

ROMANTICISM TODAY: THE SINGER/SONGWRITER-PARADIGM

Lecture 10: De-Centrings

- 1) **Ventriloquism (2): Dylan since “Love and Theft” (2001)**
- 2) **The Black/Blind Spot:
Stevie Wonder/Tracy Chapman/Michael Kiwanuka**
- 3) **The Singer-Songwriter/Hip Hop-Crossover:
Ed Sheeran and Plan B**
- 4) **Digital Futurism: Björk and James Blake**

1) **Ventriloquism (2): Dylan since “Love and Theft” (2001)**

Bob Dylan, “Workingman’s Blues #2”

Modern Times (2006)

There's an evenin' haze settlin' over the town
Starlight by the edge of the creek
The buyin' power of the proletariat's gone down
Money's gettin' shallow and weak
The place I love best is a sweet memory
It's a new path that we trod
They say low wages are reality
If we want to compete abroad

My cruel weapons have been put on the shelf
Come sit down on my knee
You are dearer to me than myself
As you yourself can see
I'm listenin' to the steel rails hum
Got both eyes tight shut
Just sitting here trying to keep the hunger from
Creeping it's way into my gut

Meet me at the bottom, don't lag behind
Bring me my boots and shoes
You can hang back or fight your best on the front line
Sing a little bit of these workingman blues

Now, I'm sailin' on back, ready for the long haul
Tossed by the winds and the seas
I'll drag 'em all down to hell and I'll stand 'em at the wall
I'll sell 'em to their enemies
I'm tryin' to feed my soul with thought
Gonna sleep off the rest of the day
Sometimes no one wants what we got
Sometimes you can't give it away

Now the place is ringed with countless foes
Some of them may be deaf and dumb
No man, no woman knows
The hour that sorrow will come
In the dark I hear the night birds call
I can feel a lover's breath
I sleep in the kitchen with my feet in the hall
Sleep is like a temporary death

Meet me at the bottom, don't lag behind
Bring me my boots and shoes
You can hang back or fight your best on the front line
Sing a little bit of these workingman blues

Well, they burned my barn, they stole my horse
I can't save a dime
I got to be careful, I don't want to be forced
Into a life of continual crime
I can see for myself that the sun is sinking
How I wish you were here to see
Tell me now, am I wrong in thinking
That you have forgotten me?

Now they worry and they hurry and they fuss and they fret
They waste your nights and days
Them I will forget
But you I'll remember always
Old memories of you to me have clung
You've wounded me with your words
Gonna have to straighten out your tongue
It's all true, everything you have heard

Meet me at the bottom, don't lag behind
Bring me my boots and shoes
You can hang back or fight your best on the front line
Sing a little bit of these workingman blues

In you, my friend, I find no blame
Wanna look in my eyes, please do
*No one can ever claim
That I took up arms against you*
All across the peaceful sacred fields
They will lay you low
They'll break your horns and slash you with steel
I say it so it must be so

Now I'm down on my luck and I'm black and blue
Gonna give you another chance
*I'm all alone and I'm expecting you
To lead me off in a cheerful dance*
Got a brand new suit and a brand new wife
I can live on rice and beans
Some people never worked a day in their life
Don't know what work even means

Meet me at the bottom, don't lag behind
Bring me my boots and shoes
You can hang back or fight your best on the front line
Sing a little bit of these workingman blues

Speaking Position?

- > lonesome and isolated male personae tramping around in cheerless urban or rural sceneries
- > monologues full of memories and flights of fancy
- > the speakers embodied by the singer do not seem to be aware of someone listening in
- > an enigma: who speaks in what situation about what to whom?
(cf. Detering 2016, 37)

- > the workingman speaks, and he's got the blues, but he's not singing the blues but rather an elegiac song in four long stanzas (AAB)
- > I / we > class
- > trying to rouse himself and the addressee (we?) into action but fails four times
(cf. Detering 2016, 39-46)

Why #2?

