Game of T(hr)ones: Music in Complex TV

Abstract
The past thirty years of American TV has seen the rise of what television scholar Jason Mittell terms 'Complex TV'. Exemplified by *The Sopranos* (HBO) and *The X-Files* (Fox), these are TV series that prioritise narrative complexity, balancing between serial and episodic storytelling modes. These shows do not prioritise self-contained, stand-alone episodes that can be easily rerun in any order. Instead, they assume a regular and dedicated viewership that allows them to adopt continuing storylines over the course of a season, sometimes several seasons.

This article explores the role that music plays in this serialized form, using Ramin Djawadi's score for *Game of Thrones* as its focus. I argue that complex TV uniquely combines four characteristics that impact on how music functions: first, the existence of multiple narratives, sometimes with hundreds of named characters; second, catering to multiple regular viewerships with different expected levels of engagement; third, extended running hours allowing for nuanced and sustained character development; and fourth, encouraging narrative innovation in order to keep viewers engaged. I suggest eight ways in which Djawadi's music is shaped by the demands of the medium, arguing that Djawadi's music is central to the show's unprecedented success, and crucial for helping viewers to orientate themselves within the *Game of Thrones* world.

Game of T(hr)ones: Music in Complex TV

The global success of shows like *Game of Thrones* (henceforth *GoT*) indicates a long-term shift in US television practice. Jason Mittell writes that 'In the past 15 years, television's storytelling possibilities and practices have undergone drastic shifts specific to the medium. … Expectations for how viewers watch television, how producers create stories, and how series are distributed have all shifted'.[1] The proliferation of TV providers in the US, the success of pay cable networks such as HBO, and the rise of series box-set releases means that the criteria for a programme's economic success have shifted. Producers can target shows at more dedicated, niche markets than previously. These may not necessarily be 'regular' TV audiences, but they are dedicated viewers willing to invest time into long-running television series.

Mittell terms the resulting shows *complex TV*, defined as a television series with 'a sustained narrative world, populated by a consistent set of characters who experience a chain of events over time', in a narrational mode that is *complex*, i.e. 'episodic forms under the influence of serial narration.'[2] It is not a genre, but 'a storytelling mode and set of associated production and reception practices that span a wide range of programs across an array of genres.'[3] Complex TV is particularly associated with American shows. Examples include *The Sopranos* (HBO), *The Wire*, (HBO), *Mad Men* (AMC), and *GoT* (HBO), an adaptation of George R. R. Martin's fantasy novels entitled *A Song of Ice and Fire*. As illustrated by this list, HBO has traditionally dominated this mode, and complex TV programmes are central to the network's ambitions to be a 'premier site' for 'high quality original programming'.[4]

These series are emerging as a home for musical innovation, with original scores commissioned for multiple shows. Ramin Djawadi's score for *GoT* is this article's focus, but similarly innovative scores include those for *Westworld* (also Djawadi, HBO), *Lost* (Michael Giacchino, ABC) and *Stranger Things* (Kyle Dixon and Michael Stein, Netflix). Despite their popularity amongst fans and critics, these scores have yet to receive substantial musicological attention.[5] In this article I argue that although music for complex TV functions similarly to film music in many ways, its serialized narrative form allows for the adoption of medium-specific musical strategies. Divided into two main categories, 'Plot complexity' and 'Multiple-level viewer engagement', I highlight four characteristics unique to complex TV that impact on how music functions:

- Plot complexity
    1. it involves multiple narratives, sometimes with hundreds of named characters;
    2. its prolific running hours allow for more nuanced and sustained character development than in film, and;
- Multiple-level viewer engagement
    3. it caters to viewers with different expected levels of engagement;
    4. it encourages narrative innovation to keep viewer's interest over several years.

Since the 1980s, some programmes in this narrative mode have been labelled *quality TV*. However, I choose to adopt Mittell's complex TV over the more widely recognized quality TV for two related reasons. The first is the inconsistency with which the label quality TV is applied, making it a vague analytical term. As Robert Thompson states, 'no one can say exactly what "quality television" means',[6] as evidenced by various scholarly attempts to define what does or does not constitute televisual 'quality'.[7] Thompson concludes that quality TV is 'best defined by what it is not. It is not "regular" TV.'[8] This comment illustrates my second reason for avoiding the term, which is that the category of quality TV implies aesthetic judgement — it is not 'inferior', 'substandard', or just plain 'bad' TV. This partly explains the lack of agreement on the terms' boundaries, and indicates an implicit validation of a scholar's choice of analytical object. If something is 'quality' then it is

'worthy' of study in a way that 'worthless' television is not, because only quality TV is 'aspirational, driven at least in part by some high cultural impulse to make television "better".'[9]

Mittell's 'complex' TV label perhaps suffers linguistically from a similar problem as 'quality' ('complex' TV is not 'simple' TV, and is therefore 'better'), but it does at least offer analytical consistency in a way that 'quality TV' does not. Trying to determine the possibilities for music's functions in quality TV becomes an impossible quest. Mittell's category of complex TV is more concrete; *GoT* clearly falls into this category, regardless of whether it is quality TV. Although critical and scholarly consensus now largely falls in favour of describing *GoT* as quality TV, this is hardly unanimous.[10] Objections repeatedly focus on the series' unrelenting inclusion of sex and violence (although widely accepted in 'realist' programmes like *The Sopranos*) in a fantasy setting; Ginia Bellafante for *The New York Times*, for example, lambasted *GoT* as 'boy fiction patronisingly turned out to reach the population's other half. … When the network ventures away from its instincts for real-world sociology … things start to feel cheap'.[11] Determining whether *GoT* constitutes quality TV is not my goal here. *GoT* is HBO's most popular series to date, averaging 18.4mn viewers per episode in season four and 25.7mn in season six, before taking into account downloads, streams, and viewers accrued by DVD releases.[12] Within the first week of release, DVD sales covered the whole $60mn budget for season one.[13] Love it or hate it, *GoT* is consumed by a vast number of people, and its popularity is making it a benchmark for narrative serial television. Djawadi's score has largely been lauded as central to the series' success. These factors, for me, justify attention to its musical strategies, and allow it to serve as a basis for some provisional conclusions about how music can function in series that adopt a similar narrative mode.

I first discuss how complex TV's narrative mode impacts on musical construction, before turning specifically to *GoT* and identifying eight ways in which Djawadi's score functions within the series so far. The conclusions drawn here can only be provisional steps towards analysis of the musical possibilities within this narrative mode, and the categories offered for how music functions in *GoT* are not intended to be exhaustive. Instead I hope to begin a discussion about how to analyse music in complex TV, and to demonstrate the centrality of Djawadi's score when considering why and how *GoT* has attained such widespread success. Episode numbers are referenced in the format season.episode.

Music for Complex TV

Mittell describes two aspects of storytelling and reception practice associated with complex TV that I wish to focus on here: first, plot complexity, and second, multiple-level viewer engagement.

To sustain interest over long time periods (at the time of writing, *GoT* constitutes 70 hours of television), complex TV programmes interweave multiple narrative arcs and have more named characters than is expected either from film or non-complex narratives. As Mittell writes, 'Few storytelling forms can match serial television for narrative breadth and vastness', and series involve 'cumulative plot lines and character backstories accruing far beyond what any dedicated fan could reasonably remember.'[14] This is at least part of *GoT*'s appeal.[15] Even within a mode that is dominated by plot complexity, *GoT* is exceptional; it has approximately one hundred and fifty named characters (the books contain over two thousand), requiring viewers to engage a highly concentrated viewing mode to keep track of storylines.

This is one of the main differences between complex TV and serial film franchises (such as Marvel's *Avengers*); the former has an emphasis on the *serial* aspects of the narrative, while the latter focuses on the *episodic*. *GoT* assumes a regular viewership, and watching any episode in isolation would make little sense. Except when characters are first introduced, *GoT* makes no attempt to remind viewers of who characters are or what their relationship is to others. Adopting

this strategy, however, potentially limits the viewership — it demands a huge time and energy commitment in a way that a self-contained two-hour film does not. This is, therefore, a medium-specific strategy. TV programmes can hope for a regular viewership partly because of their ease of access — it is much easier to watch TV than to go to the cinema, and as the success of long-running soap operas demonstrates, TV can become part of the fabric of everyday life in a way that film does not. TV producers can also take this risk because of budget; although *GoT*'s $90mn budget for season eight (six feature-length episodes) is, by TV standards, astronomical, it comes nowhere near the *Avengers: Infinity War* reported budget of $500mn.[16] Big-budget Hollywood film serials cannot risk alienating viewers who have not seen previous instalments of the series; the *Avengers* series attempts to make each film comprehensible as a stand-alone entity, often sacrificing character development as a result.

