Writerly Games Writers Play: Patterns, Playlists, and Recurring Themes

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Abstract

Academic research into the relationships between literature and music has primarily focused on Western classical music in adult literary works. This article sets out to readdress this gap with a musical reading of two Middle Grade children's novels to show how words and music play a role in storytelling. Taking as examples Aimee Lucido's *In the Key of Code* (2019) and Philip Reeve's *Railhead* (2015), the study centres on how music contributes to the construction and development of these works. The analysis demonstrates that as well as sound tracking her novel with popular and classical music, Lucido (2019) imitates noteworthy characteristics associated with particular pieces as recurring themes within the narrative. The research will also examine how Lucido (2019) plays with the meaning of a range of music terms and uses typography as a form of recognisable variations of the same to bring her fictional characters to life. In contrast, Reeve (2015) builds his story world with 1970s pop music connections and structures part one of the book by following the technical aspects of the symphony's first movement sonata form principle. Both texts are a form of metafiction by systematically drawing attention to how they were made. The aim of this approach is to give writers, music makers, artists, and researchers interested in cross-disciplinary practice insight into how two different artforms can work together.

Keywords

Metafiction; Intertextuality; Music; Sound; Children's Literature

A story is a game someone has played so you can play it too.

—Ronald Sukenick (1969:57).

Let's play…

Meta. Metafiction matters. Construction and deconstruction. This is a thing. The act of self-conscious writing. Text promoting itself as its self. Reminding us of the design processes involved. The length of this sentence is eight words. I'm playing my writerly game that every word counts. The role of the reader is to crack the code. I'm explicitly demonstrating in the text how this passage is made.

Game Over.

Introduction

There are many ways of beginning an article. This one opens with a metafictional writing game. Patricia Waugh, a leading specialist in modernist and post-modernist literature and one of the first critics to focus on metafiction states: 'the lowest common denominator of metafiction is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction' (Waugh, 1969:6). In other words, the epigraph at the start of this piece introduces the reader to the theme and sets the tone for what's to come. '*Let's play…*' and '*Game Over*' is a direct intrusion from me, the author to the reader to indicate when the game starts and ends. I then created a game and planted clues in the text to draw attention to its narrative structure so the reader can participate. When the code is cracked, the reader will realise that each sentence increases incrementally by one word. In the act of composition, I have been performing Ronald Sukenick's (1969) quote and, by putting the game on paper, recorded that performance. This is metafiction in practice.

Obviously, no writer has any control whether the reader will engage with how the work was composed. That is the fate of all texts. Some stories are meant to be fast-food takeaways consumed for instant gratification and discarded afterwards to make room for the next. Others, by the very nature in the way they were created, are meant for rereading, so that the plurality of the text becomes an interactive work or a writerly game between the author and reader. With this in mind, I have chosen two children's novels as the focus for this article.

The primary text is Aimee Lucido's *In the Key of Code* (2019). The story is aimed at Middle Grade readers and written in verse. The narrator is twelve-year-old Emmy. Her life has been turned upside down. She is in a new city, starting a new school, and feels out of place. Emmy loves music but doesn't believe she can be a musician until she discovers computer programming. Lucido's premise for the story was to weave music, code, and prose into one harmonious composition to tell Emmy's journey from feeling out of tune to being in tune with her new surroundings. The secondary text is Philip Reeve's *Railhead* (2015). The sci-fi adventure is aimed at readers eleven years and older. The protagonist is Zen Starling, a thief

who rides sentient trains that travel from one world to another. He is offered a life-changing job to infiltrate the Emperor's train to steal a box and gets caught up in a war that could destroy the whole planetary network. Philip Reeve (2015) did not consciously set out to write a music novel. But embedded within the structure of the story, there is music from the first page to the last. Both texts draw attention to the role of music as part of their own artistic construction of the novel. By following the trace evidence, my analysis will show how Lucido (2019) explicitly soundtracks pop and classical music and imitates noteworthy characteristics of a particular work as a recurring theme within the text. I will demonstrate how Lucido (2019) relies on a range of music terms and forms to bring her main character to life and explore how typography and space register elements of music such as rhythm, metre, pitch, and dynamics. And by way of contrast, I will demonstrate how Reeve (2015) implicitly builds his story world with pop music connections and divides the novel into four distinct movements as if he was composing a large-scale orchestral work. I will argue that he follows the technical aspects of the symphony's first movement sonata form principle in part one of the book.

In the Key of Code: Patterns, Playlists, and Number Games

Sound tracking popular and classical music is a recurring theme in Lucido's *In the Key of Code* (2019). Lucido (2019) follows three main techniques. The first is to reference a track with title links to other songs and other artists. Lucido (2019) establishes this at the very beginning of the book which opens with the poem called 'California Dreaming' (Lucido, 2019:5). This immediately triggers a meta-awareness to the well-known song made famous by The Mamas & The Papas (1965). In the narrative Emmy is recalling the drive from Wisconsin to her new home in San Francisco. Before the move she had only heard about the Golden State in songs. The playlist for the journey lists three pop acts with connections to the title of the poem.

> **Katy Perry** The singer-songwriter's hit 'California Gurls' (2010) featuring Snoop Dogg is a homage to The Beach Boys. The unusual spelling of Gurls versus Girls is a reference to Big Star's 'September Gurls' (1974) – another tribute to the legendary 1960s rock band.

