

Audioliterary Poetry (Hamburg, 11–13 May 22)

Warburg-Haus, Hamburg, May 11–13, 2023

Deadline: Sep 15, 2022

Henrik Wehmeier

Audioliterary Poetry between Performance and Mediatization /
Audioliterale Lyrik zwischen Performance und Mediatisierung

ERC Project Poetry in the Digital Age

Principle Investigator: Prof. Dr. Claudia Benthien

Conference organizers: Dr. Henrik Wehmeier and Marc Matter, Dipl.

The second international and interdisciplinary conference of the ERC project Poetry in the Digital Age addresses “Audioliterary Poetry between Performance and Mediatization.” The research project is situated between literary, cultural, and interart studies. It is developing tools to analyze today’s multifaceted poetry formats, ranging from pop culture to works of “high” art, by scrutinizing their forms and sites of presentation and performance, ranging from the stage to social media, from the written page to urban space. Research is divided into three areas, focusing on (1) poetry and performance, (2) poetry and music, and (3) poetry and visual culture. The first research field, which addresses audioliterary forms in performance and mediatization, will be the focus of this conference. “Audio-literariness” (Audioliterarität) denotes texts in which written and auditory content is related in such a way that its intermedial movement creates meaning (cf. Jäger 2014).

The current popularity of poetry has to do with new forms of poetry performance that are often closely connected to processes of mediatization: live formats such as spoken word and poetry slam continue to attract large audiences, recordings of readings and performances are shared on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok, and sound poetry experimentally explores the potentials of digital technology. Most recently, the Covid-19 pandemic led to manifold attempts to move poetry readings and discussions to streaming and communications platforms. These developments shed new light on discussions about the relationship between “liveness” and “mediatization” (cf. Auslander 2008; Fischer-Lichte 2019), examining the role of the (self-)staging of the “poet-performer” (Novak 2011); raise questions about the relationship between different adaptations of poetic works in different media (cf. Benthien 2017; Bernstein 1998; Bers 2021; Jäger 2014); and, finally, challenge established definitions of poetry (Müller and Stahl 2021). The conference will therefore focus on three interrelated fields: (1) live poetry performances, created through the co-presence of audience and performer; (2) the mediatization of performed poetry, e.g., recordings of events published or posted online; (3) contemporary sound poetry as audio-publications and commissioned works for (radio) broadcasts and/or studio productions. The spectrum of investigation ranges from experimental niche productions to highly eventized, popular forms of poetry.

(1) While the traditional poetry reading has received some critical attention recently (Ammon 2018; Meyer-Kalkus 2020; Utler 2016), there is also growing literature being written about new formats such as spoken word and poetry slam (Benthien and Prange 2020; English and McGowan 2021; Novak 2011). These live formats take on a wide range of functions in a mediatized society. For this reason, the conference is interested in international and intersectional perspectives on these new formats that can illustrate the similarities and differences between them (related to aspects such as community building, identity politics and authenticity; cf., e.g., Ailes 2021). At the same time, the focus will be on inter- and transmedia performances (cf. Pfeiler 2010).

(2) Poetry crosses media boundaries more easily than other literary forms (cf. Chasar 2020). Poetry performances are often recorded and shared on media platforms (cf. Döring and Passmann 2017). Poets themselves use platforms such as Instagram to present their works audiovisually, and users also upload poetry performances to platforms like TikTok. Technological factors such as interface design and the platforms' editing functions influence the production and the reception of these performances. The conference will therefore ask which genres, which topics, and which aesthetic devices characterize the poetry performances and recordings circulating on social media.

(3) The exploration of new forms of publication also plays an important role for sound poetry, which relies on publishing formats outside the book. Digitalization is facilitating access to voice recording and editing software, which is simultaneously influencing the corporeality of voice and speech in recordings (cf. Lentz 2000; Neves 2019; Vorrath 2020) and leading to the emergence of new formats like digital-born audio poetry. The conference wants to investigate which new poetic devices and artistic methods are being developed by poets utilizing new digital technologies, e.g., editing, cut-ups, sampling, mixing, and multi-channel composition (cf. Matter 2016). Among other questions, we want to ask how sound poetry reflects today's medial environment.

We welcome interdisciplinary contributions in German and English that investigate the following topics/research fields, which are by no means exhaustive or exclusive:

How do the liveness and mediatization of poetry and spoken word performances rely on each other? How can concepts like performativity and materiality be adapted to mediatized and digital environments? How do poets themselves explore (and subvert) the distinction between live and digital formats?

What new online formats of poetry reading and other forms of presentation have emerged (for example, during the Covid-19 pandemic)? Are these temporary phenomena or permanent transformations of poetry culture?

How are platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok contributing to the popularization of performed poetry? What influence do the platforms' policies and algorithms have? What are the functions of participatory practices like sharing, liking, and commenting?

How is the ubiquity of digital technologies transforming fields like experimental audio and sound poetry? To what extent is digital technology utilized in the production and composition of oral and sound poetry works?

What new forms of publishing and archiving are emerging in these fields? Where can we locate digitalization on the spectrum between ephemerality and reproducibility?

Please submit your abstract (350 words) together with a short bio-bibliography (150 words) to Dr. Henrik Wehmeier (henrik.wehmeier@uni-hamburg.de) and Marc Matter, Dipl., (marc.matter@uni-hamburg.de) by September 15, 2022. Speakers will present the selected papers at the conference in a panel format (25-minute presentation plus discussion). Travel expenses and accommodation will be covered. The papers will be published in a peer-reviewed edited volume (as a book and in open access with De Gruyter). For further information about the ERC research project Poetry in the Digital Age see: <https://www.poetry-digital-age.uni-hamburg.de/en.html>

Reference:

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