

## 11 | Cluster/Harmonia

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The track 'By This River', on the Brian Eno album *Before and After Science* (1977), is structured very simply; a repeated keyboard figure, placed against a descending bassline which ends on the track's relative minor. The track captures a moment of absolute serenity – a moment where any sense of a past or a future collapses into an eternal present. The instrumentation contains no drums; indeed, there is no percussion on the track at all. The time is kept by the metronomic keyboard bassline; above this, a piano, an electric piano, a synthesiser, and what sounds like a celeste weave simple harmonic and melodic patterns around the keyboard figure.

'By This River', however, is not a solo track. It is a collaboration with the musicians Hans-Joachim Roedelius and Dieter Moebius of the avant-garde electronic group Cluster. It grew from a specific moment in Eno's and Cluster's careers. Roedelius, Moebius, and the guitarist Michael Rother (a former short-term member of Kraftwerk, and one half of the influential duo Neu!) had come together to form the group Harmonia, and by the time that Eno came to record with them both Cluster and Harmonia had released albums that were to prove very influential in the development of ambient music and electronica more generally. Cluster's *Zuckerzeit* (1974) and *Sowieso* (1976), and Harmonia's *Musik von Harmonia* (1974) and *Deluxe* (1975), had no impact on either the German music scene of the time or the kind of European and American audiences that Kraftwerk could command; but crucially for the future reputation of the musicians, they attracted the attention of tastemakers such as David Bowie, who contemplated asking Rother to play on the sessions for 'Heroes' (1977), and Eno, who was going through a period of accelerated artistic transformation, from the louche experimental songwriter of his first two albums to the ambient artist of *Another Green World* (1975), and beyond.

Eno's fame means that, in most publications about the group(s) in English, the relatively short time he spent working with Roedelius, Moebius, and Rother in Germany has tended to dominate discussions of their work. In this chapter, I would like to reverse that narrative, and to look, not at the relation between Cluster, Harmonia, Eno, and the wider history of electronica, but at the way that Cluster's music itself changed

during the 1970s. This was part of a wider transformation in Krautrock. It was also related to the setting in which the bands produced their music. I will argue that the changes in Cluster's music (and Harmonia's) is intimately related to the fact that the musicians settled in an out-of-the-way part of rural Germany – Forst, in Lower Saxony, on the banks of the river Weser.

### From the City to the Country

The musicians who went on to form Cluster first came together in a setting that was as remote as possible from the rural idyll captured in 'By This River'. The motive force for their collaboration came at first, not from either Moebius or Roedelius, but from Conrad Schnitzler, an avant-garde musician and artist who was based, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in Berlin. Unlike other Krautrock groups (Can, for example, or Kraftwerk), neither Moebius nor Roedelius had much formal training in music. Moebius (born in Switzerland in 1944), had received some instrumental instruction when he was growing up (at this point, his main instrument was piano). However, his formal musical training was set to one side when he encountered popular American music, and rather than pursuing his instrumental studies he went on to train as an artist in Berlin. Roedelius (born in 1934) had an especially complex history. A native of Berlin, he had been at various times a child actor, an unwilling member of the Hitlerjugend, a prisoner of the Stasi, a postman, a refuse collector, and a masseur. Their collaboration began at the Zodiak Arts Lab in Berlin, a music venue co-founded by Roedelius and Conrad Schnitzler in 1968.

The Arts Lab did not exist for long but during its brief life the loose collection of musicians and artists who used the venue became influential figures in the development of some of the styles associated with Krautrock. It provided a venue for the agit prop rock group, Ton Steine Scherben, the jazz saxophonist Peter Brötzmann, and the psychedelic music of the early Ash Ra Tempel.<sup>1</sup> In particular, though, the venue was crucial in the formation of Tangerine Dream, one of the earliest of the Krautrock bands to become both widely known and successful. The very earliest version of the group (captured on their first album, *Electronic Meditation* (1970)) is, in retrospect, a fascinating mixture of the two most influential

<sup>1</sup> For more info on the Zodiak as a catalyst, compare C Dallach, *Future Sounds: Wie ein paar Krautrocker die Popwelt revolutionierten* (Berlin: Suhrkamp 2021), pp. 153–62.

