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KLANGFARBEN, RHYTHMIC DISPLACEMENT, AND ECONOMY OF  
MEANS:  
A THEORETICAL STUDY OF THE WORKS OF  
THELONIOUS MONK

THESIS

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By

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The purpose of this study is to investigate the theoretical causes of the stylistic results of both compositions and spontaneous improvisations of jazz pianist and composer Thelonious Monk. The specific topics chosen for analysis include Klangfarben (sound colors), rhythmic displacement (the relocation or complete removal of expected rhythmic events), and economy of means (the judicious use of silence, simplicity, and economy).

All of the above topics are addressed with regard to the composer's original works, his selected renditions of works by other composers, and his improvisations. The musical examples appear in transcription form, as some of them are unpublished. The topics are introduced in the first chapter, and individually addressed in subsequent chapters.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

"The best thing about jazz is that it makes a person appreciate freedom. Jazz and freedom go hand in hand. That's all there is to tell about it. That explains it. Just think about it and you'll dig it." Thelonious Monk, 1959

Jazz pianist and composer Thelonious Monk was a very private man, a recluse who said almost nothing regarding himself and his work. Thus, very little is truly understood of his thought processes and musical intent. The few available facts surrounding his life and activities are well documented. Thelonious Sphere Monk was born on October 10, 1917 in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. The family moved to New York City in 1923. Monk excelled in academics and team sports and was largely self-instructed in music from the age of five or six. He was heavily involved in church music, locally and on the road, which brought him into contact with a variety of musicians.

In 1935, after returning to New York City, he pursued formal musical training at Juilliard. Monk spent most of his time playing jazz with small groups of musicians, rather than with the big bands prevalent in the Thirties. Small groups were more conducive to experimentation, and in this setting, Monk and his constituency developed a new jazz style known as bebop. The center for this activity was Minton's Playhouse on West 118th Street in Harlem, where Monk was hired as house pianist in 1940. The club's main

attraction to the jazz population was a regular jam session; during this formative time known as the bebop era, Monk worked with Kenny Clarke, Charlie Christian, Dizzy Gillespie, Roy Eldridge, Kermit Scott, young Charlie Parker, and Don Byas only to name a few of the regulars who sat in. Monk was also known to listen for and support young newcomers such as Bud Powell and later, Miles Davis in their developmental periods, exposing them to his innovative style.

As bebop developed over the next ten years, Monk's style took a different direction than that of his fellow players Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. Although many aspects of bebop remained in his music, Monk's goals were different than most of his contemporaries.

Much of what has been written of Monk to this point is concerned with the few facts of his life and his music, in general terms. A relatively small amount of technical analysis has been written by a few scholars, mostly by American composer Gunther Schuller and French composer and critic Andre Hodeir.

A substantial number of comments in the writings of jazz scholars regarding Monk's place in the bebop tradition equate Monk's compositional ideals with those of his fellow musicians at Minton's Playhouse. It is true that Monk had a definitive role in that style. But Monk as a composer was far less confined to the regiments of bebop playing than most of his contemporaries. Some called him the "High Priest of Bop"; others, such as Orrin Keepnews, had different ideas on this matter:

Many people believe that Monk was a musical revolutionary. But this is simply not the case. Such a revolutionary takes part in a deliberate overthrow or change of regime; by doing so, he

inaugurates a chain of events that will almost certainly lead to further stylistic upheavals and render him passe. But mountains do not overthrow anything; nor do they ever become obsolete. Thelonious began to play in his own way at a particular time--about 1940--and a revolutionary new form of jazz called bebop eventually grew up around him. By now, bebop is rather old hat; but immutable Monk, who still sounds much as he did in the Forties, is entirely alive and fresh....Yes, Monk can be quite a paradox. More accurately, by being so completely himself, he is often a source of confusion to would-be analysts, leading them to stumble into paradoxes. (1)

What, then, shall the analyst do to deal with the paradox of the musical Monk? Indeed, many of Monk's best techniques will defy traditional musical analysis. And yet, Monk's work is simultaneously as simple and functional as it is diverse and complicated. In "Portrait of an Eremite," Chris Sheridan describes the Monk paradox further:

Taken as a whole, Monk's work appears halting, hunchbacked, and out at the elbows as he seemingly grapples with the keyboard, tilting at off-centre [sic] melodies or winking out some arcane harmony. The solo line moves along lumpily, like a weighted ball, bobbing unexpectedly as he grabs a fistful of notes here, or holds a precarious skirmish with rhythm there. It unravels like a ball of string prodded by a kitten, whose puzzled air of intent is mirrored by the pianist as though every turn might present some hidden menace. It is a "drawing board" style where all the elements of the music are being constantly re-examined, revised, and restructured. It is both intense and witty. In fact, its inner elements (melody, harmony, and rhythm) are like pieces of a jigsaw, which fit together in a particular way, giving each performance its own singular unity and internal motion, both of which suffer if any ingredient is underplayed. Monk's handling of each is virtuosic, despite the apparent simplicity of his playing, a simplicity which in fact, veils an inner complexity. (2)

With regard to the earlier observation concerning Monk and his place in the bebop era, it has been assumed in many ways that Monk was a primary representative of that style. While Monk did play with many bebop

innovators such as Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, and was widely known as the "High Priest of Bop," his musical thinking was in reality the total antithesis of the harmonically-oriented bebop player. John S. Wilson comments on the attribution of that misnomer to Monk:

Monk was not part of the bop movement. He was his own man right from the start and as bop formulated around Parker and Gillespie, Monk moved along in an orbit of his own. "They think different, harmonically," he once said in explaining the difference between himself and the bop musicians he had worked with at Minton's. "They play mostly stuff that's based on the chords of other things, like the blues and 'I Got Rhythm'. I like the whole song, melody and chord structure, to be different. I make up my own chords and melodies." (3)

Monk's description of himself in this aspect is perhaps more succinct than any commentary written since. The expression of total allegiance to the melody as the basis for further improvisation is apparent, and is really the opposite of bebop's harmonic approach.

The bebop players who often "sat in" at the famous New York Minton's establishment with Monk and others were schooled in the freedom of creating totally new melodies over standard chord changes. These pre-set chord changes had also undergone radical adjustment in their recent past, adding distinctive altered tones to bop such as the flatted fifth, upper extensions of the 9th, 11th, and 13th, with their respective alterations, and of course, the various blue notes. The success of a bop player was based upon his ability to create something new out of these standard chord progressions. The rhythm section behind him played beats two and four as the "preferred goal" of each bar, and his solo, if successful, had the same "two and four" momentum. By employing repeated and sequential patterns, or "riffs",



which carried this momentum over the bar line, a bop player drove toward the accented two and four, yet "laid back" or played with relaxed timing, in order for the solo to "swing" or capture the element of the superimposition of relaxation over tension. A-seasoned bop soloist knew well the various melodic formulae which "worked" over standard harmonic patterns, and exploited them, while adding his own sound and playing style for individuality. Yet, many of these bebop style characteristics are the exact opposite of the musical personality of Thelonious Monk.

Monk's compositions are worthy of more than a general verbal description; this body of works merits further in-depth theoretical analysis. Therefore, the goal of this study will be to look analytically at several representative compositions by Monk, citing the stylistic and theoretical elements which give Monk's work its unity and cohesiveness.

One such element in Monk's composition is the use of sound color. The term Klangfarbenmelodie, German for "sound color melody," is a twentieth century reference to the Second Viennese school of thought, pioneered by Schoenberg and his pupils, with regard to a particular style of composition. It is not the intention of this study to compare the Klangfarben technique of the Second Viennese School to the music of Monk; rather, the term was selected for this study primarily because of its literal meaning, "sound color." Monk makes very definite use of the colors of sounds; it is evident that the combinations he chooses are based on their sounds and not necessarily on their functions. Therefore, the term has been applied for its convenient, literal meaning, and not for comparative purposes which would be beyond the scope of this analysis.

Melody, harmony, and rhythm, as mentioned by Sheridan, are intertwined in the music of Monk, as they are in countless other styles. But what makes these three traditional musical elements so non-traditional in this style? Monk applies different techniques to their arrangement, techniques derived chiefly from Monk's intense desire for an individual sound. Monk's melodies are coloristic; one does not perceive them as intervals and pitches, but as colorful melodic units, or Klangfarbenmelodien, constructed for the express purpose of their registers, shapes, and hues. The resultant harmonies that accompany such melodies cannot avoid also being affected by this coloristic approach, and are often non-traditional as well. Rhythm and its manipulation are also tied into this colorful economy of compositional technique.

The concept of basing music on sounds and sound combinations was originally applied to timbral aspects, or to the range of instrumental combinations available, and to their different registers to exploit various orchestral colors. This usage was especially common in the works of Schoenberg's student Anton Webern, who in 1913 wrote his Five Pieces for Orchestra (opus 10), the first movement of which is an excellent example of timbral combinations and register exploitation for color. Other notable examples may be found of this type of sound color melody in its original form.

The sound color aspect of music as a tool for jazz composition may be seen, however, in a much broader light with regard to Monk, as other aspects of composing may be based on sound colors in addition to timbre and register. Monk's compositions provide some of the best examples of sound color

usages with regard to melody as well as harmony, and many of them are accomplished, not in an ensemble texture, but on solo instruments.

Monk often composed music based on the sounds of pitch combinations, chord voicings, exploitation of registers on one instrument, and unorthodox performance techniques that would evoke different timbres. This type of broadened view with regard to sound color makes it possible to consider both melody and harmony when analyzing the sound color characteristics of a work. The compositions and spontaneous improvisations of Thelonious Monk are rich with examples of melodies and harmonies whose constructions are based upon their sound color content.

Twentieth century melody in general is very often organized by colors and textures rather than pitch or interval content. But what purpose does this technique serve, other than to provide musical interest? And what place does this type of organization have in the analysis of modern jazz?

