

Open Research Online

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

[Introduction] Understanding the present through the past and the past through the present

Book Section

How to cite:

Cook, James; Kolassa, Alexander and Whittaker, Adam (2018). [Introduction] Understanding the present through the past and the past through the present. In: Kolassa, Alexander; Cook, James and Whittaker, Adam eds. *Recomposing the Past: Representations of Early Music on Stage and Screen*. Ashgate Screen Music Series. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 1–14.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2018 selection and editorial matter, James Cook, Alexander Kolassa and Adam Whittaker; individual chapters, the contributors

Version: Accepted Manuscript

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<https://www.routledge.com/Recomposing-the-Past-Representations-of-Early-Music-on-Stage-and-Screen/Cook-Kolassa-Whittaker>

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk

Introduction: understanding the present through the past and the past through the present

James Cook, Alexander Kolassa, and Adam Whittaker

History, like culture, has (to borrow from Clifford Geertz) a fictive quality. It is “something made,” “something fashioned”: *fictio* in its true sense (Geertz, 1973, p. 15). We may therefore speak of the historical past not simply as the transparent record of events but as a constructed narrative of documents whose voices have since fallen silent.¹ As Foucault notes, ‘history is one way in which a society recognises and develops a mass of documentation with which it is inextricably linked’ (1972, p. 7). This notion has far reaching implications, and not simply for history as *documentary*. Those heteroglossic narratives which develop as history is lived, told, and continuously retold are—and have always been—the site from which new narratives spring, conditioned and coloured by the perspectives and technologies of the age. Such a process can be traced throughout much of recorded history; mythology, storytelling in all its forms, academic enquiry or polemic, draw upon canons of received knowledge, but to what end?² History is the lens through which the ever-changing developments of the present day can be understood; we see the present most fully in the absence of the past.

In the first instance, a commonly understood history serves as an easily accessible record of the origins of social codes and popular views. At its intersection with the more slippery (but related) concept of ‘myth’, a shared history is, arguably, the very foundation of a culture. Though they remain present through this intersection, historical narratives are nonetheless historicising, and there is always an inherent sense of distance. To borrow again from Geertz, we can never, as observers, be natives (Geertz, 1973, pp. 13–14). Such distance is manifest in different ways. In the popularly imagined late medieval world, it offered *auctoritas*—the authority of classical antiquity—perhaps best summed up by Bernard of

Chartres' assertion that we are but dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants: 'nanos gigantum humeris insidentes'.³ The world was, for our medieval predecessors, in a perpetual state of decline, and every step into the future was a step further from Eden.⁴ For post-Enlightenment thought, history became the history of progress. Primitive times were seen to hold the germs of later, inevitable, developments, with such a view leading to such grandiose exhortations as 'the history of a civilisation, if intelligently conceived, may be an instrument of civilisation' (Beard & Beard, 1927, p. vii).⁵ Indeed, the concept of a 'usable past' continues to inspire types of progress-orientated political and civic thought. Today, perhaps nostalgia is the most commonly evoked kind of distance, a theme characteristic of our present-day cultural milieu and its popular imagination. That nostalgia offers a kind of safe distance is, of course, precisely the point. As Trilling has noted, borrowing a Freudian understanding, civilisation

imposes restrictions on the most basic of human instincts, teaching us to sublimate our drives toward sex and aggression and to strive for cleanliness and order[...] modernity subjects itself to Civilization by abjecting the Medieval, by locating it as the space of those desires—aggression, sex, dirt—that must be repressed.

(2011, p. 218)

This book, in short, considers narratives and their construction. More importantly, it considers the centrality of music in this process and the ways in which music can be used to evoke (or create) a seemingly *distant* past. An understanding of the concept of 'early music' is essential, and although the term is central to the project, we recognise its broad significations, both in scholarly contexts and for a general public. We employ it here just as it is most widely understood, not to designate historical particulars, but as a music marked by, and marking, 'earliness'. That is to say, a music signifying something *historicising*,

contrasted against the typically ahistorical treatment of Western art music on stage and on screen.

The extent to which early music on stage and screen—be it historically informed, recreated, or even completely imagined—is able to offer us a glimpse of the past is difficult to measure. All the same, early music, as it is represented in ‘historiophoty’ (to adopt Hayden White’s term),⁶ is for most of the public their first introduction to historical musical practices. We have to ask: how many writers, performers, and advocates of early music will have first come to early music through film, television, or radio?

