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## Literature and Music: Interdisciplinary Research and Teaching at The Open University

Delia da Sousa Correa, Katia Chornik  
and Robert Samuels

The Open University

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

#### *Literature and Music Research*

Interdisciplinary research in literature and music has expanded rapidly in recent years and is now also attracting a significant number of graduate students. It has an international subject association, the International Association for the Study of Words and Music (WMA) which is coordinated from the University of Graz in Austria, holds biennial international conferences, and publishes its own book series, *Word and Music Studies*. Papers combining work on literature and music are increasingly featured on the programmes of interdisciplinary conferences and a number of established scholars in both fields have pursued research into connections with the sister discipline. The healthy number of post-doctoral and doctoral researchers who attended the 2009 WMA conference in Vienna, and the degree of interest in the embryonic research network based at The Open University indicate a vital future ahead for this interdisciplinary field.

Music and Poetry have, of course, been regarded as sister arts since antiquity. However, over the past few decades, an increasing amount of attention has been paid to aesthetic and cultural interactions between literature and music, and the value of each other's disciplines has been immensely enhanced by the way in which critical theory has provided new methodologies for musicology and strengthened music's value for literature.

The diversity of contemporary critical theory has opened up new ways of conceptualizing the relationships between literature and music. Whereas the joint representational power of language and the visual arts once made *them* natural companions – Horace's *ut pictura poesis* – fundamental contrasts between the clear, referential attributes of verbal language and the fluid, indefinable nature of musical expression are harder to sustain than they once seemed.<sup>2</sup> The question of whether this contrast in semiotic functioning is real or apparent has been a rich source for theorising amongst music semioticians such as Naomi Cumming, Robert Hatten or Nicolas Meeus. Theories that emphasise the unstable referentiality of language have revived and enriched analogies between music and literature.<sup>3</sup> Now, language is valued for the referential uncertainty that was previously music's preserve, and music offers fitting, if complex, analogies for literature. Indeed, numinous signifying power is often taken as a defining feature of literary as opposed to practical language, whilst

the nineteenth-century conviction that music can embody rational thought has enjoyed a revival amongst music theorists. In Wittgenstein's phrase, beloved of contemporary scholars such as Daniel Albright, 'Understanding a sentence is much more akin to understanding a theme in music than one may think'.<sup>4</sup>

Lawrence Kramer, one of the most prominent members of the WMA, puts it like this: 'the resistance to signification once embodied by music now seems to be an inextricable part of signification itself'.<sup>5</sup> Accredited with spear-heading a 'new musicology', during the 1980s, Kramer's major project over the past fifteen years or so, has been to apply a diversity of critical theories to musical texts.<sup>6</sup> Music itself, he proposes, taking a stance that might be traced back to the American Pragmatist philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, should 'be understood as part of a general signifying process'.<sup>7</sup> Thus Music's 'meaning' can be discussed as a 'cultural practice' in a way not previously encouraged either by systematic music analysis or by music historiography.<sup>8</sup> It becomes possible to discuss the cultural contexts and significance of works such as Beethoven's 'Ghost' Trio, in relation to which Kramer analyses how narrative constructs might help to contain the admired, yet perilous, powers of transcendence attributed to instrumental music.<sup>9</sup>

Music finds a place even within critical theories that would seem inhospitable to it. Jacques Derrida hardly ever wrote directly about music, and music's abstraction might be assumed to lie outside the domain of discourse analysis. Yet recent work on literature and music by another scholar active in the WMA, Peter Dayan, proposes that music nevertheless plays a necessary role in Derrida's theorisation of textuality, emerging as the perfect metaphor for his conception of the original unknowable 'trace'.<sup>10</sup>

As in other fields, the legacy of cultural studies has vastly increased the range of works and contexts deemed worthy of study. The current preoccupation with intertextual relationships has expanded into to an excited fascination with transpositions and translations of all kinds, including from literary into other media.<sup>11</sup> Metaphorical parallels and adaptations into other media also imply the possibility of some kind of 'translation' between literary and other forms at the same time as they draw attention to what is unique about each.

