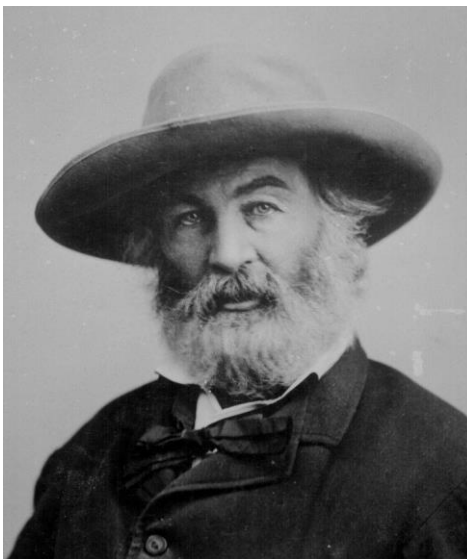


Pop Songs and Poetry: Theory and Analysis

Code: HUM1012



2017/2018
Period 1

Cover page, from left to right, from above:

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- Walt Whitman (image retrieved on July 1, 2015 from <http://virginiaplantation.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/walt-whitman.jpg>.)
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1. Contact information

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2. Literature

Students should own or have full access to a copy of:

Vendler, H. (2010). *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology*. Third edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's. ISBN: 978-0312463199

All articles and essays that we will read in addition to Vendler's book can be found through EleUM or at www.ub.unimaas.nl/ucm/e-readers.

Most of the reading material is also available in hard copy in the Reading Room.

3. Course description

This course is mainly built around a fairly accessible and straightforward textbook by Helen Vendler that aims at introducing its readers to the practice of poetry analysis. The focus in this course is on developing the skills and knowledge needed for a systematic and sophisticated analysis of 'the lyric', whether in poetry or in pop songs.

In three respects we shall go beyond Vendler's textbook:

1. We shall read additional literary theory from first-hand sources.
2. We shall apply Vendler's tools for poetry analysis to songs as well.
3. In our analyses, we shall take into explicit consideration axes of difference such as gender, race/ethnicity, and sexuality.

This results in the following objectives of the course:

- To explore the theory of the lyric.
- To test this theory on songs as well as poems.
- To integrate gender and other axes of difference into the study of the lyric.
- To be able to analyze songs and poems in a sophisticated way, to discuss lyrical texts and songs systematically.
- To express your ideas about poems and songs both in an oral presentation and in writing.
- To become familiar with a number of classic Anglo-American poems.
- To know at least one poem or song by heart, and to know how to recite/sing it.
- To write a poem or song, thereby experiencing the creative process that is involved first-hand.

A short introduction (by prof.dr. Maaïke Meijer, who first developed this course)

In this course, we will be reading a lot of English and American poetry from the 20th century, but we will also reflect on the lyric as a genre. What strange, slightly embarrassing kind of text is this, in which somebody says:

*And you, my father, there on that sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

(Dylan Thomas, 'Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night')

What happens here, in this poem about the unacceptability of death? Notice the rather strange communication situation in a lyrical text, in which we read the words of a speaker who addresses someone who does not talk back. So, it is not a dialogue, but a monologue, and we, as readers, overhear this monologue, we eaves-drop without being addressed. We are not explicitly drawn into this situation, as we would be in a narrative text, a story, where a writer can say: reader – how will this end? Shall the villain get away with murder? Read on to see how Sherlock Holmes catches him in the end. Or: 'Reader, I married him. A quiet wedding we had...' as the famous phrase in *Jane Eyre* (Charlotte Brontë) goes.

In a narrative, the reader is explicitly or implicitly addressed, the story is told to you. In a lyric text readers are drastically ignored. We are listening to *solipsistic monologues*. We listen to someone who explores his or her own feelings and thoughts, as if reading someone's diary – a diary in which the events have to yield to the meditation on the events, the feelings about what happened. Poetry does not usually deal with the telling of stories; it does something else. It starts where the action has stopped, has come to a halt.

'Why bother about this genre?' you might say. Poetry is playing a much smaller role in contemporary culture than novels, science fiction, detectives, films, documentaries, TV-shows, computer games – and these are all narratives, stories. Narratives unroll events and their attraction to us is based on our desire to know: what happens next? That is why we watch a movie until the end; that is why we finish a detective. In a lyric text, nothing happens next. Hardly anything happens at all.

And is poetry not much less important, is it not slightly outdated even? Is it not a relic of times long gone? It seems to play a much smaller role in our everyday lives than narratives. Poetry seems to dwell on an island of its own: an island where all the slightly unworldly people go, the overly romantic and the highly emotional..., right?

