

Adapting Robert Louis Stevenson's 'Curious' Poetry: Approaches to Musical Narrativization in my Recent Composition 'The Land of Nod'

Abstract

In this article I present and critically examine the ways in which I conceived my recent musical composition, 'The Land of Nod' (from *At Night* for clarinet quintet), as an adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's poem of the same name, with close reference to Marie-Laure Ryan's theoretical frameworks for the analysis of transmedia narratology and 'storyworlds', and Byron Almén's *A Theory of Musical Narrative*. As a relatively rare example of scholarship that intersects the fields of adaptation, music theory, and practice (as) research, I situate this work within its wider disciplinary context, and consider the possible benefits that such interdisciplinarity and methodological eclecticism can offer, especially for creative practitioners in music.

Keywords: adaptation, narrative, music, Robert Louis Stevenson, composition, practice research

[Short title: Musical Narrativization in 'The Land of Nod']

Adapting Robert Louis Stevenson's 'Curious' Poetry: Approaches to Musical Narrativization in my Recent Composition 'The Land of Nod'

Brian Boyd's claim that 'narrative need not involve language[...] and often gains impact throughout enactment or the emotional focusing that music offers' (Boyd, *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition and Fiction* 159) serves as the opening provocation in the commentary I wrote to accompany the portfolio of narrative musical compositions submitted for my doctorate in 2022 (Kaner, *Composing Narratives*). Existing hitherto largely as a practitioner and only part-time as an academic within the small, somewhat opaque, bubble of music theory and composition, I was only partially aware of the extent to which my doctoral research would radically alter and enrich my understanding of the possibilities of storytelling through music. In particular, I had only a very vague sense of what adapting narratives from another source medium into a musical one might entail. Though somewhat familiar with music-theoretical writing on (and the ongoing debate around) whether and how music can narrate, I was largely ignorant of the wider fields of transmedia narratology and adaptation, as I commenced composing what turned out to be, a larger and still ongoing, series of musical works concerned to varying degrees with storytelling (including works with narrator and/or singer(s), but also instrumental pieces without any performed text).

Teaching in the somewhat self-contained environment of a performing arts conservatoire, my ignorance is perhaps unsurprising, to a degree. Nonetheless, discovering that the status of 'composers as adaptors' (Hutcheon and Hutcheon) has in fact long been understood, especially as adaptors of stories in the form of dramatic vocal music and operas, I often find myself asking: 'why do so few composers openly frame their adaptive thinking in this way?' In the following article, I attempt to address this question, both in terms of its wider and historical disciplinary context, but then by example, with an analysis of my own creative approach to adapting Robert Louis Stevenson's poem 'The Land of Nod' in the first movement of my clarinet quintet, *At Night*. As such, the main body of the article constitutes practice (as) research, and can be seen as a contribution to a slowly (but surely) growing

body of work in which arts practitioners share and unpack the research embedded within their creative outputs.

Context

As noted, the notion of ‘composers as adaptors’ is well established; Linda and Michael Hutcheon state this explicitly when they discuss the role of the context of opera composition. While acknowledging the importance of sung text in adapting dramatic narratives into musicodramatic narratives, they stress that ‘musical characterization occurs in both the *vocal and orchestral lines*’ (Hutcheon and Hutcheon, my emphasis). Indeed, they emphasize the storytelling role of the ‘expressive orchestra [...] often seen as acting like an omniscient narrator, offering the audience access to the mind or even the subconscious of the characters’ with the power to convey ‘what the characters cannot verbalize, but can only feel’. The adaptive role of musical soundtracks in film is another arena in which adaptation scholarship has of course flourished to a degree, as for example, in Jørgen Bruhn’s examination of the ‘role of music in the general adaptation process of turning a novel into film’ in Scorsese’s *Shutter Island* (J. Bruhn). Likewise, in the realm of concert music, Siglind Bruhn’s seminal work on *musical ekphrasis* (pursued and explored further in subsequent publications by Goehr and Russ), argues for the value of adaptive frameworks to examine music that ‘narrates or paints a fictional reality created by an artist other than the composer’ (S. Bruhn 29).

Yet taken, as a whole, these instances form a relatively modest volume of work, compared for example, with the array of writing on transmedia adaptation of novels in theatre scripts, screenplays, and even computer games. And with the exception of the work on *musical ekphrasis* mentioned above, the majority of such publications tend to involve music that incorporates the performance of spoken or sung text (film, opera, song), including within this journal. Indeed, contributions by Kafalenos, Tarasti, and Rabinowitz to *Narrative Across Media: The Languages of Storytelling* written back in 2004 (Ryan, *Narrative across Media*) seek to introduce ‘native’ scholars of transmedia narrativity to the study of narrative music within music theory, as a ‘a relatively esoteric field rarely visited by outsiders’ (Kafalenos 272).

Perhaps this is, in part, because the question of the wider potential of instrumental music to narrate in its own right, sits outside (or only partially overlaps) the purview of adaptation studies per se. As Siglind Bruhn argues, so-called 'programme music' often 'represents scenes or stories that may or may not exist out there but enter the music from the composer's own mind' (28), implying that in many cases, such examples may not always be adaptations at all. Nevertheless, this has not prevented a vigorous body of musicological scholarship and debate emerging, over the last few decades, on whether, how, and to what extent, instrumental music can be understood in narrative terms. To summarize the range and nuances of attitudes within this large volume of writing here is unfeasible. (For a thoroughgoing survey, see Klein.) However, very broadly speaking, they fall into three categories. First, are scholars who largely deny the possibility that music, on account of its lack of semantic specificity, can narrate in any meaningful sense at all (the most frequently cited of these is probably Nattiez). Second, are those who admit that music can narrate, but only in a more narrow and limited sense: for example when, through some fissure in the musical continuity, a composer evokes the presence of an independent narrator (see Abbate). Thirdly, there are those authors who have dedicated their careers to the view that instrumental music can, and often does, narrate in its own right, by exploring the ways in which this can be demonstrated and understood (including Almén; Grabócz; Hatten; Klein; Monelle; Reyland; Tarasti, to name but a few); these endeavours now amount to a fairly substantial body of work.

Moreover, within this body are a handful of musical-narrative analyses that explicitly seek to unpick the ways in which composers have adapted existing narratives by other artists in their compositional practice (though, again, not necessarily under the guise of adaptation studies). For instance, Peter Kaminsky's analysis of Ravel's musical response to the poem 'Le Gibet' by Aloysius Bertrand, claims to 'show that Ravel's musical realization of these poetic elements constitutes a tonal-formal narrative *deeply congruent* with the unfolding of Bertrand's text' (Kaminsky 99, my emphasis), going on to compare, in detail, the structure of Bertrand's poem with the compositional design of the work, both in terms of its large scale musical-formal processes, and more literal suggestion of the poem's 'bell that sounds from

the walls of a town'ⁱ in the 'repeated ostinato pedal point on B \flat [...] that sounds without respite for the entire movement' (Kaminsky 99).

Yet while the adaptive frameworks by which instrumental music can transmediate textual narratives are thus acknowledged and documented to some degree (indeed, Hutcheon and Hutcheon argue that 'the complexity of this adaptation process has been a constant for composers'), there is exceptionally little discussion in scholarship by living composers, in the guise of researcher-practitioners, as to how they approach transmedia adaptation in their own work. This is of course part of a wider tendency; despite calls for composers to document, share, and unpack the research embodied within their practice by Leedham and Scheuregger, Pace, and others, few publications of this nature exist beyond the modernist, technical (indeed, often pseudo-scientific) treatises and exegeses that were in vogue during the second half of the twentieth century. (See Lochhead 17–38; Reeves.)

One argument for living composers to share their research in academic publications is to better align musical practice with its sister-disciplines such as theatre, where models of practitioner-research are now well established (see, for example Hilevaara and Orley; Nelson; and publications such as the *Journal of Artistic Research*). Indeed, even within music, documentation of practice research in written form by performers is arguably more commonplace and widely accepted than in the composing community (e.g. Dogantan-Dack). While this remains an ongoing debate,ⁱⁱ my own stance is that bringing the creative practice of music into closer proximity with other arts and humanities scholarship will open up possibilities for engagement with, and scrutiny from, a wider range of interested colleagues, and foster opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and debate. Composers frequently work in close proximity to practitioners with theatrical, literary, film, and many other artistic backgrounds; generating new and better frameworks for discussing how ideas can be communicated to audiences across different media, including music, may offer practical benefits as well as the potential for new research insights.

Returning to my earlier question, then: why composers have thus far failed to discuss and explore their approaches to adaptation is, in part, because (a) compositional practice

research is still rarely shared at all, and (b) the frameworks for doing so are relatively unfamiliar within music-theoretical scholarship. In offering the analysis below, it is my hope to begin to address both of these conditions.