musical styles that would grow from the work of the Arts Lab. Two of Tangerine Dream's founder members – Edgar Froese and Klaus Schulze – were drawn to the expansive soundscapes of what would come to be known as *kosmische Musik*. The third, Conrad Schnitzler, was by his own admission drafted in as a non-musician, on the understanding that he would disrupt the harmonic structure of the music. The resulting album is best described as a collision between Pink Floyd's early cosmic improvisations, and Pierre Schaeffer's *musique concrète*. Froese and Schulze went on to develop long-form electronic music, making heavy use of synths, sequencers, and the latest musical and studio technologies; Schnitzler formed the trio Kluster with Moebius and Roedelius, and set off in a very different direction.

The beginning of Moebius' and Roedelius' musical collaboration was, significantly, as spontaneous as the music they were to create. They met in a bar in Berlin's Charlottenburg area; according to Moebius, Roedelius and Schnitzler simply asked: 'Hey, Moebius, do you want to play with us in our band?'<sup>2</sup> It is not simply that there is a neat correlation between the musicians' first meeting and the style of music they produced. From the outset, the onus was placed on the act of spontaneous creation, rather than on the careful preparation of previously composed music. This was, at times, problematic – Harmonia proved unsustainable largely because Michael Rother wished to rehearse and perform material the band had previously released. On the other hand, it gave Kluster (the name adopted by the original trio), Cluster, and Harmonia a way of working that enabled them to create music that was, as it proved, uniquely responsive to the interaction of musicians within a specific environment.

However, this is not to say that they automatically moved into territory that Eno would later occupy. The music produced by Kluster, in the first instance, was if anything the antithesis of the kind of music that Eno, Moebius, and Roedelius would go on to create. Schnitzler was affiliated to Fluxus, a loosely organised group of artists whose goal was the disruption of the outcomes and practices of art. For Schnitzler, this tended in practice to take the form of an assault on the conventional markers of acceptable music: tone, rhythm, harmony, and above all melody. As a result, the first Kluster albums, *Klopfzeichen* (1970); *Zwei-Osterei* (1971), and *Eruption* (1971), are rather challenging listens – made even more challenging by the spoken text that was imposed on much of the music by their label (the Catholic Schwann-Verlag).

<sup>2</sup> A Sweeting, Dieter Moebius Obituary, *The Guardian* (22 July 2015).

Kluster was an unstable grouping. Schnitzler, by his own admission, was a 'harsh guy',<sup>3</sup> and his approach proved to be incompatible with that of the other two musicians. However, the trio prefigured Cluster in three very important ways. Firstly, the music was created spontaneously; the first three albums were recorded (with the exception of the unwanted vocal samples) in the same amount of time it takes to play the tracks. Secondly, the music was made from whatever elements were to hand. Synthesiser technology was too expensive for Kluster to afford; or, and they thought of themselves as non-musicians, so they improvised, using what instruments and effects they had at their disposal.

Thirdly (and most significantly) the trio left their base in Berlin, and started to tour. In doing so, they removed themselves from the emerging musical framework that groups like Tangerine Dream and artists like Klaus Schulze were beginning to map out. West Berlin, as much as any place could be in the dispersed musical systems that constituted Krautrock, was the home of *kosmische Musik*; in divorcing themselves from the city, Kluster, and then Cluster, began to mark out a different musical territory – one that, as it happened, led them to create work that musicians like Brian Eno would find particularly congenial. The ensuing collaboration between the German musicians and the British music conceptualist hence exemplified Krautrock's transnational quality: Cluster's de-territorialisation from its original context made it particularly suitable to travel across cultural borders and enter into exchange processes of hybridisation.

Shorn of Schnitzler, Moebius' and Roedelius' music began to change. The first album they released as a duo, *Cluster 71* (1971), was markedly less assaultive than anything released by Kluster, although it could not be said to have embraced any conventional notions of musical harmony. The music does now have structuring elements, in particular a series of low electronic pulses that run behind each one of the album's three tracks. *Cluster II* (1972) moves closer to the kind of music that later came to be associated with the band. In particular, the track 'Im Süden' (In the South) is based on two simple repeated melodic fragments – a four-note rising guitar arpeggio, and a contrasting, angular four-note figure, also played on guitar. Shortened, and with a rhythm track behind it, 'Im Süden' could fit neatly on *Zuckerzeit* (1974), *Sowieso* (1976), or *Musik von Harmonia* (1974).

