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1. A ‘music of imagery as well as sound’: Eliot’s musical poetics

1 The relationship between music and words is most defined in Eliot’s 1942 essay, ‘The Music of Poetry’: ‘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’. He continues to explain that while ‘there are poems in which we are moved by the music and take the sense for granted, just as there are poems in which we attend to the sense and are moved by the music without noticing it’, sense and

sound are two indispensable elements in composing a 'musical poem' (Eliot, Chinitz and Schuchard 2017: 313).

> My purpose here is to insist that 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 that these patterns are indissoluble and one' (Eliot, Chinitz and Schuchard 2017: 316).

2 Eliot's emphasis on the musical properties in poetry could be traced back to the influence of French Symbolists in the late nineteenth century. During his undergraduate years at Harvard, Eliot encountered Jules Laforgue's works while reading Arthur Symons's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*. He was profoundly affected by the French poet's style, technique and expression. The sensuous musical flow, in particular, gave much inspiration to the young Eliot. Some of his poems published in *The Harvard Advocate* had titles that held musical references, 'Nocturne', 'Humoresque' and 'Song'. Later, in his notebook 'Inventions of the March Hare', Eliot continued to draft poems that clearly indicate an interest in the musicality of poetry. There were fragments of 'Preludes', 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', 'Rhapsody of a Windy Night', as well as unpublished verses titled after musical styles, like 'First Caprice in North Cambridge' and 'Suite Clownesque'.

3 Eliot's frequent adoption of epigraphs, as observed by Robert J. Nicolosi, further points to an affinity with the use of a key signature and tempo markings in music: both function to evoke a mood or character of a piece. These early experiments, however, reveal only a 'superficial absorption' of musical qualities. Nicolosi sees them as merely a 'result of interaction between rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, and meaning', and it was not till *The Waste Land* that Eliot started to capture the 'aesthetic content' of music in his poetry (Nicolosi 1980: 196). While Paul Chancellor emphasises how Eliot's symbols in *The Waste Land* offer 'a kind of musicality not heard by the ear', Nicolosi draws attention to its musical *form* rather than content (Chancellor 1969: 24). He argues that 'there is a cyclic recurrence of the principal motive', just as there would be in a sonata or symphony (Nicolosi 1980: 198). This observation is important, for it informs the poet's intention to allow for a 'musical elaboration' in poetry:

> The use of recurrent themes is as natural to poetry as to music. 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, Chinitz and Schuchard 2017: 321).

4 The following sections will explore how Eliot grapples with these possibilities as he refines his technique in rendering a musical poem. Two considerations are of particular relevance: the influence of Beethoven's music, and Schopenhauer's philosophical aesthetics of transcendence. Together they deeply inspired Eliot in writing poetry that surpasses itself; poetry that encapsulates an unconditional reality beyond appearances, expressing a transcendent individual will. What characterises 'Four Quartets' is not solely its musical poetics, but more importantly, its potential in revealing a realm beyond reality through the creation of a musical pattern.

2. To the 'realm of the infinite': Beethoven's absolute music

5 In a letter to Stephen Spender, Eliot meditates on the emotions evoked from Beethoven's music:

> I find it quite inexhaustible to study. There is some 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 (Spender 1966: 54).

6 The interior quality of Beethoven's music fascinates Eliot. In particular, the composer's late string quartets possess a spirituality that speaks to the poet. Beethoven's music, as J. W. N. Sullivan observes, could 'stir other elements in us' and 'reverberate throughout a larger part of our being' (Sullivan 1927: 48-49). His music of spirituality expresses a response to a spiritual revelation in an alternate realm, one that transcends our usual state of consciousness. What characterizes

Beethoven's last quartets is their expression of a 'growth' and 'higher degree of consciousness', a 'revelation of existence'. They offer a portrayal of his inner world, his 'vision of life'. This intimate and private experience further reveals a 'yearning for the unattainable' (Sullivan 1927: 220, 227, 232). The music critic E. T. A. Hoffmann similarly praises the power of Beethoven's music in transporting listeners 'through ever growing climaxes into the spiritual realm of the infinite' (Hoffman 1813: 2) He points to an inherent expressiveness and emotionality in instrumental music to argue that it is a distinctive form of art, because 'its only subject is the infinite'. Instrumental music is unique for it can unlock an unknown world for mankind, allowing us to 'surrender to an inexpressible longing' (Hoffman 1813: 1). For this reason, Beethoven's music is exceptional: springing from a spiritual context, his music is the portal that opens us to this transcendental realm. It evokes complex emotions of 'fear, awe, horror and pain' mingled with 'love, hope, joy', awakening an 'eternal longing' (Hoffman 1813: 1). The structure of the movements further heightens a unified experience. Although the passages are short, consisting only of two or three measures and are distributed among various instruments, the music nevertheless communicates 'a sense of the whole', ultimately achieving '*one* single mood' (Hoffman 1813: 2).

