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Stories into song: theory and co-creative practice of adapting literary fiction into pop and rock songs

Nick Bentley, James Peacock[1,*]

Keele University, Keele, Staffordshire, United Kingdom

*Corresponding author: Keele University, Keele, Staffordshire ST5 5BG, UK. Email: j.h.peacock@keele.ac.uk

Abstract

Despite the many pop and rock songs adapted from literary texts, there has been little scholarship on the theory and practice of adapting novels and short stories into short-form musical works. This article is part of a British Academy-funded pilot project carried out by two researchers at Keele University, UK. Locating story-into-song texts within adaptation studies, it explores the theoretical issues involved in such adaptations; describes the methodology employed in a series of co-creative workshops with volunteers; and analyses the original songs that emerged from the project.

Keywords: intermedial adaptation; novels and short stories; pop music; musicology; intertexts.

The title of this article, and the project from which it emerges, owes a debt to George Bluestone's influential book, *Novels into Film* (1957). Bluestone describes literary and cinematic texts as 'two ways of seeing' (1), and the cinematic adaptation not as a conversion of the novel, but of 'a kind of paraphrase of the novel—the novel viewed as raw material' (62). Here, we ask different questions, again inspired by Bluestone: Are there ways of *hearing* a novel or short story? What forms of 'paraphrasing' occur in songs adapted from literary texts? What are the challenges of adapting long-form literary texts to short-form pop songs?

This article emerges from a pilot project carried out at Keele University (August 2022–September 2024), and funded by the British Academy, which draws on the research, expertise, and creative practice of literary critic-musicians and volunteer participants to bring together textual analysis and the co-creation of musical artworks as means of analysing the processes of fiction-to-song adaptations. There are many examples of pop / rock songs inspired by fiction, such as Kate Bush's 'Wuthering Heights', David Bowie's '1984', and Joy Division's 'Colony', inspired by Franz Kafka's 'In the

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Penal Colony'. However, there has been little academic research into the creative processes of this kind of adaptation. The Stories into song project aimed to fill this gap.

The project involved several distinct and occasionally overlapping phases, insights gained at each stage helping to shape the next: research into aspects of adaptation theory that relate to the fiction-to-song process; analysis of extant examples of fiction-to-song productions; a co-creative phase that used the analysis of those examples to produce original adapted songs; and a final stage that involved the recording and performance of those songs. It began by analysing selected fiction and song pairings with respect to theme, mood, genre, voice, and structure. It then brought this new knowledge to a co-creative practice strand which involved working with volunteer groups to write songs based on selected fiction. This resulted in the writing and recording of two songs: 'Never Let Me Go', based on Kazuo Ishiguro's 2005 novel of the same name and 'Don't Look Now', a song adaptation of Daphne du Maurier's famous short story.[2] These two original songs were also performed (alongside cover versions of extant story-to-song examples) to live audiences, which added an additional layer to the adaptation process. The project aimed, therefore, to shape knowledge about fiction-to-song adaptation and develop a new method of co-creative literary analysis.

This article proceeds by positioning our research within the field of adaptation studies. We acknowledge the ideas and approaches of well-known works by authors such as Linda Hutcheon and Julie Sanders that are pertinent to adapting stories into song, while noting these authors' limited engagements with such adaptations as their focus is predominantly on other kinds of adaptation. We then evaluate work by three critics—Sanders, Oana Ursulesku, and Mike Ingham—who do write specifically about popular musical adaptations of literary texts, but whose analysis, we contend, is weakened by assumptions and judgements about, for example, the relationship between 'high' and 'low' cultural forms, the desire for 'completeness' in adaptation, and a common emphasis on lyrics which downplays the importance of other musical features. This leads us to argue for a critical methodology that blends literary and musicological analysis more rigorously than previous studies of song adaptations, in a bid to capture the complex primary and secondary codes of adapted songs in relation to literary texts, and to encompass a wide spectrum of adaptive approaches. In the second half of the article, discussions of adaptations by Kate Bush, as well as our own adaptations of the works by Ishiguro and Du Maurier, illustrate how a methodology of producing songs from stories can be applied. We then discuss the findings of the co-participatory activities of the project, identifying a set of practices that might be utilized as a model for the creation of story-to-song adaptations. Finally, we consider the initial conclusions and future applications of our research methodology from theoretical, co-creative, and, potentially, pedagogical perspectives.

Although our research is inevitably interdisciplinary, we see the project primarily as an intervention in adaptation studies, and we began the project, therefore, by considering how various debates, models, and approaches in that field might be related to the specific context of fiction-to-song adaptation. Adaptation studies, of course, has a long history, but it has predominantly been focused on the transference of literary texts (novels / plays) into film adaptations. There has been less work done on the ways in which literary texts have been adapted into musical forms, although the main exception

is on the adaptation of literary texts into musicals; for example, *Oliver!*, *My Fair Lady* and *Les Misérables*, and the range of popular musicals adapted from Shakespeare, including *West Side Story*. There has also been a long tradition of adaptation of Shakespeare's plays into operatic form; for example, Verdi's *Macbeth* (1847), Gounod's *Roméo and Juliette* (1867), and Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1960). There has, however, been very little academic research into the intermedial adaptation of (long-form) texts into short-form musical formats; for example, from the novel into the pop / rock / folk song. Linda Hutcheon, in *A Theory of Adaptation,* does mention literary adaptation into song (9), although her main point is that longer-form musicals based on literary works contain a series of songs, rather than single-song adaptations. Julie Sanders is also interested in the way musicological vocabulary is useful in describing the processes of adaptation (2005, 51) but, as we discuss later in this article, she is not really interested in single-song adaptations of longer forms. Werner Wolf, in *The Musicalization of Fiction*, looks at musical and literary relationships from a different intermedial perspective, exploring how fiction, with its 'semiotic function to interpret culture' (229), has incorporated musical forms and aesthetics. He shares with the contributors to the 2020 edition, *Sound and Literature*, an awareness of commonalities between literature and music, but the practice he describes is not adaptation as much as imitation.

There are, however, approaches and theories that have pertinence for this distinctive form of adaptation and have relevance to the scope of our research. Several critics identify a distinction in the definition of adaptations between the act of adapting and the product that is produced through that process. Hutcheon, for example, identifies three categories: the '*formal entity or product*', the '*process of creation*', and thirdly, '*the process of reception*' (7–8, Italics in the original). Our project engaged with each of these categories, but in differing ways. In particular, it focused on Hutcheon's second category and developed insight into the third category through the experience of performance and the reception of the audience, who effectively became part of the research process in the form of offering feedback on the performance and, obliquely, on the songs emerging from the creative process stage. In terms of Hutcheon's focus on process, she identifies three distinct categories in terms of what gets adapted when an 'original' source is translated into the new formal entity: themes, characters, and story. Each of these categories, and others, fed into our thinking and decisions when adapting the two songs.

One of our main considerations was to think through the possibility (and limitations) of the transference of the structured story from a narrative source text with a certain size (in terms of both the number of words and the time it takes to consume) to a short-form song, and the processes of reduction or distillation this would involve. (As becomes clear, 'distillation' is a key, recurring term to describe what happens in the adaptation process we explore.) This focus on what gets carried across in adaptation, of course, has precedence in film adaptations of fiction; Brian McFarlane, for example, notes 'what novels and films most strikingly have in common is the potential and propensity for narrative' (12). The modern pop song, however, although it can often include narrative elements, is probably better understood as a lyrical form, most closely associated with lyrical poetry. Two questions arise, then, in a fiction-to-song adaptive process: (1) to what extent can the narrative (story, plot, *fabula*, *syuzhet*) be translated into

the predominantly lyrical form of the pop/rock song? and (2) how is the voice of the source text communicated in terms of narrative source, point-of-view and character? Is there inherently a problem in moving between the narrative and the lyrical? Sanders helps here in that she defines the process of adaptation as an 'interpretive act' that also 'involve[s] the movement into a new generic mode or context' (2005, 3). Adaptation into song mirrors this process; however, given the restrictions of the shorter form of the pop / rock song we would argue that the source text can only function as what Bluestone identifies as 'raw material'. Most of the extant songs we looked at in the project follow the established 3–5-minute length for pop/rock songs and in these cases there is not the space comprehensively to transfer aspects of a novel's events, scenes, or plot to a song adaptation. Symbolic content can often be privileged in this distillation process as symbols are useful rhetorical devices that can serve to distil relatively large meanings into small signifying containers such as single words or phrases.

