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Psycho (Prelude)

Psycho (The Murder)

Music by Bernard Herrmann

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**Transformation of “The Psycho Theme” in
Bernard’s Herrmann’s Music for *Psycho*¹**

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Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* has become one of the most celebrated American films in its genre and Bernard Herrmann’s music for the film contains an equally celebrated musical icon—the *slasher music*—that has become a universal motif for all slasher films. The roots of this *slasher music* are found in a tune called “The Psycho Theme” (a label given to it in the cue sheets)² that has been largely ignored over the years.³ This paper illustrates how the “The Psycho Theme” is transformed throughout *Psycho* and how it degenerates into the most famous icon in the history of film music. In addition, a rationale is offered to explain the shift from tonal to atonal music over the course of this film. Before examining various structures of Bernard Herrmann’s musical score, let us place both the story and music of *Psycho* within a dramatic context.

Raymond Durnat offers a half dozen ways to analyze the dramatic action of *Psycho* in *A Long Hard Look at ‘Psycho,’* but cautions that “detecting some ‘deep structure’ in *Psycho* is hazardous, since...the symmetries and variations in Hitchcock’s story patterns accommodate a wide variety of ideas and idea systems...”⁴ He makes a point not to discourage alternative interpretations, however, and presents the “Mythological” (Ancient Greek) model as one possibility. Since the traditional structure of Ancient Greek tragedy offers so many unexpected and thought-provoking insights into the character of *Psycho* it is a useful model with which to support our musical analysis.

Psycho is sometimes referred to as having two plots: the first is a story about a woman who steals \$40,000 and is murdered; the second is about a psychotic young man whose brutal murders are uncovered. These two stories are combined into one tragedy where the hero (or anti-hero) Norman Bates is brought down by a combination of his own doing and external forces. Initially a sympathetic young man, he tries to deal with the problem of how to maintain his strange world without having anyone discover who his mother is, or what she is up to. Bates is a *xenophobe* who aims to protect his mother against all provocative visitors to the Bates Motel, whether attractive young women, or detectives in search of missing young women. His fatal flaw is that “he is too much a loving son.”⁵ At the climax of the film, dressed in his mother’s clothes, Norman’s psychosis is uncovered and the audience, cheated of necessary information, is horrified by who he really is. In the aftermath the main character is captured and, as in a classical tragedy, world order is restored and problems are explained away by a psychiatrist (assuming the role of *deus ex machina*).

The story leading up to and including the murder of the first victim (Marion Crane) is actually background material that the audience should know before the drama begins. Material occurring after her death consists of the usual Aristotelian elements of Complication, Climax and Resolution. A diagram of this formal arrangement is given below:

EXPOSITION	INCITING INCIDENT	COMPLICATION	CLIMAX	RESOLUTION
Marion steals \$40K	Marion is senselessly murdered	Investigation of the murder; Psychotic attempts to hide his guilty “mother”	Psychotic is discovered to be his own “mother”	Psychotic is locked up; a psychiatrist explains away problems; World Order is restored

The film version of *Psycho* has an extended exposition and inciting incident because scriptwriter Joseph Stefano was unimpressed by the original Robert Bloch book.⁶ He rewrote the first three chapters—told originally in flashback technique—and presented Marion Crane in real time driving off with stolen money. Stefano admitted that he had far greater sympathy with the character of Marion than the main character Norman Bates, who is described in the book as fat, balding and an alcoholic.⁷ By concentrating on the character of Marion, and attempting to build up audience sympathy with her, Stefano’s screenplay extends the exposition and inciting incident of this drama to more than 45 minutes before her murder is achieved, and the main body of the drama

begins. Considerable emphasis is placed upon this preliminary portion of the drama by composer Bernard Herrmann, as well. Twenty-five of his 40 total musical cues are composed for the exposition and inciting incident, including perhaps the most famous musical icon in film history, the *slasher music*. Before the actual drama begins, therefore, the audience has heard over two thirds of the music for *Psycho*.