- > “Working Man Blues” (#1) by Merle Haggard (1969), a classic of modern country music
- > *Workingman’s Dead* by Grateful Dead (1970): classic Dead character songs by Robert Hunter and Jerry Garcia
- > #2 as an update in view of the historical shift from working class to casualty class (Detering 2016, 46-49)

Intertextuality/Intermediality

- > album title *Modern Times*: Charlie Chaplin’s classic film (1936)
- > Ovid, *The Poems of Exile: Tristia and the Black Sea Letters. Translated with an Introduction by Peter Green*. London: Penguin, 2005 [2004] > see passages in italics (Detering 2016, 49-53)

2) The Black/Blind Spot: Stevie Wonder/Tracy Chapman/Michael Kiwanuka

Stevie Wonder, “Living for the City”

Innervisions (1973)

A boy is born in hard time Mississippi
Surrounded by four walls that ain't so pretty
His parents give him love and affection
To keep him strong moving in the right direction
Living just enough, just enough for the city...ee ha!

His father works some days for fourteen hours
And you can bet he barely makes a dollar
His mother goes to scrub the floor for many
And you'd best believe she hardly gets a penny
Living just enough, just enough for the city...yeah

His sister's black but she is sho 'nuff pretty
Her skirt is short but Lord her legs are sturdy
To walk to school she's got to get up early
Her clothes are old but never are they dirty
Living just enough, just enough for the city...um hum

Her brother's smart he's got more sense than many
His patience's long but soon he won't have any
To find a job is like a haystack needle
Cause where he lives they don't use colored people
Living just enough, just enough for the city...

Living just enough...
For the city...ooh,ooh
[repeat several times]

His hair is long, his feet are hard and gritty
He spends his love walking the streets of New York City
He's almost dead from breathing on air pollution
He tried to vote but to him there's no solution
Living just enough, just enough for the city...yeah, yeah, yeah!

I hope you hear inside my voice of sorrow
And that it motivates you to make a better tomorrow
This place is cruel no where could be much colder
If we don't change the world will soon be over
Living just enough, just enough for the city!!!!

La, la, la, la, la, la,
Da Ba Da Da Da Da Da Da
Da Da Da Da Da Da
Da Ba Da Da Da Da Da Da
[Repeat to end]

Stevie Wonder, "Sir Duke"

Songs in the Key of Life (1976)

Music is a world within itself
With a language we all understand
With an equal opportunity
For all to sing, dance and clap their hands
But just because a record has a groove
Don't make it in the groove
But you can tell right away at letter A
When the people start to move

They can feel it all over
They can feel it all over people
They can feel it all over
They can feel it all over people

Music knows it is and always will
Be one of the things that life just won't quit
But here are some of music's pioneers
That time will not allow us to forget
For there's Basie, Miller, Satchmo
And the king of all Sir Duke
And with a voice like Ella's ringing out
There's no way the band can lose

You can feel it all over
You can feel it all over people
You can feel it all over
You can feel it all over people
...

Tracy Chapman, "Telling Stories"

Telling Stories (2000)

There is fiction in the space between
The lines on your page of memories
Write it down but it doesn't mean
You're not just telling stories

There is fiction in the space between
You and reality
You will do and say anything
To make your everyday life
Seem less mundane
There is fiction in the space between
You and me

There's a science fiction in the space between
You and me
A fabrication of a grand scheme
Where I am the scary monster
I eat the city and as I leave the scene
In my spaceship I am laughing
In your remembrance of your bad dream
There's no one but you standing

Leave the pity and the blame
For the ones who do not speak
You write the words to get respect and compassion
And for posterity
You write the words and make believe
There is truth in the space between

There is fiction in the space between
You and everybody
Give us all what we need
Give us one more sad sordid story
But in the fiction of the space between
Sometimes a lie is the best thing
Sometimes a lie is the best thing

Michael Kiwanuka, "Home Again"

Home Again (2012)

Home again
Home again
One day I know
I'll feel home again
Born again
Born again
One day I know
I'll feel strong again

