Acknowledgements

I would like first to thank my doctoral adviser, Richard Leppert, who was central to the shaping of this dissertation. Richard taught me to write about music. He has been involved in this project every step of the way, leading me on extraordinary travels of the mind. It is hard to find words to describe Richard’s generosity, kindness, and professionalism. Put simply and truly: thank you, Richard. My doctoral committee – Sumanth Gopinath, Rembert Hüser, John Mowitt, and Gary Thomas – all have shown invaluable support and guidance throughout this project. Thank you: Sumanth, Rembert, John, and Gary. Special thanks to Jochen Schulte-Sasse for starting my career as a translator and guiding so much of this journey. Jochen passed away shortly after my defense; he will be dearly missed. I would like to thank the CSCL Director of Graduate Studies Robin Brown for constant support and advice throughout. The CSCL community is one of a kind, and I would especially like to thank the following friends and colleagues for their support and assistance with this project: Michelle Baroody, Tom Cannavino, Nicholas de Villiers, Adrian Doerr, Courtney Gildersleeve, Andrea Gynge, Tom Haakenson, Christian Haines, Mirko Hall, Kysa Hubbard, Eva Hudecova, Jesse Lawson, Emily Lechner, Michelle Lekas, Rachel Schaff, Justin Schell, Aaron Thompson, Raysh Weiss, and Holley Wlodarczyk. Many thanks as well to the extraordinary CSCL office staff for their constant assistance: and for the comfortable couch. I am grateful to the Department of German, Scandinavian, and Dutch and the School of Music for their welcoming atmospheres and for providing great insight in the spirit of interdisciplinarity.

Professors and lecturers from my undergraduate and graduate years offered exceptional education and help, which directly affected this project: Roland Berbig, Tim Brennan, Cesare Casarino, Hubert Dreyfus, Kelley Harness, Poul Houe, Ralf Klausnitzer, Patrizia McBride, Ernst Osterkamp, Thomas Pepper, Jane Rubin, Karin Sanders, Anna Schultz, Hinrich Seeba, Hans Sluga, and Peter Wicke. Thanks also to my music colleagues at the University of California, Los Angeles for so much encouragement and support, especially Zarah Ersoff, Des Harmon, Mitchell Morris, Stephan Pennington, and Gray Raulerson, and to the Dancecult community, especially Graham St. John, tobias c. van Veen, and Luis-Manuel Garcia. I would like especially to thank Hinrich Seeba and Karin Sanders for supporting and guiding my undergraduate years. Prof. Dr. Ronald Hitzler and his sociology team at the University of Dortmund welcomed me back in 2003, and our collaboration is something for which I am extremely grateful: thank you, Ronald. Thanks to my dear friend Jen Lum. Thanks also go to three English teachers who formed my writing and love of literature – Ms. Woody, Mrs. Rowell, and above all, Mr. Heard, who taught me to read like no other. Finally, I would like to thank my German teachers, Ivan Bouhlev and Hella Roubicek; I miss them dearly.

The University of Minnesota has been an extraordinary academic institution to pursue graduate work. The Graduate School provided a Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship to complete this dissertation, and I would like to thank the university for the constant scholarly and financial support. I would also like to thank the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies at the Free University of Berlin. Both offered generous fellowships to be able to pursue research in Germany; the Berlin Program’s substantial travel stipend also offered
unique research opportunities. Thanks to Prof. Dr. Peter Wicke, Dr. Jens Papenburg, and the Centre for Popular Music Research at the Humboldt University of Berlin for their advice and institutional support, and to Karin Goihl for excellent support and advice at the Berlin Program. The conclusions, opinions, and other statements in this dissertation are my own and not necessarily those of my sponsoring institutions.

As reflected in the title, this work bears the mark of travel. I would like to thank my companions and dear family and friends of the various cities where I have lived: Orinda, Braunschweig, Glasgow, Berkeley, Tabor, Copenhagen, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and Berlin; and the universities I’ve been pleased to attend: UC Berkeley, the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Glasgow University, Copenhagen University, the Humboldt University of Berlin, and the Free University of Berlin. Finally, the Archive of Youth Cultures (Archiv der Jugendkulturen) has been an extraordinary resource throughout this project. Klaus Farin, Antje Pfeffer, and Daniel Schneider deserve special thanks for their institutional and scholarly support. Thanks also to my great roommate, Jürgen Grosse.

Dear thanks and love to my host brother, Josef, and to my host parents, Jürgen and Walburgis; ließe Grüße to the whole family and to all the dear friends in Braunschweig. You changed my life.

My thanks continues with the many cafes across the world that provided the ideal surroundings, internet access, and caffeinated beverages for dissertation writing: Hard Times, The Wilde Roast, Spyhouse, Pandora’s Cup, Espresso 22, Espresso Royale, and Plan B in Minneapolis; Gingko Coffee House and Dunn Bros on Grand in Saint Paul; Café Jenseits, Melitta Sundström, and Café St. Oberholz in Berlin; Au Coquelet and the International House Cafe in Berkeley; Café La Scala in Walnut Creek; and Café Teatro and Peet’s Coffee & Tea in Orinda.

Raver hugs go to my radio buddies and partners in crime at the Locust Lecture at the University of Minnesota’s Radio K for four years of extraordinary music and broadcasting – to Thomas Kwong (gonthologist extraordinaire), Deniz Rudin (master of film ceremonies), as well as to Lemmy Melor-Sturua, Suzy Vowels, and Nathan Hall. Thanks to Sue Meger for the extensive editorial reviews. I also want especially to thank Thomas Kwong for what has been an extraordinary friendship and for his guidance and reviews of the chapters throughout this project – a true friend in the study of music that hurts.

A big thanks to the Berlin crew, the Saxon crew, and the Glow-in-the-Dark Dutchie crew for much help and musical company. A big shout-out to Ben Lukas Boysen, Nicolas Chevreux, Elliott De Aratanha, Kim Dohlich, Georg Fischer, John Held, Jan Klesse, Felix Knoke, Jordan Kramer, Joshua Lemm, Daniel Reisser, Lukas Seel, Michail Stangl, Jaan Ugrinsky, and Marcel Weber. The following artists agreed to interviews and/or offered great support. Many thanks: Steve Baltes, Olaf Bender, Frank Bretschneider, Lenny Dee, Thomas Koch, Jan Kummer, Leif Künzel, Tobias Lampe, Dag Lerner, Oliver Lieb, Klaus Löschner, Mathis Mootz, Simon Reynolds, Wiliam Röttger, Uwe Schmidt, Claudia Schneider, Florian Severs, Kay D. Smith, Udo Wiesmann, and Peter Ziegelmeier.

To my parents, Ann and Gary, and to my brother, Seth: thank you, for everything.
Dedication

To my two families
In Orinda and Braunschweig
And the circle of friends
Scattered throughout,
Your love is lighter
Than this book’s weight.
Thank you for a life of levitation.
Abstract

*Teutonic Time-Slip* traces intersections between popular electronic music and German identity from 1968 to 2009, examining identity representations in electronic music both as cultural export and import. Broadly speaking, it traces the transformation of Germany’s reputation as a nation of classical music to a nation of electronic music. Its history begins with the forming of Krautrock bands amidst the cultural shifts of 1968 and ends with the self-reflective, though fractured, position of German electronic music in 2009, twenty years after German unification. The project demonstrates that electronic music, often considered a purely international music of the computer age, has represented new forms of regional, national, and European identities both within Germany and abroad. Furthermore, the dissertation examines both the construction and political-social critique of German identity through electronic music. It focuses on how German electronic pop emerged in the constant exchange with two distinct musical traditions: first, pop and rock cultures in the United Kingdom and the United States; and second, German classical music and avant-garde electronic music. Finally, as an American scholar, I frame the cultural constellations of musical sound, modern travel, technology, and performance with an examination of constructions of contemporary Germany identity that have been central to the cultural exchange between the United States and Germany.
# Table of Contents

- Acknowledgements  i-ii
- Dedication  iii
- Abstract  iv
- Table of Contents  v-vi
- List of Images  vii

**Introduction** - 1-54

Introducing the Tricoastal Outlander or Sounding the Teutonic Outland  1-5
1. California: Exiles and Science Fiction  5-31
2. Minnesota: North by Midwest  31-44
3. Germany: Good Travels, Fleeting Thoughts  45-52
4. Revisited: Start and Summation  52-54

**Chapter 1** - 55-135

Techno Tracks: From Breaking Borders to Walking in the Woods  55-63
1968: Out of the Kosmos  63-70
1974 and 1977: Driving on Roads and Rails  70-82
Biographical Supplement: The Techno-Train  82-84
1978 to 2001: Flying in the Club  85-100
1998: Running in the City  100-111
2001: Surfing the Seas  111-120
Outer Epilogue: The Moving Age  132-133
Inner Epilogue: Digging in the Mine and Mind  134-135

**Chapter 2** - 136-201

The Techno-Electronic Absolute: Sounds of Time Travel through Retro-Futures  136-146

2.1 First Wave: Electronic Yearnings

Techno-Symphonies and Krautrock:  146-158
  Klaus Schulze and Tangerine Dream
Sound Counter Sound: Herzog and Popul Vuh  158-163
Nomi in New York  163-167

2.2 Second Wave: Electronic Traditions

The Ambiguous Nature of GAS  168-175
Berlin Calling: Urban Mythmaking  176-184
Humoristic-Ironic Program Music: From Kraftwerk to Atom™  184-197

2.3 Bio-Supplement: Saxon Journey  198-201
Chapter 3 - 202-270
Die Deutsche Seele Up-to-Date: Linguistic Circuits of German, English, and Denglisch 202-211
1. Word Mixes from Scratchmasters to Trainwrecks:
   Denglisch and ESL 211-222
2. Kraftwerk's Accents
   Biolinguistic-Interruption, Cafe St. Oberholz: 236-238
   Social Media Exchange Students 222-236
3. Überdeutsch: From Laibach to Mundstuhl 239-250
   3a. Laibach's Fallout 258-263
   Afterword: Denglisch in Two Lines 264-270

Chapter 4 - 271-364
Shall We Tanz? Cyborg Anthropologies, Electronic Music, and the Masculine Question 271-277
1. Of Biopower, the Man-Machine, and Insects 277-293
2. From Haraway to Roy: Feminism and the Teutonic Cyborg 294-302
3. Soundings of Biopolitics
   3a. Kraftwerk Anthropology 302-309
   3b. DAF: Stompy Boots and Dance 309-322
4. Cyborg Legacies
   4a. Of Headphones, Mixers, and Turntables: Sven Väth and the DJ as Cyborg 323-335
   4b. Cyber-Masses and Late Styles in Subcultures 335-350
   4c. Mathis Mootz: m² 350-364

Conclusion: 365-394
Concluding the Teutonic? Time-Slips by the Coen Brothers and the Late History of Electronic Exports

- Bibliography 395-410
- Filmography 411-412
- Discography 413-419
List of Images

1. Grizzly Peak 6
2. Mann Gate 6
3. Be.Berlin 44
4. Ruhr Tourist 47
5. Fuckparade 2010 49
6. The Cosmic Jokers 67
7. Mainhattan skyline 90
8. Oliver Lieb 97
10. Lola’s Run 2. The Construction Sites 110
11. GAS. Forest catalog 125
12. Wolfgang Voigt 127
13. Klaus Schulze 1977 153
14. Berlin Calling. Organ 181
15. Berlin Calling. Laptop 181
16. Atom™ at the Schumann Piano 186
17. Clara Schumann banknote 187
18. Atom™ Liedgut 188
19. Saxon Journey: Leipzig 201
20. Saxon Journey: Zwickau 201
21. Saxon Journey: Chemnitz 1 201
22. Saxon Journey: Chemnitz 2 201
23. H.P. Baxxter 216
24. Laibach 246
25. Mundstuhl 261
26. Cocoon Club 332
27. Mayday 336
28. Forms of Hands 337
29. Mathis Mootz 353
30. Panacea. Low Profile Darkness 354
31. Panacea. German Engineering 355
32. m² 357
33. Position Chrome Logo 360
34. Ant-Zen Logo 360
35. Heliogabal 362
36. Frankfurt Airport 364
37. Autobahn 377
38. The Dude and Autobahn 377
39. The Dude and Autobahn 377
40. Battle of the Bands: The Dude 381
41. Battle of the Bands: Autobahn 381
Introduction

Introducing the Tricoastal Outlander
or
Sounding the Teutonic Outland

…a California boy studying at the University of Minnesota seeks to track German identity in popular electronic music from 1968 until 2009, a forty-year span of history that is now the self-conscious reference point of German electronic pop, a tumultuous time of art, politics, and techno culture, replete with debates on new “German” music, which the California boy divides roughly, and perhaps too neatly, into twenty-year cultural periods of preunification (1968-1989) and postunification (1989-2009) Germany, which might be alternately theorized, not as periods of identity, but split-identity, or periodic ruptures of nonidentity…

This sentence is the ignition to the thesis. It outlines the road ahead, answering the inquiry as to the thesis’s aboutness. As to the road itself, the thesis is an exploration not so much about as through German identity in the late-modern period of electronic music and mobility. The thesis of identity resides in the dual definition of thesis itself, a duality that produces movement. First, the thesis is an hypothesis: the argument that conceives German identity during the last forty years to be linked to popular electronic music in significant ways, cast through identity themes of geography, instruments, language, and body images. These links will be shown to be network links, wherein identity has been broadcast though the performative repetition of German subjects in literature, sound, lyrics, and media. However, the thesis is also the dissertation as total exploration, replete with detours. In tracking identity, the dissertation argues for a conception of the mobility of media, music, and thought in late-modern times, a mobility that rubs identity against the grain. I hope the thesis, in this sense, splinters, or skids, the identity it concerns, turning its familiar garden into a labyrinth with strange tracks left behind: an apprenticeship in reckless driving. Bluntly, the thesis is a mental combustion engine both ignited by and exhausting German engineering. As a run-on sentence, the ignition line
above already tracks too far onward, yet its density emphasizes the interweaving of biography, geography, theory, and scholarship, the basis of any proper humanities project, especially one concerned with identity, whether explicit or implicit.

It is more intriguing to be explicit. So in the beginning, with such interweaving in mind, I start at the biographical beginning in the form of a brief, academic, but by turns nonconfessional, resume. I offer identity in the form of an ID card, or rather, in its Californian form:

A Driver’s License –

Name: Sean Culhane Nye.
Sex: Male.
Ethnicity: White.¹
Date of birth: 10-6-78, Berkeley, CA.
Permanent address: Orinda, CA.
Bachelor of Arts: Philosophy and Comparative Literature, University of California, Berkeley.
Doctorate of Philosophy: Comparative Studies in Discourse and Society, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.
“Address change”²: California, Minnesota, Scotland, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany.

Current address: TBA...

These are strange roots. When I started this project, reactions from interlocutors varied as to its possible success given such a background, in particular the distant American situation. As one coming from the outside – in the sense of the outland (the literal translation from the German for the foreign or international realm, Das Ausland, residing somewhere “abroad,” im Ausland, in places inhabited by foreigners, Ausländer)

¹ For the sake of exploring heritage, a hobby for many Americans, I can clarify “white” heritage through percentages, based on a simplistic division of my grandparents’ background. My heritage is as follows: 50% Irish, 25% English, 12.5% German, and 12.5% Swiss. I often simplify this division by rounding up and saying that I am Irish-American, which is inferred from the first name: Sean.
² On the back of my CA Driver’s License, which I have kept throughout my travels as my ID, there remains a blank space left for one to write “Address Change.”
– I was made aware of the need to reflect from the perspective of the “outlander,” both as a strength and challenge.

Therefore, what follows in this introduction is a tour through several biographical topographies that make the issue of the outside as the outland explicit, as we slowly approach Germany. These topographies will turn out to be outlandish, about as outlandish as “Germany,” while themselves offering rich histories of popular electronic music and techno culture. The outland provides the Anglo-Saxon variant to the notion of the alien. For the notion of the outland in English, as compared to the German, has become archaic. At the same time, it has taken on a fantastic, sci-fi, and even kitschy flair for the wild. This “through” of German identity may thus have a “beyond” to point to.

Yet in the initial reflection from the American outland, a primordial, uneducated, and indeed bad platitude comes to mind: America is young, Europe is old. The task might be, then, to age quickly, since normally it is the privilege of the old to analyze the young. Experience is required, whether in taking the wheel or the quill. But I would like to reverse the privilege and, in now antiquated fashion, challenge the binary: for the binary is quite anachronistic.3 I will challenge it, however, not by dissolving it, but through a parodic engagement with elements of its history. American youth as that which repeatedly “pops” rather than matures will be a source of intellectual distinction. In other words, the status of an authorship as a California “boy” is announced as an American confession.

3 A wealth of theories also exist claiming America is old and Europe is young, including the following posed by Gertrude Stein: “The unprecedented escalation, on parallel tracks, of military and media-technical innovation turned the American Civil War into the preview of the twentieth century. Thus Gertrude Stein could declare that America was the oldest nation of the twentieth century” (Rickels, Case 77). In addition, the United States is the only country in North America or Europe that maintains a government based on a constitution written in the eighteenth century, whereas the European Union remains a work in its infancy. Nevertheless, for the sake of its pop possibilities, I will tarry with youth.
The boy explicitly draws on Laurence A. Rickels’s writings on Californian pop adolescence as a philosophical and psychoanalytic problem for European theorists in his seminal work, *The Case of California*. Rickels designates this Californian case the “Teen Age” because the late-modern era is marked by the recording and broadcasting of youth culture. Pop music and youth are represented here by the Californian “culture industry,” an industry that apparently does not age. The dialectic of Californian youth and European seniority that marks my travels in German pop might in this light be best expressed in the contradictory phrase of an “old boy.” The American outside perspective provides insights in this respect, especially in the context of the youthful excitement of electronic media and music in trans-Atlantic exchange. At its most profound, the old boy outs himself as a retro-future of the modern subject.

Greater geographic and biographic specificity is required, however, regarding the American context. The acceleration towards Germany needs some tempering. Let us return to the two regions mentioned in the opening run-on sentence: California and Minnesota. In this introduction, I wish first to pause and mark both these places as points of my intellectual “identity” through which to explore the notion of identity in Germany as that which tries to distinguish itself from the outland while simultaneously being filtered through the outland. As we shall later see, Germany is a nation based on exports; in fact, it has in recent years had the distinction of being the world’s top exporter, in competition with China. Germany traditionally likes to export music, and it would truly love to export more music, since it is already the world’s third largest music market (Otter). After all, identity is of little value, indeed in modern market societies it is virtually dismissed, if it cannot be exported. Yet it also goes without saying that identity cannot be produced without relying on imports.
So, in the spirit of trade, let us explore these two outlandish points:

1. California: Exiles and Science Fiction

Scene 1: The foggy and rainy chill of January 1, 2011 bites at the skin. I drink a Diet Coke and sit, parked in a green Ford Escort, a simple car that took me on road trips across the United States. On Grizzly Peak Boulevard, deep in the Berkeley Hills, the view of the San Francisco Bay (the so-called Bay Area) lies in front. I have stopped here for a familiar landscape and soundscape, a search for regional roots to this project. Imported Australian eucalyptus trees tower around as I look on in the distance and spy the S.F. cityscape. My iPod provides a German techno soundtrack to the view. Around the Bay Area lie many sites of former raves, where I engaged in candy-raver culture with electronic dance music from house to happy hardcore accompanying glow-stick nights and sunrises between 1998 and 2002. The time of the raving 1990s stood as a late representative of Californian New-Age counterculture as pop, much of which was supplied by trance music from Germany.

Below lies the lit-up grid of Berkeley, and behind me roll the suburban hills of a home called Orinda. Grizzly Peak is the borderland between tumultuous Berkeley and dreamy Orinda: the city of my birth and the burb of my youth. It is also the symbolic touch point of two Hugo-Award-winning science fiction authors associated with Berkeley and Orinda, respectively: Philip K. Dick and Poul Anderson. That Poul Anderson, the greatest writer to be associated with my otherwise unknown hometown, Orinda, was a science fiction writer is indicative of the region, extending south to Silicon Valley. The subsequent growth of techno and computer culture was the industrial mix to the literary flowering of Californian science fiction between the 1940s and 1970s. It goes without saying that the ghost of Philip K. Dick haunts not only Berkeley, but the region. At this moment, the Bay Area appears clearly in the mist of science fiction.

Scene 2: Two weeks later, a January day accompanies the sights and sounds of urban life in a posh Los Angeles suburb known as the Pacific Palisades. I sit, parked in a Honda Civic on the curb of San Remo Drive, listening to more German techno on my iPod and eating from a bag of Crunchy Cheetos. I look through a high-security gate in an attempt to spot the palatial mansion where Thomas Mann wrote Doctor Faustus: The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn As Told by a Friend. Everywhere there are signs announcing “Bel-Air Patrol,” a security service popular between Beverly Hills and Santa Monica. I am a California old boy but have no access. Just down the road lies Mann’s first L.A. residence on Amalfi Drive and the home of his one-time neighbor, Aldous Huxley, the British-Californian pioneer of science fiction and psychedelia. In my hands is a map of German/British exile addresses from the Lion Feuchtwanger Memorial Library at the University of Southern California. The map includes the usual suspects: Bertolt Brecht, Hanns Eisler, Arnold Schoenberg, Fritz Lang, Franz Werfel, and Theodor W. Adorno, among others. Adorno, the music
philosopher-sociologist and critical theorist, is of particular interest. His works have been central to my graduate study, and his more modest, rented house is located down the hill from here.

I pick at the Cheetos stuck in my teeth, and I think deeply about Doctor Faustus. The Pacific Palisades is at the very edge of Los Angeles. Somewhere on the other side of the Mann mansion, the sights of the Los Angeles metropolitan maze stretch out along the Pacific Ocean. In the distance are Hollywood and other filmic neighborhoods, Venice Beach and Gold's Gym of Schwarzenegger fame; somewhere nestled in the Palms is the Museum of Jurassic Technology with its permanent exhibit on Athanasius Kircher; further beyond stretches outlandish, conservative Orange County and its Googie-styled Tomorrowland, where earlier I visited the residences that Philip K. Dick occupied during the last ten years of his life. Things are lost and bundled…

A bit later, I coast along Ocean Drive in Santa Monica. A spectacular view of the white sandy beaches unfolds on the Pacific Ocean, peppered with surfers and flirting couples. Here another type of exile, Christopher Isherwood, met his California boy, Don Bachardy, during the late history of exile culture. Life on a relaxed Venice Beach. A mood of high kitsch, or camp, is in the air. I am content that it is a sunny day in January, and I can wear a T-shirt. Evening slowly arrives upon my return to the city, and the thick smog of Los Angeles allows for an industrial pallet of bright oranges to paint the warm winter sky.

These two scenes, peppered with monuments and medial intersections, are associated with the two major metropolitan regions of California: the S.F. Bay Area and Los Angeles, often synonymous with notions of “Northern” and “Southern” California. Together, they have formed the center of an extraordinary experience of the West
Coast. This geographic-philosophic figure, the Coast, as place that European writers have wrestled with and at times been overwhelmed by, was developed by Rickels in a unique blend of exile literature and science fiction studies: first, as stated earlier, in The Case of California (1991) and then in the long-awaited sequel, I Think I Am: Philip K. Dick (2010). Rickels moved to the Coast in 1981, as Professor of German and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Santa Barbara, a distinguished educational institution that Playboy regularly rates as one of the “Top 10 Party Schools” of America. Rickels’s work addresses the diagnosis of California as symbolic extreme of American modernity by European theorists and critics from Freud to Mann… and by Philip K. Dick. He traces the ostensible poles of superficiality and culture, media/body and mind, youth and age, culture industry and totalitarian propaganda, and above all, techno-immortality and mourning.

In The Case of California, these negotiations structure what he terms Californian-German “bicoastal logic,” exemplary in the exile authors as a form of cultural critique filtered between their residence in California during the 1930s and 1940s and the experiences of media and political catastrophe in Weimar and Nazi Germany of the 1920s and 1930s. Psychoanalysis, especially as applied by the Frankfurt School and deconstruction, is the primary frame of this logic from the Second World War up through the Cold War:

To analyze the reversal it had met in National Socialism, psychoanalysis turned toward California – or back to the future.… California and Germany are indeed the divided or bicoastal states of emergency and disaster. The center of nuclear sites always threatening to erupt, California is the other place of total war. California occupies the intersection between technology and the unconscious as part of an interiority lodged inside the discursivity of psychoanalysis – and shared with Germanicity. (3-7)
These comparisons offer insight into both the exile and Cold War past. Yet I will here be expanding the notion of “bicoastal” logic to include other post-1940s, and more specifically post-1989, notions of Californian and German relationships, musical and technological, only later to refine this dual logic through a logic of thirds.

Rickels further examines the significance of electronic media, highlighting the role that communication gadgets and recording play in calling up old ghosts while preserving immortal images of youth.

California is where it’s at: it’s the place that performs the refusal to mourn or acknowledge death at the same time that it depends totally on media-technological structures of “liveness” to support the unstressed-out or friendly interventions it advertises.

The invention of California from the nineteenth century to the 1950s can be worked out in examples of mourning which prove that to go West one must – Pacman-style – cannibalize some other. (4)

The practice of Californians going East post-1940s (both to Europe and Asia) is a different matter not addressed by Rickels. Going East to Europe poses questions to which I shall later return. For now, I want to emphasize that Rickels’s writings are of interest for this study because of their singular mix of exile theory and science fiction in the encounter with pop culture. These are the twin literary-theoretical branches that this dissertation relies upon in analyzing electronic music, in short because of their twin conceptualizations and critiques of identity and technology. At the same time, my self-helping usage of a California “old boy” author who goes east to Europe takes on a further association. It points to a refinement in Rickels’s diagnosis of California as “philosopheme” of the techno-adolescent “Teen Age,” whose late history on the German Coast has been updated with figures of the Euroboy and Eurogirl. The musical specters of Eurodance and Eurotrance, as we shall see, give these identities sonic resonance.
At the same time, my use of “boy” as critic marks a happy-faced juvenile resistance to Rickels’s designation of critical interiority to European theorists in diagnosing California as a “case.” This structure makes his study of Philip K. Dick especially suffer because his theoretical reference points (late Freud, Schreber, Benjamin) do not age with California. He preserves California as the European “philosopheme” of the Teen Age that never ages, a designation that has arguably become anachronistic or, at least, has experienced qualitative shifts since the classic era of youth culture between the 1920s and 1960s. Rickels is not able to engage California as a historical region – though such hasty judgment is, shall we say, premature. For Rickels concludes in the introduction: “As case, this study exhibits a law – that of mourning. But like the Geist or ghost of philosophical self-help programs, what can, at the end, be called ‘California’ must, to that end and on the way, have attained and unfolded self-consciousness. That quest must first pass through the relays and delays of The Case of California” (11). The question remains – does California ever find a perspective beyond the coast of European theorists? The danger seems to be that it does not, since Rickels even tends to misrecognize Dick as German, including him in his Austro-German triad as a mere Californian “correspondent” (I Think I Am 7).

Rickels’s California remains a flat, if fascinating, medium in terms of geography, history, and culture: A danger in that “California” and “America” are often interchangeable in his texts, though given the national circuits of Hollywood, this mix has its reasons. In a state that includes Death Valley and Mount McKinley, not to mention the Coastal Range, this leaves much to be desired. In the science fiction context, it is indicative that Rickels neglects to situate and analyze thoroughly the geographic antipodes of Dick’s bipolar Californian life: Berkeley and Orange County. In short,
California still lies as flat as a psychoanalytic couch potato; the analyst does not know the session is done.

Yet Rickels still offers a potent mix of exile theory and science fiction, addressing the double view of California and Germany as the spooks of electronic media and alternate realities. It is a mix rich with theoretical potential. To reverse the stereotype of flat superficiality, the mix represents for me the rich cultural legacy of some of the best the Golden State has to offer. It would seem queer then that in my youth, I intuitively reversed classic bicoastal logic; I aged too quickly as a California boy looking East to Europe, and so I later found my youth by actually going East and experiencing the arrival of Euro-adolescence, as we shall see in Scene 3.

Yet I arrived in Germany, like most of my generation, not as an exile but an expat. With a psyche firmly embedded in science fiction and exiled critical theory, my old-boy research engages in a late pop dialectic of sci-fi surfing and expat reading. In post-1989 terms, the figure of the expat in the context of Europop has become key. While inspired by the exiles, the political-aesthetic distinctions between the exile and the expat are, in all senses, glaring. The rare existence of official exiles in post-1989 Euro-American exchange is part of the high-speed mobility and political constellations of our times. Surely exiles exist, though in bicoastal terms – we are all expats now. I hope thus to reveal the exile and the alien in the expat, drawing out the expat's privilege and despair.

Indeed, the expat predicament marks modern research regarding pop culture on both coasts. This vertiginous situation has transformed from the exile Hotel Abyss to the expat Disco Abyss, where pop theory attempts to manage increasingly complex systems of post-1989 cultural industries. Through the jet-set work of the expat critic, I have
attempted to take the challenge of the surface-deep Californian, directing analysis
toward super-deep Germany through a double focus: German as the hermeneutic-
critical and as the techno-science-fictional “philosopheme” of pop California, but in which
geography and history will not be lost in the text. In this analysis, I aim to be a strange
breed: the critical Californian, bestowed with self-consciousness at the end of The Case
of California. Or let’s crystallize it with a pop image: The project represents a theoretical
Beach Boy, washed up on the German electronic scene and plugging into its power
plants.\(^4\)

Rickels points to such potentials at the end of The Case of California, starting
where his introduction left off. Through French deconstruction, California suddenly
becomes the state of theory:

The experiment is on – in California – to seek an affirmation (a way in and
a way out) of the Teen Age. Only within the (reinvention of) adolescent
modes of existence can we survive what is in effect (since the other is
always the first to go) our immortality, which at the same time comes
complete (and for all the same reasons that brought us immortality) with
the impulse to die, to die someone else. (338)

It is an experiment that, as we shall see, applies to the pop situation of Germany today in
the tradition inaugurated by Kraftwerk, the Düsseldorf Beach Boys. The Teen Age has
spilled over on both coasts, if not all coasts post-1989, and my analysis thus transfers to
the New Europe as representing alternate forms of youth culture and medial-surface
experience: Euroboys, Eurogirls, Eurotrash, Euroteens, techno-futures on the catwalks

\(^4\) Nota bene: There are exceptional Danish side dishes to this biography, foreshadowed by Poul
Anderson, which take on minor bicoastal (and tricoastal) forms. The Danish role is exemplified
through, in its Cali-German reception, the ostensibly über-German dialogue with the devil in
Doctor Faustus. This dialogue is structured by a Danish frame: Kierkegaard and Andersen; Don
Juan and Mermaid. Kierkegaard, the nonidentical northern outlander who Rickels unfortunately
conflates with “bicoastal” Germanicity (Case 221-2), has been the chief theoretical source for my
minor European studies. This Danish literature from the past offers reverb in my pop cultural
engagements with the European present in Scotland, the Czech Republic, and the Benelux
countries, among others.
of the European “Mode.” In some senses, European depth today takes the form of being more critically superficial, a form of spiritual commitment to youth raised to the second power amidst an aging population, though I should not be so hasty in judgment. Before exploring Europe and Germany, let me concretize the respective points of exile theory and science fiction for how they form the theoretical preface for the study of electronic music and my interdisciplinary-international method.

California lies half a world away from Europe, but looking at Thomas Mann’s mansion of exile reminds me, munching on the final bits of Cheetos (an artificial masterpiece that, along with Doctor Faustus and the long-playing record, was introduced to the United States in 1948), why the currents of communication from Germany might have led me, a born and bred Californian, to catch the German bug in the first place. Indeed, the 1968-2009 period requires a preface, and maybe an endtroduction in the West Coast mixological spirit of DJ Shadow, that tarries with a twenty-year prehistory beginning in 1948. Doctor Faustus is a symbol of German exile literature and culture, and, even more appropriate to this project, it is the lone novel about the so-called “German” musical tradition that stands as a super-deep meditation on German history in general. It is perversely Gothic, an untimely, old-fashioned novel of apprenticeship, and a monumental biography of suffering identity, mixed to and at times fleeing the spooks of media, modernity, and Hollywood technology through amped-up Germanness.

Its rejection of techno-California while wrestling with German catastrophe (or California as the absent-present geography of the story’s über-German journey) bears a certain old-age juvenility, an Old World rebelliousness. Shall we say rebel Mann is, in comparison to the old boy, a teen senior? The novel’s only New World geographic
reference is to old-age and über-German Pennsylvania. Herr Mann is like a Cali-Goth in a heavy-metal trenchcoat, sweating comically on the sunny beach instead of putting on commonsense T-shirts and shorts to let California soak in. In this Gothic mode, the music of exile is high culture as subculture, something that very few in California know about, dare say mourn, but which continues to have effects in underhand ways, if but through grimaces of confusion and dismissal. Indeed, this history has significant cultural implications for California that trickled down even to me: Like Philip K. Dick, I first encountered amped-up Germanness through the electronic documents of Teutonic narratives on various History Channels, which had to be worked through and ultimately read through Herr Mann and beyond. As a Californian outlander, Germany was a Teutonic outland. At the same time, my German teacher in high school was a senior exile, offering the earliest experiences of my training as a critical Californian and expat. Strange mixes, indeed…

At this moment, my Feuchtwanger Library map has transformed into a subcultural map point to an underground gathering in theory and history. Mann’s novel forms a pre-text, while it also marks a certain end to modernism and the traditions of bourgeois art. Its American publication, as stated, is from the year 1948, introduced just as the two new German states were founding their respective governments and identities. However, for the vast majority of the musicians and scenes I will be analyzing in the subsequent chapters, Doctor Faustus appears like a foreign history if it is known at all. The density of its cultural references, not to mention its analysis of musical form,

---

5 Mann’s fascination with the musical tradition of Wagner has informed this work throughout, and it also informs some of the bias of the German works of literature and music received by me; after all, Mann is known so well on both coasts because of his consummate skill in the promotion of himself as an author in the United States.
appear impenetrable and, in some cases, irrelevant. Hermann Hesse, Aldous Huxley, Bertolt Brecht, and other exiles have had arguably more musical pertinence and urgency in pop cultural and techno terms.

And yet, as a work from the bicoastal past, its ideas linger in the Berlin Republic, if but as a blurred negative – just as the novel festers in the decaying ruins of German Studies in the defunded post-Humanities. Most crucially, Mann’s novel points beyond its subject matter and specific history to my own commitments to the literary and intermedial study of music, where words and written narrative do not shy from a poetic wrestling with music meaning. In other words: I have set myself the task to write, to the best of my ability, in a literary fashion about music – to argue through words, stories, and “rampant subjectivity.” Ideally, this writing can enlighten, delight, and, in some cases, “stick” to the music and the mind as “constructive descriptions” (Kramer 128-9). This method is somewhat old-fashioned, a Gothic legacy of the Gutenberg Galaxy, yet it can hopefully be incorporated and raised to the second power through its intersections with electronic media.

Yet regarding *Doctor Faustus*, even more than its author, it is the Californian and West German writings of the musical advisor to that novel, Theodor W. Adorno, that loom large in this study: both explicitly and as “music in the background.” Adorno marks alternatively the most rigorous and most negatively polemical, in some cases to the state of blindness, cultural-critical representative of the bicoastal critique that Rickels traces. While in California, Adorno would write many of his key texts: *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (with Max Horkheimer), *Minima Moralia*, *Composing for the Films* (with Hanns Eisler), *Philosophy of New Music*, and in his final brief return, *The Stars Down to Earth*. 
Curiously, Adorno, vehemently antinationalist in sentiment, at the same time constitutes the most comprehensive aesthetic philosophy of the Austro-German tradition of art music: a legacy that he analyzed with an ever-greater outlandish intensity “on the Coast,” while developing the most trenchant critique of popular music to be seen in his time. His investigation of the Californian “culture industry” continues to haunt and infuriate the affirmative analysis of pop culture and media, whether German, Californian, or otherwise\(^6\) – a theory of the culture industry and pop music that is at times revealed, but also usurped, by industrial culture and technopop.

Furthermore, Adorno’s death in 1969 marks a break where this doctoral thesis takes off; as we shall see, 1968 is the great burgeoning year of electronic pop in Germany. Adorno’s coastal writings are thus augmented here by his final, unfinished magnum opus, *Aesthetic Theory*, which was nearing completion during the 1968 cultural shift. On the issue of tracking German identity, my project is also inspired by his extraordinary 1965 radio essay that offers a unique consideration of the inland through the outland: “On the Question: What is German?” Yet I maintain the position of the disobedient California boy, for I remain convinced that not only Adorno but a range of European exiles misunderstood the Californian coast in important ways, to say nothing of post-1968 developments. The economic and cultural transformations that have occurred in the forty years since Adorno’s death beg a transformation of critical theory. However, while this work is post-Adorno in the sense of chronology, it refuses the casual resorting to posts in theory. First of all, it is crucial to keep in mind that the operative term with reference to Adorno’s encounter with Californian popular culture is ambivalence

---

\(^6\) See Jenemann.
rather than superiority, a point that Rickels also makes (Case 8).  

Whether I misunderstand the post-1968, post-Adorno German coast remains to be seen.

In any case, instead of posts, I prefer to draw out the negatively dialectical tensions within my own commitments to popular electronic dance music. These commitments would almost certainly have begged the wrath of Adorno, who was the critically negative subject par excellence. In short, techno-dance music is the last thing Adorno would have praised, not least as German music. I accept the challenge, in other words, of an Adornian theorist who is committed to music that, it would seem, stands in every way at the antipodes of any orthodox model of Adornian aesthetic theory, though Adornian orthodoxy is necessarily a contradiction in Adorno's own terms. My intent is thus nothing less than the exploration of the sedimented history and the cultural constellations of rhythm, technology, and dance within German electronic music.

Amidst this negative friction, Adorno's bicoastal writings will offer some reverb from the past. While I engage in this dissertation with the recent works of media studies, cultural studies, and anthropology, among others, that break open autonomous notions of artworks to which Adorno remained committed, Adorno's historically grounded research of Western music and its legacy since the Enlightenment find echoes in my text. In brief, his critical "constellations" and understanding of sound and music as "sedimented history" are key to my methodology. In what follows, every chapter is, in

---

See also Jenemann (especially 179-91) for a fundamental study of Adorno's American ambivalence. The reputation of California-on-the-couch and European analyst was challenged, for example, in a late piece of Californian-exile literature, Christopher Isherwood's A Single Man (1964). Its English professor protagonist, a man of European culture who resides in Los Angeles, goes on a diatribe against European biases represented in the view of a colleague: “How can you talk such incredible nonsense?... My God, you sound like some dreary French intellectual who's just set foot in New York for the first time!” (90). He then explains why, for example, American motels are superior "unreal" forms from an idealist point of view, compared to the rich ornamental and grounded traditions of European architecture.
fact, offered as a critical, by turns sci-fi, constellation that engages sedimented history. For like the two scenes I describe of Northern and Southern California, my work on German electronic music focuses on the historical routes and palimpsests that mark this music. The notion of sedimented history is here reflected in electronic club culture’s modern valuing of “tracks” over works and songs, with all the multidimensional meanings that tracks entail – roads, lanes, songs, grooves, transitions, footprints, traces… but also, steps and dances ahead. In other words, they reflect the geography of vinyl as the geography of travel over the palimpsestic landscapes of medial and artistic history, yet directed toward the digital present.

Tracks also reflect something increasingly ignored in pop media studies: the persistence of human suffering and tragedy within the discourses of media fetishes, perpetual pop pleasures, and, as Rickels clearly points out, the correlation of mediated youth with immortal bliss. Though an expat is certainly the negative image of an exile, confused as to whether he or she even suffers, the hardcore and industrial sounds I aim to explore will reveal new sufferings, sometimes sweet sufferings, within the delights of technology.

But off on another track…

Exiled critical theory is only one historical stretch of the Californian coast in which I am interested. On another stretch, by turns sunny and foggy, the story of literary science fiction as a genre closely associate with the Coast is a story that is beyond rich. The sci-fi resonances of the notion of track, when placed in the right constellation of media critique, can result in the following: The stars do not have to come down to earth. Science fiction constitutes much of the delight of flipped-out Cali-Kultur. Shall one
perhaps even say it is a case-by-case path to self-conscious California? Here are but a few names of the great Californian sci-fi writers, aside from my aforementioned suspects Dick and Anderson: Robert Heinlein, Frank Herbert, Octavia E. Butler, Ursula K. Le Guin, L. Ron Hubbard, Robert Silverberg, Larry Niven, Harlan Ellison, Kim Stanley Robinson, Tim Powers, Greg Bear, David Brin, Gregory Benford, Vernor Vinge, and Rudolf von Bitter Rucker (Hegel’s sci-fi ancestor from Silicon Valley). If one considers the greater Coast, from San Diego to Vancouver, one can include Vonda McIntyre, William Gibson, Neal Stephenson, and the northern outposts of Butler and Bear, encompassing a matrix of techno analysis from space opera to cyberpunk. With such names, science fiction appears as the Coast literature par excellence. The science fiction of California has had its further effects in West Coast cyborg theory inaugurated by Donna Haraway, herself deeply inspired by the writings of West Coast sci-fi feminists Butler and McIntyre. In due course, I will read some of the ambivalent history of German electronic pop through Haraway’s distinctly ambivalent reception of the cyborg figure, and my narratives will often delight more in science fiction than in exile literature. Or rather, my readings will move between science fiction, electronic music, and a Hollywood studio system in many senses “made” by German and Jewish émigrés.

Yet as indicated by Rickels’s I Think I Am: Philip K. Dick, the sequel to The Case of California, it is Dick who presents a cultural matrix of key importance to this study. Rickels offers the following insight regarding Dick’s bicoastal sci-fi:

In the future that Dick foretells, high culture, music, literature, science, philosophy, you name it, are overwhelmingly German, for better or worse. The American or Terran language (in other words, Globalese) includes on its vocabulary list, like *kindergarten* or *blitzkrieg*, such words as *Selbstmord, Geheimnis, Gift*, and *Augenblick*. That American would go global simply because anyone can stumble through it and still be understood and, same thing, because it is no one’s mother tongue is part
of Dick’s accurate forecasting. That the global prospecting of all things Californian (as the teen field of representation) inside the American global language would require a certain ascendancy of Germanicity (as dead language culture) is the part of the forecast that boggles my mind. (2)

Lamentably, this promising beginning gives way to Rickels’s focus on Freud, Benjamin, and Schreber; though productive, he fails to analyze Dick in post-1950s psy-phi terms. Despite the fruitful comparative study of Dick and Schreber et al., Rickels’s stylistic principle, the pun, ascends into digressive soliloquy. European theory maintains itself as analyzer of an old spook of California. The California of Dick and beyond has now not only cancelled the appointment, but changed therapists.

While inspired by Rickels’s theorization of bicoastal logic, I prefer instead to expand the pop cultural trajectory by taking Philip K. Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) as a case, or an exception, that challenges this logic as antiquated and focused on prewar constellations. Indeed, in this novel, an exception to Dick’s own German proclivities is found. *The Man in the High Castle* can be read against his most literal of bicoastal novels, *The Simulacra*, which imagines future unification between the United States and West Germany, a combined total state of media mockery known as the United States of Europe and America (USEA), ruled by the First Lady and Der Alte (the Old Man, an immortal Konrad Adenauer).

By contrast, *The Man in the High Castle* forecasts a model for analyzing the pop world of the 1960s and beyond as not bicoastal, but *tricoastal*. In the novel, Dick imagines an alternate history in which Japan and Germany are victorious in the Second World War, with the West Coast controlled by Japan and the East Coast controlled by Germany. What this alternate history in fact realizes is the very real situation of tricoastal logic in California, as figure for America, situated between Japan and West Germany. As
is well known, both Japan and West Germany emerged already during the 1950s and 1960s as the second and third largest economic powers in the world, only a couple of decades after devastating defeats in the Second World War. The full cultural weight of their techno economies would be felt by the 1970s. This Phoenix rise of the former Axis Powers, now turned officially techno-pacifist, would indeed be maintained over the next decades, with enormous consequences for the imaginations of science fiction and techno culture. In terms of the tricoastal economic structure, this system has been maintained up to the present economic crisis of 2009, which has seen the rapid ascendancy of China and India to unseat Japan and Germany as the second and third largest economic powers.

But as we shall see for the period of this study from the 1970s through the 2000s, this tricoastal logic is central to the Californian view of the world. It is exemplified in Ridley Scott’s _Blade Runner_ (1982), the classic Dick film of cyberpunk. This film reflects in macro-social terms Dick’s world of _The Man in the High Castle_ more closely than it does the novel on which the story is ostensibly based, _Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?_ Countering the tendency to criticism of Scott’s masterpiece, I would argue this is one of many examples in which the film is, in a certain sense, richer than Dick’s book. Its mix consists of a Los Angeles populated by Asians, primarily Chinese, with the spooks of Japanese techno-Geishas in the atmosphere, but also infiltrated by Teutonic replicants. The film seizes on the tricoastal exception against Dick’s examples of bicoastal logic to explore the contemporary world as future dystopia, with fascinating implications that I will explore in the final chapter.

That the defeated Axis powers had so quickly rebounded was a source of pride as well as fear for the Californian view: pride in the perceived benevolence of the United
States and fear regarding possible residuals of militarism and revenge in the defeated foes. The cultural presence of the former Axis powers became palpable around and in California. It was their presence, an exceeding reservoir of science fiction and techno culture, that resulted in both Japanese and German engineering becoming engineered fantasies of alternate and spooky tech-no-futures against Californian happy-end science fiction.

Globally, this tricoastal logic can be viewed in macro-form through the northern capitalist geographies of late modernity. Under these terms, the three coasts take on the expanded geographic sense of (1) the United States-Canada, (2) Western Europe (Germany, Benelux, England, France, Scandinavia), and (3) East Asia (Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan). These three Northern Coasts have engaged in intense processes of technological exchange, a tricoastal logic to be distinguished from the three biographical coasts of this preface. They each emerge as reservoirs for science fiction and film, which during the Cold War were to be juxtaposed with the socialist science fictions of the similarly northern adversary, the Eastern Bloc, and the future-primitive pop imaginations of China and India. In other words, this system theorizes the production of Three Coasts of capitalist First World techno culture and electronic music within the Cold War age of Three Worlds (Denning). East and West Germany’s position in the clash of Coastal-Capitalist and Soviet-Socialist sci-fi has had fascinating repercussions still felt today, and with which any study of German electronic music must wrestle.

As already indicated by *Blade Runner*, the rich history of Hollywood science fiction film and its soundtracks, both classical and electronic, are also central to this intermedial study. Film history plays an important part in the construction of sci-fi
German identity. The Hollywood sensurround contributes both to the reception of music in multimedial forms and to the concretization and problematization of identity through film narratives. It constitutes part of the history of an aesthetic problematic that I term “the Teutonic,” in this case the representation of German industrial culture through the Californian culture industry.

The Teutonic situates the problem of technology, and by necessity electronic music, within the history of German identity. In its broad history, the conception of the Teutonic flips the classical-romantic designation of Germanness as “spirit” to reveal this spirit as material technology. In its history as term, the popular discourse of “the Teutonic” initially resulted from an explosion of Teutonic coinages, from Teutophile to Teutonomania, in Britain during the nineteenth century, especially following German industrialization. The term has since developed its most extensive theoretical underpinnings in the twin theoretical wings of my own project. In exile theory, one of its earliest uses was a translation from the English to the German by Klaus Mann as an ironic reference to his father Thomas (Der Wendepunkt 91). In science fiction, the Teutonic is featured in Philip K. Dick, Stanley Kubrick, and others. These wings, in fact, come together in Adorno’s 1965 radio talk “On the Question: ‘What is German?’” This talk provides a central reflection on Teutonic history. While refusing to answer the German question, Adorno explores the rise of German industry and power, offering a key formulation of the Teutonic problematic: “If one is permitted to speculate that something is specifically German, then it is this interpenetration of what is magnificent, not contenting itself with any conventional boundaries, with what is monstrous” (208). For this study, the history of the magnificent and monstrous as they have been
translated in technological terms, primarily in cyborg and robot tropes, will be of central importance.

The Teutonic tropes in questions of German identity lead me to address a final concept in Adornian critical aesthetics employed for this study: physiognomics. Adorno developed throughout his writings a “social physiognomics” of art (Buck-Morss 175-77). Most significant is the link of “physiognomics” to his twin writings, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy* and *Current of Music: Elements of a Radio Theory.* Physiognomics addresses here both the amplifications of instrumental music and a key institution of technological communication. He employs the term in a multimedial fashion to show how music and sound develop distinct gestures, resembling facial expressions, while using physiognomy as technological critique. Adorno explores how both Mahler’s compositions and radio run in historical parallel with and yet critique the classic notion of physiognomy as the stereotypical visual representations of identity and otherness.

Utilizing these ambivalent links, I aim to draw out the post-1960s technological physiognomics of popular electronic music as sonic science. The study will explore the dialectic of gestural personalities and the impersonally machinic in electronic music practices, further elaborating these issues through the multimedial study of characters in film and literary narrative. The insistence on the analysis of film, both image and sound, for constructions of German identity is a result of the audio-visual physiognomics of electronic pop culture as the surgical recording of faces and the surgical gestures of sound labs. Like Adorno’s use of the archaic term, the Teutonic will echo from the past as critique of the present, while rubbing identity against the grain.

---

8 For an extensive analysis of radio physiognomics in Adorno, see Mowitt, *Radio*, especially chapter 1 (22-47).
On the other side of physiognomy’s archaic gestures, a concept from a quite different aesthetic and theoretical tradition will be employed to address issues of identity in sonoric imaginings of the future: sonic fiction. Coined by Kodwo Eshun in *More Brilliant than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction*, his classic study of Afrofuturist music, sonic fiction serves to theorize the distinct stories of the African diaspora as told through sound and recording, as well as offering, to borrow Adorno’s radio term, an electronic “voice.” Eshun explores the critique of primitivism and authenticity enacted by sonic technologies, while laying out the intricate cultural exchanges between America, Africa, and Europe.

While science fiction has been a distinct marker of the West Coast, my interest in sonic fiction as concept is born out of a fascinating puzzle: Why has there been a comparative lack science fiction from Germany in either film or literature, in particular as export, since the Second World War? While there were certainly important examples, German science fiction remained hampered by outside competition. Though some significant writers in the classical modern period existed, particularly Kurd Laßwitz and Hans Dominik, no German science fiction writer achieved an international breakthrough. In the postwar period, American and British science fiction dominated the market in West Germany, while Soviet, Polish, and Czechoslovakian science fiction played important roles in East Germany. Thus, while the role of German science fiction should in no way be discounted, electronic music is here posited as a cultural practice, with distinct popular success in Germany and abroad, that deals with the politics of technology and imaginings of the future with respect to German culture.

---

9 For a thorough English-language study of Laßwitz and Dominik, as well as postwar trends, see Fischer. For a detailed study of East German science fiction, see Fritzsche.
In this cultural exchange of the Teutonic and sonic fiction, the view from California is again appropriate. There exists a long history of sonic fictions broadcast between California and Germany. My prior proclamation as a Beach Boy is indicative. The great founding track of German electronic pop, Kraftwerk’s “Autobahn” from 1974, is itself partly a study in bicoastal sonic fiction. The track established the elective affinity between Düsseldorf techno godfathers Kraftwerk and the prototypical Californian surfers, the Beach Boys. Specifically, Kraftwerk translates the Beach Boys’ 1964 auto track “Fun, Fun, Fun” to “Fahr’n, Fahr’n, Fahr’n” (drive, drive, drive), while identifying station links between “surfer waves” and “radio waves.” Though the Californian music coast arguably recedes into the background in German music history following this track, we shall see its continued effects in film and literature…

So as a final note from the pre-1968 period of Californian-German cultural exchange, and as combination of physiognomy and sonic fiction, I would like to return to a Dick novel that offers a Teutonic fiction of German identity and electronic music that will echo throughout the dissertation. An implicit Californian answer to Doctor Faustus, this novel’s central significance is imprinted in this dissertation’s title, Teutonic Time-Slip. I will thus need to tarry with this novel for some time, as it offers a true sci-fi and exile prelude to the Teutonic outland of electronic music. I will draw out the constellation it offers as a foundation for 1968-2009 electronic pop study to follow, offering a concluding note to the Californian view.

The novel is Martian Time-Slip, published in 1964, immediately following the tricoastal success of The Man in the High Castle. It was, in fact, published in the same year as The Beach Boys’ “Fun, Fun, Fun” and as such marks 1964 as the great
inaugural year of Californian broadcasts to Germany in anticipation of the post-1968 electronic era. Though *High Castle* garnered popular attention in its investigation of Nazi horror as alternate history, *Martian Time-Slip* tackled the foundations of postwar German history in order to explore the Teutonic question with the utmost subtlety. Electronic music and media play central roles, and the mix of multiple heritages here is singular. Though a Californian of English and Scots-Irish heritage, Dick was profoundly interested in music, technology, and German identity; he was proud to share the same birthday as Beethoven, and in the spirit of Wagner, Dick even gave his second daughter a rather un-Californian name: Isolde Freya.\(^\text{10}\)

In *Martian Time-Slip*, Dick’s central German character, Manfred Steiner, represents perhaps his greatest achievement in addressing the historical stakes of German music, and in particular, German electronic music. Who is Manfred Steiner? He is none other than an autistic, mute, and ostensibly “unmusical” West German techno-child living on Mars. He lives on the Martian colony of New Israel in Camp Ben-Gurion (49), a camp for “anomalous children.” In brief, Manfred Steiner crystallizes Teutonic history as a musical-military science fiction, and this crystallization is reflected in the name. In musical terms, Manfred Steiner evokes the film/TV composer Fred Steiner, the exiled “Father of Film Music” Max Steiner, anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner (a central inspiration for exiled conductor-composer Bruno Walter, who is mentioned in a key musical moment in the novel), and Lord Byron’s *Manfred*, later set to music by Schumann and Tchaikovsky. Yet Manfred Steiner also announces both an ironic and tragic military history. Manfred literally means “man of peace” yet recalls the Red Baron Manfred von Richthofen, the greatest airborne Teutonic military legend. At the same

\(^{10}\) For a thorough analysis of Dick’s employment at Berkeley music shops and his German and musical influences, see the biographies by Rickman and Sutin.
time, Steiner marks the cataclysmic end of Teutonic military history, as it references Felix Steiner, Waffen-SS officer of the “Army Detachment Steiner.” The Steiner unit was subject to the final, deranged attack order by Hitler during the Battle of Berlin, which subsequently attained YouTube fame as the most parodied or “translated” scene of the Berlin Republic’s international blockbuster *Downfall* (2004).

Thus, the history of modern music and industry is crystallized in a single name, the musical man of peace with a stone cyborg face:

> The way [Manfred] sprinted about, on the tips of his toes, as if dancing to some unheard music, some tune from inside his own mind whose rhythms kept him enthralled. We are so pedestrian, compared to him…. Leaden. We creep along like snails, while he dances and leaps, as if gravity does not have the same influence on him as it does on us. Could he be made from some new and different kind of atom? (43)

The speed of Manfred’s autistic perceptions gives him the ability to see the future, which later proves problematic. Manfred’s antagonist is a Scandinavian-American entrepreneur named Arnie Kott, who wishes to utilize Manfred’s visions for economic purposes. Kott is an old man American, traditionalist in musical understanding: “Arnie Kott owned the only harpsichord on Mars” (87). Ostensibly, this conservative taste in traditional music is in tune with Manfred, since the boy’s future vision is of a real-estate project called AM-WEB, named after “Alle Menschen werden Brüder” (All Men Become Brothers), the famous Schiller phrase in Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy” movement in his Ninth Symphony. Yet both Kott and Manfred fear AM-WEB (thus, the novel addresses the “Revocation of the Ninth Symphony” made famous in *Doctor Faustus*).

The musical foundation of the conflict between Manfred and Arnie is later confirmed. An extraordinary moment inaugurates the postwar problem of new music; Arnie hears the following when sending an encoded message:
But it was in code, alright, and his dearest: the machine had put the semantic units into a catfight-like parody of contemporary electronic music. Arnie, hearing the whistles, growls, beeps, hoots, hums, laughed until tears ran down his cheeks; he had to go off to the bathroom and slap cold water on his face to stop himself.

Then, back at the encoder, he carefully marked the box into which the spool went:

_Song of the Wind Spirit, A Cantata_
_By Karl William Dittershand_

That composer, Karl William Dittershand, was the current favorite back on Earth among the intellectuals, and Arnie detested the man’s electronic so-called music; he was a purist, himself: his tastes stopped firmly at Brahms. (115-6)

Arnie sets traditional and electronic music in opposition. Furthermore, Arnie’s comparison of the cacophony and the fictional Dittershand has a clear historical referent: Karlheinz Stockhausen’s 1955-6 “Gesang der Jünglinge” [Song of Youths]. As a science fiction youth with a scrambled history, Manfred becomes figure of the pop cultural shift in electronic music – a marked prelude to the 1968-2009 period…

Yet the cultural constellations are more intricate. Manfred’s scrambled time sense later results in his body rapidly aging; he dies an old man while mentally still a boy. Manfred is saved from a bad death, however, because he is able to communicate with native Martians, known as “Bleekmen,” especially a Bleekman named Heliogabalus. The Bleekmen possess telecommunicative abilities like Manfred, and presumably with their help, he is able to return home to his family and experience a peaceful cyborg passing:

_The living room was filled with Bleekmen. And in their midst… part of a living creature, an old man only from the chest on up; the rest of him_

---

11 A passage from Dick’s later novel, _Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said_, mentions “Gesang der Jünglinge” explicitly, confirming his interest in the piece: “He detested Wagner. Wagner and those like him, such as Berlioz, had set music back three centuries. Until Karlheinz Stockhausen in his ‘Gesang der Jünglinge’ had once more brought music up to date” (101).
became a tangle of pumps and hoses and dials, machinery that clicked away, unceasingly active. It kept the old man alive. (260)

Manfred points to the Bleekmen and says, “I am with my friends” (261), and dies shortly thereafter. This final scene represents none other than Dick’s Californian vision of Germany history and identity in 1964: on the one hand, blinded by the weight of the past and desirous of entropic speed to the future; on the other hand, incredibly old and worn out by the weight of past crimes, the central crime of genocide, and the destruction of the previous world wars.

In fact, the premature oldness of Manfred is at its deepest level none other than a representation of the totality of Teutonic history. A school scene on Mars confirms this totality. When Manfred visits the school, he converses specifically with a “teaching machine” simulacra of Tiberius, the Roman Emperor who as a general, along with Germanicus, first conquered the Germanic tribes and established the Roman Empire’s northern boundary. As mentioned, Manfred is also helped by a Martian named Heliogabalus, the name of a deranged and sexually deviant Roman emperor who worshipped a Sun God.

Dick thus uses the encounter with Manfred and Tiberius, amidst this bizarre Martian tale of the space age, to return to the first moment when the Teutonic tribes and Germania were being named and demarcated. Apparently, if I am an Old Boy of California, then Manfred is the Eldest Boy of Germany. Yet at the same time, Dick inaugurates the pop cultural turn toward electronic music through a tricoastal perspective, reinforced in the final scene of techno-child Manfred together with the Bleekmen. The native Martians are, in fact, analogous to African-Americans in the context of Dick’s engagement with the Civil Rights Movement and the counterculture.
This association is confirmed by Manfred’s antagonist Arnie, who spews racist insults and degrades the Martians as “Bleekman niggers.” Heligabalus is supposed to tune Arnie’s harpsichord, but instead he has musical telecommunication with Manfred.

Dick’s Teutonic time-slips in this strangely beautiful Martian tale thus offer outlandish possibilities for new constellations of pop culture. A future-primitive dialectic between Afrofuturistic and German sonic fiction is posited by Dick here in 1964, set on alien landscapes. I would go so far as to claim that Dick anticipates here the Afro-Germanic intersections of electronic music that will arise in the 1970s through the exchanges between Kraftwerk, Afrika Bambaataa, Juan Atkins, and others, to be discussed in the first chapter. The problematics of German cultural life suddenly break up bicoastal logic by, in this case, casting us both into the Cold War and the history of the Black Atlantic. Through its connections to electronic music, Dick’s vision represents Germany as intertwined with African-American culture, and global techno culture in general, in its attempts to construct a new German popular culture. This African-American history already had precedence in the German pop affinities for jazz and rock that were particularly strong between the 1920s and 1960s. Its new age would be represented by electronic music, envisioned by Dick in the Teutonic-electronic cyborg Manfred and his African-American partner Heliogabalus. Whether such utopian visions of cultural exchange would be realized historically is another matter. Nevertheless, the novel offers an ideal tale that has represented progressive potential in German cultural life since the 1970s.

In reading Dick’s literary mix, I realize that California has left significant traces in the musical choices of my own analysis. I remind the reader of my roots in German-influenced happy hardcore and trance scenes of California. I indeed will often focus in
this study on trance and hardcore music. It was only later that these affinities would be augmented through more direct encounters with Afrofuturist histories and sonic fictions, specifically through Detroit-Chicago techno cultures. Above all, these encounters helped me to engage Martian Time-Slip’s positing of African-American and German musical exchange. Thus, to explore this distinct dialogue between Afrofuturistic and Germanic sonic fiction, let us turn to the next biographical Coast on our tour.

2. Minnesota: North by Midwest

Show Biz: You came, of course, from Minneapolis. There are a lot famous American writers who have come from the Midwest. Is there something about the Midwest that induces you to go into fantasy?
Joel Coen: Yes, it’s extremely dull.

I arrived in Minnesota in a green Ford Escort in the early fall of 2004, the beginning of a four-year-long journey of graduate school at the first great metropolis on the Mississippi River, the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Minnesota is a study in extreme climates from subfreezing winters to unbearably humid summers. Winter often takes precedence in the popular imagination, as evidenced by the Coen brothers’ classic film of Minnesota, Fargo: From the future noir of Blade Runner’s Los Angeles, we arrive in the white noir of Fargo’s Minnesota. Indeed, a noir of snow and ice, Minnesota as place conjures up its own fantasies of the North. Its sizable population of Scandinavian immigrants reinforces this Northern imagination, though the German immigrant population in the region is even greater, reflected in the name of the capital of

---

12 Studies of the north have resurfaced in recent years; for example, the Institute of Northern Studies at the Leeds Metropolitan University sponsored a conference in 2008 on "Music and Idea of North." For the most extensive study of the north to date in a literary-poetic context, see Davidson.
neighboring North Dakota: Bismarck. Minnesota has long had to negotiate this image of North. Indeed, it is in the extreme North by the American standards of the Lower Forty-Eight States, while the great expanses of Canada lie north of it.

However, it is also a mark of pride that Minnesota is the source of the Mississippi River. This might ideally make it stand as the “heart” of America. With this fortuitous fact, Minnesota is, like its neighboring states, not of the north, but the great heart of the country: the “Midwest.” Nevertheless, the two sides, or out-sides, of the East and West Coast can reverse this source of pride. A negative side of the Midwest designation is accordingly that, by comparison to California’s mountainous geography, Minnesota is part of the vast literal flatness of Middle America. This is the center that is often ridiculed as “fly-over country,” a stereotype subtly affirmed and parodied by Joel Coen in the epigraph to this section. The ease of travel over fly-over country is reflected in that Minnesota seems far away from conflict and excitement. The innocuous border of Canada lies to the North, and to the East, South, and West stretch out the open borders of America for thousands upon thousands of flat, flat miles…

Why these observations? Here is the crux with reference to German electronic music: What I find interesting in this tension of the North by Midwest in Minnesota is its relative comparison to Germany, which simultaneously occupies positions of Middle Europe and Northern Europe (Mitteleuropa and Nordeuropa). These shifting perceptions can be explored through the comparison of rivers that spill across borders and unsettle fixed visions. From my position on the banks of the Mississippi River, I will thus examine postwar popular culture, urban-industrial life, and electronic music on the Rhine River and its subsidiaries the Main and the Ruhr. These regions intersect with other Rhine
music scenes in Switzerland, France, and the Benelux countries. A significant portion of postwar European pop, important for the construction of new identities associated with the European Union, was developed along its banks. That the political geography of the Rhine necessitates a multinational and multilingual perspective on popular culture, indeed the Rhine by no means belongs to Germany, constitutes the progressive demand that the focus of cultural analysis not be Germanocentric.

In the context of the Rhine, the notion of the North by Middle are designations that have often occupied the imagination of both Germans and outlanders regarding Germany. Yet they have also been the occasion for numerous conflicts of positioning. The Middle European position is particularly fraught. While the European Union strives for movements and open borders as free and sanguine as Minnesota has enjoyed for over a century, the numerous countries surrounding Germany have meant that the tug of the Middle is not a settled Midwest, but a constant violent tug towards East and West. Middle Europe is a particularly troublesome notion utilized by German conservatives and nationalists to argue that Germany should indeed occupy the center. To counter this tendency, the West-European-oriented Middle (a true European Midwest) was the stated goal of West Germany in the immediate decades following the war, expressed by the new capital Bonn. To a limited extent, the governments of the Berlin Republic have followed this trajectory. However, the open markets of Eastern Europe and Germany’s growing conservatism regarding the economies of member nations in the European Union has also led to the return of new conflicts in Germany’s place as Middle Europe, with major shifts occurring precisely in 2009.

There is a comparative point between Germany and the North by Midwest that is equally as striking as this ideological and geographic tug. It concerns music. My move to
Minnesota offered, in particular, an encounter with the North by Midwest techno cultures stretching from Minnesota to Ohio. I came in contact with techno cultures more oriented toward dystopia and industrial heritage, which veered in important ways away from the Californian rave cultures I knew in terms of both temperament and historical associations. In particular, the move to Minneapolis allowed for the encounter with the distinct cultural exchange between North by Midwest Europe and the American Midwest, represented primarily by two cities: Chicago and Detroit. These cities offered musical innovations and subsequent heritages of house and techno during the 1980s that have been a central source of influence on German musicians up to the present day. Indeed, it is Chicago, the still-thriving metropolis of late modernity, and Detroit, symbol of decaying industrial prowess, that cast a stimulating shadow over the traditions of North by Midwest European electronic music. These associations suddenly opened up a Third Coast in my biographical studies, that of the Great Lakes. Indeed, the shores of these lakes are themselves often termed the forgotten “Third Coast” of the United States and Canada.

In terms of industrial heritage, Detroit is the chief symbolic metropolis of the region located primarily along the region of the Great Lakes known as the Rust Belt. This area includes industrial cities that were of importance to electronic music history such as Akron and Cleveland, which featured the new wave bands Devo and Pere Ubu in the 1970s and 1980s. The cities of the Rust Belt recall the industrial cities of Middle and Northern Europe that are themselves struggling with technological transformation. Such associations are possible because the North by Midwest experienced the full weight of the industrial expansions and wars of the nineteenth century in a way comparable to Europe. Furthermore, the twentieth century saw these conflicts played out on a scale
that carried both the promises and tragedies of industrialization, socialism, and labor union organization, which are again comparable to Europe. While major cities of pop culture will be examined throughout this study, in particular the exchanges between Berlin, London, and New York, my comparative study of the Rust Belt with what I will term the *Rhine Belt* will help to illuminate relatively neglected urban regions of Germany in the study of techno culture.

This is a story of industry that is distinct from the bicoastal logic as theorized by Rickels. It emphasizes a particular form of tricoastal logic as structured specifically by my biography. In short, these local musical histories of the Midwest reveal the geographic and cultural poverty of Rickels’s slip between “California” and “America.” The music of Detroit techno, in particular, takes its inspiration from both industrial production and dystopia. It is one that brings new dimensions to the music of the Black Atlantic as theorized by Paul Gilroy and the sonic fictions of Afrofuturism as narrated by Kodwo Eshun. Indeed, among other cross-coastal analyses, both Paul Gilroy and Kodwo Eshun include fascinating analyses of Afro-Germanic relationships.\(^\text{13}\)

What is crucial here about the German techno exchange with the North by Midwest is that it explodes the notion of a stable white European musical heritage, both in popular and experimental electronic music. The North by Midwest focus consists primarily of exchanges with African-American producers from Detroit and the South Side of Chicago, though white and Latin-American producers, among others, play significant roles. It is an industrial heritage of which even my vehicle of travel, the meager Ford Escort, is a representative, given its site of design, if not production, in Motown. In this context, German engineering and Detroit engineering offer mutual inspiration, at the

\(^{13}\) See Gilroy 111-45 and Eshun 78-92.
same time that both utilized various synthesizers of Japanese engineering. The potentials of such industrial soundscapes will be excavated in a comparative analysis. In terms of cultural history, the black urban experience of the post-industrial North by Midwest meets the white German experience of postwar ruins and urban reconstruction in North by Middle Europe, while Germany is itself transformed by new currents of immigration and multicultural debates.

Yet aside from the diverse heritage of Detroit and Chicago and other North by Midwest cities, the rural Midwest also remains associated with white Americans in a way comparable to North by Middle European associations with white Europeans. My travels in Minnesota and the Midwest can thus also be read as, in part, a dialectical study of constructions of whiteness when compared to my travels in Germany and Northern Europe. These constructions of American versus European whiteness will be critiqued through the engagement of the histories and experiences of exiles, expats, and immigrants. In other words, migration and immigration are read together through the advanced practices of expat mobility in the late modern period.

In terms of the white immigrant experience and distinctly Northern European heritage, the reflections on Minnesota return me to the science fiction writer from my Californian hometown of Orinda: Poul Anderson. A Danish-American, Anderson grew up primarily in Minnesota and studied physics at the University of Minnesota in the 1940s before moving to California for the rest of his life to write science fiction. However, Minnesota and California rarely appear in his writings, an absent presence comparable to Thomas Mann’s California. Anderson’s writing is marked by the exploration of a classic conservative logic of an immigrant who looks to Europe for history and heritage. He regularly presents his imaginings of the white North through science fiction, dreaming.
constantly of another time and place: Europe, and Scandinavia in particular. His imaginary places of history, myth, and cosmic travel in Northern Europe cover an extraordinary range from the medieval *Broken Sword* (1954) to the supermodern *Tau Zero* (1972). Yet Anderson also explodes the notion of a stable heritage by offering such mixes of fantasy and science fiction as *The High Crusade* (1961). In this novel, he develops the aesthetic principle of the “creative anachronism,” where medieval Europeans are swept away on spaceships, reflecting the lost possibility of a return to origins in the European immigrant experience – which is then cast through the geographies and journeys of the America he explores.

These concerns regarding heritage, and Anderson’s idiosyncrasies, became the inspiration for an extraordinary short story, “Waterspider” (1964), by none other than Anderson’s friend, Philip K. Dick. In this short story, the Berkeley author Dick, fresh from finishing *The Man in the High Castle* and about to publish *Martian Time-Slip*, takes the Orinda-author Anderson as the main protagonist of his tale. Dick celebrates Anderson’s creative anachronisms at the same time that he brings Anderson down to earth by exploring the untold biographies and earthly histories of science fiction authors on the Coast. We shall see a similar descent toward earthly history between 1968 and 1974 in the German sonic fiction of Kraftwerk.

In Dick’s story, Anderson appears as a historical figure at the twelfth annual World Science Fiction Convention in San Francisco. In the world of “Waterspider,” it turns out that Anderson, as well as all the writers of Golden Age science fiction, have accurately predicted the future. He is kidnapped and transported into the future by an advanced people who need his help with a scientific problem. Anderson is at first deeply

---

14 Anderson cofounded a medieval living history club called The Society for Creative Anachronism.
confused. In this creative anachronism, Anderson experiences a Nordic migrant perplexity regarding the time and place in which he is located. Dick offers a humorisitic mix of a Wagnerian love-death and techno-cosmic future. In a conversation with Fermeti, a man from the future, the Dane Poul Anderson responds as follows:

“Um,” he said, “what do you mean ‘my time’? Am I dead?” He looked morose now. “I thought it would be more along the lines of Valhalla, with Vikings and such. Not futuristic.”

“You’re not dead, Mr. Anderson,” Fermeti said. “What you’re facing is the culture-syndrome of the mid twenty-first century.” (228)

This Wagnerian-Danish encounter represents two forms of bicoastal logic between Europe and California: Anderson, with his obsession for fantastic Viking space travels while settled in Orinda, and Dick, with his obsession for German culture and music while traveling the Californian coast. The absent California of Anderson’s bicoastal logic, daydreaming in suburbia over the hills from tumultuous Berkeley, is reanimated, however, by the all-too-present California of the San Francisco sci-fi convention, refined through the tricoastal logic of The Man in the High Castle. Dick and Anderson, two forms of engagement with science fiction whiteness in multicultural California, articulate the challenge of ethnic codings with regard to techno culture, sonic fiction, and the imagining of the future when applied to Germany, Europe, and the North by Midwest.

To conclude this comparative study of American coasts, let us not forget that Minnesota and California have had other sci-fi meetings of technological whiteness carried to the absurd extremes of Hollywood hyperreality. Though in many respects a study in contrasts, Minnesota and California met on the silver screen in the form of Jesse “The Body” Ventura and Arnold Schwarzenegger, the bodybuilding governors of American history. In Predator (1987) and The Running Man (1987), the two über-stars

15 This obsession took on such a degree that Dick translated his English name, Dick, as though it were a German last name meaning “Fat,” for the novel VALIS.
together represented the heights of muscled sci-fi action. *The Running Man* featured one of the great moments in this history: a gloriously “staged” wrestling match between the future governors, Jesse as “Captain Freedom” against Cali-Teuton Arnold as the underdog-protagonist “Ben Richards,” to the tune of a Munich electronica soundtrack by Harold Faltermeyer. The fight ends with Jesse throwing Arnold into a wall of spikes and letting out a triumphant laugh.

Again, strange mixes indeed…

But let us finally arrive in Germany after this long tour of the West Coast and the Great Lakes. To this end, we shall begin at a place just mentioned, which Americans sometime associate with all of Germany: Munich. But this is not the Munich of the Oktoberfest and Lederhosen Beer Hall parties as is often represented in tourist brochures. The Munich we are exploring is a techno sci-fi Munich that is decidedly a part of the digital age. This is the city as it stands in the pop-media novel published in 1998: *Gut laut*, which is roughly translated as *Nice Sound* or *Good and Loud*.¹⁶ The novel is by Andreas Neumeister, an author decidedly focused on Munich electronic music, or alternatively, as he writes it: *Mjunik* music.¹⁷ “Mjunik,” the German phonetic spelling of the English “Munich,” is the name of the city used in the currents of international travel.

The tourist fantasies of Europe are transformed and updated by Neumeister, becoming historically and sonically concrete with his reference to post-1960s electronic music in a novel that at the same time challenges the writing of history in an age of digital media. The author becomes a pop-media DJ who focuses on repetitions,

¹⁷ An anthology that reviews the history of Munich club culture even has the title *Mjunik Disco*, inspired by Neumeister. See Hecktor. See also my review, Nye, “Mjunik.”
samples, and cutups in his history of Mjunik music. These techniques are themselves deeply historical to the extent that they are appropriate to the media and music of Neumeister’s investigations. The novel largely concerns German electronic pop from Krautrock to techno, with emphasis on Mjunik’s history. This focus includes the first great flowerings of Mjunik electronic music during the late 1960s, represented by the Krautrock band Amon Düül and followed in the 1970s by the Eurodisco-duo Giorgio Moroder and Donna Summer, not to mention Moroder’s disco soundtrack to Metropolis. Gut laut is a novel of media research rather than a narrative with glamorous pop stories and biographies. Nothing really “happens”; the mixes and cutups of discussions regarding LP collections and pop research are the primary contents.

Yet some of the characters are important to the narrative. Indeed, I mention this novel of electronic music because, to a large extent, it deals with the reception of German electronic music by Americans, and specifically… a Minnesotan. In Gut laut, a German-American researcher named Carl, who comes from none other than the city of Minneapolis, is obsessed with German electronic music even more than the Germans are. This is quite appropriate. After all, to a significant extent, the history of German electronic music has been listened to and constructed by American and English journalists and fans.

Carl arrives in Munich from Minneapolis to meet the narrator, because he is writing an article on Krautrock. Carl is one of the “music-obsessed” (8), though such devotion is unremarkable because, according to the narrator, all of Munich is filled with “music-obsessed” individuals. Indeed, the representation of Munich, and to a larger extent Germany, is produced through music. In one scene, the narrator flashes back to a
conversation with a girlfriend named Melissa regarding the American obsession with German electronica, before returning to Carl:

Melissa, who moved to Berlin in 1990 to be with Stefan, told me enthusiastically about her mostly-Jewish friends from New York who were all totally into Krautrock and NDW records. She also told me about a certain man named Carl from Minnesota. She talked about Carl, who was establishing a list of German charts....

To Carl: Germs, Krauts, and Vegetables, a fourth toast to your fine European ancestors, a fifth toast to the first three lines of your glorious Krautland article. With my certain-to-be glorious guidance, nothing more can go wrong. (47)18

Carl's arrival in Munich and his establishing of “German charts” leads to a conversation between Carl and the narrator regarding Krautrock and Mjunik electronica that lasts virtually the entire book. As the narrator elegantly sums up: “The Kraut, The Rock, The Research” (37).19 The novel constructs a whacked-out Platonic dialogue of mixes and cutups between the Minneapolis Carl and the Mjunik narrator.

At the same time, in conversation with Carl, Neumeister reveals the failure of a conclusion to the research. What is conclusive is the cultural sublime of their musical obsessions in an age of technological and electronic media:

Drug-addicted demand for music, drug-addicted demand for always more, drug-addicted demand for always more awesome music, rabietic demand for unending music.... Four days in these sandstone hovels over the water. Where it all began. Learning globalese [ausländisch] with pop music! Perhaps the most important weeks of my life. We talked about real people, who for the rest of their lives could no longer hear anything else

---

18 “Melissa, die 1990 wegen Stefan nach Berlin gekommen war, erzählte begeistert von all ihren New Yorker, größtenteils jüdischen Freunden, die alle unglaublich scharf auf Krautrock- und NDW-Platten seien. Sie erzählte von einem Carl aus Minnesota. Erzählte von einem Carl, der eine German-Charts-Liste erstellt....
Zu Carl: Germs, Krauts and Vegetables, ein viertes Glas auf deine feinen europäischen Vorfahren, ein fünftes Glas auf die ersten drei Zeilen zu deinem sicher glorreichen Krautland-Artikel, mit meiner sicher glorreichen Fremdenführung kann eigentlich nichts mehr schiefgehn.”