In order to coordinate this discussion of drama and music, musical cues for *Psycho* are listed below as they appear within the film,⁸ and all examples are referenced to an audio recording of the music.⁹

BERNARD HERRMANN: MUSICAL CUES FOR *PSYCHO*

EXPOSITION		INCITING INCIDENT	
1. Prelude 2. The City 3. Marion 4. Mari and Sam 5. Temptation 6. Flight (a) 7. The Patrol Car 8. The Car Lot	9. The Package 10. Rainstorm 11. Hotel Room 12. The Window 13. The Parlor 14. Madhouse 15. Peephole 16. Bathroom	17. Murder 18. Body (rev.) 19. Office 20. Curtain 21. Water 22. The Car 23. Cleanup 24. Swamp 25. Search A	
COMPLICATION		CLIMAX	RESOLUTION
26. The Shadow 27. Phone Booth 28. The Porch 29. The Stairs 30. The Knife 31. Search B	32. First Floor 33. Cabin 10 34. Cabin 1 35. The Hill 36. Bedroom 37. The Toys 38. The Cellar	39. Discovery	40. Finale

Herrmann once said that [Hitchcock] “only finishes a picture 60%. I have to finish it for him.”¹⁰ In the case of *Psycho*, Hitchcock obviously agreed because he doubled Herrmann’s usual fee (\$34K) for the film—saying that “33% of the effect of *Psycho* was due to the music.”¹¹ There are several ways in which Herrmann achieved his finished effect. To begin with, he provides a “Prelude” (1) to the film that unifies the exposition and inciting incident. Acting as a kind of operatic *ritornello* in the exposition, the music is repeated, truncated,

resorted and also contains six of the seven chief thematic sources of music in the film. All of the themes in the “Prelude” relate to the character of Norman Bates. Other themes, occurring later in the film, are reserved for Marion and “Mother,” or madness.

The first thing heard in the “Prelude” is an ambiguous minor-major chord sometimes referred to in the literature as “The Hitchcock Chord.” It certainly does not belong to Hitchcock, nor it is used solely in this film, but its conspicuous placement at the head of Herrmann’s music signals more than just a fanfare; it is an important feature of the subsequent musical structures (Example 1, measure 1). The “The Hitchcock Chords” are followed by a series of driving half-step figures that Fred Steiner identified as the seminal force in this music. (Example 1, measure 3).¹² Steiner’s figure has been compared to the stabbing of a knife by Herrmann’s friend, Christopher Palmer; filled with latent possibilities for musical development, it was paraphrased by John Williams in his music for the film “Jaws.” The half-step relation emanating from this figure is both melodically and harmonically important in subsequent transformations of the musical themes.

Example 1. Opening measures, *Psycho*, “Prelude.” Music by Bernard Herrmann. Copyright © 1960, 1961 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC. Copyright Renewed. All Rights administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. [Track 1, “0.00—0.02”]



There are a number of other significant themes in the “Prelude” apart from the opening chords and Steiner figure, but one particular 12-bar tune stands out above all others (measures 37- 48, Example 2). Labeled “The Psycho Theme”¹³ in the Paramount cue sheets, it is divided into two sections expressed in keys located a half-step apart.

Example 2. “The Psycho Theme,” measures 37-48, from *Psycho*, “Prelude.” Music by Bernard Herrmann. Copyright © 1960, 1961 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC. Copyright Renewed. All Rights administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. [Track 1, “0.28—0.37”]

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

sigh motif **“Hitchcock chord”**

Critics over the past thirty years have largely ignored the “The Psycho Theme.” Steiner wrote, “...although this motive appears three times in this piece, Herrmann always drops it quickly, and never develops it in any way.”¹⁴ Brown wrote, “The Psycho Theme” remains an inseparable part of the “Prelude” music and is heard again only within that context when it appears twice more during the first third of the film....”¹⁵ In his notes to the recording of music for *Psycho*, Kevin Mulhall wrote, “the 12 bar melody is left undeveloped and appears only in the ‘Prelude.’”¹⁶ Perhaps because “The Psycho Theme” is referenced only indirectly after the music of the “Prelude” previous authors have dismissed its importance. Nevertheless, its ghostly image appears throughout the music up to the dramatic climax of the film. Its manipulation may even be considered a good example of what Arnold Schoenberg called “thematic liquidation.”¹⁷