But this whole picture changes when we think of songs. The popular song is an extremely vital and hugely attractive genre, and – surprise – it is lyric in every way. Bob Dylan, Nina Simone, The Rolling Stones, Sting, U2, Anouk, Muse, Amy Winehouse, Adele – you name a group or singer: it is poetry par excellence.

*I see a mansard roof through the trees
I see a salty message written in the eaves
The ground beneath my feet, the hot garbage and concrete
And now the tops of buildings, I can see them, too.*

(Vampire Weekend, 'Mansard roof')

We burst into song, or turn on the radio, the TV, YouTube, or an i-pod, to lose ourselves in the lyric: poetry is alive and kicking as song.

What we want to do in this course is explore lyrical theory, which is a vast and rich field of literary theory, and connect it firmly to the world of modern song – lyric in a modern sense – in order to revitalize lyric theory, to apply it anew in a whole new field which it has never been applied to up until now. Thereby we also want to produce some interesting and relevant critical analyses of songs – a genre which is largely ignored by literary critics and does not get the critical reflection and the sophisticated analysis it needs. We might learn a lot about songs when we do this.

You will notice that the book by Helen Vendler does not deal with songs at all. It only deals with poetry. The real book for this course does not exist yet – we have to write it ourselves. Yet, Vendler's book is excellently suited to think about songs. Therefore, we will bring in songs as lyric material ourselves.

What you learn in this course is literary theory: you are handed the necessary tools to analyze poetry and songs in an academic way, you learn to become more than just a consumer, you learn how to discuss songs and poetry systematically, so that your observations enhance the text and let it grow. You will also learn a song or poem by heart, you will sing or recite a song or poem, and you will write a poem or a song of your own. This way, you can experience the creative craftsmanship that underlies all poetry and song, in one way or another. Finally, you will practice writing and presenting your analysis of a song or poem.

4. Instructional format

This course employs the formats of tutorial group meetings and (guest) lectures. The lectures address questions and theoretical notions related to aspects of the lyric that are discussed during the tutorials. Some of the lectures also *demonstrate* how one may go about one's business when analysing lyrical texts. The tutorial meetings are to provide you with a 'hands-on-experience' of the analysis of poems and song lyrics. The meetings can be of value to you only if you come prepared.

Tutorial meetings do not comply with the standard PBL format, in that the pre-discussion does not follow the PBL-steps. To approach the lyric as if it were a 'problem' in the PBL sense seems awkward. Yet, we will 'pre-discuss' song lyrics in light of specific questions pertaining to the theory of the lyric (for details, see descriptions below), in order to prepare you for the reading of secondary literature and applying it to lyrical texts in the post-discussion. Post-discussions closely resemble the PBL format, starting with a discussion of the secondary literature followed by applying Vendler's analytic tools to analyse the lyrical texts indicated in the course manual.

General tip: *just like songs, poems need to be performed and heard in order to get a sense of their sound, their rhythm, their silences even. During 'pre-discussions', listen to the song indicated in the course book; during post-discussions, take turns in reading poems out loud before analysing them!*

5. Attendance and assessment

Students should attend at least 85% of all meetings (this **included** lectures). This means that students may miss a total of 3 meetings, with a maximum of 2 tutor group meetings, and still meet the attendance requirement. Attendance is only registered when you arrive on time, have properly prepared, and actively participate.

Proper preparation for the tutor sessions means *actively* reading the assigned materials: look up unknown words, underline key terms, summarize paragraphs, outline the text's structure, and prepare questions. Proper participation in lectures means that you arrive on time, listen actively and ask questions when needed.

The lectures will provide you with examples of different approaches within the field of lyric theory and analysis. They will both broaden and deepen the scope of this course and possibly inspire you for an approach to your final essay. You are expected to attend them.

Final grade

- **Adaptation**: By the end of week 4 (Friday at 16.00h), you hand in an adaptation (1,500 words) of Chapter 4 from Vendler (2010). You are asked to engage in a creative endeavor and to rewrite Vendler's chapter in such a way that it covers the theory and analysis of songs. Replace poetry-examples with examples from songs that you know well, add observations that deal with the more explicit musical properties of songs. This summary/adaptation constitutes 30% of your final grade.
- **Project A**: In Week 4, you recite a poem or sing a song by an established author or singer in class. Satisfactory performance of this assignment is required for a 'pass' on your participation.
- **Project B**: In Week 6, you recite a poem or sing a song of your own in class. Satisfactory performance of this assignment is required for a 'pass' on your participation.
- **Final paper**: Your final assignment is a paper in which you present an analysis of a poem or song by an established author or singer. You should also present this analysis (in progress) during the tutorial meetings in week 7 (max 10 min). The presentation enables you to receive feedback from your tutor and peers on your work in progress. You are to submit your paper (3500-4000 words) by the end of week 7 (Friday, 16.00h). The paper constitutes 70% of your final grade.

