

Radiohead and the Uses of Genre – A Stylistic Evaluation

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Abstract

The thesis explores uses of genre in the music of the band Radiohead and presents a new theoretical approach for studying popular music genres by combining text-based and discourse-based methods of analysis. Genre is a controversial and ambiguous concept that plays an important role in the ways in which we discuss popular music. Informed by a vast number of individual perceptions popular music genres are complex constructs that are subject to constant processes of change and progression. While the history of genre theory stretches back to ancient times, in popular music studies issues of categorisation have only been studied since the early 1980s. A detailed theory that utilises diverse approaches and takes into account varying perspectives on genre remains yet to be written. For this reason the following study provides a first attempt at a composite theory of popular music genres.

In the years since their formation the music of the band Radiohead has led to the emergence of a diverse genre discourse amongst different listener groups. Journalists in particular have applied a variety of genre terminologies and addressed issues of stylistic diversity and categorisation. By studying instances of genre in Radiohead's musical oeuvre as well as the accompanying genre discourse the study seeks to show how a theory of popular music genres can benefit from the application of the proposed methodology and be informative about Radiohead's music. The thesis is divided into four parts. It will move from a discussion of genre histories in chapter 1 to a study of text-based analytical methods in chapter 2 and highlight genre characteristics in Radiohead's oeuvre. Chapter 3 and 4 will present different instances of a discourse-based study of genres in offline and online contexts. In this way the thesis finally aims to illuminate issues of generic elusiveness by paying attention to the flexibility of individual generic perceptions.

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Introduction

The following thesis deals with uses of genre in the music of Radiohead and aims to present a new methodology for studying genre in popular music that is based on a combined analysis of texts and discourses. Genre is a complex and fluid construct that affects discussions about music to a considerable degree. It often appears as a way of communication or interpretation and is associated with particular meanings. While a theory of genres in other disciplines can be traced back as far as the writings of Aristotle, the idea of a genre theory for popular music is still relatively new. In dealing with popular music literatures one encounters a small number of academic writings that emerged within the last thirty five years and often present approaches to the analysis of individual genres. By contrast, more general theories of genre are still surprisingly rare and the practical application of existing theories to a study of individual musical oeuvres is seldom discussed. For this reason, the following thesis seeks to develop a new way of studying genres, which integrates different existing approaches and new ideas. It will finally propose a new theoretical framework for a study of popular music genres.

By way of discussing existing theoretical texts from different academic disciplines, the first chapter of this study will introduce varying concepts of genre and describe the functionalities of processes of categorisation. It will provide an overview of genre theory throughout history and in particular focus on the ways in which popular music genres have been described at different points in time. A second chapter will then deal with text-based approaches to the study of Radiohead's music and introduce new analytical concepts. It will also highlight characteristics that indicate genre within the band's oeuvre and point out developmental stages of their overall sound. Following from this, chapter 3 will present discourse-based approaches to a study of genre and focuses on uses of genre in journalistic and academic discourses on Radiohead. Since genre can be regarded as a multilayered and versatile construct, a study of both genre texts and discourses is useful to understand how generic meaning arises in different contexts. A fourth chapter will therefore describe uses of genre in online contexts and provide

new insights regarding the manifestation and functionalities of genre amongst different audience groups. In drawing conclusions from all stages of this work, the thesis finally aims to introduce a new composite methodology for the study of popular music genres that can contribute to individual genre analyses.

Radiohead's music has been chosen as a main example for the following study not only based on a personal interest but also due to the availability of a diverse generic discourse. During the years of the band's existence discussions of genre have appeared in different areas of music journalism, academia and online contexts alike, allowing for a very detailed study of instances of generic interpretation. Listeners have utilised a variety of genre terminologies and it is this apparent stylistic diversity that often guides Radiohead reception. Thus, the question also arises of how Radiohead's music can be defined generically and which place and function genre holds in the music and the accompanying discourse. Apart from an introduction of new theoretical and methodological ideas, the thesis thus also aims to show how a study of categorisation opens up new perspectives on music and Radiohead's work in particular.

While the study will proceed by introducing more detailed methodologies at the beginning of each chapter and also discuss the use of different source materials, it should be noted that a majority of journalistic texts and audience discussions were found online. A complete list of journalistic texts read in preparation for this thesis can be found in Appendix II. A majority of articles that were studied in greater detail and quoted in chapter 3 have been viewed in their original format, if available, in the Bodleian Library in Oxford in December 2015. Since the work with online sources also requires an awareness of possible ethical issues, all measures have been taken to ensure anonymity of the cited sources. Full ethical approval for this thesis was granted by the University Ethics Research Committee at Oxford Brookes University on 17 March 2015. Lastly, it remains to be said that a small number of analytical statements included in chapter 2 have been adapted from my MA thesis with the title "Radiohead and the Discourse on 'Post-rock' - a Stylistic and Conceptual Analysis" that was submitted to the

music department at Goldsmiths, University of London in August 2012. These passages add up to a total of approximately 300 words and also include various quoted interview passages with band members.

It should finally be noted that the thesis also includes a number of additional materials that are included in two separate appendices after the main text and bibliography. Since the discussion makes use of diverse genre descriptions and also introduces new terminologies, a glossary of terms is included in Appendix I. In order to provide an overview of the discussed genre texts, a discography and videography of Radiohead's work to date is also included. Lastly, the full table of journalistic sources and personal annotations, which provide additional insight into the research process and new data, can be found in Appendix II.

1. An Introduction to Genre

1.1 Framing genre

Genre is a controversial and ambiguous concept that plays an important role in the ways in which we discuss music today. As a means of organisation genre is present in many areas of everyday life, from the ways in which record or book stores display their products to the structure of newspapers or radio programmes. Most people have clear ideas of what they understand by genre and yet when trying to find a clear definition of the word one faces a multitude of different views. Ironically, it is often genre theorists who seem to struggle with the term or actively avoid clear definitions. While genre theory builds on a more than 2000 year old tradition and has produced a vast number of texts and discourses, it also still relies on vague definitions and opposing approaches. In order to show the possible advantages of these methodological differences, the following chapter will contrast the varying and at times overlapping definitions of genres and discuss their individual and combined value for popular music analysis.

1.1.1 Definitional struggles

Most frequently genre is defined in a technical way as a concept of classification that relies on a number of interrelating rules or characteristics. In his essay "A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications" Franco Fabbri describes genre as "a set of musical events (real or possible) whose course is governed by a definite set of socially accepted rules."¹ He goes on to name different types of generic rules² which he regards as relevant to describe the full scope of popular music genres. Similarly Jim Samson's article on genre published in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* introduces genre as a "class, type or category, sanctioned by

¹ Franco Fabbri, "A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications" (1981), in: Simon Frith (ed.), *Popular Music: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 3, London 2004, p. 7.

² The genre rules described by Fabbri include formal and technical, semiotic, behavioural, social and ideological as well as economical and juridical rules. For a discussion of Fabbri's genre rules cf. pp. 41 – 46 of this thesis.

convention" and "based on the principle of repetition."³ He describes genre as historically preconditioned and codifying for future works of music.⁴ While it is not clear how each author weighs the different aspects of genre against each other – and in practice their theories might evolve in different directions – it is interesting to note that both definitions explain genre as a concept governed by social conventions that is necessarily based on tradition. This type of definition is especially common in writings about music genres. Whereas the concept of genre is more firmly established in the fields of literature or film studies with a considerable number of related writings, musicology and popular music studies have produced comparably few works on the topic of genre. Amongst a number of reasons this might be due to the abstract nature of music and the multitude of textual features that could be included in a generic analysis. While musical scores can be detailed and insightful, they often do not suffice to deliver the full picture of what could be described as generic features. In popular music notation is rarely available or incomplete and aspects such as the live performance or production of a record can play as much a role in the context of genre as the finished recording itself.

As both of the above definitions show, social conventions play an important role in the formation of generic rules and it might be helpful to consider the importance of audiences, critics or even the music industry as well as intra-musical features when trying to describe a genre or explain the formation of genres. David Brackett accordingly describes popular music genres as follows: "Genres, for our purposes here, consist of ways of categorizing popular music so as to create a connection between musical styles, producers, musicians and consumers [...]."⁵ In this regard genre can be seen as a form of interaction between different groups of people, which in turn would suggest that music genres are not solely comprised of musical characteristics but are also defined through social actions and interactions. Ultimately this brings up the question of which generic elements should be

³ Jim Samson, "Genre", in: Stanley Sadie, John Tyrrell (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 9, London 2001, p. 657.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ David Brackett, "(In Search of) Musical Meaning: Genres, Categories and Crossover", in: David Hesmondhalgh, Keith Negus (ed.), *Popular Music Studies*, London 2002, p. 66.

considered during the process of genre analysis and how they should be weighed against each other. One aspect that further complicates the study of popular music genres is the extent of details to be found in different accounts on genre. As many authors are keen to point out, the more that rules are established for certain genres, the harder it gets to find musical works that fulfil these conditions. Similarly, the fewer rules there are, the harder it gets to define a genre in the first place. While one can therefore distinguish between very detailed and more open-ended definitions of genre, it is important to bear in mind the advantages of each method: A large number of common features might be beneficial for the validation and stability of genres. A more open-ended definition of the term accommodates inter-generic hybridity and genre transgressions more easily and thus brings with it a certain sense of flexibility that can be helpful to describe a wider range of musical works. For this reason it seems of considerable importance to keep a certain balance between different approaches to definition and apply them according to the individual circumstances of specific musical works during analysis.

As Brackett's words illustrate, not every definition of genre relies solely on a catalogue of rules or shared features. His approach suggests that genre depends as much on relations between its users. His is one example of a number of genre definitions that, in addition to a number of characteristics or rules, also contain a more abstract or conceptual description of the term. These types of definition often rely on a wider understanding of genre and tend to see it as a subjective concept shaped by individual understandings and interpretations, rather than simply specific characteristics. As such they provide an additional dimension to the understanding of genre that can often be seen as the culmination of very elaborate genre theories. While a more detailed discussion of genre theory will follow in chapter 1.2 of this thesis, the following quotation from John Frow's book *Genre* serves to illustrate the conceptual level of certain genre definitions and their relation to genre theory:

Genre, we might say, is a set of conventional and highly organised constraints on the production and interpretation of meaning. In using the word 'constraint' I don't mean to say that genre is simply a restriction. Rather, its structuring effects are productive of meaning; they shape and guide, in the way that a builder's form

gives structure to its materials. Generic structure both enables and restricts meaning, and is a basic condition for meaning to take place. I take it that genre theory is, or should be, about the ways in which different structures of meaning and truth are produced in and by the various kinds of writing, talking, painting, filming, and acting by which the universe of discourse is structured. That is why genre matters: it is central to human meaning-making and to the social struggle over meanings.⁶

As Frow's words show, genre is not only present in a specific text and its context, it can also shape the meaning that is created within and through the text during the process of production and interpretation. In this regard generic restrictions are as much present in our minds as they are in the music or any text for that matter. Frow's definition of genre relies on its working mechanisms, as do many of the more abstract definitions. Even though he alludes to certain restrictions reminiscent of Fabbri's genre rules, in his opinion it is not simply restrictions that constitute a genre. Rather, it seems that for Frow genre lies in the meaning that emerges through the process of structuring brought on with the help of such restrictions. Genre theory accordingly describes how structures arise, and Frow's definition works on a functional level. But while genre has often been defined as a principle of organisation, Frow goes one step further describing genre as meaning created from structure. Applied to music, genre thus plays as much a role during the creative process as it does in the course of analysis. Without genre we would be hard pressed to locate meaning in specific works of music. Would punk rock for instance still be the same if we were unaware of its ideologies and typical musical characteristics? How would our understanding of the music change? Would it still bear the same meaning? In his writings about film genres Steve Neale touches upon this matter by describing genre in the following way:

[...] genres are not simply bodies of work or groups of films, however classified, labelled, and defined. Genres do not consist only of films: they consist also, and equally, of specific systems of expectation and hypothesis that spectators bring with them to the cinema and that interact with films themselves during the course of the viewing process.⁷

As Neale's words suggest, genre exists on various levels: It resides in the work itself, is imposed by its creator, is used during the processes of production and marketing, and ultimately shapes the reception of a work. As

⁶ John Frow, *Genre*, London 2006, p. 10.

⁷ Steve Neale, "Questions of Genre" in: Barry Keith Grant (ed.), *Film Genre Reader III*, Austin 2003, p. 161.

Neale points out, when we encounter genres we bring with us certain ideas that influence our ways of understanding. These expectations are similar to what Frow calls restrictions since they are at work in our minds. But while Frow does not go into detail about the flexibility of genre structures, Neale's mention of expectations emphasises the importance of audience reception and underlines the relevance of individual and subjective interpretations.

The use of reception studies in the context of genre analysis is one of the more recent approaches to genre theory and will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter 1.2.⁸ It is especially common in the area of film studies, where the interpretation of audience responses or critical reception often provides an alternative or complementary approach to text-based genre analyses. However, as Barry Langford points out in his book *Film Genre: Hollywood And Beyond*, audience responses always need to be understood in relation to the kind of spectator that a genre text implies.⁹ Langford is of course referring to film genres, so the question of whether the same could be said about music genres is of considerable importance. Although a certain awareness of audiences can be found in various areas of music making and marketing, it will be helpful to consider the different ways in which audiences encounter genres in music as opposed to the areas of film or literature. Even though individual degrees of concentration may vary, both readers and spectators normally tend to encounter genre texts in an active manner by giving them their full attention. It seems that in music passive encounters are more common, which might in turn broaden the spectrum of individual genre interpretations. Whether we hear a certain piece of music in the car, in a shop or as soundtrack to a film can influence our perception of it in different ways and has consequences for our ways of understanding. Thus the reception of music genres is based on a particularly wide range of competing opinions and perceptions, which will be of importance when dealing with popular music genres in theory.

⁸ Chapter 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 present a number of theories that pay attention to the ways in which a study of reception can affect and be incorporated in modern genre analysis. Writers such as Heather Dubrow (literature), Steve Neale (film) and Jason Toynbee (popular music) elaborate on this topic and present useful approaches for studying audience reception and involvements, which will be discussed in some detail. Cf. pp. 20 – 51 of this thesis.

⁹ Cf. Barry Langford, *Film Genre: Hollywood and Beyond*, Edinburgh 2005, p. 11.

As the above example shows, in order to be able to compare definitions of genre from different disciplines more effectively, it is important to consider the differences between such areas as music, literature or film studies. In his book *Genre in Popular Music* Fabian Holt points out that genre theory is most firmly established in film studies and emphasises that there are considerable differences in the production and signification of music and film which need to be taken into account when talking about genre. He holds the view that it is mainly the fluid nature of popular music genres that makes it difficult to establish a helpful genre theory, but also points out that music differs from film in such areas as individual live performances, the nature of musical signification and its tendency towards hybridity.¹⁰ While a comparison between these two areas should take the aspects mentioned into account, it is also important to consider some of the peculiarities of film genres in relation to music. The most obvious differences between film and music might be located on the aesthetic and narrative¹¹ levels of films with an emphasis on visual or iconographic aspects as well as storylines. However, film genre theory is also shaped by tradition. As Steve Neale points out, film genre theory first emerged as a critical tool based on a "desire to complement, temper or displace altogether the dominant critical approach used hitherto – auteurism."¹² Thus a shift to genre criticism also meant a move away from the interpretation of films as the artistic and individual expression of directors.

While genre criticism provided a new way of dealing with films as genre-texts and corresponding audience responses, it could also be used to highlight the relations within a wider range of films.¹³ This does not necessarily indicate a less important role for the director in the area of genre studies, but serves to draw attention to the role of artists in popular music. When Holt discusses the role of live experiences in popular music it serves to illustrate the importance of individual performances for the formation of music genres and the perception of music in general. Musicians are

¹⁰ Cf. Fabian Holt, *Genre in Popular Music*, Chicago 2007, pp. 4 – 5.

¹¹ Cf. Alan Williams in "Is a Radical Genre Criticism Possible?", quoted in Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, London 2000, p. 20.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 10 – 11.

inevitably associated with their musical output and consequently with particular genres. For this reason, an awareness of the individualistic nature of music is crucial when comparing it to film genre. While both music genres and literature genres might share film's emphasis on artistic expression, they differ in other areas. Literary genre theory is influenced by its long standing tradition and ingrained hierarchies.¹⁴ As Neale points out, literary genres are more stable and systematically coherent than film genres which are rather fast-lived.¹⁵ In this respect film and music genres are similar because, as Robert Walser points out, "nowhere are genre boundaries more fluid than in popular music."¹⁶ While certain genre characteristics might change quickly in popular music, genre hierarchies are equally unstable. By comparison literary genres often rely on the principles of taxonomy, influenced by Aristotle's division of literary genres into the epic, the dramatic and the lyric.¹⁷ While literary genres are by no means static, music genres are fluid and constantly evolving. Similarly, there is a distinction to be made between popular music genres and subgenres and this hierarchy is less stable than in literature, where taxonomic structures have been developed over a considerably longer time period. Roy Shuker further elaborates on popular music hierarchies by introducing the concept of 'metagenres' – wide categories such as rock or pop – that exist on a higher level than mere genres or subgenres.¹⁸ When trying to compare music genres to film or literature genres it is important to remember the particular differences between these areas of study. As some of the quotations above

¹⁴ In his book *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* Alastair Fowler argues for the fundamental role of genre in literature. He states that genre enables communication of content, that possibly exceeds our understanding of it. As such genre can be seen as a basic condition for the creation of meaning. He further argues for the long-standing relevance of generic hierarchies and describes their relation to generic changes throughout history. Cf. Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*, Oxford 1982, pp. 20 – 26 and pp. 216 – 226.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁶ Robert Walser in *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*, quoted in Holt, *Genre in Popular Music*, p. 4.

¹⁷ Cf. Frow, *Genre*, p. 59.

¹⁸ In his book *Popular Music Culture: The Key Concepts* Roy Shuker addresses the relevance of these categories by stating that they mainly contribute to the organisation and navigation of the genre world. Shuker proposes 'metagenre' categories as helpful devices to introduce more structure to the study of genre and position distinct genres within a wider context. He points out that metagenres often share a geographical, social, cultural and historical background but also maintains that all of these factors can be contested or debated. Cf. Roy Shuker, *Popular Music Culture: The Key Concepts*, London 2012, p. 147 f.

have shown it can be helpful to look at the wide range of genre theories available in other disciplines and consider them as points of reference for a theory-based discussion of popular music genres.

1.1.2 Etymological debates

As the quotations by Fabbri and Samson at the beginning of this chapter have shown, most definitions of music genres feature allusions towards certain rules or characteristics. Additionally they often tend to highlight the functional aspect of genres as principles of organisation that can be helpful for the orientation of consumers. As such genres are often described with the help of replacement terms such as 'category', 'type', 'kind', 'mode', 'form' or 'style' amongst others. While some of these terms serve to highlight the functional aspect of genres, others underline the stylistic dimensions of the term. Indeed a reference to replacement terms is probably the most common approach to a definition of popular music genres and warrants a discussion and comparison of their individual merits. This poses the question as to what extent these words can actually be used interchangeably and how their use in definitions may influence the understanding of genre. Etymologically the French word 'genre' derives from the Latin term 'genus' that can be translated as 'type', 'kind' or 'class' and it can be argued that aspects such as the structuring function of genre as well as its hierarchical dimension are implied through the origin of the word. In this regard words such as 'type' or 'kind' might be helpful to highlight the structures behind different bodies of music. However, they mainly serve to describe the organisational dimension of musical groupings and do not come with the same set of connotations that the term 'genre' entails. Similarly, the words 'mode' and 'form' seem to emphasise single characteristics within a broad range of musical features that could be associated with genres and are thus equally narrow substitutes.

In contrast the term 'style' is often associated with a number of different generic features and seems to be based on the need to express the character of genre-texts. It is frequently used in writings about music and its relation to the term 'genre' is highly debated. A closer look at Allan F. Moore's essay "Categorical Conventions in Music Discourse: Style and Genre", followed

by a brief discussion of related writings by David Brackett and Mark Spicer, shall serve to illustrate the difficult relationship between the two terms. In his essay Moore discusses the different uses and implications of both terms in writings on musicology and popular music studies. He describes genre and style as "terms concerned with ways of erecting categorical distinctions, of identifying similarity between different pieces"¹⁹ and questions whether these similarities exist on the same hierarchical level. For this reason he proposes three types of possible relationships between the terms, which also appear in critical discourse: In the first instance genre and style are used almost interchangeably since they both cover the same ground except for different nuances. The second possible relationship is a hierarchical one, where 'style' is subordinate to 'genre' and covers only part of its spectrum. In the third possible case, the one preferred by Moore, 'style' and 'genre' have different areas of reference.²⁰

Moore goes on to discuss the discourse on 'style' and 'genre' in different areas of music and cultural studies. In particular he highlights the different uses of both terms in musicological texts and popular music studies and emphasises that they could almost be used interchangeably were it not for the fact that most texts insist on using both 'genre' and 'style.' Indeed as Moore points out, in both musicology and popular music studies style and genre appear in a hierarchical relationship, but while genre seems to be positioned as subordinate to style in musicology and hence classical music, in popular music studies it is the other way around.²¹ In order to determine the various uses of the terms and the ways in which they are related to each other Moore then goes on to describe how genre and style appear in different writings on the subject. As a first example he cites Fabbri's study on popular music genres, in which the author argues that the terms 'genre', 'style' and 'form' are often used synonymously in reference to what Fabbri calls the 'formal and technical rules' of genre.²² However, as Moore points

¹⁹ Allan F. Moore, "Categorical Conventions in Music Discourse: Style and Genre", in: *Music & Letters*, Vol. 82, No. 3, 2001, p. 432.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 433.

²¹ Cf. Moore, "Categorical Conventions in Music Discourse: Style and Genre", p. 434.

²² A detailed discussion of Fabbri's genre rules can be found on pp. 41 – 46 of this thesis.

out, these rules only form one part of this genre theory²³ and Fabbri is adamant about the fact that both 'form' and 'style' do not suffice to describe genres even if they are part of it.²⁴ Furthermore Moore refers to Philip Tagg who describes 'style' as a genre synecdoche, which he explains as "*pars pro toto* reference to 'foreign' musical style, thence to complete cultural context of that style."²⁵ Thus, both Moore and Tagg locate 'style' as hierarchically subordinate to 'genre.'

Contrasting these views to the world of classical music Moore discusses Leonard B. Meyer's book *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology*. Meyer's work is of interest because it is one of very few extensive studies on the topic of musical style and, in contrast to Fabbri and Tagg, Meyer positions the term 'genre' as subordinate to 'style.'²⁶ As Moore points out, Meyer's description of style as a set of behavioural and musical constraints is similar to Fabbri's definition of genre.²⁷ Meyer describes genre as one of several characteristics that can be responsible for the grouping of musical works within a style.²⁸ While he emphasises the influence of cultural circumstances on stylistic formations, it is interesting to note that his analysis of Richard Wagner's mature style is primarily based on a number of interrelating musical characteristics.²⁹ Thus it is reminiscent of a popular understanding of style as individual expression or the manner in which something is composed or played. However, Meyer is keen to point out the difference between this approach and his own theories positioning 'manner' as simply one characteristic in his understanding of style.³⁰

Following this discussion of genre theory in music Moore goes on to discuss how both genre and style are used in other disciplines and emphasises that there is no single understanding of these terms.³¹ Concluding he points out

²³ Cf. Moore, "Categorical Conventions in Music Discourse: Style and Genre", p. 434.

²⁴ Cf. Fabbri, "A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications", p. 10.

²⁵ Philip Tagg, "Towards a Sign Typology of Music", <http://tagg.org/articles/xpdfs/trento91.pdf>, p. 3.

²⁶ Cf. Moore, "Categorical Conventions in Music Discourse: Style and Genre", p. 433 f.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 433.

²⁸ Cf. Leonard B. Meyer, *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology*, Chicago 1996, p. 38.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 44.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

³¹ Cf. Moore, "Categorical Conventions in Music Discourse: Style and Genre", p. 441.

four different ways in which genre and style might be related to each other, which are helpful to assess the flexibility and possible implications of both words:

First, style refers to the manner of articulation of musical gestures and is best considered as imposed on them, rather than intrinsic to them. Genre refers to the identity and the context of those gestures. This distinction may be characterized in terms of 'what' an artwork is set out to do (genre) and 'how' it is actualized (style). Secondly, genre, in its emphasis on the context of gestures, pertains most usefully to the esthetic, while style, in its emphasis on their manner of articulation, pertains most usefully to the poietic. Thirdly, in its concentration on how meaning is constituted, genre is normally explicitly thematized as socially constrained [...]. Style, on the other hand, in its emphasis on technical features and appropriability, frequently simply brackets out the social [...] or at least regards this realm as minimally determining, where it is considered to operate with a negotiable degree of autonomy [...]. Fourthly, in its consideration of manners of articulation, style itself operates at various hierarchical levels, from the global to the most local. At global levels it is usually considered to be socially constituted, while it may operate with greater degrees of autonomy at more local levels.³²

Other writings on popular music serve to illustrate these particularities of musical style and genre. In his discussion of genre and crossover in popular music David Brackett defines musical style as "a bundle of characteristics that may be linked to a particular musician or recording and that participate in a socially recognized musical genre."³³ Like Fabbri and Tagg, Brackett positions style in a subordinate hierarchical relationship to genre. His definition comes surprisingly close to what Meyer has called 'the manner of expression' and it highlights the individual characteristics linked to particular artists or works of music. It is interesting to note that Brackett uses the term 'style' as a substitute for the phrase 'the music itself' which he deems as too narrow to describe the sonic elements of music without overlooking the influence of social contexts. While his notion of style thus mainly focuses on individual musical expression, it is more open-ended and able to accommodate the possible social relevance of musical details.³⁴

Mark Spicer's analysis of style in the music of The Police then presents a slightly different understanding of the word. While Spicer mentions reggae, punk rock, jazz and blues as examples of musical styles, his essay does not make any noteworthy mention of genre or the differences between 'genre'

³² Moore, "Categorical Conventions in Music Discourse: Style and Genre", p. 442.

³³ Brackett, "(In Search of) Musical Meaning: Genres, Categories and Crossover", p. 65.

³⁴ Ibid.

and 'style', which suggest that both terms might be used interchangeably. However, Spicer describes style as "a musical world that is defined by a family of specific musical devices"³⁵, which brackets out the social sphere. Thus his understanding of style highlights the level of musical expression, which he seems to regard as the grounds on which styles are built. His following analysis of musical elements in The Police is reminiscent of Meyer's style analysis in that he points out the interrelating musical characteristics on which the band's songs are built, which again underlines the understanding of style as specifically musical. Interestingly, Spicer points out the role of musical topics and their relation to musical style, concluding that "one small musical topic – such as a distinctive riff, a rhythmic pattern, a chord, or even an effect – can be enough to evoke the essence of style as a whole."³⁶ Thus his idea of style deviates from previous understandings of genre that are defined mostly through a number of characteristics that relate to each other in a certain way.

While particular musical topics might point towards specific styles, it seems preferable if they operate in particular musical contexts, like the musical work of a band. When Spicer points towards rhythmic displacement as a reggae element in the music of The Police, this rhythmic displacement does not simply serve as a stylistic indicator of reggae in general but rather as an indicator of reggae in the context of the band's music.³⁷ Spicer thus points out that this element can be seen as part of the band's idiolect. The term 'idiolect', coined by Allan F. Moore and based on the work of Richard Middleton, describes "style characteristics that identify an individual band."³⁸ Thus idiolect constitutes a subordinate level of style and might be helpful in narrowing the understanding of style. Following Moore's writings and other texts that utilise 'genre' as well as 'style', the latter term can be understood as a manner of expressing predominantly musical elements of genre. The term 'idiolect' in contrast can be used to describe the expression

³⁵ Mark Spicer, "Regatta de Blanc. Analyzing Style in the Music of the Police", in: John Covach, Mark Spicer (ed.), *Sounding Out Pop: Analytical Essays in Popular Music*, Ann Arbor 2010, p. 127.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 140.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 133.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 125.

of particular elements of genre in the context of individual bands. Thus it can be defined as the manifestation of style in a particular band.

In conclusion one can say that the terms 'genre' and 'style' should be used with caution and not without further discussion. As Allan F. Moore has pointed out there is no single definition for each term but, looking at their different uses, one can find a number of more or less established types of relationships between the two. While the variety of genre definitions discussed in this chapter may at times be confusing, they also serve to highlight the complex character of genre and the multitude of connotations the term entails. Instead of trying to come closer to one definition of genre, it might be helpful to use these different approaches to discuss genre in particular musical works from various angles in order to achieve a more elaborate analysis.

1.2 Genre theory and the uses of genre

As the previous paragraphs have shown in dealing with genre one faces different views shaped by various factors such as disciplinary provenance or individual arguments. Attempting to find a general definition of genre thus becomes an almost impossible endeavour subject to individual contexts, circumstances and opinions. While definitions in general are ideally succinct and often present the logical first step when approaching a new topic, the broad spectrum of different and at times contradicting generic concepts serves mostly to highlight the complexity of genre studies. To complicate matters genre definitions can be evasive and often tend to focus on single aspects within the genre such as its function or structure. While genre studies thus builds on slightly unstable premises, the majority of genre theory is remarkably elaborate and can be useful to achieve a better understanding of the larger working mechanisms of genre. For this reason the following discussion of genre theories will compare different conceptions of generic construction and development and illustrate the ways in which genres are used by different groups of people and play into the creation of meaning.

1.2.1 Historical approaches

While genre theory evolved over a relatively long period of time, many theorists are keen to point out that genre history and theory are inevitably linked. For this reason the following paragraphs will trace the emergence and historical development of genre theory and its impact on contemporary approaches to the study of genre. The chapter will move on to discuss current theories from various disciplines and consider their significance for a study of popular music genres. In his book *Film/Genre* Rick Altman provides a useful overview of the changes and continuities in genre theory throughout history. He commences by discussing Aristotle's *Poetics* (c. 335 BC) as one of the oldest and most influential texts in the history of literary genre theory. Aristotle distinguishes between different types of poetry that are historically predefined. While he does not address the issue of generic formation, the distinction implies an awareness of poetic categories on the part of his readers. According to Aristotle the different types of poetry are determined by the ways in which they imitate nature and by their choice of medium, object and manner of imitation.³⁹ While Altman points out that this method of describing and codifying pre-existing practices continues to be one of the most persistent models in genre theory today, he also stresses that this way of thinking has effectually narrowed genre theory down to a certain extent. Aristotle's unquestioning use of the pre-defined term 'poetry' – reminiscent of many theorist's uncritical use of the term 'genre' – can be problematic as it implies a consistent and undifferentiated understanding of the word without paying attention to the conditions of its construction. Furthermore, by clarifying the specific components of the different modes of imitation Aristotle seemingly excludes other possible distinctions such as the different uses of these categories.⁴⁰ Although Aristotle's writings provided inspiration for genre theorists over the next 2000 years, his notion of generic types thus needs to be considered carefully due to a distinct lack of clear definition as well as the analytical emphasis on inner-textual features.

³⁹ Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics*, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.mb.txt>.

⁴⁰ Cf. Rick Altman, *Film/Genre*, London 1999, pp. 2 – 5.

While the Aristotelian approach to generic codification proved to be particularly persistent, subsequent writings on genre theory by other authors have brought about a number of equally influential developments. Written during the early years of the first century Horace's *Ars Poetica* (c. 18 BC) introduces new ideas about the nature of imitation by paying attention to certain literary models and their standards. His text can be seen as an instruction for future writers – rather than a description of existing genres – in which he presents his readers with a number of rules concerned with form, unity and the content of a work. In this regard he also argues against the mixing of particularly opposing genres, but maintains that at times even a comedy can include tragic moments and vice versa.⁴¹ For this reason one can assume that Horace's work essentially created a new awareness of generic categories and rules on the part of writers.

While Horace comments only briefly on the debate about the mixing of genres, during the Middle Ages and throughout the 16th century an increasing interest in generic crossovers emerged. This initially resulted in heated debates about the purity of literary forms. While these disagreements amongst genre theorists were relatively common, the emerging interest in the construction of genre hybrids soon led to their general acceptance.⁴² In consequence a majority of genre theories published until the end of the 19th century tend to discuss the appropriateness of mixing genres to some extent. As Altman points out until this point "all genre theory involved some version of the classic versus romantic genre dialectic, opposing the so-called pure genres handed down by tradition to modern mixed genres more attentive to human multiplicity and complex reality."⁴³

With new developments in the natural sciences the 19th century also saw an increasing interest in the advancement of genre studies. In particular this led to the development of a so called scientific model of genre theory informed by the writings of Charles Darwin in *The Origin of Species* (1859). As Altman points out several theorists began to apply scientific genre

⁴¹ Cf. Altman, *Film/Genre*, pp. 2 – 5 and Horace, *Ars Poetica*, <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/HoraceArsPoetica.htm>.

⁴² Cf. Altman, *Film/Genre*, pp. 4 – 5.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 7.

metaphors in order to argue for the reality of generic categories and to affirm their relevance. However, this approach was highly problematic. While different attempts at a scientific justification of genre were influential at the time, Altman also emphasises their role in concealing the need for further studies on the theoretical problems of genre.⁴⁴ As Fabian Holt furthermore points out natural sciences and culture are "constituted and evaluated differently."⁴⁵ Thus the scientific model is not only unsuitable for dealing with the specific aesthetics and complexities of genres but, as Holt mentions, it also brought about a number of ideological problems.⁴⁶

During the early years of the 20th century a number of theorists began to question the concept of genre as a whole which led to a re-evaluation of the relationship between genres and individual texts. Going against traditional assumptions this new tendency broadened the discussions about the actual existence of genres and also had an impact on subsequent attempts to validate or renew genre theory.⁴⁷ In the second half of the 20th century genre theory then reached a new highpoint and began to draw interest from a wider range of academic fields in particular those associated with the study of popular culture. Utilising genre theory in the context of film and eventually popular music analysis, scholars gained new insights into the working mechanisms of their objects of study and began to develop new methodological strategies. These new approaches often focus on the formative and developmental aspects of genre and tend to regard it as a fluid concept rather than a static catalogue of rules. Mostly this led to a new interest in the contexts and social factors of genres as well as their different functions and uses. As a consequence contemporary genre theories often incorporate more than a simple text-based analysis and reflect on the different conceptions of genre available today or the ways in which they operate.

⁴⁴ Cf. Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 6.

⁴⁵ Holt, *Genre in Popular Music*, p. 13.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

⁴⁷ Cf. Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 7.

1.2.2 Genre theory in non-musical sources

The following paragraphs aim to provide an overview of different approaches to genre theory in non-musical sources in order to show how the analysis of popular music genres can benefit from cross-disciplinary studies. The discussion will initially focus on literary and linguistic genre theories and consider writings by Tzvetan Todorov, Heather Dubrow, Amy J. Devitt and John Frow, before moving on to explore the role of genre in film theory. In his book "The Fantastic" (1970), one of the most frequently quoted works about literary genres, Tzvetan Todorov discusses the problems of generic classifications and draws a number of conclusions about literary genre theory. When studying genre, in Todorov's view, every theorist inevitably has to work with certain hypotheses about the nature of literary works that should be re-evaluated constantly. Accordingly an awareness of the necessarily tentative nature of generic analysis as well as the subjective character of most genre theories is essential when approaching the topic. Todorov also emphasises that generic structures are located on different levels and thus highlights the hierarchical tendencies of generic organisation. Todorov points out that all genres can be approached from a historical or a theoretical angle. While historical conceptions of genres result from observation and should respond to a coherent theory, theoretical genres are based on literary theory and need to be verified by textual reference. As Todorov's ideas show the historical and theoretical framings of genre are thus related and interdependent. Even though not every genre will ultimately confirm these premises, Todorov argues that possible deviations can be helpful in creating an awareness of the limits of generic systems and theories. Thus he points out that "the goal of knowledge is an approximate truth, not an absolute one".⁴⁸

Following up on his previous writings Todorov's essay "The Origin of Genres" (1976) deals with the construction and development of genres. Todorov begins his essay by discussing generic hybridity and argues that the mixing of genres and transgression of generic rules can be regarded as signs

⁴⁸ Cf. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to Literary Genre*, Ithaca, New York 1970, pp. 20 – 23.

of the "authentically modern writer – one who no longer respects the separation of genres."⁴⁹ This process, he continues, has often been interpreted as a fundamental step towards the eventual disintegration of genres in modern society. However, in his view a transgression of generic rules does not make genres nonexistent but contrarily serves to affirm their existence: A transgression requires a specific law that can be transgressed, and a norm becomes particularly visible only through its transgression. Finally, the exception that arises from these transgressions has the potential to become itself a generic rule once it is recognised. With this in mind Todorov claims that new genres always arise as transformations of one or more old genres, depending on factors such as inversion, displacement or combination. He states that literature has never existed without genres and rather than asking what precedes genres one should explore what influences their formation.⁵⁰

Explaining the conditions of generic development, Todorov points out that the historical existence of genres is indicated by the existence of a discourse on genres which eventually leads to codification: Genre is thus defined as the codification of discursive properties. Furthermore, genres are dependent on the process of institutionalisation as a way of communicating with the society in which they exist, so that existing generic systems primarily serve as 'horizons of expectation' for readers as well as 'models of writing' for authors. Since genres arise from within society they also reflect related ideologies:

[...] a society chooses and codifies the acts that most closely correspond to its ideology; this is why the existence of certain genres in a society and their absence in another reveal a central ideology, and enable us to establish it with considerable certainty.⁵¹

Although Todorov mainly applies his theories to literary genres, his ideas can also serve to highlight certain aspects in the construction of popular music genres. Firstly, Todorov's claim that genres arise through the transformation of previous genres and the transgression of their established

⁴⁹ Tzvetan Todorov, "The Origin of Genres", in: *New Literary History*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1976, p. 159.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

rules serves to emphasise the historicity of popular music and its particular fluidity. The notion of musical influence plays an important role in popular music and even genres that may at times deny their influences, such as for example punk rock, often tend to have roots in more or less obscure previous genres. Furthermore, the argument that most genres evolve through discourse and eventual processes of codification serves to underline the frequent interaction between popular music genres and audience or industry discourses that often play a role in naming new genres and creating a certain awareness of specific genre codes. While music genres arise from the dichotomy of tradition and transgression, it is the process of naming that often confirms their final differentiation and individualises them. As Todorov goes on to argue, genres are dependent on ideologies in society. New popular music genres can emerge rather quickly and are often associated with particular happenings in society at the time of their development. Ideologies are reflected not only in the lyrics of a song or other musical features but also through a number of choices in terms of production, distribution and marketing. When Todorov talks about the development of genres from rule transgressions it is interesting to note that in popular music the transgression of rules seems to be a specific part of many musicians' ideology. This in turn explains the fast development of popular music genres and considering the relatively short existence of rock music its particular multitude of subgenres.

While Todorov's writings partly address the working mechanisms of generic categories within society, Heather Dubrow specifically discusses the ways in which genres evolve through the interaction of authors and readers and are guided by particular expectations. Her book *Genre* (1982) addresses generic functions and describes genre as a "code of behaviour established between the author and his reader."⁵² As Dubrow notes generic codes, similar to codes of social interaction, are always present and guide our actions and reactions. If someone chooses not to follow a particular generic code, a statement is inevitably made about their attitude towards that code. While it is possible to challenge or even overthrow generic codes, it is not

⁵² Heather Dubrow, *Genre*, London 1982, p. 2.

possible to exclude them from creative processes and reception.⁵³ Thus genre permeates not only the artwork itself but also shapes the processes that lead to their creation and the ways in which they are perceived. Genre thus not only emanates from authors and is manifest in their work, but also develops from processes of reading and discursive action.⁵⁴ Similarly, the development of popular music genres is often informed by particular audience expectations and vice versa.

Amy J. Devitt's essay "Generalizing about Genre: New Conceptions of an Old Concept" (1993) elaborates on this theory by stating that genre can influence our perception in various ways and thus forms an essential component in the creation of meaning. She argues towards a new understanding of genre that goes beyond formal classification and instead merges form and content. An understanding of genre is not only dependent on the comprehension of classification systems but also builds on the knowledge about the origin of certain patterns that constitute these systems. Thus she states that "[g]enre entails purposes, participants, and themes, so understanding genre entails understanding a rhetorical and semiotic situation and a social context."⁵⁵ While genres respond according to their individual situations and contexts, they also play an essential role in their construction. Through the interaction of writers and readers with genres – their choices of and responses to genres – situational contexts are formed. Since genres and situations are linked and mutually influential, genre has to be regarded as a dynamic concept. It is dependent on the understanding of responses, perceptions and actions from audiences and writers. Notably Devitt sees genre as a mediator between different elements and levels of texts and contexts, which is essential for the construction of meaning. Her approach integrates social aspects and the role of participants into the

⁵³ Cf. Dubrow, *Genre*, p. 3.

⁵⁴ For the purpose of this thesis the term 'discourse' will be used to describe a detailed and often reflective process of communication that addresses a specific topic. It will be contrasted with the term 'interpretation', which will be utilised to describe individual instances of analytical deduction that are less generalising and, in the case of genre, do not reflect on the issue as a whole.

⁵⁵ Amy J. Devitt, "Generalizing about Genre: New Conceptions of an Old Concept", in: *College Composition and Communication*, Vol. 44, No. 4, 1993, pp. 575 f.

analysis of literary works and thus presents genre as an interdisciplinary construct.⁵⁶

Applied to popular music this understanding of contexts and situations seems to be an important aspect in the formation of genre. It is not only of importance in terms of recurring themes in lyrics but also influences performances, audience behaviour and responses as well as ideologies in general. However, while a writer might indicate the rhetorical situation and influence reader responses through his or her choosing of a genre, the interaction between musicians, popular music genres and audiences can differ. Not only are popular music genres particularly fluid, they also often feature less distinguished forms than for example literary genres or even genres in art music. Formal differences between a novel and a drama, or a sonata and an aria might effectively indicate different situations and meanings, whereas a majority of popular music composition loosely revolves around verse-chorus-verse structures. While there is a myriad of popular music genres, this might indicate a closer relation between these genres so that they have to rely on other factors in order to distinguish themselves and achieve appropriate audience reactions. For this reason Devitt's conception of genre as a mediating factor in the creation of meaning based on the interaction of various generic features is of particular relevance to popular music, highlighting the importance of musical and social aspects alike and focus on particularities in the face of similar structural premises and fluid genre boundaries.

While John Frow's book *Genre* (2005) takes a slightly different approach, his definition of genre⁵⁷ seems to be based on similar premises. Frow deems genre responsible for the production of meaning but goes one step further than Devitt by highlighting the restricting powers of genre and pointing out that genre is a basic requirement for meaning to take place.⁵⁸ Devitt's conception of genre takes a step away from mere categorisation towards a more all encompassing system, suggesting that genre produces meaning

⁵⁶ Cf. Devitt, "Generalizing about Genre: New Conceptions of an Old Concept", pp. 575 – 580.

⁵⁷ Cf. p. 6 f. of this thesis.

⁵⁸ Cf. Frow, *Genre*, p. 10.

because it mediates between different aspects of a text that would otherwise be regarded separately. Genre is thus located in the recurring relations between elements of a text as well as in given situations. While Frow's concept of genre is similar in some respects, he emphasises that it is in particular the structuring function of genre as well as its constraints that are productive of meaning. Genre produces meaning because it gives structure to a text and organises texts in systematic categories that entail different associations. For this reason it influences creative processes and inevitably guides reader expectations. As Todorov has pointed out, genres essentially affect our interpretations of a text:

When we examine works of literature from the perspective of genre, we engage in a very particular enterprise: we discover a principle operative in a number of texts, rather than what is specific about each of them.⁵⁹

Accordingly one can say that a particular awareness of genre changes our perception of a text and ultimately our interpretation. Todorov's differentiation between the specificities of a text and general operatives in a group of texts indicates the ways in which meaning is produced. While Frow highlights the necessity of genre for the creation of meaning, it is interesting to note that, without consideration of genre, we can still make interpretative assumptions about a text and its individual features. However, these assumptions will lack actual points of reference that are assembled within a wider context. For this reason, reading a text while focusing on its generic qualities might lead to very different interpretations and influence our perception of the text's meaning in significant ways.

While Frow proposes that all texts are shaped by social settings as well as by genres that are dependent on these settings, he maintains that genres are not merely reducible to these social settings. His book establishes genres as discursive and performative structures that are able to shape a text by establishing a certain sense of meaning.⁶⁰ In trying to clarify the pragmatic relations between texts and contexts, Frow points out that, through their categorisational function, genres are essentially responsible for defining the possible uses of a text. Texts should thus be regarded as uses of genre as

⁵⁹ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 3.

⁶⁰ Cf. Frow, *Genre*, p. 16 ff.

well as performances of the specific sets of constraints that a genre entails. While they are shaped by these constraints they also have the power to transform them.⁶¹ This again entails consequences for authors who operate accordingly as the performers of genre as well as for readers who use texts in different ways determined by genre.

In order to contrast the previously discussed writings on genre to theoretical approaches originating from a different academic discipline, the following paragraphs will take a close look at genre theory in film studies and discuss texts by Tom Ryall, Stephen Neale and Rick Altman. Dealing with another popular art form film studies often features useful approaches that are of relevance for the study of popular music and can provide alternative insights. While Ryall's text is of great interest to this study due to its specific methodology and use of iconography, which will again feature in chapter 2 of this thesis,⁶² both Neale and Altman are cited in academic writings on popular music genres and have thus had a direct impact on popular music studies. In the late 1960s a growing interest in the study of film genres arose from film criticism and was largely informed by literary genre theory. Tom Ryall's essay "The Notion of Genre" (1970) presents one of the earliest accounts on the specific nature of genres in the context of the newly arising studies in film genre. Ryall explains the growing interest in genre as opposed to the critical concept of auteur criticism by pointing out the changing relationship between both aspects. Until this point in time genre had often been regarded as a further factor within the range of choices to be made by a creative director. Genre criticism in contrast maintains that artists can be intertwined with genres, yet this is not a necessary condition and thus genres need to be regarded independently. Ryall's text notably underlines the nowadays less common differentiation between distinctive genres and other types of films, which he explains as follows:

My argument will be that we should reserve the title, 'genre', for certain types of films and deny it to others. The Western and gangster types of films certainly constitute genres, while social dramas do not. To refer to social dramas as a genre does no more than collect a number of disparate though loosely related films under a suitable heading, while to say that Westerns constitute a genre implies a number of internal relationships between the various constituents of the genre

⁶¹ Cf. Frow, *Genre*, p. 25.

⁶² Cf. pp. 70 – 74 of this thesis.

(the individual films), and a controlling relationship between the film-maker, the genre and the audience.⁶³

Interestingly, Ryall's words serve to highlight the etymological problems of genre and its relation to substitute terms as discussed in chapter 1.1.2. Ryall makes a clear distinction between 'genre' and 'type', saying that the former has often been falsely used as a synonym for the latter. While every filmic grouping can be regarded as a type, Ryall is keen to point out that not every type constitutes a genre. Genre is thus not merely a category or grouping of films, but necessarily entails something more. It is defined not by its organisational function, but based on a number of superordinate relationships inherent to the filmic text. Interestingly, while Ryall highlights that genre implies a particular relationship to directors and audiences, both seemingly feature as agents external to the genre. They are related to the genre in a specific way, but they are not included in it. While his approach seems to be centred around the analysis of particular relations within a filmic text and between different texts of the same type, the social context of genre is addressed only partially. Genre according to Ryall provides directors with specific sets of rules for the making of films and audiences with certain sets of expectations. In this way genres are able to influence processes of creation and reception. However, Ryall remains unclear about the extent to which genres might also be shaped by either of these processes. Genre thus appears as a static and text-based concept with audiences and filmmakers as mere social tangents.

Although it is certainly helpful to explore Ryall's understanding of generic criteria as a way of looking at the roots of film genre studies and its early focus points, his approach can be seen as problematic due to a number of reasons. Firstly, the apparently one-sided relationship between texts and contexts results in a narrow definition of genre which is unsuitable to deal with a larger number of disparate texts as Ryall's differentiation between types and genres shows. Secondly, his etymological differentiation seems to be based on subjective premises, which brings up questions about the relationship between both terms and their definition. Thirdly, Ryall's text highlights the individual characteristics of specific genres without

⁶³ Tom Ryall, "The Notion of Genre", in: *Screen*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1970, p. 23.

integrating these generic criteria within a coherent and general theory.⁶⁴ The Western genre, for instance, is described as being based on the relations between basic material or subject matter, thematic preoccupations and iconographical continuity.⁶⁵ While this approach serves to highlight the individual particularities of this genre, it also begs the question of whether similar characteristics could be used to describe other genres. Thus it might prove problematic to talk about genre as an analytical concept without providing reference to a unified theory.

In talking about the basic generic components of the Western Ryall addresses the concept of iconography, which often features as a central aspect of analysis in film genre criticism. The iconographic analysis focuses on the identification and interpretation of visual and very immediate elements particular to specific film genres. These can often be regarded as primary indicators of genre. Originating from art history, iconography was adapted by film genre theorists as a means of highlighting the predominantly visual character of their medium. Additionally, iconographic methods also apply to paratexts, such as for instance film posters or advertisements, that are responsible for shaping early genre-based expectations of audiences. While a sole focus on the visual aspects of film genres can be problematic due to their excluding function, the iconographic approach may be useful to describe the central visual signals of a genre. In the analysis of a Western one might thus talk about the representative functions of horses or even particular landscapes. Indeed it is often the iconographic aspects that may significantly influence first impressions of a film. Accordingly, the study of iconographic elements plays a pivotal role for the designation of film genres and often features as one of the basic analytical strategies in film genre theory.

Since the iconographic analysis characteristically focuses on the visual elements of its subject, it is perhaps too easily discarded as an unsuitable principle for the generic analysis of popular music. At first glance the

⁶⁴ This aspect is also addressed by Stephen [Steve] Neale in his book "Genre". Neale criticises that Ryall fails to offer conceptual means for the analysis of genre. Cf. Stephen Neale, *Genre*, London 1980, p. 7.

⁶⁵ Cf. Ryall, "The Notion of Genre", p. 26.

visuals of popular music genres and film genres seem to be diametrically opposed. While the visual nature of films makes it relatively easy to discern iconographic elements within a filmic text, popular music predominantly functions on an aural level. Its visual characteristics appear mainly as contextual or paratextual features – in terms of clothing, advertising, cover art, instrumentation or even particular performance styles – and are consequently less immediate than the visuals of film genres. For this reason the visuals of popular music and film genres seem to function in very different ways. In film genre criticism iconography is primarily defined through its immediacy and signalling function. Filmic icons can be succinct indicators of genre. Although they mostly function on a very simple and apparent level, they influence individual identifications of genre in viewers and ultimately provide guidance for the understanding and interpretation of a film. Since this primal level of signification seems to be one of the crucial aspects for the construction of genre it might be helpful to consider how it is usually achieved in popular music. If we focus our attention on the functional level of iconography in the context of film genre criticism and regard it as detached from its visual level, the iconographic analysis seems to highlight certain generic signals that can serve as allegories to the genre and may entail part of its ideology. As many theorists have pointed out, genre also functions on a semiotic level as a system of signification and meaning creation. Consequently popular music can include a large number of elements that may fulfil a similar function to that of iconographic elements in films and it is possible to identify genre not only according to certain contextual features but also based on first impressions of musical elements such as specific sounds, melodies, lyrics or instruments.⁶⁶

In his book *Genre* (1980), one of the earliest examples of a theory of popular film genres, Stephen Neale describes genre as variations of the interplay between codes and discourses. They are "instances of repetition and difference"⁶⁷ that are bound by the articulation of desire on the part of the spectator. While every text is essentially a repetition of what Neale describes as the mainstream narrative text – a text that regulates this desire –

⁶⁶ This approach is applied in chapter 2.2. Cf. pp. 82 – 123 of this thesis.

⁶⁷ Cf. Neale, *Genre*, p. 48.

specific variations within these texts are vital to ensure the audience's continuing interest. As Neale points out genres thus "establish a regulation of the variety of mainstream narrative across a series of individual texts, organising and systematising the difference that each text represents, filling the gap between text and system."⁶⁸ He emphasises that difference is included within repetition and genres are subject to progress which, in his view, accounts for the contradiction that genres appear as seemingly coherent systems but cannot be analysed as such. For this reason he concludes that genres should no longer be regarded as actual systems but as processes of systematisation.⁶⁹ In distancing himself from a static definition of genre, Neale thus highlights the temporal character of genre reminiscent of Todorov's ideas about generic development. Genres are grounded in history and evolve constantly. Dependent on variation, there is no uniformity amongst generic texts. Consequently, genres are characteristically ambiguous and often subject to individual interpretation.

Neale's theory considerably depends on the involvement of audiences in the construction of genres. Spectators appear as a regulating force with the power to guide genres through the implementation of desires within repetition and difference. In this sense genre is not only regarded as a body of texts and textual characteristics, but also yet again as a set of expectations. According to Neale these expectations are furthermore subject to economic relations and practices and are organised through processes of institutionalisation. In conclusion, Neale emphasises the influence of genre on reading processes and points out the interdependence between audiences and industries:

As well as providing a means of regulating desire across a series of textual instances, and of offering an ordered variety of the discursive possibilities of cinema itself, genres also provide a means of regulating memory and expectation, a means of containing the possibilities of reading. Overall, they offer the industry a means of controlling demand, and the institution a means of containing coherently the effects that its products produce.⁷⁰

While this emphasis on the regulating function of genres on reading processes appears in a number of genre theories from different disciplines,

⁶⁸ Neale, *Genre*, p. 49.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Neale's focus on the relationship between audiences and industries is particularly interesting. Although the industry gains a certain amount of control due to generic expectations, it is dependent on the audience to build and react to these expectations. Therefore genre not only organises texts and expectations but also regulates the conditions of its own reception by establishing relations between the different agents involved in its construction.

In his essay "Questions of Genre" (1990) Neale elaborates on some of the aspects discussed in his book and it is interesting to consider how his ideas about genre might have changed in the course of ten years. Focusing again on the importance of audiences, Neale places special emphasis on the role of expectations and highlights their dependence on the concept of verisimilitude. He explains the relation between films and audiences as follows:

Genres do not consist only of films: they consist also, and equally, of specific systems of expectation and hypothesis that spectators bring with them to the cinema and that interact with films themselves during the course of the viewing process. These systems provide spectators with a means of recognition and understanding. They help render films, and the elements within them, intelligible and therefore explicable. [...] these systems of expectation and hypothesis involve a knowledge of – indeed they partly embody – various regimes of verisimilitude – various systems of plausibility, motivation, justification, and belief.⁷¹

As Neale's observations about viewing processes indicate, particular generic expectations guided by verisimilitude can influence the perception of films considerably and subsequently shape critical reception. However, genre and film criticism also mediate between audiences and films and thus, in turn, provide general guidelines for viewing processes. As this example shows, the concept of genre depends on a number of complex interdependencies between the different parties involved in its construction. Consequently, the different forms of audience reactions and critical reception might also have an impact on creative processes. Furthermore, Neale elaborates on his understanding of genres as temporal processes by saying that genres normally seem to extend their repertoire over time, either through processes of addition or transgression. For this reason he regards genres as complex

⁷¹ Neale, "Questions of Genre", p. 161.

and multidimensional constructs that are often prone to hybridity.⁷² While discussing a number of approaches towards a genre theory that involves this historical aspect, Neale considers the approach of the Russian formalists, which also guides Todorov's work, and contemplates its value for the organisation of generic complexity:

[...] the basis for an approach can perhaps be found in the Russian formalist idea that genres can each involve a "dominant" (or dominating) aesthetic device (or ideological element).

On this basis, particular genres can be characterized not as the only genres in which given elements, devices and features occur, but as the ones in which they are dominant, in which they play an overall organizing role.⁷³

While it is therefore not ideology alone that shapes genres, it could thus be seen as an ordering principle that relates to and systematises multiple generic elements within and across genre texts and guides audiences, critics, industries and, in this case, directors alike. Furthermore, in emphasising the importance of particular generic aspects over others Neale's approach presents a way of dealing with overlapping genre categories and generic ambiguity in general. While Neale's theories are mostly based on his earlier work he ultimately emphasises the open-endedness of genre theory and states that there is still a substantial need for further research that also pays attention to less popular genres.⁷⁴ In conclusion, genre theory is presented as a complex construct shaped by subjectivity. Due to its flexible character it is thus difficult to conceptualise.

In his essay "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre" (1984) Rick Altman adopts semiotic principles for the analysis of film genres in order to construct a new model of genre criticism which aims to "reveal[s] the relationship between differing critical claims and their function within a broader cultural context."⁷⁵ Altman's approach is based on the assumption that there are three main contradictions that have shaped genre theory over the years: Firstly, genre criticism involves at any time two competing notions of genre – the inclusive and the exclusive. While the inclusive notion of genre encompasses a large number of generic texts that respond to

⁷² Cf. Neale, "Questions of Genre", p. 171 f.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 180.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Rick Altman, "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre", in: *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 1984, p. 6.

a basic definition, the exclusive notion of genre is mainly used by critics and theorists and makes use of a familiar canon of texts that are often seen as representative of the particular genre in question. For this reason Altman states that it is paradoxically possible for a film to be included in a specific generic corpus and excluded from that same generic corpus at the same time.⁷⁶ A genre can thus be understood in a variety of different ways and the range of corresponding generic texts is always subject to differing perceptions. A second aspect involves the relationship between genre theory and history (also addressed by Todorov) and Altman argues towards the reintegration of genre history within theoretical attempts at analysis with a renewed focus on generic discourse and the temporal transformations of generic structures.⁷⁷ Thirdly, Altman mentions that genre criticism over the past has been subject to two opposing interpretative approaches. While the ritual approach assumes that ultimate authorship lies with the audience based on the articulation of expectations and desires, the ideological approach argues towards a manipulation of the audience by the film industry.⁷⁸ Summarising these problems, Altman goes on to express the need for a new critical strategy which not only serves to explain these contradictions but also benefits from them.⁷⁹ As a way of dealing with this problem Altman suggests an analytical approach that combines the interpretation of semantic and syntactic elements as well as their combination within a generic text. He explains:

While there is anything but a general agreement on the exact frontier separating semantic from syntactic views, we can as a whole distinguish between generic definitions which depend on a list of common traits, attitudes, characters, shots, locations, sets, and the like – thus stressing the semantic elements which make up the genre – and definitions which play up instead certain constitutive relationships between undesignated and variable placeholders – relationships which might be called the genre's fundamental syntax. The semantic approach thus stresses the genre's building blocks, while the syntactic view privileges the structures into which they are arranged.⁸⁰

Although semantic and syntactic strategies have often been used separately in genre studies, Altman proposes a combination of the two in order to emphasise the relations between the different levels of a generic text and

⁷⁶ Cf. Altman, "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre", p. 7.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 7 f.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 9.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 10.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

accommodate "the necessarily dual nature of any generic corpus."⁸¹ As the distinction between the inclusive and exclusive notion of genre has shown, individual texts can relate to their genres in different ways. Thus Altman introduces the 'semantic/syntactic approach' as a means for a more accurate description of the varying levels of genericity and simultaneously as a way of dealing with inter-generic hybridity.⁸² He proposes that genres either develop from a set of established semantic elements that obtain their syntactic form through experimentation or from a pre-existing syntax which then adopts a new set of semantics. The historic development and transformation of genre is reconciled with genre theory which leads to a new continuity between history, theory and the generic text.⁸³ Altman goes on to argue that the relationship between the ritual and the ideological notions of genre is mirrored by the various relations between the semantic and syntactic levels of genre which he regards as the very site of negotiation between Hollywood and its audience. A clear distinction between the semantic and syntactic is central to this theory: Altman points out that it corresponds to the distinction between the primary linguistic elements of a text and the secondary textual meanings that might result from the syntactic bonds established between primary elements. This distinction is essential for an understanding of how semantic meaning can establish syntactic meaning and vice versa. While a particular semantic signal may thus create syntactic expectations, the expectation of specific syntactic signals can equally affect semantic fields.⁸⁴

While Altman's theories may provide a helpful way of dealing with the conflicts of genre theory by focusing on particular semiotic elements, he also addresses the importance of the relationship between audiences and generic texts as well as the subjectivity inherent in different perceptions. However, this aspect of genre is not discussed in great detail and Altman's focus predominantly remains with the relations between inner-textual elements of a genre. Interestingly, Altman's book *Film/Genre* (1999) concludes with a revised version of his theories in which he addresses

⁸¹ Altman, "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre", p. 12.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 13.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 17.

particular problems of the semantic/syntactic approach to genre and ultimately proposes a 'semantic/syntactic/pragmatic approach.' As Altman points out the semantic/syntactic approach can always be threatened by divergent perceptions. Genres are subject to varying discourses and fulfil different functions depending on their user groups. He emphasises that genres are thus multi-discursive and also multi-coded. The pragmatic level of a genre then addresses the different uses of a text that can essentially influence the text's meaning. In talking about different uses we also have to recognise various user groups and Altman alludes to the fact that some genres are specifically dependent on this multiplicity. Consequently, genre needs to be seen as a multilayered construct that incorporates the possibility for different uses and interpretations. A new theory of genre thus needs to incorporate situations of competing and at times contradictory uses as well as instances of miscommunication in order to understand how meaning is created through the regulation of multiple discourses.⁸⁵

Altman's ideas about genre are mainly based on a theory of meaning and can be easily applied to other forms of generic texts, such as in this context popular music. Since most popular songs are particularly succinct generic texts and exhibit an extensive set of generic characteristics in a relatively short amount of time, a focus on their semantic and syntactic elements serves as a useful and systematic approach to understand how genre is constructed within them. Perhaps even more important in the context of popular music might be the pragmatic level of genres that highlights the different uses to which the music is put and the discourses it produces. While the use value of a newly released film is often subject to immediate discourses, specific uses and even user groups emerge or transform over time. Similarly, popular music is able to produce immediate reactions and might engage audiences in a very active way in particular during live performances. Nevertheless, reactions may differ according to the ways in which music is heard (either live or recorded music) as well as the knowledge about music or previous discourses. For this reason a genre analysis of popular music necessarily needs to include the ways in which

⁸⁵ Cf. Altman, *Film/Genre*, pp. 207 – 215.

music interacts with different audiences, the discourses it produces and the various uses to which it is put.

1.2.3 Genre theory in musical sources

The following section will trace the historical development of genre theory in academic studies of musical sources and aims to present an overview of the different uses and functions of genre throughout music history. It will pay attention to the ways in which popular music is incorporated in these studies and go on to discuss the emergence and current situation of genre theory in the academic field of popular music studies. Following a brief overview on genre history, based on the writings of Hermann Danuser and Jim Samson, the chapter will focus on texts by Jeffrey Kallberg, Franco Fabbri, Simon Frith, Jason Toynbee, David Brackett and Fabian Holt and discuss their relevance for a study of popular music genres.

Similar to literary genre theory the study of music genres has a relatively long-standing history and passed through mostly corresponding developmental stages. Hermann Danuser's entry on genre in the comprehensive German encyclopedia *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*⁸⁶ provides a useful overview of musical classification since the late Middle Ages and serves to illustrate the different approaches to genre taken by music scholars throughout history. According to Danuser a first treatise to include aspects of musical classification was written by Johannes de Grocheio around 1300 and released under the title *Ars Musicae*. Grocheio creates a system of musical genres (referring to it as 'genera', 'membra' or 'partes') that is geographically and culturally based on music in Paris at the end of the 13th century. Interestingly, he not only includes

⁸⁶ The title of the encyclopedia translates as 'Music in History and the Present.' Danuser's entry is listed under the subject title "Gattung", which he translates as 'genre.' Furthermore, the encyclopedia includes an entry on 'style' ("Stil") written by Wilhelm Seidel and Ulrich Leisinger, which is mainly concerned with individual and group specific particularities within composition. In this sense style is used almost synonymously with the word 'character.' Cf. Hermann Danuser, "Gattung", in: Ludwig Finscher (ed.), *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik (Second Revised Edition)*, subject encyclopedia, Vol. 3, Kassel 2005, pp. 1042 – 1069 and Ulrich Leisinger, Wilhelm Seidel, "Stil", in: Finscher, Ludwig (ed.), *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik (Second Revised Edition)*, subject encyclopedia, Vol. 8, Kassel, pp. 1740 – 1759.

aspects of musical structure but also describes genres in terms of their social, ethical, political or liturgical functions as well as their intended listener groups and performance spaces. As Danuser points out, this early example of a system of genres contains a notably diverse range of criteria that feature in musical categorisation.⁸⁷ As early as 1300 the categorisation of music was thus treated as an interdisciplinary field of study and Grocheio lists popular music forms alongside church music while refraining from any outright judgements of value.