19 “Das Kraut, der Rock, die Forschung.”
but the music of their mythical youth. To Carl: I am happy, today I am really happy. (10-11)²⁰

The mathematical-media sublime of sound recording is represented by the loss of time. There is simply not enough time to hear the mass quantities of music, let alone to listen to it closely. Like the “chainsmoker,” Neumeister constructs the notion of the “chainlistener” who knows the clock is ticking: “Music-obsessed chainlisteners are constantly running out of time. Music-obsessed chainlisteners always feel threatened. Music-obsessed chainlisteners still have to listen to as many records as possible at the Chainlistener Institute” (18).²¹ Tackling the amount of musical wealth, whether in Mjunik or all of Germany, thus appears an impossible task. The chainlisteners empty out their subjectivities along media chains in hopes of definitive results and the linking of it all together… but the chain never ends… The ellipsis thus announces itself as a formal principle in this dissertation. Philosophically understood, Neumeister’s notion of the chainlistener results in a new, eminently cultural, aesthetics of the sublime. The new aesthetic of the mathematical sublime is the overwhelming quantitative presence of recorded music, and likewise, the dynamic sublime reflects the qualitative transformation and amplification of music through recording. A mix of chainlistener and amplification that, as we shall see, meets in the DJ…


²¹ “Musikbesessene Kettenhörer leben ständig in schlimmstem Zeitmangel. Musikbesessene Kettenhörer sind immer gehetzt. Musikbesessene Kettenhörer müssen in der Kettenhörerzentrale heute noch so viele Tonträger durchhören wie möglich.”
I have arrived in Berlin to write the dissertation. While I am not based in Munich, I too am Carl to a certain extent. However, Carl’s Munich is not Munich. My Berlin is not Berlin. *Gut laut* presents a structure of identity that informs this dissertation, layered as artificially as a Black Forest cake. Indeed, as stated, Carl’s Munich is neither München or Munich but *Mjunik*. This spelling, like Mjunik music, is the German pronunciation of Munich when presenting the city to the primarily English-speaking outland. It is a hybrid and outside-oriented form of identity that many Mjunikers strive to attain, demonstrating in the very name of the city the filters of inside and outside. Indeed, this orientation reflects the ideal of a new Germany as represented in an iconic postwar photograph of an innocent-looking German girl who wears the phonetic title of Miss Germany: “Mies Schörmeni” (Anderlik and Kaiser 250). *Gut laut*’s Mjunik provides a prime example of the import-export dialectic of identity, of which tourism as the traffic in introductions is but the superficial preface. In this spirit of welcoming outlanders, Berlin’s pop posters welcomed me upon arrival in 2008 with the signs “Be.Berlin.” The signs not only welcomed but implored one to join: “Be.Berlin.” However, these campaigns did not know that before I could “Be.Berlin,” I had to “Be.Braunschweig.” To explain, let us truly arrive on the third and final Coast of our biographic and geographic tour…
Image 3: Be.Berlin.
Promotional campaign “Graffiti” on the Berlin TV-Tower. 2010.
3. Germany: Good Travels, Fleeting Thoughts

Scene 3: Large factory lights are shining down on me. The happy hardcore pop of Blümchen’s NDW-remix “Herz an Herz” reverberates out of the loudspeakers, to be followed by Scooter’s “Back in the UK” and Mr. President’s “Coco Jamboo,” or maybe Whigfield’s “Sexy Eyes” and Dune’s “Hand in Hand.” It is May 1996 in the city of Braunschweig. I am a 17-year-old American exchange student and Euroboy in training. The stench of beer, French Fries (with ketchup and mayonnaise), cigarettes, and Euroteen sweat is engulfing. The stench mixes with the laser lights. This is the Jolly Joker, a club unlike any other…

Or rather, an institution. A teen-world within a world. The Jolly Joker is a haven for youth in Braunschweig (a.k.a. Brunswick) and the Lower Saxon region. Part social center and part music club, it is a Großraumdiskothek [disco complex]. It only costs three D-Marks to enter – “Nice Price.” Each Euroboy and Eurogirl has the following offerings: a massive pop dance floor, an alternative floor that plays primarily metal and rock, an ice-cream parlor, a food court, a beer garden, roughly eight bars… and even a movie theater. On the main factory dance floor, the variously categorized hits and genres are played in roughly 20-minute sessions: pop, hip-hop, Schlager, gothic-darkwave, techno-Eurodance, etc. It is the last of these that I look forward to most, though all provide delights.

Almost a year prior, I had shyly asked my host-brother and best friend how to dance. He said: “Just bend your knees to the beat.” Since then, my body has flipped out. For the first time in its short teen life, the body listens to music by means of dance. This night is no different. Having recently biked through the city with a group of school friends, the tense anticipation of entering the disco offered keen delights. Brunswick shines as a teen’s paradise, and I enjoy the freedoms of the German drinking age of 16 – but I am still a good Cali-Boy. From the remnants of 1980s campaigns: just say no; just dance. The year is winding up, and the dreaded return to Californian youth is looming. The oppression of teen freedom and decadence in the schools and institutions of Orinda will return. I avoid the future and focus on the present: the necessities of schoolwork; the fantasies of Eurodance and techno; and the flirtations with fellow students.

Prior to arriving in the Jolly Joker (or the Yoollie Yoakah, locally and jokingly pronounced), we had spent the day walking through downtown Braunschweig, passing through the Schlosspark (Palace Park) and the ancient Burgplatz (Castle Square). The square’s strangely Lutheran “Cathedral” signifies the Protestant-Catholic mix of the city; it holds a massive seven-branched candelabrum that Henry the Lion ordered for the city in the twelfth century. A few cannon balls from old wars with the Welfen royals are lodged in the cathedral walls. Similarly, in the park up the way, there are rolling ridges that are the results of World War II bomb craters, which now offer perfect terrain for BMX biking. Immediately north lies Wolfsburg, founded in 1938 as “The City of the Strength-Through-Joy Car at
Fallersleben” and today the massive center of Volkswagen: a capital of German Engineering. Immediately south of Braunschweig lies Wolfenbüttel, featuring the 400-year-old Herzog August Library where Leibniz and Lessing worked.

My teenage friends and I pass through the reconstructed medieval facades of the Castle Square on our way to the shopping district. We buy Haribo candies at Karstadt. We purchase the latest issue of Germany’s best and biggest teen magazine, BRAVO, which has been training generations of Euroboys and Eurogirls. Now it is training an American exchange student as well. The magazine includes info on techno and Eurodance; I thus decide at Mediamarkt to buy the CD compilation, Bravo Hits 13. Its rainbow lettering reflects the colorful glitz of pop images that flash from the magazine pages. I eat some Haribo, and I read from the film reports, hot love stories, sex advice, and its Eurodance feature news: Scooter, Blümchen, Dune, RMB, Culture Beat, Marusha, etc.

Now heading back toward Castle Square, the group sits down for a Euroteen moment. We hang out at Café Zeit and don’t care about history. We look through BRAVO and gossip endlessly. We are all attending the Free Waldorf School of Brunswick, a school founded on Rudolf Steiner’s anthroposophy, an esoteric system that has resonances with the New-Age movements in California. Its education and these travels have provided what I sorely lacked from American public schools: a relaxing pause… to think… and to feel. Braunschweig, as with many life experiences, was the introduction of beautiful contradictions: anthroposophy and techno culture – like a vegan on synthetic drugs. At this moment, with a mix of ancient beauty, shopping, friends, organic foods, and plastic-pop club offerings, and a Yollie Yoakah night that lies ahead, there is no place I would rather be than Braunschweig. In 1996, Braunschweig is both Old and New Brunswick, teen center of the old and new world…

But that mid-1990s moment was long ago: true yet faded. Many years later, in the summer of 2008 and after four years spent in the North by Midwest, I flew as an old boy from Minneapolis to Berlin, or to be precise: via New York and Frankfurt on Singapore Airlines. As stated, I am Sean and not Carl. This move marked the first extended stay in Germany since my high school exchange in Braunschweig in 1995 and 1996. It was during that year that I first discovered, and felt the liberation of, electronic pop. This flight in 2008 was a belated return: I would stay in Germany until the summer of 2011. Only one extended visit back on the California in the fall of 2010 interrupted this
expat life. The Bay Area and Los Angeles scenes that inaugurate the California section of this preface derive from that coastal interlude.

To have arrived in Berlin in 2008 was arguably to come to the techno capital of the world for that moment: the center of it all. The 2000s were a time of unprecedented focus of international techno life and media along the banks of the Spree. There was a sense in which, however, I already had lived in Berlin before moving here. I had visited the city many times in years prior. It began with a short 1995 visit, a family drive from Brunswick to Berlin to see the glistening silver sheen of Christo and Jean-Claude’s Wrapped Reichstag. Already during those visits, I felt welcomed by the city’s filth and people in the clichéd sense of “Be.Berlin,” though the Brunswick experience would inform a practice of rubbing my research against the grain of Berlin hype: to resist that so-called center of it all through travels to the Ruhr, Frankfurt, Saxony, and more.

Image 4: Ruhr tourist.
Sporting Cal visor and rave hoodie, I arrive at the industrial kinder gym of the Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord in the Ruhr Valley, a converted factory now used for cultural festivities and leisure. The techno games have begun.
In fact, it is a lovely cliché that my first introduction to techno city Berlin was as the most banal of rave tourists: visiting Love Parade 1999. This was a significant year by all accounts. It proved to be the largest Love Parade of all, a celebration of, apparently, 1.5 million people at the pinnacle of fin-de-millénnium Europe…

The 2008 arrival proved different and longer. The experiences and community I found in Berlin inform many of the insights in the following chapters. Indeed, important contacts to the music scene were made almost immediately upon arrival. However, my field research has a longer history. The writings that follow are informed not only by the year of exchange in Brunswick, but by the years spent in Scotland, the Czech Republic, and Denmark, respectively (each of which included repeated short visits to Germany). The European travels ultimately concluded with the extended stay in Berlin between 2008 and 2011. Finally, I found the tricoastal theme of European youth again not only in pop but in academic terms in the archive where I researched: Das Archiv der Jugendkulturen [The Archive of Youth Cultures].
As is by now perhaps clear, what I write is not ethnography in any strict sense: It is rather ethnography as literary autobiography and travel narrative. The benefit of literature and cultural studies in this context is that they offer writing modes that acknowledge neither borders nor limits, nor should the author conform to professional demands of scientific objectivity. The text of field research is continuously informed, reformed, and remixed by paratext and context, a key variation on the dialectic of the nonidentical. From the literary perspective, field research is only as good as its interpretation and description. In other words, it is only as good as the theoretical and linguistic vision of the interpreter. From the cultural perspective, field research is only as good as the structural variety and theoretical extremity of the experience. It requires a
combined approach of literature, philosophy, anthropology, and sociology. In this spirit, the author and musician Thomas Meinecke, who I will discuss later, published a collection of short stories in 2006 with the wonderful title of *Feldforschung*, exploring “field research” as a performative discourse of sexuality and identity.

The truth for me is that my research is not based on any single ethnographic fieldwork that can be demarcated. I aim to draw from the biographical, sociological, and virtual field before and after the interaction with the scene. This experience requires participant observation as everyday life. In other words, while acknowledging the central importance of field research, I attempt to challenge the scientific claims regarding such demarcations of the field. Nietzsche clearly implies that field research is caught up in the dialectics of the experiment as the “gay science,” for we perpetually turn the experiment on ourselves: we are “our experiments and guinea pigs” (*Gay Science* 253). I wish always to claim, “This project was built on a lifetime of field research.” For as stated, the strength of research is based on the context of life experience and the paratext of literary framing as much as it is based on the text of demarcated field research. I hope this introduction has provided an indication of such a possibility: of the theoretical field as the framing of actual field research.

Furthermore, the research for *Teutonic Time-Slip* is more directly an antidisciplinary ethnography. I am more of a travel writer than an ethnographer. The guilt of literary narrative, where aesthetics trumps ethics, is a necessary crime. There are no wavers; no forms to clear my notes on the subjects at hand; no conventional respect for the objects of knowledge. In a globalized world I am, as a tricoastal old boy, in the service of the gay science of experimental analysis at the same time that the project offers a critique of the experiment as instrumental reason. This critique necessitates a
working-through of the subject-object dialectic, so I intersperse my tales of research with personal travel tales that resonate with the material explored. My ethnographic training is in travel writing and the 24/7 experience of technologically mediated and industrially organized life and music.

These travel scenes reflect my belief that an impressionistic account of musical experiences told in literary form is essential to understanding music. If it is less scientific than music theorists of discourse, such as Jean-Jacques Nattiez in Music as Discourse, desire regarding what are viewed as the limitations of hermeneutic writings on music, then it is writing that at least attempts to reflect musical experience through the use of words as instruments with both sonic and semantic qualities. In short, it celebrates rather than circumscribes the poetic activity. The texts explore the varieties of subjective and interpretive experiences with music, itself always infected and inflected by other media and art forms, though the priority of analysis regarding the object must not be lost in the dialectic.

In sum, I approach this music as a scholar of literature, film, and cultural history with training in musicology and music history. The writings are swept along by both the dynamic and mathematical cultural sublime that reflected the enchantment of technical media and electronic music, as represented in Neumeister’s “chainlisteners,” but with the aim of new engagements with the grounds of history and subjectivity. The research is based on endless nights of surfing electronic and internet waves far too large in material for one human brain to cope, yet cope we do. These writings and Neumeister’s aesthetic are located in the overwhelming archival wealth of musical recordings and the historical transformation of electronic and print media between 1968 and 2009, though

22 See Nattiez’s distinction between hermeneutic “nonformalized” models of analysis (161-3) and formalized and intermediary models (163-7).
precisely, and this is where ethnography remains as crucial as it always was, by taking the knowledge from these archives out into the field…

4. Revisited: Start and Summation

The bicoastal and tricoastal logics explored here, both in theory and in biography, have been founded on a single notion: travel. In the introduction, I have conceived of travel primarily through outlandish filters, and four themes of travel as identity were announced in the opening paragraph: geographic, sonic, linguistic, and bodily. These terms were chosen with purpose; they reflect the themes of the chapters that follow. Indeed, travel is the central notion that ties, as we shall see, the chapters together. Travel is a defining practice of the late modern world, marking both modernity’s wonder and its sickness; I thus will historicize travel in the first chapter precisely through various modes of geography. In sum, the four chapters concern the following issues, which correspond to the terms listed above: supermodern soundscapes, instrumental sound and temporality, language and translation, and cyborg images. I hope to offer complex intermedial engagements with themes of German identity which, rather than offering standard histories of German electronic music, help contribute to new ways in which this music can be engaged. In the conclusion, I will return to the theme of the Teutonic outland, this time post-Kraftwerk, as we slowly proceed out of Germany.

Beyond these themes, the chapters consist of three primary elements in order to ground the social-cultural study of music and identity, as well as to reflect the subject-object dialectic of musical experience. They are the following: first, constellations and sedimented histories of musical tracks and media that explore a specific theme in relation to German identity and electronic music/media; second, the exploration of music
scenes, performance practices, and club life that address larger cultural, social, and theoretical issues; third, biographical travel vignettes that relate to the theoretical analysis of the first two elements, alternatively confirming or challenging the musical and cultural analyses.

The study of this time period, 1968 to 2009, is by no means comprehensive. However, I believe it is crucial to attempt a connection of diverse musical scenes of this period. As this study has proceeded, I have been struck by some continuities in the electronic music scenes between the 1970s and 2000s and the interconnected histories from Krautrock to Neue Deutsche Welle to techno. Equally, I have also encountered countless stories and scenes of electronic music that have yet to be addressed in German studies in the United States, and some of which upset the standard narratives of electronic music as told in Germany.

To be sure, a good deal has been written on Kraftwerk (Bussy; Flür; Albiez and Pattie), and for good reason, as this band’s artistic and cultural significance has only been confirmed over time. However, I believe it is crucial for German studies to move beyond the focus of this band. To be sure, Kraftwerk plays a role in each chapter of this dissertation, in part because in this 2009 moment I will explore the sedimentation of Kraftwerk and German electronic dance music more generally as a tradition. Yet I aim to develop, to propose at least one post here, post-Kraftwerk studies of German electronic music in the sense that I aim precisely to explore Kraftwerk’s legacy for constructions of German identity in electronic music; I will connect identity themes in Krautrock, Neue Deutsche Welle, Goth-Industrial, and electronic dance music from Eurodisco to club and
rave music (techno, house, trance, hardcore). However, this project is but an introduction to the wealth of material available from these scenes. Thus, this study is confined to case studies of music that assists the critical theorization of German identity and electronic music.

*Teutonic Time-Slip* might itself be thought of as a tour guide that hopefully leaves the reader wanting to travel more and perhaps revise the guide later. Yet as an appropriate tour guide, the first chapter will begin with an extended theoretical excursus on the notion of place: of Germany as place. Though as mentioned regarding Dick’s exploration of the historical tensions between dreams of modern travel and the historical topographies of California, a variety of descendents will occur here that set the place of Germany 1968-2009 within multiple political and geographic tensions. These tensions are only possible because of the variety of modes of transport, and their potential for acceleration...

---

23 For studies on Krautrock, see Cope and Kotsopoulos. For a study of Neue Deutsche Welle, see Döpfner and Garms; Graf; and Teipel. For goth and industrial studies in the context of postpunk, see Reynolds *Rip It Up*, and for later German developments, see Mühlmann; Speit; and Büßer. The latter two of these studies focus especially on a leftist critique of certain rightwing tendencies or bands that have been tolerated in the scene. For the history of EDM club cultures, see Reynolds, *Energy Flash*; Feige; and Denk and von Thülen.
Chapter 1 – Techno Tracks: From Breaking Borders to Walking in the Woods

Yes, it cannot be otherwise, I must have been born in the attic! Never mind your cellars and woodsheds – I’ll plump for the attic! Climate, native land, customs and usage – how indelible an impression do they make! Aye, they alone shape the citizen of the world both within and without! Whence comes that elevated feeling into my soul, that irresistible urge towards what is lofty? Whence that wonderfully rare facility in climbing, that enviable mastery of the boldest and most skilful leaps? Ah, what sweet melancholy fills my breast! The longing for my native attic stirs powerfully within me! I consecrate these tears to thee, fair fatherland – to thee do I dedicate this plaintively exultant mew! These leaps and bounds are in thy honour; there is virtue in them and patriotic courage! O native attic, thou grantest me many a little mouse in thy generosity, and what’s more, a person can snatch many a sausage and flitch of bacon out of the chimney, a person can catch many a starling and even a little pigeon now and then. ‘How mighty is my love for thee, O Fatherland!’

E.T.A. Hoffmann

The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr

According to common sense, the ground zero of the idea of nation is ostensibly the literal ground: the land and borders – in geographical and anthropological terms, the place. So I begin here, now having arrived in Germany and its capital Berlin.

Establishing music’s relation to a specific territory is to establish its rootedness in a specific place. However, sound is difficult to contain. Its speed, its echoes, and its ephemerality have only been augmented by the transportability of recorded sound and the transmissions of broadcast sound in late modernity. The ephemerality and the broadcasting of musical sound have put the possibility of a clear demarcation and setting of the borders of music and nation into question. Music’s relation to place proves to be extraordinarily complex and not at all obvious. With the problem of place in mind, I thus want to highlight a specific concept in this chapter in order to examine the transitions
between the literal, literary, and musical ground of a nation, in this case Germany: that concept is *the soundscape*.

As a late-modern coinage, the soundscape is extraordinary in part because it is an explicitly *geographic* concept. It signifies nothing less than a challenge to the aesthetic tradition that theorizes music as a “time-based art.” The soundscape can thus allow for an exploration of the topographies of Germany in explicitly musical terms as compared to my travels in the preface. However, I want to first tarry with the concept, because while the soundscape helps with the critique of traditional understandings of “place,” its history as term offers certain theoretical challenges. The Canadian composer, R. Murray Schafer, when coining the term, defined it broadly as “any acoustic field of study. We may speak of a musical composition as a soundscape, or a radio program as a soundscape or an acoustic environment as a soundscape” (7). Schafer was primarily concerned with acoustic environments as a way of developing a sonic ecology for 1970s nature movements. His definition, while mentioning “landscape” (7), does not delineate the philosophical-aesthetic implications of the soundscape’s critique of the primacy of time in classical aesthetic theories of music. The soundscape highlights precisely sound’s dimensions in the experience of place. In fact, the entirety of Schafer’s book is concerned with the relation of place and sound, or “sonography” (7-8) as he puts it, which he lays out in subtle detail.

Yet the concept of “place” will prove to be troublesome. In particular, Schafer’s environmentalism results in limitations to his aesthetic theory, especially when he makes anti-modern gestures against the contemporary soundscape. The acoustic field is explicitly linked to natural ecology. In this line, he coins the term “schizophonia” to critique the practice of splitting sound from its original source via electronic recording. He
also dialectically relates what he pejoratively terms the “lo-fi” soundscape of modern life to the fetishization of “hi-fi” sound recording through the refinements of electronic media. As he states, “The benefits of the electroacoustic transmission and reproduction of sound are well enough celebrated, but they should not obscure the fact that precisely at the time hi-fi was being engineered, the world soundscape was slipping into an all-time lo-fi condition” (88). While an important critique of the relation of sound recording to dystopian sound pollution, Schafer’s observations, made contemporaneously with the development of popular electronic music, do not clarify the historical conditions by which the term itself was made possible.

To Schafer’s critique, I would counter that there is a condition of possibility for the notion of the soundscape. This condition is grounded exactly in sound’s high fidelity, transportability, and recordability in the currents of electronic media. The advent of recording technology and the development of electronic music are intertwined with rather than juxtaposed to modernity’s attention to the physiognomics of environmental sound. This is clear in the work of John Cage, who was an important inspiration behind Schafer’s term. Cage’s experiments of opening the concert hall to the environments of sound and the development of electronic music, especially musique concrète, occurred in parallel. Once the telos of the mimetic drive for high-fidelity sound recording is achieved, environmental sound invades the concert hall while it is conversely dissected in soundproof studios. As stated, Schafer coined the term around the time that electronic music as popular culture was rapidly expanding, and Schafer does indeed offer an extended analysis of industrial and electric soundscapes in a part called “The Post-Industrial Soundscape” (69-99). In the pop context, Brian Eno, a contemporary of Schafer, also theorized notions of place through the concept of ambience. Electronic
media and recording proved to be the dialectical mediation of Schafer’s analysis of the
soundscape as ecology: In short, first by achieving “hi-fi” schizophonia does one become
fully aware of the significance of the “soundscape.”

Nevertheless, Schafer’s coinage remains an extraordinary contribution. I thus
want to explore the “soundscape” as theory within the context of the industrial and
electronic facets of modernity. Only by first comprehending these theoretical issues will
we be able to explore “Germany” as a musical place within the currents of electronic
music between 1968 and 2009. Therefore, I will augment the 1970s environmentalist-
musical coinage of “soundscape” with a series of 1990s anthropological coinages by two
theorists of modernity. These anthropological terms are, in fact, comparable to the
wordplay in Schafer’s coinage. They are Arjun Appadurai’s coinages of various “scapes”
and Marc Augé’s concept of “non-places.” These terms highlight the social complexities
of musical geography in the electronic age of recording.

First, Appadurai: twenty years after Schafer’s influential study, The Tuning of the
World, Appadurai exploded the notion of the “scape” with a series of new formulations.
Expanding upon Benedict Anderson’s classic theorization of nations as “imagined
communities” based on print capitalism, Appadurai considers what electronic media will
mean for the perception of borders and place. He muses, “But the revolution of print

24 The use of dynamics, as analogue for landscape, is later delineated by Schafer: “Just as
objects are rank-ordered in perspective painting, depending on their distance from the viewer, so
musical sounds are rank-ordered by means of their dynamic emphasis in the virtual space of the
soundscape” (156). The nineteenth-century’s rapid development in dynamic range, for example,
might conceivably have brought contemporary aestheticians to coin a term such as “music scape.”
Yet only with high-fidelity recorded sound, and the blending of sound recordings and music, does
one arrive at the term “soundscape.”

In this history, Schafer as a “soundscape composer” approximates a rather conservative
tradition of a nineteenth-century landscape painter who focuses on idealized nature. In fact, his
theorizations do not explore the full implications of the landscape/music scape/soundscape
dialectic. A key novel that develops this dialectic is Der Grüne Heinrich by Gottfried Keller, in
which a landscape painter known as Green Henry repeatedly encounters glorious musical scenes
that alter his perception of the environment.
capitalism and the cultural affinities and dialogues unleashed by it were only modest precursors to the world we live in now…. For with the advent of the steamship, the automobile, the airplane, the camera, the computer, and the telephone, we have entered into an altogether new condition of neighborliness, even with those most distant from ourselves” (28-9). The new modes of media and travel lead Appadurai to the notion of “scape” in order to describe the cultural imaginations of the late modern era. Appadurai offers five scapes: ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes (33-6). He explains the use of –scape as follows:

The suffix –scape allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes, shapes that characterize international capital as deeply as they do international clothing styles. These terms with the common suffix –scape also indicate that these are not objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision but, rather, that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors…. (33)

By means of these various cultural scapes, Appadurai intertwines the experiences of space and place in ways suitable to late modernity. Precisely here, I am interested in placing the forgotten sixth scape, the soundscape, onto Appadurai’s chart. The anti-modernist associations of the original definition of soundscape are transformed by linking it to Appadurai’s late modern anthropology.

Indeed, electronic music as soundscape within Appadurai’s scapes brings out the inseparability of schizophonics and modern travel. The ways in which Appadurai sees diasporic communities linked via electronic media can be compared to the transnational and outlandish complexities of the electronic music scenes that I am investigating. Though all musical traditions have been affected by these media revolutions, electronic music and sound are literally linked to and intertwined within the transnational networks of electronic media. Electronic music – from the international
networks of the experimental avant-garde from the 1940s to the 1960s; to jet-set disco
culture in the 1970s and 1980s; to the virtual communities, mobile music, and digital
media of the 1990s and 2000s – has represented the ideal of modern travel and
cosmopolitanism, yet an ideal that often recharges the nation as export. Ostensibly, the
new timbres do not have the burden of history and regional-cultural associations in the
same way as traditional instruments, though I will show how this burden is all too
present.

With these scapes of identity in mind, I turn to Marc Augé’s work, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. Interestingly, Augé begins his study
with the interior scene of a place responsible for much of the noise pollution Schafer
criticized: the airport. A place of rapid transit, Augé observes that while the airport is a
key place through which anthropologists arrive at their sites of fieldwork, the airport itself
has not been an object of anthropological observation. This neglect is reflected in the
paradox that the airport, though essential to the lives and livelihood of its passengers,
cannot itself be a place of residence. Augé juxtaposes the traditional notion of place with
these *non-places* – airports, highways, supermarkets, hotels, etc. Non-places contain an
overabundance of time, space, and information; they are marked, according to Augé, by
supermodernity. He writes: “The installations needed for the accelerated circulation of
passengers and goods (high-speed roads and railways, interchanges, airports) are just
as much non-places as the means of transport themselves, or the great commercial
centres, or the extended transit camps where the planet’s refugees are parked” (34).

Juxtaposed with the non-places of supermodernity are the traditional places of
anthropological research. Augé names these sites “anthropological places,”
understanding anthropological place as a “concrete and symbolic construction of space,
which could not of itself allow for the vicissitudes and contradictions of social life…

These places have at least three characteristics in common. They want to be – people want them to be – places of identity, of relations and of history” (51-2). Augé later states that non-places are marked by an absence of those three cultural features, though I would counter that non-places in fact dialectically produce an overabundance, as well as an ostensible absence, of these three components – including identity.

The normative components of Schafer’s ideal soundscapes are made uneasy by the presence of non-places. From his focus on the clairaudience\textsuperscript{25} of acoustic environments, it is clear that he is primarily concerned with a musicological construction similar to what Augé terms “anthropological place.” Against Schafer’s critique, I want to emphasize the role of music in contemporary, supermodern non-places. Augé’s theorization of the non-place is furthermore linked to travel. He remarks, “The traveller’s space may thus be the archetype of non-place” (86). What interests me in these formulations is the theorization they offer of the striking presence of electronic musical works and scenes that focus on non-places. As such, my concern is to explore the supermodern aspects of Schafer’s soundscape. Schafer’s study already includes an abundance of examples. In sum, electronic music takes both supermodern hi-fi and “lo-fi” sound as rich material for musical exploration,\textsuperscript{26} just as the non-place and anthropological place are rich categories for geographic exploration.

\textsuperscript{25} Schafer’s term literally means “clear hearing” and is used to refer to “exceptional hearing ability” (272). Clairaudience should not be understood as (or in) a paranormal sense, which the comparison with clairvoyance might erroneously invite. Nevertheless, he offers a quite charged term for the training of clairaudience: “ear cleaning” (272). Schafer thus forecloses a clairaudience of noise.

\textsuperscript{26} Analogous to Schafer’s values of hi-fi and lo-fi sound are Adorno’s aesthetic categories of the beautiful and the ugly, which will be discussed later in chapter 3.
Returning to the philosophical-aesthetic impetus in Schafer’s coinage of soundscape, this chapter emphasizes that music is as much a space-based as it is time-based art. Yet it deals with scapes in which the fields of time and space intersect, not in a meditative experience of scapes as pure spatiality, but one in which time and space come together in modern travel and electronic media, as emphasized by Appadurai and Augé. Travel highlights the experience of historical tensions. The precarious yet persistent relation of German music to the nation and place in the age of electronic media in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries can thus be laid out.

The first section of my post-1968 history of German music and the soundscape thus begins in the most expansive sonic dreams of outer space, known as *kosmische Musik* [cosmic music]. This ideoscape was an important means of marketing and interpreting many of the West German electronic bands around 1968, traditionally collected under the name Krautrock. The importance of spatial experience is prefigured in the name that the era was given both immediately preceding and during Krautrock: the Space Age. Here the historical stakes of the stars are already present. The understanding of music thus already takes on supermodern dimensions. This chapter proceeds to explore the supermodern soundscape amidst Appadurai’s scapes and Augé’s non-places so as to situate electronic music, electronic media, and modern travel. It collects a diverse array of musical practices and artistic forms from the 1970s to the present, which meet in (or pass by) the ideoscape of mobility. The chapter reflects this ideoscape by offering its own movements: from instrumental music, to vocal music, to a club, to a film, to a novel, and back to instrumental music. Similarly, I explore varying modes of travel – driving, flying, running, surfing, and “old-fashioned” walking.
These modes will emphasize the changes of supermodernity in the experience of place and space in Germany.

1968: Out of the Kosmos

I’ve often said that if I pass my examination after this life… then I would like to be allowed to make music with more far-reaching sounds, so to speak, with planets, moons, and with racing clusters of planets, suns and moons; or in parts of the universe where music has at its disposal imaginings and vibrations far beyond the restricted range of acoustic oscillations on this earth…

Karlheinz Stockhausen

If I had been a young German in the 1960s I would have played Krautrock or died. No way could I have lived with the knowledge that my parents’ generation had had dealings in a crime beyond Biblical proportions. I’d have been on a Rock-it to Mars – which is precisely the path that the best German rock’n’roll artists followed.

Julian Cope

I start this spatial journey not on the earth but at the outer reaches of space, or the oddball corners of the mind. The first epigraph to this section stems from a volume of Karlheinz Stockhausen’s writings selected by Tim Nevill, entitled Towards a Cosmic Music (120). A figure who himself traversed avant-garde and pop culture, and lectured in rock’n’roll California in 1966, Stockhausen became a major composer in postwar West Germany, both through his compositions of experimental music at the Cologne Studio for Electronic Music and as a lecturer and presenter at the International Summer Courses for New Music in Darmstadt. “Space music” and “cosmic music” were terms Karlheinz Stockhausen used in the construction of a particular ideoscape of the 1960s.

Indeed, Stockhausen’s writings on kosmische Musik accompanied the artistic echoes of the Space Age. Many musicians and artists, national and international, developed a tradition of linking electronic music to the cosmos. As early as the electronic
soundtrack for *Forbidden Planet* (1956) by Bebe and Louis Barron and, from the other side of the Iron Curtain, the joint East German and Polish production of *Der Schweigende Stern* (1960) with electronic sounds by Polish composer Andrzej Markowski, electronic sounds and the cosmos have been associated in popular culture. Yet a surprising, if puzzling, feature of postwar German cultural life, particularly in the Federal Republic, emerged amidst these associations. As stated in the introduction, despite Germany’s extraordinary role in the development of modern science and the numerous Nobel prizes in physics and chemistry associated with the German academy, there was comparatively little science fiction literature exported from West Germany during the Space Age. In the twentieth century, Germany in general, and West Germany in particular, seemed the land of scientists rather than science fiction. In the Bonn Republic, the main popular science fiction of note was the best-selling and longest running pulp series *Perry Rhodan*; however, its *American* astronaut protagonist is trained at the “California Academy of Space Flight.” This sci-fi lack invites the following intriguing thesis: perhaps West Germany channeled its speculations during the Space Age into music. With Stockhausen as representative, “sonic fiction” emerges as a concept that could be applied to West German electronic music, which later develops a distinct exchange with Afrofuturist sonic fiction as theorized by Kodwo Eshun.

The discourse on and practice of cosmic music needs cultural and historical concretization, however. First, I would argue that cosmic music was in part a cultural ideoscape and soundscape of distance from the immediate prehistory of the Third Reich, and hence the musical index of the “Hour Zero” in West German cultural life. Arguably, the hope for a total break with the fundamentalism of anthropological place was represented in an astronomic non-place as utopia. Crucially, Stockhausen’s central
technique for this break and the opening of new “cosmic” spheres was through new sounds by means of electronic synthesis in, for example, Studie I. New sounds represented the explicit goal of what became termed elektronische Musik in West Germany, as opposed to French musique concrète, which focused on recorded sounds from the environment. According to Stockhausen, by synthesizing a completely new sound, which did not sound like any prior instrument, an aesthetic revolution could take place. This goal could be conceived in Augé’s terms as the search for non-sounds in modern music that corresponds to non-places of supermodern geography. The hopeful novelty of such non-sounds would reverberate in non-places that are without identity, history, or relation. The search for new sounds to express a different age thus implicitly critiqued the nationalism of the German musical tradition. In particular, Stockhausen’s electronic distortion of national hymns in Hymnen was a direct engagement with the place of nations in supermodernity. However, as we shall see in chapter 2, far from the dream of an Hour Zero, the focus of kosmische Musik also lent itself to associations with German Romanticism and absolute music.

Stockhausen would later criticize the standardization of electronic instrumentation in its attempts to mimic traditional sounds and its use of standard rhythmic patterns. However, he also engaged popular electronic musicians, and likewise, he was embraced by popular artists. Julian Cope, in his classic homage to cosmic music, Krautrocksampler, highlights both the social and aesthetic significance of Stockhausen for pop: “So whilst the young German artists loved Stockhausen for embracing their own rock’n’roll culture, they doubly loved him for what they recognized as the beginning of a freeing of all German symbols” (11). In particular, Florian Schneider and Ralf Hütter of Kraftwerk confirm this reception of Stockhausen’s music
from the first German studio for electronic music, based at the WDR radio station in neighboring Cologne. Hütter and Schneider discussed this influence on the first generation of pop artists in the Rhine Belt and their album Radio-Aktivität in a 1976 interview with Musikexpress. Schneider states, “This was an homage to the radio, the first electronic studio that existed. During that time, people like Stockhausen always made music right on the radio.” Hütter continues, “They called it night music, and we always tuned in. That was our background. It resulted in us deciding to form a purely electronic band” (Schober 13).27 Out of the experimentations of early Kraftwerk and other bands developed the special hybrid of pop and avant-garde popularly known as Krautrock.

Krautrock can be described as West Germany’s absolute answer to British progressive rock music, as Krautrock was often more experimental and instrumental. Bands or artists such as Kraftwerk, Can, Tangerine Dream, Ash Ra Tempel, and Klaus Schulze often used cosmic rhetoric. The influence by Stockhausen was also emphasized, especially by Kraftwerk and Can. In the historical context, the cosmos was a key ideoscape of the 1968 revolution as a kind of mental non-place. The cosmic music faction of Krautrock known as the “Berlin School” was particularly focused on using electronic equipment, such as Moog synthesizers and the mellotron. A spatial experience akin to an atmospheric soundscape was created through the constant use of sound manipulation techniques, such as filters, reverb, distortion, and echo.28

---


28 On cosmic music techniques, see Davis.
In setting the cosmic ideoscape in Krautrock terms, I would like to highlight here the work of journalist and label owner Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, an organizer and ideologue of an avant-rock form of kosmische Musik. He was especially important for the spread of such ideas. His work included extraordinary adventures such as recording sessions for the Seven Up album in Bern, Switzerland with Ash Ra Tempel and Timothy Leary, who was “going East,” in flight from American authorities. Kaiser also founded the Krautrock label Kosmische Kuriere (borrowed from Timothy Leary’s notion of the “cosmic courier”), whose title was soon changed to Kosmische Musik. This label featured the most famous artists Kaiser produced with Dieter Dierks, such as Popol Vuh, Klaus Schulze, Ash Ra Tempel, Tangerine Dream, and the Cosmic Jokers. This section will focus on the Cosmic Jokers as symbolic of the cosmic ideoscape.

Image 6: The Cosmic Jokers.
The Cosmic Jokers, Kosmische Musik, 1974.

---

29 Julian Cope recounted these encounters with some degree of imagination (68-77).
The Cosmic Jokers were both a concept and a band completely invented by Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser for his label. The band’s imagery developed into a tautological vision in which the cosmos had become the only word worthy of utterance. In the most extreme, or shall we say cosmically comic, example, one could listen to the “Cosmic Joy” track on *The Cosmic Jokers* LP by the Cosmic Jokers band on the *Kosmische Musik* label. The music was produced as follows: Kaiser made recordings of drugged-up jam sessions from a collection of his most accomplished musicians, including Manuel Göttsching and Klaus Schulze, and released the sessions without informing the musicians. With such a plethora of musicians, the Cosmic Jokers arguably represented the repertoire of the Kosmische Musik label itself. Five LPs were released as a result of these “Cosmic Joker” sessions: *Cosmic Jokers*, *Galactic Supermarket*, *Planeten Sit-In*, *Sci-Fi Party*, and *Gilles Zeitschiff* (or “Gille’s Time-Ship”). These records include many reworked tracks by Klaus Schulze and Ash Ra Tempel, and they stand as reflections on the history of Krautrock and the mission of cosmic music. In “Cosmic Courier Bon Chance” on *Gilles Zeitschiff*, the spoken word performance by Brian Barritt, Timothy Leary’s colleague, discusses the encounter with *Kosmische Musik* and the German scene through English fantasies of the Teutonic outland. It includes this memorable line by Barritt of their mission: “For some time we had been looking for contacts, and high wires seemed to be coming through at high altitudes, but all from a German direction. So we said: add some psy-phi to these German high vibes and we’ve got ourselves a new reality.”

Such a statement offered a crystallization of the ideals of the cosmos as liberation, yet with contradictions of geographic and historical experience left unresolved.

---

30 Cope has recounted the stories of these recording sessions (78-88).
The dreams of keeping a drugged-up and experimental spirit by merging the psyscape and soundscape with a cosmos as outland soon imploded toward the end of the Cosmic Jokers’ series. Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser’s dominating influence on the various cosmic musicians ended through infighting. Furthermore, amidst quarrels with members of the Cosmic Jokers, his copyrights were stripped by the German courts (Cope 88). In 1975, just a year after the Gilles Zeitschiff album, Kaiser disappeared from the music scene and from music production.

The dissolving of such partnerships ultimately resulted in the decline of Krautrock’s countercultural impulse. The transfer of bands such as Tangerine Dream to the Virgin label was indicative of this shift. Easy access to new equipment and recording technology allowed production to be made more slick and professional. In ideoscape terms, the cosmos was both professionalized and domesticated. In short, cosmic music became planetarium music. In the mid- and late-1970s, Tangerine Dream produced such music precisely by purchasing more advanced equipment and organizing greater planetarium-like spectacles. Indeed, many of the new electronic sounds found subsequent echoes in the cosmic pop produced for the world’s planetariums and science centers, and most famously in the use of Vangelis’s electronic music as soundtrack for the highly successful 1982 TV series Cosmos: A Personal Voyage. Put differently, cosmic music paradoxically became scientific, wherein the tripscapes of the psy-phi countercultural subject were emptied out and focus was placed on the sound lab and the objective world. Cosmic music as planetarium music offers listeners the experience of music as space devoid of national, regional, or ethnic borders, yet it eventually anchored the perspective of the listener in a controlled environment of entertainment. The tripscapes of cosmic music had offered the dream of open worlds.
However, these scapes tuned out the reality of everyday life and the contradictions and limitations of contemporary socio-political experience. The dreams of a geographic utopia, however, remained; they subsequently encountered the contradictions of history through engagement with new forms of travel.

1974 and 1977: Driving on Roads and Rails

The descent to the planetarium was indicative of arguably detrimental musical results of melding pop entertainment and cosmic music. However, other forms of descent proved innovative – and culturally revolutionary for electronic music and its connections to German identity. It thus seems appropriate that my properly pop portion of this history begins, having finally landed in Germany, with the two most iconic tracks to be produced in German electronic music of the 1970s – Kraftwerk’s “Autobahn” (1974) and “Trans Europa Express” (1977).

Kraftwerk had begun, like many Krautrock bands, by releasing music bordering between free rock and ambient, with a number of cosmic or abstract titles; track names included “Tone Float,” “Stratovarius,” “Vom Himmel Hoch” [From Heaven Above], and “Wellenlänge” [Wavelength]. However, their descent from experimental music into pop was also their descent onto earth from the heights of Kosmische Musik. This move was anticipated by the industrial earthliness of the name Kraftwerk, which was reflected in the trauma of air warfare represented in “Vom Himmel Hoch.” Indeed, this was a move from the tripscape of the free subject to the objects of cultural production, national organization, and media communication. However, their descent to earth did not involve the apolitical planetarium. Rather, it consisted of a direct engagement with German history and the history of the modern West. This grounded approach in the subsequent
productions, in productive tension with the cosmic ideoscape, illuminated the dialectical relations of technology and the supermodern soundscape; in this context, pop allowed Kraftwerk to historicize the role of non-places in contemporary life.

A major strand of Kraftwerk’s music was based on iconic images of European land travel, e.g. *Autobahn* (1974), *Trans Europa Express* (1977), and *Tour de France Soundtracks* (2003). Yet aside from these concept albums on cars, trains, and bikes, Kraftwerk interestingly never produced an LP or album about sea or jet travel. Arguably, jet travel was too closely associated with cosmic travel, and sea travel was too close to the intoxicating acid bath of the Romantic symphony. Furthermore, their situation in Düsseldorf and the Rhine Belt arguably acted as a grounded midpoint between the massive port of Rotterdam, on the one end, and the international airport in Frankfurt, on the other. Their rootedness in Düsseldorf thus allowed for the subject of airplane and sea travel to be explored by others, though as stated, all albums retained echoes of cosmic music as a kind of supermodern dialectic. Aside from these subjects of land travel, Kraftwerk primarily focused on pop explorations of fashion and modern media. In sum, their past of *kosmische Musik* remained in productive tension with such pop topics through a more socially grounded exploration of the mediascapes and technoscapes of radios (*Radio-Aktivität*) and computers (*Computerwelt*).

Whether in media or on land, it was particularly their exploration of travel that continued to produce unique, exceptionally long, tracks of Krautrock/cosmic proportions. Both “Autobahn” and “Trans Europa Express” (subsequently referred to as “TEE”) can be considered multipart movements. “TEE” was explicitly divided into three tracks, and though it is listed as a single track, “Autobahn” also invites a division into three movements. Their structures are in this respect remarkably similar:
The three movements in “Autobahn” can each be marked by a sonic Doppler effect, which functions as a cadence. Thereafter, each movement begins with the same rhythmic pattern. In fact, the musical topics of “Autobahn’s” three movements mark it as a hybrid track of earthly and cosmic music, of landscape and mediascape. The movements can be respectively described as follows:

Movement 1: the pastoral drive: The track begins with the start of an engine and the sound of a single car driving onto the autobahn. Then the main musical theme begins. Glissandi of the Moog synthesizer are used extensively, which at times imitate Doppler effects. The Doppler effects are especially important for the sense of both space and speed. The first part of the lyrics are sung, which include the mention of “glittering rays” to reflect the pastoral. Featuring the sound of the flute, the first movement invites the imagination of a rural landscape rather than a cityscape, with an autobahn free of traffic so that one can accelerate to the speeds of one’s heart’s content. The pastoral ideal of the autobahn landscape is not only sonically expressed through the extensive use of the flute and light percussion, but also reflected in the line “die Sonne scheint mit Glitzerstrahl” (the sun shines with beaming rays), the words “beaming rays” featuring a filtered echo.

Movement 2: engines and traffic: This movement is entirely instrumental. In contrast to the perception of a single car in the first movement, this movement develops a rapid succession of Doppler effects and horns, which evokes a community of Autobahn travelers on slow and fast lanes. However, these sounds gesture toward the experience of light traffic and a high-speed race rather than a traffic jam. This movement is entirely instrumental, and the heavy use of electronic percussion and white noise invites the perception of the interior workings of the car, its engine, and its material production. Already toward the end of this section, however, drawn out synthlines give a feeling of ambient, atmospheric freedom.

Movement 3: radio mediation: The final movement is a move away from both the landscape exterior and the inner workings of the engine. This movement focuses on the mediation of the automobile as an ideal non-place. The movement becomes a meta-reflection on both the song and the experience of driving by means of the radio. The main lyric is, “Jetzt schalten wir das Radio an, aus dem Lautsprecher klingt es dann” (“We switch the radio on, and it sounds from the speaker”). By turning on the radio, the fantasy becomes that of the car as a delightful object, with the passing landscape a music video without material consequences. The acceleration of the music, as well as the variations on the
main theme, make this radio fantasy border on a cosmic tripscape. The tuning of
the car to the ether-like radio signals seems to transform the car into a spaceship
leaving earth. This movement thus anticipates the album *Radio-Aktivität*, which
will be discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

These three movements in “Autobahn” correspond to the themes of the
movements in “TEE.” In “TEE,” the first movement has the introductory musical theme
and the majority of the lyrics. The second movement is a purely instrumental track called
“Metall auf Metall,” invoking the engine, the rails, and Doppler effects of passing trains; it
is a sonic experience again of material production as industrial mechanics. The third
movement becomes a kind of meta-song as in the radio section of “Autobahn,” although
it does not include radio; rather, the constant repetition of the title “Trans Europa
Express” mediates the track. A gradual layering of musical themes amidst the “TEE”
repetitions occurs until the final “Abzug” (Departure). However, the concluding sound is
of a train breaking, as though the train is arriving rather than departing the earth. The
lyrics and sound effects in both “Autobahn” and “TEE” thus offer distinctly geographic
experiences of landscape as soundscape.

With regard to the visual media of “Autobahn,” the cover art depicts the
contradictions of modern travel. It includes a pastoral landscape by artist Emil Schult, but
it shows two cars on a freeway: a Volkswagen Beetle and a black Mercedes. These
models juxtapose the class distinctions of driving. Similarly, this song about bourgeois
travel operates in the ambiguous position of pop tune and epic instrumental track. Such
imagery was later refined in the concert videos from Kraftwerk’s *Minimum-Maximum* tour
in the 2000s, by which time “Autobahn” and “TEE” had become icons of German identity
from the 1970s. The concert video begins with a Volkswagen Beetle and the official road
sign of the autobahn, followed by 1970s films of autobahns, already exotic by the 2000s,
that are juxtaposed with black and white films of 1930s drivers in rather nondescript enjoyment of the road. The Nazi political and human catastrophe remains absent in these 1930s videos, underscoring the ambiguous place that autobahns hold in the German popular imagination. Rather, the pastoral 1930s images emphasize the luxury of traveling in the prewar years, since drivers on such roads were truly rare, whereas the 1970s videos appropriately show congested highways.

Indeed, autobahn traffic jams first appeared in the postwar years, when West German production delivered the promise, unfulfilled of the Nazi state, to offer an affordable “Volkswagen” for the common people. This promise of the “people’s car” was essential, as discussed by Thomas Zeller in Driving Germany. According to Zeller, the driving ratio in Germany changed from 97 people per automobile in 1950 to 10 people per automobile in 1961 to only 4 people per automobile in 1970 (183-4). The images in the 2004 Minimum-Maximum video include pastoral paintings and advertisements for 1950s Wirtschaftswunder cars, heightening the mediation of the ideal road. This focus on the 1950s ideal state of the autobahn, one without environmental consequences, reflects Zeller’s remarks on the autobahn’s propagandic history: “After the Second World War and Germany’s liberation, the autobahnen lay upon the German landscape like a hollow relic of past megalomania, until they were reinterpreted – in a more subtle but no less effective process – into central corridors of the economic reconstruction of a Western democracy” (2).

Kraftwerk’s descent onto the “Autobahn” relates to the notion of the non-place in specific ways. The word “Autobahn” places the scenery in Germany. However, the lyrics contain no destinations or directions; thus, the abstract non-place of “driving on the autobahn” is the central focus of experience:
Together with the pastoral flute of the first movement, the 1950s imagery emphasizes the close links between the phenomenological experience of driving and landscape viewing. The link between travel and landscape further emphasizes the experience of space over place. Augé offers insightful observations to this effect: “Space, as frequentation of places rather than a place, stems in effect from a double movement: the traveller’s movement, of course, but also a parallel movement of the landscapes which he catches only in partial glimpses, a series of ‘snapshots’ piled hurriedly into his memory, and, literally, recomposed in the accounts he gives of them…” (85-6).

To be sure, the cultural traditions of travel and experience of the landscape vary. By beginning my primary discussion of German identity with “Autobahn,” I want to highlight the comparative relationship with cars in America as explored in my introductory travels. The differences between German and American perceptions of landscape are already evident in Adorno’s critical observations from Californian exile. In Minima Moralia, he criticizes the American highways for being “inserted directly into the landscape” (48). Thomas M. Lekan historicizes these observations by emphasizing the German concept of landscape, which takes on a cultivated notion of the pastoral: “Unlike the American wilderness ethic, an ideal that has valued spaces devoid of human influence, the Germans’ concept of Landschaft envisioned the ideal environment in a
pastoral sense, as a cultivated garden that blends the natural, cultivated, and built environments in an aesthetically harmonious whole” (15). Reflective of Lekan’s focus on the cultivated pastoral, Zeller insists that the landscape in Germany is now based on modern travel: “Whether through the train window, motorcycle goggles, or the windshield: in a motorized land like Germany, the ideas and experiences of nature are largely shaped by driving, traveling, and commuting” (6).

Lekan’s comparison of German and American car culture is especially apt for our study, since it was one that Kraftwerk would make explicitly in music. The experience of autobahn travel in Germany is put in dialogue with another location of travel, as explored in the introduction: California. Kraftwerk announced this association through the repeated word “Fahr’n fahr’n fahr’n” (drive-drive-drive), which translates the Beach Boys’ 1964 hit single “Fun, fun, fun.” With this sample, Kraftwerk was nicknamed “The Beach Boys from Düsseldorf” (Bussy 57). Yet while the Beach Boys’ song also concerns cars, it is far less abstract or phenomenological than Kraftwerk. It tells the story of a girl who takes her daddy’s Ford Thunderbird for a pleasure drive, a rather innocent expression of teenage rebellion in a classic American example of bubble-gum pop.

Comparisons between Kraftwerk and the Beach Boys with respect to regional representation are also apt. Tracks by the Beach Boys, such as “Surfing U.S.A.,” resulted in stereotypical notions of white identity with reference to travel and place. The Beach Boys created an ideal world of California, constructing the myth of the innocent blond surfer within multicultural California: a myth that has a distinctly European history. Namely, the Beach Boys were inspired by the 1957 surfer novel Gidget by Austrian exile Frederick Kohner. Gidget was based on Kohner’s own American surfer-daughter. The

31 “Fun, fun, fun,” was the first Beach Boys single to chart in Germany, taking position 49 on the charts.
beach-blond teen surfer offered a world as carefree as the new youth culture of Germany’s *Wirtschaftswunder*. The autobahn, the highway, and surfing were non-places that developed as regional myths. As the Beach Boys performed the stereotype of California, Kraftwerk performed the stereotype of Germany, often with ironic delight. A French colleague who worked with Kraftwerk, Paul Alessandrini, makes an important remark to this effect: “[Kraftwerk] have always made use of stereotypes, it’s like they say, ‘We came from a country which evokes a certain type of imagery, a lot of clichés, so let’s play this game, let’s transform ourselves into these stereotypes’” (Bussy 57).

Indeed, “Autobahn” and “TEE” blur the boundary between tourism and song export. Kraftwerk’s linking of the driving cultures of the United States and West Germany was further appropriate given that these road systems are the world’s largest and most iconic. While the Federal Republic resisted autobahns for most of the 1950s, it made large investments in construction from 1958 onward. Despite being a relatively small country, unified Germany is now second only to the United States in kilometers of freeway: 68,500 kilometers versus 12,000 kilometers (Zeller 184). The non-place of the freeway was a key component of West Germany’s ideologies of freedom as travel in reaction to East Germany. This contrast was expressed in West German law in 1953 when speed limits were abolished. The myth of the autobahn as the super-speed zone was from this moment in full force. Though a general speed limit law was finally introduced in 1972 (Zeller 185), the myth remains in place to this day.

The rail system was similarly important to West Germany’s ideology of travel. Kraftwerk’s “Trans Europa Express” is an explicit homage to the new train systems of postwar Europe. The actual Trans-Europ-Express (TEE) rail system was legendary as the first European-wide rail system. Launched in 1957 in the lands primarily belonging to
the European Economic Community (EEC), the TEE was a network entirely for luxury travelers. The division of high-speed rail into first and second class occurred thirty-years later, in 1987, with the establishment of the EuroCity system (Hajt 131). Harkening back to the luxury of the nineteenth century, the TEE even offered its own musical references as a sign of luxury; the most famous train along the Rhine, from Amsterdam to Basel, bore the Wagnerian name TEE Rheingold (Hajt 75). The experience of landscape through this train appeared like a Gesamtkunstwerk – not to mention the existence of other musical trains, such as the TEE van Beethoven and the TEE Albert Schweitzer. In this context, the “TEE Kraftwerk” was an imaginatively sonic train that took these musically themed trains at their word.

Kraftwerk’s release of “TEE” in 1977 was timely. The TEE network had reached its height of expansion in 1974-75, with trains running from Copenhagen in the North to Reggio di Calabria in the South; from Irún in the West to Vienna in the East (Hajt 141). As indicated by the TEE Rheingold, the Rhine Belt was at the center of this network. Düsseldorf was an important hub for TEE trains, and Kraftwerk’s Kling-Klang studio was within walking distance of the Hauptbahnhof. “TEE’s” lyrics appropriately have three couplets, each of which take place in key TEE cities: Vienna, Paris, and Düsseldorf. Indeed, unlike “Autobahn,” places and people are named in the “TEE” track. The West German ideal of travel on the autobahn is now extended to a Western European ideal of travel on the TEE. Kraftwerk reinforced this ideal by beginning the album with a track called “Europa Endlos” (Europe Endless). The expansion of the European Community marked this ideal of an “endless Europe.” The lyrics of the respective tracks in their German and English releases run as follows:
Lyrics: Europa Endlos

Europa Endlos
Das Leben ist Zeitlos

Europe endless
Life is timeless

Europa Endlos
Parks, Paläste und Hotels

Europe endless
Parks, hotels and palaces

Europa Endlos
Flüsse, Berge, Wälder

Europe endless
Promenades and avenues

Europa Endlos
Wirklichkeit und Postkarten Bilder

Europe endless
Real life and postcard views

Europa Endlos
Eleganz und Dekadenz

Europe endless
Elegance and decadence

Lyrics: Trans Europa Express

Trans Europa Express
Trans Europa Express (repeat)

Trans-Europe Express
Trans-Europe Express (repeat)

Rendez-vous auf den Champs Elysees
Verlass Paris am Morgen mit dem TEE
In Wien sitzen wir im Nachtcafe
Direkt Verbindung TEE
Wir laufen ’rein in Düsseldorf City
Und treffen Iggy Pop und David Bowie

Rendezvous on Champs-Elysees
Leave Paris in the morning on T.E.E.
In Vienna we sit in a night cafe
Direct connection, T.E.E.
Back in Dusseldorf City
Meet Iggy Pop and David Bowie

Kraftwerk’s exploration of the non-place of high-speed rail reflects the 1970s supermodern discourse of globalization arising in parallel. Similar to “Autobahn,” however, “TEE” is situated within the ambiguities of modern travel.

Trains, while conjuring up utopian ideals of internationalism, have also been key to the organization of modern nationalism and imperialism. In other words, the anxiety regarding the borders that trains open up can produce the means to close off those borders and to unite nations, as described in Todd Presner’s study of nineteenth-century train ideologies in Mobile Modernity. Trains were key to military organization in Europe in the late nineteenth century and during the First and Second World Wars, and trains ultimately became the means of transporting Jews and other victims to the gas chambers.

32 See especially Presner’s comments regarding train history (161-2).
chambers in the Holocaust, already dehumanizing the condemned with the use of cattle cars. Reflections on the history of train travel and the Holocaust were later famously explored in Steve Reich’s Grammy Award-winning “Different Trains” from 1988. Composed after “TEE,” “Different Trains” reflected a historical moment of anxiety regarding Israel’s political situation following the Intifada and the aging of witnesses to the Holocaust. Reich compares train travel in the United States before the war, train travel in Europe during the war, and global train travel after the war. Such extreme variety of train travel, indeed its utopian and dystopian possibilities, were theorized by Todd Presner with respect to trains in the nineteenth century. Presner argues that “the railway began to manifest a dialectical history: trains facilitated an unprecedented mobility and mass migration, but, at the same time, they also enabled people to be denied citizenship and deported en masse” (92).33

This dialectic is retained in the phrase “Europe Endless.” Its wording echoes dreams of imperialist conquest, although the track’s optimistic musical brightness reverses the meaning to connote the freedom of travel. The focus on the TEE’s benign tourism in “TEE” also attempts to overcome past crimes of imperialist conquest and deportation. Kraftwerk’s “TEE” invites youthful club listeners to identify with luxury bourgeois travel in the TEE mode, emphasizing passenger travel in postwar Europe as opposed to the use of railroads for commercial and military ends. Historic examples of such uses include the transport of slave labor, troops, and weapons during World Wars I and II, not to mention the military uses of trains during the Cold War to transport ICBM.

33 Presner begins his study, *Mobile Modernity*, by focusing on the ruins of the Anhaltar Bahnhof in Berlin: “The railway – arguably the most iconic association of both the splendor and horror of German/Jewish relations – is not only an important part of the cultural history of German/Jewish modernity, something which I indicate by the dialectical images of the Anhalter Bahnhof preceding each chapter, but it also allows us to formulate a theory of cultural geography by drawing our attention to the spatial fundament of the dialectic of modernity” (15).
missiles and other equipment. By contrast, the train as "non-place" in Kraftwerk’s mode attempts to present the utopian and progressive possibilities of rail systems used toward benign ends.

This focus on political progress and pleasure was indicative of another American reception by Kraftwerk. By mixing the train and technopop, Kraftwerk clearly was in proximity with the long tradition of train songs in blues and soul music. Jimmy Forrest’s “Night Train” (1951) was a significant example, later covered by James Brown (1961). Like Kraftwerk, Brown names cities in his lyrics; his cities, from Miami to Washington D.C., reflect a movement from South to North, representing the migration of blacks to Northern cities during the twentieth century. Curtis Mayfield and the Impressions also made use of train imagery in “People Get Ready” (1965), which became an anthem for the Civil Rights Movement (later to be covered by Bob Dylan). Mayfield started a tradition of train progress and unification such as was represented in the O’Jays’ “Love Train” (1973). These “soul trains” connected dance celebrations, the breaking of borders, and liberation. It is thus not surprising that the “TEE” soul train became a hit in black clubs in Chicago, Detroit, and New York, and was itself remixed by Afrika Bambaataa in his hit electro-funk track, “Planet Rock” (1986).

Nevertheless, amidst such ideals that connected Kraftwerk to the soul train tradition lies the cynicism of white bourgeois “elegance and decadence” in European luxury train travel, as stated in “Europe Endless.” Such train travel is wary of both poverty and people of color. Kraftwerk neglects these political issues and focuses more on the phenomenology of trains, coming out of a tradition of electronic music that harkens back to the first piece in the musique concrète tradition of Pierre Schaeffer, the “Étude aux chemins de fer” (Study on the Railroad) from 1948. The material and
technological foundations of train travel are similarly highlighted in “Metall auf Metall,” which Pascal Bussy describes as one of the first rhythmic “industrial” tracks (92). As Ralf Hütter states in an interview quoted in Bussy: “The dynamism of the machines, the ‘soul’ of the machines, has always been a part of our music. Trance always belongs to repetition, and everybody is looking for trance in life etc., in sex, in the emotional, in pleasure, in anything, in parties, in… So, the machines produce an absolutely perfect trance” (99).

This is a rather posthumanistic understanding of “soul” in the sense of Eshun’s “sonic fiction,” and it points to the complexities and challenges of human liberation in an age in which industrial organization, commodification, and bureaucratic administration are at such levels of complexity that one can break borders and join in on the love train, yet without necessarily knowing where it is going or who is in the driver’s seat. In both “Autobahn” and “TEE,” phenomenology, technology, politics, and the non-place touch on two icons of German and European culture, the autobahn and high-speed rail. The tracks landed Kraftwerk as an icon for Euro-German identity, with consequences that shall reverberate through this dissertation. In a supermodern spirit, these tracks represent the exports of “German engineering” while challenging one to transcend rootedness in the so-called place of “Germany.”

**Biographical Supplement: The Techno-Train**

In the winter of 2002, during my residence in the Czech Republic and well before my arrival in Berlin, I traveled by train from the city of Tabor, in the Czech Republic, to the city of Salzburg. For a period of about ten minutes during the trip, I waited outside of the train, looking out at some empty fields. This pause occurred while the train was
stopped at the border crossing between two relatively unknown towns: Horní Dvořiště (CZ) and Summerau (A). In the middle of nowhere, this checking of passports was an interesting relic – a point on the old border of East and West, lying at the edge of the former Iron Curtain. The crossing remained the official border between the Czech Republic and Austria, or more precisely between the Czech Republic and the European Union.\textsuperscript{34} While waiting, I thought about the experience of pauses in travel, which made these empty fields feel oddly bigger.

Then the train chugged forward and on to my connection in Linz. Thereafter, I continued to Mozart’s city, rendezvousing with an American friend living in Budapest. We spent the day in Salzburg walking around the pristine downtown and attending the museums dedicated to Mozart, while learning with surprise that the most popular tour in the region was not a Mozart tour, but the Sound of Music tour. We climbed up to the Hohensalzburg Castle on the Festungsberg, gaining a dramatic view of the region. The winter cold was evident in the mists produced from our breathing. As we passed back through the city center, a string quartet played Mozart for the passing tourists. We put on some techno sunglasses as we passed them.

Toward evening, we hopped on board a train, which carried us high into the Alps. Yet our goal was not to ski or hike, but to attend the annual “Rave on Snow,” an event where several thousand ravers descend on a ski resort village. The train we were on was a “techno train” – consisting entirely of railcars that had been specifically rented and booked for ravers attending the party. Having begun its journey in the Rhine Belt, it included a disco car, complete with DJ, and small laser-light show. We spent some time dancing in this railcar as the Alps passed by. I passed out some Haribo candies as

\textsuperscript{34} The Czech Republic did not become a member of the European Union until 2004.
representative of Californian rave culture, which the intoxicated European techno tourists found bizarre. The train continued on.

In fact, this “techno train” was only one of many during the 1990s and 2000s. The notion of the “techno train” itself became legendary during the height of German rave culture. The railcars were old, and they had the aromatic stench of mold and decay. The price for the trip was cheaper than normal trains, and the rusty cars offered the respective freedom to trash the train. By the end of the trip, the stench included not only the rotting chairs and bathrooms, but also alcohol and sweaty body odors. At the final destination, we departed the “techno train” to brave the cold of an Austrian December. Thereafter we danced a postromantic techno dance, deep in the Alps.

What to make of this little adventure? It was not the luxury or speed of the TEE, but it was arguably in the spirit of Kraftwerk’s “TEE.” The techno trains winding through the Alps were examples of a popular phenomenon of the train as an ideal of speed, comfort, and partying in transit – and on the cheap. Yet it also exacerbated the contradictions of travel that “TEE” sounded. Techno travel devolved into techno tourism; the landscape was consumed as part of pop leisure and forgotten in a blitz of Eurotrash intoxication, rather than opened up for new experiences. The rave trip packages allowed for the ease of travel. However, this ease produced the routine of the everyday. Though extraordinary, the techno train was ultimately a special moment in what had become the routine of Euro train systems. This routine reflects the frequent flyer who never requests a window seat because the earthscapes that such aerial views provide either do not matter or no longer impress; the point is to get off the plane, not to be on it.
1978 to 2001: Flying in the Club

After the initial 1970s impetus of Kraftwerk, the links across the Atlantic began to solidify via new developments in disco culture and travel networks. During 1977, the year of both Trans Europa Express’s release and Donna Summer’s Mjunik disco track “I Feel Love,” Studio 54 opened in New York, a club famous for high society and jet-set disco culture. Just a year later, a club with a capacity of roughly 1,500 people, the Dorian Gray, opened in Terminal 1 of Frankfurt Airport, also known as the Rhine-Main Airport. Dorian Gray took Studio 54 as its ideal, though in many respects, it made a greater historical mark. It outlasted Studio 54, which closed in 1984, by over fifteen years. Dorian Gray finally shut down on January 1, 2001 due to the implementation of new fire hazard ordinances after an airport fire in Düsseldorf.\textsuperscript{35} With its unique history, this club became a symbol of Frankfurt am Main. By comparison with Kraftwerk’s focus on land travel from its position in Düsseldorf, the Dorian Gray near the Rhine-Main confluence would bring European techno into intimate proximity with the non-place of air travel and the jet set.

While initially conceived as a posh club with Formula 1 and Playboy parties, featuring music that ranged from R&B to disco music, a new culture gradually emerged in the Dorian Gray in the mid-1980s that would prove the successor of Kraftwerk and Eurodisco. In fact, the Frankfurt scene resulted in the first usage of the term techno in Germany. In 1984, producer and DJ Andreas Tomalla (Talla 2XLC) brought the term “techno” to Frankfurt, and to Germany, in two senses: as a club name and as a term of

\textsuperscript{35} This was the explanation that DJ Dag, resident DJ in Dorian Gray from 1989 to 1993 and long-time patron, provided. Personal interview, March 2009.
music categorization in his record store. Indeed, Tomalla founded the first exclusively electronic-dance-music weekly known as the “Techno Club,” located in the city center but eventually moving to the Dorian Gray in 1988. The Techno Club at Dorian Gray would become a central destination for techno partiers for the next decade and a half; already by the mid-1980s, DJs at Dorian Gray were featuring electronic music.

In this sense, Frankfurt was pioneering. The Love Parade, the iconic Berlin festival that eventually took place in front of the Brandenburg Gate and usually taken as the symbol of German techno culture, first took place in 1989: five years later. Dorian Gray’s long history from 1978 to 2001 thus offers an ideal vantage point from which to view West German techno and its intimate links with travel, tourism, and globalization. In this respect, I will first examine the urban history of Frankfurt am Main and the role of the Frankfurt Airport before delving into the impressive history of the techno scene, arguably the most innovative in Germany between 1985 and 1995.

The Frankfurt Airport has come to occupy a central place in Frankfurt’s global image. However, the millions of international travelers who pass through the airport each year might be surprised to find out that Frankfurt is only Germany’s fifth largest city (at 648,000, far behind Berlin: 3,275,000, Hamburg: 1,686,100, Munich: 1,185,400, and Cologne: 965,300 [City Mayors Statistic]). Indeed, this comparatively small city, which does not even rank amongst the hundred most populous cities of the world, can boast of having an airport that was one of the world’s top ten busiest airports throughout the 2000s (CAPA). Yet, to be sure, Frankfurt is also the center of the Frankfurt/Rhine-Main Metropolitan Region, a key urban network in Germany. My focus thus shifts from the Rhine-Ruhr and Kraftwerk to the Rhine-Main and the Frankfurt techno scene. The fact

---

36 This usage was followed a year later by his track "Tekno Talk" with the EBM group Moskwa TV.
that Frankfurt is not so large and yet so utterly bound up in the global economy has made it symbolic of a truly “globales Dorf” (global village). Indeed, Frankfurt has surprisingly village-like and quaint qualities to it, evidenced in its Hessian suburbs.

As opposed to cosmic music’s fantastic associations of travel with outer space, Frankfurt’s scene evokes airspace and the complex networks of global travel. Put differently, the music of cosmic flight we explored in the Krautrock section attempted to correspond radically to the sublimity of modern understandings of headspace. In the case of Frankfurt, the non-place of its international airport emphasizes both the connectivity of air travel and its literal “base” in industrial production that, as we shall see, concerns both a military airbase and civilian airport. Augé theorizes such issues of space with reference to both outer space and airspace:

> The second accelerated transformation specific to the contemporary world, and the second figure of excess characteristic of supermodernity, concerns space. We could start by saying – again somewhat paradoxically – that the excess of space is correlative with the shrinking of the planet…. We are in an era characterized by changes of scale – of course in the context of space exploration, but also on earth: rapid means of transport have brought any capital within a few hours’ travel of any other. (31)

As we shall see, the ideologies of psychedelic and cosmic flight remained in productive tension with the real airspace associations in the club.

Like the Autobahn and the TEE, the Frankfurt Airport’s status resulted from the Cold War years. Established in 1936, it became the second largest airport after the Tempelhof Airfield in Berlin. After the Second World War, the increasing importance of air travel resulted in the airport’s rapid expansion both in civilian and military terms. The Rhein-Main Air Base was set up immediately to the south as the center for the United States Air Force for the American occupation zone, sharing facilities with Frankfurt
Airport. Furthermore, a new era of world travel was inaugurated in 1972 when Frankfurt became an international hub with the opening of Terminal 1, the same terminal that began housing the Dorian Gray in 1978. This expansion was the result of the city government’s radical reconstruction plans, supported by the federal government and the occupying powers. West Berlin was not an option, since its only land connection to the Federal Republic was a single highway and train corridor to Braunschweig. It became clear that a new center of travel needed to be established, and the choice was Frankfurt. Even in the Berlin Republic of the present day, Frankfurt will remain the central destination for international air travel. As a center of global capitalism, Frankfurt has also emerged as one of Germany’s most prominent centers of immigration. Currently, a third of the city’s population does not carry a German passport.

Indeed, Frankfurt am Main is representative of the Federal Republic of Germany in ways that are strikingly different from Berlin’s history. Since the Cold War, Berlin has often been described as a patchwork of breaks, voids, and architectural palimpsests. As Andreas Huyssen states, “Indelibly etched into our memory is the idea of Berlin as the capital site of a discontinuous, ruptured history, of the collapse of four successive states” (53). We will view the post-Cold War representation of Berlin and techno culture in the film Run Lola Run in the next section. For now, it should be emphasized that Frankfurt

---

37 For a history of the rise of affordable international air travel in this period, see Dierikx.
38 It is not foreseeable that this dominance will be challenged by Berlin or any other German city. To be sure, air travel in Berlin has increased rapidly in the last 20 years, with 21 million passengers reported in 2008, compared to 54 million in Frankfurt and 34 million in Munich. However, the new Berlin-Brandenburg Airport (BBI) to be opened in 2012 (and since delayed) will not come close to the massive expansion of Frankfurt, which is planning a Terminal 3 for the 2010s. Furthermore, night flights will be banned in BBI, which means Frankfurt will continue to be the center of freight traffic.
39 The Historical Museum of Frankfurt emphasizes this twin history of capitalism and international travel. Its permanent historical exhibit is entitled “Out of the Rubble to a European Center,” while two other exhibits are entitled “MainMetropole” and “Von Fremden zu Frankfurtern: Zuwanderung und Zusammenleben” [From Foreigners to Frankfurters: Immigration and Community].
offers a strikingly different history of post-1945 reconstruction. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Frankfurt was the city to emerge with the best-preserved medieval downtown in Germany. The downtown was spared from ever having a major fire, to which so many old town centers were prone. However, this premodern center was obliterated in the Second World War. The destruction was so total that even Adorno noticed the lack of feeling upon the return to his home city: “Frankfurt doesn’t actually exist any more, but life gives the impression of being normal. Indescribable strength and energy of the German population” (Frankurter 110).40

It seemed as though the loss of its previous history was complete. Of the city itself, only fifteen percent of residential buildings remained completely intact.41 As a result, the immense task of reconstruction figures prominently in the city’s history. Significantly, Frankfurt became the one major city in the Federal Republic where city planning resulted in a major break with the past. The supermodern skyline of skyscrapers that emerged out of this medieval town of timbered houses, this center popularly known as “Mainhattan,” gives the best architectural representation of the notion of a postwar Stunde Null [Hour Zero] of German culture. In short, whereas Berlin’s downtown is littered with breaks and ruptures, Frankfurt’s had one cataclysmic rupture in its history.

40 “Eigentlich gibt es Frankfurt nicht mehr, aber das Leben wirkt normal. Unbeschreibliche Kraft und Energie der deutschen Bevölkerung.” Reflecting Adorno’s statement, it appeared that Frankfurt’s liberal, leftist, and multicultural history was finished along with its architecture. When Adorno returned to Frankfurt, he encountered a Jewish community of only 140 who had survived the war, together with 1,044 concentration camp inmates who returned after the war. Frankfurt’s prewar Jewish population has numbered 31,000 (Boehling 80-1). Thus Adorno joined the tragic remains of a community that was once central to Frankfurt’s artistic and intellectual life, not to mention its tradition of leftist politics.

41 See the account of Frankfurt’s situation in Boehling (89-99).
But in view of this rapid change, the question remains: How and why did Frankfurt, as opposed to other cities, develop such a distinctive cityscape and soundscape? As to its cityscape, Frankfurt’s history was fraught with conflicting ideologies. While I do not have the space to go into details regarding postwar debates, a popular assumption regarding American influence in the planning of Frankfurt can be discounted. Jeffry Diefendorf explains that American policy played only a small role in the rebuilding of German cities. These issues were left primarily to the Germans, except for occasional visions for modernization in “an attempt to connect urban reconstruction and democratization” (Diefendorf 331). For the Americans, economic recovery and democratization were greater priorities than urban planning. There was also much uncertainty during the initial postwar years regarding Frankfurt’s institutional role, centering on the question of whether Frankfurt would become the capital of the Federal Republic. The first chancellor and former Cologne mayor, Konrad Adenauer, dashed this
possibility in 1949 as a result of his fateful vote for Bonn. He was supported by Berliners concerned that Frankfurt's size and connection to the 1848 revolution would endanger the possibility of Berlin becoming the capital upon reunification.

Nevertheless, Frankfurt did become a symbol of the Federal Republic as reflected in the economic recovery and modernist architectural visions. Initially, these trends grew out of the city's long leftist history, often dubbed “Red Frankfurt.” Every mayor between 1946 and 1977 was a Social Democrat, and politics was not insignificant in modern reconstruction and building policy. However, these modernist visions arguably shifted by the 1970s to supermodern architectural visions as reflective of neoliberal capitalism. It was not until the 1970s that Frankfurt started building the skyscrapers that would give it the nickname “Mainhattan.” This name alternatively posits world metropolitan status and comparisons with Wall Street. Indeed, as a center of West Germany’s finance capital as well as European finance, it seemed logical that Frankfurt would mirror Wall Street's Manhattan. Yet beyond the American affinities, the European identity of Frankfurt became prominent. One major skyscraper, the Eurotower, opened in the year of 1977, only a year prior to Dorian Gray’s opening. In 1993, the

---

42 In Doctor Faustus, the premier of the Apocalipsis cum figuris is in Frankfurt, marking Frankfurt's significance for prior generations as the primary site of anti-nationalism, the musical avant-garde, and modernity.

43 The fate of the Braunschweig Palace serves as an example here. The building’s postwar history is complex, symbolic of the divided politics of reconstruction in Germany. Its partial ruin lay in the city for almost fifteen years, with constant debate over whether it should be rebuilt. Finally, in 1959, the leftist Social Democratic majority in the city hall voted with a majority of only two votes to demolish the ruin. Even though it was possible to restore the building, the Left did not want to rebuild a structure so intimately tied to the imperial and aristocratic history of the Welfen family. This resulted in a conservative reaction that led to the reconstruction of the palace façade in 2004, achieved with just a one vote majority of the Christian Democratic city government.

44 The greatest example of this inspiration is the Deutsche Bank center, constructed between 1979 and 1984 and dubbed “the Deutsche Bank Twin Towers.”

45 The year of the Eurotower’s opening, 1977, is a crucial year in the history of Frankfurt politics. In that year, the first conservative Christian Democratic (CDU) mayor was elected. Indeed, the politics of “Red Frankfurt” changed drastically with the continued buildup of global finance capital.
Eurotower became the center of the European Monetary Institute, which in 1998 developed into the European Central Bank, representing Frankfurt’s de facto status as the financial capital of Europe. Such institutions altered Frankfurt’s image from its leftist associations with modernism and the Frankfurt School. In fact, Adorno, who died in 1969, never witnessed this transformed cityscape.

The Dorian Gray and Frankfurt electronic pop have echoed in some important ways the flows of people and finance in this new Frankfurt. As a center of music trade and business, represented in the 1970s with the founding of the world’s largest music fair, the Musikmesse, Frankfurt proved a major center for new music institutions, technologies, and publishing. Given techno’s firm association with the 1990s, the Dorian Gray’s long history makes clear that years of labor were required for the popular explosion of techno in Germany. Talla 2XLC’s “Techno Club” was in the late 1980s initially a broad mix of electronic dance music, increasingly featuring EBM and industrial music with live performances by Nitzer Ebb and Meat Beat Manifesto, among others. DJs such as DJ Dag, Thorsen Fenslau, and DJ T brought house and techno to Dorian Gray, as its Saturday nights and Sunday mornings gradually opened up to electronic music. By the late 1980s, it was not just the Friday “Techno Club” that featured electronic music.

Since 1977, with the exception of a six-year period from 1989 to 1995, all mayors have been CDU. This gives important indications for the changing and increasingly contradictory directions that Frankfurt’s disparate political groups have taken.