The change discernible on record was mirrored in the duo's live performances. Gradually, they moved away from the kind of abrasive

<sup>3</sup> D Stubbs, *Future Days: Krautrock and the Building of Modern Germany* (London: Faber, 2014), p. 291.

soundscapes of Kluster and Cluster's first album, towards music that showed an emerging interest in rather more conventional ideas of harmony (if not of structure). When asked, Moebius was dismissive of the idea that this change was born of a desire to be more commercially successful; rather, he saw it as an understandable outcome, when two self-declared non-musicians found themselves involved in creating music. Partly, then, the progression from *Cluster II* to *Zuckerzeit* is explicable in terms of simple competence; however, it is also at least partly attributable to a change in the band's location and lifestyle.

In 1971, Roedelius and Moebius were given the chance to live and to set up a studio in Forst, in the Lower Saxony region of north Germany. An antiques dealer had been given the lease on buildings hard by the river Weser. The buildings themselves were historically significant, having been in place since the Renaissance; as part of the condition of the lease, the dealer promised to develop a cultural centre on the site. Forst did more than give the musicians a secure base. As Roedelius put it, in a 2010 interview with *The Quietus*: 'Cluster without Forst is unthinkable.'<sup>4</sup> Fixing and maintaining the properties in Forst required a great deal of hard work, but according to Roedelius, the site itself had an impact on the band's music. A clear difference can be seen when one compares the music that Cluster and Harmonia produced in the mid-1970s, with the music produced by Tangerine Dream, Schulze, Ash Ra Tempel, and early Popol Vuh – the kind of music loosely described as *kosmische Musik*. Harden has identified some of the key features as follows:

the creation of large, unrealistic, and non-static acoustical spaces; the manipulation or generation of sounds with little or no correlation with acoustic instrumentation; and, an increased emphasis on timbral shaping of sounds, which correspond in several cases with greater use of technology to trigger them.<sup>5</sup>

These features could be realised in a number of ways; there are discernible musical differences between the monumental synth chords of Popol Vuh's *Affenstunde* (1970) and Klaus Schulze's propulsive, sequencer-driven *Timewind* (1975). However, Harden is right to point out that the general *kosmische* soundscape has a number of recurring features, which together aim to create a sense of limitless space, free of the taint of the human. Cluster's – and Harmonia's – music sounded rather different. Produced on

<sup>4</sup> A Bliss, Cluster Interviewed: Nobility in the Blood, *The Quietus* (14 April 2010).

<sup>5</sup> A Harden, Kosmische Musik and Its Techno-Social Context, *IASPM Journal* 16:2 (2016), pp. 154–73 (160).

the kind of amended instruments and cheap technology that had been used on earlier albums, the music Cluster/Harmonia produced from *Zuckerzeit* onwards has, for the most part, a rather more lo-fi quality than the music produced by contemporaries such as Tangerine Dream. This was, as the band admitted, because they had no money; the rhythm machine used on *Zuckerzeit*, for example, was a cheap, basic Italian model made by Elka.

Their manipulation of this basic piece of technology was, first of all, an economic necessity. The band were never commercially successful. This meant that necessarily, the band found themselves working with simple synths and other instruments (a flute, a cello, and two organs) that they could manipulate. From *Phaedra* (1974) onwards, Tangerine Dream's



**Illustration 11.1** Hans-Joachim Roedelius and Dieter Möbius of Cluster, 1970.  
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music had the kind of sheen associated with the professional production standards of the time. Cluster's and Harmonia's music sounds different; a track like 'Es war einmal' (There Once Was) on *Sowieso* has a rather more indistinct production, with the different musical elements seeming to bleed into each other. More than this, the tones employed across the range of Cluster's and Harmonia's recordings frequently sound as though they come from manipulated acoustic instruments – and rather than being placed within the soundscape of the production in a fashion that suggests space, they sound as though they have been crowded in together, growing organically around each other. If Schulze's 'Echoes of Time' sounds as though it soundtracks the limitless depths of space, 'Es war einmal' sounds as though it comes from the tangled undergrowth of the German countryside.