> **The Beach Boys** 'California Girls' (1965) remains one of their most famous songs. Brian Wilson likened the slow *bum-ba-dee-dah* to a Western cowboy riding into town. The inspiration behind the shuffle beat came from J. S. Bach's 'Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring' (1723).

> **The Mamas & the Papas** 'California Dreamin'' (1965) is imitated in the title of Lucido's poem 'California Dreaming' (2019) by adding the 'g'. The Beach Boys recorded a version of the song for their greatest hits compilation *Made in U.S.A* (1986).

There are countless songs with California in the title. The artists Lucido (2019) sound posts are not randomly plucked. They are all interconnected. Katy Perry is acknowledging The Beach Boys hit 'California Girls' with 'California Gurls' and The Beach Boys produced their own cover version of The Mamas & The Papas song. Lucido (2019) also reinforces the California connection in the text. It is Emmy's first day at her new school. The 'kids' look as

if they have 'jumped off the cover of a magazine' with their designer glasses and ripped jeans and Emmy is 'nothing like the cover of a magazine' (Lucido, 2019:5). The repeated 'cover of a magazine' refrain is a link to Madonna's hit single 'Vogue' (1990). The song name-checks Hollywood stars 'on the cover of a magazine' and the opening lyrics 'What are you looking at? | Strike a pose' suggests how Emmy sees her fellow students. The music video for the chart-topping track was filmed in the famous Burbank Studios in California. Lucido (2019) is again reinforcing and amplifying the text connections back to the title of the poem which ends with Emmy wishing California was just a song. When Emmy's school life improves, she admits that maybe 'California' is not such a bad song after all (Lucido, 2019:76).

The second type of sound tracking is introduced in the poem 'Hazy'. This time Lucido (2019) references one artist and two songs. She does this to show the difference between Emmy's feelings on the first day of term in her old and new school (Lucido, 2019:16). Wisconsin reminds Emmy of Ella Fitzgerald singing 'Summertime' (1968) where the 'livin' is easy'. In San Francisco, the track has changed to 'Lost in a Fog' (1957). The opening lyrics are:

> Like a ship at sea, I'm just lost in a fog
> My mind is hazy, my thoughts are blue

The word 'hazy' has become the title of the verse. The song lyrics reflect how Emmy feels like a 'wrong note' looking out the window 'into all that fog'. Lucido (2019) repeatedly returns to the 'fog' when Emmy is feeling blue. This sentiment is not only associated with being at school. Things have changed at home too. Her father is making a noise learning a new piano piece. Her mother has given up singing and Emmy no longer has anything to practice on the piano. She fills her time on the couch with the dog staring 'out the window into the fog' (Lucido, 2019:46).

The track selections in both examples reflect how Emmy is feeling at a particular time. Lucido (2019) is not being didactic. She is asking her readers to explore their own emotions on moving home and changing schools by engaging with the music and the words. As Angela Leighton puts it 'learning to listen is what literature might teach, by a kind of shared activity between author and reader, page and ear, sound and soundings, in a mutual or interactive work of apprehension.' (Leighton, 2018:15). Listening, like reading is not a passive activity. They are two different senses. Two different skills that need to be learned. Words on a page are like notes on a score. They are not silent. They are waiting to be brought to life with the eyes and the ears so the reader can immerse themselves in the safety of the fictional world the writer has created.

The third and most complex technique is where Lucido (2019) imitates motifs and numerical patterns associated with a particular piece of music. Thereby, 'shaping the novel and the story so the reader gets the impression that music is involved in the signification of the narrative […] and that the presence of music can indirectly be experienced while reading.' (Wolf, 2017:248). Beethoven's Minuet in G, No. 2 (1796) is introduced in the poem 'Pretending' (Lucido, 2019:7). The piano piece features as a recurring theme throughout the book to show movement from one space to another.

As I walk down the hallway
I head-hum my favorite walking song.
Beethoven's Minuet in G.
  dum dee dum dee dum dee dum dee dum

I move **andante**
matching my steps to the beat
  left, and right, and left, and right, and left

Figure 1. (First two verses of 'Pretending' *In the Key of Code,* **2019:7)**

Emmy hums the tune *dum dee dum dee dum dee dum dee dum* in her head on the way to find her locker. The text follows the pitch and pattern of the opening statement in the piano played with the right-hand. Her pace is descried as 'andante' which means at a medium tempo or 'walking' pace. The sound of Emmy's footsteps *left, and right, and left, and right, and left* is a textual imitation of the rhythm. When bar lines are inserted into both phrases the text relationship with the score becomes clear.

Figure 2. (L. van Beethoven (1796) Minuet in G, No. 2. Opening right-hand phrase with the novel text, page 7.)

In Figure 2, *dum* and *left,* and *right,* are the dotted quavers. *Dee* along with the *and* are the semiquavers whilst the final *dum* and *left* are the minims. Lucido (2019) is deliberately placing the comma of the foot-marching text as the dotted part of the quaver so the *and* is forced into the semi-quaver. This is to reflect the anacrusis, the unstressed note or notes

before the first bar, which is maintained throughout the piece. Werner Wolf states, 'by referring to individual works of music, sound may occasionally be conjured up in the reader's imagination, this is only possible for a short time, after which his reading will inevitably relapse into habitual voicelessness.' (Wolf, 2017:217). This is certainly the case in my musical reading of the work. Once the theme tune and the rhythmic connection is made to the opening of the Minuet, the presence of music on the tonal surface of the text can be directly experienced. When the sound starts to diminish Lucido (2019) then amplifies the visual and aural reading of the page by repeating the walking rhythm three times.

