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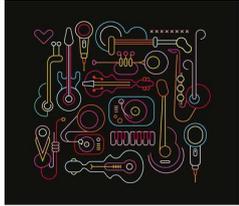
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INTERPRETING TRANSMEDIA AND MULTIMODAL NARRATIVES

Steven Wilson’s “The Raven That Refused to Sing”

Lori Burns

Steven Wilson (b. 1967) is acclaimed for his contributions to the genre of progressive rock, through his band Porcupine Tree and his solo projects, as well as through his collaborations with a number of progressive rock bands (e.g., Opeth, King Crimson, Jethro Tull, and Yes).¹ While his music explores progressive forms and arrangements, his extramusical narratives reveal his preoccupations—in keeping with the genre of progressive rock—with human experience. In interviews, Wilson describes his aim to communicate his album narratives through multi-dimensional modes of artistic expression, including texts, music, and images, as well as a variety of media, including CDs, DVDs, music videos, internet blogs, and elaborate special edition books featuring artwork and other material artifacts. Working with complex gatherings of artistic materials, Wilson builds powerful stories about the human condition that play out in our textual, musical, and visual imaginations. Describing the effect that he intends to create with his work, he writes, “I always think of listening to the kind of records I make as being the musical equivalent of watching a movie, an experience that gradually unfolds, and where each song is a scene that forms only a part of the whole story.”²

The Raven That Refused to Sing (And Other Stories) (Kscope 240, 2013) features live band members Nick Beggs (bass), Marco Minnemann (drums), Guthrie Govan (guitar), Adam Holzman (keyboards), and Theo Travis (winds), with whom he recorded the six tracks in so many days. Wilson’s goal for the album was a series of live takes with analog recording and minimal digital editing, aiming to achieve a sense of logic and storytelling.³ He considered the writing to be inspired by the ghost stories of 19th-century authors Poe and Dickens, which he valued for their use of the supernatural elements, not for their own sake but as a dramatic device to amplify emotional stories.⁴ He collaborated with visual artist Hajo Müller to develop a special edition book featuring Müller’s illustrations for each of the six songs on the album, culminating in an illustrated nine-chapter story for the title track. Basing her visual concept upon Müller’s illustrations, videographer Jess Cope created stop-motion animation video treatments for two of the songs on the album, “Drive Home” and “The Raven That Refused to Sing.”⁵ The album and its materials have been well received by the critical press, with a celebration of the musicianship, the conceptual compositional work, the integration of songwriting and production, and the organic long-form approach reminiscent of the 1970s.⁶

The Raven That Refused to Sing (And Other Stories) is a multifaceted material development of a concept album in which the individual materials and media work together to illuminate the stories being told. Taken as individual elements (e.g., the recording, the music videos, or the special edition book) important details of Wilson's narrative development remain elusive and we are unable to form a complete reading of the narrative. Taken as a whole, the individual materials work together to shape a comprehensive grasp of the larger work.⁷ In Gérard Genette's understanding, these "paratextual" materials extend the text "in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of this verb but also in the strongest sense: to *make present*, to ensure the text's presence in the world."⁸ Serge Lacasse transfers Genette's concept of the paratext to popular music production, employing the term paraphonography to account for the materials that extend and mediate a recording.⁹ In the case of a concept album, such paraphonographic materials can become a vital part of the narrative, with specific elements of the story emerging through the individual materials such as images and written texts.

To account for the aesthetic turn toward new digital media that rely upon a range of materials and technologies, Henry Jenkins coined the term "transmedia storytelling" in which a "story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole."¹⁰ In addition to analytic insights that can emerge from being attentive to *transmedia storytelling*, it is equally important for the analyst of such materials to address their *multimodal* nature. Media narratologists Marie-Laure Ryan and Jan-Noël Thon explain that multimodality is characterized by the integration of different types of signs (e.g., moving images, spoken language, music) within the same media object.¹¹ Based on this understanding, I consider multimodality to comprise the artistic integration of multiple semiotic modes within one media text. In this regard, the term multimodal must be carefully distinguished from the term *multimedia*, which connotes an artistic work that features the simultaneous presentation of different media texts, such as the screening of a film and/or delivery of a spoken narrative during a live music concert.¹² In an analysis of a multimedia performance, the analyst might address the ways in which the different media texts intersect, whereas an analysis of a multimodal work focuses on the layers of expression across a range of semiotic channels that are integrated within a single artifact.¹³

My analysis of the transmedia and multimodal narrative is thus based upon consideration of the paraphonographic materials as they contribute individual elements to the narrative and the elucidation of the multimodal nature of those materials. In the case of Steven Wilson's "The Raven that Refused to Sing," the *transmedia* storytelling occurs in and through the recorded song and its lyrics, the illustrated story released in the special edition, the music video, and interviews in which Steven Wilson describes his creative process. The *multimodal* storytelling occurs in and through the individual texts themselves (e.g., the recording is multimodal in its integration of lyrics and music while the music video is multimodal in its expressive intersection of words, music, and images).¹⁴

In order to understand the transmedia storyworld Henry Jenkins asks the analyst to distinguish the individual texts—and their narrative functions—as these pertain to the storytelling. Here, I turn to narratologist David Herman, who summarizes the elements of narrative as follows:

I characterize narrative as (i) a mode of representation that is situated in—must be interpreted in light of—a specific discourse context or occasion for telling. This mode of representation (ii) focuses on a structured time-course of particularized events. In addition, the events represented are (iii) such that they introduce

some kind of disruption or disequilibrium into a storyworld, whether that world is presented as actual or fictional, realistic or fantastic, remembered or dreamed, etc. The representation also (iv) conveys what it is like to live through this storyworld-in-flux, highlighting the pressure of events on real or imagined consciousnesses undergoing the disruptive experience at issue. [...] for convenience of exposition these elements can be abbreviated as (i) situatedness, (ii) event sequencing, (iii) worldmaking/world disruption, and (iv) what it's like.¹⁵

Herman's four elements of narrative call upon the analyst to discover how the *discursive contexts*, *event sequencing*, *worldmaking/disruption*, and *subjective experiences* are communicated in and through the different levels of the transmedia story. For instance, if an important aspect of the event sequencing is withheld from one of the media connected to the concept album, but revealed in another, then analytic attention to both artifacts would be essential for the interpreter to understand the full story. Similarly, in the case of the multimodal expression, the analyst can attempt to discern the semiotic channels through which the narrative elements are communicated, for example, as the discursive contexts might be clearly established in the visual domain, or the emotional experience of an event might be strongly suggested by the musical expression. With this framework of materiality and narratology in place, the analyst is equipped with the tools to unpack the complex storytelling of the transmedia and multimodal artwork.¹⁶