A determination to move beyond disciplinary boundaries underpins a variety of contending theoretical commitments. For some, the impact of cultural studies is more problematic than for others. Dayan sees work informed by cultural studies and the tradition of post-romantic criticism with which he is engaged as two separate modes of studying text-music relationships. His concern is that cultural studies' apparently value-neutral preoccupation with historical context, and particularly its disavowal of aesthetic judgment, tells us little about the intransigent questions of what literature and music are and why and how they matter to us – essentialist questions from which many of us shrink, but which are the explanation for the presence of our students before us in class. Related concerns have been raised by scholars who are themselves engaged in the cultural study of music, but who have more recently become troubled about the extent to which the 'cultural turn' has coiled in upon itself. Kramer identifies as both welcome and problematic the current emphasis 'away from the character of individual works to the way that music reaches its audience'. It is problematic if inquiries about 'how' music is performed 'displace' rather than 'complement' questions about 'what' constitutes 'the social force of the musical work'.<sup>12</sup> The musicologist Rachel Cowgill has commented on, 'a tendency in musicology for us to define ourselves as "contextualists"; but then the context

becomes the area of study, and there's a big hole in the middle which was the music'.<sup>13</sup>

Must those of us with an interest in literature and music choose between incompatible critical approaches? Or can music allow us to combine the reading of culture with literary reading of the type that also concerns itself with the questions of what is involved in the formation of a specifically literary language? Can we recuperate a sense of music's traditional affinity with 'the literary' (and how might literature in turn help to define the 'musical')? Does music offer something unique within our *experience* of the literary? The paradoxical sense that literature is most distinctively 'literary' where it is most 'musical' reaffirms the longstanding association between music and poetry as sister arts. Whilst the notion of a uniquely literary language may be theoretically fraught, music offers a vocabulary that denotes effects of language that are difficult or impossible to articulate as meaning. Dayan constantly highlights the logical difficulty in regarding music as at the same time uniquely expressive and beyond meaning - yet this, nevertheless, is a status that it continues to enjoy. As an emblem of indeterminable meaning, music operates as a powerful code in the interface between writers and readers of post-romantic literature.

Work in literature and music thus spans a very wide range of approaches, from investigations whose primary focus is historical - audiences, and the spaces they occupied - to close textual and theoretical analysis of the relationships between the literary and the musical. Interrogation of 'the cultural turn' in criticism alongside the continuing preoccupation of much recent scholarship in both literature and music with the wider cultural context, seems timely, given reservations expressed by those who pioneered the cultural study of music, and the signs of a renewed, albeit keenly historicised, interest in form within literary studies. Graduate students choosing topics that lead them to work between these two disciplines can expect to come up against some of the more adventurous approaches and urgent theoretical issues within both disciplines.

*The Literature and Music Research Group at The Open University*

The Open University's Literature and Music Research Group [www.open.ac.uk/arts/literature-and-music](http://www.open.ac.uk/arts/literature-and-music), has hosted international conferences and was most recently involved in the organisation of a conference on 'Purcell, Handel and Literature' in November 2009. A conference on 'Literature, Music and National Identities' is planned for 2011 and we will host the 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the WMA in 2013. Previous Research Group conferences provided some of the material for a collection of essays, *Phrase and Subject: Studies in Literature and Music* (London: Legenda, MHRA, Maney Publishing, 2006). More recently, we have initiated a national and international network of researchers with its hub in the Research Group. A major aim of this activity is to provide a network for graduate students and their supervisors, and a well-attended inaugural symposium was held at the School of Advanced Study in London in July 2009. The Open University's Arts Faculty, which houses the Departments of English and Music along with five other departments, provides an excellent base for research collaborations of this kind and for the joint supervision of interdisciplinary doctoral projects, and potentially, where funding can be found, for hosting post-doctoral attachments.<sup>14</sup>

*Interdisciplinary Teaching in Literature and Music*

Members of The Open University's Music and English Departments collaborated to produce an innovative bi-disciplinary course, 'Words and Music' (AA317) which first enrolled students in 2007:

<http://www3.open.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/course/aa317.htm>. A final-year course, aimed at students in both disciplines, it comprises three contrasting blocks of study: on approaches to word and song, on music and text in ritual contexts, and on musical narrative (both in the sense of accompanied text in oratorio or opera, and in the sense of musical allusion in fictional narrative). My colleague Robert Fraser and I took part in a roundtable on interdisciplinary study at a conference on 'Words and Notes in the Nineteenth-Century' at the IES in September 2008, where there was considerable interest in (and some envy of) our new venture in teaching these disciplines in combination. There are certainly many pleasures and benefits both for research and teaching for colleagues from different departments working in close collaboration. For example, my colleague in Music, Professor Donald Burrows, an eminent Handel specialist, was immediately able to identify precisely which keyboard arrangement Eliot is likely to have had in mind when she has Caterina, in 'Mr Gilfil's Love story', launch into the 'massive chords' of a 'fugue' upon a chorus from *Messiah*.<sup>15</sup>

There were naturally also numerous issues to be confronted. The Open University's practice is to have extremely close collaboration between authors throughout the drafting, re-drafting and production processes of a course, the materials of which are principally delivered to students through published text. For a course like 'Words and Music', this is considerably more challenging than with joint teaching in most other university contexts. The normal teaching issues discussed during the production of a new course, such as the extent to which we can expect students working at this level to deal with references to works and concepts with which they are unfamiliar were writ large by the combination of disciplines. I was reprimanded by a music tutor, who was asked to assess our draft material, for using the term 'stream of consciousness' without adequate gloss, and for assuming that students had any ready acquaintance with literature outside the set texts for the course.

Meanwhile, the musicologists who contributed to the course had to meet the challenge of writing course materials for students who might not necessarily read musical scores, or understand what is meant by 'chromatically altered'. They managed to provide very effective verbal accounts of what was going on in specific musical examples, and most of them ultimately felt that meeting this challenge enhanced the usefulness of their analyses for both music and non-music students. Ironically, the provision of sufficient guidance to the apparently more accessible field of literary study has proved the more enduring issue as the course progresses. This may partly be because English students have been somewhat more tentative about signing up for the course, perhaps because they worry that specialist musical knowledge is required. A page on the English Department's website stresses that no expertise in reading musical scores is required and gives a brief outline of what the course has to offer to those whose main discipline is English:

<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/Literature/aa317.htm>. The feedback from the students with a background in English who do take the course has generally been very positive (for example: 'I come from the literature field, I am interested in music and have some basic knowledge of it – at least enough to follow the text in the course books. From that point I think AA317 succeeded in integrating both Music and Literature in a way that everybody could follow.') Many students with a background in Music were equally positive, ('for me the best bit was the fact that I finally got to learn about,

debate and explore the relationship between words and music. It is a constant topic amongst singers but this is the first course I have seen which studies this relationship'). Students seem particularly to have enjoyed studying transformations from literary to musical text, with *Carmen* the favourite example cited in student feedback.

Like all OU courses, the 'Words and Music' course is a distance learning course. Course materials, including text books, critical readers, scores, DVDs and CD recordings are written and compiled by a group of academics from the Music and English Departments. The actual teaching of the course, both face-to-face and via electronic conferences, is undertaken in tutor groups of about twenty students, by Associate Lecturers in the thirteen regions that cover Britain and Ireland. There is a course website on which students can access all the printed course and assessment materials in electronic form, and from which they access electronic tutorial discussions and the resources of the OU library. Students submit their assignments on the different blocks of study to their tutors and also have the opportunity to meet them for face-to-face tutorials. The rewards and challenges of the writing team's collaborations between literary scholars and musicologists have been reproduced in the team of tutors recruited to teach the course (a team of between fifteen and twenty). One issue which caused extensive debate between tutors and the writers of the course was been the final extended essay on which a student's performance on the course overall is judged (in addition to coursework during the course). This final assignment allows students to draw together the issues and approaches encountered on the course, to demonstrate some of the research skills they have acquired, to pursue some of their independent interests, and specifically, to reflect on how studying literature and music in conjunction has influenced their thinking about either or both disciplines. Each year, students in genuinely rewarding numbers have risen to the challenge to produce work that is truly bi-disciplinary at the end of their studies. At the other end of the scale, this final essay has also provided the clearest indication of resistance to cross-disciplinary thinking from some students.