The serial emphasis makes *GoT*'s music crucial for helping viewers to orientate themselves within its world, particularly if they have not read the books. *GoT* is aired at weekly intervals, with a year or more between each series, meaning that audiences have to recall a substantial amount of detail to appreciate the plot subtleties of each episode. By indicating place and marking characters thematically, music can act as a memory aid for viewers trying to keep track of who is who and where their loyalties lie. Thematic recurrence is an established film music strategy for assisting a viewer's memory, acting, in Irena Paulus's words, as a 'signpost for spectators', which is especially useful in serialized forms.[17] Djawadi makes extensive use of both themes (thematic material that remains the same and indicates a particular character or place) and leitmotives (thematic material that is varied and developed, indicating an idea or character's development). This is one of music's primary functions within the series, comparable to strategies employed by John Williams for *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter*, and Howard Shore in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Music can also differentiate between kernel (narratively essential) and satellite (narratively inessential) characters, according to who is or is not afforded music. In *GoT*, thematic music is *only* assigned to kernel characters, signalling that we should invest in seeing the world from their perspective. Mittell writes that television norms dictate that 'we all assume that main characters are bound to stay on their programs and highly unlikely to die or depart the story',[18] but *GoT* is notorious for subverting this norm and killing off its kernel characters. Often, a character will be granted music, only for them to be unceremoniously dispensed with a few episodes later. *GoT*'s subversion of this norm was initially highly controversial and some viewers unfamiliar with the books threatened to cancel their HBO subscription when one of the show's main characters, Eddard Stark (Sean Bean), was executed in season one.[19] But the show's lack of concern for its protagonists' safety has since become one of its main appeals, to the extent that watching *GoT* has in itself become a performative practice. Fan engagement has resulted in an entire subcategory of YouTube videos entitled 'Reactions to watching *Game of Thrones*', in which individuals or groups are filmed reacting to *GoT* episodes. Predictably, the most grisly episodes with multiple character deaths attract the highest numbers of views. 'Reactions at Burlington Bar', one of the most popular *GoT* reactions channels, racked up 4.8mn views for the season six finale (6.10, discussed below), in which eleven named characters are killed.[20] A separate channel's 'Reactions to the Red Wedding' video is currently at 13.6mn views, documenting viewers' reactions to episode 3.09 in which three main characters are murdered.[21]

The popularity of videos such as these points to the main reception practice that Mittell identifies as being associated with complex TV, which is active fan engagement. He writes that 'this brand of television storytelling encourages audiences to become more actively engaged … ideas and potential answers to narrative questions are frequently articulated within fan communities, turning internal hypothesizing into the cultural practice of *theorizing*.'[22] This active engagement is fostered by the gaps between episodes and series, which 'allow viewers to continue their

engagement … [by] participating in fan communities, reading criticism, consuming paratexts, and theorizing about future installments.'[23] *GoT*, therefore, is catering for three audiences: the first are casual audiences who have not read the books, and watch the show without participating in fan communities; the second are semi-engaged audiences who have read the books, and watch the show without participating in fan communities; and the third are highly engaged audiences, who have likely read the books, participate in fan communities, and use the lacunae between episodes to analyze the episodes and theorize about multi-episode/series narrative arcs.

The music needs to function accordingly, working on three levels. The first is to act as signpost and memory aid for the casual viewer who comes to the show with no prior knowledge of the universe and the character relationships therein. The second is to enrich the world substantially enough to appeal to the semi-engaged viewer who is already aware of the major plot points, and therefore does not need music as an additional memory aid. The third is to challenge the highly engaged audience. Djawadi's score provides ample material for each level of engagement, ranging from the obvious (themes for each of the main character houses), to the extremely inconspicuous which might take several rounds of rewatching to notice (e.g. the implications of Petyr Baelish's theme, discussed below). These become increasingly important when the series is released on DVD, allowing highly engaged fans to participate in a 'more immersive and attentive viewing experience' than in serialized form, seeking out clues for plot analysis.[24]

Music in *Game of Thrones*

When he was approached by the show's producers, Djawadi reports that he was asked not to use flutes, to avoid comparison to Howard Shore's soundworld for *Lord of the Rings*.[25] 'The biggest challenge was just finding the right tone for the show,' he says, 'that when you hear the score that you know this is *Game of Thrones*.'[26] The cello is the most used instrument on the soundtrack, defining the *GoT* soundworld. From the basis of this core timbral identity, changing instrumentation is used to identify character development and indicate different places. In terms of the quantity of music included, the conventions have slowly changed over the course of the series. All the episodes are primarily dialogue-driven, but season one incorporates very little music at all. The main musical functions are to introduce central themes, and to underscore moments of tension. The amount of music has increased with every season, to the point where the final two episodes of season six included scenes with foregrounded music for up to ten minutes at a time. The following section describes eight main functions that music serves in *GoT*, fulfilling the demands for both plot complexity and multiple-level viewer engagement. These functions are; 1) intradiegetic framing, 2) character identification, 3) character growth, 4) bestowing power on characters, 5) signifying place, 6) sound bridges, 7) underscoring for tense/emotional scenes, and 8) subverting intrinsic norms.

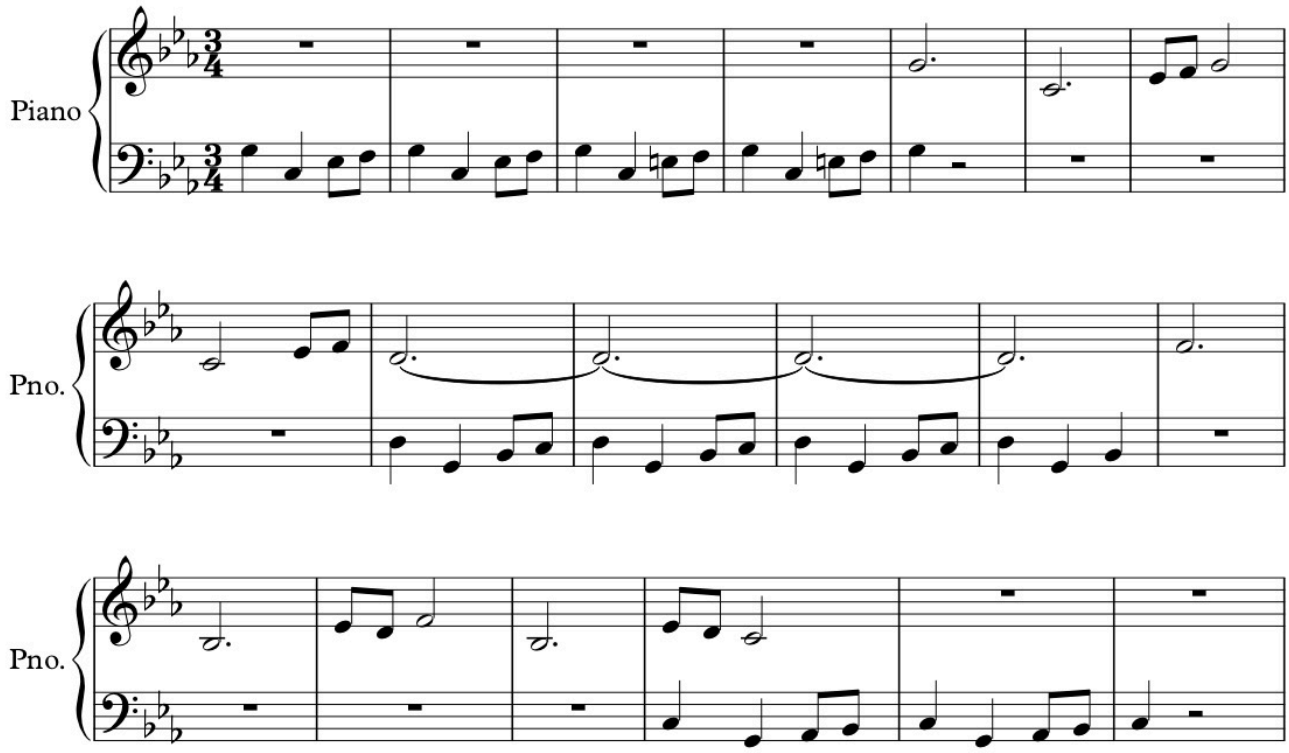
Before embarking on this analysis, a plot précis and character outlay will be beneficial for readers unfamiliar with the series. In broad terms, *GoT* is a political drama in a fantasy setting. Four main houses (Lannister, Stark, Baratheon, and Targaryen) fight to sit on the Iron Throne, the main seat of power located at King's Landing in Westeros. They are supported by the more minor houses (Bolton, Frey, Greyjoy, Mormont, and Tyrell). So far so political, but these play out against the backdrop of a battle between the living and the dead, whose two kingdoms are divided by a three hundred mile magic wall of ice descriptively named 'The Wall', guarded by a group of soldiers ('The Night's Watch') at Castle Black. The narrative construction in *GoT* is an example of *centrifugal complexity*, in which 'there is no single narrative center, as the action traces what happens between characters and institutions as they spread outward.'[27] As characters travel across the universe their personal musical themes develop, and they acquire new themes in the process. The lack of narrative center allows both for the deaths of major characters, and for narrative tension across

episodes as there are always several storylines running parallel to each other, only some of which will be resolved in each season or episode.

1) Intradiegetic framing

In his analysis of television music's functions, Ronald Rodman elaborates on the dual function of theme music. It is intradiegetic 'as it signifies aspects of the story world of the TV program', but also has extradiegetic properties as it works as 'a transition from flow to story.'[28] The theme, therefore, has to grab the viewer's attention and pull them into the show's diegesis. Djawadi achieves this by beginning with a *forte* falling fifth, announcing the C minor theme (Example 1, creating a I-V-I between the HBO logo, which ends on a held C, and the start of the theme, solidifying the sense of seamless transition). The theme establishes the primary musical identity of the show, with an orchestra, drums, and solo cello melody. It accompanies a camera panning over a mechanical map of the *GoT* universe, the camera's motion seemingly driven by the theme's driving dotted rhythms. This map shows the main places in which the episode will play out, orientating viewers and giving some idea of the universe's geography. The title theme, therefore, is associated with the global, and is only quoted in the show at moments of such significance that they have ramifications across multiple plot arcs.