Lucido (2019) develops her sound tracking of Beethoven's Minuet by using numbers that are structurally relevant to the piece. The Minuet is in three-four time, the tune moves in thirds, and the piece can be broken down into four bar phrases (or eight bar passages). The first four notes of the bassline is a rising arpeggio (notes: 1, 3, 5, 8). This becomes evident when reading the score.

Figure 3. (L. van Beethoven (1796) Minuet in G, No. 2. Opening four-bar phrase right and left hands.)

In Figure 3, the red numbers I have marked-up in the bassline show the pitch intervals from the first note (G) to the second (B) is a third, and to the third (D) is a fifth, and to the fourth (G) is an eighth (G) i.e. 3, 5, 8. The locker number Emmy is trying to find is 538. This is no accident. Lucido (2019) is remixing the note order of the arpeggio. When the key to this code is cracked it may (for some readers) involuntarily trigger the sound of the pitch intervals of the locker (D, B, G). The notated slur reaching over the four notes means they are to be played without separation which locks them together. The tonic (1) is not required as it forms part of the Minuet title. Playing with sound in the text continues with the locker code combination: 12 clockwise, 32 counterclockwise, 8 clockwise and then Emmy is 'stuck' (Lucido, 2019:8). She has forgotten the fourth part of the sequence. Three out of the four-part sequence is stated. This is again stressing the repetitive play with the time-signature

and the melody moving in thirds in a four-bar phrase. The locker combination 12, 32, 8 is not random on Lucido's part.

12	1+2 = **3**
32	3+2 = **5**
8	= **8**

By splitting the locker numbers and adding them together Lucido (2019) is again remixing the arpeggio notes (3, 5, 8) back to the original bassline intervals. If the locker combination is added together, they become: 12+32+8 = 52. Incidentally, there are 52 white keys on a standard piano. The starting point for this Fibonacci type pattern originated from the four bar phrases of the Minuet.

4+4 = 8

4+8 = 12

8+12 = 20

12+20 = 32

20+32 = 52

Each digit is the sum of the preceding two numbers. The sequence becomes: 4, 8, 12, 20, 32, 52 and so on. I would suggest when Emmy is 'stuck' the fourth combination to the locker would be 20 counterclockwise. In math games, the creator typically leaves out a stage in the puzzle. Listing three out of four steps as part of the code is another repeated sound posting back to the Minuet. Lucido (2019) takes the arpeggio number game a step further. Emmy is trying to open the wrong locker. She is at locker number 583 (D, G, B). Through repetition of the locker number references, the sound patterns become more audible allowing the reader to not only see but hear the text. To the responsive ear the notes ping and pong off the page. The complete sound sequence in this numbers game is:

(1) 3-5-8 | 5-3-**8** | 3-5-8 | 5-8-3 |

(1)

If note 8 is substituted with 1 in phase two, we have ascending and descending arpeggios followed by a second inversion of the triad. The game ends with the foot-marching text taking Emmy to class. This play-orientated setup increases the interactive layers of the novel for the reader beyond the written words on the page. When the code is cracked it does

trigger a euphoric sense of *jouissance* in Roland Barthes's sense of the term (Allen, 2003:88).

Lucido (2019) goes on to demonstrate her virtuoso technique of playing with the numbers by showing how three and four relate to another type of music composition. Emmy's heart beats in three-four time 'boom-bah-dah | boom-bah-dah | boom.' when she is excited (Lucido, 2019:19). The time signature is the same as a Minuet but Emmy's inner pulse is definitely a waltz. The rhythmic characteristics between the two forms are not the same. A waltz starts with a strong downbeat: ONE-two-three | ONE-two-three | or | OOM-pah-pah | OOM- pah-pah | and is typically played as the bass note. Beats two and three are lighter which give the sense that the three divisions are one quick beat. Later in the novel, Lucido (2019) confirms twice for the reader that she is sound posting a waltz. In the poem 'A Good Weekend' Emmy's Dad is playing Chopin as she waltzes with her dog through the kitchen (Lucido, 2019:89) and in 'The Symphony' the 'boom-bah-dah' heartbeat is compared to a pounding bassline (Lucido, 2019:201). The waltz is a ballroom dance where couples revolve around the floor in a box step – a series of six steps that form the shape of a square. A square has four sides. The six dance steps can be divided into two parts (3+3 = 6). Lucido (2019) positions the text to mirror this pattern. The next composer and piece Lucido (2019) soundtracks as a recurring theme could easily be missed. It is only when the title of the work is revealed that the almost silent journey becomes apparent. The idea is very quietly introduced when Emmy has to pick a class to go to three times a week (Lucido, 2019:18).

There are four choices:

    A) Symphony Orchestra and Choir
    B) Winter Play: *A Tale of Two Cities*
    C) Cooking Around the World
    D) Introduction to Computer Science

Emmy is unable to decide who she wants to be:

    A) Musician
    B) Actor
    C) Chef
    D) Geek

She loves music. She desperately wants to be a musician like her parents. But after nine years of lessons Emmy has come to realise loving music does not make you a musician. She turns her paper in blank, leaving everything to *chance* and gets option D. The composer and piece setup gathers pace in the poem '04:00 p.m.' (Lucido, 2019:77). This used to be Emmy's favourite time of the day. But like all the other shifts in her life this is no longer the case. Her father is no longer 'playing' but 'practicing' the piano. The new piece her Dad is working on sounds 'clunky and dissonant'. The scene is originally introduced in 'Evening Music' and 'Griiiiiiiiind' when Emmy covers her ears with a pillow to shut out or silence the racket (Lucido, 2019:43-44).