The proposed interpretive framework, summarized in Table 7.1, accounts for the multidimensional materials that are created in connection with a concept album or song, with the aim of identifying the relationships between and among these materials. The model first asks the analyst to tease apart the attributes of the materials as transmedia, multimodal, multimedia and/or intermedia, as these textual parameters can be individually developed to communicate narrative content. The analyst would next consider the foundational elements of narrative (discourse, events, disruption, and experience) in order to discover how significant elements of the narrative are communicated through the multidimensional layers of the artwork. Steven Wilson's "The Raven" is an ideal object of inquiry to illustrate the model and illuminate his artistic integration of words, music, and images.¹⁷

Table 7.1 Analytic Framework

Materiality: Attributes and Relationships

TRANSMEDIA: multiple media platforms, with each text contributing to the whole

MULTIMODAL: different semiotic channels operating within a single artifact

MULTIMEDIA: simultaneous presentation of different media

INTERMEDIA: interrelationships between different media texts

Elements of Narrative (based on Herman)

DISCOURSE: Discursive context and situatedness

EVENTS: Time-course of specific events

DISRUPTION: Events that disrupt the storyworld

EXPERIENCE: What it's like to live through the disruptive experience

“The Raven That Refused to Sing”

Steven Wilson identified his inspiration for “The Raven” album to be the classical ghost stories of the 19th century, in which he found models of supernatural writings that “possess a very human, emotional heart, with the supernatural element serving as a dramatic device to amplify the personal story.”¹⁸ In the case of this track, Wilson points us to a strong inter-textual connection with Edgar Allan Poe’s narrative poem, “The Raven,” in which a lonely poetic subject, who is lamenting the loss of his beloved (Lenore), is visited, during a dark night in December, by a raven.¹⁹ As the subject tries, with increasing intensity, to incite the bird to speak about Lenore, the creature’s only word is “nevermore.” The poem is characterized by sorrowful thematic content and the reticence of the raven to offer any comfort.

The Short Story

As part of the special edition release, Hajo Müller and Steven Wilson crafted a nine-chapter short story that takes Poe’s poem as a point of departure. Müller’s short story (summarized in Table 7.2) fulfills the previously defined elements of narrative.

Applying the analytic framework, Table 7.3 summarizes the analytic data for the four artistic domains to be considered (story, lyrics, video, music) according to the four cross-cutting parameters (discourse, events, disruption, experience). Remaining for the moment in the first vertical column of the matrix, let us consider the narrative elements of Müller’s story. The *discursive* contexts comprise the setting of the desolate cabin in a snowy forest, the telling of the story by a third-person narrator who conveys the life experiences of Eliah, a character who struggles with memories of his sister and experiences blackouts. The *event* timeline is set in the present, with flashbacks to the past that provide historical contexts. When the captured bird refuses to sing, Eliah destroys the cage. Feeling remorse for his violent outburst, he gazes into the eyes of the bird, recognizing that he cannot confine him any longer. Although he takes no direct action to liberate the bird, the destruction of the cage allows the raven to escape. The significant *disruption* in the subject’s life is portrayed as the loss of his sister, causing his alienation and detachment from society. His *experience* of trauma

Table 7.2 Summary of the nine chapter story by Hajo Müller

1.	“The Snow”	Elijah lives alone; hates the snow; experiences blackouts; hears weeping.
2.	“The Sparrow”	<u>Memory flashback</u> : attachment to sister Lily’s voice; they find a dead sparrow; she covers it with snow.
3.	“The Shadow”	His sleep is disturbed by shadows and the smell of death; he imagines seeing his sister’s face.
4.	“Lily”	<u>Memory flashback</u> : at age nine, his sister became ill and died in his arms.
5.	“The Raven”	Elijah walks outside in the snow and finds a raven.
6.	“Patience”	As the raven visits Elijah’s garden, he resolves to catch the raven and builds a cage.
7.	“The Capture”	He captures the raven.
8.	“The Guest”	He feeds it; begs it to sing for him; destroys the cage; recognizes his wrongdoing; the bird flees.
9.	“Redemption”	Having lost the raven, he is revisited by Lily and the bird sings for him.

Table 7.3 Transmedia / Multimodal Narrative

	<i>Müller's Story</i>	<i>Lyrics</i>	<i>Video</i>	<i>Musical Track</i>
DISCOURSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desolate cabin in woods; • Omniscient narrator provides account of Elijah's life struggles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unspecified setting; • Unnamed first-person subject addresses Lily and raven; • Subject pleads for bird's attachment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desolate cabin in forest; • Stop-motion animation; 2D figures; 3D setting; • Transparent, shadow, and "fleshly" forms; • Symbolic use of color and light; inside/outside. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analog recording with live takes; • Expansive sonic space; • Sensitive production (intensity, space, timbre); • Genre: classic "prog".
EVENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present tense; flashbacks; • Finds, captures, loses Raven; • Lily revisits; bird sings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present; invokes past (loss of sister); • No reference to capture of raven. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linear timeline; no flashbacks; nightmare sequence represents loss; • Subject chased by blackness; • Meets, captures, frees raven; Lily reappears; • Elijah left alone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sparse intro and outro; • A: three verses (7/4 piano ostinato; chromatic); • B: three statements of pre-chorus (3/4) and chorus (7/4).
DISRUPTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss leads to alienation and detachment; • Violent outburst leads to bird's escape. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of sister leads to detachment; • No mention of confrontation with sister's ghost; • Raven reaches into his head and steals his dreams. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death of sister played out in nightmare; • Violence toward raven; • Blackness overtakes cabin; • Supernatural elements shown to have psychological origins. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocoder melody (raven); • Intensity in verse 3 extension; • Vocoder masking of voice in chorus; • Flute activity in pre-chorus 2, 3; • Dissonant guitar tremolo offers peak of intensity.
EXPERIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memories and dreams of his sister; • Loneliness, alienation, detachment; • Attempts to form attachment lead to violence; • Lily's otherworldly visitation leads to resolution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loneliness, regret, vulnerability, fear of attachment; • No confinement of the bird. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forlorn image; sorrowful gestures convey solitary, hopeless routines; • Hopeful but desperate attachment to raven and apparition of sister; • Fear of blackness; • Bite triggers violence; • Compassion leads to reconciliation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift from ambient, atmospheric texture to heavy, distorted, dense; • Shift from clean to vocoder-inflected and harmonized vocal; • Final juxtaposition of dissonant trichord with clean statement of pre-chorus melody in piano.

matic loss at a young age and his subsequent loneliness compel him to form an attachment with the raven that turns to violence. In the final chapter, “Redemption,” Eliah is revisited by Lily, then serenaded by the raven, which leads him to forgiveness and understanding. Several drawings illustrate the story to capture the lonely figure of Eliah in the dark, wintry, and austere setting of his forest cabin. The dynamic drawings of the black raven and its cage reveal the bird to be looming large in Eliah’s world, while the drawings of Lily depict her as a faint outline in relation to Eliah and his cabin.²⁰

