

Key Terms for Studying Culture

Case Studies



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Jeanette Winterson: „A Work of My Own“

Introduced by: Cathrin Baldauf, Dörthe Poetsch

1. Language

- The language of literature “is the most precise language that human beings have yet developed.” (p.165)
- “A fully realised piece of work cannot be put into ‘other words’.” (p.171)
- “The language of literature seems to be able to contain error by being greater than it.” (p.166)
- “Language is movement... words are fleet-footed things and when right run, escape us at the place where we think we have wrestled them flat.” (p. 166)
- “The language of literature is not the language of the everyday. Human beings have made it Other. One of the jobs of the writer now is to go on respecting the Other.” (p.167)

2. Author/Artist

- “The artist in whatever medium finds herself with a gift and a discipline that demands her life.” (p.168)
- “The condition of the artist is a condition of Remove” (p.168)
- “It may well be that nothing solid actually exists, but what might exist is energy, is space. And I have not discovered a more energetic space than art.” (p.169)
- “The moment [when the central image of a book occurs]... can be predicted but it cannot be demanded. I do not think of this as inspiration. I think of it as readiness.” (p.169)
- “A **writer** uninterested in her lineage is a writer who has no lineage. [...] I cannot do new work without known work.” (p.172)
- “In my own fiction I try to drive together lyric intensity and breadth of ideas.” (p.173)
- “We can look for writers who know what tradition is, who understand Modernism within that tradition, and who are committed to a fresh development of language and to new forms of **writing**.” (p.177)
- Problem of language: “those **writers** who still compel us and who cross time as if it were a room, are those writers marked out by their compact with words.” (p.177)
- “Reaction cannot alter what is written. And what is written is the writer’s true home.” (p.179)

3. Style

- Beginnings of an individual style: “a high degree of technical ability and a distinctive note which has nothing to do with subject matter.” (p.178)
- “There are plenty of tools a writer can beg or borrow, but her chisel she must make for herself” (p.180)
- “When we read a modern writer who is true, part of the excitement we get from her style is the excitement of other styles that have passed that way.” (p.181)
- “A writer should know how to copy. I think that only by knowing how to copy can one avoid copying.” (p.182)
- “To continue to do new work is to continue a development of style that allows the writer to surprise herself.” (p.182)
- “It is impossible to find fresh **images**, fresh ways of transmitting emotional experience, without fresh use of language.” (p.185)

- “Style; sensibility and technique distinctively brought together, frees the writer from the weight of her own personality, gives to her an incandescence of personality, so that what she can express is more than, other than, what she is.” (p. 187)
- “A personal style (...) is a primary world to which everything is subordinated, including the writer.” (p.187)

4. Future of Literature

- “In so much as television and film have largely occupied the narrative function of the novel, just as the novel annexed the narrative function of epic poetry, fiction will have to move on, and find new territory of its own.” (p.176)
- “Books can be bothersome, precisely because they are not light entertainment.” (p.189)
The **author** has to catch the reader’s attention with “the lure of a good story”. (p.189)
- “What I am seeking to do in my work is to make a **form** that answers to twenty-first-century needs. (...) The novel form is finished.” (p.191)

5. Points for discussion

- What do you think of her idea of a “true writer”?
- “It is (...) foolish to try to reconstruct the writer from the work.” (p.187) Do you agree?
- Consider the key terms popular culture and value, evaluation in relation to Winterson's position?

Source:

- Jeannette Winterson, *A Work of My Own*. In: Jeannette Winterson, *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1995

Jeanette Winterson: “Art Objects”

introduced by: Elena Blessing, Tina Schäfer

1) Winterson’s Main Points

- definitions, functions and attributes of art
 - o art is necessarily **beauty** (5)
 - o “The painting should be an **original**, not a reproduction” (8)
 - o “art and beauty are an essential **part of a well-functioning society**” (5), “[Art] has no biological necessity. ” (20), “Even those from whom art has been stolen away by tyranny, by poverty, begin to make it again. ” (20)
 - o **art transcends temporality** (5, 19)
 - o **art as communication**: “There is a constant exchange of emotion between us, between the three of us; the artist I need never meet, the painting in its own right, and me, the one who loves it and can no longer live independent of it. [...] The totality of the picture comments on the totality of what I am. ” (19)
 - o art as a potentially unsettling and **challenging experience**: “True art, when it happens to us, challenges the ‘I’ that we are. ” (15)
 - o art as a foreign city with a language that has to be learned (4)
- “human beings can be **taught** to love what they do not love already” (6)
 - o lack of **interest** in art as a result of **ignorance** (4)
 - o learning through looking (9f), **art requires concentration** (10), effort to be put into art (16f)

- “Do I like this?” (13) as a basic question for an obvious direct emotional response can only be the starting point for an evaluation of art, **examination of feeling must give way to an examination of the work** (14)
- Winterson’s learning process: visual art as an example for the arts in general; “I would concentrate my reading on priests and prophets of the past, while focusing my looking on modern painters.” (6)
(**acquiring knowledge /informed study**)
vs. “The only way to develop a palate is to develop a palate.” (16)
(**development of personal taste**)
- “What has changed is my way of **seeing**. I am learning how to look at pictures. What has changed is my capacity of **feeling**. Art opens the heart.” (6f), gives **access to lost memory** (13), “Art is my rod and staff, my resting place and shield, and not mine only, for art leaves nobody out.” (20)
- **possibility of failure** faced with an artwork’s **intensity** (10)
- **understanding pictures means loving pictures means buying pictures** (8, 18)

- The artist
 - “The true artist is connected” (12): task of the artist is to renew the medium and thus **connect to the future and at the same time reclaim the past**, “Leonardo is present in Cézanne, Michelangelo flows through Picasso and on into Hockney. This is not ancestor worship, it is the lineage of art. It is not so much influence as it is connection.” (12)
 - “The true artist is interested in the **art object as an art process**, the thing in being, the being of the thing, the struggle, the excitement, the energy that have found expression in a particular way. The true artist is after the problem. The false artist wants it solved (by somebody else).” (12)

