



The Poetics of American Song Lyrics (American Made Music Series)

Charlotte Pence, Lamar Alexander

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The Poetics of American Song Lyrics is the first collection of academic essays that regards songs as literature and that identifies intersections between the literary histories of poems and songs. The essays by well-known poets and scholars including Pulitzer Prize winner Claudia Emerson, Peter Guralnick, Adam Bradley, David Kirby, Kevin Young, and many others, locate points of synthesis and separation so as to better understand both genres and their crafts. The essayists share a desire to write on lyrics in a way that moves beyond sociological, historical, and autobiographical approaches and explicates songs in relation to poetics. Unique to this volume, the essays focus not on a single genre but on folk, rap, hip hop, country, rock, indie, soul, and blues.

The first section of the book provides a variety of perspectives on the poetic history and techniques within songs and poems, and the second section focuses on a few prominent American songwriters such as Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, and Michael Stipe. Through conversational yet in-depth analyses of songs, the essays discuss sonnet forms, dramatic monologues, Modernism, ballads, blues poems, confessionalism, Language poetry, Keatsian odes, unreliable narrators, personae, poetic sequences, rhythm, rhyme, transcription methods, the writing process, and more. While the strategies of explication differ from essay to essay, the nexus of each piece is an unveiling of the poetic history and poetic techniques within songs.

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