In Kate Bush's 'Wuthering Heights', for example, most of the story is relegated to the expression of feeling coming from one character, Cathy. There is a brief summary of some events from the novel contained in the first verse and pre-chorus, but this provides more of a suggestion than any detail of the relationship between Heathcliff and Cathy. This can be seen, for example, in the opening lines, 'Out on the wily windy moors / We'd roll and fall in green'; we also get a sense of the development of the story in the lines, 'They told me I was going to lose the fight / Leave behind my wuthering [. . .] heights', which inform the listener of Cathy's demise. But on the whole, there is very little of the story translated across from the source text. What is distilled in the first line, however, is a whole nuance of meaning and imagery in the phrase 'wily windy moors', the moors themselves becoming a cipher for a range of associations and themes that the novel has the space to develop more loquaciously. We discuss the example of *Wuthering Heights* in more detail below, but in general, we found that where plot details are lacking, there is more of an emphasis on capturing specific themes and the overall mood of the source text in both the lyrics and the music. We see this, however, not as an impediment but as a benefit of the form and in many ways, as subsequent sections of this article show, the song adaptation circumvents the hoary issue in adaptation studies of 'fidelity' to the original, as discussed by many adaptation theorists (Venuti, McFarlane, Stam, Leitch).[3]

We would argue, then, that audiences are more likely to accept that a song adaptation is not expected to recreate a text's complete storyline but rather tends to crystallize certain aspects of a text's themes or meaning.[4] Indeed, Michael Klein and Gillian Parker identify one category of adaptation (following George Bluestone) in which the source text acts 'merely as raw material, simply the occasion for an original work' (9–10), and it is this category of novel-to-film adaptation that the fiction-to-song format most closely follows.[5] In this sense, the process of adapting story-to-song follows André Bazin's conception of the '*equivalences of meaning*' that can be transferred from the source to the adapted text irrespective of the form in which those meanings are contained (58, italics in original), although the broad equivalence he notes is almost inevitably affected by shifts in emphasis. The process of writing the two songs for this project focused specifically on the interpretation of theme and mood established in the two selected texts, although there was sensitivity in trying to capture some aspects of key plot events. This approach was informed by our findings from analysing the extant examples.

It is also important to note a point Linda Hutcheon makes that adaptations often stack up in terms of the creation of any new adaptation of a text and that 'multiple versions exist laterally not vertically' (Hutcheon xv). Bush's 'Wuthering Heights', for example, reportedly owes as much, if not more, to David Conroy's BBC 1967 adaptation than to Emily Brontë's novel.[6] J Hillis Miller's provocative metaphor of ghosts to describe the palimpsestic relationship between texts is also pertinent here, where a literary text can be 'inhabited […] by a long chain of parasitical presences, echoes, allusions, guests, ghosts of previous texts' (446). We found this had particular resonance in our experience of adapting 'Don't Look Now' in the co-creative part of the project, where Nicolas Roeg's 1973 film adaptation was also felt to be haunting the finished work, despite the expressed desire of the group to focus solely on Du Maurier's text.

Up to this point, we have demonstrated the applicability of some established ideas in adaptation studies to story-into-song adaptations. And yet when one considers the increased importance and scope of adaptation studies as well as the sheer number of songs adapted from or inspired by literary texts (including the entire oeuvre of the UK's The Bookshop Band), it is surprising that story-to-song adaptations have not become more prominent within the field or attracted the weight of critical work afforded to cinematic and televisual ones. Though individual songs and artists (including Kate Bush, as a later section of this article demonstrates) have inspired scholarly readings, and there have been some attempts to theorize the transition from novels and short stories to song, there has been less analysis of the specific literary and musical considerations at play in that transition, or reflection on the complex 'communicative context' (Hutcheon 26) that encompasses novels, short stories, and popular songs.

Julie Sanders, in *Shakespeare and Music: Afterlives and Borrowings* (2007), concentrates on the long-standing relationship between theatre and music and dedicates most of her study to long-form adaptations of long-form dramatic works: ballet, opera, musicals, and film scores. In the chapter devoted to genres of contemporary popular music, she implies that pop and rock's references to Shakespeare fall shy of adaptation, but rather stand 'metonymically for theatrical, and even literary, culture in general, rather than being specific or locally resonant allusions' (183). An example would be the lyric, 'all the world's indeed a stage and we are merely players' from Rush's 'Limelight' (1981). In a valuative observation, Sanders argues that 'rock and popular music have always sought a form of authenticity and authority from allusion to literary and cultural sources' (184) and cites progressive rock as an example. Thus, Sanders sidesteps the question of how one adapts a long-form literary text such as a novel (or indeed a play) into a three-minute song by regarding pop's interactions with Shakespeare, in terms reminiscent of Pierre Bourdieu, not as adaptations but as 'borrowings' that aspire to bestow 'artistic capital' upon the work (190). Her value-laden use of the term 'borrowing' is less nuanced than Peter Burkholder's, who has written extensively on the topic. He prefers to see musical borrowing as an expansive 'field', encompassing a wide range of practices, including stylistic allusion, setting, quotation, and quodlibet (854). Intermedial adaptation, we would suggest, should be considered a multi-faceted form of musical borrowing.

Similarly to Sanders, Oana Ursulesku frames her discussion within questions of cultural value, with explicit reference to Bourdieu. She contends that 'rock "n" roll culture'

of the postwar period is where the inclusive, carnivalesque tendencies of the 'lowbrow' meet and embrace 'the artistic and cultural history preceding it', including (according to Bourdieu) the more distanced 'highbrow' realms of canonical and avant-garde literature (Ursulesku 85). Examples she cites include the relationships between the Beats and musicians such as Bob Dylan and The Rolling Stones, and the influence of 'the French symbolists' on punk's predecessors such as David Bowie and Patti Smith, who regularly quoted poetry in their songs (87). Though Ursulesku's article represents one of the first attempts to explore crossovers between multiple genres of literary production and short-form pop productions, it focusses exclusively on lyrics and ignores musical aspects such as melody, harmony, tempo, and timbre. Almost necessarily, then, it is less about the process of adaptation than it is '(mere) intertextual referencing' (83). And, as her disparaging analysis of Cheryl Cole's quotation of the Marquis de Sade in the video for 'Call My Name' (2012) indicates, she is prepared to endorse the factitious distinction between highbrow and lowbrow that her earlier comments on contemporary theory and the fundamental incompleteness of all texts would seem to undermine: 'in these times of musical mass production, the accepted wisdom seems to be that a quotation from a well-known literary work will somehow give seriousness to otherwise low-quality music and connect it to works of *highbrow* culture' (92). As well as upholding a hierarchy of high and low culture inherited, perhaps, from theorists such as Theodor Adorno and Pierre Bourdieu (and reinforcing the logocentric primacy of lyrics), such a statement betrays an assumed hierarchy of musical forms also evidenced in Ursulesku's choices of musical examples: genres of 'classic' rock are favoured throughout the article over pop, dance music, soul, and reggae.

