Frith and A. Goodwin (London: Routledge, 1990), 258–74; Jeremy J. Beadle, *Will Pop Eat Itself?: Pop Music in the Soundbite Era* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993); Poschardt, *DJ Culture*, 230.

¹⁰ Goodwin, "Sample and Hold"; Poschardt, *DJ Culture*, 275–84.

¹¹ Goetz has written music journalism, deejayed, and recorded with EDM artists. In addition to *Word*, he collaborated in 2001 with DJ Westbam on an adaptation of his text *Heute Morgen*, which was accompanied by music he and Westbam jointly composed. Mirko F. Schmidt, "Techno im Raum der Sprache: Rainald Goetz' Hörbücher," in *Rainald Goetz*, ed. Charis Goer and Stefan Greif (Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 2011), 68–76.

¹² Thomas Groß, "Geheimnisse des I Djing," *Die tageszeitung*, April 11, 1997, 15.

¹³ For a bibliography of his most important texts, see Charis Goer and Tina Deist, "Auswahlbibliografie Rainald Goetz," in Goer and Greif, *Rainald Goetz*, 101–14.

¹⁴ Iggy Pop was one of the important forebears for the punk movement of the mid-late 1970s. Musically, his band, The Stooges, anticipated punk's combination of intensity and simplicity. Iggy Pop also became known for cutting himself on stage at the height of a performance. Goetz can hardly have been unaware of Iggy Pop: He titled a 1983 collage "The Funhouse"; The Stooges' second album was titled *Funhouse* (1970). See Rainald Goetz, *Kronos. Berichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), 114. Thomas Doktor and Carla Spies also make the link between Goetz's Klagenfurt performance and the infamous television appearance of England's Sex Pistols. Thomas Doktor and Carla Spies, *Gottfried Benn—Rainald Goetz: Medium Literatur zwischen Pathologie und Poetologie* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997), 118. For a detailed reading of the Klagenfurt performance, see Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur*, 173–77.

¹⁵ Christian Schultz-Gerstein, "Der rasende Mitläufer," *Der Spiegel*, September 26, 1983, 244, 247; Manfred Allenhoefer, "Struppiger Stürmer," *Schwäbisches Tagblatt*, April 11, 1984, n.p.

¹⁶ Stefan Greif, "'Schnauze. Nix muß ich': Rainald Goetz' Punkroman Irre," in Goer and Greif, *Rainald Goetz*, 17–28, especially 17. On the misanthropic and hate-laden aspects of punk in West Germany, see, e.g., Jürgen Teipel, *Verschwende Deine Jugend* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001); Hornberger, *Geschichte Wird Gemacht*; Shahan, "Sounds of Terror," 369–86.

¹⁷ Allenhoefer, "Struppiger Stürmer." On the "punk" aspects of the novel, including its strategy of "aesthetic terror," see also, e.g., Martin Büsser, "'Ich steh auf Zerfall': Die Punk und New-Wave-Rezeption in der deutschen Literatur," in Arnold and Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 149–57; Thorsten Rudolph, *irre/wirr: Goetz: Vom Ästhetischen Terror Zur Systematischen Utopie* (Munich: Fink, 2008). On its incorporation of "punk as a medium of kenosis," see Jochen Bonz, "Punk als Medium der Entäußerung in Rainald Goetz' früher Prosa," in Goer and Greif, *Rainald Goetz*, 4–16. On Raspe's identity as a "punk aesthete," see

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Greif, “‘Schnauze. Nix muß ich.’” On punk and literature generally, see also Shahan, *Punk Rock and German Crisis*; Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur*, 115–67.

<sup>18</sup> Windrich, *Technotheater*, 56.

<sup>19</sup> Rainald Goetz, *Rave* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), 82. Hereafter cited parenthetically in text by page number.

<sup>20</sup> On the importance of “subcultural capital” in the EDM scene, see Thornton, *Club Cultures*. On the “scene’s” general opposition to journalistic coverage, see Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur*, 217.

<sup>21</sup> Goetz, quoted in Johanna Adorjan, “Der Mann, der beim Ausgehen schreibt,” *Jetzt*, July 31, 2000, 18. See also Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur*, 209.

<sup>22</sup> Schmidt, “Techno im Raum der Sprache,” 69.

<sup>23</sup> MDMA, or “ecstasy,” is a “psychedelic amphetamine.” Its initial effects are a warm glow of euphoria and feelings of love and asexual tenderness toward others; it also involves a “uniquely synergistic/synaesthetic interaction with music, especially uptempo, repetitive, electronic dance music.” The psychedelic dimension of the drug promotes a sense of “hyper-real immediacy”; the amphetamine dimension contributes to the user’s energy reserves. Many of the drug’s users and rave participants report having had a “quasi-mystical experience.” Simon Reynolds, *Energy Flash: A Journey through Rave Music and Dance Culture*, 2nd ed. (London: Pan Macmillan, 2008), xxx, xxxiii.

<sup>24</sup> Ronald Hitzler, “Unity,” in *Techno-Soziologie: Erkundungen einer Jugendkultur*, ed. R. Hitzler and Michaela Pfadenhauer (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 2001), 18–20.

<sup>25</sup> Oliver Dumke, “Techno als säkulare Liturgie: Anmerkungen zu Form und Funktion von Gottesdienst und Techno Event,” in Hitzler and Pfadenhauer *Techno-Soziologie*, 69–83. See also Jürgen Kaesler, *Techno und Religion: Die Elektronische Musik als Religion der Generation XTC* (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovac, 1999); Robin Sylvan, *Traces of the Spirit: The Religious Dimensions of Popular Music* (New York: New York University Press, 2002).

<sup>26</sup> Rainald Goetz, *Celebration: 90s Nacht Pop* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), 264.

<sup>27</sup> Reynolds, *Energy Flash*, xxxv. Reynolds considers that many who have participated in the rave experience are driven to “narrativize their experiences, turn all that glorious disorder into a coherent story” (xviii).

<sup>28</sup> Goetz, quoted in Poschardt, *DJ Culture*, 309. See also Goetz, *Rave*, 221–36.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Groß, “Ja, super, mach’ ma,” *Die tageszeitung*, October 10, 1994, 15. On other resonances with tropes from the Romantic era—in particular *Rave*’s fascination with the night as a liminal space—see Andreas Wicke, “Nacht und Diskurs: Novalis’ ‘Hymnen an die Nacht’ (1800) und Rainald Goetz’ Nachtlebenerzählung ‘Rave’ (1998),” *Der Deutschunterricht* 54, no. 5 (2002): 75–79.

<sup>30</sup> Goetz, *Rave*, 21.

<sup>31</sup> Frith, *Performing Rites*, 8.

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³² Diedrich Diederichsen, "The Kids Are Not Alright: Abschied von der Jugendkultur," *Spex* (November 1992): 28–34. On Diederichsen's leavetaking from other "normative" emanations of "pop" during the mid 1990s—for example Brit pop and "easy listening"—see also Diedrich Diederichsen, "Pop—Deskriptiv, normativ, emphatisch," 36–44.

³³ Leonard, *Gender in the Music Industry*, 125. Martin Büsser, "Gimme Dat Old Time Religion: Pop Werte im Wandel," in Kemper et al., *Alles so schön bunt hier*, 38–48; Holert, "Abgrenzen und Durchkreuzen." Several scholars have suggested a "post-subcultural" approach. See, e.g., David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl, eds., *The Post-Subcultures Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2004); Andy Bennett and Keith Kahn-Harris, *After Subculture: Cultural Studies in Contemporary Youth Culture* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004). Some now favor the term "scene," which designates "something one partakes in, drifts into and out of, without in any necessary way, changing who one is." Moore, "Introduction," in Moore, *Critical Essays in Popular Musicology*, xiv.

³⁴ The annual "Love Parade," which first took place in West Berlin in the summer of 1989, would grow significantly in size and reputation over the coming decade, indeed by 1997 it was reportedly attracting over a million participants. For an excellent overview of the Love Parade's history, see Sean Nye, "Love Parade, Please Not Again: A Berlin Cultural History," *Echo* 9, no. 1 (2009), <http://www.echo.ucla.edu/Volume9-Issue1/nye/nye1.html>. Low Spirit's "pop techno" typically featured much more melody, in which the "ground" was primary, than many other types of techno.

³⁵ Büsser, *Wie Klingt die Neue Mitte?* See also Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur*, 222.

³⁶ Cordt Schnibben, quoted in Tom Holert and Mark Terkessidis, "Einführung in den Mainstream der Minderheiten," in *Mainstream der Minderheiten: Pop in der Kontrollgesellschaft*, ed. Holert and Terkessidis (Berlin: Edition ID-Archiv, 1996), 8. For similarly critical views, see also, e.g., Christine Steffen, "Das Rave Phänomen," in *Techno*, ed. Philipp Anz and Patrick Walder (Zurich: Ricco Bilger Verlag, 1995), 181; Annette Weber, "Miniaturstaat Rave—Nation," in Holert and Terkessidis, *Mainstream der Minderheiten*, 41–54; Mark Terkessidis, "Life after History: How Pop and Politics Are Changing Places in the Berlin Republic," *Debatte* 6, no. 2 (1998): 173–90; Büsser, *Wie klingt die Neue Mitte?*; Claudia Kramatschek, "Wort-mischmaschine," *Die Wochenzeitung* (Kultur), September 6, 2001, 21.

³⁷ Reynolds, *Energy Flash*, xiii.

³⁸ Peter Wagner, *Pop 2000: 50 Jahre Popmusik und Jugendkultur in Deutschland* (Hamburg: Ideal Verlag, 1999), 200. On rock's ideology, see my chapter 4.

³⁹ Poschardt, *DJ Culture*, 145.

⁴⁰ Cf., e.g., Thomas Haemmerli, "Das Lebensgefühl," in Anz and Walder, *Techno*, 187, 189; Holert, "Abgrenzen und Durchkreuzen," 34.

⁴¹ Nye, "Love Parade."

⁴² On "techno anxiety," including in a postwar German context, see, e.g., Scott McQuire, "Problematizing Global Knowledge—Technology," *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, nos. 2–3 (2006): 253–65.

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<sup>43</sup> Rainald Goetz, "Und Blut: Das Sein bestimmt das Sein," *Spex* (October 1985), 47–49.

<sup>44</sup> Goetz, *Celebration*, 235.

<sup>45</sup> Isabelle Graw and Astrid Wege, "Wie bist Du denn drauf?" *Texte zur Kunst* 28 (1997): 39–51. Goetz's desire to spiritualize techno sat uneasily with the Left, which had long been critical of those who would resacralize music, seeing such a tendency in Marxian terms as providing an opiate for the masses. On German leftist critics aversion toward spiritualizing jazz and new age music, see, e.g., Hurley, *Return of Jazz*, 132, 218–28.

<sup>46</sup> chs, "Wohlfahrtsausschuss," *Der Tagesspiegel*, December 2, 1997, 25.

<sup>47</sup> On Goetz's tendency to view flippancy about techno culture and Love Parade slogans as a "punk" performance, see, e.g., Rainald Goetz, "Sven Vāth. Manic Love. The Tokyo Tapes," *Tempo* (September 1994): 70–80.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Lau, "Idole, Ikonen und andere Menschen: Madonna, Michael Jackson und die Fans," in Kemper et al., *Alles so schön bunt hier*, 291. See also Christoph Hägele, *Politische Subjekt- und Machtbegriffe in den Werken von Rainald Goetz und Thomas Meinecke* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2010), 159–60; and Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur*, 217.

<sup>49</sup> Goetz, *Celebration*, 243–76. The original *Wohlfahrtsausschuss* was a Hamburg-based agglomeration of leftist music journalists, indie musicians, artists, and film theorists. It was spurred on by the right-wing extremist attacks on foreigners in parts of East Germany in the early 1990s, and in particular by the experiences that the Hamburg punk band Die Goldenen Zitronen made when it attempted to play a concert in the east. The *Wohlfahrtsausschuss* activity culminated in a 1993 tour through East Germany by Die Goldenen Zitronen, Blumfeld, and others under the motto "Something better than the nation." However its success was moot. In retrospect, even some of those who participated in the tour, or who sympathized with the motives, considered that the affair had taken on an unfortunate pedagogical tone, at odds with the concept of "pop leftism." At this point the old problem of "verkrampfte Debattieren" (inhibited debating) (Rocko Schamoni) reemerged in the pop Left's own ranks. Schamoni quoted in Christoph Twickel, ed., *Läden, Schuppen, Kaschemmen: Eine Hamburger Popkulturgeschichte* (Hamburg: Edition Nautilus, 2003), 156–57.

<sup>50</sup> On Goetz's notion of constructed authenticity, see Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur*, 181.

<sup>51</sup> Goetz, *Rave*, 177.

<sup>52</sup> Windrich, *Technotheater*, 110. Gabriele Klein, *Electronic Vibration: Pop Kultur Theorie*, 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004).

<sup>53</sup> Goetz, *Rave*, 80. This is a point made by Andreas Wicke. Wicke, "'Brüllaut, hyperklar': Rainald Goetz' Techno-Erzählung 'Rave,'" in Goer and Greif, *Rainald Goetz*, 41–51.

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Moritz Von Uslar, "Ha! Ha! Superdoof?" *Tempo* (November 1993): 99–102. In a 1994 interview, Goetz effectively admitted that he was slumming. For him "Intellektualität ist immer noch ein Klassen-Schicksal, gegen das man politisch revoltieren kann" (intellectuality is a class destiny, against which one can

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revolt politically), although he was aware of the risk of idealizing the working class in the process (Goetz, *Celebration*, 71).

⁵⁵ Stefan Sprang, "Abfeiern Aufreissen Ausrasten," *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, September 18, 1998, 33.

⁵⁶ Frith, *Performing Rites*, 126.

⁵⁷ Goetz, *Rave*, 172.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 178.

⁵⁹ Goetz, *Celebration*, 219.

⁶⁰ Windrich, *Technotheater*, 119.

⁶¹ Goetz, *Rave*, 159.

⁶² Matthias Waltz, "Zwei Topographien des Begehrens: Pop/techno mit Lacan," in *Sound Signatures*, ed. Jochen Bonz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 226–27.

⁶³ Dietmar Dath, "Froh wie seine Sonnen fliegen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, May 23, 2004, 29.

⁶⁴ Goetz, *Rave*, 27.

⁶⁵ As Moritz Baßler points out, the fragmented nature of *Rave* is reminiscent, for example, of the *Sturm und Drang* (storm and stress) era. Baßler, *Deutsche Pop-Roman*, 143–47.

⁶⁶ Wicke, "Brüllaut, hyperklar," 45–46.

⁶⁷ Patrick Walder, "Ganz realbrutale Echtrealität," *Der Spiegel*, no. 14 (1998): 224–25.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Thomas Steiner, "Fürst des Nachtlebens," *Badische Zeitung*, May 26, 1998, KUL 4.

⁶⁹ See Christian Jürgens, "Chefs im Exzeß," *Rheinischer Merkur*, June 5, 1998, 24; John Bornemann and Stefan Senders, "Politics without a Head: Is the 'Love Parade' a New Form of Political Identification?" *Cultural Anthropology* 15, no. 2 (May 2000): 294–317; Schumacher, *Gerade Eben Jetzt*, 142; Wicke, "Brüllaut, hyperklar," 50; Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur*, 226. As realistic and effective as Goetz's unfinished "rave talk" sentences might be, the concomitant of euphoric, broken language is the breakdown of conventional spoken communication, which is a feature of Kathrin Röggla's Love Parade vignette in her 1999 "Berlin" novel *Irres Wetter* (Schumacher, *Gerade Eben Jetzt*, 52).

⁷⁰ Schumacher, *Gerade Eben Jetzt*; see also Windrich, *Technotheater*, 101.

⁷¹ Rainald Goetz, *Abfall für Alle: Roman eines Jahres* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), 268.

⁷² Goetz, *Rave*, 84–85.

⁷³ Wicke, "Brüllaut, hyperklar," 47.

⁷⁴ Schumacher, *Gerade Eben Jetzt*, 37.

⁷⁵ Florian Illies, "So schaute aus," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 3, 1998, L3.

⁷⁶ Wolfgang Farkas, "Heute ist ein neuer schöner Tag," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, November 11, 1999, 19.

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<sup>77</sup> Windrich, *Technotheater*, 101. See also Fritz Göttler, "Nukleus der Nacht," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, April 25 and 26, 1998, 14.

<sup>78</sup> Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur*, 208, 195.

<sup>79</sup> See, e.g., Illies, "So schaute aus"; Jürgens, "Chefs im Exzeß"; Holger Kreitling, "Es gibt kein falsches Leben im richtigen Club," *Die Welt*, April 11, 1998, G5; Sprang, "Abfeiern Aufreissen Ausrasten"; Walder, "Ganz realbrutale Echtrealität."

<sup>80</sup> Philipp Anz, "Zugeballert, geil abgefeiert," *Die Wochenzeitung*, April 16, 1998, 18. See also Jürgens, "Chefs im Exzeß"; Walder, "Ganz realbrutale Echtrealität."

<sup>81</sup> Goetz, *Celebration*, 69–89.

<sup>82</sup> Tobias Rapp, *Lost and Sound: Berlin, Techno und der Easyjetset* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2009).

<sup>83</sup> Volker Zeese, "Wie findet man bloß die Heilsbotschaft im Techno-Beat," *Die Welt*, May 19, 1997, G6.

<sup>84</sup> Nye, "Love Parade."

<sup>85</sup> Albert Kuhn, "Das Manifest," in Anz and Walder, *Techno*, 215; Ralf Niemczyk, "Längst über den Regenbogen," in Anz and Walder, *Techno*, 224.

<sup>86</sup> Reynolds, *Energy Flash*, 384–86; 500; Nye, "Love Parade."

<sup>87</sup> Achim Szepanski, "Den Klangstrom zum Beben bringen," in Anz and Walder, *Techno*, 137–42; Markus S. Kleiner and Achim Szepanski, eds., *Soundcultures: Über Elektronische und Digitale Musik* (Frankfurt am Main: Edition Suhrkamp, 2003). For an excellent English-language introduction to and analysis of this poststructural EDM discourse in Germany, see, e.g., David Robb, "The Demise of Political Song and the New Discourse of Techno in the Berlin Republic," in Robb, *Protest Song*, 255–78.

<sup>88</sup> See, e.g., Martin Büsser, *Antipop* (Mainz: Ventil Verlag, 2002).

<sup>89</sup> Niemczyk, "Längst über den Regenbogen," 225.

<sup>90</sup> Jens Balzer, "In die Disco, von der Disco wieder fort," *Berliner Zeitung*, November 18, 1998, 6.

<sup>91</sup> Quoted in Wolfgang Farkas, "Herz und Hund," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 10, 2001, 21.

<sup>92</sup> Petra Steinberger, "Der Schriftsteller als Weltempfänger," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, May 27, 1993, 15.

<sup>93</sup> Andreas Neumeister and Marcel Hartges, "Introduction," in *Poetry Slam*, ed. Neumeister and Hartges (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1996), 13.

<sup>94</sup> Neumeister and Hartges, "Introduction," 14; Andreas Neumeister, "50 Jahre Nachkriegselend," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, October 17, 1996, 17.

<sup>95</sup> Neumeister, "Dual Plattenspieler," 17.

<sup>96</sup> Andreas Neumeister, "Die Spassverteidigungsveranstaltung," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, May 28, 1996, 15. Munich's *Feldherrnhalle* (field marshalls' hall) is not only linked to the general nineteenth-century history of German militarism. It was also linked specifically to National Socialism, being an important site of confrontation

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between National Socialist marchers and Bavarian police during Hitler's first (failed) "Beer Hall Putsch" in 1923.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Ulrich Rüdenauer, "Ist Pop mittlerweile zu brav geworden, Herr Neumeister?" *Der Tagesspiegel*, July 11, 2001, 26.

⁹⁸ Andreas Neumeister, "Pop als Wille und Vorstellung," in Bonz, *Sound Signatures*, 23.

⁹⁹ Quoted in Rüdenauer, "Ist Pop mittlerweile zu brav geworden." On Neumeister's views about teleological narrative, see Steinberger, "Schriftsteller als Weltempfänger"; Neumeister, "50 Jahre Nachkriegselend."

¹⁰⁰ Andreas Neumeister, *Gut Laut Version 2.0* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001).

¹⁰¹ Georg M. Oswald, "Alles Plastik, alles Sound in old Mjunik," *Die Welt*, November 7, 1998, 4.

¹⁰² Richard Kämmerlings, "Versuch über den Tape Recorder," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, December 31, 1998, 35.

¹⁰³ See, e.g., Neumeister, *Gut laut*, 55.

¹⁰⁴ Neumeister, *Gut laut*, 121.

¹⁰⁵ Neumeister, "Pop als Wille und Vorstellung," 22.

¹⁰⁶ See, e.g., Balzer, "In die Disco"; Ulrich Rüdenauer, "Müllmusik," *Der Tagesspiegel*, January 5, 2003, 29; Martin Zeyn, "Kai Dieckmann, ausziehen!," *die tagesszeitung*, February 4, 2003, 17. Geoffrey Cox also identifies distinct affinities with dada poetry: Cox, "Playlists," 163–67.

¹⁰⁷ Peter Weber is another Suhrkamp author to have been influenced by minimal EDM. He has reflected on the special propensity of the German language to be employed in an approximation of loops and variations. Peter Weber, *Die Melodielosen Jahren* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007), 64–65, 147–48, 150–51, 153–54.

¹⁰⁸ Goetz's friend, DJ Westbam, explains the original dischord: "Als Punk hab ich Disco natürlich abgelehnt" (As a punk I rejected disco of course). Quoted in Wagner, *Pop 2000*, 111. If Westbam took some time to come around to thinking the dischord, then others, like Meinecke, seem to have been able to accommodate both at the time. Indeed, this was part of the freedom heralded by the postpunk moment. Witzel, Walter, and Meinecke, *Plattenspieler*.

¹⁰⁹ Wim Mertens, *American Minimal Music*, trans. J. Hautekiet (London: Kahn & Averill; New York: Broude, 1983), 17.

¹¹⁰ Ron Rosenbaum quoted in Mertens, *American Minimal Music*, 89.

¹¹¹ Quoted in Mertens, *American Minimal Music*, 79.

¹¹² Frith, *Performing Rites*, 148–49.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹¹⁴ Mertens, *American Minimal Music*, 92.

¹¹⁵ Rüdenauer, "Ist Pop mittlerweile zu brav geworden."

¹¹⁶ See, e.g., Tim Gorbauch, "Pop, subversiv," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, April 2, 2003, 13.

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<sup>117</sup> Ingo Arends, "German Charts," *Freitag*, October 2, 1998, 1.

<sup>118</sup> Cox, "Playlists," 158.

<sup>119</sup> Hubert Spiegel, "Band läuft," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 6, 1999, 5.

<sup>120</sup> See, e.g., Neumeister, *Gut laut*, 55.

<sup>121</sup> Von Dirke, "Pop Literature in the Berlin Republic," 111, emphasis added. See also Schumacher, *Gerade Eben Jetzt*, 48–51; and Cox, "Playlists," 180.

<sup>122</sup> See, e.g., Kämmerlings, "Versuch über den Tape Recorder."

<sup>123</sup> Balzer, "In die Disco." See also Cox, "Playlists," 163.

<sup>124</sup> See, e.g., Neumeister, *Gut laut*, 13–14, 93.

<sup>125</sup> George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 29. There is also a strong German tradition of critiquing historicism; see, e.g., Friedrich Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1970); and Walter Benjamin, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte," in *Illuminationen*, ed. Siegfried Unseld (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), 251–61.

<sup>126</sup> For an account of this mode of engaging with the past, see, e.g., Elizabeth E. Guffey, *Retro: The Culture of Revival* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006).

<sup>127</sup> Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 39.

<sup>128</sup> Frith, *Performing Rites*, 243.

<sup>129</sup> Sibylle Cramer, "Das Leben zu einer einzigen Abschweifung machen," *Frankfurter Rundschau* (*Literatur Rundschau*), October 7, 1998, 4.

<sup>130</sup> Neumeister, *Gut laut*, 10, 121.

<sup>131</sup> Andreas Neumeister, "Reichspartygelände," in Neumeister and Hartges, *Poetry Slam*, 268–73. Reichspartygelände (Reich's-party-field) is a play of words on the *Reichsparteitagsgelände*, the Nuremberg site of the National Socialist Party parades.

<sup>132</sup> Arends, "German Charts."

<sup>133</sup> See, e.g., Neumeister, *Gut laut*, 25.

<sup>134</sup> Andreas Neumeister, "Mensch und Maschine," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, November 25, 1998, 2, emphasis added.

<sup>135</sup> Cox, "Playlists," 168.

<sup>136</sup> Guffey, *Retro*.

<sup>137</sup> Spiegel, "Band läuft."

<sup>138</sup> Kämmerlings, "Versuch über den Tape Recorder."

<sup>139</sup> Quoted in Ulrich Rüdenauer, "Der Reiz des Rhizomatischen," *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter* 40, no. 161 (2002): 106–17.

<sup>140</sup> Sabine Kyora, "Postmoderne Stile: Überlegungen zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 122 (2003): 287–302; Hägele, *Politische Subjekt- und Machtbegriffe*, 18–20.

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¹⁴¹ Thomas Meinecke, "Myself as Text (Extended Version)," trans. Allison Plath-Moseley, in *German Pop Culture: How American Is It?*, ed. Agnes C. Mueller (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004) 141–48. See also Brombach and Rüdener, "Gesamteles Gedankenmaterial."

¹⁴² Witzel, Walter, and Meinecke, *Plattenspieler*, 83.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 83–84.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 83.

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Rüdener, "Reiz des Rhizomatischen."

¹⁴⁶ See, e.g., Mertens, *American Minimal Music*; Timothy S. Murphy, "What I Hear Is Thinking Too: The Deleuze Tribute Recordings," in *Deleuze and Music*, ed. Ian Buchanan and Marcel Swiboda (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 159–75.

¹⁴⁷ See generally Szepanski, "Den Klangstrom zum Beben bringen"; Kleiner and Szepanski, *Soundcultures*; Robb, "Demise of Political Song."

¹⁴⁸ Thomas Meinecke, *Hellblau* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 114.

¹⁴⁹ See, e.g., Messmer, "Eine elegante Einladung zum Dialog," 13–14; Ulrich Rüdener, "Ist Maria Schwarz?," *Der Tagesspiegel*, September 23, 2001, 5; Katharina Picandet, *Zeitromane der Gegenwart*; Georg Schmid *Roman trouve*—Marcel Beyer *Das Menschenfleisch*—Thomas Meinecke *Hellblau* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 288.

¹⁵⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 21.

¹⁵¹ Picandet, *Zeitromane der Gegenwart*, 306.

¹⁵² See, e.g., Büsser, "Ich finde Musik"; Thomas Meinecke, "Ich muss nicht schreiben, um nicht verrückt zu werden," in *Zwanzig Gespräche mit Schriftstellern*, ed. Daniel Lenz and Eric Pütz (Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 2000), 145–55.

¹⁵³ Picandet, *Zeitromane der Gegenwart*, 306.

¹⁵⁴ Meinecke, "Ich muß nicht schreiben," 148.

¹⁵⁵ Picandet, *Zeitromane der Gegenwart*, 290–91. See also Feiereisen, *Text als Soundtrack*.

¹⁵⁶ Windrich, *Technotheater*, 139; Picandet, *Zeitromane der Gegenwart*, 294.

¹⁵⁷ See, e.g., Jochen Bonz, *Meinecke Mayer Musik erzählt* (Osnabrück: Intro, 1998); Gerald Fiebig, "Jäger und Sampler," *Testcard 7* (1999): 234; Sascha Kösch, "Ein Review kommt selten allein: Die Regeln der elektronischen Musik: Zur Schnittstelle von Musik- und Textproduktion im Techno," in Bonz, *Sound Signatures*, 173–89; Windrich, *Technotheater*, 139; Picandet, *Zeitromane der Gegenwart*, 294.

¹⁵⁸ Meinecke, quoted in Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur*, 275.

¹⁵⁹ Quotes from, respectively, Lenz and Pütz, "Ich bin so ein Pop-Sommer-1982-Typ," 21; Kolja Mensing, "'Originalität' ist eine Ablenkungsmanöver," *die tageszeitung*, October 15, 1997, Frankfurt Book Fair "literataz" supplement; and P. Boenisch, "Mein Text weiß viel mehr als ich," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, October 9, 2001, 22.

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<sup>160</sup> Reinhard Baumgart, "Im Chaos fischen," *Die Zeit*, October 4, 2001, 28, 30; Morten Kansteiner, "Welche Farbe hat Mariah Carey?" *Frankfurter Rundschau*, January 18, 2002, 18. In his analysis of Rolf Dieter Brinkmann's oeuvre and of "Pop I," Jörgen Schäfer argues that the hallmark of the "pop" approach is an active "reading" and recoding, in the cultural studies sense, of popular cultural signifiers. Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*; Schäfer, "Mit dem Vorhandenen," 78.

<sup>161</sup> Brinkmann and Fichte have been enabling figures for Meinecke. See, e.g., Meinecke, "From A to B," 3; Thomas Meinecke, "Er hat mich einen Mörder genannt," 27; Meinecke, *Lookalikes*.

<sup>162</sup> See, e.g., Mark Terkessidis, "Die Eingeborenen von Schizonesien: Der Schlager als deutsche aller Popkulturen," in Holert and Terkessidis, *Mainstream der Minderheiten*, 115–38; Büsser, *Wie klingt die Neue Mitte?*; Günther Jacob, "Die Modernisierung der Identität," *Konkret* 7 (2001): 46–48; Edward Larkey, "Postwar German Popular Music: Americanization, the Cold War, and the Post-Nazi Heimat," in *Music and German National Identity*, ed. Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 234–50; Ulrich Adelt, "'Ich bin der Rock'n'Roll-Übermensch': Globalization and Localization in German Music Television," *Popular Music and Society* 28, no. 3 (2005): 279–95; Unterm Durchschnitt [author's collective], "I Can't Relax—Einleitung," in *I Can't Relax in Deutschland*, ed. Unterm Durchschnitt (Cologne: Unterm Durchschnitt, 2005), 5–16. On "normalization," see, e.g., Taberner, *German Literature of the 1990s*.

<sup>163</sup> Taberner, *German Literature of the 1990s*, 26; von Dirke, "Pop Literature in the Berlin Republic," 121.

<sup>164</sup> Jacob, "Modernisierung der Identität," 46.

<sup>165</sup> Andreas Speit, ed. *Ästhetische Mobilmachung: Dark Wave, Neofolk und Industrial im Spannungsfeld rechter Ideologien* (Hamburg and Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2002), 12.

<sup>166</sup> Thomas Langhoff, "Video killed the Radio Star: MTV und Clip-Kultur," in Kemper et al., *Alles so schön bunt hier*, 261–75; Adelt, "'Ich bin der Rock'n'Roll-Übermensch.'"

<sup>167</sup> Büsser, *Wie klingt die Neue Mitte?*, 57–64.

<sup>168</sup> See generally Olaf Furniss and Gordon Masson, "Govt. Support for Music Quota Fuels German Debate," *Billboard*, September 7, 2002, 47; Richard Letts, "The Effects of Globalisation on Music in Five Contrasting Countries: Australia, Germany, Nigeria, the Philippines, and Uruguay," Music Council of Australia Report, 2003; Andreas Tzortzis, "Banging the Drum for German Music," *New York Times*, September 27, 2004, [http://www.nytimes.com/2004/09/27/business/worldbusiness/27iht-radio27.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2004/09/27/business/worldbusiness/27iht-radio27.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0); Unterm Durchschnitt (author's collective), "I Can't Relax—Einleitung." These initiatives were unsuccessful for a variety of reasons, both practical and ideological, including the lack of a federal power to legislate for the whole of German broadcasting and the existence of quotas in the GDR. On the latter, see chapter 5.

<sup>169</sup> On language choice, irony, and questions of identity in German pop, see, e.g., Edward Larkey, "Just For Fun?: Language Choice in German

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Popular Music,” *Popular Music and Society* 24, no. 3 (2000): 1–20; Adelt, “Ich bin der Rock’n’Roll-Übermensch.” On the *Neue Deutsche Welle*, see Hornberger, *Geschichte Wird Gemacht*.

¹⁷⁰ On electronica’s lack of tradition in the 1960s and 1970s, see, e.g., Wolfgang Seidel, quoted in Chrome Dreams, prod., *Kraftwerk and the Electronic Revolution: A Documentary Film* (New Malden, U.K.: Chrome Dreams, 2008).

¹⁷¹ Kraftwerk and its thematization of self-mechanisation were received as distinctly German, including by the prominent American critic Lester Bangs (Büsser, *Wie klingt die Neue Mitte?*, 102). On the camp aspect of the band’s German signifiers, see Diederichsen, quoted in *Kraftwerk and the Electronic Revolution*.

¹⁷² Langhoff, “Video Killed the Radio Star,” 268. See also Marc Fehlmann, “Das Technogeschäft,” in Anz and Walder, *Techno*, 234–39; Dave Robb, “Techno in Germany: Its Musical Origins and Cultural Relevance,” *German as a Foreign Language* 2 (2002): 130–49.

¹⁷³ Hans Nieswandt, *Disko Ramallah: Und Andere Merkwürdige Orte zum Plattenaufliegen* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 2006).

¹⁷⁴ See, e.g., Sascha Kösch, “Mike Ink,” in Anz and Walder, *Techno*, 46–51. On discursive mediations of Germanness and electronica, see also Sean Nye, “Minimal Understandings: The Berlin Decade, the Minimal Continuum, and Debates on the Legacy of German Techno,” *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 25, no. 2 (2013): 154–84.

¹⁷⁵ Jacob, “Modernisierung der Identität,” 48.

¹⁷⁶ Christian Kracht, *Faserland* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1995), 112.

¹⁷⁷ Claus Babor, “Detroit,” in Anz and Walder, *Techno*, 78–83.

¹⁷⁸ G. Wildermann, “Acid,” in Anz and Walder, *Techno*, 90. For a critical analysis of this aspect, see, e.g., Terkessidis, “Life after History,” 179–86.

¹⁷⁹ See, e.g., Anz and Walder, *Techno*, 90; Rapp, *Lost and Sound*.

¹⁸⁰ Poschardt, *DJ Culture*, 309. This is also a theme in Goetz, *Rave*, 226–28.

¹⁸¹ Witzel, Walter, and Meinecke, *Plattenspieler*, 148.

¹⁸² Meinecke, *Mode und Verzweiflung*, 8; Witzel, Walter, and Meinecke, *Plattenspieler*.

¹⁸³ Quoted Brombach and Rüdenauer, “Gesamletes Gedankenmaterial.”

¹⁸⁴ Witzel, Walter, and Meinecke, *Plattenspieler*.

¹⁸⁵ Meinecke, quoted in Hild, “Abwechslungsreiche Kontinuität.” See also Thomas Meinecke, “Alles Mist,” *Spiegel Spezial* 2 (1994): 83.

¹⁸⁶ Meinecke has been intrigued by the ways in which middle European folk idioms were hybridized and improved in the American setting. For example, in 1994 he collected various American recordings of polkas, waltzes, and Schottische tunes that included a “funky beat” or “wailing migrant blues” or otherwise demonstrated “the constructive power that lies in transatlantic misunderstanding.” Cover text for *Texas Bohemia*, comp. Thomas Meinecke (Trikont, 1994: US-0201). With FSK Meinecke perpetuated the “transatlantic feedback” by writing and performing music in a similar style for a German market. This interest is far removed from any nationalist

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*Deutschtümelei* (German jingoism), and actually queries and undermines national readings (Büsser, *Wie klingt die Neue Mitte?*, 55). German culture in the United States was also a guiding theme in Meinecke's 1996 novel, *The Church of John F. Kennedy*. See Winkels, *Gute Zeichen*, 216–20; Cecile Zorach, "Thomas Meinecke's German fictions of Multicultural America: Model or Admonition?" *Transit*, 1, no. 1 (2005), <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0tf371sj>.

<sup>187</sup> For an analysis of the ways in which FSK's music practice has engaged with and undermined the notion of the German nation, see Andrew Hurley, "Of Germanic Eddies in the Black Atlantic: Electronica and (Post-)national Identity in the Music of Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle (F.S.K.) and in Thomas Meinecke's Novel *Hellblau* (2001)," *Journal of European Popular Culture* 2, no. 1 (2012): 65–80.

<sup>188</sup> Meinecke, *Hellblau*, 103. Cf. Zorach, "Thomas Meinecke's German Fictions"; Hägele, *Politische Subjekt- und Machtbegriffe*, 18–20.

<sup>189</sup> Büsser, *Wie klingt die Neue Mitte?*, 58; Hurley, *Return of Jazz*.

<sup>190</sup> Witzel, Walter, and Meinecke, *Plattenspieler*, 108.

<sup>191</sup> Picandet, *Zeitromane der Gegenwart*, 299–300.

<sup>192</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (London: Verso, 1993).

<sup>193</sup> So, too, is the 2004 FSK record *First Take Then Shake*, a collaboration between FSK and the African American house musician Anthony "Shake" Shakir. On this album's complex iterations of the Afro-Germanic, see Hurley, "Of Germanic Eddies in the Black Atlantic."

<sup>194</sup> Meinecke, *Hellblau*, 315.

<sup>195</sup> Bachor, "Detroit"; Moritz Ege, *Schwarz Werden: "Afroamerikanophilie" in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2007).

<sup>196</sup> Meinecke, *Hellblau*, 102.

<sup>197</sup> Meinecke, *Hellblau*, 104. This is also the effect of a "colorblinding" record like *First Take Then Shake* (see Hurley, "Of Germanic Eddies in the Black Atlantic").

<sup>198</sup> Meinecke, *Hellblau*, 101.

<sup>199</sup> Cf., e.g., Hurley, *Return of Jazz*, 60–69.

<sup>200</sup> See, e.g., Jürgen Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*, trans. Max Pensky (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001); Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande, *Cosmopolitan Europe*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity, 2007).

<sup>201</sup> Büsser, *Wie klingt die Neue Mitte?*, 12.

<sup>202</sup> Thomas Meinecke, "Ich als Text (Extended Version)," in *Zuerst bin ich immer Leser: Prosa schreiben heute*, ed. Ute C. Krupp and Ulrike Janssen (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), 24.

<sup>203</sup> Neumeister, "Pop als Wille und Vorstellung," 22.

<sup>204</sup> Axel Dunker, "Alle tanzen doch niemand kennt die Platten," *Weimarer Beiträge* 1 (2006): 105–18; Picandet, *Zeitromane der Gegenwart*, 294.

<sup>205</sup> On this disjuncture, see Feiereisen, *Text als Soundtrack*.

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4: Analogue is Better: Rock- and Pop-centric Literature

Nostalgia, as a human condition, is defined by our use of popular song.

—Simon Frith, *Performing Rites*

Popsongs [und Rocksongs] kennt jeder, sie wecken starke Assoziationen, und sie stellen ein simples Ordnungssystem bereit.

[Everybody knows pop [and rock] songs, they evoke strong associations, and they furnish a simple system of distinction.]

—Nils Minkmar, “304 Seiten Helmut”

ANDREAS NEUMEISTER ALLOYED his interest in EDM with an attention to the past and to his musical socialization. Several “rock-centric” writers from the late 1990s and 2000s, for whom Matthias Politycki will serve as my example, would also attend to the musical past, albeit in more formally conservative ways than Neumeister. It is no coincidence that these rock-centric writers were left unmoved by EDM culture and by the various utopian promises that it seemed to hold out. The first part of this chapter examines this rock-centric strand of contemporary German literature and how it links the consumption of rock with an introspective, nostalgic mood as well as a certain “authenticist” and “masculinist” ideology. I will show how this backward-looking strand was consistent with “retro” trends within popular music during the 1990s as well as with an influential trope advanced in the Englishman Nick Hornby’s popular 1995 novel *High Fidelity*.¹ I will also show, however, that Politycki’s refusal to invest in anything more than the private significance of popular music put him at odds with the pop Left.

“Rockists” like Politycki, however, were not the only ones to take up a musico-centric position largely distanced from the EDM-inspired experiments with form examined in the previous chapter. At the same time, several “neo-pop” writers—most notably the music journalist Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre—also entered the field. They took inspiration from a certain ironic notion of “pop” that had been current in the 1980s. I will argue that this strategy was a complicated one. In contradistinction to the rockists, a writer like Stuckrad-Barre recognized that the world was “postrock,” that the authenticist ideology of rock was no longer

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commensurate. Yet their ironic neo-pop strategy was also fraught. It was beleaguered by ennui and hollowed out from any real passion or belief in music or social change.

### A Decade of Recycling?

Certain aspects of music consumption and production in the 1990s need to be mentioned at the outset because they are consistent with the themes and aesthetics that the musico-centric authors whom I consider in this chapter applied. My aim here is to show that a great deal of the music of the 1990s—new or otherwise—was received as “retro” or “ironic,” the latter a key term in German popular music and culture during the 1990s. These moods set the tone for novels by Politycki and Stuckrad-Barre, respectively.