The realignment of musical elements into new, more fitting hierarchies is one purpose of composing by sound color. Elevating the importance of the sound color itself to a position of significance over pitch and interval content makes possible the widening of the harmonic base as well. The harmonic possibilities and principles of bebop were widening all the time during Monk's most productive compositional era anyway. Monk was truly advanced beyond the bop players in this respect, as his melodic choices emancipated the traditional bebop harmonies, allowing him to reharmonize many traditional harmonic progressions. These actions were not taken by Monk expressly for the purpose of making an advance in 20th century melody writing, however. Monk made advanced choices in melodic

and harmonic selection for one reason alone. It was not his sense of the theoretical thought process that led him to these unorthodox and ground breaking compositions. His aural sense and the fact that he was listening more than thinking brought Monk to the musical, albeit unconscious, decision to compose by the colors of sounds. Nat Hentoff repeats an observation made by classical composer and jazz pianist Hall Overton regarding Monk's selective approach to composition with regard to sound color:

He has a very selective approach to sound. In a sense, he abstracts from the fuller type of jazz harmony. It isn't that he doesn't know the full harmony-he's played it for me- but he does know those particular sounds he wants...(4)

With regard to rhythm, Monk tended towards beats one and three, even while other rhythm section members might be driving towards the prescribed two and four. This aspect gives Monk's music a brand of swing all its own. Particularly interesting are Monk's compositional techniques with regard to exploiting accent shift and rhythmic displacement to a great extent. A very simple melodic contour, not particularly challenging to the bop player, or anyone else, becomes distinctly intriguing and even difficult in Monk's hands by way of the rhythmically unexpected.

Monk was a colorful melodist, a rhythmically diverse composer, and an economical improviser. His love for the melody, tied inseparably to its own harmonic progression, caused Monk to improvise based on that melody, the compositional material itself, and not just on chord progressions, particularly with regard to his own compositions. The melody came to be pre-composed, hallowed ground in Monk's mind, written and designed

according to his own color, rhythmic, and shape preferences. The resulting harmonies, therefore, might not be "standard", or even follow regular harmonic patterns at all, but perhaps because of certain color notes, be "distilled" to bare representation, as we shall see. Furthermore, all aspects of Monk's compositions and improvisations-- melody, harmony, and rhythm-- would be affected by this bare representation, or economy of means and would thus remain true to the original compositional material.

Even Monk's spontaneous solo improvisations are themselves ever faithful to the original melody, as will be seen in the following analyses and transcribed examples. Any improvisational growth comes from the intrinsic qualities of the original melodies, harmonies, and rhythms; any new creativity comes from within the pre-composed source.

In truth, Monk was a participant and observer in the era we know as bebop. But to be completely fair, Monk was never just a bop player, limited within that style, at all. His creative goals and accomplishments were much farther reaching. His compositional techniques with regard to melodic and harmonic color, rhythmic displacement, and formal economy were indeed "out of his time," perhaps one reason why his public musical acceptance did not come until later in his life; perhaps also a reason why even now his musical and analytical recognition have been slow in coming among modern musical analysts.

## CHAPTER I

## NOTES

- 1 Orrin Keepnews, Liner notes to Straight, No Chaser Columbia CS-9541 (1967).
- 2 Chris Sheridan, "Portrait of an Eremite--An Appreciation of Thelonious Monk: 10-10-17 to 2-17-82," Jazz Journal International 35/5 (May 1982), 25.
- 3 John S. Wilson, Jazz: The Transition Years, 1940-1960 (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts Publishing Company, 1966), 66-67.
- 4 Nat Hentoff, The Jazz Life (New York: DaCapo Press, 1975), 182.

## CHAPTER II

### KLANGFARBEN: SOUND COLOR

Musical and analytical thought is constantly being stretched and broadened to accommodate newer musical phenomena. Therefore, the term Klangfarben might very well be applied to non-orchestral music, even solo compositions, and used to describe aspects other than melody, such as harmony and texture. Such sound color usage, more widely applied, is the product of a different hierarchy than that of its predecessor. The instrumental range exploitation and timbre combinations common to the Second Viennese School writing are not the only vitalities to this sound color technique, although they are often included. Scale choices, chord voicings, unorthodox playing techniques, and composition based on the hues of sounds rather than solely on tonal or atonal organization make up the hierarchy of this technique. Instead of being based upon a tonality, or the lack of one, the compositional elements are based upon sound color.

The consideration of several Monk compositions and improvisations with this color system in mind reveals that they are not eccentric or inconsistent in any way. Rather, Monk's consistent use of sound color as a compositional technique acts as a unifying device. His intentional use of certain scales, pitch combinations, playing techniques, and chord voicings yield the result of a "colorful" jazz style all his own- one with an

idiosyncratic, almost jagged appearance- but one that is completely whole and organized within itself.

Klangfarbenmelodie, specifically a melody that is based on sound color, is common to the compositions of Monk. His preference for these melodies is based upon shadings and the selection of colorful units, rather than on pitch or interval content or a regular melodic scalar hierarchy. Monk achieves this effect typically through the use of certain "trademark" scales and pitches which the serious student of this composer, as well as the casual listener, might readily recognize. Such scales almost always include the symmetrical type, the most common of which are the whole tone scale, chromatic scale, octatonic scale (half-step whole-step diminished scale), and other "synthetic" scales which Monk devised himself, based on symmetrical patterns. The emphasis here is not on the intervals of these scales or even on their symmetrical qualities, but on the colors they produce when used melodically and repeatedly. Gunther Schuller comments on Monk's whole-tone tendencies and his influence over the melodic and harmonic areas new to jazz:

The first characteristic regards the rapid whole tone scales to which Monk is so addicted....they are logical within his harmonic thinking. Whole tone patterns first make their appearance on the 1944 recordings Monk made with Hawkins. It was in those years that the flatted fifth chords began to be generally used by modern jazz musicians. Now it so happens that the most direct line between the flatted fifth and the tonic is a whole tone pattern of four notes. Add two more notes and you have a whole tone scale. Furthermore, when one realizes that a whole tone scale is, in effect, a straightened out, horizontal version of an ordinary augmented ninth chord with a flatted fifth, one can see how easily one thing led to the other.... It is in



this melodic--harmonic area that Monk has been one of the most imaginative innovators. (1)

The whole tone scale and other symmetrical patterns are primary devices used by Monk for the purpose of sound color. Even in those compositions written by Monk that adhere more closely to the jazz tradition of melody and standard "changes", he makes use of such trademark melodic ideas for the purpose of color. One such composition is "Ruby, My Dear".

## RUBY MY DEAR

Ballad Tempo

F-9    B $\flat$ 7-9    E $\flat$  $\Delta$ 7

R.H.

First system of musical notation, measures 5-6. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Measure 5 is marked with the chord  $B\flat\Delta 7$ . Measure 6 is marked with  $C7-9$  and  $F\Delta 9$ . The notation includes a wide register whole tone run in the treble clef and a bass line with a 5-fingered chord in the first measure and a 6-fingered chord in the second measure.

Second system of musical notation, measures 7-8. Measure 7 is marked with  $B\flat$  and  $E\flat 7-9$ . Measure 8 is marked with  $A\flat\Delta 7$ . The notation includes a 7-fingered chord in the bass line of measure 7 and a 3-fingered triplet in the treble clef of measure 8.

Third system of musical notation, measures 9-10. Measure 9 is marked with  $B\flat 7$  and  $A$ . Measure 10 is marked with  $A$ . The notation includes a 9-fingered chord in the bass line of measure 9 and a 10-fingered chord in the bass line of measure 10.

This rather basic composition with its singable melody and standard ii-V-I progressions has clearly defined key areas. But even here, the effects of Klangfarben are seen. Most notable are the opening whole tone run and its wide exploitation of registers in bar one, directly followed by a functioning

Bb7(b9) chord, voiced in the right hand with symmetrical minor thirds. It is as if Monk must "colorize" even his simplest, most functional ballad, making it undoubtedly his composition and not just a jazz "tune" for improvising musicians.

From the Blue Note recordings, comes one of the most coloristic compositions for rhythm section and three horns, written by Monk and aptly titled "Hornin' In". The composition is traditional in form, best described as a 32 measure AABA work, but all conventionality abruptly stops there. The first 8 measures of the composition, a unison line for horns doubled on the keyboard in major seconds, appears as follows:

## HORNIN' IN

The musical score for "Hornin' In" is presented in three systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system contains measures 1, 2, and 3. The second system contains measures 4, 5, and 6. The third system contains measures 7 and 8. The notation shows a unison line for horns and keyboard in major seconds, with the right hand playing a melodic line and the left hand playing a bass line.

The most evident aspect of sound color here is Monk's fascination with whole tone patterns for the purpose of tonal ambiguity and "chord distillation," a device we will explore in depth when harmony is considered in subsequent sections. With regard to whole tone usage, bars one and two reflect an Eb whole tone sonority which then rises by half step in bar three to an E whole tone pattern. In the bars that follow, this Eb--E whole tone pattern alternation continues, obscuring the tonal center. In fact, until measure 7, no key has been clearly defined at all. The use of whole tone patterns not only allows Monk the opportunity to avoid his tonal goal temporarily, but also creates a colorful ambiguity that is fitting to the style of the piece.

Monk's sound color composition also relies melodically upon the retention of certain "blue notes," and hence, blues scales used to evoke color shadings in the melody. Although blues scales and pitches were not new at all, and were in fact a hold over from much earlier jazz, Monk's usage of the blue note tends to be unique in that the well-tempered piano generally is not the instrument of choice for achieving true "blue" notes, which are a quarter tone below the third and seventh scale degrees of the major scale. Jazz pianists were accustomed to using the lowered third and seventh for the closest blues sound available on the instrument, since true quarter tones were not "possible". Monk, however, not only emphasizes blue notes for coloristic reasons, but through his unorthodox piano techniques achieves a much closer and natural rendition of a quarter tone on piano! Chris Sheridan explains this further:

Virtuosic resolution of asymmetry was matched by the manner in which he [Monk] retained a harmonic element at the very root of jazz- the 'blue' notes. These were the third and seventh in the blues scale and pitched about a quarter tone below the relevant notes of a diatonic scale. In the common scale of C major, the third and seventh are E and B; to 'blue' them, many musicians had got into the habit of flattening them, momentarily slipping into the related key of C minor, and playing Eb or Bb. But that was dropping a semitone instead of the quarter tone required. It is easy to see that quarter tones can be hit by the voice or by an instrument capable of tonal manipulation, but not by the well-tempered piano-- in theory at least. It is a measure of Monk's 'new' virtuosity and his strong rooting in traditional means that he maintained the true 'blue' notes using them frequently by manipulation of fingering, key, and pedal to distort the note being played. And he did so just as the boppers were abandoning such practices and substituting more 'sophisticated' harmonies. Retention of the blue notes is one way in which Monk served as a vital link between the oldest jazz and the newest. (2)

The retention of this blue note is very important in Monk's music, and is inherently linked to his playing styles and methods, which although they were highly criticized, drew horn-like and even vocal responses from the once limited keyboard. Some considered this to be incorrect piano technique; Monk viewed this as essential to the sounds he wanted.

