Medievalism and Exoticism in the Music of Dead Can Dance

Kirsten Yri

In 1991, the alternative rock band Dead Can Dance released an album that caught the attention of music reviewers by constructing an aural allegiance to the Middle Ages. Suitably called *A Passage in Time*, the album was described as imitating medieval chant, troubadour and trouvère music, Latin hymns, and courtly songs and included Dead Can Dance's hybrid medieval songs as well as performances of actual medieval repertoire.[1] Released and widely distributed by Warner, the album was in fact a compilation of material from their earlier *The Serpent's Egg* (1988) and *Aion* (1990), both carried by the independent label 4AD.

Both Dead Can Dance's newly composed renditions as well as their performances of medieval music were modeled after historically informed performances and thus drew on the sounds of medieval music as it was constructed in the early music revival of the 1960s and 1970s. In modeling their songs and sounds after historical recordings of medieval music, Dead Can Dance also adopted some of the ideological parameters of these performances and historical reconstructions. Examining the output of Dead Can Dance against these performance practices reveals similar preoccupations with the Middle Ages as simultaneously "naive," "pure," and "uncorrupted" by modern conventions (Haines 2004a), or "distant," "exotic," and strangely unfamiliar or "archaic" (Leech-Wilkinson 2002).[2]

For listeners in the UK, and for those familiar with the medieval-inspired progressive rock music of the late 1960s and early 1970s, a rock band's foray into the sound world of the Middle Ages may appear to be nothing new.[3] Indeed, in some ways, Dead Can Dance's interest in medieval sounds and technical features parallels what Susan Fast identified in the 1960s bands Gentle Giant, Gryphon, and Pentangle as a "longing for the Other, in particular as a source of power alternative to that possessed by the dominant culture" (2000:35). Yet the musical parameters adopted by Dead Can Dance differ significantly from those Fast describes, insofar as Dead Can Dance combine sacred medieval musical traditions with contemporary Bulgarian, North African, and Arab practices, collapsing the different times and places into one. Dead Can Dance's vision and use of the Middle Ages is thus caught up in complex signifying discourses of the Other, constructing an arena where the exotic, alluring, natural, and spiritual are mapped onto the medieval and non-Western musical practices from which the band borrows.

Dead Can Dance's appropriation of Bulgarian, North African, and Arab musical practices also participates in what Edward Said has called "Orientalism." As Said has argued, the practices of geography, travel writing, literature, political theory, economics, and even anthropology were all constituents of a discourse ultimately responsible for constructing the Orient as the West's Other. For Said, the issue was not simply that Orientalism was not truthful or accurate, but that it became "a western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the 'Orient'" (1978:3). As he and other postcolonial scholars have argued, the appropriation of foreign peoples' cultures or ideas invariably amounts to representations that reinscribe power and racial divisions, and, to follow arguments by Homi Bhabha (1994) and Gayatri Spivak (1988), result in the continuous silencing and colonizing of non-Western cultures.

By juxtaposing Bulgarian, North African, and Arab practices with a Western medieval past, Dead Can Dance can also be seen to reinscribe Western stereotypes that locate the contemporary non-Western Other as frozen in the past. As Johannes Fabian (1983) has argued, such a view is the heritage of a theory of unilinear evolutionary process comprising set stages of progress with the same content for all peoples. In the underlying paradigm of a scientific Time, these stages are ordered chronologically, and a position on the evolutionary line is equal to a position in time; difference is thus affirmed as distance. Through a process of defamiliarization, the mapping of Bulgarian, North African, and Arab practices onto the Middle Ages increases the distance of the Middle Ages from the present. The Middle Ages thus becomes an internal Other, looked at, as Gary Tomlinson notes, from "the superiority of the present," failing "to perceive difference without its degenerating into superiority/inferiority" (1993:10, quoting Todorov).

Finally, the process by which Dead Can Dance collapse "our" medieval past and Orientalist Others, assigning "premodern" attributes of spirituality or naturalness to both, echoes Marianna Torgovnick's exploration of Western spirituality (1996). Torgovnick argues that connections between humans and their universe that cannot be cast into a rational mode have been written out of the West: "Bit by bit, thread by thread, the West has woven a tapestry in which the primitive, the oceanic, and the feminine have been banished to the margins in order to protect—or so the logic went—the primacy of civilization, masculinity, and the autonomous self" (1996:212). The primitive is "conceived to be the conduit for spiritual emotions," so that the desire for the primitive is often a desire for the spiritual (1996:7).