Popular music consumption at any given time is highly differentiated, of course, and exhibits what Ernst Bloch once called the “Ungleichzeitigkeit” (non-simultaneity) of the contemporaneous.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding the interest in EDM examined in the previous chapter, many German music enthusiasts were more inclined to the historical than to the new. In 2007, for example, the German music journalist Konrad Heidkamp asked: “Ist es Zufall, dass Musikzeitschriften für den gehobenen Geschmack der alterslosen Rockveteranen wie *Rolling Stone*, *Mojo* oder *Uncut* erfolgreich sind, während Postillen des Neuen wie *Spex* oder *Intro* vegetieren?” (Is it by chance that music magazines dedicated to the elevated tastes of ageless rock veterans, such as *Rolling Stone*, *Mojo*, or *Uncut*, are successful, while heralds of the new such as *Spex* or *Intro* vegetate?)<sup>3</sup> The 1990s witnessed, in Germany as elsewhere, more than their share of rock comebacks and revivals aimed at this demographic. When Martin Büsser noted “von Supertramp bis zu den Sex Pistols, von Velvet Underground bis Kiss bleibt kaum eine Reunion unversucht” (there is scarcely a reunion that has not been attempted, from Supertramp to the Sex Pistols, from the Velvet Underground to Kiss), he might also have given German examples.<sup>4</sup> That such revivals are by nature retrospective is a given. The commercial imperative of such comebacks is also important. Old bands are a recognized brand that can be used to sell new albums and awaken interest in the back catalogue or even other associated products. In the 1990s, for example, Volkswagen marketed its Golf motorcar in Germany in a series of classic rock liveries, including a “Rolling Stones” model.

By the 1990s, many critics also apprehended that, aesthetically, rock had somehow exhausted itself, that in distinction to earlier periods there was no new territory to be explored, only a past to be revisited. As Barbara Bradby has shown, one of the core debates about popular music in the late 1980s and 1990s was indeed about what Simon Frith called the “death of rock.” Some voices in this debate aligned the death of rock

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with the idea of the death of the author, also noting that rock's "centre," including its "meta-project of youth and rebellion" and its "political oppositionality," had collapsed. Bradby observes how the "death of rock" also involved a gender dimension. "Rock" had faltered in part because its monolithic image of masculinity had become "hopelessly outdated."⁵ Pop Left critics also perceived that rock had moved into the political establishment in Germany, that it had become "ideologisch wie ästhetisch verbraucht" (ideologically as well as aesthetically spent).⁶ Martin Büsser notes, for example, that "zusammen mit der rotgrünen Regierung ist eben nicht mehr volkstümliche Blasmusik, sondern die 'ehrliche' und 'erdige' Rockmusik in den Reichstag eingezogen" (when the Red-Green government entered the Reichstag [in 1998], so too did "honest" and "earthy" rock music, instead of the folksy oompah music of yore).⁷

Some new bands were content to create music in styles strongly reminiscent of earlier rock. However, others created music that came to be labeled "postrock."⁸ This term could also be transferred from a particular genre onto an era itself, when "alle suchen nach Perspektiven am Ende der klassischen Rock-Stilistik" (at the endpoint of the classic rock style, everyone is looking for a way forward).⁹ Such an attitude could lead in unusual directions. For example, hitherto denigrated "easy listening" musics were rediscovered and celebrated in a semi-ironic fashion. This "populist anti-rockism" was congruent with the rise of irony in 1990s youth culture.¹⁰ Irony had been an important theme in the Canadian Douglas Coupland's best-selling 1991 novel, *Generation X*, which depicted a twenty-something generation that was alienated by contemporary conditions, including the depressed labor market, and that reacted by adopting a disarming ironic stance.¹¹ "Irony" soon became a media buzzword in Germany as well, including in relation to popular music.¹² The zenith of ironic interest in "easy listening" came in Germany with the so-called *Schlagerrevival* (*Schlager* revival) of the 1990s.¹³ This music had been denigrated by generations of discriminating younger music enthusiasts as highly sentimental and corny.¹⁴ Now young people rediscovered and feted older *Schlager* musicians. Younger *Schlager* singers also emerged. The star of this movement was undoubtedly Guildo Horn (Horst Köhler, born 1963), whose career—and, arguably, the currency of irony within German popular music culture—culminated in his appearance in the 1998 Eurovision song contest with his group Die orthopädischen Strümpfe (The Orthopedic Stockings).¹⁵

Other new musical developments within the German popular music sector, like the earnest "Diskursrock" (discourse rock) groups associated with the so-called Hamburger Schule (Hamburg School), were seemingly far removed from things like the *Schlagerrevival*.¹⁶ Yet groups like Tocotronic, Blumfeld, and Die Sterne were also "postrock" in a sense, and adopted an occasionally ironic stance too. As Martin Büsser points

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out, the purpose of these bands was “gerade nicht mehr . . . für bloße Versenkung in die Musik oder für Identifikation innerhalb einer Subkultur zu sorgen, sondern Pop- beziehungsweise Rock-Werte zu dekonstruieren” (precisely not to cater any longer . . . to any simple self-absorption through music, or for identification within a subculture, but rather to deconstruct pop and rock values).<sup>17</sup> Irony was evident in album titles like Tocotronic’s *Digital ist Besser* (Digital Is Better), which was at odds with the band’s “analogue” instrumentation.<sup>18</sup> The epithet *Hamburger Schule*, coined by the journalist Thomas Groß, was itself rather ironic too. These groups tended to create music that, thematically and textually, might have been of interest to Frankfurt School philosophers like the late Theodor Adorno, had they not been so resolutely opposed to popular culture.

Finally, it is necessary to consider some of what was occurring in the influential Anglo-American popular music market during the 1990s. Britain is particularly important in this respect, given that Stuckrad-Barre has exhibited a strong Anglophilia, including in relation to the so-called Britpop genre.<sup>19</sup> Britpop revolved around bands such as Oasis, Blur, and Pulp, and marked a significant moment in popular music developments in the mid-1990s. It, too, was retrospective in mood, yet there was a twist, as Thomas Groß notes in relation to Oasis: “Wer die Augen schliesst, den kann das Gefühl beschleichen, einer Revivalband zuzuhören. Gelegentlich scheint ihr Plündern an Parodie zu grenzen. Doch es fehlt etwas: das Augenzwinkern. . . . Sie sind geradezu das Gegenteil von ironisch. . . . Retro ohne Retro-Geschmack.” (Someone who closes their eyes could succumb to thinking that they are listening to a revival band. Occasionally the band’s plundering [of the past] seems to border on parody. But there is something missing; the wink. . . . They are well-nigh the opposite of irony. . . . Retro without the retro flavor.)<sup>20</sup> The nation was key with respect to Britpop. Many groups focused stylistically on “British Invasion” bands like the Beatles, as well as on some of the UK’s postpunk era groups. They and their journalistic boosters thereby staked out a nation-based genre that was intended to counter the concurrent dominance of American “grunge” groups, such as Nirvana. Britpop also coincided, especially in the context of Stuckrad-Barre’s favorites, Oasis, with an emergent “lad” culture that revolved around youthful arrogance, anti-intellectualism, and what Hubert Winkels called “kultivierte . . . Schnöselhaftigkeit” (cultivated . . . snottiness).<sup>21</sup> It was hence distanced from the “right on” progressive political culture associated with indie rock in the 1980s and with the advanced music criticism of that time.<sup>22</sup> In this context, a band like Oasis also participated in that typical “death of rock” disjuncture between affect and ideology diagnosed by Lawrence Grossberg in 1988.<sup>23</sup> As Barbara Bradby has summarized, “all that is left to the rock fan is ‘feeling,’ but no longer ‘about’ anything, or even ‘feeling good.’”<sup>24</sup>

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Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity* and Its German Reception

If Britpop enthralled Stuckrad-Barre, then we can and should read the thrust toward a new musico-centric literature in Germany against developments in other literary markets, including the British one. As I identified in chapter 2, during the 1990s the German literary industry was keen to replicate the success of translations of American and British authors. In this context, we need to foreground the success in Germany of Nick Hornby's 1995 musico-centric novel, *High Fidelity*, which Kiepenheuer und Witsch published in German translation in 1996. This is especially so since some commentators came to see Hornby (born 1957) as the "Gründungsvater" (founding father) of Pop II.²⁵ Indeed Hornby's novel was published at the height of the postunification debates about a "neue Lesbarkeit" (new readability) and on the eve of the emergence of Pop II. He became an important figure of comparison, for example with Stuckrad-Barre, as well as someone from whom a writer like Thomas Meinecke was very keen to distinguish himself.²⁶

High Fidelity charts the failed relationships, and the music obsessions, of its thirty-something protagonist, Rob Fleming. At a cleavage point in his life—the impending end of his extended postadolescence—Fleming passes review over his unsuccessful romantic history. In between revisiting his relationships, he and his record shop colleagues compile acerbic yet fruitless "top five" lists relating especially to their music taste. As one less-than-charitable German critic noted, *High Fidelity* was a book "über analfixierte Pop-Bessessene, die mit Frauen nicht klar kommen und ihre Unfähigkeit über Vinyl-Fetische kompensieren" (about anal-retentive pop obsessives who can't get along with women and who compensate for their inability via vinyl fetishes).²⁷ This touches on the key theme of commodity fetishism in late capitalism, whereby "obsessive consumption is used as a substitute for social interaction" and it is not clear whether the person controls the commodities or vice versa.²⁸ In *High Fidelity*, however, the episodes of "vinyl fetishism" are relieved by the narrative of Fleming's gradual redemption. He recognizes that a change is needed and reconnects with his ex-girlfriend, thereby committing to a life of responsibility. *High Fidelity* is therefore a tale of concluding an extended period of postadolescence; it is a type of *Bildungsroman*. Fleming does not divorce himself from music altogether, but he attenuates his consumption of it. As Hornby noted in interview: "Fleming merkt ja im Verlauf der Handlung auch, dass es Dinge gibt, die *noch* wichtiger sind als eines Menschen Plattensammlung" (Fleming also discovers during the course of the narrative that there are things that are *even more* important than a person's record collection).²⁹ Avid music consumption hence becomes linked to the past. Yet there was always something rather retrospective

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about it. Fleming's top five "floor fillers" while deejaying are all from the 1960s and 1970s, for example. As he also notes in the novel, "I'm very good at the past. It's the present I can't understand."<sup>30</sup> Older styles of popular music and their sequestration into a certain phase of life are therefore thematically significant in *High Fidelity*. However, the novel, with its *Bildungsroman* narrative trajectory, is rather conventional in format. As Hubert Winkels pointed out, it has little to do "mit der spezifischen Welthaltung des Pop" (with the specific attitude of pop).<sup>31</sup>

*High Fidelity* was a popular success in Germany, including among some younger authors like Thomas Brussig and, especially, Frank Goosen, whose *Liegen lernen* (2001) strongly resembles the Englishman's novel.<sup>32</sup> If Hornby's popular success, and German publishers' and writers' wishing to replicate it, was one factor in the emergence of rock-centric literature like Goosen's, then other factors were also determinative. First, there was a new mood for retrospectivity among generations of still relatively young Germans, as exhibited in the runaway popular success of the journalist Florian Illies *Generation Golf* (2000) and the concomitant "Biografien-Boom" (biography boom).<sup>33</sup> As Peter Körte noted, "Früher konnte man sich darauf verlassen, dass 25 Jahre vergehen mussten, bis eine Generation ihre Jugend zum Material der Fiktionen machte. Doch die Halbwertszeit hat sich verkürzt. (It used to be that you could depend on twenty-five years necessarily elapsing before a generation turned its youth into the stuff of fiction. But nowadays the half life has been reduced.)"<sup>34</sup> Other critics spoke of "[die] gegenwärtig grassierende Rückschau-Literatur einer Generation, die irgendwo zwischen vorgezogenem Greisentum und Verweigerung des Erwachsenwerdens [festsitzt]" ([the] currently rampant literature of retrospection, written by a generation stuck between being premature old buffers and refusing to grow up).<sup>35</sup> The end of the Cold War was an important factor here, as we saw in chapter 1. One critic observed, for example, that "die kurzfristig beschleunigte Zeitgeschichte hat die alte Bundesrepublik ins Vorgestern rutschen lassen" (contemporary history accelerated at short notice and that allowed the old Federal Republic to slide into the day before yesterday).<sup>36</sup> The *Wende* was also a gateway into less certain times, when one might wish to have imaginative recourse to a past time that was simpler—if boringly so. This was the foundational motivation for the post-1990 phenomenon of so-called *Westalgie* (nostalgia for the old West Germany), whereby authors fondly portrayed a provincial West German past as a subtle way of criticizing the economically rationalized and globalized present.<sup>37</sup> Some German critics suspected that the individualism and narcissism of the 1980s—indeed of the whole neo-liberal Kohl era—had also had an impact on at least two generations of young people, who now felt equipped and motivated to write about their individual lives, as if they were somehow typical.<sup>38</sup>

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Popular music from the past was key to this type of retrospective authorial endeavor. If one were interested in writing a semi-autobiographical novel of one's youth, or that of one's generational cohort, then popular music was invaluable thematically. This was especially so in relation to those generations who came of age in the 1970s and 1980s, whose consumption of popular music was greater relative to that of their elders, and who were likely to be popular music enthusiasts as well as readers. As the critic Nils Minkmar neatly put it, "Popsongs kennt jeder, sie wecken starke Assoziationen, und sie stellen ein simples Ordnungssystem bereit" (Everybody knows pop songs, they evoke strong associations and they furnish a simple system of distinction).³⁹ In other words, music provided clear points for identification, especially if it was well-known music. Music, and trawling through one's music collection, was also especially useful in any semi-autobiographical exercise. As Adorno had long ago observed in "The Curves of the Needle":

What the gramophone listener actually wants to hear is himself, and the artist merely offers him a substitute for the sounding image of his own person which he would like to safeguard as a possession. The only reason that he accords the record such value is because he himself could also be just as well preserved. Most of the time records are virtual photographs of their owners, flattering photographs—ideologies.⁴⁰

Matthias Politycki's *Weiberroman*

Although Matthias Politycki has not, to my knowledge, recorded his views about *High Fidelity*, he has had much to say, variously, about the state of contemporary German literature, about the suitability of literary models imported from abroad, as well as about rock and its value as a source of inspiration for German writers. He has also written a successful "westalgic" novel, *Weiberroman* (1997), that extensively thematizes the consumption of rock during its protagonist's past in a way not at all dissimilar to *High Fidelity*. In this section, I will argue that Politycki's engagement with rock has been highly ambiguous, however. He is musico-centric, but he has resisted modeling his literature aesthetically on popular music. He has even criticized other musico-centric colleagues for not growing up, for wasting time with "collecting records." At face value, his "authenticist" and "masculinist" image of rock seems a curious choice in the "postrock" era too. Yet Politycki also thematizes many of these ambiguities in *Weiberroman*, a novel that repeats some of the tropes of *High Fidelity* but uses a more sophisticated style and ultimately avoids the neat happy ending of Hornby's work. In that sense the novel translates Hornby's subject matter into a different, would-be "German" or "European" aesthetic register, to use Politycki's own terms.

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### Should the New German Literature Be Like Rock?

Like his near contemporaries Thomas Meinecke, Rainald Goetz, and Andreas Neumeister, Matthias Politycki (born 1957) is actually not an author who emerged in the 1990s in the newly realigning literary market. However, he was an active voice during the 1990s and certainly achieved his greatest visibility and success during that decade. This was also when, on his own estimation, he found his mature style.<sup>41</sup> Three of his activities in the 1990s are of particular relevance here. First, Politycki was an active champion of a “neue deutsche Lesbarkeit” (new German readability). Second, he urged his contemporaries to engage with the debate about the so-called ’78 generation, and for that generation to take a more active role in society. Finally, he made his famous call for literature to become more like rock music. All of these endeavors were articulated with one another and ran alongside Politycki’s work as a novelist.

Politycki is a confessing member of the “’78 generation,” a term first advanced by Reinhard Mohr in his 1992 essay *Zaungäste* (Onlookers). For Mohr, the ’78 generation was historically superfluous, somewhat like a missing link between the political ’68 generation and the younger “generation of 1989.” Too young to have participated in 1968, the “onlookers” had benefited from the changes inaugurated by their elders. However, they were resistant to ideology and to concrete social engagement.<sup>42</sup> Writing five years later, Politycki agreed with Mohr’s analysis, and called on his peers to finally end their “Rückzug aus der Gesellschaft” (retreat from society).<sup>43</sup> In his view, this was an “ach-so-individuell” (18; oh so individual) generation “[die] alle erdenklichen Umwege genommen hat, um ja nicht zu früh erwachsen zu werden” (15; that had taken every imaginable escape in order not to have to grow up too soon). The “utopiefeindliche” (230; utopia-hostile) generation should now imagine a new utopia in a seemingly postutopian age. Yet Politycki was aware of the fact that many of his contemporaries would resist being lumped into a category or a cohort, as well as his call to arms. Indeed this seemed to him to be part of the defining characteristics of the ’78 generation, yet any such protestation was merely the “Gequake satter Frösche” (16; the croaking of fat frogs) in his memorable terminology.

The literary debates that emerged after unification marked a crucial and formative moment in Politycki’s thinking about the ’78 generation. Politycki took an active role in these debates—he was, as Tilman Krause points out, one of the few novelists to do so in any significant way.<sup>44</sup> He regarded this arena as an important—even defining—one whereby his ’78 contemporaries began to find a voice and coalesce around a shared notion of what they stood for.<sup>45</sup> In his view, it was precisely the members of the ’78 generation who might write novels that could lift Germany from its slide into a “literarischen Entwicklungsland” (17; developing country

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as far as literature is concerned). Politycki made a range of interventions here. He first attacked the literature that older writers were publishing. The Gruppe 47 aesthetics of a Günter Grass were outdated and of little interest to younger readers; they also underwrote the prejudices of older but still dominant literary critics.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the '68 generation's "Zwangsaufklärung" (55; forced enlightenment) of literature had fizzled out. A writer like Peter Handke had become mired in the "kultisch-religiös" (cultlike religious), for example.⁴⁷ Politycki was silent on Handke's *The Jukebox*, but probably he would have been critical of it too, compatible as it was with the "cultlike religious." Politycki also leveled criticism at Handke's publisher, diagnosing the "Untergang der Suhrkampkultur" (58–59; decline of the Suhrkamp culture). Rather than challenging readers' expectations, Suhrkamp novels were nowadays often simply a literature of boredom. The avant-garde was now antiquated and had become epigonal (52, 241). And yet if Politycki distanced himself from the Suhrkamp faction, then he was also dismissive of some of the literature that the opposing camp—the "Wittstockians"—promoted.⁴⁸ He was theoretically in favor of the commissioning editor Uwe Wittstock's "Leselust" (joy in reading) position; indeed Politycki advanced cognate notions of "neue deutsche Lesbarkeit" (new German readability) and a "Neues Literaturlustprinzip" (new principle of literature-joy). However, he also took the view that the literature the "Wittstockians" promoted was often "trivial" (54). Politycki spelled out his middle path between the Suhrkamp faction and the Wittstockians in the 2000 essay "The American Dead End," where he made the case for a new form of "German" or "European" literature. This would draw on the best parts of an entertaining yet sophisticated European tradition, and feature such things as a commitment to detail, a feeling for atmosphere, an ability to be read at various levels, the indirect fulfillment of readers' expectations, the mediation of experience rather than pure fast-paced entertainment, and an attention to style rather than narrative functionalism.⁴⁹ Politycki set this up against a would-be self-Americanization of German literature, occurring by dint of German writers' adopting formulaic creative-writing-schooled literary narratives.

Where did music fit in this scheme? Politycki was clearly a keen music enthusiast, indeed he confessed at one time that his record cabinet was as large as his bookcase. He also identified that, quantitatively, blues and rock musicians had had more impact on his life than writers.⁵⁰ Yet Politycki was largely disengaged from contemporary developments. With a few exceptions, his personal canon appeared to cease in the 1980s, if not before (*Farbe der Vokale*, 68, 71, 241). For example, the author used a curious musical metaphor to describe the positions in the literary debate, and in so doing showed that he was distinctly out of touch with the "postrock" world. The Suhrkamp faction was an "ambitionierte Abart von Techno"

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(ambitious techno mutation), whereas the Wittstockians were “easy listening.” The former was only of interest to the deejay; the latter came as a relief, but its crowd-pleasing charm soon abated (54). These metaphors were telling of both Politycki’s antiquated musical tastes and the type of music that he thought literature should become like. Indeed, they linked in with two earlier articles (both published in 1995) in which he had praised rock as a touchstone for a “resensualization” of contemporary German literature. The first, “Literatur muss sein wie Rockmusik,” was partly a critique of the bloodlessness of postwar German literature and partly a homage to rock and blues. For the Nietzschean Politycki, blues and rock music had various qualities—“Takt” (beat), “Sound,” “Drive,” “Kraft” (power), and “Magie” (magic)—that were sorely lacking in contemporary German literature. Rock had an ease to it, including in relation to its consumption, but it also had an existential, inner necessity. Indeed it was this existential aspect that was paramount for Politycki (240–41). Like Led Zeppelin’s music—sometimes ecstatic, sometimes melancholy—contemporary literature needed to get under the skin and into the blood. It needed to be less interested in sterile aesthetic innovation and more interested in “existentielle Glaubwürdigkeit” (74; existential credibility). Politycki thereby sets up rock in Dionysian terms as opposed to anodyne contemporary German literature. His discourse is also beholden to what Thomas Meinecke and others schooled in the postpunk era would disparage as a “rockist” ideology.<sup>51</sup> As Norma Coates explains, “rock” is thought to represent “a degree of emotional honesty, liveness, musical straightforwardness and other less tangible, largely subjective aspects.”<sup>52</sup> Hence, for Politycki, rock and blues might be “abgebrüht” (long steeped), but they were still “frisch, unverbraucht, überzeugend” (fresh, unexpended, and convincing) as well as “bodennah” (grounded) (69–70). They were “ehrlich” (honest) and “handgemacht” (hand crafted) (73). In other words, they are “authentic,” that crucial term so often applied to discussions of rock, but which obscures and mystifies much.<sup>53</sup> Politycki’s “rockism” was also quite masculinist, as his second article, “Lyrik und Jazz? Lyrik und Rock!,” revealed. For example, whereas he would like to see “poetry and rock” performances, he feminizes the alternative “poetry and pop” as being for “Weichspüler” (62; fabric softeners) like Kerstin Hensel and Doris Runge. Politycki’s masculinization of rock is no coincidence. As we have seen, “rock” has become discursively metonymic not only for “authenticity” but also for masculinity itself—as opposed to the “artificial” and “feminine” pop.<sup>54</sup> There may not, of course, be anything inherently masculine about rock, but its masculinity is continually “put into discourse” (Michel Foucault) by different agents and operations of the music industry.<sup>55</sup> For his part, Politycki squarely puts the masculinity of rock into discourse in *Weiberrroman*. But, usefully, the novel also explores just how liberating, or otherwise, such a reading of rock might be.

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As the reception of Politycki's polemical notion of "rockish" literature revealed, it was not an uncontroversial one. This was for various reasons, including its curious identification with an outmoded form of music in the "postrock" era.⁵⁶ It was also unclear just what sort of aesthetic borrowing Politycki might be urging. At times the author himself was unsure. On the one hand, he seemed to suggest that literature could and should transcend itself. Citing Nietzsche, he contends that literature could move "vom Geschriebenen, hin zum Gesungenen, Gestampften, Gestöhnten, Geschrieenen" (from the written toward the sung, stamped, groaned, and screamed) and even *become music* (*Farbe der Vokale*, 67). But, on the other hand, the "Lyrik und Rock" article stated that literature had to become as credible as the most straightforward rock song "ohne sich dabei an deren Techniken anzubiedern" (without getting chummy with [rock's] techniques). Moreover, literature should not repeat the slam poetry movement's mistake of conflating words with power.⁵⁷ These last comments suggested that Politycki was not interested in any literary "realization" of rock.⁵⁸ That Politycki aspired to music, but simultaneously admitted that he could not capture it, was also evident from his reflection on writing the article: "Ich könnte den Artikel mit einer blossen Aneinanderreihung von Namen bestreiten und wahrscheinlich würde ich mich damit verständlicher machen, als wenn ich nun doch versuche, aus der Beschwörung einzelner Bands und Musiktitel etwas Abstraktes zu extrapolieren" (66; I could traverse the article with a mere concatenation of names, and I would probably make myself clearer than [by] actually trying here to extrapolate something abstract from an invocation of individual bands and songs). Here, Politycki is reformulating the classic Romantic "topos of unsayability," which actually brings him close to Handke, notwithstanding his distaste for the latter's "cultlike religious" character.

Critics also attacked the nebulosity of the "rock" characteristics that Politycki identified as being invaluable to a new German literature. For example, Andrea Köhler noted that Politycki's "sogenannte Ästhetik" (so-called aesthetic) could be reduced to "'Kraft' und ein unheimlich gutes Gefühl" ("power" and an unbelievably good feeling). For her, such an aesthetic was already hopelessly yoked to nostalgia: "die passende Frage dazu heisst: 'Weisst du noch, wie es damals war?'" (the corresponding question is: "Do you remember how it was back then?"), referring to an old song by the *Schlager* singer Howard Carpendale. She thought that Politycki's intervention marked that "die ewige Diskussion um den anämischen Zustand der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur ihren vorläufigen Tiefpunkt erreicht [hat]" (at least for the time being, the very nadir of the eternal discussion about the anaemic state of contemporary German literature had been reached).⁵⁹ Ingo Arends was critical for a slightly different reason. On his interpretation, Politycki seemed to be calling for

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literature to be transformed into sound and drive. For him, this was the same as the vitalist error of wishing to conflate art and life.<sup>60</sup> Politycki's novel *Weiberroman* demonstrated that the author would leave it to others like the vitalist Rainald Goetz to conflate life and art. He himself would opt for a simpler thematization of rock music, and one that did not especially exhibit "drive" or "sound," even if it was admittedly highly "readable." In that sense, Politycki's call for a "rockish" literature was a moderate one. *Weiberroman* also proved Köhler correct in her conclusion that "rockish" literature was bound to be nostalgic. Yet the novel openly poses the question of how useful musico-centric nostalgia is.

### When Adolescence Ends in Midlife Crisis

Particularly in its first two thirds, Politycki's novel extensively thematizes rock and its consumption at a certain time and place. I will demonstrate here how Politycki, like Hornby, portrays rock as an emotional prosthesis for the '78 generation of young men who are unable or unwilling to end their adolescence. In so doing, his novel provides an apolitical and "westalgie" image of the engagement with popular music that reflected neither the utopian or progressive possibilities residing in music nor the benefits of a deeper literary engagement with it, as did the novels I examined in the previous chapter. In fact, it was completely at odds with techno literature and with its exponents.

The *Weiberroman* is an account of the protagonist Gregor Schattschneider's three major and failed love affairs between 1974 and 1990. The first book, relating Schattschneider's unrequited love for Kristina, is set in North Rhine Westphalia in the lead-up to the protagonist's matriculation. The second relates his affair with Tania, a young photo model whom he meets after moving to Vienna to study in the mid-1970s. The final book relates the breakdown of his relationship with Katarina, an airline stewardess with whom he has cohabited for three years in Stuttgart in the late 1980s. *Weiberroman* is partly an attempt by Schattschneider to come to terms with the failure of each of these relationships—it is a "writing cure," as it were. His novel also provides an ironic account of the male half of the '78 generation in the fifteen years prior to the fall of the Wall, that is, during that generation's extended journey into adulthood, which seems to pass straight from puberty into midlife crisis, as one critic observed.<sup>61</sup> That the momentous political events of the day are only dealt with in passing is the point. In this "Nichtentwicklungsroman" (non-coming-of-age novel) of a generation, politics are sidelined by the protagonist's unsuccessful attempts at a romantic life.<sup>62</sup> Thematically, music was a crucial part of this portrayal and was marketed as such. As the book's promotional material pointed out, it was a novel "in dem die Stimmungen und Moden, und die Musik,

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die Illusionen und Aufbrüche [einer Epoche] zum Greifen nahe sind” (in which the moods and fashions, and the music, the illusions, and the turning points [of an era] are palpable).

Music is of great significance to Gregor, even during his rather innocent teen years, when he is obsessed with the unavailable Kristina. It provides a private realm where he and his male friends can share their enthusiasm, obsessing about such things as the correct technique to play records, perform games of distinction, and, perhaps most important, find some compensation for the experiences so obviously lacking in their romantic lives. When he encounters a setback in his attempts to woo Kristina with a birthday present, for example, the protagonist has therapeutic recourse to music: “Gregor brauchte nach dieser Geburtstags-Pleite dringend etwas für seine Ohren” (Gregor desperately needed something for his ears after this birthday rebuff).⁶³ It gradually becomes clear to Gregor that music cannot be a substitute for action; he seems to have recognized the *Cave Musicam* made by Nietzsche and repeated by Handke that music is dangerous because it can give one the feeling that one has already achieved something that still remains to be achieved. However, his ultimate lack of success with Kristina has Gregor once more seeking his private solace in music, even if he is also spurred into the equally therapeutic but more productive act of life writing.

If the protagonist’s consumption of music in *Weiberroman’s* first book is largely a solitary affair, then the homosocial consumption of rock music in Vienna’s “Popklub” disco is a central theme in *Weiberroman’s* second book. Together with his friend Ecki and several others, Gregor is able to enjoy the corporeal release and demonstrativeness of rock, and of the Rolling Stones in particular:

Gregor schob Ecki an den Schultern vor sich her und runter auf die Tanzfläche, dorthin wo der Moslacher Ferdl bereits, breitbeinig verankert in der Verlorenheit des Refrains, mit seinem Oberkörper rauf und runter machte, dorthin, wo Walle mit monotonem Kopf-Kreisen, monotonem Haare-hin-und-her-Schleudern das Schlagzeugsolo illustrierte, diese Endlosschleife aus wirbelnden Bongos, Becken und dem metallischen Abzählreim einer Kuhglocke . . . Und als, etwa an der Stelle, wo das Keyboard erneut mit seinen einfachen Wahrheiten einsetzte, auch der Wegensteiner Poldi eintraf, da war der Kreis geschlossen: der Kreis der Samstaghelden, die’s allen mal wieder so richtig zeigten.

[Gregor pushed Ecki before him by the shoulders and down onto the dance floor, down toward where Moslacher Ferdl was already heaving his upper body up and down, legs splayed wide, anchored in the lostness of the refrain, toward where Walle was illustrating the drum solo by monotonously swinging his head ’round and ’round and

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monotonously jerking his mane back and forth; this repeating loop of whirling bongos and cymbals, and the metallic counting-out rhyme of the cowbell. . . . And by the time Wegensteiner Poldi arrived, at about the same time that the keyboard had begun again with its simple truths, then the circle was completed—the circle of Saturday Night Heroes, who were really showing everyone again.] (92)

The Rolling Stones' music, which becomes a leitmotif in the novel, has both a generational and an emotional prosthesis aspect here. As Politycki noted elsewhere, the Rolling Stones were actually not a typical band for the '78 generation. Their rebelliousness made them more of an emblem of the '68 generation, whereas younger men were more interested in "prog rock" bands such as Pink Floyd (*Farbe der Vokale*, 20–21). That '78 generation men like Gregor and Ecki were still attracted to music by the Stones exemplified that they were, *pace* Reinhard Mohr, living in the shadow of their elders. Yet the '78 generation was, at least according to Politycki, one for which ideology and politics were largely absent. The Rolling Stones are hence an occasion for rocking out in the discotheque. Gregor's brand of musico-centrism involves an implicit retreat from politics. This point is also made in a satirical encounter between Gregor and an old member of the '68 generation, Uhren-Dieter, during the late 1970s: "Solche Schlaffis wie er, so der Uhren-Dieter . . ., die wüßten gar nicht mehr, wie ein ordentlicher Molotowcocktail gebastelt werde. Wenn sie eine typische Handbewegung machen sollten, ha, dann zeigten sie nicht etwa das Peace-Zeichen, wie sich's für einen aufrechten Linken zieme, sondern zwei ausgestreckte Zeigefinger, haha: den Doppeldruck auf Record- und Play-Taste." (158, According to Uhren-Dieter, limpwristers like him [Gregor] . . ., did not even know how to make a proper Molotov cocktail any more. If they were supposed to make a typical hand gesture—huh!—then it wasn't the peace sign that befits any decent leftist, but rather two stretched-out index fingers, ha ha: the dual pressing of the record and play buttons [on a cassette deck].)

More significant, perhaps, in Politycki's thematization of the Rolling Stones is the fact that the band was the personification of the "cock rock" genre, wherein rock's underlying masculinity became hypertrophied. As Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie note in their landmark article:

These [cock rockers] are the men who take to the streets, take risks, live dangerously and, most of all, swagger untrammelled by responsibility, sexual or otherwise. And what's more, they want to make this clear. Women, in their eyes, are either sexually aggressive and therefore doomed and unhappy, or else sexually repressed and therefore in need of male servicing. It is the woman, whether romanticised or not, who is seen as possessive, after a husband, antifreedom, the ultimate restriction.<sup>64</sup>

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The second book of *Weiberroman* suggests that young German men of Gregor's generation might identify with cock rock because it assuages their fears about their own weak masculinity, but Politycki's text also details the dangers of too close an identification. Real-life women represent a danger to the Saturday Night Heroes, and therefore need to be kept at bay. The "Heroes" subject young women to distinctive denigration: They like "Mädchenmusik" (girl music) like the Beatles, or have "keine Ahnung . . . von Musik" (91; no idea . . . about music); they also dance, as distinct from "Rumrocken" (92; rocking out). However, when Gregor commences a relationship with Tania, this strategy becomes unstuck. What Gregor perceives as her aggressive womanhood quickly destabilizes the rock-based homosocial economy of the Saturday Night Heroes. For Gregor, a period of "unfreiwillige Abstinenz" (175; involuntary abstinence) from the Popklub commences. Throughout his relationship with Tania he remains fundamentally afraid of her, and feelings of inadequacy now undermine his enjoyment of cock rock too. Whereas cock rock had appeared to aid fantasies of homosocial "rocking out," listening to it now forces Gregor to confront unpleasant questions: "war man für eine solche Frau denn, wie's so furchtbar treffend hieß, war man denn Manns genug? . . . Ob er ihr wenigstens vorspielen sollte, vorspielen mußte, was er nicht war, hatte, konnte?" (129; Were you man enough for such a woman, as the expression put it so dreadfully fittingly? . . . Should he, must he, at least feign to her something that he was not, that he did not have, that he could not do?) Cock rock therefore represents a false friend, one whose fear of women is discernable to those inclined to listen, but whose friendship Gregor is unwilling to cast off.⁶⁵ It is clear that Tania could be "der Vorbote einer neuen Zeit . . . einer Zeit ohne Rockmusik" (154; the herald of new times . . . times without rock); however, he is unsure that he is ready. At heart, Gregor prefers to inhabit a rock imaginary: "[er] wollte verdorben sein, vom Leben gezeichnet und ungerade heraus, . . . gefährlich sein, fatal fremd, unberechenbar, böse, ein Mann mit vier Fäusten" (200; [he] wanted to be wasted, branded by life and way out of line, . . . to be dangerous, cataclysmically foreign, volatile, evil, a man with four fists).

That Gregor's rock dream is becoming incommensurate, however, is underlined in several ways. First, Tania seems to have permanently undermined the Saturday Night Heroes' homosocial code and the innocent pleasures that it offers. Second, contemporary musical developments have, by now, also left Gregor stranded. Synthesizer-based music makes the point at the Popklub: "[hier brach . . .] eine Zeit an, die nicht mehr die unsre war" (175–76; a new time [was dawning here] that we could no longer call our own). A ruder reminder occurs at a street festival in Vienna. Gregor is powerless to intervene when the singer of the punk band Immanuel Cunt yells at Tania during his performance: "Wannafuck!

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Wannafuck!” (163). When Gregor attempts to remonstrate, the band’s roadies start to beat him up. To add insult to injury, the Cunts play a punk version of the Rolling Stones’ “I Can’t Get No (Satisfaction).” If Gregor’s masculinity is physically impugned, then his problematic musical identification with the cock rock of the Rolling Stones is again revealed to be built on sand.

By the time of Gregor’s first attempt at cohabitation, with Katarina in the late 1980s, music has almost entirely receded from his everyday existence. He seems to have entered those dreaded “times without rock music.” Gregor may like to hold himself up as the arbiter of musical taste within their relationship—he tells her “was ging, was nicht ging und was ganz und gar nicht ging” (252; what was OK, what was not OK, and what was really not OK)—but Katarina does not seem to take any notice, and music seems to be rather unimportant for them collectively. To the extent that they listen to it at all, it is Katarina, the so-called ice queen, who has the say. This “iciness” is written into her interaction with music too. She has brought a sterile-sounding CD player into the house, and although Gregor can see the new technology’s positive dimensions, its “knisterfreier, klarer Klang, das schon” (331; admittedly crackle-free, clear sound), there is something implicitly lacking for him in its crystalline sound. Similarly, he is left cold by the synthesizer-based house music played in the Monument dance club that Katarina sometimes persuades him to visit; it is “sinnlos, seelenlos” (278; without meaning, without soul). In this context, he can only long for the analogue days, for the “stampfenden Horden einstiger ‘Popklub’-Tage” (279; stamping hordes of the erstwhile Popklub days) and the warmth or emotional “authenticity” that rock represents.

And yet, there is a return to music. Katarina suspects Gregor of intending “sein restliches Leben als Berufsjugendlicher zu verbringen” (246; to spend the rest of his life as a professional youngster), and by the end of the novel she has left him. He now seeks out the company of his neighbor, the testy, middle-aged bachelor Herr Scheuffele. If music had been largely effaced from Gregor’s and Katarina’s joint existence, then it found a significant place in Scheuffele’s extended bachelorhood: Scheuffele is accustomed to listening to old *Schlager* at high volume. The novel’s final scene has Scheuffele and Gregor, the two bachelors, attending a local bar, where they will both enjoy *Schlager* from the jukebox. Is Gregor the Peter Pan destined for a similarly music-filled but otherwise empty bachelorhood as Scheuffele, switching perhaps the *Schlager* for the Stones, and for warm memories of the “Popklub days”? Another, sadder, demise is possible, however. Gregor disappears at the end of the narrative, and his manuscript has to be finished by his friend Ecki (who is now an academic), and finally by Politycki himself. As Jörg Magenau notes, this editorial conceit raises the issue, for those inclined to do so, of the death

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of the author during postmodernity.⁶⁶ Yet the novel, which is presented as a historical-critical edition, also satirizes the activities of literary scholarship. In this and other ways, Politycki succeeds in creating a novel that can be read on several levels and is true to his notion of a sophisticated “European” literature.

Music as a Prompt for Memory?

Weiberroman explains why the male side of Politycki’s generation seemed to have no program and desisted from engaging in politics.⁶⁷ It is predominantly a story about the difficulties of growing into manhood for a particular generational cohort of “limp-wristers” unsure of themselves in the post-sexual-liberation era. Rock and its consumption appear to be central in the stunted emotional economy of Gregor’s generation. Rock also provides the novel with the flavor of the times, but it is ultimately of ambiguous value. The uncertain value of rock also reflects the ambiguity in Politycki’s call for literature to become like rock. He was clearly a fan of rock and thought that literature could learn from it, although it was never really clear just how, and *Weiberroman* itself provides no real clues. But then, just how did one implement, or assay, such mystifying would-be literary qualities as “power,” “drive,” and “magic”? They seem to be as useful as the term “authenticity” within rockist discourse.

One thing that *Weiberroman* did take from rock was its masculinist ideology. *Weiberroman* is really a novel about *men*, and reviewers widely criticized it for treating its female characters as mere “Scherenschnitte” (cutouts).⁶⁸ It was, as Jörg Magenau pointed out, “vom feministischen Standpunkt betrachtet . . . höchst unkorrekt” (highly incorrect, from a feminist perspective).⁶⁹ If, as Ursula März identifies, the three figures of Kristina, Tania, and Katarina were supposed to represent male fantasies of women, drawn respectively from *Bravo*, *Playboy*, and *Vogue*, then she might have added to those sources the fantasy world of cock rock, as well as rock journalism’s own “cutouts” of aggressive women et al.⁷⁰ März takes the view that *Weiberroman* is saved by Politycki’s irony, and indeed the way the novel thematizes cock rock may also go part way to redeeming its “incorrectness.” Rock is actually not terribly liberating for young Gregor. Instead, it is an emotional prosthesis for someone who is not ready to grow up, who only realizes that he is in love when it is too late. During sobering moments, cock rock only highlights the protagonist’s sense of inadequacy. Yet it may be that music is all the lost Gregor Schattschneider has. The novel’s message is therefore in keeping with Politycki’s call to his generation to grow up and to leave the “record collecting” behind it. A little engagement with rock music is OK, he suggests, but not too much!

