

# Contextual Practices

## Research in Context

### ADAD5003

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**Question: 2**

*Using at least three examples, consider how storytellers have utilised film and/or music/sound*

*design to explore at least one of the following: sublime, weird & eerie, transformation conflict, the self, silence, leitmotifs, symbolism, archetypes*

Word count: 2326

## Setting the question

*What are the commonalities of archetypes and leitmotifs between Jaws and Psycho?*

## Theoretical context and concepts

This essay will contain an analysis to the similarities between these two films. Here I have chosen two areas for exploration; character archetypes and leitmotifs. While the musical scores of both films have established those infamous leitmotifs in marking their monsters, some commonalities are not immediately apparent within their narrative storytelling. Apart from them both showcasing the archetypical monsters within their respective forms, **‘as there are many powerful themes, tropes, and archetypes used in these films that transcend stories of horror and suspense’ (LA Screenwriter, 2015)**. On closer inspection there are other areas which are related within one film that are explored further. This is Psycho’s connective thread within the roles of Marion and Norman. There are other areas that could be explored outside of these chosen subjects, however the purpose here is to mainly focus on these two chosen areas and how they form a link or close relationship between these two films.

## **Jaws (1975) Director - Steven Spielberg**

Providing hindsight into this archetypical premise of making a murderous creature made by nature, that randomly attacks beachgoers at an idyllic summer resort, had remarkably made the list for the ‘biggest summer blockbuster’ at that time (**IMDb, 2019**). Since Jaws released in 1975, there have been a slew of killer shark movies including the varying quality of sequels. Taking into consideration the plot synopsis of Jaws, that is comparable to every other monster runs amok killing random people, developed in the mould of a B-movie framework, could have singularly set out to do exactly that. However, with the premise of Jaws being adapted from a novel by Peter Benchley. The story’s characters are radically transformed and re-written for the film adaptation, due to a concern by the film director Spielberg that he initially ‘found all of the characters of the book unlikable’ (**Wikipedia, 2020**) a characterisation he later changed in the film adaptation. These changes that were made to these characters, were not only reworked for the audience’s sympathy toward them, there is a social collectively which form these character archetypes. Taking into consideration the town major Larry Vaughn who singularly only cares about the local trades flourishing, ignoring the recent incidents of a great white shark that has murdered two people. Instead the major advocates the decision for the beaches to remain open, whilst disregarding the safety and lives of the residents. There is a further example to this type of questionable moralistic point of view, in the form of a medical examiner who has falsified the autopsy report of a victim, in order to cover up an incident. These decisions have further consequences that gamble with the lives of people, maintaining an opening for them to enter into the monster’s feeding ground. This further emphasises the true grey area of capitalism, whilst signifying the insignificance towards all humans versus the overpowering force of nature (**Rutigliano, 2020**). The film’s main protagonist in chief Brody’s character, possesses the conscience to the prevailing threat whilst experiencing the anxiety and moments of paranoia when on his watch, becoming the likely archetypical hero.

## Musical score

Initially, Spielberg did not take the simple shark motif by John Williams that seriously, as **Burlingame (2012)** states '**Surprisingly, the director took a bit of convincing. "I played him the simple little E-F-E-F bass line that we all know on the piano," and Spielberg laughed at first**'. Subsequently, this showcased how effective a leitmotif worked perfectly, to introduce 'Jaws' as a frequent alert to the audience, signalling the monsters looming presence. The infamous shark theme centres on a simple two-note motif that is fully integrated as part of the story, from the terrifying underwater point of view scenes, to the appearance of the shark's fin above water.

