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## **Musical Aesthetics in the Poetry of T.S Eliot and Wallace Stevens**

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## **Abstract**

This study demonstrates Eliot's and Stevens' use of musical aesthetics in poetry. Previous critics demonstrated to an extent the interdisciplinary experimental musical turn Eliot and Stevens took with regards to the music of poetry. Nevertheless, those same critics limited their investigations to questions of forms and structures, and disregarded the impact such musico-poetical assimilations have in the formulation of themes and poetical meaning. In this thesis, I attempt to go beyond the set of formal analogies already covered by previous critics, in order to consider the thematic and poetical impact musical aesthetics plays in Stevens' and Eliot's poetry.

To achieve this aim, this study considers Eliot's and Stevens' use of musical aesthetics in poetry as a process of literary defamiliarization, as a process of literary misreading, as well as an interdisciplinary process of musico poetical assimilation. Following those different approaches of analysis, this study demonstrates Eliot's and Stevens' defamiliarization of musical metaphors, and soundscape descriptions from the Romantics, as an expression of their modernist skepticism. Furthermore, as it concentrates on Eliot's and Stevens' misreading of Dante's use of music in *The Divine comedy*, this thesis demonstrates Eliot's and Stevens' use of music as an expression of their distinct religious sensibilities. In conjunction to the textual analysis of musical metaphors, and soundscape descriptions, this study considers Eliot's and Stevens' interdisciplinary use of musical techniques of composition in poetry.

As it illustrates logical connections between metaphorical representations of music in poetry, and the interdisciplinary use of music in poetry, this thesis demonstrates that music, under its interdisciplinary and poetical forms, communicates Eliot's and Stevens' thematic preoccupations as modernist poets.

## Résumé

Cette étude démontre l'utilisation de de l'esthétique musicale dans la poésie T.S. Eliot et Wallace Stevens. Les critiques précédents ont démontré, dans une certaine mesure, les expérimentations interdisciplinaire entreprises par Eliot et Stevens dans leur poésie moderniste. Néanmoins, ces mêmes critiques ont limité leurs recherches a des questions de formes et de structures, et ont en revanche ignoré l'impact de ces assimilations musico-poétiques dans la formulation des thèmes et de l'expression poétique. Cette étude tente d'aller au-delà de l'ensemble des analogies formelles déjà couvertes par les critiques précédents, afin de considérer l'impact thématique et poétique que l'esthétique musicale joue dans la poésie de Stevens et d'Eliot. Afin d'atteindre cet objectif, cette étude considère l'utilisation de l'esthétique musicale par Eliot et Stevens comme étant : un processus de défamiliarisation littéraire, un acte poétique de « misreading », et une approche d'assimilation interdisciplinaire musico poétique.

En suivant ces différentes approches d'analyse, cette étude démontre comment Eliot et Stevens ont defamiliarisé les métaphores musicales utilisées par les romantiques comme étant une expression de leur propre scepticisme moderniste. Par ailleurs, en se concentrant sur la lecture erronée par Eliot et Stevens de l'utilisation de la musique par Dante dans « The Divine Comedy », cette thèse démontre l'utilisation de la musique par les deux poètes modernistes pour affirmer leur sensibilité religieuse distinctes. En conjonction avec l'analyse textuelle des métaphores musicales et des descriptions des paysage sonore, cette étude considère l'utilisation interdisciplinaire par Eliot et Stevens des techniques musicales de composition dans la poésie. En illustrant les liens stylistiques entre les représentations métaphoriques de la musique dans la poésie et l'utilisation interdisciplinaire de la musique dans la poésie, cette thèse démontre que la musique, sous ses formes interdisciplinaires et poétiques, communique les préoccupations thématiques de T.S. Eliot et de Wallace Stevens en tant que poètes modernistes.

## ملخص

توضح هذه الدراسة استخدام T.S Eliot و Wallace Stevens الجمال الموسيقي في الشعر. أظهر النقاد السابقون الاستيعاب الموسيقي الشعري الذي اتخذه Eliot و Stevens فيما يتعلق بموسيقى الشعر. ومع ذلك، فقد حصر هؤلاء النقاد تحقيقاتهم في أسئلة الأشكال والتراكيب، وتجاهلوا تأثير مثل هذا الاستيعاب الموسيقي الشعري في صياغة الموضوعات والمعنى الشعري. في هذه الأطروحة، أحاول تجاوز مجموعة المقارنات الشكلية التي سبق أن تناولها النقاد السابقون، من أجل النظر في التأثير الموضوعي والشاعري الذي تلعبه الجماليات الموسيقية في شعر Eliot و Stevens.

لتحقيق هذا الهدف، تنظر هذه الدراسة في استخدام إليوت وستيفنز للجماليات الموسيقية في الشعر كعملية تشويه للأدب، وعملية سوء قراءة أدبية، فضلاً عن عملية متعددة التخصصات للاستيعاب الشعري الموسيقي. باتباع هذه المناهج المختلفة للتحليل، توضح هذه الدراسة تعريف إليوت وستيفنز للاستعارات الموسيقية وأوصاف المشهد الصوتي من الرومانسيين، كتعبير عن شكوكهم الحداثية. علاوة على ذلك، نظرًا لأنها تركز على سوء قراءة إليوت وستيفنز لاستخدام دانتى للموسيقى في "الكوميديا الإلهية"، توضح هذه الأطروحة استخدام Eliot و Stevens للموسيقى كتعبير عن حساسيتهما الدينية المتميزة. بالاقتران مع التحليل النصي للاستعارات الموسيقية وأوصاف المشهد الصوتي، تنظر هذه الدراسة في استخدام Eliot و Stevens متعدد التخصصات للتقنيات الموسيقية للتكوين في الشعر.

كما توضح الروابط المنطقية بين التمثيلات المجازية للموسيقى في الشعر، والاستخدام متعدد التخصصات للموسيقى في الشعر، توضح هذه الأطروحة أن الموسيقى، في ظل أشكالها الشعرية و الموسيقية، تنقل الانشغالات الموضوعية لإليوت وستيفنز كشعراء حداثيين.

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## **Introduction**

The urge for formal experimentation characterized the sensibility of a great number of modernist artists. Because they faced a different context from their predecessors, modernists felt that traditional forms of artistic expression had become ill fitted to truly represent the conditions and ideas of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Spurred by the desire to come up with new forms of artistic expression, some artists pushed the limits of their disciplines, and attempted to integrate the techniques that originally belonged to other forms of art in their own artworks. As a matter of fact, the modernists' strive against stylistic restrictions resulted in the hybridization of the arts and the emergence of an interdisciplinary aesthetics.

In poetry, this tendency towards aesthetic pluralism and interdisciplinarity manifests itself in stylistic experimentations that relate poetical writing to painting and music aesthetics. If Ezra Pound's Imagism, and William Carlos Williams' Cubism explicitly illustrate the 20<sup>th</sup> century poetical turn towards plastic arts and visual representations, the interest some other poets gave to music remains implicit and less ubiquitous. Among the poets of the period, T.S Eliot, and Wallace Stevens stand out for the considerable poetical interest they gave to music and its aesthetics. If they inevitably adopt dissimilar views with regards to a number of subject matters, both poets demonstrate strong poetical motivations at integrating music and its techniques in their writing strategies. In "The Music of Poetry," T.S Eliot mentions some technical analogies that imply the aesthetic assimilation of musical forms and strategies of composition in the writing of poetry: "There are possibilities for verse, which bear some analogy to the development of a theme by different groups of instruments; there are possibilities of transitions in a poem comparable to the different movements of a symphony or a quartet; there are possibilities of contrapuntal

arrangement of subject-matter” (Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* 32). As much as Eliot, Stevens, in “Effects of Analogy,” shows a similar interest in musical poetry. Although he claims that the idea of connecting both arts is old, romantic, and intolerable, he also explains that the music of poetry has not come to an end. On that account, Stevens recognizes in the music of modern poetry the formal unfolding of a musical composition:

The use of the word “music” in relation to poetry is as I said a moment ago is a bit old and anachronistic Yet, the passage from Eliot was musical. It is simply that there has been a change in the nature of what we mean by music. It is like the change from Haydn to a voice intoning. It is like the voice of an actor reciting or declaiming or of some other figure concealed, so that we cannot identify him, who speaks with a measured voice which is often disturbed by his feeling for what he says There is no accompaniment. (Stevens, *The Necessary Angel* 125)

Far from the traditional notions of rhyme and syllable that used to define the musicality of poetry, Stevens and Eliot integrated in their poetic discourse some musicological concepts that connect poetry to the structural and formal aesthetic qualities of musical compositions. Therefore, both poets took a turn towards a poetico-musical interdisciplinary aesthetics and formal poetical hybridization.

The aim of this study is to demonstrate that music aesthetics constitute an element of stylistic and thematic connotation in Eliot’s and Stevens’ poetry. Although previous studies demonstrated to an extent the existing musical analogies in Stevens’ and Eliot’s poetry, some flaws are to be pointed in those approaches. Indeed, critics’ diverse use and understanding of musical concepts such as harmony, structure, counterpoint, and polyphony in the analysis of poetry, led to

approximative and ambiguous interpretations. Furthermore, some of those critics limited their research to questions of form and structure, resulting in esoteric musicological analyses, that disregard the poetical significance of themes and contents of poems under study. In this study, I attempt to correct this musical approach to poetry by demonstrating that music, under its structural and metaphorical forms, affects not only the design and structure of the poems, but also contributes to the formulation of thematic and poetical meaning. On account of their contrasting poetics, T.S. Eliot, and Wallace Stevens adopt dissimilar views with regards to a number of subject matters. Such divergences involve opposite reactions against the Romantics, as well as dissimilar spiritual and religious sensibilities. The aim of this study is to demonstrate that music, under its structural and metaphorical forms, clearly illustrates the poets' distinct attitude towards religion and Romantic aesthetics. Hence, I attempt to go beyond questions of form and structure in order to consider the thematic and poetical impact musico-poetical experimentations play in Stevens' and Eliot's poetry.

When it comes to Eliot's musical criticism, studies have mainly focused on "Four Quartets" and its formal analogy with the Quartet musical form. While a lot of critics invested their efforts at demonstrating this musical parallel, their use of musical terminology remains vague, and approximative. Furthermore, a lot of these musical interpretations rely on general observations, and lack the close analysis of poems to concretely demonstrate the validity of their interpretations. Last but not the least, some of those critics focus exclusively on formal analogies between music and poetry and disregard the poetical and thematic importance that musical experimentations play in the formulation of poetical meaning. Nevertheless, such critics base their interpretations on the obvious musical title of the poems' series, as well as by Eliot's comment on Beethoven's late Quartet : "I have the A minor Quartet (the Op 132 quartet, one of the 6 late quartets of Beethoven)

on the gramophone, and I find it quite inexhaustible to study. ...I should like to get something of that into verse before I die” (Eliot, *Letters* 61). In *The Art of T.S. Eliot*, Helen Gardner describes some musical analogies relevant to the poems’ structure. In the following passage, she summarizes how the structure of Eliot’ series of poems takes its aesthetic origin from the formal design of a musical Quartet:

Each poem contains what are best described as five: “movements”, each with its own inner necessary structure. The first movement suggests at once a musical analogy. In each poem it contains statement and counter-statement, or two contrasted but related themes, like the first and second subjects of a movement in strict sonata form. ...The second movement is constructed on the opposite principle of a single subject handled in two contrasted ways...The effect is like that of hearing the same melody played on a different group of instruments, or differently harmonized, or hearing it syncopated, or elaborated in variations, which cannot disguise the fact that it is the same... (Gardner 36)

Gardner’s study is quite influential, and has been quoted by many critics who dealt with the musical aesthetic dimension relevant to Eliot’s poetry. Nevertheless, some critics seem to question her methodology and interpretation. In *T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets: Its Relation To Music, and Its Dependence Upon Musical Form and Techniques*, Gilbert K. Hubbard affirms that Gardner remains too general and approximative in her methodology: “Miss Gardner, showing the influence of Homophony in her essay ‘The Music of Four Quartets’ does not really go beyond a general discussion of the musical form of the Quartets” (Gilbert 17). Gilbert K. Hubbard concludes that Gardner’s study is homophonic in its approach, and affirms on the necessity to rely on a polyphonic musical perspective in the study of musicality in Eliot’s poetry: “Four Quartets as poetry is

consecutive by nature; it is also musical by intention. In music, polyphony stresses consecution; therefore, in its relation to music, *Four Quartets* is polyphonic” (Gilbert 13).

Although Gilbert K. Hubbard brings an insightful analysis into the study of music in Eliot’s verses, his notion of polyphony remains ambiguous. In *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, polyphony is defined as “melody that combines several simultaneous voice-parts of individual design” (Apel, 687). In his study, Gilbert K. Hubbard shows an understanding of polyphony that completely disregard the simultaneous aesthetic quality of such musical technique of composition. Indeed, the critic relies mainly on “consecution” to define polyphony in his analysis. Hence, far from dealing with musical polyphony as understood by musicologists, Gilbert K. Hubbard relies on the consecutive quality of music as a chronological art to interpret the musical analogies relevant in Eliot’s poetry.

Because of the ambiguities created by the approximative and divergent use of musical concepts in such poetical criticism, some critics remain sceptical with regards to the validity of the musicological analogies underlined by such studies. In “The Place Revisited in T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*,” Inge Leimberg rejects the attempts made by Helen Gardner in *The Art of T. S. Eliot*. He affirms that the music of “*Four Quartets*” is strictly metaphorical: “I am afraid I cannot see eye to eye, here again, with Dame Helen Gardner in her study *The Art of T. S. Eliot* . . . The terms she borrows from the theory of music . . . all used in an imprecise way, show the poem to be a kind of vague structural allegory of some equally vague kind of musical composition” (Leimberg 90). What is acknowledgeable in such critical reactions is the lack of a precise and concise line by line analysis that would clearly sustain Gardener’s musical interpretation. Nevertheless, if Gardener’s reading lacks a precise approach of reading the poems, it doesn’t systematically mean that Eliot is approximate in his method, nor does it suggest that the musico-poetical affirmations he claims in



his essay “The Music of Poetry” are simply metaphorical. A more constructive reaction to Gardner’s reading would be to undertake a closer look to the analogies she describes and to demonstrate their validity as well as their limitations.

Other noticeable contributions that point to the reliance of “Four Quartets” on musical forms include Harvey Gross’s “Music and the Analogue of Feeling: Notes on Eliot and Beethoven” (1959), Keith Alldritt’s *Eliot’s Four Quartets: Poetry as Chamber Music* (1978), John Holloway’s “Four Quartets and Beethoven’s Last Quartets’ in *The Fire and the Rose: New Essays on T. S. Eliot*” (1992), and David Barndollar’s *T.S. Eliot’s Orchestra: Critical Essays on Poetry and Music* (2000). All those critics cite musical analogies in their interpretations, yet none of them clearly illustrates how such musical forms function in the text. Furthermore, those critics focus on form and structure, and seem to disregard the relation between musical experimentation and its impact on the poetical meaning of the formulation of themes.

When it comes to Stevens’ poetry, very few studies have tangibly tackled musical structures, forms, and their integration in Stevens’ verses. Nevertheless, critics occasionally acknowledge the analogy, without providing much illustration to their affirmations. In *A Certain Order of Form: The Music of "Harmonium"* Mary F. Courtney Alfano refers to Stevens’ deliberate use of musical forms: “Like his mentor, Santayana, Stevens was an instinctive "inquisitor of structures," and his study of musical structures gave him new principles of form that the visual arts were also seeking in music. Four representative poems from *Harmonium* show Stevens' first mature use of musical structure in his poetic compositions” (Courtney 2). Other occasional statements assumed by literary critics also acknowledge structural musical analogies in that respect. In *Wallace Stevens' "The Man With The Blue Guitar": Study in The Continuity of Images and Iconic Figurations*, Alden R. Turner declares that a reading of Stevens’ early poetry shows

his skilful use of improvisational musical techniques through the repetitive use of the image of the guitar : “A close and coherent reading of Stevens’ early poetry reveals that Stevens’ technique of repetition and improvisation, consistently associated with the image of the guitar, enables the poet to express his concern in the creation of meaning”(Turner 4).

Although such critics acknowledge the existence of formal analogies between Stevens’ verses and musical forms, they do not clearly demonstrate how such process of structural assimilation functions in the poet’s verses. Nevertheless, such general observations tend to be sustained by more precise literary studies conducted on ideas of music and musical metaphors in Stevens’ poems. In *Musical Metaphors in The Poetry of Wallace Stevens*, Victor Kennedy interprets Stevens’ “The Man with the Blue Guitar” as a poem embodying program music, due to its use of music as a poetical symbol for the theme of imagination: “ ‘The Man with the Blue Guitar’ briefly describes Picasso’s painting, but most of the poem is more like traditional program music in that it describes scenes from the poet’s imagination. The series of inspired art works in various genres of which it is a part combines ekphrasis with the infinite regression of nested mirror images” (Kennedy 4).

As for Eliot’s poetry, it is interesting to notice that musical oriented interpretations tend to treat forms and techniques without considering the significance of the musical metaphors and the auditory descriptions displayed in the lines. Although Eliot’s sordid soundscape of the modern metropolis is evident and, obviously, well documented by critics, musical oriented studies seem to disregard those elements in their interpretation. Overall, Eliot’s technical observations displayed in “The Music of Poetry” and his explicit appreciation of Beethoven’s Quartet, pre-established a critical tradition that pushed critics to focus more on the musicological aspect of the poetical analogy, than on the poet’s treatment of musical metaphors and ideas of music in his poetry.

Based on this brief review, it is evident that Eliot's and Stevens' interest in music and its aesthetics pushed critics to adopt different approaches to the study of music in poetry. Yet, a number of flaws require further critical investigations. First, the majority of studies that affirm the structural correlation between poems and musical techniques of composition do not make the effort to clearly demonstrate how musical forms and techniques of composition are concretely assimilated by the poets in their writings. Such superficial and imprecise claims do not give justice to the poets' efforts, and provoke skeptical reactions from the part of critics who demand precise and concise textual illustrations from the poems under study. Second, studies who concentrate on musical analogies in poetry seem to dissociate structural musicological elements, from the thematic dimension of the poems under study. Although some critics have invested their efforts on the study of ideas of music and musical metaphors, the interaction between such poetical representations of music and the assimilation of musical techniques of composition in poetry has not been set yet. In "The Music of Poetry," Eliot writes "I would remind you, first, that the music of poetry is not something which exists apart from the meaning. Otherwise, we could have poetry of great musical beauty which made no sense, and I have never come across such poetry" (Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* 29). Comparably, Stevens, in *The Necessary Angel*, formulates the following statement with regards to musical poetry: "I do not know of anything that will appear to have suffered more from the passage of time than the music of poetry. ...The deepening need for words to express our thoughts and feelings which, we are sure, are all the truth that we shall ever experience" (Stevens, *The Necessary Angel* 20). From those assertions, we understand that an exclusive consideration to musical structures and forms in a musico-poetical interpretation does not go in hand with Eliot's and Stevens' notion of musical poetry, which is explicitly linked to poetical expression and thematic connotation. In the following study, my aim is to demonstrate

that music, under its structural and interdisciplinary forms, not only affects the design and structure of the poems, but also plays a significant role at conveying poetical themes. I demonstrate that interdisciplinary musical strategies of poetical composition work in conjunction with ideas of music, soundscape, and the musical metaphors, and illustrate the different thematic concerns that relate to Eliot's and Stevens' poetics. On account of their conflicting poetry, T.S Eliot, and Wallace Stevens adopt dissimilar views on a number of subject matters. Such disagreements involve opposite reactions against the Romantics, as well as conflicting spiritual and religious tendencies. Basing my musical analysis on those two thematic elements of comparison, I demonstrate that musical metaphors, soundscape, and interdisciplinary musical strategies of poetical composition play a poetical function that thematically illustrate Eliot's and Stevens' divergent reactions against the Romantics, and their conflicting religious sensibilities.

In order to conduct this poetico musical analysis, I support my study with the following theories: Russian Formalism, Harold Bloom's theory of influence, Soundscape Criticism, and Music Aesthetics. In his essay "Art as Technique," the Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky explains that artists adopt unconventional stylistic devices to 'estrangle' and defamiliarize objects from their natural state: "The purpose of art, then, is to lead us to knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. By 'estranging' objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long and 'laborious'" (Shklovsky 6). Through this process of estrangement, the poet enables the reader to see objects afresh, and offers himself the opportunity to convey new artistic forms and connotations in his oeuvres. In light of this perspective, I consider both Eliot's and Stevens' use of musical metaphors and ideas of music in their poems as a process of poetical estrangement. By comparing the way Eliot and Stevens distinctly 'estranged' ideas of music and musical metaphors in their poetry, I interpret the poetical significance both poets have

given to music. More precisely, I demonstrate how both Eliot and Stevens defamiliarized musical metaphors prevalent in the Romantic poetical tradition, in order to stylistically convey their modernist attitudes against their romantic predecessors. In this respect, Shklovsky affirms that innovation in literature arises because the perceptibility of a given tradition tends to decrease over time: “The new form makes its appearance not in order to express a new content, but rather, to replace an old form that has already outlived its artistic usefulness” (Shklovsky 20). As both poets create genuinely innovative musical metaphors in their poetry, I demonstrate how Eliot and Stevens distance themselves from their 19<sup>th</sup> predecessors and how they stylistically share their distinct modernist reactions against Romantic poetry: “a work of art is perceived against a background of and by association with other works of art. The form of a work of art is determined by its relationship with other preexisting forms” (Shklovsky 20).

Despite considering musical metaphors as a process of literary estrangement, I interpret Eliot’s and Stevens’ use of music in poetry as a result of poetical influence, and misreading. In *The Anxiety of Influence*, Harold Bloom interprets the history of western literature as a constant process of misreading. He explains that the influence of predecessor poets i.e., the masters, provokes anxiety and misprision in the young poets’ artistic abilities. In order to swerve from the ‘anxiety of influence,’ the young poet i.e., “the ephebe” (Bloom 10), misreads the master so as to give voice to his poetic personality: “The history of fruitful poetic influence, which is to say the main tradition of Western poetry since the Renaissance, is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature, of distortion, of perverse, willful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist”(30). Hence, the ephebe poet misreads his predecessors, he performs a “poetic misreading or misprision” (14) in order to affirm his originality: "poetic influence – when it involves two strong, authentic poets, - always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, as an

act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation” (30). Relying on Bloom’s theoretical perspective, I interpret Eliot’s and Stevens’ use of musical metaphors as a process of literary misreading. More precisely, I relate this perspective of study to Dante’s musical influence on Eliot’s and Stevens’ poetry. As they adapt and misread Dante’s musical religious metaphors in their poems, both Eliot and Stevens give space to their distinct modernist poetical voices, and affirm their distinct religious sensibilities, using music and its aesthetics in poetry.

Far from an exclusive analysis of musical metaphors in poetry, I expend my investigations to soundscape studies and soundscape criticism. In *The Tuning of the World*, R. Murray Schafer coined the term ‘soundscape’ and redefined music as a set of sound utterances that take full significance according to the cultural environment of their production:

The definition of music has undergone radical change in recent years. In one of the more contemporary definitions, John Cage has declared: “Music is sounds, sounds around us whether we’re in or out of concert halls: cf. Thoreau.” The reference is to Thoreau’s *Walden*, where the author experiences in the sounds and sights of nature an inexhaustible entertainment. To define music merely as sounds would have been unthinkable a few years ago, though today it is the more exclusive definitions that are proving unacceptable. (Schafer 5)

The definition of music as sound utterances brings an insightful perspective to this study. Under a soundscape perspective, poems become acoustic imaginary spaces, where poets are capable of recording auditory events that are translated to the reader. As I rely on a soundscape perspective, I not only treat musical metaphors in an isolate way, but I also provide an interpretation in relation to the remaining auditory events that poets record in their poetry.

Following the literary representation of music and soundscape in poetry, this thesis extends towards interdisciplinary musical areas of research. In this respect, I attempt to elucidate the poets' structural borrowing of musical forms in poetry and aim to elucidate their poetical functions in the texts. Among the different approaches of comparative literature, Henry Remak defines the American School of Comparative studies as: "the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand, and other areas of knowledge and belief such as the arts (e.g. painting, sculpture, architecture, music)"... on the other" ( Ramak 3). Among the different practices employed by the American school, the interdisciplinary approach calls for the interpretation of literary texts using the theoretical frameworks employed in other disciplines: "Interdisciplinarity postulates the principle of method, that is, the application of theoretical frameworks and methodologies used in other disciplines for the acquisition of knowledge in the analysis of literature and/or the literary text or texts" (Zepetnek 97). Hence, in order to demonstrate Stevens' and Eliot's borrowing of musical structures in their poems, I rely on music aesthetics and its theories as analytical tools of textual analysis. In musicology, music aesthetics is defined as: "the sustained, systematic and critical examination of our beliefs about the nature and function of music" (Alperson 3). Thus, far from an exclusive formal analysis of the devices displayed on musical scores (form, harmony, melody), music aesthetics expands its area of research in order to question concerns such as "the production of music, the nature of musical works, the appreciation and evaluation of music, and the status of music as a human activity" (Alperson 3). To avoid the narrow perspective practised by previous musical formalist critics in the subject, I follow a 'program music' perspective, that I clearly define in the first chapter of this thesis. Unlike musical formalism, 'program music' considers musical techniques of composition as expressive tools that enable composers to achieve thematic expression. Accordingly, 'program

music' provides critics with the possibility of transcending the structural and formal elements relevant to poetico-musical analogies, in order to consider questions related to musical expression, poetical expression, and thematic connotation. As I rely on this multi-disciplinary approach to textual analysis, I attempt to demonstrate how both poets borrowed musical forms in their poetry, and how such formal borrowing serves the poetical themes relevant to their poetics.

I have divided this dissertation into four chapters. In the first chapter, I define the correct musicological perspective that would enable me to relate musical techniques of composition, as implemented in poetry, to the thematic analysis of literary texts. Previous critics who studied musical analogies in Eliot's and Stevens' poetry, relied on musical formalism. Although their approach to poetry is valid musicologically, it denies the thematic, connotative, and expressive qualities relevant to the poems, and limits its investigations to questions of form and structural musical analogies. In this chapter, I demonstrate that 'program music' is a more relevant musicological perspective for the study of poetry, since it considers musical techniques of composition as expressive tools that enable composers to achieve thematic expression. Hence, program music enables the critic to relate the analysis of musicological and technical devices in poetry, to the metaphorical and figurative representation of music in poetry.

In the second chapter, I demonstrate how musical metaphors and soundscape descriptions, as implemented by Stevens and Eliot, illustrate their distinct reactions against the Romantics. Among the five senses, some Romantic poets gave particular attention to the ear. Poets such as Wordsworth and Keats illustrate through their poems the use of musical metaphors and soundscape perception to convey their reliance on imagination. As a response to the Romantics, both Eliot and Stevens 'estranged' musical metaphors from Romantic poetry. By comparing the different methods through which Eliot and Stevens 'defamiliarized' musical metaphors and soundscape



descriptions from the Romantic tradition, I demonstrate that music, as displayed in Eliot's and Stevens' poetry, aesthetically illustrates the divergent attitudes both poets adopt against the Romantics.

In the third chapter of this study, I compare how Eliot and Stevens distinctly appropriate and 'misread' Dante's religious musical analogy displayed in his long poem *The Divine Comedy*. Through this comparison, my aim is to demonstrate how musical metaphors and soundscape, as displayed in Eliot's and Stevens' poems, reveal their divergent views on religion and spirituality. As he poetically explores the Christian medieval world-view of afterlife, Dante Alighieri develops a soundscape analogy that associates musical cacophony to the suffering of damned souls in "Inferno"; monophonic singing of psalms to a process of spiritual purgation in "Purgatorio"; and polyphony and the divine music of the spheres to salvation in "Paradisio." By contrasting how Eliot and Steven misread and assimilated Dante's musical analogy in their modernist poems, I corroborate how both poets implemented soundscape and musical metaphors to aesthetically represent their divergent religious sensibilities in their poetry.

The fourth and final chapter of this thesis represents a synthesis between the musico-poetical hypothesis I present in the first chapter, and the musical metaphors and soundscape descriptions I analyze in the second and third chapters of this study. Indeed, I demonstrate in this chapter how Eliot and Stevens implemented musical forms in their poems to sustain the soundscape and musical metaphors relevant to their verse writings. Hence, I demonstrate that musical structures, as implemented in Stevens' and Eliot's verses, communicate aesthetically the ideas and themes represented via musical metaphors and soundscape descriptions.

## **Chapter One: Program Music as an Art of Expression; Modernist Poetry as an Art of Aesthetic Hybridization**

### **Introduction**

This chapter proposes ‘program music’ as an approach to the interdisciplinary study of music in poetry. Previous musical oriented studies relied on a formalist musicological perspective. Even though this approach is valid musicologically, it denies the thematic and connotative qualities relevant to the poems under study, as it limits the critics’ investigations to questions of form and structural musical analogies. Unlike musical formalism, ‘program music’ considers musical techniques of composition as expressive tools that enable composers to achieve thematic expression. Accordingly, ‘program music’ provides the critic with the possibility to transcend the structural and formal elements relevant to poetico-musical analogies, in order to consider questions related to musical expression, poetical expression, and thematic connotation.

To demonstrate the validity of this approach, I have divided this chapter into three main sections. In the first section, I trace back the historical evolution of the musicological concept of ‘program music’ as an artistic form of expression and thematic connotation. While the classicists perceived music as a pure form without content, 19<sup>th</sup> century reflections on the aesthetic value of music and the advent of new techniques of composition, led to the emergence of ‘program music,’ a musical approach that led composers to represent, through form and technique, the ideas and themes originally displayed in literature and poetical works. Such musical innovations emerged during 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanticism, but later, musicologists such as Dereck Cooke, as well as modernist symphonic poetry, eventually demonstrated the validity of ‘program music’ in 20<sup>th</sup> century musical practices. In the second section of this chapter, I relate the emergence of ‘program

music' to the artistic climate of modernism. Through their quest for new styles of expression, 20<sup>th</sup> century artists experimented with the forms of arts and entered a pluralistic phase that led to the hybridization of the arts. Among the poets of the time, some viewed in music an aesthetic potential for poetical hybridization and formal experimentation. As much as the 19<sup>th</sup> century's view of music, poets considered musical techniques of composition as a set of devices that enabled thematic expression in poetry. Hence, music wasn't only a means to formulate new poetical forms and styles, but it also represented new means for poetical expression. In the last section of this chapter, I clearly define musical concepts such as harmony, melody, musical forms, counter point, as mentioned in the poets' theoretical writings. I demonstrate how such musical techniques are turned into expressive thematic tools when assimilated into poetry. Along with the review of musical forms, I consider musical metaphors and soundscape descriptions in the musical study of poetry. By doing so, I clearly review the set of musico-poetical connections I will rely on in my analysis of Eliot's and Stevens' verses.

### **I. The Emergence of Program Music: The Heritage of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Musicology and its Aesthetic Validity for Modernists**

In the first section of this chapter, I review the philosophical and musicological writings that demonstrate the progressive emergence of 'program music' as an art of thematic expression. Thanks to the reflections brought by Schelling, G. W. F. Hegel, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Friedrich Nietzsche, music evolved during the 19<sup>th</sup> century from an art of pure form, to become an art of artistic expression. This new status attributed to music enhanced a musicological debate among composers on the possibility for music to be considered as an art of thematic content. While Eduard Hanslick and the classicists perceived music as a pure form without content, Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner sustained 'program music' and used music as a suggestive language that

communicates themes and ideas to the audience via the use of extra musical materials. By adopting new techniques of composition, composers were able to translate through their symphonic poetry ideas and themes, originally displayed in literature, and challenged the classicist views that defined music as an art deprived of any form of expressive content. Although ‘program music’ emerged during 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanticism, its intellectual validity should not be dismissed in the era of Modernism. Indeed, the work of 20<sup>th</sup> century musicologists such as Dereck Cooke, as well as modernist symphonic poetry, demonstrated the validity of ‘program music’ in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and opened the door to connect modernist poetry to ‘program music’ and musicology.

### **1. Ninetieth Century Philosophical Perspectives on the Aesthetic Value of Music**

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some philosophers dealt with metaphysics and the spiritual nature of reality. Through their philosophical inquiries, some of them considered arts as a means to access metaphysical truth. Heidegger described art as “the becoming and happening of truth” (Heidegger 36), whereas Hegel attributed to the artist the mission “to reveal truth under the mode of art’s sensuous or material configuration” (Hegel et al. 188). For Schopenhauer, art distinguishes itself from the scientific approach, since art is “the true content of its phenomena” (Schopenhauer 36). Although such views are not systematically compatible with modernist philosophy, the inquiries of such thinkers with regards to arts and aesthetics enabled music to evolve at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a higher form of artistic expression. Indeed, an overview of 19<sup>th</sup> century philosophical perspectives on the aesthetic value of music illustrates the progressive evolution of music as an art with cognitive, intellectual, and connotative aesthetic properties.

It should be mentioned that the philosophical interest given to the aesthetic value of music represents a chain of response to Kant’s unfavorable judgment about it. Although Kant relates the appreciation of arts to subjective aesthetic experiences, he affirms that an objective judgment of

the arts is possible out of the distinct cognitive properties the artistic object displays to the audience: “When we call something beautiful, beauty was to be regarded as a quality of the object forming part of its inherent determination” (Kant 218). Following this definition, Kant established a hierarchy of the arts according to their ability to provide intellectual and aesthetic stimulations to the observer. Because of its ability to communicate explicit ideas to readers, Kant ranked poetry as the first in his hierarchy: “Poetry (which owes its origin almost entirely to genius and is least willing to be led by precepts or example) holds the first rank among all the arts. It expands the mind by giving freedom to the imagination” (326). In contrast, music conveys “sensations without concepts, and so does not, like poetry, leave behind it any food for reflection” (328). Because of its abstract aesthetic nature, music does not relate to the real world and could not be considered as an art of intellectual stimulations. For this reason, Kant ranks music in a low position. This unfavorable attribution given to music provoked a chain of philosophical answers that gradually pushed music to a higher degree of aesthetic value.

As a response to Kant, F. W. J. Schelling (1775-1854) viewed in music a number of cognitive and intellectual stimuli, that transformed it into an art with connotative and expressive characteristics. According to Schelling, rhythm enhances reflection and self-consciousness, while tonal modulation enhances feelings and the power of judgment. Melody, for Schelling, lifts intuition and the power of imagination (Schelling 112). Thus, music, with Schelling, evolved from an art of pure form, as conveyed by Kant, to an essential instrument of cognitive exploration.

In a similar way to Schelling, Hegel ascribed to music numerous intellectual and cognitive attributions. In his philosophy, Hegel sees in art and music the potential ability to access truth: “For Hegel, art is the form of the sensuous intuition of the truth; music then is the tonal representation of the truth about human nature” (Etter 120). What distinguishes Hegel’s view on

music from previous aesthetic reflections on the same subject is his distinction between what musicologists will later label as ‘absolute music’ and ‘program music.’ According to Hegel, music as an art has the aesthetic property to portray both emotions and ideas; or to stand in splendid isolation, without the mandatory condition of representing external subject matters. In Hegel’s view, the composer can “put into his work a specific meaning, a content consisting of ideas and feelings ...but, conversely, he can also not trouble himself with any such content and make the principal thing the purely musical structure of his work” (Hegel, *Aesthetics* 954). This distinction between two musical activities conciliates Kantian views on music as a free play of forms and other aesthetic views that attribute intellectual, cognitive, and spiritual properties to music. Through this definition, Hegel went beyond the general metaphysical attributions that previous philosophers had given to the art of music, and defined it as an art capable of communicating themes and ideas to the audience.

While the contribution of Schelling and Hegel portray the progressive evolution of the aesthetic value of music during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the writings of Arthur Schopenhauer and Frederic Nietzsche illustrate how music evolved as a superior form of artistic and human expression. Kant sees in the abstract nature of music a flaw that makes it an inferior form of art, whereas Schopenhauer and Nietzsche recognize the superiority of music for its ability to express what human language falls short of representing, through its non-referential tools of expression. According to Schopenhauer, music “is in the highest degree a universal language” (Schopenhauer, *The World as Will* 262). While other arts represent, through their respective media, copies of ideas (i.e., mimesis), music, according to Schopenhauer, goes beyond such mimetic process of representation. Because it is “non-representational and thus is least bound to the world of appearance”(Bowie, *Aesthetics and subjectivity* 259), music represents the manifestation of the

original idea or of what Schopenhauer defines as ‘the will’: “music is by no means like the other arts, namely a copy of the Ideas, but a copy of the will itself”(Schopenhauer, *The World as Will* 257). According to Schopenhauer, Nature, including man, manifests an insatiable ‘will to life.’ Because ‘will’ is never fulfilled completely, ‘will’ is also the origin of all human suffering:

All willing springs from lack, from deficiency, and thus from suffering. Fulfilment brings this to an end; yet for one wish that is fulfilled there remain at least ten that are denied. Further, desiring lasts a long time, demands and requests go on to infinity; fulfilment is short and meted out sparingly. But even the final satisfaction itself is only apparent; the wish fulfilled at once makes way for a new one; the former is a known delusion, the latter a delusion not as yet known. No attained object of willing can give a satisfaction that lasts and no longer declines; but it is always like the alms thrown to a beggar, which reprieves him today so that his misery may be prolonged till tomorrow. Therefore, so long as our consciousness is filled by our will, so long as we are given up to the throng of desires with its constant hopes and fears, so long as we are the subject of willing, we never obtain lasting happiness or peace. (Schopenhauer 196)

Although he defines the suffering caused by the will as perpetual, Schopenhauer sees in arts and in aesthetic pleasures effective methods to escape momentarily from such suffering. He “regards art as the only means of temporarily escaping the fundamentally futile nature of reality. Art’s essential role is...to enable us to escape what we already intuitively know about the irredeemable nature of what we are” (Bowie 262). Being self-contained and self-referential, Schopenhauer accounts for the superiority of music over other arts, in their ability to effectively escape from the will. Painting, sculpture, and poetry imitate the world of mortal will, whereas

music displays a unique capacity to be independent from the world of mortals and their continuous will:

The reason for Schopenhauer's elevation of music is that, unlike other forms of art, music is non-representational... Music has the status of the 'true general language': it 'does not talk of things, but rather of nothing but well-being and woe, which are the sole realities for the Will'... Words take one into the realm of concepts and abstractions; absolute music, on the other hand, combines direct access to the world of feelings... (Bowie 265)

Even though music was previously regarded as an inferior form of art for its non-representational quality, it is this very same aesthetic characteristic that makes it a superior mode of expression in Schopenhauer's philosophy.

As much as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche viewed music as a representation of "the metaphysical of everything physical in the world, and the thing-in-itself of every phenomenon" (Nietzsche, *Writings* 48). Because "music symbolizes a sphere that is above all appearance and before all phenomena" (Nietzsche, *Writings* 29), it does not need pictures or concepts in order to express feelings, but "only endures them as accompaniments" (Nietzsche, *Writings* 29). Hence, because of its non-referential quality, music stands above the other forms of representational art. Nietzsche's view on the aesthetic value of music is detailed in *The Birth of Tragedy*. In this work, Nietzsche uses Apollon and Dionysus as a dichotomy to describe two distinct but complementary drives of artistic creation: "Art is bound up with the Apollonian and Dionysian duality... For Apollo, the god of all plastic energies, is at the same time the soothsaying god" (Nietzsche, *The Birth* 1-3).

Through Apollonian arts, Nietzsche suggests an analytical and intellectualized process of artistic creation, whereas he defines Dionysian arts as instinctive urges that appeal to feelings.



Because of their focus on space, geometry, and visual balance, Nietzsche views plastic arts as driven by Apollonian logic. In contrast, he singles music as a Dionysian art, because it appeals directly to man's instinctive emotions: "Through Apollo and Dionysus, the two art-deities of the Greeks, we come to recognize that in the Greek world there existed a sharp opposition, in origin and aims, between the Apollonian art of sculpture, and the non-plastic, Dionysian, art of music" (Nietzsche, *The Birth* 1).

Nietzsche's discourse on music as a unique and superior form of artistic expression is developed in his work when he addresses the Apollonian and Dionysian elements inherent to the Greek tragedy. According to Nietzsche, the Greek had a capacity to fuse both Apollonian and Dionysian drives in their tragedies: "Every artist is an 'Imitator,' that is to say, either an Apollonian artist in dreams, or a Dionysian artist in ecstasies, or finally- as in example in Greek tragedy- at once artist in both dreams and ecstasies" (Nietzsche, *The Birth* 2). Far from a complete reliance on pragmatic thinking and Apollonian logic, the success of Greek tragedies, according to Nietzsche, lies in their instinctive Dionysian sensibilities, merged with their Apollonian notion of order and stage performance. Such fusion represents for Nietzsche an aesthetic example of perfect artistic achievement. Because of the bloody wars, suffering, and cruelties that preceded the foundation of their state, Nietzsche explains that the Greeks had an unusual sensitivity to Dionysian elements in arts. Via their painful past experiences, the Greeks had a huge capacity to feel empathy towards their tragic heroes. This strong connection between the audience and the heroes of the plays enabled the Greeks to be really sensitive to their instinctive, emotional, and Dionysian urges:

It is the people of the tragic mysteries who fight the battles with the Persians: and, conversely, the people who waged such wars required tragedy as a necessary healing

potion. Who would have imagined that there was still such a uniformly powerful effusion of the simplest political sentiments, the most natural domestic instincts and the primitive manly delight in battle in this very people after it had been agitated so profoundly for several generations by the most violent convulsions of the Dionysian demon. (Nietzsche, *The Birth* 21)

Interestingly enough, Nietzsche recognizes in the music of Greek stage performances (i.e., the chorus) the formative Dionysian element par excellence. Along with its power to capture the dramatic sensibility of the Greeks, the chorus is the essence of the play, as it embodies certain Dionysian elements that deal with the primal realms of the human condition: “tragedy arose from the tragic chorus, and was originally only chorus and nothing but chorus; and hence we feel it our duty to look into the heart of this tragic chorus as being the real protodrama” (Nietzsche, *The Birth* 44). In association with plot and characters, the chorus constitutes the best embodiment between Dionysian music and Apollonian order that characterizes Greek tragedy. Accordingly, thanks to its Dionysian aesthetic nature, music (i.e., the chorus) enabled Greek tragedies to achieve a perfect balance between the Apollonian formative elements of the play, and the Dionysian instinctive urges that appeal to feelings:

...the Apollonian art of sculpture, and the non-plastic, Dionysian, art of music. These two distinct tendencies run parallel to each other, for the most part openly at variance; and they continually incite each other to new and more powerful births, which perpetuate an antagonism, only superficially reconciled by the common term “Art”; till at last, by a metaphysical miracle of the Hellenic will, they appear coupled with each other, and through this coupling eventually generate the art-product, equally Dionysian and Apollonian, of Attic tragedy. (Nietzsche, *The Birth* 1)

Following his view on Dionysian music, Nietzsche affirms the necessity for modern civilization to rediscover the Dionysian instinct, that was lost during the progress of history. In this regard, he argues that the coming of rationality and human's faith in logic led to a deprivation of the Dionysian drive in the arts. In the following passage, Nietzsche views the Socratic belief in reason as an annihilation of Dionysus, and states Euripides's stage performance as an example of the supremacy of reason over Dionysian urges:

It [Euripidean drama] has alienated itself as much as possible from Dionysian elements. Now, in order to develop at all, it requires new stimulants, which can no longer lie within the sphere of the two unique art-impulses, the Apollonian and the Dionysian... Euripides did not succeed in establishing the drama exclusively on an Apollonian basis, but rather that his un-Dionysian inclinations deviated into a naturalistic and inartistic tendency, we should now be able to get a nearer view of the character of esthetic Socratism, whose supreme law reads about as follows: "To be beautiful every- thing must be intelligible," as the counterpart to the Socratic identity: "Knowledge is virtue." With this canon in his hands, Euripides measures all the separate elements of the drama — language, characters, dramaturgic structure, and choric music — and corrects them according to his principle. The poetic deficiency and degeneration, which we are so often wont to impute to Euripides in comparison with Sophocles, is for the most part the product of this penetrating critical process, this daring intelligibility. (Nietzsche, *The Birth* 83)

Far from the continual contrast between reason and instinct, feelings and mind, Euripides controlled all the formative features of the play with a determined pragmatism. In Nietzsche's view, the chorus, which represented the foremost Dionysian drive in Greek tragedy, became a simple stage convention for Euripides. Because reason dominated in Socratic and post-Socratic periods,

Western civilization lost its Dionysian drive in art: “it follows that aesthetic Socratism was the fatal principle; but in so far as the struggle is directed against the Dionysian element in the older tragedy, we may recognize in Socrates the opponent of Dionysus” (Nietzsche, *The Birth* 86).

In the last pages of his book, Nietzsche singles music and myths as the cure for modern civilization. Through the revival of Dionysian music, the instinctive connection between mythic heroes and audience would be reestablished, and music drama would unify culture through the expression of collective unconscious: “My friends, ye who believe in Dionysian music, ye also know what tragedy means to us. There we have tragic myth reborn from music — and in this birth we can hope for everything and forget what is most afflicting” (Nietzsche, *The Birth* 165). Defining music as an art with such noble and cultural properties contrasts sharply against Kant’s view of music as an art of pure form deprived of intellectual stimulations. Such philosophical perspectives, ranging from Kant to Nietzsche, relate to our study as they underline the progressive transformation of music as an art of thematic connotation. While Hegel and Shelling brought an aesthetic perspective that considers music as an art with specific cognitive intellectual properties, the writings of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche foreground the status of music as a superior artistic mode of human expression.

## **2. The Emergence of Program Music and Symphonic poetry**

The philosophical arguments presented in favor of the cognitive, communicative, and aesthetic value of music are historically accompanied by the emergence of new musical visions that helped the establishment of music as an art of intellectual and literary connotations. Indeed, 19<sup>th</sup> century composers like Liszt and Wagner initiated the ‘program music’ school and challenged the traditional school of formalists.

According to formalists, music is an art of pure form, deprived of any cognitive, intellectual or thematic properties. In *The Beautiful in Music*, Eduard Hanslick summarized the arguments proposed by the formalist school. Hanslick makes a clear distinction between music as an object, and our subjective perception and appreciation of it:

If the contemplation of something beautiful arouses pleasurable feelings, this effect is distinct from the beautiful as such. I may, indeed, place a beautiful object before an observer with the avowed purpose of giving him pleasure, but this purpose in no way affects the beauty of the object. The beautiful is and remains beautiful though it arouses no emotion whatever, and though there be no one to look at it. In other words, although the beautiful exists for the gratification of an observer, it is independent of him. (Hanslick, *The Beautiful* 18)

Since our impressions and interpretations are independent from music *per se*, the ‘beautiful in music’, according to Hanslick, is independent from what a musical performance may produce in the listener: “the immediate experience of music itself is not an emotion, and the thoughts most immediately involved in making or composing music are not emotions” (Zangwil, *Against Emotion* 42). This aesthetic distinction between the artistic object and our subjective individual perception represents the sole principle that defines music, according to formalists, as an art of pure form. Indeed, the beautiful in music, according to formalists, is determined by our contemplative faculty to follow the “sound[s] and motion[s]” (67) that formally constitute the structural and textual elements of musical compositions. Since our impressions and interpretations are independent from music *per se*, the aesthetic view that defines music as an art of emotional and intellectual communication is invalid. Hanslick’s criticism of Liszt illustrates the strong skepticism of formalists towards the idea of ‘program music’: “He [Liszt] has chosen to approach

music from an angle where, inspired by external idea, it occupies the comparative intellect and stimulates poetic or picturesque fantasy; he imposes an abusive mission on the subject of his symphonies: either to fill the gap left by the absence of musical content or to justify the atrociousness of such content” (Hanslick, *Music Criticism* 54). Such attack on Liszt in particular, and on program music in general, denies the validity of 19<sup>th</sup> century philosophical assumptions that define music as an artistic form of cognitive and intellectual expression. Fortunately, the ideas proclaimed by the school of program music are not only theoretical, but they also display diverse musical practices that enable composers to use music as an art of expression and thematic connotation.

In his symphonic poems, Liszt used new techniques of composition, with new materials, that enabled him to convey ideas and themes to the audience. Far from including lyrics in the music, Liszt evokes the themes of a poem or a novel through the use of suggestive musical phrases and movements. Indeed, Liszt’s interest in literature and philosophy pushed him to use orchestral compositions in a way to musically represent the themes and ideas of several literary works: “Here is a whole fortnight that my mind and fingers have been working like two lost spirits, Homer, the Bible, Plato, Locke, Byron, Hugo, Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Beethoven, Bach, Hummel, Mozart, Weber, are all around me. I study them, meditate on them, devour them with fury” (Liszt *Letters* 36). In his symphonic poem “What One Hears Upon the Mountain,” Liszt musically represents the moods and themes of Victor Hugo’s poem of the same title. The themes displayed both in the poem and the symphonic poem explore Nature’s perfection in contrast to man’s misery. Liszt writes: “The poet hears two voices; one immense, splendid, and full of order, raising to the Lord its joyous hymn of praise - the other hollow, full of pain, swollen by weeping, blasphemies, and curses. One spoke of nature, the other of humanity! Both voices struggle near to each other, cross

over, and melt into one another, till finally they die away in a state of holiness” (Wright, *Instrumental Music* 242).

To achieve such expressive thematic qualities in music, the composer needs to be released from the formal restrictions imposed by the formalists. In this regard, the symphonic Poem is, by definition, a free form divided into movements and sections that chronologically reveal the ideas related to the literary oeuvre it is inspired by: “The symphonic poem in the form in which Liszt has given it to us, is ordinarily an ensemble of different movements depending on each other and flowing from a principal ideal, blending into each other, and forming one composition” (Huneker, *Franz Liszt* 242). Unlike the skeptical views adopted by Hanslick and his followers, Liszt strongly believed that such musical parallels with poetry, literature, and painting represent a natural evolution for classical musical practices: “the poetic solution of instrumental music contained in the program seems to us rather one of the various steps forward which the art has still to take, a necessary result of the development of our time, than a symptom of its exhaustion and decadence” (859). The fact that music took new forms of expression through its association with non-musical materials is not a step backwards for Liszt, but rather a step forward in the progress of music and its aesthetics: “an element, through contact with another acquires new properties in losing old ones; exercising another influence in an altered environment” (853). According to Liszt, “the genius enriches the art with unused materials as well as with original manipulations of traditional ones” (858). Unlike absolute music, which follows strict rules of composition, and whose main purpose is aesthetic beauty, composers of program music encourage new experimentations that enable music to suggest and represent distinct ideas and themes.

Comparable to Liszt, Wagner took an anti-classicist stand with regards to the status of music. Through his techniques of composition, Wagner made of music an art with distinct thematic

tools that accompany his dramatic operas. As a dramatist, his account on the expressiveness of music is fundamentally linked to his vision of Drama. In this regard, Wagner defines Drama as an instrument capable of building a better society, and underlines the need for an artistic revolution that would reposition music drama within a social and political axis (Aberbach, *The Ideas of Richard Wagner* 16).

In order to achieve this aim, drama should be pushed to its ultimate limit of aesthetic expressiveness: “The highest conjoint work of art is the Drama: it can only be at hand in all its possible fulness, when in it each separate branch of art is at hand in its own utmost fulness” (Wagner, and Russel 1334). Among the artistic disciplines inherent to the art of Drama, Wagner gives a considerable attention to the aesthetic role and functions music plays. In this regard, he explains that music should not be used as a mere background accompaniment. Instead, he views the formative musical elements infused to his pieces as a means to convey what language fails to truly represent. In *Opera and Drama*, Wagner singles out the ability of music to convey moods, feelings and ideas, that are impossible to fully capture through speech alone: “As pure organ of the Feeling, it [Music] speaks out the very thing which Word-speech in itself cannot speak out, — without further ado, then: That which, looked at from the standpoint of our human intellect, is the Unspeakable. That this Unspeakable is not a thing unutterable per se, but merely unutterable through the organ of our Understanding” (Wagner, and Russel 1897).

Accordingly, for Wagner, music is not only about form, melody and harmony, but also about content and expression. In order to achieve such musical function in Opera, Wagner departs from the classical strategies of compositions and uses musical leitmotifs instead. Basically, a musical leitmotif is a recurrent musical phrase employed in conjunction with the plot of the story performed on stage. In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music And Musicians*, the leitmotif is defined



as “ a theme, or other coherent musical idea, clearly defined so as to retain its identity if modified on subsequent appearances, whose purpose is to represent or symbolize a person, object, place, idea, state of mind, supernatural force or any other ingredient in a dramatic work” (530). Far from following classical rules of composition with its definite set of aesthetic restrictions, Wagner plays with leitmotifs and the thematic treatment of his material in order to meet a cohesive match between the events in the play and musical expressiveness.

As they liberated their work from the restrictions imposed by classical formalists, Wagner, Liszt, and other composers of the program music school conceived new techniques of composition that enabled them to use music as an art of thematic connotation. Through their experiments and compositions, they illustrate the validity of the statements assumed by philosophers of the time, who perceived music as a higher form of artistic expression. Hence, unlike the formalists, whose main purpose is aesthetic beauty, composers of program music are capable of representing distinct ideas and themes to the audience through their oeuvres.

### **3. The Validity of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Musicology in Modernist Aesthetics**

From the above review, one can understand how the idea of music as an art of expression evolved considerably through the work of composers and philosophers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Because our target point is the study of modernist poets and their use of music aesthetics, literary scholars may be sceptical to accept the validity of the historical summary presented so far. In what will follow, I demonstrate the validity of ‘program music’ for modernists, despite its original belonging to the Romantic style. Indeed, the theoretical writings of modernist musicologists, as well as 20<sup>th</sup> century symphonic poetry, clearly illustrate the capacity of program music to represent themes and ideas that go beyond the Romantic ideals.