The individuality of Monk's writing and playing makes separating the two aspects not only difficult, but disadvantageous. Therefore, it is beneficial to consider those things which affect both his written compositions and his unique performance practice. Although performance techniques are not "written" into his compositions, they are actually indelibly marked upon Monk's creations because they are what makes the music so distinctly his. Much of the sound color characteristic is a product of note and scale choice as we have seen. But any player trying to authentically duplicate Monk's true

intentions must be able to play his compositions not only note for note, but in the same technical fashion as Monk did. His unorthodox playing techniques are a major contributor to the sound color aspect of Monk's composition.

Monk made few comments regarding his own intentions and even fewer comments with regard to the interpretation of his writing. The few verbal explanations he left behind in this respect are simple; Monk did not confuse his musical purposes with words, but rather let the music speak for itself. When pressed, he would reply:

I'm after new chords, new ways of syncopating, new figurations, new runs...how to use the notes differently. That's it. Just using notes differently. (3)

Using the available notes differently was in fact Monk's greatest accomplishment. Symmetrical scales and blue notes were not in themselves the innovative aspect of his work, but moreover, how he played them, and how they were sounded that caused the emergence of coloristic tendencies in his composition. Monk's style of playing involves a certain abandon, a "deliberate incaution," and a percussive strike of the instrument, as though "it were a carillon's keyboard or a finely tuned set of 88 drums." (4) This unorthodox technique was long viewed by critics as a lack of technique, and thus contributed to his slow musical acceptance. Furthermore, Monk's playing style, as we have already noted, was linked inseparably to his writing. He wrote as he played. This quality makes a style analysis of Monk's playing indispensable for an in-depth study of the written score. The two aspects are simply not complete without each other.

Regardless of the criticisms Monk's unusual methods accrued, he continued to pursue his own sound relentlessly. Even non-musically

oriented critics picked up on this aspect, but not until much later in his career.

A 1964 Time magazine article observed:

The array of sounds he divines from his Baldwin grand are beyond the reach of academic pianists; he caresses a note with the tremble of a bejeweled finger, then stomps it into its grave with a crash of elbow and forearm, armed with astonishing accuracy at a chromatic tone cluster an octave long. (5)

Thus, Monk's strangest techniques were never a true lack of piano skills, but an intentional departure from tradition for the purpose of bringing forth sounds from the instrument which were new, colorful, and largely unrealized in keyboard playing to that time.

Another fruitful result of Monk's unorthodox piano techniques with regard to sound color was the emergence of hornlike effects and even orchestral effects from that-single instrument. The term Klangfarben is often associated with orchestration. Monk's use of sound color is orchestral as well. Gunther Schuller once noted in a performance review from Town Hall that "Monk [does] play with an unorthodox piano technique" and that it has "led him to create many unusual solos which are more 'orchestral' than pianistic in concept." Schuller continues:

By that I do not mean that they are unpianistic. Rather, they attempt to go beyond the ordinary limits of the piano in the sense that the late Beethoven sonatas are no longer merely 'piano' music... (6)

This orchestral effect achieved on one instrument, although certainly impressive, was not new. But the sound colors achieved thereby were unprecedented in jazz music; Monk was truly the innovator with regard to producing so many timbres on a singular instrument, the keyboard.

Another sound quality related to the orchestral effect in Monk's playing was the hornlike quality of his phrasing, which was most unusual on the piano. Martin Williams comments on this "transformation" of the keyboard into a more expressive mode of musical communication when played by Monk:

As a matter of fact, to make his playing as personally expressive as he wished, Monk had even altered his way of striking the keys, his finger positions, and had largely converted his piano into a kind of horn. (7)

Williams, when referring to a "kind of horn," implies that Monk has 'emancipated' the piano and has actually made possible on the instrument certain effects that were before not feasible or even attempted by previous jazz pianists. In an article entitled, "Modern Jazz in Search of Maturity," Williams comments in more detail on Monk's playing style and its resulting virtuosic accomplishments:

Obviously, Monk has 'sacrificed' techniques of manual dexterity for techniques of expressiveness-- for the techniques of music, specifically his own music. Not that Monk's whole tone runs are easy to play, with the unorthodox fingering that gives him the sound he wants. Not that his fast successions of ringing note clusters built on fourths are easy either. But Monk's virtuosity, and he has real virtuosity, has developed in the specific techniques of jazz. As when Monk offers a simultaneous 'inside' trill with the first fingers of his right hand while playing melody notes with his outer fingers. Or when Monk actually 'bends' a piano note; offers by special manipulation of fingers, piano keys, and foot pedal, a true blue note, a curving piano sound, not two tied notes or a momentary resort to minor... (8)

Monk's playing style was not safe or traditional in any way. Some of the "lack of technique" criticism may here be accounted for, as much of what is truly coloristic sounds "wrong" in his playing to the unprepared listener. His



rebellion against traditional piano method, that of curved fingers, caused him to employ flat, stretched-out hands, and although treacherous, the method proved effective in producing new sounds on the piano. Schuller interprets the natural succession of events in Monk's style development, once he had begun to play "flat" handed:

Monk uses his fingers, not in the usual arched position pianistic orthodoxy requires, but in a flat, horizontal way. This determines a number of characteristics in Monk's music. Aside from the tone quality it produces, it makes for instance the playing of octaves very hazardous. In playing an octave of two E's, let us say, it would be easy to also hit by accident the D (a tone below the upper E) and the F (a tone above the lower E). I imagine that Monk soon discovered that he could exploit his unorthodox finger positions, and began to make use of these 'extra' notes which others would have heard as 'wrong' and tried to eliminate. (9)

Schuller goes on in the same article to apply this "wrong note" concept to Monk's all-important retention of the blue note, discussing the retained blue note as a natural result of Monk's flat-handed style. First, Schuller reminds us of the old tradition of "approximating blue notes by playing a minor 2nd" below the actual pitch, common to earlier jazz pianists, but now a dated practice. He surmises that this old method of producing blue notes on the piano was changed by Monk through his unorthodox style of playing, and thus brought the old-fashioned blue note back into fashionable prominence with a new sound:

In this respect [blue note retention], Monk went even further. The clash of that minor second became so natural to his ear that on top of one blue note, he began to add another right next to it...attached to it, like a satellite. (10)

Having considered Monk's affinity for the blue note and its implications, let us view another example of sound color made possible by the use of that device. Monk's classic "Misterioso" provides an excellent array of coloristic possibilities, both compositionally and improvisationally. The representative recording of this work is included on the Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz and is one of the many Monk creations based on the traditional blues chord progression, and thus supports Monk's retention of the blue notes and scales. This blues element provides multiple color tones for Monk's use in composing yet another sound color melody. The importance of the retention of the blue note and Monk's revival of that old tradition through his highly individual piano technique has already been touched upon. Below, the opening chorus of this composition has been transcribed, and piano and vibraphone parts will respectively reveal the blue note tendencies:

## MISTERIOSO

Intro

The musical score shows the opening of the piece. The Piano part (upper staff) begins with a melodic line in 3/4 time, featuring a blue note (F natural) in the second measure. The Vibes part (lower staff) provides a harmonic accompaniment, also featuring a blue note (F natural) in the second measure. The score is divided into four measures, numbered 1 through 4 at the bottom.

Chris Sheridan summarizes these first 12 bars:

Misterioso is a seesawing blues combining minor seconds with intervals which progress from 6ths to octaves. Its rhythmic stride is as important to the performance's cohesion as the harmonic exploration. It is a relentless, legato line without accent, rest, or sustained note continuing up and down its scale—simple, compelling, and unresolved. (11)

Monk has chosen the sixth as the primary vehicle for this composition. Just as the whole tone tendency in other compositions gives Monk the element of symmetry with which to work, so does this persistent use of the "walking sixth" — relentlessly pressing on without pause or release until the very end of a blues chorus. The insistent sixths melody is fused with the blues

harmony (measures 5-12), and creates a definite Klangfarben effect, particularly with regard to the timbres of the piano and vibraphone as they perform the sound-colors together. Further evidence of sound color pitch choices may be found in bars 13-14, where symmetrical chromatic motion in both parts acts as a dominant function. The equidistance of these intervals evokes an ambiguity and coloristic quality similar to the whole tone passage in "Hornin' In".

Another sound color aspect of this composition has to do with Monk's unorthodox piano accompaniment behind the vibes solo which is immediately following the transcribed portion presented here on the recording. In the liner notes to the Smithsonian Collection recording, Martin Williams outlines what happens:

With the second chorus, the [bass and drums] begin their regular rhythmic--harmonic 1-2-3-4, and Jackson [vibraphonist], a fine blues man, begins to improvise. For his accompaniment, however, Monk does not play single blues chords as another pianist might do. He plays around with the "blue seventh," the next implied note of his theme, so to speak. As if to say, "This is not just playing the blues in this key, it is a particular piece of mine called 'Misterioso'". (12)

By "comping" with coloristic pitches, rather than traditional changes, Monk is hardly taking the background as an accompanist, but is weaving yet another Klangfarbenmelodie, as if in counterpoint with the vibraphone solo.

The next section of the composition, Monk's own solo, contains another sound color technique, the voicing of chord tones in a dissonant fashion. Monk is well remembered for what seem to be wrong notes in his solos. These "mistakes" were probably intentional, and not genuine errors. This becomes obvious when we look at how Monk tends to voice sonorities,

with as much emphasis on dissonance as possible. In the case of "Misterioso," Monk bases his solo upon "a series of minor second clusters and an imperious upward figure." (13) Wherever possible, he clusters notes instead of voicing them in the standard fashion; this is well supported by his unorthodox playing technique.

