



American Poetry in Performance: From Walt Whitman to Hip Hop

Tyler Hoffman

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"Tyler Hoffman brings a fresh perspective to the subject of performance poetry, and this comes at an excellent time, when there is such a vast interest across the country and around the world in the performance of poetry. He makes important connections, explaining things in a manner that remains provocative, interesting, and accessible."

---Jay Parini, Middlebury College

American Poetry in Performance: From Walt Whitman to Hip Hop is the first book to trace a comprehensive history of performance poetry in America, covering 150 years of literary history from Walt Whitman through the rap-meets-poetry scene. It reveals how the performance of poetry is bound up with the performance of identity and nationality in the modern period and carries its own shifting cultural politics. This book stands at the crossroads of the humanities and the social sciences; it is a book of literary and cultural criticism that deals squarely with issues of "performance," a concept that has attained great importance in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology and has generated its own distinct field of performance studies. *American Poetry in Performance* will be a meaningful contribution both to the field of American poetry studies and to the fields of cultural and performance studies, as it focuses on poetry that refuses the status of fixed aesthetic object and, in its variability, performs versions of race, class, gender, and sexuality both on and off the page.

Relating the performance of poetry to shifting political and cultural ideologies in the United States, Hoffman argues that the vocal aspect of public poetry possesses (or has been imagined to possess) the ability to help construct both national and subaltern communities. *American Poetry in Performance* explores public poets' confrontations with emergent sound recording and communications technologies as those confrontations shape their mythologies of the spoken word and their corresponding notions about America and Americanness.

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