

# ROMANTICISM TODAY: THE SINGER/SONGWRITER-PARADIGM

## Lecture 9: Lost Ca(u)ses and Ventriloquism

- 1) The Piper at the Gates of Dawn: Syd Barrett
- 2) Alternative Gospel: Bill Fay
- 3) Silver Magic Ships You Carry: Sixto Rodriguez
- 4) Ventriloquism: Woody Guthrie > Billy Bragg/Wilco

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### 1) The Piper at the Gates of Dawn: Syd Barrett

Syd Barrett [1946-2006] was the fragile seer who set Pink Floyd on their stellar path before stumbling into the wilderness. In our 19-page tribute, on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death, his sister Rosemary Breen reveals the man behind the myth: “He was a child of 60 and a child of the ‘60s.”

Plus! Musicians and writers salute British psychedelia’s visionary genius.

*Mojo* (June 2016): *Syd Barrett: The Ultimate Celebration* [of  
“The Boy Who Never Grew Up”

Pink Floyd, *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* (1967)  
[*A Saucerful of Secrets* (1968)]

*The Madcap Laughs* (1970)  
*Barrett* (1970)  
*Opel* (1988)

## Tom Stoppard, *Rock 'n' Roll* (2006)

### Act One

#### *Blackout.*

*The Piper is heard.*

*Then, night in the garden. The Piper is squatting on his heels high up on a garden wall, his wild dark hair catching some light, as though giving off light. His pipe is a single reed like a penny whistle. He plays for Esme, who is sixteen, a flower child of the period: 1968.*

*Light from the interior catches Esme dimly, her flowing garment, her long golden hair.*

*The interior shows part of a dining room, lowly lit by a lamp. There is a walk-through frontier between the room and the 'unlit' garden, which is leafy with a stone-flagged part large enough for a garden table and two or three chairs.*

*The Piper pipes the tune and then sings.*

#### **The Piper**

'Lean out of your window,  
Golden Hair,  
I heard you singing  
In the midnight air.

My book is closed,  
I read no more ...'  
[Watching the fire dance  
On the floor

I've left my book  
I've left my room  
I heard you singing  
Through the gloom

Singing and singing  
A merry air  
Lean out of the window  
Golden Hair]

*Jan enters [...] He is twenty-nine. [...]*

*The Piper laughs quietly to himself and vanishes, a spring-heeled jump into the dark.*

**Esme** Who's that? Jan?

**Jan** (a greeting) Ahoj. What are you doing?

**Esme** Did you see him?

**Jan** Who?

**Esme** Pan! [...] He played on his pipe and sang to me?

**Jan** Very nice. Have you got any left?

[...]

**James Joyce, *Chamber Music* (1907): V**

Lean out of the window,  
Goldenhair,  
I hear you singing  
A merry air.

My book was closed;  
I read no more,  
Watching the fire dance  
On the floor.

I have left my book:  
I have left my room:  
For I heard you singing  
Through the gloom,

Singing and singing  
A merry air.  
Lean out of the window,  
Goldenhair.

**William Blake**

In his "Introduction" to his *Songs of Innocence* (1789), the poet, painter and engraver William Blake reflects upon the gap between being and representation by introducing the figure of a piper whose art moves from the realm of innocent involvement to the realm of representation. Interestingly, this fall from grace is inaugurated by a child who urges the piper to broaden the functional potential of his art by enriching first its affective and then, in a move from pure music to singing and writing, its semantic and representational potential:

Piping down the valleys wild  
Piping songs of pleasant glee  
On a cloud I saw a child,  
And he laughing said to me;

"Pipe a song about a lamb";           5  
So I piped with merry cheer.  
"Piper, pipe that song again—"  
So I piped, he wept to hear.

"Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe,  
Sing thy songs of happy cheer."       10  
So I sung the same again  
While he wept with joy to hear.

"Piper sit thee down and write  
In a book that all may read—"  
So he vanished from my sight.       15  
And I plucked a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,  
And I stain'd the water clear,  
And I wrote my happy songs  
Every child may joy to hear.       20

In the course of the poem, the fall from grace is clearly depicted as a **fall into language** which has the capacity to add joy to the world (lines 12, 20) but lets the world vanish from sight (15). Writing about the world is necessarily at a distance from the world, it "stain[s]" (18) its original being. In Blake's frontispiece for the collection, the piper/writer is depicted in the act of stepping out of the world of original being into experience.

