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Oi: Music,

Politics, and

Violence

Introduction

Oi Musik has been produced and consumed predominantly by socially and economically marginal white men in First World countries over the past twelve years.¹ Post-World War II immigration of foreigners to industrialized Western countries, more recent shifts of geographic boundaries in Europe, and social, economic, and sexual pressures among the conditions that have led to increasing acts of terror such as the burning of homes and places of business of foreigners, particularly in Germany. While a variety of works have appeared in Germany and other countries that track the history of Oi Musik and its connection to violent acts, this chapter will unpack the musical, social, and psycho-analytic elements that have made Oi possible.² I will conclude with an examination of how the delicate balance in more conventional forms of interpellation (between conscious acts in social space and the unconscious structures on which they depend) gets reorganized in Oi into a volatile combination of simultaneous *affirmation* and *denial* of history.

Even though relatively few people outside the German skin scene have heard this music, a publicly acknowledged subculture has arisen around skins and German Oi Musik. German officials estimate that there are around forty-five hundred active skins and around twenty thousand people who sympathize with skins, their music, and their activities.³ The main reason that few people have listened to this music is that it is never played on the radio, rarely sold in record stores, and never advertised in public space. The records, clothing, and CDs are sold

under the counter at skin boutiques and mail-order stores throughout Germany.⁴ And, when the music is described in magazine articles and newspapers, some German journalists again and again dismiss Oi as "bad." This negative aesthetic judgment is wrongheaded for three reasons. First, it inhibits an examination of a music that powerfully affects its listeners. Second, leftist denial of right-wing threats echoes social liberal dismissals of Hitler in the 1920s. And, finally, the aesthetics of rock have been consistently pushed into forbidden areas as an expression of rebellion against not only conservative but also liberal pedagogy, parental authority, and the law.

I will show below that one of Oi's long-term effects on its listeners is the production of a sense of community for skins in Germany. Its most common short-term effect is that it is sometimes used to incite acts of terror against foreigners, reported, for example, in the summer of 1993 in Germany.⁵

A Brief History of Oi

Farin and Seidel-Pielen locate the origins of the skin phenomenon in post-World War II England. The uniformity of white, working-class neighborhoods began to break up after the war owing to two political/social forces. Foreign workers came to England during the 1950s and 1960s from the Caribbean, Pakistan, India, and West Africa to support the postwar boom. According to Farin and Seidel-Pielen, the British government did very little to assimilate these immigrants.⁶ In addition, white working-class neighborhoods became gentrified; hot water and central heating were the cornerstones of postwar British improvements that resulted in poor white workers being displaced to new social housing units in the suburbs of large cities and middle-class people moving into improved and expensive urban housing.⁷

The splintering of British working-class social space in the postwar years is reflected in a series of movements that position marginalized (mostly male) groups against dominant politics; these movements mark their identity through clothes and music. The Teddyboys of the 1950s wore expensive clothes and listened to the rock and roll from the United States that was being broadcast from Radio Luxembourg. Jon Savage points out that the ambivalent relation that British mar-

ginal, male groups have to the social order can be seen in 'Teddyboys' clothes; they are expensive, and they self-consciously acknowledge the power of Britain's class system (they wore clothes from the Edwardian era).⁸ The rough affect of the Teddys was replaced by the more cool Mods at the end of the 1950s. According to Farin and Seidel-Pielen, "To be mod meant expensive clothes, ska and northern soul, Vespas with chrome siding, speed, fights, and a job as a bank courier."⁹ The mods fought battles that were heavily covered in the British press with so-called Rockers—the first generation of skins; as the mods were adjusting their hair to just the right length, the Rockers or "hard-mods" were shaving it closer and closer to the scalp.

Farin and Seidel-Pielen point out that shaving the scalp originated in "working houses" of the nineteenth century. Workers who disobeyed "God-given" rules were punished by having their heads shaved. This form of punishment was also common in early twentieth-century reformatories and prisons.¹⁰ The self-infliction of this act among men of the same class as those who were punished in the nineteenth century is one of the keys to understanding what I call "Oi subjectivity." One takes over the negative judgment of the social order in order to form an identity at its margins.

Parallel with these developments, black gangs called Rude Boys were being formed. Here is the same dynamic described above applied to names: one takes over the negative judgment of the dominant social order in order to carve out an oppositional subjective position. This has both a normative and a marginalizing quality. Many movements in the arts that have become canonized began by naming themselves in precisely this way: the impressionists and the fauves, for example.¹¹ Particularly in skin, punk, and Oi Musik, the names of performers and groups are insults that become appropriated: Sid Vicious's name came from the name of Johnny Rotten's hamster; Johnny Rotten's name came from Sid Vicious pointing out how rotten his teeth were; the German Oi band Die böhse Onkelz got their name from a group of kids pointing to the band members as they were walking across a lot and saying: "Guck mal, die böhse Onkelz da!" (Look at those bad guys over there!).¹²

These gangs brought a kind of music to England that would influence the music of skins: ska. Since I will focus in the musical-analytic

portion of this chapter on the "white" and "black" elements of Oi, it is important to realize how Britain's first skin movement took over this "black" music from Jamaica.¹³ Ska came together around 1960; one of its first songs was Laurel Aitken's single "Little Sheila." Ska is heterogeneous; radio transmissions from the United States to Jamaica in the late 1950s and early 1960s gave ska sounds from jazz (particularly the common saxophone solos and complex percussion parts), the twelve-bar blues from rock and roll, the vocal style of Fats Domino, and the energetic music of Little Richard. Ska also used an instrumental ensemble including metal drums, brass choirs (trombone with two trumpets), and a common emphasis on the upbeat that became the crucial musical signifier of reggae.¹⁴

In 1969 the word *skins* began to circulate in the British press; it referred to the *black* skin groups—the Rude Boys, who shaved their heads, listened to ska, and defended their territories. Whites joined black gangs, and the norm of skin appearance was formed: shaved heads, heavy black boots, leather jackets. The clothes, the music, and the (violent) expression of marginal existence marked Britain's first skin movement; *class* was primary. Farin and Seidel-Pielen point out that the birth of reggae in the late 1960s corresponds to a development among immigrant intellectuals and artists in Britain—a growing consciousness that Jamaicans, blacks, and other minorities were being systematically discriminated against by the white British government. Thus, an increase in ethnic consciousness among blacks and increased social pressures caused skin groups to break apart along lines of color.¹⁵

White skins had begun to be seen in Britain as the right-wing politician Enoch Powell gave a speech in 1968 laying the groundwork for white racial anxiety and hatred of the colored Other. White skin groups went on "Paki bashing," wrote racist graffiti in public spaces, and carried out spontaneous acts of violence against foreigners until the movement faded out in the early 1970s.¹⁶

Punk

Punk appeared in the mid-1970s and lasted only a few years.¹⁷ Like other marginal movements, punk is visible through clothes and audible through music. Jon Savage makes it clear that punk was made pos-

sible by a variety of factors ranging from the personality and taste of Malcolm McClaren and Vivienne Westwood, deteriorating social conditions for working-class whites in British cities, the decline of the first skin generation, and the influence of American punk—particularly the Ramones and the New York Dolls.¹⁸ By the mid-1970s, unemployment was higher than it had been since 1940, and there was “a full fledged capitalist recession, with extremely high rates of inflation, a toppling currency, a savaging of living standards, and a sacrificing of the working class to capital.”¹⁹ Punk emerged from the same social conditions as the stagnating and fragmented skin movement had only a few years before.

Malcolm McClaren went to New York in the early 1970s and heard the Ramones and the New York Dolls; their music was apolitical, nihilistic, fast, loud, and repetitive. The Sex Pistols and other bands such as the Clash took this music and made it British. British punk of the 1970s is often referred to as “leftist”; but, like most skins before and after punk, the Sex Pistols distanced themselves from any established political movement.²⁰ Like skins before and after, the Sex Pistols emphasized the present, life on the streets, the oppression of public institutions, the meaninglessness of mainstream life, and the emptiness of culture.