Finally, the return of the A section of this composition also has innovative sound color usages worthy of noting. When the theme returns, instead of merely repeating it, as was the tradition, Monk enlarges upon it. Schuller comments on the coloristic tendencies of this recapitulation and the importance of this innovation to jazz in general:

In an almost Webern-like manner, he [Monk] spreads the pattern of sevenths used earlier over two or three octaves. The resulting dramatic skips, rhythmically oblique to the main theme, are the last link in the chain of heightening intensity that generates this piece. Incidentally, this idea of varying the exposition when it returns as a final recapitulation was a rather unusual procedure at this time, and is still rare. In thousands of bop and modern jazz performances, opening and ending were identical, and even orchestrating them in harmony rather than unison was thought to be unusual. Monk was a real pioneer in this respect, generally slightly altering his basic thematic material through revoicing, reorchestrating, or superimposing upon it previously stated ideas.... these superimpositions are harmonically so unusual that they considerably obliterate the original tonal centers. (14)

Thus, the thematic choice of symmetrical and/or equidistant intervals, the voicing of dissonances, the reorchestration of the recapitulation, and Monk's use of register extremes throughout make "Misterioso" another fine example of Klangfarben for analysis.

Much of what has been discussed with regard to sound color thus far has been melodically oriented. This is well-fitting, as Klangfarben was

originally applied to melodies and their colors. But the innovative nature of Monk's sound color melodies brings up an interesting point with regard to harmony. The melodies and harmonies that make up a Monk composition must not be considered separately, because Monk's work as a writer did not produce "tunes," but complete compositions. The elements therein are not effective, if separately considered.

The compositional aspect is most succinctly revealed in the fact that the melody and the harmony of a good Monk piece do not, almost cannot, exist separately. In order to play Monk's pieces well, one must know the melody and Monk's harmony, know how they fit together and understand why. Most of Monk's melodies are so strong and important and his bass lines (even those bass lines that are fairly simple, straightforward, or traditional) so integrated with their structures that it is almost impossible for a soloist to improvise effectively on their chord sequences alone; he will do better also to understand their themes well and one way or another, make use of them. (15)

This is true, not only for the improviser, but also for the analyst. Sound color is produced in Monk's writing and playing as a result of melodies made colorful by the aforementioned musical materials and unorthodox techniques, melodies which themselves contain and suggest the harmonies, inherent in the compositions, "built into" the melodic lines. Therefore, any discussion of sound color in the works of Monk must concern itself not only with melody, but with harmony as well.

The term "harmony," as it is traditionally viewed, may be confusing when applied to Monk's compositions. Even "jazz harmony" misleads one into thinking along the lines of the bebop oriented harmonic system of "changes" so prevalent in Monk's day, and so exploited by his

contemporaries. Martin Williams comments that he is not actually "sure that the term 'harmony' is accurate" when applied to Monk:

...he [Monk] seems much more interested in sound and in original and arresting combinations of sounds percussively delivered than in harmony per se... (16)

Whether we call it combination of sounds or simply harmony, let us consider a completely different definition of "harmony," again inseparable from melody, called "distillation," that much better explains these note combinations in Monk's music and reveals their purpose, as Monk intended them for color, and not necessarily for function. Chord distillation is a system of harmonic choice, or note combination choice, which has as its basis the sound color melody. It is a bare, selective voicing process in which one note or several, usually voiced in a dissonant manner, can represent an entire sonority succinctly. Monk almost always makes extensive use of clashing dissonances and upper alterations of standard chords, such as altered ninths, elevenths, and thirteenths, voiced in half steps to achieve the dissonance for color. Williams calls this effect the "Monkian alchemy" that "distills granite" from what was once "sugar water." (17)

With regard to chord distillation, "Hornin' In" again provides an excellent example for analysis. Monk's whole tone patterns here eliminate the functional ii-V patterns so expected in jazz and consequently allow one single note to be viewed as the representation of a sonority. For instance, having reached the establishing V-I cadence in bars 7-8, we may look back to bar 5, and in retrospect, see the third of what functions as a ii chord in the bass. Again, this chord representation, or distillation, occurs in bar six in the bass as well, where the seventh of what would function as a V chord stands

alone. This is a subtle occurrence of chord distillation, having one note represent an entire chord function, and thus, Monk's compositional tendency to avoid clearly defined key areas thereby. Until bar 7, the listener cannot possibly know for sure the key of the composition. It has been suspended by the use of sound color. In addition to these coloristic tendencies, the chord voicings are notable. The relatively dissonant major second is chosen by Monk for the unison horns grouped with piano, producing a Klangfarbenmelodie, whose pitches were chosen specifically for their timbre and color which generates the desired tonal ambiguity in this composition's A section.

Distillation is a technical term that can be applied for analysis to the score, but it is also a direct result of a playing style. Whether we call it a true harmonic system and analyze it as such, or simply accept it as a by-product of Monk's style, chord distillation nevertheless is a contributor to the aspect of sound color in Monk's writing. The type of distillation apparent in Monk's work is the direct result of the omission of essential tones, such as the 3rd and the 7th of a chord. Monk's voicings are sparse and rarely include any of the usual essential notes, thus sometimes leaving the altered members of the chord to represent the sonority.

Pianist Dick Katz, who from the following excerpt seems to concern himself mainly with Monk's style, makes an important observation on the voicing of dissonances, and Monk's approach to "harmony":

What makes it appear that Monk is 'far out' is his harmonic system which is very personal. What he may do on occasion is to throw out an original harmonic scheme and substitute his own harmonic structure while continuing to refer back to the melody....his harmonic approach mostly has to do with an



ingenious sense of voicing chords in a dissonant way. Monk has a remarkably natural dramatic gift for using dissonance in an instinctive rather than in a calculated way. He'll pick a dramatic time to use a dissonance so that the dissonance is outlined in relief because of the rhythm. (18)

The results of Monk's sound color style as we have observed are numerous. Stylistically, the music tends to be pointillistic, raw with regard to emotion or nostalgia, dissonant, and sometimes impressionistic or ambiguous in quality. Tension and the delay of resolution combined with register extremes and unorthodox piano techniques all serve to perpetuate the colorful Monkian trademark sound. Analytically, trademark scales and pitches, voicings of dissonances, and the bare representation of chords known as distillation are evident in the scores of Monk's original compositions.

In addition to the melodies and accompanying harmonies Monk himself composed with sound color characteristics, there are a number of compositions written by other composers which Monk included in his regular repertoire which reflect the Klangfarben aspect as much as his originals. Monk was known to select a song written by someone else and with melody intact make it entirely his own vehicle for performance through the use of sound color in his solos. This "recomposition " or "reworking" of compositions by other musicians produced some Monk classics for discussion and analysis. As would be expected, Monk was careful to adhere to the original melody and harmony for the most part, and yet, this fact is often obscured because of the other aspects of his playing. For instance, he may change the rhythm or the interpretation completely. He most often pared the harmonic content down to his own scale of distilled representation, and often

includes dissonances in very awkward places. Many writers have tried to capture the essence of what Monk does to compositions that are not his own; what once was nostalgic is now raw and realistic. In the case of the songs chosen for this study, a radical departure from the original intention of the composer for his song is usually the result in Monk's hands. Some examples are "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," and "Nice Work if You Can Get It," from the Smithsonian and Blue Note Collections respectively. But perhaps the finest example, included on the Smithsonian Collection as well, is "I Should Care," which will be analyzed in the following sections.

These standard melodies were recomposed by Monk in his performances; Williams describes this technique as reconstructing the work and not merely improvising upon it:

...he [Monk] approaches a standard piece, as we have seen, not as a melody plus harmony, but as a point of departure for a two-handed, semi-improvised composition for piano, a logical, self-contained succession of unique, pianistic, musical sounds. (19)

With regard to popular songs by other composers chosen by Monk for a recomposition, they usually "find their harmonies used and their melodies rejected." Instead, Monk makes use of both. Where the boppers might "overblow to avoid the sentiment inherent in a tune and its popular associations," Monk chooses to emphasize that sentiment, in a naked, glaring way. "He is able to be open and declamatory, producing a bittersweet effect, although the dominant emotion is irony." (20)

Sound color composition is again the vehicle for this emotional display of musical innovation. Monk's humor is a kind of satire; he accomplishes this by playing the tune at an irregular, unexpected tempo, in an

odd key, and by choosing the dissonant, eccentric sonorities available to him while still adhering to the basic compositional materials. This is especially true of Monk's performance on "I Should Care."

Here he [Monk] is, playing to himself, turning the tune over, delaying the chords to listen to what they really meant emotionally, as though playing in his room with the mirror on the ceiling. The tune is stripped bare, examined, then rebuilt. He forms a complete composition, unified with a beginning, a middle, and an end, and a minimum of deviation from the melody, to make it all of a piece rather than improvisation framed by statements of melody. (21)

"I Should Care," 40 bars of Monk's best work with regard to recomposition by employing the techniques of sound color, is transcribed here for the purpose of analyzing just how Monk achieves this effect.

## I SHOULD CARE

The image displays a musical score for the piece "I Should Care" by Thelonious Monk. It consists of two systems of piano accompaniment, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The first system contains measures 1 through 4. Measure 1 features a complex chord in the treble and a single note in the bass. Measure 2 has a similar chord in the treble and a quarter note in the bass. Measure 3 shows a dissonant chord in the treble and a quarter note in the bass. Measure 4 has a chord in the treble and a quarter note in the bass. The second system contains measures 5 through 8. Measure 5 has a chord in the treble and a quarter note in the bass. Measure 6 has a chord in the treble and a quarter note in the bass. Measure 7 features a rapid sixteenth-note run in the treble and a quarter note in the bass. Measure 8 continues the sixteenth-note run in the treble and has a quarter note in the bass. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Musical notation for measures 7-10. The piece is in G major (one sharp). Measure 7 has a bass clef with a 7. Measures 8, 9, and 10 have a treble clef. Measure 9 has a 9. Measure 10 has a 10. There are some accidentals and rests in the notation.

Musical notation for measures 11-14. Measure 11 has a 11. Measure 12 has a 12. Measure 13 has a 13. Measure 14 has a 14. The notation includes triplets and a *tenuto* marking in measure 12.

