Sound and Image: Experimental Music and the Popular Horror Film (1960 to the present day)

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Abstract

This study investigates the functional relationship between sound and image within a particular generic and historical context - experimental music and the popular horror film, from 1960 to the present day. The study responds to a significant gap in the literature that requires sustained and in-depth academic attention. Despite recent expansion, the field of film music studies has yet to deal with alternative functional models that challenge the overall applicability of the dominant narrative-based theoretical framework.

Recent scholarship suggests that a proper theoretical comprehension of horror film music's *primary* function requires a refocusing of the hermeneutic emphasis upon dimensions of the cinematic (or audio-visual) sign that can be described as 'non-representational.' This study applies a relatively new psychoanalytical framework to explain how the post-1960 horror film deploys these non-representational elements, incorporating them into an overall cinematic strategy which indexes the transition towards a post-classical cinematic aesthetics.

More specifically, this study assesses just how efficiently experimental musical styles and techniques aid the reconfiguration of the syntactical components of horror film to these very ends. Using three case study directors, this study focuses upon major developments in musical style and cinematic technology, describing the ways in which these have facilitated this cinematic strategy. A particularly useful contribution to the

knowledge is made here via the study's explanation as to how the particular psychoanalytical framework applied can illuminate the functional and theoretical relationships often posited between both the *formal* and *subjective* dimensions of the post-1960 horror film experience.

The conclusions reached suggest this theoretical explication of post-1960 horror film music's function can now take its place alongside previously dominant narrative frameworks. Given the influential status of the horror genre, the findings of this investigation prove useful for comprehending the increasing heterogeneity of post-classical film music in general, and the functional relationship(s) of sound and image in particular.

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Introduction

It is one of the most infamous moments of modern cinema. A shower curtain is ripped aside, catalysing one of the most psychologically devastating sequences of popular cinema: Marion Crane's murder at the hands of Norman Bates in Alfred Hitchcock's milestone of horror cinema, *Psycho* (1960). As Bates stabs at Crane's prone figure, the discordant shrieks from Bernard Herrmann's musical score seemingly merge with Hitchcock's disorienting jump-cuts, creating an overall audio-visual assault that seems to tear at the very fabric of cinema itself. Unparalleled at the time for its sonic fury and visual distinctiveness, *Psycho* has gradually become one of the most discussed movies of contemporary film scholarship. And yet, despite such unprecedented attention, as recently as 2006, the film-theorist, Laura Mulvey was noting how the significance of *Psycho* "waxes rather than wanes."[1]

One recent and persuasive application of Hitchcock's film has seen theorists and historians of film use it to explicate wider evolutionary shifts and reconfigurations in popular cinematic practice across a crucial transitional period, from the classical to the post-classical. As Mulvey explains, "*Psycho* represents a moment of change in the history of the film industry [...] it reaches back to the chronicle of cinema with which Hitchcock himself is so inextricably imbricated, but it also stands, metaphorically, for a decisive

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[1] Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), p. 8.

break with that kind of cinema."[2]

This type of 'break' manifests itself across a number of individual (albeit related) areas of film scholarship, taking in issues of form and content, economic and industrial imperatives, in addition to the subsequent theoretical ramifications of such a divide. Film-theorist, Linda Williams, describes the significance of Hitchcock's film in this respect:

> *Psycho* needs to be seen as a historical marker of a moment when popular American movies, facing the threat of television [...] began to invent new scopic regimes of visual and visceral 'attraction.' In this moment visual culture can be seen getting a tighter grip on the visual pleasures of film spectators through the reinstitution of a post-modern cinema of attractions.[3]

This is particularly noticeable with regards to *Psycho*'s pioneering formal strategies, especially the director's general promotion of form over content within the overall hierarchy of popular cinematic imperatives.[4] Yet scholars have still to remark upon Hitchcock's, and film composer, Bernard Herrmann's, pioneering appropriation of experimental musical styles, or consider how *this* aspect of the director's overall cinematic strategy may have reconfigured the primary functional relationship between

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[2] *ibid*, p. 8.

[3] See Linda Williams, 'Discipline and Fun: Psycho and Postmodern Cinema' in Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (eds.), *Reinventing Film Studies* (London: Arnold, 2000), pp. 351-378, p. 367.

[4] The term 'cinematic imperatives' refers to aspects of the cinematic experience that are prioritised by audiences and directors alike and which, therefore, direct the overall mode of spectatorly engagement and subjective investment. For example, the experience of 'shock' and/or 'trauma' are absolutely imperative to audiences of post-classical horror cinema, whereas narrative structure and thematic resonance, for example, are, in the main, of little consequence to the same audiences. Importantly, this hierarchy has a distinct bearing on the overall cinematic style adopted by directors of post-classical horror cinema.

sound and image. Hitchcock scholars have typically displayed a deep fascination for the scopophilic regimes of *visual* pleasure the director constructs, but have shown scant regard for how the *soundtrack*, particularly non-diegetic music, may function in this context.

As early as 1932, Hitchcock was attesting to the fundamental role of music in the cinematic experience.[5] Moreover, the use of experimental musical styles seems especially relevant to the director's 'pure cinema' films, which occur across this classical/post-classical divide. Viewed as a landmark event in popular cinema, then, Hitchcock's *Psycho* retains a deep significance for this study, which investigates the functional relationship posited between sound and image in post-1960 horror cinema, stressing the particular efficacy of *experimental* musical styles and techniques in this context.

Until recently, film music studies laboured under the domineering influence of two interrelated biases - the promotion of the visual and the narrational dimensions of cinema. Previous to its spirited growth in the 1990s, film music studies remained a relatively minor discipline, limited to a small number of works that spanned a near century of film history. A significant number of these studies compounded this biased interpretation of non-diegetic film music, a process that arguably peaked with the

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[5] See Sidney Gottlieb (ed.), *Hitchcock on Hitchcock: Selected Writings and Interviews*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1995).

publication, in 1987, of Claudia Gorbman's *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music*.[6]

In focusing on two hitherto neglected areas of film music scholarship - the post-1960 horror film and its appropriation of experimental musical styles and techniques - this study responds to the wider concerns created by such theoretical parochialism. In particular, this relates to Gorbman's narrative-led conceptual paradigm and its subordination of sound to the image and spectacle to the narrative. This study investigates the manner in which post-1960/post-*Psycho* horror cinema has appropriated the formal attributes of experimental music(s) in ways that challenge the many preconceptions of the dominant, narrative-based theoretical understanding. In doing so, this study explains how the major characteristics of experimental music forms - most notably, atonality, dissonance, instrumental timbre, and arrhythmic time-signatures - serve alternative functional purposes than those we see prioritised in the dominant narrative model. *Psycho* proves to be a telling case in this respect: a traumatic, but compelling, rupturing of many of the things audiences had come to expect from mainstream cinema at that particular moment. More pointedly, it is also a landmark moment in popular cinema's appropriation of experimental musical styles and techniques.

It is important to clarify my intention here, which is not to argue that this dominant theoretical paradigm fails *in its given context* - the classical narrative cinema. What *is*

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[6] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987).

being challenged, however, is the misguided acceptance of this particular narrative paradigm across a range of generic and historical contexts. Furthermore, it seems 'alternative' film music models, far from being the stylistic province of an anti-Hollywood, art-house agenda, actually thrive in popular contexts - not least, the contemporary horror film. These alternative functional (and theoretical) models now reserve equal right to our scholarly attention, especially since the narrative film music model has been described and theorised at some length.

Chapter One is a dedicated theoretical chapter which reassesses the major traditions in film music scholarship and the wider intellectual disciplines this study engages. In order to retain the study's basic historical trajectory, Chapter Two provides a historical recounting of the horror soundtrack, from its beginnings in the 'primitive' cinema, on through the classical era, and up to 1960. This allows me to parallel developments in horror cinema's audio-visual strategies with the stylistic evolutions in musical styles of the period - particularly, the late-romanticist and early modernist idioms. This chapter thus provides a secure historical foundation for the assessment of subsequent developments in horror film music undertaken in the remaining chapters.

Of course, experimental musical techniques feature in popular cinema previous to *Psycho*, especially in the horror, science-fiction and film-noir categories. But, prior to *Psycho*, music as intensely left-field as Herrmann's modernist-inspired score had yet to be incorporated into a newly-reconfigured aesthetics of post-classical cinema - in horror film or otherwise. Chapter Three performs a detailed analysis of *Psycho* (the first of three

case-study chapters), describing how Hitchcock's use of Herrmann's music functions as one element of a more general paradigmatic shift in audio-visual strategy. In itself, this shift thus provides an indexical manifestation of wider post-classical (post-modern) evolutions in popular cinematic practice. Despite *Psycho*'s status as the most discussed movie of contemporary film scholarship - a textual locus for all sorts of debates concerning the evolution of popular cinema - the number of academic, and particularly *theoretical*, studies engaging in depth with the functioning of the film`s soundtrack is, to my knowledge, virtually non-existent.

If initially surprising, the tacit avoidance of horror by film music scholars is more understandable once we account for the exact manner in which music (and sound in general) function in the genre. It is part of my thesis to suggest that, in the wake of *Psycho*, the formal characteristics of a great deal of horror cinema start to function *primarily* as aural and visual 'excess.' Such a formal strategy is central to what is described as the *visceral cinema*: a cinematic sensibility privileging some 'shock' encounter between the spectator and this excess 'fragment,' or dimension, of the audio-visual sign. In other words, the *materiality* of the cinematic signifier that, theoretically speaking, lies beyond the grasp of traditional modes of discourse analysis.

Of course, the abstractions of a *purely* musicological approach may not constitute the most fruitful approach to theorising the horror soundtrack, but this defining visceral/excess function demands an acknowledgement of the *affective* properties of cinematic form. Such an acknowledgement must venture beyond the standard semiotic

interpretation, with its emphasis on representation through a successful signification of *meaning*, to articulate some real sense of relations *between* form and subjectivity, breaking the methodological deadlock that has arguably hindered film scholarship in this area.

To summarise, this study argues how the large-scale appropriation of experimental music(s) by the post-1960 horror film functions as a major facilitator (although not the only one) of a much wider post-classical/post-modern reprioritisation of cinematic imperatives. Interestingly, this reprioritisation is achieved primarily through an 'updating' of a *pre*-classical aesthetics-of-attraction, itself based upon the visceral techniques of semiotic excess described earlier. Moreover, no popular cinematic genre has so completely re-appropriated the styles and techniques of experimental, avant-garde music(s) to these particular ends as thoroughly as the post-1960 horror film.

This technique is discernable in the work of maverick horror directors like Alfred Hitchcock, Dario Argento, and Ken Russell, who make up the directorial subjects of Chapters Three, Four, and Five respectively. These chapters consider how the horror genre utilises these ostensibly *non*-commercial attributes and techniques to its advantage, focusing upon how the particular formal traits (aural *and* visual) can be considered useful to the cinematic rendering of 'horror.' These chapters also focus upon the genre's pioneering utilisation of experimental styles and new technologies, in order to explain how these are exploited by directors keen to render a visceral sense of 'excess' in the cinematic signifier.

Chapters Four and Five are premised upon close audio-visual analysis of two 'post-*Psycho*' horror films. Both chapters aim to support the study's on-going theoretical explication of experimental music and its role in the post-classical horror genre, describing ways in which this particular film music model differs from the more orthodox narrative model. Chapter Four investigates the 'visceral' horror of Italian director, Dario Argento; covering the films *Deep Red* (1975), *Suspiria* (1977), and *Inferno* (1980). Here, for example, I shall examine the director's incorporation of Progressive Rock music, noting how these function within Argento's wider strategy of semiotic excess. Similarly, Chapter Five undertakes detailed analysis of Ken Russell's *Altered States* (1980), discussing how significant aural technologies of the period (such as Dolby™) benefit the use of experimental musical styles and vice versa. The study ends with a concluding section, synthesising the findings of each chapter in order to argue for the efficacy of the theoretical framework adopted for explicating the audio-visual strategies of the post-classical horror film.

CHAPTER ONE

EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC AND THE HORROR SOUNDTRACK: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND METHODOLOGICAL APPRAOCHES

1. Introduction

The cinematic soundtrack, and the musical score in particular, continue to play an important role in the overall success or failure of a great deal of horror cinema, a fact especially apparent in the post-classical period of the genre attended to by this study.[1] Despite this, the horror genre has experienced a surprising amount of neglect from scholars of film music. The fact that horror films continue to command a great deal of attention from other scholarly disciplines - most notably, psychoanalytic theory, genre criticism, and aesthetic (but largely visual) appreciations - makes this a disconcerting omission, especially as an engagement with these disciplines can enrich our understanding of music's function in the horror film. As a result, this type of interdisciplinary strategy shapes the overall methodological approach and theoretical framework(s) applied in this study of experimental music(s) and the post-classical horror soundtrack.

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[1] The term 'post-classical' alludes here to a post-1960/post-*Psycho* (1960) shift in cinematic strategies, pioneered by that film's exemplification of the major *post-modern* shifts in theme and cinematic style. For further reading see: Linda Williams, 'Discipline and Fun: *Psycho* and Postmodern Cinema' in Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (eds.), *Reinventing Film Studies* (London: Arnold, 2000), pp. 351-378.

This opening chapter describes and justifies such an approach, built, as it is, upon the reassessment and synthesis of numerous theoretical frameworks and methods of analysis and research. This affords me the opportunity to situate the work within the current academic field, and acknowledge any scholarly debts in the process. Through such a reassessment this chapter performs two main tasks. Firstly, it shall question *why* the horror film has traditionally been considered 'out of bounds' by film music scholars. Secondly, it postulates a theoretical framework with which scholars may successfully engage with the troublesome topic of the horror film genre and its pioneering appropriation of experimental music(s) and other aural devices.[2]

Naturally, the most immediate concern for a theoretical consideration of horror film music remains those aspects of the horror soundtrack to have occasioned such widespread neglect. Of course, film music as a whole previously experienced its fair share of academic neglect, largely due to the image-centrism of the major strands of classical film theory. Given the undeniable importance of horror cinema's aural

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[2] Here the term 'experimental' music is applied in a much more general sense than applied by Michael Nyman and Brian Eno, for example, who use it to describe a 'post-Serial' music dominated by John Cage and subsequent minimalists, such as Terry Riley and La Monte Young. My appropriation of the term 'experimental' refers more simply to certain progressive musical styles as used, often for the first time, by *populist* cinematic genres *as film music*. As my historical scope covers a significant time period, this umbrella use of the term 'experimental music' takes in late-Romanticism, serial, and atonal, music, alongside Minimalism, and other popular musical genres that utilise avant-garde techniques, including Jazz, Rock, and Electronic music. That said, some interesting parallels can still be drawn between this study of horror film music and Nyman's (and Eno's) theoretical appropriation of the term 'experimental.' In his Foreward to Nyman's study on experimental music, Eno notes how (after Cage) composers, and, more importantly, their audiences, "wanted something other than the old categories of rock, jazz and classical. They wanted a music of space, texture, and atmosphere - and they found it in film soundtracks, in environmental recordings [...] and, happily, in some of the work of the 'experimental' composers." In many ways, the horror film's use of certain progressive musical styles - be they pre-Serial, Serial, or post-Serial - has played a significant role in providing this type of experience. For further reading see: Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond - Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

dimension(s), this visual bias has severely impacted upon the genre's neglect. As Peter Hutchings confirms, "Most film theory and film criticism has concerned itself with images rather than sound. When it has been discussed at all, sound has tended to be subsumed into the visual [...]. This has been especially damaging to an understanding of how horror films operate."[3]

As in other areas of film studies, an understandable responsibility rested with earlier scholars of film music to engage with the major historical and cultural paradigm - namely, the classical Hollywood studio system - through the theoretical frameworks available at the time. However, this has resulted in an intellectual dogma of sorts, whereby certain hermeneutic practices have come to dominate the theoretical interpretation of film music. Clearly, the *most* dominant of these is the 'narrative paradigm,' originally expounded by Claudia Gorbman in her *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music*.[4] In certain generic and historical instances however - not least, the post-classical horror film - Gorbman's narrative-based theoretical approach is, by her own admission, unsuitable. Of course, this is not to detract from the insightfulness and applicability of Gorbman's framework; it does, however, compound an overall visual bias. More specifically, her framework restricts evaluation of non-diegetic music to the terms of a strictly narrational efficacy. Scholars interpreting film music in this way (including Gorbman) have thus avoided the troublesome notion of horror film and its

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[3] Peter Hutchings, *The Horror Film* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2004), p. 142.
[4] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

use(s) of music.

To understand this type of neglect it is imperative we first understand the wider reprioritisation of 'cinematic imperatives' (those aspects of cinema that structure certain modes of spectatorship and subjective investment) that guides the incorporation of non-diegetic music into an overall aesthetics of post-classical horror cinema. Generally speaking, horror audiences prioritise different elements of the cinematic experience than audiences of narrative-based genres. Most notably, the post-classical horror genre questions and reconfigures those cinematic hierarchies that impart any sense of visual and/or narrative dominance.

This is not to say horror films do not contain narratives of sorts (even though they are often vague in premise), nor that basic thematic and plot structures do not feature in some way. What *is* evident, however, is that narrative structuring *as such*, and all it implies - i.e. representation and signification of meaning as the dominant function of syntax, via the metaphorical connotations of sound/image - does not dominate the *prevalent* cinematic efficacy of the audio-visual signs that make up a horror 'text.' The most telling manifestation of this wider reprioritisation of cinematic imperatives involves the genre's promotion of cinematic spectacle and sensation above narrative integrity and thematic resonance, typically post-modern traits powerfully rendered through the promotion of certain 'visceral' cine-aesthetic strategies.

The primary function of music in this context - from the harmonic dissonance and

rhythmic imbalance of Schoenberg to the atonal rock histrionics of Goblin[5] - is supporting such strategies, designed for maximum *physiological* impact, immediately prior to any cognitive, or conscious, inference on the spectator's behalf. Such impact lends a visceral dimension to the cinematic experience and serves the main generic proviso of horror cinema: the creation of some corporeal sense of trauma and/or shock. But it is the psychological and, more pointedly, *psychoanalytical*, ramifications of this 'visceral' strategy that are most relevant, here, since they most clearly differentiate a horror film music technique from the techniques (and psychological effects) of classically-styled, 'narrative' film music. It is this dimension, then, that directs my interpretation of post-classical/post-1960 horror cinema and its pioneering use of experimental music.

Methodologically speaking, the most appropriate way of understanding these developments is to interpret them (at least, initially) in relation to these wider post-modern socio-cultural shifts. Viewed from this post-modern, pluralist perspective, the main assumptions of Gorbman's narrative paradigm (particularly that of music as an agency of cinematic 'suture') are thus stripped of their hegemonic dominance. This model becomes simply one of any number of possible functional/theoretical models applicable in various contexts. Additionally, as an indexical manifestation of cinematic post-modernism, the post-classical horror film's pioneering stylistic developments have implications beyond a simple evolution in the aesthetics of cinematic horror. Due to the

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[5] The Italian progressive rock group who produced a number of well-known scores for Italian horror director, Dario Argento.

influential nature of the horror genre, an observation of these formal developments can enrich a theoretical understanding of contemporary cinematic aesthetics in general.

In serving the particular demands of the genre at that time, the post-1960 horror film deploys an alternative utilisation of aural resources than is found in a great deal of the classically-styled, narrative-led cinematic genres, including most horror films of the classical (1930-60) period. My thesis, then, duly defines the post-1960 horror film`s appropriation of experimental music(s) as an especially efficient tool with which to achieve this post-modern reprioritisation of popular cinematic imperatives. As shall be argued, this function is particularly well-served by the *formal* characteristics of certain experimental musical styles.

There are two main areas (or levels) of analytical focus retained throughout the study. Firstly, as the implications of this stylistic appropriation are observed at the most elementary levels of cinematic form - sound, image, and the functional criteria which govern their relationship - there is to be a detailed analysis of the post-classical horror film at this syntactical level. Secondly, as the implications of these syntactical developments extend beyond an evolution in the aesthetics of horror cinema, the other major focus involves the spectator's *subjective* investment in the 'horror' cinematic experience. Therefore, the study engages with certain spectatorship theories (discussed later in the chapter) in explaining the major psychological dynamics directing such an investment.

One important avenue of enquiry proposed here involves the seemingly paradoxical 'enjoyment' audiences derive from their experience of horror cinema. How may we explain this in the terms of an individual psychology? And, more importantly, what specific theoretical relationship can we assert *between* cinematic form and subjective experience? In my opinion, here lies the most original contribution of this thesis: the application of an overarching theoretical framework that asserts a relation between subjective experience and the formal properties of post-classical horror cinema, emphasising the specific relevance of experimental musical styles in this context.

In applying such a framework, it was essential that both recent trends *and* previous approaches in film music scholarship (and the wider disciplines they engage), were comprehensively reassessed. This allowed me to identify both the limitations of traditionally dominant frameworks and, in light of my own theoretical intentions, the renewed salience of previously marginalised positions. The following reassessment explains how the various disciplinary strands are best synthesised for a theoretical explication of the audio-visual techniques of the post-classical horror film. The next section introduces some of the main implications facing the study, then proceeds with a historical reassessment of the major traditions of film music scholarship. The final section discusses other areas of intellectual relevance that have a bearing on my theoretical approach. These are generic criticism relating to horror cinema, psychoanalytic approaches to the horror genre and film music, and some general post-modernist theory and criticism.

1.1 Some Initial Implications for Studying the Post-Classical Horror Soundtrack.

Contemporary critics have noted that a significant amount of film music scholarship suffers from an academic exclusivity, whereby the findings of each approach - be it musicological, semiotic, aesthetic, or otherwise - remain isolated from each other.[6] Although musicologists may have a lot more to answer for here than other scholarly groups, what *is* certain is that such a parochial approach does not lend itself to a comprehensive and nuanced appreciation of contemporary film music. This seems particularly evident in the case of the post-1960 horror soundtrack. However, this exclusivity results as much from the restrictions of certain conceptual frameworks applied in the theorisation of film music, than from the actual nature of music as the focus of a scholarly study. To give a brief example, what is nominally termed 'classical psychoanalytical film theory' (based in the Metzian tradition of theorists writing in *Screen* in the late-1970s), inherits certain concepts that were originally applied in a *literary* context, thus raising doubts as to the saliency of such an approach in the instances of films that do not follow literary modes *avant la lettre*. As E. Ann Kaplan confirms,

> A brief comparison and contrast of the development of psychoanalytic methods in literature and in film raises interesting questions on a series of levels: these have to do with the differences between film and literature as aesthetic modes, with differences in the *institutions* of film and literature, including the high/low culture debate, and with historical, cultural, and intellectual issues that have influenced when a

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[6] See Jim Buhler, Anahid Kassabian, David Neumeyer, and Robyn Stillwell 'Panel Discussion on Film Sound/Film Music' in *Velvet Light Trap*, No. 51, Spring 2001.

psychoanalytical method was developed for each mode.[7]

Of course, this problem extends further than the varying modalities of psychoanalytical discourse, though this remains an important area for this study discussed further in Section 1.3. As a matter of fact, it applies to all intellectual disciplines with histories reaching back across periods of major evolution in (and of) cultural forms, periods in which the issues described above by Kaplan experience significant flux. The period of evolution most pertinent to this study is the transition to a *post-classical* cinema. This major paradigm shift was bound to affect the applicability of older concepts inherited across such a divide. As noted critic, Kevin J. Donnelly states, "Although many contemporary scores bear some resemblance to studio-era film music, industrial imperatives and aesthetic concerns have not remained static, mitigating against the notion of a direct continuity between contemporary film music and that of classical cinema."[8] Both Kaplan and Donnelly highlight the fundamental problem characterising contemporary cultural studies per se, suggesting an approach that considers *all* the relevant factors is required - be they historical, institutional, technological, aesthetic or otherwise.

The collective issues of methodological exclusivity, generic neglect, and theoretical incongruity, then, have seriously impeded the advancement of film music studies. As the historical focus of this study is located, at least, initially, around this main period of

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[7] E. Ann Kaplan (ed.), *Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 1.
[8] Kevin J. Donnelly 'The Classical Film Score Forever: *Batman*, *Batman Returns* and Post-Classical Film Music' in Steve Neale and Murray Smith (eds.), *Contemporary Hollywood History* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp.142-155, p.143.

transition, the implications that arise from this theoretical discontinuity take on a particular significance. Most importantly, the restrictions of orthodox theoretical and conceptual frameworks used to explicate *classical* aesthetic modes are challenged through a reappraisal of the relevant disciplines. By employing an interdisciplinary approach, this study seeks to resist the homogenising effects of dominant frameworks (such as Gorbman's), which can prevent critical insight into alternative film music models.

Such an undertaking, however, involves more than simply differentiating a so-called 'classical' film-music model from a 'post-classical' model. An additional factor complicating my approach involves the theory independently developed by Linda Williams and Slavoj Žižek, both of whom claim the post-classical/post-modern cinema engenders a sort of 'updating' of a *pre*-classical cinema of attractions. Here, it is spectacle and sensation that dominate the cinematic economy and, thus, *the prevalent economy of the audio-visual signifier*, rather than narrative absorption or thematic coherence.[9] As my study focuses on the functional priorities of sound and image in post-1960 horror cinema - a particularly apposite example of the *post*-classical cinema of attractions - it emphasises the theoretical value of any similarities in the audio-visual techniques of both pre- and post-classical horror film at both the stylistic and subjective

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[9] Both Williams and Žižek apply the term 'attraction' in the Eisenstein-ian sense: a 'cinema-of-attractions' that privileges psychological shock over narrative structure and/or thematic coherence. However, as Tom Gunning argues, the cinema-of-attractions need not *totally* dispense with such elements; nor, indeed, should classical 'narrative' cinema with regards to spectacle/shock. For further reading see: Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, its Spectator and the Avant-Garde' in *Wide Angle* 8 (3-4), 1986, pp. 63-70.

level.

It should also be remembered that a scholarly understanding of what 'music' actually constitutes crosses certain intellectually-defined boundaries. Although the study of music has its own academic schools of thought, formed in relative isolation to the field of film studies, there is a tradition of convergence *between* music and other art-forms. And whilst a contemporary scholarly approach to film music cannot simply ignore the consideration of what the music philosopher, Peter Kivy termed, 'music alone,'[10] the evolution of music forms (and the numerous theories pertaining to them) are thus shaped by the specific conditions of their contextual deployment.

Of course, it would certainly be wrong to consider any film music, even horror film music, *purely* as music alone, as music lacking any kind of 'programmatic' dimension. That said, the particular incorporation of musical resources within post-1960 horror films, including the *types* of music typically used in the genre, means we should not neglect the role of the non-representational dimensions of aural (and visual) signifiers. This relates further to what Kivy defines as 'music alone.' Borrowing from Kant, Kivy suggests 'music alone' is to be defined as a "beautiful play of sensations [...] music as lacking all semantic, representational, and expressive properties."[11] A part of my thesis suggests that the non-representational dimensions of the aural signifier, in tandem with

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[10] Peter Kivy defines 'music alone,' also termed 'absolute music,' as "music without text, program, programmatic title, or any other such extra-musical paraphernalia." Peter Kivy, *Music, Language and Cognition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 199.
[11] Peter Kivy, *Sound and Semblance: Reflections on Musical Representation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 143.

their visual counterparts, prevail over the cinematic economy of the audio-visual sign, especially in the post-1960 horror film. One counter-argument to Kivy's claim for music as a fully-representational art form is based upon the perceived difference between 'representation' and 'reproduction.' Roger Scruton, for example, describes numerous caveats for the condition proper of a *representative* art form. One of these is that "representation requires a medium" and is only understood as such, Scruton argues, "when a distinction between subject and medium has been recognized."[12] He continues:

> When music attempts the direct representation of sounds it has a tendency to become transparent, as it were, to its subject. Representation gives way to reproduction, and the musical medium drops out of consideration altogether as superfluous. In a sense the first scene of *Die Meistersinger* contains an excellent representation of a Lutheran chorale. But then it is a Lutheran chorale.[13]

What is most crucial to recognise here is that, whether music can attain a truly representational status or not, it would be foolish to suggest that there is not a non-representational dimension, perhaps even a non-representational *bias*, to our comprehension of music per se. In the context of this study, we must consider the acknowledged 'tools' of musical representation (melody, tonality, harmonic architectonics, and the *metaphorical* connotations of instrumental timbre, musical dynamics and so on), as well as the evolution of certain experimental trends in music. Surely as the formal evolutions of late-Romanticism and early modernism develop towards an almost total exclusion of representational elements, the case for a non-

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[12] Roger Scruton quoted in Kivy, 1984, p. 153.
[13] *ibid*, p. 153.

representational privilege increases. Therefore we can see why music aspiring to the status of 'pure sound' - for example, the atonal work of Schoenberg, Stockhausen, and later influential figures in horror film composing, such as Krystof Penderecki and Anton Von Webern - becomes relevant to this debate.

In fact, the philosophical musings of Kivy and Scruton et al. have a relevance for the study of film music. The case for the use of the clearly-representational elements of music raises questions as to how such elements function within the classical Hollywood model. On the other hand, a more abstract, intrinsically formal use of experimental idioms is also noticeable in certain areas, challenging such a representational dominance. This is not simply a question of the musical strategies of avant-garde cinema, however, since radical challenges to the classical film music model originate within popular cinematic genres too, horror film being the prime example (discussed further in Chapter Two). What the field of film music scholarship could benefit from is not the mutual exclusion of these two schools of thought - musicology and semiotic approaches - but an encounter between each of them.

In contrast, then, to the isolationism of musicologists, this study's interdisciplinary approach responds to recent concerns regarding the future direction of film music studies, synthesising certain theoretical perspectives together under the main rubric of contemporary film music scholarship. Indeed, a 2001 panel of academics gathered to discuss this very topic. Panellist, Robyn Stillwell explained that "the field of film music is wide open, not only as to what to study but as to approaches," before adding that, "the

fields of film studies and musicology have been ignoring each other for too long."[14] She continues:

> What most of us seem to want is real engagement with the films themselves – how does the music/sound function in this movie? [...] That's very healthy, given that the tendency in earlier generations was to study the music in isolation from the film (we all know examples of that) or to theorise at a level that does not take into account the specific affect/effect that a particular composition (whether specifically written for the film or not) can have.[15]

Nowhere is this fundamental critique more relevant or as pressing than with the contemporary horror soundtrack. Despite much needed attention from a number of individuals (including Philip Brophy, Michel Chion, and Kevin J. Donnelly), at the time of writing, and with the horror genre contributing a large portion of Hollywood's post-millennial output, the discussion of its aural dimensions has remained relatively under-theorised.

It was readily apparent that this particular trans-cultural appropriation of musical resources - from their 'high-cultural' origins to the exploitative populism of the horror genre - engendered significant aesthetic, technological, and historical changes that were not readily interpretable from the perspective of *existing theoretical frameworks*. For example, in terms of musical style, the affective properties of late-romantic and early-modernist music have been particularly useful to a rendering of semiotic excess, a

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[14] Robyn Stillwell 'Panel Discussion on Film Sound/Film Music: Jim Buhler, Anahid Kassabian, David Neumeyer, and Robyn Stillwell' in *Velvet Light Trap*, No. 51, Spring 2001, pp. 73-91, p. 88.
[15] *ibid*, p. 88.

cinematic affect co-opted by the horror film into its overall generic provision of fear and/or horror. However, for the most part, these aspects do not feature in theoretical discussions of film music due to the dogmatic narrative bent of dominant interpretive frameworks.

What was required was an overarching theoretical framework that could justify the analytical focus on film music's more autonomous formal attributes and still interpret them in *direct* relation to wider notions of textual agency and subjective investment - a framework that allocates this strategy of semiotic excess not just with a place, but a *constitutive* central role. In identifying the onset of a post-classical aesthetic strategy (and, thus, the historical delineation of this study) a landmark film was required which epitomised this stylistic and thematic evolution, especially in relation to its appropriation of ever more progressive musical resources - this was Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). As noted in the Introduction, Bernard Herrmann's modernist-influenced score clearly marks a watershed moment in the history of film music. This is not just a case of Herrmann's 'music alone,' however, as Hitchcock's *incorporation* of aural resources is equally important, particularly when observed in relation to the other aspects of the director's formal style. As Elisabeth Weis confirms, "Hitchcockian music, too, is interesting less as a separate entity than for its connections with other aspects of the film."[16]

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[16] Elisabeth Weis, 'The Evolution of Hitchcock's Aural Style and Sound in *The Birds*' in Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (eds.) *Film Sound: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 298-311, p. 300.

Peter Hutchings is more vague about pinpointing a moment of evolution in this area, and neglects to mention any specific texts. He does describe three basic (if a little oversimplified) features of this new type of horror soundtrack: the increased use of electronic timbres, voices, and dissonance, all factors focused upon within my analyses. More relevantly, Hutchings emphasises the links between the horror genre's stylistic evolutions and the wider aesthetic developments of mainstream cinema:

> Things change during the 1950s [...]. This does not mean that film music in that decade and afterwards suddenly separated itself out completely from all other types of music. It does mean that in various ways horror music from the 1950s onwards acquired some distinctive qualities that [...] set it apart from the more mainstream uses of film music. That this shift in the identity of horror music occurs at a time when the traditional Hollywood studio system was starting to fragment, and when horror production itself was becoming more internationalised, is probably no coincidence for this was a period which saw a reworking of many of the aesthetic practices associated with the horror genre.[17]

These kinds of changes gain momentum during the fifties and are epitomised (and synthesised) at the end of the decade by *Psycho*.[18] My focus on Hitchcock's audio-visual strategies allows me to reconsider the film's soundtrack in relation to the 'attraction' theories of Linda Williams and Slavoj Žižek in particular. It has been noted how both these theorists assert some kind of link between post- and pre-classical cinematic aesthetics. The main intention behind Chapter Three is to assess the efficacy of

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[17] Hutchings, *The Horror Film*, 2004, p. 142.
[18] Excepting the use of colour, of course, an important aesthetic component of the horror film dealt with in Chapter Four

experimental musical attributes in realising this 'updated' version of a *pre*-classical cinema of attractions.

The next section begins a thorough re-evaluation of the traditional approaches to film music and other connected disciplines, which then forms the methodological and theoretical basis on which the remainder of this study is built upon.

1.2 Reassessing Film Music Scholarship: A Historical Survey of Theoretical and Methodological Approaches.

It is worth beginning this section by noting that it does not include an in-depth description or theorisation of the 'classical' Hollywood film music model. Readers interested in such an undertaking are directed towards Kathryn Kalinak's *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Score*,[19] or Russell Lack's *24 Frames Under: A Buried History of Film Music.*[20] Instead, the primary intention of this section is to reassess previous scholarly approaches to film music, describing the theoretical orthodoxy as it relates to earlier schools of thought, and tackling problematic issues associated with these scholastic trends. The secondary intention, which builds on the

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[19] Kathryn Kalinak, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).
[20] Russell Lack, *24 Frames Under: A Buried History of Film Music* (London: Quartet Books, 1997).

criticisms of the first, is to describe and defend my own approach against similar objections. For the above purposes, then, an expositional outline of the classical film music model will be sufficient, in order that alternative models may be compared and contrasted with it.[21]

Earlier, it was suggested the functional priorities governing the incorporation of non-diegetic music into the overall aesthetic strategies of the post-classical horror film call into question some of the core assumptions of Claudia Gorbman's 'narrative' model. Furthermore, it was noted that comprehending horror film music's primary function requires an appreciation of the *affective* properties of cinematic forms, through the disassociation from the constrictions of Gorbman's conceptual framework. As Kay Dickenson confirms, "as a result of the academic focus on studio system scoring (which was, after all, compliantly responding to completed story-lines) these more autonomous characteristics of film music are still ripe for extensive exploration."[22]

Without doubt the primary concern for scholars wanting to engage with these autonomous elements of the cinematic sign relates to the question of theoretical discourse. How *do* we discuss the extra-linguistic elements of musical expression, situated beyond the grasp of traditional discursive frameworks, without resorting to the formal abstractions of musicology or, alternatively, falling back into the semantics of

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[21] Chapter Two places in parallel the evolution of the horror film with the growth of musical experimentation and, therefore, engages the classical model in a little more depth. Again, this is primarily as a means of contrasting a burgeoning horror film music strategy with other contemporaneous applications of film music.
[22] Kay Dickenson (ed.), *Movie Music: The Film Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 4.

meaning and language? Interestingly enough, this kind of dichotomy has seemingly coloured a great many of the debates between various schools of film music scholarship.[23]

Until recently, Stilwell explains that "you had musicologists who didn't want to deal with meaning (narrative, dramatic, whatever), while film studies is largely 'deaf.'"[24] Recent approaches by critics such as Kevin Donnelly[25] and Philip Brophy[26] are primarily concerned with locating some type of secure methodological and theoretical 'middle-ground,' posed between traditional film music scholarship (narrative/semiotic) and a purely musicological approach. Consequently, if the formal abstraction of a musicological approach has something to offer study like this, it is only as a single component of a larger synthesis of theoretical perspectives - an overall framework through which scholars can interpret a film's formal attributes *in direct relation* to the wider questions surrounding textual agency and the construction of (cinematic) subjectivity.

In certain generic and historical instances, then, the hierarchy of popular cinematic imperatives is such that narrative agency (musical or otherwise) may not necessarily

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[23] One particularly relevant dichotomy is the one asserted by Metz between phenomenological and semiological approaches, as it opposes the corporeal phenomenology of a sound for example, with its semantic function. See Christian Metz 'Aural Objects' in Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (eds.) *Film Sound: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 154-161.

[24] Robyn Stillwell, 2001, p. 74.

[25] See Kevin Donnelly, *The Spectre of Sound, Music in Film and Television* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005).

[26] See Philip Brophy, *100 Modern Soundtracks* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005).

dominate the functional affectivity of sound and image. Rather, an appreciation of contemporary horror film music has to consider *all* the relative dimensions of the cinematic sign, placing them in a sound theoretical framework. This is why the title of this project specifies the words sound *and* image, as the post-classical horror film provides us with a useful case in point for investigating *alternative* functional relationships between these two essential components of cinematic form.

Of course, the narrative conceptual paradigm retains a place in the theorisation and evolution of film music, although it is linked inextricably to contexts in which narrative (and also visual) agencies dominate the economy of the cinematic sign. It is for this reason that 'spectacle' and the re-institution of a 'post-modern cinema of attractions' - which Williams describes a propos of *Psycho* - retains an importance for this study. Interpreting spectacle within the terms defined in Laura Mulvey's seminal 1975 essay dealing with visual pleasure and narrative cinema, Scott Bukatman argues, "spectacle becomes more than an unnecessary supplement to narrative [...]. Because it is precisely *not narrative*, it therefore lies beyond a narratively-grounded conceptual schema, and that 'beyond' threatens the totalizing coherence of the narrative system."[27] Interestingly, Mulvey's approach contains a *visual* bias also, but her theorisation points the way forward for the future comprehension of excess in film studies. As Bukatman continues:

> It is possible to read Mulvey's essay in retrospect as an early

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[27] Scott Bukatman, 'Spectacle, Attractions and Visual Pleasure' in Wanda Strauven (ed.), *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), pp. 71-82, p. 75.

> acknowledgement of the limitations of narrative theory, through its emphasis upon the presence of something else that exists in cinematic form. The filmic text is posited as a site of abundance [...] 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' then, draws attention to the precariousness of stable meaning in the face of spectacle.[28]

For the most part, post-classical horror film reverses the domination of narrative and therefore requires a methodological and theoretical framework that can accommodate this type of reversal. Additionally, the insights to be gained from a *musicological* emphasis can enrich an interpretation of this particular promotion of form over content (the major identifying aspect of this reprioritised hierarchy), helping to break through the methodological and theoretical impasse created by more orthodox approaches to film music. Surprisingly, this sentiment is not especially new, revealing itself in earlier scholarly approaches to film music subsequently marginalised by the theoretical orthodoxy. The next section discusses some of the challenges to this orthodoxy that proved influential in the formation of my own theoretical approach to understanding horror film music.

1.2.1 Early Challenges to Classical Hollywood Film Music

Some of the earliest writings on film music took a rather prescriptive approach to outlining the practical capacities and applications of musical accompaniment in the

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[28] *ibid*, p. 77.

'silent' film era. As Martin Miller Marks suggests, these writings were "less concerned with theoretical problems than with descriptions of techniques and trends written for a lay audience."[29] Comprised of procedural manuals and guide books - such as Erno Rapee's *Encyclopedia of Music for Pictures* (1925) - these were designed with the systematic scoring of dramatic moods and atmospheres in mind. One of the earliest challenges to any sort of procedural orthodoxy originated outside of Hollywood, and pointed to the use of synchronised-sound as the harbinger of doom for the expressive potential of cinema. This criticism, encapsulated in the Russian Formalist's infamous 'Statement' of 1928,[30] stemmed from a perceived fear of the potential of dialogue and, thus, the *symbolic* potential of language itself, to dominate the cinematic economy of audio-visual signifiers.

Historically speaking, one of the first works of any real theoretical value was Kurt London's *Film Music: A Summary of the Characteristic Features of Its History, Aesthetics, Technique and Possible Developments*. But it was the early writings of George Antheil (for the publication *Modern Music*) that stood out by virtue of their severe critique of classical Hollywood film music. "After a grand splurge with new composers and new ideas," Antheil reported, "[Hollywood] has settled back into its old grind of producing easy and sure-fire scores."[31] By 1940, the critic was bemoaning the

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[29] Martin Miller Marks, *Music and the Silent Film: Contexts and Case Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.14.
[30] S. Eisenstein, V. Pudovkin, and G.V. Alexandrov, 'A Statement' in Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (eds.), *Film Sound: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 83-85.
[31] Antheil quoted in Martin Miller Marks (1997), p. 14.

Hollywood system's hostility to modern music, describing it as "a closed proposition."[32] Classical Hollywood cinema had always lagged behind when it came to experimentation with new ideas, but one genre in particular displayed a significant aural and visual progressiveness during this period: the popular horror film.

Following the emergence of synchronised sound in 1927, the studio-system eschewed music for a short period, so in awe were directors with the level of diegetic realism achievable with the new technology. "But the life span of the all-talking picture," Kalinak confirms, "was brief, the need that music filled quickly reasserted itself. Sound film reintegrated musical accompaniment, refining music's more encompassing functions in silent film to suit its own particular need."[33] However, this process of refinement was as important for the attributes of the late-romantic and early-modernist idioms that it marginalised (particularly the use of music to create a *visceral* shock via this excess dimension of the signifier), than for any elements it promoted within the cinematic economy of film music.

The most non-representational and non-iconic of all the expressive dimensions of cinema, non-diegetic music is well-provisioned for challenging this symbolic hegemony.[34] Of course, on some level all music/sound possesses some symbolic

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[32] *ibid*, p 15.
[33] *ibid*, p.15.
[34] Royal S. Brown states: "Just as their exists a prejudice towards representation for the cinematic (iconic, representational) and verbal (non-iconic, representational) arts, there exists a prejudice towards non-representation for the musical (non-iconic, non-representational) art [...]. If, then, cinema attached itself voraciously to music, [one] reason would seem to lie in the principle that opposites attract, with the most

potential. This is often created through the tonally-ordered, architectonic matrices of harmonic and melodic signification, and the metaphorical connotations of timbral associations. However, leading composers of the late-romantic and early-modernist eras - including Wagner, Strauss, Debussy and Schoenberg - were responsible for gradually collapsing these architectonic contexts. This was achieved through the introduction of intense dissonances, and eventually outright atonality, in their work, along with a concomitant promotion of the *materialist* impact of timbre, felt as a purely physical affect.

One crucial strand of my thesis argues that, divesting the spectator of their learned responses to harmony and melody, or at least deemphasising these, composers (and directors) using the techniques of dissonance, chromaticism, and outright atonality, rearrange the prevalent economy of the (film-) musical sign. For example, chromaticism in music, Leonard Meyer notes, "is capable of arousing affective aesthetic experience [...] it tends to create ambiguity and uncertainty as to harmonic direction. Chromatic passages of considerable length [...] appear to be ambiguous because they obscure the feeling of tonal center (sic)."[35] In other words, the application of dissonance, chromaticism and atonality de-prioritises the symbolic economy of aural signifiers. In these instances, then, the nature of our *primary* encounter with the aural signifier moves

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iconic of all art forms attaching itself to the most non-iconic." Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (Berkeley (CA): University of California Press, 1994), p. 19.

[35] Leonard Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1956), p. 220.

away from a symbolic purchase, towards a visceral, material affect. Atonal music, in particular, thus engenders a very specific 'enjoyment' of the aural sign's abstract, affective properties. Moreover, the *visual* dimension of this semiotic excess often works in tandem with such aural excess to pull the overall audio-visual sign towards its abstraction. In the context of the post-classical horror film, then, a spectator's 'enjoyment' of the trans-sensorial dimensions of the signifier has little or nothing to do with any symbolic purchase - in other words, with a successful communication (via signification) of *meaning*.

The major deficiencies of classical Hollywood film music, which *promoted* music's symbolic potential, were first described in any sort of detail by two leading music-theorists of the post-war era: Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler. Published in 1947, Eisler's *Composing For The Films* (co-authored with Adorno but often credited to Eisler alone) offered the first sustained critique of the standardised practices of Hollywood film music at the start of a crucial transitional phase.[36] More specifically, Eisler's and Adorno's thesis offers a remarkably prescient framework for understanding the functional application of *experimental* musical idioms within a *populist* cinematic context, an important distinction, since the use of experimental music(s) had, until the mid-thirties at least, been limited mainly to European and Soviet 'art-house' cinema.

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[36] Generally speaking, this transitional phase (c. 1948-1960) begins with the Paramount Decree and the subsequent re-configurations of mainstream cinema it initiated. These changes reach an apotheosis of sorts with the release of *Psycho* - a moment often regarded as the inception of post-classical/post-modern era.

Composing for the Films, therefore, marked an important early turning point in the theoretical perception of classical Hollywood film music. On a more general level, Martin Hufner describes how Eisler's work follows "the traces of new music through the history of filmmaking."[37] Caryl Flinn, meanwhile, notes that Eisler provides us with "the most direct articulation of 'shock' in film music."[38] But why does Eisler's work remain so relevant in the context of my own theoretical intentions? The most immediate relevance of his work, for this study, concerns the correlation Eisler and Adorno draw between the horror film, the sensationalist essence of cinema (linked by them to the theatrical sensationalism of the early peep-shows and nickelodeons), and what they describe as the new musical resources of modernism - three fundamental elements informing my own theoretical position.

Their work does, however, suffer from a pointed and deliberate politico-ideological stance, the attack on the heavily-standardised production practices of Hollywood being delivered from a rigidly-fixed Marxist perspective. Despite its ideological specificity, however, *Composing For The Films* is still "of great value," Miller Marks argues, revealing "general comments on film music's 'function and dramaturgy.'"[39] For his part, Adorno's major thesis sought to promote the *social* relevance of music. Summarising Adorno's position on musical reception, Wayne D. Bowman notes that "modern music"

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[37] Martin Hufner, '*Composing for the Films* (1947): Adorno, Eisler and the Sociology of Music' in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 18, No. 4, October, 1998, pp. 535-539, p. 536.
[38] Caryl Flinn, 'The Legacy of Modernism: Peer Raben and Political After Shock' in Philip Brophy (ed.) *CineSonic: The World of Sound in Film* (New South Wales (Australia): AFTRS, 1999), pp. 171-188, p. 175.
[39] Martin Miller Marks, (1997), p. 16.

rejects what Adorno terms "soporific consumption."[40] As Bowman goes on to explain,

> Music that caters to easy consumption or to a communal sense of togetherness is ideological: it dulls people's awareness of the individual, of difference, and of particularity, creating an all-is-well [...]. Good music resists comfortable consumption and popularity [...] By contrast, inferior music - light music, easy-listening, popular music - actually serves to maim consciousness [41]

The chief pleasures that result from this 'soporific consumption' are imperative to audiences of classically styled, narrative led films. Here, film music aids the process of spectatorial identification with the 'text,' directing a spectator's emotionally-led, empathic engagement with various aspects of the diegetic content: plot, characters, situations, motives, and so on. This process is usually explained with recourse to the theoretical concept of *suture*. The 'sutured' spectator identifies with the (imaginary) sense of emotional wholeness; achieving a psychological state in which the 'lack' constitutive of subjectivity is momentarily dispelled. It could be argued that the 'suturing' of the spectator is considerably less relevant to the spectator's subjective experience of horror films (a subject discussed further in Chapter Three). Indeed, our general experience of the genre is perhaps more accurately described as being one of a '*de*-suturing' phenomenon.

However, a clear understanding of cinematic suture is essential, as it forms the main

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[40] Wayne D. Bowman, *Philosophical Perspectives on Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 305.
[41] *ibid*, p. 305-306.

conceptual locus for understanding the functional *differences* apparent in the horror film's cinematic address of the spectator. Many theories of film music, including Gorbman's, are constructed around positing music as a suturing agency, capable of 'safely-channelled' signification of meaning. As a result, the anti-Hollywood, anti-narrative, and, indeed, anti-*populist* agendas of Antheil, Eisler and Adorno have a renewed significance for our theorisation of horror film music - most notably, their championing of the horror genre's inherently visceral application of modernist music(s) within a populist context. Because of the above theorists' emphasis on film music's autonomous attributes, their theories are indeed applicable without the ideological baggage of their Marxist polemics. As a result, their ideas on film music's form and functionality provide a secure foundation for the reassessment of subsequent trends in film music scholarship that makes up the next section. Eisler's and Adorno's work on Hollywood film music is also taken up in more detail in Chapter Two.

1.2.2 The Imposition of the Narrative Paradigm.

Many of the theoretical investigations that followed Eisler and Adorno's landmark studies - from Manvell & Huntley's *The Technique of Film Music* (1957) to Roy Prendergast's *Film Music: A Neglected Art* (1977) - were, Miller Marks notes,

"compromised by their diffuseness."[42] Prendergast's work, for example, offers "a more detailed and sophisticated analysis than any book earlier published in America. However, its spotlight is turned too unblinkingly upon Hollywood music, and only a small portion of it at that, for the book to achieve its stated goal: 'to illuminate the subject as a whole.'"[43] Miller Marks reveals two important points here: above and beyond the Hollywood-centricity of film music scholarship, there remains the further issue of individual instances *within* the Hollywood system still neglected by the theoretical orthodoxy.

Miller Marks mentions two specific works which for him represent a theoretical maturing of the field: Claudia Gorbman's *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (1987) and the 'Cinema/Sound' issue of *Yale French Studies* (1980) edited by Rick Altman. The aim of the latter, Miller Marks claims, was "to counter the longstanding 'hegemony of the visual,'" within the field of film music studies, and suggest "new directions and possibilities for a more integrated approach to the entire film experience."[44] If Altman's approach displays certain affinities with contemporary approaches to film music (including my own), Gorbman's narrative framework cast an imposing influence over much of the work that followed, becoming the main target for revisionist scholars.

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[42] Martin Miller Marks, 1997, p. 20.
[43] *ibid*, p. 21.
[44] *ibid*, p.23.

Indeed, the very quality that gained Gorbman's narrative paradigm its widespread acceptance happens also to be the reason it remains inapplicable in certain instances, especially the post-classical horror film: that is, its overwhelmingly narrational orientation. Gorbman's conceptual paradigm, Jeff Smith asserts, "bears important links to the various suture and enunciation theories that predominated in the field throughout the seventies and eighties, and it is in this context that this work is best understood."[45]

Noting how "[Gorbman] formulates principles governing the relationship between music and narrative," Miller Marks stresses how, "this compels us to rethink assumptions and contexts, leading us to a point where films can be seen, and their music heard, anew."[46]

Gorbman's conceptual framework posits leitmotifs, tonality, harmonic architectonics, and aural signification, all as agencies of narrative construction and subjective engagement. In this particular context, the culturally-encoded attributes of non-diegetic music act as a suturing device, "aiding the process of turning the enunciation into fiction," Gorbman explains, thus lessening awareness of the "technological nature of film discourse."[47] For her, narrative film music functions as a subliminal, 'unheard' and unconscious textual agency. As Jeff Smith elaborates:

> Because of the primacy of visual elements and narrative [in Gorbman's model] and because of certain psychic processes in the spectator, film music is subordinated to the film's diegesis in a manner which renders it

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[45] Jeff Smith 'Unheard Melodies: A Critique of Psychoanalytical Theories of Film Music' in David Bordwell and Noel Carroll (eds.), *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), pp. 230-247, p. 232.
[46] Martin Miller Marks, p. 24.
[47] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 5.

> inaudible. Though film music serves important narrational and structural functions, it performs these functions "unheard" by the spectator who is to immersed in the film's fiction to attend to the interplay of image and sound, music and narrative [...]. Yet one wonders if such claims to inaudibility are not overstated.[48]

Whether narrative film music is truly 'unheard' or not (a question posed in later chapters), Gorbman's theoretical over-emphasis on language(s) and the register of the 'Symbolic,' remains the major concern for alternative theories of contemporary film music. By arguing that sound functions, "secondarily to the register of language," Gorbman employs a 'classical' psychoanalytical framework to explicate the way in which "the pleasure of music invokes the (auditory) imaginary."[49] Drawing upon the theories of Guy Rosolato and Didier Anzieu to explicate "the role of sound in the development of the subject," Gorbman thus understands the auditory-imaginary "psychoanalytically, as an 'interface of imaginary and symbolic; pulling at once towards the signifying organization of language [...] and toward original and imaginary attachments.'"[50] "The work of cinematic discourse in general," she continues, "is to efface itself in the service of the narrative." Here we must apply the psychoanalytical lesson of Christian Metz: "The fiction film represents both the negation of the signifier [...] and a certain regime of that signifier, a very precise one [...] Hence, what distinguishes fiction films is not the 'absence' of any specific work of the signifier; but its *presence in the mode of denegation.*"[51]

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[48] Jeff Smith, 1996, p. 230.
[49] Claudia Gorbman, 'Why Music? The Sound Film and its Spectator' in Kay Dickenson (ed.), *Movie Music: The Film Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 37-47, p. 45.
[50] *ibid*, p. 45.
[51] By 'denegation' Metz refers to the fact that, in classical Hollywood cinema especially, the cinematic

Concisely summarising the situation, Smith argues that, "film music's abstraction constituted a threat to the classical Hollywood cinema's production of meaning. this threat was diffused by placing music entirely *in the context of a visual narrative*" - my italics.[52] And what Gorbman describes as the "structuralist-semiotic spirit"[53] of her framework implicitly links film music to narrative structure and its systems of representation. Forced to note, however, that "narrative cinema's 'dispositions of representation' fluctuate constantly," Gorbman argues that "the contractual terms setting the ratio between identification and spectacle change according to genre, directional style, and a host of historical conditions."[54]

By her own admission, then, Gorbamn's theory is one based on *extent* - the extent to which the ratio between identification and spectacle imposes itself upon the prevalent cinematic economy of the signifier. In other words, the extent to which the agencies of narration, and its signification of meaning, construct the diegesis (turning enunciation into fiction), is the extent to which Gorbman's suture-directed theory applies. Gorbman stresses, however, that there are areas of mainstream film in which this 'ratio' is

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signifier, "does not work on its own account," but is employed, "entirely to remove the traces of its own steps, to open immediately on the transparency of the signified, of a story, which is in reality manufactured by it but which it pretends merely to 'illustrate.'" Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p.40.

[52] Jeff Smith, 1996, p235.

[53] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p.2.