### Cluster, Harmonia, Landscape, and Germany

German musicians of the post-1968 generation responded to the complex problems of national identity in various ways; by mocking it (as Amon Düül II did on the album *Made in Germany* (1975)); by reconnecting with those German cultural traditions interrupted and destroyed by Nazism (as Kraftwerk did); by embracing world music (as Can did); by heading off into space (as the *kosmische* musicians did); or simply heading away, as fast as the music would allow (Klaus Dinger, the drummer for Neu! and La Düsseldorf, described the *motorik* beat he pioneered as the rhythm of endless movement).<sup>6</sup> In general, the most common impulse felt by musicians associated with Krautrock, was to escape the idea of Germany as it currently existed. This could be said even of Kraftwerk, whose escape was both into the future and the past.

Cluster/Harmonia's escape route was different. The environment of Forst, the Weser, and the surrounding woods was, for Roedelius especially, a crucial influence on the music the band produced. Moebius, by his own admission rather less romantic in outlook than his collaborator, also admitted that Forst had 'some kind of influence'<sup>7</sup> on their music. Going to the countryside for inspiration was a common trope in the popular music culture of the late 1960s and early 1970s; Rob Young's *Electric Eden*

<sup>6</sup> Compare U Adelt, *Krautrock: German Music in the Seventies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), p. 33.

<sup>7</sup> Bliss, Cluster Interviewed.

(2010) captures the relation between the resurgence of folk music in England between 1968 and 1972, and an idea of the English landscape as simultaneously profoundly familiar and unknowable. American psychedelia was, by 1968, overtaken by musicians who drew on folk and country (such as Gram Parsons, The Byrds, The Band, and The Eagles). A strong strain of pastoral, folk-influenced music ran through British progressive rock, and even, through Led Zeppelin, into early hard rock and heavy metal. For musicians in post-war West Germany, going to the German landscape for inspiration was a rather more overtly problematic idea. From the nation's formation in 1945, the German countryside functioned as a timeless backdrop to the tumultuous and violent development of the nation.

Such evidence of national longevity was especially important to Germany, the so-called belated nation, which had been unified only since 1871 and whose pathway to modernity was punctuated by political instability . . . [Preservationists] offered a stable and supposedly apolitical vision of German nationhood that was rooted in the natural landscape.<sup>8</sup>

After the war, this paradoxical relation to the German countryside (as both unchanging and part of a restless, protean nation) was no longer sustainable. After an interim period of four years, the country was split into East and West; the *Heimat* was no longer whole. Moreover, the country had been conquered as armies had swept over the inviolable German soil from both the East and the West.

Michael Imort, in an essay collected in T. M. Lekan's 2005 volume *Germany's Nature: Cultural Landscapes and Environmental History*, argues that the forest occupies a special place in the German cultural imagination. It is seen as something primeval, something that is tied into the formation of German identity, and, as with so much in the representation of German culture in the twentieth century, this link was used by those who wished to make claims for the ethnic unity and rootedness of the German people:

During the first half of the twentieth century, however, German public discourses were replete with ethnic or *völkisch* interpretations that presented forest-mindedness not as a learned cultural pattern, but as a national characteristic of Germans that was supposedly the result of two thousand years of coevolution between forest and people.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> T Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity 1885–1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> M Imort, A Sylvian People: Wilhelmine Forestry and the Forest as a Symbol of Germandom, in T Lekan & T Zeller (eds.), *Germany's Nature: Cultural Landscapes and Environmental History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), pp. 55–80 (55).