Example 1: Game of Thrones Title Theme (piano reduction)



The credit music changes with every episode but serves a similar transitional effect, this time from story to flow. In the majority of cases, the music continues from the final scene, which will set up a cliffhanger to be resolved in the next episode. The 'Rains of Castamere', theme of house Lannister, plays throughout the credits of 2.09 after Tyrion Lannister defeats Stannis Baratheon in the Battle of Blackwater Bay, for example. Occasionally, however, the credits are used as a means of musical commentary in episodes with a particularly shocking final scene. 'The Rains of Castamere' (3.09) concludes with the Red Wedding, where Catelyn Stark, Robb Stark, and his wife Talisa are all murdered at a wedding feast. The final credits roll in complete silence, indicating the family's loss of power and emphasising the gravity of the massacre.

Earlier in the season (3.03) warrior and Lannister family heir, Jaime, has his fighting hand cut off by a Bolton soldier. From Jaime's scream, the credits then jump to rock band The Hold Steady's version of 'The Bear and the Maiden Fair', a drinking song that is sung earlier in the episode by the Boltons as they transport Jaime in captivity. The juxtaposition of the visceral scene with the upbeat rock rendition is so extreme that when the episode aired, many viewers thought there had been a error and they were watching a faulty recording.[29] But this was a deliberate choice, making the musical framing consistent with an episode full of uncomfortable and shocking scenes (including two attempted rapes). D. B. Weiss notes that 'It's such a shocking ending … There's no version of a traditional score that would keep you as off balance as we wanted that scene to leave you feeling.'[30] Here, the act-out's transitional status is fully exploited; music that is consistent with the show's internal norms would make the credits more intra- than extradiegetic, but deliberately subverting these norms encourages viewers to step outside the *GoT* universe, and to consider how this episode is placed within their own world. This is an ending that is supposed to have lasting impact, leaving the moral questions it raises and the feelings it provokes with the viewer beyond the hour of broadcast time.

2) Character identification

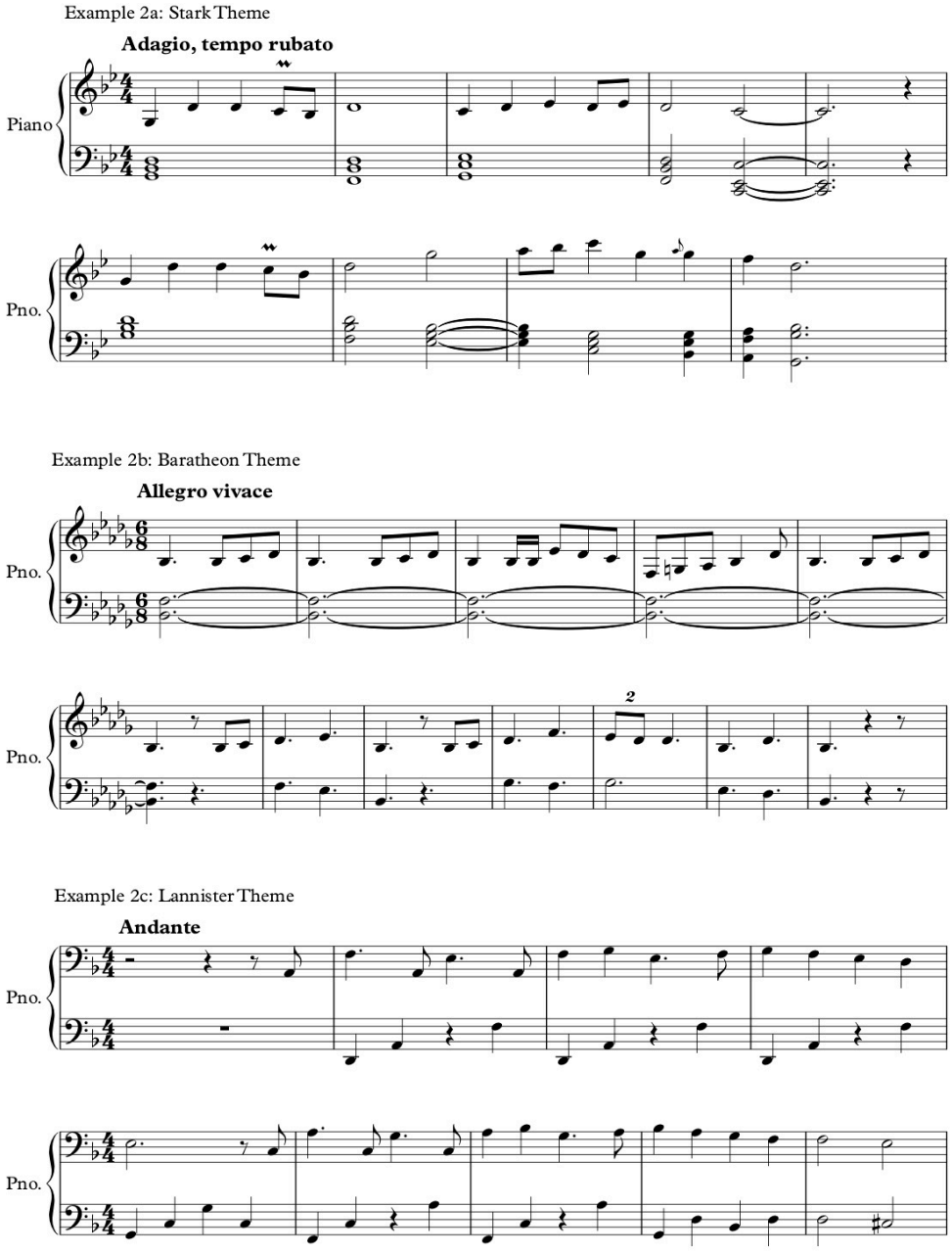
At its broadest level, the *GoT* music mainly constitutes themes associated with the main houses fighting for the Iron Throne — Stark, Baratheon, and Lannister (Example 2. I return later to house Targaryen, because they are mainly represented by Daenerys and therefore present a musical special case.) This is the most important musical aspect for the casual viewer with no prior knowledge of the universe, as it helps the casual viewer to orientate themselves within the multiple plot arcs. The 'character' of each house is established through their music; the Starks, for example, are a Northern house, laconic but loyal, and beset by tragedy. In the first season, Eddard Stark is beheaded by the King (1.09), and the first episode concludes with Brandon, the second youngest son, become paralysed from the waist down after being pushed from a tower window by Jaime. Accordingly, the Stark theme involves a solo cello, *tempo rubato* in a melancholic G minor that does not immediately resolve. The first phrase of the theme ends in an imperfect cadence, and is repeatedly used in isolation to give an effect of yearning, indicating the Stark's collective desire to continue their self-contained, happy existence at Winterfell, a desire that is continually flouted by their being subject to the King's whims.

This is contrasted with the tonally overdetermined Baratheon theme, first introduced when the King's entourage arrive at Winterfell. King Robert is a bombastic figure, and this characterisation is created through his theme. In Dorian mode in Bb, the Baratheon theme is distinguished by driving rhythms and, initially, an instrumentation that invokes a 'medieval' affect. Djawadi uses cello, tambourine, and a bodhrán, a musical shorthand for the Middle Ages and attendant chivalric pomposity that is ubiquitous in films and computer games (see for example Roland Rizzo's 'France (The Medieval Era)' on the soundtrack for *Civilisation VI*). The instrumentation is changed, however, when the theme is passed on to Robert's decidedly more threatening son, Joffrey, one of the few unambiguously evil characters in the show. Joffrey's iteration of the Baratheon theme ('You Win Or You Die') is modulated to D minor, including chords that contribute dissonance to the theme. Joffrey's musical representation indicates that unlike his father, he is somebody to truly be feared.

Particularly in the first season, these clear themes are invaluable for helping audiences navigate the notoriously complex plot of *GoT*. They immediately establish characters' personalities, indicate who we are supposed to foster allegiance with, and designate on-screen characters' loyalties. This becomes especially useful in battle scenes. In season two, which involves several armies marching towards the capital, the house themes are used to identify the army in question before it becomes

visually apparent whose army is whose (e.g. 2.07, where sonic confirmation precedes visual for both the Stark and Lannister armies).

