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Melanie Schiller

The Sound of Uncanny Silence German Beat Music and Collective Memory

On June 26th, 1963, John F. Kennedy famously declared his symbolic citizenship of West-Berlin with the words »Ich bin ein Berliner,« thus solidifying the alignment of the Federal Republic of Germany with a western liberal world order. In this same year Konrad Adenauer resigned as chancellor and his successor Ludwig Erhard declared the post-war era to be over. Popular music at the time still saw conservative Schlager topping the hit lists and, in politics, a similar reactionary tendency was visceral: the newly founded extreme-right National Democratic Party (NPD) was on the verge of succeeding in several federal state elections throughout the FRG. On the other side of the recently erected Berlin wall, Kennedy's speech caused the Soviet-loyal GDR government to counter the Western provocations with a staged visit by Nikita Sergejewitsch Chruschtschow in East Berlin. In his address to the citizens of East-Germany, the Soviet Union's head of State praised the successes of communism. Politically, the nation could not be more divided at this point. And yet, simultaneously in both East and West a new phenomenon of youth culture emerged. Beat!

While Beat music and the new fashion style it inspired appeared to be a rebellion against the parental generation, and German Schlager evolved into a synonym for reactionism, this new pop music was in fact not interested in politics. The youth in the Federal Republic and the GDR alike were much more concerned with the latest music by the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, as well as with the performances by numerous local amateur Beat bands that had started flourishing all over the split nation. For a while, GDR officials tried to exploit the apolitical nature of Beat music by appropriating the new sound for their own political agenda. Beat was temporarily supported as »socialist dance- and entertainment music«¹ and the state-owned company *Amiga* released records by the Beatles in an effort to ideologically commit the youth to the state.² In 1965, however, state policy suddenly changed, fearing it was losing its grip on the youth to western values, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany's (SED) chair Erich Honecker declared that

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- 1 Grabowsky, Ingo »Wie John, Paul, George und Ringo« Die »Beat-Ara« In *Rock! Jugend und Musik in Deutschland* Ed. by Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland Bonn Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2005, pp. 42–52, here p. 48.
- 2 Schildt, Axel/Siegfried, Detlef *Deutsche Kulturgeschichte Die Bundesrepublik von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart* München Hanser 2009, p. 206.

the »detrimental factor of such music on the thought and actions of adolescents had been crudely underestimated«³ This »misjudgment« was henceforth rectified by a complete ban of Beat music in the GDR.⁴ During the same year that Beat was banned in the East, West-German public television started airing the *Beat Club*, the first music television program for a young audience. While in the East Beat became to a certain extent »externally« politicized through its ban, Beat in the West remained primarily concerned with a break from parental values and national history, without being interested in coming to terms with the past.

German identity,⁵ at least since after WWII, has consistently been haunted by the traumas of the past, because discourses of Germanness are predicated upon and pervaded by questions of collective memory and the premise of representation, collective identification with the German nation continues to be incessantly problematic. The nation seems permanently stuck between, on the one hand, a perpetual self-reflection and an often eluding relation to its own past, and simultaneously an attempt to globally position itself as a modern and cosmopolitan nation on the other. As was the case for many western countries, the 1960s in Germany marked not only a crucial period in terms of social and political reforms, but also a process of emancipation of youth and youth culture from the older generations. Beat music, as the main source of identity formation for adolescences, functioned as a crucial means of articulating an oppositional *Weltanschauung*, but it can also be understood as a key element in the discourse of German national identity and the nation's positioning itself in an international cultural context. After the early post war years, which were primarily defined by the reconstruction of the nation in both its physical and symbolic terms, the 1960s in Germany can be understood as a transitional period of emancipation and reconfiguration. In this article I will trace the transformation of German society and its

3 »Der schädliche Einfluss solcher Musik auf das Denken und Handeln Jugendlicher wurde grob unterschätzt«, cited in Peters, Sebastian. *Ein Lied mehr zur Lage der Nation. Politische Inhalte in deutschsprachigen Popsongs*. Berlin: Archiv der Jugendkulturen Verlag 2010, p. 162. Cf. also Schafer, Sebastian. *Popmusik in der DDR. Eine Chronik*. In *Testcard* No. 12 (2002), p. 24–30.

4 The ban led to the famous »Leipziger Beat Demonstration«, the biggest unapproved demonstration in the GDR between 1953 and 1989 and after the ban East-German Beat bands partly changed their musical repertoire and names to pass state-inspections and deal with political reprisals. Grabowsky »Wie John, Paul, George und Ringo« (see footnote 1), p. 51, Schildt/Siegfried. *Deutsche Kulturgeschichte* (see footnote 2), p. 206, and cf. Rauhut, Michael. *Beat in der Grauzone. DDR-Rock 1964–1972 – Politik und Alltag*. Berlin: BasisDruck 1993.

5 Henceforth in this paper, when I discuss »German(ness)« I refer to the Federal Republic and West-Germanness. Though to a certain extent my arguments also pertain to East Germany/-ness, such discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. For an analysis of music and national identity in the GDR, see for instance Silverberg, Laura. *East German Music and the Problem of National Identity*. In *The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 37/4 (2009), pp. 501–522.

relation to national identity by describing the transition from Schlager as the dominant mode of entertainment to a new generation of Beat music. The shift in generational power relations and the developing trend from a nationally-oriented Schlager to an internationally inspired Beat is significant in relation to the nation's self-narration, Beat as a genre therefore functions as a symptom for a re-configuration of national identity, and it simultaneously provides an insight into the problematic of collective memory and national trauma in Germany.

The 1960s were dominated by the explicit silencing of a national discourse, particularly in popular music. Accordingly, it is precisely the absence of an explicit discourse that marks its very condition. I will approach this topic from three angles. In order to illustrate the absence of explicit Germanness and analyze its significance, I will first elaborate on the national context in political and social terms. Subsequently I will discuss the genre of Beat music and its relevance for the discussion of German identity, as exemplified by the television program *Beat Club* and the connected discourse of Americanization it sparked. Finally, I will delve into the more concrete example of a particular song, namely The Lords' *Poor Boy*, which I will read along the lines of trauma and the uncanny in order to highlight the significance of the explicit absence of Germanness as being implicitly constitutive of German identity.

Given the complexity of these interrelated issues, I will cover a number of topics: a generational conflict resulting in the growing impact of youth culture, the discourse of Americanization and national repositioning in a global context, and finally the over-arching issue of national trauma and its relation to collective memory. Beat music as a genre in its broader sense, the *Beat Club* as its televisual representation, and the single *Poor Boy* by The Lords will function as the guiding examples from which I will aim to discuss these broad topics in their concrete manifestations. I will suggest an understanding of German Beat as having a double relevance for German identity. On the one hand, Beat symbolizes a generational conflict and struggle of emancipation of the youth, with its strong focus on mimicking »Britishness«⁶ as a means of authentication, Beat signifies a silence about the national past and at the same time aims at embedding Germany in an international frame of reference. Secondly, Beat exemplifies the impossibility of articulating national traumas, while at the same time embodying them through its implicit struggle with the impossibility of »saying the unsayable«. Taken together, I assert that these are symptoms of the repressed traumas of German iden-

6 This »Britishness« that is mimicked by German Beat culture, and The Lords in particular, is not a representation of the United Kingdom nor any other existing national identity for that matter, rather it is an imagined »Britishness« that is primarily based on mass-mediated images of Britain rather than a physically experienced one. Cf. Kooijman, Jaap. *Fabricating the Absolute Fake. American Contemporary Pop Culture*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2004, p. 10.

tity that can be understood as uncanny melancholia a mode that makes it possible to tolerate an otherwise unbearable memory

The national sociopolitical context 1949–1967

In order to understand the full importance of Beat music in the 1960s and its relevance to German national identity, it is essential to consider a wider sociopolitical context. Therefore, I will first describe the societal conditions, and the handling of the problematic issues of guilt and remembering from a political perspective, before I continue to focus on the entanglements of national identity, generational conflicts, and cultural reconfigurations that were manifest after what has been described as the ›vacuum‹ of the early post-war years.

During the 1950s, under the lead of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer – with significant contribution from former minister of economics, Ludwig Erhard – the German economy recovered, and what became known as the ›economic miracle‹ happened. Welfare found its way into households and in 1954 the nation underwent its first post-war moment of national pride and collective identification. Germany unexpectedly (as if by miracle) beat the widely favored Hungary in the men's football World Cup final in Bern, Switzerland with a final score of 3:2. The victory evoked a nation-wide wave of euphoria, which, according to popular history, caused a turning point (and symbolic moment) in German history and identity, it is considered to be the first post-war moment of a reinstatement of West-German national togetherness, a feeling of ›we are back!‹⁷ In the mass media the Miracle of Bern is commonly (retrospectively⁸) celebrated as the Federal Republic's ›real‹ ideological founding and its moment of being accepted (and to be taken seriously) by the world again.⁹ However, this hugely influential moment of national euphoria only temporarily overshadowed the problematic elements of German national identification, the complex and challenging relationship between the German people and the nation was by no means resolved. After the so-called ›Adenauer Era‹ of 1949–1963, which is often equated with the early post-war era's focus on reconstruction, the former Minister of Economics, and

7 Free translation of ›Wir sind wieder wer‹, a popular (and characteristic) expression of confidence at the time.

8 For a detailed analysis of the function of the ›Miracle of Bern‹ in popular memory culture, compare Bruggemeier, Franz-Josef. Das Wunder von Bern. The 1954 Football World Cup, the German Nation and Popular Histories. In *Popular Historiographies in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Cultural Meanings, Social Practices*. Ed. by Sylvia Paletschek. Oxford: Berghahn Books 2011, pp. 188–200.

9 See for example Hawley, Charles. Germany is born. The Miracle of Bern. In *SPIEGELonline*, 6.7.2006, online available <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany-is-born-the-miracle-of-bern-a-420110.html> (last access: 12.5.2014) and Heinrich, Arthur. 3:2 für Deutschland. Die Gründung der Bundesrepublik im Wankdorf-Stadion zu Bern. Göttingen: Die Werkstatt 2004.

Adenauer successor, Ludwig Erhard pronounced the following in his 1965 State of the Nation Address:

All generations of our folk indeed carry the consequences of a politics executed under the German name from 1933 until 1945. Nevertheless the points of reference for the work of the 5th German Bundestag and the politics of the federal government must not be the war and post-war period anymore. They lie not behind us, but ahead of us. The post-war period is over.¹⁰

Erhard's announcement of the end of the post-war period was an attempt to leave the (dark) past behind and instead focus on the future of the nation. His progressive perspective is in a way characteristic for Germany in the mid-1960s, as a majority of the population was not interested in dealing with problematic issues of guilt and remembering, any relation to the nation's past was a major taboo and German society refused to honestly deal with the horrible crimes that were committed in the name of the nation.¹¹ The silencing of past crimes, however, led to an almost complete re-integration of former members of the National Socialist Party and war criminals into German society. On the one hand, this process was necessary for society to be able to function, doctors, engineers, journalists and lawyers were needed and sufficient unencumbered personnel were unavailable. On the other hand, this shameless rehabilitation of former Nazi leaders indicates an explicit reluctance of taking responsibility and unwillingness to address the questions of guilt. Both in politics and society the interest of people was to wipe the slate clean and end the process of denazification as soon as possible.¹² By the mid-1950s even those charged culprits who had to take a compulsory break from their offices during the early post-war years were for the most part re-integrated and had reached their former social status again. Even Konrad Adenauer in a State of the Nation Address as early as 1949 argued for an end of Nazi prosecution and a society divided into two classes of ›politically impeccable‹ and ›objectionable‹ people.¹³ The thought behind this process was that one must understand, or at least have sympathy for [›Verständnis haben‹] some misdeeds, using this logic, the government considered the possibilities of amnesty even for those

10 ›Alle Generationen unseres Volkes tragen zwar an den Folgen einer im deutschen Namen von 1933 bis 1945 geübten Politik. Die Bezugspunkte in der Arbeit des 5. Deutschen Bundestages und der Politik der Bundesregierung dürfen dennoch nicht mehr der Krieg und die Nachkriegszeit sein. Sie liegen nicht hinter uns, sondern vor uns. Die Nachkriegszeit ist zu Ende.‹ Erhard, Ludwig. Regierungserklärung des Bundeskanzlers am 10. November 1965 vor dem Deutschen Bundestag in Bonn. In *Die Regierungserklärungen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Ed. by Hans Ulrich Behn. München: Olzog 1971, pp. 149–183, here p. 149.