In their construction of a spiritual and exotic Other, Dead Can Dance prefigured and anticipated the 1990s popularity of recordings of Gregorian chant, the music of Hildegard von Bingen, and medieval crossovers such as the Hilliard Ensemble's *Officium*. In the case of chant, some of this increased

visibility and popularity has been attributed to new marketing and promotion campaigns that aligned chant with the promise of a better world. As Katherine Bergeron remarks, in the 1990s chant was marketed with imagery and rhetoric that aligned it with the mysterious, spiritual, and exotic, a rhetoric that dates as far back as 1830s France (1995:30). Hildegard von Bingen became immensely popular in the 1990s, in part due to marketing strategies that presented her as a medieval mystic. As Jennifer Bain demonstrates, the cover art for the most popular Hildegard recordings revealed a new format, "popped up" for a New Age market by modern typeface and bright colors (2004). Paula Higgins considers the popularity of medieval music to be "a belated symbolic payoff (or poetic justice?) to generations of earlier scholars (and teachers of notation courses, no doubt) whose careful, painstaking, and unglamorous work in locating manuscripts and preparing the editions has begun to yield substantial returns" (1993:118).

Such enthusiasm for the Middle Ages and for medieval music has roots in the early music revival and the wide dissemination of recordings by the Studio der Frühen Musik, the Early Music Consort, and the ensembles that followed in their path. Formed in Munich in 1961 by Americans Thomas Binkley and Sterling Jones, the Estonian-German mezzo-soprano Andrea von Ramm, and the English tenor Nigel Rogers (later replaced by William Cobb and then Richard Levitt), the Studio der Frühen Musik was acclaimed for its performances of songs from the Carmina Burana manuscript and troubadour and trouvère chansons.[4] The Studio's signature sound, defined by composed and improvised instrumental accompaniments and vocal ornamentation modeled on Arab music, came to be known as the "Arabic style." The Early Music Consort, founded in 1967 in England by David Munrow, with James Bowman, Oliver Brookes, Christopher Hogwood, and later James Tyler, was also a well-known purveyor of early music. Munrow, often referred to as "the pied piper," after his long running and successful BBC radio program, was known for his lively and virtuosic performances on hitherto unknown instruments like the crumhorn as well as "Oriental" instruments like the Middle Eastern shawm.

Dead Can Dance's allusions to medieval music via Bulgarian, North African, and Arab musical styles also anticipates the popularity of certain forms of World Music and World Beat in the 1990s that layered "exotic" tracks against various forms of spiritual chant—Gregorian chant in Enigma, Baka singing in Deep Forest, Hildegard von Bingen in Delerium, and secular and sacred medieval music in the Mediaeval Baebes.[5] As Timothy Taylor (1997, 2001) and Steven Feld (2000) have discussed, forms of music like "ethnotechno" and "pygmy pop" continue to reinscribe stereotypes of the timeless, the natural, and even the exotic when it comes to the use of indigenous musics by Western artists. In the words of Feld, what emerges are

"romantic and patronizing renditions of an old theme, the pygmy as timeless primal other" (2000:273). Even in the genres of World Music, where artists are viewed as having agency in the music they write and the way they choose to represent themselves, holdovers to these primitivist discourses are still strong because the music industry encourages and rewards musicians for staying true to their indigenous styles, whereas collaborations and hybrids have historically been viewed with suspicion (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000).

Dead Can Dance envision an idealized Middle Ages untouched by industrialization and other "modern" practices. Contemporary society is described by band member Lisa Gerrard as a "culture that just keeps churning out robots." Malaise is the obvious consequence: "People are not content with their lot in life . . . They can sense that there's something else living in their unconscious being . . . we've been brought up to deny the inner being" (Garcia 1993–94:46). Or, in Dead Can Dance founding member Brendon Perry's words, "I'm very interested in medieval society because the actual structure was very simple to understand. The relation of music and religion and other aspects portrayed more things simply. We live in a world now, which is far more complex" (Shea 1989:65).

The band's comments are symptomatic of the paradoxical search for the authentic that defined the "alternative" rock music world from which they emerged. Dead Can Dance appeared in 1984 as an alternative act on 4AD, the same British independent label that had released the ethereal-sounding music of the Cocteau Twins and This Mortal Coil. As part of this alternative rock scene, Dead Can Dance and their fans subscribed to an ideology of authenticity that was rooted in an opposition to mainstream, commercial music industries. Bands in the alternative music scene disdained the artificiality of the image and generic attributes of popular music and performers. As Charles Fairchild remarked, "At the core of an alternative music are fundamental questions of autonomy, self-definition, and resistance in the music industry" (1995:18). Alternative musicians did not subscribe to one particular musical style, but shared an attitude that music produced by the mainstream recording industry for commercial gain lacked integrity, originality, and personal, artistic vision. Musicians on an alternative or independent label were viewed by fans as artists whose personal and expressive commitments were pure and unmediated by industry forces.[6]