Approach to Analysing 'The Land of Nod'

This article is itself an adaptation of material that I wrote in my doctoral commentary, which as discussed, is broadly concerned with musical narrativity across a large body of compositions that I have written over the last five years. While the first of these is an hour-long theatrical work with spoken (and occasionally sung) poetry, the second half of the submission is dedicated to the composition of works intended to convey narrative through music written solely for instrumental forces, including my clarinet quintet entitled *At Night*,ⁱⁱⁱ for which I document my adaptation of a set of poems by different authors to generate musical narratives in each of its movements by combining theoretical tools taken from both music and adaptation studies concerned with narrativity. (Here I explore only the first movement of *At Night*, 'The Land of Nod'.)

In both my doctoral commentary and what follows, the methodological eclecticism fostered by drawing on both music and adaptation studies is further enriched by the use of 'self-narrative' (Spry) documentation of, and reflection on, my practice *in action*, through regular journaling during the period of composition. This is prompted by calls in literature on practice research to draw attention to, and unpack the 'ephemeral aspects of the creative process', which are 'precisely the kinds of knowledge that only creative practitioners can provide', and in doing so, avoid treating the process of writing about my work as a mere afterthought, 'a sequence that is specifically warned against in other PaR [practice (as) research] disciplines, where the disconnect between practice and theorising of practice is considered dislocating' (Leedham and Scheuregger, 'The Composer's Place in Academia' 3–4). The latter approach has historically been, and continues to be, prevalent in writing about compositional research projects (see Leedham and Scheuregger, 'The Purpose of the Written Element in Composition PhDs'), where the tone of such commentaries is, as discussed, frequently pseudo-scientific, emphasising technical rigour, while downplaying, or even completely disguising, the roles of creative discovery and 'tacit knowledge', the interrogation

of which is usually considered of central to insightful practice research. (See Nelson, especially chapter 3.) Conversely therefore, by foregrounding ‘my insider’s perspective and experience’ of the creative process and locating it within its wider historical, social and cultural context, my aim here is to present a multifaceted portrayal of the work and its creation that deliberately ‘blur[s] the boundaries of aesthetics and experience in an effort to capture and reflect the complex dynamics involved in the phenomenology of artistic practice’ (Stewart 126–27).

Adapting Stevenson’s Plot

My approach to adaptation in this composition was one of significant expansion.^{iv} The Robert Louis Stevenson poem reproduced below (from which my work takes its title), has something of an implicit, yet enigmatic, narrative design (conjuring the image of a child passing the day from breakfast until bedtime, followed by the exotic experiences of dreaming, and finally awakening, only to forget his or her dreams), which is undoubtedly part of its appeal.

‘The Land of Nod’, from *A Child’s Garden of Verses* by Robert Louis Stevenson (1885)

From breakfast on through all the day
At home among my friends I stay,
But every night I go abroad
Afar into the land of Nod.

All by myself I have to go,
With none to tell me what to do —
All alone beside the streams
And up the mountain-sides of dreams.

The strangest things are there for me,
Both things to eat and things to see,
And many frightening sights abroad
Till morning in the land of Nod.

Try as I like to find the way,
I never can get back by day,
Nor can remember plain and clear
The curious music that I hear.

However, to develop this into a more explicit plot that could allow me to develop a narrative musical structure, I devised an expanded version that nevertheless encapsulated what I considered the essence of Stevenson’s poem. As Hutcheon and O’Flynn argue:

The separate units of the story (or the fabula) can also be transmediated—just as they can be summarized in digest versions or translated into another language[...]. But they may well change—often radically—in the process of adaptation, and not only (but most obviously) in terms of their plot ordering. Pacing can be transformed, time compressed or expanded. Shifts in the focalization or point of view of the adapted story may lead to major differences.
(Hutcheon and O’Flynn 11)

Thus, while the narrative changes of state suggested by Stevenson’s poem are necessarily brief and act more as a framing device for the description of a dreamworld told from a child’s perspective, for me, part of the power of the poem is its ability, within very few lines, to convey the journey to and from and the ‘land of Nod’, with the lines ‘At home[...] I stay, but every night I go abroad / Afar into the land of Nod’, thereby rendering the fantastical dreamworld more vivid in contrast to the presumed realities of everyday life. Because of music’s lack of semantic specificity, the waking life of a child is rather harder to convey in a musical composition with such economy, and I chose therefore to greatly extend this ‘waking’ aspect of the narrative in order that it, and the journey to the ‘land of Nod’ (or process of falling asleep), was the normative backdrop against which the ‘strange music that I hear’, during the ‘dreamscape’, would stand in relief. The resulting expanded musical plot is summarized below in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary of Musical Plot in 'The Land of Nod', expanded and adapted from Stevenson's poem.

Note: The recording of the work, to which these time codes refer, is released by Delphian Records and can be accessed from all mainstream streaming platforms (Baker et al.). The musical score is available from *BabelScores* (Kaner, *At Night for Clarinet Quintet*).

<i>Bars</i>	<i>Time code (on recording, to nearest second)</i>	<i>Narrative Imagery</i>
1-34	00:00	Child playing before bedtime
35-39	00:43	Chiming grandfather clock, to suggest passing time
40-52	00:56	Child continuing to play
53-60	01:12	Parental intervention: calming with glimpse of lullaby to follow
61-161	01:35	Further continuation of child play, intervening parent, and chiming clock, with increasing intensity as bedtime approaches
162-169	04:05	Clock chiming on the hour: seven strikes for 7pm (bedtime)
170-202	04:40	Segue from striking clock to lullabies, accompanied by 'breathing / sunset chords'; from b. 183 [05:26], multiple lullabies heard (including quotations), intermingling as child falls asleep, eventually dissipating into silence
203-246	06:38	Dream sequence ('the curious music that I hear'), leading to climax (b. 237 [07:45]), followed by distant clock chimes within dreamworld
247-258	08:02	Striking clock becoming clearer, dreamworld dissipates
259-266	08:27	Clock strike harmony segues into musical 'sunrise', growing in intensity
267-273	08:50	Child awakes and resumes play
274-281	09:09	Play grows increasingly energetic, leading to short coda

In creating my adaptation, it seemed appropriate to draw on my vivid experience of parenting my recently born son, a significant feature of my daily life at the time. In my early sketches, I focused on several features of my son's waking and sleeping cycle, and mine and my partner's efforts to calm him before bed, as follows:

1. His highly energetic, and often chaotic play in the final hour before bed. As I noted in my journal,

[s]omething about the opening that I'm working on - almost like a Charlie Parker solo but a bit off the rails[,] conjures the chaos of the way [my son] plays – moving around very fast,

across the whole space of the room, interested in one thing for a while sometimes, but then getting distracted briefly by another that happens to be in his path...
(Composer's Diary Entry 11 May 2021)

2. My own awareness of the passing of time while supervising him before bed, which at that time seemed oddly irregular (perhaps partly through lack of sleep);
3. The effectiveness of singing a child to sleep, and the particular musical qualities of lullabies, which began to interest me much more at that time.

As set out in Table 1 above, these reflections on my own lived experiences in response to Stevenson prompted a musical formal design with several narrative phases, each of which would need to be characterized by distinct and evocative musical materials or *topics*.

Musical Topics and Tropes

One means by which music has long been argued to evoke and/or depict the extramusical is through topics. Defined by Leonard Ratner in 1980 as ‘subjects for musical discourse’, topics emerged in the early eighteenth-century as established musical ‘types’ that carried specific musical and/or extramusical connotations. According to Ratner, some were closely linked with ‘feelings and affections’, whereas others carried ‘picturesque’ associations (9). While their early eighteenth-century use was initially limited to dictating the musical character of an entire movement or piece (‘theorized through rhetoric and the “doctrine of the affects”’ (Hutcheon and Hutcheon)), during the latter half of the century composers had mastered the art of combining them within a single movement to suggest a range of shifting emotional states. Adaptation theorists have already noted their importance in operatic works from the eighteenth-century onwards, which according to Hutcheon and Hutcheon, ‘took pride of place in the tool kit of the composer adapting a libretto to music’.

Studies of the means by which musical topics achieve affective or picturesque significance are extensive, but they are broadly agreed to fall into two categories:

1. Musical topics which operate mimetically by resembling the sighs, accents, and inflections of the voice, or as ‘icons of natural sounds, which are *indices* of emotional states’ (Mirka).
2. This can involve the imitation of non-musical sounds (for instance, rumbling thunder is considered the source of the eighteenth-century *Sturm und Drang* topic), but as Mirka qualifies, for these to be considered topical, their signification arises primarily ‘from their similarity to genres or styles rather than from direct musical imitation of nonmusical sounds’.
3. Topics that are associated with a particular affect by cultural-historical convention, whereby ‘affective signification of topics is indirect because it arises from their similarity (*icon*) to genres or styles that, in their turn, are associated (*index*) with specific affects or affective zones’ (Mirka).

