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Scenes From a Memory and Progressive-Metal Tonality

Blake Graham  
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Scenes From a Memory and Progressive-Metal Tonality

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts at the City College of New York

by
Blake Graham
May 2011
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Introduction

Dream Theater is one of the most successful bands to come out of the progressive-metal subgenre. Their critical acclaim and popularity have come largely without the aid of popular media. Each of the last several albums has peaked higher on the Billboard 200 than the previous album, but their last radio hit was in 1992 with “Pull Me Under” off *Images and Words*. Their success is likely due to a number of factors, a major component being the virtuosity of the instrumentalists. The members are guitarist John Petrucci, drummer Mike Portnoy, keyboardist Jordan Rudess, bassist John Myung and vocalist James LaBrie from 1999 until 2010. Educated at Berklee and Julliard and influenced by rock and pop, the band’s style frequently combines common practice period and rock elements.

The 1999 album *Metropolis Pt. 2: Scenes From a Memory* (hereafter *Scenes*) is a landmark album in Dream Theater’s career. *Scenes* is the first and only full-length concept album by Dream Theater, the outgrowth of their history of writing “epic,” lengthy songs. It marks the first major studio release with keyboardist Jordan Rudess, signaling the beginning of the most stable lineup to date. It is also the first album since their debut *When Dreams and Day Unite* to list members of the band among the producers,\(^1\) and contains the first explicit inter-album relationships between songs, a tradition the band continues.

The genesis of the album lies in a track named “Metropolis Part 1: The Miracle and the Sleeper” from the 1992 album *Images and Words*. The song’s cryptic lyrics are a fantasy retelling of the legend of Romulus and Remus, mythical founders of Rome

\(^1\) Subsequent studio albums to date are all produced by John Petrucci and Mike Portnoy. *Scenes* has only the addition of Terry Brown as “vocals co-producer.”
(the titular “metropolis”). It is a lengthy epic in the tradition of progressive rock. At eleven minutes, it eclipses any song on their one prior album, and on *Images and Words* it is second only to *Learning to Live*.

The title of “Metropolis Part 1” was originally something of a joke; they had no intention of ever writing Part 2 until fans clamored for a sequel. However, personnel changes and record label disputes would delay the follow-up to “Metropolis.” Keyboardist Kevin Moore leaves the band following recording of the 1994 album *Awake*. Label pressure to produce a more radio-friendly album resulted in the unsuccessful 1997 album *Falling into Infinity* with keyboardist Derek Sherinian, his first and last full length studio album with the band. During the recording of *Falling Into Infinity*, the band began working on “Metropolis Pt. 2,” though did not finish it before the band took a scheduled break. After reconvening, the band proceeded to write new material instead of finishing “Metropolis Pt. 2,” writing enough material for a double album. However, the record label refused to put out to release a double album or release the band from their contract. The sequel would have to wait, and “Metropolis Pt. 2” remained unfinished.

Elektra Records demanded the band have a producer that would “help guide the music to meet the label’s needs for ‘singles,’” an experiment that failed miserably.\(^2\) Ironically, it was the failure of *Falling Into Infinity* that led to the opportunity to record *Scenes*, as Elektra Records finally gave creative control to Mike Portnoy and John Petrucci.

After John Petrucci and Mike Portnoy recorded two albums with bassist Tony Levin and Dixie Dregs keyboardist Jordan Rudess under the name Liquid Tension

Experiment, Dream Theater invited Rudess into Dream theater to replace Derek Sherinian, thus establishing the longest stable lineup in the band to date. *Scenes* is the first album recorded with this longstanding lineup.

Dream Theater’s catalog is rife with long songs and cycles. On *Images and Words*, “Wait For Sleep” is often considered the introduction to “Learning to Live” as the ending to “Learning to Live” is material from “Wait For Sleep.” Taken together the pair of songs are thirteen minutes long. The 1994 album *Awake* has the song cycle “A Mind Beside Itself” that totals over twenty minutes. The title track to the EP *A Change of Seasons* is twenty five minutes long. There are several others. However, never before or since *Scenes* have they put out a concept album. The closest they have come is the double album *Six Degrees of Inner Turbulence*, where one disk consists of single song, the title track. Though that song is connected in the concept of mental disease, each section tells the story of a different person. *Scenes* tells a single tale, that of a man who has been having dreams and his search for what they mean.

The story of *Scenes* is a complex one, subject to a certain amount of interpretation, and a synopsis of the plot may be useful to those unfamiliar with the album.³ As the album opens, Nicholas has gone to a hypnotherapist in an effort to learn more about Victoria, the girl in his dreams. Through hypnosis he begins to learn more about Victoria and her life and death, and he believes that Victoria was his past life. Nicholas eventually discovers a newspaper that tells the account of the death of Victoria.

³ There are indications that *Scenes* is also based on the Rome founding legend, with Edward as Romulus, Julian as Remus and Victoria as Rome itself, found in lyrics such as “The city, it calls to me” in “Home.” However, to my knowledge the band has never commented on such a connection in *Scenes.*
Page in a murder/suicide that took place in 1928. Act 1 ends with Nicholas visiting Victoria’s grave and mourning her death.

Act 2 begins in 1928. Julian, known as The Sleeper, is involved with Victoria, but his lifestyle is driving her away. She seeks refuge in his brother Edward, known as The Miracle, which leads to an affair between Edward and Victoria. Whether any of Act 2 up to this point is known to Nicholas or not is never made clear. Nicholas continues to undergo regression therapy with the hypnotherapist. Some or all of the song “Home” could be Nicholas’s vision while under hypnosis, or simply information for the listener to which Nicholas is not privy.

Through a combination of hypnosis and speaking to people in the present, Nicholas begins to doubt the newspaper account of Victoria’s death. He undergoes hypnosis again and has a vision of “some woman who’s screaming” while “a man pleads,” though Nicholas cannot make out what he is saying. After this vision, Nicholas no longer has any doubt that he is Victoria reincarnated, and he meditates on the impact this has on his life. He feels an obligation to try to set history aright with the true story of how Victoria died, but he has a vision of Victoria who he believes tells him to move on from her story and live his own life.

“Finally Free” tells the story as it actually occurred and Nicholas is not privy to this information. After the events described in “Home,” Victoria breaks off her affair with Edward and returns to Julian. As Victoria and Julian meet in what they believe is secret, Edward appears and shoots both of them, later staging it to be a murder/suicide by planting a suicide letter on Edward. The music ends, and the album closes with the

4 Surname “Page” taken from the Scenes From New York DVD
sound of Nicholas arriving home. As he relaxes to music, footsteps approach, and the voice of the hypnotherapist tells him to open his eyes.

In addition to the 1999 studio album, three other recordings shed light on *Scenes*. The first is “Metropolis Pt. 2,” the unfinished song originally intended to be on the album *Falling Into Infinity*. This early version was long shrouded in mystery, and drummer Mike Portnoy vowed it would never be available for the public as the one recording is of low quality and the song unfinished. However, it was finally released on *Falling Into Infinity Demos 1996-1997* in 2007, eight years after *Scenes*. The demo gives interesting insight into the writing process of *Scenes*, especially “Overture 1928.” “Metropolis Pt. 2” is referred to as “Metropolis ’96” during the rest of this paper in order to avoid confusion with either “Metropolis Pt. 1” or *Metropolis Part 2: Scenes From a Memory*.

The second is *The Making of Scenes From a Memory*, a collection of studio outtakes along with an alternative mix of the final album. Dream Theater moved into Beartracks Studios in Suffren, New York for the writing and recording of *Scenes* and so a number of early versions and sketches were recorded.

These audio recordings serve much the same analytical function as a composer’s sketches. Analysis of popular music treating a definitive recording as the text differs from studies of genres where the text is notation in that questions of

5 Though for the most part Nicholas lives in an undefined “present,” the news report heard at this point is about the death of John F. Kennedy, Jr, placing it in 1999.

6 It is possible to interpret “Finally Free” as a hypnosis-induced vision of Nicholas’s, and this final line as him awakening from hypnosis. The *Scenes From New York* DVD contradicts this. John Petrucci says in the commentary that Nicholas is not privy to the lyrics of Finally Free, and the live action footage (originally shown on a screen at live performances) shows the hypnotherapist, the reincarnation of Edward, killing Nicholas, the reincarnation of Victoria.
performance style or compositional intent are replaced with the sonic reality of the recording, which may give rise to different questions. It is unusual, but becoming increasingly common in popular music to have access to unfinished recordings that once again facilitate examination of compositional intent.

The third additional recording is a live recording of *Scenes* in its entirety at the end of Dream Theater’s 2000 tour in support of the album. Though the recording of the concert itself is not relied upon heavily in this paper, the DVD release includes a commentary on the concert by the band that is referenced several times. A closer comparison of the live performance to the studio album, particularly the guitar and vocal duet that replaces the intro to “Through Her Eyes” titled “John & Theresa Solo Spot” may reveal yet more about the work.

This paper is a look at Act 1 of *Scenes* as an individual musical work, similar in many ways to a movement. Much like a number of common practice period works, material is introduced and then the piece ventures to new areas for new material and must wind its way back before presenting the opening material again. The details of the manner in which Act 1 accomplishes this, however, have little in common with common practice tradition.

Early in the album the tritone D and G# occurs. This is both the impetus for the move away from the opening material and the means by which it eventually returns. Initially a surface feature of the D Lydian mode, it later becomes a relation in “Beyond This Life” that finally allows the key of the opening material to return. However, the opening material does not appear when the piece first makes its way back to D major. Instead, the D/G# tritone is incorporated into “Beyond This Life” on a deeper level and
moves between various keys with D or G# as their root before finally settling on D major and a return to the opening material.

The narrative of Act 1 is also a complete, yet dependent unit. Throughout Act 1 Nicholas is searching for information about his dreams. The question that drives him is “Who is the girl in my dreams and why do I dream of her?” Once that question is answered, Act 2 is then Nicholas questioning the official report of her death and attempting to discern what actually happened to her.