English musicians like Traffic and early Genesis could retreat to the archetypal English rural location (cottages in the rural home counties) and be sure that, in doing so, they were acting in line with the *Zeitgeist*. For musicians such as Roedelius and Moebius, in the cultural context of post-war West Germany, the retreat to a rural idyll (the river and woods of their base at Forst) did not carry the same automatically positive implications. It is not that the musicians, and Rother when he came to work with them, improvised music that was imbued by an innate distrust of the German countryside, and the uses to which the idea of an archetypal German landscape had been put. Rather, one of the main musical differences between Krautrock and British prog rock is that progressive musicians in Britain found it very easy to include pastoral elements in their work; Krautrock musicians, almost unanimously, did not. When the countryside figures, it does so as a source of disturbing imagery (compare the front cover of Amon Düül II's *Yeti* (1970)) or as something that is tamed, and orderly. The landscape described in passing in Kraftwerk's 'Autobahn' is ordered, designed, and mapped out in poster colours, as though designed at the Bauhaus: the green of the verges, the glittering sun, the road stretching out in front of the car.

The musician whose work comes closest to the type of pastoral compositions common in prog rock is Florian Fricke of Popol Vuh. Fricke's work, from *Hosianna Mantra* (1972) onwards, makes greater use of acoustic instruments than is the norm for Krautrock; and especially in the soundtracks he composed for Werner Herzog, his music is strongly linked to the representation of primordial, untamed landscape. However, these landscapes are, sometimes, not German; perhaps the most striking marriage of Fricke's music and Herzog's images comes in the opening shots of *Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes* (1972), as monumental block synth chords play over footage of the Spanish expedition and their bearers traversing the narrow mountain paths of the Andes. Where the films are set in Germany and middle Europe, Fricke's music helps to delineate a landscape that is profoundly *unheimlich* – the haunted settings of *Nosferatu* (1979) or the uncanny, disintegrating Alpine landscapes of *Heart of Glass* (1976).

The musical approach of Cluster/Harmonia was rather different. For one thing, as the quotes from Imort and Lekan might suggest, they were rooted in the German countryside in a way that few other musicians of the time could match. Other groups, such as the Amon Düül collectives, also had rural retreats in Bavaria, but the music produced by Moebius, Roedelius, and the other musicians who came to Forst came into being within a particular landscape, and could not be reproduced outside of the

setting in which it was spontaneously composed. Also, as Roedelius pointed out, music was produced at Forst as one part of a cycle of activities necessary to keeping the small commune going. Even Eno, who had a far higher international profile than any of the German musicians at Forst, was expected to play his part. Lastly, for Roedelius at least, the idea of being surrounded by natural sound was itself an inspiration. As Roedelius put it in 2015: ‘Listening to the richness of sound in nature is something you should be aware of, to select what you really want to do, to find your own tone language.’<sup>10</sup>

In practice, given the comparatively low-tech instruments the musicians worked with, the music produced at Forst suggests a landscape completely different to that created by the *kosmische* groups. To go through Harden’s typology point by point: whereas *kosmische* musicians oversaw the creation of large, unrealistic, and non-static acoustical spaces, Cluster/Harmonia created acoustical spaces that were smaller, and crowded with detail. *Kosmische* musicians focused on the manipulation or generation of sounds with little or no correlation with acoustic instrumentation. In Cluster’s and Harmonia’s work, manipulated acoustic instruments take their place beside electronically generated sounds, and as for timbre, all are given a production that emphasises the roughness and the grain of the music, rather than the sheen of *kosmische Musik*. It is not so much that there is a direct connection between the implied subject matter of Cluster’s and Harmonia’s music and the countryside around Forst; rather, it is that the soundscape the music creates is far more earthbound than that of Tangerine Dream – closer to Eno’s idea of music as landscape, than to music as cosmic journey. In the last section of this chapter, I will examine two contrasting pieces of music – one from Cluster and one from Harmonia – in order to suggest the soundscape the musicians working at Forst created, and its relation to the natural world in which they worked.