I left my head
Many times I've been told
All this talk will make you old
So I close my eyes
Look behind
Moving on, moving on
So I close my eyes
Look behind
Moving on

Lost again
Lost again
One day I know
Our paths will cross again
Smile again
Smile again
One day I hope
To make you smile again
I won't hide

Many times I've been told
Speak your mind, just be bold
So I close my eyes
Look behind
Moving on, moving on
So I close my eyes

And the tears will clear
Then I feel no fear
Then I'd feel no way
My paths will remain straight

Home again
Home again
One day I know
I'll feel home again
Home again
Home again
One day I know
I'll feel strong again

I left my head
Many times I've been told
All this talk will make you old
So I close my eyes
Look behind
Moving on, moving on
So I close my eyes
Look behind
Moving on

3) The Singer-Songwriter/Hip Hop Crossover: Ed Sheeran and Plan B

Ed Sheeran, "You Need Me, I Don't Need You"

You Need Me (EP, 2009) / + (2011)

Now I'm in town, break it down, thinking of making a new sound
Playing a different show every night in front of a new crowd
That's you now, ciao, seems that life is great now
See me lose focus, as I sing to you loud
And I can't, no, I won't hush
I'll say the words that make you blush
I'm gonna sing this now
Oh oh

See, I'm true, my songs are where my heart is
I'm like glue, I stick to other artists
I'm not you, now that would be disastrous
Let me sing and do my thing and move to greener pastures
See, I'm real, I do it all, it's all me
I'm not fake, don't ever call me lazy
I won't stay put, give me the chance to be free
Suffolk sadly seems to sort of suffocate me

'Cause you need me, man, I don't need you
You need me, man, I don't need you
You need me, man, I don't need you at all
You need me, man, I don't need you

You need me, man, I don't need you
You need me, man, I don't need you
You need me, man, I don't need you at all
You need me

I sing and write my own tune and I write my own verse
Hell, don't need another word-smith to make my tune sell
Call yourself a singer-writer - you're just bluffing
Your name's on the credits and you didn't write nothing
I sing fast, I know that all my shit's cool
I will blast and I didn't go to Brit School
I came fast with the way I act, right
I can't last if I'm smoking on a crack pipe

And I won't be a product of my genre
My mind will always be stronger than my songs are
Never believe the bullshit that fake guys feed to ya
Always read the stories that you hear on Wikipedia
And musically I'm demonstrating
When I perform live, feels like I am meditating
Times at the Enterprise when some fella filmed me
'A young singer-writer like Gabriella Cilmi'

'Cause you need me, man, I don't need you
You need me, man, I don't need you
You need me, man, I don't need you at all
You need me, man, I don't need you
You need me, man, I don't need you
You need me, man, I don't need you
You need me, man, I don't need you at all
You need me

'Cause with the lyrics I'll be aiming it right
I won't stop 'til my name's in lights
At stadium heights with Damien Rice
On red carpets, now I'm on Arabian Nights
Because I'm young I know my brother's gonna give me advice
Long nighter, short height and I gone hyper
Never be anything but a singer-songwriter, yeah.
The game's over but now I'm on a new level
Watch how I step on the track without a loop pedal
People think that I'm bound to blow up
I've done around about a thousand shows
But I haven't got a house plus I live on a couch
So you believe the lyrics when I'm singing them out, wow
From day one, I've been prepared
With vo5 wax for my ginger hair
So now I'm back to the sofa, giving a dose of what the future holds
'Cause it's another day
Plus I'll keep my last name forever keep the genre pretty basic

Gonna be breaking into other people's tunes when I chase it
And replace it with the elephant in the room with a facelift
Into another rapper's shoes using new laces
I'm selling CDs from my rucksack aiming for the papers
Selling CDs from my rucksack aiming for the majors
Nationwide tour with Just Jack, still had to get the bus back
Clean cut kid without a razor for the mustache
I hit back when the pen hurts me
I'm still a choir boy in a Fenchurch tee
I'm still the same as a year ago
But more people hear me though
According to the MySpace and YouTube videos
I'm always doing shows if I'm not I'm in the studio
Truly broke, never growing up call me Rufio
Melody music maker
Reading all the papers
They say I'm up and coming like I'm fucking in an elevator .

