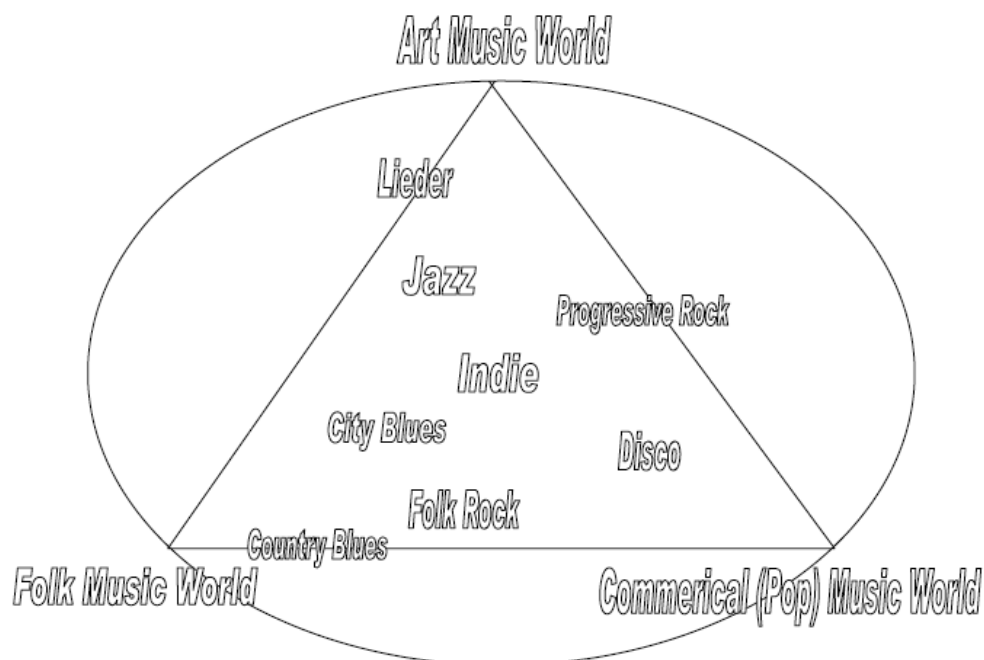


ROMANTICISM TODAY: THE SINGER/SONGWRITER-PARADIGM

Lecture 2: Romantic Continuities

- 1) The Romantic Paradigm
- 2) Direct Echoes of Romanticism
- 3) The Singer/Songwriter-Paradigm

Based on Simon Frith, *Performing Rites* (1998, 35-42)



1) The Romantic Paradigm

a) Historical Trajectories

mimetic theories (Plato, Aristotle)

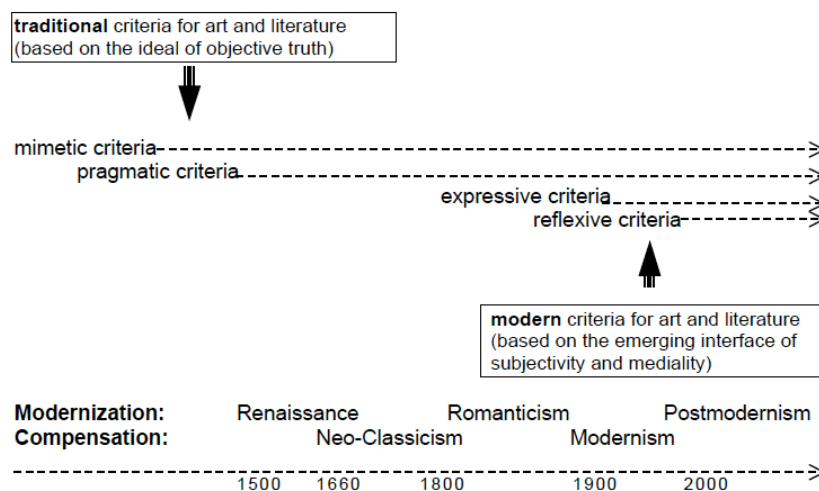
pragmatic theories (Horace)

∨

expressive theories (Romanticism)

objective/reflexive theories (modernism/postmodernism)

(Abrams 1953ff.)



In the decades that straddle the turn of the eighteenth century, the categories of 'aesthetics' and 'poetics' both underwent serious transformation that still matter in the early twenty-first century [...] This is the period [...] identified with the emergence of what might be called a cultural idiom, a whole way of being in the world.

(Chandler 2009, 9/1f.)

b) Definitions

S.T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (1817)

The IMAGINATION then I consider either as primary or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create, or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

FANCY, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; and blended with and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.

(from Chapter 13)

John Keats, Letters

The excellence of every art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth [...] [I]t struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature [...] – I mean *Negative Capability*, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubt, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason.