Politycki’s own ongoing ambivalence toward the music he enjoyed during his youth also reflects his novel’s moderate position. As his 2003

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review of a Rolling Stones concert in Munich revealed, he thought that the band was well past its use-by date. Indeed he confessed that it had been declining ever since the mid-1970s. He also considered Mick Jagger to be a tragic “Berufsjugendlicher” (professional youngster) figure. And yet he could still enjoy the Stones’ concert as a prompt for the work of memory: “Wir hören die Stücke ja ohnehin aus der Erinnerung heraus” (In any event, we listen to the songs mediated through our memory). This memory work could then have an enlivening, rejuvenating effect on the listener, especially if one focused on the drummer, Charlie Watts, who was a model for “auf stilvolle Art, alt zu werden” (growing old with style).<sup>71</sup>

Politycki’s critics, such as Thomas Meinecke, accuse him of standing for the position, also advanced by Nick Hornby and Frank Goosen, that one stops following popular music at some stage, usually in one’s thirties, and grows old with a particular sort of music; it primarily becomes what Goosen calls a locus of “Trost und Erregung” (comfort and stimulus) rather than anything more.<sup>72</sup> This type of habituation to the stimulus of music may reflect a private mode of engagement consistent especially with those socialized in the Kohl era, when “viele Jugendliche richteten sich . . . wieder in den gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse ein, suchten das kleine, private Glück” (many young people accommodated themselves again within [the prevailing] social conditions [and] sought out happiness in small and private ways).<sup>73</sup> Indeed one of *Weiberroman*’s qualities lies in what Sarah Thornton has called “reconstructing the popular past.”<sup>74</sup> For Meinecke, however, Politycki had failed to take note of the repoliticization of some popular music culture in the late 1970s and 1980s by the likes of Diederich Diederichsen. As we have seen in previous chapters, music and theory had, in Meinecke’s view, become closely co-located again in the 1990s, and Politycki, in his attention to such spurious notions as “the ’78 generation”—and the wrong sort of music—had simply missed out. Music then atrophied into an object of memory, and little more, contra, for example, the efforts by Diederichsen to defend political correctness at a time when Politycki, in both *Weiberroman* and his polemicizing about rock music, was thumbing his nose at it.<sup>75</sup>

As I demonstrated in chapter 3, Meinecke and other “younger” contemporaries showed that quite a different form of literary engagement with music was possible. There was clearly no love lost between the two camps, which was not surprising given that Meinecke et al. were Suhrkamp authors, and that they experimentally engaged with more contemporary musical forms, including techno, in which Politycki had no interest or knowledge. Already in 1995, before Meinecke and others had begun to thoroughly plumb the techno-lit field, Politycki considered that the idea of “Techno-Lyrik” (techno poetry) was a contradiction in terms “wenn wir davon ausgehen, dass ein Gedicht in der Regel mehr ist als die

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Summe geschickt zusammengesamelter Verse aus dem Fundus" (*Farbe der Vokale*, 73; if our starting point is that a poem is generally more than simply the sum of verses that have been artfully sampled together from a preexisting pool). For Politycki, Meinecke's anti-identificatory response to his call to the '78 generation was also illegitimate. Meinecke's insistence on locating a more progressive potential in popular music was just "Tonträger sammeln" (collecting records) and "hip bleiben" (staying hip): "ein schöner Beitrag über die Nutzlosigkeit, erwachsen zu werden, und für einen inzwischen 42-jährigen in gewisser Weise recht mutiger" (*Farbe der Vokale*, 16; a fine contribution to the topic of the uselessness of growing up, and a rather courageous one too, for someone who is, by now, forty-two years old). Yet this assessment was quite unfair. Meinecke was engaging in his way with a host of social problems. It was just that he had a poststructuralist view of society, and a postsovereign view of the individual, that had no truck with notions like "rock" and "authenticity."

Politycki's "rockish" attitude was also quite different from that of another, slightly younger group, closely aligned with Pop II in the critics' imagination. In so-called mainstream or lifestyle Pop II written by Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre and others, there was quite a different temporal focus and a distinct lack of underlying faith in the authenticist shibboleths of rock. Politycki clearly believed in rock, as it were. Although *Weiberroman* did have a link with the zeitgeist—it reflected the retrospective mood in the 1990s—it was also a period piece, conjuring forth the past, in its more private moments. The "neo-pop" works of Stuckrad-Barre, on the other hand, were more clearly rooted in the here and now of the 1990s; they were minimal snapshots of the present day. There was hence a different approach to narrative, and also to the idea of writing as a moral activity. Although a critic of the Gruppe 47 aesthetic, Politycki very much believed that writing novels was a matter of ethics and that a writer had to have some sort of message or vision of a better world.⁷⁶ That is, he still subscribed to the notion of a *Gesinnungsästhetik* (an aesthetics of conviction).⁷⁷ As I will show in the following section, a "mainstream" Pop II writer like Stuckrad-Barre demonstrates a close interest in popular music, but shows no deeper investment in it, or anything else. He too has participated in that split between affect and ideology diagnosed by Lawrence Grossberg and exhibited by his sometime favorites, Oasis.

Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre: Jaded Music Industry Insider

Of all the novelists who have been associated with the "mainstream" Pop II phenomenon—as opposed to the "advanced" Pop II of Goetz, Neumeister, and Meinecke—Stuckrad-Barre is probably the one whose

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writing is most thoroughly steeped in popular music. This is a function of his background. He has been intimately involved in the German music industry, as both the employee of a label and as a music journalist. Stuckrad-Barre has borrowed from popular music at several levels, including when crafting the best-selling *Soloalbum* (1998), his only novel per se, and the work for which he is best known. Stuckrad-Barre's musico-centrism has operated at the level of thematic content and, at least to some extent, a "realization" of musical form in his fiction. His keen appreciation of music celebrity and the mechanics of publicity have also guided his career as a writer. Yet this proximity by no means determines a universally positive attitude toward popular music. If the equally musico-centric industry insider Meinecke could regard music as an exciting field of political possibility, then for Stuckrad-Barre it is a finite set of genres and principles that are more restricting than they are liberating. None of them seem to matter much. If rock-centric writers like Matthias Politycki were true believers in rock's "authenticity," then "rock" and "pop" are merely a formula for Stuckrad-Barre. Momentarily appealing, perhaps, but also nauseating and no real way forward.

The youngest of the writers examined in this book, Stuckrad-Barre (born 1975) quickly moved from being a listener to a role ancillary to the production and reception of popular music.<sup>78</sup> After discontinuing his studies, he commenced a rapid ascent as a journalist and as a participant in what came to be referred to as the "new professions" within the so-called "new economy." Many of these new professions, which were an outgrowth of journalism and advertising and fell somewhere in between, supplied content to the then burgeoning dot-com sector. At the time of his literary debut (1998), Stuckrad-Barre was only twenty-three years old, but he had worked as a journalist for a number of prestigious publications including *Die Woche*, *die tageszeitung*, and *Rolling Stone*. He had also worked as a product manager for Universal Music, and in television.

Stuckrad-Barre's journalism reveals a distinctly ambivalent attitude to popular music, the industry, and music celebrity. This ambivalence reflects the proximity at which he has been able to view the industry—he noted in a 2004 article that his involvement in the industry had spoiled his enjoyment of music—as well as a particularly "jaded" moment in popular music discourse.<sup>79</sup> During the early mid-1990s, Stuckrad-Barre was well aware of the argument that everything had been done before, and that subversion within music, and the correlation that music could be the basis for a meaningful subculture, was simply no longer possible.<sup>80</sup> As he points out, half in jest, in an article titled "Ironie": "Es war keine Musik mehr denkbar, die ÜBERHAUPT NICHT werbespotkompatibel war. . . . Noch nie war es so leicht möglich, so unterschiedliche Musik zu mögen, zu kaufen, zu vergessen. Der Kauf einer Platte taugte nicht mehr zum Unterschlupf und zur Lebenskonzeptprothese, stellte zugleich auch kein Risiko mehr

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da.” (There was no conceivable music that was IN NO WAY AT ALL advertisement compatible. . . . It was never so easy to like such different sorts of music, to buy them, and to forget them. Buying a record no longer counted as a type of shelter or as a prosthesis for a life concept, it also represented no kind of risk.)⁸¹

Stuckrad-Barre’s anthologized journalism is surprisingly negative about music. He directs barbs at all sorts of contemporary genres, from hip-hop, through “fun punk,” to would-be “postgrunge,” and “Schlautechno” (clever techno).⁸² He also attacks holdovers and revivals from previous eras, including old folkies, *Schlager* revivalists, the Rolling Stones, and aging “Deutschrockers” like Udo Lindenberg.⁸³ “Rock” is a key term in his and his “Tristesse Royale” associates’ vocabulary, albeit an ambiguous one. He uses the term very broadly, to encompass the superannuated rock of the Rolling Stones and the German band the Scorpions, as well as “themed” rock like the “remodeled” *Zooropa*-era U2.⁸⁴ Drilling down however, “rock” represents various set tropes, for example “Tu Schlechtes und rede darüber—am besten aber erst hinterher” (do something bad and then talk about it—preferably afterward). It denotes “Übertreibung” (exaggeration), as well as the rehab and comeback principle.⁸⁵ In contrast to earlier notions like those of the “rockist” Politycki, though, rock does not have any special claims to innate “authenticity.”⁸⁶ Indeed, rock’s tropes may be freely performed, quite masterfully in some cases.⁸⁷

This is not to say that Stuckrad-Barre was not an enthusiast of some musics. In particular, he was attracted to Britpop, and especially to the band Oasis. Yet Stuckrad-Barre’s attachment to Oasis was highly ephemeral. In a frank postmortem article published after Oasis’s rather unsuccessful fourth album *Standing on the Shoulder of Giants* (2000), he claims to have been struck by love at first hearing. However, infatuation eventually swung around into its obverse: “Irgendwann geht einem jede Liebe auf den Geist” (Sooner or later any love object will get on your nerves).⁸⁸ This article demonstrates a type of attachment where music doesn’t matter in any lasting way and eschews any retrospectivity:

Ich befürchtete heimlich, beim nächsten Oasis-Konzert in die unangemessene und geheuchelte Wiedersehens-Euphorie eines Klassentreffens zu verfallen, in zweckdienliche Zwangsbegeisterung, Freude nicht mehr über Gegenwart, sondern als dosierbares Ritual, als mildes Abnicken und abgeklärtes Betrachten der überzuckerten und somit niedergestreckten Vergangenheit. Lieder hören wie Kinderbilder angucken. Das Gefühl weicht der Erinnerung an das Gefühl, und dann ist die Sache erledigt.

[I secretly dreaded the prospect of succumbing at the next Oasis concert to the inappropriate and feigned reunion euphoria that you encounter at a school reunion, to an expedient compelled

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enthusiasm, to a joy that is no longer about the present but rather that is a ritual in measured quantities, a smooth rolling-the-arm-over and a purified observation of the sugar-coated and thereby felled past. Listening to songs as you would look at photos of your childhood. Feeling yields to the memory of feeling, and then it is all over.]<sup>89</sup>

This remark suggests that Stuckrad-Barre would have had very little time for Politycki's fondly retrospective thematization of rock. Indeed, his attitude does not seem to allow for any sort of music consumption that is not in the moment and ephemeral. Infatuation yields to rejection, as a matter of course. It may not surprise, then, that in 2003 Stuckrad-Barre sold off almost his whole collection of music.<sup>90</sup> For its part, he damned Oasis to live out the life that had been predetermined for it by its genre and by the industry: "Die Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten einer Monsterrockband sind weiterhin nicht allzu weitreichend" (The possibilities of development remain not really that great for a monster rock band).<sup>91</sup>

Beyond dismissing different types of music, Stuckrad-Barre's anthologized journalism is also highly critical of the German music industry, including its hyperbole and puffery, as well as of German music journalists who only seem to know how to ask formulaic questions and employ clichés.<sup>92</sup> (Not that Stuckrad-Barre himself necessarily eschewed such clichés when working as a music journalist.<sup>93</sup>) This attitude was partly a function of the state of music journalism in the 1990s. As has been noted in another context, that decade brought various structural changes. First, there was, in the British market, what Eamonn Forde calls a "decline of personality journalism."<sup>94</sup> Downsizing and other economic factors also encouraged more "passive" forms of news gathering, for example relying on press releases and recycling earlier articles.<sup>95</sup>

### "Literature Pop" by a Latterday Literary "Punk"?

Stuckrad-Barre's decision to write a novel was borne of several factors. First, there was the fact that he became interested in literature and, as a journalist, in writing about literature too.<sup>96</sup> In a key enabling moment in 1996, he interviewed Nick Hornby for the German edition of *Rolling Stone*.<sup>97</sup> Other factors also motivated him, relating both to a personal crisis and to a market opportunity. Overcome by writers' block, Stuckrad-Barre found that he was unable to complete the ghostwriting of a music biography on the Stuttgart hip-hop group die Fantastischen Vier.<sup>98</sup> This is not surprising, given his criticisms of German music journalism and the music industry. In other words, these were now rather unappealing fields of activity for him. Stuckrad-Barre's diversification from journalism into literature was also symptomatic of a broader trend in which younger

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German journalists were leaving, or being pushed out of, journalism, to try their hand at writing a novel for the bull market for debutantes. As the laconic protagonist in (the erstwhile journalist) Moritz von Uslar's literary debut *Waldstein* (2006) notes: "Das Zeitschriften-Zeitalter, so hieß es ja überall immer wieder, sei abgelaufen" (As everyone was always telling you, the age of the newspaper had expired).⁹⁹ And, as Volker Wehdeking notes, an alternative beckoned: the American style of "new journalism" had offered a ready model for a highly readable literature since the early 1970s.¹⁰⁰ Stuckrad-Barre duly began working on *Soloalbum*, a strongly autobiographical novel dwelling on a recent romantic breakup that also reflected his background in the music industry. Kiepenheuer und Witsch, the contracted publisher of the Fantastische Vier book, and also the publisher of the German translation of *High Fidelity*, clearly sensed a market and promptly expressed interest in Stuckrad-Barre's novel.

There was another motivating factor in the switch to literature: the pleasure to be had in performing and agitating within the still rather fusty German literary field. Recall that Andreas Neumeister thought the literary scene of the mid-1990s was like a "Schutzgebiet" (protected area). By the mid-1990s, there were several precedents for the musico-centric "angry young man" of German letters, including Handke in 1966 and Stuckrad-Barre's friend Rainald Goetz in 1983. Although there were quite different contexts, Stuckrad-Barre's self-styling was not entirely dissimilar to the agitation that punk had performed in the popular music field in the late 1970s; punk was even an inspiration of sorts. Indeed, in a 1999 interview, he confessed that his activities within the literary field—especially his participation with Christian Kracht in a 1999 advertising campaign for the high-end clothing retailer Peek und Cloppenburg—had been "Punk-Rock, echt grossartig" (punk rock—just plain fantastic).¹⁰¹ This unusual campaign, which featured Kracht and Stuckrad-Barre on advertising billboards, epitomized both the increasing commercialization of the German literary field and younger writers' readiness to leverage that new situation to their advantage. As we have seen, the traditional modes of literary legitimation—newspaper reviews, literary prizes, and stipends—were becoming less relevant, as writers like Stuckrad-Barre harnessed other ways of marketing their books and appealing to younger and sizeable "hedonist," "metropolitan" readerships. Stuckrad-Barre was quite open about the need to appeal directly to the market, considering market success to be legitimation in itself.¹⁰²

The Peek und Cloppenburg campaign was calculated to provoke the older guard of critics, and was therefore a manifestation of the stance that Kracht and Stuckrad-Barre would adopt for the Tristesse Royale summit and in other texts in the late 1990s. The message was clear, and the "snotty upstarts" were more than happy to overstate the case in interviews too. For example, Stuckrad-Barre is quite open about the

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campaign being a means of getting publicity: “Es wäre ja töricht, sich auf die Literaturkritik zu verlassen” (It would be quite foolish to rely on the literary critics).<sup>103</sup> By appearing hyperaffirmative—confessing to selling “seinen Arsch und seine Seele” (his ass and his soul) to the media, as one critic put it—he could create a sensation within the literary field.<sup>104</sup> In any event, the Peek und Cloppenburg campaign quickly gave rise to an interview in *Die Zeit* in which Kracht and Stuckrad-Barre could further turn the screw, criticizing state-subsidized art, for example, as “subventioniert, geduldet, ertragen” (sponsored, suffered, and endured).<sup>105</sup> Stuckrad-Barre benefited by the publicity all the while. This was the provocative “punk” moment he discerned. Even if the Sex Pistols’ bondage gear has been swapped for smart Peek und Cloppenburg suits, the “snotty upstart” attitude remained, as did the savvy use of the media. So if the popular music field was in a state that did not appeal, the more antiquated literary field proved itself—again—to be a perfect venue for such “punk” games. In this way, figures like Stuckrad-Barre were, as Michael Pilz pointed out, very much a creation of a slightly unhealthy literary field, with its “Hang zur Tiefenschwere und ihrer Abneigung gegen Geld und Stars und schicke Kleider” (tendency toward the deep and weighty, and its aversion toward money, and stars, and chic clothing).<sup>106</sup> In hindsight, Stuckrad-Barre also suggested that he had not intended his persona to be “radikal punkig” (radical punky), but that that was the direction the field and the media pulled him.<sup>107</sup>

Stuckrad-Barre understood the stance he adopted to be “*Literatur-Pop*” (literature pop), a term he advanced in distinction to *Popliteratur*, which he considered meaningless. *Popliteratur* had been adopted by feckless critics as a put-down category, as an opposite for “deep” literature. For Stuckrad-Barre, this attitude revealed a lack of knowledge about “pop” itself: “[Die Kritiker nennen] es verächtlich Popliteratur, weil sie auch Pop nicht begreifen. . . . Niemand, der ein ernstzunehmendes Verhältnis zu Pop hat, würde dieses nichtsagendes Wort gebrauchen.” (It is partly because they do not get pop that [the critics contemptuously call it] *Popliteratur*. . . . No one with a respectable relationship to pop would use such an empty term.)<sup>108</sup> Literary critics therefore replicated the way male rock critics used the term “pop” as a strategy of abjection. At its heart, “pop” stood for what Stuckrad-Barre called the principle of tongue-in-cheek “vorgaukeln, behaupten, verfälschen, täuschen” (putting-on, asserting, faking, deceiving).<sup>109</sup> In this sense Stuckrad-Barre preferred the neologism *Literatur-Pop*, noting that he used “die ästhetischen Mittel des Pop” (the aesthetic means of pop) but also that “Pop ist Referenzrahmen und stilbildendes Subthema” (pop is the frame of reference and a formative subtopic).<sup>110</sup> Clearly, this was a specialized sense of the word “pop,” more closely related to that associated with Andy Warhol in the visual arts than to any sense of “pop” as a mere signifier

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for “popular music.” Warhol’s pop art had famously involved a “put on,’ a poker-faced attempt to discover exactly how much the audience would swallow.”¹¹¹ It had also involved a fascination with fame, celebrity, and a staging of self-image, all aspects that interested Stuckrad-Barre too. Of course, some of these Warholian ideas had found their way into discourse about popular music—and “pop music” in a narrower sense—at various times, including in the early 1980s, in relation to various postpunk and new pop “entryist” groups, and into the strategy of “subversive affirmation.”¹¹² Hence, one can speak of “die Geburt der ‘Tristesse Royale’ aus dem Geiste der achtziger Jahre” (the birth of “Tristesse Royale” [i.e., *Literatur-Pop*] from the spirit of the eighties).¹¹³ Yet the context had changed in the 1990s. For one thing, “pop” had become a ubiquitous “dummy term” by the mid-1990s. For another, the subcultural model originally operating behind the notion of “subversive affirmation” had broken down, as Stuckrad-Barre himself was aware. If subcultures had been wedded to a notion of progress toward a better world, it was not clear where or what that might now be.¹¹⁴ This theme also emerged strongly in Stuckrad-Barre’s novel *Soloalbum*.

Soloalbum: Music and Satisfaction?

The minimal narrative of *Soloalbum* is easily stated. Set in the present day, around the time of the release of Oasis’s third album *Be Here Now*, *Soloalbum* is in the tradition of Christian Kracht’s best-selling *Faserland* (1995). A young and reasonably well-off “narcissist” is disaffected—ostensibly by the fact that his girlfriend Katharina has left him—and he wallows in self-loathing, compensating by pouring his scorn on those whom he meets.¹¹⁵ So much so that *Der Spiegel* considered the novel the “Amoklauf eines Geschmacksterroristen” (running amuck of a taste terrorist).¹¹⁶ But, as Matthias Mertens puts it, the novel was a “reaktionäre Tirade ohne Standpunkt” (reactionary tirade devoid of a point of view).¹¹⁷ Mertens’ critique diagnoses that important split between affect and ideology that Lawrence Grossberg had identified in the late “rock formation,” and that, as we will see, also manifests itself in the way in which music is thematized in the novel.

As the title already foreshadows, *Soloalbum* employed popular music in a variety of ways—at the levels of title, cover design, form, and thematic content. The title drew on the notion of the solo album as a rather unappealing offering made during or after the death throes of a successful band, when an erstwhile band member is at a loss creatively or emotionally. Given the narrative’s premise—the protagonist’s recent romantic breakup—“Soloalbum” provides an apt guiding metaphor for his isolated mood and state. The larger form of *Soloalbum*—the novel is divided into an “A” and a “B” side, and consists of fourteen chapters

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on each “side,” with each of these taking its title and theme from an Oasis song—was also part of Stuckrad-Barre’s *Literatur-Pop* concept of passing off a novel as an LP.<sup>118</sup> This in itself was calculated both to appeal to hedonist metropolitan music fans-cum-readers and to provoke more conservative literary critics worried about the commercialization and watering down of literature. There were some critics who identified that Stuckrad-Barre had also borrowed a certain mood from popular music—and especially from Oasis. For example, Volker Weidermann took the view that Stuckrad-Barre had translated the predominant mood of the band—its melancholy yet indifferent sound—into the tone of his novel of rudderless postbreakup existence.<sup>119</sup> Moritz Baßler also takes the view that the narrative premise of love lost is taken straight from the blues tradition.<sup>120</sup> However, the formal and aesthetic borrowings from popular music and its technologies were rather superficial, certainly when one compares Stuckrad-Barre’s text with, say, Neumeister’s *Gut laut*, or Meinecke’s *Hellblau*. Thematically, however, music finds a very strong place in the novel. It functions in three main ways. First, musical signs act as economic points of Bourdieuan distinction on the part of the “taste terrorist.” Second, music figures here too as a type of consolation for the aggrieved protagonist—albeit one whose advantages are painfully short. Finally, the novel attacks the music industry via several excoriating cameos. None of these reserve any special place or utopian possibility for music—not even the type of minimal comfort that rock, and the warm memories of it, provides to Politycki’s protagonist.

If, as Nils Minkmar notes, popular music is useful in a literary setting partly because it offers a simple system of distinction shared by those socialized in the same era, then Stuckrad-Barre has learned this lesson well.<sup>121</sup> Yet whereas “rockist” writers like Politycki or Frank Goosen might employ music’s system of distinction in a more or less positive fashion to create images of music consumption with which readers might warmly identify, Stuckrad-Barre was almost entirely negative. Like his journalism, Stuckrad-Barre’s novel is withering about all sorts of music. Sometimes this is declaratory and apodictic. For example, German hip-hop is for the “blöd” (stupid).<sup>122</sup> Lists of reasons to hate German bands, such as Fury and the Slaughterhouse, are also inserted into the novel. At other times, the name of a particular band or musician is left to speak, more or less, for itself, or in association with other such references. In one particular scene at a student party, for example, a young female student’s music taste contributes to an economic description and, ultimately, put-down: “Sie hört gern Reggae. Scheiss Pearl Jam findet sie ‘superintensiv,’ auf ihre CDs von Tori Amos und PJ Harvey hat sie mit Edding geschrieben ‘♀-Power rules,’ selbst einem Comeback von Ina Deter stünde sie aufgeschlossen gegenüber. . . . Auch allergisch reagiert sie auf die Spice Girls.” (32; She likes listening to reggae. She thinks that shitty Pearl Jam

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is “superintensive,” she has written “♀-power rules” in marker on her Tori Amos and PJ Harvey CDs, she would even be open to a comeback by [the 1970s–1980s feminist singer-songwriter] Ina Deter. . . . She also reacts allergically to the Spice Girls.)

Hate-filled passages like this directly explain why some critics took the view that the whole of *Soloalbum* simply revolved around “den richtigen Geschmack” (the correct taste).¹²³ Yet the game of distinction—or as the protagonist self-consciously puts it himself, “dieses gymnasiale Abgrenzungsproblem” (211; this high school problem of delimitation)—is a fraught one in the late 1990s. Reasons of distinction can prevent him from enjoying music to which he might otherwise be attracted. This is the case, for example, with bands like Daft Punk or Kruder & Dorfmeister: “gute Musik, aber eben doch von allen so gnadenlos gern gemocht” (211; good music, but, simply, mercilessly loved by everyone). Moreover, at an intersubjective level, the returns of distinction are questionable; only very rarely does the thoroughly atomized protagonist actually bond with anyone else over shared music taste.¹²⁴ In general, the whole notion of distinction is also stripped from any sense of utopia, as might have been in earlier times when the leftist notion of pop as subversion within a subcultural setting was still intact.¹²⁵

This is not to say that a less-than-productive hatred of other people’s musics is the only state the protagonist knows. He also self-administers music as therapy within his depressed postbreakup existence. Some contemporary musics, and their modes of social consumption, seem a pleasant enough diversion, even if on closer inspection they lack any type of existential necessity for the protagonist. At one stage, for example, he goes to a “Monsterrave” (monster rave) in Berlin, noting matter-of-factly: “Ich interessiere mich nicht detailliert für diese Musik, aber auf solche Veranstaltungen gehe ich immer ganz gerne” (114; I am not interested in this music in any detailed way, but I am always keen to go to such events). A similar indifference pertains to Drum & Bass: “Vielleicht ist es . . . so, dass es an der Musik nicht viel zu unterscheiden und zu begreifen gibt. Das wäre für manchen vielleicht Grund, die Musik abzulehnen, für mich aber nicht. So was ist ja wurscht. Die Musik ist gut, stört nicht, ist schönes Geräusch, aus, fertig, man muss ja nicht alles begreifen, um es zu mögen.” (237; It may be that . . . there is nothing about this music to distinguish and to get. For some people that might be a reason to reject the music, but not for me. That is just irrelevant. The music is good, it doesn’t disturb [you] at all, it is a nice noise, and that’s that; you don’t need to get everything in order to like it.)

“Rockschuppen” (rock dives) likewise draw an ambivalent reaction. He finds these venues “sehr beruhigend” (very calming) but mostly because there are no surprises. The music they play is either historical or already “altbacken” (stale) when it is released. More critically, however, he notes

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with a certain disdain that the patrons “lieben die Vergangenheit” (162; love the past). More than this, he is averse to the authenticist discourse used within the rock scene (220). In this sense, the protagonist is “postrockist.”

Yet there is also some popular music that excites the protagonist. In particular, he finds fleeting pockets of relief in being a fan of Oasis. This adulation includes collecting—almost fetishistically—their various releases, and acrimoniously dwelling on them (216–17). It is at this point that we can see clear thematic links between Stuckrad-Barre’s lovelorn protagonist and Gregor Schattschneider or the list-obsessed Rob Fleming. However, as one reviewer correctly noted, Stuckrad-Barre’s “scharfer . . . Blick auf die Gegenwart” (keen . . . attention to the present) prevents *Soloalbum* from being a mere “Hornby-Remix für die Oasis-Generation” (Hornby remix for the Oasis generation).<sup>126</sup> Unlike *High Fidelity*, there is no happy end, either, no decision to settle down. *Soloalbum* is not even a “non-coming-of-age novel” like *Weiberroman*; the protagonist just treads water.<sup>127</sup> To the extent that *Soloalbum* has any narrative climax, it occurs at the Oasis concert the protagonist attends in Berlin toward the end of the novel. His mode of interaction with their music no longer finds its pleasure in accumulation, ordering, or in expert knowledge, but in the moment. The protagonist experiences relief from his state, yet it passes swiftly, and the novel quickly resumes the “Endlosrille” (lock groove) tone of earlier on, with the protagonist dwelling on the latest occurrences in popular culture and continuing to wonder whether he might still be able to reunite with his ex-girlfriend.<sup>128</sup> In other words, music has not redeemed him in any significant way or even provided him with a lasting mode of escape from his torpor. All that the music of Oasis is able to do is provide a moment of release, of untethered “feeling.” This moment is not free from “Unterwerfungswünsche” (a desire for subjugation)—at the height of the concert the narrator rolls around in dirt, which, Hubert Winkels suggests, would seem to validate the Adornian view of the masochistic fan.<sup>129</sup> Also taking an Adornian approach, Geoffrey Cox suggests that in *Soloalbum* it is music reception that more broadly “defines the narrator as an individual subject.”<sup>130</sup> At best, the narrator’s experience of Oasis can only provide encouragement to engage in yet more less-than-productive indifference. When the protagonist questions, for the umpteenth time, whether Katharina may yet return to him, Oasis’s lyrics provide an “answer”: “definitely maybe!”

*Soloalbum* therefore portrays a blasted image of popular music consumption in the present-day metropolitan hedonist milieu. As one reviewer put it: “In so einem Schlamassel kann das Glück nicht länger dauern als ein Song. Und es ist ein dunkles Glück.” (Happiness can’t last longer than a song in such a quagmire. And it is a murky type of happiness.)<sup>131</sup> The causes of the protagonist’s melancholia are many, but part of the reason why music only offers such a meagre consolation is given

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by his proximity to the music industry. Like Stuckrad-Barre's journalism, *Soloalbum* presents a very unattractive image of that industry. Hip label bosses are, in reality, would-be "Bill Gates . . . dem das Geldverdienen irgendwann die Lust am Sex geraubt hat" (87; Bill Gates . . . for whom earning money has robbed them of any lust for sex). The supposedly subcultural musics that they market are actually tawdry commodities: products from criminal "HipHop-Neger" (hip-hop Negroes) or from the "Richard Clayderman des Techno" (Richard Clayderman of Techno) (86). Label workers have no special qualification or talent; "wir können unseren Job alle nicht" (none of us is capable of doing our job). Indeed, the whole scenario is so appalling "[dass] man das nüchtern nicht erträgt" (87; that you can't endure it sober). Music journalists do not fare any better, either. They are deluded and self-aggrandizing characters who do not seem to realize that they are "nichts weiter . . . als . . . nützliche Idiot[en] von Plattenfirmen" (30; nothing more . . . than . . . useful idiots belonging to the record labels). The whole sector is composed of jaded copywriters who have been doing the job too long, and who are unable to move beyond cliché. Given this milieu, it is unsurprising that music consumption has become such a hollow pleasure.

What Next, "Irony" or "Rock"?

If "punk rock," or "pop," provided an inspiration for activities such as the Peek und Cloppenburg advertising campaign, then Stuckrad-Barre transferred *Soloalbum*'s metaphor of "text as LP" into many of his subsequent books. For example, *Livealbum* (1999) reported on the twelve-stop reading tour of *Soloalbum*. In addition to the CDs recorded live during the reading tours (*Liverecordings*, 1999), he published a written "best of" version of various live performances of his texts (*Transkript*, 2001). This attempted to convey the live version of the original texts by containing "ums" and "ahs," interjections from the audience, as well as "stage directions" citing what pieces of popular music were played when during the live performances and which "guest artists" (Rainald Goetz, Charlotte Roche, and others) performed when. Two "*Remix*" books were also published, in 1999 and 2004, respectively. These, too, took their cue from popular music. Nevertheless, they mostly diverge from the musical model, which typically presents remixes by other musicians or producers who extend the primary song longitudinally or, especially, vertically.¹³² *Remix* and *Remix 2* do not quite measure up to this aesthetic. They are essentially compilations of already-published articles, with small revisions made to some of the texts by Stuckrad-Barre himself. In other words, standard practice in the case of an author whose publisher deems it commercially desirable to anthologize their journalistic output, partly as a way of leveraging cross-publicity. The exception is "Frühstücksbüffets—Westbams

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Darkside Mix” (Breakfast Buffets—Westbam’s Darkside Mix), a text wherein the DJ-composer Westbam has completely rewritten a previous essay topic by Stuckrad-Barre.<sup>133</sup> “Westbam’s Darkside Mix” is a curious if somewhat tongue-in-cheek experiment that again reveals the difficulty in attaining a “vertical” aspect within a literary text the way a dub remix might do in music. More important than its success as a sophisticated type of “remix,” however, is the fact that it is also a marketing ploy, seeking spin-off publicity from Westbam’s own reputation, and making the book look more like a record: the end paper includes an endorsement, “Incl. 1 Westbam Mix.”

Various book titles therefore promoted to the hilt Stuckrad-Barre’s conceit of book as LP. These were committed to mining the seam of *Soloalbum*’s popular success, and Kiepenheuer und Witsch quickly cobbled them together for that purpose. In this respect the publisher did not diverge greatly from a business model commonly used in the popular music industry, where celebrity can be fickle and labels leverage temporary fame as quickly as possible. Hence some literary critics viewed these compilations in a cynical fashion. For example, *Die Zeit*’s Michael Pilz sneered in his review of *Remix*: “Der Remix ist das schönste Format in der Popmusik. Eine Art Rentenversicherung, weil die Möglichkeiten unbegrenzt erscheinen eine einzige Idee zu variieren.” (The remix is popular music’s finest format. A type of superannuation policy, because there seem to be unlimited ways of varying a single idea.)<sup>134</sup> Yet the “punk rock” or “pop”-inspired Stuckrad-Barre presumably did not at all object to his publisher’s strategy, even if it came very close to some aspects of the German popular music industry that he openly detested.

In many ways, Stuckrad-Barre’s was a perfect strategy, if for a short period of time. He could accommodate himself within the increasing commercialization of the literary field, as well as retreat behind the tongue-in-cheek so-called *Literatur-Pop* pose if necessary. He could court popular success and still maintain an arty stance. The whole exercise was also fun at some level. Yet there were two binds. First, he could not maintain the “pop” conceit of text as LP indefinitely. Second, there is real ennui at work here, as well as a literal nausea with the spoils of consumer society, including popular music, and with his complicity in the very thing of which he is critical. It is no coincidence that *Soloalbum*’s protagonist, and Stuckrad-Barre himself, are prone to bouts of bulimia. *Soloalbum*’s protagonist is hence a symptom of a neo-liberal and increasingly narcissistic society in which self-worth is sought by individuals through over-consumption.<sup>135</sup> As Stuart Taberner notes, then, mainstream Pop II like Stuckrad-Barre’s is not just for fun.<sup>136</sup> Or as Sabine von Dirke puts it, there is “an only apparently affirmative thematisation of fashion and life-style.”<sup>137</sup> Similarly, Hubert Winkels considers that mainstream Pop II’s seeming superficiality cannot fully occlude its shadow.<sup>138</sup>

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Unlike the rockist Politycki, with his faith in societal engagement, there is no possibility of progress to a better world here. Stuckrad-Barre and the other members of the Tristesse Royale “pop-cultural quintet” know it too. This is why many were able to discern in Stuckrad-Barre a tragic figure.¹³⁹ In their staged summit at the Hotel Adlon, Stuckrad-Barre and his colleagues revel in the trappings of consumer society, but they are so inveigled within that consumer society—as self-loathing members of the “new professions” who have no real training other than spin, and who at some level recognize that they too are “useful idiots”—that any unreflexive enjoyment of those products is impossible.¹⁴⁰ Faith in any “authentic” existence is simply naïve, and even diverting games of distinction are increasingly difficult. The culmination of their reflections at the Adlon—at the symbolic heart of the new Berlin Republic—and published in book form as *Tristesse Royale* (1999) is the conclusion that the way forward, out of this state of ennui, can only be “irony” or “rock”; the options are expressly cast in generic musical terms. “Intelligent” techno would seem to be another option, but it is not even mentioned. The Tristesse Royale clique is also pre-cultural studies and finds the paths taken by Diederichsen, and, implicitly, Meinecke, to be invalid.¹⁴¹ Superficially, “rock,” and its panache of excitement and excess, has some appeal—certainly by comparison with the irony that riles them in others, including the members of the Hamburg School.¹⁴² However, “rock” is simply not a true option. They are too late. By the late 1990s, rock is the stuff of “Vergreisung” (senescence), like the Rolling Stones or Salman Rushdie’s rock novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. It is an eternal hell of generic, and unavoidable, trajectories, as well as of ridiculous, failed makeovers, like that of the Scorpions.¹⁴³ Rockism—talk of authenticity, as practiced by hackneyed music journalists, and it might be added, by the likes of Politycki—is a tired, clichéd, and ultimately impossible stance in the “postrock” setting of the 1990s. The nostalgic stance of a “rock-centric” *Weiberroman* would be as unappetizing—for members of the “pop-cultural quintet,” anyway—as attending a school reunion, or a late-period Oasis concert, after one’s infatuation with the band has flown. Rock is now just a script for the reproduction or simulacrum of happiness.¹⁴⁴

By the same token, irony is equally unappealing. Tongue-in-cheek inauthenticity is also tired. Among their hip peers it is just as hackneyed as “rock,” just as universally loved as Kruder & Dorfmeister, whom *Soloalbum*’s protagonist despises for their wide appeal. It is also, they suggest, an inadequate basis from which to create any valid art. Yet just as they attack irony, and declare that it is “over,” the self-loathing members of the pop-cultural quintet confess that the German irony-philés are their natural demographic.¹⁴⁵ And, of course, Tristesse Royale is in one sense just another iteration of *Literatur-Pop*, a tongue-in-cheek pose. Thomas Meinecke—who himself had once embraced a “pop” stance of subversive

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affirmation—and others have perceived, however, that the political context had changed and that Stuckrad-Barre's ironic strategy was incommensurate with the times.<sup>146</sup> In all of these circumstances, “self-ironic irony” was an unavoidable but unstable stance to be occupied in Stuckrad-Barre's uneasy state of yearning for the unattainable prelapsarian days of rock authenticity. Put simply, for Stuckrad-Barre there is “kein Weg aus dem Dilemma von Rock und Ironie” (no way out of the dilemma of rock and irony), as Ralf von Appen has put it.<sup>147</sup> This is not to say that he did not continue to generate texts relating this and other dilemmas of late capitalism. There was clearly a large market for Stuckrad-Barre's jaded outlook too. Yet as Matthias Politycki, the rockist who was necessarily indisposed to pop, had predicted, it could not last, and Stuckrad-Barre came unseated.<sup>148</sup> Following his infamous burst of fame, and no doubt partly as a result of it, he suffered from a drug-fueled burnout in the early 2000s. Was this a scripted trajectory taken from the page of “rock”?<sup>149</sup> His path back into the public domain—“do something bad and then talk about it, preferably afterward!”—certainly was.<sup>150</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Nick Hornby, *High Fidelity* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Bloch discusses the term in Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1962), 113.

<sup>3</sup> Heidkamp, *It's All Over Now*, 273.

<sup>4</sup> Büsser, “Gimme Dat Old Time Religion,” 47. As Stuckrad-Barre's collected articles, and the musings of his Tristesse Royale colleagues show, Germans who made comebacks included groups such as the Scorpions and “Deutschrockers” like Herbert Grönemeyer, among others.

<sup>5</sup> Bradby, “Sampling Sexuality,” 162, 163, 158.

<sup>6</sup> Büsser, *Wie Klingt die Neue Mitte?*, 64.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 65. For Büsser, three milestones were telling: Chancellor Schroeder singing the *Wendrock* (rock anthem of unification) “Winds of Change” with the German rock band the Scorpions, Wolfgang Niedecken (from BAP) supporting the Red-Green coalition's decision to back the NATO bombing of the former Yugoslavia, and Marius Müller-Westernhagen receiving national honors.

<sup>8</sup> In Chicago and elsewhere “postrock” groups like Tortoise declared the rock era over and now looked to other sources, including new music, minimalism, the electronic avant-garde, Krautrock, and free jazz. See, e.g., Peter Kemper, “Hip-Hop, Postrock, and All That Jazz,” in Wolbert, *That's Jazz* 255–68. In the German context, some groups like To Rococo Rot were also greeted as “postrock.” See, e.g., Jan-Ole Jöhnk, “‘Unser Beitrag zum Thema Pop,’” in *Made in Germany: Die Hundert Besten Deutschen Platten*, ed. Albert Koch, Ernst Hofacker, and Christoph Lindemann (Höfen: Hannibal, 2001), 45–46.

<sup>9</sup> Kemper, “Hip-Hop,” 267.

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- ¹⁰ Will Straw, "Sizing Up Record Collections: Gender and Connoisseurship in Rock Music Culture," in *Sexing the Groove*, ed. Sheila Whiteley (London: Routledge, 1997), 12.
- ¹¹ Douglas Coupland, *Generation X* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).
- ¹² Adelt, "Ich bin der Rock'n'Roll-Übermensch," 279–95.
- ¹³ On the Schlagerrevival, see, e.g., Terkessidis, "Eingeborenen von Schizone-sien," 115–38.
- ¹⁴ Siegfried, *Time Is On My Side*, 116.
- ¹⁵ *Der Spiegel* announced Horn's nomination for the Eurovision contest as "Triumphgeheul in Ironesien" (a howl of triumph in Ironyland). Anon., "Triumphgeheul in Ironesien: Zur Nominierung Gildo Horns für den Schlager Grand Prix," *Der Spiegel*, no. 10 (1998).
- ¹⁶ See, generally, Twickel, *Läden, Schuppen, Kaschemmen*, 128–78.
- ¹⁷ Büsser, "Gimme Dat Old Time Religion," 45.
- ¹⁸ See also Joachim Bessing, et al., *Tristesse Royale* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1999), 29.
- ¹⁹ On the general uptake of Britpop and "lad" culture in Germany, see also Bessing, *Tristesse Royale*; and Thomas Groß, "Pop Will Eat Itself: Retrotrends—Musik aus dem Zitat," in Kemper et al., *Alles so schön bunt hier*, 318–30.
- ²⁰ Groß, "Pop Will Eat Itself," 322–23.
- ²¹ Winkels, *Gute Zeichen*, 150–52.
- ²² See, generally, John Harris, *The Last Party: Britpop, Blair, and the Demise of English Rock* (London: Harper Perennial, 2003).
- ²³ Lawrence Grossberg, *It's a Sin: Essays on Postmodernism, Politics, and Culture* (Sydney: Power, 1988), 39–43. See also Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 223.
- ²⁴ Bradby, "Sampling Sexuality," 164.
- ²⁵ Gisa Funck, "Wenn der Pointenlaster rollt," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 20, 2003, 38.
- ²⁶ On the history of Stuckrad-Barre's *Soloalbum* being compared by critics with *High Fidelity*, see Mathias Mertens, "Robbery, Assault, and Battery: Christian Kracht, Benjamin v. Stuckrad-Barre und ihre mutmaßlichen Vorbilder Bret Easton Ellis und Nick Hornby," in Arnold and Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 201–17. Meinecke desperately wishes to avoid being seen as an "oberbayrischer Nick Hornby" (upper Bavarian Nick Hornby), because he sees musico-centric literature as having a much more important role to play than being mere "Erinnerungsliteratur" (a literature of memory). Meinecke, quoted in Edo Reents, "Nietzsches Soul," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 6, 2004, 3; and Gerrit Bartels, "Wie die Westalgie das Laufen lernt," *die tageszeitung*, September 4, 2003, 15.
- ²⁷ Helmut Ziegler, "Steh auf, Mädchen," *Die Woche*, February 2, 2001, 41.
- ²⁸ Alf Hornborg, "Symbolic Technologies: Machines and the Marxian Notion of Fetishism," *Anthropological Theory* 1 (2001): 481. Will Straw is more sympathetic; he sees at the heart of record collecting an uncertainty based in "competing

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images of the collection as cultural monument and private haven" (Straw, "Sizing Up Record Collections," 4). For another view of the record collector "beyond the *High Fidelity* stereotype," see Roy Shuker, "Beyond the 'High Fidelity' Stereotype: Defining the (Contemporary) Record Collector," *Popular Music* 23, no. 3 (2004): 311–30.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Mertens, "Robbery, Assault, and Battery," 209, original emphasis.