We would wish to avoid reinforcing cultural hierarchies and engaging with subjective immeasurables such as 'quality'. Moreover, if one accepts that a text is not 'an individual, isolated object but, rather, a compilation of cultural textuality' (Allen 36), then there is little to be gained from drawing distinctions between adaptation and intertextuality, and no benefit in discriminating between 'good' and 'bad' adaptations. Rather, it is more productive to postulate a spectrum of adaptive practices resulting in various forms of 'cultural textuality', ranging from the most cursory of lyrical quotations, or the employment of a literary title for a band or song name, which might have a loose 'thematic connection' (Ingham 2022, 96), to songs which attempt a holistic blending of lyrics and music to capture and reinterpret the essence of a literary text. After that, it is up to the listener to evaluate the merits and demerits of the adaptation. In addition, there is a spectrum of *receptive* competencies and practices, ranging from listeners with a deep knowledge of the literary text from which the song is adapted, to those with no prior knowledge, who might enjoy the song oblivious to the specific cultural references it makes, but whose enjoyment nonetheless derives in part from those references.

To cite one example: Black Star's 'Thieves in the Night' (1998) can be regarded as an adaptation of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970), despite its minimal direct quotation—of the novel's title, the line 'hidin' like 'thieves in the night from life', and of certain terms employed by Morrison such as 'licensed'—because it extrapolates from the guilt and self-hatred of the story to the songwriters' contemporary American society. In so doing, it emphasizes historical continuities and fossilized ideologies of race, alerting listeners to the tragic endurance of the traumas confronted in Morrison's debut, and

combines with the novel-to-form a critical, cultural text in continual (re)making. The genre is significant, too: hip-hop is a form closely associated with black American experience, and one that has frequently employed many of the adaptive modes Mike Ingham identifies in relation to intramedial adaptations, including 'contrafactum and parody, quotation, sampling, dubbing, and mashup' (Ingham 2020, 329). In Ingham's terms, 'Thieves in the Night' can be considered a 'commentary' adaptation (2020, 338), commenting on and considering afresh the 'raw material' of the text which inspires it, while evincing self-consciousness about its adaptive processes and offering a critique of the less politically engaged 'gangsta rap' of the 1990s (Ingham 2022, 121).

With Ingham, we reject any assumption that literary texts 'align more closely with "serious music"' (2022, 2) and share his understanding that 'an ethos of illegitimacy is intrinsic to the creative instincts of songwriters and performers' (Ingham 2020, 338). Thus, borrowing, sampling, bricolage, and other forms of creative repurposing are intrinsic to the production of popular music, and thus that there are a multitude of approaches to intermedial adaptation. Where we diverge from his analysis is, firstly, in his privileging of poetic adaptations over novels and short stories. Examples of the latter include Jefferson Airplane's 'White Rabbit' (1967), based on *Alice in Wonderland*, and Gordon Lightfoot's 'Don Quixote' (1972). Dealt with only cursorily, these songs, for Ingham, 'illustrate the impossibility of adapting more than just an element' of a novel or short story (2020, 335). Indeed, he insists that 'no complete transposition from a novel or short fiction is feasible' (2022, 95). By contrast, he contends that 'the poem to-song transfer is probably the most complete form of intermedial adaptation [...] since it is a practice that is predominantly holistic rather than fragmentary' (Ingham 2020, 336) and results in 'settings' rather than 'variation' of the original (2022, 92). While his observation that a poem's 'preexisting musicality' makes it amenable to song is laudable (2020, 337), and while his reading of examples such as The Waterboys' engagements with W. B. Yeats makes some reference to musical features such as instrumentation, the term 'holistic' here conveys the logocentrism that pervades many discussions of adaptation (including, as we have seen, Ursulesku's). It refers to the potential adaptation of an entire poem and, in suggesting that this might produce a more 'complete' song text, hints at a favouring of fidelity at odds with Ingham's appreciation of 'illegitimacy' in songwriting, and with the overall direction of adaptation studies.

Ingham's comments, born of his focus on 'literary lyrics' (2022, 12), also imply a privileging of *quotation* as adaptive practice. From one perspective, this is logical: because songs operate in poetic forms they are especially amenable to the lifting of words and phrases from the originating source. When phrases from the literary text have become iconic, and firmly embedded in the popular consciousness, their inclusion in a song can be a useful hook for listeners. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a salient example: David Bowie's '1984', 'Big Brother', and 'We Are the Dead', all from the 1974 *Diamond Dogs* album, as well as Akala's *DoubleThink* (2010) and Douglas Dare's song of the same name, all take advantage of the familiarity and powerful political and affective qualities of Orwell's words and ideas. However, if the impossibility of quoting a complete novel or short story in a song represents an important limit on the privileging of quotation, even more salient is the fact that any quoted words assume a different form in a musical context. No longer sounded in the reader's head, they are literally

sounded in the vocal performance and thus inextricably linked to other musical features—melody, harmony, timbre, pitch, and rhythm. Transformed into sound elements and repurposed, even lyrics directly taken from a literary source are less quoted than sampled. Even to quote a whole poem, then, does not lead to a 'complete' or 'holistic' adaptation, but to a transformation of raw materials.

If holism is to have any purchase in thinking about story-to-song adaptations, then at the very least it needs reconceptualizing, moving away from a privileging of lyrical content. Such a reconceptualization requires consideration of the song's unique communicative and cognitive status as a medium which, to use Hutcheon's terms, simultaneously 'shows' and 'tells'. A song offers 'a direct aural [...] performance experienced in real time' as well as (to an admittedly much more limited extent than a novel or short story) the ability 'to describe, explain, summarize, expand' (Hutcheon 13). Unlike novel-to-film adaptations, we are not dealing with a transition from a symbolic to an indexical medium, but rather between two symbolic media, one of which—the pop song—combines the different symbolic elements of words and music symbiotically. As a result, 'telling' might be achieved not only through lyrics but through the abstract means of pitch, melody, timbre, rhythm, and harmony, and 'showing' is partly a product of words aurally received. Thus, far from downplaying the significance of lyrics, or trying to detach them from analysis of adapted songs, we are proposing that such analysis treat them as fusions of text and sound elements.[7]

Drawing on insights from Richard Middleton and David Brackett, we argue that analysis of story-to-song adaptations cannot lapse into oppositions between form and content, music and lyrics, but must aspire to the thickest possible musicological and literary descriptions combining formalist and hermeneutic methods. It must explore the endlessly complex interactions between primary significations—the musical syntax of melodic and harmonic features; structural elements such as verses and choruses and their positioning; rhythm and tempo—and secondary, semantic, connotative significations—including style, interpretations of the *intention* of syntactic elements, ideological choices, perceptions of emotional content, and historicized moral and political evaluations of certain styles and genres (Brackett 10–11). The 'musical code', as Brackett describes it, relates syntactic and semantic elements, primary and secondary significations (9). For adapted songs, then, one must consider the novel or short story from which inspiration is drawn (and one's reading of it) as vital components of musical coding, contextual aspects of secondary signification influencing the song's primary aspects, which in turn create new connotations that become part of the literary text's reception and interpretation. These theoretical insights inform the example analysis of Kate Bush songs to follow, as well as the accounts of our own experiences of story-to-song adaptations in a series of collaborative workshops, and form the basis for our preliminary thoughts on a methodology for future adaptations.

