



# Poetic Features of Punk Rock Lyrics: An Analysis of Punk Rock Lyrics with Regard to the Punk Movement

*Sebastian Heinrichs*

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Seminar paper from the year 2005 in the subject American Studies - Literature, grade: 1,3, Bielefeld University, 21 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: Punk rock and the punk movement had a powerful impact on society and pop music. People influenced by it regarded crudeness and simplicity as a chance to express themselves, the constraints of conventions that demanded conformity and accuracy left behind. While breaking with those traditions concerning music, life style and attitude was at first the main motivation in the late 1970s, the movement emerged for many people to a force propagating virtues like equality, justice and social responsibility. The mixture of music always forcing attention and the prevalent notion of urgency in the lyrics proved a perfect basis for a countless number of artists to express vigorously protest, feelings ranging from despair to joy or just their personal perception of their environment. Along the history of American poetry the poems showed exactly those features, offering a channel to express oneself. The way poets express themselves just changed. It required centuries and many different stages to develop for example from the puritan style and fixed rhyme pattern of Anne Bradstreet's works to the flowing free verse of Walt Whitman expressing a fervent patriotism, which is again a great contrast to Allen Ginsberg's beat poetry, which features a very critical attitude towards America.

Regarding the Native Americans' poetry, which deals in many cases with the balance between humans and their environment or appears in the form of vocables, as an additional facet, these developments illustrate how wide the range of style has already been when comparing it to later forms of poetry, and that always a breaking with conventions, accompanied by enthusiastic adherents on the one hand and sceptics on the other hand, took place.

Analyzing a selection of punk rock lyrics by American artists I want to show that they possess features that are typical for classical poetry, whereas the term classical poetry will represent the traditional understanding of poetry, which does not include punk rock lyrics. Intertextual elements as well as formal aspects will be pointed out and compared to similar cases in works of different poets that are supposed to serve as a kind of measuring staff, which will help to show where congruence is present and where it is not.

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