

The pop music parody in US-American and German Late-Night Shows

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Parodies of pop music are a popular instrument of entertainment in US-American Late-Night Shows. Next to pop music itself, they have reached an equal status of interest and influence in popular culture mainly in dependence of the on-line format YouTube. After a short historical overview of the pop music parody on US-American television and YouTube, this study observes why the genre is such a profitable selling strategy of pop music. This work gives an overview of the most popular musical performances on THE TONIGHT SHOW STARRING JIMMY FALLON on NBC and demonstrates how German shows like NEO MAGAZIN ROYALE on ZDFneo, with talk show host and comedian Jan Böhmermann, copy this concept and translate it into a German context. Pop culture will be discussed as a global self-referential system of communication in the sense of Niklas Luhmann, while the musical parody in the pop genre is analyzed on the level of performance focusing on the specific way of voice acting and the index effect in the sense of Diedrich Diederichsen. To achieve this observation, two examples will follow a detailed analysis: Ariana Grande's performance *Wheel of Musical Impressions* in Jimmy Fallon's show and Dendemann's performance *Eine deutsche Rapgeschichte* in Jan Böhmermann's show.

The parody as an autopoietic system

One of many possible definitions of the word parody can lead to »describe[ing] an ‘imitating singer’, or ‘singing in imitation’«, which linguist Fred W. Householder Jr. terms as an »earlier use of the term παρωδός or ‘parodos’ [...] made in contrast to a concept of the ‘original singer’« (Rose 2000, 7). Margaret A. Rose lists eight categories by which a parody can be identified and which I would like to refer to in their abbreviated form: »Semantic changes«, »Changes to the choice of words«, »syntactic change«, »changes in tense, person, or other ‘sentence-grammatical’ features«, »juxtaposition of passages from within the parodied work«, »changes to the associations of the imitated text made by the new context«, »changes in sociolect, in idiolect, or in other elements of the lexicon«, »changes to metre or rhyme in verse parodies« (Rose 2000, 37).

A brief summary offers Linda Hutcheon in *A Theory of Parody*: »Parody, then, in its ironic ‘trans-contextualization’ and inversion, is repetition with difference. A critical distance is implied between the backgrounded text being parodied and the new incorporating work, a distance usually signaled by irony.« (Hutcheon 1985, 32) While these categories mainly describe literal forms of parody, the scientific research into musical parody¹ only takes place in the field of classical music, and here mainly in the field of instrumentation, on the scripted level of composition, not on the performative level concerning the singer. While the technique of a classically trained opera singer only allows a few stylistic changes of singing and his voice is mostly recognized by his timbre, the pop singer has (thanks to the invention of the microphone that facilitates the acous-

1 For example, in the Music of Shostakovich: see Sheinberg 2000.

tics) (Hofacker 2012, 354) multiple ways to use his voice. The performative level of singing becomes important, which is why the parody of a pop singer has much more to do with acting and imitation sounds than with semantic or syntactic changes.

When Sheinberg (2000, 149) notes that »none of those studies explicitly offers a comprehensive structural scheme into which all parodies can fit«, he points out how important the structural level of the parody is and shows how the correlations of structure, content and techniques lead to a continuing circle of tradition and innovation (151). While the fact that a parody switches »between the original work and its ‘imitation’ and transformation« is not new, the relevance of the pop music parody on television and YouTube leads to a global supremacy of the US-American pop music market and a worldwide influence on popular culture not observed previously. Jean Burgess and Josua Green describe that YouTube videos »are not representations of reality, but technologies of re-presentation. Because they communicate to the audience what counts as popular on YouTube, these metrics also take an active role in creating the reality of what is popular on YouTube: they are not only descriptive; they are also performative.« (Burgess/Green 2009, 41) This level of representation is similar to Niklas Luhmann’s theory of the *Realität der Massenmedien*, as a reality of observation in secondary order:

Es geht um ein Realitätsverständnis, das Realität als eine Zwei-Seiten-Form des ‚Was‘ und des ‚Wie‘ annimmt – des ‚was beobachtet wird‘ und des ‚wie es beobachtet wird‘. Und das entspricht genau der Beobachtung von Kommunikation im Hinblick auf eine Differenz von Information und Mitteilung. (Luhmann 1995, 104s)

Even though Luhmann's system theory was formulated when the internet was not yet common practice and the participatory possibilities of distribution websites like YouTube were not on his mind, the pop parody functions as an autopoietic system as such. A system that is autopoietic produces itself out of itself and is based on communication (Luhmann 1995, 20). It is operatively closed, which means that one thought presupposes another thought, but it also has a cognitive openness, which is why irritations inside the system can occur. Its structure is determined and it defines itself through its environment and produces itself temporary (Luhmann 1995, 20). Following the definition of Luhmann's autopoietic systems it becomes clear, why the parody is the perfect instrument for a market interested in selling pop music: The pop parody produces itself out of pop music (operatively closed) and becomes a piece of pop music itself (cognitively open), therefore its autopoiesis is structured in a circle of imitation and transformation. The structure is determined because dependent to its original it is temporary because it is affiliated to the time in which it is produced. Before demonstrating the link of the parody as an autopoietic system, a brief historical overview of musical parody in US-American television will be highlighted.

Musical parody in US-American television

The pop music parody arises from artists like Spike Jones (1911–1965), Allan Sherman (1924–1973) or Stan Freberg (1926–2015), to name but a few, be-

cause they performed musical parodies on stage which can be viewed on YouTube today. The introduction of music parody to Late Night shows on US-American television started with the show TONIGHT STARRING STEVE ALLEN, which aired from 1954–1957 on NBC. Allen himself a musician, included music in his show not only as a background element, but as an element of prime-time entertainment. He was known as »the greatest friend jazz had in television« (Alba 1957, 93) and he tried to introduce his audience to the new genre by inviting famous jazz musicians, performing with them and »conduct[ing] serious panel discussions about musical topics« (105). But when the »network wanted to add a serious drama critic« it became clear that the cast »emphasized comedy and music« (108).

For example, he would play the piano while Sammy Davis sung and danced atop the piano (144m).² On the show, they had »resident vocalists performing musical numbers in between the comedy and other portions of the show« (208) and by changing the cue cards of the live performing singer to mess with him, they discovered that »funny was better than singing good« (212). The pop music parody arose almost parallel to the network MTV and VIVA, television networks specializing in music video distribution. The US-American musician and parodist Weird Al Yankovic parodied the format of music videos in 1984 and his album »Weird Al« won a lot of prizes, especially for his song *Eat It* which was a parody of Michael Jackson's Song *Beat It*, released and received on music television. In 2010, he uploaded the video on YouTube and has managed to continue his success throughout the change of the medium. With his last album

2 Photograph by Meadowlane Enterprises, Inc. without page number.

Mandatory Fun in 2014, he continues his strategy of using famous songs (usually he asks the artist for permission), adding different lyrics and parodying the music video performance staying close to the original. Since YouTube has allowed music streaming distributors like VEVO to upload music video content, the whole music industry has changed and the visual side effect, the performative level of the music have gained new importance. YouTube is not only the place where unknown artists can become YouTube stars by uploading covers of famous pop songs (like Justin Bieber); it is also a place where people can become famous for creating a musical parody. Looking at personalities that have achieved popularity by creating parodies of pop music videos by uploading them on YouTube, it is easy to assume a new relevance of the musical parody especially in regards to amateur musicians. Because of the easy technical reproduction of the music, the parodist on YouTube can add a new text and a new video and easily upload the result. YouTube stars that achieved popularity by creating these types of music parodies are for example Bart Baker, Venetian Princess, Mickey Bolts or Ferry de Ruiter and there is, in fact, a whole YouTube channel dedicated to producing musical parodies, which is called *Key of Awesome* produced, by among others, Todd Womack. Jean Burgess and Joshua Green point out a surprising affiliation of YouTube and the pop music parody:

In 2005, the sketch »Lazy Sunday« on SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE (NBC) was uploaded on to YouTube and is mentioned as one of the reasons for the huge success of the website. A pop music parody with »two nerdy, stereotypical New Yorkers rapping about buying cupcakes and going to see the Chronicles of Narnia« was viewed 1.2 million times in the first ten days (Burgess/Green 2009, 2f), which was an even bigger number at the time considering YouTube did not

have the global influence of today. The SNL sketch is a pop music parody of the rap song *The Message* from Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five that even thirteen years after its release in 1982 continues to be a classic that shaped the rap genre until today. The fading in of public houses in a ghetto neighborhood, the traffic on the streets, the freeze pictures of the protagonists cut next to each other without motion etc. Semantic changes »to the message or subject-matter of the original« (Rose 2000, 37) enable an imitation of the narrative of social problems in the ghetto with an absurd transformation to eating cupcakes and watching the movie NARNIA (USA/GB 2005, Andrew Adamson).

While the text might be completely new, it was changed »to the associations of the imitated text made by the new context« and the SNL comedians Andy Samberg and Chris Parnell changed their »choice of words« and their »sociolect« (ibid). The beat of the music is close to the original and the parody rappers shout their lyrics to express their anger, a parody of hip hop as ‘cool pose’ (Jeffries 2011, 7). The illegally uploaded SNL sketch that became »something of a break-out YouTube hit« (Burgess/Green 2009, 3) in 2005 showed »the potential of YouTube as an outlet for established media to reach out to the elusive but much-desired youth audience.«³ YouTube is received by a younger audience that prefers to consume information or entertainment in general through humorous acts.⁴ On 8 January 2006, the NBC launched their own TONIGHT SHOW YouTube channel.⁵ Since 2014, Jimmy Fallon has been hosting the

3 Ibidem.

4 Even in case of politics »nearly a quarter of Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 get their campaign news from comedy-TV shows.« See also Peterson 2008, 39.

5 TONIGHT SHOW YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/latenight/about>

TONIGHT SHOW and in the tradition of Steve Allen, the musical form is its significant image.⁶ He was a formal SNL member (1998–2004) on NBC where he performed pop music parodies in his input like *Weekend Update: Jimmy Fallon on Trick-or-Treating* or *Weekend Update: Jimmy Fallon on Valentine's Day* by covering the style of a specific musician and a song by changing the lyrics to absurd texts.

On THE TONIGHT SHOW STARRING JIMMY FALLON, the following categories represent music performances in which the show host and the invited guest equally demonstrate their talent as to singing or performing with a humoresque connotation, mainly in the sense of a parody. Most of the time, the hip hop band *The Roots*, now functioning as a show band on NBC, produce the music, but their non-comic music performances will not be listed thereafter. Jimmy Fallon performs the *Evolution of Hip Hop Dancing* with Will Smith showing every possible single hip hop dance move while old hip hop music is played. The *History of Rap* expressed by Justin Timberlake functions in the same way, performing a medley of famous rap songs. Also, he performs the *Dance battle* with Jennifer Lopez, the *Lip Sync Battle* with different actors or a song with a famous band with classroom instruments. In the *Musical Genre Challenge*, which Jimmy Fallon performed with Jamie Fox, the wheel selected a song and a dif-

6 In 2015, CBS followed the same entertainment strategy of combining humor and music by hiring singer and comedian James Cordon. In his category *Drop the Mic*, Cordon and a guest insult each other in the form of a rap battle. The rap is scripted and mostly made to measure with the invited guest. Cordon's most famous category is the *carpool karaoke* in which almost every famous singer has already participated. Cordon invites a singer for a ride in the car, giving an interview while driving and jointly performing the most popular songs of the guest while the original music plays in the background. The show that is clearly filmed outside the studio is mainly produced to gain importance on YouTube.

ferent musical genre which the contestants had to imitate. In the *Wheel of Musical Impressions*, Jimmy Fallon and his guest compete against each other performing songs by famous singers parodying the special technique or style of the original voice.

