

18. Book and internet

Claudia BENTHIEN

Public Poetry : Encountering the Lyric in Urban Space

Peter LARSEN

Poetry Between The Book and The Internet

Burkhard MEYER-SICKENDIEK

The Meaning of The Performed Word : Poetry Translations in The Age of Ubu, Pennsoud and Lyrikline

Claudia Benthien (Hamburg, D)

Public Poetry : Encountering the Lyric in Urban Space

This talk will explore the presence of the poetic word in contemporary urban settings, appearing in many diverse forms. From ‘poems in motion’ by unknown writers, posted in the New York subway – at the very place where one expects to find ads –, to fluid xenon light projections of huge verse on the exterior of buildings in Basel or Zurich by visual artist Jenny Holzer, presenting poems of the Nobel Laureate Wisława Szymborska together with her own rudimentary *truisms*. From single poems permanently written on walls – e.g. the much-discussed concrete poem “Avenida” by Eugen Gomringer at the facade of a Berlin college of education – to the technically enhanced spoken word, audible from far away as a side-effect of gigantic poetry slam events in stadiums, e.g. the Trabrennbahn (racecourse) in Hamburg.

The arguments to follow will be twofold: on the one hand, the talk will use concepts of Russian Formalism distinguishing ‘poetic’ from ‘prosaic’ language and will argue that it is the unexpected literariness of poetic language in the public realm that lets the words appear as ‘lyric.’ Ambiguously alienated proverbs put on German waste bins to urge people to use them, for instance, consciously apply poetic language to cause irritation – and to create what Jakobson famously called the “palpability of signs”. Poetic language can be perceived as such if it is ostentatious or if it creates deviations, a heightened awareness of its materiality and structure: an ‘aesthetic surplus’ that exceeds the communicative function which usually dominates the public sphere with its cacophony of street signs, ads, sirens, people talking etc.

On the other hand, the talk will inquire theoretical dimensions of the ‘between-ness’ of poetry encountered in urban spaces: shifting between the oral and the written mode, between communicative message and aesthetic experience, but also between private and public. How does a subject or a collective encounter the ‘sudden presence’ of poetry in urban spaces and how are both instances related? Recent debates on the ‘politics’ of the communal space will be taken into account here, for instance if the public sphere is diminished through

privatization and commercialization or if the urban anonymity, previously one of its central characteristics, gradually gets lost through video surveillance, security services and the growing presence of police. This sociological criticism can be confronted with approaches from performance studies, looking at non-structured audiences and unexpected 'ways of assembling' to enable new forms of democracy, collectivity, and participation.

Peter Larsen (Aalborg, DK)

Poetry Between The Book and The Internet

Has the concept of genre become meaningless in relation to digital poetry, since it is claimed that the hybrid nature of the new multimodal poetry, in which complex mixtures of writing, speech, image, graphics, film and sound effects are found, entails that “each work is a genre in itself” (Sørensen 2010)? Is the concept of literary works dissolved, when we cannot define works as belonging to categories such as poem and collection of poems? Has the work as a stable object become replaced by the text as an act or an event (Rustad 2012)? Has the poet lost his/her authority and authenticity (Larsen 2009) in the “ergodic” poetry in which the reader’s interaction with the text is an inseparable part of poetic aesthetics (Aarseth 1997; Perloff 2010)? And finally: What is the relationship between book poetry and internet poetry? In the paper, I will examine the relation between book poetry and digital poetry. I will focus on the distinctive differences as well as the similarities between poetry presented in these two media. On the one hand, we find significant changes in both genre and work concepts, when we look at the author and the reader roles in the transition from book poetry to digital poetry (Kress 2003; Morris and Swiss 2006; Engberg 2007; Larsen 2015; Mønster 2016). On the other hand, several trends within the tradition of poetry have become intensified and further developed after the emergence of the Internet.

I will focus on five key features, which connect book poetry to internet poetry. These five features have been founded in book poetry, but, to a great extent, the features has been unfolded in digital poetry. The five features are the multimodality, the montage form, the network structure, the serial form and the procedural form. I will discuss the five features based on examples from contemporary poetry.

Burkhard Meyer-Sickendiek (Berlin, D)

The Meaning of The Performed Word : Poetry Translations in The Age of Ubu, Pennsound and Lyrikline

My paper will focus on how to translate poems we not just can read, but also can listen to. Contemporary online digital audio archives specialized in sounded poetry like ubu.com, pennsound or lyrikline have offered such new ways to listen to the Poets voice. Whereas a number of authors reflected the idea of "close listening" Bernstein (Bernstein 1998), the "Sound of Poetry" (Perloff and Dworkin 2007) or the poetic experience made with spoken poetry (Utler 2016), there has been no discussion about the consequences these new archives might have for the translation of poetry. What does it mean to translate poems, when we can listen to the Poets voice, to the way he or she performed the poem? To answer these questions, I will focus not only on examples from the 17,500 translations existing on lyrikline, but also on a theoretical discussion addressing exactly this topic. It was Henri Meschonnic, who triggered the so-called "performative change" in metric theory as well as in translation theory by rising such questions, unaware about the archives mentioned above. Criticizing the traditional translation of foreign languages in terms of a "langue", i.e., the individual language, Meschonnic called for translating the "discours", i.e., the concrete speech. This is the main difference to older approaches of "translating Poetry" (Nida, Lefevere, Holmes) dating from the 1970s influenced by the so-called Prague group (Jacobson, Miko, Levij) and their comparative analysis of surface-structure features of language and poems. Meschonnic's translation focuses not on such surface structures of poems, but on their orality, their rhythm, their performance, their voice. The voice as orality, as "the subject we hear" is for Meschonnic not a phenomenology or psychology of reading but something emerging from the text as "what a subject does to its language" (Meschonnic 2011, 139).

Following Henri Meschonnic's distinction between "traduction-texte" and "traduction non-texte" (or "traduction-introduction") and his call for translation as writing rather than rewording ("une pratique du traduire homologue à l'écrire" (Meschonnic 1972, 350), Barbara Folkart drew a line between "writerly" translations done by Poets like Ted Hugh, Mary Herbert, Pierre Leyris, Robert Lowell and Robin Robertson, and rather "readerly" efforts by professional translators like Amy Clampitt and Frank Justus Miller (Folkart 2007, 69ff). With regard to that "writerly" translations, Folkart defined her idea of a translation's "valency" based on the claim that "poems are essentially performative" (Ibid). My paper will take up the distinctions made by Meschonnic and Folkart with regard to some exemplary translations of sounded poetry, taken from the lyrikline-Webside