## Tangled in the Landscape

First, I want to look at ‘Rosa’ from *Zuckerzeit*, Cluster’s third album and the first to be recorded after the band took up residence in Forst. The duo’s way of working was by this stage very well established, but the tracks on *Zuckerzeit* demonstrate a more considered, more structured approach to

<sup>10</sup> Red Bull Music Academy, Cluster on Brain Records, Brian Eno and Harmonia, YouTube video (3 June 2015), [www.youtube.com/watch?v=vBeujTXtzxA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vBeujTXtzxA).

music. The compositions were short by the standard of other Krautrock bands; 'Rote Riki' (Red Riki), the longest, was six minutes long; the shortest, 'Heiße Lippen' (Hot Lips), under two and a half. Their titles were also playful, some of them suggesting the sweetness implied in the album title ('Caramel', 'Marzipan'). 'Rosa' is a typical example of the music Moebius and Roedelius found themselves creating. As Ulrich Adelt notes, the track and the album as a whole seem to be cut from the same cloth as the music of Neu!<sup>11</sup> It is minimalist, and is built on the secure foundation of a rhythm track that stays constant throughout. However, this beat cannot really be termed *motorik*. *Motorik* as a style is uncomplicated. 'Rosa', however, has a definite rhythm, but on the bassline, rather than on the rhythm track. The other rhythmic elements on the track play against the insistent bassline rhythm; none of them stick to a particular pattern. The effect, as is often the case on *Zuckerzeit*, is of a track with a rhythm that doubles back on itself, never achieving the propulsive forward momentum of *motorik*.

Over this, Roedelius plays a repeated descending pattern in A minor against a repeated chord pattern. This starts simply, suggesting a definite melody. However, as the track progresses, the melodic elements stated at the beginning form the basis for two extemporised keyboard lines; these lines periodically return to the descending melody stated at the beginning, but they never do so completely, and they never do so in sync. At 2:01, after what sounds like an edit, the main theme recurs for a moment. Beneath it, however, the chords and bass are accompanied by a repetitious, processed sound, which recalls nothing so much as the end of the Roxy Music track 'For Your Pleasure'. On that track, Eno processed the tape, blending all the instruments together into an indistinct blur. Cluster's track never quite reaches that point, but musically the last two minutes of 'Rosa' sound as though the music is deliquescing, and that if the track continued for much longer it would melt away entirely.

The idea of *motorik* is of an endless journey into the future, with nothing to impede the relentless forward motion. It calls to mind man-made forms of transport (the car, the train) and the man-made landscapes they travel through. 'Rosa' suggests, on the other hand, not so much a forward journey as a progressive entanglement in a landscape whose elements evolve together in a mesh of musical ideas that grow together as the track progresses. The term 'organic' is used, sometimes very loosely, to describe various types of music, usually those that are produced on acoustic instruments and that fall within the broad parameters of folk music. What 'Rosa'

<sup>11</sup> Adelt, *Krautrock*, p. 40.

suggests is another way of using the term; in this case, it describes a track and a type of music that progresses by filling in the spaces in the soundscape, as melodic lines develop and divide, and as the musical texture of the track works to blend separate elements together into one, much in the same way as plants colonise and cover areas of soil.

Next, I want to examine 'Sonnenschein' (Sunshine) on *Musik von Harmonia*. Michael Rother first came to Forst in 1973, initially to ask whether Moebius and Roedelius would be prepared to act as backing musicians when his current group, Neu!, played live. He stayed at Forst, in the first instance, largely because he found the experience of playing with Moebius and Roedelius instantly congenial. Rother was aware of Cluster's music; in particular, he liked 'Im Süden' from *Cluster II* (perhaps the piece that came closest to the kind of music he had released as part of Neu!). Given this, it is no surprise that the music he made with Roedelius and Moebius represented something of a compromise, between the straight-ahead rhythms of his previous band and entangled, interwoven compositions such as 'Rosa'. 'Sonnenschein' is a good example of the music the trio produced, and the compromises that emerged as they improvised together. For one thing, compared to the tracks on *Zuckerzeit* (which was recorded in the same year, and released after the first Harmonia album), the rhythm is far closer to *motorik*: an invariant 4/4, with an emphasis on the second and fourth beats.