It is worth noting that drawing clear distinctions between the above two categories is often a challenge, as topics that originate in mimetic effects become established cultural-historical conventions over time, and their mimetic features may become obscured (such as the descending bass lines intrinsic to the *lament* topic that likely originate in depictions of sinking). In both cases, what is stressed by scholars is that topics operate intertextually across musical works ('intermusically' as Wolf puts it (213)). Even in much later works, where composers have been argued to create their own topics from scratch (e.g. see Grabócz), they nevertheless relate to other works in the composers' own catalogues, or can be shown to be adapted from topics found elsewhere.

Outside of opera and other music with performed text (songs, music with spoken word, film scores, etc.), the power of topics as a musical narrative and/or descriptive device is also well-established, given their potential to 'trigger clear associations with styles, genres, and expressive meanings' (Hatten 2; see also Wolf 213). For example, Marta Grabócz enumerates topics ranging from 'the ideal' and 'menace', to 'the gesticulating despairing hero' and 'Nature's Night Music' in Bartók's music, with the aim of unveiling the underlying 'narrative programme' of events in works such as his Four Orchestral Pieces op. 12 (120–23); implying that the mere succession of identifiable topics can, in and of itself, convey changes to settings and characters that occur within a dramatic musical plot. Or, as more simply put by Michael Klein in his chapter-long overview of narrativity in music since 1900: 'topics can get us into the musical story' (24).

Within my own practice, the use of topics, and even direct quotations from familiar musical works, to 'get us into the musical story' was a technique I had already explored quite extensively in my previous works (especially *Hansel and Gretel: A Nightmare in Eight Scenes*, which reimagines the familiar Grimm brothers' fairy-tale with a new spoken poetic text by Simon Armitage (Kaner and Armitage)). Unsurprisingly then, such thinking similarly informed my approach to constructing a musical narrative in 'The Land of Nod', given the importance, not least, of having clearly defined musical contrasts to convey the various states expressed in the poem (and my adaptive expansion of it shown above).

This eventually led me to divide my planned narrative into what Almén and Tarasti might consider *isotopies* (narrative-musical semantic units or groupings),^v all of which allude to other musical styles and real world ‘musical artefacts’, and can be summarized as follows:

1. Child at play (rhapsodic clarinet solo with heavily syncopated accompaniment, loosely inspired by certain types of bebop)
2. Chiming grandfather clock (playing Westminster chimes) to indicate the passage of time until seven o’clock (i.e. bedtime)
3. Initial parental interventions to try to calm the child (segments of lullaby material with a slow harmonic accompaniment)
4. Lullaby proper, leading to the child falling asleep; different lullaby melodies ‘mingle’ as the child gradually drifts off
5. Dreamscape featuring unconventional tunings and melodic material linked to other works depicting ‘small’ figures (imps, fairies etc.)
6. Distant clock chiming at dawn, musical ‘sunrise’, leading to:
7. Child waking up and gradually returning to play

Ryan’s Storyworlds

Each of the *isotopies* above might be seen, like many narrative texts, to project ‘different storyworlds’ (Ryan, ‘Story/Worlds/Media’ 41). Marie-Laure Ryan offers a productive model for examining the internal features of such worlds in detail, across different media, with her framework of analytical categories shown below:

- Existents: the characters of the story and the objects that have special significance for the plot
 - Setting: a space within which the existents are located
 - Physical Laws: principles that determine what kind of events can and cannot happen in a given story
 - Social rules and values: principles that determine the obligations of characters
 - Events: the causes of the changes of state that happen in the time span framed by the narrative
 - Mental events: the character’s reactions to perceived or actual states of affairs
- (Ryan, ‘Story/Worlds/Media’ 34–36)

The following discussion thus uses Ryan's methodological framework, in close conjunction with analyst Byron Almén's musically specific narrative approach, to unpick the 'storyworlds' of the movement and, in line with practice research methods, reveal the creative discoveries that led me to them through references to my musical sketches and compositional journal. (Music-specific terminology is explained in square brackets and endnotes wherever possible for non-specialist readers. Notated musical examples also include audio clips.) Inevitably, a degree of overlap occurs across Ryan's categories, which in music, as in other narrative forms, are frequently intertwined and co-dependent. In particular, I found, in earlier attempts at this analysis, that isolating the 'physical laws' (or narrative-musical syntax) from the 'existents' and their 'settings' they govern was too abstract and thus unproductive; I have therefore chosen to integrate these with the first two categories.

Storyworld Analysis of 'The Land of Nod'

Existents: Materials Used to Depict Characters and Objects in the Story

As Michael Rosen notes, one of the defining features of Stevenson's *Child's Garden of Verses* is that it represented 'the first time a writer published a sequence of poems expressed in the first person as if the writer were a child, addressed directly to a children's audience with the clear intention of expressing scenes and feelings of their own childhood' (Rosen 62).

However, as stated above, my own adaptive approach entailed elaborating Stevenson's suggestion of the existence of other entities beyond the child (such as the 'strangest things' and 'frightening sights' of the child's dreams), and even adding others to them (with a grandfather clock and singing parent) to suggest different agents interacting in the musical plot, with the distinct melodic materials examined below. (The accompanying harmonies and textures that provide the backdrop for these agents are explored in **Settings**.)^{vi}

Nevertheless, this 'interpersonal' (Almén 162) reading of the musical narrative comes with the significant caveat that, to the degree that it is possible in music, the piece can also be understood to convey the internal mental ('intrapyschic'; Almén 163) perspective and experiences of a child, in which not all of the other 'entities', such as those in the dreamscape, are really external to the child at all.

Moreover, for Ryan, the significance of narrative existents lies also in the wider cultural associations attached to them, which become ‘implicitly part of the storyworld’. Some of these associations are uncovered below, but the wider cultural connotations of the piece (and how it reflects my own views on childhood and wider values) are considered more thoroughly under **Social Rules and Values**.

1. Soloistic Clarinet Line – Child at Play before Bedtime

As noted in my diary entries, the ‘chaos’ of my young son’s play immediately before bed – ‘moving around very fast, across the whole space of the room, interested in one thing for a while sometimes, but then getting distracted briefly by another that happens to be in his path’ (11 May 2021) – suggested a kind of soloistic writing for the clarinet that reminded me of jazz saxophonist Charlie Parker’s improvisations, particularly in their rhythmic fluidity, extensive use of the full tessitura [pitch range] of the instrument, and elaborate ornamentation, often in apparently very loosely structured phrases (but underpinned by a tightly structured harmonic foundation). I therefore deliberately improvised this material as part of my sketching process (shown in Figure 1a, hence the crossings out and only partially notated rhythms) to imbue it with these spontaneous and whimsical qualities, before adapting it to the harmonic setting I eventually, and more circumspectly, devised for it (1b).

Nonetheless, as Almén argues, a topic is, in and of itself, ‘expressively static’; for it to be used in the service of a narrative, requires a sense of dynamism that comes through conflict (75). In this case, the exaggerated restlessness of the clarinet line, which is metrically, rhythmically, and harmonically far freer than a Parker solo (an effect that is compounded by the inherent instability of its accompaniment; see **Settings**) pushes it beyond the conventions of 1940s bebop with the explicit intention of conveying the chaotic (‘off the rails’) nature of an overtired child at play. If, as for Ryan (and indeed Almén, whose theories derive from the semiotician James Jakób Liszka), plot can be understood “as a transgression of boundaries” made possible by the rules that define them (Ryan, ‘Story/Worlds/Media’ 35), then immediately transgressing the stylistic norms associated with this specific topic affords it what Almén describes as a ‘markedness’ (47–50), which is key to establishing the dynamism of the musical narrative from the very opening.

Figure 1 'Child at play' clarinet line/topic from the opening of 'The Land of Nod' as (a) rapidly first sketched; and (b) as written in the completed score. (Both shown at concert pitch.)

(a) Original sketch, already rhapsodic and ornate in nature, whimsically moving across the instrument's range.

Accompanying string chords and cello 'walking bass' also imagined at this stage (but eventually changed to fit the harmonic 'setting')

The image shows a handwritten musical sketch for three parts: [clarinet line], [string chords], and ['walking bass' cello line]. The clarinet line is highly ornate with many accidentals and slurs. Handwritten notes above the staff include 'Almost Bop', 'fff down here before rising again?', and 'nat.'. The string chords and walking bass are also sketched with various rhythmic patterns and accidentals.