First of all, it is important to understand that, unlike the clear antagonism that characterizes literary modernism and literary Romanticism, musical modernism exhibits a relation of continuity with the previous composers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Because composers of 'program music' linked their works to the themes of poets, novelists and even painters, their attempt at expressing content through auditory material led to formal musical experimentations that were welcomed by the composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As explained by Maria Frendo in *T.S. Eliot and the music of poetry*, musical experimentations of the 19<sup>th</sup> century formulated a chain of stylistic and aesthetic processes of transformation that progressively led to modernist fragmentation of form:

At the end of the nineteenth century these polarized forms become formulaic... When formal coherence of the old sort is abandoned in favour of such fragmentary evocation, larger structures become problematic, as most obviously in the episodic works of Bruckner, Mahler and Zola... In longer works, one solution - particularly associated with Wagner and his followers and, in literature, with Flaubert - was to sustain interest by refusing to come to rest: perpetual unresolved dissonance, a middle with very little end... In the absence of an audible internal structure, music, for a short period, predominantly seeks its coherence from some external occasion. Ballet, programme music, and song become the norm... Literature was striving towards the condition of music just as music was striving towards the condition of language, and these apparently opposite strivings arose out of a single impulse, to substitute embodiment for denotation in order to restore expressivity where formal control had been lost." The new style that emerged from these polarized forms at the end of the nineteenth century is thus a fragmentation of form. (Frendo 2-4)

Hence, far from a relation of antagonism, the aesthetic connection between romanticism and modernism in music is a relation of continuity. Indeed, modernist composers welcomed the

techniques used by program music, despite their original belonging to romantic musical practices. In “Composition with Twelve Notes,” the modernist composer Schonberg explains that modernist atonality resulted from the significant progress romantic and post-romantic composers made in harmony:

The method of composing with twelve tones grew out of a necessity. In the last hundred years, the concept of harmony has changed tremendously through the development of chromaticism. The idea that one basic tone, the root, dominated the construction of chords and regulated their succession-the concept of tonality-had to develop first into the concept of extended tonality. Very soon it became doubtful whether such a root still remained the center to which every harmony and harmonic succession must be referred. ... Richard Wagner's harmony had promoted a change in the logic and constructive power of harmony. One of its consequences was the so-called impressionistic use of harmonies, especially practised by Debussy...The ear had gradually become acquainted with a great number of dissonances, and so had lost the fear of their "sense-interrupting" effect...This state of affairs led to a freer use of dissonances comparable to classic composers' treatment of diminished seventh chords, which could precede and follow any other harmony, consonant or dissonant, as if there were no dissonance at all. (Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* 103)

Hence, far from viewing program music as an aesthetic practice that belongs to Romantic aesthetics, one should rather consider it as a concrete progress in musical expressiveness, that remains valid for the later generations of musicians and musicologists.

Indeed, despite the statements assumed by some composers, 20<sup>th</sup> century musicological studies on 19<sup>th</sup> century program music clearly illustrate the importance and the validity of 19<sup>th</sup> century techniques of composition for modern aesthetics. In his work *The Language of Music*, the

modernist composer and musicologist Deryck Cooke demonstrates, through formal analysis of several musical compositions and operas, the validity of the 19<sup>th</sup> century view of music as an art of thematic expression. In his study, Cooke undertakes a systematic analysis of leitmotifs, as they were used by several composers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By comparing the implementation of leitmotifs in 19<sup>th</sup> century program music compositions, Cooke demonstrates their effective function at representing thematic and emotional contents. Giving such consideration to program music, Cooke illustrates through his study the 20<sup>th</sup> century attitude towards program music and its relevance in musical modernism. In the following example, Cooke demonstrates how Wagner's *Parsifal* and Verdi's *Othello* exhibit common musical constructions in both pieces:



(Cooke, *The Language of Music* 114)

Although Wagner and Verdi used different styles and methods of composition, we notice from the above example that they implemented the same ascendance of notes. Indeed, both musical lines are written under the minor key<sup>1</sup>, and both follow the same melodic chronology. Interestingly enough, both phrases occur in comparable tragic moments, where protagonists are faced with a dramatic situation that echoes a psychological climax (Cooke, *The Language of Music* 114). In his

<sup>1</sup> In music theory, major and minor are the two independent systems of notes associated to two distinct moods. It is generally understood that the major scale expresses happiness, while the minor scale tends to reveal emotions of sadness and sorrow.

analysis, Cooke concludes that the similarity in the melodic construction in both plays is not a random coincidence. Rather, both phrases express “an outgoing feeling of pain and... a protest against misfortune” (114). Accordingly, both Verdi and Wagner used a similar leitmotif to express a similar emotional condition and thematic connotation. Following the same comparative method of analysis, Cooke undertakes a systematic study that associates recurrent leitmotifs to distinct connotations in music. The following table resumes the seventeen musical phrases that Cooke analyses in his work. Each musical phrase is analogous to a specific emotional and thematic situation:

	Scale Degrees	Pitches in C Major or C Minor	Emotional Content
1	1-(2)-3-(4)-5 Major	C-(D)-E-(F)-G	Outgoing, active assertive emotion of joy; more experience of exuberance, triumph, aspiration.
2	5-1-(2)-3 Major	G-C-(D)-E	Equally expressive as #1 of an outgoing emotion of joy; partial synonym of #1; aims at M3 (E) which makes it more expressive of joy.
3	1-(2)-3-(4)-5 Minor	C-(D)-E flat-(F)-G	Outgoing feeling of pain, assertion of sorrow, complaint, protest against misfortune.
4	5-1-(2)-3 Minor	G-C-(D)-E flat	Pure tragedy; strong feeling of courage; Acknowledges tragedy and springs onwards anyway.
5	5-(4)-3-(2)-1 Major	G-(F)-E-(D)-C	Experiencing joy passively; accepting, welcoming blessings, relief, consolation, reassurance,

			a feeling of homecoming; if loud, a sense of confidence.
6	5-(4)-3-(2)-1  Minor	G-(F)-E flat-(D)-C	Incoming painful emotion in a context of finality; acceptance of grief; discouragement and depression; passive suffering; despair connected with death, passive falling away from the joy of life
7	5-3-(2)-1  Minor	G-E flat-(D)-C	Passionate outburst of painful emotion, does not protest further, falls back into acceptance; neither complete protest or complete acceptance; restless sorrow.
8	1-(2)-3-(2)-1  Minor	C-(D)-E flat-(D)-C	A look on the darker side of things in terms of immobility, neither rising up to protest, nor falling back to accept; brooding; obsession with gloomy feelings; trapped fear; sense of inescapable doom.
9	(5)-6-5  Major	(G)-A-G	Three possibilities: a). simple assertion of joy b). if unaccompanied “joyous vibration” c). anacrusis to 5 <sup>th</sup> : joyous vibration with longing
10	(5)-6-5 Minor	(G)-A flat-G	Burst of anguish (most commonly used of all terms).

11	1-2-3-2 Minor	C-D-E flat-D	Gloomy; sense of brooding grief swelling to anguish and dying again.
12	1-(2)-(3)-(4)-5-6-5 Major	C-(D)-(E)-(F)-G-A-G	Innocence and purity (of angels and children); affirmation of maximum joy (savages, children, animals, birds, saints, etc.)
13	1-(2)-(3)-(4)-5-6-5 Minor	C-(D)-(E flat)-(F)-G- A flat-G	Powerful assertion of fundamental unhappiness.
14	8-7-6-5 Major	C-B-A-G	Incoming emotion of joy, welcoming or Accepting comfort, consolation or fulfillment— if loud then a sense of confidence.
15	8-7-6-5 Minor	C-B flat-A flat-G	Incoming painful emotion; acceptance, or yielding to death; passive suffering; despair connected with death—but an opening continuing feeling.
16	Chromatic Scale (down)	C-B-B flat-A-A flat-G- G flat-F-E-E flat-D- D flat-C	Weary despair and increased pain (a chromatic expansion of #15 and #6).
17	1-2-3-3-_5	C-D-E-E-_G	Passionate love.

2

In the table above, the two first columns, i.e., scale degree and pitch, represent the intervals that constitute the studied musical phrase. The third column summarizes its connotation, as concluded by Cooke. In music theory, major and minor are the two independent systems of

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<sup>2</sup> This table is quoted directly from Carter, Brian. “Meaning in the Motives: an Analysis of the Leitmotifs of Wagner’s Ring” (Url : <https://goo.gl/mgyhdr>). It is originally condensed from Deryck Cooke’s *The Language of Music*, Chapter 3 “Some Basic Terms of Musical Vocabulary”, pp. 113-167.

notes associated to two distinct moods. It is generally understood that the major scale expresses happiness, while the minor scale tends to reveal emotions of sadness and sorrow. As he analyzes precise musical phrases in both the major and minor keys, Cooke goes beyond this general musical definition to unveil specific connotations associated to program music and opera. Because he followed a systematic method of analysis, Cooke demonstrates through his study that the expressive quality of music, as assumed by philosophers and composers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is not only a matter of argumentation or opinions, but also represents a concrete aesthetic approach to musical writing that could be observed from the analysis of musical scores. Hence, far from rejecting their aesthetics, modernist musicologists acknowledged the effectiveness of 19<sup>th</sup> century composers at expressing content through their use of leitmotifs.

Despite the modernist musicological studies on 19<sup>th</sup> century techniques of composition, the music of modernist composers explicitly illustrates their assimilation of 19<sup>th</sup> century forms of composition. More precisely, the symphonic poems of modernist composers illustrate the continuity of the program music tradition. Interestingly enough, symphonic poetry of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is inspired by the writings of the modernist literary period. Hence, through such compositions, we understand that program music as a method of composition remains valid outside of the romantic style and aesthetics.

In his symphonic poem “Thirteen ways of looking at a Black Bird,” Lukas Fros illustrates the themes related to Wallace Stevens’ poem of the same name. Originally, the poem is a series of thirteen stanzas in free verse that incorporates modernist ideas of cubism and multi-perspectivism. Indeed, Robert Buttel describes the title as an allusion to ‘the Cubists’ practice of incorporating different perspectives of the same object into the same artistic creation (Buttel 165).



From a formal point of view, both the poem and the musical composition share a number of similarities that suggest Foss's representation of the poem in his musical work. Similarly to the poem, the overall form of the piece is divided into thirteen sections, which is made even clearer by Foss's use of Roman numerals in the score. This formal similarity suggests a sense of chronological parallelism between the poem and the music. For instance, section VI features a glissando on the piano strings and repeated notes in the flute. This combination results in a complex and noisy part that associates to Stevens' use of complex images of icicles, reflecting the shadow of the blackbird in Stanza VI:

Icicles filled the long window

With barbaric glass.

The shadow of the blackbird

Crossed it, to and fro.

The mood

Traced in the shadow

An indecipherable cause. (Stevens, *The collected poems of Wallace Stevens* 95)

Unlike industrial glass, the use of icicles suggests the complex reflective effect it has on objects. Unlike a mirror reflecting a mere copy of oneself on a glass, icicles add complexity and fragmentation to the original form. This idea is used in the poem to suggest the possibility of new perspectives, as assumed by cubist painters. The image of the blackbird that flies "Crossed it, to and fro" adds even more complexity to the fragmented mirroring phenomenon, since it performs a continual movement. Through the use of complex musical textures in part VI, Foss suggests, via auditory stimuli, the same degree of complexity Steven captures in this stanza.

Unlike the complexity of the above passage, Foss introduces a more basic musical idea in part IV of his piece. The music in this section stays essentially the same, through its use of the same instrumentation, texture and pitch content. This thematically coincides with the regularity and simplicity of Stanza IV of the poem, as follows:

A man and a woman

Are one.

A man and a woman and a blackbird

Are one. (Stevens, *The collected poems of Wallace Stevens* 95)

In a letter to L.W. Payne Jr., Stevens explains that “This group of poems is not meant to be a collection of epigrams or ideas, but of sensations” (Stevens Letters 251). As Foss establishes this auditory parallel with Stevens’ poem via his composition, he captures the sensations Stevens paints in his poem through auditory materials. Through this process of association and combination, both the composer and the poet suggest, through the form of their works, a perspectivist process of artistic representation. Unlike romantic symphonic poems that relate to romantic themes, Foss’s “Thirteen ways of looking at a Black Bird” represents a concrete example of the adaptation of program music to the modernist style. Hence, far from representing a set of aesthetic ideas linked exclusively to the romantic style of composition, program music and symphonic poetry are valid in modernist music and are employed to display modernist themes via post tonal sonorities.

Unlike the classical view of music as an art of form and beauty, the philosophical and musicological writings on the aesthetic status of music during the 19<sup>th</sup> century enabled music to evolve, at the turn of the century, as an art of thematic connotation. Indeed, the musicological progress of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is manifested in the modernist era through the musicological studies

and compositions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hence, thanks to 19<sup>th</sup> century musicology, music evolved in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as an art of expression and thematic connotation.

## **II. The Modernist hybridization of Art and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Poetical Turn to “Program Music”**

Music emerged at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as an art with connotative and expressive aesthetic qualities, but the artistic climate of modernism pushed poets even further, to invest their interest in poetico-musical hybridizations. In this section, I review the general artistic context of modernism, and demonstrate how the modernists’ desire for experimentation and their interdisciplinary tendencies pushed some poets towards integrating program music in their poetry. Because modernists faced a different context from their predecessors, they felt that traditional forms of artistic expression had become ill fitted to represent modern reality. For this reason, modernists pushed the limits of their artistic disciplines and attempted to formulate new techniques and styles of artistic expression. As they experimented with the formal limits of artistic creation, some artists went beyond the limits of their arts and attempted to assimilate the aesthetic techniques that belonged to other disciplines in their own form of arts. Among the poets of the time, some of them viewed in music an aesthetic potential for poetic hybridization and formal experimentation. Poets such as T.S Eliot, Wallace Stevens and Ezra Pound went beyond the traditional notions of rhythm and syllable that defined the traditional notion of musicality in poetry, and considered in their poetics a set of musicological elements such as counterpoint, musical forms, polyphony, and harmony, as elements to create poetry. As much as the 19<sup>th</sup> century’s view of music, modernist poets viewed musical techniques of composition as stylistic devices that allowed for artistic expression and thematic connotation. Hence, far from a question of form and design, the

modernists' poetic interest in music is motivated by a desire to find new methods of poetical expression.

### **1. Formal Experimentation as a Landmark of Modernism**

For modernist authors like Sherwood Anderson, the 20<sup>th</sup> century was “the most materialistic age in the history of the world, when wars would be fought without patriotism, when men would forget God and only pay attention to moral standards, when the will to power would replace the will to serve, and beauty would be well nigh forgotten in the terrible headlong rush of mankind toward the acquisition of possessions” (Anderson, *Winesburg* 40). Such view of the modern world, as Sherwood puts it, illustrates the general scepticism that characterized the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, the events and ideas of the time led to the belief that the advance in science and human progress resulted, ironically, in a general regression. Due to the human loss and chaos of the two world wars, the destructive power of technology became evident. In parallel, new assumptions challenged the idea that defines the human being as a superior civilized creature. Darwin challenged traditional creationism with his theory of evolution, whereas Freud's theory of personality recognized in the civilized human being the same instinctive urges previously associated to the primitive *homme des caverns*. Hence, the idea of human beings as superior civilized creatures, and the confident view that humanity was prospering, looked false. This uncertain situation led to a general climate of scepticism and disillusionment that characterized modernist thinking.

In the arts, the same feeling of scepticism and disillusionment affected Modernism. Artists who had once put their faith in the existence of absolute truths (God, religion, humanity, science) started to question the validity of such traditional assumptions. As a consequence, modernists believed that traditional artistic forms of expression had become outdated and incapable of

aesthetically representing the intellectual ideas of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In order to liberate arts from this constraint, modernists strove to find new forms of expression that would reflect in content, style and form the instability of modern men. For this reason, modernism in the arts is characterized by a great deal of formal and aesthetic experimentation: “A theory of modernist movement that may embrace both Pfitzner and Schoenberg, or Balthus and Picasso, could be constructed along the following lines: Modernism is a testing of the limits of aesthetic construction. According to this perspective, the Modernists tried to find the ultimate bounds of certain artistic discipline” (Albright *Modernism and Music* 11).

As they experimented with new forms and styles of expression, artists joined and developed new aesthetic ideas and movements, such as Cubism, Constructivism, Futurism, Imagism, and Vorticism. While some of those movements did not last very long, they illustrate the modernists’ focus on formal experimentation and their will to formulate a new aesthetic. Accordingly, Pound’s slogan ‘make it new’ was assumed to be “a professional, almost a sacred obligation” (Gay, *The Lure of Heresy* 106).

Far from an ultimate focus on freshness, novelty and originality, modernists used formal experimentation as a suggestive mode of artistic communication. To illustrate the chaos of modern reality, poets such as Pound and Eliot, fragmented the form of their poems, to stylistically represent the disorder and chaos of modernist time:

The fragmentation of meter that resulted, as witnessed by Eliot’s poem, can be seen as a sign of the times ...As social conditions changed, as capitalist forces adjusted to and assimilated revolutionary forms of art, those means of artistic representation had themselves constantly to change in order to force people to reappraise their lives...the

dissonances and fractures of modernist art expressed the individual's loss of control.  
(Childs, *The Twentieth Century* 68-69)

Following the same aesthetic direction, the modernist school of the New Criticism gave to the form a connotative and expressive function that outstated previous trends of literary criticism. Indeed, New Critics defined form as content, and viewed the literary text as a self-contained, self-referential aesthetic object, that communicates through its form and design the messages and the attitudes of the author:

Form is meaning and nothing but meaning...Form and content, or content and medium are inseparable. The artist does not first intuit his object and then find the appropriate medium. It is rather in and through his medium that he intuits the object... This is an attractive idea, that form and content are one; in fact, it is hard to believe that anyone could think a paraphrase equivalent to the poem it tries to explain. This view of form and content further serves the New Critical desire to establish criticism as an independent and superior discipline. (Drake, *The New Criticism* 10)

As explained above, form became a suggestive tool capable of aesthetically representing the ideas and intellectual assumptions of the artist. As the general artistic tendency shifted the importance of forms, styles, and structures to the same level of connotative importance as themes, contents, and subject matters, formal experimentation became a form of expression and a suggestive mode of artistic communication. Indeed, this tendency towards experimentation as a form of expression is noticeable in different artistic disciplines of modernism. In painting, cubists "layered views from many angles in order to capture the subject from all sides" (Apollinaire and Eimert, *Cubism* 29). Via this original technique of visual representation, cubists assimilated through their artistic creations the relativist thinking of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that abandoned the idea

of absolute truth, in order to favor a pluralistic, multi-perspectivist approach to reality and cognition:

Modernist culture, however, acknowledged no objective reality of space motion, and time that has the same meaning for all observers. Rather, reality can be grasped in a variety of ways; a multiplicity of frame of references apply to nature and human experience. Consequently, reality is the way the viewer apprehends it to be through the prism of imagination... Thus, one discerns the attention of modern painting ...to break up ordered spaces... to bridge the distance between object and spectator, to “thrust” on the viewer and establish itself immediately by impact. (Perry, et al., *Western Civilization* 672)

In music, experimentation and its suggestive connotation is also noticeable. Via the use of atonality, modernist composers challenged traditional concepts of melody and harmony and suggested moods, ideas and emotions that relate to the disillusionment and chaos of modernity. In an attempt to describe Schoenberg’s atonal music, Bryan R. Simms assumes that “The word points to the absence of key, certainly a striking characteristic of the new approach” (R. Simms, *The Atonal Music* 03). By emancipating music from the boundaries of key signature, “new sounds were produced, a new kind of melody appeared, a new approach to expression of moods and characters was discovered” (R. Simms, *The Atonal Music* 29). Schoenberg explains that such approach to music compositions “differed from all preceding music, not only harmonically but also melodically, thematically, and motivally” (R. Simms, *The Atonal Music* 3). As they relied on atonality and fragmented rhythms, modern composers successfully communicated moods of agony, skepticism and disillusionment that characterized the psyche of modern times: “Some critics of this time saw in atonal music an outpouring of anxiety, a manifestation of trauma with the composer himself, or a resounding echo of the social antimonies of the pre- and post- World

War I period” (R. Simms, *The Atonal Music* 4). Hence, as much as painting and literature, formal experimentation in music expressed the modernists’ “evolutionary outgrowth of a crisis in music at the turn of the century” (R. Simms, *The Atonal Music* 4). Indeed, the harmonic and melodic constructions that used to sound dissonant, unpleasant and false became the ideal vocabulary to translate the dilemma of modern time:

To the uninitiated listener, Schoenberg’s music does not sound beautiful because it mirrors the capitalist world as it is... When his music is heard in the concert hall of the bourgeoisie they are no longer charming and agreeable centers of pleasure where one is moved by one’s own beauty but places where one is forced to think about the chaos and ugliness of the world or else turn one’s face away. (Durant, *Conditions of Music* 78)

As we notice this recurrent aesthetic attitude in different artistic disciplines, we understand that formal experimentation and its suggestive thematic quality represent aesthetic characteristics that affected modern art as a whole. Artists in different domains tested the limit of their arts and used form and experimentation as a vehicle for new ideas and concepts of the time.

## **2. Towards Artistic Interdisciplinarity**

The experimental tendencies of modernism pushed some artists towards interdisciplinary and pluralistic boundaries. Indeed, a group of composers, painters and poets shared their desire to go beyond the aesthetic limits of their disciplines. Accordingly, painters were interested in music, musicians in literature, and composers in literary productions. In previous centuries, ekphrastic poetry was used as a poetical form to describe the effects of a given piece of art in a verse formula. Nevertheless, such traditional aesthetic connection remains superficial when compared to modernists’ experimental aesthetic. Far from just evoking the subjective effect of a particular painting or musical composition, modernists attempted to assimilate the forms and the techniques



used in other arts as part of their disciplines. This resulted into unusual stylistic and aesthetic hybridizations in the arts. This experimental shift is noticeable from the aesthetic evolution of poetical synesthesia into an interdisciplinary approach towards poetry and painting:

After World War I, the use of synaesthesia in poetry increasingly exemplified the interdisciplinarity of the period, reflecting synaesthetic ideas from music and the visual arts. Poets such as T.S Eliot, E.E Cummings, William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens engaged with the movements of Impressionism, Cubism and Orphism/Synchronism, and the synaesthetic theories of F.T Marinetti and Wassily Kandinsky were similarly influential. (Burrows, *Word of Shape* 6)

The most obvious example of such interdisciplinary approach to poetry is the 20<sup>th</sup> century poetic appropriation of cubist painting techniques. Just like cubist fragmentation and multi-perspectivist approach to visual representations, poets assimilated the same techniques of visual representation as part of their poetical styles:

Analytic Cubism concentrates more on the fragmentation of an object to a point of retaining almost no recognizable whole (which is the final effect of “Spring Strains”). Synthetic Cubism on the other hand, brings identifiable elements into one plane of relations where the object is preserved with a greater concern with design and unity in its technique, making the object more discernable. This second type of cubism leans heavily on foregrounding devices that accentuate the object of the poem, and Williams’ use of sensory dimensions is an important method of such defamiliarization. (Kruger, *William Carlos Williams* 202)

Far from representing an exclusive characteristic of modernist poetry, interdisciplinarity and aesthetic hybridization are recurrent tenets in modern arts. In view of this perspective, the Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky pushed the limits of aesthetic experience by trying to break

the boundaries between painting and music in his pictorial art. Kandinsky states that “colour is the keyboard, eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another purposively, to cause vibration in the soul” (Kandinsky 61). In his book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky associates his approach to painting to a modernist artistic tendency towards the interdisciplinary. Kandinsky singles out music for its ability to express non material things: “Various arts are drawing together. They are finding in Music the best teacher. With few exceptions, music has been for some centuries the art which has devoted itself not to the reproduction of natural phenomena, but rather to the expression of the artist’s soul, in musical sound” (Kandinsky 53). Far from just commenting on the possible connection between his art and music, Kandinsky’s interdisciplinary and experimental approach is evident from his clear and detailed associations of certain colors to particular musical instruments and moods: “In music a light blue is like a flute, a darker blue a cello; a still darker a thunderous double bass; and the darkest blue of all-an organ...Light warm red has a certain similarity to medium yellow, alike in texture and appeal, and gives a feeling of strength, vigour, determination, triumph. In music, it is a sound of trumpets, strong, harsh and ringing” (Kandinsky 38). Furthermore, his noticeable interest in Schonberg’s music provided him a way to make his abstract art not only musical, but also modernist in style. In one of his most famous paintings, *Impression III*, Kandinsky visually represents the musical experience of listening to Schoenberg’s music. The painting shows how planes of color burst into the mind of Kandinsky upon various musical passages. It depicts a large mass of yellow towards the right side of the piano, and blue towards the left, as representations of high lead and low bass notes. In the painting, yellow and black are distinctively associated to the high notes of the trumpet and to the impact of the concert on the artist: “*Impression III (concert)*, a work that with its aggressive yellow visual blast (like the

fanfare of the trumpets, in Kandinsky's color language), anchored by the ironic black of the instrument, so brilliantly echoes the concert's aural impact on the artist from whom synesthetic perceptions could be shattering" (Weis, *Evolving Perceptions* 35). Accordingly, the structural and formal arrangement of the painting is not related to the subjective effect the performance creates on the listener. Rather, it is determined by the form of the music and its structural construction.

By exploring the boundaries between the arts via a study of the form, modern artists entered into a pluralistic phase that led to the hybridization of the arts. Despite the general tenets that characterize modernism in art, hybridization of form and interdisciplinarity remain major stylistic tendencies that define the artistic practices of the time.

### **3. Poetry and Music as Part of the Modernist Quest Toward Experimentation**

Among 20<sup>th</sup> century experimental practices, the appropriation of musical techniques in poetical writing stands out as a major practice of modernism. Initially, the innate musical properties of poetry, such as rhythm and rhyme, made the connection between music and poetry logical and systematic: "Poetry and music were one and the same originally, as far as we can know: the musical relics are quite scarce... reading texts from Antiquity we realize that poetry and music go together, that the Greeks treat them as a unity" (Goethals and Gils, 73). Nevertheless, the 20<sup>th</sup> century experimental tendencies pushed this traditional aesthetic connection to an interdisciplinary level of musico-poetical integration. Indeed, poets aspired towards the integration of music in poetry, in the same way other artists from other disciplines tended towards aesthetic hybridization. This attitude towards music is clearly illustrated by the essays some poets of the period published during their career.

In "Effects of Analogy," Wallace Stevens stresses the experimental direction modern poets took with regards to the music of poetry. Although he claims that connecting both arts represents

an outdated romantic enterprise, Stevens notices that, in modern times, the music of poetry took an experimental aesthetic direction: “Still another mode of analogy is to be found in the music of poetry. It is a bit old hat and romantic and, no doubt at all, the dated forms are intolerable. In recent years, poetry began to change character about the time when painting began to change character... But, after all, the music of poetry has not come to an end” (Stevens, *The Necessary Angel*, 124). Citing “Rhapsody on a Windy Night” by T.S. Eliot, Stevens claims that the poem “is a specimen of what is meant by music today. It contains rhymes at irregular intervals and it is intensely cadenced.” (125) In this sense, Stevens declares that the term ‘music’ takes a new meaning in modernist poetry. Far from the traditional “metrical poetry with regular rhyme schemes repeated stanza after stanza” (125), Stevens recognizes in the music of modern poetry the formal unfolding of a musical composition:

The use of the word "music" in relation to poetry is as I said a moment ago is a bit old and anachronistic Yet, the passage from Eliot was musical. It is simply that there has been a change in the nature of what we mean by music. It is like the change from Haydn to a voice intoning. It is like the voice of an actor reciting or declaiming or of some other figure concealed, so that we cannot identify him, who speaks with a measured voice which is often disturbed by his feeling for what he says There is no accompaniment. (125)

If Stevens observes the progress of the music of poetry in modern verses through the textual analysis of his contemporaries, Pound reveals the musical hybridization of poetry via the poetical claims formulated by his theory of poetry. Although his imagist movement in poetry exemplifies the modernists’ turn to visual arts, Pound is still concerned with the sense of musicality required in the art of versification. In “A retrospect,” Pound prescribes the poet “to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome” (Pound, *Literary Essays* 3). Far from the

notion of rhythm traditionally associated to poetry, “to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase” (3) means to follow the same syncopation that characterizes music as an art. Via this tenet, Pound exhibits a rather musicological approach towards poetical writing, and illustrates what Stevens notices in his essay “Effects of Analogy”, i.e., the aesthetic progress of poetry from the “regular rhyme schemes of repeated stanza after stanza” (Stevens, *The necessary Angel* 125) towards a new kind of aesthetic musicality.

In the following passage, Pound reveals more explicitly his interdisciplinary musical approach toward poetical writing. As he invites the neophyte poet and the reader to get familiar with the musical elements inherent to poetry, Pound cites polyphony, harmony and counterpoint, among other traditional elements that define the musicality of poetry:

It is not necessary that a poem should rely on its music, but if it does rely on its music that music must be such as will delight the expert. Let the neophyte know assonance and alliteration, rhyme immediate and delayed, simple and polyphonic, as a musician would expect to know harmony and counterpoint and all the minutiae of his craft. No time is too great to give to these matters or to any one of them, even if the artist seldom have need of them. (Pound, *Literary essays* 5)

With these statements, Pound describes the modernist evolution of musicality in poetry and its turn towards experimental interdisciplinarity. Indeed, he affirms: “Fortunately or unfortunately, people can write stuff that passes for poetry, before they have studied music. The question is extremely simple. Part of what a musician has to know is employed in writing with words; there are no special 'laws' or 'differences' in respect to that part” (Pound, *ABC of Reading*, 197).

In line with Pound, Eliot also displays the same interest in the appropriation of the techniques of musical composition by poetical writing. In “The Music of Poetry,” Eliot defines a detailed strategy of composition that illustrates his interdisciplinary approach to musical poetry:

There are possibilities for verse, which bear some analogy to the development of a theme by different groups of instruments; there are possibilities of transitions in a poem comparable to the different movements of a symphony or a quartet; there are possibilities of contrapuntal arrangement of subject-matter. It is in the concert room, rather than in the opera house, that the germ of a poem may be quickened. (Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* 32)

Here, Eliot evokes a set of specific analogies for integrating musical techniques of composition into the process of poetical writing. He actually cites the possibility of developing a poetical theme comparable to “the development of a theme by different groups of instruments” (32). Likewise, he evokes the possibility of integrating “transitions” that are originally used in “movements of a symphony or a quartet” (32) in the structure of poems. Interestingly enough, Eliot goes as far as to testify the possibility of implementing “contrapuntal arrangement of subject-matter” (32) in poetry, a technique that originally depends on the polyphonic quality of music as an art. Through this set of analogies, Eliot presents the art of writing poetry as an activity parallel to musical composition. The major difference lies in the use of words instead of musical notes, in the chronological aesthetic organization, and in the methodological strategies of composition. In the following passage, Eliot’s comment on rhythm captures this view of poetry as a musical interdisciplinary activity towards language:

I think that it might be possible for a poet to work too closely to musical analogies: the result might be an effect of artificiality; but I know that a poem, or a passage of a poem,

may tend to realize itself first as a particular rhythm before it reaches expression in words, and that this rhythm may bring to birth the idea and the image; and I do not believe that this is an experience peculiar to myself (32).

Eliot underlines the possibility of a poet “to work too closely to musical analogies” (32). In this regard, he affirms that any passage of poetry originates in its rhythm “before it reaches expression in words, and that this rhythm may bring to birth the idea and the image” (32). This view of poetry as a primary rhythmical pattern upon which the poet generates ideas, words and images, places poetry even closer to the art of musical composition, where a musician places chords and melodies over a given rhythmical pattern.

Because both poetry and music are consecutive arts that extend through time, the idea of assimilating musical strategies of composition in the organization of poetical material holds a logical aesthetic analogy. Even though the lack of concrete examples makes it difficult for an outsider to understand such technical propositions, the set of theoretical formulations assumed by Eliot and other poets previously mentioned in this section clearly illustrate the interdisciplinary musical direction modern poetry took in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It is important to notice that the modernist poetical interest in music and its respective techniques is generally associated to a crisis of language and expression. As they turned towards music, poets assumed that this artistic form of expression was capable of capturing the ideas and subject matters that traditional language failed to convey. Accordingly, as much as ‘program music’ composers, poets found in musical techniques of composition the aesthetic potential to artistically represent what traditional language could not truly depict:

In an attempt to overcome the ‘crisis of language’ (Sheppard 1976, 323) they [modernist poets] frequently turned to music, because of its capacity to surmount the problems of form

and language through its potential to express a higher level of emotion... In many respects then, as Greenberg aptly propounds, music ‘... provided a sort of idealized model for the reformulation of art and language’ (1986, 36). For the modernists, music became a formal and aesthetic ideal: a means to transcend commonplace language and move towards deeper significance. (Diaper 7)

Different writings of the period testify to the superior communicative quality of music, as well as to the failure of human language to represent modern reality. In this regard, the English critic Walter Pater affirms that “all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music” (Pater 271). Because of its “non-substantive and non-designative nature” (271), he affirms that music is “pure form-and thus pure language” (271). In contrast to the universal expressive quality attributed to music, some proto-modernist thinkers noticed the inaptitude of human language to truly represent reality. For Nietzsche, “Where words are concerned, what matters is never truth, never the full and adequate expression; otherwise, there would not be so many languages (Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lying* 139). Hence, “music, with its apparent indifference to external reality, came to be viewed as the purest manifestation of human thought, as a ‘language’ capable of producing the sort of immediacy, fluidity, and intensity” (Morgan 445) that modernists were searching for in their poetry. Accordingly, as much as program music composers, modernist poets didn’t view music as an art of formal design. Instead, they viewed music as an artistic form of expression capable of revealing what ordinary language fails to perfectly represent. In this regard, Eliot affirms that “It is in the concert room, rather than in the opera house, that the germ of a poem may be quickened” (Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* 32). While opera, for its use of human language, may be seen as an adequate metaphor to describe the relationship between music and poetry, Eliot favors the concert room, where instrumental music is performed. Hence, far from ultimate



motivations related to style and design, Eliot's interest in music reveals his ambition to conceive new artistic approaches to expression. Indeed, Eliot explicitly affirms that "the music of poetry is not something which exists apart from the meaning. Otherwise, we could have poetry of great musical beauty which made no sense, and I have never come across such poetry" (Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* 29). Elsewhere, Eliot affirms that rhythm calls for the poetical conception of the secondary meaning: "A 'musical poem' is a poem which has a musical pattern of sound and a musical pattern of the secondary meanings of the words which compose it, and... these two patterns are indissoluble and one" (26). Likewise, Pound refers to Melopoeia as a form of poetry where "the words are charged, over and above their plain meaning, with some musical property, which directs the bearing or trend of that meaning" (Pound, *Literary Essays* 25). It is interesting to notice how the definition of this kind of poetry interconnects musical properties of poetry with the conception of meaning and the design of the poem. In *The Musical Elements in Ezra Pound's Poetry*, Hymns KanChukHim explains that: "Musical elements are injected into this kind of poetry and these elements are considered as part of the poetic meaning as a whole. Hence, melopoeia can be appreciated by foreigners, who are not familiar with the language, as the music inside the poems is meaningful enough. Pound further claims that melopoeia expresses certain ideas beyond the exact sense of words" (09).

Hence, as much as painters and musicians, the poets' interest in musical techniques of composition stands as an artistic move that illustrates a general tendency towards hybridization in modernist arts. Far from the traditional notions of rhyme and syllables, that used to define the musicality of poetry, modernist poets sought to integrate the structural and the formal qualities of music as part of their poetical techniques. Interestingly enough, the poets' interest in musical techniques illustrate their motivation to find new poetical methods of expression. As much as

composers of ‘program music,’ poets also viewed in musical techniques the aesthetic potential for thematic expression and connotation. Hence, dealing with the subject of music and its integration in modernist poetry calls forth a general experimental tendency and hybridization in the arts that characterizes modernism.

### **III. Defining the perspectives of the study**

Despite the explicit position poets assume in their writings, some critics remain skeptical and dismiss the possibility of a concrete assimilation of musical techniques of composition in poetry. As demonstrated in the general introduction to this study, critics such as Inge Leimberg consider that the musical analogies poets assume in their essays are metaphorical statements that hold no concrete interdisciplinary value. In this section, I aim to underline the concrete aesthetic connection that lies behind a set of analogies poets assume in their writing. To achieve this aim, I explicitly define musicological concepts such as melody, harmony, musical forms and counterpoint as used by musicologists, and I demonstrate how such concepts work effectively as formal devices in the overall structure of poetry. Far from assuming musical connections that are irrelevant for the study of poetry, I narrow down my review to the musicological concepts poets refer to in their essays. More precisely, I consider Eliot’s “The Music of Poetry” as a key essay that points out to the musical techniques that are possibly analogous to the writing of poetry. Among other poetic writings on the subject, Eliot’s essay is probably the most precise in its formulations, as it takes into account a close consideration of the technical aspect of the musico-poetical analogy. Further to the formal and structural analogies, I extend the relation between poetry and music to a broader poetical perspective that includes the use of musical metaphors, and soundscape. As previously demonstrated, the modernist poetic interest in musical experimentation is not only informed by questions of structure, form and design, but is also motivated by poetical

significance and connotation. Hence, I define the study of musical metaphors and soundscape as a supplementary perspective that enables to broaden the area of investigation beyond questions of formal analogies. By doing so, I clearly review the set of musico-poetical connections that I will rely on in my analysis of Eliot's and Stevens's verses.

### 1. **Melody and Harmony: The Successive and Simultaneous Qualities of Music in Poetry**

To make things clear, I would like to define the general aesthetic principles that lie behind music as an art of auditory composition, and then demonstrate their possible assimilation by poetry, according to the definitions Eliot mentions in "The Music of Poetry." I would like to start by the most obvious elements that concern music as an art: melody and harmony.

Just like poetry, music is chronological. Notes flow one after the other in music as much as words are written and read chronologically. This successive quality of music is referred to as melody. Just like a sentence, or a line of poetry, a melody, i.e., a musical theme, is a musical idea that displays a meaning, despite its short duration. In the following musical theme, Wagner opens *Der Ring des Nibelungen* by using a simple melodic line where notes flow chronologically one after the other, comparable to the flowing of words in a sentence:



(Cooke, *An Introduction to Der Ring des Nibelungen* 1).

In such melodies, the relation between notes is chronological, and is equivalent to the consecutive and chronological nature of language and poetry. As much as a sentence, or a poetical line, such melodic lines display auditory items chronologically and have the ability to hold a thematic or a symbolic significance. In *An introduction to Der Ring des Nibelungen*, Deryck Cooke interprets the above musical phrase as underlying the major symbol of the *The Ring*:

The fundamental symbol in *The Ring* is the world of nature, from which everything arises and to which everything returns. And Wagner's basic motive for this ultimate source of existence is that fundamental element in music – the major chord. This chord, spread out melodically as a rising major arpeggio by the horns, forms the mysterious *Nature Motive* which opens the whole work. (Cooke, *An introduction to Der Ring des Nibelungen* 1)

If music is easily comparable to language for its consecutive melodic quality, the aesthetic relation between poetry and music gets more intricate and complicated when we consider the simultaneous and harmonic qualities of music as an art. While a melody, or a musical theme, is generated out of a chronological organization of isolated notes placed one after the other on the musical score, such consecutive organization is generally accompanied with the play of other suspended notes that are performed simultaneously. These vertical constructions that accompany the melody provide a simultaneous aesthetic quality to music, and are defined as harmony:

Jingle Bells (Melody and Harmony)

The image shows a musical score for 'Jingle Bells' with three staves. The top staff, labeled 'Singer-Melody (Higher register)', contains a sequence of notes: e, e, e, e, e, e, e, g, c, d, e. The middle staff, labeled 'Right Hand-Harmony (Middle Register)', shows four chords, each labeled 'C'. The bottom staff, labeled 'Piano', shows a whole rest in each of the four measures.

In the above example, the chronological unfolding of individual notes in the first line generates a meaningful melody, i.e., a theme, whereas the superposition of several notes in the second line accompanies the main melody and provides it with a larger musical context, a mood or atmosphere. Both the melody and the harmonic constructions are performed together,

simultaneously. For instance, a pianist would be able to play the harmonic construction on the left side of his keyboard, while simultaneously voicing the main melody with his right hand. Hence, the lines on the musical score are read by groups of two and are played simultaneously on the instrument.

Unlike melody, the aesthetic principle that lies behind harmony is incompatible by definition with language and poetry. While the chronological, i.e., melodic, quality of music coincides with the consecutive aesthetic nature of language and poetry, the polyphonic quality of music, i.e., the aesthetic possibility to use several notes simultaneously, seems alien to language and poetry, since it implies the simultaneous use, or the simultaneous reading, of different words or linguistic utterances at the same time.

Despite this incompatibility between language and musical harmony by definition, Eliot mentions in “The Music of poetry” the possibility of a poetical “development of a theme by different groups of instruments,” (Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* 32) as well as the “possibilities of contrapuntal arrangement of subject-matter” (32). When different instruments play the same musical composition simultaneously, the aesthetic nature of the music becomes harmonic and simultaneous. Like a pianist playing both the melody and the harmony of a given musical piece, “the development of a theme by different groups of instruments...” (32) also implies the simultaneous production of several notes at one single moment in time. More explicitly, the use of “contrapuntal arrangement of subject-matter” (32) Eliot refers in his essay, implies a well-known technique of composition that relies on the simultaneous aesthetic quality of music. In *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, counterpoint “denotes music consisting of two or more lines that sounds simultaneously. Counterpoint is practically synonymous with polyphony except for differences of

emphasis. The latter term is proffered for early music and the former for latter periods (16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries)” (Apel 208).

On the surface, the positions Eliot assumes in his essay seem impossible to be concretely put into practice. Indeed, whether simple harmony or counterpoint, both poetic appropriations imply the polyphonic quality of music that systematically translates as the simultaneous use, or the simultaneous reading, of different words or linguistic utterances at the same time. Fortunately, Eliot brings further explanations in his essay when he defines the music of the word. Through a detailed description of what he means as the music of the word, Eliot successfully captures both the successive, i.e., melodic, and simultaneous, i.e., polyphonic, qualities of music as techniques to write and interpret poetry:

The music of a word is, so to speak, at a point of intersection: it arises from its relation first to the words immediately preceding and following it, and indefinitely to the rest of its context; and from another relation, that of its immediate meaning in that context to all the other meanings which it has had in other contexts, to its greater or less wealth of association (Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* 25).

In the above definition, Eliot presents an analogy where the poetical text functions as a musical score. As much as the melodic and harmonic functions that govern the relation between notes, Eliot attributes to poetry the same multi-dimensional level of aesthetic and connotative significance. Eliot affirms that “The music of a word is, so to speak, at a point of intersection” (25). He defines those intersections by providing two levels of poetical significance, or musicality. On the first level of poetical musicality, Eliot considers the relation between a given word and what precedes and follows it in a given line of poetry: “The music of a word...arises from its relation first to the words immediately preceding and following it” (25). This first understanding

is not different from a melodic line where each individual note has a specific relation to the notes that precede and follows it. In music, this successive relation between individual notes establishes an aesthetic effect of tension, release, consonance, or dissonance. As he describes the music of poetry using this analogy, Eliot suggests a relation between words in a line of poetry that transcends simple grammatical rules and syntax, in order to achieve a poetical relationship that depends on the internal aesthetics of the poem. In “What The Thunder Said,” the line “Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata” (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 69) does not make sense on a grammatical or syntactic level. Nevertheless, the poetical relation between words that Eliot establishes in the poem generates a thematic meaning. Indeed, this set of words, as analyzed by scholars and critics, represent a set of symbolic pieces of advice given by the thunder to the protagonist, who is in a quest to redeem modern society from its spiritual chaos. Instead of water, the thunder pronounces spiritual advice so that the quester may achieve religious redemption. These poetical lines, that transcend the rule of syntax and rely on the interior aesthetic design of the poem, stand for the first level of poetic musicality Eliot defines in his essay.

While this first sense of poetic musicality could be viewed as a metaphorical affirmation, Eliot’s second level of poetic musicality is more concrete and structural. As much as harmony and polyphony in music, Eliot proposes “a point of intersection” (25) in poetry, where the significance of a word, or a poetic line, is revealed and extended when superposed against the remaining possible poetical contexts that constitute the poem as a complete entity: “The music of a word is, so to speak, at a point of intersection: it arises from... its immediate meaning in that context to all the other meanings which it has had in other contexts, to its greater or less wealth of association” (25). In the previously cited example from “What the Thunder Said,” the same poetical line - “to give, to sympathize, to control.” (Eliot, *Collected poems* 75) - takes its complete significance when

the reader considers the broader poetical contexts and possible associations that enable its complete poetical significance. In this concern, the word “to control” is poetically related to the characters in the poem that display neither physical nor spiritual control over themselves. Examples from the poem include the rape episode of the typist woman, and the woman in the bar featured in “A Game of Chess.” As we superpose the complete poetical line “to give, to sympathize, to control” (Eliot, *collected poems* 75) against different passages from the poem, the connotation of the poetical text emanates in the same way as a contrapuntal arrangement of subject matters is conceived in the musical score. Accordingly, Eliot transcends the consecutive relationship between the words in a given stanza, and establishes a set of simultaneous relationships that resembles musical polyphony.

In music, a composer highlights the moods and the thematic importance of a given melody through the choice of the chords that accompany it simultaneously. The choice of the chords determines the musical contrast and the aesthetic relation between the melody and the harmony. Through this process of harmonization, the composer highlights certain aesthetic and connotative aspect of the melody, thanks to its formal superpositions against the chords. As Eliot defines the music of the word as deriving from “...its immediate meaning in that context to all the other meanings which it has had in other contexts, to its greater or less wealth of association” (Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* 25), Eliot implies that the connotation of the poetical line is revealed in the same way a simple melodic line is superposed against a chord progression, in order to bring harmonic and thematic emphasis. Hence, despite the immediate relation between words that belong to the same verse / stanza, Eliot expands the possibility of interconnecting larger parts of poetical interpretations in the same way a musician superposes melodies against chords and harmonic constructions. As he introduces this multi-dimensional possibility of linguistic and structural



poetical construction, Eliot assimilates both the melodic, i.e., consecutive, and the harmonic, i.e., simultaneous, qualities of music as part of the music of poetry.

## **2. The Structural Analogy: The use of Musical Forms in poetry**

Despite the successive and simultaneous qualities of music, Eliot mentions the possibility of using “transitions in a poem comparable to the different movements of a symphony or a quartet” (Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* 32). In music, the study of transitions between movements implies the analyses of the form, i.e., the structure of the piece, as an entity. In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*, musical form is defined as “the structure and design of a composition” (Kennedy 261), while the *Harvard Dictionary of Music* defines form as “the existence of certain scheme that govern the overall structure of a composition and were traditionally used in various periods of musical history, eg., the fugue or the sonata” (Apel 327). As he mentions the possibility of adopting transitions in a poem comparable to the different movements of a symphony or a quartet, Eliot is referring to the structural analogy between music and poetry.

In order to clearly understand the formal principle that lies behind this appropriation, it is important to insist once again on the temporal aesthetic quality that both poetry and music share. Unlike painting and other visual arts that rely on space, music and poetry rely on time and chronological organization. As previously mentioned, words flow one after the other in poetry, and sounds unfold one after the other in music. In *The Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature*, the temporal quality of poetry and music is explicitly contrasted against visual arts:

What music produces is something that can be heard, and what poetry produces, is something that can be either heard or read...Now what the eyes sees from any point of

view, sees it all at once; in other words, the parts of anything we see fill or occupy not time but space, and reach us from various point in space at a single simultaneous perception...On the other hand, the parts of anything we hear, or, reading...fill or occupy not space, but time, and reach us from various points in time through a continuous series of perceptions, or, in the case of reading, of images raised by words in the mind. We have to wait, in music, while one note follows another in a bar, and one bar another in an air, and one air another in a movement; and in poetry, while one line with its images follows another in a stanza, and one stanza another in a canto, and so on. It is a convenient form of expressing ...to say that architecture, sculpture, and painting are arts which give shape to things in space, or more briefly, shaping arts; and music and poetry arts which give utterance to things in time, or more briefly, speaking arts. (Depuy, 202)

Because they rely fundamentally on structure and temporality, both music and poetry are known for their recurrent forms. Musicians through the ages are known for composing sonatas, symphonies, minuets, whereas poets resort to the use of poetical forms. Although forms such as the epic and the pastoral poem point to the general thematic concerns of the verses, other poetical forms prescribe pre-determined structures to poets, comparable to the way musical forms instruct composers on the overall map to follow in musical composition. This includes the fourteen lines and the fixed rhyme scheme of sonnets, the three-line poetic form of haikus, and other forms of blank verse poetry. Since both artistic disciplines rely on structures to map the chronological unfolding of materials through time, the integration of musical forms in poetry as a methodology of poetic composition relies principally on adapting the musical forms used by composers as a map for poetic organization.

Different poets refer to the use of diverse musical forms in their poetry. The use of musical vocabulary in the title of different poems - such as hymn, sonata, quartet, song - sustains this idea of musical forms adapted into poetry. In *Taking the Repeats: Modern American Poetry in Imitation of Eighteenth-Century Musical Forms*, Scot Richardson analyzes a range of modernist poets who invested their efforts in assimilating musical forms in their poems. More precisely, the critic has focused his attention on the modernists' appropriation of 18<sup>th</sup> century classical forms in music:

Taking their cues from western instrumental composition, writers have let the shapes of their poems be determined not by the demands of narrative for succession or the demands of discursive argument for progressive development but instead by music's repetitive imperative. In musical structures such as the variation set, the fugue, and the sonata, poets found constructive techniques congenial to the twentieth-century mind. Eighteenth-century musical genres can be seen as anticipating in a remarkable manner modern ideas concerning the circular patterns of thought and experience. (Richardson 4)

In his study, Richardson considers the poetic appropriation of the variation set, the fugue, and the sonata form by a wide variety of poets, such as Randall Jarell, Wallace Stevens, Harry Mathew and Charles Holson. Nevertheless, what the critic fails to demonstrate is the strong connection between such forms of music and their suggestive thematic treatment, as used by poets.

Indeed, the use of musical structures in poetry pre-determines a certain structural chronology that defines the unfolding of ideas through the poetical lines. For instance, Theme and Variations musical form, when applied in poetry, favors the continuous transformation and the description of the ideas, metaphors or imagery displayed. In *Musical Terms, Symbols and Theory: An Illustrated Dictionary*, the term variation is defined as “a modified version of a previously

stated theme” (C. Thomsett 238), while “theme and variations” is defined as: “A musical form with multiple developmental treatment on a single theme. Variations may include modification to melody, harmony, key, rhythm, contrapuntal accompaniment, ornamentation, mode, and combination of changes. A theme may be performed in the style of a different composer or musical period” (C. Thomsett 223). Hence, a ‘Theme and Variations’ piece originally consists of a musical idea played repeatedly in many different ways, including consecutive changes and modifications. In poetry, the use of this same form results in the implementation of repetitive structures that contrast continuous changes and transformations. In “Variations on a Theme as the Crux of Creativity,” Douglas R. Hofstadter affirms that theme and variations form implies some patterns of thinking that compares to the mind’s observation of the external world and its ability to transform it through intellectual and imaginative process: “... in looking directly at something solid and real on a table, people can see far beyond that solidity and reality --can see an "essence", a "core", a "theme" upon which to devise variations” (Douglas 267). Accordingly, despite a concrete structure of formal organization, ‘theme and variations’ is ideal for a poetic treatment where comparable progressive transformations are necessary. For instance, the manipulation of images through the repetitive structure of a theme and variations form can implicitly demonstrate the continuous process that relates imagination to reality.

As much as theme and variations, the sonata form, when employed in poetry, privileges a distinct thematic and structural poetical design. Indeed, the sonata form represents an A-B-A form that constitutes an “exposition,” a “development,” and a “recapitulation”. Yet, what differentiates the sonata from any other A-B-A form lies in its melodic and thematic negotiations: “the \*a\* part of sonata form contains two themes—one in the tonic, one in the dominant—the \*b\* part develops both of these, and the 'c' part recapitulates (all in the tonic) the two initially exposed themes”

(Hubbard 173). Because its form implies such continuous thematic contrast of statements and counter-statements, the sonata in its poetical formulation is best suited where a dialectic method of argumentation is desirable. In the following lines, the author explains that, because of its structural design, the sonata poem is generally a poem of “ideas”:

Dynamic antithesis lies in the heart of the sonata form. It is not surprising, therefore, that poetic sonata-allegros are frequently poems of ideas...The sonata by contrast, often becomes a vehicle for poetry of intellectual debate or meditation upon intellectual categories, what one might loosely label “philosophical” verses. (Richardson 200)

Accordingly, despite their concrete definition as structures, musical forms imply a certain organizational logic that highlights to an extent the poet’s attitude towards his themes and poetical materials. Because of this, the critic should investigate on the thematic implications such structural appropriations play in the internal design of the poems under study, instead of merely pointing to the existence of structural poetico-musical analogies. Hence, one should rely on ‘program music’ as a critical approach for the study of musical forms in poetry. Unlike musical formalism, Program music considers musical techniques of composition as expressive tools that enable composers to achieve thematic expression. Accordingly, ‘program music’ provides critics with the possibility of transcending the structural and formal elements relevant to poetico-musical analogies, in order to consider questions related to musical expression, poetical expression, and thematic connotation.

### **3. Musical Metaphors and Auditory Estrangement**

Further to the formal and structural analogies, one should not dismiss the more obvious connections that link poetry to instrumental music. Here, I allude to the literary evocation of music as an idea or a metaphor in the text. In *What Poets Think of Music*, music critic George R. Poulton demonstrates the recurrent tendency of poets such as Shakespeare, Milton, Homer, Dante,

Chaucer, Coleridge, and Pope to implement music in their poetry as a joyful and harmonious auditory experience: “Every beautiful and refining influence is in harmony with it [music], and the great human heart joyfully responds to its witchery” (Poulton146). Though this poetical representation of music is obvious, it is important to understand that poetry displays an inherent characteristic of aesthetic defamiliarization. By defamiliarizing music in poetry, poets have the ability to use it as a literary device, to represent a variety of subject matters. As explained by Viktor Shklovsky in “Art as Technique,” defamiliarization enables poets to estrange objects and provide them with a fresh effect and signification for the reader: “The device of art lies in the “estrangement” of objects and the complicating of forms; it is a device that increases the difficulty and length of perception, as the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be drawn out. Art is a means of experiencing/living through the making/creation/inner workings [delan’e] of an object; the aesthetic object itself is unimportant” ( Shklovsky 13).

As much as any other poetical device, music, when used in poetry, is subject to a process of estrangement that makes its connotation very diverse. Among the recurrent poetical estrangement of music, Romantic poets share a tendency to implement music as a poetic device to affirm their solipsism and bias towards imagination and metaphysical transcendence. In *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, Keats reveals his solipsist tendencies by comparing the imaginary melodies painted on a vase, to real musical performances:

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;  
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone. (Keats 266)

Because imagination and anticipation are often greater than the act itself, the unheard and imagined melodies described in the vase are “sweeter” than concrete “Heard melodies.” As he compares both auditory experiences, the use of music as a joyful and harmonious experience is used in the poem to poetically represent the poet’s solipsist tendencies and his bias towards imagination over concrete reality.

