

# UC Santa Barbara

## Journal of Transnational American Studies

### Title

Outside Looking In: Donna Summer's Sound of Munich and David Bowie's Berlin Trilogy

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3878w7zz>

### Journal

Journal of Transnational American Studies, 8(1)

### Author

Adelt, Ulrich

### Publication Date

2017

### DOI

10.5070/T881036678

### Copyright Information

Copyright 2017 by the author(s). This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

**TRACKING POP**

SERIES EDITORS: JOCELYN NEAL, JOHN COVACH, AND ALBIN ZAK

Listening to Popular Music: Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying  
and Love Led Zeppelin  
*by Theodore Gracyk*

Sounding Out Pop: Analytical Essays in Popular Music  
*edited by Mark Spicer and John Covach*

I Don't Sound Like Nobody: Remaking Music in 1950s America  
*by Albin J. Zak III*

Soul Music: Tracking the Spiritual Roots of Pop from Plato  
to Motown  
*by Joel Rudinow*

Are We Not New Wave? Modern Pop at the Turn of the 1980s  
*by Theo Cateforis*

Bytes and Backbeats: Repurposing Music in the Digital Age  
*by Steve Savage*

Powerful Voices: The Musical and Social World of Collegiate A Cappella  
*by Joshua S. Duchan*

Rhyming and Stealing: Musical Borrowing in Hip-Hop  
*by Justin A. Williams*

Sounds of the Underground: A Cultural, Political and Aesthetic  
Mapping of Underground and Fringe Music  
*by Stephen Graham*

Krautrock: German Music in the Seventies  
*by Ulrich Adelt*

Good Vibrations: Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys in  
Critical Perspective  
*by Philip Lambert*

**German  
Music  
in the  
Seventies**

**KRAUTROCK**

**Ulrich Adelt**

Copyright © 2016 by Ulrich Adelt  
All rights reserved

This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, including illustrations, in any form (beyond that copying permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law and except by reviewers for the public press), without written permission from the publisher.

Published in the United States of America by the  
University of Michigan Press  
Manufactured in the United States of America  
© Printed on acid-free paper

2019 2018 2017 2016 4 3 2 1

A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Adelt, Ulrich, 1972– author.

Title: Krautrock : German music in the seventies / Ulrich Adelt.

Description: Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, 2016. | Series: Tracking pop | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016006365 | ISBN 9780472073191 (hardcover : alk. paper) | ISBN 9780472053193 (pbk. : alk. paper) | ISBN 9780472122219 (e-book)

Subjects: LCSH: Krautrock (Music)—History and criticism. | Rock music—Germany (West)—1971–1980—History and criticism.

Classification: LCC ML3534.G6G3 A34 2016 | DDC 781.660943/09047—dc23

LC record available at <http://lcn.loc.gov/2016006365>

## Acknowledgments

First, I want to thank Hörfuß Allstars (Hanno Kiehl, Dirk Reimers, and Sascha Krück), my on-and-off band for many years. We were making kraut-rock and didn't even know it.

I am extremely grateful for the unique and friendly environment in the American Studies program at the University of Wyoming. I especially want to thank Eric Sandeen and Frieda Knobloch, the two directors in recent years. Other Wyoming faculty that have greatly helped me with this book include John Dorst, Isadora Helfgott, Gregg Cawley, and Kerry Pimblott. Of course I cannot leave out our wonderful office assistant, Sophie Beck. I have also had many hardworking graduate assistants at Wyoming, so thank you, Glen Carpenter, Julian Saporiti, Robin Posniak, Rie Misaizu, Jascha Herdt, Kiah Karlsson, David Loeffler, Maggie Mullen, and Susan Clements.

In preparation for this book, I was able to spend a research semester in Germany, and I would like to thank the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD), Sabine Broeck from the University of Bremen, and Ulrich Dube of the Klaus Kuhnke Archiv für Populäre Musik.

Thanks to everybody at the University of Michigan Press, especially Chris Hebert and the anonymous reviewers. I'm also grateful to Joel Rudinow for recommending the press.

For answering questions about my research, I want to thank Jean-Hervé Péron and Zappi Diermaier of Faust, Giorgio Moroder, Rusty Egan, Rudi Esch, and the *Pitchfork* writers Brian Howe, Dominique Leon, Nick Neyland, Brent Sirota, Nick Sylvester, Joe Tangari, and Douglas Wolk. For inviting me to talk about my research in Germany, Great Britain, and the Netherlands, I want to thank Uwe Schütte, Hans Bak, Frank Mehring, and Barry Shank.

And finally, thanks to God and my wonderful family, without whom I would be nothing: my wife Ursula and my children Maya, Luna, Stella, and Noah.

## 5 Outside Looking In

### Donna Summer's Sound of Munich and David Bowie's Berlin Trilogy

One of the effects of krautrock's deterritorialization was the transnational reach of artists like Can, Tangerine Dream, and Popol Vuh—artists who themselves had many non-German influences. A rigorous investigation of krautrock should involve a consideration of performers on the fringes of the field, largely due to their perceived national identity as “foreign” from a German perspective. Discussing Donna Summer and David Bowie in the context of krautrock can serve as a further step in disentangling at least part of the complex web of identity formations embedded in musical performances of Germanness.

Working within a similar context as many krautrock artists, African American singer Donna Summer and Italian-German producer Giorgio Moroder challenged the music's fairly narrow confines of “race,” gender, and sexuality in their collaborations. As Moroder and Summer showed, the same sounds that represented an abstract straight white Germanness could also suit an African American diva who appealed to gay men. Yet the border-crossing musical productions of Moroder and Summer are generally classified as disco, not as krautrock. Another border-crossing artist, David Bowie engaged with German national identity through both a problematic obsession with fascism and a genuine interest in expressionist film and visual art. Between August 1976 and February 1978, Bowie lived in West Berlin as an expatriate and was confronted with a rather different German reality, fifty years removed from his imagined community. It was this 1970s West Berlin, along with the music of various krautrock groups, that informed the radical sonic experiments Bowie would undertake on the three albums that became known as the “Berlin Trilogy.” Whereas Bowie's previous albums had been

dominated by folk and rock influences, contained fairly consistent story-based rock songs, and generally could be separated into “hits” and “filler,” the Berlin records broke with these conventions in similar ways krautrock had done: by producing a *Gesamtkunstwerk* characterized by fragmentation, minimalism, and the use of synthesizers and vocals as musical instruments.

In the context of German music in the 1970s, blurring the lines between what it meant to be on the inside looking out and to be on the outside looking in reveals how krautrock's processes of reterritorialization and hybridization were taken up by British and American artists. Donna Summer and David Bowie, two of the most successful international pop performers of their time, popularized elements of krautrock while at the same time enriching the music with a stronger emphasis on fluidity, not just of national identity but also of “race,” gender, and sexual orientation.

#### Donna Summer, Giorgio Moroder, and the History of Disco

There are a number of reasons why the music of Moroder and Summer is rarely thought of as krautrock. The most obvious explanation may be popular appeal: Summer is the only artist who has had three consecutive number-one platinum albums in the United States (the Moroder-produced two-LP-sets *Live and More*, *Bad Girls*, and *On the Radio*). Contrarily, with the exception of surprise hits like Kraftwerk's “Autobahn,” krautrock groups drew much of their appeal for later generations from their relative obscurity. Unlike many krautrock artists, whose earliest musical experiences were in conservatories or with rock bands, Moroder began his career by producing schlager hits, and Summer performed in musicals.<sup>1</sup> Summer's and Moroder's “inauthenticity” was affirmed by their embrace of disco music, which openly promoted consumerism and negated rock music's straight white masculinity. In recent years, artists and historians of electronic music have embraced Summer's and Moroder's music and secured its place in popular music history, yet the link to krautrock remains broken.

Situating Moroder and Summer within the context of German 1970s music does not just mean destabilizing krautrock but also disco, generally perceived as quintessentially American. Disco's transnational history began with the French *discothèques* of 1940s Paris and accelerated with the loft parties of gay men in late 1960s New York City. DJs like Francis Grasso introduced the concept of blending songs into each other in clubs like the Sanc-

tuary.<sup>2</sup> Mid- to late 1970s discos—like the Paradise Garage with DJ Larry Levan—and the clubs on Fire Island still featured a predominantly gay crowd. Economic “stagflation” and urban decay set the stage for disco as much as it did for punk, but the post-1960s narcissism of disco catered in particular to gay black and Latino men. In his novel *Dancer from the Dance* (1978), Andrew Holleran described what he viewed as the classless society of New York City’s discotheques (in his case the fictitious 10th Floor): “The boy passed out on the sofa from an overdose of Tuinols was a Puerto Rican who washed dishes in the employees’ cafeteria at CBS, but the doctor bending over him had treated presidents.”<sup>3</sup> Although Holleran downplayed racial segregation, he captured the period after the Stonewall riots and before the spread of AIDS when gay men were seeking spiritual experiences through sex and dancing. Kai Fikentscher has developed similar ideas by showing parallels between African American churches and gay dance clubs.<sup>4</sup> Although commercial exploitation brought the disco era to a close at the end of the 1970s, androgynous performers like Sylvester and Grace Jones were able to offer an alternative to sexist rock culture even during disco’s final years.

Musically, disco was clearly influenced by soul and funk musicians like Isaac Hayes and James Brown and by the Philadelphia sound with its lush strings, horns, and Latin percussion, exemplified by artists like the O’Jays and Teddy Pendergrass. Similar strings appeared on an early disco hit by Barry White, “Love’s Theme” (1974). Earl Young was credited for inventing the prototypical disco beat by moving Motown’s 4/4 from the snare drum and tambourine to the bass drum and by adding hi-hat flourishes. Young’s innovative style could be heard on songs like MFSB’s “Love Is the Message” (1973) and the Trammps’ “Disco Inferno” (1976). With the popularization of the twelve-inch single, extended versions of disco tracks began to appear. European disco artists like Moroder, French producer Cerrone, and German group Silver Connection combined strings with synthesizers in the second half of the 1970s. Hi-NRG, pioneered by Summer’s Moroder-produced “I Feel Love” (1977), featured drum machines and faster tempos. The new electronic disco beat did not succeed in New York City’s dance clubs but caught on in the rest of the United States and Europe.<sup>5</sup>

Disco’s mainstream success was partly brought about by the box-office hit *Saturday Night Fever* (1977), starring John Travolta. In contrast to disco’s actual origins, Travolta played a white heterosexual disco dancer, and the music was provided by Australian pop group the Bee Gees. In the same year,

the upper-class club Studio 54 opened in New York City. As a dance craze, disco moves (in particular the Hustle) had become as popular as the Charleston had been in the 1920s and the Twist in the 1960s. Different groups criticized the overexposure and commodification of disco. Funk musician George Clinton simply called it “the blahs,” and Jesse Jackson’s Operation PUSH threatened to boycott what they called “X-rated disco sex-rock.”<sup>6</sup> On July 12, 1979, young white male rock and heavy metal fans burned records at an event called Disco Demolition Night, which took place after a baseball game in Comiskey Park, Chicago. The “Disco Sucks” campaign was also fueled by *Rolling Stone* magazine and had anticommmercial but also homophobic and racist undertones. Despite the backlash, US acts continued to release some original disco songs like Chic’s “Good Times” (1979) and Diana Ross’s “Upside Down” (1980). By the mid-1980s, house music, named after The Warehouse nightclub in Chicago and championed by DJs like Frankie Knuckles, had replaced disco as the most popular underground dance music for gay men.

A number of different critiques of disco have been published over the years, starting with Richard Dyer’s 1979 article “In Defense of Disco.” In the article, Dyer described the music’s sensual (rather than phallic) eroticism and what he saw as its subversive capitalism.<sup>7</sup> Responding to scholars like Dyer, Alice Echols has pointed out that “too often disco revisionists, in an effort to debunk the pervasive view of disco as crassly commercial, exclusionary, and politically regressive, have emphasized instead its subcultural purity, democratic beginnings, and transgressive practices.”<sup>8</sup> What may be more regrettable than a tendency to overstate disco’s liberatory potential is how accounts of the genre tend to downplay its European influences.<sup>9</sup> The transnational aspects of genres spawned by disco are better known, in particular in the case of techno music, which originated in Detroit but quickly moved to Berlin and other German cities. In conjunction with the related genres hip-hop and house, techno truly realized disco’s global potential.