Kate Bush is known for the abundant literary references in her songs. To cite just a couple of examples: 'Cloudbusting', from *Hounds of Love* (1985), was inspired by Peter Reich's memoir, *A Book of Dreams* (1973), and Peter Pan appears in two songs from *Lionheart* (1978)—'In Search of Peter Pan' and 'Oh England, My Lionheart'. And Bush, of course, wrote and performed one of the most famous hit songs adapted from a literary text, 'Wuthering Heights' (1978). Nicky Losseff writes that the song is 'like an aria

from an opera whose libretto is based on a novel, with verbiage stripped to the bare bones and one moment of emotional significance expanded in depth' (238). Inspired in part, as we have noted, by Conroy's 1967 television adaptation of Brontë's novel, Bush distils Catherine and Heathcliff's tempestuous relationship into a vivid reimagining of an early scene in the novel in which Catherine's ghost pleads with Mr. Lockwood to be let in at the window (36–7).

Sung from Cathy's anguished perspective, 'Wuthering Heights' is 'operatic' not only in the popular sense of being theatrical or histrionic, but also in more specific musical ways to do with pitch and timbre. The latter, Susan Rogers argues, is both 'the most enigmatic' and 'the most individualized of all musical dimensions' (167, 192); Philip Ball, while observing that the human brain is 'astonishingly attuned' to timbre, calls it 'an elusive, ill-defined musical characteristic' (229). In 'Wuthering Heights', Bush deliberately exploits that elusiveness in the service of the song's haunting mood. She opts for a 'thinner, more reedy sound' by narrowing the gap at the back of the mouth (Losseff 229), while, even at the highest pitch, never seeming to strain the voice. Thus, she is closer in timbre and technique to operatic singers than to rock singers who make a virtue of audibly pushing the voice between registers. As Losseff argues, 'the effect is of hovering inside a well-defined space rather than pushing against it' (230) and this space can be understood as the ethereal spirit realm to which Cathy has been permanently consigned. As Bush explains in interview: 'I tried to project myself into the role of the book's heroine and, because she is a ghost, I gave her a high-pitched, wailing voice' (Wigg 1978). Losseff explains how the unique vocal timbre combines with dramatic pitch shifts in the verse and the chorus' shifting and elusive Db tonic to reinforce the sense of Cathy's (and by association, Heathcliff's) inability to find the 'home' of which she sings in the chorus.

We do not intend to reproduce Losseff's compellingly comprehensive musicological analysis of 'Wuthering Heights'. Instead, we offer a detailed reading of another Bush track which, like its predecessor, performs a 'double mediation' (Losseff 228)—using lyrics and music not only to interpret the literary text which inspires the song, but also to interpret each other in ways which cast new light on both literary text and adaptation process. 'Flower of the Mountain', like 'Wuthering Heights', focusses on a specific section of a long, complex novel, but differs in its direct quotation from the original text. Released in 2011 on the album *Director's Cut*, the song takes its lyrics from the 'Penelope' chapter of James Joyce's *Ulysses*: D-M Withers calls this form of intertextuality a 'literary mode of sampling' (106). Had Joyce's estate granted permission when Bush first asked, she would have used this text, with similar backing music, on the song that became 'The Sensual World' in 1989: this key phrase is retained in the later song's chorus.

Choosing to write from the perspective of Molly, Leopold Bloom's wife, means that 'Flower of the Mountain' also shares with 'Wuthering Heights' a deep engagement with female experience. Like Ursulesku, who argues that Bush's refrain functions as a 'directorial didascaly' (90), we argue that the words, 'stepping out of the page into the sensual world', celebrate both the creative act of adaptation itself and the female sensuality that dominates Bush's lyric. We go further in arguing that the song pays tribute to *Ulysses* while offering a subtle critique of Joyce's work through its deliberate selectivity and what Sanders describes a 're-visioning' of the source text's ideological frames

(2015, 10). Its use of quotation is, to use Sanders' terms, both 'supportive' and 'questioning', paying homage and simultaneously critiquing (Sanders 2015, 6). In taking its inspiration from the one chapter defined by a woman's point-of-view in a novel otherwise dominated by men, and in taking Molly Bloom off the page, 'Flower of the Mountain' also encourages listeners and readers to reflect on the longer history of male-authored female characters.

'Penelope' takes the form of an interior monologue comprised of eight extended, unpunctuated sections or 'sentences'. At the start of the chapter, Molly is inspired to reverie by her husband's unusual request for breakfast in bed (871). She reflects, among other things, on her husband's infidelities; her own romantic and sexual relationships with Blazes Boylan, Lieutenant Gardner, and others; male and female anatomy; and how much better the world would be if governed by women: 'you wouldnt see women going and killing one another and slaughtering' (926). 'Penelope' begins and ends with the word 'yes', its different significations marking the emotional journey Molly Bloom undertakes in the chapter. The first iteration cues her mental wanderings through a colourful life and suggests her irritation with the husband's request: 'Yes because he never did a thing like that before as ask to get his breakfast in bed with a couple of eggs since the *City Arms* hotel' (871). The second, by contrast, serves as an affirmation of their relationship, Molly's memories of his proposal commingling with numerous lyrical images from her romantic past and culminating in her excited acceptance: 'and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes' (933). If the capitalization of the novel's final word, followed by a full stop, suggests a definitive confirmation, it also echoes the more ambivalent 'Yes' with which the chapter starts.

Threaded with multiple iterations of the word 'yes', Bush's adaptation is a celebration—of romantic love, of female sexuality, and of the adaptation process itself—which nonetheless distils some of its source text's ambiguity in the tensions within and between lyrical content and musical arrangement. The song begins with the sound of church bells, evoking the marriage sacrament, recalling Molly's reference to 'the nuns ringing the angelus' shortly before she remembers Leopold's proposal (930), and reminding us that Joyce's text is, as Anna Snaith observes, 'multi-modal', full of noises that contribute to 'the omni-directional soundscape of urban din' (4) (notably in the 'Sirens' chapter). In 'Penelope' the noises include singing voices (882, 898), more bells ringing out (885), and whistling trains (894). However, the church bells also initiate the contradictions and tensions that linger throughout the song. Pitched in a microtonal zone just below C, they develop a mildly dissonant relationship with the synthesizer chords on F, Eb, and Db that play as the bells fade out, accompanied by the internal pedal C matching the rhythm of the drums and anticipating the insistent, repeated C of Bush's mixolydian melody.

If the church bells constitute a simple means by which Bush evokes *Ulysses*' Irish context, then the folk instrumentation—with recurring melody lines played on fiddles and uillean pipes—both bolsters this context and provides, along with the lyrics, an ironic counterpoint to any religious sentiments. Just as 'Penelope' is joyously impious, revelling in the somatic and featuring explicit descriptions of sexual activity both within and outside marriage, so 'Flower of the Mountain' embraces the physical and sensual rather than the spiritual: it begins with Molly giving Leopold 'the bit of seed cake out of [her]

mouth', mentions the kiss 'under the Moorish wall' and includes further references to her hair, eyes, and breasts. The fading out of the bells, which connote Catholicism's patriarchal power, signals the arrival of earthier, more demotic musical forms to accompany the words of a character far removed from a virginal religious ideal (despite 'Molly' being a medieval diminutive of 'Mary'). Musically, the element most suggestive of the clash of sacred and profane is the sharpened or augmented fourth in the uillean pipe melody Davy Spillane plays over the chorus: this note, common in traditional Irish music, is colloquially known as 'the Devil's interval' and in music theory as 'diabolus in musica', a term derived from historical prohibitions on its use (Kennedy et al. 2013).