The 'Words and Music' course offers some exceptional pedagogical opportunities. In one block of study, for example, students study the Biblical account of Samson in the *Book of Judges* followed by two transformations of this text: Milton's *Samson Agonistes* and Handel's oratorio *Samson*. Interdisciplinary clusters of this sort provide a superb basis for teaching about literary and musical genre, about the Biblical tradition, about performance, about reception and audience, and more. The range of musical and literary texts is very wide, extending from North Indian and European song to opera, oratorio and stage musical, from Boccaccio to Prosper Merimée, and from Thomas Mann to the lyrics of Stevie Wonder. Students who study the course are encouraged to reflect deeply on the relationships between music and literature, to inquire into what precisely are 'the connections between verbal and musical sound', to ponder what might be 'the limits of meaning', and, 'in what senses ... different art forms communicate, either singly or together'.<sup>16</sup> They are encouraged to interrogate notions of 'text' and 'work' in radical ways: both to respect and to probe the boundaries between disciplines. Students have opportunities to become more conscious of the discipline-specific skills needed for work in their home disciplines and to become more adventurous whilst remaining respectful of the skills required to venture into another subject area. These issues are of course as vital for research as they are for teaching. Interdisciplinary teaching also intensifies the reflections on our critical practice that are already prompted by teaching in a single discipline, and provokes us to reflect in telling ways on the perennially awkward

questions of value attached to our research disciplines, for students are likely to arrive with a strong sense of why literature or music matters and how it moves them, and their study ought to supply them with increasingly sophisticated ways of articulating and reflecting on this.

The Open University's 'Words and Music' course has recruited well (approximately 300 students in 2009) and has elicited from many students the kind of exciting independent study that any teacher in Higher Education hopes to inspire at third-year level. Sadly, funding issues have dictated that, at the time of writing, the course is not scheduled to continue beyond 2011. It has none the less been an experiment that shows that it is possible, with careful planning and collaboration, to provide successful interdisciplinary teaching at undergraduate level.<sup>17</sup> The current preoccupation with intertextuality and adaptation in literary studies also means that there is a rich potential for some combined study of literature and music, as of other disciplines, to form part of the broader English curriculum. This is certainly a feature of the new MA in English at The Open University,<sup>18</sup> which was launched in September 2009: <http://www3.open.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/course/a815.htm>.

We have also been fortunate in obtaining Open University Arts Faculty funding for a full-time doctoral student who is now completing a thesis involving not merely the two disciplines of literature and music, but a third discipline: modern languages. In the next part of this article, Katia Chornik provides her own reflections on the experience of working as a graduate student in The Open University's Arts Faculty and on the skills developed and insights attained via her interdisciplinary research.

