Sound and Vision: Color in Visual Art and Popular Music

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»The whole way we do things is that we try to lay textures together« (David Thomas of Pere Ubu, quoted in Heylin 1993: 223).[1]

»If there is such a thing as being tone-deaf, then it suggests the inability to recognize a tune. Such a person has my sympathy, but he cannot be helped; just as the color-blind are a useless lot to the painter« (Copland 1957: 16).

This comment in Copland's *What to Listen for in Music* typifies the standard theory that pervades modern thinking about music. To the extent that theorists recognize an analogy between the arts of painting and music, visual color is treated as the proper analogue to auditory pitch. The irony is that although musical timbre is also known as tone color, timbre is not treated as the analogue of visual color. This prejudice is reinforced by the tendency to regard tone color as an aesthetic property of musical performances but not of the musical works that are performed. Musical works are equated with sound structures. In a musical culture where serious analysis focuses on structural properties of musical compositions, it is not surprising that tone color is relegated to the trivial task of permitting listeners to better attend to musical structure.[2] The argument of this paper is that technological developments enhancing the role of timbre in musical arrangements make timbre highly analogous to visual color in modern painting. Tone color has its own expressive role in recent popular music. Neglect of this aesthetic function is a major failing of many discussions of popular music.

1 Heylin's source is a punk fanzine, *New York Rocker*, 1976.

2 Admittedly, many serious composers rebelled against this assumption and sought to make timbre more central to work identity (e.g., Messiaen, Varèse, Schönberg, and Boulez). But in this respect their work is regarded as breaking from tradition.

I. Aural and Visual Color

By way of introduction to the analogy between timbre and color in the visual arts, consider one of Henri Matisse's later works, particularly one of his paper cutouts, such as »Icarus« (1943), »The Snail« (1952), or one of the pieces generated for his book, *Jazz* (1947). Comparing his work sketches with the finished works, we *see* what we have probably already assumed, which is that color choice is central to his visual thinking. As Matisse simplifies his designs he also tries different color combinations. The impact of the completed work involves the interaction of size, design, and color choices, so that a black and white reproduction, or even a color one that distorts the color values, is less forceful.

Given the relative simplicity of most musical composition in the sphere of rock, success in rock music is analogously a function of production, songwriting, and tone color. To look at a Matisse cut-paper work in dim light (when the color photoreceptors in our eyes do not respond) is not to look at the work intended by Matisse. It would be like looking at a grammatical analysis of a sentence in place of the actual sentence. One would see how the communication is constructed, but one would not know what was actually being communicated.[3] Those who dismiss or downplay the role of timbre in rock music engage in a parallel distortion, which is what happens if we apply the standard theory of musical taste.

I have witnessed art critiques where a painting has been rated highly for composition but criticized for gaudy color. Another painting is then praised for its sensitive coloration but faulted for its sloppy composition, because the various areas of the painting do not hang together in any coherent manner. An accumulation of such examples teaches art students that there is a difference between structured composition and the work's additional, nonstructural elements, but they are also taught that the two must be integrated in a broader synthesis.

But how do art students perfect this synthesis? How do we even discuss it? When I teach philosophy of art, some art students complain to me that their teachers routinely fail to articulate what is good about a successful work. There is a level of criticism that seems beyond articulation; one can only point or gesture and say »that works« or »that doesn't«. There is, ultimately, a gestalt property that is beyond articulation. As Arnold Isenberg

3 It should be understood from this remark that I do not equate communication with audience reception. See Gracyk (2001: chapter 2).

puts it, »when our attention is called, by a critic, to a certain quality, we respond to that quality in its context. The context is never specified… but is always assumed« (Isenberg 1973: 170).[4] Isenberg is discussing the importance of color for any painting by Titian. Of course, if Titian demands a sensitivity to his use of color, the paintings of Corot, Ingres, and David reflect a neo-Classical context in which color is understood as something of an afterthought to drawing and structural organization.

Consider, then, this piece of professional criticism, selected from a review of a show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art devoted to works by Caspar David Friedrich:

»Even the [awkward] pictures just mentioned may sneak up on you with the artist's slow-acting disembodied color. The buzz of a Friedrich occurs when what have seemed mere tints in a tonal composition combust as distinctly scented hues — citron lights, plum darks — and you don't so much look at the picture as breathe it. He is an artist of pale fire, of twilight that scorches« (Schjeldahl 1991: 103).