(to George and Tom Keats, 21 (27?) Dec 1817)

[I]f poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves to a tree it had better not come at all.
(to John Taylor, 27 Feb 1818)

Definition

In the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, → **Wordsworth's definition of poetry** reads as follows:

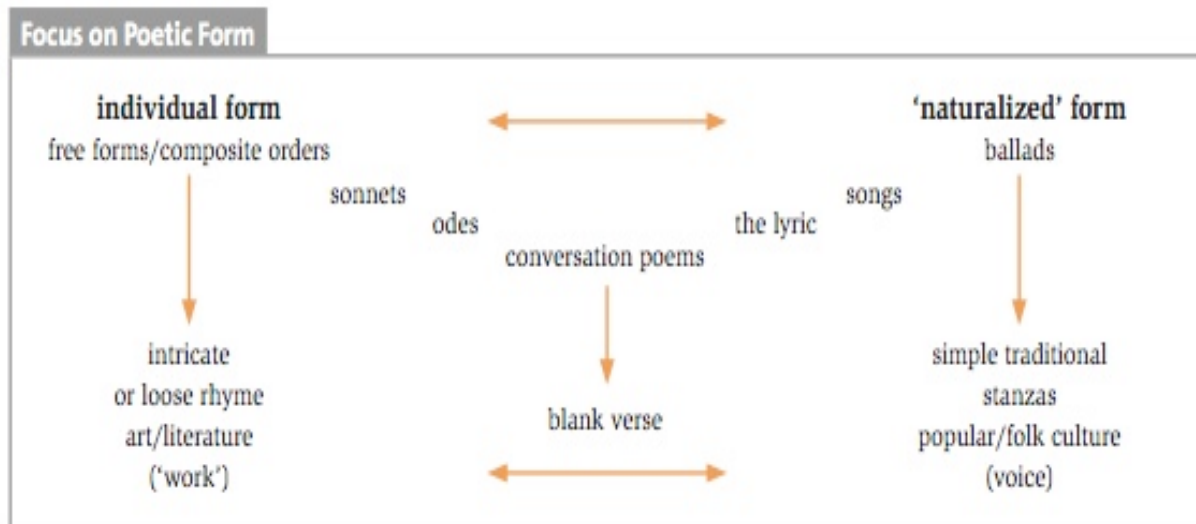
"[A]ll good Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; but though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced [...] but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. [...] I have said that Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origins from emotion recollected in tranquillity; the emotion is then contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind."

(Wordsworth 1800, qtd. in Reinfandt 2012, 49)

“Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”
> subjective experience/subjectivity/subjective dimensions of meaning

“thought long and deeply” / “recollected in tranquillity”
> representation through reflection/mediality/reflexive dimensions of meaning

VVVV



(Reinfandt 2012, 52)

c) Romantic Affordances of Form

Authenticity in Rock Music	
Modernist authenticity to be found more in	Romantic authenticity to be found more in
experimentation and progress (avant gardes)	tradition and continuity with the past (roots)
status of artist	sense of community
elitism	populism
openness regarding rock sounds	belief in core or essential rock sound
classical, art music, soul, pop styles	folk, blues, country, rock'n'roll styles
radical or sudden stylistic change	gradual stylistic change
irony, sarcasm, obliqueness	sincerity, directness
'recordedness'	'liveness'
'shocking' sounds	'natural' sounds
celebrating technology	hiding musical technology

(cf. Keightley 2001, 137;
Reinfandt 2009, 158)

Art Music World vs. Folk Music World
Pop Music World

(cf. Frith 1998, 35-42)

Affordances of Form:

(affordance = potential uses or actions latent in materials or designs
[Angebot/Aufforderung])

- a) Forms constrain
- b) Forms differ
- c) Forms overlap and intersect
- d) Forms travel
- e) Forms do political work in particular historical contexts

> Forms: containing, plural, overlapping, portable and situated.

(cf. Levine 2015, 4-6)

Poetic Form after Romanticism:

- a) sonnets and odes vs. ballads and songs:
conventional/traditional vs. innovative; artistic/individual vs. 'natural'
- b) free forms vs. conversation poems, sonnets vs. songs etc.
- c) composite orders, free sonnets, conversation poems, songlike lyrics etc.
- d) ballads and songs from past to present, folk to literature
- e) individualization – the people – nationalism

> writing into print: containing, portable – plural? overlapping? – (situated)

Songs and Form:

words – voice – music - medium?

Words

carried by

Voice (Performativity and Performance)

embedded in

Music (External: Generic Conventions and Cultural Capital vs.