This paper will examine each movement of Act 1 in turn, exploring them individually before searching for larger relations. The last chapter focuses on the act as a whole and its large scale harmonic trajectory. In order to avoid discussion of disputable terms, divisions such as “chorus,” “verse,” and “interlude” are as indicated in the guitar transcription of the album, which is also relied upon heavily for examples along with the keyboard anthology.78

Scene One

Regression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Timestamp</th>
<th>Marker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clock ticking, Hypnotherapist voiceover</td>
<td>:00</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample from “Home”</td>
<td>:28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample from “Spirit Carries on”</td>
<td>:44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocals enter - Nicholas’s Theme</td>
<td>1:05</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---


The album opens with the ticking of a clock. The voice of a hypnotherapist enters, guiding the character Nicholas into hypnosis. Samples of a choir play as the clock is crossfaded with an acoustic guitar, playing a chord progression I will refer to as Nicholas’s Theme. The progression is as follows:

\[ D \rightarrow D/F# \rightarrow G \rightarrow G/B \rightarrow D \rightarrow D/C# \rightarrow Bm \rightarrow Bm/A \rightarrow E/G# \rightarrow A7sus \rightarrow A7 \]

Nicholas’s Theme recurs several times throughout the album, always in the key of D. As my moniker might suggest, whenever there are lyrics present they are always from the point of view of Nicholas. Its simplicity and ease of recognition lend an accessible, surface sense of continuity to the album. The comfort of hypnosis (or, later, knowledge of Nicholas’s past life) becomes the safety of familiarity for the listener.

The chord progression follows common practice conventions. Even the voice leading of the guitar part obeys convention, despite the fact that it is relatively uncommon for it to do so in this style. The chord voicings of the acoustic guitar are shown in Figure 1-1.

**Figure 1-1**

```
\[ \text{Figure 1-1} \]
```

Figure 1-2 shows the vocals that accompany the first iteration of Nicholas’s theme. The melody is simple and measured, moving mostly by step or consonant skip. However, nearly every phrase ends on the and of 4 instead of a downbeat. This
creates a rhythmic dissonance between the guitar and vocals, though here it has little effect. A similar dissonance will play a much more significant role in “Through My Words.”

**Figure 1-2**

“Nicholas’s Theme” ends on a V7 chord, creating a half cadence. The progression repeats with a slightly varied vocal line ending again on a half cadence. However, the final measures of “Regression” shown in Figure 1-3 alter both the vocal line and accompanying guitar, with a descent in the vocals from scale degree 5 to scale degree 1, and a IV, V7, I in the guitar, satisfying the expectations created by the two preceding half cadences.

One reason why the rhythmic dissonance in this song does not have a large impact is the brevity of the dissonance. This final phrase ends on a downbeat at the same time as the last chord in the acoustic guitar, resolving the rhythmic dissonance.

**Figure 1-3**
Scene Two, I

Overture 1928

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Timestamp</th>
<th>Marker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>:00</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Riff</td>
<td>:27</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Strange Déjà Vu” Chorus</td>
<td>:44</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Lydian Dominant riff</td>
<td>1:01</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesizer solo over Main Riff</td>
<td>1:18</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B minor guitar solo, “Metropolis Part 1” chords/melody</td>
<td>1:35</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Strange Déjà Vu” Chorus</td>
<td>2:08</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“One Last Time” Chorus</td>
<td>2:26</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Lydian unison passage</td>
<td>2:45</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Dance of Eternity” E minor riff</td>
<td>2:58</td>
<td>J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesizer solo over “Strange Déjà Vu” Verse progression</td>
<td>3:07</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two instrumental tracks on the album go through a myriad of different keys and times, typical of progressive rock songs. “Overture 1928” (hereafter, “Overture”)\(^9\), true to its name, consists of a patchwork of other songs on the album. As such, I will

\(^9\) Not to be confused with “Overture” from *Six Degrees of Inner Turbulence*
explore the junctures where two independent sections meet, as the parts themselves will be examined in the next song in which they appear.\footnote{With the exception of a few passages that appear in “The Dance of Eternity” in Act 2 which will be discussed here.}

**Figure 2-1**

"Overture 1928" (also appears as the final measure of the intro to "Dance of Eternity")

"Dance of Eternity" intro (except last measure)

“Overture” opens with a rhythmic figure on the single note D that later occurs in the opening of “Dance of Eternity.” Figure 2-1 shows the transformation from “Dance of Eternity” to “Overture.” The riff, as it appears in “Overture,” first appears in “Metropolis Part 1: The Miracle and the Sleeper.”

Upon first hearing, it isn’t readily apparent that this figure is structurally significant. It seems to simply be a means of building into the raucous section to follow. However, the reemergence of the riff in altered form in “Dance of Eternity” suggests that it is more than just a placeholder.

In fact, the entirety of “Overture” is not what it first sounds like. As mentioned, “Overture” is made of parts of songs that appear elsewhere on the album. One may be inclined to assume that therefore “Overture” was written last, taking various existing material and constructing in retrospect. However, the “Metropolis ‘96” demo includes...
almost all of “Overture,” including this riff. Instead, the evidence therefore suggests that themes and sections from “Metropolis ’96” were taken and used in the various songs in *Scenes*.

A single quarter note rest is all that separates the unison introduction from the next section. The note D becomes a D major chord, which becomes a D(add#11) chord, marking the first of numerous Lydian passages in both the track and the album. Figure 2-2 shows the Main Riff of “Overture” and the measure prior.

**Figure 2-2**

![Figure 2-2](image)

The transformation of D major to D Lydian becomes the major musical problem that Act 1 has to solve before returning to the material of Nicholas’s Theme, which, as already mentioned, always occurs in D major. This also introduces what will become the key to this solution and the principle motive of “Beyond This Life,” the juxtaposition of D₇ and G#.

The transition from this riff to the next section is another unison passage. This time it is a scalar passage in sextuplets with guitar, bass and keyboard all in unison. The guitar part for this passage is shown in Figure 2-3. The descending passage ends
on a B, which acts as an passing tone to the A in the beginning of the next section. The first note in each of the sextuplets is accented, creating an expectation of the downbeat of the next measure. The combination of the melodic neighbor motion and the fulfilling of rhythmic expectations creates the shift into a new section.

**Figure 2-3**

![Musical notation](image)

This passage was written late in the writing process for “Overture.” Neither “Metropolis ‘96” nor the outtake on *The Making of Scenes from a Memory* contain this particular transitional phrase. They do however contain a different passage, in both cases much looser and less defined than the one appearing on the album. It is possible that the less defined version was never intended to be the final version. However, the version that appears on “Metropolis ‘96” and on *The Making of Scenes from a Memory* are both remarkably similar, indicating it was more likely to some degree worked out and considered part of the song. Whatever the case, a different passage that achieved the transition more definitively was created for the final version.

What the early version of that passage lacks that the final version has is a clear way of bridging the D Lydian section that precedes it and the section in E that follows it. Neither of the early fills have clearly defined pitch or rhythm on the last beat of the measure in the guitar. The final version of the passage, being entirely composed of

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11 The tonic in this section is ambiguous. E here is used by convenience as it is the major scale indicated by the key signature. Further exploration of this section is found under “Strange Déjà Vu.”
sextuplets, does. The significance of this is that final note of the fill is a B, which passes
smoothly to the A which is the root of the first chord in the next measure.

The transition into the next section in E Lydian Dominant at Marker D occurs
as a result of an interesting progression combining common practice and rock traditions:
a double predominant-dominant progression. As shown in Figure 2-4, A and B are the
typical IV and V chords, which resolve deceptively to the \( \flat \) VI, C. This double as a rock
predominant, that leads to the rock dominant \( \flat \) VII and that resolves to E major.

Figure 2-4

\[
\text{IV} - \text{V} - \flat \text{VI} - \flat \text{VII} - \text{I} : \text{in E}
\]

As shown in the Figure 2-5, the entire section from :44 to 1:18 can either be seen
as one of two prolonged neighbor figures, depending on the interpretation of the key at
Marker C. One option is that Marker C is in A Lydian and Marker D is in E, as shown on
the left. The other is that Marker C and D are both in E, as shown on the right. This E,
instead of functioning as a tonic, becomes a middleground upper neighbor to D.

Figure 2-5

\[
\text{I} \quad \text{IV/II} \quad \text{II} \quad \text{I} \quad \text{OR} \quad \text{I} \quad \text{II} \quad \text{I}
\]

\[
\text{D} \quad \text{A} \quad \text{E} \quad \text{D} \quad \text{D} \quad \text{E} \quad \text{D}
\]

---

12 Lydian Dominant is the fourth mode of the ascending melodic minor scale, equivalent to a major scale
with a \#4 and \( \flat \) 7. It is also known as the Acoustic Scale.

13 Lydian Dominant is suggested other places in “Overture” as well. The bass suggests Lydian Dominant
at Marker A as well by the use of the scale degree \( b7 \) (C natural). The synthesizer solo at Marker E (over
the same chord progression) is ambiguous as to whether the mode is Lydian or Lydian Dominant,
containing very few Cs some of which are sharp and some of which are natural. Jordan Rudess’s use of
a pitch wheel creates further ambiguity.
When the A chord at Marker C first sounds it seems to be the local tonic. It is only in context of the other chords, which support E as tonic, that what seems to be a move to the dominant possibly becomes a move to the IV of II.

The neighbor E area resolves back to D Lydian and the Main Riff, which becomes the accompaniment for a synthesizer solo at Marker E. Then, at Marker F, the synthesizer solo transitions into a guitar solo in B minor based on material from “Metropolis Part 1” that will later reappear in “Home.” The move from D major to B minor is to the relative minor. However, the synthesizer solo is in D Lydian, which has G# in the key signature, not D major. The transition is accomplished by means of a short figure in guitar and bass shown in Figure 2-6 that introduces G natural, thus briefly moving into D major before then moving to the relative minor. The synthesizer solo also ends on a G natural. The guitar for the last measure of the synthesizer solo is shown in Figure 2-6. This transitional figure reappears as a motive later in “Fatal Tragedy,” where the root movement F# G E becomes the basis for a riff itself.

**Figure 2-6**

![Musical notation](image-url)
The guitar solo continues in F# Mixolydian at 1:52 with material that appears later in the song “One Last Time.” As Mixolydian is the mode associated with the V chord, it may be expected that a move to the dominant would be in Mixolydian. However, the chord which precedes the mode change is A major, meaning the root movement into F# is by a descending minor third (realized by both the bass and keyboard left hand). This is not an altogether abhorrent progression, as A major and F# minor share two common tones, but the progression alone does not create the effect of such a dramatic change.

The transition is smoothed over and pushed into the new harmonic area by a sextuplet run in the guitar seen in Figure 2-7. This run is in F# Mixolydian, and ends on an E natural, which is then bent up a whole step in the next measure to F#, both predicting the upcoming mode and approaching the new root by its lower neighbor.