- opposition against art galleries: irrelevancies like a painting’s cost seem more important than the painting itself (7, 10)
- **opposition against The Canon**: it limits the intensity of art by trivializing or familiarizing it (5, 11f, 18)

2) Contradictions, Problems and Points for Discussion

- **notion of elitism** (8, 16, 17): “When I sold a book I bought a Massimo Rao. Since that day I have been filling my walls with new light.” (21) –Winterson seemingly does not want to appear elitist, but does she succeed?
- the (e)valuation and creation of **art as an intellectual achievement** (4ff, 9f, 6f, 12)
vs. learning by doing, e.g. experiencing art (6, 14f, 19, 16)
- difference of **liking as a matter of taste** (13) and **liking as a recognition of value** (17)
- Does Winterson have a **notion of ‘postmodern originality’**?
- treatment of art in Western society: “**taming**”, scepticism, contempt (11, 20) –What is the **non-Western understanding of art**?
- not all visual images can be considered art (17) – **What makes art art then?**
- “If art, all art, is concerned with truth, then a society in denial will not find much use for it.” (11) – **Is art necessarily concerned with truth and what is truth anyway?**
- “If we say that art, all art is no longer relevant to our lives, then we might at least risk the question ‘What has happened to our lives?’ The usual question, ‘What has happened to art?’ is too easy an escape route.” (21), “I am sure that if as a society we took art seriously...” (17) – **What could be the functions of art for our lives and society at large?**

3) Relevant Concepts

- **Value/Evaluation**
- **Popular Culture** vs. **High Culture** (“The solid presence of art demands from us significant effort, an effort anathema to popular culture;” 16)
- **Representation** (“art [...] is concerned with truth,” 11)
- **Technology** (“Connection to the past, to one another, to the physical world, still compelling, in spite of the ravages of technology.” 13)

Source:

- Jeanette Winterson. “Art Objects.” *Art Objects. Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery*. London: Vintage, 1996. 3-21.

Jeanette Winterson: “Imagination and Reality” introduced by: Felicitas Schlottke, Dagmar Mehrbrodt

1) Winterson’s main points

a) Reality

- She equates reality to notional life; “Notional life is the life encouraged by governments, mass education and the mass media.” (134); they all ignore individuality; the aim is a streamlined homogeneity (with certain frames), which is objective
- Reality consists of a money culture, consumer economy, and passive people: “This pattern, punctuated by birth, death and marriage and a new car, is offered to us as real life.” (135)
- “I do not think it an exaggeration to say that most of the energy of most of the people is being diverted into a system which destroys them.” (135)
- “We think we live in a world of sense-experience and what we can touch and feel, see and hear, is the sum of our reality.” (135) but this is not true, see religion; reality is just a seeming-solid world: “a general agreement that there is more around us than the mundane allows the artist a greater licence and a greater authority” (136)
- Values of society: “Money culture recognises no currency but its own. Whatever is not money, whatever is not making money, is useless to it.” (138)
- “Money culture depends on symbolic reality. It depends on confusion between the object and what the object represents. To keep you and me buying and upgrading an overstock of meaningless things depends on those things having an acquisitional value.” (144)
- “Things do not satisfy. In part they fail to satisfy because their symbolic value changes so regularly and what brought whistles of admiration one year is next year’s car boot sale bargain.” (145) → transitoriness of things

b) Imagination

Speaking of imagination Winterson refers to art and the artist’s task:

- “The Reality of art is the reality of imagination” (133)
- ”What art presents is much more than the daily life of you and me.”(133); it is visionary
- “We have to admit that the arts stimulate and satisfy a part of our nature that would otherwise be left untouched and that the emotions art arouses in us are of a different order to those aroused by experience of any other kind.” (135)
- “[Art] sees beyond the view from the window, even though the window is its frame. This is why the arts fare much better alongside religion than alongside either capitalism or

communism.” (136): Art, like religion, is more than just the physical biological material world.

- Arts true effort is “to open to us dimensions of the spirit and of the self.”(137)
- “For the artist, any artist, poet, painter, musician, time in plenty and an abundance of ideas are the necessary basics of creativity. By dreaming and idleness and then by intense self-discipline does the artist live.” (138) : Values in imaginative world which are important for art
- “Art is dangerous”. (139): It reflects the free mind, underlines individuality and challenges the notional life
- imaginative capacity: made up of invention and discernment (146)

2) Conclusion

Imagination and reality belong together and are not to be considered as separate:

- “Our real lives hold within them our royal lives; the inspiration to be more than we are, to find new solutions, to live beyond the moment. Art helps us to do this because it fuses together temporal and perpetual realities.” (142f)
- “Art is for us a reality beyond now. An imaginative reality that we need.”(148)
- “The reality of the imagination leaves out nothing. It is the most complete reality that we can know.”(150)
- “Reality is continuous, multiple, simultaneous, complex, abundant and partly invisible. The imagination alone can fathom this and it reveals its fathomings through art.”(151)

3) Relevant Concepts

Which of the following key terms can be considered as most appropriate concerning Winterson’s statements mentioned above:

- Presentation (“art as the mirror of life”136; “Art is not documentary.”137)
- Culture (“Money culture recognises no currency but its own. Whatever is not money, whatever is not making money, is useless to it.”138)
- Value/Evaluation -Business (“If you can’t sell your work regularly and quickly, you can either starve or do something else.”)
- Author/Authorship (“The artist through the disciplines of her work, is one of the few people who does see things as they really are” 145f)

Source:

- Jeanette Winterson, *Imagination and Reality*. In: Jeanette Winterson, *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery*. London: Vintage, 1996. 133 -151.