Lyrics

Steven Wilson bases his lyrics for the song upon Müller’s nine-chapter story, maintaining a simple lyrical structure and a compressed form that comprises three brief verses and a repeated chorus.²¹ The second column of Table 7.3 analyzes the narrative elements of the lyrics. With respect to the *discursive* contexts, the lyrics do not refer to any specific setting; a nameless first-person subject addresses both Lily and the raven. As Herman would understand, the “occasion for telling” is the subject’s pleading for a connection with the bird. His attempts to transfer attachment from Lily to the raven is most evident in the chorus lines, “Sing to me raven, I miss her so much / Sing to me Lily, I miss you so much.” The sense of an *event* timeline is very immediate, however the temporal context expands in verse 2 when he refers to the loss of his sister. This loss functions as the *disruptive* event in the lyrical narrative. There is no suggestion of the capture and confinement of the bird, nor is there any mention of a confrontation with the ghost of his sister, however verse 3 invokes his dreams and the potential of the raven to reach inside his head. With this content, Wilson brings forward the psychological *experience* of the subject and conveys in poetic form the urgency of his attachment to the bird and its origins in the loss of his sister.

Video Images

As Jess Cope incorporated Müller’s illustrated story into her video treatment, she maintained his setting, color palette, and character design.²² The discussion that follows includes timecode references (0:00) to moments in the video that mark significant aspects of the setting and storyline, including the subject’s interactions with his sister’s ghost and the raven.

The third column of Table 7.3 applies Herman’s narrative model to the video images. With respect to the *discursive* contexts, the stop-motion animation captures the desolation of the forest and cabin with 2D figures in a 3D (multi-planed) setting.²³ The 2D puppet design allows for the manipulation of the characters’ bodies to convey actions, gestures, and emotions. The young girl evolves from a transparent apparition (1:32), to a shadow puppet (4:12), to a “fleshly” image (7:15), and the subject also takes on a shadow-puppet style during his violent outburst (5:38). A symbolic use of color conveys strong emotions: the cold greys and gloomy blues of the snowy forest (0:31) create an isolated and barren setting; a slowly creeping blackness (0:53) incites fear as it threatens to overtake his world; the vibrant red berries are used to bait the raven (3:47), and a red sky surrounds his violent outburst (5:38); ultimately, the blackness that overcomes the subject gives way to the warmer sepia tones (7:41) that represent a hopeful reunion with his sister. Furthermore, the settings of forest, cabin, and cage allow Cope to explore concepts of inside/outside and confinement/liberation.

The video follows a linear *event* timeline during which the subject runs from the blackness (1:08), encounters the raven, and experiences a connection to the sister who is depicted

as a transparent image (1:32). Attempting to sustain that connection, he captures the raven, but the bird bites him through the cage (3:47), setting off a *disruptive* nightmare sequence (4:12, 4:29). Instead of temporal flashbacks (as occurred in Hajo Müller's story) to account for past events, the death of the sister is played out in the nightmare scene. Fear and emotional urgency cause him to lose his temper with the silent raven and he shakes the cage violently in a scene that extends the nightmare—he mistreats the bird (5:38) in a manner that is parallel to the monster's treatment of his sister in the shadow sequence. The descent into violence initiates the return of the creeping blackness, which encloses the subject in his cabin while he recognizes that his own actions have harmed the raven. His compassion leads him to release the bird from its confinement (6:35), and he is rewarded with the brief reappearance of his sister (7:15), no longer merely a transparent image. Cope's event timeline is thus saturated with psychologically-driven decisions and emotionally-charged incidents.

The carefully crafted video images convey the subject's *experience* of loneliness, loss, and hopeful attachment to the raven. In addition to the forlorn image of Eliah that features darkened eyes, a furrowed brow, and sunken cheeks, Cope manipulates the puppet to emit sorrowful gestures and to express a range of emotions, including fear, alarm, dismay, longing, and attachment. She builds on her discursive settings and events to convey his solitary, hopeless routines, his moment of contact with the apparition of his sister, and his desperate actions to form an attachment with the bird. Her visual treatment prioritizes the subject's emotions by revealing his fear of the threatening blackness and by rendering the raven's bite as a trigger of the nightmare sequence and his violent outburst. The critical experience for Eliah is his moment of recognition that he has harmed the bird. Showing compassion for the raven's own experience of pain, Eliah decides to release the bird into the very blackness that represents his fear of confinement and it is that decision which ultimately leads to his own release and reconciliation with Lily.

Cope thus designs her visual narrative to communicate a poignant story that is driven by human emotions. Elaborating upon Müller's story, she illuminates significant elements of Eliah's experience and ultimately underscores his capacity to identify with the raven's pain and suffering. Although in the story, the raven's flight from the room occurs as a consequence of Eliah's violent destruction of the cage, Cope empowers her subject to take action: following the moment of recognition and identification with the raven's confinement, Eliah himself liberates the bird. His positive choice is rewarded with a hopeful reunion and brighter outlook. Cope's complex narrative thus reveals a particular ideology around human responsibility to recognize and identify with another being's pain and suffering.

Musical Materials

To apply the narrative framework to the musical track (the fourth column of Table 7.3), the analyst must develop coherent conceptual equivalents in musical content and expression for the analytic terms.²⁴ Respecting Herman's sense of the term discourse as "a mode of representation that is situated in ... a specific discourse context or occasion for telling," I understand the *discursive* contexts of the music to comprise the musical genre in which the song is grounded and the sonic space that provides a setting for the musical story to unfold (i.e., the production values, the instrumental/vocal structure or arrangement).²⁵ With these elements of musical discourse in mind, the following attributes emerge: the analog approach adopted for the recording and production of the album; the expansive sonic space that

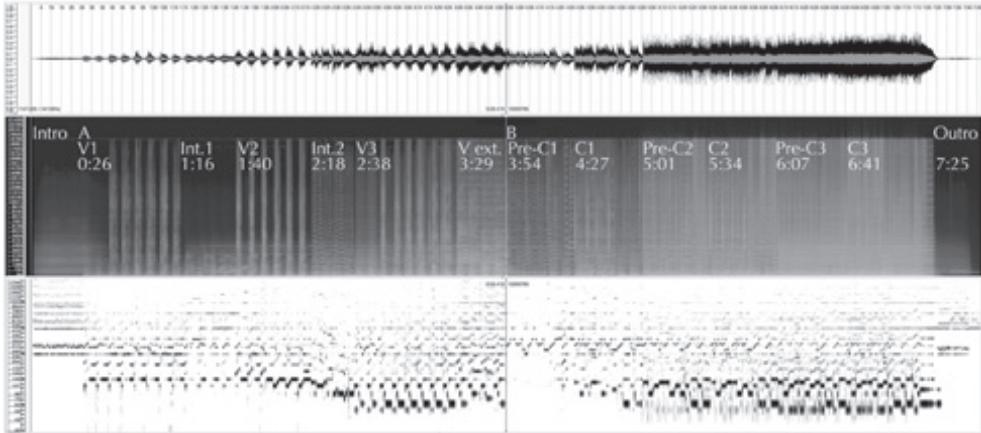


Figure 7.1 “The Raven,” wave and spectrographic data; formal design

allows for depth and breadth of texture; and the sensitive production of instrumental and vocal dynamic intensity, the use of space, and the development of timbre. These attributes all point to and confirm the genre of progressive rock, and more specifically, a “classic” prog rock sound.