Another recurrent poetic estrangement of music in poetry relates to its use in religious and spiritual poetical contexts. In the following passage from *Music and Spirituality*, the religious symbolic signification of music is explicitly revealed:

Across time and geography people have known the power of music for evoking the gods and acquiring spiritual insight. Whether arising as a textless chant by a single voice or a percussive auditory event for ritual dance, music in its various modes is a virtually ubiquitous companion to religious and spiritual practices. Not only a constant accompaniment to one’s spiritual trek, musical compositions from the great oratorios of Handel to the soundtrack to the movie trilogy *Lord of the Rings* also serve as powerful metaphors and inspirations for that journey. (Foley 1)

In the poetry of John Milton, musical auditory experiences are defamiliarized to connote the perfection of the divine. As a matter of fact, Milton refers to the music of the divine in “Another on the Same” as a heavenly tune that is too perfect to be heard by mortal ears: “the heavenly tune, which none can hear / Of human mould with gross unpurged ear” (Milton 117). In the same way, Dante, in *The Divine Comedy*, uses music to describe transcendental spiritual experiences. In “Purgatorio,” the souls are on their way to redemption and purification. Dante describes them performing songs that symbolize their spiritual elevation towards Paradise:

E’en thus was I without a tear or sigh,

Before the song of those who sing for ever  
After the music of the eternal spheres.  
But when I heard in their sweet melodies  
Compassion for me, more than had they said. (Alighieri 375)

While the above examples illustrate the ability of poets to estrange music *per se* in order to represent a variety of subject matters in poetry, it remains important to note that such poetical defamiliarizations are themselves estranged by other poets too. According to Shklovsky, innovation in literature arises because the perceptibility of a given tradition tends to decrease over time. In this respect, Shklovsky contends that “a work of art is perceived against a background of – and by association with – other works of art. The form of a work of art is determined by its relationship with other pre-existing forms” ( Shklovsky13). For instance, the same auditory experiences evoked by Keats, Milton and Dante could be used ironically by other contemporary poets to suggest their dissatisfaction with previous poetical practices and aesthetics. Accordingly, the study of the different uses of musical metaphors and ideas of music, as well as of their estrangement by poets, may illustrate the poets’ attitude towards their predecessors.

#### **4. Poetry as an Auditory Soundscape**

Along with the study of metaphors and ideas of music in the text, it is interesting to notice that such poetical evocations reveal their full connotation when considered in conjunction with the remaining soundscape of the poem as a whole. In Milton’s and Dante’s poetry, the joyful musical events in the poems reveal their full aesthetic significance when compared to the remaining sounds both poets implement along the lines. In “*At a Solemn Music*” Milton presents the music performed by humans as a broken auditory experience: “Broke the fair music that all creature made/ To their great Lord” (Milton 115). Milton uses this auditory description to emphasise the



contrast between the weak condition of individuals against God's superiority. Comparatively, Dante, in *The Divine Comedy*, establishes the same auditory contrasts between "Purgatorio" and "Inferno." Unlike the purifying spiritual songs performed by souls in "Purgatorio," the damned souls in Inferno are associated to cacophonous and unpleasant auditory events:

There sighs, complaints, and ululations loud  
Resounded through the air without a star,  
Whence I, at the beginning, wept thereat.  
Languages diverse, horrible dialects,  
Accents of anger, words of agony,  
And voices high and hoarse, with sound of hands. (Alighieri 14)

When comparable sound descriptions are infused in a poetical text, musical metaphors and ideas of music of the same poem become part of a broader aesthetic soundscape dimension. In *The Tuning of the World*, Schafer R. Murray coined the term soundscape under the need to define the cultural, thematic and connotative properties in the study of music and sound:

The definition of music has undergone radical change in recent years. In one of the more contemporary definitions, John Cage has declared: "Music is sounds, sounds around us whether we're in or out of concert halls: cf. Thoreau." The reference is to Thoreau's *Walden*, where the author experiences in the sounds and sights of nature an inexhaustible entertainment. To define music merely as sounds would have been unthinkable a few years ago, though today it is the more exclusive definitions that are proving unacceptable. (Schafer 5)

The definition of music as sound utterances brings an insightful perspective to our study. Far from treating musical metaphors in isolation, their poetical significance is further revealed

when compared against other auditory events the poet records in his poetry. Although music is fundamentally distinct from other sounds, its poetical and aesthetic significance should be considered in relation to the significance poets give to other sounds and auditory events present in their poetry.

Much like musical metaphors, the poetical significance of soundscapes is highly dependent on the poet's aim and aesthetic. For instance, the sound of nature could signify a melodious auditory experience for a Romantic poet, whereas this same auditory evocation may be irrelevant for a modernist poet, who views such solipsist perspectives as irrelevant in his poetry. In this concern, R. Murray Schafer, in *The Tuning of the World*, demonstrates how the representation of sounds could be estranged by poets to achieve new poetical connotations. Schafer reviews different sounds, ranging from the sound of the sea, water, wind, bells, horns, and sirens. Through his analysis, he demonstrates how the symbolic significance of such sounds acts as archetypes that change according to the cultural environment of their occurrence:

In his book *Psychological Types*, Jung speaks of certain types of "symbols, which can arise autochthonously in every corner of the earth and are none the less identical, just because they are fashioned out of the same world-wide human unconscious, whose contents are infinitely less variable than are races and individuals." To these "first form" symbols, Jung gave the name "archetypes.".... In this chapter I am going to try to show how certain sounds possess strong symbolic character and how some of the most ancient may act to invoke archetypal symbols...All acoustic symbolism, even that associated with archetypes, is slowly but steadily undergoing modification. Modern man has sought to escape both the wind and the sea by encapsulating himself in artificial environments. And just as he has sought to control the sea in the fountain, he has sought to tame the wind in the air-

conditioner, for the ventilation systems of modern buildings are nothing more than techniques for getting the wind to blow in the right direction at the right force. Transformations such as these will undoubtedly change the symbolism of such archetypes. This is evidenced by the fact that while more ancient descriptions of the sea and the wind always stress their terrible aspect, in aesthetic preference tests today, both these natural elements appear as sound romances rather than sound phobias-except in places experiencing sudden, violent storms, such as Jamaica. (Schafer 169)

As much as the estrangement of musical metaphors, soundscape descriptions and auditory experiences are subject to the same continuous formal transformation in poetry. Taking into account the recurrent poetical use of soundscapes in Eliot's and Stevens' poetry, relying on a soundscape perspective may bring to our study a contextual and thematic approach that will complement both the use of musical metaphors, and the purely formal musicologist approach that considers the use of form and its suggestive significance.

## **Conclusion**

The modernists' quest for formal experimentation and interdisciplinary aesthetic was motivated by a desire to formulate new forms expression and thematic connotation. Similar to the 19<sup>th</sup> century's view of program music, modernist poets viewed musical techniques of composition as a set of stylistic devices that allowed for artistic expression and thematic. Indeed, poets such as T.S Eliot, Wallace Stevens and Ezra Pound went beyond the traditional notions of rhythm and rhyme, that defined the traditional notion of musicality in poetry, and considered a set of musicological elements, such as counterpoint, musical forms, polyphony, and harmony, as valid elements to create poetry. Yet, far from a question of form and design, the modernists' poetic interest in music was motivated by a desire to find new methods of poetical expression. This poetic

approach is evident in the way Eliot defines the function of melody, harmony and structure in “The music of Poetry”. As modernist poets linked musical experimentation in poetry to a sense of meaning and connotation, ‘program music’ represents the most adequate perspective for the study of music in poetry, as it considers musical techniques of composition as expressive tools that allow artists to achieve expressive and thematic content via the use of form and technique. Because music is defined by such poets as an art of expression and thematic connotation, their poetic and metaphorical representation of sound and music in their poems should supplement our interdisciplinary musical study that aims to demonstrate their assimilation of musical techniques of composition as poetical strategies of expression.

## **Chapter II: Music Against the Romantics**

### **Introduction**

This chapter demonstrates Eliot's and Stevens' use of musical metaphors and soundscape descriptions in poetry as an aesthetic response to the Romantics. As they adopted a poetic formula that favored imagination and solipsism, Romantic poets relied enormously on sensory perceptions in order to convey their subjective and personal interactions with the world of nature. Among the five senses, Romantics gave a particular interest to the ear, and displayed the recurrent use of soundscape and musical metaphors in their poetry. As a response to their 19<sup>th</sup> century predecessors, both Eliot and Stevens estranged and defamiliarized musical metaphors from Romantic poetry. Nevertheless, because they exhibit dissimilar reactions against Romantic solipsism, Eliot's and Stevens' musical estrangement captures their heterogeneous contrast as modernist poets.

To demonstrate Eliot's and Stevens' dissimilar musical responses to the Romantic poetry, I have divided this chapter into three main sections. In the first section, I analyze some poems by William Wordsworth and John Keats. I illustrate the Romantics' use of musical metaphors, and soundscape as stylistic devices that reveal the superiority of imagination over reality, the celebration of nature's beauty, as well as their escape from reality. In the second section, I demonstrate Eliot's defamiliarization of musical metaphors and soundscape descriptions to answer back the Romantics. Because he rejects Romantic subjective emotionalism, Eliot proposes an objective theory of poetry that treats the problems of modern men, instead of finding resolution in solipsist imagination. Accordingly, his incorporation of auditory musical material exhibits an ironic attitude towards the Romantics, and highlights his turn toward an objective theory of poetry. Indeed, Eliot uses soundscapes and musical metaphors comparable to those the Romantics implemented in their nature-themed poetry. Nevertheless, he defamiliarizes those forms of expression from their original contexts, in order

to illustrate the irrelevance of Romantic escapism in modern times. Despite this auditory defamiliarizing effect, Eliot deviates from Romantic escapism by exploring the acoustic disorder that surrounds the modern city. Instead of escaping from the world of facts, Eliot uses soundscape and musical metaphors to depict the social alienation and the psychological suffering of modern civilization. In the last section of this chapter, I demonstrate Stevens' distinct musical reaction against Eliot's poetical objectivism, and the Romantic solipsism. Unlike Eliot's direct rejection of Romantic imagination, Stevens proposes a definition of poetic imagination that would fit the requirement of modern poetry. As he reconciliates poetic imagination with reality, Stevens negates the Romantic escapist tendencies that prevent the poet from treating the issues of modern men. As much as Eliot, some of his musical metaphors reveal his defamiliarization of Romantic material. Nevertheless, his insistence on the ordering role of poetic imagination is poetically reflected through musical metaphors and soundscape descriptions, that refute Eliot's sense of objectivism.

To demonstrate Eliot's and Stevens' musical response to the Romantics, I rely on soundscape criticism, and Shklovsky notion of literary estrangement. As demonstrated in the last section of chapter One, music and soundscape are defamiliarized in poetry to create new forms of artistic expression. By comparing the way Eliot and Stevens distinctly defamiliarized soundscape and musical metaphors from their predecessors, I demonstrate how music aesthetics functions as a poetic device that connotes their respective modernist aesthetics.

### **I. Romantic Poetry and Music: An auditory Poetics for a Solipsist Imagination**

Because they faced the unpleasant effects of the industrialization and urbanization, Romantic poets fled from the city to the countryside, and created through their poetry an imaginary utopic world totally detached from reality. As they adopted a poetic formula that favored solipsism, Romantic poets relied enormously on sensory perceptions to convey their

transcendental move from the real to the imaginary. Among the five senses, some Romantic poets gave particular attention to the ear. The first section of this chapter explores the use of soundscapes and musical metaphors in the poetry of William Wordsworth and John Keats. My objective is to demonstrate how both poets used soundscape, music, and auditory perceptions to represent some of the Romantic tenets relevant for their poetry, mainly: adoration of nature, and the poetic role given to imagination as a solipsist escape from reality.

### **1. Imagination and Sensory Experiences: Auditory Perception as a Poetic Device**

One of the achievements of the Romantics was their awareness of the malaise mankind felt under the effect of industrialization. Instead of facing the effects of the new urbanized and industrialized society, Romantics escaped to the countryside, in order to find a refuge from the suffering and conflicts they experienced in the city. In *The Prelude*, William Wordsworth opens his “Introduction: Childhood and School-time” with this primary Romantic principle:

Oh, there is blessing in this gentle breeze,  
That blows from the green fields and from the clouds  
And from the sky; it beats against my cheek,  
And seems half conscious of the joy it gives.  
O welcome messenger! O welcome friend!  
A captive greets thee, coming from a house  
Of bondage, from yon city's walls set free,  
A prison where he hath been long immured.  
Now I am free, enfranchised and at large,  
May fix my habitation where I will. (Wordsworth, *The Prelude* 2)

The sharp contrast between the house “of bondage” characterizing the city crowded with prison's wall, and the soothing breeze gently blowing from the green landscape, clearly illustrates Wordsworth's rejection of the city, and his great fondness of the countryside.

Accordingly, celebrating the beauty of nature represents one of the prominent artistic tendencies that characterises Romantic poetry.

Instead of just physically escaping from the malaise of the city, Romantic poets transcend the unpleasantness of reality through imagination. In “Composed upon Westminster Bridge,” the speaker compares the view of the city from London Bridge to “a garment wear[ing] the beauty of the morning” (Wordsworth, *Complete Poetical Works* 191). Thanks to his elevated sense of imaginative contemplation, the poet has the power to deviate from a mimetic representation of the scene in order to create a vision of London that is totally detached from reality:

Both Wordsworth and the ordinary man saw London on the same morning. They saw the same ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples. Yet to the non-poet, to the ordinary man, London was the same dirty city it had always been. ... It cannot be denied that Nature has manifested herself to the poet and the non-poet that day on Westminster bridge. The poet shows the proper correspondence, the other a disinterestedness. (Talkin 58-60)

Wordsworth describes the poet as “endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind” (Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads* 8). Thanks to his sense of imaginative observation, the Romantic poet is capable to deviate from the unpleasantness of reality, and to picture in his imagination a perfect utopic vision the ordinary man is unable to create. In *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth’s definition of poetry provides a detailed description on how such poetic process of imagination and contemplation functions in poetry. Although he defines poetry as a “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (Wordsworth and Coleridge 3), Wordsworth still



puts emphasis on the elaborated process of poetic synthesis and observation that give shape to poetry:

I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins.

(Wordsworth and Coleridge 3)

According to Wordsworth, the process of successful poetical composition involves both contemplations and analyses of prevailing emotions and perceptions, grasped in the realm of the natural world. Such emotions and perceptions represent the raw material that the poet's mind sequences and organizes according to "a species of reaction," (3) and different sets of associations that gradually give birth to the form of the poem. Accordingly, the poet selects and arranges his objects according to their belonging, as he "studies their interrelationships and understands which objects of the scene are useful for the poem" (Talkin 64). Hence, although spontaneity and powerful feelings stand as key ingredients for creating poetry, the recollection and synthesis of those elements into a coherent whole majorly contribute to give a final form to the poem. Following these steps, the poet consciously deviates from a mimetic representation of reality, to convey a world constructed out of his intellect and imagination.

In "Imagination and Taste, How impaired and Restored" from *Preludes*, the creative steps of the imagination Wordsworth defines in his Preface are represented through the speaker's contemplation of nature by night:

For instantly a Light upon the turf  
Fell like a flash; I looked about and  
The moon stood naked in the heavens

...

A meditation rose in me that night  
Upon the lonely mountain when the scene  
Had passed away. And it appeared to me  
The perfect image of a Mighty Mind  
Of one that feeds upon infinity,

...

That dominion which she oftentimes  
Exerts upon the face of outward things  
So moulds them, endues, abstracts, combines,  
Or by abrupt and habitual influence  
Doth make one object so impress itself  
Upon all others, and pervade. (Wordsworth, *Preludes* 354-356)

After observing the beauty of the the turf, the moon, and the shore, the speaker affirms that “A meditation rose in [him] that night / Upon the lonely mountain when the scene / Had passed away.” Through the inspiring images of the scene, the speaker’s “Mighty Mind” “endues,” abstracts,” and “combines,” the different elements that constitute the scene, in order to give birth to “one object so impress itself / Upon all others, and pervade.” In this same passage, the speaker affirms that this process of synthesis enables him to transcend reality and to picture divine heaven: “Through every image and through every thought/ all affections by communion raised/ From earth to heaven, from human to divine; / Hence, endless occupation for the soul” (356). Via contemplation and synthesis, the speaker transcends reality, to picture an utopic vision in the realm of imagination.

Along this expressive approach to poetical creation<sup>1</sup>, the use of sensory experiences represents a recurrent tenet that enables Wordsworth and other Romantic poets to convey their solipsist and imaginative interactions with the external world. In “Autumn in the Romantic Lyric,” Lilan R. Furst explains that Romantic poets fundamentally differ from their neo-classical predecessors, through their poetic reliance on the senses. According to her, unlike neo-classical poets who are mere observers of nature, Romantic poets are capable of interpreting it through their five senses: “If the eighteen- century poet is mainly a viewer of autumn, the Romantic poet is above all an interpreting reader. Seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting, he is always engaged not just in noting the physiognomy of the season, but simultaneously in interpreting it” (Furst 14).

Despite this general reliance on the senses, some Romantic poets seem to give particular interest to auditory perceptions, soundscape, and music aesthetics. In line with this point, Gillen D'Arcy Wood claims that Coleridge, Wordsworth, Hazlitt, and Keats displayed some reserve toward the visual technologies of their era, which resulted in a noticeable aesthetic reliance on music and auditory perceptions: “Romantic ideology was constructed not in opposition to the enlightenment rationalism of the eighteenth century, but as a reaction to the visual culture of modernity being born” (Wood 7). Accordingly, despite the regular use of imagery and scene descriptions, some Romantic poets equally relied on music and auditory experiences. To bring evidence to this claim, I propose to study in this first section of the chapter Wordsworth’s and Keats’ use of soundscape, and musical metaphors, and how their distinct focus on music and sounds illustrates their Romantic principles of poetic imagination and escape from reality.

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<sup>1</sup> According to M.H. Abrams, literary creation and literary criticism rely fundamentally on the following elements: text, artist, audience, and universe. The Romantic approach, which links the text to the author’s subjective perspective, belongs to what M.H. Abrams defines as Expressive Literary Theories. For further details, the reader may refer to: Abrams, M.H. *The Mirror and The Lamp: Romantic theory and Critical Tradition*. Oxford University Press, 1971.

As demonstrated by Schafer, soundscape and musical symbolism undergoes slow and continuous modifications: “All acoustic symbolism, even that associated with archetypes, is slowly but steadily undergoing modification” (Schafer 169). As I analyse the Romantics’ use of soundscape and musical metaphors, I demonstrate how those poets implemented those devices in their poetry in order to use them as poetic symbols that stand for their ideal romantic tenets:

Transformations such as these will undoubtedly change the symbolism of such archetypes. This is evidenced by the fact that while more ancient descriptions of the sea and the wind always stress their terrible aspect, in aesthetic preference tests today, both these natural elements appear as sound romances rather than sound phobias—except in places experiencing sudden, violent storms, such as Jamaica. (169)

## **2. William Wordsworth and the Music of Poetic Imagination**

From Wordsworth bibliography, “The Power of Sound” and “The Power of Music” stand out as two musical poems dealing with the power of poetic imagination. In those two poems, Wordsworth implies the use of auditory and musical metaphors as poetical devices that explain his poetic principle of “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (Wordsworth and Coleridge 3), that takes “its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility” (Wordsworth and Coleridge 3). As much as poetical writing, the cognitive activity of listening implies in both poems the same steps of recollection and imaginative observation Wordsworth defines in his Preface. Hence, music and ear perception are used as motifs by Wordsworth to illustrate his romantic principle of imagination and recollection of emotions in tranquility.

In “The Power of music,” Wordsworth praises music’s persuasive and entrancing powers, and calls the street musician of London an Orpheus:

An Orpheus! an Orpheus! yes, Faith may grow bold,  
And take to herself all the wonders of old; —  
Near the stately Pantheon you'll meet with the same  
In the street that from Oxford hath borrowed its name.  
His station is there; and he works on the crowd,  
He sways them with harmony merry and loud;  
He fills with his power all their hearts to the brim. (Wordsworth, *Poems: In Two  
Volumes* 90)

In “Ars Poetica,” Horace presents the musician- poet figure Orpheus as having the power to civilize animals and brutalize humans when he plays on his lyre: “While men still roamed the woods, Orpheus, the holy prophet of the gods, made them shrink from bloodshed and brutal living; hence the fable that he tamed tigers and ravening lions; hence too the fable that Amphion, builder of Thebes's citadel, moved stones by the sound of his lyre” (Horace 391). As he makes such reference in “The Power of Music,” Wordsworth chooses to ascribe the street musician a superior musical power that goes beyond mere entertaining. Indeed, Wordsworth describes the street Orpheus’ music as having the capacity to unite the members of the community together, bring rest to the anxious, salvation to the guilty, and bliss to the hungry: “What an eager assembly! what an empire is this! / The weary have life, and the hungry have bliss; / The mourner is cheered, and the anxious have rest; / And the guilt- burthened Soul is no longer oppress” (90). The image of the poor boy parting with his last coin highlights the power of music to relieve community members, albeit momentarily, from the financial pressure of the city lifestyle: “From the Old and the Young, / from the Poorest; and there! / The one-pennied Boy has his penny to spare” (90). Hence, despite entertaining the listeners, it seems that Orpheus’ music brings people of the city together, and makes them forget the dullness of their daily routine.

Nevertheless, the speaker follows this description with an ironic tone. In the following passage, he shifts his attention to the inability of the listeners to capture the hidden murmurs conveyed by Orpheus' melodies: "Here are twenty souls happy as Souls in a dream;/They are deaf to your murmurs—they care not for you, /Nor what ye are flying, or what ye pursue!" (91). If people listening to the music are first described as happy souls in a dream, they are at the same time presented as deaf to Orpheus' hidden messages. In the following lines, the audience is depicted as having lost all sense of being and breathing. Because of their lack of deep contemplation, the listeners are stuck into a superficial appreciation of the music:

That errand-bound 'Prentice was passing in haste—  
What matter! he's caught—and his time runs to waste—  
The News-man is stopped, though he stops on the fret,  
And the half-breathless Lamp-lighter he's in the net! (91)

Although they are enjoying Orpheus' performance, the listeners do not take the necessary time to fully apprehend its deep meaning. Indeed, people are passing in "haste," and their time runs "to waste." Even if the 'news man' stops to listen to the melodies, he seems to be in a hurry, half-breathing. One may see that the people's temporary trance to the music is just a conventional civic reunion. They simply stop for a while to appreciate superficially the melodies, before getting back to their infernal rhythm of life. The analogy between the musical scene presented in the poem and Wordsworth's poetics is the following: as much as poetry that requires an active intellectual and imaginative effort, listening to music may also require the same attention and awareness. Here, the poet's "lively sensibility [...] enthusiasm and tenderness" (Wordsworth and Coleridge 13) is represented as an auditory contemplative quality that a regular audience seems to lack. Hence, as much as he distinguishes between a passive observer of nature and the poetic observation of a scene, Wordsworth seems to make in "The Power of Music" a distinct differentiation between passive appreciation of

music, and an active imaginative auditory contemplation, that leads to murmuring transcendental revelations communicated through the Orpheus' song. Using music as a motif, Wordsworth implicitly conveys here his poetic principle of imaginative observation and recollection in tranquility.

This poetic idea of an active contemplative ear is furthermore developed in "The Power of Sound." In this poem, music and Orpheus' mythological tunes are considered as part of a larger category of sounds, including the murmurs of streams, fountains, oceans, birds singing, echoes, and even the sound of earth on a coffin lid. Assuming that listening to music requires a process of contemplation and imaginative recollection to capture its hidden meanings, even the sounds coming from the natural world may be considered as harmonious melodies. Furthermore, considering natural sounds as harmonious melodies also suggests the ability to dissociate human music from its artifice, and present it into its natural state. As he rejects the city life, Wordsworth turns the sounds of the natural world into his source of music and inspiration, thanks to his poetic process of "emotion recollected in tranquility." The opening lines of the poem convey the image of a spirit inhabiting the organ of the ear. Thanks to the interpreting power of the spirit, the ear becomes "an organ of vision" capable of interpreting the sounds of the external world. Accordingly, the entire intricate labyrinth in the human mind is illuminated by the power of sound:

Organ of vision! And a Spirit aerial  
Informs the cell of Hearing, dark and blind;  
Intricate labyrinth, more dread for thought  
To enter than oracular cave. (Wordsworth *The Complete Poetical Works* 177)

Because the ear of the individual works along with the power of the aerial spirit, sounds from the external world are all open to interpretation, for they hold thoughts when entering our "oracular cave." Most of the lines throughout the poem can be read as a representation of the

great efficacy of such cognitive auditory stimulation. The second stanza conveys the idea that no matter how great the variety of sounds, all of them serve the spirit that inhabits the human ear:

The headlong streams and fountains  
Serve Thee, invisible Spirit, with untired powers;  
Cheering the wakeful tent on Syrian mountains,  
They lull perchance ten thousand thousand flowers.  
That' roar, the prowling lion's 'Here I am',  
How fearful to the desert wide!  
That bleat, how tender! of the dam  
Calling a straggler to her side.  
Shout, cuckoo!--let the vernal soul  
Go with thee to the frozen zone;  
Toll from thy loftiest perch, lone bell-bird, toll!  
At the still hour to Mercy dear,  
Mercy from her twilight throne  
Listening to nun's faint throb of holy fear,  
To sailor's prayer breathed from a darkening sea,  
Or widow's cottage-lullaby. (177)

In the above passage, the rush of streams and fountains, the roar of the lion, the bleat of the sheep, and the call of the cuckoo are considered as belonging to the same category of human sounds such as the nun's throb, the sailor's prayer, and the cottage-widow's lullaby. Produced by nature or by individuals, external sounds are open to interpretation, as they have the ability to reveal things once interpreted by the aerial spirit. Following this frame of interpretation, the succeeding lines of the poem seem to concentrate on the power of the mind



at capturing the connotative meaning held by sounds. If sounds of the external world communicate valuable messages to us, the listener is required to use a contemplative and imaginative mind to capture such hidden murmurs. Hence, as much as “On the Power of Music,” Wordsworth uses sound and music perception in this poem to represent his poetic principle of recollecting scenes and emotions in tranquillity. Indeed, the speaker informs us that each individual’s emotion has its own note for: “terror, joy, or pity, / Vast is the compass and the swell of notes” (178), and explains that the sounds and the mind work in collaboration to capture such emotions:

Ye wandering Utterances, has earth no scheme,  
No scale of moral music--to unite  
Powers that survive but in the faintest dream  
Of memory?--O that ye might stoop to bear  
Chains, such precious chains of sight  
As laboured minstrelsies through ages wear!  
O for a balance fit the truth to tel  
Of the Unsubstantial, pondered well! (178)

The utterances of sounds have “no scheme”, nor do they represent “moral music” on their own. Instead, it is up to the listener to “stoop to bear chains” and make connections that may lead to meaningful revelations. Such contemplative listener, capable of grasping messages from his surrounding, is compared to a “laboured minstrelsies,” the medieval singer who recites lyrical poetry over a musical accompaniment. Hence, as much as a poet, the contemplative listener holds a creative and imaginative mind, that enables him to connect to his auditory surrounding and interprets it poetically.

In the “Argument” preceding the poem, Wordsworth clearly affirms that sounds and the mind could unite to form a system of “moral interest and intellectual contemplation” (177).

In this concern, Karen B. Mann, in “George Eliot and Wordsworth: The Power of Sound and the Power of Mind,” explains the reciprocal relationship between sound and mind Wordsworth conveys in this poem: “What Wordsworth desired to accomplish as minstrel in this poem is an assertion of the reciprocal and benevolent connection between mind and world accomplished by means of sound. The power of the mind to respond to outer harmony- apparent not only in sounds themselves but also in the "music" of the heavens, the ocean, and the seasons” (9). Hence, as much as poetry, listening to the external world implies a contemplative and imaginative mind that may lead the individual to harmonious revelations.

In *The Prelude* Wordsworth further demonstrates this use of music and ear perception as a poetical representation of his poetic principles. In the following passage, the speaker emphasizes the power of the mind and imagination to construct harmony out of discordant elements in nature:

The mind of man is framed even like the breath  
And harmony of music. There is a dark  
Invisible workmanship that reconciles  
Discordant elements, and makes them move  
In one society. (Wordsworth, *The Prelude* 354-358)

Wordsworth compares here the mind of the poet to harmony in music. As much as a composer arranging isolated notes to create harmonious chord progressions, the poet arranges scenes and emotions he perceives from nature, in order to create meaningful and harmonious poetic perceptions. Through this craftsmanship, discordant elements are reunited harmonically “in one society.” In the following lines, the poet extends on this musical analogy, as he affirms that something “Conscious” can emerge from the dust of reality, comparable to the way sounds of isolated notes gain significance in musical harmony:

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows

Like harmony in music; there is a dark  
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles  
Discordant elements, makes them cling together  
In one society. (17)

The speaker refers to the external world as mere dust to suggest that those “Discordant elements” (17) might be reconciled into a united whole. Just like dissonance and harmony in music, the external world full of “terrors, pains, and early miseries” (17) could turn into harmonious meaning, once imagination and craft are put at work. In this concern, the speaker implicitly differentiates between the first cognitive step, that includes listening to nature, and the second poetical step, that includes a process of interpretation and creation. Accordingly, as much as Wordsworth’s poetic principle of recollection in tranquility, the sounds heard in nature require the same creative steps, before they can be perceived as harmonious melodies:

For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven  
Was blowing on my body, felt A correspondent breeze, that gently moved  
With quickening virtue, but is now become  
A tempest, a redundant energy,  
Vexing its own creation . . .  
Thus, O Friend! did I, not used to make  
A present joy the matter of a song,  
Pour forth that day my soul in measured strains  
That would not be forgotten, and are here  
Recorded. (4)

Wordsworth compares his poem to a song he composes “in measured strains.” Although inspiration comes from the spontaneous inner response to nature’s breeze, the act of poetical

creation requires the poet to recollect scenes and emotions in tranquility. At the precise moment of composition, the speaker mentions that the inner breeze of inspiration becomes a “tempest,” a natural force, shifting the present moment “not” to be the subject of his song: “Thus far, O friend, did I, not used to make present joy the matter of my song.”(4). The sudden shift to the past tense highlights the delayed process between the first act of sensual perception, and poetic imaginative transformation: “Pour out that day my soul in measured strains, /Even in the very words which I have here Recorded. /To the open fields I told” (4). While the poet describes the effects of the natural setting so as to insist on the immediate experience of the actual moment, the shift to the past tense highlights the idea that it is not the immediate moment that is the main subject of the poem, but its recollection in a moment of imaginative tranquility. Following those steps, the poet actually takes the elements of the external world, in this case the sounds of nature, into an echoed process of auditory contemplation:

My own voice cheered me, and, far more, the mind's  
Internal echo of the imperfect sound;  
To both I listened, drawing from them both  
A cheerful confidence in things to come. (17)

The acoustic word “echo” is very evocative. By definition, an echo is actually a delayed reflection of an emitted sound. In the context of the poem, “the mind’s internal echo” refers to recalling the beauty of past natural settings in the process of creating poetry. The process of composition described here, as in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, involves an initial moment of inspiration, in which the poet finds the material for his song, and the crafting of that material into metrical form.

Through the use of sounds from the natural world, as well as of musical metaphors, Wordsworth is able to communicate two of his most famous poetic principles: “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (Wordsworth and Coleridge 3), and poetry as a process of

“recollection in tranquility” (3). Through those detailed poetic steps, Wordsworth emphasizes the role of imagination at creating poetry, and illustrates its use via soundscape, ear perception, and musical metaphors. As explained by Schafer, soundscape undergoes a continual symbolic transformation: “All acoustic symbolism, even that associated with archetypes, is slowly but steadily undergoing modification” (Schafer 169). As Wordsworth implements nature’s sounds and musical metaphors to poetically represent his Romantic tenets, the poet applies a symbolic connotation to soundscape, to poetically represent his solipsist ideas of Romantic imagination:

Transformations such as these will undoubtedly change the symbolism of such archetypes. This is evidenced by the fact that while more ancient descriptions of the sea and the wind always stress their terrible aspect, in aesthetic preference tests today, both these natural elements appear as sound romances rather than sound phobias-except in places experiencing sudden, violent storms, such as Jamaica. (Schafer 169)

### **3. Keats : Music as an Escape from Reality**

In a manner similar to Wordsworth, Keats manifests a considerable reliance on music and soundscape in his poetry. In “Myopic Keats,” Ann Townsend considers the topic from a biographical perspective. Taking into account Keats myopia, Ann Townsend argues that the poet’s short sightedness favored his other senses, and helped him explore and develop his visions and poetical ideas via the remaining sensory experiences :

Keats experienced the visual world with faulty equipment: his eyes were bad. He was myopic...To be a visionary is to acknowledge the infinite possibilities inside an individual mind and spirit... the Romantic poets relegitimized and foregrounded their emotional interior lives, valued the irrational and the imaginative, embraced the natural world, and put their faith in the evidence of the senses and what Keats called "the holiness of the Heart's affections." Keats's visionary sensibilities...Percy Bysshe Shelley, who was farsighted, to create poems that themselves capture a wide scope,

with their far-off vistas, mountain ranges, and expansive landscapes. Keats, on the other hand, favored images that are self-limiting, close-up, and auditory rather than visual. The sense of hearing, Trevor-Roper suggests, is intensified in Keats's work for neurological reasons: when the sense of sight is damaged or limited, the other senses develop greater sensitivity in order to compensate for the loss. (Townsend 167-198)

Despite this eventual biographical element, other critics considered the subject from a formal and textual perspective, illustrating the poet's recurrent use of soundscape descriptions and musical metaphors in his verses. In this concern, John A. Minahan affirms that Keats' interest in music represents a main constituent of his poetics, and claims that such formal tendency contributed to the success of Keats' poetic style: "From an early age... the two arts were associated in Keats's mind. In fact, he never stopped associating poetry with music, and he went on to achieve greatness as a poet largely by drawing upon the energy of that association" (Minahan 8). In view of this perspective, I would like to focus on Keats' use of music and soundscape as a poetical device that highlights the superiority of imagination over reality in his poetics. Hence, I would like to demonstrate that comparable to Wordsworth, Keats used soundscape and musical metaphors as an aesthetic to express his romantic solipsism and escapist tendencies.

In "Ode to a Nightingale," the speaker explicitly shares his desire to escape from the harsh reality of life, as he wants to "Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget / What thou among the leaves hast never known" (Keats 295). After describing the longing pain that torments his heart – "My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains / My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk" (295) – , he compares the singing of the bird on a tree to the pleasure of tasting a wine that would enable him to forget about the harshness of life:

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been  
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,

Tasting of Flora and the country green,  
...  
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,  
And with thee fade away into the forest dim. (263)

Unlike the speaker, the bird is happy and enjoys his life in nature. The protagonist's desire to quit reality is further highlighted as he describes the bird's singing as a melodious plot he wants to join: "In some melodious plot/ Of beechen green, and shadows numberless, / Singest of summer in full-throated ease"(263). The plot produced by the bird includes summer and beech trees, which may be perceived as a forest. Accordingly, the speaker nourishes the deep desire to get drunk through the nightingale's song so to flee the real "world" and "fade" into the imaginary forest invoked by the bird's melodies.

Despite the relief the bird brings to the listener, the speaker still laments on the temporal nature of such musical experience. According to him, the birds' song, as much as other joyful and beautiful moments in life, although memorable, are ephemeral and fade away with time. In this concern, he asserts that beauty cannot "keep her lustrous eyes" and "new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow"(265). The fact that the nightingale flies away after finishing his song significantly illustrates the relevance of the speaker's commentary:

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell  
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!  
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well  
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf. (265)

Instead of closing the poem with this factual truth, the speaker decides to recreate the musical experience in the imaginary world of poetry: " Away! away! for I will fly to thee,/ Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards, /But on the viewless wings of Poesy"(264). Thanks to the power of imagination, the speaker has the opportunity to fly away with the nightingale, and

endlessly appreciate his singing. He affirms that death represents a positive resolution in imagination, as it will enable him to endlessly appreciate the nightingale's song and never come back to reality: "Darkling I listen; and, for many a time / I have been half in love with easeful Death,/ Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme, /To take into the air my quiet breath;" (264). Accordingly, through imagination, the poet is capable of escaping the harsh pains of life, and endlessly recreate the ephemeral joys and beauty experienced during this enhancing musical experience.

In "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Keats confirms his use of music as a way to convey his poetic views on imagination and reality. The speaker opens the poem on an artistic ornamental vase that he describes as a "sylvan historian" that tells its story through its beauty: "Sylvan historian, who canst thus express /A flow'ry tale more sweetly than our rhyme" (266). Although the vase is inanimate and silent, it still communicates ideas, stories, and experiences through the artistic drawings inscribed on it: "Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness! / Thou foster-child of silence and slow time" (266). Because ageing has little effect on the object, the vase is capable of transcending time, and endlessly communicate its stories to future generations. Hence, unlike the ephemeral joys of reality, the vase is capable of bringing an endless aesthetic experience to its observer. In this regard, the speaker compares the music described on the urn to music performed in the real world. Unlike performed music, which depends on time, the music described on the urn is eternal and depends exclusively on the power of imagination:

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;  
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone. (266)

Despite the ability to perpetually recall the melody in the mind, the speaker affirms that the urn's music is sweeter than any other piece performed in the real world. Unlike performed



music, music composed in the mind cannot possibly be played badly or incorrectly. Through this musical metaphor, Keats conveys that imagination and anticipation often outweigh the copy in the real world, where imperfection and common errors are inevitable. Hence, using music as a motif, Keats illustrates the Romantic solipsist tendencies inherent to his poetics.

As much as Wordsworth, Keats uses musical metaphors to convey his poetic use of imagination and further illustrate the Romantics' use of music as part of their aesthetics. As he implements nature's sounds and musical metaphors to poetically represent his Romantic escapist tendencies, the poet applies a symbolic connotation to soundscape, that poetically serves his thematic concerns: "All acoustic symbolism, even that associated with archetypes, is slowly but steadily undergoing modification...Transformations such as these will undoubtedly change the symbolism of such archetypes" (Schafer 169). Using nature's sounds and musical metaphors, Keats demonstrates his poetic transformation of soundscape symbolism as an aesthetic strategy to represent his Romantic escapist tendencies.

## **II.T.S. Eliot : Music Against Romantic Imagination**

### **1. Eliot's literary Reaction Against the Romantics**

In his Oxford University lectures delivered in 1916, Eliot describes the Romantic age "as a period of intellectual chaos" and an "escape from the world of fact" (Eliot, *Syllabus of a Course* 12). In *The Sacred Wood*, he asserts that Romanticism "is a short cut to the strangeness without the reality and it leads its disciples only back upon themselves" (Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* 28). In view of these arguments, Eliot explicitly reacted against the Romantics as he maintains that "There may be a good deal to be said for romanticism in life, there is no place for it in letters" (28).

Eliot's dissatisfaction with the Romantics lies mainly in their divorce from reality through imagination, and their reliance on subjective emotionalism. He claims that the

romantic poet “is deficient or undeveloped in his ability to distinguish between fact and fancy” (Eliot, *New Essays* 24), whereas an adult mind “is thoroughly realist without Illusions, without day-dreams without hope, without bitterness and with an abundant resignation” (24) In his essay “Tradition and the Individual Talents,” Eliot clearly makes a stand against Wordsworth’s emotional and subjective approach to poetical writing: “Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things” (Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* 52).

Through the above definition, Eliot proposes a theory of poetry that views poetical writing, not as an externalization of personal feelings, but as a complete surrender of personality. Unlike Wordsworth’s focus on imagination, emotions and spontaneity, Eliot believes that the poet should distance himself from his text. Because the role of the poet is to objectify and depersonalize his emotions in poetical creations, Eliot affirms that: “The progress of an artist is a continual self – sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality” (47). In this regard, he affirms that the best way to infuse emotions in poetry is through the evocation of an objective correlative: “The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion” (Eliot, *Selected prose* 48). Indeed, Eliot explains that the poet's mind, when creating poetry, serves as a catalyst, that brings together the experiences of the author into an aesthetic object completely detached from the poet: the poem. Thus, the poem, in Eliot’s poetics, is no longer about the poet’s feelings or emotions but about the experiences of the author that are similar to those of all human kind. Unlike Wordsworth’s poetic notion of “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (Wordsworth and Coleridge 3), that Takes “its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility” (Wordsworth and Coleridge

3), Eliot proposes to objectify poetical emotions and to deviate from Romantic expression of personality.

In the following section, I would like to demonstrate how Eliot implemented musical metaphors and soundscape in his poetry as objective correlatives to respond to the Romantics. While Romantic poets used music and nature's sounds to favor imagination, solipsism and the individuality of the poet, Eliot defamiliarizes those same auditory poetical evocations in his poetry to suggest the invalidity of the romantic solipsism in modernist time. This includes the sounds of water, sirens, and birds singing. If this wide range of soundscapes are evoked in Romantic poetry to connote the superiority of imagination over reality, their evocation in Eliot's poetry connotes the invalidity of Romantic ideals in the 20<sup>th</sup> century modern world. Following his rejection of Romantic auditory and musical solipsism, Eliot implements the acoustic disorder of the sordid modern city in his poetry. If the Romantics escaped from the difficulties of the real world through imagination, Eliot prefers to cope with the harsh reality of modern life. Indeed, his defamiliarization of romantics singing in "The Waste Land," and his estrangement of Chopin music in "Portrait of a Lady" illustrate his musical reaction against Romantic escapist tendencies.

To demonstrate Eliot's use of soundscape and musical metaphors as a response to the Romantics, I rely on Viktor Shklovsky's formalism. According to Shklovsky, artists estrange objects and complicate forms in order to give them a fresh aesthetic effect to the reader: "The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged." (Shklovsky 6). As he defamiliarizes and estranges the soundscape of the natural world differently from the Romantics, Eliot comes up with new forms of expressions, that are interestingly associated with his modernist view against Romantic solipsism. According to Shklovsky, "a work of art is perceived against a background of and by

association with other works of art. The form of a work of art is determined by its relationship with other preexisting forms” (Shklovsky 20). By comparing the way Eliot estranged nature’s sounds and musical metaphors differently from the Romantics, I demonstrate how soundscape plays a poetic function that illustrates Eliot’s modernist rejection of Romantic aesthetics. As Shklovsky affirms in his essay “Art as Technique,” a new form of expression makes its appearance in order “to replace an old form that has already outlived its artistic usefulness” (Shklovsky 20). Using soundscape and musical metaphors as forms of aesthetic expression, Eliot stylistically implies the irrelevance of Romantic tenets and ideas in modernist poetry.

## **2. Melodies of Infertile Nature: Eliot’s Response to the Romantics’ Use of Nature Sounds**

In his long poem “The Waste Land,” Eliot poetically illustrates his rejection of the Romantic world view and its irrelevance in modern times. In the opening lines of “The Burial of The Dead,” Eliot turns Romantic nature poetry, originally filled with joy and inspiration, into a dreadful poetry that evokes the desolate situation of the modern man:

April is the cruellest month, breeding

Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing

Memory and desire, stirring

Dull roots with spring rain. (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 53)

Those opening lines implement an ironic reference to Jeffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*, whose lines originally evoke the virtue of vegetation in spring time. If Chaucer evokes April as the most desirous month of the year “when that April with his showers soote /The drought of March hath pierced to the root /And bathed every vein in such liquor” (Chaucer 01), Eliot describes it as being the cruellest month. In a reader friendly edition of the poem, Michael Murphy explains that Chaucer in his poem refers to people’s strong desire to go on pilgrimage

at this precise period of the year: “people have a strong desire to go on pilgrimages, and pilgrims long to go to foreign shores to distant shrines known in various countries” (63). Using Chaucer’s poem as an objective correlative, Eliot ironically inverts *The Canterbury Tales*’ imagery in order to poetically illustrate the invalidity of the Romantic adoration of nature in modern times and the desolate spiritual situation of modern men. Indeed, Eliot associates April to images of “dead land,” and “dull root,” and depicts spring as a season of infertility. Far from renewal, pilgrimage and rebirth, the poet evokes the image of a warm winter, that keeps people secured in a forgetful snow. This description detracts the spiritual pilgrimage Chaucer associates with spring time, and suggests the spiritual decay of the modern man. In that respect, Eliot affirms the irrelevance of the Romantic adoration of the natural world in a modern context, and illustrates the disconnection between modern civilization and spiritual relief.

In the following passage, Eliot aims to attack Romantic’s solipsist imagination that takes its origins from beautiful natural landscapes:

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow  
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,  
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only  
A heap of broken images ... . (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 53)

This scene ironically negates Romantic scenarios that starts with an observer of nature, and ends with some superior imaginary revelations. Unlike Romantic natural scenes that lead the poet towards some kind of transcendental experiences, the speaker in these lines faces a dry stony setting that inspires nothing but a heap of broken images. Indeed, the speaker is wondering about the possibility for branches and roots to grow “out of such stony rubbish” (53). This desolate vision leads him to affirm that “You cannot say, or guess, for you know only /A heap of broken images” (53). Hence, the speaker in Eliot’s lines is facing the dreadful physical description of nature, without any possibility of transcendental imaginary relief.

Along the use of visual imagery, Eliot also includes a number of soundscape descriptions and musical metaphors that supplement his rejection of Romantic poetical escapism. Using the same sounds Romantics implemented in their nature-themed poetry, Eliot defamiliarizes those forms of expression from their original context, in order to illustrate the irrelevance of Romanticism in modern poetry. If the Romantics depicted different nature sounds as harmonious melodies capable of transcending reality, Eliot deviates from this solipsistic attitude by using the same acoustic elements, to connote human alienation in modern time, and the irrelevance of Romantic imagination.

Water and its sounds figure among the most used motifs in “The Waste Land.” Because the speaker of the poem is in quest to redeem modern society, it is generally understood that water is used as a symbol for spiritual relief (Moore 30). In the following passage from “Death by Water,” the difficulty of the redemptive quest is symbolically represented through difficulty to find water in the arid setting that surrounds the speaker:

If there were water

And water

A spring

A pool among the rock

If there were the sound of water only

Not the cicada

And dry grass singing

But sound of water over a rock

Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees

Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop

But there is no water. (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 66)

The speaker depicts the scene by putting forward the singing of the cicada, the dry mess of the grass, and the singing of the hermit thrush. In such dry soundscape, the speaker expresses his desire to find the sound of water as a symbolic search for spiritual relief. Following the imaginary onomatopoeic sound, “Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop” (66), the speaker’s affirmation “there is no water” confirms the difficulty of the quest undertaken toward spiritual redemption.

If this well-established interpretation takes into account the spiritual and religious themes of the poem, it is possible to interpret Eliot’s use of water sound as a process of poetical estrangement from Romantic auditory solipsism. In their nature-themed poetry, the use of water and its sound figure among the recurrent motifs the Romantics used to convey their imaginative poetical escapism. Among different examples from the Romantic agenda, the English poet Robert Southey explicitly illustrates in “Cataract of Lodore” the poetic use of water sound, as an aesthetic representation for Romantic adoration of nature, and their solipsist imagination:

With endless rebound

Smiting and fighting,

A sight to delight in;

Confounding, astounding,

Dizzying and deafening the ear with its sound.

...

never ending, but always descending,

Sounds and motions for ever and ever are blending,

All at once and all o'er, with a mighty uproar,

And this way the Water comes down at Lodore. ( Southey 175)

When the son asks his father: "'How does the water /Come down at Lodore?" /My little boy asked me" (175), the speaker enters a long soundscape description of the waterfall, that makes the reader actually visualize the movement of water, till it reaches its final destination at Lodore Falls. The full poem represents a long and detailed auditory description of the water flowing, that leads to an imaginary visualization of the place of the "never ending, but always descending, / Sounds and motions forever and ever are blending" (175) of the cascade. As much as the previously reviewed examples from Wordsworth's poetry, soundscape is used here as a poetical device to celebrate the power of imagination at transcending the physical limitations of reality, as well as to symbolize the harmonious union between nature and man. Relying on the sound of water to describe the waterfall, the speaker is able to transcend his limited physical condition, and imaginatively visualize the water movement along Lodore Falls.

To convey the irrelevance of such Romantic imaginative revelations, Eliot defamiliarized their recurrent use of water sound motif in "Death by Water." Instead of evoking a symbolic association with romantic solipsist imagination, the sound of water "Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop" (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 66), results in the same symbolic decay first presented in the opening of the scene. Indeed, water's sound, which originates from the speaker's imaginative mind, does not help the quester at transcending the dry setting of the scene. Instead, the concrete sounds of the hermit-thrush, and the dry grass singing dominates the soundscape of the scene. By juxtaposing concrete sounds that connote dryness, with the imaginary and impalpable sound of water, Eliot opposes concrete reality against solipsist imagination. By this juxtaposition of imaginary and concrete sounds, Eliot defamiliarizes Romantics' use of water sound, and stylistically demonstrates the invalidity of Romantic aesthetics in modernist poetry. Through this original use of nature soundscape, Eliot implicitly demonstrates the invalidity of Romantic solipsism at transcending the problems of modern



men. Obviously, imagination and wondering cannot help the quester at transcending the symbolic dreadful situation.

In “The Dry salvages,” Eliot implements a soundscape description of sea sounds to further evoke his rejection of the Romantics’ solipsism. The poet actually depicts humanity as if it is on a cruise boat, detailing how human fixation on science and future gain keeps men distracted from their spiritual journey. Beside this thematic representation of the social and spiritual fragmentation of modern men, Eliot’s choice of acoustic material in the verses illustrates his defamiliarization of Romantic soundscape, that stylistically illustrates his dissatisfaction with their poetic escapist tendencies. In the following passage, Eliot distinguishes between two kinds of sea sounds: “The sea howl” and “the sea yelp.” Unlike Romantic poets who tend to use nature sounds to celebrate their escape from the city, the word choice describing the sea sounds connotes crying, pain, and alarm. The speaker tells us that both sea voices are “Often heard together” and carries on describing nature sounds using a menacing tone:

The sea howl  
And the sea yelp, are different voices  
Often together heard: the whine in the rigging,  
The menace and caress of wave that breaks on water,  
The distant rattle in the granite teeth,  
And the wailing warning from the approaching headland  
Are all sea voices, and the heaving groaner  
Rounded homewards, and the seagull. (192)

Eliot describes the sea in a naturalistic way, evoking the destroying force of nature on humanity: “And the wailing warning from the approaching headland/ Are all sea voices, and the heaving groaner /ounded homewards, and the seagull” (192). Such fearful and disquiet

description of natural sounds contrasts against the Romantics. In “Thoughts of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland,” Wordsworth refers to two distinct voices, one emanating from the mountains, and the other from the ocean. Both voices are described as the music of liberty, and celebrate the complete harmony and union between nature and the individual:

Two voices are there; one is of the sea,  
One of the mountains; each a mighty Voice  
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,  
They were thy chosen music, Liberty!

(Wordsworth, *The Complete Poetical Works* 213)

As much as previous reviewed examples, Wordsworth aims to describe his sensual union with nature, that relieves him from the social chains of urbanized society. In “On the Power of Sound,” Wordsworth’s description of the sound of the ocean evokes a comparable restful and harmonious union between the poet and natural surroundings:

That Ocean is a mighty harmonist;  
Thy pinions, universal Air,  
Ever waving to and fro,  
Are delegates of harmony, and bear  
Strains that support the Seasons in their round;  
Stern Winter loves a dirge-like sound. (179)

Far from describing sea sounds positively, Eliot’s soundscape evokes an atmosphere of crying, pain, and sorrow, that rather connotes the disconnection of modern individuals from nature. The opening lines of the poem actually sustain the interpretation of this soundscape presentation, as the speaker describes the river in a way that illustrates how modern society

tends to commodify natural resources for its own benefit, disregarding the previous Romantic values that intended to co-exist harmoniously with the natural milieu:

I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river  
Is a strong brown god—sullen, untamed and intractable,  
Patient to some degree, at first recognized as a frontier;  
Useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyor of commerce;  
Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges.  
The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten.

(Eliot, *Collected poems* 191)

Whereas “recognized as a frontier,” or as a useful means of transport and commerce, the river is depicted as a mere commodity. The speaker goes as far as to mention that the construction of bridges solved the problem for human civilizations, as individuals are no more forced to use the sea route for their voyages. Through this description, the contrast between Eliot’s and Wordsworth’s soundscape is evident. Indeed, Eliot’s use of sea voices demonstrates his defamiliarization of soundscape from the Romantic poetical tradition. If Wordsworth implemented sea voices in “On the Power of Sound,” and “Thoughts of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland,” as a soundscape representation of Romantic escapist tendencies, Eliot defamiliarizes this same technique of representation from its original context to express the invalidity of Romantic solipsism in modernist poetry.

In “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” Eliot’s ironic defamiliarization of the Romantic auditory and soundscape is further revealed. The protagonist of the poem, ‘Prufrock,’ suffers from social alienation in the city, and feels unable to communicate or share his feelings with others. Although he assumes to have some company - “Let us go then, you and I” (3) - Prufrock remains alienated, and suffers from a lack of meaningful communication: “In the room the women come and go Talking of Michelangelo” (04). The discussion around Michael

Angelo emphasizes the superficial social relationships Prufrock observes and entertains with others. Through their superficial talk about art, the speakers have consciously made the choice to skip a conversation on real issues.

Because failure of communication leads Prufrock to feel anxious on being misunderstood by others - "That is not what I meant at all. That is not at all" (6) - the protagonist attempts to find resolution and comfort by the sea side. Unlike Romantic sea poems where the speaker feels enhanced and elevated by the scene, the sea is described in Eliot's poem as a space divorced from meaningful human existence. Indeed, all that the scene inspires in Prufrock is the wish to be transformed into a pair of "ragged claws/ Scuttling across the floors of silent seas" (5). The silent sea, along with the image of the crab, reveals the obsolescence of Prufrock solipsist attempts to escape his existential crisis he experiences in the city. Far from redeeming his pain, the seaside accentuates Prufrock's feelings of insignificance and alienation.

Eliot's use of Mermaids singing in this scene interestingly calls back Keats's sonnet "On the Sea," where the speaker invites people of the city, "whose ears are dinned with uproar rude, /Or fed too much with cloying melody" (Keats 337), to listen to the "mighty swell" of the ocean "as if the sea nymphs quired" (337). Keats actually describes the soothing effect of the sea and its mesmerizing sounds on depressed individuals living in a polluted city. His depiction of the nymphs' melodies evokes the imaginative power of the soundscape setting to relief pain. The speaker invites those citizens, whose senses are assaulted by the materialistic and corrupt forces of the city, to take refuge:

Oh ye! Who have your eye-balls vexed and tired,

Feast them upon the wideness of the sea,

Oh ye! Whose ears are dinned with uproar rude,

Of fed too much with cloying melody-Sit ye near some old cavern's mouth and brood

Until yet start, as if the sea-nymphs choired!” (Keats 337).