Instructions presentation and final paper

In week 7 you will each give a short (max 10-minute) presentation in which you show us what you are doing in your final essay: which song or poem you are analyzing and how you are doing that. If you want to use a PowerPoint presentation (not mandatory), bring it on a USB stick (technically, this is the quickest and safest way). Internet and sound will be available. Use your audience to get feedback on your work.

If necessary we will use the lecture time for presentations as well.

Your final paper should be an in-depth analysis of one song or poem; the word length is min. 3500 and max. 4000 words INCLUDING quoted lyrics and references. If you aren't sure how to write a paper about one poem/song, read Chapter 11 'Writing about poetry' in Vendler. Use Vendler's analytical categories for your analysis, and use at least 2 other secondary texts from the course; you are not expected to collect additional sources, but you may do so in addition to the aforementioned requirements.

Upload your final paper through SafeAssign on Eleum.

Assessment criteria written works (summary/adaptation and final paper)

Written works will be assessed on the basis of (in order of importance):

- Contents (does the work comply with the assignment; does it discuss relevant primary and secondary sources; does it do so in a systematic and sophisticated way; is it convincing?)
- Structure (does it include a clear introduction and conclusion; does it consist of coherent parts?)
- Spelling, grammar, and style (has the work been checked for spelling and grammar mistakes; is the work written in an appropriate style for academic writing?)
- Format (does the work follow the formal requirements of the assignment; does it abide by UCM's prescribed formal guidelines for referencing, etc.?)

Plagiarism

Plagiarism leads to automatic expulsion from the course and will be reported to the Examination Board. For more information on what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, see: <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>.

6. Course schedule

WEEK 1

Tutor meeting 1: Course Introduction & Intertextuality by the tutor + Pre-discussion 1

Lecture 1: Video viewing of *Dead Poets Society* (Weir, 1989)

Tutor meeting 2: Post-discussion 1 + Pre-discussion 2

WEEK 2

Tutor meeting 1: Post-discussion 2 + Pre-discussion 3

Lecture 2: Lecture by dr. Annet de Bruijn on Poetry and Childhood

Tutor meeting 2: Post-discussion 3 + Pre-discussion 4

WEEK 3

Tutor meeting 1: Post-discussion 4 + Pre-discussion 5

Lecture 3: Lecture/instruction on summary and Essay writing by dr. Josje Weusten

Tutor meeting 2: Post-discussion 5 + Pre-discussion 6

WEEK 4

Tutor meeting 1: Post-discussion 6 + Pre-discussion 7

Hand in Adaptation

No lecture: time reserved to work on the topic of your final paper/presentation

Tutor meeting 2: ***Project A – Recite poem/Sing song***

WEEK 5

Tutor meeting 1: Post-discussion 7 + Pre-discussion 8a Or 8b

Lecture 5: Lecture by dr. Christophe Van Eecke on Susanne K. Langer's Poetic Theory

Tutor meeting 2: ***Project B – Write and perform poem / song***
Announce the topic of your final presentation

WEEK 6

Tutor meeting 1: Post-discussion 8a OR 8b

Lecture 6: Lecture by dr. Josje Weusten on the function of poetry and music in Motherhood novels

Tutor meeting 2: **Presentations** + Evaluation

WEEK 7

Tutor meeting 1: ***Presentations (if needed)***

No lecture: time reserved to work on the topic of your final paper/presentation

Tutor meeting 2: **NO MEETING**

1. Intertextuality

'The writer is a reader of texts... before s/he is a creator of texts, and therefore the work of art is inevitably shot through with references, quotations, and influences of every kind.'

Worton, M. & Stills, J. (1990). Introduction, In *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices* (pp. 1-2). Manchester.

'A text is... a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations... The writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them'

Barthes, R. (1977). *Image-Music-Text* (p.146). London.

'Confounding the realist agenda that "art imitates life", intertextuality suggests that art imitates art.'

Chandler, D. (2017[1994]). *Semiotics for Beginners*. Retrieved on June 23, 2017 from: <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/>

Intertextuality is a critical term introduced by the philosopher Julia Kristeva in 1966, with which she described the relations between texts. Texts can be related to each other in various ways, on various levels. Investigate and discuss the intertextual relations that you see at work in the song below. What consequences does taking an intertextual perspective have on the way you derive meaning from a text? And what are the consequences of an intertextual perspective for the position of the writer? Can the writer 'only imitate', as Barthes states?