Example 2: Themes of houses Stark, Baratheon, and Lannister



3) Character growth

Roberta Pearson argues that 'the repetitive nature of the television series dictates a relative state of stability for its characters', and therefore 'In television, it's more accurate to talk about character accumulation and depth than it is to talk about character development.'[31] *GoT*, I argue, presents a counter to this position. *GoT*'s substantial character development is repeatedly highlighted by the show's actors when discussing their characters. Nikolaj Coster-Waldau says of Jaime Lannister that for 'A character like this in a movie — you'd have to put across the nastiness of him in the first ten minutes. But developing the character over the course of a series, to have more time, it's so fun and rewarding.' Similarly, Iain Glen observes of Jorah Mormont that 'His journey is a slow burn

through the course of many seasons. Such roles offer the opportunity to develop character more roundly'.[32]

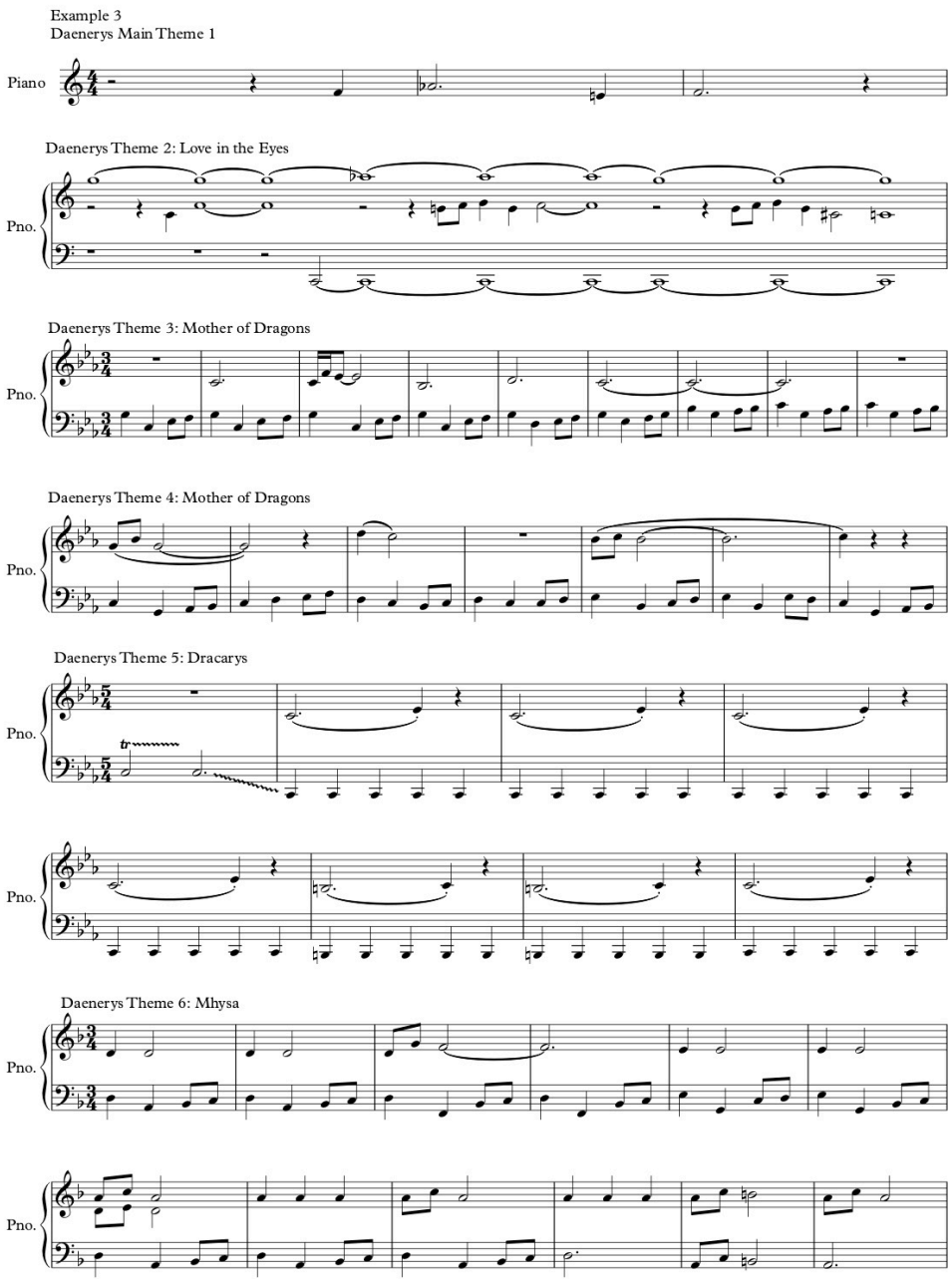
Partly, this is because it is adapted from a novel and therefore follows the book's character development in a way that eschews such staticism. But it is also because many of the central characters are children in season one. As the screenwriters point out, *GoT* is unique for the fact that 'the weight of so much adult material rests on the shoulders of people under the age of fifteen.'[33] Therefore what Mittell labels as the model of *character growth* — 'the process of maturation in which a character becomes more realized and fleshed out over time … their physical and emotional maturation fulfils a coming-of-age narrative' — is built into the series narrative.[34] Adult characters like Robb Stark remain relatively static, but his younger siblings Arya, Sansa, and Brandon undergo significant change over the seasons (Rickon Stark is relatively tangential to the central story, remaining off-screen for most episodes before being killed in season six). They are all identified by the Stark theme in season one, but slowly acquire their own leitmotives as they grow in individuality — 'Needle', for example, is Arya's leitmotif, played on the hammered dulcimer. This then develops into 'Valar Morghulis', first introduced to accompany Jaqen H'gar (an assassin). Musically, Arya is therefore associated with the Faceless Men (the society of assassins to which H'gar belongs) before she leaves for Braavos to join their order, which becomes her major plot arc throughout seasons four to seven.

The character who undergoes the greatest growth, however, is Daenerys Targaryen. Anne Gjelsvik and Rikke Schubart write that 'Female characters are … key to the originality and, thus, to the appeal and popularity of the GoT universe', and Daenerys is paradigmatic in this regard.[35] At the start of season one Viserys, Daenerys's brother, sells her to the Dothraki warlord Khal Drogo in exchange for an army that Viserys believes will help him conquer the Iron Throne. She is a rape victim and pawn in Viserys's quest for power. But by the end of season six, Daenerys is a queen with unique magical powers, commanding an army, fleet, and three dragons, and she has outlived both Viserys and Drogo. Emilia Clarke, who plays Daenerys, commented that reading her part was 'the first time … that I'd found a character that's so multidimensional'.[36] Far from Pearson's definition of static TV characters, Daenerys is a dynamic personality who defies stereotypes about the female fantasy protagonist. As D. B. Weiss puts it, 'There are plenty of opportunities for young women to be scared, abused, and terrorized in film and television, but there are virtually no roles that let them step into the fire … and come out the other side reborn as a leader and a warrior with an otherworldly poise and strength.'[37]

Daenerys receives the most complex musical treatment of all the characters, accumulating motifs as the seasons progress (Example 3) that are then combined with both the title music and other houses' themes as Daenerys builds political allegiances. Musically, the first episode establishes Daenerys's status as goods to be traded between one man and another, with no indication of how powerful her character will become. For her very first appearance in Pentos (1.01), she is stripped naked and molested by Viserys, underscored by Viserys's theme ('A Golden Crown'). When she is then presented to Khal Drogo, an extract from the Dothraki theme is played ('To Vaes Dothrak'), which is reprised during their wedding night scene. This scene has been the subject of heated debate, particularly as it differs from the books. In Martin's books, there is at least some indication that Daenerys consents to sex with Drogo in a way that is completely absent in the TV series, making even more problematic the narrative trajectory of Daenerys falling in love with her husband/rapist throughout season one. The implications of Daenerys's gender politics are beyond the scope of this article and have been discussed in detail elsewhere,[38] but musically the image of Daenerys cultivated throughout season one concurs with Schubart's labelling of Daenerys as 'postfeminist' character, i.e. an 'individual [who] is not determined … but can choose her

actions.'[39] In both the novel and the TV series Daenerys takes command of her situation, partly adapting to the new Dothraki culture that she finds herself in while retaining individual agency.

Example 3: Daenerys's Themes



Daenerys learning to work her situation to her advantage is central to this narrative. In season one, this means learning to love Drogo and be loved by him in return. This transformation begins in episode two, where Daenerys willingly has sex with Drogo. She first learns how to please Drogo from her handmaiden, then positions herself on top to have sex looking into Drogo's eyes while fully clothed, as opposed to sex from behind while naked as in episode one. Schubart writes that this scene symbolizes Daenerys's growth from passive victim to individual agent by both adopting and adapting Dothraki practices.[40] This argument is supported by the musical underscore. While Daenerys's handmaiden is teaching her, the motif that will become Daenerys and Drogo's love motif ('Love in the Eyes') begins. This motif is a variation of the music used for both Daenerys's presentation to Drogo and subsequent rape — the instrumentation, and rhythmic and main

melodic contours remain approximately the same, but E-flat becomes E-natural in the love theme. In this form, the motif provides the pitches for Daenerys's primary motif (F, A-flat, E-natural, F). This is first heard, faintly, in episode one when the dragon eggs are presented to Daenerys as a wedding gift. But in this instance the motif is centered on A (A, C-natural, G-sharp, A), and it is not until episode two, immediately preceding the Drogo sex scene, that this motif is heard on F, as the camera pans over the dragon eggs. Musically, the intimation is that by equipping herself to gain control of her marital situation Daenerys is learning resourcefulness, leadership, agency, and self-belief — qualities which will enable her to become the 'Mother of Dragons' and future Queen. Thanks to this transformation the dragons inside the eggs now answer to Daenerys, in her key, bestowing on her the power to play for the Throne.

