

Lecture (Vorlesungsmodul):

## Lyric/s: Popular Music and/as Contemporary Poetry

TUE, 10-12 // Philosophiegebäude, H 4

In a recent book on *The Poetry of Pop* (2017), Adam Bradley claims that much of the "magic" of popular music "resides in the language of the lyrics." As he points out, "[t]here's something irresistible about words set in song." The lecture will pick up on these propositions by combining the topics and approaches of popular music studies with those of literary criticism. On the one hand, it will discuss poetry *on* popular music, investigating the ways in which poets have celebrated and critiqued this key domain of contemporary cultural life. On the other hand, and most importantly, I want to take the lyrical dimension of 'song lyrics' seriously and explore the poetry *of* popular music. Accordingly, the lecture offers an advanced introduction not only to poetry and poetry analysis but also to popular music studies as a seminal field within cultural studies.

### ***Preparatory reading***

Please prepare for the lecture by recapitulating the basics of poetry studies and poetry analysis even before the teaching period begins.

- A good jumping board for such a recapitulation is the section on "Poetry" in MICHAEL MEYER, *English and American Literatures*, 4th ed. (Francke, 2011) 21-64.

The following two resources, while also largely addressing students and general readers, offer more detailed and advanced insights into the various aspects of poetry and poetry analysis:

- JOHN STRACHAN and RICHARD TERRY, *Poetry*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh UP, 2011).
- JOHN LENNARD, *The Poetry Handbook*, 2nd ed. (Oxford UP, 2005).

All three books are accessible online through Würzburg University Library (UBW).

### ***Accompanying reading and discussion course***

The lecture is accompanied by a separate reading and discussion course (Übung: Begleitveranstaltung zur Vorlesung). This course offers opportunities for coming to grips with as well as for delving deeper into the topic. It takes place right after the lecture (i.e., TUE 12-14, in room Ü 22). Participation in the additional course is recommended but not mandatory.

**PROGRAMME**

[Please note that this is a draft of the Programme. There may be changes.]

'KEY SAMPLES': These are the poems and song lyrics foregrounded in the respective meetings. The key samples (and some additional samples, too) are collected in a READER for the lecture that can be downloaded from WueCampus. Please prepare the relevant poems and song lyrics in time.

'AR' = ASSIGNED READING. Please read and prepare for the respective meetings. These texts will also be relevant for the final test.

'FR' = FURTHER READING. Some of these texts will help you to catch up, if necessary, to the standard of knowledge required for the lecture. Others represent suggestions for delving in more deeply, effectively going beyond what the lecture will be able to achieve.

**24/10 Introduction****SECTION I: POPULAR MUSIC / POETRY / POETRY ON POPULAR MUSIC****31/10 Popular music / Popular music culture – A brief introduction**

Key samples:

- ❖ WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, Sonnet 8 (1609)
- ❖ TAWANNA DABNEY [?] (for RIHANNA), "Don't Stop the Music" (2007)

AR:

- ROY SHUKER, "Introduction: Popular Music Culture," *Understanding Popular Music Culture*, 5th ed. (Routledge, 2016) 1-8. [Accessible online through UBW.]

FR:

- See the bibliography at the end of the syllabus for further reading suggestions. To those who have not yet studied popular music, I'd particularly recommend the (old but still valuable) *Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, ed. Simon Frith; see esp. FRITH' chapter on "Pop Music" (93-108) [accessible online through UBW].

**07/11 Poetry on popular music – Celebrating, critiquing, sounding the music and the culture**

Key samples:

- ❖ THOM GUNN, "Elvis Presley" (1957)
- ❖ PHILIP LARKIN, "Annus Mirabilis" (1967)
- ❖ PAUL MULDOON, "The Rolling Stones: *Voodoo Lounge*" (from "Sleeve Notes"; 1998)

FR:

- ADRIAN GRAFE, "The Poetic Voice and the Voice of Popular Music in Poems by Philip Larkin, Hugo Williams and Paul Muldoon," *Sillages critiques* 7 (2005): 141-154. Open access: [LINK](#).

**14/11 Poetry and poetry analysis – A brief (re-)introduction**

Key samples:

- ❖ ARCHIBALD MACLEISH, "Ars Poetica" (1926)
- ❖ PATIENCE AGBABI, "North(West)ern" (2008)

AR:

- JONATHAN CULLER, "Rhetoric, Poetics, and Poetry," *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford UP, 1997) 69-81. [WueCampus.]

FR:

- MICHAEL MEYER, "Poetry," *English and American Literatures*, 4th ed. (Francke, 2011) 21-64. [Accessible online through UBW.]
- The bibliography (see below) offers further reading suggestions. See esp. BALDICK (2015); BREWSTER (2009); EAGLETON (2007); LENNARD (2005); STRACHAN AND TERRY (2011).

## SECTION II: SOUND AND STRUCTURE

**21/11 Linguaging – The sonic dimension of poetry and song**

Key samples:

- ❖ LITTLE RICHARD and DOROTHY LABOSTRIE, "Tutti Frutti" (1955)
- ❖ PETE TOWNSHEND (THE WHO), "My Generation" (1965)

AR:

- JOHN STRACHAN and RICHARD TERRY, "The Sound of Poetry," *Poetry*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh UP, 2011) 47-71; focus on 47-51 ("Poetic Sound Effects: An Overview"; "Onomatopoeia"; "Sound-Patterning"). [Accessible online through UBW.]