11 Compare Schildt/Siegfried. *Deutsche Kulturgeschichte* (see footnote 2), p. 133.

12 Ibid.

13 Adenauer, Konrad. Regierungserklärung des Bundeskanzlers am 20. September 1949 vor dem Deutschen Bundestag in Bonn. In *Die Regierungserklärungen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (see footnote 10), pp. 11–33, here p. 31.

who were charged as guilty by the military courts of the allies. In consequence of these enactments the criminal persecution of Nazi crimes came to a standstill in the following years.¹⁴ It is often asserted that it was not until the trial against SS potentate Adolf Eichmann in 1961¹⁵ and the debate about stature-barred prosecution of war crimes in the wake of the first Auschwitz process in Frankfurt (1963–65),¹⁶ that one could detect a development in society's willingness to engage and come to terms with the past.¹⁷ Historian Richard J. Evans for instance interprets the trials (and the related public discourse) as a »signal for a determined examination of the German past«¹⁸ in science and politics, and political scientist Kurt Sontheimer diagnoses a »change of mood« caused by the trials, which signaled an end to the »half-heartedness and reluctance of German justice at persecuting Nazi crimes«¹⁹ as practiced during the 1950s. Contrary to this account, contemporaries, especially the younger generation (»Nachgeborene«), were very critical regarding the relatively low sentences the Nazis were charged with in the Auschwitz process. A prevalent view was that the process was eventually a »senseless pseudo trial,«²⁰ because the true criminals, including the committers of what Hannah Arendt calls »administered mass killing,«²¹ were unaffected by it and only the minor culprits were charged.²² Writer Martin Walser for instance, in his famous

14 Schildt/Siegfried *Deutsche Kulturgeschichte* (see footnote 2), p. 134

15 Eichmann was sentenced to death for millionfold murder of Jews in Jerusalem

16 The issue was debated in both the parliament and the public sphere. The latter was reinforced, and is well exemplified by a debate between the journalist Rudolf Augstein and philosopher Karl Jaspers entitled »Für Völkermord gibt es keine Verjährung« (»genocide has no limitation of time«) in news magazine *Der Spiegel* No. 11 (1965), pp. 49–70. Compare also Frei, Norbert *Vergangenheitspolitik. Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS Vergangenheit*. München: C. H. Beck, 1996, p. 29.

17 For a detailed analysis of the representation and impact of the Eichmann trial in German public discourse see Krause, Peter *Der Eichmann-Prozess in der deutschen Presse*. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus Verlag, 2002.

18 »Signal für eine entschlossene Auseinandersetzung mit der deutschen Vergangenheit«, Evans, Richard J. *Im Schatten Hitlers? Historikerstreit und Vergangenheitsbewältigung in der Bundesrepublik*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1991, p. 26.

19 A »Stimmungsumschwung,« setting an end to the »Halbherzigkeit und Zurückhaltung der deutschen Justiz bei der Verfolgung von Naziverbrechen«, Sontheimer Kurt *Die Adenauer-Ara. Grundlegung der Bundesrepublik*. München: dtv, 1991, p. 180.

20 »sinnloses Pseudoverfahren«, Frei, Norbert *Der Frankfurter Auschwitz-Prozess und die deutsche Zeitgeschichtsforschung*. In *Auschwitz. Jahrbuch 1996 zur Geschichte und Wirkung des Holocaust*. Ed. by Fritz-Bauer-Institut. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 1996, pp. 123–138, here p. 130.

21 »Staatlich organisierter Verwaltungsmassenmord«, Arendt, Hannah *Der Auschwitz-Prozess*. In *Nach Auschwitz. Essays & Kommentare 1*. Ed. by Eike Geisel and Klaus Bittermann. Berlin: Edition Tiamat, 1989, pp. 99–136, here p. 112.

22 Frei *Der Frankfurter Auschwitz-Prozess* (see footnote 20), p. 130.

paper *Unser Auschwitz*,²³ which was published shortly after the trials, represents this view. Judge and prosecutor Fritz Bauer, who played a significant role in initializing the trials and the prosecution of Nazi crimes, expresses his disappointment about the verdict as follows: »the sentences assessed were often on the edge of the minimum limit of the legally permissible, which sometimes came pretty close to a derision of the victims.«²⁴ In conclusion, in the public sphere and political discourse (as well as media representation), the gap between a younger, well-educated generation seeking to intensify investigations of Nazi crimes and working on »Vergangenheitsbewältigung«²⁵ and the vast majority of society wishing to »wipe the slate clean« and »stop hearing about the Nazi past«²⁶ widened. Erhard's aim to govern a nation that was geared towards the future instead of referring to the past, and his declaration of the end of the postwar period should therefore by no means be misunderstood as an end of the process of national trauma.

As my short summary of the controversial discourse surrounding past war crimes has shown, German society was deeply divided and increasingly dominated by a generational conflict, even though the progressive youth still constituted only a small minority. In cultural terms, »zero hour« marks an incisive moment and the view back to the roots of Germany's culture was blocked by its abuse and perverseness during the Third Reich, musical achievements of the »Golden Twenties« or even the roaring Jazz scene of Berlin during the Weimar Republic were separated from the present by a wall of silence.²⁷ In the development of new, innovative cultural ideas, the conquered nation still lacked self-confidence, which led to the emergence of a cultural vacuum.²⁸ The singer of the highly influential German Krautrock band Can, Irmin Schmidt, described the situation as follows: »we come from a generation that, when it started to become aware of art, was

23 Walser, Martin *Unser Auschwitz*. In *Kursbuch 1*. Ed. by Hans Magnus Enzensberger. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1965, pp. 189–200, here p. 194.

24 »Die Strafen, die ausgesprochen wurden, lagen häufig an der Mindestgrenze des gesetzlich Zulässigen, was mitunter einer Verhöhnung der Opfer recht nahekam«, Bauer, Fritz *Im Namen des Volkes. Die strafrechtliche Bewältigung der Vergangenheit*. In *Zwanzig Jahre danach. Eine deutsche Bilanz 1945–1965*. Ed. by Helmut Hammerschmidt. München: Desch, 1965, pp. 301–314, here p. 307.

25 Coming to terms with the past.

26 Schildt/Siegfried *Deutsche Kulturgeschichte* (see footnote 2), p. 211.

27 During the Weimar Republic Berlin was a Mecca for Jazz lovers. Compare Kater, Michael H. *Introduction. The Ambiguous Culture. Jazz in the Weimar Republic*. In *Different Drummers. Jazz in the culture of Nazi Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 3–28.

28 Compare Dedekind, Henning *Krautrock. Underground, LSD und kosmische Kuriere*. Hofen: Hannibal, 2008, p. 22.

standing in a field of ruins In a country whose culture looked like its cities destroyed, abolished «²⁹

In this climate of silence regarding the nation's past and simultaneous new welfare, consumption became an almost cultic act of compensation³⁰ During this phase of extreme consumption,³¹ especially after the second half of the 1950s, cultural pessimists criticized the increasing impact of consumerism in German society as »fatal ›Americanization«³² The process of »Americanization,« with its enormous scope of available products and its ensnaring advertisements, were considered to be a particularly dangerous threat to the youth³³ Filmmaker Wim Wenders famously even went as far as asserting that Hollywood had successfully colonized the European subconscious³⁴ In this discourse, American cultural imperialism and its lures of a culture of consumerism aimed at the lowest common denominator of mass preferences was perceived as evoking the necessity of cultural resistance³⁵ One of the crucial references of such cultural critiques was Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's argument about the mass deception of the culture industry as developed in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, they argued that this development would lead to an increase of cultural homogenization and the dominance of an escapist entertainment culture that would erase the true task of culture to function as a counterforce to the alienating forces of modernity³⁶ But, even though consumption may in one context function as escapism, repression, compensation or self-deception,³⁷ in another context it may have a different meaning the commercial youth culture of the 1950s in Germany, which readily took on US products like blue jeans, Rock'n'Roll, Coca Cola and other symbols of youthful independence, exemplifies that »Americanization« did not only stand as

29 Ibid cf also Schiller, Melanie »Fun Fun Fun on the Autobahn« Kraftwerk Challenging Germanness In *Popular Music and Society* 37/5 (2014), p 2, URL <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03007766.2014.908522#VDvMshY09bp>

30 Ibid

31 »Hochkonsumphase«, compare Jaraus, Konrad H /Geyer, Michael *Zerbrochener Spiegel Deutsche Geschichten im 20. Jahrhundert* Munchen DVA 2005, p 44

32 »verhangnisvolle ›Amerikanisierung«, Schildt/Siegfried *Deutsche Kulturgeschichte* (see footnote 2), p 187

33 Cf ibid

34 Fluck, Winfried The Americanization of German Culture? The Strange, Paradoxical Ways of Modernity In *German Pop Culture How »American« is it?* Ed by Agnes C Muller Michigan University of Michigan Press 2004, pp 19–40, here p 32 I will return to the notion of colonization and the mimicry of colonial authority in more detail below

35 Kroes, Rob American Mass Culture and European Youth Culture In *Between Marx and Coca-Cola Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960–1980* Ed by Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried Oxford Berghahn Books 2006, pp 82–105, here p 82

36 Adorno, Theodor W /Horkheimer Max The Culture Industry Enlightenment as Mass Deception In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* New York Herder and Herder 1972, pp 120–147

37 Gourgé, Klaus *Ökonomie und Psychoanalyse Perspektiven einer Psychoanalytischen Ökonomie* Frankfurt a M Campus 2001, p 153

a synonym for simple consumerism and homogenization, nor did it mean a direct adaptation of cultural models³⁸ Instead, it meant (and still means) assimilation and modification of the German national context³⁹ In his extensive study on the German youth's image of America in the 1950s, *BRAVO Amerika*, Cultural Anthropologist Kasper Maase demonstrates to what extent American popular culture played a liberating function for West German youth who were dreaming of escaping the narrow confines of authoritarian society and leading a self-determined life⁴⁰ For this purpose, American popular culture seems to have been the ultimate means, since, as Winfried Fluck argues, »it has always been driven by a promise of providing ever more effective ways for imaginary self-empowerment and self-fashioning« and hence has always bared the potential of accelerating the process of individualization in society and a »growing dissociation from the authority of social claims,« leading to a »pluralization of lifestyles«⁴¹ In this sense, Fluck argues, we can conclude that American popular culture played an important role in the »Westernization« of postwar German society⁴²

The divide between generations hence developed along the lines of their differing attitudes to both the national past and international (cultural) relations Regarding the identification as German and the discourse on Germanness, youth since the 1950s have been in a particularly problematic position Historian Manfred Gortemaker argues that youth in the 1950s were confronted with three major problems first, the purely materialistic order of the economic miracle society, which caused a problem for the youth because their financial situation was still precarious and apprenticeship training positions were hardly available in the early 1950s, the result of which was that, to a large extent, the youth were excluded from consumer society Second, the simultaneous repression of the nation's national socialistic past, and third, the generation trap,⁴³ which, in a society above all structured and dominated by an elder generation, excluded the younger generation from access to powerful and influential positions in society as well as politics⁴⁴ In terms of music, the most popular genre by far at the time was the gener-

38 Schildt/Siegfried *Deutsche Kulturgeschichte* (see footnote 2), p 188

39 Cf Kooijman *Fabricating the Absolute Fake* (see footnote 6), p 13f

40 Maase Kaspar *BRAVO Amerika Erkundungen zur Jugendkultur der Bundesrepublik in den fünfziger Jahren* Hamburg Junius Verlag 1992, p 232