Any account of electronic music’s transnational history is not complete without Hansjörg “Giorgio” Moroder. He was born in 1940 in a small town in South Tyrol’s Dolomites called Urtijëi, a trilingual community with Italian, German, and Ladin heritage. Moroder briefly studied architecture but quickly realized that his passion was music, and he toured across Europe for six years, playing upright bass in a jazz trio. He then moved to West Berlin to work as a sound engineer and composer. In 1966, Moroder began recording bubble-

gum pop songs in English, German, Italian, and Spanish as Giorgio. The most successful of these recordings was "Looky Looky" from 1969, a hit in France, Italy, and Spain. As Moroder recalled: "My intention was always to compose with an English or American feeling."<sup>10</sup> This was in opposition to many krautrock musicians of the time, as were his lack of interest in the counterculture and his unapologetic embrace of capitalism. According to Moroder, the upheavals of the late 1960s "meant little to me: I guess I have much more of a commercial feeling and so was not greatly affected by them."<sup>11</sup>

Moroder eventually moved to Munich, which was much closer to his childhood home and less isolated than West Berlin, and founded Musicland Studios in 1969. He produced a number of German-language schlager hits, including Ricky Shayne's "Ich spreng' alle Ketten" ("I Break All Chains"), Michael Holm's "Mendocino" (a cover version of a hit by the Sir Douglas Quintet), and Mary Roos's "Arizona Man" (with a very distinctive synthesizer part). The German electronic composer Eberhard Schoener had introduced Moroder to the Moog, and it prominently appeared on Moroder's own "Son of My Father" (1972), which became a number-one hit in Great Britain in a version by Chicory Tip. The song's success established Moroder as a European producer, and he began assembling a crew at Musicland that reflected his transnational identity. Coproducer Pete Bellotte and drummer and composer Keith Forsey were British; sound engineer Jürgen Koppers and arranger Harold Faltermeyer were German.<sup>12</sup> Session musicians also came from various European countries, including Great Britain, Sweden, West Germany, and Iceland. Musicland Studios later became a household name for major rock productions and brought recording stars like Queen, the Rolling Stones, ELO, Elton John, and Deep Purple to Munich.

Musicland's international success was launched by recordings Moroder made with Donna Summer. Summer was born 1949 as LaDonna Adrian Gaines in Boston. Influenced by Josephine Baker and Janis Joplin, she became the singer in an otherwise all-white and male band called Crow in 1967 ("the crow being me because I was the only black member of the group"<sup>13</sup>). Summer moved to Munich in 1968 to participate in the German production of the musical *Hair* (*Haare* in German). Summer recalled: "Germany represented a movement of personal liberation for me [ . . . ], and I was living in an artistic and cultural bohemia, a creative heaven."<sup>14</sup> Over the next few years, Summer played in *Showboat* and *Porgy and Bess* in Vienna and, back in Germany, in *The Me Nobody Knows* (*Ich bin ich* in German) and *Godspell*. In

1973, Summer, now a single mother living in poverty, responded to an advertisement for a black female singer and signed to Moroder and Pete Bellotte's Oasis label the following year. In her own words, she felt a connection with Moroder because "like me, he was a foreigner."<sup>15</sup> By invoking Moroder's Italian heritage and her own American identity, Summer pointed to the transnational dimension of the music they would produce in Germany. Moroder himself has noted: "Pete [Bellotte] and myself have combined a certain European feeling with Donna's more American experience."<sup>16</sup>

Summer contributed at least as much to the success of her collaborations with Moroder as he did himself. In addition to many songwriting credits, she provided detached vocals of an unembellished and ringing quality, often sung in the head voice, and rarely employed melisma. At times, Summer's approach was almost as far removed from African American soul influences as that of krautrock groups like Kraftwerk and Neu!. Summer was very aware of her own performativity that borrowed from her experiences singing in musicals: "I don't think a lot of people understand where I'm not an artist that's trying to establish a style. I'm an actress who sings, and that is kind of how I view myself. Whoever the character is in the song, that's who I try to become."<sup>17</sup> Album covers of Summer's collaborations with Moroder reflected this attitude: the singer was depicted as a sex kitten, an angel, a fairy, or a princess. Summer's self-awareness did not always prevent her from being sexually exploited, however, as the roles she got to play were traditionally feminine and never allowed her to express the goofy part of her personality.

Both Summer and Moroder can be viewed as transnational artists in the context of krautrock's deterritorialization and reterritorialization, since they both were at the same time German and non-German. Moroder's trans-European identity (Italian/German/Latin) and his globalized disco sounds were coupled with his penchant for robot voices, synthesizers, and a "German" drug-free work ethic, all of which placed him in close proximity to Kraftwerk. Summer's Afro-German identity, while rarely discussed, was supported by many factors: her father had been stationed in Germany and taught his wife how to speak German; Summer spent six and a half years in Germany between 1968 and 1975 and became fluent in German; Summer was married to Austrian Helmuth Sommer for two years, with whom she had a daughter and from whom she took her stage name (anglicized as Summer); Summer had another long-time German boyfriend, the artist Peter Mühldorfer, who spoke little English. Donna Summer's Afro-German iden-

tity involved a liminal space that was not always comfortable. As Josiah Howard noted:

In the minds of many, Donna's marriage [to Helmuth Sommer], coupled with her seven-year absence from the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s, placed her outside the African American experience. Consequently, to many African Americans, Donna was only begrudgingly considered an "acceptable" black performer. This impression has shadowed her entire career.<sup>18</sup>

Possibly related to her racial and national liminality was the perception of Summer's sexuality. Rumors of Summer's transsexuality, while clearly fabricated, were even picked up by *Ebony*.<sup>19</sup> Inhabiting such liminal spaces, Moroder and Summer were able to shape German popular music of the 1970s into something that still resembled krautrock's electronic offshoots but was also significantly different—the European disco that became known as the "Sound of Munich."

In addition to their liminality, Summer's performances can be historically linked to what Darlene Clark Hine has called black women's "culture of dissemblance," a direct result of slavery and rape. In this regard, Summer's role-playing and fluidity of identity worked to reclaim control over her sexuality as a black woman. As Hine put it:

Because of the interplay of racial animosity, class tensions, gender role differentiation, and regional economic variations, black women as a rule developed a politics of silence, and adhered to a cult of secrecy, a culture of dissemblance, to protect the sanctity of the inner aspects of their lives. The dynamics of dissemblance involved creating the appearance of disclosure, or openness about themselves and their feelings, while actually remaining enigmatic. Only with secrecy, thus achieving a self-imposed invisibility, could ordinary black women acquire the psychic space and gather the resources needed to hold their own in their often one-sided and mismatched struggle to racist oppression.<sup>20</sup>

While it is crucial to discuss the way both Summer and Moroder had similar transnational leanings as many krautrock artists, it is equally important to recognize Summer's status as a black woman in the white patriarchal music

industry represented by Moroder. In her performances, Summer's agency indeed often took on some form of dissemblance.

### "Love to Love You Baby" and "I Feel Love"

Moroder first experimented with krautrock-oriented synthesizer sounds on his solo album *Einzelgänger* ("Loner," 1975), an artistic and commercial failure. According to Moroder, "I used beautiful melodies and futuristic sounds, the people called me mad."<sup>21</sup> In his own judgment, the album remained his only connection to krautrock, whereas he described his other music as "the Sound of Munich, synth pop, funk, disco, Italo disco or Eurodisco."<sup>22</sup> Despite Moroder's own assessment, it is remarkable that he not only felt the necessity to experiment with synthesizer sounds reminiscent of Berlin School artists like Tangerine Dream and Klaus Schulze but that these experiments would help him to develop a unique "German" disco sound with Summer's 1978 hit "I Feel Love."

For Summer's first album, *Lady of the Night* (1974), Moroder had provided musical tracks that blended pop with rock, folk, and schlager. On the single "The Hostage" (a minor hit in France and the Netherlands) and on other songs of the album, Summer's mezzo-soprano voice was mostly mid-range and added a soul timbre to the songs. Yet it was very different vocals that brought about Summer's international breakthrough a year later. For the 1975 album *Love to Love You Baby*, Moroder made a distribution deal with Casablanca Records in Los Angeles. Casablanca owner Neil Bogart insisted that the three-minute title track from Summer's *Love to Love You Baby* should be stretched to seventeen minutes.<sup>23</sup> The song consisted of an improvised line sung in breathy, upper-register vocals and orgasmic shrieks inspired by Serge Gainsbourg's "Je t'aime moi non plus." Gainsbourg's version of the song with Jane Birkin from 1969 had been a major European hit.<sup>24</sup> Birkin's lascivious moaning was copied by Summer, whose husband reportedly had to leave the studio. As Summer remembered: "We dimmed the lights, lit a few candles, and I added all those oohs and aahs."<sup>25</sup> In line with her notion of singing as role-playing, Summer, in an act of racial transgression, performed in Marilyn Monroe's "light and fluffy but highly sensitive voice."<sup>26</sup> Moroder then added what he described as "a very catchy bass-line, a very emphatic bass drum part and a funky guitar, sort of Philadelphia feel."<sup>27</sup>

The seventeen-minute "Love to Love You Baby" was clearly the album's

standout track and made it to number two on the American Billboard charts (the rather forgettable songs on the album's second side featured hints of country, R&B, rock, and pop balladry). On the album cover, Summer was depicted with eyes closed, mouth open, head thrown back, and a dress that looked like a nightgown. Summer's hands and crotch were not visible, but it was quite clear that the image was meant to be suggestive of masturbation. This was also true of the title song, as "the absence of an instructing male voice gave the record a polyvalent potential."<sup>28</sup> Summer's moaning, banned by the BBC, could indeed be interpreted as both an expression of female sexuality and as sexploitation. Neil Bogart promoted the record as "seventeen minutes of love with Donna Summer" and encouraged people in advertisements to "take Donna home and make love to her—the album, that is."<sup>29</sup> Bogart later admitted: "The sex-image thing didn't concern me as much as it did others—or as much as it did Donna, for that matter."<sup>30</sup> In her autobiography, Summer recalled that "while the overtly sexual content of 'Love to Love You Baby' was a problem for me, the relentless hype by the label to cast me as a real-life sex goddess drove me crazy."<sup>31</sup> In the context of a sexist music industry, Summer chose to actively participate in her sexual objectification by playing a role while trying to keep her inner sanctity intact. As Richard Cromelin reported in *Rolling Stone* about Summer's live performance of "Love to Love You Baby" and other songs: "She sang her numbers with her knees bent and her head thrown back, undulating her crotch in a circular motion at the audience,"<sup>32</sup> while three dancer couples simulated sexual positions in the background.

*Love to Love You Baby* was the first international success of the "Sound of Munich" with its string arrangements, syncopated bass lines, synthesizers, and a four-on-the-floor kick-drum twice as fast as the human heartbeat. In Moroder's own words, he was making "upbeat, real danceable songs" that paved the way for "techno, house and modern dance music."<sup>33</sup> Moroder's disco sound was equally influenced by electronic krautrock groups like Tangerine Dream and by Philadelphia soul artists. Moroder admitted: "There were obvious aspects that we have used from the Philadelphia sound, although this was only successful in the States. We have internationalised it."<sup>34</sup> Moroder's emphasis on internationalization explains why he has downplayed krautrock influences on his sound and even dismissed the sonically similar Kraftwerk: "I don't particularly like their songs. They are sometimes

a little too easy in their music."<sup>35</sup> In contrast to Kraftwerk, Moroder felt the need to distance himself from the Germanness of his music so that it could be perceived as European dance music with the potential to permeate the American market. By calling this music "disco," Moroder also challenged krautrock's seriousness. As he put it in an interview: "The disco sound, you must see, is not art or anything so serious. Disco is music for dancing."<sup>36</sup>

Considering his dislike for Kraftwerk, it is quite ironic that Moroder's best-known solo album *From Here to Eternity* (1977) bore strong similarities to *Autobahn* and *Trans Europe Express*. Moroder had made an attempt to sound sultry on his disco album *Knights in White Satin* (1976) but chose a detached man-machine image for his following releases, singing through a vocoder and boasting, on the album cover of *From Here to Eternity*, that "only electronic keyboards were used on this recording." Moroder might have been poking fun at Queen, who routinely stated on their covers that no synthesizers were used on their albums, but he was quite serious about his love for technology. On the cover of *E=MC<sup>2</sup>* (1979), Moroder exposed computer circuitry under his jacket, and the liner notes stated that this was the world's "first electronic live-to-digital album," containing almost fully computerized sounds. Moroder's identification with a man-machine and his interest in musical technology might have brought him in closer proximity to Kraftwerk than he dared to admit.