In the catalogue for the same show, Friedrich is quoted as saying that his works express »in images *and colors* that which words cannot convey« (quoted in Asvarishch 1990: 34, emphasis added). An art critic offers this gloss on Friedrich's remark:

»Color no longer creates an illusion of light that causes figures and objects to cast shadows and obey the laws of chiaroscuro modeling, nor does it convey the illusion of surface textures. For him, color is neither subordinate to drawing nor made to patch itself. Indeed, his very choice of subject — whether moonlit night, sunset, or morning — calls for a single dominant tonality that sometimes borders on monochrome« (Asvarishch 1990: 34).

It is revealing to compare one of the Friedrich's pen and ink drawings with the paintings that developed from them. The colors of even the most monochrome paintings are subtle and voluptuous in a manner that precludes regarding them as secondary to structure. »What at first seem to be mere tints in a tonal range combust into distinctly scented, disembodied hues, drenching purples and scratchy russets, plum darks and citron lights«, notes Peter Schjeldahl. »Friedrich is an artist of dusky fire, of twilight that sears« (Schjeldahl 2001: 117). The colors are the emotional punch of work that is otherwise off-putting as both cold and weird. But the color choices are not arbitrary. Introduce primary colors to any of these works and their expressive integrity would vanish.

4 This essay came to my attention through its influence on Mary Mothersill.

While it seems elementary that the communicative design of many paintings includes their colors and the relationships established among them, aesthetic theory invites us to reflect on the implications of what is happening when we deny a parallel conclusion about music. Following Monroe C. Beardsley, we might say that timbre can contribute a non-structural regional quality that contributes to music's expressive character. Unfortunately, Beardsley does not recognize that his own theory of art licenses this conclusion. Yet for five decades, rock musicians have employed timbre in just this way, so that at this late date only ignorance or blind prejudice would seem to explain the ongoing assumption that timbre is a secondary, dispensable dimension of music.

Rock music has not developed a discourse that prioritizes structural qualities and so rock critics and fans have no reason to be disturbed by timbre. Rock criticism offers virtually no analysis of abstract or formal relationships within the music being discussed. When rock critics discuss the music in place of the usual fluff of biographical criticism, analysis of lyrics, and broad speculation about the music's implications for society at large, they occasionally describe the aural experience of the fabric of sound. Consider this passage from a review of Suede's eponymous debut album (1993): »Dramatic tension is paramount in a Suede arrangement. You can feel the ambition in the way the guitar tone shifts from fuzzy to biting to smooth to abrasive to soft to howling, often within the same song« (Walters 1993: 72).

For rock music, structural simplicity is generally balanced by textural nuance in creating the music's expressive power. Joe Carducci puts it this way: »In rock music, songwriting may be a significant aid in the conjuring, but it's still essentially a pretext for the art itself. […] The tonal colouring of the music's chords and notes is frequently more telling than the tune itself« (Carducci 1994: 28).[5]

Timbre or tone color is on a par with structure as an expressive resource. Consistent with Beardsley's critical categories, the Suede review singles out regional qualities of guitar tone and contrasts between such tones as generating the regional human qualities of ambition and dramatic tension.

The lesson here is that we can recognize the function of both visual and auditory color without assuming that we can stipulate compositional rules for the rightness and wrongness of their deployment. We can point out their

5 I have deleted the intervening sentence in which Carducci emphasizes rock as an essentially performing art; he regards recordings as derivative, secondary and, when carefully crafted, mere pop.

emotional power even as we fail to articulate why specific choices are, in this context, the right choice. Another lesson is that a failure to articulate an underlying logic of aesthetic rightness does not imply the irrelevance of timbre. Analyses of musical works that emphasize structural features (because those features have a relatively clear logic) seriously distort the actual communicative processes of rock music.[6] My goal is to show that it is a mistake to dismiss audience interest in timbre and its contribution to textural nuance. Yet we face a curious problem with music. The very ability to hear music in a sequence of sounds may reinforce the dubious idea that musical structure is central and timbre is incidental.