A consideration of these discursive attributes leads naturally into an analysis of musical gestures. I understand the narrative *events* in the music to comprise the formal materials and ordering of musical content.²⁶ However, since musical gestures are shaped not only by their structural features, but also by their sonic attributes, the ensuing discussion of narrative *events* will continue to invoke the elements mentioned above in connection with discursive contexts. To illustrate the narrative events in the musical track, Figure 7.1 presents the form of the song and its spectrographic data, and Figure 7.2 transcribes specific melodic and harmonic content in order to provide the reader with sufficient musical information to pursue the analytic argument.²⁷ The analytic commentary below leads the reader sequentially through the events that are illustrated in Figures 7.1 and 7.2, drawing attention to formal structure as well as the discursive effects of intensity, space, and timbre.²⁸ This approach thus considers event analysis and discursive contexts (how the musical story is told) in an integrated interpretation of musical form and expression.²⁹

- The song’s two sections are framed by a sparse and ambiguous **intro** and **outro** that feature a dissonant string trichord (0:00–0:27 and 7:24–7:48). The intro trichord comprises C – E \flat – E (Figure 7.2a); hairpin dynamic markings indicate the alternating emphasis on E \sharp and E \flat , a tension that is developed as a motivic element of the song.
- The A section comprises three verses, separated by instrumental interludes. The verses are characterized by a mid-register piano ostinato in 7/4 time (Figure 7.2b) that presents the harmonic progression A \flat – Am – F/C – Cm, followed by the same progression closing on C major (0:26–1:16). The guiding melodic pattern (E \flat – E – F – E \flat), followed by E \flat – E – F – E contributes to harmonic tension between A f major and A minor, and between C minor and C major. A duality between E \flat and E is sustained throughout the song, appearing, for instance, in the violin melody (2:18) during the first instrumental interlude (Figure 7.2c) and in the guitar/piano elaboration of the ostinato (2:41) that closes interlude 2 (Figure 7.2e).



Figure 7.2a Opening string chord



Figure 7.2b 7/4 piano ostinato

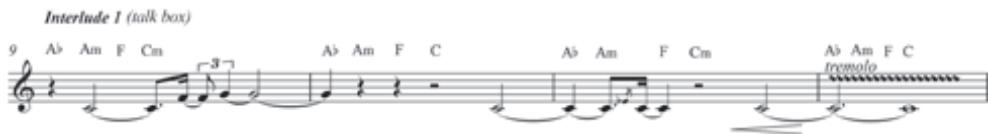


Figure 7.2c Vocoder melody, interlude 1



Figure 7.2d Interlude 2 (2:18), violin melody

- Against the piano ostinato, the vocal presentation in verse 1 (0:26) is centered, forward, dark, and warm, with a lush reverb. The microphone feels close, while the backup vocals on lines 5 and 6 (1:04; 1:10) are split left and right, more distant in the mix, and less articulate than the primary vocal.
- Interlude 1 (1:16) introduces a high string tremolo to the ostinato figure, as well as a haunting melody in the vocoder (Figure 7.2c).
- The final trill of the vocoder rings over into verse 2 (1:40), which introduces a rounded and warm melodic bass line and features Wilson’s voice in a more intense delivery, with a prominent echo; back-up vocals on lines 5–6 are split left and right.
- Interlude 2 (2:18) continues with piano and bass, now joined by a dark, distant-sounding violin that is enhanced with pre-delay and reverb, and a warm-toned guitar. The interlude closes with a melodically-elaborated version of the piano ostinato, doubled by the guitar, and enhanced by a wash of strings (Figure 7.2e).
- The elaborated ostinato melody continues into verse 3 (2:38), where the bass is heavier and the background strings gradually fill the space. Wilson’s voice builds to a new dynamic level, produced with an edgy and more compressed tone. His appeal to the raven reaches a peak of intensity in the verse extension (3:29), when he imitates a crying sound on “please” through a higher register, heavier reverb, and delay, trailing off into the distance as the instrumental texture overwhelms and envelops his voice.

harmonizer effect) with the doubled voice out of phase. The melody of the pre-chorus serves as a counterpoint to Wilson's vocal line.

- The full kit enters in pre-chorus 2 (5:01), with the crash cymbals split to the left and right; the strings are more present, and the ostinato gesture (5:22) features a flute arpeggiation.
- Chorus 2 (5:34) is marked by a more active bass and kit, increased intensity in the ostinato progression, and a stronger sonic evidence of the vocoder.
- Pre-chorus 3 (6:07) signals a major timbral change as a distorted tremolo-picked guitar is intensified by the slight delay between left and right channels, while the ostinato (6:28) is heavier, with a very active flute.³⁰
- During chorus 3 (6:41), the kit is now fully active, with hats open for the first time; the guitar tremolo climbs in pitch register to a high C⁴ (doubled at C⁵), creating greater dissonance and building anticipation. During this final chorus, the voice is overtaken by the instrumental texture; the final ostinato passage (7:01) is presented with the most extreme intensity of the song, leading to resolution in the third statement of the ostinato progression, with melodic emphasis on A_♭ – A – F – G.
- After the force of the final chord fades away, the dissonant intro chord returns for the outro, supporting a simple piano statement of the pre-chorus melodic line. The pitch structure of the opening string chord has been modified to C – D – E_♭, transposing the top two notes (E and E_♭) down by a half step. This new trichord is sustained against the chorus melody, creating a crunchy dissonance, especially as it is juxtaposed against the E_♯ of the tune. This trichord has an important impact upon the sense of resolution: although the final melody seems unambiguously in C major, the final resolution to C in the melody is supported by the dissonant trichord with E_♭ in the highest position.