Internal: Sound and Songfulness)

carried by

Mediality and Multimedia (Musicking > Recording > "Text")

(Eckstein 2010)

Analysis:

Delivery (Voice, Melody and Lyrics)

embedded in

Shape (Timbre and Texture)

embedded in

Form (Structure, Rhythm and Harmony)

resulting in

Style

Interpretation:

Friction

Persona

Reference and Belonging
(Semiotics and Authenticity)

VVVVVV

Synthesis

(Moore 2012)

Romantic Affordances of Song Form: (Reinfandt 2013, Eckstein 2010, Moore 2012)

- subjective dimensions of meaning / experience
(voice, timbre, performativity and performance <> words)
> staging the subject, persona, 'authorship'
- reflexive dimensions of meaning / style
(sound, shape: texture and timbre, form: structure, rhythm, harmony)
> songfulness <> mediality (performance vs. 'work')
- objective dimensions of meaning / reference
(generic conventions and cultural capital, mimesis, intertextuality, intermediality)
> belonging and authenticity

Songfulness?

As the medium of meaningful utterance, voice brings the music into a space of potential or virtual meaning even when actual meaning is left hanging; as the medium of social relationship, voice involves the listener in a potential or virtual intersubjectivity that in some circumstances may be realized in the course of song; and as a corporeal medium, voice addresses itself in its sensuous and vibratory fullness to the body of the listener, thereby offering both material pleasure and an incitement to fantasy. These effects all depend on the ability of the singing voice to envelope or suffuse both melody and text so that their independent existence is obscured. One way of defining songfulness is as the condensation of this distinctness into a quality, the conversation of the absence of textual and melodic distinctness into a positive presence.

(Kramer 2002, 54; see also Eckstein 2010, 67-86)

Richard Middleton, "The Real Thing? The Specter of Authenticity"

Within popular music culture, the discourse of authenticity is familiar. Typically, it is taken to mark out the genuine from the counterfeit, the honest from the false, the original from the copy, roots from surface – oppositions which in turn often map on to further distinctions: feelings as against pretence, acoustic as against electric, subculture as against mainstream, people as against industry, and so on. As Simon Frith has shown, the roots of this discourse lie in the bourgeois appropriation of folk music, constructed as an other to commercial pop, and in debates over jazz and blues [...]. Feedback between the spheres of interpretation on the one hand, and music production and dissemination on the other is common.

(Middleton 2006, 200)

The Grid (to be employed as a blueprint for essays)

Note: please provide the lyrics and a structural overview (intro – verse – chorus – bridge – instrumental/solo passage – outro etc.) in an appendix beyond the three pages

1) Placing the Song

(title, performer, year of recording, place in career trajectory, genre, reception)

2) Voice/Lyrics and Subject Position

(timbre, performance and performativity, mood, implied situation)

3) Style and Form

(structural overview, sonic textures, songfulness, performance vs. 'work'/'text'/mediality – explicit instances of reflexivity?)

4) Reference

(How does the song stage its reference to the world? Does it imitate aspects of the real world? Does it use texts from the real world? Are there samples from the real world? Or, more generally and fundamentally: How does the song establish its authenticity? How does it establish a sense of belonging and shared experience? And how does this link up with questions of social distinction and cultural capital?)

5) Works Cited (including the song itself)

2) Direct Echoes of Romanticism

Songwriters on Songwriting (cf. Zollo 1997)

Leonhard Cohen:

If I knew where good songs come from, I'd go there more often. It's a mysterious condition. It's much like the life of a Catholic nun. You're married to a mystery. (x)

Bob Dylan:

There's no rhyme or reason to it. There's no rule. (xi)

Editor's preface:

[W]riting a song I genuine magic, a very solitary, even lonely undertaking. [...] [S]ongwriters [...] are regular folks who dwell in our ordinary world [..., yet] their songs are infinite and eternal – everywhere at once, untouched by time. [...] [A] single spark of inspiration [...] is balances with the mastery of craft that comes from years of work. (xi)

Many songwriters said that their greatest songs were written in a flash, words and music arriving simultaneously, like uncovering something that was already there.

These are interviews about how songwriters have succeeded in creating something timeless and lasting within an industry that emphasizes new product over all other concerns. (xii)

Divine Comedy (Neil Hannon), "Lucy" (*Liberation* 1993)

I travelled among unknown men,
In lands beyond the sea;
Nor, England! did I know till then
What love I bore to thee.

'Tis past, that melancholy dream!
Nor will I quit thy shore
A second time; for still I seem
To love thee more and more.

Among thy mountains did I feel
The joy of my desire;
And she I cherished turned her wheel
Beside an English fire.