Analysis: Ariana Grande and Jimmy Fallon:

»*Wheel of Musical Impressions*«

The performance *Wheel of Musical Impressions* with Ariana Grande and Jimmy Fallon aired on 15.09.2015 on NBC and was uploaded on to YouTube shortly afterwards.⁷ The video is 6:13 minutes long and has currently more than 138 million clicks. In the game, both participants have to push a button for a digital wheel to select, on the one side, a famous song and, on the other side, a famous singer. The participant must sing the named song by imitating the named singer. The analysis is going to focus on Ariana Grande's performances, but here it is already important to mention that the show host has to prove his talent as well and it turns out that hosts like Jimmy Fallon can compete with the invited singers on a high level, just like James Cordon.

Ariana Grande starts to push the button and is asked to sing the children song *Mary had a little lamb* imitating the voice of Britney Spears (0:25–0:45). Second, she has to perform another children song *The wheels on the bus* imitating

⁷ The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon. *Wheel of Musical Impressions* with Ariana Grande. Last accessed: March 3, 2020. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ss9ygQqqL2Q>

the voice of Christina Aguilera (2:10–3:18) and her last performance is the song *Can't feel my face* (originally from The Weekend) imitating the voice of Celine Dion, which Grande and Fallon sing together (5:00–5:55). The difficulty of describing the imitation of the voices is founded on the subjectivity of timbre or the physics of a voice in general. But Ariana succeeds and performs the imitation so well that the originality of her and that of the copied singer becomes questionable. If one can copy the voice of a singer perceived as unique, its identity loses authenticity. A parody is based on imitation but not every imitation is supposed to be a parody.

When does the imitation of a voice become a parody? For example, when James Cordon sings a song by Katy Perry and with Katy Perry, the karaoke functions as an imitation of the song without having the objective of being a parody of the voice, even though the mode of entertainment can be humoristic. To parody the voice, one has to imitate the identity of the voice. First of all, this means to imitate the special use of the voice working with sounds, for instance, an especially sexy way of breathing and longing into the microphone as is typical for Britney Spears or shaping the mouth in a significant way with a rigid jaw as is typical for Celine Dion. In the case of imitating Christina Aguilera's voice, it is the use of the belting technique, which Ariana Grande performs professionally. This imitation of the identity of the voice that uses different sounds, different formations of the instrument and different singing techniques, I call the acting-voice because it goes beyond voice acting. The acting-voice imitates the complete character of the voice's owner by imaging his actual body and habitus adding a critical distance typical for the parody. By watching and listening to Ariana imitating the voice of Britney, an ironic effect arises on an inter-

modal level of transferring Britney's voice into Ariana's body. This contra-indication between voice, body and habitus performs the parody and is received as a parody by the insider who knows Britney Spears.

All musical performances in the mentioned Late-Night Shows play with this acting-voice in different ways. Paula Bishop, who observed the *Lip Sync Battle* category of Jimmy Fallon speaks in this context about »re-embodiment of the voice«, saying in fact that »in these performances, the body substitutes for the voice, and more specifically, for a voice that does not belong to the visible body.«⁸ While in the *Lip Sync Battle*, the body becomes a substitute of the voice because the performer has to do a playback primarily by acting or dancing without using the voice, it is the acting voice which becomes a substitute for the parodied artist who is not present, but whose presence is felt through the voice-acting.