(b) Completed version, with same qualities but added energy suggested by implied rapid harmonic changes and energetic dynamics [audio]

Molto vivo, ♩ = 138ca.
(on the beat)

Clarinet in B \flat

ff playful, soloistic \rightarrow *mf* \rightarrow *ff:mp* \leftarrow *ff* \rightarrow *f* \rightarrow *ff*

7

Cl. *f* \rightarrow *fff* \rightarrow *mf* \rightarrow *ff* \rightarrow *f* \rightarrow *ff* \rightarrow *mf* \rightarrow *fff*

15 (on the beat) **A**

Cl. *f* \rightarrow *fff* \rightarrow *mf* \rightarrow *ff* \rightarrow *f* \rightarrow *mf*

The completed score for the clarinet line is shown in three systems. The first system is for Clarinet in B \flat and includes dynamic markings from *ff* to *fff*. The second system is for Clarinet (Cl.) and includes dynamic markings from *f* to *fff*. The third system is also for Clarinet (Cl.) and includes dynamic markings from *f* to *fff*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and articulation marks.

fashion, and my childhood tendency (as pointed out by my parents) to ignore or only partially notice external stimuli, during play.^{vii} Moreover, this distortion is compounded by the clock chiming far more frequently than it would in reality (at intervals of one or two minutes), interrupting the musical foreground of the child at play with increasing urgency until 7p.m. is reached. Narratively, this might be understood to reinforce the sense of conflict and urgency caused by the child's insistence on continuing to play, despite the inevitable passing of time.

3. Lullaby Segments, leading to 4. Extended 'Lullaby Theme'

Drawing on my first-hand experience of lulling a child to sleep before bed, in this material I attempted to portray the calming qualities of a range of lullabies familiar to me from the Western canon (*Berceuses, Wiegenlieder* etc.), especially Brahms's well-known *Wiegenlied* op. 49 no. 4, with its characteristic rocking minor third motive. The final theme I composed (heard at first in brief previews) interweaves impressions, quotations, and elaborations of both this and, as it develops, many other lullaby melodies (embedded into the clarinet line and played in counterpoint with it). The effect of this was one I imagined that hearing such lullabies might have on someone on the verge of sleep, in which state the melodies might slowly seem to merge and intermingle.

This has various narrative implications. If, as Ryan states, 'when a text mentions an object that exists in reality, all the real-world properties of this object can be imported into the storyworld', in this musical context, the quotations and allusions to 'real-world' lullabies could be seen to evoke numerous cultural ideas connected with parenting and parent-child relationships. Furthermore, from a broader narrative perspective, the calmness and sense of control exuded by this topic, and its 'triumph' over the 'bebop' topic after the seven clock strikes, could be interpreted through Almén's narrative-musical lens as affording it a *higher rank* (48), to the extent that when it ends with silence, the piece seems to as well (at b. 202 [6:38]), as if to give the parent 'the last word'. In the hierarchy of existents within the plot so far, the child's attempts to transgress its social boundaries—'the laws of the group they belong to' (Ryan, 'Story/Worlds/Media' 35)—seem to have failed (for now).

Figure 3 Lullaby materials, quotations and sources in 'The Land of Nod'

[audio]

Brahms, Wiegenlied op. 49 no.4, vocal line (excerpts)

[audio]

Stravinsky, Berceuses du Chat, iii. Dodo
vocal line (transposed up a minor third)

[audio]

'The Land of Nod': Lullaby theme

[audio]

Chopin, *Berceuse* op. 57, piano right hand
(transposed up a perfect fifth for comparison)

Fauré, *Berceuse* op. 16, violin
(transposed up a semitone for comparison)



[audio]

Traditional, *Rock-a-bye Baby*



[audio]

'The Land of Nod', further quotations in violins

Musical notation for 'The Land of Nod' quotations in violins. The first staff is for Violin I (Vln. I), starting at measure 183. It features a 'Chopin Berceuse quotation' and a 'Fauré Berceuse quotation/paraphrase'. The second staff is for Violin II (Vln. II), starting at measure 187. It features a 'Rock-a-bye Baby quotation/paraphrase'. Both staves show complex rhythmic patterns with triplets and other ornaments.

5. Dreamscape motives

As recorded in my diary entries written around the development of this material (which, as discussed, I intended to stand in stark relief to the preceding sections), I looked to various external sources in which imaginary creatures featured, both musical and literary.

For the melodic material have been looking at Telemann's Gulliver suite. Want it to feel impish or like Dr Seuss or something. Curiously stylised [...] Love the idea of light-footed little creatures

(Composer's Diary Entry 2 August 2021)

After much research and sketching I arrived at three distinct categories of ‘dream-like’ material:

- i. an ‘Imp’ dance suggesting a compound metre^{viii} (notated in triplets);
- ii. pizzicato [plucked] string and staccatissimo [very short] clarinet notes playing short descending stepwise figures, depicting ‘tiny footsteps’; and
- iii. neo-baroque violin lines.

Despite their differences all of these were initially conceived as following and/or overlapping one another in succession in a kind of surreal repetitive ritual, mirroring the plurality of the ‘strangest things’ and ‘many frightening sights’ described by the poem. The specific topical associations and characters of each are examined in turn below.

i. ‘Imp’ Dance

This melodic material, presented in the clarinet and violin in rhythmic unison, was partly intended as a response to the ‘impish’ dance found in Telemann’s *Gulliver Suite* portraying the tiny Lilliputians of the Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, alongside comparable works suggesting small imaginary creatures (including Debussy’s *Prélude ‘Puck’*). While the dance rhythms I eventually used imply a compound metre, unlike the dotted rhythmic feel of the Telemann and Debussy, the treble register, light articulation, soft dynamic, and conjunct melodic writing (with scalic flourishes) are unifying features of all the examples in Figure 4.

Figure 4 ‘Imp’ dance materials and sources displaying comparable use of conjunct melodic lines in treble register with light articulation and soft dynamic

(a) ‘Imp’ dance in ‘The Land of Nod’ [audio]

Initial motive in Clarinet and Violin



Elaborated and extended statement



(b) Debussy (1910), XI. '...La Danse de Puck' from *Préludes*, Book 1 [audio]

Capricieux et léger (♩ = 138)

elaboration of material with scalic flourishes, while maintaining the initial "light-footed" dynamic and rhythmic character

conjunct melodic line in treble with dance rhythms, soft dynamic and "light" articulation

Retenu

p

mf

6

3

The image shows a musical score for Debussy's 'La Danse de Puck' from the Préludes, Book 1. It is in 2/4 time with a tempo of quarter note = 138. The score is in B-flat major. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The treble clef has a conjunct melodic line with dance rhythms, and the bass clef has a simple accompaniment. The second system shows a continuation of the melody with a sixteenth-note flourish (marked '6') and a 'Retenu' (ritardando) marking. The dynamic changes to mezzo-forte (*mf*) and there is a triplet of eighth notes (marked '3') in the bass line.

(c) Telemann (1728), 'Lilliputian Chaconne' from *Gulliver Suite* for 2 violins [audio]

largely conjunct melodic line in treble with dance rhythms (played detached / with light articulation)

(rhythmically notated) light articulation in accompaniment

5

The image shows a musical score for Telemann's 'Lilliputian Chaconne' from the Gulliver Suite for two violins. It is in 3/2 time. The score is in D major. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a largely conjunct melodic line in the treble and a rhythmically notated accompaniment in the bass. The second system shows a continuation of the melody with a five-measure rest (marked '5') in the treble line, indicating a section where the right hand is silent.

ii. Tiny 'footsteps'

This musical idea, comprising falling figures that move by step in staccatissimo [very short] clarinet notes and pizzicato (plucked) strings, seemingly implanted itself more intuitively in my sketches. However, in retrospect, I now suspect an influence from Danish composer Hans Abrahamsen, who uses a similar effect in more than of his one recent works, and significantly, a movement of his piano concerto *Left Alone*, subtitled 'In the Time of Fairy Tales' found in the cellos.

Figure 5 Footstep effects in: (a) Kaner, 'The Land of Nod', and (b) Abrahamsen (2015)

(a) Footsteps in 'The Land of Nod' [audio]

Musical score for 'The Land of Nod' showing three staves: Clarinet (Cl.), Violin I (Vln. I), and Viola (Vla.). The score is in 3/4, 3/4, and 4/4 time signatures. Dynamic markings include *mf*, *pizz.*, *f*, and *ff*. There are also articulation marks like accents and slurs, and some fingerings (3, 5) are indicated.

(b) Cello part, Hans Abrahamsen (2015), *Left, Alone*, VI. 'In the time of Fairy Tales', bb. 42-45

Musical score for the Cello part of 'Left, Alone', VI. 'In the time of Fairy Tales', measures 42-45. The score is in 3/4, 2/2, 3/4, and 2/2 time signatures. Dynamic markings include *ppp*. Tempo markings are $\text{♩} = 189$ and $\text{♩} = 90$. Performance instructions include 'div. 1: pizz.; 2: col leg. batt.'