The 'culturally hybrid soundscape' of the music, then (Ingham 2022, 120), strongly suggests that 'Flower of the Mountain' is an equivocal celebration of the marriage sacrament, at best. Closer analysis of the lyrics reinforces this view. Bush's choice of title initially appears to emphasize the romance of the proposal: images of the colour red, roses, and southern Spain, along with the breathy timbre of Bush's vocal (a marked contrast to the timbre of 'Wuthering Heights') enhance the feeling of exotic abandonment and fecundity. And yet, Bush has chosen to highlight an epithet with contradictory associations. First, as well as referring to the surname 'Bloom', it recalls 'Henry Flower', the alias Leopold employs in his romantic correspondence with Martha Clifford (88). Second, the associations with Spain, including 'the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used' confuse Leopold's marriage proposal on Howth Head with a past encounter with General Mulvey, the first man to kiss Molly 'under the Moorish wall' (901). Remembering that she was previously called 'Flower of the mountain' in Gibraltar, Molly then reflects on Bloom's kiss, in a line reproduced in Bush's adaptation: 'And I thought well as well him as another'. This pivotal line, positioned almost exactly in the middle of the song and hardly a celebration of star-crossed love, is followed by the refrain—'stepping out of the page into the sensual world'—sung twice.

After the instrumental break, dominated again by pipes and whistles in the mixolydian mode, the final verse, in which Leopold's madly beating heart is represented by a flourish on the pipes, and which climaxes on the shivering grace notes of 'oo yes', demands to be understood in light of the musical and lyrical ambiguities that precede it. 'Stepping out of the page' signifies Molly's rebirth in the sensual medium of sound, and the act of adaptation by a female creator taking a highly selective approach to a male author's work that emphasizes the tensions inherent to the source text and offers the listener space for contradictory interpretations. Much less a celebration of heterosexual romance than of female imagination and independence (both Molly Bloom's and Kate Bush's), 'Flower of the Mountain' acknowledges what is radical about Joyce's text—not least its unabashed revelling in the somatic and sexual—but also invites listeners to reassess it. If Joyce ventriloquizes Molly to assert that Leopold, and by association the author, is a man who 'under[stands] or [feels] what a woman is' (932), then Bush's adaptation, by recontextualizing Joyce's words, playfully challenges that masculine authorial presumption.

Kate Bush's 'Flower of the Mountain' is instructive because unlike, say, Iron Maiden's 'Murders in the Rue Morgue' (1981), a song which borrows a title and an image of two murdered corpses but in all other respects bears little resemblance to Edgar Allan Poe's story, it is closely related to its source material and explicitly about adaptation and its

creative and hermeneutic potential. (No value judgment is intended here: as earlier comments show, we are not advocating for outmoded virtues of fidelity or completeness, merely highlighting wide disparities between artists on the spectrum of adaptation.) This is doubly appropriate because the tracks on *Director's Cut* are also reworkings of songs from Bush's earlier studio albums, *The Sensual World* (1989) and *The Red Shoes* (1993). For Withers, this adaptive intratextuality is an important aspect of Bush's 'conceptually analogue' approach (99). The term refers not to a stubborn adherence to analogue recording techniques (Bush's studio combines digital and analogue equipment) but to a commitment to 'the *temporalities* embedded within analogue formats' (100, italics in original), temporalities in contrast with the instantaneous, fragmented consumption of music driven by the contemporary technical 'socio-technical milieu' of online streaming (101). To be conceptually analogue is to embed *memory*—of previous versions of the song, of one's life at the time when one first heard it, of wider musical history—within the listening experience, to make listeners conscious of temporal flow and their own listening processes.

We argue that Withers' evocative phrase, 'remnants of another kind of attention' (101) applies in the case of adaptations such as 'Flower of the Mountain' not only to conceptually analogue forms of listening, but to the extended readerly attention required by the novel or short story. As we have suggested, the adapted literary text is an important and complex aspect of the song's 'secondary' signification (Brackett 10); one of the reasons for this is precisely that it brings 'another kind of attention' to one's enjoyment and understanding of the song and demands renewed attention to one's listening and reading experiences. Withers states: 'Listening to *Director's Cut* is to engage in an interpretive process that transforms memory into a resource for listening to the world beyond Bush's music' (103). Though 'Flower of the Mountain' is a particularly fecund example, and Bush an artist particularly conscious of the longer temporalities and hermeneutic possibilities such adaptations enable, all such adaptations have the potential to excite active memory and to encourage listening and reading beyond the song.

We took several findings from the analysis of extant examples of fiction-to-song adaptations, and Bush's work in particular, to our own co-creative practice in song adaptation. There were two phases to this process: first, the project leads worked on an adaptation of Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*; second, a larger group made up of volunteer participants developed, through a series of workshops, an adaptation of Daphne du Maurier's short story 'Don't Look Now'. For the first stage, the project team decided that it would be advantageous to put into practice some of the approaches and techniques we had discovered in the initial research phase before the workshops ran, to give us a stronger foundation for guiding and advising on the process. *Never Let Me Go* was chosen for several reasons. Both project leads were familiar with the text and one had recently been teaching it on a third-year undergraduate module. The novel also suggests a series of layers pertinent to the project, most obviously in its own imagining of a fictional pop song called 'Never Let Me Go', performed by the equally fictitious 'Julie Bridgewater'. The song carries important emotional and thematic weight in the novel and, indeed, Ishiguro has noted how song has formed an important aspect of his creative career and that he 'started out writing songs' before he developed as a novelist (Ishiguro 2024, vii). His collection of short stories, *Nocturnes,* develops a range of

references to musical forms and influences, and he has worked with musicians on collaborate projects, most notably with the jazz artist Stacey Kent, for whom he wrote the lyrics on her album, *The Day We Crossed Europe in the Rain*.

In our song adaptation, we were keen not simply to attempt a full musical version of the eponymous textual song described in the novel but to bring 'another kind of attention' (Withers 101) to the novel as a whole and capture aspects of it. We were also intrigued by the further layering of the adaptive process due to Mark Romanek's 2010 film adaptation of the novel (screenplay by Alex Garland), which included a rendered musical version of a song called 'Never Let Me Go'. To complicate the palimpsestic layering even further, the song that appears in the novel and film has garnered its own virtual meta-life with YouTube videos cited as performed by (the fictional) Julie Bridgewater. (The song in the film was written by Luther Dixon and sung by Jane Monheit.) We were conscious, therefore, that our song would contribute to an already complex amassing of adaptations, recognizing what Hutcheon identifies as the lateral relationship of multiple versions and the need for suspicion of the notion of an original, especially from a reader-response perspective (xv).[8]

We were conscious, however, of the specific limitations of scale in the movement from 282-page novel-to-short-form song. This would inevitably involve a process of distillation and compression, and the creative decisions we initially made were an attempt to respond to this challenge (which, as we have already noted, can equally be regarded as a benefit in its rendering of 'fidelity' as otiose). As already noted, the title of Ishiguro's text refers to a song that is given prominence in the plot of the novel and although we felt that using the title front and centre in the song could be construed as unimaginative or obvious, the phrase would give us an evocative five-syllable refrain that we could develop musically for the chorus and that would convey both the novel's metafictional intertextuality and the thematic weight the phrase carries for the emotional relationships developed between the central characters. The title also conveys aspects of the central romance that develops between two of the three central characters, Kathy and Tommy, and our aim was to render uncanny the sentimental tropes of a conventional love song for the post-human world in which the protagonists find themselves.