As a producer, Moroder was able to hide his Germanness behind Summer, who was slowly ascending to become the "Queen of Disco" (Gloria Gaynor, who had a hit with "I Will Survive" in 1978, also claimed this title). After the success of *Love to Love You Baby*, Moroder quickly produced two albums with Summer in 1976. *A Love Trilogy* featured another side-long disco track ("Try Me I Know I Can Make It"), some more moaning, and some liberal borrowing from Bill Withers's "Ain't No Sunshine." The attempt to replicate the success of "Love to Love You Baby" did not fully pay off. The following album *Four Seasons of Love* was more varied in its presentation of a romantic relationship, from "Spring Affair" to "Winter Melody," with Summer's by now obligatory breathy, upper-register vocals. Moroder made no qualms about the strictly commercial nature of these records:

Our work together was business in the sense that we would go in the studio and get the job done. We wouldn't waste time or fiddle around like



some other groups that take six or seven months to do an album. Most of the time we had the songs ready. We didn't spend too much time composing songs in the studio. We did complete albums in four or five weeks.<sup>37</sup>

Moroder's emphasis on how quickly his records with Summer were made fit with presenting them as toss-off pop products with no traces of (white male) rock music's "seriousness." *I Remember Yesterday* followed in 1977 and included musical styles from the 1930s to the 1970s and beyond. Individual songs incorporated hot jazz, the sound of Phil Spector's girl groups, early Tamla Motown, Philadelphia soul, and various forms of disco. The final song on the album was "I Feel Love." Aimed at representing the future, it turned out to be the most influential collaboration between Summer and Moroder.

For "I Feel Love," Moroder returned to the Moog synthesizer he had not used since the early 1970s. The song was almost entirely electronic and contained only fourteen words and a simple four-chord progression. Apart from Keith Forsey on bass drum, Moroder played all the music, most notably the galloping Moog bass line. Summer provided ethereal vocals, harmonizing with herself throughout the track. "I Feel Love" was a top-ten hit in many countries, number one in Great Britain, number three in West Germany, and number six in the United States. It has been reissued and remixed multiple times. Before its mainstream success, the song had quickly become a hit in gay clubs and heavily influenced the subgenre Hi-NRG. Peter Shapiro called "I Feel Love" a "masterpiece of mechanoeroticism" and compared the song to Donna Haraway's notion of the cyborg: "With songs like this [ . . . ], disco fostered an identification with the machine that can be read as an attempt to free gay men from the tyranny that dismisses homosexuality as an aberration, as a freak of nature."<sup>38</sup> The song's potential of sexual liberation was quite different from the one promoted by heterosexist mainstream rock music at the time and in that sense had many parallels to Kraftwerk's gender politics.

The machine-like quality of "I Feel Love" was augmented by Summer's robotic dance moves when she performed the song live. The song's artificiality made it an international hit but also embodied what some viewed as its German characteristics. Brian Eno said the song had a "mechanical, Teutonic beat," and Peter Shapiro even called Summer a "Teutonic ice queen."<sup>39</sup> Moroder remained ambiguous about his identification with the Kraftwerk-related Germanness: "These ideas the writers are having about us using

machines and becoming like machines—they must be making a joke. I know for sure that we are [human] and maybe, as I think you say in English, we are having the last, longest laugh."<sup>40</sup> Yet Moroder had not only made solo albums that toyed with images of cyborgs, he also recorded three albums with his studio musicians as Munich Machine (the first of which had dancing robots on the cover) and even wrote a song called "Man Machine" (which eventually became Blondie's "Call Me"). In interviews, Summer also used the metaphor of the machine, but in her interpretation it became more ominous: "Sometimes it gets to the point where you've been pushed for so long, by this motorous, monstrous force, this whole production of people and props that you are responsible for, by audiences and everything that rules you, until you take it upon yourself to be a *machine*."<sup>41</sup> Both Summer and Moroder saw themselves as machine-like and embraced certain forms of disidentification, but whereas for Summer as a black woman it was "frightening when you realize you're part of a machine,"<sup>42</sup> Moroder only ostentatiously rejected but generally identified with Kraftwerk's automated and disembodied high-tech Germanness.<sup>43</sup>

With "I Feel Love," Summer and Moroder had produced a song that blended krautrock and disco, African American and German aesthetics, woman and machine. In 1977, they also released the fairy-tale-themed double album *Once Upon a Time*. It contained both orchestrated and electronic tracks, the nod to gay culture of "If You Got It Flaunt It," as well as the heterosexual schmaltz of "Sweet Romance." Summer briefly returned to the formula of "Love to Love You Baby" with similar moaning on the John Barry-produced theme for *The Deep* (1977), "Down Deep Inside," and on a fifteen-minute version of "Je t'aime" for the movie *Thank God It's Friday* (1978). In the film, Summer also performed "Last Dance," which became her first hit prominently featuring her chest voice and employing melisma. As she mentioned in an interview: "It was enough. I couldn't go on singing those soft songs."<sup>44</sup> Summer also reasserted her black female identity on her chart-topping 1979 duet with Barbra Streisand, "No More Tears (Enough is Enough)," and entered her commercially most successful period with a string of three Moroder-produced number-one double albums, starting with *Live and More* (1978), which featured number-one single "MacArthur Park." The song was another example of Summer's turn toward a more traditional African American style of singing and used orchestration rather than electronics.

*Bad Girls* and Beyond

The earlier collaborations of Summer and Moroder, in particular “I Feel Love” with its electronic experimentation and unembellished vocals, had some distinct parallels with krautrock. While Summer described Germany as a refuge, she also maintained a culture of dissemblance as an African American woman in a “foreign” country, working in a sexist music industry. Moroder, while operating in a German context, strove to create music that sold internationally. Interestingly, the liminal space between krautrock and disco and between German and transnational was largely absent in their later and most successful collaborations. *Bad Girls* (1979), a double album that cemented Summer’s superstardom with its disco-meets-rock formula, went triple platinum in the United States alone and sold about five million copies worldwide; both the title track and the lead single, “Hot Stuff,” reached the top spot in America (the third single, “Dim All the Lights,” made it to number two). At this point, Summer had shed her Afro-German persona and, as she claimed in a *New York Times* interview, had finally found her authentic (American) voice: “I really only started saying what I want to say on the *Bad Girls* album.”<sup>45</sup>

*Bad Girls*’ most striking feature was its ambiguous representation of prostitution on both the title track and the cover art, for which Summer was responsible.<sup>46</sup> Inspired by the story of a Casablanca secretary who had been mistaken for a sex worker, Summer cast herself as a street walker. The back cover invited the male gaze from the perspective of a potential john driving a car with money in hand, watching Summer-as-prostitute through his windshield. In another image, Moroder appeared with an open trench coat, suggestively getting a “hand job” from Summer, and in the liner notes Summer quipped: “Giorgio, you make a great john.” Whether Summer meant this image to be a tongue-in-cheek commentary on the slavery-like conditions of the music industry was as unclear as the meaning of the song “Bad Girls,” in which Summer claimed sympathy with sex workers on top of funky guitars and horns but also reinforced a patriarchal view of “bad” prostitutes and “innocent” johns. Summer explained the song’s “toot toot, beep beep” chants in her autobiography by asking: “How do you get the attention of a hooker?”<sup>47</sup> The accompanying sounds of whistles made light of the police harassment of sex workers and turned prostitution into a party, and,

coming right after the come-on of “Hot Stuff” with its disco beat and rock guitar solo, the song did not work as a coherent critique of prostitution.

Yet the unsettling nursery-rhyme melodies in some of the verses and the semiautobiographic quality of the lyrics by an artist who had undoubtedly been sexually and commercially exploited, but who also found agency through her sexuality, told a different story. As Alice Echols has rightfully remarked, Summer, in a gender-specific dilemma, “was attacked for both her [ . . . ] sexual assertiveness and for her sexual submissiveness by male rock critics.”<sup>48</sup> Spanning her major hits, from “Love to Love You Baby” to “Bad Girls,” Summer invoked a culture of dissemblance by walking a fine line between sexual objectification and sexual agency without ever revealing her “true” self. Unfortunately, some critics have ignored the complexity of this presentation. For instance, Judy Kutulas unfavorably compared Summer to Gloria Gaynor, falsely assuming that Summer had no input in writing her songs and citing the lyrics to “Hot Stuff” as typical of her catering to male fantasies of female promiscuity. For Kutulas, “the looming presence of [Giorgio] Moroder as a kind of producer-pimp consigned her to the category of musical slut. Summer was a commodity, an object.”<sup>49</sup> Here Kutulas simply took the lyrics to one song as evidence for judging an artist’s life’s work, disregarding Summer’s agency and even misreading the symbolism of the album cover (Moroder as pimp instead of john).

Summer continued to work within an American context after she switched record companies in 1980 and signed with Geffen. Casablanca quickly rushed out the chart-topping greatest-hits double album *On the Radio* with an airbrushed cover that made Summer appear white. The singer, who had been suffering from depression and drug addiction, had become a born-again Christian in 1979. According to Moroder, “Donna became religious. She wouldn’t sing about this, she wouldn’t sing about that. Having her biggest hit with a sexy song, she was suddenly saying that she wouldn’t sing that type of song anymore, and then she insisted on having a song about Jesus on her album.”<sup>50</sup> In fact, “I Believe in Jesus,” which closed Summer’s new-wave-inspired *The Wanderer* (1980) with melismatic belting, signaled a move away from European disco toward African American gospel, and ultimately a move away from collaborating with Moroder. In 1981, they made one more double album, but *I’m a Rainbow* was rejected by Geffen and not released until 1996. Summer and Moroder remained friends but only pro-

duced one more song together, the Grammy-winning Eurodisco hit "Carry On" (1997).

After her departure from Casablanca, Summer continued to release albums and worked with major American producers like Quincy Jones and Michael Omartian. Her most noteworthy hit from this period was her feminist anthem "She Works Hard for the Money" (1983), in which Summer identified with an elderly waitress in a more straightforward way than she had with the sex workers of "Bad Girls." Around the same time, Summer snubbed her gay audiences with remarks about AIDS as God's revenge upon homosexuals and her comment "remember it's Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve . . . but I love you anyway."<sup>51</sup> Summer later renounced her statements and continued to play benefits for the gay community, but she still occasionally made controversial statements like "I definitely think there ought to be censorship on the radio."<sup>52</sup> Summer's career never returned to the heights of the disco years, and she died in 2012 of lung cancer not related to smoking. Moroder had to cope with the decline of disco in similar ways as Summer but managed more successfully to transition into the 1980s.<sup>53</sup> Ever the acute businessman, Moroder moved on to make movie soundtracks, which earned him three Academy Awards.<sup>54</sup> In a move contrary to his transnational success, Moroder seemingly reconnected to his German heritage with his work on two controversial films—the newly edited and colored version of Fritz Lang's 1924 *Metropolis* (1984) and the last work of former Nazi propagandist Leni Riefenstahl, *Impressionen unter Wasser* ("Underwater Impressions," 2002). Yet the majority of Moroder's later productions were guided by a relatively indistinct internationalism.<sup>55</sup> Consequently, Moroder's legacy has lived on in internationally successful European artists like David Guetta and Daft Punk.<sup>56</sup>

### David Bowie's Berlin

The collaborations between Summer and Moroder hinted at the transnational reach of krautrock, but if there was one international superstar who embodied its deterritorializing potential, it was David Bowie. Bowie's popularity clearly overshadowed that of any of the German groups and musicians of krautrock, even the relatively wide-ranging success of Kraftwerk. Born 1947 in London as David Robert Jones, Bowie launched his career in 1969 with the hit single "Space Oddity" and popularized glam rock with the

highly acclaimed *Ziggy Stardust* album in 1972. Bowie's fame continued throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s and only declined somewhat in the decades that followed. In 1976, at one of the most pivotal moments in his career, Bowie decided to move from Los Angeles to Berlin, a move that inspired what many critics and fans now regard as his most important albums, *Low* (1977), "*Heroes*" (1978), and *Lodger* (1979).

