



A JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY FOR MUSIC THEORY

MTO 29.4 Examples: Burns, Female Subjectivities in the Words, Music, and Images of Progressive Metal





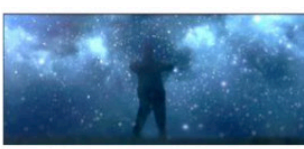


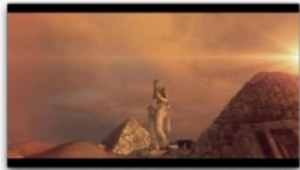










(Note: audio, video, and other interactive examples are only available online)

<https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.23.29.4/mto.23.29.4.braunschweig.html>

Example 1. "I Speak Astronomy," Lyrics and Formal Structure

Video Time-code	"I SPEAK ASTRONOMY" Form (Section) LYRICS	Instrumental Elements (riff content in guitars, bass, kit)	Vocal Elements
0:00	Intro	Meter changes; syncopation; drop-A tuning; pedal tone A, riff emphasizes fourths and tritones	
1:00	Verse 1 <i>A handful of golden dust Is what determines me Magic inside of us / Speaks astronomy Sent signals amplified / Through tidal debris Super nova, my guide / Release your energy!</i>	Metric pattern: 3/4 – 7/8 – 12/16 (heard 4 X) Syncopated guitar shots C# phrygian	Sliding melodic vocal call vs. clipped EQ-filtered response Sliding call is overdubbed, most prominent in mid-upper register (strong at 1000 Hz)
1:19	Prechorus <i>This space foam is so delicious Dark matter is so divine</i>	4/2 meter Distorted melodic guitar effects juxtaposed with rapid-fire chugs C# phrygian	Dark, sultry, intimate, yet large space (e.g., reverb at "divine") Prominent in mid register (200 Hz)
1:35	Chorus 1 <i>Tell me, why are you so suspicious When you see black holes in my eyes?</i>	Aggressive and driving 4/4 Double tresillo pattern (3+3+3+3+4) Complex guitar and kit layers A harmonic minor	Harsh vocal: huge reverb; wide spread of sonic energy; articulation in lower register 500–2000 Hz (mid-upper to high register).
1:55	Verse 2 <i>In my eyes Let this binary be blessed / By holy X-ray Singularity's our nest / Peace-forming clay If there is Lord out there / He is just a guest Sitting in his spaceship / Observing the parade</i>		
2:21	Prechorus <i>This space foam...</i> (at 2:36: spoken delivery of Chorus 1 lyrics)		
2:51	Chorus 2 <i>Don't discontinue this expedition When stuck upon the event horizon of my eyes!</i>		
3:07	Bridge <i>Come and join me in my rotation We won't be held by no bars Our reunion was tagged the "celestial" The very moment stars got us baptized</i>	4/2 Release of syncopation Supporting double-kick drumming and clear backbeat	Lyrical, epic melodic line, with backing vocals Prominent in mid-upper register
3:38	Transition		
4:03	Climactic Chorus: CC1 <i>Wave your hand from parallel universe Hidden in a folded palm After twenty eight light-years my research Must be ended somehow</i>	7/4 – 8/4 meter alternation Ambient texture: warm bass; spacey guitar tone (reverb); kit is detailed, present, dry A harm. minor scale creates tonal grounding	Chest register, dreamy, distant, warm; prominent in mid register, yet still detailed in mid-upper frequencies Spans A ³ –E ⁴ , then descends to G ^{♯3} at cadence.
4:33	Climactic Chorus: CC2	4/2 with backbeat and syncopated but unified metal "gallop" in heavy guitars.	Chest register; strong but not yet full vocal delivery 8ve overdubbing leads to prominent mid-upper freq. A ³ –E ⁴ range, cadence on E ⁴
5:10	Climactic Chorus: CC3	Very stable 4/2 with strong backbeat structure, harmonic rhythm. Full, heavy, dense guitar and kit texture	Belted, saturated; vocal tension; reverb. A ⁴ –E ⁵ range; A ⁴ –G ^{♯4} at vocal cadence Intensity in mid-upper to high freq. Final sustain: huge reverb tail



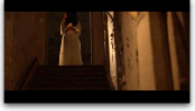






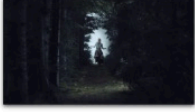

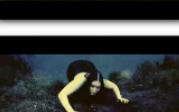






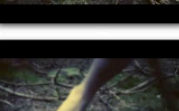



Example 2. Screenshots from “I Speak Astronomy” and visual references to the work of progressive metal bands

Jinjer, “I Speak Astronomy” (2016)	Born of Osiris, “Follow the Signs” and “Illuminate” (2012)	Between the Buried and Me, “Astral Body” (2012)	Tesseract, “Juno” (2018) and “Nocturne” (2013)
 <p>a. [1:09]</p>  <p>b. [1:10]</p>			
 <p>c. [1:31]</p>  <p>d. [3:51]</p>	 		
 <p>e. [4:36]</p>  <p>f. [5:19]</p>	 	 	