Musically, the Sex Pistols were a typical rock band with four musicians: Paul Cook, drums; Steve Jones, guitar; Johnny Rotten, singer; and Glen Matlock, bass (later replaced by Sid Vicious).²¹ The songs tend to reflect rock-and-roll formal norms, with an introductory riff and verse/chorus alternation; they emphasize the fourth scale degree—a stripped-down but clearly *black* sound that links the liturgical plagal cadence with the early slave hollers and early blues.²² The voice is rough—a heritage from the vocal style of the blues (to be discussed more fully below in connection with German Oi Musik). The meter is 4/4; there is almost always a backbeat in the snare, and the tempo is fast.²³ Although a product of the enormous social pressure being experienced by working-class whites, the music of the Sex Pistols freely steals from the black tradition of blues (the wounded voice, the plagal emphasis on the fourth scale degree), rhythm and blues (steady streams of eighth notes), and white rock and roll (the signature backbeat of 1950s rock). This musical style is capable of parody, however. I hear a clear reference to the Doors’ “I Love You” in “Sub-mission,” with the harmony moving from $\hat{1}$ to $b\hat{7}$ to $b\hat{3}$ back to $\hat{1}$. And Sid Vicious’s “My Way” is a

clear parody of Frank Sinatra’s version of the same song. This song is beautifully rendered in the film *Sid and Nancy*. It is an example of punk making a clear ideological statement about its own roots in rock and roll. One of the three musical styles that came together in rock and roll of the 1950s was popular music, or Tin Pan Alley. Sid Vicious’s version of “My Way” thus at once reenacts and parodies this quintessentially popular music. I will contrast punk’s ability/willingness to comment explicitly on its roots with German Oi Musik’s quite different treatment of the history of rock and roll below.

In addition to the musical aspects discussed above, punk’s self-destructiveness is reflected in punk bodies: hair takes on the colors of mass-produced objects; bodies are seen as vulnerable surfaces of skin that must be protected from a hostile world by black leather; bodies are scarred, marked, wounded. These wounds are at once signifiers of the white working class under siege and self-inflicted wounds.²⁴

The self-destructive nature of punk is reflected in the difficulty the Sex Pistols had working together on their one album, *Never Mind the Bollocks: Here’s the Sex Pistols*; the group lasted only a couple of years, and Sid Vicious died of a drug overdose. “God Save the Queen” and “Anarchy in the UK” are completely negative songs that hold out no hope for a place within British social space. Even as they became famous, or perhaps because they became famous, their tenuous cohesion imploded on the group. Even the relationship between performers and audience was negative; it was common at Sex Pistols concerts for the musicians to spit at the audience and for the audience to spit back. Savage reports that this practice (called “gobbing”) frequently got out of hand: “The very English phlegm which had served as a powerful physiological metaphor for denial and needless stoicism was now, literally, expelled in torrents as . . . punk audiences covered their objects of desire with sheets of saliva.”²⁵ Punk represents the body as *abjection*; as we will see and hear below, German Oi subjectivity fine-tunes this abjection into a precarious synthesis between self-loathing and loathing of the Other.

British Oi Music

With the commercialization of punk into new wave, the second phase of the skin movement began to emerge as former skins and the remains

of the (still marginal) punk movement joined hands. This music was called "Street Punk," "Real Punk," or "Working-class Punk."²⁶ It is in this music that the sound *oi* can be heard in songs by the Cockney Rejects (begun in 1979) and the Angelic Upstarts (begun in 1977).²⁷ And Jon Savage locates one of the earliest appearances of the sound *oi* in a song called "Career Opportunities" by the punk band the Clash.²⁸ The sound *oi* covers a broad and resonant semantic field. It is British, white working-class dialect for "hey!"²⁹ *Oi* is also a skin call to action, as in this line from a song by the Cockney Rejects: "I run down a side street, Oi! Oi! Oi! / and I run and I am free Oi! Oi! Oi!"³⁰ *Oi* also became a more neutral signal for the beginning of a song; Farin and Seidel-Pielen point out that the Cockney Rejects replaced their characteristic "1, 2, 3" at the outset of a song with "Oi! Oi! Oi!"³¹ The audience would then echo "Oi! Oi! Oi!" back, and the song would begin.³² *Oi* is also a more aggressive attack sound that derives from "zickezacke zickezacke Oikalyprus."³² *Oi* also reminds me of the Yiddish interjection *Oy!* as in "Oy weh ist mir!"³³

The year 1981 was crucial for skin music. Apolitical/leftist second-generation skin bands planned a tour that would make it clear to the British public that *Oi* was nonviolent. The National Front used the occasion to orchestrate violent disruptions at skin concerts that turned second-generation skin music into the domain of the right wing. Farin and Seidel-Pielen point out that the National Front (founded in 1967) won more than 200,000 votes in the election of 1977 with the slogan "If they're black, send them back!"³⁴ Although skin bands strenuously avoided explicit political affiliation, the National Front was able to recruit enough right-wing skins to disrupt a concert at Southall on 3 July 1981. The resulting injuries and press coverage caused the recall of Gary Bushell's just-released album *Strength through Oi!* and the bands the 4-skins and the Business lost their recording contracts.³⁵

German Oi

In both England and Germany, right-wing skin music arose out of the punk scene, which had become fragmented after the mid-1970s with the disintegration of the Sex Pistols, the commercialization of new

wave music, and the emergence of white, working-class rock and roll that expressed right-wing ideologies. One of the first German *Oi*³⁶ bands continues to play concerts and to record CDs; it plays a key role in the history of *Oi* and in current debates on its music, texts, and legal status—Die böhse Onkelz, founded in 1979.³⁷ As opposed to the Sex Pistols, who self-destructed after only a few years, the members of this band based in Frankfurt have remained together since 1979; they continue to produce an average of one album per year since 1984.³⁸ Like many rock groups since the 1950s, the band consists of four performers: Kevin Russell, singer; Peter "Pe" Schorowsky, percussion; Matthias "Gonzo" Roehr, guitar; and Stephan Weidner, bass. The British-German cross-fertilization of *Oi* is represented by the fact that the lead singer of this German *Oi* band that often calls for the preservation of the German state against foreigners is *British*.³⁹ In an interview with the magazine *Emma*, Stephan Weidner recalls that one of his first powerful influences was the Sex Pistols and that, before taking on the name Die böhse Onkelz, his band was a no-name punk band.⁴⁰

Der nette Mann

Der nette Mann (1984) is Die böhse Onkelz's first album. The title song, "Der nette Mann," has become for many a symbol of the brutality of German *Oi* Musik.⁴¹ The song has been placed on the infamous "index" since 1986.⁴² One problem with indexing is that it intensifies the *Oi* listener's desire for the music. A second problem is that, when recording, musicians can work around the danger of being placed on the index by changing words or phrases that are well known through concerts.⁴³

"Deutschland" by Die böhse Onkelz

"Deutschland," first released on *Der nette Mann*, is structured like much German *Oi* Musik: (1) intro, (2) verse/chorus/verse/chorus, (3) guitar solo, (4) verse/chorus/verse/chorus, and (5) coda. Here is the text of the song:⁴⁴

(Zwölf?) Jahre in deiner Geschichte
wird unsere Verbundenheit zu dir nicht zu nichte
es gibt kein Land frei von Dreck und Scherben

wir sind hier geboren wir wollen nicht sterben
 Deutschland Deutschland Vaterland
 Deutschland Deutschland mein Heimatland

Wir freuen uns deutsch zu sein, wollen hier leben
 das Land in den Dreck ziehen, die Fahne verhöhn
 doch wir sind stolz in dir geboren zu sein
 wir sind stolz drauf deutsche zu sein