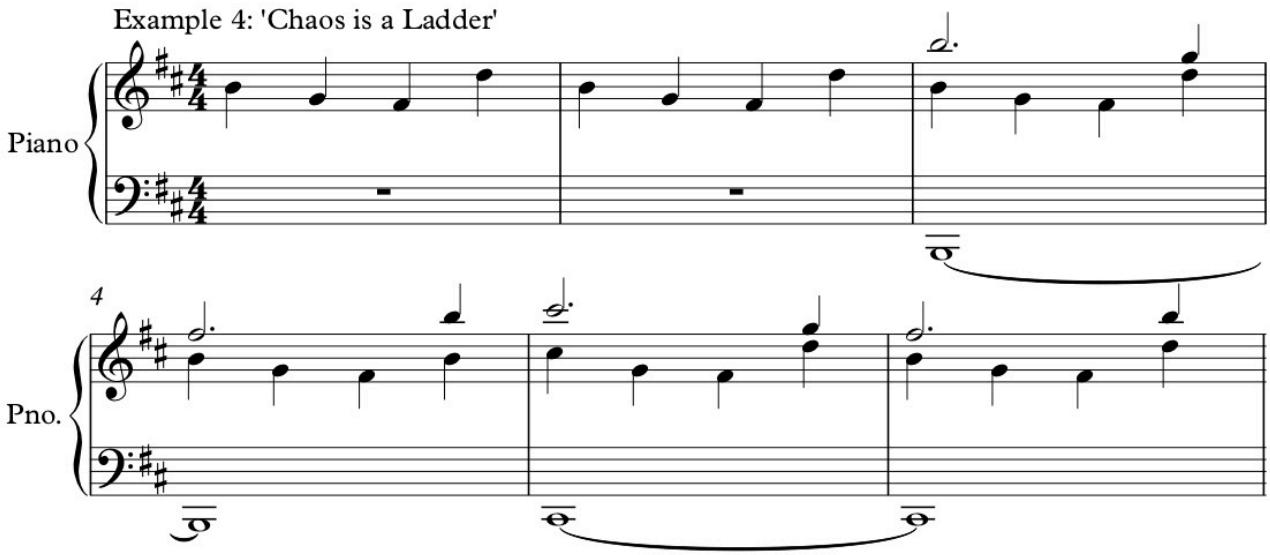
From hereonin, Daenerys's music grows alongside her character narrative. She gains motifs when her dragons learn to weaponize breathing fire ('Dracarys'), and when she becomes Queen of Meereen ('Mhysa'). 'Myhsa', a development of the motifs introduced in season two ('Mother of Dragons'), is particularly significant, because it brings together all of Daenerys's previous motifs and incorporates a variant of the title theme. As discussed above, the title theme encompasses the entirety of *GoT*'s world, setting the parameters in which the story plays out. It is only quoted intradiagetically at moments which shift the power dynamic so radically that all the narrative arcs are impacted (the other most noticeable example is in 'The Light of the Seven', discussed below). Here, however, the title theme's falling fifth is altered to a falling fourth, to fit in counterpoint with Daenerys's 'Love' motif. In 'Mhysa', the world musically alters to suit Daenerys, rather than the other way around. As with her development of the Dothraki theme, she adopts and adapts in a way that puts her in positions of increasing power. The instrumentation also indicates Daenerys's character growth — these themes are sung by a choir, symbolising Daenerys's reputation as a 'Queen of the people', seeming to speak for the on-screen inhabitants of Meereen who carry her aloft in adoration as this theme is sounded (3.10). In 'The Winds of Winter', played in season six after Daenerys has forged an alliance with Yara and Theon Greyjoy, all of Daenerys's established motifs are sung in combination with the Greyjoy theme. This is Daenerys's most significant moment in seasons one through seven, when she appears to be closest to her goal of claiming the Iron Throne. Her growth in stature is mirrored by her accumulation of musical motifs, developed and adapted to her own desires and needs.

4) Bestowing power on characters

GoT is a story about power. Its narratives explore the lengths that individuals will go to to obtain — and keep — power, the many reasons why people seek power, and the impact that this has both on people close to them, and on those who they do not know and who have no power at all.

Music is a strong indicator of who holds power at any given moment. This manifests in four ways. The first, as discussed above regarding Daenerys, is by characters accruing themes as they gain power, forming part of their character growth. The second involves more static, adult characters being given themes to add depth to their personality, rather than as a result of character growth. An example of this technique is Petyr Baelish, who becomes associated with a theme ('Chaos is a Ladder', Example 4) in 3.06. Baelish is a spy and a schemer, a self-made man whose mantra is 'knowledge is power'. He makes his name by working behind the scenes, keeping his cards close to his chest, and making it impossible to tell where his loyalties lie. Throughout the first two seasons, therefore, he has very little associated music, the lack of musical affiliation giving no clues as to what his underlying motives might be. The first indication that he will have a theme is in 1.07, when he encourages Eddard to marry Sansa to Joffrey and pretends to be unaware of Joffrey's illegitimacy. Here we hear a few notes from what will become 'Chaos is a Ladder', but it is hardly enough to constitute a theme and, as discussed below, it is unclear that it should be associated with Baelish specifically.

Example 4: 'Chaos is a Ladder', Petyr Baelish's Theme



It only becomes apparent in 3.06 precisely how powerful and dangerous Baelish is. Preceding the scene in which Baelish is fully associated with this theme, Varys, the court's 'Master of Whisperers', has secretly plotted to marry Sansa Stark to Loras Tyrell to rescue her from Joffrey and Cersei's cruelty. Varys is assisted by Ros, a prostitute in Baelish's employ. Varys's plan is thwarted, however, by Tywin Lannister demanding that Sansa marry his son, Tyrion, and Cersei marry Loras. It is only in the scene where Baelish receives his own music that he reveals that he was behind Tywin's decision, and has secretly been manoeuvring events to his own advantage. Baelish's theme underscores a rare moment of voiceover; the scene begins with Baelish confronting Varys in the throne room, and he keeps speaking as the camera cuts to Ros, who has been murdered by Joffrey, and then to Sansa, sobbing. Baelish's voice and music put him in the position of omniscient narrator, controlling multiple plot lines simultaneously and setting in motion a series of events that leads to further destruction and death, rather than the peaceful route that Varys seeks.

Clearly assigning this theme to Baelish also has retrospective implications. Mittell makes the point that releasing TV series on DVD is crucial for developing an engaged fan base. The ability to rewatch episodes multiple times allows for the formation of fan theories, and for fans to spot 'clues' about cross-season plot arcs that are unlikely to be spotted on first watching. Baelish's theme is a good example of this. In 1.01, Catelyn receives a raven from King's Landing informing her of the death of the King's Hand, Jon Arryn. This event is the spark that begins the whole *GoT* narrative, prompting Robert to ask Eddard to the capital. When Catelyn receives the raven and relays the information to Eddard, a theme is heard which, in episode one, appears to be an unassociated theme. In season three, the narrative enigma of who murdered Jon Arryn is solved: Lysa Arryn poisoned him under Baelish's instructions. It is only in retrospect, having watched season three, that the music that accompanies the raven in episode one can be recognized as part of Baelish's theme. The raven is a musical 'clue' for the plot reveal in season three, but it is a clue that is impossible to spot on first viewing, and unlikely to be spotted without several repeated viewings. Djawadi's score therefore contributes to the 'cognitive workout' that Steven Johnson identifies as one of the key pleasures of watching complex TV, and this aspect of his music caters only to the most highly engaged audience level.[41]

Music is also used to change the power dynamics in a particular scene, rather than indicating a more permanent shift. In 2.01, Cersei and Baelish have a conversation — beginning in silence — in which he insinuates that he does not need to follow Cersei's orders because he knows the truth about her incestuous relationship with Jaime. 'Prominent families always forget a simple truth, I've found', he says, 'Knowledge is power.' Cersei's response to this threat is to command her guards to seize Baelish, at which point underscoring begins with a drum roll. As Cersei intimidates Baelish, telling the guards first to cut his throat, then that she has changed her mind, the Lannister theme plays as Cersei informs Baelish that '*Power* is power.' On its own such a statement would be banal, even risible, but the underscore suggests that Cersei has the authority to make good on her threats, reminding both viewers and Baelish that she has the might of her 'prominent family' behind her.

If music can be used to grant power, it can also be used to take it away. Fourth and finally, music — or lack thereof — is used to indicate a loss of power, sometimes through comic effect. (In a world where fear and respect keep you alive, being the butt of a joke is an exceptionally dangerous mistake.) The contrast between Tyrion and Theon's season two battle speeches demonstrates the vast difference between the two characters' command of power. In 2.09, Stannis Baratheon lays siege to King's Landing and Tyrion is charged with planning the city's tactical defence. When Joffrey abandons the front lines, Tyrion is left with a choice — abandon his soldiers to die, or lead the military charge himself, a role for which he is unprepared and has no experience. Adding to the import of the moment is that Tyrion is a dwarf, and is both reviled and ridiculed throughout the show because of it. His own father likes to remind him that he would have preferred to kill Tyrion as a child than let him live, and it was only the Lannister name that protected him. But throughout the first series Tyrion repeatedly outwits and outmanoeuvres those who underestimate him, building himself a power base strong enough that he is eventually smuggled out of King's Landing when wrongly accused of Joffrey's murder and therefore faced with execution. Tyrion's Blackwater battle speech is emblematic of how he garners true respect because of his actions, not because of his family name. When the moment comes for him to lead he steps forward, even though both he and his men realise that it will most likely lead to his death. A cello begins playing as he takes control of the situation, recognisably becoming the Lannister theme when he says 'Don't fight for your King, and don't fight for his kingdoms.' It's hardly a stereotypical rallying speech, but it precisely Tyrion's unprincely personality that inspires the soldiers to follow him. By the time he is finished, he has the whole orchestra's support, intoning the Lannister theme as he leads the army forward.