For those of us whose careers revolve around understanding, explaining, and fostering the cultural import of such musical practices, it is incumbent on us to respond. In 1995, Robert A. Rosenstone called for historians—formally uncomfortable with historical film and otherwise ill-equipped to deal with it—to recognise a ‘new kind of history’ which ‘stands adjacent to written history’ (p. 21). This collection suggests something similar by proposing the need for new, parallel, or ‘other’ musical histories, interdependent of musical history as we know it.

* * *

Popular media plays an increasingly important role in both the representations of the past and—perhaps most interestingly for the present volume—the ways in which we conceive of history. Indeed, traditional conceptions of history are now running in competition with a different, often contradictory, view of the past, with popular media becoming an increasingly potent force for knowledge transfer. Paul Sturtevant’s recent study of the impact that Disney films have had upon perceptions of the medieval past, for example, demonstrates the important role of popular media in forming dominant conceptions of the past, especially in early childhood. Such (mis)conceptions as disseminated through one ideological narrative have powerful implications for popular appreciations of historical sound (Sturtevant, 2012). It

is crucial then to understand the ways in which popular screen and stage media represent the musical past, going beyond potentially reductive accounts of complex processes (such as anachronism) that fail to explain the vibrant, creative, and multi-layered processes at work in the cultural melting pot of our popular imagination. Such processes would become a channel through which we gain unparalleled insights into the popular conceptions of not just the musical past, but of history writ large—especially its sensory dimensions.

As the title for this volume implies, it is our provocative contention that a multifaceted and stylised popular musical history is the product of a creative *recomposition* of the aural past. Such *recomposition* (or *recompositions*) form a complex proposition, erasing another past, be that in some sense real (if such a category is possible) or itself a recomposition. These redefine a sensory reality of historical sound for another generation through a web of newly formed relations and reconstituted unities coloured by the cultural lens of the present. In doing so, however, a newly inspired audience is formed, themselves destined to reconceptualise a musical history which—through its own presently contingent innovations—will play its part in rewriting a sonic present. Whatever the ramifications of this, it suffices to say that these musical representations (and *recompositions*) form an integral part of how we understand both the past and present, simultaneously or otherwise.

To this end, this volume brings together scholars working on diverse topics in early music, opera, film, television, and video game studies. It examines how, through the use of early musics, some of the complex processes detailed above are unfurled across seemingly divergent formats, so as to represent the past or, through intensive engagement with its logics and languages, to create something entirely new. Our interdisciplinary approach, therefore, proposes to locate contrasts and complementarities between television and film on screen, interactive video games, and staged opera. Just as our chapters about television (*Game of Thrones* and *The Borgias* in particular) are contributing to a growing critical realisation that

television is not merely a subsidiary of cinema, and is worthy, therefore, of its own discursive space (or spaces), so too do we allow chapters about opera to sit, suggestively, alongside its 'mass market' cousins. Indeed, opera scholarship has for decades explored (and challenged) the distinction between opera and cinema, and scholarship on either side has often drawn from the other to explain and enhance their understandings of each.⁷ Most opera today is viewed on DVD, on television, or via cinema simulcast, and those operas highlighted in three chapters of this collection are modern, either in their genesis or in their staging. They each see, in different ways, opera responding to cultures where cinema (and its offshoots) are most dominant. What too can we say about video games, often viewed as another cinematic offshoot and treated, largely, with the same critical apparatus despite its inherent interactive component that both muddies ontological discussion and challenges models of audience participation.

By presenting a diverse collection we hope to reflect the challenges and opportunities that these arts face. Indeed, the process of identifying the abovementioned contrasts and complementarities can only enhance our understanding of each field, drawing attention to the broad nexus of interactions and relationships between them. After all, many of the creative practitioners responsible for the music that inspired this collection work across generic boundaries or are, at the very least, influenced (consciously or otherwise) by different media. Opera is not the same as video games, of course. But both genres are, in a sense, lenses through which a popularly conceived past might be viewed. Consider *Assassins' Creed 3*'s historical representation of *The Beggar's Opera*, complete with a fully explorable historical recreation of behind-the-scenes set design. A full understanding of the game cannot be reached through scholarly discourse on opera alone, of course, but it is a necessary part of it. In a yet broader sense, these perspectives pose timely questions about our modern view of the history of early music, and the role that this

plays in our perceptions of the sound of history. Each of these disciplines respond, in a manner admittedly conditioned by their own generic constraints, to a broader popular historical *zeitgeist*, and it is this trans-generic impetus that we wish to explore here.