7 This inner essence which 'consumes but does not destroy' in Beethoven's music resonates strongly with Eliot (Hoffman 1813: 1). In the musical form of Beethoven's last quartets, Eliot finds expression for an inner journey of 'reconciliation and relief after immense suffering'. As Howarth notes (1957: 324), in around 1933, Eliot felt that he had 'passed through severe difficulties, through a state like illness, that demanded a confrontation with himself at the profoundest level'. The interior quality of Beethoven's music offers an inspiration for Eliot to examine and record this personal experience through poetry. 'To be willing to suffer in order to create… to realize that one's creation necessitates one's suffering, that suffering is one of the greatest of God's gifts, is almost to reach a mystical solution' (Sullivan 1927: 229). The way the music is written, and how Beethoven connects instrumentation and the inner structure of movements to create unity, also provides insights into Eliot's aspiration in communicating wholeness through fragmentation. In 'The Metaphysical Poets', he writes, 'When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amal-

gamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary… in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.' (Eliot 1932: 287) Eliot's belief to shore fragments against ruins certainly runs deep in his poetic oeuvre, but in the artistic works of Beethoven Eliot discovers a novel rendition. In 'Four Quartets', he experiments with fusing musical elements with poetry to create a coherent whole. This attempt will be discussed in further detail, when we move on to explore Eliot's development of a musical pattern. It is more important at this point to turn to how Beethoven's absolute music influences Eliot's expression of the will, a conception that greatly intrigues the poet.

3. The 'innermost essence of all things': Schopenhauer's will

8 In one of his Clark Lectures in 1926, Eliot remarks on the German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer's conception of the annihilation of the will:

> It is noticeable how often the words '*inconscient*' [unconscious], '*néant*' [nothingness], '*L'absolu*' [absolute] and such philosophical terms from the vocabulary of Schopenhauer and Hartmann… recur. Laforgue is the nearest verse equivalent to the philosophies of Schopenhauer and Hartmann, the philosophy of the unconscious and of annihilation […] (Eliot 1993: 215)

9 For Eliot, Schopenhauer's aesthetics sheds light on the insufferable human condition and the possibility for transcendence. Published in 1818, the philosopher's *The World as Will and Representation* characterizes the world as 'will' – a mindless, foundational impulse of our instinctual drives that is devoid of rationality or intellect. It is the 'thing in itself', the 'innermost essence of all things' and by no means a representation (Schopenhauer 2010: 135, 136). The world is constituted by objectifications of the will, which manifest into a set of universal objects or Platonic Ideas. The individuation of the will causes its fragmentation, resulting in a world of constant suffering for human beings. Schopenhauer believes that this struggle is created by the imposition of an individual will which imprisons itself in a perpetual

cycle of suffering, desire and pain. As individuals, we are the 'anguished products of our own epistemological making'; with our desire to know everything, we create a world that 'feasts nightmarishly upon itself', and are frustrated with wanting more than we can ever have (Wicks 2021). Only through an aesthetic perception can the individual will be liberated. Through an appreciation of art, knowledge of the eternal and universal could be acquired. In the state of aesthetic perception, the universalistic quality of the experience allows for a transcendence of the individual towards the universal will, a consciousness that is painless and timeless. Works of art that are created in this state of pure perception are capable in communicating Platonic Ideas – the essence of things. For Schopenhauer, music in particular possesses a distinctive quality and reigns superior to visual arts and literature: it directly represents the universal will, which is the 'innermost, the kernel of every individual thing and likewise of the whole' (Schopenhauer 2010: 135). He finds a strong correspondence between the structure of music and that of the physical world, asserting that music is a '*copy of the will itself*' (Schopenhauer 2010: 285, emphasis in original).