Example 3. “Perennial,” Lyrics and Formal Structure

Video Time-code	“PERENNIAL” Form Lyrics	Instrumental Elements (riff content in guitars, bass, kit)	Vocal Elements
0:07	Slow Intro (whispered) <i>This autumn feels like a funeral to me</i> <i>The longest song of grief</i> <i>And not for what has passed</i> <i>But for what shall last</i>	Atmospheric, spacious, clean guitars in slow arpeggiation F#m – D° – C#M	Spoken, whispered, dark but present
0:38	Intro Riff	4/4: 4 bars X 4 Dark sound, higher tempo “Frenetic” snare accents on 2 nd and 4 th sixteenths Guitar chords articulate the beat Crunchy harmonic dissonance: C#–D°–C#–F#°	
0:56	Harsh Verse 1 <i>Exhausted nature is tragic and suicidal</i> <i>Oh how spectacular she is when she kills herself!</i> <i>Death throes are slowly crawling to her toes</i> <i>As the last leaf is falling off her head</i>	4/2: 2 bars X 2 Kick and snare backbeat Guitar: arp. riff, R & L C# phrygian	Harsh vocals, fast delivery of text, expressive use of pitch, sustain, and articulation Spread of vocal energy from 300–2000 Hz
1:18	Chorus 1 <i>I’m here with her undressed</i> <i>With a few petals on my breasts</i>	4/2: 2 bars X 2 Kick and snare articulate 4/2 Harmonic change twice per bar F#m prog.: C#–D–F#m–E#	Clean chest vocals, emphasis on E#4, F#4 Layered with lower and higher register overdubbing
1:35	Clean Verse (based on Intro Riff) <i>We shared opiates and let the landscape do the same</i> <i>I love your warmth but yet prefer to sleep in cold alone</i> <i>We fixed our eyes up to the sky</i> <i>To see a flight send us farewell</i>	4/2: 4 bars X 2 Riff returns, now in 4/2, without the frenetic snare accents of intro riff	Clean vocals: edgy “alt” tone and style: syncopated against guitar chords
1:55	Harsh Verse 2 <i>Goodbye!</i> <i>May we see each other next time</i> <i>So please, come back to celebrate this festival of life!</i>		
2:12	Chorus 2 <i>Then as now fly! Today you reached the point of no return</i> <i>Now cry! And then die! Tomorrow I will meet you with your cells...</i>		
2:32	Bridge <i>...restored</i> <i>Annual tradition of mass destruction</i> <i>In the name of total reconstruction</i>	<u>1st passage</u> (4/2: 4+4 bars): clean lead guitar as counterpoint to voice; detailed kit, direct bass tone F#m–C#7–F#m–D° (repeated)	<u>1st</u> : chest register, warm, dark, hints of delay, reverb but still present/forward in mix (range F#3–F#4)
2:50	<i>My biggest source of confusion</i> <i>The reason of decay and disillusion</i> <i>Under permanent ice we found a breathless paradise</i> <i>No, we’re not dead ./.</i>	<u>2nd</u> (4/2: 7 bars): increased kit, heavier tone in guitar/bass Bm7– F#m–D–Bm7–F#m– D°	<u>2nd</u> : as in 1 st passage now with harmonic vocal layering (below and above)
3:40	<i>Just enjoying</i> <i>coma</i>	<u>3rd</u> (2/2: 7 bars): heavy distortion; ctpt. between voice & guitar/bass; F#m–C#–E#, followed by chrom. seq. of 7ths, leading to C# close; based on F# [0-2] octatonic	<u>3rd</u> : strong belted delivery; intense band of energy in the 2 nd , 3 rd , and 4 th partials (800–1600 Hz upper range)
3:56	Chorus Outro <i>From the ashes of my roots the new me will rise to live again</i> <i>This is poetry of youth</i> <i>This is poetry of me and you</i> <i>./.</i>	4/2: 2 bars X 4 Post-black metal wall of sound: guitars L&R, slightly back in mix; kit is forward with hard snare and prominent kick Final statement: kick drum offers steady pulse C#–D–F#m–E#	Harsh vocals, now treated with some delay effects Vocal lows at end of each growl Intensification of screams in phrase 2

Example 4. Screenshots from “Perennial” in relation to the work of progressive metal, death metal, and death-doom bands

Jinjer, “Perennial” (2019)	Lamb of God, “Vigil” (2013)	Swallow the Sun, “Rooms and Shadows” (2015)	Katatonia, “Day & Then The Shade” (2009)	Daylight Dies, “Dreaming of Breathing” (2012)
 a. [1:21]				
 b. [1:20]				
 c. [2:20]		 	 	 
 e. [2:41]			 	 
 f. [4:35]				