The poem '04.00 p.m.' segues into '4'33"' (Lucido, 2019: 78). This is a reference to John Cage's famously dubbed 'silent' piece. Lucido (2019) clearly distinguishes between the two poems in the title presentation. The time of day is written as four digits with the post meridiem abbreviation and Cage's piece is correctly titled, *4'33"* (1952). There is no confusion that it is not 04.33 p.m. Cage used *chance* operations to construct his compositions and emphasized it is 'the listener's responsibility for the musical experience, the extent to which the way one listens determines what is heard.' (Cage, 2013: xxii). The meta-awareness of *4'33"* within the work is dependent on how attentively the musical reader has been listening or paying attention to the trace evidence. The reader has been nicely played over fifty-seven pages to get to this John Cage-style Ah-ha! moment. It would have been a great musical joke if Lucido (2019) had extended her game play on the reader to sixty-four page, as Cage used chance operations to construct his works and adopted the sixty-four hexagrams in *I Ching* as part of his chart system for composition.

Lucido (2019) uses *4'33"* to prove Cage's point that there is no such thing as silence. When Ms. Delaney is teaching about randomness, her computer programme shuffles the students into different working pairs (Lucido, 2019:205). Emmy's new partner is Francis. They have an argument and Francis is sent out of the room. In the poem '4'33" Remix', the class falls silent so they can hear Ms. Delaney talking to him outside in the hall (Lucido, 2019:209). External noises outside of the work become part of the performance in *4'33"* such as an audience member coughing, rain pounding on the window, or the noise of a truck.

In another scene, Emmy asks Ms. Delaney if computers can generate music. The verse title is '4:00 p.m.' and a repeated reference to her favourite time of day (Lucido, 2019:235). Ms. Delaney shows Emmy an algorithm. The next verse is 'Digital Music'. Lucido (2019) has broken the pattern by not following on with *4'33"*. This is because Emmy has found a new instrument to learn. She wants to make music writing code but she needs to practice. Emmy works on her computer project and realises her game needs to make more noise. The time is 4:33 a.m. and no longer the title of Cage's 'silent' piece because Emmy is no longer 'silent' (Lucido, 2019:358). She has found her music. It is interesting to note, the zero has been silenced in the three intervening poems with '4:00 p.m.' in the title (Lucido, 2019:116, 129, 235). Lucido (2019) had to do this in order to get to the poem title '4:33 a.m.' otherwise the time/Cage referencing would not have worked. I have identified over sixty pieces of music embedded within the text.

In this section, I have presented three explicit techniques for sound tracking pop and classical music in a text. I have shown by following the trace evidence how a writer can exploit elements of a piece as a recurring theme by playing with patterns and numbers. Lucido (2019) is actively challenging readers to interact with the text by drawing attention to the role of music in the creation of the work. The next children's writer I consider uses implicit techniques and offers an alternative system for building stories with pop music.

Railhead: Pop Conversations
Music is the underlying heartbeat of Philip Reeve's *Railhead* (2015). The music hums in the background as a structural device and offers an alternative pathway for a writer wanting to use music covertly in writing a novel. Reeve (2015) opens with *'Listen …* He was running down Harmony when he heard it. […] The Interstellar Express was thundering down the line

from the Golden Junction, and singing as it came' (Reeve, 2015:1). Reeve's (2015) direct instruction to the reader is an invitation to stay in tune with the text and what lies behind the lines. The influence of 1970s electronica pulsates off the page. The humanoid robots are nicknamed 'Motorik' (a portmanteau of motor and musik). The term motorik was coined by the British music press to describe the metronomic beat pattern associated with Krautrock bands such as Can, Neu! and Kraftwerk that were emerging out of Germany at the time. Kraftwerk went on to inspire a new genre of electronic music with their foil-wrapped percussions pads, wired-up knitting needles and futuristic sounds. They describe their output as half-man, half-machine and their robot 'dummies' or 'dollies' act as stand-ins at events. Even Reeve's (2015) slang for motorik is 'a wire dolly' (Reeve, 2015:29).

The singing train is heading towards Ambersai station. K-trains go through K-gates and 'Only the trains ride the K-bahn' (Reeve, 2015: 6). The motorik 4/4 beat can be heard in Kraftwerk's iconic 'Autobahn' (1974) synth symphony which recreates the sounds of the highway system with cars singing and trucks hooting on their sonic journey across Germany. In 'Trans-Europe Express' (1977) Kraftwerk replicate the mechanical patterns of the trains on a railway network that connected 130 cities. Reeve (2015) masterfully railroads these tracks into the thematic pulse of his novel. It gives a sense of rhythm to the themes – not just language. The singing cars on the A-bahn become singing trains on the K-bahn. He titles part one, 'Interstellar Express' which is a spin on Kraftwerk's 'Trans-Europe Express'. The band's deadpan chanting is how I hear the 'booming loudspeaker voices reciting litanies of stations' in *Railhead* (Reeve, 2015:3). The lyrics at the end of their track: 'From station to station | Back to Düsseldorf City | Meet Iggy Pop and David Bowie' segue into the next music connection (Kraftwerk, 1977).