41 Fluck, Winfried California Blue Americanization as Self-Americanization In *Americanization and Anti-Americanism The German encounter with American culture after 1945* Ed by Alexander Stephan Oxford Berghahn Books 2005, pp 221–237, here p 226

42 Fluck The Americanization of German Culture? (see footnote 34), p 20

43 See Gortemaker, Manfred *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland Von der Gründung bis zur Gegenwart* Frankfurt a M S Fischer Verlag 2004, p 189

44 All important positions were occupied by the pre-war generation, mostly men born between 1880 and 1900 In a society with an increasing life span, the domination of the older generation was overbearing To give just one concrete example Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, in the 1950s already in his (late) 70s, held on to his power with all means, while expe-

ally reactionary and antiquated Schlager whose uncritical and sentimental songs dealt mostly with clichés of travelling, idyll, Heimat and romantic love⁴⁵ Instead of participating in (or initiating) an intellectual rehabilitation and modernization of the nation, Schlager continually works on the mythologization of Heimat and for the large part excludes contemporary political or societal issues

Indeed, post-war society was dominated by the old and was extremely conservative.⁴⁶ Because of this, the traumatized German post-war youth did not find themselves adequately represented in German culture or society As a strategy of coping with this situation, the unsatisfied youth aimed at assimilating with the culture of the occupying forces »Being German« was frowned upon by the youth and »America« in particular became a symbol for a future worth living For their part, Americans activated a strong set of imaginaries and hence emblematically became much more than occupying forces, Conny Froboess, popular Rock'n'Roll and Teenage Idol of the 1950s in Germany, explains

To us it felt like [the Americans] were not only our liberators, but also the liberators of the heart, the soul One must not forget that here was still a Nazi Germany not long ago The Americans built up utopias in us We believed to be able to do something amazing, without knowing with what ends⁴⁷

The soundtrack to this utopia is, depending on one's geographical location, primarily drawn from forces radio (BFBS/British Forces Broadcasting Service and AFN/American Forces Network) It was in this way – in the cultural encounter between the defeated nation and the occupying forces – that Rock'n'Roll reached Germany, though, as Dieter Baacke argues, a bit belatedly »[] with regards to Rock we are in this country a belated generation, but it needs to be stressed without the USA no development of this important element of youth cultures would have taken place in the Federal Republic «⁴⁸ As in the US, the discourse around Rock'n'Roll was often affected by generational conflicts and in the majority of

rienced politicians in their 50s were considered to be »too young, too immature and not white haired enough« for power Ibid, p 188

45 Peters, Sebastian *Ein Lied mehr zur Lage der Nation Politische Inhalte in deutschsprachigen Popsongs* Berlin Archiv der Jugendkulturen Verlag 2010, p 109

46 Thranhardt, Dietrich *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* Erweiterte Neuausgabe Frankfurt a M Suhrkamp 1996, p 108

47 »Uns kam es so vor, als seien das nicht nur unsere Befreier, sondern auch die Befreier des Herzens, der Seele Man darf nicht vergessen, dass hier vor kurzem noch ein Nazi-Deutschland war Die Amerikaner haben Utopien in uns aufgebaut Wir dachten was ganz Tolles machen zu können, ohne zu wissen, mit welchem Ziel« Conny Froboess cited in Wagner, Peter *POP2000 50 Jahre Popmusik und Jugendkultur in Deutschland* Begleitbuch zur zwölfteiligen Sendereihe des WDR Hamburg Ideal Verlag 1999, p 20

48 »[] in Bezug auf Rock sind wir hierzulande eine verspatete Generation, aber zu betonen ist auch Ohne die USA hatte es überhaupt keine Entwicklung dieses wichtigen Elements der Jugendkulturen in der Bundesrepublik gegeben« Baacke, Dieter *Jugend und Jugendkulturen Darstellung und Deutung* München Juventa Verlag 1987, p 43

cases focused on issues of race Conservatives were highly concerned about those »apes with nigger music,«⁴⁹ their bad influence on the youth,⁵⁰ and about American imperialism (consumerism) in general Therefore Rock'n'Roll in Germany had a reputation of protest culture, because it opposed traditional German Schlager and because it was, like American culture in general, little accepted by the adult world⁵¹ It was not until the 1960s that youth culture was emancipated, after the first major, but rather short-lived, impact in the form of Rock'n'Roll in the 1950s and the discovery of the teenager market for the music industry, youth culture failed to inflict any significant societal changes in society Rock'n'Roll's emergence had been spectacular, but, contrary to popular myths, had only marginal consequences⁵² It soon turned into »a form of gymnastic party entertainment with the aim of shedding off extra pounds gained by members of the affluent society in the wake the economic boom of the 1950s «⁵³ Germany's version of Rock'n'Roll, mostly personified by Peter Kraus and Ted Herold, had soon developed into more Schlager like »sob-stuff« than a supposedly wild and revolutionary sound⁵⁴ According to Peter Wicke, Rock'n'Roll hence did not fundamentally change the definition of youth or youth culture since it was merely a short-lived commercial trend German studies scholar Sebastian Peters takes a similar stance, arguing that Rock'n'Roll's late arrival in the 1950s was first and foremost celebrated by only a small circle of »fanatics,« and moreover was primarily a media hype that became mythologized in retrospective⁵⁵

Beat music on the other hand had a fundamental impact on the role of the youth and their relation to rebellion »British Beat music turned youth culture into a public matter,«⁵⁶ and even made youth a »central topic within the commercial fabrication of the social sphere «⁵⁷ The impact of a changing position of youth culture in society was not only limited to the closely associated realm of popular music, but, as Ian Chambers diagnoses, an even further-reaching structural change in Britain

49 »Affen mit Negermusik«, cited from Wagner *POP2000* (see footnote 47), p 21

50 Gortemaker *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (see footnote 43), p 186

51 Peters *Ein Lied mehr zur Lage der Nation* (see footnote 45), p 142

52 Wicke, Peter *Music, Dissidence, Revolution, and Commerce* In Scholdt/Siegfried *Between Marx and Coca-Cola* (see footnote 35), pp 109–127, here p 110

53 Ibid

54 Wagner *POP2000* (see footnote 47), p 32

55 »Erst in den späten 50er Jahren kommt der Rock'n'Roll nach Deutschland Allerdings wird auch hier vieles in der Rückschau zum Mythos, was bei näherer Betrachtung der Zeit einer allzu euphorischen Bewertung nicht standhält So ist es zu Beginn (wie bei vielen anderen musikalischen Stilrichtungen) zunächst ein elitärer Zirkel von Rock'n'Roll-Fanatikern, der die neue Faszination lebt Rock'n'Roll ist zunächst einmal Medienereignis, grosser inszeniert als im deutschen Alltag der Straße tatsächlich präsent« Peters *Ein Lied mehr zur Lage der Nation* (see footnote 45), p 121

56 Wicke *Music, Dissidence, Revolution, and Commerce* (see footnote 52), p 112

57 Ibid

Around 1964/65 occurred a decisive shift in the economy of public imagery surrounding pop music. Pop stopped being a spectacular but peripheral event, largely understood to be associated with teenage working-class taste, and even became a central symbol of fashionable, metropolitan, British culture.⁵⁸

Also in Germany, Beat represented a mass culture that was anchored in youth culture and pop music, but transcended the categories of age, education and social background.⁵⁹ The development of youth culture, in its earlier stages in the 1950s and its emancipatory decade of the 1960s, was however primarily based on the premise of consumption. All accounts of a changing definition and impact of youth culture, especially in relation to popular music and rebellion, are based on a change in the distribution of work and leisure time of young people as well as an increase in their dispensable incomes. In Germany the economic miracle of the 1950s led to a general increase of welfare, and due to prevailing full employment, working hours were steadily decreased, so that in the early 1960s most companies had already introduced the five working day week and a »long weekend.«⁶⁰ With the increase of companies' prosperities, the former problem of youth unemployment and difficulty in finding an apprenticeship training position dissolved. While apprenticeships were hard to find up to the mid-1950s, by the beginning of the 1960s more positions were available than applicants, which led to the grand majority of youth having an income.⁶¹ With their increasing wealth, the youth became an important consumer group. In 1964, the spending of 14–25 year olds was an estimated 17 billion DM, and by 1967 as much as 24 billion DM.⁶² Amongst the prime interests and consumer goods that the youth were interested in were records and music related products. Peter Wicke notes the commercial nature of the shift in the role of youth culture by pointing to the enormous commercial success of the Beatles in September 1963⁶³ when their first long player *Please Please Me*, EP *Twist and Shout*, and single *She Loves You* all topped the bestseller list in their respective categories in Britain. A similar scenario emerged in the United States only a few months later. In March 1964, the first five positions of *Billboard's* hit list were occupied by Beatles songs and Beatles records accounted for about 60% of all record sales in the US at that time. In 1964 about 40% of all records buyers were adolescents, a number which increased to roughly 80% by the end of the decade.⁶⁴

58 Chambers, Iain *Urban Rhythms Pop Music and Popular Culture* London Macmillan 1985, p. 57

59 Schildt/Siegfried *Deutsche Kulturgeschichte* (see footnote 2), p. 268

60 The working hours per week had reached their peak in the mid-1950s when a working week consisted of 48,6 hours, and decreased since then to 40 hours in 1965. *Ibid.*, p. 184

61 Maase *BRAVO Amerika* (see footnote 40), p. 75

62 Schildt/Siegfried *Deutsche Kulturgeschichte* (see footnote 2), p. 189

63 Wicke *Music, Dissidence, Revolution, and Commerce* (see footnote 52), p. 110ff

64 Frith, Simon *The Sociology of Rock* London Constable 1978, p. 12

Due to their huge commercial impact, youth cultures were perceived as increasingly autonomous and »within its representation in the media, youth began to become aware of itself as a societal force, albeit first only marginal and predominantly apolitical.«⁶⁵ In Germany the aforementioned magazine *Bravo* was the main source of media representation of Beat and »teenage« culture. The self-proclaimed advocate of young people mostly represented the image of a teenager whose modernity was primarily based on a propensity to consume, as opposed to the ascetic model of the old-fashioned, bourgeois and narrow minded [»spießig«] older generation.⁶⁶ Because only a minority of the youth was interested in political and social issues,⁶⁷ *Bravo* portrayed teenagers as being »interested in a self-determined hairstyle with longer hair and self-selected clothing, which was available in more and more department stores in special youth sections.«⁶⁸ The propagation of a »teenage culture« was hence eventually not least a means of increasing sales. The oppositional ideology that is often associated with youth culture is therefore in most cases not geared towards evoking actual structural change, but remains rather limited to the sphere of the production of culture symbols, as historian Ian Birchall already observed in 1969, it is »an attitude of rebellion within a framework of acceptance.«⁶⁹ In the German context, Dieter Baacke wrote the first, and to this day highly influential, study on Beat music in Germany as early as 1968, in which he makes a similar argument. He points out that in 1966 the American news magazine *Time* nominated the generation under 25 years of age as »person of the year« – not youthful rebels, but the teenagers and twenty-somethings who were the beneficiaries of affluent societies in the developed nations »not opposition but affirmation. This youth has to be reckoned on, not because of its protest, but because of its financial input in the consumption sector.«⁷⁰ Baacke also describes Beat as the new form of youth culture in terms of »opposition,« yet one without a specific target or voice.