**Figure 2-7**

To get out of F# Mixolydian and into Marker G, a F# guitar solo ends on a C#. Scale degree 5 of F# becomes the third of the A major chord. There are no neighbor tones and the F#7 does not resolve as a dominant chord. It is, however, the mirror of the progression that got into F# Mixolydian, which was A major to F#7.

The transition out of the “Strange Déjà Vu” progression and into a C# minor solo at Marker H is particularly interesting. As before, an A major and a B major chord appear at the end of the progression, but this time they are followed by C major and D
major, which then leads to the key change into C# minor. The roots of C major and D major form a double neighbor figure around the note C#. However, that is not the only reason this particular transition works. As C# minor is the relative of E major, this progression functions as a rock-variant on a deceptive cadence, shown in Figure 2-8.

**Figure 2-8**

IV - V - bVI - bVII - vi : in E

A    B    C     D     C#m

This is the same double predominant-dominant progression from the transition from Markers C to D. Here is resolves deceptively to the vi. The strange double chromatic neighbor motion of C, D, C# works only because of the expectations created earlier that establish C and D as a predominant, dominant progression, thus allowing the deception to be successful.

Marker I appears nowhere else on the album. Though passages with similar textures occur, such as the bass solo in “Dance of Eternity” or the unison lines at the end of the solo section in “Beyond This Life” (9:35), nowhere else does this chord progression or melody occur. Significantly, it also does not appear on the “Metropolis ’96” demo. It seems to have been written specifically to bridge the C# minor and A♭ Lydian passages that flank it.

To get into this section, a B major chord functions as a lower neighbor to a C5 chord while a D in the preceding guitar solo functions as a lower neighbor to the E in the melody. Note both the rhythm guitar, indicated by the chord symbols and slashes, and the lead guitar in Figure 2-9.
3:07 marks the end of this added transition. The A5 chord that the guitar ends on forms two upper neighbors to the A♭5 chord that follows. Meanwhile, a run in the synthesizer is A♭ Lydian smooths the transition, much like the transition to F# Mixolydian prior.

As seen in the Figure 2-10, the seeming chaos of “Overture” all flows together.14 In addition to the transitions outlined above, the key areas work together as well. After starting in the key of D Lydian, Markers C and D outline a large scale neighbor to E major, before returning to D at Marker E. Marker F is a move to the vi of D and Marker G moves to the the local dominant. The move from the V7/vi to II is not traditional progression, but it is created by the above outlined transition into Marker G. Marker H is a move to the vi of E, and at the end of that passage A major and B major chords are the IV and V of E that resolve deceptively to the C major, the VI/ii, which is realized as C Lydian (which is the same signature, as Lydian is the sixth mode of Aeolian). E minor is then a local tonic when it occurs at marker J. VI and i are related through the Neo-Riemannian Operation L. The above described transition moves the song into A♭ Lydian, where the planing progression from the verse of Strange Déjà Vu occurs.

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14 Lydian mode is indicated by the inclusion of the #4 in the triad.
**Figure 2-10**

![Musical notation]

**Scene Two, II**

**Strange Déjà Vu**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
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<td>:04</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G# minor</td>
<td>:40</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Strange Déjà Vu”</td>
<td>1:13</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>progression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G# minor</td>
<td>1:40</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Chorus 1</td>
<td>1:55</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>2:15</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlude</td>
<td>2:41</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge</td>
<td>2:56</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C# minor</td>
<td>3:26</td>
<td>J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G# minor</td>
<td>3:36</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>3:51</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Chorus 2</td>
<td>3:57</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scene Two continues attacca from the end of “Overture” with a riff that also comes from “Metropolis ’96.” Fitting, as the two tracks together compromise “Scene Two,” the first of three times on the album where a musical unit is made of two distinct songs. The track separation on the album cuts into the phrase; the part of the riff that occurs at the end of “Overture” is the first two measures of the four measure phrase that constitutes the intro to “Strange Déjà Vu.”

**Figure 3-1**
Figure 3-1 shows the guitar and vocals at Marker A. Consisting of an alternating open fifth (with the lower note doubled in octaves and also in the bass) and tritone, the riff itself implies little about the tonality of the song. There is even a hint of atonality in the palm-muted arpeggios (marked “with slight P.M” in the transcription), which consist of two root-tritone-octave chords a half step apart. It is with the entrance of the vocal line that it is brought back from atonality and firmly planted in A♭ Lydian, or at least supported by an A♭(#11) chord. The C♭ in the vocal line adds the third of the chord, filling out the tonic triad.

At :40 the verse moves to the parallel minor (Marker B), with a chromatically inflected guitar and bass riff with diatonic vocals in A♭/G# minor. The transition out of this section at :53 follows a pattern heard several times already; a unison run which ends in a neighbor to a chord. In this case a double neighbor figure surrounds the root of a C#5. (Figure 3-2) However, after a rest (which is filled in by a slide in the bass), the song returns to the Verse and A♭ Lydian. The C# chord simply resolves by a fourth back to G#/A♭.

Figure 3-2

(bass slide)

---

15 The progression that makes up the first half of the verse is still ambiguous, as shall be seen later. These A♭(#11) and F(#11) chords that alternate here eventually make up the first two chords of the “Strange Déjà Vu” progression discussed below. The vocal line brings the Verse back from atonality, if not exactly to tonality.
Verse 2 (Marker C) occurs much the same as Verse 1, with different lyrics and
different texture, but the same progression and the same melody. However, it ends with
an addition. Beginning at 1:13 (Marker D), the chords follow what is labeled “The
Strange Déjà Progression” in my reduction graph of “Overture”: A♭(#11), F(#11), C♭
(#11), D♭(#11).

This progression is highly ambiguous. Though clearly centered around A♭, only
A♭(#11) is in the mode of A♭ Lydian. The D♭(#11) is in the key of A♭ major, but then
the heavily emphasized #11 in the tonic chord would be a chromatic neighbor.
Attempting to call another chord the tonic is also problematic. If F, or A♭ are the tonic,
then both the major and minor third of the tonic chord are present. Calling D♭ the tonic
has a few redeeming qualities. It is the last chord of the progression. The following
section is in A♭, its dominant, and the C♭ chord the becomes the rock dominant of
D♭. Additionally, the roots of the four chords spell out a D♭7 chord. However, this
reading isn’t satisfactory either. The vocal line is rising, de-emphasizing the finality of
the chord. Additionally, D♭(#11) occurs only once in the entire track. Calling a chord
that appears only once the tonic, even a local tonic, is dubious at best. Instead, it is
more likely that the A♭ is the tonic, if for no other reason that repetition and its place at
the beginning of the progression. The F can then be heard as a chromatically inflected
vi chord. The C♭ and D♭ are still problematic.

One possibility is to look at the relation of each chord to only the chord
immediately following it, thereby viewing the progression divorced of function. What
emerges then is the pattern that each subsequent chord shares one, and only one, common tone to the chord that precedes it. This also better explains the #4 in each chord, as a common practice convention would not have a succession of chords containing a #4. A♭ is the tonic, but it is a tenuous status granted only by repetition and the expectation created by having the vocals enter on the A♭ chord.

The lyrics in the Verses describe Nicholas as he enters a hypnotic state and begins exploring the familiar but unfocused setting of his visions. The ambiguous nature of this progression could reflect the dream-like state of Nicholas’s vision. The circular nature of the main Verse progression, A♭(#11)-->F(#11), that is without a sense of direction is mirrored in Nicholas groping for knowledge. In Verse 2, as the progression gets as much of a direction as it will ever get, the whole step between C♭ and D♭, Nicholas implores the “young child” in the mirror to tell him why his vision has brought him there. However, Nicholas finds no answers yet, and the harmony returns to A♭, now shifted to the parallel minor.

The second half of the verse in G# minor (Marker E) continues as the first verse, only this time the unison phrase which ended on the C#5 chord, instead of resolving back to A♭, now becomes the transition to the Pre-Chorus in C# minor, as shown in Figure 3-3.
This Pre-Chorus ends on a B major chord. Both $\flat$ VII in C# minor and V in E, it functions as the pivot to the chorus in E major. The nature of using both rock and common practice period gestures throughout the album creates dual expectations, allowing the chord to function in multiple ways. Though, as discussed above in the “Overture” section, this chorus is ambiguous in regards to key. The B major chord also functions as a upper neighbor chord to the A major chord that starts the chorus (and at first appears to be the tonic).

The Chorus (Marker G) is more firmly in E major than its first appearance in “Overture” because of the dominant functioning B major chord that precedes it, though it initially resolves deceptively to the IV which weakens the dominant-tonic relationship and leaves the Chorus feeling slightly ambiguous. The Chorus ends with the same double predominant-dominant progression found in “Overture” that resolves to the tonic E, shown with the vocals in Figure 3-4. This E is not a fully realized E major chord. Instead, it is an E5 chord. This third-less chord becomes the pivot to E minor for the Interlude/Bridge (Marker H).
The lyrics in the Pre-Chorus and Chorus are from Victoria’s perspective, presumably Nicholas hearing her in his vision. The words are cryptic, describing her searching for something and someone called “The Sleeper.” Nicholas does not understand what this means. The sudden change in texture at the Interlude coincides with Nicholas’s awakening from hypnosis and his return to the “real world” as he grapples with the information gained from his most recent vision.

At 3:24 the harmony moves to C# minor (Marker J). This transition occurs somewhat suddenly and is not a chord found diatonically from E minor. It is, however, modal borrowing, being the relative minor of E major. Though the guitar and bass play a chromatically-inflected line, the vocals and harmony remain diatonically in C# minor (aside from a fleeting embellishing A# in the harmony vocals). The harmony moves to the G# minor at 3:34. Again this is a chord found diatonically in E major, making the two areas combined vi, iii in E major, though the tonic never sounds.

G# minor returns to C# minor, and it at first sounds as though it is going to be an instrumental version of the Pre-Chorus. This time, however, the Pre-Chorus goes through an interesting transition at Marker L to a new key. The first three chords of the Pre-Chorus occur as expected, though with a piano melody in lieu of vocals. On the fourth chord, surprisingly, the vocals enter singing the Pre-Chorus at Marker M, see in
Figure 3-5. This F# minor is now the new tonic and the Pre-Chorus continues up a perfect fourth from its original key of C# minor. This startling transition works because of a whole step root movement between the third chord of the progression, E major, and the fourth chord, F# minor (also the first chord of the new Chorus). The E functions as a pivot chord, both as the III of C# minor and the rock dominant of F# minor.