Given its sci-fi, dystopian scenario, Ishiguro's novel presents a world in which language is imbued with extra ideological import, with many words carrying euphemistic weight. We wanted to capture some of this linguistic indeterminacy in the adaptation (see Appendix). For the verses, therefore, we began by thinking of the ways in which direct quotation of such loaded terms from the source text would work as a signal of this ideological concentration on language. As Sanders notes with respect to adaptation, quotation 'can be deferential or critical, supportive or questioning' (2) and we were interested in how this transference of words and phrases from the novel could be used to evoke corresponding meanings in the song, considering quotation as a form of textual sampling. As a practical approach, we decided to focus on the first paragraph of the novel, which introduces several of the terms that are weighted with ideological significance. In this opening to the novel, Kathy's unreliable narration emerges specifically through linguistic doubling and euphemism; for example, the use of words such as 'completion' for a final operation that results in the death of the 'donor', where the word 'donor' itself becomes loaded and problematic, as does the word 'carer', which

Kathy uses to describe her role to 'comfort' the patient. To evoke some of this loaded language, we quoted (and adapted into different forms) some of these references: to being 'comfortable' in the first verse of the song; a repeated reference to 'care' in the chorus and being 'complete' in the middle 8 section, the latter of which is reframed in an alternative sense to the one employed by the authorities in the novel's dystopian scenario.

We also attempted to convey aspects of specific scenes and themes in the novel through short-form, elliptical references. So, for example, the line 'keep the woods at bay' (verse 1) refers to the woods that surround Hailsham and are built into the ideological apparatus of the 'school' by suggesting a dangerous environment outside the grounds. 'Signalling a colder world' (verse 1) is a reference to Madame's speech to Kathy and Tommy when she explains her feelings during an earlier scene when Kathy had seen her crying that the former was contemplating the 'new world coming [that was] a harsh, cruel world' (Ishiguro 267). The reference given to Tommy in the second verse that 'art can reveal our souls' relates to the misguided belief that art was used at Hailsham to provide proof that two of the donors were in love and could thus apply for a deferral from the donation programme. The repeated use of the word 'normal' in the middle 8 refers to the nickname the donors give to the mainstream populace whom they dub 'normal'; while 'never leave me waiting there' in the chorus is a reference to the last paragraph of the novel, where Kathy imagines waiting for the now deceased Tommy (282).

The repeated refrain, 'All we do is all that's human', was an attempt to convey one of the recurrent themes in the novel embedded in Kathy's narrative. Her repeated references to her ability to empathize with others, to care for 'donors', to feel nostalgia for her time at Hailsham, and indeed to tell the story she is relating are all attempts to prove her own humanity. We were conscious, therefore, in using this line as the lead-in to the chorus that we were to a certain extent reducing one of the most important 'messages' of the novel—a claim of humanity for any marginalized victim of a social system that reduces individuals to what Giorgio Agamben relates to as 'bare life' (4). Trying to encapsulate one of the central themes of the novel into a four-line chorus inevitably involves reduction and re-visioning of the original. There was an attempt, however, to retain some of the layering and indeterminacy of meaning by allowing these phrases to fend for themselves in the song as recontextualized sound elements—and of course, they could be interpreted differently by different listeners.

We also wanted to convey the enigmatic indeterminacy of the novel through musical and genre decisions. We discuss the role of genre in adaptation in more detail below, but we took as a starting point for 'Never Let Me Go' the odd combination of genres Ishiguro's novel evokes. Particularly striking is its combination of a sci-fi dystopia and a nostalgic, public-school *Bildungsroman*. Kathy's narrative tone appears old-fashioned, wistful, and seemingly out of place in a high-tech world in which body parts are harvested. This uncanny slippage between genres is also conveyed in certain scenes that emphasize the reaction of the 'normals' to the 'poor creatures' (267) who are denied full humanity. As Madame explains to Kathy and Tommy: 'We're *all* afraid of you. I myself had to fight back my dread of you all almost every day I was at Hailsham' (264). Musically, then, we tried to capture this indeterminacy by creating a melody around

an unresolved Dsus9 chord which lacked the emotional anchoring of a clear minor or major 3rd. The chorus, however, offers an anchoring of the key in G Major, which to a certain extent evokes Kathy's plea of recognition to a system that derogates her. In terms of instrumentation, we wanted to convey the unsettling dialectic between the human and advanced technology through the combination of an acoustic guitar and synthesizer sounds. The acoustic guitar used an open Gsus tuning and conveyed the dexterity of a 'real' human player through a complex fingerstyle technique around a Gsus4 chord, again maintaining an unresolved tension.

Acoustic guitars are, of course, as much a form of music technology as any other instrument; nevertheless, they carry cultural codes (at least in the Western pop / rock tradition) that signal the lyrical and often romantic expression of the lone artist, expressing individual resistance or commentary against the institutionalized forces of the state. This is a trend that runs from Woodie Guthrie and Bob Dylan through Joan Baez and Joni Mitchell to contemporary artists such as Ren. In our adaptation, the human quality conveyed by the acoustic guitar was juxtaposed with a pad sound from an analogue synthesizer—a DSI Sequential Prophet REV 2—and an Arturia digitally modelled version of a Mini Moog for the bassline, sounds that evoke the development of the use of synthesized music in rock and pop in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. As well as evoking the post-human institutionalized power of the authorities in the novel, the use of these synth sounds also conveys the uncanny time slippage the novel achieves through its indeterminate genres.

Such synth sounds achieve a distinctive form of nostalgia associated with a late twentieth-century projection of futuristic speculation that appears from the point of the twenty-first century, when the novel was published, as a form of retro-time travel. Such a stylistic frame, apt for an adaptation of a novel set in an alternative 1980s and 1990s, is redolent of what Mark Fisher has defined as the 'lost futures' evoked by reading and watching late twentieth-century sci-fi from a position of immersion in twenty-first-century capitalist realism, where the utopian alternatives to neo-liberalism suggested back then have proved to be fanciful chimaera (Fisher 13–16).[9] This sentiment is poignantly registered in Ishiguro's novel in the cancellation of Tommy and Kathy's imagined hope for deferral from their inevitable trajectory towards an institutionalized death. It was something of this cancellation of the dreams of a lost vision of the future that we aimed to capture in the use of synthesizer sounds associated with the 1970s and 1980s.

The process of co-writing the song proved particularly fruitful in developing an approach that could be introduced in the workshop stage of the project. Additionally, it produced an original method of close analysis of the literary text derived from practical production of an adaptive process based on questions of genre and the transformation of long-form text into crystallized short phrases and expressions, both lyrically and musically. We were not, in this case, explicitly attempting a form of re-visioning such as Kate Bush's critical commentary on *Ulysses*' gender frameworks in 'Flower of the Mountain'. Nonetheless, it became apparent that writing the song involved critical interpretation of the novel. And while we were keen to capture the source text's themes and tone and not the narrative structure, the process of moving from long to short form inevitably brought the vexed question of narrative 'fidelity' into sharp focus and informed the important qualifications of the idea discussed throughout this article. Thus,

what might have been regarded as reduction was in fact selection or distillation as a means of comprehension and commentary. Moreover, the novel, by its very existence within the complex web of secondary significations, serves as commentary on and interpretation of our song.

The creative and theoretical approaches developed in the co-writing of 'Never Let Me Go' provided us with general principles to deploy in the workshop phase of the project. Between January and May 2023, we ran four half-day workshops with a group of volunteers from Keele University and the surrounding area. Although some of our volunteers were literary scholars, and some were amateur musicians, participation was not predicated on expertise and experience in literary studies or music. The ultimate objective was to record an original, co-created song based on a literary text; the workshops were structured around this objective and informed by provisional insights gained from the writing and recording of 'Never Let Me Go', as analysed in the previous section. However, the songwriting process was not prescriptive: it was allowed to develop organically through group discussion and practice. Indeed, a secondary aim of the workshop series and the two-day recording session that followed in July 2023 was the development of a co-creative methodology for story-to-song adaptations that, with further theoretical input and practice, could be applied as a model for different groups interested in similar work.