II. The Inherited Problem

In order to develop the capacity to perceive a recognizable musical work in a specific sound event, listeners must learn to distinguish between what is unique to the sounds, considered as the material instantiation of the work, and the work itself. In order to avoid the Platonic assumption that musical works are eternal tonal structures, I will approach this as a difference between tokens (specific aural events of limited duration) and the type (the musical composition instantiated by the tokens).[7] Having come to know the opening phrase of Beethoven's fifth symphony in standard orchestral dress, my five-year-old son easily taught himself how to play the opening four notes on the piano. He already understood that the timbre of the strings and clarinet are not essential to the musical work (the type), nor is the »fortissimo« that his index finger cannot reproduce. Nobody told him this. It is part of the tacit, pre-theoretical knowledge he has acquired about music.

Unfortunately, theoretical musings tend to insist that musical appreciation should be emphatically work-focused. Observing clear differences between eighteenth and nineteenth century attitudes, Carl Dahlhaus main-

6 I have in mind analytical studies that focus almost exclusively on metric and harmonic construction, as with the essays by Dave Headlam and Graeme M. Boone in Covach/Boone (1997). I am not opposed to such analyses. However, we should not assume that they are always deeply illuminating. We might see them as analogous to laying out the underlying grammatical structures of a novel.

7 Types do not have to be interpreted as eternal objects. The *Ford Edsel* is a specific type of automobile, and all but the most stubborn Platonist will allow that this type is itself a human artifact that did not exist prior to the mid-1950s. For further discussion of the distinction between tokens and types, see Gracyk (1996: chapter one); Gracyk (2001: 17-26); and Davies (2001: 37-43).

tains that musicians of the earlier period regarded musical works as »mere ›scenarios‹« for performances. In contrast, nineteenth century musicians devalued the performance as »a function of a text which it attempted to interpret« (Dahlhaus 1990: 138). One legacy of this shift is that good listeners are supposed to ignore whatever is particular to a performance (a token) as irrelevant to the musical work. Today, this mode of musical apprehension is usually called analytical listening.[8] On this model, the musical composition or work is the primary object of musical attention. The performance stands to the musical work as the car windshield stands to the road: a necessary evil that one looks through in order to apprehend the real object of interest.

Numerous factors contributed to the shift from a performance-centered musical culture to one that was work-centered (Goehr 1992).[9] The legacy of this shift is that the value of analytical listening is simply assumed. To question it while professing to understand music is almost unimaginable, akin to finding a molecular biologist who denies that biological species evolve. Even Howard Gardner, whose work on multiple modes of intelligence assigns considerable importance to ›autonomous‹ musical intelligence, treats musical intelligence almost exclusively as a matter of creating and perceiving musical patterns or structures. Mastery of ›formal musical analysis‹ is identified as the pinnacle of musical intelligence (Gardner 1983: 111).

So what is the connection between downplaying timbre and endorsing analytical listening? John Shepherd argues that timbre was marginalized in this tradition because rich timbres detract from analytical listening.

»The standardization of timbres […] allowed for architectonically complex pieces of music […and] served to render timbre relatively unobtrusive, unlikely to detract attention from the foregrounded elements of harmony and melody (which depend on pitch) and, to a lesser extent, rhythm. The flute playing of Ian Alexander [sic] of Jethro Tull, for example, with its rough and ›dirty‹ timbres and melodic and rhythmic inflections (›bent‹ pitches and rhythms) […] would be inadmissible in classical music, since they would draw attention away from the harmonic argument which underlies most classical music« (Shepherd 1999: 161).

But why did the classical world restrict the ›argument‹ in this manner? Shepherd claims that it was done to prioritize the musical score as the true

8 For interesting challenges to analytical or ›musicological‹ listening, see Cook (1990), and Levinson (1997). For an abbreviated version of his argument, see Cook (1987: 23-29).

9 For cogent criticisms of Goehr, see Davies (2001: 86-91, 123 and 216).

embodiment of the music. By limiting timbres, the musical performance employs a ›reduction of sound‹ that better reflects the *visual* notation of score. But where Shepherd sees this prioritization as integral to the logic of classical music, I want to suggest that it was a pragmatic adaptation that came to seem ›logical‹ as it became institutionalized.

Let us examine a theorist who expended considerable energy defending just this sort of analytical listening. Edmund Gurney's mammoth book *The Power of Sound* (1880) links analytical or structural apprehension to focused, ››definite‹‹ listening. Gurney argues that such listening is inherently superior to indefinite, passive consumption that ignores »individual melodic and harmonic combinations« in favor of »the perception of successions of agreeably-toned and harmonious sound« (Gurney 1966: 306).[10] While many nineteenth century theorists endorse the same view, Gurney is of particular interest for directly arguing that we cannot privilege analytical listening unless we limit the importance of tone color.