With the established discursive contexts and events, the next parameter—*disruption*—of Herman's narrative model invites the analyst to reflect upon marked moments in the musical structure and texture.³¹ To this end, I consider both formal events and expressive strategies (i.e., the effects of intensity, space, and timbre) from the perspective of storyworld disruption. Thinking about that structure in broad terms, I will mention a few moments that stand out as marked (or disruptive) within the musical world of "The Raven":

- The entry of the vocoder in interlude 1 marks a technological intervention: the eerie melody suggests the warbling and trilling of a bird, but with an otherworldly quality.
- The crying vocal and instrumental overtaking of the voice in the verse extension create a moment of striking intensity.
- The vocoder modification to Wilson's voice in the B section signals a connection to interlude 1.
- The sudden flute activity in pre-chorus 2 and its intensification in pre-chorus 3 challenges and breaks free from the established musical storyworld.
- The distorted tremolo-picked guitar in the final pre-chorus begins to overwhelm the texture, building toward the dynamic peak of the song.

These gestures mark specific moments in the sonic design and serve as signifiers in the musical narrative. When analyzing the musical content and expression at this level, we are not yet interpreting the gestures in relation to the other layers of the multimodal text.

Rather, the analytic aim during this phase of the analysis is to bring forward key moments in the musical form and expression that shape the sonic narrative.

Mapping Herman's final narrative parameter—*experience*—onto the musical domain, I consider the subjective experience to be conveyed by the expressivity of the vocal and instrumental gestures, some of which have already been identified as marked moments in the narrative. One of the most notable attributes of the song is the narrative development from an ambient and reverberant texture to a heavier and denser exploration of stereophonic space, a gradual process of reaching out and beyond the original constraints. The carefully crafted sonic environment expands strategically to build upon formal materials and timbral effects.

Focusing on the vocal layer as the voice of the subject, we follow the shift from a centered, dark vocal (verse 1) to the introduction of the vocoder (raven's song), after which the voice returns with an intense delivery (verse 2) that builds to become an edgy, demanding expression (verse 3) and then a crying plea (verse 3 extension). In the second half of the song, the voice is masked and doubled by the vocoder, creating a link to the earlier vocoder presentation and extending the voice in pitch and timbral space. Ultimately, the voice is overtaken sonically by the accumulation of instrumental timbres, the level of intensity, and the use of space.

Focusing on the pathway forged by the instruments, the individual sounds of the track are distinct and separated, allowing for the clear presentation of each instrumental entry in the cumulative textural design.³² The song begins with dark timbres and low levels of intensity. The mid-register piano is joined by the warm bass and then by the violin and guitar. Even when these latter instruments enter in the second interlude, they do not offer a bright tone or aggressive delivery. It is in the verse 3 extension that the strings become a strong force in the instrumental texture, expanding to cover the voice during its strained and emotional plea. The second half of the song continues with the cumulative texture as each of the three statements of pre-chorus and chorus offers something new: the ride cymbal for the first statement, the full kit and flute arpeggiation in the second statement, and finally the distorted tremolo-picked guitar in the third statement. During the final chorus, with active kit, open hats, and the climbing register of the tremolo-picked guitars, we experience the apex of emotional intensity and release. Indeed, the unrestrained expression of the final chorus conveys a cathartic function—a moment of tension being purged and yielding to another level of experience. Following the climactic release, the return to the opening gesture is significantly modified to signal a process of change: the upper two notes of the trichord are lowered by a semitone and the chord now supports a clean statement of the chorus melody in the piano.

The Multimodal Layers of “The Raven”

Once the analyst has discerned the individual layers of the multimodal expression (in this case, story, lyrics, images, music), there remains the interpretive task of putting these layers into dialogue. To accomplish this task, we begin to read the analytic matrix of Table 7.3 across the parameters of discourse, events, disruption and experience.

Discourse. In Hajo Müller's story, the “occasion for telling” is an illustrated tale, voiced by an omniscient storyteller. The subject's situation, perspective, and motivations are conveyed to the reader by a third-person narrator who establishes the storyworld with sufficient detail for the reader to develop an empathetic engagement with the subject. In contrast to

the intricate story, Steven Wilson's lyrics offer a highly compressed poetic expression from the perspective of a first-person subject. With no reference to the setting of the story or the subject's name, the occasion for telling is an urgent appeal for the raven to sing, taking the place of his sister. The lyrics thus operate primarily on an emotional level, and the reader's familiarity with the original story would enhance appreciation of the contextual depth of the lyrical expression. By creating this interdependence between story and lyrics, Wilson relies upon intermedia reception as an artistic vehicle for signification. Without access to the story, the reader lacks meaningful attributes of the multimodal and transmedia artwork. Jess Cope's video builds further on Müller's story and Wilson's lyrics by rendering the storyworld as a desolate setting, marked by a symbolic use of color and light. Cope's meticulous stop-motion animation and sensitive camera work inject expressive poignancy into the gestures of her two-dimensional puppet figures. The material treatment of Lily's figure—which evolves from a ghostly apparition to the shadow of a nightmare, and ultimately to a “fleshly” appearance—and the movement of the creeping blackness are crucial aspects of the video's narrative arc. In the musical domain, the occasion for telling comprises the long-form analogue recorded track that offers an expansive sense of musical time and sonic space. As we hear the sensitive treatment of instrumental and vocal textures, we can apprehend the multimodal discursive connections to the emotional urgency in the lyrics and the symbolic representations of fear and loss in the video. The potential correspondences are not limited, nor are they absolute; rather the listener is encouraged to pursue the richness of the multimodal discourse at the macro and micro levels.

Events. While Hajo Müller's story allows for the contextualization and historicization of the events that shaped Eliah's perspective and mental state, the lyrics refer only to the loss of his sister, and the video images craft a sequence of events that shape a linear narrative of fear, loss, anger, and reconciliation. As the visual narrative exposes the threatening blackness, the otherworldly and nightmarish appearances of the sister, and the raven's capture and release, we come to understand the psychological issues of alienation and attachment that plague Eliah. Jess Cope as videographer developed her treatment not only from the story and the lyrics, but also from the musical track. Consequently, we can interpret video events in relation to the formal and expressive events in the music, for instance:

- Cope matches Wilson's eerie dissonant chord from the intro with an establishing shot of the gloomy setting in cold grey tones; she then frames her formal structure with a corresponding match of the outro to a brightly illuminated shot of the subject in his setting.
- Cope treats the 7/4 piano ostinato of the A section with the visual representation of the subject's anxious gestures in the forest, his confrontation with the bird and apparition of his sister, and his methodical efforts to capture the bird.
- The vocoder presentation of the first interlude is strongly bound to the image of the singing raven and the apparition of Lily.
- The immediacy of the subject's thoughts and actions emerge in connection with Wilson's expressive vocal, which intensifies to an emotional pleading when the bird refuses to sing.
- The visual representation of the nightmare sequence corresponds to the musical changes of the B section, with the gradual intensification of the instrumental texture matching the increasing despair of the subject; the violent shaking of the bird is accompanied musically by the increased activity in bass and kit, increased intensity in the ostinato progression, and a stronger evidence of the vocoder.