In the prominent Willi-Brandt-Platz in front of the Eurotower, the symbol of the Euro currency stands tall and neon – a great blue €, which has 12 yellow stars representing the original countries who adopted the Euro in 1999. The object lights up brilliantly at night like a blue Euro-Pac-Man, a more powerful image of the downtown than any other national symbols, such as E.U. or German flags. In contrast to the subversive practice of linking the stars of the American flag with dollar signs, this monument celebrates the connection of money and the European Union. The € marks the utopian dreams of future European unity. Whereas Frankfurt was once center of the American military and NATO, it has now become a symbol of an independent European Union free from American influence. The airport stands as the main link between these two eras.
The posh crowd surrounding the Playboy and Formula One parties at Dorian Gray was gradually replaced with new clubgoers. From 1987 to 1993, this particularly vibrant young generation at the Dorian Gray developed the production skills and the networks to carry the Frankfurt techno scene onto the world stage. Along with clubs downtown, the Dorian Gray acted as a gathering place for aspiring musicians, established artists, and managers to mingle, share ideas, and ensure continued innovation in Frankfurt. In this early period, such exchange in the techno scene was facilitated by the lack of clear divisions in musical genres. At the same time, these attendees witnessed innovative performances at the Dorian Gray within the airport surroundings.

In fact, Thomas Koch (DJ T) was so inspired that in 1989 he published the first issue of a new magazine called Groove, which was to be one of the earliest publications dealing exclusively with electronic music. The success of Groove reflected the success of Frankfurt. Starting with issue 6 in 1990, Groove developed a subtitle, “Sound of Frankfurt,” which remained the subtitle up through issue 39 of October/November 1994. Indeed, Thomas Koch sensed the scene’s innovative possibilities reflecting Kraftwerk’s 1986 call for “Techno Pop.” During the first years of the magazine, many labels were formed that would be central to the marketing of Frankfurt as an electronic music city: Logic Records in 1988, Suck Me Plasma and Planet Core Productions (PCP) in 1989, Eye Q in 1990, Force Inc. and Harthouse in 1991, Fax +49-69/450464 in 1992, and Mille Plateaux and Playhouse in 1993. The diversity of these labels ensured that Frankfurt gained a distinct international reputation. Force Inc. and Mille Plateaux focused on national and international artists, whereas a significant number of producers on Logic,
Suck Me Plasma, Eye Q, Playhouse, and Harthouse were born and raised in the Frankfurt scene and subsequently achieved international fame.

In this section, I will focus on the pop reception of Frankfurt’s international prominence between 1985 and 1995 as it centered around two representative genres of the “Frankfurt Sound”: Eurodance and trance. Eurodance was a product that bore distinct marks in Frankfurt. It revised the collaborative model of Eurodisco, such as was established by Donna Summer and Giorgio Moroder, by bringing together black male rappers and female soul and gospel singers with white German producers to create a distinctive sound of African-American vocals and Europop. This was a formula that was to have successful marketability in Europe and throughout the world. In the European context, Frankfurt-area studios had already been featured in 1970s Eurodisco productions, especially with the extraordinary success of Boney M., which worked on a similar model as produced and recorded by Frank Farian in the Europasound studio. Farian would later produce the most infamous and scandalous German-American dance “collaboration” in history: Milli Vanilli.

By comparison with Mjunik disco and Eurodisco, Eurodance in Frankfurt was a study in the history of American-German relations. Indeed, Eurodance would have not been possible without the presence of African-American soldiers in Frankfurt. The stationing of American GIs at the Rhine-Main Air Base meant an exchange of musical cultures with the local population. The most famous pop artist was the rapper Turbo B (Durron Maurice Butler) of the group SNAP! Turbo B developed an impressive career in Europe from roughly 1989 to 1993. Originally from Pittsburgh, he was stationed in

---

47 While I will focus on these genres in the popular context, it should be noted that Frankfurt also contributed to the whole plethora of electronic music in significant ways, from experimental glitch music to hardcore techno. I address Frankfurt artists such as Uwe Schmidt in chapter 3 and Marc Acardipane in chapter 4.
Frankfurt beginning in 1985. His producers, Michael Münzing and Luca Anzilotti, began working with him after already establishing themselves as central figures in Frankfurt electronic music. They formed the group Snap! in 1989, the year of German unification, and Snap!’s 1990 hit single “The Power” became a central point of inspiration for Frankfurt producers. “The Power” was the first Frankfurt dance track to have an extraordinary market success, reaching number one on the American dance charts and number two on the Billboard charts. This was followed by two equally impressive Eurodance hits from Frankfurt: Snap!’s “Rhythm is a Dancer” in 1992 and Culture Beat’s “Mr. Vain” in 1993. Additional Eurodance groups were formed in Frankfurt at this time, including Jam & Spoon feat. Plavka, La Bouche, Le Click, and Magic Affair. However, as the U.S. army’s presence in Germany was scaled back in the 1990s, so did the fortunes of Eurodance decline. With less contact between Americans and Germans, nothing of its kind took the place of Eurodance; rather, a Eurotrance sound of primarily instrumental music or white vocalists dominated the dance charts thereafter. Nevertheless, Eurodance proved to be a unique production of post-1989 Europe, featured in Frankfurt, and the Rhine Belt more generally, as representative of new European identity. Frankfurt Airport and its neighboring Rhein-Main Air Base proved symbolic for this collaboration.

Along with Eurodance, trance music arose in Frankfurt as an internationally successful genre. In some respects, trance is more complicated to analyze because of the numerous groups and musicians involved. Producers and DJs based in Frankfurt in

---

48 That same year, the other major Eurodance group from Frankfurt, Culture Beat, was founded by Torsten Fenslau, another central figure in the Frankfurt scene and a resident DJ at the Dorian Gray. He structured Culture Beat on a similar concept, with himself as producer for an African-American male rapper and female singer. Culture Beat’s 1993 hit single “Mr. Vain” was, along with the singles “The Power” and “Rhythm is a Dancer” by Snap!, the most commercially successful single to come out of Frankfurt.
the 1990s included Sven Väth, Oliver Lieb, Pete Namlook, der Dritte Raum, Good Groove, Jam & Spoon, Dance 2 Trance, DJ Dag, Hardfloor, and Talla 2XLC.

I will here briefly highlight the work of Oliver Lieb, one of the most skilled trance producers of the Frankfurt scene. Lieb was extraordinarily prolific throughout the 1990s, working under more than 30 aliases. An important strand of Lieb’s productions reveals how the update of cosmic music to the dance floor, a key innovation of the trance sound, could have extraordinary effects on club life. In particular, Lieb’s projects Spicelab, Paragliders, and L.S.G. extensively used glissandi and the effects of reverb, echo, and flanger to achieve atmospheric sounds. These effects arguably evoked the experience of flight, such as on his 1989 debut single as Force Legato, “System,” as well as on his albums Lost in Spice (1993, as Spicelab), Constellation (1993), and Rendezvous in Outer Space (1995, as L.S.G.). The adding of a 130-160 BPM bass drum and other percussive elements meant that a unique mix of atmospheric effects and sped-up dance music became the trademark of trance. In short, the slowness of ambient sounds, extended sequencer themes, and the relentless bass drum were combined. With these manifold layers, the combination of smoothness, gliding slowness, and supersonic speed in flight became the distinctive experience of trance. Arguably the most direct example of this representation of supersonic speed was the track “Follow Me” by Jam & Spoon, which includes the repeated Doppler effect of a jet fly-by.
In this sense, trance was fundamentally related to the tradition of cosmic music of the likes of the Cosmic Jokers, on the one hand, and the ambient music of Brian Eno and Vangelis on the other. Its revolutionary gesture was to place such music in a dance context. Returning to the strange mix of headspace and soundscape of the Frankfurt Airport, it is strikingly indicative that the first major piece of ambient music, Brian Eno’s *Ambient 1: Music for Airports* (1978) was also music about air travel. Brian Eno’s music was of course to be set in airports, and it was released in the same year as the opening of Dorian Gray. Amidst the extreme loudness of the jet aircraft, the music was designed to set a mood comparable to the highly planned psychological soundscape in airplanes. Eno’s atmospheric music thus paradoxically induces one to forget about flight. It is a specific atmosphere as a calm heaven. But at the same time that these flows were meant to induce relaxation, they were also the source of the critique of ambience and
trance: the flows of the airport atmosphere were apparently bound up with the flows of capitalism in supermodernity. In short, trance works both as soundscape and financescape. The intoxication of its technological flow became the money note, an extraordinary sequenced drive as reflected in Dag Tribe’s track “No Compromise (Airport 5:00 – 11.59 a.m. Mix),” produced by Dorian Gray resident DJ Dag and featured on the Frankfurt Trax series.

Frankfurt trance was successful because it tapped into these transcendent experiences; yet Frankfurt trance had an incredible marketability that often paired it as a commodified electronic equivalent to world music, which led to its condemnation as music of profit over substance. Numerous groups streamlined the Frankfurt sound for a quick financial gain. For many of the original producers of this music, including Oliver Lieb,\textsuperscript{49} trance slowly turned into a pejorative of cheap music strongly linked to the rise of Eurotrance star-DJs.\textsuperscript{50} Such DJs have been able to maintain the enormous popular success of this style through to the present.

Within the wider history of electronic music and the post-1970s digital age, the Frankfurt trance scene crystallizes the intersection of global markets and Frankfurt’s financescapes, though ironically, a string of bankruptcies of Frankfurt labels in the late 1990s and early 2000s, including Eye-Q and Mille Plateaux, led to the decline of the scene and a gradual exodus of producers to Berlin. Nevertheless, it was the financescapes, technoscapes, and mediascapes of Frankfurt that were the basis for the innovations and international connections possible in the popularization of German techno post-1989. The site of the Techno-Club at Dorian Gray was an occasion for musical gatherings that mirrored this international traffic: taking place as taking flight. In

\textsuperscript{49} Personal communication.
\textsuperscript{50} See the analysis of star-DJs by Broughton and Brewster (384-410).
its most extreme example, to return to the New York comparison, New York DJ Lenny Dee discussed times he played at the Dorian Gray in the early 1990s, when he arrived in the airport, played at the club, slept at the airport hotel, and caught a flight the next day, all without even visiting Mainhattan.\footnote{Lenny Dee. Personal Interview. June 2008.} The club’s location meant Lenny Dee never needed to leave the non-place of the airport.

While Dorian Gray closed in 2001, its end was not related to the events of September 11. In fact, the club closed with a new millennium party between December 31, 2000 and January 1, 2001. Regardless, it is difficult to imagine a club like Dorian Gray existing today. A thousand intoxicated clubbers roaming an empty airport in the middle of the night is not an experience readily associated with the twenty-first century. Yet this was precisely what the clubbers experienced for a number of decades, even though issues of terrorism obviously existed prior to 2001. As Augé points out, the vulnerability of non-places results precisely from their traffic: “It is in the manner of immense parentheses that non-places daily receive increasing numbers of individuals. And they are the particular target of all those whose passion for retaining or conquering territory drives them to terrorism” (111). But for a period, the dream of a non-place in Mainhattan free of traditional conflicts, border disputes, or security was maintained. In this spirit, an older clubber who experienced Dorian Gray from 1981 until the mid-1990s, Thomas Zimmermann, remembers the Dorian Gray through the metaphor of travel:

In the Big Club,\footnote{The Big Club was the name for the main dancefloor at Dorian Gray. Its various floors included the Big Club, the Small Club, a bistro, and an old roller-skating rink.} you didn’t know if you were in heaven or hell when one techno record after another cracked over you and caused you to have ice-cold chills. The location beneath the airport was already ingenious. The drive out of the city in the dead of night. The walk through the airport, empty of people. The escalators down into the breadths and depths of the
catacombs, where week after week the air was electric, passing the groups of people gathered outside who would so gladly have been a part of it. The long way down to the Big Club. That was it. For this rush, you’d even head out at four in the morning. And then you’d head home completely exhausted early the next morning or midday, weaving your way through the tourists checking in for flights to Mallorca, while you had the feeling that you had returned on a space shuttle from a trip to another planet.\textsuperscript{53}

And that summed it up: the chance to party in the no-place of utopia as the real non-place of the airport terminal. It allowed for raving each weekend in a duty-free zone, in all senses of duty-free, although it was precisely such non-places that allowed for the marketing of the “Frankfurt Sound” and “German trance.” There have been many similar clubs to come and go – on the tops of skyscrapers, in old airport hangars, in old bunkers – but never at the international terminal of one of the world’s largest airports.

\textbf{1998: Running in the City}

These days, going to the Berghain is as common as going to the baker.

Anonymous clubber

From Frankfurt, I turn now to my first extensive study of Berlin as cityscape, though this is the Berlin of the late-1990s, reflecting my initial arrival as a rave tourist rather than as an expat. In the previous section, I juxtaposed the cityscape of Frankfurt

with Berlin in order to emphasize their contrasting postwar histories. In terms of the excessive focus that Berlin receives in the reception of techno culture, the Frankfurt exploration served to emphasize the multiple local soundscapes and scenes involved in the techno history and geography of Germany. Air travel was key to this analysis of a city central both to the infrastructure of (West) Germany and Europe. Yet I now turn to the breaks and fractures of Berlin, as discussed by Huyssen, to examine a different form of travel: running. I will explore here what running could say about the history of techno and German identity by focusing on the most iconic film of 1990s Berlin and the most popular film of German techno: Run Lola Run (1998). Indeed, many techno tourists saw this film long before visiting Berlin. The practice of running will reveal key aspects of the politics of music and travel within the context of 1990s and 2000s Berlin club scenes, along with the mass annual gathering of the Love Parade that followed unification.

Above all, it will allow us to explore what it means for a soundscape to represent a city.

Run Lola Run's innovative plot and unique combination of pop cultural references helps to situate this history. The Berlin protagonist, Lola, has a task – to collect 100,000 D-Marks and reach her boyfriend, Manni, on the other side of Berlin within twenty minutes. Otherwise, Manni will die in an attempt to rob a supermarket, because he lost the money needed to make a deal with some gangsters. The story is constructed around three alternative universes in a kind of classic Atari arcade game where Lola has three lives (Helbig). The first two universes end in tragic “game over” scenarios (1. Lola dies. 2. Manni dies), but the final scenario completes the mission with bonus points. Lola succeeds in obtaining 100,000 D-Marks by placing all her money on two consecutive

54 The opening pop-existentialist narration by the security guard clearly announces the game structure of the film, In fact, he combines the supposed antipodal game cultures of football jocks and video game nerds: “The ball is round. The game lasts 90 minutes. So much is clear. Everything else is just theory. And we’re off!”
bets at a roulette table. Manni also solves his debts so that not only is he saved, but they also walk away rich together.

Lola’s constant running through the city in search of Manni and money is the basis for the film’s combination of urban life, cyberspace, youth culture, and video game narrative. What is of greater interest from the point of view of techno researchers, however, is the EDM soundtrack as composed by director Tom Tykwer together with Reinhold Heil and Johnny Klimek. It was produced in the rather fateful year of 1998 during the end-of-the-millennium height of EDM’s popularity in Europe and of Berlin’s reputation as a reunified techno city amidst the Love Parade boom. But what is fascinating about Run Lola Run in this context is that there is no direct representation of the Berlin techno scene. A later film, Berlin Calling (2009), which will be addressed in the next chapter, offers the most successful representation of Berlin techno. With this difference in mind, I will term Berlin Calling a techno scene film, whereas Run Lola Run could arguably be called a techno culture film.

This distinction invites a question: What can be learned about Berlin rave and club culture from a film in which no raves or clubs are actually present? To answer this conundrum, I return to running as a representation of non-places and urban geography.

---

55 These themes are emphasized in the substantial secondary literature. Claudia Mesch, for example, describes Berlin as “a cyberspace obstacle course or environment usually associated with video and computer games.”

56 The representation of Berlin in music films has an extraordinary history, from the experimental depictions in Berlin: Symphony of a Great Symphony (1927), to Hollywood’s homage to Weimar-era Berlin in Cabaret (1972), to the queer-punk East Berlin in Hedwig and the Angry Inch (2001). While soundtracks of Berlin urban life have often relied on classical, cabaret or punk-industrial scores, post-reunification Berlin has seen a new musical genre operate as the city’s primary soundtrack – techno. Run Lola Run (1998) is the primary example of this shift in film. Yet despite the centrality of music and techno culture to Run Lola Run’s success, only one essay amidst the many publications on the film focuses on music: Caryl Flinn’s “The Music That Lola Ran To.” This essay offers a very impressive analysis of the film’s soundtrack.

57 For further analysis of this distinction, see Nye 2010. See the review also for a published version of the analysis of Run Lola Run here and of Berlin Calling in chapter 2.
Running marks the break with the direct mimesis of club life in the following way: It establishes the distinction between *running on the streets* versus *dancing in the club*. The movement of running is a means to comment on Berlin techno culture in ways that a direct representation of club dancing cannot. First, it allows for greater freedom of form. Tykwer exploits such freedoms offered by the techno culture film, which results in a hybrid of cyberpunk, pop, and realist film styles. The playful plot is mirrored in a kaleidoscope of film techniques and media from time-lapse photography to cartoons, which bring tricoastal associations of American and Japanese computer culture to Berlin.

In terms of the fantastic happy-end plot, cyberpunk transforms into cyberpop. Indeed, the heights of techno popularity were on the horizon; a year after *Run Lola Run* was released, the 1999 Love Parade achieved its highest attendance at 1,500,000. Lola, the raver techno-girl protagonist, signifies a light take on techno culture that reflects the pop wing of Berlin techno during the late 1990s. Arguably, the film offers a version of, to quote the rave anthem by Da Hool, “meeting her at the Love Parade.” Like this anthem’s music video, which presents ravers on trucks dancing past the cityscape of Berlin, Lola is on the streets and on the move. Indeed, *Run Lola Run*’s goal is pop, and what comes out is a new Berlin export: So successful was Tom Tykwer’s EDM film that it was a springboard for a career as a Hollywood film director.

Yet, running in tension with these playful elements, *Run Lola Run* proves to be an anomaly of cyberpop in the rather banal and everyday scenery of Berlin. There are no flashy city lights or fancy pieces of technology. The run as a form of movement grounds this realism. The task given to Lola is not one of a heroic conquest or hunt, but one of economic survival amidst the rapid changes of Berlin. Lola and Manni could be described here as two club-kids, delaying their adolescence into their twenties and
suddenly confronted with prosaic everyday life. To draw out the contrast between running and dancing: Lola is not *dancing at night* but *running in midday*. Literally, the time of her run is from 11:40 a.m. to noon; the terror that approaches should she fail is the ultimately prosaic *afternoon*. Against Lola, as representative of a relaxed Europop generation, the stereotypical demands of German punctuality return in full force.

In terms of the techno soundscape of Berlin, the soundtrack functions like a sonic Walkman to Lola’s run. More precisely, the 1998 film lies at the crossroads between Walkman, Discman, and iPod culture as mobile accompaniment to new urban experiences. The music also assists the run as *exercise*. Indeed, the techno soundtrack invites the question whether the endurance, fitness, and discipline clubbers have achieved in the pleasure principle of partying at night can overcome the reality principle of the day. In this way, her running in the day highlights techno’s prosaic functionality as treadmill aerobics, since electronic dance music has always operated as a dual soundtrack to the dance club and the fitness club. Indeed, techno aerobics attained symbolic value when the German fitness company, *McFit*, purchased the Love Parade in 2006. This functionality disturbs the quasi-religious commitment ravers have to techno as ecstatic and transcendent experience: or flight.

What is offered instead is the supermachine drive of the runner Lola in this singular example of a techno science fiction film. Her ability to run reflects the endurance of techno clubbers during their 48-hour pill-popping weekends. Yet Lola does not take drugs. Her strength seems to derive purely from her heart and will, although her fiery red hair arguably has its basis in amphetamines. To borrow from gamer aesthetics: as opposed to the neon Euro-Pac-Man in front of Mainhattan’s Eurotower, seat of the European Central Bank, Lola is a kind of Ms. Pac-Man as technopop, in a constant drive
on an abstract Berlin maze. The individuals she meets on the way are the ghosts that could defeat the mission. Techno as religious experience and as aerobic training combines through her primal scream and her endurance, which is anchored by the trance soundtrack. The soundtrack supports both her run and her game at the Roulette table, the primitivist-tribal track “Casino” sounding her scream as cadence. The track allows for a return to magic and mythical time as she wins the money and saves Manni.

The couple’s crisis is symbolic of the threats to newly reunited Berlin as a techno club city. To return to the comparison of Frankfurt and Berlin, it is key here to analyze the function of Berlin’s non-places in this film as sites of transformation. As a post-unification film, the scenery of both East and West Berlin is nondescript, as has been repeatedly pointed out in analyses of the film, such as by Caryl Flinn: “Berlin becomes a somewhat nonessential, generic urban place, a reading Tykwer encouraged from foreign audiences. Is this Berlin, or is this Anywhere?” (208). In comprehending this nondescript techno city as “non-place,” an intriguing theorization by Adam Krims helps. Krims develops a theory of the “urban ethos,” which is not geographically confined. He writes that the representation of an urban ethos “is not a picture of how life is in any particular city. Instead, it distills publicly disseminated notions of how cities are generally, even though it may be disproportionately shaped by the fate of certain particular cities, especially New York City and Los Angeles…” (7). As Berlin Anywhere, the city

---

58 The EDM soundtrack is not a compilation of Berlin techno anthems or contributions by DJ-stars. All tracks are composed by Tom Tykwer together with two veteran music producers – Reinhold Heil, who has roots in Neue Deutsche Welle, and Johnny Klimek, an Australian producer who has worked with various acts in the techno-trance scene. Klimek worked as producer for Berlin trance star Paul Van Dyk, and the soundtrack often resembles Van Dyk’s timbres and sleek production quality. The music is also schooled in the speech-rap from Trainspotting’s most memorable track, “Born Slippy” by Underworld. This is especially clear during Tom Tykwer’s rapping in “Running Two,” as well as Lola’s monologues in “I Wish” and “I Believe.”
experience is offered as a musical accompaniment to the urban run. It does not matter where you are; it matters that you are experiencing the city through movement.

To be sure, EDM has played a decisive role in post-unification Berlin's urban ethos. EDM's urban ethos as an advertisement invites both visitors and citizens to *Be.Berlin*, the name of Berlin's campaign as mentioned in the preface. Such links run in line with global histories of postindustrial urban tourism. Techno representations reflect many elements of what Krims calls, in reference to images from pop disco, the "abstract city of fantasy" (18). I would argue, however, that such abstract urban fantasies always imply specific localities and traditions of the "urban ethos" they represent. They must be specific because cities are in constant competition for international attention. In its hedonistic, camp, and queer representations, Berlin EDM has appropriated themes from its most prominent historical period of pop fantasy: "Weimar-era Berlin." This era has been supported internationally by a selective memory of freedom and glamour as depicted in Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* and its film adaptation, *Cabaret* (1972). Berlin techno has similarly tried to celebrate and heal the historical breaks and ruins of the Berlin cityscape through a redefinition of these ruins as festive non-places.

More generally, this urban ethos has become especially important for the German techno scene, including both Berlin and Frankfurt, because of the compromised histories that German rural and old town imagery has with national Romantic myths and their most extreme exploitation by Nazi ideology. Though every bit a modern movement, Nazism tends not to be associated with cities in cultural memory as much as it is with natural imagery and old towns. In this sense, modern cities offer potential for overcoming the past precisely because many old German downtowns were destroyed and replaced with new downtowns, as we already saw in the paradigmatic example of Frankfurt.
Modern cities have also, especially since the 1970s, been associated with immigrant populations, expats, and multicultural institutions. Urban history in Germany thus differs strongly from the Anglophone cities that are the foci of Krims’s work.

This post-unification construction of an urban techno ethos has been particularly evident in Berlin, though as was indicated in Huyssen’s representation of Berlin’s ruptures, the Prussian, Weimar, Third Reich, and Cold War periods remain in constant tension as historical palimpsests. Berlin as a 1990s playground of industrial ruins, construction sites, and squatter opportunities offered a range of legally and historically ambiguous non-places that are in part represented in Lola’s run, and now in techno tourist spots. This exploration of non-places was most directly represented in the Berlin techno scene through East Berlin club exploration. This process began in the early 1990s with the opening of Tresor, E-Werk, and Bunker, followed by clubs such as Maria, Bar 25, and Ostgut, the last of which found a new location and became the world-famous Berghain.59

Lola’s adventure represents the time-lapse excitement of a city in transition. It dreams that a reunited Germany will reflect neither the failed socialist state of East Germany nor the prosaic Wirtschaftswunder of West Germany. However, the histories and cultural differences of late-1990s Berlin and the techno scene remain veiled. Many of the shots of the city – especially the intersection where Manni waits – look more like suburban West Germany than Be.Berlin’s desired images of exciting landmarks and nightlife. Tykwer refuses to allow Lola to run through Berlin in a logical manner from East to West. Neither does he allow Lola to run by Berlin icons such as the Reichstag, the TV Tower, or the Brandenburg Gate. Given the prominence of the supermarket, generic

59 For a description of the old and new club miles, see Rapp. For a transformation of this club life within the context of the Love Parade, see Nye Love.
architecture, and the fractured geography of Lola’s run, this is Berlin as a dystopian non-place. It is fruitful here to return to the comparison of Lola’s run and the Love Parade. *Run Lola Run* insists on a dismissal of historic landmarks and geographic logic. This illogical geography as pop youth experience is reflected again in Da Hool’s “Meet Her at the Love Parade,” which features diva dancers in leopard skin outfits and sunglasses. Their Eurotrash style clashes with the distinguished monuments of the Brandenburg Gate and the Victory Tower prominent in the parade history.

*Run Lola Run* similarly represents Berlin’s paradoxical identity as a city that is always “in movement.” Yet this cyberpop dystopia also stands in striking opposition to Berlin’s industrial techno clubs of the 1990s, which offered Berlin not as a cyberpop “non-place,” but as a place of industrial production. In clubs such as Tresor and Bunker, Berlin was represented as industrial dystopia. The Tresor Club even sought to represent Berlin as industrial and dirty East Berlin through artistic connections with its symbolic sister-city of American industry: Detroit. These dystopian representations of a paradoxically no-future *Zukunftsmusik* had little resonance in the forever-transformation of *Run Lola Run*.

At the same time, Lola’s run tapped into a long history of both Berlin popular culture and techno in the following manner: the representation of Berlin as a pop *feminist* non-place. A long line of female musicians and performers has represented this urban ethos of Berlin as a progressive place opposed to the “Fatherland.” Relying on the precedence set by Marlene Dietrich, Hildegard Knef, and Nico, Berlin EDM DJanes have been particularly successful in continuing this tradition: from underground radio DJ Monika Dietl; to the stardom of “Rave Queen” Marusha; to Berlin label owners Ellen Allien, Monika Kruse, Anja Schneider, and Gudrun Gut. Lola as mythical figure can here
be compared to the feminine gendering of cities. The Western techno-woman’s freedom is defined as a freedom of movement and public display, though in Lola’s quest for money, she also represents the commodification of this freedom. Whether this feminist tradition can be carried forth amidst the centralization of cultural and political institutions in the Berlin Republic, now represented by Angela Merkel, is a question that the prosaic anxiety of Run Lola Run keenly registers.

Image 9: Lola’s Run 1. The U-Bahn.
What Lola further represents is the continued anxiety that Berlin’s identity as a city “in movement” might someday cease. Indeed, what is ultimately recognizable as an icon of Berlin during Lola’s runs is thus the U-Bahn. With the Berlin Wall having fallen in 1989, travel is a key marker of identity in this Berlin film of 1998. Lola’s run and the U-Bahn confirm that Berlin is now an extension of the West German freedoms of travel as represented on the autobahn, on the Trans-Europ-Express, and in the Dorian Gray. This freedom includes the exploration of the ostensibly open “frontier” of East Berlin. What is also recognizable are the sites of construction; Lola charges across a causeway in both her first and second run, surrounded by a vast construction site near the Reichstag. For viewers who experienced the reconstruction of Berlin in the 1990s, these sites might call up an oddly nostalgic recognition that some forms of change and transition, some non-places, are not permanent. In this sense, Run Lola Run indicates that non-places are beginning to develop a history and pastness, even nostalgia, of their own: indeed, they
are developing identity, relations, and history. Whether Lola and Manni settle down after finding their money is another question. Perhaps the missing film scene that follows Lola and Manni’s happy-end reunion is a happy afternoon walk in 2009 to the bakery… or to the Berghain…

2001: Surfing the Seas

In a number of passages from Non-Places, Augé’s analysis leaves land and air travel, and moves to sea travel. Almost by necessity, the seascape turns into the soundscape upon embarking. He writes: “The ideal vantage point – because it combines the effect of movement with distance – is the deck of a ship putting out to sea. A description of the vanishing land is sufficient to evoke the passenger still straining to see it: soon it is only a shadow, a rumour, a noise” (89). To be sure, the association of music and the oceanic has been a central discourse of modernity. The rapid developments of sea routes of trade and conquest since the fifteenth century have added new dimensions to this trope. Grounding music’s extraordinary aesthetic power, the oceanic reached mediated heights during the nineteenth century in orchestral and operatic form. In the German Romantic tradition, Richard Wagner quintessentially represented sea music in Der fliegende Holländer and Tristan und Isolde, though perhaps the preeminent example is the Rheingold prelude. This prelude sounds an intersection of the creation of both music and the world in the sonic pallets of a seascape. And yet, such sublime tradition has been reversed through modes of pop lightness: For example, my bicoastal review of exile and postwar surfer culture represented the exchange between the Beach Boys and Kraftwerk.
With such a long and complex history, writing about music and the sea elicits great challenges. Yet it is precisely this challenge that makes Thomas Meinecke’s achievement in the techno-media novel *Hellblau* (*Pale Blue, 2001/2012*) all the more intriguing. Meinecke has had a diverse career as a novelist, journalist, musician, and DJ. Growing up in Hamburg, his music with the band F.S.K was released on the Hamburg punk and new wave label Zickzick, although he moved to Munich in 1977 and later to a Bavarian village in 1994. It was not until the 1990s that he first became interested in house and techno, and his career as a novelist developed even later, inaugurated by *The Church of John F. Kennedy* (1996). Music in his novels has always been starkly present, especially in the aptly titled *Musik* (2004), which features a music-loving flight attendant named Karol.

Written in 2001, *Hellblau* is Thomas Meinecke’s third novel and his most extensive exploration of electronic music. A central thread of the story is the research by the narrator, Tillmann, on techno, house, and black American music more generally. Tillmann, who comes from Mannheim, lying at the southern edges of the Rhine Belt, has a scholarship to stay on the island of Ocracoke in North Carolina. This island is near Roanoke Island, where the first Europeans landed in 1596. He lives and exchanges ideas with his Jewish-American lover, Vermillion, who studies at Duke University. A key topic of his research is the U-Boot wars of the Nazis, and with Vermillion, he studies the Jewish diaspora in the United States. At the same time, he is embedded in a digital network of discourse and research (via email, fax, etc.) with two other girlfriends: Yolanda and Cordula. Yolanda, who lives in Chicago, is a friend who is especially

---

60 The novel was recently translated by Daniel Bowles: see Meinecke, *Pale*. “Hellblau” can translate either as pale blue or light blue. In this section, I quote from the translation and include the German original in footnotes.
interested in Chicago house and Detroit techno, as well as Afro-Germanic and Black-Jewish relations in music and culture. The primary basis of their correspondence is a book they are working on together, which has a number of working titles. Cordula, on the other hand, is Tillman’s ex-girlfriend; she is interested in Afro-Catholic studies and is an expert in the works of Hubert Fichte.

Despite this geographic dispersion, *Hellblau* emerges primarily as a meta-travel narrative. The vast majority of the travel is “surfing” of a different kind from Kraftwerk and the Beach Boys: namely, Internet surfing as travel.\(^{61}\) The name of Tillmann and Vermillion’s residence is the “Net House.” However, their “pale blue” lives and research are grounded in a more complex mix than just surfing; they also include fishing for information and literally swimming in the Atlantic Ocean. In short, fishnets and the Internet are combined at the “Net House.” One could also say that the four researchers are also lost in a sea of cultural material, similar to Neumeister’s Minneapolis and Mjunik “chainlisteners” of the cultural sublime; the macrocosm consists of mediascapes and technoscapes, a sublime second nature that is so overwhelming that the story must be one about research itself rather than the conclusion of research.

Moreover, in the research between Yolanda and Tillmann, the principle of the DJ who “digs” for lost and obscure records as sedimented history is placed into a principle of samples from a plethora of texts and objects. This construction of authorship and narrative along the lines of the DJ is one that the actual practicing-DJ Meinecke emphasizes. The novel is divided into 299 unnumbered sections or paragraphs, which

\(^{61}\) The only travels that play a prominent role in the book are when Tillmann discusses his travels in Chicago during the year prior, and when he and Vermillion travel from North Carolina to Virginia and back on highway NC 12, exploring the islands of the Outer Banks. Finally, at the very end of the novel, a number of departures take place, including Tillman’s return to Germany and his visit to the grave of Hubert Fichte in Hamburg.
resemble cultural theses. Indeed, in its practices of cutups and quotations, *Hellblau* resembles a pop version of Walter Benjamin’s *Arcades Project*. The three primary characters scarcely exist apart from their research; we learn extraordinarily little about their background or families. Their snippets of life seem like scratched record samples. As figures, the characters are primarily interesting as researchers, reflecting the stereotype that the actual lives of authors or academics are boring compared to their writings. Their soulscape have been emptied of all private, psychological content by their mediascapes. Put differently, their subjects are defined by their objects of research. As such, *Hellblau* is as much a meta-novel of cultural theory as it is a story. It travels in cultural theory as much as it travels in musical lives. Many of the 299 sections are entirely quotations from English and American cultural theory. Most important for Tillmann’s research are Paul Gilroy, Kodwo Eshun, LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. As Jörg Magenau succinctly states: “The author Thomas Meinecke is satisfied with the roll of the reciter and collagist, yes, the recipient. For he does nothing else than the readers holding his book in their hands: He reads.”  

In fact, Thomas Meinecke has long held a keen interest in American and English cultural studies, especially gender studies, queer studies, and African-American studies. Whereas modernist writers, such as Thomas Mann, delighted in the multilingual samples of languages – French, Latin, Italian, Ancient Greek, and so forth – as a demonstration of *Bildungsbürgertum* and European linguistic variety, Thomas Meinecke is an extreme example of contemporary German pop literature that focuses on one foreign language in all its varieties – English. Up to a quarter of his novels are quotes from English sources,

---

62 “Der Autor Thomas Meinecke... begnügt sich mit der Rolle des Rezitators und Collagisten, ja, des Rezipienten. Denn er tut nichts anderes als die Leser, die sein Buch in Händen halten: Er liest.”
mostly from academic writers. In *Hellblau*, a poignant English moment even takes religious form: “The pope demonstrates his conviction that Jesus was a Jew. The commentator says: For the pope it’s a pilgrimage, for the Israeli government a state visit. The lingua franca is English; unmistakably, the president says: Welcome to the Holy Land” (181). Chapter three will focus on such exchanges of the German and English language(s) and their fusion in *Denglisch*.

Yet despite the apparent endlessness and chaos of the research, there are distinct themes and goals in *Hellblau*. Indeed, the novel offers a cultural constellation of techno and house music, diaspora, and the Atlantic Ocean that is tricoastal, with the East Coast replacing the West as third coast. The mix of African-American and Jewish jazz musicians is juxtaposed with African-American and European techno artists. Meinecke’s DJ-work represents here the house nation wing of the raving society, strongly opposed to “German techno” as a categorization of national identity. Meinecke emphasizes and affirms the link and history of house and techno to African-American musical forms. In fact, one of the most interesting aspects of identity formation with Meinecke is that he, as a straight white male from Germany, has an obsession with African-American queer subcultures and music. This is often reflected in his novels. Tillmann shows similar interests, as related in this poignant passage:

> From my unbroken enthusiasm for the soulful music of the white Dan Curtin that Cordula and Heinrich recorded for me last week, I realize, not without astonishment, that I almost don’t care now whether techno or house music has black or white origins. I immediately relay this inner

change to Yolanda, who always rebuked me for the structural racism of my almost exclusive appreciation for African American music. (188)

Regarding the Black Atlantic, *Hellblau* presents a dialectic of diasporic cultures. English and American slave ships and sea routes are compared to the one sea practice for which Germans are especially famous: U-Boats. While U-Boat warfare during both world wars stands as the most serious attempt to end Anglo-American dominance of the sea, Tillmann’s research mostly concerns the Second World War. This continued dominance was historically the basis of escape routes for European Jews to America and Israel.

While Germany does not have a comparably tragic history on the ocean as African-Americans and Jews, German music and literature traveled to the United States following the heavy waves of immigration in the late nineteenth century. This late history is found in the special contributions by the German and Jewish exiles during the Second World War, as mentioned in the tricoastal preface. In this respect, Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic* is a key study of the cultural dynamics of black diasporic history, and hence, Tillmann often quotes and engages it at length. For example, in an almost obsessive logic of quotation, here is Meinecke as Tillmann quoting Paul Gilroy quoting Peter Linebaugh’s thesis: “The ship was probably the most important means of pan-African communications before the invention of the long-playing record” (7).

In terms of this transatlantic music history, both world wars took place in the middle of the rise of jazz and the subsequent black popular music exports to Germany.

64 “An meiner ungebrochenen Begeisterung für die beseelte Musik des Kaukasiens Dan Curtin, die mir Cordula und Heinrich letzte Woche überspielten, stellte ich, nicht ohne zu erstaunen, fest, daß es mir mittlerweile so gut wie egal ist, ob Techno beziehungsweise House Music schwarzer oder weißer Herkunft ist. Ich habe diesen inneren Forschritt sofort an Yolanda, die mir immer vorwarf, daß meine fast ausschließliche Begeisterung für afrikanisch-amerikanische Musik strukturrell rassistisch sei, weitergemeldet.” (207-8)

65 “Das Schiff das wahrscheinlich wichtigste Mittel panafrikanischer Kommunikation vor der Erfindung der Langspielplatte gewesen sei.” (14)
The late history of this cultural exchange is found in house and techno from the 1980s, explored by Eshun as sonic fiction. In these postwar house and techno cultures, the notion of Afro-Germanic exchange became more important, literally with the stationing of African-American GIs in Germany, and even more importantly with the rise of complex networks of cultural and musical communication via electronic media. To borrow again from Appadurai’s terminology, Meinecke’s various mediascapes, technoscapes, ideoscapes, and soundscapes come together in the figure of the Atlantic seascape. Indeed, with their constant shifts, transformations, morphings, and questioning of fixed perspective, Appadurai’s various scapes are more analogous to seascapes than landscapes. However, as was already indicated by Tillmann’s research on U-Boat warfare, the dialectic of the Black Atlantic in *Hellblau* is as much about what goes on underwater as it is about the seascape surface: It uncovers the disturbingly sublime history of human suffering as seascape, rather than fetishizing ocean currents. In fact, the first use of “pale blue” refers to U-Boats: “Like packs of gray wolves, German submarines, from pitch black to pale blue, traversed the remote combat waters and, traveling underwater from harbor to harbor, torpedoed the countless freighters there that supplied the enemy armaments industry” (10)\(^6\); this reference contrasts with other uses of the term “pale blue” in the book, which are virtually all innocent references to clothes: T-shirts and bathing suits. To be clear, blues in various shades are mentioned throughout the book, but “pale blue” is used sparingly.

This cultural theme of the *underwater* Atlantic is described by Cecile Zorach in her discussion of one of many meanings of pale blue as the “warm water of the Atlantic”

---

\(^6\) "Rudeln grauer Wölfe gleich würden deutsche Unterseeboote, pechschwarze bis hellblaue, die fernen Küstengewässer durchkreuzen und dort die unzähligen Frachtschiffe torpedieren, welche, unter Land von Hafen zu Hafen zehend, die feindliche Rüstungsindustrie belieferten.” (17)
This Atlantic notion of “pale blue” can also be dialectically related to the darkness of the deep sea, which is emphasized further with Meinecke’s focus on Drexciya, a Detroit techno duo composed of James Stinson and Gerald Donald. This duo attained a cult following in both Germany and the United States because of the aura created around the refusal to offer interviews while releasing records on the Berlin label Tresor, among others, from 1994 until 2002, the year of James Stinson’s death. Track titles with allusions to the sea are listed by Meinecke: “Deep Sea Dweller. Sea Quake. Nautilus 12. Aquatic Invasion. Aquabahn. Water Walker. Bubble Metropolis. Danger Bay” (8).

With such titles and aquatic sound effects within the tracks, Drexciya connected the seascape to musical practice. Furthermore, Drexciya envisioned an Afrofuturist myth of a race of “Drexciyans,” who consist of the souls of pregnant Africans thrown overboard from slave ships during the Middle Passage. The Drexciyans would rise up from underwater and create a new Atlantis. Meinecke quotes the German techno magazine De:Bug’s interview with a Drexciya member, who states that “water is the strongest, most dangerous, most aggressive element on the planet and at the same time the most beautiful, the most delicate” (87). As a techno soundscape, their music is a far cry from the orchestral Romantic seascapes. The Black Atlantic becomes a Black Atlantis of jazz, techno, and funk music. In this way, Drexciya presented Meinecke with the perfect opportunity to explore the role of the inter-continental and tricoastal connections between Detroit techno, Chicago house, and German techno.

Meinecke offers an updated interpretation of the sea, not as a moment of transcendent experience, but as a geographic site of past atrocities, modern warfare,

---

67 The list in the original German publication can be found on page 14.
68 “Wasser sei das stärkste, gefährlichste, aggressivste und zugleich das schönste, zarteste Element auf diesem Planeten.” (100)
and contested symbols. Nevertheless, toward the end of the book, the return of the seascape as the Romantic repressed occurs: namely, in the form of Hans Christian Andersen’s “Little Mermaid,” as quoted by Thomas Mann in translated form. This Romantic quote comes during the most repetitive use of the term “blue” in the entire book. Just before heading back to Germany, Tillmann lies in the Net House and reads the story of “The Little Mermaid,” while thinking about the Atlantic Ocean:

Far out at sea, the water is as blue as the petals of the most beautiful cornflower and as clear as the purest glass, but it is very deep, deeper than any anchor cable will fathom; many steeples would have to be stacked on top of one another to reach from the bottom to the water’s surface. It is down there that the sea folk live.

The soil itself was the finest sand, but blue as burning brimstone. A strangely blue luster lay over everything; you would have thought yourself high up in the air with only the heavens above and below rather than on the bottom of the ocean. Translated from the Danish into German by Mathilde Mann; cited in Doktor Faustus by Thomas Mann. The little memaid was an odd child."

As a German musical novel filtered through the American experience, Hellblau makes its only direct reference to the other major novel in this tradition: Thomas Mann’s Doctor Faustus. However, to be sure, Thomas Mann wrote these passages on the Little Mermaid while overlooking the Pacific Ocean rather than the Atlantic.

Moreover, Doctor Faustus appears only in the most indirect and brief of forms: a book quotation of the great fairy tale of Danish Romanticism, Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Little Mermaid.” Mentioned repeatedly throughout Mann’s novel, a key moment with

---

69 “Weit draußen im Meer ist das Wasser so blau wie die Blätter der schönsten Kornblume und so klar wie das reinste Glas, aber es ist sehr tief, tiefer als irgendein Ankertau reicht; viele Kirchtürme müßten aufeinander gestellt werden, um von dem Grunde bis über das Wasser hinauszureichen. Da unten wohnt das Meervolk.

reference to Andersen is Adrian Leverkühn’s encounter with the devil, who compares Levekühn’s existence to the mermaid. Yet in Meinecke’s world, the tale becomes reinterpreted; the “sea people” discussed at the end of the first paragraph of the above quote are both the Romantic mermaids and the Drexciyans. They are mentioned amidst the novel’s most intense Romantic imagery of the sky and the ocean, worthy of the sea as overwhelming force in the super-deep musical and literary tradition of Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde* or Mann’s *Death in Venice*.

However, the mermaids as European myth contrast starkly with the Atlantean race as envisioned by Drexciya. With this conflicted underwater history in mind, Tillmann explores a list of real historical people as possible examples of who this mermaid could be. He reinterprets this “little girl,” washed up on the shore, imagining that she could be a woman. For example, the little mermaid could be Leni Riefenstahl, the oldest scuba diver in the world at the time of the book’s writing, or Marlene Dietrich, washed up on the shores of American exile. But finally, Tillmann becomes fixated on Josephine Baker (*Pale Blue* 307; *Hellblau* 334-35) as the exotic African-American washed up on the European shores and later performing at the Tivoli fairgrounds in Copenhagen, an icon of Danish Romanticism. The observation traces the prehistory of the Afro-Germanic era of jazz, with its various exotic fantasies. The physiognomics of Afro-Germanic history are thus set in stark relief: from the spectacular face and body of Josephine Baker on stage to the “faceless” music of techno in the club travels of electronic media.
1999, 2009: Walking in the Woods

What is a forest? Mixed feelings for the first time I enter a forest – delight and consternation, and what the Romantic artists called the nature feeling. The wonderful sense of breathing free in the great outdoors, and yet at the same time the oppressive sense of being ringed in, surrounded by hostile trees. Of being simultaneously outside and in, free and imprisoned. Who can solve the riddle?

Max Ernst

I conclude this exploration in the soundscapes and non-places of electronic music through an anxiety of a Romantic return to an alternate geography associated with primordial Germanness: the forest. In January 2009, the Cologne-based acid and minimal producer Wolfgang Voigt, a.k.a. GAS, performed on the opening night of Berlin’s Club Transmediale Festival to a sold-out crowd at the Berliner Volksbühne. Voigt stood on stage, performing on his Mac laptop in a nineteenth-century suit and puff tie, accompanied by forest visuals by Petra Hollenbach. The performance was a study in visual media, electronic music, and the forest. It began with ambient music and revolving tree branches in the style of sixties psychedelia. The visuals then began to take on new formations; the trees suddenly had a blinding white glow, surrounded by darkness as though they were porcelain or still life paintings. The muted 4/4 bass of GAS’s trademark minimal-trance music began to sound. Once the repetitive beat kicked in, the individual trees divided up and multiplied like cells. The organic forms transformed into inorganic squares: Right angles appeared on the screen and the relationship between nature and Euclidian geometry was explored. The squares grew ever smaller as the trees receded into the distance, becoming nothing more than rows of dots as atomistic and microscopic vision. Leaves passed by in rows like marching soldiers with a central vanishing point. Later, a single branch began to sprout like the oak in the house of Siegmund.
The performance then shifted to 3D; the effect was achieved through a transparent screen that descended in front of Voigt. Suddenly, it appeared as though one was walking into the forest. The trees appeared blood red with ghostlike transparency. During the final track, the shrill dissonance of some high strings continuously built up, supported by the heaviest bass drum of the performance. The trees began to flash as though a strobe light were upon them. The brightness of the flashes became blinding to the point where the image began to dissolve in a repetition of abstract flashes. The dissonance of the high strings grew louder and virtually unbearable, and a final crescendo announced the return to the bloodred forest and the slow approaching title of “GAS” as though it were the title sequence to a movie. The forest dissolved, and “GAS” was left with the horribly dissonant synth strings in full fortissimo. The music ended, and the titles faded out. The show was over…

This performance was one in a series by GAS in 2008 and 2009, which was the first appearance by GAS in almost ten years. In the late 1990s, Voigt had released four albums under the project title GAS: Gas (1996), Zauberberg (1997), Königsforst (1998) and Pop (2000). While his own label, Kompakt, co-owned with Jürgen Paape and Michael Mayer, became symbolic for the triumph of “Cologne minimal” within the center of the Rhine Belt in the late 1990s and 2000s, these albums were released on the Frankfurt-based label Mille Plateaux, another primary German label for minimal music. Mille Plateaux was known for experimental and glitch forms of minimal music, rather than the pop and dance-oriented tracks of Kompakt. Yet these albums were released when the success of minimal as a definitive moniker of German techno in the 2000s was not certain.
The GAS project represented the shift of Voigt’s focus within minimal composition from acid house to acid trance. More specifically, by sampling a range of masterpieces from Western art music, GAS contrasted with his acid house productions under Mike Ink and other pseudonyms. The samples remained isolated and distorted chords, making it virtually impossible to identify the sources. The neoromantic techno music that emerged caused an intense stir in techno and pop media outlets. Voigt had explicitly stated the project was in search for a properly “German pop” music.\textsuperscript{70} The Kompakt page states: “GAS is the vision of a sonic body between Schönberg and Kraftwerk, between French horn and bass drum. GAS is Wagner goes glam rock, and Hansel and Gretel on acid. GAS is there to take you on a seemingly endless march through the under woods - and into the discoteque - of an imaginary, nebulous forest” (Kompakt). GAS was the popular fulfillment of the Rhine tradition begun with Kraftwerk’s promise of technopop. Beyond this, it was the crystallization of a number of currents: the Romantic tradition of absolute music, combined with minimal techno as the new rising tradition of German pop: in short, minimal pop-symphonies.

Voigt himself states regarding instrumental music, “The sound worlds of Wagner or Alban Berg are excellently suited to tell again the good old fairy tale of the German forest in the most beautiful colors of pop, in a completely different way” (“The German Forest”).\textsuperscript{71} Certainly, the specter of Wagnerian tradition up to Schönberg and the place of Romanticism loomed large in this project. While I will explore this tradition and the

\textsuperscript{70} For example, Wolfgang Voigt states, “Even long before Acid and a few other far-reaching incidents turned my cultural self-image upside down, my artistic zeal was mainly determined by one motive, namely to create something like a ‘genuinely German pop music’ away from current cliches.” (“The German Forest”)

\textsuperscript{71} “…die klanglichen Welten Wagners oder Alban Bergs hervorragend eignen, um das gute alte Märchen vom deutschen Wald in den schönsten Farben des Pop nocheinmal ganz anders zu erzählen.” (4)
question of absolute music in GAS in the next chapter, the focus here is the continuity of a single geographical image throughout the history of the GAS project: the forest.

The first forest image appeared on the second album, *Zauberberg* (Magic Mountain), though it was most directly present in the third album. In this album, the forest image on the cover was replicated in the title, *Königsforst* (King’s Forest), which is an actual forest lying to the east of Cologne. I will focus here on *Königsforst*. The forest imagery was replicated in 2008 on the covers of the retrospective compilation, this time published by Kompakt, *Nah und Fern* (Near and Far), which occasioned GAS’s 2008-2009 tour. In that same year, a photo album of Voigt’s pictures from the Königsforst was released on the Chemnitz label Raster-Noton, a label that will also have importance in the next chapter. The images are mostly black and white, though they also include various psychedelic blues, greens, and other tints toward the end. Finally, the 2008 and 2009 tour with the visuals by Hollenbach sealed the link of GAS to the forest. Indeed, the program statement at the Volksbühne mentioned the following as a qualification regarding the “march through the underwood”:

A march through the underwood of the German forest, its source of ambivalent myths, and simultaneously a questioning of techno and its cultural place. This search does not seek – as many critics from the outset of this project suspected – in the cultivation of Teutonic traditions – but celebrates the spirit of rave in its acid rush. (Volksbühne)

The program thus notes the exploration of the forest as the site of ambivalence.

---

What is fascinating in this context is that for many critics a major part of the anxiety of GAS was specifically geographical. GAS brought the German forest, with all of its ideological associations, into techno. To bring the forest into techno, usually considered a safely urban movement free from German roots, was indeed a provocation. Using Augé’s terminology, GAS’s forest could be described as the association of techno with an anthropological place when, until that point, it was ideally associated with non-places of supermodernity and a distinctly postmodern urban ethos. GAS’s exploration of the German romantic forest thus ensured the outrage of the protagonists of German urban life and supermodernity.

Specifically, the primordial forest (Urwald), rural life, and nature worship seemed compromised by its popular association with Blood and Soil myths from the Third Reich.
Recent scholarly debates regarding the “green wing” of the Nazi party have yielded important knowledge as to National Socialism’s relation to the “eternal forest” (Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller). The forest as myth and experience clearly precedes the Nazis, who themselves had a contradictory relationship to the forest. The party apparatus attempted to give lip service to the ideology of the forest and support preservation projects, while also developing modern industrial projects, especially the autobahns, which threatened forest landscapes.  

What interests Voigt is the forest as an ideology and mood, which has pop possibilities that bear little resemblance to everyday experiences of the forest. In interviews, Voigt expressed a particular relation to the forest that is linked to its complex German history. Using a classic model of argument in positioning German popular music, he discusses the need for artists to explore their own experience rather than copying Anglo-American forms. As he explains,

> When I was a child, I had to go to the Alps and the forests etc. three times a year with Mom and Dad, whether I wanted or not. That formed me, I appreciate and love that a lot. Things like that always stay with you, your childhood, the seventies: father, mother, German Schlager, you know these things. Some time after puberty you deny that and listen to Hard Rock. In my case it resurfaced as a motive. (“The German Forest”)

Voigt does not use this myth to reject Anglo-American pop; rather, the myth could be easily exported to these markets. The feature article on Voigt in England’s music

---

73 For analysis of these debates, see Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller; Lehmann and Schriewer; Lekan; and Zeller. Lekan offers a critique regarding the reductive association of prewar nature movements with the Nazis: “The incorporation of Naturschutz [nature protection] into Weimar’s progressive vision challenges scholarly interpretations that associate the era’s diverse back-to-the-land impulses solely with those right-wing, völkisch movements that opposed parliamentary democracy from the start” (101). Lekan goes on to show that while some preservationists turned to racial ideology, the emphasis on Heimatschutz [homeland/habitat protection] and landscape bore a striking difference with ideological theories of nature, racial eugenics, and Lebensraum. See the chapter “From Landscape to Lebensraum: Race and Environment under Nazism” (153-203).
The magazine *The Wire*, for example, expresses a fascination with the forest: “Germany’s ancient forests conceal the nation’s profoundest myths and darkest secrets…. Lying just east of Cologne, Königsforst is one of Germany’s oldest wild woods, a tangle of oak, beech and firs” (Young 38-40). The article assumes German forests are literally sublime and ancient, proving the international impact of this myth in perceptions of Germany. In fact, the article partly misunderstands Voigt’s pop exploration of Königsforst.

![Image 12](image12.png)


Voigt could have chosen a famous forest, such as the Black Forest, yet he chose Königsforst, the place where forest myths were part of his childhood walks and hippie acid experiences, but which bears the brunt of history, as most Cologne citizens know. Regarding the album *Königsforst*, Voigt states: "Königforst of course refers to the
Königsforst, a forest on the right bank of the Rhine. That's a mixed forest outside Cologne, oak, fir, beech etc., you know! A reference point of my hippie adolescence rich with content, to sharpen consciousness for the deeper aspects of electronic life: the German forest on acid” (“The German Forest”). Voigt has lived in Cologne all his life, and here he describes his memories of walking the forest with his family, like many contemporary Germans, in which prosaic experiences were mixed with such myths. These comments reflect common experiences in Germany, demonstrated in childhood memories collected from numerous interviews by Albrecht Lehmann in Von Menschen und Bäumen (75-81).

However, this “King’s Forest” is a very particular geography. This forest, Königsforst, is not an ancient Wald but a Forst, which refers to managed rather than untended woods. The Königsforst has been under the use of royalty for a thousand years. In fact, it was completely deforested by Napoleon and then replanted with nonnative conifers by the Prussians. Much later, the Königsforst became an army reserve outpost in World War II, and it is still littered with bunkers and other structures. Only recently has the Königsforst finally been placed under natural protection. In short, the Königsforst is anything but rooted. It has literally been uprooted and abused, and Voigt’s album, Königsforst, demonstrated a local Rhine patriotism as cultured and artificial as Kraftwerk’s homage to Düsseldorf fashion in “Showroom Dummies.” A similar wink can be found in the logo of the Kompakt label, the Cologne’s coat of arms as it was under the Prussians, playing with the new Prussian overlords in the Berlin Republic and

74 The history of the Königsforst can be found in nature guides dealing with the region and in descriptions on websites, for example: http://www.wahnerheide-koenigsforst.de (accessed November 10, 2012).
the Rhine region’s cultural struggles with Berlin since this time: an ominous prophecy of
the transfer of techno institutions from the Rhine Belt to Berlin.

A visual artist from another generation and from the neighboring town of Brühl
had similar intense experiences with the forest: Max Ernst (see the epigraph of this
section). While literature on Voigt has compared his work to the forest images by Anselm
Kiefer (Young 44), I would like to extend the forest history in art and culture with
attention to Ernst. Growing up in the same region, Ernst’s early forest experiences were
likely with the very same Königsforst. His extraordinary reassessment of the Romantic
forest was later developed in his Grattage-Wälder (or grattage-forests) from 1927 to
1929. Through the technique of grattage, or scraping the paint surface, Ernst offered a
unique interpretation of the phenomenology of forests. The sharp edges and brown hues
disturb the viewer and question whether the forest being painted is a full forest or its
burnt-out embers, reflecting his experiences in the First World War. Ernst also used a
special technique called frottage, which involved placing a wooden board under his
paintings and tracing the rough surface. With similar homage to the Romantics, despite
Ernst’s utter antipathy for the Nazis, he argues, “This natural history, in my view, is really
the only way of communing with nature nowadays – that is, in the twentieth century. Of
course, it is an approach to nature that had been prefigured by the entire German
Romantic movement – by Novalis, Achim von Arnim, Brentano, and so forth. They had a
feeling for nature that had far transcended anything that had gone under that term, and
in which the imagination, the force of the imagination, played a great role” (Max Ernst).

The constant use of surface noise and crackling sounds from shellac to vinyl in
GAS’s pieces could be viewed as something like a sonic equivalent of Max Ernst’s
practice of grattage and frottage, emphasizing the technological medium and distancing
the listener from direct mimesis. Moreover, the hypnotic repetition of the bass and ambient drones in the tracks evoke a kind of Romantic-psychological forest, more focused on the cultural dream of the forest rather than its natural material. The forest offers an environment with specific sonic experiences. R. Murray Schafer is aware of these issues, as well, in his reflections on the soundscape: “Each type of forest produces its own keynote. Evergreen forest, in its mature phase, produces darkly vaulted aisles, through which sound reverberates with unusual clarity” (23). Similarly, Königsforst has dense sound layers that offer a unique mix of immersion and distance amidst psychedelic associations that recall the cosmic history of Krautrock.

Indeed, to be sure, techno-nature images are not unprecedented. Kraftwerk produced tracks like “Mitternacht” and “Morgenspaziergang,” and there are examples of German “green techno” such as the Westerwald albums by Dominik Eulberg. But unlike Kraftwerk’s “Morgenspaziergang,” which is a pastoral piece with flutes and bird sounds as sonic index of the forest, GAS’s Königsforst is focused on brass sounds. The ominous sounds indeed call up the darkness of compromised myths that Kiefer’s forests evoke. Especially in track 5, there is a series of Wagnerian heavy brass samples. There are no instruments that imitate animal sounds like birds; rather, the focus is on the musical themes of Romanticism. In this highly mediated context, what is fascinating about the forest is that despite its association with rootedness, it also has functions as a non-place in cultural life. It is a place one winds around or passes through; one lives next to and utilizes the forest, but at least for Europeans, one does not live in the forest. To be sure, the experience of nature and delight in forests in modern times have complex international developments that are by no means confined to Germany. In truly lighter pop moods, the dreams of living in the forest retain special presence in the literature and
cinema of Anglo-American sci-fi adventure and fantasy: the elves of Middle Earth; the tree house in *Swiss Family Robinson*; the Ewoks in *Star Wars*.

Considering the forest specifically as non-place, I would like here to contrast Voigt with *Run Lola Run* through the distinction of walking and running. The practice of walking in the forest for its own sake, as an everyday form of hiking, is a peculiar aspect of modern life. As Rebecca Solnit explains in *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, “…walking is natural, or rather part of natural history, but choosing to walk in the landscape as a contemplative, spiritual, or aesthetic experience has a specific cultural ancestry” (86). As an aesthetic and acoustic experience, walking in the forest has a specific prehistory connected to the Romantics (Solnit 82). It is important here to mark the difference between Germany and the United States in this history. To quote Lekan again: “Unlike the American wilderness ethic, an ideal that has valued spaces devoid of human influence, the Germans’ concept of *Landschaft* envisioned the ideal environment in a pastoral sense, as a cultivated garden that blends the natural, cultivated, and built environments in an aesthetically harmonious whole” (15). German forests are anything but primeval or wild; they have been cultivated for centuries for specific uses or to evoke specific experiences, just as the landscape on road trips has been more cultivated for the Autobahn when compared to the American highway, as discussed earlier in the context of Adorno.

But with this return to the forest, late in supermodern techno history, GAS provoked anxieties regarding the return to rootedness and anthropological place. However, a late twist occurs in the dialectic of urban and rural life in supermodernity. Precisely through the presence of modern media, many techno labels and artists have been able to move out of the city and onto pastoral landscapes, while still retaining the
means to stay connected to international media networks. For example, ZYX, arguably the most influential independent label in Germany, has been based in the Hessian village of Merenberg since its founding in 1971. Similarly, a significant German label for electronic music with international networks that was founded in 1994, Ant-Zen, has its offices in the small Bavarian village of Lappersdorf. The city as the site of urban experience and modernity is, thus, no longer strictly demarcated. The mediascapes and technoscapes of supermodernity can move back onto the countryside, and if they so choose, take a walk in the forest.

**Outer Epilogue: The Moving Age**

On November 9, 2009, I stood in the icy rain of a winter's evening on Pariser Platz, which lies in front of the Brandenburg Gate. It was the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The “Festival of Freedom,” rather than the Love Parade, was taking place. The festival included a series of musical performances and speeches, beginning with a performance, conducted by Daniel Barenboim, of Wagner’s overture to the third act of *Lohengrin* and Schönberg’s “A Survivor from Warsaw.” Thereafter, the evening quickly shifted to the pop portion, hosted by TV-moderator Thomas Gottschalk and broadcast live on the German TV channel ZDF. The night proceeded with a performance by Jon Bon Jovi of his current single, “We Weren’t Born to Follow.” As representative of American rock, Jon Bon Jovi evoked German 1980s nostalgia for the period leading up to and following the fall of the Wall, filtered again through America. The evening concluded with a kitsch anthem, “We Are One,” sung by Johnny McDaid and composed by Berlin’s trance star-DJ, Paul Van Dyk. The lighters-in-the-air trance ballad was complete with masses of fireworks to conclude “The Festival of Freedom.” This was a
truly strange performance of global technopop to celebrate united Germany and Europe twenty years after the fall of the Wall.

What interested me more than the bizarre mix of music, however, was the content of the speeches. They were given by a series of major world leaders: Angela Merkel, Hillary Clinton, Gordon Brown, Nicolas Sarkozy, and Dmitry Medvedev. As I listened to the speeches in the cold and wet evening, I found that “freedom” was constantly used with a very specific meaning in mind. It was defined almost exclusively as the freedom of movement: travel, mobility, tourism, asylum, migration. To be sure, the Berlin Wall was the ultimate symbol of the oppressive results of the control of movement. However, this night, it seemed to me that freedom had been utterly reduced, perhaps reified, in the West as that of movement.

The limitations and consequences of such movement were not thematized in the speeches: Can one find a job at home? Is there a job at the end of your migration? Is tourism liberating? Is travel affordable? The history of pop music and travel, as recounted in this chapter, has repeatedly engaged mobility as central to the firm identity of not just Berlin, but the West. The Festival of Freedom was here representative. Its focus on movement reflects an era in which local populations are in upheaval, the former East Germany being just one example. Ultimately, after the endless speeches repeatedly praising a world of movement and mobility, sonically consecrated in an era of mobile music, I was shivering, wanting to walk home, with questions left that had rarely been a part of my life or the values of Western education, such as the following: What about the freedom to stand still?
Inner Epilogue: Digging in the Mine and Mind

To get to the core of something, one usually attempts “to dig.” After all, that action affects the ground itself. The dream is that of finding the bedrock whether of a nation or an identity. This process of descending to the depths is reflected in Germany’s distinguished tradition of depth psychology and deep hermeneutics. In geographic terms, mines were a special source of acoustic experience in German nineteenth-century letters. Heinrich Heine offers a particular interpretation during his travels to the Harz Mountains. These mountains, once divided by the Iron Curtain, now feature post-Cold War open forests that I hiked through during my year of education in Braunschweig. Heine’s reflections in the Harz journey are quoted by Schafer in his studies of the soundscape: “I did not reach the deepest section...the point I reached seemed deep enough, – a constant rumbling and roaring, sinister groaning of machinery, bubbling of subterranean springs, water trickling down, everywhere thick exhalations, and the miner’s lamp flickering ever more feebly in the lonesome light” (26-7). These industrial mines transformed both acoustic experience and anthropological assumptions. Mines clearly demonstrated that by digging, one did not arrive at the source of anything – whether of nature or the human soul. No bedrock was found where one could stand still. In this spirit of digging, what I have tried to show in this chapter is a new type of soulscape in Appadurai’s sense of the technoscapes of electronic music. None of my examples explored digging in the mine, though they practice a kind of author as DJ who “digs though media” in the spirit of Thomas Meinecke. That is why images of travel are so important to the theme of identity: They are at once geographical, technical, acoustical, and psychological/mental experiences. One does not necessarily arrive at a new place, but discovers the importance of the non-place as a site of change, and the
supermodern soundscapes provide experiences with strange tensions, in which one might wish to tarry, between exhilaration and education, with glances toward the past and the future...
Chapter 2 – The Techno-Electronic Absolute: The Art of Time Travel through Retro-Futures

German electronic music in 2009 finds itself in a temporal net that is the mark of late modernity. A temporal invertible counterpoint, the past is sedimented with past strivings for the future, while calls for the future reach toward the past. Such quandaries have presented formidable challenges to aesthetics since the Second World War. Theoreticians, such as Peter Bürger and Hal Foster, have stretched out and layered the complex time relationships of the postwar practices of art: from avant-garde to neo-avant-garde, from minimalism to pop art, and so forth. At the same time, popular music, in constant dialogue with art music, has developed a similarly complex mix of strivings between newness and retro, quotation and innovation.

Already in the immediate postwar period, the WDR Cologne Studio of Electronic Music conceived of elektronische Musik as making possible radically new sounds and timbres that would establish the “music of the future,” or what I earlier theorized as a “non-sound.” Yet the call to the future implies invocations of the past. Since the writings of Richard Wagner, manifestos of Zukunftsmusik [music of the future] have themselves become a tradition that bears the weight of the past, a central concern in Thomas Mann’s Doctor Faustus. Elektronische Musik aimed at a soundtrack to the hour zero of postwar German culture, yet this temporal net recalls a time-tested lesson: musical practices, whether couched as breaks or renewals, rely on combinations of rejections and appropriations of the past. Indeed, nowhere is the invertible counterpoint of the present more striking than in the manifestos of another past movement, whose very name offers electronic music a distinctly conscious anxiety of influence: futurism. It is no
wonder that the twentieth century has been marked by tropes of time travel to an equal
degree as the spatial exploration of supermodern soundscapes, quandaries reflected in
the memorable title of Adorno’s essay and radio lecture, “The Aging of the New Music.”

In Germany, electronic music, beyond aesthetic questions of future and past,
found itself in a unique quandary regarding the histories of popular, classical, and
modern art music that involved a careful use of cultural capital for local success and
international export. Admittedly, technopop achieved market success in the 1980s and
1990s with popular calls such as Kraftwerk’s elektronische Volksmusik and Westbam’s
Raving Society. However, this strategy has been complemented in the larger history of
electronic music with claims not to popular art, but high art – a blurring of past and future
through a blurring of high and low culture. Particularly in Germany, access to the popular
could be achieved precisely through a calculated appropriation of the rhetoric of high art.
This practice simultaneously anchored electronic music in tradition and claimed it as
new. Invocation of the German past of bourgeois culture and classical music legitimized
the music as a uniquely German export commodity, securing distinctions from Anglo-
American popular music through cultural capital.

The terminologies for popular, classical, and art music have long been criticized as inadequate.
“Art music” focuses on the history of autonomous music practices since the Enlightenment as a
hierarchical “vertical” distinction from popular music. This move toward autonomy includes the
changing nature of patronage and the elevation of the composer as a genius: in the German
tradition, from Bach to Brahms to Stockhausen. Comparatively, the term “classical” results in the
intriguing temporal paradoxes of style, resulting in terms like “contemporary classical.” However,
classical music arouses confusion because of the periodization of the Classical Era as distinct
from Baroque, Romantic, and Modernist works of “classical” music. Since this section focuses on
temporal issues in the form of a putatively Romantic “tradition,” I will use the term “classical” to
emphasize this weight of tradition, while employing “art music” on occasion to emphasize issues
of autonomy and cultural capital. A similar complexity results in the confusions between popular,
pop, and folk music, distinctions with which the dissertation plays throughout.

In his essay “On the Social Situation of Music,” Adorno famously claims that the Occident has
no authentic folk music traditions left: “There is no longer any ‘folk’ whose songs and games
could be taken up and sublimated by art; the opening up of markets and the bourgeois process of
rationalization have subordinated all society to bourgeois categories…. The material of vulgar
The linking of “futuristic” techno to the past of “classical” music, however vaguely defined, has repeatedly occurred since the 1970s. A typical discussion of future-past “roots” can be read in a 1992 interview from the Frankfurt techno magazine Groove. The interview was with one of the most successful Berlin trance producers of the early 1990s, Cosmic Baby, himself a trained concert pianist before shifting toward EDM:

*Groove:* Since classical music, [techno] is actually the first music that we export, with the exception of the Scorpions, Modern Talking, etc.… Furthermore, our roots lie, in my opinion, more in electronic music. The first distinct music from Germany was Schulze, Tangerine Dream, & Co. *Cosmic Baby:* That is exactly my point as to why as a classical musician I gravitated to house music. I don’t see any contradiction in this. As a modern electronic musician, I can’t imagine any other development. (Groove 15)77

With a clear reference to export, the cultural capital that such statements bestow is clear. It has assisted the marketability of electronic music as a respectable German cultural product within the currents of the supermodern soundscape. It is striking here that major events, such as EXPO and the Olympics, have appropriated German electronic artists as official cultural representatives. The following examples stand out:

1986 EXPO – Einstürzende Neubauten are German cultural representatives.

---

1988 Olympic Games in Seoul – In partnership with the Goethe-Institut, Westbam and the Low Spirit Label offer "The German Kunst Disco" as the official cultural offering of Germany.

2000 EXPO – Kraftwerk theme song represents the hosting of EXPO in Hannover.

2009 Festival of Freedom – DJ Paul Van Dyk’s “We Are One” is the official anthem celebrating twenty years of unification.

Even more impressive are the Goethe-Institut’s partnerships with German electronic artists. Already in 1982, the Institut sponsored the U.S. tour of EBM band Deutsch Amerikanische Freundschaft, not to mention other events throughout the 1980s. Such sponsorship has increased exponentially since 1995. Following the popular explosion of techno, the Goethe-Institut has been a regular sponsor of over fifty electronic music tours and events. The subsection on the Goethe-Institut’s website, Elektronische Musik aus Deutschland (Electronic Music from Germany), previously a separate website called EMAD, has been a major feature of the musical representation of the Goethe-Institut throughout the 2000s. The website includes an overview of German electronic music history since the 1950s; an archive of past Goethe-Institut tours and events since 2009; numerous articles; and “Annual Review” feature articles since 2005 on electronic music trends, with samples and podcasts.78

The link to official culture in such tours is patent, as is the mix of art-music and pop-music rhetoric. However, my focus in this chapter does not strictly concern the history of business promotions or debates regarding whether the music is “pop” or “art.” Rather, I will address the challenges of time and history within cultural capital claims of electronic music and the temporal labyrinth of future pasts and past futures as complement to the first chapter’s focus on space and geography. Ostensibly, EDM has a

78 For thorough details, see the EMAD website, which contains versions in German and English. For literary reflections on DJ tours with the Goethe-Institut, see Nieswandt. Hans Nieswandt is himself an author of a number of the retrospective articles for EMAD.
commitment to the present in the form of the most advanced technology, combined with a drive to the future in the form of sonic fictions, combined further with pop’s elective affinity with youth. These three aspects, the technological, the sonic fictional, and the pop youthful, seem firmly committed to the cult of the “up to date.” Yet the specter of the past and the aging of electronic music have made the aesthetics of German electronic music increasingly more contested.

With respect to claims on the link to the past, an important question presents itself: What, if anything, in the music allows for claims of a classical-techno link to be made by the likes of Cosmic Baby in the first place? My thesis is that it lies in German electronic music’s primary association with instrumental music, thus drawing from the established nineteenth-century aesthetics of absolute music.\(^7^9\) The link with classical music could here be reimagined through a narrowly defined prism. Namely, classical was reduced to the most prestigious music form from the nineteenth century: the symphony. The symphony became the representative genre of what counted as the classical, though to be sure, other forms such as quartets, concertos, and sonatas were important. Moreover, the history of specific instruments, keyboards in particular, played significant roles. Krautrock and techno developed, apparently, through experimental forms and instrumental music rather than popular song forms. Surprisingly, in this mode of argumentation, vocal traditions in classical music from opera to art song were forgotten, not to mention vocal traditions in electronic music. In this case, the “classical” absolute means the instrumental and the nonprogrammatic.

With respect to techno and the symphony, I am concerned here with the place of Romanticism in late modern music and culture as the aesthetic movement most closely

\(^7^9\) For theorizations and histories of absolute music, see Bonds; Chua; Dahlhaus; and Hoeckner.
linked to German identity and the history of German art music. A parallelism presents itself here in terms of temporal relations. If pop music at the turn of the twentieth century cannot seem to escape the logic of posts, from postmodern to postpunk to postrock, then German aesthetics at the turn of the nineteenth century could not seem to escape the logic of lateness, whether one terms it the late-Romantic, the late-late-Romantic, or what have you. This problem of posts versus lateness is reflected in electronic music.

The marking of lateness is clear from the official periodization of “Romantic music” versus Romantic literature or art. Whereas in textbook histories, Romantic literature and art in Germany end roughly around 1848 (literature 1795-1848, art 1790-1850), Romantic music never seems to find an end in the long nineteenth century. “Romanticism” is thus linked musically with the long history of instrumental music and the educated bourgeoisie, and perhaps surprisingly, it perpetuates after industrialization:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Composers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Romanticism</td>
<td>1800-1848</td>
<td>Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, early Schumann, early Liszt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Romanticism</td>
<td>1848-1883</td>
<td>Wagner, Brahms, late Schumann, late Liszt, Bruckner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Romanticism</td>
<td>1883-1910</td>
<td>Mahler, Strauss, early Schönberg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ostensibly antimodern, the Romantic tradition reveals itself in the form of a German catch-22 that is the Sehnsucht [yearning] for both the aesthetically new and the autonomous beyond. The return of the specter of absolute music and claims to art in electronic music and media brought major benefits, but also charges of political regress, impenetrability, aestheticism, and lack of political content (reductively understood here as the absence of clear semantic content and position statements).

Such links are most extensively explored in Thomas Mann’s Doctor Faustus. This rhetoric continues to circulate in popular discourse today. Consider both the title and project of Rüdiger Safranski’s bestseller from 2007, Romantik: Eine deutsche Affäre (Romanticism: A German Affair), which follows Romantic tropes in German cultural and political life up through 1968.
Beyond the connection to the symphony, the choice of instrumentation was crucial for the turn toward the absolute as tradition. In particular, the keyboard synthesizer became a marker of new German instrumental music. The fact that Moogs and other synthesizers developed keyboard features allowed them to be associated with the long German tradition of instrumental keyboard music, from harpsichord to organ to piano. In this context, an even longer historical matrix of the Baroque-Classical-Romantic-Electronic absolute was constructed. Krautrock star Klaus Schulze made such a connection clear in an interview for the television series Tracks:

Such things happen only once in your life. In the moment that I chose to create a new aesthetic, a new form of music, instead of taking everything from England and America, in the same time the synthesizer was invented, as though it was made for my purposes – a completely new instrument that merged together perfectly. (my translation)

Another history of performance alongside the symphony becomes prominent here: virtuoso keyboard performance. Yet as we shall see, it was not the harpsichord or piano but the organ that was the most important predecessor to the synthesizer. To be sure, in the history of synthesizer construction, the gradual preference for the keyboard form was by no means an inevitable development; for example, Don Buchla’s synthesizers, promoted by composers such as Morton Subotnick, had no keyboard features. It was the success of the Minimoog that brought about the dominance of keyboard synthesizers, which was only later challenged by, as will be explored, the rise of “laptop music.”

81 “Laptop music” is the popular term for diverse uses that laptops now provide, both in terms of composition and performance. While traditional notation and keyboard software can be incorporated into the laptop interface, the tracks are primarily represented via the visual display of sound waves. In terms of performance practice, the use of laptops by contemporary performers and DJs such as Speedy J and Chris Liebing differs strikingly from the layers of keyboard synthesizers by Tangerine Dream and Klaus Schulze. It is never certain what the musicians are exactly doing on stage, given the laptops unfamiliar role as instrument. As Marc Weidenbaum states, “During abstract sound-art shows by laptop musicians, it’s not uncommon for someone to ponder whether the performer is just checking his email while the music plays by itself.”
The spectacular commercial success of Wendy Carlos’s *Switched-On Bach* (1968) ensured the market possibilities of a neoclassical type of synthesizer music. A playful appropriation to Bach’s keyboard music, this light take on the Moog reappeared a few years later in Carlos’s remix of Beethoven under more defamiliarizing settings, namely for the soundtrack to *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). Indeed, electronic film soundtracks played an important role in the specter of classical music within electronic music genres, not only in Hollywood but also in Germany. As examples, I will consider in this chapter the works of Popol Vuh and Paul Kalkbrenner.

It is important to keep in mind that I am not only concerned with how electronic music constructs the Romantic “absolute,” but also how it parodies, transforms, and resists the absolute through other aesthetic traditions and mediums, both sonic and visual. The specter of the “Romantic” past is often just that – a specter that at times looms larger than it actually is. In the pop world, the return of the Romantic-repressed manifests itself in what I would call occasional spurts of “Romantic panic” in the German press, in which heated discussions about German identity in relation to Romanticism and nationhood are worked out before a return to a more subdued everyday engagement with pop culture ensues. We saw such worries addressed in the last chapter with reference to GAS and the forest. While the role of instrumental music has yet to be fully theorized, it should be clear initially that both the Romantic symphony and keyboard performance are only two components in the complex heritage of electronic music.