As a second example for a historical system of musical categorisation Danuser mentions Johannes Tinctoris' work *Terminorum Musicae Definitorum*, the first known dictionary of musical terms, which was released in 1472 and takes a very different approach from Grocheio. While the latter works with a large number of generic characteristics, Tinctoris' approach to generic categorisation is notably simple. A system of musical categories is created based on generic height that relies on the organisation of musical works within a hierarchic order. The aspect of height as such does not necessarily reflect conceptions of high and low art. However, it alludes to categorising factors such as the quantitative length of a musical work as well as the qualitative perceptions of the importance and meaning of a musical setting.⁸⁸

As different as these two examples seem at first glance they serve to illustrate the basic directions in which theories of music genres developed over the following centuries. While many subsequent theories try to depict the complexity of music genres by building on an extended catalogue of generic criteria, others tend to focus on particular characteristics or specific ideologies. This disparity in theoretical approaches recalls the aforementioned dichotomy between open and closed understandings of genre and suggests that the roots of this way of thinking lie in early theory of musical genre. Subsequent attempts to create systems of musical categories rely either on interdisciplinary approaches and sets of multiple criteria or aim for distinct and concise definitions. While genre theories that

⁸⁷ Cf. Danuser, "Gattung", p. 1046 f.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

are based on succinct premises – like Tinctoris' conception of generic height – may seem relatively clear at first glance, it is important to keep in mind that their accuracy can often be contested by aspects of subjectivity. When Tinctoris chooses generic height as the central criterion for his writings on genre and refers to the quality of a musical setting he is essentially making value judgements presumably based on individual perception as well as historical discourse. Equally, the choices about particular sets of rules in more elaborate conceptions of genre such as Grocheio's may guide understandings of genre and influence interpretations in specific ways. For this reason, when talking about genre theories in popular music – a discipline that often incorporates very diverse understandings and uses of such categories – it is important to keep in mind the motives and reasons behind different approaches as well as the individual perceptions and multiple discourses that guide them.

While early music genre theory rarely addresses aspects of subjectivity or perceptual differences on the parts of both writers and readers, it is interesting to note that during the 17th century genre theory developed an increasing interest in the ways in which the doctrines of affect could feature in musical categorisation. As Danuser points out this approach combines previous ideas about musical categorisation with the organisation of musical works according to the emotions and listener reactions they produce. This may in turn have consequences for the functions of particular genres as well as the ways in which they are used by groups of listeners in different situations.⁸⁹ For the first time audience perceptions feature as a focal point in music genre theory and musical works are ordered according to the ways in which they affect listeners. Although the significance of subjectivity and individual perception is at this point in time often overlooked and generic categorisation based on affections alone is potentially problematic, one can detect elements of a more progressive approach to genre studies that incorporates a new attentiveness to listeners and the ways in which genre categories relate to the effects they have on audiences. Nevertheless, this increasing interest in generic perceptions did not prove to be popular

⁸⁹ Cf. Danuser, "Gattung", p. 1050.

amongst genre theorists until much later. As Jim Samson points out, a new theoretical approach to generic analysis occurred mainly during the 1960s and brought about a growing interest in the study of aesthetic experiences as opposed to the exclusive study of the nature of artworks. While many earlier theorists were adamant about the purity and immutability of generic categories, a new conception of genre developed based on the principles of fluidity and concerned with the different functions and uses of genre in discourse and reception.⁹⁰ Since genre theory changes according to the author's conception of genre it is thus important to be aware of the historical and theoretical factors that may influence his or her understanding of the term.

Jeffrey Kallberg's essay "The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin's Nocturne in G Minor" (1988) underlines the necessity for an awareness of the historicity of genre theory and different definitional approaches. Kallberg discusses the relation of Chopin's Nocturne in G Minor to the concept of classification and helpfully sums up much of the history of genre theory by stating that "generic criticism is in some ways the tale of centuries of competing claims and systems. The suggested systems range from the utterly preclusive to the all-comprehensive."⁹¹ While Kallberg addresses the importance of an awareness of the historicity of genres and its inherent characteristics, he also states that a proposed 'rhetoric of genre' needs to take account of contexts and in particular the ways in which audiences respond to different uses of genre.⁹² Kallberg argues for a wider focus within theoretical writings on genre that pays attention to "the reconstruction of contexts and traditions, and the perceptions of composers and their audiences, both historical and modern."⁹³ He further states that although certain rules can be seen as restrictions, a rejection of established genre characteristics can often promote change. This change, according to Kallberg, can also emerge from the actions of listeners who embed genre terms with new meanings based on

⁹⁰ Cf. Samson, "Genre", p. 658.

⁹¹ Jeffrey Kallberg, "The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin's Nocturne in G Minor", in: *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1988, p. 239.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 243.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

their personal readings.⁹⁴ While Kallberg's discussion is mostly concerned with the study of classical music, this knowledge can also be of particular relevance for the study of popular music as popular music audiences are often specifically engaged in genre traditions and the creation of scenes. As such they not only tend to create their own generic rules in terms of appropriate behaviours and expectations, but also tend to produce detailed genre discourses through personal and written interactions.

While popular music studies is a relatively young discipline and a theoretical study of popular music genres only developed during the early 1980s, it is interesting to note that popular music was often included in early writings about music genres (such as in Grocheio's system), where it was mostly treated as a counterpart to art or church music. This fact is interesting due to a number of reasons. Firstly, when popular music is included alongside other musical categories it is often treated as a separate field of study. Mostly, popular music and other musical categories did not mix and it was often regarded as a separate category located on the same hierarchical level as art music. While historical musical systems are not free of value judgements popular music was thus treated as an equal and independent part of each system and was mostly defined through its secular nature and purpose of entertainment. Secondly, when popular music appears within musical systems of categorisation it is necessarily included in evaluative processes concerned with musical characteristics that are based on the parameters of art or church music. Popular music was thus often judged based on analytical conditions that did not arise through the study of popular songs but from the study of different musical categories. If particular musical standards were drawn from art or church music, popular music could only be judged against these categories and not evaluated on the basis of its own characteristics. Aspects such as different use values or motivations for their composition could thus be easily overlooked. For this reason a theoretical study of popular music genres needs to consider the possible differences between various musical categories and incorporate the

⁹⁴ Cf. Kallberg, "The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin's Nocturne in G Minor", p. 244.

particularities of popular music in order to fully comprehend the diverse nature of these genres.

One of the first essays concerned with the study of popular music genres, "A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications", was written by Franco Fabbri in 1981 and argues for an interdisciplinary approach to the study of genre that combines various musical as well as sociological elements. His theory is characterised by the application of particular types of rules that serve to describe any popular music genre. Fabbri's ideas are essentially based on the assumption that these types of rules are established through social conventions and exert influence on specific groups of musical works.⁹⁵ While he does not go into detail about the ways in which these social conventions may influence music genres on a long-term basis, it is interesting to consider how the generic conventions described by his types of rules emerge. Fabbri's essay establishes music genres as constructs that are mainly shaped through social discourse. Generic conventions presumably arise from critical reception and processes of communication between different audience groups that facilitate codification. If this is the case then audience expectations and generic texts are equally shaped through social discourse and exert their own influence on this discourse. For this reason it is interesting to consider Fabbri's ideas in relation to the ways in which audience expectations and reception have been integrated into previously discussed genre theories and consider the relevance of this approach for a genre theory of popular music.

While Fabbri maintains that a genre analysis based on the application of different types of generic rules does not completely solve the problems of genre theory, he proposes that it is possible to illustrate the complexity of popular music genres by creating a matrix of generic elements derived from these rules. There is no fixed hierarchic order between these rules. However, as Fabbri is keen to point out, particular rules might be more important than others depending on the specific genre in question. This varying evaluation of rules changes from genre to genre and Fabbri argues for the existence of hyper-rules reminiscent of ideologies that determine the individual

⁹⁵ Cf. Fabbri, "A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications", p. 8.

weighting of particular rules within a genre.⁹⁶ Fabbri identifies five different types of rules: formal and technical rules, semiotic rules, behaviour rules, social and ideological rules, and economical and juridical rules, which all deserve a brief discussion. As Fabbri points out it is often the formal and technical rules that serve as a focal point in musicological studies of genre as these types of rules are mostly concerned with the structural aspects of a composition. Thus they include elements of form, melody, harmony and rhythm but also instrumentation, interpretation and performance techniques. Formal and technical rules can furthermore apply to lyrics and describe aspects such as the syntactic, metric or lexical choices made within a text.⁹⁷ In this way formal and technical rules often refer to the most obvious elements of a musical genre and consequently function as primary indicators of genre in a listening context. They are associated most clearly with particular genres and play an important role for initial genre identification.

In talking about the semiotic rules of genres, Fabbri maintains that all rules of genre are essentially semiotic due to their inherent processes of codification. However, in referring to the semiotic rules of genre Fabbri proposes a more intensive study of the narrative strategies inherent in a generic text as the object of textual semiotics. This includes the analysis of aspects such as the coding of temporal and sociological differences between genres, implications for intended audiences as well as various communicative functions (referential, emotional, imperative, phatic, metalinguistic or poetic). Furthermore, semiotic rules may refer to the context in which music occurs and can also include proxemic aspects such as the spacing of the participants in a musical event or even gestural, mimical and facial codes of performers and audiences, such as particular postures or dance styles.⁹⁸ In pointing out the importance of the narrative strategies of genres and their relation to particular aspects of codification, Fabbri illustrates the nature of different processes of communication between audiences and performers that are centred around the articulation of genre. With the help of semiotic rules one is able to draw more or less

⁹⁶ Cf. Fabbri, "A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications", p. 10.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 10 f.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 11.

specific conclusions about the articulation of genre at specific times and in different places. They are concerned with the generic coding of performances and audience actions or reactions and thus ultimately inform the ways in which genre influences the musical perception of audiences. Similar aspects concerned with the communication between musicians and audiences are addressed by the behaviour rules of genre. As Fabbri points out, these rules depend on the psychology and behaviour of musicians when faced with an audience and vice versa. In audiences, behaviour rules might for example influence the ways in which a performer's sincerity is evaluated differently. In particular these types of rules depend on different rules of conversation such as particular rituals that serve to identify exclusive circles of a genre as well as intruders.⁹⁹ In contrast to the semiotic rules of genre that describe similar acts of communicative codification, the behaviour rules of genre thus seem to be concerned with creating a certain sense of exclusiveness that depends on a knowledge about more direct forms of conversation between the participants of a genre.

In referring to the social and ideological rules of genre Fabbri discusses the ways in which an awareness of social meaning and structure as well as particular ideologies can influence the articulation and reception of genre. As Fabbri points out the knowledge of generic rules and a particular social image of genre by one of its participants is often of an ideological nature. These aspects of ideology can also serve to emphasise or conceal particular generic rules.¹⁰⁰ Considering the ideological nature of the aforementioned hyper-rules that mainly serve to create hierarchies amongst generic rules, Fabbri is keen to point out that the ideological rules discussed here mainly reflect aspects of social awareness and are based on what he describes as a "false conscience" of generic ideology.¹⁰¹ For this reason it is important to be aware of particular social aspects and ideologies commonly associated with a genre that might be informative about the behaviour and perceptions of different participants within a generic context.

⁹⁹ Cf. Fabbri, "A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications", p. 13.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 14 and 26.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 13 f.

As their title suggests the economical and juridical rules of genre mainly deal with the economical situation of genres within the music industry and often play an important role for the survival of specific genres. While every genre depends in one way or another on a system of record companies and agents, there are differences regarding the relationships between individual genres and their economical situation. Economical rules may thus determine the ways in which live performances or TV appearances are utilised differently in order to promote particular artists and records or influence aspects such as the record prices typical for a specific genre. In contrast to many other aspects of genre, the economical and juridical rules are those that are most often ideologically concealed.¹⁰² While economical factors might influence the development and transformation of a genre considerably, their impact on creative processes as well as the reception of genres is often either ignored or criticised by audiences as well as a number of genre theorists. For this reason it can be assumed that the relevance of these rules often escapes public awareness, which would call for further research by popular music scholars on the ways in which these rules are incorporated into music genres in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of these genres that accommodates their inherent complexity.¹⁰³

One can say that Fabbri's rules and their individual hierarchic dimensions allow for a thorough review of specific genres and can be useful to approach generic analysis from various angles. While Fabbri does not focus on the developmental aspects of genre such as a possible influence of audience expectations or economic strategies on creative processes, it is interesting to note that his rules often include references to acts of communication between the different agents partaking in a genre and serve to illustrate the ways in which these actions and reactions are encoded within text and context. Thus his writings serve to inform not only about the various generic characteristics that can be learned from musical analysis, but also about the particularities of generic articulation and construction throughout processes

¹⁰² Cf. Fabbri, "A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications", p. 14.

¹⁰³ Due to a lack of resources in this area and the different focus points of this study, a further investigation of these matters would exceed the purpose of this chapter.

of performance and reception. It is in particular these latter aspects as well as their presumable influence on generic development that are of considerable value for the understanding of different genre perceptions. For this reason the following analysis of Radiohead's music in terms of genre will focus on a range of generic characteristics that can be located amongst Fabbri's rules, but also take particular note of generic peculiarities within the band's music and point out how the choice of analytical focus points can emerge from studying the mediation and reception of genre.¹⁰⁴

During the years following the release of Fabbri's work the study of popular music genres seemed to play a smaller role in popular music studies and Fabbri's ideas generated relatively few successors. In his book *Performance Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (1996) Simon Frith devotes a chapter to genre in which he argues that processes of generic labelling lie at the heart of value judgements in popular music. According to Frith this is due to the ways in which genres organise processes of popular music evaluation and he points out that generic categories are essentially used in three different ways: Firstly, they organise the sales process and are utilised as a commercial tool by the music industry. Secondly, they play an important role for the organisation of playing processes and thus depend on a shared musical knowledge and experience amongst musicians. In this regard generic labels are often used as shorthand terms to describe particular sounds. Thirdly, genre labels are used to organise the listening process and serve as a way of describing the music in terms of comparative labels and related expectations. In this regard Frith emphasises the importance of genre authenticity as a necessary critical value and stresses that every musical judgement also depends on social factors and different perceptions of what people understand to be true to a certain genre.

Frith argues for the continuing relevance of Fabbri's genre rules but maintains that genres mainly work through processes of rule bending and testing. In his view the value of Fabbri's approach thus mainly lies in the articulation of the combined musical and ideological factors within the construction of genre. Frith's understanding of genre is informed by the

¹⁰⁴ This approach is applied in chapter 2.1.2. Cf. pp. 70 – 74 of this thesis.

ways in which genres are influenced by social and ideological discourse. Different readings of genres and their inherent values necessarily rely on genre rules.¹⁰⁵ For this reason Frith concludes that genres are "not determined by the form or style of a text itself but by the audience's perception of its style and meaning, defined most importantly at the moment of performance."¹⁰⁶ While this statement essentially reminds of the influence of audience expectations on generic meaning most popular in film genre theory it certainly allows for a number of interesting observations regarding possible differences and variations in audience perceptions and uses of genre. Nevertheless, it also raises problems of subjectivity amongst audiences and does not specify the degrees to which value judgements can be influenced by the generic text. Although Frith seemingly rules out a solely text-based analysis it might therefore be interesting to consider the relationship between audience perceptions and the generic text in order to achieve an insight into the conveyance of genre and processes of communication between its participants.¹⁰⁷ Since Frith also emphasises the importance of generic performance a closer look at the relationship between recorded and live music might be equally valuable and inform about the ways in which genres are articulated in different situations and contexts.¹⁰⁸

In his book *Making Popular Music: Musicians, Creativity and Institutions* (2000) Jason Toynbee devotes a chapter to the issues of genre and argues for its relevance by stating that the "constraints of genre provide a basic condition for the productive ordering of sound in music."¹⁰⁹ Toynbee pays particular attention to the problematic and elusive nature of generic constructs and points out that, if genre were to be seen as a fixed set of characteristics, eventually, no text would feature all traits associated with a specific genre. As a solution to this problem Toynbee offers a less exclusive

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music*, Oxford 1996, pp. 75 – 95.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁰⁷ This is done in chapter 2 of this thesis. While the following chapter will take a look at text-based approaches, chapters 3 and 4 will highlight methodologies based on the study of audience reception.

¹⁰⁸ A discussion of the generic implications of live contexts can be found in chapter 2. Cf. p. 116 ff. of this thesis.

¹⁰⁹ Jason Toynbee, *Making Popular Music: Musicians, Creativity and Institutions*, London 2000, p. 103.

view on genre and quotes Stephen Neale in saying that genres are "systems of orientations, expectations and conventions that circulate between industry, text and subject."¹¹⁰ As such Toynbee establishes genre as a flexible and complex construct as well as a 'social process' and elaborates by saying that "[style] will tend to be contested, becoming the subject of struggles for definition across the continuum from production to consumption."¹¹¹ In this regard Toynbee takes note of the different participant groups involved in the making and perception of genre and their combined ability to create and shape generic meaning. He concludes by highlighting what he describes as the 'paradox of genre', namely the fact that although genre cannot be described in terms of a complete and final set of characteristics or rules, genre does not exist without its rules.¹¹² As Toynbee's text thus shows, genre cannot be studied without paying attention to the ways in which it exists in relation to its user groups and it is shaped by them. At the same time, however, genre is also bound by its own traditions and previously established rules that form the basis for these interactions and in the process are transformed, re-established or discarded.

In his essay "(In Search of) Musical Meaning: Genres, Categories and Crossover" (2002) David Brackett addresses similar ways in which genres create meaning by encoding particular affective qualities as well as social characteristics. As he points out "genres may be understood as mediating the discursive web (spun between the media, consumers and industry personnel) in which musical meaning circulates and the objects to which these meanings are attached – the sonic materiality of specific performances and recordings."¹¹³ Not unlike Frith or Toynbee, Brackett thus approaches genre by highlighting its organising function and the interrelation between its different user groups. However, while social characteristics certainly play an important role in Brackett's writings, his mention of affective qualities is maybe even more interesting. In their function as a means of generic articulation within audience reception affective terms are not only able to indicate genres in a particularly apparent manner, they also often hold

¹¹⁰ Neale quoted in Toynbee, *Making Popular Music*, p. 103.

¹¹¹ Toynbee, *Making Popular Music*, p. 103

¹¹² Ibid., p. 128.

¹¹³ Brackett, "(In Search of) Musical Meaning: Genres, Categories and Crossover", p. 67.

connotations about specific ideologies associated with the genre in question. For this reason affective language is one of the main tools of genre criticism.

As Brackett points out genres need to be regarded "as a group of stylistic tendencies, codes, conventions, and expectations that become meaningful in relation to one another at a particular moment in time."¹¹⁴ With this statement he not only highlights the important interrelation between processes of generic codification and perception but also the ways in which both can be affected by time. While Frith for instance locates the meaning of genre in audience perceptions of particular performances, Brackett argues that genres are perceived and constituted differently according to their context. For this reason a piece of music can belong to several genres at the same time.¹¹⁵ In this regard one could argue that it is specifically the multiplicity of varying conceptions of genre as well as the complex relations between genres that may be responsible for the creation of meaning.

Brackett goes on to propose that there are several different levels of genre that may ultimately form a hierarchy. As he points out an unclear terminology and the use of different genre names in the charts, in radio programmes or by different audience groups often creates confusion. For this reason he emphasises the importance of what he calls supra-genres – categories such as Pop, Rhythm and Blues or Country that are used by record companies for marketing purposes. These categories mainly function as a centre for a widespread group of genres or genre terms and organise these categories in relation to the mainstream.¹¹⁶ With this in mind one can assume that generic hierarchies with their varying terminologies are often created based on particular generic functions and can thus be informative about the varying uses of genres by different user groups.

¹¹⁴ Brackett, "(In Search of) Musical Meaning: Genres, Categories and Crossover", p. 67.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ While Brackett's category of 'supra-genres' is in some ways reminiscent of Shuker's earlier discussed term 'metagenres' and refers to the same range of generic categories, it is important to note that both terms serve different purposes. Whereas 'metagenres' can be seen as a way of organising genre research and the general navigation of the genre landscape, supra-genres are linked with the actions of the music industry. Cf. Brackett, "(In Search of) Musical Meaning: Genres, Categories and Crossover", p. 68. The category 'metagenres' was further discussed on p. 10 and in footnote 18 of this thesis.

As one of the most recent works about the topic Fabian Holt's book *Popular Music Genres* (2007) gives an interesting insight into the developmental processes and working mechanisms of genre. As Holt argues all genres necessarily go through two basic processes: they are founded as well as codified and they all develop through further negotiations. Codification develops within so called 'center collectivities' – small insider communities within a larger network of genre participants – that give direction to the genre and are responsible for early processes of negotiation. In talking about the conventions that emerge during this process Holt distinguishes between codes, values and practices and thus emphasises the complexity of generic codification. Conventions accordingly describe textual as well as social elements or even particular rituals. They are negotiated and renegotiated in relation to cultural and economic circumstances as well as the user groups involved.¹¹⁷ As Holt's theories show genre predominantly develops through discursive processes. His example of 'center collectivities' illustrates that specific groups hold a certain status within a genre and are able to influence processes of codification and generic development in a more significant way than others. It can be argued that there are several levels of generic discourse that are able to influence and shape a genre in specific ways. Therefore when talking about generic hierarchies one not only needs to address the relationships between different categories within a generic system but also the varying statuses of and relationships between the different agents and user groups involved in the genre.

Holt's study is of particular relevance to this thesis as he describes a way of dealing with genre in popular music that takes account of generic border crossings and genre transformations. Holt discusses a theory of understanding music that exists in between genres and focuses on what he describes as a 'decentered concept of genre.' This idea of genre is, according to Holt, mainly subject to notions of transgression or heterogeneity. As Holt further elaborates, this 'in-between model' is structured by "continuums and plural narratives rather than dichotomies, and they embrace polymorphous

¹¹⁷ Cf. Holt, *Genre in Popular Music*, pp. 20 – 25.

semantic textures rather than distinct categories."¹¹⁸ Holt concludes that it is important to complement traditional models of genre with 'decentered' notions of genre in order to create awareness of and take into account types of music that defy simple forms of categorisation or cross generic borders. At the same time Holt's discussion also evokes notions of the space between traditional generic categories and he points out their significance for understanding diversity and transformation. He places emphasis on the ways in which music is situated in relation to genre and finally underlines the necessity for studying the connections between different musical works and across genre boundaries.¹¹⁹ Holt's study thus provides an account of genre that focuses on the issues of categorising popular music and introduces ideas that illuminate the problems of categorisation according to strict categories. The following study of genre in Radiohead's music can profit from Holt's views and will comment on complex manifestations of genre outside of existing categories. However, rather than presenting one analysis of these matters that highlights the position of music amongst genres, it will examine the benefits of studying categorisational issues by analysing parallel interpretations and exploring their comparative validity. The following chapters thus aim to study how an awareness of existing categories and conventions can affect views of crossovers and analytical processes amongst audiences in general. They will furthermore show how this knowledge can contribute to the study of popular music genres.

¹¹⁸ Holt, *Genre in Popular Music*, p. 159.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 159 f. Holt's concept of cross-generic meaning and in-between concept of genre also holds implications for a study of Radiohead's music and in particular the works following the release of *Kid A* as will be shown in the following chapters of this thesis. At the same time it is interesting to note that Holt refrains from introducing a fully developed genre theory. This fact is criticised by Fabbri in a review of Holt's book. Fabbri points out the relevance of Holt's work for understanding genre-related issues in certain types of North American music, but also holds the view that the book's title can be regarded as slightly misleading as it implies the introduction of certain genre related concepts and more theoretical explanations that Holt explicitly rejects. Cf. Franco Fabbri, Review of Fabian Holt *Genre in Popular Music*, *Popular Music*, Vol. 27, Issue 3, 2008, pp. 490 – 492. Wolfgang Marx, author of the book *Klassifikation und Gattungsbegriff in der Musikwissenschaft*, also reviews Holt's writings and points out that the concept of 'in-between genres' can be seen as Holt's most original contribution to the genre discourse. Marx emphasises that this concept needs to be treated carefully as everything that is slightly transgressive could otherwise be categorised as such. He concludes that Holt's book presents useful ideas for the study of genre and introduces helpful terminologies and methods. Cf. Wolfgang Marx, Review of Fabian Holt *Genre in Popular Music*, *Journal of the Society for Musicology in Ireland*, Vol. 4, 2008 – 2009, pp. 27 – 34.

In conclusion one can say that a theory of popular music genres requires far more than a text based analysis of musical elements or any number of contextually related characteristics. It also needs to pay attention to the ways in which genre guides the interactions between musicians, producers, the music industry and audiences, in particular critics and fans. Genre thus functions as a process of communication between the different agents involved in its making and reception. It creates meaning by mediating between specific user groups and is furthermore characterised by its varying uses. However, while genre is able to guide different forms of discourse, it is also shaped by them and thus dependent on a complex interrelation between its participants. Ultimately, genre theory thus requires a closer look at the different ways in which genre is perceived and appears in discourse and how the different levels of discourse can influence genre in turn and at particular moments in time. For this reason the following section will give an overview over the ways in which popular music genres have been discussed in different contexts and focus on the question of how they can be explained through discursive analysis.

1.3 Popular music genres in discourse

Over the last fifty years the rapidly increasing interest in genre studies also led to a new understanding of genres as multi-dimensional constructs. In academic writing this brought about a closer engagement with the social dimensions of genres including the study of audience discourses and genre reception. This growing interest in generic perceptions can be of value for the study of popular music genres as they tend to produce a large number of varied and well documented discourses. Nevertheless, the extent to which an analysis of popular music genres might take into account musical and social characteristics or genre reception is not always clear and may require some further discussion. Theories such as Fabbri's serve to illustrate the importance of each of these aspects and show how genre can be analysed according to a list of characteristics. However, as the previous sections have shown genre should not be regarded as a static construct. Accordingly, Franco Fabbri's concept of a hyper-rule illustrates that genre often involves certain ideologies and different sorts of relationships between its various

types of characteristics. Thus it seems that genre is not governed by a strict policy of rule fulfilment but rather by particular overarching concepts as well as expectations and perceptions that influence how it is constructed in different situations.

While an analysis of generic characteristics can be elemental for understanding the full scope of a genre text, theorists are keen to point out that the concept of genre mainly gains relevance due to the ways in which it creates meaning and impacts communicative relationships as well as processes of interpretation. Thus when studying genre texts one has the opportunity to observe exactly how generic meaning emerges and how it is constructed within and from a piece of music. By looking at genre discourses one can then see how audiences translate this meaning into their own conceptions of genres and interpret texts accordingly. The importance of genre becomes obvious from the way that it influences these creative and receptive processes and one can assume that a study of popular music genres would equally benefit from text-based and discourse-based methods of analysis. While this might sometimes lead to contradictory results both approaches are helpful to highlight two different yet complementary sides of generic meaning – the intended or embedded meaning originating from musicians, composers or producers as well as the perceived meaning on the side of the audience. For this reason this thesis proposes an approach to popular music genres that takes into account the ways in which genre is constructed within musical works and their contexts as well as the differences within generic perceptions that can be found in discourse. While the following chapters will focus on the integration of more traditional text-based forms of genre analysis they also aim to highlight the ways in which generic meaning is constructed within discourse. As other writers have shown, possible differences in genre reception often provide an interesting basis for discussions about the character of genres and their implications. In this sense the study of audience-based genre discourses can serve as a crucial starting point to achieve a better understanding of the ways in which genre influences expectations and interpretations.

While discourse-based approaches to genre analysis are still somewhat rare in popular music studies¹²⁰ they provide a unique way of gaining insight into the working mechanisms of genres and in particular their relationships with audiences as well as the music industry. By analysing genre discourses one can consider genres from various different angles and thus develop a better understanding of the ways in which they are used by different groups of people. Discourse analysis in general is concerned with the question of how language is used in particular situations and to what extent language and social context inform each other. Thus a study of genre discourses not only serves to highlight the different uses of genres but can also help to detect its social components and the backgrounds and individual motivations of its user groups. This way genre not only influences the contents of particular discussions but ultimately the ways in which these contents are described. Therefore the assumption can be made that genre discourses are always genre specific. They are shaped by the very thing they seek to describe and define. To show the ways in which discourse-based methods work and have been applied by popular music scholars the following paragraphs will introduce different approaches to discourse analysis and discuss theoretical works by Stephanie Taylor and Brian Paltridge as well as works concerned with the study of popular music genres by Johan Fornäs, David Hesmondhalgh, Ryan Hibbett, Chris Atton, James A. Hodgkinson, Joti Rockwell and Anna Nekola.

In her book *What is Discourse Analysis?* Stephanie Taylor points out that discourse analysis does not rely on a single approach or methodology.¹²¹ It is for this reason that it seems particularly fitting for analysing popular music genres which are characteristically varied and tend to produce diverse discourses. Taylor goes on to specify various reasons for working with discourse analysis that can be helpful to clarify what can be gained from analysing genre discourses in popular music. The most obvious reason,

¹²⁰ So far popular music studies have often refrained from addressing matters concerned with the impact of generic and general discourses. While the works discussed in the following present useful examples of how discourses can affect generic developments and discussions, it is notable that a majority of studies on popular music genre take a more text-based approach and often disregard genre reception. At the same time discourse-based studies often exclude text-based analytical approaches.

¹²¹ Cf. Stephanie Taylor, *What Is Discourse Analysis?*, London 2013, p. 1.

according to Taylor, is the fact that discourse analysis works with interesting data. As mentioned earlier when studying genre discourses in popular music one can draw on a large number of interesting sources that serve to highlight genre debates in different ways and from specific angles. Furthermore, Taylor points out the value of discourse analysis for studying social practices and interactions as well as particular cultures and identities.¹²² While the language and content of discourse serve as useful sources to examine any of these aspects, it might be important to bear in mind that genre discourses can also be helpful in highlighting different conceptions of what a popular music genre might sound like, or how the music is created and performed. Ultimately these kinds of discourses can even include debates about differing terminologies and be informative about naming processes. As this suggests genre discourses are equally valuable for gaining information about the texts and contexts of a genre. Therefore they serve as useful starting points when trying to understand how particular ideologies, audience expectations and different conceptions of genres come to be.

Considering the large number of sources available, a discourse-based study of popular music genres would benefit from the supposed multiplicity of inherent opinions and perspectives. These different accounts of genre might serve to examine the topic from various angles and in the process develop a fuller understanding of genre as a concept. For this reason the following paragraphs will focus on the ways in which one can gain information by studying genre discourses and how these discourses have been incorporated into popular music studies so far. As Taylor has pointed out most researchers analyse discourses by utilising their individually developed methodologies.¹²³ Therefore it will be of particular interest to see how discourse analysis is applied in various studies of popular music genres and consider the ways in which these differing approaches can be useful.

While most of the literature on popular music genres discussed in chapter 1.2.3 features interdisciplinary methods and focuses on the different

¹²² Cf. Taylor, *What Is Discourse Analysis?*, p. 53 – 58.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

functions and uses of genre it often does not go into detail about the ways in which this information can be obtained. Although a general account about the discursive study of popular music genres remains yet to be written, the growing number of academic essays dealing with audience discourses on particular genres can provide a first overview of appropriate methodologies. A discussion of several examples serves to illustrate how discourses can be used in the context of genre analysis and to what extent they inform genre debates. In his essay "The Future of Rock: Discourses that Struggle to Define a Genre" (1995) Johan Fornäs brings up a number of interesting points that can be used to develop ideas towards a more general approach to a discourse-based genre analysis. Focusing on hypothetical future developments rather than present instances of genre Fornäs describes how ongoing definitional debates amongst audiences lead to the construction of rock as an "open and unfinished category."¹²⁴ He goes on to point out that the genre's future development depends on the ways in which its meaning is negotiated within various discourses and concludes by saying that active discursive action ensures the creative lives of genres.¹²⁵

Fornäs makes use of genre discourses in order to explain how interpretative struggles and conflicts of opinion might enable creative processes by maintaining areas of tension between the different agents involved within the making and development of a particular genre. Notably he emphasises the defining role of genre discourses by saying that it is mostly definitional debates that characterise genres. By contrast he holds the opinion that once a genre can be unambiguously defined, it will be dead.¹²⁶ In this context discourses present a place for genres to form and evolve. Additionally Fornäs utilises genre discourses to describe the different uses to which genres are put by audiences. He highlights a number of smaller audience discourses such as discussions about identity, individuality, alternative ideals or authenticity and emphasises that different uses of genre are subject to aspects such as social transformations or political developments. Based on these observations it can thus be said that genre discourses always

¹²⁴ Johan Fornäs, "The Future of Rock: Discourses that Struggle to Define a Genre", in: *Popular Music*, Vol. 14.1, 1995, p. 113.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 118 ff.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

include a varying number of smaller discourses that mostly reflect notions of identity as discussed by Taylor. These 'sub-discourses' can be helpful in establishing a certain sense of structure within the larger discursive framework and it can be assumed that the number and topics of smaller discourses varies from genre to genre, which might serve as an interesting angle for discursive analysis.¹²⁷

A closer look at two studies of 'indie' concerned with specific discourses within the genre can help to illustrate how these discourses are constructed and structured. David Hesmondhalgh's essay "Indie: The Institutional Politics and Aesthetics of a Popular Music Genre" (1999) provides a useful model for incorporating subordinate genre discourses into a study of a specific genre by describing a number of common and less common indie discourses – 'burn-out' and 'sell-out' as well as 'classicist' and 'aestheticist'¹²⁸ – and regarding them critically in order to develop a clearer picture of the ways in which particular areas of the genre evolved over time. This critical perspective is helpful for making use of discourses in an effective manner while at the same time staying aware of their limitations and complex nature. As Hesmondhalgh's study of indie shows, discourses are subjective constructs that are governed by individual as well as collective ideologies and subjectivities in general. Thus they can be informative about particular genre ideologies but they are also constrained by them. In his book "Discourse Analysis" Brian Paltridge states that the critical approach to discourse analysis is mostly concerned with the use of discourses in relation to their individual social contexts. Critical discourse analysis focuses on aspects such as the construction of social and political issues in a text, the negotiation of power relations, the reflection of social relations and the influence and construction of ideologies.¹²⁹ Paltridge elaborates on the value and uses of critical discourse analysis and goes on to formulate what can serve as a useful methodology for interpretation:

¹²⁷ Since the following discussion of Radiohead's oeuvre focuses on the work of a single band rather than one specific genre, it will not focus on these issues. However, the concept of generic discourses and discursive levels also calls for further research, which could be very beneficial for the study of popular music genres. Cf. p. 250 of this thesis.

¹²⁸ Cf. David Hesmondhalgh, "Indie: The Institutional Politics and Aesthetics of a Popular Music Genre", in: *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 13.1, 1999, p. 36.

¹²⁹ Cf. Brian Paltridge, *Discourse Analysis: An Introduction*, London 2006, p. 178 f.

Critical Discourse analysis explores the connections between the use of language and the social and political contexts in which it occurs. It explores issues such as gender, ethnicity, cultural difference, ideology and identity and how these are both constructed and reflected in texts. It also investigates ways in which language constructs and is constructed by social relationships. A critical analysis may include a detailed textual analysis and move from there to an explanation and interpretation of the analysis. It might proceed from there to deconstruct and challenge the text/s being examined. This may include tracing underlying ideologies from the linguistic features of a text, unpacking particular biases and ideological presuppositions underlying the text, and relating the text to other texts and to people's experiences and beliefs.¹³⁰

In this regard critical discourse analysis not only considers the information that can be gained from studying various forms of discourses but also pays attention to the ways in which these discourses came to be and how they are constructed and situated within their specific contexts. It focuses on the ways in which particular topics appear within discourse and for which reasons, and examines the motivations that inform particular texts. Therefore critical discourse analysis not only looks at the arguments and interpretations of particular groups of texts but can also be informative about the different uses of specific discourses and by extension their user groups as well as their individual functions. When focusing on genre discourses in popular music one can thus gain information about the ways in which certain debates emerged and how they are influenced by genre specific social and cultural contexts. Accordingly it can be assumed that genre discourses in popular music are conditioned by the genre in question and are thus genre-specific. When studying them one can not only gain information about particular genre texts and contexts but also about the ways in which these are constructed and reflected generically within discourse based on motivations that are equally genre-specific.

In his essay "What is Indie Rock?" (2006) Ryan Hibbett provides another interesting insight into the genre by pondering the question to what extent indie functions as a social discourse. Interestingly, Hibbett's use of genre discourse is slightly different from the positions expressed in Hesmondhalgh's writings. This difference can mostly be detected in the ways in which both authors use the term 'discourse.' While Hesmondhalgh considers different reception-based discourses of the genre in order to explain its particular characteristics, Hibbett proposes the idea of indie as a

¹³⁰ Paltridge, *Discourse Analysis*, p. 179.

discourse in itself. In order to explain how identity is established through this discourse Hibbett focuses on the negotiation of generic meaning in an article on the website 'soyouwanna.com' that gives instructions on how to "Fake Being an Indie Rock Expert."¹³¹ The article not only includes instructions about listening to particular kinds of music but also focuses on rules of behaviour, dress and conversation.¹³² In this sense what Hibbett describes as social discourse not only takes place on a verbal level in writing or speech but also includes specific actions or gestures and the ways in which they are developed. Indie as a social discourse thus primarily focuses on the ways in which the genre is defined through the construction and articulation of particular genre markers and discursive features.

Hibbett's and Hesmondhalgh's positions intersect in so far that they both focus on the definitional struggle about genre within discursive action. However, while Hesmondhalgh focuses on several at times opposing discourses, Hibbett develops his ideas based on a central discourse which he describes as inherent to the genre. Although both approaches feature similar premises and are helpful in developing a better understanding of the role of discursive negotiation for the construction of meaning within a genre, they seem to have different focus points. While Hesmondhalgh regards discourses as central agents within the genre's development, Hibbett maintains a similar position but at the same time establishes a central genre discourse which in some ways could be seen as the true essence of the genre. Following this logic it can be assumed that genres are not only described through particular discourses but that these discourses can also be regarded as inherent in the genre to varying degrees and are ultimately subject to varying perceptions. In this sense genre discourses not only fulfil a communicational function but also work as methods of individual expression. Nevertheless what can be gained by studying indie as a social discourse is presumably close to if maybe not as comprehensive as the information one can obtain from a critical discourse analysis of different generic sub-discourses. For this reason a critical study of a number of

¹³¹ Cf. Ryan Hibbett, "What Is Indie Rock?", in: *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 28.1, 2006, p. 69.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 70 f.

discourses as well as their positioning within a larger generic framework might be helpful in achieving a wider knowledge about the construction of genre discourses as well as the information they can provide.

As interesting and insightful as Hesmondhalgh's and Hibbett's studies of indie as a genre might be they mostly present ways of using specific discourses in the context of genre analysis and thus do not provide detailed methodologies for working with a wider range of different discussions. For this reason Chris Atton's writings on audience discourses on popular music genres can serve as a valuable source to show how particular genres are constructed through various and at times contradicting discourses that are equally shaped by the genre in question. In his essay "'Living in the Past?': Value Discourses in Progressive Rock Fanzines" (2001) Atton examines the role of musical value discourses – as discussed by Simon Frith in his book *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* – in non-professional publications about progressive rock. His analysis shows how progressive rock as a genre can be described through the interactions and overlaps between these discourses and characterised according to the particular ways in which it is valued.¹³³ Since he focuses on discursive action that takes place roughly twenty years after the genre in question reached its peak his study serves to illustrate the impact that time can have on judgments about genre. By discussing a number of different publications from the 1970s as well as the 1990s Atton elaborates on the different ways in which generic meaning and value are constructed at particular points in time.

Considering Atton's discussion of the ways in which new discourses serve to revive and transform progressive rock it becomes obvious that time can impact the uses and functions of genre discourses significantly. A certain awareness of the temporal displacement between the most active stages of a genre and particular discourses that take place in its wake can provide useful insights into the construction of genre discourses and the ways in which they are shaped by their participants. Different audience groups with varying sets of experiences or degrees of familiarity with a genre will

¹³³ Cf. Chris Atton, "'Living in the Past?': Value Discourses in Progressive Rock Fanzines", in: *Popular Music*, Vol. 20.1, 2001, pp. 30 and 33f.

experience the genre in very different ways and discuss it in relation to these experiences. Younger audiences that experience a genre retrospectively might for example have access to a wider catalogue of music and possibly a particular range of secondary literature concerned with the genre that could influence their judgement. At the same time discourses that took place during the genre's earlier stages can sometimes draw on a more active involvement of the author or his or her experience of early live performances. As these examples show discourses are rather unstable constructs that are highly dependent on the people involved in their creation. They are able to reflect social transformations within a genre as well as the impact of its temporal context and most importantly serve to sustain generic development. While discursive action fulfils a vital role for the development of a genre this also requires a certain sense of development within the discourse itself. Accordingly discourses might be influenced and effectively transformed by new generic developments and effectively inspire new generic transformations. For this reason it can be said that genres and their discourses evolve simultaneously and are mutually influential.

In his essay "Fan Discourse and the Construction of Noise Music as a Genre" (2011) Atton elaborates on the ways in which genres can be understood from studying discourses and their properties. Atton explains generic construction as a process of discursive negotiation that is less concerned with the "retrospective classification of music" but focuses on the ways in which "music becomes understood according to ideological, economic, cultural, and social interest."¹³⁴ In his evaluation of different fan discourses he draws on a number of publications including websites, fanzines as well as semi-professional magazines and deduces several discourses that seek to make sense of noise in different ways. The debates discussed by Atton include discourses about noise as a type of music that lies beyond the limits of expression, noise as an anti-genre as well as noise as a genre. Atton utilises these discourses in order to answer the question how listeners make sense of genre. Quoting from discussions in several publications Atton describes the distinctive style of noise discourses which

¹³⁴ Chris Atton, "Fan Discourse and the Construction of Noise Music as a Genre", in: *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, Vol. 23.3, 2011, p. 327.

reveal particular kinds of listening practices as well as genre-specific styles of writing.¹³⁵ He concludes by highlighting the social significance of the genre that becomes clear from studying multiple discourses and states that

[n]oise music can be approached as a set of "open texts" through which listeners may project their own identities, experiences, histories, and ideologies upon a text. [...] Such an interpretation places the discursive practices of fans at the center of the construction of noise music as a genre.¹³⁶

In this regard genre discourse functions as a site for social meaning that is shaped by the subjective articulation of audience opinions. Atton shows how different discourses can be used to achieve a better understanding of the ways in which audiences influence the construction and development of a genre by engaging in ongoing interpretative debates. At the same time he also pays attention to the impact the music has on audiences and discourses. In this regard his work helpfully illustrates a methodology that incorporates the mutual influences of genre texts and their corresponding discourses and shows how both play into the construction of a genre and can be used collectively in order to gain insight into its perceived characteristics and complexities including its social implications.¹³⁷

During the last twenty years the development of larger online communities concerned with the discussion of popular music also led to more widespread and fast-paced debates about genre driven by a mixture of diverse opinions.¹³⁸ As Joti Rockwell's essay "What is Bluegrass Anyway? Category Formation, Debate and the Framing of Musical Genre" (2012) shows, 'center collectivities' as discussed by Holt that develop online – in this case in the form of a mailing list – often benefit from a diverse range of

¹³⁵ Atton, "Fan Discourse and the Construction of Noise Music as a Genre", p. 336.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 339.

¹³⁷ Atton's approach to studying genre discourses also holds great relevance for further discussions of discourses on genre in Radiohead's music. In a similar way to Atton's analysis, chapter 3 and 4 of this thesis will be based on the analysis of existing audience discourses and explore how genre is constructed and used within these texts. However, while Atton's writings are mainly concerned with the role of discourses in shaping and reflecting on genre, the following study aims to examine the functions of genre within discourse as well as the values of a combined discursive and text-based analysis for a study of genres.

¹³⁸ This development is of particular relevance for the research methods that inform chapter 4 of this thesis, dealing with online audience discourses. Chapter 4.1.1 in particular deals with the conditions of the online discourse and addresses the impact of intersecting audience groups resulting in a variety of opinions. Cf. p. 213 ff. of this thesis.

participants and allow for a faster and thus more active as well as interactive debate. In his discussion of competing bluegrass definitions Rockwell outlines two popular positions that seemingly dominate the genre discourse. Based on the work of Lawrence Zbikowski, Rockwell discusses the differences between classical genre categories in which all examples equally confirm to a fixed list of conditions and prototype-based categories in which different examples represent the genre to varying degrees.¹³⁹ As Rockwell points out bluegrass is often and in his opinion falsely constructed as a classical category. However, these supposed misconstructions can be beneficial to the genre as they serve to sustain the definitional debate.¹⁴⁰ As this example shows conflicting opinions within genre discourses can play an essential role for the ongoing negotiation of generic meaning that propels generic development. For this reason online discourses with their large number of participants can provide a unique insight into the definitional struggles over genre and be informative about the dominant positions within the debate.¹⁴¹

While Rockwell's text serves as a helpful example to illustrate how 'center collectivities' appear within discourse and essentially shape the genre debate, James A. Hodgkinson's essay "The Fanzine Discourse over Post-Rock" proposes that whole scenes can be constructed and take place within a wider genre discourse. Despite the fact that popular music genres often emerge in particular places where scenes are formed that are then regarded as representative for the genre, Hodgkinson argues that post-rock questions the very idea of a scene. Although there are manifestations of local post-rock scenes in different places, he points out that a wider post-rock scene is essentially trans-local and takes place on a virtual level through media discourses. In the face of this subcultural displacement debates based on a shared language and knowledge serve to create a genre community that finds expression within a wider network of fanzines which give direction to

¹³⁹ Cf. Joti Rockwell, "What Is Bluegrass Anyway? Category Formation, Debate and the Framing of Musical Genre", in: *Popular Music*, Vol. 31.3, 2012, p. 372 f.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ The values of analysing online genre discourses will be discussed in chapter 4. Cf. p. 213 ff. of this thesis.

the genre.¹⁴² In this sense genre discourse takes on a very important role as the main means of communication between separate groups of audiences that are placed within a shared generic context. As this example shows, genre discourse often acts as an essentially social space that counteracts generic dispersion and disintegration. By providing a platform for social interaction genre discourse serves as a secure space in which generic meaning is negotiated and thus functions as a powerful catalyst for the formation and conditioning of genre scenes.

As the previous examples have shown genre discourse plays a vital role for the creation of generic meaning as well as the organisation of genre communities. However, the longevity of genre debates often depends on ongoing definitional struggles between the different parties involved and is thus subject to differences in audience positions. In her essay "'More Than Just a Music': Conservative Christian Anti-Rock Discourse and the U.S. Culture Wars" (2013) Anna Nekola discusses the negative construction of rock music in religiously informed discourses and argues that these debates can be used to illuminate the development of particular cultural and political situations.¹⁴³ As Nekola's argument shows, positions and opinions within genre discourse not always reflect mainstream opinions but can vary substantially. Aspects such as different religious, cultural and political backgrounds can influence discussions and definitions in so far that a genre might be constructed in various and at times contradicting ways. At the same time Nekola argues that these positions can influence and are influenced by developments that lie outside of the genre realm, which essentially indicates a linking between genre worlds and different processes taking place within a wider cultural and political field. Therefore it appears that genre discourse is as much influenced by its time as it is by its audiences. At the same time it also has the power to transform opinions and influence particular developments within society.

¹⁴² Cf. James A. Hodgkinson, "The Fanzine Discourse over Post-Rock", in: Richard A. Peterson (ed.), *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual*, Nashville 2004, pp. 222 – 225.

¹⁴³ Cf. Anna Nekola, "'More Than Just a Music': Conservative Christian Anti-Rock Discourse and the U.S. Culture Wars", in: *Popular Music*, Vol. 32.3, 2013, p. 408 f.

In conclusion it can be said that a discourse based analysis of popular music genres is beneficial due to a number of reasons. As the previous discussions have shown one genre can spawn a number of different discourses that are at times highly contradicting. However, these debates often serve to highlight the flexibility of generic categories and ensure the ongoing negotiation of generic meaning that can be seen as a necessary condition for the development of a genre. Discourse analysis often provides an insight into the social dimensions of a genre and can thus serve as an interesting starting point in exploring the roles different audience groups play for the construction of a genre. As such it also emphasises the subjectivity inherent in all genre definitions and provides a useful way of dealing with different perceptions. Furthermore, a discussion of genre discourses is essential for creating an overview over the different debates that inform generic development and in particular competing ideologies or identities that influence genre reception greatly. Since genre discourse serves as a means of communication that involves most participants of the genre it can provide a comprehensive number of different interpretations that contain information about the above mentioned aspects. Finally, an analysis of genre discourses can serve as a vital starting point for explaining the ways in which genres develop and transform over time. For these reasons discourse analysis should be regarded as a helpful method that can be used in accordance with more text-based approaches to explore the working mechanisms of popular music genres and the conditions under which they are shaped and understood over time.

2. Radiohead and the Concept of Stylistic Diversity

2.1 Approaches towards a text-based analysis of genre

The significance of individual generic perceptions often only becomes apparent and can be evaluated when one is aware of the larger stylistic elements and developments that are indicated by a musical text. Without these textual or contextual points of reference it would be impossible to judge whether genres are constructed comprehensibly and justly within discourse. In order to decide which discursive sources should be considered for the purpose of genre analysis, it is necessary to make judgements about the importance of these discourses by looking at the texts they describe. A study of genre discourses easily stands and falls with the quality of the sources included as well as the scholar's knowledge about the stylistic features of the genre text in question which necessarily serves as a basis for all further discursive interpretations. For this reason a study of textual matters presents a crucial prerequisite for the understanding of discourses and the ways in which they construct individual genres.¹⁴⁴ The following chapter will present ideas for a text-based approach to genre analysis based on the theoretical literature discussed in chapter 1. It further aims to show how the concept of genre and stylistic diversity in Radiohead's music can be understood and discussed with the help of this outlined methodology.

2.1.1 Methodological backgrounds

During the years since their formation Radiohead's music has become the subject of a wide range of diverse genre discourses that were shaped by audiences, journalists and the music industry alike. Looking at the various

¹⁴⁴ As the previous examples of discursive genre analysis in chapter 1.3 have shown (i.e. Atton or Hesmondhalgh), a focus on discursive methods can often be useful to comprehend how genres emerge through audience negotiations. While the writers predominantly focus on the ways in which genres are constructed within discourse, they often do not go into much detail about the textual construction of genre. By contrast most genre analyses tend to focus on the social and contextual developments of respective genres and seek to illuminate the ways in which genre audiences communicate and engage. Here one can argue, that most of the discussed texts would benefit from analytical work concerned with text-based analysis as it would allow for a more precise selection of genre discourses and can serve to clarify the selection of specific discourses for analysis.

accounts and discussions available one is confronted with different opinions that often use varying approaches to make sense of generic meaning and stylistic elements in Radiohead's music. While debates have often tended to focus on the band's stylistic hybridity or their positioning within particular genre canons it is the sheer number of diverse interpretations that serves to underline the importance of genre as a significant feature within Radiohead's work. However, individual takes on genre in the band's oeuvre often present opposing ideas and thus contribute towards a sense of indefinability or generic elusiveness which in the absence of textual reference points can ultimately lead to confusion. Creating an overview of recurring stylistic elements within Radiohead's music – or any particular oeuvre for that matter – is thus essential for the understanding of individual discourses that are based on the music in question. The following paragraphs will take a closer look at the music of Radiohead and concentrate on stylistic¹⁴⁵ constants and developments in order to achieve a better understanding of what defines the band's music and to gain a basic knowledge about its textual and contextual characteristics that might ultimately influence genre discourses.

While all genre discourses dealing with Radiohead's music are essentially based on the same genre text, they often utilise it in very different ways to form their individualised opinions. Accordingly the same text can be understood in many ways depending on a range of varied listening circumstances as well as personal factors and it is the responsibility of the analyst to consider to what extent his or her discursive sources might be affected by these subjectivities. In this regard the issue of immediacy can

¹⁴⁵ In the context of this chapter the term 'stylistic' is used in line with earlier discussed definitions by Moore. 'Style' here refers to the technical features of a genre but regards these without placing them within a social context. In the context of this thesis this definition of 'style' could also be taken slightly further, referring solely to the work of one band amidst a variety of generic appellations. The following analysis will focus on musical and contextual features within Radiohead's oeuvre without paying specific attention to their positioning within wider contexts. It is based on the factor of immediacy and for this reason the selection of analytical criteria is necessarily dependent on the analysed music and conditions of listening. It is therefore less rigid or comprehensive (but also more flexible and adaptable) than more traditional analyses of style as can for example be seen in the work of Jan La Rue. Cf. Jan La Rue, "Rubrics of Style Analysis (1):_The Music Itself", adapted from: La Rue, Jan, *A Comprehensive Outline of Basic Principles for the Analysis of Musical Style*, New York 1970, <http://www.ccarh.org/courses/254/files/styleAnalysis-LaRue.pdf>.

play a particularly important role for the ways in which the music is discussed and interpreted. While audiences in general might take longer to build their opinion of a piece of music by listening to it repeatedly, the music press often works under temporal constraints and it can be assumed that most listeners develop particular listening skills and methods of interpretation that are based on these premises. Having to pass judgement on various pieces of music within a limited timeframe, it seems logical that many journalists would listen for the most distinctive musical elements and utilise generic categories to position their elaborations within a wider context.¹⁴⁶ Similarly it can be useful to consider the impact of very distinctive and immediate generic elements on audiences in general as it is often first impressions that influence perceptions of music to varying degrees.¹⁴⁷ Consequently, an analysis of textual genre characteristics that precedes a study of genre discourses needs to take these circumstances into consideration and incorporate a similar methodology. It will benefit from considering the most immediate aspects within a genre text in order to create a basis of musical characteristics that are likely to be noticed by people with different amounts of musical training within a limited time span. For this reason it is important to comprehend how individual first impressions of genre texts are formed and to consider which aspects they mostly rely on.

To develop a new approach for the textual study of music genres a look at similar methodologies in other disciplines can yet again be helpful. As the previous chapter has shown film genre studies often incorporate elements of the iconographic analysis as a premise for more specialised accounts of

¹⁴⁶ As the entry on "Popular Music Criticism" in the *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World* notes, journalistic practices often vary significantly: "The aesthetic standards of rock criticism are eclectic and allow for a vast range of critical positions." It is therefore interesting to note that often music journalists emphasise that an understanding of rock music is context-dependent. While the critical tools and methods of journalists thus vary depending on personal backgrounds, it is important to bear in mind that individual perceptions of analytical focus points can therefore also differ. Cf. Gestur Gudmundsson, Ulf Lindberg et al., "Popular Music Criticism", in: John Shepherd (ed.), *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World*, Vol. 1, London 2003, p. 307.

¹⁴⁷ These first impressions are presumably also affected by audience expectations, which – as Neale notes – can have a considerable impact on the perception of genre. Cf. p. 7 of this thesis.

genre related matters.¹⁴⁸ Due to its immediate nature the description of visual elements is used to position a film or a scene within a wider and more well-known context established through convention which either makes the genre text in question more palpable to the reader or serves to underline its peculiarities. Within film genre analysis the description of iconographic elements often functions as an introduction to a more complex research question and also establishes a basis of textual characteristics that may serve – together with the larger narratives of a film – as points of reference for any further elaborations including aspects such as the development, success or wider reception of a genre. This methodology which has been used in film genre studies over the last fifty years also illustrates that an awareness of the immediate textual characteristics of any genre text can often present an important starting point for establishing a deeper understanding of genres and complex genre texts. As such the iconographic elements of a film need to be regarded as a group of characteristics that can have a crucial impact on genre reception as they often affect the viewer's initial perception of a genre and determine the ways in which this first impression of a film is later on adapted within the context of interpretation. Thus it is the immediacy of initial responses that often determines how genre continues to be regarded in the long run and that has the power to influence interpretational processes considerably.

While the outlined methodology displays clear benefits for the study of film genres and a similar approach would certainly aid the study of genre in other disciplines, the visual focus of the iconographic analysis makes it necessary to adapt its specific principles into a more general method for exploring all

¹⁴⁸ Through my participation in the undergraduate module "Film Genres" (part of the course 'Film Studies' at Oxford Brookes University) during spring term 2014, I had the chance to observe this analytical approach in practice: As a first means of analysing film genre students often referred to iconographic methods and discussed film trailers and posters by pointing out their individual genre signifiers. This method was also introduced by the course tutor through a consistent use of film posters and related analytical methods in PowerPoint presentations. Similarly, academic studies of film genres often apply this method or incorporate the analysis of visual elements in some form. This can for instance be seen in essays by Daniel Martin and Jamie Sexton that not only discuss the horror genre and its characteristics, but also reflect on film journalism and its analytical strategies. Cf. Daniel Martin, "Japan's 'Blair Witch': Restraint, Maturity, and Generic Canons in the British Critical Reception of 'Ring'", in: *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 48, No. 3, 2009, pp. 35 – 51. And: Jamie Sexton, "US 'Indie Horror': Critical Reception, Genre Construction, and Suspect Hybridity", in: *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 2, 2012, pp. 67 – 81.

kinds of genre texts. In order to utilise a similar approach within a musical context it is thus necessary to shift the analytical focus away from the visual nature of the method and towards the actual character of the aspects it is intended to highlight. In this context the word 'immediacy' is key as it is often the most basic and immediate elements of a genre text that affect first impressions of a genre and provide the foundation for numerous interpretations and genre discourses. Decisions about the affiliation of a particular song with a genre often occur within the early moments of listening and accordingly it would be the most striking and memorable elements of a piece of music that are responsible for individual interpretations. Consequently, a text based genre analysis would start by taking account of the most easily discernible features of the genre text in question under consideration of the possible divergences and discrepancies of the implied audiences. Considering the visual nature of film genres it is again important to emphasise that by adopting the iconographic concept within a musical context one does not necessarily need to incorporate the visual principles of this method but might instead make use of the general approach by exploring a group of characteristics that can commonly be regarded as more or less immediate indicators of genre.

As mentioned in chapter 1 a musical text can include a number of striking genre elements that will often fulfil a similar signifying role to that of the iconographic elements of film genres.¹⁴⁹ Accordingly it can be said that stylistic elements which are immediately noticeable are often highly indicative of genre and maybe even more of genre reception. The following paragraphs will thus develop an analytical approach that focuses on the study of these genre signifiers within a popular music context by looking at genre indicative elements in the music of Radiohead. This methodology will not only incorporate iconographic principles but also the idea that the perception of *popular* music genres is dependent on individual listening circumstances as well as spontaneous and individual reactions to a number of striking stylistic elements. As follows from this approach it is important to keep in mind that the listener's first impression of a musical text is to a

¹⁴⁹ Cf. p. 26 f. of this thesis.

great extent responsible for his or her eventual perception of genre within the text. While an initial evaluation of genre occurs within the early listening stages and is spontaneous in nature it can have a considerable impact on any further interpretations and ultimately determines the ways in which the meaning of genre evolves within discourse.

2.1.2 The iconographic approach

In order to apply iconographic principles in the context of popular music analysis, it is crucial to decide which aspects of a musical text can be heard as the most striking within a listening context. The selection of such characteristics is necessarily subjective and their interpretation might change according to listening circumstances, personal backgrounds or the attentiveness and interest of the listener.¹⁵⁰ Describing the concept of listening Roy Shuker elaborates:

Listening to particular musical styles requires distinct cultural capital, including, but not limited to, a knowledge of the sonic codes and conventions of the genre and the previous work of the performer and similar artists.¹⁵¹

As follows from this argument the process of listening to music, and in particular different genres, is highly individualised and dependent on previous knowledge and the engagement with the music in question. Any consequent reactions or interpretations are thus inevitably coloured by these conditions and may be based on different aspects of the genre text. With this in mind it becomes clear that any analysis of immediate genre signifiers needs to be decidedly careful in the selection of aspects that will be covered and that are of importance in the context of the genre or individual style. In choosing the allegedly most noticeable characteristics for the textual analysis the analyst thus also needs to consider the wide disparities between listeners and their individual circumstances and make decisions that are reconcilable with the inferred perceptions of the majority. Contrary to film genres which often feature a range of genre-indicative visuals, the task of choosing aspects that should be considered as genre indicators within a popular music context is thus rather complex. While popular music genres

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Shuker, *Popular Music Culture*, p. 199.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

might include visuals amongst its contextual features and also a range of musical genre signifiers, their immediate genre indicators are less standardised and fall amongst a wide range of elements that might fulfil a similar function to that of visuals to different people. Accordingly the analysis of these elements might facilitate a larger number of interpretations and it is important to stay aware of the fact that they could all be of relevance for different discourses.¹⁵²

In order to prepare one elementary text-based interpretation that will be useful for later elaborations regarding the use of genre in discourse it thus becomes even more important to draw up a list of elements that complies with a majority of listening experiences. For this reason the following analysis will concentrate on a group of musical and to a certain degree contextual aspects that can be seen as major points of interest for listeners – judging from the way they frequently serve as focus points within journalistic evaluations and wider audience discussions¹⁵³ – and that can be regarded as crucial for forming the character of a musical oeuvre by creating a certain atmosphere and personality within and from the music. Taking a closer look at the individually chosen aspects will serve to make these claims clearer: As David Hesmondhalgh points out listeners with little background in music theory mainly tend to discuss music in terms of its expressiveness¹⁵⁴ and it is this mode of description that is often adapted by music journalists in order to portray the music in more relatable terms in particular if a piece of music is difficult to describe or unusual. The writing styles of popular music journalists can often be characterised by their use of stylistic devices and generic allusions, while interesting aspects within the music are frequently explained in terms of their impact on the general mood and atmosphere. In his review article "Radiohead's *Kid A*: Revolution In The Head" (*Uncut*, November 2000) Simon Reynolds' writing style reflects

¹⁵² As noted in chapter 1, analytical aspects for this approach to a text-based study of genre can often still be located amongst Fabbri's genre rules. Cf. p. 40 of this thesis.

¹⁵³ Examples of these audience debates can be found in chapter 3 and 4 of this thesis, but were also viewed during the initial research process.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. David Hesmondhalgh, "Audiences and Everyday Aesthetics: Talking about Good and Bad Music", in: *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 2007, p. 517.

this principle and he describes the album in a way that is partly factual and partly affective:

On 'Everything In Its Right Place', the lead vocal is just one strand in a shimmering tapestry of multi-tracked and treated Thom Yorke voice-goo, whose pulse-riffs and rippling patterns simultaneously recall Robert Wyatt's *Rock Bottom* and contemporary *avant*-electronica outfits like Curd Duca. On 'Kid A', a drastically processed and illegible Yorke vocal nestles amid a honeycomb of tweeting'n'cooing space-critters and enchanting music-box critters – again, the track would be right at home in the world of "glitch techno" labels like Mille Plateaux or Mega. The jackknifing two-step beat that powers 'Idioteque' explicitly nods towards contemporary dance, but leeches the joy out *a la* PiL's 'Memories' or Joy Division's 'She's Lost Control' – call it Death Garage. At the opposite extreme, the beat-less 'Treefingers' – a miasma of glistening vapours and twinkling haze – could be an eerie dronscape from Aphex Twin's *Selected Ambient Works Vol II* or Eno's *On Land*.¹⁵⁵

As the excerpt shows, Reynolds picks single striking aspects of the songs which he describes with the help of a language that utilises a vast amount of metaphors, comparisons and occasionally onomatopoeic adjectives that often evoke a particular atmosphere associable with the music and generate expectations within readers. Reynolds' frequent use of stylistic allusions often paired with comparisons to associated artists is particularly notable and serves to create a web of generic references that contribute towards the stylistic positioning of the album. Thus, while Reynolds' style of writing cannot be regarded as representative for music journalism as a whole, and other journalists might indeed prefer a more plain language, the above quoted passage usefully illustrates how journalistic language can operate to create the sense of expressiveness mentioned above while describing distinct musical characteristics with the help of generic terms and associated artists.¹⁵⁶

Keeping in mind the alleged predominance of musical expressivity in everyday audience discussions it is also important to consider how this aspect can function in relation to the concept of immediacy within the context of genre interpretation. Based on the assumption that generic

¹⁵⁵ Simon Reynolds, "Radiohead's *Kid A*: Revolution in the Head", *Uncut*, November 2000. While this excerpt from Reynolds' writings was included here in order to show how journalistic language can function in the context of genre analysis, the quotation will return during later discussions of journalistic genre discourse as it also presents a striking example of journalistic genre appellation. Cf. p. 185 of this thesis.

¹⁵⁶ At the same time Reynolds' words also illustrate the journalistic tendency to create and name genres, a theme that frequently appears in music criticism and will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter 3. Cf. p. 124 ff. of this thesis.

evaluations often occur within the early moments of listening and are dependent on individual circumstances, the textual analysis not only needs to take account of musical features that inform genre characterisations within discourse but should also consider the mentioned conditions and choose its focus points accordingly. Before attempting a text-based genre analysis within a popular music context it is therefore important to consider a number of external factors that might influence interpretations to varying degrees. Firstly, audience perceptions are informed by the immediacy of individual listening processes as well as general temporal constraints. For this reason the text-based analytical approach should ideally pay attention to a number of textual aspects that are particularly striking and that become apparent within the earlier moments of listening. While the choice of such characteristics is subjective it is, secondly, important to consider aspects that contribute towards the expressiveness of a piece of music and that are consequently often favoured within wider audience discussions and journalistic reviews. As the quoted passage from Simon Reynolds' article on *Kid A* shows, this can be aspects such as vocals, rhythm or production. However, even this choice of characteristics seems rather selective and a closer look at a musical example and its evaluation within the media can be helpful to show how the proposed concept of immediacy might work in practice.