- Cope matches the dissonant guitar tremolo with the creeping blackness that overtakes the cabin, thus mobilizing that musical moment to enhance the subject's anxiety and recognition of the bird's pain.
- The reappearance of the fleshly image of Lily, once the raven has been released, corresponds with the final (clean) statement of the pre-chorus melody, effecting a resolution; the sense of melodic closure is clouded, however, by the dissonant trichord as the image of the sister fades away, leaving the subject alone.

Disruption. Müller's story, Wilson's lyrics, and Cope's video images all point to the loss of Elish's sister as the event that disrupts the storyworld. In the story, the loss of the sister is paralleled with the capture and loss of the raven. In the lyrics, the subject declares, "sister, I lost you," and a profound feeling of disruption occurs when he begs the raven to reach into his head and replace his dreams with songs. Cope productively converts that idea into the nightmare sequence featuring the violent treatment of Lily. Attention to such connections will yield a nuanced appreciation for the details of the multimodal narrative, for instance:

- The first interlude of the A section introduces the vocoder after the lyrical appeal to the raven ("heal my soul"), which is enhanced in the video by the illuminated eye of the raven.
- The instrumental and vocal force of the verse 3 extension marks a moment of psychological intensity that is complemented visually by the raven's biting of the subject's hand.
- The masking of Wilson's voice by the vocoder in the chorus section creates a sonic connection with the earlier vocoder treatment of the raven's song, signalling the subject's attachment and emotional urgency in connection with the raven.
- The flute activity in pre-chorus 2 and 3 is marked as sonically unique in the musical track, but the video confirms this to represent the release of the raven.
- The dissonant guitar tremolo marks a significant moment of narrative disruption, once again confirmed by Cope when she matches that moment with the overtaking of the cabin by the creeping blackness and the subject's realization that he has harmed the bird.

Experience. Finally, let us consider how Herman's narrative parameter of experience plays out in the multimodal materials of "The Raven." Hajo Müller's story explores the subject's experience of tortured memories, alienation, violence, and ultimately a supernatural visitation with his sister that leads to a sense of resolution. The lyrics illuminate that experience from the first-person perspective of the subject as he expresses alienation and desire for attachment. Grounded in Müller's story, Cope's video narrative offers hope, as the visitation of the sister and the release of the bird ultimately lead to reconciliation. In the musical domain, the dynamic distinction of individual sounds creates a sense of immediacy and poignant subjectivity. The progressive form is shaped by a shift from the ambient atmospheric texture to the heavy and dense exploration of sonic space and from the clean, resonant vocal to the masked (vocoder-inflected) and harmonized vocal texture.

Concluding Remarks

"The Raven" is but one example of transmedia and multimodal work that Steven Wilson has been developing in his solo recording career. His subsequent albums, *Hand. Cannot.*

Erase. (2015) and *To the Bone* (2017) have both been released with elaborate print and internet materials, as well as music videos that contribute to the development of his transmedia storyworlds. Recognizing the roots of musical multimodality in, for instance, the work of The Beatles, Pink Floyd, or David Bowie, it is important to recognize the degree to which contemporary musical artists are increasingly mobilizing new digital technologies and social media platforms to build transmedia and multimodal narratives. We now see artists, across a range of genres and styles, to be releasing albums that are bound integrally to visual materials, for instance Kanye West's *Runaway* (2010), Of Monsters and Men's *My Head Is an Animal* (2011), Beyoncé's *Beyoncé* (2013) and *Lemonade* (2016), Frank Ocean's *Endless* (2016), Bon Iver's *22, A Million* (2017), Brad Paisley's *Love and War* (2017), and Jay-Z's *4:44* (2017). In the context of this multimodal approach to album creation, there is tremendous potential for scholars in the field of music analysis to develop analytic models for the interpretation of multidimensional artistic expression.

To close, I will return to the theoretical terms that I have relied upon to analyze Wilson's storytelling practices. "The Raven" can be considered to explore intermediality as the illustrated story points to the song lyrics and also sends tendrils to the music video, not only through the storyline, but through Müller's original artwork. The work can be considered to explore transmediality as the storyworld unfolds across a transmedia platform that comprises the illustrated story, the song, and the video, with each item making a specific contribution to our understanding and mental map of the storyworld. Without the illustrated story, for instance, there is much about Eliah's experience—even his name—that we do not know and understand. With respect to multimodality, it is productive to distinguish the individual semiotic modes through which the artistic expression is communicated. The original story is multimodal in its exploration of words and images. The song is multimodal in its convergence of words and music. The music video brings words, images, and music together in a complex rendering of the original story.

The application of Herman's narrative model offers a method for processing this multidimensional content. By considering the elements of discourse, events, disruption, and experience as these are conveyed in and through each individual layer, the analyst is brought into a very close engagement with the artistic content, and ultimately into a more sensitive consideration of the human story that is being told.³³

Notes

- 1 In addition to his own output, Wilson has extensive experience producing and mixing the music of other artists. He notably co-produced progressive death metal band Opeth's breakthrough album *Blackwater Park* (2001) and has remixed a number of albums from classic progressive rock bands such as King Crimson, Yes, Jethro Tull, and Gentle Giant. For an exhaustive list of Wilson's musical contributions until 2015, please refer to Uwe Häberle, *Steven Wilson – The Complete Discography*, 10th ed., May 17, 2015, www.voyage-pt.de/swdisco.pdf.
- 2 Steven Wilson, "'To the Bone' is Officially Released Today," *StevenWilson.com*, August 18, 2017, <http://stevenwilsonhq.com/sw/to-the-bone-is-officially-released-today/>.
- 3 Steven Wilson, "Steven Wilson Talks The Raven That Refused to Sing (And Other Stories)," interview by Joe Bosso, *MusicRadar*, February 7, 2013, www.musicradar.com/news/guitars/steven-wilson-talks-the-raven-that-refused-to-sing-and-other-stories-570809.
- 4 Steven Wilson, "Steven Wilson: Past Presence," interview by Anil Prasad, *Innerviews*, 2013, www.innerviews.org/inner/wilson2.html.
- 5 I refer the interested reader here to my analysis of Steven Wilson's video for the track "Drive Home"; Lori Burns, "Multimodal Analysis of Popular Music Video: Genre, Discourse, and

Narrative in Steven Wilson's 'Drive Home,'" in *Coming of Age: Teaching and Learning Popular Music in Academia*, ed. Carlos Rodrigues (University of Michigan Press, 2017), 81–110.