Musical notation for measures 15-17. Measure 15 has a 15. Measure 16 has a 16. Measure 17 has a 17. The notation includes a triplet in measure 15 and a *ritard* marking in measure 17.

Musical notation for measures 18-20. Measure 18 has a 18. Measure 19 has a 19. Measure 20 has a 20. The notation includes an *8va* marking in measure 18 and a triplet in measure 20.

Musical notation for measures 21-22. Measure 21 has a 21. Measure 22 has a 22. The notation includes an *8va* marking in measure 21 and a triplet in measure 22.

Musical score for measures 23-27. The piece is in G major (one sharp). The right hand features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides harmonic support with chords and single notes. Measure numbers 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27 are indicated below the bass staff.

Musical score for measures 28-29. The tempo marking *molto ritard* is present. The right hand has a melodic line with a trill in measure 29. The left hand has a bass line with a trill in measure 29. Measure numbers 28 and 29 are indicated below the bass staff. An *8va* marking is present above the right hand in measure 29.

Musical score for measures 30-31. The right hand features a melodic line with a trill in measure 31. The left hand has a bass line with a trill in measure 31. Measure numbers 30 and 31 are indicated below the bass staff. An *8va* marking is present above the right hand in measure 31. The word *Cadenza* is written in the right hand in measure 31.

Musical score for measures 32-33. The right hand has a melodic line with a trill in measure 33. The left hand has a bass line with a trill in measure 33. Measure numbers 32 and 33 are indicated below the bass staff. An *8va* marking is present above the right hand in measure 33.

The musical score consists of three systems of piano notation. The first system (measures 34-35) shows a whole-tone scale in the right hand. The second system (measures 36-38) continues with various rhythmic patterns and accents. The third system (measures 39-40) features a '8va.' marking above the right hand and '(l.h.)' below the left hand, indicating an octave shift and left-hand entry. A 'p' dynamic marking is present below the left hand in measure 40.

The most obvious aspect of sound color in this transcription is Monk's blatant use of the whole tone scale, which removes temporarily the feeling of the key, creating an ambiguity as we have seen previously in "Hornin' In." The whole tone scale passages here, bars 31-35, however, create not only ambiguity, but an impressionistic "far-away" sense, uncommon to the standard in its original form. As we have stated, it is Monk's practice to remove the nostalgia and familiarity of these tunes by creating a different atmosphere around them. This is achieved through the use of unexpected and colorful scale usages, such as the whole tone.

Related to the whole tone usages are other equally symmetrical patterns used for the same effect. These may be found as patterns of one

interval alone, such as symmetrical fourths in succession, or even in combinations, such as the F# half diminished formation in bar 6. The pattern is C--E--F#--A; thus, major third, minor third intervals, repeated at the octave four times. This same pattern occurs again in bar 22, again repeated four times. Bars 18 and 30 contain symmetrical upwards fourths, D--G in both instances; other examples of symmetrical interval patterns may be located in bars 21 (F#--C#) and 29 (Eb--Ab). In all of these measures, Monk has stated these symmetries in rapid, improvisatory fashion. Yet, they are not just lavish decorations to the melody, but part of the recomposition process. The very nature of their patterns contributes to the overall color of the work. Symmetry, like the pure whole tone scale usage, brings about the desired ambiguity in "I Should Care."

Another rather obvious point with regard to sound color in this piece is Monk's use of register extremes. While this is a rather common occurrence in piano music, it is rather uncommon with regard to the dissonances used here in conjunction with the register extremes. Monk, while making use of register extremes, does so on the most dissonant pitches available at the moment chosen for the register change. In bar 16, a Bb7 chord has been outlined in the bass with the root and seventh. However, the melody notes which follow, E natural and F#, alter that sound so that when the succeeding melody notes are heard, (G#--Bb octaves with register extreme employed) they seem dissonant. The G# and Bb are actually chord tones with Bb7 as the recognized sonority, but the way that Monk uses the melody notes, along with the register extreme of the Bb creates a colorful dissonance, even having used apparent chord tones. This same instance occurs in bar 29, involving

the same pitches and relationships. In addition, the symmetrical patterns discussed earlier all make use of the register extreme technique as well, (bars 6, 18, 21, 22, 29, and 30).

While looking at the technical aspects of the work, it is still important to remember that Monk's style of playing made most of these technical aspects possible. After all, Monk's goal was not towards the theoretical but towards the pursuit of his own sound:

Monk once more transmutes a popular song into a composition for piano. And in turn, he conceives this composition as a striking, resourceful tissue of unique piano sounds, in a kind of free tempo in which each phrase seems to have its own momentum. Among its several virtues "I Should Care" is evidence that Monk has carried the jazzman's concept of individuality of sound further than any other player on his instrument... (22)

That distinctive individuality of sound was Monk's musical goal. Monk's style with regard to playing the works of other composers offers us the opportunity to see how he achieves his individuality, and how he treats the themes written by others to make them his own. Andre Hodeir comments:

One may wonder what remains of the theme of "I Should Care" after this acid bath, and, in fact, of the ballad in general, considered as an essential element of jazz sensibility. Personally, I am delighted at this transmutation, which is in keeping with the breath of fresh air brought to jazz, in my opinion, by his [Monk's] own original themes. (23)

Another example of the use of sound color in "I Should Care" is Monk's tendency to voice sonorities in their most dissonant arrangements. He reaches for clusters and stacks of notes, rather than traditional, primarily triadic voicings. In this case, these voicings usually appear in clusters of seconds, such as those found in bars 1, 10, 11, 12, 15, 23, 26, 27, and 30. In



most cases, the dissonance is a minor second, producing a more effective clash in the voices. In bars 11, 26 (first chord), 27, and 30, the dissonance is a major second, but the result is the same. For all these examples, the dissonance in question can be construed in some way as a chord tone. The voicing of the sonority, however, produces the clash effect.

The fact that "Monk favored 'crushed' notes and clusters" has been discussed, but directly related to this, in terms of sound color, is the idea of sonorities which "evaporated to leave a few key pitches." This idea, referred to earlier as chord distillation, is perhaps Monk's greatest achievement in the realm of Klangfarben. (24) Ironically, it is also the very technique for which Monk was often ridiculed:

The joke is often that he [Monk] approaches a chord as though he cannot find it, the listener waits and perhaps understands more of the emotion of that chord being placed where it is, and then Monk hits it just when the listener thinks he has missed it. (25)

The truth regarding chord distillation is that Monk intentionally made use of its sparse, bare results; its effectiveness was planned. Schuller recognizes the success of Monk's technique and describes the distillation in "I Should Care" in this manner:

"I Should Care" is worth many rehearsals, as Monk toward the end--after a sort of private double-time passage--plays four chords in which, after first striking all the notes hard and sharply, he quickly releases all but one. This kind of chord distillation is one of the most radical aspects of his music, i.e., the idea that one note can most succinctly represent a chord-- not a new idea in music, but almost untried in jazz. (26)

In bars 37-40, Monk makes extensive use of chord distillation, choosing the roots of chords as their solitary representatives. For example, in measure 37,

the chord is spelled from the bass voice up as Ab-D-Gb-Bb-Db. We may interpret this chord as dominant Bb with raised 5th and 9th alterations, considering the 5th and 9th enharmonically respelled; this is a relatively common choice in jazz for dominant function. What is unusual here is that Monk immediately releases all tones but the Bb, indicating that he sees the Bb as the only pitch necessary to represent the chord. This happens a second time in that same bar with a spelling from the bass voice up as C-E-Bb-Db-Gb. Although at first glance this looks like a C7 with a lowered fifth and ninth, Monk clearly intended it to function as a dominant Gb with a raised 11th alteration; the supporting evidence for this lies in the fact that, again the important note, the Gb, is the only note left sounding in the distillation process. In bar 38, an Eb triad is played, followed by another distilled chord in bar 39. The spelling in this instance is G-Bb-Eb-Gb, with the Eb being the elongated note. Monk uses this Eb as the representative for the functioning dominant Eb chord with a raised 9th alteration. Finally, in bar 39 again, the final tonic chord is distilled to bare minimum, with only tonic D and sixth B as the representatives for the ending sonority.

If we assign analysis symbols to this final progression, beginning in bar 36, the harmonies, or their representatives, function as follows:

Bar	36-----	37-----	38-----	39-----	40-----
[original key D]	V	I	V7/bII (x)	D: bII	V7sub I
[secondary key Eb]			V7 (V7/bVI)	I	

Looking at the function of the chords in both keys, both permanent key D and secondary key area Eb, Monk's distillation becomes clearer. There is a definite V--I in D major in bar 36, followed by the Bb representative in bar 37, which functions as dominant of the Neapolitan (bII) in the original key, but more importantly serves as the dominant to Eb. Eb is important because it, in turn serves as a dominant substitute for A7 in the penultimate chord. (Tritone substitution calls for a dominant chord located a tritone away: thus, Eb-G-Bb-Db may substitute for A-C#-E-G because they have the tritone in common so necessary to the dominant pull towards tonic.)

The use of single pitch representatives, or chord distillation, allows Monk to further evoke colors that might not be evident in a more straightforward rendition. It affords him the freedom to include many other color tones and then immediately release them, leaving the listener wondering if those "crushed" clusters of notes were intentional or mistaken. In the process, the original composition becomes distinctly Monk's own creation, his own distinct recomposition through the use of sound colors:

...the 1957 performance [of "I Should Care"] ...as avant garde as anything that Luciano Berio or Roscoe Mitchell might write tomorrow, it is a slow, out of meter dissection of the raw materials of a tune. It is a feat akin to cutting up a Van Gogh canvas and reassembling it as a Picasso. (27)

## CHAPTER II

### NOTES

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3 John S. Wilson, Jazz: The Transition Years, 1940-1960 (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts Publishing Company, 1966), 68.

4 "Loneliest Monk," Time 83/1 (February 28, 1964), 84-85.

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6 Gunther Schuller, "Thelonious Monk at Town Hall," Jazz Review 2/5 (June 1959), 7.

7 Martin Williams, "Modern Jazz in Search of Maturity," The Jazz Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 145.