U2 (1983). 'Sunday, Bloody Sunday'

Yeah

I can't believe the news today
Oh, I can't close my eyes
And make it go away
How long
How long must we sing this song
How long, how long
'Cause tonight, we can be as one
Tonight

Broken bottles under children's feet
Bodies strewn across the dead end street
But I won't heed the battle call
It puts my back up
Puts my back up against the wall
Sunday, Bloody Sunday
Sunday, Bloody Sunday
Sunday, Bloody Sunday

And the battle's just begun
There's many lost, but tell me who has won
The trench is dug within our hearts
And mothers, children, brothers, sisters
Torn apart

Sunday, Bloody Sunday
Sunday, Bloody Sunday

How long
How long must we sing this song
How long, how long
'Cause tonight, we can be as one
Tonight, tonight

Sunday, Bloody Sunday
Sunday, Bloody Sunday

Literature:

- Wolfreys, J. (2004). Intertextuality. In *Critical Keywords in Literary and Cultural Theory* (pp. 119-121). Houndmills & New York: Palgrave.
- Furniss, T. and Bath, M. (2007). The Poetics and Politics of Intertextuality In *Reading Poetry: an Introduction* (pp. 408-412). 2nd ed. Harlow etc.: Pearson Longman.
- Vendler, H. (2010) About Poets and Poetry. In *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology* (pp. xxxix-xliii). Third edition. Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Galbraith, D. (2011). Drawing our fish in the sand: Secret Biblical allusions in the music of U2. *Biblical Interpretation*, 19(2), 181-222.

Assignment:

Prepare for a class discussion of two songs by U2 with the analytical perspective of intertextuality. Choose these songs as a group in a pre-discussion.

2. Poetry and life

In the movie *Dead Poets Society* (Peter Weir, 1989), connections are drawn between poetry and life. Can you make a list of the main characters in the film, and indicate for each character how they relate poetry to their lives?

Walt Whitman (1865). 'O Captain! My Captain!'

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring:
 But O heart! heart! heart!
 O the bleeding drops of red,
 Where on the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up – for you the flag is flung – for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths – for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
 Here Captain! dear father!
 This arm beneath your head!
 It is some dream that on the deck,
 You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
 Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
 But I with mournful tread,
 Walk the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.

Literature:

- Vendler, H. (2010). Chapter 1: The Poem as Life. In *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology* (pp. 3-15). Third edition. Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Vendler, H. (2010). Chapter 2: The Poem as Arranged Life. In *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology* (pp. 27-65). Third edition. Bedford/St. Martin's.

Assignment:

Prepare for a class discussion on what Vendler calls the 'analytic shapes' or 'meaningful patterns' in the poems 'Facing It' (1988) by Yusef Komunyakaa and 'The Road Not Taken' (1916) by Robert Frost.

3. A lyric is not a narrative

In order to fully understand what we mean when we talk about ‘the lyric,’ it is useful to discuss what a lyric is *not*, namely ‘a narrative’ (often also referred to as ‘a story’). Even though you might not be aware of it, you already know a lot about the narrative. What are stories that everybody knows (make a list if you want to)? What do these stories have in common? How are stories usually structured? What makes a story a story?

Narratives are usually told in prose, and lyrics mainly occur in poetry. However, sometimes we feel that certain prose novels have lyrical qualities. For example, the novel *The English Patient* (1992) by Michael Ondaatje contains sentences such as: ‘Her gardens were the gardens I spoke of when I spoke to you of gardens.’ Can you point out what exactly is lyrical about this prose sentence?

Similarly, not all poems are distinctly lyrical; some have typical narrative qualities to them. Can you think of poems and songs that resemble narratives in certain ways? And can you think of poems and songs that are fully lyrical?

What do you think are the main differences between narratives and lyrics, between prose and poetry? Think of form, content, genres, the way you read them, why you read them, and so on. Use the song below to come up with tentative answers.

Kate Bush (1978). ‘Wuthering Heights’

Out on the Wiley, windy moors
We’d roll and fall in green
You had a temper like my jealousy
Too hot, too greedy
How could you leave me
When I needed to possess you?
I hated you, I loved you, too.