<sup>30</sup> Hornby, *High Fidelity*, 66. Eckhard Schumacher cites this as an indicator of Hornby's generally retrospective attitude (Schumacher, *Gerade Eben Jetzt*, 9).

<sup>31</sup> Winkels, *Gute Zeichen*, 153. See also Mertens, "Robbery, Assault, and Battery," 213.

<sup>32</sup> On the German reception of the best-selling *High Fidelity*, see, e.g., Martin Wolf, "Krankenakte B," *Der Spiegel*, August 28, 2000, 196; Thomas Brussig, "Liebe zu Zeiten der Kohl-Ära," *Der Spiegel*, January 29, 2001, 168–70; Wolfgang Kralicek, Review of *Liegen lernen*, *Falter*, June 29–July 5, 2001, 60–61; Josef Engels, "Witzischkeit hat seine Grenzen," *Die Welt*, March 15, 2003, 3; and Mertens, "Robbery, Assault, and Battery." Unfortunately, limitation of space prevents an analysis of Goosen's rock-centric oeuvre.

<sup>33</sup> Christiane Peitz, "Total Normal," *Der Tagesspiegel*, September 3, 2003, 23.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Körte, "Verwende deine Jugend," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, August 31, 2003, 23.

<sup>35</sup> Kristina Maidt-Zinke, "Da lacht der Schrotthändler," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 12–13, 2003, 16.

<sup>36</sup> Körte, "Verwende deine Jugend."

<sup>37</sup> Andrew Plowman, "'Was will ich denn als Westdeutscher erzählen?': The 'Old' West and Globalisation in Recent German Prose," in Taberner, *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation*, 47–66; Taberner, *German Literature of the 1990s*, 86.

<sup>38</sup> Peitz, "Total Normal." On the links between neo-liberal economics and the culture of self-absorption and narcissism, see, e.g., Matthew McDonald, Stephen Wearing, and Jess Ponting, "Narcissism and Neo-Liberalism: Work, Leisure, and Alienation in an Era of Consumption," *Loisir et Société/Society and Leisure* 30, no. 2 (2007): 489–510.

<sup>39</sup> Minkmar, "304 Seiten Helmut."

<sup>40</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "The Curves of the Needle," trans. Thomas Y. Levin, *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 54.

<sup>41</sup> Matthias Politycki, "Man muss mehr geben als Wörter," *die tageszeitung*, February 22, 2000, 14.

<sup>42</sup> Reinhard Mohr, *Zaungäste: Die Generation, die Nach der Revolte Kam* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1992).

<sup>43</sup> Politycki, *Farbe der Vokale*, 14. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

<sup>44</sup> Tilman Krause, "Die 78er: Nur Maulhelden und Königskinder?," *Die Welt*, September 4, 1998, 10.

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⁴⁵ Politycki, *Farbe der Vokale*, 58–59. See also Politycki, “Man muss mehr geben als Wörter.”

⁴⁶ Matthias Politycki, “The American Dead-End,” in Mueller, *German Pop Culture*, 139.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Stephan Wackwitz, “Mädi abgeschminkt,” *Die Woche*, July 18, 1997, 39.

⁴⁸ In the wake of the second postwall literary debate (see chapter 2), there was a push, on the part of key critics and commissioning editors—notably Uwe Wittstock (Fischer) and Martin Hielscher (Kiepenheuer und Witsch)—for a “neue Lesbarkeit” (new readability). Wittstock urged for this new readability to be along “American” lines, as opposed to more obtuse, “European” (post)modernist lines; other pundits urged German authors to focus their attention on the aesthetic strategy of realism and to return to the attractions of narrative. Köhler and Moritz, *Maulhelden und Königskinder*; Ernst, “German Pop Literature,” 169–88: 175; Taberner, *German Literature of the 1990s*, 6–7.

⁴⁹ Politycki, “American Dead-End,” 138–39.

⁵⁰ Politycki, “Literatur muss sein wie die Rockmusik.”

⁵¹ On “rockism” see, e.g., Simon Frith, *Music For Pleasure: Essays in the Sociology of Pop* (Cambridge: Polity, 1988), 4.

⁵² Norma Coates, “(R)evolution Now?: Rock and the Political Potential of Gender,” in Whiteley, *Sexing the Groove*, 53.

⁵³ See, e.g., Stratton, “Between Two Worlds,” 267–85; Leonard, *Gender in the Music Industry*, 32–33. Many popular music scholars have urged for an outright jettisoning of the term, suggesting that in the poststructuralist era, it has been “consigned to the intellectual dust-heap.” Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, “Othering, Hybridity, and Fusion in Transnational Popular Musics,” in *Western Music and Its Others*, ed. Born and Hesmondhalgh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 30. Others have suggested that one should radically reconceive of “authenticity” in more discursive terms, that is, as something “emergent” rather than inherent. Moore, “Introduction,” *Critical Essays in Popular Musicology*, xiv.

⁵⁴ Coates, “(R)evolution Now?” 53.

⁵⁵ Leonard, *Gender in the Music Industry*.

⁵⁶ See, e.g., Britta Lippold, “Hauptsache existentiell,” *KULTUR/news*, October 1, 1997, 8–10; Oswald, “Alles Plastik,” 4; and the critics cited in Politycki, *Farbe der Vokale*, 240–41.

⁵⁷ Matthias Politycki, “Was wir schon viel zu lange lesen müssen,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, June 12, 1996, V.

⁵⁸ See also Politycki, *Farbe der Vokale*, 64; and Matthias Politycki, “Wir wollen doch alle Ravioli,” *Freitag*, March 10, 2000, 17.

⁵⁹ Andrea Köhler, “Seasons in the Sun,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, January 24–25, 1998, 49.

⁶⁰ Ingo Arends, “German Charts,” *Freitag*, October 2, 1998, 1.

⁶¹ Michael Bauer, “Ewig lockt das Weib,” *Focus*, August 4, 1997, 86.

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<sup>62</sup> Martin Krumbholz, "War man den Manns genug?" *Freitag*, September 5, 1997, 16.

<sup>63</sup> Politycki, *Weiberroman*, 74. Hereafter cited in the text parenthetically by page number.

<sup>64</sup> Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, "Rock and Sexuality," in Frith and Goodwin, *On Record*, 374. For a more differentiated reading of Mick Jagger's often misogynistic lyrics, and his sometimes androgynous style of dance and performance, see, e.g., Sheila Whiteley, "Little Red Rooster vs Honky Tonk Woman: Mick Jagger, Sexuality, Style, and Image," in Whiteley, *Sexing the Groove*, 67–99.

<sup>65</sup> Frith and McRobbie note that this fear of women is particularly evident in the Rolling Stones' music. They also observe that the fantasies of cock rock may be okay in a homosocial setting, but that "when it comes to the individual problems of handling a sexual relationship, the Robert Plant figure is a mythical and unsettling model" (Frith and McRobbie, "Rock and Sexuality," 382).

<sup>66</sup> Jörg Magenau, "Epocheninventar," *die tageszeitung*, August 15, 1997, 15.

<sup>67</sup> Hubert Spiegel, "Taugenichts der alten Republik," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 14, 1997, L3.

<sup>68</sup> See, e.g., Köhler, "Seasons in the Sun"; Spiegel, "Taugenichts der alten Republik."

<sup>69</sup> Magenau, "Epocheninventar."

<sup>70</sup> Ursula März, "Sex & Time," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, August 2, 1997, ZB4. On the tendency to stereotype women in rock criticism and discourse, see, e.g., Helen Davies, "All Rock n Roll Is Homosocial: The Representation of Women in the British Rock Music Press," *Popular Music* 20, no. 3 (2001): 301–19; Leonard, *Gender in the Music Industry*, chap. 2.

<sup>71</sup> Matthias Politycki, "Betreutes Wohnen auf der Bühne," *Die Zeit*, June 12, 2003, 33–34.

<sup>72</sup> Goosen, quoted in Beatrix Schnippenkoetter, "Frank Goosen, Kabarettist und Autor," *Der Tagesspiegel*, March 24, 2004, 53. On Meinecke's critical views about this attitude and about Politycki in particular, see Bartels, "Wie die Westalgie das Laufen lernt"; Witzel, Walter, and Meinecke, *Plattenspieler*.

<sup>73</sup> Peter Kemper, "Gib gas, ich will Spaß: Die Neue Deutsche Welle," in Kemper et al., *Alles so schön bunt hier*, 224.

<sup>74</sup> Thornton, "Strategies for Reconstructing the Popular Past," 87–95.

<sup>75</sup> Thomas Meinecke, "Alternde Peinsäcke," *Die Woche*, August 1, 1997, 33.

<sup>76</sup> See, e.g., Martin R. Dean, Thomas Hettche, Mathias Politycki, and Michael Schindhelm, "Was soll der Roman?" *Die Zeit*, June 23, 2005, [http://www.zeit.de/2005/26/Debatte\\_1](http://www.zeit.de/2005/26/Debatte_1).

<sup>77</sup> On the *Gesinnungsästhetik*, see, e.g., Alison Lewis, "The Twilight of the Public Intellectual: Germany's Literary Intellectuals and the End of the Cold War," *Portal* 1, no. 2 (2004): <http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/portal/article/view/59>.

<sup>78</sup> For a detailed study of Stuckrad-Barre and his works, see Paulokat, *Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre*.

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⁷⁹ Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre, "Show-Biss," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, April 8–9, 2004, 13.

⁸⁰ See, e.g., Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre, *Livealbum* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1999), 152. This was particularly so for some of the older "pop Left" music critics. As we have seen, for example, "pop pope" Diederichsen had already distanced himself from the pop model in the early mid-1990s. On the breakdown of subcultural models, and the concurrent rise of a "mainstream of minorities," see Tom Holert and Mark Terkessidis, "Einführung in den Mainstream der Minderheiten," in Holert and Terkessidis, *Mainstream der Minderheiten*, 5–19. See also my chapter 3.

⁸¹ Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre, *Remix* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1999), 89–90.

⁸² See, e.g., *ibid.*, 89, 223, 259–62; Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre, *Festwertspeicher der Kontrollgesellschaft: Remix 2* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 2004), 188–89, 247.

⁸³ Stuckrad-Barre, *Remix*, 136, 160–61, 195–98.

⁸⁴ Bessing et al., *Tristesse Royale*, 127–46. Stuckrad-Barre's looseness with the term "rock" reflects the reality. As Johan Fornas noted in 1995, "rock actually seems to be more of a family of genres than a homogeneous category." Quoted in Leonard, *Gender in the Music Industry*, 23.

⁸⁵ Stuckrad-Barre, *Remix*, 278–81.

⁸⁶ For example, Stuckrad-Barre dismisses talk of the Scorpions lack of "roots" as an illegitimate "Rockargument" (Bessing et al., *Tristesse Royale*, 130). On Stuckrad-Barre's provocative opposition to the establishment views about "honest rock," see, e.g., Rudi Raschke, "Neustart und Absturz," *Badische Zeitung*, August 29, 2000, 10. On the clash between his ideas and those of the "rockist" 78er Matthias Politycki, see, e.g., Matthias Politycki, "Das Medium ist die Massage," *die tageszeitung*, May 25, 2000, 13–14.

⁸⁷ Stuckrad-Barre, *Remix*, 278–81; Stuckrad-Barre, *Festwertspeicher*, 197–204.

⁸⁸ Stuckrad-Barre, *Festwertspeicher*, 201.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ He retained only twenty records, from which he then culled a song each for the compilation *Autodiscographie*. Anon, "Popautors letzter Seufzer," *Der Spiegel*, November 3, 2003, 181; oew, "Popautors Plattenbau," *Der Tagesspiegel*, April 24, 2003, 11.

⁹¹ Stuckrad-Barre, *Festwertspeicher*, 203.

⁹² Stuckrad-Barre, *Remix*, 207–14, 236–41. See also Stuckrad-Barre, "Show-Biss."

⁹³ Mertens, "Robbery, Assault, and Battery," 209.

⁹⁴ Eamonn Forde, "From Polyglottism to Branding: On the Decline of Personality Journalism in the British Music Press," *Journalism* 2, no. 1 (2001): 23–43.

⁹⁵ Meryl Aldridge, "The Tentative Hell-raisers: Identity and Mythology in Contemporary U.K. Press Journalism," *Media, Culture and Society* 20 (1998): 109–27; Leonard, *Gender in the Music Industry*, chap. 2.

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<sup>96</sup> Stuckrad-Barre, *Remix*, 249.

<sup>97</sup> Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre, “Nick Hornby: High Fidelity,” *Rolling Stone* (German), May 1996.

<sup>98</sup> Christian Seidl, “Schöner Irrsinn,” *Stern*, September 10, 1998, 38.

<sup>99</sup> Quoted in Wehdeking, *Generationenwechsel*, 186.

<sup>100</sup> Wehdeking, *Generationenwechsel*.

<sup>101</sup> Quoted in Kristina von Klot, “Demut ist das Stichwort,” *Falter*, December 10–16, 1999, 26.

<sup>102</sup> Anne Philippi and Rainer Schmidt, “Wir tragen Grösse 46,” *Die Zeit*, September 9, 1999, 3.

<sup>103</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Oliver Fuchs and Axel Henrici, “Die ganze Welt soll Ich werden,” *die tageszeitung*, September 15, 1999, 15.

<sup>105</sup> Quoted in Philippi and Schmidt, “Wir tragen Grösse 46.”

<sup>106</sup> Michael Pilz, “Lyrisches Ich ins Grab, hopp, hopp,” *Die Welt*, September 24, 1999, 13.

<sup>107</sup> Thomas Venker and Linus Volkmann, “Die Kehrseite der Journaille,” *Sonntag Aktuell*, May 23, 2004, 20.

<sup>108</sup> Quoted in Philippi and Schmidt, “Wir tragen Grösse 46.”

<sup>109</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Edward Lucie-Smith, *Movements in Art since 1945*, 2nd ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), 162, quoting Frank O’Hara.

<sup>112</sup> On “entryism” and subversive affirmation in the “new pop” setting of the early 1980s, see, e.g., Simon Reynolds, *Rip It Up and Start Again: Post-punk, 1978–84* (London: Faber, 2005). On subversive affirmation in the 1980s in Germany, see my chapter 3.

<sup>113</sup> Dirk Frank, “Die Nachfahren der ‘Gegengegenkultur’: Die Geburt der ‘Tristesse Royale’ aus dem Geiste der achtziger Jahre,” in Arnold and Schäfer, *Pop-Literatur*, 218–33.

<sup>114</sup> Holert, “Abgrenzen und Durchkreuzen,” 23–37.

<sup>115</sup> The charge of narcissism is Michael Pilz’s (“Lyrisches Ich ins Grab”).

<sup>116</sup> Anon, “Amoklauf eines Geschmacksterroristen,” *Der Spiegel*, September 7, 1998, 209.

<sup>117</sup> Mertens, “Robbery, Assault, and Battery,” 211.

<sup>118</sup> For an analysis of these aspects, see, e.g., Cox, “Playlists,” 152–55.

<sup>119</sup> Volker Weidermann, “Gagschreibers Trauergesang,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 18, 1998, 42.

<sup>120</sup> Baßler, *Deutsche Pop-Roman*, 103.

<sup>121</sup> Minkmar, “304 Seiten Helmut.” See also Baßler, *Deutsche Pop-Roman*, 106–10.

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- ¹²² Stuckrad-Barre, *Soloalbum*, 136. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number.
- ¹²³ Silke Schnettler, "Mein Bauch ist der Nabel der Welt," *Die Welt*, January 9, 1999, 10.
- ¹²⁴ This is point that Geoffrey Cox also makes ("Playlists," chap. 3).
- ¹²⁵ Holert, "Abgrenzen und Durchkreuzen," 36.
- ¹²⁶ Schnettler, "Mein Bauch ist der Nabel der Welt."
- ¹²⁷ On the disjunctures between *Soloalbum* and *High Fidelity*, see also Mertens, "Robbery, Assault, and Battery."
- ¹²⁸ Weidermann, "Gagschreibers Trauer gesang."
- ¹²⁹ Winkels, *Gute Zeichen*, 151.
- ¹³⁰ Cox, "Playlists," 157.
- ¹³¹ Schnettler, "Mein Bauch ist der Nabel der Welt."
- ¹³² On the diversity of remixing practices in music, see, e.g., Jonathan David Tankel, "The Practice of Recording Music: Remixing as Recording," *Journal of Communications* 40, no. 3 (1990): 42–43; Serge Lacasse, "Intertextuality and Hypertextuality in Recorded Popular Music," in *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?*, ed. Michael Talbot (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001), 35–58.
- ¹³³ Stuckrad-Barre, *Remix*, 43–45. This text seems to be the sole remnant of a larger literary remix concept that Stuckrad-Barre had at the time. He apparently also asked Rainald Goetz to be involved in the project, but Goetz declined.
- ¹³⁴ Pilz, "Lyrisches Ich ins Grab."
- ¹³⁵ McDonald, Wearing, and Ponting, "Narcissism and Neo-Liberalism."
- ¹³⁶ Taberner, *German Literature of the 1990s*, 93.
- ¹³⁷ von Dirke, "Pop Literature in the Berlin Republic," 122.
- ¹³⁸ Winkels, *Gute Zeichen*, 165.
- ¹³⁹ See, e.g., Stefan Beuse, "Es poppt nicht mehr," *Die Woche*, September 8, 2000, 39.
- ¹⁴⁰ On Stuckrad-Barre's self-loathing, see, e.g., Hans-Peter Junker, "Alles ist falsch—Man selbst auch," *Stern*, August 31, 2000, 220–21.
- ¹⁴¹ Bessing et al., *Tristesse Royale*, 98–99.
- ¹⁴² See also Stuckrad-Barre's essay "Ironie" (in Stuckrad-Barre, *Remix*, 84–92).
- ¹⁴³ Bessing et al., *Tristesse Royale*, 137–44.
- ¹⁴⁴ Stuckrad-Barre, quoted in *ibid.*, 146.
- ¹⁴⁵ Bessing et al., *Tristesse Royale*, 29.
- ¹⁴⁶ Meinecke, quoted in Ullmaier, *Von ACID*, 35. See also Ernst, "German Pop Literature," 181.
- ¹⁴⁷ Ralf von Appen, "Kein Weg aus dem Dilemma von Rock und Ironie: Die Musik in den Schriften Benjamin v. Stuckrad-Barres," in *Pop Pop Populär:*

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*Popliteratur und Jugendkultur*, ed. Johannes G. Pankau (Bremen: Aschenbeck und Isensee, 2004), 153–66. See also Baßler, *Deutsche Pop-Roman*, 126–34.

<sup>148</sup> For Politycki, mainstream or lifestyle “*Popliteratur*” was essentially “Lesefutter” (reading fodder) devoid of any inner necessity. The main thing these “Plapperprosa” (blabber-prose) authors had learned from popular music was image mongering. Many of them took themselves for “popstars,” treated the public reading as an event, and the book as another “Ablenkungs und Zerstreuungsmedium” (medium of distraction and diversion). Politycki, “Man muss mehr geben als Wörter”; Politycki, “Medium ist die Massage.” Politycki was clear that such criteria could not support a career as a serious novelist, so *Popliteratur* was pre-programmed to fail. What was partly at issue here were gravely divergent attitudes to popular music and a clash between the younger authors’ ironic “popism” and Politycki’s antiquated rock-centrism.

<sup>149</sup> Stuckrad-Barre was prone to bouts of depression, but threw himself into his work as a response. He also overindulged in drugs, including cocaine, to which he became addicted. It is not easy to identify the causes of this overdetermined state—they presumably were etiological and were brought about or exacerbated by his fame, by his extreme “Literatur-Pop” strategy, and by the tenor of the criticism that he drew. To some extent the causes were societal: “Wer sieht, muss saufen” (He who sees is driven to drink). Stuckrad-Barre, quoted in Anon, “Ruhe fand ich, wenn ich breit war,” *Der Spiegel*, May 24, 2004, 170–75. On Stuckrad-Barre’s breakdown, see also Georg Diez, “German Psycho,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, April 4, 2004, 19, as well as Herlinde Koelbl’s 2004 documentary film *Rausch und Ruhm* (Intoxication and Fame).

<sup>150</sup> Stuckrad-Barre finally came to terms with his illness as a result of meeting Deutschrocker Udo Lindenberg, who guided him through kicking his habit. On his “rockish” desire to publish his addiction, see Anon, “Ruhe fand ich”; Barbara Nolte, “Ich traf einen verzweiferten Menschen,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, June 2, 2004, 30.

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5: After the GDR's "Musical Niche Society"? Popular Music in the Literature of Thomas Brussig

[Im Osten] wurde und wird in Musik ein Lebensphilosophie hineinprojiziert, wo der Westler schlicht Unterhaltung erkennt.

[In the East a philosophy of life was and is projected into music, whereas the Westerner simply sees entertainment.]

—Christoph Dieckmann, *My Generation*

THOMAS BRUSSIG (born 1965 in East Berlin) was an enthusiast of Nick Hornby's 1995 novel *High Fidelity* and of Frank Goosen's similarly musico-centric *Liegen lernen* (2001). His own musico-centrism, although long-standing, began to fully emerge in his 1999 screenplay and novelization of the Leander Haussmann film *Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee* (At the shorter end of *Sonnenallee*). Popular music, and its complexion in and after the GDR, would continue to be of thematic interest to Brussig, especially over the next five years—in the 2000 play *Heimsuchung* (Visitation) as well as in the 2004 novel *Wie es leuchtet* (How It Shines). These texts represent a reckoning with the special history of popular music production and consumption in the GDR and contribute to our understanding of the social meanings attached to popular music after the state's demise. More specifically, they demonstrate the ambiguous political potential of popular music in and after state socialism. The special history of the GDR made the production and consumption of popular music a political act, at least for some. This chapter will use the film and novelization of *Sonnenallee* to explore how popular music's antiregime connotations could operate during the life of the GDR and how some former easterners would choose to remember those connotations in the 1990s and beyond. I will use *Wie es leuchtet* to show how, in the revolutionary period of 1989–90, popular music could support a social movement. Yet the novel indicates how fragile such a nexus might be, and how the political associations that many East Germans made with popular music quickly dissipated, contributing to the sense of disorientation they felt after the Wall fell. This literary image is consonant with the fundamental point established by the secondary literature about popular music and politics. As Roy Shuker points out, popular music has contributed at various

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historical junctures to “identifying social problems, alienation and oppression, and facilitating the sharing of a collective vision.” However, there are three aspects that can detract from music’s efficacy as an agent of political change. First, there can be a “radical dissociation” (Lawrence Grossberg) between intended content and actual reception. Second, popular music may be too “transient” to have a lasting effect on the consciousness of its audience. Finally, it is not exactly clear how the feelings that music engenders articulate with concrete political action.<sup>1</sup> *Wie es leuchtet* plots popular music through a period of rapid political change and shows how it could become unstuck from the social movement it once quickened. *Heimsuchung* is set a decade after the fall of the Wall and the passing of East Germany’s music-based oppositional subcultures. The play offers an admonition to former East Germans not to dwell on the past and on now outdated images of popular music and subversion. In general, then, Brussig demonstrates a distinct ambivalence about popular music, which, together with the degree of self-reflexivity he uses, sets him apart from other less sophisticated purveyors of “Ostalgie” who have looked back on everyday culture in East Germany. For Brussig, and perhaps for many other music fans in his generation, this may have been a case of once bitten, twice shy.

### Popular Music in the GDR

As various scholars have shown, Western-flavored popular music did not have an easy time of it in the GDR.<sup>2</sup> The regime paid special attention to it, partly because of the importance of culture within the socialist project, particularly from the last quarter of the 1950s onward. Policies in relation to popular music were also integrated with concerns about young people and the future of socialism. In addition to Cold War reasoning—such as the concern that popular music was part of a “diversionary” strategy by the capitalist West—many cadres rejected popular music on aesthetic grounds, given that the GDR adhered to the inherited distinction between “high” and “low” until well into the 1960s.

Just as the GDR’s economy was centrally planned, the state subjected popular music to dirigiste measures. In general, it pursued a philosophy of musical independence from the West. Ideologues hoped that homegrown music would develop young people’s taste and morality along appropriately socialist lines. And yet the fruit of these efforts could scarcely compete with Anglo-American popular music at the everyday level, so there were also pragmatic figures in the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party, SED) who recognized a need for dance music that catered to young people’s increasingly Anglo-American tastes. Together with the fluctuating Cold War background, this ideological conflict accounts for the flip-flopping that occurred, especially in the

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1960s, a period during which foundational debates were had and institutional frameworks were set for the regulation of popular music during the remainder of the life of the GDR. As Peter Wicke puts it, the regime would thereafter apply the following schema to successive new Western genres: "Ignorieren, Ausgrenzen, Umdefinieren, Integrieren" (ignore, exclude, redefine, integrate).³

East Germans ideologues demonized rock 'n' roll in the late 1950s because they thought it was contributing to the problem of juvenile delinquency that publicly flaunted officially sanctioned socialist norms.⁴ However, a thaw occurred in the first half of the 1960s, in line with a relatively liberal 1963 SED communiqué on youth matters. This change recognized that the state needed to grant latitude to young people if it was to integrate them into the socialist project. The state now made attempts to recuperate the increasingly popular "Beat" music, or at least certain aspects of it, and to stress its critical potential in relation to the capitalist West. However, as with jazz, there were also sharp changes of tack. The most notorious one came with the SED's neo-Stalinist policies proclaimed at the 11th Central Committee Congress in December 1965. The party now rejected criticism in literature and the arts and attacked songwriters and writers such as Wolf Biermann and Stefan Heym. Walter Ulbricht also made a famous comment about Beat music at the Congress: "Ich bin der Meinung, Genossen, mit der Monotonie des Jay, Jeh, yeh [sic!], und wie das alles heisst, sollte man doch Schluss machen. . . . Ist es denn wirklich so, dass wir jeden Dreck, der vom Westen kommt, kopieren müssen?" (Comrades, I am of the opinion that we ought to put an end to the monotony of the yeh, yeh, yeh [sic!], and whatever else it is all called. . . . Is it really the case that we have to copy every bit of trash that comes from the West?)⁵ The media duly launched anti-Beat campaigns, and the state now mandated that even amateur musicians needed a permit. Bureaucrats assessed individuals' moral and political character, as well as that of their music. They required bands with English names to change them and proscribed musicians from singing in English. The aversion to English continued over the years as the state eschewed terms such as "deejay" and "Beat" in favor of "Schallplattenunterhalter" (record-entertainer), and "Jugend-" or "Tanzmusik" (youth or dance music). The crackdown banned foreign Beat groups from appearing in the GDR as well as the import, broadcasting, or covering of especially "harmful" Western recordings. In this way, the state banned many songs by the Rolling Stones, whom ideologues thought the very "Inkarnation imperialistischer Dekadenz" (incarnation of imperialist decadence).⁶ Indeed, the Rolling Stones often represented a crystallizing point in the GDR's deliberations about popular music. For example, the Stones' rowdy concert on September 15, 1965, during which West Berlin fans damaged the *Waldbühne*, precipitated a moral panic in the GDR media about Beat music. The status of the Rolling Stones again came to a head in

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1969. West Berlin's public broadcaster circulated a rumor that the Rolling Stones would perform a concert during the GDR's twentieth anniversary celebrations from the roof of the Springer building that overlooked East Berlin. Although it was a hoax, crowds of young East Germans gathered in anticipation and the SED regime took a number of costly measures to prevent an "incident" occurring.<sup>7</sup>

The pendulum swung back in favor of an East German variant of rock at the end of the 1960s, as the state began to promote so-called GDRock. This change came because a rock scene was blooming at an underground level and because Erich Honecker's new principle of "consumer socialism" recognized that the state needed to cater to young people's leisure requirements. However, rock continued to operate under regulation. Bands still had to apply for a permit and submit their lyrics for political scrutiny. Those who wished to record for AMIGA, the state-owned record label, faced additional levels of control.<sup>8</sup> They had to navigate the outdated tastes of the official producers and comply with requirements about maintaining rhythm, harmony, melody, and comprehensible lyrics. Lyrics had to be in German and censors encouraged didacticism. Some nebulous lyrics that passed the censors left room for individual listeners to imagine criticism of the regime.<sup>9</sup> However, censorship could also operate in a bizarre fashion, outlawing lyrics that did not, however remotely, have any critical intent. As Peter Wicke notes, censorship meant that even the most banal lyrics could be overinterpreted as political, the outcome being precisely the opposite of what the regime desired.<sup>10</sup> Despite the GDRock thaw of the 1970s, then, many restrictions continued. Bands not willing to toe the line could have their right to perform withdrawn. The state also continued to impose piecemeal restrictions on the broadcast of various types of Western music—be it the Rolling Stones, psychedelic music, "God Rock," or anything smacking of the capitalist "star cult."<sup>11</sup> As the various later editions of Heinz Peter Hofmann's standard work *Beat, Rock, Rhythm & Blues, Soul* (1973) indicate, the official view persisted that certain Western rock and pop was a "Wunderwaffe monopolistischer Macht" (miracle weapon of monopolistic power).<sup>12</sup>

Yet the regime's measures could never be entirely effective. Whereas print media and film could be relatively effectively censored, music inherently evaded control. Moreover, the infrastructure required to adequately police the rules was lacking. There were various ways that performers could evade a ban on playing. For everyday music consumers, the matter was even easier. Those who lived within the transmission regions for Western television and radio could just tune in to hear the latest popular music from the West, a strategy that increased over time.<sup>13</sup> Changes in music technology also had a major impact. Properly equipped, young people could record music onto tape, either from Western radio or dubbed from a contraband record. Magnetic tape technology thereby

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assisted in the dissemination and reproduction of frowned-on music among East Germany's music enthusiasts. The practical cassette recorders of the 1970s prompted a further democratization of music. Even though blank cassettes were relatively expensive—more expensive than an AMIGA LP, and effectively a third of a young apprentice's monthly wage—young people took to cassette recorders with great enthusiasm. By the 1980s, over 90 percent of young people either owned a cassette recorder or had access to one in the family.¹⁴ Cassette technology was also useful for circumventing the state in another way too. In the mid-1980s, an underground punk scene sprang up and it circulated its music by means of homemade tapes.¹⁵

In these circumstances, popular music held a special series of political associations for young people, associations that East German writers reflected on at different times. Whereas West German writers tended to consider that the subversive value of rock dissipated relatively quickly after its "underground" period in the late 1960s—see chapter 1—East Germans maintained a similar association for much longer.¹⁶ Thomas C. Fox has examined a series of works by East German writers such as Fritz Rudolf Fries, Erich Loest, Ulrich Plenzdorf, and Stefan Heym from the late 1960s and 1970s, most of which were unable to be published in the GDR. He shows how these authors and their characters viewed popular music ambiguously; it was a form of "retreat but [it also had . . .] an at times utopian element that [could] be set against an ossified reality."¹⁷ On the one hand, popular music functions in these novels as a private "niche," a realm where the imagination rules rather than the repressive sameness of the state; on the other hand, music embodies a utopian model of hope.¹⁸ For Fox, it is this ambiguity that epitomizes East German musico-centric writing from the reunification period. In one sense, Thomas Brussig's post-*Wende* writing should be seen in this tradition, particularly where, as in *Sonnenallee*, it ambiguously reflects on the pre-*Wende* situation.¹⁹ Nevertheless, we should not forget that this literature was written after the *Wende*. For that reason alone Brussig's novels could have a comic tone that was absent in the pre-*Wende* literature.²⁰ Yet the wisdom gained from the post-*Wende* perspective also allowed a greater note of sobriety about the political potential of music.

Ostalgie and the Rediscovery of East German Popular Music

It is important to situate Brussig's musico-centric writing within a broader social trend in the 1990s and 2000s, that of so-called *Ostalgie* (nostalgia for the old East Germany and its popular and material culture). Music was far from absent from this phenomenon. Several years after the fall of

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the Wall, the public began to pay renewed attention to the peculiarities of East German popular music. In 1994 and 1995, Peter Wicke, Michael Rauhut, and others from the Humboldt University conducted a large-scale research project into rock in the GDR.<sup>21</sup> At the same time as this academic work, popular interest also began to increase, which was in curious contrast to the low esteem of GDRock in the 1980s. Western record companies now began to reissue popular music from the AMIGA label; BMG made a turnover of more than DM 30 million from that back catalogue between 1993 and 1999.<sup>22</sup>

This popular turn to the musical past was by no means universal, indeed many young East Germans embraced deliberately futuristic genres of popular music such as techno in the 1990s.<sup>23</sup> Consuming the past was also a differentiated activity. For some older East Germans, attending a 1990s concert by a reunited GDRock band may not have been qualitatively different from a Matthias Politycki attending a concert by the Rolling Stones in Munich in the same period. Some younger people may have revelled in what now bore the appearance of state-sponsored kitsch, just as others enjoyed the *Schlagerrevival*. (Tellingly, AMIGA records were also rediscovered by West Germans.)<sup>24</sup> However, many minds associated all this with *Ostalgie*, a phenomenon that can be traced right back to the early 1990s but began to emerge in full force in the mid-to-late 1990s.<sup>25</sup> At a basic level, *Ostalgie*—a combination of the words *Ost* (east) and *Nostalgie* (nostalgia)—can be defined as the nostalgic evocation of the East German past, and in particular of the more cosseted realm of everyday life. However, it is a nostalgia that stops short of actually wishing for a return of the SED regime.<sup>26</sup> From a socio-psychological perspective, one of the several motivations behind *Ostalgie* is that easterners have sought refuge from the economic uncertainty of the postunification present in comforting images of the past.<sup>27</sup> Yet *Ostalgie*'s critics attacked the way that it papered over the brutal realities of the regime and, for them, impeded a sober account of history.<sup>28</sup> Some also criticized how the entertainment industry commercially exploited the mood. As Paul Cooke has noted, *Ostalgie* "has become big business" in recent years.<sup>29</sup> But as Cooke also stresses, *Ostalgie* is a "multi-layered phenomenon" and one ought always to query whether a particular cultural worker allows the recipient to indulge in "unreflected wistfulness."<sup>30</sup> Peter Wicke also rejects any blanket use of the term *Ostalgie* in relation to the increased consumption of GDRock in the mid-to-late 1990s. He argues that most of those who rediscovered GDRock were too young to have consumed it the first time around. Their interest was not rooted in the past but in a form of identificatory sympathy with the current biographies of GDRockers, who—as we will see—had not been dealt favorable cards by the *Wende*. In Wicke's view, young people's interest in GDRock was actually a new form of "cultural self-assertion" in the postunification present.<sup>31</sup>

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Brussig, the Musico-Centric "Zonenkasper" (East German Jester)

Thomas Brussig is one author who has been criticized for *Ostalgie*.³² However, by attending to the ways that he thematizes music we can query such claims. I will argue that although his musico-centric literature does look back on the past, it does so in a complex manner that both engages in musical nostalgia and undermines it. He points to the political potential of music under state socialism and during revolutionary times, but also suggests that such potential is brittle, relatively narrowly circumscribed, and tends to be overestimated in hindsight by its enthusiasts. Indeed, he occasionally queries whether too close an attachment to the musical past might be detrimental in the post-Wall present.

Given Brussig's musico-centrism, and that a great deal of musico-centric literature is nostalgic in mood, it is unsurprising that his novels have been charged with *Ostalgie*. Like the "westalgic" Matthias Politycki, Brussig is an enthusiast of classic rock like the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. He has engaged with popular music at a range of levels. "DJ Thomasig" has been an occasional amateur deejay, has dabbled in music journalism, and popular music has also served as inspiration for his literary endeavors.³³ Just how productive music could be is revealed by the process he and his collaborator Leander Haussmann used for the screenplay of *Sonnenallee*, their coming-of-age film set in the GDR in the 1970s or 1980s. They listened to music, which triggered memories of their GDR youth that they incorporated into the script.³⁴ For Brussig, engagement with music is ipso facto a retrospective if not nostalgic activity: "Wenn ich mich mit der Musik beschäftige, die mir mal gefallen hat und die mir immer noch gefällt, dann ist das auch eine Begegnung mit meiner Vergangenheit" (Whenever I engage with the music that once appealed to me and that still appeals to me, then it is also an encounter with my past).³⁵ The strength of his and Haussmann's identification with the music of their youth—and perhaps that of their whole cohort—is also palpable in Haussmann's observations in a *Spiegel* interview ten years after the *Wende*. He struggled to remember what GDR banknotes looked like, yet he could recall exactly which Western records he had owned.³⁶ Little wonder, then, that a text portraying that East German past should so heavily feature popular music.

Brussig's motivations to deal with the GDR past in a literary fashion were complex. He by no means held any great attachment to communism. As with Jakob Hein, and some other younger writers who have looked back on the place of popular music in the lived existence of young East Germans, Brussig belongs to one of the generations that the poet Uwe Kolbe called the *Hineingeborenen* (those "born into" socialism). That is, they were too young to have experienced fascism and undergone conversion to socialism,

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as well as to have accommodated the crisis events of 1953 and 1968.<sup>37</sup> Unlike older East German writers such as Christa Wolf and Volker Braun—whom Brussig's fiction explicitly criticized—the *Hineingeborenen* were never so committed to the socialist utopia that they had to go through a process of melancholic grieving in the wake of the GDR's demise.<sup>38</sup> In Brussig's case, he had been, during his early teens, a supporter of communism, yet this rapidly dissipated, especially after he was conscripted into the East German Army. Brussig's detachment allowed for a surprising new, comic tone in relation to the past, as in *Helden wie wir*, his best-selling satire about the *Stasi* (East German secret police).

Brussig was interested in using *Sonnenallee* as a vehicle for depicting an everyday side to the GDR that was hitherto absent from film and literature. He wished to record characteristic elements from the everyday past, such as the fact that West Germans kissed in a different manner, that would otherwise be forgotten.<sup>39</sup> Brussig had long harbored a desire to archive the peculiarities of popular music consumption in the GDR, to utilize literature's properties as a "Gedächtnismedium" (medium of memory).<sup>40</sup> As early as 1990, for example, he had encouraged the independent East German journalist Christoph Dieckmann to publish an anthology of his music journalism from the last years of the GDR.<sup>41</sup> By the late 1990s, however, Brussig had another motivation: to revalorize the collective biographies and memories of East Germans of his generation that he felt were now spurned from the perspective of the hegemonic West. When Brussig observed that he wanted to depict the GDR in such a way as to make West Germans jealous that they had not grown up there, this was only partly in jest.<sup>42</sup> Recall that *Sonnenallee* was written in the same period as "westalgic" texts like Politycki's *Weiberroman*. Brussig could savor these westalgic texts and their representation of an adolescence saturated with Western rock, yet he had a certain glee in revealing a divergent mode of music consumption, one that was more adventurous and heroic than that depicted in novels like *Weiberroman*. But in addition to this desire to archive, and to revalorize, Brussig was also interested in exploring the rose-tinted ways in which East Germans of his generation were remembering the past.<sup>43</sup>

Literature such as *Sonnenallee* can be approached as a complementary source for the history of music consumption in and after the GDR. This literature can especially reflect the myths of liberation through music, which Michael Rauhut's and other academic studies tend to avoid.<sup>44</sup> Yet we should not, of course, succumb to the risk of taking *Sonnenallee* too literally, of ignoring the author's entreaty that his story does not describe "wie die DDR war, sondern wie sie gern erinnert wird" (how the GDR was, but how [people] like to remember it).<sup>45</sup> Hence, it becomes as much a study of the present context of rose-tinted remembering as it is a portrayal of some "real" musical past.