With a name that includes the word "Dead" and imagery that is often dark, it is no surprise that Dead Can Dance has occasionally, to the band-members' chagrin, been included under the heading Gothic Rock, though the band actively protests this moniker.[7] A type of alternative music cultivated in the UK in the mid-1980s and born out of the post-punk moment, Gothic

Rock translated punk rock's angry cries for action into a depressing fatal-
ism where death, horror, decay, and the grotesque were used to express the
pain and suffering seen in modern life. It was the gloomy imagery found in
Gothic literary genres (themselves the products of a Romantic medievalism),
including works like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*
that gave the genre its name. Like a few Gothic Rock bands—Bauhaus,
Christian Death, and The Cure—Dead Can Dance borrows musical tropes
from medieval chant, but while Goths put chant in the service of the satanic
and grotesque, Dead Can Dance uses it to convey reverence.[8] Where Gothic
Rock voices its critique of the modern industrial world in dark, nihilistic
terms by using imagery that draws attention to the body, suffering, and
mortality, Dead Can Dance focus on offering a panacea: "What on earth is
music for anyway, but a way to transcend the everyday common world. It's
through music that we pretend to be something else, somewhere else, and
at some other point in time" (Berger 1994).[9]

Medievalism

Dead Can Dance's discourse of the Middle Ages as a place of spiritual remove
is evident in their choice and treatment of medieval repertoire. "The Song
of the Sibyl," one of the authentic medieval songs the band performs, is a
Catalan version of a non-liturgical Latin song that surfaces in manuscripts
from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries. The song features the pagan
figure of Sibyl who was known for her ability to see into the future and who
was brought into the Catholic church during the Middle Ages. Dead Can
Dance's dirge-like approach to the piece, coupled with their atmospheric,
reverent vocalization of the conjunct melody of the song's refrain with organ
accompaniment, psaltery, and bells, conjures up an image of spiritual wor-
ship (example 1). Alternating with the refrain, the two melismatic verses are
performed with the strumming of psaltery and rendered by Gerrard with
vocal tension. Long pauses and digital reverberation give the impression of a
large cathedral and are reminiscent of religious worship. Dead Can Dance's
performance of "The Song of the Sibyl" clearly imitates the performance by
Ars Musicae, Ensemble de Musique Ancienne de Barcelone, on the album
Dictionnaire des Instruments Anciens (1974).[10] Dead Can Dance make use
of the same instrumental combination and setting, the same harmonic
underpinnings, and the same placement of rhythmic markers. Moreover,
Gerrard's vocal quality is remarkably similar to Ars Musicae's Irene Miret.
    Bergeron reminds us that that there is nothing inherently spiritual
issuing from recordings of medieval music and chant (1995:32). Instead
spirituality is conveyed through the rhetoric of liner notes and the imagery

Example 1: Transcription of "The Song of the Sibyl," performed by Dead Can Dance (*Aion*, 1990), refrain. Words and music by Lisa Gerrard and Brendan Perry, © 1990 Momentum Music Ltd. and Beggars Banquet Music. All rights controlled and administered by EMI Virgin Music, Inc. All rights reserved. International copyright secured. Used by permission.

of the packaging, and the emotional impact that creates an out-of-this-world experience is culturally constructed through a complex and ever-changing interweaving of musical signs. The ringing of bells, the use of organ, acoustic resonance, responsorial form, conjunct motion, and ametricism are all constituents of this particular musical discourse of medievalism that, because of their prominence in Western religious practices, have come to symbolize the spiritual.

Dead Can Dance's choice to include "The Song of the Sibyl" out of an endless array of selections from the Middle Ages reveals something of the image they wish to communicate and illustrates the connection to crossover albums of Hildegard von Bingen as well as other mid-1990s chant albums. Like the medieval chant explored by Bergeron, "The Song of the Sibyl" presents a "virtual liturgy," where, as Bergeron remarks on the contemporary function of chant outside the church, "It is the condition of being between two realities, both of which are offered and both of which are denied, that
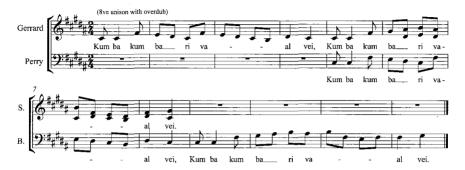
creates the desired effect of this music" (1995:34). Such virtual spirituality, to use Kreutziger-Herr's extension of Bergeron's term, is a peculiar kind of religious experience that one may either participate in or simply observe, and lies "somewhere between the secular and the sacred" (1998:98).

