

## McGowan, Hayden. 'Recontextualisation in the *Ars Subtilior*: A guide to the meaningful classification of referential material in a given repertory'

---

A handful of late fourteenth-century composers known to contemporary scholars as the *ars subtilior* generated a corpus of secular music rife with compositional experimentation and notational innovation. In light of these characteristics, this music has generally been remembered and studied for its daring complexity. In recent years, some extant scholarship concerned with the presence of intertextuality in the *ars subtilior* (such as allusion and citation) has demonstrated that the corpus exhibits unusually complex intertextual constructs. Similarly, my research has revealed additional objects of interest in the corpus that are related to intertextuality, but have not been identified as referential objects in extant scholarship.

I argue that the conventional definition and quotidian usage of the term 'intertextuality' (as developed primarily in literary theory) is not equipped to address and qualify constructs of reference that are non-horizontal and non-external. A non-horizontal reference is not bound to the same mode of communication as the referent and can thus refer to entities across discourses, while a non-external reference is that which refers to an entity that is contained within the same piece of work as the referent. Examples of objects that demonstrate this sort of referential complexity in the corpus of the *ars subtilior* include heraldic allusion, bird song, counterfeiting, and representational graphic notation.

Though the music of the *ars subtilior* constituted the vast majority of my project's focus, my research peripherally demonstrates that a nuanced investigation into the referential landscape of any given repertory (in any medium) would benefit greatly from a scholarly consideration of a structuralist approach to referential classification, in particular a system borrowed from linguistics called '**recontextualisation**'. As recounted and delineated by Per Linell in 'Discourse across boundaries: on recontextualizations and the blending of voices in professional discourse',<sup>1</sup> recontextualisation accounts for non-horizontal and non-external referential activity while simultaneously emphasizing that the nature of reference itself is a transformative act. In utilizing this structuralist approach to referential taxonomy, the scholar can meaningfully address and classify unusual objects of reference and avoid defaulting to a laissez-faire usage of the term 'intertextuality'.

My research has been consolidated into the form of a journal article for which I will be seeking publication.

---

<sup>1</sup> Per Linell, "Discourse across boundaries: on recontextualizations and the blending of voices in professional discourse", *Text - Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse* 18, no. 2 (1998): 143-158.