Jeanette Winterson: “The Semiotics of Sex”

Introduced by: Ulrike Krone and Katharina Fink

Main Topics:

1) Sexuality

- “Is it about me? Is it amusing? Is it dirty? What about sex? are not aesthetic questions but they are the questions asked by most reviewers most of the time.” (S. 111)
- “Heterosexuality is backgrounded, whilst homosexuality is foregrounded” (S. 103)
- “It seems to me that to choose our reading matter according to the sex/sexuality of the writer is a (COMMON, BUT) dismal way to read” (S. 110)

2) Art

- “If Queer culture is now working against assumptions of identity as sexuality, art gets there first” (S. 106)
- Art objects: “I know that the language of my passion and the language of my art are not the same thing.” (S. 105)
- Art is not amnesia, and the popular idea of books as escapism or diversion, misses altogether what art is. Art is the realization of **complex emotion**”
- **“Complex emotion is pivoted around the forbidden”**
- **Art “creates emotion around the forbidden”.**
- “Some of the early feminist arguments surrounding the wrongfulness of men painting provocative female nudes seem to me to have overlooked the possibility or the fact of another female as the viewer. Why should she identify with the nude? What deep taboos make her unable to desire the nude?” (S. 107)
- “The striking loneliness of the individual when confronted with these large happenings that we all share, is a loneliness of displacement. The person is thrown out of the normal groove of their life and whilst they stumble, they also have to carry a new weight of feeling, feeling that threatens to overwhelm them.” (S. 113)
- **“I do not think of art as Consolation. I think of it as Creation.”** (S. 114)
- Art is not “a private nightmare” (S. 117), “it is shared human connection that traces possibilities of past and future in the world of now.”
- **“The rebellion of art is a daily rebellion against the state of living death routinely called real life”** (S. 108)
- “Art is not Capitalism, what I find in it, I may keep.” (S. 112)
- Art is “beyond the consequences of truth” (S. 116)

3) Artist/ Writer

- “I am a writer who happens to love women. I am not a lesbian who happens to write.” (S. 104)
- “The true writer knows that feeling must give way to form” (“The bad writer believes that sincerity of feeling will be enough, and pins her faith on the power of experience.”) (S. 114)
- “It is through the form, not in spite of or accidental to it, that the most powerful emotions are let loose over the greatest number of people.” (S. 106)
- “It is the poet who goes further than any human scientist. The poet who with her dredging net must haul up difficult things and return them to the present. As she does this, the reader will begin to recognize parts of herself so neatly buried that they seem to have been buried from birth.” (S. 115)
- “The artist imagines the forbidden because to her it is not forbidden. If she is freer than other people it is the freedom of single allegiance to her work” (S. 116)

4) Relevant Concepts and Points for Discussion

- Unless we set up criteria of judgement that are relevant to literature, and not to sociology, entertainment, topicality etc., we are going to find it harder and harder to know what it is that separates art from everything else.”
- Gender
- Representation
- Author/ Writing
- Evaluation
- Does art need effrontery?
- The artist becomes the artwork -> Jeanette Winterson and her writing; Performance Art

Source:

- Jeanette Winterson “The Semiotics of Sex”. In: *Art Objects. Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery*. London: Vintage 1996, S. 103-118.

David Bowie

Introduced by: Anja Pauser, Alexander Ries, Thomas Faust

I. Introduction

Discography:

- David Bowie (1967)
 - Space Oddity (1969)
 - The Man Who Sold the World (1970)
 - Hunky Dory (1971)
 - The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars (1972)
 - Aladdin Sane (1973)
 - Pin Ups (1973)
 - Diamond Dogs (1974)
 - Young Americans (1975)
 - Station to Station (1976)
 - Low (1977)
 - "Heroes" (1977)
 - Lodger (1979)
 - Scary Monsters (and Super Creeps) (1980)
 - Let's Dance (1983)
 - Tonight (1984)
 - Never Let Me Down (1987)
 - Black Tie White Noise (1993)
 - 1.OUTSIDE (1995)
 - Earthling (1997)
 - 'hours...' (1999)
 - Heathen (2002)
 - Reality (2003)
- Change (musically as well as stylistically or as an artist) as the only constant element in Bowie's work from 1967 until today
 - High culture vs. popular culture

- The actor David Bowie
- David Bowie and the art world
- The first artist to effectively make use of the internet → Bowienet (*multimediality*)
- David Bowie the businessman

II. Performance(s) & Authorship

“In concert, I play with the characters and evoke different kinds of emotional drive anytime I wish.”

1. Glam Bowie: ZIGGY STARDUST (1972)

- gender bending: constantly shifting signals from male to female
- feminizing effect: costumes emphasize his legs, shoulders and stomach
- ambiguity as part of performance: *“I was fairly forthcoming about the fact that I was bisexual. I don’t think there was any question of me being ambiguous, was there? I think Ziggy was ambiguous, but not me personally.”*¹

2. Soul Bowie: THE THIN WHITE DUKE (1976)

- period heavily influenced by drugs
- performed with “Brecht-inspired theatricality”
- icy character flirting with fascism
“When you think about it, Adolf Hitler was the first pop-star.” (Bowie, around 1976)

3. Experimental Bowie: VARIOUS – 1.outside (1995)

- *Outside* album: musical diary which makes references to various performance artists in the 70’s, 80’s and 90’s
- Nathan Adler, one of seven different characters (all performed by Bowie), as Bowie’s alter ego investigating art murder
- body as performance – body as art?
“It was definitely murder – but was it art?” (Nathan Adler)

III. Bowie “the chameleon of Pop“. Authenticity and mediality in his life

- “He is commonly known as the chameleon of pop, predicting trends and adjusting his style and persona, while holding on to his own ideas and creativity.“
- Authenticity is in need of constant efforts of stabilisation and renewal.
- He used masks to convey a different image of himself to the audience. He does not want to show his own self on stage. (staging of yourself)
- Satire against the protest movement by changing the view on “rock’n’roll”.
- Bowie is part of the pop culture and the avant-garde at the same time
- *Bowie in an interview with NY rock*: "For me, taking a new and exciting artistic avenue has always been my priority. I want to be able to continually surprise myself as an artist. I think if that element is not there, then things dissipate and you get into a sort of regularity of concept that becomes vegetating, if you're not careful. I think for me, personally, I have to really shake myself up musically every now and again to find out what it is that drew me to working with music in the first place."