Part of Bowie's new approach in Berlin involved continuing a fluidity of gender and national identity that he had begun to express earlier, especially by presenting himself as an alien both on stage and in film. Bowie had come out as bisexual in an interview with *Melody Maker* in January of 1972, performed the role of the gender-ambiguous Ziggy Stardust, and queered heterosexual rock on *Pin Ups* (1973) with cover versions of the Who, the Yardbirds, and Pink Floyd. Bowie had also spent a significant part of his career outside of his home country, particularly in the United States. By turning to Germany and krautrock, Bowie reinforced his stateless identity (which during this time also included an interest in Japanese and Arabic themes) and solidified his rejection of heterosexual "cock rock." While only Rio Reiser had made the queerness of krautrock explicit, the emphasis on keyboards with the simultaneous de-emphasizing of the lead guitar showed a general dissatisfaction with traditional gender roles. Bowie incorporated krautrock's queering of national and gender identity and successfully marketed it for an international pop audience.

Bowie's career had begun in London, but before his move to Berlin he had spent almost a year and a half in the United States, first in New York City and then in Los Angeles. After experimenting with folk rock and heavy metal, Bowie turned to glam rock, which was characterized by a revival of 1950s rock'n'roll structures and an emphasis on androgyny and had been popularized by Marc Bolan.<sup>57</sup> After his breakthrough album *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* (1972), Bowie continued to explore glam rock on two US-influenced albums, *Aladdin Sane* (1973) and *Diamond Dogs* (1974) before switching his attention rather abruptly to soul music for *Young Americans* (1975). Bowie's embrace of a mythic America was apparent in the documentary *Cracked Actor* (1975), in which he was gazing at LA cityscapes from the back of a limousine. Bowie himself called *Young Americans*, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, "the definitive plastic soul record [ . . . ], the squashed remains of ethnic music as it survives in the age of Muzak rock, written and sung by a white limey."<sup>58</sup> Despite their commercial

success, Bowie's "American" albums showed that the artist, who was living on a steady diet of milk, cocaine, and French cigarettes, was creatively and mentally exhausted.

Bowie had gone through a number of different stage personas at this point, from "Space Oddity's" Major Tom to Ziggy Stardust and Aladdin Sane (a pun on "a lad insane"). The last of these personas was introduced as "the thin white duke" on the song "Station to Station" and represented, according to Bowie, "a European living in America who wanted to get back to Europe again."<sup>59</sup> Bowie further explored the thin white duke persona in his first major acting role for Nicolas Roeg's *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976).<sup>60</sup> Bowie played Thomas Jefferson Newton, an alien who arrives in New Mexico and attempts to find a water source for his home planet but ultimately succumbs to alcoholism and mental distress. Similar to Bowie's public persona, Newton was depicted as alienated and gender-ambiguous. Still images from the film graced the covers of Bowie's next two albums, *Station to Station* (1976) and *Low* (1977).

*Station to Station*, recorded in Los Angeles, was a transitional album. Bowie continued the "plastic soul" of *Young Americans* on "Golden Years" and "Wild Is the Wind," but the ten-minute "Station to Station," with its machine-like beat, electronic effects, and obscure lyrics (drawing on Aleister Crowley, the Stations of the Cross, and the Jewish Kabbalah), was clearly influenced by krautrock. As Bowie remarked: "I think the biggest influence on that album was the work of Kraftwerk and the new German sound. I tried to apply some of the randomness and I utilized a lot of that feeling for especially the title track."<sup>61</sup> For *Station to Station*, Bowie had assembled a versatile rhythm section that remained for all three albums of the Berlin period. Carlos Alomar (rhythm guitar) and Dennis Davis (drums) had already played on *Young Americans*, and George Murray (bass) had just joined Bowie's band. These three African American musicians would often provide a counterpoint to the krautrock explored by keyboards and vocals.

On the song "Station to Station," Bowie proclaimed ambiguously: "The European cannon / canon is here." Incidentally, Bowie's imminent return to Europe would take him to a city that was almost as alien to him as Los Angeles but would help him to create groundbreaking new music: "I'd got tired of writing in the traditional manner that I was writing in while I was in America and coming back to Europe I took a look at what I was writing and the environments I was writing about and decided I had to start writing in

terms of trying to find a new musical language for myself to write in."<sup>62</sup> Moving to West Berlin was a return to Europe but also meant entering uncharted territory. In Germany, Bowie would connect past, present, and future, focus on specific locations on Earth as opposed to outer space, and purge his music of the theatrical cabaret elements in favor of a clean, crisp new-wave sound.

Bowie's move to Europe had some practical and personal reasons—being officially registered in Blonay, Switzerland, was useful for tax purposes, and he was slowly separating from his wife, Angela, while trying to curb his drug use. Yet just like Los Angeles, Berlin also represented a mythic landscape that Bowie was drawn to. He had chatted with the British-American writer Christopher Isherwood, who had lived in the city in the late 1920s and early 1930s and had written about his experiences in *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939), which in turn served as the blueprint for the musical and film *Cabaret* (1966 and 1972, respectively). Bowie also admired German expressionist art and the films of Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, Fritz Lang, and Georg Wilhelm Pabst. Bowie's interest in the Berlin of the past extended to the Weimar Republic but also, in much more unsavory ways, to the Third Reich.

Bowie's interest in fascism already began to appear in his Ziggy Stardust persona, his references to George Orwell's totalitarian dystopia *1984* on the second side of *Diamond Dogs*, and the stage design of his 1974 tour, which was inspired by Robert Wiene's expressionist silent film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) but also by Albert Speer, Adolf Hitler's chief architect.<sup>63</sup> When Bowie took a trip to Moscow in April of 1976, customs at the Polish-Russian border confiscated Nazi books that, Bowie argued, he had bought for his research on a film project about Joseph Goebbels. On May 2, 1976, Bowie arrived at Victoria Station in London, standing in an open black Mercedes 600 convertible. An image of Bowie in mid-wave was construed by British tabloids as a Hitler salute. Other pictures taken at the event did not confirm these reports. However, Bowie did apparently pose with raised hand in front of Hitler's bunker on his first visit to East Berlin, even if the only pictures published just showed Bowie's emaciated figure in all black with a Gestapo-style trench coat scowling at the camera and trying to irritate a communist guard.<sup>64</sup>

Bowie's comments in interviews further contributed to notions that the pop star had become a Nazi. "I think I might have been a bloody good Hitler," he was quoted. "I'd be an excellent dictator. Very eccentric and quite

mad.”<sup>65</sup> In another interview he offered the following political analysis: “I believe very strongly in fascism. The only way we can speed up the sort of liberalism that’s hanging foul in the air at the moment is to speed up the progress of right-wing totally dictatorial tyranny and get it over as fast as possible. [ . . . ] Rock stars are fascists too. Adolf Hitler was one of the first rock stars.”<sup>66</sup> And finally, in yet another 1976 interview, Bowie admitted: “As I see it, I believe Britain could benefit from a fascist leader. After all, fascism is really nationalism.”<sup>67</sup> Bowie’s controversial, cocaine-fueled political comments (which he later retracted), along with Eric Clapton’s public support for British anti-immigration politician Enoch Powell, led to the founding of the Rock Against Racism coalition in the winter of 1976.

When Bowie actually moved to Berlin in August of 1976, he found himself in a place with a much less naïve relationship to the Nazi era than his own. As he recalled: “Suddenly I was in a situation where I was meeting young men of my age whose fathers had actually been SS men.”<sup>68</sup> Bowie came to understand that toying with fascism was inappropriate in a country grappling with collective guilt, and he changed his look accordingly, opting for plaid shirts and jeans to blend in. West Berlin in the 1970s was decades removed from both fascism and the German expressionism he had come to look for. As Bowie noticed: “The kind of lush, decadent thing that’s thrown around about Berlin [is] entirely wrong.”<sup>69</sup> The city was a haven for draft dodgers, left-wing students, artists, and wealthy but inconspicuous citizens, isolated from the rest of West Germany and economically less productive than other major cities. As Bowie described it, rather dramatically, West Berlin turned out to be “a city cut off from its world, art, and culture, dying with no hope of retribution.”<sup>70</sup>

After a few weeks at the stately Hotel Gerhus, Bowie took residence in a fairly modest but spacious *Altbau* (period apartment), located above a spare parts store for cars at 155 Hauptstraße in the southwestern district of Schöneberg. The neighborhood was rather nondescript but lively, with the gay bar *Anderes Ufer* (“other shore”) right next door. Bowie’s roommate was American rock star Iggy Pop, born 1947 as James Osterberg in Muskegon, Michigan. Pop later moved into his own courtyard apartment at the same address but remained Bowie’s closest friend during the Berlin years, along with another American, the record producer Tony Visconti. As Bowie stated in 1977, he wanted to “find some people you don’t understand and a place you don’t want to be and just put yourself into it” and to “force yourself to buy

your own groceries,” and he had found the right place, since “nobody gives a shit about you in Berlin.”<sup>71</sup> As German journalist Tobias Rütger aptly described it, Berlin’s residents accepted Bowie “as they had accepted any other freak or interesting weirdo who tried their luck in the city: without questions or concerns, by collectively shrugging their shoulders.”<sup>72</sup>

Although Bowie spent a considerable amount of time in West Berlin, he never learned to speak German and did not collaborate with any German musicians. The only Germans he got to know a bit more intimately were Tangerine Dream’s Edgar Froese, Froese’s wife Monika, transsexual cabaret owner and performer Romy Haag, and Hansa Studios engineer Eduard Meyer.<sup>73</sup> Meyer, who worked on Iggy Pop’s *The Idiot* and David Bowie’s *Low*, recalled in 2008: “You could sense that [Bowie] was excited to live where Nazi history had taken place.”<sup>74</sup> Meyer also stated: “David enjoyed the atmosphere of the ‘front-line city’ and felt very much at home here. Berlin was very provincial at the time. [ . . . ] With the wall, nobody could get out, and it was like an island, and David loved that very much.”<sup>75</sup> Another German acquaintance Bowie made was Antonia Maaß, singer of the Berlin jazz rock group the Messengers, who were recording at Hansa as well. Maaß, who had an affair with Bowie’s producer Tony Visconti and provided backing vocals for the album “*Heroes*”, remembered that Bowie only cared about his music and Berlin’s museums.<sup>76</sup>

Bowie was particularly interested in the Brücke Museum in Dahlem, where he spent much time studying German expressionist art (*die Brücke*, literally “the bridge,” was a movement of Dresden artists from 1905 to 1913). Bowie had taken up painting and used Erich Heckel’s *Roquariol* (1917), a portrait of artist Ernst-Ludwig Kirchner, as the inspiration for both the cover of Iggy Pop’s *The Idiot* and his own “*Heroes*”. For the album covers, both Pop and Bowie imitated Kirchner’s gesture with bended arm; in Bowie’s case, his Elvis quiff also expressed the ongoing fascination with American rock’n’roll. Apart from museums, Bowie seemed to have spent most of his time at home or enjoying West Berlin’s nightlife, which might explain his rather clumsy statement that Berlin was “a city made up of bars for sad people to get drunk in.”<sup>77</sup> Iggy Pop appeared to have had even fewer meaningful interactions with West Berliners than Bowie, and the few comments he made about the city revealed a deeply clichéd gaze: Berlin “hadn’t changed since 1910: organ grinders who still had monkeys, quality transvestite shows. A different world.”<sup>78</sup>

Bowie only immersed himself in his city of residence in rather selective ways, but the three albums that he later, in keeping with his interest in visual art, referred to as the “Berlin triptych” revealed an astonishing influence of a particularly West German sensibility. Berlin’s continually unfinished status meshed with Bowie’s artistic self-construction, and he effortlessly incorporated the music of krautrock artists into his own work. Although Bowie did not explicitly reference Berlin in his recordings, the atmosphere and sounds of the city clearly impacted his music. In 1978, Bowie called Berlin “the centre of everything that is happening and will happen in Europe over the next few years.”<sup>79</sup> Incidentally, it was West Berlin’s gritty minimalism, not its decadent and fascist past, that left traces in Bowie’s music. As he stated in an interview with French magazine *Rock et Folk*:

I’ve written songs in all the Western capitals, and I’ve always got to the stage where there isn’t friction between a city and me. That became nostalgic, vaguely decadent, and I left for another city. At the moment I’m incapable of composing in Los Angeles, New York or in London or Paris. There’s something missing. Berlin has the strange ability to only make you write the important things.<sup>80</sup>

Bowie had come to the city to find the world of *Cabaret*, but instead he discovered an urban wasteland shaped by Cold War geopolitics.