[] an opposition emerged, which – in contrast to the linguistically articulate students' – might be called the *speechless*. It is speechless, because it is not pre-formulated in consciousness and does not know whom to address and with what means. For this reason, it does not seek to engage an opponent, but behaves inversely towards itself, that is, it presents itself as an evasion, as an inability to dis-

65 Wicke *Music, Dissidence, Revolution, and Commerce* (see footnote 52), p. 113

66 Schildt/Siegfried *Deutsche Kulturgeschichte* (see footnote 2), p. 189

67 Wagner *POP2000* (see footnote 47), p. 31

68 Schildt/Siegfried *Deutsche Kulturgeschichte* (see footnote 2), p. 189

69 Birchall, Ian *The Decline and Fall of British Rhythm and Blues*. In *The Age of Rock Sounds of the American Cultural Revolution*. Ed. by Jonathan Eisen. New York: Vintage Books 1969, p. 98

70 Baacke, Dieter *Beat, die sprachlose Opposition*. München: Juventa 1972, p. 13

cuss social realities, as a retreat into forms of behavior which many adults initially find frightening, because they do not understand them⁷¹

Beat in this perspective constitutes a crucial generational divide, a youth culture that was inaccessible to adults and distinct from the student opposition, which was based on verbal expression and political content. Beat's vague notion of opposition is called *speechless* because it does not have a direct political message or target, it is not clearly formulated, but rather remains a loose non-directional protest and an identity sustaining factor that is expressed in music. In his autobiographical attempt to understand 1960s youth culture, author Dieter Jaenicke makes a similar point

»Beat separated us from the parents, it gave us an identity, it gave us a means of expression – it made the US. In all its individualization Beat created commonality, connection, a sense of belonging for those of us who loved the same music, had long hair, shared the same feeling, suffered from the same despicement. Beat wanted to only address us, the youth, it was not for everybody, not for the old, the reactionary, the numb and also not for the boy scouts, the good children who played house music with their parents [] Beat separated us from the old and the Other [] It gave us a means of expression and identity. But only the acrimonious battle of the old made Beat into an expression and identity AGAINST the old, the bourgeois, the others⁷²

In this way, it would be inadequate to simply dismiss Beat culture as just another commercial phenomenon. Even if youth culture, consumption and popular music are often intertwined, its impact transcends the realm of commerce, indeed, Peter Wicke argues that »British Beat music turned youth culture into a public matter, more than just a commercial trend«⁷³ and, in a similar vein, Dieter Baacke

71 »So hat sich eine Opposition entwickelt, die – im Gegensatz zur sich sprachlich kundgebenden studentischen Jugend – die sprachlose genannt werden konnte. Sie ist sprachlos, weil sie im Bewusstsein nicht vorformuliert ist, und nicht weiß, zu wem sie sprechen soll und mit welchen Mitteln. Darum wendet sie sich an kein Gegenüber, sondern verhält sich invers zu sich selbst, d.h. sie stellt sich dar als Ausweichen, als Unfähigkeit zur Diskussion gesellschaftlicher Tatbestände, als Rückzug in Verhaltensformen, die viele Erwachsene zunächst noch erschrecken, weil sie diese nicht verstehen.« Ibid., p. 29

72 »Der Beat trennte uns von den Eltern, er gab uns Identität, er gab uns Ausdrucksmittel – er machte das UNS. In aller Vereinzelung schaffte der Beat die Gemeinsamkeit, den Zusammenhang, das Wir-Gefühl derer, die die gleiche Musik liebten, die Haare lang trugen, das gleiche Gefühl hatten, unter der gleichen Verachtung litten. Der Beat wollte nur uns, die Jugendlichen ansprechen, er war nicht für alle, nicht für die Alten, die Reaktionäre, die Gefühllosen und auch nicht die Pfadfinder, die ordentlichen Kinder, die mit ihren Eltern Hausmusik machten [] Der Beat trennte uns von den Alten und den Anderen [] Er gab uns Ausdruck und Identität. Aber erst der erbitterte Kampf der Alten machte den Beat zum Ausdruck und zur Identität GEGEN die Alten, die Bürger, die anderen.« Jaenicke, Dieter *Bewegungen Versuch, die eigene Geschichte zu begreifen*. Berlin: Verlag Asthetik & Kommunikation 1980, p. 26

73 Wicke *Music, Dissidence, Revolution, and Commerce* (see footnote 52), p. 112

asserts that Beat constitutes an expressive paradigm for questioning the relation-ality of youth and society in general⁷⁴. During the mid-1960s, when the impact of Rock'n'Roll as youth culture had begun to decline, the USA temporarily lost their status as the main source of controversial pop cultural products. Parents and politicians were increasingly worried about the bad influence of British bands like The Beatles and The Rolling Stones. One of the major elements of the generational conflict in cultural terms and the increasing impact of youth as a relevant force in society can be seen in the use of language in pop music. German radio played (almost) exclusively songs with German vocals as it was targeted at the older generations and traditional families. But, as media historicist Konrad Dussel compellingly argues, a radical change occurred between 1959 and 1979 that completely restructured the landscape of music entertainment⁷⁵. According to Dussel, the central moment of this change can be precisely dated to the period 1964/65. A shift in language choice from German to English provides a simple criterion for measuring the growing impact of emerging youth cultures, Dussel argues. Initially, »foreign tunes were hardly to be heard at all, unless discretely repackaged by German composers«⁷⁶. Linguist and literary science scholar Thommi Herrwerth, in his account of early sixties music in Germany, claims that »back then, Germans listened almost exclusively to hits sung in German« and »foreign hits generally received German adapted lyrics«⁷⁷. One (out of many similar) such German adaptations of popular songs is the British singer Cliff Richards' 1963 hit in German translation, *Rote Lippen soll man küssen*. Based on Germany's most popular youth magazine *Bravo's* annual hit lists, Dussel depicts the shift in language choice by pointing to the number of hits with German vocals in 1963 (only one single English-language song made it into the Top 20: Elvis' *Devil in Disguise*). In 1964 however, with five English-language Beatles' songs, three other »foreign« artists, and even one German artist (partly) singing in English (Drafi Deutscher

74 Baacke *Beat* (see footnote 70), p. 38

75 Dussel, Konrad *The Triumph of English-Language Pop Music: West German Radio Programming*. In Schildt/Siegfried *Between Marx and Coca-Cola* (see footnote 35), pp. 127–148, here p. 130

76 German radio stations were initially reluctant to play the new Beat (and Rock) music, so interested youth had to tune in to British or American forces radio (BFBS, AFN), Radio Luxemburg or pirate radio stations. Most radio shows were targeted at the traditional family and comprised primarily entertainment music played by the station's own orchestras. Stylistically the music ranged from genres like classical romantic, waltz, polka to operetta and it was nearly impossible to find a radio program for a youth audience. Cf. Siegfried, Detlef *Draht zum Westen: Populäre Jugendkultur in den Medien 1963 bis 1971*. In *Buch, Buchhandel und Rundfunk 1968 und die Folgen*. Ed. by Monika Estermann and Edgar Lersch. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2003, p. 83–109. And Dussel *Triumph of English-Language Pop Music* (see footnote 75), p. 129

77 »In der Regel bekamen Hits aus dem Ausland einen deutschen Text verpasst«, Herrwerth, Thommi *Itsy bitsy teenie weenie – Die deutschen Hits der Sixties*. Marburg: Jonas Verlag 1995, p. 15

with *Shake hands*⁷⁸), almost half of the Top 20 had non-German lyrics. The trend clearly continued: in 1965 only six German titles were to be found in the hit list (one of which is by an artist who had just recently adopted his pseudonym Roy Black), and in 1966 and 1967 only four German titles remained (two of those from 1967 were actually sung by Englishmen, which made Roy Black the only German artist represented in the hit list). German became more and more exclusively the language of Schlager whereas English became the language of internationally and progressively oriented pop music. As the development of growing importance of English in pop music indicates, the choice of German or English meant more than positioning oneself as Schlager or Beat musician, it was a statement about being reactionary or progressive.

Commitment to Schlager means commitment to tradition, the old fashioned, commitment to the new pop sound [Beat] on the other hand means commitment to political change, to break with the past.⁷⁹

Language was hence a prime means of demarcation for Beat musicians and fans who aimed at distancing themselves from so called »Schlager bods.«⁸⁰ As the author Albrecht Koch describes in his account of Beat and the English language, musicians were so bent on performing not-German that they even conducted sound checks in English: »instead of saying ›eins, zwei, drei‹ they flinched not from uttering ›wann, tuh, srie, test, test‹«⁸¹ and because »Beat was English, anyone who sang in German was automatically part of Schlager business.«⁸² This change in language preference of the young generation clearly can be linked to the characteristics usually attributed to Schlager (the aforementioned traditionalism and general reactionary orientation), but also to the problem of German culture being incessantly haunted by its past. The shift in language hence should not only be read as a growing internationalization of youth culture but also as a means of avoiding the label »German« with its adherent associations. Moving beyond dismissing youth culture as purely consumerist in nature, we are able to gain deeper

78 *Shake hands* is referred to as »the first original German Beat hit in the history of pop music« by Thommi Herrwerth. Ibid., p. 72f.

79 »Das Bekenntnis zum Schlager bedeutet ein Bekenntnis zur Tradition, zum Althergebrachten, das Bekenntnis zum neuen Popsound [Beat] hingegen bedeutet ein Bekenntnis zum politischen Wandel, zum Bruch mit Vergangenen«, Peters *Ein Lied mehr zur Lage der Nation* (see footnote 45), p. 165 (my emphasis).

80 »Schlagerfuzzis«, Koch, Albrecht *Angriff auf's Schlaraffenland 20 Jahre deutschsprachige Popmusik*. Berlin: Ullstein 1987, p. 16.

81 »Neben wenigen Ausnahmen wollten die Beatmusiker und ihre Fans nichts mit den ›Schlagerfuzzis‹ zu tun haben und nutzten den englischsprachigen Gesang als gutes Mittel, sich von denen abzuheben. Das führte dazu, dass noch lange, bis in die späten 70er Jahre, selbst Soundchecks in Englisch absolviert wurden statt ›eins, zwei, drei‹ entblodeten sich die Musiker nicht ›wann, tuh, srie, test, test‹ von sich zu geben.« Ibid.

82 »Beat war englisch und jeder der deutsch sang gehörte automatisch zum Schlagergeschäft.« Ibid.

insights into German culture and identity at the time through a consideration of Beat as societal phenomenon.

In 1970, the journalist George Melly, in one of the first analyses taking »Beatlemania« seriously, argues »[Pop] presents, with an honesty based on indifference to any standards or earlier terms of reference, an exact image of our rapidly changing society, particularly in relation to its youth.«⁸³ In consideration of this, Peter Wicke concludes, »the triad youth, youth culture and popular music evolved into the symbolic figure for societal processes of change.«⁸⁴ Focusing on Beat culture as a symbol of societal conjunctures of reconfiguration, in this article I now want to draw on Dieter Baacke's observation that »the phenomenon Beat provides us the opportunity of a diagnosis both of the situation of the youth as well as those who parent them.«⁸⁵ In the following section I will use Beat as a means of diagnosis for German identity in the 1960s. I will first look into the oppositional nature of the genre in closer detail before I focus on the more explicit discourse on national identity by describing the case of Germany's most relevant youth and Beat television format: the *Beat Club*.

The *Beat Club* is a legendary TV program produced by the public broadcasting station Radio Bremen. It first aired in 1965, two years after the peak of German »Beatlemania«, and can be understood as representative for the unfolding of a discourse on German identity both in relation to an international pop cultural context as well as to its own past. The *Beat Club* was a revolutionary television format in many respects. In the German context, it was the first program to be targeted to a youth audience,⁸⁶ staging a nightclub atmosphere with international Beat bands performing live and teenagers dancing »spontaneously« and unchoreographed.⁸⁷ The show was inspired by the British format *Six-Five Special*,⁸⁸ which was designed as a show »by young people for young people,« mostly based on spontaneity and improvisation. Both shows, *Six-Five Special* and the *Beat Club*, were initially conceived of by Ernest Borneman. Borneman, originally Ernst Bornemann, had to emigrate from Germany in 1933 to escape political persecution,⁸⁹ subsequently gained experience in international media corporations (BBC, Canadian National Film Board, etc.), worked as an author, director, and manag-

83 Melly, George *Revolt into Style: The pop arts*. Harmondsworth: Penguin 1970, p. 5.

84 Wicke *Music, Dissidence, Revolution, and Commerce* (see footnote 52), p. 113.

85 Baacke *Beat* (see footnote 70), p. 39.

86 Up until then the preferences and demands of the youth were widely ignored in terms of television formatting. Ibid., p. 333.