[54] Claudia Gorbman, in Kay Dickenson (ed.), (2003), p. 46.

subverted, although this does not include proffering a viable alternative theoretical model. As Scott Curtis argues:

> While she [Gorbman] makes it clear that these rules apply only to dramatic feature-length fiction films of the thirties and forties, and that they are by no means invariant, films that would systematically violate those rules (comedies and reflexively modernist films) are labelled 'exceptions that prove the rule.' But exceptions don't 'prove' rules they disprove them.[55]

Curtis points to the music accompanying Warner Brothers cartoons of the early thirties, noting that they challenge the dominant film music model. The example of the horror film also applies here, a genre with its own strong relations to both self-reflexive techniques and comedy. Curtis suggests these 'exceptions' can reveal "how a set of ostensibly marginalized set of texts can stand at the very intersection of economics, technology and art."[56]

Gorbman's approach displays an explicit stylistic preference for a musical dialect composed almost exclusively from the late-romantic musical idiom. Interestingly, Gorbman herself describes how "Herrmann and others may have gone beyond this style by exploring dissonance, harmonic ambiguity, even atonality, and scores using jazz, electronic music [...]. But the core musical lexicon has tended to remain conservatively rooted in Romantic tonality, since its purpose is quick and efficient signification to a

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[55] Scott Curtis 'The Sound of the Early Warner Bros. Cartoons' in Rick Altman (ed.), *Sound Theory Sound Practice* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 191-203, p.191.
[56] *ibid*, p. 191.

mass audience."[57] But exactly what are we to make of instances within mainstream cinema in which narrative and thematic requirements do not exert a monopoly over a film's aesthetic functions? To take Gorbman's own cue, for example, how are we to theoretically comprehend the function of non-diegetic music in Hitchcock's *Psycho*, in which the audio-visual sign's visceral attributes are clearly promoted as the primary element of the film's cinematic affect upon the spectator? In this particular instance, Hitchcock's marshalling of Herrmann's characteristic harmonic and tonal ambiguities (which collapse the architectonic orderings that 'safely-channel the efficient signification' of melody and harmony) challenges the kind of function deemed so essential to Gorbman's framework.[58]

Any functional, or theoretical, model subordinating sound to the image, or cinematic spectacle to narrative, disavows, to a certain degree, the *materialist* properties of film music/sound. So reliant is Gorbman's model on promoting non-diegetic music as a narrational agency of suture that it homogenises the cinematic experience under the overall rubric of classical narrative cinema. In the case of post-classical horror, a framework is required that not only justifies an analysis of film music's autonomous attributes, but interprets them in direct relation to the wider contexts of textual agency and cinematic subjectivity.

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[57] Claudia Gorbman, (1987), p. 4.
[58] In fact, what we increasingly witness in the post-1960 horror film is an incessantly maddening *repetition* of a particular musical phrase, or pattern, often contained within the main theme.

Recent scholarly trends have yet to apply such a framework to horror film music. To my knowledge, this study proposes the first in-depth Žižekian-Lacanian psychoanalytical reading of horror film music. However, other recent approaches display affinities with this particular psychoanalytical approach. In their individual ways, both Kevin J. Donnelly and Philip Brophy advise a distancing from the semiotic stranglehold of the narrative paradigm, in instances where this may be required. Consequently, their work has proven influential in the construction of my own theoretical approach. The next section attends to some of these contemporary trends, discussing the relevance of the work of these critics to my own interpretation of post-classical horror film music.

1.2.3 Contemporary Trends in Film Music Scholarship

If there is a fundamental premise linking contemporary scholarly approaches to film music, then it is this intention of critics and theorists to free themselves from the constrictions of the narrative paradigm *as and when required.* Gorbman's model is simply not encompassing enough to deal with the heterogenic multiplicity of the many individual applications of film music found within post-classical cinema. If there is arguably one element characterising the functional efficacy of post-modern, or post-classical, film music across a number of cinematic genres, then it is not linked to narrative; rather, it lies with the potential of the audio-visual signifier to render the visceral affectivity of semiotic excess.

Perhaps the earliest sign of a methodological and theoretical distancing from the narrative model (other than Eisler's impressively prescient challenge to classical film music) pre-dates the publication of *Unheard Melodies*, appearing in Rick Altman's 'Cinema/Sound' edition of *Yale French Studies*, published in 1980. However, the publication of *Sound Theory/Sound Practice* in 1992 finally consolidated Altman's theoretical position. In fact, Altman's general position seems particularly well-provisioned for explicating the various functions of contemporary film music. In his introduction to the above work, 'Cinema as Event,' Altman outlines his general proposal for a move away from what he describes as the 'text-oriented era' of film studies which prevailed in the eighties. He notes:

> In retrospect the cost of Cinema/Sound's text-based strategies becomes clear. Though the volume was conceived as a rehabilitation of the sound track, in all its diversity, Cinema/Sound actually stresses only a very narrow range of sound-oriented concerns. The sounds of silent films are hardly mentioned; sound technology is almost entirely neglected; no attention is paid to non-narrative, non-feature, or non-western films. More important still, sound itself is most often treated as if it were an ideal conveyor of linguistic or musical information.[59]

Similar to the interdisciplinary approach this study proposes, Altman suggests a methodology that extends "the range of critical discourse appropriate to film studies, while offering a new coherence among the various types of scholarship currently devoted

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[59] Rick Altman, 'General Introduction: Cinema as Event' in Rick Altman (ed.), *Sound Theory/Sound Practice* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-14, p. 1.

to cinema."[60] He notes further that, "in opposition to the notion of film as text," it is helpful to "conceive of cinema as event. Viewed as a macro-event [...] cinema is conveniently characterized by an even dozen attributes: multiplicity, three-dimensionality, materiality, heterogeneity, intersection, performance, multi-discursivity, instability, mediation, choice, diffusion, and interchange."[61]

The relevance of each of these attributes varies in relation to questions of genre, historical era and a whole host of institutional, aesthetic, and other intellectual conditions. But Altman's professed interest in *all* dimensions of film sound/music provides scholars with a basic theoretical and methodological framework for dealing with *the* heterogeneity of the contemporary cinematic soundtrack. Therein lies the importance of Altman's approach, it enlightens us to the true scope of the stylistic evolutions within film music, thus engendering a methodological shift away from classical conceptions of 'textual analyses,' by situating the spectator more generally in terms of their phenomenological experience. Most importantly, for the study of the horror soundtrack, Altman's conceptualisation of 'cinema as event,' he explains, means "cinema reveals rather than dissimulates its material existence [...] cinema must be considered in terms of the material resources that it engages."[62]

Rather than explicating the intricacies of the suture process - whereby cinematic

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[60] *ibid*, p. 2.
[61] *ibid*, p. 4.
[62] *ibid*, p. 6.

enunciation is turned into fiction (*à la* Gorbman's model) - Altman's 'materialist' methodology provides us with a conceptual framework for understanding this 'de-suturing' process: the promotion of enunciation *itself* within horror film's semiotic excesses. Moreover, this materialist procedure is easily adapted to Slavoj Žižek's late-Lacanian psychoanalytical framework, the overall framework used by this study (discussed in detail in Section 1.3). This particular psychoanalytical approach looks beyond the dominance of the largely literary contexts and paradigms that have characterised theoretical frameworks up to this point. As Altman himself explains,

> The publishing history of literature and music offers little encouragement in this direction (since their medium has usually been judged, wrongly, not to be material) [...]. When critics read the film text ideally, as music scholars read the musical score or literary scholars regularly interpret the text, they break all ties with the text's material conditions of existence.[63]

Recently, a small group of film music scholars have emerged who, *pace* Altman, have began to challenge dominant, narrative-centred, semiotic theorisations of film music. Interestingly, these writers also display a keen interest in horror film music. Kevin J. Donnelly, for example, seems particularly interested in the functioning of horror film music, focusing on moments in film "when the music rises up and shows itself to be a remarkable agent of power."[64] In a chapter entitled, 'The Demon of Film Music,' Donnelly likens the textual agency of most film music to a spectral presence that 'possesses' the spectator, something "irrational and unaccountable in the seemingly

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[63] *ibid*, p. 5-6.
[64] Kevin J. Donnelly, *The Spectre of Sound: Music in Film and Television*, (London: BFI Publishing, 2005, p. 20

rational world of mainstream film."[65] He continues:

> This possession is like a demonic force that is seemingly inexplicable, irrational and cannot be easily recuperated by the logic of the film itself. Film music's relationship with film is parasitic, yet it is also symbiotic. It enhances films, yet at times obliterates their regular proceedings and dominates proceedings. At its most potent, it can manifest a demon of film music as bursts of pure affect – not simply film music as the polite clarification of screen activity that some scholars have theorised.[66]

Horror film surely offers the exemplary case of film music as bursts of 'pure affect,' wherein music as an irrational demon - rising and 'attacking' the spectator - performs a central functional role. This visceral attack strikes at a primal, intrinsically corporeal, level, working through the dimensions of the cinematic sign that seemingly touch us physically. But what is the real nature of this exchange? And what particular formal attributes might be useful to such an attack? More importantly, what overall *psychological* role can we ascribe to this ostensibly physiological affect, and how can it be linked to the notion of an extra-linguistic semiotic excess?

During the early silent period, it was claimed that accompanying music helped the spectator overcome the 'ghostly' effects of the film image. In certain cases, Donnelly remarks, "the reverse may well be the case: that film music in sound cinema furnishes a spectral dimension for films."[67] However, we must not mistake our experience, or encounter, with this spectral dimension as something incorporeal. Rather, it is an

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[65] *ibid*, p. 23.
[66] *ibid*, p. 23.
[67] *ibid*, p.23.

intensely visceral, *kinaesthetic* experience of certain cinematic affects. And, as if to highlight this basic opposition to Gorbman's suturing (film music) model. Donnelly states this affect is most potent when contrasted with, "film as, or understood as, an illusionistic representation of the world."[68] Donnelly's overall approach, then, also questions the received wisdom of previous film music scholarship. His theoretical intentions display a distinct affinity with my own, as they seek to de-emphasise the narrative paradigm (and its attendant notions of suture), suggesting that a truer understanding of horror film music must be interpreted, first and foremost, *beyond representation.*

Parallel developments in cinematic technology have also played a role in establishing horror cinema's sense of spectacle and excess. For example, stereophonic sound, "through its identification with the genres of spectacle," John Belton has argued, "became associated for audiences not so much with greater realism as with greater artifice."[69] The approach of this study thus reinvests a number of technological developments with renewed theoretical import, discussing their impact on the sensory qualities of the post-1960 horror film. Indeed, sonic theorist, Michel Chion, describes horror cinema (and its near-cousin the science fiction film) as a "privileged proving ground for such sensory experiments."[70] Chion adds:

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[68] *ibid*, p.23.
[69] John Belton, '1950s Magnetic Sound: The Frozen Revolution' in Rick Altman (ed.), *Sound Theory Sound Practice* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.154-170, p.158.
[70] Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), trans. by Claudia Gorbman, p.154.

> This pursuit of sensations (of weight, speed, resistance, matter and texture) may well be one of the most novel and strongest aspects of current cinema. To the detriment, as some object, of delicacy of feeling, intelligence of screenwriting, or narrative rigour? Probably. But didn't the much-admired films of the old days, for their part, achieve their emotional force and dramatic purity at the expense of something else - of 'sensation' for example, when in reproducing noises they gave us an inferior and stereotyped sensuality.[71]

My methodological approach seeks to use the overall context of a psychoanalytical framework to discusses the distinct relationship between horror's central technique of semantic excess, its ongoing appropriation of experimental musical styles, and the relationship of each to the aural and visual technologies of the period. As Belton explains, "the attention of the audience was drawn to the novelty of the apparatus itself [...]. The new technology was understood, it would seem, as a kind of *excess*, packaged, in turn, as *spectacle*" - my italics.[72] Some elements of Michel Chion's work are particularly important in thinking about the changing ratio of identification to spectacle. Like Altman, Chion suggests a shift of emphasis towards different aspects of film sound/music than those engaged with by Gorbman et al. For example, linking Chion's work with technological developments that evolve cinema towards an increasingly sensory experience involves the application of 'pure' sound - that is, aural signs functioning beyond language and beyond representation. "The sound of noises," Chion exclaims, were "for a long time relegated to the back ground."[73] Of late, however, Chion notes how these sounds have,

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[71] *ibid*, p. 154-155.
[72] John Belton in Rick Altman (ed.), 1992, p.160.
[73] Chion, (1994), p.155-156

> Benefited from the recent improvements in definition brought by Dolby. Noises are reintroducing an acute feeling of the materiality of things and beings, and they herald a sensory cinema that rejoins a basic tendency of...the silent cinema [...]. The earliest stage of sound film led to the privileging of pre-coded sound elements, that is, language and music - at the expense of the sounds that were pure indices of reality and materiality, that is, noises.'[74]

One particular area of interest for this thesis is the study of the functionality of atonal music, since it functions on the level of pure sound, disorienting and destabilising the spectator also by blurring the boundary between diegetic and non-diegetic sound. However, my focus on atonality is one component of a more comprehensive formal analysis that takes in rhythms, time signatures, instrumental timbre, and dynamics in volume and pitch, all of which function in tandem in the post-classical horror film.

Another important commentator on film sound/music emerging in recent years is the film-sound theorist, Philip Brophy. Like Donnelly, Brophy has been instrumental in challenging the theoretical dominance of Gorbman's narrative paradigm. In addition, Brophy's work is concerned with the importance that 'spectacle' increasingly asserts within contemporary cinema. If there is a recurring theme in his work, it is the need to theorise a film's aural functioning within *non*-narrative contexts (as well as narrative ones). Brophy's basic methodology, then, asserts the importance of capturing or comprehending the audio-visual experience of cinema in all its multi-sensorial, multi-dimensional power. Brophy's summary description of the numerous dimensions of sound

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[74] *ibid*, p.155-156.

and music in the cinema alerts us to how many crucial elements had been previously neglected. "Sound in the cinema," he notes,

> Is visceral, abstract, poetic, material, spatial, psychological, temporal, narrational [...]. It is more expansive than literate imagination allows; and it engulfs us in its audio-visuality [...]. Nowhere near enough has been said about sound and music in the cinema. Scarce utterance has been made of the weight of music, the character of voice, the smell of atmospheres, the presence of effects.

Like Kaplan and Altman before him, Brophy describes the need "to move away from many well-applied literary and visual frameworks through which the cinema has been perceived," explaining that we should treat film primarily as a "spatio-temporal event [...]. Fundamentally, this requires a different mode of writing whose 'flow' is more important in its capture, replay and rendering of a film's momentum, than it is in summarising, reducing or even encapsulating a film's signifying skeleton."[75] Although this study does not attempt to ape this mode of writing, it *is* concerned with the kinaesthetic dynamics of the horror film's cinematic strategies, and assesses the particular ability of experimental musical styles to render an experience of physical momentum via spatiotemporal dislocation.

In concluding this section, it is obvious that horror film displays a very individual deployment of cinema's aural resources, both in terms of the kinds of music it appropriates, and the criteria that guides music's incorporation into wider audio-visual strategies. This alternative functional hierarchy *should* direct a scholarly approach to

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[75] Philip Brophy, *100 Modern Soundtracks* (London: BFI Publishing, 2004), p. 3.

horror film music. Given the restrictive context-specific foundation of the narrative paradigm, the horror film's appropriation of experimental musical forms reveals numerous alternative criteria for the conjunction of sound and image. Therefore, a theoretical comprehension of this type of aesthetic strategy involves challenging some deep-seated theoretical presumptions.

Despite differences in their approaches, then, the various scholars discussed in this section share a common aim: comprehending the *full* functional range of film music across a number of generic and historical applications. However, in extending the range of critical discourses, the discipline of film music studies needs to engage with other intellectual disciplines outside the field. The following section discusses these areas of intellectual relevance and how they figure in this study.

1.3. Other Intellectual Disciplines

This final section assesses developments in the wider intellectual disciplines engaged with throughout by this study. Such an assessment is structured upon an underlying interest as to how certain theoretical and interpretative frameworks in each of these disciplines can enrich a theoretical understanding of horror film music and, more specifically, its use of experimental music(s). The three main intellectual areas most relevant to my own intentions are (in no particular order): scholarly approaches to the

horror film; psychoanalytic theories of film and music; and some general theories relating to the inception of a post-classical/post-modernist era in popular cinema.

One debate currently preoccupying scholars of the horror film centres upon the seemingly paradoxical nature of the 'pleasure' and/or 'enjoyment' experienced by spectators of the genre. As Mat Hills explains, "different theories of horror adopt different perspectives on the pleasures of the genre. Audience pleasures are constructed in line with specific theoretical presuppositions, and are then projected on horror's 'ideal' readers and viewers."[76] Hills problematizes the *a priori* basis of frameworks - including psychoanalysis - that define the pleasures of horror film "to fit into their grounding assumptions, adding that "one hopes vainly for a psychoanalytical study of horror that concludes that the concept of the 'unconscious' is called into question, modified, or problematized by horror texts."[77] One particular way of modifying our understanding of such a crucial psychoanalytical idea is to draw upon the essential differences the discipline asserts between 'pleasure' and 'enjoyment.'

Firstly, however, we should recognize the ostensibly paradoxical nature of *any* positive reaction to the events typically portrayed in horror films. This type of pleasure, or enjoyment, is drawn, for the most part, from cinematic 'events' that would not be considered enjoyable at all were they experienced outside the fictional domain of cinema. In fact, most cultural entertainment and/or art forms manipulate this inherent

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[76] Mat Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror* (London: Continuum, 2005), p.13.
[77] *ibid*, p. 2.

paradox of fiction itself to varying extents, demonstrating how such fictions elicit undeniably real physiological responses, and what are seemingly real emotional responses too. The paradoxical nature of this 'enjoyment,' however, seems more essential to the horror film experience, encapsulating, as it does, the underlying antagonisms and ambivalences that drive a spectator's engagement with, and perverse enjoyment of, contemporary horror cinema.

Raymond Durgnat, for example, writes of the famous shower murder in *Psycho* (discussed further in Chapter Three): "it is too erotic not to enjoy, but too grisly too enjoy; its ferocity and pornography are opposed. They force on the spectator a rapid, hysteric oscillation between outraged shock and enjoyment."[78] Interestingly, Durgnat goes on to discuss the techniques used in this film, stressing how they differ from orthodox, legitimatised aesthetic standards and techniques of the classical cinema. He believes a film like *Psycho* deploys,

> Aesthetic idioms which by 'academic' standards are 'illegitimate.' None has much value as 'drama.' They are more interested in the frivolous, the supernatural, the brutal. Instead of giving us familiar points to cling to, they evoke and explore the 'zone' of indeterminate, elusive feelings between common sense and the erotic wish [...]. They touch on what Nietzsche called the Dionysiac spirit."[79]

Royal S. Brown interprets elements of musical experimentalism and notions of 'the

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[78] Raymond Durgnat 'The Subconscious: From Pleasure Castle to Libido Motel' in Alain Silver and James Ursine (eds.), *Horror Film Reader* (New York: Limelight Editions, 2000), p. 44. Originally published, 1962.
[79] *ibid*, p. 49.

Dionysian' in relation to Hitchcock's *Psycho*. Discussed further in Chapter Three. Nietzsche remarks that "Dionysian art is difficult to grasp, and there is only one way to make it intelligible and grasp it immediately: through the wonderful significance of musical dissonance [...]. The Dionysian, with its primordial joy experienced even in pain, is the common source of music and tragic myth."[80] As Brown adds,

> Herrmann's music [...] subverts some of the rationalisation inherent in the active expectation created by tonality. The manifestations of the 'irrational' as such, with all its cyclisms, repetitions, and ambiguities are, I feel, at the core of what Nietzsche means by 'Dionysian tragedy' [...]. Herrmann gives the last word to madness [...]. The bitonal chord that follows the madness motif and closes the film fortifies the irrational.[81]

There are two questions here concerning this study. Firstly, how does the utilisation of experimental music(s) in horror film render - in tandem with the image - some sense of this fundamental irrationality, in ways that challenge the accepted functional model of film-musical cinematic practice? And secondly, what are the consequences of this for understanding this 'enjoyment,' and the construction of subjectivity in the post-classical cinema?

Returning to the distinctions posed between notions of 'pleasure' and 'enjoyment,' Richard Middleton draws upon Roland Barthes' distinction between *plaisir* and *jouissance*. Middleton stresses how pleasure is to be "associated with the smooth

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[80] Nietzsche quoted in Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (Berkeley (CA): University of California Press, 1994), p. 33.
[81] Royal S. Brown, 1994, p. 36.

movement between signifier and signified, subject and object, and acts to confirm the system of cultural conventions [...]. *Plaisir* results, then, from the operation of the structures of signification through which the subject knows himself or herself; *jouissance* fractures those structures."[82] My overall thesis originates from an understanding of this specific kind of enjoyment - defined in Lacanian terms as *jouissance*[83] - and how this concept facilitates further explanation of the evolving syntactical attributes of post-classical, post-1960 horror cinema. In particular, this psychoanalytical concept aids clarification of the complex web of relations posed between formal attributes and the spectator's subjective investment in the cinematic experience as a whole. More pointedly, the late-Lacanian approach proposed here provides us with a hermeneutic framework through which we can comprehend the special affinity of experimental musical resources in this instance.

It would seem that questions concerning the relationship between aspects of the cinematic syntax (the formal dimensions of cinema) and the spectator's subjective investment in the cinematic experience have remained unanswered. Since the post-classical horror film is premised on a rather obvious, even vulgar, promotion of cinematic form over narrative or thematic resonance, any theoretical approach that asserts some relationship between form and subjective experience potentially sheds much-needed light on the *relative* functioning of the main syntactical elements of the

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[82] Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990), p. 261.
[83] Slavoj Žižek alerts us to the particular French definition of *jouissance*: "Although jouissance can be translated as 'enjoyment', translators often leave it in French in order to render palpable its excessive, properly traumatic character: we are not dealing with simple pleasure but with a violent intrusion that brings more pain than pleasure." Slavoj Žižek, *How to Read Lacan* (London: Granta Books, 2006), p. 79.

cinematic experience - sound and image.

This thesis applies such an approach in order to substantiate relations between the spectator's physiological and psychological responses and the formal devices used to engender them. But how do these scholarly intentions sit in relation to the existing schools of thought in horror film scholarship? Of late, the significant body of work dealing with horror cinema has displayed a distinct theoretical distancing between two major schools of thought. Mat Hills notes how this division separates the cognitivist theories of horror, expounded by critics such as Noel Carroll et al., from the critics dealing specifically with psychological notions of 'affect,' such as Philip Brophy, and/or psychoanalytic theorists, such as Steven J. Schneider.[84]

One major theory pertaining to the essential 'paradox' of horror fictions (and the pleasures thereof) is expounded by Noel Carroll, who constructs an overall philosophy of the genre through a 'cognitive-evaluative' framework.[85] Dealt with in more depth in the next chapter, the main concern arising from Carroll's theoretical stance involves his unwillingness to engage with horror film's aesthetic immediacy, or the specific enjoyment taken in a film's affective properties. Nor does Carroll consider the specific formal traits of the genre's characteristic rendering of aesthetic immediacy. However, questions relating to the spectator's subjective, and inherently libidinal, investment in his

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[84] Hills describes 'affects' as "feelings that are not aimed at, or experienced in relation to, a readily identifiable object." See Mat Hills, 2005, p.15.

[85] For a fuller description of Carroll's philosophy of horror, see Noel Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart* (London: Routledge, 1990).

or her *visceral* experience of shock and/or trauma - surely important aspects of any horror film experience - go largely unanswered, both in horror studies in general. and in Carroll's work in particular.

In a similar way to Claudia Gorbman's theory of film music, then, Carroll's general thesis is primarily interested in the *symbolic* potential of sounds/images to *represent meaning*, since he suggests that "the pleasure derived from horror fiction [...] resides, first and foremost, in the processes of discovery, proof, and confirmation that horror fictions often employ."[86] Forced to admit, however, that a significant portion of horror fictions, including films, are primarily *non*-narrative in their construction, Carroll supports his main line of argument with a secondary claim: that these "non-narrative examples of art-horror [...] attract their audiences insofar as the objects of art-horror *promote fascination at the same time as they promote distress*" - my italics.[87] For Carroll, theses 'objects' subvert our conceptual schema, provoking active questioning on the spectator's behalf through the staging of these dramas of discovery, proof and confirmation.

Psychoanalytical approaches to horror films differ considerably from Carroll's 'post-theorist' position. "Since the late seventies," Steven Jay Schneider claims, "there has been a tremendous diversity of psychoanalytic approaches to the horror film, as well as

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[86] Noel Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 184
[87] *ibid.*, p. 189-90.

substantive disagreements between the advocates of these varying approaches."[88] More specifically, Schneider argues, "the heterogeneity of conceptual and methodological backgrounds suggests that what we have here is more than just a genre-specific case of cognitive/historicist 'Post-Theory' [...] attacking what its advocates hold to be the 'ethereal speculations' of a 'Grand' psychoanalytic theory."[89]

The main consequence of Carroll's cognitive-evaluative approach, for a scholarly investigation of horror film music, involves his refusal to engage with what Hills describes as the genre's 'affective discourses,' or consider how such discourses relate to the spectator's subsequent pleasure and/or enjoyment. Affective discourses, Hills suggests, "do not concern themselves with mediating or discursively constructing 'pleasure,' and instead are subjective (but also cultural) moments where *extra-discursive* affects can be posited as powerfully permeating discourse."[90]

Psychoanalytical frameworks are sometimes applied in order to explicate *extra-*discursive affects. Typically, this includes discussions of the troublesome notion of semiotic excess, the paradoxical response to objects of 'art-horror' (to use Carroll's proper terminology),[91] along with the fundamentally ambivalent responses of fascination/distress, pleasure/enjoyment, and desire/drive that such objects provoke.

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[88] Steven J. Schneider, 'Introduction: Psychoanalysis in and of the Horror Film' (July, 2001) @ www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/15/ horror psych.html (Date of Entry: 17/09/2006).
[89] *ibid.*
[90] Mat Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror* (London: Continuum, 2005.), p. 7.
[91] 'Art-horror' is a term applied in general by Carroll to differentiate between 'fictional' horror and 'real' horror.

Perhaps the most widely-applied psychoanalytical notion utilised in scholarly interpretations of horror film, however, involves what Schneider describes as "the psychological explanation of the symbolic/mythic import of monsters."[92]

Robin Wood's widely acknowledged essay, 'The Return of the Repressed,' uses this approach, emphasising the metaphorical potential of monsters for symbolising 'the Other.'[93] Here, 'the Other' is defined as being external to an individual's psychosocial make-up, but it also symbolises repressed aspects of our own inner psychic selves. Consequently, the *symbolic* potential of film music - bound up in melody, harmonic context, and the metaphorical connotations of instrumental timbre - is considered the most important aspect for this particular representation of monsters, not the non-symbolised, excess-in-the-signifier emphasised in the formal strategies of the post-classical horror film.

Such a symbolic dissemination of the figure of the monster - as a metaphor for 'alien-ness' (be it external *or* internal) - was the defining characteristic of the late-forties and early-fifties 'classical' horror film. Despite some undeniably experimental traits,[94] the musical scores of this period were also sequestered into serving these narrative-led, *representational* functions. Throughout this period, the so-called 'creature-feature'

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[92] Steven J. Schneider, 'Introduction: Psychoanalysis in and of the Horror Film' (July, 2001) @ www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/15/ horror psych.html (Date of Entry: 17/09/2006).
[93] Robin Wood, 'The Return of the Repressed' in *Film Comment*, n. 14, pp. 25-32.
[94] Hans J. Salter, for example, composed some quite experimental scores for a number of 1940s and 50s horror movies, including *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*. Although something of a horror specialist, Salter's career took in a number of popular Hollywood genres.

horror/science-fiction hybrids - such as *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1956) and *Invasion of the Bodysnatchers* (1956) - were, according to Wood, engaged in a kind of socio-cultural commentary. In this context, non-diegetic music supports a classical, 'added-value' functional role, aiding the safely-channelled signification of the visual signifier and vice-versa.

Schneider's own theoretical ideas regarding 'the Uncanny' differ from Wood's theoretical interpretation of 'repressed materials' in a number of ways. Specifically, Schneider utilises Freud's *second* category of the Uncanny, the reconfirmation of surmounted beliefs, instead of the first category (as in Wood's use of repression). Although a detailed description of Schneider's approach lies beyond the scope of this study, his approach does not, Hills explains, "require us to accept that horror's attraction relates to, or calls upon, unconscious processes."[95] Schneider's approach *is* useful, however, in that it "allows us to account for why it is that the same 'monster' (e.g. Dracula) may be frightening when represented through certain aesthetic devices [...] but not at all frightening in old horror films, or if represented by different aesthetic techniques."[96] Although both Schneider and Hill draw different conclusions from this kind of aesthetic essentialism, their work reminds us that the one crucial factor for an understanding of the horror genre (and the spectator's enjoyment of it) lies with the *aesthetic rendering* of horrific 'objects.'

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[95] Hills, 2005, p. 55.
[96] *ibid.*, p. 54.

Other scholars of horror cinema, including Carol J. Clover and Isabel Pinedo, have focused their discussion of the genre's paradoxical pleasures upon issues of gender. Clover for example, has discussed the troublesome idea of identification processes as they form around an idealised 'male gaze,'[97] whilst Pinedo discusses the distinctly post-modern valence of the contemporary horror film and its 'recreational terrors.'[98] More relevantly, Barbara Creed draws on Julie Kristeva (who in turn draws on Lacan), turning her attention to notions of 'the abject.' Creed's work holds a certain relevance for the study of horror film music, since it acknowledges the manner in which horrific objects are rendered cinematically?[99] Additionally, theoretical notions regarding abjection possess an affinity with Kristeva's ideas of the 'semiotic' and the Lacanian Real. Following on from Kristeva and Creed, some contemporary, post-Freudian, psychoanalytical approaches have emphasised the corporeality and physicality of 'the body' (as the site of intense violence and sexual energy). Linda Badley, for example, suggests that,

> Gothic fantasy provided an iconography, a process, and a mystique for the popular understanding of psychoanalysis [...]. Freud in his turn demonstrated the significance of fantasy [...]. Today, as the ego is challenged and altered, a comparable shift has occurred from the Freudian psyche to the post-Freudian body fantastic, the product of a materialist, post-literate, electronic, image-based culture.[100]

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[97] See Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women & Chainsaws* (London: BFI Publishing, 1992).
[98] See Isabel Pinedo, *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing* (New York: State University of New York, 1997).
[99] See Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1993).
[100] Linda Badley, *Film, Horror, and the Body Fantastic* (Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1995), p. 21.

What none of these studies contain, however, is a *direct* engagement with the formal renderings of 'cinematic horror.' In his insightful article, 'Toward an Aesthetics of Cinematic Horror' - tellingly subtitled, 'Avoiding the Issue' - Steven Jay Schneider argues that,

> There is no dearth of scholarship on cinematic horror [...]. Interestingly, however, and not a little surprisingly (what with all the ink that has been spilled studying the genre), extended investigations into what might be called the "aesthetics of horror cinema" [...] have been few and far between to date. The focus instead has been primarily, almost exclusively, on such questions as where the boundaries of the genre (and/or various of its sub-genres) can and should be drawn; on what monsters "mean" from a certain social or cultural point of view; and on how particular horror films operate so as to implicate viewers of either or both sexes in one or another ideological stance'[101]

More so than any other popular film genre horror is reliant on aesthetic *affect*. Furthermore, the cinematic utilisation of sound (and image) in the horror genre is constructed upon two central generic provisos: the achieving of some kind of 'shock-affect,' through the rendering of visceral, materialist impact, and the maintaining of psychological and physiological tension. Schneider's article, however, does not acknowledge any *direct* correlation between the purely formal attributes of the horror genre and the spectator's subjective investment in it.

The question of musical, or sonic, affect becomes crucial, then, in formulating a contemporary scholarly approach to this particular generic category of film music. As

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[101] Steven Jay Schneider, 'Towards an Aesthetics of Cinematic Horror: Avoiding The Issue' in Stephen Prince (ed.) *The Horror Film* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004), pp. 131-149, p. 131.

noted earlier, the difficulty lies in comprehending such extra-discursive affects – the visceral, materialist experience of sounds, for example – whilst still interpreting them within a cogent theoretical account of cinematic subjectivity and textual agency. Therefore, this reassessment of the intellectual disciplines this study engages with develops from the same initial premise: that is, a *non*-cognitive approach to the horror genre is more immediately relevant to the theoretical intentions of this project. Thus, there is the subsequent need for a specific psychoanalytical paradigm that explicates some sense of this subjectivised enjoyment, and the relationship of this 'excess-in-the-signifier' to the formal (syntactical) evolutions of the post-classical horror film, as well as the particular role played by the genre's appropriation of experimental musical resources.

Essentially, this thesis argues that Slavoj Žižek's late-Lacanian psychoanalytical framework provides us with a comprehensive theoretical figuration of this type of cinematic experience. With its concentration on the psychic register of the Real,[102] this approach draws the purely formal attributes of horror's sounds and images (and the traumatic affects they create) into a newly-reconfigured model of spectator positioning and cinematic subjectivity. This section now goes on to explain how the major components of Žižek's framework can be differentiated from previous psychoanalytical approaches, and why these differences are particularly important in the context of

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[102] Perhaps Lacan's biggest contribution to the field of psychoanalysis was his figuration of the three interrelated registers, or levels, of our psyche: Symbolic, Imaginary and Real. In the later phases of his teachings, Lacan began to focus on the paradoxical status of the Real, which is basically defined as 'that which resists symbolisation.' It is this later phase of Lacan's work that interests Žižek (and myself) most.

understanding the contemporary horror soundtrack.

Film music and psychoanalysis have a rather convoluted history, and navigating the numerous currents of contemporary psychoanalytical theory can be particularly difficult, as the application of psychoanalytical concepts to music and to film have not always shared similar theoretical aims and/or intentions. In the context of this study, there exists the need for a trade-off between purely formalist approaches (for example, the musicological approach), and a meaning-driven, semantic interpretation of film music. This is fundamental to debates concerning the application of psychoanalytic concepts to film music and particularly important in the case of horror film music, with its experimental musical characteristics and its promotion of semiotic excess.

Claudia Gorbman's model, discussed earlier, describes how the classically-styled, Hollywood film links sound to the pre-Oedipal, pre-linguistic condition of plenitude. Here, narrative film utilises *all* aspects of the soundtrack, particularly the dimension of dialogue, to 'suture up' the spectator into an illusory semblance of wholeness, momentarily dispelling the very lack that constitutes the subject's entry into symbolically-construed 'reality.' Gorbman draws deeply on the work of Guy Rosolato[103] and Mary Ann Doane,[104] two scholars that emerged from the Metz-ian tradition which lays bare the ideologically-directed processes of cinematic suture.

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[103] See Guy Rosaloto, '*La Voix: Entre corps et langage*' in *Revue Francais de psychanalyse* 38, no. 1, (Jan, 1974), pp. 75-94.

[104] See Mary Anne Doane, 'The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space' in Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (eds.), *Film Sound: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, pp.162-176).

In the context of the post-1960 'visceral' horror film, then, the function of sound and image is *not* the suturing of the spectator through identification with the auditory-imaginary (*a la* Gorbman), but the traumatic *decentring* of the spectator - a coming to terms, and even identification, with the 'lack' constitutive of desire. Comprehending this, *psychoanalytically*, requires a kind of hermeneutic shift. Specifically, this involves deemphasising the Imaginary-Symbolic axis (the locus of Gorbman's musical suture process) and emphasising the uncanny tension between the Symbolic and Real. In this instance, what counts is not the signification of tonal music(s), but what might be termed the 'failed' signification of this excess dimension. The main consequence is that this hermeneutic shift in emphasis responds to a very literal shift within the *prevalent* economy of the cinematic sign towards an overall materialist affect. As Caryl Flinn succinctly remarks, "current theoretical trends largely champion the non-representational, abstract capacity of music that the classical tradition tried to efface."[105]

The problem for an explication of film music's more abstract attributes mirrors the problem Kaplan warns of in more general terms: the *appropriateness* of a classical Lacanian, or, indeed, any framework, for the cultural context in which it was to be originally applied (see page 16). The classical Lacanian model (appropriated by the suture theorists writing during the 1970s and 1980s) is less relevant to the consideration of the visceral, materialist properties of film music - that is, the dimension of the audio-

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[105] Caryl Flinn, *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 50.

visual signifier theorised in *excess* of the function of 'efficient signification.'

Furthermore, Flinn argues,

> The auditory realm is a crucial shaping force in early subjectivity. Lacan, who has been widely read for his work on vision and the image in the formation of the subject, includes the desire to hear as one of subjectivity's four main sexual drives, although he never really directly explores how sounds, music, and rhythm might function as *objects petit a*, objects fetishised for the plenitude they represent for the subject - my italics.[106]

The inherent bias of the 'classical' Lacanian approach becomes a major component in the formation of Gorbman's own theory of 'narrative film music.' However, as Flinn explains, "since the demise of the studio era the paradigm has shifted somewhat and the critical desire for unity has been replaced by an overriding interest in fragmentation."[107] This critical assertion is at the centre of this study of experimental music and the post-1960 horror film.

This study reveals the need for an updated psychoanalytical approach to cinema in general, and horror film music in particular. Accordingly, this study investigates how sounds, music, and rhythms function as *objects petit a*. What seems to be missing from the classical Lacan's 'literary-structuralist' approach is a lack of emphasis on the register of the Real - that is, on the dimension of the signifier that resists symbolisation. This dimension lies outside the ordering matrices of signification, and gives a materiality to some traumatic, extra-linguistic *excess*. As Edmond Wright and Elisabeth Wright opine,

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[106] *ibid*, p. 53.
[107] *ibid*, p. 51.

"Žižek looks to the Lacanian Real to account for the failure of language in its attempts at reference [...]. At its simplest it is that which we most ardently desire [...] what is unconsciously believed will fill the void at the core of being."[108] In other words - the *object petit a.* As Wright and Wright continue,

> The ubiquity of the Real is what the later Lacan takes account of, in contrast to his earlier concentration on the signifier. He thus moves from the notion that *jouissance* is prohibited in language to that of the letter as permeated with enjoyment, the Real as active in every utterance. In the cinema, such perversion of the sign has been designated as *rendu* (Michel Chion), a way of representing reality distinct from the Imaginary and the Symbolic modes, typically through the soundtrack.[109]

Žižek provides some examples to explain the nature of *rendu* as a fragment of the signifier (aural or visual) opposed to the registers of the Imaginary and Symbolic, and connected implicitly with the register of the Real. He describes how "the fact that the Real thus rendered is what Freud called 'psychic reality' is demonstrated in the mysterious beauty of scenes in David Lynch's *The Elephant Man* which present the Elephant Man's subjective experience 'from the inside.'"[110] Although not a horror film per se, there are definite elements of 'horror' present in Lynch's *The Elephant Man* (1980). In particular, the rendering of John Merrick's dream - an abstract, highly formalised sequence - offers us an apposite example of how these seemingly autonomous, trans-sensorial dimensions of cinematic form fuse together to create an

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[108] Edmond and Elisabeth Wright (eds.), *The Žižek Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 3.
[109] *ibid*, p. 13.
[110] Žižek in Wright & Wright, 1999, p. 35. Indeed, there is an intriguing similarity between Žižek's interpretation of this scene from *The Elephant Man* and Peter Franklin's reading of the music that underscores the approach to the island in *King Kong* - see Chapter Two.

uncanny feeling through a rendering of the Lacanian Real. Moreover, it would seem sound has a particular function in this respect. "The noise of 'the real world,'" Žižek informs us, "is suspended or moved to the background; all we hear is a rhythmic beat of uncertain origin and status [...]. Here we have *rendu* at its purest, a pulse which does not imitate or symbolise anything, but which seizes us directly, 'renders' the thing without mediation."[111]

The quotations around the 'real world' are telling, as what is being described here is the dimension of *symbolically-construed* reality. This is linked explicitly to the domain of the Symbolic by Žižek. Interestingly, John Shepherd and Peter Wicke have noted that "Music, by definition, cannot aspire to the condition of the symbolic order, at least in so far as it remains unmediated by language in its position of privilege."[112] Regardless of whether or not music can be considered a symbolic mode of language proper, within the post-modern, cinema-of-attractions there does exist a clear signifying, representational function. However, this function moves to the background as it were, it is demoted hierarchically within the cinematic economy of the audio-visual sign. Accordingly, a *rendering* of the Real, the obverse 'underside' of the sign, is *promoted*, prevailing over the cinematic economies of the audio-visual sign. Žižek's late-Lacanian approach provides the structural framework for psychoanalytical interpretations of the *subjective* relations governing the spectator's experience and 'enjoyment' of this semiotic excess - of the Real thus rendered.

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[111] Žižek in Wright and Wright, 1999, p. 35.
[112] John Shephard and Peter Wicke, *Music and Cultural Theory* (Cambridge; Polity Press, 1997), p. 70.

To explicate his concept of *rendu*, Michel Chion turns interestingly to Dolby™ sound technology (discussed in more detail in Chapter Five). Chion realized Dolby as an extremely potent technological instrument for this kind of formal 'rendering.' For Žižek, the main importance of Chion's discussion of Dolby is that, as a technology, it enables us to "not only exactly reproduce 'original' sound, but to reinforce it and so render audible details which we should not be able to hear if we found ourselves in the 'reality' recorded by the picture. This kind of sound penetrates us, seizes us on an immediate-real level."[113] Here we can see how this excess dimension of the signifier may be used to bolster the sound beyond any 'reality' quotient, and this occurs within the visuals as well.

Importantly, Chion realises this formal evolution in cinema (a 'quiet' revolution) is not necessarily tied to the post-Dolby era. As he states, "Dolby is not a Jesus Christ, dividing an era before from one after. The change was more gradual [...]. Even before Dolby, throughout the history of the talkie, the sound slowly unfurled itself into the high and low frequencies, thickened, spread, and refined itself."[114] The strange irrationality of subjectivity viewed 'from the inside' (as described in *The Elephant Man* example), is very interesting for this study of horror film music - in particular, the way in which experimental musical styles, along with aural and visual technologies, achieve this third way of 'representing' reality. This third way, as Kevin J. Donnelly refers to it, is

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[113] Žižek in Wright and Wright, 1997, p. 25-26.
[114] Michel Chion, 'Quiet Revolution...and Rigid Stagnation' in *October*, No. 58, (Fall 1991), pp. 69-80, p. 72. Trans. Ben Brewster.

positioned *beyond representation.*

However, a scholarly emphasis on semiotic excess has a history within the field of psychoanalysis reaching back to the formation of the discipline itself. This is linked to two of the discipline's fundamental notions: trauma and anxiety. And an important aspect of my own psychoanalytical approach to horror film music concerns the heightened state of anxiety that characterises the audience's relationship with horror texts - more specifically, the *enjoyment of anxiety-producing effects*, defined by Lacan as *jouissance.*

Sigmund Freud's experiences with music - never a topic of much academic interest for him - become relevant to a contemporary psychoanalytical appreciation of horror film music, as they emphasise enjoyment of potentially disturbing and *conflicting* elements within the musical syntax itself. Freud's self-diagnosis "identified a conflict clearly enough," Neil Cheshire proclaims, but Freud had "grossly underestimated his positive responsiveness and capacity for enjoyment [...]. It is one thing, however, to diagnose the existence of a conflict or disturbance, but quite another to *specify its constituent mechanics* - my italics."[115] "In the case of music," Cheshire concludes, "there is no reason why a state of aesthetic gratification should be disturbing unless that form of pleasure has become anxiety-laden; and this could have occurred, of course, as the result of either technically 'neurotic' processes (such as super-ego guilt or phantasy about the destructiveness of some disinherited impulse), or of 'reality' processes to do with

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[115] Neil Cheshire, 'The Empire of the Ear: Freud's Problem with Music' in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 77, (6), pp. 1127-1168, p1127.

objective conditioning (such as traumatic experience)."[116] The central defining experience of anxiety in the horror genre emphasises the functional role of these formal 'conflicts.' The affective power of this 'conflict' thus becomes critical in understanding how well sound (in particular, music) and the image function as these 'constituent mechanics.' That is, how they function as enablers of an excessive mindless enjoyment - *jouissance*.

Žižek's preoccupation with the Lacanian Real is central to his own theorisations of anxiety *as* excessive enjoyment, something he interprets in relation to both cinematic form and *the subject itself*. In her introductory study of Žižek, historian Sarah Kay emphasises the fundamental role the psychic register of the Real plays in his theories. She notes that Žižek's career amounts to a sustained interrogation of what, for the *early* Lacan at least, remained a relatively minor concern. In Žižek's work, Kay contends, the Lacanian Real,

> Must not for a moment be confused with what, through discourse, we represent to ourselves as 'reality'; it is, that which discourse cannot include [..]. The real for Žižek is far more elusive and less amenable to description. This does not mean, however that it is not all around us, On the contrary it dogs our every step - as though stuck to the sole of our shoe - as Lacan humorously put it. Lacan's remark brings to mind the joke told about Sir Thomas Beecham, who when asked if he had ever conducted music by Stockhausen replied, 'No but I trod in some once.'[117]

As we shall see, the link Kay asserts between the atonality of Stockhausen's work (an

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[116] *ibid*, p. 1127.
[117] Sarah Kay, *Žižek* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), p. 4.

early exponent of music as 'pure sound') and the Lacanian Real reveals a more telling characteristic of this type of music - its *capacity* for semiotic excess. As she proclaims *a propos* of Žižek's central theoretical notion, "the real is the disgusting hidden underside of reality [...]. Just as we can't keep ourselves form sniffing at it - whether with titillation or revulsion - so it fills us with jouissance, or enjoyment: the thrill of the real."[118] In addition to his theories on cinema, Žižek's psychoanalytical grasp of music, especially Romantic Opera, is especially relevant. He seeks to explore the 'hidden underside' of musical forms, and its relation to the construction of subjectivities. "With Romanticism," Žižek informs us, "music changes its role, it no longer merely accompanies the message delivered in speech, but contains/renders a message of its own, 'deeper' than the one delivered in words."[119]

Deftly summarising the required focus for a psychoanalytically-derived theorisation of post-classical horror film music, Pinchas Noy has suggested:

> What is regarded today as 'psychoanalytic interpretation of art' is based on the tacit assumption that meanings are always related to narrative [...]. The problem is that such an approach is justified only in the case of interpreting *content*, but not for interpreting *form*. Although we know that form too may represent in some cases an unconscious content, in other cases it may represent nothing beyond itself.[120]

As noted, my study is concerned chiefly with the elements of the symphonic model that

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[118] *ibid*, p. 4.
[119] Slavoj Žižek, 'Why is Wagner Worth Saving?' in Rex Butler and Scott Stephens (eds.), *Interrogating The Real* (London: Continuum, 2005), pp.307-329, p.307.
[120] Pinchas Noy 'How Music Conveys Emotion' in Stuart Feder, Richard L. Karmel, George H. Pollock (eds.), *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Music, Second Series*' (Madison, Connecticut: International Universities Press, Inc., 1993), pp. 125-149, p. 125-126.

were marginalised by the classical Hollywood film music model, particularly those elements re-appropriated by the post-classical horror film in its staging of cinematic spectacle. Žižek's framework is applied to the case-study films/directors (Chapters Three through to Five) to display just how *their* use of film music can "render the 'noumenal' flux of *jouissance* beyond linguistic meaningfulness," as he terms it, "the inaccessible excess which forms the very core of the subject."[121]

Stephen Heath notes that, for Žižek, "cinema translates psychoanalysis, but also confronts it: film with Žižek, or rather 'Žižek-film' - the particular new conjunction he makes out of cinema and psychoanalysis - realises the unrepresentable, pushes on screen what is more than in representation."[122] My approach, then, discusses and assesses contemporary trends in film music scholarship in the light of Žižek's theoretical paradigm. The methodological implications of this approach are also crucial for this study. As Žižek himself states, he is "not interested in direct content analysis, but the kind of purely formal changes in how we relate to the physicality of film and the shifts in the notion of subjectivity [...] You can detect what goes on the profoundest, most radical level of our symbolic identities and how we experience ourselves."[123]

Ernesto Laclau has also highlighted the multifaceted applicability of Lacanian theory,

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[121] *ibid*, p. 307.
[122] Stephen Heath, 'Cinema and Psychoanalysis: Parallel Histories' in Janet Bergstrom (ed.), *Endless Night: Cinema and Psychoanalysis, Parallel Histories* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999)pp.25-56, p.37
[123] Slavoj Žižek 'Japan Through a Slovenian Looking Glass: Reflections of Media and Politic and Cinema - Interview with Geert Lovink' in Inter/Communication No. 14 (1995) @ www.ntticc.or.jp/pub/ic_mag/ic014/Žižek/Žižek_e.html (Date of Entry: 29/12/2006).

suggesting that its "illuminating effects have tended to present it as a source of diffuse inspiration feeding highly differentiated intellectual currents, rather than a closed and systematic theoretical corpus."[124] In this way, Žižek's grasp of Lacanian theory displays its own in-built post-modern pluralism, most powerfully, in his application of it across numerous different cultural and socio-political sites. In fact, as Eli Zaretsky affirms,

> Lacan gave us the first postmodernist conception of psychoanalysis, the first conception that truly broke with modernist assumptions concerning subjectivity, and sexual difference. Because Freud was so central to modernism, Lacan's originally modest attempts to introduce Freud to French culture turned out to be a founding moment of post-modernism itself.[125]

The manner by which *late*-Lacanian theory (the Lacan of the Real) is to be applied throughout this study corresponds to the fundamental centricity that 'the Real' obtains within post-modern culture. "The subject,' Zaretsky adds, 'becomes a subject intersubjectively, that is, by entering into a chain of signification. Outside that chain the subject is 'nothing,' but that subject is the void of non-relating. We constitute our subjectivity out of this void. The Lacanian 'real' is meant to signal this moment."[126] This study's theoretical explanation of horror film music, through this specific late-Lacanian paradigm, creates an opportunity to reconfigure the 'spectator-text' relationship in a manner more befitting such a pluralist, post-modernist perspective.

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[124] Ernesto Laclau quoted in Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), p. ix..
[125] Eli Zaretsky, 'Psychoanalysis and Postmodernism' in *American Literary History*, Vol. 18, No.1 (Spring, 1996), pp.154-169, p.163.
[126] *ibid*, p.166.

The main way Žižek reconfigures the spectator-text relationship is via his notion of 'interface,' a theoretical interpretation of one's subjective experience posited in direct relation to the formal procedures of certain film directors. Generally speaking, Žižek conceives the celebrated 'decentred' subject of post-modernity through its specific relation to the formal characteristics of the aesthetics of cinematic spectacle and *hyper-*real materialism. In the case of post-classical horror, the notion of interface allows us to investigate just how this procedure is supported by the widespread appropriation of experimental musical resources.

For example, Gorbman stresses it is largely via *tonal* expression (the major-minor dialectic, for example) that most classical film scores work to 'suture' up the gap between film text and spectator. It does so by dispelling the lack constitutive of the Imaginary-Symbolic axis, creating an illusory, temporary, state of wholeness. Žižek's interfacing mode of spectatorial engagement, however, describes a *disjunction* between form and content, a 'short-circuiting' of the gap between the Real and the Symbolic. This is manifested through an overwhelming proximity that is directly correlative to the spectator's encounter with the hyper-real, aesthetic immediacy and materialist impact of the audio-visual sign. Rather than the lack, sutured up through identification with the Imaginary-Symbolic axis, therefore, there exists the 'lack of a lack,' an immediate encounter with *form itself.*

Herein lies the importance of the excess in the signifier for Žižek. This excess fragment, or dimension, cross-fertilises with other fragments on a more elementary formal level,

across aural, visual, and other cinematic devices. These include: sound and music (the materialist impact of instrumental timbre, particularly the non-symbolized excess of atonal music, or 'pure sound'), *mise-en-scène* (spatial antagonisms), cinematography (the materialist 'texture' of the image), and editing (temporal debasement). As part of this methodology, then, framework we need not (indeed, must not) look for *translations* of meaning across sound and image (as in the 'added-value' technique), but rather a sense that sound and image are working towards an overall rendering of this uncanny, irrational, non-symbolised excess.

The strange 'irrational' quality of this cinematic procedure is best clarified in reference to Žižek's summary definition of interface:

> A more standard reproach to the classical notion of suture is that the elementary matrix [...] is rather the opposite one [...] In short, the threat is not that of an objective shot which will not be subjectivised, allocated to some protagonist within the space of diegetic fiction, but that of a point-of-view shot which will not be clearly allocated as the point-of-view of some protagonist, and which will thus evoke the spectre of a free-floating Gaze.[127]

The cause of this irrational, anxiety-laden experience is found in what Lacan has described as the two exemplary manifestations of *object petit a* (the object-cause of desire), namely, *voice* and *gaze*. This gaze is "the gaze of an impossible subjectivity which *cannot* be located within the diegetic space," Žižek states, adding "the Lacanian

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[127] Slavoj Žižek, *The Fright of Real Tears, Krystof Kieslowski: Between Theory and Post-Theory* (London: BFI Publishing, 2004), p. 34.

notion of the Gaze is that it involves the reversal of the relationship between subject and object: as Lacan puts it in Seminar XI, there is an antimony between the eye and the Gaze, i.e. the Gaze is on the side of the object."[128] Žižek's theorisation of interface is, therefore, extremely revealing in relation to the psychotic effects of an externalised 'paranoid' horror cinema, as well as the potentially destabilising effect it possesses in relation to Williams' idea of a post-modern, cinema-of attractions (discussed further in Chapter Three).

To return to the topic of film music, in clarifying the overall applicability of this psychoanalytical framework to the kind of cinematic experience described above, we might remind ourselves of the formal autonomy that characterises *rendu* - that is, it is *trans*-sensorial. In other words, the uncanny qualities of the Real, rendered in gaze and voice as objects (i.e. image and sound), work in accordance with each other towards some deeper effect that is more than the sum of its parts. Žižek's chosen exemplar of 'voice-as-object' is found in Michel Chion's notion of the *voix acousmatic* - "the voice as 'object' [...] the voice, for example, of the superego, addressing me without being attached to any particular bearer, floating freely in some horrifying interspace."[129]

This does not necessarily have to allude to an actual *voice*, but simply to the aural dimension of *rendu* itself, as well as its visual (gaze) counterpart. Žižek notes that the

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[128] *ibid*, p. 34.
[129] Slavoj Žižek in Wright and Wright (eds.) *The Žižek Reader*, p. 15. Žižek points to the example of the 'mother's' voice in *Psycho* prior to the moment of revelation that it is, in fact, Norman.

voice-as-object must not be "attributed to a subject [...] being part neither of the diegetic reality of the story nor of the sound-accompaniment (commentary, musical score), but that mysterious domain designated by Lacan as between-two-deaths."[130] However, he does provide a number of examples of the voice-as-object that include musical score and even diegetic song.

We can now see how this specifically Lacanian differentiation, as outlined by Žižek, maps onto a discussion of film music, as it helps us describe a crucial differentiation between the two main functional models of film music. There is Gorbman's classical model of film music: this supports the processes of suture (imaginary identification) through the smooth signification of meaning. Alternatively, Žižek's voice-as-object is based upon a "fragment of the signifier permeated with mindless enjoyment [...] the reading of which procures an immediate *jouis-sense* or 'meaning-in-enjoyment."[131] So, instead of facilitating the safe-channelling of signification, in the alternative model, the primary function of sounds (and images) is to give substance, a *density*, to cinematic enjoyment itself.