I am thus ultimately concerned with how electronic music transforms the absolute through popular culture as a kind of techno-electronic absolute. In particular, I am interested in its broader multimedial presentation through film and popular dance as aesthetic totalities. I am further concerned with how electronic artists set the Romantic
heritage in productive tension with twentieth-century artistic movements that rub against the Romantic grain: especially Dada, surrealism, and pop art. The time travel of retro-futures must be seen in counterpoint. Even as I explore the dialectic of posts and lateness, the reduction of new popular art to labels of “neoromanticism” blinds and levels historical tensions. Rather, the techno-electronic absolute will allow for explorations of the German future-pasts that correspond to the spatial experiences of “Germany” in supermodernity. In other words, while the designation of cosmic music already indicates a theory of the techno-electronic absolute, namely of music as absolute space, the juxtaposition of the classical and techno-electronic absolute will allow for historical pivots to be placed on the supermodern absolute similar to the descents to earth in the prior chapter. Concerning such transformations of the techno-electronic absolute, this chapter explores six diverse examples, which are divided into two groups from different historical periods: first, three West German examples from the 1970s and early 1980s, thus prior to unification and the popular explosion of techno music; second, three examples from between 1989 and 2009, thus following unification and historical reflection on German techno’s popular success and sedimentation as a tradition.

In the first trilogy, I begin with an exploration of the legacy of Krautrock and absolute music through Tangerine Dream and Klaus Schulze. I then turn to the dialectic of Romantic imagery in Popol Vuh’s Krautrock soundtracks for Werner Herzog’s films. An examination of Klaus Nomi’s camp mix of new wave and Romantic opera follows this discussion as a queer operatic counterpoint to the late Romantic tradition. In the second trilogy, I jump twenty years ahead to explore projects that reflect on the past both in terms of the legacy of art music and the (now self-conscious) legacy of electronic music. First, I return to the discussion of Wolfgang Voigt’s GAS project, as it is one of the key
techno projects of the 1990s to invoke such a past. I follow with two recent projects from the immediate past: first, the 2008 film *Berlin Calling* and its construction of the techno-Romantic hero in the Berlin DJ-producer Paul Kalkbrenner, who has roles as both lead actor and soundtrack composer; and second, Atom™’s album *Liedgut* from 2009, which makes a humorous-ironic glance back at the tradition of Romantic-techno critically encoded as Biedermeier-minimal music.

The two trilogies have parallel structures. The first example of each trilogy deals with techno-symphonic albums, and the second offers a discussion of techno-symphonic soundtracks to neoromantic films. Put in terms of aesthetic legacies, they examine serious-sublime histories with Romanticism; the first example explores the legacy of Beethoven through symphonic form, and the second explores the legacy of Romantic genius and Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* affinities to film. The final example of each part then sublates the earnestness of the former discussions and demonstrates a return of Romantic-camp practices in ironic or humorous modes and *Heiterkeit* [merriment, brightness]. 82

These examples are not only linked by their concern with Western art music; they bear stylistic affinities as well. Namely, my focus in this chapter, with the humorous exceptions of Klaus Nomi and Atom™, will center on the tradition of ambient and trance music, or rather, the general question of "atmospheric" music. Ambient has primarily been debated under the notion of an artistic substitute for Muzak and elevator music, though it has at times been critically linked to New Age music. As a genre, trance was defined in the last chapter as the mix of atmospheric soundscapes and dance music.

---

82 *Heiterkeit* is a term with an important aesthetic and philosophic history in Germany, and it has a range of meanings: merriment, brightness, mirth, cheeriness, buoyancy, etc. It figures prominently, for example, in the work of Nietzsche and Thomas Mann. See Kiedaisch.
Similarly, trance music has since the mid-1990s years been disparaged as commercial and formulaic music, in part precisely because it achieved such success as a German cultural export. What has been neglected in the debate is the proximity of these genres to absolute music from the nineteenth century. The legacy of ambient, found in Wagnerian theatrical works, most famously in the preludes to *Das Rheingold* and *Lohengrin*, and the late-Romantic symphonies of Bruckner and Mahler, is key to this history. At the same time, ambient and trance fall within the history of minimalist music, whose legacy will be explored especially by GAS and Atom™. As we shall see, the historical-temporal dimensions of both trance and ambience are far more complex than both their attractors and detractors often acknowledge. In the 2000s, debates on German retro-futures and historical engagements will ultimately be found in trance and minimal music as sedimented traditions within German electronic dance music.

**2.1: First Wave: Electronic Yearnings**

**Techno-Symphonies and Krautrock: Klaus Schulze and Tangerine Dream**

Within the cultural and political tumult of 1968 (explored earlier with reference to the Cosmic Jokers), the genre designation of Krautrock for the music of this period has often been criticized, since it conflates bands with marked stylistic differences. For example, there are few commonalities between bands like Amon Düül and Kraftwerk. Indeed, the only common features of Krautrock bands seemed to be that they were West German and formed around the 1968 revolution. Nonetheless, Krautrock is worth retaining for a number of reasons, not least as a reminder of outlandish designations of

---

83 Mark Prendergast links modern ambient to a number of Mahler’s slower symphonic movements, from adagio to andante moderato (4-6). The classical and ambient relationship was also explored by Robert Fink in a comparative study of the 1950s “Barococo” revival and minimalism (169-207).
identity. As a chronological marker, the term is important, since all the bands struggled with the legacy of the neo-avant-garde and the 1960s rise of pop art and music.

Taking these historical struggles as a cue, I would risk at least one definition of Krautrock in terms of album structure. Namely, the vast majority of albums included only three to six tracks, often of lengths far exceeding popular song. Such an album structure is key for the social positioning of Krautrock. Specifically, many bands borrowed from the tradition of symphonies, especially the late-Romantic symphonic poems of Liszt and Strauss and the maximalist symphonies of Bruckner and Mahler,84 which often contained anywhere from three to six movements. However, to rub the Romantic associations already against the grain, such album structures can also be set in the context of experimental forms of popular music, especially the significant influence of free jazz on Krautrock.

While maximalist symphonies radically increased the time span of performance pieces, Krautrock symphonies usually maxed out the available LP, and later CD, lengths. The lengths of the tracks varied greatly.85 The mix of rock, electronic music, and art music was, to be sure, prevalent since the studio experiments of Pet Sounds (1966), Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band (1967), and Electric Ladyland (1968), though this mix of styles was particularly pronounced in English progressive rock in the 1970s, with such bands as Emerson, Lake, and Palmer, Pink Floyd, and Yes. Progressive rock and its disco complement, synthpop, were significant in the European context, because they gradually distanced English popular culture from American pop music, moving

84 Bruckner and Mahler are described by Richard Taruskin within category he terms “maximalism” (1-58) as a reflection of compositional length and orchestra expansion.
85 Consider the approximate minutes lengths of the five movements in Mahler’s Third Symphony: 30, 9, 17, 9, 4. By comparison, the tracks from Tangerine Dream’s Atem album have the following length: 20:28, 10:48, 5:52, 4:30.
toward constructions of European identity in the 1970s and 1980s and increasing exchanges with German popular music.

Progressive rock and Krautrock have many commonalities, especially in their breaking up of song lengths and structures, not to mention the featuring of electronic equipment and synthesizers. However, what distinguishes Krautrock bands like Tangerine Dream, Ash Ra Tempel, and Klaus Schulze is the degree to which they relied on instrumental music compared to bands such as Pink Floyd. These bands made up the techno-symphonic wing of Krautrock. Conglomerating in Berlin, they became known as the “Berlin School” of Krautrock, representing cosmic music that contrasted with the experimental rock of La Düsseldorf, Can, and other bands in the Rhine Belt. The instrumental-electronic Krautrock bands, lacking lyrics in either English or German, thus retained the “universal language” of absolute music and resisted the categorization of their music to either provincial-national or pop-folk markets. In other words, Krautrock’s claim to instrumental art music was an important strategy by which German artists could successfully market their music and incorporate it into the international pop industry.

Tangerine Dream and Klaus Schulze, in particular, have worked within cosmic music throughout their careers. This section will focus on these bands, though I especially want to highlight Klaus Schulze, who most self-consciously appropriated the Romantic tropes of the maximalist symphony and symphonic poem. Schulze explicitly

---

86 With the use of expensive equipment and artistic experimentation, progressive rock was linked with the distinctly bourgeois counterculture. See Macan: “Progressive rock could have never emerged from the working-class milieu that was responsible for the formation of genres such as heavy metal and later, punk rock; throughout the 1970s, progressive rock’s audience consisted largely of a middle-class, post-hippie extension of the counterculture.” (19)
presented himself as a Krautrock techno-Wagnerian, with tracks like “Bayreuth Return” and “Wahnfried 1883” from the album *Time Wind* (1977). Even more telling, he recorded seven albums under the unforgettable alias Richard Wahnfried. Amidst progressive rock traditions, Tangerine Dream and Schulze explored ambient soundscapes that harkened back to Romantic symphonic notions of the infinite and the sublime; differing from the hippie freakouts of Amon Düül, Can, and Neu!, these tracks were atmospheric explorations in timbre. In short, discourses of headspace and soundscape offered a filmic mix of Wagner and absolute music through electronic pop spectacle.

While the Romantic maximalist tradition is important, the link to the Romantic organ with its dynamic capacities was key for Tangerine Dream and Klaus Schulze. Organs are prominent in Tangerine Dream’s earliest tracks, such as “Journey Through a Burning Brain” (*Electronic Meditation*, 1970), and “Fly and Collision of Comas Sola” (*Alpha Centauri*, 1971). In tracks like “Atem,” from the 1973 album of the same title, the music includes shrill, dissonant organs associated with horror movies. Klaus Schulze’s works are likewise organ based; the opening “I. Satz: Ebene” [*Irrlicht* (1972)] consists essentially of a constant organ drone with little harmonic direction, a kind of organ ambience. During this period, Schulze appropriated organ sounds prior to acquiring the equipment for his electronic-synthesized work, which properly began in 1974 with the album, *Blackdance*.

But why is the organ such an important reference point for these synthesizer musicians? First, many synthesizers imitated the timbres and drone effects of organs.

---

87 The historical link of progressive rock and the Wagnerian tradition in terms of media and sound developments is also a central concern of Friedrich Kittler, who writes extensively on both Wagner and Pink Floyd.

88 Wahnfried refers to Richard Wagner’s residence in Bayreuth, which was finished in 1874. The name literally means “Free from Delusion”; Wagner spent the last ten years of his life at the residence, and his grave, as well as his wife Cosima’s, lies on its grounds.
Furthermore, in terms of instrumental design, organs and synthesizers closely resemble each other – namely, in the comparative combination of keys and stops versus keys and dials. Stops can alter the dynamics and sound quality of any organ key, and similarly, synthesizers such as the Minimoog have modern “stops” on their control panels: oscillators, glides, resonance, filter envelope, and modulation wheels. Indeed, synthesizers offered numerous options for distortion. Alterations of the key tones reflect the similar timbral variety available on the stops of Romantic and classical organs.

Likewise, in terms of their timbral range, the synthesizer could be seen as an expansion upon the principles of the Wurlitzer and electric organs. Through the imitation of other musical instruments and natural sounds, these early organs paved the way for more advanced electronic organs and synthesizers. While used primarily for silent cinema, there organs remained popular long after the introduction of sound film.

Furthermore, the organ and synthesizer are linked by their machinelike appearance and dynamic range. Nicholas Thistlethwaite gives an impressive summary of the history of organ building: “The path from such modest instruments to giant modern organs boasting four or five keyboards, 32' pipes, dozens of registers, sophisticated stop controls and electrical blowing apparatus encompasses a complex and fascinating process of development in which music, technology, architecture, liturgy, industrial organization and changing taste all play a part” (1). Indeed, the machinery of organ pipes resembles the machinery of a modern concert stage. The rational development of the organ sound and its dynamic range, originally to present the sonic equivalent of God’s sublimity, corresponded with the same processes of rationalization that would eventually undo church authority. This comparison of the organ to a machine continued into the twentieth century. Max Weber provides an example: “The organ is an instrument
strongly bearing the character of a machine. The person who operates it is rigidly bound by the technical aspects of tone formation, providing him with little liberty to speak his personal language” (117).

Expanding on this history, Daniel Fromme in “Ein Instrument im Kontext des Bösen – Warum Graf Zahl die Orgel spielt” [An Instrument in the Context of Evil: Why Count von Count Plays the Organ] explores the cultural constructions of organ playing, leading up to the unique figure of the Sesame Street character Count von Count. The Count teaches generations of American and European children today to connect organ playing as a mix of Promethean evil, pop humor, and math lessons. Fromme constructs a periodization of the ideological constructs surrounding organs, shifting between the popular and elite, the decadent and the rational, and the theologically good and evil. This periodization includes the antique organ, the rational organ, the Catholic organ, and the universal organ (62-7), which are followed by constructs in the wake of Romanticism: the satanic organ, the gothic organ, and the booming organ (67-72). These post-Romantic constructs are associated respectively with organ players, architectures, and loudness.

This periodization of the organ’s ideological history clearly shows parallels with the rapid industrial expansion of organ building as described by Thistlethwaite. However, Fromme’s periodization also requires an update for the twentieth and twenty-first century. In particular, there exists a more recent history of analog and digital organ representation and ideological constructs beyond the pipe and industrial organs that concern Fromme. These new organs take primarily the form of electronic-film organs and keyboard synthesizers. Importantly, this electronic age comes after Romanticism’s cultural coding of organ music. To explain: Although organs are popularly linked with the Baroque age of Dieterich Buxtehude and Johann Sebastian Bach, the ideological
association of organists is predominantly Romantic. The sublimity of God as represented in the organs of the Lutheran Church is transferred to Promethean associations of the organist, who alone wields the massive machinelike instrument.

In the electronic age, the Promethean performance practice of the soloist morphs from the Romantic organist to the artist-technician in the sound lab. In other words, the split between organ as rationality and organist as genius can be compared to the tropes of the synthesizer and experimentalist in electronic music, although it is often precisely experimental art that critiques the tradition of genius through the focus on technique. These concerns were clearly explored in the avant-garde context in Mauricio Kagel's film Antithese (1965), where an isolated sound engineer gradually loses all sense of reality as he becomes immersed in the technological possibilities of the sound studio.

Yet such Promethean links were later affirmed in the performance practice of Klaus Schulze. For example, in his live performance in 1977 for the “Deutschrock Nacht” series on the German television channel WDR, Schulze is dressed in cosmic-hippie garb and surrounded by keyboard synthesizers in a kind of organ console. The racks of keyboard synthesizers and sound mixers recall the layered keyboards of the industrial organs mentioned by Thistlethwaite. Schulze’s equipment includes his famed Big Moog, weighing one hundred kilograms. Surrounded by this technology, Schulze simply sits on the floor “Indian style.” This intimacy of being on the same level, indeed practically beneath his audience, is offset by the fact that Schulze has his back to the audience,

---

89 Tangerine Dream also gave impressive performances for the “Deutschrock Nacht” series. However, I would argue that Schulze is aesthetically more compelling. He performs alone and relies entirely on synthesizers, offering a blend of trance-hippie and sound-lab technician virtuoso. The members of Tangerine Dream do not provide such a striking image. They also rely on guitars, though each member has multiple synthesizers surrounding their consoles. This 1976 performance demonstrates the change in dress and increased reliance on synthesizers compared to the earlier free-rock style of Tangerine Dream. This earlier style can be witnessed in their 1971 “Deutschrock Nacht” performance.
recalling the filmic profiles of organ players as are represented in films like Disney’s 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (1954). This profile was displayed on the cover of Schulze’s album X (1978). The mix of man and machine is pronounced; taking a cue from Kraftwerk, Schulze later dressed up as a cyborg for a number of performances, such as the Linz concert in 1980. That Schulze is able to control the sequencing of all the synthesizers by himself recalls a virtuoso performance of Lisztian dimensions. Conversely, his hippie posturing and “Indian-style” sitting reinforce the exotic and otherworldly associations of the music, while anchoring him in youth-pop settings that ironically transform such histories.  

Image 13: Klaus Schulze 1977. Schulze performs at the 1977 Deutschrock Nacht at the WDR.

---

90 Compare this performance to the romantically religious setting of Tangerine Dream’s 1975 performance at Coventry Cathedral.
Schulze’s appropriation of genius rhetoric is evident on his website. He makes judgments on three albums in the discography section, declaring them to be fully realized masterpieces. Nietzsche’s rhetoric of artistic self-promotion in Ecce Homo finds here an elective affinity. The notes to Moondown – The Original Master are especially telling: “The first masterpiece in the typical Schulze style and in a much better sound than all the former albums.” The rhetoric of the male genius is even more striking in the titles of some of the movements of his techno-symphonic poems, not to mention his allusions to Wagner in various track names and as Richard Wahnfried.

The clearest example of heroic titles is from the album X, a techno-symphonic poetic update to Richard Strauss’s Heldenleben and Also Sprach Zarathustra, though carried to greater heights of megalomaniacal camp grandeur. The tracks, all of significant length, are termed in the album notes “six musical biographies”:

---

91 See klaus-schulze.com.
92 See Schulze, “Discography.” The other two albums mentioned are Mirage and X. A humorous warning accompanies Mirage: “Commercial new age musicians could learn a lesson or two from the master.” Regarding X, the website simply writes: “Masterpiece number three.”
93 Schulze expresses a formalist position with regard to musical meaning while appropriating the Wagnerian tradition. Yet his rhetoric could not be further from Wagner: “Legends, myths, and silly stories are easier to understand than all words about the structure of a piece of music, about its roots and relations, about the technical side of composing, playing and recording it, and all the other many little and bigger musical things (which most people don’t know a thing about, anyway).” He argues that the meaning of music is both radically open and restricted: “This shows, that you can put many different images on and into pure and innocent music, especially with words and pictures about its ‘meaning’. But... what music only can do on its own is just one thing: to show emotions. Just emotions. Sadness, Joy, Silence, Excitement, Tension. All this is not much I must use many words about... Because this is indeed a ‘universal language’” (Interview, “Music Can”). Such claims neglect vocal music, film, and opera, and Schulze contradicts himself with his own use of programs. Either his concept albums and project names represent promotional devices and posturing, or he has simply forgotten his own practices of program music.
1. Friedrich Nietzsche (24:52)
2. Georg Trakl (26:12)
3. Frank Herbert (10:53)
4. Friedemann Bach (17:59)
5. Ludwig II von Bayern (28:47)
6. Heinrich Von Kleist (29:35)

All the tracks are of German cultural figures, the one exception being “Frank Herbert,” an appropriate bicoastal reference to West Coast science fiction. The specific interest in Herbert was followed a year later with a full-length album dedication: *Dune*. Regarding the five German figures, the diversity in terms of their biographies and reputations is notable, though all have associations with extreme commitments to art mixed with troubled lives, related to poverty, madness, and/or suicide. This allows for Schulze’s electronic music to mix with classical music in an exploration of expressive sounds as an updated version of musical physiognomy.

For example, “Friedemann Bach” features two extended sessions consisting of contrasting elements: a solo violin played by B. Dragic, wildly improvising, accompanied by strictly regulated synthesizer sequences, electronic sound effects, and an orchestra. In terms of the Bach family, I would compare the clash between sequenced structure and free improvisation here to the debate between father Johann and son Friedemann in Gustaf Gründgens’s music blockbuster produced at the height of the Second World War: *Friedemann Bach*. Though the sequences in Schulze’s “Friedemann Bach” have the aura of rational regimentation, this is by no means a constant practice in the electronic compositions of Schulze or Tangerine Dream. The violin screeches and distortions of “Friedemann Bach” can be compared to other tracks by both Schulze and Tangerine Dream, in which the rational associations of synthesizer sounds are estranged by the

---

94 This track can be compared to the reference to Nietzsche in the third movement of Schulze’s album *Irrlicht*: “Exil Sils Maria.” Whether the first two movements, “Ebene” and “Gewitter (Energy Rise – Energy Collapse),” describe earlier points in Nietzsche’s life or philosophy is unclear.
use of oscillators and other techniques of distortion. Such effects happen periodically in “Friedemann Bach.” The dialectic of experimental art as controlled science and radical expression is strongly present. To be sure, this use of electronic music to represent the irrational and/or unconscious might appear to contradict technology’s ostensibly necessary association with scientific rationality. However, the oscillators, glides, and other controls prove to be the medial-technological equivalents to the techniques of glissandi, tremolos, and pizzicatos, often used as indices of suspense, tension, and estranging effects.

Tangerine Dream’s incorporations of psychedelia, the irrational, and the unconscious, while directly influenced by surrealism, also link the band to the heritage of Romanticism. The name Tangerine Dream is itself a study in both Romanticism and surrealism; a variation on the lyrics of the Beatles’ “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds,” it provides an artistic image that is an unrealizable yet seductive object, a pop update to Novalis’s *die blaue Blume* [the Blue Flower]. A track like “Origin of Supernatural Probabilities” from the album *Zeit* offers a good example of Tangerine Dream’s instrumental soundscapes. The track makes use of pulses and tremolos with dissonant guitar sounds that evoke exotic beings somewhere between aliens and whales. The pulses have a sonar effect that recalls retro-science fiction sounds of spaceships. One loses a sense of spatial orientation: Is one underwater or in outer space? *Zeit* explodes with the tension between the highly technical equipment and irrational dreams in search of representation. Tangerine Dream had already presented such themes in tracks like “Journey Though a Burning Brain” on *Electronic Meditation* and “Wahn” on *Atem*.

Tangerine Dream and Klaus Schulze thus alluded to the sonic fiction mix of technology and psychedelia, where tripping and the setting free of *Einbildungskraft*
[imagination] were key. Schulze humorously claimed in a later interview, “The only thing that linked the different Krautrock bands was the drugs.” (Tracks). In terms of the Krautrock bands that promoted electronic music, electronic instrumentation became the aesthetic medium of psychedelia. Such visions are evident in the titles by Tangerine Dream and Schulze: consider Tangerine Dream’s “Journey Through a Burning Brain,” “Sunrise of the Third System,” and “Origin of Supernatural Probabilities,” or Schulze’s “Neuronengesang” [Neuron Song], “Mindphaser,” and “Velvet Voyage.” These titles are restricted to abstract and cosmic terminology, representing techno-absolute symphonies as opposed to Schulze’s musical biographies as symphonic poems.

However, the music is not absolute in a strictly formalist sense of autonomous music. Rather, the titles emphasize moving beyond both narrative language and traditional musical form to abstract and free forms in the service of the phenomenological experience of what I would term a “mental-medial absolute” as a pop expansion of consciousness: a multimedial variation on the techno-electronic absolute. With the emphasis on psychedelic vision, such tropes are key to the age of film spectacle. The experience of music occurs by means of filmic-visual imagination, taking precedence over words, semantics, and autonomous form. Lighting, staging, and music appear in dialogue with the aim of opening eyes and ears to a fantastic Outland. It is thus not surprising that both Tangerine Dream and Schulze had accomplished careers producing soundtracks as well as albums. With this reference to film spectacle and the mental-medial absolute, I turn now to an example of soundtrack music within the age of Krautrock itself: the music of Popol Vuh in the films of Werner Herzog. Popol Vuh offers unique possibilities for exploring the past and the mental-medial absolute through visual
media and music of the present, while demonstrating the intimate links between electronic music and the film industry.

**Sound Counter Sound: Herzog and Popul Vuh**

Like Klaus Schulze and Tangerine Dream, Florian Fricke of the Munich-based band Popul Vuh holds a unique position within the history of the organ and the synthesizer. He was the second German in history to own a Moog Synthesizer III, and Popul Vuh was the first band to release albums using the Moog. The first two albums, *Affenstunde* (1970) and *In den Gärten Pharaos* (1972), remain important examples of techno-symphonies with a world music inflection. A classically trained pianist, Fricke even outdid Tangerine Dream and Schulze in terms of association between the synthesizer and organ; he literally performed on the Baumberg church organ in Bavaria for his track “Vuh” (Cope 129). At this time, he praised the Moog synthesizer for the expressive possibilities it offered. The synthesizer was an entirely new instrument that had musical potentials still in need of exploration. Yet Fricke was also the first to reject the synthesizer; in 1972, he sold his Moog to Schulze, claiming at one point, “It’s too dependent on the machinery. It’s nothing human. The piano is more direct” (Interview, “Popol”). Though electric guitars and later synclaviers were employed in Popul Vuh’s subsequent albums, Fricke’s conflicted relationship with electronic music and technology in his search for authentic musical expression and spiritual-humanist voice remained.

His positions reflected questions regarding retro-futuristic histories and the human struggles with new technologies, questions that also appeared starkly in Werner Herzog’s films that incorporated Popul Vuh’s music.
My study will focus here on the role that Popol Vuh’s music plays in representing the techno-electronic absolute in film and establishing a distinct historical counterpoint of modernity, the counterculture, myth, and the psychedelic mental-medial absolute. The techno-electronic absolute is most impressively represented in two films with starkly different geographic and historical referents: *Aguirre: The Wrath of God* (1972) and *Heart of Glass* (1976). *Aguirre* is set in the Amazon at the time of the conquistadors (and in New World settings that interested both Herzog and Popol Vuh), whereas *Heart of Glass* is located in Herzog’s and Popol Vuh’s native Bavaria around 1800, immediately prior to industrialization. In both films, Herzog uses pre- and post-Moog productions by Popol Vuh as integral components in constructing a temporal counterpoint of past and present, while attempting to push the limits of film experience.

More specifically, Herzog explores in these films the history of the West in terms of the imperialist legacy (*Aguirre*) and the Romantic legacy (*Heart of Glass*). Yet Popol Vuh’s music adds an anachronistic and yet highly evocative sound of the present. The temporal counterpoint is derived from Herzog’s careful selection of soundscapes and music, thereby creating aural palimpsests of history. In short, the films offer soundtracks as forms of time travel. Furthermore, a tension between the historic and the absolute rubs on the film spectacle’s abilities to represent past events, comparable to the symphonic poems of Schulze.

*Aguirre* remains Popol Vuh’s and Herzog’s most accomplished collaboration, incorporating new types of ambient electronic instrumentation.95 In the opening scene of

---

95 In terms of film music, Popol Vuh is roughly the German equivalent to Vangelis. Both Popol Vuh and Vangelis helped bring about a popular shift in film music from Romantic Hollywood scores to ambient soundscapes. However, Popul Vuh’s move to film music was prior to Vangelis. Vangelis’s music on *Chariots of Fire* (1981) and *Blade Runner* (1982), as will be explored in chapter 4, appears a decade after *Aguirre: The Wrath of God.*
Aguirre, an expansive forest-mountain landscape accompanies Popol Vuh’s mellotron “choir-organ” theme, supported by a Moog pulse, as the conquistadors and their minions march along the slopes. The mellotron’s cold evocation of the choir is a direct assault by electronic physiognomics on both the voice as sonic index of humanism and the religious choir as theological anchor. Aguirre’s quest is exposed as Quixotian as he gradually experiences megalomaniacal delusions, which are reinforced by the electronic music. 96 Indeed, the mellotron theme resounds in full force at the end of the film, after Aguirre has lost all sense of reality. Surrounded by monkeys, he is the only living human left on a raft strewn with dead comrades and his dead daughter. The absurdity of Aguirre is observed from an anthropological distance at the same time as Aguirre’s delusions merge with the spectacle of the film medium and soundtrack.

Aguirre’s quest calls up complex historical associations of past and present; the plot’s relation to postwar Germany, Krautrock, and electronic music is subtly indirect. The quest is arguably a mixed allegory of Nazi Germany’s campaign in Russia 97 and the war in Vietnam, while the links to the counterculture and fetishizations of tribal cultures develop modern themes regarding technological domination. The continuing tensions of world music with neoprimitive, neoromantic, and cosmopolitan ideologies of the “Long Peace” are here set to a film and music that wrestles with Germany’s history during the Cold War. These antinomies are explicitly sounded in the dialectic tensions between

96 To be sure, the sanity of the conquistadors is questioned from the outset in their zealous self-righteousness, their quest for El Dorado, and their social-cultural organization. The transport of the women and lords in handheld carriages through the difficult terrain appears like a bizarre and alien cultural form in such surroundings. The conquistadors, and not the Amazonians, are at the wrong end of Darwinian survival – by failing to adapt, they perish.

97 The link is clear as the Spanish soldiers are destroyed by the fierce terrain and climate, as well as picked off by the guerilla tactics of an invisible and countless enemy. The endless stretches of the Amazon are the forest equivalent to the endless plains of Mother Russia. The link to Operation Barbarossa is most strikingly made in Aguirre’s final dreams of conquest and Wagnerian racial-incest speeches, when his armies are already destroyed.
Popol Vuh’s electronic themes and the pan flutes, drumming, and chants of the Amazonians, which stand as an early constellation of world music, electronic music, and techno-ambience.

The links between the Krautrock counterculture and German Romanticism are more strikingly present in *Heart of Glass*. A parallel is drawn here between Romanticism and countercultural psychedelia, and it is anchored through Popol Vuh’s music. Crucially, the ruby glass of this film, Herzog’s modern version of *die blaue Blume*, is not an object of desire in nature but a product of industry. It is forged and refined with human tools, similar to the industrial pharmaceuticals of imperial Germany. The industrial associations also reflect postwar psychedelia and the general squandering of resources and oil conflicts in the 1970s, just as the aestheticist son who exploits the ruby glass for profit explores generational conflicts and neoromantic debates on rebellion and social responsibility.

As opposed to the electronic soundtrack, Popol Vuh’s music is here primarily in the style of progressive rock. Yet the music operates again in dialogue with other film music, this time consisting of the medieval music of the Studio der frühen Musik, which emphasizes the contrapuntal link between German Romanticism and the counterculture amidst the nineteenth-century Bavarian setting at the dawn of industry. This nature-culture dialectic within the history of Romanticism is fully realized in a central musical scene that explores the frictions of the historical and the absolute. It begins with a short mellotron-based piece that sounds as hypnotized villagers walk through fields while carrying an insane village elder, followed by a shepherd’s apocalyptic visions. A spectacular scene of volcanic natural follows to the tune of medieval music by the Studio der frühen Musik. Nature then takes on grander dimensions while an instrumental rock
track by Popol Vuh sounds. This extended sequence, mixing three musical styles (electronic-ambient, medieval, psychedelic rock) during a total absence of dialogue, offers a study of absolute-musical moments in film within the dialectic of German industry, Romanticism, and the aesthetics of nature.

These extended musical scenes in *Aguirre* and *Heart of Glass* emphasize Popol Vuh’s spectacular and mental-medial potentials. In other words, the instrumental music of the techno-electronic absolute stands starkly apart from the verbal dialogue. The music alone completes a filmic *Gesamtkunstwerk* understood in terms of an aural-visual experience beyond language. In Herzog’s emphasis on both its nondiegetic and anachronistic functions, Popol Vuh’s music is linked to the film as medium while creating a tense dialectical time-slip of the hypermodern and the hyperprimitive.

As mentioned, the debates of technology, humanism, and the counterculture were also strongly present in Florian Fricke’s own career. Herzog, in fact, implicitly acknowledges Fricke’s later positions against electronic music. In an ironic-humanist reversal to the transcendent Popol Vuh scenes explored in *Aguirre* and *Heart of Glass*, the film *The Enigma of Caspar Hauser* (1976) features Florian Fricke himself and the prominent use of diegetic music. Fricke plays the part of a blind musical dilettante, who performs a simple theme on the piano, which is a variation of his track “Agnus Dei” from

---

98 A comparable historical counterpoint occurs in Herzog’s *Nosferatu*. During a Romantic representation of the “Magic Mountain” as Dracula’s castle, the *Rheingold prelude* and Popol Vuh’s “Brüder des Schattens” music make direct links of Romantic and Krautrock ambience. In a comparable fashion to the Amazonian pan flutes in *Aguirre*, “ethnographic” music is set off in this scene of *Nosferatu* when a lone gypsy boy plays a theme on a violin. The ethnographic music contrasts with the musical spectacle of the Romantic hero and the Weimar-Hollywood film spectacle as anchored in Popol Vuh’s soundtrack. In other words, ethnographic humans are set off from the *Übermenschen* protagonists, who themselves become anthropological subjects. See Casper and Linville.

99 With respect to musical-medial counterpoint, *Fitzcarraldo* offers the most complex layers: theatre, opera, gramophone, ethnographic music, birdsong, and Popol Vuh. Regarding birdsong, ethnographic music, and the gramophone, Richard Leppert has uncovered the dialectical layers of nature and culture that play out in the opera-loving protagonist Fitzcarraldo (“Opera”).
the Aguirre soundtrack (and also featured in the track “Gutes Land” from Einsjäger & Siebenjäger). The piano variation of “Agnus Dei” could be from a mass in Catholic Bavaria, and yet it has such a simple melody that it recalls a Lutheran or Pietist hymn. The film thus links Fricke’s search for humanistic and religious voice within the critique of technology. The scene is so removed from the associations of Krautrock, electronic music, and Popol Vuh’s soundtracks, that the audience has no immediate reference point to connect the simple and blind “Herr Florian” to Popol Vuh. Rather, “Herr Florian” appears in a domestic Biedermeier setting, repeatedly humming the words “Agnus Dei” and playing his minimalist-Christian ditty. As will be explored later in the chapter, the specter of Biedermeier simplicity will reemerge through appropriations of Schubert and Schumann, in a challenge to the traditional association of techno-symphonies with the sublime and otherworldly.

**Nomi in New York**

While the music of Tangerine Dream and Klaus Schulze began the long history of cosmic Berlin and Werner Herzog’s Popol Vuh provided new soundtracks to neoprimitive Bavaria and Brazil, a Bavarian-transplant to Berlin known as Klaus Nomi was preparing new engagements with opera through his next move to a quite different city: New York. Nomi began a unique career there. Already connected to the Berlin gay underground in the early 1970s, Nomi’s move to New York sometime around 1975 meant a substantial shift in his career and audience. He prepared a mix of classical music, cabaret, and rock in the Big Apple, carefully cultivating the presentation of German-Berlin queerness to his New York audience. While constructing otherness, Nomi resisted the appropriation of high-art genius. Nomi’s choice of art music thus
necessarily contrasts with Tangerine Dream, Schulze, and Popol Vuh. Instead of the Romantic symphony, the Baroque-Romantic organ, or world music, Nomi incorporated material from English Baroque opera and Romantic art song, among others. With his unique falsetto/countertenor voice, he borrowed from the star qualities of Italian Baroque castrati and emphasized his role as performer/vocalist rather than producer/composer. Moreover, Nomi’s selection of operatic pieces is remarkably anti-German. Aside from Schumann’s “Der Nussbaum” (*Encore*, 1983), his preference is for Henry Purcell and the opera and song of England, the country usually dismissed in German cultural circles as “the land without music.”

Even the choice of Schumann does not fall in line with the techno symphonies. The choice had its own subversive and queer potential. I previously mentioned Biedermeier with reference to Florian Fricke’s performance in *The Enigma of Caspar Hauser*, and Biedermeier is important for Nomi as well. Nomi sings “Der Nussbaum” in countertenor, giving a camp rendition of female vocalists to a Lied that deals with female subjectivity. The estrangement is reinforced by his untraditional accompaniment: piano, flute, and organ synthesizer. Such practices render Nomi an anomaly in the appropriation of art music by German pop and electronic music.

To be sure, the appropriation of opera is not unprecedented. Nomi appeared in the wake of the 1970s trend of rock operas. By emphasizing rock’s narrative possibilities, rock operas offset the emphasis in both the techno symphony and progressive rock on instrumentality and sound experimentations. Nomi’s new wave music remained aesthetically at a distance, though it had in common with rock opera the celebration of vocal virtuosity. In other words, while the *rock opera* has been understood in terms of theater and narrative rather than direct appropriation of opera music, Nomi’s
use of the falsetto voice and incorporation of Baroque and Romantic opera into his work was one of the few successes that might be termed opera rock.

Nomi brought a camp aesthetic to classical music appropriations that challenged the Romantic aesthetics of both the techno symphony and the rock opera. This challenging offers an alternate view on the history of the Baroque beyond the Lutheran organ. In her 1964 classic “Notes on Camp,” Susan Sontag famously analyzed the Baroque’s extravagant style as an essential component of camp aesthetics. This observation proves especially appropriate for Nomi. Nomi relies on Baroque opera as decadent, gender-bending, and queer compared to other ages such as the Classical or Romantic periods of opera history. In establishing his camp temporal counterpoint, Nomi also relies heavily on Weimar cabaret, Hollywood film, glam rock, and space rock. Three examples can be highlighted in this respect: His cover of Friedrich Holländer’s “Falling in Love Again” honors the Weimar tradition of Marlene Dietrich; “Ding Dong” is a tribute to Judy Garland and Hollywood queerness; finally, the track “Keys of Life” is an exploration in space-rock electronics.

This mix of American and European forms was appropriate for a German immigrant artist who was, like many before him – from Marlene Dietrich to Nico – attempting to carve out a performance style that would resonate with an American audience. So while his operatic selections were a far cry from the German musical tradition, emphasizing his German exoticness remained a key for success. For example, he carefully cultivated his accent in his performance. In “Falling in Love Again,” he even alternates between German and English. His operatic falsetto voice was also connected to science fiction motives of space flight, a kind of exoticist Baroque-cyborg crossover.

---

100 Note 14 of Susan Sontag’s “Notes on Camp” states, “The late 17th Century and early 18th Century is the great period of Camp.”
Kristian Hoffman’s obituary to Nomi emphasizes this play of European and American, not to mention Japanese, science fiction, and spectacular identities: “Klaus was a face – elfin and painted as a Kabuki robot. He was a style – a medieval interpretation of the 21st century via Berlin 1929. He was a voice, almost inhuman in range, from operatic soprano to Prussian general” (Cvejić 66). The robotic movements on stage and the futuristic imagery stood as the technological equivalent to Nomi’s vocal technique. At the same time, he offered a counterpoint of the past to the space associations. While Nomi performed in modern New York as a stranger in a strange land, the association with opera brought the audience back in time to a strange land of high-art gender bending. This link of technology, space flight, and the “castrato” operatic voice is clearly marked in the final track on the album Klaus Nomi (1981), the aria from Saint-Saëns’s 1877 French grand opera, Samson and Delilah; following the track, a rocket sound to the moon is accompanied by electronic soundscapes.

In the associations of the physiognomics of space-rock otherness to the falsetto voice, Nomi aroused anxiety through questioning not only the gender of his body but the material source of his voice: “If that body could perhaps accommodate the male-sounding baritone, the accommodation was immediately offset by the contrasting, high-pitched pseudo-operatic falsetto, and vice versa. For some of his listeners, at least, Nomi’s voices then operated as disembodied voices – hence these listeners’ disbelief, unease, and disgust” (Cvejić 72). Such a presentation lay at the antipodes of Florian Fricke’s search for an authentic human voice. Indeed, a productive clash of art and space rock was made possible through Nomi’s shifts from baritone to countertenor.

---

101 These passages are also quoted in the epigraph of Žarko Cvejić’s excellent essay on Nomi’s identity constructions, “Do You Nomi?” Klaus Nomi and the Politics of (Non)identification.”
Reversing the presumed place of transgression, the voice of art music becomes the voice that is subversive and queer to the New York audiences versed in rock and punk.

The above issues not withstanding, the key point I want to draw from Nomi’s success is that his New York audiences, not to mention his wider American and European audience, who were all supposedly firmly anchored in the traditions of the Occident, did not likely have much direct access to or understanding of major traditions in Western art music. In this period of Krautrock and the transition to technopop and synthpop, significant shifts in musical reception occurred. Thus, within the West itself, Western art music could appear bizarre, strange, and otherworldly, whether in Schulze’s symphonic biographies or Nomi’s performances. Nomi emphasized this flight into another world by often beginning his tracks in his baritone or speech song voice, and then gradually or suddenly shifting into his falsetto voice of Baroque or Romantic opera later in the track, most evident in “Nomi Song.” We shall see later in this chapter how almost thirty years later, Uwe Schmidt emphasized the exotic past of Western art music within the West through his Atom™ project. The exotic thus need not only be found in the distant places of foreign cultures far away from home; sometimes it suffices simply to explore the history of the cultural tradition that, presumably, is “one’s own.”
2.2: Second Wave: Electronic Traditions

The Ambiguous Nature of GAS

“Have you,” he said abstractedly but with great seriousness, “ever heard of that strange minstrel whose music lures young people into a magic mountain from which no one has ever returned? Be on your guard.”

Eichendorff, “The Marble Statue” 1819

This is reminiscent of a Mohammedan tale. The prophet had said to the mountain, “Mountain, come to me.” But the mountain did not go. And behold, the greater miracle occurred; the prophet went to the mountain.

Heine, *The Romantic School* 1831

By the late 1990s, German popular electronic music already had thirty years of its own history upon which to draw. This sedimentation of an electronic and technopop tradition would be set increasingly in counterpoint with debates on Romantic lateness. Electronic music’s history was growing old at the same that its popularity was attaining heights in both Germany and internationally. Amidst this techno-sedimentation, the Cologne producer Wolfgang Voigt released the albums of his GAS project between 1996 and 2000. In the previous chapter, I explored the place of the forest in GAS’s construction of German identity. By contrast, what concerns me here is the double role of instrumental-absolute music and Krautrock techno symphonies in GAS’s exploration of both Romantic and electronic lateness.

As is often the case with instrumental music, the dearth of linguistic anchors and clear position statements was a source of anxiety in debates on GAS. Voigt’s 2008 book GAS, published by the Chemnitz label Raster-Noton, did not remedy the situation by offering a discussion of the project’s musical and cultural theories. Rather, the book coupled the semantic muteness of absolute music with a series of images of the German forest that lacked clear focal points of time and place. History and semantics remained
distant, bare, and minimal in this project. Yet in returning to Voigt’s GAS project, I still yearn to uncover a narrative, not so as to find a straightforward answer regarding the project’s meaning, but in order to move beyond the medium of Voigt’s paratextual interviews and debates on the German forest as place. Instead of Königsforst, I will focus on GAS’s album from the year prior: Zauberberg [Magic Mountain] (1997).

The word “Zauberberg” offers obvious Romantic connotations, a trademark of German identity. Indeed, the word has such a weight of history that it alone offers a grand “program” to this techno-absolute project. Zauberberg. Indeed, this title lends a hyperbolic example to Heinrich Heine’s comments while interpreting the subtle differences in some royal markings during his own explorations of Romanticism and German identity: “I cannot imagine the reason of this variation from the established order, though it has doubtless some occult signification, as Germans have the remarkable peculiarity of meaning something in whatever they do” (Harz Journey 47). In this mix of Romanticism and electronic music, I wish thus to offer a close reading of “Zauberberg” as a Romantic word trace lodged within the aesthetic history evoked by the project’s equally significant name: GAS.

GAS seems at first to be a comparable Romantic icon, alluding to symphonic transcendence: air, atmosphere, and ether, with a nod to the Krautrock past of kosmische Musik. Musical sound as gas is here imagined as both vital and ethereal: material yet invisible, the most basic of elements; the world-breath and the sustenance of life. But there is more to this word GAS: it is a link to the post-industrial history with which Zauberberg also wrestles. Specifically, GAS can be compromised within the logic

---

102 “Ich konnte nicht erraten, was dieser Unterschied sagen soll; und es hat doch gewiß seine Bedeutung, da die Deutschen die merkwürdige Gewohnheit haben, daß sie bei allem, was sie tun, sich auch etwas denken” (Heine, Harz Journey 46).
of the *reductio ad Hitlerem*, since it conjures up poison gas, gas warfare, and even the gas chambers of the Holocaust. Debates on rightwing association with Voigt did flare up, though such arguments concerned German identity and the forest rather than the associations of the word gas. Voigt responded with emphatic denials regarding such associations. His focus, also with respect to the forest, remained with ether music and pop, and GAS was a clear allusion to his glam rock heritage; the band T-Rex released a song called “Life’s a Gas,” which Voigt himself covered.

Regardless, what is clear from this debate is that even terms such as gas, apparently fanciful, timeless, and weightless, are always already material and historical. Indeed, gas is a key source of energy production in the modern world and in some cases a weapon that can have lethal consequences. With respect to poison gas, the musical proximity to the “acid bath” of Wagner’s music as interpreted by Nietzsche is also clear. Gas is thus a word trace of practically intolerable ambiguity, between pop innocence and absolute crime in which the history of German identity is caught up. With this trace, GAS already skirts along the border’s edge between program and absolute music.

With such issues in mind, I turn to the word “Zauberberg” as the only other word trace on the album, which similarly concerns Germany, ether music, and Romanticism. Yet with *Zauberberg*, the history of German Romanticism is offered as a specific literary counterpoint from and within GAS. In particular, Thomas Mann’s thousand-page novel, *Der Zauberberg* [*The Magic Mountain*], becomes at once the obvious program note to this apparently wordless absolute music, a striking turn within this semantically “minimal” project. Indeed, the weight of “Zauberberg” is great. To be sure, Mann is not alone in the use of the term. Music was at once central to the qualities of the “Magic Mountain” as
reflected in the Romantic forerunners to the term: Eichendorff’s “Das Marmorbild” [The Marble Statue] (see the epigraph to this section), which coined the term, and Ludwig Tieck’s stories Der Runenberg and Der Getreue Eckart und der Tannenhäuser. The Magic Mountain was later firmly linked to the Wagnerian tradition through Wagner’s own Tannhäuser. Even in the Krautrock context, a “Magic Mountain” scene is already featured in Herzog’s film Nosferatu, which mixes Wagner’s Rheingold prelude with Popol Vuh’s score. GAS’s Zauberberg thus uses samples from the Wagnerian tradition, whether directly through musical samples of Wagner or indirectly through the Krautrock and Mannian reception.

Yet Mann’s novel is especially significant to the extent that, as a modernist narrative from the 1920s itself dealing with the legacy of Romanticism, it focuses on the turns toward technical media following the industrialization of Germany. Both the maximalist novel and the minimal album explore fundamental issues of modern time, recording technologies, and repetition; indeed, Susan McClary, in her study of repetitive

---

103 See Michael Neumann’s history of the term (Der Zauberberg 5.2: 58-63). He confirms that the term was coined by Eichendorff in Das Marmorbild and related to Tieck’s “Venusberg” [Venus Mountain] in Der Getreue Eckart und der Tannenhäuser. However, as he states, of central importance for Mann were Richard Wagner and Friedrich Nietzsche (57-9). Wagner’s version of the Zauberberg is found in Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg. The first act depicts the myth of the “Venus Mountain,” which is analogous to the Magic Mountain. Nietzsche employs the term “Magic Mountain” in The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music: “Now the Olympian magic mountain opens up before us, revealing all its roots. The Greeks knew and felt the fears and horrors of existence: in order to be able to live at all they had to interpose the radiant dream-birth of the Olympians between themselves and those horrors” (22). “Jetzt öffnet sich uns gleichsam der olympische Zauberberg und zeigt uns seine Wurzeln. Der Grieche kannte und empfand die Schrecken und Entsetzlichkeiten des Daseins: um überhaupt leben zu können, musste er vor sie hin die glänzende Traumgeburt der Olympischen stellen” (Geburt, 35).

104 Consider the following passage from Ludwig Tieck’s “Der Getreue Eckart und der Tannenhäuser”: “Ein Spielmann von wunderseelner Art ist plötzlich von unten hervorgekommen, den die Höllischen als ihren Abgesandten ausgeschickt haben; dieser durchzieht die Welt, und spielt und musiziert auf einer Pfeifen, daß die Töne weit in den Gegenden widerklingen. Wer nun diese Klänge vernimmt, der wird von ihnen mit offenbar, doch unerklärlicher Gewalt erfaßt, und fort, fort in die Wildnis getrieben, er sieht den Weg nicht, den er geht, er wandert und wandert und wird nicht müde, seine Kräfte nehmen zu wie seine Eile, keine Macht kann ihn aufhalten, so rennt er rasend in den Berg hinein, und findet ewig niemals den Rückweg wieder” (35-6).
forms in the twentieth century, appropriately names Mann’s novel as a primary source for modern repetition and minimalism (297). Hence, GAS sounds Mann’s legacy, not to mention Mann’s trans-Atlantic literary success, within the shifts toward post-industrial Germany and techno in a modern export economy.

With such issues in mind, I want to emphasize the intermedial constellation of cosmic music, recording technologies, and engineering subjectivities in Mann’s and Voigt’s work. I will highlight a key musical moment in Mann’s novel: the protagonist Hans Castorp’s first moment of ether intoxication, which crystallizes this mix with reference to the popular, the atmospheric, the technological, and the musical:

It was almost half past eight on a cool, cloudy morning. As he had planned, Hans Castorp breathed deeply of fresh, light, early-morning air that went so easily into the lungs and had neither odor nor moisture nor content, that evoked no memories…. Hans Castorp enjoyed the climb; his chest expanded, he pushed his hat back from his brow with his cane, and when from a good height he looked back around and saw in the distance the surface of the lake his train had passed on arrival, he began to sing.

He sang the kind of songs he knew – sentimental folk melodies, the ones you find in the handbooks of sport and business clubs…. (115)

Castorp’s folk singing becomes a form of kosmische Musik, a lightness mixed with the experiences of the sublime amidst a pop sampling of music.

In Castorp’s selection of sentimental songs and pop imagery, a parallel in Voigt’s understanding of German identity becomes apparent here. Namely, Voigt’s associations are not so far off from a tourist’s perception of Germany. Put differently, identity and outlandish stereotypes remain in constant tension. Voigt states regarding the GAS

105 “Es war ein kühler, bedeckter Morgen – gegen halb neun Uhr. Wie er es sich vorgenommen, atmete Hans Castorp tief die reine Frühluft, diese frische und leichte Atmosphäre, die mühelos einging und ohne Feuchtigkeitsduft, ohne Gehalt, ohne Erinnerungen war … […] Das Steigen freute Hans Castorp, seine Brust weitete sich, er schob mit der Stockkrücke den Hut aus der Stirn, und als er, aus einiger Höhe zurückblickend, in der Ferne den Spiegel des Sees gewahrte, an dem er auf der Herreise vorübergekommen war, begann er zu singen.

Er sang die Stücke, über die er eben verfügte, allerlei volkstümlich empfindsame Lieder, wie sie in Kommers- und Turnliederbüchern stehen….“ (Mann, 5.1: 179-80)
project: “I started to put German cultural history - or what is commonly associated with it – Heino, Schlager [German popular song], Wagner, Volksmusik [folkloric music], Hansel and Gretel, O Tannenbaum, Lass jucken Kumpel [German trash porn comedy]...,

whatever – under the microscope, to reduce the original material back to its basic aesthetic structures and to put it into a new context from there” (“The German Forest,” explanations in original).

Voigt simultaneously tries to distance himself from “high culture,” even as he samples from it in his unique mix of pop and Romanticism.

Castorp continues his own sampling much later by a special selection of schönen Stellen [beautiful moments] of his favorite records following the introduction of a gramophone. In terms of the engagement with technology and debates on popular art, the key parallel I wish to draw here is between the engineer Castorp as pop protagonist and the sound engineer Voigt as techno protagonist. In comparable fashion, Voigt samples classical pieces for the most effective sounds, or what could be described as the ambient equivalents to rhythmic Amen breaks. These nondescriptive chords offer important meditations on the divide between phenomenological/immersive versus structural/formal practices of listening. They are evocative of the pop reception of classical music and colloquial notions of style, producing blank images of genres and composers in notions such as the “Beethovenesque” and the “Wagnerian.” As has already been pointed out, the blank image of past styles extended beyond the

---

106 “Ich fing an, die deutsche Kulturgeschichte, oder was man landläufig damit assoziiert - Heino, Schlager, Wagner, Volksmusik, Hänsel und Gretel, Oh Tannenbaum, Lass jucken Kumpel..., was auch immer - unter’s Mikroskop zu legen, das Ausgangsmaterial sozusagen wieder auf die ästhetischen Grundstrukturen zurückzuführen und von da aus in einen neuen Zusammenhang zu stellen.”

107 The Amen break is arguably the most famous sample in the history of electronic dance music. It derives from a drum solo by George Sylvester Coleman in the song “Amen, Brother” (1969), and the sample has been used on countless songs and tracks since the 1980s.
Beethovenesque and the Wagnerian to the blankest image of all in reference to German identity and the Romantic absolute, *sampled* by Voigt in minimal form: Zauberberg.

Indeed, the thermal noise of the gramophone is prominent throughout the album. The story that GAS’s *Zauberberg* tells is a media history of the development of the techno-electronic absolute out of early recording and instrumental music.\(^{108}\) The album engages a sedimented history of sound recording and/or production in various modes: live, phonographic, analog, digital. In Mann’s *Der Zauberberg*, the introduction of the gramophone is even complemented by an exploration of organ technology. A key character, Herr Settembrini, has the nickname of the “Organ Grinder,” his street organ calling up the history of mechanical musical instruments that prefigures recording, amplification, and electronic music.\(^{109}\) Similarly, the thermal noise and crackling in GAS’s *Zauberberg* constructs classical modernity within the history of digital “glitch music” as was being released on GAS’s label: Mille Plateaux.

In terms of media history, the divorce of sound from instrument that R. Murray Shafer earlier diagnosed as schizophrenia is starkly demonstrated through the manipulation of these samples. GAS returns to the Wagnerian history of this split, namely Wagner’s sunken orchestra pit at Bayreuth, by focusing on strings and brass rather than organs. GAS’s *Zauberberg* comes at a time when it is becoming increasingly

\(^{108}\) This thesis updates Daniel Chua’s history of absolute music and meaning, which explores the various codings of absolute music in the course of modernity, while offering a theoretical comparison of instrumental music and instrumental rationality. The music also resonates with certain themes in the change of acoustic perception through media, such as the pumping yet muted bases that evokes a weak beating heart rather than the dance floor. That one could “listen to the heart” was made possible during Mann’s lifetime through the invention of stethoscopes, and the heart is a central acoustic motive in the novel of the engineer-protagonist Hans Castorp. See Jonathan Sterne’s discussion of the role of the stethoscope in aural media history (87-136). GAS’s bass is further comparable to filmic stethoscope sound effects, the acoustic index for panic, anxiety, and imposing danger. Herzog’s *Nosferatu* even begins with a repeated heartbeat that reverberates amidst Popol Vuh’s “Brüder des Schattens” theme.

\(^{109}\) See the extraordinary collection of mechanical instruments at the Museem Speelklok in Utrecht, The Netherlands. For a history of mechanical instruments, consult Haspels.
difficult, if not impossible, to locate the production basis or sound source of pop and techno tracks. Sedimented history is constructed here through the acoustics of old recordings, though Voigt simultaneously challenges the listener as to whether history can be accessed. It seems virtually impossible to identify the samples since the means exist to distort, isolate, and alter the sources beyond recognition. GAS’s minimal sampling thus crystallizes the dialectical tension between history, musical recording, immersive listening, and sound production. The brilliance of GAS’s Zauberberg is its combination of the maximalist techno symphony and symphonic poem, which offer tracks of medial, popular, and classical immersion out-of-time that simultaneously explode with the tension of history, word, and sound.

The weight of history upon this German Zukunftsmusik looms large. But it is a history that is crucial to engage with, even if its sounds as samples fade into the distance. Indeed, it is precisely the distance that gives them weight, though in sampling even a bit of “Pop” lightness can emerge. Mann himself recalls such experiences in a passage from his Vorsatz [Forward] to Der Zauberberg, so exquisite it also requires sampling:

…For stories, as histories, must be past, and the further past, one might say, the better for them as stories and for the storyteller, that conjurer who murmurs in past tenses. (xi)\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{110} “…denn Geschichten müssen vergangen sein, und je vergangener, könnte man sagen, desto besser für sie in ihrer Eigenschaft als Geschichten und für den Erzähler, den raunenden Beschwörer des Imperfekts.” (5.1: 9)
Berlin Calling: Urban Mythmaking

In exploring the physiognomies of the techno-electronic absolute, the old engineer biographies of Voigt and Castorp could be compared to a DJ-producer biography on film that offers an impressively updated story of techno: *Berlin Calling*. Released in 2008, the film had a successful run in German and European cinemas. Tobias Rapp, in his classic study of the Berlin club scene, *Lost and Sound*, even called *Berlin Calling* “the first serious film drama about Berlin and techno” (11). As a contribution to film, this judgment is true with respect to *techno scene films* as defined in Chapter 1 in distinction to *Run Lola Run* and techno culture films. Rather than a fantastic narrative of techno culture, *Berlin Calling*, as a techno scene film, attempts to represent club life directly.

Indeed, *Berlin Calling*, as the title indicates, offers Berlin as a club land, echoing the *Be.Berlin* campaign by the city government. At the same time, this promotional offering resorts to a call to myth as represented by the protagonist DJ-producer’s name: Ickarus. A figure from Greek mythology, Icarus concerns the dream of flying. Using the wings that his master-craftsman father Daedalus gives him, Icarus flies so close to the sun that his wings melt, and he plunges to his death. The DJ-producer Ickarus has similar problems of both recklessness and (psychedelic) flight. Suffering a creative block and managerial conflicts, Ickarus avoids his problems through hedonist excess and ends up taking an “evil pill” that almost kills him. Though he survives, the rest of the film deals with his life passing in and out of a Berlin psychiatric clinic, wrestling with the symptoms

---

111 “Der erste ernstzunehmende Spielfilm über Berlin und Techno.”
of insanity. However, Ickarus’s creative energies are unleashed, and a new album takes shape in the ward. An artistic triumph and a means of psychological therapy, his new tracks are produced through the inspirational media of illegal and prescription drugs.

The film thus focuses on musical inspiration, rather than training and analysis in musical technique. Reflections on technical media and electronic music production and performance are largely absent. Furthermore, there is no attempt to explore techno culture by utilizing the actual medium of film. I mean here that the material of the film is not emphasized through music/word/image collages as Run Lola Run practices. Rather, as a techno scene film, Berlin Calling exploits film as mere mimesis in the attempt to capture “what it’s really like” in the Berlin scene, using hand-held “documentary” camera shots of Berlin clubs and other locales. Here, the claim to documentary mixed with a mythical story is the best foundation for star construction.

The star is secured through market and critical success. Ickarus’s resulting album, itself titled Berlin Calling, achieves high praise and the trappings of genius. The label manager reads a fictional review from the real-life Berlin techno magazine De:Bug: “The music creates a clear vagueness, thought through to the last detail.” This judgment could indeed be compared to the film’s own mythical narrative, which offers a carefully constructed enchantment of Berlin. The musical success sealed, Ickarus heads off on another world tour in the closing scene...

And in fact, this success was mirrored in the real life career of the actor. Ickarus is played by the Berlin DJ-producer Paul Kalkbrenner, who had already released three albums on the iconic Berlin techno label BPitch Control before working on the film. Following the film’s success and the release of his film soundtrack, Kalkbrenner headed

---

113 “Die Musik entwirft eine klare Unklarheit bis ins Detail durchdacht.”
off on his own “Berlin Calling Tour” in 2010. Attaining national stardom, Kalkbrenner performed solo at massive concert venues in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. The myth of Ickarus thus cast the techno star of Kalkbrenner. This techno scene film’s claim to authenticity was sealed through the merging of protagonist and DJ-star. As opposed to rock operas or the opera rock of Klaus Nomi, *Berlin Calling* could thus be described as a *techno opera*. The film falls within the shift from the anonymous DJ to the DJ-producer as artist and star, a shift that had already been enacted in the early 1990s.

At the same time, the film is of its times to the extent that, in its claims to realism as a techno scene film, it also explores economic struggles of a DJ-producer from a younger generation. Ickarus must face music industry challenges and techno overkill in the 2000s. Berlin as a techno city with long established clubs and media industries is taken as given, and Ickarus struggles with the requirements of constant touring in a city long saturated with techno. The *Fernsehturm Berlin* [TV-Tower Berlin], rather than the Brandenburg Gate, becomes the monument of the city as traditional club land. Reflecting this East Berlin geography, the film highlights, in particular, the pressures and suffering of a young East German DJ in capitalist, united Berlin. Kalkbrenner was, in fact, born in and grew up in Leipzig, which lies in Saxony, a state in former East Germany. The relationship between musical Leipzig and Berlin proves central to the film, grounding the economic and artistic struggles. Only through the successful album is Ickarus able to overcome his plight and financially and artistically “survive” in Berlin.

The Leipzig-Berlin links further ground the film’s understanding of musical and cultural heritage beyond the techno-saturated capital. These links are shown through Ickarus’s relationship with his father, a Lutheran preacher and organist. The mother is deceased, and the father has raised Ickarus alone. This void implies there are no
mothers in the provincial Fatherland. Rather, Ickarus must find mother figures in the Mother Metropolis of the Berlin club scene and medical institutions: his bisexual girlfriend/agent, his psychiatrist, and his label manager (a stand-in for Ellen Allien, the actual manager of Kalkbrenner’s label, BPitch Control). Again, Berlin figures as technofeminist geography just as we explored in Run Lola Run and represented by stars such as Marusha.

Berlin, as a city dominated by women in business roles, is alternately threatening and nurturing to DJ Ickarus as he deals with the history of German patriarchy. A division between ethics and aesthetics is inferred from the conflicts of father and son. Ickarus’s club life stands as his secular Saturday Night Sabbath, which contrasts with the father’s Sunday Morning Sabbath. Ickarus “performs” wordless music before youthful crowds, whereas his father “performs” the nonmusical Word of the Gospel in front of isolated seniors. In fact, the father begins the sermon by quoting Martin Luther, who will become the palimpsest of the striving for musical authenticity and new ethics.

Kalkbrenner’s/Ickarus’s specific connection to Leipzig is grounded musically through another giant of Protestant Germany: Johann Sebastian Bach. The composer’s name is featured when the father performs at the church organ. In this context, the struggles between father and son resonate with Gustaf Gründgens’s Friedemann Bach. The tense relationship between DJ Ickarus and organist father corresponds to the unruly Friedemann, who rebels before his pious father, the Meister Johann Sebastian. East Germany in Berlin Calling is selectively remembered here as old Protestant Germany before the influence of global techno culture and the atheistic socialism of the German Democratic Republic. In this specific scene, the focus of popular memory is Protestant Saxony and Thuringia rather than atheist East Germany.
The issue of belief continues to be a point of contention between father and son. Following Ickarus’s overdose, the father comes to the psychiatric ward and has the following conversation with the psychiatrist:

**Father:** He spent practically his entire adolescence in the disco. I was… I am probably still completely over my head trying to raise my sons… I mean, I don’t demand that he believes in God, but he needs to believe in something.

**Psychiatrist:** Mr. Karow, I consider your son, Martin, to be a very sensitive man. And he believes in something very strongly – he believes in his music. Honestly, that is something I also underestimated.\(^{114}\)

The psychiatrist’s observations prove prophetic. Music as “belief” will allow for father-son bonding. Following his recovery, Ickarus visits the church, and in a final moment of atonement, he turns the pages of the Bach score while the father plays the organ. Ickarus senses a commonality between the organ music and his electronic music. He states, “The sound is… awesome…” However, that is all he can say – after all, the music is as sublime as his techno. This attitude is comparable to an early Romantic genius of Wackenroderian inspiration, with a naivety that lacks the irony or humor of Friedrich Schlegel or E.T.A. Hoffmann. In this return to Kalkbrenner’s native Leipzig, the film returns to the first in the long line of German musical geniuses constructed through biography, inaugurated by Johann Nikolaus Forkel’s 1802 *Johann Sebastian Bach: His Life, Art, and Work.*

---

\(^{114}\) **Father:** Er verbrachte fast seine ganze Pubertät in einer Diskothek. Ich war… ich bin wahrscheinlich noch völlig überfordert mit der Erziehung der beiden (Söhnen)… Ich meine, ich verlange ja nicht, dass er an Gott glaubt, aber an irgendetwas muss er doch glauben.

**Psychiatrist:** Also Herr Karow, ich halte Ihren Sohn Martin für einen sehr sensiblen Menschen. Und er glaubt ganz stark an etwas – er glaubt an seiner Musik. Das habe ich ehrlich gesagt auch unterschätzt.

\(^{115}\) “Geg! Der Klang ist…”
This comparison with club and church life corresponds with the high artistic claims of the electronic music scene in Berlin. In the 2000s, club music offered a sober and reflective take on techno culture compared to the 1990s pop rave aspirations of the Love Parade and Low Spirit. Yet Ickarus’s biography mixes both these periods to the extent that he explores melancholy and passion, as does Ickarus/Kalkbrenner’s music
for Berlin Calling. In terms of the Leipzig connection, the cold trance pallet of Ickarus’s
digital techno meets the cold structure of the father’s organ playing. Ickarus’s adagio
trance themes give melodic form to his minimal techno, thus having within them the
sedimentation of the Lutheran hymns of old Protestantism. They are the basis for techno
elaborations just as such basic melodies allowed for Bach’s musical elaborations. In
short, this form of minimalism in techno meets the religious simplicity of songs of praise.
At the same time, they reflect a city that remains in tough economic times; a strict work
ethic is still demanded for post-industrial Berlin.

Indeed, Kalkbrenner’s tracks have the echoes of melodic trance. Simon
Reynolds offers an apt analysis of such trends from 1990s minimal to what Philip
Sherburne called “microhouse,” a form of music definitive for German techno of the
2000s. Minimal and microhouse are traditions that are integral to the ostensibly rave and
trance-free city of Berlin. According to Reynolds, microhouse is “the transposition of the
minimal techno aesthetic onto the warmer sound-palette and more relaxed, inviting
tempo of house” (Energy Flash 500). Nevertheless, he points to a colder development in
which trance and ambient tints also appear, so that one “started to hear more elements
of a strictly nineties and Nordic provenance: sounds that flashed back to Jam & Spoon
circa ‘Stella’ and ‘Age of Love’, tunes that bordered on fluffy trance…” (503). For
Reynolds, whereas the 1990s minimalism of a techno-DJ like Tanith evoked “old clichés
of Prussian discipline and severity,” the microhouse of the 2000s was “a hedonism
tempered by taste” (503). Reynolds observed this tendency already in 2002, but it is also
appropriate to Kalkbrenner’s Berlin Calling soundtrack. It is primarily microhouse in
tempo, \textsuperscript{116} but there are also trance themes, as in the tracks “Queer Fellow,” “Azure,” “Bengang,” and “Gebrünn Gebrünn (Berlin Calling Edit).” Such melodies in minor keys and with ambient-adagio atmospheres construct a melancholic soundtrack to accompany the genius of Ickarus. The tracks are indeed hymn-like in their simplicity. In short, they may be termed microtrance. The soundtrack to \textit{Berlin Calling} aims to be the Romantic soundtrack for a new generation of Techno City Berlin.\textsuperscript{117} It expresses the tension between the sacred and the erotic reverberating in Berlin’s Lutheran technotrance cathedrals, comparable to the tension of the sacred and the erotic in the Baptist churches of house music in Chicago and New York, to which Kalkbrenner alludes in the prayer track, “Sky and Sand.” These tracks offer a sublime reverence, though they are the occasion for Ickarus’s atonement with his father, if but to continue his life with a renewed commitment to humanism in diva-city Berlin.

I close with a return to the question of sound production in electronic music. Though the film’s focus is on inspiration and musical biography rather than instrumentation, \textit{Berlin Calling} as a 2008 film also marks an important shift from analog synthesizer to laptop music (see image 15). Ickarus’s production console includes a single keyboard synthesizer, but there is no other traditional instrument upon which one can anchor the music. The laptop becomes the actual \textit{synthesizer} of all his musical practices: producing, listening, deejaying. Ickarus brings his laptop with him virtually

\textsuperscript{116} Reynolds offers an insightful sociological association with this new music style as well: “Microhouse appeals to European middle-class youth, kids who are bohemian in their drug taking and sexual freedom but bourgeois in their love of designer commodities and careerism (typically working in media, the arts, design, computing). The music found a similarly urban but ninety-nine percent white (and Europhile) audience in America” (504).

\textsuperscript{117} Compare, for example, \textit{Run Lola Run} and the 1993 tour given in the television documentary \textit{Techno City: Ein Wochenende in der Berliner Szene}. 
everywhere. The shape of the laptop as a musical instrument is unprecedented in the history of music, which is arguably why Ickarus takes so long to recognize the affinities of his music with his father’s organ music. There is no visual analogy between the laptop and organ like there is between keyboard synthesizer and organ as presented by Klaus Schulze. Indeed, Ickarus’s production equipment is a far cry in terms of size, shape, and weight from Schulze’s massive synthesizer console. And as we shall see with Atom™, the virtual weightlessness of digital music production and distribution brings both the instrumentation and music into the ether and ephemeral-like qualities of music itself.

Humorous-Ironic Program Music: From Kraftwerk to Atom™

For their completion, the present compositions required the acquisition of new instruments, which did not fit well with the artist’s instrumentarium. Their cost exceeded the usual means of a German composer.118

Atom™

In contrast to Voigt’s Cologne and Kalkbrenner’s Leipzig/Berlin, electronic music producer Uwe Schmidt is a world traveler without a fixed home. If Voigt’s and Kalkbrenner’s music explores pop sublimity in regional terms, then Schmidt’s music oozes with the experimental lightness of the expat. His biography reflects such themes. Schmidt grew up in Frankfurt, which as he observes, never feels like home even for Frankfurters.119 He studied philosophy at Frankfurt University until he saw Jürgen Habermas repeatedly try to push open a door that said “Please Pull,” a door Habermas goes through every day.120 Schmidt decided this meant something was drastically wrong.

118 “Die vorliegenden Compositionen erforderten zu ihrer Vollendung die Beschaffung von neuen Instrumenten, welche nicht wohl für das Instrumentarium des Künstlers passten, und deren Kosten die gewöhnlichen Hilfsmittel eines deutschen Componisten überstiegen.”
120 Ibid.
with academic life. With literary-philosophical training, being especially influenced by Jean Baudrillard, he left the university and thereafter committed himself to music.

In the early 1990s, Schmidt produced first EBM-industrial music as Lassigue Bendthaus and later a plethora of Frankfurt EDM-rave music, from ambient to hardcore, much of which was later released on his one-man label Rather Interesting. He has maintained an enormous output under various aliases (Lassigue Bendthaus, Atom Heart, Urban Primitivism, etc.). Dissatisfaction with Frankfurt and the stagnation of techno led to a move to Santiago de Chile in 1997, though Schmidt considers himself neither particularly Chilean nor German. He has stated that his constant travels have left him with the conclusion that he must be an “extra-terrestrial.”\textsuperscript{121} However, reflection on German identity and electronic music increased in importance as a techno expat on the Chilean coast. A play of identities became prominent when, under the alias Señor Coconut, he released an album of Latin remixes of Kraftwerk called \textit{El Baile Alemán} [The German Dance] (2000). This interest in Kraftwerk’s legacy expanded into a general exploration of electronic music and German identity.

This practice was followed by his current project name, Atom™, through which Schmidt explores such issues with respect to Germanness. Most prominent here was the album \textit{Liedgut} [Song Goods] (2009), released on the Chemnitz label Raster-Noton. \textit{Liedgut} was one of Schmidt’s most publicized albums since \textit{El Baile Alemán}. Like Voigt, Schmidt was on tour through 2008 and 2009, sporting various bourgeois-minimal suits. For example, in issue 129 of \textit{De:Bug} (44), he is dressed in a formal vest and suit attire. He sports slicked-back hair and a swashbuckling mustache of Hollywood fame, recalling Errol Flynn or Clark Gable, while also evoking the entrepreneurial blandness of the

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
German economic miracle. Striking a subtle pose, Schmidt looks out in a strangely blank fashion. A further photo (42) depicts Schmidt looking slightly up, as though a heroic philosopher, yet again with a blank stare. In both photos, he sits at Clara Schumann’s childhood piano built in 1828, and featured at the Robert Schumann House in Zwickau, a subtly appropriate selection since such a photo in Zwickau would have not been possible in pre-1989 Germany. Furthermore, this piano and Clara Schumann were featured on the post-1989 German 100 D-Mark note. Schmidt thus explores the history of the role of Schumanns, updated and rewound. Past Biedermeier domesticity confronts the minimal-lounge domesticity of modern-day Berlin, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt…

and Santiago de Chile.

The album design of *Liedgut* also features clear literary references to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century legacies of Biedermeier simplicity. The shape recalls the bookbinding formats of the *Insel-Bücherei* classics, which were popular and cheap, but elegantly designed, editions of German literary classics. The album further includes a booklet with song texts and a *Danksagung* [Note of Thanks] couched in light Romantic irony. (The epigraph of this section in part quotes the Note of Thanks.) Comparable to his references to Biedermeier, both packaging and promotional imagery suggest a literary assault on the monad of the techno-absolute with a return to programs, literature, the salon, and art song.
Yet the “literary” qualities of the Danksagung resist the traditional valorization of literature. Schmidt’s Danksagung is an altered version of Hermann von Helmholtz’s Danksagung to his landmark 1863 study of acoustics and sound, On the Sensations of Tone as a Physiological Basis for the Theory of Music. This text is a key source for modern sound and media theory, efforts to challenge the primacy of literature and the printed book as a foundation of human communication, memorably described by Marshall McLuhan as “the Gutenberg Galaxy.” A final portrait of Schmidt is included in the album booklet; contrasting starkly with the magazine images, the picture is an abstract composite of Schmidt’s face made from green computer symbols on a black background. In short, digital meets Biedermeier in Schmidt’s physiognomy. He offers a return to multiple beginnings: Biedermeier, carnival, media theory, literature, Kraftwerk, and minimal.
This constellation leads to the challenging of conventional historical and artistic associations with Romanticism. Like the title and booklet cover, the reference to art song fools expectations. A direct engagement with Lieder, either in lyrics or musical form, does not occur. Rather, a computer voice recites the spare lyrics in the tradition of Kraftwerk’s minimal speech-song. The music is likewise minimal, but in the rhythms of the waltz and experimental glitch instead of conventional 4/4. The carnivalesque is inferred via mechanical organs and a Hammond organ (rather than the brass and strings of GAS). Digital sound production is juxtaposed with the motif of white noise produced by a Korg MS-20. An analog synthesizer introduced in 1978, the Korg MS-20 was the first cheap synthesizer that helped realize Kraftwerk’s proclamation of an age of “technopop.”

Schmidt thus returns to the middle stage of Kraftwerk following their initial break from techno symphonies. The first two releases in the development of their new style of technopop, *Autobahn* in 1974 (analyzed in chapter 1) and *Radio-Aktivität* in 1975 (to be analyzed in chapter 3), were still closely connected to cosmic Krautrock. *Autobahn* even remains in the album form of a techno symphony in five movements. However, the track “Autobahn” shocks because it is the first pop-Schlager tune, which includes, as we saw, the translation of the Beach Boys into Kraftwerk’s first example of speech-song. The other tracks on the LP fall more in the line of the cosmic symphony: “Kometenmelodie I & II,” “Mitternacht,” and “Morgenspaziergang,” though these reflected Kraftwerk’s light touch on instrumental music.\(^{122}\)

\(^{122}\) Particularly interesting in this context is “Morgenspaziergang” [Morning Walk], a pastoral track that demonstrates electronic instrumentation’s capabilities of imitating natural sounds such as birds, reinforced by Florian Schneider on flute.
Compared with the five tracks of *Autobahn*, *Radio-Aktivität*’s twelve tracks break with the techno symphony form, although cosmic associations remain prominent in tracks like “Radioactivity,” “Radioland,” “Ätherwellen,” “Antenne,” and the electronic Eastern meditation “Ohm Sweet Ohm.” In fact, the album arguably announces the birth of trance music as an EDM form$^{123}$; the tracks I just listed are candidates for such a beginning. The break up of the techno-symphony format remains the distinguishing mark of *Radio-Aktivität*. This break was a striving toward artistic innovation precisely by means of pop. There was a willingness to risk the charge of Schlager in order to produce music for the dance floor. It was this crossover that gave rise to the tradition of technopop artists in German electronic music. Techno-Schlager became prominent by the 1980s and 1990s, from the New German Wave hits of Nena and Grauzone to rave themes by Mark’Oh and Marusha to vocal medleys by Justus Köhnke and the Kompakt label’s pop ambient. Schmidt’s *Liedgut* is precisely an engagement with this technopop tradition.

Indeed, Kraftwerk’s general trajectory was toward pop. The band concluded in their 1986 album *Electric Café* (the final album of their classic dance period) with the announcement, “Music non stop, techno-pop,” which followed the introduction of the Korg MS-20, the synthpop boom, and their own visits to Frankfurt’s Techno Club. That said, the exploration of the tense legacy of the avant-garde and classical music remained. While there is only one direct reference to classical music in Kraftwerk’s albums after *Autobahn*, it is an intriguing one. The track is “Franz Schubert,”$^{124}$ one of

---

$^{123}$ That a “trance continuum” in German electronic music exists is doubly reinforced by the play on words in Kraftwerk’s album, *Trans Europa Express* and Klaus Schulze’s *Trancefer*.

$^{124}$ Pascal Bussy includes a great tale regarding the name: “‘Franz Schubert’ is a fairly innocuous instrumental filler, but provided Hütter with one of this more humorous anecdotes, claiming that Franz Schubert had actually visited the studio when they were recording the track” (89).
their lesser-known works on *Trans Europa Express*. Playing off quartet associations, “Franz Schubert” has a lighter flare than the music of GAS or Schulze, though it is itself surprisingly non-Schubert-like if one considers Schubert’s depressive song cycles and violent themes in piano works like the Piano Sonata in B-Major (D. 960). Kraftwerk’s electronic medley offers an interpretation of Schubert’s legacy; Schubert becomes the light counterpoint of chamber music and the salon to the hetero-masculine sublimity of Beethoven, Wagner, and company. Resisting calls to the symphony or opera, the band reinforced the appropriation of Schubert’s chamber music by also posing on the *Trans Europa Express* album as a string quartet. In terms of the Austro-German tradition of chamber music and *heiteren* pop humor, Schmidt’s pose as Schumann in Zwickau takes up where Kraftwerk’s “Franz Schubert” leaves off.

However, Schmidt and Kraftwerk’s Biedermeier references also explore a specific palimpsest of 1970s political reaction. Namely, the post-French-Revolution imagery of Biedermeier corresponds to the failed revolution of 1968 and the end of the Communist bloc in 1989. The bourgeois restoration, which Kraftwerk explored in their performance practice during the 1970s and 1980s, is fulfilled by Uwe Schmidt in Zwickau: the Romantic and post-Socialist industrial city of Schumann and the Trabant. Indeed, the Schumann photos could have only been taken with the ease of neoromantic Saxon tourism in unified Germany. At the same time, Saxony, along with Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, has struggled with rightwing political reaction more than any other German state.