Supported by harmony in the tonic of E flat minor, the first eight notes (hereafter marked with numbers) of “The Psycho Theme” pass over the diatonic E flat minor scale. Before reaching the tonic of E flat (Example 2, measure 40), the tune drops a half step and passes through another eight notes (*n.b.*) in diatonic E minor.¹⁸ The tune continues with two iterations of an operatic “sigh motif” (an augmented and inverted reference to Steiner’s two-note figure from earlier in the “Prelude”) and concludes by stepping down another half-step onto the note F onto a “Hitchcock Chord.” Herrmann sometimes substitutes ambiguous diminished seventh chords for the “Hitchcock Chord” when this melody is referenced later in the film. Unlike

other motifs of the “Prelude,” “The Psycho Theme” can be easily sung, and because the listener hears it many times (e.g., in cues such as “Prelude,” “Flight a,” “Patrol Car” and “Rainstorm”) an expectation is built up for its pattern of eight-notes or eight measures (augmentation)—followed by “sigh motifs” in subsequent cues of the film.

Elements of “The Psycho Theme” permeate most of the music up to the climax of the film (e.g., “Discover,” 39) where the character of Norman Bates goes completely insane. The eight-note pattern of “The Psycho Theme” is preserved in 14 cues and its “sigh motifs” occur in over 20 cues, or more than half of all the music for the film. As Norman Bates’ personality degrades over the course of the drama, the tune is gradually crowded out by music associated with another (atonal) motif that Herrmann referred to elsewhere as “the *real Psycho* theme.”¹⁹ “The Psycho Theme” disappears precisely at the climax of the film where Norman is discovered to be acting as his own “mother.” Let us briefly review some of the modified versions of the “The Psycho Theme” before seeing how it is dismembered in the “Murder” scene.

After the fast-paced “Prelude” to the film, the scene changes to a lazy day in Phoenix, Arizona (Example 3, “The City”) where two lovers are secretly meeting in a hotel room. Slow tempo and harmonic rhythm help set the mood of a lazy afternoon. A cascading eight-note pattern (*n.b.*) of diminished and half diminished seventh chords (with implications for resolution to the tonic of E flat) end with a variant of the “sigh motif” expressed as two diminished seventh chords a half step apart (cf. Steiner “sigh motif”). The latent references to E flat harmony, an eight-note period, and the presence of the “sigh motifs” all signal a connection to “The Psycho Tune,” but listeners are only dimly aware of this connection as events unfold.

Example 3. “The City,” measures 1-3. [Track 2, “0.00—0.21”]

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 **sigh motif**

Wherever this cascading material is heard later in the film one associates it with a dreamy, but tragic situation because both the tempo and harmonic rhythm are slower than the theme from which it derives. Music of “The City” (2) is duplicated in “Car Lot” (8) and recurs with slight variations four times thereafter in “Window” (12), “Parlor” (13), “Bathroom” (16) and “Search B” (31).

The most important of these recurrences is in “The Window” (12) where Marion looks up the hill from her motel room window to hear Norman arguing with his “mother.” Chromatic alterations in the harmony (cf., Hitchcock chords identified with an asterisk in Example 4) increase the dissonance and reflect Norman’s comment that “mother isn’t quite herself today.”²⁰ This marks the first time in the film that chromatic dissonance and atonality are thematically linked to Norman’s madness. By disrupting the pattern with a chromatic alteration, the music more effectively portrays the disturbance created by “mother.” There is no actual “mother” theme in *Psycho* unless we equate her with a three-note motif heard later in “The Madhouse” (14). Bruce called this three-note motif “the madness theme.”²¹ As we shall see, however, “mother” and madness are represented by dissonance and atonality that Herrmann derives from another of his works, *Sinfonietta for Strings* (1935).²²

Example 4. “The Window” (12), measures 1-3. [Track 12, “0.00—0.22”]