Bad dreams in the night
They told me I was going to lose the fight
Leave behind my Wuthering, Wuthering
Wuthering Heights

Heathcliff, it’s me, Cathy
Come home, I’m so cold
Let me in-a-your window

Ooh, it gets dark, it gets lonely
On the other side from you
I pine a lot, I find the lot
Falls through without you

I'm coming back, love
Cruel Heathcliff, my one dream
My only master

Too long I roam in the night
I'm coming back to his side, to put it right
I'm coming home to Wuthering, Wuthering
Wuthering Heights

Ooh, let me have it
Let me grab your soul away
Ooh, let me have it
Let me grab your soul away
You know it's me, Cathy

Literature:

- Wolfreys, J. (2004). Narrative/ Narration, in: *Critical Keywords in Literary and Cultural Theory* (pp. 162-169). Houndmills & New York: Palgrave.
- Vendler, H. Chapter 4: Describing Poems. In *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology* (pp. 111-138). Third edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Losseff, N. (199). Cathy's Homecoming and the Other World: Kate Bush's 'Wuthering Heights', *Popular Music*, 18(02), 227-240.

Assignment:

Prepare for a class discussion on the song Wuthering heights by Kate Bush. Discuss if and to what extent this song is narrative and / or lyrical. How is it different from the novel by Charlotte Brontë it appeals to?

4. Rhythm

Since the base of all organic life is repetition (repeated motion in growth and form), and since human life, by its heartbeat and breathing, is innately rhythmic, we can suppose that there is a biological basis for our recognition of, and apparently instinctive pleasure in, repetition. (Vendler, *Poems, Poets, Poetry* 73)

For our purposes the so-called YO-HE-HO theory is of particular interest: 'Under any strong muscular effort it is a relief to the system to let breath come out strongly and repeatedly, and by that process to let the vocal cords vibrate in different ways; when primitive acts were performed in common, they would, therefore, naturally be accompanied with some sounds which would come to be associated with the idea of the act performed and stand as a name for it' (Jespersen 1922: 415). So this theory argues that the origin of language had to be sought in singing during physical labor. (De Roder, 'Poetry: The Missing Link?' 19-20)

Several theorists of the lyric have argued that the origin of poetry and songs lies in rhythmic repetition. What is more, these theorists believe that we derive pleasure from songs and poems precisely because they are rhythmic: rather than the meaning of the words, it is the (metric) beat that we enjoy and 'naturally' focus our attention on.

Would you agree with this particular explanation of why songs and poems are pleasurable? And if so, would you say that the importance of rhythm overshadows the relevance of meaning in the analysis of poetry and songs? Or perhaps rhythm can actually contribute to meaning?

Ed Sheeran (2016). 'Shape of You'

The club isn't the best place to find a lover
So the bar is where I go
Me and my friends at the table doing shots
Drinking fast and then we talk slow
Come over and start up a conversation with just me
And trust me I'll give it a chance now
Take my hand, stop, put Van the Man on the jukebox
And then we start to dance, and now I'm singing like

Girl, you know I want your love
Your love was handmade for somebody like me
Come on now, follow my lead
I may be crazy, don't mind me
Say, boy, let's not talk too much
Grab on my waist and put that body on me
Come on now, follow my lead
Come, come on now, follow my lead

I'm in love with the shape of you
We push and pull like a magnet do
Although my heart is falling too
I'm in love with your body
And last night you were in my room
And now my bedsheets smell like you
Every day discovering something brand new
I'm in love with your body
Oh—I—oh—I—oh—I—oh—I
I'm in love with your body
Oh—I—oh—I—oh—I—oh—I
I'm in love with your body
Oh—I—oh—I—oh—I—oh—I
I'm in love with your body
Every day discovering something brand new
I'm in love with the shape of you

One week in we let the story begin
We're going out on our first date
You and me are thrifty, so go all you can eat
Fill up your bag and I fill up a plate
We talk for hours and hours about the sweet and the sour
And how your family is doing okay
Leave and get in a taxi, then kiss in the backseat
Tell the driver make the radio play, and I'm singing like

Girl, you know I want your love
Your love was handmade for somebody like me
Come on now, follow my lead
I may be crazy, don't mind me
Say, boy, let's not talk too much
Grab on my waist and put that body on me
Come on now, follow my lead
Come, come on now, follow my lead

I'm in love with the shape of you
We push and pull like a magnet do
Although my heart is falling too
I'm in love with your body
And last night you were in my room
And now my bedsheets smell like you
Every day discovering something brand new
I'm in love with your body
Oh—I—oh—I—oh—I—oh—I
I'm in love with your body
Oh—I—oh—I—oh—I—oh—I
I'm in love with your body

Oh—I—oh—I—oh—I—oh—I
I'm in love with your body
Every day discovering something brand new
I'm in love with the shape of you

Come on, be my baby, come on
Come on, be my baby, come on
Come on, be my baby, come on
Come on, be my baby, come on
Come on, be my baby, come on
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Come on, be my baby, come on
I'm in love with your body
Every day discovering something brand new
I'm in love with the shape of you