### **Doctoral Study in Literature and Music<sup>19</sup>**

My doctoral thesis deals with the role of music in the novels of the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980). A leading Latin American figure, he exerted a key influence on the writers belonging to the so-called Latin American Boom (most closely associated with Gabriel García Márquez, Julio Cortázar, Carlos Fuentes and Mario Vargas Llosa). Carpentier was musically educated in his own right, and used music to a greater extent than any other Latin American writer of his time. He worked with music from several perspectives: as a researcher, concert promoter, librettist, music critic and radio producer. Carpentier's use of music in his fiction takes multiple forms: the titles of novels, structural analogies with musical forms and techniques, scenes that depict musicians composing and performing, a subject of discussion for characters, descriptions of recordings and radio broadcasts, and other musical references besides. Carpentier's use of music in fiction is interdisciplinary by its very nature and thus begs for consideration by scholars working across both disciplines. However, it has been mainly analysed by literary critics with insufficient or inadequate understanding of the musical materials linked to the literary texts. (The only exception appears to be a 2002 study in French by the musicologist Leiling Chang, *Métissages et résonances: Essais sur la musique et la littérature cubaines*, 2002). So far, no substantial cross-disciplinary study on the role of music in Carpentier's novels in has been published. My doctoral thesis takes a multi-disciplinary perspective. As well as textual analysis of the novels and archival material, my research involves analysis of musicological sources, scores and recordings, study of Carpentier's radio activities and music theorizing in the context of texts of Latin American and European literary and musicological research, publications in Words and Music Studies, and evolutionary and anthropological literature. My thesis therefore aims to add significantly to existing scholarship on



Carpentier, to the field of Word and Music Studies (particularly for non-Spanish readers), and more generally to Postcolonial Studies.

My first chapter deals with the analogies between literary and musical form in the novella *El acoso* (*The Chase*, 1956). The few scholarly studies that deal with this topic tend to be highly speculative and often display little rigour in the analysis of musical constructions. I came across the text of a radio programme written and delivered by Carpentier on Radio Habana in 1965 in which he ambiguously directs readers to literary analogies to sonata form. From this I have been able to elucidate ways by which the author integrates this musical model into the construction of the novella and establishes a narrative time frame related to a performance of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony. Further, I propose that Carpentier's broadcasting experience sheds light on these structural analogies, particularly on the question of timing. For this chapter it was invaluable to be able to draw upon my supervisor Robert Samuels' knowledge of musical analysis and the relations between the genres of the novel and the symphony.

My second chapter deals with the discussions on the origin and development of 'primitive' music in the novel *Los pasos perdidos* (*The Lost Steps*, 1953). I frame these debates in the context of Darwinism, drawing on a wide range of European nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature (Darwin, Herbert Spencer and comparative musicology texts, among others), and Latin American evolutionary anthropological and musicological accounts. I look at how the argument of Carpentier's novel incorporates paradigms of cultural evolution, and conflicting conceptions of 'the primitive' and 'the civilised', and yet distances itself from Darwinian ideas regarding music's relationship with spoken language. My contention is that the novel, in its representation and terms of debate, reveals some of the notions of comparative musicology (which were based on evolutionary models): for instance, an alienating distance from the exotic music of the Other which is at the same time valued in terms of their potential for Western art music. For this chapter, my other supervisor Delia da Sousa Correa's work on music and evolutionary thought in English literature and the relations between sciences, literature and music in the nineteenth century has been crucial.

After music as form, and music as formative, comes a final chapter on music as performed. Focusing on the novels *El acoso* and *La consagración de la primavera* (*The Rite of Spring*, 1978), I analyse the depictions of fictional performers and audiences: how these note, understand and react to musical works, contexts and ideologies, and the ways in which music performance is used as a vehicle for wider debates, particularly political ones. For my discussion, I draw on a further variety of sources: Carpentier's non-fictional writings on various subjects, musicological studies of the pieces portrayed in the novels, politically-engaged writing (by Bertolt Brecht and others), and studies by literary critics. Having a multi-disciplinary team of supervisors has been key for the selection of primary and secondary material for this chapter.

### *Interdisciplinary Supervision*

Through my experience over several years of meeting and talking to other postgraduate students at interdisciplinary research events, for instance those organised by the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Cambridge (CRASSH), I have gained a sense that many universities in the United Kingdom find it difficult to offer adequate supervision for interdisciplinary doctoral students. In this respect, departments often lack institutional facilitation to



branch out to other disciplines and, if necessary, other institutions. As a result, students typically have a single adviser covering one discipline only. This situation can create serious problems, particularly when the student has not previously done multi-disciplinary undergraduate courses, or has no prior specialist knowledge of particular areas of research involved in their doctoral projects.