Musically, the minimalism that inspired Bowie was mostly from Düsseldorf, not West Berlin. With the exception of Tangerine Dream, the so-called Berlin School had much less of an impact on Bowie than Neu! and Kraftwerk. Bowie appropriated Neu!’s concept of one side of ambient and one side of rock for *Low* and “*Heroes*”, and he possibly even took the title of the latter from Neu!’s song “Hero.” Like Kraftwerk, Bowie abandoned blues scales and harmonic structures for electronic minimalism and espoused a distinctly European sensibility as well as a conceptualization of a self-referential *Gesamtkunstwerk* that included music, clothes, album covers, concerts, and interviews.<sup>81</sup> In return, Kraftwerk name-checked their famous admirer on “Trans Europe Express” (“from station to station back to Düsseldorf city, meet Iggy Pop and David Bowie”). In addition to Neu! and Kraftwerk, Bowie was clearly influenced by a number of other krautrock bands, such as Can, Faust, and Cluster. Yet instead of collaborating with them while he was in Germany (or with producers like Conny Plank and Dieter

Dierks), Bowie remained secluded on the island of West Berlin, soaking up German influences from afar and choosing musical partners from the United States.<sup>82</sup>

### The Berlin Trilogy

Bowie’s initial interest in Berlin had been informed by notions of 1920s expressionism and 1930s fascism, but actually living in the city brought about a shift in his musical expression toward a fragmented personal as well as spatial identity that bore strong resemblances to krautrock’s hybridization and deterritorialization. On the “Berlin Trilogy,” consisting of *Low*, “*Heroes*”, and *Lodger*, Bowie dramatically broke with conventional rock structures by turning to incomplete songs and instrumental music and by endorsing a synthetic and minimalist sound. Inhabiting a liminal space of national identity as a “Germanized” Brit after World War II, Bowie provided a counter-model to Moroder and Summer’s celebratory “Sound of Munich” and emphasized the fragmentation and alienation of transnational identity in his music.

Influenced by krautrock groups and the new environment of West Berlin that he was settling into, *Low* might have been “the most radical departure from charts music ever undertaken by a superstar.”<sup>83</sup> As Bowie admitted: “It’s influenced by the new wave—not the American new wave bands, the European new wave.”<sup>84</sup> For the first time, Bowie did not promote his album and kept, as the cover image suggested, a “low profile” (the cover featured the word “low” above a profile shot of Bowie’s head from *The Man Who Fell to Earth* in front of a bright orange sky). Much of *Low*’s new sound was shaped by a new collaborator, Brian Eno (born 1948), who also contributed to Bowie’s other two Berlin albums. Eno had begun his career playing keyboards for Roxy Music and had already made four highly acclaimed solo albums of synthetic rock and ambient music. The 1975 releases *Discreet Music* and *Another Green World* served as the blueprint for Eno’s parts for *Low*. Like Bowie, Eno was paying attention to the sounds that came out of West Germany, and he would even go on to record a number of albums with Cluster and Harmonia.<sup>85</sup>

Eno’s goal was to combine Kraftwerk’s rigidity and funk group Parliament’s passion (he was also interested in the disco sound of Moroder). Therefore, Eno had already conceptually envisioned *Low*’s combination of a funky African American rhythm section (Carlos Alomar, George Murray,

and Dennis Davis) and “Germanic” keyboards and vocals (provided by the Englishmen Bowie and Eno).<sup>86</sup> Another element that Eno brought to Bowie’s music was chance. With his artist friend Peter Schmidt, he had invented the *Oblique Strategies*, a set of about one hundred cards that gave individual musicians seemingly random advice like “work at a different speed” or “use an old idea.” The cards inspired many tracks on Bowie’s Berlin albums and complemented William S. Burroughs’s cut-up technique that Bowie was now using to write most of his lyrics (by cutting words out of a book or newspaper and reassembling them). On *Low*, Eno played many instruments that also dominated the sound on krautrock albums, such as ARP and EMS synthesizers, the Minimoog, and the Chamberlin.

In addition to singing, Bowie played an array of instruments on *Low*. These included saxophone, guitar, various keyboards and synthesizers, xylophone, and harmonica. Most of the album was instrumental, which showed a focus on sound instead of lyrical content. In addition, the album included what *Rolling Stone* called “one of rock’s all-time most imitated drum sounds.”<sup>87</sup> Producer Tony Visconti used an Eventide harmonizer, a proto-sampler that, like Auto-Tune decades later, could change the pitch without altering the tempo. Visconti applied the Eventide to the sound of Dennis Davis’s drums, which were also foregrounded in the mix. As Visconti put it, the harmonizer “fucks with the fabric of time,” a description that could also be applied to the music of Neu! or Faust.<sup>88</sup> For better or worse, the resulting crashing snare drum sound became a staple of 1980s pop music. Along with Eno’s swirling synthesizers, disjointed and cacophonous guitar solos by Alomar and Ricky Gardiner, and Bowie’s withdrawn vocals and paranoid lyrics, Visconti’s production added to “that amalgam of the darkest and most enticing elements of American and German musical cultures: the robotic, the escapist, the ethereal, the direct, all conveying a state of emotional dissonance, in which depression could be uplifting and boredom became transparent.”<sup>89</sup>

*Low* was divided into one side of song fragments with sparse lyrics and one side of ambient instrumentals.<sup>90</sup> Side one was bookended by “Speed of Life” and “A New Career in a New Town,” two wordless songs heavy on electronics but with traditional verse-chorus structures, the latter’s title commenting on Bowie’s move to Berlin. Both tracks contained quieter passages clearly influenced by Kraftwerk’s synthetic sound. Sandwiched between the two instrumentals were five relatively short songs with vocals by Bowie. “Breaking Glass” referenced the Tree of Life from the Kabbalah, had more

melody in the bass line than the vocals, and ended abruptly after one verse and what might have been the chorus. “What in the World” featured angular rhythms, atonal lead guitar, and Iggy Pop’s slightly off-key backup vocals. The more melodic “Always Crashing in the Same Car” rephrased the paranoia of the other pieces as a dreamscape. “Sound and Vision” had the elements of a more pop-oriented song but deconstructed them: its first half was purely instrumental, it foregrounded the background vocals by Mary Hopkin, and it contained only one verse. Finally, “Be My Wife,” the second single after “Sound and Vision,” had Bowie singing about deterritorialization: “I’ve lived all over the world, I’ve left every place.” It may have been the most conventional song on the album, but its vocal melody seemed deliberately unambitious, and consequently it was the first Bowie single in five years that failed to enter the UK charts.

If side one of *Low* was already confusing for many of his fans, side two with its four electronic instrumental pieces was where Bowie truly defied expectations and showed his appreciation of krautrock and his newfound European sensibility. “Warszawa,” which Bowie wrote after gazing at bleak Polish landscapes and cities on his trip to Moscow (he hardly left the train), was comprised of synthesizers that blended Eastern European music with Kraftwerk and featured phonetic singing with pitch manipulations that made Bowie’s voice sound like a Bulgarian boys choir. “Art Decade” (a pun on “art decayed” and “art deco”) was a somber ambient piece with layers of synthesizer about the Berlin Bowie had discovered. “Weeping Wall” contained more wordless vocals by Bowie, synthesizers, as well as percussive xylophone and vibraphone and was written about what he perceived as the “misery” of the Berlin Wall. Finally, “Subterraneans,” yet another ambient piece with phonetic singing, featured reversed recordings of instruments over synthesizer tracks reminiscent of Tangerine Dream. According to Bowie, the song dealt with the people caught in East Berlin after the Wall was built. The faint jazz saxophone solo was a nod to the East Berlin jazz scene.

However cursory Bowie’s engagement with Berlin and Eastern Europe was when he recorded *Low*, his compositions still managed to capture a sensibility that was both locally grounded and transcendental. Initially, the critical response to the album was mixed, with the *New Musical Express* printing both a positive review by krautrock advocate Ian MacDonald and a negative review by Jimi Hendrix biographer Charles Shaar Murray side-by-side. Yet over time the album has been regarded as one of the most, if not the most

important album of Bowie's career.<sup>91</sup> Bowie popularized the sounds of krautrock (and, to some extent, of electronic composers of minimalism) by connecting them with an African American rhythm section. As Phil Doggett put it: "For those who had taken little notice of the computerized rhythms of Kraftwerk, the apparently seamless patterns of Philip Glass and Steve Reich, the sparse landscape of NEU! and the deconstructive impulses of Faust, *Low* sounded completely revolutionary."<sup>92</sup>

The second album of the Berlin triptych, "*Heroes*," was the first to be entirely conceived and recorded in Berlin, this time at the Hansa Studio right by the inner-German border, which Bowie had dubbed "the Hall by the Wall" (*Low* had been partly recorded in France). It repeated the concept of Bowie's previous album with one side of fragmented rock songs and one side of (mostly) ambient instrumentals. Musically, "*Heroes*" was as uncompromising as *Low* but also contained a major pop hit with the title track, which became one of Bowie's signature songs. In addition to Eno and *Low*'s rhythm section, consisting of Alomar, Murray, and Davis, "*Heroes*" featured Robert Fripp of British art rock group King Crimson on lead guitar. The album was released in 1978. "*Heroes*" was musically not the same watershed moment as *Low*, but it represented the full realization of Bowie's engagement with krautrock and German identity.

"Beauty and the Beast" and "Joe the Lion" opened the album with motorik beats, discordant guitars, and lyrics that made no sense, a combination somewhat akin to some of Faust's recordings. Transnational German/American themes surfaced when Antonia Maaß could be heard singing the word *Liebling* ("darling") on "Beauty and the Beast" and when "Joe the Lion" referenced American performance artist Chris Burden, who had nailed himself to the top of a Volkswagen Beetle in 1974. Bowie was inspired by Iggy Pop to make up the lyrics as he recorded them. With the exception of "Heroes," which he wrote down on paper first, Bowie would sing a line, stop the tape, record the next line, and repeat this process. The album's fourth song, "Sons of the Silent Age," was an overall more conventional composition that could have fit on older Bowie albums but also possibly referenced German silent movies like Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927). The last song on side one, "Blackout," contained distorted vocals and more disjointed guitars and synthesizers. The song had autobiographical allusions to Bowie's disintegrating marriage and his binge-drinking and described the narrator as

being "under Japanese influence," possibly a reference to hara-kiri by an artist who musically was more under German influence at the time.