Yet in terms of literature and narrative, expectations are tricked by the relative dearth of lyrics or poetry for an album with the title *Liedgut*. The booklet contains a table of contents, wherein track names and numbers represent chapters and page numbers.
However, the tracks are mostly instrumental, and the booklet contains only two texts, offering a minimal reference to song cycles: “Wellen und Felder” and “Weiβes Rauschen.” Finally, to confirm the heritage of Kraftwerk, the album ends with, “Florian Schneiders Schlußwort” [Florian Schneider’s Closing Words].\textsuperscript{125} Despite the minimal texts, the chapters offer a historical narrative through musical sound. From the “White Noise” sounds of the “Introduction” to the creation of the “Radio Signal,” the beginnings of mechanical music, electronic, and experiment music are explored up to the “Intoxication of the Present,” expressed as a waltz dance. Thus, if Radio-Aktivität is an exploration of the Romantic qualities of the radio, produced at the dawn of the computer age, then Liedgut is an exploration of the Romantic history of Kraftwerk’s analog-retro sounds, yet produced in the digital age.

Reflecting these historical juxtapositions, the texts play with natural, poetic-musical, and digital meanings. However, the texts focus on artistic production, as opposed to the plays on meaning in Radio-Aktivität between media, energy, and destruction. A light sheen of nature and computer language in “Wellen und Felder” holds the listener at a distance from these power relations. Liedgut thus engages the ideology of a postindustrial age that is supposedly saved by digital technology and the refinements of design. For example, “Wellen und Felder” [Waves and Fields] explores the aesthetic associations of both waves and fields:

(1) \textbf{Waves}: waves of the ocean; waves of Romantic orchestral music; radio and surf waves of Kraftwerk and the Beach Boys; sound waves of digital production.

(2) \textbf{Fields}: fields of nature; academic fields of the sciences and the humanities; computer fields of data.

\textsuperscript{125} Schneider’s text is not included in the booklet; it is a variation on the opening line of the children’s song, “Es klappert die Mühle” [The Mill Goes Cickety-Clack].
“Weiße Rauschen” has a similar matrix of meanings. *White noise* is the basis for sound production represented in the Korg MS-20 motive of actual white noise, with echoes of “Rauschen” (rushing, rustling) in German aesthetics. At the same time, “Rausch” is a Romantic icon of the German language comparable to “Zauberberg.” “Rausch” means intoxication or rush, and the tracks draw out its poetic, musical, and digital histories.

The speech-song poems thus concern the production of electronic music in the digital age – no greater narrative “story” is told. Yet regarding the specific history and trajectory of German techno, the connection of Biedermeier and minimal proves key to Schmidt’s diagnosis. Minimal techno and microhouse developed in the 2000s to the point where they became iconic as German styles. Schmidt thus posits what I would term a *minimal continuum* of German electronic music. I borrow this term from Simon Reynolds’s notion of the “hardcore continuum” in reference to British 1990s and 2000s electronic music styles inherited from the West Indies (“Hardcore Continuum”). This continuum emphasizes a distinctive tradition of British dub and bass EDM.

By comparison, the minimal continuum is central to the Berlin Republic. Rooted in Kraftwerk and the reception of Detroit techno and Chicago house, the minimal continuum has sustained this tradition through a series of genre monikers during a history of over twenty years:

**Hardcore Continuum – England**

Hardcore → jungle → UK garage → drum and bass → grim → bassline → dubstep

**Minimal Continuum – Germany**

EBM → techno → dub techno → glitch → clicks ‘n’ cuts → pop ambient → Schaffel → microhouse
In this context, Voigt’s 2008-2009 tour was symbolic of the triumph of minimal as the definitive techno style in the Berlin Republic, while Schmidt’s tour was an implicit critique of this tradition. To be sure, implicit in Schmidt’s reception of Radio-Aktivität is also the exploration of another German continuum of note, one that has been implied in this chapter, but which has been critically rejected in the Berlin Republic of the 2000s: the trance continuum.

It is Schmidt’s reception of Biedermeier that allows for his diagnosis of the minimal continuum at the end of the 1968-2009 period. He states that the occasion for Liedgut was an art exhibition titled Biedermeier: The Invention of Simplicity (Ottomeyer et al.): “I realized at the exhibition that we are still stuck in Post-Biedermeier” (“Einfach” 43).\(^{126}\) Schmidt thus seizes on the links of lateness and posts; Romantic lateness is reversed as a Biedermeier post. According to Schmidt, Biedermeier is “a German theme, which I probably would not have become aware of if I were living in Germany. Simplification, minimalism, reduction in art, especially music, is an inflationary idea. There is an artistic construction of minimalism that is no longer questioned and has become a lifestyle here” (“Einfach” 45).\(^{127}\) Indeed, as a Chilean expat viewing the Berlin Republic, Schmidt has compared himself to Nietzsche’s view of the first Berlin nation, the German Empire, from the Alps.\(^{128}\) Schmidt’s conclusion is the following: “The main evolution is stagnation and decadence. I think the last ten years have been very

\(^{126}\) “Bei der Aufstellung ging mir auf, dass wir heute immer noch im Post-Biedermeier stecken.”
\(^{127}\) “Ein deutsches Thema, das mir vielleicht nicht bewusst geworden wäre, wenn ich in Deutschland leben würde. Vereinfachung, Minimalismus, Reduktion in der Kunst, besonders der Musik, ist eine ganz inflationäre Idee, es gibt hier so einen künstlichen Kulturüberbau des Minimalismus, der gar nicht hinterfragt wird und zu einem Lifestyle geworden ist.”
\(^{128}\) The second Raster-Noton album by Atom™, Winterreise (2012), includes in its booklet a quotation from aphorism 334 of Nietzsche’s Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft (239-40).
reactionary. We have been thrown back ten or fifteen years by minimal techno, which I consider in a strict sense conservative” (“Main Evolution”).

The irony is that technology apparently offers greater possibilities, but the dogma of minimal prevents innovation. This “Weiβes Rauschen” [White Noise] results in Schmidt’s critique of digital media as an offering of possibilities out of which little that is musically innovative has developed: It leaves us only “Im Rausch der Gegenwart” [In the Intoxication of the Present]. The laptop can here be taken again as symbolic instrument. The laptop’s Romantic promise of universal sound design, equivalent to Schlegel’s \textit{progressive Universalpoesie}, proves false: The laptop of minimal techno is rather \textit{reductive Universalpoesie}. In Schmidt’s return to Kraftwerk as the source of reduction, he attempts to return to the mix of romanticism, concept albums, pop, and the minimal-trance dialectic that provided so much potential at the dawn of technopop. In his diagnosis of minimal as German exactitude beginning in Kraftwerk, Schmidt thus acknowledges its successes while critiquing the trajectory.

Arriving at this conclusion, it is worthwhile to explore the variety of Schmidt’s instrumental electronic tracks in an album supposedly about art song. The final words of “Wellen und Felder,” which are uttered in the track “Überleitung,” are the following: “Um drahtlos zu kommunizieren / erschufen wir das Funksignal” [To communicate wirelessly / we created the radio signal]. This statement marks the passage into the main instrumental-digital section – from Kraftwerk’s age of radio to the age of the Internet. We also pass from lyrics into the language-like structures of digital absolute music. The reverb of the radio voice announces the religious promise of broadcasting at the same time as the track plays with static, clicks, and cuts in a reflection on digital production and performance capabilities. “Funksignal” and the “Mittlere Kompositionen” proceed
through various dances of experimental glitch, carnival music, the merry-go-round, and waltzes, leading up to the final waltz of “White Noise/Intoxication.”

This Biedermeier play relies on the computer. The return of an ether-like and mental-medial experience of light and sound is particularly evident in the computer age. Indeed, the promise of the ether through digital technology is announced with the start of each Windows program, originally composed by Brian Eno for Windows 1995, and the classic C major chord of the Macintosh startup chime. These synthesized chimes resound sonorously, a window to an HD virtual world and a flood of possible edits, updates, and apps. Such sounds contrast starkly with the cranking of the spires and sprockets that start up mechanical or industrial equipment. The chime, a window to carnival play, indexes the ideology of the smooth crossover between occult and digital media as that which lies beyond the material world and has no apparent environmental consequences.

With respect to such occult associations, Schmidt’s photo shoot in the Schumann House is again appropriate. Schumann falls in the nineteenth-century history of spiritualist movements, having had a special interest in the magnetist theories of Franz Anton Mesmer, from whom the term “to mesmerize” derives. Indeed, the spiritualist movements that arose in his wake were later parodied in the chapter “Highly Questionable” from Mann’s Magic Mountain. The “New Age” proves to be quite old. Spiritualist movements during the nineteenth century used the term, and the present age is not far from reproducing such mesmerizing experiences. After all, what could reinforce the ether-like qualities of music more than disco, club, and rave traditions, where light and lasers are sequenced to the rhythms of dance music. Similarly, it is the laptop that offers Romanticism to the digital age. Like Schmidt’s diagnosis of reduktive
Universalpoesie, the laptop is an instrument that takes the shape of a blank screen as pristine and weightless as white paper, upon which the free musical, literary, or image writing of performative fantasies is practiced… once more without apparent environmental consequences.

The substantial changes in media create layers of distance that cover up such links, and this distance explains why classical music and German Romanticism can themselves become exotic in the post-Biedermeier expat Occident. Nineteenth-century Europe and German Romanticism have become strange to most Germans currently raised on pop culture. Like Klaus Nomi’s stylized performance in New York, Atom™’s Liedgut estranges art music in Germany and Europe. This estrangement explains why it by no means can be taken for granted that growing up in the Occident means one necessarily comprehends or has roots in Western music. So I repeat the final line of section 2.1, making it the final line of section 2.2. For it applies in 2009 as well: the exotic need not only be found in the distant places of foreign cultures far away from home; sometimes it suffices simply to explore the deeper history of the cultural tradition that, presumably, is “one’s own.”
2.3 Bio-Supplement: Saxon Journey

The history of German Romantic lateness traced here has its counterpoint in the American romantic exploration of roots... Between 2008 and 2011, I made repeated visits from Berlin through the Saxon Triangle in search of 12.5% of my roots (honoring a long American tradition of precise ancestral percentages). To explain, the Saxon Triangle is an urban designation; it forms the main body of the Central German Metropolitan Region, the only metropolitan region located entirely in the former East. It is shaped by five major cities: Halle, Leipzig, Dresden, Chemnitz, and Zwickau. With such iconic cities, the Triangle is exceptionally rich in Baroque and Romantic/Biedermeier musical heritage: Handel’s Halle, Bach’s Leipzig, Wagner’s Dresden, and Schumann’s Zwickau. It is no wonder then that in Doctor Faustus, Adrian Leverkühn spends his youth in this region: in fictional Kaisersaschern, and the very real Halle and Leipzig. Yet in its modern turns, the Saxon Triangle also bears the weight of electronic music and industry. I encountered both of these legacies in this decidedly American musical quest: a California boy’s deep search for culture.

I traveled to all of these cities. However, the connection to relatives had been lost. In Leipzig and Zwickau, the two cities where the German branch of my family was located before emigration to America in the 1880s, no roots were to be found... only modern networks and events: Leipzig’s Wave-Gotik-Treffen, the world’s largest festival of the Goth-industrial scene, and in Zwickau, visits to the renovated Schumann House and the August Horch Museum of Saxon industry and East German car culture. As a California boy, I made Teutonic and melancholy poses in front of the Bach statue in Leipzig and the Schumann statue in Zwickau: critical performances as a happy loss of
roots. I also realized these trips were being made in the midst of historical scars and political battles with the rightwing in Saxony that still needed to be addressed.

Modern turns took place. Instead of the cities of classical and family heritage, I found myself identifying most with the one city in the Saxon Triangle that bears no major composer to its name: Chemnitz, also known as Karl-Marx-Stadt. The city center still retains the prominent Karl Marx Monument, with its humorous Saxon nickname, Nischel (“Head”). However, it was the electronic music of Chemnitz that drew me most: the band AG Geige and the world-famous electronic label raster-noton: archiv für ton und nichtton, which developed out of 1980s art and video collectives in Karl-Marx-Stadt. The founders of Raster-Noton – Frank Bretschneider, Carsten Nicolai, and Olaf Bender – carry this history forward in their respective techno-absolute minimalisms with experimental tinges. Out of the Dada roots and wordplay of AG Geige (of which Bretschneider and Bender were members, along with AG Geige’s lyricist and my Chemnitz host, Jan Kummer), Raster-Noton’s founding as a label for electronic music and Bauhaus-inspired design became a singularly influential take on minimalism in the 2000s. The label’s continued residence in Chemnitz, with international networks from Japan to Chile, offers a unique mix of the local, the national, and the global.

While the Saxon Triangle both reinforces the scars of split history and resists easy assumptions of a single German identity, Chemnitz/Karl-Marx-Stadt stands as the concrete sign of split identity: displayed by traffic signs, electronic signs, and linguistic signs. I traveled through the city on a rickety old bike and grew to love the aging humor of the region. Indeed, the Saxon accents of German, as figure for East German identity, continue to frustrate demands for a united German language. In Karl-Marx-Stadt, AG Geige enjoyed a similar experimentation with language while using the Korg MS-20 as
an East German announcement of technopop. Though the advanced techno-absolute productions of Bretschneider, Nicolai, and Bender would largely depart from this earlier vocal music, AG Geige offered ingenious cuts and absurdist examples of German and English behind the Iron Curtain, such as in Jan Kummer’s texts “America” and “Melodie & Harmony,” the latter of which announced a Dada and Biedermeier-inflected satire of the techno-absolute: “I don’t need any big symphonies; just give me a little melody.” This play of language and performance in AG Geige, followed by Atom™, allows for a u-turn away from absolute roots. We head toward what at first glance appears distant or peripheral to electronic music: the role of language. The Saxon dialect, which to the amazement of my German buddies I declared pretty, was the inauguration of such refined looks at the tongue as an instrument. In this materialist and comedic spirit, the next chapter will enact a critically accented form of the linguistic turn.
Images 19/20/21/22: Saxon Journey (personal photos).
American tourist visits Saxon ancestry. In Leipzig at the New Bach Monument (1908); in Zwickau at the Robert Schumann Monument (1901); and in Chemnitz/Karl-Marx-Stadt – images of the Karl Marx Monument (1971), with a remodeling plan’s “Contextualization Strategy,” and Jan Kummer’s artwork: a composition of an anonymous East German lady’s tourist photos.
Chapter 3 – Die Deutsche Seele Up To Date: Linguistic Circuits of German, English, and Denglisch

I truly see myself as a German cultural bearer… I should have a tag: “German cultural treasure – please do not bomb.” Anyway, I love the German language, a: it’s my mother-tongue and b) it’s the language in which I dream.  

Blixa Bargeld.

I don’t speak German, but I can if you like (ow)
Ich Schleiban austa be-clair
Es kumpt madre monstere,
Aus-be, aus-can-be flaugen
Begun beske but-bair
Lady Gaga

In spring 2009, the German Historical Museum in Berlin mounted an exhibition with a simple title that belied the complex topic at hand: *Die Sprache Deutsch* [The German Language]. Rarely has a museum chosen a language as the subject of an entire exhibition. Indeed, presenting language in a museum space proved to be both challenging and fascinating. It required the innovative use of a range of media: literary and audiovisual instruments; advertisements; portraits of authors, politicians, and philologists; the reproduction of a schoolroom; an extensive audio tour; and manuscripts from the Middle Ages to the present.

The exhibition also offered an extensive section on *Jugendsprache* [Youth Language], discussing modern manifestations of German from *Denglisch* to

---

Kiezdeutsch.\textsuperscript{130} Denglisch is the particular concern of this chapter. The name refers to the mix of German and English that is used primarily by young Germans raised with pop media references, though it has already influenced a number of generations. Although the name is analogous to “Spanglish” in the United States, Denglisch and Spanglish as linguistic phenomena cannot be directly compared because Spanglish has resulted from cultures of migration. Denglisch differs in that it has resulted almost entirely out of the importation of pop media and culture, and the German-English mix is just one of many examples of English-influenced youth pop languages across the world.

Examples of Denglisch on display at Die Sprache Deutsch exhibition included the objects of various kinds of subcultures: fanzines, T-shirts, Walkmans, videos, LP/CD covers, etc. The commonsensical associations of youth language and popular music were thus brought together. While a laudable addition to the exhibition, this section reinforced the perception that popular music and youth are literally structured around the practice of youth who listen to, write about, and make pop music. This structure is, however, in a certain sense inverted: Popular music is the index of the normative ideal of youth irrespective of actual age. The teenage years analyzed at the exhibition need to be expanded under Rickels’s concept of the “Teen Age” as reflective of the increased presence of youth ideals through electronic media and technology.

The notion of youth as it relates to language and pop music is a key aspect of postwar German linguistic and cultural practice. Youth, the English language, and Anglo-American pop culture have been closely associated in West Germany since the postwar

\textsuperscript{130} “Kiez” in German roughly corresponds to “district” or “hood.” Kiezdeutsch generally refers to the various slang forms of German spoken by young Germans with immigrant backgrounds, primarily Turkish. Kiezdeutsch is thus used primarily by immigrant youth cultures in urban areas of Germany.
repopularization of jazz and the rise of rock in the 1950s.\textsuperscript{131} 1956 could here be pointed to as the seminal year for this new Euro-German youth culture as a result of the founding of two major institutions: the Eurovision Song Contest\textsuperscript{132} and the definitive West German youth magazine BRAVO.\textsuperscript{133} This youth culture was reflected in politics; \textit{Die Sprache Deutsch} featured, in this respect, Konrad Adenauer's 1960 speech "An die Jugend Europas" [To the Youth of Europe], which was given both in German and English. The speech called for a new cultural era following World War II through a "Zusammenschluss Europas" [Union of Europe] (251).\textsuperscript{134} Pop journalism of both German and Anglo-American music continued to expand rapidly in Germany during the 1970s and 1980s with the development of magazines such as Musikexpress, Spex, and Sounds. \textit{Die Sprache Deutsch}’s exhibition on the history of “youth language,” presented after twenty years of German unification, thus showed the German language at a crossroads between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with youth language playing as great a role in the Berlin Republic as it did in West and East Germany.

\textsuperscript{131} For a history of the rise of popular music and conflicts regarding the notion of youth, see Poiger. The section on youth language in the exhibition \textit{Die Sprache Deutsch} began in the 1950s with rock’n’roll, thus bearing important similarities to the standard American account of youth culture and pop music history. The exhibit had little discussion of pre-FRG manifestations of youth culture: the Wandervögel, linguistic practices of jazz, or the Hitlerjugend, for example.\textsuperscript{132} See Raykoff and Tobin for a history and cultural analysis of this major event, organized each year by the European Broadcasting Union.\textsuperscript{133} The centrality of BRAVO to German youth culture is both difficult to overestimate and to explain with comparison to American media. Indeed, this magazine has no comparison in the United States. Though mainly designed for teens, as a magazine, BRAVO could be described as a unique mix of Seventeen, Rolling Stone, and People. During its popular peak in the seventies and eighties, it had a weekly press run of two million copies. BRAVO consisted of a significant amount of coverage not only of standard music stars, but also of various pop music movements and subcultural trends from punk to techno. Written in a carefully crafted Denglisch, it has played a central role in teaching young Germans to associate the English language with the ideal of youth. It thus garnered a diverse crowd of both male and female readers from ages 15 to 25. For a comprehensive history, see Archiv der Jugendkulturen’s 50 Jahre BRAVO.\textsuperscript{134} See the chapter on West German language (249-57) in the section “Geteiltes Deutsch” (248-74) from \textit{Die Sprache Deutsch}; this chapter focuses on the significant role played by the English language immediately following the war.
As far as pop music cultures are concerned, German punk and hip-hop were the main focus of the exhibition.\textsuperscript{135} There was no discussion of the forms of linguistic practice that occur in techno or industrial scenes; the exhibition thus reinforced a popular misconception. Though stereotyped as a mute movement consisting primarily of instrumental music and sound art,\textsuperscript{136} electronic music and technopop have in fact made unique, if sometimes bizarre, contributions to German linguistic practices. These contributions are marked by the linguistic mix of German and English so common to other popular and subcultural scenes. The semantic components of these genres can be found in the following musical and extramusical forms that correspond to other youth cultures:

Musical –
1. Lyrics;
2. Voice samples;
3. Live MCing;

Extramusical –
1. Flyers;
2. CD/LP covers and liner notes;
3. Band/DJ/album/song titles;
4. Magazines, fanzines, and web blogs;
5. Narrative films with EDM or industrial soundtracks;
6. Techno novels, short stories, and other belletristic writings (Rainald Goetz, Thomas Meinecke, Andreas Neumeister, etc.).

Given this linguistic context, it will be important in this section to first offer a definition of popular music primarily based on language.

Many musicological definitions of popular music have wrestled with pinpointing formal features, technological-medial developments, or types of sociocultural practice that make pop distinct from classical, folk, and other musical genres. Some who wrestle

\textsuperscript{135} See the section “Jugendsprache” (Anderlik and Kaiser 301-18).
\textsuperscript{136} See the previous chapter, which explores how techno’s history of instrumental music has alternatively been celebrated as Germany’s extralinguistic pop update to absolute music.
with these details can miss, however, a way of defining twentieth-century popular music that focuses on language. To this end, I offer the following definition: Popular music consists of a variety of English-language musical practices beginning at the turn of the twentieth century that, through successive market and cultural successes in the age of mechanical and digital reproduction, have helped make English the *lingua franca* of the European popular music industry.¹³⁷ The centrality of English is comparable with that of the Italian language in classical music, as can be seen in their basic terminology. In classical music, Italian is used in the vocabulary of dynamics (piano, forte, etc.) and tempo (adagio, andante, etc.), for example, as well as for musical forms (sonata, opera, concerto, etc.). The use of English terms in popular music is equivalent. Terms such as sound, release, hit, performance, song, track, and so forth are employed in German and other languages. Furthermore, the various music-based subcultures in Germany and the rest of Europe have primarily English titles: punk, skin, hip-hop, techno, rock, goth, etc. Political and media trends have not changed this pattern. In terms of the use of the English language in Germany, the departure of American and English military forces and media, especially the radio of the British and American Forces Networks, from West Germany in the 1990s has been compensated for by the rise of the Internet and social

---

¹³⁷ Whether English is the *lingua franca* of global pop culture is debatable, especially in light of the roles that Spanish, French, Arabic, and other languages play in regional pop music industries. In terms of the success of English language pop, the music industries of the United States and the United Kingdom are usually assumed responsible. However, it is crucial to keep in mind the major contributions to English-language pop made in Ireland, Canada, Australia, Jamaica and many other countries crucial to English’s global presence. I offer the following examples: **Canada:** Joni Mitchell, Leonard Cohen, Celine Dion, Justin Bieber, Bryan Adams, Skinny Puppy, Alanis Morissette. **Ireland:** U2, Enya, My Bloody Valentine, The Cranberries, Sinéad O’Connor. **Australia:** AC/DC, Kylie Minogue, Savage Garden, Air Supply, Olivia Newton-John. **Jamaica:** Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer, Jimmy Cliff, Lee “Scratch” Perry,
media, as well as the continued integration of the European Union, which are all primarily based upon English-language communication.\textsuperscript{138}

Techno cultures arrive at a late period of this long history of English-language pop music, already nearly a hundred years old. German and American English, in particular, have been engaged in an intense exchange of musical-linguistic life and letters since the Weimar Republic and the rise of jazz. Jazz already unleashed an intellectual crisis that included critiques and intense debates by such diverse political and cultural figures as Oswald Spengler, Hans Pfitzner, Hermann Hesse, Theodor W. Adorno, and Ernst Bloch.\textsuperscript{139} Many of these debates were reawakened in the postwar years both in East and West Germany with the rebirth of jazz culture and the rise of

\textsuperscript{138} Duden acknowledged these trends in 2000 by publishing the first dictionary on “scenes”: See Trendbüro’s \textit{Wörterbuch der Szenesprachen}. This dictionary covered not only pop music and subcultural scenes, but also the language of sport, fashion, and computer cultures. Virtually the entire book consists of English terms. This publication had been preceded by numerous less official dictionaries with similar goals, such as Eike Schönfeld’s \textit{Alles Easy: Ein Wörterbuch des Neudeutschen}. The term “Neudeutsch” is a synonym for “Denglisch,” and this dictionary is indeed filled with English phrases and terms from “bodybuilding” to “smalltalk.” The language of pop music and subcultural scenes is always prominent in these dictionaries. Schönfeld’s dictionary included terms such as “DJ,” “event,” and “rave,” thus associating such terms with the late modern world of shopping, fashion, technology, and fitness.

Such dictionaries have been complimented by just as many polemical writings against the rise of \textit{Denglisch}, most recently in Wolf Schneider’s \textit{Speak German!} Schneider cites pop music as one of four main causes of \textit{Denglisch} in Germany today: “Der Triumph der Rock-und Popmusik (seit 1956 Elvis Presley, seit 1962 die Rolling Stones, seit 1963 die Beatles)...so hörte der deutsche Schüler vor der Schule meist mehr Englisch aus dem Radio als Deutsch am Frühstückstisch” (142). He attacks Duden for succumbing to trends in the service of philological neutrality in the section “Wie ‘Die große Hure Duden’ sie steuert” (39-41). Schneider further attacks so-called Anglomanics who delight in \textit{Neudeutsch}: “Wer die hässlichen, die überflüssigen, die unverstandenen unter den Anglizismen bekämpfen will und ausdrücklich nur sie – der hat viele Feinde.... jene Anglomanen zumal in der Werbung, in der Wirtschaft, in der Popmusik, die sich auf der Höhe der Zeit fühlen, wenn sie ihre Muttersprache so tief wie möglich in englische Vokabeln und Redewendungen tauchen” (52).

\textsuperscript{139} See Weiner, especially chapter 1 on Hans Pfitzner (33-72) and chapter 3 on jazz, Hesse, and \textit{Steppenwolf} (101-50). Regarding jazz and the crisis of European identity, the composer Hans Pfitzner writes, for example: “It is the jazz-fox-trot flood, the musical expression of \textit{Americanism}, this danger to Europe. This kills the soul and flatters the body, which is why its danger remains unnoticed and is welcome” (Weiner 65). Two operas that explored the link of Weimar Germany, the United States, and popular music at this time were Ernst Krenek’s \textit{Jonny Strikes Up} (1927) and Bertolt Brecht’s and Kurt Weill’s \textit{Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny} (1930). For an analysis of Brecht, America, and opera, see Calico.
Popular music later helped to forge identifications with the United Kingdom and United States and the associated political alliance with liberal democracy. At the same time, popular music became virtually synonymous with English and American music during the fifties and sixties to the point where it became difficult to imagine how musicians from Germany would be internationally, or even nationally, successful in such a market.

How German electronic music developed and was marketed is closely intertwined with this history. Artists, label owners, and journalists constantly debated how to be successful in this supermodern and global market place. Continuing our transnational leitmotif of musical export, this chapter explores a number of examples regarding how this market challenge played out in language. First, I proceed from the theoretical assumption that both the choice of language and/or dialect is always a political decision and, further, that any linguistic system in which one performs or writes presents challenges regarding the sedimented history of the respective language. For example, sedimented history is already starkly present in the radically different associations between the English and German terms for music of the people: folk/popular music versus Volksmusik. “Volk” remains a volatile term in Germany due to its constant racist use under the Third Reich and broader connection to nationalism; “Volksmusik” thus tends to be ascribed to conservatism or provincialism.

Indeed, the rise of totalitarianism and fallout from World War II set the political problem of language in striking relief. A seminal work that deals with such political-linguistic issues is Victor Klemperer’s *LTI: Notizbuch eines Philologen* [*LTI: A Philologist’s Notebook*], which incidentally has never been translated into English. Its title

---

140 For postwar debates on jazz and rock, see Poiger.
"LTI refers to the "Lingua Tertii Imperii," or "the language of the Third Reich," and LTI is itself a play on the alphabet soup of totalitarian bureaucratic organizations from NSDAP to KDF, though of course, such alphabet soup has also become the daily life of virtually all modern bureaucratic states and economies, from NATO to DAX. Klemperer carefully traces the changes in the use of language in the Third Reich, both in the shifting connotations of old words and in the coining of new words, and he draws out their political implications.

Much postwar literature followed this theoretical framework. For example, Theodor W. Adorno proceeds from similar theoretical assumptions as Klemperer in two remarkable essays on the progressive politics of foreign words in German, "Words from Abroad" and "On the Use of Foreign Words." The English-speaking world confronted similar theoretical issues at this time, most famously in George Orwell’s "Politics and the English Language." However, Orwell’s suspicions of Latin-based intellectual discourse and his reliance on Anglo-Saxon common sense and directness in speech make his analysis differ starkly from Klemperer’s and Adorno’s critiques of linguistic purity. Such political-linguistic challenges of German are, however, by no means confined to LTI. German linguistic practices today continue to struggle with language as it was practiced under successive political regimes, especially during the twentieth century: Wilhelmine Germany, the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, West and East Germany, and now, the Berlin Republic.

The challenges of dealing with such political-linguistic themes are too numerous to be addressed here. My investigations will be confined to the following issues within the context of German/Anglo-American relations:
1. The practice of Denglisch and other mixed languages and/or terminology in techno and industrial music.
2. The representation of English as the language of light entertainment, superficiality, camp, and/or commerce in opposition to European high culture.
3. English’s political use as a linguistic echo for liberal democracy and pluralism.
4. Identity signals in German techno-industrial vocals or samples through references to Schlager, Romantic poetry, and LTI linguistic practices, among others.
5. German language phonetics and the singing voice. In particular, the mediated male voice in its bass, baritone, and tenor manifestations, as well as the use of vocoders and synthesized speech.

To emphasize the politics of the German language, I focus for the purposes of this chapter on a number of tracks by two bands, where not only language plays a central role, but the German language and English language are innovatively set in tension.

The bands are Kraftwerk and Laibach. I choose these two bands because, in part, they highlight some of the general features that distinguish the linguistic practices in technopop (Kraftwerk) versus industrial music (Laibach) as major traditions of German electronic music. Kraftwerk’s vocal practices have been key to the development of German technopop lyrics, and the band also played an influential role in the style of Neue Deutsche Welle. I focus here on Kraftwerk’s tracks dealing especially with language issues: “Radioaktivität,” “Radioland,” “Nummern,” “Boing Boom Tschak” and “Die Stimme der Energie.”

By contrast, Laibach offers an impressive case for the construction of the German language and identity from the Teutonic outland. The band is not German, but Slovenian. Nevertheless, Laibach has continually released German-language albums. I

141 Schlager [hit music], German-language pop music from the 1950s to the present, has in certain contexts a comparable reputation in Germany as the conservative wing of country music in the United States, disparaged by many groups of the Left as reactionary and lacking artistic quality. The common statement of taste, “I’ll listen to anything but country,” can in certain contexts be transferred to Germany: “I’ll listen to anything but Schlager.” However, Schlager has a complex history that such taste distinctions fail to acknowledge, including camp aesthetics and its significant influence on other genres. Similarly, the history of country music is certainly more complex than its current pop-conservative associations.
focus here especially on three “covers” of English-language music: “Geburt einer Nation,” “Life Is Life,” and “The Final Countdown.” These tracks demonstrate Laibach’s artistic innovations, which proved to be a major influence on the subsequent popular movement in Germany known as *Neue Deutsche Härte*, of which Rammstein is the most famous (if excessively examined) representative. Indeed, beyond technopop and industrial, these two bands offer an occasion for placing the legacies of *Neue Deutsche Welle* and *Neue Deutsche Härte* in productive tension. Kraftwerk and Laibach were successful precisely because of their innovative uses of English and German, making it important to consider the relationship between both languages. My project of viewing identity as a filter between inland and outland is thus continued with the emphasis here on German-English translations in the context of Europe and the United States. Therefore, I will begin with the theoretical exploration of how German and English relate to each other in the controversies surrounding *Denglisch*, as well as the role of English-language pop music practices that are particularly prevalent in Europe.

1. Word Mixes from Scratchmasters to Trainwrecks: Denglisch and ESL

Regarding conflicts over German, English, and *Denglisch*, most debates proceed from a superficial binary of German and English as singular languages. We must first ask, however: Which German and English is being addressed here? The German language is assumed to be primarily standard *Hochdeutsch* [High German]. Regional dialects, such as I mentioned in the last chapter regarding Saxon, have not played a major role in debates regarding *Denglisch*, and likewise, industrial and techno musics have rarely, if ever, been associated with such dialects. Furthermore, while both musical genres are primarily associated with urban life, they remain associated with white urban
youth and linguistically associated with Hochdeutsch rather than the urban dialects, or Kiezdeutsch, of Turks and other immigrant groups. Thus, as a debate centered primarily on Hochdeutsch, it is one concerned with the national identity of the German language as was standardized by the Duden publications in the time of the German Empire.\

But which English is being addressed? The many forms of English make this question particularly difficult. To be sure, English is most readily associated with either Oxford English or Standard American English (also termed General American by linguists); however, English dialects, Scottish English, Irish English, African American English, Jamaican Patois, and Caribbean English play important roles as well. At school lessons, most Germans learn official Oxford British or Standard American English, only coming into contact with various vernaculars through pop media and music. Since the success of Beat music, progressive rock, and punk music, young Germans have engaged especially with various dialects of British English. Similarly, rap, soul, and R&B have brought Germans into contact with African American English. The German version of American Idol known as Deutschland sucht den Superstar shows, for example, young Germans who often sing soul, rap, and R&B music with impressive voice imitation but often painfully strained, sometimes humorous, accents.

Technopop occasionally confronts all these varieties of English. However, technopop has been so successful because it is at a crossroads between instrumental music, as described in the previous chapter, and a careful balance of German- and English-language song and samples. In short, I turn from the questions of the electronic

---

142 *Die Sprache Deutsch* exhibition emphasized this history of standardization, for example, through the construction of desks and other imagery from a Wilheminian school room. See the section “Deutschstunde” (Anderlik and Kaiser 147-55).
absolute in the last chapter to questions of language and translation in issues of identity in this chapter.

First, however, the practice of European bands that sing in English needs more precise theorization. Specifically, I would term English-language music by European bands from any nation other than the United Kingdom and Ireland as “ESL music” (ESL standing for “English as a Second Language”). Related to Denglisch, ESL music in Germany has in fact been key to twentieth-century German pop music since the jazz age. I call ESL music globally any practice in which performers sing or sample in English even though English is their second language; the question of its place as a “second” language, or the language which exists beside the mother tongue, will become of key importance. These ESL practices can include covers of English songs, originally composed music and lyrics, or music or film samples. Sometimes singers have an audible accent or compose lyrics with incorrect grammar or stylistically awkward lyrics, though crucially, these ostensible failures can have both advantages and disadvantages. For example, German artists such as Marlene Dietrich and Nico turned German accents into trademarks of performance practice in America. In the context of Krautrock and the early stages of ESL music, the work of Can’s vocalist Damo Suzuki is unique. Can’s performances were striking occasions of the doubly foreign mix of German instrumentalists and a Japanese singer working through jam sessions with scarcely intelligible English lyrics. On the opposite end, bands like the Scorpions achieved international market success through careful imitation of rock vocals with largely inaudible accents. Such examples demonstrate the extraordinary potential and diversity of ESL music, which, depending on the context or emphasis, might also be more properly called International English, or IE, music; it is the dialectical tension of IE and
ESL that interests me here. The notion of ESL is key to retain so as to explore translation as linguistic tension and difference, recalling otherness and resisting the pure communicative smoothness of IE.

In the 1990s and 2000s, perhaps the greatest techno example of ESL was the Hamburg-based band Scooter, which achieved unprecedented international success through the ESL MCing of lead man H.P. Baxxter (Hans Peter Geerdes), and the pop-rave productions of Rick J. Jordan (Hendrik Stedler). Since its founding in 1993 and its first success with the single “Hyper Hyper” in 1994, Scooter has had over twenty Top Ten hits in Germany and sold over thirty million copies worldwide. The band is the top-selling group for a major EDM-Eurodance label, Kontor Records, which is also based in Hamburg. Headed by Jens Thele, Kontor has established Europeanwide success with such popular acts as ATB and Sunbeam. Scooter's album, *Jumping All Over the World* (2007), even became a number one album in England when it unseated Madonna in the charts, a success that Scooter’s press releases repeatedly mention with delight.

Such multi-decade success by so-called Eurotrash groups as Scooter has resulted in mixes of anger, indifference, and bemusement within the German techno scene. A band notorious for high energy, Scooter could be described as the techno equivalent to Rammstein, a band which was formed only a year later and, like Scooter, dominated the 1990s charts. Both bands gained comparable market success through displays of technological masculinity, though popular criticism of Scooter has nothing to do with the Third Reich imagery that Rammstein has employed. Rather, Scooter enjoys apolitical presentations and celebrations of rambunctiousness, intensity, and bad taste.

Baxxter’s ESL MCing consists of a mix of nonsensical calls, coded references to fans, and carefully selected phrases that have little narrative logic but sound impressive
to the primarily German-language audience; the lyrics might in this respect be termed ESL sound poetry. The English language is used, in other words, for its effect as pure exclamation rather than semantic meaning. In other words, H.P. Baxxter’s ESL MCing is here a pop form of rave-Dada nonsense (inspired specifically by the English band the KLF), yet borrowing from football chants, hedonistic rudeness, and other displays of fun stupidity. It should be pointed out, however, that Baxxter has an impressive English accent, especially when MCing, and an expert knowledge of English pop. His vocals are usually supported by carefully sampled hooks and choruses from relatively obscure English, ESL, or German songs from the 1970s and 1980s, sped up to produce the rave “helium voice.” The chart-topping tracks “How Much Is The Fish?”, “Weekend!”, “Ramp! (The Logical Song),” and “The Question Is What Is The Question” are examples using these techniques. Scooter has in this way taken Eurotrash as a principle, forming it into the most commercially successful German Eurodance project of the 1990s and 2000s.

Scooter’s stature even resulted in the use of their 2002 hit, “Nessaja,” for the Euro-porn title sequence of the Hollywood comedy Brüno (2009). Released by Universal, or as the title sequence states in Teutonic parody, “Üniversal,” the comedy had a successful international run. Brüno, a character created by comedian Sacha Baron Cohen, is one of the great mythic figures of ESL Eurotrash. He is a gay Austrian fashionista, and in appropriately bicoastal logic, the film tells the story of his move to Los Angeles in order to become “über-famous” to the point where he hopes to be the most successful “gay Austrian actor since Arnold Schwarzenegger” and “the most famous Austrian since Hitler.” ESL Eurodance and hardcore techno tracks mark Brüno’s Eurotrash aesthetics throughout the film. Yet it is “Nessaja” that sets Brüno’s identity in the beginning, introducing Brüno as a postmodern icon.
The musical video to “Nessaja” is equally, if not more, significant. A parody of the decadent *fin de siècle* party in Stanley Kubrick’s *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), the video portrays the European elite flipping out to Scooter’s Eurotrash rave tune. “Nessaja” is especially memorable for its signature rave helium-voice hook, a sample of a translation from the 1983 hit of the same name by German pop-star Peter Maffay, turned into a rave dreamland of regression.


H.P. Baxxter’s MCing punctuates the rhythmic drive that follows the helium-voice introduction. The lyrics of the rave intro and the first section of H.P. Baxxter’s ESL MCing are as follows:

*(Helium voice: Peter Maffay translation)*

- Always lived my life alone,
- Been searching for a place called home.
- I know that I’ve been cold as ice,
- Ignored the dreams, too many lies.
- Somewhere deep inside, somewhere deep inside me,
- I found the child I used to be
- And I know that it's not too late
- Never, too late...

*(HP Baxxter)*

3 AM!
The painted cow!
Hiaaaa!!

You ain't stoppin` us now!
[Wonderful human beings]
Yeah! I am the Junglist souljah.
Come On! The rocket launcher stops ya.
It's not a bird, it's not a plane
It must be Dave who`s on the train
Wanna wanna get'cha, gonna gonna get'cha
Tell them that I told ya
YEAH!

ESL music of this Eurodance style is, of course, not confined to Germany. It has become key to the construction of European identity. In particular, the Nordic and Benelux countries have pioneered the careful construction of ESL as IE since the 1970s; this is partly reflected in the greater degree of fluency in English amongst the general population of these nations through school programs and English-language media. The most iconic event linked to such European ESL/IE music has become the Eurovision Song Contest, especially since the extraordinary commercial success of ABBA following their 1974 Eurovision victory. In the book A Song For Europe, the introduction by co-editor Ivan Raykoff addresses the event’s streamlined pop English lyrics: “English has become the lingua franca of Eurovision songs, with the greatest number of winning songs overall (including ABBA’s “Waterloo”), even though it is the national language of only two participating countries…. For many critics, this infantile approach to linguistic diversity also detracts from Eurovision’s artistic dignity” (1-2). This argument echoes the forecasting by Laurence A. Rickels, quoted in the introduction, of what he calls “globalese” as communicative code of pop culture in Philip K Dick’s science fiction: “That American would go global simply because anyone can stumble through it and still be understood and, same thing, because it is no one’s mother tongue is part of Dick’s accurate forecasting” (I Think I Am 2).
The Eurovision Song Contest offers an important marker for tracing the development toward ESL pop. During the 1950s and 1960s, the contest was primarily a competition between varieties of modernized European folk music that had been transformed into pop spectacles (what in Germany became known as Schlager). A gradual move toward English-language entries took place in the 1970s and 1980s, as folk music became viewed as provincial. Since the 1989 revolutions and the expansion of the European Union, this process accelerated; although the rapid addition of non-English-language participants from eastern and southeastern Europe would ostensibly make English more marginalized, it has resulted in the opposite effect. Presenting English-language entries is a symbolic marker of these new countries’ admittance into European pop culture. The cultural and economic capital of English has spread through postwar Europe to such an extent that ESL pop is now relatively equivalent in terms of international reach to Latin-language church music during the Middle Ages or Italian-language opera in the Baroque period.

ESL music as a late-modern manifestation has the following cultural benefits in Europe that are reflective of the ideals of IE communication:

1. ESL communicates directly with the established popular music traditions of the Anglophone world, which includes music from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia, Jamaica, and the United States.
2. ESL lyrics help to connect with other bands and listeners throughout Europe, thus facilitating communication within the European Union, where English is the dominant language of commercial and cultural exchange.
3. ESL has the (sub)cultural capital of European media that construct youth and pop music on the ability to converse in English,\(^{143}\) avoiding charges of provincialism. In the case of Germany, pop media is marked by Denglisch practices in advertising and discourse about popular music.

\(^{143}\) In a class I attended at the Humboldt University of Berlin concerning the music market in the Federal Republic of Germany, an interesting linguistic moment was observed. In response to the question as to why Volksmusik is not included in the official German pop charts, the first proposed answer from one student was: “Because it is sung in German.”
4. ESL distances music from the specific sedimented histories and political challenges associated with other languages (in this case, German). The sedimented history of English itself is often depoliticized and dehistoricized through the streamlined lyrics of ESL pop. Furthermore, ESL bands in a non-English-speaking country will likely not have to confront scandal or challenges as to lyrical content.

Intertwined with these cultural benefits are the economic advantages of ESL practice, which are the following:

1. ESL secures an expanded market of the non-German-speaking European Union and Anglo-American world, among others. This helps with gaining access to English promotional media, such as television spots and interviews.
2. ESL texts are effective marketing tools. They help to distance a band from provincial or national markets, though regional identity can simultaneously be emphasized.

While some ESL texts are made functional for the market, there are also many examples by ESL bands where the lyrical quality can far outstrip songs by native English speakers. Both in terms of production and reception, German artists and media outlets have themselves long been self-conscious and playful regarding their relationship to ESL, as is humorously represented in the German phonetic title for the magazine Zitty (equivalent to City). Wordplays of this kind abound: For example, we already saw Andreas Neumeister’s Mjunik mix, not to mention the titles of books such as Simple Storys by Ingo Schulze and Faserland (Fatherland/Vaterland) by Christian Kracht.

Nevertheless, the practice of writing lyrics in English can be particularly challenging. A failed ESL text (with simplistic or awkward poetry, or incorrect grammar or word use) will sometimes confirm rather than shield a band’s provincial origins. A comic example is the Swedish performer Günther, who satirizes ESL pop and Eurodance in tracks like “Ding Dong Song” and “Teeny, Weeny, String Bikini.” Günther’s music videos play with the stereotype of Northern Europeans who cannot dance, while his sensual deep voice parodies performers like Frank Farian and Yello. The promotional description
of Günther on his website, sporting a swashbuckling mustache more like Boris Blank of Yello than Atom™, explicitly mocks ESL: “Günther is a true European, his origin is Sweden but he sees himself as a global citizen. Günther has always been in the entertainment industry and now he feels it is time to change the attitude of the world to do something better. Günther wants to change the world’s look at the sexual way of thinking, so he have started a new trend to sexualise it more in the world. ‘A Günther trend.’” (Günther). In this example, Günther parodies the history of attempts at English accents that fail miserably or stereotypical simplifications of global pop culture as speaking English, which often results in the charge of Eurotrash aesthetics.

Another case in point is the history of Electronic Body Music (EBM), which is notorious for having questionable ESL practices. For example, successful bands such as Funker Vogt and Blutengel have gained reputations for writing uniquely bad English lyrics. An impressive example, which is appropriate since the song deals with German identity, is “Germaniac” from the Düsseldorf-based EBM band the Krupps. It is sung in an accented imitation of Metallica’s James Hetfield. Metallica was, in fact, such an influence on the band that they later recorded an album of truly bad covers called A Tribute to Metallica (1993). The beginning of the “Germaniac” text reads as follows:

Micro-precision and heart full of steel
Strategic kindness, mechanic feel
Logical passion, pre-planned joy
Controlled madness, the world is just a toy
Concrete emotions, artificial tears
Dog-faced devotion, one thousand years
Perfuse perfection, dishonest smile
Malicious action, vicious and vile
Germaniac!
Mad in Germany
Germaniac!
To rule the world
Ha!
While ostensibly a mark of internationalism, ESL can in this sense emphasize otherness, whether provincial or national.

In comparable contexts, ESL can be exploited to arouse exotic interests, to mark an individual style, or to present an aura of high-cultural European sophistication. Indeed, the careful and intentional cultivation of accents in pop-music practices has long been a phenomenon that has garnered precisely these benefits. In connection with exotic fantasies coupled with erotic desire, women have historically been particularly successful in utilizing such projections. For example, Northern European women have succeeded in constructing a distinct performance type termed by Simon Reynolds and Joy Press as the “Ice Queen” (300-5). While Reynolds and Press mention the “Ice Queen” with reference to Nico, such vocalists as Marlene Dietrich, Björk, and Enya could be seen as producing strikingly diverse forms of the “Ice Queen” type. The latter two are especially important in electronica because of their use of multitrack recording and vocoders. Each of these vocalists has a distinctive style and accent, alternating between ESL and mother tongue. Yet males can also evoke forms of the exotic European in a variety of ways. With respect to this constant play of languages and ESL, I want to turn to the bands Kraftwerk and Laibach to see how they have contributed to

---

144 Reynolds and Press focus on the supposedly asexual and rigid aspects of performance, including Grace Slick band Siouxsie Sioux in their analysis. When discussing Nico, they describe her “Teutonic hauteaur” and her creation of “a wasteland of arid, ascetic, Aryan sound” (300). In this respect, the image of ice links her to the cold north as inhuman. I take the term “Ice Queen” in this direction and focus on its geographic fantasies. These fantasies can include a variety of performance styles, such as Nico’s type which “has unsexed herself, dammed up her lachrymal and lactation ducts” (300). For a general theorization of the North that examines the history of literature and painting, and includes chapters on ice and glass, see Davidson.

145 Though Enya comes from an English-speaking nation, her ability to shift between Gaelic- and English-language lyrics, combined with her Irish accent, has helped to construct a performance style closely related to the practice of ESL exoticism of the North.
this late-modern history of constructions of European identity through language, while setting the precedent for the vocal practices of technopop and industrial music.

2. Kraftwerk’s Accents

We are the first German group to record in our own language, use our electronic background, and create a Central European identity for ourselves…. We cannot deny we are from Germany, because the German mentality, which is more advanced, will always be part of our behavior. We create out of the German language, the mother language, which is very mechanical, we use as the basic structure for our music. Also the machines, from the industries of Germany. (Bangs 158-9)

This statement by Ralf Hütter has become notorious in the United States regarding Kraftwerk’s relationship to German national identity. With a fair dose of irony and hyperbolic performance, Hütter positions Kraftwerk as a uniquely German band against other groups, which he accuses of being copies of Anglo-American music – and language plays a key role in this accusation.

The German language is not just representative of German, but “Central European,” identity, thus referencing German as a national language of Switzerland and Austria and a commonly spoken language in other countries of the region. The passage derives from the relatively short 1975 interview with Lester Bangs, which has become an influential piece in the history of the band’s reception in the Anglophone world: first, in terms of Kraftwerk’s construction of the German language and identity, and second, in terms of Bangs’s construction of Kraftwerk and German music through his own Teutonicist fantasies of first contact. Indeed, Bangs is here arguably the technopop equivalent to Philip K. Dick’s exploration of Tiberius’s first contact in Martian Time-Slip. Due to the dearth of significant English interviews with the band and Bangs’s iconic
status in pop journalism, this interview has played an important role for English-language scholars and fans in interpreting the secretive workings of Kraftwerk.

Aspects of Hütter’s statement explode from the page with historical significance regarding German-American relations and postwar understanding. The striking interpretation of German as a “mechanical language” links the logical exactitude of industry with German’s guttural and sharp sounding phonemes (“clashing consonants” in the words of the English music journalist Charles Burney during an encounter with German in the eighteenth century146). The German tongue approximates logos and efficiency. Such a statement contrasts starkly with nineteenth-century associations of German music with passion and the soul, closely connected as it was to Romanticism.147

How could such a radical change in associations have come about? The cultural fallouts from the industrialization of Germany and both world wars certainly play a role. However, in the immediate historical context of the interview, the shift derives from West Germany’s reputation as a land of the Wirtschaftswunder. Rather than culture, West Germany’s main concerns during Hütter and Schneider’s childhood lay with the reorganization of German industry, engineering, and banking. Hütter enjoyed cryptically referring to this era when asked about his childhood musical influences: “Nothing… Silence” (Bussy 20).

146 Upon first contact, Burney writes, “I was curious to hear a German play, but still more curious to hear German singing: and I must own, that I was astonished to find, that the German language, in spite of all its clashing consonants, and gutturals, is better calculated for music than the French” (31).
147 Two German thinkers on opposite poles of the political spectrum, Theodor W. Adorno and Hans Pfitzner, linked the machinic aspect of jitterbugs in “On Popular Music,” to be analyzed in the next chapter. Likewise, Pfitzner writes: “The audience is entirely fascinated, delighted by this soulless American machinism [Maschinismus], which repels me more than I can say. The feeling that I have here is difficult to describe – something of a homeless nature, unsound, almost frightening seizes me, as if I had ended up in a shady, hostile society, whose language I do not understand: I do not belong here, away, to my home, to my own kind!” (Weiner 67).
Out of this experience emerged in Kraftwerk’s music a unique interpretation of both
the German and English languages, although their linguistic practices have often been
neglected in favor of focusing on the band’s performance style, public image, or
instrumentation. In this section, I therefore want to focus on three key aspects of
Kraftwerk’s lyrical practice, all of which are closely intertwined:

1. Kraftwerk’s German and ESL lyrics, as well as their use of other languages:
   Russian, French, Spanish, Italian, and Japanese.
2. “Language” as a concept related to notions of logos, music, mathematics,
   informational codes, and technological media.
3. The physiognomic voice of Kraftwerk, especially the relation of Hütter’s speech
   song to Schneider’s vocoder recordings and computer generated lyrics using
   speech pattern recognition.

Regarding the first point, the positioning by Hütter of Kraftwerk as a “more
German” band in linguistic terms needs to be read against the band’s diverse use of
languages. As a marketing tool, this use was literally reflected in their practice of product
distribution, i.e. their carefully planned simultaneous releases of English and German
versions of their albums for the international and national market, beginning with Trans
Europa Express. To target France and Spain, where they were particularly successful,
Kraftwerk even released a French version of “Taschenrechner” called “Mini Calculateur”
and a Spanish version of “Sex Object.”

However, not all lyrics on either the German or ESL editions were translated. There was always some mixing of both English and
German (and other languages) in the releases of the major technopop albums. In fact,
the mix of German and English is identical in Radio-Aktivität and Radio-Activity. The only
exception is the original LP that made Kraftwerk famous: Autobahn. The spare textual
examples of the title track are entirely in German. In some live versions, such as the
album Concert Classics (1998), there is also a quotation from Goethe’s Faust for

148 A comprehensive Kraftwerk discography is offered in Bussy (184-189).
“Kometenmelodie I.”

Nevertheless, the use of English did not necessarily result in the reception of Kraftwerk as an international band. The English lyrics still represent German identity to the extent that “Germanness” is literally accentuated through Hütter’s ESL accent. Whereas a band like Scorpions attempts to achieve success through the elimination of all traces of otherness, Kraftwerk by contrast cultivates the accent in the context of ESL music as a marketing tool. It reconfirms both their Germanness and their relation to Central European sophistication and the avant-garde. If one considers Ralf Hütter’s ESL singing, a speech song based on minimal melodic lines, versus Scorpions vocalist Klaus Meine’s virtuosic imitation of American stadium rock, the difference could not be more pronounced. Furthermore, Kraftwerk’s lyrics mostly consist of depersonalized language suitable for their conceptual albums, by which I mean that there are virtually no pop love songs of the dialogic I-you construction. The one exception, “Sex Object,” is not exactly full of pop love, and the term “love” only appears once, albeit in the highly mediated form of “Computer Love.” In these examples, as pop music sung in German, Kraftwerk is closely related to Schlager song structure and linguistic practice; however, Kraftwerk achieved a kind of alienated Schlager through the choice of lyrics and instrumentation.

Beyond the band’s ESL practice, Kraftwerk’s use of multiple languages indicates that Hütter’s emphasis on Kraftwerk’s relationship to Germanness is misleading. Kraftwerk’s tracks often contain prominent uses of other languages: “Die Roboter” (Russian), “Electric Café” (French, Spanish), and most famously, “Nummern,” with the reciting of numerals in different languages (German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, Russian).

With reference to this diversity, Pascal Bussy argues that this increased linguistic
diversity, contrasting with the purely German Autobahn, marks a trajectory away from dealing with specifically German themes toward European and, ultimately with Computer World, “a type of global music” (108). The argument has some merit, though Bussy overstates Kraftwerk’s trajectory toward the global. I would argue that Kraftwerk has maintained a relatively constant concern with the place of both Germany and Europe within global techno culture. Throughout its career, Kraftwerk has been centrally concerned with European themes to the extent that the band has engaged with avant-garde modernism, futurism, communism, and fascism of the 1920s and 1930s and postwar European politics. The themes are global to the extent that they are issues of twentieth-century modernity.

Importantly, Kraftwerk only recorded in European languages; the one exception is the brief tricoastal homage to Japan’s technological rise with the use of Japanese numbers in “Nummern.” Indeed, this is a distinctly tricoastal track of American, European, and Japanese techno culture. According to spokesman Hütter, Kraftwerk was consistently concerned with the place of Germany in Europe, maintaining the United States and the United Kingdom as productive rivals. Hütter continued to emphasize their Germanness, even after the appearance of Computer World, precisely by emphasizing their linguistic diversity. In a 1981 interview in the magazine Sounds, Hütter answered a question regarding their mix of languages in the following manner: “We want to communicate! Quite simply, we do not want to be as ignorant as the Yankees and English. We also sing the texts in Japanese, French, and Italian” (31).149

149 “Wir wollen kommunizieren! Ganz einfach nicht so ignorantisch sein wie die Amis und Engländer, wir singen die Texte auch in japanisch, französisch, italienisch.”
The use of various foreign languages is, furthermore, only one aspect of Kraftwerk’s linguistic practice. An equally intense concern is the future of vernacular languages in the face of notions of logos, scientific objectivity, new media codes, and computer language. These issues were most complexly articulated at the beginning of their career as a technopop band with the track “Radioaktivität.”

Ralf Hütter, in his characteristic speech song, sings the text in English and then in German. However, the text is also given in Morse code, which becomes distorted in the latter part of the track through the use of filters. Though usually experienced as an instrumental interlude, the Morse code is just as much a part of the “lyrics.” Furthermore, there is a constant sound of a choir produced by a Vako Orchestron synthesizer, which provides a subtle backing melody that is comparable to Popol Vuh’s use of the mellotron-like “choir organ” in Aguirre, as discussed in chapter 2. The choir here never pronounces any words. It is a kind of vocal angelic transcendence beyond language that is the medieval occult counterpart to the hypnotic and transcendent potentials of modern media. This parallel becomes most apparent as the Morse code sequence becomes more distorted. The distorted code begins to take on melodious contours and glissando effects of flight that merge with the transcendent choir sounds. The borders of vocal and instrumental music are thus challenged here through the exploration of modern media codes. The song and lyrics are structured as follows:

Song Structure:
0:01-1:00 Choral and Morse code intro
1:01-2:60 English lyrics
2:07-2:42 Morse code lyrics
2:43-3:49 German lyrics
3:50-4:50 Distorted Morse code lyrics
4:50-6:10 English lyrics
6:11-6:42 Choral fade-out
The lyrics of “Radioactivity” are the following:

Translation of Morse code:
Radioactivity

Radioactivity
Is in the air for you and me
Radioactivity
Discovered by Madame Curie
Radioactivity
Tune in to the melody
Radioactivity
Is in the air for you and me

Radioactivity
Is in the air for you and me

Translation of the German text:
Radioaktivität
Für dich und mich im All entsteht
Radioaktivität
Strahlt Wellen zum Empfangsgerät
Radioaktivität
Wenn’s um unsere Zukunft geht
Radioaktivität
Für dich und mich im All entsteht

Distorted Morse code:
Radioactivity
Discovered by Madam Curie
Radioactivity
Tune in to the
...Kraftwerk

(repeat English lyrics)

The variations of the German and English lyrics, as well as the rhythms of the languages and Morse code, offer a meditation on the possibilities of exact... translation: in an era of instrumentalized language, where transparent communication is assumed.

The histories of technical/occult media and language are also innovatively explored in the track. The choir-like Vako Orchestron sound, Morse code, Geiger counter, and various sound effects from Kraftwerk’s electronic instrumentation represent different eras of sonic and linguistic (re)production. Moreover, the multiple meanings to
be found both in English “Radioactivity” or German “Radioaktivität” are exploited. The politics of modern media and transmission of the voice are already evident in the image of the Volksempfänger that adorns the cover of the Radio-Aktivität album. Pascal Bussy offers an insightful analysis of these images of older media that repeatedly crop up in Kraftwerk. He believes that Kraftwerk is particularly effective by “simultaneously playing about with the modernity and nostalgia of their imagery.” He continues:

They still like to accompany the newness of their musical ideas with the romanticism of images, pictures and industrial design from a bygone age, thereby tugging the listener in two directions.… [Hütter and Schneider] struck a chord in the seventies and eighties (decades which saw Kraftwerk’s popularity soar) with imagery surrounding their music that seemed more in keeping with the twenties and thirties. (70)

Science-fiction counterpoints of the future, modernity, and technological nostalgia are thus constantly set in contrapuntal tension, a form of time travel comparable to the themes of the techno absolute explored in the last chapter.

The vocal and instrumental borders of music are further challenged through the use of vocoders and voice synthesis. Though by no means tending to the anti-art vulgarity and gruffness of punk vocalists, Hütter’s vocal lines are anything but bel-canto song in its pop or classical forms; rather, his tenor voice is a soft and often unsteady speech song. His vocal practice leans ostensibly to the mechanical and reserved, a confirmation of Rousseauian fears regarding the inevitable prosifying of modern language versus the idyllic unification of language and music in poetry. And yet, his voice also at times evokes a surprising vulnerability. For example, in “Radioland” Hütter’s voice contrasts with Schneider’s incorporation of vocoders, which alienates the human voice from its traditional role as index of individual human expressivity, passion, and identity.
The vocoders often allow for a kind of call and response structure – except the call and response is not between singer and crowd, but between human and machine. “Radioland” offers again an appropriate example. Though Kraftwerk’s theory of artistic creation is popularly associated with the track “Taschenrechner,” “Radioland” is an important early meditation on artistic creation with a theoretical structure that is in a number of respects even more complex than “Taschenrechner.” Unlike “Taschenrechner,” “Radioland” includes the use of vocoders, where Hütter and Schneider expressing in duet the various actions performed on electronic instruments. After each line, a corresponding sound indexes each practice of sound creation; at the end of the strophe, a final response in the form of a summary regarding the sounds from Radioland, perhaps located somewhere between Deutschland and Disneyland, is given by the vocoder voice. The song in terms of instrumentals and use of voice and vocoders takes on the following structure:

- 0:01-0:37 Instrumental
- 0:38-1:51 Voice in German
- 1:52-2:15 Vocoder in German
- 2:16-3:49 Instrumental
- 3:50-4:14 Voice in English
- 4:15-4:38 Vocoder in English
- 4:39-5:54 Instrumental

The lyrics are as follows:

**Translation:**

Drehen wir am Radiophon  [We turn the dials of the radio]
Vernehmen wir den Sendeton  [And receive the signal tone]
Durch Tastendruck mit Blitzesschnelle  [Pressing on the keys, with lightning speed]
Erreichen wir die kurze Welle  [We receive the short wave]
Nach Feineinstellung mit der Hand  [After a careful adjustment with the hand]
Lauschen wir dem Morseband  [We listen to the Morse code band]

**Vocoder:** Elektronenklänge aus dem Radioland

**Vocoder:** Electronic music sounds from Radioland

Turn the dials with your hand
Till you find the short wave band
Kraftwerk's diversity in the use of vocoders became greater as the band's career developed. The vocoder was most notably exploited in “Nummern” from the album *Computerwelt*. A meditation on language as profound as “Radioaktivität,” this track consists of a medley of vocoders, or voice synthesis, that merely recite digits. The intertwining of musical metronomes, mathematics, abstraction, and computer codes is set in relief:

Eins zwei drei vier fünf sechs sieben acht
One two
Un deux trois
Uno due tre quattro
Uno dos quatro
Ich ni san shi
Odin dva tri

The only anachronistic error in this system is Kraftwerk's diversity of digits rather than the focus on the Turing code 01. Nevertheless, this musical counting is appropriate to the linguistic diversity, the greatest in Kraftwerk's discography. It is precisely here that the actual contribution of languages to objective knowledge is called into question. The languages are reduced to communicative codes; rather than cars and trains, digits become the traffic of culture and commerce in international systems.

Put differently, this track offers a meditation on the relation of colloquial languages to the principles of clear communication and unified science. The numerical translations, at their most abstract, reflect upon the dream of transparent communication through a logical Esperanto,\(^\text{150}\) where direct communication is assumed for media systems that do not require translations. Such postmodern logical atomism stands, in

\(^{150}\) Logical atomism was an ideal of the analytic philosophy of Bertrand Russell and the early Ludwig Wittgenstein, who both argued that the world consists of facts and that philosophers should endeavor to clear up superfluous terminology and logical errors in traditional languages in order to create a single, logically transparent language based on science. This language would have one term for each individual fact. This ideal of a single unified science and language bears similar tendencies in the logical positivism of A.J. Ayer and other writers.
this respect, at the antipodes of the celebration of diverse language systems as a plurality of worldviews, such as is found in the writings of Wilhelm von Humboldt. In sum, “Numbers” poses the following postmodern predicament, to offer a slightly altered translation of the opening line of Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory*: It is self-evident that nothing concerning language is self-evident anymore, not its inner life, nor its relation to the world, nor even its right to exist. Such lack of linguistic self-evidence is made apparent in the age of information flows. “Numbers” is thus followed by “Computer World 2,” where a flood of digits mixes into numerical soup rather than alphabet soup. Indeed, to return to “Pocket Calculator,” this neglect of languages finds its most popular expression in the tourists who attempt to communicate in foreign countries by buying pocket translation calculators rather than taking language courses. This often results in wrong and embarrassing translations. In this spirit, one could translate and paraphrase the immortal line of Kraftwerk: I’m the Traveler with my Pocket Calculator.

Beyond the translation of digits, the timbres of the computer voices are equally as important. The voices have various degrees of distortion to highlight their artificiality and distance from the human voice, yet all approximate the human voice to some degree and even imitate the rhythmic accents of each language. The timbral, linguistic, and rhythmic diversity elicits the question as to whether the voices are humans speaking through vocoders or the speech-pattern recognition of computers. Furthermore, the distortion parodies assumptions regarding the clear distinctions of computer codes and human languages. The popular belief that computers possess syntax and lack semantics, limiting the literalness of “artificial intelligence,” is presented through the

---

151 The sentence of Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory* reads as follows: “It is self-evident that nothing concerning art is self-evident anymore, not its inner life, not its relation to the world, not even its right to exist” (1).
reduction of the computer “languages” to digits and metronomic counting. The place of codes is brought into stark relief. Just as music can be interpreted as expressing mathematical principles in a more complex manner than language, so the proximity of codes to mathematics is often assumed to be closer than that of literature. Subjective narrative is rejected in favor of objective knowledge, information, and solid facts.

“Numbers” also lies at the serious antipodes of the blubbering, stiff, comic-like vocoder sounds of Kraftwerk’s “Boing Boom Tschak.” On the other side of hypermodern codes are the primitivist constructions of sound poetry and scatting as practiced in “Boing Boom Tschak” – language as the phenomenological experience of phonetics and onomatopoeia rather than semantics or logic. Pop goes Kraftwerk in the form of superhero sound effects. The action and entertainment sounds from computer games and a quite different “literature” – comic books – reverberate here. Yet both “Nummern” and “Boing Boom Tschak” are comparable in that no conventional narrative regarding human subjects is told using traditional language. This narrative was instead left to two tracks that consisted entirely of vocoder lyrics: “Die Roboter” and “Mensch-Maschine,” which contain Kraftwerk’s most direct anthropological reflections on humanity in the late-modern world. However, in terms of the musical exploration of vocoders, tracks like “Nummern,” “Computerwelt,” and “Electric Café” offer more complexity of human and computer voice interaction.

To return to the mix of nostalgia and modernity that Bussy observes, I would like to focus on a final vocal piece that represents the use of the most distorted, arguably the most alienating, vocoder voice: “Die Stimme der Energie” [The Voice of Energy]. This short interlude offers a number of historical references. The text is essentially based on a 1949 composition by the phonetician and vocoder acoustician Werner Meyer-Eppler
(Brocker 106); it thus harkens back to the genesis of electronic music. As we saw in
“Radioaktivität,” Kraftwerk also explored the relations of modern media and religious
transcendence through consonant choral tones that evoke church music. “Die Stimme
der Energie” deals with the same issues, but in a reversed fashion – the potentials of the
postmodern material and Godless world are represented in forms that bestow upon them
sublime and godlike power. As you, dear reader, will read in Meyer-Eppler’s text, the
German language here is a mix of Lutheran Biblical allusions and Romantic-poetic
“genius”:

Hier spricht die Stimme der Energie
Ich bin ein riesiger elektrischer Generator
Ich liefere Ihnen Licht und Kraft
Und ermögliche es Ihnen Sprache, Musik und Bild
Durch den Äther auszusenden und zu empfangen
Ich bin Ihr Diener und Ihr Herr zugleich
Deshalb hüetet mich gut

Translation:
[This is the voice of energy
I am a huge electrical generator
I give you light and power
And make it possible to send and receive language, music and image, through the ether
I am both your servant and master
Therefore guard me well
I, the genius of energy.]

No consonant music is offered in Kraftwerk’s version. Rather than a song, the track
tends toward a short unmusical interlude, representing a radio announcement as befits
the concept album’s theme of the radio.

The track begins with rustling and distorted radio static and white noise, followed
by the especially distorted sound of the vocoder that conjures up the memory of evil
robots in classic science-fiction films. A sonic memory of robophobia, the voice has a
pronounced patriarchal and baritone resonance; this is an Old Testament Robot, a kind
of radio-DJ as Robo-God the Father. Instead of the crackling fire and thunder claps as
sonic indices of the God of the Old Testament, the intense buzzing of the vocoder jolts
the listener. The paradox of secular materiality and religious transcendence associated
with technology are set in dialectical relief here.
The "voice of energy," while having echoes in the Schopenhauerian will, calls up more scientifically grounded notions of atomic power. Here it is also the basis of artistic creativity. The linguistic combination of Martin Luther and sci-fi romanticism gives a special German ring. The immaterial ubiquity of the radio, combined with nuclear radioactivity, is transformed into an electronic deity. To be sure, the vocoder in "Die Stimme der Energie" borders on a humoristic play with science-fiction kitsch; nevertheless, the powerful buzzing sound would become a trademark for the posthumanist associations of Kraftwerk. Though the sound distortion is not as intense, Kraftwerk’s subsequent concerts from the 1980s to the present use a similarly patriarchal vocoder bass to introduce the concerts: “Meine Damen und Herren, Ladies and Gentlemen, here is the Mensch-Maschine: Kraftwerk.”

Yet at such moments, ostensibly most removed from humans and nature, Hütter had a penchant for dialectical reversals. He always argued for the close intertwining of the human and machine, nature and culture. In the different voice of a humorous pastoral, Hütter argued that a synthesizer “is very responsive to a person…. I think it’s much more sensitive than a traditional instrument like a guitar” (Bangs 157). A similar, particularly delightful, passage regarding their Kling-Klang-Studio comes from an interview in Musikexpress four years after Radio-Aktivität: “It’s constantly changing. We call [our music studio] a kind of electronic garden, where we can stroll around with the ewer and water the beautiful plants. Some will grow, and others wither” (Schober, 152).

152 Similarly, when Lester Bangs charged that Kraftwerk’s music was anti-emotional, Florian Schneider responded: “Emotion” is a strange word. There is a cold emotion and other emotion, both equally valid. It’s not body emotion, it’s mental emotion” (Bangs 158).
“Kraftwerk: die Kinder” 78). With this emphasis on the human and natural sides of their technological practice, Kraftwerk demonstrated its mission of claiming a paradoxically natural techno voice on the other side of vocoded technology that was distinct from an Anglo-American pop understanding of free nature and human expression – or in a different sense, it posits a pastoral technology of everyday supermodern life, a strange mix of technology and German Green politics, as opposed to the classical German critique of technology and civilization as alienation.

Biolinguistic-Interruption

Café St. Oberholz: Social Media Exchange Students

In 2009, I sit in Café St. Oberholz in Prenzlauer Berg, a quarter of Berlin most beloved by the younger and gentrified cosmopolitan and creative class. More specifically, it is beloved by the substantial expat community living throughout Berlin – American and English expats, especially, but also expats throughout Europe. Berlin minimal techno often plays in the background. One walks in and hears a plethora of languages – Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, French, and, above all, English and ESL in various native and foreign accents. This café is the principle of the “non-place” transferred to coffee hipster culture. I walk past each table and next to the lattes and cappuccinos sits, without fail, a laptop. Facebook pages light up on most of the screens. Or if the customers are working, there are various interfaces for art or design projects. Like the tangled vines of an ivy garden, extension chords lie everywhere, for it is expected the use of electric currents has no end. People pass in

and out of this café, either during their extended years abroad in Berlin or their short trips through the capital’s cultural delights.

I sit down with an iced latte, flip open my laptop, and realize it is so easy to travel around the world or “go home” via the laptop screen. I flip through the news in any language I choose – spiegel.de, faz.de, taz.de, b.dk, exberliner.com, guardian.co.uk, msnbc.com, nytimes.com, latimes.com, and countless other sites. I put on my headphones and skype some friends and later watch some music videos via Youtube. I put on some music or choose a band’s radio from last.fm, one of the most popular music communities in Europe, and slowly begin to work. But then, of course, I check my own Facebook on repeated occasions… The temptations of procrastination via the web have fundamentally changed work and language patterns throughout the world: work and leisure on the same flat screen.

However, to be sure, every once in a while I find a website that says “this site is not available in your country,” which gives one an occasional memory that national and economic borders still exist or are being reconstructed on the web. Yet this same experience I could just as easily have in my Kreuzberg apartment, or on my vacations in Bitterfeld, Dortmund, Chemnitz etc. – alone and yet connected to the world’s interweb. Nevertheless, I choose to work and surf in public, enjoying the rustle of different languages and the people-watching experiences that are offered at Café St. Oberholz. After all, my laptop in Berlin is my teddy bear and home in one. I carry it wherever I go. When I want to go home and find a safe place, all I need to do is light up the screen: my silicon home and hearth…
When I grew up learning foreign languages, and German in particular, there was a principle called *total immersion*. I look around in St. Oberholz and my pupils dilate from the glaring difference of travel and media experiences here versus my year of exchange in Braunschweig. In the mid-1990s, long-distance phone calls were expensive and English-language magazines were to be had only with an extra charge compared to German magazines. Braunschweig had virtually no tourists. My main contact to English was through the Denglisch of *BRAVO*. Though the young people spoke English with some skill, it was nothing like the bilingualism of Generations Y and Z that I meet in Berlin.

The younger German kids absorb Hollywood with a confidence and enjoy demonstrating their linguistic command of Hollywood irony and pop discourse on the level of kids from California. Geographic breaks and travel used to be considerable breaks. I see older tourists pass through Berlin, trying to say “guten Tag” and “danke schön,” and it feels as false and archaic as *The Sound of Music*, because English is already at home here. In Braunschweig, my contact with the United States was miniscule; here in St. Oberholz, I feel I could be in California. The mix of languages here reflects tricoastal techno culture. And this café of electronic media is like a caffeine compliment to the clubs of electronic music around the various alleys of cosmopolitan *Sei.Berlin* as *Be.Berlin*. The year 2009: virtually twenty years of European and American club tourists waiting in line in front of a range of venues, speaking in so many ESL accents… to be followed by the ESL pop or wordless bass.
3: Überdeutsch: From Laibach to Mundstuhl

Speak only German! Avail yourself of naught but good old-fashioned German, no feignings, no presence. I understand it. Squarely said, my favourite language. At times I understand only German.... German I am, German to the core, if you will, but then surely in an older, better sense, to wit: cosmopolitan at heart.

The Devil in Doctor Faustus

Humor is a moral irresponsibility of a person in relation to the factual nature of actual relations between individuals and community.... It is well known that the word “humor” springs from England and that the English are proud of it; however, it is also known that England has nothing left to laugh at. Its humor is a leftover of narcissoid hedonism, its weapon against the outer world and a proof of its pseudo-dominion over the actual situation.

In art, we appreciate humor that can’t take a joke.

Laibach

The practices of LTI (“Lingua Tertii Imperii” or “Language of the Third Reich) as documented by Victor Klemperer and discussed in the beginning of this chapter remain a traumatic experience of linguistic abuse that continues to affect the German language in terms of vocabulary and voice. LTI was as much a media spectacle as it was a linguistic spectacle; in other words, it broadcast media-enhanced language during the first era of amplification, radio, and sound film. While the Third Reich’s twelve-year history is considerably short in years, it remains uniquely influential in the short history of modern media; technological media is the basis for its mythical presence today. The

154 The pop science-fiction film Contact (1997) cites this influence in terms of the cosmic sublime; the communication with the aliens in the film begins initially with the reception of Hitler’s announcement of the opening of the 1936 Summer Olympics. The scientist, initially puzzled and worried, realizes that this event was the first to be broadcast with a significantly strong television
acoustics of LTI, especially the voice of Hitler in his speeches both in film and radio, remain a presence in the form of cinema, documentary film, and television. To such issues, Marcel Atze has offered a thorough examination of Third Reich acoustics in its use of the microphone and loudspeaker, detailing the first experiments with Hitler’s *schallunterstützten Stimme* [amplified voice] in 1928 (304). \(^{155}\) Regarding Hitler’s famous statement, “Without the automobile, the airplane, or the loudspeaker, we could not have conquered Germany” (301), \(^{156}\) Atze argues that “loudspeaker” refers to the amplification of Hitler’s voice during mass events. It does not refer to radio, since radio was not used for political speeches until the Nazis had taken power. Atze goes on to examine the central role of radio in National Socialist propaganda and the transmission of Hitler’s voice after 1933. The grain of Hitler’s voice, the generalized Nazi practice of screaming in speeches, and the fact that plans for genocide were clearly announced by Hitler over the radio to millions of listeners already by January 1939 remain traumatic components of LTI.

Internationally, and particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom, young people usually encounter German in the form of LTI because of the popularity of World War II films and literature. Terms such as *Blitzkrieg, Panzer, Gestapo, Achtung!*, *Schnell!, Feuer! or Sieg heil!* have inevitably been word exports that have equaled in influence German word exports from other time periods. For example, one of the most beloved linguistic invocations of the Teutonic has been the adjective Über-, borrowed

---

\(^{155}\) See section 5 “Das Redner-Mythem” in Marcel Atze’s ‘*Unser Hitler*: Der Hitler-Mythos im Spiegel der deutschsprachigen Literatur nach 1945. See especially the subsection 5.2 “‘Tausend Finsternisse todbringender Rede.’ Der literarische Diskurs um die medial vermittelte Stimme Hitlers.” (297-370)

\(^{156}\) “Ohne Kraftwagen, ohne Flugzeug, ohne Lautsprecher hätten wir Deutschland nicht erobert!”
from Übermensch and the anthem “Deutschland Übere Alles.” Über- is used in all types of occasions, even in the neologism “über-cool,” or in Brüno’s version of “über-famous.”

This parodic tradition of LTI already found its immortal representation in Charlie Chaplin’s 《The Great Dictator》 from 1940, with his “Tomainisch” language that offered a kind of Teutonic Sonata in Urlauten of Hitler’s speeches. In this context, Slavoj Žižek offers a reading of 《The Great Dictator》 in his 《The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema》 that sees the film as ultimately concerned with the “traumatic dimension of the human voice.” His reading is one of the most profound in the history of World War II cinema, and so I quote Žižek in 《The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema》 at length:

Nobody was as fully aware of the properly traumatic dimension of the human voice. The human voice, not as the sublime, ethereal medium, for expressing the depth of human subjectivity, but the human voice as a foreign intruder. Nobody was more aware of this than Charlie Chaplin. Chaplin himself in the film plays two persons: the good, small Jewish barber and his evil double: Hynkel, dictator, Hitler of course. The Jewish barber, the tramp figure, is of course the figure of silent cinema. Silent figures are basically like figures in the cartoon. They don’t know death; they don’t know sexuality even; they don’t know suffering. They just go on in their oral, egotistic striving... What we get with sound is interiority, depth, guilt, culpability, in other words, the complex Oedipal universe. The problem of the film, is not only the political problem, how to get rid of totalitarianism, of its terrible seducing power. It’s also this more formal problem: how to get rid of this terrifying dimension of the voice. Or since we cannot get rid of it, how to domesticate it.