87 For a discussion of the *Beat Club*'s »spontaneity« and constructions of authenticity cf. Stegfried, Detlef *Time is on my side: Konsum und Politik in der westdeutschen Jugendkultur der 60er Jahre*. Göttingen: Wallstein 2006, p. 347ff.

88 *Six-Five-Special*, produced by the BBC, aired first 1957. Cf. BFI Screenonline <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/561782/index.html> (last access: 14.4.2014).

89 Borneman was an activist in the »Sozialistischer Schulerbund,« a youth organization closely linked to the German Communist Party (KPD).

er, and was renowned as »one of the world's foremost jazz critics and scholars «⁹⁰ After returning to Germany in the early 1960s, his vision was to create »German television based on the English model «⁹¹ One of the central ideas of the *Beat Club* was to create a space for the German youth to develop their musical potential.⁹² during his travels throughout Germany after the war he visited numerous Jazz clubs, listened to the music and observed the audience, which brought him to the conviction that »today Germany is a treasure chest of talent, which so far no one has made use of «⁹³ Hence, by specifically addressing a German audience, he wanted to stimulate German talents, especially in opposition to the language of Schlager. According to him this would be well possible in English After initial doubts,⁹⁴ the format was finally accepted Borneman's original script was designed to »create a new German sound,«⁹⁵ which was not the final result of the first airings Due to internal quarrels, Borneman lost directorship to Michael Leckebusch, who is now officially regarded to be the originator of the show The idea of the *Beat Club* stimulating German talent was soon left behind and Leckebusch instead pursued the concept of an authentic English Beat program «⁹⁶ The show became internationally renowned and the *New Musical Express* surmised in 1968 that the *Beat Club* had a good chance of becoming »the best of the bunch« and even trumping the British competition.⁹⁷ This success made Germany a pioneer in a field in which they were merely considered epigones a few years earlier But, they succeeded not in creating a specifically German Beat culture, but in a particularly creative presentation of British and American Pop music⁹⁸

The almost exclusive focus on Anglo American artists was not uncontroversial Since England was considered to be the land of origin when it came to good music, the pop- and Beat-market in England functioned as guiding principles for German orientations and »Liverpool-« or »Mersey-Sound« were labels of authen-

90 Nat Hentoff cited in Grunzweig, Werner Just A »One Night Stand « Zur Einrichtung eines Ernest-Borneman-Archivs an der Stiftung der Akademie der Künste In *Ein lüderliches Leben* Ed by Sigrud Standow Lohrbach Pieper's MedienXperimente 1995, p 111

91 »deutsches Fernsehen nach englischem Modell « Cited in Siegfried *Time is on my side* (see footnote 87), p 337

92 Ibid, p 338

93 »Ich bin dreimal seit dem Krieg in ganz Deutschland herumgereist und habe in jedem Jazz-Keller nicht nur den Musikern zugehört, sondern das Publikum beobachtet, dies hat mich fest davon überzeugt, dass Deutschland heute eine Fundgrube an Talent ist, die bisher niemand ausgebeutet hat « Borneman cited in *ibid*, p 338

94 The head of television play-entertainment of public broadcasting studio Radio Bremen, Hans Bachmuller, for instance wonders if »we have as many good bands in Germany as would be necessary,« (»Ob wir in Deutschland so viele gute Bands haben wie nötig waren«) *ibid*, p 339

95 Ibid

96 »Authentische englische Beat-Sendung«, cited in *ibid*, p 343

97 Ibid

98 Siegfried *Time is on my side* (see footnote 87), p 343

ticity and guaranteed quality For German bands to be successful it was necessary to adopt these identifications and, in order to be able to perform in concert or on television, they had to mimic the originals as faithfully as possible The result of this struggle was often mediocre since the language barrier was an obstacle and stylistic adaptation often resulted in »venturesome text imports «⁹⁹ The *Beat Club* officially did not have a policy against German bands – Radio Bremen's artistic director Heinz Kerneck announced the producers care about »the quality of the music, not its nationality« – but German bands were most often considered »followers of their Anglo-Saxon forerunners,« even though Beat music was understood as »an international affair« which was disproportioned to »close national demarcations «¹⁰⁰ The criteria for musical selection in the *Beat Club* were the hit parades, as Kerneck explains, which were dominated by English titles¹⁰¹ What Kerneck concealed though, is the fact that the English Hit lists were used as a guideline for the show Were the German *Musikmarkt*¹⁰² considered, German Schlager like Freddy Quinn's *Hundert Mann und ein Befehl* or Roy Black's *Ganz in Weiss* would have had to be included in 1966

The debate about national representations in Germany's most successful television music program began unfolding in the autumn of 1966 and shortly peaked again in early 1968 with an article in Germany's biggest tabloid newspaper, *Bild* *Beat Club* director Leckebusch continually defended the England oriented musical selection with negative German stereotypes, he argued that German Beat bands produced »second rate titles at best or so called adaptations of well-known international bands [Since they lack not only] the right inspiration, [but also because] their deficient skills and crass opportunism suffocate any possible performance Artists in England and America [on the other hand] just work harder than we Germanic people can imagine «¹⁰³ Because the German Federal Republic's Beat-Scene uncritically adopted the spontaneous and artistic English, it remained »provincial« in comparison to its Anglo Saxon role models, according to Leckebusch¹⁰⁴ The discourse on national representation, especially by opponents

99 »Abenteuerliche Textimporte«, *ibid*, p 344

100 »Beatmusik ist »eine internationale Angelegenheit,« die mit »enge[r] nationale[r] Abgrenzung,« unvereinbar ist«, *ibid*

101 Ibid

102 The trade journal of the German music industry, founded in 1959 and known for announcing the latest national hit lists

103 »Die deutschen Gruppen produzierten »höchstens zweitrangige Titel oder sogenannte Nachzieher von Titeln bekannter ausländischer Bands« Denn ihnen fehle nicht nur die »rechte Inspiration,« sondern bei ihnen »ersticken mangelndes Können und krasser Opportunismus jede mögliche Leistung« Demgegenüber arbeiten in England und Amerika »die Künstler eben harter, als wir Germanen uns das vorstellen können « Leckebusch cited in Siegfried *Time is on my side* (see footnote 87), p 345

104 Leckebusch summarizes his credo for the *Beat Club* in one sentence »No German Beat No German Schlager No!« (»Kein deutscher Beat, kein Deutscher Schlager Nein!«), Michael Leckebusch, 1967, cited in *ibid*, p 332

of the disproportionate overrepresentation of British and American artists, was often articulated in war metaphors and allusions to German honor »they [the producers of the *Beat Club*] should not forget that they address a German audience – and we of all people should renounce our own troops?!«¹⁰⁵ and »some people are surprised that German bands do not come to fame like so many of the English groups. Naturally, if one is not even allowed to perform in one's homeland, one cannot succeed«¹⁰⁶

The discourse on the nationality of artists was in its broader sense a debate about German national identity and its orientation. The crass favoritism of particularly English bands in the youth television program was argued for by claims that Germany needed to redefine itself as a modern, and most of all worldly, nation. The demand for more German music was to be equitable, at least from the producers of the *Beat Club*'s perspective, with a step back to reactionary German provincialism. As I have shown, German Beat bands were practically excluded from performing at the *Beat Club* due to their alleged lack of quality and originality. Nevertheless, in the very same year that the debate about the absence of German representation in the show peaked, one of the most famous German Beat bands, The Lords, had their *Beat Club* performance debut. Since this is an exceptional case, I want to investigate the Band and in particular their most famous song (also performed in the show), *Poor Boy*. Since they apparently managed to transgress the threshold of »not being German,« and hence being accepted as performing guests, I suggest a closer analysis of The Lords and their relation to German national identity. By paying particular attention to the band's self-construction of »Britishness« and their ambivalent relationship to Germanness, I will read their original composition, *Poor Boy*, as emblematic for German identity and its traumatic modes of repression and repetition.

The Lords and *Poor Boy*

One of the most popular and successful German Beat formations of the mid to late 1960s were The Lords from Berlin. Like many other Beat bands of that time (including the Beatles), they started out as a Skiffle band (called The Skiffle Lords). When Beat became increasingly popular, the band switched genre. After having been quite popular as a Skiffle band, their success grew with the switch to the new genre. As was common practice, they participated in local Beat competitions, and in July 1964 they won the title »Berliner Beatles« in a competition organized in connection with the premiere of the Beatles film *A Hard Day's Night*.

105 »Sie dürfen nicht vergessen, dass Sie deutsches Publikum vor sich haben – und ausgerechnet wir sollen auf unsere eigenen Truppen verzichten?« Cited in *ibid*.

106 »Manche Leute wundern sich, dass die deutschen Bands nicht ebenso zu Ruhm und Ehre kommen wie die vielen englischen Gruppen. Natürlich, wenn man nicht einmal im Heimatland auftreten darf, kann man auch auf keinen grünen Zweig kommen.« Cited in *ibid*.

(*Yeah Yeah Yeah*) The victory entitled them to participate in the prestigious competition »Wer spielt so wie die Beatles?« (Who plays like the Beatles?) at Hamburg's famous *Star Club*. The Lords won and »officially« became »Germany's Beat band No. 1.«¹⁰⁷ Awarded with an EMI record contract, they were henceforth promoted as »the German Beatles« and toured amongst others with The Kinks, The Who, and The Moody Blues.¹⁰⁸

When The Lords were signed in 1964, the record company initially urged them to sing in German, because they anticipated bigger sales with German lyrics. As Konrad Dussel describes the situation of English language choice at that time, this made The Lords quite exemplary for the shift from preferring German (Schlager) lyrics to progressive English (Beat, Rock) music. The Lords themselves were initially very dissatisfied with the record company's request and, according to The Lords' biographer Eckhard Diergarten, secretly applauded the fatal failure of their first (German sung) single, as it eventually enabled them to continue as a »real« Anglophone Beat band.¹⁰⁹ Later, temporary bass player Heinz Hegemann told *Bravo*:

We are musicians and Lords. That's why our second command is: we only sing in English! Because a Lord who sings in German does not exist. Besides, our fans love the straight Beat. The German language is only for sob stuff. No wonder that our only record in German *Hey Baby, lass den anderen* was a damp squib.¹¹⁰

In terms of appearance, The Lords were known for their pseudo aristocratic look: Prince Valiant haircuts and matching costumes: bowler hats, waistcoats, frilled shirts, spats, and bow ties. In live performances, including their television appearance on the *Beat Club*, The Lords performed a reasonably synchronized routine (rhythmical air kicking with both feet) during the verses.

Dieter Baacke explains that there is no such thing as a typical fashion for Beat fans, as long as the costume of choice is »zestful and different.«¹¹¹ Any such costume, Baacke explains, allows the teenager or twenty-something to »portray a person different from the self, to transform oneself into a more *beautiful* human

107 Diergarten, Eckhard. *50 Jahre The Lords: Langhaarig, laut und eine Legende*. – *Die Biographie*. Berlin: Pro Business 2008, p. 36.

108 *50 Jahre THE LORDS – Die Biografie*. Official website: <http://www.thelords.de/index.php/the-lords/biografie> (last access: 15.5.2014).

109 »echte« englischsprachige Beatband«, Diergarten. *50 Jahre The Lords* (see footnote 107), p. 15.

110 »Wir sind Musiker und Lords. Deshalb heißt unser zweites Gebot: Wir singen nur in englischer Sprache! Denn einen Lord, der deutsch singt, gibt es nicht. Außerdem lieben unsere Fans den astreinen Beat. Die deutsche Sprache ist nur etwas für Schnulzen. Kein Wunder, dass unsere einzige deutsche Platte *Hey Baby lass den anderen* ein Durchfall wurde.« *Ibid*, p. 16.