Participants arrived at the first workshop with lists of story-to-song adaptations which, after a brief overview of the project, they compared as a warming activity. After this, we discussed two songs in more detail—'Wuthering Heights' and Rush's 'Tom Sawyer' (1980)—highlighting criteria by which such adaptations might be interpreted and which might be considered in our own adaptation process: these included voice and narrative perspective; whether particular aspects of the story are foregrounded, ignored or updated; lyrics, which may or may not be comprised of direct quotations from the literary text; song structure; instrumentation and how the timbres of certain instruments and voices combine to reproduce or alter the mood of the story; and genre, to which we return presently. Following a presentation on the genesis of 'Never Let Me Go', participants were split into two groups to choose two songs from their original lists to discuss in detail, with reference to the criteria listed above: these were 'White Rabbit' and Dire Straits' 'Romeo and Juliet' (1980). Finally, participants chose the literary text to be adapted into song: Du Maurier's 'Don't Look Now'.

The second, third, and fourth workshops were dedicated first to discussion of Du Maurier's story—specifically, the elements participants felt were especially amenable to song adaptation—and then to the collaborative development and rehearsal of the song. Recalling Sanders' observation that an adaptation enters 'a new generic mode or context' (3), it is important to stress how central genre was to our discussions from the outset. As Ball notes, listeners 'may become almost surreally attuned to the niceties of genre', able in psychological experiments to identify genres after hearing extracts of only a quarter of a second (348). That this is even possible suggests the centrality of nebulous but hugely evocative musical qualities such as timbre (rather than wider melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic structures) but also more broadly genre's crucial role in musical cognition and affect. Musical pieces are '"understood" by their references to genre' because genre plays a key part in activating primary and secondary musical

codes, content, and expression (Brackett 26): that is, genre forms the nexus of relationships between musical syntax, lyrical content and the wider sociohistorical contexts within which songs are written, produced, performed, and appreciated. Related to this is the question of listener competencies. Recognition of and affection for musical genres emerges from different forms and levels of listener competence in, to list some key categories described by Gino Stefani: social practices, including musical ones such as attending gigs and reading music journalism; musical techniques such as instrumental virtuosity, scales, and compositional forms; and style, closely related to though not synonymous with genre, which refers to the idiosyncratic ways in which technique and social practice are concretely manifested (Stefani 9).

Our workshop participants drew on their competencies as both listeners and readers in their discussions of 'Don't Look Now' and its adaptation. Agreeing that Du Maurier's story participated in the Gothic mode and might be considered a horror story and a tale of loss and trauma, they considered which musical genres might best capture its genre and spirit. Initial ideas included a murder ballad in the style of Leonard Cohen or Nick Cave, and what one participant described as 'a smoking gun, retro noir style song' in the style of Lana Del Rey or a typical James Bond theme song. The latter, we speculated, might acquire ironic power if accompanying the short story's bathetic final reference to 'a silly way to die' (Du Maurier, 51). However, when it became clear that our lyrics would be from the perspective of Laura and John's deceased daughter, Christine, this lyric was felt to undermine the desired emotional poignancy.

Using evocative phrases from the story—'frescoes of the blessed and damned', 'a lost underworld of stone' (8, 21)—woven together with original lyrics penned by participants, we eventually developed a Gothic musical ghost story in a moderato waltz time suggestive of an uncanny dance of the dead. The verse's descending IV-III-II-I progression, known as the minor descending tetrachord or more colloquially as the Andalusian cadence, was designed, along with the mandolin part which introduces the song and is prominent throughout, to evoke the story's Renaissance Italian setting and its preoccupation with haunting. Lingering on the Am root for two iterations of the hook, 'don't look now, the things you see don't have to be', before moving to Dm9 to signal the transition back into the verse's descending minor sequence, the chorus repeats the story's title partly to pay direct homage to Du Maurier's work (and Nicolas Roeg's 1973 film adaptation) and partly because the phrase carries such powerful connotations, one of which is the metaleptic exhortation to listeners reinforced by the use of the second person. The insistent Am reinforces the sinister mood of story and song, redolent of being pursued by unknown assailants through dark, narrow streets, an effect enhanced on the recording by whispered backing vocals.

Debates over genre continued into the recording sessions, during which disagreement arose over the amount of reverb applied to the final mix. The producers' desire to apply reverb liberally stemmed from a perception that we were making a pop song, whereas the songwriters perceived the song to sit more comfortably within folk or 'indie' genres, and therefore to require more subtle effects. Whatever the final results, the centrality of genre to our adaptation process raises practical and theoretical considerations. That it organically became the framework for discussions of primary and secondary musical codes strongly indicates its methodological efficacy for future story-to-song adaptations.

However, regardless of the fact that literature and music are both symbolic, as opposed to indexical media, there is nothing natural or axiomatic in the mapping of literary to musical genres or styles. While heavy metal artists, for example, have frequently turned to speculative literary genres for inspiration, the conventions of sci-fi, horror, and fantasy are not *inherently* suited to the conventional codes of heavy metal—overdriven guitars, fast tempos, booming, low-tuned snare drums and twin bass pedals, high-register vocals. And if genres emerge and evolve from specific historical conditions of production and reception, so too do the musical elements which contribute to our comprehension of genres and to their emotional resonances for individual listeners.

So, while participants instinctively chose a minor key for 'Don't Look Now', the extent to which A minor might successfully convey the sadness, loss, fear, or threat of the Gothic is dependent on myriad other factors—tempo, melodic complexity, timbre, pitch range, rhythmic complexity, lyrical content—a listener's responses to all of which, as Ball demonstrates, are culturally conditioned (254–321). Mood and emotion are thus notoriously difficult to locate within music. They emerge from complex interactions of composition, performance, and listener situatedness and cannot therefore be mapped in anything other than the broadest terms onto musical genres.

Rather than as a unidirectional mapping of literary genre onto musical genre, then, the process enacted during our workshops, while focussed on genre, is better regarded first as a vehicle for comprehending, interpreting, and critiquing Du Maurier's text (the decision to write the song from the daughter's point-of-view partly a comment on the masculinist perspective of the story), and secondly as a means of interrogating and critiquing genre expectations themselves through the prism of adaptation. As Roy Shuker observes, 'genre divisions must be regarded as highly fluid' (121), but they are nonetheless stable and recognizable enough at the point of reception to have utility in such discussions. Genres are neither fixed formal taxonomies nor so anarchic as to be meaningless; they become legible through 'the tension between their emphasis on standardized codes [...] and their fluidity as these codes are elaborated on and challenged and displaced by new codes' (Shuker 121). Thus, adaptation of the kind undertaken in our workshops is part of the process of genre re-evaluation and evolution, with the genre markers of three iterations of a text called 'Don't Look Now'—the short story, the film adaptation, and the song—mutually modifying each other and collectively shaping understanding of the text.

Conclusions: towards a method for analysing and creating story-to-song adaptations

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the research undertaken during this project. We found that there is clearly a significant body of work that engages in this form of transmedia adaptative process and that it thus represents a legitimate and significant form of adaptation that has, to date, been under-researched. As with all aspects of adaptation studies, we also discovered a wide range of adaptive processes at play across the range of extant examples. In terms of analysis, we identified that several of the approaches used in fiction-to-film adaptation studies can be transferred to a fiction-to-song context. This would include focus and analysis on the ways in which key characteristics of the source text can be conveyed in the song adaptation, such as aspects of

the story, setting, point-of-view, and characters. These factors were identified in both the analysis of extant examples and the co-creative aspects of the project. There are, though, limitations to this transference of approaches developed from one adaptation context to another. We found that songs, perhaps inevitably because of their shorter form, focus their adaptive correlations more often to aspects such as mood, tone, theme, and genre than to an attempt to replicate the narrative events or plot of a source text. Despite their short form, however, we found that many of the nuances and complexities of a source text can be conveyed in the song adaptation, especially in the hands of an accomplished artist such as Kate Bush. We are probably past the point in adaptation studies debates where films are regarded as inadequate stand-ins for the novels they adapt, but we would want to argue that the rejection of a hierarchy of cultural quality and sophistication between adaptive texts should also be extended to the development of a fiction-to-song analytical practice.