The musical score for Example 4 consists of two staves, treble and bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo/mood is marked *mp*. A dashed line labeled *8va* spans the first four measures. Above measures 5 and 7, there are asterisks (*). Below the staff, measures 1 through 8 are numbered. Under measure 8, the text "sigh motif" is written. The melody in the right hand descends chromatically from G4 to E3. The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

“The Psycho Theme” occurs many times and in many guises as it is systematically liquidated across the film. But Herrmann reserves the most chromatic and grotesque transformation for the inciting incident of the drama —“The Murder” (17, see Example 5). The sounds of the *slasher music* have become iconic in 20th century film music. Even those who have never seen this film before recognize the screeching “Murder” motif whenever it is paraphrased in music. Music critic/director Claude Chabrol commented about this spot in the film: “The music virtually points to the culprit, but we don’t know why....Deep inside we feel that Norman Bates may be the killer.”²³ One of the musical reasons we suspect that Norman is the killer is because the tonic notes of his “Psycho Theme” (E flat and E) are presented as a cascading chord cluster that references the eight-note rhythm of “The Psycho Theme” (in augmentation) and ends with atonal retrogrades of the “sigh motif.” Norman is musically transformed into the deadly knife itself as he stabs Marion to death with atonal chord clusters based upon the key notes of his own theme. Since this is Norman’s greatest moment of madness, we expect to

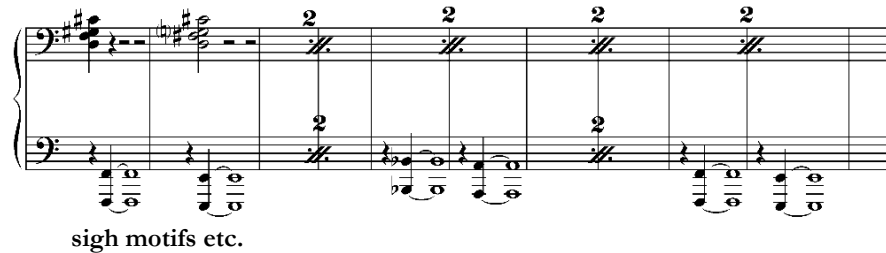
hear melodic fracturing, disjunction and great dissonance—even atonality. “The Psycho Theme” is here dismembered in the tradition of operatic mad scenes—where tunes are typically fragmented, broken up and distorted in order to demonstrate insanity in a character of the plot.

Example 5. “The Psycho Theme” transformed into *slasher music*, measures 1-8. *Psycho*, “The Murder.” Music by Bernard Herrmann. Copyright © 1960, 1961 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC. Copyright Renewed. All Rights administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. [Track 17, “0.00—012”]

Eight (*n.b.*) measure-long (augmentation) reiterations cascade down an open position chord-cluster in the style of Henry Cowell or Charles Ives.²⁴ The idea of representing slashing blades in music goes back at least as far as Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* (opening scene, sword fight) and certainly the strokes of bows upon strings emulate a slashing effect, but perhaps these individual bow strokes do actually sound like bird shrieks, as one author suggests.²⁵

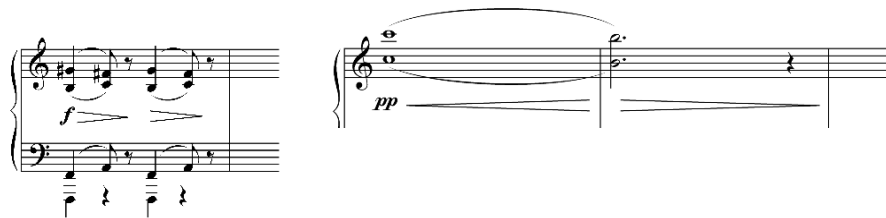
The pattern descends as altered octaves (keynote pitches from the “The Psycho Theme”) and major sevenths (reference to the “Hitchcock Chord”), while the individual pitches are rising chromatically from E flat to G flat as the pattern repeats sequentially. Measures 17-37 immediately following this cascade present a grotesque transformation of the “sigh motif.” The rhythm from the end of “The Psycho Theme” is heard here in retrograde; the pitches are altered and the pattern is in a low register, but the two-note groupings shown in Example 6 are clear.