If Keats’ soundscape description evokes the mesmerizing power of the sea to reach and relieve the most depressive-looking and God-forsaken shores: “It keeps eternal whisperings around /Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell/Gluts twice ten thousand caverns, till the spell/Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound” (337) – Prufrock’s soundscape experience rather accentuates his alienation. Although he is capable of hearing their singing, Prufrock affirms that the mermaids won’t sing to him: “I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach / I have hear the mermaids singing, each to each /I do not think that they will sing to me” (Eliot, *Collected poems* 07). Comparable to his social alienation in the city, Prufrock’s experience with the music of the mermaids evokes the same state of disregard and failure of communication. His drowning at the end of the poem is symbolic, as it emphasizes his failure to find resolution both in reality and imagination. With regards to this point, Keats’ advice for transcending the decaying condition of city life becomes fatal for Prufrock: “We have lingered in the chambers of the sea/ By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown/ Till human voices wake us, and we drown.” (07). Because the speaker had stayed too long in the company of imaginary creatures, the sound of human voices of reality awakened him, leading him to his symbolic death. Consequently, reality quickly comes back to Prufrock’s mind, leading him to understand that his alienation remains constant at the city, near the seaside, as well as with the imaginary mermaids. Prufrock symbolic death connotes that his attempts to find comfort in the deep maritime soundscape milieu is a total failure. Instead, he will return to the real world of “tea and cakes and ices” (05) and the superficial talk of Michael Angelo.

Restoring to a range of acoustic sounds from Romantic nature poetry, Eliot stylistically expresses his dissatisfaction with Romantic imagination and solipsism. As he implements comparable nature sounds the Romantics used in their poems, Eliot defamiliarizes those

poetical motifs in his poems, in order to reveal his stylistic detachment from 19<sup>th</sup> century poetical tendencies. As Viktor Shklovsky develops in his essay “Art as Technique,” the poet defamiliarizes devices from their original poetical context, in order to give them a fresh artistic effect to the reader: “The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object: the object is not important ...” (Shklovsky 4). As he defamiliarizes soundscape of the natural world differently from the Romantics, Eliot aesthetically depicts the irrelevance of the Romantic tradition in modernist poetry. In this regard, Shklovsky believes that innovation in literature arises because the perceptibility of a given tradition tends to decrease over time: “The new form makes its appearance not in order to express a new content, but rather, to replace an old form that has already outlived its artistic usefulness” (Shklovsky 20). As he defamiliarizes nature sounds differently from his Romantic predecessors, Eliot demonstrates the invalidity of Romantic aesthetics, and demonstrates the use of comparable ‘devices’ in his modernist poetry.

From a soundscape perspective, Eliot’s dissimilar use of nature’s sounds illustrates the continuous transformation of the symbolic connotation given to soundscape. As he implements soundscape as a poetical device to his modernist poetry, Eliot changes the Romantic poetical significance of nature sounds, with a modernist connotation that best suits his poetry:

All acoustic symbolism, even that associated with archetypes, is slowly but steadily undergoing modification. ... Modern man has sought to escape both the wind and the sea by encapsulating himself in artificial environments. And just as he has sought to control the sea in the fountain, he has sought to tame the wind in the air-conditioner, for the ventilation systems of modern buildings are nothing more than techniques for getting

the wind to blow in the right direction at the right force. Transformations such as these will undoubtedly change the symbolism of such archetypes. (Schafer 169)

### **3. Away from Romantic Solipsism: The Music of the City as an Expression of Modern Desolation**

As he turned away from Romantic solipsist poetry, Eliot chose to represent the decayed situation of modern individuals, instead of proposing a possible escape through imagination. In this regards, Eliot's turn to the French symbolists inspired him to create a poetry that deals with the sordidness of everyday life in the urban city, instead of avoiding its depiction, as most Romantics had previously done. In his essay "What Dante Means to Me," Eliot clearly admits the influence of Baudelaire and singles him as the poet who taught him to write in his "own language, of the more sordid aspects of the modern metropolis" (Eliot, *To criticize the Critics* 126). Thus, instead of fleeing from the sordid situation of modernity, Eliot took the firm resolution to put forward the material of city life in order to depict modern fragmentation.

Similarly to his decayed nature verses, Eliot implements an auditory musical perspective to his poetry of the city. Through an ironic use of musical metaphors and sordid soundscape descriptions, Eliot aims to capture the sterile lives of modern individuals, as well as to respond to Romantic poets, who originally used soundscape and music to celebrate their solipsist union with nature. In the following passage from "The Fire Sermon," Eliot depicts the river Thames with an image of dirt and pollution. Far from the Romantic depiction of the river, the speaker illustrates the malaise and decay of the modern city life. Leaves have fallen from trees and lie down on the wet dirty river bank. Despite the imagery of decay in the city, the speaker's song represents an ironic reference to Romantic past celebrations along the Thames. This contrast between past and present aims to suggest the irrelevance of Romanticism in modern times:

The river's tent is broken, the last fingers of leaf

Clutch and smoke into the wet bank. The wind

Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.

Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

The river 'bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,

Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends

Or other testimony of summer lights. The nymphs are departed.

Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,

Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.

But at my back in a cold blast I hear

The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

(Eliot, *Collected poems* 60)

The line “Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song” (60) is an allusion to Edmund Spenser’s poem “Prothalamion.” By performing his song, the speaker in the original poem celebrates the beauty of the Thames as a place of happy weddings, picturing beautiful nymphs scattering flowers along the river: “There, in a meadow, by the river's side, /A flock of nymphs I chanced to espy,.../ In which they gathered flowers to fill their flasket” (Spenser 126). To convey the irrelevance of such Romantic celebrations, Eliot affirms that: “The nymphs are departed”(60). Eliot implies here that the actual river bears nothing of its happy past ceremonies. Instead, the speaker describes the river through his song as littered with "empty bottles, sandwich papers, / Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends" (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 60). Through the allusion to Andrew Marvel’s poem “To His Coy Mistress” : “But at my back in a cold blast I hear” (60), Eliot further contrasts the happy Romantic weddings Spenser originally evokes in his song, against the meaningless relationships that dominate the modern city. In Marvel's poem, the narrator entreats a woman he desires and tells her how he would praise her if he had the eternity to do so: “Had we but world enough and time, /This coyness, lady, were no crime” (Marvel 75). Because time is short, they should put



their youthful bodies to use before they wither and die: “But at my back I always hear /Time’s wingèd chariot hurrying near; /.../Now let us sport us while we may” (Marvel75). By adding this allusion to the speaker’s song, Eliot associates the idea of unfertile sexual intercourse to Spenser’s wedding song, and ironically turns such Romantic celebration into a poetical evocation of infertility, that dominates the city and its inhabitants. By defamiliarizing those songs from their original Romantic context, Eliot poetically presents the sordid lifestyle of modern men, and demonstrates the invalidity of the Romantic world view in the modern world.

When the narrator encounters the Thames a second time, the harmful effects of industrialization over the river are further evoked. As much as the previous passage, the images of the polluted river aim to contradict Romantic solipsist descriptions of a beautiful nature: “river sweats / Oil and tar / The barges drift / With the turning tide”(Eliot, *Collected poems* 63). If images of oil and tar go hand in hand with the previous description of the polluted river bank, Eliot’s reference to Wagner’s opera comes to supplement the ironic displaced echoes of Spenser’s song along the modern Thames. Indeed, the line “Weialala leia/ Wallala leialala”(63) is a musical reference Eliot took from Wagner’s “Der Ring des Nibelungen.” In “Das Rheingold,” the first opera in the cycle, the antagonist Alberich forges the magic ring that grants him the power to rule the world. Despite stealing the gold from the three nymphs of the river Rhein, Alberich has the obligation to renounce love in order to be granted the power to rule the world through the ring. The line “Weialala leia/ Wallala leialala”(63) is taken from the original opera and represents the crying of the nymphs for the loss of their gold. Eliot estranges Wagner’s song from its original context in order to draw a parallel between modern society (as it values industry and technological progress over nature) and Alberich, who renounces love for the power to rule the world. This fresh re-interpretation of the song is reinforced as Eliot repeats the lines, “Weialala leia/ Wallala leialala,” after naming Queen Elizabeth, and the first Earl of Leicester, Robert Dudley, two historical lovers who never married: “Elizabeth and

Leicester/ Beating oars ... Welalala leia”(63). Hence, as much as Spenser’s song, Eliot’s reference to Wagner’s opera song aims to depict the irrelevance of the Romantic worldview in modern times. Far from the idea of romantic love and marriage, the river is now associated to unfertile sexual intercourses, modern pollution, and social seek for power over the traditional image of naïve wedding and love. On those grounds, it can be inferred that singing is used as a motif to defamiliarize the image of the Thames river from its traditional Romantic depiction. Following this technique, Eliot conveys the irrelevance of the Romantic world view in modern times.

Along with these defamiliarized references to songs, Eliot evokes the sound of bones, chuckle spread and rats, that suggest the spiritual decay of the citizens: “A rat crept softly through the vegetation/Dragging itods slimy belly on the bank” (60). In this passage, the hostile decomposed soundscape is associated to the echoes of the city life that the narrator can hear at a distance, while sitting with his perch near the bank. The sounds of horns and motors that accompany Mrs. Porter are meant illustrate the meaningless sterility of the waste landers:

But at my back from time to time I hear

The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring

Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.

O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter

And on her daughter

They wash their feet in soda water

*Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!*

Twit twit twit

Jug jug jug jug jug jug

So rudely forc’d.

Tereu. (60)

As in previous passages, Eliot's reference to singing contributes to represent the sterility that dominates the lives of the waste landers. The lines "O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter/And on her daughter/They wash their feet in soda water" (60) evoke a ballad song Eliot explicitly refers in his comments to the poem: "I do not know the origin of the ballad from which these lines are taken: it was reported to me from Sydney, Australia" (72). In *T. S. Eliot and Ideology*, Kenneth Asher explains that this musical allusion makes Mrs. Porter a woman of ill reputation: "The lascivious Mrs. Porter and her daughter may wash their feet in soda water in the poem, but Eliot's notes directs us to the vulgar Australian original which had "cunts" in place of feet" (Asher 44). Chinitz David, in *A companion to T.S Eliot*, further supplements this interpretation, as he explains that Mrs. Porter is actually "the madam of Cario brothel known for infecting British soldiers with venereal diseases. The song of 'Mrs. Porter and her daughter' was sung by troops in the Dardanelles camping" (Chinitz 97). Along this explanation, the line "Twit twit twit / Jug jug jug jug jug jug/ So rudely forc'd. / Tere" (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 61) calls back the evocation of the nightingale singing in the story of Philomela.

The first reference to this story occurs in the first part of "A Game of Chess." After being raped and mutilated by her sister's husband Tereus, Philomela obtains her revenge and is transformed into a nightingale. Because of the violence associated with the myth, the song of the nightingale is often depicted or interpreted as a sorrowful lament (Ovid 195-204). By mentioning the singing of the nightingale along Mrs. porter's song, Eliot accentuates its symbolic signification in the poem. Hence, following Wagner's and Spenser's songs, Eliot estranged Mrs. Porter's ballad, and the nightingale singing to present the soundscape of a sterile modern city life style.

The episode of the typist woman represents another example that confirms Eliot's strong reliance on music and soundscape in "The Fire Sermon." After being raped, the woman puts some music on the gramophone in a quite passive attitude. Instead of showing any guilt

or offense about what had happened to her, the typist woman is rather portrayed as if she were much more worried about smoothing her hair, a task that she performs in automatic gestures:

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,  
Hardly aware of her departed lover;  
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:  
“Well now that’s done: and I’m glad it’s over.”  
When lovely woman stoops to folly and  
Paces about her room again, alone,  
She smooths her hair with automatic hand,  
And puts a record on the gramophone. (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 62)

The remaining part of this scene represents fragments of songs played on the gramophone, largely contributing to the soundscape fragmentation of the waste landers:

“This music crept by me upon the waters”  
And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.  
O City city, I can sometimes hear  
Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,  
The pleasant whining of a mandoline  
And a clatter and a chatter from within. (62)

Visibly, music and singing heard and performed in public places of the city are used to connote the superficiality of the relationships established between individuals. By defamiliarizing songs from their original Romantic context, and by presenting sordid soundscape descriptions, Eliot skilfully depicts in “The Fire Sermon,” the spiritual demise of urban society, and repudiates the Romantic poetical tendency to escape the city via imagination.

In “The Portrait of a Lady,” Eliot further explores the meaninglessness of modern society and the obsolescence of Romanticism through musical defamiliarizations and soundscape descriptions. On the surface, the poem evokes the story of a couple and describes their occasional meetings. Yet, as much as in “Prufrock,” the poem deals with the alienation of both individuals and their lack of communication. On their first meeting, the couple talks about a recent musical concert they have attended. The description of the performance per se is an evident element that illustrates the superficiality of the couple, and their inability to apprehend things beyond their appearances: “We have been, let us say, to hear the latest Pole / Transmit the Preludes, through his hair and finger-tips” (8). Eliot defamiliarizes the musical scene in a way that highlights the superficiality of the couple relationship. Far from evoking the emotional content of the music, the couple concentrates on superficial details, such as the hair of the musician and his fingers on the keyboard. Through this description, the couple estrange the musical scene, yet they demonstrate their focus on the superficial elements of the musical performance.

Interestingly enough, the music described is explicitly associated to the Romantic musical agenda. The performance is compared to a resurrection of Chopin among friends: “So intimate, this Chopin, that I think his soul / Should be resurrected only among his friends” (8). By metaphorically “resurrecting” Chopin, Eliot dissociates this romantic figure from the 19<sup>th</sup> century context, in order to highlight the irrelevance of Romanticism in modern times. This effect of musical anachronism is further revealed through the comments of the couple to the musical performance. Instead of evoking the significance of the musical piece, the couple is just pretending to be one of Chopin’s friends, by the mere justification of attending to one of his concerts. Accordingly, the idea of resurrecting the figure of Chopin aims to translate the irrelevance of the Romantic worldview in modern society.

Despite this ironic effect of defamiliarization, the soundscape of the scene contributes to picture the superficiality of the couple's relationship. Indeed, the notes of the violin are described as filling in the silence and the distance between the two individuals, when they are not sharing superficial comments on the music:

And so the conversation slips  
Among velleities and carefully caught regrets  
Through attenuated tones of violins  
Mingled with remote cornets  
And begins. (8)

Despite the music, speech also conveys the meaningless of the couple's relationship. When the woman tries to share her feelings to her beloved, the speaker's monologue commenting on her words evoke "cracked cornets" and a dull tom-tom inside his brain. Such cacophonous soundscape is meant to signify the little interest the man gives to his partner:

Those qualities upon which friendship lives.  
How much it means that I say this to you —  
Without these friendships — life, what *cauchemar!*"  
Among the winding of the violins  
And the ariettes  
Of cracked cornets  
Inside my brain a dull tom-tom begins  
Absurdly hammering a prelude of its own,  
Capricious monotone  
That is at least one definite "false note". (09)

As he depicts her words as an annoying prelude with false notes, the speaker affirms his disinterest toward the woman. Indeed, his disconnectedness from the woman is evidently

expressed through the robotic daily activities he proposes as an answer to her presumed feelings of love. Far from answering her sentimental revelations, the man suggests a series of entertainment filled with superficial appreciation of arts, and occasional discussions of late events, that would prevent them from having any meaningful conversation on the subject. The image of the couple correcting their “watches by the public clocks” captures the robotic boredom and the futility that characterizes their relationship:

Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance,  
Admire the monuments,  
Discuss the late events,  
Correct our watches by the public clocks.  
Then sit for half an hour and drink our bocks. (09)

In the second section of the poem, the speaker and the woman meet again for tea: “Yet with these April sunsets... I feel immeasurably at peace, and find the world / To be wonderful and youthful, after all” (10). As previously stated, the disinterest of the man towards the woman is revealed through the auditory description of her voice. As she attempts to express her peace of mind, the speaker compares her talk to the “insistent out-of-tune / Of a broken violin on an August afternoon” (10). The woman carries on confidently, affirming her presumed love and feelings - “I am always sure that you understand / My feelings, always sure that you feel, Sure that across the gulf you reach your hand,” (10) - while the speaker seems to give more interest to a “street piano, mechanical and tired” (10), repeating old common songs. It appears that the street piano, along with “Reading the comics and the sporting page,” affects the speaker’s mind in a way that neither Chopin’s music, nor the woman’s words ever did. When the woman dies at the end of the poem, the disordered music the man evokes in his mind ends with a ‘dying fall’” (10). Hence, the man is left with the tired street piano playing, a situation that better reflects his meaningless and robotic routine. Accordingly, the musical and

auditory descriptions associated to Chopin's performance and the woman's feelings has now been replaced by the modern tired piano music, that best captures the disillusionment of modern men.

Through an explicit soundscape description of the sordid city life style, Eliot clearly distances himself from Romantic escapist tendencies. Furthermore, Eliot defamiliarizes romantic songs and romantic musical scenes in order to contrast them against the modern city life style. Through this process of poetical defamiliarization, Eliot aesthetically translates the irrelevance of the Romantic world view in modernist poetry, and successfully demonstrates the disillusionment of modern men, instead of escaping from it via solipsist imagination.

### **III. Stevens' Supreme Fiction: An Answer to the Romantics and Eliot's Objective Poetry**

In tune with Eliot, Stevens shares a skeptical attitude towards the validity of Romantic poetics and poetry. Among a rich array of techniques, Stevens shows an extensive use of musical imagery and metaphors in his verses. Nevertheless, unlike Eliot's objective depiction of modern decay, Stevens proposes to reconcile poetic imagination with reality, as a reaction against the subjective and solipsist imagination assumed by the Romantics. The purpose of this section is to show how ideas of music, musical metaphors, and soundscape are used by Stevens to aesthetically give voice to his views against the Romantics. To achieve this aim, I demonstrate how Stevens defamiliarizes Romantic musical metaphors, and implemented soundscape descriptions as poetical devices that stylistically translate his ideal fusion between imagination and reality. Following this analysis, my aim to show how musical aesthetics functions at illustrating the poetical contrast between Wallace Stevens, T.S Eliot, and Romantic poetry.



## 1. Stevens' Poetic Answer to Romantic subjectivism and to Eliot's Objectivism

In "Sailing After Lunch," Stevens addresses the question of how prevalent the Romantic should remain: "The romantic should be there/ It ought to be everywhere. /But the romantic must never remain" (Stevens, *The Collected Poems* 120). For Stevens, the main flaw of Romantic poets resides in their solipsist use of imagination and their divorce from the real world. For this reason, he believes that Romanticism does not meet the requirements for modern poetry, as it would keep the poet away from reality and contemporary matters. In "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," the speaker affirms that imagination loses its poetic credibility if the imagined object does not originally belong to reality:

Suppose these houses are composed of ourselves,  
So that they become an impalpable town, full of  
Impalpable bell, transparencies of sound,  
Sounding in transparent dwellings of the self,  
Impalpable habitations that seem to move  
In the movement of the colors of the mind. (466)

These lines suggest that, if the "houses" are the product of our imagination, i.e., "composed of ourselves," they would be "impalpable" and "transparent." Following this visual presentation, sound imagery is used to describe the bells' ringing of the imaginary building. Such sounds are presented as the "transparent dwellings of the self." Because the houses are the pure product of imagination, the sound of bells is similarly impalpable. Consequently, the mind is "uncertain," "indefinite," and "confused," in its visual and sound perceptions. Stevens asserts poetically that imagination becomes obsolete when divorced from reality, and comes to the conclusion that "romantic[s] inevitably falsif[y]" (Stevens, *Collected Poetry and Prose* 780).

Although he clearly rejects their solipsism, Stevens' poetical reaction against the Romantics differs enormously from Eliot's adoption of an objective theory of poetry. In "Tradition and the individual Talent," Eliot clearly defines modern poetry in opposition against Romantic personal and subjective poetic practices: "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality." (Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* 52). Through the use of "objective correlatives," Eliot proposes to mute the voice of the poet, in order to depersonalize and objectify the poetic experience for the reader. Hence, poetic expression becomes objective and impersonal. If Stevens shares with Eliot the idea that Romantic imagination and solipsism lead to a total divorce from the real world, he still believes that objectifying the poetic experience for the reader does not represent the best solution in modern poetry. In "Six Different Landscapes," Stevens' ironic comment on rationalist thinkers illustrates his dissatisfaction with modernist poetic objectivism:

Rationalists, wearing square hats,

Think, in square rooms,

Looking at the floor,

Looking at the ceiling.

They confine themselves

To right-angled triangles.

If they tried rhomboids,

Cones, waving lines, ellipses --

As, for example, the ellipse of the half-moon --

Rationalists would wear sombreros. (Stevens, *The Collected Poems* 75)

Because of their pure pragmatic approach, the rationalists are described as "wearing square hats," thinking in "square rooms." Accordingly, rationalists confine themselves within

“right-angled triangles.” If they adopt a more subtle thinking approach, Stevens writes that “Rationalists would wear sombreros” (75) instead of square hats.

For Stevens, the problem with the Romantics is not imagination, as much as its inadequate use by the romantics. Hence, far from adopting an objective poetry, Stevens proposes to redefine the poetic properties of imagination, and to revisit its poetic use according to modern requirements and needs. In *The Nobel Rider and the Sound of Words*, Stevens redefines the poetic use of imagination on an account of Blaise Pascal, a 17<sup>th</sup> century philosopher who praised reason over imagination, and the real over the illusory. For Pascal, imagination represented a door toward illusory and false revelations. Through his criticism, Stevens describes Pascal’s view as “the mistress of the world” (Stevens, *The Necessary Angel* 133), and the “deceptive element in man” (133). The problem, as Stevens sees it, is that imagination is not a false statement, but the path toward reality: “it is in the nature of the imagination itself that we should be quick to accept it as the only clue to reality.” (133). Nevertheless, Stevens asserts some poetic conditions that make imagination credible. To dissociate poetic imagination per se from Romantic escapism, Stevens affirms that “the imagination is not a free agent. It is not a faculty that functions without reference” (Stevens, *Letters of Wallace Stevens* 789). This reference, for Stevens, is reality (Stevens, *The Necessary Angel* 137). Accordingly, imagination, for Stevens, is referential and rhetorical, as it reveals truth through images, that themselves are more aesthetical than true. Because the Romantics used imagination as a source of transcendental escape, Stevens affirms that “the achievement of the romantic ... lies in minor wish-fulfilments and it is incapable of abstraction” (138). For this reason, he singles out poetical imagination as “the liberty of the mind” (138), and assumes that “The romantic is a failure to make of that liberty” (138).

By redefining the rules that govern the poetic use of imagination, Stevens successfully opposes Eliot’s objective modernist poetics, for being the only reliable solution to deviate from

Romantic solipsism. As he reconciliates poetic imagination with reality, Stevens proposes a definition of imagination that fits the requirements of modern poetry, and negates, at the same time, Romantic escapist tendencies, that prevent the poet from treating the issues of modern reality.

## **2. Stevens' Musical Response to the Romantics**

Stevens gives voice to his poetic vision via the implementation of different techniques. Among a variety of stylistic implementations, Steven shows a recurrent use of soundscape and musical metaphors. As much as Eliot, some of those metaphors reveal an interesting contrast with Romantic poetry. By defamiliarizing musical metaphors from their original Romantic context, Stevens presents poetically his stand against Romantic escapist tendencies.

In "The Idea of Order in key West," Stevens uses singing as a metaphor, to reveal his dissatisfaction with Romantic imagination. Interestingly enough, the poem recalls a poetic scenario Wordsworth reveals in "The Solitary Reaper." Through this poetic reformulation, Stevens defamiliarizes Woodsworth's musical scene to convey his view on poetic imagination, and its mandatory connection with reality.

In "The Solitary Reaper," Wordsworth directs our attention to a solitary woman "single in the field" (Wordsworth, *Poems: In Two Volumes* 11), singing a song, and picking up some kind of grain: "Alone she cuts and binds the grain, / And sings a melancholy strain" (11). Through this scene, Wordsworth aims to celebrate the Romantic ideal union between men and the natural world, and the power of imagination at recalling back such inspiring scenes. The harmonious union between the woman and her surroundings is implicitly evoked as the speaker describes how her singing fuses with the setting. The woman's beautiful tune echoes in the deep valley - "O listen! for the Vale profound / Is overflowing with the sound" (11) – while the image of her "sickle bending" the corps implies that her harmonious connection with nature is not only auditory, but also physical.

Both nature and the woman's song are inspirational for the speaker, who invites people to stop and listen to her singing, or "gently pass," so as not to distort the experience. The closing lines of the poem suggest Wordsworth's Romantic escapism through auditory imagination. Although the speaker questions the meaning of the song, "Will no one tell me what she sings?" (13), he decides to keep the melody in his heart for its symbolic representation of the union between harmonious nature and the individual:

listened, motionless and still;  
And, as I mounted up the hill,  
The music in my heart I bore,  
Long after it was heard no more. (13)

The use of the past tense is very evocative here, as it reveals the speaker's incantation for the song in his mind "Long after" observing the scene. Accordingly, the speaker is able to recreate the joyful moment experienced via his auditory imagination. Interestingly enough, Wordsworth, in *The Prelude*, refers to the importance of such reminiscences, that he labels as a "spot of time". According to him, recalling inspirational relieving moments via memory and imagination helps at transcending the depressing moments we face during our existence:

There are in our existence spots of time  
which with distinct pre-eminence retain  
A fructifying virtue, whence, depressed  
By trivial occupations and the round  
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds  
(Especially the imaginative power)  
Are nourished, and invisibly repaired. (Wordsworth, *The Preludes* 212)

As he decides to keep the melody in his heart, the speaker conveys the imaginative significance of the experience, and its auditory musical reminiscence as a "spot of time".

Hence, music is implemented in the poem to celebrate the beautiful union between man and nature, as well as the power of imagination to escape reality. By this means, Wordsworth illustrates his Romantic use of poetic imagination, which tends to result in a total divorce from reality.

In “The Idea of Order in key West,” Stevens defamiliarizes the Romantic figure of the woman singing along natural landscape. As he displaces the scene from its original context, Stevens aims to poetically convey a poetic perspective that creates a link between imagination and reality:

She sang beyond the genius of the sea.  
The water never formed to mind or voice,  
Like a body wholly body, fluttering  
Its empty sleeves; and yet its mimic motion  
Made constant cry, caused constantly a cry,  
That was not ours although we understood,  
Inhuman, of the veritable ocean.  
The sea was not a mask. No more was she.  
The song and water were not medleyed sound  
Even if what she sang was what she heard,  
Since what she sang was uttered word by word. (Stevens, *The Collected Poems* 128)

Like Wordsworth, Stevens describes a woman singing and interacting with the natural elements around her. Though the speaker refers to the sea as a genius, he actually notices the inability of water to construct coherent melodies. The sea formulates a mere “constant cry,” unable to be understood by the human ear: “That was not ours although we understood, Inhuman”(128). Though the woman is inspired by what she heard in the natural soundscape, her meaningful song is far from resembling the cacophony of the sea, which is presented as :

“Inhuman, of the veritable ocean”(128). Because it is unable to generate any meaningful utterances by its own, the speaker affirms that the sea stands only as the place where the woman walks: “For she was the maker of the song she sang./ The ever-hooded, tragic-gestured sea/Was merely a place by which she walked to sing” (129). Although he raises the possibility that the woman’s singing could be a mimetic reformulation of the sea’s sounds -“ If it was only the dark voice of the sea/.../ If it was only the outer voice of sky /.../And sound alone”(129) - the speaker concludes that the woman’s melody is by far superior: “ more than that, /More even than her voice, and ours, among /The meaningless plungings of water and the wind”(129). Through this poetical soundscape presentation, Stevens provides an important creative role to the woman, for her imaginative ability to transform the meaningless external reality into a coherent and meaningful entity. The closing lines of the poem resume the creative role of the woman, as she is presented as an artificer of the world, the maker of the song:

She was the single artificer of the world  
In which she sang. And when she sang, the sea,  
Whatever self it had, became the self  
That was her song, for she was the maker. (129)

Through this poem, Stevens conveys two key elements that are of a crucial importance in his aesthetics. First, unlike Wordsworth’s plain celebration of nature’s beauty, Stevens’ recognition of the cacophony of the water places him as a modernist poet reacting against Romantic poetry. Indeed, as he describes the water sound as a meaningless cry, Stevens conveys his acceptance of the disorder of real life, as it presents itself to the modern individual. Hence, far from considering nature as a refuge from the desolation of life, Stevens stands against the Romantic tradition, and clearly singles himself as a modernist poet who rejects the escapism that characterized 19<sup>th</sup> century poetry.

Secondly, Stevens' insistence on the significance of the song contradicts the inability of the listener to understand the words pronounced by the singer in Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper." Apparently, for Wordsworth, the conception of musical meaning is not as important as the ability of the music to transcend the listener from reality. This particular view is rejected in Stevens' poem, through his emphasis on the woman's creative ability at transforming the cacophony of the water into meaningful utterances. Hence, far from escaping reality through imagination, the poem proposes to explore reality via poetic imagination. As he reformulates the scene Wordsworth presents in "The Solitary Reaper," Stevens uses singing and soundscape descriptions of nature to convey his rejection of Romantic Imagination. By juxtaposing the woman's song in nature against the meaningless sound of water, Stevens conveys his modernist poetic ideal that substitutes Romantic escapism with a poetic duality that includes imagination and reality.

As he defamiliarizes the soundscape of the natural world and the figure of the woman differently from Wordsworth, Stevens aesthetically depicts the irrelevance of the Romantic tradition in his modernist poetry: "The new form makes its appearance not in order to express a new content, but rather, to replace an old form that has already outlived its artistic usefulness" (Shklovsky 20). Furthermore, Stevens' dissimilar use of nature's sounds from Wordsworth illustrates his transformation of the symbolic connotation given to soundscape by the Romantics. As he implements soundscape as a poetical device illustrating his poetic principles of imagination and reality, Stevens revisits the Romantic poetical significance of nature sounds, with a modernist connotation that best suits his poetry: "All acoustic symbolism, even that associated with archetypes, is slowly but steadily undergoing modification. . . . Transformations such as these will undoubtedly change the symbolism of such archetypes" (Schafer 169).



In “Esthétique du Mal,” the use of nature’s soundscape and musical metaphors further shows Stevens’ rejection of the Romantic solipsist adoration of nature. Although the poem has been interpreted as Stevens’ response to Baudelaire’s Aesthetics, it is worth noticing the soundscape material and musical metaphors relevant for this poem, and how they convey Stevens’ rejection of Romantic solipsism, as well as his ideal poetics of imagination and reality.

In the part X of the poem, the speaker’s evocation of the natural setting and of the cricket’s chant aesthetically reminds the reader of the Romantics’ tendency to implement nature’s sounds in their poetry. Nevertheless, Stevens’ cricket is described as being indifferent to human crises. The “indifferent crickets” (Stevens, *The Collected Poems* 321) chant through humanity’s “indifferent crises” because nature is free, and exists independently from human intellectual reasoning. Accordingly, the Romantic plain celebration of nature is rejected, since fusing with elements that are indifferent to us contradicts the reciprocity Romantics pretend to have with their natural surroundings:

Here in the west indifferent crickets chant  
Through our indifferent crises. Yet we require  
Another chant, an incantation, as in  
Another and later genesis, music  
That buffets the shapes of its possible halcyon  
Against the haggardie . . . A loud, large water  
Bubbles up in the night and drowns the crickets' sound. (321)

In contrast to this poetic presentation, Keats, in his poem “On the Grasshopper and Cricket,” portrays the beauty of nature by taking into account the song of two particular insects, the grasshopper and the cricket. Keats assumes that “The Poetry of earth is never dead” (Keats 44), as it continuously sends us elements of joy during the four seasons of the year. While birds

hide in summer from the hot sun and stop singing in order to rest, nature continues to send joy to its auditory, as the grasshopper takes the lead:

When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,  
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run  
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead;  
That is the Grasshopper's—he takes the lead. (44)

Likewise, in winter, nature also emanates joy via its quiet auditory to human beings. When winter arrives, and all creatures shelter from the cold, the cricket's song emerges to interrupt the "wrought" silence of the setting: "On a lone winter evening, when the frost /Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills /The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever" (45). Keats illustrates the harmonious union between man and nature that the Romantics tend to celebrate, and presents nature as consciously conveying joy via the cricket's song, despite the cold and silence of winter evenings. In contrast with such solipsist view, Stevens' poetically reacts to the cricket's indifferent songs, and requires "Another chant, an incantation, as in /Another and later genesis, music/That buffets the shapes of its possible halcyon" (Stevens, *The Collected Poems* 321). The sound of the cricket's drowning - "Bubbles up in the night and drowns the crickets' sound" - stands for Stevens' search for the "reverberating psalm, the right chorale" (326), that is a possible musical metaphor for his poetics of imagination and reality. As he defamiliarizes the romantic soundscape of the cricket's sound, Stevens conveys his modernist poetics of imagination and reality as a substitute to the escapist tendencies of 19<sup>th</sup> century poets. Interestingly enough, Stevens' idea of imagination and reality is also musically represented in the poem, through the metaphor of the pianist B., and the listener's comments over his playing:

When B. sat down at the piano and made  
A transporence in which we heard music, made music,

In which we heard transparent sounds, did he play  
All sorts of notes? Or did he play only one  
In an ecstasy of its associates,  
Variations in the tones of a single sound,  
The last, or sounds so single they seemed one? (316)

The speaker refers to the sound B produces on his instrument as “a transparence.” This assumption leads him to question whether the pianist is using different musical notes, or just one single note that is perceived differently by the audience. As he juxtaposes the music produced by the musician against its auditory perception, Stevens translates, through the pianist’s metaphor, the function of imagination at transforming reality. As B. is playing his partition, the speaker, through his questioning, suggests that the music played is, in reality, just a “a single sound,” that is transformed to “all sorts of notes” thanks to imagination. Thus, it is the “ecstasy” of the listener’s association of sounds in his mind that creates the melody, which originates from one single sound. Hence, similar to the woman’s song in “The Idea of Order at Key West,” the external sound of the piano is imperfect and deprived of musical meaning on its own. Thanks to the creative imaginative process of the musician and the audience, the meaningless note is given a musical meaning.

In “How The Paradoxical Relationship Between Reality and Imagination Works in Wallace Stevens’ ‘Esthetique du Mal’, ” Deskovich Jackie clearly asserts that among “ the fifteen smaller poems that make up the poem as a whole, the conflicting relationship between reality and imagination is explored in a number of different ways: Stevens' poem is really a series of paradoxes but none are greater than the major conflict of the poem, the tension between imagination and reality” (Deskovich 74). Hence, despite representing a poetic answer to Baudelaire’s aesthetics, the poem conveys, through its arguments, a necessary link between imagination and reality. In *Baudelaire and Stevens: "L'Esthetique du Mal"*, Raymond P.

Poggenburg argues that, although Baudelaire's poetry differs essentially from the Romantics, it results, according to Stevens, in the same poetic divorce from the real world: "Baudelaire's poetic world did not have enough reality, depended too much upon incantation, was too much removed from "things as they are" (Poggenburg 8). Because imagination, for Stevens, needs inevitably to meet with the real world, his criticism of Baudelaire's aesthetics reveals the same arguments he presents against the Romantics: the necessity to reconcile poetic imagination with immediate reality. Far from pretending to resume Stevens' relation with Baudelaire to this single explanation, our interpretation is mainly motivated by the poet's use of nature's sounds and musical metaphors, as a poetic representation of his skepticism towards poetic solipsism. Hence, while dealing thematically with Stevens' relation to Baudelaire's aesthetics, the poem also translates Stevens' dissatisfaction with Romantic solipsism through musical metaphors and natural scenes originally implemented in Romantic poetry. Via soundscape defamiliarization, along with the musical metaphor of the pianist, Stevens attributes to imagination an ordering element that links it to modernist reality.

### **3. Stevens' Music Against Eliot's Objective Poetry**

By reconciling imagination with reality, Stevens not only responded to the Romantics, but also proposed a poetical art different from Eliot's aesthetics. While Eliot conceived a poetry that pictures an objective vision of the modern world, Stevens believed that poetic depiction is inevitably undetachable from the poet's creative imagination. Accordingly, Stevens conveys the destruction of traditional reality, with a poetic definition that relates the perception of reality to the imaginative potential of the poet's mind. In his poem "The Man with the Blue Guitar," Stevens resumes this view through the musician's struggle to fully represent reality verbatim in his music. As he enters into a debate with the audience, the musician's answers illustrate Stevens' poetic vision on the inevitable connectedness between reality and imagination:

They said, "You have a blue guitar,

You do not play things as they are.”

The man replied, “Things as they are

Are changed upon the blue guitar.” (165)

When the audience asks the musician why the music he plays is not the exact representation of things as they are, the guitarist responds by explaining that “Things as they are / Are changed upon the blue guitar” (165). Throughout the ‘Blue Guitar,’ “things as they are” are perceived, filtered, and transformed. Hence, far from blindly imitating the real world, the artist uses his instrument as a medium by which a mechanism of imaginative transformation takes place. In the following passage, the guitarist clearly affirms that an exact copy of the real world is impossible to achieve. Nevertheless, far from composing a song totally divorced from reality, the artist attempts to represent the world as close as he can. This results into an art that captures Stevens’ ideal poetic equilibrium between reality and imagination:

I cannot bring a world quite round,

Although I patch it as I can.

I sing a hero's head, large eye

And bearded bronze, but not a man,

Although I patch him as I can

And reach through him almost to man. (165)

Reproducing reality is as impossible as drawing a perfect circle. While the head, the eye and the beard are all compositional parts of the depicted hero, the finished artistic product remains dependent upon the musician’s perspective. As he affirms to patch the hero’s head as realistically as possible “And reach through him almost to man” (165), the musician illustrates a strong duality between his imaginative potential as an artist, and the reality that he attempts to represent in his song. This duality is particularly represented in the poem via the close

correlation between the guitar and the musician. Although the artist and his musical instrument are evidently two distinct entities, their collaborative work at reshaping reality is as strong as it becomes difficult for the musician to clearly differentiate himself from the guitar: “Where/Do I begin and end? And where, /As I strum the thing, do I pick up/That which momentarily declares/Itself not to be I and yet/Must be” (171). Because his imaginative potential is part of his subjective self, it is impossible for the guitarist to dissociate himself from his instrument. In his comment, Stevens asserts that: “Although the blue guitar is a symbol of the imagination, it is used most often simply as reference to the individuality of the poet” (Milton 71). Hence, because it is impossible for the artist to successfully transcend his individuality, picturing reality verbatim is also an impossible task.

Because poetic depiction is always dependent on the poet’s perspective, Stevens realizes that the meaning of a poem is not the quest towards absolute truth, but rather an aesthetic representation of the poet’s imaginative perception of the physical world. In this concern, Stevens defines modern reality as “a reality of decreation, in which our revelations are not the revelations of belief, but the precious portents of our own powers” (Stevens, *The Necessary Angel* 750). Unlike Eliot’s objective depiction of the fragmented modernity, Stevens’ distinct point of view offers the possibility to conceive a meaningful poetic reality that takes its ordering from the imaginative potential of the poet.

In “Jouga,” Stevens depicts this poetic possibility through the metaphor of the musician and his instrument. The speaker explicitly presents the physical world as meaningless: “The physical world is meaningless tonight and there is no other.” (Stevens, *The Collected Poems* 337). As he affirms that there is no other physical world, Stevens illustrates his deviation from Romantic escapism, and accepts to deal with the chaos of reality. As much as “The Man with The Blue Guitar,” Stevens metaphorically represents the poet’s imaginative potential to bring order to reality, via the image of the guitarist and his instrument. If both the musician and the

guitar are depicted as beasts, their collaborative artistic work is capable of transcending the meaningless physical world through the artist's imagination:

There is Ha-eé-me, who sits  
And plays his guitar. Ha-eé-me is a beast.  
Or perhaps his guitar is a beast or perhaps they are  
Two beasts. But of the same kind - two conjugal beasts.  
Ha-eé-me is the male beast...an imbecile,  
Who knocks out a noise. The guitar is another beast  
Beneath his tip-tap-tap. It is she that responds.  
Two beasts but two of a kind and then not beasts. (337)

If the poet relies exclusively on reality, all that he is capable of formulating is his depiction of the meaningless physical world. Yet, relying on his poetic imagination, the poet is capable to resolve the modern meaninglessness and make it more tolerable. This idea is metaphorically evoked in the quoted passage through the musician and his instrument. While the musician and the guitar are beasts on their own, the fusion between them reconciles harmony. The last line of the poem conveys the fusion of the two beasts, the guitar and the musician, which results in no beasts at all: "Two beasts but two of a kind and then not beasts" (337). Viewed from this perspective, although modern reality is meaningless, as it is explicitly presented in the opening lines of the poem, the role of the artist is to give such reality a consequent meaning through his artistic and creative imagination.

In "Jumbo," Stevens uses, once again, the image of a musician playing on his musical instrument, to represent the possibility to settle the chaos of reality by using poetic imagination. The artist is metaphorically described as plucking trees through his music: "The trees were plucked like iron bars / And jumbo, the loud general-large / Singsonged and singsonged, wildly free." (269). This scene connotes that the external nature is just the raw material used by the

artist to transform reality. In the following lines, the musician is presented as a companion to nothingness, suggesting his ability to create meaning out of the nothingness perceived in the physical world:

Who was the musician, fatly soft  
And wildly free, whose clawing thumb  
Clawed on the ear these consonants?  
Who the transformer, himself transformed,  
Whose single being, single form  
Were their resemblances to ours?  
The companion in nothingness. (269)

Hence, as in the previous musical examples, the musician is capable to transcend the meaningless reality via his imaginative process of artistic transformation. Accordingly, as much as Romantic poets, Stevens implements soundscape as a poetic device that symbolically captures his poetic theory of poetry. If some musical examples illustrate Stevens' defamiliarization of romantic soundscape as a rejection of Romantic solipsism, other musical metaphors illustrate Stevens' modernist substitutes for Romantic aesthetics.

As demonstrated by Shafer, soundscape and musical symbolism undergoes slow and continuous modifications. Through his modernist use of musical metaphors, Stevens demonstrates his transformation of soundscape symbolism in poetry in a way that best represents his poetics of imagination and reality: "All acoustic symbolism, even that associated with archetypes, is slowly but steadily undergoing modification...Transformations such as these will undoubtedly change the symbolism of such archetypes" (Shafer 169).



Interestingly enough, Stevens' divergent attitude against Eliot's objective poetry is noticeable not only from these evident musical metaphors, but also through the implementation of soundscape descriptions Eliot uses in his poetry. Hence, as much as his musical answer to the Romantics, Stevens defamiliarizes some musical ideas Eliot implemented in his poems, in order to give them a fresh connotation that better suits his poetic ideas.

It is important to remind the reader that, despite soundscape studies, my comparative interpretation relies on a Russian Formalist perspective. Hence, through a comparable use of auditory material in their poems, both Eliot and Stevens illustrate how they differently defamiliarized poetic materials in order to affirm their distinct positions as modernist poets.

I would like to start by comparing Stevens' "page from a Tale," and its soundscape contrast, with Eliot's "The Dry Salvages." In "The Dry Salvages," the speaker evokes different sea voices, whose connotation evokes crying, pain, and alarm: "The sea howl and the sea yelp, are different voices / Often together heard: the whine in the rigging, / The menace and caress of wave that breaks on water" (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 191). Eliot ends up evoking how humanity commodified the sea as a means of transportation: "Useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyor of commerce; / Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges. / The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten (191). Despite the evident religious theme inherent to the poem, Eliot's stylistic use of images and auditory material still retains here his disregard against the Romantic's view on the harmonious union between man and nature. Far from the Romantic desire to meet with nature, the sea's sound evokes a rather antagonistic relation between man and the natural world. In a similar way, Stevens in "page from a Tale" evokes different voices coming from the sea. Yet, unlike Eliot's voices of pain and alarm that are "Often together heard," the speaker in Stevens' poem is able to extract a coherent meaning from nature's acoustic cacophony. Accordingly, Stevens' rejection of Romantic escapism does not prevent him from adopting imagination to resolve the chaos of modernity:

The sea was frozen solid and Hans heard,  
By his drift-fire, on the shore, the difference  
Between loud water and loud wind, between that  
Which has no accurate syllables and that  
Which cries so blau and cries again so lind  
U nd so lau, between sound without meaning and speech,  
Of clay and wattles made as it ascends  
And hear it as it fans in the deep heart's core. (Stevens, *The Collected Poems* 421)

Through his capacity to distinguish “between sound without meaning,” as perceived in nature, and the meaningful speech produced out “Of clay and wattles made,” the speaker conveys the ability to reorder nature via imagination. In the same manner as a sculptor who shapes argil and clay to transform the disordered soil into meaningful manufactured objects, the poet also uses the cacophonous sounds of water, among other elements of external reality, to transform them into meaningful speech. While Eliot used sea sounds to illustrate his tendency toward an objective depiction of modern chaos, Stevens’ use of sea voices illustrates his tendency toward accepting poetic imagination as an ordering agent for the fragmented modern world.

Stevens’ occasional use of comparable soundscape material is also noticeable in “Infanta Marina”. In this poem, the implementation of the siren’s figure interestingly contrasts against the singing of Prufrock’s mermaids:

She made of the motions of her wrist  
The grandiose gestures  
Of her thought.  
The rumpling of the plumes  
Of this creature of the evening

Came to be sleights of sails  
Over the sea....  
Partaking of the sea,  
And of the evening,  
As they flowed around  
And uttered their subsiding sound. (7-8)

On the surface, “Infanta Marina,” i.e., “Spanish princess of the sea.” suggests a woman walking along the shore. Yet, through significant descriptions, the woman is comparable to a sea creature. The woman is certainly “partaking of the sea,” as she roams along the beach. She is making grandiose gestures, articulating her thoughts, and bringing them into being. This process of “rumpling” becomes part of the seascape, as the woman is simultaneously master of the night, and subordinated to it. The scene evokes the reciprocity between the woman and her milieu, as her thoughts are bound up in the world around her, and vice-versa. As he describes this established duality, Stevens conveys once again the poetic inter-relatedness of imagination with reality. In contrast to this poetical scene, Eliot’s seaside and the mermaid’s song he describes in “Prufrock” illustrate the pathetic attempts of the protagonist at escaping the reality from which he feels alienated. Although the speaker is able to listen to the mermaids singing, he remains alienated, as they refuse to communicate with him. Unlike Stevens’ protagonist, who is capable to fuse with the external world through her imagination, Prufrock’s drowning at the end of the poem shows the irrelevance of imagination as a valuable solution for the alienated modernity. Indeed, Prufrock’s wandering along the sea accentuates his social isolation, instead of bringing him any sense of relief. Though both Eliot and Stevens used the mermaid’s song in their poems, its distinct integration illustrates their divergent points of view as poets responding to the Romantics. While the mermaids in “Prufrock” are just creatures

belonging to the world of imagination, the duality between the sea creature and reality in Stevens' poem evokes the possibility of a reconciliation between imagination and reality.

### **Conclusion**

With regards to the analysis conducted throughout this chapter, one may understand that music and soundscape descriptions, as skilfully used by T.S Eliot and Wallace, clearly illustrates their distinct reactions against Romantic musical aesthetics. Using musical metaphors comparable to those implemented by Romantic poets, Eliot defamiliarizes those forms of expression from their original context, in order to illustrate the aesthetic irrelevance of Romantic escapism in modern times. The auditory soundscape that characterizes his poetry of the city illustrates his decision to deal with the fragmented modern reality, instead of adopting the Romantic's poetic escapism.

As he reconciles poetic imagination with reality, Stevens negates both Romantic solipsism and Eliot's poetic objectivism. As much as Eliot, some of Steven's musical metaphors reveal his defamiliarization of Romantic material, to express his skepticism towards Romantic escapist tendencies. Nevertheless, his insistence on the role of poetic imagination at bringing order to modern reality is poetically reflected through musical metaphors and soundscape descriptions that deny Eliot's objectivism. By comparing how Eliot and Stevens use musical metaphors, and soundscape descriptions in their poems, one gets a clear picture of the poetic use of music as an aesthetics that connotes the poets' divergent positions regarding Romantic imagination and solipsism.

### **Chapter III: Music as a Religious Poetical analogy**

#### **Introduction**

The third chapter of this thesis treats on Stevens' and Eliot's use of musical metaphors and Soundscape as poetical devices that stylistically reveal their contrasting religious orientations and distinct spiritual sensibilities. To achieve this aim, I propose a comparison between Dante's use of music in *The Divine Comedy*, and the distinct poetico-musical reactions Eliot and Stevens share against their medieval predecessor. My choice of *The Divine Comedy* as a touch stone to my musico poetical comparison is motivated by the following arguments: As a medieval poet who lived during an era where religion dominated the intellectual and social ideas of the time, Dante's use of musical metaphors and soundscape in his long poem represents a truthful poetical starting point that documents the well-known religious and spiritual connotations associated to music in poetry. Furthermore, the pre-established criticism that links Eliot poetical career to the structure of *The Divine Comedy* makes Dante's poem an interesting corpus to consider when dealing with the religious poetical significance of music in Eliot's and Stevens' verses.

As he poetically explores the Christian medieval world-view of the afterlife, Dante initiates an imaginative journey from "Inferno," "Purgatory," and "Paradisio," and evokes a systematic auditory and musical analogy that associates cacophony to the suffering of damned souls in hell; monophonic singing psalms to the purgation of souls in "Purgatorio ;" and polyphonic divine music of the spheres to the souls purified in heaven. Eliot's adaptation of those musical ideas with the same religious connotation in his poetry highlights the influence of the medieval poet on Eliot. Yet, because Eliot's religious theme relates to modern society, the poet swerves away from verbatim imitations, and adapts Dante's medieval religious soundscape in a way that best suits his modernist poetical needs. This is illustrated by Eliot's use of cacophonous narration and chaotic singing in "The Waste land," by his implementation

of an auditory's quest toward salvation in "Ash Wednesday," as well as by his appropriation of the musical concept of the divine unheard music of the spheres from Dante's "Paradisio" in "Four Quartets". Unlike Eliot's soundscape adaptations, Stevens turns Dante's musical religious connotations upside-down. Indeed, Stevens used cacophony to evoke the irrelevance of the religious institution in modern times, and suggests more pleasing musical experiences when proposing poetry and his 'supreme fiction' as a profane spiritual substitute.

By comparing the way Eliot and Stevens reacted to Dante's text, and how they distinctively adapted its soundscape devices, I demonstrate how music and soundscape serve both poets to affirm their dissimilar religious sensibilities. Along with soundscape criticism, I rely on Harold Bloom's theory of literary influence. Relying on the six revisionary ratios Blooms developed in his work, *The anxiety of Influence* will provide me with the necessary theoretical framework to clearly describe Eliot's and Stevens' divergent reactions against the influence of their precursor Dante Alighieri.

## **I. Music in Dante's *The Divine Comedy*: From Cacophony to the Music of the Spheres**

In his long poem *The Divine Comedy*, Dante explores the medieval world-view of the afterlife as it had been interpreted in the Western Church during the 14th century. As Dante relates the journey of the protagonist through "Inferno," "Purgatorio," and "Paradisio," the poet evokes the hierarchy of the after world, its division and organization, according to the religious and Christian world view of the time. Despite the poetical recording of medieval Christian beliefs, and the important historical and political figures Dante documents in this long poem, the novelistic methods of representations implemented in *The Divine Comedy* have left a lasting impression on the Western imagination and fine arts. This includes the visual imagination Dante uses in the poem to describe settings, scenes, and the souls, as well as his preoccupation to details that establishes the distinct moods of heaven, hell, and purgatory. In

this regards, Stockton Axon describes Dante as a word-painter, who inspired, through his use of color and visual imagery, a number of artists, among them Giotto di Bondone:

References to Dante as word-painter are strewn through “Modern Painters,” “Stones of Venice,” “Val d’Arno,” and others of Ruskin’s works. Ruskin emphasizes what he calls “the precision of the medieval eye for color,” and undertakes, by several analyses, to show that Dante “distinguishes color precisely as a painter would.” In language scarcely less luminous than Dante’s own, he analyzes Dante’s faculty of painting flame, concluding a passage, too long to read, with, “It is lambent annihilation.” He dwells on Dante’s “treatment” (in the painter’s sense of the word) of forests, rocks, and mountains. He compares Dante with Giotto, as two artists working in different media, both characterized by strong intellectual powers. Of course, Dante appealed equally to Ruskin as moralist and mystic: Ruskin pauses in the Ducal Palace in Venice to discuss Dante’s gradations of vice and the “profound truth,” as he calls it, of placing Sadness in so deep a hell-pit, the fifth circle, and comments on the “guilt of sadness.”

(Axson 243)

Hence, despite its religious themes, and its historical recordings of important political figures of the time, *The Divine Comedy* holds an artistic and aesthetic value that inspires artists in different fields. In this concern, the visual quality of the poem Stockton Axon deals with in his article is not the only sticking stylistic element of the poem. Indeed, Dante constant reliance on soundscape and musical descriptions in his poem is of an equal importance. Although the academic contributions to Dante’s relation to music are not as numerous as those dedicated to visual arts and painting, musical aesthetics in Dante’s text still play an important role at revealing the themes and moods of the poem. In “Music as Mirror: Dante's Treatment of Music in the Divine Comedy,” Kristina Aste points to the abundant musical references in Dante’s

text. She actually refers to a precise established parallelism between the music described in the poem and the protagonist's path from hell to, purgatory, to paradise:

From the crude cacophony of Inferno to the celestial music of the spheres in Paradise, music abounds in *The Divine Comedy*. The text contains one hundred and forty-six references to music: twenty-nine in Inferno, fifty-nine in Purgatory, and fifty-seven in Paradise. Rich in hymns and liturgical songs, including "Regina Coelis", "Gloria", "Sanctus", "Miserere", "Agnus Dei", "Te Deum Laudamus", and "In Exitu Israel", *The Divine Comedy* also features instruments of all kinds: drums, horns, trumpets, harps, kitharas, and lutes. There are choirs, polyphonic choruses, and even dances, from the fickleness of Dame Fortune in Inferno to the joyful symmetries of the blessed in Paradise. (Aste 66)

Another major contribution to the subject was published by Francesco Ciabattoni. In his influential work *Dante's Journey to Polyphony*, Ciabattoni draws on the same pattern evoked by Kristina Aste. He describes Dante's path through "Inferno," "Purgatorio," and "Paradisio," as a musical journey from cacophony and monophony towards polyphony:

The evolution of the inherently musical discourse from cacophony in Inferno, through an essentially monophonic soundscape in Purgatorio, to a polyphonic environment in Paradisio, is affected on musical, rhetorical, and theological levels. While infernal music is cast as a parodic reversal of sacred songs, the purgatorial poetics of desire are associated with monophony. The plainsong of the atoning souls, who are struggling with pain or breaking into sobs, express the longing for the mathematical and musical harmony of the universe. This desire culminates and is fulfilled in the polyphonic performances in heaven. (Ciabattoni 06)

In the first section of this chapter, I bring further evidences to Kristina Aste's and Francesco Ciabattoni's musical interpretations of the poem. Relying on a soundscape



perspective, I propose a musical analogy to the poem, and associate Dante's voyage from Inferno to Purgatorio and Paradiso to three distinct musical concepts, namely: cacophony, monophony, and polyphony. As the pilgrim moves from eternal damnation, to purgation, to paradise, the musical, auditory, and soundscape descriptions featured in the text progressively evolve from cacophonous anti-musical noises, to monophonic religious singing of purgation, and then to polyphonic divine tunes of paradise. Through this systematic layering of poetical materials, Dante provides to his text a musical logic that follows the thematic evolution and chronology of the poem. My contribution to this topic consists at closely scrutinizing examples from the poem, proposing a detailed consideration to some musical examples featured in the text.