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A Life Saved by Music?: Remembering the Rolling Stones

The 1999 film and the accompanying novelization of *Sonnenallee* portray a vignette of everyday East Berlin life sometime during the 1970s or 1980s among a teenage generation that has been inured to the utopian claims of socialism.⁴⁶ In doing so, the text exhibits both a universalizing aspect and a specific one. At a broader level, it deexoticizes the GDR by focusing on universal themes such as first love—the main narrative thrust relates to the protagonist Micha's attempts to woo Miriam—thereby partaking in the broader "teen film" genre.⁴⁷ Yet the film also identifies specificities of life in the GDR.⁴⁸ One of these relates to the place of popular music in the emotional economies of Micha's group of young male friends. To a large extent, this representation follows those earlier East German novels in their characterization of popular music as an intimate sphere in which a temporary escape from the restrictive GDR is possible, but where utopian hopes might also congeal. As the West German diplomat and writer Günter Gaus famously observed, it was possible to create "niches" in GDR society that provided some respite from the regime, and *Sonnenallee* demonstrates that this younger generation was able to do so in its consumption of popular music.⁴⁹ Some of the attitudes exhibited within the niche might have outwardly resembled what youths in the West thought, yet they were also skewed in important ways by the underlying restrictive social context. As Brussig was to note in his review of Frank Goosen's *Liegen lernen*, a music-saturated coming-of-age novel set in West Germany during the 1980s: "es war alles genau so—nur ganz anders" (it was just like that, only completely different).⁵⁰ Thematically, two GDR-specific aspects of the musically furnished niche emerge as significant. *Sonnenallee* demonstrates the distinctive, as well as subversive, value of certain Western rock music for Micha's generation. In addition, the text draws attention to the special importance of the technologies of private musical consumption behind the Wall. It plays on the powerlessness of the SED regime to combat wayward music consumption. Indeed, a recurring theme is the incompetence of the regime as it attempts to censor popular music or to grasp the significance of music technological change. These elements combine to create an image of popular music consumption as a niche in which individuals played out both a relatively "normal" but at times also "heroic" adolescence. Yet *Sonnenallee* also undermines the heroic image at times. It reveals that the niche of popular music also had its clear limits.

Distinction and Subversion Writ Differently

Micha tells viewers at the beginning of *Sonnenallee* that he harbors the desire to become a pop star. He and his friends—in particular the

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mop-haired Wuschel—are, like many characters in teen films, popular music enthusiasts.<sup>51</sup> As in other parts of the world, popular music provides them with an important distinctive code that they employ within their peer group to distinguish between those who possess more or less “symbolic capital,” to use Pierre Bourdieu’s term.<sup>52</sup> Possessing a stock of accumulated musical “symbolic capital” stands to mark an individual young man not so much as a member of an elevated social class, but as cool and suitable romantic partner. (Or at least that is how they imagine it. In *Sonnenallee*, as in texts like *Weiberroman* and *High Fidelity*, music connoisseurship is in inverse proportion to success with the opposite sex.) Although Bourdieu holds that taste maps closely with class, the situation was more complicated in the Communist, theoretically classless, GDR, where, at least in East Berlin, eastern men competed with the western men who used to cross the border to visit local discos; Micha’s prime competitor for the affection of Miriam is one such border-crosser.

For Micha, and even more so for Wuschel—as indeed for Brüssig himself, both before and after the Wall—the top of the taste hierarchy is held by the Rolling Stones, who, it will be recalled, were regarded by the SED regime at different times as perpetrators of a particularly degenerate, imperialist music.<sup>53</sup> The West German band Wonderland also holds a similar value in the film. The young friends enthuse over a home-taped cassette of the band’s 1968 hit, “Moscow,” in the beginning sequences. The English-language lyrics of music are of great distinctive significance here, as they generally were for young people in the GDR.<sup>54</sup> There are several distinction-based reasons why this was so. For Micha, Anglo-American popular music is a valuable source for the coveted English skills that are otherwise lacking in the GDR’s Russo-centric school curriculum. (GDRock did not help the situation since a German-language decree existed there.) Linguistic ability, as demonstrated through the connoisseurship of English-language music, was an important element of distinction among young East Germans then.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, English lyrics are an essential, but not sufficient, prerequisite for distinction. In the film the schmaltzy ballad “Stay” is not cool, notwithstanding its English lyrics. It is the attribution of subversiveness to the Rolling Stones and to “Moscow” that elevates their value. Even if it proves to be a vague supposition about why a song’s lyrics might be outlawed, “knowledge” has paramount distinctive value, as Wuschel demonstrates when he belittles one of Micha’s friends for not knowing why “Moscow” is banned.<sup>56</sup>

One of the reasons why a young person could so strongly identify with music like the Rolling Stones—even more strongly than in West Germany at a comparable time—was that its actual or supposed contraband nature allowed him or her to imagine resistance against the SED regime, as being “irgendwie diffus gegen das System” (somehow diffusely against the system).<sup>57</sup> East Germans might especially want to

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remember this affect after the *Wende* when the West was fixated with stories of Stasi collaboration.⁵⁸ Imagined resistance, together with a desire to combat black and white Western interpretations of the GDR's history and general feelings of nostalgia, contributed to some 1.2 million East Germans watching the film upon its release.⁵⁹ Brussig's own sentiments on revisiting the music of his youth are telling: "Ich habe mich sofort wieder zurückversetzt gefühlt. Dieses Aufbegehren, diese Wut, die aus der Musik sprach. Dieses Gefühl von Freiheit oder von Stärker-sein-als-alle-Emotionen!" (I felt myself instantly transported back. That rebellion and anger that the music enunciated. That feeling of freedom or the emotion of being stronger than everyone else.)⁶⁰ Universal feelings, to be sure, yet ones that those socialized behind the Iron Curtain felt more starkly, given the overlay of repressive measures against the free consumption of popular music.⁶¹ Compare for example the far less existential quality of attachment to the Rolling Stones exhibited contemporaneously by Gregor Schattschneider in *Weiberroman*. It was this heightened sense of "liberation," which Brussig both fosters and undermines, that could make the right sort of music connoisseurship seem more adventurous and heroic than the type of mundane music consumption portrayed in Politycki's novel.

By contrast, Micha's friends regard German-language GDRock, such as the Puhdys song "Geh zu ihr" ("Go to Her"), which is played in the officially sanctioned school disco, as distinctly inferior, at least at the start of the film. This cultural cringe was not uncommon, especially in the 1980s, and especially in relation to the long-lived Puhdys, the GDRock band par excellence, who had once been awarded the East German medal of honor and who henceforth carried the opprobrium of being "Staatsrocker" (state-rockers).⁶² Although GDRock could still attract 60 percent of popular music listeners in 1976, interest steadily and rapidly declined; indeed by 1984 it was only 31 percent, and three years later a meagre 11 percent.⁶³ Edward Larkey suggests that, for the most part, GDRock only became popular in terms of record sales once a band or song was banned from the radio.⁶⁴ In the film, the anti-GDRock sentiment is evident both in Wuschel's commentary and in the extreme lack of interest that is shown when the *Schallplattenunterhalter* puts on the song. The dance floor is only enlivened when another Western song (T-Rex's "Get It On") is played. As this scene makes clear, demonstrating familiarity with the right sort of Western music is essential to making oneself more attractive to the opposite sex. Micha's and his friends' dance routine to "Get It On" noticeably awakens the interest of Miriam and her friends.

An important prerequisite for strategies of music-based distinction in East Germany is therefore access to scarce Western music. Micha is fortunate that he possesses equipment allowing him to make tape recordings, either from Western radio—luckily he lives in the right

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area—or by dubbing, an act that was typically far more social than in the West.<sup>65</sup> (The collective aspect of popular music consumption during the GDR ought not be undervalued; it may have contributed a basis for the nexus of music and social movement during the *Wende* period that I will explore below.) Micha and Wuschel use these cassettes to circumvent their inability to buy Western rock.<sup>66</sup> By contrast, the young Dresdeners who visit Micha's family during an FDJ youth festival are hopelessly out of touch. They come from the "Tal der Ahnungslosen" (valley of the clueless) and are unable to receive Western broadcasting.<sup>67</sup> As a result, they are—for geographic reasons—completely without symbolic capital. They are transfixed even by the deeply unfashionable *Schlager* music that is broadcast late at night on the Western television they view in Micha's family's apartment. Not surprisingly, these Dresdeners are depicted as perhaps the least attractive young men in the film, which again goes to demonstrate that distinction is attained by interest in the right sort of Western music.

Nevertheless, as *Sonnenallee* points out, there are limits to the kudos that attaches to knowledge about Western music. In particular, it is trumped by actually being from the West, however lowly one's station. Micha and his friends are quickly deflated when Miriam's Western boyfriend—a hotel porter—strolls into the school disco in the midst of their dance routine. Here, the East Berliners form an underclass as potential amours, notwithstanding their almost up-to-the-minute Western musical tastes. Even before the *Wende* they are "Deutsche zweiter Klasse" (second-class Germans), to borrow Brussig's term in another context.<sup>68</sup> As for Wuschel, his obsessive knowledge about Western rock does not appear to equip him at all to deal with the opposite sex. He is too shy to approach girls; indeed, we may regard his musical obsession, too, as a compensatory realm. "Satisfaction gibt es nicht" (there ain't no satisfaction), as the *tageszeitung*'s reviewer quipped.<sup>69</sup>

### Short-Circuiting the Regime?

*Sonnenallee* goes to some lengths to satirize the inability of the SED regime to deal with the music consumption of young East Germans. It does so by lampooning the regime's cluelessness in relation to the significance of technologies of music consumption, as well as by satirizing its attempts to ban or confiscate undesirable Western music. No one really seems to know what is banned and what is not. As Michael Rauhut's work shows, there were types of music that were declared "verbotene Einfuhr" (forbidden imports) at different times, yet the infrastructure to police such regulations was lacking. Hence misinformation reigns in the film. Without really knowing, Micha and his friends assume that "Moscow" is a banned item. The bumbling border guard—the film's primary representative of

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the state—overhears them referring to the song as “verboten” (banned), and promptly confiscates Micha’s cassette.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, his action is motivated not by officiousness but by his own desire to possess the musical artefact. He himself is a *Schallplattenunterhalter*. In satirizing such attempts to control popular music, the film thematizes the way the regime was unable to stop this type of consumption, try as it might. The *Alltag* (everyday) is fugitive, and attempts to regulate it come across as buffoonery; not even GDR functionaries know what is what.⁷¹ Furthermore, functionaries like the border guard seem to be just as susceptible to the “virus” of harmful Western music as are young people like Micha. “Der Westwind . . . der Popmusik [weht] durch alle Mauerritzen” (The westerly wind . . . of popular music [blows] through all of the cracks in the Wall), as Peter von Becker aptly put it in his review.⁷²

Of equal significance is the way that *Sonnenallee* portrays the SED regime as clueless about the potential that music technological change holds. Brüssig and Haussmann make this point through the leitmotif of the cassette player, which brought with it considerable latitude to consume, produce, and disseminate music in spheres the state could not control, and which, along with the bureaucracy’s inability to otherwise control music, contributed to the possibility of creating a niche within that state. This was so for listeners as well as musicians. Particularly in the 1980s, cassette technology contributed to many of the punk and new wave so-called *andere Bands* (other bands) bypassing the regulatory system, which was now left to merely regulate itself.⁷³ At the start of the film, the border guard fumbles over Micha’s portable cassette player, unsure of how to stop it. He might confiscate the cassette with “Moscow” on it, but he does not confiscate the recording device itself, which would surely have been a more effective strategy to restrict the dissemination of subversive Western music, albeit a futile one, given the high level of ownership of cassette recorders among young people. Even more telling is the scene involving Micha’s West German uncle, who, while crossing the border, is called in for what he fears will be an interrogation. In fact, the guard simply wishes to demonstrate why East Germany is more advanced than the West. He does this by comparing a Western cassette recorder he has just confiscated with the standard issue East German *Minetta* radio. The Western cassette recorder is far too complicated, he declares, whereas the *Minetta*—with few features beyond an on/off button—is perfection itself. What more could a consumer want? Honecker’s East German model of “consumer socialism” is thereby held up to ridicule. However this scene is significant for another reason too. The cassette recorder, about whose music-democratizing significance the border guard is oblivious, fuses when he plugs it in and is responsible for causing a blackout in the *Sonnenallee*. In a very real sense then, the SED regime is “powerless” in the face of superior music technology from the West.

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### Imagining the Freedoms of the Musical Niche

The blackout presses the film's narrative action to one of its climaxes, namely, to Wuschel being shot at as he strays into the border zone. That and the following sequence explore the significance of popular music in creating a niche away from the intrusions of the state and also delineate the limits to that freedom. Wuschel must at all costs own the Rolling Stones' 1972 album, *Exile on Main Street*. This is not an easy task, and the difficulty surely heightens both Wuschel's desire to own the artefact and the kudos he attaches to it (a common affect among East German popular music enthusiasts at the time).<sup>74</sup> After a series of adventures, he finally locates a copy on the black market; however, its exorbitant price means that it is all but out of reach—he must save for months to buy it. The pleasure to be derived from finally obtaining the object of his desire is then painfully short. Presumably day-dreaming about his victory, Wuschel strays too close to the border. When commanded to stop, he makes a run for it. Perhaps he is scared by the prospect of being caught with contraband. Perhaps he is just sick of his own "exile" on East Berlin's *Sonnenallee*, and seizes the initiative when the blackout presents an opportunity to flee to the West. In any event, he is shot by the guard in the process, and appears to all onlookers—and viewers—to have been killed. However, the pathos of the moment is relieved a short while later when Wuschel begins to stir. Had it not been for the double LP stuffed down his jacket he would certainly have died. In a tragicomic moment, the Rolling Stones' record has broken the path of the guard's bullet, saving Wuschel but itself being destroyed in the process.

Wuschel finally gets another chance to own *Exile on Main Street* after he receives a windfall of hard currency. In the last sequence in the film, he settles down with Micha to dub the record, and yet even here an authentic experience of the Stones evades him. It turns out that the record he has been sold is fake. In reality it contains a tinny Eastern European variant of rock. (In the film, it is a piece called "Schnuk-Schnuk-Schnuk" by Janosc Pelet.) It is only after Micha urges him to creatively reimagine this music as new, unpublished Rolling Stones material—a common mechanism for East German music fans, who were accustomed to interpreting extant East German rock groups as "Stellvertreter" (stand-ins) for Western groups—that Wuschel's despondency can be dispelled.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, through this act of collective fantasizing, a moment of liberation can be attained. Micha and Wuschel start playing along on their "air guitars." For a short while they even become rock stars, "die Glimmer Twins der DDR" (the GDR's Glimmer Twins).<sup>76</sup> Significantly, when the boys start playing their air guitars, the film's soundtrack modulates. The sound becomes far less tinny, and the music itself mixes from "Schnuk-Schnuk-Schnuk" not to the Rolling Stones, as one might have expected, but to what sounds like

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the West Berlin agit-rock band Ton Steine Scherben. The "wrong" music is redeemed in an act of *Schönhören* (positively transmutative listening).

While the "Glimmer Twins" move onto their balcony, their adoring "fans"—in reality everyday East Germans—gather below and, in a rerun of the disco scene's "Get It On" dance routine, boogie toward the border, performing a rather half-baked "Tanz in die Freiheit" (dance into freedom), as the *Neues Deutschland* reviewer put it.⁷⁷ Rock leads to the fall of the Wall, we might be led to infer.⁷⁸ This topos, which maintains that Anglo-American popular music, and the principles of pleasure and freedom that it embodies, created among Eastern Europeans, or at least reflected, the psychological preconditions that could bring about the fall of communism, has had various adherents since the early 1990s.⁷⁹ *Sonnenallee* gently interrogates that trope, however, just as some academic commentators had also begun to question it, preferring to explain the revolution not via "rock," but via structural, economic factors.⁸⁰ That the "dance into freedom" scene is, of course, nothing but a rose-tinted fantasy is revealed when the sequence swiftly cuts to Micha and Wuschel dancing along a deserted East Berlin street, eyes closed tight, still playing their air guitars. It is a picture of harmlessness. If all cultural consumers are engaged in the act of creative readership, fashioning their own meaning from the extant text, then the imperative to do so was felt more strongly in Communist countries, where the stock of texts was restricted and the face value of those texts could have undesirable associations.⁸¹ From the perspective of the late 1990s, Brussig and Haussmann nevertheless gently pull the rug out from underneath any attempts to view popular music consumption as embodying any significant form of resistance or for bringing about the *Wende*.

In combination, the two scenes fondly satirize the way that young East Germans held Western popular music in high regard. Such music did exemplify a subcultural niche removed from the intrusions of the state. It was even a source of diffuse identification against the state, which suggests that the regime was right to resist its spread. However, music is ephemeral. Like the eternally evasive Stones' record, the niche had to be actively imagined, and it was ultimately powerless against the realities of the regime. Even if Wuschel is quite literally saved by the Rolling Stones record, the musical talisman is destroyed in the process and his attempt to escape is rebuffed. All he is left with is an air guitar on a deserted street. Music therefore appears to be of great significance, but within certain clear limits. It cannot deliver anything more than a sensation of freedom. The final sequences gently probe the feelings of *Ostalgie* that the film might otherwise generate.

It is therefore curious that it was precisely the scene in which Wuschel shows more emotion about his destroyed Rolling Stones record than about the fact that it has saved his life that attracted the ire of Help e.V., an organization representing the interests of victims of political violence

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in Europe. Help e.V. instituted legal proceedings against the film's producers, considering that this scene belittled the suffering of those who had been harmed by the SED regime: "Wir haben nicht wegen materieller Werte geweint, sondern weil wir misshandelt wurden und Menschen an der Mauer getötet wurden" (We did not cry over material objects, but rather because we were abused, and because people were killed at the Wall).<sup>82</sup> Although the court case was ultimately withdrawn after a public debate-cum-mediation, it highlighted a stark contrast between two generations and milieus in relation to the GDR past—a group of younger artists, such as Haussmann and Brussig, who could jest about something as "trivial" yet simultaneously important as popular music and material culture, and those older political victims of the GDR regime for whom the GDR was not at all something to be taken so lightly.<sup>83</sup>

Ultimately, *Sonnenallee* is not a harmful form of *Ostalgie*, even if there are those, like Help e.V., who might have disagreed. Nostalgia—an affect that is often associated with the consumption of popular music—is a "normal" condition, for West Germans as well as for East Germans.<sup>84</sup> Recall the concurrent success of the musico-centric, westalgic *Weiberroman*. As Paul Cooke points out, Brussig also put up the image of a relatively normal adolescence in the GDR for a political reason, namely, to counter those in West Germany who simply considered the GDR a "Stasi state." *Sonnenallee* is hence a "writing back" from the margin, a taking issue with a hegemonic misrepresentation of the East German past.<sup>85</sup> In any event, Brussig did not create his rose-tinted version in an unreflective way; its constructedness is well and truly on display. Yet perhaps the film, and its tongue-in-cheek depiction of a more adventurous, occasionally heroic mode of musical consumption, did make some West Germans jealous. Their experiences as listeners in the West during the 1970s or 1980s might have seemed drab by comparison.

### Capturing the Sounds of the *Wende* Year

The *Wende* of 1989 and 1990 brought with it many important changes for East German musicians and music enthusiasts. After a very short period in which the utopian value of music enjoyed a new sidereal moment, both musical production and consumption rapidly became more "Westernized" or "normalized," as it were. Some of the special political qualities that East Germans invested in Western popular music were called into question. For a period of at least two or three years, until the rise of *Ostalgie*, the fortunes of many East German musicians also suffered.<sup>86</sup> This was so not only for the Staatsrocker but also for many sub-cultural *andere Bands*, albeit for somewhat different reasons.<sup>87</sup> Christoph Dieckmann suggests that this process of decline in the fortunes of eastern musicians was already in train in the late 1980s, when Western musicians,

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including Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, and others, were permitted to perform live in East Germany.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, those processes were exacerbated significantly by the fall of the Wall.⁸⁹ This process of sometimes painful adjustment is examined in Brussig's lengthy *Wende* novel *Wie es leuchtet*, which represents more generally how a range of East and West Germans reacted to the events of 1989–90. In the novel, Brussig again reveals both his fascination with the political power of popular music for East Germans at a certain point in time and a wariness about its durability.

The Rebirth and Souring of the Protest Song

Wie es leuchtet represented an attempt by Brussig to shed the mantle of “Zonenkasper” (East German jester), and to write a more substantial novel in a more serious register.⁹⁰ Inspired by Lion Feuchtwanger's Weimar era *Zeitgeschichtenromane* (contemporary history novels) as well as by Remarque's *Im Westen nichts neues* (*All Quiet on the Western Front*), Brussig's ambition was to create a compendious novel that preserved all of the detail of “das deutsche Jahr” (the German year) 1989–90 and to trace the significance of those times through a number of exemplary biographies.⁹¹ The book's prologue, written from the perspective of one of the main protagonists, a photographer, aestheticized the motivation to do so. We learn that the photographer's images of the *Wende* year were destroyed in the floods of 2002, and that in any event they were already starting to fade. *Wie es leuchtet* is an attempt to hold on to those vivid images and to reinvest them with meaning a decade and a half after the *Wende*, to reexamine the euphoria and what came after. The broader context for doing so was that by the early 2000s the public discourse about German history had grown tired of the GDR and the *Wende*, returning instead to the Nazi era—“Soviel Hitler war nie” (There was never so much Hitler as now), as Norbert Frei commented—and there was also a depressed attitude in the east and people needed to be reminded of why and how they had arrived there after the euphoria of late 1989.⁹²

Despite the narrow time frame, Brussig's novel is vast—over six hundred pages—and in the author's encyclopedic desire not to leave out anything important, there are a large number of protagonists. Although several characters have some involvement with popular music, my analysis will focus on Lena, a nineteen-year-old physiotherapist-cum-singer from Karl-Marx-Stadt, and her sometime bandmates. Lena is not just another exemplary biography. Together with her “older brother,” the photographer, she is one of the main characters and also intended to be one of the primary figures of reader identification. Indeed at the level of parable Lena is supposed to be a “Repräsentin der guten DDR: natürliche Grazie, große Menschlichkeit, nicht korrumpierbar” (representative of the good GDR: natural grace, a great deal of humaneness, uncorruptible).⁹³

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As a singer-songwriter with one of those *andere Bands* that existed in the tension between subcultural outsider status and participation in the state's system of music regulation, broadcast, and dissemination, Lena happens to write an unorthodox type of protest song during the early part of the *Wende*, that is, a piece of so-called *Wende Rock*.<sup>94</sup> That song, and the story of its reception, show that the special history of popular music in the GDR created a context in which a song and a musician could still become allied with, and indeed be seized on by, a social movement. Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison point out that at different times during the twentieth century "social movements have given a kind of political focus or direction to musical expression, charging music with a special intensity and responsibility."<sup>95</sup> In this context, music can provide a social movement with a type of cohesiveness and vice versa. *Wie es leuchtet* suggests that some popular music fulfilled this role in the GDR in 1989–90. It acted as a potent vessel for hopes for political and social change, indeed quickening those hopes. This depiction reflected the reality to some extent. Popular music was by no means absent from the Monday Demonstrations. A group of prominent GDR musicians also signed a landmark petition in late 1989 demanding the reform of the system. Various East German musicians also recorded *Wende Rock*.<sup>96</sup> Yet *Wie es leuchtet* also reveals how quickly the "movement phase" could pass in the overwhelming events of the *Wende* year. Political music becomes hijacked by politicking of another sort, albeit one that might have seemed strangely familiar. It is also reduced to a mere commodity. This commodification of music reflected other periods such as the 1960s when the "movement phase" of the folk revival was superseded by "commercialization, fragmentation and depoliticization."<sup>97</sup>

Lena's neo-protest song "Warum können wir keine Freunde sein" (Why Can't We Be Friends), was inspired by her frustration after participating in one of the early Monday Demonstrations: "Ich will was hören, was diesem Laden hier den letzten Tritt versetzt" (I want to hear something that sinks the last slipper into this joint), she tells a friend.<sup>98</sup> The song's catchy melody was written by one of her friends, a member of the group PlanQuadrat. Like some of the real *andere Bands* in the last few years of the GDR, PlanQuadrat has shed its subcultural status to the extent of entering into a contract with AMIGA.<sup>99</sup> This contract means that Lena's song can be recorded in the studios of the GDR's broadcaster and quickly put into mass circulation. The link with the GDR's system of popular music regulation was necessary for the song to be broadcast and received so widely, since popular music's "mass" quality is vital to any collective uptake of its political content.<sup>100</sup> Had PlanQuadrat's song been a mere underground cassette, it is unlikely it would have attained the importance it did, or at least not so quickly.<sup>101</sup> Yet, as we will see, this link with the GDR state would also be its undoing a short while later.

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"Warum können wir keine Freunde sein" has a refrain reminiscent of John Lennon's antiwar classic "Give Peace a Chance," and even shares that song's use of a large choir of amateurs—in this case radio station employees—as backup singers. The thematization of John Lennon's post-Beatles music, and of this song in particular, is no coincidence: Brüssig had been a Lennon enthusiast during the lifetime of the GDR.¹⁰² "Give Peace a Chance" was also sung at various Monday Demonstrations.¹⁰³ It had emblematic value among many popular music fans in East Germany, as it had featured in an important scene in *The Strawberry Statement* (translated as *Blutige Erdbeeren*), one of the few Western music films to be widely screened in the GDR. Set during the student protests in Berkeley in the late 1960s, the film features a memorable concluding sequence where a group of music enthusiasts gather in a circle and start thumping the ground while singing "Give Peace a Chance," thereby transforming "Beat Fans selbst zu Akteuren" (Beat fans themselves into agents). This point was not lost on East German audiences, who granted the film cult status.¹⁰⁴

Lena's own remake of "Give Peace a Chance" combines the refrain's message with more concrete critical observations about the GDR: "Liestn Typ was vor zur Nachrichtenzeit/Lebt schon längst in ner anderen Wirklichkeit; Sitzen Typen an den Hebeln der Macht/Und wir leben wie von denen ausgedacht" (There is a guy who is reading at Newstime / He's been living for ages in a different reality; There are guys who are holding the levers of power / And we are living as if we had been thought up by them). Though Lena's song is "an sich nichts besonderes" (nothing particular per se), it services a need in the East German public's social imaginary and fills a void in its repertoire of songs (*Wie es leuchtet*, 87, 88). We are told that, in musical terms, the demonstrators were at a loss up until that point: "ohne Lied und ohne Ziel" (77; without a song and without an aim). The socialist battle songs that they had been taught in school were too laden by their association with the regime, and not enough people were familiar with the otherwise appropriate "*Die Gedanken sind frei*" (Thoughts Are Free), Hoffmann von Fallersleben's song that historically had been invoked at times of political repression in order to give voice to the yearning for freedom and independence.¹⁰⁵

Just as in reality "Give Peace a Chance" was sung at some Monday Demonstrations, Lena's song is functionalized in the novel by everyday East Germans. The crowds reach for the song as a way of voicing their disapproval at—and literally drowning out—regime figures. At the largest Monday Demonstration, on November 6, 1989 in Karl-Marx-Stadt, for example, 150,000 people sing the refrain for 10 minutes. For the protestors, the music has a liberatory affective function: "sie verloren ihre Angst, indem sie sangen, sie wurden frei mit diesem Lied, und sie waren glücklich" (513; in singing they lost their anxiety, they became free

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with this song, and they were happy). On the other hand, the music also has an impact on some of those on the other side, like Marco, a young East German army member who encounters Lena at the demonstration, and who is also moved by the song. By this stage Lena has become a "Volksheldin" (hero of the people), who embodies a unique historical moment and who engenders the "Lust auf Veränderung, auf Revolution, auf Freiheit" (89–90; lust for change, revolution and freedom).

That this heady moment of "fröhliche Revolution" (joyful revolution) and "Liedersingen" (the singing of songs) passes relatively quickly is clear, however. Indeed it is over as soon as the GDR regime calls an election, and real political involvement becomes possible, as one of Lena's friends observes (176). The transience of popular music, and hence one of the difficulties in yoking it to concrete political aims, is also portrayed in the novel. Lena's song rapidly loses its sheen and its nexus with the social movement as it becomes hostage to the taint of the GDR past, a pawn in the grubby cut and thrust of professional party politics, and ultimately a mere commodity. Indeed, in a dialectical moment, Lena's song becomes the opposite of what it once stood for, which is reflected at both an ideological and a material level.

Unprompted, and as "ein Akt der Ehrlichkeit, ein offensiver Abschluß des jahrelangen Doppellebens" (an act of honesty, an active conclusion to [her] long-term double life), the song's producer outs herself as a Stasi informant, and soon finds herself reduced in public discourse to "Stasi Inessa" (399).<sup>106</sup> Inessa's admission unfairly taints her productions, including Lena's song, which a conservative politician now dubs a "Stasi hit" (401). The fugitive nature of her song's meaning, and its functionalization at the level of party politics, all come to a head in the campaigning for the upcoming election. The *Bürgerrechtsbewegung* (East German civil rights movement) had once courted "die mit dem Lied" (her with the song) in the belief that Lena represents the "Geist der Revolution" (spirit of the revolution) and would be an electoral boon (396). Now the reformers discover that the song is a liability. The ascendant conservatives denounce it as "Verrat" (treachery): "Sogar mitgesungen hat die Stasi!" (The Stasi even sang along!) (401). The Social Democrats also choose to interpret the refrain as a message of conciliation to the Stasi: "*Warum können wir keine Freunde sein* kann ebenso gut bedeuten: *Ach laß uns doch gut Freund sein!*" (401; *Why can't we be friends* could just as easily mean: *Oh, let us be friends instead!*). The ex-communist PDS also advances this interpretation, albeit with a different purpose in mind. Exasperated, Lena tries to reclaim sole rights to the song's meaning: "[Es] heißt *Wir können niemals Freunde werden!*" (402; [It] means *we can never be friends!*) she declares. Yet this naïve strategy is bound to fail, and the politically experienced conservative candidate promptly accuses her of revisionism. In short, this debate with the various politicians over the meaning of her

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song, which in some ways actually repeats the chicanery over song interpretation during the GDR, albeit in a new, plural, whole-of-Germany setting, marks Lena's "restlose und endgültige Niederlage" (403; complete and final defeat) as a public figure. Tellingly, her song has been replaced by another one in the public's imagination: the West German national anthem, with its call for "Einigkeit, Recht und Freiheit" (514; unity, justice, and freedom).

The song's ideological freight becomes problematic, and with it the whole notion of popular music's relationship with politics. To some extent this depoliticization represented a "normalization." In the West, the politicization of music had been recognized as problematic for some time. Martin Büsser observes that the notion of a blatantly political popular music—with its "Platitüden und abgedroschenen Parolen" (platitudes and threadbare slogans)—became outdated in West Germany.¹⁰⁷ In the 1980s, some Western musicians had even discovered that their political opponents had "hijacked" their political music against their intentions.¹⁰⁸ Yet the new place of Lena's song within music's West German economy also causes difficulties for its author, which likewise contributes to popular music losing its erstwhile sheen. As Maas and Reszel have shown, officially licensed GDR musicians were protected from market forces, including by virtue of a mandatory broadcast and performance quota: "the economic risk of becoming a rock star was rather low."¹⁰⁹ The significance of an AMIGA record production was also different; its benefits were not primarily financial.¹¹⁰ In other words, East German popular musicians were poorly equipped for the new West German market. Unfamiliar with the regulation of performing rights, Lena had erroneously stated that she was the song's sole author, subsequently receiving DM 60,000 in broadcast royalties.¹¹¹ Faced with the song's success on the radio, the music's composer, who had moved to West Germany, issued legal proceedings against Lena, claiming the inflated sum of DM 250,000. By this stage, what was once a hymn of subversion has been reduced to "eine Verletzung des Urheberrechtes, ein Rechtsfall" (516; an infringement of copyright, a legal case). Ironically, a song nominally about friendship has become the reason for Lena falling out with her friend. When the song is finally released on an AMIGA LP, no one will buy it—"Wer kauft von Westgeld schon Ostmusik?" (515; Who is interested in buying Eastern music with Western currency?)—and Lena herself cannot stand hearing it. She is effectively lost to music. The novel is silent as to whether PlanQuadrat's career continues after the *Wende*, but as Wolf Kampmann has shown, many of the *andere Bands'* careers were in fact halted after their credibility was destroyed by an ambiguous lyric or a comment in an interview. In general, politics was now something to be avoided in the post-*Wende* era. Critically, these bands' oppositional status also evaporated when the SED state ceased to exist.¹¹²

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The fate of the righteous but naïve Lena can be read as an allegory for many of the social movements, including the *Bürgerrechtsbewegung* and the musicians who allied themselves with it, who were then overtaken or compromised by the events of 1990. Her fate also reflects the way that a great many East German musicians were tripped up by various new factors brought about by the *Wende*, including the spook of the Stasi, the minefield of politics in song, and the new ground rules of music production and marketing—as well as by their sudden dive in popularity among their erstwhile constituents.<sup>113</sup> East German music consumers—like *Sonnenallee*'s Wuschel—were also in store for a rude shock.

### A Normalization of Musical Affect?

For the everyday East German music enthusiast, the *Wende* meant that Western popular music that had hitherto been scarce or completely unavailable was now within easy reach. An advantage, one would have thought. Yet this availability now contributed to popular music losing some of its significance in their everyday lives, the sort of significance that Brussig had retrospectively explored in *Sonnenallee*. This devalorization of music is evident in one scene in particular in *Wie es leuchtet*. Like so many of their contemporaries, two of PlanQuadrat's members make a beeline for a Western music shop after they have received their one-off ex gratia payment from the West German government.<sup>114</sup> Indeed, we are told in *Wie es leuchtet* that this particular store is doing a roaring trade selling to East German music enthusiasts. It is a trade that also extends to some shopsoiled goods, like those highly political Ton Steine Scherben records that are no longer sought after in the west, but which still appeal to the East Germans.<sup>115</sup> One of the PlanQuadrat members now locates the 1972 Pink Floyd record *Obscured by Clouds*. He had never been able to hear it during the life of the GDR; for him it is a holy grail. Yet when he finally does listen to it, it is "reine Zeitverschwendung" (118; a complete waste of time). If Wuschel and Micha had ultimately been able to engage in "Schönhören" that rendered tinny GDRock "unreleased" Rolling Stones material, then such a path is no longer open to the PlanQuadrat members in the new context.

That this was not an isolated experience is clear. Western labels particularly welcomed East German music listeners' need to "catch up" during and after the *Wende*. However, East German consumers were also embittered by their exposure to the market-driven motivations of the Western music industry. As Lindner points out, East German music enthusiasts may now have been able to purchase records, yet the ensuing demise of the LP meant that they had to purchase those records all over again as CDs.<sup>116</sup> In these circumstances, the new surfeit of Western musical choice actually led more than a few East German enthusiasts to lose interest in the avid musical consumption that had hitherto been so constitutive of identity.<sup>117</sup> The

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political realignment of East Germany also led to a breakdown of the certainties revolving around musical subcultures, as indicated in Jakob Hein's 2001 short story "Rinks und Lechts" (Reft and Light). In his adolescence, Hein's protagonist finds himself attracted to the underground East Berlin punk scene, which allows for an easy antiregime political identification: "Ich kaufte mir die Kassetten von allen Bands und wußte nun wo ich politisch stand" (I bought myself cassettes from all the bands and then I knew where I stood politically).¹¹⁸ However, the *Wende* ruins any neat association between subcultural music and politics. In the topsy-turvy post-*Wende* world, some punks become right-wing extremists, others become drug dealers or computer salesmen, and Nick Cave even sings a duet with Kylie Minogue!¹¹⁹ Under these new, slightly bewildering circumstances, Hein's protagonist finds that he has to question automatic associations between music and political positions, and to think for himself.

East Germans' everyday relationship to Western music changed in mood too. Rather than being useful for distinction and political identification in the present—if we follow Peter Wicke's interpretation, rediscovered GDR Rock and right-wing music would take over that role in the late 1990s—Western music now became a material that East Germans deployed in their memory.¹²⁰ This, of course, was thematized in *Sonnenallee* too. As one journalist wrote: "Mit der Wende ertranken die ostdeutschen Musikfreunde in einer unüberschaubaren Flut an [Musik] Titeln. Besitzen konnte jetzt jeder—das war nicht interessant. Was bleibt ist Erinnerung." (East German music enthusiasts drowned in a flood of (music) recordings during the *Wende*. Now everyone could own [it]—that was not interesting. What remains is the memory.)¹²¹ For Brüssig himself, consumption of Western music also shifted in emphasis, as his nostalgia-laden review of a 1998 Rolling Stones concert in Berlin demonstrated: "Sie werden unser Leben nicht mehr verändern, werden nicht einmal etwas bei uns bewirken. . . . Die Stones sollen spielen, damit wir uns alle erinnern können, was wir mit ihrer Musik verknüpfen." (They won't change our life any more, they won't even have any effect on us. . . . The Stones need to play so that we can all remember what we associate with their music.)¹²² This change effectively brings Brüssig into alignment with nostalgic musico-centric authors like Politycki.

Heimsuchung

This transition to a would-be "normal," "mature" attitude to music—one in which the affect of anger and rebellion is, to the extent that it continues to exist at all, linked with a more nostalgic mode—is also reinforced by Brüssig's little-known 2000 play *Heimsuchung*. We should read the play in conjunction with both the peculiar history of punk in the GDR—which was, at the time Brüssig was writing, just beginning to be more

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widely publicized—and Brussig's then recent clash with Help e.V. over Wuschel's "death" scene in *Sonnenallee*.

*Heimsuchung* tells the story of three former East German rockers, "Schulle," "Zillus," and "Keks," who are now in their early thirties. Heartily sick of the chicanery to which the Communist regime subjected them, they had decided, some time before the *Wende*, to escape to the West. Yet their plans were foiled by a Stasi spy, Fengler, who had infiltrated the punk subculture, and they were imprisoned as a result.<sup>123</sup> This scenario was not at all far-fetched. During the 1980s, the Stasi viewed the East German punk subculture—estimated by the authorities in 1984 to have at least nine hundred members—with particular suspicion.<sup>124</sup> The regime interpreted the "habitus" of these young people as inimical to socialism. The Stasi therefore infiltrated the scene and went about breaking up the bands. In extreme cases, band members were prosecuted. Most famously, the punk-poet and scene linchpin Sascha Anderson and two members of the punk band Die Firma (Frank Troetzsch and Tatjana Besson) were outed as Stasi informants after the *Wende*.<sup>125</sup>

In *Heimsuchung*, we learn that the *Wende* has been kind to the former Stasi-punk Fengler, who now runs a successful security business. Motivated by a lingering sense of injustice, Schulle, Zillus, and Keks seek to mete out revenge to Fengler, namely by confronting him with a fire-arm in a punk-styled "feierlicher Akt der Vergeltung" (celebratory act of retribution).<sup>126</sup> However, the confrontation backfires. Fengler's guard shoots and wounds Schulle, and it seems that the guard has also been shot and killed. On the run, the trio seek shelter in a Catholic church somewhere in the West German state of Hessen. The play's action takes place in the church, where the trio tries to explain their actions to the priest and to the local doctor.

The play's message is that people like Schulle, Zillus, and Keks have—like those victims of the regime who took Brussig and Haussmann to task the previous year for insulting their suffering with the film *Sonnenallee*—indeed been hard done by, left without any dignity in the united Germany. In the debate with Help e.V., Brussig had been very much alive to the neglect that these victims had suffered since 1990. In many ways, then, the earnest *Heimsuchung* is a corrective of sorts to the comedy *Sonnenallee*, albeit one that was commercially far less successful than the film.<sup>127</sup> Keks, who suffered injuries after being imprisoned by the GDR regime and became partly deaf, is unable to receive any damages from the Federal Republic, and the newspapers are now uninterested in his story, despite the fact that the West had been fascinated by his band and other East German punks before the *Wende*.<sup>128</sup> In fact, the ignorance and insensitivity of the West, represented in particular by the figure of an arrogant West German doctor, is a significant theme in the play. However, Brussig urges pragmatism and a forward outlook on the part of East Germans.

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He suggests that victims like Keks ought to leave their harmful prisoner mentality behind them and move on (*Heimsuchung*, 45, 77). Schulle and Zillus had more or less done so—Schulle has a wife and children, Zillus is studying law—and both scarcely think about their time in jail any longer. Their erstwhile drummer Kaspar is even farther removed from the past; he migrated to the United States long ago. Yet Keks has not been able to move on. It is he who is still inhabiting the East German past and who has encouraged the others to seek revenge. This reactionary backwardness is also musically signified. Unlike his increasingly bourgeois former bandmates, the one-time front man of “Zusammenbruch der Systeme” (Collapse of the Systems) is an occasional music critic who supports himself by working as a janitor and clearly has not left behind the punk rocker’s disposition—“Er war ein Tier, laut und wild und mutig” (He was an animal: loud and wild and courageous) (18). Not only was Keks the one who urged his erstwhile bandmates to confront Fengler in the first place, but he is also responsible for the situation in the church escalating. At his instigation, they take the priest and doctor hostage. Crucially, Keks also fails to disabuse Schulle and Zillus of their mistaken belief that Fengler’s guard is dead. Rather than saving Schulle’s life, but losing face in the process, he clings to his misguided plan of exacting revenge on Fengler. If *Heimsuchung* is a play that investigates the failure of the German-German dialogue and explores the consequences of East Germans maintaining a victim or prisoner mentality, it consigns punk’s affect to the past. Schulle notes that their punk nicknames “[waren] so was von damals” (40; totally belonged to yesterday). Those who stand the best chance of making a future in the united Germany are those who move on, leaving their punk (“no future”) past and its hate-laden and antagonistic affect behind them.

Popular Music: Thematically of Value, but Otherwise Suspect?