Deutschland Deutschland Vaterland
 Deutschland Deutschland mein Heimatland

[guitar solo]

wir sind stolz in dir geboren zu sein
 wir sind stolz drauf deutsch zu sein
 deutsche Frauen deutsches Bier
 schwarz und rot wir stehen zu dir

Deutschland Deutschland Vaterland
 Deutschland Deutschland mein Heimatland

Es gibt kein Land frei von Dreck und Scherben
 wir sind hier geboren, wir wollen nicht sterben
 deutsche Frauen deutsches Bier
 schwarz und rot wir stehen zu dir

Deutschland Deutschland Vaterland
 Deutschland Deutschland mein Heimatland

Deutschland Deutschland Vaterland
 Deutschland Deutschland mein Heimatland
 Deutschland Deutschland Vaterland
 Deutschland Deutschland wir reichen dir die Hand

[guitar repeats chorus without voice]

[end with sustain on tonic note]

[12:] Years in your history
 our loyalty to you will not be destroyed
 there's no land free of filth and splinters
 we were born here we don't want to die

Germany Germany Fatherland
 Germany Germany my home country

We are happy to be Germans and want to live here
 to pull the country through the filth and spoil the flag
 yes! we're proud to have been born in you
 we're proud to be Germans

Germany Germany Fatherland
 Germany Germany my home country

[guitar solo]

we're proud to have been born in you
 we're proud to be Germans
 German women and German beer
 black and red we'll stand by you

Germany Germany Fatherland
 Germany Germany my home country

There is no land free of filth and splinters
 we were born here we don't want to die
 German women German beer
 black and red we'll stand by you

Germany Germany Fatherland
 Germany Germany my home country

Germany Germany Fatherland
 Germany Germany my home country
 Germany Germany Fatherland
 Germany Germany we reach out our hand to you

In addition to the social, economic, and political issues in Oi, gender is particularly troubling for the Oi subject. In this song, women are paradoxically praised and dreaded by the male narrator of the text. The essential dynamic of Oi subjectivity is the structuring and maintaining of a clear binary between the self and the Other. The Other is usually the foreigner, less often the leftist, women, occasionally the external world as an entirety. Klaus Theweleit has discussed the role of women in fascist ideology in *Male Fantasies*. Theweleit argues that the

quintessential German soldier was a member of the *Freikorps*—soldiers from World War I who refused to disband after the war and became the kernel of the Nazi SA, SD, and SS in the 1920s. Through a detailed examination of letters, diaries, and novels, Theweleit discovered that the male fascist subject had three absolute categories for women: the white, pure nurse; the wife who kept the family together back home; and dangerous, red women. He focuses much of the analysis of *Male Fantasies* on these men's fantasies of red women; she can be a Communist, a whore, a female of the enemy, and the men describe fantasy red women in terms of a swamp, a flood, a space that threatens to engulf the male subject. He describes a desire for destruction, a "burning" for war without end, that informs the language of these men, and the urge for destruction is always closely linked to a desire to obliterate red women.⁴⁵

In German Oi Musik as well, women are often identified with a "red flood," an oceanic force that threatens to engulf the male Oi subject. Most German Oi texts assume an external threat of foreigners and leftist politics in Germany. Against this flood a defense must be erected: a shield is constructed and put in place; it defines the pure race internally and protects the male subject. The complement to this placement of the shield is the active and phallic destruction of the Other: striking out with the sword.⁴⁶ "Deutschland" is, as it were, a shield song; the song yearns for a clear binary between the self and the Other, between Germany and the rest of the world. Within this fantasy binary, women are objects to be consumed: "deutsche Frauen/deutsches Bier." The equation of women and beer is at once an obvious and a horridly clear objectification of the female body and an indication that, as in other German Oi lyrics, the objectification of women marks woman as organic Other. To return briefly to the punk/skin comparison developed earlier, here is one clear and significant difference between the two subjectivities and musics: there were female punk bands; a female German Oi band is hard to imagine.⁴⁷

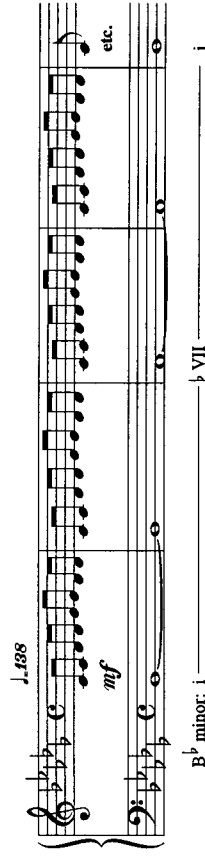
One thing that is so obvious that it can be overlooked is the national identity that the song obsessively repeats. What is curious about this song and much German Oi Musik is the nature of the allegiance of Oi subjectivity to the nation Germany. Most of these bands are all marginalized, and the German government seems to be doing all it can to curb the dissemination of this music. There are three paragraphs

of the German *Grundgesetz* that more aggressively and explicitly limit freedom of speech than in the United States. Paragraph 130 forbids "Volksverhetzung" (inciting the people) and provides for a punishment of up to five years in prison for infractions. Paragraph 131 forbids "Aufstachelung zum Rassenhass" (promoting racial hatred); paragraph 86 forbids the distribution of propaganda of illegal organizations; and paragraph 86a forbids the use of illegal symbols such as the swastika.⁴⁸

German Oi subjectivity is thus allied to a fantasy of "Deutschland"—a pure Germany at once *present* (as in "Get rid of the foreigners so that our Germany can be pure") and *absent* (a fantasy of the return of a lost and once pure state). The phrase "die Fahne verhöhnern" is curious. There is a parallel structure in the text: subject and verb *we want*, followed by infinitive phrases: *to live here, to pull the country through the filth, to spoil the flag*. What sense does it make for a German Oi band to construct and represent a fantasy of spoiling the flag? There are two possibilities. On the one hand, the agency could be displaced from the singers to the liberal politicians of the postwar Bundesrepublik Deutschland who are "spoiling" the real German flag of the Nazis. Recall that the song begins with a reference to twelve years—presumably those between 1933 and 1945. Or the agency remains with the singers; the flag that they fantasize ruining is the flag of the Bundesrepublik Deutschland—a false nation imposed on Germans from without. German Oi subjectivity is marked with a desire to return—here to the German nation prior to 1945.

The phrase "Wir sind wieder da!" at the outset of "Imperator der G." by Störkraft suggests this sense of return, of repetition. Yet German Oi is supposedly apolitical; German Oi bands have never allied themselves with the established right-wing parties and never participated in party functions. The center of German Oi national fantasy is thus curiously abstract, curiously unstable. One can begin to unpack this instability in the music itself. German Oi is supposed to be pure, German music. In the words of one song by Endstufe, "Wir spielen keinen Punk / Wir spielen Skinhead Rock and Roll!" (from "Skinhead Rock and Roll" on Endstufe's album of the same title). For an introduction to how "Deutschland" sounds, see ex. 48.⁴⁹

The steady stream of eighth notes embodies the punk influence that pervades much German Oi Musik—an extension of the steady eighth



Example 48. The opening riff of "Deutschland" by Die böhse Onkelz.

notes of 1950s rhythm and blues. There is a pungent 2-3 suspension as the minor second between the bass B $\flat$ and the C $\sharp$ in the upper system resolves with the stepwise descent in the bass to A $\flat$. More important, the bass motion emphasizes the flattened seventh scale degree—a clear element of the musical language of the blues. A common misconception in some German journalism is that German Oi Musik involves a mindless use of "three-chord minimalism."⁵⁰ Most Oi Musik is monophonic and not chordal at all. Within the monophonic style, Oi uses the scale degrees I, $\flat$ II, ii, iii, III, iv, IV, V, $\flat$ VI, vi, $\flat$ VII, and VII and guitar solos that show a mastery of the instrument in a variety of styles. There are Oi ballads, slow songs, fast songs, unique uses of the voice (particularly in songs by Störkraft), electronic manipulations such as echo effects, intentional use of distortion and feedback, noises from the environment, etc. This music is dangerous, but it is not mindless. The harmony of the chorus alternates between $\flat$ VI and V. Again, $\flat$ VII and $\flat$ VI are sounds taken directly from the blues. The chorus of the song expands on the half-step motion between $\flat$ VI and V.