Literature:

- De Roder, J. (2002). Poetry: The Missing Link? In F. Brisard & T. Mortelmans (eds). *Language and Evolution* (pp. 15-26). Antwerp: Antwerp Papers in Linguistics 101
- Mithen, S. (2011). More than cheesecake? The similarities and differences between music and language. In *The Singing Neanderthals* (pp. 11-27). Harvard University Press.
- Vendler, H. (2010). Chapter 3: Poems as Pleasure. In *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology* (pp. 77-99). Third edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Assignment:

Prepare for a class discussion on the poems 'To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time' (1646) by Robert Herrick and 'My Papa's Waltz' (1942) by Theodore Roethke, using the categories

covered by Vendler in Chapter 3 – rhythm, rhyme, structure, images, argument, poignancy, wisdom, a new language, and finding yourself. Pay special attention to how rhythm is used in these two poems: do they have strong and steady rhythms? Does the rhythm change, or falter? How does it relate to meaning? And does it influence your interpretation? Make sure to include the articles by De Roder and Mithen as well. What do they have to say about rhythm and how can we relate this to the two poems at hand.

5. What is poetic language?

There are differences between telling somebody about an event, writing a prose text about that event, and writing a poem or song about the event. To understand these differences, we need to grasp the various functions language can have. Therefore, as the famous linguist Roman Jakobson said: 'Language must be investigated in all the variety of its functions' (*Language in Literature* 66).

Language can be used to inform television audiences on the weather forecast, it can be used to tell a joke, it can be used to shout at someone, and so on. Can you draw up a list of possible language uses? What possible *functions* can language have?

'Do not forget,' says Wittgenstein, 'that a poem, even though it is composed in the language of information, is not used in the language-game of giving information.'
(Forrest-Thomson, *Poetic Artifice* x)

Do you think that poems and songs favor a certain function of language?

Björk. (2004). 'Oceania'

One breath away from mother Oceania
Your nimble feet make prints in my sands
You have done good for yourselves
Since you left my wet embrace
And crawled ashore
Every boy is a snake is a lily
Every pearl is a lynx is a girl
Sweet like harmony made into flesh
You dance by my side
Children sublime
You show me continents
I see the islands
You count the centuries
I blink my eyes
Hawks and sparrows race in my waters
Stingrays are floating
Across the sky
Little ones, my sons and my daughters
Your sweat is salty
I am why, I am why, I am why
Your sweat is salty
I am why, I am why, I am why

Literature:

- Jakobson, R. (1987). Excerpts. In K. Pomorska & S. Rudy (Eds.), *Language in Literature* (pp. 66-71, pp. 508-09). Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.
- Vendler, H. (2010). Chapter 5: The Play of Language. IN *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology* (pp. 153-167). Third edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Assignment:

Prepare for a class discussion on the poems 'One Art' (1975) by Elizabeth Bishop and 'Poema para los Californios Muertos' (1981) by Lorna Dee Cervantes, paying special attention to the different aspects of 'the play of language' as discussed by Vendler.

6. Who is the 'I'?

When we read a poem or listen to a song, we have to decide who the speaker (also known as the lyrical subject) is. Does the 'I' in a poem overlap with the real-life author of the poem? And does the 'I' in a song overlap with the real-life singer of the song, or with the real-life author of the music and lyrics?

If the lyrical subject of a poem is separate from the author of the poem, how do we then infer information about her or him? How do we even know whether we are dealing with a woman or a man? And how do we find out about the speaker's age, race/ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, religion, and so on?

Evanescence (2003). 'Wake me up inside'

How can you see into my eyes, like open doors
Leading you down into my core
Where I've become so numb,
Without a soul
My spirit's sleeping somewhere cold
Until you find it there and lead it back
Home

Wake me up, wake me up inside, I can't wake up,
Wake me up inside, save me,
Call my name and save me from the dark, wake me up
Bid my blood to run, I can't wake up
Before I come undone, save me
Save me from the nothing I've become

Now that I know what I'm without
You can't just leave me
Breathe into me and make me real, bring me
To life

Wake me up, wake me up inside I can't wake up,
wake me up inside, save me,
call my name and save me from the dark, wake me up
Bid my blood to run, I can't wake up
Before I come undone, save me
Save me from the nothing I've become

Bring me to life, I've been living a lie
There's nothing inside, bring me to life

Frozen inside without your touch
Without your love, darling
Only you are the life among the dead

All this time, I can't believe I couldn't see
Kept in the dark, but you were there in front of me
I've been sleeping a thousand years it seems
I've got to open my eyes to everything
Without a thought, without a voice, without a soul
Don't let me die here
There must be something wrong, bring me to life