(Reinfandt 2012, 50)

## 2) Alternative Gospel: Bill Fay

### The Bill Fay Story

After having been rehearsed in nearly every review of *Life Is People*, the Bill Fay Story has found its way on to reference tools like Wikipedia or allmusic.com and is now at least alluded to in the reviews of *Who Is the Sender?* [2015] It goes like this: In 1967, a first single by Bill Fay was issued on the Deram label (“Some Good Advice” / “Screams in the Ears”, now featured as bonus tracks on the 2005 Elektra reissue of *Bill Fay*). He went on to produce two albums for Deram, the self-titled *Bill Fay* (1970) and *Time of the Last Persecution* (1971). Due to lack of success, Fay was dropped from the label and retired from the music business, taking on various jobs and continuing to write songs at home. A tentative rediscovery by other musicians such as Nick Cave and Wilco’s Jeff Tweedy resulted in Fay’s cult status from the mid-1990s onwards, which in turn led to reissues of his two albums in 1998, the release of a collection of demos recorded between 1966 and 1970 under the title *From the Bottom of an Old Grandfather Clock* by British independent label Wooden Hill in 2004, the first release of his recordings for *Tomorrow, Tomorrow & Tomorrow*, the successor to *Time of the Last Persecution* – at the time rejected by no less than 14 record labels – by British independent label Durtro in 2005, and finally the release of a compilation of outtakes and home recorded new material on a double CD (*Still Some Light*) by the Canadian Coptic label in 2010. These scattered efforts did nothing to re-establish Bill Fay as a force in the music business, but the re-issues of his earlier albums in 1998 gave him some satisfaction, as he recalls in an interview in 2012: “It was astonishing to me. I won’t ever really be able to believe that it happened. That’s how I feel about it. I had come to terms with the fact that I was deleted, but that I had always kept writing songs anyway and that was good enough.” It took another 14 years, however, until producer Joshua Henry, who had heard the early albums as part of his father’s record collection, managed to lure him back into a recording studio for *Life Is People*.

(Reinfandt 2015)

### Bill Fay, “How Little”

*Who Is the Sender?* (2015)

There’s a melody  
Somewhere deep  
At the heart of it  
There’s a melody

There’s a rhythm and a rhyme  
Through the years and days  
There’s a signature  
At the bottom of the page

Root and branch  
Leave and seed  
There's a melody  
At the heart of it

Cloud and rain,  
Hill and plain  
There's a melody  
At the heart of it

It's all so deep [rep]

There's a reason [3x]  
At the heart of it  
There's a melody

It's all so deep [rep] / *Little do we know* [rep] of [???

There's a reason [3x] / *How little* [3x]  
At the heart of it  
There's a melody

It's all so deep / *How little*

How little, how little

### **Bill Fay, "Who Is the Sender?"**

*Who Is the Sender?* (2015)

Had a song delivered  
Through my door today  
From an unknown sender  
Far away

Who is the sender?  
I'd really like to know  
Who is the sender?  
I'd really like to know

I wanna say thank you (2x)  
To the unknown sender  
Far away

Had a song delivered  
Through my ears today  
Through the chords on this piano  
That I play

Who is the sender?  
I'd really like to know  
Who is the sender?  
I'd really like to know

I wanna say thank you (2x)  
To the unknown sender  
Far away

I wanna say thank you  
To the unknown sender  
Far away

### 3) Silver Magic Ships You Carry: Sixto Rodriguez

*Searching for Sugar Man* (Sweden/UK 2012, dir. Malik Bendjelloul).  
Styrdom, Craig Bartholomew, and Stephen 'Sugar' Segerman, *Sugar Man: The Life, Death and Resurrection of Sixto Rodriguez*. London: Bantam Press, 2015.

#### Rodriguez

*Cold Fact* (1970)  
*Coming from Reality* (1971)

[1977 *At His Best*; 1981 *Rodriguez Alive* (Australia)]  
[1982 *The Best of Rodriguez*; 1998 *Live Fact* (South Africa)]

*Searching for Sugar Man* (OST, 2012)

#### Rodriguez, "Sugar Man"

*Cold Fact* (1970)

Sugar man, won't you hurry  
'Cos I'm tired of these scenes  
For a blue coin won't you bring back  
All those colors to my dreams.

Silver magic ships you carry  
Jumpers, coke, sweet Mary Jane

Sugar man met a false friend  
On a lonely dusty road  
Lost my heart when I found it  
It had turned to dead black coal.

Silver magic ships you carry  
Jumpers, coke, sweet Mary Jane

Sugar man you're the answer  
That makes my questions disappear  
Sugar man 'cos I'm weary  
Of those double games I hear

Sugar man  
Sugar man  
Sugar man  
Sugar man  
Sugar man  
Sugar man  
Sugar man

Sugar man, won't you hurry  
'Cos I'm tired of these scenes  
For a blue coin won't you bring back  
All those colors to my dreams.