The song "Singen und Tanzen" from Die böhse Onkelz is an example of a skin dance song. The lyrics suggest the subversiveness of Bill Haley and the Comets' "Rock around the Clock," and this song is very close to a self-conscious update of that 1950s classic. The barely disguised appropriation of 1950s rock in this song can be heard in the bass, shown in ex. 49.

The 1950s sound is even clearer in the music right after the first eight measures. The music suddenly stops, and there are eight quiet taps before the first verse begins. This sounds like a reminiscence of the "ticky-tacky" drum sound of Bill Haley before the more aggressive sound of

Elvis and other 1950s rock-and-roll musicians began to dominate. The guitar plays chords off the beat, as shown in ex. 50.

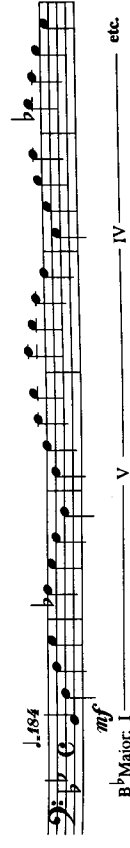
This is characteristic of ska (a forerunner of reggae), and quite a bit of German Oi Musik has this ska influence—particularly guitar chords played *off the beat*. Ska chords played on upbeats sound so good in this music because they sound at the eighth-note level the structure of the backbeat at the quarter-note level. While the backbeat emphasizes beats 1 and 3 by slamming beats 2 and 4, ska chords emphasize the *downbeat* by always sounding on the *upbeat*.

"Stolz" also involves blues-influenced harmonies and ska off-beat accompaniment. The text is as follows:⁵¹

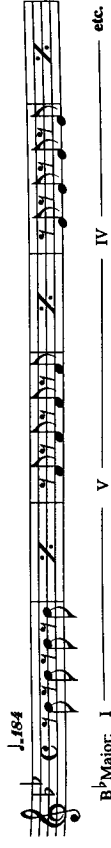
Einer von vielen mit rasiertem Kopf,
du steckst nicht zurück, denn du hast keine Angst,
Shermans, Braces, Boots, and Jeans [Jeans and Boots]
Deutschlandfahne, denn darauf bin ich stolz [bist du Stolz]
man lacht über dich, weil du Arbeiter bist,
doch darauf bin ich stolz, ich hör nicht auf den Mist!

Du bist Skinhead, du bist Stolz,
du bist Skinhead, schrei's heraus,
du bist Skinhead, du bist stolz,
du bist Skinhead, schrei's heraus!

Example 49. The bass line to "Singen und Tanzen" by Die böhse Onkelz.



Example 50. Off-the-beat guitar chords in "Singen und Tanzen" by Die böhse Onkelz.



Du hörst Onkelz, wenn du zu Hause bist,
 du bist einer von vielen, denn du bist nicht allein,
 du bist tätowiert auf deiner Brust,
 denn du weißt, welcher Kult für dich am besten ist,
 die Leute schauen auf dich mit Hass in den Augen,
 sie schimpfen dir nach und erzählen Lügen über dich!

Du bist. . .

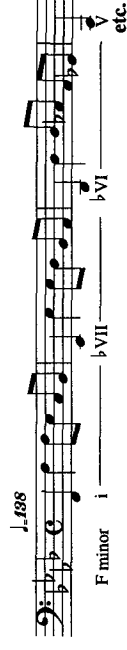
One among many with shaved head
 you don't stay behind 'cause you're not afraid
 Shermans, Braces, Jeans, and Boots,
 Flag of Germany, 'cause you're proud of it,
 people laugh at you 'cause you're a worker,
 but I'm proud of that, I ignore such crap!

You're a skinhead, you are proud
 you're a skinhead, scream it out loud
 you're a skinhead, you are proud
 you're a skinhead, scream it out loud

You listen to the Uncles at home
 you're one among many, you're not alone
 you're tattooed on your chest
 you know which cult is the best for you
 people look at you with hate in their eyes
 they swear at you and tell lies about you.

You're a skinhead. . .

The last two lines of the last verse suggest an essential component of Oi subjectivity—anxiety produced by the gaze of the Other. The shield aspect of Oi subjectivity discussed above can always be penetrated by a gaze bearing identity-threatening negative judgment from the outside. The pride that is at the center of skinhead identity seems to be fueled in this song by defending oneself against the Other's gaze through companionship. But I think that no amount of solidarity with other threatened subjects can produce a defense against the castrating gaze of the Other. The music of "Stolz" begins with a riff in the bass that descends stepwise from tonic to the dominant, as shown in ex. 51.



Example 51. Opening riff of "Stolz" by Die böhse Onkelz.

This bass line is accompanied by the guitar playing a ska motive like the one shown in "Singen und Tanzen" (see ex. 50 above). The power of the chorus derives from its musical stripping of ornamentation of the opening riff; the voices are shouting, not singing, as the guitars play a simple descending perfect fourth from tonic to the dominant (F# "Du bist Skinhead!") [You are a skinhead!]—E♭ "Du bist Stolz!" [You are proud!]—D♭ "Du bist Skinhead!" [You are a skinhead!]"—C# "Schrei's heraus!" [Scream it out loud!]). In this and a few other songs, there is a "dive-bomber" effect taken from Jimi Hendrix. Also, there is a consciously massive wall of noise, feedback, and distortion that accompanies the final "heraus!" of this song.⁵²

"Wieder mal'n Tag verschenkt" is a pastiche of sounds from the slow rock ballad repertoire. The text is an adolescent fantasy of the meaninglessness of life tightened up a notch to extreme self-pity. The text is as follows:

Ein neuer Tag beginnt
 auf der Suche nach dem Sinn
 den Sinn in meinem Leben
 doch ich kann ihn nicht finden
 was kann das alles sein
 was kommt danach dann ist's vorbei
 wer kennt die Antwort auf diese Fragen?
 Die Zeit vergeht nichts passiert
 nichts ist geschehen und es rebelliert
 in den Falten meiner Seelen
 in den Ecken meiner Seele meiner Seele
 Wieder mal'n Tag verschenkt
 wieder mal'n Tag verschenkt

Tage vergehen nichts passiert
 nichts ist geschehen und es rebelliert
 in den Falten meiner Seelen
 in den Ecken meiner Seele

ich hab' nächtelang gezecht
 mich ins Coma gesoffen
 oft gezielt doch nie getroffen
 ich weiss wie es ist der Arsch zu sein

wieder mal'n Tag verschenkt
 wieder mal'n Tag verschenkt

A new day begins

with a search for meaning
 the meaning of my life
 but I can't find it yet

was that it, can that be all there is
 what comes afterward, is it all over
 who knows the answers to these questions?