¹ Waldrep, Shelton: “The Aesthetics of Self-Invention. Oscar Wilde to David Bowie.” p. 107.

Sources:

- Büttner, Jean-Martin: „In der Küche grinst der Pierot“, in: Du Magazin. Zürich, 1998, Nr.741.
- Heidkamp, Konrad: „Engel im Netz“, in: Die Zeit. Hamburg, 1999.
- No Author. „Interview David Bowie: The dame speaks“. NY rock, February 1997. Last access 25 January 2006
- Pegg, Nicholas: The Complete David Bowie. London: Reynolds & Hearn, 2002.
- von Rutenberg, Jürgen: „David Bowie: Ihr wollt Space? Ich gebe euch Space! Ein Interview“, in: Die Zeit. Hamburg, 1997.
- Waldrep, Shelton: “The Aesthetics of Self-Invention. Oscar Wilde to David Bowie.” Minneapolis / London: University of Minnesota Press 2001, p. 105 – 140.
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Bowie
- http://www.nyrock.com/db_new.htm
- <http://www.virginrecords.com/bowie/index2.html>

Bruce Springsteen

Introduced by: Daniela Härter, Jörg Schröder, Janni Mariolas

1) Thesis

- by Karsten Stanley Andersen.
- Title: Rock Music - Body, Art and Lifestyle.
- Chapter: Rock music as art.
- Survey among Springsteen fans.

2) Problem

- Cultural outlets of the last century.
- The role of TV.
- The role of (rock) music.

3) The development of lyrics in rock music

- In the beginning: aim = sounding cool (Presley, Little Richard).
- The Beatles: “no important message”.
- Bob Dylan “new approach”.

4) Bruce Springsteen

- The new Dylan.
- Own style.
- Development with regard to lyrics.

5) The three main functions of Rock lyrics in general.

- Convey feelings.
- Rock as an opinion former.
- Rock for delivering a certain message.

6) Key Term: Form

- The lyrics of a song and its musical structure may work against each other or at least intertwine in complex rather than simply supportive ways. (Middleton 1999: 152)

- Dai Griffiths (1988) has revealed this sort of intertwining in his analysis of Bruce Springsteen's "The River," where rhyme scheme, verbal content, melodic shape, and harmonic rhyme often follow divergent temporal patterns. (Middelton 1999: 152)

Sources:

- bruce.springsteen.com
- http://greasylake.org/frame_talk_to_me.htm (Thesis);
- Richard Middleton, "Form". In: Bruce Horner, Thomas Swiss (eds) Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture. Malden, Mass./Oxford: Blackwell, 1999. 141-155.
- www.statistik.baden-wuerttemberg.de/indikatoren/02_005.asp

“The Boss’s” Biography:

- born in 1949 in Freehold, New Jersey.
- 1962 his Mom buys him his first electric guitar.
- 1965 Springsteen joins “The Castiles”.
- In 1972 John Hammond – who discovered Bob Dylan as well- signs Springsteen to Columbia Records.
- Jan. 1973 debut album “Greetings from Asbury Park, N.J.” released but little acclaim.
- Sept. 1973 “The Wild, the Innocent & the E-Street Shuffle” is released.
- May 1974 his future manager John Landau sees him opening for Bonnie Raitt and writes “I saw rock’n’roll future and its name is Bruce Springsteen”. This, together with Bruce adoring Elvis, “The King”, is the foundation for his nickname “The Boss”.
- Aug. 1975 release of “Born to run”, in Oct. 1975 Bruce appears on the cover of *Time* and *Newsweek*.
- 1980 first top ten hit with “Hungry Heart”, a song he almost gave to *The Ramones*.
- 1984 “Born in the USA” is released and sells more than 15 million copies.
- 1988 Bruce and the E Street Band part after some rough years in his private life (moving from his homestate New Jersey, the state he himself mythologized with his songs and did not want to leave when his parents moved to California in his youth, to L.A., marrying an actress and getting divorced in just a few years time.)
- 1994 Springsteen wins an Academy Award for Best Song and later four Grammys with “Streets of Philadelphia” (solo).
- 1999 Bruce is inducted into the *Rock’n’Roll Hall of Fame*. Reunion with the E Street Band for a World Tour.
- July 2002 the first studio record with the E Street Band is released after 18 years.

Born In The USA (1984) as a political song

- Pop music is always more or less influenced by politics. It does not exist outside the realm of politics.
- The lyrics of *Born In The USA* contain explicit political meaning.
- The lyrics play an important role in the song. There are various indications to the Vietnam War, the song refers to a political situation.
- The context in which the song is performed is also very important. Depending on different political contexts, the song was interpreted in quite different ways as:
 - a critical song about a Vietnam veteran and his mother country
 - a patriotic pop anthem (e.g. by Ronald Reagan while campaigning for election in 1984)

Sources:

- www.Timeeurope.com
- www.brucespringsteen.com
- Lauglo, Magnus: "Greasy Lake",
- Daniel T. O'Hara, "Class". In: Frank Lentricchia, Thomas McLaughlin (eds.) *Critical Terms for Literary Study*. Chicago/London: U of Chicago P, 1995. (Es)
- http://greasylake.org/frame_talk_to_me.htm
- Robin Ballinger, "Politics". In: Bruce Horner, Thomas Swiss (eds.) *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture*. Malden, Mass./Oxford: Blackwell, 1999: 141:155.

Gorillaz

Introduced by: Violeta Topalova, Philip Langer

I, 1 Biography

- 1998: Damon Albarn (Blur) and Jamie Hewlett (*Tank Girl*) created a virtual band *Gorilla* (later *Gorillaz*), consisting of 4 characters: **Murdoc, 2D, Noodle and Russel**
- Besides Albarn and Hewlett, the artists behind the Gorillaz are Del Tha Funky Homosapien and Mihi Hatori
- Frequent use of guest artist eg Ibrahim Ferrer, Neneh Cherry and De La Soul
- On stage, the physical band originally played behind a screen, while animations of the characters were projected onto the screen
- The official website, www.gorillaz.com, is a virtual representation of *Kong Studios*, the band's fictional studio and home

I, 2 The Story of Gorillaz

I, 3 Discography

- 2001 Gorillaz
- 2002 G-Sides
- 2002 Laika Come Home
- 2005 Demon Days

II A short tour through *Kong Studios*

We will proceed directly to the cinema and watch the following video:
Rock it (Gorillaz – 2001)

III Key Terms and points for discussion

Authorship:

How far does the Gorillaz-project stray from the conventional notion of authorship in popular music?