Figure 3-5

![Chord Progression](image)

Figure 3-6

![Chord Progression](image)
Interestingly, the E major occurs in first inversion, which facilitates a smooth bass descent A, G#, F# in the first Pre-Chorus. So while harmonically the E major is a lower neighbor to F# minor, in the bassline the G# is an upper neighbor.

At the end of Pre-Chorus 2, the final E major chord functions as a pivot, both III in C# minor and I in E to transition into the Chorus (Marker N). This is the first time the A major in the start of the Chorus is clearly heard as a IV chord. Again, the Chorus ends with the double predominant-dominant progression. However, this time the D chord moves to first inversion, and this F# in the bass then becomes the leading tone to G major, thus retroactively making C major and D major into the IV and V of G seen in Figure 3-6. The rock predominant and dominant get reinterpreted as traditional predominant and dominant, facilitating this unusual transition to the remote key of G major in preparation for “Through My Words.”

Scene Three, I

Through My Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Marker</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>:00</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocals enter</td>
<td>:09</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outro/Transition to “Fatal Tragedy”</td>
<td>:53</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through My Words is a short piano and vocal interlude that lies between “Strange Déjà Vu” and “Fatal Tragedy.” Musically, it serves as an introduction to “Fatal Tragedy,” setting up a G major to which “Fatal Tragedy” then moves to the relative minor.
The second time on the album that two separate songs make up a single musical unit, Scene 3 is connected both musically and lyrically. Lyrically, it is the beginning of Nicholas’s understanding of the nature of his dreams. The question he asks in “Strange Déjà Vu,” “Could I have lived in that other world?” is answered in quiet contemplation in “Through My Words,” and then investigated further in “Fatal Tragedy.” Scenes 1 and 2 are concerned with Nicholas groping for understanding, while Scene 3 is him accepting the knowledge that he had a past life and beginning the exploration of what that means.

The sudden direction in Nicholas’s search is reflected in the harmonic stasis of Scene 3. While “Overture” and “Strange Déjà Vu” both move through vast harmonic spaces and start and end in keys remote from one another, all of Scene 3 is a move from a major key to its relative minor.

Though “Through My Words” is the shortest track on the album, and harmonically tame in comparison to the rest of the songs, the rhythmic interaction of the piano and vocals bear examination. The first measure contains the syncopated ostinato that runs through the majority of the track. Figure 4-1 shows the four measure Intro before the entrance of the vocals at Marker B.

**Figure 4-1**
However flowing the song may seem, the time is metronomically precise. The sensation of freedom in the time is created by a metric dissonance between the two hands of the piano and how the vocals interact with this dissonance.

Every two measures, the left hand anchors both the time and the harmony with a strongly accented bass note, usually doubled in octaves. Against this two measure pulse, the right hand plays a descending arpeggio almost exclusively on the offbeats. (see arrows on Figure 4-1)

This rhythmic figure is found in the right hand for nearly the entire song. Even as the melodic shape of the right hand varies and more dense dyads and eventually fully voiced chords are found towards the end of the piece, the rhythm remains largely a series of quarter notes on the offbeats.

Figure 4-2
The vocals enter on the fourth measure on the downbeat, together with an articulation in the left hand. This entrance is jarring, as the presence of another part indicates a sudden preference of one pulse stream over the other. However, the accents in the vocals are all on the offbeats, lining up with the rhythm of the right hand. The vocal melody shifts back and forth between the pulse stream of the left and right hands throughout the song. Every vocal phrase except one begins on the beat. Conversely, only the last vocal phrase ends on the beat. These two abhorrent phrases are shown in Figure 4-2, and a more typical phrase is shown in Figure 4-3. Thus the vocals tend to start phrases with the left hand pulse stream and end phrases in the right hand pulse stream. The way in which the vocals shift between pulse streams varies considerably. No two vocal phrases have the exact same rhythm.

The right hand does vary the quarter note pulse, especially as the song approaches the end of the lyrics at :53. However, only in three places does the right hand have an articulation with the left hand bass notes that occur every two measures. Notably, in none of these cases do the vocals also have an attack. In two cases the vocals do not strongly articulate the second note of a slurred figure, and in the third the vocals enter on beat two. These three measures are shown in Figure 4-4 with the
coinciding parts circled. Arrows point to slurs in the vocals, indicating a lack of attack. Therefore, in no place in the entire track do the vocals and both hands of the piano have an attack at the beginning of the most clearly defined pulse stream, that being bass that sounds every two measures in the piano left hand.\(^\text{16}\)

**Figure 4-4**

![Musical notation](image)

In the first two examples the left and right hands coincide, as circled. However, the vocals do not have an articulation on the downbeat.

In the third example, again the right and left hand coincide, but the vocals have a rest.

The sudden change of texture and harmonic motion mirrors a realization in the narrative. It could be that this represents Nicholas reflecting on the impact of newly acquired knowledge, while the rhythmic dissonance indicates his inability to yet fully comprehend how this effects his life. In addition, the song’s slow, contemplative nature hints at mourning. Nicholas’s realization of a past life inherently brings with it the realization that his past incarnation has died. Though this is not stated outright in the lyrics of “Through My Words,” it is explored in “Through Her Eyes.”

---

\(^{16}\) In certain places both *hands* and the vocals coincide, but this is not the same as every *part* lining up. In these cases the left hand is playing a separate voice from the bass that sounds every two measures.
Scene Three, II

Fatal Tragedy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band enters</td>
<td>:35</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse 1</td>
<td>:47</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus (E major)</td>
<td>1:46</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlude</td>
<td>2:06</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse 2</td>
<td>2:24</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I tried to get [...]”</td>
<td>2:51</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus (E major)</td>
<td>3:25</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental Section</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riff A</td>
<td>3:50</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polymeter section</td>
<td>4:11</td>
<td>J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riff B</td>
<td>4:32</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guitar solo</td>
<td>4:38</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesizer solo</td>
<td>5:13</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outro</td>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypnotist/Piano</td>
<td>6:40</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the first part of Scene 3, “Through My Words,” Nicholas comes to the understanding that the girl in his dreams is his past incarnation. In the latter part, “Fatal Tragedy,” he begins to look for information about who this girl was. The lyrics of “Fatal Tragedy” are about Nicholas meeting an old man who tells him of a girl named Victoria who died under mysterious circumstances.
Like “Through My Words,” and in contrast to “Overture” and “Strange DÉJÀ Vu,” “Fatal Tragedy” does not venture far from its starting E minor. However static it may be, the opening chords play with expectations of key.

A tonic chord containing a tritone is no stranger to heavy metal, and it is a crucial part of Scenes. Both the main riff to “Overture” and the opening riff in “Strange Déjà Vu” make use of the tritone through the Lydian mode. However, the use the tritone in “Fatal Tragedy” is very different than either of those riffs. The introduction and Verse 1 (Markers A-C) are based on the progression i, i°. This type of chromatic neighbor motion is found throughout this track as a means of creating motion while remaining harmonically static. It is also the same neighbor motion, scale degree 5 to b5, that transformed D major into D Lydian in “Overture.” Here that motion is used with the minor third instead of the major third, keeping the tritone relationship but moving away from Lydian. This will become the means to finally get back to D major in “Beyond This Life.”

The ambiguous nature of a diminished chord, particularly the multiple ways it can resolve, provides an unusual means of getting to the dominant chord in the verses. Scale degree b5 gets reinterpreted as #4 in an applied diminished chord (with no third) of V. The dominant then winds its way back to the tonic with a descending bassline in the following progression:

||: Em, E°, Em, E°(A#97), B, B7/A, Em/G :||

The chorus (Markers D and H) moves to the parallel major, but it is a strange E major. For one, the E° that precedes it does not typically resolve to the F#m which
begins the chorus, and thus the Chorus begins on ii instead of tonic. This transition is accomplished through two chromatic sixteenth notes seen in Figure 5-1.

**Figure 5-1**

```
\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure_5_1.png}
\caption{Chorus:}
\end{figure}
```

Not only does the Chorus not start on a tonic chord, it is the only place in the song to go an extended period of time without a tonic E minor chord. It is not just because of the shift of mode; nowhere in the Chorus is E major a stable chord, either. It opens on the ii of E major, and begins with a series of rising thirds: ii, IV, vi. Next is an E major chord, another rising third, but in first inversion. The roots of these chords outline an F#m7 arpeggio, similar to the D♭7 arpeggio of the Strange Déjà Vu progression.

The stanza ends on another rising third, but this time from the bass note G# up a third to B, which forms the root of a B major chord, the dominant of E major. Instead of resolving to a tonic chord, an instrumental line sets up the return to the ii with a double neighbor figure around F#. The progression thus points very strongly to E major, beginning on a ii chord and ending on the V, but the only time an E major chord appears it is weakened by inversion.
Instead of a typical repeat on the second stanza of the Chorus, there is an abrupt meter change to 6/8 (♩=♩). The first two measures are nearly identical to the first two measures of the first stanza, except with a quarter note removed. The transformation is shown in Figure 5-2.

Figure 5-2

Figure 5-3
The next measures, which covers the C#m and E/G# chords, has similar rhythmic variations rhythmic variations. After the last vocal phrase is an extension not found in the first stanza. At the end of first stanza the IV appears briefly in the guitar simultaneously with an anticipation in the vocals so that it is not a stable sonority but merely passing motion in the guitar on the way to the V chord. At the end of the second stanza, shown in Figure 5-3, more emphasis is placed on the IV. Thus, the E/G# that precedes it functions similarly to a V\(^6/5\)/IV, though there is the major seventh in the vocals.

As the vocal phrase ends, A major moves up by a third to C# minor. The following chord is somewhat ambiguous. The chord in the synthesizer is identical what Rudess plays over the E/G#, only this time no instrument plays an E, making this just as likely a G# minor chord. If it is interpreted as E major, it is a rise of a third from C# minor. If it is interpreted as G# minor, then the B major chord which follows it is a rise of a third. Thus, with this ambiguity, the entire second stanza is a series of rising thirds, save the resolution of one psuedo-applied dominant (indicated by the italics in Figure 5-4).