Time passes nothing happens
 nothing happens and I feel rebellious
 in the folds of my soul
 in the corners of the soul
 once again a day is gone
 once again a day is gone

Days pass nothing happens
 nothing happens and I feel rebellious
 in the folds of my soul
 in the corners of my soul

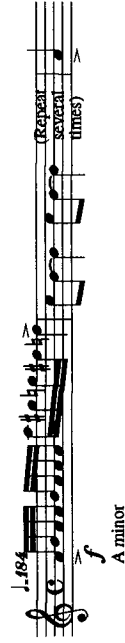
I've raised hell all night
 drunk myself into a coma
 aimed many times but never hit the mark
 I know very well what it feel like to be an asshole

once again a day is gone
 once again a day is gone

It is important to remember that both fascist subjectivity and Oi subjectivity emerge not from pathological exceptions to the normalcy of everyday life but precisely *out of* everyday life. Qualitatively, the text is nothing more than a conventional male adolescent fantasy taken a bit into delinquency in the lines "I've raised hell all night / drunk myself into a coma." The music does two things that are reserved for self-pitying German Oi ballads: (1) there is humming right before the vocal entry, and (2) phrases are repeated, such as "meiner Seele." The piece opens with a guitar riff of very heavy bottleneck sliding that sounds like a cheesy imitation of Ry Cooder; there is a strummed acoustic guitar throughout, no percussion, and fragments of melodies played on a piano in cocktail bar ballad style. The harmonic rhythm is slow—one change per measure.⁵³

The song "Heilige Lieder" is crucial to a study of German Oi Musik for several reasons. First, it represents the "new" böhse Onkelz, the clean, reformed bunch of bad guys. The first stanza of the verse has been transcribed by Klaus Walter: "Hier sind die süssesten Noten jenseits des Himmels / heilige Lieder aus berufenem Mund / wahre Worte im Dschungel der Lüge / das Licht im Dunkel ein heiliger Bund" (Here are the sweetest notes this side of heaven / holy songs from appointed mouths / true words in a jungle of lies / a light in the darkness, a holy offering).⁵⁴ Several newspaper articles have questioned whether this "Wendung" (change) is a ruse, part of the deeper mission of Oi to penetrate mainstream culture using texts that seem less offensive than their earlier material, texts that are irrevocably coded nonetheless.⁵⁵ The song has become very well known in Germany, taking Oi Musik out of the exclusive domain of hard-core skins. As of June 1993, *Heilige Lieder* sold over 500,000 copies and occupied the position of number 5 on the German pop charts.⁵⁶

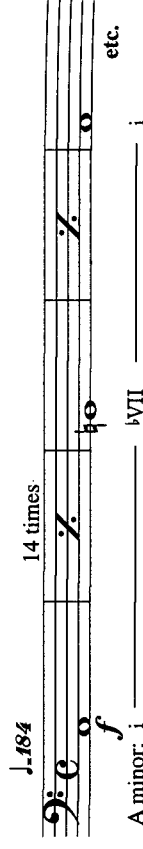
The song is a self-reflexive hymn of praise dedicated to German Oi Musik. It opens with a guitar riff that is fuzzy and distant, shown in ex. 52. This riff is repeated a few times, and then the music shifts channels in a moment of hesitation, as if circling around the head of the listener; then it "snaps into place," and the verse begins in A. The introduction to "Heilige Lieder" is fuzzy and distant; with one hit on the snare drum, the verse is clear, up close, fast, and tight. The music seems to go faster once it snaps into place, but it doesn't—an example of how music can produce acoustic illusion.



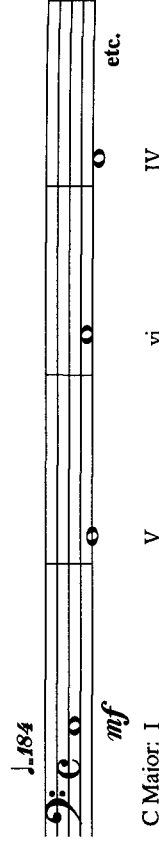
Example 52. Opening riff of "Heilige Lieder" by Die böhse Onkelz.

The musical structure of the opening riff is ingenious; it has three components that follow one another diachronically in the melody. The first is the major-second alternation between A $\sharp$ and B $\natural$; this is a quickened-up version of the major second that so often signifies the "walking blues." This example blurs our ability to be consciously aware of the blues-like sound of the gesture. But we are aware unconsciously, however, and the riff immediately inscribes us in/hides us from the musical tradition of the blues. The second element of the riff is the chromatic filling in of the major third from the high A $\sharp$ to the F $\sharp$. The gesture shifts from rhythm (the repeated alternation between A $\sharp$ and B $\natural$) to pitch structure (the filled-in major third that moves *down* from A $\sharp$, as the initial gesture had stepped *up* from the same note). The third element of the riff is the move down to and pause on B $\natural$. This generates enormous energy for two reasons. First, the rapid motion of sixteenth notes suddenly slows to eighth and dotted quarter notes. Second, the halt on the B $\natural$ frustrates the descent of the melodic line down to the melodic goal—A $\sharp$. And it is precisely right after this rhythmically, gesturally, and melodically charged note that the music snaps into place. The harmonic rhythm of the verse is excruciatingly slow, as shown in ex. 53. The aching feeling that something needs to happen to the slow harmonic rhythm of the verse is released with the leisurely unfolding pop harmonies of the chorus, which softens the hard blues progression I-IV-I-V-IV-I with an added minor submediant, as shown in ex. 54.⁵⁷

As the verse returns, it becomes clear that a hint of the A-major/G-major motion of the verse is contained in the vocal part that obsessively works over the double neighbor figure B $\flat$ -A $\sharp$ -G $\sharp$ -A $\sharp$. The B $\flat$ -A $\sharp$ half step signifies heavy metal. "Heilige Lieder" ends with an unusual sound—two-part vocal harmony—an affectation of commercial pop scoring. While Oi subjectivity is indirectly evoked by a song like "Heilige Lieder," it is explicitly evoked in many songs by Störkraft.



Example 53. Harmonic rhythm of verse of "Heilige Lieder" by Die böhse Onkelz.



Example 54. Harmony of the chorus of "Heilige Lieder" by Die böhse Onkelz.

Störkraft

According to a government report from Lower Saxony, the band Störkraft from Andernach is one of the most important German Oi Musik bands for inspiring listeners with German nationalist feelings.⁵⁸ The lead singer of this band is being tried in the German courts (as of the summer of 1993), and government officials have raided apartments in search of material in violation of paragraphs 130, 131, 86, and 86a mentioned above.⁵⁹ The text of the band's "In ein paar Jahren" is as follows:

Früh in der Bildung, da fing es schon an,
ein Land voller Dreck, genannt Deutschland.
Sie nahmen dir den Stolz, verhöhnten das Land,
Doch das hast du damals noch nicht erkannt.

In ein paar Jahren haben wir keine Rechte mehr.
Unsere Gefühle existieren nicht mehr.
Doch wir sind geboren in Deutschland.
Wir kämpfen für das deutsche Vaterland.

Überall wohin du siehst, siehst du wie dein Land überfließt,
Fremde Völker mischen sich ein und behaupten auch
noch deutsch zu sein

In ein paar Jahren. . . .

Ja eines Tages, da wacht ihr alle auf.

Rettet die Rasse, die man einst verkauft.

Ich weiss, in jedem Deutschen, da steckt ein Mann,
der das Verderben noch verhindern kann.

In ein paar Jahren . . .

. . . doch wir sind zum Kampf bereit!

Early in school, it began already,

A land full of waste, a land called Germany.

They took your pride away, mocked the land,

But they never really knew you.

In a few years, we'll have no more rights

Our feelings don't exist any more.

But we have been born in Germany.

We will fight for the German fatherland.

Everywhere you look

you see how your land is flowing over.

Foreign peoples mix themselves in

and claim to be Germans.

In a few years, we'll have no more rights.

Our feelings don't exist any more.

But we have been born in Germany.

We will fight for the German fatherland.

Yes, one day, you will all wake up.

Save the race that one used to sell.

I know that inside every German, there is a man
who can prevent this decay.

In a few years, we'll have no more rights.

Our feelings don't exist any more,

But we have been born in Germany.

We will fight for the German fatherland.

We are ready for the fight!