Kraftwerk were acknowledging with their train that David Bowie's album *Station to Station* (1976) borrowed ideas from *Autobahn*. Bowie's sixty-five second exposition of the title track is the sound of a train travelling from speaker to speaker. This started a two-way musical conversation. 'V2-Schneider' on Bowie's *Heroes* album is a tribute to Florian Schneider, nicknamed V2 and co-founder of Kraftwerk. The snare percussion is deliberately imitating the synth percussion on 'Trans-Europe Express'. These details are important because Reeve (2015) riffs and remixes from both to build his story-world. Reeve's (2015) singing train is pulling into the station. It is a huge loco called Helden (Heroes) Hammerhead – a fusion of two Bowie tracks (Reeve, 2015: 4). This is no coincidence. The set-up is clear: 'For as long as anyone could remember, the Bazar had been a happy hunting ground for people like Zen who were young and daring and dishonest, the low heroes of this infinite city' (Reeve, 2015:2). *Low*, *Heroes,* (both 1977) and *Lodger* (1979) make up what is referred to as Bowie's Berlin Trilogy.

According to Wolf: 'An implicit metareference does not use overt but rather covert means to establish a meta-level in a work and trigger meta-thoughts in the recipient' (Wolf, 2017:326). It would be unfair to expect an everyday reader, regardless of age, with little knowledge of electronic music to pick up on these associations. Reeve's (2015) originality is in how he orders these connections into a recognisable system to make something new. Through sound tracking his text, Reeve (2015) adds his twist on their tête-à-têtes, creating an artistic bridge to their associations and beyond. Reeve's (2015) meta-references do not

hinder the plot. They are a structural device to help frame the novel and develop the storylines.

Referencing other art forms in *Railhead* (2015) is not limited to music. I have recorded over forty connections to a range of works. Raven's train is called the *Thought Fox* (Reeve, 2015:30). It is also a poem by Ted Hughes (1957). 'McQue Junction' is a reference to Ian McQue, a concept artist at Rockstar North, the home of Grand Theft Auto games (Reeve, 2015:15). His artwork is used on the inside covers of *Railhead* (2015) and the outside covers of *Black Light Express* (2016) – book two in the series. And off the page the continuity of connections is meticulously maintained. Reeve's *Railhead* (2015) book readings resemble a live show. Onstage he performs the text with music and film accompaniment. *Listen* … 'Take the K Train' (2015) composed by Sarah Reeve (2015) has the motorik beat and the red-and-cream train on screen is not too dissimilar to the former Trans Europe Express colours.

Lucido (2019) and Reeve's (2015) poietic approaches are very different. But what they both have in common is a clear understanding of how one work segues into another link in the sound chain as part of their writing methodology. In the next two sections, I discuss how terms associated with music and musical forms are used in storytelling.

In the Key of Code: Music Terms and Musical Forms

Another form of repetition or variation in Lucido's (2019) case is how she introduces over fifty different musical terms and forms into her work. These add another sonic dimension and interactivity to the text. In the 'Author's Note', Lucido (2019) asks the reader to look up words they do not recognise: 'It may reveal a deeper layer to a poem that you missed on the first read' (Lucido, 2019:391). There is also a glossary of music and computer code definitions at the end of the novel.

The patterns for showing the meaning of a term include a mix of the following:

1. descriptor to introduce the term
2. sound reference that points to a piece of music
3. text demonstration of how the term works in the narrative
4. play with the sound of the term in the form of word punning
5. play with typography and space on the page (discussed later as a separate section)

An explicit example is the poem 'Polyrhythm' (Lucido, 2019:56). The term is described as 'when one orchestra is playing in three-four time and a second orchestra is playing in two-four time' and sounds 'like two people trying to have a conversation while reading different pages of sheet music' (Lucido, 2019:56). The piece referenced is Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* (1787). Lucido (2019) does not inform the reader where to find the polyrhythm in the work. The interactive part between the text and the music is for the reader to listen to the piece. The polyrhythm can be heard in the ballroom scene at the end of the first act. Two ensembles are positioned on stage and the orchestra is in the pit. The three different groups are playing their own dance music in their own time signatures: three-four, two-four, and three-eight. Lucido (2019) demonstrates how polyrhythm works as part of the narrative in 'Orchestra One vs Orchestra Two' (Lucido, 2019:57). Francis is in Emmy's

computer class. He is unable to comprehend that Frankie Delaney is a woman and not a man. The page is vertically split in half to visually sound post the confused out of sync exchange between the pupil and the teacher. The glossary definition at the end of the novel is: 'The simultaneous use of two or more conflicting rhythms that are not part of the same or related meters' (Lucido, 2019:405).

The poem 'Presto' is a more challenging game aimed at advanced musical readers. Presto means to play at a very quick tempo. On the tonal surface of the page, this term seems simple enough to 'literally' understand. The text imitates a lively pace in a group conversation.

Presto

The conversation whizzes
like Chopin's *Fantaisie-Impromptu* {
    "The auditions are—";
    "Ms. Sinclair said—";
    "Sing from your—";
}

Figure 4. (In the Key of Code, 2019:226)

Figure 4, shows how everyone interrupts one another mid-sentence alluding to a sense of speed and Emmy finds it hard to find any 'white space' to join in. There is no room for her. Every time she takes a breath to speak the 'moment has passed'. On a first hearing this seems a reasonable demonstration of the term. However, the piece example is Chopin's Fantasy Impromptu in C-sharp minor, Op. 66 (1834) for solo piano. The 'cut-ins' or interruptions are punctuated by en-dashes. They break the rhythm and momentum of the text, stopping each phrase in its track. This sounds at odds with the rapid free flowing sweeping passages of the Impromptu and leads to the critical question: Why did Lucido (2019) pick this piece?