The succeeding episode has a mirroring battle speech from Theon, one of the show's far less likeable characters. Theon is first introduced as a ward of the Starks, and accordingly Robb trusts him as one of his battle advisers. Robb sends Theon to his birth family, the Greyjoys, to rally support for his cause. Instead, Theon betrays Robb and takes a Greyjoy raiding party to capture Winterfell. Adding murder to his perfidy, Theon burns two children he claims are Robb's younger brothers, Bran and Rickon (later revealed to be two farm boys). In retaliation, Robb sends an army to retake Winterfell. When this army arrives at Winterfell's gates, Theon proceeds to give his rallying speech. Theon is a truly pathetic figure — mocked by his father and weaker than his sister, his attack on Winterfell is a desperate attempt to gain his family's respect and admiration. But his battle speech tells the futility of this cause. When he says 'They say every Ironborn man is worth a dozen from the mainland' the Greyjoy theme begins, following the same pattern as Tyrion's speech as his men start shouting their support. Theon screams 'What is dead may never die', the Greyjoy motto, the music swells towards a climax… and is cut off mid-phrase as Dagmer (Theon's second in command) knocks him out from behind. Silence ensues. 'I thought he'd never shut up', says Lorren; 'Was a good speech', Dagmer replies, 'Didn't want to interrupt.' This is precisely the kind

of writing that has earned *GoT* such a loyal fanbase: it has well developed characters with believable motivations and consistent actions, but simultaneously plays wryly with fantasy tropes and conventions, making it impossible to predict which direction a scene will swing. The music is crucial for building up this joke at Theon's expense. To be effective, the viewer has to see the scene from Theon's perspective, and believe that the parallel with Tyrion's speech means that this is about to be Theon's moment of glory. Within the narrative conventions of *GoT*, music is power. Without it Theon is helpless, given up by his men to be tortured, mutilated, and castrated by Ramsay Bolton.

5) Signifying place

The music has several markers to signify place, the most prominent of which are instrumentation, diegetic music, and sound effects. Djawadi has repeatedly highlighted the importance of instrumentation for creating sonic markers of place throughout the *GoT* universe — the Westerosi houses (south of the Wall) are represented by the symphony orchestra, with a heavy emphasis on the cello; the Wildlings (north of the Wall) have a didgeridoo included in their music; and taiko (Japanese drums) and the Armenian duduk create the sound of the Dothraki (Essos, across the Narrow Sea).[42] Djawadi has commented that the producers 'wanted a "global sound"' because the geographic scope of Martin's world is enormous, and the vast variety of instruments is a swift and effective way to signify geographic difference, particularly important for casual viewers without prior knowledge of the *GoT* universe.[43]

These instrumentations are used for diegetic music in each location. Diegetic music occurs rarely, but when it does it is often foregrounded and therefore memorably associated with particular places and events. At the Red Wedding (3.09), it is the musicians beginning to play 'Rains of Castamere' that alerts both Catelyn and the viewer to something being wrong. Initially, a string ensemble plays music unassociated with any house, and Talisa comments on the quality of the musicians, highlighting their presence to the viewer. But when the Freys close the doors to stop the Starks escaping, the music's tone changes. A solo cello emerges from the texture and the camera cuts to the cellist. Unusually, the onscreen characters can hear the musical thematic cues indicating house allegiance that are usually audible only to viewers. The diegetic music allows both the viewer and the wedding guests to become simultaneously aware of the imminent danger, and reinforces the cello as a sound tied to the power battles between Westerosi houses.

Drogo and Daenerys's wedding (1.01), by contrast, includes drumming and dancing, establishing the sound of the taiko with Essos. At this early stage, the Dothraki are still viewed from Daenerys and Viserys's perspective — and they are more accustomed to Westerosi practices. The drumming, therefore, is used to here to orientalize, emphasising the Dothraki's alterity and 'exoticism'. It is coupled with images of women dancing with their breasts exposed, couples publicly having sex, and two men fighting over a woman. Viserys is shown wrinkling his nose in disgust, while Daenerys turns away in horror as one man disembowels the other. As Daenerys becomes better acquainted with Dothraki customs, however, the drums are used in a less explicitly orientalizing way. They accompany formal rituals in which Daenerys herself partakes — she eats a stallion heart as part of a pregnancy ritual, and afterwards her reception feast is accompanied by drums and dancing (1.06). This time it is the Dothraki who view Viserys with disgust after he interrupts the feast drunk and screaming, calling his sister a whore. The drums remain constant as a Dothraki signifier, but the way in which they are presented diegetically corresponds with Daenerys's viewpoint, aligning the viewers with her perspective.

Bells occupy a liminal space between diegetic music and sound effect. From the first episode, the sonic identity of King's Landing is defined by bells and birdsong. The bells' symbolic import is not

highlighted until season two (2.09), in a conversation between Varys and Tyrion. The bells sounding to announce the presence of Stannis's ships in Blackwater Bay are discussed as follows:

> Varys: I've always hated the sound of bells. They ring for horror: a dead king, a city under siege.
> Tyrion: A wedding.
> Varys: Exactly.

This signals that royal weddings are likely to be a source of horror (this kind of ominous exchange is aimed particularly at viewers who have already read the books and know that Joffrey, for example, will be murdered at his own wedding), and communicates to viewers the importance of the bells as a diegetic signifier within King's Landing. This is reiterated by Lord Davos's comment when the camera pans to Stannis's ships, with the bells still tolling in the background:

> Davos: I've never known bells to mean surrender. They want to play music with us? Let's play. Drums!

Drums are then heard in the background when the camera cuts to the battlements of King's Landing, underscoring Tyrion and Joffrey's ensuing conversation. Both bells and drums serve to rally the Lannister and Barratheon troops respectively, and to menace the opposite side by serving as a 'means of territorial oppression.'[44] Crucially, alternating between Tyrion's and Davos's perspective in this way allows the viewer to experience the battle from both standpoints. Both Tyrion and Davos are well-liked characters, and both are fighting — potentially dying — on behalf of others. Switching sonic allegiance encourages the viewers to align their sympathies with both characters, generating a sense of futility to this particular battle. In other battles, such as the Battle of the Bastards (6.09) when Jon Snow fights Ramsay Bolton for Winterfell, the music is aligned only with Jon — it is clear who the audience is supposed to root for in this case.

6) Sound bridges

In season one, music is self-contained within particular scenes. If the Stark theme sounds when the Starks are on-screen, the music stops before the camera cuts to another location. Partly, the reasons for this are practical. The first season needs to unambiguously establish themes with particular people, families, and locations. For the same reason, Djawadi reserved several of the house themes (including the Greyjoys) for later seasons, so that viewers did not get confused: 'We couldn't have too many themes right away … [it] would have been confusing for the audience, so we … held off with themes for certain characters.'[45]

By season three, however, the associations of musical themes are established enough that they can be used to elide between scenes and locations. Music is particularly used to provide elision between a conversation and the absent conversation subject. In 3.07, Daenerys's theme starts while Tywin and Joffrey discuss her and the camera is still in King's Landing, and continues playing as the camera cuts to Daenerys in Yunkai. Eliding the scenes in this way gives the show more forward momentum and accelerates the episode's pacing, but it also contributes to the sense of in-episode puzzle-solving in pivotal conversations where the subject is not named. In 5.03, Roose and Ramsay Bolton discuss Ramsay's need to marry so that he can maintain his position, at which point strings enter playing a descending octave G-D-G. The strings hold for two seconds after Roose finishes saying 'As it happens, I've found the perfect girl to solidify our hold on the North', before the camera cuts to Sansa Stark and a full sounding of the Stark theme in C minor. This technique is used repeatedly for conversations that have major narrative impact, the inclusion of the music giving viewers a couple of seconds to piece together who the subject of the conversation is, and therefore how the plot is going to unfold. That viewers at multiple engagement levels 'puzzle-solve' in this way is demonstrated by 'Reactions' videos: 'Jay Burgins Reactions' video for this

episode shows him saying 'Oh, it's not going to be Sansa', before the scene changes.[46] A similar instance is found in 6.10, when the long-standing narrative enigma of Jon Snow's parentage is revealed. A solo cello plays the opening interval of the Stark theme after Lyanna says 'You have to protect him, promise me Ned', giving the first sonic clue that the baby is Jon Snow. 'Hogwarts Reacts' responds to this clue by saying 'Is that Jon?', before the camera cuts to Jon Snow and a full sounding of the Stark theme, confirming the child's identity.[47]