Randall D. Larson has interpreted these two general film music approaches in specific relation to the horror genre. He states that, "Film scoring has traditionally been approached in two basic ways [...]. On the one side, there is what has become known as the 'leitmotif' method [...]. Other composers prefer to take a more modern approach, in

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[130] *ibid*, p.15. This phrase can be further defined as between the Symbolic and the Real.
[131] *ibid*, p. 17.

which leitmotif are dispensed with in favour of achieving an overall musical ambience [...]. They maintain an overall feeling of uneasiness, embellishing a mood and an atmosphere while avoiding a strict pattern of correlated melodies.[132]

It is part of my thesis to suggest that the aural objects described by Žižek can be interpreted as something not properly located in the *classical* model of film music. That is, it lies *in excess* of the centrally defining functional characteristic of classical Hollywood film music - representation through the successful signification of *meaning*. These are not sounds or images functioning to suture the spectator in respect of the diegetic fiction, through 'Imaginary' identifications that cover up the precise (i.e. tonal, diatonic) working of the signifier. Rather, these fragments of aural and visual signifiers engender a rendering of the Real, they stage an 'interfacing' with uncanny objects based on a short-circuiting, or disjunction, between form and content. The point to stress is that our scholarly emphasis upon this short-circuiting of the orthodox spectator-text relationship (via the promotion of semiotic excess) facilitates an understanding of the specific functioning of experimental musical resources in the post-1960 horror film. More generally, it also allows us to challenge the hegemony of the narrative-based theoretical model of film music.

To conclude, it seems the dominance of narrative has assumed its own overwhelming centricity to the various classical theoretical paradigms used in the explication of film

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[132] Randall D. Larson, *Music from the House of Hammer: Music in the Hammer Horror Films, 1950-1980* (London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1996), p. xv-xvi.

music, as well as the wider ideas of the 'pleasures' and/or 'enjoyment' of horror audiences. Of late, the ongoing evolution of these topics seems to be distancing itself from a narrative-based hermeneutics, a wider trend this study aligns itself with. This chapter has outlined a methodological approach for interpreting instances of film music that are not used, *primarily*, as narrational support. Theoretically speaking, this alternative approach directs us to a more physical encounter with cinematic form. In terms of cinematic practices, this has revitalised (although not consciously) the syntactical construction of cinematic expression within the aesthetics of the contemporary horror film. A further concomitant shift is also noticeable within the changing theoretical configuration of cinematic subjectivity, through the recognition of our intimate and highly nuanced psychological negotiations with sounds and images. This provides us with a figurative understanding of the 'alien' strangeness at the heart of the film/music experience, an experience that offers, in its very non-integrated, remaindered and non-symbolised qualities, some uncanny glimpse of the very essence of the *self itself.*

This chapter's re-assessment of intellectual trends, both within film music scholarship, and the wider disciplines it engages, describes a framework that can facilitate an understanding of the formal and subjective implications of the horror genre's appropriation of experimental musical resources. The next chapter shall look in more detail at the history of the horror genre's utilisation of such musical resources.

Chapter Two

TRADITION, TONALITY AND TEXTUALITY: A HISTORICAL REAPPRAISAL OF HORROR FILM MUSIC

2. Introduction

Both historians and theorists of film and popular culture alike continue to debate the significance of 1960 as an epochal moment in the development of mainstream cinema. These debates often range from the general - 1960 marking the inception of the post-classical/post-modern cultural era, for example - to more specific interpretations of 1960 as a moment of significant aesthetic and thematic development within the horror genre. For scholars of horror attaching a significance to this date, these developments are epitomised by one film in particular, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). Of course, a proper understanding of the wider cultural ramifications behind this transition lies beyond a simple pre-/post-*Psycho* historical delineation, but the film remains important to describing post-classical/post-modern evolutions within popular cinema, from any number of intellectual perspectives.

As a key inaugural moment in the inception of the post-classical cinematic paradigm, *Psycho* amalgamates many of the stylistic and thematic trends that were emerging throughout the transitional period preceding the movie's release (approx. 1948-60). More specifically, Hitchcock's first (and only) foray into true cinematic horror facilitates an

understanding of the concomitant developments in horror film music, and how *these* elements supported this widespread shift in popular cinematic practice. However, attributing such far-reaching evolutionary influences to *Psycho* carries with it some methodological and theoretical implications. For a start, articulating developments in 'post-*Psycho*' horror cinema necessitates an acknowledgement of the situation as it existed previous to *Psycho*. As noted in Chapter One, these wider evolutionary developments have been interpreted by certain scholars - notably, Linda Williams and Slavoj Žižek - as some sort of updating of a *pre*-classical aesthetic of attraction - a cinematic sensibility preceding the inception of the classical, studio-era model of narrative cinema.

This general hypothesis is taken up by this study as it facilitates my own theoretical intentions regarding experimental musical styles and techniques and their role in post-classical horror film's overall audio-visual strategies. In order to clearly define the specific audio-visual developments of the post-1960 horror film, some time must be spent describing the audio-visual, and specifically *film-musical*, strategies of both the pre-classical and the classical horror film. This chapter sets out to do just that, placing in parallel the discussion of the development of the horror genre with a theoretical re-evaluation of film music scholarship and film music practice throughout the same period, particularly the wider contemporaneous innovations in the late-romantic and early-modernist musical idioms.

As suggested in the previous chapter, a theoretical appreciation of these pioneering

aesthetic strategies requires a reassessment of previously marginalised intellectual positions, alongside an acknowledgement of recent developments within film music scholarship. As a result, the historical delineation of this chapter deals with the years leading up to 1960, reassessing various positions in light of the specific shifts in cinematic practice occurring throughout the development of the horror film during this particular period.

The undeniably pioneering and experimental nature of the horror genre, especially its formal sophistication, means it has not necessarily evolved in the same way, or at the same pace, as other popular cinematic genres. In the context of this study, this means traditional historical distinctions used to delineate the major periods in film history may not apply in certain generic and historical instances, particularly with a genre as idiosyncratic as the horror genre. This becomes apparent when observing some of the stylistic evolutions within the audio-visual strategies of the horror film. As the last chapter has made clear, a formal emphasis on audio-visual technique (to distinguish major 'periods' of the genre, and more generally throughout the thesis) is entirely in keeping with the wider requirements of my scholarly approach to the post-classical horror soundtrack.

This chapter's reassessment of horror film music begins with a discussion of stylistic antecedents in the genre's literary and theatrical precursors, and then proceeds to a discussion of the pre-classical (and pre-synchronised sound) era in horror cinema. This includes an observation of the early horror film's reliance on sensationalism, via

cinematic spectacle, as well as the genre's origins in late-romantic notions of 'the Gothic' and 'the Uncanny.' This begins the study's discussion of the function of experimental music(s) in the horror genre, focusing on how certain techniques, in pre-classical horror, were quickly sidelined by the emergence of a classical film-musical model. Here, the intention is to describe the particular traits of an early 'cinema of attractions,' traits that would be subsequently re-appropriated and re-contextualised by the horror genre in the wake of *Psycho*.

Of course, music displays its own strong relationship to the late-romantic and early modernist movements in the arts, and the formal characteristics of these progressions in musical style are outlined here. In doing so, this chapter examines the evolution of experimental musical tendencies *alongside* the emergence of the horror film as a commercial cinematic genre. Rather than an exclusively theoretical discussion, then, much of this chapter is focused on historical and stylistic observations. Through these observations, the chapter seeks to ascertain a theoretical link between the formal attributes of early musical experimentalism and a pre-classical aesthetics of the early horror film.

The chapter then moves on to a discussion of the so-called transitional period in Hollywood (c.1948-60) during which time the classical studio-system's mode of production (and reception) were largely challenged and re-configured. At this stage, *a propos* of Altman, the emphasis is directed towards the influence of economic, technological, and aesthetic factors, and how each has potentially affected the

development of horror's audio-visual strategies. However, the sharper focus remains set on the horror genre's use of experimental music and how it begun to challenge the classical film music model in the years leading up to *Psycho*, a film which consolidated such developments.

2.1 The Visceral Horror Cinema and the Sound-Image Syntax

A discussion of the horror film's utilisation of aural resources feeds into the ongoing debates regarding its generic definition and origin. Any worthwhile generic definition must reach beyond aesthetic conventions (the visual and aural iconography that 'signifies' a generic category) to incorporate some level of consensus regarding other aspects of the cinematic experience. Most importantly, a true definition of the horror genre must address the relationship *between* its particular spectatorial pleasures and the formal characteristics of the genre. During the classical period, 'popular' film genres tended to share certain general characteristics, especially those related to the kind of cinematic pleasures they afforded. Beyond differences in subject matter, thematics, and even formal style, largely speaking, an overall realist mode prevails in the classical cinema; this mode links these pleasures directly to the narrative sensibilities of any particular film.

As noted in the last chapter, certain approaches to defining the generic pleasures of

horror have neglected the formal characteristics of horror films. Noel Carroll's unravelling of the 'paradox' of horror, for example, bases itself firmly in a classical Aristotelian *poetics*.[1] This 'cognitive-evaluative' approach neglects to incorporate horror's central aesthetic immediacy and the visceral pleasures thereof. Instead, Carroll couches the genre's intrinsic pleasures within the "problem-solving" contexts of classical realism, structured into what Carroll terms "dramas of discovery and confirmation."[2] However, such dramas are too general to support a generic definition, being familiar to any mystery or thriller-type narrative. This generality recurs repeatedly in Carroll's polemics. Even interaction at the level of syntax is explained away via a cognitive interpretation of horrific 'objects' that violate the spectator's conceptual schema and, therefore, call for an *evaluative* engagement. Carroll offers no real consideration of the actual formal manner in which these objects are rendered cinematically.

Other approaches, such as Andrew Tudor's, claim generic definition should be historically specific, since the particular traits of a certain period are linked, as all cultural products are, to the social milieu in which they originate from.[3] Although the demand for historical specificity seems justifiable, it could also be argued that one defining aspect of horror cinema remains throughout different eras of the genre: the requirement that horror film provides some kind of shock, a characteristic closely linked to the horror genre's individual 'textual' nature. Horror audiences place a significant

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[1] Noel Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart*, (London: Routledge, 1990).
[2] Noel Carroll, 'Why Horror' in Mark Jancovich (ed.), *Horror: The Film Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 33-45, p. 36.
[3] Andrew Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Movie* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

importance on the visceral, *hyper*-aesthetic nature in which these shocks are rendered, making horror film arguably the most textual of all the popular genres.

This is not to imply that the horror genre is alien in every respect to other generic examples of popular cinema, but that the genre is clearly marked by a formal individualism. And there is much evidence to suggest that the essence of Horror's primary pleasures are *extra*-textual, especially in its pre-classical and post-classical incarnations. This interpretation requires something of its own qualification as to the particular *kind* of textuality at work here, which differs considerably from the nominal 'structuralist-semiotic' interpretation of *film-as-text*, in which a spectator's subjective engagement is largely based in a reading of cinema as a set of culturally-encoded cinematic (audio-visual) signifiers.

The need to 'horrify' us through the provision of some type of shock has been the one element singular to the horror genre throughout all of its sub-generic and historically specific guises. However much the *intensity* of this shock varies through the history of the genre, the special textual nature of its rendering remains a fundamental generic characteristic. Such a requirement also necessitates the type of radical re-contextualisation and reconfiguration of the sound-image relationship proposed by this thesis. This 'shock-affect' is present in even the most detailed of narrative horror films (as discussed by Carroll), in non-narrative spectacles that characterise the pre-classical cinema of attractions, and in post-classical horror films which mix narrative and spectacle up in increasingly novel formulations.

What many of the generic theories of horror frequently neglect is any detailed observation of the *formal* characteristics of this 'shock-affect.' "Horror cinema is mediated by adrenaline," Philip Brophy explains,

> A saturated fiction whose primary aim in its telling is to generate suspense, shock, and horror [...] engaging the reader in a dialogue of textual manipulation that has no time for the critical ordinances of social realism, cultural enlightenment, or emotional humanism [...]. The pleasure of the text is, in fact, getting the shit scared out of you - and loving it.[4]

The important shift in this type of horror is that the film impact is made, "not by portraying graphic violence," Brophy notes, "but by conveying to the viewer a graphic sense of physicality, accentuating the very presence of the body on screen."[5] Such an "uncomfortably physical" experience, Brophy continues, "is effected by a very exact and acute cinematic construction of sound, image, framing, editing."[6] Žižek's main thesis contends that such a physical, material immediacy is not 'mediated' as such, but rather immediately *rendered* through the remaindered elements of signification, the excess dimension of the sign that he describes in terms of the (Lacanian) Real.

This strategy marks a crucial development in the contemporary horror film which can be traced back to *Psycho*'s pioneering cinematic techniques. This 'visceral' horror film

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[4] Philip Brophy, 'Horrality - The Textuality of Contemporary Horror Films' in *Screen*, Vol. 27, Pt. 1, (Jan-Feb, 1986), pp.2-13, p.5.
[5] *ibid*, p.8.
[6] *ibid*, p.8.

strategy promotes the destabilising spectacle of sensory impact, reconfiguring the cinematic experience into what Brophy describes as a "death-defying carnival ride."[7] But what is the exact relevance of this central generic requirement to the popular horror film's appropriation of experimental musical resources? The visceral horror film has necessarily evolved around a different configuration of the cinematic syntax, one based on the rendering and promotion of this textual excess. Accordingly, this justifies the use of more unorthodox musical resources, a formal characteristic separating much horror film music from classical 'narrative' film music.

It is the special relevancy that experimental musical styles and techniques display towards the development of a horror-specific mode of textual interaction and spectator positioning which guides the main focus for the rest of this chapter. We must approach horror film music as a special kind of 'textual' pleasure, if we are to understand the common defining factor of the horror film in all its guises. And we should begin by looking at the genre's stylistic and thematic precursors in the theatre and in literature to see how crucial this shock aesthetic has become to an experience of post-classical horror cinema.

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[7] *ibid*, p.5.

2.1.1 'Shock-Affect': Some Stylistic Precursors of the Classical Horror Film

The stylistic precursors of horror cinema, based within literature and in the theatre, nurtured a central defining feature of sensation/shock. Gothic novels of the late-18th and early-19th century exhibit what Phil Hardy describes as, "a vulgarized romanticism in which the creation of sensations and a morbid fascination with death, pain and solitude were recurring features."[8] In particular, the literature of Edgar Allen Poe promotes an articulation of horror based on psychological shock. "Poe's idea of horror," Michael Sevastakis claims, "finds a modern equivalent in the term 'shock,' and it is the shock appeal of the gothic film and literature that attracts a continuing audience of devotees to the genre."[9]

Such a preoccupation with sensation carried over into theatrical adaptations of such gothic classics as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. More importantly, early theatrical adaptations displayed another special relationship that carried over perfectly into the early cinema, the connection between stage technology (special effects, lighting etc.) and the provision of a visceral experience. As Hardy concurs, "this theatrical backdrop is of special significance to the Anglo-American tradition of horror. It announced the kind of sensationalism that film-makers would seek

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[8] Phil Hardy (ed), *The Overlook Encyclopaedia of Horror – Second Edition*, (New York: Overlook Press, 1993) p. ix.
[9] Michael Sevastakis, *Songs of Love and Death: The American Horror Film of the 1930s* (Westport, CT, Greenwood Press, 1993), p. xv.

first to replicate *and then to further intensify* with apparatus and techniques newly available to them" (my italics).[10]

The privileging of spectacle and 'shock' (that is, shock-as-attraction) is ultimately created by the technology. The special link horror film would form with music is also guided, to some extent, by a reliance on these interrelated aspects - technology and spectacle. The connections between the early cinema and Gothic literature and theatre are well documented. However, the special relevance of *musical* accompaniment (and, later, synchronised sound) to the aesthetic intensification Hardy describes above is relatively under-explored. Indeed, we can question the validity of Hardy's own claim: that horror "had little role to play in the earliest days of cinema,"[11] since it could be argued that the cinema of attractions displays its own distinct affinity with a nascent horror genre. This promotion of shock-as-spectacle has clearly remained a central aesthetic necessity in the horror genre, and a defining *textual* characteristic. As Peter Hutchings explains,

> The elements of spectacle associated with these moments on the stage become even more important in the movies. [...]. These moments codified for the first time in the serial Universal horror production are usually linked with a display of cinematic techniques (make-up, special effects, set-design, etc), so that not only the monster but *aspects of cinema itself* are involved in the spectacle - my italics.[12]

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[10] Phil Hardy (ed.), 1993 p. ix.
[11] *ibid*, p. 16.
[12] Peter Hutchings, *Hammer and Beyond: The British Horror Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 19-20.

The textuality of horror films is, thus, powerfully rendered via the genre's use of experimental musical techniques, both in and of themselves, and as a result of the functional relationship sound adopts with its accompanying imagery. Tom Gunning's summary description of the cinema of attractions is worth quoting at length, since it makes clear the importance of this cinematic style to a burgeoning horror genre:

> The cinema of attractions directly solicits spectator attention, inciting visual curiosity, and supplying pleasure through an exciting spectacle – a unique event, whether fictional or documentary that is of interest in itself [...] shocking or curious incidents. It is the direct address of the audience, in which an attraction is offered to the spectator by a cinema showman, which defines this approach to film making. Theatrical display dominates over narrative absorption, emphasising the direct stimulation of shock or surprise at the expense of unfolding a story or creating a diegetic universe [...] its energy moves outward towards an acknowledged spectator rather than inward towards the character-based situations essential to classical narrative.[13]

The shift *Psycho* brought about, then, was less an introduction of completely new aesthetic forms, than an *intensification* and *concentration* of characteristics already extant within the pre-narrative cinema. Although this is made clear by Linda Williams, she neglects to mention that the shift to this cinematic mode was as contingent upon *aural* elements as it was on *visual* (mise-en-scene) or temporal (editing) dimensions. Williams neglects the aural dimension, despite the fact that a cursory analysis of *Psycho*'s score throws up a significant amount of evidence in support of her claims for the film. The emphasis, as far as the rest of this chapter is concerned, rests on describing

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[13] Tom Gunning 'The Cinema of Attractions: early film, its spectator and the avant-garde' in *Wide Angle* 8 (3-4), 1986, pp. 63-70, p. 66.

these aesthetic tendencies and suggesting how experimental musical techniques support them.

In narrative terms, the *early* horror genre exhibited some prototype post-modernist qualities. To begin with, it has traditionally been premised upon a subordination of narrative to the production of aesthetic shock, rather than the building upon, complicating, or resolving of any narrative or thematic concerns. In many examples of post-classical horror, narrative serves simply to bridge together certain spectacles of horror. These spectacles often increase in intensity, postulating a trajectory of *aesthetic concentration* in place of strictly narrative-directed climax and thematic closure. As Brophy notes, "What is of prime importance is the textual effect, the game one plays *with* the text [...] as the cheapest trick in the book will still tense your muscles, quicken your heart and jangle your nerves [...] swallowed up by the fascistic continuum of the fiction."[14] One need only think of the structure of most horror plots, centred, as they usually are, on one location - for example, a haunted house. With the characters introduced, the remainder of the film becomes simply a question of who will survive, who will not, and how much spatiotemporal destabilisation and aesthetic intensification and affect can be provided for the viewer in the meantime.

As a result, the cinematic *syntax* of horror has evolved in a noticeably different way than most other major film genres. In particular, indifference towards narrative directs the

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[14] Philip Brophy, 1986, p. 5.

individual utilisation of the soundtrack, especially where non-diegetic music is concerned. Having significantly less need of orthodox film music's signifying capabilities, horror provides a generic and textual locus where pioneering and experimental approaches to filmmaking and scoring are introduced. The following section offers a discussion of early horror film music, focusing on the genre's use of experimental musical resources, and how this has developed in relation to the classical model.

2.2. Early and Classical Horror Film Music and the Late-Romantic Dichotomy.

One aspect of film music studies seemingly beyond dispute involves the early and overwhelming influence of the late-Romanticist symphonic-operatic idiom. Sometimes described as the 'leitmotif school,' this is exemplified in the compositions of Richard Wagner. By the late silent period, the Wagnerian model characterised the main film music style as well. Moreover, the early Romantic composers, such as Carl Maria Von Weber, as well as later exponents, including Wagner, as well as Richard Strauss, demonstrated an interest in *supernatural* themes, and furthermore, linked this in their work to an *experimental approach in musical style*. The shift away from harmonic and melodic orthodoxy, for example, was further intensified by the modernist composers, such as Arnold Schoenberg, Igor Stravinsky, and Edgar Varese. And, interestingly enough, these composers also shared an interest in supernatural themes and musical

experimentation, investigating how the latter could intensify our experience of the former.

That said, the affinity that the symphonic model displayed for cinema was primarily structured around the organising principle of the leitmotif. Bordwell, Steiger and Thompson have described how this organising principle "exploited the narrational possibilities of music. Harmony, rhythm and 'continuous melody' could correspond to the play's dramatic action," they claimed, while the leitmotifs could "convey a character's thoughts, point up parallels between situations, even anticipate action or create irony."[15] At this juncture, however, it is necessary to introduce a particular interpretation of late-romantic music that separates the music's narrational possibilities from its more stylistically unorthodox characteristics.

The utilisation of the leitmotif technique, in particular, exemplifies the musical structuring and narrative support that would come to dominate the classical film music model. However, other aspects of the musical sign that in some way disavow the harmonic and melodic functionality of classical film music also form an important part of the late-romanticist idiom. And the horror genre was arguably the popular genre to first maximise the visceral potential of these elements of the musical (and visual) sign.

As early as 1909 an Edison cue-sheet for the production of *Frankenstein* (1909) shows

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[15] David Bordwell, Janet Steiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*, (New York: Columbia University, 1985), p. 35.

how a musical motif from Carl Maria Von Weber's *Der Freischutz* (1817-21) was used to articulate the presence of the monster (Frankenstein's Monster in the former/the demon 'Samiel' in the latter).[16] Edison's use of this motif pre-empts the experimental musical sensibilities of later horror film composers, such as Herrmann, who would appropriate these kinds of techniques, refracting them through the twentieth century intensifications of the musical modernists.

What is interesting in the *Der Freischutz* example is not the leitmotif technique as such, but the formal characteristics of this musical phrase, especially its lack of a tonal stability. This particular motif, critic Darrell Ang notes, strikes, "across the entire fabric of tonality, [Weber] invented a harmonic shudder of a diminished-seventh chord for the demon Samiel: a rootless chord that offers no clear reference to any established tonality [...] the tonal conflicts within become irreconcilable."[17] Therefore, a prototypical post-classical film music aesthetic can be observed to be part of the horror genre as early as a pre-sound and, arguably, a pre-*narrative* period.

Tonality, of course, is the bedrock of most Western music, including the classical Hollywood film score. The film music of the emerging popular genres of the late-silent/early sound period utilised this harmonic principle to develop character and plot, all the time remaining resolutely within stable architectonic contexts. Outright atonality

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[16] See Kathryn Kalinak, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Score* (Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), p.64.
[17] Darrell Ang, www.theflyinginkpot.com/Reviews, 1998. (Date of Entry: 9/9/05)

was rare, even in horror films of the classical era, as it had little to offer in terms of a rigidly-fixed (i.e. safely-channelled) signification. It was the post-classical horror film which pioneered the deployment of this individual musical characteristic, gradually moving away from the melodic and harmonic orthodoxies of the classical model.

Tonality aids the spectator's emotional identification through the suture process, allowing the spectator to empathise with elements of the fictional diegesis. Often, classical film music alternates from major to minor modes, from consonance to dissonance as the diegetic situation fluctuates between happiness and stability to despair and uncertainty (the protagonist's psychological state being the usual locus of identification and empathy for the spectator). Royal S. Brown describes one of the gimmicks of Western tonality, as exemplified by the classical Hollywood film score. He notes that music will,

> Move away from its tonal center in ways that cause the listener to anticipate the return, sooner or later, of that tonal centre. Psychologically and aesthetically speaking, tonality sets up a certain order, creates a sense of loss and anxiety in its various departures from that order, and then reassures the listener by periodically returning to that order, which will generally have the final word.[18]

This is most clearly displayed in the major/minor harmonic dialectic. Despite being a little simplistic in terms of expressing the myriad complexities of human emotional vicissitudes, this movement formed the basis for a classical Hollywood matrix of aural

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[18] Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), p. 7.

signification. Major chords, constructed from strong musical intervals - the 3rd, 5th, 6th - signify a sense of stability, heroism, and happiness.[19] Minor chords, in comparison, are built on less stable intervals. The harmonic minor mode has an unstable seventh 'lead' note for example, with the minor 3rd and minor 6th intervals offering more ambiguity since they have more potential vertical combinations. This gives the seventh chord an especially destabilising effect, since the listener is less sure where the phrase can potentially develop. This use of dissonance and consonance relates to how various intervals can be heard, either they sound resolved/consonant or unresolved/dissonant, thus implying the need for stability and resolution.

Therefore, movement and overall harmonic context are crucial to the use of music in symbolising elements of the narrative and/or thematic events (locations, atmospheres, the characters' emotional development, and so on). Norman Cazden notes that "in musical harmony the critical determinant of consonance and dissonance is expectation of movement [...] A dissonant interval causes a restless expectation of resolution, or movement to a consonant interval [...] Context is the determining factor."[20] Modes of musical signification depend on the contexts in which they are set, and the very conception of tonal music stems from the fact that its forms are contained within (the context of) a hierarchical ordering of melody and harmony. This is organised around a tonal centre or 'key' and is referred to as the architectonic context, which determines the

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[19] For example Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy' or John Williams' 'Main Theme' from *Star Wars* (1978).
[20] Norman Cazden quoted in Leonard B. Meyer *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 230.

relative stability of various musical intervals. As Brown states,

> The fourth and the fifth, while pillars of tonal stability, tend to go either way, often depending upon whether they are heard as open (more dissonant) or in combinations with other notes. The second and the seventh are the least stable intervals within the scale, whereas the accidental intervals of the minor second and the so-called tri-tone are the most dissonant intervals of all.[21]

Even dissonant intervals are defined in relation to the consonance they are expected to return to. But, for the most part, classical Hollywood film music was, and is, resolutely tonal, exploiting harmonic contexts for maximum emotional effect. As Brown adds, "dramatic, substantially developed melodies in solidly tonal harmonic contexts have set the mood and provided abundant motivic material."[22] In the classical model, the associated signification (be it emotional or more literal) underpins a narrative structure and the discourses therein which make up the story. As a genre, horror is based on an aesthetics of shock, this involves a different prioritisation and use of film music than observed in the classical film music score.

It could be argued that horror film music involves the very removal of the harmonic and melodic contexts that form the basis of classical film-musical expression. Certainly, the visceral techniques of horror involve the demotion of the importance of orthodox narrative structuring. As it develops in the genre, the functioning of music in the horror film begins to be predicated upon a different hierarchy of imperatives. This need not

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[21] Royal. S. Brown, 1994, p. 7.
[22] *ibid*, p. 96

mean that orthodox signification is not taking place but, in terms of the viewer's enjoyment of horror cinema's sound-image syntax, a different hierarchy of functional roles can be discerned.

The use of the Weber motif in Edison's 1909 *Frankenstein*, for example, betrays the ambivalent influence of Romanticist music upon the horror film. Harmonically, the Monster's cue is formulated through the refusal of a tonal context, although it does conform to a basic leitmotiv technique. Even in its original application this particular leitmotif is atypical in terms of a typical romanticist technique. As John Warrack notes, "There is little call for the full deployment of Leitmotiv [...] given Weber's interest not so much in development and conflict of characters"[23] Already, in this early example, there is evidence for the kind of aesthetic brevity and formal dynamism that would characterise the aesthetic styles and techniques of post-1960 horror cinema, with its general indifference to any detailed narrative commentary. Despite the fact that Weber was an early exponent of the leitmotif style (and a considerable influence upon Wagner), it seems when an experience of something supernatural or 'horrifying' was conveyed, he turned to the prioritisation of untypical musical styles and techniques.

Catalysing this increasing extremity of form were certain emerging historical developments within musical theory and expression. These developments conspired to form new modalities of musical expression that would completely reconfigure the

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[23] John Warrack, *Carl Maria Von Weber* - Second Edition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 260.

imposing hierarchies of tonal harmony. So radical were these developments, and so strange sounding the results that Hollywood, still accustoming itself to the slight dissonances of Romanticism, was initially slow to respond to these new stylistic tropes. Except the popular horror film that is, an area in which these new musical ideas were considered the perfect working tool for the formal interpolation of shock and terror, for what we might call the *abstract figuration* of cinematic shock.

2.3. Historical Convergences: Atonality, Aesthetic Brevity, and the Modernist Intervention

The growth of the silent film and the Hollywood industry coincided historically with what is generally considered to be one of the most radical periods of innovation and reinvention within musical expression. Around 1909 the Austrian composer, Arnold Schoenberg, drastically deconstructed the notion of tonality and hierarchical harmonic structuring with his atonal, 'key-less' music. Atonal music lacks a tonal centre, the organising principle around which tonal and harmonic contexts are constructed. The result was a music that was shocking to many upon first hearing it. Schoenberg, in particular, removed all notions of a harmonic and melodic architectonics, later developing his ideas further into what he termed 'Serialism' – which gave each of the twelve chromatically-arranged notes an equal relevance within any given composition.

In these serial works, certain restrictions on compositional practice are imposed which have the effect of liberating musical expression. For instance, serial compositions could call for all twelve notes to be played before any of them could be repeated. The result was an intensely experimental music that never resolves harmonically, except maybe by accident. This had the effect of isolating the listener in some sort of perceptual sonic limbo or imagined space. It also resulted in a tension that was way beyond the slight dissonance of a minor chord, for example, conveying some sense of a kind of irreconcilable antagonism in the musical form. Needless to say, Schoenberg's style was not immediately popular in any mainstream cultural contexts, but it set a precedent for the next quarter-century of musical experimentation within the concert-hall.

Alongside the serial intervention, some composers formed a historical bridge back to late-romanticism's more irrational musical characteristics and techniques, and wrote works of an extremely primitive and affective power. Stravinsky's three major works - *The Firebird* (1910), *Petrushka* (1911), and especially *The Rite of Spring* (1914) - all display a hitherto unrivalled passion and emotional intensity. Stravinsky's style displays what Arthur Jacobs describes as, "barbaric force, violent rhythms, orchestral sounds chosen for their extreme or uncouth character," whilst Richard Strauss' opera, *Electra* (1909) was "equally shocking in psychological aim [...] and equally harsh in musical effect."[24]

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[24] Arthur Jacobs, *A Short History of Western Music*, (London: Pelican, 1972), p. 278-9.

Hollywood was obviously reluctant to adopt these new musical resources. By the beginning of the sound-era, the structural and harmonic principles of an orthodox romantic style had become inextricably linked to the standardisation of the classical Hollywood style. Horror film, however, had displayed an ambiguous relationship to this model since the pre-sound era (as we saw with the use of the Weber motif). We see this type of ambiguity and antagonism developing further within the aural *and* visual aesthetics of the early sound Horror film. As Brown notes,

> In Hollywood [...] it took more bizarre pictures such as *King Kong* or James Whale's *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) to bring out the modernist in composers and to shake studio moguls momentarily out of their conservative lethargy. Steiner's *King Kong* music, for instance, would no doubt have scandalized most concert-going audiences of the time with its open-interval harmonies and dissonant chords, its tri-tone motifs, or such devices as the chromatic scale in parallel, minor seconds [...] In *The Bride of Frankenstein*, Franz Waxman, though not wholly departing from the romantic tradition in his first Hollywood score, moved toward a kind of musical expressionism in which familiar patterns [...] are distorted enough by bizarre instrumentation, chromatic theme movements and so forth to throw the viewer/listener off the centre of familiar musical norms.[25]

Coinciding historically with a growth in the popularity of Horror film (the Universal cycle of the early 1930s) was the standardisation of the classical Hollywood score. Reading Brown's remarks, it might seem surprising to learn the film that first established the classical Hollywood film music model was Merian Cooper's *King Kong* (1930). The film's score, by the Austrian composer, Max Steiner, laid down the template for what was to follow, developing the late-romanticist model through the use of the structural

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[25] Royal S. Brown, p. 118.

leitmotif technique and the symbolic potential of musical signification.

Some of the early horror sound-films - such as *Dracula* (1931) and *Frankenstein* (1931) - shied away from a *full* non-diegetic musical score. So overwhelmed were their makers with the novelty of a realistic diegetic aural sound-scape that they resisted the dramaturgical, emotional and sensorial potential for a non-diegetic score for a short period. Most early horror film scores were comprised of little more than a 'Main Title' over the opening credits which was then reprised at the end of the film. Max Steiner's *Kong* score changed this forever, the film's non-diegetic music covering some seventy-five percent of the film soundtrack with a bombastic orchestral score that was impressively symphonic in scope.

As a horror film, *King Kong* afforded Max Steiner the scope for introducing certain modernist musical techniques into his score, techniques ostensibly at odds with the majority of musical accompaniment heard in most popular cinematic genres. The *Kong* score perfectly encapsulates the ambivalence of the early horror scores. Evidently, the genre required an alternative overall approach to film-scoring, but it also required musical accompaniment more so than any other, despite employing it to alternative functional ends.

It may seem strange that Steiner's score for *King Kong*, with its pioneering stylistic developments, should be viewed as the founding text, so to speak, of the *classical* Hollywood film score. This is difficult to understand until we consider the

aforementioned dichotomous view of the functional influences bequeathed to the Hollywood film score by the Romanticist style. This is characterised, on the one hand, by the music's structural/narrational functions (prioritised in the classical model) and, on the other, by the more unorthodox stylistic characteristics of Steiner's score, which are more in keeping with the non-narrational elements of cinematic spectacle and sensation.

This dichotomous interpretation also has implications for the different analytical approaches to film music available to the scholar. Peter Franklin has re-approached Steiner's *Kong* score looking for ways how "scoring reveals much about music's meanings as a cultural practice."[26] Franklin describes how early film music positioned itself against the 'classical' category of musical autonomy by "insisting on all that the ideology of autonomy disallowed: narrating, 'representing,' dispensing manipulative pleasure [...]. To what extent may it be reclaimed by musical scholarship as anything more than a site where jaded musicologists play?"[27] In the later chapters such an autonomy of form is examined at the level of the audio-visual signifier. These chapters discuss the concept of musical autonomy and how it *can* aid an explanation of the cinematic experience of 'horror,' with a focus on the role of experimental music in this context.

These two elements of film music - what I shall term the 'signifying' function and the

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[26] Peter Franklin, '*King Kong* and Film on Music: Out of the Fog' in Donnelly, K.J. (ed.), *Film Music: Critical Approaches*, (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 2001, pp. 88-102), p. 90.
[27] *ibid.*, p. 88.

'rendering' function occur simultaneously. As elements of the film-musical discourse, these functional modes can be conceived as opposite aspects of the larger functional relationship. But along what axis is this to be positioned? As mentioned earlier, the signifying aspects of a lot of Romantic music was based, like a lot of western classical music, within an overall harmonic (i.e. tonal) context. As we move towards complete atonality we also move towards a lack of a rigidly-fixed signification, the "key-less" music of the modernists, possibly signifying some vague 'other-ness' or, more likely, nothing at all.

Of course, on one level, music *is* unlike language. First and foremost, music is a non-iconic art form; that is, there is no absolutely fixed system relaying the meanings of any particular note, phrase, or pitch to its 'referent.' This fact emphasises the arbitrary manner of languages and their signifying systems. And the arbitrary nature of aural signification also seems set within the arbitrary context of tonal systems, at least in most Westernised classical and popular music. As film-music moves towards the atonal, then, it also moves along an axis from the promotion of a signifying dimension to the promotion of an 'immediate-rendering' dimension - that is, the excess fragment of the signifier. These two uses of aural resources were noticeable (in a relatively tamer form) in the Romantic and late-Romantic idioms from which film music took much of its inspiration.

What Peter Franklin seems to be suggesting is that a film-musical analysis can attach itself too rigidly to an approach privileging the signifying dimensions of the musical

score. Often there are moments of the musical score when aural signification (set in support of the narrative) seems less important that the more immediate experience of forms themselves, with what we might call the affective properties of the aural sign. Therefore, we need not reduce our analysis to what Franklin describes as, "the crude code of signification that 'leitmotivic' film-score analysis has often been reduced to and Steiner may have believed himself to be using."[28] Instead, Franklin suggests a reading of the *Kong* score in which music "both invites and repels motivic interpretation."[29]

In his analysis of *King Kong*'s 'A Boat in the Fog' cue, for example, Franklin notes: "its role in the soundtrack is that of a kind of fog, an absence, a lack of visual and aural signification, whose slow and quiet harp ostinato suggests the trope of music as nature."[30] Franklin is careful to mark the importance of musical strategy here to the general cinematic pleasures inherent in the text, noting how "every device and strategy of the cinematic narrative seems geared to signal that we are entering the film's central pleasure zone: as we enter the fog, so we enter the realm of music."[31]

Horror film music, in fact, as we move towards the post-classical era, has increasingly less need of a narrative-based hermeneutics. As argued earlier, the genre has always been based on the provision of sensation and shock rather than narrative or thematic integrity, and this is especially the case in the pre- and post-classical eras. Early horror music

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[28] *ibid.*, p. 97.
[29] *ibid.*, p. 96.
[30] *ibid.*, p. 90.
[31] *ibid.*, p. 91.

specialists such as Hans Salter, David Raskin, and Frank Skinner were selective as to the techniques they appropriated from the romanticist idiom, regarding the new musical resources of modernist classical music (Schoenberg, Stravinsky et al.) to be more attuned to the formal and aesthetic requirements of the genre. However, as suggested, some of the principles central to a modernist philosophy have their origin in the more irrational aspects of late-romanticism.

From *King Kong* onwards, a division appears between the classical Hollywood film music model and an alternative model introduced (albeit in a relatively tame form) within the Horror film, that shifts further and further away from that classical model.[32] The extent to which one of the two functional modes is privileged, in any particular genre, is dependent upon the extent to which each individual genre (and film) requires either leitmotivic/signifying support for its narrative dimensions, or a more 'immediate-rendering' use of music in intensifying the visceral impact of cinematic shock and/or spectacle.

Hans Salter, talking of his much-respected score for *The Wolf Man* (1941) noted that, "in musical terms we stayed within the bounds of tonality and did not try to write anything too complicated."[33] As we have seen with Steiner's *Kong* score, these two approaches often occur within the same soundtrack. Although the late-Romantic idiom may have

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[32] These two types were outlined in Chapter One (see the quotation from Randall D. Larson on page 79).
[33] Hans Salter quoted in Liner Notes for *The Monster Music of Hans J. Salter and Frank Skinner*, Marco Polo CD Release, (1995), Marco Polo: 8.22374.

initiated a shift towards the irrational, non-signifying uses of music - drifting, as it did, towards a more dissonant musical expression - it was the significant leap made by the modernist composers that cemented forever the use of avant-garde, experimental musical techniques within the popular horror film.

Although, Hollywood was initially reluctant to comply, the various changes in the industry brought with them the realisation that techniques of the musical avant-garde could be used successfully within a popular cinematic context. In many ways, the horror and science-fiction film (and to some extent the burgeoning film noir style) became a testing grounds for this kind of audio-visual experimentation in the popular sphere. This period of evolution coincided with a wider period of transition within Hollywood, wherein ideas about cinematic pleasures were also developing. In relation to the requirements of the horror genre, these styles would find a powerful expression in the work of directors who began to translate this audio-visual experimentation into a more generalised cinematic enjoyment.

The next section now turns to that transition, noting how these particular musical resources facilitated this type of cinematic entertainment, changing the functional priorities that govern the conjoining of sound and image within the post-classical horror film. In addition, the next section pays close attention to how the changes described above engendered a new symbiotic relationship between popular entertainment forms and avant-garde styles and techniques (in music and film), with the emphasis on how the horror genre can be considered as a pioneering locus of such trans-cultural appropriation.

2.4. Hyper-Aesthetics and Horror Film Music: Phenomenological Evolutions and Economic Contingencies.

Writing at the start of this transitional period in mainstream film, the Marxist critic, Hanns Eisler outlined the cinematic potential of the 'new musical resources' of modernism. His *Composing For the Films*[34] (co-authored by Theodor Adorno) exposed the standardised production practices and economic biases of classical Hollywood cinema. Eisler, in particular, criticised the standardised conventions of the classical Hollywood film score, suggesting ways in which experimental musical styles can be best appropriated by the mainstream cinema. It says a great deal about popular cinema's resistance to 'new' musical forms that, by 1947 (35 or so years after the first real modernist interventions in music), that these techniques were still yet to be fully incorporated into mainstream cinematic genres.

Referring to the "new musical resources" specifically as "techniques elaborated particularly in the works of Schoenberg, Bartok, and Stravinsky during the last thirty years [approx 1917-47]," Eisler notes that, "all important in their music is not the increased number of dissonances, but the dissolution of the conventionalized musical idiom."[35] In other words, the removal of the architectonic and hierarchically-arranged systems of tonal harmony discussed earlier. Eisler very perceptively recognised the

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[34] Hans Eisler and Theodor Adorno, *Composing For The Films* (London: Dobson, 1951). Originally Published 1947.
[35] *ibid*, p. 32-33.

affinity these new musical resources had for the rendering of cinematic horror. In fact, Eisler's idea regarding the utilisation of these modernist musical principles and techniques are impressively prescient in the context of this study, as they place an emphasis on the fundamental importance of shock and sensation in cinema, and also links this back to the horror film's Gothic literary and theatrical heritage. Eisler's remarks in this area are thus worth quoting at length:

> The suitability of the modern, unfamiliar resources should be recognised from the standpoint of the motion picture itself. The fact that this form of drama originated in the county fair and the cheap melodrama has left traces that are still apparent; *sensation is its very life element*. This is not to be understood solely in a negative sense, as a lack of taste and discrimination [...]. The horrors of sensational literary and cinematic trash lay bare part of the barbaric foundation of civilisation. To the extent that the motion picture in its sensationalism is the heir of the popular horror story and dime novel and remains below the established standards of middle-class art, it is in a position to shatter those standards, precisely through the use of sensation, and to gain access to collective energies that are inaccessible to sophisticated literature and painting. It is this very perspective that cannot be reached with the means of traditional music. But modern music is suitable to it. The fear expressed in the dissonances of Schoenberg's most radical period [which result in the complete removal of a tonal context or hierarchy] far surpasses the measure of fear conceivable to the average middle-class listener – my italics.[36]

The above quotation is of a major importance to this study for three main reasons. Firstly, it provides a historical overview of the stylistic practices of classical Hollywood film composers. Secondly, it postulates an alternative functional model that eventually becomes the basis for the horror genre's utilisation of these musical forms within a popular entertainment context. Finally, Eisler makes clear the connection, not just

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[36] *ibid*, p. 36.

between 'shock-value' and the cinema of attractions, but also argues how these aspects retain their importance for the cinema of the late-forties and beyond.[37] Additionally, Eisler argued this spectacular/sensational basis of popular cinema is powerfully supported by the *formal* characteristics of the new musical resources. This technique owes a substantial debt to the *pre*-cinematic forms of horror discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Eisler's work, composed, as it is, around these issues, provides a secure theoretical foundation upon which to base my own theoretical propositions.

In terms of musical form, Eisler has much to say about the aesthetic stagnation of classical film music, providing a point-by-point critique of some of its most formulaic aspects. Of course, writing in 1947, Eisler had yet to witness the same process of standardisation tarnish the use of experimental musical forms within Horror. Each of Eisler's criticisms, then, are worth observing in some detail, as they contribute to an overall description of an alternative model of film music constructed around a hyper-aesthetics of cinema, which would find a powerful expression within the post-1960 horror film.

Eisler reserves much of his criticism for the leitmotif, the most fundamental structural component of classical film music. He argues that leitmotifs are fundamentally *non*-cinematic in nature, as in order to develop its fullest potential, a leitmotif requires the epic scope of opera, a situation where "the atomization of the musical element is

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[37] Both Tom Gunning and Linda Williams link these connections further still to a *post*-1960 mainstream cinema.

paralleled by the heroic dimensions of the composition of the whole. This relation is entirely absent in the motion picture, which requires continual interruption of one element by another rather than continuity."[38]

This argument harks back to the silent era when the musical accompaniment assured some kind of emotional and narrative continuity over the abrupt changes in scene. "Musically," Eisler continues, "shorter forms prevail, and the leitmotif is unsuitable here because of this brevity of forms which must be *complete in themselves* – my italics."[39] This point supports Eisler's second criticism: classical ('narrative') film music's overuse of overlong melodically (i.e. horizontally-arranged) memorable 'tunes.' Quite predictably, Eisler's concern lies with Hollywood's use of these memorable tunes for consumerist purposes. But he also criticises the formal construction of melodic phrases (and harmony itself), questioning their appropriateness to the cinematic form. "The conventional concept of melody, Eisler notes, is based on criteria of the crudest sort [...] easy intelligibility is guaranteed by harmonic and rhythmic symmetry, and by the paraphrasing of accepted harmonic procedures; tunefulness is assured by the preponderance of small diatonic intervals."[40]

We can begin to see in Eisler's suggestions the construction of a new type of film-musical aesthetic: a *hyper-aesthetic* of brevity and an economy of form, a truly new

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[38] Hanns Eisler, 1951, p. 5.
[39] *ibid*, p. 5.
[40] *ibid*, p. 7.

dynamism utterly at odds with the gluttony and bombast of the classical 'symphonic' style. *Because* of this economy of form, and not in spite of it, such a hyper-aesthetic technique is particularly well-placed to provide a powerful sensorial impact. After all, in the inception of a post-modern hyper-aesthetics of cinema, experimental musical forms contribute two important formal characteristics: *concentration (via intensification)* and the potential for spatiotemporal *destabilisation*. The importance of these two elements shall become more apparent as the study proceeds, as they form the *syntactical* basis for the shift to a post-modern/post-classical cinema of attractions.

What is particularly interesting about Eisler's ideas regarding the proposed use of experimental music in popular film is that he not only outlines the essential nature of these two syntactical characteristics (concentration and destabilisation) but draws a correlation *between* the two. The very notion of tonal *stability* in the film-musical experience is *necessarily* based in the longer musical phrases. As Eisler suggests, "Consciousness of a tonal centre can be achieved only by parallel episodes [...]. No tonal incident in the sense of a major-minor tonality is intelligible as such; it becomes "tonal" only by means of relationships [...] Thus all tonal music necessarily contains an element of the 'superfluous.'"[41]

Therefore, we can assert a relationship here between the destabilising effects of the *atonal* phrase and the shorter musical phrase. Tonality and stability are mutually

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[41] *ibid.*, p. 38.

contingent on the very architectonic harmonic contexts that a syntactical concentration (of the kind Eisler describes above) removes. "The brevity of the new music is fundamentally different," Eisler claims, "all this results in a condensation of the musical form that goes far beyond the romantic fragments."[42] The horror genre in particular begins to marshal this formal brevity within its overall hyper-aesthetic style. This becomes a defining element of the post-modern/post-classical mode of cinematic enjoyment (the '*jouis-sense*' or 'meaning-in-enjoyment') introduced in the previous chapter (see page 79).

This type of syntactical concentration was also complemented visually in the *early* Universal sound-era horror films, although the spirited development of musical techniques would see this formal unity - between aural and visual components of the cinematic sign - temporarily out of step during the studio-era. In a similar way to the manner by which aural concentration achieved, visual concentration results from the removal of a certain context. Moreover, this technique is linked by theorists to the provision of some sort of aesthetic shock within the genre. Phil Hardy, for example, claims this particular stylistic technique separates an (early) American sound-era horror film strategy from its European counterpart. This split is indicative of Hollywood's approach to horror, especially its subordination of all the techniques of cinematic expression to the demands of genre entertainment.

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[42] *ibid.*, p. 39.

We can also see how this marshalling of cinematic aesthetics exploits the kinaesthetic dynamics of sound and image. Whereas the late-silent and early-sound European horror films were loaded with philosophical and metaphysical subtext, the American horror films adopted a celebration of *form itself* through the promotion of a visceral, hyper-aesthetic impact. Thus, both strategies involve two very different types of subjective experience. Phil Hardy's comparative analysis of the opening sequences of Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) and Dr. Robert Wiene's *Das Cabinet Des Dr Caligari* (1919) details the formal and psychological differences characterising these two basic approaches, noting how the American version privileges the provision of a visceral aesthetic shock. He states:

> Whale opens on a shock effect – the hands on the rope in close-up [...] Whale's aim here is not to provide us with a *context* for what will follow, but to introduce the shocks and terrors that lie ahead [...] Wiene's film opens very differently [...] Both film makers start by taking us out of the familiar, everyday world, but in radically different ways, one shocks us, the other prepares us for a literally distorted world in which fantasies reign.[43]

Therefore, the horror genre's incorporation of experimental music(s) is not the only functioning element in the creation of aesthetic shock through a concentration of form - it is part of wider aesthetic of destabilisation. But how does music actually affect the spectator in these terms? Music and sound can fix the spectator within a particular spatiotemporal frame of reference. For instance, sound effects and non-diegetic music can relay exactly how near or how far away an audience considers either an image or

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[43] Phil Hardy (ed), 1993, p. x.

sound to be, in relation to the characters, and also in relation to themselves, something not always clearly signified by the image alone. And locating and fixing ourselves spatially in this manner relates to how stable in general the cinematic subject feels. in themselves, and in relation to the wider cinematic experience.

Of course, cinema sometimes works to divest the spectator of any fixed points of reference. Music can radically alter our perception of certain spatial and temporal references provided through the cinematic experience. Tonal relations (or the lack thereof) are absolutely critical in this respect. As tonal relations are felt in respect of expected movement, non-diegetic music is in a privileged position to destabilise the spectator. Again, the *formal* traits of musical resources are relevant here, its abstract dimensions, and not what they provide in terms of a symbolic potential. Of course, atonal music denies any kind of spatial fixity, it does not have a central 'key' or tonal basis to diverge from in the first place. The affective potential of atonal aural signs, therefore, shifts to suggestions of movement and sensory impact from rhythmic characteristics and the materiality of timbre. This is especially true in the case of post-Dolby™ cinema, but the technological progressions of the 1950s also enhanced the destabilising potential of music. Six-track stereophonic sound, for example, extended the dynamic range of what audiences could perceive.

These fundamental motives governed the scoring of a horror film, and have often been undervalued in studies of film music due to the field's concentration on classically-inclined narrative efficacy. But these motives are reprioritised within a post-classical

aesthetics of horror. And chief amongst these is music's ability to articulate a sense of *movement* and *momentum*. Experimental musical techniques can powerfully articulate the temporal and spatial destabilisation central to our cinematic experience of horror films. This has both aesthetic and psychological ramifications, as Kurt London notes,

> The reason, which is aesthetically and psychologically most essential to explain the need for music as an accompaniment of the silent film, is without doubt *the rhythm of the film as an art of movement*. We are not accustomed to apprehend movement as an artistic form without accompanying sounds, or at least audible rhythms...It was the task of musical accompaniment to give [films] accentuation and profundity.[44]

Although this function was relevant to most types of early film, it has a special relevance to the textuality of horror cinema, in which the form *itself* is used to accentuate the psychological jolt, a technique deemed central to its generic success. Therefore, the accentuation of movement suggested by the accompanying music is central to the mechanics of cinematic horror, itself bound up in the *inevitability* of movement and propelled by the music and the editing of the film. A significant evolution pioneered by the horror film is the linking of this inevitability of movement to general cinematic enjoyment. Above all others, this is the reason why the popular horror film has appropriated the traits of experimental music to such a large degree, particularly the serial techniques of Schoenberg et al., with their refusal of a tonal centre. As David Sonnenschein confirms,

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[44] Kurt London quoted in Martin Miller Marks, *Music and the Silent Film: Contexts and Case Studies 1895-1924*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 27).

> With no reference for our natural senses and no short-term memory functioning, we lose any anchor or location sense. The music of Schoenberg and Hindemith has been likened to a nauseating amusement park ride in which one is tossed in every conceivable, unpredictable direction for too long. It is not enjoyable, makes the ears hurt and the body want to escape. Indeed this may be the desired effect at a particular moment in a film.[45]

Sonnenschein directly links the use of experimental musical resources to the 'rollercoaster' experience of cinema which Linda Williams describes in relation to the post-classical cinema of attractions. This use of film music does not attempt a metaphorical, added-value translation; instead, it attempts to accentuate the abstract characteristics of non-diegetic music, in order to cinematically render what Eisler describes as the "un-metaphorical contents [...] beyond the range of stylization. This requires musical means that do not represent a stylized picture of pain but rather *its tonal record - my italics.*"[46] Here music is not engaged in the processes of signification, the audio-visual sign is not seeking meaning *as such*, but functions on a more elementary level. It attempts to immediately render something of the materiality and corporeal impact of the cinematic (audio-visual) sign.

The spatial fixing of the spectator in the three-dimensional space of the cinematic environment is powerfully compromised by the formal traits of musical modernism. A 1912 Times review of the first performance of Schoenberg's *Five Orchestral Pieces*, displays a shrewd insight into the spatiotemporal dynamics of modernist musical styles,

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[45] David Sonnenschein, *Sound Design: The Expressive Power of Music, Voice, and Sound Effects in Cinema*, (Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions, 2001), p. 106.
[46] Hanns Eisler, 1951, p. 38.

and the ramifications for a developing aesthetics of cinematic horror. "The listener," the reviewer notes, "was like a dweller in Flatland straining his mind to understand the ways of that mysterious occupant of three dimensions, man."[47] A more fitting description of the subjective experience of the visceral horror film (as it evolved throughout the fifties and sixties) would be difficult to find. The music of Stravinsky, for example, can make the listener loose their metrical bearings. This results "in a heightened sense of engagement," Pieter C. Van den Toorn notes, "brought about by disruption. By means of disruption we are brought into closer contact with what we are internally, so to speak, with what we are, deep, down under."[48] The implications here for a 'psycho-stylistic' interpretation of cinematic subjectivity, through Žižek's late-Lacanian focus on the Real, are immediately apparent.

The cinematic spectator's ostensibly paradoxical enjoyment of this destabilising experience can be linked to the wider evolutionary developments that characterise this transitional period in the history of popular cinema. The textual efficacy of the horror film is of paramount importance to the spectator's direct encounter with cinematic form in this instance. Through these visceral techniques, experimental music(s) of the period also manifest a general anxiety and slippage in self-identity, not just through the changing themes of post-classical cinema, *but directly in the forms themselves.*

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[47] Quoted in Arthur Jacobs, 1972, p. 276.
[48] Pieter C. van den Toorn, 'Stravinsky, Adorno, and the Art of Displacement' in *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 87, No. 3 (Fall, 2004), pp. 468-509, p. 494.

More specifically, it is through the abstract dynamics of these textual evolutions themselves that subconscious manifestations of the wider anxieties and crises in self-identity are manifest. As Royal S. Brown says of the murder cue in *Psycho*: "Herrmann musically brought to the surface the subliminal pulse of violence which in 1960 still lay beneath the rational facades of American society."[49] The inception of a hyper-aesthetics of horror cinema can, then, be interpreted as a manifestation of the collective subconscious, and of the general insecurities of the period. The *raison d'etre* of contemporary cinema was to translate these underlying feelings of unease (within the social sphere) into a more general feeling of abstracted displacement and destabilisation. The audio-visual syntax of popular horror cinema began, at this time, to morph this energy and anxiety into a formal analogue of a fictionalised excitement, through a thrilling discomfort and displacement that, as we shall see, was at the same time very *Real*.