The clue is in reading the score. The time signature for the Fantasy Impromptu is two-two time (2/2) also referred to as cut time or cut-common time. There are two beats in a bar counted as 1 and 2 and (strong-weak strong-weak). I would suggest when members of the group *cut* into each other's sentences this is a link to the *cut* time signature of the

Impromptu. The fun play on Chopin's name adds another humorous level: Chop–in and the 'chopping' of the text dialogue. The piece is also another example of using two different rhythms or polyrhythm. The right-hand is playing sixteenth note semiquavers against sextuplet quavers in the left-hand. Basically, one hand fills the gaps between the notes of the other which represents how Emmy is unable to take part in the conversation.

***Figure 5.* (F. F. Chopin, (1834) Fantaisie Impromptu in C-sharp minor Op. 66. Bars 5-6.)**

In Figure 5, my red lines in bar 5 show how the semiquavers *cut-in* between the quaver triplet notes. They are not hitting at the same time. The red lines in bar 6 indicate where the semiquavers hit at the same time as the quavers (on beats: and-two-and). It is clear from the Chopin polyrhythm that there is no sound space to interrupt which perfectly matches how Emmy feels. Everything on the page is carefully orchestrated by Lucido (2019) from the title of the poem to the choice of piece, and the word play with Chopin's name.

A Diminished Fifth is nicknamed 'the devil in music'. The interval is made up of six semitones (for example: G to D-flat) and is introduced in the poem 'Try Tone' (Lucido, 2019:35). The chord was banned by the church in the Renaissance period because of its discordant sound. Other names for a diminished fifth are tritone, augmented fourth, or a flattened fifth. Lucido (2019) is playing with the spelling of the music term tritone in the title of the poem. Emmy is desperate to be friends with Abigail. They are both going to be in the same computer science class. Abigail is surrounded by her friends and ignores Emmy's attempt to grab her attention. This leaves Emmy feeling flat. She doesn't belong in this harmonious unit. She's a diminished fifth. Lucido (2019) is trying to show in sound how her character feels out of tune and by referencing a piece which uses the chord. Lucido (2019) soundtracks Jimi Hendrix's 'Purple Haze' (1967) (Lucido, 2019:105). The opening notes of the psychedelic rock classic are played on an electric guitar and bass. They are octave-shifting tritones. When Emmy plucks up the courage to join the quartet, the verse title becomes 'Augmented Fifth' to reflect the increase in group numbers (Lucido, 2019:224). She is happy. Lucido (2019) is cleverly playing with two types of sound – discordant and harmonious – to show two different emotions.

The difference between 'Atonal Music' (Lucido, 2019: 229) and 'Tonal Music' (Lucido, 2019338) is expressed through Emmy. Atonal music is compared to the computer language C++ and sounds like 'cold metal steely assembly lines'. It is the opposite of Java which gives Emmy a warm fuzzy feeling. Tonal music is linked to the art works in Ms. Delaney's condo. The variety of picture styles work together in harmony like an ensemble. The page numbers

for the music terms may be a coincidence but the sequence is interesting. The 2's and 9's are visually inharmonious. The 3's are curvy, like half of 8 as if they were meant to be together. 2+2+9=13 is odd and 3+3+8=14 is even. The two pages are on opposite sides (right and left) and a hundred-and-nine pages apart. This again shows the distance between atonal and tonal music.

Throughout the novel Lucido (2019) describes characters with musical metaphors. The homeroom teacher buzzes around the room like Rimsky-Korsakov's *Flight of the Bumblebee* (Lucido, 2019:11). Ms. Delaney 'crescendoes' in with a smile like a red candy-apple. 'She's like the flourish of an electric violin in the middle of a Beethoven symphony' (Lucido, 2019: 64). When Emmy becomes friends with Abigail in her head, they 'shine red like allegro | fortissimo | the flourish of two electric violins' (Lucido, 2019:135). They fall out and everything inside Emmy is 'out of tune' (Lucido, 2019:221). The computer class students bond together for the project showcase. During Emmy's performance they join in and support her. They are a choir, an orchestra, a symphony with Ms. Delaney conducting from another place. 'And when the music stops | and out voices fade | we're left holding each other | like a fermata | over the last note | in the world's | most beautiful | symphony' (Lucido, 2019:388). Emmy finally belongs.

Interpreting Musical Form in *Railhead*
Reeve did not consciously structure *Railhead* (2015) as a symphony, but the format is different to his other books with un-named chapters divided into four parts. The recurring motif of the train is stated at the start and used throughout to dramatize the scene changes. The first subject, Zen Starling, is introduced as a 'thin brown kid' (Reeve, 2015:1). Several verbs orchestrate Zen's character as he's racing, dancing, listening, itching, watching, whilst being hunted by a drone.

The reader is given more information as the subject/character is expanded. Zen is poor. He is a thief. He is impulsive. He verges on being arrogant. A thematic bridge points towards the second subject – 'the girl in the red coat' – giving some indication of what is to follow, without reducing the impact when it actually happens (Reeve, 2015:3). Red is the symbol of love and danger. Will she be with him or against him? Zen ignores her. He is flying solo as we are shown his world and meet an ensemble of characters who will help counterpoint the plot.