Example 6. “Sigh motifs” from “The Psycho Theme” transformed into *slasher music*, measures 17-37. *Psycho*, “The Murder.” Music by Bernard Herrmann. Copyright © 1960, 1961 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC. Copyright Renewed. All Rights administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. [Track 17, “0.24—0.39”]



At this point, the “sigh motif” is one of the few recognizable remnants left of “The Psycho Theme.” Later in the film, it is the only remaining piece of “The Psycho Theme” as things deteriorate for Norman Bates. Subsequent reiterations of this motif are heard in augmentation with slow and pathetic reminiscences sounding not unlike a musical commentary upon the tragic decline of a main character. The “sigh motif” is grotesquely transformed in “The Murder” (17) and “The Knife” (30), and is harmonized in various ways in “The City” (2), “The Car Lot” (8) “The Window” (12), “The Parlor” (13) “The Bathroom” (16) and “Search B” (31). It is also heard as melodic reminiscence in “The Package” (9), “The Hotel Room” (11), “The First Floor” (32), “Cabin 10” (33), “Cabin 1” (34) and “Discovery” (39) as shown in Example 7. Herrmann used this same two-note “sigh motif” in many of his other film scores to create a sense of pathos (e.g., *Vertigo*, *North by Northwest* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still*).

Example 7. Two variants of the “sigh motif” from *Psycho*, “The City” (2) and “Hotel Room” (11). [Track 2, “0.15—0.17” and Track 11, “0.00—0.10”]



After the first murder, the “The Psycho Theme” is referenced only as fragments (in the bass part of, “The Car” (22), or in “The Knife” (30) and “Search B” (31). New dissonant music takes over the film as Norman’s psychiatric situation degrades.

The only tune not contained in the “Prelude” that appears later in the film (complication and climax) is a reused motif from Herrmann’s atonal *Sinfonietta for Strings* (1935) as shown in Example 8. The motif is found in the “Scherzo” (Movement No. 3) of that work and labeled there as “Theme.” This disjunct, three-note “Theme” was re-labeled by Graham Bruce as “the Madhouse

theme” in his analysis of *Psycho* because it is always associated with madness in the drama. Its arrival signals the final psychiatric decline of Norman Bates and a trend toward atonality in the musical score.

Example 8. Three-note “Theme” from Bernard Herrmann’s *Sinfonietta* (1935), duplicated in “The Madhouse” (14), and heard as “the *real Psycho* theme,” in *Taxi Driver* (1975).



Years after Herrmann composed the music for *Psycho*, he scratched out two measures at the end of the manuscript for the film *Taxi Driver* (1975), replaced them with this three-note “Theme” from the *Sinfonietta*. He also wrote the words “this is the *real Psycho* Theme” over the same notes in a score of *Taxi Driver* owned by his friend Chris Palmer.²⁶ It is not clear whether Herrmann was making a musical reference only to the psychotic main character of *Taxi Driver*, or referencing this “Theme” in the larger context of his earlier works, but all three instances of the three-note “Theme”—in *Sinfonietta* (1935), *Psycho* (1960) and *Taxi Driver* (1975)—are identical. The connection between them is their disjunct character, their atonal context and dramatic implications for madness.

Royal Brown once mentioned to Herrmann that the cue for “The Swamp” (24) seemed to derive from his *Sinfonietta*.²⁷ But Herrmann argued vehemently that he didn’t copy his earlier work. Among other things, such an admission would create a copyright conflict and could potentially damage the career of a Hollywood studio composer. The “Madhouse” (14) theme (or “*real Psycho* Theme”) comes at a point in the drama where Norman has held a lengthy conversation with Marion; it is the point at which “mother” (atonality) is provoked with jealousy. This moment provides the composer with an opportunity to introduce dissonant music that will signal both a downturn in Norman’s mental state and the arrival of atonality in the subsequent “Murder” (17). So, why not recycle earlier original music?