### **1. Dante's Hell as a Cacophonous place of Damnation**

Dante's extensive reliance on music and soundscape in *The Divine Comedy* could be related to the religious and spiritual connotations associated to the musical art in the medieval era. In "Music in The Divine Comedy," Barbara Smyth mentions Dante's passion for the musical art during his life time, and relates his use of musical imagery in *The Divine Comedy* to the spiritual connotation associated to music in medieval culture:

The art of music has a very important place in Dante's Comedia, and there are several reasons which make it a matter for no surprise that this should be the case. Firstly, music has always been associated with worship...Secondly, music was very extensively studied in Dante's time, and certain branches of the art had been brought to a high pitch of perfection. Thirdly, Dante himself had, besides a considerable knowledge, a very real and intimate love of music, as is attested by his biographers Boccaccio and Bruni... (Smyth 649)

Accordingly, despite the biographical evidences that show Dante's love for music, the religious significance of music in medieval times is a major reason for its extensive use in the

Comedia. In this concern, Augustine's view on the spiritual value of music illustrates a socio-theological consideration to singing and music in the religious life of medieval Christians, as he claimed that: " 'The one who sings prays twice' (sometimes given as 'The one who sings well prays twice' or 'Whoever sings [to God in worship] prays twice'" (Linman 66). Augustine linked music to salvation and spiritual elevation. He noted that music deepens the life of prayers, as the "embodied qualities of music making carry the Word into ourselves and employ multiple dimensions of our physicality and experience" (66). By means of various practices, music "can carry us in our imaginations and experiences to the ends of the earth such that we grow in appreciation for the gift of cultural diversity" (66), and grasp a "sense of the rich tapestry [of the] human family" (66). From such comments, it is clear that music and singing in medieval times were considered as symbols of divine order, hence the omnipresence of music in churches, including chants, hymns, psalm, and liturgical songs.

Taking into account the traditional religious significance associated with music, the evocation of harmonious melodies, liturgical singing and hymns could easily connote religious salvation and God's mercy in poetry. Following this line of thoughts, lack of musical harmony, dissonance, and cacophony could, by deduction and analogy, suggest spiritual bareness and religious decay. Because sinners in Dante's "Inferno" are condemned to eternal damnation, music as a spiritual source of redemption is absent from the poem. Indeed, Dante stripped the Inferno from any harmonious music, featuring instead an exclusive use of cacophony and annoying sounds of torture, that emphasize the eternal damnation of the sinners. Through this distinct use of soundscape, Dante implicitly highlights the absence of redemptive music in hell, and reveals his strong reliance on auditory imagination to picture the image of hell in his poetry.

Straight from Canto I, the presentation of the setting evokes a visual and acoustic description that hints to Dante's strong reliance on soundscape:

Midway upon the journey of our life

I found myself within a forest dark,  
For the straightforward pathway had been lost.

...

But after I had reached a mountain's foot,  
At that point where the valley terminated,

...

Which, coming on against me by degrees  
Thrust me back thither where the sun is silent.

(Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Trans Longfellow 04)

Dante is introduced in a dark forest, observing a “a silent sun” above the mountain.

The religious connotation associated to this description is very evocative. As explained in the following quote, silence in the Bible is synonymous for religious demise and darkness: “The more poetical signification of silence is darkness rather than absolute deprivation of sound. Silence has the force of ineffectual...” (Alighieri and Parsons 69). As he associates the image of sunlight to silence, Dante suggests the hidden difficulties that are awaiting the protagonist during his voyage towards spiritual redemption. In Canto V, Dante describes light as dumb. As much as the opening lines of the poem, this example illustrates Dante’s mix of visual and auditory description to convey the difficulties that await the protagonist during his quest: “I came into a place mute of all light, / Which bellows as the sea does in a tempest” (Alighieri 16). By associating visual and acoustic imagery, Dante hints to his strong poetical reliance on the sense of hearing as an aesthetical tool of representation.

Indeed, Dante displays in “Inferno” an extensive use of unmusical cacophonous noises and unpleasant cries, that convey the desolate situation of sinners and their spiritual bareness. In some instances, as in Canto III, sounds and auditory soundscape precede the visual descriptions associated to the scene:

There sighs, complaints, and ululations loud  
Resounded through the air without a star,  
Whence I, at the beginning, wept thereat.  
Languages diverse, horrible dialects,  
Accents of anger, words of agony,  
And voices high and hoarse, with sound of hands,  
Made up a tumult that goes whirling on  
For ever in that air for ever black,  
Even as the sand doth, when the whirlwind breathes. (10)

Dante describes the sound produced out of tortured souls as featuring complains, accents of anger, loud ululations and horrible incomprehensible attempts of speech. In a verse translated version written by Allen Mandelbaum, these same sounds are described as “Strange utterances, horrible pronouncements, Accents of anger, words of suffering,” (Alighieri, *a Verse Translation* 22). Through this soundscape description, Dante pictures the Inferno as a place of torture and damnation. Virgil’s comments on those suffering souls employ a musical choir metaphor, that actually accentuates the cacophony of the scene, portraying the bare spiritual situation of the souls:

And he to me: "This miserable mode  
Maintain the melancholy souls of those  
Who lived withouten infamy or praise.  
Commingle are they with that caitiff choir  
Of Angels, who have not rebellious been,  
Nor faithful were to God, but were for self.

The heavens expelled them, not to be less fair;  
Nor them the nethermore abyss receives,  
For glory none the damned would have from them. (10)

Virgil first introduces the sinners as people who have deliberately chosen neither good nor evil in their life, “Who lived withouten infamy or praise” (10). Because of their in-between situation, these souls are kept with neutral angels, the angels who have chosen neither God nor Satan, as a spiritual guide: “Commingled are they with that caitiff choir / Of Angels, who have not rebellious been/ Nor faithful were to God, but were for self” (10). Through the description, the souls appear as forming a wicked choir, a “caitiff choir Of Angels,” moving in a circular motion: “And I, who looked again, beheld a banner, /Which, whirling round, ran on so rapidly, / That of all pause it seemed to me indignant” (10). Even though a religious choir is formed initially out of a group of singers organized harmonically and melodically to celebrate God’s mercy, the sinners and the neutral angels are presented here in a group circle, producing cacophonous sounds, in a symbolic celebration of their suffering and punishment in hell: “A fitting form of symbolic retribution, their punishment is a lowly imitation of the angelic wheels: they are arrayed in a circle and must forever spin, fixing their attention on a meaningless and yet unreachable banner (...), instead of looking to God in whom all truth lies” (Ciabattoni 78). Dante defamiliarizes in this passage the musical religious concept of the choir and puts it in the context of suffering souls in Inferno to suggest their eternal damnation in hell. In the circle where the gluttonous are lying on the ground, we encounter: “Cerberus the demon, who so thunders over the souls that they would fain be deaf” (Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Trans Longfellow 20). This clearly illustrates how the chaotic and shrill non-musical sounds function as an auditory punishment for the damned souls in Inferno.

Despite the sounds of torture, Dante’s ironic use of musical instruments further contributes to the unmusical setting that surrounds hell, and highlights the absence of melodic

and harmonious content as an auditory punishment. In canto XXXI, on his way toward the ninth and last circle of hell, the protagonist evokes the darkness of the forest and the difficulty to find his path. In such gloomy and dark setting, it is the sound of a horn that directs Dante and Virgil toward their destination. Although the sound enables the questers to find their path, the horn isn't described as healing or redemptive. Instead, its sound is as loud and unpleasant as to make thunder sounds weak and feeble:

There it was less than night, and less than day,  
So that my sight went little in advance;  
But I could hear the blare of a loud horn,  
So loud it would have made each thunder faint,  
Which, counter to it following its way,  
Mine eyes directed wholly to one place (99).

In this passage, the horn appears among the annoying and terrifying sounds Dante uses to establish the cacophonous soundscape of "Inferno." As an instrument, the horn is unsuitable for any melodic or harmonic musical use because it produces only one single musical note. Furthermore, the lines that follow inform us that such tremendous horns' sound is performed by the giant Nimrod, who is a sinner among the damned souls in hell: "Then said to me: "He doth himself accuse;/ This one is Nimrod, by whose evil thought / One language in the world is not still used" (100). In the Bible, Nimrod, the king of Babylon, is responsible for the building of the Tower of Babel, a doomed project which ended up with God's anger, breaking up man's single language into thousands of different dialects and tongues and condemning Nimrod to Hell: "According to a medieval and patristic tradition that probably arose from the Genesis, Nimrod was the deviser of the Tower of Babel on the plain of Shinar...Nimrod built the Tower of Babel in Babylon, where the mixture of languages and confusion of tongues occurred..." (Alighieri and Singleton 572). Because he provoked God's anger, Nimrod is condemned to

hell. In Dante's poem, Nimrod is presented as producing horrible sounds with his horn, as a form of punishment for his sins. When he tries to use language to communicate with Dante, all that Nimrod is capable of producing are meaningless utterances, that Dante compares to psalms: " 'Raphael mai amech izabi almi,' / Began to clamour the ferocious mouth, / To which were not befitting sweeter psalms" (Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Trans Longfellow 100). By comparing such meaningless utterances to a psalm, Dante highlights the religious musical meaningfulness of the scene. To the same degree that music is turned into cacophony, singed psalms, that originally represent harmonious and spiritual elevation to God, are turned into meaningless pronouncements of suffering and annoying sounds of a horn. As an answer to his babbling, Virgil asks emphatically Nimrod to shut up and stick to his cacophonic instrument: "And unto him my Guide: "Soul idiotic, / Keep to thy horn, and vent thyself with that,"/When wrath or other passion touches thee" (100). Dante's deliberate choice in using the horn as a non-melodic instrument suggests the absence of harmonious music as a spiritual punishment to Nimrod and other damned sinners in hell.

In canto XX, Dante similarly extends his use of cacophonic musical instruments as a form of punishment. As Dante, the pilgrim, and Virgil meet with sinners who falsified in the course of their life, Dante perceives a man whose body is shaped like that of a lute. This physically deformed sinner identifies himself as Master Adam, a man who counterfeited coins during the course of his life:

I saw one made in fashion of a lute,  
If he had only had the groin cut off  
Just at the point at which a man is forked.  
The heavy dropsy, that so disproportions  
The limbs with humours, which it ill concocts,  
That the face corresponds not to the belly,

Compelled him so to hold his lips apart

As does the hectic, who because of thirst

One tow'rds the chin, the other upward turns. (96)

As much as Nimrod's horn evokes spiritual defeat, Adam's lute-shaped body evokes suffering in hell. Because of his physical deformity, Adam is unable to move. As he learns that some of his friends are condemned in hell, Adam wonders about his aptitude to move and join them: "If I were only still so light, that in/A hundred years /I could advance one inch, / I had already started on the way" (97).

Through these soundscapes and musical illustrations from the text, we understand that Dante turned the traditional religious and spiritual connotations associated to music upside down, so as to represent the demise of the souls in Inferno, who are doomed to perpetual cacophony, as a form of punishment for their unforgivable sins.

## **2. "Purgatorio" and the Monophonic Healing Hymns**

As its name suggests, Purgatorio is the place where human spirits are purged before being given access to paradise. Unlike "Inferno," "Purgatorio" conveys punishment as a way to get cleansed from our sins in order to access paradise. Thus, far from being trapped in a perpetual endless suffering, souls in Purgatorio are still hoping for God's mercy to enter paradise. This spiritual situation, that differs from that of the damned souls in hell, finds a parallel in Dante's use of sounds and music in "Purgatorio." Unlike the preceding scenes, which are dominated by an acoustic disorder and absence of musical meaning, "Purgatorio" features prayers in the form of songs, hymns, and psalms, as forms of healing and continual progress toward divine salvation. This idea of singing as a symbolic call for religious forgiveness is a pre-established concept found in different religious writings. In Augustine's view, praying to God through singing gives voice to our heart and calls the divine healer to cure us from our sins: "With an appropriate voice and harmony in our hearts we seek a



physician so as to be healed... Our soul alone is capable of singing, but we must pray for God's healing hand to cure the wound of sin" (Ciabattoni 112). In his definition of hymn, Augustine makes singing a mandatory condition. Without singing, a hymn would be rather just a mere prayer:

Hymns are songs containing the praise of God. Praise, if not of God, is no Hymn; God's praise, if not sung, is no hymn. A hymn must be three things: praise, of God, and must be sung. Whoever sings *praise*, not only praises, but does so with gladness: whoever sings praise, not only sings, but loves the one sung. Praise is the proclamation of one confession, singing the affection of one loving. (Haller76)

Such considerations about singing in religious practices highlight the spiritual connotation associated to music in the Christian tradition. As "Purgatorio" is the place where souls get purified from their deeds, the implementation of hymns, songs, and liturgical singing represents the best musical tools that enable Dante to establish a musical religious contrast against the cacophony of "Inferno."

From the first introductory lines of Canto I, Dante initiates an analogy that associates singing to spiritual redemption. Having left Hell behind, Dante and Virgil find themselves on the island of Mount Purgatory, at the dawn of a new day. Dante and Virgil are presented as sailing through calm waters, leaving the cruel waters of the inferno behind: "To run o'er better waters hoists its sail / The little vessel of my genius now, / That leaves behind itself a sea so cruel" (Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Trans Longfellow 248). In this same introductory scene, Dante invokes some muses to help him rise from Hell's deadly realm, and compares his journey to a song:

And of that second kingdom will I sing  
Wherein the human spirit doth purge itself,  
And to ascend to heaven becometh worthy.

Let dead Poesy here rise again,  
O holy Muses, since that I am yours,  
And here Calliope somewhat ascend,  
My song accompanying with that sound,  
Of which the miserable magpies felt  
The blow so great, that they despaired of pardon. (248)

The speaker calls upon “dead poesy” to rise again, and invokes the muses to “ascend” his song, so as to accompany the rest of the souls who are: “despaired of pardon”. Through this metaphorical statement, Dante associates from the opening of “Purgatorio” the activity of singing to the spiritual process of purification the souls are witnessing in this part of the afterworld.

As the poem progresses, Dante’s association between singing and spiritual cleansing takes a significant importance at evoking the spiritual state of the sinful souls, who are waiting for God’s mercy to enter paradise. Featuring direct quotations of religious psalms, hymn songs and musical scenes, some passages explicitly show the author’s conscious use of songs as a symbol of spiritual purification. In Canto II, Dante quotes a passage from psalm 114 to implicitly inform the reader about the spiritual state of the souls sailing on a boat:

The Bird Divine, more radiant he appeared  
So that near by the eye could not endure him,  
But down I cast it; and he came to shore  
With a small vessel, very swift and light,  
So that the water swallowed naught thereof,  
Upon the stern stood the Celestial Pilot;  
Beatitude seemed written in his face,  
And more than a hundred spirits sat within.

“In exitu Israel de Aegypto!”

They chanted all together in one voice,

With whatso in that psalm is after written. (253)

Presented in Latin words “In exitu Israel de Aegypto,” this line translates as follow: “When Israel went out of Egypt” (Brueggemann and Bellinger 491). In its original version, the Psalm relates, in a highly poetical manner, the exodus of Israel out of Egypt and God’s response to their captivity, leading them to the Promised Land:

When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language;  
Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.

The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back.

The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.

What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?

Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs?

Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;

Which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.

(Brueggemann and Bellinger 491)

As much as the Israelites, who are mentioned in the original psalm, the souls in Dante’s poem are undertaking a journey towards redemption, through a voyage along the seas: “A light along the sea so swiftly coming, / Behold the Angel of God! fold thou thy hands! ... But down I cast it; and he came to shore” (Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Trans Longfellow 253). Yet, unlike the Israelites, who sought to escape Egyptian slavery, the pilgrims presented in Dante’s poem are seeking an ultimate escape from the burden of their earthly sins. By introducing psalm singing in the scene, Dante is capable of evoking the spiritual situation of the souls, and aims to highlight the nature of their pilgrimage as a continual progress towards divine redemption.

This effective technique of introducing psalm songs is once again used in canto V. As Dante and Virgil carry their path up to Mount Purgatory, the souls featured in the scene are described as singing the *Miserere* psalm: “Meanwhile along the mountain-side across/Came people in advance of us a little,/ Singing the Miserere verse by verse”( 262). In its original version, the *Miserere* psalm expresses a faithful pray for redemption: “Psalm 51, called the *Miserere* after its latin incipit, *Miserere mei domine*, is the preeminent psalm of penitence. It is the middle Psalm, and the most important, of the seven Penitential Psalms (6, 32, 38, 51,102,130,143), which before the Reformation had been central to traditional Christian devotions” (Hamlin 173). Although there is no direct quotation to the psalm in Dante’s text, the reference to *Miserere* initiates the connotation of singing as an act of redemption. As much as the previous musical reference, Dante aims to show through this psalm the souls’ gradual spiritual progress toward complete purgation.

It is important to mention that, despite mercy and salvation, “Purgatorio” is still thematically concerned with the idea of punishment, as a means toward purification. If previous studies focus on Dante’s use of monophonic singing to illustrate the possibility of religious relief and salvation, Dante, in “Purgatorio” Canto XIX, seems to remind us, through musical devices, that the souls are not yet completely relieved from their sins. As Dante encounters the avaricious, “From God was I, and wholly avaricious; / Now, as thou seest, I here am punished for it” (Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Trans Longfellow 310), he actually describes the sinners’ song in a way that compares to the meaningless cacophonic auditory experiences described in *Inferno*: “Adhaesit pavimento anima mea,” / I heard them say with sighings so profound, / That hardly could the words be understood” (310). This line is actually a reference from psalm 118 and relates to the original text as follows: “The souls quote the first half of line 25 of the long acrostic Psalm 118...Nothing in the Psalm applies specifically to avarice, but Augustine influential commentary interpreted it as a prayer against attachment to earthly

things” (M. Durling 321). Dante’s difficulty at understanding the words situates this auditory presentation on the verge of cacophony. Yet, his ability to recognize a line from their saying makes such acoustic exploration more meaningful than the complete auditory disorder featured in “Inferno.” Hence, standing between complete cacophony and meaningful pronouncement, the auditory exploration of the psalm captures the situation of the souls on their way towards purification. Because the avaricious gave greater importance to earthly wealth than to spirituality, they have their hands and feet tied and are forced to stare at the ground:

So justice here doth hold us in restraint,  
Bound and imprisoned by the feet and hands;  
And so long as it pleases the just Lord  
Shall we remain immovable and prostrate.

(Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Trans Longfellow 311)

Hence, although they are waiting for God’s pardon, their process of purification is still harmful and difficult. This situation between suffering and hope for salvation is captured musically as the souls are described as singing a psalm, that Dante could hardly comprehend.

Despite this diversified use of hymns and psalm singing, the religious connotation associated to music as a healing spiritual tool is further highlighted in the poem, as Dante, comparable to Augustine, seems to make a clear distinction between profane and religious singing. Although he describes music as a condition for any hymn, Augustine had an inferior opinion about non-religious secular music:

The origin of the polarized view of music, as sacred and secular, can be traced back to Saint Augustine (fourth and fifth century A.D). Under the influence of platonic philosophy, Saint Augustine, indeed, had advanced the idea that art was given a right to exist only to the extent that it was put in the service of praise to God...Music not done in a spiritual context came to be considered as “a beguiling service of

devils"...Thus, earthly music was perceived as 'lower beauty,' which 'defiles the soul' and could be escaped only with the help of God. (Doukhan 180)

Much like Augustine, Dante's establishes in "Purgatorio" a sharp contrast between secular and spiritual music, which comes to emphasize the spiritual connotation accorded to religious singing in the text. In Canto II, Dante meets Casella, an old friend musician. As Dante asks Casella to play a tune he used to listen to on earth, the music is quickly interrupted by an old man, asking them to carry on their journey, instead of distracting their souls with earthly tunes:

And I: "If some new law take not from thee  
Memory or practice of the song of love,  
Which used to quiet in me all my longings,  
Thee may it please to comfort therewithal  
Somewhat this soul of mine, that with its body  
Hitherward coming is so much distressed."  
"Love, that within my mind discourses with me,"  
Forthwith began he so melodiously,  
The melody within me still is sounding.  
My Master, and myself, and all that people  
Which with him were, appeared as satisfied  
As if naught else might touch the mind of any.  
We all of us were moveless and attentive  
Unto his notes; and lo! the grave old man,  
Exclaiming: "What is this, ye laggard spirits?  
What negligence, what standing still is this?  
Run to the mountain to strip off the slough,

That lets not God be manifest to you".

(Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Trans Longfellow 254)

Dante, Virgil and the souls felt like “nothing else could touch the mind” with pleasing melodies, while the old weatherman of the shore describes the scene as an act of negligence, labeling such practices as holding the blessing of “God be manifest to you”. Because the song represents a love tune borrowed from their mortal lives, it is depicted as a profane source of temptation that may distract the souls from their religious journey. In canto XIX, Dante continues to differentiate between profane music of distraction and religious music of spiritual healing, through the pilgrim’s dream of a Siren, who attempts to seduce him with her beautiful song:

There came to me in dreams a stammering woman,  
Squint in her eyes, and in her feet distorted,  
With hands dissevered and of sallow hue.

...

When in this wise she had her speech unloosed,  
She 'gan to sing so, that with difficulty  
Could I have turned my thoughts away from her.  
"I am," she sang, "I am the Siren sweet  
Who mariners amid the main unman,  
So full am I of pleasantness to hear.  
I drew Ulysses from his wandering way  
Unto my song, and he who dwells with me  
Seldom departs so wholly I content him." (308)

As Dante illustrates, the Sirens' song made the speaker unable to divert his thoughts from her. Once again, unlike religious singing that is associated to spiritual healing, this example associates profane music to earthly temptations, as it is depicted as a source of distraction from the spiritual quest. Just like Augustine's clear definition of religious chant, Dante makes a clear distinction between profane music of distraction, and the spiritual music of redemption.

### **3. Polyphony and the Music of the Spheres in "Paradisio"**

Following the logic of the musical analogy attributed to *The Divine Comedy*, one would guess that the most beautiful musical descriptions are to be found in "Paradisio." Indeed, while "Inferno" is associated to cacophony and "Purgatorio" to the healing psalms of the church, "Paradisio" features another kind of music that connotes full purification and complete spiritual elevation. Indeed, music, and soundscape descriptions in "Paradisio" are implemented to connote the spiritual achievement of the souls, and the superiority of the divine over the imperfect condition of the human being. This is achieved via the implementation of two distinct musical concepts, namely: polyphony, and the Pythagorean concept of the divine music of the spheres.

#### **3.1 Polyphony and the Spiritual Achievement of the Quest**

Unlike the monophonic singing featured in "Purgatorio," "Paradisio" features some kind of polyphonic music that uses several notes or voices, played simultaneously, to create musical sequences. If this technique of composition results in a rich harmonic content, that is used to illustrate the superiority of paradise over the monophonic simple songs featured in "Purgatorio," it should be mentioned that dealing with polyphony in a religious musical context can be problematic. Indeed, it is important to mention that polyphony was not always tolerated in religious singing, and was even sometimes considered as evil and immoral. Because words had to be more important than music, and because music should not to distract the singer from



the meaning of the psalms, keeping a simple melodic line, instead of elaborated chord progressions and counterpoints, would let the audience concentrate on the words. This restrictive tendency of church music resulted in an aesthetics that contrasts sharply with secular music. As profane singing included different kinds of polyphonic techniques of composition, using polyphony in religious chants meant, for some people, merging the sacred with the secular. In his comment on the use of polyphonic singing in the church of Notre-Dame in the twelfth century, Alered of Rievaulx resumes this conservative view that associates polyphony to secularism and distraction from God:

Why that swelling and swooping of the voice? One person sings tenor, another sings duplum, yet another sings triplum. Still another ornaments and trills up and down on the melody. At one moment, the voice strains, the next it wanes...Sometimes –it is harmful to say- it is expelled like the neighing of horses...and this ridiculous dissipation is called religious observance. (Paul Macey 91)

Nevertheless, such negative view over polyphony didn't prevent it from its gradual spread in religious songs. Indeed, the fourteen-century Pope John XXII of Avignon never completely banned polyphony from church musical practices. Although he restricted its use to some specific rules, he illustrates through such attitude some of the fourteen century moderate reactions to the integration of polyphonic music in religious practices:

In the fourteen century, when the development of the notational system for rhythm enabled musicians to create even more complicated polyphonic textures, Pope John XXII (r.1316-34), while not forbidding polyphony entirely in church services for major feast-days, nevertheless laid down severe restrictions concerning all elaborate music that obscured the original chant melodies. (Paul Macey 91)

By introducing polyphony as a musical concept in “Paradisio,” Dante challenges the idea of polyphony as an evil music that distracts the souls from the voice of God, and considers

it as a music that celebrates the greatness of the Divine and the gratitude towards his mercy :  
“Polyphonic music could serve the liturgical texts with clarity as well as beauty and elevated feelings...decorous polyphony was used not to draw attention to itself, but to produce elevated feeling; harmony” (Viladesau 248). Since Paradisio is the place where the pilgrim achieves his quest, Dante implemented polyphonic musical descriptions to evoke comparable ideas that connote religious achievement, the souls’ gratitude toward God’s mercy, and the superiority of the spiritual setting over Purgatorio.

These musical religious connotations of polyphony can be deduced from Dante’s incorporation of the “Hosana Hymn” in Canto IX. As Dante is entering the Third Havens’ Sphere, The Sphere of Venus, he observes some heavenly souls moving harmoniously together, and hears them performing the hymn:

To any one who had those lights divine  
Seen come towards us, leaving the gyration  
Begun at first in the high Seraphim.  
And behind those that most in front appeared  
Sounded "Osanna!" so that never since  
To hear again was I without desire.  
Then unto us more nearly one approached,  
And it alone began: "We all are ready  
Unto thy pleasure, that thou joy in us.

(Alighieri,*The Divine Comedy*, Trans Longfellow 516)

The deliberate choice of the hymn clearly sets singing in “Paradisio” as a different musical experience than in “Purgatorio.” In *A Holy Catechism, Or Explanation of the Divine and Holy Liturgy*, the word Hosanna is explained as follow: “Hosanna is composed of two

Hebrew words; hosa' means save or deliver; na means Oh that God would do it" (Boulgaris196). Thus, unlike the previous psalms featured in "Purgatorio," singing in paradise is rather an acknowledgment for God as the Savior, as the original lines from the hymn clearly show: "Hosanna to the living Lord! / Hosanna to the th'Incarnate Word! /To Christ, Creator, Savior, King" (Maurice 225). Despite the explicit reference to the hymn, Dante's description of the singing evokes a polyphonic musical performance. Dante evokes an interweaving of voices that come and go, which indicates the presence of more than a basic melodic line: "And as within a flame a spark is seen, / And as within a voice a voice discerned, / When one is steadfast, and one comes and goes" (Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Trans Longfellow 516). If the constant voice stands for the basic melody, the second voice that comes and goes adds a supplementary voicing to the main singing, establishing a polyphonic performance. By describing the hymn's song in such a way, Dante seems to move away from the monophonic singing he implemented in "Purgatorio," towards a richer harmonious kind of singing that expresses God's mercy and gratitude towards the Divine.

Other musical examples in "Paradisio" further suggest polyphony as an expression of the creator's superiority over human beings. This is the case in Canto XVII, when Dante meets his great-great-grandfather Cacciaguida, and asks him about the reliability of the prophecies that were given to him in Inferno: "when descending into the dead world, / Were spoken to me of my future life/ Some grievous words... On this account my wish would be content/To hear what fortune is approaching me" (Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Trans Longfellow 546). To show Dante the infinite greatness of God, Cacciaguida explains to him that, even if he is forced to exile from Florence, as previous seers affirmed, he will eventually overcome the hardship, find some friends, gain reputation, and be a hallmark of generosity and honor, thanks to God's will:

Thou shalt abandon everything beloved

Most tenderly, and this the arrow is  
Which first the bow of banishment shoots forth.  
Thou shalt have proof how savourest of salt  
The bread of others, and how hard a road  
The going down and up another's stairs,  
And that which most shall weigh upon thy shoulders  
Will be the bad and foolish company  
With which into this valley thou shalt fall;  
For all ingrate, all mad and impious  
Will they become against thee; but soon after  
They, and not thou, shall have the forehead scarlet  
Of their bestiality their own proceedings  
Shall furnish proof; so 'twill be well for thee.

(Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Trans Longfellow 546)

Because his position in paradise is spiritually privileged over previous prophets in “Inferno,” Cacciaguida takes in consideration other elements that previous seers disregarded in foreshadowing Dante’s future, including Dante’s faith in God, and God’s possible help. As

his vision is pluralistic, and considers parameters of faith and good will, Cacciaguida compares his perspective and predictions to a musical polyphony: “sweet sound may rise/ from mingled voices to the ear, so rises to my sight/ a vision of the time that lies in store of you” (546). Unlike previous prophets who focused on eventual future events, Cacciaguida’s consideration of God’s power at changing Dante’s will is compared to a musical harmony that introduces a plurality of voices and perspectives, as part of a polyphonic musical piece. In other words, comparable to a musician oscillating between the different voices of a polyphonic musical piece, Cacciaguida’s vision takes into account God’s guidance as a constant parallel

possibility, that may lead Dante to a harmonious resolution. This musical connotation is even more explicit in the original version of the text, via Dante's precise use of musicological vocabulary: "Da indi, sì come viene ad orecchia / Dolce armonia da organo, mi viene / A vista il tempo ch'è si apparecchiato." (Alighieri, *La Comedia* 456). While the English version implements harmony as a mere metaphor, Dante, in the original lines, uses the word "organo," which refers to one of the earliest polyphonic musical practices in religious singing: "Organum means a general technique of composition. In the school of Notre Dame, organum treatment became restricted to few types of plainsong" (Apel 627). In *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, different kinds of organums are defined, namely: the parallel organum; the free and contrary organum; and the melismatic organum. This diversity of techniques illustrates the evolution of polyphony in the Middle Ages, as each one of them deals with the use of, at least, two melodic lines to create a polyphonic musical effect:

Parallel Organum (c.900-1050). The main part, called *vox principale*, is added a *vox organalis* at the lower fifth or fourth... In the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, contrary motion began to be used side by side with parallel motion... this type may be called "free organum"... *Melismatic organum* (mid-12<sup>th</sup> century): This type is characterized by the use of groups of notes in the added part against a single note in the original part...

(Apel 627)

Using the musical term "organo," Dante shows that the protagonist's destiny could be guided by God, and implicitly demonstrates his understanding of polyphony, or organum, as a simultaneous use of several musical voices to create harmony. Through this precise use of musical vocabulary, Dante illustrates his conscious consideration of polyphony in his text, as well as its divine and possible religious connotation.

### 3.2 The Divine Inaudible Music of the Spheres

Despite his use of polyphony, Dante considers music as an expression of the divine superior power of God. Considered from a historical perspective, the idea of music as a symbol of spirituality and divine order could be traced back to the Greek philosopher Pythagoras and his concept of the music of the spheres: “The concept of the musical universe and the Great Chain of being originates in the classical bedrock of our culture, flows through the Christian tradition, and remains firmly centered in the Renaissance and the Age of Reason” (James 04). Through the flourishing of some intellectual ideas that associated music to divine cosmic order in Dante’s time, the Greek concept of the music of the spheres survived, and its connotation remained valid. For the fourteenth century mathematician Nicole Oresme, the mathematical and geometrical equivalence of polyphonic musical understanding was an expression of the beauty and complexity of the cosmos and the universe: “For the fourteenth- century mathematician Nicole Oresme, the beauty of the cosmos is manifest in an irrational, incommensurable geometry that shuts arithmetical commensurable periodicity of the repetitive structures that dominated the musical soundscape of the fourteenth century” (Hicks 253). As paradise coincides with this idea of divine superiority, Dante incorporates the Greek concept of musical spheres to further highlight his interest in music, and its ability at expressing such divine connotation. To understand such cosmologic musical references in the text, it is important to get familiar with the musical concept *per se*, as developed originally by Pythagoras.

As he studied the priority of tonal pitches in musical sounds, Pythagoras was able to recognize in the tonal distances between sounds a mathematical explanation of ratios that clarifies the organization and hierarchy of the musical notes. This systematized organization of notes gave birth to the oldest system of musical scale construction; the Pythagorean musical scale: “The oldest system of musical scale construction is that described as the Pythagorean

scale...his name is associated with the theoretical justifications, in mathematical terms, of its construction” (Fauvel et al. 14). As Pythagoras set the basic pattern for music theory, he also concluded that the musical ratios of the intervals he calculated could illustrate the distance between the planets of the cosmos. Thus, Pythagoras created an analogy between the harmony of the cosmic universe and the perfect harmony and distance between musical notes. In the following quote, Jamie James explains in simple terms this cosmic musical relationship:

Counting outward from the earth to the outmost sphere of the fixed stars, Pythagoras fixed the musical intervals as follow: from the earth to the moon was a whole step, from the moon to Mercury a half step; Mercury to Venus, another half step; from Venus to the sun was a minor third, which is equal to three half steps; the sun to Mars, a whole step; Mars to Jupiter, a half step; Jupiter to Saturn, a half step; and from Saturn to the sphere of the fixed stars, another minor third. (James 40)

As the musical intervals in the Pythagorean scale coincide with the distance between the planets, Pythagoras pushes the musical cosmic analogy to further boundaries. He actually claimed that the cosmos emitted sounds in direct relation to the ratios of the planets and their location in the galaxy, hence reproducing the pitches that relate to the Pythagorean musical scale: “There is geometry in the humming of the strings ... there is music in the spacing of the spheres” (Kappraff 109). This analogy resulted in a cosmic and geometric auditory representation of the musical scale that Pythagoras coined as the harmony of the spheres. Because none human being was capable of actually hearing the humming of the planets, the idea of a superior divine music unable to be perceived by mortal ears started to emerge. In this concern, Aristotle explains that no individual would be able to discern the sound of the spheres, since the existence of such sound is constant in the universe, and is part of what mortals define as silence: “the sound is in our ears from the very moment of birth and is thus indistinguishable from its contrary silence, since sound is discriminated by mutual contrast” (James 40). Whether

the music of the spheres is a purely scientific concept, or just a mythical reformulation of the mathematical analogy between the planets of the cosmos and the Pythagorean musical scale, its evocation in a poetical context clearly sets the idea of a superior divine tune, too perfect to be perceived by mortal imperfect ears.

As “Paradisio” coincides with this idea of divine superiority, Dante incorporates the idea of the music of the spheres to further highlight his interest in music and its poetical ability at expressing the grandeur of God. Being well informed about such references, and their potential connotations, the implementation of the metaphor of the music of the spheres shows Dante’s conscious aesthetic decisions with regards to music and its connotation in the poem. As he is ascending towards paradise, the protagonist informs us on the incapacity of human language to capture the perfection of the scene: “Within that heaven which most his light receives / Was I, and things beheld which to repeat / Nor knows, nor can, who from above descends” (Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Trans Longfellow 493). Nevertheless, as he tries to find words to describe what he sees and hears, Dante introduces the reader to what could be an explicit reference to the music of the spheres. As the title of each Canto suggests (Sphere of the Moon, Sphere of Mercury, Sphere of Venus, Sphere of the Sun, Sphere of Mars, Sphere of Jupiter, Sphere of Saturn, Sphere of the fixed stars...), the different stages of paradise are organized into spheres, and coincide with the cosmology of the time. As he gives a general description of the different spheres in the first Canto, Dante evokes a musical harmony that modulates in conjunction with the revolving of the spheres:

To represent transhumanise in words

Impossible were; the example, then, suffice

...

When now the wheel, which thou dost make eternal



Desiring thee, made me attentive to it  
By harmony thou dost modulate and measure,

....

The newness of the sound and the great light  
Kindled in me a longing for their cause,  
Never before with such acuteness felt. (494)

Dante actually describes the sound emitted by the spheres as a musical harmony that tunes and modulates, strange, with bright lights. Hence, in accordance with Pythagoras' music of the spheres, the cosmos that constitutes Dante's Paradise is described as spheres that emit harmonious divine sounds. As Dante attempts to describe the tunes, Beatrice labels him as a fool for trying to rely on his mortal senses to capture such divine scene: "To represent transhumanise in words / Impossible were; the example, then, suffice" (494). This emphasizes the reference to the musical harmony of the spheres as a divine music that compares to the Pythagorean concept of the musical spheres:

And she began : " Thou makest thyself so dull  
With false imagining, that thou seest not  
What thou wouldst see if thou hadst shaken it off.  
Thou art not upon earth, as thou believest. (494)

Because everything in heaven is superior and unique, Beatrice informs Dante that using his mortal senses would not enable him to fully capture what he hears and sees. If he is still capable of capturing the harmony of the spheres in this first Canto, all that he is capable of perceiving in Canto 21 is complete silence:

Tell me why is silent in this wheel  
The dulcet symphony of Paradise,  
That through the rest below sounds so devoutly."

Thou hast thy hearing mortal as thy sight,"  
It answer made to me; " they sing not here,  
For the same cause that Beatrice has not smiled. (560)

At the sphere of Saturn, Dante asks the soul why he is no longer capable of capturing the beautiful harmonies that characterize "Paradisio" in the previous spheres. The soul explains Dante that, because he is relying on his mortal senses, it will be impossible for him to perceive the music, since the more they ascend to the last divine sphere, the closer they get to divine perfection. For those same reasons, Dante is unable to perceive Beatrice's smile in this sphere. This gradual musical crescendo towards divine perfection can be actually traced back to earthly paradise in the last canto of "Purgatorio." Dante, who began his journey in a terrifying dark wood at the beginning of *Inferno*, finds himself in canto 28 at the top of "purgatorio." Here everything is different from what he already encountered during his voyage: "Eager already to search in and round / The heavenly forest, dense and living-green, / Which tempered to the eyes the new-born day" (338). If the previous psalm songs explicitly connote the cleansing process of the souls in "Purgatorio," the singing of the woman Dante encounters here along the river of earthly paradise coincides with the beautiful nature of the forest:

But with full ravishment the hours of prime,  
Singing, received they in the midst of leaves,  
That ever bore a burden to their rhymes,  
Such as from branch to branch goes gathering on  
Through the pine forest on the shore of Chiassi. (Alighieri 339)

This clearly marks the transition from the hymns of "Purgatorio" and prepares Dante for another kind of musical experiences. Along with the introduction of the harmony of the revolving spheres from "Paradisio" in Canto I, and the divine inaudible music of Canto 21, we

understand that the closer Dante approaches paradise, the more likely the featured scenes evoke divine superior musical experiences.

## **II. Redemptive Music for Modern Men: Eliot's Adoption of Dante's Musical Concepts**

In "To Criticize the Critic" Eliot acknowledged his enduring appreciation for Dante's poetry, and the influential role it had over his writing: "There is one poet . . . who impressed me profoundly when I was twenty-two and with only a rudimentary acquaintance with his language started to puzzle out his lines, one poet who remains the comfort and amazement of my age although my knowledge of his language remains rudimentary... the poet I speak of is Dante" (Eliot, *To Criticize the Critic* 23). Despite the explicit testimonies he assumed in his writing, Eliot's frequent use of imagery and metaphors from *The Divine Comedy* easily illustrates the huge influence the medieval poet had over Eliot's career. As the poet gradually moved from a secular criticism of society to a spiritual and religious poetry of redemption, critics established a thematic analogy that links Eliot's poetry to the structure of Dante's *Comedia*: "The Waste Land is his Inferno, Ash Wednesday his purgatories, and Four Quartets his 'Paradisio.' In the first poem we get glimpses of Hell, in the middle one the struggle of the poet for self-purification, and in the last one glimpses of paradise" (Alhaj 28). In the vein of this interpretation, poems that treat on the chaos and fragmentation of the modern world such as "The Waste Land" and "The Hollow Man" have been recognized as a depiction of a modern Inferno on earth, whereas the poet's spiritual struggle in "Ash Wednesday" has been associated to Dante's "Purgatorio." Following this structural analogy, "Four Quartets" has been recognized as Eliot's "Paradisio," mainly because of the imagery borrowed from the original text, and of the poet's religious conversion to Christianity. As he borrowed imagery and metaphors from *The Divine Comedy*, Eliot illustrates the influence of Dante in his poetry and

adapts the medieval religious worldview to suggest traditional Christianity as a source of spiritual relief for modernity.

In this section of the chapter, I would like to provide a musical reading to this literary interpretation. As much as Dante's use of cacophony, monophony, and the unheard music of the spheres, Eliot's use of soundscape, and musical metaphors coincides with his treatment of religion and spirituality in his poetry. Yet, because Eliot's religious theme relates to modern society, the poet moves from a verbatim musical imitation of Dante, to an appropriate integration of musical metaphors that best suit his poetry. Indeed, Eliot swerves from Dante's metaphorical use of cacophony, monophony, and the music of the sphere, towards the use of a cacophonous narration in "The Waste Land," a purgatory quest toward silence in "Ash Wednesday," and a conceptual divine music of salvation in "Four Quartets". Relying on soundscape criticism, and on Harold Bloom's theory of influence, I demonstrate in this section how Eliot swerves away from Dante's religious soundscape, in order to conceive an original handling of cacophony, silence, and divine music, that serve his modernist religious theme.

### **1. Eliot's Inferno on Earth: Desolate Singing and Cacophonous Narration**

In "The Burial of the Dead," Eliot paints a scene, of "a crowd" that "flowed over London Bridge" (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 55). This scene associates Eliot's characters featured in "The Waste Land" to Dante's description of masses crowding toward the gates of hell: "Through me the way is to the city dolent ;/Through me the way is to eternal dole ; / Through me the way among the people lost" (Alighieri 9). In the original passage from Canto III of *The Comedia*, Virgil presents the place as a damned city, and explains that people punished here failed to choose between good and evil in their lives. As a result of their spiritual bare neutrality, the souls are condemned to remain in an ante-Inferno, nowhere between hell and paradise:

“O Master, what so grievous is  
To these, that maketh them lament so sore?”  
He answered: " I will tell thee very briefly.  
These have no longer any hope of death;  
And this blind life of theirs is so debased,  
They envious are of every other fate.  
No fame of them the world permits to be;  
Misericord and Justice both disdain them.  
Let us not speak of them, but look, and pass." (Alighieri 10)

As Eliot quotes from this Canto in “The Burial of the Dead” – “I had not thought death had undone so many” (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 55) – , the poet takes Dante’s concept of ante-Inferno and places it in the modern metropolis, to depict a modern city hell, whose inhabitants, comparable to the neutrals, suffer from a psychological in-between situation. Thrown between the desire to revive some happy past memories and the spiritual desolation of their chaotic present – “mixing memory and desire” (53) –, their spiritual in-betweenness is represented, in the opening lines, through the speaker’s affirmation on preferring Winter’s forgetful snow over the spiritual renewal and the pilgrimage that spring and April suggest: “April is the cruelest month.../ Winter kept us warm, covering/ Earth in forgetful snow...” (53). Because they are afraid of religious purgation, the Waste Landers prefer to remain forgotten in their bare suffering, spiritually half dead.

Despite this thematic parallel between *The Divine Comedy* and “The Waste Land,” Eliot implements Dante’s use of cacophony as a soundscape representation of sordidness and spiritual decay. Yet, Because the setting of “The Waste Land” is the modern city, and because its themes relate to modern society, Eliot moves from a verbatim imitation of Dante’s medieval

soundscape, and adapts cacophony in a way that best suits his modernist thematic preoccupations. Unlike the damned souls featured in Dante's "Inferno," the characters of "The Waste Land" are given the possibility of singing, listening to music, and playing musical instruments. This ranges from the mandolin's playing in the city – "O City city, I can sometimes hear/ Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,/ The pleasant whining of a mandoline" (63) –, to the gramophone's music that the typist woman plays after being raped – "Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over.../ She smooths her hair with automatic hand, /And puts a record on the gramophone" (62) –, and to the ironic singing lamentations along the river Thames: "Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song./The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers, /Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends" (60). Introducing popular songs, gramophone music, and street piano playing as part of the general soundscape of the poem enables Eliot to best capture the auditory environment of the modern city. Yet, as much as Dante's use of cacophony in "Inferno," Eliot's auditory and musical layering evokes the suffering and the spiritual bareness of his characters.

It is important to notice that those musical performances featured in the poem are given an aesthetic cacophonous quality through the fragmented narrative strategy implemented in the lines. Through a random intrusion of voices that dominate the entire body of the poem, Eliot resorts to a technique that establishes a cacophonous soundscape, capturing an auditory atmosphere of decay and fragmentation. In "The Three Voices of Poetry," Eliot describes three distinct strategies through which a poet can voice his poem. Among those techniques, he cites a voicing strategy that establishes a dramatic tone, using the voicing of characters: "The first is the voice of the poet talking to him self-or to nobody. The second is the voice of the poet addressing an audience, whether large or small. The third is the voice of the poet when he attempts to create a dramatic character speaking in verse" (Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* 96). Taking into account the multitude of characters and the sudden shift of voices implemented in

“The Waste Land,” one understands that Eliot resorted to the third category of voicing, which aesthetically establishes an aesthetic effect of narrative cacophony. In the following passage from the “Burial of the Dead,” Eliot quotes from Wagner’s *Tristan und Isode*, in a way that establishes a constant shift in narration. The fragmented parts of the song, along with the speech of the characters, initiate a cacophony of voices that captures the decayed situation of the Waste Landers:

*Frisch weht der Wind  
Der Heimat zu  
Mein Irisch Kind,  
Wo weilest du?*

“You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;  
“They called me the hyacinth girl.”  
—Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,  
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not  
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither  
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,  
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.  
*Oed’ und leer das Meer.* (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 54)

The passage opens and closes with two different singing parts from Wagner’s Opera. The first quote is taken from the very first scene, featuring a sailor who is taking both Tristan and Isolde to King Mark of Cornwall. One needs to understand clearly the original context of the song, as featured in the opera, in order to relate it to the remaining voices that surround Eliot’s passage. In the opera version of the Arthurian myth story, Isolde is an Irish princess, famous for her healing powers, whereas Tristan is a knight, who works for his uncle, King Mark of Cornwall. As Tristan kills Isolde’s future husband in the battlefield, Isolde, who attempts to revenge, eventually falls in love with Tristan. In the opening scene of the opera, a

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sailor is introduced as singing a song that evokes his departure from his lover in Ireland: “Fresh is the Wind/ That blows me home/ My Irish child/ Where do you roam” (Wagner and Bassett 17). If the sailor’s song does not relate directly to the story, it actually works as a prelude to the orchestral introduction of Isolde’s desolation: “All the important actions in the opera take place in the orchestra, its principal function being to tell something about Isolde or Tristan—their emotion and state of mind. At this early stage, the young sailor’s song has no bearing to either of them—until Isolde is aroused from her torpor and reacts” (17). As in the opera version, the sailor’s song in Eliot’s poem does not directly relate to the scene: “...*Wo weilest du?* / You gave me hyacinths first a year ago...” (Eliot, *Collected Poems*” 54). Nevertheless, acting as a musical leitmotif, the sailor’s singing his departure from his lover acts as a prelude to the psychological suffering of the woman featured in the scene. Indeed, following the sailor’s singing, Eliot shifts to a woman character who, after recalling the happy past moments she spent with her lover in a garden – “You gave me hyacinths first a year ago; /They called me the hyacinth girl”...”(54) –, exposes her actual fragmented reality: “I could not Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither/ Living nor dead, and I knew nothing, / Looking into the heart of light, the silence.” (54). Comparable to Wagner’s use of the song, Eliot uses the sailor’s tune to establish a tension that captures the hyacinth’s girl demise. By randomly shifting from the singing voice to the woman’s monologue, an aesthetic effect of randomness is established along the lines. Interestingly enough, Eliot forwards the Hyacinth’s monologue with another quote from Wagner’s opera, which extends the cacophonous style of narration: “*Öd’ und leer das Meer!*” (54). In the opera version, Tristan is badly injured by King Mark’s knights, after landing in Cornwall. Tristan flees to his home and waits for Isolde to come and heal him. The quoted song is taken from a scene that reveals the long distance that separates both lovers: “Watch the sea, / if sails come in sight a sprightly melody play. / Shepherd (turns round and scans the horizon, shading his eyes with his hand). Blank appears the sea!” (Wagner and Bassett



141). As Eliot introduces this song at the close of the Hyacinth's scene "Looking into the heart of light, the silence /*Oed' und leer das Meer.*" (Eliot, *Collected poems* 54), he actually highlights the woman's desperate desire to meet again with her lover, despite the physical and emotional distance that separates them. As he fragments the parts of the song with random intrusion of voices, Eliot establishes a random cacophonous narrative strategy that captures the desolation of the Waste Landers.

Another theoretical argument that sustains our interpretation of fragmented cacophonous narration, is the first draft version of the poem, that Eliot entitled "He Do the Police in Different Voices." Through this first title, Eliot implicitly refers to the multitude of fragmented voices he implemented along the poem, and the aesthetic narrative strategy he develops to handle them in the text. Accordingly, although songs and musical instruments do not dominate the entire body of the poem, the constant change in narrative voices initiate an aesthetic disorder that contributes to the overall soundscape cacophony Eliot paints in "The Waste Land." Straight from the opening of "The Burial of The Dead," the speaker, who opens the poem with a description of a dead nature, is unexpectedly interrupted by a voice sharing personal past memories: "we stopped in the colonnade, /And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten" (53). As much as the hyacinth girl's voice, this voice is introduced unexpectedly without following any chronological chain of events. Before the explicit reference to Mary – "And I was frightened. He said, Marie, /Marie, hold on tight. And down we went" (53) –, distinguishing between both voices is not an easy task. Once we recognize Mary's voice, we finally understand that the narration shifted from an omniscient speaker describing a dead nature, to the voice of a female character sharing her personal experiences. Nevertheless, as soon as the reader gets familiar to Marie's narrative – "In the mountains, there you feel free /I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter" (53) –, the poem shifts once again to another prophetic voice that focuses on a dead nature: "What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow/ Out

of this stony rubbish? Son of man, /You cannot say, or guess, for you know only a heap of broken images” (53). Despite the formal fragmentation that characterizes the narration, Eliot unites the experiences and descriptions, in order to convey a coherent thematic whole that captures the suffering and the demise of the characters.

Unlike Dante’s cacophonous metaphors displayed in “Inferno,” Eliot mingles songs of desolation with a narrative strategy that establishes a random cacophony of voices along the lines. Yet, as much as Dante, Eliot’s distinct use of such auditory device in “The Waste Land” aims to capture the suffering and spiritual bareness of the characters. From this perspective, we understand that Eliot swerves away from a verbatim imitation of Dante’s use of cacophony in order to present a modern picture of hell on earth. In his theoretical work *The Anxiety of Influence*, Harold Bloom describes such process of adaptation as a corrective movement, and defines it as *Clinamen*, the first ratio that enables a younger poet to affirm his originality against his precursor:

*1. Clinamen*, which is poetic misreading or misprision proper; I take the word from Lucretius, where it means a "swerve" of the atoms so as to make change possible in the universe. A poet swerves away from his precursor, by so reading his precursor's poem as to execute a *clinamen* in relation to it. This appears as a corrective movement in his own poem, which implies that the precursor poem went accurately up to a certain point, but then should have swerved, precisely in the direction that the new poem moves. (Bloom 14)

As he swerves away from a verbatim imitation of Dante’s cacophonous metaphors, Eliot affirms his originality by performing *Clinamen*. Furthermore, Eliot’s swerve away from the master illustrates his thematic preoccupations with modernist themes. If Dante strips away singing from “Inferno” as a form of auditory punishment, Eliot chooses to incorporate popular

songs to best picture the soundscape of the modern city. As he mingles such desolate songs with a cacophonous narrative strategy, Eliot adapts Dante's cacophony in order to capture the sordidness and the suffering of people in modern society.

## **2. The Auditory Quest towards Purgation in "Ash Wednesday"**

Comparable to Dante, Eliot moves from cacophony to other musical tools that aesthetically coincide with his religious progress, from damnation to the possibility of spiritual purgation. Yet, unlike Dante's direct incorporation of redemptive psalm songs, Eliot moves from cacophonous narration and desolate singing to a search for silence and redemptive words, that enable the quester to achieve his journey toward redemption. Hence, as much as his use of cacophony, one would assume that Eliot deviates from a verbatim imitation of Dante's soundscape analogy, and affirms his originality by performing a *Clinamen*.

In "What the Thunder Said," the antithesis to the cacophony of voices is interestingly represented through a search for silence, as in the following lines: "There is not even silence in the mountains/ But dry sterile thunder without rain /There is not even solitude in the mountains" (66). This passage has traditionally been quoted to illustrate Eliot's use of water as a religious symbol for redemption. Nevertheless, the speaker's search for silence and solitude illustrates the poet's conscious use of soundscape, for its potential spiritual connotation. Indeed, acting as an auditory antithesis to the cacophony of the doomed characters, the quester's search for silence here expresses his desire to meditate in order to transcend the auditory chaos that surrounds the poem. Furthermore, the sound of the cicada and the singing of the dry grass accentuates the soundscape dimension of the passage that Eliot uses to convey the difficulty of the redemptive quest: "If there were the sound of water only /Not the cicada/ And dry grass singing" (66).

This auditory analogy is further expanded, as the narrator, who is in pursuit for the redemptive grail cup, instead gets three key words pronounced by the thunder: “Datta,” “dayadhvam,” “damyata” that translate as : “Give, sympathize, control” (69). Besides suggesting that redemption is not physical but rather spiritual, replacing the content of the grail cup by spoken words gives significance to the auditory dimension of the poem. Indeed, the coherent utterances pronounced by the thunder represent a meaningful linguistic and auditory substitute for the auditory non-sense and the cacophony the quester encountered along his journey.

This soundscape connotation associated to silence and words of salvation is even more apparent in “Ash Wednesday.” Written during Eliot’s conversion to Christianity, “Ash Wednesday” focusses on the spiritual struggle of the poet at finding his own path toward redemption.<sup>2</sup> As he renounces the voice of the woman figure in the first part of the poem, the quester’s act stands for his willingness to turn away from earthly distractions that would prevent him to achieve religious purgation: “I renounce the blessed face/ And renounce the voice” (Eliot “collected poems” 85). Following this line, the remaining parts of the poem initiate a soundscape aesthetic that associates silence to a spiritual sense of purgation.

In Part II, the figure of the lady is more explicitly associated to the virgin Mary: “She honours the Virgin in meditation” (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 87). Interestingly enough, the lines describe the lady as “lady of silences” and associates her to a set of unspoken words of salvation, that would enable the quester to achieve his complete spiritual purification:

The wind will listen. And the bones sang chirping

With the burden of the grasshopper, saying

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<sup>2</sup> As mentioned in the first lines of the poem, the main speaker initiates his spiritual journey through the act of turning, which reveals his willingness to turn away from his sins and undertake a journey toward salvation: “Because I do not hope to turn again Because I do not hope Because I do not hope to turn” (95).