'Cause you need me, man, I don't need you
You need me, man, I don't need you
You need me, man, I don't need you at all
You need me, man, I don't need you
You need me, man, I don't need you
You need me, man, I don't need you
You need me, man, I don't need you at all
You need me, man, I don't need you

...

- > 'rock' version on *Live at the Bedford* (EP, 2010)
- > hip hop crossover on *No. 5 Collaborations* (EP, 2010)
- > all five EPs collected in *Ed Sheeran, 5* (box set, 2015)

Plan B, "Sick 2 Def"

Who Needs Action When You Got Words (2006)

Che Che Che Che Check Yo,

Real sick hearing these pricks talk shit
They get there throats slit coz they talkin to me like I'm thick
And I'm,
Real tired of these bullshit guys they best go hide coz Im lookin for em on the sly.
Coz I've had it up to here, right up to here
Might ave to do it reservoir dogs style. slice of there ear, coz I've had enuff of
bredders actin tough tryin ta get rough when it's obvious they ain't rough enuff.

Listen....

I don't just talk the talk I walk it.
That's why my mouth's always comin out with raw shit
My rap style's distorted like lil mo getting raped and keepin the baby instead of gettin
it aborted
Yo I talk morbid just to make you feel awkward.
Deaths a part of life yo you just can't ignore it.
Especially when I rip out your heart and on my sleeve sport it like summat you thinks
precious coz ya dead gran bought it.
I talk so foul I talk so course I show no regret I show no remorse.
Like a necromanic raping a corpse up the anal passage while contracting genital
warts
My metaphor's are twisted like that game where you gotta put that hob nob in ya gob
if you the last one to come on the biscuit,
I'm so sadistic so I fantasize about finding my mums ex floating in a bath tub with his
wrists slit

And I'm....
Real sick hearing these pricks talk shit
They get there throats slit coz they talkin to me like I'm thick
And I'm,
Real tired of these bullshit guys they best go hide coz I'm lookin for em on the sly.
Coz I've had it up to here,
Right up to here
Might ave to do it reservoir dogs style, slice of there ear, coz
I've had enuff of bredders actin tough tryin ta get rough when its obvious they ain't
rough enuff.

You best.....
Buy a TV if you want me to stop.
Coz I'm so heavy influenced by the things that I watch
It ain't just pulp fiction and reservoir dogs
It's irreversible there's my city of god
it's the news on every channel when I turn on the box
I'm seein paedophiles singing on top of the pops
Garry Glitter, Michael Jackson WHAT!!!
On the net Ken Bigley got his neck tek off
That's some nasty shit and still you wonder why I'm sick when I see this shit and I
say exactly what I think
That's some nasty shit and you don't ban it
But you ban computer games, summat round here really stinks
What about cigarettes and alcoholic drinks
Or the animal that died just so your wife could wear that mink.
Your disgraceful like gettin caught pissin in the sink.
A white girl wont suck my dick just because its pink

And I'm.....
Real sick hearing these pricks talk shit
They get there throats slit coz they talkin to me like I'm thick
And I'm,
Real tired of these bullshit guys they best go hide coz I'm lookin for em on the sly.
Coz I've had it up to here, right up to here
Might ave to do it reservoir dogs style, slice of there ear, coz I've had enuff of
bredders actin tough tryin ta get rough when its obvious they aint rough enuff.

Check It....