Like ensembles who perform medieval music—Anonymous 4, Sequentia, Ensemble Organum—Dead Can Dance also encourage a kind of virtual spirituality through their performance venues. When Dead Can Dance toured with this material, they performed in old cathedrals whenever possible, making use of the aura such ritualized spaces communicate. Reviewer Ian Gittins said of one concert, "I can't escape the idea of a church service, all the litanies and Latin cries which fill the air" (1989:39). For encores during tours of their medieval-inspired music, Gerrard, usually clad in a flowing white gown, often sang songs interpreted by reviewers and fans as liturgical chant (Brown 1993:87).

The text for "The Song of the Sibyl" includes an invocation to prayer, and the refrain issues a warning to those who have strayed from the path of righteousness. (The Catalan "Al jorn del judici / parrà qui haurà fet servici" translates as "On the Day of Judgment, it will be seen who has done his duty.") But this message is hidden from listeners, since the band does not print the Catalan lyrics nor provide a translation for them. This act of nondisclosure helps shift the emphasis from a specific religious prayer for spiritual salvation to a vaguely mystical statement. The evocative and aesthetic sound qualities of the words' performance are more important than their textual meaning.

Dead Can Dance also construe the medieval as spiritual in their own hybrid medieval songs. Inspired no doubt by medieval performances such as Ars Musicae's "Song of the Sibyl," the band employs several techniques: the use of digital reverberation, church bells, and the absence of a steady beat; a preference for smaller intervals and conjunct melodic motion; and the allusion to specific medieval traditions such as chant, organum, sequences, conductus, motets, or troubadour and trouvère music. The band exploits these musical markers for communicative and emotive purposes. The song "End of Words" is a good example of the band's allusion to several different medieval music traditions (example 2). Two voices enter in parallel motion, in octaves, and sing in a mostly stepwise motion fit for monastic or liturgical medieval chant. Medieval markers include the responsorial style, narrow melodic range, conjunct motion, repetition and slight alternation of phrases, and the practice of ending the phrase with a rising major third falling to a full tone below. The intervallic content of the line conforms to medieval mode 2, though the use is not governed by a specific, historically "authentic" practice.

The form of the piece loosely implies a medieval liturgical sequence, where pairs of musical phrases are repeated, though here Dead Can Dance allude to the early medieval polyphonic tradition by using two and then three part polyphony. The pairs of versicles also alternate between monophonic and polyphonic renditions, and are in the form of a response. The lower voice carries a musical motive that is repeated in all phrases, a practice that is also a feature of some motets and conductus.[11] In "End of Words," the upper voices sing in unison or in harmony with this repeated phrase in much the same way as in a conductus. When the voices sing in polyphony, the lower voice takes the bottom tetrachord while the upper voice takes the top. This vocal texture, together with church bells, an organ drone, a sedate tempo, the intervallic content, and vocal declamation summon a spiritual and reverent setting that anticipates the virtual spirituality Bergeron and Kreutziger-Herr identify in early to mid-1990s recordings of medieval music and their contemporary crossovers.

As the title of the song suggests, there are no words; instead, the singers are limited to intoning six syllables that imitate the sound of the Latin language—another marker for an archaic Middle Ages. Indeed, Dead Can Dance carefully construct all features of the melodic lines, the harmonic content, and form to evoke the Middle Ages, the salient markers for the archaic here being the monophonic, unison singing, the repetition of phrases, and the lowered seventh degree.

Another example that illustrates the construction of the Middle Ages as spiritual and the amalgamation of different medieval genres into one is the song "Orbis de Ignus." Even the title evokes a medieval sacred tradition in its use of (grammatically incorrect) Latin. Like "End of Words," this song also

uses vocables that sound Latin but are non-lexical. Reverence is suggested by the ringing of a bell followed by a long silence and then an allusion to the sounds of the earliest organum (example 3). Two voices enter singing a conjunct melodic phrase in parallel fifths, akin to the practice of note-against-note organum.[12] However, midway through the line, the two voices employ a mixture of contrary and parallel motion until landing on and continuing in parallel sevenths for two notes. The sevenths then expand to a ninth for the close, before jumping to an octave to begin the second part of the phrase. The linear succession of intervals, the avoidance of the leading tone, and the approach to the final F from a full tone above emphasize the archaic or medieval sound.

The musical examples above illustrate not only how Dead Can Dance musically construct the medieval, but also how they construct "difference" from the popular and alternative rock music world that is their contemporary context. In the examples above, the band eschews any reference to these musical domains by avoiding a steady drum beat, functional tonality, the usual guitar, bass, keyboards, and drums combination common to popular bands, and the post-punk gloom that defined the alternative rock scene of the late 1980s.