**Figure 5-4**

\[
\text{ii} \rightarrow \text{IV} \rightarrow \text{vi} \rightarrow I(V^{6/5}/IV) \rightarrow \text{IV} \rightarrow \text{vi} \rightarrow I(iii) \rightarrow V
\]

This is also one of the few places in the album where the lyrics may not by from the viewpoint of any of the characters. Though the lyrics printed in the liner notes of the album give no indication a change of perspective has occurred, these words do not seem to fit the searching, unsure character of Nicholas at this point in the narrative.
The shift to the relative major further emphasizes the disconnect from the rest of the song.\footnote{17 The only concrete evidence that any of the lyrics are from a viewpoint not of the characters is a brief statement by John Petrucci in the commentary of the \textit{Live Scenes from New York} DVD.}

The Interlude (Marker E) shifts back and forth between B (V) and Em (i). Each time a passage with bass, guitar and keyboard surround the chord’s root with a neighbor on either side before arpeggiating the chord. The triads are circled in Figure 5-5.

\textbf{Figure 5-5}

![Figure 5-5](image1)

Following the B arpeggio, the synthesizer, set to a pipe organ patch, plays two chords: D\#\textsuperscript{7} and B7 shown in Figure 5-6. The chord in fact doesn’t go anywhere, it is simply a B7(add \(\flat 9\))(no root) that resolves to a B7. I use “(add \(\flat 9\))” instead of B7 \(\flat 9\) because the C\# isn’t treated as a stable note. It is rather an incomplete upper neighbor to the B. Once again, surface features create motion in a structurally static passage.

\textbf{Figure 5-6}

![Figure 5-6](image2)
The guitar riff that follows the E minor arpeggios is a similar neighbor motion. The first time, an F# and A dyad (which is bent up a quarter step) forms the lower neighbor of a G and B dyad, the third and fifth of E minor. The second time, the same F# and A dyad is trilled with G and B, before falling to E and G.

This then leads to another unison passage outlining the chords Am, Em/G and B7/F# (with a G passing tone). The lowest notes in each of these arpeggios moves smoothly from scale degree 4 back to 1 and sets up Verse 2.

Harmonically speaking, the Interlude is not necessary. The Chorus (Marker D) is in E minor, as is the Interlude (Marker E) which appears after this transitional section. The Chorus even ends on the dominant. It could have been inserted merely for length’s sake. However, there is another possibility. Texturally it would have been quite a shock to go from the smooth, almost uplifting Chorus to the rhythmic, chromatic, creeping Verse 2. The Interlude serves to bridge the two, in addition to adding length and variety typical of progressive genres and creating a buffer between viewpoints if the Chorus is indeed a different point of view.

Verse 2 (Marker F) has little in common with Verse 1. The guitar and bass play a rhythmic figure that remains on E5 while the synthesizer and vocals outline a progression against the guitar and bass ostinato shown in Figure 5-7.

Figure 5-7.1

\[\textbf{||:Em, F\#7/E, Am/E, Em :||} \]

\[\textbf{i \quad II7 \quad iv \quad i} \]
This progression is in the miniature what the track is on a larger scale: static. It is a chromatic elaboration on the common i, iv, i neighbor motion. The iv chord is preceded by the II7 chord. A# and C# are chromatic upper neighbors to A natural and C natural. Thus F#7 does not function as a dominant seventh chord, but instead a voice leading waystation on the way to the neighboring iv chord. Additionally, major quality II chord and passing #4 are associated with the Lydian mode. This is another transformation of Lydian ideas introduced earlier in the album by using similar ideas outside of the Lydian mode, like the i, i⁰ progression in the Intro.

At Marker G, there is a move to the dominant. The guitar and bass play a melody based on E harmonic minor while the synthesizer plays the second half of the progression from Verse 1: B, B⁷/A, Em/G. This is one of the few musical connections between the two verses.

Following the second Chorus, the synthesizer plays a figure that once again demonstrates the defining element of this track, illusion of movement.

---

18 All chords in this passage have a B sounding during from the guitar ostinato them which is ignored in this analysis.
The passage, shown in Figure 5-8, is just an E minor chord with a chromatic line running through it. All the instances of E \(\frac{\flat}{2}\) descend to B against a G and B dyad pedal in a line that recalls the C#, C natural, B descent in the upper voice of the vocal line of Figure 5-7. The figure ends back on an E minor chord without functionally going anywhere.

The Instrumental Section, which begins at Marker I, consists mostly of two riffs with various solos over them. The first riff, Riff A, opens the section and is shown in Figure 5-9.1. Before Riff B is a polymetric section that will be discussed momentarily (Marker J). Following the polymetric section is Riff B, a rhythmic figure on the single note F# shown in Figure 5-9.2 (Marker K). In this first appearance, there is a synthesizer part overlaid on Riff B.
Figure 5-9.1

The polymeter lasts for only a few measures beginning at 4:11. The guitar, bass and drums play a rhythmic figure on the note E in 6/4, indicated by the lower staff in Figure 5-10, while the synthesizer plays straight sixteenth notes in 4/4 shown in the upper staff. The meter is further confused by the 3+3+3+3+2+2 accent pattern in the synthesizer and the fact that the guitar, bass and drum pattern is one sixteenth note longer than a beat.
Polymeter is common in Dream Theater’s music, though it rarely plays a major role. This brief flourish is typical of the band’s style. What is unusual is that the drums are playing in unison with other instruments. Typically Mike Portnoy will not play the same pattern as the other instrumentalists, occasionally being the only instrument in a different time, such as at 12:04 in “Home” when the melodic instruments play four measures consisting of 3/8, 5/8, 3/8 and 5/8, over which the drums play two measures of 4/4. In “Scenes,” polymeter tends to arise in areas on turmoil, but this passage being well segregated from any sections containing lyrics makes it difficult to speculate on exact meaning. “Fatal Tragedy” is Nicholas receiving cryptic information being left on his own to figure out what that information means for him. As such, the complex Instrument Section as a whole could represent his struggle to process new information.

The keyboard then switches to playing descending arpeggios with the same rhythm as the rest of the band. Jordan Rudess plays two E minor arpeggios, two F# major arpeggios, and then a final E minor arpeggio, as shown in Figure 5-11.
This F# major chord, not native to E minor, not only foreshadows the F# riff to come, but predicts the nature of the solos that will be over it. The note F# is in the key of E minor, and as Riff B consists of only that note, it could imply several chords, particularly F#° or B⁴/₃. However, these F# major arpeggios suggests modal borrowing, specifically the II from Lydian, a mode which plays a significant role in Scenes. The synthesizer figure over the first appearance of Riff B (4:32) is also not diatonically in E minor. It is taken from the polymetric section (Figure 5-10), now transposed up one whole step to F# minor.

The guitar solo makes use of the ambiguity of Riff B, tending more towards diatonicism over Riff A and chromaticism and bending notes over Riff B.

**Figure 5-11**

![Figure 5-11](image)

**Figure 5-12.1 Excerpt from guitar solo over Riff A**

![Figure 5-12.1](image)

**Figure 5-12.2 Excerpt from guitar solo over Riff B** - note the bends and slides

![Figure 5-12.2](image)
The synthesizer solo contains chromaticism and bent notes throughout, both over Riff A and Riff B.\textsuperscript{19} There is still a difference between the nature of the solo over the respective riffs, and it is found in the note choice. Where the guitar solo favored A#\textsuperscript{b}, implying F# major, the synthesizer solo favors A\textsuperscript{b}, implying F# minor.\textsuperscript{20} This difference is a larger scale reflection the synthesizer parts from the beginning of the Instrumental Section, as it plays F# major in the polymetric section and F# minor over the first appearance of Riff B. Additionally, the A#/A natural dichotomy appears earlier, in Verse 2.

Also of note is the form of the solo sections, shown in Figure 5-13. When both Riff A and Riff B are first presented at Markers I and K, respectively, they are four measure entities. When these riffs become the backing of the guitar solo at Marker L they again appear in these four measure forms. However, when the backing instruments return to Riff A, they play only the last three measures and likewise play Riff B for only three measures. Each cycle removes another measure, increasing the harmonic rhythm of the guitar solo as it progresses. A four measure transition on a B5 chord leads to the synthesizer solo, which reverses this pattern. The accompaniment begins with the harmonic rhythm at it’s fastest: only one measure of each riff. Measures are then added back to the beginning of the riff on each cycle.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} Including various uses of a “ribbon controller,” a midi controller which is in this case set to pitch bend, allowing bends and slides not possible on guitar or bass.

\textsuperscript{20} Though, due to the chromatic nature of the guitar solo over Riff B, it also frequently uses A\textsuperscript{b}.

\textsuperscript{21} This is explained in both Mike Portnoy’s Liquid Drum Theater DVD and in the commentary to Live Scenes from New York, where it is referred to by the band as “the shrink and grow.”
Figure 5-13
Solos
Guitar Solo accompaniment
  Riff A - Four measures
  Riff B - Four measures
  Riff A - Last three measures
  Riff B - Three measures
  Riff A - Last two measures
  Riff B - Two measures
  Riff A - Last measure
  Riff B - One measure
Transition on B5 - Four measures
Synthesizer Solo accompaniment
  Riff A - Last measure
  Riff B - One measure
  Riff A - Last two measures
  Riff B - Two measures
  Riff A - Last three measures
  Riff B - Three measures
  Riff A - Four measures
  Riff B - Four measures

Unusual and complex forms are another Dream Theater staple that, like polymeter, is often present and rarely prominent. Though not examined in this paper, “The Dance of Eternity” contains several instances of unusual form, including a smaller scale “shrink and grow.”

After the final instance of Riff B behind the synthesizer solo, now back to its original four measure form, there is a move to the dominant, B7, at 5:54. This ends with guitar, bass and synthesizer all playing a unison figure. After landing on the tonic, there is one beat of silence before the Outro (Marker N) commences.

Though the texture of the Outro is a radical departure from anything before, it is not wholly disconnected from the rest of the track. The synthesizer and guitar play a

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22 From :57 to 1:05 a riff grows that shrinks when it returns from 1:19 to 1:24.
pattern in harmony that is rhythmically based on the synthesizer part from the polymeter section with 3+3+3+3+2+2 accents.

The bass focuses on three notes for the first part of the Outro: 2 measures of B, 2 measures of A, and 4 measures of E, implying a V, iv, i progression, which then repeats. However, both guitar and synthesizer employ frequent D#s throughout the entire progression, making these sixteen measures a prolongation of dominant harmony.23

After these sixteen measures, the Outro begins moving back to E minor by having the melodic instruments return to using D♯s. The harmony breaks down here, as the bass begins playing a melodic line that outlines no particular chord. This ambiguity blurs the move back from the dominant harmony of the beginning of the Outro to tonic E minor harmony. The lack of clear dominant-tonic movement softens the return to the tonic, which slightly weakens E minor as tonic. This is one of the ways the upcoming key change in “Beyond This Life” is made less jarring.