Music and medievalism, and beyond

The genesis of this project was at the first conference run by the Representations of Early Music on Stage and Screen (REMOSS). The study group came about in response to a perceived lack in musicological scholarship on popular representations of early music on stage and screen. John Haines' *Music in Films on the Middle Ages: Authenticity Vs. Fantasy* (2014) comes closest and is a significant contribution from which we hope to build. It sets out a convincing rationale for examining films on medieval themes, identifying an array of musical signs or tropes ('idéologèmes') and moods or moments, which Haines argues are used to convey a sense of the sound of this period. Like this volume, his discussion of music is framed within a yet greater tradition of creative and intellectual 'medievalism' which predates recorded sound (and sound-film). Our creative engagement with history, though inexorably coloured (even accelerated) by the twentieth century's rapid technological advancements, has long traditions.

The growing field of studies in 'medievalism' is, despite the irony, the product of an increasingly diverse modern technological field, wherein 'film, television, music, video games, digital art, digital writing, and other electronic medievalisms'⁸ come together as a site for the exploration and understanding of the medieval era's long shadow into postmodernity. Haines' limitations to the Middle Ages and to film as a medium presents a major opportunity to explore the creative processes involved in representing the musical past in a broader range of stage and screen media, all of which are touched by the powerful gaze of medievalism. Though 'medievalism' has a long and rich history, there is, nonetheless, a degree of

confusion surrounding the term and its derivatives. For Umberto Eco, medievalism had a pejorative air, a dilettantish pursuit to be contrasted with responsible philological study (1986a, pp. 61–72). In some contexts, the description ‘medieval’ evokes a sense of barbarity and primitiveness that bears little or no relationship to the historical period to which it might refer. For others, medievalism refers to a subject requiring scholarly attention, needing a historian or literary scholar of that particular timeframe. It is also often used as a general term for artworks that draw upon medieval themes. Neomedievalism, a term typically attributed to Eco in his ‘Dreaming of the Middle Ages’ (1986a), carries a more presentist (or futuristic) association. A neomedieval text, whilst still borrowing from the past, might otherwise be stylistically ‘postmodern’, ironic, or distanced, and it might be set on another planet or in a fantasy parallel universe. We return to this theme in our final chapter.

The development of neomedievalism as a term therefore speaks to an enduring Middle Ages, of which we experience near ‘constant revivals’ in modern history (Eco, 1986b, p. 84). Eco draws still timely parallels: ‘the big city, today no longer invaded by belligerent barbarians or devastated by fires, suffers from water shortages, blackouts, gridlocks’ (p. 77). Indeed, for this reason, neomedievalism has a strong currency in political theory, describing our newly apocalyptic era of digital and corporate feudalism, corrosion in the power of the nation state, and a growing anti-intellectualism.⁹ Suffice it to say, the boundaries of these concepts are porous and ill-defined, especially given the difficult historiographical issues with the term ‘medieval’ itself.¹⁰ But for the purpose of our collection, is there such a concept as ‘renaissanceism’? Or ‘baroqueism’? Both are ‘isms’ related to historical labels we cast back and forth without real consideration of their broader implications and connotations.

Certainly, the popular American concept of the Renaissance fair (or fayre) relies almost entirely on medievalist tropes, bound up in a melange of historical and fantastical images. The resultant representation is something that has its roots more in the centuries than