8 Ibid., 139-140.

9 Schuller, "Thelonious Monk," Jazz Panorama, 231-232.

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12 Martin Williams, Notes in the supplement to Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz, 1st edition (Smithsonian P6 11891, 1973).

13 Schuller, "Thelonious Monk," Jazz Panorama, 220.

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15 Williams, "Modern Jazz in Search of Maturity," The Jazz Tradition, 142.

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18 Nat Hentoff, The Jazz Life (New York: DaCapo Press, 1975), 180-182.

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23 Andre Hodeir, Toward Jazz (New York: DaCapo Press, 1976), 166.

24 Ran Blake, "Thelonious Monk," New Groves Dictionary of Jazz, ed. Barry Kernfeld (London: MacMillan Press, 1988), 122.

25 "Loneliest Monk," 86.

26 Schuller, "Thelonious Monk," Jazz Panorama, 228.

27 Michael Cuscuna, Notes in the supplement to Blue Note Recordings of Thelonious Monk (Mosaic MR4-101, 1983), 7.

## CHAPTER III

### RHYTHMIC DISPLACEMENT

Allusions have been made previously in this study to Monk's formidable rhythmic ability. While the effects of Klangfarben composition can be felt throughout Monk's compositions, these "colored" melodic and harmonic aspects are inextricably tied to his rhythmic eccentricities. Before discussing the particulars of Monk's rhythmic compositional materials, it is helpful to understand the unusual synthesis of melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic qualities in this music, because each aspect supports the other two. In an article for Jazz Journal International, Chris Sheridan crystallizes this unity of parts into a whole that we may perceive as undoubtedly "Monkian".

Reducing harmonic sequences to their elements afforded great rhythmic freedom, and Monk's work is littered with ingenious rhythmic twists and turns. His figures first stretch the beat by lagging behind it or telescope it by anticipating it. This creates flux and tension which he does not always resolve. Moreover, because the harmonies suggest rhythm, his melodic solos are full of shifting accents and implied metric alterations. He is therefore the master of the discontinuous line, the unexpected abbreviation, the melodic surprise, and in this way, his asymmetric lyricism feeds on both harmony and rhythm equally. (1)

With the fusion of all three elements in mind, to concentrate initially on rhythm brings to view Monk's innate sense of timing. As in humor, timing is everything; Monk's talent for timing should not surprise us, as his work is very much humor personified in musical terms, written slightly off-center, tongue-in-cheek, as he pokes fun at the conventional or wryly re-

interprets what was once pure sentiment. Rhythmic displacement, or the deviation from or rearrangement of previously established rhythmic material for variety or interest, plays the major role in Monk's success at producing the rhythmically unexpected, and delightfully witty twists in music.

While many of Monk's greatest compositions are based on small melodic fragments, and others are based on longer themes, they all reflect his fascination with rhythmic shift, metric accent, anticipation, and delay. These qualities are also related to his sense of economy, largely because he makes use of all the space in music, whether by sound or silence, which is musically economical. This economy of means will be dealt with in the fourth chapter.

How is it that Monk's rhythmic displacement techniques support his compositions with regard to the jazz feel of swing? Rhythmic displacement actually serves to perpetuate the swing aspect, as recognized by jazz scholar Andre Hodeir:

Modern jazz thrives on the notion that a variety of rhythmic figures is more conducive than the riff to that relaxed type of swing- because the relentless repetition of the riff ultimately becomes an element of tension. (2)

Thus, an inherent Monkian tendency towards the shifting and unexpected actually encourages the relaxed swing feel that is so elemental in and typical of this style.

Monk's use of the rhythmically unusual extends beyond his writing and into his playing as well. His piano accompaniments behind other soloists, referred to among jazz players as "comping," sometimes involve "unusual displacements of the regular four beat pulse of the performance and of the period."(3)

Monk is a unique and largely unorthodox accompanist. He forms a frequently 'simple' polyrhythmic and nearly polyphonic horn-like line between the percussion (bass and drums), and the soloist or front line horns. Even when Monk does "comp" chordally, he is a subliminal melodist. (4)

Thus, even in the background, and supporting the soloist, Monk's penchant for the rhythmically odd and shifting figure can be observed at work, generating that same swing momentum.

These metric shifts are also seen in his own soloing as well. Monk's improvisations were not only filled with colorful, melodically faithful lines, but they also "tended to swing from the accent to 'on' beats," which would serve to divide them up with "surprise accents and rests," and therefore again produce the rhythmically unexpected in Monk's work, even in this form of spontaneous composition called improvisation. (5)

Monk's interest in the rhythmically "different" twist encompassed all that he did, whether as composer, accompanist, or spontaneous soloist. However, it is in the original compositions of Monk that a clearer appreciation of his gift for creating the quirky, off-handed, rhythmic rarity may best be cultivated. Three such compositions are "Let's Call This," "Criss-Cross," and "Straight, No Chaser". All three compositions, played and improvised upon by scores of jazz players, contain some of the most pertinent and perfect examples of the concept of rhythmic displacement and metric delay and shift in all of jazz. One need not even look any further than the "head," or original chorus form, of each work to find and recognize these examples as rhythmic displacement, purposefully designed so by Monk. Before turning to the transcriptions of these compositions, it is helpful to



discuss displacement as it applies to Monk, and reveal the process by which he arrives at such rhythmic ingenuities.

We have said that rhythmic displacement is the deviation from, or rearrangement of the previously established rhythmic material for the purpose of variety and musical interest.

The core of Monk's style is a rhythmic virtuosity. He is a master of displaced accents, shifting meters, shaded delays, and anticipations. Therefore, he is a master of effective pause and of meaningfully employed space, rest, and silence. (6)

In Monk's case, however, rhythmic displacement is a much broader and more deeply explored compositional technique, in which the displacement is always directly intentional and can include the complete removal of that which is rhythmically expected at a certain beat or measure to another locale where it is unexpected and most unusual. This displacement takes on several forms, often inseparable, and yet individually recognizable.

The first technique Monk uses in achieving displacement is the shift of thematic placement within the bar, often by the use of rests in unexpected places. Such a shift produces anticipation or retardation of the thematic entrances, either placing them sooner than expected (the anticipated thematic entrance), or later than expected (the retarded thematic entrance). Secondly, there is often a shift of placement within the thematic line itself, a practice dating back hundreds of years and widely known as thematic augmentation or diminution, which involves changing the note values within the theme itself. Making the values longer within the theme produces the augmented thematic entrance, while shortening them produces the opposite effect called diminution. A third displacement technique Monk uses in his compositions

is the shift of placement with regard to the accents in a thematic line. This type of displacement is indeed written into his compositions, but also involves the more esoteric aspect of note articulations, as each player individually interprets them. Monk, in playing his own compositions, fully realizes these articulation changes in his performance to truly accomplish the displacement of this kind. Nat Hentoff recalls Paul Bacon's 1948 Record Changer description of this metric accent shift achieved by Monk's own articulation:

He may play for a space in nothing but smooth phrases and then suddenly jump on a part and repeat it with an intensity beyond description. (7)

This articulative variety, or shifting of the accents in a line, both compositionally and spontaneously, effectually achieves the displacement technique as well.

Finally, Monk also makes use of a shift of placement with regard to resolution of the thematic line. Such a shift of the resolution in Monk's work almost always involves the delay of the expected resolution, producing the tension-- release effect Monk is so partial to in his writing. We will see several examples of this last technique, the delay of resolution displacement, as well as the earlier mentioned three, and very often in conjunction with each other, in the three transcribed representative pieces to follow. Monk's most rhythmically interesting compositions usually make, at the least, a partial combined use of these four techniques for displacement. And yet, there is something so rhythmically "normal" about these displaced themes, once one recognizes them as Monk's.

"Monk's [work] depends upon making the surprise twist, the sardonically witty Phrase, and the unexpected rhythmic movement seem fitting and inevitable once one has heard them." (8)

One of Monk's least recognized and rarely called-upon compositions yields a rhythmically diverse example of all four types of rhythmic displacement. "Let's Call This," one of the best thematic selections on the 1960 Quartet Plus Two at the Blackhawk recording, features the abbreviation of expected rests repeatedly, so that successive phrases begin surprisingly soon. (9) The thematic anticipation that results, along with syncopation because of the displaced rests, make shift of placement within the bar obvious in this composition.

## LET'S CALL THIS

The musical score for "Let's Call This" is presented in two systems. The first system consists of measures 1, 2, and 3. The second system consists of measures 4, 5, 6, and 7. The score is written in treble and bass clefs with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature (C). The music is characterized by a complex rhythmic structure with many rests, particularly in the bass line, which are often abbreviated, leading to phrases that begin earlier than expected. The melody in the treble clef is characterized by syncopation and unexpected rhythmic movements.

Musical notation for measures 8, 9, and 10. The piece is in D major (two sharps) and 4/4 time. Measure 8 features a treble clef with a half note D5, a quarter note E5, and a quarter note F#5, with a fermata over the first two notes. The bass clef has a whole rest. Measure 9 is a repeat of measure 8. Measure 10 has a treble clef with a half note G5, a quarter note A5, and a quarter note B5, with a fermata over the first two notes. The bass clef has a whole rest.

Musical notation for measures 11, 12, 13, and 14. Measure 11 has a treble clef with a half note G5, a quarter note A5, and a quarter note B5, with a fermata over the first two notes. The bass clef has a whole rest. Measure 12 is a repeat of measure 11. Measure 13 has a treble clef with a half note C6, a quarter note D6, and a quarter note E6, with a fermata over the first two notes. The bass clef has a whole rest. Measure 14 has a treble clef with a half note F#6, a quarter note G6, and a quarter note A6, with a fermata over the first two notes. The bass clef has a whole rest.

Musical notation for measures 15, 16, 17, and 18. Measure 15 has a treble clef with a half note B5, a quarter note C6, and a quarter note D6, with a fermata over the first two notes. The bass clef has a whole rest. Measure 16 is a repeat of measure 15. Measure 17 has a treble clef with a half note E6, a quarter note F#6, and a quarter note G6, with a fermata over the first two notes. The bass clef has a whole rest. Measure 18 has a treble clef with a half note A6, a quarter note B6, and a quarter note C7, with a fermata over the first two notes. The bass clef has a whole rest.