Exoticism

As mentioned at the outset, a significant facet of Dead Can Dance's medievalism is their conflation of the Middle Ages with the foreign and "exotic" through references to Arab, Bulgarian, and North African musics. This cultural "difference" is marked through the use of non-Western instruments and reconstructions of early instruments and the adoption of a vocal timbre that has vague references to the Balkan singing style made famous by recordings of the Bulgarian State Vocal Choirs, *Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares* (1986, 1988, 1990).[13]

The pairing of medieval sounds with Balkan vocal practices and North African and Arab instruments results from the band's exposure to record-

ings of medieval music that do the same. Significantly, in describing his inspiration for the music on the album *Aion*, Dead Can Dance's Brendan Perry says,

> We've listened to almost nothing else in the last two years except trou-
> badour and trouvère music (music that developed in 12th and 13th
> century France, resulting from a fusion of European secular folk music
> and Oriental instruments and influence brought back by the crusaders).
> (Horkins 1990:62)

Leech-Wilkinson (2002) and Haines (2001) argue that early music record-ings, in particular those of troubadour and trouvère music that the Studio der Frühen Musik modeled on North African and Arab practices, were based on the "Oriental Hypothesis": the theory that through Arabic rule in the Iberian peninsula, and through contact with the Arabs during the Crusades, medieval European music took on oriental flavors.

Dead Can Dance's performance of a medieval Saltarello, an instrumental dance favored by early music ensembles, exemplifies the musical link they draw between the exotic and the Middle Ages.[14] They impart a distinctly Othered sound that vaguely references the North African or Arab world by including non-Western, "early," and North African instruments such as medieval hurdy gurdy, timbales, Moroccan hand drums, and an instrument (presumably a digital patch) referred to in the recording's notes as a snake charmer. Thrown into the mix are Chinese cymbals and uilleann bagpipes, other signs that Orientalism is at play in the conflation of everything non-Western as Other.

With the added percussion of tambourine and drum, this performance resembles the famous version of this piece recorded by the Studio der Frühen Musik. But the performances differ in tempo, register, and timbre. Dead Can Dance's performance is slower than the Studio's. This and the percussion help to shift the setting from a fast-paced, sprightly dance to a militaristic march. The tune is presented on recorder in the Studio's ver-sion, while Dead Can Dance employ the uilleann bagpipes with drone and hurdy gurdy accompaniment. The light, airy recorder is thus replaced by a significantly lower, reedy, and heavy sound. The Dead Can Dance version also uses a military bass drum that simulates the complex patterns often heard in Moroccan music.[15] These changes in percussion, register, tempo, and timbre are dramatic, and alter the locale from the inner chamber of a (Northern) Italian court to the expansive grounds of an Arab palace.

Dead Can Dance and the Studio der Frühen Musik may have believed there was historical precedent for adopting Arab and North African practices, but both adopted *contemporary* performance practices and claimed them as past. As Haines has argued, the Studio's espousal of the Oriental Hypothesis

is linked to a nineteenth-century Orientalism of "looking to the Islamic Orient for its own roots" (2001:369). Embedded in the myth-making about the Orient and viewing it as an idealized repository of the past, both groups participate in inaccurate and problematic representations of the Middle East and North Africa, reinscribing the dangerous, sensuous Other that is typical of Orientalism's narrative.

The song "Orbis de Ignus," discussed earlier as an example of medievalist spirituality, is a good example of the mix of "reverence" with the "exotic." Its use of parallel octaves intermixed with strains of parallel moving dissonant intervals against a drone evokes Balkan folk music practices, specifically a Bulgarian practice from the Pirin region where songs usually begin in unison and then develop into distinct layers of melody and drone, producing as many intervals of seconds and thirds as possible.[16] In addition, Gerrard uses what she calls an "open-throat Bulgarian technique" of pharyngeal resonance and glottal stops (Lanham 1995:34). The combination of pharyngeal resonance, glottal stops, parallel dissonances with the bells, and allusions to organum, liturgical Latin, responsorial singing, and medieval modes distance the Middle Ages not only in time, but also in place. Dead Can Dance's choice to adopt vocal practices that lie outside the realm of Western popular music thus suggests "an act of strange-making, a defamiliarizing of musical practice," to borrow a phrase Bergeron uses to describe the Greek Orthodox priest Lycourgos Angelopoulos on Ensemble Organum's 1995 album. Such practices distance us from the Middle Ages and promote "a remote and unattainable music that recalls an equally remote past" (1995:30).

Besides referencing the Bulgarian State Choir, the open-throat technique Gerrard adopts recalls the Australian ensemble Sinfonye, whose pairing of Balkan vocal techniques with medieval repertoire is a hallmark of their historically informed performances and was probably inspired by the vibratoless, nasal quality of Musica Reservata's Jantina Noorman. Sinfonye's main singer, Mara Kiek, is trained in Balkan singing techniques and uses pharyngeal resonance in her performances in much the same style as Dead Can Dance's Gerrard.[17] The two groups are also similar in their use of drones, layering of instruments, privileging of particular timbres such as reed instruments, inclusion of Moroccan drums, and plucked-string accompaniments.

