

Poetry Off the Page: Literary History and the Spoken Word, 1965-2020

www.poetryoffthepage.net

University of Vienna

Launch: 1 Sep 2021



“Poetry Off the Page” is a five-year project, directed by Dr. Julia Lajta-Novak at the University of Vienna and supported by an ERC Consolidator Grant and the START-Prize of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF).

A vital field of poetic production, the spoken word in poetry has experienced a noticeable boom for more than half a century. Cultural phenomena such as jazz poetry, Beat poetry, dub poetry, and poetry slam have given rise to thriving performance scenes across the world. The proliferation of new technologies and modes of distribution – via archives, the internet and other digital forms – has made spoken word more accessible than ever before.

This project investigates the significance of poetry performance to recent British literary history, taking account of the aesthetic and political potential of oral performance in conjunction with the alternative institutional structures, publication channels, career pathways, presentational formats, styles, and poetic genres that have emerged from its dynamic performance scenes. Drawing on, and contributing to, the recent digital SpokenWordArchive.org.uk, we will write a history of British poetry performance. We will also conduct in-depth studies on the intersections of spoken word with literary and performance traditions, on Black British spoken-word poetry, the British poetry slam, Irish spoken word, and the spoken-word play.

A core aim of the project is to articulate multifaceted theoretical and methodological approaches to poetry performance analysis. By revealing the vital role of oral performance in the history of Anglophone British poetry, providing new sources, and cultivating spaces for its study, this project marks a fresh intervention in British literary history and seeks to establish poetry performance research as a recognised branch of historico-literary enquiry.

Poetry Off the Page is currently looking for a

Postdoctoral Researcher

4 years, 35h/week; start: 1 Aug 2022

Annual gross salary: €48,337

Subproject c. “Intersections: literary heritage & performance traditions in spoken word” (Postdoc 2)

This subproject will examine the dual heritage of spoken word poetry as literature and as a performing art. While spoken word poets engage with various literary traditions, their work is often also informed by performing arts such as dance, theatre, stand-up comedy, or music. This subproject will examine such intersections of literary and performance practices in spoken word, shedding light on the aesthetics and the politics that such contact points between art forms generate. A particular focus will be placed on transnational influences.

Job description:

The Poetry Off the Page team comprises three postdoctoral researchers, 2 PhD students, a part-time administrator, and the PI [Julia Lajta-Novak](#).

Postdoc 2 will be in charge of the “Intersections: literary heritage & performance traditions” research strand, present at international conferences, organise the second project conference (guided by the PI), co-edit the journal issue arising from it, and co-organise the third project conference. They will contribute regularly to the annotated bibliography online and to the Spoken Word Archive and be in charge of the project website and blog (y3-4); they will interview practitioners; write for the project blog (at least 3 entries) and the team book on the history of British spoken-word poetry (2 chapters); publish 2 journal articles; and produce 1 podcast.

This position is based at the Department of English and American Studies, University of Vienna, with travel to the UK and conference travel. We will have a weekly jour fixe in Vienna to monitor progress and enable a regular exchange of ideas.

With over 3000 active students, the University of Vienna’s [Department of English and American Studies](#) is one of the largest in Europe. It is situated on a green, car-free campus, not far from the U2 underground line and about a 15-minute walk from the city centre. In the 2020 Times Higher Education World University Rankings, Arts & Humanities at Vienna University were ranked in 30th position.

The city of Vienna is culturally vibrant while still affordable, with a sizable international community and a fantastic public transport system. In [Mercer’s quality of living city ranking](#), Vienna has been ranked no. 1 – of over 200 cities worldwide – for 10 consecutive years.

Required Qualifications:

- PhD in British or Anglophone Literary or Cultural Studies or a related discipline
- Expertise in (British) poetry / performing arts
- Excellent command of written and spoken English
- IT user skills
- Ability to work in a team, and to deadlines

The following additional qualifications would be desirable:

- Interest in postcolonial criticism
- Interest in gender studies
- International research experience
- Experience in presenting at international conferences
- Experience in editing audio and video files

How to apply:

The official job advert can be found under **reference number 12951** in the University of Vienna’s Job Centre: <https://univis.univie.ac.at/ausschreibungstellensuche/> (click “English” top left corner). This is also where you should submit your application.

Application documents

Font size: 11pt (minimum)

Language: English

Format: pdf

- Academic curriculum vitae in 1 page, including (projected) date of PhD completion and list of up to 5 relevant publications
- Letter of motivation, max. 400 words
- Full academic CV
- Full list of publications
- Relevant certificates/diplomas
- Three scholarly articles or selected dissertation chapters (in one pdf, with bookmarks)
- Contact details of 2 potential referees

Deadline: 28 March 2022.

(Notifications: 13 April 2022; Zoom interviews: 25 April 2022)

For more information, see www.poetryoffthepage.net or contact Julia.Lajta-Novak@univie.ac.at).