The title track "Heroes," which appeared right in the middle of the album's first side, deserves further attention. A retro-romantic story of love and loss, its earnestness was somewhat diminished by the quotation marks in the title. The six-minute track contained layers of guitar feedback and synthesizers and was recorded with three microphones placed at varying distances from Bowie. They were gradually opened one after the other, resulting in his vocals moving from quiet lament to melodramatic scream. The relatively coherent lyrics depicted a passionate but hopeless love affair "by the wall" amidst gun shots, where "shame was on the other side." The song clearly referenced the Berlin Wall (Bowie has repeatedly mentioned armed border guards visible from the studio where the song was written and recorded) but was also inspired by Otto Mueller's painting *Lovers Between Garden Walls* (1916) and the short story "A Grave for a Dolphin" (1956) by Alberto Denti di Pirajno.

The single version of "Heroes," edited from six to three minutes, was initially not a hit, but the song quickly became a live favorite and one of Bowie's best-known recordings (it has even appeared in TV commercials). Bowie also recorded versions of the song in German and French. Although "Heroes" was a universal tale of love, its connection to Berlin was evoked again when it was featured in the film *Christiane F.* (1981), and when Bowie performed the song at the Concert for Berlin for seventy thousand fans in front of the Reichstag in 1987. Before playing the song, he read a message in German, dedicating it to his "friends on the other side of the wall," and a few hundred young people listening on the East side rioted that same night and during the next few days.<sup>93</sup> By immersing himself as an outsider in German culture, Bowie had become versed in the fragmented identity of a divided nation, and his music was resonating among members of the culture he was representing.

Side two of Bowie's "*Heroes*" contained four synthesizer-driven instrumentals and ended with one more conventional song. "V-2 Schneider" began with the sound of an airplane landing and morphed into an upbeat saxophone-synthesizer theme with a lively bassline and Bowie singing the title repeatedly through what sounded like a vocoder. The title referenced Kraftwerk's Florian Schneider and German V-2 missiles from World War II.



As Tobias Rütger observed: "The song reduces the world that surrounded Bowie, the Federal Republic of Germany, to the Fleet Street code, the stereotype which British tabloid reporters use to play off their home country against the Germans, then and now."<sup>94</sup> One could argue, however, that "V-2 Schneider" was not merely reaffirming Bowie's British national identity but could also have been his reaction to British critics who feared by moving to Berlin he had turned into a "Hun" himself.<sup>95</sup>

In "Sense of Doubt," Bowie and Eno employed call-and-response patterns with eerie-sounding synthesizers over a descending four-note piano motif after *Oblique Strategies* cards had given each of them contradictory instructions, explaining the tension of the song. It morphed into the more serene "Moss Garden," on which Bowie played *koto*, a Japanese zither-like instrument, on top of synthesizer washes reminiscent of Klaus Schulze. Bowie unintentionally misspelled "Neuköln," a district of West Berlin with a large Turkish immigrant population, for the song of the same name (it should have been *Neukölln*). On the song, Bowie played saxophone using a Middle Eastern modal scale amid ambient synthesizer sounds. Explaining the motivations behind the track, Bowie stated: "The Turks are shackled in bad conditions. They're very much an isolated community. It's very sad."<sup>96</sup> As with his impressions of Poland and the Berlin Wall, all that Bowie could see was sadness, a sadness that might have been more his own than that of others. After all, while staying in Berlin, Bowie was mostly isolated from both German and Turkish communities. For the last song of "Heroes," Bowie returned to Middle Eastern themes. "The Secret Life of Arabia" was a rather conventional rock composition with a disco beat and lyrics that seemed a bit misplaced but already signaled the travel focus of the more song-oriented follow-up album, *Lodger*.

Overall, "Heroes" explored similar musical themes as *Low* but also developed them further. Bowie's transnational identity was expressed through both closeness to and distance from Germany. His music was rooted in African American sensibilities while still embracing the synthetic sounds of krautrock in a city that was both at the heart and on the border of Germany. Bowie, who had not promoted *Low*, toured "Heroes" extensively. After taking his son on a six-week safari to Kenya, Bowie played in the United States, Europe, Australia, and Japan. Later in 1978, he released the double live album *Stage*. It was recorded in Philadelphia, Boston, and Providence and consisted of one album of older material and one album with songs from the first two

parts of the Berlin Trilogy. After the isolation of the divided city, Bowie was in the process of exposing a global audience to his version of krautrock.

*Lodger* (1979), the third part of the Berlin Trilogy, reflected Bowie's transient identity and, although conceptually linked to *Low* and "Heroes", was not recorded in Germany but in New York City and Montreux, Switzerland. The album title was a bit misleading—while Bowie had been a lodger and a traveler during his Berlin years, he appeared more like a tourist on his latest record, which featured many of the same musicians he had been working with (Eno, Alomar, Murray, Davis) as well as some new additions, like Frank Zappa's guitarist Adrian Belew. *Lodger* did not contain any ambient instrumentals and developed some of the sonic experimentation of *Low* and "Heroes" into more conventional but still daring pop songs.

The cover of *Lodger* was, fittingly, in the form of a postcard, with Bowie made up as an accident victim. On "Move On," Bowie described himself as a "traveling man" and name-checked Africa, Russia, Kyoto, and Cyprus. Musically, the biggest influence was still krautrock, but two songs brought in other elements. "Yassassin (Turkish for Long Live)" was an odd mix of Middle Eastern melodies, funk bass, and a Caribbean reggae rhythm (the correct spelling would have been *yassasin*), and "African Night Flight" incorporated tribal chants, percussion, and the synthetic chirping of crickets. Phil Doggett compared the song's appropriation of African sounds unfavorably to Can's E.F.S. series, but Bowie's angular rhythms and detached vocals displayed a similar tongue-in-cheek approach to world music to that of the German group.<sup>97</sup> It seemed that, after having engaged with the culture of West Berlin more in depth, Bowie was aware that he was only scratching the surface in his new cultural explorations.

Interestingly, Bowie referenced Neu! even more explicitly on *Lodger* after having left Germany. The most obvious example was "Red Sails," which copied Michael Rother's echo-filled rhythm guitar and Klaus Dinger's precise drumming and off-key singing and featured a narrator sailing to the "hinterland" and caught in a "struggle with a foreign tongue." On other songs, Bowie seemed to have incorporated the idea of recycling from Neu! 2. "Move On" was created from an older Bowie composition, "All the Young Dudes," played backwards. "Red Money" used the backing track from Iggy Pop's "Sister Midnight," slowed down slightly. Finally, two songs, "Fantastic Voyage" and "Boys Keep Swinging," were almost identical, except that the latter had a more ragged sound because the musicians had switched instru-

ments after some advice from the *Oblique Strategies*. The self-referential, ironic approach that Bowie shared with Neu! was also apparent in many of the lyrics, which were somewhat more straightforward but detached: "Repetition" and "Fantastic Voyage" tackled domestic violence and nuclear war from utterly impassionate-sounding narrators, and the singles "D.J." and "Boys Keep Swinging" were merely parodies of disc jockeys and masculine identity, respectively.

Bowie's *Lodger* might not have had quite the same impact as the first two parts of the Berlin Trilogy and was not received very well by critics at the time, but the album has recently been rediscovered as an underappreciated continuation of radical ideas. Bowie's next album, *Scary Monsters* (1980), was the last one to use the well-tried rhythm section of the Berlin years, but Eno's absence led to a more polished sound and well-crafted pop songs, including one with overlaid Japanese vocals ("It's No Game Part 1"). It represented the transition from krautrock-inspired music to the mainstream pop of multimillion-selling *Let's Dance* (1983), recorded with a brand new band that included aspiring blues guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan.

Bowie's representation of a restless, unstable identity on the Berlin Trilogy drew heavily on krautrock's deterritorialization, hybridity, and fragmentation. This becomes even more apparent when one compares the trilogy to Bowie's collaborations with Iggy Pop on two albums that were both released in 1977, *The Idiot* and *Lust for Life*. Pop's engagement with German music and transnational themes was negligible, and it therefore serves as a counterexample to the significant impact krautrock had on Bowie's work. On Pop's two "German" albums, it was only through Bowie's participation that the country they were both living in left any noticeable traces in the musical production, and Bowie's ambition in his own work to create new music through an act of border-crossing became even more apparent.

Iggy Pop had recorded three proto-punk albums with the Stooges beginning in 1969, and Bowie, who had coproduced the group's *Raw Power* (1973), sought to revive Pop's career by working on *The Idiot*.<sup>98</sup> Bowie cowrote and produced all the songs for the album, provided backing vocals, and played guitar, electric piano, synthesizer, saxophone, and drum machine. He also tried out new sounds that he would further develop on *Low*, which explains Pop's description of the music as "a cross between James Brown and Kraftwerk."<sup>99</sup> Compared to Pop's Stooges albums, *The Idiot* had a more refined sound, which provided a contrast to his deep *sprechgesang*. The music

on *The Idiot* was quite eclectic. It ranged from the funk bass and syncopated riffs of "Sister Midnight" to the cabaret singing of "Baby" and the doo-wop elements of "Tiny Girls" (saxophone and 6/8 time), from the motorik drum machine beat and wailing electric guitar of "Nightclubbing" to the distorted garage rock of "Funtime." On "China Girl," which prominently featured toy piano and synthesizers and which Bowie rerecorded and turned into a worldwide hit in 1983, the line "visions of swastikas in my head and plans for everyone" recalled his toying with fascism. On "Dum Dum Boys," Pop recounted the story of the Stooges over a simple arpeggio riff. The album ended with the eight-minute, mostly one-chord "Mass Production," which prefigured the sound of 1990s alternative rock with a tape loop of industrial noise on top of a relentless beat. Some of the music's minimalism could be seen as krautrock-influenced, but overall there was no clear indication that Pop felt any connection to German musicians.

Less than a year after *The Idiot*, Pop released *Lust for Life*, another Bowie production. Bowie played keyboards and cowrote seven of the nine songs. The album's sound was much more straightforward, tighter, and suited Pop's limited vocal range well. It also contained two of his most recognizable songs, the title track and "The Passenger." The powerful, driving "Lust for Life" used the rhythm from the Supremes' "You Can't Hurry Love" to support Pop's monotone vocal and was part of the singer's 1990s comeback when it appeared in the film *Trainspotting* (1996). "The Passenger" had an infectious four-chord guitar riff by Ricky Gardiner and lyrics that were inspired by the experience of riding the subway in West Berlin. It was the only song on Pop's two albums with Bowie that had any meaningful connection to Germany. Unlike Bowie, Pop seemed unable to infuse his Detroit rock'n'roll with much local color.<sup>100</sup> In comparison to Pop's Berlin albums, Bowie's development of his previous glam rock queerness into a deterritorialized, krautrock-infused art form on *Low*, "Heroes", and *Lodger* is even more striking.

### German Afterthoughts

In his final months in Berlin in early 1978, Bowie returned to his earlier fascination with the 1920s when he played a German soldier and dandy in his second movie production, David Hemmings's *Schöner Gigolo, armer Gigolo* (the English title was *Just a Gigolo*). The film featured famous German actors

such as Marlene Dietrich, Maria Schell, and Curd Jürgens, as well as Hollywood veteran Kim Novak. *Just a Gigolo* was unanimously panned as a hopelessly stereotypical portrayal of 1920s Berlin with clumsy acting. Bowie, who had successfully played an alien in *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, later referred to the film as “all my thirty-two Elvis movies rolled into one.”<sup>101</sup> Considering how well Bowie had connected to the time and place he had entered by making music that was both forward-looking and rooted in West German realities, *Just a Gigolo* represented an uncritical return to his pre-Berlin fascination with the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany.