Such was the problem of the mediated voice of LTI in sound film and radio, though this issue of language remained starkly present for subsequent generations.

In the late-1970s, in particular, popular culture wrestled with such issues of the fascist aesthetic legacy. The ways in which bands and artists reacted to this challenge varied widely. Some bands simply avoided the challenge of finding a voice in German by singing in English. Kraftwerk’s approach was subtly to invoke this history in the larger context of twentieth-century politics and the avant-garde, most famously in their
Schlager-techno provocation of “Autobahn.” Many of the bands in the period of *Neue Deutsche Welle* followed Kraftwerk’s lead, though equally as many found occasion for composing pop songs in depoliticized versions in the tradition of *Schlager*, most famously in Markus’s simple demand, “Ich Will Spaß” [I Want Fun]. In contrast, punk found resources in the perceived roughness of the German language that could conversely be used in left-wing critiques, such as Slime’s “Deutschland muss sterben” [Germany Must Die] or in more depoliticized celebrations of trash and alienation.

Industrial music offers a different, if more disturbing, answer to such challenges. Both within and without Germany, industrial music took on the stance of quoting and confronting the history of LTI directly. The origin of industrial music has conventionally been located in the late 1970s, a subculture that emerged, like punk and new wave, in resistance to affirmative culture. Though the term became popular through the pioneering British band Throbbing Gristle’s label name, Industrial Records, industrial music had numerous international influences. In terms of its popular reception, Germany has been a significant center both in terms of national audience and international success, especially on account of such groups as Einstürzende Neubauten, DAF, Die Krupps, and indeed, Kraftwerk in its industrial moments – all of whom reinforced the association of industrial music and German national identity, not least by singing mostly in German. Blixa Bargeld of Einstürzende Neubauten, quoted in the epigraph of this chapter, is perhaps best known.

However, to investigate the filters of identity in industrial music, I choose not a German vocalist, but a vocalist from an outland: Slovenia. The vocalist’s name is Milan Fras, and his band’s name is Laibach. Historically, Laibach became the most notorious

---

157 Mirko Hall has offered an important analysis of Einstürzende Neubauten’s lyrics and aesthetics of negativity (111-27).
band of the 1980s for its invocations of totalitarianism and LTI, by which it engaged
Central European identity through strikingly different methods than Kraftwerk. This band
developed as part of the musical wing of a movement called *Neue Slowenische Kunst*
[New Slovenian Art], or NSK. This designation based on totalitarian and late-modern
alphabet soup was not to be missed.

The fact that identity is not only produced from within or determined by events
and practices within national borders is starkly apparent in Laibach. As Žižek states with
reference to the mediated voice in *The Great Dictator*, the terrifying dimension of the
human voice is that of a “foreign intruder,” at once outside and part of oneself. Though
the focus here will be on its relation to German identity, Laibach must also be
understood within a specific national context that includes Yugoslav and Slovenian
politics. According to Žižek, himself a fan and defender of the group, Laibach critiqued
the Yugoslav authoritarian state by mirroring its ideology in exaggerated form:

> I think the message of Laibach basically was, ‘We want more alienation.’
> This is for me their basic political message. All other dissident movements
> in those years criticized the regime, but, as it were, accepting its own
> basic premises. That is to say, reproaching the system by saying that it
> pretends to fight for disalienation, but in reality it’s the alienated political
> elite which rules, etc. But in the case of Laibach, it is as if the regime got
> back its own message in its true, naked form. (Žižek, *Laibach*)

This critique of Yugoslavian politics was, however, only one aspect of Laibach.

Like Kraftwerk, Laibach has been throughout its existence concerned with the
question of the place of Central Europe and European identity. Indeed, in *linguistic
terms*, one arguably cannot find a more central point of Europe than the point where
Slovenia’s border intersects with Italy and Austria. It is here where the three major

---

158 Žižek offers a further observation about Laibach that is closely linked here: “The way really to
subvert a system, I think, is not to criticize its official values et cetera, but to expose this hidden
reverse of it. And I think this is basically what Laibach did here. They exposed precisely this, let
us say, implicit transgression but which was the real point of identification of the system here.”
language groups of Europe meet: Romance (Italy), Germanic (Austria), and Slavic (Slovenia). The mix of Eastern and Western Europe in the compromised notion of Central Europe has been a crucial part of Laibach’s practice.

The use of the German language plays a key role here, as can already be seen in the heavy use of German terms for both the band and the art movement. Laibach is the German name for the capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana. The name Laibach thus invokes memories of war, collaboration, occupation, and Slovenia’s long existence under the imperial Austrian yoke. The German language is also important for Laibach, because the band toured through Germany and influenced the German scene extensively. In 1985, Laibach even organized an all-German tour called “Die Erste Bombardierung! – Laibach Über Dem Deutschland” [The First Bombardment – Laibach Above The Germany]. This tour was complemented by performances at the Berlin Atonal Festival and the Berlinale during the same year.

Indeed, Laibach and NSK constantly employed German to productive ends that, along with their use of Slovenian and ESL, included both artistic and economic benefits. One of Laibach’s trademarks has been its singing in German. Such a practice offers a new linguistic side to the ESL questions with respect to Germany and Europe. Namely, there also exists GSL music, or “German as a Second Language” music, and Laibach was a pioneering band precisely by offering an industrial tradition of GSL music. Indeed, GSL music is itself a provocation. After all, why would one engage in such a practice when the ESL option is available? To be blunt regarding prejudices: Who would wish to sing in ugly, unmusical, and provincial German? Such a question might seem crass. However, such assumptions about German had by the 1980s become commonplace.

159 To be sure, for either Kraftwerk or Laibach to raise the specter of Central Europe is itself a provocation, since such a notion was historically compromised by right-wing politics.
For example, M.O.C. Döpfner and Thomas Garms, in their seminal volume on *Neue Deutsche Welle*, repeat such stereotypes regarding German, despite its musical history. Döpfner and Garms write about their mother tongue as follows: “German certainly won’t travel around the world like an international pop language. This is because of the long tradition of English, the meager international reach of German, and last but not least, the sharp sounds and choppy rhythms of the German language, which can only be sung with difficulty and does not sound pretty” (171).

With these assumptions regarding the ugliness of the German language in mind, I want to explore Laibach’s lyrical practices by focusing on their covers of the following English and ESL pop songs: Queen’s “One Vision,” Opus’s “Life is Life,” and Europe’s, “The Final Countdown.” Through Laibach’s engagement with these works, an extraordinary linguistic mix of Slovenian, ESL, and GSL music comes to the fore. My analysis will here be informed Alexei Monroe’s seminal study of Laibach, *Interrogating Machine: Laibach and NSK*, expanding on his readings with special attention to German identity and translation.

---

160 On Germany as a musical nation, see Applegate and Potter (1-35).
161 “Mit Sicherheit wird es nicht so sein, daß Deutsch als internationale Popsprache um die Welt geht. Das liegt an der langen Tradition des Englischen, an der geringen internationalen Verbreitung der deutschen Sprache und nicht zuletzt auch daran, daß sie wegen ihrem oft kantigen Klang und abgehackten Sprachrhythmus nur sehr schwerig und eigentlich unschön zu singen ist.”
In 1987, Laibach made a “cover” of Queen’s hit “One Mission,” which Laibach renamed “Geburt einer Nation” (Birth of a Nation). In this song, the sound of Queen’s rock is remixed in the style of what Monroe calls “paramilitarized versions” (226). Laibach makes here a “new original”162 of pop songs, which essentially means a cover that undermines and makes strange the ideals of the original. In part, this is a necessity for a band from a minor country that wants its voice heard beyond the home country’s borders. Laibach retains “an awareness that within a globalized market of popular culture, straight copies of Western trends are inadequate, since they will rarely be able to progress beyond local markets, and will be seen as inferior copies of more glamorous Western originals…” (Monroe 227). The question of using German is thus partly one of export.

162 Monroe (227) quotes from Laibach’s own critique of the notion of a cover: “On this basis we find no superiority in the cover-versions over sampling techniques. Our work, however, which is original, or rather a copy without the original, is superior to the historical material” (NSK 58).
Yet another question remains: in this new original, what is made strange? First, the English language is critique precisely through the translation into German. The apparent innocence of English in its marriage with globalization and pop ideals is critiqued through the translation into German. Crucial to this process of alienation are the lyrics; the first section from Queen’s original and Laibach’s translation reads as follows:

**Queen – One Mission**

One man, one goal,  
One mission.  
One heart, one soul,  
Just one solution.  
One flash of light.  
Yeah, one God, one vision.

One flesh, one bone,  
One true religion.  
One voice, one hope,  
One real decision.  
Wowowowo!  
Gimme one vision.

No wrong, no right,  
I'm gonna tell you  
There's no black and no white.  
No blood, no stain,  
All we need is  
One worldwide vision.

**Laibach – Geburt einer Nation**

Ein Mensch, ein Ziel  
Und eine Weisung.  
Ein Herz, ein Geist,  
Nur eine Lösung.  
Ein Brennen der Glut.  
Ja! Ein Gott, ein Leitbild.

Ein Fleisch, ein Blut,  
Ein wahrer Glaube.  
Ein Ruf, ein Traum,  
Ein starker Wille.  
Ja! Ja! Ja! Ja!  
Gebt mir ein Leitbild.

Nicht falsch, nicht recht.  
Ich sag' es dir:  
Das Schwarz und Weiß ist kein Beweis  
Nicht Tod, nicht Not.  
Wir brauchen bloß  
Ein Leitbild für die Welt.

Ein Fleisch, ein Blut,  
Ein wahrer Glaube.  
Eine Rasse und ein Traum,  
Ein starker Wille.  
Jawohl! Ja! Ja! Ja! Jawohl!

The ways in which this “new original” is distanced from Queen’s original are extraordinary. Here is famous text composed by an English band to the camp vocals of Freddie Mercury in the progressive rock idiom of electric guitar, synthesizers, and a call-response form bordering on gospel. It has, however, been translated into German.

Moreover, the cover is sung by a Slovenian band in the GSL idiom to the martial tune of
industrial disco music. The ostensible political distinctions of the English and German languages are striking in this translation, and Laibach exploits their provocative potential. The Anglo-American multicultural liberalism of “One man, one goal, one mission” transforms into Central European totalitarian horror with the words, “Ein Mensch, ein Ziel, und eine Weisung.” Furthermore, such politically compromised words as “Volk,” “Rasse,” and “Wille” emerge from the translations of “people,” “race,” and “will.” The most humorous translation of “English,” however, is the whooping howl of Queen’s “Wowowowo!” Laibach translates this as a militaristic call of “Jawohl! Ja! Ja! Ja! Jawohl!” The German utterance of “Jawohl!” is linked to military drill, as opposed to the sexual freedom of rock howls. Monroe points out some of the implications of this “new original”: “Laibach’s politicized interrogation of popular music indicates that the Western-style entertainment sphere contains ideological power structures that are far more refined and less visible than those of totalitarian propaganda” (57). In short, pop entertainment is interpreted as the culture industry. In Laibach’s artistic manifesto, “10 items of the Covenant,” published in 1983, the band includes the following statement under item 6: “The material of LAIBACH manipulation: Taylorism, bruitism, Nazi Kunst, disco…” (NSK 18). Moreover, Laibach echoes Kraftwerk’s performance of anonymity in point 4: “The triumph of anonymity and facelessness has been intensified to the absolute through a technological process. All individual differences of the authors are annulled,”

163 Monroe writes in this respect, “The lyrics have obviously sinister connotations when they are sung in German by a group such as Laibach.... Laibach are not ascribing any specific hidden agenda to Queen (beyond the conquest of new audiences and territories), but amplifying or ‘making strange’ the structures of unquestioning adulation (and obedience) common to both totalitarian mass mobilization and capitalist mass consumption” (229). 164 Equivalent ideas are uttered by the narrator of the documentary film Laibach: A Film From Slovenia: “Covering Queen’s ‘One Vision’ and Euro hit ‘Life is Life’ was an astute move. By holding up the reflection of eastern totalitarianism to western pop culture, the showcase of capitalism itself, you exposed the totalitarian mechanism at its heart.”
every trace of individuality erased…. LAIBACH adopts the organizational system of industrial production and the identification with the ideology as its work method” (NSK 18). In keeping with the theory of the culture industry, Laibach seeks to present in all its terror the total loss of individuality under industrial cultural production rather than mask it with the discourse around and performance of, as Adorno terms it, pseudo-individuality.

Laibach’s GSL music lays bare the negative potentials of projected, foreign fantasies of “the German.” Put differently, the Slovenian band Laibach exaggerates the German, parodically constructing an aesthetic “more German than the German.” Laibach even states, “What we are bringing back to German is its substantive essence that has been banished from this territory for a certain time” (NSK 54). Monroe offers insight here as regards the Slovenian-German tensions of Laibach:

> Within the culturally and historically grounded Laibach project, “the Slovene” manifests itself as a quality that is “more Germanic than the Germanic itself”…. Laibach enact an archetype of Germanicist triumphalism and, in the process, subvert it entirely, transforming it into something apparently completely contradictory; a Germanically coded assertion of Slovene culture, even more disturbing to German nationalism than a straightforward assertion of Slovene identity. (135-6)

Laibach clearly draws out a distinct representation of the Teutonic in a Slavic context.

For a Western democratic theory that conflates totalitarianisms, this practice might appear logical since the Eastern bloc has suffered under a totalitarian system whose socialist realist art seemed to be nothing more than a Leftist counterpart to heroic Nazi-Kunst. Laibach plays with these expectations, and thus disturbingly mixes Western democracy, German Nazism, and Eastern Stalinism into an ideological trainwreck. This mix of ideologies to the driving rhythm of industrial disco is one of the most striking musical representations of Horkheimer and Adorno’s theory of the culture industry as
totality. Horkheimer and Adorno write, “Even the aesthetic manifestations of political opposites proclaim the same inflexible rhythm” (94).

However, orthodox critique of the cultural industry does not entirely suffice in this context. Surprisingly, in the midst of this totalitarian art, a notion of Heiterkeit and indeed hilarious satire shines through. In this respect, Laibach plays here with another Anglo-American and European prejudice regarding the necessity of German bad taste. This prejudice is most blatantly exemplified in the American belief that Germany is still obsessed with the Baywatch-Californian superstar actor and singer David Hasselhoff. It is assumed that, no matter how hard the Germans try, they will never develop any sense of pop taste or “get” pop music. Laibach’s use of the German text in an exaggerated, proto-Death metal voice is a shocking satire of Teutonic stereotypes of bad taste, where the German tongue is imagined to possess guttural, disgusting, militaristic sounds utterly unsuited for Anglo-American light pop entertainment – Teutonic overidentification with English as disastrous misunderstanding.

In this context of a critique of the culture industry through German excess, I want to bring in Adorno’s Aesthetic Theory as a reflection on art’s relation to negative critique. Adorno offers some surprising insights that echo the aesthetics of goth-industrial music, and which my project, in its own process of rubbing against the “taste” of Adorno, can

165 This myth of Hasselhoff’s perpetual fame in Germany has been filtered through a number of major media venues. Norm MacDonald played a key role as the “Weekend Update” anchor for Saturday Night Live from 1994 to 1997. One of his trademark lines was, “Which once again proves my theory: Germans love David Hasselhoff.” He announced this at the end of any report having to do with Germany. In recent years, the anachronistic reference to the German love for David Hasselhoff was made in my fellow-Orindan Rawson Marshall Thurber’s 2004 film Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story, a major box-office success. In the film, the German dodgeball team “Blitzkrieg” prepares for a match by joining hands with an icon of Hasselhoff. The “Hoff” himself makes a cameo appearance in the film as the team coach, scolding Blitzkrieg and breaking the icon after they lose. While Hasselhoff indeed continues to have a significant music career in Central Europe by comparison with the United States, his chart hit that was linked to German identity, “Looking for Freedom,” and other successful songs are from the 1980s. He has since entered into a stage of self-parody within German pop culture.
find some fascinating answers. Specifically, Laibach’s German bad taste reveals the domination of supposedly innocent pop beauty. This critique is reminiscent of Adorno’s dialectic of the ugly: “In the history of art, the dialectic of the ugly has drawn the category of the beautiful into itself as well; kitsch is, in this regard, the beautiful as the ugly, taboo in the name of that very beauty that it once was and that it now contradicts in the absence of its own opposite” (47-8). However, the surprise here is that the use of German as critique of English domination comes from the Slovenian outland. Germanophilia appears as the most extreme use of the ugly to critique the beautiful. Again, Monroe illuminates Laibach’s use of the Germanic:

Primeval Germanic archetypes offend contemporary notions of political and cultural taste, and their continued popularity challenges liberal/multicultural narratives. The reason for the unease and distaste is that Germanophilia in itself represents a sort of violence because of the Germanic’s strong associations with force and fanaticism. In NSK’s case, the (sensory and conceptual) violence of its transmission amplifies this. The violent extremes of attraction and repulsion aroused by the Germanic make it one of the most powerful elements in the NSK presentation. (142)

In essence here, German identity as an attractive export is wrestled with as a problem. Foreigners infatuated with Germany or the foreign markets of Germanic exports become more suspect than the Germans themselves. In this respect, Adorno offered a shocking observation on Wagner’s German nationalism, that he was “an article for export, like Hitler” (“Nations,” 167).

In this spirit, I want to address the history of export industries in terms of the use of German as representative of Goth-industrial and dark romanticism in electronic music. In short, I will look at the issue of evil and technological Germanness as export. Laibach’s new originals, for example, undermine or make strange in the following sense: They make dark precisely by making überwhite the ideals of the original. What is made
dark is the innocence of the English language, the benignly white, in its role in globalization and pop export ideals. *E pluribus unum* is translated into an absolute totality.

At the same time, darkness is here the representative tone of negativity and dissonance in the face of affirmative culture. Amidst this “dark” theme, Adorno surprisingly outs himself as a high-art Goth fan in *Aesthetic Theory*. In his final work, he offers a range of reflections on darkness, negativity, and the ugly, while also reflecting on their pleasures. I will quote at length the most significant passages by Adorno as a Goth-industrial theorist:

Radical art today is synonymous with dark art; its primary color is black. Much contemporary production is irrelevant because it takes no note of this and childishly delights in color. The ideal of blackness with regard to content is one of the deepest impulses of abstraction…. The injustice committed by all cheerful art, especially by entertainment, is probably an injustice to the dead; to accumulated, speechless pain…. There is more joy in dissonance than in consonance: This metes out justice, eye for eye, to hedonism. The caustic discordant moment, dynamically honed, is differentiated in itself as well as from the affirmative and becomes alluring; and this allure, scarcely less than revulsion for the imbecility of positive thinking draws modern art into a no-man’s-land that is the plenipotentary of a livable world…. Negation may reverse into pleasure, not into affirmation. (39-40)

Adorno’s revelations on the allure and the critical powers of dissonance and darkness allow for a constellation of dark pleasures to be explored.

To be sure, Adorno is formulating a notion of art that is removed from these industries and informed by negative dialectics, though his formulations in this section have a slightly modernist kitsch about them, somewhere between film noir and a late-Rothko painting. To theorize an ideal of “dark art” is to run up against many problematic and sedimendated historical quandaries, which include the following: the associations of darkness with race, colonialism, and exoticism; the slippage between violence,
aggression, resistance, horror, and death; the borders between negation and nihilism; the tension between Luciferean and Promethean freedom, or the dialectic of domination, resistance, and emancipation. In this same section on the ideal of dark art, Adorno thus must resort to qualifying his comments:

The radically darkened art – established by the surrealists as black humor – which the aesthetic hedonism that survived the catastrophes defamed for the perversity of expecting that the dark should give something like pleasure, is in essence nothing but the postulate that art and a true consciousness of it can today find happiness only in the capacity of standing firm. (40)

This critique of dark delight has a long history in Adorno’s work. Already in *In Search of Wagner*, this qualification was made clear in his critique of an early version of the emancipation of dissonance, *Tristan und Isolde*. He argues this music drama “is compelled to equate death with pleasure” (95). Adorno remains careful to critique these capacities. Adorno’s “firm stance” against allowing hedonistic pleasure in darkness and dissonance remains, however, in tension with his formulations quoted above, specifically regarding the allure and joy of darkness and negation that may reverse into pleasure, but not affirmation. These theories shed light on how the success of Laibach’s Wagnerian parody reveals German as an evil export commodity within the constellation of “dark art.”

As an article of export, Laibach’s new original includes a brilliant new original of Queen’s music video. This video is but one of many examples in which it is difficult to decide whether the critique of liberal Anglo-American pop through totalitarian imagery reverses into taking pleasure in that totalitarian imagery itself. Laibach’s logic can thus be faced with a double charge: first, of reproducing attractive totalitarian images; and second, of making the logical error of the *reductio ad Hitlerem*, where listeners and
viewers experience a moment of fascist panic and have “one vision” that pop culture is fascist. Since Laibach’s interventions in the 1980s, the cliché regarding German identity and industrial music has been exacerbated in the music of EBM, new industrial, and *Neue Deutsche Härte:* the crucial addition of what for Anglo-American pop seems to be, as mentioned before, the German urge toward the ultimate *bad taste.*

Such images offer a false synthesis of sublime art and ugly kitsch as terrifying totalitarian aesthetic. With regard to Laibach’s “Geburt einer Nation” video, the performers parody the association of Germany with soldiers incapable of experiencing pleasure. In passages that are comparable to Adorno’s wrestling with dark pleasures, Klaus Theweleit in *Male Fantasies* analyzes the literature of Freikorps soldiers under the category “soldier males.” He considers the pleasures of the soldier males as a form of “totality machine”

> The machine’s flow is continuous, a totality that maintains every component in appropriate and uninterrupted motion. It has no cut-off points, it never pauses: if the machinery of the military academy ever stops running, it is done for. To turn it off is impossible.

> The machinery is the antithesis of the desiring-machine…. [It] gives way to the pleasure of existing as a component within a whole machine, a macromachine, a power machine in which the component does not invest his own pleasure, but produces that of the powerful. (2: 152-3)

Laibach offers an implicit critique of Theweleit in its own display of totalitarian desires. A foundational idea in Theweleit’s account is his strict division between the totality machine and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s notion of the desiring machine. Though Theweleit thinks he has overcome what he considers the Frankfurt School’s ideological constructs and their failure to account for “what human bodies feel when they reject pleasure” (1: 414), he is himself ideologically invested in foreclosing any possibility that
the soldier males’ pleasures could be actual. Horkheimer and Adorno, in fact, draw out the dialectical relations of pleasure and totality just as thoroughly, if not more so.

Closely linked to these failures to critique fascist desire is the failure to ever find the definitive answer regarding the question: Is Laibach fascist? Leftist fans take comfort in Laibach’s apparently definitive and comic answer to Die Zeit’s question on fascism: “We are fascists as much as Hitler was a painter” (NSK 58). However, should this humorous account be the last word? The mix of Left and Right fans at Laibach’s concerts is reflective of what Laibach indicates is its cure or an “unmasking social neurosis” (45). They state: “LAIBACH unites warriors and opponents into an expression of a scream of static totalitarianism” (46). Through such combinations, Laibach critiques the apparent division between the two halves of the twentieth century, the first (war/ideological) and the second (peace/postideological), as well as between the two halves of Europe, Eastern totalitarian art and Western pop art. This is evident in the impressive practice of giving interviews in serious poses that answer always in the language of the “age of ideology.” Laibach’s language involves a mix of mysticism, idealism, Marxism, fascism, and other highly complex theoretical-political rhetoric. For example, to the question, “What are your plans for the future?”, instead of discussing banal career plans or personal goals, Laibach answers: “To prevent political suicide with a sensible cultural defense strategy” (NSK 52). Similarly, the division between Eastern

---

166 In *Laibach: A Film from Slovenia*, Slavoj Žižek tries to answer this charge definitively as well: “Official ideology itself was based on a certain split, between acknowledged public values and the hidden reverse. And Laibach simply states... this hidden reverse. And in this way, precisely because of this reason, I think they can in no way be accused of really standing for fascism. It’s precisely the opposite. The moment you pronounce this in the open, it cancels itself.”

167 Laibach answers this history by collapsing propaganda and art. Point 3 of the program states: “All art is subject to political manipulation (indirectly – consciousness; directly), except for that which speaks the language of this same manipulation” (18). The NSK book further claims, “Art and totalitarianism are not mutually exclusive. Totalitarian regimes abolish the illusion of revolutionary individual artistic freedom” (NSK 21).
and Western Europe is explored in their reinterpretation of concert tours as military invasions: e.g. “The Occupied Europe Tour” from 1983, touring both Eastern and Western Europe, and the “United States of Europe Tour” from 1987, taking place only in Western Europe. Laibach tours produce maps designed as complex military operations, as though the band is a Panzer spearhead moving from city to city.

However, Laibach produced not only GSL music, but also ESL music. Two of their most well-known ESL “new originals” are those of the Austrian band Opus’s “Life is Life” and the Swedish band Europe’s “The Final Countdown.” While “Geburt einer Nation” was a GSL cover of an English song, “Life is Life” and “The Final Countdown” were ESL covers of ESL songs. These covers thus offer more striking examinations of the place of ESL in Europe. Indeed, the Eurotrash credentials of the two bands in question, Europe and Opus, were confirmed by their status as One Hit Wonders. The main difference in terms of Laibach’s interpretation is not language, but the industrial-metal baritone voice, which replaces the tenor, and the martial music, which replaces the primarily guitar-based stadium rock. Timpani, snare drums, brass, and indeed, Wagnerian orchestras replace stadium rock. Actual Wagner samples were used in Laibach’s tracks “Jaegerspiel” and “F.I.A.T.” As should be obvious, such timbres and samples differ strongly from the ESL practices of Kraftwerk, though again, Kraftwerk offers industrial and warlike undercurrents in tracks such as “Vom Himmel Hoch” and “Metall auf Metall.”

Laibach has used its martial tunes to sound a critical echo behind the practitioners of light pop. Ostensibly, pop institutions like the Eurovision Song Contest might seem at the antipodes of such martial music. However, in the context of the
critique of European ESL pop, one might see evidence of Laibach’s case for martial music in the structure of the Eurovision itself. Fans of Eurovision would not see anything in common with Laibach’s aggressive imagery. Ostensibly, Eurovision is not political and only aims at light entertainment, fun, and peace. However, Laibach’s martial style and Eurovision come together in a surprising way: through Eurovision’s anthem. At each contest, the theme from the prelude to Marc-Antoine Charpentier’s “Te Deum” sounds, itself a piece of religious music in pristinely martial style, composed in celebration of the French victory at the battle of Steenkerque. Eurovision thus begins and ends with martial music. Following the arguments of Žižek and Monroe that Laibach exposes the hidden message of ideology, Laibach itself could point to this anthem as the unspoken message of Eurovision, exposing the Eurovision Song Contest as, shall we say, yet another oppressive institution, the ESC: specifically, the “ESC of ESL,” or conquest by other means. For Laibach, the expansion of Eurovision to the East and its streamlining consolidation around ESL music during the last ten years would offer proof.

Yet Laibach is also quintessentially postmodern in its ironic postpunk use of fascist imagery. The irony is not that of a cynical resignation or parody of fascism in liberal democracy. Rather, it is present precisely through the apparent überseriousness of their political statements, an earnestness whose intentions remain inconclusive. In punk gestures, the leveling of the sign system means symbols of fascism are both emptied of their semantic power (a progressive tendency) and not taken seriously (a regressive tendency). However, a residual anxiety remains that such ironic play is merely a cover for a secret delight in or belief in such signs. The problem is that satire rubs along the grain of clear interpretation. After all, satire often emerges from both fascination and contempt.
Laibach’s singing of the GSL language takes the form of LTI, often barking out orders through the nostrils to give an annoyingly loud nasal blast in German. Victor Klemperer offers an interesting term for this type of LTI. He calls it zackig [jagged, snappy, rigid]: “A firm military greeting is rigid. An order or an announcement can be rigid. Rigid signifies the exertion of organized discipline” (93).\(^{168}\) Laibach’s postmodern irony and play with rigid LTI-German was similarly expressed by a band that will be explored in the next chapter: DAF. Though the name officially stands for Deutsch Amerikanische Freundschaft [German American Friendship], DAF also explores totalitarian alphabet soup, as it is an acronym for the Nazi Deutsche Arbeitsfront [German Labor Front]. DAF’s biggest hit, “Der Mussolini,” was created through mixing the languages of directing dance steps and barking military orders. These gestures took place precisely during the postpunk era, in which the ironic play with fascist signs was particularly prevalent. Such postmodern productions were similar to Laibach in that, precisely by mixing pop music and LTI, they created pop pleasure at the same time that they presented pop pleasure as equivalent to the culture industry and fascist pleasure.

3a: Laibach’s Fallout

By the time Laibach made the “Geburt einer Nation” video, the connection of the German language to totalitarianism had already long been cliché. With the international commercial success of Rammstein starting in the mid-1990s and carrying on into the present, the cliché was perpetuated. Rammstein was linked to and in many senses the instigators of a new, national pop wave of übermasculinity in Germany called Neue Deutsche Härte. Since achieving commercial success, the distinctly East German

\(^{168}\) “Zackig ist ein straff militärischer Gruß, Zackig kann ein Befehl, kann eine Ansprache gehalten sein, zackig ist, was einen zusammengerafften, einen disziplinierten Energieaufwand ausdrückt.”
Rammstein has popularized German metal-industrial music internationally unlike any other band.

Yet Rammstein’s vocal practice of German borrows heavily from Laibach’s GSL music. In this case, the trend points to a change in the aesthetics of the culture industry and negativity that Adorno perhaps did not foresee: the commodification of the ugly, violence, and dissonance. Indeed, Rammstein has arguably commodified the aesthetics of ugliness and LTI in its most extreme, yet bland, form. As can be heard in their song about homosocial love, “Spiel mit mir” [Play with Me], singer Till Lindemann often accentuates his German with trilled Hitlerian R’s. This form of metal-industrial music lacks, however, the use of noise and formal experimentation of bands like Throbbing Gristle and Einstürzende Neubauten. The main link with industrial is Rammstein’s occasional use of unconventional instrumentation and synthesizers, though essentially the band relies on conventional song forms, hooks, and pop metal.

The video “Mein Teil” from their 2004 release Reise, Reise offers a standard example of their aesthetic of ugliness, itself inspired by a 2002 cannibal murder/suicide incident in Germany that developed into a media spectacle. Flesh, horror, and cannibalism are explored in the most banal of wordplays: “Denn du bist, was du isst” [You are what you eat]. In the music video, Lindemann shows an especially distorted grimace while wearing a mask that stretches out his mouth and looks to give him the role of a dog in stereotypically sadomasochist role-playing. A scene toward the end of the video is particularly telling. The members of the band are led by a male actor dressed in drag. They exit a U-Bahn station in Berlin marked “Deutsche Oper” [German Opera].

169 The case concerns Armin Meiwes, known as the Rotenburg Cannibal, who killed and partially ate his victim, Bernd Jürgen Brandes. The killing was apparently consensual, as Brandes had a death wish to be eaten, and thus the case caused a media sensation. See Furlong.
While one interpretation might hold this image as a shocking threat to high culture, it arguably only reinforces the common links of Rammstein and the classical music “industry” as export commodities of German national identity. Rammstein sets itself off from supposedly light (read “feminine”) pop. In an attempt at distinguishing German pop from the Anglo-American pop world, one of their members even called Rammstein, “die erste natürliche Boy-Band” [the first natural boy band] (Live aus Berlin). While a humorous comment that satirizes homosocial dreams, it also implies that the boys in the boy bands that are produced for teenage girls are not real men; boy bands are effeminate and homosexual, whereas Rammstein is properly masculine and homosocial.

This spectacle of clichéd German sadomasochist übermasculinity and its reliance on LTI has since been satirized insightfully by the band Mundstuhl in the song “Wurstwasser,” a hilarious “new original” that reverses Monroe’s own principle. In this case, Mundstuhl gives a pop “new original” of Rammstein’s hit single “Engel.” Mundstuhl sings about the greatness of men who become invigorated from the juice of bratwurst jars. The phallic association and the German national symbol of the bratwurst are not to be missed; after all, Heinrich Heine also began his Harz Journey with the classic line that Göttingen is “celebrated for its sausages and University” (5).170 Lindemann’s Hitlerian trilled R’s are clearly parodied throughout the song, especially in the word “Wurstwasser.” The essential message of the lyrics can be gleaned from the first two stanzas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wurstwasser</th>
<th>Sausage Juice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Willst du dieses Wasser trinken</td>
<td>Do you want to drink this juice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nie mehr andres Wasser trinken</td>
<td>And never drink anything else?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasch dir deine Seele rein</td>
<td>To cleanse your soul.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

170 “Berühmt durch ihre Würste und Universität.” (4)
Wurstwasser, Wurstwasser  
Jaaa... denn wir sind Wurstwasser  
Nichts anderes als Wurstwasser  
Macht mit bei Wurstwasser  
Nichts anderem als Wurstwasser

Sausage juice! Sausage juice!  
Jaaa! because we’re sausage juice  
Nothing but sausage juice  
Come dive into sausage juice  
Nothing but sausage juice.

Image 25: Mundstuhl. “Wurstwasser”  
Still from the official video.

To be sure, Mundstuhl’s satire of Rammstein is not necessarily a critique of Adorno’s notion of darkness. Rammstein’s failure is to interpret darkness literally and affirmatively, whereas Adorno understands darkness dialectically in relation to negation, ugliness, and bad art. The übermasculine affirmation of “Ja” in Mundstuhl’s video further links it indirectly to Laibach’s use of “Ja, Ja, Jawohl, Ja.” In Mundstuhl’s case, it is industrial music that is being parodied, although Laibach and other industrial-noise artists remain difficult to criticize because the Teutonic theatricality is itself a critique. The question of Laibach’s “literalness” is more difficult to place. A possible answer to this dialectic could hold the following: Laibach stages totalitarian desires in excess with their consequences on display. Rammstein stages totalitarian desires in a spectacle of Hollywood theatricality that is not supposed to have consequences.
Regardless, what the parody to “Sausage Juice” makes blatantly clear is that in this debate on truth and language, I have been exploring masculinity and patriarchy without any reference to women. In this spirit, let me conclude this section by citing Friedrich Nietzsche’s first proposition from Beyond Good and Evil: “Supposing truth to be a woman – what then?” (9). In the context of the history of the emancipation of dissonance and dark art, I find myself often asking the following question: “Supposing consonance to be a woman – what then?” Or in the linguistic-national context, “Supposing German to be a woman – what then?” I offer these questions as dialectical challenges in the context of industrial music and other male-dominated avant-gardes. While the rise of dissonance in music could certainly be seen in the historical context of feminist movements and the challenging of entrenched, religious, and “consonant” patriarchy, in terms of the politics of taste, there remain misogynist and homophobic tendencies within the liberatory movements of dissonance and high art as well. This takes the form of tendentious links between masculine strength and revolution, the fetishization of technology, and the hatred of “fun” and “entertainment,” which is often demonized in terms of gender. As such, female and transsexual artists who engage technology and industrial culture, from Wendy Carlos to Gudrun Gut, and in the Berlin techno tradition, from Marusha to Anja Schneider, remain key to breaking up the commonsensical links of masculinity and technological revolution.

I return, thus, to Adorno’s theory of the dark and blackness. His indication that certain forms of art “childishly delight in color” (39) does not account for some of the liberatory and revolutionary pleasure that can come from the practices of camp, comedy, and even consonant pop. To reverse Adorno’s claim, some of the music I have explored here, most obviously in Rammstein, might be said to “childishly delight in darkness.”
Nevertheless, in the context of current German cultural life, I do find continued value in the tradition of industrial music and its questioning of ESL practices when compared with some of the increasingly conservative manifestations of electronic music, as diagnosed in part by Uwe Schmidt with regard to Biedermeier. This is reflected in an increasingly conservative Berlin that has become a center for the privileged, minimal-lounge bourgeoisie where cosmopolitanism is often reduced to ESL practices as I explored at St. Oberholz, though of course, as I observed with these practices, I too am guilty.

Here I have focused only on some of the most extreme forms of dissonance within German linguistic practice to illuminate the potential ugliness and beauty of the German tongue. This is music that I find particularly interesting because, unlike some of the more overtly experimental forms of avant-pop industrial, this music combines dissonance and rhythmic dance in productive ways. Laibach’s use of the German language and industrial has become unfortunately reified, with continued releases of GSL/LTI crossovers in albums like WAT, though it should also be pointed out that Laibach has forged new ground through engaging Bach. Indeed, a new Lai-Bach project has moved to contribute to the distinguished tradition of experimental-electronic Baroque Bach, most recently in the album Laibachkunstderfuge BWV 1080 (2008). Yet the Neue Deutsche Härte bands that followed Laibach’s lead might do well to consider Adorno’s dialectical surprise in the midst of Aesthetic Theory during his apparent affirmation of dissonance and the ugly:

Ugliness would vanish if the relation of man to nature renounced its repressive character, which perpetuates – rather than being perpetuated by – the repression of man. (47)
Afterword: Denglisch in Two Lines

In our discussion of language, we have focused primarily on matters of German and English translation and of ESL and GSL practices. In the midst, we lost sight of the practice of mixed German and English as discussed at the beginning of the chapter: the strange creole-media phenomenon of Denglisch. So I end with a simple question: What can Denglisch sentences offer?

I offer first an example of Denglisch from an author often assumed to be the conservative and refined antithesis to modern Denglisch marketing firms: Thomas Mann (once again). In the section “Fullness of Harmony” from The Magic Mountain, the stuffy director of the Davos sanatorium, Director Behrens, introduces the gramophone to his patients in a classic manner. I give the German original and John E. Wood’s translation to follow:

„Das ist kein Apparat und keine Maschine... das ist ein Instrument, das ist eine Stradivarius, eine Guarneri, da herrschen Resonanz- und Schwingungsverhältnisse vom ausgepichtesten Raffinemang! „Polyhymnia“ heißt die Marke, wie die Inschrift hier im inneren Deckel Sie lehrt. Deutsches Fabrikat, wissen Sie. Wir machen das mit Abstand am besten. Das treusinnig Musikalische in neuzeitlich-mechanischer Gestalt. Die deutsche Seele up to date. Da haben Sie die Literatur!” sagte er und wies auf ein Wandschränkchen, worin breitrückige Alben aufgereiht standen. (Mann, 5.1: 965-6, my emphasis)

“This is no apparatus, no machine.... This is an instrument, this is a Stradivarius, a Guarneri – you’ll hear resonances and vibrations of vintage raffinemang. It’s a Polyhymnia, as we are informed here inside the lid. German-made, you see – we make far and away the best. Music most faithful, in its modern, mechanical form. The German soul, up-to-date. There’s the library,” he said and pointed toward a cupboard with rows of broad-backed albums. (Mann 627-28, my emphasis)

In these short lines, a crystallization of the crisis in German culture and technology during the 1920s is captured in language. The formulation “Die deutsche Seele up to
date” [“The German soul, up-to-date”] stands as the key passage. In a basic Denglisch phrase, it posits a dialectical relation of German and English within modern media that bears the mark of a whole range of German bourgeois assumptions regarding the relation of these two languages. It posits the German language as that which possesses the “soul” – while the English term “up-to-date” reflects the association of superficial trends, fashion, utilitarianism, and modern entertainment. A column of the binary opposites according to Director Behrens might be set up as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soul</td>
<td>Machine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind</td>
<td>Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>Reproduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volk</td>
<td>Pop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

English is the new Latin of the technical age. Firmly anchored in modern technical media from the gramophone to the computer, English stands as the basic language of this media in the same way that Latin was inextricably tied to the written word. German instrumental music is maintained, but only by means of the recording instruments of modern global pop recordings. In this respect, Mann’s carefully placed Denglisch phrase reveals German as necessarily hybrid. Though English is linked with the “up-to-date” of industry and technology, German Bildung is supported by German industry and technology in its attempt to keep up with the times. Director Behrens misses his contradiction of praising the gramophone as a German wonder, produced by a German firm more advanced than its competitors, with the English phrase “up-to-date.” The German soul is indeed “up-to-date,” but it is no longer in control over its means of production. Culture becomes an epiphenomenon, lending voice to German fears that
there is no economic base left to support the superstructure of the German language. Behrens believes his world picture is secure because the German soul is necessarily both deeper and more efficient than American superficiality; depth will be preserved through up-to-dateness rather than hollowed out. Depth appears secure. Yet with the age of pragmatics and utility, super-deep reflection is exposed as not only useless and superfluous – it is dangerous, pseudoscientific, and mystical.

With the decline of the nation state, all modern European languages have been downgraded to and/or reset as dialects – vulgar tongues that are used in private conversation and as museum relics of cultural “depth,” while English remains the language of science, commerce, and politics of Europe. “Up-to-date” is further a stock phrase that is indicative of one of the favorite practices of Denglisch: the delight in short English phases and one-syllable words. “Up-to-date” is the linguistic equivalent to the unforgettable hook and the money note of pop melodies. Brevity is the only perceptible beauty in language today; languages that are long-winded are as archaically time-wasting as the Ents’ language from Middle Earth, to borrow from Tolkien’s great English translation of Nordic and Anglo-Saxon mythology, which has become the mythically archaic foundation of twentieth-century English pop…
“And there were reservations about techno as an idea – from Motte, for example, who always wanted house. I didn’t want that, because it had soul. But I’m a white boy; I have no soul. I also never liked disco. I searched for what was industrial in music.”

Tanith

...approximately sixty years after Thomas Mann’s The Magic Mountain, a crystallization of such oppositions would be found in the work of Maximilian Lenz, aka. Westbam, head of the label Low Spirit and most famous practitioner and theorist of the technopop “Raving Society.” Afro-American and German cultural exchange is posited even in his artist name: He is the Westphalia Bambaataa as compared to hip-hop Godfather Afrika Bambaataa. Originally from Münster, Westbam became influential in the Berlin house and techno scene during the 1980s through party promotions, theoretical writings, and music productions that were well tuned toward an “up-to-date” move to the pop future.

His 1988 track “Disco Deutschland” proved to be one of many successful tracks from this period. Though more obscure than his hit, “Monkey Say, Monkey Do,” “Disco Deutschland” is key in this context because it is a sampling meditation on German identity. These two words, disco and Deutschland, in fact form a unique Denglisch phrase about as basic as “the German soul, up-to-date.” It thus constitutes the second Denglisch line of this afterword. The dialectical relation of German and English in this title is striking, particularly because of the choice of voice samples in the actual track:

“Disco” is the sample of an MC as indicator of Afro-American electronic music, and it is juxtaposed with the sample “Deutschland” from one of Adolf Hitler’s speeches.

This dialectical kernel of Denglisch is reflected in other samples throughout the track: Along with Hitler’s “Deutschland” scream, the reference to the Second World War is made clear by the further sampling of Winston Churchill and a radio announcement by the British fascist William Joyce, nicknamed Lord Haw-Haw, for Nazi war propaganda: “Germany Calling.” There are also sounds of marching and warfare. However, the “Disco” cry is reflected in party samples from MCs, prominent throughout the track: “Can you feel it,” “Everybody work your body,” “Don’t worry about that, homeboy,” and “We’re going to do a song that you never heard before.” “Can You Feel It?” is a sample of the 1986 house track by Mr. Fingers, which is itself a sample from the famous opening of a Jackson Five concert. Given the voice samples, a binary opposition can be set between German and English that reflects Director Behrens’s statement to an extent, though Westbam’s sampling switches many crucial terms, as well as offering additional binaries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Machine</td>
<td>Soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind</td>
<td>Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious</td>
<td>Fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War</td>
<td>Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orders</td>
<td>MCing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volk</td>
<td>Pop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar to Kraftwerk’s claim of a “mechanical language” at the beginning of the linguistic study, some key qualities associated with Germany have now been reversed since

---

**172** The sample of Winston Churchill is a famous line from a speech on December 26, 1941 in front of joint session of the United States Congress: “What kind of a people do they think we are? Is it possible that they do not realize that we shall never cease to persevere against them till they have been taught a lesson which they and the world will never forget” (456).
Mann’s *Magic Mountain*, especially those having to do with the relation between Soul/Machine and Music/Technology. Afro-American “Soul” now becomes the saving grace of the German rational “Machine” that is soulless, and the two are combined ideally as a soul machine.

Reflecting this ideal, the European samples are not the only references to Germany and England during World War II. Rather, music from a later point in Europe’s history can be heard. In particular, repeated samples from two icons of disco dance culture stand out: Kraftwerk and the Swiss band Yello. The specific samples of Kraftwerk are from none other than “Radioaktivität” and “Nummern,” and the Yello samples are from “You’ve Got To Say Yes To Another Excess” (1983). “Disco Deutschland” is in this way a reflection on the history of dance music in Europe and the United States. In 1988, the year “Disco Deutschland” appeared, this history was already twenty years old. The Kraftwerk and Yello samples are set in dialectical relation to the Afro-American dance, hip-hop, and funk tracks as a demonstration of what Europe has learned. This education is summed up in the ironic reversal where calls to war become calls to party, as evinced by the double meanings of the MC’s repeated phrase: “Drop the Bomb.” According to Westbam, Europe has learned how to drop new party bombs.

These two lines, “die Deutsche Seele up to date” and “Disco Deutschland,” offer striking crystallizations of the prominence of Denglisch, DJ culture, and musical practice in Germany. Westbam offers an optimistic projection of the rise of techno culture in Germany during the 1990s, while releasing the track as proof and self-promotion of his “record art” as a sampling DJ. Not only German or English lyrics, but *Denglisch* lyrics as well, can explode from the page and offer historical reflection. Kraftwerk, so often linked to the music of the future, is in fact primarily a dialectical study between the 1920s and
1970s. In the same way, Mann and Westbam are in a surprising dialogue: a dialectic addressing the globalese of Denglisch. This bilingual history, or trilingual if one considers Denglisch a new language, is carried through various media codes: from nineteenth-century romantic music; to the media revolutions between the 1890s and 1920s; to the electronic revolutions of the 1970s; to the new DJ technology of the 1980s on the eve of German unification and the search for new German dances in “Disco Deutschland.” To those dances I now turn…
Chapter 4 – Shall We Tanz? Cyborg Anthropologies, Electronic Music, and the Masculine Question

A persistent point of contention regarding popular music during the twentieth century has been its relationship to the body. This relationship has been dealt with primarily through an understanding of pop as dance music, which plays a key role in social gatherings and the sexual awakening of youth, usually understood as white youth. For example, a liberal myth of modern pop history traces a linear narrative of progress from Elvis to the present. It views pop dance music as a continual exercise in the sexual liberation of white youths from repressive theological and bourgeois forces. In postwar West Germany, this myth offered important progressive potentials in the context of the immediate Nazi past. The embrace of Afro-American music, jazz and rock in particular, served as a sonic index of identification with democracy and pluralism. The late 1950s, in particular, witnessed the institutional expansion and official acceptance of pop culture and music in the Bonn Republic, marked, as mentioned, by the founding of BRAVO and Eurovision in 1956, as well as the importation of Elvis fever.173 Public performances of recorded music began at this time, seeing the slow spread of disco culture to the point of “Disco Deutschland” on the eve of German unification.

Yet the relationship between the body, music, and technology has had a more contentious history; the highly optimistic moments of the late 1980s and early 1990s, of techno dances surrounding German unification, emerged from a range of cultural conflicts. Beginning in the 1960s, the countercultural and student movements resulted in new understandings of the body. Though the 1968 uprisings bore some important

173 See, for example, Poiger’s chapter “Presley, Yes–Ulbricht, No? Rock ‘n’ Roll and Female Sexuality in the German Cold War” (168-205).
similarities to the 1950s association of rock music as bodily and political liberation, shifts had occurred. The student movement was strongly influenced by the sexual-liberatory theories of Herbert Marcuse and Wilhelm Reich, so the link between progress, rock, and natural-sexual utopia continued to be posited. However, tastes shifted as the student movement embraced British “Beat” bands (Poiger 214-16, 219-220) as representative of cultural rebellion. The fundamental difference from the 1950s was the refusal to link popular music with West German democracy, which in the view of the student movement held traces of the Third Reich in the continuance of conservative traditions and the consolidation of power in the 1966 grand coalition of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats under former NSDAP-member Kurt Kiesinger. Yet both the youth culture of the 1950s and the student movement of the 1960s were humanist in outlook. They perceived the release of natural sexual desire as an expression of humanity not linked to fascism, though already in the technological excesses of Krautrock, the links of body-mind liberation were tested to their limits.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, the decline of the student movement, the economic and ecological crises of industry, the political conflicts surrounding the Red Army Faction, and the gradual introduction of digital media brought conventional notions of pop music, liberation, and the relationship to the body into question. After the naïve beliefs in bodily expression as utopia were challenged, the return of the body as an alternatively neutral or dystopian object and problematic figure increased in pop awareness by the late 1970s. Especially through the subcultural aesthetics of punk and cyberpunk, the human body became not a subject to be accessed and freed, but a malleable object to be assembled, reassembled, or ignored as the case may be. This

174 See the interpretations of the student movements by Herzog 158-61 and Poiger 220-222.
shift in focus was closely related to the decline of industrial production in the West, resulting in the collapse of the simple binary of dystopian industrial civilization and utopian pastoral nature.

The point of departure for the following investigation is thus the moment of the 1970s and early 1980s during this transitional cusp between industrial and postindustrial organization in Europe leading up to the techno dances of German unification. This chapter explores a web of images in theory, music, and film that emerged during this period in the context of Teutonic cultural industries and German identity. It further traces their legacy in the popular representation of techno and industrial culture from the mid-1980s to the present. Since the 1970s, electronic music has provided the soundtrack to cyborg conceptions of the body. This chapter focuses on the historicization of the cyborg figure in the context of the German white male body. It deals especially with the dialectic of physiognomies and body images (fashions and postures) of posthumanism and of technological utopias and dystopias as revealed in cyberpunk and techno culture. In forms of bodily performance, fashion, and dance, EDM was key in giving popular expressions to the politics of the body in the age of industrial decline. Interaction with music in performance, dance, film, and music videos became the chief means by which to present new images of the body.

To trace this longer history, this chapter is divided into four parts, where body images will weave through electronic music cultures as we arrive in the moment of 2009. As a concluding chapter and a kind of separate journey through the body as technology, it focuses on the relationship of the body, dance, and visual media to electronic music as a way to critique physiognomies of identity. As the final chapter, it is the longest, demanding an attention that reverberates back through the former themes of geography,
time, and language to try to grasp the problems of pleasure, community belonging, and what it feels like to dance: alone amongst groups and beyond bending the knees, as my first dance training was. Finally, it offers a debate through electronic music as a representative export at a time that Germany has gained the reputation of being a “green nation,” resulting however in debates on the nature of “green technologies,” whether in music or otherwise.

The first part examines the nature-culture dialectic developed in strands of theory, music, and film of the 1970s, manifested in two popular cyborg images: the man-machine and the man-insect. With respect to theory, I address in a comparative study Michel Foucault’s theorization of the man-machine during the mid-1970s and Klaus Theweleit’s concept of the soldier male during the crisis in German sexual liberation and debates on masculinity in the late 1970s. Both of these texts help to keep in mind the broader history of the cyborg during the rise of disco and technopop. This history, with origins in the eighteenth century, repeatedly presented images of the man-machine as an embodiment of Teutonic technology explored in the introduction.

This analysis of the man-machine is complemented by the examination of modern theories of the cyborg as man-insect. I first address the concept of “insect music” developed by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), a canonical text in theorizations of techno culture and electronic music. I supplement this text with an analysis of equally influential media: Ridley Scott’s film *Alien* (1979) and the biomechanical art of H.R. Giger as represented in *Necronomicon* (1977), a popular collection of biomechanical art that I read as insect-bodies. Finally, as a prehistory to these 1970s understandings of the cyborg man-insect, I discuss Adorno’s critique of jitterbugs as man-insects during the 1930s and 1940s. Adorno offers a negative
counterpart to Deleuze and Guattari’s progressive notion of “becoming-molecular” as “becoming-insect.” By placing Deleuze/Guattari and Adorno in tension, a comparison I see reflected in my own productive tension with Adorno and techno described in the introduction, I approach the insect as an ambiguous figure, evoking queerness, loss of identity and/or subjectivity, and technological domination.

The images of the man-machine and man-insect from the 1970s form a theoretical preface to the second part of the chapter, which turns back to the West Coast by giving a critical account of Donna Haraway’s inauguration of feminist cyborg theory in her essay “A Cyborg Manifesto” (1985). Considering the consequences feminism has for my study of white masculinity, I conduct a critical reading of Haraway’s brief remarks on the film Blade Runner (1982), also directed by Ridley Scott. An extended account of this film follows as a bridge to the musical objects I examine. The film itself has operated as a cult object on both sides of the Atlantic. It is a definitive work of cyberpunk for both electronic and industrial music scenes, not least because of the highly influential electronic score by Vangelis. Through a close reading of the character Roy Batty as played by Rutger Hauer, an ambiguous figure of white European identity, I demonstrate the physiognomic role that the Teutonic man-machine plays in Blade Runner, and the consequences of the film’s visual style and soundtrack for techno culture.

Having prepared the historical/stylistic context in theory, art, and film, my study shifts in the third part of the chapter to the musical soundings and performances of biopolitics in German electronic music during this period. The late 1970s saw the appropriation of cyborg images from the classical avant-garde, especially Dada, Russian constructivism, and futurism, by two bands: Kraftwerk, in the album Die Mensch-Maschine (1978), and Deutsch Amerikanische Freundschaft (DAF), in the album Alles ist
The links between these bands’ cultural legacies are striking, as DAF’s electrification and militarization of punk established the genre of “Electronic Body Music,” a term coined by Kraftwerk. The foregrounding of biopolitical aesthetics by both of these bands relied on past images of the future in the classical avant-garde, while engaging with traditions of natural-sexual liberation in modern pop music. I show the importance these bands have in laying the groundwork for cyborg aesthetics in Germany and Europe during the late 1970s and 1980s.

In the fourth and final part, my discussion moves to an examination of the consequences of cyborg aesthetics for rave, industrial, and DJ culture from the late 1980s onward. The study takes three examples as symbolic of this heritage. First, I focus on the transformation of body images through DJ culture in the performance styles of one of Germany’s major technopop stars, Sven Väth. Väth reintroduced topics of pop-sex liberation in electronic dance music while addressing issues of control and machinic pleasure. Second, I explore the body politic of mass events by discussing my experiences of two manifestations of rave and industrial culture that took place on the same weekend in 2004: the Mayday and Forms of Hands. These observations allow me to engage the cyborg and subcultural theories of the late-1970s and early 1980s from an historical distance. Specifically, I critique valorizations of “subcultural style” through the notion of a “third nature” of representation in digital culture to complement the traditional dichotomy of the pastoral utopia and industrial dystopia. The chapter concludes with the examination of a final electronic DJ-producer: Mathis Mootz. Mootz offers a unique example from the youngest generation of popular electronic musicians, who have dealt with the legacy of both the cyberpunk cultures of the 1970s and the rave cultures of the 1990s, while paying careful attention to the politics of the white male body and German
identity. I contrast Mootz’s engagements with debates on green technologies and the banalization and everydayness of the cyborg figure in the current techno scenes of Berlin and beyond. As we shall see, the study of Mootz winds up the examination of the politics of electronic dance music and German identity by moving back to sci-fi themes of the Teutonic outland, as we land back on the Californian coast via Minnesota.

1. Of Biopower, the Man-Machine, and Insects

The popularization of the cyborg figure in theory has largely resulted from Haraway’s “A Cyborg Manifesto,” published in 1985. Haraway’s text was unique in bringing biopolitical studies and technoscience together in a feminist context. Before applying Haraway’s theorizations to electronic music, however, two important traditions in the prehistory of cyborg theory need to be examined in a specifically musical context. The first tradition deals with the notion of the body, with consequences for music and rhythm, and the second deals with music and rhythm, with consequence for the body.

The first tradition is traced in Foucault’s concept of biopower, developed precisely in the late 1970s through the publication of two texts: Discipline and Punish (1975) and The History of Sexuality, Volume 1 (1976). While biopower according to Foucault does not apply strictly to the body, but rather to all dimensions of the organization and regulation of life, he locates two poles of understanding since the eighteenth century that made biopolitical practices possible, one of which is the notion of the man-machine. Foucault writes in The History of Sexuality: “One of those poles – the first to be formed, it seems – centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls,
all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the disciplines: an anatomo-politics of the human body” (139). This conception of biopower was foregrounded in the chapter “Docile Bodies” from Discipline and Punish. Foucault cites Julien Offray de la Mettrie famous 1748 text, L’homme Machine (Man, A Machine) as the primary literary-philosophical product of the Enlightenment to offer this conception. In Foucault’s presentation of La Mettrie’s philosophy, the man-machine is “both a materialist reduction of the soul and a general theory of dressage, at the centre of which reigns the notion of ‘docility’, which joins the analysable body to the manipulable body. A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Discipline and Punish 136).

Foucault thus offers an important historical background to the popularization of the cyborg figure. Cyborgs understood as man and machine couplings are shown by Foucault to rest on an earlier cyborg theory: the anthropological view of man as machine, both in body and soul. In other words, prior to the new man and machine couplings that would take place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the very notion of man must already be transformed into a machine, whereby the distinction of the organic and the mechanical is dissolved. This material definition of man makes possible further man-machine couplings, which merely reinforce the truth of this prior theorization of man as machine.

This reinforcement of anthropocentric machinism causes complications and political tensions. Cyborg history thus develops as a dialectic in two directions: the first, reflected in the conception above, sees man as preserved and enhanced through cyborg couplings to tools, appendages, and subordinate species understood as mere extension. However, another direction sees the anthropocentric machine in a process of continual
transformation and questioning through such couplings. In other words, these couplings not only are in the service of man, but reflect back on and challenge the very notion of man as dominant machine. Put differently: In the first trajectory, the disciplined Enlightenment man-machine is preserved and enhanced with mechanical-machines, animal-machines, and others, updating anthropocentrism in the industrial age as a form of male domination as production and conquest. Yet as we shall see in the example of Haraway, the second trajectory of the dialectic points to forms that challenge the dominant position of the man-machine.

Biopower and Haraway’s cyborg figure become important for this musical study because they augment the popular understandings of cyborg culture. These popular images could be described as a third trajectory of cyborg understandings, wherein man is not ad ipso a machine, in the sense of Le Mettrie, or transformed by couplings, but one which must first be disciplined into a machine. In this conception, the man-machine is only possible by combining materialist ontology and political discipline. Viewed in this way, the perceived antagonism of the organic and mechanical need not be dismissed as a dualistic anachronism, but as a political register that continually rattles the ontological synthesis and relentless drive of the machinic. To be sure, Le Mettrie’s ontological materialism regarding the machine recognizes prior practices of discipline and discursively makes new and refined forms of biopolitical discipline possible. And aside from the traditional organic and mechanical division, the various forms of machinic discipline can themselves become antagonistic.

Foucault’s man-machine, Haraway’s cyborg, and cyborg understandings all conceived of such machinic discipline as taking on cultural-political and regional inflections. In this context, biopolitical discipline in German-speaking regions, with the
Prussian military as the primary symbol, resulted in a tradition of seeing the German body as a machine body. Already in 1771, the music journalist Charles Burney reported on his observations regarding some Swabian soldiers: “The soldiers seemed disciplined into clock-work. I never saw such mechanical exactness in animated beings. One would suppose the author of ‘Man a Machine’ had taken his ideas from these men” (Burney 38). Foucault's own theory of docile bodies, which, as we saw, also cites La Mettrie’s *Man, A Machine*, acknowledges this persistent cultural connection. The first example of docile bodies he cites in *Discipline and Punish* is the army of Frederick the Great: “The celebrated automata, on the other hand, were not only a way of illustrating an organism, they were also political puppets, small-scale models of power: Frederick II, the meticulous king of small machines, well-trained regiments and long exercises, was obsessed with them” (136).

Important for our purposes, however, is not this larger Prussian history, but cyborg images from the twentieth century. In the 1970s in particular, popular culture was engaging with images from the early twentieth century from the classical avant-garde: Dada, Russian constructivism, and futurism especially. As we shall see, Kraftwerk and DAF relied primarily on the cyborg aesthetics from these movements for their own analysis of the body. In short, the 1970s and 1980s were in intense dialogue aesthetically with the 1910s and 1920s. Examples of these cyborg images include the collages by Berlin Dada artists, which have recently been analyzed in a cyborg context by Matthew Biro in *The Dada Cyborg*. The late history of Prussian militarism was traced

---

175 When using the theoretical terminology of the machine in the tradition of Deleuze and Guattari, the following depictions should properly be termed mechanical bodies as opposed to machine bodies. Understanding the concept of the machine purely in terms of mechanical rigidity is a reductive interpretation, which Deleuze and Guattari challenge in their distinction of mechanics and machines. Nevertheless, I prefer to retain the term “machine body” because of the constant slippage between notions of mechanics and machines in popular culture.
by Dadaist depictions of the German military-industrial complex as Teutonic cyborgs, specifically of cyborg versions of Wilhelm II and of Paul von Hindenburg (Biro 67-70, 117-24). Out of the mix of militarism and the disciplining of the body following the industrial revolution arose an aesthetic image of the Teuton as a type of body that can neither dance nor slouch: This body is armored, stands straight, and marches. The modern tension between the pleasures of dancing and marching is a trope that, as we will see, has important consequences for musical interpretation.

An eminently 1970s text in the long tradition of analysis of the German body as a machine body, itself focusing on the period of the 1910s and 1920s and contemporary with Foucault’s theorizations of biopower, was Klaus Theweleit’s Male Fantasies (1977/78). Coming late in the wake of the cultural-sexual upheavals surrounding 1968, this text has been aptly described by Dagmar Herzog as “an energetic and imaginative last-ditch attempt at an optimistic reading of the relationship between the personal and the political” (241). While focusing on the Freikorps literature of the Weimar period with the explicit task of exploring the psychological and sexual matrix of the protofascist male, the book’s interdisciplinary theorizations can also be read as “an exploration of the broader historical phenomenon of the ‘soldierly man’ (soldatischer Mann)” (Herzog 241). A bestseller in Germany and widely read in English-speaking countries, Theweleit’s investigations regarding discipline, sexual oppression, and social order have done much to continue the coding of the German body as a machine body in the academy, popular culture, and even music literature.177

176 Both volumes were translated in the late 1980s and published by University of Minnesota Press in the Theory and History of Literature Series edited by Jochen Schulte-Sasse and Wlad Godzich.
177 Consider Reynolds and Press’s application of Theweleit to Kraftwerk and other figures (60-69; 102-106).
The following can be cited as a crystallization of Theweleit’s representations of
the German machine body through his analysis of the phrase “German to the bone”:
“What this formulation most clearly indicates is that the German body has to be stripped
of its flesh (be encased in leather, Krupp steel, or whatever) if it is to earn the label
‘German’… The soldier male is a man who would doubtless be entranced to have his
passport stamped ‘Sex: German’” (2: 84). The reference to leather and Krupp steel,
alluding to a speech by Hitler to the Hitler Youth, is an explicit formulation of a hardened-
metallic machine that has lost all traces of the “organic” and “natural” human. For
Theweleit, posture is a central biopolitical technique of the German male, already
highlighted by Nietzsche a hundred years prior in his famous definition of the Teuton in
*The Case of Wagner* as “obedience and long legs” (254). Theweleit analyzes posture in
the following manner: “In ‘standing erect,’ the fascist adopts an attitude of sexual
defense and mastery; his very stance was seen to produce an inevitable and
unquestioned German superiority to the rest of the world, and to ground the German
claim to world domination” (2: 50).178 Standing erect is the foundation for forming lines,
drilling, and marching, which is itself a machinic-musical experience: “The machine’s
flow is continuous, a totality that maintains every component in appropriate and
uninterrupted motion…. The man pleasurably invests his self only as a thoroughly
reliable part of the machine. His line from this point on: the machine must run, the faster
the better; it breaks down, it won’t be my fault…” (2: 152-53). Such passages make clear
Theweleit’s biopolitical analysis. I shall explore his theory further through the
examination of Kraftwerk and DAF.

---

178 In the first volume of *Male Fantasies*, Theweleit reveals his residual allegiances to 1960s
sexual liberation, which Herzog examines, by positing an implicit opposition of the organic as
feminine and the mechanical as masculine. He grounds this in an argument of Elaine Morgan’s
“aquatic ape” thesis as related to woman’s organic form (1: 288-94).
This tradition of the man-machine and the assertions that apply it strictly to German identity represent one aspect of the prehistory of cyborg theory. The other biopolitical image I wish to emphasize, though it differs in significant respects from the man-machine, applies to modern understandings regarding the cyborg as man-insect, specifically insect music. Unlike the man-machine, this tradition highlights the coupling of technology and Western industrial culture with a metaphorical image derived from *nature*. The image of the insect is biopolitical because it draws out consequences for modern understandings of bodies both animal and human. In the context of insect music as a metaphor for industrial nature-culture, I will first focus on Deleuze and Guattari’s writings from *A Thousand Plateaus*.

Deleuze and Guattari conceived the idea of an age of “insect-music” in the concluding section of Plateau 10 concerning ontology and nature, “Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible…” This concluding section is entitled “Becoming-Music” (299-309). It postulates the notion of insect music as molecular sound production that dissolves the refrain, a concept that will later be developed in plateau 11, “1837: Of the Refrain” (310-50). From the study of music and the refrain, Deleuze and Guattari make the following observation on “insect-music”:

Already Wagner was reproached for the “elementary” character of his music, for its aquaticism, or its “atomization” of the motif, “a subdivision into infinitely small units.” This becomes even clearer if we think of becoming-animal: birds are still just as important, yet the reign of birds seems to have been replaced by the age of insects, with its much more molecular vibrations, chirring, rustling, buzzing, clicking, scratching, and scraping. Birds are vocal, but insects are instrumental: drums and violins, guitar and cymbals. A becoming-insect has replaced becoming-bird, or forms a block with it. The insect is closer, better able to make audible the truth that all becomings are molecular (cf. Martenot’s waves, electronic music). (308)
Deleuze and Guattari explicitly link electronic music here with their understanding of insect music.\textsuperscript{179} They conceive of insect imagery in progressive and liberatory terms, not as a squashed protofascist subject of the state as we will see in Adorno’s account of jitterbugs. Rather, the insect represents the dissolving of subjectivity in, alternatively, flows and molecular structures, achieved through technology and yet divorced from technological destruction: “through becomings-woman, -child, -animal, or -molecular, nature opposes its power, and the power of music, to the machines of human beings, the roar of factories and bombers” (309).

The mentioning of electronic music at the end of the prior quotation, despite its apparent opposition to industry, links the precision of sound synthesis and new instrumentation to a transformation of both nature and civilization as insect metaphor. Insect music is the becoming-molecular of modern technology as it sets popular Romantic \textit{Volk} ideologies free from molar formations as represented both in the nightingale and the factory’s roar. The molecular thesis on electronic music was fortuitous, since Deleuze and Guattari later became the philosophers of choice for a whole range of electronic music artists, represented in the Frankfurt-label \textit{Mille Plateaux} and its 1996 double album \textit{In Memoriam Gilles Deleuze}. Indeed, such passages from Deleuze and Guattari need to be examined, not only as pieces of musical-philosophical theory, but as popular texts with considerable impact on the pop and academic discourse of techno culture.\textsuperscript{180}

\textsuperscript{179} These passages have been analyzed and developed by Rosi Braidotti in “Met(r)amorphosis: becoming Woman/Animal/Insect” (117-72). Specifically in the section “Acoustic Environments” (157-63), Braidotti discusses becoming-insect in relation to the musical practice of artists such as DJ Spooky, though the comparisons she draws derive from an arguably limited understanding of musical theory and audio production.

\textsuperscript{180} See the following articles: Hemment; Murphy and Smith (and a later, abridged version by Murphy); and Cox, “Wie.”
Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of music echoes the development of new media: THX insect sound as Wagnerian aquaticism. Imagine Wagner’s Siegfried if he could hear, instead of the birds, only the insects of the forest... The becoming-insect of music can be viewed here as the engineering of music: the dissection of every sound and the optimal arranging of acoustics and volume from Wagner’s Bayreuth to modern sound labs and concert stadiums. As we shall see, this prospect is the promise and the horror of the destruction of nature in the twentieth century, a destruction about which Deleuze and Guattari are not explicit in their writings on music.

Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari’s follow these promising sections on insects with an unfortunate focus on birds in “1837: Of the Refrain.” While mentioning insects briefly, the analysis of birds reads as ahistorical with respect to sound production and industrial organization since the Enlightenment. I thus wish to supplement the “becoming-insect” of music, and its overcoming of the “becoming-bird,” with a third becoming. This becoming rubs against the expressive grain of ontological “becomings” because it recognizes the need for materialistic-technological dissection of the musical material through industrial and institutional means. Dissection is seen as a potentially destructive process. Human music attempts natural expression with means that do violence to nature...

And it is none other than the unlikely formalist figure of Eduard Hanslick who provides this intermediary notion regarding the industrial use of natural materials. In expressing this process, he utilizes as image a quite different animal: the sheep. In one of the great passages from On the Musically Beautiful (1854), written in the midst of the industrial age, Hanslick writes: “Not the voices of animals but their entrails are important to us, and the animal to which music is most indebted is not the nightingale but the sheep” (72). This is at once a materialist and biopolitical understanding of the use of
animal materials. The sheep can be seen as symbolic for other animals of import in instrument construction, such as the horse and the goat. Such an understanding is emphasized by John Mowitt in his theorizing of the importance of skin to drums in *Percussion: Drumming, Beating, Striking*.\(^{181}\) In the image of the sheep in opposition to the nightingale, Hanslick lays the ground for the recognition that advances of the musical material are indeed located in the dissection and refinement of instrumental materials: wood, brass, etc. as well as the anatomo-political instrumentalization and training of human bodies. The historical link of instrumental music and instrumental reason has already been traced by Daniel Chua in *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning*.

In sum, only through this instrumental notion of the becoming-sheep of the musical material could music attain its current microprecision of sound synthesis through both the construction of synthetic materials and the dissection of sound recording, captured in the natural image now made instrumental of becoming-insect.

Dialectics is here brought into Deleuze and Guattari through the back door: The end of subjectivity that Deleuze and Guattari claim in the expressive micromovements of insect-music can be viewed, conversely, as the fulfillment of subjectivity in the scientist who analyzes and structures the micromovements in the *sound lab*, down to the last molecular sound wave. Viewed historically, the material refinement of traditional musical instruments in the becoming-sheep of industrial-Romantic orchestras is expanded through the introduction and use of new materials in the instrumentation of the modern sound studio: from plastics and silicon to new mass-produced metals such as steel, and furthermore, the microprecision of sound synthesis and analysis through the codes of

\(^{181}\) For a general overview of the theory of skin, see the introduction and chapter 1 (1-41).
both analogue and digital equipment.\textsuperscript{182} Indeed, key in this conception of becoming-sheep is its function as an historical analogy. In my schema, the three images of nature-becoming correspond to three stages of human economic production: agrarian/pastoral and becoming-bird, industrial and becoming-sheep, and digital-electronic and becoming-insect. As we will see, these three ages will be key in analyzing the later conceptions of industrial and rave cultures in the age of postindustrial production as an expression of three natures.

At the same time, the insect becomes an explosively productive metaphor for a range of pleasures, movements, sexes, and political organizations. Indeed, I would argue Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of “insect-music” is not an isolated phenomenon during the era of the 1970s and early 1980s. It is a biopolitical image that we see exemplified in cyborg notions of the \textit{man-insect} as complement to the \textit{man-machine}. In popular culture, a few years prior to \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, H.R. Giger’s influential art compendium \textit{Necronomicon} (1977) was published, whose mix of Dark Romanticism, surrealism, and biomechanical art resulted in a plethora of man-insect images. The title of this book derives from the story by H.P. Lovecraft, “The History of Necronomicon.” The origin of Lovecraft’s invented word “necronomicon” lies in none other than insect-music. Lovecraft writes in his fictional etymology of necronomicon: “Original title \textit{Al Azif}—azif being the word used by Arabs to designate that nocturnal sound (made by insects) suppos’d to be the howling of daemons.” Giger’s \textit{Necronomicon} artworks resonate because they combine the perceived terrifying and queer nature of insects with mechanics and humanoid forms. More precisely, Giger’s art is effective because he

\textsuperscript{182} As a result, the advent of codes and sound synthesis also brings the dominance of the sound engineer into question, as he must negotiate analysis, accident, and failure in his engagement with the equipment.
shows “natural” sexuality to be augmented and heightened through the technological and the mechanical. It was this combination that interested Ridley Scott when he utilized the necronomicon series for his film Alien (1979). While lacking an electronic soundtrack with the impact of Vangelis’s Blade Runner compositions, Alien’s influence for its visual aesthetics, biomechanical art, and atmospheric sound production can hardly be overestimated. Just as the alien is simply known as “alien,” without definition, the sexuality of the aliens is a queer form of metamorphosing production beyond human categories. Indeed, the alien is pure production, lacking any mode of traditional identity: The purity of blood as the basis of myths of family, race, and religion is transformed into acid that dissolves. The aliens also create their own hive-like structures, a kind of biomechanical architecture that represents a dystopian metropolis. They take the form of plague-like expansion, which is achieved through pure destruction of all life, individuality, and difference.

It is this model of the insect as representative of industry that interested Theodor Adorno so much in his analysis of popular music a generation prior to Deleuze/Guattari and Giger. Two of Adorno’s essays, “On the Fetish Character of Music and the Regression of Listening” (1938) and “On Popular Music” (1941) include intriguing analyses of the popular phenomenon of the jitterbug, a word that was first used in 1934.

---

183 In the film, the alien demonstrates a proximity to the properties of insect metamorphosis as exhibited by the moth or butterfly. The alien develops in four stages: 1. the egg that is planted by the alien queen; 2. the face hugger that implants its own egg in the male-human host; 3. the chestburster that emerges from and simultaneously kills the host; 4. the fully mature alien that grows out the chestburster through the repeated shedding of skin into a being at two meters height. The queerness of the alien is manifested especially in the face hugger stage, which engages parasitically in an act described by the scriptwriter, Dan O’Bannon, as “homosexual oral rape” (Gallardo and Smith 37). This rape enables the implantation of its egg into the stomach of the male host; the chestburster thus corresponds to male pregnancy. The queer sexuality is an index of the alien’s extreme mode of production, which is demonstrated by Giger in his combination of insect imagery, biomechanics, and industrial design.
in reference to music. This model of subjectivity interested Adorno, though he fails to fully explore the explosive implications of the “jitterbug” as metaphor. For Adorno, the “bug” in “jitterbug,” like the robot, is a totalitarian image that emphasizes brainless oppression, materiality, and collectivity. Adorno conceived of insect music not as a progressive dissolving of subjectivity in Deleuzian flows and molecular becomings, but as a passive protofascist subject:

> Superficially, the thesis about the acceptance of the inescapable seems to indicate nothing more than the relinquishing of spontaneity: the subjects are deprived of any residues of free will with relation to popular music and tend to produce passive reactions to what is given them and to become mere centers of socially conditioned reflexes. The entomological term jitterbug underscores this. It refers to an insect who has the jitters, who is attracted passively by some given stimulus, such as light. The comparison of men with insects betokens the recognition that they have been deprived of autonomous will. (Essays on Music 465)

Adorno does not understand this development in terms of ontology. He focuses, rather, on the historical and performative aspect of this association, arguing that the jitterbugs are all too aware of this performance:

> Even the belief that people today react like insects and are degenerating into mere centers of socially conditioned reflexes, still belongs to the façade…. To become transformed into an insect, man needs that energy which might possibly achieve his transformation into a man. (468)

In both of these passages, Adorno reiterates popular comparisons of jitterbugs with insects. However, it should be mentioned that the original impetus for the term was the notion of the jitters, a medical condition of “delirium tremens” (DTs) resulting from alcoholism. During acute alcohol withdrawal, DTs can include shaking, convulsions, and hallucinations. The jitters developed entomological associations because the hallucinations often involve insects crawling on the skin.
Adorno focuses on the jitters in other passages, where he compares fast and strenuous dancing to the jitters. After all, the jitterbug’s supposed loss of autonomy is augmented by something that neither someone with the jitters, nor the insect, nor the robot has: the ecstatic dance. While ostensibly liberatory, according to Adorno, “Their ecstasy is without content. That it happens, that the music is listened to, this replaces the content itself…. It has convulsive aspects reminiscent of St. Vitus’ dance or the reflexes of mutilated animals” (309). If we compare Adorno’s mentioning of “mutilated animals” to Hanslick’s dissection of the sheep, insect-music could be seen as the barbaric reversion to ritual sacrifice out of the violent foundations of Enlightenment in becoming-sheep.

However, what Adorno does not discuss in the jitterbug, and what makes his criticism merge undialectically with the conservative-bourgeois grump, is precisely the explosive historical content that lies in the natural image of the insect as it relates to music. In other words, the key question remains: What makes discussion of insect imagery in music possible at this specific time versus, for example, the Romantic fixation on the nightingale? To be sure, it is the late-industrial organization of musical life, mass festivals, and concert venues based on electrical sound recording. In the technologies of new media, recording, and amplification, the individual participants appear miniscule and the individual subject appears to dissolve in mass psychology.

But it is more than that. The insect also figures in the progressive potential of modern media that mines natural images and reorganizes the institutions and sounds of folk music, which Deleuze and Guattari indeed did recognize: Bird song becomes insect
The jitterbug is an early manifestation of what will become the postwar myth of sexual liberation and release from traditional cultures. In other words, Adorno misreads insect imagery exclusively as enslavement rather than a historization of nature and a critique of the nightingale and the sheep. The rise of discussion of insects in music is one that is a reconsideration of both first and second nature. In short, it is the realization of what is most artificial and civilized in nature. Adorno’s failure to make this connection is surprising given the industrial metaphors he constantly uses in both essays and his own highly refined dialectics of nature and culture. In fact, the observation in relation to nature would indeed have served him well, since the industrial privileging of insects could be read as the perfect image of the forgetting of first nature that second nature tries to achieve. Such industrial critique is implied, yet in these passages, Adorno prefers to focus polemically on slave subjectivity rather than the nature-culture dialectic. In this context, Richard Leppert criticizes the jitterbug passages from both essays for their overwroughtness, which corresponded to other conservative disparaging of jitterbugs during the time with reductio-ad-Hitlerem analogies.