Gurney devotes an entire chapter to the analogy between timbre and visual color. Predictably, he contends that interest in timbre is consigned to the indefinite, passive and thus less rewarding category of listening (ibid.: 307). He argues, »color is both to the eye and the ear a secondary quality of phenomena,« so »it can be by both dispensed with«.[11] Not in actual performance, of course, but rather in reflection and memory: »musical forms, though necessarily presented to the ear in some kind of sound-colour if presented at all, [are] reproducible in memory with the very minimum of realization of any actual sound-quality« (ibid.: 296-7). If timbre has any legitimate role to play in music's power, it is to the degree that it aids or hinders our grasp of the music's formal organization. Timbre is assigned no expressive function. Although sketchy, this argument is central to proposals that interest in timbre and sound quality is a species of passive or pathological response.

Gurney is certainly correct that timbre aids or hinders our grasp of structure.[12] But his appeal to the ability to recall melodies with a ›minimum of realization‹ of tone color does not establish that timbre is merely a con-

10 For a summary and analysis of Gurney's basic position, see Budd (1985: chapter IV).

11 This argument draws on the modern dogma that some perceptual properties are ›secondary‹ qualities and that such properties are merely subjective appearances of objects. This doctrine originates in the writings of Galileo, Descartes, Hobbes, and Locke. But many philosophers, including their contemporaries, find it incoherent (e.g., George Berkeley. *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, §§ 9-15).

12 For a summary of pioneering work on this topic, see Pierce (1983: 190-91).

tingent byproduct of musical performance. It merely establishes that nineteenth century audiences were unaccustomed to thinking about, and remembering, music as clothed in specific timbres. Prior to recorded sound (i.e., prior to 1877), audiences heard a fresh performance and interpretation each time they heard a piece. Furthermore, they were more likely to know a Beethoven symphony transposed to piano or wind ensemble than in full orchestral dress. Indeed, it is this very fact that drives Gurney's dismissal of timbre. In the musical world of the nineteenth century, one could not expect to hear a work repeated with the same tone coloration, nor even to hear it performed again: »Musical works are not, like pictures, contained in a national gallery which can be walked round once a week, and it may be necessary to wait a year for a repetition« (ibid.: 302).[13] Treating timbre and sound quality as inessential gave legitimacy to transcriptions and so made it acceptable to experience ›the same‹ musical work more often, in many performance settings. Gurney emphasizes that only »by foregoing special rights as to colour« can all worthwhile music be brought into the home or reproduced in performance by adaptation to the instrumental means at hand. Better to have great music on a cheap instrument or sung by an untrained voice than to hear a lavish production of some »uninventive and joyless work« (ibid.: 298-99).[14]

But of course those days are past. Now that one can hear the same recording of a work as often as one likes, why do theorists and educators continue to emphasize a model that presupposes nineteenth century music practices? Why do we continue to treat *that* tradition as normative? Gurney's argument is circular, for of course worthwhile music is simply assumed to be music with enough structural character to survive adaptation. However, one cannot really adapt a Balinese Gamelan piece to wind ensemble, nor can we adapt a Burundi drum piece. The fact that these cannot be adapted does not show that they are ›uninventive and joyless‹ music. Even if we could preserve the central sonic structures on completely different instruments, we would create music with a completely different expressive feeling. A parallel conclusion applies to most rock music.

13 But contrast the situation of notated music with that of rock music as institutionalized by the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. ›Artists‹ become eligible for induction twenty-five years after the release of their first record. Recordings are the relevant musical achievement in this area.

14 The consequences of such a position are clearly unfavorable to rock, since the average rock fan is hardly satisfied by adaptations. It's a cute trick when the Kronos Quartet transcribes Jimi Hendrix's »Purple Haze« and Television's »Marquee Moon« for string quartet, but the result is mainly of interest to those who know the original rock versions.