There are certain historical and economic determinants within the American film industry that also relate further to this type of aesthetic intensification. The incredibly prescient timing of Eisler's theoretical study, for example, illuminated the formal evolutions that were to follow. Written during the war years, its publication (in 1947) occurred just before the main industrial event most often referred in discussions of the early signs of transition towards the post-classical: the 1948 Paramount decree. Also, a new spirit of independence was developing in the fifties that saw directors experimenting

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[49] Royal S. Brown, 1994, p. 174.

with many stylistic and technological developments. Peter Kramer has explained how "processes of stylistic change," were brought about "for example, by the introduction of new technologies [...] or by the encounter with alternative stylistic systems such as European art cinema."[50]

Both the new technologies and encounters with alternative styles relate directly to the changes noticed in the horror genre over the transition from the classical to the post-classical. The early years of this period see some salient advances in cinematic technology, which were followed by an increasing appropriation of art-house techniques by Hollywood. The Paramount Decree, in effect, catalysed these changes, gathering momentum throughout the 1950s. Indeed, no other event marks as clearly the beginning of the end of one era, the classical, and the start of the transition to another, the post-classical (or post-modern).

Of course, classical Hollywood cinema, formulated over half a century, didn't simply vanish with the inception of the post-classical era. However, developments such as Cinerama™, six-track stereophony, and the economical competition created by the rise of television and independent film companies - a response to the end of vertical integration - fostered in the majors an urgent need for increasingly novel styles and techniques. The need to differentiate and specialise their product meant studios were more willing to turn to ever more experimental techniques, in order to individuate the

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[50] Peter Kramer, 'Post-classical Hollywood' in Joanne Hollows, Peter Hutchings, and Mark Jancovich (eds.), *The Film Studies Reader*, (London: Arnold, 2000, pp. 174-180), p. 178.

cinematic experience from that of television. Thus, interest in the techniques of the avant-garde (directed especially towards progressions in the European art-house cinema) was matched by progressions in the technological capabilities of cinema, including film-sound reproduction.

Observing this seismic shift in Hollywood practices, it is important to note that such issues were already present in discussions surrounding earlier aesthetic evolution and changes in modes of reception. These are certainly not peculiar to a discussion of post-1960 horror cinema, but relate to individual examples of a more general process of formal evolution that gradually intensified. Peter Kramer notes of the main tenets of a "post-modern" cinema:

> Juvenilization, the technological renewal of the cinematic experience, the trend towards big event pictures, and the displacement of narrative by spectacle, had all been the subject of critical debates in the 1950s [...]. Such continuities in critical debates and in Hollywood's aesthetic and commercial logic often go unacknowledged. Consequently, recent critical discourses about the New Hollywood (in both its restricted and general meaning) have tended to exaggerate its newness, instead of situating the New Hollywood in relation to long-term trends in the post-war period.[51]

In the context of horror film and its use of experimental musical techniques, the cinematic 'newness' introduced across this transition can be read in terms of a more constant evolution of generic traits that, as I have discussed, go back to the 'primitive' cinema and beyond. The 'shock-affect' of this pronounced textuality is bound up in a

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[51] ibid., p. 175.

hyper-aesthetic form, characteristics that were promoted by the reconfiguring of cinematic imperatives, a process that itself marked the onset of a post-classical, post-modern cinema.

This post-modern rearranging of popular cinematic imperatives, Henry Jenkins notes, revolved around the following: "a breakdown of classical storytelling conventions, a merger of previously separated genres, a fragmentation of linear narrative, a privileging of spectacle over causality, the odd juxtaposition of previously distinct emotional tones and aesthetic materials."[52] In general, then, post-classical horror cinema conforms to all of Jenkins' proposed traits. As this chapter has argued, the horror genre's relationship to classical narrative modes has always been ambivalent, a fact mirrored in the genre's singular use of film music to link horrifying spectacles together. To conclude, strong evidence has been put forward as to the type of 'textuality' emphasised by the popular horror film. The next chapter observes Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, and begins a detailed assessment of the types of musical changes the film introduced into the sphere of popular cinema.

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[52] Henry Jenkins, 'Historical Poetics' in Joanne Hollows and Mark Jancovich (eds.), *Approaches to Popular Film*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 99-122, p. 101).

Chapter Three

POST-CLASSICAL EVOLUTIONS IN CINEMATIC ENJOYMENT: PSYCHO, *EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC, AND THE HYPER-AESTHETICS OF POPULAR CINEMA*

Hitchcock not only intensified cinema, he intensified life.

Francois Truffaut

Someday we won't even have to make a movie – there'll be electrodes implanted in their brains, and we'll just press different buttons and they'll go 'oooh' and 'aaah' and we'll frighten them, and make them laugh. Won't that be wonderful?

Alfred Hitchcock in conversation with Ernest Lehman

3. Introduction

The above insights into Hitchcock's early sixties cinema seek to explicate core experiences intrinsic to the director's cinematic philosophy during this period. In particular, the emphasis stressed on raw visceral affect and cinematic intensification relates directly to the theoretical observations outlined in this chapter, which focuses on Hitchcock's most 'intensified' work of cinematic art: *Psycho* (1960). The previous chapter suggested that the primary enjoyment taken from horror cinema resides in an encounter with some kind of visceral impact, emphasising the role of experimental music(s) in rendering this particular sensorial shock as part of an overall aesthetic strategy.

This chapter describes how Bernard Herrmann's pioneering musical score for *Psycho* works as a key component of Hitchcock's overall aesthetic strategy. It also assesses the wider ramifications of the director's appropriation of experimental musical resources. As the opening quote from Truffaut implies, these stretch far beyond a mere evolution in the cinematic aesthetics of horror, reconfiguring the whole subjective relationship posited between spectator and 'text' - or what we should now, *pace* Altman, refer to more precisely as the cinematic *event(s)* (see p. 39-40). Certainly, there is no shortage of criticism describing *Psycho* and 1960 as a crucial moment in the rise of contemporary cinema, indexing the shift to a post-modern cinematic aesthetics. Where I break with previous scholarly focus is in my emphasis on the role played by cinematic form in general, and the musical score in particular, in realising such a transition.

With specific audio-visual analyses of sequences from *Psycho*, and building upon the musicological observations of Chapter Two, this chapter discusses the significant role of experimental music in constructing a post-modern, *hyper*-aesthetics of cinematic expression, as rendered through the means of a syntactical intensification and concentration of form. Split into three sections, the chapter concentrates its analysis on *Psycho*'s cinematic syntax, measuring the efficacy of Hitchcock's cinematic signs as a key currency of the psychological and libidinal economies governing the spectator's subjective investment in the cinema-as-event(s). *Psycho* is particularly useful for this kind of reassessment marking, as it does, a significant shift in cinematic sensibilities within both the director's own aesthetic regime, and the specific 'enjoyment,' or

jouissance created for the audience.

Before undertaking any detailed formal analysis, the first section of this chapter situates *Psycho* in relation to some wider post-modern/post-classical trends - in particular, the reprioritisation of the hierarchy of cinematic imperatives that amounts to the primary manifestation of this post-classical shift. There are three main significant theoretical areas that relate to such a reprioritisation that were introduced in Chapter One. Firstly, there is the promotion of a visceral, destabilising impact, which is implicit in the 'rollercoaster' analogies of Linda Williams' and the 'post-modern, cinema of attractions.'[1] Secondly, there is Elisabeth Weis' notion of 'extra-subjectivity.' This is particularly relevant to this study as her delineation of the extra-subjective period of Hitchcock's oeuvre (c.1958-1963) approximates the period of Hitchcock's career concentrated upon by this study.[2] The final area involves the processes of collapsing these inter-subjective, Symbolic networks, attributed to *Psycho* by critics such as Andrew Tudor.[3] He suggests that *Psycho*'s main strategy simulates a 'psychotic' collapsing of the *self itself.*

Crucially, Elisabeth Weis points to an increased reliance on *aural* techniques in Hitchcock's extra-subjective films, and this chapter discusses this notion with specific

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[1] See Linda Williams, 'Discipline and Fun: Psycho and Postmodern Cinema' in Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (eds.), *Reinventing Film Studies* (London: Arnold, 2000).
[2] See Elisabeth Weis, *The Silent Scream: Alfred Hitchcock's Soundtrack* (New Jersey: Associated University , 1982).
[3] See Andrew Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Film* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

reference to the experimental tendencies of Bernard Herrmann's scores. More importantly, Slavoj Žižek also defines Weis' extra-subjective mode of engagement (which he actually terms 'trans-subjective') as an increased preoccupation with an 'excess of the Real' as interpreted within the psychical economies of cinematic spectatorship.

Since cinematic form is so crucial to Žižek's hermeneutics, the second part of this chapter offers detailed formal analyses of the *Psycho* score, both in strictly musical terms, and as an element of Hitchcock's overall cinematic strategy. In addition to emphasising the late-romantic and early modernist influences at play, the focus is directed towards the anti-narrational/anti-suturing stance (at least, that is, in relation to orthodox interpretations of such concepts) that is adopted via Hitchcock's singular incorporation of the musical syntax into his overall strategy of cinematic excess. It is crucial to observe Herrmann's score in this way, as one, albeit key, aspect of a larger cinematic strategy. In purely stylistic terms, the *Psycho* score is rightly considered as strictly modernist. As this chapter argues, it is Hitchcock's populist re-appropriation of Herrmann's avant-gardist tendencies that directs the *musical* contribution to the film's pioneering *post*-modern qualities. The reasons for engaging the theories of Williams, Weis et al. are, firstly, to explain how experimental musical forms work to render the destabilisation and visceral impact central to the experience of the post-modern cinematic of attractions. And secondly, to explain this experience in the terms of a *collapsing of subjectivity*, within a post-classical/post-modern milieu which privileges pure form over narrative content to these every ends.

In the final section, Hitchcock's extra-subjective films are used to outline the distinct parallels between all three of the theoretical concepts described earlier (see page 128). and Žižek's late-Lacanian framework. This relates back to the overall theoretical intention of this thesis: to explicate a comprehensive theoretical configuration that attributes to this promotion of semiotic excess, not just a place, but a *constitutive structural role* within the larger psychical economies of cinematic subjectivity and libidinal investment. Concentrating on this formal excess, this chapter explains how certain characteristics of Herrmann's scores contribute to an overall rendering of the Real, directing the physiological and psychological responses of the audience.

A particular emphasis is placed upon the composer's use of atonality, harmonic ambiguity, arrhythmic imbalance, and a textural emphasis on instrumental timbre. Žižek has described 'fragments' of the cinematic sign as nothing but pure materialised enjoyment; these are what Lacan described as *sinthomes* producing *jouissance*. These fragments represent 'reality' differently. Instead of working through the Imaginary and Symbolic dimensions of cinema, they work instead through the pure sign of *rendu* (i.e. rendering) - a concept Žižek appropriates from the sonic theorist, Michel Chion.[4] This chapter comparatively assesses how such paradoxical 'signs of the Real' differ from the orthodox interpretations of non-diegetic music found in the classical, studio-era model.

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[4] See Slavoj Žižek, 'The Undergrowth of Enjoyment' in Edmond Wright and Elisabeth Wright (eds.), *The Žižek Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 11-36.

In summary, this chapter seeks to apply its contextual findings in support of an interpretation of *Psycho* as a watershed moment in the history of the horror film - a moment in which the 'uncanny' resonances of the Gothic and the 'cinema-of-attractions' are reclaimed and revised for a mainstream genre responding to increasing industrial, economic, and cultural imperatives with large-scale transition and flux. *Psycho* epitomises such a response, and this chapter seeks to theoretically explicate the importance of experimental musical resources in establishing this post-modern, cinema of attractions.

3.1 Resituating *Psycho* - Form, Content, and the Role of Soundtrack in the Post-Modern Cinema of Attractions.

Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* often operates as a nexus for debates surrounding a modernist/post-modernist and/or classical/post-classical delineation in mainstream cinema. Critics such as Paul Wells and Andrew Tudor argue how *Psycho* marks the beginning of 'contemporary horror cinema,' manifesting the general crises of anxiety and self-identity indicative of the emergent post-modern condition. For example, Wells explains how Hitchcock's first real foray into the horror genre expresses "the core meanings of the horror genre: psycho-sexual and psychosomatic angst, non-socialised violent imperatives, the instability and inappropriate nature of established socio-cultural

structures and the oppressive omnipresence of 'death.'"[5] Efficiently summating these core meanings, Wells continues:

> *Psycho* 'ends' the horror movie and ushers in the post-modern era in the genre. As Fred Botting confirms, after *Psycho* these key themes, already subject to ambiguity and contradiction in many texts, become increasingly 'unstable, unfixed and ungrounded in any reality, truth or identity [...]. There emerges the threat of sublime excess.'[6]

Of course, this is not to claim the film did not revolutionise the horror genre, but that it did so via a particularly excessive *concentration* of form initiated in response to the changing thematic preoccupations of the post-classical horror film. *Psycho*, therefore, is important for the promotion of such 'sublime excess' *directly* as an *excess of form*, intensifying the destabilising properties of cinema.

In Chapter Two, it was noted how this promotion of destabilisation and formal intensification emerged as a response to various economic, technological, and cultural pressures, exerted on popular cinema throughout the transitional period of the 1950s. Despite the promotion of cinematic spectacle and sensation - that Williams describes *a propos* of her post-modern, post-classical cinema of attractions - the beginnings of this post-classical period does not involve a *complete* break with the stylistic tendencies of cinema (horror or otherwise) previous to 1960. In fact, a certain amount of overlap does exist. More specifically, this type of overlap is mirrored by concomitant shifts in

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[5] Paul Wells, *The Horror Genre: From Beelzebub to Blair Witch* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 76.
[6] *ibid*, p. 76.

Hitchcock's own ongoing stylistic evolution. Paula Cohen, for example. notes how the last phase of Hitchcock's career exhibits an overlap with the previous phase, which begins with a "shift in emphasis in his films of the late 1950s and 1960s [...]. These films no longer refer to a novelistic tradition or a family nexus. They no longer support *consistent norms or encourage emotional investment but operate, rather, as exercises in design and purveyors of sensation* - my italics."[7]

Cohen's remarks offer a succinct summary upon the changes *Psycho* brought to the horror genre. They not only point to the specific nature of thematic destabilisation the film manifests, but also to its contingent promotion of cinematic form and sensory impact. From this point on, these particular attributes take priority within both the spectator's (and the director's) hierarchy of cinematic imperatives. That said, although *Psycho* marks an increasing delegation of thematic and narrative absorption, a true understanding of the film's formal evolutions requires an acknowledgement of its thematic shifts. *Psycho* temporarily redirected the themes of horror away from the supernatural, towards the more secular and psychological concerns of contemporary society. Importantly, these thematic shifts were manifested formally, such formal evolutions themselves related to the changing nature of the 'object' of horror for the spectator, or, more precisely, the very form in which such objects were *rendered cinematically*.

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[7] Paula Cohen, *Alfred Hitchcock: The Legacy of Victorianism* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky, 1995), p. 3.

Previous to *Psycho*, the object of an audience's horror amounted to an externalised threat.[8] However, the film engendered a shift towards a more internalised threat, originating not just from within the westernised, patriarchal order but, indeed. from within the self itself. The fear of 'the Other' was now a fear of (but also a kind of obsessive curiosity in) something much more personal, if not exactly familiar, to each of us. The spectator of this 'paranoid' horror (willingly) loses the security of a clearly defined Other - the same security positioning us, 'suturing' us, in respect of the text. Andrew Tudor posits this reformulation amidst a more general shift from what he terms 'secure' (i.e. externalised) horror, towards a 'paranoid' (i.e. internalised) horror.

This reformulation facilitates an understanding of why the horror genre is aligned by critics (including Williams and Wells) with a burgeoning post-modern aesthetics of cinema, partly because it incorporates the collapsing of certain meta-narratives (of science, religion, and familial structures), but also because it enacts a collapsing, or de-centring, of the *self itself.* As Jancovich stresses, "The crisis of faith in paranoid horror not only leads to doubts about society's institutions, but also about personal identity. The distinction between order and disorder becomes blurred and uncertain, and the abnormal or monstrous frequently erupts from *within* the normal, rather than invading it from *without.*"[9] Furthermore, Jancovich adds that, "if paranoid horror is founded on a blurring of distinctions between the normal and abnormal, order and chaos, it is also based on a

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[8] For example, the thinly disguised metaphor of the eastern European as social 'Other,' a characterisation common to Universal's vampire films of the late-thirties and forties.
[9] Mark Jancovich, *Rational Fears: American Horror in the 1950s*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996, p. 228).

blurring of distinctions between the rational and the irrational, the conscious and the unconscious."[10]

This is why Žižek's late-Lacanian psychoanalytical framework, centred on the Real (a psychic register connected explicitly by Lacan to the unconscious), can be particularly useful for explicating the relationship between cinematic form(s) and the psychical economies that govern our subjective investment in the 'cinema-as-event.' The point to emphasise is this shift towards a paranoid horror engenders a contingent change in the positioning of the spectator in respect of the cinematic 'event.' No longer sutured into identification with the 'text,' the spectator instead experiences some kind of 'short-circuiting' of this process, via the direct visceral impact with cinematic affect - a physiological *and* psychological impact directly inputted into the unconscious. Indeed, this is Žižek's basic thesis. Post-modern cinema promotes an excess of the Real, a preoccupation evident within both the director's visceral aesthetic strategy and the spectator's enjoyment of the experience. Hence the importance of conceiving the cinematic experience as *event(s)*, since spectators of the post-modern, cinema of attractions prioritise their visceral engagement with the abstract dimensions of the cinematic sign, not what it signifies.

A further parallel can be drawn between Žižek's framework and the distinctions that Tudor draws between madness - which characterises 'secure' horror - and psychosis

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[10] *ibid*, p. 230.

which characterises 'paranoid' horror. Succinctly describing the fundamental ambiguity characterising the anxieties of contemporary horror audiences, Žižek details how a "paranoid construction," helps the spectator, "evade the fact that (to cite Lacan again) 'the Other does not exist' [...] avoid confronting the blind, contingent automatism which is constitutive of the symbolic order."[11] Within the contemporary horror film, the spectator comes to terms with their paradoxical 'enjoyment,' or in Lacanian terms, the *jouissance* taken, in their visceral celebration of destabilisation, and even - as in the final scene of *Psycho* - the trauma of complete psychotic breakdown. The only real way of dealing with this sadomasochistic shift in the libidinal economies of cinematic spectatorship (the eruptions of 'abnormality from within' Tudor refers to) is to fictionalise these eruptions of the Real through a 'paranoid construction,' linked implicitly in Žižek's model to the notion of fantasy. Of course, fantasy is of fundamental importance to all dimensions of the contemporary cinematic experience but, as Tony Myers notes, the Žižekian-Lacanian framework reminds us that, what we get when fantasy collapses, is not "a return to reality, but a much more traumatic return to the Real."[12]

"Tudor's study," Jancovich claims, "does offer an alternative way of approaching the crises of identity and the psychotic killers relationship to it,"[13] and Žižek's late-Lacanian hermeneutics provides a framework in which to situate a *psycho-stylistic* account of our

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[11] Slavoj Žižek, 'The Undergrowth of Enjoyment' in Edmond Wright and Elisabeth Wright (eds.), *The Žižek Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 22.
[12] Tony Myers, Liner Notes for *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* DVD (dir. Sophie Fiennes, Netherlands, Lone Star/Mischief/Amoeba Film Production, 2005, 150mins).
[13] Marc Jancovich, 1996, p. 231.

engagement with these two modes of cinematic horror. Just as spectators of classical Hollywood cinema are sutured into a narcissistic empathetic identification with characters, situations and so on, the post-classical spectator does not seek narcissistic identification, as much as they indulge in an 'extra-subjective' engagement with the cinema of spectacle and sensation.

Essentially this *libidinal* economy is what directors of contemporary horror (including Hitchcock) manipulate, consciously and/or unconsciously, by favouring the spectator's preoccupation with this semiotic excess. Such a preoccupation characterises the post-modern condition in cinema and, arguably, popular culture in general. As Tudor confirms, "by the late fifties capitalist cultures were already accelerating away from post-war repression and toward a market and commodity driven with sexuality and personal gratification. The vision of insanity embedded in *Psycho* and *Peeping Tom* is, on this account, no more than the dark side of that development."[14] In describing this development further Jancovich adds that, "sexuality and emotion were no longer simply a threat to rationalisation," but rather, "increasingly organised and controlled through the new consumer culture [...]. The self had been so thoroughly penetrated that it was virtually impossible to distinguish the self from the other, one's own desires from those which had been implanted by consumer culture."[15]

This type of cinematic experience was, perhaps for the first time since the pre-classical,

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[14] Tudor quoted in Jancovich, 1996, p. 231.
[15] Marc Jancovich, 1996, p. 231.

cinema-of-attractions, indicative of a popular idiom constructed around this type of disjunction between both form and content, and the spectator and his/her cinematic experience. Much of *Psycho*'s pioneering aesthetic spirit (including its *non*-classical utilisation of film music) was directed towards promoting these libidinal economies of cinematic spectacle. More importantly, this kind of promotion, despite its connection to changing thematic principles, simultaneously resulted in the subordination of thematic and narrative absorption within the spectator's own hierarchy of cinematic imperatives. By manifesting the crises of identity central to paranoid horror, the thematic rationale of the contemporary horror film itself becomes self-reflexive - *theme becomes the form itself* - or the affective properties of this type of semiotic excess. In other words, the formal intensification and destabilisation manifests textually the collapsing of the network of Symbolic interconnectivities, which in secure horror guaranteed (through the suture process) a fixed subject-object positioning. The destabilising effect itself is now increasingly imperative for the spectator's cinematic enjoyment and related to the objectification of some deeply unconscious subjective core.

For Linda Williams, *Psycho* initiated this particular reprioritisation of cinematic imperatives. She bases her description of it on the oft-quoted 'roller-coaster' metaphor which succinctly analogises the audience's affective responses to *Psycho* and the new mould of contemporary horror the film pioneered. Hitchcock himself compared the intended effects of *Psycho* - the laughs, screams, and shouts of the audience - to the

experience of the Switch Back Railway.[16] This shift in cinematic sensibilities, Williams notes, involves the "*intensification of certain forms of visuality, and certain appeals to the senses*," that she claims were, "already evident in what is more properly called the popular modernism of mainstream Hollywood cinema but which *changed under the incipient pressures of post-modernity*" - my italics.[17]

These pressures were translated and synthesised by *Psycho* into a new hyper-aesthetic sensibility which, as Williams explains, was "grounded in the pleasurable anticipation of the next gut-spilling, gut-wrenching moment [...] viewers began going to the movies to be thrilled and moved in quite visceral ways, and without much concern for coherent characters or motives."[18] As Hitchcock himself stressed,

> My main satisfaction [with *Psycho*] is that the film had an effect on the audiences, and I consider that very important. I don't care about subject matter; I don't care about acting; but I do care about the pieces of film and the photography and the soundtrack and all the technical ingredients that made the audiences scream [...]. They were aroused by pure film.[19]

For its director, *Psycho* functioned foremost as a series of shocks, varying in intensity (rather akin to the various dynamic peaks and troughs of the rollercoaster experience), until the final moment of revelation. Despite its disappointing explanatory denouement,

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[16] See *H is for Hitchcock* (dir. Ted Haimes, US, Universal Studios, 1999, 90mins).
[17] Linda Williams, 'Discipline and Fun: Psycho and Postmodern Cinema' in Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (eds.), *Reinventing Film Studies* (London: Arnold, 2000), pp. 351-378, p. 355.
[18] Williams, 2000, p. 356.
[19] Hitchcock quoted in Francois Truffaut (ed.), *Hitchcock by Truffaut: The Definitive Study – Updated Edition*, (London: Paladin Books, 1986, p. 434). Originally Published 1968.

one of the film's relatively few concessions to classical cinema's literary model, the perverse thrills and wry black humour of *Psycho* exhibited a distinct break with past Hollywood practice. Indeed, Williams' own claim is not that contemporary American cinema "reverted to the *same* attractions of early cinema," rather, her evoking of Eisenstein's term *attraction* was aimed at stressing that, "while there is certainly an affinity between the two this new regime entails entirely different spectatorial disciplines."[20]

This new experience *is* linked, however, to the pre-classical, pre-narrative cinema's refusal of the safe channelling of signification, a central requirement of the suture process. Both the pre- and post-classical cinemas placed a premium on the ability of the [cinematic] apparatus to offer attractions *over* its ability to absorb the spectator into a diegetic world. What is interesting about this post-modern updating of the cinema of attractions is the particular affinity it displays for the central requirements of the contemporary horror genre in general, and the cinematic sensibilities of Hitchcock in particular. Like its pre-classical predecessor, the post-classical horror film places a premium on this kind of *textual* shock, a traumatic affect that ensures the spectator is never fully absorbed (i.e. sutured) into a comfortable identification with the film. As Laura Mulvey notes, "[Hitchcock] had seen how Eisenstein translated the eruption of violence into fragments of film and *turned shock into the cinema of attractions* - my

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[20] Williams, 2000, p. 356.

italics."[21]

As I have noted, the orthodox function of music in the classical Hollywood film was to suture the spectator into some kind of "return to a primitive narcissism."[22] However, the aesthetic strategies adopted in the contemporary horror film (and here I include *Psycho* and its use of experimental music) meant that, as Tania Modleski notes, "narcissistic identification on the part of the audience becomes increasingly difficult, indeed it could be said that some of the films elicit a kind of *anti*-narcissistic identification, which the audience delights in indulging just as it delights in having its expectations of closure frustrated."[23] Such a narcissistic identification is replaced by a visceral destabilisation of the spectator, rendered through what Weis describes as an *extra*-subjective engagement. In fact, this can be interpreted in the same terms of what Cohen describes above as 'exercises in design' which become 'purveyors of sensation.' These techniques, both critics remark, are developed in Hitchcock's films of the late-fifties/early sixties - from *Vertigo* (1958) to *The Birds* (1960). In these films, Weis states, "the director sought most seriously *to touch directly* the fears of the audience - my italics."[24]

This cinematic sensibility reaches a powerful expression with *Psycho*, a film which

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[21] Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2006), p. 94.
[22] Claudia Gorbman, 'Why Music? The Sound Film and its Spectator' in Kay Dickenson (ed.), *Movie Music: The Film Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 37-47, p. 44.
[23] Tania Modleski 'The Terror of Pleasure: The Contemporary Horror Film and Postmodern Theory' in Tania Modleski (ed.) *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 155-166, p. 161.
[24] Elisabeth Weis, *The Silent Scream: Alfred Hitchcock's Soundtrack* (New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1982), p. 136.

retains connections with the uncanny resonances of the Gothic, and an overall technique that is largely dependent upon the technical mastery of the cinematic apparatus. Both this technical mastery and gothic sensibility (even if it was of a distinctly *post*-modern variety) pervades Hitchcock's extra-subjective films. As Weis confirms,

> Such an interest in new technical challenges was, of course, characteristic of the director who immediately experimented with synchronised sound, elaborate camera movement, and 3-D [...]. Indeed the challenge of mastering a new technology has provided a major creative stimulus for Hitchcock in many films.[25]

This kind of technical mastery was taken to the point of fetishism by Hitchcock and the legion of horror directors that emerged in his wake during the 1960s and 1970s, becoming an important tool of audience manipulation. Following the lead of *Psycho*, Williams claims, directors of post-classical horror used their technical mastery to "set out, as a first order of business, to simulate the bodily thrills and visceral pleasures of attractions that [...] take us on a continuous ride punctuated by shocks and moments of speed up and slow down."[26] Williams' description of this post-modern, cinema of attractions is crucial for this chapter, and thesis, for numerous reasons. Firstly, it supports an understanding of post-modern cinema as a new order of prioritisation of these previously neglected dimensions of filmmaking. Not a *complete* dispensing of narrative ordering or thematic resonance, but a subjugation of these aspects to cinematic spectacle and sensation. Additionally, these general shifts in emphasis towards a post-modern

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[25] *ibid*, p. 136.
[26] Williams, 2000, p. 357.

condition in cinema were manifested, and arguably *pioneered*, by this generic shift towards the 'paranoid' type of horror film.

Crucially, along with a mastery and promotion of cinematic technology, this shift required something of its *own modality of cinematic expression and syntactical construction*. But how can we comprehend, let alone *express*, the collapsing of the self itself, and the strange eruptions of the abnormal from within, at the syntactical level? How are these internalised, unconscious urges rendered cinematically, when the very notion of the unconscious is based on that which cannot be symbolised? Importantly, Hitchcock drew his own triangular correlation between cinematic form, its *physical* impact on the spectator, and the sadomasochistic type of enjoyment it feeds. As the earlier quote from the director made clear, Hitchcock believed his audiences were aroused by pure film: the photography, soundtrack, and all the other technical ingredients. It is *these* which made the audiences scream.

To conclude this section, I have sought to describe the particular cinematic evolution of *Psycho*, firstly, within the terms of Williams' post-modern cinema of attractions - a cinematic strategy centred upon the direct visceral engagement of the spectator with these moments of semiotic excess. I have also linked this cinematic sensibility to Elisabeth Weis' extra-subjective mode of spectatorial engagement, or what Žižek alternatively describes as '*trans*-subjective.' In the extra-subjective cinema, the secure 'subject-object' positioning familiar to the classical suture process is short-circuited. I have sought to interpret this new conceptual model of spectatorial engagement in terms

of a perceived shift in the sensibility of the horror spectator during the period in question. In particular, Tudor's concept of the 'psychotic/paranoid' spectator aligns itself comfortably with Žižek's late-Lacanian position. Here, it is a paranoid construction which constitutes the spectator's fantasy and performs a crucial, but newly-theorised, ideological function, fictionalising the mindless *jouissance* (or enjoyment) created through these eruptions of the Lacanian Real.

In returning to the topic of film music, attempting to reconfigure the subjective dissolution at the core of this paranoid horror, we might well consider Kevin J. Donnelly's notion of film music as something 'irrational,' in the rational, diegetic and narrative world of cinematic fictions (music as a 'demonic' *un*-reality erupting from the heart of symbolically-construed reality). As noted in Chapter One, there are some interesting parallels between Donnelly's insights and Žižek's Lacanian framework that warrant further attention - especially the differences asserted by Lacan between *symbolically-construed* reality and the meaningless presence of the Real (see page 72). These are mirrored in differences Donnelly draws between the representational qualities of orthodox film music, which direct the symbolic 'purchase' of the cinematic signifier, and a promotion of the more physical (visceral, materialist) impact of music which Donnelly accredits to the contemporary horror soundtrack. Before discussing the promotion of this stylistic excess and how it functions in a newly-reconfigured mode of spectatorly engagement and subjective investment (Žižek's ultimate thesis), this chapter turns now to a detailed analysis of these formal evolutions, emphasising the role of the musical score in rendering the Real.

3.2 Deconstructing the *Psycho* Score: Herrmann's Anti-Classicism, Hyper-Aesthetics, and the Late-Romantic/Early-Modernist Influence.

Laura Mulvey typically describes *Psycho* "in the first instance," as a "highly formal, minimalist film."[27] In fact, almost everything about the film's aesthetic strategies point towards an aesthetic of extreme economy and brevity of form, mostly via a hyper-intensification and concentration of the syntactical elements of cinematic expression. Indeed, Richard Appignanesi and Chris Garratt have described "the meaning of so-called postmodernism" in these very terms, as the "technological hyper-intensification of modernism."[28] This description succinctly describes a 'distillation' of cinematic signs down to their syntactical essence, a technique clearly evinced in *Psycho*, and linking directly to Hitchcock's concept of 'pure cinema.'

Bernard Herrmann's appropriation of modernist musical technique clearly contributes to this hyper-intensification. For Hitchcock, Howard Goodall notes, 'pure cinema' amounted to "using every trick in the book to convey what was going on without it needing to be expressed in unnecessary dialogue [...] this meant that music was to become much more crucial to the film than ever before."[29] In contrast to the classical model of film music (where music plays secondary to the image and dialogue), the intrinsic formal emphasis of Hitchcock's pure cinema meant that it exploited the

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[27] Mulvey, 2006, p. 85.
[28] Richard Appignanesi and Chris Garratt, *Introducing: Postmodernism* (Royston: Icon Books, 2004), p. 126.
[29] Howard Goodall, *20th Century Greats: Bernard Herrmann*, (CH4, 2004, 55mins).

potential of modernist music for destabilisation and visceral impact more so than ever before.

As such, it is these purely cinematic tendencies that link *Psycho*'s 'post-modern/post-classical' strategy with a *pre*-classical cinema-of-attractions, with its propensity for rendering 'shocks' of uncanny excess *via* the remaindered fragments of the signifier, which, in Žižek's framework, pertain to the Real. As Mulvey stresses, "[Hitchcock] translated non-cinematic forms onto the space of the cinema screen in ways that meshed with cinema's proclivity for movement, mystery and shock [...]. When Marion's murder halts the film's narrative, changing its structure, the topography also shifts and the death-drive story opens into a space of the uncanny."[30] Of course, the crucial difference here for sound cinema is that music is now partly delivering these shocks, rather than 'cushioning' them, as certain theorists argue it did in the 'silent' cinema.

In positing the post-classical horror film as a popular nexus for the implementation of these wider evolutionary trends, this section discusses how Hitchcock's appropriation of Herrmann's musical syntaxes facilitates this extra-subjective mode of engagement, and how the director's supposed proclivity for 'mystery, movement, and shock,' evolved popular cinematic practice towards a post-classical/post-modern *hyper*-aesthetic mode. This requires a theoretical reconfiguration focussed upon two distinctly interrelated levels. The first level being the reconfiguration of the supposed functional priorities

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[30] Mulvey, 2006, p. 86.

guiding the economy of the cinematic sign. Secondly, the contingent reconfiguration of the spectator's extra-subjective engagement with the cinematic event, away from the secure subject-object positioning (of the sutured spectator), towards the 'short-circuiting' of suture which characterises this type of engagement. The explication of the latter occurs in the third section and is continued and refined in subsequent chapters as other pertinent factors are introduced into the discussion. But the need for these two reconfigurations also reflects a wider reprioritisation of the hierarchy of cinematic imperatives which occurs in response to the changing sensibilities of a post-modern culture.

However, one must proceed cautiously as to the exact way we explain this alternative functional relationship between sound and image, as it differs from the classical sound-image relationship more in terms of which function is *prioritised*, rather than a different set of functions altogether. Whereas classical film music functions *primarily* around an 'added-value' symbolic (metaphorical) relationship - that is, musical phrases contributing to the 'safe-channelling' of the visual signifier, and vice-versa, as per the suture process; Hitchcock's audio-visual strategies are constructed to prioritise a more abstract relationship between the non-symbolising dimensions, or fragments, of the cinematic sign. It is these complementary relations, on the purely formal level, that render an 'excess of the Real,' mostly through aural and visual ambiguities working in unison to produce an uncanny anxiety in the spectator. Such a comparison can help distinguish between these two polarised, but interconnected, modes of syntactical expression, as outlined in the previous chapter: the 'signifying' function, and the 'immediate rendering'

function, using examples from *Psycho* to fully explicate the latter mode.

As noted in Chapter One, Žižek's hermeneutics are located around a shift of emphasis found in Lacan's later work, away from the Imaginary-Symbolic axis, towards the uncanny tensions that 'short-circuit' the registers of the Real and the Symbolic. The crucial difference between this extra-subjective mode of engagement (or the 'trans-subjective' mode, as Žižek describes it), and the classical model of suture, relates to the nature of the relationship between each pair of psychic registers. For instance, Gorbman's model stresses that it is largely through a *tonal* expression (of the major-minor dialectic, for example) that most classical scores work to 'suture up' the gap between film and spectator, dispelling the lack that is constitutive of the Imaginary-Symbolic axis, by creating for the spectator an illusory, and temporary state of wholeness.

Slavoj Žižek conceives of a mode of spectatorial engagement more in keeping with the traits of post-modern cinema. He describes a disjunction between form and content which short-circuits the gap between the Real and the Symbolic. Rather than the lack, or gap, which is sutured up through identification with the Imaginary (and Symbolic) registers, there remains, 'a lack of a lack' conceivable through our immediate visceral encounter with form *itself*. As outlined in Chapter One, Žižek describes this through the concept of *rendu* (or a rendering of the Real), borrowed from sonic-theorist, Michel Chion. The benefit of Žižek's framework for explaining Hitchcock's particular cinematic strategies lies in the fact that, as critics and theorists, we need not argue for a complete jettisoning of narrative/theme as such. In fact, we cannot argue for this. Instead, what we

have is a figuration of the cinematic experience that posits the Real and (symbolically-construed) 'reality' as two sides of the same experience. As such, the promotion of either dimension naturally engenders a contingent demotion of its obverse. In the post-modern cinema of attractions, this disjunction between form and content is rendered by the immediate proximity of the visceral attractions, the prevalent cinematic (libidinal) economy of the sign, as well as a concomitant demotion of the importance of narrative content and the representational strategies that present it.

Such a disjunction underpins the thematic shifts of the 'paranoid/psychotic' mode of horror described earlier, and its formal excesses that render the experience of a 'psychotic breakdown,' as an excess of the Real. My focus on the film music of Hitchcock's extra-subjective period benefits the thesis at large, facilitating a clear explication of Žižek's late-Lacanian framework - since *Psycho*, and its immediate neighbours in Hitchcock's corpus, are exemplars of the director's 'pure cinema.' This section now turns to assessing how crucial Hitchcock's appropriation of Herrmann's experimental tendencies is to this 'psychotic' strategy and, in the following section, the theoretical reconfiguration of the relationship between spectator and the cinematic event(s) that it engenders. The emphasis is focused on the composer's use of typical modernist musical techniques, such as bi-tonality, harmonic ambiguity, anti-melodic phrasings, musical dynamics (such as extreme intervallic leaps), and finally, a textural emphasis on instrumental timbre.

It would seem this particular methodological focus - concentrating the analysis down to

the very syntactical essence of the sound-image relationship - has been neglected in film studies generally and 'Hitchcock-studies' in particular. As recently as 2006, Jack Sullivan was claiming that, "although music is essential in Hitchcock's concept of pure cinema, it is largely unexplored."[31] As previously noted, Linda Williams also neglects the aural contribution of this concentration and intensification of form, sound and music barely getting a mention in her own article. This is particularly surprising, as the types of aural intensification present in Herrmann's scores (especially *Psycho*'s) not only support her assertions but, in certain instances, articulates them more forcefully than their visual counterparts. Therefore, the intention of this section is to support Williams' own claims through an analysis of *Psycho*'s audio-visual strategies, emphasising the affinity of experimental music(s) for this post-modern, cinema of attractions, especially as it functions under the creative aegis of a director as cine-sonically adept as Hitchcock.

Herrmann and Hitchcock's collaboration stretched over nine full-length projects whilst their individual careers covered the better part of seventy years of cinema. As case studies this makes them particularly useful for describing certain periods of popular cinema (and their attendant film-musical styles), through an observation of some of the individual stylistic traits and preoccupations of both director and composer. As Sullivan notes, "the collaboration between Hitchcock and Bernard Herrmann was the greatest director-composer partnership in film history. But the special connection Hitchcock had with music began much earlier, with the dawn of movie sound, and continues until his

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[31] Jack Sullivan, *Hitchcock's Music*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. xiii.

final collaboration, with John Williams."[32] Ditto Herrmann, whose first Hollywood score just happened to be for Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941), and who worked with some acknowledged masters of the cinematic art, including Michael Curtiz, Francois Truffaut, Brian De Palma, as well as his moving final score for Martin Scorcese's *Taxi Driver* (1977). More importantly, an observation of their work alerts us to the aesthetic shifts in emphasis that signify a transition across cinematic periods. The later Hitchcock-Herrmann collaborations are particularly useful for an understanding of the post-1960 Horror film and its appropriation of experimental music(s).

Hitchcock was always a director impressively attuned to the emotional and physical impact that sound in general, and music in particular, could bring to the cinematic experience. What seems remarkably prescient, in the context of this study, was the distinctly (proto-) post-modernist appreciation he displayed for music's potential for rendering cinematic spectacle, through a visceral impact and spatiotemporal destabilisation. As early as 1932, the director was noting: "the first and obvious use [of film music] is atmospheric. To create excitement. To heighten intensity. In a scene of action, for instance, when the aim is to build up to a physical climax, music adds excitement as effectively as cutting."[33] In addition to highlighting the physical, visceral power of music, Hitchcock's aural strategy most seriously diverges from the classical model of film music in his emphasis upon a cinematic aesthetic of extreme economy.

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[32] ibid, p. xiii.
[33] Hitchcock quoted in Sidney Gottlieb (ed.), *Hitchcock on Hitchcock: Selected Writings and Interviews*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 243.

"You should do the minimum on screen,' Hitchcock stated, 'to get the maximum audience effect."[34]

Hitchcock used the musical score more sparingly, then, particularly in collaborations with Herrmann, a composer himself being strongly influenced by the aesthetic brevity and concentration of form found in the works of mid-period modernists such as Bela Bartok and Anton Von Webern. Herrmann's influences, however, stretched to more than just modernism's mid-period mainstays. Even as a famous composer in his own right, Herrmann wore his musical influences on his sleeve. "His music," Smith states, "embodied the German Romanticism of Wagner and Mahler as well as the psychological impressionism of the French school (Debussy and Ravel especially) [...]. His idiom was that of a Neo-Romantic schooled in the music of the twentieth century."[35] Herrmann cultivated an overall vision that, "like that of the great Romantics in music, art, and poetry," Smith proclaims, recognised "the beauty and the horror of the human condition [...] capturing the psychological bond between love and anxiety."[36]

It was this fundamental sense of ambiguity that characterised Herrmann's work from the beginning, although his collaborations with Hitchcock undoubtedly brought something out in the composer which had not previously manifested itself, at least in such a viscerally immediate fashion. As Royal S. Brown succinctly remarks, it was as if

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[34] ibid, p. 243.
[35] Steve Smith, *A Heart at Fire's Center: The Life and Music of Bernard Herrmann* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1991), p. 4.
[36] *ibid*, p. 4.

"Herrmann's musical translations of raw effect seemed to be waiting for the counterbalancing effect of a Hitchcock-style cinema."[37] What is particularly interesting about the 'counterbalancing' effects of Hitchcock's style are the distinct affinities they display for the formal traits of *experimental* music.

The previous chapter sought to emphasise the point about tonal music, by definition, containing an element of the superfluous. Theorist, Hanns Eisler, for example, described the aesthetic brevity of the new musical resources as a "condensation of the musical form that goes far beyond the romantic fragments."[38] This condensation is important in the context of this study for numerous reasons. Although it points to the concentration of musical syntax clearly evinced in the work of many modernist composers, it was also already noticeable in the work of the late-Romantic composers who were working towards a similar kind of syntactical fragmentation and condensation. As Leith Stevens perceptively notes, "Wagner's innovation was chromatic harmony (the first step away from the solid tonalities of the day)."[39] Since tonality can only be expressed when situated within the architectonic contexts of harmony and melody, the sharply chromatic, dissonant phrasings of late-Romantics, such as Wagner and Strauss, were already pointing increasingly towards the collapsing of the tonal and harmonic architectonic contexts, and, therefore, the signifying matrices within which aural signification was encoded. This would lead ultimately to the outright atonality of Schoenberg et al. As

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[37] Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (Berkeley, California: University of California, 1994), p. 149.
[38] Hanns Eisler, *Composing for the Films* (London: Dobson, 1947), p. 39.
[39] Leith Stevens, 'The Door to Atonality' in *The Journal of Film Music*, vol. 1, no. 4, (2006) pp. 389-390, p.390.

Schoenberg was to state, "What distinguishes dissonances from consonances is not a greater or lesser degree of beauty, but a greater or lesser degree of *comprehensibility*."[40]

It was for this reason that the inherent representational/non-representational dichotomy of Romantic music was outlined in Chapter Two. Žižek conceives of Romanticism as the era in which music changes its role. However, it is less a changing of roles, than the gaining, or the promotion, of an extra, or hitherto untapped, musical function. Romantic music, Žižek argues, "contains/renders a message of its own, 'deeper' than the one contained in words,"[41] and it is this which renders the sublime excess of life (interpreted earlier by Botting as a 'threat of sublime excess'). This threat is equally experienced as a thrilling *jouissance* central to the post-modern cinema of attractions. Of course, although Žižek refers to the message 'deeper' than words, he is not simply referring to the actual worded text of opera, but the encoded meanings that belong to the Symbolic register of the 'language' of musical expression. What is rendered deeper by this excess is the "underlying 'noumenal' flux of *jouissance beyond linguistic meaningfulness* - my italics."[42] This remainder of the signifier is the very non-symbolised excess left behind when, as Eisler describes, the superfluous elements of musical expression are removed. This fragment of the sign that pertain to the Real, an "annoying, messy, disturbing surplus, a piece of leftover, or 'excrement,'" as Žižek describes it, a "tiresome and

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[40] Arnold Schoenberg quoted in Andrew Grossman, 'Twelve-Tone Cinema: A Scattershot Notebook on Sexual Atonality' in *Bright Lights Film Journal* @ www.brightlightsfilm.com/43/atonal.htm - Date of Entry: 09/03/2005.
[41] Slavoj Žižek, 'Why Wagner is Worth Saving' in Rex Butler and Scott Stephens (eds.), *Slavoj Žižek: Interrogating the Real* (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 307.
[42] *ibid*, p. 307.

disruptive residue, the famous *objet petit a.*"[43]

It is this 'excess' dimension that is typically demoted in the classical film score. This type of score uses music to achieve a 'safely-channelled' signification through tonality and melody. As noted in Chapter Two, the modernist composers evolved this formal concentration down to its most elementary level, the complete removal of any architectonic context - in other words, outright atonality. Atonal music has traditionally been used to signify some vague 'otherness,' but in reality atonal music signifies nothing but the *failure* of signification itself. This is an important formal device in *Psycho*. As Philip Brophy notes, "the score to *Psycho* is no mere caricature of Otherness: *it musically simulates the collapse of meaning which propels its character psychosis* - my italics."[44] Hitchcock's cinematic strategy engenders this 'sublime excess' through the atonality and dissonance of the score (amongst other methods); this overall promotion of the excess dimension of the signifier lends the 'psychotic/paranoid' horror (which *Psycho* pioneers) its essential post-modern quality.[45]

Herrmann's modernist, anti-melodic and bi-tonal tendencies formed the bedrock of his film-musical style, a fundamental harmonic ambiguity that the composer manipulated when it came to the physiological and psychological impact required by post-classical horror film music. Just like the modernist composers who influenced him, Herrmann

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[43] Slavoj Žižek, 'The Undergrowth of Enjoyment' in Edmond Wright and Elisabeth Wright (eds.), *The Žižek Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 28.
[44] Philip Brophy 'Picturing Atonality: Death of the Natural' in *The Wire*, No. 169, (March) 1998, p. 87.
[45] Indeed, as I shall argue in the next chapter, it is this very presence and not absence that further distinguishes the post-modern cinematic condition

sought to refine the expressive qualities of music down around this neglected 'excess' element. Jonathan Sheffer describes how "[Herrmann] aspired to the kind of intellectual rigour of serialism: at the same time, his taste also ran to Impressionism and exoticism in music [...]. What emerged from this blend of atonality and Impressionist gestures was a genuinely personal style."[46] As a result, the two most crucial techniques for Herrmann's collaborations with Hitchcock were his aesthetic brevity (as a concentration of form), and the harmonic ambiguity that naturally resulted from the removal of these 'superfluous' harmonic and melodic contexts.

The main intention behind Hitchcock's *hyper*-aesthetic technique, was the creation of destabilisation through an elementary sense of ambivalence, a kind of irreconcilable antagonism, that I have already interpreted in terms of an 'immediate-rendering' of the Lacanian Real. As Brown notes, "one thing Herrmann obviously fathomed, consciously and/or unconsciously, in Hitchcock and his art was the perfect ambivalency: for every dose of the calm, the rational, and the everyday, there is a counterbalancing dose of the violent, the irrational, and the extraordinary." Moreover, the Real is interpreted here further as a manifestation of the sublime, the uncanny effects of Hermann's musical translations of Hitchcock's 'raw effect' creating a state of *jouissance* (in this 'sublime excess of life') for the spectator and, therefore, also some sense of the paradoxical enjoyment, or 'fun,' alluded to by Williams. Contemporary reviews of the film seem to agree on the 'fun' aspects of the film's peculiar blend of beauty and horror, delight and

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[46] Jonathan Sheffer, Notes on the Program for 'Bernard Herrmann: More Than the Movies' @ www.bernardherrmann.org - Date of Entry: 16/07/2007.

disgust. Reviewing the film for *Sight and Sound*, Peter J. Dyer noted that there is "plenty to laugh at," in the film's "blend of Gothic wit and horror."[47] As Sullivan confirms,

> The dread we take away from *Psycho* is lasting and has continued to haunt our culture since its creation in 1960. Sometimes horror is all we can bear. [Edmund] Burke's advice is to enjoy it, at least in our imaginations, to 'fill the mind with that sort of delightful horror, which is the most genuine effect and truest test of the sublime.'[48]

More importantly, Herrmann's personal style was created specifically through an engagement with cinema. He was "not the first great composer who wrote for film," Sullivan claims, "but rather the first great film composer, a unique and significant category in the music of our time." It was the fine balance between these two poles of experience that Hitchcock and Herrmann manipulated, both consciously and unconsciously. The affinity Herrmann's compositional style displayed for this new cinematic sensibility was most powerfully achieved through his collaborations with Hitchcock, a director who was himself impressively prescient when it came to acknowledging the importance of experimental musical styles in the creation of cinematic spectacle and sensation.

As such, Herrmann's grounding in modernist practices was absolutely essential, the founding traits of musical modernism, harmonic ambiguity and aesthetic brevity, contributing in no small measure to the visceral, spatiotemporal destabilisation of

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[47] Peter J. Dyer, 'Review of *Psycho*' in *Sight and Sound*, vol. 29, n. 4, (Autumn 1960), p. 195.
[48] Jack Sullivan, *Hitchcock's Music* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 244.

Hitchcock's extra-subjective films - particularly *Psycho*. As Sullivan notes, "If *Vertigo* is Herrmann's most expansive score, *Psycho* is his most economical: from the first knifelike chords in the title sequence to the final bleak ninth chord, the music is stripped to its bare essentials."[49] Perhaps the most telling attribute of Herrmann's aesthetic economy of form was the composer's use of the shorter musical phrase. It was the classical score's distinct reliance upon longer melodic phrases which had led theorist Hanns Eisler to condemn melody as a particularly limiting film-musical technique. As Russell Lack notes,

> In Hanns Eisler's view music can be equally important an element as the image itself, structurally equivalent but not reliant on its own internal limitations (such as the need to resolve a melodic pattern) for its impact. The need to complete a broad musical pattern is one of the most limiting aspects of music and the one that most threatens its functionality. He therefore recommends a movement away from melody towards shorter, more flexible musical phrasing.[50]

Of all the modern film composers, it was Herrmann who most faithfully adapted, consciously and/or unconsciously, to the fundamental lessons of Eisler, distancing himself from the compositional principles of classical film music in the process. Lack states how "Herrmann's preference for writing music that relied on small musical units demonstrates the wisdom of Eisler's claim [...]. Music needed to be as flexible as

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[49] Jack Sullivan (ed.), *The Penguin Encyclopaedia of Horror and the Supernatural*, (New York: Viking, 1986, p. 202).
[50] Russell Lack, *Twenty Four Frames Under: A Buried History of Film Music*, (London: Quartet, 1997, p. 78).

possible."[51] One important function of Herrmann's small musical units and propulsive musical scherzos involves the matching-up of aural and visual 'units,' which highlights each cinematic unit, or sign, as it where, *in and of itself.*

The most telling example of this occurs in the film's most famous scene - the shower murder - a scene which showcases Hitchcock's own contribution to this hyper-aesthetic intensification and concentration of cinematic form. The quick musical stabs to the senses heard in 'The Murder' cue are matched principally to the edits in the film, foregrounding the fragmentary nature of the cinematic apparatus, rather than smoothing over it - we are in no doubt we are watching the art of *cinema itself.* Although I shall return to the ramifications of this foregrounding of the processes of cinematic enunciation in the final section, I shall continue to concentrate here on the musical qualities intrinsic to this self-reflexive cinematic technique.

The shower scene is a perfect example of how Hitchcock exploits the traits of musical modernism. The musical dynamics work in unison with the destabilising effects of Hitchcock's frenetic editing and pronounced spatial contrasts, created through his fractured mise-en-scene, which jumps from long-shots to extreme close-up and back, often with am accompanying change in the P.O.V. These shots function in the same manner as the shock-cuts described by Phil Hardy in Chapter Two (see page 117), a spatial disorientation created by jump-cutting to an extreme close-up. The crucial

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[51] *ibid*, p. 78.

difference being, in the *Psycho* example, there is a distinct link between both the aural and visual elements on an elementary formal dimension, which is absent in Hardy's earlier example. This functioning across different dimensions of the audio-visual sign typifies the burgeoning *post*-classical cinematic aesthetic, especially where the use of experimental musical attributes is concerned. Howard Goodall attributes this, in part, to Herrmann, but traces the initial development of this particular synching-up of aural and visual affect to the immediate post-war period. As Goodall notes:

> Before Herrmann, Hollywood scores invariably relied for their big emotional climaxes on a grand memorable tune that would swell and peak at the appropriate moment. But Herrmann found that long, arching phrases like these were, in the end, counter-productive [...] they didn't suit the new wave of post-war filmmakers. These directors wanted the emotional tempo of a scene to move more rapidly and for there to be sudden, even *violent*, changes of mood to match a snappier cutting style.[52]

Whether or not this sensibility fully manifested itself in the immediate post-war period, as Goodall claims, *Psycho* certainly represented an exponential leap in the extent by which such a hyper-intensification of the cinematic syntax was to feature in the popular cinema. One could argue further that the 'paranoid' horror characteristic of the genre at this time operated as perhaps the main generic nexus for the amalgamation of these burgeoning economic, technological, and cultural tendencies.

'The Murder' cue offers a perfect example of this kind of evolution at the aesthetic level.

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[52] Howard Goodall, *20th Century Greats: Bernard Herrmann*, (Ch 4, 2004, 55mins)

Although, atonality and dissonance had featured in previous horror films, this cue comprises a musical phrasing unequalled in its extreme physical impact and dissonant harmonic ambiguity. Herrmann's abrupt musical phrases undoubtedly support Linda Williams' destabilising, decentred, cinematic 'rollercoaster' analogy: as the sequence denies the spectator the stability claimed through suture. This is where Hitchcock's audio-visual techniques display a distinct distancing from classical Hollywood procedures, the audience now *celebrates* their awareness of the technological construction of the director's cinematic enunciations - the opposite intention to the classical function of film music as an agency of suture, covering up these technological contingencies.