Second, a parody is performed by rounding out the voice-acting with dramatized acting. Ariana, for example, imitates a significant nod with the head and a »ha« as an affirmative expression, which is typical for Christina Aguilera ending a phrase of belting. Or when Ariana is imitating Celine Dion, she includes typical phrases like »should we go for it« or »come on«, a typical way in which Celine communicates with the audience, which again, just the insider would recognize as a parody. As a result, the parody is only as good as the acting-voice, the imitation of the voice, the genre, the song or the artist and a bad parody is one that cannot be recognized as one. A parody only works, when the af-

8 Paula J. Bishop »'Sincerely Faking It:' Re-embodiment of the Voice in *Lip Sync Battles*,« presented at the Music and the Moving Image Conference, May, 2016, New York City. (not published)

filiation with the original is very clear. That means, the image of the original imitation must be unique and famous as one can generally only understand the parody by knowing the original. As for Jimmy Fallon, the successful parody of a singer demonstrates his authentic talent as a comedian, Ariana Grande's talent as regards copying other singers puts her in the defense of fidelity and originality. On James Cordon's Carpool Karaoke, she admits that copying other singers made it hard for her to find her own timbre: »It took me a minute to find my own style«⁹.

Late-Night in Germany: Jan Böhmermann

German comedian Harald Schmidt hosted Late-Night Shows on German television (1990–1994 WDR, 1995–2003 Sat1, 2004–2011 Das Erste)¹⁰ that were a very close copy of LATE NIGHT WITH DAVID LETTERMAN on NBC (1982–1993) and LATE SHOW WITH DAVID LETTERMAN (1993–2015) on CBS. At that time, US-American shows could only be watched on pay TV in Germany, YouTube did not have its present global influence, so the copy would not be directly identified as one and the influence of US-American show business was normal. But Harald Schmidt was not known as a musician. Since comedian and television show host Stefan Raab might be one of the most famous musical entertainers on German television in the field of the pop music parody, only one

9 Ariana Grande Carpool Karaoke on CBS 16.08.2018. Online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ZDK_E5p84, last accessed March 3, 2020.

10 <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Late-Night-Show#Deutschland>

German comedian can compete with Jimmy Fallon's professionalism: Comedian and host of the show ZDF NEOMAGAZIN ROYALE Jan Böhmermann.

In 26. November 2015, he released the music video *Ich hab Polizei*, one of his most successful pop music parodies, with his pseudonym »Pol1z1stensohn«. ¹¹ The video, which is 4:35 minutes long, was first aired in Böhmermann's Late Night Show NEOMAGAZIN ROYALE and has subsequently been uploaded on to YouTube where it has had more than 32 million clicks so far.

The scenery starts with a bird's eye view scanning the periphery of a city by night and starts its narrative at the back door of an unknown real estate that looks like a warehouse. Böhmermann exits the door that carries the sign »backstage« and unlocks his car (a BMW), the sole car in the otherwise empty yard with an automatic key. Suddenly five suspicious men wearing dark clothes pop up threatening Böhmermann with a huge knife, a baseball bat and a menacing chain. In slow motion, they are about to attack Böhmermann, who looks scared until he steps back, gets hold of his mobile phone and dials three digits which can be deduced from the different beeping tones. Because of the digit's sound, which indicate the number 110, the gangsters get scared themselves as they realize that Böhmermann is about to call the police. In minute 0:45, the narration of the background story stops in terms of the turnaround of the situation. Böhmermann puts on dark sunglasses, suddenly wears a hood and a leather jacket with the words »cop life« printed on it in white and switches his emotion from scared to powerful while the music starts. Clearly Böhmermann's changed look

¹¹ Neo Magazin Royale: Pol1z1stensohn a.k.a Jan Böhmermann – Ich hab Polizei (Official Video) Neo Magazin Royale ZDFneo. Online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNjG22Gbo6U>, last accessed March 3, 2020.