111 »reizvoll und anders«, Baacke. *Beat* (see footnote 70), p. 98.

being «¹¹² In the case of The Lords, this act of performative mimicry is clearly linked to a crisis of national identity in Germany, since they chose to »transform« themselves into British »Lords.« In his seminal work *The location of culture*, post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha introduces the concept of mimicry as a strategy of recognition,¹¹³ and as a way of relating to colonial presence. As mentioned before, the relationship between Germany and the presence of the Allies in post-war West-Germany was always one of power struggles and the metaphor of »colonization« was used in different contexts.¹¹⁴ Bhabha talks about mimicry in the colonial context as signifying »the difference between being English and being Anglicized.«¹¹⁵ In reference to Jacques Lacan, Bhabha explains that »mimicry is like camouflage, [] a form of resemblance, that differs from or defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically.«¹¹⁶ Hence, mimicry, Bhabha argues, *repeats*, rather than *re-presents*,¹¹⁷ it is »almost the same, *but not quite*«¹¹⁸ Finally, Bhabha points to the desire to emerge as »authentic« through mimicry – precisely through the process of repetition.¹¹⁹ For The Lords, the transformation to the better, in Baacke's terms, (i.e. not German) is connected to both questions of identity and authenticity. As I have shown in detail above, national identification in Germany was a highly problematic issue at the time, and in terms of popular music British Beat was considered to be the archetype. So the band's choice of name (English language and closely associated with English feudalism) and costume (an imaginary version of noblemen) as personating the ideal of Britishness can be understood as a double move: first, as mimicking the Other in order to performatively transform themselves into something *better*, following Baacke's argument, as well as distancing themselves from Germanness and its dire associations. Second, it can also be seen as a strategy of authentication. Through the repetition of British clichés, the band aims to create the possibility of a presence for itself. I am referring here to the already discussed impossible positions of being (explicitly) German and particularly, being a German Beat band. Therefore, The Lords have

112 »Welche Kleidung der Teenager oder Twen auch gewählt haben mag Sie erlaubt ihm wie dem Schauspieler, der vorübergehend eine andere Person darstellt, als er selbst ist, sich zu verwandeln, und zwar in einen *schöneren* Menschen.« (Italics in original), *ibid*, p. 99

113 Bhabha, Homi. *The location of culture*. London: Routledge 1994, p. 86

114 I have already mentioned Wenders' famous statement about the American colonization of Europe's subconscious, but compare also Fred Ritzel on *Wir sind die Eingeborenen von Trizonesien*. Ritzel, Fred. »Was ist aus uns geworden? – Ein Haufchen Sand am Meer.« Emotions of Post-War Germany as Extracted from Examples of Popular Music. In *Popular Music* Vol. 17/3 (1998), pp. 293–309, and Sunka, Simon. »Der vord're Orient. Colonialist Imagery in Popular Postwar German Schlager.« In *The Journal of Popular Culture* 34/3 (2000), pp. 87–108

115 Bhabha. *The location of culture* (see footnote 113), p. 90

116 *Ibid*

117 *Ibid*, p. 88 (Italics in original)

118 *Ibid*, p. 86

119 *Ibid*, p. 88 (quotation marks in original)

to mimic (their version of) Britishness. But as Bhabha also points out, any mimicry (as repetition) is always only partial, and incomplete – is almost the same, *but not quite*. In the following section of this article I take a closer look at the »not quite« of The Lords' performance.

In accordance with their mimetic project, the music The Lords played was mostly cover versions of British and American folk classics. They performed only a few original compositions, all of them with English lyrics (with the exception of their very first single, as previously mentioned). Between 1965 and 1969 they were represented with twelve titles in German hit parades, almost all of which were classic folk songs like *Gloryland* or *Green Sleeves*. Their trademark song, though, is their third single, *Poor Boy*, which is an original composition released in 1965 that reached no. 12 of the official German hit list. It also remained the only original composition by the band that was commercially successful.

Poor Boy

When I was born you know, I couldn't speak and go
my mother worked each day and she learned me to say

Mother and father and son, sister and uncle are fun
and she learned me to say life is so hard each day

Poor boy you must know poor boy the life is hard to go
poor boy, poor boy you might say life is very hard to stay

When I was born you know, I couldn't speak and go
my mother worked each day and she learned me to say

Poor boy you must know, poor boy the life is hard to go
poor boy, poor boy you might say life is very hard each day¹²⁰

Lead singer »Lord Ulli« was notorious for his thick German accent when singing in English, which garnered him a lot of criticism and ridicule, especially for his inability to pronounce the »th« sound correctly.

English we had learned in school. Middling. But the pronunciation! How often was I teased about not managing the *th*. It just sounds like *maza end faza end san!* Or the grammatical error in the *Poor Boy* lyrics – so what? That was not so important to us. Like the other groups we were not perfect either.¹²¹

120 Since the singer is so inarticulate in his pronunciation, the lyrics are at times undecipherable. There exist different written versions of the lyrics but as far as I'm aware none officially released by the band. Some versions of the lyrics say »I couldn't speak I'll go,« or »sister and uncle have fun,« it is also unclear whether he sings »life is hard to stay« or »life is hard each day.«

121 »Englisch hatten wir in der Schule gelernt. Leidlich. Aber die Aussprache! Wie oft wurde ich damit aufgezo-gen, dass ich mit dem *th* nicht klarkomme. Es klingt nun mal nach *Masa end Fasa end San!* Oder der Grammatik-Fehler im Text von *Poor Boy*. Na und? Das war uns nicht so wichtig. Wie die anderen Gruppen waren auch wir nicht perfekt«, *Diergarten 50 Jahre The Lords* (see footnote 107), p. 15

As »Lord« Ulli Gunther himself notices here, the lyrics are not central to Beat music's (self)understanding. Dieter Baacke also points out that Beat lyrics are not suitable for an adequate understanding of Beat as a genre and phenomenon. He argues that Beat lyrics are often not deeper or more artful than in antagonistic Schlager songs, but they are nevertheless closer (»more authentic«) to the youthful audience because they speak to their primal desires.¹²² Baacke names a few basic categories of themes, love being the by far most frequent. He identifies the four main themes as follows: a) the need for love, b) loneliness, c) »it feels so right now« (state of happiness) and d) »Fun is the only thing that money can't buy« (relation between assets and fortune with an emphasis on fun).¹²³ Following this categorization, *Poor Boy* seems an uncommon exception. Even if one is careful not to over-interpret the lyrics and even if some details of the text even seem arguable (even inscrutable), I think it is reasonable to say that *Poor Boy* is, in its basics, about life being hard. Even keeping in mind that Beat lyrics cannot be understood as clear statements of comprehensive messages, nonetheless I want to point out three objects: first, the song tells about the hardship of life, possibly about the hardness of staying alive (»life is hard to stay«). Second, the song contains inter-generational communication, the »Poor Boy« was taught (»learned«) by his mother about these difficulties. And finally, the message is frequently repeated (»Poor boy you must know« and »life is very hard«). Regarding the latter, Dieter Baacke makes an important observation: repetition of syllables or words is a common stylistic element in Beat music and should not be misunderstood as unimaginativeness on the side of the composers, but rather as attempts to »make sayable what is effectively unexplainable, by means of insistence.«¹²⁴ According to Baacke this insistence of repetition is connected to the beat of the music and used to affect the listener more emotionally and less intellectually.

Poor Boy is not only repetitive in terms of lyrics, but in fact even more so sonically. The structure of the song is not complex (A - A' - B - A - B) and the lead guitar plays a very repetitive riff during the intro, verses, and outro. The riff, remaining the same during harmonic changes, is composed of a three-note melodic motif (3-3-4-3-1). The rhythm guitar plays a simple chord scheme using the main chords of the major scale (I, IV, and V) in a similar rhythm to the lead guitar. The vocal line during the verses is monotonous (resembling Sprechgesang) with only minor changes in melody and barely any changes in the rhythm of singing (besides during the three-voice chorus). The guitars break into a constant strumming, playing slightly more complex chord progressions during the chorus. The

122 Baacke *Beat* (see footnote 70), p. 159

123 *Ibid.*, pp. 154-158

124 »Vielmehr versuchen [die Wiederholungen] das, was eigentlich nicht zu erklären ist, durch Insistieren doch sagbar zu machen«, *ibid.*, p. 164

hi-hat skips beats four and four+ of the measure, which creates a sonic gap and gives the impression of a momentary halt or belatedness.¹²⁵

Besides the repetitive composition, these interpretations are nevertheless bound to remain superficial, for a more substantial understanding of *Poor Boy* it is necessary to widen the perspective, digressing from the text (in its broader sense) to its positioning in a wider cultural and theoretical context. When attempting to understand German national identity by analyzing this song, the obvious and explicit absence of a discourse on Germanness makes it evidently a peculiar case study. Yet, my argument in this section will be that it is precisely the explicit absence of Germanness in the song that signifies its implied presence. The question is hence: how can the absence of a discourse on Germanness be explained and analyzed, and how can the song be understood as emblematic of German national identity at the time? Since the notion of an »absent present« is a common feature in and a defining characteristic of trauma, I suggest using trauma theory for the analysis of *Poor Boy*. After introducing trauma theory, I will argue that it is precisely the apparent absence of traces of Germanness that points to the traumatic texture of German national identity.¹²⁶

Even though theorizing trauma and the impact of traumatic experiences on the psyche predate Freud's writings, he is often presented as the main inspiration for theories of traumatic memories. In his early accounts of trauma, which are mainly concerned with the causes of female hysteria (memories of sexual abuse in childhood), he describes the progression of traumatic conditions as occurring in the following sequence: causation of trauma in experience, first blocked by repression, stored up, then expressed in a symptom, subsequently relieved by catharsis and verbal working through.¹²⁷ Until the trauma is overcome, the memory of trauma (may it be edited and reconstituted by the psyche)¹²⁸ has to be understood as »a foreign body which long after its entry must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work.«¹²⁹ In his later accounts, Freud focuses on war experiences as trauma and their obtrusive recurrence in more literal ways, while he simultaneously accounts for a more complex interlinkage between the »truth« of

125 Thanks to Fabian Rose and Bas Jansen for helping me with the musical description.

126 Film scholar Thomas Elsaesser elucidates »trauma affects the texture of experience by apparent absence of traces« and »one of the signs of the presence of trauma is the absence of all signs of it.« Elsaesser, Thomas *Postmodernism as Mourning Work*. In *Screen* 42/2 (Summer 2001), pp. 193-201, here p. 199.

127 Cf. Smelser, Neil J. *Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma*. In *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Ed. by Jeffrey C. Alexander (et al.). London: University of Berkeley Press, 2004, pp. 31-59, here p. 33.

128 Cf. Grandison, Julia. *Bridging the Past and the Future: Rethinking the Temporal Assumptions of Trauma Theory*. In *Donne Brand's At the Full and Change of the Moon*. In *University of Toronto Quarterly* 79/2 (Spring 2010), pp. 764-782, here p. 767.

129 Freud, Sigmund. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, Vol. II (1893-1895) *Studies on Hysteria, I-VI*. London: Vintage, 2001, p. 6.

the traumatizing event to be rediscovered, and the role of fantasy in representation and interpretation¹³⁰ In *Jenseits des Lustprinzips (Beyond the Pleasure Principle)* Freud calls the recurrence of traumatic experiences »compulsion to repeat«¹³¹

Those reenactments in the present of psychic events that have not been safely consigned to the past, that retain the visual and affective intensity of lived (rather than remembered) experience, and that disrupt the unruffled present with flashbacks and terrifying nightmares, intrusive fragments of an unknown past that exceeds the self's (relatively) coherent and integrated story about itself¹³²

Repetition hence is the central principle in Freud's conceptualization of trauma. The traumatized »is obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of [] remembering it as something belonging to the past«¹³³ The »perpetual recurrence of the same thing,«¹³⁴ and »repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident«¹³⁵ lead to the symptom as repetition, »representing [] situations not-to-be-repeated«¹³⁶

Although theorists debate about the degree of unconscious distortion involved in re-experiencing an event, and they disagree in their conceptions of the form of the recurrent experience or the way it is remembered (if at all),¹³⁷ the challenge of integrating a past event of immense psychic impact into the post-traumatic present is at the heart of most theorization about trauma. This challenge operates on both the level of the individual as well as that of the community when trauma is

130 Freud's later work blurs the distinctions between patient-victims and the events that made them ill, as well as the confidence that the truth of things can be retraced to their beginnings. This blurring causes epistemological struggles about issues like truth, history and representation, circling endlessly around the subject of memory. Cf. *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*. Ed. by Paul Antze and Michael Lambek. London: Routledge 1996, p. xxvii.

