

MPhil in Eighteenth-Century and Romantic Studies
The Romantic Songbook: Language, Music, Metaphysics
Michaelmas Term, 2017

Overview

When the poetic culture of Romanticism uses ‘song’ as a cognate term for ‘poetry’, is this merely an instance of a whimsical and semantically attenuated ‘poetic diction’? This course will begin with the assumption that there might be more going on. Participants will certainly attend to the shared generic origins of song and lyric poetry, and the emphasis laid on their kinship in Romantic poetics. In addition to this genealogical scrutiny the reading and discussion will centre on the ontological status of song in Romanticism: what kind of thing is a song taken to be? what kind of metaphysical charge is it supposed to have?

The four seminars are structured around a range of different examples of songs, variously heard, notated, collected, adapted, written to be set to original compositions, or described in poetry. The seminars will trace the development, between 1760 and 1840, of accounts and practices that position song between a number of more or less incommensurable states: melody and words; orality and literacy; sound and silence; mind and body; spirit and matter. We will note the recurrent trope in both late-Enlightenment speculative history and Romantic-period poetics which figures song as the residue of a pre-linguistic moment in human culture or consciousness. Participants will attempt to analyse the verbal and non-verbal effects associated with this conception of song as a negotiation with the ineffable, or with the primitive, strange, supernatural, wild or non-human. Special attention will be given to the modes of translation which frequently accompany the songs under consideration.

There is a dedicated Moodle site for the course, where participants will be able to access some of the texts for discussion, as well as engage in exchanges of information and opinion. Seminar members will be asked to submit short (500-750 word) observations or provocations, relating to set reading, to the course chatroom in advance of each seminar; responses will then be invited within the seminar. The emphasis in seminar discussions will fall on close reading of the poetic features – prosody, rhyme, rhythm, melodic or anti-melodic features of verbal composition – deployed by the texts in question. Those with literacy in musical analysis will be able to make a valuable contribution to discussions, though this is by no means a pre-requisite for those taking the course.

Presiding over all the conversations will be Wordsworth’s poem, ‘The Solitary Reaper’, written after a tour of the Scottish Highlands made in 1803. It is to these verses, and to J. H. Prynne’s extraordinary exegesis of them in *Field Notes*, that participants are encouraged to turn first of all.

Seminar 1. The Body of Song: Robert Burns

Donald A. Low, ed., *The Songs of Robert Burns* (London: Routledge, 1993). [Texts and music for individual songs for discussion will be available on Moodle from September 2017].

Nigel Leask, ed., *The Oxford Edition of the Works of Burns* Vol I: Commonplace Books, Tour Journals and Miscellaneous Prose (Oxford University Press, 2014).

James Kinsley, ed., *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, 3 vols. (Oxford University Press, 1968).

Extracts available on Moodle from September 2017:

From *Two Glossaries by Robert Burns*. The glossaries to the Kilmarnock and Edinburgh *Poems* reproduced in facsimile, with an introduction by Donald A. Low (University of Stirling Bibliographical Society, 1987).

From James Johnson, *The Scots Musical Museum* Vols 1-6. (1787-1839).

[National Library of Scotland Digital edition: <http://digital.nls.uk/special-collections-of-printed-music/pageturner.cfm?id=91519813>]

From Gaskill, 'Herder, Ossian, and the Idea of Folk Song' [see General Reading list]

From Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages* [see General Reading]

Matthew Gelbart, *The Invention of "Art Music" and "Folk Music"* [see General Reading list]: chapters 2 and 5.

Tom Jones, 'Prosody, Knowledge and Humanity in Enlightenment Language Science', in Tom Jones and Rowan Boyson, eds., *The Poetic Enlightenment: Poetry and Human Science, 1650-1820* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013), pp. 29-42.

Nigel Leask, *Robert Burns and Pastoral* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

Kirsteen McCue and Marjorie Rycroft, 'The reception of Robert Burns in music', in Murray Pittock, ed., *The Reception of Robert Burns in Europe* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), pp. 267-291.