Dissonance creeps into the text with Captain Malik. Zen is about to be injected with a truth drug. The train engine whines and hiccups. Then Reeve (2015) rips the drapery aside by introducing the second subject. "'Well, this is exciting!' she said. […] 'I'm on your side. My name is Nova'" (Reeve, 2015:29). The codetta starts with the resounding statement of Zen as the first subject. He escapes with Nova to the *Thought Fox*. Raven needs Zen to pose as a member of the Noon family and steal a box on the Emperor's train. The development harmonises Zen and Nova's relationship as he learns the role. The recapitulation reminds the reader of the threads that have been introduced such as Malik and Raven's past history. New material falls into a coda at the end of part one of the novel. Reeve (2015) introduces a new character, Chandni Hansa (Reeve, 2015:73). She hardly makes an appearance in *Railhead* (2015) but comes into her own in the sequel *Black Light Express* (2016). Zen is not

the only hireling. Part one ends with the *Thought Fox* dropping Zen and Nova off at a dead platform to embark on their heist.

Each part of *Railhead* (2015) opens with an illustrated double-page spread acting as the silence between movements. The confident scoring never falters. Everything is in the right place to deliver the storyline and the book ends as it starts with the train coming down the rails, rising up her siren voice, and singing. The trains lead characters to and from danger. They are the platform for action and show the expanse of the story-world. Michel Foucault (1984:3) sums up why it is a great vehicle for driving the storyline:

> A train is an extraordinary bundle of relations because it is something through which one goes, it is also something by means of which one can go from one point to another and then it is also something that goes by.

Reeve (2015) takes this further. His trains carry passengers to different planets with different time zones and like all 'closed' forms of transport, the vehicle becomes a world of its own which is distinct from the outside surroundings it is travelling through. These trains are not objects. They are characters with their own thoughts and feelings. They talk. They sing. Write music. The *Thought Fox* is ruthless and unpredictable. The *Damask Rose* battered but loyal. Others form relationships and act like humans. 'The *Wildfire* was dead, but the *Time of Gifts* was still alive. That awful bellowing was a cry of grief' (Reeve, 2015:131). By borrowing titles from a diverse range of works and using the trains to go up, down, criss-cross and double back along the stave, Reeve (2015) unites his world-in-words and his world-in-notes.

Both writers have used music terms and musical forms to structure and develop the narrative. I will proceed to examine how Lucido (2019) uses typography and space to imitate elements of music on the page.

Typography and Space as Elements of Music

The presentation of the text in *In the Key of Code* (2019) is very different from *Railhead* (2015). The latter follows a conventional layout and comes in at two hundred and ninety-nine pages. The former is a hefty three hundred and eighty-nine pages. The high page volume is due to Lucido's innovative approach. Page lengths can vary between two and twenty-three lines of text. One argument might be that Lucido (2019) is visually emphasising the meaning of words with a variety of different typographical sizes, formats, and page layouts. But Lucido (2019) is doing much more than this. She is explicitly promoting an auditory reading. The clue is in the Author's Note: 'This book is close to my heart because it combines the three subjects that I love the most: code, music, and poetry' (Lucido, 2019:391). The keyword is 'combines'. To truly merge music into the construction of a novel, there has to be an aural dimension to the work.

In Angela Leighton's introduction to her study on sound in literature, she states: 'Written words make noises as well as shapes, calling on the ear like an after effect of being seen and understood' (Leighton, 2018:5). This is certainly true in Lucido's text. Embedded within the text is a rich and varied sonic soundscape. Elements of music (rhythm, meter, pitch, and dynamics) underscore the importance of listening and trigger the experience of music in the

act of reading. The poem '4'33"' is an example of where Lucido (2019) expresses rhythm, meter, pitch, and dynamics within a single page.

4'33"

There's music in me
I can feel it

sur**g**ing

        m   g
    u   p   n
j   i

cha-
   cha-
      chaing
So while Dad cooks dinner
and Mom is walking Jeopardy
I
cha-
   cha-
      cha
my way over to the piano.

I sit on the bench
put my hands on the keys

and the music in me

disappears

Figure 6. (In the Key of Code, 2019:78)

Figure 6 demonstrates how the font size of the word 'surging' increases with each letter to the 'g' and decreases again. The 'sur' and 'ing' mirror each other in point size. By definition, 'surge' means to go forward or upwards with a sudden motion. Lucido (2019) does this with the first four letters even if the last three do not carry on the trajectory. I would further suggest that the upward and downward play sets in motion the sound of an arpeggio – a sequence of four notes rising from the tonic 1, 3, 5, 8, and three notes falling 5, 3, 1 back to the tonic – as the point size format is not an incremental step-by-step change. The shift from non-bold letters to bold implies a crescendo and decrescendo which many vocalists naturally do when practicing arpeggios. Recapitulation: (1), 3, 5, 8, are the intervals of the bassline notes in Beethoven's Minuet in G. Emmy's locker number is 538. The split combination number for the locker sequence when added together is 358. Emmy is also
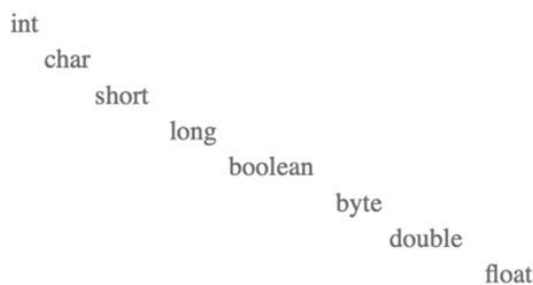
standing at the wrong locker number 583. Lucido (2019) has taken the arpeggio number motif and skilfully integrated it into the sound of the narrative.