131 Freud, Sigmund. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, Vol. XVIII (1920–1922). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Group Psychology and other works*. London: Vintage 2001, p. 19.

132 Forter, Greg. Freud, Faulkner, Caruth. *Trauma and the Politics of Literary Form*. In *Narrative* 15/3 (October 2007), pp. 259–285, here p. 260.

133 Freud. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (see footnote 131), p. 18.

134 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

135 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

136 Freud, Sigmund. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, Vol. XXIII (1937–1939). *Moses and Monotheism, An Outline of Psychoanalysis, Analysis Terminable and Interminable, and other works*. London: Vintage 2001, p. 76.

137 Cf. for instance Ruth Leys' dispute with Caruth and von der Kolk on the literalness and narratability of traumatic memory in Leys, Ruth. *Trauma: A Genealogy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2000. And Murray M. Schwarz' critique of Leys' reading of Caruth. Schwarz, Murray M. *Locating Trauma: A Commentary on Ruth Leys's Trauma: A Genealogy*. In *American Imago* 59/3 (Fall 2002), pp. 367–384.

experienced collectively¹³⁸ According to Cathy Caruth's seminal and contested literary approach to trauma, the event is experienced »too unexpectedly to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness«¹³⁹ and, as a result, rather than activating direct cognition and rational understanding, the traumatizing event becomes distorted in the actor's imagination and memory »trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way its very unassimilated nature – the way it is precisely *not known* in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on«¹⁴⁰ The traumatic event can therefore not be fully experienced at the time at which it occurs, but intrudes belatedly as a literal replay of that experience, conveying both »*the truth of an event and the truth of its incomprehensibility*«¹⁴¹ For the traumatized individual, experience is hence punctuated by anachronistic events that recur with greater force and clarity than with which they were experienced in the first place, yet they cannot be narrated, they cannot be adequately expressed in language – the experience is, as Susannah Radstone puts it, »ontologically unbearable«¹⁴² In this way, »the traumatized [] carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot possess«¹⁴³

The concept of trauma as unspeakable, interrupting, and overwhelming recurrences is also theorized as a trans-generational vector. Nicolas Abraham describes a phenomenon that he calls the »phantom«. Based on Freud's notion of Metapsychology, Abraham suggests that while a parent offers no verbal explanation of the content of an experienced traumatic event (silence), a child will detect the gaps in the parent's speech and will eventually identify words associated with those gaps¹⁴⁴ »The words used by the phantom to carry out its return (and which the child sensed in the parent) do not refer to a source of speech in the parent. Instead they point to a gap, they refer to the unspeakable.«¹⁴⁵ This »contagious silence« may recur in the next generation when the phantom haunts the decedents, based on associations an individual has made with its parents' trauma¹⁴⁶ The in-

138 Cf. Smelser. *Psychological Trauma* (see footnote 127).

139 Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. London: Johns Hopkins University Press 1996, p. 5.

140 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

141 Caruth, Cathy. *Recapturing the Past: Introduction*. In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Ed. by Cathy Caruth. London: Johns Hopkins University Press 1995, pp. 151–157, here p. 153 (Italics in original).

142 Radstone, Susannah. *Screening Trauma: Forrest Gump, Film and Memory*. In *Memory and Methodology*. Ed. by Susannah Radstone. Oxford: Berg 2000, pp. 79–107, here p. 89.

143 Caruth. *Trauma and Experience: Introduction*. In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (see footnote 141), p. 5.

144 Cf. Grandison. *Bridging the Past and the Future* (see footnote 128), p. 769.

145 Abraham, Nicolas. *Notes on the Phantom: A Complement to Freud's Metapsychology*. In *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*. Ed. by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1994, pp. 171–176, here p. 174.

146 Cf. Grandison. *Bridging the Past and the Future* (see footnote 128), p. 769.

tent of the phantom, according to Abraham, is to prevent its traumatic secrets from coming to light¹⁴⁷ German post-war cultural output has been described in terms of trauma, of the nation's suffering from the events of the Nazi reign and the Holocaust. Issues that have been discussed in relation to national trauma, collective memory, and cultural representations are on the one hand the temporality of such representations and their structural limitations on the other. Thomas Elsaesser for instance gives an account of films dealing with memories of the Holocaust, or to be more precise, with the question of how to represent the unrepresentable, as delayed (belated) attempts of coming to a cultural understanding of itself.¹⁴⁸ Linda Belau in her analysis of Shoshana Felman's reading of the film *Shoah*, argues that trauma lies not beyond the limits of representation, but trauma appears as a repetition of the impossibility of returning to the past moment when the injury occurred. Trauma is hence a repetition of what is not possible, and therefore becomes resistant to interpretation.¹⁴⁹ Cathy Caruth in contrast has a different take on the issue of representation and argues that »if trauma is the name of an event that does not leave any visible traces, these non-traces are nonetheless recoverable by a different kind of hermeneutics.«¹⁵⁰

When bearing these accounts of responses to traumatic experiences in mind, a return to The Lords' *Poor Boy* offers a different kind of interpretation. The song was produced in a period of silence about the past, wherein the parent generation refused to address issues of guilt and yet inevitably any discussion of German related topics (like the representation of German bands in the *Beat Club*) seem to obsessively return to metaphors of war and nationhood. When looking at the *Poor Boy* lyrics, the son is taught that life is hard, but no explanation is offered – it may be outside the confines of language. As I have already mentioned, the highly repetitive character of the haunting tune can also be interpreted as an implied, but repressed, presence of trauma. The skipped fourth and four+ beat (hi-hat)

147 Cf. Davis, Colin. *Ét at présent*. Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms. In *French Studies* 59/3 (2005), pp. 373–379, here p. 374.

148 Elsaesser discusses films like Edgar Reitz's *Heimat* (1984), Claude Lanzman's *Shoah* (1985) and Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993) as being made after the so-called latency period, which is the delay or displacement of an event (the Holocaust) and its representation. According to Elsaesser accepting the latency hypothesis as significant for filmmaking (and understanding the nature of delays) makes it possible to ask the question: why these films now? Elsaesser, Thomas. Subject Positions, Speaking Positions. From *Holocaust, Our Hitler* and *Heimat*, to *Shoah* and *Schindler's List*. In *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event*. Ed. by Vivian Soback. London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 145–186. Cf. also Santner, Eric L. *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany*. London: Cornell University Press, 1990.

149 Belau, Linda. Trauma and the Material Signifier. In *Trauma: Essays on the Limit of Knowledge and Experience*. Ed. by Linda Belau and Petar Ramadanovic. (Postmodern culture. An electronic journal of interdisciplinary criticism 11/2, January 2001. Online available via http://pmc1ath.virginia.edu/text-only/issue_101/11_2contents.html, last access 16.5.2014).

150 Elsaesser. *Postmodernism as mourning work* (see footnote 126), p. 56.

opens up a gap in the sonic narrative and indicates a moment of silence. Yet, the repetition in both music and lyrics does not seem to attempt the representation of past traumatic events, so how can we access the underlying experience of this song in relation to national identity? In order to pursue this question, I suggest turning to a related Freudian concept: the uncanny.

Characteristic features of trauma are the *secrecy* and *silence* which surround it. And, insofar as secrecy and silence are symptomatic of an event whose core meaning has been permanently displaced – is not known directly – [] the trauma can *only* enunciate itself as an enigma. It can only spawn the kind of *symptoms* which speak of what is not there, what is not sayable.¹⁵¹

Assuming that The Lords' *Poor Boy* is haunted by the phantom of the past, lying and misleading him to ensure that »its secrets remain shrouded in mystery,«¹⁵² hiding its traces, maintaining the unspeakable in silence,¹⁵³ how then can we trace the absent present, to borrow Derrida's terminology?¹⁵⁴

So far I have described how the 1960s in Germany (and elsewhere) marked a period of transition in multiple senses. First, I showed how youth culture came to be an autonomous category in society and how Beat music as an example can be understood as a symptom of societal change. Second, I have shown in detail how the discourse of national representation in relation to the television program *Beat Club* functions as a catalyst of opposing conceptions of Germany's identity in an international context. In this section I want to continue with using Beat as a symptom of societal condition, and *Poor Boy* as its concrete manifestation, focusing on the nation's collective memory, or rather, the lack of explicitly dealing with the traumas of the past. In order to investigate the relation of *Poor Boy* to national memory, I will move beyond the notion of trauma and explicate how the song functions as an aesthetic moment of uncanny melancholy.

While trauma theory is mostly concerned with the more or less literal repetition of past events in a person's mental life, there is another concept related to repetition of the past that is repressed yet in a more transient way. Trauma, as repressed experience, affects the traumatized's life as an unthinkable or unsayable, unremembered element in the unconsciousness. It may possibly be rememberable but it remains unrepresentable. Freud's concept of the uncanny is also based on a sense of repetition, of a return of the repressed. In his famous and

151 Ragland, Ellie. The Psychological Nature of Trauma: Freud's Dora, The Young Homosexual Woman, and the Fort! Da! Paradigm. In *Trauma: Essays on the Limit of Knowledge and Experience* (see footnote 149).

152 Davis. *Ét at présent* (see footnote 147), p. 374.

153 »The symptom of trauma is enigmatic because it is shrouded in secrecy and silence.« Ramadanovic, Petar. Introduction. Trauma and Crisis. In *Trauma: Essays on the Limit of Knowledge and Experience* (see footnote 149).

154 »Derrida's trace is the mark of the absence of a presence, an always already present.« Spivak, Gayatri C. Translator's Preface. In Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, pp. ix–lxxxvii, here p. xvii.

intriguing 1919 essay, *Das Unheimliche* (*The Uncanny*), Freud describes the uncanny as the once-known and long familiar returning as a vague memory that reappears as something appalling and frightening.¹⁵⁵ As he examines in great detail, the ambiguous German word for uncanny (»unheimlich«) carries several apparently conflicting (yet not contradictory) meanings, it connotes both strange, unfamiliar, and haunted, as well as the converse of »heimlich,«¹⁵⁶ a secret that was supposed to remain concealed but has come to light.¹⁵⁷ For Freud, »unheimlich is what was once *heimisch*, familiar, the prefix »un« is the token of repression»¹⁵⁸ and what is experienced as uncanny is hence the return (repetition) of something familiar that has been repressed. Freud particularly discusses the uncanny in relation to something gruesome or terrible, above all corpses and death, cannibalism and the return of the dead.¹⁵⁹ Although Freud primarily links uncanny experiences to neurosis, essentially anyone at any time may fall prey to uncanny memory.¹⁶⁰ The commingling of the familiar and unfamiliar, something secret that has come to light, of the uncanny works as a critical disturbance and involves feelings of »uncertainty, in particular regarding the reality of who one is and what is being experienced. Suddenly one's sense of oneself [] seems strangely questionable.«¹⁶¹ These experiences, literature scholar Nicholas Royle notices, come »above all [] in the uncertainties of silence.«¹⁶²

Keeping these descriptions in mind, it is possible to read the Lord's *Poor Boy* along these lines – there is something ghostly about the song. The song displays the silencing of traumatic war experiences in an uncanny manner through its repetitive patterns. By mimicking an (imaginary) Britishness, it attempts to distract the attention from a discourse of German guilt, yet it does not quite succeed at eliminating Germanness. As stated earlier, the singer's accent is very strong and the grammatical errors in the lyrics indicate alienation – the language of the song is haunted. *Poor Boy* can be understood as an example of traumatic silence, yet

155 »The uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar.« Freud, Sigmund. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, Vol. XVII (1917–1919) *An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*. London: Vintage 2001, p. 219.