The last verse is just as bad as the first.
But compared to the second yo it's definitely worse.
Coz this is about a guy getting chauffeured in a hearse.
Let me do what Nas did and tell that shit in reverse:
The hearse brings the corpse back to the morgue,
The guy from the morgue undresses the corpse
Embalming fluid goes back out and blood goes back in
Body goes back to hospital where it comes alive again
The paramedics walk backwards like an Irish dance
Put the wounded man back in the ambulance
The ambulances engine turns back on and its lights flash as it plays his favourite
song
The guy goes back to the exact spot they found him and the medics and all the
passers by go back where they came from
Till eventually
No-one surrounds him and the blood pours up him rather than down him.
The man then falls upwards back on his feet and stumbles towards a dark figure on
the other side of the street.
He walks into the blade that cut his belly
Then he holds his neck which was bleeding already.
He removes his hand so you can see the cut.
And as the knife undoes the slice it closes back up
He unsays the words he said which were "What the fuck"
And unscreams the scream from the first initial cut
Then the blood from the severely severed ear crawls back up his cheek and slowly
disappears
As the knife wielding silhouette unhacks it from the rear,
Puts the knife away after reattaching the ear
Then walks backwards through the bushes where he's disregarding nature
Who's the guy on the bench I'm reading his paper
Takes the snail he stepped on back from its creator
Only to be killed again when I fast forward this shit later
Back in his house now back in his bed
He un-listens to a CD and un-bops his head
Take's the CD out the player and puts it back in its case which has my name on the
cover along with my face
Fast forward there's been a murder and the police know who's done it.
Not lookin for a motive coz they don't know why he done it.
Sure enough it don't take that long for them to find a reason and they publicly state it

on TV that evening
A couple of months later this shit gets banned
Like it was me who put that switch in his hand and told him to kill that man.
Like this whole song was some sickly devised plan to hurt some poor cunt I don't
even know and I've never met before in my life.
The words whoever said "the pen is mightier than the sword" was right so you better
think twice before you step to me and pick a fight

Plan B, "She Said"

The Defamation of Strickland Banks (2010)

She said I love you boy, I love you so
She said I love you baby, oh oh oh oh
She said I love you more than words can say
She said I love you ba-ay-ay-ay-by

So I said, what you're saying girl it can't be right
How can you be in love with me
We only just met tonight
So she said, boy I loved you from the start
When I first heard 'Love goes down'
Something started burning in my heart
I said stop this crazy talk
And leave right now and close the door

She said boy I love you boy I love you so
She said I love you baby oh oh oh oh
She said I love you more than words can say
She said I love you ba-ay-ay-ay-by (yes you did)

So now up in the courts
Pleading my case from the witness box
Telling the judge and jury the same thing that I said to the cops
On the day that I got arrested
I'm innocent I contested
She just feels rejected
Had her heart broken by someone she's obsessed with
Cos she likes the sound of my music
Which makes her a fan of my music
That's why love goes down not to lose it
Cos she can't separate the man from the music
And I'm saying all this in the stand
While girl cries tears from the galleries
Got bigger than I ever could have planned
Like that song by the Zutons' Valerie
So the jury don't look like their buying it
And it's making me nervous
And I'm just screw faced like I'm trying it

Their eyes fixed on me like a murderer's
They wanna lock me up
And throw away the key
They wanna send me down

Even though I told them she...

She said I love you boy
I love you so
She said I love you baby oh oh oh oh (yes you did)

She said I love you more than words can say
She said I love you ba-ay-ay-ay-by

So I said why the hell you gotta treat me this way
You don't know what love is
You wouldn't do this if you did
Oh no no no no

Plan B, "Ill Manors"

Ill Manors (2012)

Let's all go on an urban safari
We might see some illegal migrants
Oi look there's a chav
That means council housed and violent
He's got a hoodie on give him a hug
On second thoughts don't you don't wanna get mugged
Oh sh*t too late that was kinda dumb
Whose idea was that... stupid...
He's got some front, ain't we all
Be the joker, play the fool
What's politics, ain't it all
Smoke and mirrors, April Fools
All year round, all in all
Just another brick in the wall
Get away with murder in the schools
Use four letter swear words cause we're cool
We're all drinkers, drug takers
Every single one of us buns the herb
Keep on believing what you read in the papers
Council estate kids, scum of the earth
Think you know how life on a council estate is,
From everything you've ever read about it or heard
Well it's all true, so stay where you're safest
There's no need to step foot out the burbs
Truth is here, we're all disturbed
We cheat and lie its so absurd

Feed the fear that's what we've learned
Fuel the fire, let it burn

Oi! I said oi!
What you looking at, you little rich boy!
We're poor round here, run home and lock your door
Don't come round here no more, you could get robbed for
Real (yeah) because my manors ill
My manors ill
For real
Yeah you know my manors ill, my manors ill!