Before commencing with this case study it is important to emphasise that the chosen characteristics should ideally be describable in non-technical terms as they emerge from largely diverse audiences and are consequently accessible for people with different musical backgrounds. This is not to say that more complex principles of musical analysis cannot be considered within the described context and a selection of immediate criteria will always depend on generic contexts and the positioning of artists within these genres. Nevertheless, the following paragraphs aim to show that a textual genre analysis – which precedes the discursive analysis of journalistic sources – is largely dependent on first impressions and interpretations. Consequently, the generic evaluation of a musical text can be as much influenced by perceived affective qualities as it might be by technical specificities depending on the listener's musical background and

knowledge. One can assume that immediate genre perceptions are thus influenced by spontaneous reactions to striking musical aspects that can be discussed in terms of their expressiveness. Meanwhile, deeper compositional structures and features might only become apparent through repeated focused listening. While they can affect immediate reactions they are more difficult to detect within a short time span and for listeners with little musical training. A text-based genre analysis needs to pay attention to this dichotomy by considering single aspects as well as their collective composition within a piece of music. It can ultimately be used to evaluate the individual textual observations that different genre discourses might be based on and to consider to what degree argumentations might be comprehensible and justified.

2.1.3 A look at "Creep" and its alternatives

Out of all Radiohead songs released until the time of writing it is arguably the band's first single "Creep" that continues to have a very significant influence on the band's stylistic perception and canonic positioning within a wider rock music context. Initially released in 1992 "Creep" was met with relatively little critical acclaim in the UK and continental Europe but soon gained wider popularity – first in Israel and later within the US in the wake of the grunge movement – leading to its re-release in 1993.¹⁵⁷ The song also appeared on the band's debut album *Pablo Honey*, which was released in the same year and secured Radiohead a place as one of the more successful bands within the British alternative rock scene. More than twenty years after its initial release "Creep" is still one of the band's most successful songs¹⁵⁸ and due to its status as a debut single occupies a particularly important position within the band's oeuvre as the song that introduced many people to Radiohead's music. Since the band's early commercial success was largely dependent on the song's frequent radio play it stands to reason that

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Simon Reynolds, "Walking on Thin Ice", *The Wire*, July 2001.

¹⁵⁸ The single was awarded silver status in the UK by the British Phonographic Industry in July 2013, Cf. British Phonographic Industry, "Certified Awards: Radiohead - Creep", <http://www.bpi.co.uk/certified-awards/search.aspx>. The status of the single can be viewed through a search for the term 'Creep' with the parameters 'Title', 'Silver' and 'Single.'

a majority of listeners were first exposed to Radiohead's musical style while listening to "Creep" which might have subsequently benefited the sales of *Pablo Honey*. While this points towards the importance of "Creep" in defining Radiohead's style – at least during the band's very early years – it also raises the question to what extent "Creep" might have functioned as a stylistic indicator for *Pablo Honey* assuming something close to a *pars pro toto* role. Thus the question arises whether a band's generic perception is dependent on its complete oeuvre or just their most well-known songs. Here, again, lies the importance of successful songs such as "Creep", that often come to be positioned as representative and authentic works within a band's oeuvre and might therefore shape perceptions of genre. As such the subject matter of "Creep" has for instance contributed towards Radiohead's association with the grunge genre, which will also be shown in the following.

Undoubtedly, "Creep" needs to be regarded as one of Radiohead's most defining songs – not only due to its huge exposure but also based on the fact that it was chosen as a debut single that would introduce the band's music to the wider public – and accordingly it can serve as a useful example to illustrate the types of immediate characteristics that appear throughout the song and that might influence individual stylistic perceptions. During the first moments of listening it becomes apparent that the song features a standard rock instrumentation consisting of drums, bass and guitars. Even though this arrangement is rather typical for a popular music setting and consequently less striking it can be said that it is this aspect together with the 4/4 rhythm and G major harmony that loosely positions the song within a wider rock music canon. The fact that "Creep" opens with an arpeggiated guitar melody rather than a more basic rhythm guitar section might point towards a beginning interest in more elaborate playing techniques that allow for more diverse uses of the band's three guitars and furthermore emphasise their role as melody instruments.

Thinking in generic terms the use of instrumentation and playing techniques within the first seconds of "Creep" can thus suggest that one is not for instance listening to a punk song or a techno track. When Thom Yorke's

voice sets in after approximately 18 seconds for the verse it initially remains within in a lower register sounding vaguely detached. Within the chorus it becomes perceptibly louder but still remains restrained to a certain degree only rising slightly with the presumable intention to give more emphasis to the lyrics. It is during the song's second chorus that it notably gains strength and consequently builds up towards the bridge section where its full range becomes apparent. Following the chorus the vocals rise within the range of a major tenth ascending from g', the last note of the chorus, to b'', the highest note within the bridge, and culminating on a descending line from a'' over the word 'run' which is held twice for approximately six seconds each.¹⁵⁹ It is at this point that the voice arguably becomes the main centre of attention and can be regarded as one of the most striking characteristics of the song in particular in terms of its expressiveness.

Out of all instrumental features it is the iconic muted guitar chords at the beginning of each chorus (at 00:57 and 02:00) that can be regarded as the most characteristic elements of "Creep" and stand out from the rest of the instrumentation. Again this underlines the importance of the instrumentation as an indicator of style within the music of Radiohead and points towards the role of the guitar as an instrument that is used to create suspense and draw attention towards structural changes. The chorus is characterised by distorted rhythm guitars interwoven with arpeggiated notes and builds a dynamic contrast with the considerably more quiet beginning of the song. This contrast between loud and quiet sections has often been associated with grunge¹⁶⁰ and consequently one also needs to pay attention to the peculiarities of dynamics to understand the ways in which genre can be constructed. By extension, it is aspects such as the use of effects and production techniques in general that can be significant in appointing genres. In this regard the use of heavy distortion might for example be perceived as a further indicator towards a grunge influence which can become even more meaningful in association with the dynamic contrasts.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Radiohead, *Pablo Honey* (Guitar Tab Edition), London 1997, p. 13 – 16.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Anwar Ibrahim, Allan F. Moore, "Sounds Like Teen Spirit: Identifying Radiohead's Idiolect", in: Joseph Tate (ed.), *The Music and Art of Radiohead*, Farnham, Surrey 2009, p. 141 f.

Finally the song's lyrics are stylistically indicative to a certain degree, dealing with low self-esteem issues and the glorification of the other person addressed in the song. While lyrics are particularly likely to be interpreted in multiple ways based on very subjective perceptions, they can also be regarded as important for the mediation of style. Thus the fact that "Creep" features narrative and elaborate lyrics that revolve around the narrator's persona as well as the addressee of the song establishes a particular scheme by which listeners could measure any Radiohead songs they might hear subsequently. Also, the topics of self-deprecation and romantic admiration can be seen to set a certain tone for the song and regulate other already mentioned aspects that contribute towards the song's expressiveness, such as for example the voice. While the content and structure of the lyrics is just one instance of Thom Yorke's writing it can be argued that under particular circumstances they do have the power to establish a specific set of expectations based on the song's considerable success. Thus the lyrics can ultimately be regarded as an indicator of style that serves to situate Radiohead within a particular rock music tradition that leans towards lyrics based on a verse, chorus and bridge structure that are narrative, coherent and deal with topics such as the song's discussed admiration of a person from a distance.

While the above mentioned aspects can be helpful for developing a better understanding of the stylistic perceptions triggered by the song "Creep", their role as immediate indicators of genre becomes somewhat clearer when compared to one of Radiohead's later songs, "Treefingers" from the album *Kid A*, which presents a stylistic contrast. Listening to "Treefingers" it soon becomes apparent that the song does not feature most of the elements that defined "Creep". The ones that can be found on the track often appear stylistically opposing to the older song as they construct genre in a very different way. Firstly and maybe most importantly, the song does not feature any lyrics or singing. Instead it consists of atmospheric guitar textures and does not contain any rhythmic patterns or formal intersections. Similarly, the song does not feature any dynamic contrasts and could be described as inherently quiet throughout. Thus it might evoke the impression of an ambient track. While "Creep" was frequently played live during

Radiohead's earlier years, "Treefingers" has so far only been played once during a live performance.¹⁶¹ Accordingly, it seems to be a prime example of a studio composition and can mostly be seen as a stylistic contrast to the older song. While the aspects used to describe "Creep" achieve a very different meaning in the context of this discussion of "Treefingers", it thus also becomes apparent that they can be useful to illustrate the different ways in which both songs are constructed stylistically. As such they are indicative of style and their variances and disparities from song to song or album to album can be considered of utmost significance for understanding how listeners might make sense of generic meaning. As follows from this a closer look at the particular aspects of a genre text as highlighted above can not only be helpful for understanding the ways in which style is constructed within a song but it can also indicate stylistic differences and generic developments within the oeuvre of one artist or band.

While "Creep" and "Treefingers" can appear as stylistic opposites, a middle ground can be found in various songs from the album *Hail To The Thief*. The song "Go To Sleep" for instance opens with guitar sounds and straightforward lyrics thus establishing clear rock premises. While the song continues with relatively sparse instrumentation, it also accumulates more voice and instrumental effects and closes on a guitar solo (02:36 to 03:12) that is distorted and formed by computer-manipulated sounds that distinguish the song from a typical rock track. This especially translates during live performances. While the song has been performed live on many occasions, the use of on-stage computer manipulation of the guitar further serves to distinguish the performance from other rock shows on a visual level.

2.1.4 The immediacy of genre and generic signifiers

Returning to the example of "Creep" one can now note a number of musical characteristics that fulfil the external conditions mentioned previously and can therefore be seen as immediate indicators of genre. One can argue that it

¹⁶¹ The first and so far [as of January 2016] only live performance of "Treefingers" occurred during Radiohead's concert in Nîmes, France on 10 July 2012. The song was performed with Ed O'Brien on guitar and Thom Yorke and Jonny Greenwood on keyboards.

is often the voice and singing style¹⁶² that serve to express emotions in a very noticeable and easily describable way and by extension it is different instruments such as for example the lead guitar that play a major role in underlining this expressiveness.¹⁶³ For this reason the following text-based analysis will begin by focusing on the character of the voice as well as the instrumentation as both elements are responsible for providing a sense of individual expression that can only ever be replicated to a certain degree and thus both aspects can be seen to have a considerable impact on the perception of genre. In this context vocal characteristics can often be regarded as the one element within a particular oeuvre that is different from the work of every other artist. While the voice alone cannot always be a signifier of genre, aspects such as range, singing techniques and styles are highly indicative and need to be considered carefully. Similarly, the choice of instruments as well as playing styles can have a considerable influence on genre perception.

By extension, the lyrics often provide a focus point that intersects with the voice and provides one of the main aspects of interest within audience interpretations.¹⁶⁴ The meaning of lyrics is often discussed and associated

¹⁶² In his book *The Foundations of Rock: From "Blue Suede Shoes" to "Suite Judy Blue Eyes"* Walter Everett discusses the role of the singing voice and goes into detail about vocal range, colour and techniques. He positions the voice as a crucial part of the instrumentation and states that, as such, it is specifically unique. Cf. Walter Everett, *The Foundations of Rock: From "Blue Suede Shoes" to "Suite Judy Blue Eyes"*, Oxford 2009, pp. 117 - 133.

¹⁶³ The entry on "Bands" in the *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World* also emphasises the importance of instruments for the classification and naming of bands and by extension genres. It states that traditionally bands could be classified according to their instrumentation, occupational origin or function, geographical origin, the incorporation of a musical style into their title, the incorporation of a band member's name into their title or their identification by gender, ethnicity or demographics. Cf. Dave Laing, "Bands", in: John Shepherd (ed.), *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World*, Vol. 2, London 2003, p. 6. In his book *Song Means: Analysing and Interpreting Recorded Popular Song* Allan F. Moore further describes the importance of instrumental functions and layers. He discusses how the positioning of instruments (or instrumental textures) within a recorded track can be expressed during analysis by coming up with the model of a 'soundbox.' While an analysis of instrumental positions would go beyond the immediate genre analysis drawn out in this chapter, the importance of instrumental roles and positions is nevertheless important to bear in mind. Cf. Allan F. Moore, *Song Means: Analysing and Interpreting Recorded Popular Song* (Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series), Farnham, Surrey 2012, pp. 29 – 38.

¹⁶⁴ In *Performing Rites* Frith states that most frequently popular music analysis tends to locate the meaning of popular song within the lyrics. While Frith's text indicates the relevance of lyrics in immediate listening contexts, he also takes care to point out possible

with concepts such as ideology and authenticity and functions as a means of analysis that is more easily approachable for wider audiences than for example more classical features of music analysis such as harmony, melody or form.¹⁶⁵ Equally, the structure and composition of the lyrics can be very influential for the construction of genre within a song and needs to be considered carefully. Furthermore, the analysis will focus on the influence that dynamics might have on the construction of genre. Both elements are core characteristics of expressiveness and for this reason timbral and dynamic developments and contrasts can be highly influential for the formation of stylistic perceptions. Elements concerning production techniques and effects can have a similar impact and by extension it will be interesting to consider to what extent a song might have been a product of in-studio composition.¹⁶⁶

Additionally, the text-based analysis developed in this chapter will focus on two contextual aspects that are important for the overall perception of style emanating from a musical genre text. Firstly, the changing aspects of live performances including stage setup, song adaptations as well as behavioural aspects as mentioned in Fabbri's genre rules¹⁶⁷ can be useful for understanding the forms of generic communication between artists and audiences and are essential for understanding how immediate signifiers of genre work within a live setting.¹⁶⁸ Secondly, paratexts such as for example

connections between lyrics and musical sounds and states that music makes lyrics memorable. Cf. Frith, *Performing Rites*, pp. 158 – 182. In his essay "From Lyric to Anti-Lyric: Analyzing the Words in Pop Song" Dai Griffiths further suggests a new 'word-consciousness' which pays attention to the ways in which lyrics function and how their position within pop songs has developed historically. Cf. Dai Griffiths, "From Lyric to Anti-Lyric: Analyzing the Words in Pop Song", in: Allan F. Moore (ed.), *Analyzing Popular Music*, Cambridge 2003, p. 42.

¹⁶⁵ While these aspects can in some cases serve to indicate genre, they are left out of the immediate genre analysis as they clash with the idea of an immediate interpretation under time constraints as well as the concept of a wider and partly non-professional audience as main producers of journalistic and fan discourses.

¹⁶⁶ The term 'in studio-composition' was coined by Brian Eno and has been a vital part of his musical work. Cf. Brian Eno, "The Studio as Compositional Tool", in: Christoph Cox, Daniel Warner (ed.), *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, London 2004, pp. 127 – 130.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Fabbri, "A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications", p. 13.

¹⁶⁸ While Frith elaborates on the idea of performance by stating that not only different studio recordings but also listening experiences thereof should be regarded as performances, the following analysis will solely focus on the aspect of live performance. Cf. Frith, *Performing Rites*, pp. 203 – 225.

the album or single artwork and promotional music videos will be given some consideration as they might often influence stylistic perceptions before one even has the chance to listen to the music and can have a significant influence on the first impressions listeners might have of a genre text. Ultimately it can thus be said that the consideration of contexts and aspects that are directly related to the immediate characteristics of a genre text often play a role for the evaluation of genre and should therefore be considered as part of the textual analysis.

While the mentioned aspects will serve as main focus points within the following analytical approach it is important to bear in mind that more technical aspects of music analysis can at times inform generic perceptions and might be given attention if addressed within discourse. In this regard it should however be noted that an analysis of technical aspects often does not require genre analysis. This is for instance exemplified by a majority of Northern-American studies on Radiohead, which tend to favour more traditional analytical approaches.¹⁶⁹ These studies often focus on the analysis of textual matters and are less concerned with contextual features or overall developments. For this reason genre is rarely addressed or needed. By contrast the features discussed during the course of this chapter are referential of generic contexts and therefore appear in direct reaction to genre-informed listening conditions. They serve to shape immediate reactions, but also serve as useful parameters to monitor and discuss the ways in which the music develops over time and in reference to its former generic conditions. While elements such as, for example, musical structures can be indicative of genre to varying degrees, they are mostly excluded from

¹⁶⁹ While studies by US-American theorists such as Brad Osborn or Nathan D. Hesselink provide interesting insights into the technical aspects of Radiohead's music they are often informed by musicological strategies and incorporate music analysis as a main methodology. Cf. Brad Osborn, "Understanding Through-Composition in Post-Rock, Math-Metal, and Other Post-Millennial Rock Genres", in: *Music Theory Online*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 2011, <http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.11.17.3/mto.11.17.3.osborn.php>. And: Nathan D. Hesselink, "Radiohead's 'Pyramid Song': Ambiguity, Rhythm, and Participation", in: *Music Theory Online*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2013, <http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.13.19.1/mto.13.19.1.hesselink.php>. In this regard Marianne Tatom Lett's study provides an interesting middleground which combines both genre-based and music analysis-based methodologies and can in some ways provide guidance to the combination of genre and music analytical methods discussed in this thesis. Cf. Marianne Tatom Letts, *Radiohead and the Resistant Concept Album. How to Disappear Completely*, Bloomington 2010.

this analysis as they do not fulfil the conditions highlighted earlier and often require more focused and concentrated listening or musical knowledge to affect generic interpretations. As such they are often excluded from immediate genre perceptions by non-academic audiences and are less likely to affect first impressions. Keeping the importance of all other musical elements in mind the analysis will begin by looking at the specifically mentioned focus points – voice and instrumentation, lyrics, dynamics, production, live performance and paratexts – that often serve as immediate indicators of genre. The following sections will then proceed to pay attention to the ways in which these features appear in discourse in combination with other possible aspects, that are usually featured in music analysis and affect the ways in which audiences construct generic meaning.

2.2 A text-based analysis of genre in the music of Radiohead

Almost thirty years after the band's initial formation in Oxford in 1985 Radiohead's music describes a stylistic trajectory that has touched upon different genres and combined various influences resulting in a new and complex amalgamation of diverse musical elements. Consisting of band members Thom Yorke, Colin and Jonny Greenwood, Ed O'Brien and Phil Selway Radiohead have released eight studio albums to date and can furthermore look back on a variety of collaborations and side projects.¹⁷⁰ Their music has become the topic of varied audience discourses with the themes of stylistic development and diversity often at the centre of discussions. Looking for stylistic elements in Radiohead's music under consideration of the above mentioned signifying criteria one can therefore expect a variety of different characteristics that contribute towards the construction of a musical style which draws on a multitude of generic sources. The following paragraphs will consider the usefulness of the outlined iconographic approach for analysing genre texts by looking at the music of Radiohead. They aim to answer the question how Radiohead's music can be described generically and to what extent the notion of stylistic diversity might be illuminated by a study of musical texts. The analysis will

¹⁷⁰ A discography, including demo recordings and side projects, can be found in Appendix I.

address the previously discussed signifiers of genre individually and thus go into detail about voice and instrumentation (chapter 2.2.1), dynamics (chapter 2.2.2), lyrics (chapter 2.2.3), production (chapter 2.2.4), live performance and paratexts (chapter 2.2.5). By discussing the specific nature and developmental trajectory of each of these aspects separately and combined, the chapter aims to explore the value of considering aspects of immediacy within the course of a text-based genre analysis. It further sets out to create an overview of characteristic elements within Radiohead's music and trace the band's development and change in terms of genre over the years.

2.2.1 Voice and instrumentation

As the previous discussion has shown the uses and functions of the voice and instrumentation within popular music can have a significant influence on the ways in which genre is perceived within the first moments of listening and is thus of considerable importance for the interpretation and reception of genre within a piece of music. Listening for these elements in the music of Radiohead one can draw a number of interesting conclusions about the ways in which the band's music developed stylistically from their earliest demo recordings¹⁷¹ to more recent studio albums. On one of Radiohead's earliest available recordings, a demo cassette tape made in 1986,¹⁷² the band – then still called On A Friday¹⁷³ – uses a standard rock instrumentation revolving around guitars, drums, bass and singing voice which indicates the band's rock influences on a basic level. While this initial setup does not seem to show any major differences from the instrumental

¹⁷¹ While this study mainly focuses on Radiohead's studio albums, as these have been at the center of journalistic and audience discussions, a closer look the band's first demo recording can be useful in giving an idea of Radiohead's early vocal and instrumental approaches. Although there are several other demo recordings available that were recorded subsequently, these will not be discussed in great detail as they mostly contain musical material that appears on the band's subsequent studio albums. A list of demo recordings can be found in Appendix I.

¹⁷² This was apparently recorded in Abingdon School near Oxford, which all band members attended.

¹⁷³ Before the band took on the name Radiohead, it had several different names as Ed O'Brien has discussed in a radio interview in 1995. Cf. "(1995/04/0x) Unknown US radio station, Ed and Jonny", interview, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3uNEHiomCk>, 12:10.

line-up of voice/guitars/bass/drums that would come to characterise Radiohead's early studio albums, the demo tape contains a number of interesting particularities that can serve as useful examples of Radiohead's early stylistic development. Most notably, the music is marked by an augmented instrumentation and hints towards a general experimentation regarding the roles of each instrument. Saxophone interplays and solos are included in a number of songs and distinguish the music from Radiohead's later work.¹⁷⁴ As an instrument within the realm of popular music the saxophone can evoke different forms of generic meaning as it is associated with a variety of musical styles such as jazz, blues, or soul amongst others. Applied in a more typical rock setting the addition of saxophone elements serves as a distinguishing factor that not only creates a slightly experimental atmosphere and seems to hold aspirations towards a possibly more sophisticated sound but also disrupts the construction of a clear generic label for Radiohead's music. While later songs that eventually appeared on *Pablo Honey* do not feature saxophone players and may fit more seamlessly into a particular generic niche, such as the grunge influenced rock music of the early 1990s Radiohead was often associated with, they also appear more well-rounded and present a step towards the formation of the band's individual style.

Although the general arrangement of the instrumentation on the first demo recording is mostly similar to later albums and might thus be easily dismissed as marginal towards the identification of Radiohead's initial style, one can dissect a number of relevant differences that allow specific conclusions about the band's generic development. Considering the importance of immediate listening conditions the intro sections of the songs are particularly informative regarding stylistic manifestations. Looking at the individual instrumental roles it becomes apparent that the songs do not follow a set compositional formula. In contrast to Radiohead's later recordings that often feature guitar intros revolving around chord sequences or arpeggios the demo recordings tend to feature rather diverse intro

¹⁷⁴ At this point in time the band reportedly featured three saxophone players. Cf. Mac Randall, *Exit Music: The Radiohead Story*, London 2011, p. 22 f.

sections starting with either drums, keyboards or guitars.¹⁷⁵ It is furthermore notable that at this point in time Radiohead only featured two guitarists instead of the three guitars of later years, seeing as the demo was recorded without the addition of Jonny Greenwood to the band.¹⁷⁶ Although the alleged diversity of these instrumental choices can hold rather positive connotations and could be regarded as a sign of creativity or variability it might also be seen as a form of experimentation that speaks of a still remaining uncertainty or the band members' way of trying to find their own position within the group.

The knowledge about the instrumental roles on Radiohead's early demo recordings becomes particularly relevant once compared to the band's early studio albums. While *Pablo Honey* does not feature any keyboard sounds it is characterised by the joint sound of the band's three guitars and its songs feature guitar intros. Furthermore, it appears that at the point of recording the individual instruments have taken up more fixed roles and mostly seem to be utilised to create a melodic and tightly knit wall of sound that is punctuated by guitar interplays such as finger picking sections or arpeggios and accompanies the singing voice that seems to be positioned at the centre of the album. Therefore the role and arrangement of the instrumentation on *Pablo Honey* and later recordings stands in considerable contrast to Radiohead's earlier work and it is arguable to what extent this might also be due to the presumable line-up and compositional changes brought on by Jonny Greenwood's earlier shift from keyboards to lead guitar. Looking at Radiohead's earliest recordings in comparison to the band's first studio album one can thus detect a development towards a more stable allocation of instrumental roles and the beginnings of a consolidation of the band's individual style.

On early Radiohead albums Thom Yorke's voice often takes up a central position and necessarily plays a significant guiding role for the general instrumental arrangements. Compared to the recordings made in 1986 one

¹⁷⁵ Thus it is particularly notable that three of the five available songs contain drum intros ("Fragile Friend", "Fat Girl" and "Lemming Trail"), while "Girl (In The Purple Dress)" opens with a keyboard passage and "Everybody Knows" features a guitar intro.

¹⁷⁶ He joined later in the same year and initially played harmonica and keyboards.

can hear a clear development in terms of technique and singing style. While the demos often feature the voice as central element, they show a more varied and perhaps less developed vocal style. As such Thom Yorke's singing on these recordings can sometimes be evocative of the band's early influences. In particular they feature certain forms of intonation and emphasis that can be reminiscent of bands such as The Smiths or Talking Heads amongst others. In comparison to later recordings Thom Yorke's vocal style seems somewhat more reserved and almost restrained. For the most part the songs do not feature any great intervallic leaps such as the ones that would come to characterise "Creep". However, songs such as "Fragile Friend" certainly give an impression of Thom Yorke's vocal range and in particular of the higher registers reached during the chorus of "Creep". Nevertheless, it is often these higher sections that appear to be sung with less vigour. While Thom Yorke seemingly reaches higher notes without effort his voice still appears slightly untrained and less powerful. Interestingly, a clear development becomes soon apparent on following demo recordings. Thus the song "To Be A Brilliant Light" from the *On A Friday Demo* made in 1988 features a considerably stronger vocal performance displaying a wide vocal range in particular during the chorus.

Through the course of the first three studio albums – *Pablo Honey* (1993), *The Bends* (1995) and *OK Computer* (1997) – Thom Yorke's vocal style and range notably develop resulting in a number of characteristics and particularities that present useful indicators of Radiohead's general rock orientation and serve to describe the band's individual style. Despite the fact that instrumental arrangements gain a much more pronounced role over the years – specifically with the purpose of creating textures and layers – the vocals mostly remain a central focus point within the songs and draw particular attention. As indicated above it can be said that Thom Yorke's wide vocal range needs to be regarded as one of Radiohead's most constant and prominent elements. It is in particular the choruses that often feature higher passages and notable interval jumps. These are often combined with a rise in emotive content and manner and present a contrast to the verses that often appear to be sung in a more restrained style and lower register.

Furthermore it can be said that the interaction between the voice and the individual instruments – and in particular the lead guitar – seems to gain considerable importance over the years. While the muted guitar chords that characterised "Creep" mainly served as a structural element signalling a break between the verse and chorus, they can also be seen as one of the most striking elements of the song in combination with its vocals. Although the voice is clearly a central element of Radiohead's earlier songs, over the years Jonny Greenwood's lead guitar assumes a significant position and often interacts with the singing voice to create a sense of form and contribute towards the general emotive expression of the song.

On *The Bends* guitar solos take up a considerable part of the songs and often serve to highlight and extend the vocal range and expression. The lead guitar is more prominently placed in comparison to the songs' rhythm sections and often contributes towards the general development of melody lines in a more direct interplay with the voice. This can for example be heard on songs like "The Bends." The song starts with sampled sounds before moving into a chord sequence that is played in unison by all three guitarists and finally interweaves with the vocals at the 30 second mark. While these sounds are accompanied by both bass and drums it is notable that they are comparably more restrained in volume. The guitar intro features slight variances such as distortion effects or short melodic interplays on the part of each instrument. At 1:05 minutes a short guitar interplay signals the break between the first and second verse with the last note continuing to sound through part of the verse. At 1:55 minutes structural development is indicated by a move from a stripped down instrumentation to quick successive guitar strumming before the full instrumentation sets in for the verse.

In a similar way "My Iron Lung" is characterised by an arpeggiated guitar line that marks the song's intro. The arpeggios continue throughout the song and alternate with the sung verses creating something close to a call-and-response effect, before eventually leading up to the chorus. Following the chorus' slightly heavier instrumentation and sound effects, they again serve as a transition into the more quiet verse. As these instances serve to

underline it is especially the guitars but also the density of the instrumentation and employment of different playing techniques that are often used to create structure and suspense. In many cases it is possible to draw similar conclusions simply by listening to the songs' intro sections. Additionally, *The Bends* is characterised by its use of keyboards, which subsequently became a standard element of Radiohead's instrumentation. They can for instance be heard during the intro of the album's opening track "Planet Telex" featuring a heavy space echo effect.

With *OK Computer* Radiohead's instrumental and vocal arrangements become more elaborate and diverse. The recording process for *OK Computer* seems to mark an important period of experimentation during which the band came to fully recognise the possibilities of studio recording and its general implications for creating and transforming sounds as opposed to the limitations of a live setting. While the album marks the band's first use of vocal effects – these can be heard on "Climbing Up The Walls" where they create a slightly eerie and detached atmosphere – it can be said that the vocal recordings on *OK Computer* are generally more varied than on previous albums. While "Exit Music (For A Film)" for instance features quiet and intimate lyrics that appear to be recorded very closely ending with the voice close to the point of breaking, the following song "Let Down" is based on a more calm and comparably less emotive style of singing that is interwoven with the continuous guitar line. Notably the song features a second vocal line, sung by Thom Yorke, that sets in at the beginning of the last verse and takes over the lyrics while the first vocal track moves into the background. In contrast to "Exit Music (For A Film)" which is mostly centred around the sound of Thom Yorke's voice and his manner of singing, resulting in a narrational and dramatic style that could be recreated similarly within a live setting, the interwoven vocal layering on "Let Down" adds a sense of artificiality that underlines its position as a recorded album track. With the addition of the second vocal track Thom Yorke's voice is obviously featured on two different levels emphasising the status of the song as a studio composition that is comprised of several interwoven layers. This also makes it hard to recreate the vocals within a

live setting.¹⁷⁷ As this contrast shows *OK Computer* features a range of different manners of singing that vary between a more live inspired context and the possibilities of studio recording with a growing interest in creating layers and textures.

While most of the songs on *OK Computer* contain clear and unprocessed vocals, "Fitter Happier" presents an exception. It is the first track on a Radiohead album that does not feature Thom Yorke's voice or any sounds created by guitars. A computer voice is used to read out the lyrics and, as Dai Griffiths notes, it takes particular care "to avoid any obvious euphony (rhyme or closely-placed alliteration or assonance)."¹⁷⁸ Thus the song not only presents a clear break midway through the album but could also be regarded as one of the first signs of a growing interest in a new and more experimental way of presenting lyrical content through technical means. As the stark contrast of this track to the rest of the album's songs shows the emotive quality and expression as well as clarity of Thom Yorke's voice is maybe one of the most characteristic elements on Radiohead's first three studio albums and at first listen clearly distinguishes the band's style from genres with a bigger focus on instrumental music or vocal processing such as for example electronic and dance music.

As Patrik N. Juslin and Renee Timmers note in their essay "Expression and Communication of Emotion in Music Performance" emotive expression has a considerable impact on the ways in which music is perceived. Performers in particular utilise expressiveness to bring music to life and produce emotive responses in audience members.¹⁷⁹ With this in mind it is reasonable to assume that the expressiveness and affective qualities of Thom Yorke's voice also serve a communicative function within Radiohead's music and are utilised to convey distinct sets of emotions to listeners. Referring to classical music traditions Juslin and Timmers state

¹⁷⁷ Possibly due to this reason "Let Down" has not been performed live very often. During these performances Thom Yorke would usually continue to sing the first vocal line, leaving out the last verse and continuing the background singing.

¹⁷⁸ Dai Griffiths, *OK Computer* (33 1/3 Series), London 2004, p. 65.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Patrik N. Juslin, Renee Timmers, "Expression and Communication of Emotion in Music Performance", in: Patrik N. Juslin, John A. Sloboda (ed.), *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications*, Oxford, New York 2010, p. 453 ff.

that expressiveness has often been described as the interpretation of a piece of music by the performer as well as the relation between this interpretation and the listener's perception thereof. They go on to discuss expressiveness as a multi-dimensional construct that incorporates structural aspects such as timing, dynamics or loudness, but also affective qualities, fluctuations based on human limitations in motor precision, motion principles and stylistic deviations and unexpectedness. Emotions are encoded in the music by means of various acoustic cues and in turn decoded by the listeners who use similar cues. It is notable that expressiveness is not strictly dependent on a correct decoding of emotional cues and deviations from existing norms are often perceived as more emotive or expressive.¹⁸⁰

Considering Juslin and Timmer's arguments the thought occurs that Thom Yorke's voice can be regarded as something close to an emotional lead that often guides and structures Radiohead's music. His singing is not only characterised by contrasting dynamics, variations in tempo and loudness, but also relies on expressions of different moods that are emphasised through the choice of lyrical content. Returning to the example of "Exit Music (For A Film)" it can be noted that the voice functions as the center of attention. The contrast of loud and quiet passages is extremely important in conveying an increasing intensity, fear, sadness, anger and desperation. The breaking voice at the end of the song signals emotional fragility and vulnerability but also conveys authenticity mostly based on the closeness of the recording. This aspect is further emphasised in live contexts. By contrast the example of "No Surprises" shows that emotions can also be expressed indirectly. Here the voice is very clear and calm throughout the song, but clashes slightly with the song's melancholic theme. Thus it signals a certain dejectedness or helplessness. The fact that "Fitter Happier" clearly lacks these qualities and breaks the flow of the album serves to emphasise the emotional impact of Thom Yorke's vocal expressiveness on *OK Computer* as well as other Radiohead albums. As Michael Spitzer points out in his essay "Mapping the Human Heart: A Holistic Analysis of Fear in Schubert" emotions are either understood through empathy (expressions of sameness)

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Juslin, Timmers, "Expression and Communication of Emotion in Music Performance", p. 454 f. and pp. 472 – 477.

or sympathy (expressions of difference). Reactions do not have to mirror the expressed emotion, but can also lead into other emotions based on emotional leakage (i. e. joyfulness due to exhilaration).¹⁸¹ It can thus be assumed that emotive expressiveness not only translates directly into same-minded listener reactions but also presents a way of transforming these reactions into new emotions. Expressiveness then also serves as a stylistic device that shapes reactions in different ways and often presents a framework for coping with these emotions by distorting them.

While *OK Computer* contains generally more elaborate and layered instrumental arrangements these are furthermore marked by the band's notable use of a wider and more varied selection of instruments and playing techniques. This for instance includes the addition of a Mellotron, keyboards, piano sounds, manipulated drum sounds, a Glockenspiel or even the triangle at the end of the song "The Tourist". In particular the album signals a new approach towards the role and use of guitars. Even before *OK Computer* was released band members had repeatedly declared a decreasing interest in guitars. Given the album's detailed guitar arrangements this may appear somewhat surprising. Nevertheless, the guitar-sounds of *OK Computer* indicate a step away from earlier recordings and show a new approach to guitar playing rather than a loss of interest. In an interview from 1997 guitarists Ed O'Brien and Jonny Greenwood discuss the album's difference to previous recordings:

Ed O'Brien: I think we're trying to find new sounds...guitars are actually pretty versatile instruments, they don't have to be straight ahead. You can find new sounds and that's always quite interesting.

Jonny Greenwood: People have started saying there are less guitars on the album, which isn't really true. I think a lot of the time it is still a guitar but it just doesn't sound like a guitar.¹⁸²

A further interview from the same year shows Jonny Greenwood elaborating on the topic and stating that he was not so much bored by

¹⁸¹ Cf. Michael Spitzer, "Mapping the Human Heart: a Holistic Analysis of Fear in Schubert", in: *Music Analysis*, Vol. 29, 2010, p. 156.

¹⁸² "(1997/xx/xx) MusicFactory, full band", interview, YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVCPPfBLano&feature=plcp>, 1:36.

guitars as by guitar bands and "keen to do other things with the guitar."¹⁸³ It is therefore reasonable to understand these statements as a shift of interests mainly in terms of playing styles and techniques. Taking these changes into consideration *OK Computer* signals a step away from a more simple and rock-oriented style towards a growing interest in experimentation that adopts instrumentation and methods from a number of different genres. As Jonny Greenwood has furthermore pointed out the album is characterised by the band's wish to recreate particular atmospheres from albums they liked¹⁸⁴ and it may be this objective in particular that facilitates the use of the mentioned elements and explains the development of Radiohead's music in a new and slightly more experimental direction.

While the albums *Kid A* (2000) and *Amnesiac* (2001) are frequently regarded as a break from Radiohead's previous music and overall style, they also continue the experimental path taken with *OK Computer* and explore the idea of creating music with different layers and textures.¹⁸⁵ On most songs the instrumentation slowly builds up and features greater variety. The intro section to "The National Anthem" starts with a bass line and the song's textural density slowly increases through the addition of drums, sampled sounds and voices as well as sound effects and a short horn interplay. When the voice sets in at 1:36 minutes the song's overall soundscape is still relatively sparse in comparison to the band's earlier songs and the absence of guitars is notable. While the density of the instrumentation becomes more prominent throughout the song, it is interesting to consider the fact that texture is mostly created through studio effects and the songs on *Kid A* mostly display a more varied use of instrumentation than previous Radiohead albums.

¹⁸³ "(1997/08/21) MusiquePlus, Thom & Jonny", interview, YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ai-o5KNijeE&feature=plcp>, 6:50.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Randall, *Exit Music*, p. 147.

¹⁸⁵ This development also holds implications for what Holt describes as the 'space in-between genres' and begs the question to what extent the release of *Kid A* could be regarded as a shift in generic meaning. Cf. p 45 f. and footnote 119 of this thesis. It can also be noted that in the wake of *OK Computer* Radiohead had also considered a change of the band name, which could have fuelled further debates about a shift of generic meaning in this context.

As several band members have stated over the years the albums are marked by the ambition to move away from any previously established instrumental roles towards a more variable positioning of the instruments that made way for more experimental and creative ways of composing and recording. Considering the changing role of Thom Yorke's voice it is rather interesting to contemplate the vocal and lyrical development from *OK Computer* towards *Kid A* and *Amnesiac*. While *Kid A* in particular contains generally shorter and often fragmented lyrics as will be discussed in due course the album features less actual singing and more instances in which the voice is utilised to create textures assuming a somewhat more instrumental and arguably less emotively central role. As Thom Yorke has repeatedly stated one of the main ideas for the album was a repositioning of the voice as an equally treated part of the instrumentation. He furthermore explains:

Whatever I did with my voice, it had that particular set of associations. And there were lots of similar bands coming out at the time, and that made it even worse. I couldn't stand the sound of me even more. [I] got really into the idea of my voice being another one of the instruments, rather than this precious, focus thing all the time.¹⁸⁶

Nevertheless, even this new style of singing is not completely free of certain generic associations and accordingly the vocal improvisation on "The National Anthem" might evoke impressions of a jazz influenced improvisation technique while the general approach of utilising the voice as texture contains implications of a post-rock inspired style. While the reduced lyrical space on some of the songs certainly draws part of the listener's attention away from the voice it is also notable that songs such as "How To Disappear Completely" still follow a more traditional rock formula and present the singing voice as the emotive lead embedded in an instrumental arrangement that is dominated by acoustic guitar sounds and contains very prominent string sections – with underlying Ondes Martenot sounds – that intertwine with the singing voice and assume a similarly central and emotively guiding position within the song. Although the voice thus assumes a very prominent status within the song reminiscent of older Radiohead recordings it also appears in a more duet-like and somewhat

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Reynolds, "Walking on Thin Ice."

interdependent interaction with part of the instrumentation distinguishing it from previous albums.

Together with its follow up *Amnesiac*, *Kid A* marks the beginning of an interesting affiliation between the singing voice and the studio technology used to alter its sound in order to create what Thom Yorke has called a "grammar of noises"¹⁸⁷. Notably, sound effects were often applied live in the studio in order to achieve a better understanding of the ways in which they would ultimately transform the band's overall sound.¹⁸⁸ In particular the vocal processing can have a significant impact on the affective quality of the voice and, as Thom Yorke has pointed out, the presentation of the song's lyrics which he describes as otherwise rather brutal if sung in a normal voice.¹⁸⁹ While several of the album's songs feature vocal effects to some degree the song "Kid A" can serve as useful example of the particular methods used. Thom Yorke's voice is processed through a vocoder, which was connected to the Ondes Martenot, and could be used to manipulate the vocal pitch. Ultimately this procedure also contributes to obscure the lyrical meaning of the song. Further effects also include instances of vocal sampling which can be heard on "Everything In Its Right Place".

Recorded during the same studio sessions as *Kid A* and released during the following year, *Amnesiac* continues and expands on Radiohead's experimentation with vocal processing. In particular the band started to utilise an autotuner, normally used to create perfect pitch. This process gave the vocals a peculiar sound which Thom Yorke describes as follows:

There's also this trick you can do, which we did on both "Paki [Like Sardines In A Crushd Tin Box]" and "Pulk/Pull Revolving Doors", where you give the machine a key and then you just talk into it. It desperately tries to search for the music in your speech, and produces notes at random. If you've assigned it a key, you've got music.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Reynolds, "Walking on Thin Ice."

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ The Guitar Tab edition for *Kid A* quotes the song's lyrics as follows: "I slip away. I slipped on a little white lie. We've got heads on sticks and you've got ventriloquists. [x3] Standing in the shadows, at the end of my bed. The rats and the children will follow me out of town. Rats and children follow me out of town. C'mon kids!" Cf. Radiohead, *Kid A* (Guitar Tablature Vocal), London 2001, pp. 9 - 14.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Reynolds, "Walking on Thin Ice."

Further experimentation includes the use of an eggbox as a shield in front of the microphone on "You And Whose Army?" while the band played the song live in the studio. This way not only the vocals but also the rest of the instrumentation was filtered through the eggbox. The band also used a Palm Speaker on the song in order to create unusual reverb sounds on the voice recordings.¹⁹¹ In this regard Jonny Greenwood explains:

The Palm Speaker is something else that Monsieur Martenot invented, to go with the Ondes. It's a bit like a harp with a speaker in the middle of it. The strings are tuned to all 12 semitones of an octave, and when you play a note in tune, it resonates that specific string and creates this weird kind of echo that's only on those pitches.¹⁹²

Meanwhile the vocal melody of "Like Spinning Plates" was adopted from the song "I Will" – later released on *Hail To The Thief* – but played backwards. As Colin Greenwood has stated "Thom learned to sing the backward melody forward" and also "did the phrasing so as to create backward sounding words but it's sung forward."¹⁹³

In general it can be said that this extended use of vocal effects together with the new role of the voice as an equally positioned part of the instrumentation generally serves to not only distinguish both *Kid A* and *Amnesiac* from previous recordings but also distracts from any previously mentioned generic associations that come with the idea of the voice as a facilitator of texture underlining the distinct development of Thom Yorke's vocal style. Mainly the vocal effects contribute towards the affective mode of the lyrics and singing and create a sense of alienation or even disembodiment of the voice. This underlines a break with typical rock mechanisms such as identification.¹⁹⁴ In this regard Thom Yorke has furthermore stated that he

¹⁹¹ Cf. Reynolds, "Walking on Thin Ice."

¹⁹² Ibid. As Thomas B. Holmes further explains in his book *Electronic and Experimental Music*, the palm speaker is one of the Ondes Martenot's four loudspeakers. It has a resonating body and 12 strings that are stretched over its front and back. It is mostly used to create "eerie bowed-string sounds". Cf. Thomas B. Holmes, *Electronic and Experimental Music: Pioneers in Technology and Composition*, New York 2002, pp. 61 – 64.

¹⁹³ Cf. Michael Weber (adm.), "Citizen Insane", <http://citizeninsane.eu/likespinningplatesquotes.htm>.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Simon Reynolds, "Post-Rock", In: Christoph Cox, Daniel Warner, *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, London 2004, p. 358.

had a "real problem [...] with the "identify" bit. By using other voices, I guess it was a way of saying, "obviously it isn't me."¹⁹⁵

While both *Kid A* and *Amnesiac* generally contain less guitar facilitated or dominated sounds, they emphasise a move towards a new use of guitars as instruments that create textures. Consequently the band developed an interest in using different instruments and experimented with playing techniques. Following the album's release Thom Yorke explained his method for writing most of the songs on *Kid A*:

I started playing the piano and I'm a terrible piano player so that was kind of good. So everything was a novelty. And I wrote a lot of stuff on piano...badly. But it was good. I mean, in a way the less you know about an instrument, the more you get excited about it, I think.¹⁹⁶

In an interview from January 2001 Jonny Greenwood was asked about the guitars on *Kid A* and continued this line of thought:

I think all of us – by turns – find the instruments that we're using frustrating and exciting and very easy to work with, and then very frustrating...whether it's a sampler or guitar or anything. And these things tend to be most exciting and creative when you first come across them in a way, when you first start using them. But there is something about the guitar that does keep me coming back to it. There's more guitar on this record than people realize in a way. It's just more hidden than it previously was, I think...There is songs like "Treefingers", which is just one guitar. But people just assume that it isn't.¹⁹⁷

He also states that often the guitars were used to create texture that was then either used as sampling material or modified by effects.¹⁹⁸ Therefore it can be said that on *Kid A* guitars were predominantly used in accordance with studio technology in order to create textures and layers.

While the band continued experimenting with new guitar sounds, they also started using instruments that did not feature on previous albums inspired by their different musical influences. A brass section was added to the "The National Anthem", a song that was inspired by Charles Mingus.¹⁹⁹ On "How To Disappear Completely" the band added strings modelled to resemble the

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Reynolds, "Walking on Thin Ice."

¹⁹⁶ Cf. "Reflections on Kid A", documentary, 2000, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7-wTWhp5UU>, 13:15.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. "(2001/01/20), BBC Radio 3, Mixing it, Jonny and Colin", interview, YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaDQ_WwIWNg&feature=plcp, 7:16.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 4:14.

music of Krzysztof Penderecki. Most notably the album also makes use of the Ondes Martenot, triggered by Jonny Greenwood's fascination with Olivier Messiaen's use of the instrument which is featured on "The National Anthem", "How To Disappear Completely" (playing along with the strings) and "Optimistic" and – as previously stated – was also responsible for forming the vocal melody on "Kid A".²⁰⁰ It is interesting to note that in following interviews Greenwood has often highlighted the voice-like quality of the Ondes Martenot. During live performances the instrument is used in a rather interesting way, mostly as an accompaniment or counterpoint to the voice, taking on its role as a facilitator of texture. On both *Kid A* and *Amnesiac* the instrument plays a rather crucial role in distinguishing the music from Radiohead's previous albums as well as from most other popular music in general. Moreover the extended instrumentation clearly points towards influences that lie outside of popular music, such as jazz or contemporary classical music and thus serves to create a more diverse spectrum of genres that contributes towards the band's stylistic progression. Moreover the albums are characterised by a growing interest in sampling – notably on the song "Idioteque" which features a sample from Paul Lansky's piece "Mild und Leise" – showing influences from electronic and dance music.

The album *Hail To The Thief*, released in 2003 again takes a slightly different approach as it seemingly brings together elements of Radiohead's earlier albums with aspects that can be found on *Kid A* or *Amnesiac*. Notably, *Hail To The Thief* appears to take a step towards a more rock-oriented sound that is achieved through an amalgamation of the band's early rock inspired sound and the experimentation of the two previous recordings. In particular the album features more guitar sounds and generally more traditional roles for each instrument. On songs such as "2+2=5" or "There There" the lead guitar again appears as a structuring device that contributes towards the development and clear distinction of the songs' individual

²⁰⁰ During live performances the Ondes Martenot is substituted with an Analogue Systems French Connection, a custom-built Analogue Systems modular synthesizer with an added controller to emulate the sound and playing technique of the Ondes Martenot. Cf. "The King of Gear: A Website about Radiohead's Gear", <http://thekingofgear.com/jonny>.

sections and creates obvious breaks in between.²⁰¹ Furthermore in both songs it works to create a building sense of suspense that is closely linked to the songs' dynamic variations. However, it also needs to be noted that guitars do not take up as much space as they did on Radiohead's early albums and *Hail To The Thief*, while characterised by its rock influenced guitar sounds, contains a considerably wider range of instruments, in particular the piano and Ondes Martenot, but is also characterised by a range of electronic sounds and in particular programmed drum beats. As such the album is stylistically rather diverse and does not appear as much as a step back towards older recordings as a mixture of and logical follow up to Radiohead's pre- and post-*Kid A* recordings in terms of instrumentation and musical experimentation.

A listen to the vocal recordings on *Hail To The Thief* shows a similar approach. The album can be regarded as a shift back towards a more common use of the voice as a central focus point within the recording. Vocals take up considerable space on each of the songs and present an element of guidance for instrumental arrangements and serve to draw more attention towards lyrical content and emotive expressions. This also indicates a renewed function of the voice as an aspect of identification and also holds particular implications for more rock oriented forms of emotive authenticity. However, at the same time the album also continues the experimentation with vocal effects and textures of the two previous albums. In particular the album seems to explore the wide range of possibilities that both of these approaches – the more rock based and live-inspired way of singing as well the experimentation with vocal effects and techniques – can offer and how they contribute towards a more diversified construction of style in each of the songs.

Not only does *Hail To The Thief* feature different singing techniques – such as for instance the vocals on "A Wolf At The Door" with a singing style almost reminiscent of rap – but furthermore a very intricate engagement

²⁰¹ On "2+2=5" the guitar works as an important element that emphasises the song's structure of through-composition as Osborn notes in his writings. Cf. Osborn, "Understanding Through-Composition in Post-Rock, Math-Metal, and Other Post-Millennial Rock Genres."

with studio-based vocal constructions. In particular the album makes use of backing vocals that are often directly interwoven with the lead singing voice and are arguably more pronounced than on previous Radiohead recordings. This can be heard for example on "Sit Down, Stand Up" that introduces a second vocal line with different lyrical content early on in the song or "I Will" which features two additional vocal lines that set in at different times and feature the same lyrics as the main voice sung at different pitch levels. Both instances point towards a new interest in vocal multiplicity, reminiscent of the techniques used on "Let Down" as described earlier, that also suggests a play with perspectives and the construction of the singer's persona within the song. Considering these examples of vocals and previously mentioned instances of instrumentation on *Hail To The Thief* it can be said that the album brings together elements of Radiohead's earlier style influenced by a more live-oriented rock background but also includes more experimental and studio-based approaches that point towards an amalgamation of older ideals and the development of new and experimental aspects. Thus the album neither signals a step back towards Radiohead's pre-*Kid A* style nor picks up directly where *Kid A* and *Amnesiac* left off, but rather appears as a mixture of both stylistic periods in terms of instrumental and vocal arrangements.

In Rainbows, released in 2007, again marks a slight shift in Radiohead's vocal and instrumental style, with a more pronounced focus on the softer qualities of Thom Yorke's voice and generally more mellow sounds. While it can be said that the album's instrumentation does not vary to a great extent from the band's previous album, with the possible exception of a slightly more frequent use of string arrangements on songs such as "Nude" or "Faust Arp", it soon becomes very obvious that the general quality of sounds is a very different one which by extension indicates the use of different playing techniques and approaches to composition. The album is seemingly marked by a growing interest in a compositional style that facilitates the use of instrumental and vocal textures and layers that brought together serve to create very intricate sound designs. The result is a number of more detailed musical constructs that, despite their grounding on a slightly extended rock instrumentation with occasional moments of classical

orchestration, appear decidedly more complex and experimental. The song "Weird Fishes/Arpeggi" for instance starts with a short drum section, before moving into a series of layered arpeggios created by two guitars that set in at different times. The instrumental density and texture thus slowly builds up with the addition of guitars, bass and ultimately the voice and background singing. While the song features a more typical rock instrumentation, it is notable that playing techniques and the overall instrumental composition have changed considerably since albums such as *The Bends* or even *OK Computer*. In this regard it is also interesting to note that in a similar way to the album's guitar arrangements, vocal layers have become more common and background vocals such as on "Weird Fishes/Arpeggi" assume a more prominent role. The vocal arrangements on *In Rainbows* further display the use of a higher-pitched singing range, that often spans over longer passages within songs and borders on falsettos. Backing vocals often appear as vocal textures and contribute towards a more languorous and layered atmosphere. In general the album is characterised by the band's growing interest in compositional strategies based on the combination of different kinds of instrumental and vocal layers and also illustrates how these elements can be used to create atmospheres and affect the music's overall sound.

Radiohead's following studio album *The King Of Limbs* (2011) continues the band's general experimentation with textures and layers but also takes this principle further by employing a wider range of instruments and effects that often stand in contrast to each other. Notably the album is characterised by computer sounds and samples, but also includes classical instruments such as woodwinds and furthermore sampled nature sounds. Interesting is also the increasing emphasis on rhythm and specifically drum loops, which the band subsequently started to recreate live by employing an additional drummer. With this multitude of tonal sources the album again creates a sense of textural density, which becomes apparent on the opening track "Bloom". The song features breathy vocal samples that overlap with the main vocal line and weave through layers of stacked drum- and piano-loops, a flugelhorn arrangement as well as samples of birdsong. While the voice still frequently appears as a very central element it is also often used to

create texture. The use of backing vocals or multiple simultaneous vocal tracks in general is of increasing significance throughout the album and again underlines Radiohead's move towards a more studio-based compositional approach that draws attention towards the artificiality of the sonic construction of each song as opposed to a live setting.

As the example of "Bloom" shows the album is marked by a growing interest in experimentation with vocal samples. While shorter vocal samples had previously appeared on tracks such as "Everything In Its Right Place" *The King Of Limbs* makes extended use of this technique that can for example be heard on "Feral" or "Give Up The Ghost." On both songs the vocals appear processed and often distorted. Layered arrangements play a considerable role and the recordings feature various stacked vocal tracks. On "Feral" the vocals are at times difficult to discern and lyrics are not easily understood. In contrast to the song's prominent instrumental arrangements the vocals seem to be used to create extra texture and appear comparably quiet. While "Give Up The Ghost" provides a different example with more prominent vocals over sparse instrumentation, it is notable that the song also makes extended use of vocal layers that are often processed. This way texture is built up and background vocal samples often create something close to a choir sound. The effect of this extended vocal treatment in combination with Thom Yorke's high singing range is a sound reminiscent of the often heavily processed and almost de-gendered vocals of dance music rather than rock which by extension can serve to create an atmosphere of disembodiment and alienation. Thus it can be said that the album again marks a slight stylistic shift and revolves around a combination of influences that appear to be mostly based in rock and electronic music. As the previous examples have shown *The King Of Limbs* is furthermore characterised by the band's attention to careful layered arrangements and details and mainly underlines Radiohead's apparent interest in experimentation with sound processing and the sonic possibilities of studio recording.

As the discussion has shown over the years Radiohead's instrumental and vocal styles have changed to a considerable degree. While it is notable that

both singing techniques and the use of vocal effects have become more diverse, the band has also incorporated new instruments and playing techniques. Notably one can see a shift with the release of *Kid A* that introduces generally more sound manipulation but also a new awareness of instrumental and vocal roles. In a similar way one can detect an increasing work with sound layers over the years, that has come to affect the band's working mechanisms and performance techniques.

2.2.2 Dynamics

A further aspect that can be interesting and informative in terms of identifying genres within a short time span is the use of dynamics. While the importance of dynamics is often emphasised in classical music analysis popular music dynamics are addressed less frequently which amongst other reasons might be due to the lack of notation in this regard. In his article on dynamics in *Grove Music Online* Matthias Thiemel describes dynamics as "the intensity of volume with which notes and sounds are expressed [...]" which function interdependently to create musical meaning and structure."²⁰² He furthermore goes on to say that "dynamic variation is so natural to the performance of almost all styles of music that its presence can normally be assumed even when indications for it are mainly or even entirely absent from the notation."²⁰³ As Thiemel's words show the impact of dynamics on popular music must be considered when dealing with musical structures and it is in particular the arrangement and variation of dynamics that can be seen as significant elements of different musical styles. As the article furthermore highlights the emergence of new concepts of dynamics is often closely linked to the formation of new genres throughout history. Particular genres are characterised through their use of specific dynamic structures and effects.²⁰⁴ Since dynamics not only affect the specific construction of musical works but also the transmission of moods and affects and thus work on a very immediate level, it can be

²⁰² Matthias Thiemel, "Dynamics", in: *Grove Music Online*,
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.
oxfordbrookes.idm.oclc.org/subscriber/article/grove/music/08458.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

helpful to discuss the use of dynamics when analysing popular music genres as well as particular musical oeuvres.

As a look at Radiohead's studio albums shows the band's music is rather interesting in terms of dynamic constructs and changes. As Moore and Ibrahim point out in their article "'Sounds Like Teen Spirit': Identifying Radiohead's Idiolect" Radiohead's early songs are often characterised by stark dynamic contrast between verse and chorus that are reminiscent of bands such as The Pixies and also point towards a wider grunge influence.²⁰⁵ In more general terms the loud choruses counterbalanced with more restrained verses often underline Radiohead's wider rock influence and stand for a still rather simple and genre-conscious dynamic and compositional approach. The muted guitar chords in "Creep" serve as an obvious example of dynamic structuring. Interrupting the quiet and self-reflective atmosphere of the verse, the strong dynamic contrast leads into an instrumentally more fleshed-out and energetic chorus. Similar ways of musical structuring can also be observed on other songs on *Pablo Honey*. On "Stop Whispering" the quiet verse is contrasted with a louder chorus section that is marked by the enunciation of the word 'shouting', larger vocal intervals, the addition of more guitars as the song progresses as well as an increase in volume and emotive delivery. Later Radiohead albums show that dynamic contrasts can also affect the construction and composition of songs to a considerable extent. On *OK Computer* the song "Paranoid Android" is divided into several sections that are marked by specific dynamics. Rather than indicating the change between verse and chorus, the dynamic changes characterise individual parts of the song and convey an overall development. While the song features four distinct sections, the first and second section are marked by a layered and intricate guitar sound that gradually builds up in density. The song's second section, starting around the 2 minute mark, grows increasingly louder and features more expressive vocals and distorted guitars before moving into an extended guitar solo. The third section starts at c. 3:30 minutes and it is notable that at this point the song almost comes to a standstill. The new section features an acoustic guitar and sparse

²⁰⁵ Cf. Ibrahim, Moore, "Sounds Like Teen Spirit: Identifying Radiohead's Idiolect", p. 142.

instrumentation. It focuses on Thom Yorke's emotive singing that is accompanied by choir-like background vocals. A fourth section serves as the song's outro and starts at 5:37. Once again the song features louder guitars, more textural layers and sound effects. While the lead guitar seemingly picks up the guitar solo from the end of section two, this section does not feature any vocals. As the example of "Paranoid Android" can therefore show, dynamic contrasts are often used within songs to create structure and contrast in general. With this in mind it is interesting to note that Radiohead's compositional techniques on *OK Computer* clearly present a move on from earlier recordings towards a more complex and intricate sound design.

While dynamic contrasts can be heard within songs they also effect the sequencing of albums to a great extent. This also becomes obvious on *OK Computer* which can be seen as Radiohead's first more experimental album as far as genre-based dynamics are concerned. As the songs on *OK Computer* show dynamic contrasts can have a considerable impact on generic perceptions and perceived experimentalism. In his article Thiemel points out that great dynamic contrasts often serve to underline experimental and progressive compositions.²⁰⁶ As the example above has shown this can be heard on a song like "Paranoid Android" that goes through various contrasting dynamic sections that differ in terms of speed and volume level created through changes in instrumentation and voice. The song is not only characterised by widely contrasting dynamics that underline the unusual structure but also by different moods and atmospheres that can influence perceptions of authenticity and emotional honesty and eventually the generic verisimilitude of the song. With its changing dynamics and contrasting sections the song's dynamic construction might therefore explain the numerous interpretations of *OK Computer* as a progressive rock album. By extension the album is characterised by dynamic and timbral differences between songs. While "Exit Music" closes very quietly and slowly on a rather desperate note, "Let Down" picks up in a considerably faster tempo and at the same time presents a distinct change in mood.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Thiemel, "Dynamics."

Similarly, the fast and loud "Electioneering" provides a noticeable contrast to the monotonous computer voice and quiet piano play of "Fitter Happier", while "No Surprises" follows as a quiet and slow counterpart to the tumultuous and effect-driven "Climbing Up The Walls". As these few examples show the use of dynamics can be of considerable importance for the ways in which album sequences are produced and can be informative about aspects such as the construction of moods as well as the conveyance or emphasis of particular atmospheres or narratives through the course of an album or particular songs.

A look at Radiohead's later albums shows that distinguished dynamic contrasts within songs still remain of considerable importance. Nevertheless it can be said that over the years the band achieves a greater dynamic diversity. *Kid A* in particular underlines the band's use of more subtle and often flowing dynamic changes as can for instance be heard on the title song. Meanwhile, on "Treefingers" the band utilises an equally quiet and flowing sound structure that can be reminiscent of ambient textures. As these examples emphasise the idea of dynamics can be seen as a vital part of generic construction within songs and albums. However, it is also often the constant variation of dynamics as well as the use of decidedly contrasting dynamics that has the power to complicate the identification of genres and mark music as experimental. Moreover, dynamic diversity can often point towards more elaborate and elongated song structures and thus stands for more experimental genres. Thus, a general look at the use of dynamics on Radiohead's albums yet again underlines the bands stylistic diversity and in some instances points towards experimental approaches and more elaborate generic structures that could be found in genres such as progressive rock or post-rock. Other examples show a more subtle approach to dynamic changes and work with more fluid variations. Based on these observations it can be said that the concept of dynamics can be a very telling part within generic construction and also form an important tool for its identification. However, in this regard it also needs to be noted that an abundance of dynamic contrasts or complete lack thereof can often complicate generic identification and point towards a more experimental approach that can further obscure genre boundaries.

2.2.3 Lyrics

A third aspect that often forms a particularly important part of critical evaluation and can be considered a significant indicator of genre is the composition and use of lyrics within songs. Looking back to the previously discussed role of the voice lyrics appear as a similarly weighted element which assumes different positions over the years. While early Radiohead songs feature lyrics as very central elements, later albums starting with *Kid A* in particular signify a change in regard to the positioning of voice and lyrics. A short look at the topics and structures of lyrics on each of the albums shows that Thom Yorke's style of writing has evolved considerably over the years and it remains to be discussed to what extent this is due to a play with genres. Generally the lyrics are very coherent and mostly elaborate. While *Pablo Honey* does not feature any overarching conceptual narratives, it often focuses on particular topics such as a general outsider mentality and a constant struggle to overcome certain issues or gain recognition. This is exemplified by lines such as "but I'm still no-one, and you're now a star"²⁰⁷ ("Thinking About You") which depict a more doubting mentality. Meanwhile "Anyone Can Play Guitar" highlights the protagonist's struggle against oppressive circumstances and features something close to a punk mentality as can be heard in the song's chorus: "And if the world does turn and if London burns, I'll be standing on the beach with my guitar. I want to be in a band when I get to heaven, anyone can play guitar and they won't be a nothing anymore."²⁰⁸ In "Stop Whispering" a similar sentiment is expressed through the song's symbolic appeal to "stop whispering, start shouting."²⁰⁹ Often the songs are directed at a second person which usually remains anonymous and is solely addressed with the pronoun 'you'.²¹⁰

While *The Bends* continues some of the already mentioned topics, it arguably contains a wider variety of themes and lyrical structures. Generally, lyrical meaning is more obscured which indicates a move

²⁰⁷ Cf. Radiohead, *Pablo Honey* (Guitar Tab Edition), p. 33.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 42 ff.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 25 f.

²¹⁰ Most famously this happens during "Creep", but can also be heard on the tracks "You", "Thinking About You" and "Prove Yourself" amongst others.

towards a more intricate style of writing that features a wider range of stylistic devices. The album's title song can serve to illustrate this new approach not only by showing a wider range of lexical choices but also by using decompression sickness as a substitute for metaphorical oppression. Notably the lyrics often feature the narrator as a partaker in the actions of the songs but also as an observer which signals a slight change from previous songs. While all songs feature first person pronouns in different capacities, songs such as "Fake Plastic Trees" signify a move towards a retelling mode of speaking which highlights the partaking of other characters in the song's storylines. Even though the album's content shows certain similarities to previous topics, it is also marked by clear developments in this regard. As the lyrics to "High & Dry" illustrate ("You'd kill yourself for recognition, kill yourself to never ever stop. You broke another mirror, you're turning into something you are not."²¹¹) the aspect of success and recognition is yet again very central to Radiohead's songs. However, it is also marked by a decidedly more detached positioning of the narrator, who highlights both the conflicts and downsides of this behaviour and thus assumes a more critical and careful position in comparison to *Pablo Honey*.

Radiohead's following studio album *OK Computer* contains a mixture of topics that span a variety of areas which could be associated with a certain sense of fear or paranoia in the face of the developing digital age. As has been pointed out by various writers, the album most famously addresses topics such as transportation and general issues of mechanisation. Moreover, it deals with aspects such as violence, fear and different forms of escapism. In contrast to both previous albums the lyrical themes on *OK Computer* thus almost seem to form an overarching narrative that could be interpreted as a lyrical concept for the album. While the album again features a mixture of observer and insider standpoints it also makes use of a range of very different personas as narrators. Starting with lines from the opening song "Airbag" ("in an interstellar burst, I am back to save the universe"²¹²) the album features a recurring superhero-thematic which interestingly often

²¹¹ Cf. Radiohead, *The Bends* (Guitar Tablature), London 1997, p. 21 f.