demonstrates his change of role. Böhmermann now plays the gangster as his pseudonym »Pol1z1stensohn« by decoding the genre gangsta rap antithetic. Antithetic means that while in gangster rap music videos the police is staged as the enemy, the police now takes on the gangster role itself. The narration of a story line stops here and changes into a sequence of sections that, typical for the genre gangsta rap, are made up of overlaid pictures. A group of police men imitate the »cool pose« (Jeffries 2011, 7) of the crew of gangsta rappers, the police officers demonstrate their power by showing their guns and the police car, motorcycle, horse or helicopter become the protagonist similar to the BMW in the gangsta rap videos, while the police dog substitutes the fighting dog of the streets. All these sections function to demonstrate power, masculinity, and illegal business mainly to construct the fiction of a ghetto which is copied from the US American context. In Germany, socially disadvantaged communities live in areas called »soziale Brennpunkte«, but the dimensions of the US American ghettos do not exist. Also, the conflict of police violence, which is still a current problem in the USA, for example in Baltimore, has a racist dimension that leads to the common theme of staging the police as the enemy of the gangster rapper. While the rapper would celebrate this »thug life« not only by staging it but also by using the name like a tattoo similar to the rapper Tupac Shakur, the »thug life« becomes a slogan that promotes the life of a gangster whose enemy is the police. This is why one often hears of or sees the sprayed signs »fuck cops« expressing anger against the injustice of the police system.

Böhmermann parodies this by emblazoning the phrase »cop life« on his sweat-shirt demonstrating that the unreflecting transfer from the US American ghetto and its stylized enemy the police to the German context is excessive and not po-

litically reasonable. Böhmermann calling himself »Pol1z1stenson« , a son of a policeman (the number »1« substituting the letter »i« parodies the youth-slang spelling of online communities that often listen to gangsta rap), is not only in effect parodying the role of the police inside German gangster rap videos, but is actually based on his biography. While one could argue that police brutality also exists in Germany, Böhmermann is positively influenced by his father, who was a police officer and a role model to him, assured by the loss due to his early death. By calling himself »Polizistenson«, he does not only parody German gangsta rap but also refers to his own biography. By using that name he proves authenticity and he is not only proud of his father but also brags about having the whole police system on his side. Böhmermann manages to attach personal feelings to his video and parodies himself in it which makes him untouchable to other rappers' 'beef'. With this video, he managed to create a parody on every level. His voice-acting, his mumbling with vulgar puckered lips, the special pronunciation of the words and grammatical mistakes, associated with talking slang or dago-German, symbolize the change of his sociolect. It is a perfect imitation of rappers like Haftbefehl or Bushido, his behavior, his cool pose and his clothes with the significant embroidery or the pullover tattoos. The music video gives an exact imitation of German gangsta rap performances in general, the significant video composition with the overlaid sequences parodies the format, the lyrics and the beat all create an ironic distance to the original.

Next to this pop music video parody, Böhmermann copied Jimmy Fallon's concept of performing a song by the invited band with classroom instruments and extended the idea to a song being performed with a »geekchester« (»Orchestra« and »Geek« meaning a person obsessed with computer technology), which

means an orchestra performing with the sounds of an old computer or technological machines. Böhmermann also performs a *Musical Edition* and sings the lyrics of German gangsta rap songs in an a-capella-vocal-style similar to the *Comedian Harmonists*. One of the most significant copies of the US-American role model is Böhmermann's and Dendemann's performance of *Eine deutsche Rapgeschichte* that aired on 28 Mai 2015 on ZDF Neo and reached 5.2 million views on YouTube.¹²

Hip hop had already been given a special role because the German rapper Dendemann was its musical director from 2015-2016. Dendemann performed raps as the bandleader following the show host's monologue, during the show and was always integrated as co-moderator, just like the drummer Questlove from the Roots. Böhmermann starts the performance of *Eine Deutsche Rapgeschichte* by mentioning Jimmy Fallon and Justin Timberlake's performance of *The History of Rap* and he asks Dendemann, what the German history of rap might be, since hip hop is the most important culture that influenced all kinds of music (0:10–0:15), even in Germany. With these words of introduction, let's say a harmless conversation, the performance starts with Böhmermann and Dendemann suddenly jumping on to the stage and starting to rap the song *Fremd im eigenen Land* by Advanced Chemistry, one of the earliest hip hop crews reaching fame in Germany (1:06). For about three minutes, they perform famous German rap songs, when suddenly the comedian Anke Engelke enters the fray with the lyrics of the rap crew Absolute Beginner imitating the familiar