Left, Alone

Music by Hans Abrahamsen

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The above piece was certainly on my radar at the time of composition, no doubt because of its title, as I noted at the time of composition, even if my immediate focus was not on the above effect in particular:

Last night remember Abrahamsen's indication 'fairy tale time' in the sixth movement of his *Left, Alone* concerto. [...] I love the flurries - it really is like magic dust glistening or something.... Maybe there's an idea for me there too... (Composer's Diary Entry, 6 August 2021)

iii. Neo-baroque string lines (after Telemann's *Gulliver Suite*)

Here my indebtedness to Telemann and his *Gulliver Suite* was intentionally more overt. Having heard this work performed live during a period of collaboration with violinist Margaret Faultless of the Orchestra of the Age of the Enlightenment, I had long been particularly enamoured by a certain kind of violin passage work in Telemann's music (see violin 2, Figure 6b), which combines rapid runs and different bow strokes in a relatively low register. As emerged during my discussions with Faultless, this kind of material is far less

common in later violin repertory, for which the advent of the modern violin bow and use of the chin rest facilitates longer singing lines and, in faster passage work, tends to emphasize fluidity across the full range of the instrument.

Figure 6 Neo-baroque string lines in ‘The Land of Nod’ and sources

(a) Violin passagework in ‘The Land of Nod’ after Telemann [audio]



(b) Telemann (1728), *Gulliver Suite*, V. ‘Louré of the sitting Houyhnhnms / Fury of the artless Yahoos’ [audio]



Narratively speaking, the juxtaposition of these both anachronistic and fantastical existents within the plot, implies an unreality that negates the ‘physical’ (or music-syntactical) laws of the previous isotopies, and in doing so, completely upends the oppositional dynamics between the child, its parent and the passing of time, embodying Stevenson’s line ‘none to tell me what to do’. This arguably affords the child a ‘higher rank’ once again; the music engages in play with even greater whimsy than at the start, unimpeded by real-world, stylistic and/or parental boundaries. In a sense, the dream inhabitants seem to be a manifestation of the playful desires of the child dreamer. Yet in another, the dream itself might also encapsulate what Grotstein labels the ‘ineffable subject of the unconscious and

its inscrutable landscape and workings' (23) in its surreal ritualistic qualities, and perhaps even the intuitive origins of some of the materials I, as the composer, incorporated.

6. 'Dreamy' Reprise of Clock Chimes, leading to 'Sunrise' Chords

Following a reprise of the clock chimes to signal the end of the dream (7am), I employed a succession of chord pairings to evoke the sun rising, a reference to the dawn scene in my own *Hansel and Gretel: A Nightmare in Eight Scenes*, itself a homage to the opening of Ravel's famous dawn scene in *Daphnis et Chloé*. (See Kaner, *Composing Narratives* 123.)

In the 'Land of Nod', I specifically depict the intensifying warmth of the rising sun (and the rousing of the child) in the gradual ascent in the upper voice, increasing pace (first as shorter note values, but eventually with an *accelerando* [increase of musical tempo] into **[W]**), and accumulating harmonic intensity of the writing, shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7 Piano reduction of sunrise chords in 'The Land of Nod' **[audio]**

259 **U** ♩ = 76
unmuted, poco vib., tasto

ppp pp ppp p pp mp pp < mf

(tasto) → nat.

This has several ramifications for the narrative: as a symbol of renewal, the dawn signifies the restorative effect of sleep on the child, and also perhaps a return to order and the familiar 'real' storyworld of earlier in the plot. Yet the way that the dawn chords overlap with the fading away of the dreamscape which 'abruptly fade[s] from view, with the clock chimes' (Composer's Diary Entry, 5 August) perhaps points to the enigma at the end of Stevenson's poem, as waking seems to erase all memory of the dream itself ('nor can remember plain and clear / the curious music that I hear').

7. Coda

The final section of the movement essentially features no new materials or existents; the clarinet lines that appear from **[V]** are intended to represent the waking and return to play

of the child-protagonist, underscored by a gradual transformation of the accelerating ‘sunrise’ chords into an accompanimental texture more like that of the opening, whilst simultaneously serving the more rhetorical function of closing the piece. Narratively, however, the return of the child to the musical foreground is highly significant because, though still playful and flamboyant in character, it is crucially no longer in conflict with any other agents in the plot, and has the actual ‘last word’ (notes) in the piece.

Settings: Harmonic Landscapes and Textural Backdrops in which Existents are Located

1. ‘Bebop’ textures and harmonies behind the Clarinet line

As seen above in my sketch (Figure 1a), the accompaniment for these ‘bebop’ clarinet lines was a feature of its original conception, underpinned by a ‘walking bass’ pizzicato [plucked] part for the cello, and syncopated middle register harmonic filling in close spacings (often diatonic clusters [chords consisting of adjacent notes]) that are reminiscent of bebop-era improvised piano accompaniments. As well as establishing its topical identity, this sets up a specific (intervallic) profile for the harmonic accompaniment of this material, facilitating one of the musical ‘norms’ with which the subsequent materials (the grandfather clock, dreamscape) can readily be contrasted.

However, as stated above, the whimsical, chaotic quality of the writing pushes it beyond 1940s jazz pastiche to generate a sense of narrative markedness and tension. A significant factor in the realisation of this comes from the harmonic and rhythmic relationship between the different elements of the texture. Harmonic conflict is, for example, generated by false relations between the bass and higher registers, as for example between the G \flat and G \sharp in the very first beat of the piece, shown in Figure 8.^{ix} Likewise, in this same passage, clarinet, mid-register string chords and cello line switch frequently between rhythmic and metric confluence and independence that might convey a lack of a singular purpose in its movements (recalling that I had the image of my son ‘moving around very fast[...] interested in one thing for a while sometimes, but then getting distracted briefly by another’). Through Almén’s theoretical lens this might be considered a strategic musical ‘character flaw’ that contributes to the ‘markedness’ described earlier. (Cf. the discussion of the first theme in the opening movement of Schubert’s Piano Sonata in B \flat , D. 960 in Almén 141–45.)

Figure 8 Opening of 'The Land of Nod' with harmonic reduction [audio]

The musical score for the opening of 'The Land of Nod' consists of a Harmonic Reduction and five instrumental staves: Clarinet (Cl.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vc.).

- Harmonic Reduction:** Shows a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. It includes a 'G#/G# false relation' annotation.
- Cl.:** Features a melodic line with dynamic markings from *ff* to *mf*, and articulations including 'playful, soloistic', 'pizz.', 'arco', 'ftr.', and 'nat.'. It includes triplet and quintuplet markings.
- Vln. I & II:** Play sustained chords with dynamic markings ranging from *pp* to *f*. The Vln. I part includes a 'pizz.' marking.
- Vla.:** Plays sustained chords with dynamic markings from *pp* to *f*.
- Vc.:** Provides a walking bass line with dynamic markings from *mf* to *ff*. It includes triplet markings.

Annotations at the bottom of the score include 'metric independence in cello walking bass line' and 'cello with clarinet and strings'.

2. Grandfather Clock and Bell Chords

As acknowledged above, generating bell effects for this ensemble presented certain technical difficulties. However, drawing on one of my own earlier piano works,^x I focused on emulating the complex acoustical properties of bells in my harmonisation of the Westminster Chimes melody. For the musically literate, this was achieved by means of 'additive instrumental synthesis' (Fineberg 85) governing: firstly, their pitch (the natural inharmonicity of bells,^{xi} generated by their complex subharmonics, or 'hum tones', and non-harmonic upper partials); and secondly, their characteristic attack and decay envelope, which is briefly very loud, as the bell is struck, but immediately much quieter in the slow decay of their resonance (replicated in the *ffpp* markings and pizzicato doublings).

Figure 9 Westminster Chimes in 'The Land of Nod' with piano reduction and analysis [audio]

Chiming Grandfather Clock on Westminster Chimes

The score is for a 4/4 piece in G major, starting at measure 35. It features a piano reduction and an orchestral arrangement. The piano part includes (inharmonic) overtones, a bell strike note (perceived fundamental), and a hum note. The orchestral parts are as follows:

- Clarinet (Cl.):** Starts with a *ffpp* dynamic, marked 'like a bell'. It plays a melodic line with dynamics ranging from *ff* to *ppp*, including a triplet and a *senza vib.* section.
- Violin I (Vln. I):** Plays a sustained chord with *ffpp* dynamics, marked 'like a bell'. Dynamics range from *ppp* to *ffp*.
- Violin II (Vln. II):** Plays a sustained chord with *ffpp* dynamics, marked 'like a bell'. Dynamics range from *ppp* to *p*.
- Viola (Vla.):** Plays a sustained chord with *ffpp* dynamics, marked 'like a bell'. Dynamics range from *ppp* to *mf:p warm*.
- Violoncello (Vc.):** Plays a sustained chord with *ffpp* dynamics, marked 'like a bell'. Dynamics range from *ppp* to *ppp*.