- 6 See UG Team, "The Raven That Refused to Sing (And Other Stories)," *UltimateGuitar.com*, March 6, 2013, www.ultimate-guitar.com/reviews/compact_discs/steven_wilson/the_raven_that_refused_to_sing_and_other_stories/index.html; "20 Best Metal Albums of 2013," *RollingStone.com*, December 11, 2013 www.rollingstone.com/music/lists/20-best-metal-albums-of-2013-20131211/steven-wilson-the-raven-refused-to-sing-and-other-stories-19691231; Joe Bosso, "Steven Wilson Talks The Raven that Refused to Sing," *MusicRadar*, February 7, 2013, www.musicradar.com/news/guitars/steven-wilson-talks-the-raven-that-refused-to-sing-and-other-stories-570809; Dom Lawson, "Steven Wilson: The Raven that Refused to Sing-Review," *The Guardian*, February 21, 2013, www.theguardian.com/music/2013/feb/21/steven-wilson-raven-refused-review; Thom Jurek, "Steven Wilson: The Raven that Refused to Sing and Other Stories-Review," *AllMusic.com*, www.allmusic.com/album/the-raven-that-refused-to-sing-and-other-stories-mw0002475916; and Jean-Frederic Vachon, "An Interview with Steven Wilson on his New Album, Success and Conceptual Rock," *Diary of a Music Addict*, June 22, 2015, <http://musicaddict.ca/2015/06/an-interview-with-steven-wilson-on-his-new-album-success-and-conceptual-rock/>.
- 7 I have written elsewhere about the elaboration of the concept album through multimodal materials; see Lori Burns, "The Concept Album as Visual-Sonic-Textual Spectacle: The Transmedial Storyworld of Coldplay's *Mylo Xyloto*," *IASPM@Journal* 6, no. 2 (2016): 91–116, doi: 10.5429/2079-3871(2016)v6i2.6en. The interdependence of the individual components to form a comprehensive narrative in this case is suggestive of Jonathan Dunsby's conception of the *multi-piece*, as applied to large-scale compositions comprising a sequence of individual pieces. See Jonathan Dunsby, "The Multi-Piece in Brahms: Fantasien, Op. 116," in *Brahms: Biographical, Documentary and Analytical Studies*, ed. Robert Pascall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 167–190.
- 8 Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1.
- 9 See Serge Lacasse, "Towards a Model of Transphonography," in *The Pop Palimpsest: Intertextuality in Recorded Popular Music*, eds. Lori Burns and Serge Lacasse (University of Michigan Press, 2018), 9–60.
- 10 Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006), 95–96.
- 11 Marie-Laure Ryan and Jan-Noël Thon, *Storyworlds Across Media: Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 10–11.
- 12 For more on music and multimedia, please refer to Nicholas Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) and Jamie Sexton, ed., *Music, Sound and Multimedia: From the Live to the Virtual* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).
- 13 For semiotic approaches to multimodal discourse, see, for instance, David Machin, *Analysing Popular Music: Image, Sound, Text* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2010) and Theo Van Leeuwen, *Speech, Music, Sound* (Houndmills, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999). Although Machin and Leeuwen are both interested in the musical dimensions of multimodal works, their scholarly writings represent the interests and expertise of linguistic theorists, thus do not engage with contemporary approaches to music theory and analysis.
- 14 Wilson also gives these materials a *multimedia* (or *intermedia*) treatment when he performs the song live in concert with the music video on screen behind the performers. See the live version of "The Raven," filmed in Neu-Isenberg, Germany on March 23, 2013, directed and edited by Bernhard Baran: Steven Wilson, "Steven Wilson - The Raven That Refused To Sing (Live)," *YouTube* video, June 14, 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZtZIUgYOIM.
- 15 David Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2009), 9. It is important to note that all narrative theorists do not define narrative structure to include Herman's third element of *worldmaking/world disruption*. For instance, Mieke Bal identifies three central concepts in her theory of narratology: *narrative text*, which is the text in which a narrator conveys a story to an

- narratee in a particular medium; *story*, which is the content of that text; and *fabula*, which is the ordering of the events that are experienced by the agents in the text (see Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. 3rd ed. [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009], 5). We can find common ground between Bal and Herman: Bal's *narrative text* can be likened to Herman's *situatedness*; Bal's *story* and *fabula* can be connected to Herman's *event sequencing*. However, his category of *worldmaking/world disruption* opens up a new dimension to narrative structure, as does his conception of *what it's like*. In these two categories, Herman is influenced by the field of philosophy and specifically the term *qualia*, which refers to the experience of a subject in a particular situation (Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, 14).
- 16 Musicologists and theorists have written extensively on music and narrative, including (but not limited to) the following authors: Byron Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008); Michael L. Klein and Nicholas Reyland, eds. *Music and Narrative Since 1900* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013); Lawrence Kramer, "Musical Narratology: A Theoretical Outline," *Indiana Theory Review* 12 (1991): 141–62, <http://hdl.handle.net/2022/3431>; Fred Everett Maus, "Music as Narrative," *Indiana Theory Review* 12 (1991): 1–34, www.jstor.org/stable/24045349; Robert S. Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994); and Eero Tarasti, *A Theory of Musical Semiotics* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994). I will draw connections to their approaches to music and narrative during the music analysis portion of this chapter.
 - 17 For a selection of writings exploring the relationship between lyrics and music in progressive rock, please consult John Covach, "Progressive Rock, 'Close to the Edge', and the Boundaries of Style," in *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis*, ed. Graeme M. Boone (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3–31; Paul Hegarty and Martin Halliwell, "Myth and Modernity," in *Beyond and Before: Progressive Rock since the 1960s* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 85–104; Kevin Holm-Hudson, *Genesis and the Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008); Edward Macan, "The Progressive Rock Style: The Lyrics," in *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 69–84; Allan F. Moore, *Aqualung* (New York: Continuum, 2004); Phil Rose, *Roger Waters and Pink Floyd: The Concept Albums* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015); and Jennifer Rycenga, "Tales of Change within the Sound: Form, Lyrics, and Philosophy in the Music of Yes," in *Progressive Rock Reconsidered*, ed. Kevin Holm-Hudson (New York: Routledge, 2002), 111–120.
 - 18 Wilson, "Steven Wilson: Past Presence," para. 12.
 - 19 The Edgar Allan Poe poem was first published in 1845. To read the poem online, see "Edgar Allan Poe – The Raven," *Genius*, <https://genius.com/Edgar-allan-poe-the-raven-annotated>.
 - 20 For a video that flips through the pages of the short story for "The Raven," see AudioMusings, "The Raven That Refused To Sing (and Other Stories) Limited Edition," *YouTube* video, 6:54–8:24, March 16, 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=xia_uufvQUM.
 - 21 For lyrics to "The Raven," see "Steven Wilson – The Raven That Refused to Sing," *Genius*, <https://genius.com/Steven-wilson-the-raven-that-refused-to-sing-lyrics>. It is not uncommon for the lyrics of progressive rock songs to tell stories, and Wilson's narrative lyrics for "The Raven" can be seen as continuing this practice. For more on the use of storytelling and mythology in classic progressive rock lyrics, see Hegarty and Halliwell, *Beyond and Before*, 85–104.
 - 22 The reader is encouraged to watch the official music video. See Kscope, "Steven Wilson – The Raven that Refused to Sing," *YouTube* video, February 11, 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4XevlloPY4.
 - 23 Jess Cope describes her technique of multi-planing in her Behind the Scenes video for the making of "The Raven" (see "Behind the Scenes on The Raven," *Owl House Studios*, www.owlhousestudios.com/behind_the_scenes/the_raven.html). Multi-planing effects are created with layers of glass on a frame to produce depths of field in the animated images.
 - 24 There has been some degree of contestation amongst musicologists about music's potential to convey narrative as well as the relationship between musical narrative and literary narrative. For a detailed consideration of the various views, arguments, and approaches concerning music