The obvious problem with privileging analytical attention to sonic structure is that so much of the pleasure of popular music is due to non-structural dimensions of the aural experience. Indeed, for decades this fact has been used to dismiss popular music and to denigrate its fans: »What is unaesthetic about popular art is its formlessness. It does not invite or even permit the sustained effort necessary to the creation of an artistic form« (Kaplan 1966: 355). Listen to any Chuck Berry song or early Lennon and McCartney song. Many children can hum them after one or two hearings. Or listen to any of the simple, strophic tunes on the Ramones' eponymous debut album (1976). Apprehension of structure cannot be the primary attraction in listening to the majority of rock music. There is just so little of it, either horizontally or vertically, and even less that has any degree of originality.[15] In terms of traditional syntactical analysis, the music is simple and repetitive and predictable.[16]

At the same time, we are fooling ourselves if we do not allow that there is a genuine aesthetic reward in listening to the Ramones' »Judy Is A Punk«. We should reject the assumption that only formal properties are genuine sources of musical reward, or even that they are always its primary reward. This move may sound like a begging of the question, since what is at issue is whether rock can sustain real aesthetic interest. Yet since I am not alone in regarding Ramones songs like »Judy Is A Punk« and »53rd & 3rd« as expressively powerful music, I assume that there is both meaning and genuine merit in anything that continues to have such appeal to educated people who've been exposed to the best our culture has to offer.[17]

So I deny that pleasure in the Ramones is ›unaesthetic‹ or otherwise suspect because it does not derive from apprehension of form.[18] I will sketch an aesthetic justification of the position that the impoverished structure of »Judy Is A Punk« is largely a framing device, a coat-hanger upon which other qualities are hung. The challenge is to show that some of these qualities arise from timbre as well as from melody, rhythm, and harmony.

15 For an early discussion of this point, see Chester (1990).

16 There is also a good deal that is simply incoherent. See Scruton (1997: 500-505). Scruton dismisses R.E.M. as musically »brutal« and »inarticulate«. An informed response is Sutherland (1999).

17 The obvious rejoinder is that my appeal to an informed audience is a retreat to relativism. However, the central question is whether tone color contributes to musical meaning, and serious difficulties face anyone who disregards appeals to relevant populations when limiting semantic indeterminacy. For a sketch of those difficulties, see Kraut (1992).

18 For my response to the position that it is a mistake to look for aesthetic rewards in popular art, see Gracyk (1996: chapter 8), and Gracyk (1999).

III. Nonstructural aesthetic properties

»The field of hearing sound as music is set by the culture—the *lebenswelt* of understanding, part of the fabric of a social, shared sense« (Kimmel 1992: 59).

When rock musicians and fans talk about the music, their descriptions are generally free of the assumptions that permeate the thought of someone with a notational understanding of music. Studying the process by which aspiring rock musicians learn their craft, H. Stith Bennett confirms that most rock musicians start by imitating recordings. When Bennett asked one aspiring guitarist about learning to read music and studying the sheet music, he got a very direct answer: »I want to hear what the thing sounds like, and there ain't no way a sheet of paper sounds like Jimi Hendrix« (Bennett 1990: 223). Without formal musical training, the Hendrix fan regards nuances of timbre as a vital quality of Hendrix's achievement. The challenge is to explain why this preference is appropriate and not simply musical ignorance (that it is not, in Gurney's parlance, ›unmusical‹ hearing). My case for the centrality of timbre to rock music rests on the idea that timbre contributes a distinct regional quality. This quality is a distinct part of the musical whole, one of »the main elements of which we perceive [the work] to be made up«, as Gurney (1966: 52) puts it, and so the notion of a »main element« should not be reserved for melodic elements.

Recall my earlier point that listening to music requires a distinction between tokens (specific aural events) and types (compositions performed in generating tokens). Different tokens of the same type can present expressively distinct interpretations of the same melody. This overall expressive quality is a regional quality, so called because it does not belong to any distinct moment or to any distinct musical phrase. However, if I know the melody of »Bridge Over Troubled Water« as sung by Art Garfunkel in its most famous version, I will recognize the ›same‹ melody when embellished by Aretha Franklin or transposed to composer Paul Simon's lower register. The absolute pitch values differ, but all the basic tonal relationships remain the same. Yet fans of rock music are likely to notice a distinct expressive quality arising from the different timbres of three vocalists. In each case, the timbre — not just the vocal mannerisms of each vocalist — alters the musical effect. Garfunkel's is angelic in its purity, Franklin's is joyful with the hope of redemption, and Simon's is earnest, his faith tempered with doubt.