12 NEO MAGAZIN ROYALE: Eine deutsche Rapgeschichte #witzefrei Dendemann im Neo Magazin Royale mit Jan Böhmermann. Zdf neo. Online: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=eine+deutsche+rapgeschichte, last accessed: March 3, 2020

voice of the rapper Jan Delay: »Seid doch mal ehrlich, ihr seid zwar überhaupt nicht locker.« (3:04) At minute six of the video, Böhmermann, who has been performing on stage with Dendemann, gets a skype phone call and while answering it, the scene changes and the viewer of the video sees the screen of the computer receiving the skype call (6:00). The person calling is Jan Delay and the voice he uses saying »Ja Hallo« (6:14) is exactly the same he has been using in the song *Füchse*, a legendary rap song from 2007 with Jan Delay as part of the crew Absolute Beginner featuring Samy Deluxe. At the end of the song *Füchse*, Jan Delay ironically imitates a phone call of a person that corrects the lyrics of the song by saying: »Ja Hallo, ich wollt' ma' sagen, Füchse sind gar keine Rudeltiere«. This phrase has become an insider joke for rap music fans as it is just the short version of the original, the words »Ja Hallo«, imitated in this specific way are significant for the song.

The performance of *Eine deutsche Rapgeschichte* continues until minute nine by filming the computer screen that accepts call after call from other rappers performing their own raps during the skype conference. Samy Deluxe, Alligathoa, Kollegah, Smudo, Curse and the rap crew Blumentopf appear and continue to perform while the next call is accepted. At the same time, the skype profile adds ironic messages. For example, a contact request and a call from gangsta rapper Bushido is not accepted (7:10), the rappers Farid Bang and Fler are sending different text messages and the singer and dancer DJ Bobo from Switzerland, who became famous for the genre eurodance (a sort of sprechgesang that is not rap) texts: »Schweizer können aber auch gut rappen« (8:00). The conference call of all the rappers ends with Jan Delay rapping, as he was

the first to call, while the viewer can only see Dendemann and Böhmermann from the skype camera position, dancing in the background.

Suddenly Jan is asking himself, why it is that only Dendemann's rap friends are joining the performance and not his own friends from the television business. Thus Jan Delay disappears from the screen and the TV entertainer Thomas Gottschalk calls. They engage in a conversation which ironically reminds of the conversation between Smudo and Thomas D from Fanta 4 in their song *Die da*. In the song, the lyrics start with: »Hallo Thomas/Hallo/Alles klar/es ist schon wieder Freitag [...].« Böhmermann answers Thomas Gottschalk's call while in the background, the whistled melody of the song *Die da* is played. Böhmermann says: »Hallo Thomas, Alles klar?«, and Gottschalk replies »Hallo Böhmermann heute wieder Donnerstag?«, referring to the day NEO MAGAZIN ROYALE appears on television (8:45). After skype is closed, the performance continues on stage. Dendemann and Böhmermann rap songs by rappers like Haftbefehl and Marteria and the German moderator Walter Freiwald has a brief appearance. The whole performance ends with the song *Endlich wieder Beef* by the rap duo Zugezogen Maskulin. In the end, the comedian Florentin Will stops the performance in his role as the »Beefträger«.¹³

Insider knowledge and Index-effect

The performance of *Eine deutsche Rapgeschichte* is more than a number of pop music parodies combined into one performance. It is an expression of admira-