Lady of silences

Calm and distressed

...

Speech without word and

Word of no speech

Grace to the Mother. (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 87)

Following the figure of the three white leopards that devour the speaker's body as a symbolic act of resurrection: "Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper-tree/ In the cool of the day, having fed to satiety/ On my legs my heart my liver and that which had been contained" (87), the bones sing a song in praise of the achieved purity: "The wind will listen. And the bones sang chirping /With the burden of the grasshopper, saying" (87). Through the song, the figure of the lady is referred as "lady of silences," a source of calm and distressed forgetfulness, and is described in a garden, where all unsatisfied earthly and physical love ends. In order to achieve a full state of purgation – "End of the endless /Journey to no end" (87) – the quester has to find "Speech without word and/Word of no speech /Grace to the Mother" (Eliot 87). The last part of the poem develops this symbolic acoustic act of redemption as follow:

If the unheard, unspoken

Word is unspoken, unheard;

Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,

The Word without a word, the Word within

The world and for the world;

And the light shone in darkness and

Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled

About the centre of the silent Word.

O my people, what have I done unto thee.  
Where shall the word be found, where will the word  
Resound? Not here, there is not enough silence  
Not on the sea or on the islands, not  
On the mainland, in the desert or the rain land,  
For those who walk in darkness  
Both in the day time and in the night time  
The right time and the right place are not here  
No place of grace for those who avoid the face  
No time to rejoice for those who walk among noise and deny  
the voice. (92)

Because the unspoken word of salvation is “unspoken, unheard,” and forgotten in modern times, silencing the profane world that distract the protagonist is mandatory in order to find religious relief. Through his search for “the word” of redemption: “Where shall the word be found, where will the word Resound?” (92), the speaker concludes that “there is not enough silence / Not on the sea or on the islands, not / On the mainland, in the desert or the rain land” (92). Because the redemptive word is ‘silent’ and not produced in the physical world, the quester deduces that silence is the most adequate auditory source to capture its essence. Hence, despite all the beauty that the natural world may present, the speaker clearly affirms that: “The right time and the right place are not here” (92). More than renouncing the lady’s voice in Part I, the act of renouncing the sound of the natural world in this section symbolizes the need to substitute physical beauty with a spiritual desire for purification: “No time to rejoice for those who walk among noise and deny the voice” (92). Through a metaphoric use of a silent word of salvation, this passage actually suggests the condition of a strong spiritual dedication by the quester, in order to achieve complete religious revelation.

Since silence is poetically presented as the auditory key to the muted word of salvation, Eliot extends this acoustic analogy to musical connotations. In part IV of the poem, the figure of the lady of silence is associated to the image of a breathless flute that produces no single melody nor word: “The silent sister veiled in white and blue /Between the yews, behind the garden god, /Whose flute is breathless, bent her head and signed but spoke no word” (92). As salvation is acoustically associated to a search for the “word without speech,” silence is necessary, and the music produced by the flute needs to be muted to let the quester achieve his spiritual goal. Interestingly enough, this soundscape dichotomy is more evidently developed in the following passage. Just like Dante’s renouncement to profane music in “Purgatorio,” here Eliot refers to music as an eventual source of profane distraction:

At the first turning of the third stair  
Was a slotted window bellied like the figs's fruit  
And beyond the hawthorn blossom and a pasture scene  
The broadbacked figure drest in blue and green  
Enchanted the maytime with an antique flute.  
Blown hair is sweet, brown hair over the mouth blown,  
Lilac and brown hair;  
Distraction, music of the flute, stops and steps of the mind over the third stair,  
Fading, fading; strength beyond hope and despair  
Climbing the third stair. (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 89)

To show Eliot’s thematic and musical connectedness to Dante, it is important to mention that the image of the stairs presented here recalls Dante’s pilgrim, who had to ascend the seven terraces on Mount Purgatory, in order to get access to paradise. In the same way, the pilgrim in “Ash Wednesday” ascends through stairs, turning down and observing the earthly pleasures he has left behind, in order to achieve complete spiritual salvation. At the first turn

of the third stair, the pilgrim observes a pastoral scene where a “broadbacked figure” is playing a flute and enchanting the world around him. The pilgrim describes the music as: “Distraction, music of the flute, stops and steps of the mind over the third stair” (89). As he implements music as a source of distraction in “Ash Wednesday,” Eliot establishes a perfect musical similarity with Dante, who initially contrasted religious music against the profane music of distraction in “Purgatorio”. Yet, because “Ash Wednesday” treats on religious and spiritual struggles in modern times, Eliot replaces the monophonic psalms Dante introduced in “Purgatorio,” with a soundscape poetical representation that implements the sounds of the physical world as a source of distraction, and a search for silence. Hence, as much as his use of cacophony, Eliot performs a *Clinamen* in “Ash Wednesday” to affirm his originality. By swerving away from Dante, Eliot infuses his thematic preoccupations as a modernist poet. By muting the sound of the natural world with spiritual silence and a search for the words of purgation, Eliot conveys the necessity for modern society to find a resolution in religion and spirituality.

### **3. “Four Quartets” as a Musical Paradiso: The Divine Music of Salvation**

Written after his complete conversion to Christianity, “Four Quartets” illustrates the poet’s spiritual achievement of his religious quest. After purifying his soul from sins in “Ash Wednesday,” the quester in “Four Quartets” achieves a complete religious revelation. In this concern, critics have interpreted this series of poems as Eliot’s “Paradiso.” Indeed, Eliot’s series of poems actually reveal his concerns at preserving and entertaining his religious sensibility after accepting Christianity. Through the verses that constitute the series, Eliot engages in long philosophical debates regarding time, spiritual concepts of afterlife, and eternity, that summarize his Christian faith.

From a musical perspective, Eliot’s use of music in “Four Quartets” compares much to Dante’s “Paradiso”. As much as Dante’s music of the spheres, music evolves as an aesthetic



manifestation of divine spiritual superiority. Nevertheless, unlike Dante's metaphorical use of the divine music of the spheres, Eliot defines a divine music through philosophical concepts of time and eternity. As much as the image of "the still point," music serves in "Four Quartets" as a poetical illustration to the philosophical and spiritual arguments Eliot proposes in this series of poems. As he elaborates on the aesthetic possibility of listening to a superior conceptual divine music of salvation, Eliot performs a Clinamen against Dante's metaphorical use of the music of the spheres.

### **3.1 Defining a Spiritual point of intersection**

To understand the soundscape and the musical symbolism of the series, it is important to first deal with the philosophical and spiritual ideas Eliot develops along his verses. In "Burnt Norton," Eliot attempts to situate the afterlife and the divine outside of our earthly dimension as mortals, by defining a spiritual spacio-temporal dimension that is totally detached from our mortal notion of reality:

Time present and time past

Are both perhaps present in time future

And time future in time past.

If all time is eternally present

All time is unredeemable.

What might have been is an abstraction

Remaining a perpetual possibility

Only in a world of speculation.

What might have been and what has been

Point to one end, which is always present. (Eliot, *collected poems* 175)

As he relates past, present and future to a notion of time that is "eternally present", Eliot points to another notion of time where everything is contained within another. Unlike human

chronological time, Eliot refers to a superior temporal location, where “all time is eternally present,” (175) and which points to one single end “which is always present” (175). Throughout this revisited notion of time, Eliot alludes to God as the “eternally present” (175), and invites us to consider a temporal possibility, under which a constant spiritual contact with the creator is possible.

Likewise, Eliot also explores the spatial location of God, and refers to what he defines as the still point of the universe: “At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless; Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is, / But neither arrest nor movement “(177). In “Imagery and Symbolism in T. S. Eliot's Poetry”, Nidhi Tiwari says that Eliot’s still point is like a wheel “with its spokes and pivotal point. Without this point no movement is possible but, this central point does not move itself” (Tiwari 162). That is to say, the still point of the turning world stands at the center of movement itself, yet without moving neither. Because humanity’s physical condition is stuck in the temporal flux of time, it is physically impossible for an individual to transcend to such spiritual dimension. Yet, since complete spiritual achievement is defined in the poem as a meeting with the still point, Eliot conceives this meeting as a mental condition, that would give us the opportunity to constantly connect with our sense of spirituality:

But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,  
The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,  
The moment in the draughty church at smokefall  
Be remembered; involved with past and future.  
Only through time time is conquered. (178)

As the speaker mentions that “Only through time time is conquered”, Eliot defines the connection with the flux of present time as the only valuable method to achieve spiritual temporal eternity. Far from a historical event with a defined beginning and end, Eliot defines

the meeting with the still point as a mental condition. In the following passage, the image of the garden calls for an immediate present experience, which would enable a connection with our sense of spirituality:

Into the rose-garden. My words echo Thus, in your mind.

But to what purpose Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves

I do not know.

Other echoes

Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?

Quick, said the bird, find them, find them, Round the corner. Through the first gate,  
into our first world, shall we follow

The decephon of the thrush? Into our first world. (175)

We are introduced to a garden, where the seductive call of a bird invites the speaker to enter and follow “them” around the corner. As the lines later suggest, the personal pronoun actually refers to a group of children playing in the garden: “Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children, /Hidden excitedly, containing laughter” (176). Just like children entertain an immediate connection with present time, without any attempt to conceptualize things, the bird’s call also invites humanity to enter closely in contact with present time, as a method to connect with eternity and the divine. In this concern, the image of the rose ‘unseen eyebeam’ conveys a “possibility of a world of experience...beyond seeing and hearing” (Ward 76). Given the human quality of vision, the image of the rose emphasizes here the possibility of a spiritual connection, that would lead to vision and revelation. Hence, through a conscious consideration, the poet suggests the possibility of achieving a continual spiritual connectedness with the divine, despite our physical limited condition on Earth.

### 3.2 Music as an Auditory Spiritual Intersection with the Still Point

It is important to mention that, far from a hedonist connection with the present moment and its joy, Eliot resorts to musical metaphors to further elaborate on the kind of spiritual experience and connection with the present time he is concerned about. In the following lines, music as a temporal art is used as a metaphor to better define the nature of spiritual connection we should entertain with our present time:

Words move, music moves  
Only in time; but that which is only living  
Can only die. Words, after speech, reach  
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern  
Can words or music reach  
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still  
Moves perpetually in its stillness. (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 180)

The speaker informs us that the music and words that we know as mortals “move / Only in time” (180). Because it is temporal in its nature, music is ephemeral since “which is only living Can only die” (180). Using this aesthetic discourse on the nature of music as a temporal art, the speaker elaborates on the possibility to attain ‘The stillness,’ or the divine state dimension of the still point. To achieve this spiritual state, music, although dependent on its temporal quality, must follow a specific form, or a pattern: “Only by the form, the pattern/ Can words or music reach the stillness” (180). This pattern, as much as the still point of the turning world, is described as an in-between state where “the end and the beginning were always there/Before the beginning and after the end” (180). To complete the temporal musical analogy, the in-between stillness of the music is described in the same way as the in-between temporal location of God, previously evoked in the opening lines of “Burnt Norton”:

Not the stillness of the violin, while the note lasts,  
Not that only, but the coexistence,  
Or say that the end precedes the beginning,  
And the end and the beginning were always there  
Before the beginning and after the end. (180)

Unlike temporal stillness, which musically translates as a lasting note on a musical instrument, the speaker evokes a musical stillness where the beginning and the end constantly coexist. Far from being an experience that only exists acoustically and chronologically, the music is described as a spiritual event that transcends the notion of space and time that governs our existence. Like Dante's use of the music of the spheres, Eliot refers here to a conceptual unheard divine music. In the following passage from "The Dry Salvages," Eliot refers to the music as an unheard tune, that compares to Dante's unheard music of Paradise:

The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning  
Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply  
That it is not heard at all, but you are the music  
While the music lasts. These are only hints and guesses,  
Hints followed by guesses; and the rest  
Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.  
The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.  
Here the impossible union  
Of spheres of existence is actual,  
Here the past and future  
Are conquered, and reconciled,  
Where action were otherwise movement

Of that which is only moved  
And has in it no source of movement—  
Driven by daemonic, chthonic  
Powers. And right action is freedom  
From past and future also. (199)

The experience of listening to the music is represented as a deep musical contemplation, that on the surface appears to be in-existent and “not heard at all.” Like Dante’s music of “Paradisio,” these lines feature a kind of divine music, that only individuals who achieve a spiritual elevation are capable of perceiving. This same musical experience is explicitly defined in the spiritual still point setting, where the different ‘spheres’ of existence, those of the past and the future, of stillness and movement, “Are conquered, and reconciled” (199).

In the scene of the rose garden, the same spiritual musical experience is evoked. The bird actually refers to the music surrounding the setting as an “unheard music hidden in the shrubbery” (176). In the closing lines of the passage, the bird repeats the pattern that connects the human notion of time with eternity, “Time past and time future” (176), as a reminder for the path to follow in order to achieve spiritual awareness. The phrase “human kind Cannot bear very much reality” (176) actually emphasizes how humanity has ignored such possible spiritual connotation with the divine:

Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind  
Cannot bear very much reality.  
Time past and time future  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present. (176)

Considering the musical analogy relevant in “Four Quartets,” we come to understand that Eliot’s use of musical metaphors and soundscape in “Four Quartets” compares to Dante’s

use of the music of the spheres in “Paradisio.” Yet, Eliot soundscape sustains a philosophical argument that is absent in Dante’s poetry. As much as his use of cacophony, and silent words of purgation, Eliot’s distinct implementation of divine music in “Four Quartets” illustrates a corrective movement in his poetry. Accordingly, Eliot follows Dante’s religious musical analogy that associates cacophony, monophony, and the music of the sphere to a quest towards purgation. Yet, he deviates from the master and performs a Clinamen to better suits his use of soundscape to the modernist themes relevant to his poetry.

### **III. Wallace Stevens and the Music of Secular Spirituality**

If Dante and Eliot single Christian faith as a redemptive solution for humanity, Stevens depicts religion as an inherited system of beliefs, too old and detached from modern reality. As he considers religion as an irrelevant spiritual solution, Stevens proposes the “Supreme Fiction,” a fiction attached to the real world, as a valid spiritual substitute for modern men: “Stevens evolve[s] new poetries of the secular-sacred, inscribing himself as a self-conscious artist "whose actual words blaze with an art, or artifice that can redeem the human spirit” (Thomas 1). Interestingly enough, Stevens’ call for a profane spirituality is poetically illustrated in his poems through an ironic appropriation of traditional religious symbols and visual imagery:

Stevens transvaluations of parable, proverb, prayer, and hymn are efforts to create a new religion. They defer to the supreme integration of the old by retaining the vocabulary and purposes; they acknowledge new realities by changing the content. Stevens’ use of biblical symbol is a further, more intense indication that religious thought informs his work. (Morris32)

Although such ironic appropriations have already been the subject of a number of studies, Stevens’ use of music and soundscape to illustrate his religious themes has not been

given the attention it deserves yet. As much as his implementation of visual imageries, Stevens recurs to the use of religious singing, and soundscape metaphors, to contradict the traditional religious musical symbolism. In the vein of this perspective, I demonstrate in this section how Stevens counters Dante religious soundscape upside down, and performs poetically what Harold Bloom defines as a “Kenosis, or repetition and discontinuity” (Bloom 77), to affirm his religious point of view. Indeed, Stevens moves from a cacophonous soundscape exploration to harmonious and pleasant musical evocations. Nevertheless, far from glorifying the spiritual role of Christianity, Stevens’ implements cacophony to illustrate his skepticism towards traditional religion, and moves towards a harmonious secular music to suggest the ‘supreme fiction’ as a modernist spiritual substitute.

### **1. Musical and Soundscape Cacophony: The Obsolescence of Religion in Modern Times**

In *The Necessary Angels*, Stevens describes religion as “an ancient world full of figures that had been known and become endeared for its reader for centuries” (144). Stevens considers traditional religion as an irrelevant and outdated set of beliefs, too old to deal with the issues of modern men. In “St. Armorer's Church from The Outside,” the image of the decayed church evokes religion as a vanishing institution, unable to survive the changing conditions of modernity:

St. Armorer's was once an immense success.  
It rose loftily and stood massively; and to lie  
In its church-yard, in the province of St. Armorer's,  
Fixed one for good in geranium-colored day.  
What is left has the foreign smell of plaster,  
The closed-in smell of hay. A sumac grows



On the altar, growing toward the lights, inside.

Reverberations leak and lack among holes. (Stevens, *Collected Poems* 529)

Even though the first lines open by informing us about the immense past success of the church, its present decayed architecture with plaster smell and “lack among holes” connotes its abandon. A few lines later, the speaker explicitly affirms that “St. Armorer's has nothing of this present” (529), which implies the inability of religion to survive in modernity.

In some of his poems, Stevens recurs to a cacophonous auditory aesthetics that contributes to his skepticism with regards to religious institutions. Hence, unlike Dante's use of cacophony, Stevens evokes, through unmusical auditory descriptions, the invalidity of traditional religion and the need to turn towards something new. In “The Blue Buildings in The Summer Air,” Stevens takes the decayed visual presentation of “St. Armorer's Church from The Outside”, to an auditory cacophonous level of aesthetic representation:

Cotton Mather died when I was a boy. The books  
He read, an day, all night and all the nights,  
Had got him nowhere. There was always the doubt,  
That made him preach the louder, long for a church  
In which his voice would roll its cadences,  
After the sermon, to quiet that mouse in the wall. (216)

The poem introduces a doubtful preacher, whose uncertainty pushes him to preach louder “...There was always the doubt, / That made him preach the louder, long for a church /In which his voice would roll its cadences” (216). The preacher's sounding cadence is contrasted against the quiet sound of a mouse hidden in the walls of the church: “In which his voice would roll its cadences, /After the sermon, to quiet that mouse in the wall” (Stevens 216). Although the sounds produced by the mouse are quiet, they are referred to as an eminent thunder: “Yet the eminent thunder from the mouse/ The grinding in the arches of the church,

/The plaster dropping, even dripping, down” (217). The eminent thunder of the mouse is concrete and effective, as it evokes the inevitable decline of religion. Other cacophonous sounds intervene in the lines. As much as the mouse’s voice, the sound of the plaster dropping suggests the decay of religious institutions in modern times: “The grinding in the arches of the church, / the plaster dropping, even dripping, down” (217). The last stanza of the poem shows the complete defeat of the preacher, as the speaker invites the mouse to devour the preacher’s body in his tomb: “Go, mouse, go nibble at Lenin in his tomb. /Are you not Le plus pure, you ancient one?” (217).

In “The Old Lutheran Bells at Home,” Steven’s use of cacophony is revealed in a more musical fashion. Straight from the first stanza, the speaker evokes the voices of religious men singing in the name of God. The poet mingles their singing with some other contemporary profane musical references, which results in a meaningless cacophonous auditory setting, that retains nothing from the religious significance of the ritual celebration:

These are the voices of the pastors calling  
In the names of St. Paul and of the halo-John  
And of other holy and learned men, among them  
Great choristers, propounders of hymns, trumpeters,  
Jerome and the scrupulous Francis and Sunday women,  
The nurses of the spirit's innocence. (461)

Among the pastors’ voices and “propounders of hymns,” Stevens evokes the displaced sounds of great choristers, and trumpets. The voice of Sunday women could probably refer to the woman’s figure in “Sunday Morning,” who prefers to relax, instead of attending religious ceremonies. As the main concern of the singers relates to the afterlife and God’s mercy, the speaker describes their voices as spreading fortress walls around themselves: “These are the voices of the pastors calling/ Much rough-end being to smooth

Paradise, / Spreading out fortress walls like fortress wings” (461). This depicts the community singing as a sect completely disconnected from the real world, for their ultimate reliance on religious imagination. The speaker’s skepticism with regards to their ritual is further evoked when he assumes that “Each truth is a sect though no bells ring for it” (461). This implies that, although other sects pretend to hold some kind of truth, the church is the only institution that uses bells’ ringing to manifest its presence. This ironic remark implies the assumption that, if traditional religion effectively held any absolute truth at all, churches and religious men wouldn’t need bells and sound artifacts to manifest their religious authority. In the following quote, Stevens comparably describes church bells as an outdated sound coming from the past: “The Church bells are ringing and it seems very much like the reading of long ago. But that reading, if it ever existed anywhere expect in the affection, has long since disappeared” (F. Lombardi 201). Hence, as much as the previous sounds, the church bell is used in the closing lines of the poem to reflect the invalidity of religion and its disconnection from modern reality.

In “Country Words,” Stevens explores the disconnection of religious beliefs from modern reality through an ironic allusion to a psalm. While Dante depicted psalms singing as a musical act of religious repentance, Stevens rather depicts such rituals as an obsolete attempt to escape from the real world. According to critics, the poem alludes to psalm 137 (Cook 141). In the original version of the psalm, the song evokes the sadness of the Israelites in exile, hanging their harps on trees. As they found themselves “on strange land” (Summon 6), the captive Israelites are unable to sing their redemptive song, since there is no temple to celebrate their religious ritual

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, also we wept at our remembrance of Zion.

On the willows, in the midst thereof, we hung up our lyres.

For there our captors demanded a song, and our desecrators, mirth: "Sing us from the song of Zion."

How can we sing the song of God on strange land? (6)

As the following line suggests, -“How can we sing the song of God on strange land?”- the psalm represents a communal lament of the Israelis in exile. Stevens takes this psalm as a reference in his poem, to serve his anti-religious theme:

I sang a canto in a canton,  
Cunning-coo, 0, cuckoo cock,  
In a canton of Belshazzar  
To Belshazzar, putrid rock,  
Pillar of a putrid people,  
Underneath a willow there  
I stood and sang and filled the air. (Stevens 207)

As referred by Eleanor Cook, in *Reade Guide to Wallace Stevens*, the line “Cunning-coo, 0, cuckoo cock” is considered to be a reference to the following line from the psalm “If I forget thee, O Jerualem, Let my right hand forget her cunning”(Cook 141), whereas “I stood and sang and filled the air ” is considered to echo “We hanged our harps upon the willows ...sing us one song of Zion” (Cook 141), from the same psalm. Taking into account such allusions, the title “Country Without Words” could be read as a reference to the inability of Israelites to sing the words of God in a strange land. While the allusions *per se* are approximative, Stevens addresses religious singing in a way that clearly relates the content of the poem to the situation of Israelites in the original psalm.

Unlike the original text, Stevens gives his character the possibility of singing his canto: “I sang a canto in a canton” (Stevens 207). Interestingly enough, the singer describes his singing as “An old song/ An Edge of song that never clear” (207). Because his religious song calls for the affirmation of a divine order disconnected from our physical reality, the singer

seems unable to make up a clear vision, and presents his song as an incomplete creation, that only belongs to the realm of the supernatural world: “an old rebellious song, /An edge of song that never clears” (207). Hence, far from aiming for a positive spiritual connotation, Stevens uses psalm religious singing to describe the disconnection of religious singers from reality, and contradicts Eliot’s and Dante’s religious musical aesthetics, as implemented in their poetry.

According to Harold Bloom, a poet is capable to counter his predecessor through a process of repetition and discontinuity, or what he labels in *The Anxiety of Influence* as a Kenosis. Unlike clinamen, where the young poet performs a corrective movement against his predecessor, Kenosis is “a breaking-device similar to the defence mechanisms our psyches employ against repetition compulsions; *kenosis* then is a movement towards discontinuity with the precursor” (Bloom 14). In another passage, bloom explains that a poet who performs a Kenosis “intends to do the opposite of the compulsive act” (89) performed by the aster master, yet he “paradoxically performs the same act with an opposite meaning”(89). In the vein of this perspective, we understand that Stevens performs a Kenosis to counter Dante’s religious soundscape. If Cacophony and religious psalms are used by Dante as devices that communicate the need for religious purgation, Stevens implements the same soundscape arrangement to counter Dante’s religious message, and to suggest the irrelevance of traditional religion as a spiritual solution in modern time.

## **2. Stevens’ Return to Concrete reality**

### **2.1 Refuting Death as a Spiritual Continuity**

As he manifestly rejects religion for its obsolescence and detachment from modernity, Stevens considers reality as our only valuable refuge. Stevens suggests that the reader should live in a secular world, cleansed from any transcendental religious beliefs. In “Sunday Morning,” the glorification of reality over the religious idea of perfect paradise is presented

through the figure of a woman, who prefers to relax in her dressing gown, instead of attending the Sunday preaching:

Complacencies of the peignoir, and late  
Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair,  
And the green freedom of a cockatoo  
Upon a rug mingle to dissipate  
The holy hush of ancient sacrifice.  
She dreams a little, and she feels the dark  
Encroachment of that old catastrophe. (Stevens 67)

The woman is enjoying coffee and oranges under the warm of sunshine, but, at the same time, she “feels the dark Encroachment of that old catastrophe,” (67) and “The holy hush of ancient sacrifice” (67). The speaker questions why should the woman sacrifice herself for a shady sense of divinity, “Why should she give her bounty to the dead?” (67) and tries to convince her that the supernatural divinity she fears is merely metaphysical and would only manifest itself “in silent shadows and in dreams” (67). Instead of relying on religious hope in the afterlife, the speaker presents earthly pleasures and “the beauty of the earth” (Stevens 67) as providing enough compensation for the lost heaven.

As he defines reality and its concrete pleasures as the only valuable refuge for humanity, Stevens accepts death as part of the cycle of life. Unlike the traditional religious view that defines death as a passage to eternity, Stevens accepts death as “a passage to nothingness, the end of everything” (Mc. Brerty 341). In “Decorations in the Nigger Cemetery,” Stevens celebrates this idea through a number of musical metaphors that bring evidence to the poet’s use of music as an aesthetic motif connoting his religious concerns. Considering the physical decorations on the cemetery, Stevens, through the title of the poem, communicates his interest in concrete reality, against any religious fantasy that proposes paradise as a spiritual liberation

after death. The first section of the poem actually introduces the figure of Walt Whitman, who is associated to the image of the sun: “In the far South the sun of autumn is passing/ Like Walt Whitman walking along a ruddy shore” (Stevens 150). Actually, the figure of Whitman establishes the thematic concern of the poem<sup>3</sup>. As a poet who considers death as a perpetual continuous celebration of life, this allusion particularly relates to Stevens’ consideration of any form of life after death, or its negation, in his poetics: “Walt Whitman is a great poet of the joys of life, but he is equally a great poet of death...he proclaimed his faith that death was not a plunge into the terminal nada and was convinced that we can live our lives fully only if we are prepared to welcome death as a transition in a continued, but still mysterious, process of spiritual evolution” (Aspiz 1).

Through his singing in Stevens’ poem, Whitman celebrates the idea that no individual shall ever see any sort of end, even after death: “He is singing and chanting the things that are part of him, / The worlds that were and will be, death and day. / Nothing is final, he chants. No man shall see the end” (Stevens 150). As he rejects any possible transcendental continuity after death, Stevens answers Wittman’s enthusiastic singing with a rather skeptical tone, as follow:

We should die except for Death

In his chalk and violet robes.

Not to die a parish death.

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<sup>3</sup> Whitman shows his belief in afterlife as a perpetual joy in “Song of Myself”. The speaker celebrates by singing the pleasures of life, and sings death, not as an end, but as a continuity:

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,  
And what I assume you shall assume,  
...there is really no death,  
And if ever there was it led forward life,  
and does not wait at the end to arrest it,  
And ceas’d the moment life appear’d. ( Whitman7)

Out of the spirit of the holy temples,  
Empty and grandiose, let us make hymns  
And sing them in secrecy as lovers do. (151)

Instead of assuming any kind of religious “parish death,” the speaker calls to free our mind from “the spirit of the holy temples, /Empty and grandiose” (151). Stevens urges the reader to make new hymns and sing them “in secrecy as lovers do” (151). Instead of supporting the belief in any form of perpetual life after death, the speaker initiates a new kind of music, a music that celebrates his reliance on concrete reality. In canto XXV, Stevens evokes the music of birds, as strictly belonging to reality: “From oriole to crow, note the decline /In music. Crow is realist” (154). In canto XLVIII, the speaker refers to a personal, written music, as an antithesis to the hymn songs that supposedly originated from an external transcendental divine origin: “Music is not yet written but is to be. /The preparation is long and of long intent /For the time when sound shall be subtler than we ourselves” (158). Unlike religious hymns, the songs of reality need be created by ourselves, and require our sense of creativity.

In “Extracts from Addresses to the Academy of Fine Ideas,” Stevens extends this idea by accepting the perpetual evil that surrounds our existence, instead of seeking death as a transcendental liberation. Unlike the Christian world view that considers death as a liberation from evil, Stevens reincorporates evil as part of our human experiences, proposing to coexist with it. The poet presents such secular understanding of life by comparing our existence to a battlefield:

We live in a camp.... Stanzas of final peace  
Lie in the heart’s residuum....Amen.  
But would it be amen, in choirs, if once  
In total war we died and after death  
Returned, unable to die again. (Stevens 258)



Life and its evil are metaphorically represented as living in a war camp. The speaker affirms that a peaceful end is possible and could be found in our inner selves: “Stanzas of final peace / Lie in the heart’s residuum...Amen” (Stevens 258). The speaker contrasts this secular statement against the religious idea that conceives death as an escape from earthly evil. Through his arguments, he redefines the notion of death and images it as a return to the soil. Accordingly, far from a spiritual event that transcends us to a superior spiritual dimension, death represents for the speaker an event that bring us closer to our evil origins, i.e., closer to earth: “Yet to lie buried in evil earth, / If evil never ends, is to return / To evil after death, unable to die again”( 259). Seen from this perspective, death represents a perpetual co-existence with evil. Accordingly, the speaker concludes that if earth “dissolves/ Its evil after death” as much as it “dissolves it while we live”, peace needs to be found in our inner selves: “The chants of final peace / Lie in the heart's residuum” (259). The speaker poetically sustains his arguments by questioning the validity of any religious burial chant, since all that awaits us after death is a perpetual connection with an evil soil: “How can We chant if we live in evil and afterward Lie harshly buried there?” (Stevens 259). Instead, he proposes to substitute those religious burial hymns with a new kind of chant, as follow:

Thence come the final chants, the chants  
Of the brooder seeking the acutest end  
Of speech: to pierce the heart's residuum  
And there to find music for a single line,  
Equal to memory, one line in which  
The vital music formulates the words. (Stevens 259)

In these lines, the final chants are defined as a speech that goes through our “heart's residuum”, which results into a “vital music” that “formulates the words”. Hence, instead of

relying on perpetual paradise, the speaker suggests a profane perspective to transcend the evil that surrounds our existence. Eventually, the profane words formulate an allusion to Stevens' Supreme Fiction, that represents a substitute for traditional religious imagination. As he turns traditional religious hymns songs into secular hymns, Stevens counters Dante's use of religious songs in "Purgatorio" as a soundscape evocation that calls for spiritual resolution. Instead of purging the soul from religious sins, Stevens "secular Hymns" aims to purge the mind from traditional religious beliefs in order to embrace reality. Hence, as much as his use of cacophony, Stevens implements the metaphor of religious hymns in a way to perform a Kenosis against Dante's soundscape aesthetics, and affirms his rejection of traditional religious imagination.

## **2.2 Stevens' Return to Natural Time as a Response to Eliot's Quest for Spiritual Timelessness**

It is worth mentioning that Stevens' reliance on concrete reality, and his rejection of religious imagination, culminate in an interesting thematic and musical contrast against Eliot's religious perspectives. If Eliot initiates in "Four Quartets" a spiritual journey toward timelessness, a closer consideration of Stevens' lines illustrates his acceptance of natural time as a way to contradict Eliot's religious perspective. Interestingly enough, this thematic antagonism leads to a musical contrast that highlights the aesthetic consideration both poets give to music, in relation to their respective religious sensibilities.

Stevens' acceptance of natural time is implicitly shown in "Credences Of Summer." The poet actually captures the continual movement of the seasons by situating midsummer between "spring's infuriations" and "autumnal inhalations":

Now in midsummer come and all fools slaughtered

And spring's infuriations over and a long way

To the first autumnal inhalations, young broods

Are in the grass, the roses are heavy with a weight

Of fragrance and the mind lays by its trouble. (Stevens 372)

J. Dennis Huston explains that Stevens considers summer as a season that begins and ends at a certain period of the year, suggesting a conscious consideration of the temporality of the seasons: “With the first word Stevens establishes his poem within time. “Now,” he begins, and as he continues, he reminds the reader that summer is but one season in a cycle that has a very definite past and future” (264). This particular use of the natural seasons contrasts against Eliot’s evocation of zero summer in “Four Quartets,” an imaginary season situated outside of human chronology: “Where is the summer, the unimaginable/ Zero summer?” (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 200). Eliot’s Zero Summer stands for the quester’s aim to transcend regular time in order to achieve spiritual eternity. As he celebrates the natural cycle of time in his poem, Stevens testifies his exclusive reliance on concrete reality, and contradicts Eliot’s religious transcendental tendencies. The religious connotation attributed to Stevens’ poem is revealed through the Christian religious symbols employed: “The rock cannot be broken. It is the truth. / I t rises from land and sea and covers them” (Stevens 375). Images of rock and water traditionally connote religious redemption, but Stevens presents nature’s rock here as a concrete and solid representation of truth in the real world.

This thematic antagonism consequently leads to a musical contrast between both poets. Unlike the divine conceptual music Eliot evokes in “Four Quartets,” Stevens’ celebration of natural time culminates in a kind of music that belongs to the concrete natural morning, as follow:

The trumpet of morning blows in the clouds and through The sky.

It is the visible announced, It is the more than visible, the more

Than sharp, illustrious scene. The trumpet cries

This is the successor of the invisible. This is its substitute in stratagems Of the spirit.

This, in sight and memory, Must take its place, as what is possible Replaces what is not.

The resounding cry Is like ten thousand tumblers tumbling down. (376)

Stevens evokes a sharp, visible and concrete trumpets' music in the nature's morning. Unlike the abstract unheard music Eliot evokes in his poetry, the visible trumpet is explicitly described here as the successor of "the invisible" religious beliefs. This musical contrast is further developed, as the speaker evokes the difficulty at finding resolution in "unreal songs":

Far in the woods they sang their unreal songs,  
Secure. It was difficult to sing in face Of the object.  
The singers had to avert themselves  
Or else avert the object. Deep in the woods. (376)

The speaker describes the difficulty singers have at performing an unreal song when facing concrete objects that belong to reality. The singers are given two different solutions: either turn away from the object and stick to unreal abstractions, or turn toward a concrete tune, related to the real world. In the following lines, the singers' decision seems to favor Stevens' reliance on concrete reality. As they have chosen to capture the object of the external world in their song, the singers clearly illustrate their connectedness to the real world:

They sang desiring an object that was near,  
In face of which desire no longer moved,  
...  
The object, grips it in savage scrutiny,  
Once to make captive, once to subjugate  
Or yield to subjugation, once to proclaim  
The meaning of the capture, this hard prize,

Fully made, fully apparent, fully found. (376)

As singers made the object of reality captive in their song, the meaningful song is “Fully made, fully apparent, fully found” (376). This artistic act targets the singers, who move away from spiritual abstract singing, toward a song that captures their surroundings. As much as his rejection of Dante, Stevens illustrate here his negation of Eliot’s use of soundscape as a poetical illustration of divine order. Indeed, his acceptance of natural time, against Eliot’s spiritual notion of timelessness, culminates in a soundscape antagonism that illustrate Stevens’ divergent reaction against traditional religion and Dante’s religious soundscape.

### **3. Poetry as a Modern Spiritual Substitute**

Far from becoming a materialist poet, Stevens presents a spiritual substitute for traditional religion in his poetry. In a letter to Hi Simons, Stevens wrote, “It is a habit of mind with me to be thinking of some substitute for religion.... My trouble, and the trouble of a great many people, is the loss of belief in the sort of God in Whom we were all brought up to believe” (Stevens, *The Cambridge Companion* 88). Though he clearly refutes religious abstraction for its complete detachment from reality, Stevens does not reject the possibility to find, in the real world, a spiritual modern substitute. In “Angel Surrounded by Paysans,” the conversation between the countryman and “the angel of reality” (Stevens “Collected poems” 496) conveys the possibility of constituting an earthly spiritual sensibility. Although the angel does “neither ashen wing nor wear of ore/ And live without a tepid aureole” (496), he informs the protagonist about his spiritual validity, for he represents: “the necessary angel of earth, /Since, in [his] sight, you see the earth again” (496).

Stevens proposes the possibility of formulating a profane spiritual imagination via modern poetry. He claims that the role of the modern poet, is “to find, by means of his own thought and feeling, what seems to him to be the poetry of his time as differentiated from the

poetry of the time of Sir Walter Scott, or the poetry of any other time, and to state it in a manner that effectively discloses it to his readers” (Spears 148). Hence, unlike traditional religion, Stevens believes that poetry has the capacity to nourish the spiritual needs of individuals, without taking them away from their modern realities.

In “A High-Toned Old Christian Woman,” the speaker criticizes the woman for her blind adherence to Christianity. He informs her that her blind devotion to religion will result in a “haunted heaven” (Stevens 59). Instead of an imaginary heaven, the speaker proposes poetry as a better spiritual substitute: “Poetry is the supreme fiction, madame/ Take the moral law and make a nave of it /And from the nave build haunted heaven” (59). As he engages into a comparison between poetry and Christian beliefs, the protagonist aims to show the limits of traditional religion, against the superiority of poetic imagination. In the following lines, Stevens implements a set of musical metaphors to sustain his poetic argumentation:

Like windy citherns hankering for hymns.  
We agree in principle. That's clear. But take  
The opposing law and make a peristyle,  
And from the peristyle project a masque  
Beyond the planets. Thus, our bawdiness,  
Unpurged by epitaph, indulged at last,  
Is equally converted into palms,  
Squiggling like saxophones. And palm for palm,  
Madame, we are where we began. Allow,  
Therefore, that in the planetary scene  
Your disaffected flagellants, well-stuffed,  
Smacking their muzzy bellies in parade,  
Proud of such novelties of the sublime,

Such tink and tank and tunk-a-tunk-tunk,  
May, merely may, madame, whip from themselves  
A jovial hullabaloo among the spheres.  
This will make widows wince. But fictive things  
Wink as they will. Wink most when widows wince. (59)

Stevens' juxtaposition of religious hymns, against the modern saxophone, illustrates the gap between modern reality and traditional beliefs. The speaker informs the woman that poetry, as much as psalms and hymns, could be used for moral and spiritual subject matters. Because of this parallel, he concludes that both the poet and the nun "agree in principle." Yet, unlike religious hymn songs, the saxophone, as a metaphor for modern poetry, could also be used to treat different profane subject matters. As much as peristyles in architecture, poetry is capable of creating decorations outside the church. In this concern, when profane matters become the subject of poetry, they are "equally converted into palms":

.....But take  
The opposing law and make a peristyle,  
And from the peristyle project a masque  
Beyond the planets. Thus, our bawdiness,  
Unpurged by epitaph, indulged at last,  
Is equally converted into palms,  
Squiggling like saxophones. And palm for palm. (59)

In "Notes Toward Supreme Fiction," Stevens details the functioning of his supreme fiction, and how it could work as a new spiritual substitute for religious beliefs. As he calls the ephebe to give up any pre-conceived idea about the sun "Begin, ephebe, by perceiving the idea.../You must become an ignorant man again/And see the sun again with an ignorant eye" (380), the speaker implies the annihilation of any kind of knowledge inherited from our

ancestors. Following this assumption, the line “the death of one god is the death of all” (381) implies the annihilation of any traditional system of beliefs that includes a logocentric source of transcendental absolute. This invitation is musically reformulated, as the speaker calls to substitute religious hymns by a lucid observation of reality: “After a luster of the moon, we say/ We have not the need of any paradise,/ We have not the need of any seducing hymn”(394). The speaker suggests a substitute for religion, through a continuous observation of the real world. Unlike religious imagination, poetry continually follows and captures the changes occurring in the real world, instead of merely capturing a fixed idea of it:

Two things of opposite natures seem to depend  
On one another, as a man depends  
On a woman, day on night, the imagined  
On the real. This is the origin of change. (392)

Through such poetic process, the poet continually creates “fictions” related to the changes occurring in reality. In “An Ordinary Evening in New Haven,” this poetic process is represented musically as follow:

We keep coming back and coming back  
To the real: to the hotel instead of the hymns  
That fall upon it out of the wind. We seek  
The poem of pure reality, untouched  
By trope or deviation, straight to the word,  
Straight to the transfixing object, to the object. (471)

Instead of seeking refuge in religious hymns, the speaker returns to the real world in order to conceive “The poem of pure reality.” As he relies on his intellect to initiate an imaginative spirituality, the figure of the poet in “Tea at The Palz of Hoon” is presented as



“the compass of that sea”( 65), conveying the intellectual process through which he shapes “the world in which” he “walked...saw or heard” :

What was the ointment sprinkled on my beard?  
What were the hymns that buzzed beside my ears?  
What was the sea whose tide swept through me there?  
Out of my mind the golden ointment rained,  
And my ears made the blowing hymns they heard.  
I was myself the compass of that sea:  
I was the world in which I walked, and what I saw  
Or heard or felt came not but from myself. (65)

Other references more accurately suggest Stevens’ use of musical metaphors and soundscape for proposing the supreme fiction as a substitute for religious imagination. In “The Hand as a Being”, Stevens turns the religious singed cantos into a song that connects the speaker to his surroundings:

In the first canto of the final canticle,  
Too conscious of too many things at once,  
Our man beheld the naked, nameless dame,  
Too conscious of too many things at once,  
In the first canto of the final canticle,  
Her hand composed him and composed the tree. (271)

The poem represents an attempt at “canticle,” which means a biblical hymn or a religious chant. The singer in the poem, who is “Too conscious of too many things at once” (271), turns away from such religious singing, to embrace naked reality, represented through the image of the “nameless dame,” who “composed him and composed the tree” (Stevens 271).

In “The Comedian as the Letter C,” the speaker presents “The liaison, the blissful liaison, /Between himself and his environment,” as “...his theme and hymn and flight, / A passionately niggling nightingale” (Stevens 34). Hence, instead of religious hymns, the poem proposes “To make a new intelligence prevail?” through the “... reverberations in the words / Of his first central hymns..., /tests of the strength of his aesthetic, his philosophy” (Stevens 37). In contrast with such concrete song of the real world, the speaker in “Academic Discourse at Havana,” presents the “oldest hymns” of religious practices as having “no more meaning” (Stevens 144). Accordingly, he proposes to “Let the poet on his balcony” (144), by observing external reality, in order to let him substitute the profane spiritual imagination.

In “Things of August,” this idea of a new spiritual direction is presented through a soundscape juxtaposition. The sound coming from the natural world is contrasted against an old spiritual praying activity. Religious praying explicitly presents poetry as a spiritual substitute for traditional religious hymns:

These locusts by day, these crickets by night  
Are the instruments on which to play  
Of an old and disused ambit of the soul  
Or of a new aspect, bright in discovery. (489)

Here, the sound of “locusts by day” and “crickets by night” are presented as new instruments for “an old and disused ambit of the soul.” Instead of old hymns and psalms, the sounds coming out of the natural world take over, as they keep the listener connected to reality. In the lines that follow, the speaker details this new spiritual direction through a description of the sounds that August sings: “The sort of thing that August crooners sing, /By a pure fountain, that was a ghost, and is, / Under the sun-slides of a sloping mountain” (489). More explicitly, the speaker presents poetry as the new text of the world, that may replace the old traditional religious hymns: “A new text of the world, /A scribble of fret and fear and fate, /From a bravura

of the mind” (494). Far from seeking truth and meaning in any transcendental religious text, the speaker affirms that, through poetry, “The meanings are our own / It is a text that we shall be needing, to be the footing of noon, / The pillar of midnight, / That comes from ourselves” (495). As the figure of the poet relies on his intellect and imagination to create a spiritual fiction, the speaker in “Evening without Angels” affirms that the poet who creates a picture of this world does not resort to unreal creatures, such as angels hovering in the air praying their heavenly music:

Air is air  
Its vacancy glitters round us everywhere.  
Its sounds are not angelic syllables  
But our unfashioned spirits realized  
More sharply in more furious selves. (137)

Through this repetitive use of musical metaphors, Stevens illustrates his conscious use of soundscape and musical aesthetics to propose the supreme fiction as a substitute for traditional religious imagination. Unlike the cacophony of church singing, Stevens presents hymn songs as a metaphor for its profane spiritual substitute, that originates in the continual connection between modern reality and poetic imagination. Once again, Stevens’ use of hymns to illustrate his ‘supreme fiction’ demonstrates a Kenosis movement against Dante’s soundscape. As he turns Dante’s soundscape religious symbols upside down, Stevens performs “a movement towards discontinuity with the precursor” (Bloom 14), and affirms his contradictory point of view against Dante religious sensibility.

### **Conclusion**

Although Eliot and Stevens use musical materials comparable to those Dante implemented in *The Divine Comedy*, they both adapted and modified those materials to better

serve their respective positions with regards to religion and spirituality. Dante moves from cacophonous descriptions in “Inferno,” to monophonic psalms in “Purgatorio,” and to the spiritual humming of the spheres in “Paradisio,” while Eliot poetically moves from cacophonous narrative voices in “The Waste Land,” to an auditory quest for redemption in “Ash Wednesday,” and to a spiritual musical revelation in “Four Quartets.” Because religion represents for Stevens an outdated system of beliefs, his use of cacophony illustrates the poet’s skepticism toward traditional religion. As he musically moves away from the cacophony of churches to more pleasing profane musical experiences, Stevens reveals his supreme fiction as a modern spiritual substitute. Hence, whereas Eliot adapts Dante’s musical religious analogy to represent Christianity as a spiritual redemptive solution, Stevens turns Eliot’s and Dante’s musical religious connotations upside-down, in order to affirm a secular poetic perspective. Using a musical analogy that moves from cacophony to meaningful musical experiences, both Eliot and Stevens illustrate the poetic use of music to implement religious ideas related to their distinct spiritual sensibilities.

## **Chapter IV: Musical Forms as interdisciplinary experimental parallels to Soundscape and musical metaphors**

### **Introduction**

Despite the use of musical metaphors and soundscape, both Eliot and Stevens implemented musical forms in their poetry. Although previous studies considered to an extent Eliot's and Stevens' interdisciplinary musical approach, the thematic significance behind the formal and structural appropriations of music in their poems has not been given the attention it deserves. In this chapter, I demonstrate that musical forms, as implemented by Eliot and Stevens, serve as aesthetic poetical tools that contribute to convey the thematic ideas previously analyzed in this thesis. Hence, I demonstrate that the poets' interdisciplinary musical approach to versification meets the same ground as soundscape and musical metaphors at evoking Eliot's and Stevens' divergent religious views, and their attitudes against the Romantics. Taking into account the interdisciplinary nature of this chapter, I follow a program music perspective to interpret the formal integration of musical structures in poetry. Among the different strategies used in comparative literature, the interdisciplinary approach calls for the interpretation of literary texts using the theoretical frameworks of other disciplines: "Interdisciplinarity postulates the principle of method, that is, the application of theoretical frameworks and methodologies used in other disciplines for the acquisition of knowledge in the analysis of literature and/or the literary text or texts" (Zepetnek 97). Hence, this chapter relies on the formal analytical approach used in musicology i.e., program music, in order to interpret the overall form and structure of the poems. To achieve this aim, the first part of this chapter introduces the aesthetical principles that lie behind some of the well-known forms of music in the history of Western musicology: The Sonata, The Theme and Variations, The Rhapsody, and The Nocturne. Through this introductory section, I bring the necessary theoretical and structural notions that will determine Eliot's and Stevens'

adaptations of musical forms in their poems. In the second section of this chapter, I demonstrate how Eliot implemented The Sonata form in “Four Quartets,” The Nocturne musical form in his poem “The Nocturne,” and The Rhapsody musical form in his poem “Rhapsody on a Windy Night”. Despite demonstrating the structural analogies between poems and musical forms, I concentrate on revealing how such formal appropriations serve as stylistic devices that contribute to translate Eliot’s themes. In this respect, I demonstrate that The Rhapsody and The Nocturne, as implemented in “Rhapsody on a Windy Night” and “Nocturne,” translate Eliot’s ironic attitudes and his dissatisfaction with Romantic style and aesthetics, whereas The Sonata, as implemented in “Four Quartets,” poetically translates Eliot’s spiritual and religious themes. In the last section of this chapter, I demonstrate how Stevens implemented the Sonata and the theme and variations musical forms in his poems. As much as Eliot, I demonstrate how Stevens implemented those musical and stylistic devices that reveal his thematic preoccupations. In this regard, I demonstrate that The Sonata, as implemented in “Peter Quince at the Clavier,” develops Stevens religious theme, whereas Theme and Variations, as implemented in “Sea Surface Full of Clouds,” demonstrates Stevens’ poetics of imagination and reality.

## **I. Reviewing Musical Forms**

It is important to review and introduce some of the well-known forms of music that we shall consider through our analysis. Indeed, understanding the structure of a Sonata, or a Theme and Variations composition, would enable us to evaluate Eliot’s and Stevens’ implementation of such musical structures in their poems. In this section, I propose to review a number of musical forms, namely: The Sonata, Theme and Variations, The Rhapsody, and The Nocturne. Following a program perspective of study, I attempt to go beyond elements of form and structure, in order to consider musical expressiveness and connotations. To achieve this aim, I propose to describe the formal constructions of musical forms, and to connect them to the

historical and cultural context they belong to. As much as literary history, the history of western music is organized in periods, namely: the Medieval, the Renaissance, the Baroque, the Classical, the Romantic, the Modern, and the Postmodern period. As much as poets, composers reflect and communicate through their formal and aesthetic styles their attitudes towards the predominant ideas of their epochs. Accordingly, as much as neo classical poets, composers of the classical era sought to define rules for composition, and were seeking for balance and harmony, whereas Romantic composers, as much as poets of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, sought to liberate themselves from the formal restrictions imposed by the classicists. Reviewing musical forms under their respective intellectual context of their production would enable us to better understand Eliot's and Stevens' decisions at adopting few of those forms in poetry, according to their classical/Romantic connotations.

### **1. The Classical Period and the Sonata form**

As much as 18<sup>th</sup> century poets, composers of the classical era were seeking for balance and aesthetic unity. This is evident from the established musical canon of the period. In that respect, each musical form had a particular number of movements that composers followed closely to create their new musical oeuvres. This illustrates the composers' tendency to focus on formal unity, balance, and control.

Among the famous forms of the period, the Sonata explicitly illustrates the classical composers' focus on unity and systematic organization. Formally, the sonata form combines "a three-part (or ternary) thematic plan with a two-part (or binary) harmonic outline" (E. Grim 238). This means that the sonata is divided chronologically and structurally into three parts, yet, the harmonic and thematic content that flow along the parts is formed out of two musical ideas or themes:

The essential of sonata-form is the division of a movement into three parts—exposition, development, recapitulation. The exposition, having its first theme in the

'home' key of the movement, moves into another key, normally the dominant, with a second subject, and ends in that key. The next section, 'develops' or expands the material already presented; the last section is basically a varied repetition of the first, but ending in the home key, by bringing the second subject into that key. It will be gathered that sonata-form consists basically in the relationship of keys. (Jacobs 5)

Through its structuration and form, the sonata clearly illustrates the classical composers seek for unity, balance, and control. Indeed, the Sonata constitute chronologically an a-b-a form. Yet, unlike any other standard a-b-a structure, the sonata is characterized by a distinct thematic treatment. Indeed, the exposition of the sonata ( the a part) introduces two distinct contrasting musical themes written in different key signatures. Those two themes are extended and developed in the development ( the b part of the composition), before returning to the last recapitulative part (a), where both themes are re-exposed: “the “a” part of sonata form contains two themes—one in the tonic, one in the dominant—the “b” part develops both of these, and the “c” part recapitulates (all in the tonic) the two initially exposed themes” (K. Hubbard 173).

With its simple themes and tonic changes, Mozart’s Piano Sonata No.12 in F major, K.332 is a good illustration to get familiar with the sonata Form. The exposition introduces us to a happy and playful theme in F major, and a counter theme in the dominant key. The alternation between the theme and the counter theme, and their consecutive development along the piece creates a musical dialogue between variations of two distinct melodies in the “development part.” The ‘recapitulation’ part reintroduces the main theme/ counter theme of the exposition to close the dialogue between both melodies<sup>1</sup> . This basic formula constitutes the general statements and counter statements scheme that characterizes the sonata form:

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<sup>1</sup> In this YouTube musical score, the listener could easily follow the structure of Mozart’s Piano Sonata No.12 K.332 and its development:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DK\\_owDX5WOE&ab\\_channel=ZhannaGumenyuk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DK_owDX5WOE&ab_channel=ZhannaGumenyuk).



The first subject consists of two complete sentences in the tonic key... The second subject divides in two sections, of which the first is entirely in the key of the dominant major, the second alternating between the two modes of the same key... The transition reappears lengthened by the interpolation of four bars in the keys of C minor and B flat minor (163-166), which form a sequential repetition of the preceding four bars. The passage is modified so as to lead into the second subject in the key of the tonic... the movement ends with a repetition of the original codetta, transposed into the key of the tonic. (Marks 79)

If such detailed musicological description may be confusing and hard to understand for a profane listener, the overall structure is evident from simply listening to the oeuvre. Indeed, the constant thematic contrast is easy to detect from the way the composition goes back and forth between a happy tune (tonic key theme), and another sad tune that introduces tension (dominant key counter theme).