Wake me up, wake me up inside, I can't wake up,
Wake me up inside, save me,
Call my name and save me from the dark, wake me up
Bid my blood to run, I can't wake up
Before I come undone, save me
Save me from the nothing I've become

Bring me to life, I've been living a lie,
There's nothing inside, (Bring me to life) Bring me to life

Literature:

- Vendler, H. (2010). Chapter 6: Constructing a Self. In *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology* (pp. 179-196). Third edition. Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Vendler, H. (2010). Chapter 7: Poetry and Social Identity. In *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology* (pp. 213-237). Third edition. Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Vendler, H. (2010). Chapter 8: History and Regionality. In *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology* (pp. 239-253). Third edition. Bedford/St. Martin's.

Assignment:

Prepare for a class discussion on the identity of the lyrical subject in the poems 'A Letter to Her Husband, Absent upon Public Employment' by Anne Bradstreet (ca. 1612-1672) and 'Night, Death, Mississippi' (1972) by Robert Hayden. If needed, look up information about the historical and regional contexts of the poets to get a better understanding of issues of history and regionality in each of these poems.

7. Who is the 'you'?

Frequently, a poem or song is addressed to a 'you' – more often than not when it is a love song or love poem. Who is this 'you'? Is it the reader? Or perhaps the lyrical subject is addressing a third party, and the reader just happens to overhear it?

A poetic device that is related to this issue is called apostrophe. It occurs when the lyrical subject directly addresses an imaginary person or abstract idea. Often, such a direct address is preceded by the exclamation 'Oh.' Can you think of examples of apostrophe in popular songs or well-known poems? Based on your examples, what meaning-effects would you say the apostrophe has?

Billie Holiday (1952). 'Blue Moon'

Blue moon
You saw me standing alone
Without a dream in my heart
Without a love of my own

Blue moon
You knew just what I was there for
You heard me saying a prayer for
Someone I really could care for

And then there suddenly appeared before me
The only one my arms will hold
I heard somebody whisper please adore me
And when I looked to the moon it turned to gold

Blue moon
Now I'm no longer alone
Without a dream in my heart
Without a love of my own

Literature:

- Jonathan, C. (1983). Apostrophe. In *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (pp. 135-154; pp. 233-234). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. [Dutch students can use Ernst van Alphen a.o. *Op poetische wijze. Handleiding voor het lezen van poezie* Bussum: Coutinho 1996 p. 19-32 to make access to the Culler-text easier]
- Johnson, B. (1987). Apostrophe, Animation, and Abortion. In *A World of Difference* (pp. 184-199). Baltimore.

Assignment:

Prepare for a class discussion on the use of apostrophe in the poem 'The Mother' by Gwendolyn Brooks (see next page):

Gwendolyn Brooks (1963). 'The mother'

Abortions will not let you forget.
You remember the children you got that you did not get,
The damp small pulps with a little or with no hair,
The singers and workers that never handled the air.
You will never neglect or beat
Them, or silence or buy with a sweet.
You will never wind up the sucking-thumb
Or scuttle off ghosts that come.
You will never leave them, controlling your luscious sigh,
Return for a snack of them, with gobbling mother-eye.

I have heard in the voices of the wind the voices of my dim killed children.
I have contracted. I have eased
My dim dears at the breasts they could never suck.
I have said, Sweets, if I sinned, if I seized
Your luck
And your lives from your unfinished reach,
If I stole your births and your names,
Your straight baby tears and your games,
Your stilted or lovely loves, your tumults, your marriages, aches, and your deaths,
If I poisoned the beginnings of your breaths,
Believe that even in my deliberateness I was not deliberate.
Though why should I whine,
Whine that the crime was other than mine?—
Since anyhow you are dead.
Or rather, or instead,
You were never made.
But that too, I am afraid,
Is faulty: oh, what shall I say, how is the truth to be said?
You were born, you had body, you died.
It is just that you never giggled or planned or cried.

Believe me, I loved you all.
Believe me, I knew you, though faintly, and I loved, I loved you
All.

8a. Resistant reading: femininities

with the group, decide upon the case study you want to do: femininities or masculinities

In *Where the Girls Are*, Susan Douglas describes how she grew up as a teenager with the mass media culture of 1960s America. Bombarded with contradictory messages on womanhood, she and her girl friends came up with their own readings of what movies, television shows, and popular songs meant, of what those texts were saying about being an American girl.