After leaving Germany, Bowie occasionally revisited his time in Berlin in various songs. His 1978 single “Alabama Song,” written by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, had previously been recorded by the Doors but was also a staple of Romy Haag’s cabaret show, and Bowie sang it more like Haag than like Jim Morrison. Haag also influenced Bowie’s performance in the music video for “Boys Keep Swinging,” where he embodied 1950s rock’n’roll masculinity but also appeared in three different drag costumes as his own “female” backup singers.<sup>102</sup> For his 1979 guest spot on *Saturday Night Live*, Bowie hired another gender-ambiguous performer, German-American Klaus Nomi, along with New York City drag artist Joey Arias. For Bowie’s memorable renditions of “The Man Who Sold the World,” “TVC15,” and “Boys Keep Swinging,” Nomi and Arias provided operatic background vocals and robotic movements.<sup>103</sup> Bowie returned to German themes again in 1981 with a BBC production of Bertolt Brecht’s *Baal*, in which the singer played the leading role, and for which he recorded an EP at Hansa Studios in Berlin. Finally, after a ten-year recording hiatus and three years before his untimely death, Bowie released the song “Where Are We Now?” in 2013, on which he name-checked several places in Berlin and looked back on his time in the city with nostalgia.

Bowie’s German afterthoughts were not as relevant and cutting-edge as the “krautfunk” of his Berlin triptych but showed his ongoing fascination with themes related to his extended stay in the country. Ultimately, the most meaningful connection between Bowie’s music and West Berlin was not made by the singer himself but by German director Uli Edel in his 1981 film *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* (*We Children from Bahnhof Zoo*). Christiane F.’s first-person account of one of the young teenage drug addicts and prostitutes who gathered at West Berlin’s subway station Zoologischer Garten had shocked audiences in 1979. In the book, Christiane F. declared herself a

Bowie fan: “David Bowie was our only hero, the coolest of them all. His music was the best. All the guys wanted to look like David Bowie.”<sup>104</sup> Two years after the book, the film utilized this connection by using Bowie’s music for the atmospheric soundtrack. The singer also had a guest appearance in the film.

The *Christiane F.* soundtrack included two tracks from *Lodger* (“Boys Keep Swinging” and “Look Back in Anger”), three tracks from “*Heroes*” (the title track, “V-2 Schneider,” and “Sense of Doubt”), one track from *Low* (“Warszawa”), two tracks from *Station to Station* (“TVC15” and “Stay”), and a live version of “Station to Station” from *Stage* that was used for the concert scene of the film. The restaging of Bowie’s show at the Deutschlandhalle on April 10, 1976, corresponded with a scene in the book where the singer’s rendition of the cocaine-fueled song directly spoke to the underage heroin addict: “When David Bowie began, it was almost as cool as I had expected it to be. It was insane. But when he started singing ‘it’s too late,’ it brought me right down. Suddenly I felt like crap. [ . . . ] I thought the song accurately described my situation. [ . . . ] I could have used some valium.”<sup>105</sup> The distance between the performer and the fan, despite their shared addictive personality, became even more apparent in the filming where Bowie did not directly interact with Natja Brunckhorst, who played Christiane F. The part in the film where Bowie performed the song “Station to Station” was actually shot in a New York club and then intercut with audience footage from an AC/DC concert in Berlin. Bowie was spatially removed from the narrative of the film, but conceptually his music made perfect sense.

In addition to the concert scene, Bowie’s music from his Berlin Trilogy was used throughout the film to underscore both Christiane’s fascination with drugs and the desperation of her addiction. “Sense of Doubt,” in particular, worked exceptionally well to orchestrate the film’s underworld of subway tunnels, public restrooms, empty downtown streets lined with underage prostitutes, and the desolate high-rise buildings of the Gropiusstadt where Christiane grew up. The despair of “*Heroes*” also took on a different meaning in the context of the many teenage drug addicts overdosing in the film who dream about being “heroes just for one day.” With his recordings at Hansa Studios, Bowie had unintentionally provided the ideal soundtrack for Uli Edel’s gritty tale of 1970s West Berlin.

Bowie’s *Christiane F.* soundtrack recast his music in a local context, but the greatest achievement of his Berlin years was his popularization of krautrock

and his successful integration of synthesized sounds into Anglo-American rock. In a 1997 interview with *Mojo*, Bowie discussed how his interest in krautrock inspired him to bypass punk rock, a move that in turn made him an influence for post-punk: "I was a big fan of Kraftwerk, Cluster and Harmonia, and I thought the first Neu! album, in particular, was just gigantically wonderful. Looking at that against punk, I had no doubts where the future of music was going, and for me it was coming out of Germany at the time."<sup>106</sup> Bowie's influence was most apparent in British pop groups from the 1980s like Ultravox, ABC, and the Human League, but it also extended to the Talking Heads and Joy Division, who were originally called Warsaw in reference to Bowie's "Warszawa," and even to 1990s groups like Blur, Radiohead, and Nine Inch Nails. U2 recorded *Achtung Baby* (1991) in collaboration with Brian Eno at Hansa Studios, and Nick Cave, Depeche Mode, and R.E.M. also went to Berlin to record in the "Hall by the Wall." Along with Kraftwerk's and Giorgio Moroder's international successes, Bowie's Berlin years were the closest that krautrock ever got to mainstream popularity.

While Bowie's preconceived notions of 1920s and 1930s Germany gradually made way for the reality of 1970s West Berlin and resulted in a fragmented identity that found its expression in the Berlin Trilogy, the "Sound of Munich" created in the collaborations between Donna Summer and Giorgio Moroder inhabited a liminal space between krautrock and disco, between German and transnational. To some extent, Bowie's and Summer's role-playing represented two different versions of a conflicted and unstable identity, alienation, and celebration of difference. The collaborations between Moroder and Summer and the music Bowie made in connection with Berlin have generally not been considered in the context of krautrock, largely because transnational, female, gay, and black identities have been systematically excluded from notions of German identity. Yet many of their productions show striking parallels to various forms of krautrock, particularly in their deterritorialization and reterritorialization of German identity after World War II. Therefore, including artists like Summer and Bowie in an analysis of krautrock can serve to show that its complex web of discursive identity formations clearly extended beyond the borders of Germany itself. For a discursive formation like krautrock, there were no sharp distinctions between being inside looking out and being outside looking in.

## 6 After Krautrock

### The Neue Deutsche Welle and Beyond

Krautrock affected music both inside and outside Germany. In the wake of the British and American punk revolutions of the late 1970s, the *Neue Deutsche Welle* ("German New Wave") emerged across various local scenes in West Germany. Spanning roughly from 1979 to 1983, the Neue Deutsche Welle (NDW) picked up some of krautrock's ideas and developed them further, but it also applied reterritorialization more narrowly by focusing on German themes and lyrics. Along with its quick appropriation by the music industry, this led to NDW's fairly short lifespan and its relatively minor impact outside Germany.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, the Neue Deutsche Welle marked the moment in the history of West German popular music that reformulated krautrock for the post-punk generation.<sup>2</sup>

Internationally, krautrock's abandonment of Anglo- and African American structures created a fertile ground for groups both spatially and temporally removed from the music's origins. The renewed interest in German music from the 1970s has had an impact on many contemporary fields of production. Perhaps most strikingly, krautrock's shadow looms large in the imagination of current American indie rock writers, musicians, and audiences. The popular webzine *Pitchfork Media* exemplifies how deterritorialized sounds that disavowed American influences attained subcultural capital in the United States. While some meanings might have gotten lost over time and in translation, both rearticulations of some of krautrock's fragmented identity formations—nationally and transnationally—show the continued relevance of the music's politics.

also be interpreted as a “parody of an auteur.” See Timothy Corrigan, “Producing Herzog: From a Body of Images,” in *The Films of Werner Herzog: Between Mirage and History*, ed. Timothy Corrigan, (New York: Methuen, 1986), 6.

8. Quoted in Cronin, *Herzog on Herzog*, 301.

9. Quoted in Brad Prager, *The Cinema of Werner Herzog: Aesthetic Ecstasy and Truth* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2007), 92.

10. Prager, *Cinema*, 121.

11. Quoted in Cronin, *Herzog on Herzog*, 55.

12. According to K. J. Donnelly, Werner Herzog used Popol Vuh’s songs in his movies “not to heighten tension in the mainstream sense of film music, but essentially to cut across the image and add a sense of emotional and spiritual death.” K. J. Donnelly, “Angel of the Air: Popol Vuh’s Music and Werner Herzog’s Films,” in *European Film Music*, ed. Miguel Mera and David Burnand (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 123.

13. Prager, *Cinema*, 26.

14. Quoted in Cronin, *Herzog on Herzog*, 257.

15. *Ibid.*, 81.

16. Roger Hillman, “Coming to Our Senses: The Viewer and Herzog’s Sonic Worlds,” in *A Companion to Werner Herzog*, ed. Brad Prager (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2012), 170.

17. Quoted in Cronin, *Herzog on Herzog*, 80.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Aguirre’s* complexity also stood in marked contrast to the collaboration of Popol Vuh’s Florian Fricke and Daniel Fichelscher with Conny Veit of krautrock group Gila on the album *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, which was released in 1973, only one year after *Aguirre*. Based on white historian Dee Brown’s 1970 bestseller about Native American struggles, the album by the former psychedelic rock group Gila, joined by Sabine Merbach on vocals and the two main members of Popol Vuh on guitar and keyboards, invoked notions of noble savages, contained *faux* Indian drums, flute, and chanting, and featured sentimental lyrics about romanticized Native Americans reminiscent of German author Karl May’s nineteenth-century hero Winnetou and sung with a German accent: “In a sacred manner I live, to the heavens I gaze, in a sacred manner I live, my horses are many.” The second side of the concept album contained “Black Kettle’s Ballad” about the Sand Creek Massacre in 1864, sung from the perspective of the pacifist Cheyenne chief who was killed four years after the massacre by George Custer’s troops: “Here I stand on my land, dying people all around me, here I stand, my bloody hand holding an arm of an Indian squaw, her body ripped by a white man’s sword and her unborn child is lying beside her in the sand!”

20. *Burden of Dreams*.

21. Incidentally, Werner Herzog would choreograph operas by Richard Wagner and other composers later in his career.

22. Quoted in Cronin, *Herzog on Herzog*, 212.

23. Werner Herzog’s dehistoricization of “Africa” occurred in his documentaries, too, examples being in particular *Wodaabe, Herdsmen of the Sun* (1989) and *Echoes from a Sombre Empire* (1990).

24. Quoted in Cronin, *Herzog on Herzog*, 95.

25. Prager, *Cinema*, 24.

26. *Ibid.*, 110.

27. Werner Herzog quoted in Cronin, *Herzog on Herzog*, 151.

28. Donnelly, “Angel,” 124.

29. Werner Herzog’s uneven Hollywood career has continued with the two films *My Son, My Son, What Have Ye Done?* (2009) and *Queen of the Desert* (2015).

### Chapter Five

1. Tellingly, Giorgio Moroder’s early recordings have been rereleased under the title *Schlagermoroder* (Repertoire Records, 2013).

2. For the disco history that follows, I draw on the following: Alice Echols, *Hot Stuff: Disco and the Remaking of American Culture* (New York: Norton, 2010); Kai Fikentscher, “You Better Work!”: *Underground Dance Music in New York City* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 2000); Tim Lawrence, *Love Saves the Day: A History of American Dance Music Culture, 1970–1979* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Johnny Morgan, *Disco* (New York: Sterling, 2011); Peter Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around: The Secret History of Disco* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2005).

3. Andrew Holleran, *Dancer from the Dance* (New York: Perennial, 2001), 40.

4. See Fikentscher, “You Better Work!”

5. Morgan, *Disco*, 98.

6. Echols, *Hot Stuff*, xxv.

7. See Richard Dyer, “In Defense of Disco,” in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, ed. Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (New York: Pantheon, 1990), 410–18.

8. Echols, *Hot Stuff*, xxvi.

9. For instance, Alice Echols has claimed that “disco did not arrive on American shores courtesy of Giorgio Moroder, the Bee Gees, and Abba” (Echols, *Hot Stuff*, 11). As I argue in this chapter, Moroder in particular did contribute to a transnational development of disco early on.

10. Quoted in Angus Mackinnon, “Der Munich Mensch Machine,” *New Musical Express* (9 December 1978), [http://homepage.ntlworld.com/clive.hocker/moroder/mor\\_1978/part01.htm](http://homepage.ntlworld.com/clive.hocker/moroder/mor_1978/part01.htm).