Thy mornings showed, thy nights concealed,
The bowers where Lucy played;
And thine too is the last green field
That Lucy's eyes surveyed. (1801; 1807)

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love:

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
- Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me! (1798; 1800)

A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees. (1798; 1800)

1) Placing the Song

- early 1990s indie/alternative rock, early Divine Comedy
- has become a classic in the repertoire (played solo/acoustic guitar only as encore on Arte concert early 2016)

2) Voice/Lyrics and Subject Position

- somewhat uniform singing

3) Style and Form

- one verse after the other, occasional line repeats
- basic electric guitar/acoustic guitar/bass/drums-set up plus sound effects, sparse background vocals
- Romantic connection ironized in rural interlude (sheep and cow bells)
- Instrumental passage (trombone? French horn effect?)
- Dynamics slightly mechanical?

4) Reference

- Directly quotes three 'Lucy Poems' by William Wordsworth, but doesn't repeat order of composition or even boundaries of individual poems
- Iconic rural samples
- Irony, second-hand authenticity?
- Cultural sophistication, artiness?

Billy Bragg, "Upfield" (*William Blake* 1996)

(cf. Eckstein/Reinfandt 2009)

I'm going upfield, way up on the hillside
I'm going higher than I've ever been before
That's where you'll find me, over the horizon
Wading in the river, reaching for that other shore

I dreamed I saw a tree full of angels, up on Primrose Hill
And I flew with them over the Great Wen till I had seen my fill
Of such poverty and misery sure to tear my soul apart
I've got a socialism of the heart, I've got a socialism of the heart

I'm going upfield ...

The angels asked me how I felt about all I'd seen and heard
That they spoke to me, a pagan, gave me cause to doubt their word
But they laughed and said: "I doesn't matter if you'll help us in our art
You've got a socialism of the heart, you've got a socialism of the heart"

I'm going upfield ...

Their faces shone and they were gone and I was left alone
I walked these ancient empire streets till I came tearful to my home
And when I woke next morning, I vowed to play my part
I've got a socialism of the heart, I've got a socialism of the heart

I'm going upfield ...

1) Placing the Song

- Bragg moving into singer/songwriter mode
- Ska?-arrangement (gospel version more convincing?)

2) Voice/Lyrics and Subject Position

- Individual voice, placing the singer (Bragg) in the tradition of William Blake and the chosen genre
- Fusion of vision and politics

3) Style and Form

- Chorus/verse alternation
- Uniform rhythm powered by horns in chorus/piano + gospel choir
- Studio versions (Bragg not normally performing with horns or piano)
- 'our art'

4) Reference

- allusions to William Blake, but not explicit
- drawing on genre/knowledge to establish collective authority/sense of community while maintaining individual stance
- political rallying cry: 'socialism of the heart'

3) The Singer/Songwriter-Paradigm

Jackson Browne, "Running on Empty" (*Running on Empty* 1977)
(cf. Reinfandt 2003b)

Looking out at the road rushing under my wheels
Looking back at the years gone by like so many summer fields
In sixty-five I was seventeen and running up 101
I don't know where I'm running now, I'm just running on

Running on, running on empty
Running on, running blind
Running on, running into the sun
But I'm running behind

Gotta do what you can just to keep your love alive
Trying not to confuse it with what you do to survive
In sixty-nine I was twenty-one and I called the road my own
I don't know when that road turned, into the road I'm on
Running on ...

Everyone I know, everywhere I go
People need some reason to believe
I don't know about anyone but me
If it takes all night, that'll be all right
If I can get you to smile before I leave

Looking out at the road rushing under my wheels
I don't know how to tell you all just how crazy this life feels
Look around for the friends that I used to turn to to pull me through
Looking into their eyes I see them running too

Running on ...

Honey you really tempt me
You know the way you look so kind
I'd love to stick around but I'm running behind
You know I don't even know what I'm hoping to find
Running into the sun but I'm running behind

1) Placing the Song

- Browne going 'rock'
- Recorded live on tour (not only in concert, but also 'backstage')
- Huge mainstream success

2) Voice/Lyrics and Subject Position

- Individual voice > retrospective stocktaking <> confusion
- Biographical experience (years!) shared with audience, fusion in performance situation (bridge)
- Love as a remedy

3) Style and Form

- Intro – verse – chorus – verse – chorus – solo lap steel/slide (David Lindley) – bridge – verse (picking up from beginning) – chorus – verse (conclusion/resolve?) – drums introducing outro (lap steel <> g) – resounding ending
- Distinct riff + piano figure, instrumentation aiming at rock authenticity
- Touring situation transformed into 'text'/'work'
- Highly self-reflexive and yet centred around subjective experience

4) Reference

- Live ambience at the beginning (opening track of eponymous album)
- Autobiography generalized in performance
- Shared experience in performance
- 'The Real Thing' (Middleton)

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