Additional annotations include 'lingering resonance from all bells' in the piano part and 'poco vib.' in the Viola part.

Having done this relatively freely based largely on my earlier experience of writing bell effects, I felt it important to capture more specifically the sonority of a genuine grandfather clock, and so transcribed the overtones of a striking clock I found online (The Clock Depot) with the aid of computer software. However, I found this harmonically somewhat incompatible musically with the material I had already composed, so allowed myself simply to extract certain characteristic features of this bell's sound that I considered evocative enough to make the allusion clear to listeners, before adapting them to fit the existing musical landscape of the work. As H. Porter Abbott puts it, good adapters 'don't copy'; rather 'they steal what they want and leave the rest' (105).

Figure 10 Original grandfather clock bell, and bell chord used by the author in 'The Land of Nod' [audio]

3. and 4. 'Sunset' Chord Pairs accompanying Lullaby Themes, and 6. 'Sunrise' Chord Pairs

The harmonic accompaniment of the lullaby themes was primarily intended to support the calming character of its melodies. My use of chord pairings here, in the upper middle register, links to the chord pairings found elsewhere in the work (see 5. below) but has a specific spacing and intervallic profile that affirms its identity. The rocking minor thirds in the upper voice provide a melodic connection with the lullaby theme itself; topically speaking, the musical gesture might be compared with composer Jonathan Harvey's use of chord pairings to depict the intake and exhalation of breath in a 'state of single pointed concentration' in his ensemble work *Tranquil Abiding* (Harvey [frontmatter, v]).

Figure 11 'Sunset' chords used to accompany lullaby theme [audio]

Moreover, these chords (shown in Figure 11) might also be heard as counterparts to the 'sunrise' chords of isotopy 6 (which also embed the falling minor third motive within them; see Figure 7). In this case, the slow long-range descent of a semitone between bars 172-191 [4:48-6:00] might be seen as the musical 'opposite' of the rapidly rising upper voice of the 'sunrise' chords.^{xii} As such, this link establishes both sets of chord pairings as contrasting iterations of closely related materials, narratively further linked by their framing of the child's sleep and the restorative qualities associated with it.

5. Dreamscape Harmonies

Perhaps the most intricate set of compositional decisions for me in writing the work arose in designing the harmonic world of the dreamscape. Having established the norms of the child protagonist's waking world, it seemed imperative to generate a musical backdrop that encapsulated the 'curious and 'frightening sights' of Stevenson's poem, to the extent that it could constitute an entire second storyworld within the narrative. For Stevenson's child subject, the dreamworld is strangely real, an actual location to which they 'have to go', with its own set of physical (or music-syntactical) laws. For Ryan, this could be read as generating an 'ontological multiplicity' within the story ('Story/Worlds/Media' 41) that might be interpreted as undermining or subverting the previously accepted boundaries of the narrative altogether.

Figure 12 Harmonic materials employed for dreamscape in 'The Land of Nod' [audio]

The musical score for Figure 12 is written in G major and consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains several chords labeled 'main chord pair' (chords *a* and *b*), 'intensification' chords (chords 223 and 225), a 'climax chord at [R]', and 'fuzzy' clock chimes. The bass staff contains 'C overtones' and 'A overtones' for chords *a* and *b*, and 'sunrise' chords from [U]. A note in the bass staff is marked 'pizz.' and 'bass notes in cello (not fundamentals; c.f. also climax chord)'.

Shown above in Figure 12, I devised another chord pairing for this purpose (chords *a* and *b*, which are simply transpositions of one another). However, unlike those used earlier, both chords derive from natural (harmonic) overtones on C and A respectively, incorporating the flattened seventh partial, which in relation to standard western tunings sounds noticeably 'out of tune'.^{xiii} To foreground this 'strangeness', neither chord is ever presented with its respective C or A fundamental in the bass, which to my ears, would have diminished this detuned quality by promoting too strong a sense of harmonic grounding and stability. (The harmonic series is, by definition, an incredibly stable sonority.) Using other bass notes to harmonize these chords creates a limited degree of resonance, but also generates sufficient tension to drive the music to move forward harmonically (or back and forth, in this case).

Thus, on the simplest level, the use of these microtones^{xiv} (and subsequent microtonal inflection of the melodies against these harmonies) can be seen to function, as Christopher Dingle and Julian Anderson put it, as a means to ‘provide that different world of colours’ (125). Yet on a more nuanced one, their inherent familiarity (we hear, but are not consciously aware of, the seventh harmonic, in every note that someone sings) has an uncanny quality that could be understood, paradoxically, as ‘voicing’ the ineffable.

Alongside this, there were several further aspects of the nature of dreams that informed my approach. As shown in my diary, when trying to develop my initial sketches for this section, I began to consider ideas of suspended and circular time as representative of dream states:

Working on dream sequence in first movt.
Thinking about the slow harmonic rhythm and harmonic series tuning - hadn’t really realised but it seems to suggest suspended time because the harmonic rhythm is so slow (literally but also in the way that when it does move, it doesn’t go anywhere - it’s circular or something like that.) (Composer’s Diary Entry 2 May 2021)

Having made this intuitive leap, I then explored literary equivalents for connected ideas:

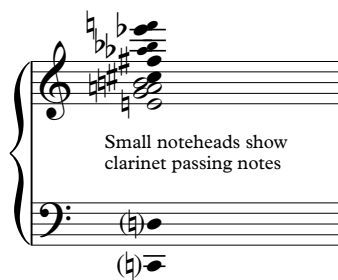
Trying to think if there’s a link to an equivalent literary device here to suggest time has been suspended... Borges? Saramago? Kafka?
(— 5 mins later)
Just having a look at the House of Asterion (aka the Minotaur) by JLB [JL Borges] – which has an infinite number of doors and is as big as the world. (It is the world). Each part of the house occurs many times.
Maybe something here? The idea that everywhere we go in the music, we’re still looking at the same thing (or replicas of it)?
‘My other nightmare is that of the mirror. The two are not distinct, as it only takes two facing mirrors to construct a labyrinth. I remember seeing, in the house of Dora de Alvear in the Begrano district, a circular room **whose walls and doors were mirrored, so that whoever entered the room found himself at the center of a truly infinite labyrinth.**’
Perhaps this is why the chords are actually just transpositions of each other. It’s looped around on itself....
(Composer’s Diary Entry 2 August 2021)
(Quotations are from Adler; emphasis added at time of journaling.)

Nevertheless, as noted later in my diary, I encountered difficulties working with this kind of circularity: both in terms of maintaining musical interest and momentum, but also when attempting to generate a sense of climax at the end of this section, before the child awakes.

Thinking about how to achieve a climax without a sense of ‘arrival’ - I don’t want it to go anywhere, just become ‘maximally of itself’, using these harmonic series chords and quite elaborate but ultimately non-developmental materials...
Plan is to segue from the most active/climactic moment back into clock chimes, which I’ve sketched, but need to make this harmonically not underwhelming because of the repetitive approach. (Composer’s Diary Entry 5 August 2021)

This ultimately led me to briefly introduce what I label above as ‘intensification’ chords, an additional pair of harmonies (containing no microtones) that would briefly move the music away from the original chord pairing, in order to prepare for the music’s arrival on the climax chord, which in itself is a ‘reharmonization’ of chord *a*. (See Figure 12 above.) Moreover, when I added passing notes between the notes of the chord, a 12-note aggregate^{xv} was created (Figure 13), which, in its use of all available chromatic pitch classes, arguably embodies this sense of ‘maximality’.

Figure 13 Climax chord analysis (detail) [audio]



The ensuing ‘segue’ into the reprised clock chimes was prompted by a further narrative image:

Think that maybe the solution for the climax is to cut it short and have the dream abruptly fade from view, with the clock chimes appearing as if they’ve interfered with the dream to wake you up. (Composer’s Diary Entry, 5 August 2021)

7. Coda

Emerging seamlessly from the sunrise that follows the chimes, the accompaniment in the final passage of the piece melds two previous ‘settings’: snatches of the ‘bebop’ accompaniment support the re-energized return of the opening clarinet line, while at the same time, the melodic upper voice of the sunrise chords continues to rise. Thus, rather than proceeding whimsically and in conflict with other intervening elements as in isotopy 1, the environment surrounding the clarinet line has its own intrinsic sense of forward momentum that leads directly to the final chord of the piece (b. 277 [9:14]).