Before I started my doctorate, I certainly had appropriate academic qualifications and working experience in music (I had completed a Masters degree at the Royal Academy of Music and worked as an orchestral and chamber musician for a number of years), an ample yet informal knowledge of Carpentier's work and related literature, and a native-speaker command of the Spanish language. Considering my background and also the nature of my research proposal, I needed supervision in a number of areas to fill gaps in my knowledge of the field of literature and also to acquire the necessary tools to pursue multi-disciplinary research. This has been provided by The Open University from the outset. My supervisors' extensive cross-discipline research and teaching experience has benefited both the overall conception of my thesis and key aspects of my research. I have profited from the expertise of other members of the OU's Literature and Music Research Group, particularly in the areas of postcolonial literature, ethnomusicology and performance studies. In addition, the OU Arts Faculty provided funding for me to have formal external supervision from two scholars working in Hispanic departments at the Universities of Edinburgh and Columbia, both of whom helped me to advance my knowledge of sources and developments in Carpentier studies as well as my translation skills (significant primary and secondary material is only available in the Spanish language). In sum, the multi-disciplinary culture at the OU has allowed me to develop research skills, a broad understanding of research environments and access networks in English, Music and Hispanic studies.

In addition to my research on Carpentier, I have worked on a number of knowledge-exchange activities. In 2005, I developed a radio series and a web special for the BBC World Spanish Service on the subject of music activities performed by political prisoners in Chile during Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship (1973-1990).<sup>20</sup> From 2010, my research will be part of the permanent collection of the new Chilean government-funded Museum of Memory and Human Rights (currently under construction), which aims to promote human rights through the knowledge of the atrocities committed during Pinochet's regime.

The knowledge-exchange projects that reached fruition represent only a proportion of those embarked on, some of which were extensive in the time and number of people involved in their development, but, as is typical for many such projects, were stalled by lack of funding. Among these was a project that aimed to commission a new opera (*Children of Fire*) on the story of Darwin's *Beagle* voyage to Tierra del Fuego, and of the three natives from Tierra del Fuego who also made the journey – a complex, chequered and critical story of cross-cultural encounter, with a fatal aftermath. The *Children of Fire* project was first developed together with the singer Carola Darwin (great-great-granddaughter of Charles Darwin). We brought together a team formed by artists and academics from South America and the UK, including several scholars from the OU's Literature and Music Research Group and other members of the Arts Faculty. Although the opera project has had to be suspended, I completed a journalistic article on Darwin's relation with the peoples of Tierra del Fuego, which was published by the BBC World Service in November this year, to coincide with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of Darwin's *Origin of the Species*.<sup>21</sup>

The projects above exemplify the possibilities for knowledge-exchange activities linked to cross-disciplinary research.

### **The Graduate-Supervisor Workshop<sup>22</sup>**

The existence of the Words and Music Association (WMA), mentioned above, and now more than a decade old, is testament to the establishment of 'Literature and Music studies' as a field in its own right. One result of this, naturally enough, is a burgeoning community of graduate students researching and writing doctorates in the field. Such students tend to share some distinctive experiences. On the one hand, there is the excitement of innovation, of feeling that one is working in a youthful and relatively unexplored field (and, pragmatically, one in which secondary literature is perhaps easier to identify, beginning with the WMA's own series of monographs and essay collections). But this excitement is almost inevitably tempered by the isolation of being the only scholar working in this field in a given institution, and often with a supervisor unused to managing projects of this sort. In addition, it is almost a definition of this field that any doctoral student has to work with sources completely outside their supervisor's field of expertise. Even a team of supervisors is likely to have gaps of this sort; amongst the authors of this article, for instance, Katia Chornik works with literature written in a language not spoken by either of her main supervisors.

This particular profile of the field suggested to us that 'networking', for scholars in this field, is no modish buzzword, but rather an indispensable part of any research project. This is perhaps a more immediate and pressing issue for doctoral students than for established scholars, but it is certainly true for both. With this in mind, the Literature and Music Research Group organised a one-day workshop for students and their supervisors, held at the Institute for Advanced Study in London on 10 July 2009.