²¹² Cf. Radiohead, *OK Computer* (Guitar Tablature), London 1997, p. 6.

contrasts with topics such as apathy in the face of impending doom which can be heard on songs such as "Subterranean Homesick Alien" ("they'd shut me away, but I'd be alright"²¹³). Different narrator personas include the narrator as someone dangerous and perhaps even deadly ("Climbing Up The Walls") as well as the defensive group mentality which underlines the narrator's comments in "Karma Police" ("this is what you get when you mess with us"²¹⁴). Lastly, the difference between narrating personas also becomes very clear on "Fitter Happier" which is characterised by its use of a computer voice and thus exemplifies the album's theme regarding the overtaking of technology. The lyrics are read out in a plain tone and without any emotive enunciation. A short excerpt shows that the track includes statements that could stem from a self-help book: "Fitter, happier, more productive, comfortable, not drinking too much, regular exercise at the gym (3 days a week), getting on better with your associate employee contemporaries, at ease, eating well (no more microwave dinners and saturated fats) [...]"²¹⁵ In this way the album's theme of apathy in the face of technological change is not only expressed in the lyrics but also through the plain listing of individual elements and finally through the distinctly emotionless lyrical performance.

As mentioned previously *Kid A* marks a notable change in lyrical composition through its experimentation with aleatory methods. A considerable part of the album's lyrics was reportedly put together by drawing individual lines out of a top hat.²¹⁶ This, together with a tendency for repetition and short or incomplete sentence structures, led to a distinctly altered lyrical style that obviously favors experimentation while meanings are often obscured. This can for instance be heard on the album's title song which features lyrics such as "we've got heads on sticks and you've got ventriloquists."²¹⁷ Nevertheless, the song also seemingly deals with topics such as paranoia and makes clear references to the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin and consequently features a narrative structure, which is

²¹³ Cf. Radiohead, *OK Computer* (Guitar Tablature), London 1997, p. 20 ff.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 39.

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 42.

²¹⁶ Cf. "Reflections on Kid A", 19:08.

²¹⁷ Cf. Radiohead, *Kid A* (Guitar Tablature Vocal), p. 10 f.

reminiscent of certain topics that already appeared on *OK Computer*. In her book *Radiohead And The Resistant Concept Album – How To Disappear Completely* Marianne Tatom Letts highlights the subject of disappearance as central lyrical element on *Kid A* and furthermore points out:

Although the lyrical themes of *Kid A* are similar to those of *OK Computer* (alienation as a reaction to the onslaught of technology), *Kid A* challenges Radiohead's earlier methods of narrative cohesion by forming a hopeless, self-negating subject who disintegrates at the midpoint of the album at the moment of his maximum articulation.²¹⁸

As this quotation shows *Kid A* can be seen as a continuation of various previously explored topics, but also as a more radical approach to the notion of the narrative as a whole. While Tatom Letts identifies a single and central subject to the songs building her argument for a vanishing subject,²¹⁹ a general interpretation of the narrator as one individual is arguable making it even more difficult to determine any additional overarching narratives or developments. While the narrating persona is thus somewhat more obscure than on previous albums it can be said that previous topics such as a certain apathy and paranoia are carried through to some extent. However, based on the less central position of the voice and repetitive structure of certain lyrics one can also question the general importance of lyrics on the album and based on the aleatory aspects of composition challenge the idea of a concept of lyrical meaning as imposed by the author.

Amnesiac to a certain extent signals a move back towards more elaborate and coherent lyrical structures, but also deals with a variety of different topics that are only partly reminiscent of Radiohead's work prior to *Kid A*. As Moore and Ibrahim point out, the album can be seen as a consolidation of the stylistic tendencies introduced on *Kid A*, but is also marked by a collection of disparate and juxtaposed songs.²²⁰ While it gazes upon a variety of topics, themes such as escapism and a particular fear of being trapped seem to appear repeatedly. Furthermore, the album's lyrics interestingly feature a slightly more antagonistic and defensive attitude, which appears in songs such as "You And Whose Army?" ("come on if you

²¹⁸ Tatom Letts, *Radiohead and the Resistant Concept Album*, p. 45.

²¹⁹ Ibid. p. 104 ff.

²²⁰ Cf. Ibrahim, Moore, "Sounds Like Teen Spirit: Identifying Radiohead's Idiolect", p. 145.

think you can take us on."²²¹) and is notably paired with a switch to a first person plural point of view. Moreover, the album again features images of violence – figuratively as in "Dollars And Cents" ("we're gonna crack your little souls") and literally as in "Like Spinning Plates" ("I'm being cut to shreds") – and thus the lyrics often present a contrast to the sometimes more passive view points of *Kid A*. Generally, the lyrics are longer and more elaborate moving back towards Radiohead's earlier style in this regard. However, on *Amnesiac* the narrator is often involved in the action of the song and similar to *Kid A* it is again unclear whether the songs revolve around a singular narrator or different personas. Meanings are furthermore obscured by a lack of fully coherent storylines and a distinct use of stylistic devices and references. "Pyramid Song" in particular features various lyrical references to literary and mythical depictions of death. While it has been mentioned by band members that the song was based on works such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* as well as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, it also makes references to ancient Greek and Egyptian mythology.²²² The song repeatedly references themes of death and afterlife and lines such as "we all went to heaven in a little row boat" might allude to the Greek myth of the ferryman Charon who carries souls across the rivers Styx and Acheron to Hades. The imagery of "Pyramid Song" includes black-eyed angels, rivers, the moon and stars, boats and 'astral cars,' which mostly appear as ways of depicting death, afterlife, heaven and purgatory. As the example shows *Amnesiac*'s lyrics are often symbolic and referential of cultural and historical events and works. The album therefore presents a more developed take on the style of writing used for *Kid A* but at the same time also incorporates aspects typical of Radiohead's prior work and consequently could be seen as an amalgamation and development of the band's previous lyrical traits.

While *Hail To The Thief* has often been positioned either as the true successor to *OK Computer* or as yet another stylistic change in Radiohead's

²²¹ Cf. Radiohead, *Amnesiac* (Guitar Tablature Vocal), London 2002, p. 12.

²²² An early version of "Pyramid Song" was titled "Egyptian Song" and said to be influenced by Thom Yorke's visit to an exhibition of Egyptian art.

work²²³ it can be said that the album is characterised and shaped by a number of ambiguities. This becomes clear when considering the album's title and song names, which all contain alternate titles that are listed in brackets. Although these titles could be regarded as elaborations on the song names and accordingly lead to further individual interpretations they might also be seen as alternatives and facilitate a plurality of interpretations. While the album features a range of very elaborate and long lyrical structures it also contains short and more repetitive lyrics as can for example be heard on "Sit Down. Stand Up. (Snakes & Ladders.)". As such it could easily be interpreted as a mixture of characteristics taken from Radiohead's pre- and post-*Kid A* phases. Nevertheless, some of the lyrics can still be regarded as obscure or randomly put together and it is in some instances difficult to identify clear narratives. Furthermore, the lyrics are again referential ranging from literary references ("2+2=5") to historical references ("You And Whose Army?") and thus the album's lyrical style not only appears as a development of previously used attributes but also indicates a possibly widening cultural capital on part of the artists but also the audience.

As Tatom Letts points out the album is marked by the presence of the band and possibly the subject from the very beginning. The album's first song "2+2=5" opens with instruments being plugged in and a short conversation between Thom Yorke and Jonny Greenwood which can be heard in the background²²⁴ and is thus marked by a certain sense of studio realism and authenticity. Starting with the album's opening track the audience is made aware of the recording process and the artificiality of the music they are listening to. On one hand this indicates a higher emphasis on studio technology and the artwork status of the recording itself. However, it also reduces the distance between artists and audience by giving a short insight into the making of the album. While similar disruptions of an album's general unity can be achieved through other forms of stylistic breaks (such as for instance the lack of lyrics on *Kid A*'s "Treefingers" or the computer voice on *OK Computer*'s "Fitter Happier") the placement of this particular

²²³ Cf. Tatom Letts, *Radiohead and the Resistant Concept Album*, p. 178.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

instance at the very beginning of *Hail To The Thief* is curious as it can be forgotten or missed rather easily. Although it creates a distinct awareness of the artificial recording process, it does not disrupt the song's escapist tendencies and overall sequence. In this way it can attest to the album's growing stylistic diversity mirrored in the shape and structure of lyrics and contents, which on their own serve to create notable instances of contrast and change and make it counterproductive to identify any unifying subjects or overarching narratives on *Hail To The Thief*.

While *In Rainbows* is again characterised by long and elaborate lyrics, it interestingly features a first and second person dynamic almost reminiscent of the band's earliest albums. However, on *In Rainbows* the meaning is often more obscure and not as direct as on some of the earlier mentioned songs that share similar traits. A range of stylistic devices and in particular metaphors and similes make the texts often appear quite oblique and poetic. This can for example be heard on "Weird Fishes/Arpeggi" which mostly features aquatic terminology and includes lines such as "Turn me into phantoms, I follow to the edge of the earth and fall off."²²⁵ The introduction of more romantic themes which can for example be heard on "House Of Cards" ("I don't want to be your friend, I just want to be your lover."²²⁶) can be regarded as a distinct change from most earlier songs. In general it also presents an engagement with one of the most frequently addressed topics in rock and pop music, which was previously often absent from Radiohead's songs.

The lyrical structure and content on *The King Of Limbs* again presents a slight change from the previous recording and can be described as particularly varied. While some of the songs feature long lyrics that are rich in content such as for example "Little By Little" or "Lotus Flower" others are characterised by a minimalism reminiscent of some of the songs on *Kid A*. Thus the album's opening track "Bloom" is considerably shorter with no apparent chorus and accordingly not only disrupts the more elaborate narrative structures established on both previous albums but also the

²²⁵ Cf. Radiohead, *In Rainbows* (Guitar Tab Edition), London 2008 , p. 44 f.

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 78.

verse/chorus/verse structure typical for a majority of songs in popular music. This becomes even more apparent on the song "Feral" which features only one verse ("I'm not yours, you're not mine. It's all fine, please don't judge"²²⁷) that is almost unintelligible with effects and woven into a construct of instrumental layers and vocal textures. Again the persona of the narrator can be described as different from previous albums. While *In Rainbows* often portrayed a partaking or active involvement in the contents and actions of the songs, the narrative persona on *The King of Limbs* seems to fluctuate between partaking and observing and portrays different standpoints through a changing use of the voice. This can for example be heard on "Give Up The Ghost" which features different vocal deliveries that could be interpreted as a change of persona or standpoints. In this regard it can be said that the structure and content of Radiohead's lyrics as well as their general use has become more varied over the years and reflects increasingly complex song structures and a general change and variation of styles.²²⁸

2.2.4 Production

While the previously mentioned aspects can be regarded as considerably important elements for the identification of genre and appear as main points of discussion within genre discourse, the impact of production and the shaping of general sounds can be regarded as a fourth aspect that influences generic perception and is constantly gaining more attention from audiences. Producers have the power to influence the sound of an album or particular songs considerably and in popular music it is often their work with particular bands or artists that draws attention from newer acts and consequently influences the ways in which their music is recorded. While this is only one way in which musical influences can shape the stylistic identity of musicians, it also often leads to a particular branding of artists

²²⁷ Cf. Radiohead, *The King of Limbs* (Piano Vocal Guitar), Van Nuys, CA 2011, pp. 26 – 29.

²²⁸ While a more detailed analysis of Radiohead's lyrics would deflect from the immediate character of this genre analysis, further research could include a discussion of lyrical functions within Radiohead's music and examine to what extent these affect lyrical meanings. In this regard one could for instance focus on aspects such as humorous, poetic or didactic characteristics. The nature of lyrical themes (in light of poetic genres) is further discussed by Dai Griffiths. Cf. Dai Griffiths, *Elvis Costello*, London 2008, p. 99 ff.

and identification with a specific generic area or niche. Thus when discussing Radiohead's debut album journalists often refer to its grunge influenced sound or producers Sean Slade and Paul Q. Kolderie's previous work with bands such as The Pixies, Dinosaur Jr. or Throwing Muses.²²⁹ Likewise, Radiohead's move from changing producers on the first two studio albums to a consistent work with Nigel Godrich who had previously been present as a recording engineer during the production of *The Bends* has led to a consolidation of the band's individual style and perception thereof. In a similar way to other producers who work constantly with specific artists Godrich has reached a particular status as the producer for Radiohead and it is this aspect amongst others that contributes towards the emergence of a particular style of production that is typical for Radiohead and shapes the band's genre-based approaches to processes of recording and composing.

Over the years Radiohead's music has been shaped by a general development from more live-influenced ideas about composition and recording towards a deep interest in and engagement with in-studio composition. The idea of composing songs in the studio and developing musical structures with the help of recording equipment is often attributed to Brian Eno who describes the process as follows:

[...]in-studio composition, where you no longer come to the studio with a conception of the finished piece. Instead, you come with actually rather a bare skeleton of the piece, or perhaps with nothing at all. I often start working with no starting point. Once you become familiar with studio facilities or even if you're not, actually, you can begin to compose in relation to those facilities.²³⁰

This way of composing is also often associated with the creation of textures and layers and generally pays considerable attention to the details of the recording. A changing attitude towards the studio can thus attest to Radiohead's growing interest in more detailed and layered song arrangements over the years as well as the more frequent experimentation with effects and sampling. In several interviews following the release of *Kid A* Thom Yorke furthermore explains the band's altered way of recording and details the specific use of the studio as a space for composing:

²²⁹ Cf. Johnny Dee, "In Bloom", *Q Special Edition: Radiohead*, July 2003, p. 15.

²³⁰ Eno, "The Studio as Compositional Tool", p. 129.

We started recording before we knew what we were doing, deliberately, so that recording became part of writing. Like when you do programming and electronic stuff, you essentially edit rather than write.²³¹

I think a lot of what changed about the way that we work is that it became less about standing in a room with five people, working like you would in a live situation and more about people going off on their own and experimenting and bringing things in and editing, which is a totally new thing for us. You generate material and then you edit something together and then you generate some more and then you edit that and it becomes like editing a film and depending on how you put a chord with another chord.²³²

Talking in 2012, Jonny Greenwood has also stated that following *Kid A* the band started to evolve into a group of arrangers, interested in starting with very basic ideas and working out more elaborate orchestrations in the studio.²³³ As both commentaries show, while earlier Radiohead songs seem to be recorded in a rather linear fashion it appears that the recording process for more recent albums revolves around an assemblage of elements and details and relies heavily on the editing of sounds. This can be heard on the song "Idioteque" off *Kid A*, which features a repeating electronic beat, sound effects and samples. As this shows the song relies heavily on studio techniques. While there have since been numerous live interpretations featuring a modular synthesizer and live sampling techniques, the song's sound might have been drastically different had it originally been adapted from a live into a studio setting without major changes. In a similar way the song "Like Spinning Plates" (*Amnesiac*), which emerged from the reversed recording of "I Will" later released on *Hail To The Thief*, is a composition that takes advantage of studio technology and would have undoubtedly sounded different if it were not for these recording techniques. Lastly, various songs on *The King Of Limbs* such as for instance "Bloom" make extensive use of studio techniques to increase textural layering. This not only includes the creation of drum and other instrumental loops, but also sampling techniques in general. In this way Radiohead are able to make use of elements such as recorded nature sounds which would not have been

²³¹ "(2000/09/1x) TMF9, Thom", interview, YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdwhpdXJZ_Q&feature=plcp, 0:22.

²³² "(2000/09/0x) Musique Plus, Thom & Phil", interview, YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8VJurWFFVA&feature=plcp>, 3:38.

²³³ Cf. Alex Pappademas, "Radiohead's Runaway Guitarist", *New York Times*, March 9, 2012.

available outside of the studio, but also as Jonny Greenwood has pointed out, to re-arrange and edit their music in order to achieve the desired sounds.

Not only do the compositions thus appear to be complex constructs but also harder to reproduce in a live setting, which might strengthen the artwork status of the recording depending on the audience's point of view. At the same time, the changing manner of production can also contribute to the previously mentioned awareness of the recordings' perceived artificiality, as the beginning of *Hail To The Thief* underlines. Thus audiences might gain a new awareness of the music as something very thought through and complex, which is achieved with the help of a variety of technological equipment and methods. Even though this manner of production is not always obvious from a first listening experience it can nevertheless influence generic perceptions considerably and is often associated with specific genre ideologies and concepts of authenticity. While the use of effects and textural elements can thus give the audience an idea of genre within the first moments of listening, it is also the awareness of an album as a studio product that can shape the generic perception of Radiohead's music considerably.

2.2.5 Performances and paratexts

As the previous paragraphs have shown observations about a small number of textual aspects can already go a long way in giving an impression of the construction of genre in Radiohead's music and the ways in which it might be perceived and interpreted. However, when analysing genre in musical oeuvres it is also important to keep in mind the impact of listening circumstances. As such the conditions of live performances and paratexts can be seen as vital genre signifiers that have the power to influence first impressions of artists and their music significantly.²³⁴ While the previous discussion, and in fact many other forms of popular music analysis, build on an ideal case scenario of listening to the recorded version of a song, audience encounters with new music are often colored by factors such as

²³⁴ As discussed in chapter 1, in *Performing Rites* Simon Frith specifically notes the importance of genre performances. Cf. Frith, *Performing Rites*, p. 45 f. of this thesis.

previous knowledge, images or associated artworks. Before gaining more radio exposure through the re-release of "Creep" Radiohead like many other young bands achieved recognition within the UK through touring and thus early audience perceptions of style were necessarily based on the live representation of songs. Since early Radiohead performances mostly show the band members anchored to their instrumental roles and moving within a more or less predetermined space, it can be assumed that most often live performances reflect musical aspects such as instrumentation to some degree. Accordingly they seem to align with the immediate nature of generic construction and representation. While Radiohead's initial performances thus often convey the impression of a guitar band or rock band in general, this image changes over the years. Starting with a growing range of instrumentation the live interaction between the individual band members and their onstage actions seem to increase and vary. Jonny Greenwood's role as multi-instrumentalist thus becomes more obvious through a more frequent use of changing instrumentation. Likewise, Thom Yorke's constant shift between his position as third guitarist and singer becomes more pronounced and his stage behaviour (i.e. dancing) and interaction with the audience becomes more animated, which can also presumably be attributed to certain time constraints due to changing instrumental setups.

While the changes in instrumentation and action can already serve as visual indicators of Radiohead's growing interest in experimentation as well as the accurate live reproduction of their recordings, a more frequent use of live sampling and effects can furthermore emphasise the changing use of 'liveness.' Following the release of *Kid A* this becomes particularly obvious through the use of live voice sampling on songs such as "Everything In It's Right Place" which utilises short recorded phrases sung by Thom Yorke during the beginning stages of the song²³⁵ which are later sampled and manipulated by Jonny Greenwood and used to build an extended end section. In a similar way "Idioteque" also relies heavily on the distinctly difficult operation of a modular synthesizer and for this reason the song's

²³⁵ This is usually either a short passage from a different Radiohead song or varying cover versions.

live adaptation always includes elements of variation and improvisation to differing extents. It is furthermore notable that various Radiohead songs, whose studio versions are shaped by technology and effects, appear altered or stripped down in live performances. This is for instance the case with "Like Spinning Plates" which does not feature any vocal or instrumental effects live and simply consists of Thom Yorke's voice accompanied by a piano. "Bloom" on the other hand is one example of a new song arrangement, that adopts and translates studio sounds into a live setting. Here, instead of playing drum loops and other samples from a computer, the band employed Clive Deamer who played drums alongside Phil Selway and Jonny Greenwood to reproduce the rhythmic structure and presumably replace other textural layers to be heard on the studio recording.

The performances often seem to produce a form of musical experimentation that makes use of incidental elements which are constantly changing. At the same time they also include an attention to detail and accuracy as demonstrated by the extended use of instrumentation and live techniques. As the above mentioned examples serve to underline Radiohead's live performances often reflect their more recent approaches to in-studio composition by utilising the available technologies and circumstances and often present experimental approaches. At the same time they also showcase a clear development in behaviour which not only includes a more confident appearance presumably based on previous live experience but also a general move away from fixed instrumental and representational roles that indicate a step away from more typical rock mannerisms. In this regard it is particularly notable that all band members have switched between instruments in the past or employed additional instrumentation. This is particularly often the case with Thom Yorke and Jonny Greenwood who have both played a variety of instruments during live performances (guitars, keyboards and drums amongst other more unusual choices) and often done so within the span of one song. This, together with the band's general interest in using an extended instrumentation, often serves as a visual representation of Radiohead's experimentation with textural layering and technologies.

While not strictly associated with the creative context of musical composition and production paratexts such as album covers or music videos can often shape first impressions of artists and the general perception and success of their music. In Radiohead's case one can speak of a mostly consistent artistic representation through the band's association with artist Stanley Donwood who has been responsible for creating the band's album covers starting with *The Bends*.²³⁶ As Lisa Leblanc points out in her article "'Ice Age Coming': Apocalypse, the Sublime, and the Paintings of Stanley Donwood" over the years Donwood created an iconographic language through his work which in her opinion functions as a visual analog to Radiohead's music.²³⁷ She furthermore points out topics such as progressing anxiety, societal fear and destruction that are described as main motifs and points of connection with Radiohead's songs.²³⁸ As Leblanc's opinions serve to illustrate the artwork for Radiohead's albums can easily be interpreted as a representation of themes explored in the band's music and thus it ultimately holds generic significance.

The sense of unity achieved through the consistent work with one artist who is close to the band furthermore contributes to a perceived unity within Radiohead's work and their visual representation. Equally the intricacy of the artworks and their high presence within the album booklets (as opposed to a use of band photographs or otherwise blank lyric pages) serves to further the artwork status of the music and can construct a sense of detailed complexity. An impression of stylistic diversity becomes particularly apparent in Radiohead's music videos, which vary between live scenarios ("Creep"), partial and full animations ("There, There", "Pyramid Song") with optional narratives and short animated clips that feature Stanley Donwood's art work for *Kid A*. More recently, the video for "Lotus Flower" featured Thom Yorke in a more active role dancing throughout the course of

²³⁶ Stanley Donwood (Dan Rickwood) has collaborated with Thom Yorke under various pseudonyms in creating the album art.

²³⁷ Cf. Lisa Leblanc, "'Ice Age Coming': Apocalypse, the Sublime, and the Paintings of Stanley Donwood", in: Joseph Tate (ed.), *The Music and Art of Radiohead*, Farnham, Surrey 2009, p. 85.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 85 f.

the video.²³⁹ While Radiohead's representation in promotional videos can accordingly be described as varied,²⁴⁰ it also demonstrates the band's generic development based on the degree of the band members' inclusion within the video, the use of artwork or extended storylines versus live scenarios. The promotional video for "Anyone Can Play Guitar" for instance revolves around representations of Radiohead as a rock band and features elements of a live performance interspersed with images of the band posing and interacting in a mostly empty room. The second scenario is dominated by the band's – or alternatively the director's – choice of clothing and accessories, which includes leather jackets, black clothes, sun glasses and a feather boa amongst others. As the video progresses movements and actions also increase in speed, band members are playing their instruments in smoky backgrounds and the video concludes on the image of a burning guitar. The video thus features a variety of elements and behaviours that are often associated with rock music by focusing on the band member's rock star appearances, distorted images of live performances as well as elements of destruction and chaos.

While many of Radiohead's later videos feature different approaches and representations it is generally notable that over the years the band has appeared less often as the protagonists of their own videos. In recent years this role mostly fell to Thom Yorke as shown in the description of the video to "Lotus Flower." Over the years it is notable that the storylines of videos have become more extended and the film and production quality notably increased. The video for "There There" for instance features Thom Yorke in the midst of a landscape of animated woodland creatures and revolves around a linear storyline. The video for "Knives Out" also features a clear

²³⁹ In 2013 Thom Yorke's side project Atoms for Peace released a promotional video for the song "Ingenuet", which features Thom Yorke in a similar role dancing alongside a professional dancer.

²⁴⁰ In his essay "Radiohead's Antivideos: Works of Art in the Age of Electronic Reproduction" Joseph Tate for instance discusses a number of video clips released online in support of *Kid A*. These videos (or 'blips') are generally less than 30 seconds long, feature animated pictures similar to the album artwork, and are accompanied by excerpts from the songs on *Kid A*. In many ways they present a contrast to promotional music videos. Cf. Joseph Tate, "Radiohead's Antivideos: Works of Art in the Age of Electronic Reproduction", in: Joseph Tate (ed.), *The Music and Art of Radiohead*, Farnham, Surrey 2009, pp. 103 – 117.

storyline with Thom Yorke as the protagonist. By contrast the video to "Pyramid Song" is completely animated and lacks a distinct narrative structure. With all these videos in mind it appears surprising that interpretations of songs have always been particularly diverse, which might also indicate the influence of individual directors. In terms of immediate genre signification it can furthermore be said that aspects such as the conveyed authenticity, ideologies, symbols or other elements associated with particular genre scenes as well as general colour schemes or even dress codes and behaviour can have a considerable impact on the perception of style. While a close look at a small number of musical factors can have a considerable impact on the analysis of genre it thus becomes obvious that certain contextual aspects can be of equal importance for the immediate perception of style as they often influence first impressions and should subsequently be considered as a part of the discussion on genre within a musical text.

2.2.6 Concluding thoughts

As the textual analysis of Radiohead's music so far has shown by looking at aspects of immediacy and incorporating iconographic approaches one can detect a large number of stylistic elements that serve as primary indicators of genre in a listening context that is influenced by temporal constraints. It is these factors that often have the power to influence individual perceptions and ultimately audience discourses, not only through their immediate nature but also based on their expressiveness and intelligibility for a wide and varied audience with different academic or non-academic backgrounds. For these reasons a textual and partly contextual analysis similar to the one presented in this chapter can often be useful to create a basis for understanding immediate reactions within a range of contexts and audience interpretations of genre that are shaped by factors such as temporal constraints. Applying an iconographic approach in the context of a text-based analysis of genre in musical oeuvres further proves helpful for pointing out generic elements that are particularly notable. The previous discussion can thus serve as a useful starting point for the following analysis of different types of discourses as it gives a basic impression of generic

developments and influences in Radiohead's music. Thus a thorough knowledge of related aspects and stylistic peculiarities will be of considerable importance for later explorations of how different interpretations and opinions come to be.

While the previous analysis has shown a number of significant stylistic features in the music of Radiohead such as for example the use of a wider rock instrumentation or recurring themes revolving around a personal struggle for recognition, these elements mostly appear as individual instances of genre at very specific points in time and go through constant processes of change and development. Although the basic instrumentation used in a majority of Radiohead's songs remains, it is transformed by a changing use of playing techniques, instrumental roles or effects and additional instrumentation. Similarly, lyrical topics are changed through the use of differing personas, singing styles, word choices or stylistic devices. As these examples serve to illustrate it is the development of particular generic characteristics over the years of a band's existence and the ways in which the music transforms under these conditions that can be very important for how genre is interpreted based on the aspects discussed in this chapter and concerning the issue of immediacy. In this context it can be said that it is mostly Radiohead's interest in experimental playing and singing techniques as well as the use of studio effects and varying approaches to composition and instrumentation that have defined their work over the years and can be meaningful in terms of identifying genre to a certain extent. Nevertheless, due to the changing functions and uses of these elements as well as the decidedly fluid nature of the band's musical development a strict generic classification of Radiohead's music can often appear as a slightly pointless or misguided attempt at explaining one of the band's most striking features, its stylistic diversity.

While different generic interpretations of Radiohead's music at specific points in time are certainly possible and provide interesting insights, it is the general fluidity and diversity of the band's music over a longer time period that draws attention to their generic complexity and can be regarded as one of the most defining stylistic elements in itself. While *Kid A* and *Amnesiac*

are often considered a move away from Radiohead's previous music, they are necessarily responsible for influencing and altering audience perceptions of Radiohead's music by introducing contrasting and experimental musical ideas and allowing audiences to encounter the band from a new generically regulated position. As this example serves to illustrate it is often the awareness of genre or perceived generic notions of artists that – once swayed or moved by inconsistencies – can have a considerable impact on the ways in which genre is henceforth interpreted or redefined.²⁴¹ It is for these reasons that this chapter arrives at a new concept of genre as a means of describing and accounting for aspects of experimentation and musical development as in the case of Radiohead, rather than a strict set of specific rules and features. While the attempt to position Radiohead within a specific generic category thus becomes futile, it can be very useful to consider their music from varying perspectives to highlight the band's generic flexibility. For this reason the following chapters will focus on discursive interpretations of Radiohead's music centering around different audience groups in order to analyse and explore how different forms of generic meaning and debates arise through genre reception and individual interpretations.

²⁴¹ This can also be related to the notion of genre expectations, one of the main themes in Neale's writings, as discussed previously. Cf. p. 7 of this thesis.

3. Journalistic Perspectives

3.1 Approaches towards a discourse-based analysis of genre

The following discussion aims to develop a new approach towards genre analysis based on a study of genre discourses that will complement the text-based analysis shown in chapter 2. By taking account of the numerous journalistic discussions of Radiohead's music the chapter sets out to describe the ways in which genre affects critical evaluations. It attempts to show how these findings can contribute towards the study of genre in popular music and will illuminate specific issues of stylistic diversity in the music of Radiohead. Beginning with a theoretical overview of journalistic processes, chapter 3.1 aims to provide a methodological framework for the study and critical analysis of discourses in journalistic sources. It will not only briefly review the history and development of popular music journalism, insofar as it is concerned with the role of genre, but also focus on the working mechanisms and thought processes that affect journalistic processes. Building on these elaborations, the following subchapters will then commence to describe individual examples of journalistic discourse on Radiohead and examine to what extent these discussions can be beneficial for a study of genre.

3.1.1 Roles and histories of genre in music journalism

As one of the most significant areas in which genre discourses take place the popular music press plays a pivotal role for the development of popular music genres and their introduction to wider audiences. In the specialised print media genre terms fulfil a range of diverse functions and feature not only as a means of editorial organisation but also as a way of describing, analysing and interpreting popular music in the context of journalistic writing. Publications may order their contents according to genres or even focus on one genre in particular which then largely determines their thematic coverage. They may furthermore feature articles that focus on topics such as the emergence of new musical genres and associated scenes, the revival of old genres or generic changes within well-known musical oeuvres. Most likely they will contain articles with short allusions or

comparisons to several genres that allow the writer to set the tone for the description of particular artists or, more often, newly released musical works. As this shows genre can appear in many different ways within a media context. A closer look at the position genre occupies within the popular music press is therefore crucial for reaching a better understanding of its specific working mechanisms.

While the popular music press underlies certain genre related constraints and is shaped by genre in different ways, it is interesting to consider if and to what extent journalists can influence genres in the process of their coverage. As the discussions in chapter 1 have shown it can be argued that generic meaning arises within discourse, which in turn suggests that journalistic discussion serves as an important prerequisite for generic development to take place. Often journalists are actively involved in creating names for newly emerging genres, which not only shapes the genre's wider representation and perception but also bestows the journalist with a certain authority over the genre and to a certain degree assures his or her status within music history. A useful example of this is again found in the writings of Simon Reynolds. His article "Post-Rock", published in *The Wire* in 1994, is one of the first articles to cover the genre in greater detail and serves to illuminate the role a journalist can occupy within a generic context. Reynolds highlights specific post-rock characteristics in a very elaborate manner and includes statements from an interview with three bands partaking in the genre that lend his discussion a certain sense of credibility and truthfulness. Not only does he provide a list of main elements his readers should expect when listening to the music, he also creates an inner circle of bands that are to be associated with the genre.²⁴²

Further, the article addresses a specific audience, namely the readers of *The Wire*. Writing under this magazine's banner Reynolds positions post-rock within the musical spectrum of a publication that specialises in experimental music. Taking these factors into consideration it becomes apparent that a genre – post-rock in this case – can thus achieve a certain status and value within the eyes of a specific readership that is affected by the actions of

²⁴² Cf. Simon Reynolds, "Post-Rock", *The Wire*, May 1994.

journalists as well as editors. It becomes clear that journalistic discourse can have a considerable impact on generic formation and change. When studying popular music genres it is therefore crucial to consider the impact of music journalism on the development and reception of genres and further bear in mind the possible subjectivities that underlie journalistic reportage. The following discussion will illuminate these issues further and aims to show how genre can affect the journalistic coverage of individual musical oeuvres.

While these paragraphs aim to provide an overview of genre within the popular music press, a focus on the work of rock critics can be of further importance. As the following subchapters incorporate case studies of articles written by rock critics, it is useful to take a closer look at the ways in which this group of journalists operate and the position they occupy within the wider music press. While academic writings as well as more general journalistic texts about different forms of popular music can be traced back more than one thousand years,²⁴³ popular music journalism only began to develop as a separate journalistic discipline in the latter half of the 19th century with the emergence of trade magazines such as *The Music Hall* in the UK (first published in 1889) and *Billboard* in the US (first published in 1894).²⁴⁴ Interestingly, early issues of *Billboard* largely resemble classic newspaper formats and contain news reportage on various aspects of the music industry. The first issue of the magazine features the subheading "Devoted to the Interests of Advertisers, Poster Printers, Bill Posters, Advertising Agents & Secretaries of Fairs" and thus establishes the magazine's role in providing a marketing space for the industry and buying guides for consumers.²⁴⁵

Apart from news reportage the magazine includes consumer guides that are often divided according to genres and other forms of musical categorisation. Early archived issues of *Billboard* published in the 1940s divide their reviews according to categories such as vaudeville, night clubs or

²⁴³ Cf. p 36 ff. of this thesis.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Marion Leonard, Robert Strachan et al., "Music Press", in: John Shepherd (ed.), *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World*, Vol. 1, London 2003, p. 38 f.

²⁴⁵ Although, at this point in time, it can be assumed that the readership of the magazine was mostly restricted to members of the music industry.

orchestras, while later issues organise their content based on an ever-growing range of music genres.²⁴⁶ Recent issues feature more than twenty different single charts arranged according to genres. It is thus interesting to note that early reportage seems to emerge from a more general form of news journalism and predominantly tends to highlight aspects such as sales potentials of artists or developments within the music industry. Genre was here utilised to organise the magazines content and present what can ultimately be seen as consumer goods by serving as a point of identification. As this shows, when working with journalistic sources it can often be crucial to consider the ways in which journalists may operate as commercial mediators between the industry and the audience.

The early 1930s saw a selective interest in jazz within the educated middle class which led to an increasing demand for journalistic writing on the topic brought forward by the recent emergence of a number of specialist publications such as *Melody Maker* in the UK (first published in 1926). This soon led to the development of particular journalistic discourses directly associated with jazz, such as debates about authenticity, the conflict between high and low art as well as discussions about the value of particular subgenres.²⁴⁷ As this suggests journalistic practices and publications are subject to the developments of genres and particular 'genre audiences'.²⁴⁸ At the same time genre discourses are seemingly influenced by the demography and interests of audiences as well as journalists who might also exhibit a certain audience consciousness. Similarly, when blues criticism emerged during the 1950s it was directed at a particular audience and built on particular discourses associated with the genre.²⁴⁹ Interestingly, discussions of topics such as the genre's value were often influenced by similar aspects within jazz discourse which leads to the assumption that older genre discourses can affect newer discourses in significant ways.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ Back issues of the magazine starting in the 1940s can be viewed online. Cf. "Billboard Magazine: American Radio History", <http://www.americanradiohistory.com/Billboard-Magazine.htm>.

²⁴⁷ Cf. Gudmundsson, Lindberg et al., "Popular Music Criticism", p. 304 f.

²⁴⁸ Cf. Appendix I.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 305.

²⁵⁰ The term 'value' again suggests the importance of genre authenticity or, by extension, a verisimilitude of genre. This subject has also been discussed by film genre theorists such as

This also becomes clear when looking at the beginnings of rock criticism. Evolving during the late 1950s and into the 1960s partly as a reaction to the emergence of rock 'n' roll, rock criticism draws to a great extent on the discourses of blues and jazz criticism mentioned above. However, by positioning rock and pop music as mass cultural art forms²⁵¹ and subsequently focusing on the distinctions between these two types of music²⁵² the new popular music press also began to develop new discourses.

Different types of magazines that began to focus on various areas of popular music had been developing internationally since the early 1950s. This soon led to a split between the traditional rock/pop reportage and towards a repositioning of several magazines as well as the targeting of different audiences. While established magazines such as *Melody Maker* or *New Musical Express*²⁵³ in the UK adopted a more pop-oriented stance at the time, newly emerging publications such as *Sounds* (UK, 1970) or *Rolling Stone* (US, 1968) began to write specifically for a rock audience.²⁵⁴ This new and more selective grouping of magazines also facilitated the emergence of a more distinguished coverage and specific writing styles. While the pop press in general was largely aimed at a teenage audience and featured a lighter writing style, short articles and a focus on the persona of featured artists, the new rock magazines favoured a similar format but also aimed for a more serious and in-depth coverage in order to position the music in a socio-political context. This way rock criticism emerged as a distinguished discipline that featured its own journalistic style and specific discourses.²⁵⁵ At the same time rock criticism and the journalistic discourse on rock developed from a combination of different areas such as "popular culture journalism, film, jazz and folklore discourses, philosophy of art and contemporary debates on Pop Art, New Journalism, the resistance of youth, technology and US culture."²⁵⁶ As this shows the newly emerging discourse

Neale who underlines the importance of generic verisimilitude for a study of genres. Cf. Neale, "Questions of Genre", p. 31 and p. 170 of this thesis.

²⁵¹ Cf. Gudmundsson, Lindberg et al., "Popular Music Criticism", p. 305.

²⁵² Cf. Leonard, Strachan et al., "Music Press", p. 38 f.

²⁵³ Shortened to the more common name *NME* in further discussions.

²⁵⁴ Cf. Leonard, Strachan et al., "Music Press", p. 39.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Cf. Gudmundsson, Lindberg et al., "Popular Music Criticism", p. 306.

was largely shaped by different forms of previous discourses as well as journalistic traditions. Also, it should be noted that rock criticism and discourse builds on an amalgamation of different aspects found in a vast number of sources. While it is thus established as a new compound style of writing it also reflects a large number of pre-existing ideologies that might affect aspects such as thematic coverage or discussions of value. Over the years the development of new musical styles and their representation in journalistic writing has led to a number of very distinguished styles of writing and reportage that is often associated with different genres and publications. While rock criticism thus adds to the self understanding of rock culture by creating canons²⁵⁷ it also contributes towards the understanding and reception of genre as well as the identity and ideologies of associated scenes.

3.1.2 Journalism in theory

As the previous paragraphs have shown genre is often utilised as a commercial tool within particular publications and while music journalists might at first glance appear as mediators between the music industry and the audience²⁵⁸ their position is considerably more complicated. By forming an active part of the audience as well as the music industry journalists occupy an ambiguous position within the cultural and economical landscape which affects their work in different ways. Not least of all their work and perception is often coloured by conflicting values such as commerciality and authenticity. In order to understand the ways in which journalists work under these conditions it can be useful to consider a number of theoretical ideas about the work and position of journalists. For this reason the following paragraphs will present theoretical ideas and approaches by Pierre Bourdieu, Barbie Zelizer and Jason Toynbee and discuss their usefulness for a study of journalistic genre discourses.

Dealing with the intricacies of what he describes as the 'journalistic field', Pierre Bourdieu's work on journalism can be useful to achieve a better

²⁵⁷ Cf. Leonard, Strachan et al., "Music Press", p. 41 and Gudmundsson, Lindberg et al., "Popular Music Criticism", p. 306.

²⁵⁸ Cf. Leonard, Strachan et al., "Music Press", p. 40.

understanding of the constraints under which journalists operate. Since Bourdieu's work focuses on more general forms of journalism his writings can be of further importance for showing the particularities of rock music journalism. In his essay "The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and the Journalistic Field" Bourdieu describes the working mechanisms of and relations between the three mentioned areas and discusses their specific particularities. In this context the term 'field' should be understood as a social construct in which agents occupy different positions that are a result of the specific rules of the field as well as the status and background of the agents who also have the power to affect the field's internal structures. Thus a field's structure is largely determined by the varying degrees of autonomy and authority of its agents. While the agents within these fields accordingly operate under particular constraints and a specific hierarchic structure their actions are direct reactions to these conditions and they are able to shape them to a certain degree. At the same time different fields are conditioned by the relations and invisible structures that exist between them and that are important for their understanding.²⁵⁹ In this regard Bourdieu explains:

[...] when the historian addresses the journalist it is not an historian who speaks to a journalist – which is already a start in the construction of the object – it is an historian occupying a determinate position in the field of the social sciences who speaks to a journalist occupying a determinate position in the journalistic field, and ultimately it is the social science field talking to the journalistic field.²⁶⁰

However, it is also important to stay aware of the specific positions each agent occupies within their field and their individual motives, which might be determined by their respective position within different subsections of the field. News journalists, for instance, might have different aims and strategies than rock critics and their interactions with people within their field or from other fields will be determined by this fact.

While the interactions and relations between music journalists, audiences and the music industry are determined by similar forces, it is important to take notice of the difficult position of rock critics who occupy different positions in all three of these fields. While they are originally part of the

²⁵⁹ Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, "The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and the Journalistic Field", in: Rodney Benson, Erik Neveu (ed.), *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field*, Cambridge 2005, p. 30 and p. 39 f.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 31.

audience their individual careers may lead them to adopt a journalistic stance and either work closely with the music industry in marketing new acts, occupy positions within record companies or be musicians themselves.²⁶¹ Consequently they are affected by the constraints within each field in different ways and may often have ambiguous motives. For this reason it is important to stay aware of the fact that music journalists are not only influenced by the rules of their main occupation but may also have less obvious ideals that can influence the ways in which they utilise genre as well as their work in general. At the same time they also possess the power to influence all three of the mentioned fields.

One aspect that Bourdieu deems responsible for the actions of agents is the necessity to distinguish oneself from other agents in order to ensure one's existence within the field.²⁶² Thus the pressure of coming up with new topics and stories plays an important role in music journalism, which might also explain the journalistic struggle to uncover new styles of music and genres. This is furthermore brought forward by the competition between similar publications as well as individual journalists who strive to achieve a certain status within the field. In this regard Bourdieu states:

A field is a field of forces and a field of struggles in which the stake is the power to transform the field of forces. In other words, within a field, there is competition for legitimate appropriation of what is at stake in the struggle in the field. And, within the field of journalism, there is permanent competition to appropriate the readership, of course, but also to appropriate what is thought to secure readership, in other words, the earliest access to news, the "scoop," exclusive information, and also distinctive rarity, "big names," and so on. One of the paradoxes is that competition, which is always said to be the precondition of freedom, has the effect, in fields of cultural production under commercial control, of producing uniformity, censorship and even conservatism.²⁶³

It is this emerging uniformity that may also have the power to create generic canons that arise through the repetition of what is perceived to be new stories. Thus it can be assumed that new genres develop from an area of tension between the journalistic struggle to be the first to present new and innovative music and not to miss out on topics covered by others. As this

²⁶¹ Cf. Leonard, Strachan et al., "Music Press", p. 40.

²⁶² Cf. Bourdieu, "The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and the Journalistic Field", p. 39.

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 44.

suggests generic canonisation and genre discourses largely depend on journalistic competition.

In her essay "Journalists as Interpretive Communities" Barbie Zelizer brings up a number of interesting points that can be of further help for understanding how journalists operate and interact. Zelizer's construction of news journalists as an 'interpretive community' is based on the idea of a 'shared discourse' amongst journalists that often leads to more or less collective interpretations of particular public events. Through informal networking and the monitoring of each other's work journalists establish their own conventions that become visible through communal discourses. These discourses and interpretations are consequently dependent on previous discourses and conditioned by them.²⁶⁴ While Zelizer mostly refers to the working mechanisms of news journalism, these principles can also be of help in understanding similar aspects within popular music journalism. As historical developments within popular music journalism have shown new genre discourses often depend on previous genre discourses by adapting particular topics or forms of narratives. Since musical influences are often used to position new musicians within an existing canon and are of particular importance in journalistic writing, it can be said that various discourses on popular music show a substantial degree of interdependence. However, it is also important to bear in mind that rock criticism evolved as a new discipline within the 1950s and 1960s and thus displays a certain degree of independence from previous writings. Since many early rock critics came from various disciplines and did not have a large number of previous journalistic discourses on rock music at their disposal,²⁶⁵ they had to construct their own identity and modes of behaviour based on their previous occupations and discourses from other areas of journalism. While they are thus partly influenced by older forms of journalism, they also had the freedom of having no real predecessors which allowed them to develop a more individual style of writing by taking up the perceived ideals of their subjects within rock music.

²⁶⁴ Cf. Barbie Zelizer, "Journalists as Interpretive Communities", in: *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, Vol. 10, 1993, p. 219 and p. 223.

²⁶⁵ With the possible exception of previously existing jazz and blues criticism.

According to Zelizer news journalists operate with the help of a particular repertoire of past events that can be used as a standard point of reference to make judgements about the present.²⁶⁶ In this regard it can be assumed that music journalists utilise a variety of established genres and generic rules in order to evaluate newly emerging genres. While an awareness of past genre discourses and reception is thus of importance for the analysis of present discourses, it is also probable that the growing amount of past discourses and collective interpretations has an ever increasing impact on present writings. This way genre comparisons will presumably gain even more importance in writings on popular music and it might become harder for newly emerging artists to position themselves outside of existing generic boundaries and discourses or compete with them.

Zelizer states that by "constitut[ing] themselves not only as the objects of the accounts they give but as the subjects of other accounts that elaborate on their earlier reportage"²⁶⁷ journalists essentially position themselves in double-time. This temporal duality is marked by two distinct modes of interpretation that help journalists establish a higher degree of authority over their topics.²⁶⁸ Firstly, in the 'local mode' of interpretation reporters construct their individual authority through their presence at a particular event. This "eye-witness authenticity"²⁶⁹ is often emphasised through verbal markers such as "being there" that underline the journalists' presence further.²⁷⁰ This mode of interpretation is particularly interesting in regard to the ways in which journalists construct their own position within their writing and also appears in popular music journalism. As Zelizer points out news journalists often construct themselves as the observers of events²⁷¹ and presumably try to uphold the image of objective and professional reportage. In rock criticism this self-construction can appear in various forms. While eye-witness accounts similar to those described by Zelizer are found frequently, other journalists prefer to construct themselves as being more

²⁶⁶ Cf. Zelizer, "Journalists as Interpretive Communities", p. 224.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 225.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

involved in particular events and take on a participatory stance and authority. Although the ideal of an objective and informed reportage is still of importance in rock criticism, the self-construction of the journalist as well as their authority is often taken to a more individual level and can influence their writing and reception to varying degrees.²⁷²

As a second way of establishing authority within journalistic writing Zelizer discusses the 'durational mode' of interpretation, which serves as a way of judging current events within a larger discursive framework in order to discuss their significance.²⁷³ She furthermore states that "[in] establishing authoritative views of an event long after it took place, [journalists] generate contemporary standards of action for other members of the interpretive community."²⁷⁴ Thus the durational mode of interpretation allows for a second evaluation of events and a chance to establish new meanings.²⁷⁵ This re-evaluation of events can often be found in popular music journalism and has a particular impact on genre reportage. While newly emerging forms of music are sometimes met with scepticism or open criticism they are often constructed as more valuable in later years. Artists that were criticised initially thus have the opportunity to gain more favourable reviews upon second evaluation which often leads to the construction of a new standard amongst journalists. In this way journalistic discourses about past events and opinions are often crucial for the creation of new standards and the re-evaluation of meanings. Shared discourses about the past and past events thus often lead to the emergence of new conventions and play an important role for the ways in which news or new forms of music are discussed and received.²⁷⁶

²⁷² This can for instance be seen when journalists attempt to create new genre names and thus position themselves as persons of authority. Similarly, journalistic self-construction also often appears when music journalists report on their personal experiences with musicians. One can for instance find a large number of articles that document rock tours and backstage events.

²⁷³ Cf. Zelizer, "Journalists as Interpretive Communities", p. 225 f.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 232 f.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 232.

²⁷⁶ This durational mode of interpretation often accounts for retrospective applications of genre. Both journalistic and audience interpretations of albums that have been released in the distant past are thus affected by the degree of knowledge gained in the meantime. Authors then have the authority, as Zelizer states, to discuss the significance of events

Nowadays popular music journalism produces works and publications that fall into the wide spectrum between active consumer guidance and academically informed criticism.²⁷⁷ In this regard aspects such as the reviewer's background and personal opinions as well as the stance of the publications in which something is reviewed can be informative about the character and generic reception of a particular work. For this reason genre analysis also needs to take into consideration the subjectivities that underlie genre reportage in individual cases and focus on the different ways in which it is constructed and evaluated. In order to be able to notice these individual divergences it is thus important to understand the general role genre occupies in music journalism. In his essay "Policing Bohemia, Pinning up Grunge: The Music Press and Generic Change in British Pop and Rock" Jason Toynbee discusses genre reception in the British music press and elaborates on the position of genre in journalistic writing. While Toynbee points out that genre often appears as a means of organising the review sections of magazines, he also finds that different genres are often valued differently in various magazines. These positions often reflect the changes of and relations between journalists and the cultural and economical fields and can in turn have an influence on the development of audience receptions. As Toynbee's case study of indie reception in the British music press thus shows journalists apply different critical standards for particular genres.²⁷⁸ For this reason it should be considered that associated genre discourses are as much informed by journalistic ideals and value judgements as they are by the actual music or thematic contents and standards of a genre or artists. Furthermore, it can be assumed that there are established ways of discussing individual genres – including specific writing styles and appropriate sub-discourses – that presumably arose through shared discourses as well as journalistic competition as discussed by Zelizer and Bourdieu. However, genre reportage in general can also be driven by shared

within a larger discursive frameworks. *OK Computer* may for instance gain new meaning when seen in comparison to *Kid A*: While it was once seen as Radiohead's experimental album, it is now re-evaluated. Cf. Zelizer, "Journalists as Interpretive Communities", p. 225.

²⁷⁷ Cf. Gudmundsson, Lindberg et al., "Popular Music Criticism", p. 307.

²⁷⁸ Cf. Jason Toynbee, "Policing Bohemia, Pinning up Grunge: The Music Press and Generic Change in British Pop and Rock", in: *Popular Music*, Vol. 12.3, 1993, p. 295.

motives. As Toynbee points out journalists often seek to make indie more intelligible to their readers²⁷⁹ and it can be said that journalists who are dealing with other genres often share the same aim. By introducing new genres and making them more relatable they contribute towards the genre's popularity and commerciality and in consequence to its further development. When analysing generic reception in the music press it is therefore important to consider the ways in which genre criticism is shaped by the journalist's individual values as well as shared discourses. Consequently genre criticism occupies a somewhat difficult position in an area between subjectivity and communality amongst journalists.

3.1.3 The case of the 'genre portrait'

As a closer look at numerous music publications shows the concept of genre appears in various ways in journalistic writing. Firstly, it is often used in order to structure a text and genre terms can mostly be found at the beginning of articles. Here it is utilised to set the tone of the article and position the discussed music within a wider discourse. Reviews and other short articles tend to include genre terms in their headlines that serve to catch the reader's attention. In this context genre is often used alongside musical influences and the geographic origins of a band or artists in order to create a short musical biography that helps readers to form a first impression of the discussed music. Genre thus appears as a point of association and identification that serves as a common denominator between journalists, audiences and by extension artists. Accordingly, it can be said that most article types utilise genre in some way in order to introduce and discuss new music.

In this context the 'genre portrait'²⁸⁰ presents an interesting type of article that can be useful to highlight some of the aspects that are often associated with genre or appear as generic sub-discourses. Here, Sam Wolfson's article

²⁷⁹ Cf. Toynbee, "Policing Bohemia, Pinning up Grunge: The Music Press and Generic Change in British Pop and Rock", p. 295.

²⁸⁰ Cf. Appendix I.

"Jumping the Wave"²⁸¹ (*NME*, 22 May 2010) that deals with the genre 'chillwave' can serve as a case study. The article is based on an interview with one of the emerging acts of the genre, Washed Out, and often includes quotes that might be used to underline the genre's legitimacy and authenticity. Wolfson begins by positioning the genre geographically (Florida, USA) and at the same time establishes a certain sense of ideology that seemingly derives from this location. Associated adjectives such as "sun-drenched" appear to build up an image in the reader's mind that together with the article's main picture – a photograph of Ernest Greene of Washed Out carrying a keyboard along a sunny beach with the ocean in the background – serve to create a certain feeling or atmosphere for the genre. As this shows specific word choices and images can play an important role in shaping the perception of genres. Furthermore, particular trigger words such as "scene" or "movement" appear in the article's headline and contribute towards the perceived consolidation of the genre. However, by mentioning the associated conflicts and a certain sense of instability Wolfson draws on a common generic narrative that is often used to create suspense and interest in the face of the genre's possible or supposedly inevitable self-destruction.²⁸² He goes on to point out that Greene works without a manager or a fixed schedule, which creates a sense of authenticity for the genre and contributes towards its ideological stance of freedom and ease.

While the article largely focuses on Washed Out, it also includes short portraits of other associated artists and thus serves as an introduction to the genre and establishes an inner circle. Despite the fact that Wolfson is not responsible for naming the genre, he discusses the emergence of the title to some extent which emphasises the importance of the naming process from a journalistic perspective. The article further deals with the growing success of the genre and concludes with Wolfson's personal evaluation which also

²⁸¹ Cf. Sam Wolfson, "Jumping the Wave", *New Musical Express*, 22 May, 2010, pp. 40 – 41.

²⁸² Conflicts or struggles within a genre often appear in journalistic texts and present main points of interest. This way journalists for instance highlight rivalries between different musicians or speculate about the end of specific genres. These types of discussions often make room for new developments within the genre or a renegotiation of rules and power.

includes statements about the genre's possible target audience. While Wolfson mostly focuses on common rock discourses such as that of ideologies or authenticity, it is interesting to note that the article mainly serves the purpose of creating a clearer picture of the genre in the reader's mind which is accomplished through the use of particular words or phrases. Furthermore, the article deals with genre specific discourses such as the associated sense of freedom that plays into the genre's ideology as well as more general narratives such as the genre's inner conflict and underlying instability. Therefore it can be said that although genre reportage often deals with common discourses that are of importance for the genre's general reception it also often includes specific discourses and individualised language that serves to make the genre more tangible. Since Wolfson also positions the genre in relation to his audience and establishes a sense of value, it can be assumed that the article played an important role in introducing and conditioning the genre for *NME* readers and, to a certain degree, the British market.

As the discussion so far has shown genre often appears as one of the main narratives of rock criticism and holds a particular importance alongside other aspects such as a focus on the artist's persona or the mention of musical influences and traditions. While genre often functions as a principle of organisation and a commercial tool it is mostly used as a means of association that journalists use in order to help their readership establish connections between their own musical tastes and new forms of music. As such the concept of genres and that of musical influences or traditions are often mentioned in a similar manner and can respectively be described as the horizontal and vertical axis of comparison within journalistic writing that are utilised in order to position new music within the wide field of available and competing music and locate its place in music history. While genre is accordingly used in order to introduce new music by implying certain standards and values against which it should be measured, it also needs to be regarded as a construct that partly emerges and evolves in journalistic discourse and is ultimately conditioned by the various and contradicting ways in which the music press operates.

3.2 Journalistic discourses on genre in the music of Radiohead

The following paragraphs present an overview of journalistic discussions of genre in the music of Radiohead and aim to answer the question to what extent a study of popular music genres can be enhanced by including methods of discourse analysis. The chapter will commence with a general overview of the different stages of Radiohead reception that can be found in music journalism (chapter 3.2.1). In doing so it will highlight important moments of perceived generic change and an increasing awareness of stylistic diversity on the part of the journalists. Following from this, the study will focus on individual examples of texts and discuss the varying functions and uses of genres to be found in journalistic discourse (chapter 3.2.2). This way the chapter aims to provide guidance for a qualitative study of journalistic genre discourses. It can also serve to give a first impression of the variety of ways in which genre terms can appear and be perceived within audience discourse.

3.2.1 Radiohead's journalistic reception

As the previous discussion suggests, the notion of genre affects the working mechanisms of popular music journalism and is shaped by a variety of different functions and manners of interpretation. While journalistic discourses on genre in general often feature specific narratives, imagery or styles of writing, and are built on a varying number of more or less established features, journalistic articles with a particular focus on genre discussion (such as the 'genre portrait' presented earlier²⁸³) also count amongst the least common forms of genre discourse and solely present the ideal case scenario of journalistic genre reception. Far more common but yet more obscure is the often slightly unwitting and spontaneous use of genre as a means of description or identification in discussions, interpretations and evaluations of individual works of music by different artists. The following section attempts to answer the question of how and to what extent genre may affect journalistic receptions of individual musical oeuvres.

²⁸³ Cf. p. 136 ff. of this thesis.

A look at various journalistic sources shows that genre reception plays a considerable role for the interpretation of individual musical works and subsequently affects the ways in which audiences perceive artists. The fact that Radiohead's media coverage has always involved discussions of genre to some extent and includes diverse opinions on the subject further begs the questions of how these diverse genre debates emerge and develop. With this in mind the following paragraphs will address varying genre interpretations in the music of Radiohead and show how genre has been established as one of the consistent narratives in Radiohead's journalistic coverage over the years. The discussion will deal with issues arising from interpretative differences, subjectivities of listeners as well as perceived stylistic diversity and finally address the ways in which genre functions and is utilised in journalistic discourse. Based on these results the chapter will describe the resulting terminologies and different ways of categorising music that are used in journalistic discourse in order to discuss the role of genre in music journalism as well as the generic peculiarities of Radiohead's music. Based on these observations the chapter aims to examine whether a study of journalistic reception and discourses presents a new way of approaching categorisation in popular music as well as a new way of perceiving of genres as multidimensional constructs that allow for a number of different but equally valid interpretations. Simultaneously the discussion will address to which extent a study of Radiohead's music can benefit from the analysis of different genre discourses and present a first attempt at a more general methodology for a discourse-based study of genre which will be developed further during the final sections of this thesis.

3.2.1.1 Methodological backgrounds and source materials

Looking at a number of different journalistic sources one is able to create an overview of different reception stages of genre in the music of Radiohead that can also be used for exploring the roles and uses of genre in music journalism as a whole. The results and debates included in this chapter are based on an extensive study of the band's coverage in the commercial print media between the years of 1991 and 2012. Approximately 2,500 articles were read in preparation with the main objective to identify different forms

of categorisation, genre terminologies and ways of utilising genre as a tool of music criticism. The study equally looks at different forms of texts (reviews, features as well as interviews), different types of publications (newspapers, music magazines or specialist genre-focused publications) as well as international differences in journalistic genre discourse. While this chapter originates from a study of international publications²⁸⁴ from five continents and results are generally based on the breadth of information gained from these different perspectives, the following discussion will utilise examples originating from the English speaking music press. Although a similar use of categorisation as a way of making sense of music was observed in a majority of the internationally reviewed sources, both the UK and the US have the advantage of a particularly active, varied and well established music press as well as frequent music coverage in other media forms. Due to their higher availability and international relevance²⁸⁵ a study of sources originating from these countries will be useful in illustrating how issues of categorisation are addressed in journalistic writing underlining the advantages of a discourse-based study of genre. A comparison of varying international approaches to stylistic reception as well as different publication formats or frequencies can additionally serve to shed light on the ways in which genre discourse is affected by outer circumstances and possible national differences.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ Articles read for this chapter appeared in publications from the following countries and were partly available as translations: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Russia, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America.

²⁸⁵ Often articles published in widely-distributed American or British magazines are quoted or appear as translations in publications in non-English speaking countries.

²⁸⁶ While this thesis does not specifically focus on international differences in reception and relies on qualitative methods, the article study that lies at the basis of this chapter made it possible to draw a number of conclusions in this regard. Firstly, as a majority of articles either stem from UK or US publications, the differences between genre discourses in both countries became particularly apparent. While a majority of early Radiohead reception in the UK mainly appeared in music magazines, US reception at this point in time mostly appeared in local newspapers. This is presumably due to a different status of music publications in both countries as well as publication frequencies (i.e. weekly in the UK versus monthly in the US). Against expectations it was mostly the smaller newspapers, specifically in the US, that used genre terminology to explain Radiohead's music – presumably for the purpose of concert advertising that is not aimed at an expert readership. In the UK music press genre appeared as an element of Radiohead reception in the late 1990s and journalists predominantly focused on the issues that arise from

While the total number of articles included in this study was collected from a variety of online sources,²⁸⁷ a majority of examples given during the course of this chapter were subsequently viewed in print in order to determine their positioning and general presentation within the publications. An initial reading of all available sources served mainly to highlight the points at which genre appears within journalistic discourse and the ways in which it is used on a more general level as a way of describing and evaluating music. During this first stage of reading it was possible to trace the functions of genre within a wider media context and take note of the commonalities of journalistic genre discourses on Radiohead during different stages of the band's career. Building on these observations it was possible to detect various ways in which categorisation can affect processes of music reception and analysis. A second reading of the monitored sources served to emphasise the need for a more detailed analysis and the selection of a smaller number of articles. Subsequently, this led to the production of a short list of articles that were taken into closer consideration due to their more explicit mention of genre and extended discussion of the topic.²⁸⁸ A close reading of these sources proved to be particularly useful for exploring the variances and disparities within Radiohead's stylistic reception in more detail but can also serve to illustrate the working mechanisms of genre in music journalism on a general basis. While these more general observations are highlighted throughout the chapter and provide part of the theoretical framework for this study, the articles will be discussed as individual examples and not only underline general appearances of genre in journalistic writing but also show the specific ways in which stylistic diversity has been dealt with in Radiohead's journalistic reception over the years.

Since this chapter works with a large number of sources from which a smaller number of examples has been selected, it remains important to state

genre debate rather than individual interpretations. In the US music press the term 'British' is often used as an alternative form of generic classification.

²⁸⁷ This predominantly includes articles collected on the popular music press archive www.rocksbackpages.com as well as the fan-made websites www.citizeninsane.eu and www.followmearound.com, which both feature a considerable number of articles from different stages of Radiohead's career.

²⁸⁸ This includes an approximate number of 170 articles. Cf. Appendix II.

that all observations made during the course of this chapter result from a strictly qualitative study of journalistic sources. Even though the initial reading allows for a small number of more general statements to be made, it is necessary to emphasise that the list of examples given during the following paragraphs relies on a subjective selection process focusing on articles that mention genre to some extent and elaborate on its presence and context in order to be able to make more general statements about its wider uses and functions. For these reasons this study is also able to cast light on how genre can work on more individual levels of journalistic reception and discuss the value of different listener receptions. As one of the particular aims of this thesis is to examine the equal validity of different genre interpretations when based on sound arguments, the structure of this chapter and manner of article selection can be useful to highlight how a study of different opinions can be integrated with a study of journalistic discourses in order to show the advantages of discourse analysis for the process of genre analysis in individual musical oeuvres. It is mainly with this in mind that the articles discussed during the following paragraphs were chosen as they highlight the different ways in which listeners and journalists in particular make sense of music by applying different readings and methods of contextualising music. The following paragraphs seek to propose an alternative way of accommodating these varying approaches and opinions by integrating them into a cluster of equally valid interpretations that is ultimately based on the understanding of genre as a flexible and fluid construct.

While the subject of genre and stylistic development has been one of the most widely debated topics in Radiohead's journalistic reception over the years, interestingly it is this subject matter that also informs the band's media coverage most consistently and – as a look at the mentioned sources serves to illustrate – has led to the development of rather consistent strands of genre reception in music journalism over the years. Since the release of "Creep" in 1991 and early live appearances Radiohead's press coverage has been affected by genre reception to varying degrees. It is further telling that the band's album releases often coincide with new directions in Radiohead's journalistic reception, resulting in a variety of collective generic discourses

and varying interpretations²⁸⁹ that permeate Radiohead's history as recording artists by dividing it into different stages of genre reception. As this shows the discourse on genre in the music of Radiohead is based on two forms of reception: Firstly and maybe most frequently it relies on individual opinions of genre that can be pitched against each other and serve to illustrate the band's alleged stylistic diversity. Secondly, however, there are also collective strands of genre perception that point towards a general consensus on certain musical characteristics within the band's work as well as their interpretation and relay into generic rules shared by several individuals. As the previously discussed article by Zelizer suggests, these collective strands of genre reception can also indicate a mutually influential or shared discourse based on the concept of journalists as interpretive communities and such elements as competition and networking.²⁹⁰ In this regard an overview of various journalistic sources and discussions of genre over the years is useful to trace how different strands and stages of generic reception arose in response to Radiohead's individual albums. This initial discussion of different approaches to Radiohead's generic classification specifically serves to highlight the contrasts of simultaneously arising discourses as well as the supposed reasoning behind each of them. Additionally, it will provide a basis for a more detailed analysis of various individual genre interpretations with the main aim of illustrating the roles and functions of genre in journalistic writing.

3.2.1.2 Genre reception from *Pablo Honey* to *OK Computer*

In the field of popular music journalistic writing often serves as the main form of critical discourse and has the power to affect the actions and opinions of listeners as well as the recording industry. During the early stages of many artists' careers a certain amount of journalistic attention can play a substantial role for gaining recognition and success. One of the main

²⁸⁹ In the context of Radiohead reception, and as mentioned previously, the term 'interpretation' will be used as a descriptive for individual analyses of genre in Radiohead's music, with particular reference to one or possibly more terms of classification. Meanwhile, 'discourse' will be used to describe discussions that focus on the issue of interpreting Radiohead in terms of genre and the writer's active engagement with classification to varying degrees. Cf. p. 23 (footnote 54) of this thesis.