precede most classical definitions of the ‘Renaissance’. It is, in short, a site of ‘contested meanings’ (Wetmore, 2010, p. 116). Similarly, we could see what might be described as a neo-baroque aesthetic in films such as *Amadeus* (1984) or, more recently, *Tale of Tales* (2015). Neither film depicts, or seeks to depict, an historically informed recreation of the baroque—and why should they—but they do seem to share a core aesthetic which clearly connects to what we have been describing as medievalism. Both are historical and historicist or perhaps, to continue the connection with medievalism, neohistoricist. Medievalism studies, and its key players, continue to debate fiercely the chronological and ontological limits of the discipline and sub-disciplines. From the walled fort of musicology, we take the risk of opening it up further still: where do *we* draw the line for medievalism? In the first instance, it is the creative allure of what Richard Utz has characterised as a ‘non-contiguous’ past (2011, p. 109), where the medieval is a period which has enough ‘otherness’ to inspire creative reinterpretation, but retains a certain degree of familiarity. This holds more weight in the study of early music, where practitioners have often necessarily conflated the so-called ‘medieval’ and the ‘Renaissance’ for decades, something that the work of Leech-Wilkinson (2002) and Upton (2012) examines from different perspectives.¹¹ Ultimately, it is hard to say where to draw the line on medievalism, but perhaps no more difficult than asking where to draw the line on the medieval, something which has continuously vexed scholars for centuries.

* * *

This is not a book about the past. Instead, this volume is about the present and its relationship with the past, how the present rewrites the past, and perhaps even how the present itself is rewritten through our ongoing creative dialogue with that past. Our concern is not about whether the creative practitioners under review here are really looking at or drawing from the medieval or the Renaissance period. At a foundational level we are interested in how the

evocation of a distant and discontinuous past is used creatively. Whether the concepts borrowed are those from the medieval, the Renaissance, or a stylised baroque period made distant through the sensorial application use of music (and costume, language, etc.) is, to an extent, moot: they all share in the common concern of evoking historical distance.

Nonetheless, for all their shared traits they may be contrasted.

Our contributors each speak to the following themes: (1) Authenticity, appropriateness, and recomposing the past; (2) Music, space, and place: geography as history; (3) Presentness and the past: dialogues between old and new. Within each section examples from the diverse worlds of film, television, video games, and opera are discussed, teasing out the parallels and contrasts between them and asking how each medium, despite its generic differences, might be seen to draw from a shared popular conception of the musical past. Finally, we end with a point of departure: fantasy medievalism. In a final chapter about HBO's *Game of Thrones*, we explore the application of the diverse practices discussed by our contributors outside the realms of historical recreation or re-enactment and show how these very same historical connections might be involved in the creation and maintenance of fantasy worlds.

Authenticity, appropriateness, and recomposing the past

Anachronism, intentional or otherwise, has a long history in art. It stretches back at least as far as antiquity and continues to attract the attention of scholars today. Given our focus on historical, or rather *historicising* music, anachronism—that is to say, the appearance of something temporally inappropriate or inauthentic—should hold some significance for our discussion. However, given the plethora of generic musical norms and conventions found within film, television, video games, and opera, it is important to question precisely to what we are being appropriate or authentic: the medium or the time period being represented (or

indeed something else altogether)? The chapters in this section of the book deal with the ways in which different media may seek to negotiate the divide between the norms of modern audio-visual genres and those associated with representing the past authentically. To do this, these chapters incorporate discussions of on-screen and onstage depictions of the early sixteenth century through to the late eighteenth century (either new works that seek to represent the past, or modern restaging of works from these periods), which include newly composed music—both self-consciously early and in a post-romantic filmic idiom—and pre-existent medieval plainchant, Renaissance polyphony, and baroque works. The interplay between the era being represented, the music being used to represent it often, and even the very way in which the works are (re)constructed, betrays an extraordinarily creative approach that tells us much about popular conceptions of how the past might (or might not) have sounded.

James Cook's chapter considers questions of anachronism in the score of Showtime's *The Borgias* (2011). It suggests that, far from being problematic, the anachronistic choices of pre-existent music within the first episode of the series are carefully conceived and thus entirely appropriate to the context. Rather than being chosen for an inattentive or unknowledgeable listener, an understanding of the pre-existent music's historical background and intertextual context(s) is at least desired, if not assumed. This understanding may elicit a deeper insight into the role of the music in the drama and, ultimately, prove key to understanding the series as a whole. This chapter—like Mervyn Cooke's, which follows—also sheds some light on the ways in which pre-existent historically situated music interacts, in a meaningful way, with newly composed post-romantic film music.