The workshop built on the network of professional contacts of Delia da Sousa Correa and myself, and was limited to participants from the UK. The event drew an attendance of seven postgraduate students and twelve academics, with many others wanting to be kept informed of future events. It is unlikely that this number represents all those working in the field in the UK in 2009, but it does indicate a small, but distinctive and enthusiastic field of research.

The departmental affiliations of those attending give a good flavour of the field. The majority were indeed from English departments, with Music and Modern Languages the usual alternatives, but with students from Creative Writing and Theatre, the rainbow of possible affiliations within the field was apparent. On a practical and sometimes frustrating level, many institutions divide these disciplines between different Faculties or Schools: convenient when there is approbation for 'cross-disciplinary working', inconvenient when organising timetables or simply meeting colleagues.

In addition to the variety of disciplines represented, the subjects of the different students' doctoral topics were similarly diverse. It is, of course, statistically ridiculous to make judgments concerning the popularity of subjects on such a small cohort of projects; but nevertheless, it seems to me that certain styles of research, at least, are recurrent preoccupations of the field at present. One is the use of literature, or rather of literary sources, to gain access to music distant from our own time where other data is often lacking. There are medieval and renaissance performance situations where no written music survives, or at least no particular score can be assigned with confidence, but where written accounts or poetic works do provide access to an

otherwise lost event. It is, in my opinion, no accident that the early modern period shares an obsessive interest in the relationship between music and literature with another period often mined for doctoral topics in this field: the nineteenth century. But in addition to these two historically-driven areas of interest, many contemporary students turn to recent, sometimes contemporary, fictional writing which engages with music either as a subject or as something more akin to ‘background’.

If I might be permitted to make a scholarly and analytical comment about this, it seems to me that researchers in this hybrid ‘literature and music’ field are drawn again and again to a sort of intellectual resonance with the period which they study. It is a cliché of the Renaissance that research and experiment advanced rapidly without the constraints of disciplinary boundaries or discipline-specific terminology and jargon that characterise the university of today. The nineteenth century, too, in an entirely different manner, celebrated the transgression of conceptual boundaries, at the very moment of the establishment of empirical science and systematic taxonomy in fields as divergent as etymology and entomology. It is no accident that these two periods, in which literature and music were (for different reasons in each period) hardly seen as distinct activities, should furnish rich source material for today’s researcher. Many a doctoral study bears witness to the fact that writers of both music and literature often say most about their own materials when they address the nature of the other art form.

So much for my own reaction as a researcher in this field to the stimulation of the discussions held in London at our workshop. But the day went beyond the exchange of ideas concerning each other’s projects and ambitions. A whole raft of recurrent issues, from the selection of institution to the selection of external examiners, emerged as common concerns for most of those present, both supervisors and students. Most poignant were the frustrations of those who had completed doctorates in the field, only to find that their difficulties in finding adequate supervision from any one department in a university were replicated by the suspicions of successive appointment panels concerning their ‘true’ academic identity when it came to seeking university teaching posts.

Like many small fields of academic endeavour, ‘Literature and Music’ as a field sometimes appears tiny, almost irrelevant to its parent disciplines, and sometimes appears to be of central interest to the study of any period or topic not only in Music or English, but in other disciplines as well. That it is a growing and vibrant area of research is beyond doubt. We hope that this is matched as time goes on by its acceptance as an aspect of the teaching of English ‘beyond its boundaries’.

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### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> This section authored by Delia da Sousa Correa.

<sup>2</sup> In her important 1942 work, *Philosophy in a New Key*, for example, Susanne Langer contrasted the ‘fixed connotation[s]’ of verbal language, with the indefinite nature of musical expression: an advantage in her view, as it gave music the power, which language could not have, to express opposing emotions, Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1942), 228, 233, 243.