²⁹⁰ Cf. Zelizer, "Journalists as Interpretive Communities", pp. 223 ff.

aspirations of popular music journalists is the discovery and subsequent introduction of new musical acts or scenes often leading to the enhancement of the journalist's status to that of an inventor of a specific new genre or expert within a specific field. It is therefore hardly surprising that references to genre often feature heavily in early writings about particular bands or artists: New acts are linked to current genres, used to indicate possible revivals of older genres or positioned as the main actors of a new musical style. Looking at Radiohead's early press coverage one can easily trace similar tendencies, but also at times struggles with classification. Following the success of "Creep" and subsequent release of *Pablo Honey* in 1993 journalists often positioned Radiohead as part of the then blossoming grunge genre.

Apart from its temporal association with grunge, the single – which was at times described as 'grunge anthem' by journalists – has mainly been categorised as such based on its specific loud-quiet-loud dynamic and its particular subject matter. Equally, Radiohead's journalistic coverage at the time displays a particularly large number of grunge references in reviews of the band's debut album or live performances.²⁹¹ Aspects such as specific dynamics, topics of self-doubt and the struggle to overcome various issues as well as the band's look and behaviour in a live setting are often cited as indicative factors along with a very common tendency to establish connections and points of reference with other popular bands of the genre – in Radiohead's case most frequently Nirvana. This way journalistic evaluation often seeks to establish specific parallels (in terms of look, voice, overall sounds etc.) in order to provide a certain guideline for new listeners that can be used as an indicator of whether one might like the music or not but that also serves as a point of reference for judging its perceived value.

²⁹¹ Cf. Pat Gilbert, "Radiohead", *Record Collector*, November 1996, for the term 'grunge anthem.' In 2001 *Uncut* described "Creep" as "global Generation X anthem to rival Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit"." Cf. Stephen Dalton, "How To Disappear Completely", *Uncut*, August 2001. In 2008 *Q* furthermore published an article that called the song "a lacerating anthem whose theme of self-loathing chimed with grunge's angst." Cf. Tom Doyle, "The_Complete_Radiohead", *Q*, April 2008. Cf. Appendix II for further uses of the term 'grunge.'

While 'grunge' can be seen as the genre term most regularly associated with the album in the early 1990s, from this point on Radiohead's generic classification became increasingly varied. Following the band's considerable success, critical voices soon arose, proclaiming Radiohead as prospective one-hit wonders, an opinion which would prevail in various publications until the release and subsequent success of *The Bends*. While the term 'one-hit wonder' is not a canonic genre term²⁹² and instead based on a single unifying characteristic, it is one example of a variety of alternative ways of classification which will be shown in the course of this chapter. Since journalists utilise different methods of classification not exclusively limited to canonic genre terminology, it is vital to approach journalistic writing with the understanding that categorisation can appear in various forms based on different common traits or ideals. Doing so may generate a wider and more flexible concept of genre. While a majority of reviews discussed in this chapter will deal with canonic genre terminologies and their specific origins one can also find a large number of more flexible and creative accounts of classification.

Looking at different journalistic accounts on the music of Radiohead it becomes noticeable that the band's success and status at the time of writing are two of the most influential aspects when it comes to non-canonic forms of musical categorisation. Following various speculations about Radiohead's future in the music industry the release of *The Bends* in 1995 signalled another change in Radiohead's media reception. Most frequently the album was described with the rather vague term 'rock' due to its overall sound and instrumentation.²⁹³ Based on the album's substantial sales figures and generally positive reviews journalists furthermore began to discuss the band's prospective potential and drew comparisons to other successful acts. Along with the frequent notion of Radiohead as the next big stadium act this also resulted in a number of comparisons to other successful bands and

²⁹² In the context of this chapter the term 'canonic' will be used to describe established generic categories that are characterised by a specific selection of associated characteristics, rules as well as a canon of representative works. By contrast, 'non-canonic' will be used to describe categories that lack these elements. Cf. Appendix I.

²⁹³ Following the release of *OK Computer* these descriptions often became slightly more specific and displayed a tendency to replace 'rock' with the term 'guitar rock.' Cf. Appendix II.

frequently the idea of Radiohead as the 'new U2'²⁹⁴ – a comparison that can evoke both positive and negative associations. Generally it can be said that the concept of a band or artist as the next important actors within a certain musical and social context or as the successors of a well-known act presents one of the most frequently used forms of non-canonic categorisation within Radiohead's media reception. Similar to the mentioning of musical influences or comparisons to other artists, this type of classification often occurs as a way of familiarising the reader with the new music described within journalistic writing and aims to establish points of reference for future taste and value judgements, albeit avoiding canonic classification.

Following the release of *OK Computer* in 1997 Radiohead reached a new level of commercial success and gained further critical acclaim. With the band's growing interest in experimentalism and different stylistic influences music journalists were quick to construe the album as a change in direction from the Radiohead's previous work. While the music was still often described with the rather wide term 'rock', a canonic meta-genre, the band's journalistic reception soon began to develop into a number of different directions with a decidedly more explicit focus on generic perception. Apart from Radiohead's general positioning as a rock band one of the most widely discussed generic interpretations of their music centres around an alleged move towards progressive rock.²⁹⁵ As opposed to various previous journalistic accounts of genre in Radiohead's music that mostly sought to position the band amongst a variety of contemporary genres and artists, this reference to the progressive rock genre is particularly interesting as it focuses on a very specific subgenre of rock and settles for a distinct and definite interpretation of the album. While the history of the chosen genre

²⁹⁴ For comparisons to U2 around the release of *The Bends* cf. Caroline Sullivan, "Live: London Forum", *The Guardian*, March 1995. Mark Sutherland, "Fairy Tale of New York", *Melody Maker*, March 1995. And: Simon Williams, "I Rate Myself and Want to Dive", *New Musical Express*, March 1995. Cf. Appendix II.

²⁹⁵ Cf. Mark Sutherland, "Return of the Mac", *Melody Maker*, May 1997. Stephen Dalton, "For Those about to Baroque...", *New Musical Express*, September 1997. Tom Doyle, "Party on!", *Q*, June 1997. Cf. Appendix II. As the referenced articles further show it is often the same authors that are chosen to review Radiohead's music at different points in time and describe the band's generic progression in similar ways. While this may underline the validity of certain interpretations it can also point towards a shared genre discourse and indicate imitative or competitive behaviours.

serves to highlight the inherent experimentalism and a varied background of musical influences, it also removes Radiohead to some extent from their contemporaries.

This divide is furthermore reinforced by the fact that progressive rock had been at its peak more than twenty years before the release of *OK Computer* and subsequently attained a set of specific associations leading to a particularly high level of signification and meaning solely through the genre name. Thus the band's specific association with the genre not only serves to underline Radiohead's particularity in the midst of other bands at the time but also points towards the experimentalism, musical complexity and futuristic approaches to composition and recording that were often seen as main elements of progressive rock. This way, ironically, it can be said that the mention of the genre in the context of Radiohead's generic reception does not necessarily indicate a music that is mostly referential of the past but also a general interest in exploring new musical concepts and approaches that some journalists went on to describe as 'futuristic'.²⁹⁶

Studying different accounts of canonic genres it remains important to note that progressive rock, as most other canonic genre terms, can have different evaluative connotations. Thus many punk musicians and fans often associated the genre with a distinct overindulgence in musical and technical experimentalism and a general loss of focus on the conciseness of a song for the sake of presenting one's musical expertise. It is for this reason that a discussion of genre also needs to take into account the relevance of authorship within journalistic writing and stay aware of the individual background of writers which can often affect representations of genre and the ways in which music is evaluated. Since the majority of journalists tend to write about the music they know it can be assumed that their writings on a particular subject will often derive from – at least to some extent – their own musical expertise which naturally also involves an expertise in certain genres.

²⁹⁶ *OK Computer* in particular is often described as 'futuristic' or indicative of future musical developments alongside terms such as 'experimental.' Cf. Ted Kessler, "The Reign in Spain", *New Musical Express*, June 1997. Tom Sinclair, "Head Trip", *Entertainment Weekly*, October 1997. Cf. Appendix II.

As Radiohead's interpretation as a progressive rock band shows, genre reception generally tends to utilise genre terms independent of their original social context or historical positioning. While many readers may be aware of the history of different genres it is mostly the associated meanings and ideals that inform journalistic uses of the terms and, as the above example shows, even the association of a new band with an older genre can serve to make a statement about the artists' position within the musical environment of the time as well as its interest in experimenting with new sounds. Equally, the association with contemporary genres can be an expression of nostalgia or a general interest in music of the past which was for example at times the case in britpop.²⁹⁷

The release of *OK Computer* furthermore marks a point in time at which journalists started to develop an interest in Radiohead's allegedly futuristic style, proclaiming their music as the 'future of the rock genre' or 'indicative of the new millenium'.²⁹⁸ These references to the time of the album's release not only serve to express a certain zeitgeist and underline the importance of historical or social circumstances for the evaluation of music but also evoke the impression of a type of music that lies beyond canonic genre terms due to its novel character. While this essentially points towards a different type of categorisation grouping together new and as of yet unnamed music it also again emphasises Radiohead's specificity amongst other artists at the time and ultimately resulted in more active discussions about the band's general relation with genre as well as interpretations of their musical style as a generic category of its own. While the emergence of what one might describe as a 'Radiohead genre' mainly becomes apparent at later stages in the band's media reception and will be discussed more thoroughly at a later point in this chapter, it is the journalists' growing interest in discussions about genre in Radiohead's music rather than their use of genre as a mere tool for music evaluation which plays a key role in the manifestation of this development.

²⁹⁷ In his article on the genre for *Grove Music Online* David Buckley mentions nostalgia as a 'key element' of Britpop. Cf. David Buckley, "Britpop", in: *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/46596>.

²⁹⁸ Cf. Joe Feese, "Pre-Millennium Homesick Aliens", *Wall Of Sound*, July 1997.

As some of the previous examples have shown Radiohead's early reception mainly revolves around the use of canonic and non-canonic genre terminology as a way of describing musical elements and the overall sound of the band to potential listeners. Following the release of *OK Computer* this notably changes and the topic of genre evolves as one of the main narratives in Radiohead's media coverage.²⁹⁹ It is at this stage that the discourse on genre as a whole as opposed to individual genre interpretations reaches a more central position within journalistic coverage and reflections on the overall diversity amongst reviewers take a more prominent position in Radiohead's media reception. At the same time the acknowledgement of varied journalistic accounts on genre in Radiohead's music also had a growing influence on the perception of stylistic diversity within the band's work and furthered the discussion and re-evaluation of previous related genre discourses. This can for instance be seen in journalistic reactions to some of the previously discussed strands of generic interpretations, such as for instance the notion of Radiohead as 'one-hit wonders' or as the 'next U2.' In both cases the notion becomes at one point so wide spread that a number of journalists seemingly feel the need to go against the statement which they perceive as over-used leading to the formation of an 'anti-discourse' and a process of 'anti-labelling'.³⁰⁰ As this shows, genre discourse evolves not so much unlike genre itself by dealing with certain notions and ideas that at one point are challenged and overthrown or develop in a new direction. This process in particular can also be seen as one of the main reasons for the ever-growing genre discourse on Radiohead which subsequently led to the widespread perception of the band as difficult to categorise. Similarly, the band's often discussed stylistic diversity relies on this notion and forms the basis for the idea of Radiohead's music as a generic category of its own.

²⁹⁹ Other narratives predominantly focus on issues of lifestyle, behaviour and biographical notions.

³⁰⁰ For a discussion of why Radiohead are not comparable with U2 cf. Robin Bresnark, "Radiohead: Doncaster Dome", *Melody Maker*, August 1997. For a discussion of how Radiohead overcame the description as 'one-hit wonders' cf. Caroline Sullivan, "Aching Heads", *The Guardians*, May 1997. Both 'anti-discourse' and 'anti-labelling' are further explained in Appendix I.

3.2.1.3 Genre reception of *Kid A* and the idea of a 'Radiohead genre'

While the music press generally emphasised the stylistic progress of *OK Computer* in relation to Radiohead's previous albums, *Kid A* was most often presented as a distinct break from the band's early work and marks a turning point in Radiohead's journalistic reception. Thus it almost seems ironical that some of the album's early reviews describe the music with terms such as 'futuristic', 'experimental' or 'challenging', which were formerly used to describe *OK Computer*. In this regard it is interesting to note that the standards for the evaluation of the new album have apparently changed: In hindsight *OK Computer* achieves a new status as a more firmly established example of Radiohead's style against which the new music is now compared. It also becomes clear that the meaning of canonic and non-canonic terminology can change over time, based on shifts in perception and expectation. While *OK Computer* marked a moment of stylistic change and a subversion of expectations – making its labelling as 'futuristic' or 'experimental' appropriate at the time – *Kid A* signalled an arguably more prominent break with a number of established musical elements as well as the introduction of new concepts and ideas.³⁰¹ This way the description of the band's work as 'experimental' often seemed to appear as a euphemism for either 'challenging' or even 'confusing.' In particular this also led to a re-evaluation of previous albums on the side of journalists that were keen to construct the band's earlier music as part of a 'classical' period within Radiohead's work.³⁰²

³⁰¹ This has also been shown in the text-based analysis of chapter 2.2. Cf. pp. 82 – 123 of this thesis.

³⁰² In these instances one can often witness the retrospective canonisation of Radiohead's first three albums as a group of recordings displaying a style that is seen as 'typical' or 'characteristic' for the band. Despite the fact that these assessments are necessarily subjective and tend to refer to varying elements of Radiohead's music, the band's early work here presents a norm against which later albums are often compared. In his article "Into the Light" Peter Paphides comments on this way of categorising Radiohead's music and points out that listeners who view the early recordings as part of a 'classical period' see *OK Computer* as a "millennial masterpiece to take rock into the 21st century" while *Kid A* and *Amnesiac* present a new and possibly more experimental direction. Cf. Peter Paphides, "Into the Light", *Mojo*, August 2003. It is further important not to confuse Radiohead's supposedly 'classical' period with the generic category of the same name. Since one is able to find a number of references to 'classical' or 'art music' in journalistic writings about Radiohead, there needs to be a clear distinction between the use of the term as a generic category describing distinct musical traditions, histories and

While *OK Computer* was often constructed as a stylistic turning point within the media, *Kid A* as a second perceived change in direction, seemed to come as something of a surprise to the majority of journalists resulting again in a subversion of genre-based expectations. Based on the general extent as well as the intensity of some of the journalists' reactions it becomes especially apparent that media discourses often revolved around the status of *OK Computer* as either the height of Radiohead's own musical style or as the band's big stylistic break with their previous music and a considerable turning point within their compositional development thus far. As such it can be said that *OK Computer* played an important role for the development of Radiohead's music and their overall perception not only due to its considerable success but mostly through the beginning manifestation of the band's music as a generic category in itself. This apparent emergence of a 'Radiohead genre' could have been interpreted as a point of arrival by journalists and wider audiences at the time with possible implications for future compositions. It is this notion in particular which might also explain some of the media reactions expressing surprise after the release of *Kid A* and the further change of direction.

Since *OK Computer* had already been considered an experimental album, and at times the culmination of the band's individual style, to the majority of journalists a further change in direction might have appeared unlikely or even counterproductive as it seemed Radiohead had already found their musical niche and reached a point where they were able to be commercially successful and thematically subversive at the same time. In light of these observations it can be assumed that journalists work with very specific expectations about a band's development and progression over time. While some artists are renowned for their consistent styles, others notoriously reinvent themselves or go through pronounced stylistic changes. These moments of change tend to evoke strong reactions from fans and journalists alike and are frequently discussed themes in journalistic writing. The

characteristics and the use of 'classical' as a mere temporal and stylistic restriction within the work of a band. For a distinct generically informed reading of Radiohead's music as an oeuvre that is influenced and sometimes reminiscent of art music traditions, or indeed a "new kind of classical music for the masses" cf. Alex Ross, "Orbiting: Radiohead's Grand Tour", in: Alex Ross, *Listen to This*, London 2011, p. 95.

scanning of a band's media coverage over the years thus usually allows for the identification of specific moments of change or one pronounced point of development, that is often perceived as a distinct moment of maturing.³⁰³

Although subsequent stylistic developments after this point are not exactly uncommon, it can be said that – unless an artist has built up a reputation for reinventing themselves with every album³⁰⁴ – these changes are usually more subtle or temporally further apart. The temporal component of genre perception that becomes apparent also has a considerable impact on the forming of expectations and can be useful to achieve a better understanding of the reactions to stylistic change in music journalism: The release of *OK Computer* was generally perceived as a moment of change and signalled the beginning of a new chapter in Radiohead's career. However, this was cut short by the release of new and very different material on *Kid A* resulting in a very immediate 'second' turning point which affected journalistic expectations and perhaps explains the surprised reactions to the album's overall style and divergence from the band's previous work.

With the positioning of Radiohead's style as a distinct musical category as well as the emergence of genre as one of the main narratives in the band's media coverage, one can detect a general shift in journalistic genre discourse which not only started to become more elaborate and active but also reflected Radiohead's overall status within the musical landscape at the

³⁰³ One famous example of this can be found in the changing reception of the Beatles, which developed from pop or rock-oriented music towards an increasing experimentalism. This is also discussed in chapters 8 and 9 of Bernard Gendron's book *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club*. Cf. Bernard Gendron, *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club: Popular Music and the Avant-Garde*, Chicago 2002, pp. 161 – 187 and 189 – 224. In Radiohead's case one can come across discussions of a perceived generic shift, usually situated around the release of *OK Computer* or alternatively *Kid A*. Kessler's article "The Reign in Spain" presents one example of journalistic writing that addresses the idea of a stylistic progression. Kessler positions *OK Computer* as a "fresh new chapter in [Radiohead's] history" and notably states that the band has "found their voice so convincingly that they've invented a new musical language." As this shows, the concept of stylistic development is often associated with a musical coming of age and furthermore marks the band's move into a new stylistic territory that is seen as less referential of existing genres and increasingly individualised. At the same time Kessler's review also presents one of the first mentions of the 'Radiohead genre' within the popular music press, which underlines the significance of a correlation between musical individualisation and stylistic progression. Cf. Kessler, "The Reign in Spain."

³⁰⁴ One example of this is David Bowie's invention of new personalities that often accompanied the release of new albums.

time. While Radiohead were formerly named the 'new U2' they had now become something of a household name and it was not long before journalists started looking for a 'new Radiohead.' Despite the fact that the band's earlier music was often associated with concepts such as musical experimentalism, detailed instrumental parts, specific lyrical topics or Thom Yorke's distinctive use of his wide vocal range³⁰⁵ the predominant question of what makes Radiohead's musical style their own was more often than not answered with a mere acknowledgement of the band's alleged stylistic diversity and – maybe quite ironically – their wide range of musical influences. Thus, the shift from *OK Computer* to *Kid A* marks one of the most distinct moments of change within the journalistic genre discourse on Radiohead's music over the years. It is at this point that one can also perceive a general shift of evaluative standards. While previous discussions of Radiohead albums are characterised by their mention of the band's overall musical influences which generally provide the canonic generic norms, the majority of post-*Kid A* reviews focuses on the new album's deviation from previous releases and effectively positions the band's earlier music as the main point of reference.

Despite the fact that Radiohead's diverse musical influences remain a main point of interest for journalists, the band has become equally associated with their early successes that are often evaluated retrospectively in order to reflect on the band's overall stylistic development. As such the discussed shift in Radiohead's generic perception in music journalism towards the end of the year 2000 also resulted in a general increase of references to the band's previous work. While journalists often tend to use "Creep" as an indicator of the band's initial sound and general accessibility, the band's musical output up to and including *OK Computer* is often presented as part of the 'classical' Radiohead period, which is generally characterised by an increasingly experimental approach to rock music and equally shaped by the band's anchorage in guitar-based rock music with distinct vocal and lyrical elements. In light of the media's mostly astonished or confused reactions following the release of *Kid A* it is perhaps not surprising that reviewers

³⁰⁵ This has also been shown in chapter 2.2. Cf. pp. 82 – 123 of this thesis.

often concentrated on finding similarities to Radiohead's previous work or otherwise highlighting differences. Rather than attempting a clear generic interpretation such as with previous albums the journalistic discourse on genre on *Kid A* mostly revolves around the idea of a deconstruction of style based on what individual journalists had come to expect of Radiohead's music.

While the idea of deconstruction naturally also implies a previously developed style that can be deconstructed it is not always clear whether this style was constructed retrospectively by journalists in light of Radiohead's latest change in terms of genre or based on their previously existing notions. Whichever may be the case, it can be said that the growing interest in Radiohead's music as an independent generic category might be based as much on the almost reflexive construction of a 'classical' Radiohead period in light of recent changes in style as well as the growing list of diverse genre influences that can be found in the band's music at this point in time.³⁰⁶ The suspense between the initial reconstruction of Radiohead's older works in light of their new music and the debate about new stylistic tendencies eventually resulted in a wide range of interpretations that largely focus on the assessment of generic change and a construction of the new alleged 'Radiohead genre.' Quite interestingly this also resulted in the band's subsequent coverage in a much wider range of genre specialised magazines, such as for example *The Wire* (2001³⁰⁷), *Jazz Times* (2001³⁰⁸) or the *Computer Music Journal* (2004³⁰⁹), which underlines the band's stylistic advancement and diversity. As this shows, the band's alleged cross-over in terms of genre is notably reflected in a cross-over between publications but

³⁰⁶ This retrospective re-positioning of Radiohead's early work also reflects what Zelizer describes as the 'durational mode' of interpretation, the positioning of events within a larger discursive framework. Cf. Zelizer, "Journalists as Interpretive Communities", p. 132 f. and p. 179 of this thesis.

³⁰⁷ Notably, this article was written by a rock journalist, Simon Reynolds, who had already written about Radiohead on previous occasions and addressed issues of stylistic change following the release of *Kid A*. Cf. Reynolds, "Walking on Thin Ice."

³⁰⁸ Cf. George Varga, "Radiohead's Jazz Frequencies", *Jazz Times*, November 2001.

³⁰⁹ Nick Collins, "Radiohead: Kid A, Amnesiac, Hail To The Thief", *Computer Music Journal*, Vol. 28, Issue 1, May 2004.

also a more frequent coverage in non-specialised media such as for instance newspapers.³¹⁰

Looking at the trajectory of Radiohead's generic reception in the media one is able to consider a number of different ways of conceptualising a possible 'Radiohead genre.' Firstly, the 'Radiohead genre' could be the manifestation of a general stylistic diversity that permeates the band's work throughout the years from their initial formation until today. This assessment would provide a rather simple solution as it largely reflects journalistic opinions over the years and mainly relies on the band's characteristic use of diverse influences and cross-over tendencies while effectively avoiding a listing of individual musical or contextual elements that would necessarily change over time. Secondly, a 'Radiohead genre' could revolve around the re-evaluation of Radiohead's early work as a 'classical' period with *OK Computer* as the epitome of the band's individual style and a manifestation of their generic independence. In this instance the 'Radiohead genre' largely revolves around a listing of characteristics as mentioned earlier in this chapter³¹¹ and becomes visible through its proposed deconstruction within the band's subsequent work. As a third option, *Kid A* could be interpreted as the culmination of Radiohead's individual musical style, involving a prime shift from rock to electronic music³¹² and generally experimental tendencies as opposed to the band's previous music that relies on comparatively more established canonic genre traditions. In this case it would be important to note that *Kid A* still relies on a number of possibly more diverse musical influences from different genres³¹³ even though they mostly appear as new and innovative elements within the general rock music context. A fourth

³¹⁰ However, it should be noted, that newspaper coverage of popular music issues has generally become more frequent in recent years.

³¹¹ Cf. p. 136 of this thesis.

³¹² This development in particular is often noted and commented on by music journalists. In a review of Radiohead's performance at V Festival in 2006 in *NME* the author states that Radiohead have "dramatically somersaulted between genres" and their live show displays the stark difference between the band's early rock influenced music and more recent electronica. Cf. [Unknown Author], "Radiohead", *New Musical Express*, August 2006.

³¹³ In his article Ross interviews Jonny Greenwood on his use of the Ondes Martenot and the influence of Olivier Messiaen's work on the band's music. Ross further mentions the impact of jazz (in particular Charles Mingus, Alice Coltrane and Miles Davis) on both, *Kid A* and *Amnesiac*. Cf. Ross, *Listen to This*, pp. 90 f. and 95.

conceptualisation of the 'Radiohead genre' might be the notion of genuine musical novelty. In this sense the band that produced *Kid A* could be seen as a reformation of the former Radiohead, which had Thom Yorke in a very central position as the main songwriter. In this regard *Kid A* not only appeared as a six-piece group project (including producer Nigel Godrich) with a new experimental compositional approach but consequently also marked a reconstruction of the band's former sound.³¹⁴

As the different interpretations suggest it is perhaps most plausible to regard the 'Radiohead genre' as a culmination of diverse musical influences in combination with varying individual characteristics that appear at different stages throughout the band's career. Since *OK Computer* and *Kid A* have both been discussed as the respective epitomes of Radiohead's musical style by journalists both albums appear as distinct milestones within the overall development of a Radiohead genre and are equally important in this context. While neither of these recordings should be interpreted as a more representative example of the 'Radiohead genre' they present examples of how the band's music functions as a distinct generic category at specific moments in time. Therefore the 'Radiohead genre' can best be described as a fluid construct that serves to describe the band's music at different stages and does not include any fixed musical or social characteristics, but is constantly evolving. It is a combination of the band's acquired musical tastes and constantly evolving musical features or playing styles and relies on the use of these characteristics in new and often unusual ways. It is possible to interpret the use of genre within the band's music in different but equally valid ways as various journalistic accounts show. At the same time one can detect a distinct double shift in terms of stylistic perception that is acknowledged by most journalists to varying extents. Identifying Radiohead's individual style as a fluid construct thus makes it possible to see not only the variety within Radiohead reception as a whole but also to trace the band's stylistic development and independence at different stages throughout their career as recording artists.

³¹⁴ As mentioned previously, at this point Thom Yorke had also considered a change of the band name in order to "make a break with Radiohead's past recordings." Cf. Reynolds, "Walking on Thin Ice."

While the idea of a 'Radiohead genre' contributed to the steadily growing range of journalistic genre discourses in the wake of *Kid A*, a re-evaluation of Radiohead's past recordings in light of the new music also led to changes concerning the manner of discussion. Rather than dealing with specific generic interpretations, a considerable number of reviews written around this time focused on the issue of genre in Radiohead's music on a more general level. Additionally, journalists began to discuss individual musical elements in greater detail leading to a fragmentation of generic interpretations based on the analysis of individual musical elements and their possible association with various canonic genres. While this generic fragmentation facilitates a detailed analysis of genre in the context of an album and makes it possible to point out various indicators of genre, it also marks a moment in time at which journalists perhaps felt that genre interpretation had either become insufficient to describe the full scope of Radiohead's music or that the band's status made further stylistic explanations unnecessary.

Despite the fact that Radiohead's fame certainly affected how the band's music came to be described over the following years in particular with regards to the journalists' audience consciousness circling around ideas of previous knowledge, it can be said that Radiohead's stylistic progression also appears as one of the most distinct and prominent developments within the band's music which would justify and even necessitate reportage on the issue to a certain degree. For this reason it appears that the alleged fragmentation of Radiohead's musical evaluation after *Kid A* is often borne out of necessity and an apparent avoidance of attempting clear statements about genre in favour of highlighting interpretative flexibility and generic diversity. Genre is mainly used as a way of explaining the details of a track rather than an album as a whole. On *Kid A* the bass sound would for instance be described as "hip hop-style" while the singing is reported to experiment with techniques used in electronic music.³¹⁵ In other cases various songs would be described with the help of different canonic genre

³¹⁵ Both descriptions are used by Reynolds in his review of *Kid A* for *Uncut*. Cf. Reynolds, "Radiohead's *Kid A*: Revolution in the Head."

terms.³¹⁶ Alternatively, reviews often refrained from making genre-based interpretations by highlighting and describing the new music's differences from previous recordings. The music is evaluated on the basis of older generic standards that derive from previous albums and writers tend to avoid the independent interpretation of new recordings in terms of genre by pointing out the elements that are perceived to be 'missing'.³¹⁷ This type of 'negative' non-canonic genre interpretation can often be found in reviews following the release of *Kid A* and typically appears in accordance with the positioning of previous recordings as Radiohead's 'classical phase'.³¹⁸

3.2.1.4 Genre reception after *Kid A* and a fragmentation of style

While reviews of *Amnesiac* continue in a similar fashion to *Kid A*'s media reception, they also include a large amount of speculation regarding the ways in which Radiohead's music would henceforth develop. Significant in this regard was the question whether the band would return to their 'classical style' or carry on in the same experimental manner that the previous two albums had shown. While reviews of *Amnesiac* often repeated discussions that started after the release of *Kid A* they mostly addressed the question of what could be expected from the band's future recordings. The main question was whether there would be a return to alternative rock music or else further experimentation and a move away from what audiences had come to expect of the band. This also contributed to speculations about a possible third shift in Radiohead's musical style. It was thus often the journalists' previous knowledge or generic expectations that had a considerable impact on the ways in which *Kid A* and *Amnesiac* were interpreted and presented in terms of genre. As shown in chapter 1 of this thesis audience expectations often affect definitions of genre³¹⁹ and, in this

³¹⁶ This can for instance be seen in David Stubbs' review of *Amnesiac*. Cf. David Stubbs, "Radiohead: *Amnesiac* (Parlophone)****", *Uncut*, July 2001.

³¹⁷ In his review of *Kid A* for *The New Yorker* Nick Hornby for instance laments the fact that Radiohead's new music does not deliver the type or quality of pop music its fans have become used to. Cf. Nick Hornby, "Beyond the Pale", *The New Yorker*, Vol. 76, Issue 32, 30 October, 2000.

³¹⁸ Although Hornby does not explicitly mention a 'classical' period within Radiohead's work he, too, discusses the band's new music in relation to past work which is positioned as the standard. Cf. Hornby, "Beyond the Pale."

³¹⁹ Cf. p. 29 f. of this thesis.

regard, it becomes clear that individual interpretations of genre on the two recordings are often based on the ways in which people have interpreted genre in Radiohead's music in the past. Generic perception is therefore not only affected by past interpretations and evaluations of music, but also by individual listening circumstances such as for instance the context of a person's first encounter with the music in question.

The release of the album *Hail To The Thief* in 2003 saw a general decrease in journalistic discussions about genre-related issues. Instead reviewers followed up on earlier speculations stating that the new album could very well be interpreted as a move back towards Radiohead's 'classical' pre-*Kid A* sound and a rekindling of the band's interest in 'guitar rock.' It is interesting to note that the album marks a point in time at which journalistic discussions of genre in Radiohead's music almost come to a stand-still. While journalists continue to display an awareness of previous discourse a majority of reviews imply that the readership would already be 'in the know' about stylistic developments throughout the band's career as well as different generic interpretations. The presumed return towards guitar rock is often addressed in a self-explanatory fashion without further commentary, which to some extent also implies a shared discourse amongst audiences regarding the stages of Radiohead's generic progression. Accordingly, the genre discourse surrounding *Hail To The Thief* appears decidedly restricted. While journalistic evaluations of previous albums had led to a number of diverse generic interpretations *Hail To The Thief* was mostly interpreted and evaluated in relation to previous albums and often reflects journalistic opinions of what Radiohead's music should be rather than what it actually was. The process of journalistic genre appellation had become slightly stagnant and referential of the past rather than innovative. While this change in Radiohead reception also serves to establish the idea of different reception stages more firmly one issue that arises from this is the fact that listener interpretations of these stages can differ significantly. For this reason processes of communication between different audience groups and journalists can often be slightly disrupted and might result in misinterpretation.

With the release of *In Rainbows* in 2007 journalistic genre discourses mostly continued to focus on the album's positioning in relation to previous works while some reviewers, again, saw a more pronounced return towards the rock-inspired style of earlier recordings. Considering the particular release method for the album – the album was initially available online on a pay-what-you-want basis – it is probably not very surprising that a large majority of reviews pay particular attention to aspects of distribution and marketing while discussions of genre are mostly avoided. At times the album's interpretation as 'futuristic' is strictly based on the way in which it was released which serves to emphasise the impact that industrial aspects can have on generic interpretations. The interest in the band's new uses of experimental release methods nevertheless often served to underline a general move towards a more autonomous position within the realm of the music industry. Notably, this also draws attention to Radiohead's general positioning within the industrial environment at the time. Thus the move from the major record label Parlophone/EMI to the independent label XL Recordings (and TBD in the US) also had implications for the band's overall perception in terms of genre as well as authenticity.

While Radiohead's new music was subsequently released under the banner of an independent label, their previous label Parlophone followed their parting with the re-release of Radiohead's entire back catalogue as well as a best of compilation of the band's work in 2008. This not only led to a wider availability and presence of Radiohead's previous music including rare live recordings and b-sides but also presents a very interesting re-evaluation of Radiohead's style from the side of the music industry. A look at the compilation *Radiohead: The Best Of*³²⁰ shows that the label's selection of songs can have implications for what could be seen as either the most commercial or well-known songs or give an indication of what the music industry might regard as most representative of the 'Radiohead sound.' It is interesting to note that the compilation is clearly dominated by tracks taken from *OK Computer* and *The Bends* in particular. A clear majority of the

³²⁰ *Radiohead: The Best Of* could be purchased as a normal one CD version (including 18 songs) as well as a special edition containing a second CD with 13 songs and a DVD featuring the band's promotional videos. Cf. Appendix I.

songs were previously released as singles and it is furthermore notable that the album mostly focuses on rock-based songs rather than more diverse music. While the selection of songs on this album presumably follows a mostly commercial purpose it is interesting to consider the implications for how Radiohead's music is presented generically by members of the music industry. Clearly, the album highlights the band's older works and does not pay particular attention to the more experimental songs on *Kid A* or *Amnesiac*. However, *Hail To The Thief* has equally little space on the compilation which leads to a clear positioning of Radiohead's representative work within the alleged 'classical phase' of the band's recording history. While this might be due to a number of commercial reasons it also indicates a canonisation of the band's early work and a re-evaluation of their previous music from a temporal distance.

In light of the above discussion it is interesting to note that general re-evaluations of Radiohead's work by music journalist's became notably more frequent at this point in time. Starting in 2007 critics specifically began to reflect on *OK Computer* and discussed the album's status ten years after its initial release. These writings often served to further underline the division of Radiohead's musical recordings into distinct generic stages, and a majority of retrospective reviews turned the usual reviewing process around by comparing the album against what one could still expect of the band in the future. Despite initial interpretations of *OK Computer* as 'experimental' or 'futuristic' the subsequently acquired knowledge about *Kid A* often served to relativise these readings and resulted in a retrospective positioning of *OK Computer* as closer to the rock 'mainstream.' As this shows the impact of temporal distance and commercial purposes can affect the perception of genre and its presentation in a media context to a considerable extent.

The release of Radiohead's eighth studio album *The King Of Limbs* in February 2011 was again met with relatively little speculation about specific generic interpretations in the press and genre discourses mainly repeated earlier debates regarding stylistic diversity and fragmentation. It is perhaps a statement of Radiohead's status and the widespread distribution of their music that a majority of journalists did not seem to feel the need to include

detailed explanations regarding the band's overall sound. Rather, as the discussion of Radiohead's media reception around the release of *Kid A* has shown, smaller aspects within the band's music are at times explained with the help of generic terminology. As such the band's media coverage mostly continued to focus on abstract ideas about generic shifts and concepts rather than concrete interpretations of genre and in the process contributed to the development of what might best be described as a 'meta-dialogue'³²¹ on conceptions and uses of genre in the music of Radiohead.

Interestingly, the release of Radiohead's remix album *TKOL1234567* in September 2011 emphasises the role of stylistic diversity in journalistic discourse as it presents the songs in a way that underlines their suitability within a certain genre if treated with the right techniques and methods. As this shows the music is adapted rather easily in a slightly different generic context³²² – in this case electronic and dance music³²³ – and the release of this collection of songs that were essentially treated by different musicians can open up new and distinct strands of generic discourse that re-interpret and re-evaluate the initial recordings in light of the new material. Since the original tracks were still relatively new at this point in time, their transformation created space for new interpretations and a wider variety of readings.

While the discussion has so far emphasised the prevalence of generic stages and shifts in genre discourse, looking at journalistic sources one is also able to detect a number of general elements and statements that affect individual genre interpretations. In this regard it is possibly most noteworthy that a majority of genre assessments are not exclusively based on musical elements but also incorporate social circumstances. One example that reappears over the years is the statement that the members of Radiohead lead the antithesis to what is seen as a typical rock lifestyle.³²⁴ This usually

³²¹ Cf. Appendix I.

³²² Similarly, other artists have released a variety of cover versions of Radiohead songs inspired by different genres such as reggae, jazz or orchestral music.

³²³ The list of musicians involved in the remixes mainly consists of electronic artists.

³²⁴ Interestingly, this notion was also spread by the band's record company. As an article published in *Fender Frontline* in fall 1993 states, Radiohead's press kit at the time described and marketed the band as "the antithesis of rock'n'roll." While it remains

includes characteristics such as being 'polite' or even 'reserved' during interviews or simply not drawing any negative attention within the media. Often articles present this behaviour as something of a novelty within a rock music context which is on the one hand worth pointing out to their readership but also seen as opposed to a typical rock star behaviour. A further example is the continuing reference to Radiohead's music as slightly 'unusual' or even 'weird' which often indicates a still lingering confusion in terms of the band's generic interpretation with a tendency to avoid making any clear interpretative statements instead relying on implications that can be read in different ways. As such the analysis of journalistic articles shows that opinions on genre can often rely on very different factors – they might be determined by musical features, but also by audience behaviour, styles of clothing or live performances and so on – and therefore the process of genre interpretation differs from writer to writer. It is this diversity that allows for a comparison of different ways of listening and makes it possible to consider varying interpretations contributing to a more informed analysis of genre. For this reason the following paragraphs will take a closer look at the ways in which journalists analyse genre in Radiohead's musical oeuvre in practice to achieve a more thorough understanding of how the discussed individual interpretations arise and which roles they take on in the context of music criticism.

3.2.2 Uses of genre in music journalism

As a look at Radiohead's media reception over the years can show the concept of genre fulfils a variety of functions in different areas of music journalism and can appear in various forms in journalistic discourse. Most commonly it is used as a way of explaining the sound of a particular musical work to new listeners by making comparisons and evoking associations with other pieces of music that readers would already be more familiar with. Genre creates relations between different works in order to facilitate the

unclear whether this was in reference to the band's music or lifestyle, the article chooses to contrast this view with a description of Radiohead's music highlighting aspects such as an underlying sense of rebellion, anger or frustration as typical elements within the realm of rock'n'roll and consequently challenging the notion circulated by the band's press office. Cf. [Unknown Author], "Creeping into the Limelight", *Fender Frontline*, 1993.

navigation of the musical landscape and enhance processes of communication and evaluation. It further shapes expectations and affects the ways in which audiences approach new music. For this reason when dealing with journalistic sources it is important to bear in mind that presented opinions are usually based on preconceived notions, existing knowledge and, to a certain degree, subjectivity. While Radiohead's journalistic reception shows great variety in terms of genre, classification appears in different forms and is not always limited to canonic terminology. Different forms of categorisation for instance appear at different points in time. Similarly, types of classification often coincide with distinct phases in the band's career and can be associated with individual albums. The following paragraphs aim to create an overview of the different forms of genre that can be found in journalistic discourses on Radiohead and show how these uses of genre can illuminate a study of the band's generic reception.

3.2.2.1 Canonic genre terminologies and their variations

When Radiohead's first interview appeared in the Oxford based magazine *Curfew* in November 1991 more than a year before the release of *Pablo Honey*, editor Ronan Munro described the band as "a great pop group"³²⁵, if maybe "a little weird"³²⁶. Although Munro could not possibly have anticipated the development Radiohead's music would undergo in the following years, he does provide a rather interesting assessment of the band's music by pointing out two ways of defining the music generically that are still relevant in the journalistic genre discourse on Radiohead until today. While Munro's article highlights the dichotomy of a grounding in 'pop music' with its wide range of connotations and at the same time a sound or appearance that is slightly out of the ordinary, he involuntarily and yet accurately summarises the majority of genre discussions that would appear as part of Radiohead's media reception over the coming years. The use of words such as 'pop' presents a typical example of canonic genre terminology, but meanwhile also falls into the category of meta-genres and accordingly delivers a slightly vague account of the music in question that

³²⁵ Cf. Ronan Munro, [Radiohead's first interview], *Curfew*, November 1991.

³²⁶ Ibid.

avoids precise interpretations. Despite the fact that the use of meta-genres is consistent throughout Radiohead's career (usually revolving around the band's roots in rock music) these generic categories are usually combined with further genre-based specifications that describe the music in more detail but also serve to maintain an interpretative stance that often borders on evasiveness. In this sense terms such as 'weird' are then often used as a type of 'ersatz genre terminology' that evades clear generic interpretations – often by using adjectives as replacement terms – which ultimately leads to equally vague interpretations and serves to express a sense of confusion or indicate a certain degree of generic diversity or complexity within the discussed piece of music.

The use of what one might call 'adjective genres'³²⁷ is considerably widespread in music journalism as a whole and presents one of the main examples of non-canonic terminology. As one of the main tools for describing new artists as well as generic change this specifically descriptive method of categorising music appears consistently throughout Radiohead's media reception and will be discussed in more detail at a later stage in this chapter. However, it is important to note that, in this specific instance of genre specification, the use of both meta-genres and 'adjective genres' indicates an avoidance of very distinguished generic interpretations, presumably based on the fact that at this stage the band's music was not well-known and journalistic evaluation was necessarily based on first fleeting impressions. Both instances of categorisation appear as circumventive methods of classification that are indicative of the band's less known status. Nevertheless, at the same time Munro also takes care to highlight the band's individuality and it is mostly this aspect together with the description of their sound as slightly out of the ordinary which serves to present Radiohead as generically distinguished. While the article thus serves as a very early indication of Radiohead's subsequent musical development it is also decidedly careful and tentative which is possibly due to the fact that it lacks any previous journalistic accounts of the band's music as reference points.

³²⁷ Cf. Appendix I. This form of categorisation is further discussed on p. 206 ff. and p. 236 ff. of this thesis.

As Munro's discussion of Radiohead's early music shows journalistic allusions to genre often present a first step into describing new music to possible audiences and establishing systems of expectation. The use of canonic terminology functions as a way of positioning the music within existing canons and traditions and furthermore highlights possible associations with other bands or current styles of music. At the same time it also becomes clear that this early account – presumably similar to a majority of first musical evaluations of new bands or artists – takes care to point out what one might find unusual about the band and clearly seeks to distinguish Radiohead in this sense. Despite doing all of this Munro remains conveniently vague about more specific evaluations or very detailed accounts of the music. Whether this is due to the general style of the article, the overall listening circumstances, the lack of reference points, or a product of his specific style of writing remains unclear. Nevertheless, the article usefully illustrates the ways in which categorisation can appear in journalistic writing without making very distinct statements regarding the band's perception and shows that even vague generic interpretations can appear in various shapes and forms.

It is ultimately the difference between the two types of classification found in the article that is helpful in giving an impression of how the band could have sounded to audiences at the time. Munro describes Radiohead as a band that does not quite fit the pop mould, but also has its roots in pop music, and it is interesting to note that this dichotomy plays a considerable role in various journalistic discussions of Radiohead's music. It can be said that a certain element of contradiction is important in Radiohead's media reception which often highlights the music's generic inconsistencies or diversity. At the same time Munro's statements also need to be considered carefully, not least because they provide the exposition for an interview. While the previous paragraphs have shown that it is indeed possible to draw a number of conclusions regarding his stance on genre based on very few words, this does not necessarily imply that Munro put a lot of thought into this specific account of the band's music or thought about genre in detail. It is more likely a spontaneous account and it is important to keep in mind that the circumstances of journalistic writing processes as well as generic

reception may often vary. Moreover, individual readings of genre interpretations can also differ. Thus it is mainly through looking at the similarities and parallels within journalistic discourses on genre that one is able to draw more useful conclusions regarding a band's generic interpretation as well as the role that genre plays within their overall media reception.

While Munro's text presents one distinct example of canonic genre terminology, it is this form of generic classification that appears most commonly in journalistic discourse and serves to specify stylistic tendencies as well as different levels of generic interpretation (i.e. meta- or subgenres). In general it can be said that canonic genre terms can appear in very different contexts and may be combined with different types of arguments that can either be very specific or otherwise barely noticeable. In other instances the genre might be mentioned without any further explanation and it is indeed this type of genre reception that is most commonly found in Radiohead's media coverage over the years. This, of course, also has implications in terms of journalistic audience consciousness and often indicates an assumed or presupposed awareness of the band's music on sides of the readership combined with a distinct knowledge about the discussed genre.³²⁸ In this regard genre then almost appears as a kind of language or communicative device between writers and their audiences which relies on a shared knowledge of genre rules and can serve to convey a distinct impression of music in very few words.³²⁹

A further example of this use of genre can be found in Keith Cameron's live review "Radiohead – Smashed!, Islington, London" published in *NME* on December 19, 1992.³³⁰ In his article Cameron describes Radiohead as "a

³²⁸ This knowledge would notably be quite specific to the magazine in which the canonic genre term is mentioned. Since different magazines cover particular genres it can be assumed that most of their readership has expert knowledge in these areas. Thus journalists would approach their writing process with certain expectations about their reader's previous knowledge.

³²⁹ In his book *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures* Keith Negus points out that genre often functions as a shorthand language between musicians allowing them to communicate certain mutual expectations in relatively few words. Cf. Keith Negus, *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures*, London 1999, p. 4.

³³⁰ Cf. Keith Cameron, "Radiohead: Smashed!, Islington, London", *New Musical Express*, 19 December, 1992.

band who play tight, slightly noisy power-pop and, er, that's it."³³¹ During the course of the article he takes great care to present the music as distinctly restrained and cautious. Thus he points out that Radiohead are "mannered beyond belief"³³² and overall present a "slightly camp (but not too much), vaguely dissonant (ooh, but careful, not too loud) mod-ish (but hey, we're lookin' to the future) blueprint and can barely fathom a decent tuneful moment in their allotted 40 minutes."³³³ This reasoning is mostly what leads Cameron to describe Radiohead as a "pitiful, lily-livered excuse for a rock'n'roll group"³³⁴ towards the end of his review, a description which infamously sparked a long-standing distrust between Radiohead and the *NME*. While Cameron's article falls amongst one of the shorter pieces of journalistic writing, its use of genre is comparably extensive and particularly noteworthy in terms of related notions of authenticity. Despite the fact that the band is presented in a negative light one could also gain the impression that, according to Cameron, the music is not living up to its potential. Thus Cameron mainly utilises genre to draw comparisons between what he assumes Radiohead are aiming to do, or else what they should be trying to achieve and the way he actually perceives the band's music at this stage in their career, in a live context.

Although Radiohead are initially described as 'power-pop', Cameron does recognise the band's supposed rock aspirations. While he takes great care to point out that this is not achieved, his evaluation seems to revolve around what a 'rock'n'roll group' should sound and behave like. In this regard one can then assume that the term 'power-pop' holds negative connotations that are not only recognised by Cameron but also by his readers, an audience that presumably mostly consists of dedicated rock fans. In this regard the word 'pop' itself might essentially be used to form a familiar antithesis to rock and, while Radiohead's music aspires to the latter, Cameron is willing only to describe them as 'power-pop', but no further. In a similar manner Cameron describes the music by using words such as 'slightly' or 'vaguely' in accordance with specific musical details to indicate why Radiohead do

³³¹ Cameron, "Radiohead: Smashed!, Islington, London."

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid.

not fit the rock mould. It is specifically his description of Thom Yorke's stage behaviour which he says always seems to shift between a sense of inherent politeness and anger during performances which, according to Cameron, is mainly based on a role Yorke is acting out. With this statement it becomes clear that Cameron's notion of rock largely revolves around certain notions of authenticity and his evaluation of Radiohead largely seems to be based on the fact that, in his opinion, Radiohead are too well mannered and not offensive and polarising enough for a rock group. It is thus important to notice the distinctly negative connotations certain genre terminologies can bring with them in specific contexts. In a similar manner journalistic writing often relies on specific comparisons or distinctions between certain genres that are used to convey notions of authenticity and a sense of generic verisimilitude.³³⁵

As Cameron's article illustrates canonic genre terminology usually appears in journalistic writing as a way to introduce audiences to new sounds and generally relies on a shared knowledge between readers and writers regarding the rules and contexts of genre which affect individual perceptions of music. It is for this reason that journalistic evaluations often not only set the standard for genre-based expectations but also guide their readership in terms of their overall knowledge and understanding of different genres and genre histories. Looking at Radiohead's early media reception one can see a distinct tendency towards the use of canonic genre terminology, specifically meta-genres, and categories that are often easily explained, very well-known or specifically popular at the time. In using words such as 'rock' or 'pop', that are widely understood but yet vague, or else terms such as 'grunge' or 'shoe-gazing', that were popular at the time, journalists establish Radiohead as a band that builds on well-known traditions and can be associated with current musical happenings.³³⁶ In comparison to Radiohead's early media reception it is important to note that later accounts of genre in the band's music are generally more varied and often display a wider selection of canonic and non-canonic genre

³³⁵ The verisimilitude of genres is also often addressed in film genre theory and counts amongst one of the most frequently mentioned concepts of classification and generically based judgements of value in films. Cf. Neale, "Questions of Genre", p. 160 f.

³³⁶ Cf. Appendix II.

terminology. Moving away from well-established categories, journalistic evaluations of genre soon begin to sway towards more specific terminologies and detailed arguments that serve to reflect specific genre rules. This often becomes apparent through the use of subgenres: Albums such as *Pablo Honey* or *The Bends* were grouped under the banner of 'indie rock', while *OK Computer* was sometimes associated with 'progressive rock' which led to specific evaluations.³³⁷ At the same time it is interesting to note that with each new album the list of genre titles appointed to the band grew considerably. This diversity of generic interpretations within journalistic discourse indicates a growing complexity of Radiohead's music in terms of genre over the years and again underlines the necessity for a more discriminatory overview of the uses of canonic and non-canonic genre terminologies in Radiohead reception.

While different generic interpretations of the same album or song can often be useful to highlight two different yet complementary sides of the music, it is noteworthy that the release of *Kid A* not only resulted in a wider use of different standard terms to describe Radiohead's music but also in a list of articles that use similar terminologies in varied ways. In this regard it is important to consider that individual interpretations and arguments might often work with very different notions of genre and thus display a variety of approaches to according genre rules but also to the general notion of genre as a whole. One example that is particularly interesting in the context of *Kid A*'s media reception is the interpretation of the album as a work within the genre of post-rock. Two articles – Simon Reynolds' review "Radio Chaos"³³⁸ as well as Gerald Marzorati's "The Post-Rock Band"³³⁹ both published around the same time shortly after the album's release – can serve to show various similarities but also differences in the ways in which the same genre term can be used in a journalistic context by different writers. While Reynolds' article appeared in the rock magazine *Spin*, Marzorati's review was published in the *New York Times Magazine* which may indicate a wider audience with presumably less knowledge about the genre but also a

³³⁷ Cf. Appendix II.

³³⁸ Cf. Simon Reynolds, "Radio Chaos", *Spin*, October 2000.

³³⁹ Cf. Gerald Marzorati, "The Post-Rock Band", *The New York Times Magazine*, 01 October, 2000.

wider range of different areas of interest. As such it needs to be noted that Reynolds' as a rock journalist writes for a specialist audience, while Marzorati in his capacity as editor for the *New York Times Magazine* is generally responsible for a wider range of subject areas and presumably also writes with a more diverse audience in mind. Nevertheless, both articles initially highlight similar aspects about post-rock and seemingly display a comparable awareness of associated rules. Aspects that are mentioned in both texts and serve as indicators of post-rock are fragmented lyrics and voice manipulation; a lack of traditional guitar-sounds that are replaced with instrumental textures and electronically generated sounds; a new-found interest in synthesizers; a move away from traditional song structures in popular music; and lastly a compositional approach that largely takes place in the studio.³⁴⁰ The articles differ, however, in their presentation of these features and it is perhaps noteworthy that they make use of different reference points. While Reynolds mostly addresses new musical elements by naming specific musical influences – in particular he makes comparisons to other genres such as free-jazz or ambient as well as bands such as Hawkwind that also have certain stylistic implications – Marzorati explains Radiohead's lyrical fragmentation by pointing towards methods used by French dadaist Tristan Tzara.³⁴¹ This difference in reference points can be one indication of a distinct audience awareness on part of both writers and again reflects the different readership and interests of the respective publications.

While the two articles initially reflect similar notions of the same genre it is mostly interesting to consider the backgrounds of their generic

³⁴⁰ As previously mentioned, the concept of 'in studio-composition' largely goes back to Brian Eno's methods of composing and recording. However, a similar approach was also taken in Eno's work with David Byrne and the Talking Heads. Since band members of Radiohead have at times stated the influence of both musicians on their work it can be assumed that they were – at this point at least – familiar with the techniques used. A description of 'in-studio composition' can be found on p. 114 f. of this thesis.

³⁴¹ A dada inspired cut up technique was indeed used by Yorke to generate lyrics for a number of songs contained on *Kid A*. In "Reflections On Kid A" he explained: "[W]hat I tried to do when I [had the writer's block] was just basically [keeping] all the things that didn't work [...] and cutting them up and putting them in this top hat and pulling them out." This can be heard on the title track "Kid A" as well as "Everything In Its Right Place", "The National Anthem", "Optimistic", "In Limbo" and "Idioteque" and quite possibly "Morning Bell", which is not mentioned explicitly but features similarly fragmented lyrics. Cf. "Reflections on Kid A", 18:40 and 20:25.

interpretations. Both authors take care to position Radiohead as an 'important band.' Reynolds points out that there is something close to a "solemn self-seriousness"³⁴² about Radiohead which slightly removes them from many of their contemporaries. Accordingly Reynolds sees Radiohead as very ambitious and hard-working yet slightly "uncool"³⁴³ but at the same time also unconcerned about current musical trends. It is this attitude, combined with the mentioned characteristics, that serves as an introduction to Reynolds' assessment of Radiohead's album *Kid A* as a post-rock record. It is important to note in this respect that Reynolds' article extensively builds on his previous writing about the genre which he helped to name and define in the early 1990s. Thus it is perhaps not surprising that Reynolds' statements about post-rock and its rules largely build on his early article about the genre that was published in *The Wire* in 1994³⁴⁴ and rewritten to be published as part of the book *Audio Culture* in 2004.³⁴⁵ Accordingly, Reynolds has very extensive background knowledge about the genre and is careful in pointing out in which respects Radiohead's album could be interpreted as such. His article mostly relies on certain behavioural and musical aspects which he describes precisely despite the relative shortness of the review. It is thus mainly the way in which the album was composed and recorded as well as its specific musical characteristics that lead him to conclude that: "Essentially, [*Kid A*] is a post-rock record."³⁴⁶

While Reynolds' account mostly relies on his personal evaluation of Radiohead's music and an extensive knowledge about the rules of post-rock, Marzorati's genre interpretation also reflects views on larger cultural developments. Despite the fact that Marzorati discusses the music to some extent and addresses specific generic features, it soon becomes clear that his interpretation also builds on current trends and historical developments within popular music. Marzorati positions Radiohead as a "significant band"³⁴⁷ that released their album in a "moment that has the feel of a

³⁴² Reynolds, "Radio Chaos."

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Cf. Reynolds, "Post-Rock" [1994].

³⁴⁵ Reynolds, "Post-Rock" [2004], p. 358 – 361.

³⁴⁶ Reynolds, "Radio Chaos."

³⁴⁷ Marzorati, "The Post-Rock Band."

mainstream-music paradigm-shift -- away from pop-rock and toward hip-hop, dance music and what gets called electronica."³⁴⁸ As such one can assume that Marzorati's initial notion of the term 'post-rock' and interpretation of Radiohead's music is not necessarily based on a historically anchored notion of the genre or previously established rules, but maybe as much on the idea of something that goes beyond rock, a new generic category that supersedes the genre. Notably, Marzorati compares Radiohead's status and work ethic at the time to that of The Beatles and points out that Radiohead are reinventing the concept of a rock band. In this regard it is perhaps most interesting to consider the fact that, while Reynolds uses the term 'post-rock' to describe Radiohead's album *Kid A* in musical terms, Marzorati uses the same term to position Radiohead as a post-rock band at a moment of change within popular music as a whole. As such Marzorati's article is conscious of the band's status at the time and the ways in which their music reflects current developments. His interpretation has a pronounced focus on larger happenings within the music industry and gives an indication of what role Radiohead play in this, which serves to underline their importance.

Although Marzorati's previous knowledge about post-rock is not clear, his closeness to Reynolds' writings could suggest that he might have been familiar with Reynolds' early article on the genre.³⁴⁹ However, while Reynolds mostly utilises post-rock as a way of describing musical details, Marzorati makes more general statements and uses the term to explain Radiohead's music as a product of its time but also as a catalyst for change. As this shows even similar generic interpretations can be based on different notions of a genre and reflect various perceptions or objectives. Canonic genre terminology can appear in a variety of ways with different implications and it is possible to detect varying uses of similar terminologies in genre discourse, which often indicates stylistic diversity or interpretative differences. Notions of the same genre term often vary and it is useful to

³⁴⁸ Marzorati, "The Post-Rock Band."

³⁴⁹ Indeed, Reynolds articles still count amongst the most frequently cited writings on the genre, which is otherwise rarely discussed in academic literature.

compare different uses of the same term to trace how different interpretations arise and function.

Looking at Reynolds' initial review of *Kid A* and the discussion of post-rock it is also interesting to note that after the release of *Amnesiac* in the following year he went on to write about Radiohead's possible association with the genre in greater detail. In July 2001 Reynolds' article "Walking on Thin Ice" was published as a cover story in *The Wire* and introduced Radiohead's new album to a readership with a particular interest in avant-garde and experimental styles of music. While a large part of his discussion again focuses on the positioning of Radiohead's music since *Kid A* as post-rock and mentions related rules and musical elements in great detail, it is interesting to consider the differences between this evaluation and Reynolds' previous account of the genre. A major factor in Reynolds' assessment of Radiohead's music might yet again be a consciousness of his readership and, by extension, the generic associations of this specific publication. While Reynolds' previous article was written for a rock audience with a possibly wider background knowledge about Radiohead and the post-rock genre, the newer article takes a more careful stance and focuses less on the band's positioning as a post-rock band than the idea of a general deconstruction of the rock genre as well as the concept of a rock group. It is particularly in this regard that the article is occasionally reminiscent of Marzorati's views of the genre. At times Reynolds' writings almost read like a justification of Radiohead's presence amongst the more experimental musicians usually covered in *The Wire* and thus it is perhaps not surprising that his new outlook on the band's interpretation as post-rock also includes a distinct differentiation from mainstream rock music.³⁵⁰

In his discussion of post-rock elements that appear in Radiohead's music and compositional approach Reynolds takes care to point out in which ways the band's music differs from conventional rock music and perhaps goes

³⁵⁰ It is perhaps not surprising that reader reactions to Radiohead's presence on the front cover of the magazine were mixed, which becomes apparent from subsequent letters to the editors of *The Wire*. While a number of responses welcome the band's inclusion in the magazine, others were more critical and felt that the band did not fit amongst the range of artists normally covered by the publication. Cf. [Unknown Authors], "Letters", *The Wire*, Issue 209, July 2001, pp. 4 – 8.

beyond popular music. The term 'rock music' is here mostly used as a reference and point of comparison that helps to underline Radiohead's experimental side and position them amongst the diverse acts covered in the magazine. As this exemplifies, genre terminology does not always appear in journalistic writing with the direct intention to describe a piece of music in greater detail but can also be used to create a point of opposition that can serve to distinguish a piece of music from certain musical traditions. While Reynolds' audience awareness might have possibly stopped him from describing Radiohead with the help of the term 'avant-garde' in its literal sense³⁵¹ it becomes clear that his use of 'post-rock' works in a similar fashion to position the band as experimental innovators in the realm of popular music. Thus it seems that post-rock is here maybe not so much used to draw comparisons to the genre which Reynolds helped to establish, but also appears in a more literal sense to express the band's experimental side and their alleged deconstruction or reinvention of rock music. As such it can be said that Reynolds utilises genre in his article to position the band amongst a wider selection of other genres – including musical categories in and outside of popular music – and it appears that genre definitions and uses by the same author can differ slightly if genre is seen from a new vantage point or considered in comparison to varying generic canons.

3.2.2.2 Non-canonic genre terminologies

Despite the fact that canonic genre terminology continues to play an important role in Radiohead's media reception it is mostly in earlier reviews that this kind of classification is accompanied by more detailed arguments or discussions of the genre terms in use. While more recent reviews often feature canonic genres they mostly appear without much further explanation, perhaps due to the fact that a knowledge about Radiohead's

³⁵¹ Literally translated from French the term 'avant-garde' means 'fore-guard' and is often used to describe a general sense of advancement. In this sense 'avant-garde' often stands for the vanguard within certain areas of art, music, theatre or society in general. This is not to be confused with the ways in which 'avant-garde' can often be used as a category to describe certain groups of composers in modernist and post-modernist art music traditions. Cf. Jim Samson, "Avant garde", in: *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.oxfordbrookes.idm.oclc.org/subscriber/article/grove/music/01573>.

music or the discussed album is often assumed. It is nevertheless interesting to note that early reviews of Radiohead's music often focus on terms associated with rock music, while later articles mostly incorporate terminologies based on electronic or dance music. One example of this is Luke Lewis' review of Radiohead's album *The King Of Limbs* published in *NME* in February 2011.³⁵² In his discussion of the album Lewis describes *The King Of Limbs* as "Radiohead's most ambient album to date, with thick layers of echo and reverb creating a watery, dreamlike feel that is further evoked by various marine images – the ocean, lakes and fish – that recur throughout."³⁵³ While this account of Radiohead's music may at first glance appear very descriptive, it is also interesting to note that this explanation of the term 'ambient' is rather concise.

What follows from this is a certain awareness of genre terminology as a communicative device on the sides of journalists and audiences. Lewis points out specific characteristics of the genre in a short and colourful manner but does not discuss genre rules or a large number of characteristic features in great detail. His mentioning of ambient is sufficient to give readers – who might already have heard the album – an impression of where its sounds come from or help them to make sense of them. He goes on to describe the album as "bracingly avant-garde in places"³⁵⁴ and takes care to point out its experimental aspects. The article is interesting in how it uses these terms in order to position the album in comparison to previous works, and in particular in comparison to Radiohead's roots in rock music. Lewis makes a clear statement when saying that one might even hesitate to describe *The King Of Limbs* as rock.³⁵⁵ Again, genre terminology is used in a way to position the new music against older standards, and it becomes clear that it is often a knowledge about previous musical styles of artists that determines the ways in which their newly released music is perceived and positioned in terms of genre. As Lewis' text further serves to illustrate it is often the knowledge about musical oeuvres and genres as well as specific

³⁵² Cf. Luke Lewis, "Radiohead – The King of Limbs (XL)", *New Musical Express*, 26 February, 2011.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

genre based expectations on the side of audiences that influence the reception and interpretation of genre considerably and affect the ways in which new music is discussed and evaluated. It is for this reason that canonic genre terminology can be seen as one of the most complex forms of musical classification due to the fact that it often relies on subjective terminological notions that are utilised in various ways and with differing objectives.

As the previous examples show forms of musical categorisation do not always appear as a way of describing music or aim to position artists within a specific musical canon but can also be utilised as a method of differentiation or comparison. Indeed, when looking at Radiohead's generic reception over the years one can find a large number of instances in which genre terminology is utilised to express what the music is not.³⁵⁶ Both Reynolds and Lewis point out that one can at times struggle to describe *Kid A* as a rock album and thus establish rock as a point of reference that serves to give readers an impression of what the band's music may have sounded like previously and highlights the ways in which this has changed. In journalistic discourse this type of musical classification is used regularly presumably due to the fact that it can often appear easier to discuss genre by way of a process of elimination. While this type of 'negative genre definition'³⁵⁷ often leaves more room for interpretation and speculation, distinct genre interpretations on the other hand can sometimes appear too complex and limited or even controversial. A further example that can illuminate this use of categorisation is Nick Hornby's article "Beyond the Pale" that was published in *The New Yorker* in October 2000.³⁵⁸ In this review of *Kid A* Hornby mainly addresses the state of pop music at the time of writing and discusses the relationships between artists and listeners as well as audience expectations that are related to issues of genre. In this regard Hornby says the following:

What is peculiar about this album is that it denies us the two elements of Radiohead's music that have made the band so distinctive and enthralling. For the most part, Thom Yorke's voice is fuzzed and distorted beyond recognition, or

³⁵⁶ Cf. Appendix II.

³⁵⁷ Cf. Appendix I.