Three measures of an Em7sus4 and a measure of 2/4 recalling Riff A resolve to an E minor in the synthesizer as the rest of the band drops out. The song ends with the synthesizer playing the i, i° progression and a voice, just as it began, further emphasizing the static nature of this song. However, this time the voice is that of the Hypnotherapist who ends the track and creates the transition to “Beyond This Life,” appropriately enough, with the word “transition.” The shift from the synthesizer’s final E minor chord to the G♯5 that opens “Beyond This Life” is radical and abrupt. It is most

23 It should also be noted that E minor with D#s is harmonic minor, and using harmonic minor as a stable scale is not uncommon in heavy metal.
likely intended to be striking, but musically it is kept from being shocking to the point of
distraction by the fact that the last phrase of the Hypnotherapist, “but only a transition,”
occurs sans accompaniment. The lack of pitches serves to provide an amorphous
buffer out of which anything musical could arise.
Scene Four

Beyond This Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Timestamp</th>
<th>Marker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>:00</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse 1</td>
<td>:45</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus 1</td>
<td>1:12</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse 2</td>
<td>1:37</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus 2</td>
<td>2:04</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge 1</td>
<td>2:26</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlude</td>
<td>2:58</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guitar solo</td>
<td>3:12</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse 3</td>
<td>3:26</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus 3</td>
<td>4:25</td>
<td>J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge 2</td>
<td>4:50</td>
<td>J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge 3 - D major</td>
<td>5:23</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental Section</td>
<td>5:55</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesizer solo</td>
<td>6:25</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guitar solo</td>
<td>7:20</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesizer solo</td>
<td>8:26</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Zappa-esque” duet</td>
<td>9:06</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Chorus” duet</td>
<td>9:43</td>
<td>Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge 4 (Heavy)</td>
<td>10:04</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge 5 - D major</td>
<td>10:34</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outro</td>
<td>11:04</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the commentary to *Live Scenes From New York*, John Petrucci remarks that “[Beyond This Life] is probably the most interesting musically.” At 11:22, it is the longest track in Act 1, contains a lengthy instrumental passage of solos and complex unison passages, and contrasting sections with intricate vocal harmonies. On its own, it is an interesting song. However, the most interesting thing about it may be that, both musically and in the narrative, it is the culmination of all that has come before.

Nicholas has determined that the girl in his dreams, Victoria, is his past incarnation. Lyrically, “Beyond This Life” is the newspaper account of the death of Victoria. It thus represents an immediate understanding on the part of Nicholas. In discovering and reading this newspaper article, he gains the knowledge that his past life was a real person and learns the story of her life and death. Though he has yet to come to terms with how this effects him now, this revelation is the answer he has been searching for the entire album up to this point, and is the story that is elaborated on for the majority of Act 2.

Likewise, it is the musical coming-together of the preceding songs. The tritone, the interval that shaped the harmonic trajectory of “Overture” and the main riff to every scene thus far, permeates the track, being found in nearly every riff. Additionally, it is now incorporated into the song on a larger scale in the interval between the Bridge in D (first minor, and later major) and the rest of the song in G# minor. The same harmonic motion that “Overture” spans from beginning to end is now found within a song, integrated into it as the root movement between two key areas.

The track opens with a distorted guitar riff in 5/4. The riff is punk-like in that it consists solely of a series of power chords in a steady rhythm, reminiscent of the verse.
to “Seeing Double at the Triple Rock” by NoFx or “When I Come Around” by Green Day, though faster than either of those songs and with a typical progressive idiosyncrasy of being in odd meter.\textsuperscript{24} The psuedo-punk nature of the opening riff, along with the sudden shift from the E minor of “Fatal Tragedy,” clearly mark this song as something very different from the rest of the album. Nowhere else does this texture in the guitar of constant, steady power chords reappear. In fact, it appears nowhere in else in Dream Theater’s studio albums.\textsuperscript{25} Perhaps the different texture is representative of unusual context of this song, being the content of a newspaper article, or as will be discussed more below, the fact that the information contained therein is false.

The riff is almost entirely diatonic to G# minor, except the G5 chord. Here is the first tritone in “Beyond This Life,” as the fifth of G \( \frac{5}{3} \) is D \( \frac{5}{3} \), scale degree \( \frac{5}{3} \) of G# minor, as circled in Figure 6-1. It is this tritone, between G# and D \( \frac{5}{3} \), that occurs most frequently in the song and becomes the most significant motive. Local occurrences are mirrored in the larger conflict between the key areas of G# and D.

\textsuperscript{24} Though this texture has come to be associated with punk through guitar magazines and self-taught guitar culture, it is in fact extremely rare in the 1970s and 80s, the era most associated with the genre. It begins becoming more common in the 1990s punk revival with bands like the above mentioned Green Day and NoFx and in subsequent punk subgenres like the pop-punk of the early 21st century.

\textsuperscript{25} 1:26 in the title track to A Change of Seasons and :13 in “Learning to Live” off Images and Words are as close as they ever come to this texture elsewhere, and neither of those instances could be described as “punk-like.”
The riff cycles in a four measure pattern: three measures of Figure 6-1 and one measure of a group of descending power chords. The pattern as a whole outlines yet another tritone. The F#/C tritone is found both in the roots of adjacent chords, noted in Figure 6-2, and the fact that the roots cover the chromatic scale from F# to C.

The guitar and synthesizer part to the next riff, which begins at :20, contain several tritones. The guitar and synthesizer have the G#/D tritone and additionally the guitar outlines a B#/F# tritone as circled in Figure 6-3.
When the guitar and bass returns to the first riff at :31, the synthesizer adds a part with a percussive, kalimba-like sound. Though this part never explicitly plays the G#/D b flat tritone as a sonority or melodic outline, it does contain numerous D b flat s, circled in Figure 6-4. These occur against the B5 chord, creating a i, iii progression. This progression is used in later Dream Theater albums to connote evil or tragedy.

In Verse 1 (Marker B), the guitar drops out, and with it the power chords that provided the D b flat . The bass continues playing the <G#, B, G b flat , F#> riff, only now it is treated as a bass ostinato while the synthesizer outlines a four measure progression in

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26 As heard on “In the Presence of Enemies, part 2” from the 2007 album Systematic Chaos, and “Nightmare to Remember” from the 2009 album Black Clouds and Silver Linings.
dyads. This part provides the G#/D tritone, now occurring as a sonority shown in Figure 6-5.

**Figure 6-5**

![Figure 6-5](image)

Chorus 1 (Marker C) is marked by a reentrance of the distorted guitar. It consists of a iv, VI progression that alternates a riff based on the bass ostinato from the verse. If the ostinato is treated as the i chord, this is the same “rising thirds” progression from the Chorus of “Fatal Tragedy.”

The motive now appears in the vocals as seen in Figure 6-6. D is the upper part of a double neighbor figure, except that when it resolves to C#, now C# is dissonant against an E major chord. Thus the vocals continue descending to B and then G#, outlining a tritone.

**Figure 6-6**

![Figure 6-6](image)

The second line of Chorus 1 starts the same as the first but veers off to a different ending. After the E major chord, instead of returning to the beginning riff the harmony moves to D#, the V. The D# major then moves by a tritone to A major. The V
of D, this chord points towards the eventual move to D minor in Bridge 1. However, weakened by the tritone approach, it doesn’t sound like a dominant, and indeed it sinks by a whole step back to G# minor. This progression, E major->D# major->A major, appears in every Chorus in “Beyond This Life” and hints very strongly at a move to D, yet it never manages to push the song into a different key.

Following Chorus 1 is a return of the riff from :20, and then Verse 2 (Marker D), which is much the same as Verse 1, with the addition of a guitar part. Instead of the distortion from the Intro, it is clean with a wah-wah effect and bounces between being panned hard left and hard right. It first doubles the bass, G# and B, panned left. The last two notes of the ostinato, instead of G♭ and F#, it plays D♭ and D#, not only the ever-present scale degree ♭5, but immediately contrasted with 5.

At 1:50, the guitar part changes slightly. The G# and B remain, while the D♭ and D# move up a minor third to E# and F#. The four notes are now: G#, B, E#, F#. There is now a tritone present in the interval between the adjacent notes B and E#. Both guitar parts are shown in Figure 6-7, with the tritone in the latter one circled.

**Figure 6-7**

Chorus 2 (Marker E) is identical to Chorus 1 with different lyrics until the end of the second line where there is an extension that serves as the transition to Bridge 1. The second line ends with the D# major and A major chords from Chorus 1 that failed to
move the song into a new key. Where Chorus 1 had the A major chord resolve to the riff from :20, in Chorus 1 resolves by a rising third to C# minor to start a third line. Again, C# minor moves to E major, and then D# major, but on the D# major chord begins a very different transition that will finally successfully transition to D.

The end of Chorus 2 is a series of dotted half notes that move from D# major to A major shown in Figure 6-8. An ascending line in guitar and synthesizer outline a larger tritone from D# to A. Against this moves another line in contrary motion from A# to E that creates smooth voice leading through this transition to a very remote key. The bass also follows the rising line but then abandons it on the fourth chord to play a C#, the leading tone to D, creating the melodic interval of a tritone between F## and C#.

Figure 6-8

The entire song has been leading up to this transition. In a sense, it is what the album has been leading to, as it is the undoing of “Overture.” Whereas “Overture” moved from the opening key D major to A Lydian, here G# moves to D, reversing the

27 The lines in contrary motion are indicated on the synthesizer part. They are also present in the guitar line, but not indicated for the sake of legibility.
earlier root motion. The last chord in the above series of dotted half notes is the \( V^6 \) of D, and could resolve to either D major or D minor. Thus the resolution to D minor is a return but not a completely fulfilling one, as it is not (yet) the starting key of D major.

Bridge 1 (Marker F) is in D minor, and here the tritone also abounds. Most obviously, it is in the frequent note A\(_\flat\)\, scale degree \( b5 \), but tritones also exist in sonorities, for instance between the notes B and F in the second chord, B\(^\flat\).

The simple, repetitive guitar part in 3/4 and the measured vocal line belie complex harmonies born of a pedal figure in the guitar. The pedal figure causes the notes D, E and F ring out through each chord. The E however is a passing tone that rings out because of the idiomatic guitar technique of using open strings.