Some of the most fascinating music in *Psycho* occurs where Norman slowly climbs the stairs to confront his “mother” to tell her that she must be hidden down in the cellar (“The Stairs,” 29). Herrmann builds tension with a cascading sound mass made up of two diminished chords located a half step apart. As early as age 17, Herrmann employed the idea of cascading chord clusters in a work entitled *The Forest*²⁸ where he took all of the notes of the C

sharp minor scale and cascaded them slowly downward as an unresolved sound mass. Ascending and descending sound masses permeate much of *Psycho*. At the beginning of the film, Herrmann's cascades are triadic but, as the plot thickens, they evolve into chromatic and even atonal simultaneities. Many visual images in the film correspond to these ascending and descending cascades, such as the establishing shot of "The City" (2), Marion looking up the hill from "The Window" (12), Bates conversing in "The Parlor" (13), or even the downward thrusts of the knife in "The Murder" (17)

About half a dozen cues of dissonant music precede Lila's (Marion's sister) climb to Norman's house ("The Hill," 35). A descending chromatic soprano line (from "Marion," 3) phrased in several eight-note groups (*n.b.*) is accompanied by a rising chromatic bass made of inverted "sigh motif" figures from "The Psycho Theme." As Lila climbs the hill, these two chromatic lines converge upon an ambiguous "Hitchcock Chord." The musical and dramatic outcome of Lila's climb to Bates' house is ambiguity, but her continued search leads to the discovery of Norman's madness in the basement of the house (atonality).

As Lila wanders through the Bates' house in "The Bedroom" (36) and "The Toys" (37), the music takes an unexpected diatonic turn and the listener is reminded once again of Norman with notes of the "The Psycho Theme" (measures 41-44). Bruce wrote, "The rising scale is almost tuneful, its restrained lyricism contrasting with the bulk of the music which has preceded it in the film...It is warm, compassionate music..."²⁹ Naturally, this segment of the diatonic "Psycho Theme" sounds "warm" when compared to the atonal music surrounding it. As an audience, we want to be sympathetic to Norman's situation, but we have lost faith in him because he is protecting his psychotic mother. We are also confused about his role in this horrific plot; a reference to the diatonic "The Psycho Theme" while viewing his childhood possessions makes this sympathy possible.

At the climax of the drama, when Bates breaks into the cellar dressed as his "mother" to kill Lila, the *slasher music* is heard again. It is well known that the *slasher music* was missing in the earliest version of this film and that Hitchcock said "Well, Benny, it's great, but you missed a terrific point....you should repeat that marvelous string theme [*slasher music*] from the shower scene as Norman comes rushing down the cellar stairs..."³⁰ Hitchcock realized how important the knife attack music would be at the tragic climax, how it would identify the perpetrator of the crimes, summarize previous events, and prevent any turning back at the crux of the drama. Thus, the most grotesque version of "The Psycho Theme" is presented one last time to reinforce its connection with the main character.

The flailing of Lila's arm causes Norman's embalmed mother to turn around in her chair and the audience is teased with striking descending chromatic scales. At first this repeated rhythmic pattern ("Discovery," 39, measures 26-35) appears to be a copy of measures 64-68 of the "Scherzo," from Herrmann's atonal *Sinfonietta*. However, each group of this musical

pattern begins with one of the first five notes of “The Psycho Theme” transposed up a half step (cf. Steiner figure) from E flat to E minor, as shown in Example 9. Such a small reference to “The Psycho Theme” at this point in the drama indicates that Norman Bates’ tune still exists somewhere in all of the chromatic madness, but is fragmented to an almost unrecognizable state. This spot marks the crux of the drama from which there is no turning back. When Lila knocks her arm against the light bulb, mother is exposed (coming to light)—almost as if Apollo (the Sun God) has come down in an Ancient Greek tragedy to administer punishment against the main character.

Example 9. “The Psycho Theme” embedded in the highest notes of “Discovery” (39), measures 26-35. [Track 39, “0.22—0.29”]

The one thing that Norman Bates does not want is exposure and he is hoping that another murder will help keep his secret. Thwarted by Sam, however, and discovered in his mother’s clothing by the astonished Lila, Bates’ secret is exposed. The music becomes a character at this point in the drama, sounding an inverted two-note Steiner motif from the opening of the film to signal the end of Norman. He is, for all practical purposes, psychiatrically dead and “mother” (atonality) takes over completely. The music stops, catharsis is complete, and modern psychiatry is left to explain things.