Mervyn Cooke's contribution describes the ways in which George Fenton melds pre-existent music with a newly composed score in *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988) in a manner suggestive both of the periodisation of the film and so as to support the thriller-genre aspects

at work in it. These two chapters are complementary, with one concerning a stylised representation of the early Renaissance and the other clearly situated in late eighteenth-century musical traditions. Both case studies use an anachronistic baroque score: too late for the former and somewhat early for the latter. In both cases, the score treads a delicate line between supporting the periodisation of the narrative and the broader narrative themes, characterisations, and genre characteristics.

The third chapter of this section both broadens the discussion and further sharpens its focus. Daniela Fountain discusses the power of the lute as an aural and visual signifier of the Renaissance, contrasting it with the signifiers of the medieval period as outlined in Haines (2014). She discusses its ability to authenticate the Renaissance, but also its capacity to contribute both to the narrative and to emotional participation, demonstrating how a single shared aspect, the lute, can function in multiple different roles.

This section ends by picking up on what it means to restage an English restoration era music-theatrical work for the benefit of contemporary eyes and ears. This chapter looks, in a way, at the problem of authenticity from the opposite angle to those that precede it, focusing on the recreation of an historical art work rather than the representation of history through a modern work. Nonetheless, English restoration music theatre is itself medievalist in its topic and treatment. The processes of adaptation—and reworking—involved in modern stagings of what might be termed dramattick opera from this period (such as Purcell's *King Arthur*, *The Fairy Queen*, and *The Indian Queen*, for example) are significant too. In their original incarnation, these works were complex multimedia spectacles which gave as much emphasis to dialogue-driven drama as they did to their musical scores; most contemporary stagings of the operas in question focus, by contrast, almost entirely on the music. Katherina Lindekens' chapter examines this phenomenon, and asks the question: what if future stagings were to embrace the original whole work? Moreover, what would be experimental, paradoxically so,

about such an approach? In so doing, Lindekens confronts what it means to be authentic on a modern stage when dealing with historical musical-dramatic material. Simultaneously, she sets up the third section of this project—in our dialogue of the past with the present, what does it mean to create something ‘new’?

Music, space, and place: geography as history

‘The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there’. L.P. Hartley’s famous opening to *The Go Between* has achieved almost proverbial status and neatly encapsulates its historiographical zeitgeist: in the words of John Ganim, a sense of ‘geography being transmuted into history’ (2005, p. 7). This perspective, in the context of early music on stage and screen, has manifested itself through the use of different types of musical orientalism and folk occidentalism. Take, for example, the often fine line between the ways in which Hollywood typically scores a film set in the Middle East, and how it scores one in medieval Europe: the duduk—an Armenian double reed instrument—often features prominently in both. Illuminating the ways that the musical boundaries between ideas of geography and history are almost constantly blurred, warped, or reinterpreted in approaches to scoring and recreating the past offers many fascinating possibilities. Indeed, notions of space and place have had a significant impact on the ways in which we bring history to life. More broadly, these approaches can concern issues of the musical portrayal of internal and external spaces, or sacred and secular worlds, aspects which are central to our project.

The section opens with a chapter by Adam Whittaker, which focusses on the apparent divide between the musical representation of sacred and secular spaces in film, arguing that such divisions are somewhat analogous with the academic discourse on the so-called ‘a-cappella heresy’. In comparing the scholarly and popular conception of this supposed divide, his chapter shows that the two perspectives have far greater potential for intersection than

might have previously been suggested. By looking at a single but enduring narrative—*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*—told through a variety of filmic adaptations from across the twentieth century, this chapter explores how musical approaches have changed over time and what insight this might offer into popular and scholarly conceptions of how history ought to sound. Additionally, this chapter grapples with the problems associated with musical representations of ethnicity, typically through the use of recognisably folk-like musical idioms. This strand of thought is continued in Simon Nugent's following chapter, which deals explicitly with the notion that folk music can be used *as* early music.

In his case study, Nugent draws on the remarkable commercial success in recent times of a type of folk music marketed as 'Celtic', and its concomitant explosion in historically situated film: both those representing an ostensibly real past, and those, such as *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001–2003), which are more fantastical but draw clearly from historical themes. This chapter argues that, whilst the epithet 'Celtic' may have little to do with actual geographical areas or ethnic groups and seems to have been very much a commercial creation, it exerts a profound influence on the popular conceptions of the sound of the historical past. Celtic music, in effect, has the transportative narrative power to situate a diasporic audience within an ancestral homeland, imagined or otherwise. Nugent's examination of Celtic folk in folk-like rural, peasant, and pastoral idylls has clear intersections with Whittaker's sacred and secular/inside and outside distinction.