10 The proposed impersonal universality of music speaks to Eliot's desire 'to escape individual existence' and 'the condition of personal emotion and suffering', which is consistent with his early poetic theory of impersonality (Virkar-Yates 2017: 82). In 'Tradition and Individual Talent' (1919), Eliot states that instead of an expression of personality, poetry is an escape from it; that 'the emotion of art is impersonal' (Eliot 1999: 22). The 'business of the poet is not to find new emotions', but to combine 'ordinary' feelings to create a 'new art emotion' in poetry. Rather than recollecting personal experiences or emotion, the poet must concentrate in 'tranquillity' so that his work is created out of a 'passive attending' (Eliot 1999: 43). His theory of impersonality is resonant with Schopenhauer's claim that with less individuation and objectification of the will, more peaceful states of consciousness can be obtained, in particular through aesthetic perception.

11 This metaphysical quality is specifically reflected in the idea of 'absolute music', a term that gained prominence in the early nineteenth-century. It is music that is non-programmatic and non-representational, placing an emphasis on its experience as an art

form. Hoffman's critical interpretation of Beethoven's music, as discussed, prefigured later theories of 'absolute music'. The value of pure music, however, drew conflicting voices amongst music critics. Eduard Hanslick argued that the beauty of music lies in its pure sound and form, not in any extra-musical elements. Unsurprisingly, Richard Wagner strongly opposed the view of absolute music, claiming that words could enhance the experience of music, especially when the latter reaches its limit. For the purpose of the current analysis on Eliot's aesthetics, it matters less what constitutes the highest form of music than the insights the term 'absolute music' offers to the poet. In Schopenhauer's musical aesthetic of the manifestation of the will, the transcendent nature of Beethoven's music makes it a revelation, articulating a condition that is 'beyond the human and material' (Virkar-Yates 2017: 82). This conception has important implications for Eliot to convey poetry as 'transparent' – as 'essentially poetry' (Matthiessen 1947: 90). For Eliot, to create poetry in its 'bare bones', akin to the condition of absolute music, is vital in expressing and liberating the inner essence of the individual will. To transcend to an unknown realm and see the world 'as it is', the poet must, like Beethoven, evoke inarticulate emotions.

4. Eliot's musical pattern: An approach to la poésie pure

12 'What matters, in short, is the whole poem: and if the whole poem need not be, and often should not be, wholly melodious, it follows that a poem is not made only out of "beautiful words"' (Eliot, Chinitz and Schuchard 2017: 316). For Eliot, the limitations imposed by semantics can be liberated from devising a musical pattern, so that a poem is composed of both sound and sense. In 'Burnt Norton',

> Words, after speech, reach
> Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,
> Can words or music reach
> The stillness. (Eliot 1963: 194)

13 By manipulating words to form allusive images with emotions of varying intensities throughout the quartets, Eliot's 'musical pattern'

frames and amplifies the two musical properties in poetry: the sense of rhythm and structure. Literally, his pattern examines how words could be infused with musicality to invoke an auditory imagination; metaphorically, it alludes to the desire to assuage the pain of the individual will through reaching timelessness with the universal will. With recurrent themes which come 'as natural to poetry as to music' (Eliot, Chinitz and Schuchard 2017: 321), the subject-matter and the style blend together to form an increasing consciousness of language, reaching towards the 'theoretical goal of *la poésie pure*' (Eliot 1949: 339). Achieving this goal, however, is not Eliot's intention in 'Four Quartets'. Rather, he aims to *approach* closest to pure poetry by mingling musicality, so that a musical experience of poetry could be achieved.

14 To recognise a melody – in other words, to hear music – it is necessary to perceive sounds as 'having a certain shape or form' with imagination (Warnock 1976: 50). Hence to infuse music in poetry, a certain form must be given to language to evoke auditory imagination. Eliot must dislocate language to elevate 'an allusiveness which is in the nature of words' – to highlight the 'secondary meanings' of words and create strong allusions (Warnock 1976: 50). With imagery swirling repeatedly throughout the four poems in 'Four Quartets', the allusive echoing incantations successfully convey a rhythm that is 'penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling' (Matthiessen 1947: 81).