Over the course of his three literary works that most closely engage with popular music, Thomas Brussig has mined a rich seam, namely, the special relationship between popular music and politics in the GDR and its affective aftermath for East German musicians and listeners. Others writers, like Jakob Hein, Andreas Gläser (author of *DJ Banfresse*), and Sascha Lange (author of *DJ Westradio*), also knew how to thematize this relationship and its aftermath in their semi-autobiographical literature. Occasionally, one wonders whether some of the musico-centric literature that followed in the footsteps of *Sonnenallee* was not only taking advantage of literature’s qualities as a *Gedächtnismedium* but also seeking to replicate that text’s popular success or otherwise capitalize on the *Ostalgie* phenomenon. Brussig’s own script for the musical *Hinterm Horizont* (Beyond the

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Horizon, 2010), also poses similar questions. In many ways, it is a reprise of sorts, since some critics had already interpreted *Sonnenallee* as a type of filmed musical, an "East Side Story."<sup>129</sup> *Hinterm Horizont* is another tale about the appeal of Western music in the GDR, in this case, that of "Deutsch-Rocker" Udo Lindenberg. Lindenberg holds an important place not just in West German popular music history but also in relation to East Germany. In the early 1970s, he would be one of the first West Germans to successfully adapt the rock idiom by using German-language lyrics. This allied him, at least potentially, with the efforts of the GDR regime and with GDRock. Indeed, he was invited to perform in the GDR in 1983. Yet Lindenberg was a complicated case for the GDR regime and eventually became the subject of a convoluted episode involving an exchange of letters and gifts with Erich Honecker, a song satirizing Honecker, "Der Sonderzug nach Pankow" (The Express Train to Pankow), and the withdrawal of the invitation to perform. *Hinterm Horizont* takes this rich material, places it within the framework of a love affair between Lindenberg and an East Berlin woman—also the subject of a Lindenberg song—and turns it into a musical about "Deutschland Ost und Deutschland West und Deutschland einig Vaterland" (Germany East and Germany West, and Germany the unified Fatherland).<sup>130</sup>

Unlike the authors I examined in chapter 3, Brussig's engagement with music has been thematic rather than at the level of aesthetic "realization." In many respects his musico-centric oeuvre therefore most closely resembles the "rockish" literature I analyzed in chapter 4. *Sonnenallee*, in particular, looks back to an earlier time and to an adolescence filled with music. Although Brussig seems to be advocating a position like Hornby's—at a certain time, popular music becomes the stuff of memories, as one moves on to an adult life—a text like *Sonnenallee* also resists any unreflective nostalgia. Brussig is someone for whom music has clearly been very important, yet we can detect a vague distrust of it too, which may well reflect the experience of his generation of East Germans and their disillusionment with the political value of popular music after the abrupt end to the GDR. In his literature, popular music's "niche" is tightly circumscribed and its affect of liberation and subversion is ultimately rather ambiguous. Music's political effects are also fugitive; and being too absorbed by music and by the past, as in the case of Keks, can be harmful. *Wie es leuchtet* also conveys Brussig's faint distrust of music in another way. It is a novel obsessed with capturing the moment of the *Wende* in all of its rich detail. As Volker Wehdeking notes, music and its changing significance at that time may be an important theme, but Brussig foregrounds photography and the visual. They are more susceptible to capturing the moment, and unlike the political significance of Lena's song, less fugitive. Hence Brussig's novel actually aspires to the photographic rather than to the musical.<sup>131</sup>

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Notes

¹ Roy Shuker, *Key Concepts in Popular Music* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 223–24.

² The following account is derived largely from Michael Rauhut, *Beat in der Grauzone: DDR-Rock 1964 bis 1972, Politik und Alltag* (Berlin: BasisDruck, 1993).

³ Peter Wicke, "Rock around Socialism: Jugend und ihre Musik in einer gescheiterten Gesellschaft," in *Handbuch Jugend und Musik*, ed. Dieter Baacke (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1998), 297.

⁴ For an official representation of this view—and of how juvenile delinquency might be reined in—see, e.g., the 1957 DEFA Film *Berlin Ecke Schönhauser*. For a discussion of the film, and of the East German reception of rock 'n' roll in the 1950s, see Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

⁵ Quoted in Rauhut, *Beat in der Grauzone*, 162.

⁶ Ibid., 88.

⁷ Thomas C. Fox, "Ooobliadooh or EIKENNGETTNOSETTISFEKSCHIN: Music, Language, and Opposition in GDR Literature," *The Germanic Review* 61, no. 3 (1986): 114; Bernd Lindner, *DDR Rock & Pop* (Cologne: Komet Verlag, 2008).

⁸ Edward Larkey demonstrates how different rules applied to the different musical media, with most restrictions applying to the media with the greatest spatial reach, namely, radio. This meant that a song might be censored for radio play, but might still be able to be played live or even released on record. A certain degree of latitude was also extended to AMIGA records because this was one part of the cultural economy where a profit could be made. Edward Larkey, "Fighting for the Right (to) Party?" in *Music, Power, and Politics*, ed. Annie J. Randall (London: Routledge, 2005), 195–209.

⁹ On the complex discursive negotiations of power in three GDRock songs from the 1980s, see Larkey, "Fighting for the Right (to) Party?" See also, generally, Robb, *Protest Song*, 227–54.

¹⁰ Wicke, "Rock around Socialism," 302.

¹¹ The Rolling Stones were subject to a slight thaw in the 1970s and 1980s, however they remained ideologically suspect. In 1978, the blanket broadcast ban was lifted. Then, in 1982, a short-run AMIGA pressing of a Rolling Stones record was released. In 1986, a book about the band was even published. Nevertheless, it was very expensive, hard to find, and still presented a certain ideology: The band was portrayed as "ein musikalisches Grossunternehmen der kapitalistischen Unterhaltungsindustrie" (a large-scale musical enterprise within the capitalist entertainment industry). Lindner, *DDR Rock & Pop*, 188. See also Larkey, "Post-war German Popular Music," 246.

¹² Rauhut, *Beat in der Grauzone*, 267.

¹³ The SED had an ambivalent attitude to Western broadcast media. As Joanna McKay points out, the state regarded Western media as a negative influence because they portrayed a consumer society whose options outstripped those on offer in the GDR. However, the Western media also represented the downside

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of life in the West, and so they might have a positive effect from that perspective. Joanna McKay, "East German Identity in the GDR," in *East German Distinctiveness in a Unified Germany*, ed. Jonathan Grix and Paul Cooke (London: Continuum, 2002), 24. See also Larkey, "Fighting for the Right (to) Party?," 206; Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 146.

<sup>14</sup> Lindner, *DDR Rock & Pop*, 186.

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., Neil Strauss, "Putting the Net over Networking," in *Cassette Mythos*, ed. Robin James (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 1992), 130–32; Susanne Binas, "Die 'anderen' Bands und ihre Kassettenproduktionen—Zwischen organisiertem Kulturbetrieb und selbstorganisierten Kulturformen," in *Rockmusik und Politik: Analysen, Dokumente, Interviews*, ed. Peter Wicke and Lothar Müller (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 1996), 48–60; Wicke, "Rock around Socialism," 303; Ronald Galenza and Heinz Havemeister, eds., *Wir Wollen Immer Artig Sein: Punk, New Wave, HipHop und Independent-Szene in der DDR, 1980–1990* (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 1999).

<sup>16</sup> Schmiedt, "No satisfaction," 11–24.

<sup>17</sup> Fox, "Ooobliadooh," 109.

<sup>18</sup> On East Germany as a "niche society," see Günter Gaus, *Wo Deutschland Liegt: Eine Ortsbestimmung* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1983).

<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Brussig's little-known first novel, *Wasserfarben* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1991), which was published just after the *Wende* under the pseudonym Cordt Berneburger, fits this scheme. The novel portrays the rudderless existence of an East German secondary school student, whose chosen career of journalism has been rendered off-limits by the state. In this context, the narrator-protagonist finds some solace in the path that his elder brother, a rock musician, has taken. The brother has pursued the path of an independent artist, thereby creating his own niche and remaining true to himself in spite of the repressive social conditions in the GDR.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., Barbara Sichtermann, "Kekse am Körper," *Die Woche*, September 24, 1999, 37; Jill E. Twark, *Humor, Satire, and Identity: East German Literature in the 1990s* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> See Wicke and Müller, *Rockmusik und Politik*.

<sup>22</sup> Sebastian Schäfer, "Popmusik in der DDR," *Testcard* 12 (2003): 29. Post-*Wende* compilations included, for example, *L'Amigamore* (1995), *Formation 60* (1998), and *Amiga a Go Go* (2000).

<sup>23</sup> See, e.g., Robb, *Protest Song*, 255–78.

<sup>24</sup> Peter Wicke nevertheless considers this "western" sector of the audience to have been relatively small: a "cult" following. Peter Wicke, "'Born in the GDR': Ostrock between Ostalgia and Cultural Self-Assertion," *Debatte* 6, no. 2 (1998): 150.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Brussig, "Murx, die deutsche Einheit," *Der Tagesspiegel*, August 31, 2003, 25; Schäfer, "Popmusik in der DDR," 29.

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g., Brussig, quoted in Silke Lambeck, "Herr Brussig, was halten Sie von Nostalgie?" *Berliner Zeitung*, November 6–7, 1999, 6.

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²⁷ Cooke, *Representing East Germany*, 147.

²⁸ Ibid., 104.

²⁹ Paul Cooke, "'GDR Literature' in the Berlin Republic," in Taberner, *Contemporary German Fiction*, 65. See also Patricia Hogwood, "'Red Is for Love. . .': Citizens as Consumers in East Germany," in Grix and Cooke, *East German Distinctiveness in a Unified Germany*, 56.

³⁰ Cooke, *Representing East Germany*, 105; Cooke, "'GDR Literature,'" 65.

³¹ Wicke, "Born in the GDR," 153.

³² Cf., e.g., Cooke, *Representing East Germany*, 111.

³³ See, e.g., Ute Falck, "DJ Thomasig liebt den Klang der Gitarre," *Der Tagesspiegel*, August 17, 2000, 12; Sarah Kramer, "Ein Held wie kein anderer," *Berliner Zeitung*, August 21, 2000, 30; Thomas Brussig, "Eine unmögliche Wahl," in *Mein Lieblingslied: Songs und Stories*, ed. Susanne Halbleib and George Lindt (Frankfurt am Main: Krüger Verlag, 2005), 33–40; Thomas Brussig, "Weiß nicht viel," *Horen* (special edition, *Klangspuren: Songs & Soundtracks*), 53, no. 2 (2008): 10–13.

³⁴ Volker Hage, "'Jubelfeiern wird's geben,'" *Der Spiegel*, September 6, 1999, 256.

³⁵ Quoted in Falck, "DJ Thomasig."

³⁶ Marianne Wellershoff, "Musik der Freiheit," *Der Spiegel*, October 4, 1999. See also Brussig's own comments in Falck, "DJ Thomasig."

³⁷ Thomas Jung, ed., *Alles nur Pop? Anmerkungen zur Populären und Pop-Literatur seit 1990* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002): 62.

³⁸ Jung, *Alles nur Pop?*, 63. See also, e.g., Brussig's narrator's caustic remarks about Wolf in *Helden wie wir*, and his portrayal of the "little unshaven poet" (Braun) in *Wie es leuchtet*.

³⁹ Hage, "'Jubelfeiern wird's geben'"; Michael Neubauer, "'Sie merken plötzlich: Wir sind ein Roman,'" *Badische Zeitung*, November 16, 1999, 9.

⁴⁰ The term is from Gansel and Zimniak, "Zum 'Prinzip Erinnerung,'" 14.

⁴¹ See Dieckmann, *My Generation*.

⁴² Lambeck, "Herr Brussig."

⁴³ Hage, "'Jubelfeiern wird's geben'"; Lambeck, "Herr Brussig"

⁴⁴ Jung, *Alles nur Pop?*, 60. Compare Rauhut, *Beat in der Grauzone*, 103.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Hage, "'Jubelfeiern wird's geben,'" 255. See also Brussig's warning at the end of the novel (*Sonnenallee*, 157): "Die Erinnerung . . . vollbringt beharrlich das Wunder, einen Frieden mit der Vergangenheit zu schließen, in dem sich jeder Groll verflüchtigt und der weiche Schleier der Nostalgie über alles legt, was mal scharf und schneidend empfunden wurde. Glückliche Menschen haben ein schlechtes Gedächtnis und reiche Erinnerungen." (Memory . . . doggedly works the wonder of sealing a peace with the past, whereby every anger volatilizes and the soft veil of nostalgia lies over everything that was once experienced as sharp and cutting. Happy people have a poor faculty of memory, but a rich set of memories.)

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<sup>46</sup> This chapter generally refers interchangeably to the film and to Brussig's novelization. There are distinctions between the two—including the historical period portrayed (the film evokes the 1970s, the novel ends in the late 1980s) and details such as the surname of the protagonist (film: Ehrenreich, novel: Kuppisch); however, these do not impinge significantly on the thematization of music.

<sup>47</sup> Ken Woodgate, "'Young and in Love': Music and Memory in Leander Haussmann's *Sun Alley*," *Screening the Past* 18 (2005): [http://tlweb.latrobe.edu.au/humanities/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr\\_18/KWfr18b.html](http://tlweb.latrobe.edu.au/humanities/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr_18/KWfr18b.html).

<sup>48</sup> Cooke, *Representing East Germany*, 113.

<sup>49</sup> Gaus, *Wo Deutschland liegt*.

<sup>50</sup> Brussig, "Liebe zu Zeiten der Kohl-Ära," 168–70.

<sup>51</sup> Woodgate, "'Young and in Love.'"

<sup>52</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*.

<sup>53</sup> Kramer, "Ein Held wie kein anderer."

<sup>54</sup> In 1984, for example, 62 percent of young people surveyed reported that they listened "sehr gern" (very gladly) to popular music with English lyrics (Lindner, *DDR Rock & Pop*, 185).

<sup>55</sup> See also Jakob Hein, *Formen Menschlichen Zusammenlebens* (Munich: Piper, 2003), 15–21. Michael Rauhut also notes that during the late 1960s and 1970s young East Germans who knew most about Western music, who were able to record it onto tape and who had English-speaking skills, had the most prestige among their peers (Rauhut, *Beat in der Grauzone*, 236).

<sup>56</sup> As we will see, the subversiveness of the lyrics to "Moscow" is very much open to question. Yet a banal text often did not stop a GDR audience from interpreting the song as subversive.

<sup>57</sup> Tilman Krause, "Einmal war es doch schön," *Die Welt*, October 7, 1999, 34. See also Josef Engels, "Die Intelligenzia an den Plattenteller!" *Die Welt*, August 21, 2000, 32.

<sup>58</sup> That it could function in this way is directly suggested by Gunnar Decker's review of the film. Gunnar Decker, "Freiheit zu lachen," *Neues Deutschland*, October 6, 1999, 10.

<sup>59</sup> Cooke, *Representing East Germany*, 111.

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in Falck, "DJ Thomasig."

<sup>61</sup> On this point, see also Engels, "Intelligenzia an den Plattenteller!"

<sup>62</sup> Wicke, "Rock around Socialism"; Wicke, "Born in the GDR," 149.

<sup>63</sup> Lindner, *DDR Rock & Pop*, 185.

<sup>64</sup> Larkey, "Fighting for the Right (to) Party?," 205.

<sup>65</sup> Falck, "DJ Thomasig"; Lindner, *DDR Rock & Pop*, 187.

<sup>66</sup> In the film, a hotly desired Rolling Stones' record may be only had on the black market for the extortionate sum of 250 East German marks (i.e., over four months' wages for an apprentice).

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⁶⁷ On the "valley of the clueless," see, e.g., McKay, "East German Identity in the GDR," 24.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Lambeck, "Herr Brussig."

⁶⁹ Christiane Kühl, "Sex und Substitutionsdrogen," *die tageszeitung*, October 7, 1999, 15.

⁷⁰ The evasiveness of musical meaning is a theme here. On the face of it, there is nothing particularly subversive about the rather inane lyrics for "Moscow," which is simply a tale of unrequited love where the love object has returned home to Moscow and the spurned lover decides to go after her, even though he knows that she does not love him. The lack of subversiveness may not, of course, have been apparent if one's English-language skills were deficient, and as we have already observed, GDR censors made some peculiar decisions that seem difficult to rationalize.

⁷¹ This confusion reflected, to some extent, the reality: the various arms of the GDR's popular music regulation system were sometimes unaware of what the other arm was doing (see, e.g., Wicke and Müller, *Rockmusik und Politik*).

⁷² Peter von Becker, "Hier riecht es nach Lysol," *Der Tagesspiegel*, November 9, 1999, 28.

⁷³ Wicke, "Rock around Socialism," 303. On the use of cassette technology by "other bands," see, e.g., Binas, "Die 'anderen' Bands."

⁷⁴ See, e.g., Dieckmann, *My Generation*, 11.

⁷⁵ Wicke, "Rock around Socialism," 300.

⁷⁶ Andreas Platthaus, "Deutsche Dynamische Republik," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 9, 1999, 47.

⁷⁷ Decker, "Freiheit zu lachen."

⁷⁸ For an example of this interpretation, see, e.g., Johannes Hedinger, "Wild, Wild East," *Wochenzeitung*, November 25, 1999, 17; Christiane Peitz, "Alles so schön grau hier," *Die Zeit*, November 4, 1999, 50.

⁷⁹ See, e.g., Peter Wicke, "The Times They Are a Changin': Rock Music and Political Change in East Germany," in *Rockin' the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements*, ed. Reebee Garofalo (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 81–92; S. Frederick Starr, *Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union, 1917–1991* (New York: Limelight Books, 1994); and, to some extent, Woodgate, "Young and in Love"; and Wolfgang Lange, "Alles Lüge: Stefan Maelck's Pop essen Mauer auf," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, February 6, 2007, 27.

⁸⁰ Jolanta Pekacz considers that the desire to mythologize rock in this way is understandable, yet could not be supported by the facts. Jolanta Pekacz, "Did Rock Smash the Wall?: The Role of Rock in Political Transition," *Popular Music* 13, no. 1 (1994): 48. A decade later, Stefan Maelck satirized the whole notion that "pop ate up the Wall." Stefan Maelck, *Pop essen Mauer auf: Wie der Kommunismus den Pop erfand und sich damit selbst abschaffte: Die Hartholtz Akte* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2006).

⁸¹ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Wicke, "Rock around Socialism," 301.

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<sup>82</sup> Alexander Hussock, Help e.V., quoted in MCM, "Anzeige wegen 'Sonnenallee,'" *Die Welt*, January 28, 2000, 35.

<sup>83</sup> Jörg Thomann, "Das falsche Objekt," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 1, 2000, 3.

<sup>84</sup> Frith, *Performing Rites*, 211; Brussig, "Murx, die deutsche Einheit"; Cooke, "'GDR Literature' in the Berlin Republic."

<sup>85</sup> Cooke, *Representing East Germany*; Cooke, "'GDR Literature' in the Berlin Republic," 65–67.

<sup>86</sup> Georg Maas and Hartmut Reszel, "Whatever Happened to . . . : The Decline and Renaissance of Rock in the Former GDR," *Popular Music* 17, no. 3 (1998): 269; Wicke, "Born in the GDR."

<sup>87</sup> Lindner, *DDR Rock & Pop*, 199.

<sup>88</sup> Dieckmann, *My Generation*.

<sup>89</sup> Wicke, "Rock around Socialism," 303; Lindner, *DDR Rock & Pop*, 185. For the standard account of popular music and politics in the GDR during the 1980s, see Michael Rauhut, *Schalmei und Lederjacke: Udo Lindenberg, BAP, Underground: Rock und Politik in den achtziger Jahren* (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 1996).

<sup>90</sup> Michael Pilz, "Geschichte wird gemacht," *Die Welt (Literarische Welt)*, October 2, 2004, 3.

<sup>91</sup> Joachim Feldmann, "Ein Zug aus Dresden," *Freitag*, September 24, 2004, 40; Susanne Kunckel, "Endgültiger Abschied vom Zonenkasper," *Welt am Sonntag*, September 19, 2004, 68.

<sup>92</sup> Feldmann, "Ein Zug aus Dresden"; Peter Richter, "Nobelpreis, ich komme!" *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, September 26, 2004, 33. Frei, quoted in Bluhm, "Popliteratur und Erinnerung," 49.

<sup>93</sup> Maik Albaladejo, "Ausgerechnet Schniedel," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, October 6, 2004, 9.

<sup>94</sup> On the "andere Bands," see, e.g., Binas, "Die 'anderen' Bands"; Galenza and Havemeister, *Wir wollen immer artig sein*.

<sup>95</sup> Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 77.

<sup>96</sup> See Wicke, "The Times They Are a Changing"; Rauhut, *Schalmei und Lederjacke*; Wicke and Müller, *Rockmusik und Politik*; Maas and Reszel, "Whatever Happened to . . ."

<sup>97</sup> Eyerman and Jamison, *Music and Social Movements*, 106.

<sup>98</sup> Brussig, *Wie es leuchtet*, 70. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

<sup>99</sup> As Michael Pilz noted ("Geschichte wird gemacht"), it is likely that A.G. Geige was the model for PlanQuadrat. A.G. Geige was a prominent "other band" from Karl-Marx-Stadt that released an AMIGA album in 1990. That album's title (*Trickbeat*) supplies the genre for PlanQuadrat's music in *Wie es leuchtet*.

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¹⁰⁰ Simon Frith and John Street, "Rock against Racism and Red Wedge: From Music to Politics, from Politics to Music," in Garofolo, *Rockin' the Boat*, 80.

¹⁰¹ Underground cassettes were seldom made in runs larger than fifty, which reflected both the expense of blank cassettes and the fact that many of the "other bands" were happy with their underground position effectively producing "living-room avant-garde" (Lindner, *DDR Rock & Pop*, 198).

¹⁰² Brüssig, "Eine unmögliche Wahl."

¹⁰³ Dieckmann, *My Generation*.

¹⁰⁴ Lindner, *DDR Rock & Pop*, 174.

¹⁰⁵ For an account of how, within the strictures of the GDR, old socialist songs actually were performed in accordance with a "subversive agenda: [namely,] to reflect on how the revolution had *not* been achieved in the GDR," see David Robb, "Playing with the 'Erbe': Songs of the 1848 Revolution in the GDR," *German Life and Letters* 63, no. 3 (2010): 302.

¹⁰⁶ This Stasi background is not at all far-fetched; as Michael Rauhut and others have shown, the Stasi did infiltrate the popular music scene—including that of the so-called other bands—and the staff of the youth broadcaster DT 64. Michael Rauhut, "Ohr an Masse: Rockmusik im Fadenkreuz der Stasi," in Wicke and Müller, *Rockmusik und Politik*, 28–47; Klaus Michael, "Macht aus diesem Staat Gürkensalat," in Galenza and Havemeister, *Wir wollen immer artig sein*, 72–93. Brüssig had also already thematized this matter in *Heimsuchung*, as we will see.

¹⁰⁷ Martin Büsser, *Wie klingt die Neue Mitte?* (Mainz: Ventil, 2001), 12. See also Robb, *Protest Song*, 255–78.

¹⁰⁸ The most telling example was Bruce Springsteen, who found that "Born in the USA" was co-opted by the Republican Party in the lead-up to the 1984 elections. In doing so, the Republican Party concentrated on the triumphal tone of the chorus at the expense of the obvious protest lyric (Frith, *Performing Rites*, 165).

¹⁰⁹ Maas and Reszel, "Whatever Happened to . . .," 268.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 269. See also Lindner, *DDR Rock & Pop*, 211.

¹¹¹ This error was not coincidental: There was a loophole in the regulation of broadcast royalties in the GDR. Unlike in West Germany, with the GEMA, there was no broadcast royalties system, only a copyright system administered by the AWA. Walter Bartel, Interview, in Wicke and Müller, *Rockmusik und Politik*, 89–103.

¹¹² Wolf Kampmann, "Ich such die DDR: Ost-Rock zwischen Wende und Anschluss," in Galenza and Havemeister, *Wir wollen immer artig sein*, 368–76. See also Lindner, *DDR Rock & Pop*, 214.

¹¹³ Compare Lindner, *DDR Rock & Pop*, 211–15.

¹¹⁴ On the popularity of spending the payment on music, see, e.g., *ibid.*, 214.

¹¹⁵ The West Berlin agit-rock band Ton Steine Scherben enjoyed a comparatively large following in the West during the early 1970s, when its combination of blues rock and German-language protest lyrics spoke to a generation of "68ers." The group disbanded in 1985, and in *Wie es leuchtet* we are told that the West German

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record shop owner has picked up a crate of their records cheaply at a clearance sale. For East German rock fans at the time of the *Wende*, however, they are one of the most hotly sought after items (Brussig, *Wie es leuchtet*, 117). On the demise of agit-rock as a valid strategy in the West, see, e.g., Büsser, *Wie klingt die Neue Mitte?*, 12. On the contrasting appeal of Ton Steine Scherben in East Germany, see also Brussig, "Weiß nicht viel."

<sup>116</sup> Lindner, *DDR Rock & Pop*, 213–14.

<sup>117</sup> See, e.g., Falck, "DJ Thomasig."

<sup>118</sup> Jakob Hein, *Mein erstes T-Shirt* (Munich: Piper, 2001), 127.

<sup>119</sup> On the political realignment of various German punk musicians in this era, see, e.g., Büsser, *Wie klingt die Neue Mitte?*

<sup>120</sup> Wicke, "Born in the GDR."

<sup>121</sup> Falck, "DJ Thomasig"; emphasis added.

<sup>122</sup> Thomas Brussig, "So jung will ich mal werden," *Der Tagesspiegel* August 28, 1998, 27; emphasis added.

<sup>123</sup> Again, Brussig seems to have loosely based these characters on real musicians. During the early 1980s, there was a GDR new wave band called Keks that included several Sex Pistols' songs in its live repertoire. Keks had a following among East German punks. It fell afoul of the state in the mid-1980s, however, after cadres took objection to their appearance, as well as to the fact that the Western media had profiled the band. The group was then outlawed, at which point several of its former members applied to leave the GDR (Galenza and Havemeister, *Wir wollen immer artig sein*).

<sup>124</sup> Rauhut, "Ohr an Masse"; Michael, "Macht aus diesem Staat Gurkensalat."

<sup>125</sup> Galenza and Havemeister, *Wir wollen immer artig sein*; Alison Lewis, *Die Kunst des Verrats: Der Prenzlauer Berg und die Staatssicherheit* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003).

<sup>126</sup> Brussig, *Heimsuchung*, 15. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

<sup>127</sup> Matthias Schümann, "Die Zone in den Köpfen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, January 23, 2001, 53.

<sup>128</sup> During the lifetime of the GDR, Western media expressed quite an interest in the "other bands"—including Keks—and in their plight in the GDR (Galenza and Havemeister, *Wir wollen immer artig sein*).

<sup>129</sup> Jürgen Krätzer, "'... aber wir haben uns prächtig amüsiert': Thomas Brussig—Satiriker, Hanswurst, Shooting-Star?" *neue deutsche literatur* 48 (1999): 179–82.

<sup>130</sup> Stefan Kuzmany, "Alles unterm Udo-Hut," *Der Spiegel*, January 14, 2011, <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/musik/lindenberg-musical-alles-unterm-udo-hut-a-739417.html>. For a full account of the Lindenberg-Honecker episode and the different motivations for the two parties, as well as for the GDR's ultimate decision to un-invite Lindenberg, see Rauhut, *Schalmei und Lederjacke*.

<sup>131</sup> Wehdeking, *Generationenwechsel*.

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6: The Gendering of Popular Music in the Novels of Karen Duve and Kerstin Grether

Warum [machen] Mädchen sich überhaupt weniger Musik[?] Ich verstehe das auch nicht. Wahrscheinlich haben sie zu Schallplatten und CDs eher eine hedonistische Einstellung. Aber den Männern die Musik zu überlassen, ist noch ein schlimmerer Fehler, als dass wir ihnen das Feuer überlassen haben.

[Why do girls make less music for themselves, anyway? I don't understand it either. They've probably got a more hedonistic attitude toward records and CDs. But to leave music in the hands of men is a worse mistake than when we left them with fire.]

—Karen Duve, quoted in Messmer,
“Es ist eine erbärmliche Sucht”

UNTIL THIS POINT, the question of gender in recent German musico-centric literature has remained a critical but under-illuminated aspect. One might assume from the tenor of the novels I examined in chapter 4 that it was male writers who were predominantly interested in reflecting on popular music or “realizing” its aesthetics. After all, a major trope in novels like the *Weiberroman*—actually a “men’s novel”—is that rock is a domain in which a young postadolescent male may gain some form of compensation for his lack of success with the opposite sex. To a large extent it was male writers who were most prominent in the field of musico-centric literature, yet they have not been the only ones. To suggest otherwise would misrepresent the breadth of contemporary German literature. Just as the second half of the 1990s saw the emergence or consolidation of many younger male writers’ careers, various commentators also observed a so-called *literarisches Fräuleinwunder* (literary girls’ rush).¹ There were some younger female novelists who wrote about popular music consumption. They included, for example, Alexa Hennig von Lange, whose 1997 novel, *Relax*, took its title from a song and portrayed a dysfunctional young couple and their asymmetrical attachment to the nightclubbing lifestyle. (The man is the one who goes nightclubbing; his female partner stays home and frets.) By contrast, the finely sculpted short stories of Judith Herrmann sometimes thematized popular music consumption, albeit in a far more understated way than Hennig von

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Lange. The expatriate Austrian author Kathrin Röggla also reflected in a sophisticated fashion on Berlin's Love Parade in a chapter in her 1999 novel *Irres Wetter* (Crazy Weather). Rather than concentrating on these writers, however, I will examine how gender features in the novels of two other women who have focused on the production and reception of popular music in contemporary German conditions in a more sustained way. After surveying the discursive gendering of "rock" and "pop" music more generally, as well as theoretical approaches to consumption, I will show how Karen Duve's *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* (This Is Not a Love Song, 2000) portrays as gendered the reception of popular music and access to its symbolic capital. She assigns to her female protagonist an emotional mode of music reception—one long associated by male writers with women—and struggles with whether there might be some excess value to be enjoyed in this realm. The second part of the chapter turns to Kerstin Grether, a younger writer who has also worked as a journalist and was an "indie" musician during the heyday of the *Hamburger Schule*. If Duve's protagonist is a listener, then Grether's novel *Zuckerbabys* (2004) depicts the lives of women who are involved in bands or are music journalists. Despite the advances of recent years—including in movements such as the "Riot Grrrls"—Grether registers the impediments these women face and remains quite ambivalent about the possibilities of agency for women musicians. She is therefore not altogether distanced from the elder Duve.

### Rock and Pop: Male and Female?

Critics have long been aware of how gender has impacted understandings of popular music. In general terms, we can speak of a "gendered history of rock/pop with its juxtaposition of the active male/passive female."<sup>2</sup> This is a juxtaposition that relates both to performance roles and to modes of listening. First in the English-speaking context to throw proper light on this matter were Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie in their landmark 1979 article "Rock and Sexuality." There, they examine two durable pre-punk male stereotypes: the so-called cock rocker and the pop singer. As we saw in chapter 4, the cock rocker is associated with a predatory model of masculinity, at once misogynistic and, although less apparent, fearful of women. By contrast, the pop singer is clean cut, slightly effeminate, and intended to appeal to young female "teeny-bopper" fans. According to Frith and McRobbie, female musicians tend to be "singer/songwriter/folkie lad[ies]—long-haired, pure-voiced, self-accompanied on acoustic guitar." Such gender models "reinforced . . . the qualities traditionally linked with female singers, sensitivity, passivity and sweetness."<sup>3</sup> Exceptions like the "gender bending" David Bowie surely existed during the "glam rock" period of the early 1970s. There were also "toughe Frontfrau[en]" (tough front

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women) like Janis Joplin, who seemed to assimilate to the masculinist aesthetic of rock.⁴ Not that popular music's gender stereotypes should always be taken at face value; they are sometimes ambiguous, and in any event they only supply raw materials with which music's consumers can and do assemble their own gender identities. Furthermore, stereotypes "are themselves subject to reappropriation."⁵

The punk and new wave eras supplied several models that diverged from the stereotypes Frith and McRobbie discerned. Most famous in the German context was Nina Hagen, who sang about things like lesbian kisses, masturbation, and female orgasm.⁶ There were also important all-women groups at the time, including Malaria and Mania D. Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle provides another, different example: Michaela Mélian took on a role as the group's bassist and singer that was at odds with the hitherto typical female figure. The "indie" scene of the early 1990s also opened up spaces where women explored and performed new roles. Indeed, in Anglo-American popular music, feminism and activism coalesced to create what Joanne Gottlieb and Gayle Wald called a "new moment in history," namely, the "Riot Grrrl" network.⁷ All-female groups like Bikini Kill and Sleater-Kinney introduced a new feminist politics, albeit not a doctrinaire one. Their ideological platform was rather "a crazy salad that mixes rhetoric from 1960s-style women's liberation, green politics, vegetarianism, Susan Faludi's *Backlash*, Naomi Wolf's *Beauty Myth* and other disparate sources."⁸ By combining anger and expressions of sexuality, these groups created a "fertile space both for women's feminist interventions and the politicisation of sexuality and female identity."⁹ As Thomas Meinecke's "discourse novel" *Tomboy* (1998) indicates, this American Riot Grrrl phenomenon was also received within a German student milieu. *Tomboy's* main protagonist Vivian is a fan of groups like Sleater-Kinney and attempts to situate the bands' music within her readings in gender studies.¹⁰ There were also some all-female indie groups in the *Hamburger Schule* context of the 1990s who took a cue from the Riot Grrrls. These groups included Die Braut haut ins Auge, Trixi Parole, as well as Kerstin Grether's own band, Doctorella.¹¹

Nevertheless it would be wrong to overstate the progress made. In a 2005 joint interview, Michaela Mélian and her partner Thomas Meinecke—by then active participants in the German music industry for over twenty-five years—present a rather sobering view. Mélian points out that "erst in den letzten Jahren [haben sich] auf breiter Front neue [Modellen] entwickelt" (it is only in recent years [that] new [models] have developed in a significant way).¹² She also observes the lack of female role models whenever there is a new development, as was the case with electronica.¹³ Meinecke is generally more negative, considering that "the female" is ubiquitous in popular music, except that it is all too seldom that women are able to represent themselves: "Es gibt das Weibliche

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also überall in der Popmusik, aber es tritt nur selten als es selbst auf. Eine Figur wie Missy Elliott ist die Ausnahme: Da spricht eine afroamerikanische Frau, die nicht nur Beschriebene, sondern Schreibende ist. Andererseits verschwinden diese Positionen plötzlich, wenn es eine neue musikalische Welle gibt, wo Männer Frauen einfach verdrängen oder das Weibliche selbst darstellen." (The feminine is everywhere in pop[ular] music; it's just that it only seldom appears as itself. A figure like Missy Elliott is the exception. In that case an Afro-American woman is speaking; someone who is not only inscribed but who also inscribes [her own image]. On the other hand, these subject positions suddenly disappear whenever there is a new musical wave, in which case men simply suppress the women or else represent the feminine themselves.)<sup>14</sup> Kerstin Grether has also been rather pessimistic. In 2002, she noted that only 10 percent of all popular musicians registered with the GEMA were female, and that 80 percent of them were singers.<sup>15</sup> Later on, when reviewing the success of Silbermond and Juli—groups that do feature women—she again noted that the women are “merely” singers rather than, say, guitarists, which she thinks would be more substantive, and subversive: “Eine Frau mit Gitarre ist für Männer immer noch ein absolut rotes Tuch. Eine der letzten Männerdomänen” (For men, a woman with a guitar is still like a red rag. It is one of the last male domains).<sup>16</sup> If the “woman who inscribes her own image” is still a rare creature, then Grether’s novel *Zuckerbabys* would carefully delineate the various impediments to her career. Before we examine Grether’s novel, though, it is necessary to return to the female music consumer, whom Duve would thematize extensively in *Dies ist kein Liebeslied*.

### Women, Emotion, and Music Consumption

As Neil Nehring and others have shown, there is a long history in aesthetic thought—especially German aesthetics—of associating women with an “inferior” emotional response to art, including music. Indeed, he traces the distaste for emotion from Kant through Adorno, and into the postmodern theorists, and speaks of a “quite traditional sexist linkage of emotion with feminine weakness.”<sup>17</sup> Critics created many of these attitudes in relation to high art, but they would subsequently transpose their ideas into the popular music domain, where gendered discourses about consumption complicated matters further.<sup>18</sup>

In his *Kritik der Urtheilskraft* (*Critique of Judgement*, 1790), for example, Kant had considered that a pure judgement on the aesthetic value of art was based not on the “barbaric” influence of the emotions but rather on the intellect and erudition.<sup>19</sup> A different view was taken during the Romantic era, however. The Romantics’ attitude was very much based on an aesthetics of feeling. Music was thought—and expected—to

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express these qualities in a direct way.²⁰ Hence, many Romantic-inspired musico-centric novels feature epiphanies like the one experienced by Peter Handke's protagonist in *The Jukebox*. One of the most common tropes here is the "schmelzendes Adagio" (melting adagio), whereby a sensitive listener's will is overcome in accordance with the laws of nature and melts or flows away.²¹ A corollary of music's access to the emotional realm is that it might even substitute for life itself. The idea that a musical inclination therefore has a certain "decadent" sympathy with death is a common Romantic trope existing right up to the early Thomas Mann: "Musik dient . . . als Medium . . . der Mitteilung von Gefühlen, sowie der Berührung mit dem 'Leben.' Im Verständnis als *ästhetisches Surrogat für das wirkliche Leben* wird Musik . . . zum Paradigma für Dekadenz." (Music serves as a medium for the communication of feelings, as well as [for] an encounter with "life." Understood as *an aesthetic surrogate for real life*, music . . . becomes a paradigm for decadence.)²² This is an idea that emerges strongly in Karen Duve's novel.

A contrary, anti-emotional approach to musical aesthetics—an aesthetics of form—began to emerge during the course of the nineteenth century, however. This was pioneered by the critic Eduard Hanslick, who attacked the Romantic notion that music's purpose lay in the representation of emotion.²³ Martin Huber considers that Hanslick's ideas paved the way for the twentieth century and modernism. They also led to a reduction in the pool of those "qualified" to evaluate music. The apogee of this approach is represented by Adorno's 1962 *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*.²⁴ According to Adorno, there is a hierarchy of listeners, which—it goes without saying—is arranged with popular music listeners aggregated at the bottom. The optimal mode of listening is one that is concentrated, able to conceive of a piece of music in its entirety and in formal aesthetic terms. Following these experts is the "good listener," who "is not, or is not fully, aware of the technical and structural implications" (5). This type of listener is becoming rarer in the bourgeois era, with its emphasis on exchange and performance principles. More in tune with that era is the "culture consumer," who "respects music as a cultural asset, often as something a man must know for the sake of his own social standing. . . . For the spontaneous and direct reaction to music, the faculty of simultaneously experiencing and comprehending its structure, *it substitutes hoarding as much musical information as possible, notably about biographical data and about the merits of interpreters*" (6–7, emphasis added). This mode of listening is "atomistic"—it attends to musical details rather than the whole—and fetishistic. The "emotional listener" falls below even the "culture consumer" in Adorno's hierarchy; "to him, the relation [to music] becomes crucial for triggering instinctual stirrings otherwise tamed or repressed by civilization" (8). Emotional listeners are naïve and easily moved to tears, as well as wilfully blind, in

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that they do not wish to know more about the thing to which they are reacting. Music offers a compensatory realm; it acts either as a “vessel into which they pour their own anguished and . . . ‘free-flowing’ emotions” or as an object with which to identify in such a way that it supplies “the emotions they miss in themselves.” It is “a means to ends pertaining to the economy of [one’s] own drives” (9). Karen Duve’s novel portrays how this type of scheme mapped onto popular music and gender, especially in the 1970s and 1980s.

Nehring suggests that the distrust of emotion has persisted into the postmodern era too. By delineating a genealogy back to Nietzsche and to his notion of *ressentiment*, he traces that distrust into postmodern academic theory about popular music, including Lawrence Grossberg’s concept of a splitting apart of affect from ideology (see chapter 4), and into a great deal of advanced music journalism as well as the general pessimism that emotion in popular music can have any progressive effects. Situating himself among feminist music critics who attend to the “perspective of the listener/fan [who] actively engages in the construction of the meaning of a . . . performance,” Nehring argues instead for a revalorization of emotion as “an energy.”<sup>25</sup> In his view, an emotional response always has a rational component and can help build an affective community with utopian aspirations. His classic example is the Riot Grrrl movement. Kerstin Grether’s novel, in particular, thematizes just this notion of popular music as a touchstone for building an affective community, especially among women, but she is somewhat less sanguine than Nehring.

The commonly held stereotypes about women, emotion, and music have another important aspect relating to the gendering of the popular and of consumption. As we have seen, anxious German analyses of popular culture have a long history. Consumption also has a long history of being associated with women. Critics often projected anxieties about the seductive nature of mass-produced commodities and about runaway capitalism onto women because of women’s proximity to the “cultures of consumption” and their exclusion from the spheres of production.<sup>26</sup> This discourse has had a clear impact on the gendering of “rock” and its schematic opposite, “pop.” “Rock distanced itself [from mass-produced pop] by masculinizing itself, and by introducing a new way of enjoying music that eschewed the feminine, emotional and physical response of early 1960s pop fans in favour of cool, laid-back and thoughtful appreciation of the music.”<sup>27</sup> Young women still feel the invidious results today: “Girls find themselves in a double bind: Choosing to participate in the musical discourses of important male culture limits them to the subject position of groupie or perhaps honorary male, but subscribing to an identificatory girl-centred music earns them contempt for embracing mainstream fluff.”<sup>28</sup> There is another corollary for female musicians. Male journalists often attribute to them a special susceptibility to the dangers of “selling

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out”—succumbing to commercial pressures and being co-opted into the mainstream record industry—because they are assumed to have “little or no distance from commercial culture to relinquish.”²⁹

Whereas radical feminists and cultural critics in the Frankfurt School tradition have been quick to cast women as the passive victims of consumerist ideologies, cultural and postmodern feminists, exponents of cultural studies, and researchers in consumer culture have recuperated “the resistive agency of the female consumer,” who fashions her own meanings through consumerism.³⁰ They have shifted the focus from women as commodity to women as consuming subjects who “negotiate” both pleasures and risks. Rather than being “cheerleaders” or “prophets of doom,” they interpret culture as “the site of critical resistance as well as ideological manipulation.”³¹ Both Karen Duve and Kerstin Grether have been especially alive to this “negotiation” of risk and pleasure. They have paid special attention to the pleasurable, female-coded, emotional realm of popular music consumption, but also to its pitfalls and to the question of “selling out.”