As well as the length of the typical musical phrase, the *manner* in which Herrmann instructed it to be performed also exhibited a distinct break with standard practices, as well as a direct contravention of the neo-romantic idiom that hitherto dominated the classical model of film music. Typically, the strings would be played with maximum vibrato, creating a suffuse, but over-egged, sentimentality, characteristic of the studio-era Hollywood film score. The emphasis of this new style was placed on the *immediacy* of the sensorial attack, a central requirement of this new extra-subjective mode of spectatorial engagement. As Goodall explains,

> Out went sentimentality, in came anxiety. Herrmann directed his string players to play with little or no vibrato [...]. By reducing or removing vibrato, the strings were given a new attack or forcefulness [...] He also asked them to play [...] with their mutes fixed on. [Playing with mutes] can sound clamped down, and colder, and less rich, it can sound thinner

and reedier – in short, far less romantic.[53]

Of course, for *Psycho*, Herrmann downsized the orchestra to strings-only, an approach which highlighted the impact of these particular techniques. This was a significant aesthetic decision for Herrmann, symbolising the composer's own particular hyper-minimalist aesthetic sensibility. The decision to utilise strings-only orchestration meant the traditional bombast of the symphony orchestra was significantly pared down. However, there was implicit in this economical strategy a contingent *maximising* of the audio-visual sign's potential for dynamic intensity contrasts in pitch and volume. As Christopher Palmer explains, "The strings span the longest gamut of notes; they have an effective range of dynamics unmatched by the other groups, and within the boundaries of their basic single tone-colour they can command a great number and variety of special effects: pizzicato, tremolando, harmonics, playing near the bridge."[54]

Another noticeable aspect of the score was its incessant pace and inexorable forward motion, particularly evident in the 'Prelude' cue that played over the film's opening credits. From the beginning, then, as spectators, we are in no doubt as to the central role that sonic impact will play in this experience. Far from existing (*pace* Gorbman) as a background element, music is immediately utmost in the spectator's attention. This opening cue (which has no accompanying images or spoken dialogue, just Saul Bass'

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[53] Goodall, 2004.
[54] Christopher Palmer, Liner Notes for *Bernard Herrmann's Psycho*, Unicorn Records, RHS 336, 1975.

constructivist forms[55]) manifests "the constant, hard, forward-driving motion," which, Christopher Palmer suggests, "anticipates the key emotion of the first part of *Psycho* - fear bordering on panic."[56]

Additionally, the destabilising potential of 'The Prelude' cue has as much to do with its extreme juxtapositional contrast with the proceeding 'The City' cue - yet another favoured device of Herrmann and Hitchcock's collaborative stratagem. Thus, the pounding repetitive ostinatos of the 'Prelude' cue give way to the relative eerie calm of 'The City' cue. "After the strident contrapuntal urgency of the prelude," Smith describes, the music, "abruptly shifts tone with a series of placid, descending string chords [...]. Rather than accelerate the images languid rhythm, Herrmann's music slows it further down, making the affect all the more agonising."[57] It is exactly these extreme intensity contrasts that most directly stimulate the spectator's physiological and psychological responses. As a result, they also solicit the type of enjoyment to be had in these destabilising affects - the types of contrast that Williams refers to as 'moments of speed up and slow down.' These characterise the post-modern, cinema of attractions.

In music, as in cinema, contrast can be manifested in numerous ways. "All our senses work on the concept of contrast," David Sonnenschein notes, "If we stay in one position or mode, after a certain period we become habituated [...]. At the other extreme, if

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[55] Bass animated this sequence to Herrmann's music, linking the abstract imagery and music together on an elementary formal dimension. (For more on this, see Francis Regnault, 'Systems formel d'Hitchcock', in *Cahiers du Cinema*, hors-serie 8:[b] *Alfred Hitchcock*, pp. 21-30).
[56] Christopher Palmer, 1975.
[57] Steve Smith, 1991, p. 238.

changes occur rapidly, repeatedly, and at the same time intensities (sic), we can either become insensitive or hypersensitive or exhausted."[58] This hypersensitivity and exhaustion is literally the exhaustion of *jouissance*, the elementary pleasure-in-pain associated with our paradoxical enjoyment of horror films. We can see how this may relate on a formal level to Herrmann's musical style, and its incorporation by Hitchcock, who brought further cinematic intensities and contrasts into play, as evident in the shower scene.

As musical expression has a number of dimensions - tonality, meter, rhythm, pitch, timbre - it is well-placed to create a number of abrupt intensity contrasts, thereby fashioning an overall spatiotemporal environment in which the listener is displaced around. These cine-musical techniques - the short musical units, ostinatos, intervallic leaps and timbral forcefulness of Herrmann's strings-only orchestration - create something of the inexorable forward motion and destabilisation intrinsic to the 'rollercoaster' sensibility in the cinema. Such an experience is rendered through the spectator's direct visceral engagement (their spatiotemporal dislocation through a reconstructed, 'virtualised' environment) with the *abstracted* dimensions of the audio-visual sign. It is this which renders something of the *density* of cinematic enjoyment and the *jouissance* taken in these renderings of the Real.

The element of Herrmann's compositional style that most forcefully renders this excess

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[58] David Sonnenschein, *Sound Design: The Expressive Power of Music, Voice, and Sound Effects in Cinema* (Studio City, (CA): Michael Wiese Productions, 2001), p. 128.

of the Real, however, was his trademark use of harmonic ambiguity. I have already noted how the removal of the harmonic and melodic architectonics familiar to atonal music naturally engenders an aesthetic brevity of sorts, through the very syntactical concentration of form used to remove these superfluous elements. Tonal phrases are as reliant on their melodic arrangement as they are on their vertical, harmonic foundation. If the need for tonal referencing is absent, the composer is then free to experiment with shorter phrase lengths, to distil music down to its barest essentials. It was this fundamental characteristic of early-to-mid, twentieth-century, classical music that became the foundation stone of Herrmann's film-musical style. As Paul Griffiths notes,

> One of the principal characteristics of modern music [...] is its lack of dependence on the system of major and minor keys [...]. Gently it shakes loose from roots in diatonic (major-minor) tonality, which is not to say that it is atonal, or keyless, but merely that the old harmonic relationships are no longer *of binding significance* [...]. Diatonic harmony is now only one possibility among many, not necessarily the most important and not necessarily *determinant of form and function* – my italics.[59]

For all its origins in the sublime excess of Romanticism, Herrmann's evolution towards this type of harmonic ambiguity and atonality, economical phrase-lengths and minimal orchestration, betrays the distinctive influence of modernism's major mid-period composers, in particular, the work of Anton Von Webern and Bela Bartok. The latter's influence had a very noticeable effect on Herrmann's compositional style; Bartok's style also evolved away from the prolongation of melody, to a more vertical musical

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[59] Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music: A Concise History from Debussy to Boulez*, (London: Thames and Hudson), p. 7.

expression, a basic technique for the creation of abrupt sonic impact. Herrmann's score for *Psycho* exhibits a telling similarity to Bartok's *Music for Strings, Percussion & Celeste* (1936), with its dissonant counterpoint and *sforzando* attacks. This work, something a late masterpiece, is described by Lajos Lesznai as "so spontaneous, so passionate, so immediate in experience [...] it is as if Bartok had written the whole work down in one impulse and not, in fact, worked it out with great ingenuity."[60] This particular composition evinces Bartok's increasing preoccupation with exactly the kind of harmonic freedom described by Griffiths, especially the musical counterpoint expressed through a synthesis of various opposites, the most crucial of which is chromatic versus diatonic. In fact, *Music for Strings Percussion and Celeste* provides something of a stylistic template for Herrmann's seemingly impulsive compositional practices, which were, in both composer's cases, constructed down to the last semi-quaver.[61]

That said, the kind of dissonant counterpoint that prevailed in Bartok's work was not completely new to Hollywood film music, nor, indeed, Herrmann's work previous to *Psycho*. Noted composers including David Raskin, Leonard Rosenman and Hans Salter had all experimented with dissonance with varying degrees of success. Although, Herrmann's scores for *Psycho*, *Vertigo*, and *North By Northwest* included the use of

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[60] Lajos Lesznai, *The Master Musicians Series: Bartok* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1973), p. 144 Originally Published, 1961, Trans. Percy M. Young.

[61] Interestingly, this careful design is one way we can distinguish Herrmann, and his ilk, from subsequent composers of horror film music. Although the resultant style might sound 'Herrmann-esque' these composers would rely largely on an improvisatory, 'trial and error' technique. I look more closely at this kind of composer in Chapters Four and Five.

dissonant musical intervals (notably, the minor second and the major and minor seventh) to a *degree* previously unheard in the mainstream cinema. What *was* completely new was the manner in which Hitchcock and Herrmann sought to conjoin their images and music together to produce a cinematic whole, and to what *ends*.

Perhaps the most affective of Herrmann's techniques was the manner by which he took the characteristic intervals of Western tonality (particularly the major third and major fifth), and began to isolate them from their 'natural' harmonic settings. As Brown notes, "the third when isolated from the major or minor triad, can be manipulated so that its identity became quite ambiguous [...]. Left without a point of harmonic reference, as we often are for musically long moments in Herrmann, we are left floating."[62] This technique becomes especially interesting in the context of the free-floating disassociations of Williams' 'rollercoaster' sensibility (described with recourse to *Psycho*) to the post-modern, cinema-of-attractions in general, and particularly in light of the free-floating anxieties which Žižek attributes to the fundamental antagonisms and ambiguities created through a rendering of the Real.

Take 'The Madhouse' cue, for example, which accompanies the scene in which Marion asks why Norman cannot put his mother 'some place,' (i.e. a home for the infirmed). This eerie dissonant fugue Steve Smith has likened especially to the 3rd movement of Bartok's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celeste*. The slow tempo of the cue

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[62] Brown, 1994, p. 152.

juxtaposes two individual three-note motifs - the first contains a rising minor seventh and a falling minor ninth (both strongly dissonant intervals), set against a second rising and descending motif. What is interesting is how this type of musical counterpoint can contribute towards directing the psychical economies that govern the spectator's cinematic experience (as part of Herrmann's overall strategy), since the dissonant counterpoint mirrors the same structural tensions operating between the Symbolic and the Real.

The first motif of this cue has been described by Brown as, "an extremely important motif, which Herrmann has called the *real Psycho* theme, that not only plays an important role in the film but that also has a strong importance in Herrmann's overall musical vision."[63] Brown goes on to describe how three notes of this significant motif (the rising minor seventh and descending minor ninth), "represent a distortion of a much calmer motif associated with Marion Crane."[64] However, though this second motif likewise contains three notes, rising then falling, Brown adds: "the interval is a very consonant fifth in both directions, thus forming a calm and static figure that begins and ends on the same note [...] the opposition of these three note motifs [...] delineate Norman's madness and Marion's sanity *as two sides of the same irrational/rational coin*, (a characteristic Hitchcock theme)" - my italics.[65]

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[63] *ibid*, p. 170.
[64] *ibid*, p. 170.
[65] *ibid*, p. 170.

The point to emphasise about these motifs is that they are not primarily expressed horizontally (that is, melodically), but more in terms of their vertical, harmonic expression. Furthermore, the manner in which these are expressed *syntactically* affects the relative intensity of the dissonance or consonance of any given musical phrase. As Charles Seeger states, "it is necessary to distinguish clearly between the melodic (horizontal) and chordal (vertical) use of both tonal and rhythmic intervals. Thus a minor second is far more consonant melodically than chordally."[66] Therefore, Herrmann's vertical harmonic constructions and smaller musical cues *maximise* the relative intensity of their dissonance, and simultaneously minimise the intensity of melodic expressions of consonance.

The 'Madhouse' cue, then, amounts to a perfect syntactical expression of Hitchcock's minimalist hyper-aesthetic, as well as the internal structural contrasts created through Herrmann's shorter, harmonically-ambiguous, phrases. These techniques ensured his scores were well placed to render the irreconcilable antagonism constitutive of the relationship between the Real and the Symbolic - of two conflicting dimensions of the sign pulling a spectator in opposite directions simultaneously. The diatonic, consonant qualities of the first motif - its stable fifth intervals and return to the tonic - is linked to the rational (Symbolic) dimension; whereas the dissonance and instable intervals (the minor seventh and minor ninth) of the second motif, common to experimental musical

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[66] Charles Seeger, 'On Dissonant Counterpoint' in Richard Kostelanetz and Joseph Darby (eds.), *Classic Essays on Twentieth Century: A Continuing Symposium* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1996, pp. 179-184, p. 180.

idioms, is linked to the remaindered excess of the Real. This provides us with a typical example of Žižek's methodological practice of using cinema, not just to apply psychoanalytical readings of content, but also to explicate psychoanalytic concepts themselves *through cinema*. In fact, this diatonic/chromatic and tonal/atonal antagonism has not gone unnoticed by other academics either. Royal S. Brown, for example, believes it possible to construct,

> A theory around the way in which such a key musical element as harmony has been so engulfed, in Western music, by diatonicism, that this particular harmonic system has come to be perceived as a kind of 'reality,' departures from which are often reacted to with just as much panic by the ordinary listener [...] as are departures from accepted representationalism in both the pictorial and verbal arts.'[67]

Brown's use of inverted commas around the world 'reality' are extremely telling in this context, allowing a late-Lacanian interpretation of this 'reality' as 'symbolically-construed reality,' a reality, furthermore, based firmly in the Symbolic register. In other words, the tonal matrices of signification that mediate meaning have an obverse, remaindered, uncanny underside, based in the more abstract, non-representational, 'immediate-rendering' fragments of the sign. More specifically, the interpretation of Herrmann's diatonic/chromatic and tonal/atonal counterpoint lends itself to a theoretical understanding of Žižek's distinctions between the Symbolic and Imaginary dimensions through which reality is represented in the cinema; through 'code' and 'simulacra' respectively, and a third means, which he describes as *rendu*. I shall return to the idea of

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[67] Royal S. Brown, 1994, p. 19.

rendu in the final section. At this stage, the point to stress is that these complementary qualities that function between these abstract remaindered fragments of the signifier occur on a number of levels and *across* different sensory dimensions - they are trans-sensorial - amounting to an overall affect often greater than the sum of its parts.

And these non-iconic, non-representational aspects of music are crucial to Hitchcock's cinematic philosophy; the director has often likened the process of constructing film to composing music. "Every piece of film that you put in the film should have a purpose," Hitchcock claimed, "you cannot put it together indiscriminately. Its like notes of music. They must make their point."[68] Harmonic ambiguity and economic brevity become the very foundation of Herrmann's compositional style for Hitchcock's extra-subjective films, a strategy that would reach an apotheosis of sorts with the scores for *Vertigo*, *Psycho* and *The Birds*.

The musical score for *Psycho* became one of the principle facilitators of the film's uneasy atmospheres, positing an underlying ambiguity that was constructed musically through intense dissonance and often, as in the final scene, a complete lack of tonal reference. As Brown notes of the *Psycho* score, "Herrmann began to rely even less on the types of dramatic *shifts from major to minor mode* [...] no harmonic resolution takes place – so that the harmonic colours stand even more strongly on their own and so that

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[68] Hitchcock quoted in 'On Style: An Interview with *Cinema*' in Sidney Gottlieb (ed.), *Hitchcock on Hitchcock*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), pp. 285-302, p. 290. Originally Published 1963.

the viewer/listener remains suspended."[69] It is this 'suspension' of the spectator that Williams alludes to in her description of the giddy, thrill-seeking attractions of post-modern cinema. These examples of Hitchcock's overall audio-visual aesthetic strategy exact a reconfiguring of the relationship between the spectator and the 'cinema-as-event(s).' Moreover, the techniques and strategies evinced by *Psycho* can be readily contrasted with the typical classical film-musical strategy, that verges towards the promotion of the more symbolically-construed 'suturing' function of the cinematic signifier - both aurally and visually speaking. The next section of this chapter seeks to explain Žižek's late-Lacanian framework and how it is suited to a theoretical comprehension of this new mode of spectatorial engagement, and to further differentiate this type of engagement from the classical understanding of a spectator's subjective cinematic experience.

3.3 Reconfiguring Spectatorship - *Psycho*'s Sound-Image Syntax, Extra-Subjectivity, and the Interfacing of Gaze and Voice.

The previous sections have considered some of the musicological characteristics of *Psycho*'s film score, especially in relation to some of the more general theories forwarded by other academics, to distinguish the shifting status of spectatorly

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[69] Royal S. Brown, 1994, p. 155-156.

engagement as it is manifested across this major transitional period for post-classical horror cinema. In particular, this chapter has so far sought to explain some distinct parallels between each of these hypotheses. For example, the immediate visceral engagement central to Linda Williams' post-modern cinema of attractions has been defined with further recourse to Elisabeth Weis' notion of the extra-subjective, an alternative mode of spectatorly engagement indicative of Hitchcock's films of this period. A further element has also sought to describe the exemplary indexing of these notions as evinced in the generic evolution of the popular horror film over the same period (post-60/post-*Psycho*) - away from the 'secure' horror characteristic of the 'classical' period, and towards the 'paranoid' horror of the post-classical era. In the latter, the 'psychotic' breakdown of the symbolic matrices of signification (upon which our narrative and thematic comprehension of cinema traditionally depend) is staged, a total collapse that is interpretable at the level of the *self itself* - the very core of subjectivity.

One conclusion to be drawn from these related evolutions in horror cinema is the fact that these two *stylistic* idioms - characteristic of each mode of cinematic horror (classical/'secure' - post-classical/'paranoid') - reflect an alternative hierarchy of cinematic imperatives. Furthermore, these are clearly based upon the promotion of different functional dimensions of the cinematic sign: the 'signifying' function, which upholds the classical mode of spectator engagement (via suture), and what can be described as the 'immediate-rendering' function, promoting the excessive, remaindered dimensions of the sign that resist symbolisation. The previous sections of this chapter

have also focused on Hitchcock's promotion of this non-symbolised dimension, via his 'pure cinema' approach to the representational strategies of horror cinema. Furthermore, it has considered how such an approach exploits the particular potential inherent in experimental musical styles and techniques.

In many ways, *Psycho*'s formal evolutions are symptomatic of the general extent to which the boundaries between avant-garde and mass-cultural idioms have become blurred in the face of post-modernism's cultural pluralism. Additionally, they tell of the fact that the horror film has pioneered this shift, increasingly appropriating the experimental idioms of progressive, avant-garde art movements - particularly that of modernist music - to these very ends.

Describing the shared characteristics of popular horror film and the avant-garde text, Isabel Pinedo remarks that, "Mass culture produces pleasure, which inscribes the consumer into the dominant bourgeois ideology. In contrast, the de-centred text produces *jouissance* and takes an adversarial stance [...]. Modelski aligns the contemporary Horror film with the latter." Pinedo states further: "Modleski argues that the de-centred, disordered horror film, like the avant-garde, *changes textual codes in order to disrupt narrative pleasure*, and that as such, it is a form of oppositional culture – my italics.'[70] It is just such a disruption that draws Žižek's interest in the horror genre and populist entertainment forms in general. Žižek's basic thesis - that we should 'identify' with the

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[70] Isabel Pinedo, *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of the Horror Film Viewing* (New York: University of New York Press, 1997), p. 74.

Real - thus performs an important ideological function: this he interprets in line with an overall neo-Marxist position. This position, Žižek contends, is very much a part of Lacan's later writings. However, the political implications of this stance do not really concern us here. It is the *manner* by which post-1960 horror films changes textual codes to disrupt narrative pleasure - through a particular 'rendering' of reality - that concerns us, and the central role of experimental musical styles and techniques to this type of rendering.

To explicate theoretically the central importance of *rendu* (rendering) to Žižek's late-Lacanian framework, this section now turns to a discussion of three important scenes from *Psycho*: the infamous murder of Marion Crane, the sequence detailing Lilah's approach to the house, and the final scene of Norman's imprisonment. I shall focus on the formal aspects of *Psycho*'s cinematic syntax, which critics, such as Williams, have only mentioned in passing. This allows me to assess the extent to which these formal characteristics 'change textual codes in order to disrupt narrative pleasure' and, in doing so, reconfigure the most fundamental aspect of the cinematic experience: our subjective experience of it.

So far, it has been suggested that what we are dealing with in the post-classical horror film is not the efficient channelling of signification, but some sort of trauma, or disruption through textual excess. This disruption is already *always there*. This is an intrinsic aspect of the Symbolic order, it contains its own inherent failure. The formal destabilisation and intensification present in *Psycho*, manifests textually the breakdown

of symbolic interconnectivities which, in Tudor's "secure" Horror (and classical cinema generally), guarantees a fixed 'subject-object' positioning. In the post-classical, *extra*-subjective cinema, however, it is not the Other now threatening from its opposing, 'externalised' position, but the 'internal' Other *constitutive of our own desiring subjectivity*. What we experience in the shower scene, for example, or the final scene, in which the Norman/mother character amalgam gazes back, is the destabilising of the self itself. Usually fixed in the register of Symbolic (albeit arbitrary and 'fictional') assurance, the self has now been displaced, decentred by this shock intrusion of the Real, a shock based in *non-meaning* as such. Žižek states that,

> The shower murder has always been a *pièce de résistance* for interpreters [...] a textbook case of what Freud called 'displacement.' Marion's violent death comes as an absolute surprise, a shock with no foundation in the narrative line which abruptly cuts off its 'normal' deployment; it is shot in a very 'filmic' way, its effect brought about by editing: one never sees the murderer or Marion's entire body; the act of murder is 'dismembered' into a multitude of fragmentary close-ups which succeed one another in frenetic rhythm.[71]

It could be argued that this scene effectively *opposes* the structural effects of suture, staging what can be better described as the *de*-suturing of the spectator. However, there are critics who interpret this scene with recourse to the classical notion of suture. One such critic is Stan Link, who argues the shower scene's musical cue, "crystallises the emotional and descriptive approaches of traditional horror [...]. The musical distortion and grotesqueries of romanticism, along with the fragmentation and abstraction of

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[71] Slavoj Žižek (ed.), *Everything You Wanted to Know About Lacan, But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock*, (London: Verso, 1992), p. 229.

expressionism, become congruent with horrific actions, emotional extremes and deranged interiorities."[72] Although this description succinctly describes Herrmann's musical techniques and influences, can we indeed say the music accompanying this scene, or indeed any of its formal characteristics, are working towards an efficient suturing of the spectator?

Jeff Smith describes two overarching functions for film music according to Gorbman's theory of cinematic suture – one semiotic and one psychological. Smith continues:

> Film Music must fend off two potential displeasures which threaten the spectator's experience. The first is the threat of uncertain signification, what Roland Barthes has called "the terror of uncertain signs" In diffusing this threat, film music uses its cultural codes and connotations to anchor the image in meaning. [...] Music harnesses the elusive signifier, and assures us of a safely channelled signified. Second, film music also fends of displeasure by diverting the spectator's potential awareness of the technological basis of cinematic discourse. Like the primordial sonorous envelope, music's bath of affect is thought to smooth over gaps and roughnesses, cover spatial and temporal discontinuities and mask the recognition of the frame through its own sonic and harmonic continuity.[73]

Stan Link provides an "interpretation of musical horror" in this scene, explaining that "suture creates an emotional continuity between the film and spectator."[74] Actually, measured by the criteria of Smith's definition, it seems clear that the audio-visual

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[72] Stan Link, 'Sympathy with the Devil? Music of the Psycho post-*Psycho* in *Screen*, Vol. 145, No. 1, Spring, 2004, pp. 1-20, p. 2.
[73] Jeff Smith, 'Unheard Melodies? A Critique of Psychoanalytic theories of Film Music' in David Bordwell and Noel Carroll (eds.), *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 1996, pp. 230-247, p. 234.
[74] Stan Link, Spring, 2004, p. 2.

strategies of the shower scene, and arguably the film as a whole, actually seek to engender the exact opposite. As Žižek argues, the shower scene delivers a 'shock of the Real,' with no foundation in the narrative line of the film. It not only highlights the fragmentary, spatiotemporal discontinuities of the scene, but also intensifies them through the deployment of uncertain signs. Here, it achieves this effect through the use of disjunctive edits, full of spatial jumps, contrasting angles, and fragmented, fetishised images in extreme close-up.

In the last scene of the film, with Norman imprisoned in the cell, the musical cue used offers a powerful example of Herrmann's serialist tendencies. The phrase has no central 'anchoring' key, the tune never returning to a note already played until it has gone through all eleven others. This sense of endless movement expresses a psychological sense of *drive* as opposed to *desire* in its failed attempts at a clear signification. Of course, it is through the signifying matrices of tonal systems that music manages to 'harness the elusive signifier' and 'anchor the image in meaning,' but Herrmann's distinct promotion of harmonic ambiguity and fragmentary, musical verticality only works to support a *failure* of the cinematic sign. This renders a sense of the Barthesian notion of the terror of 'uncertain' signs mentioned above. Moreover, the transition to a post-classical typology of horror is now premised upon the evolution of the spectator towards an experiencing of this affect as a 'good' terror. This is a clear manifestation of the growing sadomasochistic sensibility that typifies the spectator of the post-modern cinema of attractions as defined by Linda Williams.

To support his interpretation of musical horror in his analysis of *Psycho*'s shower murder, Stan Link turns to John Rahn's notion of 'concentrated musical listening' in order to describe a particular emotional intimacy he believes is created by Herrmann's sonic stabs to the senses. Defining concentrated musical listening, however, Rahn states that "During the time I am coupled with the music, there is little or no semeiosis going on. The music and I are too involved with one another for a space to open between us at any time, so that I could constitute a separate it as a sign [...]. Such connections are immediate and intimate, like touch."[75] It could be argued, then, that such an intensely haptic experience of cinematic form has more in keeping with the immediate spatiotemporal *destabilisation* and visceral impact created through the spectator's encounter with the materiality of the pure sign of *rendu*. Rather than the signifying dimension of the suture process, through which we engage empathetically with an imaginary identification with the characters, we have what can be described as an affect of pure form.

We can see the problems with describing our experience of the shower scene with recourse to the suture model and the idea of 'concentrated listening.' The two notions can be conceived as polarised opposites - although, again, opposites paradoxically connected on a deeply unconscious level. For Gorbman, the primary function of film music as suturing agent is to evoke the 'auditory-imaginary,' and situate the text's reader in a clear relationship with the Symbolic register of language and discourse. Expanding

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[75] John Rahn in Link (2004), p. 3.

upon her theory of music as a suturing agency, Gorbman refers to the work of Mary Ann Doane, who suggests that this process should be understood *psychoanalytically* as an, "interface of imaginary and symbolic; *pulling at once toward the signifying organisation of language*" - my italics.[76]

As I suggested in Chapter One, here we must apply the lesson of Christian Metz. His theoretical approach, Žižek notes, worked to dispel "the imaginary fascination, to break through it to the hidden symbolic structure regulating its functioning."[77] However, Žižek adds that, "in the last decade we can observe a shift of accent to the paradoxical status of those remnants and leftovers of the Real that elude the structuring of the signifier."[78] It is perhaps worth recalling the point made earlier: the suture process is reliant on the Metzian notion of the "transparency of a signified, of a story, which is in reality manufactured by it but which it pretends to merely illustrate. [...] The fiction film represents both the negation of the signifier (an attempt to have it forgotten) and a certain working regime of that signifier, a very precise one."[79] Thus, it is not the absence of any specific work of the signifier but "its *presence in the mode of denegation.*"[80] that characterises the classical narrative cinema and its suturing of the spectator. This 'precision' of the *aural* signifier is based upon the 'safe-channelling' of meaning, which

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[76] Mary-Ann Doane quoted in Claudia Gorbman 'Why Music: The Sound Film and its Spectator' in Kay Dickenson (ed), *The Film Music Reader*, (London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 37-47, p. 43).
[77] Slavoj Žižek 'The Undergrowth of Enjoyment' in Edmond and Elisabeth Wright (eds.), *The Žižek Reader*, (London: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), pp. 13-33, p. 14.
[78] *ibid*, p.14.
[79] Christian Metz quoted in Claudia Gorbman, 'Why Music? The Sound Film and its Spectator' in Kay Dickenson (ed.), *Movie Music: The Film Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 37-47, p. 45.
[80] *ibid*, p. 45.

is arrived at through the spectator's decoding of the largely *tonal* 'matrices' of musical signification. Žižek describes what, conversely, happens in *Psycho*, emphasising the role of music and the extra- or *trans*-subjective experience. As such, the reference is worth quoting in full:

> Elisabeth Weis makes a perspicacious remark on how the status of horror in Hitchcock's films changes with *Psycho*: here for the first time, horror (the high-note violin squeak that accompanies the two murders and the final confrontation) become transsubjective – that is, it can no longer be qualified as the affect of a diegetic personality. From our perspective, however, this 'transsubjective' dimension is precisely the dimension of subject beyond 'subjectivity': in *Rear Window* for example, the horror and tension are still 'subjectivised', located in a narrative universe, attached to a subjective point of view; whereas the impersonal abyss we confront when we find ourselves face to face with Norman's gaze into the camera is the very abyss of the subject not yet caught in the web of language – the unapproachable Thing which resists subjectivisation, this point of failure of every identification, is ultimately *the subject itself*.[81]

John Rahn, in the quotation included earlier, claimed that, in this instance of concentrated *musical* listening, there is 'no space' opened up for the spectator to conceive it as a sign - that is, as a signifier, the 'space' between the Imaginary and the Symbolic having to exist prior to it being 'sutured' up. What we do experience in this scene seems more in keeping with Žižek's description of the pure sign of *rendu*, or what Wright and Wright refer to as "the psychotic effect [...] constituted by the refusal of symbolic castration, resulting in the lack of a lack."[82] In other words, what results is the overwhelming proximity of the cinematic experience. It is *this* which characterises the

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[81] Slavoj Žižek, 'In His Bold Gaze My Ruin is Writ Large' in Slavoj Žižek (ed.), *Everything You Wanted to Know About Lacan But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock*, (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 211-272, p. 245.

[82] Elisabeth Wright and Edmond Wright, (eds.), *The Žižek Reader*, 2001, p.13.

'psychotic' mode of paranoid horror, the flooding of 'reality' with the Real. The same overwhelming proximity is present in the shower scene's aural cues, rendering palpable the anxiety-ridden, short-circuiting of the Real and the Symbolic registers, the point of failure for every symbolic identification (successful identification being the preserve of the suture process). This experience, Žižek contends, can be interpreted as an experience of the subject beyond subjectivisation - that is *the subject itself.*

Another critical intention behind Stan Link's argument is to suggest that the characterisation of Norman Bates does not represent a substantial departure in terms of his *musical* characterisation. In terms of musical style, Link claims, "Norman is technically grounded in the expressionist idioms developed by Strauss, Bartok, Berg and Webern."[83] There are, then, further problems with Link's assessment of *Psycho*'s cine-musical strategies, above and beyond his interpretation of musical suture. For example, Link does not acknowledge the specific qualities of the film's pioneering aesthetic achievements. Although he notes that the score for *Psycho* "realises musical modernism's potential relevance for cinematic horror,"[84] Link's precedents are all drawn from Expressionist operas. For example, the quote he includes from Eisler's and Adorno's *Composing for the Films* (written in 1947) focuses one's attention on the fact that the shocks of modern music were still unassimilated (into the movies) after thirty years. As noted in Chapter Two, Hanns Eisler and Theodor Adorno argue that modern horror cinema had the most *potential* for a successful cinematic incorporation of

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[83] Link, 2004, p. 5.
[84] *ibid*, p. 5.

modernism's musical syntax, but not necessarily that this potential had ever been *fully* achieved in the mainstream cinema (horror or otherwise).

As I argued earlier, it is Hitchcock's *cinematic* incorporation of Herrmann's musical syntax, into the larger audio-visual syntax of his cinematic forms, that gives the film its pioneering status and guides the film-musical contribution to the post-modern, post-classical cinematic sensibility. And it is this aspect that Link neglects. This is where an explication of the director's promotion of these abstract dimensions, or 'fragments,' of the cinematic sign can facilitate a differentiation, between what Link deems as musical suture and Žižek's theory of *interface* (introduced in Chapter One), and which the latter argues fits the post-modern cinematic sensibility more accurately. As we shall see, this differentiation also relates also to the trans-sensorial basis of these non-symbolising 'fragments,' that structure the libidinal economies that underpin Hitchcock's extra-subjective films.

Herein lies the crucial link Žižek draws between the 'excess' element of Romanticist music, an element subsequently refined and intensified by numerous modernist practitioners, and its signifying potential (or lack thereof). The crucial difference, for our interpretation, is to *what ends* we may discern the functional relationships between syntactical elements (sound, images, editing) to be working - a safely-channelled signification, leading to identification via the suture process, or some uncanny sense of semiotic excess that stages a more material, visceral appreciation of signs.

However, to understand the paradoxical quality of the Real, we must acknowledge its obverse dimension: the *potential* for signification must be present for it to fail. In describing the distinct affinities that Herrmann's harmonically ambiguous music displays for this type of effect, we need to be aware of how film music in general can also function in a more ambiguous manner. The musical cue for 'The Hill' sequence shows us how important this formal ambiguity truly is. In this sequence, Royal S. Brown notes: "music and cinematic movement complement each other to create a striking example of vertical montage in the audio-visual structure."[85] In a similar way to 'The Madhouse' cue described earlier, this formal contrast is immediately rendered in the contrary motion of each separate melody line, further matched in turn with contrasting P.O.V shots of Lila's perspective and an uncanny returning shot of the house: the 'object' of our horror, as it where, looking back at us.

Brown adds, for example, that this vertical montage "goes way beyond the classical shot/reverse shot pairing, since its alternation is repeated too many times."[86] Scholars often use the orthodox shot/reverse to explicate the process of suture, but here we have something slightly different, something more intensely excessive and irrational. The musical cue for this sequence renders palpable the ambivalency between individual positions. Indeed, it structures ambivalence into its very form. Crucially, this radical ambivalence is not, then, to be read metaphorically, as it is not signified through the symbolic potential of signs, but rendered by the very failure of the Symbolic - the

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[85] Brown, 1994, p. 168.
[86] *ibid*, p. 169.

remaindered fragments that pertain to the Real create this elementary anxiety. *It is an effect of pure form.*

'The Hill' cue does not resolve in any tonal sense, but ends instead on an ambiguous 'Hitchcock' chord (neither tonally major or minor). As Brown suggests, the effect of "prominent passages of parallel upward and downward movement [...] as well as passages of mirrored contrary motion [...] in terms of the affective impact on the listener [...] would seem to be quite similar to that of the major/minor ambiguity."[87] There is a tendency in Hitchcock and Herrmann's cinematic rhythms that "stands apart from the scenes considerable narrative implications,"[88] Brown explains. Although Herrmann's "musical correspondence," works in the Hill sequence, "within its own temporal elaboration [...]. Once again, what Hitchcock accomplishes in the horizontal movement of the editing Herrmann suggests more vertically thanks to the simultaneity afforded by the textures [of the musical cues]."[89] In the truest and most uncanny sense, what we have here is the *trans*-sensorial basis by which 'forms themselves' (to use Žižek's phrase) render the Real.

Overall, the de-hierachilising affect of the music - its working in accordance with other forms on the same level of abstract affective functioning - guides the promotion of this formal autonomy towards this type of rendering, and away from the safe-channelling of

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[87] *ibid*, p.168.
[88] *ibid*, p. 169.
[89] *ibid*.

signification that characterises the normal deployment of the shot-reverse shot, for example. As Brown confirms, "What characterises the Herrmann/Hitchcock sound are the ways in which the downward tendency is counterbalanced to reflect the unique equilibria of Hitchcock's cinema, and, even more importantly, the ways in which novel harmonic colorations make that descent into the irrational felt as an ever-lurking potential."[90] We can now see how this antinomy is located in the visual field, in Hitchcock's uncanny evocation of this impossible Gaze in 'The Hill' sequence. As an example of an, "elementary Hitchcockian procedure," Zizek informs us, this "already reads as a kind of uncanny inversion of the elementary suture procedure [...] Hitchcock is at his most uncanny and disturbing when he engages us directly with the point of view of this external fantasmatic gaze."[91]

We should, therefore, read *Psycho*'s pioneering audio-visual developments - in particular, Hitchcock's incorporation of Herrmann's musical modernism - as part of a larger trend. There are also distinct affinities displayed between Herrmann's compositional style and the burgeoning cinematic technologies of the period. For example, six-track stereophony, a technology which allowed for a wider frequency range to be more clearly definable, intensified the potentiality of dynamic contrast so crucial to the affective power of Hitchcock's cinema. This type of cinematic experience is also directly connected to the increasing 'spatialisation' of the spectator which, as I have suggested in Chapter Two, originated out of the economic competition created by the

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[90] *ibid.*, p. 153.
[91] ibid, p. 35.

arrival of television. Towards the end of the fifties, as popular cinema found itself in the position of requiring to be as cinematic as it possibly could, a number of technological evolutions occurred that began to stress the importance of the spectator's actual spatial environment. I referred, for example, in Chapter One, to John Belton's point about the technological improvements of the 1950s not always striving for some new level of cinematic realism but, on the contrary, a whole new level of spectacle and sensation (see page 49).

In the post-modern cinema nothing more readily imposes an ontology of spatial and temporal destabilisation than the constant allusion to movement provided by music. Moreover, nothing engenders for an audience the destabilisation of spatiotemporal reference points as well as the styles and techniques of certain experimental music(s). As Frederic Jameson opines, "the most crucial relationship of music to the post-modern, however, surely passes through space itself [...]. Technologies of the musical, to be sure, whether of production, reproduction, reception, or consumption, already worked to fashion a *sonorous space around the individual or collective listener* - my italics."[92] Not only is this process of spatialisation a quintessentially post-modern notion, it is of prime importance to the horror genre. As Kevin J. Donnelly stresses:

> In horror films, in particular, music can manifest a distinctive and enveloping 'sound architecture' or ambience [...] its enveloping quality means that it can be more than simply 'backdrop'. *Horror films are created as whole environments that the audience enters, equating*

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[92] Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late-Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1984), p. 299.

> *mental states with a sonic construct*. Indeed, more than any other film genre, they construct a whole sound system, a musicscape, as well as embodying a distinct sound effects iconography of horror - my italics.[93]

If, as suggested, this multi-faceted imposition of space amounts to a maximum destabilisation of the spectator's *potential* space, this also surely describes the post-classical cinematic mode as pioneered by *Psycho*. As this chapter has argued, Herrmann's musical techniques (and Hitchcock's incorporation of them) contributes significantly to the spatiotemporal dislocation and materialist impact present that are imperative to our experience of *Psycho*, and rendered through the musical techniques described earlier.

This inherent spatialisation of the spectator's cinematic experience contributes to the uncanny effects of an 'interfacing with/rendering of' gaze and voice. What we start to notice is the spectator's environment is now overloaded with anxiety-producing, 'free-floating,' signs of ambiguity and ambivalence. Experimental music, in particular, plays a privileged role in our destabilisation through a *fantasy* space, or rather, a space of fantasy. Perhaps Herrmann's most fundamental technique - his harmonic ambiguity - refers to an inherent bitonality that functions in exactly the same way as an atonal musical piece. As Gerhard Albersheim explains,

> The psychological result of bi- or polytonality is the same as that of atonality: we perceive no harmonic structure and therefore have not two

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[93] Kevin J. Donnelly, *The Spectre of Sound: Music in Film and Television*, (London: BFI Publishing, 2005). p. 94.

> or more standpoints in tonal space, but none at all [...]. In the tonal space of atonal music there are no places (tones) which are so distinguished from others that we can identify ourselves with them."[94]

The use of bi-tonal music in *Psycho* occasions the ambiguous effects of *rendu*, through the 'transsubjective' dimension of 'voice-as-object' described earlier. There is no diegetic music in *Psycho* at all, no music that is fixed to a diegetic source. In fact, the film plays with the very opposite - a traumatic voice that has no source for a significant portion of the film. In terms of music, though, there is only the non-diegetic music that issues from an uncanny, non-localised, intermediate domain of the irrational - Žižek's horrifying inter-space.

Albersheim, like Žižek, links this experience to other art forms that produce "streams of consciousness" effects, noting what links them is the failure to "represent and to communicate an intelligent aesthetic manifestation of a human individuality."[95] But for Žižek this is exactly the point. The last years of Lacan's teaching were directed at, "breaking through the field of communication as meaning [...] to delineate the outlines of a certain space in which signifiers find themselves in a state of free-floating, logically prior to their discursive binding and articulation [...] a psychotic kernel evading the discursive network."[96] We can now see how Herrmann's musical techniques function to stage a fantasy space for the spectator, a virtualised space in which we float. This

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[94] Gerhard Albersheim, 'The Sense of Space in Tonal and Atonal Music,' in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol. 19, No. 1 (Autumn 1960), pp. 17-30, p. 24-25.
[95] *ibid*, p. 25. Interestingly Albersheim's comparison to certain 'streams of consciousness' arts and abstract expressionism links perfectly with Žižek's (and Lacan's) discussion of Mark Rothko and James Joyce.
[96] Slavoj Žižek in Wright and Wright (1999), p. 29.

rendering of spatiotemporal dislocation and materialist impact is directly analogous to Williams' 'rollercoaster' metaphor for the post-modern cinematic experience.

Anxiety is the underlying emotion here. And the post-classical horror film expresses this fundamental anxiety through the means of this irreducible antagonism. The 'object' of our horror is rendered through an elementary ambiguity structured into the very syntax of cinema itself, as a traumatic excess of the Real. The point to remember is that this ambiguity, this failure of signification (of the Symbolic-Imaginary identification), is *structured into the form itself.* It's primary purpose is not to be interpreted, or decoded, but enjoyed *as such.* In many ways, this was *Psycho*'s major achievement, arguably the reason why the film preoccupies us still after some forty-eight years of intense academic scrutiny.

In demoting film music's signifying function, the post-*Psycho* horror film, in particular, has radicalised both the notion of popular cinematic aesthetics, and the psychical structuring of a spectator's subjective investment. After *Psycho*, post-classical horror films would deploy certain musical styles primarily as an agency of diegetic rupture through a rendering of semiotic excess. This is indicative of the fact that post-modern culture has become a culture that is obsessed with the search for the true nature of this core of radical subjectivity, of the subject beyond subjectivisation, a search that horror film has pioneered, and stages through this hyper-aesthetic agency.

The next chapter undertakes an analysis of Dario Argento's visceral period films (c.

1975-1980). Argento is another director who exemplifies (and intensifies) this hyper-aesthetic style, disposing of narrative almost completely, and replacing it with a celebration of pure cinematic spectacle. I shall also use this chapter to introduce numerous new factors into the thesis' wider discussion. These shall include a consideration of more populist musical idioms, such as Rock music, and how they have been traditionally incorporated into the evolutionary trajectory of this particular generic development. Also, in theoretical terms, the next chapter assesses the extent to which certain other schools of post-structural intellectual thought seek to explain this visceral cinematic experience in all its extra-linguistic capacity. My focus here is to be placed on the distinct parallels that can be observed between these schools of thought and Žižek's overarching late-Lacanian framework.

Chapter Four

SOUNDTRACK, SUBJECTIVITY, AND CINEMATIC MATERIALISM: FIGURATIONS OF THE LACANIAN REAL IN THE VISCERAL CINEMA OF DARIO ARGENTO (1975 - 1980)

'You cannot have both meaning and enjoyment'

Slavoj Žižek

'I would love to have one of my films regarded in the same way as Psycho. *Perhaps* Suspiria *will be one day, who can tell?*

'What the cinema reflects is something deeper than reality'

Dario Argento

4. Introduction

The above comments of Dario Argento clearly hold a deep significance for a psychoanalytical approach to the director's cinema in general, and a Žižekian (late-) Lacanian interpretation of his visceral, mid-to-late seventies, films in particular.[1] This chapter discusses how this excess of the Lacanian Real - the something 'deeper' than reality itself - is positioned central to Argento's cinematic philosophies. By combining detailed formal analysis with more general theoretical observations this chapter focuses on Argento's audio-visual strategies - especially his use of soundtrack - describing how these position his work along the evolutionary trajectory of a 'post-classical, post-*Psycho*' hyper-aesthetics of popular horror cinema.

[1] Dario Argento's 'visceral' period covers the period from 1975 to 1980. This period begins with the transitional film, *Deep Red* (1975), and also includes *Suspiria* (1977), and *Inferno* (1980). Although visceral-type cinematic strategies feature in both earlier *and* later Argento films, they do not dominate the overall cinematic economy as they do in these three films.

Žižek postulates a central functional role for what he describes as, 'the Real thus rendered,' within his psychoanalytical figuration of cinematic enjoyment, a framework he constructs with various other notions of cinematic subjectivity and spectator positioning firmly in mind. As I have suggested in Chapter Three, two notions of particular theoretical relevance to Žižek's general thesis are Elisabeth Weis' concept of 'extra-subjectivity,' and Linda Williams' definition (and delineation) of a 'post-classical/post-modern, cinema-of-attractions.' The principle common to all three being the requisite promotion (within the overall hierarchy of cinematic imperatives) of the spectator's encounter with/enjoyment of this 'excess' dimension of the cinematic signifier.

In terms of musical styles, Dario Argento is widely responsible (along with other director's of 'Euro-Horror') for introducing *rock*-based musical idioms to horror film music. And the director's incorporation of the Progressive Rock and Jazz-Rock styles provides a contextual focus for assessing how well the formal characteristics of these styles - odd time-signatures, the textural promotion of instrumental timbre, the use of large intervallic leaps - facilitate the kind of 'extra-subjective' effects described above. Some Argento scholars, including Maitland McDonagh and Stephen Thrower, have attempted to describe some special conjunction of sound and image in the director's visceral-period films. However, much of this kind of work on Argento often fails to recognise the implications of these audio-visual evolutions for wider theoretical questions.

McDonagh, for example, refers to a strategy of "Barthesian excess," arguing that (from *Deep Red* onwards) Argento utilises the musical score to "merge sound and image together into a single structural element."[2] However, despite McDonagh's detailed readings of Argento's oeuvre, there is never a *direct* acknowledgement of what this 'merging' might entail at the syntactical level, or any consideration as to the theoretical implications it could hold for our understanding of the spectator's subjective enjoyment/experience with this type of cinema.

Therein lies the main purpose of this chapter. It provides a detailed theoretical explication of these formal dynamics *as reflected through* Argento's pioneering appropriation of experimental rock music(s). My own focus on questions of style and cinematic form - particularly the functional dynamics evinced between aural devices (atonality, and timbral and rhythmic expression, for instance) and non-aural devices (image, *mise-en-scene*, and editing) - strives to elucidate a theoretically-informed correlation *between* such formal characteristics and this excess dimension of horror cinema, in particular, our subjective experience or 'encounter' with it. With recourse to Žižek's late-Lacanian psychoanalytical framework, and an emphasis upon the experimental qualities of Goblin's music for the films, this chapter seeks a deeper understanding of the aural and visual idiosyncrasies of the 'visceral' horror cinema, explaining how these elements function *in tandem* to render the uncanny anxieties normally associated with an 'eruption' of the Lacanian Real.

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[2] Maitland McDonough 'Broken Mirrors/Broken Dreams: The Dark Dreams of Dario Argento' in *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 2, (Winter, 1987/88), pp.2-13, p.12.

It was noted in Chapter One how Žižek's individual approach to psychoanalytically-informed film analysis engenders a hermeneutic reversal of sorts. As Stephen Heath points out, cinema, for Žižek, is not *just* "an object for psychoanalysis, with films understood through psychoanalytic concepts (though that also features in his work)," it also provides "the means by which those concepts can be truly understood, films as the material with which to explicate psychoanalysis."[3] In keeping with this general methodological tenet, Argento's visceral films (and the visceral emphasis of contemporary horror in general) offer a revealing context for explicating a number of related theoretical notions - in individual terms, as well as the particular affinities seemingly shared by each. As well as the ideas of Weis and Williams, these include Roland Barthes' notion of 'obtuse' meanings, Chris Gallant's theories of the 'post-modern Gothic,' and general ideas regarding the links between 'the Real' and 'the Uncanny.'

These analytically-informed discussions shall contribute to the study's critique of the dominant film music models and theories. The main issue adopted in my own thesis concerns Žižek's central critique of the theoretical concept of cinematic suture. Regardless of its individual agencies, Žižek contends, the idea of cinematic suture (at least as understood by *Screen* theorists of the late-seventies), has become less applicable

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[3] Stephen Heath, 'Cinema and Psychoanalysis: Parallel Histories' in Janet Bergstrom (ed.), *Endless Night: Cinema and Psychoanalysis, Parallel Histories* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 25-56, p. 36.

to a contemporary cinema based increasingly upon the spectacle of "cinematic materialism," further defined by Žižek as "the direct physical impact of the texture of texts"[4] which he explicitly links to the Real.

Argento's promotion of this non-symbolised semiotic excess, remaindered from signification, engenders a subjective engagement at odds with orthodox notions of cinematic subjectivity. Claudia Gorbman's 'narrative' paradigm of film music's functional role is particularly problematic in this respect, as the applicability of her model is proportionate to the extent by which an overall narrativising agency structures our spectatorly engagement. In opposing this conceptual paradigm, the analytical approach undertaken here stresses the particular affinities that experimental musical styles display for the staging of these spectacles of cinematic materialism - spectacles that, as Žižek argues, "short-circuit"[5] the suture process. The following case-study outlines how the spectator's encounter with such spectacles of cinematic materialism translates, in Argento's visceral horror cinema, into a spatial and temporal decentring/destabilisation of the spectator, as simulated within an 'actualised,' or 'virtualised,' cinematic environment.

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[4] Slavoj Zizek *The Fright of Real Tears: Krystof Kieslowski Between Theory and Post-Theory* (London: BFI Publishing, 2001), p.102.
[5] *ibid*, p. 102.

4.1 Semiotic Excess and Extra-Subjectivity: Argento's Visceral Cinema and the Hyper-Aesthetics of Euro-Horror

During the 1970's one director above all exemplified the horror genre's growing tendencies toward cinematic strategies of semiotic excess more than any other: the acclaimed Euro-Horror auteur, Dario Argento. The director's trademark cinematic style displayed a preoccupation with sensorial impact, bringing a new level of density and materiality to his cinema that was lacking in much of the horror cinema of the period. Certainly, the most successful and well-remembered of Argento's movies (*Deep Red*, *Suspiria* and *Inferno*) operate predominately on this physical level. However, the physiological affects of this 'visceral' cinema also hold important *psychological* ramifications, the most crucial being the singular mode of cinematic 'enjoyment' that is being promoted via the director's hyper-real strategies of semiotic excess.

This kind of enjoyment is absolutely central to Argento's cinema, positioning it firmly within the post-*Psycho*, post-modern cinema of attractions (as described by Williams). Importantly, Slavoj Žižek's late-Lacanian interpretation of this enjoyment-in-*jouissance* helps us understand Argento's incorporation of experimental musical styles within his personal cinematic philosophy. Moreover, whereas Hitchcock's extra-subjective films offer isolated 'eruptions' of this excess of the Real - articulating a collapsing of the self within an overall structure of symbolically-construed 'reality' - Argento's visceral cinema (particularly *Suspiria*) simulates the complete collapse of symbolic assurance itself. In other words, his visceral films amount to a cinematic rendering of a state of

extreme psychosis.

To recap, achieving this 'psychotic' affect (defined by Tudor as a basic trait of the post-modern horror film - See page 135) means the musical score functions in an *extra-subjective* manner, and in tandem with other formal elements. That is, the *primary* functional purpose of these is not suturing the spectator (through a 'safe-channelling' of aural signification) into an empathetic identification with the characters etc. Instead, the Argento's aesthetic strategies, like Hitchcock's, work towards a type of *de*-suturing phenomenon, a 'short-circuiting' of the suture process. What differentiates this film-musical (and general) aesthetic experience, n the latter instance, is the nature *of* its cinematic mediation. The direct visceral engagement of the spectator, in a film like *Suspiria*, does not result from a successful signification, the interpretation of a 'text' through the decoding of its cinematic signs. Rather, the experience is dependent on a 'failure' of signification, of communication, achieved through the spectator's direct engagement with this excess dimension of the signifier that resists symbolisation. Within Žižek's theoretical framework, then, the direct correlative of this failed signification is a *successful* rendering of the Real.

To understand the difference between the visceral cinema's promotion of semiotic excess, and the more orthodox, 'suturing' model of classical cinema (as outlined by Gorbman et al.), we need to observe the hierarchy of cinematic imperatives in place in each individual case. For Argento, as for his audience, his intense conjunctions of sound and image involve a celebration of *cinematic intensity itself*. His overall cinematic style

promotes a visceral, inherently libidinal, encounter/experience, rather than symbolic interpretations *per se*. Certainly, his visceral films are not *primarily* 'texts,' to be decoded through the Imaginary-Symbolic registers. Instead, they favour a more intense experience of filmic events, manipulating the tension between the Symbolic and Real psychic registers. This is why Žižek's (late-)Lacanian framework is so useful - particularly in relation to Argento (and other directors of visceral horror) - as it shifts the hermeneutic focus away from the Imaginary-Symbolic axis (which dominates in the 'classical' Lacanian model), towards the uncanny tension operating between the Real and Symbolic registers, which so captivated Lacan during his final years.

This visceral style of filmmaking was very much part of the new criteria for popular cinematic enjoyment during the mid-to-late-1970s, and an important factor in the burgeoning popularity of the Horror genre during this period. The visceral cinema celebrated the spectacle of cinematic materialism to the full - a cinema of shock and anxiety, employing the materialist impact of sounds (and colours) in order to provide intense pleasures arguably bordering on pain. In short, a cinematic strategy for creating an enjoyment-in-*jouissance*. As James Monaco notes, "the visceral cinema [...] eschews intelligence in favour of what Pauline Kael has called the visceral response, and the singular emotion they chose to exploit is fear (whether you call it horror or anxiety, terror or paranoia)."[6]

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[6] James Monaco 'Aaaiieeeaarrggh!!' in *Sight and Sound*, Vol.49, No.2, (Spring, 1980), pp. 80-82, p.82.

The sub-category of horror film that grasped these new ideals most fervently was the burgeoning Euro-Horror movement of the mid-to-late seventies. Involving a group of European directors that include Argento, Lucio Fulci, Lamberto Bava, and Michael Soavi, the defining trait of this sub-category of horror was its promotion of stylistic excess. As Steven Jay Schneider notes,

> Euro-Horror is more often associated with the stylistic and visual excesses and idiosyncrasies of certain cult auteurs. Moreover, it is one that threatens to collapse a number of traditional and deeply entrenched binary oppositions that remain operative in academic film discourses, such as that between 'art' and 'trash' cinema, that between quality and exploitation, and that between experimental and conventional filmic practices.[7]

What remains most interesting, in the context of this study, is how the above-mentioned directors structure such ambiguities into the very forms of their filmic discourse. As he moves towards the Euro-Horror of *Suspiria* and *Inferno*, Argento seems progressively more inclined to exploit experimental styles and techniques - strange angles, hyper-real cinematography, and musical expression - purely for such visceral ends. If the visceral technique is characterised by a willingness to re-appropriate the techniques of 'high-art' purely in the name of cinematic enjoyment/spectacle, then the deployment of experimental musical techniques should be viewed as critical in this context. Not only as an isolated component, that is, but as a device that draws together other experimental cinematic procedures *under the same abstract rubric of affective functioning*. As a non-

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[7] Steven Jay Schneider 'Notes on the Relevance of Psychoanalytic Theory to Euro-Horror Cinema' in Andrea Sabbadini (ed.), *The Couch and the Silver Screen: Psychoanalytic Reflections on European Cinema* (East Sussex: Brunner-Routledge, 2003), pp.119-127, p.120.

representational art-form, combining the spatial and temporal dimensions of melody, harmony, and rhythm, with the materialist affect of timbre, music is best placed to coordinate this type of trans-sensorial complementation on the abstract level of pure cinematic form.

As in Hitchcock's *Psycho*, Argento exploits a hyper-aesthetic strategy to create a state of anxiety in the spectator through a visceral impact and a spatiotemporal de-centring effects that the director subsumes into a generalised feeling of awed excitement and tension. As the following case-study analysis affirms, its a technique that maximises sensorial affect and spatial displacement by engaging the main traits of musical modernism - most notably, the use of harmonic ambiguity, rhythmic instability, and the textural impact of instrumental timbre. The Goblin scores for Argento's films update various modernist tendencies, articulating them through the formal traits and instrumental orchestration of both Progressive Rock and the Jazz-Rock styles of the period. As mentioned, this film-musical technique was pioneered by the Italian horror directors of the 1970s, many of whom actually introduced the sonic bombast and musical dexterity of the Rock idiom to the horror soundtrack.