7) Underscoring for tense/emotional scenes

Non-thematic material is used for moments of heightened emotional tension when there are plot-sensitive reasons for concealing the person responsible for a narrative twist, or multiple onscreen characters with equal power dynamics. It is also used to build suspense, either as the source of acousmatic threats are revealed, or in the build-up to an inevitable negative outcome. This is not only crucial for orientating casual viewers who have no prior knowledge of the universe, but also for encouraging investment in the series from casual viewers who have already read the books. As plot twists are not a source of surprise for these viewers (at least, until season six), *how* these plot arcs are rendered on-screen becomes of paramount importance for keeping these viewers tuning in each week.[48]

Djawadi uses techniques familiar from horror and action films. An example of building tension before a negative outcome accompanies Rickon's death (6.09). Ramsay and Jon are facing each other in battle and Ramsay has captured Rickon, bringing him onto the battlefield to try and goad Jon into attacking first. 'Let's play a game', he says, before instructing Rickon to run towards Jon while he fires arrows at him. The stakes are obvious as soon as Ramsay brings Rickon onto the field. Sansa has previously warned Jon that if he attacks first he will inevitably lose, but Ramsay will find some way of pushing Jon into doing so. A synthesized cello plays as Ramsay leads Rickon out, creating an atmosphere of terror and suspense that escalates as Ramsay lifts a knife above his head as though to stab Rickon, before immediately falling silent as Ramsay instead cuts Rickon's bonds and explains the terms of his 'game'. The underscore begins again as soon as Ramsay picks up his bow, with drums and strings accompanying Rickon and Jon's dash to reach each other. The camera cuts between Ramsay, Rickon, and Jon as the music crescendos, encouraging the viewer to identify with Rickon and Jon's emotions. The most manipulative use of music, however, comes at the end of Rickon's run. As pitch and dynamic reach an apex, an arrow lands just short of Rickon and the underscore immediately falls silent, replaced by the sound of Jon's horse and Rickon's breathing. For a full seven seconds the lack of underscore tricks the viewer, suggesting that Rickon might win the game and make it to Jon, before an arrow hits him in the heart and the soundtrack remains silent except for the sound of his dying breaths. Underscore begins again when the camera cuts first to Ramsay and then to Jon's point-of-view looking down on Rickon's body, signalling that Ramsay has won. It is unambiguous who the viewer is supposed to identify with here. The music is completely aligned with Jon's perspective, encouraging viewers to empathize with his anger and sorrow, and therefore his otherwise foolish decision to attack first and thereby lead his army to their deaths.

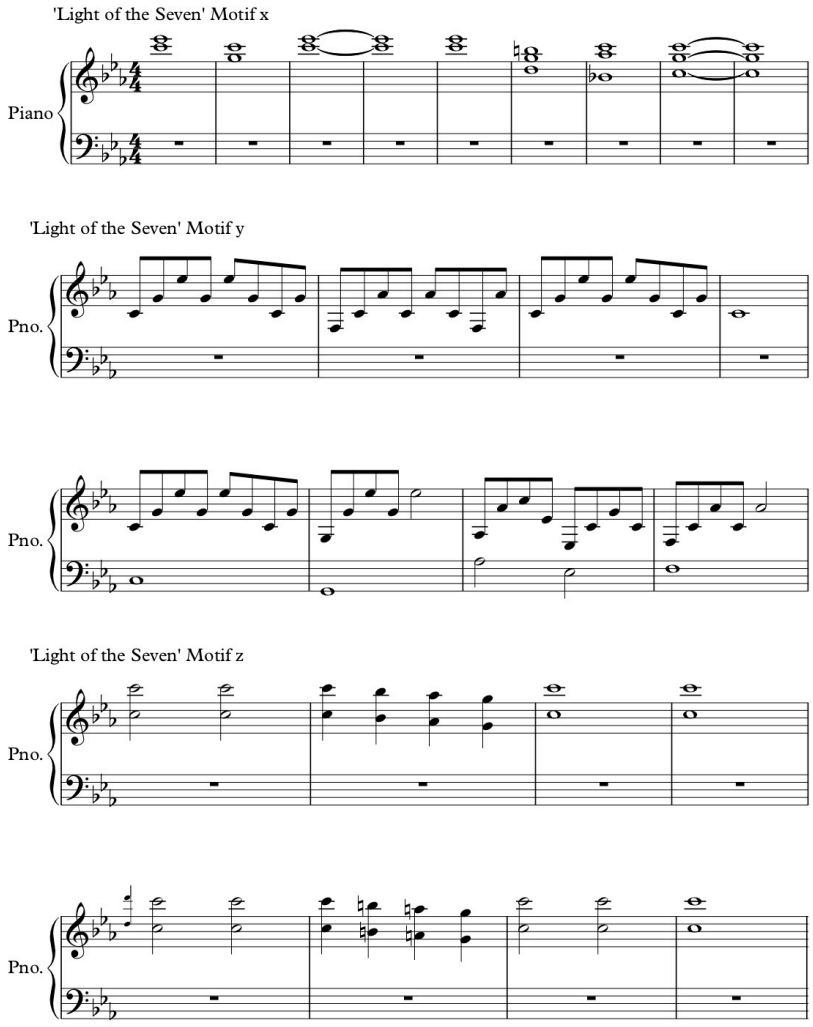
8) Subverting intrinsic norms

Mittell observes that 'one of the most exciting pleasures of contemporary fictional television is when a series breaks from its intrinsic norms to offer a new take on its conventional storytelling mode.'[49] Of all the uses of music listed here, this is one of the most effective as a method of rewarding and surprising regular viewers who are well-accustomed to the series' established storytelling mode. *GoT*'s most spectacular flouting of intrinsic norms comes in the season six finale, 'The Winds of Winter' (6.10). The established series trajectory is that if there are major character deaths or a battle in episode nine, then episode ten provides the denouement, ties up some plot arcs and opens others to leave cliffhangers for the next season. Throughout season six, there are

two major plot arcs. The first, at King's Landing, is the continued rise of a religious sect called the 'Sparrows'. They arrest Cersei on charges of incest, and demand that she stands trial to determine her guilt. The second, at Castle Black, is the resurrection of Jon Snow and his march south to battle Ramsay Bolton for Winterfell. The latter plot arc is concluded in episode nine — Jon defeats Ramsay, who is murdered by Sansa. This leaves Cersei's trial to be concluded in episode ten, but given the visual, musical, and dramatic spectacle of episode nine, the show's intrinsic norms dictate that it should be a relatively understated affair.

Instead, we are presented with a filmic *tour-de-force* that received universal acclaim from critics and fans alike. Rather than stand trial, Cersei blows up the Sept of Baelor (the building representing the religious centre of King's Landing), eliminating seven members of the central cast in a single stroke. This also indirectly leads to the death of King Tommen, Cersei's son, who commits suicide after he is informed of his wife's death in the explosion and realizes that his mother is responsible. Even for *GoT*, eight significant deaths within fifteen minutes is exceptional.

Example 5: 'Light of the Seven'



On multiple levels, this episode's first fifteen minutes constitute a *narrative special effect*, a moment 'when a program flexes its storytelling muscles to confound and amaze a viewer.'[50] The audience is left to marvel at the audacity of both Cersei as the plot's mastermind, and of the show's creators. 6.10 subverts both series norms and intrinsic narrative norms established from the pilot episode, and this is achieved entirely through musical means. Usually, the pace of the action is determined by dialogue. The opening of 6.10, however, is choreographed around a continuous ten minute track ('Light of the Seven', Example 5). Here, the music is not used as underscoring, but instead becomes the primary focus of the viewer's attention. There are only occasional interruptions for very short passages of dialogue. The departure from the show's norms is so extreme that music and speech's established roles within the series seem to be reversed in this episode. The music is foregrounded in a manner that is unprecedented for the show, setting the pace at which the plot unfolds. Dialogue and sound effects are so carefully coordinated with the music that this scene comes closer to the norms of opera or melodrama than of complex TV, and certainly the narrative norms within this particular series. And if this wasn't enough, the majority of the track is scored for solo piano, the first time piano has been used in the entire series, before later being joined by an organ, cello, and two boys' voices.

This departure from the show's intrinsic norms regarding instrumentation, musical foregrounding, and thematic material was a deliberate choice to unsettle audiences: Djawadi states that 'it needed to be a new piece of music. Any kind of character theme could tip it, and we didn't want to tip the audience. … *Game of Thrones* is always up for surprises. … I have to do the same with the music.'[51] Viewers responded with approval — 'Light of the Seven' reached number one on Spotify's "Global Viral 50" chart,[52] and various bloggers and reviewers delivered analyses of the music even if this lay outside their usual remit.[53] As Lili Loofbourow put it, 'the real winner of the *Game of Thrones* season finale was the music.'[54]

Conclusion

Djawadi's music for *GoT* is exceptional for both its innovativeness and the acclaim that it has received, but the four primary storytelling reasons for this innovation are consistent across other complex TV programmes. Complex TV composers have to help viewers orientate themselves within *multiple* narratives. Audiences must keep track of various places and characters with their own story arcs, so the music has to provide sonic identifiers to act as a memory aid between episodes/seasons. *Orphan Black* (Netflix) has a completely different musical identity to *GoT* but uses similar thematic techniques, using different types of song for different characters. Sonic differentiation is crucial in this series, as it is about a woman who finds out she is part of a cloning experiment. The majority of the show, therefore, is acted by the same actress in different clothing adopting different accents, and in season one alone viewers have to keep track of six clones. Visual and sonic identifiers are vital, and consequently each of the clones' identities is heavily constructed around music. Sarah is a punk who listens to bands like M.I.A., while soccer mom Alison acts in musicals, etc.