156 Meaning both secret and homey.

157 Freud. *An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works* (see footnote 155), p. 224.

158 *Ibid.*, p. 244.

159 Freud especially discusses dolls as (in)animate objects and the motif of the »Doppelgänger« as uncanny.

160 For Heidegger what he calls »uncanny anxiety« is essential to the Dasein part of the »structure of uncanniness« is »being's flight from itself« (»Die Flucht des Daseins von ihm selbst«), but the realization of the impossibility of escaping one's own being and the mind's entrapment in the body creates »uncanny anxiety«, Heidegger, Martin. *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*. In *Gesamtausgabe* Abt. 2 *Vorlesungen*. Ed. by Petra Jaeger. Vol. 20. Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann 1979, p. 391.

161 Royle, Nicholas. *The Uncanny*. Manchester: Manchester University Press 2003, p. 1.

162 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

one that evokes an uncanny experience. The explicit *absence* of Germanness marks an implicit *presence*, yet a repressed one. It is precisely this moment of uncanny presence of the repressed that constitutes the song's moment of uncertainty and unconscious questioning of the nation's identity. Keeping the centrality of repetition in all discussion of both trauma and the uncanny in mind, the extremely repetitive musical pattern of *Poor Boy* becomes meaningful beyond being a simple catchy tune. As literary theorist Robert Rogers points out in the context of analyzing the semiotics of repetition in Freud: »Repetition provides a signpost on the avenue to self-knowledge« and is always meaningful.¹⁶³

In contrast to traumatic repetition though, uncanny repetition does not take one back to a past experience, even if only as (always failed) aesthetic representation. As German comparative literature scholar Laurie Ruth Johnson in *Aesthetic Anxiety* argues, uncanny repetition in fact »disconnects us from that experience, although it is of course associated (via repression) with it.«¹⁶⁴ The experience is disconnected because a return is impossible. As a form of memory, according to Johnson, the uncanny (un-heimlich, un-homey) reminds us of home (heimlich, homey), uncanny repetition of repressed material is symptomatic of a state of melancholy, of nostalgia for a lost home.¹⁶⁵ In this way, the experience of the uncanny is a melancholic reminder of loss and therefore loss-sustaining.¹⁶⁶

The liminality of the uncanny lays in its ambiguous relation of »home« the familiar, repetition, or »coming back« (the return of the repressed) to the external Other. »At some level the feeling of the uncanny may be bound up with the most extreme nostalgia or »homesickness,«¹⁶⁷ but it always occurs in relation to an external »Other« that triggers those desires. Therefore the liminality of the uncanny, its state of »no-longer and not-yet,«¹⁶⁸ its dialectics of remembering and forgetting, always represents a slippage of Self and Other. Johnson puts this relationality as follows:

In every case, the form of memory that transpires when something external, yet strangely familiar, to the remembering subject appears, is embodied (felt in and expressed through the body) and interrelated (requiring the existence of real others, who may be represented as images to and within the self, but who are nevertheless different from the self).¹⁶⁹

163 Rogers, Robert. *Freud and the Semiotics of Repetition*. In *Poetics Today* 8 (1987), No. 3/4, pp. 579–590, here p. 584.

164 Johnson, Laurie Ruth. *Aesthetic Anxiety: Uncanny Symptoms in German Literature and Culture*. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi 2010, p. 30.

165 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

166 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

167 Royle. *The Uncanny* (see footnote 161), p. 2.

168 Cf. Johnson. *Aesthetic Anxiety* (see footnote 164), p. 121.

169 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

A third concept connected to the notions of loss, repetition of the repressed, and the liminality they cause regarding the relation of Self-Other, is the notion of melancholia as it is described in Freud's famous and contested 1917 essay *Trauer und Melancholie (Mourning and Melancholia)*¹⁷⁰ In this text, he introduces a distinction between mourning on the one hand and melancholia on the other Mourning designates, on Freud's account, a psychic response to loss that eventually, after working through grief and relinquishing past attachments in the name of forming new ones, concludes in a definite end of the process Melancholia, by contrast, comprises hostility toward what one has lost which entails the inability to fully relinquish it in order to keep one's argument with it going,¹⁷¹ this process leads to inner desolation and the incapacity to form new attachments.¹⁷² In many cases, the melancholic cannot see clearly what it is that has been lost, and Freud suggests therefore that melancholia is in relation to a lost object that is withdrawn from consciousness What is most striking about the melancholic personality is its extreme diminution in self-regard the loss of an object has triggered an impoverishment of the self, as Freud puts it »in mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty, in melancholia it is the ego itself«¹⁷³ In other words, while it would seem as though the loss suffered is that of an object, what the melancholic has actually experienced is a loss of self The melancholic cannot remember the lost object and, because it is unknown, the loss is »withdrawn from consciousness, in contradiction to mourning, in which there is nothing unconscious about the loss«¹⁷⁴ »The melancholic's unconscious incorporation in this sense prevents the object from being remembered, in part because it confuses Self and Other and so makes it hard for the Other to become an object of memory or consciousness«¹⁷⁵

170 For an illuminating account of the contemporary academic discourse on Freud's notion of melancholy and mourning compare Forter, Greg Against Melancholia Contemporary Mourning Theory, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, and the Politics of Unfinished Grief In *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 14/2 (Summer 2003), pp 137-170

171 Although in his later work, most notably *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur (Civilization and its Discontents)*, Freud acknowledges that mourning might in fact not be as fundamentally different from melancholia Mourning itself can be a repetitive process that continually reveals anxieties about loss Since the lost loved objects will be replaced by new ones, which, in turn will eventually be lost again, mourning increasingly resembles melancholy »The normal affect of mourning« if repeated continually, is no longer so different from what characterizes melancholy Cf Freud, Sigmund Mourning and Melancholia In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol XIV (1914-1916) *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works* London: Vintage 2001, p 305, and Johnson *Aesthetic Anxiety* (see footnote 164), p 49

172 Freud Mourning and Melancholia (see footnote 171), p 254

173 Ibid, p 245

174 Ibid

175 Forter Against Melancholia (see footnote 170), p 138

In the case of The Lords' *Poor Boy*, I have already established that the sonic and textual repetition and the absence of an explicit discourse on Germanness signify the repression of traumatic experience (the Holocaust) These events, experiences, and complicity in genocide escape the realm of representation, they cannot be known and understood and hence they remain silent Yet, the trauma is also impossible to be forgotten precisely because it is unknown, incomprehensible, unrepresentable, which makes it impossible to be processed in a mourning fashion The Holocaust trauma is hence known, experienced, familiar and simultaneously repressed, forgotten, and strange The silence in which this experience, the unsayable, unthinkable secret reappears and comes to light is in the repetitive chords of The Lords' melody Still, the trauma is not literally repeated, it is not represented, but it haunts the song and becomes an uncanny experience, a vague but intense reappearance of the repressed secret. Through conjuring the loss of home that is implicit to the uncanny and a yearning for the time of innocence, the song reveals the repression of the atrocities committed during the Holocaust The lost object, an idealized, utopian sense of »Heimat« is inaccessible because it is blocked by the horrors of traumatic experience As stated in the beginning of this article, the »zero hour« was experienced as an incisive moment, a symbolic screen that detached the pre-war experiences and cultural accomplishments (like the Jazz scene in the 1920s) from access Hence, the music and language of the Lords must be understood as what Johnson calls »uncanny melancholy« a mode that makes it possible to tolerate an otherwise unbearable memory

Besides the centrality of the (sonic) repetition of the repressed, the intersubjectivity¹⁷⁶ of self-and-other is crucial to the uncanny melancholy of the Lords' »silence«. in trauma theory, the self becomes estranged from itself, »the foreign within me«¹⁷⁷ to borrow Julia Kristeva's words Regarding the concept of the uncanny, it is the Other that triggers the uncanny experience, yet it is intrinsically a subjective and bodily affective experience, which makes a clear distinction between inside and outside problematic Finally, in Freud's concept of melancholy, it is the inability to relinquish the unknown lost object that affects the ego in such a way that it loses part of itself Returning to the Lords, the relation between external and internal, between self and other, between German and British is essential to an understanding of the song's uncanny silence The Lords find it impossible to relate to German culture and identity, hence the only source that provides them with a language is external an idealized (imaginary) Britishness English is their language of choice, the language that allows them to remain »silent« Beat as

176 I refer here to Esther Peeren's use of the term, paraphrasing Mikhail Bakhtin Identities are »co-productions, processes that take place not within the self, but in-between self and other Identities oscillate between exterior and interior, as the self takes on board the determinations offered up by others and fashions these determinations into provisional self-narratives« Peeren, Esther *Intersubjectivities and Popular Culture Bakhtin and beyond* Stanford: Stanford University Press 2007, p 17

177 Kristeva, Julia *Strangers to Ourselves* New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf 1991, p 192

a genre enables them to look beyond the borders of Germany and its associated dilemmas, yet as I have tried to show, this remains an impossible desire because they cannot escape the phantom that haunts them. In the cracks of their erroneous English, in the hyperbolic mimicry, and the disparity of synchronization, their silence about the past becomes uncanny.

Conclusion

As Ian Chambers said, in the mid-1960s pop music became a central symbol of fashionable, metropolitan, British culture. A German modernity of this kind was unthinkable at the time, any such attempt inevitably evoked undesired memories of the past. Hence the young generation, growing in societal influence, needed to satisfy its desire for *fun*, independence and consumption by orienting itself in a national ›outside,‹ by mimicking the Other. Only in this way could the phantoms of the past remain silent – yet, the fragile mimicry of an imaginary Britishness of Beat culture ineluctably created uncanny moments. The Lords singing about a poor boy in poor English, with a heavy accent and grammatical errors could not succeed in suppressing the traumatic memory and history through mimicry of the Other. In their necessarily incomplete mimicry, they produced a copy that is indeed »almost the same but not quite,« and it is precisely this friction, the aberration and deflection that points to the void in German identity. Through *Poor Boy*, silencing and absence manifest to a degree obliquely or hauntingly. Beat culture is in this sense indeed not »oppositional,« as this manifestation is not explicit but implicit and linked to unconscious processes of repression and disavowal. Beat culture manifests symptoms of national trauma, but it does not resolve these traumas by openly addressing them and thus exorcising the ghost. Hence, the »speechlessness« of Beat can be understood as a symptom for the repressed traumas of the past and the absent present discourse on national responsibility and guilt.

When using Beat as a diagnosis of the state of society, as Baacke suggests, we can conclude that in terms of national identification the 1960s in Germany was a decade of two major developments. On the one hand, Beat symbolizes a generational conflict and struggle of emancipation of the youth. With its strong focus on »Britishness« as means of authentication, it aimed to disregard the national and at the same time embed Germany in an international frame of reference. Simultaneously, the uncanny of Beat exemplifies the impossibility of articulating national traumas while embodying them through its implied struggle with the impossibility of saying the unsayable, its unwillingness to engage with them, and by being haunted by these impossible memories. The silence in content and the obsession of becoming someone else, the desperate mimicry (trying to be more British than the British themselves), and its immanent failure (in language and performance) are symptoms of the repressed traumas of German modernity that can

be understood as uncanny melancholia – a mode that makes it possible to tolerate otherwise unbearable memory. The national ›outside‹ fulfills a double function for Germany in the 1960s: the debate about Americanization shows how »America« is imagined as a threat to national culture and identity, a detrimental factor from outside that the nation needs to be protected from. On the other hand, the national outside (»America« as utopia and imaginary Britishness) functions as providing a means of both implicitly addressing issues of national trauma and collective memory, as well as imagining a national identity beyond its own history – towards positioning Germany in an international frame of reference as a reconstituted modern, fashionable, and cosmopolitan nation.