Silver magic ships you carry  
Jumpers, coke, sweet Mary Jane

Sugar man met a false friend  
On a lonely dusty road  
Lost my heart when I found it  
It had turned to dead black coal.

Silver magic ships you carry  
Jumpers, coke, sweet Mary Jane

Sugar man you're the answer  
That makes my questions disappear...

### **Rodriguez, "Crucify Your Mind"**

*Cold Fact* (1970)

Was it a huntsman or a player  
That made you pay the cost  
That now assumes relaxed positions  
And prostitutes your loss?  
Were you tortured by your own thirst  
In those pleasures that you seek  
That made you Tom the curious  
That makes you James the weak?

And you claim you got something going  
Something you call unique  
But I've seen your self-pity showing  
As the tears rolled down your cheeks

Soon you know I'll leave you  
And I'll never look behind  
'Cos I was born for the purpose  
That crucifies your mind  
So con, convince your mirror  
As you've always done before  
Giving substance to shadows  
Giving substance ever more

And you assume you got something to offer  
Secrets shiny and new  
But how much of you is repetition  
That you didn't whisper to him too

#### **4) Ventriloquism: Woody Guthrie > Billy Bragg/Wilco**

**Billy Bragg & Wilco, *Mermaid Avenue: The Complete Sessions***

(Vol. 1: 1998, Vol. 2: 2000, Vol. 3: 2012, DVD *Man In the Sand/Making of*)

Lyrics by Woody Guthrie, passed on to Billy Bragg and Wilco by Nora Guthrie

##### **“Another Man’s Done Gone”**

(Vol. 1: Music by Billy Bragg, performed by Jeff Tweedy, voc, Jay Bennett, p)

Sometimes I think I'm gonna lose my mind  
But it don't look like I ever do  
I've loved so many people everywhere I went  
Some too much, and others not enough

Well I don't know  
I may go  
Down or up or anywhere  
But I feel  
Like this scribbling might stay

Maybe if I hadn't seen so much hard feelings  
I might not could've felt other people's  
So when you think of me, if and when you do  
Just say, "Well, another man's done gone"

Well, another man's done gone



### **Regularly Played in Wilco's Live Sets:**

From Vol. 1: California Stars  
Hoodoo Voodoo  
At My Window Sad and Lonely  
One By One  
Hesitating Beauty  
Another Man's Done Gone

From Vol. 2: Airline to Heaven  
Feed of Man  
Secret of the Sea  
Remember the Mountain Bed  
Blood of the Lamb

### **"California Stars"**

Vol. 1: Music by Jay Bennett and Jeff Tweedy / Live Dec. 11, 2014 (Chicago, Ill.)

I'd like to rest my heavy head tonight  
On a bed of California stars  
I'd like to lay my weary bones tonight  
On a bed of California stars  
I'd love to feel your hand touching mine  
And tell me why I must keep working on  
Yes I'd give my life to lay my head tonight  
On a bed of California stars

I'd like to dream my troubles all away  
On a bed of California stars  
Jump up from my starbed and make another day  
Underneath my California stars  
They hang like grapes on vines that shine  
And warm the lovers' glass like friendly wine  
So I'd give this world just to dream a dream with you  
On our bed of California stars

[repeat]

(Dream a dream with you)

## “Hoodoo Voodoo”

Vol. 1: Music by Wilco, Billy Bragg and Corey Harris

Hoodoo voodoo,  
Seven twenty, one two,  
Haystacks, hostacks,  
ABC.  
High poker, low joker,  
Ninety-nine-a-zero,  
Sidewalk, streetcar,  
Dance a goofy dance.

Blackbirdy, bluejay,  
One, two, three, four  
Trash sack, jump back,  
EFG.  
Biggy hat, little hat,  
Fatty man, skinny man,  
Grasshopper greensnake,  
Hold my hand

Hoodoo voodoo,  
Choka-chooky-choo-choo  
True blue, how true,  
Kissle me now

Momma cat, Tommy cat,  
Diapers on my clothes line,  
Two, four, six, eight,  
I run and hide.  
Pretty girl, pretty boy,  
Pony on a tin can,  
I'll be yours, you'll be mine

Hoodoo voodoo ...

Jinga jangler, tinga lingle,  
Picture on a bricky wall,  
Hot and scamper, foamy lather,  
Huggle me close.  
Hot breeze, old cheese,  
Slicky slacky fishy tails  
Brush my hair and kissle me some more

Hoodoo voodoo ...

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