Yet there is clearly an important political background to Adorno’s conservative disparaging of popular culture through reductio-ad-Hitlerem reasoning. I would posit here that Adorno was so affected by the barbarity of the Third Reich and traumatized by the biopolitical cyborgism of “marching” that he reduced all popular dance forms to the practice of marching. In short, all rhythms are reduced to meter. This is the crux of the

---

184 Adorno complains, for example, about the “infantile” quotations of folk and children’s music (Essays on Music 308) in the hot jazz that jitterbugs so adore. However, he focuses on the commodity aspect of the quotation without acknowledging the potentials of denaturalizing the quotation through performance style, distortion/mediation, and musical form.

185 As Richard Leppert points out, a professor during this time argued jitterbugs could lead to “musical Hitlerism” (Adorno, Essays on Music 344n33). See Leppert’s comments in Essays on Music regarding Adorno’s historical-theoretical context (248-9n78, 342-4).
failure of both the culture industry thesis and Adorno’s reading of popular dance music to account for cultural difference. For Adorno, the protofascist discipline of soldiers and Prussian militarism seemed to affect all aspects of life and ground a stern political anxiety that perceived, sometimes to the point of blindness, the negative potential of all dancing, from carnival to jazz.

Nevertheless, while differing starkly in terms of analysis and historical periodization, Adorno’s and Deleuze/Guattari’s theories are both cyborg images of man and insect mergings. I have described the implication of this insect imagery for electronic music, industrial culture, and the musical material itself. But a question remains in this analysis: Why is the biology of the insect important as a biopolitical image? I would argue that it is the appropriate class of animals for arguments regarding the posthuman age, primarily because of the aesthetic resources that insects provide in the depiction of aliens, as we saw in Giger and Scott’s Alien. The insect is a class of the phylum Arthropoda, which is distinguished by its exoskeletal form. In popular culture, menacing aliens usually take arthropodan form (primarily insects and arachnids): Arthropodan aliens emerge repeatedly as the pop antitheses of humanity.

As an image of the posthuman, cyborg arthropods recall in their armored, exoskeletal forms both biomechanics and industrial culture. While insects are animals, they don't seem "organic" to our understanding, and thus could be linked to notions of becoming alien in the form of becoming plastic or artificial. In other words, the insect is a strange earthly creature that late-modern culture constantly interprets as extraterrestrial. Its sexual practices seem beyond human comprehension, so the insect here becomes symbolic for queerness. The insect thus provides an ambivalent image; it can have beneficial and destructive trajectories. Though the smallest and most insignificant of
creatures, it is more dangerous to humanity's survival than large animals and traditional predators, the so-called “Kings of the Wild” like lions and tigers. The insect as “swarm” takes on lethal forms in terms of plagues or the destruction of crops. Thus, it can also be an image of modern warfare, either nuclear or chemical, or swarms of alien invaders in the form of immigrants and refugees. James Cameron's sequel to Scott's film, *Aliens* (1986), turned to an emphasis on such swarm aspects. The exoskeletal armor of the insect can even become the natural mirror of the Teutonic man-machine, as was later depicted by Paul Verhoeven in *Starship Troopers* (1997), a film itself inspired by *Aliens*. In this sense, the arthropod is the perfect image of otherness because it can be thought of as both futuristic and primitive, armored and amorphous. The insect pleasures of Adorno's jitterbugs and Deleuze/Guattari's electronic insect music thus constitute extraordinary provocations to humanist conceptions of life.

The two trajectories I have explored in this section, the Teutonic man-machine and insect-music, together form a biopolitical dialectic of nature-culture relations. This biopolitical prehistory regarding German identity and popular music's relation to industry and technology situates the electronic music anthropologies to be explored later in the chapter. Before focusing on music, however, my discussion turns to Donna Haraway's feminist theory and the film *Blade Runner* in order to further concretize the cyborg as late-modern figure. Haraway helps to show a new understanding of the cyborg in the 1980s that is fraught with historical ambivalence in a sense not offered by either Adorno's negativity or Deleuze/Guattari's positivity, an ambivalence that *Blade Runner* reflects. Moreover, the film was highly influential in Europe both for its visual aesthetics and electronic music, and it thus allowed the image of the cyborg to circulate within techno and industrial music cultures up to the present.
2. From Haraway to Roy: Feminism and the Teutonic Cyborg

Since the coinage of the term cyborg in 1960, the rapid development of cyborg theory has focused on its consequences for anthropology in a global context. Originally coined by Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline, the cyborg referred to “the enhanced man who could survive in extra-terrestrial environments” (“Cyborgs and Symbionts” xv). In other words, the cyborg was the astronaut and the cosmonaut of the Cold War era. Soviet-American political conflicts aside, the potentials of space travel seemed to reflect in the popular mind the global reach of cyborg terminology in transforming the universal understanding of man. However, Donna Haraway’s canonical “Cyborg Manifesto” rubs against the grain of “man” and deals with the consequences of cyborg technology for notions of race, gender, and reproduction: Or as she terms it, her concept is a “blasphemous anti-racist feminist figure” (“Cyborgs and Symbionts” xvi).

Yet in Haraway’s analysis, a tension in the text, of which she is all too aware, disturbs popular perceptions of the manifesto as a blankly technophilic celebration of the progressive potential of technology to undo gender binaries and national-imperial allegiances. The persistence of the dialectic of technology haunts her affirmation of the progressive potential of cyborgs. As she states, “The main trouble with cyborgs, of course, is that they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism. But illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential” (“A Cyborg Manifesto” 151). She understands these illegitimate offspring to be female cyborgs. However, this chapter will

---

186 A “cyborg anthropology” has been theorized already in a number of contexts. See Downey, Dumit, and Williams.
187 In the language of Clynes and Kline, the cyborg “deliberately incorporates exogenous components extending the self-regulatory control function of the organism in order to adapt to new environments” (31).
use Haraway’s theory to explore primarily the potential for male cyborgs to be illegitimate offspring as well.

Her ambivalence regarding this potential is further hinted at in her discussion of the ages of modernity and supermodernity, or what she terms the ages of “white capitalist patriarchy” and “informatics of domination.” A list of terms lines up along each age, which shows how anthropological parameters have changed between the two ages. I have selected some of the terms, especially because they leave questions regarding the perpetuation of the terms from the first column:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representation</th>
<th>Simulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heat</td>
<td>Noise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugenics</td>
<td>Population Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decadence, <em>Magic Mountain</em></td>
<td>Obsolescence, <em>Future Shock</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial chain of being</td>
<td>Neo-imperialism, United Nations humanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>Robotics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind</td>
<td>Artificial Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second World War</td>
<td>Star Wars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Capitalist Patriarchy</td>
<td>Informatics of Domination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

("A Cyborg Manifesto" 161-162)

Specifically in the second-to-last pair, Star Wars is clearly an enhancement of the destructive potentials of the Second World War. The very nickname of Star Wars connects Ronald Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) program to the Wagnerian-Hollywood science-fiction epic, *Star Wars* (1977). While the Star Wars program referred to here by Haraway came to naught, the threat of nuclear holocaust with its Wagnerian apocalyptic potential remains real. Haraway later acknowledged this aspect and the destructive potential of cyborgs in her discussion of the “Terminator” version of cyborgs: “The Terminator is much more than the morphed body of a virile film star [Schwarzenegger] in the 1990s: the Terminator is the sign of the beast on the face of postmodern culture, the sign of the Sacred Image of the Same” ("Cyborgs and
Symbionts” xv). Taking the materialist view to its catastrophic end, the elimination of gender and anthropological binaries in the enhanced, postmodern man-machine of Star Wars takes its form as the literal destruction of the world.

With the contentious state of the cyborg in our age, I am interested in how cyborgs are racially and nationally coded to recall the past of “white capitalist patriarchy.” In this respect, Theweleit’s soldier male in Male Fantasies offers a negative image of Haraway’s ideal of the cyborg as an “anti-racist feminist figure.” Indeed, a shorthand mode to understanding this history of white capitalist patriarchy is often to reduce it to the Teutonic man-machine. While it is important to understand cyborgs in a global context, how national and racial codes and differences perpetuate in popular cyborg aesthetics and theory has yet to be fully explored. These codes have been recognized in recent literature on Arnold Schwarzenegger and The Terminator films (Goldberg; Greven), in which Schwarzenegger transforms the aesthetics of the SS man into a queer body-builder-machine. But in the context of Haraway’s “A Cyborg Manifesto,” I am more interested in a different, and subtler, manifestation of this history that appears in Blade Runner (1982).

Indeed, Haraway mentions Blade Runner in “A Cyborg Manifesto,” but briefly. The film concerns the return of six replicants (manufactured human- androids) to dystopian Los Angeles set in 2019. The replicants are banned from Earth because they have shown the means to take on human characteristics, which results in a replicant mutiny that killed numerous humans. Special combat units, known as blade runners, are set up to kill any replicants who try to return to Earth. In analyzing the film, Haraway focuses on the new anthropology of the replicants, though she mentions only one of the replicants, Rachel (Sean Young): “There is no fundamental, ontological separation in our
formal knowledge of machine and organism, of technical and organic. The replicant Rachel in the Ridley Scott film *Blade Runner* stands as the image of a cyborg culture’s fear, love, and confusion” (“A Cyborg Manifesto” 178).

Haraway does not mention the other replicants in the film, the replicant rogues that stand outside of the law in their return to Earth. Hunted by the blade runners, they are in a number of respects even more haunted than Rachel by the cyborg age. In particular, Haraway neglects to mention the leader of the rogues, the male replicant: Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer). His is a destructive form of confusion partly because his character operates within the historical dialectic of “white capitalist patriarchy” and “informatics of domination”: the ages of the sheep and the insect. The figure of Roy Batty is as fascinating as Rachel and Roy’s own female rogue-partner: the replicant doll-vamp, Pris (Daryl Hannah). As the replicant rogues on the run, Roy and Pris demonstrate the stylistic effects of cyberpunk and cyborg body aesthetics on European pop musical life. They are a cyberpunk blond couple of strikingly different 1980s appearance than the utopian blond couple of Barbarella (Jane Fonda) and Pygar (John Phillip Law) in the quintessential film of 1960s sexual liberation: *Barbarella* (1968).

Instead of the cyborg as the anti-racist and feminist figure of Haraway’s kind, Roy is the Teutonic cyborg of enhanced whiteness and masculinity. Although he is a key figure in the history of Teutonic representation, Rutger Hauer’s replicant is a subtler figure than Arnold Schwarzenegger’s Terminator. Above all, it is hard to place him geographically and morally. Whereas Schwarzenegger is a clear Teutonic man-machine with a thick Austrian accent (his essence, once the human layers are peeled off, is a machine), Hauer speaks with a refined English accent that has subtle Dutch inflections,

---

188 For analyses of racial coding in *Blade Runner*, see Locke and Silverman
and there is no antihuman machinic essence to be found. Indeed, Hauer’s Dutch ancestry is fortuitous. He represents the extraordinary potentials for negotiating Northern European identity that the Benelux countries and the Rhine Belt provide, in which the history of Teutonic industry can be approached in more indirect fashion than a German or Austrian actor might offer. Indeed, Hauer’s character and physiognomy could arguably represent five primary codings of imperialism: German, English, Dutch/Flemish, Scandinavian, and Russian.

Roy Batty uniquely blurs the boundaries of German and European identity. His behavior, which is not merely a man-machine, reinforces this vagueness. He is as torn and confused as Haraway’s expanded cyborg couplings beyond the traditional man/machine coupling. Roy takes on images part man, part machine, part godhead, and part animal-wolf, especially in the final battle with his blade runner nemesis, Rick Deckard. This splitting of identities approaches the schizophrenic model of the insect. Yet as a “Combat Model” Nexus 6 replicant of “Level A” physique and “Level A” intelligence, with striking blue eyes, albino white hair, and a Nordic physiognomy, Roy recalls the history of Nazi eugenics in a new age of “population control.” These aspects were not lost on Philip K. Dick, who commented on the performance of Rutger Hauer: “the perfect Batty – cold, Aryan, flawless.” (Sammon 284).

That Roy is coded both as Aryan-Nazi and European-Other is further complemented by the fact that Harrison Ford plays his blade runner nemesis, Deckard. Though it is hinted Deckard might be a replicant himself, Ford’s performance makes an interpretation of Deckard as a grunt American hero with traces of persistent humanism.

189 That Rutger Hauer’s physiognomy lends itself to such World War II associations is demonstrated later in his Nazi performances in two made-for-TV movies: Inside The Third Reich (1982) and Fatherland (1994).
virtually irresistible. Ford had already played roles such as Hans Solo and Indiana Jones, both of whom fight actual Nazis or Nazi-coded enemies in *Star Wars* (1977) and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981). As antihero, Deckard-Ford is thus caught between three codings: blade runner, replicant, and American hero-celebrity.

Yet Roy remains superior to his all-too-human American adversaries, at least in strength and wit. His two primary adversaries are Deckard and Dr. Eldon Tyrell, Roy’s scientist-creator. The meetings with each of these adversaries conclude with some of film’s most famous lines. Before Roy kills his creator, he has the following exchange:

Roy: I’ve done questionable things.
Tyrell: Also extraordinary things. Revel in your time.
Roy: Nothing that the God of Biomechanics wouldn’t let you in heaven for?

Roy then kisses his “father” on the lips before killing him.

This final exchange between Roy and Tyrell concerns ethics, even though the initial meeting began with Roy’s demand for more life in his vitalist existence beyond good and evil. His confrontation with death leads him to an ethical turn. However, this turn is replete with utter despair, since Roy’s entire existence up to this point has concerned war and destruction. In this state, Roy is like the “soldier males” described by Klaus Theweleit, who attempt to deal with civilian life in a postwar world, in this case the world system of the Long Peace, and yet exhibit the repetition compulsion to return to the world of war. Roy’s only way out seems to be turning his talents of war back against the “father” in the hope that this will atone for his actions. The destruction of the father is thus Roy’s attempt to become something like the illegitimate offspring that Haraway describes.

Though physically deteriorating and in mental despair, Roy’s superiority as a replicant with “Type A” physique and “Type A” intelligence continues in his final battle
with Deckard. Yet it is not a real battle. Roy can choose to kill Deckard at any point. At the same time that Roy returns to a love of war, the deterioration of his replicant body reflects the deterioration of his world. Roy saves Deckard from death in a merciful “Christian” act immediately prior to the final shutdown of his replicant body. His final lines to Deckard, the most famous lines of the film, are as follows:

I’ve seen things you people wouldn’t believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I’ve watched c-beams, glitter in the dark near Tannhäuser Gate. All those moments will be lost, in time, like tears in the rain… Time to die.

What to make of these memories he has “seen”? In *Blade Runner*, memories are generally shown to be untrustworthy evidence of individuality as a challenge to the division between human and replicant. There is always the chance that memories are implanted and thus false histories: An apparent human could always be a replicant. Nothing of the past is secure. Yet with Roy, I would argue that this is the one moment in which memories can be taken as real, because they do not concern human domesticity and the family, the traditional source for identity. Rather, they are his memories of war experiences as a soldier in the service of white capitalist patriarchy. Ironically, war trauma is the only past memory one can rely on securely in the film.

However, the reality of these experiences are still “misremembered” because of Roy’s interpretation of them. When Roy says “all those moments will be lost, in time,” he does it with a tone of attachment and pain. He recalls those memories as his “father” wishes him to: as “extraordinary things.” The reference to the fictional “Tannhäuser Gate” subtly situates Roy as a war antihero in Wagnerian history, with his bright recollections of these wars as a futuristic *Gesamtkunstwerk*: a final aestheticization of war before his death. Yet his death is also extraordinarily plain. He simply slouches over
in the rain – naked, unarmored, vulnerable – while a dove that he caught flies into the sky. This is a strange mix of heroism and antiheroism, a hero’s salvation in a final antiheroic refusal to kill, just as he is running out of juice.

In these final moments, Roy proves to be an extraordinary aesthetic figure for exploring the identity of the Teutonic male in the crossover from fascist modernity to posthumanist supermodernity. The shocking scandal of Roy consists in his function as a humanist soldier male, in which humanism dissolves. A key point of identification for numerous techno-industrial movements, the figure of Roy is the primary filmic example of the militaristic cyberpunk of the leather-trench coat style. As we will see, this style had its contemporary manifestation in groups like Deutsch Amerikanische Freundschaft.

Furthermore, *Blade Runner* itself has become, at least for electronic music groups, one of the most sampled films in history. Both its dialogue and its soundtrack by Vangelis have passed through a whole range of producers, including German electronic musicians such as Pete Namlook in “The Fires of Ork II” and Cosmic Baby in “A Tribute to Blade Runner,” as well as the “Trés Chic” LP by Nexus 6.¹⁹⁰ The technologically Teutonic Roy is also sonically reflected in the electrification of martial tunes in Vangelis’s soundtrack. It is an aesthetic world vision of a hyperartificial dystopia, a philosophical understanding of nature-culture relations that runs counter to Haraway’s anti-binary understanding of “natureculture.” The futuristic-dystopian Los Angeles is a simulacra of the natural world, and its electronic music arguably explores insect music in more dystopian and destructive ways than Deleuze and Guattari could have ever imagined.

¹⁹⁰ A list of primarily electronic music was compiled by Patrick Meaney in 2003 in the article, “Blade Runner: Related Music FAQ, Versions 1.1.” He gives the following totals for the direct sampling of *Blade Runner* in music: “At the last check, they totaled 77 groups, 102 songs, 198 samples.” However, one can be sure this represents only a portion of *Blade Runner* sampling, not to mention the influence of its soundscapes on the styles of countless bands.
Blade Runner has become the source for imagining numerous artificial techno worlds, as we will see, in the aesthetics of various raves. With Blade Runner’s enormous influence on the sounds and aesthetics of electronic music cultures in mind, I now turn to a series of musical acts and events in which biopolitics and the man-machine are thematized and explored.

3. Soundings of Biopolitics

3a. Kraftwerk Anthropology

Kraftwerk has appeared repeatedly in this dissertation not only because of its singular influence on German electronic music. Even more important is the fact that its pop albums are thoroughly crafted concept albums that proved influential on the aesthetics that was to arise in many subsequent techno bands and scenes. In chapter 1, Autobahn and Trans Europa Express were analyzed as travel albums, more precisely as explorations of German and European travel and identity. In chapter 2, the legacy of Kraftwerk’s Romantic minimal compositions, especially Radio-Aktivität and the track “Franz Schubert,” were analyzed with reference to Atom™. In chapter 3, Radio-Aktivität and Computerwelt were dealt with as modern media albums, more precisely as a reflection on the intersection of media, language, communication, and energy in the twentieth century. Finally, in this chapter, Die Mensch-Maschine can be understood as Kraftwerk’s anthropology album. More precisely, this album explores the future of biopolitics through the exploration of retro-futures of the avant-garde from constructivism to dada. Indeed, its anthropology is clearly rooted in the European avant-garde and in the matrix of modern urban life in Germany.
The opening and closing tracks, “Die Roboter” and “Die Mensch-Maschine,” constitute Kraftwerk’s most direct expressions of the male cyborg. Yet the other four tracks also offer key anthropological statements regarding late modernity. Most significantly, gender, posture, and the female cyborg are explored in “The Model.” This track alludes to Kraftwerk’s hometown of Düsseldorf, a center of European fashion and body culture that was already evoked in their track from *Trans Europa Express*, “Schaufensterpuppen.” The rest of the songs discuss geographical locations far removed from the pastoral becoming-bird. They include “Spacelab,” a cyborg-astronaut vision of extraterrestrial residence,¹⁹¹ and two tracks about urban life inspired by expressionist visions of the city in film and poetry: “Metropolis” and “Neon Lights.” “Metropolis” obviously makes reference to *Metropolis* (1927), a film with its own vision of modern urban life and the depiction of a female robot vamp, which at the time was receiving a new disco soundtrack by Giorgio Moroder. This allusion firmly marks Kraftwerk’s *Mensch-Maschine* album as a reappropriation of older German science fiction within the context of postwar German sonic fiction. In this sense, both “The Robots” and “The Man Machine” appear as indirect homages to *Metropolis*. The singular female presence of the “Model” thus offers a postmodern interpretation of female cyborgs that marks an ambivalent update, and arguable critique, of the female robot vamp of *Metropolis*.

“Die Roboter,” which opens the album, can be classified as a sonically biopolitical song. By this I mean that the sounds are selected for their materially evocative properties. They imitate the various clicks, bleeps, blurps, and clangs that a metallic robot body produces – thus offering an expressive instrumental-body of the insect type

¹⁹¹ One might also imagine this musically as the cyborg dream of a sound engineer, whose “soundlab” is transformed into a “spacelab.”
described by Deleuze and Guattari, as opposed to the vocal-bird. The biopolitical focus on energy as a bodily and material resource underscores this in the text:

**Die Roboter**

- Ja tvoi sluga, (I'm your slave)
- ja tvoi Rabotnik (I'm your worker.)
- Wir laden unsere Batterie
- Jetzt sind wir voller Energie
- Wir sind die Roboter
- Wir funktionieren automatik
- Jetzt wollen wir tanzen mechanik
- Wir sind auf Alles programmiert
- Und was du willst wird ausgeführt

**The Robots**

- Ja tvoi sluga, (I'm your slave)
- ja tvoi Rabotnik (I'm your worker.)
- We're charging our battery
- And now we're full of energy
- We are the robots
- We're functioning automatic
- And we are dancing mechanic
- We are the robots
- We are programmed just to do
- Anything you want us to

Unlike the songs from *Radio-Aktivität* and *Computerwelt* explored in chapter 3, which demonstrate a dialectical interaction of human and vocoder voices, the vocoder voice of “Die Roboter” is remarkably consistent throughout. It thus emphasizes the robot world over the human world. Yet this is not a menacing robot of the robophobic kind. The clicks and bleeps of the robot body create a pleasureful rhythm, a robot that dances despite the announcement of being a “worker” and “slave.” The line “And we are dancing mechanic” is key. The pleasurable, and indeed comical, technophilic merging of the robot and human world in the activity of the robot dance is reflected in the funky rhythm. Indeed, the line of “dancing mechanic” and the rhythms of *Die Roboter* anticipate the rise of urban-cyborg forms of dancing from breakdance to jumpstyle.

The relation of the body to dance keenly interested Kraftwerk. For example, the title “Schaufensterpuppen” from *Trans Europa Express* appears to deal strictly with the Düsseldorf fashion industry. Yet, Ralf Hütter explains that it was conceived in the context of the disco: “The song was born in a disco, before Travolta and all that. We were
interested in the transition of life/death/life, a part of our existence, which cannot be
denied and has a lot to do with the disco” (Schober, “Kraftwerk: Kinder” 78). This
interest is reflected in the lyrics; the showroom dummies begin by “standing here,” but in
the final lines they state: “we go into a club / and there we begin to dance.” Like Adorno’s
worries regarding the subjectivity of jitterbugs, the text of “Die Roboter” admits the link of
robots to workers and slaves; the final verse emphasizes the submission inherent in their
programming and dancing in the industrial age. However, like “Schaufensterpuppen,” the
pleasure that resists total submission is comparable to the “illegitimate children” of
Haraway, who turn the tables on the soldier cyborg. This resistance by Kraftwerk to the
prejudice that the robot dance is purely submissive makes the vocoder voice pleasing.
The voice is distorted like “Die Stimme der Energie,” but it is not threatening. By
emphasizing the unwieldiness of these bodies with its various clangs and blurps,
Kraftwerk emphasizes the humorous aspect of cyborg worlds that resist totalitarian
earnestness. The buzzing and distorted sound of the vocoder evokes insect music. Like
Haraway, Kraftwerk’s irony emphasizes the distant performativity of robot bodies on
stage. In short, the age of the “informatics of domination” is distinguished from the
previous age by its wrestling with humor and irony in the political arena.

This emphasis on performativity is reflected in the actual stage performances.
“Die Roboter” inspired one of the most interesting stage ideas in modern pop music;
robot replicants of the band members were placed on stage, emphasizing the
constructed nature of stage shows and critiquing the “authentic” connection between
stars and fans. Hütter even played with the journalists with respect to the band’s

192 “Der Song entstand in einer Disco, bevor Travolta und sowas da waren. Da hat uns der
Übergang von tot/lebendig/tot interessiert, ein Teil unserer Existenz, der nicht zu leugnen ist und
viel mit Disco zu tun hat.”
“authentic” statements in the context of interviews. As Hütter says: “You, the journalists, you will be amazed. One day, the robots will be the ones who will answer your questions, they will have an electronic brain and memories with all the possible questions. To get the answers, you will only have to press a button…” (Bussy 107). During tours, I saw Kraftwerk perform in 2004 in Copenhagen and in 2008 in the “Metropolis” of Maplewood, Minnesota. The audience indeed applauded just as enthusiastically for the robots as they did for the Kraftwerk band members themselves. This reaction is reflected in the live performance of “Die Roboter” on Minimum-Maximum.

The use of robots on stage was the culmination of Kraftwerk’s stiff appearance in red and black ties, emphasizing their role as postindustrial office workers or “Musikarbeiter.” This was the image cultivated specifically for the Mensch-Maschine album, and the style is represented in its 1978 music video of “Die Roboter.” It forged a provocative break with the band members’ former muted appearance in business suits. In the words of Pascal Bussy, “by adopting a uniform they were stressing the impression of a corporate mentality – the group as one whole, Kraftwerk being greater than the sum of its parts, an efficient working machine whose individual personalities had given way to a group mentality” (98). These uniforms were a version of Teutonic performance different from and subtler than Laibach. Though inspired by Russian constructivism and futurism, El Lissitzky in particular (Bussy 97), and emphasizing the color red and its association with communism, the album’s primary colors were red, white, and black. The band could thus skirt the stylistic similarities between totalitarian, communist, and fascist art.
However, against fascism’s aesthetic appropriation of male cyborg imagery and the avant-garde, Kraftwerk reappropriated man-machine aesthetics for the avant-garde and a postmodernist ethos of cyberculture. As band member Karl Bartos states, “\textit{Man Machine} had a strong paramilitary image, but it is a contradiction because we wore red shirts and not brown” (Bussy 98). Fellow band member Wolfgang Flür even reverses the expectation of gender politics regarding an all-male band, emphasizing the feminist aspects that mark these cyborgs as illegitimate children of Haraway’s type: “We had to look like it sounded, if you think that big and huge American rock stars, how they appeared on stage…. It’s a macho feel, and macho movements, and we didn’t want that…. We have feminine attitudes, everyone of us, and this was good for us because it kept us a little more elegant. We wanted that elegant style” (Flür, \textit{Pop I Fokus}). Again, this reference to feminine style indicates a move toward becoming “illegitimate children” of the Teutonic man-machine while acknowledging the risk involved in this move.

The ambivalent relationship to the progressive and destructive form that cyborgs have taken during the century comes out more directly in the more ominous sounds of the final track, “\textit{Die Mensch-Maschine}”:

\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textbf{Die Mensch-Maschine} & \textbf{The Man-Machine} \\
\textit{Mensch-Maschine,} & \textit{[Man-Machine} \\
\textit{Halb Wesen und Halb Ding} & \textit{Half creature, Half thing} \\
\textit{Mensch-Maschine} & \textit{Man-Machine} \\
\textit{Halb Wesen und Halb Über-Ding} & \textit{Half creature, Half über-thing} \\
\end{tabular}

English version released by Kraftwerk: \textit{(pseudo-human being super-human being)}

The song primarily consists of a rising melodic line of the repeated word “machine” that has a menacing feel to it, reminiscent of an approaching villain in horror films. Within the text, the Teutonic term of an “Über-Ding” as synonym for “machine”
emphasizes the ambivalent history of the destructive, biopolitical potential of the man-machine. Moreover, the repetition of “machine” emphasizes the threatening, dehumanizing potential of techno culture in a more direct way than “Die Roboter.” To explain, each time “man-machine” is uttered, “man” is uttered only once whereas “machine” is repeated nine times as though, in its health- unto-death vitality, it takes over the musical melody as a form of productive repetition. This repetitive “machine” line was rather muted in the 1978 original song, but it became more pronounced in the version of the track for the Minimum-Maximum tour. Each utterance of the word was made with greater emphasis. In fact, “Mensch-Maschine” opened the concerts for this tour.

By offering minimal text, combined with melody and rhythms that were less clunky than “Die Roboter,” “Die Mensch-Maschine” was able to offer a different take on the history of the man-machine and the supermodern cyborg. Indeed, with their minimal texts, neither track takes a direct political stance through proclamations of agitprop and other political traditions. This is the strength of both of the songs. The ambiguous phenomenon of the robots and man-machines are presented through sound. However, “Die Mensch-Maschine” is even more direct in its announcement of the man-machine as an ontological fact, which is brutal in its irreversibility. Journalist Lester Bangs offered an important observation on this issue in his article on the band:

In the music of Kraftwerk, and bands like them present and to come, we see at last the fitting culmination of this revolution, as the machines not merely overpower and play the human beings but absorb them, until the scientist and his technology, having developed a higher consciousness of its own, are one and the same.

Kraftwerk, whose name means ‘power plant,’ have a word for this ecstatic congress: Menschmaschine, which translates as ‘man-machine.’
This statement offers the synthesis, or rather the troubled sum, of the man-machine dialectic. This sum takes the following form: a tension between message of the lyrics and the sounds of the musical medium in both tracks. “Die Roboter” plays with the trope of the man-machine to reveal human agency involved in performative decisions, which maintain the humanist experiences of pleasure, humor, and irony. In contrast, “Mensch-Maschine” lets the reflection on white capitalist patriarchy and the informatics of domination be made in more ambivalent and cold terms that emphasize the robot as slave. The repetition of “machine” is offered up as both a fact and a warning to the course of techno culture in the 1980s.

3b. DAF: Stompy Boots and Dance

Boots appeared to the souls an especial symbol characteristic of manliness. To the souls “to take off boots” meant much the same as unmanning.

Daniel Paul Schreber

By 1978 and the release of Die Mensch-Maschine, Kraftwerk had established itself as a major band from Düsseldorf. At the same time, the Düsseldorf punk scene was still in its infancy. However, this scene was quickly gaining national attention in West Germany. The most successful and innovative band to emerge out of Düsseldorf punk was Deutsch Amerikanische Freundschaft (DAF, translation: German-American Friendship). With an exceptional focus on electronic sounds, DAF took a different musical trajectory than many of the punk bands in the period. Composed of originally four members, Gabriel “Gabi” Delgado-López, Robert Görl, Kurt “Pyrolator” Dahlke, and Wolfgang Spelmans, the group was eventually reduced in 1981 to the duo of Delgado-López and Görl, the formation for which it became best known. The albums Die Kleinen und die
Bösen (1980), Alles ist Gut (1981), and Gold und Liebe (1981) would become the definitive albums of the band and central for the development of the genre of “Electronic Body Music” (EBM), a biopolitical name if there ever was one and as stated, a term that actually derived from Kraftwerk. Delgado-López explains the shift in musical and artistic interests: “We quickly became more interested in Dadaism than punk...we were also influenced by futurism, this positive attitude to new technologies, to the future, to progress, and to machines. To the motor. I liked that. We thought all the abstract constructivists were great – these cyborg man-machines” (Teipel 78-9).

This mix of punk and electronics was presented in productive rivalry to Kraftwerk’s more reserved, bourgeois ethos. I thus want to explore the trajectory that DAF attempted to carve out in its focus on class and ethnic issues in relation to cyborgs and the techno dance. Delgado-López states, “I was always totally against Kraftwerk. It was like this: ‘No energy! These lazy-asses!’ We knew them too. They sat with their slim ties in a fancy bar in Oberkassel together with white-collar types. That was a horrible way to live to me. We wanted real violence and extreme sex. We wanted to experience something.” (Teipel 96-7). In short, Kraftwerk represented the machine as white Apollo, and DAF represented the machine as carnival Dionysus. While both bands thematize the machine body and biopolitical issues, DAF differs in striking ways.

193 All quotations from the Teipel interviews with DAF in this section are my own translations. “Wir haben uns bald mehr für Dadaismus interessiert als für Punk.... Wir waren auch vom Futurismus beeinflusst, diese positive Einstellung zu neuen Technologien, zur Zukunft und zum Fortschritt und zur Maschine. Zum Motor. Das hat mir gefallen. Wir fanden die ganzen abstrakten Konstruktivisten toll – die ganzen Cyborg-Maschinenmenschen.”

194 “Ich war immer total gegen Kraftwerk. Das war so: ‘Keine Energie! Diese laschen Säcke!’ Man kannte die ja auch. Die sind mit ihren schmalen Krawatten immer in Oberkassel in ihrer komischen Schnulli-Bar gesessen, zusammen mit so Bundfaltenhosen-Typen. Das war für mich eine scheußliche Form zu leben. Wir wollten doch hier echt Gewalt und extremen Sex. Wir wollten was erleben.”
The innovations of DAF were essentially achieved by placing the aggressive energy of punk into their experimentation with the driving possibilities of the Korg MS-20 synthesizer, one of the definitive synthesizers in the development of popular electronic music during the 1980s, later used by Uwe Schmidt in Liedgut. Pyrolator mentions that the addition of the Korg MS-20 brought an electronic edge to their punk music, which eventually resulted in Electronic Body Music, a form of electronic music that was, like punk, starkly dilettantish but ruthlessly driving and effective (Teipel 176).

Aside from the newness of the driving electronic sounds, DAF’s presence on the stage served to make the public and press take notice, as it contrasted starkly with the cold distance of Kraftwerk. Delgado-López and Görl played with diffuse erotics and constantly implied a bisexual and hardcore ethos. The reports and gossip surrounding these performances made them notorious in Germany and internationally. Delgado-López was a striking youth with dark hair and tan skin, the son of Spanish workers who arrived in Germany when he was eight years old, hence a youth with *Migrationshintergrund* [immigrant background]. Görl was an equally striking German youth with blond hair.

In music videos and photos shoots, both members cultivated highly charged erotic physiognomies. They would usually look directly at the camera, displaying aroused expressions, parted lips, and damp hair and skin, most famously on the cover of *Alles ist Gut*. Sex as musical tension was placed on stage by DAF, again in contrast to Kraftwerk. To confuse matters regarding sexuality, Delgado-López states that he and Görl were in love, but that sex was forbidden: “I just liked men. The drama queens made me want to barf. And so we had these gay aesthetics. Really fist-fuck-like. But I never had sex with Robert. That was taboo. Even though it was in the air. Robert was my true
love, for many years." (Teipel 306). DAF emphasized the charged homoerotic image with scandalous texts, especially for the culture of the 1980s, like “Der Räuber und der Prinz.” This song was open about homosexual love:

**Der Räuber und der Prinz**

Ein schöner junger Prinz
Verirrte sich im Wald.
Plötzlich wurde es dunkel.
Da packten ihn die Räuber.
Doch einer von den Räubern
Liebte diesen Prinzen.
Ich liebe dich mein Prinz.
Ich liebe dich mein Räuber.

**The Robber And The Prince**

A beautiful young prince
Got lost in the woods.
Suddenly night fell.
So the robbers caught him.
But one of the robbers
Loved the prince.
I love you, my prince.
I love you, my robber.

Starting with *Alles ist Gut* and fully developed by *Gold und Liebe*, these aroused expressions and homoerotic innuendos were accompanied by militarized uniforms and leather gear of various types. Delgado-López: “And after we really started to make money with DAF, we could afford the completely leather outfits, down to the leather T-shirt. That was a simple body cult: hard, clear, pure. Even though we seemed to be militaristic – for some it seemed like the SS – it was still a total fantasy outfit for us” (Teipel 304). He explains further: “Something had to emerge from this hateful energy to make it good. Namely love. Love had to come in, because you can’t live that way forever. So something homoerotic had to emerge out of this male band, like the love that crystallized between Robert and me” (Teipel 227). The association of fascism with the

---


196 “Und als wir mit DAF richtig viel Geld verdienten, konnten wir uns eben dieses komplette Lederoutfit leisten. Bis hin zum Leder-T-Shirt. Das war einfach so ein Körperkult: hart, klar, rein. Wenn wir dadurch militarisch rüberkamen – das kam ja für manche SS-mäßig rüber –, war das für uns trotzdem das reinst Phantasieoutfit.”

197 “Aus dieser Hassenergie musste sich ja etwas entwickeln, damit das gut wird. Nämlich Liebe. Liebe musste da rein. Weil man auf Dauer nicht so leben kann. Deswegen musste aus diesem Männerbund so was Homeroetisches werden, wie sich das dann zwischen Robert und mir herauskristallisierte.”
tense slippage between male bonding and homosexuality has a complex history in pop culture and theory (both from the political left and right), which I will critique later. For now, it should be mentioned that these debates had an interesting contemporary parallel in the academy: precisely, the theories of biopower of Foucault, whose experiences in the leather scenes of Europe and California assisted in his own theorizations.

Gender and sexual representations were not the only scandal in the performance by DAF. Delgado-López’s immigrant background made the display of protofascist energy all the more confusing and disturbing, just as he parodied immigrant fears in the 1980 single “Kebab-Träume” [Kebab Dreams]. His love for Görl, whether consummated or not, constituted an act of miscegenation as musical performance. Robert Görl describes what his stage role with Delgado-López was like: “Until the end I accompanied these electronics with acoustic drums…. Today one just plays a computer. But at that time it was a real man-machine-occasion. You had to play perfectly as a human. That was high risk sport” (Teipel 293).  

He continues, “That was the show concept. The blond, sweating one, who pounds away: and the dark Spaniard, who jumps around in front of him” (Teipel 296). With such a challenge to traditional racial and gender categories mixed with fascist-leather associations, DAF served to draw attention from audience members and the press. They gained publicity, commercial success, and export status with Alles ist Gut and Gold und Liebe being released on Virgin.

Yet the fascist imagery was actually quite common for the time. The return of such imagery with Teutonic scandal was an important marker of the era, especially

---


199 “Das war unser Showkonzept. Der blonde, schwitzende Typ, der da reinhaut. Und der dunkle Spanier, der vor mir rumspringt.”
rampant in postpunk bands as diverse as Joy Division and Throbbing Gristle. The prevalence of this imagery marked the degree to which sexual and political liberation had come into doubt during the late-1970s and early-1980s. For DAF, the mix of biopolitics, sex, and machine music was crystallized by Delgado-López in the following statement regarding their musical instruments, and again he polemicizes against Kraftwerk: “The machines were always on the verge of breaking. In contrast to Kraftwerk, our machines had to sweat.” (292). The image of sweating synthesizers indicates the logic of the increased drive and hardcore sex precisely through the machinic rather than despite it. Their outfits and EBM reflected the sweating synthesizers, displayed in the music videos “Liebe auf den ersten Blick” and “Greif nach den Sternen.” Indeed, conflict and war were directly associated with their erotically charged performances, as presented in their hit song: “Alle Gegen Alle”:

**Alle Gegen Alle**

Unsere Kleidung ist so schwarz.
Unsere Stiefel sind so schön.
Links den roten Blitz.
Rechts den schwarzen Stern.
Unsere Schreie sind so laut.
Unser Tanz ist so wild.
Ein neuer böser Tanz.
Alle gegen Alle.

**All against all**

Our clothes are so black.
Our boots are so beautiful.
The red flash to the left.
The black star to the right.
Our shouts are so loud.
Our dance is so wild.
A new evil dance.
All against all.

As the text announces, the “new evil dance” was to be achieved by having “black boots” rather than dance shoes or sneakers on the dance floor. Görl discusses how their music resulted in new dances by the crowd, as reported by their producer, Conny Plank: “[He] worked at the mixer right in the crowd. He told us later that the people had never danced like that before. A totally new dance had emerged. A mix between jumping and dancing

---

200 “Die Maschinen waren immer kurz vorm Zusammenbrechen. Im Gegensatz zu Kraftwerk mussten die Maschinen bei uns schwitzen.”
and turning. They developed entire new moves out of our energy” (Teipel 297). Indeed, it announced and celebrated the march, a provococation regarding the possible return of the Teutonic “man-machine” in the midst of liberal pop culture. A number of years later in Frankfurt, the producer Marc Acardipane took this march of “hardcore techno” to new heights with the extraordinary 1990 track “We Have Arrived,” in which the Roland TR-909 eventually replaced the Korg MS-20 as the ultimate sweating synthesizer amidst the sounds of war sirens. Acardipane’s work in developing hardcore continued on his label Planet Core Productions and the release of ever more intense and fast music, such as “At War [Remix]” and “The Phuture.”

This association of marching, dance, and fascism, of which many accused DAF, was highlighted further in a song that flaunted the association. The song makes jokes about new dance styles and moves, such as “The Mussolini,” a loosely interpreted cover version of Cabaret Voltaire’s “Mussolini Headkick.” The song describes the dance moves with delight:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Der Mussolini</th>
<th>The Mussolini</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geht in die Knie</td>
<td>Get on your knees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Und Klatscht in die Hände,</td>
<td>And clap your hands,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beweg deine Hüften</td>
<td>Move your hips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Und tanz den Mussolini,</td>
<td>And dance the Mussolini,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanz den Mussolini.</td>
<td>Dance the Mussolini.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreh dich nach rechts</td>
<td>Turn to the right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Und klatsch in die Hände,</td>
<td>And clap your hands,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Und mach den Adolf Hitler,</td>
<td>And do the Adolf Hitler,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


202 The aesthetic traced here engages a specific European interpretation of repetition as regression. For alternative theories of repetition that critique this negative association, see Butler; Fink; and Garcia.
Tanz den Adolf Hitler.  Dance the Adolf Hitler.

Und jetzt den Mussolini,
Beweg deinen Hintern,
Klatscht in die Hände,
Tanz den Jesus Christus…

Klatscht in die Hände,
Und tanz den Kommunismus,
Und jetzt den Mussolini,
Und jetzt nach rechts,
Und jetzt nach links…

Like their earlier scandals, this resorting to inflammatory lyrics had commercial benefits. “Der Mussolini” continues to be one of DAF’s most popular songs, proving that both sex and fascist aesthetics sell, especially as exports. In other words, the use of man-machine biopolitics as advertisement was nothing new. In this historical context, the conflicted writings of Susan Sontag regarding pop and camp aesthetics were prominent. Sontag tried to explain the popularity and commercial success of 1970s Naziesque fashions in her 1975 essay, “Fascinating Fascism,” an essay that arguably tries to offer a more critical eye to her 1964 musings “Notes on Camp.” As she argues, “Today it may be the Nazi past that people invoke, in the theatricalization of sexuality, because it is those images (rather than memories) from which they hope a reserve of sexual energy can be tapped…. The fad for Nazi regalia indicated something quite different: a response to an oppressive freedom of choice in sex (and in other matters), to an unbearable degree of individuality; the rehearsal of enslavement rather than its reenactment” (“Fascinating” 104). Sontag detects in this sensationalist change, made symbolic by the 1970s celebration of Leni Riefenstahl as a pop figure, a shift from an ethics against fascism to a problematically benign fascist aesthetic that is merely a “matter of taste” or “life-style.”
Yet in the exploration of the logic of cyborg images such as DAF, one might see more in these new performance styles than Sontag’s critical eye wants to admit. Arguably, bands such as DAF were able to appropriate and flip the sedimentation of the Teutonic man-machine. Sontag does not acknowledge the historical work in the 1970s that the sensationalism of, and above all sexualization of, fascist fashion is able to achieve. While DAF did indeed encounter right-wing audience members, their performance style served as a scandal to such perspectives. DAF features the scandalized, hybrid version of their identity through one of the most famous sayings about them at the time: that they were “the Teutonic complement to Grace Jones.”

Grace Jones is a Jamaican-American diva who by the late 1970s had a large gay following through her sensationalized performances. The logic of coupling sadomasochism or homosexuality with Nazism was later critiqued by Andrew Hewitt in Political Inversions. As Hewitt claims, “If homosexuality dare not speak its own name, it will nevertheless serve as the ‘name’ of something else that cannot be spoken – fascism” (9).

Whereas Kraftwerk focused on the merging of man and technological machines in the figure of the cold cyborg, DAF focused more directly on the energies of the human body that resulted from the discipline of the Teutonic man-machine. By merging this tradition with queer aesthetics, DAF sought to ramp up what were already recognized as the pleasures that result from bodily training and submission, but in a form in which homosexuality was on display. In such a display, DAF challenges the audience to reflect upon the relationship between male pleasure and machine music.

---

203 “germanisches Gegenstück zu Grace Jones.”
Klaus Theweleit's *Male Fantasies* had precisely the relationship between pleasure and fascism as a central theme in the notion of the “totality machine,” discussed earlier with reference to Laibach. *Male Fantasies* theorizes the form that “total” fascist pleasure, an example of the “soldier male” type:

The machine’s flow is continuous, a totality that maintains every component in appropriate and uninterrupted motion. It has no cut-off points, it never pauses: if the machinery of the military academy ever stops running, it is done for. To turn it off is impossible.

The machinery is the antithesis of the desiring-machine…. [It] gives way to the pleasure of existing as a component within a whole machine, a macromachine, a power machine in which the component does not invest his own pleasure, but produces that of the powerful.  

Opposite from the desiring-machine, the totality-machine presented a type of celebration and erotics that differs starkly from the carnivalesque. Theweleit further argues that the soldier male is “constantly directed toward the attainment of three perceptions: the ‘empty space,’ the ‘bloody miasma’ and the inundation of consciousness in ‘blackout’” (2: 271). He offers a fanciful theory of color in which each of these experiences corresponds to the colors of the imperial German flag, and later the Nazi flag: white, red and black. The soldier males love these flags “with a frenzy that may be more than accidental” (2: 283). Theweleit proposes linking black with homosexuality: “Black is the color of forbidden love between men, of a dance of death in dark, deranged ecstasy – the ecstasy of a physical body overloaded, of mutual recognition in armed combat hand-to-hand” (2: 283)^204^.

However, when trying to describe the experience of war, Theweleit’s analysis becomes darkly blurred. He resorts to discourses of intoxication. In his writings,

^204^ “White corresponds to the “marble body of the white countess nurse” and womb, whereas red signifies the “female flesh wallowing in its blood; a reeking mass, severed from the man” (Theweleit 2: 283).
“blackout” in war is difficult to distinguish from a night of intoxication. To be sure, the “carnival bodies” of EBM fans “stomp” at the virtual antipodes from Bakhtin’s formulation of the open carnival body. The militaristic outfits in which the fans present themselves seem to mirror Theweleit’s formulation of the “armored body”: “The new man is a man whose physique has been machinized, his psyche eliminated – or in part displaced into his body armor, his ‘predatory’ suppleness. We are presented with a robot that can tell the time…” (2: 162). Nevertheless, the conflation of the two would come dangerously close to the reified common sense of moralistic condemnation.

If Theweleit theorizes the totality machine as the antithesis of the desiring machine, then DAF could be interpreted in a more positive and historically concrete light that indeed “invests his own pleasure.” DAF explores the process by which the historical experience of the totality machine is overcome through a new synthesis. The totality machine is sublated through its scandalous combination with the 1970s queer politics of the desiring machine. What emerges is a cyborg-machine, an illegitimate offspring of the man-machine. It is related to the history of the man-machine, and yet in the tensions of bodily discipline as chaos, it appears as a monster to reactionary man-machines.

DAF makes an aesthetic move of removing the pleasure of the totality machine from the theater of war and placing it in the context of the disco. DAF’s concerts stage festivities of war during the age of the informatics of domination: the Long Peace understood as perpetual Cold War. What DAF developed out of the relentless drive of punk and its appropriation of dada was not the popular dance as complex polyrhythms and youth liberation, but the dance as a regressive monotone and monorhythmic stomp:

205 “This is not a utopia from the technologization of the means of production; it has nothing to do with the development of machine technology…. The mechanized body as conservative utopia derives instead from men’s compulsion to subjugate and repulse what is specifically human within them – the id, the productive force of the unconscious” (Theweleit 2: 162).
one that offers an extraordinarily functionalist pleasure in its minimalist reduction of rhythm to speed. The march/dance dialectic of Adorno is put on display in a way that attempts to combine the pleasures of both in the disco. The hardened body of the soldier male is a man-machine body of physical enhancement through technology. Such cyborg bodies can be set in opposition to popular images of the lazy and flabby bodies of Californian cyborg-couch-potatoes. These are two poles of understanding regarding the direction of physical enhancement in relation to technology: The first sees bodily training as working in direct proportion to technology, whereas the second sees it in inverse proportion. Thus, they highlight two biopolitical strategies in the face of modern industrial entertainment and organization.

In the postmodern male “cyborg machine” of DAF, technology and training are combined in direct proportion. However, it is a carnival dominated by males. In its ironic moments, the male bonding of the punk-EBM dance floor represents a carnival of postfascist imagery that mirrors a postknight carnival of Don Quixote. In other words, these are groups of mock soldier males as the white postknight; they are in love with each other and have forgotten about the damsel in distress. If we take Haraway’s model of the cyborg as a blasphemous, anti-racist, feminist figure, then to be sure, DAF appears blasphemous and anti-racist, but not necessarily feminist unless the homosocial politics develop feminist alliances. In this respect, a critical stance must be maintained regarding the progressive limits of DAF and the EBM tradition. The male bonding retains the guilt of male domination. Liberation is not yet achieved. Though the man-machine logic has been undermined from within, this can only be truly liberatory when these illegitimate offspring move toward feminist alliances. The illegitimate offspring still remain

---

[206] For a recent example of such body images, see Pixar’s Wall-E (2008).
caught within white male identity. Nevertheless, as a way of imagining hardcore queer culture, DAF is able to engage directly with the problems and legacies of masculinity in the age of the informatics of domination. How males approach pleasure, bonding, war, and training continues to be a contested site, and a site that must be contested, if the possibilities of a society that is blasphemous, anti-racist, and feminist will ever be realized…

DAF’s tradition of EBM and engagement with the problems surrounding the pleasure of machines has continued in Germany up to the present, though many EBM bands have regressed away from homosocial scandal. One band in particular developed a similar model to DAF and gained pop success: And One. The band is itself headed by a man with Migrationshintergrund, Steve Naghavi, who is Iranian-German. Naghavi plays with the same combination of homoeroticism, migration politics, and protofascist imagery. Yet And One’s forms take this tradition in a direction more associated with pop and Heiterkeit, which is surprisingly campy and consonant. Their tracks “Sweety, Sweety” and “Military Fashion Show,” for example, and their notorious song about a pervert exhibitionist, “Pimmelmann” [Cock Man], offer a parody of overtly masculine German seriousness. Especially in “Sweety, Sweety,” the mix of English and German, a literal representation of Denglisch in pop music, reveals the Anglo-American influence of pop love on German cultural life, announced in the initial lines:

She came from the U-Bahn, right now, auf mich zu.
Mein Herz wurde faster, denn the reason was nur you.

Though And One parodies “pop love,” it does so with an affection and delight that breaks the divide between the über-Teutonic Laibach’s German lyrics and the liberal camp of Queen’s English that we saw in chapter 3. However, And One also constantly
thematizes the notion of the machine in its lyrics. Nothing could be more direct regarding German engineering than And One’s hit “Deutschmaschine” (German machine):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Die Deutschmaschine</th>
<th>The German Machine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aus dem Tal der Vergangenheit</td>
<td>From the valley of the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vergessen, doch stets bereit</td>
<td>Forgotten, though always ready</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kam sie, um sich zu feiern</td>
<td>It came to celebrate itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bis in alle Ewigkeit</td>
<td>For all eternity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sie glänzt so wunderbar</td>
<td>It glows so brilliantly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macht Deine Träume wahr</td>
<td>And makes your dreams come true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sie singt und tanzt und lacht</td>
<td>It sings and dances and laughs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denn Du gibst ihr neue Macht</td>
<td>Because you give it new power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die Zukunft kauft sie sich</td>
<td>It buys the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dafür verkauft sie Dich</td>
<td>And for that, it sells you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So stolz doch winzig klein</td>
<td>So proud though minutely small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sie muss was Deutsches sein</td>
<td>It must be something German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die Deutschmaschine lebt</td>
<td>The German machine lives…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maschinen dieser Welt</td>
<td>Machines of this world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bekämpft den falschen Helden</td>
<td>Fight the false heroes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ob Kremlin oder Weißes Haus</td>
<td>Whether Kremlin or White House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zieht uns den Stecker raus</td>
<td>Unplug us and set us loose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This track operates within a similar model as DAF, dealing with the pleasures of the machine in a context of anxieties regarding German reunification and new nationalisms. However, it focuses again on reinterpreting fascist desires in the context of the dance floor and a camp aesthetic. Although many EBM and synthpop bands offer serious performances, And One offers a humorous variation to DAF’s bitter irony. By displaying evil in the lyrics, they show the disconnection of the dance floor from such content. In other words, it would be quite confusing if someone took the lyrics seriously and tried to apply them to the dance floor. Through logics of exaggeration, they reveal the positive lack of identity of their performance and their party, all the while gaining musical success through using the figure of the evil German as evil export.
4. Cyborg Legacies

4a. Of Headphones, Mixers, and Turntables: Sven Väth and the DJ as Cyborg

In my examination of Kraftwerk and DAF during the late 1970s and early 1980s, I have explored musical acts that engage with the traditional performance of bands as manifestation of male bonding. Kraftwerk and DAF critique this performance tradition of bands through man-machine engagements. Yet in the 1980s and 1990s, new forms of performance also began to develop that wrestled with the legacies of cyborg aesthetics. I now turn to both the popularization and the development of the cyborg as a tradition of performance in German pop music.

Specifically in the 1980s, a different performance tradition in the context of electronic music and bodies gradually became beloved in Germany: the DJ. The DJ was an unlikely superstar given that not only the performance was with recorded sound rather than “live,” but also the DJ did not have flashy instruments on stage as compared to either the synthesizers or, in the context of the critique of bands, the electric guitar. I am interested here specifically in Steve Waksman’s cultural history of the electric guitar, *Instruments of Desire*, which explores the negotiation of race, sexuality, and gender by eight electric guitarists in their diverse uses of the electric guitar as a “technophallus” (247). This phallic instrument dominated the stage and was key to star performance. It is clear that this tradition has been taken up in some branches of rock-inflected electronic music, such as the Teutonic performances of Rammstein. Yet the electric guitar also elicits a question of comparison as to the role of “DJ tools” in performance, specifically the headphones, mixers, and turntables. How can these be coded as instruments of desire?
To explore the figure of the DJ in rave culture since the 1980s and how the DJs performance style differs from Kraftwerk and DAF, I examine the long career of unquestionably the most enduring performer in the German techno scene: Sven Väth. Born in 1964, Väth began his career just as the production activities of both DAF and Kraftwerk were declining in the early 1980s. Though not a professional producer, Väth's stage performances as singer and DJ have been the source for sustained popularity since his first hits in 1985. In terms of stylistic transformation both in fashion and music over multiple decades, he is arguably a German techno equivalent to David Bowie or Madonna. Väth’s ability to reinvent himself stylistically and musically has allowed him to maintain star power from the 1980s up to the present. Repeatedly on the cusp of new pop developments and trends, his stylistic transformations reflect larger transformations and trends within rave culture over the last decades. What follows is a description of the various “bodies” he has presented on stage, which can be roughly divided into four general stages: 1. 1981-88: New Romantic. 2. 1989-1997: Trance Shaman. 3. 1998-2003: Electro-Robot. 4. 2004-present: Guru Techno-Father. This periodization allows for an exploration of techno transformations post-Kraftwerk amidst the popularization of EDM and the figure of the DJ.

1. New Romantic: Väth grew up near Frankfurt in a lower-middle-class household. In 1981, at age 17, his obsession with the famous Dorian Gray club in Frankfurt began to take hold (see chapter 1). However, he was initially only a teenage guest. Dressing extravagantly, it was his appearance and dancing that caught the eye of the club manager, Matthias Martinson. Based on these performances, Martinson offered Väth a DJ job at the club starting in 1982. At this time, Väth oriented himself toward the New Romantics, bands such as Duran Duran, Visage, and Spandau Ballet. This style
consisted of extravagant, gender-bending outfits and the extensive use of makeup. Väth quickly drew attention to himself as a DJ-performer in Dorian Gray, and he continued his extravagant dancing while DJing. Relatively quickly thereafter, he landed a job with another major club at the time: the Vogue. Here he became the permanent weekend DJ starting in 1984.

Väth then began a partnership with the music producers Michael Münzing and Luca Anzilotti (later the founders of the Eurodance act Snap!) under the band names OFF and 16 Bit, producing synthpop in the New Romantic style. The first track to be produced with Münzing and Anzilotti was “Bad News” (1985), which was quickly followed by the international club hit “Electrica Salsa” (1986). The video to this track displays Väth dancing as a youthful, free German youth amongst uptight old Germans, who ultimately join him and other young Germans in the carnival festivities. This song not only brought Väth to pop prominence, but it also began his association with Spanish and Latin styles. He repeatedly connected disco life to the positive pleasure of the tropics as pop carnival wonderland, for example in “Casa Latina” (1989). Already in 1979 at the age of 14, Väth had traveled for the first time to the famous club island of Ibiza, part of the Spanish Balearic Islands. He would be long associated with this famous resort island in later years, which I will discuss more in period three of his performance styles.

2. Trance Shaman: Already during the mid-1980s, Väth’s interests were shifting away from the New Romantics and synthpop toward darker sounds. He became especially interested in EBM, techno, and acid house, which grew massively in popularity during 1987 and 1988. Väth began to spin these styles at the Vogue. These interests resulted in a full commitment to techno in 1989. In the early 1990s, Väth transformed his dress into a trance hippie, with a mohawk, goatee, piercings, neon
clothes, and baggy pants. This era of the trance shaman took hold with his purchasing of Vogue, together with two colleagues, in 1988. It was reopened as Omen in 1989, one of the earliest clubs to play techno exclusively. The Omen became a symbol of party excess and bodily endurance by the trance shaman Väth, whose powers of endurance were demonstrated by DJ sets that lasted longer than 24 hours. He even completed the legendary farewell party of the Omen in 1998 with a 12-hour set. Väth described this party as follows: “12 hours, with that sound volume and those temperatures, made me pretty much exhausted…finished! The Omen really exhausted me, I have to say.”

During this period, Väth founded the labels Eye-Q in 1990 and Harthouse in 1991. He also changed music producers from Münzing and Anzilotti to Ralf Hildenbeutel in order to develop new musical directions. Here it is important to highlight Väth’s primary role as performer and DJ, rather than as a producer; his changes in musical and performance styles have thus required repeated changes in producers. His first trance album with Hildenbeutel, Accident in Paradise (1992) was an international success, followed by The Harlequin, The Robot, and The Ballet Dancer (1994). To be sure, the latter album from 1994 offered a statement on the performance style of Väth, which despite his various metamorphoses in fashion and music, has maintained a consistency that partly reflects these three figures: harlequin, robot, ballet dancer. In an interview with Spiegel TV from 1996, he explained how he felt all three figures were a part of him: in short, that he was (1) the partying joker, (2) the functional and exacting performer, and (3) the graceful and dancing machine, fully committed to his craft.

207 “12 Stunden, bei der Lautstärke, bei den Temperaturen, ich war dann danach ziemlich ausgelaugt…fertig. Das Omen hat mich auch richtig fertig gemacht, muss ich sagen.”

208 See Väth interview, Spiegel-TV.
This period, as part of the raving society, also saw an era in which the positive pleasures of body liberation and psychedelia from the 1960s were retapped. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the reunification of German unleashed a relative period of optimism. An embrace of European integration, globalization, and neoliberalism within a reunited Germany marked the period, and the pleasures of young Europe and Germany were expressed in the techno scene through a tense combination of 1960s bodily liberation and psychedelia with the cyberpunk and cyberculture traditions of early technopop and EBM. However, the lingering economic crises of the 1970s and 1980s prevented the full return of ethical-democratic demands of the 1950s or utopian revolutionary ideals of the 1960s. This liberation was closely managed: a type of youth liberation organized by technology, capital, neoliberalism, and tolerance.

These tendencies were reflected in Väth’s two famous trance hits from the period, “L’Esperanza” and “Barbarella.” The video to the first track shows Väth swimming with a woman in a tropical, aquatic paradise of spiritual flows and world music beats that reflect the capitalist flows of international Frankfurt (see the discussion in chapter 1). In this context, trance was an electronic music variant of 1980s world music as neoliberal soundscape. The second track, “Barbarella,” uses samples from the Jane Fonda movie of the same name, symbol of 1960s sexual liberation. In fact, the track “Barbarella” was itself produced under the project name Barbarella, which resulted in the album Art of Dance (1992). The Barbarella associations could thus perfectly combine sci-fi cyberpunk, psychedelia, and sexual liberation.

In accordance with the role of the shaman, Väth began to represent himself as a spiritual individual. He claimed the album, Accident in Paradise, was inspired by a dream he had on a trip to India, which occurred at a time when he was reading Hermann
Hesse’s *Siddhartha*. In describing his spiritual changes, he often discussed his addiction to cocaine between 1986 and 1989, and how the birth of his daughter had changed his priorities and led him to go clean.\(^{209}\) In fact, his drug practices during this period were merely transferred to alcohol and the rave drug of choice, ecstasy. At this “high time” of the raving society, in all senses, Väth combined the politics of pleasure, love, and artful endurance with an outlook of world tolerance, neoliberalism, and meditation unlike any other pop performer – with a stamina, length, and musical speed (upward of 150 BPM) of partying that the German disco culture of the 1970s and 1980s could not have imagined. This role resulted in Väth becoming a symbol of the early-1990s raving society as the positive pleasure machine stretched to the brink.

3. Electro-Robot: The optimism of this trance-rave era had declined by 1997, at least locally in Frankfurt. Though successful for years, Eye-Q and Harthouse went bankrupt as a result of mismanagement, and the Omen closed in 1998. The rapid growth of the techno music industry was consolidated and restructured. Väth thus reinvented himself and changed producers yet again,\(^{210}\) though he remained committed to the techno scene and electronic music. He released three albums that were indicative of the new musical directions of this period: *Fusion* (1998), *Contact* (2000), and *Fire* (2002). The new style could be described as an electro-robot, which was presented in the videos to the tracks “Dein Schweiss (Your Sweat)” and “Mind Games.” Väth was no longer presented as the trance hippie who focused on world music. Consciously appropriating the traditions of Kraftwerk and DAF, he made a sudden turn back to a strictly hedonist

\(^{209}\) For these comments, see the interview for the Sven Väth special on the television program *Music Planet*.

\(^{210}\) From work with Hildenbeutel, which ended with the album *Fusion*, he turned to an extended working relationship with the music producers Johannes Heil, Alter Ego, and Anthony Rother, who could all produce the new electro-techno styles at which he aimed.
bourgeois member of the Occident. His blond hair was grown out and combed to the side or slicked back like a posh dandy. The aquatic flows of “L’Esperanza” and its accompanying music video were transformed into the dripping sex-obsessed sweat of “Dein Schweiss (Your Sweat)” and its accompanying video. This song includes the appropriate line, “Your sweat: the nectar of my desire.”

Similarly, the single “Mind games” presents Väth in a full black suit together with four faceless cyberpunk diva-robots that are also clothed all in black, slowly metamorphosing like insects. The track’s lyrics are comparable with Madonna’s “Like It Or Not” in its presentation of celebrity identity as metamorphosis. Väth now emphasized his place in the European tradition of Kraftwerk and DAF at the same time as he displayed the principle of self-reinvention and the play with pop expectations and market trends, as stated in the track: “I play mind games tonight; I play my game… tonight.”

4. After the 2002 album *Fire*, Väth ceased to produce original albums and focused on releasing DJ mix compilations. However, he continued the jet-set life of the DJ that he had lived since the 1990s, and today he remains extraordinarily active on the club and rave circuit. Growing a beard in 2004, he has presented himself as the bearded minimal Guru Techno-Father of the scene since this time. Väth has even received the nickname “Papa” or “Babba” by techno fans. As this period continues, the scene witnesses the slow aging of his star body during countless DJ performances, while maintaining an extraordinary display of endurance. In this maintenance of star power, change of styles, and continued relevance and respect, Väth is simply unmatched, even by major international DJ stars from Germany such as Westbam and Paul Van Dyk. Though central to the “raving society” theories and technopop movements of the 1980s and 1990s, Westbam has been comparatively inactive since the early 2000s. Paul van
Dyk’s star rose much later in the mid-1990s, and his career has remained linked to trance or, more recently, technopop national anthems like “Wir sind Wir” and “We are One,” which were relative artistic failures. In contrast, Väth has continued to be hailed as a technoguru and star by multiple generations and branches of the techno scene, primarily on account of his DJing. Often voted “Best National DJ” in the annual votes of magazines such as Raveline or Groove, his postmodern Germanness as a blond diva is displayed on stage at the same time that he is linked to international performance tours and club circuits from Ibiza to Japan.

Our previous theorizations of insect-music and the insect-man become relevant in this context. Väth’s process of multiple stylistic transformations has indeed been represented in terms of insect-music, or in this case insect-chic: to be biologically specific, of the order Lepidoptera. The moths and butterflies included in this order have the common characteristic of rapid metamorphosis from larval to winged stages. These changes and the queer life of insects have been represented by Väth in Cocoon Recordings, the label he founded in 1999 after the collapse of Eye-Q and Harthouse. In 1998, during the closing of Omen, Väth had already started a party series known as Cocoon Club. This party series was eventually transferred in 1999 to the famous Club Amnesia on Ibiza. Ibiza gradually increased in importance for Väth, who first traveled to the island in 1979, three years after the original Club Amnesia had opened. Väth always dreamed of having his own Ibiza club. He even linked his identity to the island through Scorpio astrology: “Ibiza is in the sign of the scorpio, and I am also a scorpio. And Ibiza has something mystic, magic, positive, something ungraspable. I don’t know, when one
has sensed this island’s spirit one is somehow infected” (*Music Planet*). Since the first Cocoon Club party on Ibiza in 1999, Väth has released annual “Sounds of the Season” mixes. Decorated with cocoons, hives, and other formations of insect life, the parties represent a type of insect-chic society both in terms of body and music. The cover of the first album in the series, *The Sounds of the First Season*, presents Väth as an insect-robot wrapped up in a cocoon. Such transformations were already incorporated in his music video “Mind Games.”

To be sure, these references could be viewed as choices that lend mere stylistic surfaces to a culture primarily defined by pop and profit. Nevertheless, the systematic representation of insect-chic in Cocoon Recordings makes it a key institution for the dissemination of such associations with electronic music. The professional design of Cocoon Club in Frankfurt is particularly impressive in this respect. Opened by Väth in 2004, the club’s style is inspired by H.R. Giger and other science-fiction artists. Its massive main hall can house over a thousand dancers, and it is explicitly structured like an insect-cocoon-pod paradise. The club includes a lounge club called Micro and a fine dining restaurant called Silk, also featuring insect themes. A center of world-class design, Cocoon was voted the best club in Germany by readers of *Raveline* and *Groove* for multiple years, although as a concept, it has struggled financially to repeat the successes of Ibiza, in part because of the decline of the Frankfurt techno scene; these struggles ultimately resulted in the closing of the club in November 2012.

---

211 “Ibiza steckt im Zeichen des Skorpions, und ich bin auch ein Skorpion. Und Ibiza hat auch was mystisches, was magisches, was positives, was nicht greifbares. Und ich weiß nicht, wenn man das mal erhascht hat, diese Spirit von der Insel, dann ist man irgendwie angesteckt.”

212 See the documentation of Cocoon’s interiors by MESO.
Despite such struggles and its eventual closing, Cocoon became the subject of an exhibition by the renowned photographer Andreas Gursky. Through digital manipulation, the images of Cocoon’s architecture and club nights were represented on a far greater scale than the actual club space allowed. The masses of clubbers on the main dance floor appear minute like partying insects themselves and the cocoon walls expanded to appear multiple stories tall. This is consistent with the techniques of Gursky’s mass-scale photography. The process of stylistic-capitalist transformation represented by Väth and the Cocoon label were thus linked with the sound chamber of the Cocoon Club, the sound production of electronic dance music, and the dancing masses of clubbers in worship of the dancing Queen, Väth.
In light of Väth’s continued success up the present, the question is invited: what to make of this enduring stardom, especially in Europe, of the performer-DJ? To be sure, the DJ body was not initially supposed to garner attraction and star power in the same way as the rock star. Ideally, DJs were to be faceless, in the same style as Kraftwerk’s robots: an inconsequential body merging both behind the technical apparatus and with the crowd. Nevertheless, the pop-DJ did emerge as a new form of star power. To be sure, “DJ tools” used by the body in performance are not immediately as flashy as electric guitars. Moreover, techno DJs rely much less than turntablists or hip-hop DJs on the visible manipulations of sound through scratching. This skill is simply not as developed in techno culture. Instead, length of time and endurance are required and a continuous flow of music through the practices of beat matching and the manipulation of sound using mixers such as the standard Pioneer DJM-800. As a result, techno DJs have developed a range of performance styles along two poles: They either interact with the crowd as the fellow listening partier, or they resort to the cold and distant precision of the mix scientist. Yet along both poles, the DJ body is one who primarily garners fandom and interaction with the crowd as an expert listener. Like the studio art of the sound engineer, the DJ manipulates sound and listens carefully to recordings so as to reintroduce tracks to listeners in new contexts. In short: While the body politic of the audience listens, the DJ listens in a precise and professional way for the audience.

The DJ body as a listening body is primarily expressed through the headphones as a fetish object. The headphones already draw attention on stage through the DJ’s constant shifting of the phones in the task of preparing the next track, a practice of private listening in tension with public performance, which draws in the audience’s anticipation and desire for what will come next. Even when the headphones are not
used, the DJ as fashionable listener is fetishized through the wearing of what could be termed the headphone necklace. The prominence of the headphones and the DJ’s listening pleasure thus emphasize the ears as an erotic orifice: The DJ is sonically penetrated and excited by the music. Whereas the electric guitarist retains a commanding position of virtuosic instrumental performance, the DJ is in a dialectic of command and submission to the music and audience, since the DJ emphasizes the roles of both listener and performer. This dialectic is what Väth constantly displays in his various diva dances to the music as the listening partier: a rather polymorphously perverse mix of bodily pleasure. In cyborg terms, Väth displays a DJ-dance of pop cyborg sexuality. Nevertheless, at the same time that this release of pleasure is put on display, he, like other male DJs on both poles of DJ performance styles, displays scientific control over tracks, taking confident postures to make their bodies appear in full command of the technology and recorded sound around them.

In this respect, the fact that only one individual is needed on stage has resulted in tendencies of DJ culture to have dominating star presences to a degree not imagined by many idealistic proponents of DJ culture. The single man on the performance stage reflects the dream of a single man in control of the entire sound production and reception process. These hetero-masculine tendencies of the DJ can be confirmed through a reading of Bill Brewster’s and Frank Broughton’s Last Night a DJ Saved My Life, which uses the sexist “he” pronoun throughout, with the only justification for this use being the fact that male DJs dominate “with precious few exceptions” (377).

And yet, in the sheer endurance of Väth’s multiple-hour DJ sets and his emphasis on a carnivalesque diva dance, Väth demonstrates a cyborg pop love of technology that emphasizes a pleasure-machine rather than a man-machine, and one
that has endured over decades beyond the traditional subgenre divisions of electronic
dance music. Väth’s extraordinary popularity represents the mix of techno pop between
club culture and rave massives, which in Germany have developed highly professional
event firms that organize multiday festivals across the summer: from Berlin to the Rhine
Belt. The consummate design of these festivals, from lighting to sound systems,
integrates the DJs into a system whose features have become highly refined over the
last twenty years. It is one in which the DJ star clearly rests on the management of light,
video, and sound for the masses. From the star body of Väth, I thus turn to the body
politic of two diverse examples of these techno events.

4b. Cyber-Masses and Late Style in Subcultures

In previous sections, the issue of biopolitical representation and performance of
masses was highlighted in my discussion of dance and audience reaction at the
Kraftwerk and DAF concerts, and especially in Andreas Gursky’s photography of the
crowds in Cocoon. In these photographs, the audience member as an insect dissolves in
the mass crowd; this reflects the traditional associations regarding the fears and thrills of
a subjectivity dissolved in mass psychology. However, Gursky’s artistic engagement with
techno culture has not been limited to this club. He has increasingly identified himself
with rave and techno culture, photographing a range of events utilizing his techniques of
mass-scale photography. One series of photographs, *May Day I-V*, was of masses at the
Mayday festival in Dortmund, the longest running and most famous annual rave festival
in Germany.

This section concerns my multiple experiences at this festival on the May Day,
focusing on the year 2004. I attended the Mayday during this year, which had a time
schedule that demonstrates party endurance is not confined to star DJs. It includes club
goers and ravers. The rave began at 6 p.m. on April 30 and ended at 10 a.m. on May 1.
However, this was not the only event I attended during this weekend. From the night of
May 1 to the morning of May 2, I also visited the Forms of Hands Festival at the
Maschinenhalle Zeche Zweckel in Gladbeck, north of Essen. The simple fact that two
festivals of this scale were offered on a single weekend, and in close proximity, is
exemplary of the degree to which mass festivals of electronic music are prevalent in
Europe. Yet the difference in organization and body cultures witnessed at these events
was striking. I include here two personal photos of these events from 2010:

First of all, the venues for these concerts differed in significant ways. The Mayday was a pop media event that took place at the Westfallenhallen, or Westphalia Halls. These halls form a modern concert venue, built after the Second World War, opening in 1952. This stadium housed a sold-out crowd of 20,000 ravers. Two stages at opposite ends of the hall were set up, and the DJs and live performers alternated in rapid succession throughout the night. The futuristic lightshow was particularly impressive. Furthermore, the event was broadcast on Germany’s music channel VIVA. By contrast, the Forms of Hands Festival took place in the Maschinenhalle Zeche Zweckel, a designated historic landmark and museum. Built in 1909, its architecture combines the functionalism of a factory with the neoclassicism of a palace. A historic landmark and museum, the structure is an emblem of the Ruhr Valley’s industrial development during the Wilhemine era. Thus, the difference of concert venues mirrored
the historical associations of raving with the digital age and industrial parties with the industrial age. Though professionally organized in a historic machine hall, Forms of Hands only drew roughly a thousand visitors over two days, compared to Mayday’s 20,000.

While both the Mayday and Forms of Hands are linked to the histories of specific subcultural scenes, Mayday is doubtless a crossover pop event. I include both events so as to make a comparative study of techno aesthetics and Ruhr Valley history in the context of German urban culture. With respect to subcultures, and to theorize their specific associations with body representations and technology, I will address Dick Hebdige’s classic *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*. Hebdige makes the key argument that those subcultures that attract the most media attention are “spectacular subcultures.” He states:

> Spectacular subcultures express what is by definition an imaginary set of relations…. The raw material out of which they are constructed is both real and ideological…. Moreover, this material is subject to historical change. Each subcultural ‘instance’ represents a ‘solution’ to a specific set of circumstances, to particular problems and contradictions. (81)

In Germany, both techno and industrial cultures are important late forms of spectacular subcultures, which precisely due to the emphasis on events, have morphed into rather loosely connected scenes. Both the Mayday and the Forms of Hands festivals are symbolic of the degree to which notions of classless spectacular subcultures contrast with older forms of labor or union practices. For example, I was struck by the fact that both festivals took place on the same day as the International Workers’ Day. The Mayday even takes its name from this holiday. To be sure, it is a tradition in unions that festivities occur on the night prior to May Day. Nevertheless, aside from the date, there was no political connection to a workers’ culture at these events. Both of these events
emphasized body culture and music in the late-modern era over labor politics or traditional political discourse.

Hebdige traces the history of the change from labor to subculture, focusing on postwar Britain. According to him, working class youth took on new forms of spectacular resistance at the same time that their communities were uprooted. He formulates this resistance in terms of style, which can include “the cultivation of a quiff, the acquisition of a scooter or a record or a certain type of suit.” He continues, “But it ends in the construction of a style, in a gesture of defiance or contempt, in a smile or a sneer. It signals a Refusal” (3). While theorists such as Sarah Thornton have criticized Hebdige’s notion of resistance, he nevertheless traces an important history of subcultural style in Britain. While having a different labor history than Britain, Germany has been strongly influenced by the subcultural styles cultivated in Britain, which include goth, industrial, and punk during the late 1970s and early 1980s.213

The focus of Hebdige’s book is punk, which he describes as a kind of postmodern montage of styles. Indeed, Hebdige is concerned with the shift in body cultures during the same period of the 1970s as the development of cyborg theories. Punk borrowed widely from contradictory semiotic systems in order to challenge any coherency of meaning in modern civilization. Hebdige writes:

Rather, the punks seemed to be parodying the alienation and emptiness which have caused sociologists so much concern, realizing in a deliberate and wilful fashion the direst predictions of the most scathing social critics, and celebrating in mock-heroic terms the death of the community and the collapse of traditional forms of meaning. (79)

213 See Reynolds, Rip It Up for an account of these histories.
The predicament of punk was indicative of the crisis in body cultures and sexual liberation explored at the beginning of this chapter with respect to Kraftwerk and DAF. Indeed, his text is a key contribution to biopolitics as applied specifically to subcultures.

However, Hebdige’s biopolitical conceptions prove to be limited with respect to cyberpunk theory. The crucial insight of cyberpunk theory is that it explodes the traditional notion of the body that grounds Hebdige’s understanding of style. For Hebdige, style includes the expressions on the face, the pose of the physical body, and the clothes and accessories, all of which represent human choice and a resistant politics of physiognomy. A biopolitical notion of the body as training, technology, and prosthesis within this breakdown of “traditional meaning” is not fully developed. At both events, I observed that, while fashion was present in comparable ways as analyzed in Kraftwerk, DAF, and Sven Väth, the relation of the body to training, electronics, and technology was continually emphasized. While arguably fetishizing science fiction, electronics, and/or industry, both festivals demonstrated important ways to think about the body in late modernity.

In contrast to punk borrowings from multiple semiotic codes, greater uniformity of style through technology was evident at both events. At Forms of Hands, the crowd wore dark, often strictly black, attire. This industrial style represents a subsection of goth style; instead of Victorian, punk-inflected, or Renaissance dress, this industrial style focuses on boots and simple black T-shirts or attire informed by military styles. Many were dressed in muted examples of what might be described as the industrial-EBM tradition emphasized by DAF, though the band’s spectacular queer politics were notably absent.