As noted, some critics have used the functional relationship posited between sound and image to delineate the various stages of Argento's work, itself a testament to the fundamental role of formal attributes in the director's work. The earlier films, for example, were characterised by ironic counterpoint between sound and image. In the visceral films, however, the *excess* semiotic element of each dimension of the sign are

complementing each other, that is, working towards the same result: rendering some uncanny sense of the irreducible ambiguity that, according to Žižek, characterises the Lacanian Real. Therefore, from a theoretical, analytical, and historical perspective, these two formal strategies provide the perfect context for introducing the early and middle (i.e. visceral) stages of Argento's career, and their attendant stylistic modes.

4.1.1 Sound and Image as Counterpoint: Argento's Early Period, Morricone, and the Animal 'Giallo' Trilogy.

Born September 7th, 1940, to a photographer mother, and a film-industry executive father, Dario Argento experienced a bohemian upbringing from an early age. A meek child, given to long periods of delirium and frequent nightmares, the young Argento turned to film journalism after briefly trying acting as a profession in his late teens. It was Italian director, Sergio Leone, who provided him with his first real break in the film industry - a co-writing job alongside Bernardo Bertolucci on Leone's epic western, *Once Upon A Time in the West* (1969). "It was the first time in my life," Argento acknowledged, "I encountered someone who reasoned in terms of images. Every time he spoke, my brain would be flooded with some new fantastical vision."[8]

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[8] Dario Argento quoted in Alan Jones, *Profondo Argento: The Man, the Myths and the Magic* (Guildford:

Leone may have influenced the highly formal basis of Argento's cinema, but despite sharing Leone's usual composer, Ennio Morricone, his early films evince little of the intense audio-visual strategies that mark the director's later visceral horror films. Of course, this early directorial style had as much to do with the specific type of cinema Argento began his career making: the specifically-Italian crime-thrillers known as *giallo*. Argento's early works (referred to as the 'animal trilogy,' as animals figure in their titles and/or plot), include his major directorial debut, *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (1970), *The Cat O' Nine Tails* (1971), and *Four Flies on Grey Velvet* (1971). Produced during a two-year creative burst, these crime-thrillers display nascent elements of the director's visceral style, especially with the film's aesthetically-refined approach to articulating violence. Still, a fundamentally different approach to the conjoining of sound and image is strongly evident in these early films.

In the animal trilogy, Argento utilises lullabies, easy-listening music, and some light jazz-inflected music, to suggest what Stephen Thrower describes as an "emotional irony and neurosis."[9] Quite often, there is no music at all accompanying the actual acts of violence in these films. In *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*, for example, some of the standard techniques of horror film scoring are utilised. The music cues a fearful response from the spectator, pre-empting the violence to come with suspenseful arpeggios full of discordant

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FAB Press, 2004), p.16.

[9] Stephen Thrower '*Suspiria*' in Chris Gallant (ed.), *Art of Darkness: The Films of Dario Argento* (Guildford, FAB Press, 2001), p.127-p.144, p.129.

intervals. But the second murder in particular (occurring just after the chase sequence of the lead protagonist) reveals how much Argento's early use of non-diegetic music differs from his later utilisation of soundtrack music.

As the victim enters the apartment, one is visually reminded of the beautifully-photographed interiors of the Dance Academy in *Suspiria*, the camera revelling in the sheer formal beauty of the building's abstract geometric shapes, capturing them within Argento's painterly mise-en-scene. In foregrounding these abstract forms, Argento invites the spectator to linger lovingly on these scenes. The images are allowed to resonate and pulsate as visual signs, long after any narrative/diegetic purposes have been fulfilled. However, although the strange lullaby-like melodies accompanying this sequence elicit the correct anxiety-ridden response, the actual act of violence, the peak cinematic event, as it where, remains un-scored.

In the early *gialli* films, if Argento does adopt a strategy of semiotic excess, it is nearly always rendered through one dimension or component of the cinematic sign alone. The kinaesthetic dynamism of Argento's mise-en-scene, the destabilising affect of his editing style, or the musical score, never seem to be working *in tandem* to render this excess semiotic dimension. Rather, the formal mismatching of his aural and visual signifiers often creates an ironic counterpoint between sound and image. In the director's early *gialli*, however, it is not even necessarily a case of anempathetic music necessarily signifying any sort of ironic impropriety of context, but points, more simply, to the fact that a trans-sensorial technique of semiotic excess has yet to become a significant aspect

of Argento's overall aesthetic approach.

An additional sequence displaying this lack of affective complementation between sounds, images, and any other discursive device, is the chase sequence from *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*. In this instance, the 'free-jazz' styling of the accompanying music renders the frenetic pacing of the chase. Yet, this same quality is never really complemented by any of the other cinematic devices - camera movement, for example, or the pace of the editing. One need only compare the above sequence to both taxi ride sequences (and cues) from both *Suspiria* and *Inferno* (the latter composed by Keith Emerson), to understand the crucial difference between Argento's earlier and later utilisations of musical score. The kinaesthetic dynamism of the taxi ride sequences (a minor motif, it would seem, in Argento's work) is rendered all the more disorientating by the fact that *both* aural and visual elements are contributing to the overall materialist impact and spatiotemporal destabilisation of the spectator.

An important element of this matching of the formal attributes of cinematic devices (soundtrack, camera movement, and editing), involves the destabilising affect of *Inferno*'s 'Taxi Ride' cue's time-signature - in this instance, 5/4. The use of 'arrhythmic' time-signatures (which I shall look at in more detail later) figures strongly in many horror scores of the period, and was a popular formal device of both late-romantic and early-modernist music(s). On a more general level, however, what differentiates these two aesthetic strategies is the *functional* criteria governing the conjoining of aural, visual, and other cinematic devices. In the earlier films, it is not *primarily* one of an abstract

rendering of the affective properties of the cinematic sign - a rendering of excess of the Real.

Rather, in the early *giallo* trilogy, the dominant function is symbolic, and operates along the lines of an ironic counterpoint of sound and image. This is primarily based on a dominant economy of mediation through signification, the spectator retaining a relationship with the text (characters, events, etc.) that is arrived at through the safe channelling of *signifiers that attain their signified.* In these early examples, then, we do not witness a true promotion of semiotic excess within the cinematic (and, therefore, libidinal) economy. Even if such signification is based around the terms of an ironic impropriety of context, the *dominant* functional role of sound and image remains set within a more classical film-musical vein. Film music, that is, as suturing agent, facilitating the closing up of the decentring gap, and positioning the spectator definitively, fixing them, morally, psychologically, and ideologically speaking - into some kind of emotional identification with certain characters, motives events, and so forth.

Argento's early audio-visual strategies simply do not display the requisite level of trans-sensorial symbiosis in order for his cinematic signs to be experienced as a single 'structural unit.' Achieving this level of trans-sensorial complementation (with other contingent attributes, such as the subjugation of narrative structuring and thematic coherence to cinematic spectacle) required a shift towards a truly visceral strategy of semiotic excess. *Deep Red* is the film that signals such a transition in Argento's oeuvre.

In fact, *Deep Red* is a transitional axis-text in the truest sense. Rather like *Psycho*, and the shift from a classical to a post-classical Horror cinema, it retains certain elements of the director's earlier style, and simultaneously introduces some nascent elements of a visceral style. Interestingly enough, the film's score occasions pronounced shifts in musical styles also, introducing the complicated experimental styles of the Italian progressive rock group, Goblin - a crucial factor, it shall be argued, in Argento`s shift to a purely visceral cinematic style.

4.1.2 Deep Red, *Horror, and the use of Rock Music: Argento's Transition to the Visceral Technique.*

Deep Red - a film whose very title alludes to a strategy of semiotic excess - introduces the beginnings of stylistic evolution in Argento's work that reaches an apotheosis in the hyper-real excesses of *Suspiria* and *Inferno*. In these films, Argento promotes semiotic excess; this also has a natural correlative in the demotion of narrative and thematic concerns, in keeping with Williams' idea of a post-modern, cinema of attractions. With *Deep Red,* the story of an American musician abroad, entangled in a series of murders, Argento returns, in part, to the *giallo* format. Yet, he does so with a perversely post-modern playfulness, further characterised by a fetishist's preoccupation with the affective properties of pure cinematic form.

Deep Red, McDonagh claims, is the first Argento film to "enter truly into the realms of Barthesian excess," adding that such a strategy involves "displacing the emphasis of scene after scene with details that resonate way out of proportion to their overt importance."[10] Crucially, McDonagh emphasises the importance of music to this transition:

> The multi-textured score no longer functions in simple counterpoint to the imagery (as do the Ennio Morricone scores for Argento's first three films, juxtaposing lullabies with violent murders) but mergers it into a single structural element; in certain extended passages music completely replaces dialogue and diegetic sound as the aural component of the scene.[11]

The suggestion being put forth here is that, in Argento's visceral films, music is not positioned contrapuntally to the image, but on some other level of inter-dependency. "Unlike Morricone's scores for the first three films, which are designed to act as straightforward (if ironic) counterpoint to the images," McDonagh claims, "Goblin's compositions are an integral part of the unpredictable diegesis, as inherently contradictory as the deceptive imagery."[12] But the question remains - how may we best conceptualise this inherent contradiction, particularly as it relates to Argento's formal techniques, and the audience's subjective experience of them?

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[10] Maitland McDonough, 'Broken Mirrors/Broken Dreams: The Dark Dreams of Dario Argento' in *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 2, (Winter, 1987/88), pp.2-13, p.12.
[11] *ibid*, p. 12
[12] Maitland McDonagh, *Broken Mirrors/Broken Minds: The Dark Dreams of Dario Argento* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1991), p.32.

Turning to Roland Barthes' notion of 'obtuse' meaning (sometimes referred to as the 'third' meaning) to explain this extra-linguistic dimension, McDonagh notes that an obtuse 'meaning' is obtuse precisely because it lays "outside of whatever system the reader has adopted in order to make sense of a particular work [...]. Barthes' radical proposal is that the excess, all the meaning that falls outside of the system or systems that determine the work's overall structure, forms its own system, one which may exist parallel or tangentially to the others."[13] Barthes' idea of an 'obtuse' or 'third' meaning, therefore, adopts a significant theoretical relevance when considered in relation to Žižek's late-Lacanian framework.

In *Deep Red* (and both *Suspiria* and *Inferno*) music works *with* the imagery and with other aural components (and vice-versa), in order to render some overall sense of an inherent contradiction - the same type of fundamental ambivalence Žižek describes *apropos* of the Lacanian Real. Moreover, this comparative link is perfectly placed to explicate Argento's use of music, in his visceral films, how it functions (as one component of an overall 'visceral' strategy of semiotic excess), *outside* the orthodox 'system' of a classical Hollywood aesthetics. More specifically, the merging of these theoretical notions also helps to clarify exactly how experimental musical idioms, in particular, function outside orthodox film-musical frameworks.

One of the most crucial factors in Argento's promotion of this technique of semiotic

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[13] *ibid*, p.23.

excess - from *Deep Red* onwards - is his decision to utilise rock music forms (in addition to a more standard orchestral accompaniment); most specifically, the sub-genres of Jazz-Rock and Progressive Rock which were very popular at the time. During the seventies, the use of progressive rock music within the horror genre slowly increased, many director's taking a cue from William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1974), which used a re-recorded snippet of Mike Oldfield's 'Tubular Bells' to great effect. However, Simon Boswell, composer on Lamberto Bava's *Demons* trilogy, as well as numerous Argento projects, believes it was actually Dario who "pioneered the use of rock music in horror."[14]

Numerous directors had previously matched the horror genre with popular music forms - most notably, during the mid-to-late fifties, in response to the burgeoning teenage market for horror-comedy hybrids. These films often had rock-and-roll scores, matched with other synergistic tie-ins (toys, records, books). However, in terms of their formal tendencies, these rock-n-roll horror films, such as *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* (1957), and the Burt Bacharach-scored *The Blob* (1958), remained mostly within a classical Hollywood aesthetics.

Although the market in the seventies remained largely teenage, the cinematic strategies differed completely from horror films of the late-1930s, 1940s, and even the 1950s, as did the *kind* of pleasures they afforded. The musical strategies used by horror film

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[14] Simon Boswell, quoted in interview with the author, 29/10/2005.

directors across the years brings to light the changing requirements of the developing post-classical/post-modern audience. These changes are also underpinned by this 'excess' strategy (of musical technique) as it reaches something of an apotheosis in Argento's visceral cinema. As B. Lee Cooper confirms, the subtle dramatisation of classical horror films was to be "eroded in the brutalizing splatter movies of the past two decades. The outright meanness, sadomasochism, vulgar exorcisms and nihilism of films like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and *I Spit on Your Grave* (1980)."[15]

Crucially, all these later examples have experimental musical scores. Cooper could just as easily have mentioned *Deep Red* or *Suspiria*, as these films also responded to the increasingly sadomasochistic nature of horror audiences of the period. In fact, as far as terminologies go, 'sadomasochistic' neatly typifies the spectator of late-seventies horror, acknowledging the fundamental ambivalence of the 'pleasure-in-pain' that this type of enjoyment, or *jouissance*, affords. In support of such a strategy, Goblin's scores for both *Deep Red* and *Suspiria* update the film-musical legacy set in place by Herrmann and Hitchcock work on *Psycho*, helping to provide this specific type of enjoyment for the spectator.

The music provided for *Deep Red* and *Suspiria* was Progressive and Jazz-Rock music,

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[15] B. Lee Cooper, 'Terror Translated into Comedy: The Popular Music Metamorphosis of Film and Television Horror - 1956-1991' in *Journal of American Culture*, Vol.20, Issue 3, pp. 31-43, p. 36. This same 'subtle dramatisation' would reappear in the more 'intelligent' horror fare of the nineties, such as Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs* (1992). Tellingly, although these films would offer their fair share of cinematic excess - *stylistically*, they make use of a more classically-styled cinematic model, particularly regarding the use of aural signification through the non-diegetic musical score.

incorporating many of the attributes of musical modernism: intense dissonance, atonality, arrhythmic time-signatures, and the textural quality of instrumental timbre. This is why Progressive Rock was particularly important in this respect, because it incorporated elements of both commercial and experimental idioms. One of the more general attributes that rock music provided was the promotion of the electronically-amplified impact of pure sound (as opposed to the dominance of melody and/or lyrical interpretation). In a sense, this situated rock music firmly within the tradition of the musical avant-garde. As Russell Lack explains, "The old modernist idea of the aesthetic moment lying in between huge sound fields of fracturing dissonance finds its nearest equivalent in the amplification of rock music. In many cases," Lack adds, "once a song has made the transition from record to film soundtrack this amplification itself was carefully modulated within an overall sound mix that gave preference to dialogue."[16]

This 'careful modulation' describes the classical Hollywood style of sound-mixing perfectly. Starting with his sound-mix for *Deep Red*, however, Argento's musical scores begin to function in exactly the opposite manner - either obscuring or completely replacing the aural components of the diegesis (such as dialogue and sound affects), or having those diegetic themselves sound at an unnaturally high level.[17] Of course, rock music of the seventies and rock music of the mid-to-late-fifties had very little in common, and the subsequent developments in rock music meant that director's could

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[16] Russell Lack, *Twenty Four Frames Under: A Buried History of Film Music* (London: Quartet Books, 1997), p.268.

[17] The whole 'plot' of Suspiria, for example, hinges around the fact that the main character (and, thus, the audience) fails to register an aural clue to the troubles that lie ahead, due to the unnaturally high diegetic and non-diegetic sounds obscuring the dialogue.

utilise these stylistically-progressive techniques in an altogether more non-commercial and experimental vein. Psychedelic rock, for example, the musical branch of the mid-sixties cultural revolution, exerted an impact on popular culture in general. And one particularly useful category of rock to emerge out of the late-psychedelic period was Progressive Rock, a hybridisation of styles from across distinct social and cultural boundaries. Progressive, or 'Prog Rock' merged the symphonic structures of classical romanticism, for example, with the improvisational freedom of modern jazz and psychedelic rock, articulating it all through the formal styles and instrumentation of the general Rock idiom.

Argento had considered using rock music since the early seventies, and was especially taken with Progressive Rock (which had enjoyed a special popularity in Italy). "On *Profondo Rosso* [*Deep Red*], Dario would hold informal parties" Goblin's leader, Claudio Simonetti, explains, "and we'd sit around listening to music by Emerson, Lake and Palmer and Genesis for progressive rock influences to stir our creativity."[18] In fact, Argento had initially wanted another band with slight progressive tendencies, Deep Purple, to score *Four Flies on Grey Velvet*, and had initially approached Pink Floyd (whose career spanned the psychedelic and progressive eras) to score *Deep Red*.[19]

Goblin's music for *Deep Red* betrays clear Progressive Rock influences, but with a foot

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[18] Claudio Simonetti quoted in Alan Jones, *Profondo Argento: The Man, the Myth and the Magic* (Guildford: FAB Press, 2004), p.78.
[19] See Dario Argento Interview with Fangoria Magazine - www.vervost.de/argento/interview_flies.html (19/03/2005) - Originally Published in *Fangoria Magazine* - Issue #34.

remaining in the cocktail-style jazz of the Morricone-scored films - albeit a high-powered, rock version. However, even during the moments when the musical score adopts a more experimental edge, as in the earlier films, it seems to support a stylistically-excessive strategy alone. One scene in particular that displays this technique is the scene in which the lead protagonist, Marc (played by David Hemmings), searches the dilapidated building for a second time and almost falls from the crumbling masonry. Similar to the chase sequence from *Bird with the Crystal Plumage*, the accompanying music (the 'Mad Puppet' cue),[20] renders the kinaesthetic dynamism and material impact of the scene alone. Strangely, Argento's maddeningly mobile camera is, for once, frozen in place, his editing logical, placid, and uninspired.

Taken on its own, though, the music accompanying this scene characterises Goblin's mature style - an experimental melange of abstract, electronically-produced, sound-affects and aural textures set within a jazz-rock backing. That said, there *are* moments in *Deep Red* when the musical score actually starts to serve a trans-sensorial strategy of semiotic excess, a function revolving around the potential for the musical traits of progressive rock to complement and, thus, intensify, the destabilising potential and visceral impact. Such traits include an emphasis on dynamic shifts in pitch, volume, and time-signature.

Additionally, the growth of progressive rock also paralleled the progression of musical

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[20] Goblin, *Deep Red - Original Soundtrack*, Cinevox Records (MDF.33/85 MDG.85), Italy, 1975.

technology - in particular, the emergence of electronic keyboards, such as the Mellotron™ (arguably the first sampler) and the Moog™ synthesiser. These instruments have a particular relevance, theoretically speaking, to Žižek's ideas surrounding an excess of the Real. As Russell Lack explains, "The innovation of programmable synthesisers made a profound difference to the types of sounds the composers were able to record. The main appreciable difference was a greater tendency to explore *the textures of sound rather than simple melody lines*" - my italics.[21]

Interpreting this technological advancement in terms of the larger evolution of musical modernism, Russell Lack notes how,

> Musical evolution is as much a history of musical technology as it is of cultural changes in the listener [...]. Modern music in the second half of the century has been increasingly an evolution of musical colour, of pitch of musical texture. This is the domain of electronic music, the manipulation of 'blocks' of sound rather than individual melody lines.[22]

Horror film music was one of the few commercially popular areas where this type of formal evolution could develop. The use of synthesisers typified an important quality brought to horror soundtrack by the use of electronic equipment: the fetishisation of electronic timbres and repetitious phrases. A nagging and repetitious musical phrase occurs over and over again in *Deep Red*, alerting the audience to the presence of the killer. But in their very repetition - both the frequent use of the cue *and* the musical

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[21] Russell Lack, 1997, p.317.
[22] *ibid*, p.312.

repetition built into the melodies - these phrases are able to foreground these alternative aural attributes, especially the timbre of these newly-synthesised sounds.

The use of repetitive phrases, in Argento visceral films, functions as one aspect of a wider fetishisation of the cinematic experience. As Žižek notes, "The initial move of a human being is not thought, reflexive distance, but the 'fetishisation' of a partial moment into an autonomous goal: the elevation of pleasure into *jouissance* - a deadly excess of enjoyment as the goal-in-itself."[23] In offering a general description of this process it is telling that Žižek turns to the notion of a "vulgar tune that inexplicably pursues us."[24] For him, such a tune is, "an intrusive sinthome, a figment of obscene enjoyment," a kind of babble that is "devoid of meaning proper [...]. Is this babble not what Lacan called *lalangue* ('llanguage')," Žižek asks, "preceding the articulated language: the succession of Ones, signifiers of jouis-sense ('enjoy-meant')?"[25]

The use of synthesised, electronic sounds thus took on a huge importance to the development of horror film scoring during the 1970s. As Philip Brophy notes,

> Rock and synthesiser scores have over the past two decades branched out to develop as means of orchestration and scoring capable of broader psychological symbolism These two major musical types have been epicentral to the modern development of mood music centred on activating the viewer's adrenalin and creating feelings of terror, dread, suspense, and fear [...]. The melodic compound-time riff of TUBULAR BELLS first surfaced in Dario Argento's Hitchcockian gore-thriller

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[23] Slavoj Zizek, *Organs Without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences* (London: Routledge, 2005), p.143.
[24] *ibid.*
[25] *ibid*, p.143-144.

DEEP RED (1975) and was developed further in Goblin's score for SUSPIRIA (1977).[26]

Indeed, the main title of *Deep Red* exemplifies the changing approach to the use of main themes that characterises the post-classical horror era. During the classical era, main themes were usually constructed as a mini-symphony, with multiple variations on a theme often used to introduce the various leitmotifs that would appear - Max Steiner's 'Main Title' for *King Kong* being a case in point. But the main title or theme would rarely *reappear* on the soundtrack, in its original form, until the end of the film, and then often with a larger orchestral arrangement. The horror films of the seventies took a different approach, having the main title re-appearing continually during the film in the same form. Of course, an incessant musical repetition had been a popular technique of modernist composers.

In a similar way to Argento's lingering on scenes and objects (suggesting a cinematic approach unrestrained by strictly narrative concerns), sound and image function as a 'single structural element,' unconcerned with any real narrative motives. Although a Symbolic-Imaginary dimension is present, it is certainly not promoted above a libidinal-type encounter with this 'babble' of the Real. As spectators of Argento's 'events,' we fixate on this dimension of his images and sounds, which tend to resonate way out of proportion to any narrative requirement. In particular, the *textural* qualities of electronic instruments are utilised in this way. The electric organ is prominent, for example,

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[26] Philip Brophy '*Suspiria*: Rock and Synthesiser Scores' @ www.philipbrophy.com/projects/mma/Suspiria (Date of Entry: 30/03/07).

offering a sumptuous timbral quality, that is pulled, through the technique of musical repetition, into a material abstraction.

Observing the first murder proper, the killing of the psychic, Helga, we can see how music, along with other cinematic elements, start to work to direct us away from a narrative economy, into this dimension of the Real. Following the sequence in the conference hall, with its bright red backgrounds - huge colour-field's that give 'voice' to, and embody, the enjoyment of the Real - we are immediately thrown into a dislocating, abrupt cut across time and space (but this is only confirmed for us retrospectively) to extreme close-ups shots of various objects - a doll, a figure made of bright red wool, a bright red devil figurine, marbles. For Keith Hennessey Brown, this scene in particular enhances the sense of *Deep Red* as a transitional work:

> In which Argento is reconfiguring the *giallo* to his own distinctive ends [...]. The whole sequence is, one would venture, better experienced than it is synopsised, clarifying as it does the different way Argento is approaching things [...]. The sequence is also noteworthy for restating the importance of Goblin's scoring to Argento's developing vision, with music on an equal footing to image: while Ennio Morricone's scores the for the Animal Trilogy were effective, their function was supplementing the visuals.[27]

In this scene, the mobile camera crawls over these objects as the music starts up, but rather than music here being matched to cuts (which are missing for most of this short sequence), it seems to be propelling the mobile camera along these objects, inextricably

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[27] Keith Hennessey Brown 'Genre, Author and Excess' @ www.darkdreams.org/dissertation/deep_red.html (30/03/2007).

linking its unforgiving gaze and unstoppable movement with a cinematic exploration of the object's material textures, and the retinal impact of their bright colours. Like a microscope, Argento's camera explores the minutiae of objects, making of them, cinematic fetish-objects. As the music reaches a crescendo in the main organ line, the camera comes eventually to a knife and slopes right across its body in time with the crescendo. This is followed by another disorientating jump-cut to a huge close-up of an eye. Too close to reveal age or gender, or any other detail, we do surmise, however, that we are being introduced to the killer.

In terms of an overall narrative purpose, this scene has little to offer in terms of a traditional expositional function. In terms of its use of music, it suggests that it is functioning on a level of semiotic excess, satisfying libidinal drives through an inexorable propulsion forward, and further linking this satisfaction with the kind of abstract pleasures in detail that we take in the fetishised objects detailed in the scene. As Simon Boswell has noted of the Goblin/Argento scoring technique: "the raison d'etre of it all is to have impact and to have adrenaline [...] to propel you through the film,"[28] and so, in this scene, such a propulsion is generating a level of libidinal intensity. - a type of cinematic, audio-visual version of Lacan's la 'llanguage.'

Another characteristic of the late-seventies horror film score is a disruption of the temporal dimension, especially through use of compound time-signatures - a musical technique particularly prevalent in the main themes of a great deal of horror films of the

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[28] Simon Boswell, Interview with the Author, 29/10/2005 - See under BOSWELL, Simon in Bibliography.

period. John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978) main theme offers an important case in point: "A driving piece in 5/4 time," David Burnand and Miguel Mera note, "that contains Carpenter's hallmark musical language. The devices of simple, recognisable melodic fragments and Herrmannesque step-down modulation [...]. The time-signature is being deliberately chosen to disorientate the listener."[29] As Carpenter himself adds, "5/4 is nuts, you know, where does it end and what's going on? You can't find the start and stop of it."[30] However, Burnand and Mera pointedly add that, "in itself a 5/4 time-signature cannot create unease. The music structure must also take advantage of the potential rhythmic possibilities. Carpenter achieves this by using uneven phrase lengths."[31] Simon Boswell elaborates on the way odd time-signatures can become fixed to other formal elements of the film that are equally as abstract:

> The thing about film music is that it is not driven in the way other music is driven, by a rhythm in your head, it is driven by the rhythm of the edit. You are coming from a place where you are not going to be able to do a regular meter. So it forces film composers into very complicated time-signatures. Its almost like you are forced into insanity, because you are watching something that hasn't been thought of in terms of its musical beat. So if you want to hit this, this and this, you might, if you wanted to do it well have to do a bar of 4/4 and a bar of 15/8 then a bar of 3/3.[32]

Deep Red's main-theme, written two to three years before Carpenter's theme, uses the

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[29] David Burnand and Miguel Mera, 'Fast and Cheap? The Film Music of John Carpenter' in Ian Cornrich and David Woods (eds.), *The Cinema of John Carpenter: The Technique of Terror* (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), p. 49-65, p. 59.
[30] *ibid*, p. 59.
[31] *ibid*, p. 59-60.
[32] Simon Boswell quoted in Interview with the Author, 29/10/2005.

same technique, also taking its cue from Herrmann's use of smaller music units which allows more possibilities with the use of odd phrase lengths. A maddeningly repetitive phrase, originally written in 4/4, it was re-arranged, according to Walter Martino, into alternating bars of 7/4 and 8/4.[33] This juxtaposition of time-signatures creates the destabilisation, the uneven phrase lengths being articulated most clearly in the electric bass phrases of *Deep Red*'s main theme.

The use of music in the murder sequences displays how these various experimental attributes and techniques allowed Argento to move away from his earlier cinematic representation of violence in the *giallo* trilogy of films. In the scenes observed above, what we notice is how this type of musical destabilisation can be matched to other cinematic devices, simultaneously engaged in the creation of spatial and temporal destabilisation. Although brief, the scene of Helga's murder - immediately following the fetishised close-ups scene described above - typifies this type of decentring audio-visual affect. We shift from the loud main theme accompanying the close-up of the murderer's eyeball that finishes the previous scene, into the into relative quiet of Helga's apartment. She is on the phone and, again, Argento's camera constantly roams the apartment, shifting from Helga to the empty hallway, and creating anxiety simply because we are never sure where we should be concentrating our attention. Just as Helga tells the caller on the telephone that she is alone we hear a distant nursery-rhyme sung by a child, the same tune that accompanied the suggested murder in the film's opening sequence. Helga

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[33] See Walter Marino Interview @ www.goblin.org/martino_int.html (Date of Entry: 30/03/2007).

turns her head, and as the tune begins, we have the first of a serious of totally destabilising close-ups of part of Helga's head, shot from a very oblique angle. It results in an intensely uncanny feeling.

The difference in scoring technique from the earlier films is really noticed when the doorbell rings. The door bursts open, and the killer lands a blow to Helga that, immediately upon impact, sets off a new cue ('Death Dies' on the soundtrack), which soundtracks the *actual* violence of the scene. Although, again, as in the sequence involving the close-ups of dolls, the music seems to be propelling the camera (undoubtedly the POV of the killer now) onwards, there are individual syncopations in the musical - a sort of repetitive funk-jazz riff with dynamic octave skips in the lower register - that have their emphases matched to the killer's blows. The murder scene ends abruptly with another cross-cut to the next sequence, which takes place in the relative silence of a Rome suburb at night. This extreme juxtaposition of silence with the sonic mayhem that has just occurred is just as unsettling. Another advantage of having rock music at such a high level in the overall mix is that the effect of juxtaposing it with silence is heightened. Such a technique was often used by directors of post-classical Horror. It is brilliantly exploited by William Friedkin in *The Exorcist* (1974) which, incidentally, utilised some extremely modernistic music (Krystof Penderecki, George Crumb and Hans Werner Henze) on its soundtrack.

Another scene to provide an interesting take on Argento's cinematic fetishisation process, and the function of musical composition in realising such a technique, is the

scene in which Marc is seen composing at the piano. A series of close-ups make of the piano a fetish object, in the same way it did the dolls and figurines of the earlier sequence. As Marc is seen practicing and composing at the piano, close-up shots go inside the piano to linger on the piano keys, strings and hammers, it segments them in the way that close-ups often segment the human body in the same process of fetishisation. Crucially, this comes after the scene in which Marc's drunken musician friend tells him that 'a piano is like a woman,' that he 'caresses with his fingers' - sexualising our own experience of this sequence in our minds.

In one highly revealing sequence, the camera travels in close-up down a line of music (written out on notation paper) as a brief jazzy musical phrase sounds. We are in no doubt that, in Argento's mind, and thus, in the mind of the spectator, the fetishising potential of individual cinematic devices are being brought together, in an overall aesthetic strategy concerned, not with signification, but a cinematic rendering of the Lacanian Real. What we are dealing with in *Deep Red* is the nascent stages of a cine-aesthetic and film-musical strategy that attempts to use music as a tool with which to deconstruct the orthodox hierarchy of individual formal elements. Argento does so to achieve a formal symbiosis of the remaindered, 'excess' elements of the sign (left over after signification). These elements, then, work together in a type of 'rendering' that elevates cinematic pleasure into *jouissance* - the enjoyment of this excess of the Real.

Perhaps the death sequence of Helga's colleague, Professor Giordani, more so than any other sequence in the film, paves the way for a formal strategy of complete visceral

excess, a strategy that would characterise the application of music in *Suspiria*. Featuring the same 'Death Dies' cue that has accompanied all the murders so far, this time the kinetic dynamics of the violence seems pin-pointed *exactly* to rhythmic, melodic, and timbral emphases found in the syncopated phrases of the music. The killer knocks the professor's head and mouth onto sharp table corners, whilst loud trills in the music sound. Thus, we are provided with a kind of tonal record of the physical pain being experienced. This is made all the more affective through the complete formal accordance that can be evinced between the kinetics of the *mise-en-scene* and the music`s own syntactical emphases.

But ultimately *Deep Red* remains a transitional text in this context, with Goblin`s memorable score displaying uncertainties - in both the band *and* the director - about a wholesale shift to a truly visceral strategy. It is not until *Suspiria* (the first of Argento's truly supernatural films) that the non-diegetic music achieves a *complete* level of symbiosis between sound, image, and other cinematic devices, and begins to articulate them as 'one structural element.' With *Suspiria*, and its Goblin score, we begin to see how crucial experimental musical styles and techniques can be to such a cinematic strategy of semiotic excess. Additionally, there can be no lingering doubt about the manner in which this aesthetic strategy positions the spectator - both in relation to Weis' model of the extra-subjective spectator, and Williams' definition of the post-modern, cinema of attractions. Again, Argento's film-musical technique proves crucial in this respect.

4.2 *Suspiria* and Soundtrack: The Extra-Subjective Spectator, the Materiality of Language, and Post-modern Gothic Spaces.

In *Suspiria*, the importance of music is established from the outset. Moreover, Goblin's film score completely rewrites the rule book as to the type of sonic impact that could feature upon the soundtrack of a horror film. Tellingly, *Suspiria* is Argento's first purely supernatural film. The tale follows Susie Banyon (played by Jessica Harper), another American abroad, who becomes stranded amongst a coven of witches who are masquerading behind a dance academy in the countryside. But the ostensible plot of *Suspiria* is of only minor importance to its director. This is a film about cinematic impact. As Stephen Thrower notes, with *Suspiria* "Argento aims for a synaesthetic sensation obsessively plastering light and sound into a malevolently pulsating whole [...]. Such a powerful musical presence goes well beyond anything previously attempted in the horror genre."[34]

Travis Crawford, in his essay that accompanies the film's Anchor Bay DVD release, describes how Argento has "crafted a work whose every frame seems wholeheartedly intent on overwhelming the eyes and ears, an exercise in audio-visual overload whose sole purpose often appears to be the evocation of pure nerve racking terror."[35] But what is the actual nature of such a cinematic experience? And how is it achieved? Goblin's

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[34] Stephen Thrower, 'Suspiria' in Chris Gallant (ed.), *Art of Darkness: The Films of Dario Argento* (Guildford, FAB Press, 2001), p.127-p.144, p.132.
[35] Travis Crawford, Liner Notes for *Suspiria* - Anchor Bay DVD Release, p.9.

atonal, hyper-kinetic rhythms and strange sonic textures, synchronised alongside Argento's vivid colour palette and disorientating cinematography, form the crucial elements for situating the spectator *extra-subjectively* in respect of the film.

4.2.1 Positioning The Extra-Subjective Spectator

The popular music scholar, Richard Middleton, notes that in the realm of popular music (and we may add in the realm of popular cinema) it is the star that dominates the "processes of identification [...] involved in confirming an actual, or constructing a desired, self-image for listeners."[36] This also describes the suturing function of film music perfectly, as it directs and supports the (imaginary) illusion of completeness governed by the safe channelling of the signifier, even as it attempts to render that symbolic support invisible. However, there also exists what Middleton describes as a "partially overlapping but phenomenologically prior domain, that of *audibility*."[37]

The music of Goblin revels in this prior domain, a chaotic musical realm of dissonance and atonality. The primary function of this domain of cinema is to operate through the *failure* of symbolisation, through the breakdown of the harmonically-ordered matrices of signification. Here, Goblin's rock style (and Argento's cinematic incorporation of it) utilises a "musical meaning" that "cannot be limited to translatable signification [...] we

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[36] Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990), p. 251.
[37] *ibid*, p. 249.

look not only for understanding but also enjoyment."[38] Adding further credence to my overall late-Lacanian interpretation, Middleton claims, that "the symbolic order may on occasion be momentarily fractured, allowing a 'pathogenic' enjoyment of the signifier - a state which has been called *jouissance*."[39] The experimental rock music of Goblin's Argento film scores, structures this type of libidinal investment in the listener, privileging enjoyment in the excess of the signifier, by positioning the spectator of this spectacle extra-subjectively (often referred to as trans-subjectively).

The pleasurable economies of rock music relate in a more general way to Linda Williams' idea of a post-modern cinema of attractions. In a quotation which echoes the underlying premise of Linda Williams' model, Middleton notes that "the essence of rock...is fun [...] sensuality...grace...joy... energy...vigour...exhilaration." Particularly important to this extra-subjective experience of film is the musical shift to atonality, in addition to the rhythmic properties of repetition, and the particular use of electronic musical timbres discussed earlier. All these stylistic characteristics are foreground in this type of cinema, the purely aesthetic functional mode dominating in the visceral horror cinema.

In Elisabeth Weis' conceptual model of extra-subjectivity, the spectator shows little concern for plot-driven motivations, or, more importantly (in film-musical terms), the processes of character identification and empathy. The extra-subjective technique in

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[38] ibid, p. 247.
[39] *ibid*, p. 255.

Hitchcock, Weis noted, involved the shift to aurally-based techniques. Therefore, the promotion of the purely 'non-melodic' sound-masses that appear in Goblin's *Suspiria* score displays a particular efficacy for this overall technique, as it is not preoccupied with signification through the metaphorical use of melody and harmony. Importantly, *Suspiria* also involves a shift in subject matter, away from the *giallo* milieu that characterised Argento's earlier work, into the realms of the purely fantastical. In these post-*giallo* films, McDonagh notes, "Argento murders and maims and splatters blood with abstract abandon, revelling in the mayhem with glorious unselfconsciousness; he is a hedonist who finds pleasures in unacceptable places and has no compunction about letting everyone in on the fun."[40]

There are two connected points I wish to qualify here. The extra-subjective mode does involve a promotion of overall form over content. This is why it is deemed relevant in the context of Williams' notion of the post-classical, post-modern cinema of attractions, which promotes a similar hierarchy. But what characterises the move to the extra-subjective mode of engagement, more exactly, is not a promotion of any one formal element over another, but a new level of symbiotic exchange and complementation between these individual elements. Ultimately, what results is a change in the relationship *between* these elements, their complementariness qualified by radically different criteria than is sound and image in the classical narrative model of Gorbman et al.

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[40] Maitland McDonough, 'Broken Mirrors/Broken Dreams: The Dark Dreams of Dario Argento' in *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 2, (Winter, 1987/88), pp.2-13, p.2.

Despite its short length, even *Suspiria*'s pre-visuals, credits sequence gives us an insight into the cinematic intentions of Argento's excessive style during this visceral period. It also bears witness to the skilful manipulation of sound and image that forms the foundation of this extra-subjective cinematic experience. Immediately, the affective power of music to impact upon us physically is present, along with the director's utilisation of avowedly experimental musical styles. The title-credits - white text on black - are accompanied by a cacophony of pounding drums and a creeping, scratchy atonal string-section. This Penderecki-*esque* tumult of noise, dynamically travelling upwards in pitch, comes to a jarring halt. Before we have time to recover from this aural assault, the cue shifts immediately into the repetitious phrase of the 'Main Title' cue, a ghostly, nursery rhyme-like phrase pulsating relentlessly. Over this, a deadpan voice intones one of the film's minimal concessions to a classical Hollywood storytelling model, albeit a mocking one: 'Susie Banyon decided to perfect her ballet studies in the most famous school of dance in Europe, she chose the celebrated academy of Freiburg. One day, at nine in the morning, she left Kennedy airport, New York, and arrived in Germany at 10:40pm local time'

The main theme continues unabated for a further few bars, until another jarring shock back into the strident cacophony of the first cue, which climaxes in an abrupt, *sforzando* chord. All this without one single visual image appearing on screen. Despite its brevity, this opening title sequence is important for a number of reasons. The deadpan tone, the lack of a visual referent, all suggest that Argento does not care much, if at all, for

establishing any emotional identification/empathy between spectator and protagonist - indeed, his protagonists could be anybody, anywhere, anyplace. It is almost like introducing characters and locations is a necessary nuisance for the director, points he feels obliged to establish, and therefore does so in the most glibbest manner possible. As Bill Gibron remarks, for spectators, "[*Suspiria*'s] plot is more of a dream, a trip through a damaged and rococo-looking glass into a world of colour, sight and sound. No explanations are given, and even the introductory voiceover narration is simply a 'Once upon a time' to start this wicked fairy story."[41] Indeed, as Stephen Thrower has confirmed, *Suspiria* is a film "sublimely unconcerned with the logical constraints of narrative cinema."[42]

More likely, what guides the use of the short voiceover for Argento (albeit unconsciously) is the establishment of an extra-subjective mode of engagement for his audience. In *Suspiria*, this model of cinematic experience involves the complete immersion of the audience into a whole cinematic environment of semiotic excess. Protagonists and spectators alike, are to be immersed within a cinematic space of confusion and chaos, their experience becoming one of a potential spatialisation. The strange, neo-Gothic, Expressionistic sets that make the space Susie Banyon (played by Jessica Harper) occupies, constantly seeks to destabilise and de-centre her (and us). The angles look too twisted, the colours too intense, *too real*. During the scene in which the student's practise their dance routines, Susie faints under the giddy spell of her

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[41] Bill Gibron, '*Suspiria*' DVD Verdict @ www.dvdverdict.com/reviews/suspiriale.php (30/07/06)
[42] Stephen Thrower in Chris Gallant (ed.), *2001*.

immediate environment.

Paradoxically, in Argento's visceral cinema, the process of spatialisation does not involve fixing, or stabilising, a spectator's sense of external space; but in divesting the spectator of any spatiotemporal referent, thereby maximising their sense of a 'free-floating' anxiety. As Linda Schulte-Sasse efficiently explains,

> Already the soundtrack, which precedes the first image, effects a sensuous immersion, a sense of compulsion as opposed to control, drive as opposed to desire. The music is overlaid with enervating sound effects like whispers, screams and whines that add to the overall paranoiac mood. Sound is in perfect synch with the visuals, but renders unstable the boundary between conventional, non-diegetic 'mood' music and diegetic sound within the film proper, as we are haunted by sounds 'from nowhere.[43]

Schulte-Sasse's perspicacious observations get to the very foundation of Argento's cinematic style, the affective core of the director's syntactical manipulation, and, additionally, the saliency of Žižek's (late-)Lacanian framework for interpreting this experience. The overall effect of *Suspiria* is somewhat similar for the spectator as it appears to be for Suzy. What do we know of her character, over and above her ridiculously brief voice-over introduction? We are divested of any characteristic attributes that might lead to an emotional identification, as we are divested of a fixed spatiotemporal referent in the film. Thus, we 'identify' more immediately and viscerally with the events as displayed cinematically, rather than empathetically. If there is an

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[43] Linda Schulte-Sasse, 'The "Mother" of all Horror Movies: Dario Argento's Suspiria' in *Kinoeye*, Vol.2, Issue 11 @ www.kinoeye.org/printer.php?path=02/11/schultesasse11.php (15/07/2006)

emotional and psychological response, it is purely one of an ambivalent relationship to Argento's anxiety-ridden signs of excess.

It is as if *Suspiria*'s introductory sequence is the last time the symbolic economy of language (its ability to signify, to communicate real meanings) will be allowed to dominate the cinematic economy. Although, it provides us with some very basic information, plot-points, for example, about the film's characters, locations, and so on, these are so minimal as to come across as completely useless, especially in relation to what then unfolds. Overall, the purpose of this short introductory sequence is entirely transitional. With its overly specific time/place geographical fixations, the spoken introduction seems to be implying that we are now entering something completely *alternate*. From here on in, nothing will have a *fixed* meaning, all spatiotemporal referents will be constantly undermined and challenged, played with, manipulated, and the affective economy of Argento's cinematic signs will now prioritise their 'failure' as communicators of meaning (and, thus, their success as renderings of the Real).

The opening visual sequence detailing Susie's walk through the airport terminal, and out, into the dead of night, confirms and completes this transitional process, by transferring and immersing her/us into Argento's cinema domain of and chaos and collapse. Looking closely at this sequence, we notice how Argento utilises music, sound and imagery to achieve the transition of the spectator into an extra-subjective mode, a complete *immersion* into a cinematic space immediately rendered by the visceral, destabilising formal contours of both sound and image. As I have explained, a key aspect of this

technique requires sound and image, or any other combination of formal traits, to be acting at such a high level of synaesthetic symbiosis that they are, as Maitland suggests, experienced by the spectator as 'one structural unit.' For reasons I shall discuss below, experimental musical techniques are crucial here.

Suzy's walk down the airport corridor, out into the maelstrom of an night-time thunderstorm, re-enacts our subjective journey into the unknown and unknowable, a process enacted on the subjective level every time we walk into a cinema to watch an Argento film. As Pierre Jouis confirms this sequence is,

> A few seconds in the world of reality, as she leaves the airport lounge, to find herself in a hostile an dark night [...] Suzy (Jessica Harper) has no idea that she has just broken all bonds with a reassuring reality to penetrate the unreal baroque and terrifying world of Dario Argento.[44]

However, positioned as spectator we have an idea we are entering into something irrational regarding both the circumstances of our protagonist, but more importantly, our subjective status regarding the spectator-text relationship. Here, the use of music and image comes into its own. Argento uses non-diegetic music and diegetic sound as a key transitional device. The first thing we see is the flight arrivals/departures board - again, an emphasised specificity of time, place, and location. But, already, an unnatural suffuse red glow is present in the lighting of the airport, the beginning of the film's unnatural preoccupation with intense colour, mostly reds and blues. The lighting and colours are

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[44] Pierre Jouis (ed.), 'Suspiria' in *Fantasy Film Memory*, FFM 4/5, (1991), pp.35-38.

unnatural, out-of-place, *hyper*-real. Rather than life-like, these colours are chromatically dense but sensuous and inviting, enjoyable *in and of themselves* or, as Žižek might remark, *permeated with meaningless enjoyment*. As Suzy begins her walk into the unknown, numerous people in bright red costumes flitter in and out of view, surrounding Suzy in the *mise-en-scene*. These are foreboding signs of what is to come. when Suzy (and the spectator) will be literally immersed in the densely contrasting chromatic reds and blues of the dance academy.

What is happening sonically during this sequence seems just as unreal and unsettling as the scene's intense visual elements. We briefly hear the diegetic sound of the airport announcements before they are abruptly silenced with a shift on the soundtrack to the relentless, repetitious main title theme we heard during the titles sequence as we share Suzy's point-of-view as she approaches the doors. The shift is matched perfectly by an accompanying shift in the POV of the camera. The diegetic sound is accompanied by a shot looking at Suzy from the chaotic netherworld into which she is about to immerse herself, *back* into the world of 'reality,' into the world of fixed times, places and the diegetic sounds we expect in such circumstances.

But the sequence then begins a series of shot/reverse shots that begin to manipulate the protagonist's (and spectator's) transition into Argento's universe of cinematic excess, and, clearly, non-diegetic music becomes an important marker of this. As we shift to the opposite shot (taking on Suzy's POV), cued precisely to the moment the airport doors (the border between these two domains) open for the woman in the red suit, the diegetic

sound abruptly ceases. Despite still being located in the diegetic space of the airport, all we hear now is the nagging, insistent main theme repeating over and over as we look down the corridor into the unknown.

The process is repeated, the POV reversed, and with Suzy in the frame again the diegetic noises resume. But with the reverse shot now looking down the corridor things have become even stranger. With the opening of the doors (situated only a few feet away) we obviously recognise the massive storm raging outside but cannot hear anything but the insistently creepy musical theme. There are three of these shot/reverse shots in total, beginning with the shot looking in to the terminal. The last shot of the sequence we shift from Suzy's perspective to another one from which we see her walk out of the doors, crossing the threshold, like ourselves, from symbolically-construed reality to the psychic register of the non-symbolised, visceral Real.

Although we are positioned near enough to see literal evidence of the storm (her hair blows in the wind), as Suzy steps over the boundary, we should *hear* it too, but we hear nothing but the relentless child-like phrases of the *Suspiria* main theme. The sequence also includes a number of bizarre close-ups accompanied by abrupt and unnaturally emphasised diegetic sounds. Here, Argento "seeks to incorporate heightened details of the real world [...] subjecting them to close scrutiny," Thrower informs us, "discovering in these brute material objects not mundanity but wonder and menace."[45] The inclusion

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[45] Stephen Thrower in Chris Gallant (ed.), 2001, p.133.

of a number of these transitional sequences facilitates various levels of spectator engagement and are repeated throughout the film. The omniscient POV of the camera in the last shot is also crucial in that it removes the perspective away from Suzy and becomes a viewpoint from which, during the rest of the film, impossible feats are achieved (crawling across buildings, swooping through the air etc.). These types of shots render the purely cinematic at the level of enunciation and become integrated into our experience as a fantasy perspective upon fantasy spaces. These shots feature early on in *Suspiria* starting with the moment of Suzy's transition, and gradually becoming more and more omniscient and uncanny.

This perspective is also revealed in a number of *shock* close-ups (similar to the close-ups in *Frankenstein* discussed in Chapter Two). These shifts in scale, between a standard mid-shot and extreme close-up, are often accompanied by a sudden dynamic musical shift or, as in the case with the door mechanism described above, an unnaturally emphasised diegetic sound. Thrower notes how they engender a "transformation of the mundane" that "refuses an easy contrast between normality and the occult, instead mobilising one of the films key principles, the observation that, '*Magic is everywhere.*"[46] In Argento's visceral cinema, this stylistic principle is rendered immediately by cinematic form and only superficially by narrative content.

Only when the location has shifted to outside the airport into the tumultuous storm (a

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[46] *ibid*, p.134.

great metaphor for Argento's cinematic space) do we hear diegetic and non-diegetic sound together mixed together. It is at this point, when the audio-visual affect is so overwhelmingly powerful in terms of its sensory affect that we are *immersed* into his chaotic cinematic domain. Whereas, moments before, they were so disarmingly disparate, *all* sounds are now bombarding the spectator/character. One manifestation of this basic mistrust of signification is confusion *between* the diegetic and non-diegetic sounds. Such is the explosion of noise and colour outside the airport that, when both diegetic and non-diegetic sounds are finally mixed together, it now becomes hard to distinguish between the two. What is 'natural,' emitting from the narrative space in which the protagonist is placed, and what is non-diegetic is hard to tell.

This transformation is crucial to Argento's formal strategy of cinematic excess, and uses a number of important functional properties of sound and vision in establishing this extra-subjective spectator-text relationship. In the above sequence, which is less than a minute in length, the director economically establishes the fantasy world into which we stare (and walk toward) as an entirely *irrational* world. Diegetic reality is nominally conveyed through sounds and images (signifiers), but in this context signifiers do not always have a clear signified. Signifiers have been divested of any symbolic assurance and are rendered, not through the channels of the Imaginary or Symbolic registers, but through the Real.

What we are dealing with here is the same phenomenon I discussed in relation to *Psycho* and the new type of 'paranoid' spectator it introduced - that is, a spectator attempting to

come to terms with the collapse of the signifying network. Signification should place Suzy (and our own sense of internal space) within a recognisable world of rational sounds and images, but it has failed, in fact the whole signifying network has been obliterated with our immersion into Argento's extra-subjective cinematic space. A 'paranoid' or psychotic state if often described as a heightened state of hyper-awareness, a state actively provoked by Argento's mise-en-scene of concentrated detail and hyper-real style. The result of our own transference into such an irrational domain is that, as spectators, we have established from the beginning a fundamental mistrust of both aural and visual signification. This is why the visceral technique has such an affinity for contemporary horror cinema, as this mistrust manifests as an underlying unease, an elementary anxiety caused by our fundamental ambiguity regarding the symbolic truth of signs.

Kevin J. Donnelly argues at length as to the irrational status of film music. Its very presence on the soundtrack, its extra-diegetic origins, should seem strange to us, but traditionally, Hollywood films condition us to *expect* music to issue from some nether space. Along the way, film music's spectral-like presence has been normalised to the point were the *absence* of non-diegetic music can seem more strange to the spectator than its presence. Part of the process of this normalisation, critics like Gorbman argue, involves the fact that we engage with film music on a subconscious level, as it sutures us into an idealised, 'Imaginary' identification (that is always symbolically construed) with characters and/or events.

But film music, especially of the post-classical visceral horror film, acts upon us in a different manner, one in which we are certainly less aware of any *empathetic* engagement or bonding, and more engaged with the physical and materialist impact, if only momentarily. For this mode of engagement, the spectator must feel literally immersed in the materialist physicality of a film's textural attributes and de-stabilised constantly within the environment it creates. As Donnelly notes, rather than simply acting as a "backdrop," horror film music creates "whole environments that the audience enters, equating a mental state with a sonic space."[47]

Indeed this is exactly what Argento achieves with his use of music in *Suspiria*, a complete immersion of the spectator into an audio-visual environment rendered through this excessive style. This style simultaneously de-centres the spectator and provides visceral impact through its aural *and* visual elements, which reach the viewer through attributes that are beyond, or in excess of, representation. "If film music is invocatory, this underlines its nature as something more than simply representation," Donnelly notes, adding that consideration of music as "a selection of signs that are decoded by the listener" is a banal conceptualisation of something "far more emotional, seductive and mysterious than simple communication."[48]

First, there is the decentring ability of music to disrupt our sense of internal space via the lack of a tonal centre. This is supported by destabilising rhythmic attributes that are also

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[47] Kevin J. Donnelly, *The Spectre of Sound* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005), p.94.
[48] ibid, p. 94.

characteristic of a modernist influence. Second, is the fact that a lack of signifying potential shifts the expressive emphasis to other elements of the musical sign that are more materialist in nature, supporting a more physical and visceral engagement with the audio-visual sign. I say *audio-visual* elements because it is precisely the promotion of these abstract contours of sound, image *and* editing that allows for the crucial symbiosis of these elements to occur.

As Thrower notes, "*Suspiria* incorporates music as a key element, in conjunction with colour, and in a more general way Argento approaches the composition of his film as a musician would."[49] This fact is made glaringly obvious in the opening scenes of the first major documentary made on the director, *Dario Argento's World of Horror* (1985), in which Argento is pictured in the studio mixing down the music of Goblin onto the soundtrack of *Suspiria*. He stands in front of a huge cinema-sized playback screen his hands held aloft like a conductor as he guides his engineers in cueing up a particular scene. "One might say that *Suspiria*," Thrower continues, "is [Argento's] first instrumental work. The film circles around, occupying and replenishing a dynamic field of energy, 'saying' very little but holding the attention through a cascade of mantric visual riffs."[50]

Herein lies the importance of this element of excess, the remaindered 'residue' of signification, plays a central part in a Žižekian-Lacanian figuration of this type of

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[49] Stephen Thrower in Chris Gallant (ed.), 2001 p. 129.
[50] *ibid*, p.129.

cinematic enjoyment. This is based around a rendering of the Real that involves sound bombarding us with details from every side. But for this sensory experience, as I have argued, the spectator must be situated in a spatial field, not so much *placed* in a dynamic field of energy, but subjected to a maximum displacement around this field.

4.2.2 The Materiality of Film Music

One of the main characteristics of *Suspiria* is a strong materialist aesthetic, a whole environment of strong, vivid textures, both aural and visual. When all of the extra-discursive dimensions of cinema act in a way in which the aesthetic functioning of the sign dominates, a symbiosis occurs that makes of these different elements a single structural unit. This does not, indeed, *must* not, imply a direct corresponding translation between sound and image, or sound and camera movement, or image and editing. Indeed, if we are to decipher a *translatable* discursive signifying pattern between the different sensory components, then we are placed back within the register of the Symbolic and its 'matrices of signification,' where a particular sound gives an added-value meaning in relation to the image which it accompanies.