Dies ist kein Liebeslied

Near the beginning of Karen Duve’s novel, the protagonist, Anne, muses on the significance of her collection of “memorex” mixtapes. Her tapes are an archive of musical trends of the past two decades; they are also witnesses to a disastrous series of relationship failures. Only one cassette appears to have it all, as does its creator, Peter Hemstedt, whom Anne belatedly realizes is the love of her life. Anne is now on a flight from Hamburg to London to try to reconnect with Hemstedt, just as Nick Hornby’s Rob Fleming revisits his past loves in *High Fidelity*. In this scene two major themes of the book converge: the consumption of popular music and contemporary gender relations. The novel’s other major theme is Anne’s chronic eating disorder, a state that is closely linked with gender relations, but seemingly less so—at least in Duve’s view—with music.³² The novel suggests that the consumption of popular music in Germany, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s, when much of the book’s narrative is set, was marked by gender divisions and hierarchies. In many ways those hierarchies repeat the ones that Adorno had discerned in his 1962 *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*. Although Duve herself tends to revalorize the emotional, it is open to question how optimistic she really is.

Within this context, Duve’s thematization of the mixtape is significant, and not only because it is consistent with the tendency in contemporary German-language literature to reflect on the media of music consumption, from the jukebox to the cassette recorder, especially on the eve of their demise. *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* also suggests that changes in technologies

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of popular culture have led to the proliferation of what Teresa de Lauretis once called “technologies of gender.”<sup>33</sup> The ways that the mixtape has gendered music is a recurring trope in contemporary German musico-centric texts, from Duve’s *Liebeslied*, to Stuckrad-Barre’s *Soloalbum* (1998) and *Remix* (1999), through Thorsten Krämer’s *Neue Musik aus Japan* (New Music from Japan, 1999), to Sky Nonhoff’s *Kleine Philosophie der Passionen: Schallplatten* (Short Philosophy of the Passions: Records, 2000), and Christian Gasser’s *Mein erster Sanyo* (My First Sanyo, 2000). As Ulrike Helms’s overview of some of these novels identifies, literary mixtape producers are typically male, the recipients female, and the mixtape frequently replaces the love letter as a form of male-to-female communication.<sup>34</sup> The present analysis of Duve’s novel will show how this new “love letter” has tended to be skewed in favor of the male party, even if the mixtape retains some ambiguous value for its female recipient.

Duve’s novel also has other things to say about how popular music articulates with the realm of love, the “new center” around which modern life revolves.<sup>35</sup> That popular music can have intimate links with one’s romantic life, and function as a surrogate, had of course been apparent from the “rockish” literature of Matthias Politycki. Like Grether’s novel too, *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* is an important “writing back,” providing a much-needed female perspective, complementing the simplistic images of female figures in Politycki’s novel. Significantly, its tone is also different from the more lackadaisical rock-themed literature. The starkly depressing *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* offers little opportunity for community-building identification. Anne does not enjoy music with any group of Saturday Night Heroes.

### Gendering Taste?

As we have seen in previous chapters, popular music is commonly employed by the postadolescent characters in musico-centric novels as a form of “distinction” in the Bourdieuan sense. If Brussig’s novels show how the Cold War division of Germany could have an impact on hierarchies of music taste, then Duve’s novel shows how gender would also complicate the matter. “Legitimate” music is, for those who enjoy it, a form of “symbolic capital” that can be acquired and accumulated; however, it is not only class and geography that structure young people’s relationship to popular music but gender as well: gender functions within social class as an additional marker of difference to effectively create a subclass or what Bourdieu terms “class fraction.”<sup>36</sup> Duve’s female protagonists make up a type of underprivileged underclass with respect to the “musical cultural capital” of the men in their lives.<sup>37</sup> In *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* young men have the upper hand with regard to music, and the women typically aspire to the superior tastes of the men.

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Initially, however, popular music seems to hold out the promise of a field in which both sexes might meet and share an interest, even find some common symbolic code of love. Hence, one of Anne's early formative experiences with the other sex is of playing singles on her parents' record player with her neighbor Axel, and their putting on a joint "hit parade." She recalls that she was happiest when their tastes in music converged. This scene validates the point made by Simon Frith that whereas it might once have been literature and its consumption that formed the basis whereby young people might gain valuable "insight into thoughts and feelings" and assay their compatibility, that role has now been taken over by popular music, among other things.³⁸

For the teenage Anne, however, a range of factors contributes to a gulf opening up between her own musical tastes and those of the men whom she wishes to be with. As Bourdieu suggests, these impediments include "inherited" tastes—Anne's young taste is formed by the passé *Schlager* in her parents' collection—as well as geography.³⁹ Anne comes from an outskirt of the metropolitan pop center, Hamburg. Not quite the GDR's *Tal der Abnungslosen*, but "modisch, moralisch und musikalisch hinkten wir . . . fünf bis zehn Jahre hinterher" (in terms of fashions, morals, and music we limped five to ten years behind).⁴⁰ By the time she reaches adolescence, Anne's "limping" tastes in music only reinforce her already pronounced inferiority complex. Those men whom she really admires—Hemstedt and his friends—already seem beyond her reach. Tellingly, they display the trappings of a more refined cultural capital redolent of the "new wave" period, and of time spent in the metropolis. They wear tapered jeans and listen to David Bowie. By contrast, the men with whom Anne has relationships, such as the long-haired drug enthusiast Yogi Rühmann, tend to have bad taste in clothes and music. Yogi, whom Anne suffers rather than loves, listens to "prog rock," which was thoroughly passé in the new wave era of this part of the book's narrative.⁴¹ It is only after being exposed to Bowie's music, and being excoriated by Hemstedt's friends for not being able to identify it, that Anne finally grasps that Yogi's musical taste is not acceptable.⁴² In this way, popular musical taste acts as a distinctive marker differentiating the "attractiveness" of the men in the book.

That Hemstedt's male friends are the conduit of knowledge about David Bowie's music is not coincidental. In general, it is the men in the novel who have the expertise in relation to music. In terms of the gendered hierarchy of consumption, they acquire and possess the record collections and the detailed knowledge about popular music that typically comes with it. Hemstedt has a large collection of music, for example, and Ole, another uncharacteristically "cool" boyfriend of Anne's, is the editor, writer, and distributor of a music "fanzine." It is also the men who make the mixtapes. The gendering in the novel seems to reflect reality. As Will

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Straw has shown, popular music connoisseurship is traditionally a male domain.<sup>43</sup> The depiction of the male characters in the novel, and their acquisitive mode of popular music consumption, is also largely in key with Adorno's notion of the middle-ranking "culture consumer," who "[focuses on] hoarding as much musical information as possible."<sup>44</sup> Most of the male record collectors in the novel resemble this type, even if Ole the budding critic also aspires to listen to popular music in a colder, more structural fashion—to be a "good listener"—some occasional "lapses" into emotion notwithstanding. It is in those lapses that we see how collecting and connoisseurship might act to "displace the affective or corporeal aspects . . . onto series and historical genealogies, in what might be seen as a fetishistic act of disavowal."<sup>45</sup> As Susan McClary suggests, it is precisely the ability to view music as "dangerously" emotional that encourages men to disavow this aspect of it, to seek refuge in a more anti-emotional, classificatory response, thereby also creating in women and a female-coded consumption an abject Other.<sup>46</sup>

As such, one of the important ways that the men in the novel seek to assert and shore up their superior "position in social space" is by belittling the women and their musical tastes.<sup>47</sup> As Straw shows, male popular music connoisseurship is largely based on the notion of exclusion, which "functions not only to preserve the homosocial character of such worlds, but to block females from the social and economic advancement which they may offer."<sup>48</sup> Hence—as with the male Saturday Night Heroes in Politycki's *Weiberroman* who belittle "girl music"—the men in Anne's life are particularly disparaging about her meager stocks of acquired "musical capital." She seems defenseless to react. When Ole ridicules her collection for containing a Kate Bush—"pop"—record, for example, Anne promptly tosses it out: "Das eine Stück darauf 'Army Dreamer' mochte ich gern, *aber ich wollte auf keinen Fall meine Plattensammlung durch eine Mädchenplatte verunreinigen*" (I really liked the one song on it, "Army Dreamer," *but there was no way I wanted to pollute my record collection with a girl record*).<sup>49</sup> So if there is a divide between a Hemstedt and a Rühmann, there is a chasm between them and Anne, with her shame-faced tendency toward "girl music." This incident suggests that the gendering of musical consumption also articulates with class. As Simon Frith has observed of the early 1970s in the UK, there was a clear class division between the middle-class aficionados of rock and the working class of pop fans.<sup>50</sup> For Anne, too, taste in music is proof of boys' elevated class status. She therefore feels doubly inferior when Ole finds her Kate Bush record. After his rebuke she concludes that she has the tastes of a "Vorstadtmädchen" (girl from the suburbs), "das in Wirklichkeit auf liebliche Melodien und treibende, stampfende Rhythmen mit tiefen Bässen stand" (who was really into

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gentle melodies and driving, pounding rhythms with deep bass lines), most probably as a result of her “Kleinbürger-Genen” (lower-middle-class genes).⁵¹

Anne is acutely aware of her inadequacies as a consumer of popular music. However, she does not have the money to listen to music as a “primary” consumer—that is, to accumulate a record collection—or, initially, even to own a cassette deck. In a very real sense, the young women in Duve’s novel lack the “technological means of reproduction of capital” (Karl Marx) with regard to this form of cultural capital. They must compensate by gaining access to music’s capital via brothers or boyfriends. Indeed, Anne predominantly consumes music in a “dependent” fashion. She is often too embarrassed or shy to ask her friends to identify a piece of music for her—who can blame her after the David Bowie dressing-down?—and she does not trust herself to go into a record shop and ask about or buy music for herself. She relies on the men to identify music for her and to make her mixtapes. Her musical taste is thus “vicarious” and largely determined by whomever she is going out with.⁵² However, there also seems to be an attitudinal issue, and this is where her eating disorder does have an impact on her ability to deal in musical cultural capital, à la the men. Anne considers that she lacks dedication to anything other than dieting—which is at least one domain that appears in this novel to be entirely female dominated—as well as the ability “sich in irgend etwas hinein[zu]steiger[n]: Fußball, Pferde, Berufe, Plattensammlungen, Klebebilder, Marktforschung, Politik, Brückenbau, Aquaristik, Inselhopping—egal was” (to really get into anything: football, horses, careers, record collections, stickers, market research, politics, bridge construction, fish-keeping, island hopping—whatever).⁵³

Yet the narrator is ultimately quite ambivalent about the way in which men consume music; she does not really wish to be an “honorary male.” Hemstedt and others may possess the taste, cultural capital, and record collections that the narrator covets, but they are also the instigators of a nerdy, and at times vaguely homoerotic, culture of music consumption, about which the narrator is particularly scathing, thereby following the familiar slippage from homosocial to homoerotic.⁵⁴ Within this fan culture, young men, including the idolized Hemstedt, are abnormally obsessed with male musicians or pop gurus like Diedrich Diederichsen. This is part of Duve’s “writing back” to Hornby, Politycki, et al.⁵⁵ But although Anne is scornful of the way in which the culture consumer, Ole, runs after band members “wie ein aufgeregter kleiner Hund” (like an excited little dog), and mocks his “Demutswollust” (lust for humiliation)—this marks one of his “lapses” into emotion—her behavior is hardly free from its own lust for humiliation.⁵⁶

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## The Love Letter and the Mixtape

*In the future, when social scientists study the mix tape phenomenon, they will conclude—in fancy language—that the mix tape was a form of “speech” particular to the late twentieth century, soon replaced by the “play list.”*

—Dean Wareham, quoted in Moore, *Mix Tape*

One of the qualities of Duve’s novel is that it skilfully blends references to “high” and “low” culture—metonymically referenced by Goethe and the Public Image Limited singer Johnny Rotten—as Heike Bartels notes.<sup>57</sup> The intertextual reference to Goethe introduces the theme of the love letter and its marginalization by other newer media. When the teenage Anne is sitting in class writing an essay on Goethe’s *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*, 1774), she finds herself unable to attend to the matter at hand. Presumably inspired by the epistolary form of *Werther*, and by the theme of unrequited love, she decides instead to write a letter to Hemstedt.<sup>58</sup> Except that here too, nothing eventuates. Anne is unable to use the medium of the letter to actually declare her love for Peter. She has already discounted the possibility of that love being requited, and she thinks that anything she might write would be hopeless. In fact, Anne finds the written medium altogether inadequate to her task, not only as an unhappy lover, but also as an interpreter of *Werther*. Intuitively—and prelinguistically—she grasps what might be required in order to write an essay acceptable to her teacher, Beimer, but she cannot bring it to paper. Instead, she prefers silence, handing him an empty piece of paper, with her name written at the top. Anne chooses to remain wordless in the face of her emotion: “Ich hatte . . . nicht viel Hoffnung, daß Beimer begreifen würde, daß ein leeres Blatt dem Thema angemessener war als jede noch so ausgefeilte Interpretation” (I didn’t hold out much hope that Beimer would understand that an empty piece of paper was more appropriate to the topic than any interpretation, however elaborate).<sup>59</sup>

Anne never sends Hemstedt her love letter; however, one of his subsequent girlfriends, Kathrin, does send one of her own. We do not learn the precise contents of that letter, but Anne tells us that the letter “war wirklich sehr albern. . . . Er sprach Dinge aus, die man einfach nicht aussprechen sollte, Gefühle” (really was very silly. . . . It expressed things that simply shouldn’t be expressed, feelings).<sup>60</sup> This statement indicates that Anne has internalized the gendered prejudice against emotion, just as she has internalized the prejudice against “girl music.” It is clear, then, that the love letter has been demoted and has very little place in the lived existence of Anne and her peers. This is not to say that communication has ceased entirely. On the contrary, *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* reveals

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that important communications now take place by means of a different medium, that of the cassette. Here is one further instance of how sound recording media have had an impact on the “monopoly” of the older medium of writing.⁶¹

As we can see from *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* and from the other recent novels cited above that thematize the mixtape, cassette technology rapidly embedded itself within courtship patterns. In this context, Anne’s collection of mixtapes is an “archive of feeling” that serves as a reminder of past love affairs.⁶² She can replay it at will; each tape has an auratic value—to Anne at least—and reveals a great deal about its respective maker. As she observes: “Wenn du dir von einem Mann eine Kasette aufnehmen lässt, erfährst du mehr über ihn, als wenn du mit ihm schläfst” (When you get a man to make you up a cassette you learn more about him than you do when you sleep with him).⁶³ What the musical compilation and its appearance—the mixtape’s cover—reveal, however, is not an altogether attractive image. Most often they show a young man who is seeking to do little more than demonstrate his own musical connoisseurship. Here is a form of narcissism that is not especially interested in the would-be amour’s musical tastes, or necessarily even in communicating new music to her.⁶⁴ One of Anne’s tape makers has not even deemed it necessary to include a track listing; he assumes she knows the music already. Unsurprisingly, the tape closest to Anne’s heart is one that Hemstedt has made. But although she likes the music, this cassette does not seem to have been made with any particular “lover’s” concessions to her taste, either; it is rather simply the selection of an enthusiast “der Ahnung von Musik hat” (who knows what is what in music).⁶⁵

Despite its asymmetry, the mixtape is of critical importance in the courtship process and during the life of the romance.⁶⁶ As *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* demonstrates, a lover can also use a mixtape as a “break-up mix.”⁶⁷ Indeed it is by mixtape that Hemstedt finally delivers his message that Anne’s love is unrequited. He has included “This Is Not a Love Song,” by the English post-punk band Public Image Limited. When she hears the refrain, which gives the piece its title, she observes to herself: “Schon Gut! Du meine Güte, jaja, ich hatte es ja bereits begriffen.” (All right! Goodness, yes, I’d got it already.)⁶⁸ Here the “break-up mix” functions in such a way as to let Hemstedt off the hook. He can communicate that he doesn’t love her without having to face her—or write a letter—and say so in as many words.

As I pointed out in the introductory chapter, however, musical meaning is not generally so easy to pin down. For this reason, a mixtape can be multivalent; it might be received in a way that was not intended. This openness to interpretation is evident on one of Hemstedt’s “loveless” mixtapes. On the B side of the tape is a song that brings on an epiphanic experience in Anne. For her, the song conjures up images and

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feelings of being in love. But it is most unlikely that Hemstedt intended the song to be received in this way, and for Anne's brother, the music is simply "Müll" (rubbish).<sup>69</sup> Under these circumstances, the utterance has a fugitive meaning, and the communicative act can fail. Here, as elsewhere, music fails to provide the symbolic code of love it seems at times to promise. Nonetheless Anne gains enjoyment from the mixtape, perversely even from the "break-up mix," or at least parts of it, and she continues to get some use value out of it, although it should be noted that, unlike Ole and Hemstedt, she cannot convert this use value into exchange value or "cash in" on it. While Anne participates in a fairly limited fashion in the "economy" of musical cultural capital, she is still able to profit from the excess of meaning that is generated from the production process of making the tape. That is to say, she gains some benefit from the "surplus value" of the mixtape, in the sense of the ineffable quality that the tape's afterlife lends her. How lasting that benefit might be, though, is quite debatable.

If Anne herself were to have the cultural capital required to make mixtapes, then she might find the medium liberating, perhaps even more therapeutic and expressive than the blank sheet of paper that constitutes her response to *Werther*. Christos Tsiolkas writes: "How do you articulate the unbearable weight of unrequited love? You make a compilation tape. The sorrow and the grief and the love and the passion and the ecstasy and the fucking pain of it have already been put in words by lyricists more adept than you are, sung by vocalists more able to express the emotions you want the other to understand."<sup>70</sup> However, unfortunately for Anne, the creation of mixtapes—in this novel, and as Duve thinks, more generally—appears to be a thoroughly male-gendered domain. The mixtape might be a form of "speech" specific to the late twentieth century, then, but it is one that diverges significantly from the epistolary form that it has, to a large extent, replaced, and it is one to which the genders do not have equal access.

### Love, Music, Life, and Death: The Emotions of Listening

Despite her "dependent" or "vicarious" access to it, popular music fulfils a vital role within Anne's emotional economy. The mixtapes serve not only as a personal archive of missed opportunities. They also literally enable Anne to "write over" her disastrous past life and to replace the humiliation and shame of failed relationships with a more positive narrative of the self. This strategy partly revalorizes an emotional approach to music. Yet it has an ambiguous value. To understand how music can function in this way, it is necessary to examine more closely how Anne interacts with it.

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The scene in which Anne undergoes a musical epiphany upon hearing a song on Hemstedt's last mixtape demonstrates how her experience of music is thoroughly embedded in affect:

dann kam das Lied, das eine unvergleichliche Lied, vor dem mein ganzer Widerstand in sich zusammenbrach. . . . Ich schloß kurz die Augen, und als ich sie wieder öffnete, war alles um mich herum viel deutlicher, viel heller. . . . So mußte es sein, wenn man im Lichtblitz einer Atombombe stand, kurz bevor der Rauchpilz aufstieg und alles verglühte. Jetzt, in diesem Augenblick, wurden die Töne unfäßbar schön, ein grandioser Ausgleich für all die stillen Jahre, die hinter mir lagen. Es war wie ein Glas Wasser, wenn man sich eigentlich schon darauf eingerichtet hat, zu verdursten. Die Musik drang in mich ein, war in mir, durchströmte mich und füllte mein ganzes Sein. Und ich, all dieses Unerfreuliche, Widerliche, das ich bisher gewesen war, war endlich aus mir heraus. In mir war nur noch das Schöne. Das Wunderbare. . . .

Diese Musik ließ mich Freuden erinnern, die ich nie gehabt hatte, die ich aber unbedingt hätte haben sollen. . . .

Ich wollte, daß er [Peter] neben mir lag und seinen Arm um mich legte. *Ich wollte das berühren, was ich eben gehört hatte.*

[then came . . . that one incomparable song, at which point my entire resistance broke down. . . . I briefly closed my eyes, and when I opened them again everything around me was much clearer, much brighter. . . . It must be like standing in the flash of an atom bomb, just before the mushroom cloud rises up and everything burns out. Now, at this moment, the notes became unimaginably beautiful, a magnificent compensation for all those silent years that lay behind me. It was like a glass of water when you've actually already prepared yourself to die of thirst. The music penetrated me, was in me, flowed through me and filled my entire being. And I, all this unpleasantness, revoltingness that I had been before, was finally brought out of me. Only the beautiful remained within me. The miraculous. . . .

This music allowed me to remember joys that I had never had, but which I definitely should have had. . . .

I wanted for Peter to lie beside me and lay his arm around me. *I wanted to feel what I'd just heard.*⁷¹

Music here provides a Romantic-tinged realm where Anne can hedonistically indulge her emotions. In doing so, she can achieve moments of transcendence, even beauty. Indeed, after what we can term Anne's "schmelzendes Popadagio," in which she is possessed by the music on the B side of Hemstedt's tape, she comes close to seeing herself as beautiful. Music is a therapeutic substitute for what Anne cannot achieve in life, namely, a relationship with Hemstedt. In fact, in her mind it

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actually stands in for the emotion of love for Hemstedt. Hence, applying Adorno's gendered hierarchy of listeners, Anne is one of those "emotional listeners" for whom music is an object with which to identify in such a way that it supplies "the emotions they miss in themselves."<sup>72</sup> Her appreciation is based on the emotions of "Einsamkeit, Leidenschaft und Überwältigung" (loneliness, passion, and feeling overwhelmed).<sup>73</sup> Unlike an Ole, Anne is not interested in learning more about the structure of music, or even its identity. For her, it is the affect that counts. She is able to enjoy it more, the novel suggests, than the nerdy male connoisseurs. In summary, Anne's feminine-coded consumption of music is linked both with intoxication and pleasure on the one hand and with compensation and lack on the other. The music enables her to forget the curse of being overweight in a moment of pure and "beautiful" embodied presence.

What makes the tapes so effective as a technique to forget and to reinvent herself is that she can use them to endlessly reproduce the experience of pleasure. Anne may not have recorded the selection of music, but as a consumer who eventually attains the proper technological means of consumption, she can produce and endlessly reproduce emotions and meanings. Thus, replaying the tapes also functions, in some respects, as a different sort of "technology of gender" that produces moments of alternative gendered embodiment. Moreover, Duve even suggests there is a structural homology between the tapes and Anne's life; the tapes offer the theoretical possibility that she might be able to rewind things and play back a better version of her life, as in a sense she is attempting to do by flying to London to meet with Hemstedt, whom she has not seen for a long time:

Ich sprang auf, spulte die Kassette zurück, probierte, spulte hin und her, bis ich den Anfang des Liedes wiedergefunden hatte, und ließ es noch einmal laufen. Ich wußte nicht, was und wen ich hörte. . . . Aber was immer es sein mochte, er machte mir klar, daß mein Leben von Anfang an falsch gelaufen war. Ich hörte die Kassette zu Ende. Danach fühlte ich mich, als wäre auch ich am Ende meines Lebens angekommen. *Ich spulte die B-Seite wieder ganz zurück und begann mein Leben ganz von vorn.*

[I jumped up, rewound the cassette, tried it, wound it back and forth until I found the start of the song again, and let it play once more. I didn't know what or whom I was listening to. . . . But whatever it was, it made it clear to me that my life had been on the wrong track from the beginning. I listened until the end of the cassette. Afterward I felt as though I'd arrived at the end of my life. *I rewound the B side all the way back and started my life right from the beginning.*]<sup>74</sup>

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This revalorization of emotion in music is the second aspect of Duve's "writing back" to Nick Hornby et al. The passages quoted above reveal Duve's attempt to capture in words some of that ineffable affect traditionally attached to feminine-coded music consumption. In effect she has attempted something that Anne herself felt unable to do, with her internalized prejudice against the love letter and the expression of emotion ("Dinge, die man einfach nicht aussprechen sollte, Gefühle"). This did not, however, prevent uncharitable critics from considering emotion-laden passages like these to be kitschy. One reviewer, for example, considered the sentence in which Anne recounts her "musikalisches Hiroshima" (musical Hiroshima) as the worst in the book.⁷⁵ Far from coincidentally, this reviewer's reaction is very similar to Anne's when she hears the contents of Kathrin's emotion-laden love letter to Peter.

But there is also a dark side to Anne's mode of music appreciation. One wonders whether her indulging in musical affect is akin to the way she overindulges her sweet tooth in the context of her eating disorder. Indeed, Anne's attachment to music is also thematically aligned with neurosis, melancholia, sickness, and death, as is her conception of love. Love is, as Duve's narrator tells us, a "Krankheit" (sickness), which the text further underscores by Anne's obsession with dying and killing—either herself or the object of her love, Hemstedt.⁷⁶ Duve's narrator reinforces the link between music and melancholia at various points; for instance, when she reflects on the correct sort of music to hear if the plane in which she is traveling to Hemstedt were to crash (Herman's Hermits' "No Milk Today"); when she admires the Beatles' hymn to melancholic loneliness, "Eleanor Rigby"; and when she dwells on the melancholia in David Bowie's music. This focus, too, is redolent of the Romantic approach, with its alignment of melancholia, sympathy with death, and an emotional susceptibility to music.

Life as a "B Side"?

Ultimately, Duve suggests that "emotional listening" becomes more important to Anne than the chance of a normal life with Hemstedt. Just as music can make Anne seem more attractive to herself, enhance her self-image and even exorcize her character flaws, in the end she proves happier with this musical simulacrum than with reality itself. By the novel's conclusion, we are led to believe that she will continue to listen to the music and get a momentary kick out of it rather than compromising and brooking any kind of "normal" life. On those few occasions where she does actually sleep with Hemstedt, she can never remember the details. For her, what is significant is going back home before morning arrives and listening to the tape over again and reveling in the affect. For her there is no redemption in a bourgeois partnership, unlike Hornby's Rob

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Fleming, who had also sought solace in music, albeit in a different, more accumulative, way. Hemstedt opts for a career in London. The record collection remains as residual cultural capital, which he can always liquidate if necessary. He has redirected his dedication as a collector into success in the white-collar workplace.<sup>77</sup> By contrast, Anne is left with her objectively worthless mixtapes and drives a taxi, occasionally turning off the CB radio when she hears a particularly good song on the radio, just so that she can enjoy the moment. The differing status of men and women in relation to “taste production” is therefore subsequently reproduced in other aspects of the characters’ lives.<sup>78</sup> Anne’s life seems destined to remain like the B side of a cassette, no matter how many times she might replay it in her imagination and memory.

As Anne’s experiences with the mixtape reveal, music never fulfils its promise of bridging the gulf between the sexes or creating a sense of community, serving in reality only to reinforce gender hierarchies that cement prevailing gendered norms of embodiment. The medium of the cassette and the art of making a mixtape may allow musical consumers a good deal more freedom to become “secondary” producers, but this freedom is not extended to women in the novel. As a persuasive new “technology of gender” that shapes and inscribes contemporary gender norms, popular music remains largely the province of men, and even though the boundaries of “legitimate” popular music have shifted in Anne’s lifetime to include the gender-bending David Bowie, there is little indication by the end of the novel to suggest that they have shifted far enough toward “feminine” tastes to include pop music from the likes of Kate Bush. If the mixtape holds out any possibility of empowerment for girls, and there is much to suggest that it does not, then it may ultimately lie in the “surplus value” of the mixtape itself, that is, in that unpredictable and indefinable excess of meaning and affect that is occasionally produced when the female listener plays and replays the tape, creating and recreating musical meaning under conditions of her own making.

### A Younger Voice from Inside the Culture Industry

Duve belongs, more or less, to the ’78 generation. Her novel reflects on a provincial postadolescence in the 1970s and 1980s, and hence we might think that her portrayal of the gendering of popular music is less valid for younger metropolitan generations, including those who have had more opportunity to participate in punk, new wave, or the burgeoning indie music scenes of the 1990s. However, there are indications otherwise. Kerstin Grether’s *Zuckerbabys* (2004), suggests that despite the relative openness of the indie rock scene to female participation and the advantages of Riot Grrrl music, there are various impediments—self-imposed or otherwise—that constrict women who attempt to maintain a career within

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the scene.⁷⁹ In so doing, she develops a theme that Duve had broached in *Dies ist kein Liebeslied*. Indeed, Grether has directly cited Duve's novel to make the point that women generally fail to seek empowerment through actively engaging in popular music culture.⁸⁰ There are several parallels between the novels. Both give an ambivalent view about the "redemptive" power of music and of a feminine-coded mode of interaction with it; both have a female protagonist with a debilitating eating disorder. But Grether expressly links the disempowering eating disorder with popular music culture. She moves beyond Duve to establish that popular music culture is so infiltrated by the beauty myth that women's involvement is severely impeded. Whereas young men can collect music and congregate to play in a band, she suggests that many women isolate themselves via sapping eating disorders in the hope that it will enable a music career. Hence, even while Grether advocates women empowering themselves by actively participating in music, she questions their ability to make good on that potential.

Kerstin Grether: A "Susan Sontag der deutschen Popkritik" (Susan Sontag of German Pop Criticism)

By the time Grether (born 1975) wrote her novel, she already had a considerable career behind her as a music journalist, having been a "Wunderkind bei *Spex*" (*Spex* wunderkind) during the early 1990s, and having subsequently written for various other music magazines and newspapers (figure 6.1).⁸¹ In this respect she followed a career path taken by other *Spex* luminaries-cum-novelists, including former editors Dierich Diederichsen and Dietmar Dath. Like other hybrid figures, including Thomas Meinecke, Grether has also been a musician, including during a "paar literarische Urlaubsjahre in der Hamburger Bohème" (couple of years' literary sojourn in Hamburg's Bohemia).⁸² Making music was very much an empowering experience, yet she would be highly critical of the *Hamburger Schule* milieu. Indeed, she has suggested that, to a great extent, the only place for women within this scene was as "groupies."⁸³

As Grether's erstwhile commissioning editor Dierich Diederichsen put it in a review of *Zungenkuss* (Tongue Kiss, 2007), an anthology of her criticism from the 1990s and 2000s, she was one of the first German music critics to redeem a female perspective on fandom and music consumption.⁸⁴ She argued that male critics needed to marginalize women fans and treat them as passive because active female figures would only interrupt the masculinist projection screens in male critics' minds. Grether also attended to the production side in her journalism, and especially to the figure of the "woman in rock."⁸⁵ During her *Spex* years, for example, she wrote various "Manifeste über weibliche Role Models

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Fig. 6.1. Kerstin Grether and her amplifier. Photo copyright by Sybille Fendt. Used with permission of Ostkreuz agency.

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(manifestos about female role models).⁸⁶ The Riot Grrrls hold a special place in her estimation. As late as 2008, for instance, Grether was urging third-wave German feminists to take note of their example.⁸⁷ In essence, she was in favor of the Riot Grrrls because they were women who expressed their emotions and thoughts in a voluble way, which in her view was very much an exception in the current day.⁸⁸ Yet *Zuckerbabys* would indicate some of the obstructions that continued to impede women, even aspiring Riot Grrrls.

***Zuckerbabys*: “Casting-Opfer” (Casting-show Victims) and “Medienschlampen” (Media Sluts)**

Grether’s novel reveals several months in the life of Sonja, a young graphic designer and singer, and her circle of Hamburg friends. It plots her artistic successes as well her low self-esteem and eating disorder. This disorder grinds its way through what ought to be the culmination of her success, a tour of Germany with her friends’ indie band, the all-female “Museabuse.” Almost all of the main characters in *Zuckerbabys* are female, the only exceptions being Johnny, a self-absorbed songwriter-cum-shop assistant who is Sonja’s romantic interest until he dumps her, and her work colleague Tim. Otherwise it is Sonja’s female friends who populate the novel: the journalist Allita; the model Melissa; as well as Kicky, Ricky, and Micky, the three members of Museabuse.

Zuckerbabys is a portrait of a generation of young German women who are almost universally subject to some sort of eating disorder. As the narrator points out, having an eating disorder is actually the norm; the exception being where “jemand *nicht* magersüchtig ist” (someone is *not* anorexic).⁸⁹ By focusing on female characters who are active in the world of popular music and in the media and advertising, Grether demonstrates how this widespread, systemic pull toward eating disorders—what Barbara Bradby in her study of gender in electronic dance music calls the “tyranny of slenderness”—operates, and how the situation perpetuates itself.⁹⁰ The male-dominated advertising industry and the two beauty ideals it propagates—the “pralle, pornographische und das zarte, anorektische” (58; saucy pornographic and the delicate anorexic)—are an obvious culprit. Nevertheless, Grether’s acid point is that women have much to answer for themselves: “Als Casting-Opfer fordern [sie] die Autorität ja geradezu heraus, sich autoritär zu verhalten” (177; As casting-show victims, [they] practically demand of authority that it act in an authoritarian manner). Men may be in positions of power in marketing and advertising in the novel, but various women, whom one might have expected to be critical, abet the men.

For her part, Melissa is willing to pay the price to be a model. Having dieted since primary school, she has gained work in the advertising

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industry, but her achievement—one to which so many girls and young women aspire—is hollow. For all her success, a matter as personal as hair color is not even in her hands. When she dyes her hair, her agent, who has determined that her commercial value depends on her being cast as a dangerous redhead, promptly upbraids her. The market will only tolerate a minor and temporary deviation. In these circumstances, Melissa's fate is an unhappy one. She eats very little in order to maintain her figure, and her temporary makeover as a brunette, which she does to attract Johnny, only results in fleeting success. She remains an isolated figure, too obsessed with her appearance to be politically engaged, successful as a model, yet without friends with whom to enjoy her success.

Melissa is an easy target. She has fallen for the beauty myth and has no political insight into how harmful it is: "Das hat auch noch keinem geschadet" (201; It hasn't hurt anyone, either), she claims. By contrast, Allita, the journalist, is more ambiguous. She is at once a critic and a mediator of the beauty myth, a "schlaue Diplom-Psychologin und Medien-Schlampe" (142; clever psychology graduate and a media slut). On the positive side, Allita decides to write a series of critical articles on "Aussehensarbeit" (54; appearance work) in the "pop" world. She decides to use "pop" as a stalking horse, as it were, for a serious subject that would otherwise have no chance in her magazine, "weil im Pop immer noch alles sagbar ist, was im Lifestylesektor untragbar ist" (55; because with pop, you can still say everything that the lifestyle pages won't carry). Unfortunately, the first interview she conducts—with Maria Superstar from the Trash-Pop band the Bourbon Barbies—is a disaster, and although Allita continues to work on the series of articles, Sonja is convinced that the "Körperthema" (body topic) is really only her "neuestes Steckenpferd" (65; latest hobby horse). In fact, Allita does worse than simply tire of the subject. The "media slut" actually allows herself to become co-opted by the Bourbon Barbies' record label, ultimately writing a "beschissene[s] Info" (164; shitty text) for the band's upcoming release that expresses "das Gegenteil . . . , was man wirklich denkt" (161; the opposite . . . of what you actually think). She also liaises with Melissa so that the model features in the group's semi-pornographic music video. Allita overcomes all her reservations, and she, too, bathes in the glory of music video's success. In effect, Allita has become inveigled in the very thing about which she started out as being critical. The insight of the "clever psychology graduate" seems to have been of little use.

The two "all-girl" bands that feature in the book—the Bourbon Barbies and Museabuse—are theoretically in a position to provide a subversive and critical counterpoint to the mainstream beauty discourse. However, the Bourbon Barbies, in particular, are "inscribed" by others, to use Meinecke's term. When Allita confronts Superstar with the argument that her record label is using a "saucy pornographic" image to market the

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band, the singer obstinately and naïvely prefers to see herself as a “Lara Croft,” supposedly using her sexuality as a weapon in a battle against evil: “Ich bin tough und unschlagbar, ich bin die Zukunft des Rock ‘n’ Roll” (I am tough and unbeatable, I am the future of rock ‘n’ roll). Superstar is just a “lächerliches Sternchen” (59; ridiculous starlet), incapable of critically analyzing how her image is manipulated by the music industry, and she is also protected by her label minders from being forced to do so. To all intents and purposes, the Bourbon Barbies have no subversive value, Grether suggests. Singers like Superstar have no voice of their own. There is also no indication in the novel that the band’s fan base reads such a self-representation in any productive manner.

The subcultural Museabuse represents a contrary moment and holds out the most hope for writing against the beauty myth. Rather than the established Bourbon Babies, Museabuse is, for the bulk of the novel, an underground Riot Grrrl group. Following Nehring’s and Grether’s own interpretation of Riot Grrrls, there is a redemptive power in the anger of their music: “Sie haben ihren Schmerz und ihre Wut so selbstverständlich ins Publikum geschmettert, als würden sie Schmerz und Wut nicht kennen” (23; They have belted out their pain and their rage into the audience in such a self-explanatory way that it’s as if pain and rage are foreign to them). This affect—which is partly directed at their female peers who do not fight against the system—is particularly evident in one piece: “Ich hasse meine Generation, im Kindergarten schon, treibt ihr mich in die Isolation” (134; I hate my generation; ever since kindergarten you have been driving me into isolation). Crucially, Museabuse is fully aware of the ways in which the mainstream media are responsible for the beauty myth, and wishes to opt out of it:

“Was für ein Dreck. . . . Und daran sollen wir uns orientieren!”
 “Mußt du ja nicht.” . . .
 “Ja, ich weiß, ich muß das nicht. Ich habe sowas natürlich nicht
 nötig. Ich bin die Zukunft!”
 Diese kratzende Selbstgewißheit in ihrer Stimme.

“What a load of crap. . . . And we’re suppose to orient ourselves
 toward that!”
 “You don’t have to.” . . .
 “Yes, of course I know that. I don’t need that sort of thing. I am the
 future!”
 That scratchy self-assuredness in her voice. (36)

Nevertheless, there are various indications that these young women are just as absorbed by “ständige Aussehensarbeit” (173; constant appearance work) as are the other women in the novel. The band’s subversive power is questioned later on in the novel too.

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Sonja herself is the most developed character study of anorexia in the novel. She is extremely conscious of how the media work, and is, like Allita—although in less crass a form—even co-opted into the system. She is, after all, a designer who is employed to retouch photos. Her level of critical insight into the way young women are trained to think—“wir träumen davon, uns für die Träume anderer zu eignen” (177; we dream about rendering ourselves up for other people’s dreams)—does not enable her to break her own debilitating eating disorder. It is too ingrained, not only by her dream of wishing to become a singer in a world where certain images of beauty are trump, but also by an unhappy childhood that she wishes to redeem by delaying adulthood and retaining the body of a girl. There are times in the second half of the novel when it appears that Sonja will lose the battle against her body and die. However, popular music—as something to consume or to perform—holds an ambiguous key to her salvation.

### Community and Atomization

*Frauen sind nun mal Pop und haben ein Einzelschicksal, und Männer sind Rock’n’Roll und besitzen die kollektive Gültigkeit des Rudels.*

[Women are pop and have an individual fate, whereas men are rock ‘n’ roll and have the collective validation of the pack.]

—Kerstin Grether, *Zuckerbabys*

Although we might imagine that going on tour with Museabuse would lead to an empowering sense of community, Sonja’s eating disorder prevents her from making the most of the opportunity. She has a sense that the band could be a “lovely little Ersatzfamilie” (174) for her, but is unable to make the most of it, isolating herself from the band, just as she has from other friends over the course of the novel. In this context, popular music has a rather ambiguous value for Sonja. On the one hand, singing provides her with respite from a world against which she is pitted and a way of steering her emotional state. This is possible for a moment, for example, when she is taking a singing lesson: “Das Gefühl, ein richtig toller Mensch zu sein, habe *ich* nach jeder Gesangsstunde” (146; After every singing lesson, *I* have the feeling that I am a really terrific person). This affect mirrors Anne’s emotional response to music in *Dies ist kein Liebeslied*. Crucially, music acts as a counterworld where Sonja feels that different rules apply and where she can display the affect that has no place in the adult, male-dominated world: “Keiner bestraft einen für seine Gefühle, wenn man singt” (17; When you are singing, no one can punish you for your feelings). Singing and gaining the adulation of an

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audience act as a tonic against her latent death wish, otherwise manifest in her anorexia.