Performance: Who is the actual performer? The Singer and Instrumentalists or the characters you see on stage and screen?

Youth: The members of the virtual band are all much younger than their real-life counterparts or models. Why could this be?

Business: Allegedly the Gorillaz started out as a sort of joke and turned into a mega-selling phenomenon. Are they just playing a post-modern game? Would you call them subversive? Does contemporary cultural subversion have to happen from inside the system? Is cultural subversion still possible at all?

Sources:

- Eckstein, Lars: Torpedoing the Authorship of Pop: Damon Albarn and Jamie Hewlett's 'Gorillaz' Project. Lecture Paper.
- Shumway, David R. "Performance", in: Horner, Bruce and Thomas Swiss (eds.). *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell 1999, pp. 188-198.
- www.gorillaz.com
- www.fans.gorillaz.com
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gorillaz>

System of a Down

Introduced by: Katrin Meischel, Annika Huhn, Katrin Sütterlin

A Introduction: Background and Biography

B AUTHORSHIP / POLITICS

"We're really an honest band – that's why people are listening to us." (Malakian)

Quotes

- ⇒ **Honesty**
- ⇒ **Purity / Freedom / Innovation**
- ⇒ **Art / Music is life, not money**
- ⇒ **Political AND Social Criticism / Personality / Diversity**

The Armenian Issue

During 1915 and 1918 the Ottoman Empire, ruled by Muslim Turks, sought to eliminate the Christian Armenian minority of the country. Before this genocide, a series of massacres had taken place (1894-1896 and in 1909), and it was followed by yet another series of massacres from 1920 on. Thousands of civilians lost their lives (estimates run from 700.000 to 1.5 Million Armenians). Turkey still does not admit the Armenian Genocide.

- ⇒ System Of A Down reminds of the events in songs like P.L.U.C.K., Holy Mountain, WAR?

The Iraq Issue

"The possibility of the U.S. going to war with Iraq is an extremely personal issue for me because I have family who live there. I visited Iraq when I was a teenager, and I can tell you first-hand that the people who I met there are really nice, ordinary people who don't want war with us or with anyone. So, we'd like to have the 'BOOM!' video help change the way people think about the solution to our global problems. We want to make the idea of dropping bombs, of waging war seem as antiquated and ridiculous as it is today for an Afro-American to have to sit at the back of the bus."

- ⇒ Songs dealing with the war in Iraq or war in general are BOOM, Soldier Side or BYOB

C B.Y.O.B. (Bring Your Own Bombs)

1. TEXT

I. Explanation of terms

- **B.Y.O.B.:** abbreviation for "bring your own bottle", "bring your own beer" or "bring your own booze"; usually used to indicate that the host of a party or social gathering will not be providing alcoholic beverages, but that guests are welcome to bring their own
- **Fort Knox:** United States Army post in Kentucky south of Louisville; it holds the U.S. Army Armor Center, the U.S. Army Armor School and the U.S. Army Recruiting Command

II. Lyrics: Content and form

▪ **explicit criticism**

⇒ recruitment of soldiers from lower classes ("Why don't presidents fight the war / why do they always send the poor", "Where the fuck are you"); message becomes very forceful by the permanent repetition of these lines (the whole song is repeated as well!)

⇒ concept of war as party ("Everybody's going to the party have a real good time"), c.f. the title B.Y.O.B.

▪ **implicit criticism: metaphorical expressions** (examples)

⇒ "Barbarisms by Barbaras with pointed heels"

⇒ "Marching forward hypocritic and hypnotic computers": notion of soldiers who do not think for themselves

⇒ "You feed us lies from the tablecloth": brain wash by U.S. government

⇒ biblical /theological imagery (kneeling, Moses): war is justified by religion

III. Interaction between lyrics and music / singing

- in this song, **different musical styles** have been intermingled

⇒ various styles strengthen System Of A Down's statements which are conveyed by the lyrics

- The **voice** of System Of A Down's singer influences the listener's understanding of the song as well

⇒ Variations of the voice (singing, speaking, screaming) lead to certain interpretations (e.g. mocking a quotation; giving vent to one's anger)

2. STRUCTURE (Video)

See: Screenshots and sequence analysis

3. FORM (in general)

vocals: Tankian's and Malakian's unique vocal style varies from a guttural roar to a high-pitched roar to a melodic singing voice (suits the sudden change in pace of the music)

- Drumming: **blast beats** (death metal drumming technique)
- Hard rock roots
- Mild rhythmic syncopation
- Minor key tonality
- Electric guitar riffs

wide range of instruments (including baritone [electric guitars](#), electric [mandolins](#), [sitar](#)s, 12-string [classical guitars](#) and many other [East Asian](#) instruments)

main influences: from earlier [alternative rock](#) bands, but they also draw influence from the [heavy metal](#), [punk rock](#), [jazz](#), [fusion](#), [Armenian folk music](#), [classic rock](#), [blues](#), and [industrial](#) genres

4. IMAGES / PERFORMANCE

Performance: “classic” presentation on stage, light show corresponds to rhythm and beats ⇒
Live pictures and live music

(“A good performance will result from careful attention and scrupulous fidelity to the score or text.” Henry Sayre, ‘Performance’, p. 92)

Images: how the public perceives System Of A Down as band, the musicians as individuals
⇒ *promotional pictures, CD artwork and magazine*