To counteract the dogma that timbre can be set aside as a secondary quality of these musical performances, I will adopt Monroe C. Beardsley's distinction between regional and elemental (or local) qualities (Beardsley 1981: 82-88). Searching for the »phenomenally objective features« of works of art that are central to artistic value, Beardsley predictably focuses on structural qualities that provide music's semantic dimension. He does not seem to have recognized that his analysis of regional and local qualities is friendly to the thesis that timbre plays a significant role in generating expressive qualities of musical works.

Beardsley's basic line of reasoning about music can be mapped in a few sentences. A musical work is an auditory design arising from interactions of the duration, intensity (volume), pitch, and timbre of sounds. Because the essential quality that differentiates music from the other arts is the presence of »auditory movement«, pitch and duration are more fundamental than timbre and intensity. Furthermore, Beardsley introduces — without supporting argument — the thesis that melody is auditory movement in its »purest« form. Nearly as important are rhythm and tonality. In short, to listen to music is fundamentally to apprehend its total complex tonal structure. (Why isn't a drum solo an equally pure example of auditory movement?) Having identified timbre as a basic quality of music, Beardsley's extended discussion of music hardly acknowledges it again. He then asserts that expressive qualities are objectively present in music as gestalt qualities arising from musical structure.

However, Beardsley recognizes something very different with paintings and other visual designs, allowing that expressive qualities are not always *structural* gestalts. This difference in his accounts of expression in music and visual design cannot be attributed to anything in his basic ideas about aesthetic properties. It appears to be an unreflective acceptance of traditional discourse on music. Independent of his analysis of music, Beardsley more generally proposes a distinction between local and regional qualities. Local qualities are, for purposes of critical analysis, perceptual atoms. They are the homogeneous »elements« which do not allow further discrimination, such as the white area within any »O« on this printed page. Beardsley ultimately defines a regional quality as »a quality that a complex has as a result of the characters of its parts and *the relationships among them*« (Beardsley 1981: xxix, emphasis added).[19] Thus neither the hue of a small homogeneous red patch nor the timbre of a single tone played on a flute is

19 This characterization amends the definition provided in the first edition.

a regional quality, since neither emerges as a relationship among perceptually distinct local qualities (elements).

Notice that Beardsley's four basic qualities of music are thus the four basic species of *local quality* in music. Turning to a specific example, the pitch of any note played by Peter Buck on mandolin on R.E.M.'s »Losing My Religion« (1991) is an element or local quality of the work. But the experienced tone is a complex of elementary or local qualities. Although intimately related, the pitch of the tone can be distinguished from its timbre (the characteristic that allows us to identify it as coming from a mandolin and not, say, an oboe).[20] And its intensity (volume) and duration can be distinguished from its pitch and timbre. But of the four local qualities in each tone, Beardsley treats only pitch and duration as directly relevant to any regional qualities in the music. This is not surprising, given his emphasis on melody, rhythm, and tonality. The sounds must have some volume and timbre, of course, but their specific volume and timbre is of limited relevance to the presence or absence of a distinct melody. A melody is an emergent regional quality, present only as a gestalt of a series of pitched sounds and their relative durations in a specific sequence. Since expressive qualities are obviously regional qualities rather than local ones, Beardsley treats them as a further gestalt quality emerging from the structural pattern. By combining regional qualities into larger complexes, musicians generate further ones, as when the strophic character of »House Of The Rising Sun« or Dylan's »Knockin' On Heaven's Door« (1973) emerges from the unvaried repetition of the same melody. Many of the expressive qualities in complex works emerge from contrasts between two regional qualities, as when one melody follows another in a different key (e.g., the verse in C contrasts with the refrain in A in the Beatles' »I Should Have Known Better«).

But regional qualities are not limited to structural qualities, a point that Beardsley allows about color in visual design. A picture will be garish or lively or somber »chiefly on account of the colors.« The hue of each homogeneous patch of color in a visual design is a local quality of the work, yet vivacity and garishness and so on are not qualities of isolated patches of colors. The color will nonetheless »contribute toward« the expressive character of the whole. Thus, Beardsley allows that these regional expres-

20 It is important to recall that we are talking about perceptual qualities. Timbre depends on the complexity of the sound wave pattern; our physiological response to this pattern is a reason for a perceived difference in tone color, but this fact cannot be employed in a critical analysis of the music as a complex phenomenal object.

sive qualities, although emergent, do not depend solely on the work's structural qualities (Beardsley 1973: passim).