15 The fragmented imagery of the rose-garden and the yew-tree appears several times, constantly stirring in movement in a rhythm of sound. Representing unrealised, illusory experiences and desires, the rose-garden symbolises that which might or could have been: it is 'Down the passage which we did not take', 'Towards the door we never opened' and 'Through the unknown, remembered gate'; the laughter in the garden that echoes ecstasy is an illusion, for it is 'unheard music' that signals 'the agony | Of death and birth' (Eliot 1963: 180, 190, 201, 222). The yew-tree, whose chill fingers are 'curled | Down on us', points to the direction of a realm beyond death. It is the 'next' world after mortality that is 'Not too far', reminding us that our existence is ephemeral and 'temporal' – for at 'the moment of the yew-tree', we are 'born with the dead' (Eliot 1963: 194, 213, 222).

16 Receded in the background of the poetic experience is also the emphasis on time: the imagery of dust and shafts of sunlight connote suspense and a sense of temporality. It is the time moving and unmoving, the still-point of timelessness, 'between un-being and being'; it is the unattended 'Moment, the moment in and out of time', and 'Marks the place where a story ended' (Eliot 1963: 195, 212-213, 216). The most allusive image of all, however, is the bird that appears at the beginning and returns again at the end of the quartets: it captures the crux of the poem by heightening the consciousness of time present. With a sense of urgency, the bird ventures to be our guide:

> 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. (Eliot 1963: 222)

17 It then returns at the end of 'Little Gidding': 'Quick now, here, now, always'. The focus on 'here' and 'now' is familiar, for it implies the 'present': the same destination towards which we have been led by the bird and by Eliot throughout the whole musical experience of the quartets. It is a consciousness of time present that exists beyond time, for

> Time past and time future
> Allow but a little consciousness.
> To be conscious is not to be in time (Eliot 1963: 221)

18 The quartets depict a cyclical journey in which the beginning mirrors the end and vice versa, for 'to make an end is to make a beginning' (Eliot 1963: 221). With a recurring movement of language, an incantatory semantic rhythm is produced: it embodies 'an acute feeling both for the music of words, and for their richly varied connotations' (Matthiessen 1947: 82).

19 In his lectures on metaphysical poetry, Eliot centres on the significance of fusing sense with thought: the purpose of poetry is to draw out 'feelings and sense' that have 'existed only in thought' and make them 'more conscious and precise', so to resonate with readers' own experiences (Eliot 1993: 50). Such feelings in thought are no doubt

paramount to Eliot: to express ineffable and abstract emotions had always been his main aim in poetry, yet undoubtedly also his biggest struggle in writing. His musical pattern demonstrates the continuity of this aspiration. Following Beethoven's structure of a string quartet that consists of movements conveying various emotions that 'radiate' from a 'central experience' (Sullivan 113), Eliot realises that 'a rhythm of fluctuating emotion [is] essential to the musical structure of the whole'. Emotions of 'greater and less intensity' must be expressed in various parts of the poem, simulating not only the melodious, but also the dissonant and cacophonous sounds. The poem must further take on different voices to create a musical rhythm, such that passages of less intensity should be 'prosaic' (Eliot, Chinitz and Schuchard 2017: 315).

20 Like an *allegro* movement, 'Burnt Norton' opens with a brisk and fast pace. The bird hurries us to enter the bright and colourful scenery of shrubbery, flowers, pool, and sunlight; the feeling of being alive is heightened with the 'vibrant air', 'heart of light' and children's laughter (Eliot 1963:190). The excitement ceases, however, in the second part; with longer and incantatory lines, the poem takes on the slow and expressive movement of *adagio*:

> At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh or fleshless;
> Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
> But neither arrest nor movement…
> 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. (Eliot 1963: 191)

21 With repetitions of the words 'neither', 'still point' and 'the dance', the poem gradually slows to stillness. The quieter and meditative tone continues and moves on to Part III, marking a stark contrast with the earlier animated pace. It arrives at an in-between state, one that echoes in the third part of each quartet: dislocated, it is 'a place of disaffection… With slow rotation', 'The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant into the vacant', 'between the hither and the farther shore'; suspended in time, it is 'time before and time after', 'the moment which is not of action or inaction' (Eliot 1963: 192, 199, 211). This limbo, indifferent condition of pensive thoughts gives space for introspec-

tion, a 'way down' that 'Descend[s] lower, descend only | Into the world of perpetual solitude', triggering deep emotions in the inner core of our being – our individual will (Eliot 1963: 193).