**28/11 Rhyme**

Key samples:

- ❖ BERNIE TAUPIN (for ELTON JOHN), "Candle in the Wind" & "Candle in the Wind 1997" (1974 / 1997)
- ❖ GRANDMASTER FLASH AND THE FURIOUS FIVE, "The Message" (1982)

AR:

- STRACHAN and TERRY, "The Sound of Poetry" [as in previous meeting]; focus now on 51-69 ("Rhyme"; "The 'Orthodox' Rhyme"; "Some 'Unorthodox' Rhymes"; "Some Indeterminacies of Rhyme"; "Rhyme and Meaning").

FR:

- MARY STONE HANLEY, "Close to the Edge: The Poetry of Hip-Hop," *Counterpoints* 338 (2008): 145-158. [Accessible online through JSTOR.]

05/12 **Rhythm and metre**

Key samples:

[We will return to samples that have already been introduced.]

AR:

- JOHN LENNARD, "Metre," *The Poetry Handbook: A Guide to Reading Poetry for Pleasure and Practical Criticism*, 2nd ed. (Oxford UP, 2005) 1-28. Only pp. 1-14 are assigned reading. [Accessible online through UBW.]

### SECTION III: SUBJECTIVITY AND SOCIALITY

12/12 **Speaker / Voice / Persona – The staging of subjectivity**

Key samples:

- ❖ LANGSTON HUGHES, "The Weary Blues" (1926)
- ❖ CAROL ANN DUFFY, "Elvis's Twin Sister" (1999)
- ❖ RANDY NEWMAN, "Short People" (1977)

AR:

- Entries for "Persona" and "Voice" in CHRIS BALDICK, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. [Accessible online through the *Oxford Reference* website.]

FR:

- OREN IZENBERG, "Persona," *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 4th ed., ed. Stephen Cushman et al. (Princeton UP, 2012) 1024-25. [Accessible online through UBW.]
- ELIZA RICHARDS, "Voice," *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* 1525-27.
- DONALD E. HALL, "Introduction," *Subjectivity, The New Critical Idiom* (Routledge, 2004) 1-15. [Accessible online through UBW.]

19/12 **Communicative and social situation**

Key samples:

- ❖ IAN AXEL and CHAD VACCARINO (A GREAT BIG WORLD, performed with CHRISTINA AGUILERA), "Say Something" (2014)
- ❖ TRACY CHAPMAN, "Fast Car" (1988)

Christmas break

09/01 **The politics of articulation – Ethnicity, gender, class**

Key samples:

- ❖ TAMMY WYNETTE and BILLY SHERILL, "Stand by Your Man" (1968)
- ❖ LINTON KWESI JOHNSON, "Bass Culture" (1980)
- ❖ BEYONCÉ, "Formation" (2016)

AR:

- RUSSELL A. POTTER, "Soul into Hip-Hop," *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock* 143-157. [Accessible online through UBW.]

FR:

- AISHA Durham, "Class Formation: Beyoncé in Music Video Production," *Black Camera* 9.1 (2017): 197-204. [Accessible through UBW/JSTOR.]

### SECTION IV: SEMANTICS AND SYNTAX

16/01 **'Imagery' – Similes and Tropes**

Key samples:

- ❖ LEWIS ALLAN (for BILLIE HOLIDAY), "Strange Fruit" (1939)
- ❖ BOB DYLAN, "It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)" (1965)

AR:

- MICHAEL MEYER, "Rhetorical Form" [chapter within the section on "Poetry"], *English and American Literatures* 30-45; focus on 30-42. [Accessible online through UBW.]

FR:

- JOHN STRACHAN and RICHARD TERRY, "Comparisons and Associations," *Poetry*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh UP, 2011) 111-136; focus on 111-123 ("Literal v. Figurative"; "Metaphor and Simile"; "Metonymy and Synecdoche"; "Tenor, Vehicle and Ground"). [Accessible online through UBW.]

23/01 **Poetic syntax – Schemes**

Key samples:

[We will return to samples that have already been introduced.]

AR:

- MICHAEL MEYER, "Rhetorical Form" [chapter within the section on "Poetry"], *English and American Literatures* 30-45; focus 43-45. [Accessible online through UBW.]

FR:

- TERRY Eagleton, "Syntax, Grammar and Punctuation," *How to Read a Poem* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007) 121-124. [WueCampus.]

**30/01 Coherence and Incoherence – Narrative and its absence**

Key samples:

- ❖ THOM YORKE (RADIOHEAD), "Idioteque" (2000)
- ❖ KURT COBAIN (NIRVANA), "Smells Like Teen Spirit" (1991)

06/02, 14-16: **Final test (room TBA)**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Here is a selection of scholarly texts and study aids that might be useful either to catch up on necessary background information or to delve in more deeply and go beyond the level of the lecture. I have tried to be really selective and list only titles that really make sense in the context of the lecture.