Musical notation for measures 19, 20, and 21. Measure 19 has a treble clef with a half note B6, a quarter note C7, and a quarter note D7, with a fermata over the first two notes. The bass clef has a whole rest. Measure 20 is a repeat of measure 19. Measure 21 has a treble clef with a half note E7, a quarter note F#7, and a quarter note G7, with a fermata over the first two notes. The bass clef has a whole rest.

The one instance of an abbreviation of expected rests that allows this whole composition to feel displaced occurs in bars 2–3, and repeatedly reappears whenever that thematic statement does. The half note at the beginning of bar 2 does not feel complete without the rest that we expect to follow it. Instead of the rest, Monk immediately resumes his theme, making it sound "early." From that point on, everything sounds intriguingly displaced. This device allows Monk to be slightly unpredictable; we cannot foretell where the next entrance is going to be unless we are familiar with the tune. To prove this, the insertion of a half rest on beats three and four of that bar, and the immediate resumption of the theme on the downbeat of the next

bar yields a typical and predictable jazz tune style, and proves to be not at all what Monk was aiming for, even if it is what we expect to hear. The abbreviated rest is compensated for in bar 4 with an elongated C#. The same instance occurs again in bars 10--11, and is again compensated for in bar 12, as well as in the return of the A section, bars 26--27--28.

The fact that Monk employs displacement within the bar by abbreviating an expected rest makes possible another form of displacement. Monk is able to suspend the resolution of this work for the entire presentation of the theme through the use of the shift of placement within the expected resolution. Bars 1--8 constitute the opening statement of the theme, or so the listener thinks. But in the rest of the "exposition" of the tune, that cadence in bar 8 never reappears until bar 32; we expect to hear it in its normal place in bar 15, after the second statement of the A theme, but because of the abbreviated rest and the displacement of the melody, Monk is able to "leave the resolution hanging" on a D, the subdominant note, with the bass voice descending by half step, and with no sign of the expected cadence. The B section is equally unresolved at bar 24, with an E, the dominant note, extended over the same descending bass line. With the return of A, the resolution we expected as early as bar 15, finally appears in bar 32. Monk has managed to keep our attention and keep us listening and wondering, if for no other reason than to find out just how far he can suspend this resolution. Rhythmic displacement, as we mentioned, often involves the deletion of expected musical material entirely. "Let's Call This," one of [Monk's] most satisfying lyric melodies, achieves the Promethean task of being (in terms of jazz harmonies) continuous throughout, technically

unresolved until its 32nd bar." (10) This continuity is made possible by the deletion of something expected to maintain the composition's momentum, the displacement or abbreviation of an expected rest.

A second composition which reflects the usage of rhythmic displacement is the well-known Monk standard "Criss Cross." "Criss Cross" is another masterpiece...breaking up the [melodic] patterns with miniature riffs, unexpected rests, and accents. The bridge is an ingenious abbreviation of the theme..." (11) Below, the transcription of the introduction, A section, and B section appears.

## CRISS-CROSS

(Piano)

(Piano and Horns)

Bridge

In general the piece is an A-A-B-A form beginning at the repeat sign. The thematic material is remarkable, however, because of the extensive displacement found as early as the piano introduction. Monk sets up the theme with beats carried across the bar, propelling the composition, before the A section ever appears. Bars 2, 3, and 4, which contain the pattern across the bar lines, also reveal an ascending chromatic scale over elongated, stressed notes, to support the intensity Monk has created. Bar 5 marks the beginning of the A section, where horns and piano seem at first to be restating the theme. But "Monk dodges away in bar 7, first leaving an unexpected hole with the eighth note rest and then jumping up past the high point of the previous line (the Ab in bar 4) to an A natural." (12) By "leaving a hole," Monk has deleted that which we expected, based on the introduction. Bars 9--12 reflect a similar situation, where a secondary motive begins. In bar 11, Monk inserts another "hole," this time a half rest which shortens the secondary motive we've just heard. These examples are instances of rhythmic displacement accomplished by the deletion of something expected, thus, within the bar. Even with the displacement, Monk also accomplishes perfect symmetry by mirroring the opening ascending chromatic line with the descending chromatic line which appears in the earlier mentioned secondary motive in bar 9.



Another place in "Criss Cross" that shows Monk's use of displacement occurs in the B section, or Bridge, of this composition. The previously heard secondary motive originally found in bar 9, is transposed to another level, and repeated in bars 21-26. This only constitutes 6 of the expected 8 bars of the B section; thus, Monk follows up with a casual two bar tag, just before the A section returns. In later performances, Monk completely deleted these two bars, largely due to his sense of economy, which will be discussed in the following chapter. But the whole reason for the bridge appearing as only 6 bars can be traced to the deletion of expected material. The A section primary motive was heard three times; the B section motive has been reduced to only two hearings, thus leaving another "hole;" at first, Monk was compelled to fill it. In later performances, his sense of economy superceded his sense of tradition, and the two bar tag in question was deleted.

Perhaps one of Monk's most recognized compositions, "Straight, No Chaser," also provides excellent examples of rhythmic displacement. The melody is only a small fragment, within the range of a minor seventh.

## STRAIGHT, NO CHASER



5 4

5 6 7 8

This musical system shows the first four measures of the piano solo. The treble clef staff contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the bass clef staff provides a harmonic accompaniment. Measure numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8 are indicated below the bass staff. A '5 4' is written in the top right corner. Two accents (^) are placed above the notes in measures 7 and 8.

9 10 11 12

This musical system shows measures 9 through 12. The notation continues with the same melodic and harmonic patterns as the first system. Measure numbers 9, 10, 11, and 12 are indicated below the bass staff.

This little motive, however, is placed in a different location just about every time it appears. The anacrusis to bar one falls on the upbeat of four and the melody begins. The next time the figure enters, almost immediately, this low G pickup falls on the upbeat of three, displacing the figure. Other entrances fall on the upbeat of two (bar 4), and the upbeat of one (bar 5), thus displacing the figure, each time earlier and earlier, until the listener, having not heard the work before, cannot predict where the next entrance may fall. Even those who are somewhat familiar with this piece have trouble singing it back exactly as they heard it. This type of displacement, within the bar, along with the anticipated entrances, make "Straight, No Chaser" one of Monk's most interesting compositions.

Finally, Monk's personal concept of timing and his individual method of articulation also are a part of the displacement technique. Looking once more at the piano solo "I Should Care," this rhythmic aspect may be seen.

This musical score shows a cadenza for the piano solo "I Should Care." It features a single treble clef staff with a complex, fast-moving melodic line. The notation includes various rhythmic values and accidentals, with a double bar line and repeat sign at the beginning. The piece concludes with a fermata over the final note.

Cadenza

Bars 31-32, according to Schuller, constitute a kind of "private, double-time passage." (13) Previous to this passage, the ballad has been progressing in a slow, rubato style. The tension of the sonority immediately preceding this passage gives way to the relief of a sudden rhythmic figure. Instantly, Monk's articulation changes, and the timing of the piece is altered. Of "I Should Care," in general, Hodeir writes:

It is not hard to see why I am so fascinated by his remarkable 'I Should Care'...it consists of a series of impulses which disregard the bar line completely, pulverize the musical tissue, and yet preserve intact that 'jazz feeling' ... These elongations of musical time...Is it so unreasonable to think that they exist as a function of a second, underlying tempo, imperceptible to us, but which Monk hears in all the complexity of its relationships with the figures he is playing? (14)

Thus, Monk's concept of rhythm and the ways in which he avoids doing the expected provide a much more interesting mode of composition. Whether the displacement or complete removal of, the musically expected occurs within the bar, theme, articulation, or resolution, all make his works less predictable and certainly more individual.

### CHAPTER III

#### NOTES

1 Chris Sheridan, "Portrait of an Eremite- An Appreciation of Thelonious Monk: 10-10-17 to 2-17-82," Jazz Journal International 35/5 (May 1982), 25.

2 Andre Hodeir, Toward Jazz (New York: DaCapo Press, 1976), 139.

- 3 Martin Williams, "Thelonious Monk; Modern Jazz in Search of Maturity," The Jazz Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 139.
- 4 Ibid, 145.
- 5 Sheridan, 25.
- 6 Williams, 146.
- 7 Nat Hentoff, The Jazz Life (New York: DaCapo Press, 1975), 179.
- 8 Williams, 145.
- 9 Sheridan, 26.
- 10 Williams, 147.
- 11 Sheridan, 26.
- 12 Michael Cuscuna, Notes in the supplement to Blue Note Recordings of Thelonious Monk (Mosaic MR4-101, 1983), 8.
- 13 Gunther Schuller, "Thelonious Monk," Jazz Panorama, ed. Martin Williams (New York: DaCapo Press, 1979), 231.
- 14 Hodeir, 166.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ECONOMY OF MEANS

Monk's compositional unity and success is due largely, not to grandiose themes and intricate harmonic progressions, but to his sense of economy and his ability to make the best use of notes as well as silence. This economic, careful use of musical material is evident in his original themes, as well as in his comping behind other soloists in that he makes use of the melody, even while accompanying, instead of the traditional jazz pianist's habit of chordal backgrounds. Even Monk's solos are largely economical, borrowing material from the composition itself and often in a verbatim fashion.

Composers know that one of the most difficult aspects of writing a memorable theme involves where to let the music breathe, or more basically, when to use silence instead of sound. Monk's use of silence almost feels uncomfortable to those who are unfamiliar with it. Some soloists playing in front of Monk recognized this type of economy much to their surprise:

His penchant for leaving large spaces in his playing left unseasoned sidemen with the sensation in the middle of a chorus, of having stepped into an abandoned elevator shaft. (1)

Other musicians, such as Miles Davis, recognized that same Monkian tendency for using silence as a means of "getting free of the continuous, chord-choked substructure of modern jazz." In an interview, he said:

Monk had been a big influence in giving musicians more freedom. They feel that if Monk can do what he does, they can. Monk has been using space for a long time. (2)

Another realm of Monk's sense of economy involves his ability to balance his compositions through the use of symmetry. Because he is able to be economical with thematic material by using it in his solos, this "enables him to play a dominant role in the form of the collective work, shaping it in terms of that basic choice between symmetrical and asymmetrical structures....only in Monk's music do asymmetry and discontinuity enhance one another, thereby assuming their full symbiotic significance." (3) Related to that symmetry is Monk's use of simplicity in his thematic choices. These elements, silence, symmetry, and simplicity, all make up the economical style of Monk.