Kirsteen McCue, 'Burns's songs and poetic craft', in Gerard Carruthers, ed., *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Burns* (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 74-85

David Sergeant and Fiona Stafford, eds, *Burns and Other Poets* (Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

Nicholas Temperley and David Temperley, 'Music-Language Correlations and the "Scotch Snap"', *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (September 2011), pp. 51-63.

Seminar 2. The Matter of Song: Byron, *Hebrew Melodies*

Isaac Nathan and Lord Byron, *A Selection of Hebrew Melodies, Ancient and Modern*, edited by Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass, (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1988).

Thomas L. Ashton, *Byron's Hebrew Melodies* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972).

Extracts available on Moodle:

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §23.245; §43.304

Isaac Nathan, from *Fugitive Pieces and Reminiscences of Lord Byron, Containing an Entire New Edition of the Hebrew Melodies* (London, 1829).

Robert Lowth, 'Lecture Three: The Hebrew Poetry is Metrical', from *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, Vol. 1, trans. G. Gregory (1787).

Alexander Pope, from *PERI BATHOUS; Or, Martinus Scriblerus His Treatise of the Art of Sinking in Poetry* (1728)

Thomas Warton, from *History of English Poetry* (1781): sections on Sternhold, Hopkins et al., *The Whole Booke of Psalmes Collected into English Metre, With Apt Notes to sing them withall*.

Terence Allan Hoagwood, *From Song to Print: Romantic Pseudo-Songs* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Joseph Slater, 'Byron's Hebrew Melodies', *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Jan., 1952), pp. 75-94.

Sheila Spector, 'The Liturgical Context of the Byron-Nathan Hebrew Melodies', *Studies in Romanticism*, 47 (Fall 2008), 393-412.

Gillen D'Arcy Wood, 'The Byron of the Piano', in *Romanticism and Music Culture 1770-1840: Virtue and Virtuosity* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Seminar 3. The Qualia of Song: John Keats

Jack Stillinger, ed., *John Keats: Complete Poems* (Harvard: HUP, 1991).

Hyder Edward Rollins, ed., *The Letters of John Keats 1814-1821*, 2 vols (Harvard: HUP, 1958).

[Individual texts and extracts available on Moodle from January 2017]

Jack Stillinger, ed., *John Keats: Poetry Manuscripts at Harvard, a Facsimile Edition* (Harvard, 1990).
Autograph Manuscript of Ode to a Nightingale (1819), Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Numerous recordings are available on YouTube of nightingales singing, sometimes for three hours at a stretch.

Derek Attridge, 'Lexical Inventiveness and Metrical Patterns: Beats and Keats', in *Moving Words: Forms of English Poetry* (Oxford: OUP, 2013).

Mark Booth, 'Introduction' from *The Experience of Songs* [see General Reading]

James Castell, 'Wordsworth, silence and the nonhuman', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 45.1 (Winter 2014), 58-61.

Helen Vendler, *The Odes of John Keats* (Harvard, 1983).

Extracts from:

Thomas Nagel, 'What is it Like to Be a Bat?', *Philosophical Review* 83 (October 1974), 435-50.

P.M.S. Hacker, 'Is There Anything it is Like to Be a Bat?', *Philosophy* 77 (2002), 157-174.

Simon J. Evnine, 'Kinds and Conscious Experience: Is There Anything That it is Like to Be Something?', *Metaphilosophy*, 39.2 (2008), 185-202.

Seminar 4. The Language of Song: John Clare

Eric Robinson, David Powell, Tom Paulin, eds., *John Clare: Major Works* (Oxford World Classics edn, 2008).

George Deacon, *John Clare and the Folk Tradition* (Sinclair Brown, 1983). [Containing fiddle tunes and song lyrics collected by Clare, transcribed from manuscripts in the Northamptonshire Libraries collection].

Glossary to John Clare, *The Village Minstrel* (1821) [see Google Books].

Mark Storey, ed., *The Letters of John Clare*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

[Extracts and individual texts for discussion available on Moodle]

John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730-1840: an Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge University Press, 1972).

Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', in *Illuminations* (Random House, 2011).

Paul de Man, 'Conclusions: Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator"', in *The Resistance to Theory* (Manchester University Press, 1986).