Critically, Sonja's experience of music also stirs her from her anorexia and allows her to begin to eat again. This occurs when she attends a Museabuse concert and is moved by their music. "Hilfe—*Ich will mein Leben zurück*" (195; Help!—*I want my life back*), she declares. Nevertheless, Grether also questions any possible redemption through music. Sonja's recovery, we are led to imagine, will be glacial and fragile. And what has saved her may, paradoxically, prove to generate her relapse. If she chooses to follow redemption via a singing career—and this is the path that she seems destined to follow—she will be subjected to enormous, perhaps irresistible pressures. This is evident in the fate of the slightly older Allita, but even more so in that of the oppositional Riot Grrrls, Museabuse. At the end of the novel, the group finally succeeds in signing with a record label. However, success will come at a price. The label has indicated at the outset that Kicky must lose weight in order for the band's records to be saleable: "Der Typ von der Plattenfirma hat gesagt: Drei Kilo müssen dauerhaft runter, sonst haben die ein Problem mit uns" (200; The guy from the record label has said: three kilos have to come off and stay off, otherwise they've got a problem with us). Symbolically, she starts dieting on the very day that Sonja starts eating again. Given Sonja's interest in music-making with Tim's band—the book concludes with a scene in which the two are bent over a piano, engaged in turning her lyrics for "Traum den übernächsten Traum" (Dream the Dream after Next) into a song—Sonja may well find herself in a similar position in the future . . . if she is unlucky. As Sheila Whiteley observed not so long ago: "Success, for the woman musician, is compromised by hard facts—the collision with commercially driven and headstrong A & R men; the requirement to 'fit' into a music business which remains a male domain; the emphasis on image over musicianship; the problems surrounding the maturing of young performers; the choice between career and a family."⁹¹

"Writing Back," but without the Commerical Success?

Grether's achievement is to extend Karen Duve's scope—into the metropolis, into the 1990s and 2000s, into a younger, perhaps more self-aware generation, and into the world of popular music production—as well as to make the link more explicit between eating disorders and impaired access to the gendered world of popular music. For her, this is the debilitating price a woman must pay for success in popular music, to be a "woman who inscribes her own image." As Sonja states "[nur] wer bereit ist, sich blöde zu hungern" (12; [only] she who is prepared to starve herself

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stupid) is allowed to become a singer. Men do not have this impediment. They can devote themselves to collecting records instead, and to playing in a band. As Sonja sums up at one point: Johnny “darf morgen eine Platte aufnehmen, und ich sitze morgen wieder daheim und mache Diät” (77; can record an LP tomorrow, but I’ll be sitting at home again, dieting). Men like Johnny are also less susceptible to the drive to “sell out,” or are subjected to less pressure to do so.<sup>92</sup> However much they may benefit from the patriarchal dividends, though, men are not entirely to blame for the situation of the women in the novel. Rather, women have internalized the beauty myth to the extent that the sidelong glance of another woman may be more harmful than the gaze of a man.<sup>93</sup>

What emerges is very much a conflicted view in relation to popular music. On the one hand, consumption, knowledge, and performance are emancipatory and women should strive for them. For an individual like Sonja, the right sort of music-making might be just what is required to turn her life around. Like *Dies its kein Liebeslied*’s Anne, she finds an affect-laden pleasure there that relieves the burden she feels for being overweight. Museabuse literally give her the will to live. Furthermore, Grether suggests that there is still something quite subversive about the figure of a guitar-playing woman within the context of a patriarchal popular music world. On the other hand, access to popular music and to its potential for “produktive[r] Überschuss” (66; productive surplus) remains unequal for the genders, despite the advances made recently by “postfeministische Frauenbands” (177; postfeminist all-women bands) like Museabuse. To the extent that Museabuse makes it, the group might just be an exception that proves the rule, at least in Sonja’s appraisal: “Bei so Bands wie Museabuse denken doch sowieso alle schon von vornherein: Das ist eh nicht normal, was die Mädels da machen—aber gut. Lass uns halt ein bisserl was davon in unser System integrieren.” (177; Everybody already knows from the start with bands like Museabuse: What those chicks are doing just isn’t normal—but it’s good. Let’s take a piece of it and integrate it into our system.) This raises the vital question of whether oppositional women who do establish careers will find themselves irresistibly complicit with the patriarchal system against which they are also rebelling. A “subculture”—and individuals—can quickly be subsumed by the mainstream, or at least by commercial interests. Subcultural music is rapidly co-opted and the empowerment one may attain could dialectically swing around: “how easy it is for those in control of representational discourse to exploit and commodify marginalised cultures.”<sup>94</sup> In Grether’s novel, insight appears to be powerless against such risks. We are left asking whether Sonja will be able to negotiate the pressures to which Museabuse, and presumably the Bourbon Barbies before them, are subjected. Will the “established” Museabuse retain its value as a focus for community building among otherwise isolated women, and for

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expressing their anger about the status quo? Or will they become new Bourbon Barbies? In this sense, *Zuckerbabys* is a deeply ambiguous portrait of the empowerment that young women can derive from the creative consumption and production of music. Yet this picture is true to the theoretical insight into women as consuming and producing subjects who “negotiate” both pleasures *and* risks, and to a sense of the present “post-subcultural” moment.⁹⁵

Although Kerstin Grether has affinities with an older figure like Diedrich Diederichsen, she is most closely related to her exact contemporary Benjamin Stuckrad-Barre, whom she admires.⁹⁶ If *Soloalbum* was a novel revolving around the “Werther-Prinzip” (Werther principle) of “das Leiden der jungen Männer” (the sorrows of young men), then, as Elke Buhr noted, Grether had at last written “das Gegenmodell” (the countermodel).⁹⁷ In other words, her novel, too, is a type of “writing back” to male-written musico-centric literature. Yet the similarities between Grether and Stuckrad-Barre extend beyond the thematics of their novels. Both have worked as music journalists, albeit initially with different types of magazines. By the time Grether’s novel was published, she was also working for MTV. Both authors have had eating disorders—perhaps questioning Grether’s point that men do not have the same impediments preventing them from participating in the mediatized world of popular culture. And both have a dialectical involvement with the culture industry, which they have also thematized in their novels. Put bluntly, they have insight into the evils of the system—in Grether’s case, especially, a theoretically informed insight—but both seem to be ensnared by it. Even while being critical of “besinnungslosen Konsumismus” (mindless consumerism), Grether cannot seem to fully extricate herself from it.⁹⁸ As if to reinforce her point about the complicity of critique and affirmation, and the powerlessness of insight, Grether herself actually developed her eating disorder after the book was written. “Ich fand es auch gut, als Künstlerin das Buch nachzuerleben” (As an artist, I also thought it a good idea to relive the book), she claimed.⁹⁹

However, unlike the best-selling Stuckrad-Barre, Grether’s *Literatur-Pop* performance of self does not seem to have redounded in significant commercial or critical success, and this fact may also have contributed to why she developed her eating disorder *after* the publication of the book.¹⁰⁰ Given what this chapter has already demonstrated, however, perhaps it should not surprise that women have been relative latecomers to musico-centric literature, making their contributions after some critics had thought the field “totgeschrieben” (written to death), and that they have been overshadowed by men like Stuckrad-Barre in terms of commercial success.¹⁰¹ After all, that would only reflect the still gendered domain of popular music itself. And the very notion of a literature heavy on references to popular music perhaps rules out deep involvement by many

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women writers. Recall that Duve, for example, was reliant on Thomas Meinecke for expert musical advice. As Nina Baym has commented in another context: “Suppose we required a dense texture of classical allusion in all works that we called excellent. Then the restrictions of a formal classical education to men would have the effect of restricting authorship of excellent literature to men. Women would not have written excellent literature because social conditions hindered them. The reason, though gender-connected, would not be gender per se.”<sup>102</sup>

### Coda

If Grether has intruded into a predominantly “male” field, then we might ask whether she has done so as a type of “honorary male.” It is noteworthy that Grether’s novel, like Duve’s, is rather conventional in form. By contrast, the German author who seems to have most attempted to explore a would-be “feminine” aesthetic in relation to literary writing about popular music is the ubiquitous and more well-established Thomas Meinecke. In the semi-autobiographical *Musik* (2004), Meinecke adopts a “female” voice for the writer Kandis, one of the novel’s two main protagonists. Thematically, *Musik* ponders themes of writing about music and finding an apposite form for doing so, and is an exploration of the notion of an antipatriarchal *écriture féminine*. We can interpret the overspilling, associative, antiteleological form of *Musik* as avoiding the “phallogocentric” notion of a plot. In a sense, it “beginnt auf sämtlichen Seiten gleichzeitig” (begins simultaneously on each and every page), and is hence close to the whole body erotics of Hélène Cixous’ notion of *écriture féminine*, with which the novel’s characters also specifically engage.<sup>103</sup> It is an irony that Meinecke would thereby seem to be perpetrating something that he has elsewhere criticized in relation to new waves of popular music culture, namely, that men step in and “das Weibliche selbst darstellen” (represent the feminine themselves).

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Heidelinde Müller, *Das “literarische Fräuleinwunder”: Inspektion eines Phänomens der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur in Einzelfallstudien* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004); Christiane Cämmerer, Walter Delabar, Helga Meise, eds., *Fräuleinwunder literarisch: Literatur von Frauen zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005); Ilse Nagelschmidt, Lea Müller-Dannhausen, and Sandy Feldbacher, eds., *Zwischen Inszenierung und Botschaft: Zur Literatur deutschsprachiger Autorinnen ab Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Whiteley, “Introduction,” in *Sexing the Groove*, xxiv.

<sup>3</sup> Frith and McRobbie, “Rock and Sexuality,” 377.

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⁴ Michaela Mélian, quoted in Dirk Peitz, "Mädchen malen anders," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, June 13, 2005, 14. The classic example in the Anglo-American setting is Janis Joplin, who had to be "one of the boys" in order to succeed. On the ambiguities of this type of "assimilationism," see Neil Nehring, *Popular Music, Gender, and Postmodernism: Anger Is an Energy* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997), 164; Sheila Whiteley, *Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity, and Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 2000). There are other ways of reading this type of female masculine musician, however: See, e.g., Kathleen Kennedy, "Results of a Misspent Youth: Joan Jett's Performance of Female Masculinity," *Women's History Review* 11, no. 1 (2002): 89–114; and Philip Auslander, "I Wanna Be Your Man: Suzi Quatro's Musical Androgyny," *Popular Music* 23, no. 1 (2004): 1–16.

⁵ Whiteley, "Introduction," xxiv. See also Simon Frith, "Afterthoughts," in Frith and Goodwin, *On Record*, 419–24; Sue Wise, "Sexing Elvis," in Frith and Goodwin, *On Record*, 390–98; Simon Reynolds and Joy Press, *The Sex Revolts: Gender, Rebellion, and Rock 'n' Roll* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1995); Leonard, *Gender in the Music Industry*, chap. 1.

⁶ See, particularly, her 1978 album *Nina Hagen Band*.

⁷ Joanne Gottlieb and Gayle Wald, "Smells Like Teen Spirit: Riot Grrls, Revolution, and Women in Independent Rock," in *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture*, ed. Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose (New York: Routledge, 1994), 252.

⁸ Dana Nasrallah, "Teenage Riot," *Spin* (November 1992): 81.

⁹ Gottlieb and Wald, "Smells Like Teen Spirit," 256.

¹⁰ For more on the reception of the Riot Grrrls in Germany, see, e.g., Anette Baldauf and Katharina Weingartner, eds., *Lips. Tits. Hits. Power?: Popkultur und Feminismus* (Vienna: Folio, 1998); Kerstin Grether, "Material Girls: Geschlechterkonstruktionen im Pop," in Kemper et al., *Alles so schön bunt hier*, 344–53; Julia Herbst and Christina Kral, *Boy Punk: Was Rockmusik über Geschlecht erzählt* (Stuttgart: Merz & Solitude, 2007).

¹¹ There was a smattering of female groups within the indie scene of the Hamburger Schule. However, some of these groups expressly wished to maintain a distance from the notion of the "Hamburger Schule," in part because of its masculinism. See Twickel, *Läden, Schuppen, Kaschemmen*, 155.

¹² Quoted in Peitz, "Mädchen malen anders."

¹³ On the marginalization of women musicians as a result of the digitalization of music, see, e.g., Angela McRobbie, "Peggy-Sue Got Marketed," *Times Higher Education Supplement*, June 3, 1988, 24. On the gendering of electronic dance music, see Bradby, "Sampling Sexuality," 155–76.

¹⁴ Quoted in Peitz, "Mädchen malen anders."

¹⁵ Grether, "Material Girls," 345.

¹⁶ Quoted in Anja Rützel, "Du darfst nicht vergessen zu essen," *Sonntag Aktuell*, October 24, 2004, 18.

¹⁷ Nehring, *Popular Music*, 40.

¹⁸ See, e.g., Frith, *Performing Rites*, 19.

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<sup>19</sup> Immanuel von Kant, "Zweites Buch: Analytik des Erhabenen," in *Kritik der Urtheilskraft, Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 5, ed. Königlich-Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1913 [1790]). See also Nehring, *Popular Music*, 34.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., Friedrich Blume, *Classic and Romantic Music: A Comprehensive Survey*, 2nd ed., trans. M. D. Herter (London: Faber, 1979), 103, 112.

<sup>21</sup> Huber, *Text und Musik*, 40–43.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 60, 52, emphasis added.

<sup>23</sup> Eduard Hanslick, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, n.d. [1854]).

<sup>24</sup> Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*. Compare Huber, *Text und Musik*, 25–27.

<sup>25</sup> Quoting Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones, eds. *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 5.

<sup>26</sup> Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1995), 62. See also Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 44–62.

<sup>27</sup> Diane Railton, "The Gendered Carnival of Pop," *Popular Music* 20, no. 3 (2001): 324. For an analysis of the gendering of jazz and rock 'n' roll culture along similar lines in 1950s Germanies, see Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*.

<sup>28</sup> Jacqueline Warwick, *Girl Groups, Girl Culture* (London: Routledge, 2007), 5.

<sup>29</sup> Nehring, *Popular Music*, 161.

<sup>30</sup> Felski, *Gender of Modernity*, 63. See also Alladi Venkatesh and Laurie A. Meamber, "The Aesthetics of Consumption and the Consumer as an Aesthetic Subject," *Consumption, Markets, Culture* 11 (2008): 51–60. Compare, e.g., Sheila Jeffreys, *Beauty and Misogyny: Harmful Cultural Practices in the West* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>31</sup> The terms are Meaghan Morris's. Quoted in Rob Burns, "Introduction," in Burns, *German Cultural Studies*, 7. On recent developments in feminist theory and consumption, see, e.g., Fiona Hutton, *Risky Pleasures?: Club Cultures and Feminine Identities* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006); and Emma Casey and Lydia Martens, eds., *Gender and Consumption: Domestic Cultures and the Commercialisation of Everyday Life* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>32</sup> Heike Bartels has analyzed the different rituals that girls and boys have in relation to food in the novel in terms of feminist discourses around eating and ideals of beauty, arguing that Duve's innovation lies in the fact that she attributes Anne's eating disorder (her overconsumption and her bulimia) not to a problematic mother-daughter relationship but to a troubled relationship to the father. Bartels also refers to the opposition between the restraint of girls when dieting and the lack of restraint on the part of the boys. Heike Bartels, "Von Jonny Rotten bis Werther: Karen Duves *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* zwischen Popliteratur und Bildungsroman," in *Pushing at Boundaries*, ed. Bartel and Elizabeth Boa (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 94. There are some links between music consumption and the

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eating disorder in Duve's novel, but it would fall to Kerstin Grether to spell out the connection, in the context of young women aspiring to become musicians.

³³ The phrase "technology of gender," coined by de Lauretis, extends Foucault's notion of sex and sexuality as a "complex political technology," which is a "set of effects produced in bodies, behaviours, and social relations," to the construction of gender. De Lauretis encourages us to "think of gender as the product and the process of a number of social technologies, of techno-social or bio-medical apparati." Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 3. For another application of de Lauretis's theory to rock, and especially its production, see Coates, "(R)evolution Now?" 50–64.

³⁴ Helms ponders whether the clear gender division between literary "cassette guys" and "cassette girls" might be a result of the fact that the majority of these "Pop II" writers are male ("Von Kassettenmädchen und Kassettenjungs," 167–76). There are clearly also women who produce mixtapes, e.g., the lesbian networks of mixtape circulation referred to in Whiteley, *Women and Popular Music*; and the female contributors to Thurston Moore, ed., *Mix Tape: The Art of Cassette Culture* (New York: Universe, 2004). However, *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* would suggest that the field was divided along gender lines during the 1970s and 1980s. For another analysis of the thematization of the mixtape in contemporary literature—Anglophone and German—see Cox, "Playlists," chap. 5.

³⁵ Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Das ganz normale Chaos der Liebe* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), 10.

³⁶ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 234. Bourdieu uses the term "symbolic capital" to designate the "degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour" held. See Randal Johnson, "Pierre Bourdieu on Art, Literature, and Culture," in *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Johnson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 7.

³⁷ "Cultural capital" refers to the cultural knowledge and competencies held (Johnson, "Pierre Bourdieu on Art," 7).

³⁸ Frith, *Performing Rites*, 5.

³⁹ Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 13.

⁴⁰ Duve, *Liebeslied*, 35. According to Duve, growing up on the fringes of the bigger city centers of Germany was far worse than coming from the country (Messmer, "Es ist eine erbärmliche Sucht," 15).

⁴¹ He is particularly fond of an album where horses feature on the cover—probably a reference to the 1978 Jethro Tull "prog rock" record *Heavy Horses*.

⁴² She now refers to it rather derisively as "Pferdemusik" (horse music) and to records such as these "öde Schallplatten mit dicken Pferden auf dem Cover" (dismal records with great big horses on the cover) (Duve, *Liebeslied*, 107, 137).

⁴³ Straw, "Sizing Up Record Collections," 3–16. On the similar tendency in Germany for record collectors and budding critics to be male, see, e.g., Sky Nonhoff, *Kleine Philosophie der Passionen: Schallplatten* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000); Diedrich Diederichsen, "Pop ist immer Enttäuschung," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, July 11, 2007, 36. Tellingly, Duve herself consulted with Thomas Meinecke on the question of popular music history when writing her novel (see her credits at the end of the novel).

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<sup>44</sup> Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, 6–7.

<sup>45</sup> Straw, “Sizing Up Record Collections,” 6.

<sup>46</sup> Susan McClary, ed., *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 151–52.

<sup>47</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 57.

<sup>48</sup> Straw, “Sizing Up Record Collections,” 10.

<sup>49</sup> Duve, *Liebeslied*, 177.

<sup>50</sup> Frith, quoted in Büsser, *Wie klingt die Neue Mitte?*, 19.

<sup>51</sup> Duve, *Liebeslied*, 177.

<sup>52</sup> The term is from Whiteley, *Women and Popular Music*.

<sup>53</sup> Duve, *Liebeslied*, 211. One other field where the female characters in the novel do have the upper hand is in relation to literature, yet this does not seem to count for much in the narrator’s view. At the end of the novel Anne discovers that the adult Hemstedt has a book collection that is full of second-rate, lowbrow “men’s” literature. As Anne tries to point out to him, Hemstedt’s inferior library is no different from her female music collection; it is the equivalent of a “Pop-Explosion LP from K-Tel” or an “Enya CD” (Duve, *Liebeslied*, 276–77). Hemstedt clearly is far less ashamed of his taste in literature than Anne is of her inadequate knowledge of music. In other words, popular music capital trumps literary capital.

<sup>54</sup> On the “risks” of the homosociality of record collecting and of connoisseurship being interpreted as homosexual, see Straw, “Sizing Up Record Collections.”

<sup>55</sup> It was also a strategy taken by Sarah Khan in her novel *Gogo-Girl* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1999), which is scathing about the weak masculinity exhibited by men in the German “indie” music scene.

<sup>56</sup> Duve, *Liebeslied*, 177.

<sup>57</sup> Bartels, “Von Jonny Rotten bis Werther.”

<sup>58</sup> The reference to Werther is not at all coincidental. As Rutschky has argued, Werther is the prototype of much of the (male-written) “*Popliteratur*.” Katharina Rutschky, “Wertherzeit: Der Poproman—Merkmale eines unerkannten Genres,” *Merkur* 57, no. 2 (2003): 106–17. See also Elke Buhr, “Weil ich ein Mädchen bin,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, April 23, 2004, 18. In making an intertextual reference to Werther in her own musico-centric novel, Duve was presumably making a play on this literary convention. As this chapter argues, her novel was in part a “writing back” to those novels.

<sup>59</sup> Duve, *Liebeslied*, 165.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>61</sup> See, generally, Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 1–114.

<sup>62</sup> The term is from Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>63</sup> Duve, *Liebeslied*, 47.

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⁶⁴ On this narcissistic aspect of the mixtape, see also Moore, *Mix Tape*, 28, 43, 44. On the narcissism of the record collection, see my discussion of Adorno's 1928 essay "The Curves of the Needle" in chapter 4.

⁶⁵ Duve, *Liebeslied*, 50.

⁶⁶ See, generally, Moore, *Mix Tape*; Christos Tsiolkas, "Mix-Tape: The Technology of a Passion," *Meanjin* 65 (2006): 233–39.

⁶⁷ Daniella Meeker, quoted in Moore, *Mix Tape*, 78.

⁶⁸ Duve, *Liebeslied*, 200.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁷⁰ Tsiolkas, "Mix-Tape," 236.

⁷¹ Duve, *Liebeslied*, 167–69; emphasis added.

⁷² Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, 9.

⁷³ Duve, *Liebeslied*, 177.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 168; emphasis added.

⁷⁵ Anon, "Die Diät und das Leben," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, October 9, 2002, 35.

⁷⁶ Duve, *Liebeslied*, 165. Anne harms herself, and on one occasion even tries to commit suicide. The novel elaborates the link between love and death in several intertextual references to Monika Maron's *Animal Triste* (1996), another tale of *amour fou*. In particular there is a direct allusion to the ancient proverb in Maron's title that "alle Tiere sind hinterher traurig" (all animals are sad after the deed). Duve, *Liebeslied*, 180.

⁷⁷ In London, Hemstedt may still buy music, but he no longer has time to listen to it and he seems to have almost left this collecting phase behind him. His path thereby follows the trajectory suggested by one of Will Straw's interlocutors: "The [music] nerds of youth are the Bill Gates of adulthood" (Straw, "Sizing Up Record Collections," 15).

⁷⁸ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 230.

⁷⁹ On the indie scene's relative openness to women, see, e.g., Leonard, *Gender in the Music Industry*, 3.

⁸⁰ The article was a critique of some contemporary German feminism. It noted that despite welcome advances in the popular music sector during the 1990s (especially the "Riot Grrrls"), many in the currently earnest younger generation of German feminists had overlooked the possibilities. Kerstin Grether, "Streber haben keinen Soundtrack," *Die Zeit*, July 17, 2008, 48. This is not a new complaint. Both Mavis Bayton and Barbara Bradby have discussed "the mutual blindness between feminism and popular music" (Bradby, "Sampling Sexuality," 155). See also Mavis Bayton, "Out on the Margins: Feminism and the Study of Popular Music," *Women: A Cultural Review* 3, no. 1 (1992): 51–59.

⁸¹ Joachim Lottmann, "Guten Tag, ich will meinen Körper zurück," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, August 29, 2004, 29. My heading title "Susan Sonntag der deutschen Popkritik" is from Rützel, "Du darfst nicht vergessen zu essen."

⁸² *Zuckerbabys* cover text.

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<sup>83</sup> Quoted in Lottmann, “Guten Tag, ich will meinen Körper zurück.” This representation coincides with the image given in another novel written by a woman and revolving around the Hamburger Schule scene. Ruth, the protagonist in Sarah Khan’s *Gogo-Girl* (1997), points out that the scene is fixated on “picklige Jungs in Gitarrenbands” (48; pimply boys in guitar bands). Here, women are granted little significance in their own right. For example, a male radio presenter points out that women like Ruth are, in terms of their musical abilities, “banduntauglich” (91; of no use in a band). To the extent that women are active in this scene, they are treated as alibis, as supporters of men, or as muses. Khan’s image is further validated by the comments of a Hamburg musician, Bernadette Hengst, who points out that, especially during the early 1990s, women were regarded as “Freundinnen von” (girlfriends of) or as “Anhängsel” (little hangers-on) (quoted in Twickel, *Läden, Schuppen, Kaschemmen*, 155).

<sup>84</sup> Diederichsen, “Pop ist immer Enttäuschung.” Of course, it is wrong to suggest that Grether was the only female music journalist at the time. As Evelyn McDonnell and Ann Powers have shown, many women have been active in music journalism since the 1960s, even if this is not a common perception. Evelyn McDonnell and Ann Powers, eds., *Rock She Wrote* (London: Plexus, 1995). Marion Leonard suggests that the mongering of this perception is one of the key ways in which the masculinity of rock is put into discourse (Leonard, *Gender in the Music Industry*, chap. 1). In the German setting, we should make a special mention of Ingeborg Schober, who has written, for example, about the Munich music commune Amon Düül (Ingeborg Schober, *Tanz der Lemminge* [Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1979]), as well as of Clara Drechsler, a regular contributor to *Spex* in the 1980s, and one of the translators of Hornby’s *High Fidelity*.

<sup>85</sup> I hesitate to use the term “woman in rock,” since it suggests that rock is immovably inscribed as male.

<sup>86</sup> *Zuckerbabys* cover text.

<sup>87</sup> Grether, “Streber haben keinen Soundtrack.”

<sup>88</sup> See, e.g., Grether, “Material Girls,” 344. She made this assertion based on the research that Carol Gilligan undertook in the early 1990s. Gilligan had analyzed some of the reasons why girls and young women were prone to losing their own “inner” voice. See, e.g., Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan, *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women’s Psychology and Girls’ Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

<sup>89</sup> Grether, *Zuckerbabys*, 42. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

<sup>90</sup> Bradby, “Sampling Sexuality,” 170.

<sup>91</sup> Whiteley, *Sexing the Groove*, xxv.

<sup>92</sup> This is also the impression given in Khan’s *Gogo-Girl* and other musico-centric novels written by women. For example, Jenni Zylka’s 2004 novel *Beat baby, beat* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2004) focuses on the short-lived career of a contemporary all-female band that performs in the Beat genre of the mid-1960s. On the strength of their lighthearted cover of the Champs’ song “Tequila,” which they dub “Mascara,” the band is engaged to appear in a television advertisement for

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cosmetics. This early success is the beginning of the end, however, splitting the band between those women who wish to continue marketing their music in this way and others who do not wish to “sell out” entirely. It is difficult to imagine a male group being exposed to such pressures in such short order or to such an extent.

⁹³ See also Grether, quoted in Rützel, “Du darfst nicht vergessen zu essen,” 18.

⁹⁴ Whiteley, *Sexing the Groove*, xxiv.

⁹⁵ Marion Leonard has also chosen to interpret the Riot Grrrl movement within a post-subcultural framework (Leonard, *Gender in the Music Industry*, 125).

⁹⁶ Grether, quoted in Lottmann, “Guten Tag,” 29.

⁹⁷ Buhr, “Weil ich ein Mädchen bin,” 18.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Lottmann, “Guten Tag,” 29.

⁹⁹ Quoted in Rützel, “Du darfst nicht vergessen zu essen,” 18. See also Lottmann, “Guten Tag,” 29.

¹⁰⁰ In general Duve’s and, especially, Grether’s novels received far less critical attention than the other novels examined in earlier chapters. *Zuckerbabys* was, however, picked up by Suhrkamp for republication in 2006. On the lukewarm critical reception of *Zuckerbabys*, see, e.g., Kirsten Riesselmann, “Zuckerbabys unter sich,” *Berliner Zeitung*, July 1, 2004, 30.

¹⁰¹ Thomas Steiner, “Mascara, Musik und Magersucht,” *Badische Zeitung*, August 28, 2004, IV.

¹⁰² Nina Baym, “Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors,” in *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, Theory*, ed. E. Showalter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 64–65.

¹⁰³ Hägele, *Politische Subjekt- und Machtbegriffe*, 236. Thomas Meinecke, *Musik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 366. Meinecke’s attachment to EDM is key here. He dislikes masculine, “ejaculatory” rock and its teleological arc, which he likens to a traditional narrative plot. In this context, he much prefers disco and repetitive EDM tracks, which according to Richard Dyer reject phallogocentric culmination in favor of an endlessly deferring whole body eroticism. See Richard Dyer, “In Defence of Disco,” in Frith and Goodwin, *On Record*, 410–18. On Meinecke’s attitude toward rock and to traditional narrative, and his preference for the EDM model, see generally Christoph Huber, “Bewege deinen Kopf,” *Die Presse*, April 3, 2004, 38; Meinecke, “Myself as Text,” 141–48; Thomas Meinecke, “Sonic Drag: Sequenzen über die Kulturtechnik des Tracks.” In *Gendertronics: Der Körper in der elektronischen Musik*, ed. M. Jansen and Club Transmediale (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 153–64; and Witzel, Walter, and Meinecke, *Plattenspieler*. After his band FSK’s turn to electronica, Meinecke similarly referred to its music as “Dauerkopulation ohne Klimax” (perpetual copulation without climax). Quoted in Jan Ole Jöhnk, “FSK stehen für Dauerkopulation ohne Klimax,” in Koch et al., *Made in Germany*, 91. Sheila Whiteley has shown that the whole body eroticism of repetitive dance music is also consistent with the notion of an *écriture féminine* (*Women and Popular Music*).

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## Conclusion: Out of the Groove?

THIS BOOK HAS ATTEMPTED to disentangle and make sense of the spate of contemporary German musico-centric literature, focusing on novels published between 1997 and 2004. I have argued that the writing and publishing of musico-centric literature was not necessarily new—there were so-called *Popliteratur* precursors going back to the 1960s at least—but that a range of factors came together to reconfigure and consolidate literary attention on popular music. These factors included, in no particular order: The emergence of more “omnivorous” modes of cultural consumption, especially among a metropolitan, hedonist segment of readers-cum-listeners. The rise in interest in popular music among younger generations, and the desire of various writers to harness that music’s qualities to “resensualize” literature. The moral and economic shocks to the German literary market as a result of unification. The desire of publishing houses to emulate successful models from the Anglo-American literary field, including, for example, Nick Hornby’s *High Fidelity* (1995). The disappearance of music technologies, such as the jukebox and the mixtape, that had had a significant effect on the lives of some writers. The emergence of new musics, such as electronic dance music (EDM), and digital music technologies, such as sampling, that for some writers registered significant societal change or were a source of literary experimentation. The realization of East German writers that the GDR had an important history of popular music and politics. The general postunification rise in nostalgia in both eastern and western Germany. Various other factors motivated individual novelists. Thomas Meinecke became repoliticized via engaging with Cultural Studies and sought to reflect that in his novels. Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre’s motivation to write a novel was more experiential—his ennui in response to the German popular music industry and journalism.

Contrary to any simplistic employment of the term *Popliteratur*, particularly among those critics who used the term as an abject Other to worthy high literature, there was a wealth and diversity of musico-centric literature at this time, some of which I have explored in the preceding pages. These strands included Matthias Politycki’s “rockish” novel *Weiberroman*, which reflected on mainstream male music socialization in the Federal Republic during the 1970s and 1980s. Writing in a so-called postrock era, Politycki curiously held up rock as a source of literary innovation, or at least identification. This move was in tune with a then

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current mode of music consumption—it was retro and nostalgic in tone—but some vocal critics thought Politycki and his novel advanced too private and too conservative an image of popular music. For some members of the postpunk cohort like Thomas Meinecke, Politycki's notion was at odds with the far more political, and arguably more productive, attitude to popular music they held. It was among this postpunk cohort in particular that we see an engagement with EDM and with its concomitant digital technologies.

Writers like Rainald Goetz, Thomas Meinecke, and Andreas Neumeister looked to EDM as a source of quite radical literary experimentation; they thereby “realized” music in ways that “rockish” authors like Politycki did not attempt. They also reflected on the possibilities of EDM and music discourse as a locus for positive social change. For example, Goetz linked EDM culture, such as Berlin's Love Parade, with a fundamental type of grassroots democracy at a time when a great many young people were disengaged with party politics. Meinecke placed EDM culture in proximity to the notion of a transnational cosmopolitanism at a time when many other Germans were engaging with the notion of “Deutschpop” and the would-be “normalization” of the German nation after unification, with what Sunka Simon has called a “German turn.”¹ It is at this point in particular that we can see a distinctive “German” aspect to some of the musico-centric literature I have analyzed.

“Germanness” is a live issue in relation to many of the novels considered here, and for a variety of reasons. In much of the literature I have considered—for example, Rolf Dieter Brinkmann's *Wurlitzer*, Politycki's *Weiberroman*, and Karen Duve's *Dies ist kein Liebeslied*—the authors almost exclusively thematize Anglo-American popular music, reflecting its persistent influence in middle Europe during an era of quickening cultural globalization. The influence goes beyond individual bands or musical genres. There are a range of English or American novelists, including Nick Hornby, whose themes and style have influenced some of the writers examined in this book. However, this is not exclusively the case, especially in relation to some of the postpunk-schooled authors. Goetz might have been influenced by the “rave fiction” of the Scot Irvine Welsh, for example, but he, Meinecke, and Neumeister all attended to German aspects of contemporary popular music too. They were always aware of an overarching “international” frame—an inheritance from earlier postwar generations of German popular music enthusiasts—and engaged with various German manifestations of and attitudes toward popular music in that context. In terms of the weighty thematics and the unconventional styles they adopted, their novels raise the question of whether, as the critic Stephan Wackwitz thinks, there might be some typically “German” rendering of popular (“light”) music into what he calls “schwere Zeichen” (heavy signs).² A novel like *Weiberroman* might seem, at least thematically, to be

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a “cover version” of Anglo-American music-centric novels like Hornby’s, but on close inspection, it and Politycki’s paratexts reveal quite a productive translation of that model and a sophisticated querying of musico-centrism even while they engage it. In all of these ways we can see that recent German musico-centric literature is consonant both with the history of actively “recontextualizing” imported popular music styles in Germany and with how much other contemporary German literature is “glocalized,” in that is it has engaged with trends and models extant in the Anglo-American world but modified them in the process.<sup>3</sup> Focusing on the literary engagement with predominantly Anglo-American popular music has highlighted some ways in which contemporary German authors have discursively contemplated and mediated these processes of recontextualization and glocalization.

Many—but not all—of these German writers engaged at some level with the notion of popular music as an important site around which socially progressive subcultures might revolve. This idea had been advanced in Germany during the 1980s by the so-called pop Left, especially in the context of the advanced music journalism associated with magazines such as *Spex*. Yet in the 1990s, a range of factors, including attacks on asylum seekers by young Germans wearing “Malcolm X” baseball caps, the rise of “right-wing rock,” and even the notion of a widespread postunification affirmative culture of consumption changed the context. No longer did the subcultural model seem to be as valid; rather, a so-called “Mainstream der Minderheiten” (mainstream of minorities) seemed to have emerged, and some advanced music journalism began to express an anxious, almost neo-Adornian attitude.<sup>4</sup> This sense of what we can call a “post-subcultural” moment manifested itself in much of the literature I have examined, albeit in different ways. Some writers, like Goetz, attacked those among the pop Left who would hold on to the idea of subversion in popular music and fail to find a commensurate language for the emergent techno culture, seeing it only as protofascist. Others, like Meinecke, associated certain types of techno with Cultural Studies and theory discourses, and heuristically sounded out its political potential in what they nevertheless recognized was a postsovereign era, where the possibilities for subjecthood were circumscribed. For others still, like Benjamin Stuckrad-Barre, there was a melancholy recognition that the era was both “postrock” and “post-subculture.” In this context, the antiquated “rockism” of Matthias Politycki, with its shibboleths of authenticity, seemed impossible to Stuckrad-Barre and his *Tristesse Royale* associates. However, other strategies, including an “intelligent techno” embrace of theory à la Meinecke, were also unappealing. In the event, Stuckrad-Barre had superficial recourse to an affirmative yet strongly ironic notion of “pop” that had been current in the 1980s. But he simultaneously also registered his dissatisfaction with irony as a “solution” for

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the current malaise among younger Germans. Leftist critics argued that Stuckrad-Barre's "pop" strategy was simply no longer fitting of the times; in effect that Stuckrad-Barre had no real sense of a better world, as had been the case in the 1980s when the pop Left's notion of subversive affirmation had been first advanced. To a great extent, his portrayal of the consumption of popular music in contemporary German conditions was at the level of "untethered" but scripted emotion against a general background of ennui.

Thomas Brussig also registered a certain distance from notions of popular music as a locus for political identification and action. He attended to the ways in which popular music—especially when it was Western rock—had allowed for a vaguely heroic mode of music consumption during the latter period of state socialism in the GDR. He also explained how popular music could be harnessed to a political imaginary and a social movement within the context of the fall of the Berlin Wall. However, writing from the vantage point of the postunification period, he also prodded at any unreflective nostalgia about the articulation of popular music consumption and political action. His literature also showed how the distinctive qualities that many East German young people had associated with music could and did evaporate after the *Wende*.

Female writers like Karen Duve and Kerstin Grether came to the field of musico-centric literature relatively late. Their novels explored how popular music acts as a site where gender is "put into discourse," which itself explains why this literature was late. These novels, too, are often wracked by ambivalence. Duve's *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* is a type of writing back to male writers' "rockish" literature, but it is open to question how empowering the female-coded, emotional engagement with popular music that it portrays really is. Grether's portrayal of music production within a 1990s "indie" context also queried the advances of recent times. Grether presented a "post-subcultural" image of female music making in a German "Riot Grrrl" context. These young women all succumbed to the "tyranny of slenderness," and even the rebels were liable to be co-opted by the patriarchal system against which they rebelled. *Zuckerbabys* left open the question of whether these women could continue to be figures of antipatriarchal identification and community building in such a context.

The most intellectually satisfying of this musico-centric literature has probably not been that which has aspired to be highly "readable," to approximate the "easy" consumption of popular music, say, by adopting a fast-paced, traditional narrative. Nor has it been the novels that have neatly pinned down musical meaning or served as a trigger for more or less unreflective nostalgia. Rather, the most rewarding novels are those, like Meinecke's and Neumeister's, that have attempted to "realize" music in some way, thereby "activating" the reader in the process. It is the

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novels that are informed by a sense of the past, as well as by the present and future, that have tempered “techno enthusiasm” with more critical perspectives, for example. It is the novels that have engaged both with the popular and the more obscure. It is the novels that have “omnivorously” brought music into contact with other extramusical, and often theoretical, areas. Or it is the novels that have retained a sense of musical meaning as inherently open, that have productively played on music’s “cultural vocabulary” rather than simply reproducing it, and that have combined the positive aspects of music enthusiasm with a sense of Nietzsche’s *Cave Musicam*. This proposition reflects the theoretical position that popular music consumption in the post-subcultural era is about negotiating pleasures and risks.

Some critics have opined that the field of musico-centric literature has been “totgeschrieben” (written to death), and it is indeed open to question whether the market can sustain many more mimetic novels thematizing the thirty-something male “vinyl fetishist” who has problems with women and with the notion of settling down.<sup>5</sup> As I pointed out in the Introduction, many commentators also discerned the death of that ill-defined and unsatisfactory *Popliteratur* genre in the early 2000s. Yet most of the imperatives that brought about musico-centric literature have not disappeared. Young people have not ceased to be interested in music and literature. Because of the ongoing widespread interest in “retro,” including in the field of popular music, we can expect to see more novels and autobiographic texts relating to musical socialization.<sup>6</sup> Just as significantly, music technology and modes of consumption have continued to develop apace. As Chris Rojek has suggested, popular music, its production, distribution, and consumption, have all been undergoing a “tectonic shift”: the music object becoming dematerialized, the high street music shop dying out, on-line music “piracy” booming, and self-production, including of such dialogic forms as the “mash-up,” now well within reach of any laptop owner and Internet-savvy individual.<sup>7</sup> Popular music itself shows no sign of ceasing to be an important site at which listeners weave extramusical “webs of signification.” Rich humus for new generations of musico-centric literature, one would have thought. Moreover, younger generations of German music practitioners and journalists—women and men with a sense for the performative, which is a bankable asset in an increasingly mediatized literary market—are waiting in the wings. This does not mean that it will be any easier to write a novel about music, given the persistence of that Romantic trope of “unsayability.” Nor does it mean that the musico-centric novels of the future will attain the commercial success of some of the novels I have examined here. But it does mean that it is hardly likely that German literature will, to use Andreas Neumeister’s memorable term, go “unplugged” in the near future.<sup>8</sup>

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Notes

¹ Sunka Simon, “Irresistible Innocence: Reappropriations of Weimar and Nazi-Era Schlager,” in *Reworking the German Past: Adaptations in Film, the Arts, and Popular Culture*, ed. Susan G. Figge and Jenifer K. Ward (Rochester: Camden House, 2010), 135.

² Stephan Wackwitz, “Popmusik, Literatur und die Erzeugung schwerer Zeichen,” *Merkur* (January 1999): 55–61.

³ On the recontextualization of imported popular musical styles in Germany, see, e.g., Jannis Androutsopolis and Arno Scholz, “On the Recontextualization of Hip-hop in European Speech Communities,” paper presented to the international conference on “Americanization and Popular Culture in Europe,” Centro S. Franscini, Monte Verita, Switzerland, November 10–14, 1999; and Hornberger, *Geschichte wird gemacht*. On the “glocalization” of contemporary German literature, see, e.g., Taberner, *German Literature of the 1990s*, xxii; as well as Biendarra, *Germans Going Global*.

⁴ Holert and Terkessidis, *Mainstream der Minderheiten*.

⁵ The term (and diagnosis) “totgeschrieben” comes from Steiner, “Mascara, Musik und Magersucht.”

⁶ On the retro trend, see, e.g., Simon Reynolds, *Retromania: Pop Culture’s Addiction to Its Own Past* (New York: Faber & Faber, 2011).

⁷ Chris Rojek, *Pop Music, Pop Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011).

⁸ Gansel and Neumeister, “Pop bleibt subversiv, 183–96.

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