Harmonic change is marked almost exclusively by a change in the lowest note of the guitar part (which is doubled by the bass after the first eight measures). This bassline is also notable for juxtaposing G\#/A\(_\flat\) and G\(_\flat\), indicated in Figure 6-8. The G\(_\flat\) native to D minor is surrounded by the G\# of the primary motive.

**Figure 6-8**

![Figure 6-8](image)

Perhaps the most striking instance of the G#/D tritone is the vocal line at the end of each stanza in Bridges 1, 2 and 4. It descends by a tritone from D to end the phrase on G\#, seen in Figure 6-9.
There also is another tritone in this same passage, occurring simultaneously.

The bassline moves in parallel major thirds from the D-A $\flat$ descent, from B $\flat$ to E. This is doubled in the synthesizer with the direction inverted.

**Figure 6-9**

![Figure 6-9](image)

The harmony here is a D$^o$ triad with an E in the bass. Thus, each stanza of Bridges 1, 2 and 4 ends on a highly unstable sonority with scale degree $\flat$ 5 in the melody. After the first stanza, this diminished chord then resolves back to D minor for the second stanza, creating a i$^o$, i progression, much like in “Fatal Tragedy.”

The transitions from G$\#$ minor to D minor are elaborate, while the transitions back to G$\#$ minor are minimalist. Here, a simple chromatic line from E to G$\#$ serves to return the song to G$\#$ minor. This could be related to what the two keys represent. As stated in the chapter on “Regression,” Nicholas’s Theme is always in D major and thus the present, while the majority of “Beyond This Life” is in G$\#$ minor, and thus G$\#$ represents the time of Victoria’s death, 1928. Therefore, as “Beyond This Life” is a

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28 The synthesizer plays different parts on the various repeats of this chord progression. The part shown is a composite of several different parts. Anything discussed is present every time.
newspaper article from 1928, its natural state is G# and it requires effort on the part of Nicholas to move it into the present and relate it to his life.

The Guitar Solo at Marker H is a frantic, chromatic burst of sixteenth notes that contrasts sharply with both Bridge 1 and the Interlude and precede it. The first note is D♭ against a G#5 chord, the primary motive of this song. The D♭ is immediately followed with D# and a number of times throughout the eight measure solo the two notes D and D# are found in proximity.

The chromatic nature of the solo could easily threaten to break down any sense of tonality, yet that doesn’t happen in the first three measures. However, the fourth measure starts with a C major arpeggio over a C5 chord, but quickly devolves into chromatic wandering illustrated in Figure 6-10. Three chromatic line rise in nonfunctional counterpoint to the descending chromatic accompaniment. This chromaticism continues and is magnified in the second four measures, where the first four measures are repeated and an additional guitar harmonizes the solo in parallel major sixths.

**Figure 6-10**
Out of the chromatic guitar solo Verse 3 (Marker I) emerges with an abrupt time and feel change. The vocals for Verses 1 and 2 are extremely static, while the vocal line for Verse 3 moves quickly through a wide ambitus, occasionally employing leaps of an octave or a seventh and much less repetitive rhythms. What it doesn’t have is the G#/D tritone.

A possible reason for this lull in the motive which is so ubiquitous elsewhere in the song is a change in the lyric content. Though ostensibly still the text of the newspaper article, the lyrics at this point differ from the rest of the article in two ways. What comes before it is a witness account and what comes after it is evidence, though the origin of this information is never revealed. Secondly, it is the only part of the newspaper account which ultimately turns out to be true after Nicholas finds more information in Act 2. If the tritone motive represents deceit, something which will be explored more below, then the fact that this passage is true is reflected in the absence of the motive.

All this changes at 4:01. The feel in the drums change, the vocals return to a static, repetitive melody, and tritones return to the instrumental parts. However, the tritones are not the G#/D tritone. Shown in Figures 11.1 and 11.2, in the guitar and bass part an F#/B# tritone appears and in the synthesizer an F/B tritone appears.

Figure 6-11.1

Figure 6-11.2
Following this section the Chorus material is reworked for Chorus 3 (Marker J). A return of the second riff from the intro starts at 4:24, now with the drums in triple meter. This riff, as it did in the intro, contains a G#/D tritone. This riff, alternates with vocal passages over the same iv, VI, i progression from Verse 1 in duple meter.

At 4:46, instead of resolving to G# minor the E major chord slips down a half step to D# major, just as it at the end of Chorus 1 and 2. This is followed by a series of arpeggios that imply the D#, E#, D#6, A6 progression that earlier made the transition to Bridge 1 (Figure 6-12). Here it serves the same function: the transition into Bridge 2.

**Figure 6-12**

Bridge 2 is much like Bridge 1, except that the end of the second stanza, instead of the D⁰/E chord, the final two measures are Em7 and A: ii, V in D major. Bridge 3 (Marker U) is finally the return to the starting key of the album, D major.

This moment could be a definitive return to the opening key. One might expect the rest of the Act to be in D major, but that isn’t what happens. The arrival to D major is weakened in two key ways. D minor has already occurred twice in this song, and it is arrived here by mode shift, both events weakening the impact of the arrival. Finally, G# is immediately reasserted, tying this section to the song as a whole and further
weakening any impression that D major is here to stay. The second chord of Bridge 3 is G#\(^{6}_{5}\), creating the motivic G#/D tritone between the first two notes in the bass.\(^{29}\)

The Instrumental Section (Marker U) emerges out of the D major Bridge with no transition. This is not jarring only because of the prior G#/D motive and the use of the G#\(^{6}_{5}\) chord immediately after D major in Bridge 3. This creates the allowance of G# after a D major chord, and the use of a previous figure, the 5/4 riff from the Intro and Verse 1, grounds the listener in familiar gestures to complete the transition back to G# minor.

The Instrumental Section is lengthy; at around four minutes it takes up the bulk of the track. It opens with guitar playing the bass ostinato from the verses. This gets altered to 12/8 and becomes the accompaniment for a synthesizer solo heavily influenced by the solo in the middle of Money by Pink Floyd.\(^{30}\)

**Figure 6-13 -** Comparison of beginning of Instrumental Section to the accompaniment behind synthesizer solo.

![Figure 6-13](image)

The solo creates a bluesy sound reminiscent of David Gilmour’s famous solo by employing scale degree b5 as a passing tone. However, Rudess’s use of a pitch wheel creates a different effect than any of the tritones used thus far in “Beyond This

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\(^{29}\) The G# could be ignored as an incomplete, chromatic upper neighbor were it not for the synthesizer and vocals filling out the chord with a B b, completing a fully realized G#\(^{6}_{5}\).

\(^{30}\) Both this influence and the Frank Zappa influences mentioned below are discussed by the band on the commentary to the *Live Scenes From New York* DVD.
Life.” No D ♭s appear in the solo as a note, but only in a portamento between C# and D#.

The end of the progression is modified from a typical blues progression. First, it is a sixteen measure solo instead of the most typical twelve-bar blues. Instead of V, IV, I, the progression ends with II5, ♭ II5, ♭ VII5. ii and ♭ II (in the form of the Neapolitan Sixth) are both common predominant chords. ♭ II5 moves as a Neapolitan Sixth traditionally resolves, to the dominant. However, a N6 resolves to V and this ♭ II5 resolves ♭ VII, the rock dominant, which then passes through ♭ VII5 back to i. This is similar to the double predominant->dominant progression from “Strange Déjà Vu.” This time the two predominant chords are II5 and ♭ II5. The chromatic passing ♭ VII5, G5, includes D ♭. It resolves up to G# minor, once again creating the G#/D ♭ motive. The last four measures are similar to the preceding four, with III5 substituted for the ♭ II5. This creates a III5, ♭ VII5, ♭ VII5 progression, very similar to the Intro, with the last two chords reversed.

The use of the bass ostinato and here the appearance of the progression from the Intro are connections to verse material. Though it then goes far afield from any prior material, the Instrumental Section eventually makes its way to chorus material. Bookended by verse and chorus material, and followed by Bridge 3, the Instrumental Section formally serves as a replacement for a vocal verse and chorus.
Following the synthesizer solo the meter changes to 4/4, and the guitar and bass based on the G# blues scale. At Marker U this moves up a minor third to B blues and becomes the accompaniment for a guitar solo in B minor. It is treated exactly like the G# minor riff is for the preceding synthesizer solo and outlines the exact same modified blues progression, with one exception.

When the blues progression moves to the iv chord, E minor, the guitar heavily emphasizes G#, the major third of the chord, never playing G except as part of chromatic lines until the harmony returns to the i chord. Additionally, in the modified ending progression, each chord is this time treated as a dominant seventh chord as opposed to power chords, so G#s appear in both the II7 and the VII7 chord.

**Figure 6-14** - Excerpt from guitar solo over iv chord.

This is another example of the G#/D motive. D s are already present in B minor and briefly G#s appear. The presence of G#s only over the certain chords highlights the motive even more than if the entire solo were in B Dorian. For instance, when the G# clashes with the G in the accompaniment over the iv chord.

The guitar solo gives way to a riff in B minor (without either scale degree b5 or b7). Very similar to how a riff was introduced and then moved up a minor third for

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31 The term “blues scale” refers to a number of different scales. Here I refer to the minor pentatonic with the addition of scale degree b5: 1, 3, 4, b5, 5, b7. The riff also includes scale degree b7 as a chromatic passing tone.
the guitar solo, here the same thing happens as the riff is moved up to D minor for a
synthesizer solo (Marker U). This solo is odd and disjointed, going through a number of
different textures and contours very quickly, including a passage of parallel augmented
chords.

Unlike the previous two solos, this synthesizer solo is not over a blues
progression, but halfway though the accompaniment moves up a minor third from D
minor to F minor. The first half, in D minor, makes frequent use of the note G#, another
appearance of the G#/D้า motive. The latter half in F minor is significantly less
dissonant, though tritones are plentiful through frequent use of scale degree #4, B้า,
the first measure of which is shown in Figure 6-15.

**Figure 6-15**

![Figure 6-15](image)

The roots of the keys of the various solos in this section spell out a G#°7 chord.
The two blues solos are in G# minor and B minor, and following synthesizer solo starts
in D minor and ends in F minor. Here again is the G#/D้า motive and also another
tritone between B and F. These four notes are a larger representation of the keys of G#
minor and D minor, consisting of the root and third of the tonic chord of those two keys.