11. *Ibid.*

12. Harold Faltermeyer scored an international hit in 1985 with the theme song for the movie *Beverly Hills Cop*, “Axel F.”

13. Donna Summer quoted in Mikal Gilmore, “Donna Summer: Is There Life After Disco?,” *Rolling Stone* (23 May 1978), <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/donna-summer-is-there-life-after-disco-20120517>.

14. Donna Summer with Marc Eliot, *Ordinary Girl: The Journey* (New York: Villard, 2003), 65.

15. *Ibid.*, 101.

16. Quoted in Mackinnon, “Der Munich Mensch.”

17. Quoted in Josiah Howard, *Donna Summer: Her Life and Music* (Cranberry Township, PA: Tiny Ripple Books, 2003), 26.

18. Howard, *Donna Summer*, 20. For instance, Donna Summer was interrogated about her blackness by *Jet* magazine in 1976.

19. See James Haskins and J. M. Stifle, *Donna Summer: An Unauthorized Biography* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1983), 74.
20. Darlene Clark Hine, *Hine Sight: Black Women and the Re-Construction of American History* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson, 1994), 41.
21. Giorgio Moroder, e-mail conversation with author, 28 April 2013.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Neil Bogart named both his company and himself after the 1942 Hollywood movie (his real name was Bogatz). Apart from Donna Summer, Bogart counted George Clinton's Parliament, Kiss, and the Village People among his artists. For a more detailed view of Casablanca, see Larry Harris, *And Party Every Day: The Inside Story of Casablanca Records* (New York: Backbeat, 2009).
24. Serge Gainsbourg originally recorded "Je t'aime" as a duet with Brigitte Bardot in 1968. It was finally released in 1986.
25. Summer, *Ordinary Girl*, 111.
26. *Ibid.*, 108. Donna Summer was also shown in a Marilyn Monroe pose on the back cover of her LP *Four Seasons of Love*.
27. Quoted in Mackinnon, "Der Munich Mensch."
28. Lawrence, *Love Saves*, 174.
29. Quoted in Gilmore, "Donna Summer."
30. *Ibid.*
31. Summer, *Ordinary Girl*, 130.
32. Quoted in Howard, *Donna Summer*, 51.
33. Giorgio Moroder, e-mail conversation with author, 28 April 2013.
34. Quoted in Mackinnon, "Der Munich Mensch."
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*
37. Quoted in Howard, *Donna Summer*, 31.
38. Shapiro, *Turn the Beat*, 109, 111.
39. Quoted in Echols, *Hot Stuff*, 112.
40. Quoted in Mackinnon, "Der Munich Mensch."
41. Quoted in Gilmore, "Donna Summer." Emphasis in the original.
42. *Ibid.*
43. This should not be seen as a simple equation of white Germans with "technology" and African Americans with "nature." Afrofuturist performers like George Clinton were as fully engaged with "techno" music as Kraftwerk and Giorgio Moroder in the 1970s.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Quoted in Howard, *Donna Summer*, 100.
46. Prostitution was also the topic of one of Donna Summer's earliest songs, "Lady of the Night!"
47. Summer, *Ordinary Girl*, 173.
48. Echols, *Hot Stuff*, 275.
49. Judy Kutulas, "'You Probably Think This Song Is About You': 1970s Women's Music from Carole King to the Disco Divas," in *Disco Divas: Women and Popular Culture in the 1970s*, ed. Sherrie A. Innes (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 188.

50. Vince Aletti, "Electric Dreams," *Numéro* 39 (December 2002), [http://homepage.ntlworld.com/clive.hocker/moroder/mor\\_2002/index.htm](http://homepage.ntlworld.com/clive.hocker/moroder/mor_2002/index.htm).
51. Quoted in Howard, *Donna Summer*, 142.
52. Quoted in Haskins and Stifle, *Donna Summer*, 126.
53. Downplaying the racist and homophobic elements of the backlash, Giorgio Moroder nonetheless was keenly aware that disco had run its course: "Certainly disco killed itself. And there was a terrible backlash. Too many products, too many people, too many record companies jumping on this kind of music. A lot of bad records came out. I guess it was overkill. Everybody started to come out with disco and it became . . . what's the word? A cussword." Quoted in Morgan, *Disco*, 79.
54. Giorgio Moroder earned Oscars for the soundtracks to Alan Parker's *Midnight Express* (1978) and for songs from *Flashdance* (1983, title song by Irene Cara) and *Top Gun* (1986, Berlin's "Take My Breath Away"). Moroder also contributed to the soundtracks for *American Gigolo* (Blondie's "Call Me," 1980) and *Scarface* (1983), among other Hollywood movies.
55. Giorgio Moroder produced artists as varied as Janet Jackson, Nina Hagen, Sparks, David Bowie, and Cher, wrote the theme songs for three Olympics (Los Angeles 1984, Seoul 1988, and Beijing 2008) and for the soccer world cup 1990 in Italy, and participated in designing a luxury car, the V-16 Cizeta Moroder.
56. For Daft Punk's 2013 song "Giorgio by Moroder," the producer related autobiographic tidbits to music reminiscent of his own work. His first solo album in decades, *Déjà Vu*, followed in 2015.
57. See Philip Auslander, *Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006).
58. Quoted in Pete Doggett, *The Man Who Sold the World: David Bowie and the 1970s* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), 278.
59. Quoted in *David Bowie: Five Years*, directed by Francis Whately (BBC, 2013).
60. Nicolas Roeg had already cast another rock star, Mick Jagger, in *Performance* (1970).
61. *Ibid.*
62. Quoted in Marc Spitz, *Bowie: A Biography* (New York: Crown, 2009), 278–79.
63. See Tobias Rütther, *Helden: David Bowie und Berlin* (Berlin: Rogner & Bernhard, 2008), 18.
64. See Jerry Hopkins, *Bowie* (New York: Macmillan, 1985), 168.
65. Quoted in Peter and Leni Gillman, *Alias David Bowie* (New York: Holt, 1986), 426.
66. Quoted in Spitz, *Bowie*, 272.
67. Quoted in Thomas Jerome Seabrook, *Bowie in Berlin: A New Career in a New Town* (London: Jawbone, 2008), 68.
68. *Ibid.*, 84.
69. *Ibid.*, 165.
70. *Ibid.*, 83.
71. *Ibid.*, 84.
72. Rütther, *Helden*, 124–25.
73. I list Romy Haag as German here although she was born in the Netherlands and had lived in Paris and New York City before moving to Berlin.

74. Quoted in Rüther, *Helden*, 96.  
 75. *Ibid.*, 132.  
 76. See Rüther, *Helden*, 160. There is some speculation that the song “Heroes” is about the affair between Antonia Maaß and Tony Visconti, but most likely Bowie wrote the song before he knew of their relationship.  
 77. Quoted in Seabrook, *Bowie*, 118.  
 78. *Ibid.*, 117.  
 79. *Ibid.*, 82.  
 80. Quoted in Roger Griffin, *Bowiegoldenyears*, <http://www.bowiegoldenyears.com/1977.html>.  
 81. See Hugo Wilcken, *Low* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 35. Wilcken also claims that there are similarities between *Low* and Can’s *Tago Mago* “with its funk experimentalism of the first half giving way to the disturbed inner space of the second half, where not only words but music itself is more or less jettisoned in favour of textural sound.” *Ibid.*, 133–34.  
 82. At various points during his time in Germany, David Bowie planned to collaborate with krautrock musicians like Michael Rother, Klaus Dinger, Jaki Liebezeit, and Eberhard Froese. However, none of these collaborations ever became a reality.  
 83. Rüther, *Helden*, 72.  
 84. Quoted in Seabrook, *Bowie*, 100.  
 85. In addition to the “Berlin triptych,” David Bowie and Brian Eno collaborated on 1. *Outside* (1995).  
 86. The two other musicians on *Low* were Ricky Gardiner (guitar) and Roy Young (keyboards).  
 87. Quoted in Seabrook, *Bowie*, 103.  
 88. *Ibid.*, 100.  
 89. Doggett, *The Man*, 324.  
 90. My understanding of the musical aspects of David Bowie’s songs has been greatly enhanced by reading Chris O’Leary’s Internet blog *Pushing Ahead of the Dame: David Bowie, Song by Song* (<http://bowiesongs.wordpress.com>).  
 91. For instance, the album topped *Pitchfork Media*’s list of the best albums of the 1970s.  
 92. *Ibid.*, 316.  
 93. See Rüther, *Helden*, 175.  
 94. Rüther, *Helden*, 158.  
 95. See Gillman, *Alias*, 439.  
 96. Quoted in Doggett, *The Man*, 339.  
 97. See Doggett, *The Man*, 353.  
 98. David Bowie also revived Lou Reed’s career when he produced his solo album *Transformer* (1972). Reed’s follow-up, incidentally, was *Berlin*, recorded in London and New York and purely based on 1920s clichés about the city.  
 99. Quoted in Doggett, *The Man*, 303.  
 100. Nonetheless, *The Idiot* and *Lust for Life* are generally regarded as Iggy Pop’s strongest solo albums. David Bowie also produced another hit record for his friend in 1986 with *Blah Blah Blah*.

101. Quoted in Spitz, *Bowie*, 297.  
 102. See Romy Haag, *Eine Frau und mehr* (Berlin: Quadriga, 1999), 198.  
 103. Klaus Nomi died of AIDS in 1983 and was later immortalized in the documentary film *The Nomi Song* (2004).  
 104. Quoted in Kai Hermann and Horst Rieck, *Christiane F.: Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* (Hamburg: Gruner & Jahr, 2004), 79.  
 105. *Ibid.*, 81.  
 106. Quoted in Andy Gill, “We Can Be Heroes,” *Mojo* (April 1997), <http://www.phinweb.org/krautrock/mojo-krautrock.html>.

### Chapter Six

1. Not surprisingly then, there is no scholarly account of NDW in English with the exception of Cyrus M. Shahan’s *Punk Rock and German Crisis: Adaptation and Resistance after 1977* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), which emphasizes literature over music. In the German literature on NDW, its earlier manifestations have received much more attention than its later, more commercialized forms.
2. Similar to krautrock, East German musicians did not contribute substantially to NDW, although “punk and new wave permeated the Wall and motivated parts of the young generation to consciously position themselves outside of the disciplinary regime.” Like other rock and pop music, punk and new wave were suppressed by the East German government but often tolerated by Protestant churches, which were also hotbeds of the country’s civil rights movement. Ronald Galenza and Heinz Havemeister, eds., *Wir wollen immer artig sein . . . : Punk, New Wave, HipHop und Independent-Szene in der DDR 1980–1990* (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 2005), 9.
3. See Barbara Hornberger, *Geschichte wird gemacht: Die Neue Deutsche Welle, eine Epoche deutscher Popmusik* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011), 38.
4. See Jürgen Stark and Michael Kurzawa, *Der große Schwindel???: Punk, New Wave, Neue Welle* (Frankfurt: Verlag Freie Gesellschaft, 1981), 155.
5. See M. O. C. Döpfner and Thomas Garms, *Neue Deutsche Welle, Kunst oder Mode?: Eine sachliche Polemik für und wider die neudeutsche Popmusik* (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1984), 11–12.
6. See Winfried Longenrich, “Da Da Da”: *Zur Standortbestimmung der Neuen Deutschen Welle* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1989), 74.
7. See Hornberger, *Geschichte*, 51.
8. See Hollow Skai, *Alles nur geträumt: Fluch und Segen der Neuen Deutschen Welle* (Innsbruck: Hannibal, 2009), 36.
9. See Albrecht Koch, *Angriff*, 78.
10. See Frank Apunkt Schneider, *Als die Welt noch unterging: Von Punk zu NDW* (Mainz: Ventil, 2007), 8.
11. Quoted in Jürgen Teipel, *Verschwende deine Jugend: Ein Doku-Roman über den deutschen Punk und New Wave* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2001), 61.
12. See Hornberger, *Geschichte*, 287.
13. One might add that Kraftwerk had already recorded with both the most expensive and the cheapest keyboards and synthesizers available.