Beardsley never considers the possibility that music, like painting, has regional expressive qualities that are not structural in origin. Furthermore, combinations of these regional qualities into further complexes yield rich expressive nuance. The first step is to see that many other regional qualities within a musical work are not structurally emergent. They are not designs or structural gestalts. For instance, the playing time of the first verse of »Losing My Religion« is of a specific duration that is not the same as the duration of any element (in the strict sense of ›element‹). Furthermore, the song's duration is not a structural relation »between elements or between complexes« of elements. It is regional (not local). In this case, the regional quality can be calculated from the local ones that support it. Beardsley calls such qualities »summative« or »additive« regional qualities (Beardsley 1981: 82-85). Beardsley's primary example is the fact that the weight of an object can be calculated from the weight of its parts. The total weight is a summative property rather than a structurally emergent property.

The next step is to note that non-structural summative properties are often relevant to the expressive qualities of a work. The sheer scale of some of Matisse's work is as important as its design. Surely the brevity of the Ramones' »Judy Is A Punk« (90 seconds), as well as the cumulative brevity of the debut album, is essential to their punch:

»14 rock & roll songs exploding like time bombs in the space of 29 breathless minutes […] constructed almost entirely of rhythm tracks of an exhilarating intensity rock & roll has not experienced since its earliest days. The Ramones' lyrics are so compressed that there is no room for even one establishing atmosphere verse or one dramatically irrelevant guitar solo« (Nelson 1976: 47).

Beardsley could say that structural compression and simplicity, rather than mere brevity, generates the emotional qualities of this music. He might thus avoid the proposal that these expressive qualities are non-structurally emergent, and he could hang on to structural isomorphism as the explanation of expression. But the timbre of Johnny Ramone's buzz-saw guitar is not so easily dismissed.

The hue of small color patch is a local quality, but when a painter fills a canvas with many specks of that hue, the overall quality is regional. Musical timbres are generally present and then absent and then present again in various regions of the flow of sound. (Peter Buck's mandolin is occasionally silent during »Losing My Religion«, and there are moments where the guitar falls silent in many Ramones' arrangements.) As a quality that may be more

or less persistent and intensive, the contribution of a timbre through its repetition should therefore count as a regional quality. Consequently, any perceived warmth, vivacity, aggression, or other expressive quality that arises from such a quality is also a regional quality, appearing as a »larger scale« quality »spread through the artwork or some major portion of it«.[21] Yet expressive qualities arising from repetitions and similarities and contrasts of timbre do not quite fit Beardsley's category of additive qualities. Nor do they fall into the category of structural qualities. The musical line of a Jimi Hendrix guitar solo can be adapted to alto saxophone without generating any additional structural qualities. Yet there are obvious expressive differences in Hendrix's recording of »Angel« (1967) as compared to Gil Evans' arrangement for jazz ensemble (1974).

The conclusion is clear. Expressive qualities due to choices of timbre are regional and emergent, but they are neither additive nor structural. Like so many before him, Beardsley ignores the expressive role of non-structural regional qualities in music. To restate my point: the angelic quality of Garfunkel's voice singing »Bridge Over Troubled Water« is expressively different from the icy chill of Nico's alto on the first Velvet Underground album. Yet these are not local qualities present in any individual tone of their respective recordings. They are neither structurally emergent nor additive. Nonetheless, they are expressive regional qualities. The sound of Johnny Ramone's guitar is a dense sheet that forms a backdrop for Joey's vocal. Replace Joey's guitar with an acoustic guitar playing the same chords and most of the urban assault will dissipate (imagine »Ramones Unplugged« on MTV). The vocal distortion on King Crimson's »21st Century Schizoid Man« (1969) imparts a much-needed bite to Greg Lake's normally winsome vocals, with studio effects imparting a metallic quality that would be altogether inappropriate on the same album's »I Talk To The Wind.« When John Wetton sings the same words and tune without vocal distortion on *The Great Deceiver* (1992), »Schizoid« is a far tamer beast.

So it is simply false to think that this expressive difference can be explained by appeal to some alteration of structural isomorphism with human mental or physical processes. In those cases where timbre can be »fixed« in ways that parallel the »fixing« of color in a visual work (e.g., where the music is constructed as a recording, as it is with so much rock music), we should treat timbre as an objective contribution to the music's expressive character. As different combinations of color affect the expressive qualities

21 These ways of characterizing regional qualities are in Beardsley (1981: 247 and 338).

of each one, so the combination of a specific voice with different guitar tones will affect the expressive quality of each.

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