The word *aufwachen* from “In ein paar Jahren” has clear Nazi overtones, as from the line “Deutschland erwache!” And much of the song is a fantasy of boundary trauma described by Klaus Theweleit in *Male Fantasies*. The Oi subject behind this text feels as if he has no skin and the external world is flooding into the vacant spot where his personality is tenuously holding on for life. This fear pervades many of Störkraft’s texts. It is dangerous to overpsychologize the subjectivity of a few thousand German skins and to suggest that others, perhaps *many* others, qualitatively share in the structures that clearly mark “the tip of the iceberg,” the four to five-thousand hard-core German skins. But the obsessive rituals of tattooing and shaving heads, and lyrics such as this song suggest an extreme version of a trauma in early childhood development that we all go through, according to Ester Bick: the sense that our bodies have not been incorporated into any space immediately after birth, that we are born into an uncontrollable flux of body parts, surfaces, sounds, smells.⁶⁰ Didier Anzieu argues that the perception that one’s body is enclosed by skin marks a crucial phase in very early childhood development. He shows that, for infants, the skin has three functions: (1) it contains the various parts of the body, (2) it shields the body from the world from which it has become separate, and (3) it facilitates communication with the outside world. Anzieu argues that all three of these functions must be securely in place before psychic development can continue to the acoustic-mirror stage, the visual mirror stage, the triangulation of desire, and language acquisition.⁶¹ A wide variety of psychic and/or cultural pressures can cause people to mark their skin as the site of trauma. In addition to the right-wing appropriation of neutral punk ideology (with the piercing of skin so common in punk style), extreme social marginalization in German social space of the late 1980s and 1990s caused youths drawn to Oi to scar their skin in an active attempt to master the experience that we all have experienced passively—the perception that our bodies are enclosed, protected by delicate membranes of skin.

The song “Söldner” has received much attention in the German media during the early 1990s. The text is as follows:

Er ist ein Söldner und Faschist

Er ist ein Mörder und Sadist.

Er hat keine Freunde, er liebt nur sich.

Ein Menschenleben interessiert ihn nicht.
 Er hat keine Sinne und keinen Verstand.
 Er hat keine Herrkunft, man hat ihn verbannt.

oh . . . er ist Söldner

Er ist ein Skinhead und Faschist.
 Er hat 'ne Glatze und ist Rassist.
 Moral und Herz besitzt er nicht.
 Hass und Gewalt zeichnen sein Gesicht.
 Er liebt den Krieg, und liebt die Gewalt.
 Und bist du sein Feind, dann mach ich dich kalt.

oh . . . er ist Söldner

He is a soldier and a fascist
 He is a murderer and a sadist
 He has no friends, he loves only himself
 A human life doesn't interest him at all
 He has no conscience and no brains
 He has no ancestry, he's been banned.

O . . . he is a soldier

He is a skinhead and fascist
 He has a bald head and is a racist
 He doesn't possess a heart or a sense of morality
 Hate and violence mark his face
 He loves only war and loves only violence
 And if you're his enemy, then I will kill you.

O . . . he is a soldier.

In an interview with the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, the band's lead singer, Jörg Petritsch, asserts that this song was written and first performed by a punk band named Target.⁶² If this is true, then the boundaries between punk and skin music may be quite blurry indeed.⁶³ There is a twist in the text that produces an uncanny sense that the text gazes out at the listener, and this shift has been overlooked as often as it has been correctly perceived in transcriptions of the words in articles; the next to the last line is correctly written "Und bist du sein Feind,



Example 55. Opening riff of "Söldner" by Störkraft.

dann mach' ich dich kalt." It is often given as "Und bist du sein Feind, dann macht er dich kalt." The emergence of *ich* in the text suddenly collapses two binaries: the soldier and the singer, on the one hand, and the victim and the listener, on the other. Until the last line of the last verse, we are listening to a horrifying description of a pure killer in the third person: *er*, whose victims are unnamed. With the shift from *er* to *ich*, the listener is addressed, and the musician is identified in an instant as the voice of the soldier. The song combines a sense of the listener as victim of the soldier's violence and *perpetrator* of that violence. A crucial element of Oi subjectivity is precisely this confusion of violence from without and violence from within.

The music sounds like punk (musical evidence to back up Jörg Petritsch's assertion of the song's pedigree); for the opening riff and the musical basis of the verse, see ex. 55. The motion between i and bVII sounds particularly powerful in this song that isolates and obsessively reworks the major second between F# (tonic) and E# (bVII). The "O . . ." of the chorus is set to a rising line (F#-G#-A#-B#) that suggests F# *minor*. Two aspects of Störkraft's music seem very powerful to me. First, the music often cuts to silence. In "Söldner," there is a cut to total silence after the introductory riff given in ex. 55, accompanied by a dry cymbal sound and *mezzo forte* bass drum notes on each quarter note of each measure. Sudden drops to silence occur in 1950s rock, ska, and much music by Störkraft. Such silences articulate the control the band has over each other and the *listener*. Their unpredictability and very short duration bring the listener up short as if the music were gazing at the listener. Slavoj Žižek discusses silence as gaze in the following: "Lacan determines the *objet small a* as the bone which got stuck in the subject's throat: if the exemplary case of the gaze *qua* object is a blind man's eyes, i.e., eyes which *do not see* . . . then the exemplary case of the voice *qua* object is a voice which remains silent,

i.e., which we *do not hear*.”⁶⁴ Second, Jörg Petritsch’s voice is at once very rough like gravel and very clear—an extraordinary example of a rock *Sprechstimme*.⁶⁵ The complete isolation of the subject in the lyrics marks the song as more punk than German Oi Musik. One of the key features of Oi subjectivity is male bonding, and this song produces a fantasy of the totally isolated individual male warrior.

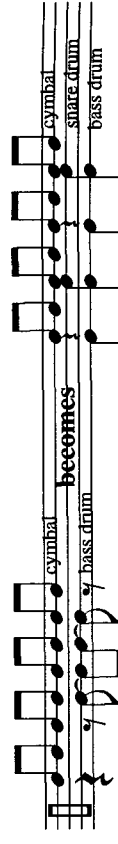
“Mann für Mann” Störkraft

The verses of this song express the boundary anxiety that is common in much German Oi Musik. The following line sounds right out of Theweleit: “die Rote Masse nimmt drastisch ihren Lauf” (the red mass swells drastically). And then, after another line: “dann ist es viel lieber Tod als rot!” (then it’s much better to be dead than red”; translations mine). This last line resonates with middle-class rhetoric of 1950s Bundesrepublik discourse that has been reinscribed into an 1980s Oi song. The verses of this song express the fantasy of German Oi subjectivity being flooded from without by women, Communists, and foreigners. The song opens with a slow solo in the guitar that is a whining hymn of self-pity; there are luxurious smears notated by lines between notes in ex. 56, and the meter is free.⁶⁶

The chorus represents the phallic assertion of drawing the boundary between the self and the other through male bonding: “Doch für uns gibt es keine Weiche / wir stehen Mann für Mann / stark wie deutsche Eisen / den niemand mehr flexen kann” (No weaklings for us / we stand man for man / strong as German iron / that no one can bend). The phrase “stark wie deutsches Eisen” clearly was made possible by Hitler’s description of the German soldier: “stark wie Kruppstahl.” The alteration between anxious fantasies of being flooded and phallic fantasies of assertion is represented in the music by a quickened tempo (nothing specific to this song) and by a shift in the percussion (something that *is* unique to this song). Example 57 shows that in the verse there is no snare drum and the bass drum articulates a syncopated pulse; in the chorus, the backbeat returns in the snare, and the bass plays again on the beat; this is a musical locking into place, a stiffening response to the self-pitying opening solo and the weak, syncopated drum beat of the verse.



Example 56. Opening guitar solo in “Mann für Mann” by Störkraft.



Example 57. Shift in percussion between verse and chorus in “Mann für Mann” by Störkraft.

One of the song’s later verses expresses a rarely explicit link between Oi subjectivity and flight from women: “Jetzt stehst du da voller Tränen und Leid / dennoch deine Frau wird das niemals mehr verzeihen / komm zu uns und dann bist du nicht mehr allein / dafür hörst du uns; ein Leben darf dankbar sein” (Now you stand all alone full of tears and pain / yet your wife will never forgive you / come to us, then you’ll not be alone anymore / that’s why you listen to us / a life can be grateful!).