The track also contains a low but persistent drone effect, the volume of which rises and falls as the music develops. In other words, the track uses some of the same musical components as 'Hallogallo', 'Für immer', or any of the longform *motorik* instrumentals on *Neu!* or *Neu! 2*. Over the top of this *motorik* structure, however, we find musical elements that derive from the work Moebius and Roedelius had already done as Cluster. The production, in comparison to the smoothly blended sound of a Neu! album, is lo-fi, characterised by timbres that suggest the instruments and amplification have been pushed almost to the point of distortion. As the track fades up (in common with 'Rosa', the music does not have a definite starting point), we hear an insistent, repeated six-note melodic pattern, played against a lower keyboard line that develops into a set of syncopated arpeggios. Neither of these elements is exactly rhythmically fixed, however – both drift in and out of sync with the insistent driving rhythm of the track.

One of the things that makes *motorik* such a compelling, driving musical force is the fact that the other musical elements either match and complement its rhythm, or seem to have no connection to rhythm at all (compare 'Für immer' (Forever), the first track on *Neu! 2* (1973)). 'Sonnenschein'

does not work like this; the various musical elements never lock together with the rhythm. Rather, although the beat insistently drives forward, the other components of the track either impede the smooth forward progress of the music, or threaten to take the music in a different, less rhythmically sure direction. In other words, just as with 'Rosa', the soundscape is completely different to those created by the *kosmische* musicians; and in this case it is also different to the clean, technological landscapes conjured up by *motorik*. Even though the beat is more insistent, the soundscape is the same; closed in, entangled, organic, in the sense used earlier. 'Sonnenschein' maps a journey: but in this case, we are not driving down an autobahn. We are on a track through the landscape, one that is close to being entirely overgrown.

### Conclusion: 'Sowiesoso' by the Weser

'Sowiesoso' (Anyways) is the title track of Cluster's fourth album. The front cover of the album catches the duo leaning against trees, silhouetted against the sky and the Weser. The album bears the imprint both of Rother and Eno. It is more rhythmically exact than previous work, and it has the same carefully worked out, evocative musical textures that one might find on Eno's work of the period (the sonic template of the album can be thought of as a mixture of two Eno albums, both from roughly the same time – *Another Green World* (1975) and *Music for Films* (1978: recorded 1975–78). 'Sowiesoso' however, even though it has a secure rhythm, does not have the same sense of forward momentum as 'Sonnenschein'. The pace is slower, the musical timbres are softer, and although the track develops in the way as 'Rosa' and 'Sonnenschein' it does so by accruing those elements far more gradually than in the earlier tracks. 'Sonnenschein' suggests a journey down an overgrown track; 'Sowiesoso', in contrast, is a gentle drift downriver, through a landscape constantly various and at the same time unchanging.

The landscapes implied in 'By This River', 'Sowiesoso', 'Rosa', 'Sonnenschein', and the other tracks produced at Forst are, therefore, very close to each other. They exist at some distance, both to the idealised landscape of German cultural memory, and to the implied landscapes (variously haunted, exotic, technological, or unearthly) created by other Krautrock musicians. Even before Eno came to influence their work, the music produced by Cluster and Harmonia fulfilled two of the criteria that Eno came to use in creating his own music. First of all, it made use of the

technologies available, even if (as was the case), those technologies were homemade or dated. Secondly, it was immanent in that it was founded on an immediate response to the situation within which it was recorded. In terms that Eno would later come to use, Cluster/Harmonia composed by, in effect, setting themselves a series of musical heuristics (or simple instructions that, taken together, lead to complex outcomes).<sup>12</sup> Those heuristics were embedded both in the technologies the musicians had available; and, for each of them, in Forst as a location and a source of musical inspiration. What resulted from the interaction of these elements was a unique response to the German landscape, and to the idea of the pastoral in music. Cluster and Harmonia created music that did not hymn the archetypal German countryside; rather, they created sonic landscapes formed from the organic entanglement of blurred, imprecise musical elements; landscapes formed as an immanent response, not to the cultural representation of landscape, but to the complex, entangled, immanent environment in which they lived and worked.

### Essential Listening

Cluster, *Zuckerzeit* (Brain, 1974)

Cluster, *Sowieso* (Sky, 1976)

Harmonia, *Musik von Harmonia* (Brain, 1974)

Harmonia & Eno '76, *Tracks and Traces* (Grönland, 2007)

<sup>12</sup> For more on Eno's use of heuristics, see S Albiez & D Pattie, *Brian Eno: Oblique Music* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).