<sup>3</sup> See for example Wendy Steiner’s *The Sign in Music and Literature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

<sup>4</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* ’527, [1953] trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), 143. Quoted by Daniel Albright in ‘Stances towards Music as a Language’, in Delia da Sousa Correa, ed., *Phrase and Subject: Studies in Literature and Music*, (London:

Legenda/MHRA/Maney Publishing, 2006) p. 18. See also *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press/ Boydell and Brewer, 2000), p.6

<sup>5</sup> Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1995), p. xii.

<sup>6</sup> Kramer's *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1990) paid particular attention to the potential offered to music criticism by poststructural and historicist approaches. This was followed by *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1995) in which Kramer outlines the revised perceptions of music demanded by postmodernist conceptions of knowledge. *After the Lovedeath: Sexual Violence and the Making of Culture* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1997) extends Kramer's contextual study of music to analyse its role in the construction of gender identity, and in *Franz Schubert: Sexuality, Subjectivity, Song* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998) he considers the cultural influence of Schubert's songs. His most recent theoretical exploration is *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2001), and *Opera and Modern Culture: Wagner and Strauss* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*, p. xii.

<sup>8</sup> A valuable volume of essays in this respect is Steven Paul Scher, ed., *Music and Text: Critical Inquiries* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992) which includes a commentary by the historical theorist Hayden White. The international as well as interdisciplinary scope of work in this field is illustrated by Scher's own publications on links between literature and music in both English and German.

<sup>9</sup> See Kramer, 'Saving the Ordinary: Beethoven's "Ghost" Trio and the Wheel of History', in da Sousa Correa, ed., *Phrase and Subject*, pp.73-86; see also pp. 4-5.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Dayan, 'The Force of Music in Derrida's Writing' in da Sousa Correa, ed., *Phrase and Subject*, pp. 45-58. See also Dayan, *Music Writing Literature, from Sand via Debussy to Derrida* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006). For a theoretical investigation of the role of music in contemporary fiction, see Stephen Benson, *Literary Music: Writing Music in Contemporary Fiction*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006)

<sup>11</sup> See for example, Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (London: Routledge, 2006)

<sup>12</sup> Kramer, 'A New Self: Schumann at 40', *Musical Times* (Spring 2007), 3-17, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Banfield, Delia da Sousa Correa, Rachel Cowgill, John Picker, 'Roundtable: Victorian Soundscapes and the potential for Interdisciplinary Exchange', in Martin Hewitt and Rachel Cowgill, ed., *Victorian Soundscapes Revisited*, Leeds Working Papers in Victorian Studies, Volume 9, (2007), p.34.

<sup>14</sup> There is also a cross-faculty 'Musics and Cultures' research network connecting around fifty researchers in the OU, including in Geography and Technology.

<sup>15</sup> George Eliot, 'Mr Gilfil's Love Story', chapter 13, in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, (1857).

<sup>16</sup> <<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/Literature/aa317.htm>> [accessed 9 December, 2009].

<sup>17</sup> The text books produced for the course are: Martin Clayton, ed., *Words and Song* (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 2007), Bill Strang, ed., *Song, Performance and Ritual, Words and Music* (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 2008) and Robert Philip, ed., *Musical Narratives* (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 2008)

<sup>18</sup> See Delia da Sousa Correa, with Sara Haslam and Derek Neale, 'Literary Research and Other Media', in *The Handbook to Literary Research*, ed. Delia da Sousa Correa and W.R. Owens, (Abingdon, Routledge, 2010), pp. 148-66.

<sup>19</sup> This section authored by Katia Chornik.

<sup>20</sup> Katia Chornik, 'Canto Cautivo', *BBC Mundo* (2005)

<[http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/specials/2005/canto\\_cautivo](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/specials/2005/canto_cautivo)> [accessed 2 December 2009].

<sup>21</sup> Katia Chornik, 'Darwin y los hijos del Fuego', *BBC Mundo* (2009)

<[http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/ciencia\\_tecnologia/2009/11/091120\\_1700\\_darwin\\_fueguistas\\_wbm.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/ciencia_tecnologia/2009/11/091120_1700_darwin_fueguistas_wbm.shtml)> [accessed 24 November 2009].

<sup>22</sup> This section authored by Robert Samuels.

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