³⁵⁸ Cf. Hornby, "Beyond the Pale."

else he is not allowed to sing at all; and Jonny Greenwood's guitar, previously such an inventive treat, has been largely replaced with synths. One explanation may be the band's enthusiasm for the sort of music it has recently been listening to – Messiaen, apparently, and Charles Mingus, and all sorts of things that don't sound anything like "Creep." The result is that there's no room for anything approaching conventional pop music [...].³⁵⁹

As Hornby's words show there are specific genre based expectations that are involved in the process of interpreting and evaluating music. His assessment of Radiohead's music is coloured by his previous knowledge about the band, which serves as a standard against which the new music, in his opinion, falls short. It is furthermore the notion of a more or less established style – the Radiohead genre, if you will – that affects the way in which he perceives possible generic deviations. It is for this reason that interpretations of genre are often closely combined with statements about an artist's back catalogue or else rely on specific expectations. It is rarely the case that music and genre in particular are evaluated without any particular reference points that are established through previous listening experiences, and it is for this reason that negative genre interpretations like the ones described above often appear at later stages within an artist's career and are often indicators of stylistic change or progression.³⁶⁰ As such they are often useful to gain an impression of retrospective processes of generic interpretation or canonisation. It is often at these points of change that journalists or wider audiences become more aware of their personal perceptions or expectations of artists and discuss how these may have changed or become subverted.

One aspect that many of the reviews of Radiohead's music have in common is the fact that journalists often appear to handle genre in a very careful manner. While a number of articles incorporate very thorough interpretations as well as arguments, a majority of reviewers utilise genre more sparingly to describe singular aspects of the music or express certain musical associations in a quick way. This is particularly notable in reviews that often deal more openly with issues of generic interpretation or stylistic diversity. Accordingly, one is able to find a large number of articles that use

³⁵⁹ Hornby, "Beyond the Pale."

³⁶⁰ Again this retrospective evaluation of music in a negative way points towards the durational mode of journalistic work as indicated by Zelizer. Cf. Zelizer, "Journalists as Interpretive Communities", p. 132 ff. of this thesis.

genre in various forms to discuss specific issues of classification, but also give an impression of the music that is descriptive and yet conveniently vague in terms of genre. As the above discussion has shown one way of describing music in this manner is the use of alternative forms of categorisation that tend to avoid actual generic interpretations but also serve to give an impression of the writer's opinion on the subject. Apart from the negative or exclusive genre definitions described above one is able to find a number of alternative forms of categorisation that might often be regarded as a type of ersatz or replacement genre terminology.

Before going on to discuss different instances of these methods of categorisation in greater detail, it is important to note that this replacement terminology plays a considerably large role in the genre discourse on Radiohead and thus provides the quantitative and methodical counterpart to the use of canonic genre terminology. While these forms of classification may sometimes appear as avoidance techniques and ways of keeping interpretations specifically vague, one can also find a large number of instances in which they appear as particularly descriptive and useful ways of explaining or indicating different generic associations. Furthermore, they can serve to emphasise the importance of categorisation due to the fact that, despite a general air of vagueness and evasion, categorisation is still often implied or more directly referenced in a text. As such these replacement terms often appear as more descriptive forms of categorisation that can be useful to convey an impression of either stylistic diversity or else general interpretative difficulties. However, they can also often serve to describe the music in a more detailed manner by coming up with new terms and methods of description that are sometimes even more accurate and fitting than existing genre terminology could be in these cases.

By looking at the ways in which journalists often avoid canonic terms of classification, one can find a variety of non-canonic methods of musical description. One example that often comes with slightly ambiguous implications is the use of newly invented genre titles or a new combination of already existing terms. While this use of terminology can often indicate the artists' move away from existing categories towards a more futuristic or

experimental approach, it also often borders on absurdity and is used to criticise the discussed music in a more concealed way. It is for this reason that the impressions conveyed through these newly made up genre terms can often waver between realistic and detailed accounts of the music and slightly mocking caricatures. Some of the more common forms of new genre terminology derive from the addition of different prefixes or suffixes to existing genre terms or else from a combination of genre terminology with characteristic adjectives or nouns. In different reviews of Radiohead one is able to find terms such as "post shoe-gazing"³⁶¹ (*Melody Maker*, 1992), "post triphop"³⁶² or "post grunge"³⁶³ (*GQ*, 2000). Newly invented terminology that is clearly referential of existing genres can also be found in Simon Reynolds' writings in which he utilises terms such as "bleak house"³⁶⁴ or "glum'n'bass"³⁶⁵ (*Spin*, 2000) as well as "death garage"³⁶⁶ (*Uncut*, 2000). These descriptions are usually accompanied by further explanations and often present a useful method of describing to what extent the music might fit into existing categories as well as the point at which these categories fall short.

Other types of made up terminology include terminology based on specific characteristics. One example of this is the term "art school band"³⁶⁷ (*Daily Variety*, 1993) which has become increasingly canonised over time. More detailed and specific within Radiohead's media reception are expressions such as "1990s depression albums"³⁶⁸ (*The Times*, 1995) which places Radiohead's *The Bends* alongside albums such as The Manic Street Preachers' *The Holy Bible* or Nirvana's *In Utero*.³⁶⁹ Similarly, the description of Radiohead as part of the "miserable male genre"³⁷⁰ (*Spin*, 1996) also presents a type of categorisation based on the perceived mood of

³⁶¹ John Harris, "On A Friday. The Venue, Oxford", *Melody Maker*, 22 February 1992.

³⁶² Barney Hoskyns, "Exit Music: Can Radiohead Save Rock Music as We (Don't) Know It?", *GQ*, October 2000.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Reynolds, "Radio Chaos."

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Reynolds, "Radiohead's *Kid A*: Revolution in the Head."

³⁶⁷ Ethlie Ann Vare, "Review: PJ Harvey; Radiohead", *Daily Variety*, 15 July, 1993.

³⁶⁸ Caitlin Moran, "Carve Their Nayims with Pride" [sic], *The Times*, 19 May, 1995.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ J. D. Considine, "Harmony In My Head", *Spin*, May 1996.

albums and shows that it is often very specific and individual impressions of an album's overall tone or subject matter that can affect categorisation in this way. While the majority of these types of description often serve the purpose of further explanation or specification of the discussed music and are useful to point out where it departs from established categories, one can also find a large number of more absurd expressions – one example being "psychedelic dance music for aliens"³⁷¹ (*Rip It Up*, 2000) – that mostly function to express either a sense of confusion or poke fun at the perceived complexity of the music. Indeed, as a rule of thumb, it may appear that it is often specifically long or slightly contradictory combinations of existing terms and words that are usually used in a less serious manner. It is therefore often the more absurd combinatorial terms that are used to express a sense of confusion or rejection in light of musical experimentation and stylistic diversity. However, it can ultimately be said that it is specifically this manner of categorisation that plays into the creation of a Radiohead genre, which can be regarded as a newly invented term without any pre-existing reference points in terms of genre or other musical associations.

In a similar manner to some of the above mentioned examples that are based on new word combinations, reviewers often tend to use descriptive words without any outright genre reference to categorise music in order to position it in relation to existing canons. Generally speaking there are two types of this form of categorisation that can frequently be found in journalistic writing. Firstly, one is able to find descriptions based on the use of adjectives, such as for instance 'futuristic' or 'experimental' in a variety of articles.³⁷² While these terms are particularly frequent within Radiohead's media reception and again serve to indicate the band's unusual style and diversity, one would generally be able to find a large number of terms that are referential of different times or contexts and that can be useful in positioning the music without making any outright statements regarding genre. It is for this reason that these 'adjective genres' can be found frequently alongside canonic generic evaluations and often serve to describe the music in greater detail or indicate the ways in which it differs from

³⁷¹ Scott Kara, "Experimental Creeps", *Rip It Up*, September 2000.

³⁷² Cf. Appendix II.

existing categories. It is interesting to note that this form of categorisation functions in a similar manner to the previously discussed ways of avoiding canonic categorisation. A second type of descriptive terminology can be found in the use of 'noun combinations'³⁷³ that usually serve to indicate the position or status of artists. As such one is often able to find descriptions like "mainstream"³⁷⁴ (*NME*, 1995), "one hit-wonders"³⁷⁵ (*The Guardian*, 1997) or "stadium rock"³⁷⁶ (*NME*, 1993).³⁷⁷ This way of describing music often goes hand in hand with comparisons to other artists that could be seen as either particularly influential or that produce similar music. As such these types of replacement terminology are often specifically referential and tend to position the music in relation to other artists at the time in a way that is very similar to canonic genre terminology.

3.2.2.3 Allusions to genre and the issue of stylistic diversity

As the previous paragraphs have shown canonic and non-canonic genre terminology can often go a long way in describing music and establishing a discourse on genre in the music of specific artists. A third and sometimes less obvious way of incorporating notions of genre in journalistic writing is the inclusion of generic allusions or indicators of genre. While it is important not to confuse these indicators with non-canonic genre terminology, they often appear in a very similar way. Thus one is often able to find hints at genre through the use of particular sets of word choices and a distinct vocabulary. Whereas 'adjective genres' tend to serve as placeholders for genre terms that are not fully formed, other adjectives that serve as genre indicators will usually point towards specific generic traditions and mostly established categories. One example of this can be found in Caitlin Moran's article "Everything Was Just Fear"³⁷⁸ (*Select*, 1997) in which *OK Computer* is described as a 'space rock album.' In her article Moran states that with

³⁷³ Cf. Appendix I.

³⁷⁴ Angela Lewis, "Rule Of Thom", *New Musical Express*, 11 November, 1995.

³⁷⁵ In her article for *The Guardian* Sullivan discusses Radiohead's journey from supposed 'one hit-wonders' to one of the most successful bands at the time. Cf. Sullivan, "Aching Heads."

³⁷⁶ Cf. Johnny Cigarettes, "Guitar Very Much!", *New Musical Express*, 22 May, 1993.

³⁷⁷ Cf. Appendix II.

³⁷⁸ Cf. Caitlin Moran, "Everything Was Just Fear", *Select*, July 1997.

their new music Radiohead are "headed into deep space"³⁷⁹ and points out the album's "complete unearthliness"³⁸⁰. She goes on to comment that the music sounds like it was "conceived in a black hole"³⁸¹ and "rehearsed in the vacant space between the stars"³⁸² and accordingly makes extensive use of a vocabulary that is deeply evocative of the images and sounds that one might associate with a genre term such as 'space rock.'

In a similar fashion writers often refer to specific bands that can be read as indicators of genre to a certain extent. One example that is often found in Radiohead's media reception is the use of Pink Floyd's name as a point of comparison and reference to progressive rock. In this regard journalistic texts will often include allusions to specific works by Pink Floyd, associated characteristics and distinct argumentations that indicate a likeness to the genre, but still refrain from including the actual canonic genre term.³⁸³ It is often the readers' knowledge about genres that leads them to make specific associations to genres that could possibly be referenced in these contexts. In a similar way one would be able to find a large number of indicators for other genres, as most genres tend to have a number of particularly representative bands at its core.³⁸⁴ Thus, while it may not always be the author's particular intention, comparisons to certain artists can often evoke very specific generic associations. Finally, as these examples again serve to indicate despite a distinct lack of canonic genre terminology it is often easy to find generic associations within journalistic writings. As this shows genre displays a high presence within music interpretation and analysis and often only appears by way of implication or through specific associations.

As the discussion of genre in music criticism so far has shown musical categorisation can appear in a variety of ways within journalistic writing and one is often able to find different types of terminologies that are used for

³⁷⁹ Moran, "Everything Was Just Fear."

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Sullivan for instance points out a number of parallels between *OK Computer* and Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side Of The Moon* without ever mentioning the term 'progressive rock.' Cf. Sullivan, "Aching Heads."

³⁸⁴ Thus bands like Blur or Oasis are often mentioned to indicate a relation to britpop, while Nirvana has become representative of grunge and so on.

varying purposes. While some of the above mentioned examples have implied a sense of confusion on the part of their respective authors, one final way of incorporating the notion of genre within journalistic writing is based on the very concept of generic complexity and needs to be discussed in greater detail. Both the idea of generic diversity or music that goes beyond simple generic classification can often be found in genre discourse and is furthermore very particular to Radiohead's media reception.

While previous allusions to the idea of a Radiohead genre may have already implied a sense of confusion on the sides of journalists to some extent, it generally relates to the notion of a band that is very difficult to categorise and includes a large number of diverse generic allusions. It is for this reason that journalists often choose to explore the idea of a specific Radiohead style that builds on these characteristics. However, one is often able to find many different accounts that specifically deal with aspects of stylistic diversity, cross-over or the notion of generic elusiveness to varying degrees. It is often these factors that can have a particular influence on the overall interpretation of genre and result in various attempts to come up with alternative ways of categorisation and ultimately a category that solely refers to the artist in question. One example of a distinct use of stylistic diversity can again be found in Simon Reynolds' writings. In this previously discussed quotation from his article "Radiohead's *Kid A*: Revolution In The Head" (*Uncut*, 2000) Reynolds utilises generic diversity in order to describe different aspects of Radiohead's music in the following manner:

On 'Everything In Its Right Place', the lead vocal is just one strand in a shimmering tapestry of multi-tracked and treated Thom Yorke voice-goo, whose pulse-riffs and rippling patterns simultaneously recall Robert Wyatt's Rock Bottom and contemporary avant-electronica outfits like Curd Duca. On 'Kid A', a drastically processed and illegible Yorke vocal nestles amid a honeycomb of tweeting'n'cooing space-critters and enchanting music-box critters – again, the track would be right at home in the world of "glitch techno" labels like Mille Plateaux or Mega. The jackknifing two-step beat that powers 'Idioteque' explicitly nods towards contemporary dance, but leeches the joy out a la PiL's 'Memories' or Joy Division's 'She's Lost Control' – call it Death Garage. At the opposite extreme, the beat-less 'Treefingers' – a miasma of glistening vapours and twinkling haze – could be an eerie dronescape from Aphex Twin's *Selected Ambient Works Vol II* or Eno's *On Land*.³⁸⁵

³⁸⁵ Reynolds, "Radiohead's *Kid A*: Revolution in the Head." This example was first cited in chapter 2 where it was used to explain journalistic language. Cf. p. 72 of this thesis.

As the quotation shows Reynolds includes a variety of genre terms in his assessment of *Kid A*. Furthermore he uses musical influences and comparisons to create specific relations to other more established works. In his article one is able to witness a certain generic fragmentation as most album tracks are described with the help of different generic allusions or reference points. Whereas other reviews of the same album are very referential of Radiohead's previous works, Reynolds mostly utilises stylistic diversity to make sense of the new developments and considers the album's complexity as a work that builds on and combines very different musical traditions. As such Reynolds text highlights the idea of multiple styles and utilises genre to describe different elements of the album and explain how they come together. Thus genre works here mainly as a way of communicating certain sets of associations to the reader and establish points of reference that serve to position the album in relation to other works. It is in a similar manner that stylistic diversity is also used in other journalistic sources over the years and one can easily gain the impression that it plays a particularly important role within Radiohead's media reception. In this regard discussions of generic complexity and versatility often appear at specific points of change or development when journalists struggle to build connections to the band's previous work or to describe the music in simple generic terms.

Moreover, the idea of 'cross-over' is often addressed in a similar manner and mostly serves to communicate a move on from musical styles that are common and widespread towards something more experimental or distinct. In this regard it is also interesting to know that genre often serves as a way of expressing or judging the perceived value of music, mostly in terms of its authenticity or honesty. As such one is often able to find expressions such as 'moving on from', 'breaking free of' or 'overcoming' certain genres that can serve to indicate the author's opinion on particular musical traditions as well as an evaluation of how the discussed music has progressed or improved generically.³⁸⁶ This process of evaluation often appears in close connection to a re-evaluation of previous genre discourses, and it is mostly in these

³⁸⁶ This can also be seen in Sullivan's previously mentioned article, which describes how Radiohead overcame their "indie one hit-wonder" status. Cf. Sullivan, "Aching Heads."

moments of perceived progress that journalists start to reflect on these discourses and include references to common previous strands of interpretation and examine how the music has changed. Going even further, various journalists have tried to abandon categorisation completely by saying that Radiohead's music exists 'beyond genre.' Discussing *Kid A* in his review for *Pitchfork* Brent DiCrescenzo says the following about the album:

Even the heralded *OK Computer* has been nudged down one spot in Valhalla. *Kid A* makes rock and roll childish. Considerations on its merits as "rock" (i.e. its radio fodder potential, its guitar riffs, and its hooks) are pointless. Comparing this to other albums is like comparing an aquarium to blue construction paper. And not because it's jazz or fusion or ambient or electronic. Classifications don't come to mind once deep inside this expansive, hypnotic world.³⁸⁷

While this review is still clearly referential of established genre categories it also shows that aspects such as musical advancement and development are often regarded as adverse to traditional forms of categorisation. As DiCrescenzo points out *Kid A* cannot only be seen as going beyond a number of established categories but also beyond the very notion of categorisation. As such it can be said that to a certain extent musical categorisation is often embedded with different negative connotations. Many reviewers see it as too restricting and it is in these instances that concepts such as stylistic diversity, individual or band-specific generic categories as well as the abandonment of classification appear more and more often. In this regard it is maybe also not surprising that, in Radiohead's case, genre discourses became predominantly varied after the release of *Kid A* and at times when audience expectations were subverted.

As the discussion of journalistic accounts on genre in Radiohead's music has shown, concepts of categorisation can fulfil a variety of roles in popular music journalism and individual assessments of music and are used in different ways. The idea of generic change and progression in particular often propels these debates and it is for this reason that a study of genre discourses in the media can often illuminate moments of musical development and experimentation. In Radiohead's particular case one can find a large number of different uses of genre in the popular music press that often serve as a compressed way of communicating specific sets of musical

³⁸⁷ Brent DiCrescenzo, "Radiohead: Kid A", *Pitchfork*, 02 October 2000.

associations to the reader and describe sounds. At the same time, however, one often has to deal with perceptive and interpretative differences that are responsible for producing a variety of diverse accounts on genre and consequently a very wide and varied genre discourse on Radiohead amongst journalists.

Since genre terms and uses of the same genre often differ amongst writers one usually has to deal with the equivalent of a complex network of genre terms and associative notions that are used to describe the same piece of music in a multitude of ways. Looking at different sources in order to get a better overview of these differing interpretations can often go a long way in studying a piece of music in a more in-depth way and realising its inherent complexities. While studying Radiohead's media coverage it also becomes more obvious that this process is somewhat mirrored in journalistic accounts over the years, that generally moved from decidedly distinct interpretations to often more engaged discussions that take into account aspects such as stylistic diversity, the development of Radiohead's personal style as well as possible interpretative differences and re-evaluations of previous journalistic accounts. While journalistic uses of genre can at times differ significantly it is therefore often helpful to take notice of the many different ways in which generic categorisation operates in music discourse and is used in music journalism in order to comprehend how the music appeared to audiences at the time of its initial production. Finally, one is thus able to gain a more all-encompassing view of how genre can be interpreted in different contexts and compare multiple parallel interpretations in order to consider how a comparative and combinatory study of these varied notions of genre can contribute towards processes of music analysis as a whole.

3.3 Academic genre discourse and the role of journalistic sources

As the previous discussion has shown genre plays a significant role for processes of music analysis and thus affects journalistic discourses to a considerable extent. By contrasting the functionalities of genre in journalistic discourse to uses of genre in academia the following discussion aims to highlight the impact of the previous results and examine their

transferability in terms of a different audience context. The chapter will discuss various academic writings on Radiohead, emerging from disciplines such as popular music studies, musicology and philosophy, and focus on the uses of generic terminology. For the purpose of showing how journalistic sources might affect academic writing, it will furthermore trace the uses of media texts in academia. This way the chapter finally aims to underline the value of a discourse analysis of genres in different audience contexts and give directions for an application of this methodology under varying circumstances.

3.3.1 Variations in academic and journalistic discourse

While most journalists are often keen to point out striking contrasts within Radiohead's stylistic trajectory and emphasise the role of musical diversity, this is often done without much further investigation into the reasons behind the band's overall development and little to no theoretical underpinning. Very detailed musical discussions are often omitted for the sake of keeping articles short, succinct and comprehensible for a wide readership. Music journalists generally tend to focus on presenting the music in a way that shapes genre-based expectations and by extension consumer behaviour. Articles thus generally revolve around questions such as: How does the music relate to previous albums? How can Radiohead's music be described in terms of genre? And to what extent has this changed over time? These questions are notably anchored in current contexts and seldom allow for more in-depth discussions of how the band for instance utilises genre as a creative and communicational device throughout their career or how it has worked towards their own 'genrefication'.³⁸⁸ While a study of these sources thus serves as a useful method of analysing genre discourses within the media, it also sometimes reveals a lack of analytical detail and can give rise to new genre related questions.

With the academic interest in Radiohead's music steadily growing, one is able to draw information from a considerable number of subject-related publications, that might provide further insights into some of the genre-

³⁸⁸ Cf. Appendix I.

centred debates opened by music journalists. As the discussions in chapter 1 and 3 of this thesis have shown, detailed conceptualisations or definitions of genre are often relatively hard to come by and tend to give way to either more historical and functional approaches to genre-analysis or alternatively favour the discussion of artistic backgrounds and methods of music production and creation. As some of the journalistic sources discussed in chapter 3 have shown there are of course exceptions to this use of genre. Writers such as Simon Reynolds or Gerald Marzorati amongst others have taken care to point out the musical intricacies that define Radiohead in terms of style and thus created greater awareness of generic complexities within their readership.³⁸⁹ Others such as Ted Kessler have indeed raised the question of a Radiohead genre and also elaborated on the possibilities of this specific interpretation.³⁹⁰

While these different accounts have proven to be useful sources to study not only the uses of genre in journalism but also the possibilities of Radiohead's own generic category, it should be noted that a majority of journalistic texts steered specifically clear of this type of content as well as its further ramifications. Genre is generally discussed as part of the journalists' elaborations on the novelty of the reviewed music as well as beginning processes of canonisation. However, this does not always take into consideration how the emergence of a Radiohead genre could be framed in more detailed analytical or theoretical terms and how this affects popular music as a whole, if at all. For these reasons the following discussion will take these questions into account and propose a study of academic genre discourses on Radiohead in addition to the journalistic discourses studied previously. It aims to examine the uses of genre as well as genre formation in academic writings on Radiohead in relation to music journalism in order to develop a better understanding of the role and functions of genre amongst different listener groups. This way the following paragraphs will explore how different genre audiences conceptualise generic change and investigate how these perceptions are communicated within and across genre discourses by different audience groups.

³⁸⁹ Cf. pp. 171 – 176 of this thesis.

³⁹⁰ Cf. Kessler, "The Reign in Spain" and footnote 303 on p. 153 of this thesis.

3.3.2 Academic sources and methodological backgrounds

Since the first academic studies of Radiohead's music appeared in the early 2000s, the band's music has become the subject of a constantly growing academic discourse that has so far focused on many different facets of their work reaching from musical and stylistic analyses to philosophical debates.³⁹¹ The publication formats vary from commissioned monographs, to peer-reviewed journal articles and non-commissioned pieces to doctoral theses. All writings differ in terms of length, area of study and specific research focus and tend to approach the music as well as issues of genre in different ways. Genre is included as a way of either positioning Radiohead's music within existing canons or explaining the band's specific musical intricacies and inner working mechanisms. Comparing the different academic writings that focus on Radiohead's music it is interesting to note that a considerable number of texts seemingly follow a similar structure regarding the manner in which genre is presented and discussed. While a brief review of Radiohead's recording history and discussions of related generic issues are particularly common, it is interesting that a large number of publications reflect on the band's generic development in a similar manner to the majority of music journalists. This way one can often find similar stages of genre reception that mirror the different phases of generic interpretations to be found in music journalism.³⁹²

Notably, the academic interpretations of individual Radiohead albums in terms of genre are even more consistent and conforming than journalistic texts that often tend to put an individual spin on matters. While Radiohead's early albums up to and including *OK Computer* are mostly discussed in rock music terms, with a specific focus on the role of the guitars, *Kid A* and *Amnesiac* are generally seen as a break with Radiohead's previous style or a move towards more electronically inspired music. Articles that take later

³⁹¹ Most of Radiohead's academic coverage appeared from around 2004. The first commissioned monographs by Dai Griffiths and David Lin were published in 2004 and 2006 respectively. A first collection of essays, titled *The Music and Art of Radiohead*, was released in 2005. A second collection, *Radiohead and Philosophy*, followed in 2009. More recently one could see an increase in peer-reviewed journal articles as well as several PhD theses that are concerned with the study of Radiohead's music.

³⁹² Stages of journalistic genre reception were discussed in chapter 3.2. Cf. pp. 139 – 164 of this thesis.

albums into consideration often seem to vary between a move back towards more traditional rock aspirations and musical and specifically technical experimentalism. Generally it can be said that Radiohead's music is mostly discussed up to the point of *In Rainbows*, whereas only some of the newest publications tend to include discussions of Radiohead's music after *The King of Limbs*.

While a majority of journalistic texts were published in direct response to the release of new albums or singles, academic writing often maintains a temporal distance from the discussed content and tends to regard the music from a retrospective point of view. This quality notably fosters a sense of analytical distance that is upheld within academic texts and distinguishes these writings from the often more subjective and personal accounts to be found in music journalism. Following from this it can be assumed that the use of genre in academia might generally derive from a more strategic point of view and introduce theoretical groundings. While music journalists by contrast are more likely to express individual opinions spontaneously, academics often strive to highlight one or more specific issues and follow argumentative structures, which indicates that their use of genre is often decidedly functional and thought-through. This way the study of academic genre discourses in addition to journalistic discussions can be useful to achieve an understanding of the personal motivations that affect genre usage within different listener groups.

Nevertheless, it is also important to note that the boundaries between different audience groups can sometimes overlap. One should bear in mind that academics can also be journalists or fans and vice versa. In their essay "Desperately Seeking Methodology: New Directions in Fan Studies Research" Adrienne Evans and Mafalda Stasi address this issue and introduce the concept of the 'aca-fan', a person who is part of both the academic world and the fan base of a specific artist. As one of the main advantages of this personal status Evans highlights the possibilities of self-reflective research and auto-ethnography that challenge both notions of academic and fandom identities but also facilitate processes of

communication between these two groups.³⁹³ While the academic study of genre in Radiohead's music would undoubtedly benefit from this sense of self-awareness, an expanded awareness taking into account the academics' possible journalistic backgrounds could prove even more useful to illustrate the differences and similarities amongst genre audiences. Since the majority of academic texts included in this chapter refrain from taking self-reflective approaches,³⁹⁴ it is important to take note of the fact that audience identities can often overlap and academic accounts on genre may be affected by issues raised in fandom or music journalism. For this reason the following discussion will not only reflect on the question of how academic identity affects the usage of genre, but also address to what extent academic texts do make use of and interact with journalistic points of view within their writing.

The discussion so far has highlighted the fact that academic authors often reflect on Radiohead's overall stylistic development in a similar fashion to music journalists and tend to apply the same range of genre terminology to specific albums. It is interesting to note that a majority of academic texts initially classify Radiohead as a rock band,³⁹⁵ but also pay particular attention to a proposed shift from rock to electronic music that is usually seen to occur around the time *Kid A* was released. As chapter 3.2 of this thesis has shown this distinct shift is equally popular within journalistic discourse and often coincides with discussions about Radiohead's musical particularities and increasing stylistic diversity.³⁹⁶ Within academic writing these debates often take a distinctly prominent position and predominantly lead to more detailed musical analyses. They ultimately foster

³⁹³ Cf. Adrienne Evans, Mafalda Stasi, "Desperately Seeking Methodology: New Directions in Fan Studies Research", in: *Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*, Vol. 11, Issue 2, 2014, pp. 14 – 15.

³⁹⁴ Indeed, most of the academic literature on Radiohead is less self-reflective. While there are some exceptions such as Paul Lansky's essay "My Radiohead Adventure", which addresses the author's interactions with the band as well as their use of his music, these do not always treat genre in great detail. Cf. Paul Lansky, "My Radiohead Adventure", in: Joseph Tate (ed.), *The Music and Art of Radiohead* (Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series), Farnham, Surrey 2009, pp. 168 – 176.

³⁹⁵ Here one should also note the difference between an affiliation with rock music and the classification as a 'rock band', as both can have different implications. The term 'rock band', for instance, is often more concerned with issues of identity and might therefore still be applied even in the face of stylistic change and progression.

³⁹⁶ This was for instance shown in chapter 3.2.1.3. Cf. pp. 151 – 159 of this thesis.

conceptualisations of Radiohead's individual style that aim to explain the band's musical development over the years and often argue for their continuously growing impact on popular music and more specifically modern rock music.

While the popularity of the discussed generic shift within the band's work amongst academics can serve to emphasise its overall significance for a study of Radiohead's music, it also underlines the analytic ability often displayed within music journalism as well as the value of journalistic sources for an academic study of genre in the field of popular music. This point is further confirmed by the fact that academic texts concerned with the study of musical material will usually focus on some of the most prominent and interesting elements within a particular piece of music or canon and often emphasise the relevance of these aspects for the understanding of an artist's music. In this regard Radiohead's proposed generic shift and growing diversity can be seen as one of their defining elements that is reflected on in the analytical approaches of two mostly different listener groups and their discourse on genre within the band's work. While this has also further implications for the conceptualisation of a Radiohead genre, this aspect will be revisited at a later stage in this subchapter in order to take the academic approaches to genre presented in the following into consideration.

As the study so far has shown journalists utilise genre and methods of musical categorisation in a variety of ways that often have the potential to affect the analysis and presentation of Radiohead's music significantly. By studying journalistic uses of genre one can not only gain new insights into the working mechanisms of music criticism but also achieve a better understanding of how processes of generic perception or interpretation function on an individual and general level. As the study of journalistic genre discourses in chapter 3.2 has shown, the increasing digitalisation of the popular music press often makes it possible to base results on a considerable number of text sources. In this regard it is noteworthy that a study of academic genre discourses by comparison will often rely on a distinctly narrower selection of sources and therefore generally provide a less detailed insight into the breadth of genre functionalities within

academic writing. However, as academic discussions often tend to provide more analytical detail their study can be useful to comprehend the thought processes behind the individual choices when it comes to using genre terminologies and furthermore provide an interesting contrast and means of comparison to the study of journalistic source material. For this reason the following paragraphs aim to provide an overview of genre usage within academic discussions of Radiohead and will pay particular attention to the question of how academic uses of genre compare to or differ from the genre functionalities discussed previously.

3.3.3 Uses of genre in academic writing

3.3.3.1 Canonic genre terminologies and the 'Radiohead genre'

As one of the most popular means of categorisation canonic genre terminology plays a particularly big role in music journalism, where it is often used in order to position new music amongst other current or past artists and provide readers with a sense of familiarity and a range of specific associations. The discussion so far has already hinted at the fact that a large number of academics define Radiohead as a rock band and pay particular attention to a proposed generic shift from one canonic genre to another. In this regard it is important to note that canonic genre terminology has a generally high presence within academic discourse and is mostly utilised and discussed in a similar fashion to music journalism.

As previously mentioned most academic discussions tend to start out by positioning Radiohead as a rock band and tend to go into more or less detail regarding the specific reasons behind these interpretations. In his essay "Radiohead, or the Philosophy of Pop" Mark Greif for instance leads with the statement that Radiohead belong to the category of rock music and he goes on to define the genre mainly according to its lyrical themes. Greif describes rock as a category that strives for a freedom from constraints and is inherently defined by an underlying sense of rebellion.³⁹⁷ At the same

³⁹⁷ Cf. Mark Greif, "Radiohead, or the Philosophy of Pop", in: Brandon W. Forbes, George A. Reisch, *Radiohead and Philosophy: Fitter Happier More Deductive* (Popular Culture and Philosophy Vol. 38), Chicago, La Salle 2009, p. 17.

time he also points out that for a genre that "celebrated individual liberation [rock music] required increasing regimentation and coordination."³⁹⁸ As this statement highlights, rock can often appear as a genre that is defined by its inherent contradictions and tends to incorporate elements that not always appear to add up or go hand in hand. In this regard it is perhaps less surprising that Greif also notes the aspects of Radiohead's music that do not fit into his initial rock concept. He states that even though one of Radiohead's lyrical themes "may still be freedom , their technique involves the invocation – not of the feeling of freedom – but of unending low-level fear."³⁹⁹

While Greif goes on to discuss Radiohead's underlying lyrical themes in greater detail, for the purpose of this study it is interesting to note that his definition of genre is predominantly based on the topics found in Radiohead's songs. Although Greif includes musical details at a later stage in his essay,⁴⁰⁰ it is notable that one of his first attempts at creating a basic frame for his discussion of rock music relies largely on the genre's subject matter and motivations. This might partly be due to the overarching theme of his essay, which is largely concerned with creating a philosophical approach for the study of popular music and perhaps less concerned with musicological subject matters. Greif initially sets out to discuss the reasons why popular music, and Radiohead's music in particular, works in the ways that it does.⁴⁰¹ In doing so he theorises that popular music allows its listeners to draw upon certain feelings that have been experienced in the past to varying extents. The meaning of rock music accordingly relies on the "insistence on finding ways to retain the thoughts and feelings that a larger power should have extinguished."⁴⁰² In this regard Greif states that Radiohead's music creates a sense of "impersonal defiance"⁴⁰³ that

³⁹⁸ Greif, "Radiohead, or the Philosophy of Pop", p. 21.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴⁰⁰ Greif discusses the band's stylistic trajectory and mentions terms such as 'guitar rock', which is defined by its use of instrumentation. Cf. Greif, "Radiohead, or the Philosophy of Pop", p. 24.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

ultimately fosters notions of personal withdrawal and perhaps skepticism.⁴⁰⁴ Greif's text specifically shows that academic discourses on genre are not simply limited to musicological debates but can also move from discussions of either musical or lyrical aspects into philosophical arguments that have the power to reflect the importance of genre uses within musical and social contexts. This way it also becomes clear that the academic genre discourse on Radiohead's music and music genres in general is not solely limited to the field of musicology or popular music studies but can also cross over into other related disciplines that can bring up valid debates.⁴⁰⁵

As the analysis of Greif's essay serves to show academic debates about genre in the work of particular artists often lead with genre interpretations and descriptions before moving on towards more complicated matters. In this regard academic discourses on genre in the music of Radiohead tend to make use of canonic genre terms, but then utilise these terminologies in order to problematise the issue of genre within the band's music and continue to discuss its relevance either directly or indirectly. In this way the study of academic genre discourses is useful to bring up specific issues that music journalism might miss and discuss these debates in greater detail.

A read through the available literature on Radiohead serves to bring up a number of articles that approach the band's music in a similar or comparable manner to Greif's initial approach. In his essay "Deforming Rock: Radiohead's Plunge into the Sonic Continuum" Mark B. N. Hansen clearly positions Radiohead as a rock band which becomes evident by the choice of his title alone.⁴⁰⁶ He discusses Radiohead's stylistic trajectory and makes use of subgenres such as post-rock to further specify the nature of their music at particular points in time, in this case around the release of *OK Computer*.⁴⁰⁷ He also discusses the generic relevance of specific musical elements such as for instance the new presumed positions of the voice and

⁴⁰⁴ Cf. Greif, "Radiohead, or the Philosophy of Pop", p. 32.

⁴⁰⁵ In Radiohead's case it is notable that philosophy scholars show a particular interest in the band. On the other hand one can also find writings from different areas of cultural studies and sociology.

⁴⁰⁶ Mark B. N. Hansen, "Deforming Rock: Radiohead's Plunge into the Sonic Continuum", in: Joseph Tate (ed.), *The Music and Art of Radiohead* (Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series), Farnham, Surrey 2009, p. 118 f.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 118.

instrumentation that now appear in what he terms the "post-rock mode."⁴⁰⁸ What is particularly notable in this regard is that Hansen's interest soon shifts from a mere description of generic features towards a discussion of generic change and how this has affected Radiohead's music as a whole.

One of the main focus points within Hansen's essay is the discussion of how the band's music has shifted from their roots in rock music but also appropriated and transformed the genre individually. Hansen specifically compares notions of stylistic diversity and change against the proposition that over the years Radiohead's music also displays an underlying continuity.⁴⁰⁹ He utilises the journalistic discussion of *Amnesiac* by Simon Reynolds in order to explain his notion of Radiohead's proposed "plunge into the sonic continuum"⁴¹⁰ as a consequence of the band's supposed "self-deconstruction"⁴¹¹ that deals with the band's altered uses of guitar and voice after the release of *Kid A*.⁴¹² This way the essay ultimately utilises the discussion of genre in Radiohead's music in order to propose a solution for the generic continuity-problems posed by the loss of what Hansen describes as "vococentrism of western music"⁴¹³ as well as the effects of digitalisation on stylistic progression. By extension his article also challenges the often noted rock versus techno divide in Radiohead reception and proposes that the band has instead extended their repertoire to move back and forth between or integrate both worlds.⁴¹⁴ As the article thus shows academic texts do make use of canonic genre terminology, but generally tend to utilise this form of categorisation as a way of leading into more extensive

⁴⁰⁸ Hansen, "Deforming Rock: Radiohead's Plunge into the Sonic Continuum", p. 127.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 119.

⁴¹⁰ Hansen ultimately explains this notion as follows: "By exposing the profound continuum linking breath-based and machine-based rhythm, and simultaneously accepting the priority of the voice as an internally complicated, differential 'origin' for listening, Radiohead gives one (perhaps paradoxical) recipe for overcoming the vococentrism of Western music: do not fear the voice, for the voice is not opposed to sound, but itself sound, the materialization of sound in listening – that is, the complex, self-differing condition upon which sound can become phenomenalized." Hansen, "Deforming Rock: Radiohead's Plunge into the Sonic Continuum", p. 136.

⁴¹¹ Reynolds, "Walking on Thin Ice", quoted in Hansen, "Deforming Rock: Radiohead's Plunge into the Sonic Continuum", p. 131.

⁴¹² Cf. Hansen, "Deforming Rock: Radiohead's Plunge into the Sonic Continuum", p. 131.

⁴¹³ Ibid., p. 136.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid. pp. 123 and 136.

discussions that tend to focus on the conceptualisation and problematisation of genre-related issues within the artists' work.

Despite the fact that Hansen does not specifically address the matter of a Radiohead genre, his essay is one example in a long list of academic writings that utilise canonic genre terminology to open up discussions about the individual characteristics and stylistic peculiarities that define Radiohead's music and distinguish the band from other artists. As the previous examples have already shown these discussions often tend to focus on questions of stylistic diversity or generic progression and most commonly address Radiohead's proposed shift from rock towards electronic music. In his essay "Radiohead and Some Questions about Music" Edward Slowik approaches Radiohead's music from a philosophical standpoint and reflects on a number of issues surrounding the questions of what music is and how we experience it. Slowik positions Radiohead as a rock band and goes on to discuss their development in terms of style and addresses specific moments of change which he observes in their work.

While he states that both *Pablo Honey* and *The Bends* had "limited cross-over appeal to other styles"⁴¹⁵ he describes *OK Computer* as an "increasingly more complex and experimental"⁴¹⁶ album that indicates a stylistic transition.⁴¹⁷ He points out that both *Kid A* and *Amnesiac* mark a particular moment of change for the band and takes particular note of the albums' overall stylistic diversity. While he still emphasises Radiohead's roots in rock music in different ways, he also states that "[t]he music just sounds different from rock."⁴¹⁸ Slowik further goes on to mention *Hail To The Thief* as an album that combines both more traditional rock approaches but also the new elements within Radiohead's music that first appeared on *Kid A*.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁵ Edward Slowik, "Radiohead and Some Questions about Music", in: Brandon W. Forbes, George A. Reisch, *Radiohead and Philosophy: Fitter Happier More Deductive* (Popular Culture and Philosophy Vol. 38), Chicago, La Salle 2009, p. 42.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., p. 43.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

Looking at Slowik's account on Radiohead's stylistic development it is interesting to note that his discussion is generally guided by his initial understanding of Radiohead as a band associated with the category of rock music. Even with the numerous changes he finds in their music over the years, the concept of rock is used throughout his discussion as a standard and point of comparison against which he assess the band's stylistic trajectory. While Slowik points out Radiohead's increasing use of new stylistic components, he examines these changes in light of the band's previous generic groundings. He further makes a specific point of not only highlighting the music's increasing stylistic diversity but also the interest from other genre audiences outside of rock music such as classical or jazz fans.⁴²⁰ As this example shows in different cases canonic genre terminology plays a substantial role for setting up specific generic norms in regard to specific bands or artists against which new music is then compared.

Slowik's article underlines a rather common tendency amongst academics and journalists that tend to identify Radiohead as a rock band based on their early work and stick to this interpretation even in light of changing genre discourses and discussions of stylistic diversity. In this regard the study of genre discourses in academia can serve to underline the fact that genre identities of specific bands or artists are not always interchangeable with generic readings of their individual albums. As such it becomes apparent that it is possible at any time for Radiohead and other artists to have two different generic identities: a core identity such as for instance the title 'rock band', which spans Radiohead's career as a whole, as well as different time- and album-bound generic readings, that appear more spontaneously and underline the extent of the band's stylistic development when compared to the core identity.

While the discussion so far has shown that canonic genre terminologies appear frequently in academic writings on Radiohead, it is notable that generic categories and core identities often form part of essay or book titles and generally tend to appear early on in the written text where they form part of the exposition. The increasing use of generically related titles not

⁴²⁰ Cf. Slowik, "Radiohead and Some Questions about Music", p. 42 f.

only serves to underline the growing interest in the study of popular music genres within the academic community, but also indicates the importance of the topic for approaching different musical issues and debates on a general level. Similar to Mark. B. N. Hansen's earlier discussed essay "Deforming Rock: Radiohead's Plunge into the Sonic Continuum", which establishes Radiohead's rock influence as well as an overarching genre-theme within its title, Matthew Lampert's essay "Why a Rock Band in a Desolate Time?" calls to attention Radiohead's generic position and indicates the relevance of categorisation within the main text. Lampert goes on to discuss Radiohead's overall development and mostly addresses changing themes within the band's music in order to explain a perceived break between *OK Computer* and *Kid A*.⁴²¹

It is interesting to note that Lampert's perspective is largely affected by a philosophical background and his usage of genre is mostly centred around themes and social concepts.⁴²² While he does not make great use of genre terminology his essay is guided by the question of why Radiohead remain as a rock band within the time of its existence. His conclusion positions the concept of a rock band as very purpose oriented model. One of Radiohead's defining characteristics – and one of their reasons to exist as a rock group – is, according to Lampert, to create awareness and remain aware of their own alienation. This aspect in his opinion becomes particularly relevant after the release of *Kid A*, which addresses the theme of alienation more actively.⁴²³ As a result of this discussion one can observe that often genre does not only exist on a technical level in order to describe music or individual styles and create distinctions, but can also be defined according to its wider purposes that may explain the actions and motivations of musicians as well as audience groups.

⁴²¹ Cf. Matthew Lampert, "Why a Rock Band in a Desolate Time?", in: Brandon W. Forbes, George A. Reisch, *Radiohead and Philosophy: Fitter Happier More Deductive* (Popular Culture and Philosophy Vol. 38), Chicago, La Salle 2009, p. 203 ff.

⁴²² In this regard Lampert mentions for instance nihilism as one of the defining elements within the grunge movement. Cf. Lampert, "Why a Rock Band in a Desolate Time?", p. 210 f.

⁴²³ Lampert utilises a number of philosophical approaches to frame this subject area, in particular Heidegger's theories about 'inauthenticity.' His main aim and question mirrors the question by German philosopher Friedrich Hölderlin "And why poets in a desolate time?". Cf. Lampert, "Why a Rock Band in a Desolate Time?", pp. 211 and 218 f.

While detailed discussions about the notion of stylistic diversity within Radiohead's music are at the forefront of academic genre discourse, it is notable that these debates often lead into further discussions about the band's individual style and consequently address a possible Radiohead genre in a comparable manner to many music journalists. In his doctoral thesis "Coding *OK Computer*: Categorization and Characterization of Disruptive Harmonic and Rhythmic Events in Rock Music" Nathaniel Emerson Adam states that it is "not only difficult to articulate the characteristics of technical surface-level problems in the music of Radiohead, or album-level themes and problems, it is apparently difficult to articulately categorize their music at all."⁴²⁴ In order to further exemplify this statement Adams includes a chart prepared by graphic designer Jamie Gurnell that depicts different musical categories – indie, alt-rock, psychedelic, jazz, ambient, electronic, folk and, perhaps not surprisingly, a distinct Radiohead genre – and shows how these genres feature on individual albums from *Pablo Honey* to *The King Of Limbs*.⁴²⁵ As Adam points out this graphic is not based on academic analysis, but can nevertheless serve to "reveal[s] the overwhelming effect Radiohead's music can have on a listener, amateur or scholar, through its resistance to definition."⁴²⁶ While this stylistic diversity is one of the main factors that complicates the discussion of typical Radiohead features, it also leads to a number of questions and thus often produces further academic debate. Adam points out that it may prove difficult to find a "unifying stylistic signature"⁴²⁷ within Radiohead's work, but attempts to circumvent this problem by focusing on the music itself rather than Radiohead's compositional process and specifically the expectations listeners might have when encountering Radiohead's music and how these are met.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁴ Nathaniel Emerson Adam, "Coding *OK Computer*: Categorization and Characterization of Disruptive Harmonic and Rhythmic Events in Rock Music", Doctoral Thesis, University of Michigan, 2011, p. 23.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., p. 16. In this regard it is important to bear in mind that specific audience expectations take on a significant role within the academic study of genre as the discussion of film genre theories in chapter 1 has shown. Cf. p. 29 f. of this thesis.

Adam's approach is guided by the methods of grounded theory and Schenkerian music analysis and does not specifically focus on work in the area of genre theory.⁴²⁹ Rather than discussing how Radiohead's music can be integrated within the world of popular music genres on a general level, Adam mainly focuses on the individual intricacies and characteristics within the band's work. He thus proposes that "Radiohead (as a collective composer) has accumulated for themselves this distinctive musical language through their use of disruptive melodic figuration, harmony, and rhythm, by drawing from a musical palette that is characterized by a problematic relationship with mainstream conventions and expectations."⁴³⁰ As Adam's line of discussion shows attempts to identify genre and common characteristics within Radiohead's music often lead to an increasing awareness of stylistic diversity and progression and by extension often bring up the question of whether Radiohead can be defined with the help of its own generic terminology. Accordingly academic discourses of genre often utilise canonic genre terminologies in order to describe a variety of components within the band's music that shape listener expectations, and ultimately tend to lead into debates about a generic conceptualisation of Radiohead's music. In this regard it is furthermore notable that canonic genres often function as the musical standard within academic discussions and therefore create greater awareness of individual deviations from the generic norm that will generally affect any future debates.

While the discussion of Adam's work has served to emphasise the fact that Radiohead's individual style is often discussed as a result of the genre debate, Allan F. Moore and Anwar Ibrahim's essay "'Sounds Like Teen Spirit': Identifying Radiohead's Idiolect" sheds further light on this issue by discussing the impact of Radiohead's stylistic progression in regard to a specific idiolect that characterises the band.⁴³¹ Moore and Ibrahim establish

⁴²⁹ To a certain extent this, again, underlines what has already been stated in chapter 2: While the North-American musicological perspective on Radiohead often offers interesting music-analytical perspectives, it is generally less concerned with issues of genre theory. Cf. p. 81 (footnote 169) of this thesis.

⁴³⁰ Adam, "Coding *OK Computer*: Categorization and Characterization of Disruptive Harmonic and Rhythmic Events in Rock Music", p. 19.

⁴³¹ The term 'idiolect' also appears in other works by Moore, as discussed in chapter 1. Cf. p. 15 of this thesis.

Radiohead's inherent stylistic diversity after the release of *OK Computer* early on and proceed to debate whether one can find a specific musical or compositional language within the band's work that links the individual albums and stays consistent in the face of constant generic change.⁴³² They conclude that this idiolect mainly exists in terms of a structure that is upheld and shapes the way in which songs are composed. However, they also take care to point out that the concept of unpredictability appears as Radiohead's only real constant, which results in an emphasis on "difference and juxtaposition over similarity and unity."⁴³³ While this statement again highlights the band's tendency to subvert expectations, also mentioned by Adam, it places emphasis on the interdependence of Radiohead's individual style and notions of their inherent stylistic diversity. As a consequence of this debate it thus becomes apparent that both topics often appear in close correlation due to their roots in genre discussion and can be regarded as mutually influential.

Moore and Ibrahim's essay brings up a number of particularly interesting points when it comes to the identification and use of genre within academic writing. In this regard it is interesting to note that the authors take particular care to point out generic change through a change of language. They argue that the release of *Amnesiac* not only introduced a new sound but also brought about a change in terms of musical structures by replacing the notion of 'songs' with the idea of 'pieces'.⁴³⁴ This use of language serves to underline the changes of style in a very substantial way by introducing a new terminology that has specific generic connotations normally associated with classical music. At a later point Moore and Ibrahim furthermore state that Radiohead's work on *Kid A* challenges the very notion of the word 'song'.⁴³⁵ As both examples show the mere use of generically laden words can have very specific implications in the context of genre discourse and can signify changes on a small and sometimes subconscious level.

⁴³² Cf. Ibrahim, Moore, "Sounds Like Teen Spirit: Identifying Radiohead's Idiolect", p. 139 ff.

⁴³³ Ibid., p. 152.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., p. 139.

⁴³⁵ Ibid., p. 145.

The article proceeds to treat genre in a very interesting and distinguished manner. While Moore and Ibrahim point out that *Pablo Honey* should be heard as a "response to the Seattle-based 'grunge' rock movement that crossed into the musical mainstream in late 1991"⁴³⁶ it is noteworthy that this statement serves as much to associate Radiohead with the grunge genre as it does to distinguish them from it. By formulating this generic association as a response to the music rather than a part of the genre itself, the authors emphasise the role of Radiohead's musical influences as well as the specific impact of grunge on their music, without explicitly positioning the band within the genre. This way of discussing genre is so far specific to academic discourse and can serve to differentiate generic associations and influences from generic belonging. The essay further proceeds to discuss Radiohead's music as 'progressive' in terms of their individual development while at the same time refraining from describing the band as 'progressive rock'.⁴³⁷ This way of description brings up a final important point when it comes to the uses of genre-related language. Even though certain genre terminologies have become canonised over the years it is important to note that at times they may appear either out of context and have different connotations or else could be subject to different readings. This way the essay not only serves to underline the impact of canon genre terminology on discussions about Radiohead's stylistic progression and individual idiolect, but also contributes to the study of genre discourses by highlighting the ways in which specific semantic choices can affect the ways in which genre is presented within academic debates as well as general discussions.

3.3.3.2 Non-canon genre terminologies and journalistic impacts

As the previous discussion has shown academic authors often utilise canon genre terminology in various ways and generally tend to move from simple processes of categorisation into more detailed discussions about generic issues. While the academic uses of established terminologies are comparable to those found within music journalism, it is interesting to consider the question to what extent alternative forms of categorisation

⁴³⁶ Ibrahim, Moore, "Sounds Like Teen Spirit: Identifying Radiohead's Idiolect", p. 141.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., p. 152.

feature within these texts. As the earlier discussion of journalistic genre discourses has brought to attention, in many cases journalists tend to express musical novelty or complexity with the help of replacement terminologies that either aim to emphasise these attributes and isolate the music from existing canons or else create specific associations. While academic texts often work with canonic terminologies, it is also notable that they often tend to describe the music in greater detail. For this reason it is perhaps not surprising that descriptive terminologies and adjective genres in particular play a significant role within academic writing. In his essay "To(rt)uring the Minotaur: Radiohead, Pop, Unnatural Couplings, and Mainstream Subversion" Greg Hainge initially utilises canonic terms to describe Radiohead's often discussed shift from rock or guitar rock towards electronic music.⁴³⁸

Hainge reflects on various journalistic texts and utilises a form of negative terminology by stating that both *Kid A* and *Amnesiac* do not follow traditional pop conventions.⁴³⁹ Perhaps more notably Hainge also defines the music in more descriptive terms and points out that while Radiohead technically form part of the mainstream they also subvert mainstream expectations as well as common notions of rock music and can be described as inherently experimental.⁴⁴⁰ He further goes on to compare and emphasise Radiohead's alternative credibility and musical experimentation against their supposed mainstream belonging and concludes that as a result of this *Kid A* presents the "marriage between the mainstream and *avant-garde* experimentation."⁴⁴¹ Looking back at the discussion of Radiohead's music in music journalism it is particularly interesting to note that Hainge's thoughts reflect the dichotomy between a grounding in pop music and experimental approaches that have been mentioned by writers such as Munro.⁴⁴² As this shows academic and journalist authors not only tend to

⁴³⁸ Cf. Greg Hainge, "To(rt)uring the Minotaur: Radiohead, Pop, Unnatural Couplings, and Mainstream Subversion", in: Joseph Tate (ed.), *The Music and Art of Radiohead* (Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series), Farnham, Surrey 2009, pp. 62 f. and 74.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., p. 72.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 63 f.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., p. 84.

⁴⁴² A dichotomy between pop influences and experimental approaches was further discussed in light of Munro's early interview with Radiohead. Cf. pp. 165 ff. of this thesis.

utilise replacement terminologies in comparable ways but in different cases also highlight similar underlying issues within Radiohead's music.

In his essay "Is Radiohead the Pink Floyd of the Twenty-First Century?" George A. Reisch compares the two bands and discusses to what extent they fulfil similar roles within popular music at different points in time. As the discussion of journalistic genre discourses has shown the association of Radiohead with the music of Pink Floyd can have specific genre-related connotations. In different cases the mention of musical influences can evoke notions of genre and affect the ways in which the discussed music is perceived. While Pink Floyd is often associated with progressive rock, it is interesting to note that throughout his article Reisch utilises the terms 'prog-rock' as well as 'space-rock' to further define the ways in which Radiohead's association with Pink Floyd might be understood.⁴⁴³ His use of replacement terminologies thus leads from the musical association with specific artists over generic implications towards a discourse on existing generic categories. Reisch's discussion can further serve to illuminate issues of temporal relations within genre discourses and show that in different instances genre relies on and is evaluated according to the time of its release. As the title of Reisch's essay underlines the music of Pink Floyd as seen from a temporal distance can be utilised in a comparable manner to canonic genre terms in order to define and categorise music based on certain sets of characteristics. This way of discussing music not only underlines certain traditions that are upheld by a line of artists but also emphasises the specific position of Radiohead amongst its peers. While Reisch's way of discussing the band's music through musical associations points out the influence of the past it also presents a differentiation by presenting Radiohead as a twenty-first century band. Ultimately this discussion serves to show how canon building processes might affect genre debates, an issue that calls for future research.

While the use of alternative genre terminologies in music journalism can often provide unique insights into the ways in which genre is perceived and

⁴⁴³ Cf. George A. Reisch, "Is Radiohead the Pink Floyd of the Twenty-First Century?", in: Brandon W. Forbes, George A. Reisch, *Radiohead and Philosophy: Fitter Happier More Deductive* (Popular Culture and Philosophy Vol. 38), Chicago, La Salle 2009, p. 4.

evaluated on a general and individual level, it is notable that a considerable number of journalistic accounts work with newly invented terminologies or provide different readings of existing terms. In this regard it is interesting to note that these types of genre discourses are also found in academia and often present new approaches towards music or genre analysis and are further utilised to emphasise specific aspects within the music such as for instance certain underlying themes. In his essay "Public Schoolboy Music: Debating Radiohead" (2005) Dai Griffiths discusses Radiohead's music in relation to the band's public school background and proposes 'public schoolboy music' as an appropriate category to describe their work. During the course of the essay Griffiths emphasises how certain themes within Radiohead's music – such as for instance the topic of alienation – might derive from the band's personal educational background.⁴⁴⁴ While he goes on to focus on the stylistic properties and themes that characterise Radiohead in this manner, the way in which genre is constructed based on these issues is particularly interesting. At the beginning of his discussion and following genre construction Griffiths poses the question "of what the musical material refers to or means, where it comes from, and what the whole idea of being in music, let alone pop music, means or amounts to."⁴⁴⁵ He further elaborates on the genre concept stating that

you have to push deeper to see the public school background really start to tell, less the external world of public issues, further into the heartland of the musical material. My guess is that, almost as a special consequence of the band members' schooling, they have a profound sense of being cut off from the rest of ordinary society, ordinary only to mean public-service-dependent, and that this was manifest as super-awareness, both in content and feeling, of late twentieth-century alienation.⁴⁴⁶

While Griffiths goes on to describe musical details associated with Radiohead's music that might derive from this background, such as for

⁴⁴⁴ Dai Griffiths, "Public Schoolboy Music: Debating Radiohead", in: Joseph Tate (ed.), *The Music and Art of Radiohead* (Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series), Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate 2009, pp. 162 f.

In a more literal sense it is perhaps also interesting to note that Radiohead songs have sometimes included references to the band member's educational upbringing. This is for instance the case with the B-Side "Bishop's Robes", recorded in the mid 1990s. A similar case provides Radiohead's cover version of The Smiths' "The Headmaster Ritual", which was played live during a webcast in 2007.

⁴⁴⁵ Griffiths, "Public Schoolboy Music: Debating Radiohead", p. 162.

⁴⁴⁶ Griffiths, "Public Schoolboy Music: Debating Radiohead", p. 162.

example specific rhythmic, harmonic or structural elements,⁴⁴⁷ he also emphasises the band's ever growing concern with technology, musically as well as thematically.⁴⁴⁸ The sense of alienation or even isolation described above serves to characterise the genre and further underlines its inherent struggle. As Griffiths states in the final words to his essay, the very "purpose of public schoolboy music [would then be, that we could indeed] all do without it."⁴⁴⁹

The genre thus emerges in a rather functional manner, comparable to some of the more descriptive categories described earlier. Radiohead's music is mainly discussed in terms of its social background and cultural components that affect its sound, themes and composition. In a similar way to more descriptive genre terminologies the term 'public schoolboy music' defines the band by referring to one overarching characteristic that is constructed as representational for their work. The term 'public schoolboy music' then presents both a descriptive account of genre as well as the construction of a new category that has the ability to describe Radiohead's music in very precise terms by referring to the band's individual background. As Griffiths' article ultimately shows, much like music journalism academic genre discourse can include the construction of new genres. However, while journalistic uses of new genre terms often appear as methods of evasion or in certain cases seek to further the journalists status within the genre, it is notable that the academic discussion is often more detailed and utilises genre construction as a way of illuminating the contents of the general analytical process.

In "'How to Disappear Completely': Radiohead and the Resistant Concept Album"⁴⁵⁰ (2005) Marianne Tatom Letts addresses the topic of a disappearing subject on *Kid A* and *Amnesiac* and introduces the notion of a resistant concept album. According to Tatom Letts this category "stretch[es] the parameters of the traditionally defined concept album (a clearly articulated narrative, characters, or a musical/lyrical theme) while still

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 163 ff.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 167.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ The book is based on Tatom Letts doctoral thesis from 2005.

conveying some kind of concept beyond a single sequence of organized tracks over the course of an album."⁴⁵¹ While the category of concept albums generally forms part of the more descriptive types of replacement terminologies discussed previously, it is notable that Tatom Letts' take on the existing term can also be regarded as the construction of a new category. Based on the proposition that the existing subject on *Kid A* self-destructs halfway through the album and is revived on *Amnesiac*, Tatom Letts reconstructs the album's identity with the help of the existing concept album terminology and presents her personal take on these conventions by introducing the new category.⁴⁵² While the 'resistant concept album' clearly relies on the idea of concept albums in general, it is shaped by the thematic and musical characteristics Tatom Letts finds in Radiohead's work and presents a way of understanding these features in terms of genre. As Tatom Letts' points out during the introduction to her discussion:

Treating Radiohead's *Kid A* (2000) as a resistant concept album can help make sense of an otherwise baffling musical work. This analysis is, of course, only one way of viewing the album. Its very resistance to the conventional rock genre opens it up to a variety of interpretations.⁴⁵³

With this statement Tatom Letts unintentionally underlines what has become obvious from studying different audience discourses on genre in the music of Radiohead so far. The analysis of different readings and interpretations of the band's music can often be useful to achieve a better understanding of the methods and arguments that affect processes of musical categorisation. While Tatom Letts also utilises canonic terminologies to describe individual albums, she adopts the idea of concept albums and analyses how the music of Radiohead can be understood in these terms and to what extent it deviates from the established terminology towards a new variation of it. As this shows genre terminology can play a significant role in academic genre discourse and often works to bridge the gap between traditional analysis and the adaptation of new methodologies.

While the previous examples have shown that genre discourse affects academia in similar ways as it does music journalism, it is interesting to

⁴⁵¹ Tatom Letts, *Radiohead and the Resistant Concept Album*, p. 25.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

note that the discussion of academic uses of genre can add to the study of genre discourses in so far that it often results in more elaborate and theoretically grounded argumentations. Academic writers generally make use of a similar range of generic terminologies that can also be found in journalistic sources, but at the same time often go on to discuss underlying concepts within the music in greater detail. In this regard genre is mainly utilised as a way of addressing specific issue and topics within Radiohead's music that are consequently discussed in relation to their generic meaning. It is interesting to note that the academic discourse on genre often includes references to journalistic discussions and at times incorporates direct quotations that are mostly used to further the academic arguments about genre. Music journalism features surprisingly often within academic writing and is sometimes used to indicate popular public opinions and debates about Radiohead. This way journalistic genre discourse often provides academics with specific statements or interpretations that can open up further discussions about specific issue that are then discussed. On a different note the inclusion of media texts can further serve to close the gap between academia and the general public and perhaps also highlights the role of many academics as part of the general fandom, that looks towards music journalism for new information. At the same time it is, however, also important to note that the most recent information about Radiohead, including band interviews, are generally found within the music press and at least in this regard popular music studies is somewhat reliant on journalistic sources.

As the discussion so far has shown audience discourses on genre can be very interactive and often cover similar issues. Academics and journalists use genre in comparable ways, but also do so to varying extents. Discussions in both discursive spheres often circle around issue of stylistic diversity, individual genre formations and the question of how Radiohead's music can be seen as a product of its time and place. While music journalism often discusses the music from a more immediate perspective, the study of academic texts can serve to show that the retrospective point of view, which often plays a role in academia, does not always affect the ways in which categorisation is applied. Besides their common tendency to

discuss genre in more analytical terms, academic authors often move from more individual debates of genre within Radiohead's music to general discussions about genre itself. Their accounts often follow specific theoretical frameworks that are generally absent and maybe even unnecessary within music journalism.

As a final thought it becomes obvious that this is what could be regarded as one of the main arguments for a combined study of journalistic and academic genre discourses. While both types of discussion tend to address similar issues in comparable terms, they often do so by applying different methodologies. Consequently their analysis cannot only serve to highlight the flexibility of generic interpretations and readings of Radiohead's music in particular, but also emphasises the varying purposes of genre uses amongst different audience groups. This variance shows how genre debates are shaped by socio-cultural circumstances, including the individual backgrounds of its many participants. Ultimately it underlines the necessity for a study of genre discourses across different audience groups and academic disciplines.

4. Genre in Online Audience Discourse

4.1 Theoretical approaches

As the discussion so far has shown a study of popular music genres can often benefit from the combined use of text- and discourse-based methods of analysis. Journalistic texts can serve as useful examples of an ongoing genre discourse and are mostly easily accessible and varied. By contrast academic studies often present more detailed insights into music-analytical matters and display slightly different uses of genre. It becomes obvious that functionalities of genre are highly dependent on specific purposes of writing and individual positions. The question thus remains to what extent genre discourse is affected by the type of audience group in which it takes place. While both journalistic and academic discourses are affected by the intention of conveying new knowledge, they also portray commercial interests to varying extents. For this reason a study of genre would benefit from gaining insight into genre discourses on the side of music fans, which present a further sizable part of the compound listener community. Since online fan discourses are easily available and often very active and interactive, the following paragraphs will expand on the study of genre discourses by taking a closer look at the uses of genre within this audience group. In doing so the chapter finally aims to present a consolidation of the study of genre discourses that shows how genre permeates different areas of music reception and how the available source material can be used to make sense of it. It will further present a methodology of dealing with new media sources that suggests the use of online texts as an alternative or means of comparison for currently available offline discourses.

4.1.1 Conditions of the online discourse

While the previous chapter has shown how genre affects working processes within the music press, it has also emphasised the relations between music journalism and academia and brought out the fact that both areas can interact or overlap. In the same way that academics can be journalists and vice versa, both journalists and academics can be fans and form part of an online fandom. In their essay "Desperately Seeking Methodology: New

Directions in Fan Studies Research" Evans and Stasi introduce the concept of the 'aca-fan' and show that it is not too far-fetched an assumption that academic interests often arise out of a personal interest in and involvement with a specific topic.⁴⁵⁴ It is important to be aware of the fact that a study of audience discourses – which sets out to combine journalistic, academic and fandom viewpoints – cannot always make clear distinctions between these areas and should therefore at best treat each field as a loose grouping of people with similar interests and objectives in relation to their chosen subject matter, as well as a self-awareness with regards to their position within the wide range of different audience groups. Of all audience groups mentioned in this thesis, online fans are possibly the largest and most diverse group to produce genre discourses. While personal backgrounds may differ it is very likely that this group of people also includes contributors from the previously discussed groups and consequently produces a more diverse, if possibly less sophisticated or elaborate, discourse on genre. A study of online discourses is therefore useful to explore the variety of interpretations amongst audience groups and show how journalistic and academic discourses are reflected or challenged in an online context.