Because its main characteristic is the constant contrast between musical theses and anti-theses, the sonata could be used as a musical metaphor for intellectual debates. In the Pastoral Sonata op.82, Beethoven contrasts, a very elaborated and refined musical theme, against another simplistic melodic line. This establishes a musical dialogue that is interpreted by musicologist, as a contrast between the pastoral way of life that characterizes the age of enlightenment, against the rustic life of the countryside. Far from foregrounding pastoral sophistication over folkloric simplicity, Beethoven rather celebrates through his music the

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The exposition lasts from the opening of the piece till 10:33. Its two contrasting themes are distinctly different to the ear, even for listeners who do not understand music theory. The Adagio development part, that starts at 10:33, develops both themes of the exposition through melodic changes, yet keeping the harmonic contrast between statements and counter statements recognizable. The recapitulation (16:15), although virtuosic in its tempo, retains the exact core melodic construction of the exposition, with added intervals that keep the melody run in perfect cadence with the accelerated tempo.

reconciliation between nature and urbanity, which translates as a metaphorical meeting between Man and god:

[Bethoven] fuses the refined music of the ‘connoisseurs’ with the rustic music of the country-folk. Essentially, he reconciles the natural realm with the urban realm and, since many viewed the natural landscape as a manifestation of God, brings man and God together metaphorically. In the *Pastoral* Sonata, Beethoven therefore demonstrates Neefe’s Enlightenment goal of “connecting men with God, Nature and themselves” by subverting the traditional opposition of rural and urban life. The technical demands of the music itself are used to articulate this same idea, with the rural represented by technical ease and the urban by virtuosity. ...The fact that the sonata begins with such serene simplicity and concludes with virtuosic brilliance only articulates the sense of reconciled opposition that is found at multiple levels throughout the piece. Thus, the above Enlightenment message of a connection and reconciliation between God and man is reinforced. (Anderson 42)

Hence, using the sonata to contrast two different kinds of musical themes, Beethoven captures the enlightenment spiritual idea of reconciling between metaphysical divine order and the individual. Hence, as much as metaphysical poets of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Beethoven celebrates intellectually the idea of divine order, through a smart, balanced, and harmonious musical organization, brought by the aesthetic of the sonata. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In this YouTube video, the contrast that characterizes the sonata form is clearly illustrated through a color-coded analysis that may help to understand the structure of the sonata:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FPz4RTCL-Js&ab\\_channel=TheRealEdChang](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FPz4RTCL-Js&ab_channel=TheRealEdChang)

## **2. Formal liberation and Romantic Compositions: The Rhapsody and The Nocturne**

If composers of the classical and baroque periods sought to prescribe formal rules of composition, Romantic composers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century sought to liberate themselves from the formal restrictions imposed by the classics. As much as Romantic poets, Romantic composers believed in the centrality of the individual. This artistic attitude is manifested via the composers' rejection of the pragmatism and the rigidity of Baroque and Classical structures, in order to favor a musical vocabulary that focus on impression, expression, and emotions.

As a matter of fact, composers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century relied on non-conventional rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic changes that compare to musical improvisation. Far from relying on a systematic organizational methodology, Romantic composers exhibited their liberation from the standard, and conveyed their personal emotions and impressions through their music. These compositional attitudes can be illustrated from famous forms of the time; mainly the Rhapsody, and the Nocturne.

Unlike the fixed structure of the Sonata, the Rhapsody refers to “a free style” (Johnson 51) characterized with improvisation. Such form was favored by 19<sup>th</sup> century composers for its expressive aesthetic quality: “The Rhapsody was one of a number of free forms of music that became increasingly popular in the nineteenth century and in which the display of performer's emotional intensity, and, therefore, a revelation of personality, was as much the purpose of the musical occasion as the making of music for its own sake” (Cooper 93).

The earliest form of the Rhapsody goes back to Prince of Gallenburg's Rhapsody for Piano Forte, op.3 (1802). This piece was written in virtuosic, improvisatory, and expressive style (Maurice, *The New Grove* 03). Nevertheless, it is not until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the popularity of this form highly increased, as notorious composers such as Liszt shared a musical interest in this form of compositions.

Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody N.02 is a good illustration of a Romantic Rhapsody displaying a free play of rhythm and moods. It consists of a "Lassan" section, i.e., a slow section, and a "Friska" section, i.e., a fast part section. Each section modulates from a key to another. The Lassan section moves from C sharp Major to C sharp Minor, whereas the Friska section moves from the F sharp Major to the F sharp Minor:

In the nineteen Hungarian Rhapsodies, Liszt presents so-called "Hungarian" melodies, some of which are originally of gypsy origin. These virtuoso showpieces consist of both the slow and pathetic Lassan, and the wild dance Friska, and in form they are free improvisations or fantasies. Characteristics of the "Rhapsodies" are scale work, augmented intervals, abrupt rhythms, accented weak beats, bold changes of key and tempo, and imitation of the gypsy violin and cimbalom. Although, Bartok denigrates the Hungarian Rhapsodies as "his least successful works," having no real ethnomusicological value, nonetheless Chopin and Liszt were pioneers in exploring the music of their native countries. (Ming 44)

Because of its improvisational quality, change of tempos, abrupt rhythms, and change of keys, the Rhapsody gave the opportunity for composers to compose freely with irregularity, mingling between different contrasting moods and rhythms.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9S2CfDwNAg&ab\\_channel=PianoJFAudioSheet](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9S2CfDwNAg&ab_channel=PianoJFAudioSheet)

In this YouTube musical score of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2, examples of abrupt and free variations in form occur at 1:50. After introducing a coherent theme as a main exposition, Liszt directly moves, without transition, to a section (1:50 till 2:46), that navigates quickly through different melodies. This free play of melodies denies the well-structured and balanced forms of the classical period, yet unexpectedly returns to the main theme at 2:46.

The second run contains melodic and rhythmic variations to the main theme. These sets of subtle playing variations give the impression that the performer is not even following a musical score i.e., there is an aesthetic feel of improvisation. This same part culminates in a second abrupt free change at 6:01. The comic mood and tempo of this variation clearly contrasts against the melancholy of the main exposition. All those free and abrupt changes give an improvisatory feel to the piece, and translate musically an attitude of freedom and improvisation that characterizes Romantic music.

As much the rhapsody, the nocturne musical form favors emotional content and non-conventional structural organization. The form refers back to a short-form musical genre for piano that came into throughout the Romantic era. These musical pieces were typically slow and dreamy, and were thematically inspired by the night:

A nocturne (night piece) is a slow, dreamy genre of piano music that came into favor in the 1820s and 1830s. It suggests moonlight nights, romantic longing, and a certain wistful melancholy, all evoked through slightly chromatic melodies and softly strumming harmonies. To set a nocturnal mood, Chopin usually lays out a very regular accompaniment, either as an arpeggio going up and down or as chords going low-middle-high. Above this support he places a sensuous melody that plays around and against the very square accompaniment... (Wright 279)

Via a slow tempo and dreamy melodies, composers used the nocturne to paint via auditory stimulus the inspiring effect of night longing. Nevertheless, they infused into this kind of compositions some abrupt key changes and nonstandard harmonic developments to avoid musical monotony and emphasis on expressions and emotions. Hence, via the use of non-conventional tonal modulations, Romantic composers, such as Chopin, offered to their nocturne compositions improvisational qualities that call for liberation and freedom of expression: “Each switch of key seems to bring with it a miraculous change of color or hue... op.9, no.01 being just one outstanding example. In those nocturnes with dramatic shifts of mood—op.15, nos. 1 and 2, or op.62, no.2—the contrast is dramatic but never sounds forced or self-conscious (Rye and Isserlis 265).

With forms such as the Nocturne, and the Rhapsody, musical composition moved in the Romantic era from an art of formal structure and balance, to become an art that conveyed

through its free play and improvisational qualities the expression of Romantic liberation and freedom.

### **3. Theme and Variations**

Despite developing new forms, Romantics revisited older styles of composition. Instead of blindly following the classics, the Romantics reformulated traditional musical forms by adding their own aesthetic tenets into them. For instance, Romantic Theme and Variations illustrate the 19<sup>th</sup> century use of the classical form of Theme and Variations. Nevertheless, instead of following the rigid rules imposed by Baroque composers, Romantic shifted their focus from symmetry and structural rigidity towards romantic musical expressiveness and emotions. In *Musical Terms, Symbols and Theory: An Illustrated Dictionary*, the term variation is defined as: “a modified version of a previously stated theme” (C. Thomsett 238), While theme and variations is defined as: “A musical form with multiple developmental treatment on a single theme. Variations may include modification to melody, harmony, key, rhythm, contrapuntal accompaniment, ornamentation, mode, and combination of changes. A theme may be performed in the style of a different composer or musical period” (C. Thomsett 223).

Hence, a Theme and Variations piece consists of a musical idea played repeatedly in many different ways, including consecutive changes and modifications. At the close of the musical performance, the listener may recognize how each variation differs from the other, yet he/she would be able to trace back the original theme according to some melodic or thematic resemblance.

During the Baroque era (c.1600 - c.1750), composers working on this form followed a compositional technique which favored the implementation of a fixed melodic line. By maintaining the same bass and melody, Baroque composers ensured a systematic sense of organization which characterized their aesthetic sensibilities: “Throughout the Baroque era,

composers preferred the fixed-bass, fixed-melody, and harmonic forms of variation. The crowning achievement of Baroque keyboard music, Bach's Goldberg Variations, contains examples of the "constant harmonic" method in its collection of 30 variations" (Kwon 1).

Because the Romantics broke free from these over-systematized rules of composition, their Theme and Variations included elaborated melodic changes that captured their desire for aesthetic liberation: "Rather than sectionalizing the emotions into objective experiences, romantics frequently embraced a large gamut of feelings, often accepting the highs and lows of emotional experience simultaneously" (Pepple 69). Accordingly, their use of Theme and Variations displayed some formal features that made it clearly different from the Classical and Baroque styles: "The nineteenth century produced numerous compositions that display variation techniques, some based on such older, classical models as melodic-outline variation and hybrid variation, others in the style of the character variation or free variation" (Kwon 02).

Johannes Brahms' "Variations on a Theme of Haydn" represents a straightforward illustration of Theme and Variations in the tradition of Romanticism. In *The Language of Johannes Brahms: A Study of his Chamber Works for Strings*, Joanna Pepple explains how Brahms successfully implemented this technique to his compositions, without muting his individual voice and individuality as a composer:

The variation movements of Johannes Brahms portray a continuous development of his musical discourse...By challenging the historic aesthetics of variation technique through a progressive release of structure, Brahms establishes a discursive, goal-directed language within a recurring framework. He thus asserts his individual voice within a traditional form, contributing to the genre of theme and variation with an ongoing, teleological dialogue. (Pepple 01)

As commonly practiced in Romantic variations, Brahms' "Variations on a Theme of Haydn" is based on a previous musical idea. He borrowed the main theme of his composition from "Chorale St. Antoni" found in a wind ensemble previously composed by Joseph Haydn. Following the aesthetic tradition used in Theme and Variations musical compositions, Brahms first exposes the theme, and follows it by a set of variations. The first variation recaptures the two last notes of the initial theme with a faster tempo than the original theme, whereas the second variation represents a modal modulation to the minor relative key. The two fingerprints observed in the first variation continue to be played in this part of the piece, yet with variant dynamics. Following the modal and dynamic change, the third variation represents a contrapuntal episode. A contrapuntal musical construction means that two completely independent melodies are played simultaneously to achieve polyphonic results. The last bars of this variation represent a kind of a reminder, as they recall the melodic line of the original theme to preserve continuity. The fourth variation, like the preceding one, is contrapuntal. The piece jumps once again into the minor relative key with a slower tempo than the preceding variation. The fifth variation is played mainly with rhythmic patterns. Short and separated notes in the melodic line give the impression of quickness without displaying the fast tempo of the second variation. The sixth variation returns more explicitly to the St. Antoni's melody in the horns, yet in a faster tempo than the original and in subdivided notes. In the same way, the eighth and final variation of the piece introduces the original five measures of the main theme in the bass line. This thematic re-exposition occurs after revisiting the minor mode in a rapid tempo. Accordingly, the bass keeps repeating those five measures, while the rest of the orchestra plays counter-melodies to that stable "ground." The work closes with the original form of St. Anthony Chorale, played by the entire orchestra in a triumphant *fortissimo*.

Unlike the systematic organizational variations that characterized Baroque and Classical styles, one would argue that the "Chorale St. Antoni" retains little from the original



theme along its variations. Such attitude typically characterizes the vision of the Romantic composers in their quest to liberate their music from the restrictions of the classicists. Hence, although it follows the traditional musical idea of continuous variations, Brahms's theme and variations still translates freedom of expression Romantic composers and poets sought to achieve in their artistic creations.

## **II. Eliot's Implementation of Musical Forms in his Poetry**

Following the review of the musical forms relevant to this study, I would like to demonstrate how Eliot integrated few of those structures in his poems. To fully demonstrate my contribution to this topic, I first underline the limitation of previous criticism that interpreted Eliot's "Four Quartets" in relation to Beethoven's Op. 132 quartet form. If Eliot explicitly shares his appreciation for Op.132 in his correspondence with Stephen Spenser, the structural dissimilarities between Eliot's poetical series and Beethoven's op.132 demonstrate the invalidity of this interpretation. As an answer to those studies, I propose the Sonata musical form as an a more cohesive structure to Eliot's "Four Quartets." Unlike the Quartet musical form, the Sonata form closely meets the chronology and the motivic development of Eliot's poetical series.

Further to this case study, I analyze Eliot's "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" and "Nocturne" in conjunction to the Rhapsody and the Nocturne musical forms. Through the poetical assimilation of 'abrupt key changes' as a poetical device in "Nocturne", and the implementation of "rhapsodic free changes" in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," Eliot demonstrates his conscious use of those Romantic musical forms in his poetry.

Taking into account the interdisciplinary nature of this analysis, I follow a program music perspective to interpret the formal integration of musical structures in poetry. Among the different strategies used in comparative literature, the interdisciplinary approach calls for the interpretation of literary texts using the theoretical frameworks of other disciplines:

“Interdisciplinarity postulates the principle of method, that is, the application of theoretical frameworks and methodologies used in other disciplines for the acquisition of knowledge in the analysis of literature and/or the literary text or texts” (Zepetnek 97). Hence, instead of relying on literary theory, I link my formalist interpretation of poems to the analytical tools used in musicology i.e., program music criticism. As much as New critics, Program music critics consider form, and structure as aesthetic elements through which composers artistically express ideas and themes. Following this same strategy of analysis, I demonstrate how Eliot implemented the structures of musical forms in poems, as stylistic devices that enable him to convey thematic poetical meaning. In view of this of this perspective, I demonstrate that the Sonata, as implemented in “Four Quartets,” conveys a dialectic negotiation of ideas, that poetically translates Eliot’s spiritual and religious preoccupations, whereas the Rhapsody and the Nocturne, as implemented in “Rhapsody on a Windy Night” and “Nocturne” function as structural devices that translate Eliot’s dissatisfaction with Romantic aesthetics and its irrelevance in modernist poetry. Unlike previous musico-poetical studies that gave an ultimate focus to the formal analogies, I consider the musical experimentations Eliot implemented in his poetry as poetical writing techniques that convey stylistically the ideas and themes of the poems.

## **1. Four Quartets and the Sonata Form: Musical Form Serving Eliot’s Religious Theme**

### **1.1 The limitations of Previous Interpretations: Structural Incoherence Between Beethoven’s OP. 132 and Eliot’s “Four Quartets”**

In a letter he wrote to his friend Stephen Spender, Eliot singles op.132 among the six later Beethoven’s quartets that inspired him to write poetry that would capture his state of reconciliation and relief, after enduring a long journey of hardship and suffering:

I have the A minor Quartet (the Op 132 quartet, one of the 6 late quartets of Beethoven) on the gramophone, and I find it quite inexhaustible to study. There is a sort of heavenly,

or at least more than human gaiety, about some of his later things which one imagines might come to oneself as the fruit of reconciliation and relief after immense suffering; I should like to get something of that into verse before I die. (Eliot, *Letters* 61)

Despite the title of the poetical series that suggests an analogy with the musical quartet form, critics have considered the above comment as an indication that suggests a correlation between “Four Quartets” and Beethoven’s op.132. Among the different similarities, critics have noticed a similar state of mind, that characterized both Eliot and Beethoven during the compositional phase of their late artistic works. As he composed Op 132 Quartet, Beethoven was recovering from a serious illness which he had nearly died. The composer expresses his spiritual gratification for his recovering in op.132, and entitled the third movement of his piece ‘A convalescent’s holy song of thanksgiving’: “Beethoven wrote the quartet after recovering from a serious intestinal illness, and marked the third movement, “Molto...Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die ....(A convalescent’s holy song of thanksgiving” (Lichter 201). Comparable to the composer, Eliot wrote “Four Quartets” after enduring personal and spiritual hardships:

Both men had suffered hugely in their lives; Eliot with his turbulent marriage to Vivienne and Beethoven with his deafness. Both men sought a solution to their struggle and found it through faith; Beethoven was a Catholic and Eliot had converted to Anglicanism at the age of 38. Eliot makes frequent Biblical references in the Quartets and directly quotes Christian mystics such as Julian of Norwich. ( Narvey 01)

Accordingly, if we consider the poetical series and the musical piece from biographical perspectives, we notice that both “Four Quartets” and OP.132, represent artistic affirmations of spiritual hope, and renewal, after the hardship and the suffering both the composer and the poet experienced during their personal life. Nevertheless, because Eliot shared in his letter a motivation to go “beyond poetry, as Beethoven in his later works, strove to get beyond music”

(Eliot, *Letters* 61), critics attempted to go beyond biographical similarities and strove to find structural correlations and relationships between Beethoven's A minor Quartet, and Eliot's poetical suite.

To an extent, the analogy between Eliot's poems and op.132 is defensible. Indeed, an overall structural observation of "Four Quartets" actually points to some formal evidences that demonstrate Eliot's borrowing from Beethoven's Quartet. As much as Beethoven, Eliot divided each Quartet of his series into five parts. If we take into account the original four movements design of the classical Quartet form, as well as Beethoven's original use of a five-part structure in op.132, we come to conclude that Eliot's five-part poetical quartets indicates the poet's conscious modeling of Beethoven's genuine variation of the classical quartet musical form in his poetry.

Despite this evident resemblance, critics noticed a number of formal and aesthetic strategies, Eliot implemented in his series of poems, that interestingly resemble the stylistic methods and techniques used in musical techniques of composition. In this regard, critics noticed in the overall design of "Four Quartets" the organizational logic that resembles the quartet musical suite: "It is apparent upon casual reading that each of these four poems has in a large sense the basic structure of a string quartet... These two, time and eternity, are the themes for the poem. Following the idea of musical themes, they become independent "sentences," distinct from each other in style and character... (K. Hubbard 39).

In the following quote, the critic notices how the movements in "Four Quartets" are linked in a way that resembles a musical suite. He also underlines the poet's use of tension and release, mood, and thematic development that composers use in music:

It can be seen, then, that the individual movements of each Quartet (with *The Dry Salvages* in mind as a typical example) are linked together in an essential relationship;

that the Quartets are analogous to that kind of musical suite which exhibits such an essential relation among its movements—by mood, tension, texture, and theme as well as by a type of “key-tonality”—that no movement can be left out without destroying the unity of the whole. (K. Hubbard 37)

Other critics have also noticed how each poem in Eliot’s series makes use of a distinct motif that recurs along the lines. Comparable to the use of key changes in a long classical piece of music, Eliot uses the same motivic logic to divide his poems:

‘Burnt Norton’ is a poem about air, on which whispers are borne, intangible itself, but the medium of communication; ‘East Coker’ is a poem about earth, the dust of which we are made and into which we shall return;... ‘The Dry Salvages’ is a poem about water... [while] ‘Little Gidding’ is a poem about fire, the purest of the elements, by which some have thought the world would end, fire which consumes and purifies. (Tymieniecka 89)

Along with this design, it is interesting to mention that the title of each of Eliot’s Quartet is associated to a given geographical location as follow: “‘Burnt Norton’ refers to a seventeenth century manor house; ‘East Coker’ to the Somersetshire village from which Eliot’s ancestor set out for the New World; ‘The Dry Salvages’ to a group of rocks off the coast of Massachusetts, and ‘Little Gidding’ to the English village to which Nicholas Ferrar retired in the seventeenth century to lead a life of devotion”( Max 204). Comparable to this set of associations, Beethoven associates each movement of his op. 132 quartet to a distinct key signatures and a number of musical motifs. This parallel similarity between the music and the poems illustrates an overall structural cohesion that the critics underline as a formal evidence, that demonstrates Eliot’s conscious assimilation of Beethoven’s strategies of composition in his poetry. As much as the use of distinct key signatures, motivic development, and variations

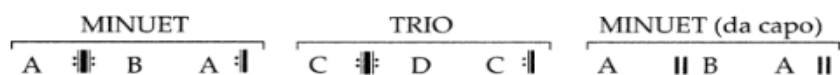
Beethoven used in his Quartet, Eliot in his series of poems implements comparable set of strategies such as the use of repeated motifs, geographical locations, and suggestive subtitles:

In Four Quartets, Eliot supplies the fundamental tonal relationship among movements by relating the movements of each quartet to a set locality; hence the titles: Burnt Norton: East Coker: The Dry Salvages: and Little Gidding. This association of each quartet with a particular locality has the effect of creating an atmosphere peculiar to each quartet, uniting its movements much in the manner of the key or mode of a musical composition. (K. Hubbard 27)

If these general observations suggest Eliot's assimilation of Beethoven's op.132 musical structure in poetry, a closer look to the internal form that constitutes the musical quartet demonstrates the limitation of this reading. As demonstrated in the in the first chapter of this work, the correlation between musical forms and poetical structures implies the handling of words in a poetical pattern, that follows closely, or loosely at least, the chronological development of a given musical form. Accordingly, in order to assume that Eliot relied on the structure of Beethoven's op.132, one needs to closely illustrate how the different parts of "Four Quartets" follow the structure and chronological organization of the distinct parts that constitute op.132 musical piece.

In this regard, it is important to understand that the musical string quartet is a large musical piece that consists of: a Sonata allegro form in the first part; (a-b-a Structure), a Slow movement in the second part; a Minuet and Trio in the third movement, and finally a Rondo form or a Sonata rondo form, in the tonic key: "The classical string quartet typically comprises four movements, the first movement being a sonata-allegro, followed usually by a minuet, adagio, and a quick final...." (Hurry et.al. 209). Hence, the musical Quartet is formed through the combination of smaller musical forms in one single composition, namely: a Sonata, a

Minuet, an Adagio, and a Sonata rondo. As the following quote explicitly states, Beethoven in his late Quartet composition deviates from this traditional quartet form: “Beethoven string quartets considerably expended the four-movement scheme. His late quartets illustrate marvelous innovations, radically altering the four-movement scheme and straining the boundaries of the four movement form” (Hurry et.al. 209). Far from following the pre-established four movement structure, Beethoven added a fifth section to his compositions. If the number of parts in Beethoven’s work meets Eliot’s poetical division in his quartet series, the Minuet and trio, the Adagio slow movement, as well as the March that constitute the three middle movements of Beethoven’s work are hardly recognizable as borrowed structures in Eliot’s series. Because such musical forms depend enormously on their rhythms and tempos, it is difficult to demonstrate how they could possibly serve as structuring devices in poetry. In the following definition, the minuet is described as an a-b-a musical form. Nevertheless, what distinguishes the minuet from any other a-b-a structure, is its high tempo and rhythmic speed:



Mozart and Haydn increased the speed of the minuet and allowed the movement to take on a lighter character than that of the earlier minuet. In Beethoven hands the minuet underwent more extreme changes. Beethoven often increased the speed to the point that we feel only one pulse per measure rather than three that typify the slower minuets of earlier composers. The result is a more energetic kind of music characterized by duple measure grouping. Beethoven retained the formal plan of the minuet but called the movement scherzo (Italian for “joke”). Beethoven’s scherzos often exhibit robust humor, a sense of surprise, and vigorous rhythmic pattern involving syncopation. (Spring 112)

Because the minuet is aesthetically defined by elements of tempo, and speed in Beethoven's works, the poetical assimilation of this form in poetry is difficult to achieve. Although a critic could manage to demonstrate the a-b-a structural nature of a given poem, the speed and rhythm that aesthetically distinguish the minuet as a musical form have no formal equivalent in poetry. Accordingly, affirming that a poem, or a part of a poem constitutes a minuet remains a superficial observation that is limited by the critic's subjective assumptions. Unlike the thematic nature of sonatas, or theme and variations musical pieces, musical forms like the Minuet, depend highly upon tempo change and rhythmical patterns to be fully integrated as definite poetical forms.

The same can be said about the Adagio form of the third movement of Beethoven's Quartet. As a musical form, the Adagio is known for being a free form that could take any binary a-b or a ternary a-b-a form. This makes the structural comparison of an Adagio with a piece of poetry an obscure activity. Indeed, because the adagio can take any formal structure, any poem could be defined as an Adagio poem. Furthermore, what characterizes the form of the Adagio is its slow tempo and rhythm. Hence, as much as the Minuet, the impossibility to translate tempo change in poetry makes this form incompatible with poetical writing. Accordingly, claiming that a specific Adagio musical composition meets the structure of a given poem remains a superficial assumption that cannot be proven textually from the form of the poem under study:

If all movements of an instrumental cycle were constructed with the same degree of formal complexity, the slow movement would last considerably longer than the other movements, because of the slower pacing of its events. Thus to maintain a relatively consistent length among the movements, composers often select an inherent simpler formal type for the slow movement. (E. Caplin 209)



Considering the comparison from such musicological perspective, we understand that previous analyses took for granted the formal elements that constitute the different parts of a quartet in their reading of Eliot's poetical series. If the implementation of recurrent motives, the numbering of the poetic parts, and the suggestive titles Eliot uses in "Four Quartets" inform us about the overall musical design of the poetical series, the impossibility to translate tempo change and musical rhythms inherent to the Minuet, and Adagio parts of the Quartet musical suite makes the comparison between "Four Quartets" and Beethoven's op.132 limited to a number of superficial formal correspondences. Despite the number of similarities found between Eliot's Quartet and Beethoven's quartet, the impossibility of translating tempo change, as understood in musicology, in poetical writing makes the analogy between Eliot's series of poems and Beethoven's Op132 Quartet rough, and approximate, when considered from a closer musicological perspective.

## **1.2. The sonata as an Answer to Previous Approximate Interpretations**

If the aesthetic nature of the Adagio and the Minuet is incompatible with poetical writing, the first movement of the musical Quartet, i.e., the Sonata form, displays a set of formal characteristics that could be easily integrated in poetry. Unlike the rhythmic and tempo variations that the Minuet and the Adagio depend on, the Sonata rather relies on a strategy of motivic and thematic development that could be reformulated in verse form. In the following section, I would like to demonstrate the formal similarity between the sonata form and Eliot's "Four Quartets." By this means, I aim to challenge previous approximate musical interpretations that consider "Four Quartets" as assimilating the structure of a musical Quartet form. More precisely, I propose a textual and structural analysis that demonstrates how Eliot's series of poems follow in each of its first opening parts, the formal design of the sonata form.

Far from an ultimate focus on the musical analogy, I would like to demonstrate how the sonata functions as a structuring poetical device that translates the themes and connotative significance of the poems. As much Beethoven's thematic contrast used in Pastoral Sonata, I demonstrate that the Sonata form as implemented in "Four Quartets" functions as an aesthetic that highlights a spiritual reconciliation between man and spiritual forces. Hence, I demonstrate that Eliot implemented the dialectic method of statements and counter statements of the sonata in his poetry to initiate a constant motivic contrast between human and divine perspectives, that thematically translates his religious and spiritual preoccupations.

As previously illustrated, the musical sonata consists of an a-b-a structure that outlines an "exposition," a "development," and a "recapitulation." Unlike any other conventional a-b-a plan, the exposition of the sonata encloses two distinct contrasting themes written in different key signatures. Those two contrasting musical statements are both extended and developed in the b part of the piece, and are lastly recapitulated, or re exposed in the concluding part.

Unlike the Minuet and the Adagio, the Sonata form is not defined by its tempo or rhythm. Rather, what defines an a-b-a form as a sonata, is the dual motivic and thematic developments that establishes a continuous contrast along the piece. Accordingly, the adaptation of the sonata form in poetry does not rely on aesthetic elements that are impossible to assimilate in the art of poetry. Rather, the introduction of contrasted statements, or ideas, their continual development along the lines, and their recapitulations in a poem, are the main structural elements that we should look after if we want to demonstrate that a poem follows the structure of a sonata musical piece.

Hence, the adaptation of the Sonata into a poem conveys the introduction of two contrasting ideas, statements, or juxtaposed images, that work as a poetical exposition. Both parts of the contrasted dichotomy are thematically developed in a development part, follows a

closing passage that either restates both contrasted ideas, or synthesizes them into a statement that brings reconciliation. In the following lines, the author explains that, because of this structural design, a sonata poem is generally a poem of dramatic antithesis, or intellectual negotiation: “Dynamic antithesis lies in the heart of the sonata form. It is not surprising, therefore, that poetic sonata-allegros are frequently poems of ideas...The sonata by contrast, often becomes a vehicle for poetry of intellectual debate or meditation upon intellectual categories, what one might loosely label “philosophical” verses” (Richardson 200).

Because its main characteristic is the constant contrast between juxtaposed materials, the implementation of the Sonata form in poetry translates a dialectics negotiation between two contrasted but related perspectives. Hence, following its formal design, the sonata form could work in poems where the underlying and the negotiation of ideas is desirable.

In “Four Quartets,” the first part of each poem in the series opens with a set of juxtapositions that initiate a contrast between human and divine perspectives. As much as a sonata piece, these set of juxtapositions are followed by a development section that extends the theme initiated in the dichotomies of the exposition. Following this section, the poem returns to the initial ideas, statements, or images presented in the first lines. Following this form, Eliot conveys a sonata dialectic negotiation of ideas through his poems. Through a set of juxtapositions, developments, and recapitulations, Eliot poetically translates his thematic religious and spiritual preoccupations following a sonata form.

In “Burnt Norton,” the opening lines initiate a dichotomy that opposes human notions of time against a spiritual notion of non-temporality. The words in the lines are organized in a way that compares to the theme/ counter theme dichotomy of a sonata exposition:

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,

And time future contained in time past.  
If all time is eternally present  
All time is unredeemable.  
What might have been is an abstraction  
Remaining a perpetual possibility  
Only in a world of speculation.  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present. (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 175)

The three opening lines combine “time present,” “time past,” and “time future,” in a statement that interconnects human notions of temporal time: “Time present and time past /Are both perhaps present in time future, /And time future contained in time past” (175). This interconnection of human notions of temporalities is juxtaposed against a statement, that suggests a transcendental non-temporal notion of eternity: “If all time is eternally present /All time is unredeemable” (175). Through this set of juxtapositions, Eliot initiates a dichotomy that opposes our regular notion of time against a notion of divine eternity. The lines “What might have been and what has been/ Point to one end, which is always present” (175) explicitly resume this dichotomy, as they explicitly oppose our speculations in time -“What might have been and what has been”-, against a spiritual and eternal present entity- “Point to one end, which is always present”-. By opposing two notions of temporalities through juxtapositions and associations, the poet implements the strategy of musical statements and counter statements used in the exposition of a sonata, to initiate a philosophical negotiation of ideas that underlines his preoccupation with spiritual and divine perspectives.

Indeed, the lines take us progressively from human notions of time: “time present...time past...time future” (175), to arrive to a spiritual notion of time, that is always

present: “What might have been and what has been/ Point to one end, which is always present” (175). The passage “What might have been is an abstraction/Remaining a perpetual possibility/Only in a world of speculation” (175), represents a variation to the contrasted notions of times presented in the first three lines. When combined together, the lines convey through their association of opposites a movement from time to eternity, to poetically conceptualize a condition that would transcend an individual from our natural state to a state of physical, temporal, and spiritual transcendence: “What might have been and what has been/ Point to one end, which is always present” (175). Hence, as much as Beethoven’s Pastoral Sonata, the lines take us progressively from human to divine perspectives.

Comparable to the development of a sonata piece, Eliot follows the thematic juxtapositions of the first part with a thematic development. Indeed, the passage of the rose garden, that directly follows the juxtapositions of ‘time vs eternity’ takes the philosophical and spiritual ideas of the exposition, and turn them into a visual poetical depiction:

Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?

Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,

...

And the bird called, in response to

The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,

And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses

Had the look of flowers that are looked at.

There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting.

So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,

Along the empty alley, into the box circle,

To look down into the drained pool.

Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,  
 And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,  
 And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,  
 The surface glittered out of heart of light,  
 And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.  
 Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.  
 Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,  
 Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.  
 Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind  
 Cannot bear very much reality. (175-176)

The poem moves from conceptual and philosophical juxtapositions, to a visual scene in a garden. The bird calls the protagonist to find children around the corner: “Quick, said the bird, find them, find them, /Round the corner. Through the first gate, /Into our first world, shall we follow” (175-176). As explained in chapter III, this symbolic call implies a connection to our present moment as the only valuable temporal dimension that enables a spiritual elevation to timelessness.

Eliot’s use of seasons and water symbol between the repetitive calls of the bird further develops the initial sonata’s juxtaposition that opposes human time against spiritual eternity: “In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air, / And the bird called, in response to /The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery”(176). Autumn, which is as a season where the leaves die, is used as a symbol of death. Nevertheless, this image is associated with the call of the bird, the unheard music, and the image of the shrubbery to suggest spiritual revival after death. Comparatively, the image of “Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged ”(176) that transforms into a pool “filled with water out of sunlight, /And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly, /The surface

glittered out of heart of light,” (176) suggests the same idea of spiritual renewal after physical death. Hence, as much as the exposition of the poem, the rose garden suggests a movement that starts in a human temporal notion of time, to arrive to a spiritual condition of eternity in the afterlife. The line “Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind /Cannot bear very much reality” (176) implies this understanding, as it suggests a contrast between human and spiritual notions of reality. Via this scene, the poet develops an imagistic poetical depiction that translates the dichotomy of time and eternity previously initiated in the exposition.

Interestingly enough, the closing lines recapitulates the contrasted statements initially implemented in the exposition, to meet the formal ending of a sonata form: “Time past and time future/What might have been and what has been/ Point to one end, which is always present” (176). Through this recapitulation, the poet reinforces the symbolic significance of the rose garden as an imagistic representation of the conceptual and spiritual dichotomy of ‘time vs eternity’ first introduced in the exposition. Closing the first part of “Burnt Norton” with such recapitulation, Eliot demonstrates his use of the sonata logic of composition to develops the theme of his verses. Through the set of juxtapositions in the first lines, the poetical imagistic depiction of the rose garden, and the recapitulation, Eliot follows a sonata organizational logic of composition to give form to the first part of “Burnt Norton.”

It is worth to mention that Eliot implements occasionally the same technique of juxtaposition in the second part of “Burnt Norton.” After exposing a number of images, the speaker defines a still point that metaphorically stands for the spiritual location of a divine presence:

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,

Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.  
I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where.  
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time. (177)

As much as the opposition between temporal and non-temporal notions of times evoked in the first part of the poem, the lines juxtapose here different physical and temporal conditions in order to locate a transcendental place of meeting with a superior source of divinity. The image of the rose garden previously implemented in the first part, is replaced here with a more intellectualized physical location that Eliot defines as the “still point of the turning world.” Using juxtaposition of opposites: “Neither flesh nor fleshless; Neither from nor towards” (177) the poet suggests a point of intersection between our mortal lives and a superior spiritual source of divinity.

Following this strategy of writing, Eliot demonstrates his departure from the structure of Beethoven’s op.132. Instead of adapting an Adagio form, the second part of “Burnt Norton,” follows the same strategy of juxtaposition that reassembles a sonata technique of composition. This negates the previous interpretations that attempted to demonstrate a structural parallel between Eliot’s series of poems and the Quartet multi movement form. Far from taking the form of an Adagio, the second part of “Burnt Norton” demonstrates the same technique of contrasting imagery used in a Sonata exposition. Accordingly, the second part of the poem could be considered as either a continuation, or a variation to the statements and counter statements presented in the first part of “Burnt Norton.”

As much as “Burnt Norton,” “East Cooker” opens with a dialectic technique of juxtapositions and associations that compares to the exposition of a sonata musical form. The



lines juxtapose a dichotomy of beginning and end, to notions of ‘raising and falling,’ ‘construction and destruction,’ ‘living and dying’. Through such juxtapositions, the passage captures the cyclical movement of time, and brings to the poem the same thematic concern that relates human to divine and spiritual perspectives:

In my beginning is my end. In succession  
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,  
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place  
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.  
Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,  
Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth  
Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,  
Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf.  
Houses live and die: there is a time for building  
And a time for living and for generation  
And a time for the wind to break the loosened pane  
And to shake the wainscot where the field-mouse trots  
And to shake the tattered arras woven with a silent motto.(182)

As much as the opening of “Burnt Norton,” Eliot uses the technique of juxtapositions used in a Sonata to convey the theme of the poem. The contrasted words of the first lines “In my beginning is my end... Houses rise and fall... Old stone to new building...” (182) suggest the perpetual cycle of time. Death is clearly introduced and acknowledged among this repetitive cycle since “Houses live and die.” Nevertheless, the lines “And a time for living and for generation/.../ And to shake the tattered arras woven with a silent motto” (182) convey the effect of the wind over the ruins of old buildings. The movement of the wind over decayed

buildings suggests rebirth and renewal after death. Hence, as much as the exposition of “Burnt Norton” the opening lines of “Burnt Norton” takes its juxtapositions from a mortal and earthly perspective, “Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended, /Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place” (182), to arrive at a statement that suggests spiritual renewal.

As much as “Burnt Norton,” the poet moves from this dichotomy and juxtapositions to a visual scene that develops the thematic significance of the exposition. Nevertheless, the poet replaces the insistent call of the bird in the rose garden, with an open field that “insists on the direction / Into the village” (182). The speaker affirms that: “If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close, /On a summer midnight, you can hear the music/ Of the weak pipe and the little drum” (182-183). Comparable to the visual scene featured in “Burnt Norton,” the open field the speaker evokes here is presented as a place of spiritual revelation. The music featured in the scene is accompanied with an ancestral dance at a wedding feast that symbolically celebrates the cyclicity of time first presented in the opening lines. Through this scene, Eliot signals the thematic development part of his sonata:

And see them dancing around the bonfire  
The association of man and woman  
In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie—  
A dignified and commodious sacrament.  
Two and two, necessarye coniunction,  
Holding each other by the hand or the arm  
Whichebetokenethconcorde. Round and round the fire  
Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles,  
  
...  
Nourishing the corn. Keeping time,

Keeping the rhythm in their dancing  
As in their living in the living seasons  
The time of the seasons and the constellations  
The time of milking and the time of harvest  
The time of the coupling of man and woman  
And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.  
Eating and drinking. Dung and death (183).

The ancestral couple are following the rhythm of the earth, the living seasons, and the constellations, which symbolizes the perpetual continuous movement of time. The image of their “Feet rising and falling” (183) along with the act of “Eating and drinking. Dung and death.” (183) at the end of the scene, convey death as a natural segment among the repetitive cycle of time. Interestingly enough, the scene is not dramatic. Rather, it captures the harmonious relation the couple have with the living universe, and their acceptance of death as part of the endless cyclical movement of the universe. The first line that precludes the scene: “In my beginning is my end. In succession” (182) resumes this idea.

Comparable to a recapitulation of a sonata, the closing lines of the passage represents a variation over the main dichotomies presented in the exposition. The thematic emphasis on death as a spiritual afterlife confirms the thematic significance of the visual depiction presented in the development part, and recalls thematically the initial exposition of the poem:

The time of the seasons and the constellations  
The time of milking and the time of harvest  
The time of the coupling of man and woman  
And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.  
Eating and drinking. Dung and death.

Dawn points, and another day  
Prepares for heat and silence. Out at sea the dawn wind  
Wrinkles and slides. I am here  
Or there, or elsewhere. In my beginning. (183)

As much as the exposition, the recapitulation opposes human and divine perspectives. Indeed, these closing lines recapitulate the cyclical movement of time first introduced in the exposition. Each human activity “milking... coupling...eating...dinking...death” (183) is associated to a specific time, comparable to the cyclical movement of “rise[ing] and fall[ing]”(183) first captured in the exposition. When reunited, these set of activities symbolically sum up the full cycle of the seasons and the years. As he resumes this repetitive cycle, the speaker singles death as an important event towards silence “Eating and drinking. Dung and death./ Dawn points, and another day/ Prepares for heat and silence.”(183). Nevertheless, as he closes the whole passage by affirming that he is: “here Or there, or elsewhere. In [his] beginning” (183), the speaker suggests his full acceptance of death as part of a continuous spiritual cycle that transcends the chronology of regular time. Accordingly, although death represent an end, or a “silence” on earth, it at the same time carries an individual to a spiritual beginning toward divine transcendence. This illustrates the speaker’s acceptance of death as a spiritual passage towards spiritual eternity, and his understanding of the spiritual connotation associated to the repetitive cycle of time.

Through the juxtaposition of the first lines, the poetical imagistic depiction of the couple’s dance, and the recapitulation features in the closing lines, Eliot follows a sonata organizational logic of composition to give form to the first part of “East Cooker,” and to relate its thematic significance to the first part of “Burt Norton.”

As much as previous poems, “The Dry Salvages” contrasts an earthly human view against a divine spiritual perspective. Unlike the explicit contrapuntal arrangement established in the ‘exposition’ of the two previous poems, Eliot uses in the opening of “The Dry Salvages” a freer writing style. This makes the sonata’s structural design less apparent from a first reading. Yet, as much as the two previous poems, Eliot opposes two contrasting ideas to evoke the theme of his poem, comparable to a sonata dialectic organization:

I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river  
Is a strong brown god—sullen, untamed and intractable,  
Patient to some degree, at first recognised as a frontier;  
Useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyor of commerce;  
Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges.  
The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten  
By the dwellers in cities—ever, however, implacable.  
  
Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder  
Of what men choose to forget. Unhonoured, unpropitiated  
By worshippers of the machine, but waiting, watching and waiting.  
His rhythm was present in the nursery bedroom,  
In the rank ailanthus of the April dooryard,  
In the smell of grapes on the autumn table,  
And the evening circle in the winter gaslight. (191)

Eliot uses the image of a river to develop his sonata dichotomy. The choice of words layered through the lines present the reader with two distinct perspectives. In this regard, words such as ‘frontier, useful, untrustworthy, a conveyor of commerce’, denote the river as a physical object. From this first perspective, the river is depicted as a physical obstacle for humanity, a

“problem confronting the builder ... unhonoured, unpropitiated by worshippers of the machine” (191), “The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten” (191). Nevertheless, other words such as ‘brown god...sullen ... intractable ..... implacable ... destroyer’ associate the image of the river to a divine power. From this perspective, the river is described as a living entity that keeps its rage and destroying power to punish humanity that has chosen to worship material life: “Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder /Of what men choose to forget. Unhonoured, unpropitiated/ By worshippers of the machine, but waiting, watching and waiting” (191). As it juxtaposes these two poetical depictions of the river, the opening part of the poem, much like previous poems in the series, presents the reader with two contrasting perspectives. This time, the physical and the spiritual point of views are infused in the way the river is depicted: as a physical object, and as a manifestation of a divine destructive power.

Comparable to a sonata piece, the part that follows the exposition develops thematically the statements of the first lines. Both images, the sea and the river, work as motives in this passage to develop both the spiritual, and the physical perspectives initiated in the exposition.

The river is within us, the sea is all about us;  
The sea is the land's edge also, the granite  
Into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses  
Its hints of earlier and other creation:  
The starfish, the horseshoe crab, the whale's backbone;  
The pools where it offers to our curiosity  
The more delicate algae and the sea anemone.  
It tosses up our losses, the torn seine,  
The shattered lobsterpot, the broken oar  
And the gear of foreign dead men. The sea has many voices,  
Many gods and many voices.

The salt is on the briar rose,  
The fog is in the fir trees. (191)

Far from treating it as a physical object, the speaker affirms that “The river is within us, the sea is all about us” (191). This statement is followed by a description of a sea that hints to “earlier and other creation:/ The starfish, the horseshoe crab, the whale's backbone” (191). Unlike human ‘s short living experience, the sea witnessed the existence of different creatures and civilizations on earth. Hence, despite being “a conveyor of commerce” (191), the lines depict the sea as a living proof for the cyclicity of time, in contrast to our short living mortality as humans. Accordingly, despite a physical object, the sea recalls the spiritual idea of the continuous cycle of time previously treated in the series. In this regard, the speaker affirms that the sea has “many gods and many voices” (191) that belong to a past we did not witness through our life. Hence, as much as a sonata, the image of the sea and the river develop the dichotomy of ‘physical vs spiritual perspectives’ first presented in the exposition.

Following a sonata form, the closing lines of the passage, recapitulates both physical and spiritual perspectives developed along the poem. The passage introduces the image of a “tolling bell” that symbolizes the notion of time relevant to the sea and the natural world. This definition of time that captures the spiritual cycle of life and death, is contrasted along against the time of the “chronometers” that limits its calculation to an earthly superficial view:

The tolling bell  
Measures time not our time, rung by the unhurried  
Ground swell, a time  
Older than the time of chronometers, older  
Than time counted by anxious worried women  
Lying awake, calculating the future,

Trying to unweave, unwind, unravel  
And piece together the past and the future,  
Between midnight and dawn, when the past is all deception,  
The future futureless, before the morning which  
When time stops and time is never ending;  
And the ground swell, that is and was from the beginning,  
Clangs  
The bell. (192)

Unlike the time calculated with the chronometer, the spiritual notion of time represented through the “The tolling bell” never ends: “When time stops and time is never ending” (192). This notion of time, that is older than “time counted by anxious worried women / Lying awake, calculating the future, / Trying to unweave, unwind, unravel” (192) suggests to give away our superficial preoccupations in life, in order to consider our spiritual time and our relation with the divine. As much as a Sonata recapitulation, this ending part varies on the dichotomy first introduced in the exposition, and synthesizes both human and divine perspectives to implicitly suggest the thematic significance of the whole poem.

As much as “The Dry Salvages,” the opening lines of “Little Gidding” initiate a contrast between two perspectives that compares to the juxtapositions used in the dialectic of a sonata exposition. The opening passage evoke the physical beauty of nature on a sunny day. The speaker refers to the season as an in-between spring and winter season: “Midwinter spring” (200). This imaginary season is “Sempiternal,” (200) which means timeless. As much as previous poems, this notion of timelessness aims to evoke a spiritual condition of redemption. Hence, as much as a Sonata exposition, the opening lines of the poem juxtaposes two different perspectives: a physical description of nature, and a spiritual timeless condition that would lead to religious salvation:



Midwinter spring is its own season  
Sempiternal though sodden towards sundown,  
Suspended in time, between pole and tropic.  
When the short day is brightest, with frost and fire. (200)

Along with this initial dichotomy, it is worth to mention that the title of the poem “Little Guiding” refers to a religious community in England who formed an Anglican religious community: “It consisted of few families who wanted to devote themselves to a life of prayer, work, and charity” (Servotte, and Grene 50). Via this suggestive title, the opening lines presents through its imagery, a metaphorical path toward “Little Guiding” and spiritual salvation.

Following the dichotomy of the exposition, the path towards “Little Guiding” is presented as both a physical and spiritual journey towards redemption. The speaker’s question: “Where is the summer, the unimaginable Zero summer?” (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 200) signals the development part of the sonata as it initiates an attempt of the quester to explicitly locate the “Sempiternal” (200) season of spiritual redemption. The speaker informs us that if we “came this way, “you would find the hedges /White again, in May, with voluptuary sweetness” (200). Unlike the use of “April” as “the cruelest month” (53) in the opening lines of “The Waste Land,” the use of “May, with voluptuary sweetness”(200) Suggests that redemption is possible, and achievable. Nevertheless, the speaker imposes some spiritual conditions that would enable the success of the journey towards “Little Guiding.” The arguments elaborated through the verses sustain the continuous dichotomy that opposes physical and spiritual perspectives, and demonstrate Eliot’s subtle reliance on the Sonata as a poetical form:

Taking any route, starting from anywhere,  
At any time or at any season,  
It would always be the same: you would have to put off

Sense and notion. You are not here to verify,  
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity  
Or carry report. You are here to kneel  
Where prayer has been valid. And prayer is more  
Than an order of words, the conscious occupation  
Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.  
And what the dead had no speech for, when living,  
They can tell you, being dead: the communication  
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.  
Here, the intersection of the timeless moment  
Is England and nowhere. Never and always.(201)

On his attempt to define the path towards “Little Guiding,” the speaker singles praying as an important spiritual activity. Whatever the “route, starting from anywhere,” all what matters “you would have to put off Sense and notion/.../Or carry report. You are here to kneel Where prayer has been valid” (201). As much as the previous observations, praying here involves both the physical pronouncement of words, and a metaphysical spiritual consideration that makes it possible for an individual to elevate and purify his soul: “prayer is more/ Than an order of words, the conscious occupation / Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.”(201). Through this detailed statement, Eliot emphasis on the dichotomy first initiated in the exposition, and which suggest the consideration to both our physical and spiritual existence as individuals.

As much as Sonata, the closing lines of the poem recapitulates and variates upon the lines of the exposition. Instead of a nature scene, the closing lines evoke England as a physical place. As much as the exposition, the lines juxtapose this evocation against an abstract physical and temporal notion that suggest spiritual perspectives: “Here, the intersection of the timeless

moment /Is England and nowhere. Never and always” (201). As much as the previous poems, this recapitulation captures the main idea the poet wants to poetically represent.

Using the dualistic thematic development proper to the Sonata, Eliot displays a structure that follows an exposition, a development, and a recapitulation in each of the first part of “Burnt Norton,” “East Cooker,” “The Dry Salvages,” and “Little Gidding.” This organizational methodology enables the poet to constantly emphasize on his theme of regular time and eternity that captures his spiritual and religious preoccupations.

## **2. Ironic Borrowing: Eliot’s Use of Romantic Forms of Music**

Despite his use of the sonata form in “Four Quartets,” Eliot implemented Romantic musical forms such as the Nocturne and the Rhapsody in two of his poems. As much as his handling of nature’s sound and romantic musical metaphors, Eliot’s appropriation of these musical structures in his poetry manifests his rejection of Romanticism and its invalidity in modern poetry.

In his poem “Nocturne” Eliot subverts the romantic idea of the night as used in romantic music. As much as the musical Nocturnes, Eliot’s “Nocturne” represents an aesthetic representation of the night as depicted by the romantics. Previously defined in the first section of this chapter, musical Nocturne pieces are typically slow and dreamy composition, that aim to capture a Romantic view of the night as the title suggests:

A nocturne (night piece) is a slow, dreamy genre of piano music that came into favor in the 1820s and 1830s. It suggests moonlight nights, romantic longing, and a certain wistful melancholy, all evoked through slightly chromatic melodies and softly strumming harmonies. To set a nocturnal mood, Chopin usually lays out a very regular accompaniment, either as an arpeggio going up and down or as chords going low-middle-high. Above this support he places a sensuous melody that plays around and against the very square accompaniment... (Wright 279)

Throughout the suggestive musical title “Nocturne,” one may deduce that the main content of the poem would connote a quiet, dreamy, and sensual scenes at night. However, Eliot’s “Nocturne” subverts this romantic musical tradition. Using the romantic Nocturne as an ironic reference, Eliot seems to be mocking nocturnal romantic scenes once adopted by romantic composers like Chopin:

Romeo, grand sérieux, to importune  
Guitar and hat in hand, beside the gate  
With Juliet, in the usual debate  
Of love, beneath a bored but courteous moon;  
The conversation failing, strikes some tune  
Banal, and out of pity for their fate  
Behind the wall I have some servant wait,  
Stab, and the lady sinks into a swoon.  
  
Blood looks effective on the moonlit ground--  
The hero smiles; in my best mode oblique  
Rolls toward the moon a frenzied eye profound,  
(No need of "Love forever?"--"Love next week?")  
While female readers all in tears are drowned:--  
"The perfect climax all true lovers seek!" (Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays* 1429)

The opening lines set the setting at night, with Romeo importuning Juliet “beneath a bored but courteous moon.” The moon, personified here, is not taking part in what would be a romantic scene. Instead, it is merely polite and bored. The conversation that Romeo and Juliet have is described as an “usual debate,” implying that such Romantic love stories are no more valid, as they represent banal clichés of an old tired Romantic trend. This idea is further

highlighted as music in the scene, is used mainly to fill the silence when the conversation fails: “conversation failing, strikes some tune /Banal, and out of pity for their fate” (1429).

Despite this ironic mockery on the romantic musical idea of the nocturnal night, the development of the poem draws more explicitly from the strategies Chopin used in his Nocturnes musical compositions. To prevent redundancy and boredom, Chopin is known for introducing dramatic modulations to increase the musical interest to his Nocturnes. Following the dreamy and peaceful mood implemented to the music, Chopin creates tension in order to expand the dramatic tone and feel of the musical piece: “Each switch of key seems to bring with it a miraculous change of color or hue... op.9, no.01 being just one outstanding example. In those nocturnes with dramatic shifts of mood—op.15, nos. 1 and 2, or op.62, no.2—the contrast is dramatic but never sounds forced or self-conscious” (Rye and Isserlis 265).

Following the ironic exposition initiated in his “Nocturne,” Eliot imitates a comparable strategy of dramatic modulation. Indeed, after exposing a scene with boring love, the lines move drastically to a dramatic scenario that unexpectedly presents a “servant stab[ing] Romeo” (1430) with the lady who “sinks into a swoon.” Unlike Chopin’s dramatic modulations, this dramatic murder, has in reality little effect and lacks any real significance, besides describing the blood as “effective on the moonlit ground” (1430). Spurred by his rejection of the Romantic cliché, Eliot imitates Chopin’s Nocturnes techniques of composition to render a change in mood. Nevertheless, the scene Eliot conveys here is meaningless as it is just meant to express a superficial, and meaningless dramatic effect. Accordingly, Eliot is ironic about such use of musical and poetical formulas, His modernist version of the “Nocturne” moves from boring conversation with banal tunes at night, to a meaningless dramatic murder scene that lacks any deep or symbolic significance. While Chopin’s music conveys such genuine dramatic modulations seriously, Eliot deliberately chooses to modulate exclusively to follow the conventions and to accentuate his romantic stereotyping. In view of this argument, the romantic

Romeo and Juliet love, as well as the romantic nocturnes that used to attract people's feelings, cease to mean anything to the author. Hence, it can be inferred that Eliot's use of Romantic musical titles in his poems obviously represents an ironic attitude that implicitly demonstrates his aesthetic rejection of Romantic style.

If Eliot implements in "The nocturne" the dramatic changes and plays in the mood likely used in nocturne musical compositions, he expands the musical literary analogy in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" to the formal and structural strategies used in musical Rhapsodies. As much as "Nocturne" the form of "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" is analogical to Romantic musical practices. Nevertheless, the themes and the motifs displayed in the poem illustrate Eliot's rejection of Romanticism and its irrelevance in modern poetry.

As previously defined, the musical Rhapsody refers to "a free style" (Johnson, *A Night at the Symphony* 51) characterized with improvisation. Because of its improvisational quality, the Rhapsody gave the opportunity for composers to mix between different contrasting moods and rhythms. This freedom of association that characterizes the Rhapsody makes it an iconic Romantic musical form, for it enabled romantic composers to liberate themselves from the restrictions of the classics and to concentrate on musical expressiveness: "The rhapsody as a free form of self-expression, as an occasion for the display of personality, spreads a sympathetic coloring across ... the bleakness of a fallen world" (Cooper, 95).