The true symbiosis of these excess, remaindered elements of the sign occurs when they complement each other in abstract terms, either directly, or by supporting one type of sensory impact with another. Goblin's use of progressive rock also supports this

technique. I mentioned earlier the importance of electronic keyboard instrumentation such as the Mellotron and the Moog synthesiser, both particularly central to the Goblin sound. What is important is the manner in which these instruments are applied, not in the strictly 'musical' manner of melody and harmony, but in a way that exploits the textural, timbral qualities of synthesised electronic sound. It was such qualities that linked the technological achievements of rock instrumentation (these two machines mentioned above were invented a couple of years apart during the mid to late sixties), with the evolutions of musical modernism. It was with the modernists, one may recall, that the materialist qualities of sound (timbre) became as dominant a mode of musical expression as melody, perhaps even more so. Within the immediate historical period that precedes the invention of rock instrumentation - particularly keyboards and synthesisers - it was arguably Herrmann's *Psycho* score that emphasised the materialist aspects of the aural signifier within an overall cinematic (formal) style. This places the use of such synthesiser technology by bands like Goblin firmly within a post-Herrmann tradition of film-musical expression.

This type of instrumentation, then, promotes the aesthetic functional mode and, as a result, the abstract pleasure taken in the material aspects of Goblin's sound, (in a film like *Suspiria*). Therefore, it plays a constitutive role in the construction of subjectivity in the listener/viewer, but one quite unlike the role afforded music within the classical theoretical model. The set piece murder that begins *Suspiria*, after the opening scene of Suzy's, and our own, transition/immersion into Argento's mode of extra-subjective engagement, is a text-book example of the visceral horror cinema.

The main protagonist is forever moving through a series of journeys, corridors, and doors that, Thrower notes, "alerts the viewer to the importance of thresholds between worlds. Argento makes maximum use of the transition between different locations [...] heightening our awareness of the threshold experience of crossing from one to another."[51] These liminal transitions are rendered in a heightened intensity of form, and music propels us along these transitions, playing an important role by strengthening the visceral impact of the transitional experience.

One of the most crucial dimensions of Argento's cinematic style is his use of vivid colour. The taxi-ride sequence in *Suspiria* provides a fascinating example of the director's ability to heighten the sensory pleasures for the spectator in this visceral manner. One of the ways Argento deploys technology to this end is in his utilisation of old Technicolor Matrix™ film stock. This allowed him to achieve the saturated chromatic intensities seen in this sequence. Guiding this trans-historical *bricolage* of technological experimentation was the director's demand for a visceral effect and stylistic excess. Luciano Tovoli, Director of Photography on *Suspiria*, describes the required effect of the film's saturated colours:

> We wanted to create a visual style that went far beyond normal filmmaking. We decided to use Technicolour's Matrix™ system that divides the negative up into three colour bands. In *Suspiria* we really exploited the possibilities that Technicolour offered. We could paint each primary colour matrix individually, using different intensities of colour,

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[51] *ibid*, p.129.

> or even leaving one out altogether. The close-up of Jessica Harper [in the taxi] actually acquires a new dimension and seems to leap out of the screen like 3-D.[52]

What Argento and Tovoli actually mean here, I believe, is that they wish to 'literally' reach out and grab the spectator by virtue of the materialist power of their cinema, immediately rendered via their hyper-real aesthetic. Since they talk about the impact of primary colours, this effect is not so much about the real efficacy of any intended 3-dimensionality, but the haptic intensity of an actual physical/bodily impact. Of course, colours on screen, no matter how violently contrasted with each other, will never actually come *out* of the screen and touch us. Colour always remains a surface element, essentially two-dimensional. However, the aesthetic strategies of this visceral cinema, this symbiosis of affective properties, means that colour, sound, camera movement, are all working towards the same result and can therefore be experienced as one 'structural unit.' In other words, the (retinal) impact of Argento's intensely saturated colours is actually rendered, in part, by a sonic impact that *does* reach us physically, in the form of sound waves. There is an inter-dependency between these dimensions of sound and image operating here, but it is one structured around abstract affective properties, rather than any translatable meaning that would belong to a symbolic purchase.

To some extent, this type of affect becomes the actual *theme* of the film - in fact, the main theme of all the visceral horror cinema. As critic Linda Shulte-Sasse opines,

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[52] Luciano Tovoli quoted in *Dario Argento's World of Horror* (1985).

"Argento has no interest in realism whatsoever; *Suspiria* is self-consciously styled, artificial [...] *Suspiria* is about intense colour as much as it is about anything."[53] This replacement of theme with style, of content with form, is as a direct influence of *Psycho*'s introduction of this extra-subjective (or trans-subjective) model of cinematic experience. Argento claims his influence for this utilisation of colour saturation was Walt Disney's cartoons, which exploited the fact that Technicolour™ lacked subdued shades. Linda Schulte-Sassse is quick to mention the importance of sound to this visual intensity, noting that:

> Suspiria is *about* sound as well, overlaid with a repetitive, frantic and compelling musical soundtrack [...]. But if Disney's artificiality invites us to share a beautiful fantasy of stability and reassurance, Argento's fantasmagoria goes for the exact opposite, destabilising every inch of the way and graphically visualising the bodily violence and dismemberment.[54]

What remains singular to the strategy is that all elements are engaging with each other on the formal level, and not as signifiers of a translatable meaning, an *added value* given in terms of a signifying potential. Aaron Smuts notes that "There is something about the manner of violence depicted by Argento - its intimacy and sheer visceral quality - that makes it more 'effective' than most other types of screen violence. [Argento] tries to confine displays of pain to common experiences."[55]

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[53] Linda Schulte-Sasse, 'The "Mother" of all Horror Movies: Dario Argento's Suspiria' in *Kinoeye*, Vol 2, Issue 11 @ www.kinoeye.org/printer.php?path=02/11/schultesasse11.php (15/07/2006)
[54] *ibid.*
[55] Aaron Smuts, 'The Principles of Association: Dario Argento's *Profondo Rosso* (Deep Red, 1975)' in *Kinoeye*, Vol. 2, Issue no. 11, @ www.kinoeye.org/printer.php?path=02/11/smuts11.php (Date of Entry 03/08/2006).

In applying philosopher, David Hume's proto-materialist theory of the *principle of association*, to Argento's strategy of depicting violence, Smuts relies on some sort of "psycho-physiological memory of cause and effect."[56] This includes "encouraging viewers to pair disparate elements," Smuts notes, using those pairings, "established within the film and in normal everyday experiences to provoke and heighten the viewer's response."[57] Smuts describes how Argento's violent sequences often use murderous items, such as knives and falling glass, items that we all have a physical memory of hurting ourselves with, if not being murdered with. What is important here is the use of sound and image to heighten visceral impact in the symbiotic manner common to Argento's style. Often revolving around a set piece, or what Cynthia Freeland describes as "violence numbers," these are further described as "sequences of heightened spectacle and emotion. They appear to be interruptions of plot - scenes that stop the action and introduce another sort element of element, capitalising on the power of cinema to produce visual and aural spectacles of beauty and stunning power.[58]

These set-pieces possess the following qualities, or 'symptoms,' as Smuts refers to them, (giving his reading an interesting psychoanalytical slant): "divergent or excessive qualities, are preceded by cued entrances or other transition devices, they involve

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[56] *ibid.*
[57] *ibid.*
[58] Cynthia Freeland quoted in Aaron Smuts, 'The Principles of Association: Dario Argento's *Profondo Rosso* (Deep Red, 1975)' in *Kinoeye*, Vol. 2, Issue no. 11 (Date of Entry; 03/08/2006).

spectacle, heightened emotion."[59] As well as simply cueing the presence of danger (a well-known technique heard in *Jaws* (1975), *Halloween* (1978), and Argento's films), material impact helps render, through this type of associative principle, a physical record of the depicted violence, an accompaniment of the violence or pain with its *tonal record*. The harmonic ambiguity of atonality, or the dynamic antagonisms of contrary motion techniques, for example, are thus perfectly suited for creating these free-floating anxieties of the Real, through the uncertainty and ambiguity within the signifying network itself.

The visceral impact of the first murder sequence in *Suspiria* figures as a key element in rendering the *physicality* of violence, through a formal simulation of the scene's kinaesthetic and dynamic character. The killer's first victim (an expelled student of the dance academy) is viewed roaming around through a forest that is straight out of the Brothers Grimm by way of German Expressionist Cinema. The cue accompanying this sequence ('Witch' on the original soundtrack) is perhaps the most outlandish and powerful of the whole score, as it is reprised on a number of occasions. The cue is made up of intensely abstract aural components: sharp percussive crashes that produce visceral stabs to the senses, and a continuous, and seemingly unstoppable, high-pitched wailing, randomly punctuated by deeply resonant, low-pitched synthesiser noises.

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[59] Aaron Smuts, 'The Principles of Association: Dario Argento's *Profondo Rosso* (Deep Red, 1975)' in *Kinoeye*, Vol. 2, Issue no. 11 (Date of Entry: 03/08/2006).

It also contains a wordless ululation, repeated a number of times (amidst a number of groaning voices on the soundtrack), that seems to focus on the texture or the grain of vocal sounds, its materialist quality increasingly emphasised through its repetition. Some of these voices, like the low guttural kind of chorale, are actually played on the Mellotron™ an instrument admired for its peculiarly grainy timbral qualities. The promotion of these material attributes supports the importance of this non-representational semiotic excess since this type of wordless vocal seems to highlight the material aspects of the human (and often processed) voice. Simon Boswell notes his appreciation of the technique, linking it to semiotic excess: "I love wordless vocal. Its almost like its expressing the terror of not being able to put [what you want to express] into words. It's like being gagged actually."[60]

4.2.3 Soundtrack and Post-Modern Cinematic Spaces

The *cinematic* version of the post-modern Gothic was, in many ways, born of *Psycho*'s historically prescient synthesis of emerging trends (carefully crafted by Hitchcock into 'pure film'), a process that was, in many ways, realised by a film like *Suspiria*. The director's complete oeuvre, of which *Suspiria* represents a peak of stylistic excess, is perhaps best summarised by this short quote from Todd French:

> The Argento oeuvre is that of the excess of a phantasmagorical twentieth

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[60] Simon Boswell quoted in Interview with the Author, 29/10/2005.

> century Gothic, combining, among other things: a maddening narrative looseness; a baroque patina of stylistic elegance; bizarre camera angles; jagged editing; experimental lighting techniques; tortuous pans and tracking shots; striking in-frame compositions.[61]

In true *bricolage* style Argento has fashioned, with *Suspiria*, a very post-modern Gothic experience of the horror cinema. In fact, one of the qualities of the Gothic is that, as Gallant notes, "it rarely refers to any particular historical period [...]. Gothic is something which plunders iconography from across history indiscriminately."[62] This is a tradition Argento's cinema readily subscribes to, as is evident from his widespread borrowings and hybridisation of styles, something which is clearly evident in the soundtrack of *Suspiria*. Earlier, the importance of Edgar Allen Poe's writings to the Gothic tradition was described. Recapping, it was noted that Phil Hardy believes Poe's idea of 'horror in violent suspense' finds its modern equivalent in the term 'shock.' It was further stressed how sensation and spectacle, the cinematic analogues of shock, was nurtured by the early cinema, and how theorist, Hanns Eisler, suggested a direct correlation between this fundamental element of cinematic pleasure and the affective capabilities of experimental music, or what he termed the 'new musical resources,' to render such spectacle and sensationalism.

As a contemporary filmmaker, Argento has always been eager to emphasise the influence that Poe's work has exerted on him as a creator of cinematic art. He explains how "Poe

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[61] Todd French quoted in John Martin, 'What You See is What You Didn't Get or "I Wanna Know About the Mystery Dance"' in *Fantasy Film Memory*, FFM 4/5, (1991), pp.1-10, p.1

[62] Chris Gallant (ed.), 2001, p.21.

opened a door inside me. It was a landscape, a new world, a new perspective."[63] Argento unwittingly sets this experience within a potentially Lacanian framework when he describes the influence of Poe as being analogous to the Freudian landscaping of the mind, as 'mapped' via analysis. Argento claims: "I've never gone into analysis. But Freud opened a door, I know. Like Poe. A landscape different than people see every day (sic). I've tried to explore that."[64]

Chris Gallant describes one suggested definition for experiencing the Gothic: "The Gothic places an emphasis upon the aesthetic and superficial in order to encourage readers and audiences to deduce for themselves complex inner psychological movements."[65] This movement is rendered by a tension inherent in form and is why experimental musical idioms display such an affinity for rendering this process. Subjectivity *is* a process that articulates the disjunction of desire and libidinal drives. "There is nothing natural about our desires," Žižek notes, "we have to be *taught* how to desire. Cinema is the ultimate pervert art. It not only gives us what we desire. It tells us *how* to desire."[66]

The particular qualities of the Goblin scores, as incorporated by Argento in his visceral films, forms an absolutely crucial element of this experience of libidinal desire/drive.

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[63] Argento in interview with Simon Drax. 'Filmmakers in Focus! Mondo Argento' in *Videoscope*, Issue No.30, (January, 1999), @ www.videoscopemag.com/30_samples_argento.htm (Date of Entry: 18/09/2006).
[64] *ibid.*
[65] Chris Gallant (ed.), 2001, p.21.
[66] Slavoj Zizek quoted in *The Perverts Guide to Cinema* (dir, Sophie Fiennes, 2006)

Such an affect can be characterised as a type of spatialisation of the spectator, a maximum de-stabilisation of his/her own sense of internal space, of a psychological space, established via the extra-subjective mode of engagement outlined by Elisabeth Weis. A number of general stylistic traits actually situate this spatial design (continued and intensified in *Inferno)* within what Gallant terms the 'post-modern Gothic.' The spatial designs of *Suspiria* and *Inferno* display a technique that Argento uses to transfer us to an extra-subjective mode of engagement, short-circuiting the process of suture and inflicting the physical impact of these films' sights and sounds *directly* as physiological stimulus. As Gallant elaborates:

> In *Inferno* and *Suspiria*, colour, shape, music and movement do more than simply articulate the anxieties of their own characters - they substitute character psychology altogether. The people that inhabit these worlds are ciphers, their two-dimensionality flaunted unrestrainedly, while their physical environment is psychologised in the extreme.[67]

I have outlined how the formal traits particular to progressive rock and modernist classical music shared certain latent dynamics that were ripe for exploiting in this context. But what ties these traits to the post-modern Gothic? In general terms, this aesthetic tendency is easily situated within the overall tradition of Gothic Romanticism, albeit a particular 'vulgarised' strain of Romanticism that celebrates this singularly excessive aesthetic/sensory affect. The Gothic has always exerted an influence on the horror film, in particular generic/historical instances, coming noticeably to the fore to

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[67] Chris Gallant (ed.), 'In the Mouth of the Architect: *Inferno*, Alchemy and the postmodern Gothic' in Chris Gallant (ed.), *Art of Darkness: The Films of Dario Argento* (Guildford, FAB Press, 2001), pp.21-31, p 22.

dominate. Although it depends ultimately on one's definition, the post-modern, post-classical period of the horror genre, one can argue, seems to have nurtured certain of these Gothic characteristics.

What needs to be redressed here is the actual formal traits of the post-modern Gothic (as well as its themes), and how they reflect the typical post-modern concerns about the collapsing of self-identity and the resultant subjective destitution as the elementary cell of contemporary subjectivity. Here, Gallant claims, "the crises of knowledge" - so central to both anti-Enlightenment *and* post-modernist theorists - manifests itself through "the consequent rise of the Gothic" via "technological upheaval," and results in forms "imbued with uncertainty."[68] Allan Lloyd Smith concludes that the experience of such forms "opens the possibility of what exceeds our understanding."[69] Here the case for a Žižekian-Lacanian reading of the Gothic horror of Argento asserts itself powerfully. Is not the 'possibility of what exceeds our understanding' a perfect conceptual encapsulation of the Lacanian Real, itself a contemporary take on the Sublime. We can conceptualise the Lacanian Real, as something intrinsically other, and even position it central to our formation of subjectivity, but we can never understand it *as such*.

More relevant, at this juncture, is the semiotic excess that is marshalled through a particular handling of the audio-visual syntax. In its very hyper-reality, this evokes the

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[68] Gallant, (ed.), 2001, p.27.
[69] Allan Lloyd Smith quoted in Chris Gallant, 'In the Mouth of the Architect: *Inferno*, Alchemy and the postmodern Gothic' in Chris Gallant (ed.), *Art of Darkness: The Films of Dario Argento* (Guildford, FAB Press, 2001), pp.21-31, p.24.

nausea of the Real. As Gallant confirms, "It is this 'aesthetic of anxiety and perplexity,' which ties the Gothic to the post-modern in their mutual obsession with the impossibility of knowing and the fruitless search for answers in the wake of a complete loss of control over our environment."[70]

Argento's cinematic style is best read, then, in terms of the post-modern Gothic - a catch-all trope that displays distinct similarities with the post-*Psycho* strain of 'paranoid horror,' and its 'psychotic' spectator (as described in Chapter Three). The post-modern gothic establishes the psychotic spectator, and the trans-subjective experience as the 'beyond' of subjectivity. Recapping, the most important element of this trans-subjective experience was the short-circuiting of spectatorial identification. However, in establishing an alternative to suture theory, we must replace the experience with something else. This is a more immediate, visceral affect, bypassing the diegesis (character identification etc.) and impacting upon the spectator with what we could term a concentrated aesthetic assault upon the senses that results in the failure of symbolisation and the de-stabilisation of the spectator. This is Gallant's 'fruitless search for answers' and 'complete loss of control over our environment' - but the post-classical/post-modern cinematic experience of horror involves a *wilful* subjugation to the de-stabilising, sadomasochistic allure of *jouissance*.

The environment inhabited by Argento's characters is, as Chris Gallant explains, "one of

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[70] Gallant, (ed.), 2001, p.27.

fragmentation, instability, and partial orders, a diegetic world [...] in which neither its own characters nor its audience can orientate [sic] themselves effectively," and is, he adds, "rich in the hallmarks of the [Barthesian] writerly."[71] It is this reliance on aesthetic spectacle that lends the Gothic a particular affinity with post-modern cultural paradigms. Another trait of Argento's work is based in his self-reflexive style. The director brings attention back to the cinematic process itself, offering a sort of meta-commentary. This self-reflexivity is central to Argento's visceral period cinema, and in this period, the *diegetic* dimension is subjugated to the director's set pieces of operatic violence. Confirming this, Maitland McDonagh notes,

> Characterised by baroque stylistic devices that include bizarre camera angles, convoluted pans and tracking shots *whose narrative motivation is woefully inadequate to their extravagance*, their unnatural color (sic), jarring shot transitions and obtrusively off- kilter compositions within the frame - all of which conspire to delineate *a diegetic world gone mad* - my italics.[72]

The real delight, for Argento, as for his spectators, is in experiencing the dynamic kinetics of these cinematic events, or 'set-pieces,' a pleasure as much about physiological simulation as it is about psychological investment. Above all, the hyper-real audio-visual style, in which formal intensification is achieved through the concentration of the syntaxes, is off paramount importance. Argento's visceral horror films typify this trajectory of formal and syntactical concentration and intensification that was

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[71] Gallant, (ed.), 2001, p.23.
[72] Maitland McDonough, 'Broken Mirrors/Broken Dreams: The Dark Dreams of Dario Argento' in *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 2, (Winter, 1987/88), pp.2-13, p.3.

characterising the evolution of the contemporary horror film during this period. Furthermore, his use of music plays an absolutely essential role in this trajectory, provoking, evolving and intensifying the syntactical changes Hitchcock and Herrmann originally wrought upon the popular Horror film. Goblin's music further updates the mode of extra-subjective spectator engagement, utilising recent musical forms that seemingly intensify and heighten the effect even more. Arguably, the actual aspects of this updating further qualifies its explication via a Žižekian-Lacanian psychoanalytical framework.

4.3 Conclusion - The Žižekian-Lacanian Subject and the Real Thus Rendered.

Although I have talked about the affective power of film music in certain physiological terms, the Žižekian-Lacanian subject involves something more than just a mere model of physiological response. The materialist basis of these bodily reactions are important, in as much as they relate to the creation of a free-floating anxiety, the elementary affect of the hyper-aesthetic bombardment offered by a film like *Suspiria*. After all, the contemporary visceral horror film is one mediated by *adrenaline* if anything. But the notion of an extra-subjective cinematic experience - as one of a potentially maximised de-stabilisation within the visceral horror cinema's dynamic environment - must include some psychological dimension also.

I have already discussed the idea that if atonality signifies anything, other than some

vague cultural Otherness, then it signifies, or rather it manifests, *renders*, the very failure of signification itself. That is, the very breakdown of the symbolic network from which our ideas of symbolically-construed 'reality' are formed. This breakdown is manifest through an eruption of the non-symbolised Real, a free-floating signifier without a signified, which creates anxiety through the de-centring of the subject. This decentring, Žižek argues, is really a way of refusing to come to terms with the truly traumatic core of modern subjectivity, the status of which is Real. Atonal music offers us an exemplary index of this breakdown, as it does not allow the listener the comfort of a fixed perspective, just the constant movement around it, strengthened by other dynamic musical attributes (as in the examples discussed in this chapter).

I wish to argue that this takes the form of an actual *spatial simulation of unconscious drives and libidinal intensities*, a dynamic syntactical reconfiguration that renders the *process* of this new trans-subjective (Žižek's alternative term for an extra-subjective) experience of horror. Argento's investment in the audience is *libidinal* - his cinematic 'magic' involves a skilled wielding of the kinaesthetic mechanics of cinematic energy, so forcefully manifested by what I termed earlier as *the abstract contours* of the audio-visual sign.

By its very definition, the *jouissance*-producing excess of this non-symbolised, residual Real is intrinsic to this textual excess, and this technique implies a simultaneous minimising of a proper symbolic economy of audio-visual signification (the basis for narrative and thematic organisation and the suturing of the spectator). Here, then, is the

very manifestation of Žižek's quote from the beginning of the Chapter: you cannot have both meaning and enjoyment - that is, in so far as truth has the structure of a (symbolic) fiction, truth and the Real of *jouissance* are incompatible.

The shift into the post-classical involves a promotion of Barthesian excess, of a state of enjoyment (of *jouissance* taken) in the excess/residue that resists symbolisation and that *short-circuits* the process of suture. Here we can see the logic behind Žižek's opening quote, that the Real of enjoyment, of *jouissance*, is necessarily situated *in excess of meaning* – as a kind of non-divisible, remaindered *excrement* thoroughly at odds with the meaning-producing effects of the semiotic, representational processes. It is these aspects of the post-classical cinematic text that allies it most centrally with an overall post-modern/post-classical sensibility. As Edmond and Elisabeth Wright opine, 'Post-modernism is distinguished by its preoccupation with an excess of the Real, while in Modernism its an absence round which the text/object circulates.[73] A preoccupation with the Real also inhabits the late work of Lacan, a period that sees a shift away from the Imaginary-Symbolic interfacing of his 'classical' teachings. This later work involves a preoccupation with this excess that resists symbolisation, and centres on the register of the Real, and its uncanny tension with the Symbolic.

In particular, Žižek's reading of the late-Lacanian sign – as a sign *permeated* with nothing but pure materialised enjoyment - *via* Michel Chion's concept of *rendu* offers a

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[73] Edmond and Elisabeth Wright (eds.), *The Zizek Reader* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. xi.

more viable configuration of the textual *agency* of experimental music as it may be set within the context of the post-classical, visceral Horror cinema. Connected to this dimension of semiotic excess is that which Žižek has termed the subject beyond subjectivisation. As Žižek describes it this trans-subjective dimension of the subject relies on the dominance, in the overall cinematic (libidinal) economy, of the aesthetic functional mode. I'd like to argue that the application of the hyper-aesthetic excesses of experimental musical form co-function alongside similar evolutions in editing and imagery, to offer an exemplary model of this cinematic process of subjective re-constitution. Furthermore, it is this aesthetic domination that debases the classical theoretical model of Hollywood film music, as a *guarantor* of an illusory/imaginary feeling of completeness. Such is the affect of the hyper-realism of the visceral horror film that no such feeling is ever guaranteed, as it's the very destabilising affects of the (extra-) or trans-subjective *process* that provides the spectator's pleasure/enjoyment in the cinematic spectacle.

By implication Žižek's theoretical stance, especially its critique of the suture process, connects to the wider preconceptions of the theoretical orthodoxy of classical Hollywood, especially its visual and narrative biases. "Suffice it to recall the recent crisis of narrative," he argues, "where we witness a kind of unexpected return to the early 'cinema of attractions.'"[74] These classical theoretical models simply fail to account for the guiding affective elements of the post-classical cinematic experience - idiosyncratic

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[74] Slavoj Zizek, *The Fright of Real Tears, Krystof Kieslowski: Between Theory and Post-Theory* (London BFI Publishing, 2005), p. 6.

genres, stylistic evolutions, formal reconfigurations of the audio-visual syntax, even industrial and commercial re-structuring - all of which are symptomatic of the post-classical, post-modern, paradigm shift within popular cinema.

These qualities form the basis of the pleasures to be had of the post-modern, cinema of attractions, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the contemporary horror film. Here, eruptions of the Lacanian Real form the basis for aesthetic pleasure and subjective relations to the text, through the abstract elements of the sign that can be *measured* in physiological terms, as much as they can be inscribed into a psychological configuration of cinematic enjoyment. Arguably, no other film in Argento's canon sets up such an exemplary cinematic articulation of the late-Lacanian sign, defined by Žižek as a sign permeated, or too filled-in, with the deadly excessive enjoyment of *jouissance* - a true rendering of the Real. But when we talk of a rendering of the Real, of moments of semiotic excess, what are we indeed discussing? Does it relate to the cinematic sublime, the Gothic uncanny, or the Lacanian Real? Are they indeed all different notions for the same basic experience of something excessively subjective, of some disturbingly elementary experience of a *dimension of self*, so deep, so pathologically singular, as to initially appear strangely alien to us.

Chapter Five

CINE-SONIC TECHNOLOGY, EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC AND SEMIOTIC EXCESS IN KEN RUSSELL'S ALTERED STATES

By vulgarity I mean an exuberant over-the-top larger-than-life slightly bad taste red-blooded thing. And if that's not anything to do with Art lets have nothing to do with Art.

Ken Russell

It's forte and allegro right from the start. There are no lentos and pianissimos in Ken Russell.

John Corigliano, composer on *Altered States*

5. Introduction

The intense formal strategies of semiotic excess employed in Dario Argento's visceral period films, the promotion of form over content and physical impact over narrative integrity, were not peculiar to that sub-genre of 'Euro-Horror' the director's films exemplified. Towards the end of the 1970s, standardisation of this particular cinematic sensibility was becoming increasingly evident in the stylistic approaches of certain American (and British) directors of horror cinema. Luminaries of the genre, including Brian De Palma, John Carpenter, George Romero and Ken Russell (to name but a few) began to promote their own ideas regarding cinematic spectacle, manipulating semiotic excess through a promotion of *form itself.*

The one thing all of the directors mentioned above recognised was the efficacy of *experimental* musical resources and techniques for supporting this type of 'visceral' aesthetic strategy. The previous two case-study chapters have concentrated on the functional role of these musical attributes - both classical-modernist and 'Progressive' and 'Jazz-Fusion' rock styles - in rendering some of the material impact and spatial destabilisation associated with this visceral strategy. However, another crucial factor linking these directors' individual formal strategies together is their obvious preoccupation with, and skilled handling of, a number of important new cinematic *technologies*.

This chapter discusses some of the more pertinent evolutions within cinematic technology to have occurred during the period discussed here (1960-present day), assessing the impact each has exerted upon the contemporary horror film experience. Naturally, the most relevant of these is the mid-1970s boom in Dolby™ stereo-sound (also a boom period, interestingly enough, for the 'visceral' horror film), as well as the role of subsequent Sensurround Sound™ systems in today's total immersion experience within the sensorial domain of digital cinema. As well as these aural technologies, this chapter discusses some *non*-aural technologies and techniques, such as cinematography and mise-en-scène, and notes ways in which these perform in conjunction with sonic elements to render this 'excess' dimension of the cinematic sign. Ken Russell's horror spectacle, *Altered States* (1980), offers us a particularly apposite example of this functional relationship. The film utilises an experimental score (composed by John Corigliano) in conjunction with then current state-of-the-art cinematic technologies to

strengthen the affective properties of the director's overall visceral aesthetic strategy.

On a more general level, if the post-modern, or post-classical condition in the popular arts is indeed one preoccupied with this 'excess of the Real,' then the contemporary horror film (and its near relative, the science-fiction film) continues to direct the deployment of pioneering cinematic technologies towards this aesthetic experience of material affect. In outlining a new conceptual and theoretical framework for this experience of excess - an experience enabled, in part, by many of the *formal* traits of experimental music(s) - this study has, so far, sought to emphasise both the spatial (ambient, environmental) and textural (material) nature of 'musical affect' in singular instances of the visceral horror cinema. Furthermore, the question of our subjective constitution, and its relation to a hyper-aesthetic, 'environmental' experience (i.e. environment *as* an experience of self) has also been explicated via my theoretical recourse to Žižek's 'late-Lacanian' psychoanalytical framework.

As a cinematic experience/event, Russell's *Altered States* lends itself to a Žižekian-Lacanian hermeneutics. Through its discussion of the film's core themes of an experience of 'self' and 'subjectivity,' this chapter conceives 'the subject' as fundamentally split and lacking. More importantly, it describe just how this film structures these thematic elements on two interrelated levels: the first being the narrative and diegetic level of Symbolic fictions, the second, the non-symbolised dimension of the Real thus rendered, the remaindered fragment of the sign posited beyond symbolisation and representation. As a cinematic fiction, *Altered States* explores and extemporises the

uncanny tensions operating between the Real and the Symbolic registers - hence the importance of Žižek's late-Lacanian shift in the hermeneutic emphasis.

The second section of this chapter undertakes an in-depth analysis of Russell's film, focusing upon the manner by which certain conjunctions of cinematic technology and experimental formal techniques (aural and visual) work to render this tension palpable - and, more importantly, *enjoyable*. As in the previous case-study chapters the analysis is used to support the wider argument: that Žižek's approach provides an overarching theoretical framework that comprehensively explains the primary function of experimental music within a popular cinematic aesthetics, not just on the formal level, but the psychological, subjective level too. In addition to this Žižek's framework illuminates the hitherto-ignored relationship that scholars can draw between these two dimensions.

5.1 Excess and Vulgarity: The Cinema of Ken Russell.

Altered States was an early success stories for Dolby™ sound and therefore offers a particularly fruitful context in which to situate my own theoretical discussion of that particular technology. In addition to basic Dolby™ sound, the film also pioneered a prototype surround-sound system called MegaSound™ - this provided some additional low-frequency boost from speakers that were positioned towards the rear of the auditorium. Such aural technologies are allotted a central functional role in Russell's

post-1975 films, which were early testing grounds for these prototype technologies. However, the director's overall cinematic style, and *Altered States* in particular, also allows us to comment upon some of the *theoretically*-based affinities Russell has with other directors (and films) analysed in this study. Indeed, this relates to the one main feature seemingly critical to most late-seventies horror films - the promotion, within the overall hierarchy of cinematic imperatives, of pure cinematic form over narrative integrity.

Ken Russell, Dario Argento, and other directors of visceral horror cinema, share this common preoccupation with the *affective* properties of pure cinematic form. Such a strategy has its foundations, as this study has argued, in Alfred Hitchcock's notion of 'pure cinema' - an aesthetic sensibility that can be considered, in itself, partly an updating of a *pre*-classical, aesthetics-of-attraction. Žižek argues that this strategy (linking Hitchcock to other directors such as David Lynch, Krystof Kieslowski, and Andrei Tarkovksy) is founded upon "a certain autonomy of cinematic form," a form that is not here "simply to express, articulate content," but has "a message of its own."[1] This is a kind of "cinematic materialism," that is positioned "beneath the level of meaning," Žižek explains, "a more elementary level of *forms themselves*" that pertain to "a real which is more dense, more fundamental, than the narrative reality, the story. It is this that provides the proper density of the cinematic experience."[2]

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[1] Slavoj Žižek quoted in *The Perverts Guide to Cinema* (dir. Sophie Fiennes, 2006, 150mins).
[2] *ibid.*

We can, then, conceive of a direct correlation between the 'density' of the cinematic experience and Russell's own vulgar stylisations. Moreover, this kind of formal autonomy relates not only to individual dimensions of the audio-visual sign, but, in a way, proposes a functional relationship between the two, on some level beyond, or prior, to any 'added-value' signifying role each may provide for the other. Žižek and the sonic-theorist, Michel Chion, have both stressed the importance of cinematic technologies - and Dolby in particular - in rendering this level of 'proto-reality,' an insight which all the directors detailed in this study seem to grasp intuitively, if not consciously. As the opening quote of this chapter makes clear, Russell's movies often make use of what critics and the director himself has described as a 'vulgar,' over-the-top, cinematic style. Importantly, this does not just pertain to various aspects of content - a 'social vulgarity,' for example (although his films investigate these too), but to a certain vulgarity of style, a *formal* vulgarity. As Linda Williams has suggested,

> Russell has never been afraid of accusation of vulgarity, revelling in a seaside-postcard mischievousness [...] though usually cleverer than a *Carry On*. Many viewers hated this aspect of his work and it has clouded his reputation as a serious film-maker (though why shouldn't vulgarity be serious?). But at a time when 'extreme cinema' has become a fashionable brand-name, I propose that national treasure, Ken Russell be anointed the patron saint of British Extreme [cinema].[3]

Altered States was Ken Russell's first film to be actually made *in* Hollywood, and provided the director, not just with a stylistic context, in which to give free reign to his

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[3] Linda Williams, 'Ken Russell: Sweet Swell of Excess' @ www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/feature/49385 (Date of Entry: 18/09/2007). Originally published: July, 2007.

ideas of a populist deployment of experimental musical and cinematic styles, and a manipulation of state-of-the-art cinematic technologies, but also a commercial and industrial context. As critic Rebecca Bell-Metereau notes *apropos* of *Altered States*:

> The use of sound synthesizers, computer-enhanced rotoscoping, pixel-matteing, and Steadicam have created a revolution in the kinds of dream affects available to filmmakers of recent years. If film is an ideal vehicle for capturing and presenting dream creations, the technology available to film is responsible for the forms those dreams take. With increasing competition from television markets, films intended to be successes on the big screen must have something the little screen cannot capture. This has resulted in increasing reliance on technology and big effects in science fiction and horror films.[4]

Bell-Metereau's assertion that the governing technology is ultimately responsible for shaping Russell's 'dream affects,' and the forms they take in *Altered States*, lends further credence to a psychoanalytical interpretation of the film. The main technological evolutions utilised by Russell's film (Dolby, Surround-sound, blue-screen special effects) also positions the film along a general aesthetic trajectory of popular cinema that, arguably, began during Hollywood's transitional period (c.1948-60).

As it had in the 1950s, a brand new set of competing media developed in the late-seventies: the expanding home-video rental market, computer and video games, and television's ever expanding movie re-run scheduling. Indeed, Rick Altman has argued that the evolutionary complexity of these evolving sound technologies has often been ignored in various technological and aesthetic studies of the cinema, and that throughout

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[4] Rebecca Bell-Metereau '*Altered States* and the Popular Myth of Self-Discovery' in *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, Vol. 9, Pt. 4, (Winter 1982), pp. 171-179, p. 177.

these 'histories of film' this increasing complexity has often been based around the development of aural technologies. Altman notes that,

> Critics have effectively neutralized much of cinema's complexity. In doing so they have systematically concentrated on the uniformity of the image, thus neglecting such essential variations in the soundtrack as 1) three decades of live, un-standardised accompaniment of 'silent' films, 2) simultaneous release of silent and sound versions throughout the twenties and early thirties, and 3) parallel distribution of magnetic and optical track versions during the fifties and sixties, as well as mono, stereo, and surround sound versions in the seventies and eighties.[5]

Along with visual and other technologies, these various forces exerted their own particular pressure within the industry, persuading directors to once more prioritise aspects of cinema that were the province of cinema and cinema alone, thus creating a whole new level of cinematic spectacle. For many directors, this meant an increasing reliance on cinematic pyrotechnics - special effects, better sound-relaying equipment, bigger set locations - all of which contributed to the onset of the blockbuster mentality of the 1980s, as well as the increasing popularity of those genres in which these purely cinematic pleasures can be most powerfully incorporated.

Of course, one significant generic area in which this sensibility has traditionally prospered is the post-classical, or post-modern, horror film. Therein lies the psychological implication of this type of economic and industrial pressure. The novelty of these technological developments was best witnessed in genres based around dual

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[5] Rick Altman quoted in Gianluca Sergi, *The Dolby Era: Film Sound in Contemporary Hollywood* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 72-73.

notions of *fantasy* and *excess*. As Williams claims, "It is perhaps as an arch-fantasist, however, that Russell is at his most persuasive [...]. Russell's fantasies are not a substitute for reality [...]. Fantasy is where different sexual and psychical identities can be tried out [...]. And fantasy is both where he has most fun and is most serious." This is particularly the case in *Altered States*, a film which deals explicitly with questions of sexual and psychical identities. It could be argued that ostensibly narrative levels of a film's diegetic dimensions only gives us a superficial metaphorical symbolisation of these themes. It is the more fundamental level of *forms themselves* (to quote Žižek again) that finally renders some sense of the fundamental antagonisms of drive and desire that are constitutive of fantasy.

Within Žižek's late-Lacanian framework, these 'fantasies' are what the subject constructs in order to 'gentrify' and rationalise their paradoxical enjoyment of the meaningless Real - in other words, the *jouissance* taken in this excessive remaindered element. And the seemingly vague narrative structures of Russell's most operatic fantastic flights of fantasy, operate as a shield or barrier, separating us from a *complete* identification with the obscenely enjoyable, but utterly meaningless, nature of one's individual *jouissance*. A total identification with *jouissance*, on the other hand, can result in psychosis. However, one could argue that, with the shift to a post-modern condition, the spectator moves ever nearer towards an enjoyment of psychosis.

Nowhere is this condition more evident and relevant than in our enjoyment of the visceral horror film. In rendering our deepest, most unspoken fantasies, the popular

horror film of the late-1970s goes further than ever in locating new formal techniques and technological enhancements with which to dazzle its largely cynical and jaded audiences with this enjoyment of excess. *Altered States* was itself nurtured in this environment of aesthetic novelty and technological upheaval, and Russell was to bring his wide-ranging musical and cinematic knowledge to bear upon such considerations. Indeed, from the beginning of his career, music in particular functions as the main contributing factor to his viscerally powerful cinematic style. The musical characteristics intrinsic to Russell's *oeuvre* (as with Hitchcock and Argento) are, then, closely linked to the director's canny grasp of the technological developments in both the sonic *and* visual capabilities of cinema. The next section provides some background material on Russell's general body of work, outlining some of the key stylistic devices and aesthetic strategies noticeable in his films, before turning to an analysis of *Altered States* and its use of experimental musical resources.

5.1.2 Ken Russell: The Musician's Filmmaker

Born June, 1927, in Southampton, England, Ken Russell had tried numerous careers before finding his way into filmmaking, initially *via* television and the London 'Free Cinema' movement. Russell eventually emerged from the BBC arts series *Monitor*, something of a lone bastion of experimentalism within the notably reserved British film industry. It was the "one and only English experimental film school ever," the director

claimed.[6] As explained in the previous section, the trajectory of Russell's career proves to be such that experimental techniques developed during his apprenticeship become increasingly applicable within the context of the director's evermore populist and generically-defined body of work.

The signs of Russell's mature style are clearly discernable in his early period films. In particular, the director's latter-day shift away from the representational efficacy of the signifier towards a more poetic formal rendering of semiotic excess is clearly evident in Russell's early documentary work, albeit to a lesser degree. Moreover, music becomes the crucial element of this early strategy, which takes the form of a powerful utilisation of the affective power of 'image-and-sound' (that is, image-with-sound) rather than the more orthodox documentary format, created through an omniscient narrative voice and numerous accompanying dialogic voices. Russell's landmark 1962 television documentary, *Elgar*, Michael Brook confirms, "exploited these limitations brilliantly, the absence of dialogue letting him fill the soundtrack with almost wall-to-wall Elgar," and although there was "relatively sparse narration [...] the films' true eloquence comes from the fusion of Elgar's music and Russell's images." This particular 'fusion' would, from this point on, start to operate at the very heart of the film director's oeuvre.

His first full-length feature was made in 1963, but it was not until *Women in Love* (1969), and *The Music Lovers* (1970), his film about Tchaikovsky, that Russell would

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[6] Ken Russell quoted in John Walker, *The Once and Future Film: British Cinema in the Seventies and Eighties*, (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 98

begin to consolidate this signature cinematic style. The latter film contains an interesting scene (where Tchaikovsky premiers his new concerto) very similar to the scene discussed in the last chapter (in which the piano in *Deep Red* is posited as a fetish object - see page 222). In Russell's scene, the piano's keyboard is also shot in close-up as the composer's sweat-sodden hands dash across the keys. The sequence, some twelve minutes in length, keeps shifting to imagined sequences from within various character's psychic interiorities. Again and again, Russell returns to the intensely physical manner in which the composer's hands gloss over the piano keys, sometimes so fast that they appear blurred, soaking them in sweat. It is an intensely physical sequence that somehow gets to the very core of our subjective responses to music.

The next few years would prove crucial in the context of the director's application of experimental musical styles and new cinematic technologies. Important additions to his canon during this period were *The Devils* (1971) and *Tommy* (1975). The first was a controversial movie with an intensely experimental musical score by the British composer, Peter Maxwell Davis, whilst the second was Russell's hysterically excessive cinematic rendering of The Who's famous rock opera of the same name, one of the earliest contemporary rock movie scores to be released in Dolby Stereo.

In a similar way to Argento (and, indeed, Hitchcock, at one time), Russell's films have continued to sharply divide critics. Many of these critics themselves oscillate between praising his eccentric stylistic genius, and castigating him as a vulgar and tasteless manipulator of a somewhat tawdry disposition. These types of criticisms might also

point to the director's adoption of a certain non-realistic cinematic style. As Pauline Kael remarks, "Russell doesn't seem to have the ability to create believable representations of human behaviour; he's such an eccentric filmmaker that he has invented his own kind of film [...]. Russell's images often have great energy [...]. But he has never been a director for flow or seductive rhythm."[7]

The major issues regarding Russell that critics seem agreed upon, however, are his encyclopaedic knowledge, and skilful deployment, of music within cinema, and his willingness to adopt new and often untested cinematic technologies. As Ioan Allen, the initiator of the Dolby Stereo™ system, explains, "you had to get imaginative director's on your side. The first director to like the idea [of Dolby Stereo] was Ken Russell."[8] Films of the period reveal Russell's preoccupation with musical subjects: *Lisztomania* (1975), a bizarre post-modern retelling of the virtuoso composer's life, features the music of :Liszt rendered on an electronic synthesiser keyboard by progressive rock musician, Rick Wakeman, whilst *Mahler* (1974) was a rather abstract, poetic handling of its eponymous subject that "responded not to the composer, or his music," critic John Walker notes, "but to his [Russell's] own feelings about the music."[9]

Arguably, this need to personalise his feelings about music and musicians, and to transpose those feelings into cinematic form, underscores Russell's whole auteur-like

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[7] Pauline Kael, *Taking It All In* (London: Marion Boyars, 1986), p. 128-129.
[8] Ioan Allen quoted in 'Interview with Gianluca Sergi' in Gianluca Sergi, *The Dolby Era: Film Sound in Contemporary Hollywood* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 99.
[9] John Walker, 1985, p. 101.

philosophy of cinematic art. More importantly, this musical preoccupation, already nascent in his earlier work, seems to influence the *formal* dimensions of Russell's style, more so than any narrative, thematic, or symbolic concerns. As Russell noted of *The Music Lovers*: 'What I've always been after is the spirit of the composer as manifest in the music [...]. I try to achieve the cinematic equivalent of a musical form.'[10] This musicality influences Russell's whole approach to cinematic expression, a trait that connects him further with directors such as Hitchcock and Argento, as all three have stated, albeit in slightly different ways, that their films aspire to some *condition of musicality*.

The similarities do not end there. This 'condition of musicality' relates in a more general manner to what in film studies may be termed the 'filmic' or purely 'cinematic' qualities of these director's films - those qualities pertaining to the purely formal elements of the craft, that, in the hands of the skilled directors under discussion here, operate as a tool for the creation of 'peak' cinematic experiences. As Russell himself has noted, "Musicians are trying to do what I'm trying to do: express the inexpressible [...]. If you're a musician you do it in a musical way. If you're a filmmaker, you do it in a filmic way, which is my craft. Musicians come closest to plumbing this divine mystery."[11]

David P. James argues that Corigliano's score for *Altered States* is "not only exciting

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[10] Ken Russell, *The Lion Roars: Ken Russell on Film*, (Boston, MA: Faber and Faber, 1993), p. 75.
[11] Russell quoted in Walker, 1985, p. 99.

musically, but extremely effective cinematically."[12] This is due to the fact that Russell sought to invest this film with a musical quality constructed on a type of poetic union of sound and image - the merging of the non-representational. non-iconographical dimensions of aural and visual elements of the cinematic sign to achieve an overall visceral impact. As Pauline Kael remarks, "suspense is intensified by the blasting. dissonant music of John Corigliano, which is designed to drive you up the theatre walls (It's the kind of music you can't easily separate from the sound-effects; you may just back up against your seat)."[13] Therefore, Corigliano's non-diegetic music does not primarily function in the film in the classical manner described by Claudia Gorbman: that is, as a conveyor of symbolic meaning and, therefore, as an agency of suture. Rather, the non-diegetic music functions in the film to powerfully render an extra-linguistic affect.

In order to maximise music's affective potential, the film's score performs in tandem with other non-representational formal elements. All these must operate towards the same overall affect, on the same level of psychic interaction with the spectator, they result in a visceral impact. The primary function, then, of Corigliano's non-diegetic music in *Altered States* is not to contribute any sense of a metaphorical 'added-value' to the meaning of the image, or vice-versa. What music is intending to do, in Russell's films, is maximise some sort of intense spatiotemporal displacement and textural,

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[12] David P. James 'Modern Music That Works' in *Pro Musica Sana*, Vol. 9, No. 4, (Summer, 1982), pp. 2-6, p. 2.
[13] Pauline Kael, *Taking It All In* (London: Marion Boyars, 1986), p. 130.

materialist impact.

Russell's film-musical technique stresses what I have termed the *trans-sensorial and synaesthetic* basis of the functional relations between the individual elements of the audio-visual sign. He himself describes how he sees "shapes and feelings - a feeling which is extremely strong and does have a shape - when I listen to music that I can't put into words but which I can feel I can use in my work [...]. Sound and images turn into something else. The challenge is to get that sort of feeling on film."[14] Although this may seem vague, Russell does come close to explicating what Žižek describes as the register of the Real - that remaindered excess leftover from symbolic purchase, the 'failure' of the Symbolic.

In a way these 'leftovers' have become the tools of Russell's trade, though it is worth stating that Russell is simply utilising a stylistic over-emphasis. The notion of the Lacanian Real is simply an idea that facilitates an understanding of our subjective response to such stimuli in theoretical terms. However, the director's summary description of the cinematic affect of his non-diegetic music reads uncannily like a rendering of the Lacanian Real, even down to the exact terminology the director often employs. In an interview with Nik Huggins, for example, Russell complains: "reality is a dirty word for me, I know it isn't for most people, but I am not interested. There's too much of it about [...]. My films do rely on music and imagery. I soon realised that a

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[14] *ibid*, p. 101.

certain image with the right music creates something "Other."[15] Of course, it is not just within the non-diegetic musical accompaniment that we get this strange uncanny rendering of excess and 'otherness.' We conceive of it also in terms of Russell's imagery, sound-effects, and even his particular use of dialogue. The following section now looks at *Altered States* in some detail, investigating the numerous ways in which sound, image, editing and other cinematic devices, work in tandem towards staging this sense of excess and otherness.

5.2 *Altered States* - A Case-Study Analysis

Like the other case-study films analysed thus far, *Altered States* has an intensely experimental musical score. Composed by John Corigliano, the music was specially commissioned for the film by Russell himself, and was eventually nominated for an Academy award, unheard off in those days for such an experimental film score. The director had been decidedly impressed by Corigliano's *Clarinet Concerto*: "I braced myself for thirty minutes of plinks and plunks that pass for music these days. I was in for a surprise, a shock, a revelation. Not since Bartok's *Miraculous Mandarin* have I been so excited in the concert hall, I knew I was looking at a composer of the stature of Ives

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[15] Nik Huggins, 'Savage Messiah: An Interview with Ken Russell' @ www.futuremovies.co.uk/filmmaking.asp?ID=54 (Date of Entry 28/11/08).

and Copeland."[16] The choice of Corigliano as composer for *Altered States* marks the kind of treatment and changes that the producers hoped Russell might bring to the project (the production of which had started under director, Arthur Penn). It seemed obvious Russell's hiring was, first and foremost, about the director's skill with fantasy sequences: "They thought I could handle the fantasy sequences, but they were less certain about the acting," Russell claims, adding, "I had more money to spend than usual. Most of my fantasy sequences have been done on very low budgets."[17]

Altered States was not a huge success critically or commercially speaking, but neither was it an unmitigated disaster. The film tells the story of a university professor, Dr. Edward Jessup (played by William Hurt), who experiments with sensory depravation tanks and hallucinogenic drugs with a view to achieving some sort of pseudo-mystical self-realisation of 'original self.' He meets and marries another scholar, anthropologist, Emily (played by Blair Brown). But his marriage and academic career become increasingly derailed by his experiments, which begin to take on a more selfish and dangerous character. After a trip to Latin America to experiment with drug-induced ancient Indian ceremonial rites, Jessup begins to have ever more extreme hallucinations often involving visions of his father and his wife. Eventually the hallucinations that Jessup experiences start to manifest as *physical* symptoms, until the doctor finally morphs into an primitive, ape-like creature and then, finally, into a ball of pure pre-

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[16] Russell quoted in Liner Notes for *Altered States:* Original Soundtrack, RCA Victor Compact Disc Original Released as Vinyl Recording on RCA, 1980, (ABLI - 3983).
[17] Russell quoted in John Walker, 1985, p.102.

symbolic energy, only to be rescued and delivered back to 'reality,' to symbolically-construed reality that is, by his ex-wife and their work colleague. Although, Jessup seems contrite about the consequences of his actions, his work colleague, at the end of the film, now seems possessed by the very same irrational fire that consumed him. The film ends with the ultimate Lacanian lesson: that behind the ultimate sense of 'the original self' there is nothing, just the lack constitutive of subjectivity itself.

The popular response from contemporary reviewers seemed to be that the film's fantastical elements - in particular, the hallucination sequences - overwhelmed the narrative dimension.. In a similar way to *Psycho*, then, *Altered States* is a film driven largely by the psychic imperatives of its main protagonist. The dramatic tensions of the film being played out not so much "between the characters," as Martyn Auty noted upon the film's release, "but in the traumatised mind of the hero [...]. Consequently the bravura trip sequences, rather than the erratic and implausible linking narrative, are the film's only possible source of appeal."[18]

Altered States is, therefore, an exemplary case of Linda Williams' post-classical, post-modern, cinema-of-attractions, and also borrows many of its techniques from experimental film and music. The film's main aesthetic strategy is situated squarely within a post-modern aesthetics-of-attraction. This is most clearly rendered in the hallucination sequences, which are "no different in form or concept from the colour-

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[18] Martyn Auty 'Review of *Altered States*' in *Monthly Film Bulletin*, Vol. 48, No. 570, July 1981, p. 131.

wheel patterns and animated graphics used as backing to the acid rock concerts of ten years ago [...]," Auty noted, "a sensory extravaganza of apocalyptic light and terrifying quadraphonic sound."[19] The sheer physical displacement and visceral impact *Altered States* creates is, indeed, the main source of cinematic enjoyment, and it engages the spectator in the same 'extra-subjective' manner described by Elisabeth Weis (see Chapter Three). Like the other films assessed, the use of experimental musical attributes, especially their incorporation into an overall cinematic style, is crucial to the achievement of this kind of extra-subjective engagement.

Altered States, made relatively late in Russell's career, bears all the hallmarks of the director's mature cinematic style. In a similar way to *Psycho and Suspiria*, the film marks a real summation of intent for its director, in which all the stylistic and thematic tendencies of his earlier work reach a formal and thematic apotheosis. In particular, the final hallucination sequence of the film - a special effects *tour-de-force* that sees Jessup trans-substantiate into a ball of pure energy - realises a cinematic intention the director had harboured for some time. As Ken Hanke notes of the sequence: "As the ending of *Altered States* it is brilliant; as the summation of Russell's progression towards a positive vision it becomes phenomenal. For the student of Ken Russell's films it is an exhilarating moment, fulfilling every expectation."[20]

Hanke's remarks remind us that, as a complete work, *Altered States* is an important

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[19] Auty, 1981, p. 131.
[20] Ken Hanke, *Ken Russell's Films*, (London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1984), p. 411.

addition to Russell's *oeuvre*, on a level above and beyond the film's ostensible themes. As Hanke opines, "*Altered States* is almost pure Russell [...] as much a personal statement as any of his earlier works."[21] Perhaps appropriately for such a work, in addition to the film's self-contained narratives of self-discovery and redemption, Russell adds another level of meta-commentary upon the spectacular 'attractions' of the cinematic apparatus. Given this opportunity to meditate on the psycho-philosophical essence of 'the self itself,' Russell turns that commentary back on itself, postulating his ideas concerning the great attractions of cinema for mankind.

This personalised approach can be read, in psychoanalytical terms, as an approach that does not shrink from investigating our most inner selves, no matter how painful this process may turn out to be. As the lead character proclaims himself he is 'not afraid of that solitary pain.' And as Russell himself notes of his filmmaking career: "It is a pity when one, either through force of circumstance or because one is afraid of being ridiculed by others, won't expose to everyone that little spark of something special which is unique to him alone."[22] The most interesting aspect of Russell's work is exactly how this deeply subjective essence is rendered through the power of cinema to expose our most ardent and hidden desires. For Lacan, this is the aspect of subjectivity situated between the domains of the Real and the Symbolic. And to render this uncanny subjectivity in *Altered States*, Russell marshals every cinematic trick in the book - special

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[21] *ibid*, p. 399.
[22] Internet Movie Database 'Biography for Ken Russell' @ www.imdb.com/name/nm0001692/bio (Date of Entry - 06/01/07).

effects, experimental musical tendencies, fantastical imagery, art-house cinematic techniques, and contemporary sound-recording techniques.

In an interesting article on special effects written around the time of *Altered States* release, Steve Neale states that, "[Special effects] depend upon and *intensify the fetishistic aspects* of the genres of 'fantasy' in particular and of the cinema and its signifier in general" - my italics.[23] How does this 'fetishist' intensification inscribe itself upon the cinematic syntax? In rendering the fetishistic machinations of drive and desire that underpin this visceral cinematic experience - through techniques of self-reflexivity and stylistic over-emphasis - Russell directly comments upon the ability of *cinema itself* to astonish and shock, marshalling elaborate cinematic pyrotechnics to intensify his own trademark vulgar, unsubtle style. In the Quiche Indian ceremony sequence, for example, this is even presented by Russell with actual fireworks and pyrotechnics exploding around Jessup as he hallucinates. The bizarre pops and squeaks of these explosions mix with the manic trills in the musical score, creating a sequence that is cinematic sensationalism and showmanship at its purest.