The musical representation of the last line is like an erection, in this case, a homophobically constructed homocroticism.⁶⁷ The song ends with a fade-out, a very rare sound at the end of a German Oi song. Most Oi songs end with an aggressive close, usually a single note. Fade-out seems particularly appropriate here, given the whiny solo at the beginning of the song. German Oi Musik actively confronts the listener, and this is part of its phallic nature; thus, a fade-out is antithetical to its aesthetic. Recall how the verse of “Heilige Lieder” snaps into place after its fuzzy opener by having the music briefly oscillate between the left and the right channels. It is as if the music found the listener in its musical sights, as it were, aimed, and fired. An additional note to “Söldner” discussed above: the song begins with a helicopter approaching from the distance, beginning to fire overhead, then receding into the distance; here again, the listener is sighted and fired on.⁶⁸

Despite the fact that one can describe characteristics that several Oi songs share, the category *Oi* also includes some unusual songs, such as

"Mickie" by Störkraft. It opens with an anthem-like solo played by the guitar. The anthem announces a song in which the verses are in a clear twelve-bar blues form in A major. The bass plays both the minor and the major third in a fast 4 that sounds like 1950s rock and roll. The song gets close to acknowledging its musical roots in the black tradition of the twelve-bar blues and 1950s mainstream rock and roll. What differentiates this tip-of-the-hat from punk is that in punk there are specific references to specific songs and in Oi Musik there is unacknowledged appropriation of musical material—a radical disavowal of a musical debt. Punk more openly acknowledges its history; German Oi Musik takes the history of rock and roll, strips it of its affect, and cathects it onto a protofascist subjectivity. A direct quote to a direct song would destroy this ideological-musical mechanism. A direct quote in punk makes the listener consciously aware of a musical debt; Sid Vicious sings "My Way," and most listeners competent in the mainstream popular repertoire of the postwar decades will process the song as a parodic representation of complacent middle-class individualism. When an Oi band such as Störkraft plays a song like "Söldner," the listener who is competent in punk style recognizes stylistic markers *unconsciously*, aware of the phobic denial on which the song depends, but consciously processes the song as Oi. While it is difficult to mark a clear threshold between conscious and unconscious structures that place a listener within an ideological field, I think that *general* stylistic references trigger unconscious structures while *specific* references trigger conscious structures. The perception of general style depends on a listening competence that is produced by many hearings of many pieces. In an unconscious response to music, one forgets individual pieces and specific references and still responds to the general features of a style.

Another song by the band Endstufe, "Skinhead Rock and Roll," both acknowledges and denies its roots. The denial is in such lyrics as "Wir spielen keinen Punk / Wir spielen Skinhead Rock and Roll" (We don't play punk / we play skinhead rock and roll) and "Sheiss auf die Hippie-Musik" (shit on hippie music). The acknowledgment is in the music; the piece is pure blues with the walking blues major second discussed above in the outset of "Heilige Lieder." Also, the music has a steady stream of eighth notes that would not have been possible without punk, and the bVII harmony is out of the blues scale and is ubiquitous in "Hippie-Musik" from the 1960s.

German Oi Musik is anything but fast, three-chord, primitive music. My transcriptions of several hours of Oi Musik yield tempi ranging from sixty-nine to two hundred beats per minute; Oi monophony articulates every scale degree within the blues minor scale (and even a diminished triad in "Singen und Tanzen"); its dynamics (an admittedly very fluid category) range from *piano* to *fortissimo*. Verse and chorus tempi are different from one another in "Mann für Mann" by Störkraft and "Stolz" by Die böhse Onkelz. Even though many Americans and even German intellectuals, teachers, and journalists may never hear German Oi Musik, it is very important music because it has been linked (as suggested above) to the violence of the right-wing skin scene in Germany and to activities that directly precede burning places of residence and businesses owned by foreigners and people seeking political asylum in Germany. This chapter has intended to show how one kind of post-rock and roll can function.⁶⁹

It is also crucial to remember that, appearances to the contrary, the Right is not stupid, or, to put it more accurately, calling the Right stupid lets the Left dismiss it as primitive. I hope this chapter has shown that this music is anything but primitive, anything but stupid. Of course, German Oi musicians respond to questions in interviews with German journalists in ways that resemble stupidity. But the way German Oi musicians talk suggests a carefully polished rhetorical structure that parallels deeper aspects of Oi subjectivity that I have been exploring—particularly the fear of flooding and the need to protect oneself from dissolution. In interviews, and in other statements, Oi band members do not argue; they pursue points until a wall needs to be drawn between "us" and "them."⁷⁰ These walls make Oi musicians sound stupid, as if they were unable to draw a logical conclusion from a premise. But these walls have a structure. One common device for excusing the playing of songs at concerts that have been forbidden is that the crowd forces them to do it. A way for Oi musicians to avoid responsibility for acts of violence that were preceded by listening to Oi is the claim that what people do with their music is out of the control of the musicians themselves. The idea that Oi is *nur Musik* (only music) often signifies this alibi. One of the most common rhetorical devices in these articles is the statement that "we are constantly being misunderstood." Stephan Weidner asserts that his music is "Musik aus dem Bauch" (music from the gut)—an appeal to the purely emotional

nature of rock. It is a delicious irony to me that Oi musicians assert that they are misunderstood by the public. I think that the essence of Oi subjectivity *is* misrecognition; one both hates and needs the Other; one both rejects and fully cannibalizes the history of rock and roll.

This rhetoric of Oi subjectivity in interviews is represented in the music; turn everything into a brutal attack from without so that the self can protect itself from aggression by bonding with other males and purging social space of the Other. But personal space can never be purged of the Other; the abject is with us in our own body fluids and the vulnerability of own's own *skin*. This is the deadly mixture that makes German Oi Musik burn so powerfully. No matter how many people one kills, one will never be able (one will never really *want*) to eliminate the abjection of one's own body and the Other that fuels one's rage.

Since this chapter was first conceived and written, a new development has occurred in Oi Musik: two central bands have produced new CDs that openly criticize right-wing violence. The double CD *Schwarz/Weiss* by Die böhse Onkelz is an example.⁷¹ German scholars and journalists are divided as to whether this explicit turn away from right-wing ideology is genuine or a screen for continuing the right-wing politics that lie behind the music. I believe that, although the lyrics of the songs of *Schwarz/Weiss* suggest a turn away from right-wing ideology, this ideology is present nevertheless. Suppression of certain taboo representations has been characteristic of German Oi Musik since the 1980s; bands could sing "Türken frei" in a concert and "wirklich frei" on a recording. Thus, one can have it both ways; fans know what the euphemism seems to efface but in fact *underlines*.⁷² Rather than a binary opposition between early explicitly dangerous Oi Musik and recent "changed" Oi Musik, I hear a continuum in which lyrics move from explicit to implicit representations of Oi subjectivity. Songs like "Heilige Lieder" and most of the songs from *Schwarz/Weiss* do not explicitly call for acts of violence against others; yet their affect is based on extreme self-pity, especially when the songs seem to criticize acts of violence perpetrated by Oi subjects. Oi self-pity is internalized guilt from mainstream social institutions that is represented in music such as "Das Messer und die Wunde" from *Schwarz*: "Kennst du die Trauer einer Mutter / die ihr Kind verliert / Kennst du das Herz

eines Freundes / das Leere spürt und stirbt" (Do you know the mourning of a mother / who has lost her child / Do you know the heart of a friend / who senses emptiness and dies). The rhetorical ambiguity of the pronoun *you* signifies the hinge between the voice of the law (the big Other) and its internalized transposition. Thus, when the narrator of the song berates the "you" who has killed, the source of the voice is multiple. It is at once the law condemning the Oi subject for his act of violence and the Oi subject berating himself in self-pity for having lost a brother—signifier at once of self, actual family member, member of the Oi community, and victim. The structure of this song suggests hidden aggression behind its surface mourning: "Kennst du die Wut, den Schmerz / das Brennen tief in mir / die grenzenlose Ohnmacht / einen Bruder, einen Bruder zu verlieren" (Do you know the anger, the pain / the burning deep in me / the boundless impotence / to have lost a brother). The tempo of the verse is 192 beats per minute (the fastest Oi song I know is "Söldner" by Störkraft at 200 beats per minute). There is also a tempo shift for the chorus—96 beats per minute. The music snaps back in place at 192 beats per minute for the rest of the song; the guitar line stresses the flatted second scale degree, a clear signifier of heavy metal. The self-pitying sadism of this song is signified by text that mourns and music that propels aggression.