A further example, "Host of Seraphim," demonstrates how Dead Can Dance combines the exotic with the contemplative in a medievalesque setting. The elements that stand in for the medieval ritual are the church bells, organ drone, and chant. Tonal harmonies provide the foundation for Gerrard's tight vocal production, which centers around A♭. As is often the case with songs by Dead Can Dance, there are no lyrics, only syllables, which Gerrard sings to a lugubrious melismatic melody over Perry's drone. The

pharyngeal resonance of her vocality, and the ornamented melody against a drone are, again, evocative of Bulgarian music from the Pirin region (example 4). However, this setting is then juxtaposed with a "Western" vocal practice common to performances of chant: at the end of the piece, as if imagining a religious ceremonial practice, Gerrard changes her vocal quality, which has until this point used pharyngeal resonance, vibratory ornament, and glottal stops in the style of Balkan practice, to a straight tone, releasing an embellished melodic line on the syllable "a," thus conjuring up an Amen or Alleluia.

To be sure, this Balkan vocal sound is "exotic" only insofar as it has been constructed as such in popular discourse. Donna Buchanan (1991, 1997) points out that the Bulgarian State Choirs were marketed to highlight the spiritual, mystical, exotic, and ancient qualities of what was in reality a modern, government-sponsored music aimed at creating a sense of natural heritage. In European and American publicity materials and reviews, this vocal technique and musical style were presented as "natural" for the Bulgarian singers and were equated with the sounds of an exotic tradition. Such a representation is also echoed in the 1994 recording, *Missi Primi Toni de Per Luigi da Palestrina par les Voix Bulgares*, produced by Ivan Lantos, which presents a Palestrina mass sung by the contemporary Bulgarian en-

semble Bulgarka Jr 3+1, rewritten and reset to reflect a $\frac{7}{8}$ time signature. Lantos chose Palestrina because, "in keeping with the Renaissance's concern with humanism, Palestrina, a composer of humble peasant origin, was more in tune with the natural state of the earth and its people" (Buchanan 1997:151). I include this example as another apparently incongruous pairing that from a medievalist perspective is often considered straightforward: the premodern (Renaissance) combined with a "natural" tradition of folk singing. Indeed, the idea that the Bulgarian singers were somehow "back in time" and had access to what are perceived as past vocal traditions is explicit in the notes for the album:

> The music of Palestrina is totally in the spirit of the epoch, and marks a return to simplicity, to the natural noblesse of the people and of the earth. The voices of the traditional Bulgarian singers grow naturally from their bodies, without any mannerism. One can even suppose without great risk of error that this dense and rustic sonority, produced by singing outdoors, is closer to the sixteenth century manner of singing ... The purity, the ecstatic quietude and celestial character of Palestrina remain intact. The originality of the work is enhanced thanks to an approach that is simpler, less polluted by artifices, more savage than the aesthetic manner in which we have presented Palestrina up to now. (Quoted in Buchanan 1997:151)

Buchanan is quick to point out that this view "perpetuates the belief that these cosmopolitan, highly trained professional musicians are peasant girls endowed with raw and rustic talent of archaic vintage" (Buchanan 1997:151). Such beliefs problematically locate the Other as frozen in the past and reinscribe Western discourses rooted in the logic of progress and evolution. As Fabian argues, this view is dangerous not only because it claims the contemporary Other as distanced in time, but also because change is predetermined down one path—that of Western progress and technological advancement.

To be sure, Dead Can Dance's interest in Bulgarian, Arab, and North African music or instruments is not only a consequence of hearing performances of early music ensembles do the same. Rather, the band's interest also points to a cultural fascination with the Other and its representations. A focus on non-Western sounds and traditions is evident in a few songs on these and earlier albums, anticipating their post-1990 interest in "World Music." "Echolalia" (*The Serpent's Egg*) references a number of non-Western musical traditions, particularly Bulgarian and Arab. The song begins with Perry's energetic presentation of an arc-shaped conjunct melodic line. This is heard twice before it is taken up by Gerrard, who sings it an octave higher and with pharyngeal resonance. One noticeable feature is the use of what resembles the Arab Saba scale, but in this case with no neutral second degree.

Example 5: Transcription of "Echolalia," performed by Dead Can Dance (*The Serpent's Egg*, 1988), statements two, three, and four. Words and music by Lisa Gerrard and Brendan Perry, © 1988 Momentum Music Ltd. and Beggars Banquet Music. All rights controlled and administered by EMI Virgin Music, Inc. All rights reserved. International copyright secured. Used by permission.

As in other songs, the vocal layers are gradually built up, with a statement by Perry, followed by another with Gerrard at the octave. The third statement adds Gerrard a perfect fifth above, while the fourth adds her a fourth higher, at the upper octave (example 5).