In contrast to Nugent's chapter, which focuses primarily on the connection between occidental folk and the representation of early music, Edward Breen's chapter centres on oriental folk influences, issues which have remarkable overlap with the other chapters in this section. Breen's chapter provides a timely historiographical account through a case study based on David Munrow's approach to early music performance. It demonstrates the intellectual milieu within which Munrow's beliefs about the perceived similarities between

certain non-European musics and instruments, and the musical cultures of Europe's past, were formed. It also outlines the ways in which Munrow's media appearances, especially his television programmes, impacted deeply upon public conceptions of the sound of early music. This may go some way to explain the prevalence of some aspects of orientalism in musical representations of the past, as discussed in the first section of this book.

Closing this section of the book is William Gibbons's contribution on the use of baroque-style music, both pre-existent and newly composed, in some video games from the 1980s released on the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) games console. Whilst video games draw, in many ways, upon the traditions and conventions associated with scoring in film and television, the medium presents a distinct set of challenges that arise from the essentially indeterminate nature of the gameplaying experience. In these early video games, labyrinth-like levels set in historically inspired castle environments, often imbued with some of the medievalist tropes outlined elsewhere in this book, were often accompanied by a range of baroque music, drawing upon the complex polyphonic nature of this musical style to negotiate the technical limitations of the console audio processor. The repetitive harmonic loops allowed for large-scale musical soundscapes to be created using small amounts of processing power. However, Gibbons argues that there is more behind this musical choice than technical limitations alone. He explores how baroque musical styles were used to create a sonic metaphor for complex architecture, and how such a musical style helped to situate video games, an emerging media at the time, within a broader cultural context that includes cinema, popular music, and literature. Taking some early games as case studies—including *Dragon Warrior*—he illuminates the complex intersections between popular and art music cultures through the medium of the video game, and demonstrates that music in a baroque style can evoke a sense of space that supports, perhaps even transcends, the on-screen architectural constructs of video game levels.

Presentness and the past: dialogues between old and new

The two previous sections seek to explore ways in which music is used to evoke a type of authentic, if not necessarily historically accurate, past. This section hopes to advance the discussion, describing the ways in which materials discovered *from* the past might be used creatively so as to produce something more overtly modern. In effect, it seeks to animate an argument that is central to the discussion thus far: that the innovations mentioned throughout this project are the product of a creative dialogue between old and new, and that our contemporary engagement with history is indivisible from our understanding of it.

The first chapter of this section, by Alexander Kolassa, focusses on operatic case studies from two British composers over the past 40 years: *Taverner* (1972) and *Arianna* (1995) by Peter Maxwell Davies and Alexander Goehr, respectively. It examines the ways in which modernist composers have been able to engage creatively with the processes, logics, or aesthetics associated with early music, be that medieval, Renaissance, or baroque. The two operas in question do this in strikingly different—and highly personalised—ways, offering decidedly relevant examples of musical anachronism and/or pastiche, discussed elsewhere in this collection. By making this comparison, Kolassa demonstrates the extent to which the techniques of the musical past have resonated with the aesthetic aims of forward-minded, and in this instance, particularly British, contemporary composers. There is, he argues, a great deal that is *new* residing in art that is *old*. His chapter also sketches out relationships between modernist composition and popular culture, relationships which are refracted through early music collaborations and make a convincing argument for the discussion of opera alongside popular screen media.

Maria Ryan's following chapter continues the subject of contemporary (and in particular British) opera, by drawing our attention to George Benjamin and Martin Crimp's *Written on Skin* (2013). Ryan offers an analysis that is perhaps more textual, as opposed to

musical, in nature. *Written on Skin* is inspired by a thirteenth-century troubadour text and is told through a narrative conceit that, alongside other complicating temporal layers, features a cast of angels who comment—retrospectively—on the events in the drama. The text itself, a medieval manuscript, is central to the opera both literally and figuratively. The opera walks a complex path between traditional operatic narrative and scholarly excursus on the study of medieval manuscripts. *Written on Skin*, Ryan demonstrates, confronts plainly the very processes of creative interpretation implicit in any exploration of historical subject matter.