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**THEME FROM "JAWS"** 1  
from the Universal Picture JAWS

Very steady and threatening By JOHN WILLIAMS

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Williams's score in itself establishes a perfect bind in a non-diegetic form that encompasses the action onscreen. Essentially sharing the screen time is a master stroke in building suspense, through the medium of visual and audio storytelling. Another scene in the film which exemplifies shock value whilst showcasing the effectiveness of excluding the Jaws theme leitmotif, is when the shark makes a surprise appearance as Brody is scooping fish bait into the ocean to lure the monster (**Illustrated Fiction, 2019**). The build up to this scene is played through in the diegetic form, even though the characters are out at sea in a boat with the potential threat of the shark making an appearance. Minus the musical score, the audience are led to believe there is no obvious

indication that the monster is anywhere to be seen. This technique establishes a form of silence to surprise the unsuspecting audience, through retaining a state of suspense as the characters are carrying out their preparations to eliminate the shark.

Within the notable absence of the monster's signature leitmotif to warn the audience, the shark makes a sudden appearance without attacking, as Brody has scooped another fish bait.



The novel approach of this scene is highly effective for two reasons; when the immediate shock horror sets in as this is the first up close and personal glimpse the audience has of the until now mysteriously hidden from view monster, with this moment being the sharks means of self-introduction hunter versus hunters. There is a thrilling musical composure to accompany the reveal, which has now set-up the playing field for the conflict to ensue. As Chief Brody's initial shock and realisation is processing his first encounter, apart from the non-diegetic sound of the musical score, there is a protracted silence which leads to the following infamous line 'you're gonna need a bigger boat'. Not only is this Brody's response to his first appearance of seeing the scale of the shark for the very first time, this presents a vividly clear indication of the impending danger ahead of them.

## **PSYCHO (1960) DIRECTOR - ALFRED HITCHCOCK**

### **Setting the narrative**

During the introduction to Marion Crane and her boyfriend Sam Loomis, being the archetypical characters in the form of the lover and the hero respectively. They are addressing a problematic financial issue that is preventing them from consummating in marriage. This opening scene alone is played out in the same vein as a typical drama or love story, that is until during a later scene when an opportune moment occurs as Marion is entrusted with depositing a business transaction to the sum of \$40,000 dollars. This money that belongs to the wealthy businessman Mr. Tom Cassidy is portrayed as a sleazy and corrupt character. Furthermore, there is Marion's boss Mr. George Lowrey, who does not intervene into his client's sleazy advances toward his employee, another morally questionable character is presented. Given Marion's personal dilemma proving the backstory and motivation to steal the money, presents a chance for the conflicted protagonist a road to redemption, that ultimately delivers them to the monster.

### **The Car Scene**

During this scene when Marion is leaving town whilst psychologically re-evaluating her actions after committing this crime, there is some further revealing introspection within her character. For instance, the moment when she has a freak encounter when her decision to flee town has been made, by pure chance her boss Mr. Lowrey passes by her car and seemingly recognises her. Following Marion's initial reaction of her panic, though her crime has not yet been revealed, follows through with her intent without a shred of guilt or remorse. The accompanying violin musical score shrieks in a thrilling arrangement, not too dissimilar to the shower scene which will be discussed later, signifying there is a darker side to Marion's character.

Further into the car journey en-route to cohere with her boyfriend, Marion's envisioned and inventive fantasies during the aftermath of her vanishing act, have clearly constructed a justification in Marion's mind. This is in stark contrast during the scenes where Marion is behaving in a suspecting manner, becoming extremely anxious within herself acting with much haste to flee the dealership. As Adam Scovell states **'indeed, the musical reading of the rapid changing motifs as a parallel to Marion's inner voices showing the "spiralling morality" of the character' (Celluloid Wicker Man, 2014).**

Another interesting detail which occurs within the opening scene is the color of Marion's purse being white when in a later scene post-theft/crime, Marion's purse appears to have changed color to black. This could further signify that because of Marion's act of criminality, her psyche has been transformed. On closer inspection this has blurred the line with the former lover archetype, what can be further scrutinised in direct comparison to Marion's inner conflict. This can be compared to Norman Bates psychoanalysis not being too dissimilar, because of his transformation similarly to Marion's purse changing color. **Carl Jung, a psychoanalyst from the early 1900s, coined the term "archetype." He believed that in the unconscious there was an aspect in each of us that was related to the rest of humanity (The Sociopathic Style, 2020).** This reverts back to the driving scene, where Marion is reimagining the dialogue exchanges between her boss and the corrupt wealthy businessman. The scene traverses from day to night to convey an objective purpose, as Marion's thoughts are narrated through an internal subjective way. The consecutive close up shots get tighter on Marion's face, as the light gradually traverses to darkness in unison with Marion's psyche becoming distorted, finally climaxing to her smiling directly at the viewer revealing no remorse. This can be comparable to Norman's smile at the climax of the film.