Example 5. “Pit of Consciousness,” Lyrics and Formal Structure

Video Timecode	“PIT OF CONSCIOUSNESS” Form Lyrics	Instrumental Elements (riff content in guitars, bass, kit)	Vocal Elements
1:12	Intro	4/4; 2-bar riff X 2 Heavy, dark sound: drop-A tuning; 5-string bass; strong kick and snare; hard backbeat on 2 + 4 Distorted guitar (split L & R).	
1:26	Harsh Verse <i>I keep on losing the keys / From reality And now I'm passing on the wheel To insanity. In a secluded corner Waiting for my time to come, Waiting for the bedlam To be pacified.</i>	Intro riff continues 2-bar riff X 4 D ^o - C ^o - A ^o	Harsh vocal: centered around 1100 Hz (mid-upper range) Long reverb (evident at phrase endings) Frequency contour unique to each phrase: upper “scream” / lower “growl”
1:51	Clean Verse 1 <i>I am climbing hand over fist And I scratch concrete, Shine in the end... my mistake — It's not there. The air is terribly heavy here. It settles inside And I suffer burn after burn from the...</i>	3-bar phrase X 2 Riff: rising and falling (wide) melodic contour in distorted guitar. Syncopation in 3rd bar disrupts expected backbeat Phrase 1 elides into phr. 2; Phrase 2 into verse ext. C ^o 7 / A ^o 7	Chest register (B ³ -F ⁴); mid freq. range (200–400 Hz) Centered, doubled Alt metal melodic, rhythmic style
1:09	Verse extension <i>...dark Burn.</i>	Shift to 6/8; eighth note pivot pulse from 4/4 Driving 8ve leaps; palm-muted response; G ^o m ^o 7	Harsh vocal pitched high; scream now occupies mid-upper range (centered around 1300 Hz)
1:28	Clean Verse 2 <i>In a pit of consciousness Squeal is bleeding So I feel there was someone else Before me. Eyes are changing colors. A stranger knocks on my mind. I became a foreigner to...</i>		
1:46	Verse extension <i>...myself! Myself!</i>		
2:05	Chorus <i>Stillness stuns. Wish I'd run Creeped away to the light. In my head someone else Setting...</i>	4/4; 3 bars X 2, plus 1 bar of 3/8. Riff characterized by low pitch bends followed by arp. pattern	Chest voice (A ³ to E ⁴); doubled Alt metal styling in tone, syncopation, interaction with the groove Tresillo pattern  begins on downbeat of each bar 7 th statement of tresillo creates 3/8 bar (“setting”). Final word, “snares,” elides into Bridge A
2:26	Bridge A <i>...snares For my soul. In the darkest place What was once named “Consciousness” I'm a miniature, I'm a sketch forfeiting...</i>	Metric modulation from 4/4 to compound meter The  part of the tresillo becomes 6/16th pivot to new beat Interpretations of phrasing: <u>3-bar riff</u> in 18/16–18/16–12/16 <u>2-bar metric pattern</u> in 24/16 hard snare backbeats on 2, 4	Harsh vocals. Tresillo accentuation changes from downbeat to upbeat Passage opens with growl (mid-range, centered at 700 Hz but reaching down to 200 Hz level) Closes with higher scream (centered at 1300 Hz)
2:53	Bridge B <i>...outlines Irrelevant entity to sanity, A hive for nonsense, For multiple selves Resonating, but never compromising.</i>	24/16; 8 bars plus 2 bars instrumental extension Continues beat from previous metric modulation Sense of musical stasis, lack of resolution	Harsh vocals reach song apex on “compromising” Through-composed rhythmic presentation in voice
3:40	Chorus <i>Stillness stuns. Wish I'd run Creeped away to the light. In my head someone else Setting snares For my soul. For my...</i>	9 bars of 4/4 = 8 bars of 18/16 4/4 hearing: clear backbeat snare 18/16 hearing: 3 groups of 6 sixteenths	Metric revision of earlier chorus Tresillo pattern now treated as anacrusis, changing the accents in the passage In polymetric relation to guiding 4/4 with phrases of 18/16
4:08	Outro <i>...soul. Waiting for my mind to be pacified.</i>	Settles into clear 4/4	

Example 6. Screenshots from “Pit of Consciousness” in relation to the work of progressive and alternative metal bands

 a [1:47]	 Korn, “Somebody, Someone” (2000)	 Gojira, “The Cell” (2016)
 b [1:07]	 Korn, “Insane” (2016)	 Of Mice & Men, “Pain” (2016)
 c [0:52]	 d [1:35]	 Of Mice & Men, “Pain” (2016)
 e [3:06]	 Album cover, Gojira, <i>Stranded</i> (2016)	 Of Mice & Men, “Pain” (2016)
 f [3:17]	 Of Mice & Men, “Pain” (2016)	 Korn, “Insane” (2016)
 g [3:14]	 Daylight Dies, “Dreaming of Breathing” (2012)	 Daylight Dies, “Dreaming of Breathing” (2012)
 i [4:02]	 j [4:22]	