Returning to screen media, but in distinction to those films discussed elsewhere in this collection, Philip Weller's examination of Werner Herzog's 'documentary' *Gesualdo: Death for Five Voices* (1995) proffers a film that is itself *about* music, and does not simply contain it. *Death for Five Voices* is, however, a problematic work to categorise, and Herzog's study of the work and life of Renaissance composer Carlo Gesualdo sets out to blur the lines between fiction and truth, between myth and history (etc.). Herzog's inimitable approach is, Weller suggests, as eccentric as it is powerful. It is through the inclusion and exploitation of music—live performances of Gesualdo's pieces permeate the film's already complex narrative structure—that Herzog is able to conjure, not simply the *historical present* which might be expected from a more traditional documentary approach, but an altogether more *mythic present*. What Herzog provides is a kind of 'play' characterised by discontinuities and dissonances: in time, detail, and setting. This is an approach not unrelated to the types of 'play' that abound throughout this volume. *Death for Five Voices* confronts head on, however, those very permeabilities between fact and fiction, then and now, that confront all works covered in this collection.

Lisa Colton's closing chapter shows how the manipulation of both old music presented as new, and new music presented as old (what she terms a doubly synthetic score) serves to destabilise the sense of temporality in the cult-classic film, *The Wicker Man* (1973).

Set on the remote fictional Hebridean island of Summerisle, *The Wicker Man* depicts an outsider policeman's search for a missing girl against the backdrop of a community in the throes of a three-day pagan rite. Perhaps, the island of Summerisle acts as a helpful metaphor for a complex musical landscape—neither strictly historical nor truly ahistorical—that we have only begun to establish in this collection of essays: a land that is both out of time but thoroughly constrained within it, governed by competing agencies and free-contradictions, yet strangely authentic. Indeed, Paul Giovanni's score for *The Wicker Man* features a wide array of styles which act to signify a 'now' (psychedelic and folk rock on electric instruments) and a 'then' (pseudo-folk and early music). Colton demonstrates just how this complex constellation of musical styles and contradictions is able to fuel, and legitimise, the violence that crowns the final scenes of the film. It also contributes to recurrent themes of atemporality and folk orientalism in its depiction of pseudo-peasant life, in contrast to mainland, and ostensibly, Christian civilisation. This chapter offers a helpful metaphor for the collection as a whole.

It is the aim of this collection to create a unified and important contribution to a new avenue of enquiry, one based not on single generic constraints but on a more holistic approach. There is much to offer here and while all sections contribute to one another in a number of different ways, they bring to bear a richer and more nuanced discussion of early music than that suggested in the title. This is a multifaceted discussion that encompasses a wide-ranging panorama of topics, across regions, times, and technologies. Like the musical collage that is our shared multimedia historical soundscape, we hope this collection is, in its eclecticism, more than the sum of its parts.

To this end, our final chapter on medievalism, neomedievalism, and fantasy in the thoroughly contemporary—but suggestively historical—television series *Game of Thrones* takes this further still. By foregrounding the show's genre-hopping and transmedia musico-

narrative vocabulary, we hope to demonstrate what it might mean to imbue the past with presence. In circumventing notions of historical accuracy altogether, HBO's television fantasy spectacle becomes a model for diverse examples of creative history everywhere—in this book and beyond.

