INTO THE GROOVE

POPULAR MUSIC AND CONTEMPORARY GERMAN FICTION

ANDREW WRIGHT HURLEY

Into the Groove

Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

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Andrew Wright Hurley

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For Meredith, Emil, Arno, and Clemens

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Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Making Sense of Recent Musico-Centric Literature

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Word and Music Studies

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

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

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

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

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

"Webs of Signification" in 1990s and 2000s Popular Music

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sources and Structure

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[17] Ullmaier, *Von ACID*, 12.

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

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

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

[21] See, e.g., Wehdeking, *Generationenwechsel*, 15, 171.

[22] Von Dirke "Pop Literature," 110. See also Jung, *Alles nur Pop*, 42.

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

[24] Taberner, *German Literature of the 1990s*, 81–93; Thomas Ernst, "German Pop Literature and Cultural Globalisation," in Taberner, *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation*, 177–80.

[25] Ernst, "German Pop Literature," 169. See also Ullmaier, *Von ACID*, 130–69.

[26] Sascha Seiler, *"Das einfache wahre Abschreiben der Welt": Pop Diskurse in der deutschen Literatur nach 1960* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2006).

[27] Eckhard Schumacher, *Gerade Eben Jetzt: Schreibweisen der Gegenwart* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003).

[28] Seiler, *"Rinfache wahre Abschreiben der Welt,"* 275, 324.

[29] Diedrich Diederichsen, "Pop—Deskriptiv, normativ, emphatisch," *Literaturmagazin* 37 (1996): 36–44. See also Baßler, *Deutsche Pop-Roman*, 165; Peter Kemper et al., eds. *Alles so schön bunt hier* (Leipzig: Philipp Reclam, 2002); Ernst, "German Pop Literature," 177.

[30] Florian Illies, *Generation Golf zwei* (Munich: Goldmann Verlag, 2003); Ernst, "German Pop Literature," 179; Seiler, *"Einfache wahre Abschreiben der Welt,"* 16.

[31] Finlay, "Literary Debates," 35. See also Baßler, *Deutsche Pop-Roman*, 130–34; and Ernst, "German Pop Literature," 179.

[32] See, e.g., Gustav Seibt, "Da! Da ist Diedrich Diederichsen," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, October 10, 2002, 16.

[33] For a more nuanced view on the "death" of *Popliteratur*, see André Menke, *Die Popliteratur nach ihrem Ende: Zur Prosa Meineckes, Schamonis, Krachts in den 2000er Jahren* (Bochum: Posth Verlag, 2010).

[34] Enno Stahl, "Popliteraturgeschichte(n)," in *Popliteraturgeschichte(n) 1965–2007*, ed. Joseph A. Kruse (Düsseldorf: Heinrich Heine Institut, 2007), 26–27.

[35] Geoffrey Cox, "Playlists: Music, Narrative, and Structure in the Contemporary Novel," PhD thesis (University of Washington, 2009).

[36] Tillmann, *Populäre Musik und Pop-Literatur*.

[37] Emily Petermann also points out in her study of two disparate groups of musical novels—jazz novels and novels that engage intermedially with J. S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations*—that despite some differences between the two groups of novels many individual techniques are shared (Petermann, *Musical Novel*).

[38] Calvin S. Brown, *Music and Literature: A Comparison of the Arts* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1948). George C. Schoolfield, *The Figure of the Musician in German Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956).

[39] The following sketch of "melopoetics" is derived from the introduction to Steven Paul Scher, ed., *Literatur und Musik: Ein Handbuch zur Theorie und Praxis eines komparatistischen Grenzgebietes* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1984).

[40] Scher, *Verbal Music*, 3.

[41] Ibid., 5; Huber, *Text und Musik*, 37.

[42] See, e.g., Horst Petri, *Literatur und Musik: Form- und Strukturparallelen* (Göttingen: Sachse & Pohl, 1964); Huber, *Text und Musik*; Albert Gier and Gerold W. Gruber, eds., *Musik und Literatur: Komparatistische Studien zur Strukturverwandschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997); Andreas Sichelstiel, *Musikalische Kompositionstechniken in der Literatur: Möglichkeiten der Intermedialität und ihrer Funktion bei österreichischen Gegenwartsautoren* (Essen: Blaue Eule, 2004).