As the song builds, Gerrard increases her pharyngeal resonance and uses glottal stops to heighten the dramatic tension. In addition to the "exotic" sounding vocal inflection, the song uses asymmetrical rhythms, here 3 + 3 + 3 + 2 + 2 with shifting accents forming heterometric patterns. While a mixture of 3 + 2 may be in keeping with the shifting accents of Bulgarian music, Dead Can Dance's rhythmic treatment is not an authentic recreation, but like their medievalism, borrows from various traditions and genres to communicate an Othered sound that cannot be located in any one culture.[18] An exotic image is also conveyed through the use of vocables that convey sounds typical to the Bulgarian language such as "gn" as in *magna* and "dy" as in *dyeho.*

Dead Can Dance's interest in these non-Western traditions stems not only from the Otherworldly sounds present in performances, but also from the ideological import these musics carry. It is not the mere use of the non-Western musics and instruments that situates the music within these discourses; rather, it is the particular way in which these traditions and allusions are used to communicate the "natural," the pure, and the premodern. The band's essentialist and orientalist attitudes are palpable in Perry's description of the song "Tell Me About the Forest":

"Tell me about the Forest" is about that, about watching the gradual erosion of cultures and peoples, ruralized people around the world, seeing emigration as a key to the cultures of the world, all the capitalist mechanisms that rob people of their spirituality, of their roots. (Garcia 1993–94:46)

For Dead Can Dance, the contemporary West has given birth to changes that may once have been viewed as progressive but are now blamed for wreaking havoc with (our and other) culture(s). Perry asserts, "It's all part of this modernistic ideal where you must strive for this destiny in the future, and it works in this linear line, modernism, Western science, technology is our savior—that's the Godhead" (Garcia 1993–94:46). The belief that many of the changes brought about by the West were detrimental to other cultures in more than just economic terms has encouraged a nostalgia for the Other, viewed as a holdover of an authentic and pure culture. In other words, the same impulse that led Dead Can Dance to the Middle Ages—a desire for transcendence from the modern world and a critique of the modern— steered them into the terrain of the exotic Other.

Conclusion

In their output between 1988 and 1991, Dead Can Dance borrowed medieval compositional features and created an aesthetic that drew on the sounds and ideological parameters of historical recordings of medieval music. If Dead Can Dance's medievalism privileges the spiritual and exotic Other, it was, in part, inspired by recordings of medieval music that appeared to do the same. One of the many differences between Dead Can Dance's recordings and those of historically informed performances is that Dead Can Dance construct their Other in a way that collapses multiple past and present traditions into one monolithic, essentialist presentation. For this reason, it may be easier to see and hear the spiritual or exotic Other in music of Dead Can Dance than in historically aware performances whose practices are generally song or genre specific. Still another difference is the way the folk-inspired, "naive" imagery of 1960s ensembles is altered by Dead Can Dance in the late 1980s and early 1990s to offer spiritual transcendence. One of the problematic implications of Dead Can Dance's appropriation of medieval, Bulgarian, North African, and Arab musics concerns their mapping of spirituality onto the Other, suggesting that both can only exist outside of time and culture. Whether located in the Middle Ages or in non-Western cultures, this form of medievalism seeks to escape the modern, "corrupted" world rather than contend with the difficult processes of altering current cultural or social conditions.

While it might be said that the interest in medievalism was a short-lived trend in Dead Can Dance's music, the band's treatment of the Middle Ages and the increased number of medieval music ensembles inspired by folk or popular music practices confirms that the boundaries between popular culture and academic practices are permeable, and that "knowledge" from one can and does inform the other. However, Dead Can Dance's medievalism also illustrates that such knowledge of the medieval is never complete, nor is it immune to the problematic ideological parameters that inform its production.

Notes

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1. The following reviewer's comparison is typical: "Most of the pieces here have a timeless quality, which isn't surprising when you consider how faithfully Dead Can Dance manage to recreate the styles, textures and traditional instrument sounds of their chosen period (Elizabethan chamber music, Latin hymns, Gregorian chants)" (Lester 1991:35).

2. Haines explores the idea of a "naive Middle Ages" and twentieth-century revivals of trouvère music that were inspired by and modeled on folk song, on the practitioners' assumptions that "trouvère songs flow from living folk traditions which lead straight back to medieval song" (2004a:245; see also 2004b). Katherine Bergeron's work, though examining an earlier time period, also has much to offer here. *Decadent Enchantments* (1998) traces the restoration of Gregorian chant by the Bénédictine monks at Solemnes in the nineteenth century and discusses the ideological narrative that helped shape this restoration: an interest in authenticity, in purity, and in restoring what was seen as a natural tradition that had been lost to a corrupt modern world. Leech-Wilkinson links the practice of adopting Arabic and North African instruments to assumptions made by scholars in the early part of the twentieth century (2002).