22 Comparatively shorter in length, the fourth part of each poem paints religious images that explore mental states of cultivating faith and redemption. After awakening us from our individual will, the rhythm picks its pace up again and pulls us out from our deep inner world towards the spiritual. Moving away from the previously long and incantatory lines, the fourth part employs short and often rhyming lines, recalling an *alla marcia* movement. For example in 'Burnt Norton', 'Time and the bell have buried the day | The black cloud carries the sun away' (Eliot 1963: 193); and in 'Little Gidding',

> The dove descending breaks the air
> With flame of incandescent terror
> Of which the tongues declare. (Eliot 1963: 221)

23 Both poems depict a journey, a movement which signals a change in the individual will. Finally, the last part of each poem points to a reference of word and music, with emotions pushed to their highest intensity. Approaching the end of a poetic experience that seeks for a path towards an unworldly world, Eliot expresses complex sentiments of desperation:

> We die with the dying:
> See, they depart, and we go with them.
> We are born with the dead:
> See, they return, and bring us with them.

24 However, a hint of determination and faith is instilled in the expressed poignancy:

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time. (Eliot 1963: 222)

25 It is the ultimate emotion that Eliot, throughout his poetic oeuvre, desires to articulate: the difficulty in a continuance to cultivate and

keep faith despite experiencing the inevitable anguish and disheartenment that comes with the journey of life. It is embedded in Prufrock's 'overwhelming question' of the worthiness of suffering in life; Gerontion's 'Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season'; the haunting 'dry sterile thunder without rain' in *The Waste Land*; and 'The hope only | Of empty men' in 'The Hollow Men' (Eliot 1963: 13, 41, 76, 91).

26 What characterizes 'Four Quartets' from the poet's earlier pursuits, however, is how it evokes inarticulate emotions by adopting a distinctive musical pattern. With music weaved unconsciously in its undertone, it offers glimpses of possibilities in achieving a 'compromise' with life's sufferings: it actively seeks to arrive at a timeless still-point, where a higher human consciousness reaches a new kind of awareness – one that possesses a revelation of existence in a realm beyond reality, allowing us to see things *as they are* by surrendering the individual to the universal will. Music, in 'Four Quartets', is the gateway to the still-point. Symbolic of the inner essence of the universal will, it is the state in which poetry must be 'so transparent that we should not see the poetry, but that which we are meant to see through the poetry'; it must arrive to be 'essentially poetry' (Matthiessen 1947: 90).

27 Such possibility has, however, proved to be unrealised: the condition of timelessness is never attained, and the destination towards which the bird points is never reached. Rather, at the end of the poem we find ourselves back in the rose-garden, the same place 'where we started' at the beginning of the poem. It is a place that exists within the realm of time because 'only in time can the moment in the rose-garden… Be remembered'; it is 'involved with past and future' (Eliot 1963: 222, 192). Unable to follow the bird out of the garden, we have not arrived at the still-point where time is timeless. The individual will is always bound by time. In the same manner, it is impossible for poetry to be *la poésie pure*, for it is constantly bound by words and language that limit a subjective consciousness. (Eliot 1957: 87). For Eliot, while an 'increasing self-consciousness of language' is necessary for pure poetry, 'Words strain, | Crack and sometimes break' (Eliot 1949: 339; Eliot 1963: 194). They 'will not stay in place, | Will not stay still'. (Eliot 1963: 194) The subject matter, represented by words, is an 'impurity' that poetry must preserve in order to *be* poetry. Rather

acting as an '*end*', the sense of the subject matter is an important '*means*' of the poem. (Eliot 1949: 339).

28 A return to the beginning, therefore, is crucial for the poem. Language must 'perpetually depart and return upon itself; but without the departure there is no return and the returning is as important as the arrival' (Ricks and McCue 2015: 1041). An experience of a musical poem must depart and return to itself in order to evoke a state of pure poetry, one that represents the transcendent consciousness of the individual will. This timeless still-point, however, cannot and in fact, should never be achieved: 'We can never emulate music, because to arrive at the condition of music would be the annihilation of poetry' (Eliot, Brooker and Schuchard 2019: 87). Poetry must 'retain its vitality' through words; the individual will must also impose its blind, striving energy, which in actuality constitutes its own essence (Ricks and McCue 2015: 1041). For a poet to 'work too closely to musical analogies' would result in 'an effect of artificiality' (Eliot, Chinitz and Schuchard 2017: 321); for the individual will to arrive at the realm of the universal is to simultaneously destruct a sense of being, approaching death:

> You can receive this: "on whatever sphere of being
> The mind of man may be intent
> At the time of death" – that is the one action
> (And the time of death is every moment)
> Which shall fructify in the lives of others:
> And do not think of the fruit of action. (Eliot 1963: 211)

29 This cyclical journey that promises salvation yet also anticipates destruction is not unique to 'Four Quartets'. Maud Ellmann observes that 'The Waste Land' is haunted by a 'continual extinction' of the self; its 'nervous efforts to reconstitute the face only drive it to its disappearance' (Ellmann 1987: 109). B. Rajan likewise notes how the poem contemplates annihilation as 'the passage to a fuller and higher existence' (Rajan 1974: 12). From 'A Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', John Mayer discerns a 'mirror of our yearning troubled selves' in the poem's protagonist. He quotes from Harold Bloom to highlight the paradox of Prufrock's quest to 'widen consciousness as well as to intensify it', but is 'shadowed by a spirit that tends to narrow consciousness to an acute preoccupation with self' (Mayer 1989: 16). May

it be the individual will or the self, liberation seems to be always conditioned by annihilation.

30 What is central to 'Four Quartets', however, is not whether the will succeeds in attaining the absolute. Eliot's intention lies in expressing the experience, the quest itself. Through the poem's journey of departing and returning, the individual will 'shall be enriched', and from it acquire a 'wisdom' that is not a 'conclusion', but a transcendence of itself: 'For the point to which we return should be the same, but somehow is not, but is a higher stage of reality'. (Ricks and McCue 2015: 1042) In 'The Dry Salvages', 'You are not the same people who left that station | Or who will arrive at any terminus' (Eliot 1963: 210). Liberation of the individual will does not lie in its voyage or transformation to the universal, but in its own self-discovery process. As the didactic voice in the third part of 'The Dry Salvages' remarks,

> 'Fare forward, you who think that you are voyaging;
> You are not those who saw the harbour
> Receding, or those who will disembark.
> Here between the hither and the farther shore
> While time is withdrawn, consider the future
> And the past with an equal mind. (Eliot 1963: 210-211)

31 The timeless realm of the universal will can never be fully realized, for its pure, ethereal state renders it impossible to be grasped in reality. It can only be momentarily obtained in the musical experience of poetry, through sounds of 'unheard music' and 'hidden' laughter (Eliot 1963: 190); it can only be observed from a distance, 'If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close, | On a summer midnight, you can hear the music' (Eliot 1963: 196). At these 'moments of great intensity' which 'only music can express', the experience of the poem brings one closest to the 'border' of the absolute (Eliot, Brooker and Schuchard 2019: 87).

5. A Continuous Search

32 For Eliot, 'the task of the poet will differ, not only according to his personal constitution, but according to the period in which he finds himself' (Eliot, Chinitz and Schuchard 2017: 318). Despite taking on different forms, musicality continues to be discerned in his later

works, such as in dramatic verses in the theatrical plays *The Cocktail party* and *The Confidential Clerk*. The journey is on-going: it marks a continuation in our sense of self. 'Four Quartets' lays out Eliot's aspiration in communicating an experience of the absolute, one that can only be achieved by combining poetry and musicality. It not only demonstrates his dedication and passion in exploring the potential of poetry, but also echoes Schopenhauer's philosophic aesthetics in presenting a determination in the individual will to transcend itself. The interior quality of Beethoven's music gives inspiration to Eliot in expressing poetry in its purest state, albeit the constraints imposed by language. Yet, it is perhaps precisely this tension that makes the poetic experience of 'Four Quartets' profoundly resonant with the individual will's quest in transcendence. The purpose is not about creating poetry that emulates music, just as the aim of the individual will is not to arrive at a timeless, other-worldly realm. Rather, the meaning is inherent in the journey towards the absolute. It lies in the heart of the effort, the perseverance, and the courage to return to where one started. The significance lies in the enriched knowledge that is gained through the experience, so that when the individual will returns to the rose-garden, through the 'unknown' but simultaneously 'remembered' gate, it will look at the same world with fresh perspectives, as if it is 'the first time'. While this return to the beginning is familiar, it is not the same: having gone on its own cyclical journey, the individual will arrives at an in-between realm that stretches '[b]etween two waves of the sea' (Eliot 1963: 222). Despite not having transcended to the universal, its experience has changed its state. This 'exploration' in life, captured most movingly in the last lines of 'The Dry Salvages', is a continuous strong-willed search for faith:

> For most of us, this is the aim
> Never here to be realised;
> Who are only undefeated
> Because we have gone on trying;
> We, are content at the last
> If our temporal reversion nourish
> (Not too far from the yew-tree)
> The life of significant soil. (Eliot 1963: 213)

33 Walter Pater proclaims, '*all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music*' (Pater 1998: 86; original emphasis). In a similar vein, to find meaning in suffering, the individual will is always aspiring towards the condition of the universal will, just as the self is continuously seeking to break from its own preoccupation. 'Four Quartets' might not have succeeded in exposing poetry in its most bare form, nor arrived at the condition of music, but it most certainly strives to be more than poetry. With its musical pattern, it presents a compelling experience that elucidates the truth of life: it is a constant 'conscious loss of belief and the search for it' (Eliot 1933: 293), and in this never-ending quest, we gain insights that enrich our perspectives, which keep us going.

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1 T. S. Eliot, J. S. Brooker, and Ronald Schuchard, 'On Poetry and Drama', in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Still and Still Moving, 1954-1965* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019), pp. 14-19 (p. 16). Trad C.Guéron.

English

It is true that a great piece of music expresses to us something that words cannot express, and which therefore we cannot explain in words; it is true that music in its own way enlarges our range of emotion. But the moment a poet sacrifices sense to sound he ceases to write poetry (Eliot, Brooker and Schuchard 2019: 16). T. S. Eliot.

Underlying the 'Four Quartets', arguably one of Eliot's masterpieces, is a desperate search and expression for the real essence of life: one that encompasses an inarticulate, universalised emotion to transcend the individual will. A metaphysical poem, 'Four Quartets' is a clear allusion to Eliot's desire in achieving a universal will that stretches beyond life and the external reality to reach the realm of a timeless still-point. Aiming to write poetry that could 'get beyond poetry' – get beyond life – Eliot's experimenta-

tion in threading music and poetry together elucidates the importance of musicality in poetry (Matthiessen 1947: 90). With its power to evoke a 'world unconscious' to reveal the absolute, music gives form and pushes poetry beyond the limitations posed by the semantics of words (Virkar-Yates 2017: 82). This article examines Eliot's musical pattern of uniting sound and sense in 'Four Quartets' to argue that a musical experience of poetry could transcend time: in exposing both poetry and life 'naked in their bare bones', Eliot aspires towards a state of absolute harmony in surrendering the individual to the universal will (Matthiessen 1947: 90).

Français

Il est vrai qu'une grande œuvre musicale exprime quelque chose que les mots sont incapables d'exprimer, et que l'on ne peut donc pas expliquer à l'aide de mots ; il est vrai qu'à sa manière, la musique élargit le spectre de nos émotions. Mais dès qu'un poète sacrifie le sens au son, il cesse d'écrire de la poésie.[1] T. S. Eliot.

Cet article étudie la musicalité du chef-d'œuvre de T.S. Eliot, « Quatre quatuors ». Inspiré par Schopenhauer et Beethoven, Eliot présente une expérience poétique musicale qui exprime une émotion indicible mais universelle, et qui transcende la volonté individuelle. La musique, avec son pouvoir d'évoquer un « inconscient du monde » qui renvoie à un absolu, est vecteur de forme et pousse la poésie au-delà des limites imposées par la sémantique des mots. À propos de la qualité intérieure des quatuors de Beethoven, Eliot affirme : « J'aimerais parvenir à reproduire cette sonorité-là dans mes vers avant de mourir ». La nature transcendantale de la musique de Beethoven résonne fortement avec l'esthétique musicale de l'absolu formulée par Schopenhauer : avec son potentiel de libération de la volonté individuelle, la musique peut communiquer l'essence interne de l'émotion et le monde tel qu'il est. En manipulant les mots pour former des images évocatrices d'émotions de différentes intensités à travers ses « quatuors », le « schéma musical » d'Eliot encadre et amplifie les deux propriétés musicales de la poésie que sont la structure et le rythme. Au sens propre, son schéma permet d'étudier la façon dont les mots peuvent se charger d'une musicalité propre à susciter l'imagination auditive ; au sens métaphorique, il évoque le désir de soulager la douleur de la volonté individuelle en atteignant la dimension atemporelle de la volonté universelle.

Mots-clés

poétique musicale, volonté, transcendance, musique absolue, atemporalité

Keywords

musical poetics, will, transcendence, absolute music, timeless

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