While the question of authorship for both journalistic and academic texts is often easily answered, online discourses are often held anonymously and names are only revealed by choice. As Robert V. Kozinets states in his book *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online* it is this state of anonymity or 'pseudonymity' that often functions in a liberating way and affects the presentation of self identity as well as related behaviours and expressions of opinion.⁴⁵⁵ It is hence important to consider the impact anonymity might have on the content, tone and manner of online discourses. As Kozinets further explains online commentary and expressions of identity can be particularly revealing in terms of consumers' true opinions or intentions.⁴⁵⁶ Consequently, online discourses are affected by a number of

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. Evans, Stasi, "Desperately Seeking Methodology: New Directions in Fan Studies Research", pp. 4 – 23.

⁴⁵⁵ Cf. Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, Los Angeles, London 2010, p. 70.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

issues that directly emerge from the privacy and obscurity they afford. Unlike journalists, who have to respond to the criticism of editors and readers, anonymous web users have the advantage of being able to comment on specific subject matters without having to worry about the nature of their opinions or making statements that could be damaging to their name and status. For this reason online discourses tend to generate a variety of responses, ranging from detailed arguments to spontaneous commentary.

While certain online reviews and comments concerned with the nature of specific musical works can resemble academic or journalistic debates, others might show specific lack of expertise and present more immediate and less thought-out reactions. The degree of truthfulness and honesty in web commentary varies and the intent of evaluations is not always clear. One factor that affects the presentation of online content is the issue of constructing a (generally temporary) web identity.⁴⁵⁷ This way the author's wish to appear in a certain way, for instance knowledgeable and intelligent, can have a considerable impact on the presentation and manner of description, analysis and evaluation of content. In other cases phenomena such as 'trolling' can factor into the discussion of content on platforms that foster more dynamic discussions amongst web users.⁴⁵⁸ Since online audiences are less bound to straight-forward modes of expression – unlike perhaps journalists or academics – aspects such as irony, sarcasm or cynicism might also affect the ways in which opinions are presented.

While the concept of anonymity at first glance seems to allow for a greater freedom of expression and a more diverse range of opinions, it is also the relative obscurity of web audiences that causes issues during the course of online research. It is therefore important to note that the truthfulness of presented opinions can be difficult to judge. As Kozinets points out the internet is a "medium [that] makes it complicated to see the messenger"⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, p. 10.

⁴⁵⁸ The term 'trolling' describes patterns of behaviour in certain web users, whose main intention is to disrupt and disturb online discussions or act in a provoking manner. Cf. Judith S. Donath, "Identity and Deception in the Virtual Community", in: Peter Kollock, Marc A. Smith (ed.), *Communities in Cyberspace*, London 1999, pp. 27 – 58.

⁴⁵⁹ Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, p. 10.

and it is not always clear who one is communicating with online.⁴⁶⁰ It is often this lack of knowledge about the context in which statements emerge that can complicate or compromise the analysis of comments. It is therefore crucial to take note of the fact that online audiences are inherently diverse and guided by different intentions. While academic and journalistic texts emerge in pre-mediated contexts and adhere to certain conventions, styles and formats, they also present purpose-oriented approaches to musical discussion. As such they can for instance provide guidance for consumers or present new analytical insights.

Online audiences are comparably less bound by rules and agendas. Instead they are often shaped by the very fact that they do not have to meet specific standards set by editors or publishers in order for them to appear online. For this reason one is often able to find a larger variety in terms of stated opinions as well as modes of expression.⁴⁶¹ Comparing online statements can thus present a challenge in terms of understanding and judging the reasoning and intent of individual online participants in order to decide to what extent they might serve as useful source material for a study of online audiences. Additionally it is useful to consider the possibility that, despite a steady increase of online participants, it is perhaps only specific types of people that choose to comment online or that are able to do so.⁴⁶² Thus a study involving online audiences necessarily needs to operate with the assumption that the audience groups featured in the analysis of web content do not present an accurate representation of all web users but merely afford a closer look at one part of them.

⁴⁶⁰ Cf. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, p. 70.

⁴⁶¹ As mentioned earlier Rockwell points out that this is also due to the fast-paced nature of the online discourse. Cf. p. 61 f. of this thesis.

⁴⁶² As the website "Internet World Stats" shows in November 2015 roughly 47 % of the world population were able to access the internet. Of this number 48% were located in Asia, 18% in Europe, 10% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 10% in Africa, 9% in North America, 4% in Oceania and Australia and 1% in the Middle East. By contrast, the percentage of people per continent with access to the internet (penetration in % of population) ranges from 88% in North America, over 73% in Europe, 73% in Oceania and Australia, 56% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 52% in the Middle East, 40% in Asia and 29% in Africa. Cf. Miniwatts Marketing Group, "Internet World Stats: Usage and Population Statistics", <http://www.internetworldstats.com>.

4.1.2 Methodological backgrounds and ethical concerns

The following discussion of the uses of genre in online audience discourses on the music of Radiohead is based on a study of source material taken from two online platforms – 'youtube.com' and 'amazon.co.uk'⁴⁶³ – that have been chosen for a number of reasons. While some of the issues stated above can affect the analysis of web content to a considerable degree, the nature of the research project underlined the importance of being able to ground the final results on a comprehensive study of different points of view that were presented in varying forms. Despite the fact that this study does not aim to deliver quantitative results and instead focuses on the principles of qualitative content analysis, the analysis of online audience discourses needed to be comparable, if perhaps only in numbers, to the previous analysis of journalistic points of view in order to be able to comment on important similarities and differences.

Since the study of journalistic sources in chapter 3 is based on a close reading of more than 2,500 text sources, it was necessary to work with a range of online sources that emerged under comparable conditions and provided an equally varied and widespread range of opinions. As this may indicate the choice of web content for this chapter is partly due to the popularity of the chosen websites and their specifically large number of users. Both Amazon and YouTube offer a wide range of commentary to individual songs and albums that were recorded and released throughout Radiohead's career. A combined and comparative analysis of these comments on both sites can be useful to gain insights into the perception of the band's music from different perspectives that are presented in different styles and formats. While Amazon reviews usually tend to be more reminiscent of journalistic reviewing styles, YouTube commentary is often

⁴⁶³ While youtube.com does not feature region-specific commentary and therefore presents international contributions, amazon.co.uk was chosen as it is the main online distributor of Radiohead albums released in the band's home country as well as under their original record label. The platform serves as a useful source for review texts that appear in English language and can also be read comparatively. Despite the fact that texts from the US domain amazon.com were viewed in preparation for this chapter these review sections are extremely expansive and thus more difficult to navigate. For the purpose of studying similarly large quantities of source materials it would therefore be advisable to restrict studies to a particular time interval, rather than including all sources.

short and succinct but also increasingly interactive. For this reason a look at both sources can be informative about the ways in which the dynamics of online discourses affect the presentation of opinions.

The following paragraphs aim to highlight different stages of genre usage over time and in correspondence with the different stages of Radiohead's career. While the analysis of Amazon contributions mirrors the study of journalistic content insofar that it focuses on English speaking reviews posted on the British Amazon domain – contributing towards the comparability of both analyses – the YouTube commentary is multi-lingual and comments in languages other than English were taken into consideration. The analysis of Amazon content is based on a study of 1,684 reviews composed of a varied number of reviews focusing on the newest available versions of each of Radiohead's studio albums.⁴⁶⁴ As the changing numbers of reviews for each release serve to indicate, audience members pay varying amounts of attention to different albums and, in this case, it is specifically *Kid A* and *OK Computer* that seem to be subject to a more active discourse. While this development of audience interests is certainly telling and reminiscent of Radiohead's reception in music journalism, the study takes note of these changes but disregards them in so far that it builds on the analysis of a small selection of ca. 150 relevant reviews in total with a comparable number of sources per album.

Since the methodological approach for this chapter largely resembles that of chapter 3 the analysis will revolve around issues of genre uses and functionalities ranging from the individual to more widespread conventions. The study of YouTube commentary will serve as supporting evidence of the relevance of genre in online discourses and provide insight into the uses of genre in a different and perhaps more fast-paced and interactive online environment. The YouTube commentary included in this analysis is largely taken from the official music videos for Radiohead's single releases and thus effectively corresponds to the album reflections found on Amazon

⁴⁶⁴ This number is correct as of 27.07.2015 with the reviews for the individual albums counting as follows: *Pablo Honey Collector's Edition* (62); *The Bends Collector's Edition* (184); *OK Computer Collector's Edition* (330); *Kid A Collector's Edition* (433); *Amnesiac Collector's Edition* (168); *Hail To The Thief Collector's Edition* (207); *In Rainbows* (172); *The King Of Limbs* (128).

making it possible to trace the trajectory of the band's stylistic development on both sites.⁴⁶⁵ While most YouTube videos feature varying numbers in terms of commentary, the analysis focuses on an approximate number of 300 comments per video, from which individual examples were chosen to contribute to the analysis of online audiences. These will be used to either draw comparisons with or contest existing Amazon content.

On a general level it is important to state that web-sources need to be approached carefully in order to protect online participants and their privacy. A study of online discourses usually comes with a number of issues, primarily regarding the question of whether any type of content and commentary posted on the internet can be treated in a way comparable with content published in the print and online media or in book format.⁴⁶⁶ One issue affecting the free use of online content for academic purposes – and specifically for this thesis – is the perceived online privacy from the perspective of unprofessional web audiences. While it may often seem that individual contributors to online discourse would be aware of the general reach and traceability of their comments, this is not always the case and it is mainly for this reason that researchers need to approach this type of online content with care. As a general rule of thumb, it can be said that the use of large platforms such as Amazon and YouTube often implies a wider visibility than, for instance, username- and password-protected communities or mailing lists. This is also one of the reasons why these sites have been

⁴⁶⁵ While the YouTube videos included in this study are mostly official Radiohead videos, individual URLs are not cited due to ethical reasons.

⁴⁶⁶ While the field of online research is still young, studies of online content appear more and more often. One of the main problems of clearing up the ethical concerns for this thesis was the fact, that mostly researchers tend to use the internet to generate their own research responses. By contrast, this thesis works with existing content and it was to be determined to which extent this was available for use. Ethical approval for this study was granted under the premises that online authors remain anonymous and untraceable. Interestingly, Hesselink's essay "Radiohead's "Pyramid Song": Ambiguity, Rhythm, and Participation" from 2013 utilises similar methodologies and makes use of YouTube commentary. In this case online pseudonyms and links to the videos in question are included in the bibliography. As this slight variation may show, approaches to a study of online content still vary and future research in the area of popular music would certainly benefit from new studies on online research methodologies. Cf. Hesselink, "Radiohead's "Pyramid Song": Ambiguity, Rhythm, and Participation."

chosen as main sources for this thesis.⁴⁶⁷ Since the traceability of the chosen content can often provide issues in terms of privacy, the following discussion will refrain from including any direct quotations and instead utilise a coding system that serves to ensure the anonymity of web users. While each statement made in the following will include footnotes that document specific statements next to more general observations, the key to these references will thus only remain available to the author and supervisors of this thesis.

A further ethical concern relevant in the context of this chapter is the extent to which researchers might interfere in online discussions in order to generate the sought after content. While this process of actively generating results would necessitate further ethical considerations – specifically the question of whether researchers need to identify themselves as such – the following study exclusively works with pre-existing content. An analysis of these found sources is useful as it is comparable to the journalistic and academic content discussed in previous chapters, which was equally pre-existent. This way a closer look at this type of genre commentary can serve to paint a more accurate picture of how online audiences discuss and evaluate genre in Radiohead's music unaffected by the intent or purpose of academic research. As such, the results presented during the following discussion should always be understood with these ethical considerations in mind.

4.1.3 Writing conventions, formats and temporal constraints

As the previous chapters have shown temporal conditions often affect generic perception. While journalistic debates appear as immediate reactions to the release of new musical material at specific points in time, online commentary is shaped by the concept of 'retrospectivity'.⁴⁶⁸ Despite the fact that this temporal distance is in some ways reminiscent of academic discourse, online discussions often tend to combine less analytical styles of

⁴⁶⁷ Nevertheless, it is notable that both platforms often feature a mixture of real names and pseudonyms and hence privacy may vary. Here, web-users are usually responsible for ensuring their personal degree of privacy by constructing their online identity accordingly.

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. Appendix I.

writing with retrospective points of view. With the launch of Amazon.com in 1995, audiences soon found a new platform to discuss their views and opinions.⁴⁶⁹ By this point Radiohead had already released their first two studio albums, and it should be noted that the reviews included in this study only go back as far as 1999 with the majority being written in more recent years. It is for this reason that one can often detect a shift in the ways in which Radiohead's music is discussed and evaluated in the context of Amazon reviews. While the reviews for *Pablo Honey*, *The Bends* and *OK Computer* are exclusively retrospective and often trace Radiohead's stylistic development in light of what was yet to come, reviews for later albums show a divide between more immediate and time-bound comments and retrospective debates that often emerge in reaction to the release of new albums. By comparison, the website 'youtube.com' is considerably younger, being launched in 2005, and thus also more likely to feature comments that discuss Radiohead's earlier songs in retrospective terms. While the nature of online reviews can thus at times make it difficult to compare audience points of view with the positions of journalists and academics, it is useful to take note of this in order to achieve a better understanding of the nature of online discourse.

The concept of 'retrospectivity' can be seen as one of the defining characteristics that guide web audiences and affect how opinions are formed. As an inherent part of web discussions the retrospective point of view has a considerable impact on the different modes of musical description and evaluation that can be found online. It is for instance reflected in the increasing expressions of nostalgia, references to past times and personal memories that often accompany more general reviews and comments.⁴⁷⁰ Meanwhile, more recent reviews often tend to be decidedly immediate and can resemble journalistic debate, which serves to emphasise the varied nature of online discourses. It is for this reason that a study of online content can often provide useful insights into the complex world of

⁴⁶⁹ The British version, amazon.co.uk, was launched in 1998.

⁴⁷⁰ This is often the case in YouTube comments for earlier Radiohead songs, that tend to feature temporal references. The 1990s are for instance often described as a time with better music – but also more personal memories. On Amazon this personal component often appears in the form of individual concert reviews.

audience discussions as it shows various types of analysis and incorporates different temporally shaped perspectives. The following discussion of online discourses therefore aims to show how these different perspectives emerge and to what extent they are shaped by the conditions of their reception.

While both journalists and academics are bound by specific stylistic conventions that shape the ways in which discussions and arguments are presented, online content often appears more varied. Audiences are generally less affected by the necessity to adhere to specific formats and writing styles. The manner in which web audiences discuss genre in Radiohead's music tends to waver between individualised recounts of personal memories and journalistically inspired review formats. The type of online commentary is often determined by the chosen platform on which it is published. Thus it is perhaps not surprising that YouTube – a website featuring mostly short comments that enable active discussions – presents a useful source for subjectively tinged commentary and personal tales. Meanwhile, journalistically inspired review styles are often found on Amazon and resemble more professional or established music reviews.

As Amazon specifically asks for 'customer reviews' attention is actively drawn to the format of discussion, which can further imply that reviewers might want to adhere to certain stylistic conventions. By comparison, YouTube comments are often created for a different purpose and either look to draw attention or present a less composed type of personal critique. However, they also display a distinct tendency to include debates regarding the identification of genre in Radiohead's music and use categorisation in a similar manner to the often more detailed Amazon reviews. With this in mind it can be said that online discussions tend to position Radiohead's music in a similar way to journalists and academics by way of discussing the band's generic roots and development. It is clear that online debates are often affected by other types of publications and conventions that were established offline. However, as a closer look at the content of online discussion can also show, reviews and comments are equally shaped by the conditions of the online discourse and listening contexts. As such online commentary needs to be regarded as an individual format that may build

upon previously established conventions. It is also highly personalised and follows specific guidelines that may vary across platforms but are inherently shaped by the nature of the online context.

One aspect that has a considerable impact on the ways in which online discussions appear and develop is the previously mentioned concept of individualisation or personalisation. While journalistic and academic texts are often created for specific purposes, audience commentary does not always follow in the same path. The listening circumstances amongst these three groups may differ significantly and it can be assumed that online audiences encounter the discussed music in various ways and contexts. Any subsequent interpretations are therefore dependent on personal objectives and affected by aspects such as retrospectivity, previous knowledge and expectations as well as the listening time invested. Online commentary often displays particular styles that are shaped by these conditions, and features a number of traits that result from the inherent diversity of online audiences and the perceived freedom of expression the internet affords them. While web users tend to make use of offline writing conventions, over the years they have also created their own reviewing styles and formats.

Considering the role personalisation plays in online discourse, it is interesting to note that a large number of reviews and comments manage to incorporate personal memories and meanings. A main example of this is the recounting of concert experiences that might accompany discussions of past albums and also tend to be distinctly nostalgic.⁴⁷¹ In this regard it appears that expressions of genre are often shaped by personal experience. By extension definitions of genre can be considerably varied as web users often tend to work with individually shaped ideas of genre rules and characteristics and utilise various terminologies in different ways. As this shows the study of online discourses presents insights into a complex and multifaceted concept of genre and conventions, that are generally more diverse than those found in music journalism or academia due to the fact that they are less bound by shared conventions.

⁴⁷¹ This is also the case in various reviews of Radiohead's music. Cf. TB-Amaz-01.

As the study of online audiences and discussions serves to show the impact of individualisation does not only affect the content of online commentary but also the ways in which it is often presented. Audience discussions can often feature more colloquial styles of expression and are sometimes written in a stream of consciousness manner that places emphasis on the personal perspective. In a similar way the use of a first-person narrator often serves to draw a clear distinction between web users and other listener groups and stresses the peculiarity of the discussed content. At first glance this can point towards a dissociation amongst web-users and also raise the question to what extent one is able to find shared discourses amongst this varied group of people. It is therefore important to note that despite the web users' tendency to distinguish themselves from each other, online discourses still often share a considerable number of traits and narratives that affect, and in turn are affected by, the audience's uses of genre. This way shared discourses evolve through genre discussion but also guide the development of categorisational processes, which will be discussed in more detail at a later point in this chapter. A further possible reason for the audience members' frequent leaning towards personalisation is the common aim to present unpopular or unusual opinions in a less generalising and decidedly more careful manner in order to avoid large conflicts. While online anonymity can often contribute towards the freedom of expression and a specific variety in terms of what is said throughout the genre discourse, it is also the cause of more frequent and severe forms of counter arguments or attacks. For this reason a crucial characteristic that shapes online discussions might be the common discrepancy between a possibility to express oneself freely and the fear of instant critique, that affects individual online participants in very different ways.

As a further characteristic element of online commentary formats, affective styles of writing can shape the presentation of content. Both Amazon reviews and YouTube comments display similar tendencies to discuss the music in a variety of specifically emotive manners. The discourse on genre is therefore usually shaped by the audience's tone of discussion and can for instance appear rather enthusiastic or even polemic. This is due to the fact that individual web users who make the decision to discuss a piece of music

online often do so for specific reasons based on personal interests and motivations. While online commentary can be positive or negative, it is rarely neutral and thus often displays a degree of emotional involvement that informs the ways in which opinions are presented. One example that arises as a product of online discussion is the tendency to use the computer's 'caps lock' function in order to emphasise particular points throughout the discussion. This will usually be aspects that the writer is specifically passionate about and often involves the band's status and positioning of their work. As the text sources studied for this chapter can show, this feature is used quite frequently in online discussions and often appears in combination with argumentative structures of discussion and is used to convey certain points more insistently. At the same time the use of superlatives is equally common and again underlines a distinct tendency to present and discuss music in an emotive and often subjective manner.

While it has been mentioned that Amazon reviews tend to mimic journalistic review styles and succeed to varying degrees, it is interesting to note that the writing styles found online are generally more varied and affected by issues of personalisation. The discussion styles found in the YouTube comment sections often feature shorter and more focused insights into genre that rarely proceed to deliver concise arguments. Nevertheless, they often focus on specific genre-related issues and are surprisingly useful in gauging the extent of genre discourse in an otherwise open-ended and topic-less online discussion. By comparison, Amazon reviews often place emphasis on more detailed discussions and evaluations and appear in a variety of formats derived from journalistic or academic styles, that are shaped by the nature of online discussion. Online reviews are thus often informed by review styles practiced offline and tend to incorporate typical elements such as analytical or evaluative sections that can appear more or less detailed.

The reviews are inherently characterised by the fact that they often include personal elements, rarely follow specific argumentative structures and place specific emphasis on detailed discussions of individual songs. This latter aspect, which presents a fragmentation of sorts, can be frequently found in

discussions of Radiohead's individual albums and is one of the main characteristics of online discourses. Unlike journalists who often focus on the generic description of specific musical elements that are featured on an album, audience discourses online mostly include listings of songs that are then individually discussed in terms of their perceived sound and style. This way online discussions do not always feature specific mentions of genre in reference to particular albums, but focus on the question of how specific songs can be described in terms of genre and relate to the album as a whole. It is for this reason that a study of online discourse can provide useful insights into the ways in which audience members deal with generic complexities and also address issues of stylistic diversity in Radiohead's music.⁴⁷²

As the discussion of temporal issues in online reviews has brought to attention, audience interpretations are often informed by genre-based expectations as well as the author's individual previous knowledge. The knowledge about a band's musical history as well as presumptions and speculations about their new music can affect the ways in which evaluative standards are created. These aspects are often at the centre of debates about new albums or songs and foster a comparative mode of interpretation that usually refers back to previously encountered works by the same artist. In the case of Radiohead's early studio albums one can for instance often find references to what audiences might expect, while later albums such as *OK Computer* or *Kid A* are often seen to divert expectations. *Amnesiac* is sometimes solely discussed in light of *Kid A* and *The King of Limbs* is surprisingly often described as a rock album based on Radiohead's previous affiliation with the genre when its individual songs are described as anything but rock music.⁴⁷³ While it has been shown that music journalists

⁴⁷² As opposed to journalistic discourse it should be noted that the concept of stylistic diversity generally appears as a larger framework within online discourse. Due to the large number of individual and personalised interpretations that are not subject to editing processes, one will often find a wider range of canonic genre terminologies. While music journalists have frequently placed Radiohead in either rock- or pop-related categories or referred to specific subgenres, online audiences are more daring in terms of categorical choices. Therefore one can find more mentions of terminologies that derive from varied generic backgrounds.

⁴⁷³ Cf. TKOL-Amaz-03. Interestingly, as the discussion of Rockwell's writings in chapter 1 has shown, these tensions within the genre debate can often be seen as beneficial for the

do make use of similar knowledge- and expectation-based standards,⁴⁷⁴ it is interesting to note that online audiences often present their discussions in a decidedly more complex way which is again shaped by the factor of retrospectivity. It thus appears that evaluative standards are often as much based on a knowledge about the band's previous music as they are informed by the specific knowledge about what was yet to come. As such online audiences are often in a position to compare forwards and backwards in time and often approach the discussed content from a more informed, but also biased point of view. In consequence online reviews and commentary on Radiohead's early music often appear more informed by later events and, while journalists might have used terms such as 'one hit-wonders' to describe the band's earlier work, it is notable that this sort of description never appears in online discussions unless it is to reflect on past Radiohead reception in the music press.

4.2 Uses of genre in online audience discourse

4.2.1 Specialist genre audiences and processes of 'canon-building'

Online discussions of genre in Radiohead's music are often highly personalised and audience members take great care to point out how a new song or album might fit into their individual conception of Radiohead's style. Online audiences generally display a high degree of self-awareness and often reflect on the reasoning behind their expectations and their own position in relation to the music. Personal affiliations with specific genres as well as the proclamation thereof therefore play an important role in online discourse and affect how the music is presented generically in a way that one would be rarely able to find in journalism or academia. By stating their affiliation with one established genre or fandom, audience members seek to distinguish themselves from other discourse participants but also give direction to people with similar tastes and position the music in light of their experiences.

development of genres and genre discourses as they usually lead to a renegotiation of rules. Cf. p. 61 f. of this thesis.

⁴⁷⁴ Cf. p. 158 f. of this thesis.

Comparing reviews of Radiohead's later albums to their earlier work it becomes apparent that the band's web audience has become more varied in terms of genre. Individual audience members identify themselves as fans of genres such as rock, jazz, electronica, hip hop or classical music amongst others, which serves to emphasise an increasing stylistic diversity within the band's music as well as their cross-generic appeal.⁴⁷⁵ At the same time this generic affiliation can also show if and when expectations are subverted, which becomes particularly prominent after the release of *Kid A*, which was sometimes met with confusion. It is at the point of perceived generic change that audiences often assess their own position in relation to the music and re-evaluate the genre they had previously assigned to a specific artist or band. In the case of Radiohead's online reception this often resulted in debates regarding the band's position as a rock band and consequently discussions about whether the newly released music could still be considered as such.⁴⁷⁶

As a further characteristic of online discussions the concept of 'canon-building'⁴⁷⁷ presents another form of categorisation that can at times appear slightly evasive and, again, seeks to describe the music in a genre-transcending manner. Instead of utilising canonic genre terminologies the idea of canonisation places the music into categories that serve to position it in relation to other works and are not always genre-bound. This way, one can often find terms such as 'masterpiece' or 'classic'⁴⁷⁸ as alternative forms of categorisation that refrain from making clear generic statements. Similarly, the use of the word 'artwork' becomes more common and serves

⁴⁷⁵ The notion of an audience affiliation is often specifically used for this reason. Diversity is thus emphasised and audiences often underline their personal interest in Radiohead's music in spite of the fact that they usually would not count themselves amongst the group of listeners the music might be aimed at. One can for instance read statements such as this: "Even as a classical fan I like listening to Radiohead." [While this is merely a made up example, similar statements have been viewed in preparation for this chapter. Cf. KA-Amaz-04.] This type of sentence does not only express a specific genre affiliations, but also defines the music by way of exclusion, thus mirroring the concept of a negative genre definition as shown in chapter 3. Cf. p. 159 of this thesis.

⁴⁷⁶ Interestingly, in Radiohead's case this often happened in the form of discussions about the definition of rock. This type of discussion then also holds implications for the authors' previous understanding of Radiohead's music in terms of genre.

⁴⁷⁷ Cf. Appendix I.

⁴⁷⁸ Both terms have been used particularly often and regularly throughout Radiohead's career on both Amazon and YouTube.

to emphasise the band's general status. As this indicates the process of canon-building often seeks either to judge the discussed music or emphasise its overall value or authenticity in relation to other works. Since canonisation frequently makes use of canonic genre terms and attaches value judgements – the category 'best rock group' is one example⁴⁷⁹ – the concepts of canon-building and generic categorisation can often intersect or overlap. In audience discussions of Radiohead's music online one can find a large variety of similar terminologies and canonisation increases considerably following the release of *OK Computer*. This interestingly coincides with a trend within the music press of printing best-of lists that often affect canon-building processes and might influence the online audiences in this regard. Since Radiohead's studio albums have frequently featured on similar lists and votings it can be assumed that online discussions may also reflect popular offline trends and are in this regard affected by the music press.⁴⁸⁰ Nevertheless, it should also be noted that canonisation factors much more heavily in online discussions and appears distinctly affective and evaluative. It is therefore one of the main elements that distinguishes online audiences from journalists and academics and appears as one of the most influential forms of categorisation alongside canonic genre terminology, which serves to underline the general importance of value judgements in online discourses on genre.

4.2.2 Canonic genre terminologies and stages of the discourse

While the previous discussion has shown that online discourses can differ from journalistic and academic debates in various ways, it is interesting to note that over the years Radiohead's online reception has developed in a manner comparable to offline discussions and often features similar narratives. In general it can be said that the discussion moves from genre-based interpretations, which mostly appear in reviews of the band's earlier albums, towards a discourse on genre that emerges around the time of *OK*

⁴⁷⁹ Generally one can find a range of similar terminologies. Usually a judgemental term is combined with a genre ('rock' is often a favourite).

⁴⁸⁰ Most notably *OK Computer* was chosen as the best album of all time by *Q*-readers in 1997.

Computer's release.⁴⁸¹ Eventually, this also results in meta-reflections that comment on previously established strands of the genre discourse online and offline, often regarded in a critical way. Given the previously discussed impact of retrospectivity on online commentary, it is perhaps not surprising that this factor also affects the development of online discussions and the ways in which they differ from offline debates. While the offline discourse on genre in Radiohead's music evolves over time and is shaped by the band's own development, online comments on the same issues are not bound by temporal restrictions. They often fluctuate between simpler forms of discussion, actual genre discourse and meta-reflection in the course of a few sentences. The importance of this becomes particularly clear considering the ways in which journalistic discussions can change over time.

By comparison, retrospective online comments often include several stages of genre discussion in close proximity that are usually linked to specific albums. This way a review might start with the interpretation of *Pablo Honey* or *The Bends* as rock albums and proceed to look at *OK Computer* or *Kid A* for a more detailed discussion of the generic issues within Radiohead's work, leading into an actual discourse on genre. This discourse can feature reflections on associated debates in music journalism, academic texts or other audience comments. It is further important to note that this type of review is not bound to a particular time or album. Online discussions are thus inherently shaped by the fact that they do not always reflect the developmental levels of genre reception that can be found in the music press in a way that is particularly notable. While older commentary might feature less of a genre discourse, this is outweighed by the fact that a considerable number of comments were written in more recent years and usually include a mixture of different modes or levels of discussion that equally appear in reviews for all albums. For this reason online commentary can be seen as

⁴⁸¹ In this regard the development of online discourse appears similar to that of music journalism, which also features the beginning of a more active genre discourse around the release time of *OK Computer*. It should however be noted, that in the online context, this discourse appears mostly retrospectively. For this reason one can also assume, that the development of the discourse is mostly due to the album's content rather than its temporal placement.

less linear than offline discourse and often appear more complex and fast-moving due to the fact that it usually concentrates on both past and future developments.

While the online discussion of Radiohead's music over the years has become more widespread and diverse, it also deals with specific narratives and shared discourses that are often comparable to offline discussions. Online commentary includes distinct reception stages that categorise the albums in a similar manner to music journalism with the help of canonic genre terminologies. These stages of canonic genre interpretation are usually at the core of online reviews or comments and often evolve into common strands of interpretation within the genre discourse. Shared discourses on genre often develop from common interpretations and are equally present in an online context as they are offline. As one of the main elements of online commentary, they usually provide an underlying structure for discussions. Specific narratives often fulfil a similar function and are equally present in Radiohead's online reception. They are often based on common ideas that are then adopted into online discourse and shaped by it. One example of this is the emphasis of a dichotomy between experimental and popular elements within the band's music, another might be the band member's off- and on-stage behaviour and the question of how this affects their generic positioning.⁴⁸² While narratives are not always focused on generic issues, they usually reflect aspects of categorisation to some extent and often function as one of the main arguments within the discussion, which in turn affects the ways in which genre discourse appears.

As the previous discussion has shown, the online commentary on Radiohead's music can often appear varied or complex, which also applies to the different uses of genre and categorisation in web discourse. In a similar way to music journalism or academia online discussions feature canonic genre terminology as one of the most common forms of categorisation, if sometimes in new or slightly altered ways. When studying online discourse it is important to bear in mind that this choice of

⁴⁸² These types of discussions can be found at various stages of Radiohead's career and in reviews of all albums.

terminology is again affected by possible retrospective points of view. This specifically affects the evaluation of Radiohead's earlier albums and songs, which is often exclusively retrospective. Since a large number of these discussions tend to focus on the band's further development, it can also be said that the retrospective approach often fosters debates about stylistic diversity and change.

While Radiohead's rock influences present a common thread that runs through most of the web commentary, online audiences display a general tendency to utilise well-known and established genre terms. This type of canonic terminology often appears without further explanation and might either indicate a distinct vagueness or a reluctance to make use of lesser known terms, which in turn could lead to criticism or foster longer debates. Based on the study of online sources for this chapter it can be argued that web audiences mostly favour common and simple types of genre terminology such as for instance meta-genres. Interpretations usually revolve around a small number of generic traits that are used to position Radiohead's music within more widely known musical traditions. One example of this is the interpretation of Radiohead's early music as either rock or guitar rock, which is often solely based on the band's extensive use of the instrument.⁴⁸³ While online discourse can therefore appear rather simple or direct, it is important to note that this way of using genre presents one of the defining characteristics of the generally fast-paced and often implicative online context. Since online discussions are generally less formulaic, aspects such as a background knowledge about the band's history or the expertise in a specific genre are sometimes implied and presupposed.

The fact that online discourse makes little use of more distinguished canonic terms or subgenres is one of its most telling features. It serves to position the online discourse as a way of communication that can appear very accessible

⁴⁸³ Due to the different format of online reviews and the presence of review stages, examples of this may be found in reviews for all albums. Interestingly, it should be noted that the journalistic interpretation of Radiohead's music as 'rock' or 'guitar rock' can mostly be found in discussions of earlier albums. While online comments sometimes emphasise a relation between the 'rock interpretation' and Radiohead's earlier work, they often present interpretational strands in a more generalising manner. A discussion of the journalistic 'rock interpretation' within Radiohead's earlier work can be found on p. 147 f. of this thesis.

but also generalising. At the same time it is noteworthy that complex interpretations are often implied or alluded to within the discussion. As a consequence shared discourses are sometimes obscured. While *OK Computer* would for instance be described as a rock album, a discussion of its content could bring out several generic nuances, that either appear in the form of musical influences or specific sounds. This type of discussion points towards a more complex generic evaluation that utilises canonic terminology like an umbrella term in order to provide structure and meaning to the rest of the discussion. A shared discourse on stylistic diversity is implied, but not explicitly discussed with the help of canonic terms. Nevertheless, it is useful to take note of this underlying complexity and stay aware of the fact that online discussions may sometimes feature implied or obscured arguments that can present a form of common knowledge and by extension an implied shared discourse.

While both journalism and academia mostly make use of the same range of canonic terminology that also appears in online discourse, the latter is clearly distinguished by the ways in which these terms are used. As the previous paragraph has shown web audiences tend to work with a slightly smaller range of canonic terminologies, which necessarily limits the ways in which the music is described and interpreted. While it might appear that this way of discussing genre is not always conducive to highlighting aspects of stylistic change and diversity, that are often present in offline discourse, it is the ways in which these terms are used that truly define the online discourse and serve to present a more all-encompassing view of how the band's music is perceived and evaluated. One of the main attributes of the online discourse on Radiohead is the fact that, despite its lack of more nuanced canonic terminologies, it is considerably detailed. Its use of canonic terms is highly functional and highlights distinct aspects of how the music works generically and to what extent it might include different generic traits.

Comparing the different reviews and comments on the band's albums over the years it becomes apparent that web audiences generally make use of a range of canonic terminologies that spans from rock to electronic music – a contrast that is mostly presented as a gradual development – but also

includes mentions of jazz and classical music. While this development is mirrored offline, it is perhaps all the more interesting to note that these terms often appear altered and are used in their adjective- or verb-format. It is specifically this 'adjectification'⁴⁸⁴ of canonic genre terms that often contributes towards the presentation of musical content in a diversified manner. While the music on Radiohead's early albums would for instance be described as part of the rock spectrum or widely known subcategories such as grunge, indie or alternative, the discussion would then incorporate generic nuances in the form of adjectives such as 'jazzy' or 'funky' that emphasise the complex nature of the music.⁴⁸⁵

In a similar manner combinatory genres consisting of several canonic terms, such as 'industrial grunge rock', and the combination of canonic terms with evaluative adjectives, such as 'aggressive rock', are often found in online discourse.⁴⁸⁶ This way the content of online discussions is presented in a distinctly diversified manner and again affected by processes of fragmentation that often result in the description of individual songs with the help of canonic genre terms in various forms. While this might indicate a vagueness in terms of generic interpretation and an uncertainty regarding the generic positioning of Radiohead's albums as a whole, it also points towards a need for precision that favours the accurate description of individual songs over generalisations. For this reason the online discourse on genre can often be very detailed due to its creative use of common genre terminologies and presents aspects of stylistic change or diversity in a perhaps less prominent but very distinct and characteristic manner that is shaped by online conditions.

As the discussion in chapter 3 has shown, over the years journalists have often invented new terminologies in order to describe Radiohead's music and make sense of stylistic change. While these new categories usually evolved as purpose-oriented modes of description that helped to strengthen the journalist's individual status and place within the music press, they have also played a considerable part in positioning Radiohead's music as

⁴⁸⁴ Cf. Appendix I.

⁴⁸⁵ Cf. A-Amaz-01 and A-Amaz-05.

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. TB-Amaz-14 and OKC-Amaz-03.

something close to a generic novelty that goes beyond existing categories. With this in mind it is interesting to note that new genre terminologies rarely appear in the context of online discussions.⁴⁸⁷ Since online discourses on genre in Radiohead's music mostly revolve around existing categories, one can assume that audiences are generally less concerned with distinguishing themselves amongst their peers and again prefer to utilise terminologies that are easily comprehensible and widely known. This can also explain the earlier discussed necessity for different uses of canonic genre terms in online commentary, that often allow for more diversified and creative ways of describing genre without completely moving away from existing categories. Looking at the online comments and reviews of Radiohead's albums, it has been shown that online audiences work with a similar range of canonic terms that are also used in offline discourse. While Radiohead's earlier albums are most frequently described with the help of canonic terminologies that fall within the wider rock spectrum – such as for instance alternative, indie, grunge or Britpop⁴⁸⁸ – Radiohead's music after *Kid A* is often discussed with the help of more diverse terminologies that range from rock towards electronica but also incorporate categories such as 'avant-garde' or even 'art music' that are somewhat removed from popular music categories.

Genre terms are often used rather freely and, while definitions may often vary, it is notable that rules and characteristics are rarely discussed.⁴⁸⁹ As such the reception stages of genre found in online discourse often mirror journalistic and academic uses of canonic terminology.⁴⁹⁰ Given the retrospective nature of online discussions it is interesting to consider the fact that web audiences apply the same canonic terminologies to specific albums at different points in time. Despite the temporal distance that some of these writers might have to the reviewed work, they often continue to describe the

⁴⁸⁷ Indeed, the source material studied for this chapter only features new combinations of existing terms as discussed previously, but completely refrains from including new terminologies.

⁴⁸⁸ Cf. YT-PID, YT-MIL, PH-Amaz-06 and TB-Amaz-16.

⁴⁸⁹ More so than journalistic discourse, the online discourse shows that each writer has individually formed views on specific genres. While a general consensus is present in the form of basic rules, personal understandings of genre vary considerably.

⁴⁹⁰ Journalistic reception stages were discussed in chapter 3. Cf. pp. 139 – 164 of this thesis.

music in similar terms as others have done before them or discuss these terminologies in a more critical manner. As this indicates, canonic interpretations are seemingly less affected by the audience's knowledge of what was yet to come. While a knowledge of Radiohead's future development can thus affect the form of reviews or comments and factor in the way in which the band's general stylistic tendencies are discussed, it can be said that this aspect has less of an impact on individual interpretations of albums. This observation can finally serve to emphasise the consistency of genre reception stages amongst online and offline audiences and emphasise the significance and reach of shared genre discourses.

4.2.3 Non-canonic genre terminologies

As the discussion so far has shown the study of online audience discourses on genre can often appear quite similar to journalistic discourses. Different discourses often work with similar forms of genre commentary and utilise categorisation in comparable ways. While canonic genre terminology is used consistently by all listener groups, the implementations of these terms differ depending on the specific user groups. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that the evasion of canon terminologies, which factors heavily in academic discourse, also appears in online commentary if possibly in slightly varied ways. One of the most common forms of genre evasion that is also found in offline discourse is the use of adjective genres or noun categories that seek to define the music in more descriptive but also vague terms. As opposed to music journalists who often tend to make use of a similar range of adjective terminologies (i.e. 'experimental' or 'mainstream'), it is interesting to note that online audiences generally rely less on these more established terms. By contrast, they often apply a wider range of individual and often unrelated terminologies.

Web users further tend to link the discussed music to the time and place of its release. Descriptions of Radiohead's music as '90s music' are particularly common and reviews often describe Radiohead as distinctly British. Descriptions often discuss the band's overall sound throughout the years in a generalising manner. Terms such as 'melodic', 'harmonic' or 'haunting' are

very common and appear in combination with canonic terms. As in the music press, genre is also hinted at through references to musical influences and it can be said that online audiences and journalists generally tend to discuss similar works.⁴⁹¹ Especially in later years these influences are more diversified and feature components from both rock and electronic music. While journalists often refer to the ways in which Radiohead's music is affected by the band's influences, it is interesting to note that online discussions pay equal attention to Radiohead's own impact on future musicians. This way online audiences often highlight a number of musical traits – such as singing style, instrumentation or overall sound – that they see as representative of Radiohead and that have affected new music. These discussions can also indicate an awareness of or direct allusion to a Radiohead genre, which consequently features in online discourse. While negative genre terminologies appear in a similar capacity as they do in offline discourse it is notable that the use of negative adjective genres – descriptions such as for example 'not immediate'⁴⁹² – are particularly common in reviews of Radiohead's later albums and can indicate a sense of confusion on the side of the audience due to the diversion of genre-based expectations.

A further aspect that affects online discussions of Radiohead's music is the interpretation of specific albums as concept albums. The first time this type of category is used in online discourse is in reviews and comments on *OK Computer*. While the term is rarely discussed in great depth, it is often used to describe specific albums independently from other works and to position them in a category of their own. It is interesting to note that the release of *OK Computer* seemed to mark a point of change in web discussions and a move away from established terminologies towards an interest in the band's

⁴⁹¹ Both journalists and online audiences tend to focus on a similar range of musical influences that are often associated with specific albums and sounds. In reference to Radiohead's early work one can for instance find mentions of Nirvana or U2, while *Ok Computer* is often compared to the works of Pink Floyd. Later reviews sometimes feature a wider range of influences that seek to account for the band's often discussed stylistic diversity. At the same time, online discourse also includes more one-off mentions of specific bands, that are a product of individualised interpretations. Similarly, certain compositional techniques are sometimes used to refer to specific artists and sounds. For this reason online references to musical influences can often hold different implications.

⁴⁹² Cf. TKOL-Amaz-08.

individual style and progress. Discussions are centred around the interpretation of Radiohead's current music in comparison to earlier or later works and focus on their overall development. On the one hand this can indicate a growing complexity of stylistic components within the band's music that is perhaps increasingly difficult to define with the help of established or even evasive genre terminologies. On the other hand it can serve to emphasise the presence and general significance of a Radiohead genre that is perhaps still developing at this point but affects audience discussions online to such an extent that the use of other genre terminologies notably decreases from album to album.

4.2.4 A brief discussion of fan message boards

Until this point the analysis of online content has purposely refrained from talking about genre discourses on online message boards, which can present another great source of information for studying audience conceptions of genre. From an ethical point of view the use of existing or generated information found on password- and username-protected message boards can be questionable without attaining the explicit permissions of discourse participants. Nevertheless, a general overview of information and discursive actions can often suffice to achieve an overview of generic evaluation while preserving the anonymity of online contributors as well as websites. In Radiohead's case it is notable that one can find a variety of online discussions as well as message boards devoted solely to the band, that often speculate about and assess new album releases and in the process address issues concerning genre. As opposed to the comments on YouTube and Amazon, message boards often include more interaction and appear more spontaneous in nature as well as increasingly interactive. They often mirror active offline discussions and thus might be useful to achieve better insights into the communication processes amongst more involved fans of Radiohead's music. In particular these kinds of discussions about genre often revolve around the elementary question of how Radiohead's music can be categorised and most often lead into a discourse on stylistic diversity and evasiveness. A common strand of thought amongst different message board users seems to be the conviction that 'Radiohead can (or should) not

be categorised.' This opinion is either based on the idea that Radiohead's music is too multifaceted and therefore referential of various genres or else presents something that is completely novel and unprecedented. The latter assumption, of course, also suggests a way of romanticising the band's music that is often found on message boards and especially amongst devoted music fans. At the same time it is notable that message board discussions of Radiohead's music often feature a high degree in technical music knowledge, detailed analytical discussions as well as opinions that are founded on mostly well-worded and extended argumentations. Considering the results of online discourses discussed above message boards, perhaps surprisingly, do not stray far from the general genre discourse on Radiohead. They often utilise similar terminologies as used in YouTube or Amazon comments and incorporate a variety of genre forms, mainly relying on established canon terms and at times non-canonic replacement terms. While a study of message boards can thus serve to extend the analysis of online genre discourses, it does not necessarily add anything new in terms of terminology that cannot be found when studying other sources. It is notable, however, that discussions of genre on message boards are often more concentrated, detailed and rich in content. In this way a short study of these sources serves to draw out strands of generic perception and interpretation that often appear more dispersed and less in-depth in other online sources. At the same time it is notable that message board discussions contribute to the discourse on Radiohead's musical development and often feature conceptualisations of a Radiohead genre. As this shows these types of discussions do resemble other online and offline discourses on the band and one can easily find shared generic discourses even if the manner of discussion is often dependent on the individual medium or platform.

4.2.5 The 'Radiohead genre' and notions of stylistic diversity

As the study of online discussions so far has shown, the retrospective nature and temporal dispersion of comments can often be useful in order to gain new insights into the ways in which shared discourses develop online. It is notable that genre interpretations of specific works often remain consistent over time which serves to emphasise the impact of a shared discourse,

incorporating common perceptions of genre, as well as the general longevity of generic reception stages. Since journalistic opinions evolved in a mostly linear fashion alongside Radiohead's own stylistic progress, the study of online commentary can serve to emphasise that a lack of this temporal parallel does not affect the shared discourse in a distinctly notable way. While specific reception stages of genre are therefore equally present in online discourse as they are offline and may appear even more stable and consistent, it is interesting to note that from an early point online discussions tend to pay less attention to individual genre interpretations and focus on a discussion of the band's overall generic development as well as stylistic diversity. Similar to music journalism the online discussion of Radiohead's music produces shared genre discourses that mostly appear in reviews of *OK Computer* and later albums. At the same time one is often able to find early mentions of meta-discourses that address the ways in which online contributors have discussed Radiohead's music in terms of genre so far. In terms of canonic genre discourses one can generally observe a clear trajectory that seeks to describe Radiohead's move from rock music to electronic music over the years. As web audiences often tend to apply more popular canonic terminologies, a study of online discourses can be particularly helpful in tracing this development and emphasise what has already been shown with the help of journalistic sources. This way it becomes apparent that the move from rock into electronica presents one of the most popular narratives within the genre discourse on Radiohead and can be seen as one of the defining themes that also tends to permeate more specialised genre discourses on the same music.

While the above discussion has shown that web discourses often tend to discuss the issue of genre in more explicit terms than music journalists, a look at online commentary can serve to strengthen the results found during a study of offline discourses. With this in mind it is important to note that the general move from personalised interpretations to shared genre discourses in online commentary is accompanied by a move from canonic interpretations towards a discussion of stylistic diversity and generic change that is mostly persistent in reviews and comments on *OK Computer* and *Kid A*. In web commentary one is often able to find allusions to the growing generic

complexity in Radiohead's work – and specifically on these two albums – and stylistic diversity quickly evolves into one of the main themes of genre discourse online. As this development indicates, it is interesting to see how web audiences seemingly search for the common denominator within the band's work and reviews start to revolve around the issue of what distinguishes Radiohead's music from other artists. In this regard it is often stated that the band's music does not fit within existing categories any longer or even defies categorisation.

It is then important to note that a large number of discussions still tend to allude to the general move from rock towards electronic music, which grounds the discussion of change and progression in a wide but still specifically popular generic field. As the earlier discussion of music journalism has shown, the genre debate on Radiohead has often tended to incorporate a certain dichotomy of experimental elements and popular styles.⁴⁹³ It is a similar theme that is also persistent throughout online discourse, where canonic terminologies are often mentioned alongside issues of categorisation and generic complexity. This way the concept of innovation often appears together with notions of stylistic consistency. While online audiences often highlight the ways in which Radiohead's music develops from album to album, they also emphasise the thought that the band always manages to retain recognisable and characteristic elements within their overall sound. For this reason it can be said that notions of a Radiohead genre generally appear very early on and consistently throughout Radiohead's online reception and shape the ways in which the music is described and categorised.

The first explicit mentions of a Radiohead genre in the context of online discourse can be found in a number of Amazon reviews for *The Bends*.⁴⁹⁴ While YouTube commentary is generally concerned with typical elements in Radiohead's music, such as for instance voice or instrumentation, the concise nature of most comments often puts a limit to more detailed

⁴⁹³ This was discussed on p. 165 ff. and p. 206 of this thesis.

⁴⁹⁴ While it is often mentioned that Radiohead manage to adopt a specific style and 'make it their own', online audiences also highlight the fact that the band is rather hard to categorise. A first conceptualisation of the Radiohead genre focuses on Radiohead's inherent diversity and stylistic progression as their true personal style. Cf. TB-Amaz-01.

discussions of the subject. In contrast message boards often discuss the topic in greater detail. Online discussions generally display a high tendency to discuss Radiohead's music in their own generic terms that even exceeds journalistic debates about a Radiohead genre in terms of numbers. It is perhaps a reluctance to commit to specific canonic interpretations or the focus on Radiohead's stylistic diversity and impact on future bands that foster these debates. With the release of *Kid A* audience members soon took note of further stylistic progressions within the band's music, but also emphasised that the music was tied to the band's previous work through a common style that is seen as characteristic of Radiohead's music. This style, again, presents a composite of various musical notions that are more or less easily discernible within the band's work. Individual interpretations focus on aspects such as singing style, use of guitars or electronic effects in order to describe how Radiohead's music not only fits within a range of standard canon terminologies but can also be regarded as a category in its own right. As this shows the notion of a Radiohead genre in online discourse develops in a similar way to music journalism. Despite the fact that journalistic discussions of such a category are often more detailed, it is important to note that online audience discussions on the same topic appear considerably more frequently. For this reason they can often present more detailed insights into the specific ways in which Radiohead's music can be perceived and interpreted as a musical category, and to what extent these views present the foundation for a shared discourse.

While music journalists have placed the development of a Radiohead genre at the point of change between *OK Computer* and *Kid A* and noted the dichotomy of the band's generic progress and simultaneous stylistic consistency as one of their defining elements, it can be said that the extent of journalistic discourse on Radiohead's music as a distinct generic category is mostly limited to this discussion. In this regard it can also be noted that online debates on the same topic generally go further and it is mostly in the online commentary on *Hail To The Thief* that one can become aware of a beginning shared discourse that focuses on the development of a Radiohead genre. In this regard it is interesting to note that reviews of the album are often centred around the notion of *Hail To The Thief* as a display of a

stylistic hybridity that is comprised of the different sounds and styles of Radiohead's previous albums. At the same time this discussion is most often accompanied by an equally engaged debate about a possible return towards more basic rock music as well as further hints towards a slow but continuous move into the world of electronica. While Radiohead's music is often interpreted as a distinct category of its own, it is also always associated with more established canonic terms that serve to define the origins and overall development of the new category.

As the previously discussed arguments show, the discourse on a specific Radiohead genre often seems to move alongside more traditional generic notions and is always grounded on underlying canonic terminologies that affect the ways in which a new generic category comes into existence. This way Radiohead's online reception clearly displays a move from individual canonic interpretations over evasive terminologies towards a discussion of stylistic change and progression that soon led to the formation of a new category based on a hybridity of previous styles. Starting with *Hail To The Thief* it becomes apparent that genre is indicated not only by the mention of specific musical influences, which can further point towards a solidification of a possible Radiohead genre, but also by the band's status as influential artists. Looking at the reviews and comments on *In Rainbows* it is interesting to note that the online discourse on Radiohead's stylistic hybridity becomes increasingly more detailed. It is specifically at this point in time that web audiences begin to express more genre-based expectations that often refer back to the perceived amalgamation of previous styles and hence the discourse on a Radiohead genre. While the music press generally tended to focus on the circumstances of the album's release method as well as issues of stylistic diversity, in online discourse *In Rainbows* seemingly signals a moment of arrival that features fewer debates about Radiohead's generic interpretation and instead focuses on the exploration of their personal style.

With all this in mind, it becomes apparent that the notion of a Radiohead genre in online discourse approximately appears at the same time as the beginning discussion on the band's generic complexity. Notions of stylistic

diversity, a certain moment of maturing, or even the move beyond existing categories have often affected online discussions on genre in Radiohead's music and fostered debates about the development of a distinct personal style.⁴⁹⁵ At the same time Radiohead's music has often been subject to particular debates revolving around canonic interpretations, such as the move from rock into electronic music or the notion of stylistic complexity versus commercial appeal. As the discussion of online content has shown the concept of a Radiohead genre in web discourse develops in a mostly linear fashion starting with the notion of stylistic change and progress, and ending in a conceptualisation of the band's inner-musical hybridity, that mostly relies on an amalgamation of their own previous works and styles.

Looking at the online reception of *The King Of Limbs* it has been noted that while Radiohead's music is generally described in different generic terms, the band itself is still often listed as a rock band.⁴⁹⁶ For this reason it can be assumed that the online discourse on genre in Radiohead's music has in some ways reached a shared conclusion, which generally agrees on a positioning of Radiohead as a rock band in spite of their distinct stylistic tendencies that may move beyond the genre. This development can finally serve to underline the consolidation of a Radiohead genre: While online audiences seemingly agree on the fact that the band can be described as a rock band at its core, this does not bind them to specific canonic interpretations, but rather opens the floor for various discussions of how Radiohead have moved beyond this title and evade the concept of traditional categorisation.

It can be said in conclusion that the analysis of online discourses presents a very useful method for studying and understanding popular music genres and their inherent complexities. As the previous discussion has sought to show, online discourses can often appear varied and complex and do not

⁴⁹⁵ As in music journalism online audiences often note that Radiohead's music moves on from certain canonic categories at specific points in time. One example of this is the notion of a break with rock music, which generally serves to emphasise the band's supposed move into electronica and also features within music journalism. Cf. Amaz-TB-18. The concept of a maturing of sorts appears notably often in online discourse and generally serves to emphasise aspects of stylistic progression.

⁴⁹⁶ Cf. TKOL-Amaz-03.

always include detailed arguments. Nevertheless, it is notable that online discourses often present shared opinions more clearly than journalists or academics and refer specifically to each other. This might be due to their communicative and fast-paced nature. Their study is useful to consolidate what has already been shown in music journalism: Uses of genre are similar amongst different audience groups but also always shaped by the nature of the listening contexts as well as the audience's medium of expression and communication. While the study of music journalism has displayed distinct reception stages and useful insights into the shared discourses within a journalistic context, online audiences often appear to be even more in tune with each other and generally less competitive.

This increase in terms of inter-audience communication leads to more engaged discussions of the topic and the solidification of specific shared discourses. For this reason the additional study of online discourses can not only be useful to provide insights into the different uses of genre in a web context, but also help to achieve a more extensive view of Radiohead's audience reception in terms of generic complexity. Additionally it can help to gain information on the ways in which shared discourses develop over time and as a result of online genre debate. It is for these reasons that the study of online discourses can add to the previous discussions on other genre participants and provide immensely useful insights into the functionalities of genre concepts. This way online discourse analysis presents a crucial tool for understanding the ways in which complex notions of genre are dealt with in more communal and interactive but also distinctly versatile and personalised contexts.

Conclusion

As stated at the beginning of this thesis a main aim of this work is the development of a new methodology for studying processes and issues of generic categorisation in popular music that combines text- and discourse-based methods of analysis. Chapter 1 has discussed theoretical approaches from different disciplines and explained how these could be applied in a musical context and with regards to the study of music reception. It has provided an overview of genre theory throughout history and shown that academic discussions of popular music genres first appeared during medieval times and thus precede the emergence of popular music studies as a discipline. In particular the chapter has also shown that film genre theory can often hold implications for a study of music genres. It becomes apparent that popular music studies, a discipline that combines elements from different academic fields, can further benefit from a study of relevant literatures in other related fields. In providing the theoretical underpinnings for further discussions of genre texts and discourses chapter 1 has thus served as the basis for the evolving methodology.

While the main purpose of chapter 2 was to show how Radiohead's music could be analysed and described generically, it also set out to test new methodological ideas derived from the study of genre theories. In this way the concept of an iconographic genre analysis was developed – based on ideas from film genre theory – and adapted to serve as an appropriate strategy within the context of the newly evolving methodology of music genre analysis. Due to its succinct and adjustable manner, iconographic genre analysis serves as a useful text-based approach for a study of music genres, that can easily be paired with other means of analysis and specifically serves to assess and evaluate discursive sources. This methodology can also be adapted into other generic contexts or even transferred to non-generic analytical processes and provide guidance for introductory assessments of musical texts. By extension the iconographic method could also be applied to musical contexts and utilised to analyse paratexts in a more detailed manner. As the chapter has further shown Radiohead's music can be discussed generically and one can find various

characteristics that hold implications for the band's generic positioning. While Radiohead's affiliation with a particular genre is not overtly clear, the chapter has provided reason for a study of stylistic diversity and change.

With chapter 3 the thesis has shown how one can analyse genre through a study of journalistic discourses and thus make sense of generic complexities within Radiohead's music. The chapter has introduced theoretical ideas for a discourse-based method of analysis and shown how this methodology can work in practice. Based on the analysis of journalistic sources one was able to see that genre functions as a purpose-oriented way of describing music and appears in a variety of forms. Generic classification is often guided by specific objectives that arise from the writing context and personal circumstances. Uses of genre thus differ greatly. The chapter has also introduced new terminologies, most importantly the terms 'canonic' and 'non-canonic', which can be useful to distinguish between socially established genre terminologies and alternative forms of categorisation.⁴⁹⁷ It further served to highlight a number of non-canonic uses of genre – negative terminologies, 'adjective genres' and genre allusions amongst others – that have not been discussed in previous literature on the topic. The chapter has also dealt with issues of 'genrefication' and specifically the idea of a 'Radiohead genre', a category that helps distinguish the band from other artists and serves to indicate their personal and generic status. In comparing the results of the journalistic discourse to a discussion of academic uses of genre, the chapter has further drawn out the differences amongst audience groups and emphasised the variability of the genre discourse. In doing so it has shown that an analysis of popular music genres can not only benefit from a study of discursive sources, but also needs to pay attention of the nature of these sources and take note of its various nuances.

While the discussion in chapter 3 has primarily dealt with traditional offline discourses on genre, chapter 4 has presented an expansion of the discourse-based method of analysis by focusing on online discourses on genre. As the chapter has served to show uses of genre in audience discourse are highly

⁴⁹⁷ A full list of new terminologies established during the course of this thesis can be found in Appendix I.

dependent on the ways in which the discourse is produced. Thus, by including web-discussions, one can see that debates often depend on the specific conditions of the online context. This not only includes conditions based on the new medium of expression – a constructed online identity for instance – but also aspects such as a temporal distance to the discussed work or the access to a breadth of information and thus previous knowledge. Nevertheless, online discourses also often feature similar interpretations as offline discourses and are inherently shaped by their influence. As the chapter has thus shown, the analysis of discourses can generally benefit from alternative views and should include diverse sources that arise from various backgrounds in order to present contrasts in opinion or emphasise popular interpretational strands.

Reflecting on the discussions included in this thesis it finally becomes apparent that both the text-based and different discourse-based manners of analysis presented here have mutual benefits. As stated earlier without a text-based study of genre one would be unable to judge the value of individual discursive sources. Meanwhile, if it were not for the discourse-based methodology one would not be able to reflect on different uses of genre that are shaped by individual circumstance and thus be unable to understand individual manifestations of genre in all their inherent complexity. While previous studies on popular music genre have highlighted the importance of a study of genres and utilised individual methodologies that reflect part of what has been described here, a concise and combined account of genre analysis that considers all of the described facets was yet to be written. The thesis thus aims to present one first attempt that combines different methodologies and approaches genre study from two different angles in order to provide more detailed and distinguished insights into the concept of genre.

As the thesis has further shown, a discussion of different discursive sources can serve to highlight common strands of interpretation and thus convey an impression of popular opinions. In Radiohead's case issues of stylistic diversity and progression have often been discussed and appeared as main themes within Radiohead reception. In a similar way notions of a Radiohead

genre have served as crucial points of discussion. As both chapter 3 and 4 have shown in studying different discursive sources one is able to trace the developments of these common interpretations. In particular one can take note of the fact that often shared strands of discussion evolve into shared conclusions about a specific topic. Thus it has been shown that a Radiohead genre is often conceptualised in specific ways or that most journalists position Radiohead's stylistic break at the same point in time, namely between the release of *OK Computer* and *Kid A*, and tend to speak of a move from rock into electronica. A study of genre discourses can therefore also serve to identify a general consensus, which may appear complex and fluid but also reflects shared opinions.

While the discussion of different genre discourses has served to describe Radiohead's music and point out different functionalities and uses of categorisation, it has also allowed for a number of conclusions about the working mechanisms of different audience groups. The writings of journalists, academics and online audiences all serve to highlight different sides of generic meaning and utilise categorisation in specific characteristic ways. Journalistic writing often varies between vague descriptions and detailed analytical accounts. It includes a particularly large range of genre uses and thus often displays innovative processes of categorisation. Journalistic discussions thus often present most useful insights into generic reception due to the manner and detail of the genre discourse. Academics, by contrast, tend to favour traditional methods of music analysis over genre analysis. They mostly utilise generic categories as a way of positioning Radiohead's music within wider canons but also in order to create distinctions. Academic writers also tend to refer to journalistic sources, which makes a combined study of both types of discourse particularly interesting. In comparison online audiences are often specifically vague in their descriptions of genre. Presented opinions are often surprisingly unified and it becomes very easy to detect shared strands of opinions. With this in mind it can finally be said that a study of discursive sources deriving from different audience groups can also serve to highlight different listener perspectives on genre as well as the relations between genre discourse and personal circumstance.

As a concluding remark for this thesis it can be said that the methodology and results presented here will certainly benefit from future studies of genre and related subject matters. One aspect that calls for further discussion is the appearance of generic 'sub-discourses' as highlighted in chapter 1.⁴⁹⁸ A study of these individual discursive strands – aspects such as genre ideology, aesthetics or authenticity – that appear within the discourse on specific genres could be integrated in a larger study of one or more genres. Issues surrounding genre histories and canon-building processes could present a further topic for discussion as highlighted in chapter 3.⁴⁹⁹ A study of genre texts would further benefit from new research on lyrical functions.⁵⁰⁰ As genres are perceived and defined differently at different points in time, research on the developmental stages of genres as well as the impact of famous participants within a genre could affect the outcomes of discourse analysis. On a more strategic level future research could also include the study of other discursive sources that would have exceeded the extent of this study. In this regard a more detailed look at online fandom or professional bloggers and their ways of treating genres could be of interest. Furthermore, one could trace offline fandom discourses on genre through a study of fanzines. Additionally, a study of popular music genres that applies the methodology proposed in this thesis would certainly benefit from further work in the area of online research.⁵⁰¹

Finally one should also take note of the fact that, while Radiohead have yet to release a follow-up album to *The King of Limbs*, rumours of new studio recordings and a tour appear more frequently as this thesis nears completion. A study of any type of new material would without a doubt present interesting new insights and could contribute towards a consolidation or advancement of the proposed methodology. Thus tracing Radiohead's future developments and reception certainly promises to be an exciting prospect. A future addition to this study could therefore take into account the band's new work, present research that highlights generic

⁴⁹⁸ Cf. p. 56 of this thesis.

⁴⁹⁹ Cf. p. 207 of this thesis.

⁵⁰⁰ Cf. p. 113 (footnote 228) of this thesis.

⁵⁰¹ Cf. p. 219 (footnote 466) of this thesis.

developments and reception at later stages throughout a band's career and finally discuss what follows after genrefication.⁵⁰²

⁵⁰² On 8th May 2016, 10 days before the viva for this thesis took place, Radiohead released their ninth studio album *A Moon Shaped Pool* for download. On 17th June the CD and vinyl release followed. While a study of the new musical material certainly has the potential to add interesting elements to the discussion, a first look at the immediate media and audience responses already shows the avid continuation of a discourse on genre and categorisation that also addresses previous discussions and instances of genrefication. Thus the interest in genre appellation in Radiohead's music continues paving the way for future research and debates.

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"INT - 2004 ROKA" ["Reflections on Kid A"], documentary, directed by Rob Hodselmans for VPRO.nl, 2000, YouTube, uploaded by "Radiohead

Atwebpages" on 28.08.2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7-wTWhp5UU> [accessed: 07.01.2016].

Appendix I:

a. Select discography and videography

Demo Recordings⁵⁰³:

On A Friday Demo, 1986.

On A Friday Demo, 1988.

Union Street Demo, 1990.

Manic Hedgehog Demo, 1991.

Radiohead:

Pablo Honey: Collector's Edition (2 CDs + DVD), EMI 2009 (1993).

The Bends: Collector's Edition (2 CDs + DVD), EMI 2009 (1995).

OK Computer: Collector's Edition (2 CDs + DVD), EMI 2009 (1997).

Kid A: Collector's Edition (2 CDs + DVD), EMI 2009 (2000).

Amnesiac: Collector's Edition (2 CDs + DVD), EMI 2009 (2001).

I Might Be Wrong: Live Recordings, EMI 2001.

Hail To The Thief: Collector's Edition (2 CDs + DVD), EMI 2009 (2003).

In Rainbows, XL Recordings 2007.

The Best Of (2 CDs), Parlophone 2008.

The King of Limbs, XL Recordings 2011.

TKOL RMX 1234567, XL Recordings 2011.

Solo Work:

Jonny Greenwood, *Bodysong*, Parlophone 2003.

Jonny Greenwood, *There Will Be Blood*, Nonesuch 2007.

Jonny Greenwood, *Norwegian Wood*, Nonesuch 2011.

Jonny Greenwood, *The Master*, Nonesuch 2012.