Music for complex TV has to cater for different levels of audience engagement, from casual viewers to highly engaged fans. The ability to rewatch episodes on DVD means that as well as being engaging for a first-time viewer who has no intention of engaging with paratexts, complex TV must have a narrative world that is multi-layered enough to satisfy fans willing to watch episodes multiple times, seeking out clues to solve narrative enigmas, and theorizing about characters' motivations and potential series outcomes. Paul Christiansen makes a similar observation of the comedy series *Arrested Development* (Fox), arguing that 'The fact that this is a recorded television comedy that can be played over and over again rather than a fleeting theater performance allows for incredible subtlety and multivalence in the humor', allowing for more

complex musical jokes than in feature films.[55] In *GoT*, the score leaves musical clues for fans to decipher (such as Baelish's theme), as well as playing the more obvious roles of signifying place and indicating house allegiance.

The extended duration of complex TV programmes allows for far more nuanced character development than in film. Trevor Morris's score for *The Tudors* (Showtime) employs comparable strategies to *GoT*: Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn's love theme ('Henry meets Anne Boleyn') is varied throughout the series as their relationship develops, changing instrumentation and harmonisation as Henry turns against Anne ('Mixed Messages from Anne', 'The Passion of King Henry', and 'Anne begs Henry').

The length and scope of complex TV encourages innovation. Complex TV programmes require enormous time and concentration commitments of their viewers, so they must be continually surprising, intriguing, and challenging to maintain engagement. This can be achieved through a variety of means, *GoT*'s disregard for its main characters being a key example. Music is also integral to this process, becoming both an attraction in itself and used within the show to subvert internal norms to surprise viewers. The extent to which music is used to subvert intrinsic norms in Season 6 of *GoT* is unusual among complex TV shows, but not unprecedented. Similar examples of shows subverting their musical norms include Bear McCreary's use of 'All Along the Watchtower' in *Battlestar Galactica* (NBC, 3.20), or the entire episode scored as a musical in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (WB, 6.07).

As Djawadi's score demonstrates, music can be integral to the complex TV's narrative means, fulfilling multiple functions simultaneously in a way that is not possible in stand-alone feature films. Whatever a viewer's level of engagement, Djawadi's music immerses them within the world, encourages them to invest in the main characters, and helps to keep their attention for years as the stories unfold.

Notes

[1] Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York, London: New York University Press, 2015), 2-3.

[2] *Ibid.*, 10, 18.

[3] *Ibid.*, 223.

[4] Marc Leverette, Brian L. Ott, & Cara Louise Buckley (eds), *It's not TV, It's HBO: Watching HBO in the Post-Television Era* (New York, Oxford: Routledge, 2008), 1.

[5] Complex TV has received more academic attention in TV and narrative studies. See Sean O'Sullivan, 'Broken on Purpose: Poetry, Serial Television, and the Season', *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies*, Vol. 2 (Jan. 2010), pp. 59-77.

[6] Robert Thompson, *Television's Second Golden Age: From Hill Street Blues to ER* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 12.

[7] See Thomas Elsaesser, Jan Simons, Lucette Bronk (eds.), *Writing for the Medium: Television in Transition* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994).

[8] Thompson, *Television's Second Golden Age*, 13.

[9] Dean J. DeFino, *The HBO Effect* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 10.

[10] See Dan Hassler-Forest, '*Game of Thrones*: Quality Television and the Cultural Logic of Gentrification', *TV/Series* Vol. 6 (2014), pp. 160-177.

[11] Ginia Bellafante, 'A Fantasy World of Strange Feuding Kingdoms', *The New York Times*, 14 April 2011.

[12] Ben Beaumont-Thomas, 'Game of Thrones becomes most popular HBO show ever', *The Guardian*, 6 June 2014; Jeremy Egner 'Game of Thrones returns to Record Ratings', *The New York Times*, 18 July 2017.

[13] DeFino, *The HBO Effect*, 13.

[14] Mittell, *Complex TV*, 292.

[15] Andy Gregory, 'Your Game of Thrones Obsession', *I News*, 13 July 2017.

[16] Jack Shepherd, 'Avengers: Infinity War could be the most expensive film ever made', *Independent*, 3 March 2017.

[17] Irena Paulus, 'Williams versus Wagner or an Attempt at Linking Musical Epics', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, Vol. 31/2 (Dec. 2000), pp. 153-184, 157.

[18] Mittell, *Complex TV*, 123.

[19] *Ibid.*, 125.

[20] 'Game of Thrones Reactions at Burlington Bar S6E10, Winds of Winter Pt. 1' (Jun. 28, 2016) Accessed Jul. 2018 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGeRWi9w6-o&frags=pl%2Cwn

[21] 'Game of Thrones: Red Wedding Reactions Compilation' (Jun. 3 2013) Accessed Jul. 2018 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78juOpTM3tE&frags=pl%2Cwn

[22] Mittell, *Complex TV*, 35, 173.

[23] *Ibid*., 2-3.

[24] *Ibid*., 29.

[25] Ruben Kalus, 'No flutes allowed: Composer Ramin Djawadi on the music of *Game of Thrones*', *DW*, 17 May 2018.

[26] 'Inside Game of Thrones: A Story in Score' (Jun. 27, 2017) Accessed Jun. 2018 https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=115&v=rSMO4pHe3HE

[27] Mittell, *Complex TV,* 222.

[28] Ronald Rodman, *Tuning In: American Narrative Television Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 57.

[29] Reddit r/gameofthrones 'Episode discussion — 3.03 "Walk of Punishment"' Accessed Aug. 2018 https://www.reddit.com/r/gameofthrones/comments/1ccx1t/episode_discussion_303_walk_of_punishment_season/

[30] D. B. Weiss quoted in James Hibberd, '"Game of Thrones": Nikolaj Coster-Waldau on Jaime's big surprise', *Entertainment*, 14 April 2013.

[31] Roberta Pearson, 'Anatomising Gilbert Grissom: The Structure and Function of the Televisual Character', in *Reading "CSI": Crime TV under the Microscope* ed. Michael Allen (London, 2007), pp. 39-56, 56.

[32] Nikolaj Coster-Waldau and Iain Glen quoted in Bryan Cogman, *Inside HBO's Game of Thrones* (London: Gollancz, 2012), 83, 166.

[33] D. B. Weiss, quoted *ibid*., 55.

[34] Mittell, *Complex TV*, 16.

[35] Anne Gjelsvik & Rikke Schubart, *Women of Ice and Fire: Gender, Game of Thrones, and Multiple Media Engagements* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), Introduction pp. 1-16, 1.

[36] Emilia Clarke quoted in *Inside HBO's Game of Thrones*, 156.

[37] D. B. Weiss quoted *ibid*., 155.

[38] See Rikke Schubart, 'Women with Dragons: Daenerys, Pride, and Postfeminist Possibilities' in *Women of Ice and Fire* pp. 105-129, and William Clapton & Laura J. Shepherd, 'Lessons from Westeros: Gender and power in *Game of Thrones*', *Politics* Vol. 37/1 (2017), pp. 5-18.

[39] Schubart, 'Women with Dragons', 113.

[40] *Ibid.*, 116.

[41] Steven Johnson, *Everything Bad is Good for You: How Today's Popular Culture is Actually Making Us Smarter* (New York, 2005), 215.

[42] 'Game of Thrones: A Story in Score'.

[43] Kalus, 'No flutes allowed'.

[44] Martin Cloonan & Bruce Johnson, 'Killing Me Softly with His Song: An Initial Investigation into the Use of Popular Music as a Tool of Oppression', *Popular Music*, Vol. 21/1 (Jan., 2002), pp. 27-39, 30.

[45] 'Game of Thrones: A Story in Score'.

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[47] 'Hogwarts Reacts: Game of Thrones S06E10 — "The Winds of Winter" (part two)' (Dec. 4, 2017) Accessed Jul. 2018 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3jMKeNj4bw&frags=pl%2Cwn

[48] For more on adapting novels for screen, see Mirela Aragay (ed.), *Books in Motion: Adaptation, Intertextuality, Authorship* (Amsterdam, 2005).

[49] Mittell, *Complex TV*, 28.

[50] *Ibid.*, 43.

[51] Josh Wigler, '"Game of Thrones" Composer Discusses "Light of the Seven", the Finale's "Haunting" King's Landing Score, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 28 June 2016.

[52] Kim Renfro, 'The backstory of the epic "Game of Thrones" finale song fans still can't stop streaming', *Business Insider*, 5 July 2016.

[53] E.g. Harrison Abbott's vlog *Reel Opinions* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xSLm1uYqEwQ

[54] Lili Loofbourow, 'Why the real winner of the *Game of Thrones* season finale was the music', *The Week*, 29 June 2016.

[55] Paul Christiansen, '"And That's Why You Always Leave a Note!": Music as Comedic Element in the First Season of the Television Show *Arrested Development*', *Music and the Moving Image* Vol. 11/1 (Spring 2018), pp. 19-34, 30.