The principle underlying Monk's chief structural contribution is one of brilliant simplicity. The incorporation of shifting, asymmetrical structures into a symmetrical type of fixed 'combo' structure constitutes an obvious, though partial, solution to the problem of form in jazz-- so obvious in fact that I am surprised no one ever thought of it before. (4)

Once again, the best place to gain insights regarding Monk's economy is in his original composition. Even though it is true that his continuous use of the melody while comping is economical, and that his soloing is melodically faithful as well, his original works contain the most evident examples for study.

The bridge of "Criss Cross" is an excellent case in point. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, this bridge was originally 8 bars long, 6 bars of essential thematic material with a 2 bar tag or extension to round out the expected 8 bars of the B section.

Bridge

Eventually, in his performances, Monk deleted those two bars. Perhaps any sense of obligation to traditional form was superseded by Monk's own sense of economy. The 6 bars, two 3 bar phrases, were truly all that was needed in that particular instance, and even though it made the otherwise traditional AABA form asymmetrical, Monk felt it necessary to achieve the balance in the composition.

Monk once said of his tune "Thelonious" that it was so simple that even "a nitwit could sing it." The entire composition is mostly made up of two pitches, tonic and dominant, arranged in an interesting rhythmic fashion.

## THELONIOUS

The economy of note choice is evident here, but the work is surprisingly unpredictable even with those pitches repeated over and over again. The overall form is again AABA, with the A sections consisting mostly of those two prominent pitches (bars 1-16 and 25-32). Another evidence of economy in this same work is the B section (bars 17-24) which is actually an extension of the A section. The thematic material comes from the first 8 bars, but is augmented rhythmically. Monk reuses his musical material wherever possible; this is one of the most efficient forms of musical economy.

'Thelonious' is a strange, melodious record, consisting of a simple theme, beautifully enlarged. That seems to be the key to Monk's playing--nothing startling to begin with, but that nothing is played with such individuality and freshness that it's amazing. (5)

Another example of economy already viewed once in this study is Monk's classic "Straight, No Chaser." This work, as we regarded it in the light of its displaced rhythms, is made up of a small melodic fragment within the range of a mere minor seventh, reused over and over at different locations in the bar each time it appears.



## STRAIGHT, NO CHASER

The musical score for "Straight, No Chaser" is presented in three systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 4. The second system contains measures 5 through 8. The third system contains measures 9 through 12. The melody is primarily in the right hand, with some accompaniment in the left hand. Measure 1 is the essential pattern. Measures 5 and 7 have accents (^) over the notes. The piece ends with a double bar line at the end of measure 12.

Bar 1 contains the essential pattern which Monk economically makes use of eleven times in the course of the A section. Each entrance, however, is unpredictable because of the displacement factor, and yet this is the same melodic material. The seeming simplicity of this melody and the intricacy with which Monk weaves it in and out of the barline constitute an example of that paradox spoken of in the Introduction; Monk's music is based on economy, that which appears to be simple, and yet, is used in an unpredictable way. "Straight, No Chaser" is perhaps Monk's best example of his use of simplicity, a very economical method for composing.

Thematic economy, involving the use of silence, symmetry, and simplicity, is present in its full form in the composition "Off Minor;" the first chorus appears below: **OFF MINOR**

Fast medium bounce

Chords for the first system: G-6, Db7, F#, B-7, Bb, Eb, D

Chords for the second system: G-, Bb7-5, D°

Chords for the third system: G-6, Db7, F#7, B-7, Bb7, EbΔ7, D7

Chords for the fourth system: G-, Bb7-5, D°

DbΔ9 D7 Bb-7 Eb7-5 B-7 E7

17 18 19 20

E- A A- D° D7-5

21 22 23 24

G-6 Db7 F# B-7 Bb7 EbΔ7 D7

25 26 27 28

The image shows a musical score for piano, consisting of four measures. The first measure is labeled with the chord G-6, the second with Bb7-5, and the third with D°. The score is written on a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. Measure numbers 29, 30, 31, and 32 are indicated below the bass staff. The music features a mix of notes and rests, with some notes beamed together and some measures containing rests.

First of all, the use of silence is evident in the A section; bars 1--3 constitute the basic motive, followed by a bar made up mostly of silence. This opening motive is economically repeated in bar 5, but a different consequent follows in bar 6 and 7. As if to justify the opening three bar phrase, the second time through (bars 5-8) that consequent is repeated in bar 8, immediately echoing bars 6-7. Instead of two 4-bar phrases, Monk has linked two 3-bar phrases with a bar of silence. In addition to the judicious use of silence, the thematic entrances are also symmetrical. Notable are the facts that Monk reiterates the theme in a predictable fashion (AABA) and does not delete the bar of silence, even though the theme is really made up of a three bar phrase. In addition, the bridge to this work (bars 17--24) is made up of a simple countermelody to the A section. Monk's use of simplicity contributes to the success of this composition in that it "makes room" for a more complicated harmonization. If all aspects of the composition were intricate and complex, the symmetry and brilliance of the work would be lost. Monk's best tool for ensuring against that was the use of economy in his writing.

Finally, "Epistrophy" yields one last example of economy for study. Not only does the economy apply to the melody, but also to Monk's harmonic structure here.

## EPISTROPHY

C#7 D7 C#7 D7 C#7 D7 C#7 D7

Musical notation for measures 1-4. The treble clef contains a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes. The bass clef contains a bass line with chords and eighth notes. Measure numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 are indicated below the bass line.

D#7 E7 D#7 E7 D#7 E7 D#7 E7

Musical notation for measures 5-8. The treble clef contains a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes. The bass clef contains a bass line with chords and eighth notes. Measure numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8 are indicated below the bass line.

D#7 E7 D#7 E7 D#7 E7 D#7 E7

Musical notation for measures 9-12. The treble clef contains a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes. The bass clef contains a bass line with chords and eighth notes. Measure numbers 9, 10, 11, and 12 are indicated below the bass line.

C#7 D7 C#7 D7 C#7 D7 C#7 D7

Musical notation for measures 13-16. The treble clef contains a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes. The bass clef contains a bass line with chords and eighth notes. Measure numbers 13, 14, 15, and 16 are indicated below the bass line.

Musical notation for measures 29-32. The right hand (RH) features a sequence of chords: C#7, D7, C#7, D7, C#7, D7, C#7, D7. The left hand (LH) contains a melodic line with eighth notes and rests.

Musical notation for measures 25-28. The right hand (RH) features a sequence of chords: D#7, E7, D#7, E7, D#7, E7, D#7, E7. The left hand (LH) contains a melodic line with eighth notes and rests.

Musical notation for measures 21-24. The right hand (RH) features a sequence of chords: B7, D#7, D#7, D#7. The left hand (LH) contains a melodic line with eighth notes and rests.

Musical notation for measures 17-20. The right hand (RH) features a sequence of chords: F#, D#7, D#7, D#7. The left hand (LH) contains a melodic line with eighth notes and rests.

The melodic line makes use of one basic rhythmic pattern, displaced to different locations within the bar. Measures 1 and 2 contain the same melodic content, with bars 3 and 4 based on that same content, but slightly altered to "answer" the initial statement. Bars 5-12 are but a transposition of the opening 4 bars. The bridge is also derived from the opening 2 bars, changed slightly for interest.(bars 17-24) Note also that the bridge itself contains the same repetition of material (bars 17-20 and bars 21-22) while the last two measures of the bridge are versions of each other. Why does Monk make use of this repetition? The best explanation is for the purpose of symmetry within the composition.

Also remarkable are the harmonies used in the composition. Bars 1-4 are simply transposed up a whole step. Even the same sonority (dominant quality) is used almost throughout the entire work. This gives a kind of "planing" effect, with the rising tonality of C# up to D#, and its consequential descent back to C# in bar 13. Monk makes use of both simplicity and symmetry here; silence is not part of this composition ,however, in that the line is almost continuous throughout.

The combination of the elements of economy, silence, symmetry, and simplicity, is another compositional vehicle which Monk exploits in many instances throughout his repertoire. In keeping with his tendency towards the unexpected, both melodically and harmonically, as well as rhythmically, the economy of means aspect of his writing ironically does not oversimplify his creations, but in fact makes them more diverse, and even complicated.

Like a child, Monk is more complex than appears on the surface. Innocence is not simple, and simplicity is not easy. What to leave out...is every bit as important as what is included. Monk is neither dated nor contemporary, neither in nor out, because his strength is such that he need only and forever be Thelonious Monk. (6)

## CHAPTER IV

### NOTES

1 Nat Hentoff, "The Private World of Thelonious Monk," Esquire 53/4 (April 1960), 133.

2 \_\_\_\_\_, The Jazz Life (New York: DaCapo Press, 1975), 179.

3 Andre Hodeir, Toward Jazz (New York: DaCapo Press, 1976), 171.

4 Ibid., 171-172.

5 Michael Cuscuna, Notes in the supplement to Blue Note Recordings of Thelonious Monk (Mosaic MR4-101, 1983), 5.

6 Michael Zwerin, Liner notes to Thelonious Monk's Greatest Hits (Columbia CS-9775, n.d.), n.p.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

Having read the available material on Thelonious Monk, it becomes obvious that Monk's body of compositions deserves more than a passing glance. Rather than merely to comment upon his style, it was the intent of this effort to discover exactly what elements make this music possible. The aspects of Klangfarben, sound colors, rhythmic displacement, and economical writing are the primary techniques used by Monk for the purpose of composing, and were found to be the elements that give Monk's music its paradoxical nature.

The complicated nature of some of the rhythmic activity in a Monk composition, as opposed to the bare simplicity of many of his themes, provides just one example of the dichotomy that is Monk the composer. Yet, the music sounds entirely as if it were destined to be displaced, meant to be dissonant, and what was once unpredictable sounds completely normal in Monk's creations. These and other aspects of Monk's composition are all largely tied to sound color, displacement, and economy.

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