Works Cited

- Beard, C. A., & Beard, M. R. (1927). *The Rise of American Civilisation*. New York, NY: The Macmillan Company.
- Burckhardt, J. (1860/1990). *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (S. G. C. Middlemore, Trans.). London: Penguin.
- Dahlhaus, C. (1983). *Foundations of Music History* (J. B. Robinson, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eco, U. (1986a). Dreaming of the Middle Ages. (W. Weaver, Trans.). *Travels in Hyperreality* (pp. 61–72). New York, NY: Harcourt Brace.
- Eco, U. (1986b). Living in the New Middle Ages. (W. Weaver, Trans.). *Travels in Hyperreality* (pp. 73–86). New York, NY: Harcourt Brace.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*. (A. M. S. Smith, Trans.). New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Ganim, J. (2005). *Medievalism and Orientalism: Three Essays on Literature, Architecture and Cultural Identity*. New York, NY: Palgrave.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Haines, J. (2014). *Music in Films on the Middle Ages: Authenticity vs. Fantasy*. New York, NY & London: Routledge.
- Holsinger, B. (2007). *Neomedievalism, Neoconservatism, and the War on Terror*. Chicago, IL: Prickly Paradigm.
- Joe, J., & Gilman, S. L. (Eds.). (2010). *Wagner and Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Joe, J., & Theresa, R. (Eds.). (2002). *Between Opera and Cinema*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Leech-Wilkinson, D. (2002). *The Modern Invention of Medieval Music: Scholarship, Ideology, Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- MEMO. (2016). Medieval Electronic Multimedia Organization (MEMO). Retrieved from <http://medievalelectronicmultimedia.org/>.
- Rosenstone, R. (1995). The Historical Film as Real History. *Film-Historia*, 5(1), 5–23.
- Sturtevant, P. (2012). “You Don’t Learn It Deliberately, but You Just Know It from What You’ve Seen”: British Understandings of the Medieval Past Gleaned from Disney’s Fairy Tales. In T. Pugh & S. Aronstein (Eds.), *The Disney Middle Ages: A Fairly-Tale and Fantasy Past* (pp. 77–96). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Trilling, R. (2011). Medievalism and Its Discontents. *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies*, 2, 216–224.
- Upton, E. (2012). Concepts of Authenticity in Early Music and Popular Music Communities. *Enthnomusicology Review*, 17, 1–13.
- Utz, R. (2011). Coming to Terms with Medievalism. *European Journal of English Studies*, 15(2), 101–113.
- Wetmore, Jr. K. J. (2010). “Sportful Combat” Gets Medieval. In G. C. Semenza (Ed.), *The English Renaissance in Popular Culture* (pp. 115–128). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- White, H. (1988). Historiography and Historiophoty. *The American Historical Review*, 93(5), 1193–1199.
- Winters, B. (2010). The Non-Diegetic Fallacy: Film, Music, and Narrative Space. *Music & Letters*, 91, 224–244.
- Worsley, L. (2017). British History’s Biggest Fibs: BBC Four.

¹ Such a view holds a great deal of resonance with key texts on music historiography. See, for example, Dahlhaus (1983).

² See, for example, early histories of Britain by authors such as Geoffrey of Monmouth that mix history, myth, and legend. More recently, the archivist and historian Lucy Worsley has sought to raise these issues with a popular audience through her television documentaries, most notably the recent series *British History’s Biggest Fibs* (BBC, 2017).

³ Perhaps the best-known articulation of this concept is by Isaac Newton: ‘If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants’. Though it has a long historical tradition.

⁴ This is not to suggest a single, unchanging medieval mindset. Such models of thought had waning significance towards the Renaissance.

⁵ Such a trait abounds in Jacob Burckhardt’s 1860 work, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, which includes sections of the book charting the development of Renaissance interest in mankind, morality, society, and nature. Burckhardt presents the Renaissance as though it represents the civilisation of the barbarous medieval age.

⁶ ‘The representation of history and our thought about it in visual images and filmic discourse’ (White, 1988, p. 1193).

⁷ See, for example, the collections *Between Opera and Cinema* (Joe & Theresa, 2002) and *Wagner and Cinema* (Joe & Gilman, 2010), which unpack the kind of productive relationships, historical and conceptual or theoretical, that have been made and observed between film and opera. Others have sought to use apply conceptual frameworks from one to the other: for example, in revisiting accepted notions of filmic diegesis (see Winters, 2010).

⁸ See the work of the Medieval Electronic Multimedia Organisation (MEMO) group:
<http://medievalelectronicmultimedia.org/>.

⁹ For an exploration of these themes, see Holsinger (2007).

¹⁰ These issues are discussed at length in Leech-Wilkinson (2002), though not from the perspective of stage and screen media. Leech-Wilkinson raises important issues relating to the extent to which prevailing traditions in performance are sustained by historical evidence or by personalities and ideologies alone.

¹¹ Early music has, variously through music history, been used to describe music written as late as the eighteenth century, and 'historically informed practice' has applied its techniques for authentic recreation on music as recent as Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*.