Through Almén’s lens, this might represent the ‘unstable’ and ‘flawed’ topical materials from the opening finally achieving a new position of dominance (higher ‘rank’) within the musical plot hierarchy. And crucially, this implies that it is the child, not the parent, who emerges as

the real 'hero' of the story by overcoming narrative conflict not through victorious confrontation, but *via the act of imagination* in dreaming, perhaps just as, 'chameleon-like in his capacity to imagine himself in many roles', Stevenson's child 'transcends the outside world and reality' (Federico 99).

Events

The changing states of the narrative and, importantly for Ryan 'the causes of the changes of state', have now already been explored in some detail in the foregoing discussion. A more comprehensive account detailing the events of each *isotopy* in turn can be found, linked to their attendant topics and melodic material can be found in my doctoral commentary (Kaner, *Composing Narratives* 133–35). Yet this, and the foregoing analysis arguably only goes some way to uncovering the 'historical, social and cultural contexts' needed, according to Stewart, for generating a narrative of the creative process 'shaped through autobiography as a portrait-of-self that mirrors and situates' my experience as an artist, as 'a process for theorising [my] practice' (Stewart 126). The remaining categories of Ryan's storyworld model will therefore be dedicated to examining the wider historical, social, and cultural contextual factors underpinning my adaptive approach.

Mental Events

In a more literal sense, determining the 'the motivations of the agents, and in the case of both actions and accidental events, [...] the emotional reactions of the affected characters' (Ryan, 'Story/Worlds/Media' 36) in a solely musical context, may seem inherently speculative, or worse still, an act of 'ventriloquism' given that, as Kramer posits, '[m]usic is apparently disembodied sound, sound rendered independent of its sources and cut into form'. Nevertheless, as Kramer continues, it 'feels, acts and sounds like subjectivity. Like a "magnetic" or "electrifying" force of personality, music can animate one subject after another, but it does so without any personality, without itself being or having a subject' (164). The ways in which I have imbued the musical agents with narrative teleological impulses and emotive qualities have been uncovered through the examination of topic and Almén's narrative-musical theoretical toolkit. However, there are also many ideas and assumptions behind Stevenson's poem to consider in terms of the motivations of the child-

subject of the poem, and the extent to which it influenced my own musical rendering of the child in an adaptation that equally embodies many of my own tacit and explicit views on childhood, parenting, and broader positionality.

Waterson, Federico, and Rosen all highlight Stevenson's preoccupation throughout *A Child's Garden of Verses*, of the 'of the value, power, and pleasure of imaginative play with children' (Rosen 62). Written when the poet was suffering with severe lung-disease, there is a prevailing theme of 'the human imagination as survival' (Federico 99) and an 'Arcadian relief from the pain of his illnesses' (Rosen 55). To a degree, this points to a conventional late nineteenth-century nostalgia for, or even idealization of the innocence of childhood, possibly undergirded by Stevenson's Calvinist beliefs on preserving children from the 'powers of evil' (Waterston 164; see also Rosen 54). Yet the extent to which many, if not all, the poems 'celebrate the pleasure derived from the transforming power of creativity' in way that does not 'fit neatly into concepts of innocence or sentimentality' (Rosen 68–69) is heralded by all three critics, who note Stevenson's own remarks that due to illness, his 'childhood was in reality a very mixed experience, full of fever, nightmare, insomnia, painful days and interminable nights' (Maixner 158). On some level, therefore, Stevenson's 'innovative and insightful' exploration of 'imaginative play' (Rosen 68) could be understood as an 'analog for the artist's journey into the subterranean parts of the self' (Federico 99) written out of 'subconscious need to locate certain energies within himself, parts of the psyche he thought he had evicted but that still want his attention' (103).

Social Rules and Values

This kind of projection of the writer's own complex feelings (conscious and unconscious) on childhood onto the subject of the poem no doubt mirrors my own. My (largely intuitive) decision to present the dreamscape as an independently viable rival storyworld no doubt reflects my sympathy with Stevenson's sense of refuge in the imagination, especially one where adult societal expectations no longer seem to apply ('with none to tell me what to do'). In addition, my overt drawing on my parental experiences reflects my transposition of the child subject to a contemporary setting with all the personal cultural baggage that might entail, including the normative power dynamics between myself and my infant son at the

time (even if the narrative does depend on these), and the reflections on my own childhood and sense of nostalgia that it provoked in me. As such, this transposition of the story to another medium and era represents a complex intertwining of myriad sets of cultural values, and any attempt to unpick them will inevitably be incomplete and flawed (not helped of course by the semantic non-specificity of instrumental music.) Nevertheless, acknowledging these flaws, I will briefly reflect here on my positionality and intersecting identities with the aim of, if not fully revealing, offering a least some sense of their impact on this work, and my wider practice and status as a composer, researcher and academic.

To the casual observer, I might be seen as the orthodox image of the contemporary composer: heterosexual, cis-male, well-educated and middle-class. (Cf. BASCA.) Yet my racial identity is a more nuanced question for me; though frequently perceived as white (a perception that sometimes causes me unease), I am of mixed heritage, as the grandson of Jamaican, German, and Romanian-Jewish immigrants to the UK. Thanks to my siblings I also consider myself adjacent to the LGBTQ+ community and try to remain attuned to their concerns. How this expresses itself in my creative work (which is, so far, rarely overtly political) is hard to pin down, but the cosmopolitan nature of my tastes, and ‘an ability to look through others’ eyes’ (Power) has been noted by colleagues and commentators. Indeed, a broad sense of pluralism feels deeply intrinsic to my practice and could be seen to be reflected in the eclectic combination of musical topics found in ‘The Land of Nod’. For instance, learning jazz piano before attending university was a major part of my route into composition (and continues to exert a strong influence on my harmonic and rhythmic language), and the allusions to Charlie Parker in the work are therefore filtered through a deeply personal embedding within my own musical language, rather than I hope, an act of direct appropriation; the writing comes from a position of personal respect for his artistry, and my admiration for it, cognisant of the societal and cultural circumstances in which he lived and worked. Naming his influence on my work is intended to convey my reverence for it, and I would never try to claim that what I have written here is genuinely bebop or any authentic form of jazz.

Re-evaluating the piece now, I cannot help but feel that it also represents something of a bridge for me between stages of my own life. Though unaware at the time, I suspect the

piece can, like Stevenson's volume, as a conduit for processing my own life circumstances, which at the time of composition, meant bidding farewell to a certain kind of innocence (an extended childhood even) that I experienced pre-Covid and shifting to a certain type of pragmatic maturity (partly, as a result of being a parent) and acceptance of stark reality. I still feel much nostalgia and sympathy for the idea of innocent escapism in the imagination, particularly yearning for the time before creativity became a professional occupation for me. In part, this sense is inextricably linked with the completion of my own doctorate (coloured also by its completion being significantly drawn-out due to Covid), which I had previously resisted due to my scepticism of the very idea of practice research. So, in multiple ways perhaps, the creation of the piece is entangled with a kind of personal narrative journey from innocence to experience and the (not always willing) acceptance of change and ageing. Yet examining these complex overlapping sensations now gives me a somewhat clearer sense of who I am and would like to continue to be as an artist, practitioner and educator, echoing Stewart's mission statement that practice research should 'blur the boundaries of aesthetics and experience' to reveal the 'complex dynamics involved in the phenomenology of artistic practice' (126).

Responses

As shown, fundamental to my transmediation of the narrative from poetry to music is its use of topics and their attendant cultural resonances. However, the degree to which listeners can recognize this referentiality is entirely dependent on their specific cultural knowledge and background. Indeed, even in the (semantically more specific) cases of literature and film, Umberto Eco notes that intertextuality usually ‘provokes in the addressee a sort of intense emotion accompanied by the *vague* feeling of a *déjà vu*’, qualifying that no ‘intertextual archetype is necessarily “universal”’ (Eco, ‘Casablanca’ 5; my emphasis). Indeed, in *Dire quasi la stessa cosa*, he distinguishes between the ‘naïve’ and ‘cultured reader’, where the former ‘does not detect the quotations and follows the same development of discourse and plot as if what is being recounted was new and unexpected’ whereas the latter can ‘detect the cross references and sees them as mischievous quotations’ (transl. in Premier 93). Perhaps unsurprisingly then, those most familiar with my musical output, including the Goldfield Ensemble’s clarinetist Kate Romano (who premiered both this work and several others by me), did pick up on some of the topical allusions and mimicry within the piece: ‘It’s very very playful and mischievous... are you telling a story? I can hear the clock chiming again and again...” (Extract from WhatsApp conversation with Romano in advance of the premiere, 26 November 2021). Yet, as I anticipated, no listener could (nor should) detect all of them; even Romano stated she had not ‘immediately spotted’ any specific lullabies in quotation until I pointed them out.