Their active reading practice opens up the question where the meaning of a text resides. Who gets to decide what a song or poem means? The writer? The reader? The critic? Does a text mean the same thing to everyone? Does it always mean the same thing, across times and cultures? Are some interpretations of texts better than others, and if so, based on what criteria?

The Shirelles. (1960). 'Will You Love Me Tomorrow?'

Tonight you're mine completely
You give your love so sweetly
Tonight the light of love is in your eyes
But will you love me tomorrow?

Is this a lasting treasure
Or just a moment's pleasure
Can I believe the magic of your sighs
Will you still love me tomorrow?

Tonight with words unspoken
You say that I'm the only one
But will my heart be broken
When the night meets the morning sun?

I'd like to know that your love
Is a love I can be sure of
So tell me now and I won't ask again
Will you still love me tomorrow?

Literature:

- Vendler, H. (2010). Chapter 9: Attitudes, Values, Judgments. In *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology* (pp. 281-290). Third edition. Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Douglas, S. (1995). Excerpt from *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (pp. 83-98). New York: Three Rivers Press.

Assignment:

As a group you will choose a female pop artist. Prepare for a discussion on how this pop artist performs femininity and what kind. Focus on specific song lyrics and music videos, and use Douglas' insights to back up your arguments historically and theoretically.

Focus on specific song lyrics and music videos, and use Douglas' insights to back up your arguments historically and theoretically.

8.b. Case study: Masculinities

Pop music offers a stage, on which different and ever-changing ways of being masculine can be performed. How would you sketch the important moments in the history of representation of masculinity in pop music, the sources of these representations and their effects on audiences and on pop music itself?

The Killers (2017). 'The Man'

I know the score like the back of my hand
Them other boys, I don't give a damn
They kiss on the ring, I carry the crown
Nothing can break, nothing can break me down
Don't need no advice, I got a plan
I know the direction, the lay of the land
I know the score like the back of my hand
Them other boys, I don't give a damn

I'm the man, come round
No-no-nothing can break, no-nothing can break me down
I'm the man, come round and
No-no-nothing can break, you can't break me down

I got gas in the tank
I got money in the bank
I got news for you baby, you're looking at the man
I got skin in the game
I got a household name
I got news for you baby, you're looking at the man

When it comes to Friday, I always earn
Don't try to teach me, I got nothing to learn
'Cause baby I'm gifted
You see what I mean?
USDA certified lean

I'm the man, come round
No-no-nothing can break, you can't break me down

I got gas in the tank
I got money in the bank
I got news for you baby, you're looking at the man
I got skin in the game
I don't feel no pain
I got news for you baby, you're looking at the man

Who's the man? Who's the man?
I'm the man, I'm the man
Who's the man with the plan?
I'm the man

Who's the man? Who's the man?
I'm the man, I'm the man
Who's the man with the plan?
I'm the man

I'm the man
I'm the man

I got gas in the tank
I got money in the bank
I got news for you baby, you're looking at the man
I got skin in the game
Headed to the hall of fame
I got news for you baby, you're looking at the man

Right hand to God
First in command
My testimony, but I take the stand

Who's the man? Who's the man?
I'm the man, I'm the man
Who's the man with the plan?
I'm the man

Who's the man? Who's the man?
I'm the man, I'm the man
Who's the man with the plan?
I'm the man

I don't give a damn
I'm the man

Literature:

- Vendler, H. (2010). Chapter 9: Attitudes, Values, Judgments. In *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology* (pp. 281-290). Third edition. Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Frank, L. (2000). Sometimes We Wonder Who the Real Men Are – Masculinity and Contemporary Popular Music. In R. West & F. Lay (Eds.), *Subverting Masculinity. Hegemonic and Alternative Versions of Masculinity in Contemporary Culture*, (pp. 227-245. Amsterdam: Rodopi. (references accessible through <http://books.google.nl/books?id=AbGhCuc5UscC>)

Assignment:

As a group you will choose a male pop artist. Prepare for a discussion on how this pop artist performs masculinity and what kind. Focus on specific song lyrics and music videos, and use Franks' insights to back up your arguments historically and theoretically.



This course was developed by the *Centre for Gender and Diversity* of the *Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences*. In case you are interested in enriching your education and life with other courses in the field of Gender and Diversity Studies, we offer the following courses at UCM:

HUM 1003; Cultural Studies I

HUM1012; Popsongs and poetry; theory and analysis

HUM1014; Great Novels 1850 – present

HUM2003; The Making of Crucial Differences: 'Race', Sexuality, Gender and Class in Historical Perspective

HUM2011; Cultural Studies II

HUM2018; Cultural Diversity in a Globalizing world

HUM2056; Cultural Remembrances

HUM3040; Crucial Differences in the 21st Century

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