***Basic study aids***

BALDICK, CHRIS. *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. 4th ed. Oxford UP, 2015. [Accessible through *Oxford Reference*.]

BARKER, CHRIS. *Cultural Studies: Theory & Practice*. 3rd ed. Sage, 2008.

CULLER, JONATHAN. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 1997.

CUSHMAN, STEPHEN, et al., eds. *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. 4th ed. Princeton UP, 2012. [Accessible online through UBW.]

MEYER, MICHAEL. "Poetry." *English and American Literatures*. UTB basics. 4th ed. Francke, 2011. 21-64. [Accessible online through UBW.]

*Oxford Reference*. Web.

SHUKER, ROY. *Understanding Popular Music Culture*. 5th ed. Routledge, 2016. [Accessible online through UBW.]

***Surveys and introductions***

BARKER, CHRIS. *Cultural Studies: Theory & Practice*. 3rd ed. Sage, 2008.

BORTHWICK, STUART, and RON MOY. *Popular Music Genres: An Introduction*. Edinburgh UP, 2004. [Accessible online through UBW.]

BREWSTER, SCOTT. *Lyric*. Routledge, 2009. [Accessible online through UBW.]

CLAYTON, MARTIN, TREVOR HERBERT, and RICHARD MIDDLETON, eds., *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*. 2nd ed. Routledge, 2011. [Accessible online through UBW.]

EAGLETON, TERRY. *How to Read a Poem*. Blackwell, 2007.

FRITH, SIMON, et al. *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*. Cambridge UP, 2001. [Accessible online through UBW.]

LENNARD, JOHN. *The Poetry Handbook: A Guide to Reading Poetry for Pleasure and Practical Criticism*. 2nd ed. Oxford UP, 2005. [Accessible online through UBW.]

SHUKER, ROY. *Understanding Popular Music Culture*. 5th ed. Routledge, 2016. [Accessible online through UBW.]

STRACHAN, JOHN, and RICHARD TERRY. *Poetry*. 2nd ed. Edinburgh UP, 2011. [Accessible online through UBW.]

### **Further reading**

BRADLEY, ADAM. *The Poetry of Pop*. Yale UP, 2017. [Accessible online through UBW.]

BRATHWAITE, KAMAU. "History of the Voice." 1979/1981. Rpt. in *Roots*. U of Michigan P, 1993. 259-304.

BUHLER, STEPHEN M. "Musical Shakespeares: Attending to Ophelia, Juliet, and Desdemona." *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture*. Ed. Robert Shaughnessy. Cambridge UP, 2007. 150-174. [Accessible online through UBW.]

BULL, MICHAEL, ed. *The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies*. Routledge, 2019.

COLEMAN, NICK. *Voices: How a Great Singer Can Change Your Life*. Jonathan Cape, 2017.

CUSHMAN, STEPHEN, et al., eds. *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. 4th ed. Princeton UP, 2012. [Accessible online through UBW.]

DETTMAR, KEVIN J. H., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan*. Cambridge UP, 2009. [Accessible online through UBW.]

ECKSTEIN, LARS. *Reading Song Lyrics*. Rodopi, 2010.

FRITH, SIMON, and ANDREW GOODWIN, eds. *Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*. Routledge, 1990. [Accessible online through UBW.]

HEBDIGE, DICK. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. Methuen, 1979. [Accessible online through UBW.]

JOHNSON, LINTON KWESI. "Jamaican Rebel Music." *Race & Class* 14:4 (1976): 397-412.

KOLESCH, DORIS, and SYBILLE KRÄMER, eds. *Stimme: Annäherung an ein Phänomen*. Suhrkamp, 2006.

MARCUS, GREIL. *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll Music*. 1975. 6th revised ed. PLUME / Penguin: 2015. [Accessible online through UBW.]

MIDDLETON, RICHARD. "Rock Singing." *The Cambridge Companion to Singing*. Ed. John Potter. Cambridge UP, 2000. 28-41. [Accessible online through UBW.]

———. *Studying Popular Music*. Open University Press, 1990.

———. *Voicing the Popular: On the Subjects of Popular Music*. Routledge, 2006.

MORAT, DANIEL, and HANSJAKOB ZIEMER, eds. *Handbuch Sound: Geschichte – Begriffe – Ansätze*. Metzler, 2018. [Accessible online through UB WÜ.]

PICHASKE, DAVID R., ed. *Beowulf to Beatles: Approaches to Poetry*. The Free Press, 1972. [Not on stack at UBW.]

TOOP, DAVID. "The Evolving Language of Rap." *The Cambridge Companion to Singing*. Ed. John Potter. Cambridge UP, 2000. 42-52. [Accessible online through UBW.]

WELLS, JONATHAN, ed. *Third Rail: The Poetry of Rock and Roll*. Pocket Books, 2007.

WILLIAMS, JUSTIN A., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Hip-Hop*. Cambridge UP, 2015. [Accessible online through UBW.]

WILLIAMS, KATHERINE, and JUSTIN A. WILLIAMS, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to the Singer-Songwriter*. Cambridge UP, 2016. [Accessible online through UBW.]