After completing the final scene of the film, Alfred Hitchcock said to Simon Oakland (Dr. Richman): “You’ve just saved my picture.”³¹ This is both literally and figuratively true because it takes a good actor to deliver such dry medical dialog and only a psychiatrist could convincingly explain away this strange story with the concept of schizophrenic death. Modern psychiatric science is here depicted as a “god” in the manner of the Ancient Greek *deus ex machina*. Affirming the psychiatrist’s analysis, the orchestra provides an atonal commentary as Norman (or, his “mother”) talks to himself in voiceovers. Following the tradition of Ancient Greek tragedy, where the main character is usually killed or permanently damaged in some way, Norman Bates’ personality has died, and the accompanying atonal music confirms it (“Finale,” 40).

It is remarkable how carefully Herrmann’s “Psycho Theme” outlines the dramatic structure of this film. Not only is it systematically liquidated up to the dramatic climax, but it identifies the main character, references the decline of that character and significantly disappears at the turning point of the drama

when Bates' schizoid split is complete. The celebrated *slasher music* that derives from "The Psycho Theme," is an organic part of this reductive process.

Film connoisseurs will be forever thankful to Fred Steiner for his identification of the half-step relations in the music of *Psycho*, to Royal Brown for appreciating the sounds of the minor-major seventh chords found there, and to William Wrobel for showing the roots of this music in Herrmann's *Sinfonietta*, but the systematic musical liquidation of "The Psycho Theme" into the *slasher music* will now add an important new dimension to their conversation about the overall structure of the music for *Psycho*.³²

Notes

¹ This paper was originally read at the National Association for Humanities Education Association meeting, San Francisco, March 2, 2007 and at the Mid-South American Musicological Society—Music Theory Society Mega-Conference at the University of Georgia (Athens), March 16, 2007.

² "Cue sheet #19,752," *Psycho*, Paramount Pictures, July 1, 1960, (also another sheet dated June 27, 1960) controlled by Famous Chappell Limited.

³ In his 1975 pioneering work, "Herrmann's 'Black and White Music' Music for Hitchcock's Psycho," *Film Music Notebook*, 1-4 Winter, 1974-75, 26-46 (Part II), Fred Steiner identified the principal musical motifs of Psycho and explained their organization. Royal Brown presented an important harmonic aspect of the music in "Herrmann, Hitchcock, and the Music of the Irrational." *Cinema Journal* 21, No. 2, *Jstor* 4/19/2006 10:46 AM. University of Texas Press, 1982. 4-49. Graham Bruce sorted the important themes into comprehensible groups in "Bernard Herrmann Film Music and Narrative." Ann Arbor: *UMI Research Press*, 1985. 193-200. As recently as 2003 William Wrobel listed the influences of Herrmann's *Sinfonietta for String Orchestra* (1935) on *Psycho* in "Self-Borrowing in the Music of Bernard Herrmann," *The Journal of Film Music* 1:2-3 (Fall-Winter 2003). 249-271.

⁴ Durgnat, Raymond. *A Long Hard Look at Psycho*. London: BFI Publications, 2002. 222.

⁵ Conversation with Professor Thomas Walton, April, 2008.

⁶ Stefano, Joseph. Psycho (complete script, transcribed). *New Arts Library*. 1998. Online Internet [<http://www.paradiselost.org/psycho.html>] 4/18/2006. Also as completed film, Hitchcock, Alfred. *Psycho*. Universal City, CA: Universal Studios, 1999 (originally released, 1960). [DVD 20251].

⁷ Bloch, Robert. *Psycho*. London: Bloomsbury Paperbacks, 1997 (originally published, 1959).

