

MUS4605

Oppsummering

Summary + conclusions

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22 October 2014

The unity of a text is not in its origin, it is in its destination.

(Roland Barthes)

All art is unstable. Its meaning is not necessarily that implied by the author. There is no authoritative voice. There are only multiple readings.

(David Bowie)

Some key concepts in popular music research:

- Popular musicology
- Sonic markers
- Transcultural space
- Intertextuality
- Authenticity

Popular Musicology:

- A critical approach to popular music
- Popular music must be understood *relationally* – e.g., in relation to a given context and to other texts
- Emphasis on the critical study of music in its context aligns popular musicology to *critical musicology*
- Popular musicology as different from popular music studies: Analysis of the music on musical premises, with questions connected to how the music can be read outside a contextual framework («the music itself»)

Sonic Markers:

- «... why and how does who say what to whom and with what effect?» (Tagg 1982: 3)
- *Sound* as a compositional tool in pop production
- Textual/discourse analysis and close readings of popular music – with emphasis on technology
- Sound and *time*, sound and *place*, sound and *agency*
- Sonic markers: Musical codes that have been historically grounded through a specific context, and that, through their appropriation, serve a range of narrative purposes in recorded music. (Cf. Askerøi 2013)

Transcultural Space:

- A postmodern mode of perceiving globality –interdisciplinary and poststructural. Ties to cosmopolitanism and globalisation
- Differs from multiculturalism and interculturalism in that *cultural traits are disseminated and become hegemonic*
- Language as exemplary signifier of transculturality: English as opaque signifier of cultural capital
- Illuminates how ideas of normality are constructed and maintained
- Postmodern/poststructural: a dynamic rather than static model for analysis (e.g., of popular music)

Intertextuality:

- The principle of how texts always already relate to other texts
- Intertextual references operate as hooks for substituting and differentiating meaning (Richardson and Hawkins 2007: 17)
- Intertextual approaches suggest that meaning occurs *between* texts, not *within* them (Korsyn 2003: 37)
- Signs relate to each other in a particular context, but these signs also circulate in other contexts, often enabling unexpected connections of thought to be made. (Scott 2009: 10)

Authenticity:

- «Authenticity as authentication» – three types of authenticity (Moore 2002)
- Rock vs. pop authenticity – «[in pop] notions of authenticity are not only undermined through musical codes being destabilised, but also through the suspension of norms linked to the portrayal of gender and sexuality» (Hawkins 2002)
- Technology and authenticity – e.g., the voice (Frith 1996)
- Spectres of authenticity – «the question is not so much what or where authenticity is, but how it is produced» (Middleton 2006)
- Authenticity as illusion of «the unmediated sincerity of expression» – the child star as idol (Warwick 2012)
- «Authenticity» as essentialist: The notion of authenticity in any mediated music presupposes a belief in «the possibility of unmediated access to human nature that is incompatible with the notions inherent in ‘performance’» (Weisethaunet & Lindberg 2010), one that is both dependent on a binary opposition (Other) and consequently locks both the authentic and its (non-authentic) Other in a dichotomy.

Postmodernism and popular music research:

- Postmodernism as «the study of moving objects» – researching into cultural phenomena that develop as they are being researched into (e.g., popular music)
- Postmodernism as reaction against paradigmatic modernist ideas of high-low cultural divide and ideas of inherent meaning (inner essence) in works of art
- «In a general sense, postmodernism is to be regarded as a rejection of many, if not most, of the cultural certainties on which life in the West has been structured over the past couple of centuries ... To move from the modern to the postmodern is to embrace scepticism about what our culture stands for and strives for.» (Sim 2005: vii)

«[The] superficial does not necessarily represent a decline into meaninglessness or valuelessness in culture. Analysis of the so-called trivial should not remain at the level of the semiotic reading. In this sense postmodernism emerged like a breath of fresh air allowing cultural critics to shift their gaze away from the search of meaning in the text towards the sociological play between images and between different cultural forms and institutions.

(McRobbie 1994: 4)

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