D A Cultural Phenomenon

- essay by Serj Tankian titled "**Understanding Oil**"
- efforts to make Turkey recognize the **Armenian Genocide of 1915**
- **Axis of Justice**, an activist organization aimed at motivating youth interest in politics ("The Axis of Justice Radio Network" will welcome Noam Chomsky)
- B.Y.O.B. has been nominated for the **2006 Grammy Awards**
- Internet discourse (e.g. forums about song meanings)
- **Michael Moore** directed the video for the single “BOOM”
- **SERART** (collaboration between Arto Tunçboyacıyan and Serj Tankian)
- Own labels: Daron – EatUrMusic, Serj – Serjical Strike Records
- Serj's self-published poetry book *Cool Gardens*
- Daron's latest project: ‘Scars on Broadway’

E Relevance

- **BUSINESS** – record labels, collaboration with star producer Rick Rubin
- **VALUE / EVALUATION / DISCOURSE** – internet / literary / political discourse
- **IDEOLOGY**
- **INSTITUTIONS** – video channels, broadcasting programmes
- **GENDER / RACE / CLASS**

Sources:

- **Axis of Justice. Interview with Professor Noam Chomsky.** PDF Transcript of Radio Show on Jan 13, 2005. Jan 28, 2005.
http://www.axisofjustice.org/PDF/AOJ_Chomsky_Interview.pdf
- **“Understanding Oil” by Serj Tankian.** Jan 28, 2005.
<http://wrestlingcasa.tripod.com/systemofadown/id174.html>
- **SOADfans.com:** The Official Unofficial System Of A Down Site!
<http://www.soadfans.com/>
- **System Of A Down.** Official Website. Jan 2, 2005. <http://www.systemofadown.com/>

MJ Harris & Martyn Bates: Murder Ballads

Introduced by: Andreas Schlenker, Aleksandra Furlan, Lilijana Babic

A Short History of Dark Ambient

1982: Ambient: Brian Eno - Ambient 4: On Land

1990: Dark Ambient: Lustmord - Heresy

1991: Isolationism: Lull - Dreamt About Dreaming

1994: Post-Isolationism: MJ Harris & Martyn Bates - Murder Ballads (Drift)

"Non-Entertaining Headphone Music":

Performance:

- non-reproducibility
- digital processing
- (edited) found noises
- 'enclosed' live performances
- radio broadcasts / DJ-ing
- art installations
- limited edition publishing

Reception:

- deliberately non-entertaining
- rejection of 'good vibrations'
- individual reception at home
- focus on gloom
- non-obtrusive wall of sound
- deep-listening
- feedback to the artist

Representation:

"Isolationism's idea of utopia is empty space. If this music evokes mind's-eye images of unpopulated expanses, it's because it's purged of all the normal signifiers of 'humanity' or 'sociability' in pop (vocals, lyrics, funky beat)." (Reynolds)

"This is music that embodies and embraces the "death of the social," music impelled by a near-monastic impulse to flee pop culture's noisy hyper-activity for a rigorous aesthetic of silence and sensory deprivation. At its ultimate degree, this impulse becomes a kind of aestheticised death wish." (Reynolds)

Mick Harris: "it mirrors some kind of frightening, inevitable breakdown of society in general (evoking paranoid visions of hermetic, cut-off cells of human isolation – no real human one-to-one direct communication) – I never planned to be here; it's just somewhere I've arrived because merely I'm part of the culture..." (Chimenti, "The Interview")

Images:

- No videos
- Abstract designs on CD covers, no photos of the artists

The Lyrics - Murder Ballads:

- A subgenre in the genre of street/broadsheet folk ballads of the 18th and 19th centuries in England.
- the plot provides the details of a murder and some moral references

Authorship:

Composition & Production: M.J. Harris & Martyn Bates

Recorded and mixed by: M.J. Harris

Most lyrics follow: Francis James Child: The English and Scottish Popular Ballads

MJ Harris' Monikers:

Main Projects: *Scorn, Lull*

Minor Projects: *Quoit, Mick Harris, MJ Harris*

One-off Projects: *Clang, Fret, Matera, Monrella, The Weakener*

In Groups: *Certain Beyond All Reasonable Doubt, Defecation, Equations Of Eternity, Extreme Noise Terror, Flux, Hygiene, Painkiller, Pigface, Praxis, Trace Decay, Unseen Terror*

Topics for Discussion:

- Do the Murder Ballads belong to High or Pop Culture?
- Are the Murder Ballads music or rather a form of Audio Book?
- How does the music/voice sound in terms of gender?

Sources:

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<http://www.eyelessingaza.com/mbintrockerillaeng.html>
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Appendix:

The idea of making music that in some way related to a sense of place - landscape, environment - had occurred to me many times over the years preceding "On Land". Each time, however, I relegated it to a mental shelf because it hadn't risen above being just another idea - a diagram rather than a living and breathing music. In retrospect, I now see the influence of this idea, and the many covert attempts to realise it, running through most of the work that I've released like an unacknowledged but central theme. This often happens; you imagine a territory rich in possibilities and try to think of how you might get to it, and then suddenly one day you look around and realise that you have been there for quite a long time.

My conscious exploration of this way of thinking about music probably began with "Another Green World" (1975). On that record I became aware of setting each place within its own particular landscape and allowing the mood of that landscape to determine the kinds of activity that could occur. Working from the realisation that my music was less and less connected with performability but was created in and of the studio, I took advantage of the fact that music produced in recording studios (rather than music reproduced by studios) has the option of creating its own psychoacoustic space. Most frequently this has been achieved by mechanical or electronic echoes and delays: short repeat echoes connoting rectilinear urban spaces, for example, and until recently, these possibilities have been used "realistically" to evoke spaces that were recognizable. From "Another Green World" onwards I became interested in exaggerating and inventing rather than replicating spaces, experimenting in particular with various techniques of time distortion. This record represents one culmination of that development and in it the landscape has ceased to be a backdrop for something else to happen in front of; instead, everything that happens is a part of the landscape. There is no longer a sharp distinction between foreground and background.