⁸ This is the arrangement found in a cue sheet (#19,752) from Paramount Pictures with sixty cue numbers, dated July 1, 1960. Bernard Herrmann Society web site, "Cue Sheet: Psycho." Online [http://www.uib.no/herrmann/db/cuesheets/film_psycho.html] 9/02/06.⁹ Musical selections are identified with track numbers and timings (e.g., "Track —, —") as found on the following CD recording: Herrmann, Bernard. *Psycho: The Complete Original Motion Picture Score*. Joel McNeely, conductor, Royal Scottish National Orchestra. Studio City, CA: Varese/Sarabande, 1997 (VSD-5765).

¹⁰ Smith, Steven C. *A Heart at Fire's Center: The Life and Music of Bernard Herrmann*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991. 192.

¹¹ Leigh, Janet, with Nickens, Christopher. *Psycho: Behind the Scenes of the Classic Thriller*. New York: Harmony Books, 1995. 166.

¹² Steiner, 14-49.

¹³ The “Psycho Theme” moniker was attached to the tune early in the history of *Psycho*. A list of cues attached to the original film score manuscript (*Psycho*, film score manuscript cue sheet. Bernard Herrmann Collection, Donald C. Davidson Library, Dept. of Special Collections, University of California, Santa Barbara—in Herrmann’s handwriting?) bears no mention of a “Psycho Theme.” A few weeks after completion of the musical score, however, Herrmann signed an affidavit with Paramount indicating that he was the creator of all the music for the film and that particular cue list included four references to a “Psycho Theme.” (Legal agreement between Bernard Herrmann and Shamley Productions, Inc., dated March 15, 1960. Property of Paramount Pictures, courtesy of Dr. Jeannie Pool.) Cue lists from a few months later, include (all) eleven references to “The Psycho Theme” in the film score. The theme appears to be an original creation for this film that was identified separately for copyright purposes to ensure it could be used as a source of song material later—which was standard studio practice at the time according to correspondence with Warren Sherk, Database Archivist and Music Specialist, Special Collections, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. November 20, 2006.

¹⁴ Steiner, 29.

¹⁵ Brown, 34.

¹⁶ Mulhall, Kevin, liner notes, *Herrmann, Bernard. The Complete Original Motion Picture Score: Psycho*. Joel McNeely, conductor, Royal Scottish national Orchestra. Studio City: CA: Varese/Sarabande, 1997 (CD, VSD-5765) 3.

¹⁷ Dudeque, Norton. *Music Theory and Analysis in the Writings of Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005. 159.

¹⁸ One is tempted to compare the harmony of “The Psycho Theme” with the Steiner motif because it rises a half-step from E flat minor to E minor.

¹⁹ Palmer, Christopher. “The Music of Bernard Herrmann,” *Monthly Film Bulletin* (British Film Institute), Oct. 1976.

²⁰ Hitchcock, Op. cit.

²¹ Bruce, Op. cit.

²² Wrobel, Op. cit.

²³ Raksin, David, Musilli, John and Paley, Stephen. *The Film Music of Bernard Herrmann*. Kent, CT: Creative Arts Television, 1997.

²⁴ Bernard Herrmann writes “...in 1890 Ives was writing poly-tonality, which, in 1910, Milhaud introduced in popular garb. In 1902 he was producing poly-rhythms, atonality and tone clusters...” *Trend: A Quarterly of the Seven Arts* Vol. 1 No. 3 (Sept-Oct-Nov. 1932), 99-101.

²⁵ Bruce, 210.

²⁶ Palmer, Op. cit.

²⁷ Siegel, Robert. “Profile: Composer Bernard Herrmann and His Musical Score for the Movie “Psycho,” transcript from *All Things Considered*, National Public Radio, October 30, 2000. Available through Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, Online Internet [<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1B1-367017.html>] 5/3/2008.

²⁸ Herrmann, Bernard. “The Forest,” from *Tone Poem for Large Orchestra*, January 29, 1929. Bernard Herrmann Collection, Donald C. Davidson Library, Dept. of Special Collections, University of California, Santa Barbara.

²⁹ Bruce, 203.

³⁰ Leigh and Nickens, Op.. cit.

³¹ Rebello, Stephen. *Alfred Hitchcock and the Making of Psycho*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1998. 128.

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