

Welcome to Week 9

- Paper 2 is DUE on March 11
- Unit 2 Test will be included in Module 10.
- By 2011, people assumed Bowie was never coming back. It was a big surprise when Bowie released music in 2013.

Where Are We Now?

- Sometime in 2011, Bowie decided he wanted to record music again.
- Bowie released video of song "Where Are we Now?" on his birthday Jan 8, 2013.
- It was a complete surprise to everyone.

- The song expresses **nostalgia** for Bowie's past.
- Bowie is **reassessing** how he felt about **Berlin Period**, not redoing music from that time.
- In music video, Bowie is also wearing T-shirt that says "**M/S Song of Norway**".
 - This is a reference to the play that Bowie's ex-girlfriend, **Hermione Farthingale**, left Bowie to be in (effectively ending their relationship). The time period was shortly after or before Bowie released "**Space Oddity**".
- So, Bowie was also thinking about the "**Space Oddity**" era.

- Aside from TA (chad): the Smashing Pumpkins started covering "Space Oddity" in the summer of 2012. Did that influence Bowie?

The Next Day

- Bowie's album "The Next Day" is released in March 2013.
- The album cover is the "Heroes" cover with a white block containing the words "The Next Day". The word "Heroes" is crossed out.
- Album was a reassessment and partial erasure of Berlin recordings.

- The album was very long, probably because he worked on it for two years.
- Aside from "Where Are We Now?", which is kind of a ballad, the songs are simple, artsy rock songs
 - o Some think "The Stars" sounds like the "Scary Monsters" period (somewhat catchy rock).
 - o This would make sense because "Scary Monsters" was a kind of departure from or negation of Berlin Period.
 - o In the video for "The Stars", Bowie is reassessing the Thin White Duke from the LA/Philly Soul era. It's a riff on video for "Blue Jean".

Nothing Has Changed

- In 2014, Bowie released a **compilation set** called "Nothing Has Changed".
 - o 3 discs, 60 songs starting w/ "Liza Jane" from mid-60's to present.
 - o It was a total retrospective.
 - o Included unreleased album from 2001 called "Toy".
 - o Included **new jazz song** called "Sue". This song led to future collaborations between Bowie and jazz band.

Lazarus

- In 2014, Bowie starts working on stage musical called "Lazarus"
 - o Bowie constructs narrative using songs from his **back catalog**.
 - o the protagonist is **Newton** from "The Man Who Fell to Earth" in present day.
 - o Remember: Newton was on covers of "Station To Station" and "Low". Again, we see Bowie's nostalgia for that time of his life.
 - o Adapted old music to fit **Broadway** aesthetic. There's debate about which sounds more alive.
 - o Debuted in Nov 2015.
 - o Bowie had terminal **cancer** then.

New Inspirations

- In late 2014, Bowie tells Tony Visconti that he wants to record more music together. They were influenced by:

Bar 55 →

- Donny McCaslin (jazz)
- Kendrick Lamar (rap)
- Death Grips (hip hop)
- Boards of Canada (electronic)

- They wanted it to sound like jazz w/ rock and other influences. Music was played by McCaslin's jazz band.
- Ask yourself: what do I hear in "Blackstar" that comes out of influences listed above?

Blackstar

- The song "Blackstar" was released in Sept 2015 as a single ; there was no indication that it would appear on a future album.
- The album "Blackstar" was released on Jan 8, 2016 (Bowie's birthday).
- Bowie died on Jan 10, 2016 of cancer.
- He hadn't made his illness public.
- The song "Blackstar" appears to be a meditation on death.
- the changing drum patterns may represent Bowie's changing attitudes toward his past work.

Girl Loves Me

- This song includes lyrics in English, Polari, and Nadsat.
- Polari is slang invented by night club goers and homosexuals in London. It was used in the circles Bowie moved around in during the 60's.
- The song has hip hop influences:
 - Dark-sounding beat reminiscent of Young Thug.
 - Coded language similar to Kendrick Lamar and Death Grips. The idea of signifying in hip hop is that the meaning is hidden under some other surface-level meaning.

- o By bringing his own perspective on coded language, Bowie honors hip hop tradition and remains authentic to himself (similar to what he did w/ Philly Soul).

'Tis A Pity She Was a Whore

- Bowie compares this song to Vorticism, which was a modernist art movement formed in 1914 in London.
 - o This movement promoted idea that world should be interpreted through the lens of the modern industrialized society. Rejected emotionalism.

- This was in contrast to Romanticism.
- Vorticists communicated idea of **industry forming out of chaos** (rather than emotion forming out of chaos).
- The lyrics of the song are based on English play from 1629.
- The 2013 demo version of the song captures more of the essence of vorticism. There are so many musical parts that you have to be **rigid to avoid chaos**. There's no room for improvisation or for emotions to lead you in the music.
 - this version has similarities to **process music** and minimalist music. compare it to "Different Trains" by Steve Reich (1988).

- The lyrics of the song are restrained.
- The 2016 version of the song is less restrained / rigid because it's being interpreted by jazz musicians.

Sue (or In the Season of Crime)

- This is an alternate version of the song released w/ "Nothing Has Changed" compilation.
- This version is more improvised. Bowie is also less bombastic.
- The guitar line sounds like Bo Diddley blues rock beat, but the arrangement is more loose/improvised
- the story in "Sue" is part of narrative in "'Tis A Pity She's a Whore". Is it also about Bowie?