In using the term landscape I am thinking of places, times, climates and the moods that they evoke. And of expanded moments of memory too... One of the inspirations for this record was Fellini's "Amarcord" ("I Remember"), a presumably unfaithful reconstruction of childhood moments. Watching that film, I imagined an aural counterpart to it, and that became one of the threads woven into the fabric of the music.

What qualified a piece for inclusion on the record was that it took me somewhere, but this might be somewhere that I'd never been before, or somewhere I'd only imagined going to. Lantern Marsh, for example, is a place only a few miles from where I grew up in East Anglia, but my experience of it derives not from having visited it (although I almost certainly did) but from having subsequently seen it on a map and imagining where and what it might be. We feel affinities not only with the past, but also with the futures that didn't materialize, and with the other variations of the present that we suspect run parallel to the one we have agreed to live in.

The choice of sonic elements in these places arose less from listening to music than from listening to the world in a musical way. When I was in Ghana, for instance, I took with me a stereo microphone and a cassette recorder, ostensibly to record indigenous music and speech patterns. What I sometimes found myself doing instead was sitting out on the patio in the evenings with the microphone placed to pick up the widest possible catchment of ambient sounds from all directions, and listening to the result on my headphones. The effect of this simple technological system was to cluster all the disparate sounds into one aural frame; they became music.

Listening this way, I realised I had been moving towards a music that had this feeling; as the listener, I wanted to be situated inside a large field of loosely-knit sound, rather than placed before a tightly organised monolith (or stereolith, for that matter). I wanted to open out the aural field, to put much of the sound a considerable distance from the listener (even locating some of it "out of earshot"), and to allow the sounds to live their lives separately from one another, clustering occasionally but not "musically" bound together. This gave rise to an interesting technical difficulty. Because recording studio technology and practice developed in relation to performed music, the trend of that development has been towards greater proximity, tighter and more coherent meshing of sounds with one another. Shortly after I returned from Ghana, Robert Quine gave me a copy of Miles Davis' "He Loved Him Madly". Teo Macero's revolutionary production on that piece seemed to me to have the "spacious" quality I was after, and like "Amarcord", it too became a touchstone to which I returned frequently.

As I made these pieces, I began to take a different attitude towards both the materials and the procedures I was using. I found the synthesizer, for example, of limited usefulness because its sound tended towards a diagrammatic rather than an organic quality. My instrumentation shifted gradually through electro-mechanical and acoustic instruments towards non-instruments like pieces of chain and sticks and stones. Coupled with this transition was an increasing interest in found sound as a completely plastic and malleable material; I never felt any sense of obligation about realism. In this category I included not only recordings of rooks, frogs and insects, but also the complete body of my own earlier work. As a result, some earlier pieces I worked on became digested by later ones, which in turn became digested again. The technique is like composting: converting what would otherwise have been waste into nourishment.

(Brian Eno 1982, revised February 1986)

Photography

Introduced by: Lisa Peter, Anna Rösch, Indira Suresh, Anne Thoma

History

[Photography] was developed in the 19th century through the artistic aspirations of two Frenchmen, Nicéphore Niépce and Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre, whose combined discoveries led to the invention of the first commercially successful process, the daguerreotype (1837). In addition, two Englishmen, Thomas Wedgwood and William Henry Fox Talbot, patented the negative-positive calotype process (1839) that became the forerunner of modern photographic technique. Photography was initially used for portraiture and landscapes. In the 1850s and '60s, Mathew B. Brady and Roger Fenton pioneered war photography and photojournalism. From its inception, two views of photography predominated: one approach held that the camera and its resulting images truthfully document the real world, while the other considered the camera simply to be a tool, much like a paintbrush, with which to create artistic statements. The latter notion, known as Pictorialism, held sway from the late 1860s through the first decade of the 20th century, as photographers manipulated their negatives and prints to create hazy, elaborately staged images that resembled paintings.

(Encyclopaedia Britannica)

Case A - Technology and Image: The Effects of Photography

Source: Walter Benjamin (1892 – 1940) "A Short History of Photography"

- Walter Benjamin as one of the most influential theorists of photography
- analyses photography at its intersection between art and **politics**
- Benjamin as a supplement to Théberge: ambivalent view on **technology**, technology as a power for fundamental change

Distinction into two stages of photographic production:

First Decade of Photography "daguerreotype" scepticism toward the machine - exposure duration	
Benjamin distinguishes art by the concept of "aura": relict of a cultic use of art its historical link to power its uniqueness technology redefines the art concept extracts the essence "art" from earlier forms of technology	the new technology's advantages: photography as condensation art slow motion, magnification → exploring the unconscious the model's authenticity photography withdraws the painting's "aura" puts an end to traditional art
Industrialisation of Photography mass reproduction linking the actual and the photograph	
<p style="text-align: center;">Creative photography</p> attempts in vain to reinstall the aura emancipates from physiognomic, political, scientific interests true nature of photographic creativity: advertisement and association	<p style="text-align: center;">Constructive photography</p> uncovering interhuman relations exposure, construction Atget / surrealist photography: liberates the object from its "aura" a gap for politics to enter art

→ The strength of photography lies in the medium's – not *per se* realised – authentic **representation**. When referring to the actual via inscription, it obtains social and political significance.