13 Briefträger = postman carrying »beef« like complaints from persons that where parodied.

tion to the German rap genre but on the same time, a parody of the global phenomenon of rap and its element of intertextuality. The way in which hip hop refers to his own history constructs an autopoietic self-referential system in the sense of Niklas Luhmann inside the pop music itself. Rap in general and the parody of the history of rap in the US-American and German field, require insider knowledge not only of the genre hip hop but more specifically of individual rap lyrics and the affiliations of the rappers. For example, only true hip hop fans will recognize that the rap crew Blumentopf performs a song by the crew Deichkind, which creates the ironic distance because these two groups are always mixed up. When the rapper Alligatoah, known for a satirical kind of rap, performs a gangsta-rap song by Bushido badly copying his neck tattoo, the parody works because of its affective reversal. When the rapper Bushido is excluded from the skype conference, it shows that Bushido represents a form of gangsta rap that not everyone appreciates, as a matter of fact, he is one of the rappers Böhmermann parodied in his song *Ich hab Polizei*. The insider knowledge on which the parody is based, also works because of the enormous number of famous people joining the show. The German show might have copied Jimmy Fallon (for which Böhmermann is often criticized) but they surpassed the original by transforming it into a parody of the US-American hip hop culture saying that German hip hop is so strong that it has its own history to perform. Including legend after legend in their show turns into an ironic battle between US-American hip hop and German hip hop. The appearance of famous people on the show gives the audience a nice surprise and the feeling of getting something for free. Surprise is a common strategy on television shows and fulfills what Diedrich Diederichsen calls the »index-effect«. It means the direct

transference of another human soul, the recording of realia itself (see Diederichsen 2017, 9–11).

The surprise of unexpected guests tries to break through the staged concept of the show to present the unpredictable and construct authenticity by staging an innovative format not stuck in repetition. The unexpected is staged mainly for a YouTube audience where an online community of hip hop fans can meet and share the video. The values of the invited people providing the surprise effect target insiders as well. For example, a rap fan that would not usually spend money on a ticket for a concert given by Jan Delay, Samy Deluxe and Smudo in the same year, gets to see all these stars in one show as a surprise. In that way, Böhmermann earns a lot of popularity within this community while constructing this community at the same time. A person that listens to rap music every day feels attached to or accompanied by them like a community of friends, identifies itself with them and through them. When these artists suddenly all perform together in one show, this community does not only exist for an individual listening to music every day but also in real life. The show appears like the reality show of an imagined community, but while watching the video, the moment of sharing creates this community. The humorous effect is affiliated with a happy feeling of being surprised and the impression of being part of this insider community. But this insider community is not only a target that the video refers to, the medley of rap songs works like a canon of significant hip hop songs and constructs a history of rap that will be used by rap fans to identify themselves as insiders. To sum up, one can say that through a musical parody, a musical milieu is visualized.

Whether we talk about the »index-effect« of surprising someone on television or looking at these musical games of assumed improvisation, it is clear that all of them are practiced or even follow a staged concept. These entertainment acts work like a proof of talent in equal measure for the invited guest and the show host. The actor, the singer or the host must prove his/her skills in the show in order to be able to continue as successful artists. Besides the live concert, the performances in Late-Night Shows function as a proof of authenticity becoming much more important than the interview section. The performances are live, yet the videos are cut for generating clicks on YouTube. This demonstrates how important these performances are for the artists in terms of not only being present on TV but more importantly being present and popular on YouTube. The competition inside the games is constructed to entertain, but the competition on YouTube is real and measured in clicks. Beside the focus on the artist, the analysis of Böhmermann and Jimmy Fallon demonstrates that the role of the show host in general goes way beyond simply being the one that interviews famous people or presents a (mostly political) monologue. The show host that strives to become famous on YouTube, must prove entertainment skills on any level: Singing, dancing, acting like a professional artist, always with an ironic effect of being a comedian. Mainly though the host helps to re-enact or reproduce pop music. Through these musical performances, a popularity is communicated which constructs a pop star. To be present on the show signifies that to become popular and to be invited one has to be popular. Late Night Shows have become part of the media pop culture that works like an autopoietic self-referential system on a global level. Late Night Shows invite pop stars to maintain their popularity and to construct it at the same time. Or in other words, through Late Night

Shows pop music is presented and at the same time, pop music is constructed basically through the transformation of the reproduction. The history of rap and the parody of voices shows that these Late Night Shows refer to an insider community which they also construct at the same time. In this self-referential system, the parody works like an instrument of pop history that constructs a canon of its history by performing it.

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