As the cycle of rising minor thirds returns to G# the synthesizer solo becomes a
unison duet with guitar. Another Frank Zappa influence modeled after unison passages
like those in “Peaches en Regalia,” the passage is rhythmically complex and harmonically ambiguous. The bass anchors the passage with only the single note G#. Devoid of any realized harmony, the guitar and synthesizer play angular lines that go far afield from G# minor without becoming truly atonal. There are several D♭s, which together with the bass create the G#/D♭ tritone. D♭s in this passage are often highlighted, such as with trills, or as shown in Figure 6-16, a sudden register change.

**Figure 6-16**

![Image](image1)

This duet ends on a trill accompanied by what will become the last two measures of the next section, a riff based on the G# blues scale. At Marker U another guitar and synthesizer unison duet begins over the iv, VI, i progression from the Chorus.

This duet contrasts heavily with the previous, Zappa-influenced duet. The duet at Marker U is rhythmically even and largely diatonic, except for the use of D♭s over the VI chord, which references both the vocal line in Figure 6-6 and the G#/D♭ motive.

**Figure 6-17**

![Image](image2)

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This duet serves as a formal substitute for the Chorus, consisting of the same chord progression, and ending with the transitional chords to the Bridge. The duet breaks from unison into harmony over those transition chords. Shown in Figure 6-18, it outlines the progression by emphasizing chord tones explained in Figure 6-18.

**Figure 6-18**

The song ends with Bridges 4 and 5, nearly identical to 2 and 3 with the addition of a distorted guitar doubling the bass. As the vocals end, the acoustic guitar continues into the Outro (Marker U), and thus the song ends in D major. However, it is a tainted D major that includes the note G#. This taint finally fades as the guitar resolves to a D major chord, and the song continues attacca into “Through Her Eyes” and the return of Nicholas’s Theme.

The tritone wears two hats in this track. The large tritone relationship between the bridges and the rest of the song is the goal of the harmonic trajectory of the album thus far; a solution of no (re)solution. Though the song does end in D major, this hardly feels like a satisfactory return to a home key. It is weakened by several things. For one, Bridge 5 is brief. Additionally, it is a repeat of material already heard in Bridge 3 with a different texture. If anything is to be heard as a return to a home key it is Bridge

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33 This passage shown enharmonically in G minor for the sake of legibility.
3, but obviously, nestled in the middle of the song and arrived at by a parallel mode shift, it is not a gratifying return, either. Instead, the song as a whole serves to incorporate this tritone relationship into itself. The symmetric nature of a tritone, that is, the fact that an interval of three whole steps evenly divides an octave, creates a loop that could conceivably continue *ad infinitum*. This potential infinity fits well with the album’s theme of reincarnation and especially this song with lyrics about eternal recurrence.

On the smaller scale, the tritone is often less obvious. It occurs in melodic intervals (such as Figure 6-6), or simply in an abundance of scale degree $b5$, even when it is not a harmonic tritone (Figure 6-4). These smaller tritones, by virtue of being hidden and historic musical connotation of the tritone with “evil,” reflect the “deceit,” which at this point is hidden from Nicholas.

**Scene Five**

**Through Her Eyes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocal and guitar duet</th>
<th>:00</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>1:05</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse 1</td>
<td>1:39</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse 2</td>
<td>2:38</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge</td>
<td>3:20</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse 3</td>
<td>3:53</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though the word “deceit” is never mentioned in the lyrics of *Scenes*, the presence of deceit in the story could be a references to the three Eternal Dances mentioned in “Metropolis Part 1,” of which Deceit is “the second without end.” The word “deception” does appear in “Home.”
“Through Her Eyes” is a song with a dual purpose. It exists as a song in and of itself in G major with an introduction in the dominant. It also serves as the close of Act 1 with a return of Nicholas’s Theme in D major and texted song proper then serves as a Coda in the IV. “Through Her Eyes” begins with a vocal and guitar duet accompanied by the synthesizer playing Nicholas’s Theme. This duet is the serves as both the introduction to “Through Her Eyes,” setting up a key change to G major, and as the close of the form of Act 1.

The vocals are not by James LaBrie, but a female guest vocalist named Theresa Thomason. Though the vocals here are wordless, and LaBrie previously sung lyrics from Victoria’s point of view in “Strange Déjà Vu,” the sudden appearance of a female voice evokes that of the story’s only female character, Victoria. When Thomason’s voice reappears in “The Spirit Carries On” (in Act 2) this connection is made obvious as she sings lyrics from Victoria’s point of view, but here in the first Act is is more ambiguous. This is perhaps intentional, as Nicholas is not under hypnosis at this point. He is at Victoria’s grave, and perhaps he feels her presence but not in the same tactile way he does when hypnotized.

The duet is over the same progression as “Regression,” twice through Nicholas’s Theme and then IV, V, I in D major. Though where “Regression” was metered and simple, this duet is more fluid. Nothing keeps time and the tempo ebbs and flows. Nicholas’s Theme, and thus the vocal and guitar duet, ends on a D major chord, the V of G major, which gives way to the song proper.
At Marker B, an acoustic guitar, fretless bass and electronic drums enter. In addition to the end of the Intro of “Through Her Eyes,” this also marks the beginning of the Coda to Act 1. In addition to key, it shares the qualities of being static and relatively simple with “Through My Words.” The two songs are Nicholas’s meditation on acquired knowledge and the lack of forward motion in the narrative is mirrored in the lack of harmonic motion.

Other than a Bridge and an Outro, “Through Her Eyes” consists of three verses of largely the same musical material. The harmony for the verses is given in Figure 7-1.

**Figure 7-1.1**

\[
\begin{array}{c}
|\text{I} \rightarrow \text{V}^6 \rightarrow \text{vi7} \rightarrow \text{IV(add9)} :| |
|\text{vi7} \rightarrow \text{V} \rightarrow \text{I} \rightarrow \text{I}^6 \rightarrow \text{vi} \rightarrow \text{IV(add9)}
\end{array}
\]

The verses use numerous common tones, and the guitar voicings create minimal motion. In going from G/B to Em7 Petrucci’s left hand doesn’t move except to mute the D string and simply adds the low E string on the guitar. In fact, the note D sounds throughout except in the Bridge.

The Bridge comprises two phrases that each begin on ii and end in a half cadence so that the tonic is treated never a stable chord. This is very similar to the
Chorus of “Fatal Tragedy,” but in “Through Her Eyes” the Bridge is in the same key as the rest of the song.

As the end of Act 1, it is the Intro that closes the form. This heavily modified and amorphous version of the opening material is an inconclusive ending. It is, however, fitting with the narrative. In “Regression” we may assume Nicholas was relatively comfortable in his life. Through the discovery that his dreams are of his past life that Nicholas’s worldview is upset and his search for more information begins. It is in this confused state that Act 1 ends, and so it is fitting that it end in an inconclusive way. Only later, in Act 2 will Nicholas come to peace with what being reincarnated means for his life. Thus the Coda creates a plagal motion to the IV that sets up Act 2 where Nicholas can explore his past life more. Notably, “The Spirit Carries On,” the song where Nicholas “[finds] out what all of this means,” starts on Nicholas’s Theme and also ends in D major.

The song fades out with a loop of the progression above labeled “Guitar melody” while the guitar plays variations on a melody. Uplifting and happy, in stark contrast to the songs that depict Nicholas groping for answers, this fade out still fails to provide a satisfying conclusion. There is neither the traditional perfect authentic cadence nor any rock analogue. Nicholas’s Theme has reappeared, thus returning the song to the starting key and bringing back the opening material, but the ending does not satisfying the listener’s desire for conclusion. This necessitates more material, and thus Act 2

Nicholas says in “Through Her Eyes” that he has a family, and the sound effects at the end of “Finally Free” indicate he has a car and home. No information is given that would contradict Nicholas having a comfortable life outside of his confusion over his dreams.
begins. This musical necessity reflects Nicholas not yet understanding how the knowledge of his past life will effect his current life.

**Conclusion**

**Figure 8-1**

![Figure 8-1](image)

Figure 8-1 traces the harmonic trajectory of Act 1. The act begins in D major with Nicholas’s Theme. The Main Riff of “Overture” transforms this D major into D Lydian. The change from G♭ to G# then becomes the musical problem that must be solved before Nicholas’s Theme can return. “Strange Déjà Vu” and “Through My Words” play out this G#/G♭ dichotomy, with the verses of “Strange Déjà Vu” in A♭ Lydian and “Through My Words” in G major. “Fatal Tragedy” moves to the relative minor “Through My Words,” and the act the moves back to G#, now the G# minor of “Beyond This Life.”

The G#/D motive in “Beyond This Life” is what finally brings Act 1 back to D major. It is as if “Strange Déjà Vu” moved the wrong way by moving scale degree five, E♭, up a half step to E natural. “Beyond This Life” corrects this by moving scale degree 5, D#/E♭, down a half step to D natural. G# and D natural become intertwined in “Beyond This Life” in the tritone motive. The potentially infinite loop of this tritone relation is broken when the D major of the Bridge 5 moves into Nicholas’s Theme at the beginning of “Through Her Eyes.” The rest of “Through Her Eyes” is just IV neighbor motion to set up Act 2.
The rest of *Scenes From a Memory* and indeed all of Dream Theater’s catalogue offer plenty of room for future scholarship. An analysis of the intentionally complex “The Dance of Eternity” would be fascinating, as would a look at whether or not Act 2 functions as a coherent unit like Act 1. Perhaps a failure to work as a unit relates to the story, as Nicholas dies at the end, or perhaps the fact that the album ends in G# minor is related to the G#/D motive from “Beyond This Life.”

The lyrics of Act 2 are equally interesting. It is possible that Nicholas misinterprets the message Victoria tells him in “The Spirit Carries On.” If when Victoria says “please never let your memory of me disappear” it is as a warning instead of a request or epigram, how might this effect the interpretation of some of the other material? The introduction to this paper mentions examining the differences between the introduction to “Through Her Eyes” on the album and “John & Theresa Solo Spot” on the *Scenes From New York* DVD. Likewise, the live differences in “The Spirit Carries On” may be worth examining.

Additionally, this album is the beginning of a collection of albums sometimes referred to as the “meta-album.” The sound effect or sustained chord that ends one album, here the record player static, begins the next album. *Scenes From a Memory, Six Degrees of Inner Turbulence, Train of Thought,* and *Octavarium* comprise the meta-album. The final album, *Octavarium,* contains numerous references to circularity and repetition, and the sound effect that begins the album is the same as the one that ends it, creating a loop. Treating the meta-album as a cycle similar to a Wagnerian opera may yield interesting results.
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