Russell's formal autonomy impacts upon the spectator through the properly traumatic dimension of the director's spectacles of 'cinematic materialism.' Indeed, the whole of *Altered* States can be cast within a Lacanian framework, as the ostensible theme of schizophrenia acts as the perfect structural metaphor for Lacan's 'split' model of

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[23] Steve Neale 'Hollywood Strikes Back: Special Effects in Recent American Cinema' in *Screen*, Vol. 21, No. 3, (1980), pp. 101-105, p. 105.

subjectivity. Jessup, as witness to his own innermost fantasies, substitutes for our own experiences of self, for the spectator's traumatic encounter with the real of their desire. Such a splitting of the self is given a degree of normality in the film, when Jessup proclaims that schizophrenia may not even be a disease.

The most interesting aspect of the film, however, is the fact that this split is rendered formally. As Bell-Metereau notes, "Jessup's dreams are as much a product of the technology that produces them as they are the result of ideas about the experience of self-discovery and the origins of life."[24] What Russell's film provides us with is a perfect structural model for the working through of our own deepest fantasies, as they may be constructed through the domain of cinematic fictions. In subjecting the spectator to Jessup's fantasies - rendered in hyper-real cinematography and high-definition Dolby sound - such fantasies become surrogates for our own cinematic fetishes and render, in their very cinematic materialism, something of the *density* of one's own personal (cinematic) enjoyment. As Bell-Metereau continues:

> The visionary dreams of *Altered States* are the central images that link the theme of self-discovery to the experience of making and watching movies. Dreams are the ultimate movie experience - stories that arise full-blown from the subconscious, complete with extras, soundtrack, elaborate sets, and terrific special effects.[25]

This is most noticeable in the scene following Jessup's second hallucination (the Indian

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[24] Bell-Metereau, 1982, p. 177.
[25] *ibid*, p. 173.

mushroom ceremony) when we cut to Jessup's two colleagues sitting watching the back of Jessup's head. Structurally, the characters are thus arranged as cinematic spectators themselves, since they are also made privy to Jessup's subjective states. Furthermore, should we consider the Lacanian split between 'enjoyment' and 'pleasure,' these dichotomies can also be more readily understood and defined. Indeed, the whole film revolves around a foundational schizophrenic structure that could just as easily be split along the Lacanian categories of 'reality' and the 'real,' and their parallel psychical categories, the Symbolic and the Real. The interest, for this study, concerns the functional capacity, or agency, of these 'extras' mentioned by Bell-Metereau. How important are Russell's handling of cinematic devices like the soundtrack and cinematography in the staging and shaping of such cinematic spectacles? And how does his conjoining of sound and image work towards establishing this 'extra-subjective' mode of spectatorial engagement?

It could be argued that, in a film in which this particular mode of spectatorial engagement is actively promoted, music undergoes its own promotion, as an agency of *libidinal stimulation.* It must also be stressed that such promotion is only conceived relative to the neglect sound has traditionally suffered at the hands of previous film theorists. It is not my intention to simply assert another false hierarchy. What seems evident in the film's conjoining of sound and image, in fact (especially in the hallucination sequences), is that each individual sensory element is essentially *de-*hierarchilised. A sensory amalgam results which is then promoted within the overall cinematic economy of Russell's style, and placed above narrative and thematic

resonance. The important thing to note, here, is that visual and aural elements are functioning upon the same level of *abstraction* - that is, beyond representation, and towards a 'successful' rendering of the Real.

This technique becomes apparent when we look at Russell's construction of cinematic signs. Both the aural and visual elements of cinema are therefore applied together in order to provide an overall visceral affect through an encounter with the more abstract attributes of sound and image. One clear example of this occurs during the second hallucination sequence, starting with the shot of Jessup dressed in bright white, foreground against a backdrop scene of densely-coloured yellow flowers. These particular audio-visual signs are indicative of the hallucination sequences in general, and display Russell's lack of concern for the representational capabilities of images and/or sounds. In these scenes, the functional relationship between sound and image is considered, first and foremost, on the level of pure form, *beyond* any presumed 'added value' either may add in terms of a *symbolic* signification. Here, then, it is the abstract attributes of sound and image that become the primary functional agencies.

For example, the chromatic intensity of Russell's colour palette in the hallucination sequences is maximised through sharp 'tonal' contrasts (also a technique of Argento's) creating a visual tension that remains unresolved. These colours continue to reverberate and, at the same time, the accompanying atonal musical cues fail to achieve any proper harmonic resolution. Michel Chion has discussed the intensity of colour cinematography in cinema, and has turned, interestingly enough, to a musical terminology in describing

the intensity of a colour that is too extreme as "an irruption of something too blue or too red [...] something no longer in 'key.'"[26] Although colours do retain some level of metaphorical symbolic purchase, in Russell's hallucination sequences, this dimension of the sign is rarely, if ever, manipulated. Instead, he manipulates the chromatic intensities and contrasts of these hyper-real colours. This becomes a formal technique based around what Lacan describes as, 'llanguage' (as opposed to language). For Lacan, llanguage "serves purposes that are altogether different from that of communication [...]. Llanguage affects us first of all by everything it brings with it by way of effects that are affects."[27]

The colour red, for example, may signify romance, passion, danger, but it is the abstracted intensity of colours themselves that is employed to its fullest potential in Russell's aesthetic strategy - the colour red's intrinsic 'redness,' for example. During the scene towards the end of *Altered States* where Jessup hallucinates his physiognomy morphing before his very eyes, we experience such an intense enjoyment of these saturated colours. After Jessup thinks his hallucination has subsided, he opens his apartment door to be confronted by a primal, volcanic landscape rendered in hyper-saturated hues of red. Huge cavernous volcanoes explode as Russell's camera glides down into the crags, twisting and turning wildly in order to destabilise the spectator's sense of a fixed spatial referent. This vision has no real thematic or metaphorical

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[26] Michel Chion 'Quiet Revolution and Rigid Stagnation' in *October*, No. 58, (Fall 1991), pp. 69-80, p. 76. Translated by Ben Brewster.
[27] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge - Book XX Encore 1972-1973*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), p. 138-139. Translated by Bruce Fink. Originally Published in French in 1975.

richness. The experience becomes one of a pure cinematic, audio-visual form, as the music simply compounds this destabilisation. Indeed, it functions more successfully as an example of Russell's own meta-commentary regarding the real nature of cinematic enjoyment in the post-modern era. It provides the audience with an enjoyment of cinematic pyrotechnics which is not 'read' through the scene's representational (and metaphorical) potential; rather, it stages this enjoyment directly through the *very form in which it is being rendered.*

Žižek explains that the nearest comparison to *rendu* (rendering) in painting is Abstract Expressionism, which deals with colours and forms on their own terms, *prior* to their discursive binding and subsequent incorporation into a wider representational system. Of course, cinema of the sort being discussed here must ultimately deal with representation on some level, since it is a overall representational form. However, it is precisely on this level of abstract level of formal rendering that the influence off non-representational signs is most apparent, in a fragment of the sign in which the true density of our enjoyment may be realised. It is here where the significant differences between sound and image as expressive forms comes into play. Royal S. Brown notes the essential difference between sounds and images, and stresses the particular importance of music in this respect:

> Whereas the cinema's visuals, whether stressed as stills or presented in relational contexts developed by montage, can likewise have the quality of unconsummated symbols when presented outside of a narrative context, their representational qualities provide at least the illusory quality of being consummated in history - in physical space and

> chronological time - that music does not have. Because it is unseen, non-representational music aligns itself with the visceral, even when it takes on many of the forms and structures of classical music. It is not surprising, then, that film-music composers have generally exploited to the hilt the affective potential of music.[28]

Music, in essence, is a non-iconographical art-form, and although even music made within the 'forms and structures' of classical music has an affective potential that is powerfully realised, even in classical film music, atonal music has a further affective potential in this context. However, Brown adds that "other elements of the filmmaking process contribute to this as well [...]. Music, in helping transform the cinematic image-event into an affect image-event, skews our reading of the image-event."[29]

Both colours and sounds have this dimension of purely abstract affect, a formal autonomy that atonal music (a music of 'pure sound') itself promotes. It lacks the organising architectonic and melodic matrices that structure one's reading of aural signifiers to begin with. Examples of a 'vocal' dimension of this purely affective fragment of the sign might be the 'grain' of the voice rather than the 'message' of the spoken words. Or the timbral qualities of an instrument's sound rather than a harmonic or melodic cue that imposes a certain 'learned' emotional response. Psychoanalytically speaking, we perhaps find some *pleasure* in the signifying potential of sounds and images, but we find *enjoyment* by way of their material and spatial affects. These audio-visual moments become formal procedures that generate anxiety-producing affects;

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[28] Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music*, (Los Angeles (CA): University of California Press, 1994), p. 27.
[29] ibid, pp. 27-28.

fragments of a sign that render the true ambiguity of the cinematic image in postmodernism, setting it across the dichotomies of pleasure and enjoyment, and content and form. As Žižek opines,

> In the Lacanian notion of the Real, the hard kernel resisting symbolization coincides with its opposite, the so-called 'inner,' 'psychic' reality; within postmodernism, the same ambiguity is reproduced in the shape of the tension between the obtrusive bodily density (one is tempted to say the Heideggerian 'earth') which overshadows the narrative frame and the opposite attitude which, *vulgari eloquentia*, reduces reality itself to 'something that exists only in our heads.'[30]

In Chapter Four I concentrated on the material aspects of such a spectacle, but the experience of a material, or physical, impact also implies a spatial affect as well. As far as the musical score is concerned, *Altered States* clearly portrays the dual manner in which music can function within cinema, acting as an agent of this fundamental ambiguity. Musical's relationship to narrative thus fluctuates constantly from that of a 'classical' signifying agency to a more abstract formal rendering of this visceral experience of excess as it shifts from the two opposing sides mentioned by Zizek above. Importantly, the more experimental elements of the Corgliano score are used as part of Russell's overall rendering of the hallucination sequences, and it is during these moments of 'formal vulgarity' that the soundtrack takes on a particularly magnified functional responsibility.

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[30] Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom: Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* (Second Edition), (New York (NY): Routledge, 2001), p. 130.

The use of special-effects technologies in *Altered States* - including the sound-relaying systems utilised in the exhibition of the film - becomes an important arbiter in the eventual formal and stylistic decisions made by Russell. They are also important in marking out the different ways in which Russell's handling of various cinematic devices can be theorised in Lacanian terms. Russell, as we know, was an early exponent of Dolby™ noise reduction and multi-channel sound-relaying systems. And his decision to risk his commercial reputation by experimenting with these formative technologies is symptomatic of more than just his preference for emphasising a film's 'inherent musicality.' Russell is, it has to be said, as much of a visual experimentalist as a sonic one. But his risk taking displays a very subtle and pioneering understanding of the *kinaesthetic* power of the raw musical materials he uses and, more importantly, the affinity these new aural technologies of the period display for certain experimental musical forms. *Altered States* being a case in point.

5.2.1 Cinematic Technology and Experimental Music: Dolby Sound and the Rendering of the Real.

As well as a nominal Dolby™ stereo sound-mix, which by 1980 was quickly becoming standard, *Altered States* was chosen by Warner Brothers to debut its new MegaSound™ sound-relaying system, essentially Warner's version of Universal's Sensurround™ system, in selected theatres. Interestingly, in his description of a rendering of the Real, Žižek turns to Michel Chion's notion of *rendu* (introduced in Chapter Three), a concept.

in turn, defined by Chion with recourse to Dolby technology. Dolby was the first sonic technology to "influence the aesthetic of cinema in general,"[31] Chion claims, but he is also careful to emphasise the technological and sonic *legacy* of Dolby sound in mainstream cinema. As he notes, "We should bear in mind that even before that time [the mid-70s generalisation of Dolby], films had been made with 'magnetic sound' giving Dolby-like characteristics - broadened frequency range; improved dynamics; with more extreme intensity contrasts and reduced background noise; and with two, three, four or six tracks instead of one."[32]

Dolby and its technological precursors also display a special relation to the stylistic traits of the late-modernist period in music, the main stylistic influence upon Corigliano's *Altered States* score. In contrast to the carefully designed harmonic progressions of the Romantic period, much of which was written within the mezzo-forte range, the modernist composers utilised much larger dynamic leaps in pitch, volume *and* tempo. These attributes were rendered all the more clearly by the new technology. Discussing the Dolby revolution, Chion explains, "As for sound, its dynamic range and its frequency range (the distance between the lowest and the highest frequency) have increased, as has the sensitivity of its recording and reproduction."[33]

This can be clearly heard in the *Altered States* score, the style of which has been

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[31] Michel Chion 'The Silence of the Loudspeakers, or Why With Dolby Sound it is the Film That Listens To Us' in Larry Sider, Diane Freeman, and Jerry Sider (eds.), *Soundscape: The School of Sound Lectures 1998-2001*, (London: Wallflower Press, 2003, pp. 150-154, p. 150.
[32] ibid, p. 150.
[33] *ibid*, p. 72.

described by film music scholar, Royal S Brown, as "ultra-modern, with its massive glissandi, tone clusters, extreme intervallic leaps, and its extension of instrumental timbres to their furthest limits."[34] Therefore, the limits of pitch, volume, and textural depth were extended as a result of the invention of magnetic tape and six-track stereophony, and later, the Dolby noise reduction, stereo-sound and Sensurround™ systems.

What is interesting is that the benefits brought about by the addition of these sonic technologies do not primarily relate to the *signifying* potential of aural signs, as much as the *abstract* attributes of the sign. Obviously, if elements of a sound-mix are made clearer, then as *potential* signifiers, they can only benefit from the better sense of separation achieved through Dolby aural separation. However, the real benefits are felt most powerfully within the realm of a sound's visceral impact, and a more defined sonority experienced as such.

Žižek's summary description of *rendu* is perfectly encapsulated by Lacan's notion of 'llanguage,' as "the status of this letter-enjoyment - of a letter continuous with the Real of *jouissance*."[35] This type of sign, which has a special relevance to the horror genre, originates from the technological improvements made in the rendering capabilities of a *hyper*-real aural sign. Through this, Žižek notes, we hear "details we should not be able

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[34] Royal S. Brown, 1994, p. 180.
[35] Slavoj Žižek 'The Undergrowth of Enjoyment' in Edmond Wright and Elisabeth Wright (eds.), *The Žižek Reader*, (London: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), pp. 12-36, p. 25.

to hear if we found ourselves in the 'reality' relayed by the picture."[36] This new technology proves to be a great tool for the creation of anxiety-producing effects in *Altered States*, where sounds do appear to emanate from places other than their ostensible sources, and diegetic sounds appear to merge with the non-diegetic musical score. As Hanke observes, "The sound effects in *Altered States* are so much an integral part of the film it is difficult to tell, in many cases, just where the sound effects leave off and Corigliano's musical score begins."[37]

Again, experimental musical styles that deal with ideas of music as 'pure sound' have an obvious benefit as far as this technique is concerned. We notice this quality in the first hallucination scene proper, in which Jessup sees the vision of his dying father amongst other quite random biblical imagery. On the soundtrack, we hear a number of devilish voices - strange whispers, shouts, and cries - but never what it is they say. Often, it is difficult to distinguish these vocal noises from the strange musical sounds that are heard in the musical cue that accompanies the clip. Instead, we are forced to experience with the materiality of things, the sonorous vocal grain of indistinguishable words alongside the muted sounds of Corigliano's score.

Russell had always intended a modernist style of music for *Altered States*, with Bela Bartok and Igor Stravinsky the two main frames of reference suggested to Corigliano. One of the most influential composers of the twentieth century, Bartok cast an imposing

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[36] *ibid*, p. 26.
[37] Hanke, p. 412.

influence over the style Herrmann adopted for the *Psycho* score as well as many subsequent scores for the horror genre. His *Music for Strings Percussion and Celeste* (1936) used the isolation of triadic elements, an influence coined from the 'primitive melodies' of Hungarian folk music. This style, Bartok stated, showed "no trace of the stereotyped joining of triads."[38] Bartok has, in fact, always been a popular and important touchstone for Russell. The director had made a television documentary about the Hungarian composer as early as 1964 that, according to Michael Brooke, contained elements of Russell's mature style, with, "imaginative visualisations of key aspects of Bartok's music," featuring in a film that supplied "only basic biographic and contextual details, allowing Russell plenty of room to let the music breathe."[39]

Corigliano's brief for *Altered States* was to the point and must have been a refreshing change for the young composer: "I want to see a new view, a completely fresh view," Russell advised, "I want you to go as far out as you want."[40] As Corigliano himself explains, "There have been many film scores that have used modern-music techniques and music from the repertoire [...]. I know directors have used Ligeti and Penderecki and such. But I don't think there had ever before been a composer who designed music for film using those techniques."[41] One could argue that Herrmann's *Psycho* score, or

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[38] Bela Bartok 'The Influence of Peasant Music on Modern Music' in Richard Kostalanetz and Joseph Darby (eds.), *Classic Essays on Twentieth Century Music: A Continuing Symposium*, (New York (NY): Schirmer Books, 1996), pp. 125-129, p. 128.
[39] Michael Brooke 'Bela Bartok (1964)' @ www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/907445/index.html (Date of Entry: 10/01/2007).
[40] Russell quoted in Michael Schelle (ed.), *The Score: Interviews with Film Composers* (Beverly Hills, CA. Silman-James Press, 1999), p. 167.
[41] *ibid*, p. 167.

Leonard Rosenman's 12-tone score for *The Cobweb* (1955) prefigured this technique, but there are important distinctions between these two scores that can illuminate the aesthetic evolutions made by subsequent composers such as Corigliano.

In fact, these distinctions actually bring to light both *Psycho*'s pioneering status in this respect, and the important role that other cinematic elements play in the affective engagement of music's power. I have argued that the utilisation of these experimental musical techniques only work properly when functioning in tandem with similarly attributed cinematic devices. Music's abstract, non-representational power requires a similar cinematic sensibility (regarding the other formal elements), and this is something a film like *The Cobweb* ultimately lacks. It uses atonal music to *signify* a mental condition, as something intrinsically 'other,' which as I have explained is perhaps the only thing it *can* signify.

Psycho is arguably the first time modernist musical technique has been successfully integrated into a 'pure film' cinematic aesthetics, certainly within the popular sphere. *Altered States* audio-visual power, in a similar manner to *Suspiria*'s image-sound amalgam, is premised on the same functional relationship between each of the different formal attributes. As David P. James notes, "Corigliano's music works with the film, not against it. It is not used extraneously or as mere background; instead, the score enriches the filmic experience and communicates to the audience the theatrical and dramatic

potential of image and music."[42] In terms of stylistic progression, however, Corigliano's soundtrack to *Altered States is* much more 'further out' than even Herrmann's score. It quotes from movements in modernist classical music that characterise the post-*Psycho* years, in the same way *Suspiria* updates the horror score to include the experimental evolutions brought about in the field of rock music. Because the film deals with the discovery of the 'primitive self,' Russell had turned to the primitivism of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* and Bartok's *Miracuous Mandarin* for his temping of the film. Corigliano describes Russell's temporary inclusion of this 'primitive' type of modernism:

> It's a vocabulary that actually is very useful to the film composer [...]. They had come to symbolize [sic] the horror movie vocabulary. The idea of contemporary science fiction and horror movies having a primitivism of the teens and twenties, I felt was wrong. I felt we had evolved into a whole other world of sound that could be much more effective for the movies.[43]

As I outlined at the beginning of the chapter, what is interesting is the way this 'updating' can be read in terms of a general trajectory of aesthetic concentration and intensification of syntax, that came about, in part, via the use of new technologies, alongside this appropriation of more contemporary styles of classical music. In terms of a simple *stylistic* influence, Corgliano's score clearly owes a significant debt to Krystof Penderecki, the Polish composer at the forefront of classical music's experimental avant-garde in the sixties and early seventies, and a popular reference point for burgeoning

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[42] David P. James 'Modern Music that Works: John Corigliano and *Altered States*' in *Pro Musica Sana: Quarterly Publication of the Miklos Rozsa Society* Vol. 9, No. 4, (Summer 1982), pp. 2-6, p. 3-4
[43] Michael Schelle, 1999, p. 167.

horror film composers of the period.

In fact, the influence of Penderecki led Corigliano to formulate his own compositional process which he termed 'motion sonority.' This technique realises the type of co-dependent, but essentially abstract, relationship between the affective power of sound and image discussed earlier. With this technique Corigliano developed a symbol that would, he explains, "create extreme action in the players [...] a single sound with simple notation that generates a lot of motion."[44] This symbol - a box with two notes in it - denotes that the players are to play, "in between the boxes, as fast as possible, which, for multiple instruments, gives you a tremendous, boiling cluster of sound."[45] This kind of technique describes one way in which a particular cinematic sign, or 'unit,' may be filled considered to be filled with as much dynamic expression as possible. This can be read in the terms of an abstract rendering of Lacan's llanguage - a sign that, as Žižek notes, is "too traumatic, too *filled-in* with enjoyment."[46]

It was Herrmann, however, who first transplanted the type of syntactical concentration common to avant-garde composers like Webern and Berg, from modernist practice to the Hollywood film score. These smaller musical units make for a sharper, tighter fit to the jagged cutting-style that Hitchcock experimented with, which has it most perfect expression in *Psycho*'s shower scene. The same temporal matching of edits can be seen in

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[44] *ibid*, p. 172.
[45] *ibid*, p. 172.
[46] Slavoj Žižek in *The Perverts Guide to Cinema* (dir. Sophie Fiennes, 2006, 150mins)

the hallucination sequences of *Altered States,* and the musical style also helps propel the intense pacing of the film. As Corigliano notes, "From the very first moment in that film, you were in acceleration. [...]. That's what Ken does in all his films - goes into staggeringly high energy right from the second the opening credits are over."[47] Corigliano's odd time signatures and fast tempos gave Russell greater flexibility to tightly structure the destabilising editing style alongside the music's formal attributes, linking images and sound together by way of the visual and aural editing style. But in addition, his motion sonority technique, made sure the smaller cinematic 'units' - we might call them 'shocks' or 'jolts' even - were filled with as much dynamic energy as possible, as if tightly pressurised with physical energy. This technique adds to the powerful reverberating effect of the high-contrast coloured imagery discussed earlier, as if adding a tonal record of the tensions posited between Russell's gaudy colours.

This highly energised technique also renders actual movement of elements within the frame. For instance, the musical accompaniment for the first hallucination sequence features very short, abrupt musical phrases, sonic exclamation points, that are tightly matched to dynamic actions within the *mise-en-scène*. An example of this is the close-up image of Jessup's father's face, overlaid with the Turin-like shroud, which is thrown off as an abrupt, discordant *sforzando* phrase is blasted out on the soundtrack. This doesn't really add anything to the *symbolism* of these images. Russell plunders various mystical and religious imagery with scarcely a thought as to how it may ultimately relate to his

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[47] *ibid*, p. 173.

themes or the character's situations. As Hanke points out, in this first fantasy sequence. Russell plunders the Book of Revelations for imagery, but does not rely on drawing any type of "modern allegory."[48] What seems more important to Russell in appropriating this type of imagery is how they will come across in a purely *cinematic* fashion, as audio-visual events *in and of themselves*.

5.2.2 Interrupting the Diegesis

The soundtrack of *Altered States* fluctuates between a more classical utilisation of musical material and the techniques more common to the post-*Psycho* horror film. This can be seen in the early sequences of the film through the expositional agency of the soundtrack. During the party scene, for example, diegetic music is playing in the background. It is an instrumental section of a song called 'Light My Fire,' a hit single recorded by the rock group, The Doors, in 1967, the year in which the film is set. The music works in an entirely orthodox film-musical manner - that is, as an aural signifier with a number of culturally-informed connotative interpretations. On one level, the song simply reinforces the historical setting, which has already been pin-pointed by the opening voice-over as the late-sixties. But The Doors were also an important part of the sixties cultural revolution, s group renown for their psychedelically-informed search for

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[48] Ken Hanke, 1985, p. 404.

higher forms of consciousness on both the individual and the social level. On another level, it places these characters within a certain social strata - as liberal, bohemian intellectuals, reinforcing our interpretation of the character's actions also. For example, they are seen smoking marijuana at the party - and this links in with the themes of self-discovery and search for the mystical states the main protagonist will soon embark upon with his use of hallucinogenic drugs.

However, even this classical use of music has an element of strangeness, displayed as Jessup is first introduced to his future wife Emily (played by Blair Brown). Here, Russell uses diegetic music as an aural exclamation mark, highlighting the distance between the two characters that will come to characterise their relationship, before they have even met. In a popular device, stretching right back to the golden era of Hollywood, the volume of the diegetic music rises on the soundtrack when we have no real evidence that it should depicted within the frame.

In cinematic terms, this has the effect of linking non-realistic musical devices to the main character. It is as if the fictional dimension of the diegesis has been taken over, possessed, if you will, by the same strange irrational force that inhabits non-diegetic music. The moment the volume of the cue increases the instrumental solo of the song reaches a crescendo and we see Jessup in the mid-distance surrounded in the doorway of the house by a non-naturalistic white light. This also echoes the later moment when Jessup, in his incessant search for the ultimate selfhood, will find himself literally surrounded by the nothingness, the lack that constitutes the very core of his being.

This scene is abruptly cut by a destabilising jump edit over time and space, a cut that is also rendered aurally by a cut from the diegetic rock music to an instrumental sitar piece, that is now back at normal volume for the situation the characters find themselves in. And again, we are back to a more classically-inclined use of diegetic sound as a signifier of philosophical searching and mystical states, since Indian classical music is deeply connected to the attainment of transcendental states via its trance-like 'raga' forms. Interrupting the diegetic realism in this manner conforms exactly to Žižek's description of *rendu* - a rendering of details we would not hear were we to find ourselves in the reality recorded by the picture. "This kind of sound penetrates us, seizes us on an immediate-real level,"[49] Žižek notes, but achieving this effect relies on the prohibition of some mediating element. As Žižek continues: "We can now see, therefore, wherein lies the dimension of *rendu*: not in the psychotic contents of these movies, but in the way the content, so far from simply being 'depicted,' is directly 'rendered' in the very form of the narrative. Here surely the message of the film is immediately the form."[50]

We can understand how this interruption of diegetic reality in *Altered States* is in part realised by the visceral impact of the MegaSound™ relaying systems and Dolby stereo. But the very form of Russell's audio-visual amalgams is also an important factor in the rendering of this kind of cinematic experience. The effect is most powerfully attained by non-diegetic music, which in all the case-studies observed by this study, is set at an

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[49] Slavoj Žižek in Edmond Wright and Elisabeth Wright (eds.), *The Žižek Reader*, 1999, p. 26.
[50] *ibid*, p.27.

incredibly loud level of volume. The interruptions of diegetic 'reality' occasioned by the increase of volume on the soundtrack posits the agency of diegetic music somewhere between its classical film-musical functional role and the immediate-rendering role. The affective power of 'horror' in *Altered States* is constructed upon the creation, in the spectator, of a fundamental anxiety. This state of anxiety is itself directly proportionate to how well Russell's intuitively excessive and vulgar style renders this ambiguity - in both sounds and images.

The importance of music in rendering these ambiguities is set up from the start, as it is established early on that a particular function of the non-diegetic score is to render palpable the anxiety-fuelled spectacle/shock of Jessup's hallucinatory visions on the purely formal level - that is, cinematic spectacle as a rendering of the Real. The close relationship between the Corigliano score and the dream-like, subjective experiences of Jessup is established when we first see a close-up of Jessup in the tank: the voice-over informs us how Jessup has endeavoured to try the tank out for himself. Interestingly, it is on the word 'self' that the very first non-diegetic music cue begins, making explicit a connection between the non-diegetic musical score and this dimension of the character (as well as our subjective experience of the film). But the experimental style of the musical score also helps to create another ambiguous level regarding the relationship between diegetic sound effects and non-diegetic musical score.

Corigliano's use of musical material as 'pure sound' reinforces the anxiety produced by the non-specific sourcing of aural signs, so that, as Ken Hanke states, "The sound effects

in *Altered States* are so much an integral part of the film that it is difficult to tell, in many cases, just where the sound effects leave off and Corigliano's musical score begins [...] the fine line between the music and the effect is all but obliterated."[51] In musical terms, the very basis of modernist compositional principles were founded upon this very attribute - the harmonic ambiguity of discord and outright atonality - which makes the style perfect for rendering this elementary anxiety that is a basic element of cinematic horror.

5.2.3 Harmonic Ambiguity: Rendering the Tension Between the Real and the Symbolic

Not all the non-diegetic music in *Altered States* functions purely in the way described above, but instead exploits the tension between the two strategies - a tension posited in Lacanian terms between the registers of the Symbolic and the Real. Nothing renders this tension more palpable than the harmonic ambiguity Corigliano incorporates into the 'Love Theme' cue, which to all intents and purposes functions exactly like a leitmotiv found in any number of classical Hollywood films. Upon closer inspection, however, even this musical cue renders, in formal terms, something of the fundamental ambiguity to be found between the characters. Corigliano wanted to prefigure the fundamental distance that would eventually develop between Jessup and his soon-to-be wife. To do

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[51] Ken Hanke, 1985, p. 413.

this, he shifts the melody away from the kind of tonal architectonics normally associated with the musical signification of people's 'love' for each other.

Here the same difference between 'reality' and 'the real' is structured into the relationship between the two characters, it is a fundamental difference that neither can overcome, since they are, at this moment in time, already set upon different paths (they will later divorce before finally coming together for good). To describe this relationship in Lacanian terms: Jessup, at this point, wants to submit fully to the 'true self,' the traumatic core of the Real of his desires, rendered for him, as for the spectator, in the hyper-real audio-visual 'events' that make up his visions. Emily, on the other hand, is fully installed in the Symbolic order, this constitutes 'reality' as something agreed upon, even as it is fictionalised through the arbitrary nature of signification. This impasse of symbolization is fully rendered by the strangely alien 'piece of the Real' found *in the midst* of the Symbolic order, and also, therefore, incorporated into the 'love theme' cue itself.

Musically speaking, this effect is powerfully enhanced by the central components of diatonicism and chromaticism. Royal S. Brown explains that:

> Such a key element as harmony has been so engulfed, in Western music, by diatonicism, that this particular harmonic system has come to be perceived as a kind of 'reality,' departures from which are often reacted to with just as much panic by the ordinary listener [...] as departures from accepted representationalism in both the verbal and

pictorial arts.[52]

Brown's comments clarify our understanding of the metaphor of abstract art used by Žižek to explicate Chion's notion of *rendu*. But this non-representational element is necessarily taken further, as the non-symbolised Real - the remaindered 'fragment' of the sign produced by *the failure of signification*. As noted in Chapter Two, the modernist canon is based on a shift towards a greater use of chromaticism and harmonic ambiguity, a move which results ultimately in the total collapse of the established, diatonically-structured matrices of signification. The formal technique of *rendu* is used to introduce this kind of 'impasse of formalisation' upon which our 'symbolically-construed reality' always fails in the face of the meaningless Impossible-Real. The resultant promotion of the sign's material affects (reinforced here by MegaSound™ and Dolby technology) make us experience "the utter nullity of its immediate reality;" Žižek explains, "the stupidity of a material presence which escapes historical mediation. Dialectical mediation - the context that bestows meaning on the object - is not added, but rather subtracted."[53]

Somehow stuck in the middle of these two states of 'reality' and 'the Real,' Corgliano's musical techniques, as heard in the 'love theme,' alert us to this impasse of formalisation, which stands between the symbolic consummation of the lead characters' relationship with *love* (only later does that appear to save the couple, or rather, Jessup, from

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[52] Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music*, 1994, p. 19.
[53] Slavoj Žižek, 1999, p. 17.

psychosis). As Corgliano notes of the main characters' relationship: "[Jessop] loved her but could not get through to her. And she was so tentative - I wanted the love theme to be tentative. It had to have that quality. I didn't want it to be out-and-out love music because, in a way, it never got resolved until the very last line of the story."[54] So while one could argue that the 'tentative' quality of the cue 'signifies' the condition of the relationship between the two major protagonists, it is also rendered on the formal level, the level promoted within Russell's overall cinematic economy.

The idea of a lack of communication between the two protagonists is configured by way of a musical phrase that shifts from diatonic intervals to more unstable chromatic intervals. The feeling we get from hearing this theme is one of instability and anxiety, since it lacks proper tonal resolution. "It is a curiously one-sided love theme," David P. James remarks, "that is, it is not a theme for two lovers [...] this long-lined, yearning theme is built on a rising and falling configuration of six notes that contain the interval of the second as well as the unusual interval of the tri-tone."[55] Importantly, this tension between the couple is established early on in the film, and acts as the catalyst for triggering the first of Dr. Jessup's major hallucinations.

If the 'love theme' cue contains within it something of the dichotomous structural principle that figures throughout the whole film, then the more intensely experimental styles of music that accompany the hallucination sequences are formulated upon the

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[54] Michael Schelle, 1999, p. 173.
[55] David P. James, 1982, p. 4.

complete collapse of any tonally-ordered, signifying potential. It is during the act of sex that Jessup seems to undergo some type of transformative experience. However, for the moment, his experience is kept within the symbolic domain of language and meaning - instead of the spectator experiencing cinematically what he experiences mentally, he tells us about the visions instead. Rather like the 'love theme' cue, the music that accompanies Jessup's verbal description of his vision is relatively restrained, although quite discordant. Nothing about the visual images in this sequence suggests anything other than a relatively realist style.

However the following sequence, the first of Jessup's visions, moves to a fuller, hyper-real style, in which the spectator is bombarded with aural and visual signs that are rendered in all their bombastic visceral power and materiality. With Corigliano's massive orchestrations, and the additional extra-diegetic noises, the full potential of the Dolby stereo and MegaSound™ systems are realised. Huge sections of brass, bassoons, and strings would have filled out the additional low-frequency speakers present at the theatres equipped with MegaSound™. The massive glissandi and intervalic leaps are better realised by the wider frequency ranges available with Dolby systems, as examples of the Real thus rendered. Observing the hallucination sequence on this level, as a rendering of the Real, we can see the inter-dependency of the various sensory modes, and the role of technology in arranging them. Chion notes how a "rendering is naturally linked to the texture of the auditory and visual material of the film [...] located somewhere between

code and replication."[56]

Other than its power of bombast and spatial separation, another less celebrated facet of Dolby technology is also expertly realised in *Altered States*, namely, its handling of sounds of a very close frequency to each other. As Chion continues: "I am not talking particularly of the spatial effects of stereo, or Dolby thunder, but of a micro-rendering of the hum of the world."[57] This is yet another aspect of Dolby technology that has a direct affinity with the particular attributes of experimental music - the use of quarter tones. What is interesting is that, within Corigliano's score, this conjoining of technological enhancements in sensory perception and experimental musical technique is used to articulate the affective power of cinematic horror within the dimension of formal autonomy described by Žižek.

Russell and Corigliano utilise this facet of the technology to achieve a fundamental anxiety based around both the material impact of image and sound, and the spatially destabilising affect of the purposely ambiguous sound-sourcing within the spectator's suggested cinematic space. Corigliano's explanation of his scoring of the scene of the Ape Man/Jessup's escape describes how all these elements come together:

> If you listen to the low, low sounds of the contra-bassoons and the strings, you'll hear that the sounds of the animal are the same sounds that get played by the quarter-tone pianos. The pianos play simple melodies, repeating the same notes a quarter tone apart. So you can actually hear the shift, which surrealistically takes it out of this world.[58]

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[56] Michel Chion, 1991, p. 71
[57] *ibid*, p. 70.
[58] Corigliano quoted in Michael Schelle, 1999, p. 170.

It is likely that the quarter-tone pieces would not have sounded anywhere near as precise on pre-Dolby equipment, further confirmation of the refined relationship between this sonic technology and avant-garde musical technique, and the importance of both in the rendering of cinematic horror in and of the Real. As David P. James describes, the Ape Man's murderous spree is accompanied by,

> Clusters of contrabasses arising in bombastic crescendos followed by a mixture of primitive music and modern, yet at first unrecognizable sonorities that could be summarized best as organised chaos [...]. All this music is meant to unsettle the audience as well as give them something they have not heard before. Much of the dramatic music in the score is also mixed with the sound effects and seems to grow out of the humming machinery or amplified breathing in the isolation chambers. One is often unaware when the music begins, and its sudden crescendos keep the audience on edge.[59]

As the film progresses, the more experimental musical material, originally confined to the hallucination sequences, starts to appear more frequently as Jessup's investigations into self-discovery start to have more and more ramifications for the people around him. What we begin to see is the very breakdown of the self into psychosis, the flooding of 'reality' with the Real; the process of which, metaphorically speaking, stands in for our own relationship towards symbolic fictions and cinematic fantasies. As a result, we witness these continuous irruptions of the Real into 'reality' as the visions get longer, stranger and more intense, and the formal attributes of the cinematic syntax also intensify. "As with schizophrenic dreams" Bell-Metereau notes, "in many horror films

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[59] David P. James, 1982, p. 3-4.

the fear of loss of self takes the form of actual disintegration of the body."[60] This disintegration of the subject is rendered for the spectator by the complete break down of the tonal architectonics of the music, and the spatial destabilisation caused by the abrupt intensity contrasts in volume, pitch, tempo. Accompanying these elements are the shock-edits, and the reverberating colour contrasts of the hyper-real cinematography.

The final hallucination sequence, in which Jessup's physical surroundings are actually destroyed by the unstoppable power of his hallucination's externalisation, is best explained with reference to what Cosimo Urbano has loosely termed, the "*mise-en-scène of all hell-breaking loose.*" Urbano describes the absolutely essential nature of both the concept of excess and the soundtrack to such an aesthetic strategy:

> Not unexpectedly, it is in the *mise-en-scène of 'all hell breaking loose'* that the soundtrack's importance is at its highest. [...]. Here excess is the crucial word to describe the film's visual and aural appearance. Everything is blown out of scale and importance, everything seems about to explode both in a metaphorical and, very often, in a literal sense.[61]

There are telling similarities between this concept and Weis' idea of the 'extra-subjective,' since, Urbano notes, "the spectators and the characters seem to merge completely," adding that, "what is going on in these sequences is simply an all out attack on both the characters and, through a much greater use of extra-diegetic music and sound

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[60] Bell-Metereau, 1982, p. 177.
[61] Cosimo Urbano 'Projections, Suspense and Anxiety: The Modern Horror Film and its Effects' in *Psychoanalytic Review*, Vol. 85, Pt. 6, pp. 889-908, p. 894.

effects, on the spectators."[62] A successful sequence of 'all hell breaking loose' should have the effect of "completely engulfing the spectator in chaos," reminding us that "horror is first and foremost a state of agitation."[63]

I have described above how Corigliano's soundtrack, working in conjunction with the technology, achieves this type of effect, creating a state of agitation through a manipulation of the spectator's anxiety surrounding the uncertain nature of Russell's cinematic signs. The finale of *Altered States* - an exemplary case of 'all hell breaking loose' - teaches us the fundamental Lacanian lesson: that our most innermost fantasies cover up a central, defining lack, the status of which is *Real*. The reason for this is that Russell's basic filmic treatment of source material is inherently fictional. Even when dealing with factual subjects (such as the Bartok biography, or the film on Mahler) Russell's style remains the same - he personalises the film in a way that allows the spectator to relate to the fiction in a deeply subjective way, projecting his or her own innermost fantasies upon the cinematic fiction. Indeed, Joseph Gomez identified this characteristic of Russell's oeuvre five years before *Altered States* was made; as such, his insightful remarks are worth quoting in full:

> Subtlety does exist in his films [...] but it is his shock editing, his obsessive camera movements, his penchant for theatricality and overblown performances, and his extraordinary, phantasmagoric images which overwhelm his audiences. For Russell, the art of gentle persuasion is lost in the present age; audiences have become

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[62] *ibid*, p. 894.
[63] *ibid*, p. 895.

complacent and therefore must be assaulted and jolted into awareness, or into sharing emotions of ecstasy or outrage about a particular subject. To some extent, Russell's methods can be compared to those of D. H. Lawrence, another experimental artist too often dismissed as excessive and extravagant. Lawrence, uncompromisingly, intemperately, and compulsively assaulted his readers in an attempt to alter their responses. He over-emphasized the power of the body and the 'blood' because he claimed that this aspect had been denied by man's over-dependence on abstract reasoning. Russell's methods of assaulting his audience are not really dissimilar.[64]

In Lacanian terms, by fictionalising his filmic treatments, Russell exploits the tension between truth and enjoyment, 'reality' and 'the Real.' Our engagement with, and enjoyment of, 'signs in the Real' - hyper-aesthetic renderings that create *jouissance* - stands in for an impassive kernel of self. Russell fictionalises this impassivity through staging this fundamental tension, this deadlock or impasse where every symbolisation ultimately fails.

After his final vision, for example, Jessup is forced to make a choice between 'reality' and 'the Real,' which at this point are starting to become dangerously entwined in his own mind. This is reinforced by the fact that the atonal, extra-diegetic music, which previously only accompanied Jessup's visions, is now rendering the *externalisations* of Jessup's mental state, as he transubstantiates into what Žižek describes as a being of pure *jouissance*. Jessup even states the night he spent - transformed into the ape-man - rampaging through the streets and eating animals in the zoo (and potentially murdering somebody) was 'the most supremely satisfying time' of his life. This is *jouissance* at its

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[64] Joseph Gomez, *Ken Russell* (London: Frederick Muller, 1976), p. 206.

purest.

When the Real floods reality a psychotic breakdown is enacted. Fantasy, the inherently fictional element that prevents us from getting to close to the traumatic core of subjectivity, stops us from being engulfed by the primordial chaos of the Real. As Jessup says to Emily before his final struggle against a total submergence and subservience to the Real: 'I was in that ultimate moment of terror that is the beginning of life. It is nothing [...] Truth is what's transitory [...] That moment of terror is a real and living horror, living and growing within me know.' For her part, Emily represents the Symbolic domain, the arbitrary fiction of symbolically-construed reality. 'Come back to us' she asks, 'you made it real you can make it unreal.' Unreal, of course, being the symbolically-construed 'reality' of social conventions, state apparatuses and hegemonic dominance. As Jessup struggles with a full submergence into psychosis, Corigliano's atonal music on the soundtrack gradually resolves into a full tonality, flowering into the love theme. This time it is re-arranged with a greater diatonic emphasis.

Atonal music, in particular, is a powerful tool for rendering this failure of the symbolic. And we have seen how the use of Dolby technology and cinematographic trickery can create this rendering, a dimension of formal autonomy which, for Chion and Žižek, offers a different *means* of representing reality, a third way, separate from a code (which is symbolic) and a replication (which is imaginary). As Žižek states, "Therein consists the fundamental ambiguity of the image in postmodernism: it is a kind of barrier enabling the subject to maintain distance from the Real, protecting him/her against its irruption, yet its

very obtrusive 'hyperrealism' evokes the nausea of the Real."[65] The sub-genre of 'visceral horror' cinema is, in a way, constructed around this type of schizophrenic design, centred on the paradoxical enjoyment/pain taken in *jouissance*, of cinematic signs permeated with enjoyment as opposed to functioning as signifiers of meaning. Of the many formal strategies that render the basic fundamental ambiguity of the sign in postmodernism, in which there is a preoccupation with an excess of Real, the atonal, harmonic ambiguity central to modernist classical music is surely the most successful. Successful that is, in its essential failure, a failure that provides, through the appropriation of certain formal attributes, something of the true density of our own cinematic enjoyment.

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[65] Slavoj Žižek, 2001, p. 129-130.

Conclusion

The post-classical horror film provides an illuminating example of the functional relationship between the two main components of the cinematic syntax - sound and image - and how this has gradually been reconfigured along pioneering new lines. First and foremost, this study has sought to describe how the main formal characteristics of experimental music(s) display a distinct affinity for this new kind of audio-visual technique. Secondly, it has explained how this type of cinematic strategy can be interpreted as an indexical manifestation of the wider transition to a *post*-classical cinematic condition.

My focus on the use of experimental musical styles and techniques in post-classical horror film has been largely based around two main areas of analytical interest: the syntactical level of the cinematic (or audio-visual) syntax, and the psychological dimensions of the spectator's engagement with the cinematic experience. It was crucial these two dimensions were established from the start. This was because one of the study's most valuable contributions involved asserting some type of theoretical connection between the *formal* characteristics of post-1960 horror cinema and wider theoretical interpretations of a spectator's *psychological* experience of popular cinema. In particular, this aspect of the thesis focuses on the paradoxical nature of spectators' 'enjoyment' of the horror film.

Some leading horror directors, with *Psycho* in mind, have displayed an increasing willingness to appropriate ever more unorthodox and experimental musical styles and techniques. This has had some far-reaching ramifications for an understanding of contemporary cinema, beyond the developing aesthetics of a post-classical horror cinema. It's more than a little surprising, then, to discover that horror films remain largely neglected by film music scholars. Above all, my study has sought to begin to fill that gap in the literature, by introducing new methodological and theoretical approaches more befitting the specific film music strategies of the post-classical (post-1960) period in horror cinema.

In the opening chapter, I assessed the efficacy (or lack thereof) of both previous and current theoretical models to explicate the functional capacity of music in the post-classical horror film. Specifically, the manner in which horror films appropriated experimental music(s) into the genre's wider audio-visual strategies directed my own assessment of contemporary theoretical models, including those of Philip Brophy and Kevin J. Donnelly. This study has also noted the renewed salience of previously marginalised positions such as Rick Altman's and Hanns Eisler's. Aspects of each of these perspectives have been synthesised by this study, facilitating my investigation of post-classical horror film music and how it challenges some preconceived notions regarding the classical film music model.

One of the main intentions of this study has involved identifying a turning point in the history of the horror film when experimental music(s) began to be appropriated for new

functional purposes. Experimental music(s) obviously featured in popular cinema previous to 1960 (mostly within the horror, science-fiction and film-noir categories), although, arguably, never in the manner in which they did in Hitchcock's *Psycho*. Although certain musical attributes, such as atonal and dissonant phrasings and arrhythmic time-signatures, can be used to signify some quality of cultural otherness. from *Psycho* onwards, many directors of horror have re-appropriated attributes of experimental musical styles towards supporting a wider reprioritisation of the cinematic sign's *potential* functions.

Both Hitchcock, and his main composer, Bernard Herrmann, have co-opted the formal characteristics of experimental music into this general 'visceral' cinematic strategy. The primary purpose of this is not the signification of any sort of meaning. Instead, the functional priority of sounds and images here involves working *in tandem* towards the rendering of some uncanny sense of semiotic 'excess.' This kind of strategy privileges the *affective* properties of the sign over any representational or symbolic potential and, therefore, its ability to communicate *meaning*.

Our essentially *visceral* experience of the post-1960 horror film - an exemplary post-modern cinematic genre - has meant we must rethink our ideas surrounding the primary function of music, certainly within the horror genre, but also in relation to the post-classical soundtrack, and post-modern cinema, in general. In particular, this study has drawn attention to the fact that, because of this promotion of visceral affect, the comprehensive explanation of the post-classical horror film's appropriation of

experimental music(s) lies outside the theoretical grasp of the dominant 'narrative' framework, originally expounded by Claudia Gorbman.

What Gorbman describes as 'narrative film music' operates as an agency of suture, in other words, it facilitates the spectator's emotional and ideological engagement with certain aspects of the fictional diegesis. In interpreting this narrative-based cinematic experience, her conceptual framework emphasises the central importance of a *safely-channelled* signification. As a result, Gorbman also stresses the importance of tonal and harmonically-ordered architectonic contexts - musical attributes with a clear symbolic potential - to her narrative model. As this study has observed, however, experimental music(s), in particular, the works of the late-romantic and early modernist composers discussed in Chapter Two, are largely based upon collapsing these tonal contexts. Thus, the chromatic, dissonant, and occasionally, fully atonal techniques of experimental idioms pose a considerable problem for Gorbman's narrative paradigm, as does the horror genre's promotion of spectacle and sensation at the expense of spectatorial identification and narrative ordering.

The promotion of these elements makes Slavoj Žižek's *late*-Lacanian psychoanalytical framework particularly salient and pioneering in this context. Gorbman contrasts her narrative-based model with one that promotes spectacle and sensationalism, a cinematic philosophy bound up in the promotion of the visceral cinematic strategies described above. But this is not the same as proposing a working theoretical model for this alternative film music model. As noted in the opening chapter my investigation required

a theoretical framework that could not just explicate this paradoxical enjoyment of semiotic excess (aural or visual), but situate *centrally* to the underlying notions of spectator positioning and subjective engagement.

The post-classical, post-*Psycho* horror film provides an exemplary case of a popular cinematic genre using non-diegetic music to render this sense of spectacle and excess, through an overall visceral strategy that reconfigures the prevalent economy of the cinematic sign to one of sensory impact and spatiotemporal destabilisation. Crucially, Žižek's late-Lacanian focus on the centrality of the register of the Real re-directs the hermeneutic focus away from the Symbolic-Imaginary axis (of the suture process), towards the 'uncanny' tensions found operating between the Real and the Symbolic. These tensions can powerfully manifest the basic antagonism of the Real via the destabilising sensorial affects of a visceral cinematic strategy. Chapter Three, in particular, has described how bi-tonal and atonal musical phrasings mirror the inherent structure of an essential antagonism in their very form *and* affect. A perfect example of this is the non-resolved 'serial' passage heard at the very end of *Psycho*. Here, experimental musical styles are rendering, instead of signifying, a sense of this uncanny antagonism.

The basic hermeneutic shift present within Žižek's framework has significant implications for both film music studies and film scholarship in general. It functions as part of a comprehensive framework through which scholars can now explicate this 'alternative' deployment of film music. Although Gorbman stresses the relevance of the

psychic register of the Imaginary to her suturing model, and the narcissistic identification it engenders, she is also forced to acknowledge the Metzian lesson: behind every Imaginary identification there lies a Symbolic purchase. What can be described, then, as Gorbman's 'classical' application of Lacanian psychoanalysis must take its place *alongside* more recent reconfigurations of Lacan's later ideas - particularly those of Slavoj Žižek - and their emphasis on the register of the Real. In terms of the formal characteristics that support such a rendering of the Real, this study has argued how experimental musical attributes - the collapsing of tonality, the privileging of dissonant and chromatic phrasings, and the materialist impact of instrumental timbre - are especially efficient.

Instead of a relationship between sound and image based on a mutual, 'added-value' function (the basis of the classical film music model), this alternative marshalling of sound and image is not one based on their overall symbolic potential. Instead, sound, image, and any other device involved in the cinematic address of the spectator, work towards a larger rendering of visceral cinematic affect. Arrhythmic time-signatures, intervallic leaps, the dynamics of volume and timbral impact, and the fundamental antagonism created by bi-tonal and atonal phrasings, support this overwhelming disorientation through two basic qualities: a physical impact, and spatial destabilisation.

Linda Williams marks out *Psycho* as a pioneering film in this respect. She uses it to explain her ideas surrounding a new post-classical/post-modern 'rollercoaster' sensibility which prioritises this type of destabilisation above any narrative and/or thematic

coherence. If we think of this general experience in purely formal terms, the contrast of formal attributes present in experimental musical idioms can stand, metaphorically speaking, for the peaks and troughs of a rollercoaster ride. *Psycho*'s shower sequence is telling in this respect. The oddly-timed musical phrases of the murder cue are matched precisely to Hitchcock's destabilising jump-cuts, providing a telling example of how sound and image work toward this intentionally visceral effect. Neither music in isolation, nor the audio-visual sign in general, is used here to grant the spectator any sort of fixed perspective; either in the empathetic terms of the suture process, nor in a phenomenological capacity. Instead, the scene, and film in general, invite a willing submission on behalf of the audience to the destabilising potential of the director's cinematic enunciation.

The last two chapters of this study have looked at how more contemporary musical genres and technologies have also been appropriated by the post-classical horror film to support a visceral cinematic strategy. The advantages of the rock-based musical idioms of the seventies, for example, has been the fact that these idioms have engaged in depth with experimental tendencies, giving popular horror film an added impetus to utilise commercially potent styles, including progressive rock and jazz-fusion, without any concession at all to film-musical classicism. Indeed, electronically-amplified rock music of the sort found in Argento's and Russell's films, for example, contributes to the potential for the same sensory impact and dynamic power found in more classical modernist music(s).

In addition, the formal attributes of experimental musical idioms - in particular. the powerful contrasts in intensity that result from dynamic leaps in volume and pitch (an especially useful tool of destabilisation) have been compounded by the developing cinematic technologies of the period. Dolby and Sensurround systems, in highlighting aural contrast, empower an overall visceral strategy, in the same way as the suffuse colour palettes of Argento's and Russell's films do in a visual sense. Taken together, these audio-visual techniques function primarily in a manner that promotes a visceral strategy by accessing (albeit unconsciously) this fragment of the signifier which renders some uncanny sense of the antagonism between the Real and Symbolic psychic registers. It is particularly telling, for example, that the concept of *rendu* (rendering) which Žižek appropriates to explicate his own theories regarding a rendering of the Lacanian Real, was first discussed by the sound-theorist, Michel Chion, in relation to the affects of Dolby technology.

In addition, this study has explained how these formal and technological developments can be read in terms of certain other genre-specific developments. Our voluntary submission to the destabilising affects of the post-classical horror film has been interpreted by theorists, such as Andrew Tudor, as a manifestation of the breakdown or slippage in personal identity - a destabilisation of *the self itself.* Tudor suggests that the post-1960 horror audience has gradually learnt to enjoy such a destabilising experience. He describes a kind of 'psychotic' mode of spectatorship that displays much in common with the evolutions attributed to horror cinema of the same period by Linda Williams and Elisabeth Weis.

In conclusion, it was noted in the opening chapter how Žižek's approach involves a hermeneutic reversal of sorts. As in Žižek's own work, this has meant that, in addition to the applied psychoanalysis of textual interpretation, this study has used cinema to explicate, and, indeed, synthesise, some of the more complex psychoanalytical notions and perspectives discussed above. This framework has allowed me to explain how a focus on post-1960 horror film and its appropriation of experimental musical attributes can enrich our understanding of the shared characteristic of Williams' post-modern cinema of attractions, Weis' idea of extra-subjectivity, and Tudor's description of the psychotic spectator.

With recourse to Žižek's own framework, all the developments in popular cinema discussed here have been in some way interpreted in relation to the Lacanian notion of *jouissance*, the term used to describe the paradoxical enjoyment of a pleasure that is almost painful and, more importantly, given Lacan's Freudian leanings, inherently libidinal. This particular enjoyment is not gained through the normal processes of mediation - in fact, this *jouissance* taken in a rendering of the Real requires dialectical mediation (the context that bestows meaning) to be subtracted. Instead of textual communication via the Symbolic-Imaginary axis of the identifying processes of suture, Žižek refers to the late writings of Lacan to explicate "a fragment of the signifier inescapably *permeated with mindless enjoyment* [...] the reading of which produces a

immediate *jouis-sense* or meaning-in-enjoyment."[1]

The current cinematic climate suggests this promotion and enjoyment of a sense of *jouissance* positions our subjective encounter with the antagonism of the Real as a defining component of contemporary horror cinema. Pioneered by the post-classical, post-*Psycho* horror film, the syntactical evolutions that developed as a result of the increasing deployment of experimental musical resources has meant this 'fragment' of the sign, permeated with enjoyment, has become subsumed into a general visceral cinematic (or audio-visual) strategy. Given the horror film's influential status, and the increasing relegation of narrative within the hierarchy of general popular cinematic imperatives, Žižek's late-Lacanian framework can provide us with a very efficient tool with which we can describe the re-configuration of the relationship between sound and image that has been the focus of this study.

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[1] Žižek quoted in Edward Wright and Elisabeth Wright (eds.), *The Zizek Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 17.

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