The letters of 'jumping' hop up and down over three lines. This again shows a visual meta-functional relationship between the meaning of the word and the text presentation. But if one looks more closely at the letters and listens with the ear, it becomes clear that Lucido (2019) is playing with the sound of the word. The 'j' and 'i' are on the same line which I am going to call line 1. Line two is skipped. Letters 'u', 'p', 'n' are positioned on line 3. Line 4 is skipped. Letters 'm' and 'g' are on line 5. This is a split major chord which consists of three notes: a root, a major third, and a perfect fifth (notes: 1, 3, and 5).

The 'cha- cha- chaing' and 'cha- cha- cha' is positioned in a step downward motion over three lines each time to show the rhythmic movement towards the piano. When Emmy places her hands on the piano keys the music 'disappears'. The letters of the word gradually get fainter until the 's' is barely visible or audible on the page. This would suggest a decrescendo. The arpeggio, split major chord, and cha-cha-cha dance form are implicit examples of playing with the recurring theme of three and four in the form of typography.

An explicit example would be Lucido (2019) positioning her text to signify a scale in music. There are seven notes in Western music (A-G). The eighth note of a scale is a repetition of the first note an octave higher (A—A, B—B, C—C, etc.). Emmy has tried learning eight different instruments: piano, flute, violin, voice, saxophone, drums, bass, and guitar (Lucido, 2019: 20). This is visually sounded by each instrument listed in a step formation like a descending scale on the page.

Lucido (2019) reinforces the meaning of a 'scale' in another class session. Ms. Delaney is teaching primitive types (objects that exist without the programmer having to do anything). In the poem 'Purple', she gives the students eight words to type on their screens which are presented in a downward step formation as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7. (In the Key of Code, 2019:97)

Emmy feels like she is playing scales even though the words are meaningless until she presses play and they turn into music. Again, the words are presented in step formation like a descending scale. By contrast and to prove my theory, when Ms. Delaney asks the class to remember the eight entry points for the computer programme Java, the text presentation

is different. The words are not laid out in a downward or upward step formation. They are stacked in a ladder formation (Lucido, 2019:69):

    public
    static
    void
    main
    string
    bracket
    bracket
    args

Lucido (2019) is referencing true computer code. Positioning the eight words like a music scale would be misleading and confusing for the reader. However, the class are asked to think of the words as sounds, keystrokes, and music they can sing in their sleep. The open '{' bracket reminds Emmy of a time signature and the closed '}' bracket becomes the double bar line at the end of a score. Whilst it may be a coincidence that eight words form the basis of this programme, I would argue that the class size is not random. The seven pupils equal the number of notes in Western music, plus a teacher makes eight like an octave. This is a conscious decision by Lucido (2019) to combine computer code and music terminology into the text. The class would have been too small with three or four and these numbers are connected to Beethoven's Minuet in G. Five or even six would have worked. Twelve (the number of notes in a chromatic scale) would have been too many characters to deal with and Emmy just happens to be aged twelve.

Music is all about time and there are many examples where Lucido extends the duration of words. She does this by adding in extra spaces and repeating letters. For example, the gaps between the word 'last' has eight-character spaces between each letter (Lucido, 2019: 143). 'Grind' has eight and twelve extra 'i's (Lucido, 2019:44, 273) and when things are less of a chore the word is spelt correctly (Lucido, 2019: 347). 'Sl-o-w' has sixteen extra 'o's and in other variations descends down the page to signify the slow motion of a door opening or Emmy putting on her shoes (Lucido, 2019:337, 354). To increase the tempo of the text Lucido (2019) also joins words together in a string formation. For example: 'Fun-fact-so-fun-it-pours-our-of-her' and 'You-belong-here smile | you-belong-here thumbs-up' (Lucido, 2019:58, 99). In many ways the hyphenated notation of the text acts like a notated slur in a score. The notes or words in this case are spoken without separation and become another sound reminder of the opening bassline in Beethoven's Minuet in G.

Conclusion

I have followed the trace evidence left by Lucido (2019) and Reeve (2015) to reveal how their novels were constructed. Music is integral to *In the Key of Code* (2019) and *Railhead* (2015). Both stories draw on elements of another art form and in doing so make statements about how they were made. I have shown how two different writers build structural frameworks using music, which are then incorporated into the narrative fabric of the work. Lucido (2019) explicitly soundtracks pop and classical music. She draws on characteristics associated with a particular piece and transforms them into recurring themes within the story. Introducing musical terms and forms into the body of the piece increases the

interactive engagement between the writer and reader and her play with typography adds another sound dimension to the work. Reeve (2015) is implicit in his approach, but music provides a system to order information and build his story world. By analysing, documenting, and recording these writers' techniques I have demonstrated that music is not 'plucked' from the ether, but truly integrated into the heart of these innovative stories. Whilst it may be argued that the intended reader may not fully understand the intertextuality of these works, it is also important to acknowledge that we start all texts as readers before we break out into the writerly stratosphere. Interactive works take time to unfold with each rereading; their impact can last a lifetime.

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