Further analysis can be observed when Marion arrives at the Motel and during her first encounter with Norman. There is some intriguing introspection between these two characters. They are both very friendly and mirroring their courteousness toward each other, whilst unbeknown to them is their deeper dark secrets. Once Marion is alone in the room, this is when she conceals the stolen money inside a newspaper, This is when a connective thread becomes apparent when the conversation between Norman and his

### The shower scene

# The Murder from "Psycho"

Written by BERNARD HERRMANN  
Score Reduction & Analysis by Brad Frey

This is an Eb (you're welcome)

Major 7th interval

Half step below the last note, an octave below the first note

Major 7th below the last note

Half step above the previous note\*

\*Note: this is a deviation from the previous pattern of adding major 7ths and minor 2nds below the previous notes, by instead adding them above the previous note. This allows for new pitches to be introduced that will further increase the dissonance.

Maj 7th below the last note

Half step below the previous note

Major 7th below the previous note

*sforz sord.*

*sim.*

*The murderer pulls back the shower curtain*

*gliss.*

*sim.*

This is an exact repeat of the previous 8 measures, but performed as upward gliss



This is the moment when a shift occurs to non-diegetic sound, being the iconic musical score by Bernard Herrmann played out to the psycho theme. The precise moment when Marion is confronted by the killer brandishing a knife, the famous is then fused with Marion's screams coupled with the diegetic sound effects of the knife penetrating the victim's body. The noticeable observation is that throughout this entire brutal murder scene, the camera never once shows in graphic detail the grisliness detail of the knife

penetrating the body. Instead the diegetic and non-diegetic sounds, map the elements of a horrific murder with the camera detailing Marion's struggle and suffering. Through dissecting the filming and editing technique of this scene, the intercutting of the knife where the audience is being directed to various parts of the body, with blood signifying Marion's life is slipping away with the water down the plughole. Hitchcock initially felt the scene should be played out with no music to create the desired artistic impression. This was obviously not to be the final decision, as Hitchcock discovered the sight of the knife in motion with the sound of Marion's screams alone **did not create sufficient visceral involvement in the scene (Cinema Journal, 1982)**. With Hitchcock's initial concept of having no music within the shower scene, would not have made this thrillingly engaging scene as impactful with the audiences.

### **Conclusion**

On closer examination between these two films, there are similar commonalities within the character and narrative archetypes. For instance, both the Major and the medical examiner in Jaws are characters portrayed as ignorant and morally corrupt individuals. Through their influence they convince Chief Brody to act against his better judgement, a decision that takes him on course to hunt the monster and become the hero. Similarly, with Psycho Marion's boss is ignorant to their employee being sexually harassed by a male chauvinistic and corrupt character, that influences Marion to steal the money. The prevailing cause, in the most literal sense, having grave consequences further down the road. During Marion's disappearing act, this sends the hero of the story to find her, in doing so Sam Loomis apprehends the monster. Finally, there is the psychoanalysis between Marion and Norman identifying their commonalities within their archetypes, as **Carl Jung states 'The archetypes for The Sociopathic Style™ are not just male in gender. There are as many female representatives as there are male. Our culture continues to turn a blind eye toward psychopathic women' (Sociopathic Style, 2020)**.

The musical scores of both films distinctly share their integral use of the leitmotif to represent the presence and terror of these monsters. There is one defining answer which comes to my mind when referring to the commonality of these two films; the leitmotifs of their respective killers have become synonymous, when collectively thinking or discussing Jaws and Psycho.

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