Case B: Madrid, 11th March 2004

A photograph, showing victims and rescue workers by the wreckage of a train, was taken by a Spanish photographer and syndicated worldwide by the agency Reuters. In the foreground on the left hand side, a blood-soaked limb is discernible. The image was used by British newspapers on 12th March 2004 in the following ways:

- *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Sun*, and the *Daily Mail* removed the limb and replaced it with stones
- The *Guardian* changed the colour from red to grey
- The *Independent* and the *Mirror* printed the picture in black and white
- *Metro* printed the image in full

Representation

- axis of representation
object: Madrid bombing, manner/means of representation: photograph
axis of communication
maker: Spanish photographer or newspaper (?), beholder: reader
- “prohibitions and restrictions (...) against the representation of evil or ugly objects, against (...) violence” (C, p. 13)
- “Every representation exacts some cost, in the form of lost immediacy, presence or truth, in the form of a gap between (...) original and copy” (C, p. 21)
- “the thing itself”, “the authentic”, “the real” (C, pp. 16-17) – “An image that tells the truth up to a point, but not the whole truth” (Mitchell, p. 200)
- notion that photography does not invent things but that it is a confirmation of a present scene – authenticity at stake (Röttger-Denker, p. 120)
- the limb as the Barthesian *punctum*

Technology

- “the portrayal of technology as the corrupting force (...)” (K, p. 210)
- misplaced trust in the authority and truth of traditional photographs, blaming technology for an apparent erosion of truth (Thomas, p. 44)

Authorship

- “the institutional alteration of photographs without the consent of the photographer is widespread” (Thomas, p. 42)
- to whom does the photograph belong? Barthesian notion that photographers, like authors, only initiate a process → photography seizes the law of ownership (North, p. 1379)
- authorship as a “selection from pre-existing materials”, e.g. the Spanish photographer’s material? (K, p.200)

Case C: The myth of photographic truth

- The rules and conventions of different systems of **representation** vary, and we attribute different sets of cultural meanings to each – such as paintings, photographs and television images.
- Regardless of the social role of an image, the creation of an image through a camera lens always involves some degree of subjective choice through selection, framing, and personalization.
- Some types of image recording seem to take place without human intervention. These mechanisms are often invisible to the user. Yet, it remains the photographer who frames and takes the image, not the camera itself.
- At the same time, despite the subjective aspects of the act of taking a picture, the aura of machine objectivity clings to mechanical and electronic images. All camera-generated images, be they photographic, cinematic, or electronic (video or computer-generated), bear the cultural legacy of still photography, which historically has been regarded as a more objective practice than, for instance, painting or drawing.
- The legacy of objectivity clings to the cameras and machines that produce images today. This combination of the subjective and the objective is a central tension in camera-generated images². It is a paradox of photography that although we know that images can be ambiguous and are easily manipulated or altered, particularly with the help of computer graphics, much of the power of photography still lies in the shared belief that photographs are objective or truthful records of events.
- Among the range of images produced by cameras, there are cultural meanings that affect our expectations and uses of images. We do not bring the same expectations about the representation of truth to newspaper photographs as we do to television news images or to film images that we view in a movie theatre
- Widespread use of digital imaging technologies since the 1990s has dramatically altered the status of the photograph, particularly in the news media. Digital imaging thus can be said to have partially eroded the public's trust in the truth-value of photography and the camera image as evidence.
- The altered image may still appear to represent a photographic truth → the meaning of an image (and our expectations of it) is tied to the technology through which it is produced

Images and ideology

- **Images** are an important means through which **ideologies** are produced and onto which ideologies are projected.
- Images are elements of contemporary advertising and consumer culture through which assumptions are both constructed and responded to. Film and television are media through which we see reinforced ideological constructions. Ideologies often appear to be natural or given, rather than being part of a system of belief that a culture produces in order to function in a particular way.

² Photography was developed in Europe in the early nineteenth century, when concepts of positivist science held sway. Positivism involves the belief that empirical truths can be established through visual evidence. In the context of positivism, the photographic camera was taken to be a scientific tool for registering reality and was regarded by its early advocates as a means of representing the world more accurately than hand-rendered images. Since the mid-1800s, there have been many arguments for and against the idea that photographs are objective renderings of the real world that provide an unbiased truth because cameras are seemingly detached from a subjective, particular human viewpoint. A photograph is often perceived to be an unmediated copy of the real world and therefore 'speak' the truth.

- Visual culture is integral to ideologies and power relations: Ideologies permeate the world of entertainment, and images are also used for regulation, categorization, identification, and evidence.

An **icon** (from Greek εἰκών, *eikon*, "image") is an image, picture, or representation; it is a sign or likeness that stands for an object by signifying or representing it, or by analogy, as in semiotics; by extension, *icon* is also used, particularly in modern popular culture, in the general sense of symbol — i.e. a name, face, picture or even a person readily recognized as having some well-known significance or embodying certain qualities.

The modern usage of language commonly refers to icons as products of art and the media which are widely known among most members of a cultural area.

Examples: Hamlet's 'to be or not to be' soliloquy, the Mona Lisa, Michelangelo's painting in which God's Hand touches the hand of Adam, the silhouette of the Eiffel tower, the famous Descartes quote '*cogito ergo sum*', the Coca-Cola logo or Mickey Mouse.

Case D: The Borderlines of Photography

a) Daniel Lee's *Manimals*-Series (1993)

- the series consists of traditionally photographed portraits that were later on digitalized and manipulated layer by layer with Adobe Photoshop software, so that the faces resemble the Chinese Zodiac
- idea behind it: people are believed to share certain behavioural and even physical characteristics with the animal in whose year they were born
Lee likes to work with the animal traces in human bodies; he believes in Darwin's theory of evolution and he therefore likes to highlight the animal still within us
- **representation:** *The Year of the Monkey* is a self-portrait, but the most recognizable part of the human body, the face, is changed into a humanoid animal
→ representation of somebody who exists, yet not in this particular way; is it still a portrait?
- **technology:** the importance of the computer, "the computer gave me a different way of thinking about the art form"
→ actual transgression of the genre photography?
- **authorship:** "You have to have both the imagination and the technical know how to make it work."

Helmut Ditsch, *Traunsee* and *Das Gebirge*

- Ditsch is a painter, not a photographer in the first place; he takes pictures of his mountaineering expeditions, but he does not copy them one to one into a monumental painting; instead, he concentrates on certain landscape structures, leaves others out and composes new formations

- *Das Gebirge* was made for the dining hall of the Österreichische Nationalbank in Wien; it measures 150 x 1190 cm and took him two years to complete
- **representation**: photorealistic painting of an alpine landscape that does not exist in this way, but which might well; repeatedly called “surrealistic hyperrealism” in the media
- **technology**: art takes over photography, the photograph gains the position of the ideal, not vice versa!
- **authorship**: is a landscape photographer less an artist than a landscape painter?

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