Phil Selway, *Familial*, Bella Union 2010.

Phil Selway, *Weatherhouse*, Bella Union 2014.

⁵⁰³ While these recordings were not officially released, they can often be found on online platforms such as YouTube.

Thom Yorke, *The Eraser*, XL Recordings 2006.

Thom Yorke, *Tomorrow's Modern Boxes*, Self-released 2014.

Atoms for Peace, *Amok*, XL Recordings 2013.

Videos:

Radiohead: Live At The Astoria, EMI 2005 (1994).

The Best Of Radiohead: Video Collection, Warner Music Group 2008.

The King Of Limbs: Live From The Basement, Rough Trade Distribution 2011.

b. Glossary of terms

Adjectification – The use of established genre terms in adjective form, for instance 'grungy'. Usually, this descriptive form is intentionally vague.

Adjective genre – An adjective used as a descriptive generic category and sometimes appears in a judging manner, for instance 'futuristic'. (See also: Noun combination)

Anti-discourse – A line of discussion that refers to specific strands of (genre) reception and attempts to challenge or contradict them.

Anti-labelling – A manner of categorisation that often emerges from anti-discourse. Works are categorised by disputing established ways of description.

Canonic – Socially established generic categories that are characterised by specific rules and characteristics and usually associated with a canon of representative works, for instance 'rock' or 'punk.' (See also: Non-canonic)

Canon-building – A process of categorisation that places music in relation to other works. This is sometimes used in combination with established genres, for instance 'rock classic' or 'masterpiece'.

Genrefication – A process of generic formation and independence referring to the work of one specific artist or band.

Genre Portrait – A magazine or newspaper article that introduces a genre. This often includes a discussion of rules, characteristics, associated artists or influences.

Meta-dialogue – An active discussion and awareness of specific issues – in this case on the topic of genre and change in the music of Radiohead – which focuses on general narratives rather than specific instances.

Negative genre interpretation – A way of describing music by rejecting specific generic associations.

Non-canonic – New and made up categories that are not yet socially established and are often used to avoid canonic genre descriptions, for instance 'death garage'.⁵⁰⁴ (See also: Canonic)

Noun combination – Combinations of nouns used as a descriptive generic categories that often appear in a judging manner, for instance 'one-hit wonders'. (See also: Adjective genre)

Retrospectivity – The evaluation or re-evaluation of an artist's work, in light of a knowledge about previous or future recordings. This often appears in online discourse, which can often be characterised by a temporal distance between the release date of albums and the reviewing process.

(Specialist) genre audiences – Audience groups (experts or participants) of a specific genre, that often express their belonging to this genre.

⁵⁰⁴ Reynolds, "Radiohead's *Kid A*: Revolution in the Head."

Appendix II – Supplementary Material

a. List of journalistic Sources⁵⁰⁵

Date	Publication ⁵⁰⁶	Article Title	Author	Genre Terminology and Notes
1991-11-xx	Curfew	[Unknown]	Ronan Munro	Pop, weird
1992-02-22	Melody Maker, NME	"On A Friday" "Drill EP"	John Harris; Steve Lamacq	Pub rock, rock post-shoe gazing
1992-05-09	Melody Maker	"Totally Wireless"	John Harris	Grunge, alternative influences
1992-05-30	NME	"FM-Inate – Not"	Simon Williams	N. a.
1992-06-13	Melody Maker	"Radiohead"	Ian Gittins	N. a.
1992-09-12	NME	"Magna-ficent"	Simon Williams	Mention of the Pixies
1992-10-10	Melody Maker	"Jeepers Creepers"	Dave Jennings	N. a.
1992-10-10	NME	"FM and Blinding"	John Harris	Association with britpop scene, indie
1992-12-19	NME	"London Islington Smashed"	Keith Cameron	Noisy powerpop, 'excuse for a rock'n'roll group'
1993-01-23	Melody Maker	"Transistor Lovers"	Peter Paphides	N. a.
1993-02-06	Melody Maker	"We're Going to Save Pop Music"	Peter Paphides	'Pop rather than rock'
1993-02-13	NME	"Mottley Crew"	Stuart Bailie	Mention of Mott The Hoople, rock
1993-02-20	Melody Maker	"Wireless is More"	Simon Price	Several genre references, the

⁵⁰⁵ The list of articles presented here served as source material for the study in chapter 3 of this thesis. Articles that were chosen for a more detailed study are printed in bold letters. It should be noted that the chart merely served to create a first overview and does not contain detailed results of the discourse analysis. Furthermore, a number of articles that were not available in English and did not contain any references to genre, have been excluded here. For this reason the number of articles listed here do not add up to the complete number of articles read during the research phase.

⁵⁰⁶ If not mentioned otherwise, publications originate from the UK.

				'new Jam', 'boy rock'
1993-02-20	NME	"Glow Frequency Band"	John Harris	Association with punk
1993-02-27	NME	"Turn on, Tune in, Rock out"	Paul Moody	'Pop not indie'
1993-03-13	Melody Maker	"Tune in, Turn on"	Dave Jennings	N. a.
1993-04-xx	Lime Lizard	"Radiohead: Oy Vey Their Way"	Vivienne Near	N. a.
1993-04-24	Melody Maker	"Radiohead"	Roger Sargent	N. a.
1993-05-xx	Dissident	"Radiohead"	Steve Janes	interview with genre-specific questions
1993-05-xx	Select	"Super Creep"	Andrew Collins	Indie, glamour-desert indie-rock
1993-05-15	Billboard (US)	"Contagious Creep"	David Sprague	rock anthem, anti-rock lifestyle
1993-05-15	Melody Maker	"P.O.P.R.I.P."	Peter Paphides	Discussion about pop music
1993-05-23	NME	"Guitar Very Much"	Johnny Cigarettes	Between indie and stadium rock
1993-06-04	Watt (NL)	"Jong en Fris"	Walter Hoeijmakers	N. a.
1993-06-07	Chicago Sun-Times (US)	"The Radiohead Vision Creeps onto Airwaves"	Christi Kempf	Categorisation of "Creep"
1993-06-24	Boston Globe (US)	"Radiohead Is More than Creep Deep"	Jim Sullivan	'Self-denigration' as category
1993-06-24	Washington Times (US)	"Radiohead's Creep Is a Wonderful Person"	Matt Neufield	N. a.
1993-06-27	Los Angeles Times (US)	"Pablo Honey"	Mario Mundoz	N. a.
1993-07-01	Chicago Tribune (US)	"Alternative Guitar Rock Shows Its Many Moods"	Brad Webber	Guitar rock
1993-07-13	San Francisco	"British Rockers	Michael	Various

	Chronicle (US)	Ride a Hit Called Creep"	Snyder	combined genre terms, rock in headline
1993-07-15	Daily Variety (US)	"PJ Harvey & Radiohead"	Ethlie Ann Vare	Anthem, art school band, 80s power pop
1993-07-15	Hollywood Reporter (US)	PJ Harvey, Radiohead..."	Marc Pollack	N. a.
1993-07-19	The Arizona Republic (US)	"Live: The Library Cafe"	Hontz [sic]	N. a.
1993-08-07	VOOR (NL)	[Unknown]	[Unknown Author]	Pop melodies
1993-08-14	Melody Maker	"Band File"	[Unknown Author]	Band file (asks for favourite bands and albums)
1993-08-15	Los Angeles Times (US)	"Obsessed With a Misery That Begets Company"	Steve Hochman	Rock, guitar sound, anthem
1993-08-16	The Island-Ear (US)	"Anyone Can Play Cards"	Risa Bryan	Anthem, focus on rock lifestyle: Radiohead as anti-thesis
1993-08-18	Evening Standard	"British Nobodies Rock USA"	Tim Cooper	Anthem; British pop
1993, fall	Fender Frontline (US)	"Creeping into the Limelight"	[Unknown Author]	Pop sensations, pop band, blend of punk, new wave and grunge
1993-09-xx	Magnet Magazine (US)	"Radiohead"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1993-09-06	The Times	"Tune in to Menace"	Adrian Deevoy	'Conventional rock parameters'
1993-09-11	NME	"Creeping up with the Joneses"	Paul Moody	'Un-rock' (in terms of lifestyle)
1993-09-16	Rolling Stone (US)	"Single of the Moment"	Glenn Kenny	Pop
1993-09-18	NME	"Creeping their reward"	John Harris	From indie/alternati

				ve towards mainstream
1993-09-24	St. Petersburg Times (US)	"An Earful From Radiohead and Belly"	Julie Richardson	N. a.
1993-09-25	Melody Maker	"Creepshow"	Dave Jennings	N. a.
1993-09-30	Circus (US)	"Radiohead Plays for Creeps"	Mordechai Kleidermacher	N. a.
1993-10-xx	Creem (US)	[Unknown]	Chris Nadler	Discussion of categorisation, shoe-gazing
1993-10-08	The Boston Globe (US)	"Creep Stumbles onto Fame"	Jim Sullivan	'Un-rock' (in terms of lifestyle)
1993-10-15	St. Louis Post-Dispatch (US)	"Not Just Another One-Hit Wonder"	Alan Sculley	Discussion of one-hit wonders
1993-10-18	Chicago Sun-Times	"Belly Rocks, Radiohead rolls over"	Jae-Ha Kim	N. a.
1993-10-23	Melody Maker	"From the Bedroom to the Universe"	Paul Lester	'Music for lapsed rock fans'
1993-10-28	Voir (CAN)	"Radio Ga Ga"	Nicolas Titley	Rock, mention of Nirvana
1993-11-xx	Details (US)	"Dork Radio"	Caren Myers	'wimp rock with teeth', not grunge or glam, difference between American and British rock
1993-11-xx	VOX	"Radiohead"	Lisa Verrico	N. a.
1993-12-xx	Guitar (US)	"Radiohead - Success Comes Creeping"	Bob Gulla	N. a.
1993-12-04	NME	"Thom Yorke's Heroes and Villains"	Ted Kessler	N. a.
1993-12-26	The Guardian	"Futures, Futures, Futures: Radiohead-Great Pop Hopes"	Roger Tredre	Pop in the headline
1994-01-xx	Juice (AUS)	"Radiohead Creep	Mel Toltz	'Conceiving

		to the Top"		their own style' (first mention of a 'Radiohead genre')
1994-01-xx	Sky	"Oxford Circus"	Paul Rogers	Rock-indie
1994-01-14	The Guardian	"Doing It over There"	Caroline Sullivan	Pop, success in America
1994-02-12	Billboard (US)	"Radiohead"	Jim Bessmann	Alternative, British
1994-05-27	The Guardian	"Live: Manchester"	Simon Warner	'Pop used to express genuine feelings'
1994-06-04	NME	"Don't Fear the Creepers"	Simon Williams	'Proper rock band', 'cover everything between the Pixies and Simon & Garfunkel'
1994-06-11	Melody Maker	"All You Need Is Loathe/Wireless Is More"	Holly Barringer Dave Jennings	Beatles comparison, rock
1994-07-03	Sunday Mail	"Critics Switch on, as Fans Go"	Russell Blackstock	Rock
1994-08-27	Melody Maker	"Singles"	Thom Yorke	Discussion of genres
1994-10-xx	Plymouth Music Scene	"Locks Chopped & Marrow"	Lisa E. Lust	'Richter scale of pop between Henry Rollins and cheesiness'
1994-10-xx	Select	"Videohead"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1994-10-01	Melody Maker	"Radio-Unfriendly Unit Shifters"	Jennifer Nine	Psychedelic, pop
1994-10-01	NME	"The Lung and Whining Road"	Stuart Bailie	N. a.
1994-10-08	Melody Maker	"Jail Strippers"	Ian Watson	Pop group
1994-10-08	NME	"March of the Modulations"	Paul Moody	N. a.
1994-11-xx	Sun Zoom Spark	"This Glorious Isolation"	Alison Freebairn	N. a.

1994-11-19	NME	"It's So F---ing Special"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1995-01-xx	London Calling	"Snap, Crackle and Perfect Pop"	Vincent Voyd	Pop in the headline
1995-02-xx	Ruhig (DE)	"25 Mal Radiohead"	Thomas Zeidler	'Pop not rock or punk'
1995-02-25	Billboard (US)	"Radiohead Creeps Past Early Success"	[Unknown Author]	Modern rock act
1995-02-25	Melody Maker	"The Mirror Crack'D"	David Bennun	Classic rock (in terms of status)
1995-02-25	NME	"Single/The Unforgettable Ire"	John Harris	Indie rock, classic vs. not classic
1995-03-09	Daily Mirror	"Radiohead Are on the Right Wavelength"	Louise Johncox	N. a.
1995-03-10	The Times	"Raptures of the Deep"	David Sinclair	Alternative rock
1995-03-11	Melody Maker	Fame Fatale	"Te Stud Brothers"	N. a.
1995-03-11	Melody Maker	"Scuba Doo, Where Are You?"	Jennifer Nine	'Almost unrecognisable as pop'
1995-03-17	The Guardian	"The Bends"	Caroline Sweeting	Rock, mention of U2
1995-03-17	The Independent	"The Bends"	Andy Gill	'Their own sonic architecture'
1995-03-17	The Times	"Wired Up for Better Reception"	Jim Sullivan	Rock
1995-03-18	Melody Maker	"Fairytale of New Yorke"	Mark Sutherland	Indie rock album of the year, mention of U2
1995-03-18	NME	"I Rate Myself and I Want to Dive"	Simon Williams	The 'new U2?', pop
1995-03-24	The Independent	"Tuned-In"	[Unknown Author]	Post-indie, metal, sophisticated rock
1995-03-26	The Independent	"Live: London Forum"	Nicholas Barber	Rock

1995-03-27	The Guardian	"Live: London Forum"	Caroline Sullivan	Neurotic pop, arena rock
1995-03-31	The Independent	"Self-Doubting Thomas: Radiohead, the Forum, London"	Ryan Gilbey	Grunge formula
1995-04-xx	Intro (DE)	"Radiohead mischen die britische Szene auf"	Götz Werner	Indie rock
1995-04-xx	Mojo	"Radiohead"	Pat Reid	Biggest alternative rock band
1995-04-xx	Musikexpress (DE)	"Volle Kraft voraus"	Heiko Hofmann	Rock
1995-04-xx	Rock & Folk (FR)	Radiohead	Christophe Basterra	Indie
1995-04-xx	Select	"You've Come a Long Way, Baby"	Gina Morris	Rock'n'roll
1995-04-xx	Select	"The Bends"	Dave Morrison	'Indie-U2'
1995-04-xx	Vox	"Scuba Do/The Bends"	Steve Malins Craig McLean	Rock
1995-04-05	Hot Press (ITA)	The Bends	Patrick Brennan	N. a.
1995-04-08	Melody Maker	"Medium Wavering"	Andrew Mueller	Indie rock
1995-04-22	Melody Maker	"Diary of an LP"	Tom Doyle	N. a.
1995-04-29	NME	"Bristol Fashion"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1995-05-xx	Spin (US)	"Radiohead: The Bends"	Chuck Eddy	Discussion of style, Creep reference point for other work
1995-05-xx	Consumable Online (US)	"Radiohead"	Nigel Harding	N. a.
1995-05-19	Entertainment Weekly (US)	"Tales From the Creeps"	Nisid Hajari	Rock
1995-05-19	The Times	"Carve Their Nayims With Pride"	Caitlin Moran	'Greatest rock album since <i>Nevermind</i> ', rock vs. pop

1995-05-26	Providence Journal-Bulletin (US)	"Going On Beyond Creep"	Andy Smith	N. a.
1995-05-27	NME	"Radio Daze"	Ted Kessler	Rock
1995-05-29	The Boston Globe (US)	"Melancholic but Satisfying"	Jim Sullivan	Pop hit, glam, 'Beatle-esque'
1995-06-01	Voir (CAN)	"Cercle Vicieux"	Nicolas Titley	N. a.
1995-06-01	The Hartford Courant (US)	"Britain's Radiohead Carry Explosive Sound"	Roger Catlin	Rockers, new wave, mention of U2
1995-06-01	The Record (CAN)	"Change of Tune for Radiohead"	Arthur Staple	One of the first to discuss varied sound; various genres...
1995-06-01	The Toronto Star (CAN)	"Runaway Hit a Mixed Blessing for UK's Radiohead"	Lenny Stoute	References to critical claims of Creep as one-hit wonder
1995-06-03	New York Daily News (US)	"Radiohead's Creepy Frequency"	Jim Farber	Rock'n'roll
1995-06-07	The Plain Dealer (US)	"Band's Melancholy Music Elates Fans"	Jane Scott	Discussion of labelling, comments about genre by the band
1995-06-07	The Toronto Star (CAN)	"Radiohead Loud and Clear"	Peter Howell	N. a.
1995-06-10	Melody Maker	"Head Cases"	Caitlin Moran	'Rock martyrdom', mentions of Nirvana and Manic Street Preachers
1995-06-12	The Denver Post (US)	"Rejuvenated Radiohead Is on the Rise"	G. Brown	Slacker anthem
1995-06-16	The Orlando Sentinel (US)	"Radiohead Maintains a High Profile in US"	[Unknown Author]	New rock
1995-06-17	LA Times (US)	"Live: The Palace"	Sandy Masuo	Alternative, 'British guitar-pop micro-invasion'

1995-06-19	Daily Variety (US)	"Live: The Palace"	Troy J. Augusto	'Current British invasion', shoe-gazing
1995-07-xx	BSide (US)	"Radiohead Decompression"	Sandra A. Garcia	'Their own style'
1995-07-xx	Select	"Just Like The Beatles!"	[Unknown Author]	Mention of The Beatles in headline
1995-07-xx	Smash Hits	"Can They Handle It?"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1995-07-11	The Seattle Times (US)	"Action-Packed Radiohead Show Gets Audience Movin'"	Marisa Lencioni	Pop, genre discourse
1995-07-13	The San Diego Union-Tribune (US)	"Fame Leaves Band Unfazed"	Clare Zimmerman	Pop, discussion about genre with the band
1995-07-13	The Vancouver Sun (CAN)	"Radiohead Redeem Themselves With Ballroom Blitz"	Katherine Monk	N. a.
1995-07-17	The Arizona Republic (US)	"Radiohead Loaded With Potential"	Jeremy Simon	Mention of The Smiths
1995-07-20	The Times Union (US)	"Radiohead Prepared to Work for Success"	Fred Shuster	Grunge (through mention of Nirvana and Soundgarden), rock
1995-07-29	NME	"Radiohead out"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1995-08-11	The Fresno Bee (US)	"Radiohead's Success Doesn't Just Creep Along"	Paul Maldonado Jr.	N. a.
1995-08-12	NME	"Radiohead Tune in Again"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1995-08-12	OOR (NL)	"Radiohead"	Hans van den Heuvel	N. a.
1995-09-07	Rolling Stone (US)	"Radiohead Transform Emotional Turmoil into Kinetic Pop"	Jon Wiederhorn	Pop
1995-09-08	The Advocate	"Radiohead Crosses"	John Wirt	N. a.

	(US)	Ocean for Another Tour with R.E.M."		
1995-09-08	St. Petersburg Times (US)	"Radiohead Ready to Rock"	Logan Neill	N. a.
1995-09-11	The Nashville Banner (US)	"Radiohead Finds Opening for REM Enormously Surreal"	Jay Orr	N. a.
1995-09-14	The Dallas Morning News (US)	"Angst Attack"	Kendall Morgan	Discussion of categorisation
1995-10-xx	Alternative Press (US)	"Modulation across the Nation"	Randee Dawn	Pop and rock lifestyle, one-hit wonders
1995-10-xx	Q	"That's Me in the Corner"	Thom Yorke	Discussion of the roles of pop stars
1995-10-05	Rocky Mountain News (US)	"Thieves Get Gear, but Band Plays on"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1995-10-13	The Independent	"Alanis Morissette on Fake Plastic Trees"	Ethlie Ann Vare	N. a.
1995-10-21	Billboard (US)	"Radiohead Clip Just Lies Down"	Brett Atwood	Rock act
1995-10-21	Melody Maker	"Scary Monsters and Super Creeps"	Andrew Mueller	Mentions of U2
1995-10-21	Daily Record	"The Name's Radiohead"	John Dingwall	N. a.
1995-10-28	Melody Maker	"Radio Radio/Shiny Unhappy People"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1995-10-29	Scotland on Sunday	"Right in the Face"	Craig Mclean	'Saviours of rock', stadium band, reference to an article in the <i>Dallas Morning News</i> , which uses different genre terms
1995-11-xx	The Trigger	"From LA to New York"	B. McAndrew and E. Threlfall	N. a.
1995-11-02	The Scotsman	"Barrowlands, Glasgow"	Tom Lappin	Not britpop, mention of U2

1995-11-03	Daily Record	"Radiohead Rocked Scotland"	John Dingwall	N. a.
1995-11-05	The Observer	"Gives You the Creeps"	Sam Taylor	Not britpop, mention of Nirvana
1995-11-08	Les Inrockuptibles (FR)	"L' Amer Hic"	Emmanuel Tallier	N. a.
1995-11-10	The Times	"A Band so Big You Never Hear Them"	Caitlin Moran	N. a.
1995-11-11	NME	"Rule of Thom"	Angela Lewis	Not rock'n'roll, mainstream
1995-11-18	NME	"Turn Your Radiohead on"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
Late 1995	Whirlpool ezine	"Caitlin Moran's Lovely, Lively Radiohead Interview"	Caitlin Moran	N. a.
1995-12-02	NME	"Thommy's Temper Tantrum"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1995-12-09	NME	"Boom, Shake, The Gloom"	Andy Richardson	Anti britpop lifestyle, grunge
1995-12-12	Toronto Sun (CAN)	"Radiohead's on a Bend-er"	Kieran Grant	Rules of rock
1996-01-xx	Raw	"Danger! Unhinged Minds at Work"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1996-01-31	Raw	"Life on Planet Radiohead"	Clark Collins	'Oxford's newest post-punk pop band'
1996-02-xx	Raw	"Leeds Town and Country"	Robin Morley	'Suitably grungy', indie
1996-02-xx	Vox	"Radiohead"	Mark Sutherland	N. a.
1996-02-17	Billboard (US)	"The Modern Age"	Bradley Bambarger	N. a.
1996-03-xx	B-Side (DE)	"Eine herrliche Band?"	Daniel [sic]	Authenticity, britpop, 'disco hits'

1996-03-17	Orange County Register (US)	"A Little Electioneering"	Mark Brown	The 'next U2', mentions of Jim Morrison and Johnny Rotten
1996-03-26	Orange County Register (US)	"I Don't Belong Here"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1996-03-29	Rocky Mountain News (US)	"Radiohead Turns Its Other Cheek"	Michael Mehle	N. a.
1996-04-xx	Dazed & Confused	"You Do It To Yourself"	Jefferson Heck	Rock
1996-04-xx	The Varsity (CAN)	"Video Thrill the Radio Stars"	Tovjo Pajo	N. a.
1996-04-xx	Toronto Sun (CAN)	"Tuned in to Radiohead"	Jane Stevenson	First description of Thom Yorke's voice as instrument (in rock music)
1996-05-xx	Rock Sound (FR)	"Instant Karma"	[Unknown Author]	Britpop
1996-05-xx	Spin (US)	"Harmony in My Head"	J. D. Considine	'No britpop poses', 'miserable male genre'
1996-05-18	Melody Maker	"Radiohead /The Bluetones"	The Stud Brothers	N. a.
1996-06-xx	Addicted to Noise (US)	"Don't Call Em Britpop"	Claire Kleinedler	Britpop mentioned in headline
1996-06-xx	Shift	[Unknown]	Krishna Rau	Britpop
1996-07-xx	Guitar Player (US)	"Three-Way Jam"	Mike Baker	N. a.
1996-07-13	The Guardian	"Nice Dream?"	[Unknown Author]	Britpop, other categories
1996-07-08	Evening Times Special	"Radiohead"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1996-07-13	NME	"We Have Lift Off"	Mark Beaumont	Rock band
1996-07-20	NME	Radiohead	Mark Sutherland	'Trad-rock', 'last great sincere rock

				group'
1996-08-xx	Modern Drummer (US)	"Phil Selway"	T. Bruce Wittet	N. a.
1996-08-xx	Smug (US)	"All We Hear is Radio Ga Ga"	Shirley Halperin	Britpop band
1996-09-xx	Hot Press (IRL)	"Transistor Act"	Stuart Clark	Pop and further discussion
1996-09-xx	Mojo	"Radiohead"	Sylvie Simmons	Rock and further discussion
1996-11-xx	Record Collector	"Radiohead"	Pat Gilbert	N. a.
1996-10-19	Melody Maker	"The Look of Yorke/Creep Show"	Robin Bresnark	'Classical music of a millennial end'
1997-03-01	NME	"New Yorke Production"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1997-03-xx	NME	"Radiohead"	[Unknown Author]	'The band's new direction', 'contemporary dub sound'
1997-05-03	NME	"Radiohead: Vive la Megadrive"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1997-05-16	The Guardian	"Bridges and Sighs"	Caroline Sullivan	Pop star lifestyle, rock album of the year
1997-05-17	Irish Times (IRL)	"Radiohead Calling"	Kevin Courtney	Modern rock masterpiece
1997-05-xx	The Guardian	"Aching Heads"	Caroline Sullivan	From one-hit wonders to rock stars, mention of Pink Floyd
1997-05-24	Melody Maker	"Rounding the Bends"	Mark Sutherland	'End of britpop', 'new grave'
1997-05-31	Melody Maker	"Return of the Mac"	Mark Sutherland	Genre terms used to introduce tracks (prog, pop, rock)
1997-31-05	NME	"Radiohead: Get the	Mac Randall	Prog

		Details"		
1997-06-xx	Q	"Party On!"	Tom Doyle	Pink Floyd
1997-06-02	Jam (CAN)	"Radiohead Talk About Their New Video"	John Sakamoto	N. a.
1997-06-07	NME	"The Reign in Spain"	Ted Kessler	'The Future', 'their own voice'
1997-06-12	Ottawa XPress (CAN)	"Radiohead Rules OK"	Allan Wigney	'A sound too diverse to adequately define in terms of influences'
1997-06-13	The Times	[Unknown]	[Unknown Author]	Futuristic, 'first great album of the 21st century', 'music for the next century'
1997-06-14	NME	"The Rise and the Rise of the Roman Empire"	James Oldham	Concept album debate, Pink Floyd
1997-06-13	Independent	"First Impression: OK Computer"	Andy Gill	Impressionistic
1997-06-20	LA Life Weekend (US)	"Dr. Quinn Had Right Elixir for Radiohead"	Fred Shuster	N. a.
1997-06-25	The Globe and Mail	"Rock's Reluctant New Star"	Elizabeth Benzetti	Genre discussion
1997-06-25	Hot Press (IRL)	"The Head Boys"	Craig Fitzsimons	Not pop
1997-06-25	Les Inrockuptibles (FR)	"Le troisième Thom"	Emmanuel Tellier	N. a.
1997-06-28	Melody Maker	"Eirena Rock"	Everett True	Indie, pomp rock (negative genre connotations)
1997-06-28	NME	"Go Wired in the Country"	Stuart Bailie	Rock band
1997-07-xx	Chart (CAN)	"Outsiders"	Stuart Berman	Pop, rock, U2
1997-07-xx	Dazed & Confused	"OK Computer"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1997-07/08	Intro (DE)	"Transmitter!"	Stephan	N. a.

			Glietsch	
1997-07-xx	Mojo	"Press your Space Face Close to Mine Love"	Nick Kent	David Bowie reference (i.e. reinventing oneself), discussion of generic diversity and genre uses
1997-07-xx	Musikexpress (DE)	"Britische Bescheidenheit"	[Unknown Author]	Grunge (for "Creep")
1997-07-xx	Uncut	"Radiohead: OK Computer"	Paul Morley	N. a.
1997-07-xx	Q	"Moonstruck"	David Cavanagh	Rock, guitar rock
1997-07-xx	Rock & Folk (FR)	"Le Cinqième Element"	Philippe Manoeuvre	N. a.
1997-07-xx	Rock De Lux (ESP)	"Solo en Casa"	Jordo Bianciotto	N. a.
1997-07-xx	Select	"Everything Was Just Fear"	Caitlin Moran	Space rock
1997-07-xx	Stereo Type (US)	"I'm Okay, You're Okay"	Albert Clapps	'No typical rock hooks'
1997-07-xx	Vox	"Grand Control to Major Thom"	Sam Steele	'Deconstruction of traditionalist rock dogma', experimental, space adjectives
1997-07-xx	Wall of Sound	"Pre-Millennium Homesick Aliens"	Joe Feese	N. a.
1997-07-08	Zillo (DE)	"Radiohead: Musik für Langstreckenflüge"	Steffen Rüdth	Britpop and general genre debate
1997-07-21	Orange County Register (US)	"Yes, We Have No Message"	Ben Wener	Genre discussion within the interview
1997-08-xx	Circus	"Radiohead - Getting More Respect"	Adrian Gregory Glover	N. a.
1997-08-13	Flagpole	"Ignore the Hype"	Bruce Folkerth	N. a.
1997-08-14	Now (CAN)	"Radical OK"	Kim Hughes	N. a.

		Computer Disc Boots Up UK's Magnificent Five"		
1997-08-17	London Free Press (CAN)	"It All Got Very Surreal"	Ian Gillespie	Art rock
1997-08-17	Toronto Sun (CAN)	"Reluctant Stars"	Jane Stevenson	N. a.
1997-08-30	Melody Maker	"Radiohead: Doncaster Dome"	Robin Bresnark	New grave, rock, not U2
1997-08-30	NME	"Radiohead's Fans- tastic Day"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1997-09-xx	Alternative Press (US)	"Does Compute"	Randee Dawn	Prog reference
1997-09-xx	Consumable Online (US)	"Radiohead"	Nancy Price	N. a.
1997-09-xx	Details (US)	"Will Video Kill the Radiohead Star?"	Denise Sheppard	N. a.
1997-09-xx	Esquire	"Radioheadline"	Adam Sweeting	Rock band, pomp rock (negative connotations), avoidance of genre titles
1997-09-xx	Indiana Daily Student (US)	"Radiohead One of the Top Bands of 1997"	[Unknown Author]	Art rock
1997-09-xx	Mojo	"Have Lift-Off"	Jim Irvin Barney Hoskyns	N. a.
1997-09-xx	Musikexpress (DE)	"Radiohead"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1997-09-xx	Ray Gun (US)	"Radiohead"	Grant Alden	Prog
1997-09-xx	Request	"Subterranean Aliens"	Sandy Masuo	Beatles, Pink Floyd, ambient dabbling
1997-09-xx	Vox	"The Dour & the Glory"	Stephen Dalton	Prog-punk, best rock album
1997-09-02	Microsoft Music Central (US)	"Radiohead Master"	[Unknown Author]	Discussion about new style
1997-09-13	NME	"For Those About	Stephen	Punk, prog

		to Baroque"	Dalton	
Late 1997	Rolling Stone Yearbook (AUS)	"Dream Weavers"	Matt Hendrickson	N. a.
1997-10-xx	Bikini (US)	"Radiohead"	Rob Hill	N. a.
1997-10-xx	Guitar (US)	"Radiohead"	Bob Gulla	Rock guitar, stadium rock, concept album
1997-10-xx	Guitar Player (US)	"British Pop Aesthetes"	Aidin Vaziri	Pop, Pink Floyd
1997-10-xx	Q	"Death is All Around"	Phil Sutcliffe	N. a.
1997-10-xx	Select	"Uncle Thom's Medicine Show"	Roy Wilkinson	Futurist Prog
1997-10-24	Entertainment Weekly (US)	"Head Trip"	Tom Sinclair	Guitar rock, future of rock and electronic music, no britpop, challenging, inaccessible
1997-10-xx	Rolling Stone (US)	[Unknown]	[Unknown Author]	Prog discussion
1997-11-xx	Rock & Folk (FR)	"Creepshow"	David Angevin	N. a.
1997-11-xx	Rock & Folk (FR)	"Tetes Radiohead Chercheuses"	Yves Bongarcon	N. a.
1997-11-xx	Total Guitar	"Radiohead"	Harry Wylie	Prog discussion and analysis
1997-11-xx	Visions (DE)	"Das Warten auf die Ruhe nach dem Sturm"	Sascha Krüger	N. a.
1997-11-xx	Vox	"Songs of Devotion"	Jerry Thackray	Prog
1997-11/12	What!	"Radiohead"	ChrisYackoboski	Various genres
1997-11-01	OOR (NL)	"Radiohead"	Oene Kummer	N. a.
1997-11-05	Time Out	"Radio Daze"	Peter Paphides	'Guitar rock in the 21st century', discussion about people calling <i>OK</i>

				<i>Computer 'millennial'</i>
1997-11-08	Melody Maker	"Twin Peaks"	Sharon O'Connell	N. a.
1997-11-22	Melody Maker	"Street Spirit (Fans Out)"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1997-11-29	NME	"Come on Alien!"	John Robinson	N. a.
1997-12-xx	Visions (DE)	"Perfektionismus als Lebensprinzip"	Sascha Krüger	Rock
1997-12-13	Melody Maker	[No Surprises announcement]	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1997-12-13	NME	"We Never Wanted to Be the Biggest Band in the World"	Ted Kessler	N. a.
1997-12.20	The Guardian	"The Making of OK Computer"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1998-01-xx	Hammer (DE)	"Radiohead: Shiny, Happy People"	Markus Kavka	Stadium rock
1998-01/02	Option (US)	"Under Pressure: Just What Do You Want from Radiohead?"	Steve Appleford	Comparison to 70s art rock
1998-01-xx	Q	"Taxi! Take Me to Berlin"	[Unknown Author]	Best rock album
1998-01-xx	Select	"Renaissance Men"	John Harris	'Language of rock'
1998-01-xx	Spin	"Radiohead – Band of the Year"	Pat Blashill	Art rock
1998-01-03	Melody Maker	"Reader's Poll Results"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1998-01-08	Rolling Stone (US)	"Q&A with Thom Yorke"	David Sinclair	N. a.
1998-01-17	NME	"New Yorke, New Yorke"	David Fricke	Rock and generic diversity
1998-02-xx	Q	"End of Year Polls"	[Unknown Author]	No 'soft- option rock'
1998-03-xx	Musikexpress (DE)	"Finstere Freude"	Hanspeter Kuenzler	Rock
1998-03-xx	Ray Gun (US)	"Fridge Buzz Now"	Dean Kuipers	Rock

1998-03-14	Melody Maker	"OK Kangaroo"	Michael Dwyer	N. a.
1998-04-xx	Alternative Press (US)	"Radiohead: Alarms and Surprises"	Mary Gaitskill	Pop
1998-04-xx	Guitar World (US)	"The Golden Age of Radiohead"	Mac Randall	Rock
1998-04-04	San Francisco Chronicle (US)	"Radiohead is Plenty OK"	James Sullivan	Various genres
1998-04-08	Toronto Sun (CAN)	"Radiohead Tune Out the Buzz"	Jane Stevenson	Pop rock
1998-05-xx	Spin (US)	"Top 40 Most Vital Artists"	James Hunter	N. a.
1998-05-02	Launch (US)	"Give Radiohead to Your Computer"	Dave Di Martino	Pop
1998-05-09	NME	"China Crisis!"	[Unknown Author]	Rock
1998-06-xx	Q	"Fitter, Happier"	Peter Kane	N. a.
1998-06-xx	Rolling Stone (DE)	"Radiohead"	Greg Kot	N. a.
1998-06-xx	Smug (US)	"Radiohead @ Radio City Music Hall, NYC"	Kat Ascharya	Pink Floyd
1998-06-xx	The Big Takeover (US)	"Radiohead: The Great Rock Hope"	Daralyn Adams	Rock
1998-06-02	Jam! Showbiz (CAN)	"Radiohead Documentary Nearing Completion"	Richard John	N. a.
1998-06-20	Melody Maker	"Review: Tibetan Freedom Concert"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1998-06-27	NME	"Tibetan Freedom Concert"	John Robinson	N. a.
1998-11-14	Melody Maker	"Videohead"	Neil Kulkarni	N. a.
1998-11-xx	Shambala Sun (CAN)	"The View from the Stage"	Judy Bond	N. a.
1998-11-14	NME	"Radiohead Movie Highlights"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1998-12-19	NME	"Air Baguette"	James Oldham	N. a.

1999-01-xx	Uncut	"OK Photographer/ Fantastic Voyage"	Tom Sheehan The Stud Brothers	N. a.
1999-02-13	NME	"Here's Jonny"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1999-04-xx	Visions (DE)	"Radiohead-Film über Visions zu beziehen"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
1999-05-14	Wall of Sound	"Radiohead Filmmaker Discusses Documentary"	Gary Graff	N. a.
1999-06-26	NME	"Unfinished Monk Business/Tibetan Freedom Concert"	Stephen Dalton	N. a.
1999-11-xx	Select	"Revolution in the Head/What the Hell Am I Doing Here?"	Steve Lowe (for both?)	Song-by-song analysis with genre discussions
1999-12-xx	Select	"Back to Save the Universe"	Steve Lowe	'Future of rock'
2000-01-25	Les Inrockuptibles (FR)	"Nigel the Nihilist"	J-D Beauvallet	N. a.
2000-03-29	Melody Maker	"New Yorke Stories"	Andre Paine	N. a.
2000-04-xx	Total Guitar	"Radiohead"	Harry Wylie	Pop
2000-04-14	Guardian	"Radiohead and Their Kind"	Barney Hoskyns	'Reinventing the rock genre'
2000-06-xx	Humo (BEL)	"Radiohead Reveal the Secret of Their Greasy Sound"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2000-06-21	Melody Maker	"OK Catalonia"	Ian Watson	Speculation about Radiohead's new style
2000-06-24	Le Soir (FR)	"Interview Colin Greenwood"	Thierry Coljon	N. a.
2000-06-24	NME	"'Head New Music/State of the New Yorke Empire"	James Oldham	Jazz
2000-07-xx	Record Collector	"Thom Yorke's Year Zero"	[Unknown Author]	'Definitive rock band of

				the moment', post-punk
2000-07-05	Melody Maker	"Radiohead"	Andre Paine	'Beyond genre and concept of songs', genre terms for older songs (indie, relief at being able to name genres)
2000-07-08	NME	"Live: Royal Albert Hall"	John Robinson	'Folk Krautrock'
2000, Summer	CDNOW.com	"Stormy Return"	Barney Hoskyns	Rock
2000-08-xx	Musikexpress (DE)	"Out of the Dark"	Martin Weber	N. a.
2000-08-xx	Q	"Praise Be!"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2000-08-xx	Visions (DE)	"Strange Little Sounds and Bleepy Noises"	Sascha Krüger	N. a.
2000-09-xx	Musikexpress (DE)	"Radiohead"	[Unknown Author]	'Brit prog rock'
2000-09-xx	Rip it Up (NZL)	"Experimental Creeps"	Scott Kara	Rock, challenging, dance beats, ambient, experimental
2000-09-xx	Rolling Stone (AUS)	"Radiohead"	Bernard Zuel	Prog
2000-09-06	Melody Maker	"We Are Bracing Everybody..."	[Unknown Author]	Avant-garde, discussion of new style
2000-09-09	NME	"Morose Code"	Victoria Segal	"dividing the rock sheeps from the avant-goats"
2000-09-14	Rolling Stone (US)	"Guest Hot List"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2000-09-16	OOR (NL)	"Radiohead"	Raymond Rotteveel	N. a.
2000-09-19	Les Inrockuptibles (FR)	"Science Radio"	Richard Robert	N. a.
2000-09-22	The Guardian	"I Think I'm Meant"	[Unknown]	Electronic

		to Be Dead..."	Author]	music
2000-09-27	Melody Maker	"'Kid' Rocks"	Mark Sutherland	N. a.
2000-09-29	Music365.com	Radiohead	Stephen Dowling	N. a.
2000-09-30	NME	"I Was a Complete..."	James Oldham	N. a.
2000-09-30	NME	"Yo Surprises"	Keith Cameron	Different genre terms for each song
Fall 2000	Revolver (US)	"Prove Yourself"	Tobias Hoi	N. a.
2000-10-xx	GQ	"Exit Music"	Barney Hoskyns	Rock
2000-10-xx	Intro (DE)	"Digital ist besser"	Thomas Venker Heiko Hoffmann	N. a.
2000-10-xx	Juice (AUS)	"Fitter, Happier, More Productive"	Lauren Zoric	N. a.
2000-10-xx	Mojo	"Boys in the Bubble"	Jim Irvin	Several genre terms (ambient, dub), discussion of typical elements in Radiohead's music, discussion of different listening situations for different genres; <i>OK Computer</i> as 'age-defining'
2000-10/11	Pop Culture Press (US)	"Radiohead - The Songs You Get Instead"	Boon Sheridan	Various genre terms and song discussion
2000-10-xx	Q	"I can See the Monsters"	David Cavanagh	N. a.
2000-10-01	New York Times (US)	"The Post-Rock Band"	Gerald Mazorati	Post-rock
2000-10-01	The Observer	"Sound and Fury"	Andrew Smith	Genre retrospective, review focuses on avant-garde

				element
2000-10-06	Sydney Morning Herald (AUS)	"The Radical Reinvention of Radiohead"	Mike Gee	Electronic masterpiece, symphony for a new millenium, discussion about genre reception
2000-10-09	Time (US)	"Radiohead Reinventing Rock"	Christopher John Farley	'Saviours of rock', reinventing the genre
2000-10-11	Hot Press (IRE)	"Here's Looking at You, Kid/ Just Kidding?"	Dave Fanning Olaf Tyaransen	Discussion of audience expectations
2000-10-12	Eye	"Fitter, Happier, More Productive"	Stuart Berman	British art-school rock, deconstruction of style, different genre terms
2000-10-xx	Rolling Stone Online (US)	"Thom Yorke..."	David Fricke	Is <i>Kid A</i> rock?
2000-11-xx	The Spill	"Radiohead"	Keith McCalmont	New musical direction, 'jazz-disco feel'
2000-11-xx	Musikexpress (DE)	"Was lange währt"	Christiane Rebmann	Beyond rock
2000-11-xx	Q	"Radio Ga Ga"	Stuart Maconie	Experimental (discusses the degree of experimentalism)
2000-11-xx	Record Collector	"Kid A Rock/Top is Dead"	Jake Kennedy	Rock, ambient
2000-11-xx	Select	"Kid 's...Alright"	John Harris	Reflection on <i>Kid A</i> reception
2000-11-xx	Spin (US)	"The Difference Engine"	Zev Borov	Anti-rock
2000-11-xx	Total Guitar	"Radiohead"	Andy Jenson	N. a.
2000-11-xx	Uncut	"Revolution in the Head"	Simon Reynolds	Rock vs. dance, several genre terms, death garage

2000-11-xx	Visions (DE)	"Zirkus Maximus"	Sascha Krüger	Reflection on journalistic reception and speculation
2000-11-04	NME	"New Yorke to LA"	April Long	N. a.
2000-12-xx	Rocks Backpages	"Here Are the Young Men"	Barney Hoskyns	Not rock?
2000-12-xx	Q	"Radiohead Take America"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2000-12-xx	Select	"I Don't Want to Be in a Rock Band No More.../Another Kid on the Way?"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2000-12-xx	The Big Takeover (US)	"Radiohead"	Jack Rabid	Different genre elements
2000-12-09	OOR (NL)	"Radiohead"	Erik van den Berg	N. a.
2000-12-23/30	NME	"Radiohead's Forgotten Album/People Basically Want..".	James Oldham	N. a.
20001-01-xx	MC2 (US)	"A Spy in the House of Music"	Kylee Swenson	'Anti-pop song structures'
2001-01-07	Media Guardian	"Radiohead: BBC Has Exiled Adult Music"	Vanessa Thorpe	N. a.
2001-02-xx	CMJ New Music Monthly (US)	"Mother, Should I Build a Wall?"	Douglas Wolk	N. a.
2001-02-xx	Spin (US)	"Reader Poll"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2001-04-xx	Q	"Radiohead Recruit New Member"	Pat Long	N. a.
2001-04-07	New Zealand Herald (NZL)	"Ed O'Brien: Turning up, Tuning in"	Russell Bailie	Amnesiac as less experimental
2001-05-15	Wall of Sound	[Unknown]	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2001-05-19	NME	"Let's Try and Set the Record Straight"	Sylvia Patterson	Kid A is 'not rock'
2001-05-21	Rolling Stone	"Radiohead Warm	David Fricke	N. a.

	(US)	up"		
2001-06-xx	Intro (DE)	"Wider die Berechenbarkeit"	Thomas Venker	N. a.
2001-06-xx	Mojo	"Happy Now?"	Nick Kent	Mentions of genre in relation to new songs
2001-06/07	Rip it Up (NZL)	"Airheads"	Scott Kara	Not rock
2001-06-xx	X-Ray (US)	"Radiohead"	[Unknown Author]	Radiohead themselves became the 'new Radiohead', 'ambient-tronica' and jazz
2001-06-02	NME	"Recall to Arms"	Victoria Segal	Amnesiac has the power to transform ways of viewing Kid A
2001-06-03	LA Times (US)	"Operating on His Own Frequency"	Robert Hilburn	Discussion about sound and change
2001-06-03	Philadelphia Enquirer (US)	"Radiohead: Companion to Kid A Sessions"	Tom Moon	N. a.
2001-06-05	Les Inrockuptibles (FR)	"Oxford Circus"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2001-06-07	Jam! Music (CAN)	"Radiohead to Debut Brand New Songs"	Paul Cantin	N. a.
200-06-07	The Electric Newspaper	"Faith in What They Do"	Scott Kara	Challenging, not rock
2001-06-14	Westword	"Spinning Plates"	Mikael Wood	N. a.
2001-06-15	Launch (US)	"Meeting Machines is Easy"	Soren Baker	N. a.
2001-06-19	Mondosonoro (ESP)	"Recordando el futuro"	David Broc	N. a.
2001-06-21	The Georgia Straight (CAN)	[Unknown]	Martin Turenne	N. a.
2001-06-23	Neumu	"Radiohead: In the	Michael	Rock and

		Forest as the Fire Burns"	Goldberg	genre rules
2001-06-24	San Francisco Chronicle (US)	"Thom Yorke Loosens up"	James Sullivan	N. a.
2001-07-xx	Mojo	"Amnesiac"	Chris Ingham	Genre discussion
2001-07-xx	Uncut	"Amnesiac"	David Stubbs	Genre discussion
2001-07-xx	Blender (US)	"Dear Superstar: Thom Yorke"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2001-07-xx	MeanStreet	"Radiohead"	Lisa Y. Garibay	N. a.
2001-07-xx	Nightshift	"Talking Head"	Ronan Munro	N. a.
2001-07-xx	Pulse	"Defying People is Easy"	Ken Micallef	Jazz, blues, uncommercial, serious music
2001-07-xx	Q	"Not Kidding"	Danny Eccleston	Genre expectation vs. reality, comparison to previous music, deconstruction of their rock branding
2001-07-xx	Rhythm	"Where Do We Go from Here?"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2001-07-xx	The Wire	"Walking on Thin Ice"	Simon Reynolds	Post-rock discussion
2001-07-14	NME	"The Perfect Storm"	Stephen Dalton	'garage rock rather than avant-jazz'
2001-07-16	Music Connection	[Unknown]	Gary Graff	Deconstruction of style
2001-08-xx	Q	"Everything in Its Right Place"	[Unknown Author]	'Amnesiac is not the accessible rock album that people may have expected'
2001-08-xx	Uncut	"How to Disappear Completely"	Stephen Dalton	'Uneasy listening'
2001-xx-xx	Uncut	"Radiohead and	Stephen	Genre

		Whose Army?"	Dalton	discussion
2001-08-02	Rolling Stone (US)	"Making Music that Matters"	David Fricke	Rock
2001-08-20	The New Yorker (US)	"Radiohead's Unquiet Revolution"	Alex Ross	'Classical music for the masses'
2001-09-xx	Alternative Press (US)	"How to Reinvent Completely"	Jason Pettigrew	Genre discussion
2001-09-xx	Magnet (US)	"Road to Nowhere?"	[Unknown Author]	Rock discussion
2001-09-xx	Mojo	"Radiohead, Oxford – South Park"	Barney Hoskyns	N. a.
2001-10-xx	Q	"It's a Music Fan's Album"	[Unknown Author]	Polls and genre discussion
2001-10-11	Hot Press (IRE)	"How Radiohead Learned to Loathe the Bomb"	Peter Murphy	Deconstruction, reaction to Nick Hornby article
2001-11-xx	Jazz Times	"Radiohead's Jazz Frequencies"	George Vara	Jazz-analysis
2001-11-11	NME	"Everything in Its Right Place"	Ted Kessler	Kid A and Amnesiac as electronica
2001-12-xx	OOR (NL)	"Thom Yorke"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2001-12-xx	Q	"Err...Radiohead"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2002-01-xx	The Face	"Radiohead"	Craig McLean	Discussion of labelling 'computertronic'
2002-03-xx	Q	"These Artists Are Revolting..."	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2002-03-02	NME	"Best Video/Yorke and Beck's Charity Duet in LA"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2002-08-03	NME	"The Creative Gentleman's Leisurely Tour"	Johnny Davis	Return to rock narrative
2002-08-03	NME	"Radiohead: Subterranean Homesick Aliens"	Stephen Dalton	Genre discussion

2002-09-xx	Q	"Radiohead Rock!/Radiohead"	[Unknown Author]	Return to rock narrative
2002-10-05	NME	"Exclusive: Thom on New Radiohead Album"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2002-12-xx	Q	"Look Who's Talking"	Steve Lowe	N. a.
2002-12-05	Drowned in Sound Online	"Radiohead: 6 Months in a Post-Strokes World"	Gareth Dobson	N. a.
2003-01-04	NME	"Radiohead Dress up for Christmas"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2003-032-xx	Rolling Stone (DE)	"Die 100 besten Alben"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2003-03-xx	Q	"It's Fucking Brilliant!"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2003-08-xx	NME	"Radiohead to Play Intimate UK Tour"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2003-04-26	NME	"No Surprises"	James Oldham	Mixture between experimental and traditional, different styles of Radiohead
2003-05/06	RES (US)	"Sound and Vision"	Philip Sherburne	Retrospective on videos and genre
2003-06-06	Independent	"Hail To The Thief"	Andy gill	Genre discussion
2003-06-06	Independent	"Hail To The Thief"	Nick hasted	Genre discussion
2003-08-xx	Rocks Backpages	"Hail To The Thief"	Barney Hoskyns	Genre discussion
2003-06-xx	Rocks Backpages	"Hail To The Thief"	Bud Scoppa	Art-rock
2003-05-03	NME	"It's Clear and Pretty..."	John Robinson	Rock, return to guitar rock
2003-05-10	NME	"Bagpuss, Ex-Lax and the Angriest Thing We've Ever Written"	John Robinson	Song commentary
2003-05-17	Telegraph	"OK, No	Craig McLean	Return to

	Magazine	Computers"		mainstream
2003-06-xx	GQ	"Make Rock not War!"	Will Self	N. a.
2003-06-xx	Intro (DE)	"Age of Darkness"	Christoph Büscher	N. a.
2003-06-xx	Lime (SGP)	"Head Case"	Ki'ern Tan	N. a.
2003-06-xx	Mojo	"Unite and Take Over"	Peter Paphides	Genre and expectations
2003-06-xx	Q	"It's All Fucked"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2003-06-05	Time Out New York (US)	"Fitter. Happier. More Productive"	Reed Tucker	Rock vs. electronica on past albums
2003-06-12	Die Zeit (DE)	"Die Kunst des Verschwindens"	Thomas Gross	Anti-image, rock, prog and deconstruction
2003-06-26	Rolling Stone (US)	"Bitter Prophet"	David Fricke	N. a.
2003-07-xx	Bang	"Alarms and Surprises"	Neil Kulkarni	Post-rock
2003-07-xx	FHM	"Radiohead Q&A"	Craig Tansley	N. a.
2003-07-xx	Musikexpress (DE)	"Fünf flogen übers Kuckucksnest"	Josef Winkler	Rock album of the year
2003-07-xx	Muzine (US)	"Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves"	Gary Graff	N. a.
2003-07-xx	Q	"Pique Viewing/ Silence!/Weird Science"	John Harris	Genre Discussion
2003-07-xx	Rolling Stone (AUS)	"Thom Yorke"	Ian Watson	Experimentation
2003-07-xx	Spin	"No More Knives"	Chuck Klosterman	N. a.
2003-07-xx	Visions (DE)	"Die wichtigste Band der Welt"	Jochen Schliemann	N. a.
2003-07-05	NME	"Radiohead"	Julian Marshall	N. a.
2003-07-28	Launch (US)	"Putting the music Biz in Its Right Place"	Lyndsey Parker	Avantgarde pioneers
2003-08-xx	Mojo	"Into the Light"	Peter Paphides	Different eras

				of style: vintage vs. experimental, 'classical period'
2003-08-xx	X-Ray (US)	"21st Century Fix/The Last Word"	Toby Manning	N. a.
2003-09-xx	Blender (US)	"Inside the Mind of Radiohead's Mad Genius"	Michael Odell	Diversity of genre terms
2003-09/10	Magnet (US)	"The Insiders"	Matthew Fritch	N. a.
2003-11-12	Time Out London	"Performing Still"	Chris Salmon	Not pop
2003-11-29	NME	"Thom Yorke"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2003-12-06	NME	"Hail to the Freaks/Computers OK/Thom Speaks out!"	Tim Jonze David Sue	Genre affiliation in terms of live shows and behaviour
2003-12-08	Alternative Nation (DE)	"Product of Environment"	[Unknown Author]	'Stylistically hard to define', development with each album
2004-01-13	Billboard Online (US)	"Radiohead Resists Time off"	Jonathan Cohen	N. a.
2004-02-21	NME	"Radiohead"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2004-03-xx	Daily Telegraph	"Fearless Experimenter"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2004-03-03	The Guardian	"Ondes but not Forgotten"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2004-03-23	Filter Online (US)	"Out of His Radiohead"	Gregg LaGambina	N. a.
2004-04-11	The Age (AUS)	"Are We Having Fun yet?"	Stephen Dalton	Avant-rock, from rock to quasi- electronic, art- jazz
2004-04-30	The Guide	"Radiohead on New Wave"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2004-05-xx	Computer Music Journal	"Radiohead: Kid A, Amnesiac, Hail To	Nick Collins	Retrospective genre

	(US)	The Thief"		trajectory
2004-05-xx	Rolling Stone (AUS)	"Radiohead"	Serge Simonart	N. a.
2004-05-xx	Undercover (AUS)	[Unknown]	Tim Cashmere	N. a.
2004-05-15	NME	"The New Governors of California"	Conor McNicholas	N. a.
2004-05-16	Sunday Times	[Unknown]	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2004-05-18	BBC News Online	"Radiohead Star Composes for BBC"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2004-05-28	BBC News Online	[Unknown]	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2004-05-28	Teletext	[Unknown]	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2004-07-03	NME	[Unknown]	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2004-10-09	NME	"Radio Active!"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2004-12-xx	Third Way	"Chipping Away"	Brian Draper	N. a.
2005-03-xx	Southbank	"New Musical Directions"	Richard Wolfson	Avant-garde, rock
2005-03-22	Daily Telegraph	"Pop Pioneer in Love with the Classics"	Robert Sandall	N. a.
2005-03-22	The Guardian	"I'm Going to Drive Everyone Slightly Crazy"	Tom Service	N. a.
2005-06-xx	Musikexpress (DE)	"'No Surprises' und eine Überraschung"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2005-06-04	NME	"Thom Yorke Rocks Parliament"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2005-06-26	Sunday Express	"Culture Vulture - Thom Yorke"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2005-08-xx	GQ (US)	"Stanley Donwood"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2005-09-03	NME	"Radiohead Back in the Studio"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.

2005-10-xx	antiMusic (US)	"Stanley Donwood"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2006-03-25	NME	"Thom: Tony Blair Made Me Ill"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2006-05-06	NME	"Radiohead Hit the Road"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2006-05-13	NME	"Finally...Radiohead are back"	[Unknown Author]	Return to guitar-driven rock
2006-05-27	NME	"New Songs"	[Unknown Author]	Return to guitar-driven rock
2006-06-01	Rolling Stone Online (US)	"Radiohead's Thom Yorke on Going Solo"	David Fricke	N. a.
2006-06-14	Globe and Mail	"Radiohead Retooled"	Robert Everett-Green	N. a.
2006-06-17	NME	"Thom Solo Album"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2006-06-18	Observer	"All Messed up"	Craig McLean	From prog to tech-jazz
2006-06-26	Der Spiegel (DE)	"Ich habe alle fest im Griff"	Christoph Dallach und Wolfgang Höbel	N. a.
2006-06-26	New York Magazine Online (US)	"Secrets of the Radiohead Setlist"	Ben Mathis-Lilley	N. a.
2006-06-28	LA Times (US)	"Thom Yorke, Free Agent"	Ann Powers	N. a.
2006-07-xx	Bant Online (TUR)	"Stanley Donwood"	Ekin Sanac	N. a.
2006-07-02	New York Times (US)	"With Radiohead, and Alone, a Sweet Malaise"	Jon Pareles	What is untypical for a rock band?
2006-07-05	LA Weekly Online (US)	"Getting Good Radiohead"	Dani Katz	N. a.
2006-08-xx	Mojo	"Ghost in the Machine"	Nick Kent	N. a.
2006-08-xx	Paste (US)	"Dancing in the Dark"	Jay Sweet	N. a.
2006-08-xx	Spin (US)	"Bent Out of"	Brian Raftery	N. a.

		Shape"		
2006-08-11	Pitchfork (US)	"Thom Yorke"	Scott Plagenhoef	N. a.
2006-08-14	Sydney Morning Herald	"Thom out of Tune"	Annabel Crabb	N. a.
2006-08-18	Daily Record	"Song for a Whistleblower"	John Dingwall	N. a.
2006-08-26	NME	"Radiohead"	[Unknown Author]	'Somersaulted between genres'
2006-09-02	NME	"Harrowdown Hill"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2007-02-xx	Uncut	"Communication Breakdown"	David Cavanagh	Led Zeppelin reference in headline?, experimental rock
2007-03-xx	Uncut	"Complete Controller"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2007-03-19	Time (US)	"Rebels Without a Contract"	Josh Tyrangiel	N. a.
2007-04-13	Evening Standard Online	"A Radiohead Riddle"	David Smyth	N. a.
2007-05-19	De Morgen Magazine (BEL)	"My Body Forces Me to Work"	Bart Steenhaut	N. a.
2007-06-26	Creative Review Online	"Stanley Donwood"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2007-10-02	The Times	"Name Your Price"	Adam Sherwin	N. a.
2007-10-10	Gothamist (US)	"A Conversation With Jonny Greenwood"	John Del Signore	N. a.
2007-10-11	Daily Telegraph	"Radiohead: the Verdict"	Robert Sandall	Rock album, stylistic trajectory
2007-10-13	NME	"Welcome to the Revolution"	[Unknown Author]	N. a.
2007-11-xx	Rolling Stone (DE)	"Radiohead – In Rainbows"	Birgit Fuss	N. a.

2007-11-20	Columbia Spectator (US)	"No Alarms, but Still Surprising"	Logan Light	N. a.
2007-12-xx	Hot Press (IRE)	"And You Shall Know Us by the Trail of the 'Head'"	Olaf Tyaransen	Jazz, ambient, electronic
2007-12-xx	Mojo	"Everything Must Go"	Mark Paytress	Different genres, description of the 'Radiohead sound or genre'
2007-12-xx	Musikexpress (DE)	"Der Trick mit dem Netz"	Hanspeter Künzler	N. a.
2007-12-xx	Paste (US)	"Android Sangfroid"	Brian Howe	Post-rock, retrospective genre discussion
2007-12-xx	Spin (US)	"Radiohead, Inc."	Lane Brown	N. a.
2007-12-02	The Age (AUS)	"Radiohead Rebooted"	Stephanie Bunbury	N. a.
2007-12-04	Mojo Online	"Radiohead's Discbox Blows a Mind"	Mark Paytress	Avant-punk
2007-12-08	NME	"Rainbow Warriors"	Julian Marshall	Guitar band
2007-12-09	New York Times (US)	"Pay What You Want"	Jon Pareles	N. a.
2007-12-09	Observer Music Monthly	"Caught in the Flash"	Craig McLean	N. a.
2007-12-10	Der Spiegel (DE)	"Es locken Geld und Freiheit"	Dallach Höbel	N. a.
2007-12-15	NME	"In Rainbows Part II"	Jamie Fullerton	N. a.
2007-12-22	NME	"The Story of the Year"	Dan Martin	'The first time you could call it soul'
2007-12-28	The Sun	"Giving Away Music"	Jacqui Swift	N. a.
2008-01-xx	Mojo	"In Rainbows"	Mark Paytress	N. a.
2008-01-xx	Musikexpress (DE)	"Wir können auch anders"	Hanspeter Künzler	N. a.

2008-01-xx	Rolling Stone (DE)	"Alles Schaum, oder?"	Joachim Hentschel	N. a.
2008-01-xx	Wired (US)	"The Radiohead Revolution"	Thom Yorke David Byrne	N. a.
2008-01-10	Time Out New York (US)	"Signal to Noise"	Steve Smith	N. a.
2008-01-16	New York Times Online (US)	"In an Eclectic Concert Series"	Allan Kozinn	N. a.
2008-02-xx	Intro (DE)	"Schneller als das Leck"	Christian Steinbrink	N. a.
2008-02-xx	Mojo	"Chasing Rainbows"	Mark Paytress	Retrospective genre discussion
2008-02-06	Analogue (IRE)	"Radiohead"	KarlMcDonals	Indie, 'genre-hopping'
2008-02-07	Rolling Stone (US)	"The Future According to Radiohead"	Mark Binelli	Canonisation in the past, release method overshadows music
2008-02-21	Globe & Mail	"After the Storm"	Robert Everett-Green	N. a.
2008-03-xx	Spin (US)	Rainbows Coalition	Craig McLean	N. a.
2008-03-06	Jam!Music (CAN)	"Radiohead Breaking New Ground"	Jane Stevenson	N. a.
2008-03-23	The Observer	"When Thom met Ken"	Lucy Siegle	N. a.
2008-03-28	Pitchfork (US)	"Interview: Radiohead"	Ryan Dombal	N. a.
2008-04-xx	Q	"The Complete Radiohead"	Tom Doyle	Genre discussion of all albums
2008-04-01	Drowned in Sound	"Radiohead"	Mike Diver	N. a.
2008-04-03	Buenos Aires Herald (ARG)	"Thom Yorke"	Matt Kennard	N. a.
2008-04-03	Japan Times (J)	"One Huge Fan of Civilization"	Donald Eubank	N. a.
2008-04-08	Gigwise	"Radiohead"	Hazel	N. a.

		Exposed"	Sheffield	
2008-04-30	The Hollywood Reporter (US)	"Thom Yorke"	Mimi Turner	N. a.
2008-05-01	Rolling Stone (US)	"Best Festival Band"	David Fricke	Best festival/live band (categorisation through performance contexts)
2008-05-09	Palm Beach Post	"Radiohead Goes Local"	Jose Lambiet	rock
2008-05-22	Jam! (CAN)	"Radiohead Revels in New Freedom"	Jake Coyle	N. a.
2008-05-26	Entertainment Weekly (US)	"Radiohead"	[Unknown Author]	'Brit indie-prog'
2008-05-29	Rolling Stone (US)	"Radiohead"	David Fricke	N. a.
2008-06-xx	The Word	"The Escape Artists"	Andrew Harrison	N. a.
2008-06-19	The List	"Fitter Happier"	Mark Robertson	Classic albums
2008-07-xx	Visions (DE)	"Exit Music"	Sascha Krüger	Post-rock
2008-07-23/24	The Quietus	"Radiohead"	Andrew Mueller	'Soundtrack for the times'
2008-09-xx	Q	"Radiohead in Milan"	Craig McLean	'Reinventing the rock tour'
2009-03-27	Paste	"Pablo Honey, The Bends, OK Computer"	Mark Kemp	Genre retrospective
2009-04-18	NME	"Radiohead to Make Latino Krautrock?"	[Unknown Author]	'Latino-Krautrock'
2009-05-xx	Q	"Reissues: Radiohead"	Victoria Segal	Retrospective genre review
2009-06-xx	Classic Rockpresents Prog	"Sailing to the Moon"	Malcolm Dome	Prog, new prog
2009-10-xx	Classic Rock presents Prog	"The Jigsaw's Falling into Place"	Malcolm Dome	Prog
2011-02-xx	Q	"Welcome to the Machine"	Dorian Lynskey	Retrospective genre review

				Krautrock
2011-02-26	NME	"Radiohead's Royal Return"	Luke Lewis	'Most ambient album to date', avant-garde
2011-10-15	NME	The Kicking, the Screaming"	Luke Lewis	Retrospective genre review, prog
2011-12-xx	Q	"TKOL RMX 1234567"	[Unknown Author]	Electronica
2012-03-09	New York Times (US)	"Radiohead's Runaway Guitarist"	Alex Pappademas	Retrospective genre review, 'not a typical rock band'
2012-03-29	Rolling Stone (US)	"On the Road"	David Fricke	'Hermetic electronica'
2012-04-26	Rolling Stone	"Radiohead Reconnect"	David Fricke	'How the most experimental band learned to rock again'