Just like a musical Rhapsody, Eliot makes "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" free in form. Its arrangement of irregular stanza patterns, form irregular rhetorical units of free verses. Beyond this obvious characteristic, Eliot displays a set of associations between images and scenes that compares to the free play of aesthetic associations implemented in the musical Rhapsody. By arbitrarily connecting images, scenes, and fragmented memories of the speaker along the lines, Eliot makes the poem rhapsodic in its form. Nevertheless, the fragmentation

and chaos that emanates from these set of combinations suggest the fragmentation of the character's psyche, and the decay of the modern life. Hence, as much as his ironic use of the Nocturne, Eliot implements the Rhapsody in his poem to establish a contrast between romantic style and modern chaos. Unlike the harmonious associations established in romantic musical rhapsodies, Eliot establishes disjointed connections and deliberately fails to conceive the harmonic completeness initially associated with rhapsody compositions. Intentionally, the fusion between rhapsodic style of composition and the nonromantic ideas of fragmentation and the squalor of urban life results in a mockery over Romantic style and its irrelevance in modern times.

Straight from the first stanza, Eliot hints to the rhapsodic nature of his poem. Under the effect of lunar synthesis and its incantations, the speaker informs us that he is about to remember past memories with clear "relations" "divisions" and "precisions":

Twelve o'clock.

Along the reaches of the street

Held in a lunar synthesis,

Whispering lunar incantations

Dissolve the floors of memory

And all its clear relations,

Its divisions and precisions. (Eliot, *Collected poems* 16)

Under the effect of the moon light, the speaker presumes to have a clear vision that will enable him to recall a coherent set of memories. As much as the harmonious associations established in the rhapsody, the memories the speaker is about to recall imply clear "relations" "divisions" and "precisions." Nevertheless, Eliot quickly introduces nonromantic elements to this initial presentation. Although the speaker links his inspiration to the power of the moon

for incantations “Held in a lunar synthesis, / Whispering lunar incantations /Dissolve the floors of memory” (16), it is finally the mere crude artificial light of the street lamp that awakes in him glimpse of flashbacks:

Every street lamp that I pass  
Beats like a fatalistic drum,  
And through the spaces of the dark  
Midnight shakes the memory  
As a madman shakes a dead geranium. (16)

The evocation of the street lamp gives the Romantic image of the moon a quite obsolete connotation. Despite acknowledging the romantic image of the moon and its power for incantation in the first lines of the poem, it is under the effect of the artificial light of the street lamp that the speaker finally recalls his past memories.

In this concern, it is worth to mention that the opening lines of the poem evoke back the kind of romantic scenes that associate the moon light to inspiration and the evocation of happy memories. Wordsworth’s “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798” is an example of this aesthetic formula:

Therefore let the moon  
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;  
And let the misty mountain-winds be free  
To blow against thee: and, in after years,  
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured  
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind  
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,



Thy memory be as a dwelling-place  
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,  
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,  
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts  
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me.

(Wordsworth, and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads* 198)

As much as Eliot, Wordsworth evokes a scene that presents a solitary walker under the moon light. Once matured in the mind of the speaker; the inspiring effect of nature, the moon, and the mountains, would construct memories of “dwelling-place / For all sweet sounds and harmonies”(198). Using the strategy of free play and associations initially implemented in a musical rhapsody, Eliot twists this Romantic image of the moonlight, to re-associate the speaker’s incantation to the street lamp presented in the scene. Through this first poetical association, Eliot gives to his poem an urban connotation that imply the modernity of the 20th century and a nonromantic characteristic.

Following this initial exposition, Eliot works with the following poetical formula: the implementation of a strategy of rhapsodic romantic associations, in order to evoke nonromantic poetical contents. Eliot establishes rhapsodic associations by arbitrarily linking what the street lamps “observe[s]” to fragmented memories of the speakers. When the speaker notices what the street lamp ‘is observing,’ his mind recalls quite simultaneously some images from his past via analogical associations. Nevertheless, the speaker’s recalled memories are merely fragmented information that evoke the sordidness of modern existence. Such free play of combinations between the street lamp’s suggestions, and the images recalled by the speaker imitates the rhapsodic free play of association and initiates a fragmentation in the poem that implies the chaos of urban modern life. In the following passage the street lamp first spotlights

a woman. The street lamp asks the speaker to “Regard that woman / Who hesitates towards you in the light of the door” (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 16). The lamp’s focus on the woman’s eye that “twists like a crooked pin”, brings to the observer’s mind a “crowd of twisted things”:

Half-past one,  
The street lamp sputtered,  
The street lamp muttered,  
The street lamp said, "Regard that woman  
Who hesitates towards you in the light of the door  
Which opens on her like a grin.  
You see the border of her dress  
Is torn and stained with sand,  
And you see the corner of her eye  
Twists like a crooked pin."  
The memory throws up high and dry  
A crowd of twisted things;  
A twisted branch upon the beach  
Eaten smooth, and polished  
As if the world gave up  
The secret of its skeleton,  
Stiff and white.  
A broken spring in a factory yard,  
Rust that clings to the form that the strength has left  
Hard and curled and ready to snap. (16-17)

Under the influence of the lamp’s vision, the speaker recalls back a set of past scenes that evoke “A crowd of twisted things”(16). His mind focuses on the “twisted branch upon the

beach” “as if the world gave up / The secret of its skeleton, / Stiff and white”(17). From the beach, the narrator’s mind returns to the city, to evoke “broken spring in a factory yard”(17). The twistedness the speaker perceives and recalls is universal, occurring on the beach, in the image of broken woman, and in the factory yard instantly. This set of associations could be interpreted as a symbolic representation of modern brokenness in nature, people’s lives, and the urban city. Through this set of free play, the poet associates images from the city, suggested by the street lamp, to the memories of the speaker in a rhapsodic style to suggest the fragmentation of modern existence.

Following this first set of associations, the following passage focuses on isolation and disconnection. Just like the first rhapsodic episode, this section opens on some observations evoked by the street lamp, that lead to fragmented visions in the speaker memory:

Half-past two,  
The street lamp said,  
"Remark the cat which flattens itself in the gutter,  
Slips out its tongue  
And devours a morsel of rancid butter."  
So the hand of a child, automatic,  
Slipped out and pocketed a toy that was running along the quay.  
I could see nothing behind that child's eye.  
I have seen eyes in the street  
Trying to peer through lighted shutters,  
And a crab one afternoon in a pool,  
An old crab with barnacles on his back,  
Gripped the end of a stick which I held him. (17)

The lamp observes a cat that “slips out its tongue / And devours a morsel of rancid butter” (17). This scene makes the narrator recall the “hand of a child, automatic,” pocketing a toy. The child and the nothingness behind his eye make the narrator think of “eyes in the street / Trying to peer through lighted shutters.” As much as the previous passage, the recalled images are disconnected, yet, they all do evoke something that links them thematically. The child has “nothing” behind his eyes, and thus fails to make a connection with the narrator. In the same way, the eyes in the street, “outside,” seem to be attempting to make a connection with the people behind the “lighted shutters” of someone else’s home, or “inside,” but fails to do so. If the images are intentionally disjointed and freely disconnected, their association generates a mood of isolation. Duplicating a rhapsodic piece of music, the poem freely handles some images to construct themes. In next stanza, Eliot carries on subverting Romantic images through rhapsody associations. After a rather romantic representation of the moon, this image *per se* is associated to a nonromantic evocation of a woman evoking dust and loneliness:

Half-past three,  
The lamp sputtered,  
The lamp muttered in the dark.  
The lamp hummed:  
"Regard the moon,  
La lune ne garde aucune rancune,  
She winks a feeble eye,  
She smiles into corners.  
She smoothes the hair of the grass.  
The moon has lost her memory.  
A washed-out smallpox cracks her face,  
Her hand twists a paper rose,

That smells of dust and old Cologne,  
She is alone  
With all the old nocturnal smells  
That cross and cross across her brain."  
The reminiscence comes  
Of sunless dry geraniums  
And dust in crevices,  
Smells of chestnuts in the streets,  
And female smells in shuttered rooms,  
And cigarettes in corridors  
And cocktail smells in bars". (17-18)

After depicting the moon as a figure that retains "aucune rancune"(17), the speaker finally informs us that "it[the moon] has lost her memory"(18). Losing memory may connote that all past romantic evocations associated with moon light are now forgotten and irrelevant in present time. The personal pronoun "She" used to describe the moon first, is at the same time associated to a woman who twists her hands with "a paper rose, / That smells of dust and old Cologne" (18). Following this unromantic image of dust, we are informed that the woman is alone remembering about "sunless dry geraniums / And dust in crevices" (18). Implicitly, the paper rose she twists is comparable to what Eliot has done with the Romantic Rhapsody in this poem. Indeed, the paper rose, which appears as a meaningless mockery of a real rose, is a twisted romantic metaphor, just as the entire poem is a twist use of the romantic rhapsody. The action of twisting a paper rose that smells dust is equivalent to Eliot's own twisting of the Romantic rhapsody, to serve his purpose and to show the irrelevance of Romantic aesthetic in modern time and poetry.

Through his efficient handling of associations and free play of memories, Eliot shows a great ability at creating links and associations between materials to parody the Romantic rhapsody. Just like a musical romantic rhapsody, Eliot establishes free associations in his poem to create meaning. Yet, far from supporting the romantic world view, Eliot uses such romantic strategy of musical composition in poetry to express his rejection of conventional Romantic Aesthetics and its failure to cope with modern reality.

### **III. Musical Forms in Stevens' poetry**

As much as Eliot, Stevens' interest in music is not limited to a poetical use of musical metaphors. Indeed, the formal musical analogy that some of his poems illustrate the same aesthetic interest and experimentation adopted by Eliot in his poetry.

Nevertheless, because Stevens' thematic point of view differs sharply from Eliot, his implementation of musical forms connotes a number of ideas that contrast against Eliot's poetics. In the following section, I demonstrate Stevens' use of Theme and Variations and the Sonata form in his poetry. Unlike Eliot's religious tendencies, and his skepticism toward Romantic aesthetics, Stevens implements those musical forms to thematically represents "the supreme fiction" as a substitute for traditional religion, and his poetical principle of imagination as a reaction against the romantics. As much as the previous section, I rely on program music in order to link the formal and structural devices Stevens borrows from music as poetical elements of expression and thematic connotations.

#### **1. The Sonata form and The Supreme Fiction in "Peter Quince at the Clavier"**

As much as Eliot, Stevens implements the sonata form as a structuring device in his poetry. In the following passage from "Notes Toward Supreme Fiction", the constant juxtaposition of subject matters proper to a sonata musical form is implemented as a stylistic device to establish a relation of interdependence between a number of images:

Two things of opposite natures seem to depend

On one another, as a man depends

On a woman, day on night, the imagined

On the real. This is the origin of change.

Winter and spring, cold copulars, embrace

And forth the particulars of rapture come.

Music falls on the silence like a sense,

A passion that we feel, not understand.

Morning and afternoon are clasped together

And North and South are an intrinsic couple

And sun and rain a plural, like two lovers

That walk away as one in the greenest body.

In solitude the trumpets of solitude

Are not of another solitude resounding;

A little string speaks for a crowd of voices. (Stevens, *The Collected Poems* 392)

As much as the sonata exposition, a relation of interdependence is initiated between subject matters: “Two things of opposite natures seem to depend /On one another”(392). Accordingly, “...man depends/On a woman, day on night, the imagined/ On the real” (392). Stevens aims to poetically represent the interdependence of imagination and reality through this set of associations and juxtaposition that recalls the sonata strategy of composition. In this regard: “Music falls on the silence like a sense, /A passion that we feel, not understand” (392).

Despite its stand as a vision for poetical writing, Stevens' principle of imagination and reality also plays a religious role in his poetics. In the view of this perspective, Stevens believes that traditional religion fails to establish a concrete connection between the spiritual wisdom it promises and reality. In the opening part of the poem quoted above, the speaker calls the ephebe to: "become an ignorant man again/ And see the sun again with an ignorant eye/ And see it clearly in the idea of it" (380). This statement implies the negation of traditional religion and its complete detachment from reality: "The death of one god is the death of all" (381). Via the supreme fiction, Stevens proposes a substitute for religion with a fiction that connects our spiritual potential to our realities. Instead of old religious myths and stories, Stevens proposes his poetic vision that connects imagination to reality as a profane spiritual substitute. If this idea has already been covered in the previous chapter of this thesis, I would like to demonstrate in this section Stevens' implementation of the sonata juxtaposition of subject matters in his poetry to reveal these poetical ideas.

Stevens develops the sonata technique of poetical writing in "Peter Quince at the Clavier." The poem introduces us to a pianist who comments on his playing, and who brings through his music an original interpretation to the Christian story of Susana and the Elders. Straight from the title of the poem, Stevens implicitly attributes to the pianist the artistic mission of transforming old myths, to give them a new modern reality. Indeed, the name Peter Quince that appears in the title, is a reference to a character from Shakespeare's comedy *Midsummer Night's Dream*. In Shakespeare's play, Peter Quince is a playwright who provides "a festive finale to the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta with a bizarre stage version of Ovid's story of the lovers Pyramus and Thisbe" (Miranda 91). As he reworks the original old myth into a new artistic creation, Peter Quince represents the archetypal artist who: "turns the myth into idea, which is to say, he gives back to the myth its reality" (Riddle, *The Clairvoyant Eye* 74).



If the story of Susana and the elder stand originally for a moralistic Christian lesson, the pianist discourse on music and its aesthetic nature in the poem turns the biblical story into a sensual document of “sacramental praise” and beauty (Conway 88). By this means, Stevens gives to Susana’s story a new meaning and a new reality, that differ from its original Christian significance. By twisting the context of the story, Stevens implies the supreme fiction as a profane substitute for traditional religion.

Following a structure that consists of an exposition, a development, and a recapitulation, the poem follows a sonata strategy of composition. Using the continuous juxtaposition of subject matters properly used in the sonata, Stevens continuously layers elements from the original Bible story against his poetic ideas of imagination and reality. Thanks to this juxtaposition of statements, Stevens give to the pianist the mission to revisit the biblical story of Susana and the elders.

The juxtaposition of two contrasting ideas that characterizes the exposition of a sonata is initiated through the comparative phrase ‘Just as’ of the opening line: “Just as my fingers on this keys / Make music, so the self-same sounds/ On my spirit make a music, too” (Stevens, *The Collected Poems* 89). Quince compares the physical movements required to produce notes on the piano’s keys, to the way his “self-same sounds /On [his] spirit make a music, too” (89). Through this contrast, Quince defines music as both a mental, and a physical activity. The physical movements required to produce sound on the instrument are parallel to the intellectualized artistic process by which the musician conceptualized the melody in his mind. Both activities, result in the ordered music the musician performs for his audience. Though this introduction, Stevens metaphorically introduces his poetic idea of imagination and reality as the main dichotomy for his poetical sonata exposition:

Just as my fingers on these keys

Make music, so the self-same sounds

On my spirit make a music, too.

Music is feeling, then, not sound. (89-90)

Following this universal statement on the aesthetic nature of music, the pianist moves to a concrete scene that includes a woman in a room: “Here in this room, desiring you, /Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk, Is music” (90). Through his statements, the speaker associates the physical beauty of the woman, to the intellectual process by which he creates music on his instrument. As much as his music, that is defined as a physical and mental activity, the lady’s beauty exists both in the real world and in the pianist’s musical performance. If the physicality of the woman does not necessarily exist to satisfy the musician’s own desires: “Here in this room, desiring you”(90), Quince is still capable of turning the beauty of the woman and his desire for her into the subject of his musical composition: “Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk, Is music” (90). Quince illustrates here the process by which he is capable of appropriating objects from the factual world, and make them his own through art. Accordingly, the musician turns his desires for Susana into a musical performance that exists in real world. Through this association, Stevens follows the sonata strategy of juxtaposition of subject matters in order to relate the woman’s beauty to the initial dichotomy introduced in the first lines. By juxtaposing the woman’s physical beauty against the pianist’s statement on the aesthetic nature of music, Stevens confirms the main dichotomy that constitutes his sonata exposition, and which consists of his main poetic dichotomy that associates imagination and reality.

When the identity of the woman is divulged, Stevens’ illustration of this artistic process of creation is given a religious connotation. Through the name of the lady and the scene, it is clear that the lady the pianist is commenting on is a reference from the Biblical story of Susana and the Elders. Originally, “The story of Susanna and the Elders is found in the apocryphal chapter of the Book of Daniel” (Gonzales, *An analysis of dominick Argento* 16).

When Susana takes a bath in privacy in her garden, her beauty and “naked body arouses the Elders' lust and they demand that she give herself to them. When she refuses, they call her servants and falsely accuse her of adultery and condemn her to death. In the end, Justice prevails” (16). In “Peter Quince at the Clavier,” Stevens juxtaposes this biblical reference against the pianist’s aesthetic statements on art and music in order to suggest a new poetical meaning to story:

Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,  
Is music. It is like the strain  
Waked in the elders by Susanna;  
  
Of a green evening, clear and warm,  
She bathed in her still garden, while  
The red-eyed elders, watching, felt  
  
The basses of their beings throb  
In witching chords, and their thin blood  
Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna. (Stevens, *The Collected Poems* 90)

Far from evoking Christian values of purity, Susana’s story turns to be a case study for Stevens’ aesthetics and its principles. If the story originally rewards values of abstinence and purity, the elders’ inability to touch Susana in the original story is implicitly contrasted and juxtaposed in the poem against the pianist’s successful appropriation of her beauty through his composition: “Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk, / Is music” (90). Accordingly, the Elders’ death sentence at the end of the original story stands in Stevens’ poem as a symbol for their failure to make their own realities out of their inner desires and imagination.

Via this opening part, Stevens introduces his sonata ‘exposition’ and its main juxtapositions. In this regards, the pianist’s speech in the opening lines associates concepts of

reality and imagination to formulate Stevens' view of poetry. This first dichotomy is juxtaposed against the biblical story of Susana to suggest a spiritual and religious significance to the pianist discourse. Through this set of juxtapositions, the poem implements a sonata technique of exposition that highlights Stevens' poetic dichotomy of imagination and reality and his idea of the supreme fiction as a substitute for traditional religious beliefs.

Comparable to a sonata musical composition, Stevens follows this exposition with a development part. Section two and three respectively develop the two distinct ideas that constitute the opening part of the poem. Whereas section II celebrates via the portrait of Susana, Stevens' poetic principles of imagination and reality, the third part concentrates on the biblical story and the failure of the Elders to relate their inner desires to their own realities. Using Susana story to develop his sonata, Stevens illustrates how to deviate from religious imagination and rework our own spirituality using profane poetics and its principles.

In part two, the speaker describes Susana in her bath. The employed analogies and metaphors enable the poet to relate the figure of Susana to the pianist:

In the green water, clear and warm,

Susanna lay.

She searched

The touch of springs,

And found

Concealed imaginings.

She sighed,

For so much melody.

Upon the bank, she stood

In the cool

Of spent emotions.

She felt, among the leaves,  
The dew  
Of old devotions.  
She walked upon the grass,  
Still quavering.  
The winds were like her maids,  
On timid feet,  
Fetching her woven scarves,  
Yet wavering. (90)

Susana is portrayed here both as an artistic object, and an artist too. Despite her physical beauty that makes her the object of the pianist's creation, the way Susana enjoys and intellectualizes the actual moment in her bath resembles the musician's mediation between his inner feelings and his physical movement on the piano's keys. Indeed, Susana's movements in the water indicates that her bath is both a physical experience, and an artistic ritual. The verbs used to describe her movements shows an orderly set of actions with a definite form: "Suzanna lay .. /She searched. .. / And found ... /She sighed"(90). Her enjoyment of the moment, along with the gestures she makes, produce an artistic pattern that compares to the musician's artistic performance. As much as the pianist, Susana: "Concealed imaginings/ She sighed, / For so much melody" (90).

As she comes out of the water, Susana's emotions are gone: "Upon the bank, she stood/In the cool/Of spent emotions"(90). Nevertheless, her artistic performance still lives through her body: "She walked upon the grass/Still quavering"(91). As much as the pianist's music that is manifested both in his mind and the physical performance on the piano's keys, Susana's intellectual abstractions in the bath are aesthetically manifested in the real world via the beauty of her body. The perfect union between Susana's peaceful state of mind, and her

physical beauty is captured at the end of the passage through the natural elements she observed and how they respond to her ordering physical beauty: “The winds were like her maids, On timid feet, /Fetching her woven scarves, Yet wavering”(91). Although her sensual wondering in bath is limited in time: “Upon the bank, she stood/In the cool/Of spent emotions”(90) , Susana’s physical beauty is a manifestation for the continuation of her artistic performance in factual reality: “She walked upon the grass/Still quavering”(91). This idea is equivalent to the pianist who immortalizes his feelings for Susana in the form of an artistic sheet of music that could be read and performed endlessly. Both the pianist’s desires, and the woman’s peaceful state of mind are abstract in their nature. Nevertheless, as both the musician and Susana express their state of mind through their bodies, they are immortalizing abstract thinking in the physical world. Comparable to a sonata composition, Stevens develops in this section the first juxtaposition initiated in the opening lines of the exposition i.e., the poetic duality between imagination and reality.

If part II concentrates on the portrait of Susana and the success of an artistic perspective that mediates between imagination and physical reality, the third part of the poem concentrates on the demise of the Elders in Susana’s story and its significance within the set of dichotomies developed along the lines. Unlike the pianist’s successful mediation between his inner desire for Susana and his own reality, the Elders rely on an exclusive sensual perspective which leads to their demise. Indeed, the Elders’ desire for Susana is purely physical. Nevertheless, because Susana does not live to truly exist in their realities, the Elders are left with just a fantasy in their own imagination. Accordingly, the Elders demise makes it clear that an ultimate reliance on physical reality without imagination is not the poetic solution Steven proposes in his poem. This idea is first presented in the ‘exposition’ through the contrast between of the calm of the woman, and the possessive “red-eyed elders” observing the scene:

Of a green evening, clear and warm,

She bathed in her still garden, while  
The red-eyed elders, watching, felt

The basses of their beings throb  
In witching chords, and their thin blood  
Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna. (90)

Unlike the “green evening, clear and warm” (90) associated to the woman’s mediation between her inner thoughts and her sensual experience, the Elders’ exclusive focus on their physical needs is represented through “red-eyed” watching “The basses of their beings throb” (90). Following a sonata methodology of composition, the third section of the poem develops this part of the exposition:

Soon, with a noise like tambourines,  
Came her attendant Byzantines.  
They wondered why Susanna cried  
Against the elders by her side;  
And as they whispered, the refrain  
Was like a willow swept by rain.  
Anon, their lamps' uplifted flame  
Revealed Susanna and her shame.  
And then, the simpering Byzantines  
Fled, with a noise like tambourines. (91)

Unlike the melodious descriptions that accompany the beauty of Susana in the part II, part III associates the Elders to a set of cacophonous descriptions that stand for their demise and incapacity to mediate between their inner emotions and physical realities. Unable to create their own realities out of their desire for Susana, the Elder’s remaining solution is their aggression

on Susana's body. Their frustrated self, previously portrayed through the image of the red eyes and the cacophonous sound of "The basses of their beings throb" (90) is presented in this section of the poem via an unpleasant: "noise like tambourines, /Came her attendant Byzantines" (91). Unlike the intellectual observations that accompany Susana's physical delight in bath, and the pianist successful mediation between his desire and reality, the Elders' attempt to rape Susana is a non-intellectualized and vulgar approach to satisfy their needs on a primitive physical level.

Following a sonata logic of composition, the last part of the poem represents a synthesis of the different juxtapositions and ideas previously presented through the lines. The speaker closes the story of Susana to address the reader with a more direct style that recapitulates and retains the main idea of the poem: "Beauty is momentary in the mind/ The fitful tracing of a portal;/ But in the flesh it is immortal" (91). Unlike the traditional view that considers conceptual beauty of the mind as eternal, and physical beauty as ephemeral, Stevens turns this understanding upside down by affirming that beauty is immortal only when it is manifested in reality. To make his argument clear, Stevens follows this concluding statement with the following illustrations that are still arranged in a sonata juxtaposition of opposites:

The body dies; the body's beauty lives.

So evenings die, in their green going,

A wave, interminably flowing.

So gardens die, their meek breath scenting

The cowl of winter, done repenting.

So maidens die, to the auroral

Celebration of a maiden's choral. (92)

Bodies die, but other bodies take their place; evenings die but are always followed by a succession of evenings; gardens and maidens die, but only to set up an eternity of gardens and maidens, and one maiden celebrates the whole. Because they are unable to relate their inner



desire to their realities, the Elders' demise and death is symbolic for their failure as artists. In contrast, capturing the essence of Susana's physical beauty through art is the method the pianist chooses to follow. Much like the endless cycle of life and death Stevens' quotes in this recapitulative part of his poem, this approach enables the composer to recreate Susana's beauty in his reality via a musical composition that could be endlessly performed. Stevens closes the poem by hinting once again to Susana's story and the new poetic significance he gives it in his poem: "Susanna's music touched the bawdy strings/ Of those white elders; but, escaping, / Left only Death's ironic scraping" (92).

As he twists the moralistic Christian message Susana Story originally communicates, Stevens implicitly proposes his supreme fiction as a modern substitute for the old religious myths, and give a new meaning to Susana's story in his poem. Accordingly, as much as Eliot's series of poems in "Four Quartets," Stevens uses the sonata strategy of juxtaposition in his poem to allow for complex thematic treatment of his material. Nevertheless, unlike Eliot's spiritual quest toward divine salvation, Stevens seems rather concerned with a poetic question of artistic creation as a spiritual substitute for old traditional religion and its stories.

Following a structure of a sonata, Stevens takes an old Testament story and turns it into a sensual document of "sacramental praise" of beauty. By this means, Stevens gives to Susana's story a new meaning and reality different from the one attributed originally by the Christian worldview and implicitly proposes the supreme fiction as a profane substitute for traditional religious thinking.

## **2. Imagination and Theme and variations in "Sea Surface full of Clouds"**

If "Peter Quince at the Clavier" demonstrates Stevens' use of the sonata form to contrast the supreme fiction against old religious beliefs, "Sea Surface full of Clouds" illustrates the

poet's use of the theme and variations form as a stylistic embodiment of his poetical principle of imagination and reality.

As previously mentioned, a theme and variation musical piece is a musical form that displays "multiple developmental treatment on a single theme" (Michael 223). Unlike the progressive nature of the sonata, the minuet, and other ternary musical forms, Theme and Variations is based on the repetition of the same musical idea with progressive and continual changes to it: "Variations may include modification to melody, harmony, key, rhythm, contrapuntal accompaniment, ornamentation, mode, and combination of changes" (C. Thomsett 223). Hence, a Theme and Variations piece originally consists of a musical idea played repeatedly in many different ways, including consecutive changes and modifications.

As its musical structure suggests, the adaptation of theme and variations in poetry is based on verse repetition and continual variations. In "The Poetic Use of Musical Forms," Calvin S. Brown describes the method for applying a musical theme and variations structure in poetry: "The usual method of the poetic theme and variations is identical with that of the musical form: a theme is given out simply and directly, and then followed by a series of reworking in different moods emphases, and sometimes meters" (93). Thus, the implementation of this musical structure in poetry would be the exposition of a stanza, followed with a set of variations of it. Through repetitions, and similarities presented along the verses, the reader would be able to distinguish the initial theme from the set of variations the poet introduces in his verses.

Because of its particular structure, Theme and Variations may be an ideal poetical form to deal with distinct thematic treatments. In "Variations on a Theme as the Crux of Creativity" Douglas R. Hofstadter Studies the way by which Theme and Variations form captures the formulation of some patterns of creative thinking. According to Douglas, the brain is capable

to revises the 'raw data' of perceived scenes, making them its own. Through theme and Variations structure, artists embody aesthetically this thinking process repeatedly, and illustrate how their intellect and imagination appropriate objects from the real world, in order to make them their own "... in looking directly at something solid and real on a table, people can see far beyond that solidity and reality --can see an "essence", a "core", a "theme" upon which to devise variations" (267).

Comparable to a Theme and Variation musical composition, "Sea surface Full of Clouds" conveys five different variations of the same theme: a sea setting in November night. Basing his variations on such visual scene, Stevens gives to each of the five movements of the poem a distinct treatment, despite the use of a similar structure and chronology. As he manipulates images of a scene through a Theme and Variations structure, Stevens poetically illustrates the ways by which his mind appropriates the physical setting and shapes it via imagination. Hence, as much as his use of musical metaphors, Stevens' illustrates through the use of musical forms the interdependence between imagination and reality, and affirms his deviation from Romantic solipsist imagination.

Before a closer consideration to the way Stevens achieves poetically his variations, it is worth to mention that, because of its visual imagery, the poem has previously been associated to the impressionist movement in painting. In *Wallace Stevens: The Making of Harmonium*, Robert Buttel tackles Stevens interest in painting and cites "Sea Surface full of Clouds" among the poems that illustrates the poet's connection to visual impressionism:

In his debt to painting, Stevens seriously risked the fallacy of imitative form. Indeed, the surface of *Harmonium* nearly persuades the reader that one of his aims was to abolish the distinction between poetry and painting. Many of his titles – "Flora Decorations for Bananas," "Of the Surface of Thinks," "Domination of black," "Sea

Surface Full of Clouds”- declare Stevens’ for still lifes, landscapes, and sea scapes and are obvious signs of his determination to carry over to his poetry the visual impress of painting. “Sea Surface Full of Clouds” (1924) is as close as poetry can be to a series of Impressionistic landscapes... ( Buttel 148)

Indeed, the existence of Theme and Variations techniques in painting, along the with visual quality of Stevens’ poem makes the connection between “Sea Surface Full of Clouds” and impressionism an evident conclusion to be made. In *Paradoxes: The Theme and Variations in the Visual Arts — False-color Cartography and the Grainstacks of Claude Monet*, Gary Storm explains that Theme and Variations as a painting technique represents “multiple images, acquired at different times, of a single region of the earth” ( storm 46). Monet’s Grainstack series represents an example of Theme and Variations technique as implemented into painting. The title refers primarily to a twenty-five canvas series in which Monet repeated the same subject to show the differing light and atmosphere at different times of the day, across the seasons and in many types of weather: “ in Claude Monet's theme-and-variations sequence, are colored - brown, purple, blue, gold, black - revealing the ever-changing effects of light at different times of the day, different seasons of year” ( storm 46). Hence, comparable to the impressionists, Stevens’ poem concentrates on presenting different versions of the same setting: a sea setting in November night.

If the concept of presenting variations of the same visual setting makes Stevens’ poem comparable to the paintings of the impressionists, Stevens is rather concerned with the different ways by which poetical imagination appropriates one same setting: a sea setting in November night. In this regard, the speaker tells in each variation that the initial scene “made one think” of the different perceptions he develops along the lines, instead of visually observing the same scene at different moments of the day. Accordingly, far from a representation of the same scene

at successive nights, the poem thematically suggests how the same scene can be shaped differently through poetical imagination. Despite this dissimilarity with the impressionists, the temporal aesthetic quality that connects music to poetry, makes the connection between “Se Surface Full of Clouds” and musical Theme and Variations strategies of composition more coherent structurally, than the general conceptual similarity that connects the poem to impressionistic variations. Indeed, comparable to musical variations, the poem displays the same repeated pattern that follow in an arranged chronology in each of the five variations. Because painting is not a temporal art, Theme and Variations as implemented in music and Stevens’ poem can never be assimilated in such structural way. Unlike the chronology and temporal quality of the variations in music and poetry, variations on a theme in painting are disconnected one from the other. Indeed, it is through the observation of different paintings displaying a common theme that one could conceptualize a Theme and Variations unfolding through different canvas. In contrast, the temporality of poetry makes the adaptation of musical Theme and Variations not only conceptual, but also structural and chronological. Indeed, the temporality of music and poetry makes it possible for a poet to adapt Theme and Variations form in the different part of the same poem, making the variations flow chronologically along the lines, the same way a musical theme and variations piece is structurally organized. Simply put, if Theme and Variations in painting is used as a concept to associate thematically and stylistically a series of paintings, it directly intervenes as a technique in the formal and structural construction of poems and musical pieces. Hence, despite the impressionist’s conceptual appropriation of Theme and Variations, and the highly visual quality of Stevens’ poem, Stevens’ focus structural repetitions, and variations, make his poem more concretely connected to musical Theme and Variations, than to the impressionistic technique of variations.

As previously mentioned, the poem is divided into five parts, each part containing six distinct verses. Comparable to a musical Theme and Variations, each opening of the five parts

re-implements the same exposition: “In that November off Tehuantepec, /The slopping of the sea grew still one night” (Stevens *The Ccollected Poems* 98). Accordingly, each opening part, or variation of the poem, re introduces us to the same expository visual theme, a sea setting in November night, where “the slopping” or the flow of sea water “grew still” (98). Based on such exposition, each of the five parts distinguishes itself from the others in the way they develop and modulate in different manners. The final structure of the whole poem results in five different perceptions of the same scene, through which Stevens demonstrates the power of imagination to come up with different poetical realities.

In the first part, i.e., variation, of the poem, the exposition is followed by the following lines:

And in the morning summer hued the deck  
And made one think of rosy chocolate  
And gilt umbrellas. Paradisal green  
Gave suavity to the perplexed machine. (98-99)

The speaker conveys here how his perception of the scene makes him feel positive and cheerful. Along the “rosy chocolate” and “gilt umbrellas,” the speaker affirms that such paradisial scene “Gave suavity to the perplexed machine” (99). The metaphor of “machine” implemented here and in the other variations, stands for the working of imagination over such perceived scene. The significance of the machine metaphor is revealed through the questioning on the origins of the perceived beauty: “Who, then, in that ambrosial latitude / Out of the light evolved the morning blooms, /Who, then, evolved the sea-blooms from the clouds” (99). Following this set of questions, the speaker answers with a line in French, that suggests the working of poetical imagination over reality:

Who, then, in that ambrosial latitude  
Out of the light evolved the morning blooms,  
Who, then, evolved the sea-blooms from the clouds  
Diffusing balm in that Pacific calm?  
C'etait mon enfant, mon bijou, mon ame. (99)

The same calm and elevated attitude evoked in the opening part is translated through the speaker's questions. The speaker asks who evolved the mourning bloom in "ambrosial latitude" and who "evolved the sea-blooms from the clouds / Diffusing balm in that Pacific calm?" (99). Following this, the speaker answers these questionings by referring to his power of imagination as his own child, his jewelry, his soul. The description that closes this first variation evokes the sea, its green and blue water radiance, to capture the same calm mood portrayed in the exposition:

The sea-clouds whitened far below the calm  
And moved, as blooms move, in the swimming green  
And in its watery radiance, while the hue  
Of heaven in an antique reflection rolled  
Round those flotillas. And sometimes the sea  
Poured brilliant iris on the glistening blue. (99)

As the set of variations unfold along the lines, the implicit role Stevens give to poetical imagination becomes progressively evident. Indeed, following a Theme and Variations strategy of composition, the remaining four parts of the poem follow the same thematic and chronological organization the poet uses in the first part. Using the same visual exposition, the speaker introduces the "machine" metaphor as an interlude that introduces the effect of

imagination over the perceived reality. The way by which this metaphor is presented conveys the mood of the respective variation. Comparable to the first variation, the third and fourth stanzas of each variation introduce us to a set of questions on the origins of the perceived scene, leading to a suggestive line in French, that interludes the speaker's work of imagination at shaping reality.

Following the stable and quiet mood first part, the second variation of the poem transforms the "paradise green" of the previous evocation into a sham-like green that "Capped summer-seeming on the tense machine" (99). Though the introduction of the setting remains the same, the depiction of the ocean shifts from the calm mood of the first part to a sinister tableau "Of ocean, which in sinister flatness lay/ ho, then, beheld the rising of the clouds/ That strode submerged in that malevolent sheen"(99). Such sinister and flat representation of the ocean can be linked to Stevens' tendencies to depict the flatness of an external reality when deprived from any sense of poetic imagination. The question/ answer pattern of the third and fourth stanzas of this variation emphasizes on the mortality of "of the blooms /Of water moving on the water-floor?"(100). Interestingly enough, this evocation is followed by the French line that opens the role of imagination at shaping reality. The speaker in this variation refers to the scene as "mon frere du ciel, ma vie, mon or" (100). This affirmation helps the poet to move from the sinister and flat image of water, in order to evoke a "Blue heaven" (100) that spreads "Its crystalline pendentives on the sea/ And the macabre of the water-glooms / In an enormous undulation fled" (100). Although the structure of this variation is the same as the first part of the poem, Stevens' emphasis on the sinister image of the water, and his move towards a "Blue heaven" that spreads "Its crystalline pendentives on the sea" (100) establishes a thematic contrast that illustrate the role of imagination at reshaping a sinister reality.

The third variation presents the external surrounding as fragile and uncertain. This time, the paradise green of the first variation is presented as "An uncertain piano polished green"



(100) that held the tranced machine of imagination. The fragility of the scene, along the ‘uncertain’ green and the ‘tranced’ machine metaphor, could possibly suggest in comparison to the previous variations, the effect of an imaginative process that is totally detached from factual reality. Indeed, unlike the calm and stable mood of the first variation, and the sinister depiction of naked reality in the second variation, the scene in the third variation is beautiful, but “uncertain” and fragile.

Nevertheless, because Stevens’ thematic purpose is to convey his ideal equilibrium between reality and imagination, the fragile description of the first lines resolves as the speaker’s affirms that the scene was “Oh! C’etait mon extase et mon amour”(100). Comparable to previous variation, the French line marks Stevens poetical merging between the physical scene and his imagination. Here the superficial fragility of the scene is juxtaposed against some deep shadows that made “the petals black / Until the rolling heaven made them blue” (100). This modal change in color and atmosphere suggest an equilibrium between the beautiful but fragile evocations constructed out of the imagination of the speaker, and the concrete but dark visual setting of reality. As much as the previous variations, Stevens’ equilibrium between imagination and reality results in an evocation of a calm blue color that closes the description of the scene: “A blue beyond the rainy hyacinth, /And smiting the crevasses of the leaves /Deluged the ocean with a sapphire blue” (101).

The fourth variation is representative of the pragmatic minds that reject the usefulness of imagination. Because the speaker’s mind is now relying on factual reality to describe the scene, the former green light of previous variations is now presented as a ‘too-fluent green,’ whereas the machine metaphor of imagination is “dry” and suggests malice instead of inspiration:

In that November off Tehuantepec

The night-long slopping of the sea grew still.

A mallow morning dozed upon the deck  
And made one think of musky chocolate  
And frail umbrellas. A too-fluent green  
Suggested malice in the dry machine. (101)

Because of a reliance on reality without imagination, the machine of imagination is now presented as “dry.” The “pondering,” and the “thinking green,” along the description are intentionally used to accentuate the rationality of a mind that refuses imagination. Unlike the previous variations that convey a fusion between the clouds and the sea surface, the speaker refers to the clouds as simple damasks, fabric figures that were shaken off. This description of the cloud seems to concentrate on the physical texture and shape of the clouds which further accentuates the speaker’s bias toward the physical representation of the perception, rather than the imaginative transformation of the mind. Following this imagery, the speaker expresses his discontentment by referring to this process as “la nonchalance divine” i.e., divine disinterestedness:

Who then beheld the figures of the clouds  
Like blooms secluded in the thick marine?  
Like blooms? Like damasks that were shaken off  
From the loosed girdles in the spangling must.  
C'etait ma foi, la nonchalance divine. (101)

Following the French poetical line, it is the speaker’s faith in the creative powers of man that can bring resolution. Indeed, the nakedness of reality conveyed in lines 13 and 14: “The nakedness would rise and suddenly turn /Salt masks of beard and mouths of bellowing,” (101) becomes “the broadest blooms, / Mile-mallows that a mallow sun cajoled” (101).

The fifth and last variation of the poem explicitly asserts Stevens’ departure from Romantic imagination. The first lines of this variation make use of some romantic fancy and

clichés imagery that Stevens rejects in his poetry. Although the image of “Chinese chocolate” has an association with the “porcelain” of section three and the “chop-house” of section two, it appears to be used here for “its alliterative value than for any necessary connotations” (Riddel 185). Furthermore, though the “large umbrellas,” is descriptive of a rolling sea, it “does not have the force of diction which characterizes similar images” used in the previous variations (Riddel 185). Thus, although the structure of the variation remains unchanged, the images and their connotations are different. In this regard, the description of the sea and the clouds that follows connote the romantics’ divorce of imagination from reality:

Of ocean, perfected in indolence.  
 What pistache one, ingenious and droll,  
 Beheld the sovereign clouds as jugglery  
 And the sea as turquoise-turbaned Sambo, neat  
 At tossing saucers-doudy-conjuring sea?  
*C' etait mon esprit bftard, l'ignominie.*  
 The sovereign clouds came clustering. The conch  
 Of loyal conjuration trumped. The wind  
 Of green blooms turning crisped the motley hue  
 To clearing opalescence. Then the sea  
 And heaven rolled as one and from the two  
 Came fresh transfigurings of freshest blue. (102)

The ocean as an element belonging to external reality is described as passive and indolent. Indeed, it is depicted as an observer as it “beheld sovereign clouds as jugglery” (102). Because the poetic depiction is detached from the real image of the ocean, the speaker refers to this poetical process as an : “*esprit bftard, l'ignominie*”(102). To find resolution and in order to convey his poetics of imagination and reality, Stevens transforms the chaos evoked through

the “motley hue,” as displayed in the last lines of this variation into the “clearing opalescence.” Thus, imaginative faculty conjoins with the physical to give “fresh transfigurings of fresh est blue.”( Riddel 185)

Through the five different parts of the poem, it can be deduced that all of the striking differences in mood and imagery aim to convey five different intellectual and imaginative transformations of the same physical scene. Like a musical composition, each variation can be understood in isolation from the other. Nevertheless, it is the summing up of the five different variations that constructs the whole Theme and Variations sets composed by Stevens. In “*Disguised Pronunciamento : Wallace Stevens, "Sea Surface Full Of Clouds,"*” Joseph N. Riddel proposes an extensive explanation of each part of the poem, displaying how each individual part holds meaning in itself :

Each of the poem's five sections, then, is a psychological moment in the consciousness of an observer, the poet, at a more or less specific time and place. Yet, November and Tehuantepec are important for what they connote, not what they denote; hence all of Stevens' work has, in a sense, enriched this poem. The setting is only an illusion of dramatic place, and the action, if it can be termed action, is in the poet's mind, his imagination embellishing his perception. (Riddel 179)

In line with Joseph Riddel argumentation, we notice in fact that using different kind of imagery in each individual variation shows how Stevens’ notion of imagination is bound to reality. In the following passage, Riddel explains how Stevens illustrates his abstractions of the imagination in his poetry via the manipulation of physical scenes:

Stevens concretizes his abstract theory (of the imagination metamorphosing the physical into a new reality) by projecting it as a drama of the mind and placing it in a physical setting. And by his manipulation of the imagery, which takes its basis in the

physical scene but shows the physical in a unique perspective, through analogies and suggestive connotations, he creates the "poem of the act of the mind. (Riddel 177)

Thus, using Theme and Variations as a structuring element, Stevens shows the inter-relatedness of imagination with reality.

### **Conclusion**

Following the structural musicological analysis conducted in this chapter, one may understand that Eliot and Stevens implemented distinct musical forms in their poetry. Interestingly enough, this interdisciplinary approach to poetical structuration is informed by the thematic preoccupations of the poets. Hence, as much as their use of musical metaphors and soundscape, Eliot and Stevens implemented musical forms in their poems to inform the reader about their poetical ideas and theme. If Eliot implemented the Sonata to discuss his acceptance of religious faith, Stevens' use of this same form conveys his idea of the supreme fiction as a substitute for traditional Christianity. In the same way, their use of well-known Romantic musical forms in the structuration of poems reveal their contrasting attitude against the Romantics.

## **General Conclusion**

The results displayed through the chapters of this thesis demonstrate a fundamental link between Eliot's and Stevens' implementation of musical forms, musical metaphors, soundscape, and their thematic preoccupations as modernist poets. Unlike previous musicological oriented studies that limited their investigations to formal analogies between music and poetry, this paper demonstrates that musical forms play a thematic function in poetical texts, and reveal, in conjunction with musical metaphors and soundscape, the poetic and thematic preoccupations of Eliot and Stevens in their poetry. Indeed, far from implementing music and its techniques as a formal and structural poetical device, both Eliot and Stevens associate their interdisciplinary use of music in poetry to their use of soundscape, and musical metaphors, in order to musically reveal their poetical themes. Accordingly, despite the experimental modernist tendencies that pushed Eliot and Stevens towards interdisciplinary musical aesthetics, both poets assimilate "program music" as part of their poetry. As reviewed in the first chapter of this dissertation, program music represents a trend in music and musicology, where form and formal experimentation are used as vehicles for ideas and themes in instrumental music. As much as program music composers, Stevens and Eliot demonstrate in their poetry the implementation of music and formal experimentation as stylistic tools of thematic connotation. Far from implementing music and its techniques as mere stylistic devices, both poets associate their interdisciplinary use of musical forms to literary soundscape, and musical metaphors, in order to poetically represent their thematic preoccupations as modernist artists.

Through the chapters of this thesis, I have demonstrated how Eliot and Stevens followed this strategy of composition in poetry to thematically reflect their distinct views on romanticism and their religious believes. In the vein of romantic tradition, poets such as Wordsworth and Keats implemented nature's soundscape and musical metaphors in their

poems to poetically reflect their escapism from the world of facts. As a modernist musical reaction against romantic solipsism in poetry, both Eliot and Stevens defamiliarized romantic soundscape and musical metaphors in their poems to reflect their rejection of Romantic escape from reality. However, both poets demonstrate an interdisciplinary implementation of some musical forms in their poems, that parallels their defamiliarization of Romantic soundscape and musical metaphors, and which suggests their attitudes and reactions against Romantic aesthetics.

In poems such as “The Waste Land,” and “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” Eliot implements an ironic use of romantic soundscape to suggest the invalidity of Romantic aesthetics in modernist poetry. Instead of escaping reality, Eliot depicts the auditory sordidness of the city in some passages from “The Waste Land,” and uses musical metaphors in “Portrait of a Lady,” to represent the meaningless of the social realities in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Eliot’s structural implementation of the romantic Rhapsody musical form in “Rhapsody on Windy Night.” and his use of the romantic musical nocturne in “Nocturne,” parallel his defamiliarization of soundscape and musical metaphors from Romantic poetry, to suggest through formal experimentation, his dissatisfaction with Romantic aesthetics and its irrelevance in modern poetry.

Comparable to Eliot, Stevens exhibits the same musical approach when he poetically reveals his reaction against the Romantics. Nevertheless, his dissimilar poetic and poetical views with Eliot makes his use of music in a total contrast against Eliot’s poetic vision. In “The Idea of Order in key West” and “Esthétique du Mal,” Stevens reveals his defamiliarization of Romantic soundscape to expresses his skepticism towards Romantic escapist tendencies. Nevertheless, unlike Eliot’s objective poetry, Stevens uses musical metaphors in poems such as “The Man with the Blue Guitar,” “Juga,” and “Infanta Marina” to convey the role of poetic imagination at bringing order to the chaos of modern reality. Hence, unlike Eliot’s complete

rejection of imagination, Stevens adopts a poetical attitude that reconciliates imagination with reality, and negates through his use of soundscape and musical metaphors both Romantic soundscape solipsism, and Eliot's objectivism. As much as Eliot, Stevens associates his traditional auditory and musical poetical representations with formal musical experimentations that convey his turn towards an interdisciplinary modernist aesthetics. Indeed, his adaptation of the Theme and Variations musical form in "Sea Surface Full of Clouds" parallels his soundscape and musical metaphors that thematically suggest a reconciliation between imagination and reality, and implicitly illustrate his antagonism with Eliot's poetic objectivism.

When it comes to religion and spirituality, both poets share an interesting relation with Dante's use of soundscape and musical metaphors in *The Divine Comedy*. Yet, Eliot and Stevens transcend Dante's traditional poetical use of soundscape, and introduce musical forms to suggest, through form and style, the religious ideas they convey via other literary devices. In his long poem, Dante displays a musical and soundscape analogy that associates religious bareness to cacophony, spiritual healing to monophonic psalms, and complete redemption to harmonious polyphony, and the divine music of the spheres. In his poetry, Eliot's appropriates Dante's soundscape design to thematically suggest Christianity as a solution for the spiritual decay of the modern society. Nevertheless, unlike Dante's explicit journey through "Inferno," "Purgatorio," and "Paradisio," Eliot's religious journey metaphorically paints his gradual conversion to Anglicanism, and his acceptance of Christianity. For this purpose, Eliot swerves away from a mimetic implementation of the musical soundscape relevant to *The Divine comedy*, and adapted it to fit his modernist poetical needs. Accordingly, Eliot turns the cacophony of "Inferno" to a multiplicity of cacophonous voices in "The Waste land," and swerves away from Dante's Psalm songs of "Purgatorio" towards a search for silence, and the word of Redemption in "Ash Wednesday." Following this soundscape analogy, the evocation of silence and words of redemption in "Ash Wednesday" contrast against the cacophony of



“The Waste Land” to represent the poet’s gradual turn to Christianity as a source for spiritual redemption. In “Four Quartets,” Eliot presents his full acceptance of religion, and implements a set of musical metaphors that parallel Dante’s divine music of the spheres in “Paradisio.” As much as music in “Paradisio,” the music in “Four Quartets” is conceptual, and aims to convey a condition of spiritual elevation. Interestingly enough, Eliot extends his religious soundscape in “Four Quartets” towards an interdisciplinary musical approach in his poetical series. Indeed, Eliot implements a dichotomy of statements and counter statements that compares to the sonata musical form in the structuration of “Four Quartets.” As he adopts this musical design through the form of the poem, Eliot gives a poetical form to the ‘still point’ he defines in his poem, and repeatedly illustrates the spiritual condition that determines our connection with God, despite our mortal condition as individuals on earth.

When it comes to Stevens, his use of religious soundscape and musical metaphors share an interesting contrast with Eliot and Dante. As much as the former poets, Stevens implements cacophony and pleasing harmonious musical experiences to poetically deal with the theme of religion. Nevertheless, whereas Eliot adapts Dante’s musical religious analogy to represent Christianity as a spiritual redemptive solution, Stevens turns Dante’s musical religious connotations upside-down, in order to affirm a profane poetic perspective. Indeed, Stevens uses cacophony in poems such as “St. Armorer’s Church from The Outside,” and “The Old Lutheran Bells at Home,” to suggest his skepticism toward traditional religion, and evokes the pleasing music of reality in poems such as “An Ordinary Evening in New Haven,” “The Hand as a Being,” and “Things of August,” to reveal the supreme fiction as a modern spiritual substitute. Furthermore, Stevens’ use of the sonata form in “Petter Quince at the Clavier” parallels his religious auditory soundscape. Yet, unlike Eliot’s spiritual ‘still point’ he develops in “Four Quartets,” Stevens uses the dichotomy of the sonata musical form to poetically represent the interplay between imagination and reality as a substitute for traditional religion.

As both poets moved from a traditional use of soundscape and musical metaphors, towards an interdisciplinary musical approach to poetical writing, Eliot and Stevens illustrate their modernist attitude towards the music of poetry and their assimilation of ‘program music’ in their poetry. In “The Music of Poetry,” Eliot writes: “I would remind you, first, that the music of poetry is not something which exists apart from the meaning, otherwise, we could have poetry of great musical beauty which made no sense, and I have never come across such poetry” (Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* 29). Comparably, Stevens in *The Necessary Angel* formulates the following statement with regards to musical poetry: “I do not know of anything that will appear to have suffered more from the passage of time than the music of poetry and that has suffered less. The deepening need for words to express our thoughts and feelings which, we are sure, are all the truth that we shall ever experience” (Stevens, *The Necessary Angel* 20). From those assertions, we understand that an exclusive consideration to musical structures and forms in a musico poetical interpretation does not go in hand with Eliot’s and Stevens’ notion of musical poetry. Through the analysis displayed in this dissertation, I have attempted to correct the musical approaches previously assumed by critics, who tend to dissociate musical forms and the poetical adaptation of musical techniques, from the thematic dimension of the poems under study. Unlike previous musical oriented studies that treated Eliot’s and Stevens’ use of musical forms in poetry as a mere process of structural and technical analogies, this thesis has demonstrated that music, under its structural and formal manifestations in poetical texts, works in conjunction with ideas of music, soundscape, and musical metaphors to stylistically display Stevens’ and Eliot’s themes.

As much as any research, this thesis opens the door for other areas of investigation. Indeed, complex musical analogies such as the use of polyphony in poetry has not been considered in this dissertation. Although I have attempted to illustrate in the first chapter Eliot’s use of polyphony as a technique of writing in “The Music of Poetry,” the aesthetic

complexity of this musico-poetical connection would require a knowledge in musicology that I do not personally own, and that I prefer to leave for musicologists who are interested in the subject. Nevertheless, it is important to underline that assuming such complex musico poetic connection requires biographical evidences that clearly demonstrate if a given poet is truly aware of such aesthetic possibilities. Indeed, If the adaptation of musical forms and structure in poetry, as illustrated in this thesis, is accessible to any poet who is interested in music and musicology, dealing with complex musicological concepts like polyphony and counterpoints, require a detailed technical knowledge in the subject field. Accordingly, a biographical research is mandatory to clearly determine if a poet has a deep knowledge in musicology.

In some cases, these biographical elements are a matter of evidence. When a poet like Ezra Pound composes symphonies, it is clear that such deep knowledge in music is non questionable. Nevertheless, when a poet like T.S Eliot affirms that: “I think that a poet may gain much from the study of music: how much technical knowledge of musical form is desirable I do not know, for I have not that technical knowledge myself.” (*On Poetry and Poets* 32), engaging into very elaborated and technical analogies between his poetry and music theory may remain an exercise of analogy that the poet may have not even thought about when writing his poems. Once again, I would like to remind the reader that treating those elaborated analogies should not be detached from the thematic dimension of the poems under study. Otherwise, such analysis and criticism would reduce the aesthetic value of the poems to a set of technical analogies with music theory.

Last but not the least, other areas of research may include the musicological analysis of program musical pieces that are based on Eliot’s and Stevens’ poems. If some of Eliot’s and Stevens’ poems are inspired by musical forms, it will be of a considerable interest to determine how composers of program music assimilated the themes of modernist poetry in their music, and how do composers implemented modernist techniques of composition to musically

represent modernist poetical contents. Examples of such compositions include the symphonic adaptation of “The Waste Land” by Anthony Burgess, and Sofia Gubaidulina’s Hommage à T. S. Eliot. What is striking in these compositions is the use of the modernist post tonal system of composition, originally developed by Schubert, to musically represent Eliot’s fragmented style and the sordid depiction of modern reality. When it comes to compositions inspired by Stevens’ poems, the well-known American composer Mohammed Fairouz sets in his fifteen-song cycle “Domination of Darkness”, five of Stevens’ poems into music. Furthermore, the composer George Benjamin captures in his soprano and Orchestra Stevens’ “The Snow Man” in a composition he entitled “A Mind of Winter.” Unlike the explicit fragmented musical textures implemented in compositions inspired by Eliot’s poetry, the program music compositions related to Stevens’ poetry implements post tonality and fragmentation of structure in a more subtle way. The aesthetic difference between both kind of compositions may reveal the thematic contrast between Eliot’s and Stevens’ poetry.

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