214 The most extravagant celebrations of style and body culture in the Goth subculture are at the Wave-Gotik-Treffen in Leipzig, which included traditional, renaissance, industrial, and cybergoth styles, among others, and include a promenade where each year Goths present new fashion – including for the new media. For a thorough study of Goth, style, and gender politics, see Brill.
This style was appropriate since Forms of Hands is the flagship party of the Hands record label, an industrial and rhythmic noise label headed by the band Winterkälte.

The techno kids at Mayday were far more colorful and festive. Their clothes often consisted of neon colors and plastic materials that celebrated the virtual reality of computer and gaming worlds. This style had already become an ironically retro form of futuristic celebration: the naïve celebration of cyberspace as a key component of 1990s rave culture. In the context of club culture, this carnivalesque style gradually gave way to a mute style of party in the 2000s, most prominent in Berlin’s clubs, where advanced technology and iPod culture have become part of everyday life. Technology is no longer celebrated with excitement as something novel, since technology is now as ubiquitous as the signals of the wireless Internet. In the 2000s, with the spread of technoscience into everyday life, the cyborg has in fact become a banal figure of everyday life. Consumerism rules a practical and pragmatic approach to problem solving and the acquiring of technology in our current moment. Future utopias are reduced to economic sustainability in times of crisis through the latest products of iCulture, a term I conceive of as representative of minimalist design and gadget love across media, exemplified by Apple. These aspects of techno culture have aged, becoming notably quite unspectacular in contrast to the somewhat naively retro Mayday celebration. In other words, “spectacular subculture” in this instance is paradoxically expressed through minimal spectacle.

The reference to age also explains the much more muted dress codes of the Forms of Hands event. The crowd was generally older, and because they were more experienced, the event was routine. It was marked by veterans of the scene who had developed considerable “subcultural capital,” to borrow from Sarah Thornton’s concept
in *Club Cultures*. Expanding upon Bourdieu’s notion of “cultural capital,” she offers the following definition:

Subcultural capital can be *objectified or embodied*. Just as books and paintings display cultural capital in the family home, so subcultural capital is objectified in the form of fashionable haircuts and well-assembled record collections (full of well-chosen, limited edition ‘white label’ twelve-inches and the like). Just as cultural capital is personified in ‘good’ manners and urbane conversation, so subcultural capital is embodied in the form of being ‘in the know’, using (but not over-using) current slang and looking as if you were born to perform the latest dance styles. (11-2)

This capital was manifest in how the crowd acted. While much of the music was extraordinarily dissonant, I was struck by how sociable the participants were and the lack of displays of depression, rage, or excess. As social bodies, the participants seemed like they were at a weekend barbeque compared to a dissonant concert, although there were indeed groups who danced intensely throughout the evening. Participants were well accustomed to the music, though I don’t want to imply here an undialectical notion of being “desensitized” to the extremely harsh styles of industrial. Rather, I am suggesting that the relationship of the fans to the music changes through exposure as one becomes sensitized to some aspects and desensitized to others. The crowd was anything but the submissive “jitterbugs” that Adorno feared. The happiness the fans displayed was more in keeping with Adorno’s notion of the allure and joy in dissonance; in fact, ironic gestures were often present during dancing, offering a silly and sweet physiognomy to accompany the excessively dissonant and distorted music.

In contrast, the display of youth at Mayday was more an exploration in endurance and submission to the music as might befit a “jitterbug,” understood dialectically as a cross between desiring-machine and flipped-out techno version of Adorno’s slave. These were primarily trained and toned young bodies prepared to dance all night. I
repeat the length of the Mayday festival to underscore this endurance: Traditionally, it begins at 6 p.m. and ends at 10 a.m. the next morning. By contrast, Forms of Hands, whiling running over two days, has an official program that begins at 6 p.m. and ends at 2 a.m. each day. At Mayday, the *Technotanz* as an über-drive of bodily fitness, often with the assistance of amphetamines and other chemicals, evokes the cyborg body. Undialectical polemics against mega-raves have compared them to totalitarian rallies. Surprisingly, this connection was even reflected in the title of the 1994 Maydays: the “Rave Olympia” in Dortmund and the “Raving Society: We Are Different” in Berlin. During the Live VIVA broadcast of the “Raving Society,” the DJ stars Carl Cox and Westbam and the audience were edited with shots from Leni Riefenstahl’s *Olympia*, a site that would have likely – and aptly – horrified Adorno in his notion of “The Health unto Death” (*Minima Moralia* 58-60).

Nevertheless, similar to my analysis of DAF’s and And One’s lyrics, I find this VIVA performance to appropriate such material in a fashion that serves to confirm carnival elements of the Mayday event. Though one can certainly argue with justification that such an association is problematic and in bad taste, it acknowledges at least the continuing cult of fitness in new forms while displaying pop culture’s irreverent attitude to history. This was reflected in other totalitarian borrowings: a huge insignia depicting a jet rocket is the symbol of the Mayday festival. It is hoisted above the stage each year like a grand monument, emphasizing the new totalities of jet travel, neoliberalism, and the mind-travel of supermodern psychedelia rather than a specific political state. One of the Mayday musical anthems, “Culture Flash,” is even a pop variation on Vangelis’s opening theme of *Blade Runner*. This theme maintains the dialectic of supermodern utopia and
cyberpunk dystopia during the informatics of dominations, a continuance of the 1990s political situation reflected in Sven Väth’s roles as trance shaman versus electro-robot.

While Mayday was in many respects a pop celebration, the Forms of Hands event had, to borrow again from gothic Adorno, a “dark” style. Dancing, when it occurred, was marked by dissonant, war-like industrial sounds. Yet this “violence” happens on the level of the symbolic by means of dancing and military fashion rather than physical aggression against other participants.215 While many of the participants dance with fury, unlike metal or punk shows, the industrial shows are largely free of moshing. In contrast to Mayday, the intense dance of the mass to the discordant, inhuman sounds of rhythmic noise is a flipped-out version of Adorno’s dialectic of the “health unto death,” stretched to the breaking point yet maintained in negative vitality throughout the night.

The genre of rhythmic noise offers an intriguing reflection on theorizations of noise, which traditionally focus on listening to dissonance. Most especially with respect to Adorno’s theories of dark dissonance, the very name “rhythmic noise” elicits the following question: What does it mean when noise is structured so one can dance to it? This tradition was already emphasized by the rhythmic violence of Einstürzende Neubauten as opposed to the more experimental styles of Throbbing Gristle. The bodily experience allows for pleasure amidst the body’s “threshold of pain,” compared to the listening punishment that unrhymthic noise and power electronics induce. This is certainly not the fascist’s song of healthy and consonant “major chords to keep his children healthy” (Theweleit 2: 204), as many pseudomusicologies in Nazi Germany tried

215 Germany has been a locus for some time of larger festivals in the techno-industrial and rhythmic noise scene: most famously the Maschinenfest, which is held in various cities in the Ruhr Valley.
to argue was natural to German folk music and dance. While the presence of the white male crowd recalls the biopolitical dialectic of health and discipline, the large presence of techno nerds assured a rather humorous appropriation of the health unto death.

This relation to symbolic “violence” is further enhanced by the increasing digitization of sound, which has affected techno and industrial music just as much as other forms of music. The musicians of the Hands label rely heavily on synthesizers and computer hardware to produce “industrial” sounds. This equipment gives a certain aura of professionalism as technicians and computer programmers, rather than the brute force of industrial equipment that was used in Einstürzende Neubauten’s 1984 concert of “Concerto for Machinery and Voice” (Hall 112-13). While some bands bring various instruments and metals to perform on stage, this tendency to produce “industrial” sounds by electronic means was an established practice in the classic bands of industrial music during the late 1970s and early 1980s, such as Cabaret Voltaire and Clock DVA. Such practices on the cusp between the industrial and postindustrial ages signified the changes Western society was experiencing during this period.

In a sense, rhythmic noise has embraced the computer revolution in the same way that the technoid performers at Mayday have: industrial computer nerds on display. However, an important aspect of the sounds produced by industrial music is precisely to question the idealist notions of the “digital age,” falsely thought of as “post”-industrial and “post”-modern. This age supposedly moves away from material production toward environmentally harmless and economically pacifying “information technology” and “green energy.” The late history of techno-industrial music rather reminds the listener that industrial production and its effects on nature and climate are increasing during the “digital age.”
Dialectics is brought back into Haraway’s notion of natureculture and the cyborg’s blending of the physical and nonphysical. Such collapsed concepts can easily result in a bad synthesis where the ideology of the nonphysical-digital as being inconsequential to nature remains dominant. The practice of rhythmic noise emphasizes the suppressed antithesis of physicality as environmental destruction; in other words, this music is a cyborg emphasis on the physical-industrial as opposed to the ostensibly nonphysical-digital, a strikingly different form of engagement with digital production compared to Uwe Schmidt.

In this context, I will conclude this section by returning to Deleuze/Guattari’s and Hanslick’s engagements with natural history in becoming-bird, becoming-sheep, and becoming-insect. By means of these writers, I will expand and modify the dialectical notion of first and second nature as presented in Adorno’s critical theory. First nature refers to the imagined, unalienated unity of the world outside of human relations, whereas second nature addresses the petrified relations of human alienation under industrial capitalism. However, the digital age of the becoming-insect, termed the informatics of domination by Haraway, could be described as a third nature that appears falsely nonphysical. In other words, the material destruction of nature and the means of production are covered up through the smooth surfaces of digital culture, reflected in the iCulture designs of Apple and the MP3 market as represented in iTunes. Through Apple, iCulture is misrecognized as iNature, or in Deleuze/Guattari’s language, striated spaces are misrecognized as smooth.

The dialectic of these three natures becomes quite complex here. A musical model for the classic first-second nature dialectic would be as follows: the musical production as the becoming-sheep remembers “first nature” in the industrial world of
“second nature,” such as in Romantic symphonies, and most strikingly present in Mahler’s Third Symphony. However, rhythmic noise and the cyborg dance performances have an altogether different task: It is to remember the becoming-sheep “second nature” during an era of the becoming-insect of “third nature,” defined by a digital culture of informatics, creative industries, and *Future Shock* obsolescence. In this context, the negative image of the insect as represented by Giger and Adorno is crucial to keep in dialectical tension with Deleuze/Guattari’s notion of becoming-insect. Only in this way can the insect as image reveal both the positive and negative potentials of the age.

In the case of the band Winterkälte, a strongly environmentalist band whose leading member, Udo Wiessmann, is the organizer of Forms of Hands as well as the manger of the Hands label, all three ages are placed in dialectical tension. Formed by Wiessmann and Eric de Vries in the early 1990s, Winterkälte is a significant group within the rhythmic noise scene. The band has released four albums to date: *Winterkälte* (1996), *Structures of Destruction* (1997), *Drum ‘N’ Noise* (1999), and *Disturbance* (2004). Just as the relentless rhythmic noise has a physical effect on the listener to the extent that its electronically produced sounds and samples have the effects of drills and jackhammers, so do the titles consist of environmentalist messages and explorations of natural disaster and events, e.g. “Slash-And-Burn,” “Rebound Effect vs. Sustainability,” and “Eco-Lateral Damage.” In the context of Winterkälte, the dialectic of all three natures can be viewed as follows: The environmentalist message of pastoral/bird “first nature” is argued for by presenting its negative absence in the “third nature” analogue/digital/insect production of harshly physical and industrial/sheep sounds of “second nature.”

Though Winterkälte introduces environmental themes and pronouncements throughout its tracks, the saving of “first nature” within the dialectic of late modernity is
revealed as virtually impossible. Though first nature is the telos of their cyborg politics, it can no longer be directly represented. Only the consequences of natural destruction are evident. Winterkälte’s own production practices present the environmental crisis through highly technological means that are at the same time responsible for the crisis. The cyborg culture presented here is, on the one hand, an illegitimate offspring of technoscience while at the same time caught as “insect-music” in a sense that negatively presents the slave-like aspects of this system and the inability to access “first nature.”

I offer a final remark to this dialectic with reference to architecture: The dialectic between “third nature” and “second nature” is reflected in the Maschinenhalle. This hall survived the war and remains connected both to Germany’s imperialist and fascist past. However, during the Forms of Hands festival, the Maschinenhalle essentially remained in its cleaned-up form as a museum and Kulturgut [cultural treasure] of Ruhr Valley history. Its halls were largely empty, with only a few machines and photos displayed as reminders of its mode of production. In a side hall, a sound installation with dark lighting reminded the audience of the labor that went on in the machine hall, though even this also reflected the aestheticization of industry. As such, the concert represented in a quite striking way a form of postindustrial industrial tourism. Industry becomes the exotic marker of a lost past of the man-machine, though its pleasures and pains are retained.

With respect to architecture, Adorno, in his theory of the ugly, offers a surprising comment regarding the attractions of industry that would certainly surprise industrial music fans: “The statement that a devastated industrial landscape or a face deformed by a painting is just plain ugly may answer spontaneously to the phenomenon but lacks the self-evidence it assumes” (Aesthetic Theory 46). This devastated landscape, whether
related to war or not, refers to the violence and domination over nature. The viewer
should be reminded that such scapes have more truth content regarding civilization’s
relation to nature than cleaned-up cityscapes or the fantasy third nature of virtual reality.
Adorno argues in a variation on the industrial scape’s truth content: “Even as bourgeois
consciousness naïvely condemns the ugliness of a torn-up industrial landscape, a
relation is established that reveals a glimpse of the domination of nature, where nature
shows humans its facade of having yet to be mastered” (47). Industrial ruins offer a
shudder in comparison to classical or medieval ruins because of their proximity to the
“present,” like Wild West ghost towns.

And in this context, the presentation of the cyborg as man-machine is a
particularly progressive and, indeed, necessary act. Rather than to aestheticize the man-
machine as a form of Nazi chic, materialist presentations of the man-machine as a part
of the broader history of industrial culture is the bodily expression of the remembrance of
second nature in third nature. It is both a memory of industrial destruction and the history
of white capitalist patriarchy, and it is a debate that offers a rebound effect to our
discussion of the soundscape at the beginning of the dissertation. These environmental
debates have, in fact, become central to Germany’s national identity as presented to the
world, in which “green technologies” as exports are themselves reflected in electronic
music as exports, such as in the works of Dominik Eulberg. These are contradictions
reflected even in my first experience of Braunschweig as described in the introduction:
techno and anthroposophy: a vegan on synthetic drugs. These contradictions show that,
in the face of the man-machine, Haraway’s notion that the “fathers are inessential” for
cyborgs, as illegitimate offspring, can have its regressive expression in the naive
celebration of third nature without memory of second nature. The fathers are
consequential because without the ability to recognize them, they can return or be present in unsuspecting moments. As Adorno writes in *Minima Moralia*: “One must have tradition in oneself, to hate it properly” (52).

4c. Mathis Mootz: m²

In this chapter, we have seen images of cyborgs, white masculinity, and body cultures stretched out across numerous cultural forms: style of performance, star power, music, and parties. In following these trajectories, I have moved from theory, to film, to star power, to mass audience, all the while skirting the lines between pop, art, and subculture. This thirty-year history of body cultures is by no means exhausted here. Yet in conclusion, I would like to touch on these issues in the truly *late* history of the cyborg by examining the extraordinary career of Mathis Mootz (born 1976), who is a member of the younger generations that received these traditions in the 1990s and 2000s. As part of the rave generation coming of age in the 1990s, Mootz demonstrates a unique engagement with man-machine roles and identity construction. This engagement is grounded in the careful selection of project names and performance styles evoking ancient and late-modern mythological figures, which comment both on technology and masculinity. These names are situated with careful attention to biography as a narrative work of art that is reflected in the career and tools that Mootz demonstrates as music producer and DJ.

Growing up near Würzburg, Mootz’s youth was spent in elite educational institutions.\(^{216}\) Coming from a wealthy musical family, he sang as a child in the Boys Choir of Windsbach and attended its musical boarding school, before rejecting both the

\(^{216}\) The biographical information in this section is from a personal interview conducted in August 2010.
theological training and the oppressive life of classical music drill. He thereupon transferred to the famous, and subsequently notorious, Odenwald Boarding School,\textsuperscript{217} graduating in 1996. Although Mootz suffered from the oppressive authorities of both boarding schools, Odenwald’s secular atmosphere allowed him to begin pursuing his own interests and develop a distinct worldview. Already in 1991, during the rise of Väth’s DJ-icon status, he was introduced to electronic music in the typical fashion of a German teenager from a small town and within the confines of boarding school. He first heard pop techno hits such as L.A. Style’s “James Brown Is Dead,” after which he became dedicated to electronic music and shifted attention away from a possible career in classical music. From singing at a boy’s choir, he turned to studying music engineering at the SAE Institute.\textsuperscript{218}

Mootz also began to construct the persona that would eventually become the Panacea, his most famous musical project. Named after the Greek goddess of healing, Mootz’s Panacea was a medical project that emphasized the tonic and therapeutic aspects of dissonance. The Panacea also referred to a legendary universal potion that could heal illness, similar to the myth of music as a universal tonic and/or cosmic harmony. Mootz’s identification in name with both the feminine gender and medicine created a sharp tension with his actual performance on stage, exemplified in the slang use of “sick” as a compliment to music that is destructively unhealthy. In short, the relation of electronic music to the body was posited in this project as a dialectic of health

\textsuperscript{217} Odenwald Boarding School entered the German national press due to a string of cases regarding the sexual abuse of students by teachers. The story broke during the same time that a range of cases regarding sexual abuse by Catholic priests had also been revealed.

\textsuperscript{218} If we appropriate Deleuze and Guattari’s division of bird and insect music by conceiving it as a division vocal and instrumental music, this shift by Mootz between the choir and the sound studio might be thought of as the shift between bird- and insect-becomings. The choir’s theological and consonant associations in the purity of vocal music contrast sharply with his new commitment to secular and dissonant sounds through the appropriation of electronic-instrumental music.
and sickness, told through a persona of modern gender bending. Mootz’s musical productions and DJ performances appropriately reflected a diversity of aggressive genres: industrial, gabber, happy hardcore, drum and bass, techno, glitch, ambient, and other forms of aggressive electronic music.

Beyond his harsh musical style, Mootz often wore camouflage and industrial gear on stage. In 2004, he began to wear a metal grills, which was prominent as he smiled during performances and thus spectacularly recalled the steel teeth of Jaws from the James Bond films *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977) and *Moonraker* (1979). The reference is quite humorously appropriate. In *The Spy Who Loved Me*, Jaws is himself a Teutonic foot soldier of the megalomaniac Karl Stromberg, who plans to destroy the world through submarine warfare. However, in *Moonraker*, Jaws becomes a good sci-fi monster as he turns on his next master, Hugo Drax, who wants to destroy the world and create a master race. Mootz’s performances as the Jaws-DJ constituted displays of hearing precision and concentrated enthusiasm, with highly expressive gestures to demonstrate his knowledge regarding the finest details of the records being played. Thus, the aggressive and abrasive industrial sounds during performance, along with the cyborg style, clashed with his gestures and expressions of joy; indeed, the monstrous teeth could only be seen when he smiled. Väth’s pleasure machine is transformed into Mootz’s monstrous healing machine.
This stage personality has taken on interesting variations during his career, demonstrating a process of stylistic transformation comparable to Väth, though with greater attention to critical issues of health, class, race, and technology. It could roughly be divided into three stages:

(1) The first persona began as an industrial-drum and bass DJ whose monstrosity was augmented by his overweight body that seemed to evoke the German proletariat. Mootz’s early albums *Low Profile Darkness* (1997) and *Twisted Designz* (1998) displayed devilish pictures of his plump face making a demonic smile, flirting with the ugly, fat, and unfit as modern taboos. The series of photos on *Low Profile Darkness* offer associations of the industrial proletariat and Teutonic white trash, and this display revealed itself as a subtle play regarding fans’ expectations of underground authenticity.
In the two years that followed the release of *Twisted Designz*, Mootz suddenly lost weight and emerged as an upper-class playboy with roots from his youth, showing interests in luxury cars and the latest fashion. The mix of style and technology was summed up in the titles of the next three solo albums: *Phoenix Metabolism* (1999), *German Engineering* (2000), and *Underground Superstardom* (2002). The first album made reference to the rebirth experience one can have through weight loss, while the second album presented Mootz as an export commodity like the German auto and technical industries. This was a provocative engagement with the stereotypes and projections of his international, and especially his American, fan base (personal communication). In other words, through the concept of engineering, German cars, German fashion, German bodies, and German music were linked as engineering technologies whose patents guaranteed international prestige. Mootz’s press releases
even announced him as “the teutonic mastermind” (*Position Chrome*), another form of public relations engineering that exploits identity and audience expectations.

The complexity of his musical identity during this period splintered into new music projects such as the Rich Kid on the album *Murder Sound* (2001) and Kate Mosh for the hardcore album *Dynamo* (2001). The Rich Kid was a further acknowledgement of Mootz’s upper-class and elite educational roots that were in constant tension with the loyalties displayed toward the musical underground and its proletarian and progressive codings. Kate Mosh combined class with the analysis of gender. In other words, the name Kate Mosh constructed a feminine identity of fashion to augment the Panacea persona. As a hardcore album, it formed a contrasting position to the übermasculine expressions of the hardcore scenes that had risen to prominence in the 1990s especially

in Holland, Belgium, and Germany, which had followed the driving rhythms of DAF. Yet unlike the Panacea’s evocation of ancient Greek mythology, which, as we shall see, was followed by further explorations of ancient myth, the focus on cars in *German Engineering* and fashion with Kate Mosh highlighted modern icons.

Kate Mosh is a drag persona that embraces the English model Kate Moss, whose bad-girl image was notorious at the time. Indeed, it reflected Mootz’s interest in fashion, already displayed on the covers of *German Engineering* and *Underground Superstardom*. The project name is the opposite of what one might expect from an authentic hardcore and drum and bass producer, especially one known for the aggressive sounds and themes in tracks like “Hellbringer” from *Low Profile Darkness* and “Death is Near” from *Twisted Designz*. In these examples, Mootz’s references would seem to fall in line with a traditional Teutonic representation of destruction. Yet the Kate Mosh project, like Panacea before it, reversed the strictly male associations of hardcore and drum and bass by relying on the scandals associated with Kate Moss: charges of anorexia, heroin chic, and the “anti-supermodel” style. Moss has also performed in a considerable number of music videos and had friendships with numerous musicians. For example, she is the godmother to two sons of Paul Simonon from the Clash.

Kate Moss demonstrated a new form of the docile body as the morbidly attractive sick body addicted to chemicals. This style was exemplified in her work with Calvin Klein starting in 1993. In a later campaign, militaristic imagery was combined with her image in a popular L’Oreal commercial from the late 1990s. Moss marches down the catwalk to militaristic sounds and announces, “I declare war… on damaged hair and split ends.”

---

219 Uwe Schmidt, whose career of performance constructions was explored in chapter 2, made a similar flirtation with this scene with his album *Urban Primitivism* from 1994. His exploration of multiple styles challenged conventional wisdom regarding the gendered, functional, and taste divisions of music in the early 1990s.
After a series of target crosshairs are pointed at heads of hair, she announces, “Victory! L’Oreal, because I’m worth it.” Moss’s bad-girl persona in fashion and music is thus taken up by Mootz in a range of hardcore tracks that demonstrate a war-like diva and sick bad-girl persona in a genre thought to be exclusively occupied by male and masculine images. However, the Dynamo album cover confused the viewer with abstract 8-bit squares and the spare images of an underground recording; fashion is absent. The antipodes of the pop fashion coded as female and underground hardcore coded as male is thus combined in the album title, a genderless cyborg dynamo of production – or the industrial warrior as metrosexual dandy.

Image 32: m².
Courtesy of Mathis Mootz.

Beyond such intriguing projects, Mootz’s interests took on yet another direction that ramped up commentary on posthuman nonidentity. This new project resulted from an idea by his colleague, Stephan Alt, head of the label Ant-Zen. Alt suggested that Mootz develop a new music project and offered a new name: Squaremeter. The project
name was formed by using the initials of his actual name, Mathis Mootz, and constructing out of them the most geometrically banal forms: \( m \times m = m^2 \), or the square meter. Mootz embraced the name since it followed logically from his exploration of cyborg gender constructions. During the 2000s, with eleven albums to date, this project became established in the European electronic underground alongside Mootz’s Panacea project. An extraordinary comment on mythology and identity, the formula of \( m^2 \) is at once earthly and abstract, a measurement of space, property, and geography. It also emphasizes the mathematical precision of music production in late modernity, an age in which folk biology considers the mind a computer and identity as a genetic code.

The album covers of *Parsec* (2001), *The Bitter End* (2002), and *War of Sound* (2003), the latter two of which appeared on the Hands label discussed earlier, took on a banal square form. Similarly, Mootz delights in the play of languages and secret codes, such as in his track “Cryptonomicon” (2007), named after Neal Stephenson’s 1999 science-fiction novel of codes.

Both the name and this iconography offer important commentary on the fetishes of mystical iconography and occult symbols and languages, which are rampant in goth and heavy metal scenes, among others. The square meter emerges as the appropriate anti-occult symbol of late modernity: something utterly blank and material, signifying nothing. As an anti-icon, the square meter could either be complemented by equally abstract albums like *14id1610s* or set in tension with mythologically coded and exoticist albums like *Aswad* or *Nyx*. In short, the square meter is the mock-occult symbol of the cyborg, resisting the organic forms of goddess religions or the iconographies of patriarchal pagan religions and monotheism.
(3) Following 2003, Mootz developed a third stylistic period by honing his image through a mix of hardcore vinyl releases as Panacea and a focus on album releases in the Squaremeter projects. With the release of the Squaremeter albums on the Hands and Ant-Zen labels, he became better known in the goth-industrial scenes, which led to an even greater focus on mythological iconography, such as in Nyx (2006). As a concept album, Nyx brought the impulses of Panacea into the Squaremeter project, exploring in eight tracks the eight Greek goddesses who are the children of Nyx, the primordial goddess of night. The track “Thanatos,” in particular, offers a subdued ambient comment on war that lies at the antipodes of the usual associations of industrial music and the man-machine. In this context, female-gendered goddesses are brought into the project, though not as organicist religions of nature. Rather, they are disturbingly modern cyborg updates and commentaries on the human that, like Haraway’s figure, infiltrate the man-machine history and the informatics of domination.

This appropriation and splintering of identities in Mootz’s career resulted in the appearance of an image of nature that returns us to a discussion of insect music. As a complement to the squaremeter, insects are the predominant image of both the primary labels on which Mootz releases. The logo of Mootz’s label Position Chrome was changed from a cheetah to a moth in 2006; this moth has been prominently stamped on every release since this time. Mootz has embraced the logo, and he often wears a necklace with the moth symbol for press photos. Similarly, the majority of the Squaremeter albums are released on the Ant-Zen label. This name, also conceived by Stephan Alt, is a play on words. While standing as an abbreviation for the call of free expression or “Anti-Zensur,” German for “anti-censorship,” it expresses the earthly “zen”
of industrial ants as its main notion. The Ant-Zen logo is an ant body surrounded by a square-like formation that recalls target crosshairs.


This insect imagery undergirds the splintering of identities, both gendered and regional-racial. The overt reference to insects in this context indicates that my comparison of insects and electronic-industrial music is not merely implicit but also explicit in the minds of many artists and performers, by no means confined to Sven Väth and Mathis Mootz. As stated earlier, it was in part Deleuze and Guattari’s writings on insect music that inspired Achim Szepanski to found the label Mille Plateaux in Frankfurt. This label was the platform for a range of producers, such as Terre Thaemlitz and Oval, who critiqued modern identity through the “molecular” sound production of glitch and electronic minimalism.

Mootz himself was a prominent artist on this label for a number of years, releasing a Panacea album together with the Japanese singer Hanayo, Hanayo in Panacea (1998) as well as the m² album Sinecore (2000). Position Chrome was originally part of Szepanski’s Force Inc./Mille Plateaux network in Frankfurt before Mootz acquired the label in 2004. The complexity of international networks as represented in
Frankfurt has already been explored in chapter 1 as a “non-place.” Yet the “non-place” of computer networks and digital culture as constitutive of a new language is most clearly represented in the process of musical production itself: in the utilization of glitches and bleeps as the aural signs of computers. Squaremeter and other Mille Plateaux artists emphasized the materiality of the computer – the computer hardware as extensions of bodies and, indeed, a third nature of digital landscapes.

Finally, by focusing on computer “bugs” as the signs and mistakes of communication, this insect music critiqued the sheen of iCulture. This insect music recalls second nature with the means of late-modern digital production. In short, insect nature situates the cyborg cultures of electronic and industrial music. The music explored here distances itself from human languages and traditional folk music in its focus on insect images and sound production. These images attempt to make sense of the discursive productivity and expansion of the musical pallet that these genres of music have provided, while acknowledging their distance from human language. In other words, the insect offers an image of nonidentity to both acknowledge and critique the natural history of the man-machine. It is this aesthetic-technological tension that the trajectory of Mathis Mootz’s career explores in the extreme. Mootz offers a crystallization of techno-industrial subcultures of dissonance within the life of one artist: from industrial, to drum and bass, to dark ambient, and to goth cultures. That said, Mootz also appropriated the techno, happy hardcore, gabber, and trance sounds of rave culture into his productions. He set these dark and colorful cultures of virtual celebration and technological critique in constant tension.

In this focus on the cyborg and the tensions within electronic music traditions, I end with an investigation of the final m² album to have been produced to date:
Heliogabal (2010). In fact, the album was produced around the 2009 moment, the concluding year of this dissertation.

In Heliogabal, Mootz offers a pristinely mythical and earthly complement to his m² identity. As the title indicates, he produces a sonic exploration of the life of the Syrian-Roman emperor Heliogabal, a representative of blank identity whose life traversed the desert and the Roman metropolis. Heliogabal (himself or herself) became symbolic for decadence and sexual deviance while introducing the cult of Deus Sol Invictus, Heliogabal later becoming associated with this god. The figure of Heliogabal allowed Mootz to make a parodic appropriation of goth cultures and Dark Romanticism by focusing on both the biographical and mythical life of Heliogabal. Put differently, Mootz established a history of supermodern decadence that in many respects far exceeded goth clichés or the decadent mind, including the decadence represented in The Magic Mountain, as cited by Haraway.
However, the figure of Heliogabal achieved even more than this. It brought Mootz into surprising dialogue with the novel upon which this dissertation’s title is based: *Martian Time-Slip*. And so, I return to this old theme of the Teutonic outland as we travel out of that so-called place “Germany.” I leave present-day Berlin in its cyborg banality of the everyday as third nature. And in this moment of departure, I remember my final Be.Berlin weeks in 2011 through my actual encounter and interviews with Mootz. Our discussions occurred as we biked through the city on rickety old bikes, which produced sounds of a musical quality that were truly the banal cyborg versions of Kraftwerk’s *Tour de France*. We discussed, among other things, Mootz’s achievement with *Heliogabal*.

Indeed, with it, the “teutonic mastermind” Mootz offered a late Teutonic Time-Slip to the German-Californian history described in the introduction. Just as Philip K. Dick was inspired by the Heliogabalus myth and gave this name to the outlandish Martian and musical companion of Manfred Steiner, the Martian techno-child, so also did Mathis Mootz investigate the mythical and future-primitive history of Heliogabalus in his most blank, abstract, and supermodern of identity personas: the m².

I now proceed out of “Germany” and back to the North by Midwest and California so as to complete this journey. I finished the rickety hardcore bike ride with Mootz, and a few weeks later I packed up my things and flew from Berlin Tegel to Frankfurt Airport, where I prepared to transfer to Terminal 1. The three years of the expat Disco Abyss in Berlin were to be left behind, and somewhere in Frankfurt Airport, the non-place supermarket where the Dorian Gray once stood continued its daily routine. I rode First Class on a Lufthansa Boeing 747, and as I sat at the nose of the craft, I looked at the Mainhattan skyline as the jumbo-jet ascended into the 2011 ether. My luxury techno-chair gave my airborne body a back massage.
In this comfortable cyborg-chic fashion, I returned to the two biographical coasts in the New World that had inaugurated this exploration about and through Germany. I also returned to write and complete *Teutonic Time-Slip*. And so, I conclude by exploring an example of the late history of the Teutonic outland. From the introduction’s study of the pre-1968 outland and *Martian Time-Slip*, we move to the post-Kraftwerk and post-unification outland in an example that indeed represents an important cultural link of California and Minnesota. In particular, I explore a final filmic moment concerning German electronic music. Instead of Schwarzenegger and Jesse Ventura, we will find a Hollywood meeting between California and Minnesota of a quite different sort…
**Conclusion:**

**Concluding the Teutonic?**

**Time-Slips by the Coen Brothers and the Late History of Electronic Exports**

Action: The final scene of the “film to end all films” of World War II action cinema roles before our eyes. A Jewish revenge fantasy against the Nazi enemy is fulfilled with the total defeat of the Germans by a Jewish-American soldier in a Western-style standoff. The violence is excruciating and excessive: the battlefield is cinematic. The Jewish soldier leads his band of brothers against a superior German army equipped with the latest in techno-industrial weapons. Yet the soldier proves fearless: a cannonball crushes the chest of one German. Then he cuts off the ear of another, finishing him off with a single punch, and finally he pounds the head of a third soldier with a club, crushing his skull. In the end, the corpses of the Germans lie scattered on the battlefield with the Jewish-American soldier triumphant.

This scene likely seems familiar. Indeed, it would appear obvious that it belongs somewhere in Quentin Tarantino’s epic film, *Inglourious Basterds* (2009). Mixing World War II action cinema with Spaghetti Westerns, *Inglourious Basterds* concerns a band of Jewish-American soldiers, known as “the Basterds,” stationed in France. They seek to defeat the Nazis by means of an Apache-style resistance behind enemy lines, collecting as many “Nazi scalps” as possible. The Basterds later take part in “Operation Kino” (Operation Cinema), an extraordinary covert plan to blow up a cinema in Paris where the Nazi elites are attending the premiere of a Goebbels propaganda film, *Stolz der Nation* (*Nation’s Pride*).

Occurring in 1944, Operation Kino results in an alternate historical end to the war. At the cinema, a further revenge plot against the Nazis is underway. Hatched by the Jewish-French owner of the cinema, Shosanna Dreyfus, it proves successful. She burns her cinema to the ground and succeeds in killing all the attending Nazis. Some surviving members of the Basterds, in particular the notorious “Bear Jew,” also manage to enter
the cinema and pummel Hitler and Goebbels with bullets as the cinema burns down, thus ensuring the end of the war.

In 2009, the press entered heated debates regarding *Inglourious Basterds*. Questions of World War II film history, Jewish revenge fantasies, and excessive violence were discussed in numerous contexts.\(^{220}\) Having sonically choreographed World War II with everything from Ennio Morricone’s Spaghetti Western music to Blaxploitation hits such as the theme from *Slaughter* (1972), Tarantino seemed to have set World War II within the action film spectacle of the sixties and seventies. He further sensationalized the action by engaging the ultraviolent cinema style of Sam Peckinpah,\(^ {221}\) whose World War II epic *Cross of Iron* (1977) influenced the film’s aesthetics. Many reviews of *Inglourious Basterds* suggested that its plot and themes were unprecedented in its presentation of Jewish revenge as “kosher porn.”\(^ {222}\) While earlier films were mentioned in the history of revenge and the figure of the “muscle Jew,” such as Steven Spielberg’s *Munich* (2006) and Edward Zwick’s *Defiance* (2008), none had explored the defeat of the Germans with such fantastic and violent excess as *Inglourious Basterds*…

…but there is problem. The scene described above is not from *Inglourious Basterds*, nor any of these other films. It takes place in a, shall we say, more subtly clever film: the Coen brothers’ *The Big Lebowski* (1998). No commentary in the articles on *Inglourious Basterds* mentions the final action scene of the Coen brothers’ strange mix of film noir, comedy, and Western. In light of this silence, what makes *The Big Lebowski* so intriguing as a film is that it is so cleverly indirect, so rich in its references,

---

\(^ {220}\) See Taylor and Walter.
\(^ {221}\) For a study of Peckinpah and ultraviolence, see Prince.
\(^ {222}\) This phrase was coined by the actor Eli Roth, who plays the “Bear Jew” in the film.
that the press in this case simply passed over its objects of satire. The encounter with Tarantino’s 2009 epic helps to realize the full significance of *The Big Lebowski*. Indeed, it makes clear that the Coen brothers have offered one of the more innovative contributions in the history of Hollywood interpretations of the Teutonic. And crucial to their project is the cultural significance of electronic music and German identity. It plays a key role in this final action scene of the Coen brothers’ film, a winking soundtrack to the winking eye of the brothers’ humor. Indeed, electronic music functions as a strange object from the past, a German retro-future in America, which must be addressed in the film’s detective work. But let me first recount the twisted plot of *The Big Lebowski* in order to clarify why electronic music is central to the final action scene and the question of finding a clear techno-enemy with which to do battle.

*The Big Lebowski* is a postmodern take on the classic noir, *The Big Sleep* (1946). Set in the immediate aftermath of World War II, *The Big Sleep* stars Humphrey Bogart in his iconic portrayal of private detective Philip Marlowe. *The Big Lebowski*, set in 1991 during the military buildup of the First Gulf War, concerns Jeff “The Dude” Lebowski, played by Jeff Bridges. Though by no means a private detective like Philip Marlowe, the Dude is dragged into a detective story because of an issue of mistaken identity with a conservative millionaire who is named Jeff “The Big” Lebowski. Rather than a hard-boiled detective, the Dude is an unemployed leftover of the Left. He recalls the sixties’ revolutions, both political and psychedelic, and his life consists of listening to music, hanging out, smoking pot, drinking White Russians, and bowling with his best buddies, Walter Sobchak (John Goodman), a Jewish-American Vietnam veteran, and Donny (Steve Buscemi), a simple and naïve friend. Walter Sobchak is central to my concerns, as will be addressed shortly.
The Dude is, in fact, a distinctly musical character. He listens primarily to classic rock; his favorite band is Creedence Clearwater Revival. The Dude also mentions his former work as a music promoter. He met Metallica, whom he describes as “a bunch of assholes.” He thus represents the Los Angeles riffraff who were once involved in the entertainment or music industry in some fashion during their younger years, and now linger on at the outskirts of Hollywood with their careers behind them. Indeed, as a relaxed man who aimlessly wanders the nineties while stuck in the sixties and seventies, the Dude has become one of the most iconic characters of California cultural mythology.223

Yet the Dude’s life does not remain simple. His troubles begin when some thugs attack him at his home because the Big Lebowski’s Minnesotan trophy wife, Bunny, owes money. The Dude visits the Big Lebowski to try to receive compensation for this attack, specifically because the thugs “peed on [his] rug.” The Big Lebowski refuses, though the Dude takes a rug from him anyway. Bunny later disappears, presumably kidnapped by the thugs, so the Big Lebowski hires the Dude to act as courier for the ransom money, unconcerned about the stolen rug. This courier mission fails, however, because Walter becomes involved. Walter argues they should keep the ransom money and replaces the “authentic” suitcase full of money with a “ringer.”

Walter’s plan is merely the beginning. Lies are continually spun out as the Dude tries to solve the case of the kidnapping, and the mix of mistaken identities becomes ever more convoluted. It finally turns out that Bunny was not kidnapped, but simply on a weekend road trip; the Big Lebowski interpreted her disappearance as a kidnapping in

---

223 This status is confirmed by the many festivals held over the last ten years under the name Lebowski Fest. See also accounts by actors and fans collected in Green et al. For the Dude as a revolutionary figure with respect to the legacy of the New Left, see Thompson.
order to embezzle money from a fund under the control of his feminist-artist daughter, Maude Lebowski. Thus, the suitcase the Big Lebowski supplied, supposedly containing the ransom money, turned out itself to be a “ringer.”

Amidst this intrigue with and within the Lebowski family, the Dude becomes concerned primarily with what would appear to be a true enemy: a group of German “Nihilists.” It is this conflict with a bizarre German adversary, amidst this convoluted plot about Los Angeles, that concerns me, because it has a good deal to say about the late history of German technopop. The Nihilists are members of a technopop band called Autobahn, an obvious allusion to Kraftwerk. They become involved because the Big Lebowski falsely informs the Nihilists that the Dude has the ransom money, and the Nihilists threaten to cut off the Dude’s “johnson” if he does not give them the money. The Dude’s subsequent effort to escape the German threat becomes an important theme through the rest of the film.

With this addition of a German technopop band, the fanciful plot of The Big Lebowski offers an appropriate conclusion to our travels in identity. Indeed, it provides a return, an update, and a final example of the Californian-Minnesotan-German tricoastal links that began our travels in the Introduction. This tricoastal relationship takes the following form: The Minnesotan Coen brothers imagine the history of German representations in Hollywood as played out on the California Coast. In the conclusion, I thus explore the ironic links of Germans and technopop, the time-slips between “Nazis” and “Nihilists,” and the events that lead up to the final action scene. Through a productive comparison with Inglourious Basterds, I will show how The Big Lebowski engages with pop culture, German techno, and the politics of the 1990s in order to be responsible to history in its own uniquely perverse way. The conflict between the
California-icon Dude and the Kraftwerk-imitating Nihilists is one of the great comic conflicts in cinematic history. Indeed, it is one of the most comic Californian-German encounters in popular culture, and it proceeds through carefully constructed stages. I will thus begin by unfolding the specific tensions between the Dude and the Nihilists during their various encounters throughout the film. These scenes situate the social-cultural significance of the final action sequence.

The “first contact” between the Germans and the Dude begins early. During his first visit to the Big Lebowski’s mansion, the Dude is refused compensation for his rug and is ushered out through the backyard that features a luxurious pool. As he is ushered out, the Dude spies Bunny, the Minnesotan trophy wife, for the first time. She is lying on the porch in a bikini and putting green nail polish on her toes. He heads over to flirt with Bunny, who asks him to blow on her toes. The Dude first glances over at the pool and sees Uli Kunkle (Peter Stormare), the head Nihilist, bobbing up and down on an inflatable chair. Uli is passed out with an empty whiskey bottle next to him. Regarding blowing on her toes, the Dude then asks:

The Dude: “Are you sure he won’t mind?”
Bunny: “Uli doesn’t care about anything. He’s a Nihilist.”
The Dude: “Oh, that must be exhausting.”
Bunny: “You’re not blowing.”

The Dude’s remark that nihilism is “exhausting” is the first significant observation regarding the cultural differences between the Dude and the Nihilists. Uli is presented as “relaxed” in the pool, but in a way that contrasts with the Dude’s principles of relaxation.

---

224 Throughout this chapter, I will be providing dialogue as it appears in the film. The screenplay by Joel and Ethan Coen, published by Faber & Faber in 1998, diverges in important moments from the spoken dialogue as it ended up in the film. It is thus not a reliable source. For example, in the original screenplay, the Dude responds, “Practicing?” (22) rather than, “Oh, that must be exhausting.” These differences conflict with public statements by the actors and producers in interviews and DVD extras that nothing needed to be changed in the script.
Arguably, the Dude doesn’t care much about anything either. However, his lack of care equates “care” with “worry.” The Dude “takes it easy” rather than following a principle of aesthetic destruction of self and others which Uli comes to represent. These two principles of an aesthetic life, of how “not to care,” will clash later in the film.

After this initial encounter, the Dude receives more information about Uli from the Big Lebowski’s daughter, Maude, a feminist artist whose works are judged as “strongly vaginal.” He visits Maude at her request, because she wants to explain to him why the kidnapping is a hoax. She first shows him a porn video called Logjammin to prove that her “stepmother” Bunny is a nymphomaniac and a true trophy wife. In the video, Uli plays a German porn star called “Karl Hungus,” while Bunny plays “Bunny Lajoya.” Rather confused, the Dude says, “Oh, I know that guy. He’s a Nihilist.” In Logjammin, Uli is called over to fix the cable. He brings “mein toolz” and assures Bunny, “ich bin expert.” The Dude feigns innocence, refusing to consume the porn as porn. When Maude asks him what he thinks will happen next, he suggests: “He fixes the cable?” Here California free love and German porn are brought into bicoastal comparison, which will prove important for the marking of black leather and German sexuality later in the film. The Dude’s free love, and even Bunny’s porn, is fun and light, while German hardcore is starkly disturbing. Nevertheless, Bunny and Uli have some features in common. Apparently, they “cannot love in the true sense of the word,” according to aesthete-feminist Maude.

The Dude’s next encounter with Uli erupts in full-fledged conflict. It turns out the man with whom the Dude was supposed to exchange the ransom money was Uli. However, the Dude and Walter gave the “ringer” to Uli. The stage is thus set for the

---

225 These are the words he uses repeatedly in his request that Walter calm down after pulling a gun in a bowling dispute. The Dude says three times in slight variations: “Just take it easy, man.”
Nihilists’ attack in the Dude’s home. The Dude’s “relaxation” is contrasted with the Nihilist threats. He lies in his bathtub, smoking a joint and listening to “Song of the Whale: Ultimate Relaxation,” a pure New-Age utopia. Suddenly, Uli and the two other members of Autobahn enter the house, wearing black outfits and industrial-style boots. One member wields a cricket racket with which he smashes the Dude’s answering machine and other objects in the living room. The Dude asserts his American constitutional rights, specifically the Fourth Amendment, against the totalitarian-techno Germans: “Hey, this is a private residence, man!”

The Germans then enter the Dude’s bathroom. Uli has brought along a ferret, their Nihilist-rat version of the German shepherd as Gestapo dog. After the Dude misidentifies this animal as a marmot, Uli then throws the ferret in the tub, and the Dude screams due to the torturous tickling of the ferret’s feet on his private parts. The Nihilists warn the Dude that they “believe in nothing,” though their accents pronounce it as “belieff in nawssing!” They proceed with threats that they can “do things you haven’t dreamed of,” including cutting off the Dude’s “johnson.” They will “shtomp on it and sqvoosh it” unless they receive the money.

In the context of these comic castration threats, the choice of the ferret as torture is the pet animal equivalent to the techno style of the Nihilists. In other words, just as the ferret is the parodic variation on the Gestapo dog, so are the black leather outfits techno variations on the Gestapo uniform. The ferret is seen as innocent and hilarious compared to a German shepherd. Yet it is also a disturbingly small animal that can possibly be used for grotesque sexual play, just as they threaten to cut off the Dude’s privates. Uli’s porn career and his “inability to love” are coupled with these hardcore black-leather outfits of the Germans to present stereotypical Teutonic aestheticism.
Sadomasochism, bestiality, and the homoeroticism of the techno band combine as postmodern parodies of a predictably perverse German-Nazi sexuality.

The Dude now “worries” a great deal and can by no means “take it easy.” In short, the Germans emerge as total threats to his “ultimate relaxation.” At the bowling alley, the Dude seeks council with his own “band.” The following is a key part of the conversation between the Dude, Walter, and Donny:

The Dude: “My only hope is that the Big Lebowski kills me before the Germans can cut my dick off.”
Walter: “Now that is just ridiculous, Dude. No one is going to cut your dick off.”
The Dude: “Thank you, Walter.”
Walter: “Not if I have anything to say about it.”
The Dude: “Thank you, Walter. That makes me feel very secure. That makes me feel very warm inside.”
Walter: “Duuuuude.”
The Dude: “This whole fucking thing. I could be sitting here with just pee stains on my rug, but no man, I got...”
Donny: “They were Nazis, Dude?”
Walter: “Oh come on, Donny, they were threatening castration. Are we going to split hairs here? Am I wrong?”
The Dude: “Man, they were Nihilists, man. They kept saying they believe in nothing.”
Walter: “Nihilists! Fuck me. I mean, say what you want about the tenants of National Socialism, Dude, at least it’s an ethos.”

This conversation sums up the conflict, while bringing Walter further into the mess. By this point, it has already been established that Walter is a friend who repeatedly becomes involved in the Dude’s problems, often to the Dude’s detriment. In this case, the Germans become Walter’s problem and enemy. He sees the Germans as threatening his very existence because the California-New Age Dude is so worried that he has lost interest in the bowling tournament, one of Walter’s most passionate obsessions – a form of secular devotion.
The fact that Walter also sees Nihilism as, in a sense, worse than Nazism is a fascinating and disturbing moment in the film, especially because he is Jewish, like the Coen brothers. To clarify, Walter is a converted Jew as a result of marriage and has become incredibly committed even after, or precisely because of, divorce from his Jewish wife. Thus, his assertion that the Germans will never change emerges from the background of his commitment to Jewish history and heritage. The fact that no “ethos” is left in the German enemy appears shocking to Walter for two reasons. First, a coherent system upon which to place evil in connection with Germans has now been lost. Second, Walter is generally obsessed with systems, ritual, and rules as necessarily positive practices that are reflected in his own conservative ethos as an American soldier and Vietnam veteran.

Later in the film, the Dude challenges Walter regarding his Jewish identity. As they are driving, Walter states he is shomer Shabbos, so he should not be driving unless it is an emergency. Then the following exchange occurs:

The Dude: “Will you come off it, Walter. You’re not even fucking Jewish, man.”
Walter: “What the fuck are you talking about?”
The Dude: “You’re fucking Polish-Catholic.”
Walter: “What the fuck are you talking about? I converted when I married Cynthia.”
The Dude: “Yeah, yeah.”
Walter: “You know this.”
The Dude: “Yeah, and five fucking years ago, you were divorced.”
Walter: “So what are you saying? When you get divorced, you turn in your library card? You get a new license? You stop being Jewish?... I’m Jewish as fucking Tevye.”
The Dude: “It’s all a part of your sick Cynthia thing, man. Taking care of her fucking dog, going to her fucking synagogue. You’re living in the fucking past.”
Walter: “3,000 years of beautiful tradition, from Moses to Sandy Koufax, you’re goddamn right I’m living in the fucking past!”

Walter develops a complex and conflicted identity as a Polish-Catholic converted Jew. In fact, Walter emerges as one of the most fascinating “Jewish” characters in the rich...
oeuvre of the Coen brothers and their exploration of Jewish-American identity, especially prominent in such films as *Barton Fink* (1991), a tale of California, and *A Serious Man* (2009), a tale of Minnesota. For Walter, on the one hand, Polish-Catholicism’s long history of anti-Semitism makes it a form of converted identity that is fraught with tension. On the other hand, the combination of Polish-Catholic and Jewish heritage would make Walter’s hatred and mistrust of the Germans doubly intense. It is clear, then, that put in the right circumstances, he will go after the Germans.

Walter’s obsessions with rules and insistence that he is “living in the fucking past” also contrast starkly with the Dude. The Dude’s given name is Lebowski, which is arguably Polish as well, and maybe even Jewish. Yet with his new name, “the Dude,” constructs a blank identity that forgets history and has no interest in past conflicts. Or rather, the Dude has an identity as vague and lost to its origins as the name Lebowski is shrouded in the mystery and constantly changing borders and pasts of Eastern Europe. The Dude cares little for this Eastern heritage of the Old World and simply lives as an urban Californian in the New World, firmly “rooted” on the West Coast. The Western-style narrator of *The Big Lebowski*, a cowboy called the Stranger, appropriately emphasizes the West and the loss of names in the opening lines of the film:

> A way out west there was a fella, fella I want to tell you about, fella by the name of Jeff... Lebowski. At least, that was the handle his lovin’ parents gave him, but he never had much use for it himself. This Lebowski, he called himself “the Dude.” Now, dude, that’s a name no one would self-apply where I come from. But then, there was a lot about the Dude that didn’t make a whole lot of sense to me. And a lot about where he lived, likewise. But then again, maybe that’s why I found the place s’durned innarestin.

Yet if the past and given names have been dismissed, the Dude still faces a clear and present danger from the Germans. The Old World comes back to haunt him, even in his
dreams. Indeed, the Dude later has a nightmare involving fears of castration by the Nihilists, imagined in the style of a Busby Berkeley musical. Yet their conflict does not strictly concern national heritage. In contrast with Walter’s deeply historical aversion, the Dude’s main cultural conflict with the Germans is in his understanding of pop culture, music, and aesthetic relaxation. Yet despite the opposition in taste and values, the Nihilists and the Dude have commonalities to the extent that they are explicitly pop cultural figures that construct new identities. The electronic Germans have as little use for history as the Dude. Rather, history is something to be lightly sampled on occasion, but which does not have ethical consequences or horrific outcomes.

In fact, the next scene to involve the Nihilists has the Dude discover the Nihilists’ pop musical history. It follows after the bowling alley conversation and the Dude’s nightmare terrors about castration. The Dude visits Maude again in order to “tenure my resignation, or whatever.” He believes Uli and the Nihilists actually have kidnapped Bunny. It is not a hoax, and the case is solved, if not resolved. However, Maude disputes this interpretation. She explains who Uli is: “You remember Uli? He’s a musician, used to have group, Autobahn. Look in my LPs; they released one album in the late seventies. Their music is sort of…. ugh… technopop.” The Dude then looks into Maude’s LPs to find Autobahn’s album, Nagelbett (Nail Bed). The cover is in the style of Kraftwerk’s Mensch-Maschine, but with a sadomasochist and industrial flare, with rows of nails in formations like stormtroopers from the Nuremberg rallies of Triumph of the Will.
Images 37/38/39: The Dude and Autobahn.
Here, the Coen brothers mix various genres of electronic dance music into a typical Anglo-American fantasy of what “German” techno music might be. The “Autobahn” name, the Mensch-Maschine cover, and Maude’s definition of the Nihilist style as “technopop” obviously link the music to the Kraftwerk tradition. However, at the same time, the notion of “Nail bed” and the black leather outfits of the Autobahn members places them closer to the EBM-industrial tradition of Deutsch Amerikanische Freundschaft, not to mention the Nazi associations of goose-stepping soldiers. In this mix, the Coen brothers borrow heavily from the parody of German electronic music by Mike Myers as the character Dieter from Sprockets, which was a recurring sketch on the New York TV-comedy series Saturday Night Live between 1989 and 1993. The Dude holds the Nagelbett album for a long time in his hands while talking with Maude and drinking a White Russian. However, he remains ignorant regarding Autobahn’s strange musical practices, and he never expresses an interest in actually listening to the album.

Instead, in the very next scene, the Dude listens to Elvis Costello on his earphones in a doctor’s office and then drives down a street, happily smoking a joint and listening to Creedence Clearwater Revival. German technopop thus remains part of an art world that is strangely foreign to the Dude. He is stuck in the 1970s, listening to Creedence Clearwater as the “Culture” of the Californian Coast over and against the members of Autobahn, themselves stuck on the 1970s West German coast. In short, 1970s German technopop comes to haunt the 1970s hippie rocker Dude: two radically different notions of the 1970s as cultural heritage. In Los Angeles, which is notorious for contrived, artificial, and excessive styles, the technopop Nihilists represent the most artificial pop style of all. The Dude, by contrast, while constructing a new identity, retains
authenticity through his commitment to “roots rock.” In other words, though in a state of resignation, the Dude retains echoes of the revolutionary “roots” of the 1960s, whereas Autobahn is firmly lodged in late-1970s reaction and aestheticist resignation as the full expression of postmodern indifference.

In the context of the 1970s, yet another geographic association emerges here. The German techno-artificial world is also set explicitly in relation to the New York art world and its various minimalisms from the Velvet Underground to Steve Reich. To be sure, the Nihilists recall New York’s German visitors such as Klaus Nomi, not to mention Mike Myers’s Dieter character. Maude Lebowski is herself a New York “minimal” artist, an association confirmed by the playing of Meredith Monk’s “Walking Song” when Maude is first introduced. Monk’s music situates Maude as an odd East Coast artist living on the West Coast, and her connections to the East Coast and Europe result in her intimate knowledge of Autobahn and other subcultural bands. That Uli and his goons are even in California is arguably connected to Maude, since she acknowledges that she might have introduced Uli and Bunny to each other.

After this discussion, the Dude continues on his adventures with no further direct encounters with Uli, though the Nihilists try to prove that they have kidnapped Bunny. They cut off a girlfriend’s toe, making sure it has the same green nail polish as Bunny’s toenails, and send it as a warning with a demand for the ransom. Yet this strategy proves to be of no avail. Soon after, Bunny returns to the Big Lebowski’s mansion, confirming she was never kidnapped; it turns out she had simply been on the weekend roadtrip, visiting some friends in Palm Springs. The Dude thinks his problems are now

---

226 For an analysis of the political stakes of “roots rock,” see Pecknold.
solved, and the “case” has indeed been resolved. He returns to the bowling alley and to “taking it easy” with Walter and Donny.

But then, as the California trio happily leaves the bowling alley, the Autobahn trio is there to meet them. The Dude’s car is in flames, and the Nihilists have various weapons with which to confront them. They make a final demand for the ransom money, even though they have no hostage to offer. The final scene with the Nihilists is the key action sequence described in the opening paragraph of this conclusion. However, it should by now be clear that the details of this scene require clarification…

And translation. To be sure, the scene as initially described could have taken place in Inglourious Basterds. I deliberately narrated The Big Lebowski scene using the ultraviolent Spaghetti Western and World War II action language of that film. However, a proper account of the scene as it develops in The Big Lebowski requires the following details as decoders: The “Jewish-American” soldier is Walter, the Polish-Catholic converted-Jew and Vietnam veteran. The “band of brothers” is no dramatic group of elite soldiers, but consists of Walter and his bowling buddy slackers, the Dude and Donny. The “cinematic battlefield” is not in Europe, but the parking lot of the bowling alley located somewhere in Los Angeles. And the year of battle is not 1944, but 1991, during the First Gulf War.
Finally, the “Nazi enemy” is the Nihilist band, Autobahn, and their “techno-industrial” weapons consist of a boombox playing their one hit from the late 1970s, “Wie glauben” (a misspelling of “Wir glauben” or “We believe”). The weapons of the Jewish-
Polish soldier Walter are also slightly different from those described: a bowling ball rather than a cannonball; his own teeth rather than a knife; and finally, the technopop boombox rather than a club. As regards the second weapon, the grotesque biting off of Uli’s ear by Walter is none other than a parody of the equally grotesque ear mutilation that occurs in Quentin Tarantino’s first film, *Reservoir Dogs* (1992). It also alludes to Mike Tyson’s biting off of Evander Holyfield’s ear in a notorious 1997 boxing match at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in another city of the Wild West: Las Vegas. Walter thus becomes a stand-in for excessive and unpredictable American violence in both film and sport. He proves to be a muscle Jew as strong as his idols, Moses and Sandy Koufax.

Furthermore, though Walter beats up the Nihilists, there is no clear logic as to why the fight needs to take place. The Nihilists are merely the uninformed leftovers to a case that has already been solved. The Nihilist girlfriend’s sacrificed toe also reveals them as even more pathetic, as Walter points out to Uli: “Dipshit with a nine-toed woman.” The stark differences in style between these two action scenes of *Inglourious Basterds* and *The Big Lebowski* further makes clear the stylistic divergences in their engagement with the violent spectacle of World War II action cinema. The divergences are as follows:

*Inglourious Basterds* alters the World War II repetition compulsion by Hollywood with sadistic-ironic overstatement. Unlike any other World War II film, the notion of spectacle is starkly present in *Inglourious Basterds*. The fact that the main operation takes place at a cinema highlights the double mission of both ending the Nazi regime and ending Nazi spectacle. This is made clear in the mission as explained in the wonderfully stylized English accent of Mike Myers. He plays the fictional British general, Ed Fenech, a performative identity as stark as Myers’s Dieter character in *Sprockets*,...
and explains Operation Kino to Lieutenant Archie Hicox (Michael Fassbender), while Winston Churchill looks on:

Fenech: “Lieutenant Hicox, at this point and time I’d like to brief you on Operation Kino. Three days from now, Joseph Goebbels is throwing a gala premiere of one of his new movies in Paris.”
Hicox: “What film, sir?”
Fenech: “The motion picture is called Nation’s Pride. In attendance at this joyous Germatic occasion will be Goebbels, Göring, Bormann, and most of the German High Command, including all high ranking officers of both the SS and the Gestapo, as well as luminaries of the Nazi propaganda film industry.”
Hicox: “The master race at play, hey?”
Fenech: “Basically, we have all our rotten eggs in one basket. The objective of Operation Kino: blow up the basket.”
Hicox: “And like the snows of yesteryear, gone from this earth. Jolly good, sir.”

With the task of Operation Kino, the “Germatic” (dramatic/Germanic) spectacle of the final action sequence in Inglourious Basterds is both performed to excess at the same time the film seeks to destroy it. Shosanna Dreyfus literally seeks to end the cinematic spectacle by replacing Nation’s Pride with her own specially prepared film in which she declares to all the Nazis in attendance: “My name is Shosanna Dreyfus, and this is the face of Jewish Vengeance.” At this moment, the movie screen and the cinema are burning to the ground. The Bear Jew then sprays Hitler’s cinematic face and body with bullets to utter deformation, as though only by wiping out the cinematic spook of Hitler will the Third Reich finally be defeated. One might say here that the danger of Hitler’s promise of a Thousand Year Reich exists in the form of his omnipresent perpetuation in cinema, sound, and spectacle for decades or even centuries beyond the actual destruction of the Reich.

Obviously, everything here is highly stylized. Yet at the same time, the violent spectacle only truly works if the audience identifies the actors being killed in the film as
Nazis on some level. In other words, the direct representation of the historical “setting” in World War II is performed to utterly absurd, yet somehow believable, excess.

This final destruction of Nazi spectacle stands in many respects at the antipodes of how World War II politics and history are understood in by the Coen brothers. *The Big Lebowski* operates through a logic of humanist-humoristic understatement that tries to be as *indirect* as possible regarding the past. In fact, it is so indirect that World War II action cinema seems to have already disappeared into the “snows of yesteryear.” *The Big Lebowski* is focused entirely on what roles the political valuations of World War II and Germans play in 1991. In order to represent Hollywood to itself, the Minnesotan Coen brothers incorporate the genre of the Western into Los Angeles rather than Europe. Venice Beach proves to be the underbelly of history to the Hollywood spectacle of World War II action as it is represented to its utter extreme in *Inglourious Basterds.*

While the Nazis are *identified* to excess in *Inglourious Basterds,* identification in *The Big Lebowski* is fundamentally problematized through the techno-Nihilists. In other words, as the Gentile Quentin seeks to fulfill Jewish revenge fantasies, the Jewish Dudes Joel and Ethan choose to undermine the notion of a stable enemy in 1991.

Technopop history plays a key role in this undermining. The conflict between the Dude and the Nihilists is a conflict regarding conceptions of a pop cultural life. The Nihilists are as *uninterested* in history as the Dude is; they just want money. It is Walter who must recall history with devotion, yet he cannot figure out what to make of the ahistorical Nihilists. As they encounter the Nihilists in the parking lot, his bowling buddy, Donny, is certainly afraid:

Donny: “Are these the Nazis, Walter?”
Walter: “No Donny, these men are nihilists. There’s nothing to be afraid of.”
Donny is not convinced and asks:

Donny: “Are these men going to hurt us, Walter?”
Walter: “No Donny, these men are cowards.”

Walter prepares to attack the Germans and states, “Show me what you got, Nihilists!” As the technopop plays, he throws a bowling ball into the stomach of one German and then bites the ear off of Uli. He finishes Uli off by punching him in the face and yelling, “Anti-Semite!”

This final accusation is key. The decision regarding who the new enemy is in the post-Cold War world becomes unclear. In contrast to Walter’s designations, The Dude decides that the Germans are simply Nihilists. He is fully focused on saving his johnson from castration. Walter, on the other hand, goes through interpretations that amount to six different names of the enemy: Germans/Nazis/Nihilists/Crybabies/Cowards/Anti-Semites. His frustration at not being able to “identify” a stable enemy in 1991 leads to fury and erratic violence. His final conclusion “Anti-Semite” is the most specific regarding the rage he feels at seeing the “German” enemy. While he goes through a middle list of insults related to the issue of “Nihilism,” he comes full circle back to the issue of Nazi history that he sees in the techno-Nihilists. “Anti-Semite” is the final insult yelled at the Nihilists to give historical meaning to a parking lot brawl that has no meaning.

However, it is this middle series of insults, the variations on the Nihilists as “cowards” and “a bunch of fucking crybabies,” that firmly situates the conflict within the politics of the 1990s. With these insults on the parking lot, Walter becomes convinced that these Germans are not a “worthy adversary,” the same charge he gives to “that camel-fucker in Iraq,” Saddam Hussein. He confirms these charges with horror in the course of the battle, just as was reflected in the spectacular victory of the Gulf War.
The historical moment of 1991, with the conflicts surrounding the First Gulf War, is key since this is a period of two important events. First, it is the moment when Germany is reunifying while attempting to maintain its reserved position in foreign policy by resisting the deployment of active combat troops to the Persian Gulf. Though the Coen brothers perhaps did not know of this coincidence, German technopop and the new normalization of World War II history came together around this moment with the first major techno hit in unified Germany in 1991: U96’s “Das Boot.” A music project by Hamburg-based producer Alex Christensen, U96 remixed the soundtrack of Wolfgang Petersen’s World War II epic *Das Boot* (1981) as a techno dance hit. The song stayed number one on the German singles charts for thirteen weeks, ensuring the rise of technopop in the 1990s.

Second, the specter of the Nazi past was invoked in the Persian Gulf War itself by comparing Saddam Hussein to Hitler. George H.W. Bush claimed, for example, “A half century ago, our nation and the world paid dearly for appeasing an aggressor who should, and could, have been stopped. We are not going to make the same mistake again.” That a strange postmodern German “band,” rather than Muslim terrorists, haunt the world of *The Big Lebowski* reflects this logic. Middle East politics are fought out through the misidentified question of the old German enemy and classical questions of good and evil. The band Autobahn mysteriously descends on Los Angeles for a covert terrorist invasion as an “Apache-style resistance,” a strange reversal of the muscle Jews in the France of *Inglourious Basterds*. In other words, the presence of the German techno-Nihilists as enemy represents the broader historical attempt to read “Hitler” into

---

227 An analysis of the comparisons of Hussein to Hitler can be found in Solomon.
present day enemies and dictators – whether Osama bin Laden, Muammar Gaddafi, Kim Jong-il, etc.

Walter’s aggressive actions in this context remain highly ambiguous. The technopop Germans have indeed committed crimes, such as destroying the Dude’s car. Thus, to be blunt, they warrant an ass kicking. In this sense, Germany is by no means innocent of political conflict, especially when considering its role as the world’s third largest arms dealer. In his insistence on military action, Walter thus demonstrates the fine line between the commitment never again to repeat the “politics of appeasement” and tendencies of protofascist aggression. The aggressive tendencies lie in Walter’s commitment to strength, his understanding of pacifism as an illness, and his devotion to his old war comrades, for whom his bowling buddies represent an ersatz. He suffers from traumas of service in the Vietnam War, and he has trouble integrating into civilian life in ways that, while the political background could not be more different, have echoes in the Freikorps psychologies analyzed in Klaus Theweleit’s Male Fantasies, addressed in the last chapter. Walter’s identity, aside from being Jewish, is clear to himself: “Who am I? I’m a fucking veteran; that’s who I am.”

As an American Polish-Catholic Jew, he is a war veteran and not a Holocaust survivor. The Holocaust is, in fact, never directly mentioned in The Big Lebowski; neither is the Shoah addressed in Inglourious Basterds. As function of memory, Vietnam is Walter’s antipodal version of the Holocaust. Vietnam is the event he will never forget and which he mentions on every possible occasion. Yet to develop an “ethos” around the Vietnam War proves highly problematic for Walter. Vietnam stands as the ultimate war of ambiguity as to what “side,” good or bad, America was on – or whether there was a
“good” side at all. This contrasts in every respect with World War II, the great war of clear good and clear evil in the cultural memory of the United States and Israel.

Fortunately for Walter, his current mission against the Nihilists takes place during the First Gulf War, when American power can finally right the wrongs of Vietnam and establish clear lines of good and evil through its international coalition sponsored by the United Nations. Yet this war is being staged in the Middle East, with volatile political rivalries and conflicts. Walter’s focus on Saddam Hussein, his professed Zionism, and the context of the Gulf War thus make it arguable that the Vietnam War stands for Walter as an ersatz for an unmentioned conflict from the same period: the Six Day War of 1967. Similar to the consequence of the Vietnam War for the United States, the Six Day War put the question of Israel’s moral legitimacy in question, since territories were captured that were to have massive repercussions for Middle East politics that continue up to the present and remain unresolved. On the other hand, in the political context of 1991, Walter’s “unchecked aggression” arguably contrasts with Israel’s maintenance of extraordinary restraint against the “unchecked aggression” of Saddam Hussein, who fired numerous Scud missiles into Israel in a desperate attempt to widen the conflict of the Gulf War and break up the support of Arab nations in the coalition.

Such desert war associations, and the Desert Shield and Desert Storm references, are clear in the film. For example, Walter insists to the Dude that it is time to “draw a line in the sand.” The Dude remains a committed pacifist throughout his ordeal; Walter insists, however, on the moral commitment to attack those who have caused the Dude harm. The Dude is simply satisfied that the technopop Germans won’t cut off his johnson, and he is also happy to have survived with his Creedence Clearwater Revival music tapes intact. In the principle of forgiveness, the Dude is willing to let the techno-
Nihilists go free and continue their own pop cultural business. Walter, on the other hand, sees the actions of Autobahn as requiring punishment; the technopop Germans must be destroyed so that they do not wreak havoc on any future pacifist hippie.

With such histories and political values in mind, Walter Sobchak, as played by John Goodman, is a character that is in every way more fascinating, complex, and disturbing than the Bear Jew as played by Eli Roth. Indeed, Walter is a character of appropriate complexity in the context of the continuing tragedy of political conflict in the Middle East and the troubled political commitments of both the United States and Israel. And like Walter, the techno-Nihilists present a complex cultural mix far more appropriate to the changed conditions of German politics than Christoph Waltz as the Jew hunter in *Inglourious Basterds*. The Nihilists play off two traditions of terrorism. First, in the context of Mideast terrorism, the technopop Nihilists appear to constitute genuine dangers or threats to security on some level. They lack a state and covertly cross borders; they torture and threaten civilians; and their demands can never be fully met. Second, in the context of German terrorism, the technopop Nihilists recall the 1970s heritage of West German terrorists in the form of the Red Army Faction. Thus, two apparently opposite poles of terrorist extremism are presented: the secular-atheist terrorism of communist revolution and the religious-fundamentalist terrorism of theocratic reaction. Yet in the end, all the Nihilists want is the ransom money and thereafter, most likely, a “relaxed” life in Los Angeles. The pop-capitalist nature of Autobahn, with a postmodern comic flair, dissolves the politics of both forms of terrorist extremism.

Such a tradition of Hollywood villains, who exploit political terrorism in the service of apolitical capitalism, has precedence. Specifically, Autobahn recalls the pop heritage of the West German terrorist gang in the blockbuster action film, *Die Hard* (1988). This
terrorist group, led by Hans Gruber (Alan Rickman), appears to be the direct revolutionary heritage of the Red Army Faction. Yet in the end, like the techno-Nihilists, they only want money, just as do the capitalists whom they hold hostage. They are thus reinterpreted as apolitical nonterrorists – bank robbers in the context of the Californian Wild West. Interestingly, the German accents of many of the “German terrorists” in Die Hard are equally as stereotypical, theatrical, and exaggerated as those in The Big Lebowski. The technopop Nihilists are played by Peter Stormare (who plays Uli), Torsten Voges, and Michael “Flea” Balzary. Stormare and Flea are not even German actors, though they are both accomplished musicians. In fact, Flea is a member of the L.A. funk rock band Red Hot Chili Peppers. Both Stormare and Flea deliberately highlight their bad, stylized accents to reflect Hollywood’s exaggerated portrayal of otherness, whether German or otherwise.

In Die Hard, the German terrorists consist of a similar international mix of exaggerated accents. They are also represented by variations of the “Ode to Joy” in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. The tune as leitmotif marks the mix of pop culture and stereotypical representations of national identity. It is used to the point of comic caricature, echoed in the various themes of Michael Kamen’s score and hummed by the terrorists throughout the film. This use culminates in a resounding climax toward the end of the film, when the fanfare of Beethoven’s Ninth plays in the soundtrack with triumphant grandeur as the bank vault is successfully opened by the remaining “terrorists.” The DVD-audio commentary by John McTiernan, director of Die Hard, includes intriguing remarks on the significance of the German enemy and the pop associations: “German terrorists are neutral. They weren’t Middle Eastern terrorists. [The Germans] weren’t connected with anything that made any sense or were [sic] sensitive. I
know that was part of what we were concerned with. Let’s not gratuitously step on people’s toes. Let’s not get involved in politics, because it’s supposed to be entertainment, not politics.” These comments do not concern recent history. They address a film on terrorism made already in 1988, a year prior to German unification and many years prior to the September 11 attacks and the declaration of the War on Terror.

Yet according to McTiernan, the (West) German as enemy is already viewed as a completely benign subject of history. The significance of this neutral postmodern German enemy has become even more marked in subsequent decades. McTiernan’s analysis is quite extraordinary when considering both the history of World War II and the Red Army Faction. The terrorists in Die Hard are pop terrorists, and even more, Eurotrash terrorists who might as easily have had technopop as their soundtrack. This Eurotrash style is further remarked upon in the audio commentary by Jackson DeGovia: “I think it was McTiernan’s idea that the heavies would all be like male models – European male models, which was a wonderful new idea. They’ve got this kind of decadent sleaziness, but very expensive sleaziness about them. Even their sweat clothes are designer.”

Instead of relying on Beethoven and Eurofashion, the Coen brothers use technopop and black leather to update American perceptions of German identity and to explore this new tradition of the German as comic, popcultural, and ostensibly apolitical. Technopop remains blank, electronic, and abstract, as difficult to place historically and geographically as the electronic circuits through which it sounds. This mix of Hollywood and the war on terror in 1998, the year of The Big Lebowski’s release, anticipates the artistic exploration of entertainment and aggression in the twenty-first century, examined

Yet in this context, the connections of *The Big Lebowski* to the war on terror become even stranger. There is, in fact, an uncanny “prophecy” of September 11, 2001. In the opening scene, the Dude signs a check that is dated September 11, 1991, exactly ten years before September 11, 2001. Moreover, he signs and dates the check as he watches George H.W. Bush declare in a television broadcast, “This aggression will not stand.” Many theories exist regarding the significance of this extraordinary coincidence. To be sure, the truth content of *The Big Lebowski* has been fortuitously heightened by it. Yet it is also a logical coincidence, since the film is actually quoting *The Big Sleep*. In that earlier film, the ransom checks are dated September 11, 1945. With this quotation of September 11, 1991, *The Big Lebowski* is thus set in the mythical time of pop film and literary intertextuality. However, this coincidence is even more uncanny when it becomes clear that the date September 11, 1991 is completely illogical in strictly historical terms, since the Gulf War was already concluded by the end of February 1991 and Bush’s “this aggression will not stand” statement was made in the context of an exchange of questions with the press that took place on August 5, 1990; the logic thus cannot be found in historical terms, but in the demands of a film that offers its own emergency call. This “unhappy” coincidence thus makes *The Big Lebowski* a key film to consider in the historical transition from the Cold War to the War on Terror.

Finally, the year of release of *The Big Lebowski* itself, 1998, was an extraordinary year in terms of World War II memory and international techno culture. In particular, it marked a crossroads in the late history of World War II cinema and the height of electronic music’s popular success. First of all, on the California Coast, 1998 was
arguably one of the greatest years in the history of World War II cinema. An unprecedented three of the five Academy Award nominees for Best Picture from that year were World War II films: Saving Private Ryan, The Thin Red Line, and Life Is Beautiful. At the same time, Run Lola Run was released on the German Coast to announce the popular breakthrough of German technopop in unified Germany. The Big Lebowski explores both of these trends in its mix of World War II references and technopop. Moreover, technopop self-reflection was fully announced by this year. 1998 marked the publication of the first and most comprehensive history of EDM music and techno culture, Simon Reynolds’ Energy Flash, as well as the release of the most comprehensive documentary film of electronic music and raves, Iara Lee’s Modulations. Both these works were themselves released during and reflected upon the ten-year anniversary of the dawn of “rave culture” during the summer of love on Ibiza in 1988. Amidst these historical and self-reflective explorations of the legacy of techno culture, The Big Lebowski proves to be the most innovative, if most indirect, American intervention into Germany techno history at this time.

My overview of German techno history from 1968 to 2009 has attempted to update these historical reflections from 1998 regarding the aging of techno culture by positioning my point of historical reflection in the year 2009 and the twenty-year anniversary of German unification. The Big Lebowski proved prophetic regarding the heightening of the dialect of terrorism, digital media, and technopop culture by 2009; Berlin as a global center of technopop and digital media has proved even more secure in 2009 than in 1998. Where global politics and culture turn from here is extraordinarily difficult to predict. More specifically, how Germany continues to integrate into, or gradually dominate over, the European Union in the context of surveillance, digital
media, economic crisis, the war on terror, and popular culture, remains uncertain. Finally, how electronic music continues to transform through its ambivalent moments of technological critique and/or affirmation in its sonic fictions of supermodernity also remains to be seen. For now, it has been complicated enough to figure out where German electronic music and technopop stand in 2009, a point of reflection which by now has probably already become its own retro-future.
Bibliography:


CAPA. Centre for Aviation. “Asia Pacific airports move up the ranks in 2011, with Beijing this year to overtake Atlanta.” Centreforaviation.com. 17 April 2012. Web. 22 July 2012.


Filmography:


Loveparade: Masses in Motion. BMG, Ariola Media Gmbh, 2003. DVD.


Nosferatu The Vampyre. Dir. Werner Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduction, 1979. Film.


We Call It Techno: A Documentary about Germany’s Early Techno Scene and Culture. Dir. Maren Sextro and Holger Wick. Sense Music and Media, 2008. DVD.
Selected Discography:


Mathis Mootz:


Oliver Lieb:


---. “Transmutation EP.” Superstition, 1996.

---. *Berlin Calling*. BPitch Control, 2008.
Snap! *We’re All in the Same Game*. Warner Music, 1990.
Sven Väth.


Uwe Schmidt as:


---. *We’ll Never Stop Living This Way*. Low Spirit, 1997.


Wolfgang Voigt.

GAS. *Gas*. Mille Plateaux, 1996.


---. *Claro Que Si*. Mercury, 1981.

---. *You Gotta Say Yes To Another Excess*. Mercury, 1983.