- and narrative, see Byron Almén, “Perspectives and Critiques,” in *A Theory of Musical Narrative* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 11–37.
- 25 Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, 9. Writings about musical discourse in the field of musicology have tended to focus on a semiotics of musical language. See Jean-Jaques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990) and Kofi Agawu, *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). For Agawu, the use of the term “discourse” in music-analytic contexts connotes three potential meanings: the analysis of a series of events, the analysis of a succession of utterances, and the critical act of analysis itself (Agawu, *Music as Discourse*, 7–9). In the field of popular musicology, by contrast, scholars tend to use the term discourse to refer to musical cultures, genres, and styles, in this way embracing the social aspects, industry and production values, and performance modalities. See Tim Wall, *Studying Popular Music Culture*. (London: SAGE, 2003): 21; Allan F. Moore, “Categorical Conventions in Music Discourse: Style and Genre.” *Music and Letters* 82, no. 3 (August 2001): 432. doi:10.1093/ml/82.3.432; and Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), 28–29. In the field of social linguistics, there is a growing interest in analyzing popular music according to multimodal discourse analysis methods. See David Machin, *Analysing Popular Music: Image, Sound, Text* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010), and Gunther R. Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2001). In this vein, Evgeniya Aleshinskaya conducts musical discourse analysis as a social practice, analyzing musical genres according to five key terms: semiosis, social agents, social relations, social contexts, and texts. See Evgeniya Aleshinskaya, “Key Components of Musical Discourse Analysis,” *Research in Language* 11, no. 4 (2014), 423, doi: 10.2478/rela-2013-0007.
 - 26 Musical events play a key role in music’s ability to suggest narrative. In his discussion of narrative in music, Fred Everett Maus claims that “musical events can be regarded as characters, or as gestures, assertions, responses, resolutions, goal-directed motions, references, and so on. Once they are so regarded, it is easy to regard successions of musical events as forming something like a story, in which these characters and actions go together to form something like a plot” (see Maus, “Music as Narrative,” 6).
 - 27 The wave and spectrogram data presented in Figure 7.1 were generated using the open-access software Sonic Visualiser (version 3.0.3), which was developed at the Centre for Digital Music, Queen Mary, University of London (Chris Cannam, Christian Landone, and Mark Sandler, *Sonic Visualiser: An Open Source Application for Viewing, Analysing, and Annotating Music Audio Files*, in Proceedings of the ACM Multimedia 2010 International Conference). The top panel displays the mean wave data for the song, the middle panel displays a full spectrum spectrogram, and the bottom panel displays a peak frequency spectrogram adjusted to a range of 5000 Hz. and the bin data set to peak bins (www.sonicvisualiser.org/doc/reference/2.1/en/index.html#spectrogram). Please note that for consistency throughout this analysis, the cue numbers refer to the musical content in the music video.
 - 28 The study of narrative in music has traditionally focused on tonality, time, themes, and topics. Michael L. Klein, however, suggests that other musical parameters—such as rhythm, timbre, and register—provide new ways of telling stories, which he labels as “neo-narrative”. See Michael L. Klein, “Musical Story,” in *Music and Narrative Since 1900*, eds. Michael L. Klein and Nicholas Reyland, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 5. By analyzing intensity, space, and timbre, this paper expands the scope of existing narrative research to less-frequently analyzed musical parameters that hold significance in popular music. For another example of the use of spectrograms to analyze intensity, space, and timbre, please refer to Marc Lafrance and Lori Burns, “Finding Love in Hopeless Places: Complex Relationality and Impossible Heterosexuality in Popular Music Videos by Pink and Rihanna,” *Music Theory Online* 23, no. 2 (June 2017), http://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.17.23.2/mto.17.23.2.1afrance_burns.html.
 - 29 For a selection of writings that consider musical narrative from the point of view of expression, see Edward T. Cone, *The Composer’s Voice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974);

- Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*; Gregory Karl, "Structuralism and Musical Plot," *Music Theory Spectrum* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 13–34. www.jstor.org/stable/745997; Michael L. Klein, "Chopin's Fourth Ballade as Musical Narrative," *Music Theory Spectrum* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 23–56. www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/mts.2004.26.1.23; and Maus, Fred Everett. "Music as Drama," *Music Theory Spectrum* 10, no. 1 (March 1988): 56–73, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1525/mts.1988.10.1.02a00050>.
- 30 For more on the relationship between distortion and form, please refer to Ciro Scotto, "The Structural Role of Distortion in Hard Rock and Heavy Metal," *Music Theory Spectrum* 38, no. 2 (February 10, 2017): 178–199, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/mts/mtw01>. Scotto employs dist-space, an analytical tool used to empirically visualize distortion levels over time, in order to demonstrate the role of distortion in guiding musical form.
- 31 By invoking the concept of "marked" moments, I am engaging with Hatten's work on musical gesture. (See Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*). I am also connecting here to Almén's discussion of the importance of disruption when he suggests that narrative should be understood as "displaying a particular set of hierarchical relations subjected to crisis and tracking the consequences of this crisis" (see Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative*, 22, emphasis in original). Almén's comment is in response to Tzvetan Todorov's conception of narrative structure, in which he claims that "the minimal complete plot can be seen as the shift from one equilibrium to another" and that "the two moments of equilibrium, similar and different, are separated by a period of imbalance". See Tzvetan Todorov, "Structural Analysis of Narrative," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 3, no. 1 (Autumn 1969): 75, www.jstor.org/stable/1345003.
- 32 For more on the use and function of cumulative forms in popular music, see Mark Spicer, "(Ac) cumulative Form in Pop-Rock Music," *Twentieth-Century Music* 1, no. 1 (2004): 29–64. doi: [10.1017/s1478572204000052](https://doi.org/10.1017/s1478572204000052).
- 33 I wish to thank several students at the University of Ottawa who contributed to this project: Ryan Blakeley, Craig Visser, and Joshua Wynnuk. This project was funded by support from the Social Sciences Research Council of Canada.