You could get lost in this concrete jungle
New builds keep springing up outta nowhere
Take the wrong turn down a one way junction
Find yourself in the hood nobody goes there
We got an Eco-friendly government,
They preserve our natural habitat
Built an entire Olympic village
Around where we live without pulling down any flats
Give us free money and we don't pay any tax
NHS healthcare, yes please many thanks
People get stabbed round here, there's many shanks
Nice knowing someone's got our backs when we get attacked
Don't bloody give me that
I'll lose my temper
Who closed down the community centre?
I kill time there used to be a member
What will I do now until September?
School's out, rules out, get your bloody tools out
London's burning, I predict a riot
Fall in fall out
Who knows what it's all about
What did that chief say? Something bout the kaisers
Kids on the street no they never miss a beat, never miss a cheap
Thrill when it comes their way
Let's go looting
No not Luton
The high street's closer, cover your face
And if we see any rich kids on the way
We'll make 'em wish they stayed inside
Here's a charge for congestion, everybody's gotta pay
Do what Boris does... rob them blind

Oi! I said oi!
What you looking at, you little rich boy?
We're poor round here, run home and lock your door!
Don't come round here no more, you could get robbed for
Real (yeah) because my manors ill
My manors ill
For real
Yeah you know my manors ill, my manors ill!

We've had it with you politicians
You bloody rich kids never listen
There's no such thing as broken Britain
We're just bloody broke in Britain
What needs fixing is the system
Not shop windows down in Brixton
Riots on the television
You can't put us all in prison!

Oi! I said oi!
What you looking at, you little rich boy?
We're poor round here, run home and lock your door!
Don't come round here no more, you could get robbed for
Real (yeah) because my manors ill
My manors ill
For real
Yeah you know my manors ill, my manors ill!

4) Digital Futurism: Björk and James Blake

Björk, "Crystalline"

Biophilia (2011)

Underneath our feet
Crystals grow like plants
(Listen how they grow)
I'm blinded by the lights
(Listen how they grow)
In the core of the earth
(Listen how they grow)

Crystalline
Internal Nebula
(Crystalline)
Rocks growing slow-mo
(Crystalline)
I conquer claustrophobia
(Crystalline)
And demand the light

We mimic the openness
Of the warmth we love
Dovetail our generosity, equalize the flow
With our hearts
We chisel quartz
To reach love

Crystalline
Internal nebula
(Crystalline)
Rocks growing slow-mo
(Crystalline)
I conquer claustrophobia
(Crystalline)
And demand the light

Octagon, polygon
Pipes up an organ
Sonic branches
Murmuring drone
Crystallizing galaxies
Spread out like my fingers

Crystalline
Internal nebula
(Crystalline)
Rocks growing slowmo
(Crystalline)
I conquer claustrophobia
(Crystalline)
And demand the light

...

It's the sparkle you become
When you conquer anxiety ...

James Blake, "The Wilhelm Scream"

James Blake (2011)

I don't know about my dreams
I don't know about my dreamin' anymore
All that I know is I'm fallin', fallin', fallin', fallin'
Might as well fall in

I don't know about my love
I don't know about my lovin' anymore
All that I know is I'm fallin', fallin', fallin', fallin'
Might as well fall in

I don't know about my dreams
I don't know about my dreamin' anymore
All that I know is I'm fallin', fallin', fallin', fallin', fallin'

I don't know about my love
I don't know about my lovin' anymore
All that I know is I'm lovin', fallin', lovin', lovin'
Might as well love you

I don't know about my love
I don't know about my lovin' anymore
All that I know is I'm turnin', turnin', turnin', turnin'
Might as well turn in

...

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