Our research has also resulted in the development of a method of co-creation specific to fiction-to-song transference. Based on our findings in both the analysis of extant examples and in the workshop activities during the project, we have developed a methodology, in the form of a series of considerations and approaches, that could be applied to an extant adaptation and its source. These considerations and approaches could also be employed as a set of activities and discussion points for the co-creative production of a song adaptation. They could also, of course, be used as a starting point for a solo creative project that adapts a source text:

1. Identify a story-to-song pairing. Or for a co-creative exercise, choose a piece of fiction (novel, short story) as the source text for adaptation into song. The selection of the source text could be chosen by the group collectively, one of the participants, or in response to a particular context (e.g., a text on a set curriculum or syllabus).
2. Focus on lyrics:
   A. Any words taken directly from the source text?
   B. From whose position is the story conveyed in the fiction and is this point-of-view reproduced in the song? Is there a shift, for example, from a first-person narrator to third person or to another character? Is there more than one in the source and is this plurality transferred to the adaptation? Does the adapted song use a narrative, dramatic, or lyrical approach to its voice(s)?
   C. Does specific language and vocabulary used in the song adaptation correspond to the source text?
   D. Which aspects of the source text are conveyed in the song adaptation?
      A] events, plot
      B] characters
      C] setting
      D] mood
      E] themes
      F] the representation of time
3. Focus on the musical aspects:
   A. Under which generic classifications can the source text be identified (e.g., realism, gothic, science fiction, fantasy, detective, postcolonial)? Can this

generic frame be mapped over to music genres (e.g., rock, goth, emo, rap, punk, grime)? What factors inform decisions to map a literary genre onto a musical one?

B. How are musical elements used to convey the mood of the source and the adaption; for example, the use of minor or major keys and shifts between them? How are time signatures, tempo, and rhythmical aspects used?
C. How are chord progressions contributing to the adaptation processes (e.g., in the selection of traditional pop or experimental progressions, or unusual key shifts)?
D. How is the voice of the performing artist on the track related to the source text (e.g., in terms of gender, diction, accent, and style)?

4. How is the song structured and does this relate to specific aspects of the source text? Does the song follow an implied narrative sequence or opt for a 'more impressionistic and static, or recursive' interpretation of the source text (Ingham 2022, 98), or a combination of these approaches? For example, do the verses convey aspects of the narrative or plot, while the chorus carries a theme or themes? Consider what is happening, therefore, in different parts of the song: verses, chorus, pre-chorus, intro/outro, etc.
5. In mapping across from the source text to the song can any identifying correspondences and/or differences be identified?
6. In what ways does the song adaptation encourage us to revisit, reinterpret, or re-vision the novel? Does (re-)reading the novel add extra meaning to the song and vice versa?
7. What role does instrumentation play; for example, the use of drums, guitars, bass, piano, keyboards, horns, saxophone, etc.? Does the instrumentation produce predominantly acoustic, electric, or synthesized sounds? Are analogue or digital sources used? Are there any instances of sampling?
8. How do aspects of music production and audio effects contribute to meaning? (e.g., the use of reverb, delay, harmonizer, voice doubling, echo, distortion, stuttering, vocal chops, etc.).

This list of suggestions for the process could, of course, be adapted to specific co-participatory and co-productive groups, and the order of the activities could be changed. We also envisage that the process set out above can itself be an adaptable one: it could be moulded to diverse teaching scenarios that could have benefits as an innovative way to analyse a literary text, an exercise in a creative writing or songwriting workshop, or as a fresh approach for groups more accustomed to music-making and analysis. Overall, the project has provided some important insights in fiction-to-song analysis and practice, and we hope this kind of focus can form an important strand of adaptation studies to sit alongside the analysis of other, more recognized intermedial forms as well as having the potential to be a useful aid to songwriting.[10]

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

none declared.

NOTES

[1] For the purposes of open access, the authors have applied a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) licence to any Accepted Author Manuscript version arising from this submission.

[2] The songs that were produced during the project are available on the Soundcloud music streaming service https://soundcloud.com/storiesintosong.

[3] McFarlane summarizes: 'Discussion of adaptation has been bedevilled by the fidelity issue' (1996, 8).

[4] An additional layer of complexity is added when the adapted song is accompanied by a music video, the creators of which make aesthetic choices inspired by both the song and the literary text to which it refers.

[5] Klein and Parker offer a typology of adaptations that includes three categories; firstly, where 'fidelity to the main thrust of the narrative' is maintained; secondly, the adapted text 'retains the core structure of the narrative while significantly reinterpreting'; and thirdly, their reference to the source text as 'merely raw material' for an adaptation (1981, 9–10), again borrowing a term from George Bluestone.

[6] Marcel Rijs claims that Bush 'wrote the song after seeing the last ten minutes of the 1967 BBC mini-series based on the book *Wuthering Heights*'. Rijs, M. *The Kate Bush Encyclopedia* https://www.katebushencyclopedia.com/wuthering-heights, n.p. Online, accessed May 30, 2024.

[7] Although it is beyond the scope of our article, it is also important to note that there have been adaptions of literary work without quotation, and without lyrics of any sort. An example is Camel's 1975 album *The Snow Goose*, which for copyright reasons ended up including no words from Paul Gallico's novel. Such a work occupies a particular position on the spectrum of adaptive approaches we have postulated.

[8] In this accumulation of texts around a source there are resonances with David Metzer's work on repeated borrowings in music. Metzer writes: 'In repeated borrowing, borrowing becomes prolific and increasingly referential. Works not only borrow the same melody but also borrow from the ways in which other works use that melody' (748).

[9] It should also be noted that Fisher's focus on literary and filmic aspects of hauntology and retrofuturism has become an important concept in twenty-first-century musicology more broadly. See, for example, Trainer (2010).

[10] One aspect of the project that should be mentioned here is related to the project participants' enjoyment of all aspects of the process. This is especially the case for the co-creative aspects of the research. Although we have not yet conducted specific research into this aspect of the project, we envisage that the practice could very well have valuable health and well-being applications. David Hesmondhalgh, in *Why Music Matters*, proposes similar effects when he stresses music's important role in 'human flourishing' (17).

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Appendix

Never Let Me Go (Bentley-Peacock)

(You promised that you'd never let me go)
Looking back, it all seems so comfortable
We played our way through endless days
The ordinary all made wonderful
We could keep the woods at bay
But every day it crept up close to us
Signalling a colder world
Our hopes and dreams they were circumscribed
The truth confirming all we'd heard
(You promised that you'd never let me go)
And all we do is all that's human
To love, and laugh, and lie, and care
So, hold me tight and never let me go
Never leave me waiting there
And Tommy says that all is possible
That our art can reveal our souls

Proof that love can conquer anything
The hope to live, the right to grow old
(Promise me you'll never let me go)
And all we do is all that's human
To love, to laugh, to lie, to care
So, hold me tight and never let me go
Never leave me waiting there
To live with you in the everyday
A normal house in a normal street
And take our chances in the normal way
And live a life that's properly complete
And all we give is all that's human
We play, we laugh, we cry, we dare
So, hold me close and never let me go
Never leave me waiting there
And all we do is all that's human
To love, to laugh, to lie, to care
So, hold me tight, don't ever let me go
Never leave me waiting there