Reflecting more broadly on this question of specificity and symbolism in storytelling across different media, Ryan notes:

the mental construction of story-worlds is affected by the types of signs that a medium uses. This process of mental construction is highly sensitive to the distinction between language-based and visual media. Language-based narratives require an extensive filling-in work because language speaks to the mind and not directly to the senses. (Ryan, ‘Story/Worlds/Media’ 42)

Extending this to musical adaptations, one could argue that even more ‘filling-in’ is required because music is even more vague in its ability to describe phenomena beyond itself. In other ways, however, its more immediate emotive effects, because it speaks ‘directly to the senses’ might be an advantage for the musical storyteller: music psychologist Patrik Juslin

claims that 'we get emotionally aroused by voice-like expressive modulations in music via a process in which a neural mechanism responds quickly and automatically to certain sets of stimulus features as if they belonged to a human voice, which leads us to 'mirror' the perceived emotion internally' (Juslin 291).

Indeed, when the work eventually reached a wider audience via the release of the recording, one reviewer noted 'although I wouldn't have deduced these scenarios from listening alone, as with the whole disc there is characterful momentum that makes musical sense, whatever the story it conjures up for any particular listener' (Hughes). The latter response, at least then, fulfils the aim I expressed in my original doctoral commentary on the work: 'that a listener would have some sense of the music's narrative conception and detect elements (rather than all) of its characterisation and changing [narrative] hierarchies over time' (Kaner, *Composing Narratives* 138). Thus my hope is that listeners might sense the narrative intentions behind the piece, but also that it is 'independently viable', as Boyd would have it ('Making Adaptation Studies Adaptive' 11), in its fulfilment of a *musical* definition of narrative (according to Almén and others). They should feel able to engage with the musical storytelling on its own terms, but their experience might be enhanced significantly by seeing the work as an adaptation and reading Stevenson's poem alongside.

Conclusions

Returning to the state of affairs in compositional practice research set out earlier, the foregoing analysis might be seen as something of a case study. As Scheuregger and Leedham note, composers often 'feel the pressure to skew their writings about their own work towards a kind of quasi- scientific framework' ('The Composer's Place in Academia' 4). Sharing and unpacking my practice outside the domain of music studies, specifically in the inherently interdisciplinary arena of adaptation studies seems to me to present one potentially valuable solution to this conundrum, forcing me away from excessive technical description and towards the 'more exploratory, wide-ranging and—perhaps more honest and informative—methodologies of self-reflection and examination of process [that] are neglected by composers' (Leedham and Scheuregger, 'The Composer's Place in Academia' 4). Looking at the broader picture, Hutcheon and Hutcheon's notion of 'composers as adaptors' need not be limited to those explicitly working with texts; it is very common for composers to claim their work is 'inspired by' or 'responds' to a second source of some kind, yet such claims are often vague and simply accepted with scant scrutiny. Rather than serving as a blueprint (which might falsely imply that there is consistency across practitioners' approaches), I hope this article might simply open the door for colleagues to explore their own frameworks for analysing and disseminating their own adaptive processes. And while other analytical frameworks will be suited to other composers' needs, its methodological eclecticism might be understood, as Nelson claims of practice research more widely, to challenge 'fundamental assumptions about "research and knowledge"' in the arts and humanities (4), resulting in what Stewart describes as a 'bricolage' that 'works within and between competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms', to offer 'vast possibilities' that 'reflect the diverse ways of artistic practices' (127).

Writing about Stevenson's poetic depictions of dreams, Federico states, '[c]reative work takes place in an intermediate space between cognition and intuition', and 'writing often feels like trying to describe a dream to someone. [...] To try to recount it in everyday prose seems thin and inadequate[...] *incommunicable* was his word' (Federico 104). Perhaps with the right tools, composers at least, might have some success in making their intuitive, 'tacit

knowledge[,] more explicit' (Nelson 20), and by sharing it in 'more honest', and potentially informative ways, better communicate where their own 'curious music' comes from.

ⁱ Translation by Roger Nichols (in Ravel 19).

ⁱⁱ From a cynical viewpoint, a key motivating factor for doing so in the UK is the REF (Research Excellence Framework, which ranks research outputs according to quality which is the used to allocate government research funding to HEIs), whose commodification and measurement of scholarly, and in this case, artistic work, is often decried as a marker of the ever increasing encroachment of neoliberal ideology into British academic spaces. (See, for example, Pabst; Pace, 'Composition, Performance, the REF, and Teaching'.)

ⁱⁱⁱ For those unfamiliar with classical instrumental music, this ensemble consists of a single clarinet and string quartet (two violins, viola and cello), despite its somewhat confusing name.

^{iv} Because of this, I have resisted the temptation to consider the piece an instance of *ekphrasis*, despite significantly expanded definitions of the term proposed by Siglind Bruhn (and subsequently by Goehr; and Russ), to include any kind of 'representation in one medium of a text composed in another medium' (S. Bruhn 7). Indeed, my work could be seen to fit, rather closely, the definition of *musical ekphrasis* offered by Russ, 'in which the new work is less concerned with description, but complements the original, trying to do what that original could not'. Yet these definitions are not widely accepted by either adaptation or music scholars; distinguishing *musical ekphrasis* from programme music is particularly slippery, as noted in James Melo's review of Bruhn's book (Melo 606). Irrespective of the merits of the above authors' applications of the term, I prefer the open-endedness of the label 'transmedia adaptation' to describe my piece, as it is not intended to represent the poem itself for listeners, but instead to suggest a narrative that is itself an adaptation, or reimagining, of Stevenson's poem, as I will go on to show.

^v The term is derived from semiotics, and is perhaps most clearly defined by Eco, as 'a constancy in going in a direction that a text exhibits when submitted to rules of interpretative coherence' (Eco, 'Two Problems in Textual Interpretation' 153).

^{vi} Of course, musical parameters such as melody and harmony also rarely operate independently of one another, and I acknowledge this co-dependence below; yet drawing a degree of distinction between them is, I believe, of analytical value here.

^{vii} The decision to factor this into my composition was also possibly informed by my own curiously distorted sense of time while watching my young child play, owing to parental sleep deprivation, but also the well documented negative effect of the Covid-19 lockdowns on the wider population's perception of time in 2020-21. (See, for example, Pawlak and Sahraie.)

^{viii} A musical metre in which the beats themselves are subdivided into three, such as in the nursery rhyme 'Rockabye Baby', or 'We are the Champions' by Queen.

^{ix} A musical false relation (or ‘cross-relation’) is defined as ‘the appearance of a note with the same letter-name in different parts (or ‘voices’) of contiguous or the same chords, in one case inflected (# or ♭) and in the other uninflected (e.g. F_♮ and F_♯)’ (Kennedy et al.). The effect often results in a perceived harmonic dissonance or tension between these two notes.

^x The ‘Mazurka’ from my *Dance Suite* (2018) which in turn took inspiration from ‘Carillon Nocturne’ by George Enescu (1958).

^{xi} Inharmonicity (or ‘non-harmonic spectra’) describes instrumental sounds which have ‘less defined pitch, or no identifiable pitch at all’, such as bells (Fineberg 91). While most pitched instruments (e.g. the human singing voice, string, woodwind, and brass instruments) produce musical tones with *harmonic* overtones that occur in simple mathematical relationships (1:2, 1:3, 1:4 etc.) above the pitch that listeners perceive (known as the *fundamental*), bells, and many other metallic percussion instruments produce complex and conflicting overtones that generate their characteristically complex and ‘out of tune’ sound. This is because the body of such instruments physically vibrates in unusual ways when struck, due to their shape and material composition. In some cases, the effect is extreme enough to cause disagreements between listeners as to what ‘note’ (i.e. fundamental) an individual instrument produces, or the perception of multiple ‘notes’. (See Fineberg 91–95.)

^{xii} Their higher register and wider intervallic spacing (with prominent ninths and sevenths) may also be contrasted with the prominent seconds, sixths, and lower register of the ‘sunrise’ chords.

^{xiii} For the unfamiliar, this is perhaps a surprising property of certain natural ‘harmonic’ overtones (produced, for example by the human voice and string instruments). The seventh harmonic is the most easily isolated of these ‘detuned’ overtones, sounding approximately a sixth of a tone lower than the nearest equivalent pitch in standard western tuning. (See Fineberg 85–86.)

^{xiv} Crudely put, any pitch that cannot be played on a piano in standard western tuning (‘equal temperament’). The term ‘microtones’ is used because it implies the use of smaller distances between notes than the standard western semitone. (See Fineberg 84.)

^{xv} A chord containing all notes of the 12-notes chromatic scale. The specific distribution of these twelve notes (their ‘spacing’) greatly affects the overall sonority and resonance of the resultant harmony, which can range from relatively consonant to extremely discordant, in conjunction with other factors such as instrumentation.

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