3. For a brief exploration of medievalist rock, see Macan (1997).

4. These included the recordings: *Chansons der Troubadours und Trouveres* (1970), *Carmina Burana, 20 Lieder aus der Originalhandschrift* (1964), and *Carmina Burana (II): 13 Songs from the Benediktbeuern Manuscript* (1967).

5. Deep Forest, in their album *Deep Forest* (1993), sampled *Polyphonies Vocales Des Aborigines de Taiwan* and *Mongolia Musique Vocale et Instrumentale* (Maison des Cultures du Monde 1988, 1989); Enigma, in *MCMXC A.D.* (1990), borrowed a Kyrie Eleison and Procedamus in pace from Capella Antiqua's *Gregorian Chant: Paschale Mysterium* (1976); Delerium, in *Karma* (1995), sampled Gregorian chant, Elizabethan songs, and—as if in tribute—Dead Can Dance; and the Mediaeval Baebes, in *Salve Nos* (1998) and *Undrentide* (2000), presented secular and sacred songs from the twelfth to sixteenth centuries in an alternative rock context.

6. Of course, rock music in general, as Simon Frith has argued, depends on an ideology of authenticity that equates "good" music with "the authentic expression of something—a person, an idea, a feeling, a shared experience, a Zeitgeist," and "guarantees that rock performances resist or subvert commercial logic" (1987:136). The alternative scene reacted against

what was viewed as punk's and post-punk's co-optation by the record industry. Many have discussed the impossibility of the "alternative" distinction and the irony of the cycle from independent label to mainstream label in "indie" and rock music more generally (Frith 1981; Frith and Goodwin 1990; Cohen 1991).

7. Lisa Gerrard commented, "I don't know how you can call us Gothy. It's a very lazy description that was picked up on from one album and it's stuck" (Ali 1993:7). For an overview of Gothic culture, see Punter (2001). For Gothic Rock, see Hannaham (1997) and Gunn (1999).

8. An example that comes to mind and that epitomizes the values of Gothic rock is Bauhaus's "Stigmata Martyr," from *In the Flat Field* (1980), which features a blend of ghostlike sounds, repeated minor thirds, tritones, and echoes that make the sound appear to emanate from a large vacant space, as if to sound like a Gothic cathedral in ruins. Through this echo-y space, Bauhaus singer Peter Murphy punctuates his cries of "Stigmata" with the phrase, "In nomine patri et filii et spiriti sanctum," which he intones in a bitter-edged acerbic low voice.

9. Gerrard even goes so far as to describe their music as medicine: "And that's what we make—medicine. We make medicine for ourselves, and hopefully make medicine for other people" (Thrills 1984).

10. Higini Anglés cites twenty-three versions with Latin text, ten versions in vernacular, and six polyphonic versions (1988). The version Ars Musicae perform is listed by Anglés as "Palma de Mallorca, Cantorale, Convent de la Concepció, manuscript del segle XIV, segons sembla provinent del Convent de Santa Margarida" (1988:296).

11. Examples Dead Can Dance may have heard include "Veris ad imperia" performed on the Studio der Frühen Musik's *Chansons der Troubadours und Trouvères* (1970), and "O Virgo Splendens" and "Landemus Virginem" on the Studio's *Secular Music c. 1300* (1966) as well as on Hesperion XX's recording *Llibre Vermell de Montserrat* (1978).

12. The style can be compared to *Kyrie Cunctipotens Genitor* from the twelfth century treatise *Ad Organum Faciendum* (Eggebrecht and Zaminer 1970). Besides sharing parallel fifths, both examples feature contrary and parallel motion, and both begin and end phrases either on unison or fifths.

13. Interestingly enough, the 1986 recording was released on the same label (4AD) as Dead Can Dance. Ivo Watts-Russell, founder of the label, must have seen the attraction this music would have for his listenership.

14. The saltarello can be found in MS London, Brit.Mus. Add. 29987, f.62v. A modern edition is printed in McGee 1989:110.

15. See Aydoun (1992) for a discussion of Moroccan music.

16. For a discussion of this practice, see Donna Buchanan, "Bulgaria, §II, 2: Pre-socialist musical culture, 1800–1944," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online*, edited by L. Macy, http://80-www.grovemusic.com.libproxy.wlu.ca (accessed May 4, 2003).

17. Compare for instance, Dead Can Dance's "Song of Sophia" (*The Serpent's Egg*, 1988) with the Sinfonye performance of "Aj deus se sab'ora meu amigo" (1988).

18. It is unlikely that two sets of three side by side would occur in authentic practice. I would like to thank Jane Sugarman for pointing this out.

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