Mina Gorji, *John Clare and the Place of Poetry* (Liverpool University Press, 2009).

Seamus Heaney, 'John Clare's Prog', in *The Redress of Poetry* (Faber and Faber, 1990).

David Harker, 'Two Centuries Before Child', in *Fakesong: the Manufacture of British 'Folksong', 1700 to the Present Day* [see General Reading].

Nigel Leask, 'Burns, Wordsworth and the Politics of Vernacular Poetry', in Peter de Bolla, Nigel Leask, David Simpson, eds., *Land, Nation and Culture 1740-1840: Thinking the Republic of Taste* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

Tom Paulin, 'John Clare in Babylon', in *Minotaur: Poetry and the Nation State* (Harvard, 1992).

Douglas Robinson, *The Translator's Turn* (John Hopkins University Press, 1991).

David Simpson, 'Strange Words: the Call to Translation' in *Romanticism and the Question of the Stranger* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 144-178.

Barbara Strang, 'John Clare's Language', in *The Rural Muse, Poems by John Clare*, ed. R.K.R. Thornton (Ashington, Manchester: 1982).

Geoffrey Summerfield, Hugh Haughton, Adam Phillips, eds., *John Clare in Context* (Cambridge University Press, 1994) [especially Seamus Heaney's 'Bi-centennial Lecture'].

Stephanie Koduk Weiner, *Clare's Lyric: John Clare and Three Modern Poets* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

General Reading

John Aikin, *Essays on Song-Writing; with a collection of such English Songs as are most eminent for poetical merit* (London: R. H. Evans, 1810).

Anon., 'Essay on Song Writing', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 7 (1820), 32-35.

Roland Barthes, 'The Grain of the Voice', in *Image – Music – Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977).

Andrew Bennett, *Wordsworth Writing* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011).

Mutlu Konuk Blasing, *Lyric Poetry: the Pain and Pleasure of Words* (Princeton University Press, 2007).

Mark W. Booth, *The Experience of Songs* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981). Bill Brown, 'Thing Theory', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 28, No. 1, Things (Autumn, 2001), 1-22.

Jane K. Brown, 'In the beginning was poetry', in James Parsons, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Lied* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), pp. 12-32.

Philip Connell and Nigel Leask, eds., *Romanticism and Popular Culture in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Howard Gaskill, 'Herder, Ossian, and the Idea of Folk Song', in David Hill, ed., *Literature of the Sturm und Drang* (Boydell and Brewer, 2003), pp. 95-116.

Matthew Gelbart, *The Invention of "Art Music" and "Folk Music": Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Nick Groom, *The Making of Percy's Reliques* (Oxford: OUP, 1999).

Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: an Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

David Harker, *Fakesong: the Manufacture of British 'Folksong', 1700 to the Present Day* (Open University Press, 1985).

Elizabeth K. Helsinger, *Poetry and the Thought of Song in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Virginia University Press, 2015).

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987)

James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian*, ed. by Howard Gaskill (Edinburgh University Press, 1996). [See also NUI Galway's *Ossian Online* project for 1760s and 1770s editions of the poems.]

Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982).

Thomas Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765).

J. H. Prynne, *Field Notes: 'The Solitary Reaper' and Others* (Cambridge Printers, 2007).

Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry and its Others: News, Prayer, Song, and the Dialogue of Genres* (University of Chicago Press, 2014).

Jahan Ramazani and Herbert F. Tucker, eds., *New Literary History*, Special Issue on Song, Vol. 46, No. 4 (Autumn 2015).

Joseph Ritson, 'Dissertation on the Songs, Music, and Vocal and Instrumental Performances of the Ancient English', in *Ancient Songs and Ballads*, vol. 1 (London: 1829).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages and Writings Related to Music*, translated and edited by John T. Scott, *Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 7 (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College, University Press of New England, 1998).

Daniel Tiffany, 'Lyric Substance: On Riddles, Materialism, and Poetic Obscurity', *Critical Inquiry* Vol 28, No. 1, Things (Autumn, 2001), 72-98.

Dorothy Wordsworth, *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* (1803), ed. by Carol Kyros Walker (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).