On the one hand, the Oi subject lives and sings at the margins of society; on the other hand, he evokes German nationalism explicitly (in Oi's early phase of the 1980s) or implicitly (in Oi's late phase of the 1990s). Žižek offers an explanation for the curious interplay between the law and transgressions of the law that can illuminate the sense of alienation from and allegiance to the nation Germany in Oi subjectivity. Žižek writes: "As numerous analyses from Bakhtin onwards have shown, periodic transgressions are inherent to the social order; they function as a condition of the latter's stability. . . . The deepest identification which 'holds a community together' is not so much identification with the Law which regulates 'normal' everyday circuit as, rather, *identification with the specific form of transgression of the Law, of its suspension* (in psychoanalytic terms, with the specific form of enjoyment)."⁷³ Oi subjectivity explicitly transgresses the law; it threatens the social fabric by calling for a reappearance of fascist Germany, for the persecution of foreigners, for the celebration of the purity of the

German race. Implicitly, it *affirms* the law in the process of its transgression; the law protects society from the Oi threat while stopping short of silencing it altogether, betraying a bond that connects the Oi subject with the law. Žižek calls this the “common transgression.”⁷⁴

Oi’s loathing is also complicated; it is introjected from the big Other (although this loathing is mitigated by the “common transgression” described above) and from the self. Loathing is projected onto foreigners and the big Other (recall the phrase “die Fahne verhöhen” from “Deutschland” by Die böhse Onkelz). In a nutshell, the musical signifier of sadism in Oi Musik is the textual disavowal of its musical, black roots. In addition, the complexity of Oi loathing can be understood according to Žižek’s description of the structure of sadism. The Oi subject is sadistic through an identification with representations in music and text that displace his own boundary trauma onto the bodies of victims making him feel, for a moment, full. Such displacement can never make the sadist full since, if he needed something external to his subjectivity, there must be an abiding lack *within*. This lack in part explains how and why the second structure of sadism is necessary. For Lacan, a more *latent* structure of sadism lies underneath the *manifest* structure. In this second, latent structure of sadism, “the sadist does not act for his own enjoyment; his stratagem is, rather, to elude the split constitutive of the subject by means of assuming the role of the object-instrument in service of the big Other.”⁷⁵ The Oi subject is allied to the big Other and acts as an instrument of its enjoyment; the Oi subject introjects the transgressive loathing of the big Other and then projects his loathing outward onto the bodies and representations of bodies of others (lowercase *o*)—foreigners, women, Jews, punks, etc. Loathing flows from the big Other to the Oi subject and back out to the little other in a perpetual circulation, like the drive.

Žižek characterizes the structure of the drive as follows: “[The drive] is *always-already satisfied*: contained in its closed circuit, it ‘encircles’ its object . . . and finds satisfaction in its own pulsation, in its repeated failure to attain the object. In this precise sense, drive . . . appertains to the Real-Impossible, defined by Lacan as that which ‘always returns to its place.’ And it is precisely for this reason that identification with it is not possible.”⁷⁶ This is precisely the structure of Oi subjectivity, which is drawn toward a space that evades one’s grasp.⁷⁷

Oi is a problem for mainstream culture; it is suppressed/repressed, not because it is dark, brutal, and unacceptable, but because it too clearly uncovers the violence lurking just beneath the surface of Western social space.⁷⁸ This music is, after all, being played, not just in Germany, but in the United States, England, France, Italy, and Sweden—the heart of the affluent West. This music is the West’s symptom.⁷⁹

Having fleshed out how Oi texts and music work, I would like to conclude by examining Oi Musik as hailing, how Oi listening subjects are produced and sustained. Althusserian interpellation is made possible by a delicate balance between conscious acts produced in social space and unconscious structures into which the subject is born and socialized.⁸⁰ This balance is reorganized in Oi interpellation. In Oi, the focus is less on a balance between conscious and unconscious forms of knowledge than on a paradoxical, simultaneity of *affirmation* and *denial* of history. Oi texts are historical since they call the subject to join in a collective project to reclaim national and/or racial public space based on a paradigm from the Teutonic past. Oi Musik is historical in its use of familiar musical materials from the history of rock and roll. And Oi Musik is also *ahistorical*, erasing the contours of specific musical pieces, erasing the music’s blackness, and erasing its progressive/expressive roots. I suggest above that Oi Musik must be repressed because it reveals the violence at the heart of the West’s Symbolic Order. This obtains for democratic public policy of nations that produce Oi Musik at their margins. But why is the ahistorical nature of Oi necessary for the sustaining of its own subjectivity? The answer is that psychoanalytically and historically, two mechanisms must be held in place for Oi subjectivity to be sustained, and *each* involves a delicate balance between knowledge that is repressed and knowledge that is expressed.

Psychoanalytically, the Oi subject must let himself be convinced that his boundary trauma has been caused by the other—often expressed as the abject *out there* in social space: leftists, women, foreigners, etc. This other must be obliterated by acts of violence (expulsion, burnings, beatings), and the community can be kept pure by erecting phenomenal and symbolic shields against future incursions. In terms of his own body, the Oi subject must repress the knowledge of the vulnerability of his own skin, his biological link to the body of a woman, and the fact that his body in fact produces the kinds of fluids he identifies as the

abject. Historically, the Oi subject must let himself be convinced that the black sounds of the blues, reggae, punk, and metal with which he is familiar are incomplete, anonymous materials destined to be named and (re)christened by the white, the Right, the here and now of Oi Musik. He must not remember that his music *needs* blackness and could never have come into being without the history of blacks in America, Jamaica, and England, without the progressive political music of the 1960s and 1970s. And he must not let himself know that he is grafting Oi ideology onto an essentially black music in a cannibalistic act of musical violence.⁸¹

7

*Lamentation, Abjection,
and the Music
of Diamanda Galás*

During the summer of 1992, I heard a concert by Diamanda Galás in Hamburg, Germany. The performance took place from 1:00 to 2:30 A.M. in an ornate theater in downtown Hamburg. The initial seconds of the concert shocked me visually and acoustically. Galás sang at the front of the stage, naked from the waist up; behind her, the stage looked like the ruins of a bombed-out building; the stage and Galás were soaked in a bright red light that made Galás's sweat look like blood several minutes into the visceral performance.¹ The dynamic level of the sound was incredibly high, and I heard static in my ears — the telltale sign of sound having crossed the pain threshold. I found the music first repellent and then curiously beautiful; friends who were with me shared these ambivalent responses. In the pages that follow, I will ponder the structures that could have produced these responses culturally and psychoanalytically.²

Diamanda Galás is an American of Greek (Maniot) heritage. Her great-grandparents emigrated to the United States around 1912. She studied the piano with her father and played jazz, gospel, and classical music in public at an early age.³ Having studied avant-garde music with Xenakis, she began creating performance art in the mid-1970s, although, as she says, "I never use that word [*performance artist*] for myself. I use the word *auteur*, as Hitchcock would. Yes, I compose the music and I perform the music and I compose the libretto and I design the lights until I turn it over to a professional lighting designer. But Wagner did that, too! People who call this performance art do it out of