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T. S. Eliot and Music: An Introduction

ROBERT J. NICOLOSI

WITH characteristic bluntness, Ezra Pound once proclaimed: "Poets who will not study music are defective."[1] Indeed, since the late nineteenth-century French Symbolists experimented with the musical properties of language (inspired mainly by the works of Edgar Allan Poe), no modern poet has been able to ignore the close affinity that exists between these two arts. Through various syntactic peculiarities, the Symbolists aimed for a sensuous musical flow in their poetry, often at the expense of meaning. It is well known that T. S. Eliot's debt to these poets, particularly Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Laforgue, was enormous. In his much-quoted monograph, *The Music of Poetry* (1942), Eliot clarified his own position in the matter: ". . . 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."[2] What Eliot called the "incantatory element" (specifically with reference to Poe's works) is, however, often responsible for heightening our awareness of the *style* of the poem, while the subject matter or "story" is often of lesser consequence.[3] Eliot acknowledges that "we can be deeply stirred by hearing the recitation of a poem in a lan-

I would like to acknowledge the financial support from the Research Grants Committee of The University of Alabama for this project, No. 987.

[1] Quoted in *Ezra Pound and Music: The Complete Criticism*, ed. R. Murray Schafer (New York, 1977), p. 6.

[2] In *On Poetry and Poets* (New York, 1957; reprint, New York, 1961), p. 21.

[3] "From Poe to Valéry" (1948) in *To Criticize the Critic* (New York, 1965), pp. 38-39.

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guage of which we understand no word; but if we are then told that the poem is gibberish and has no meaning, we shall consider that we have been deluded — this was no poem, it was merely an imitation of instrumental music."[4]

If Walter Pater was correct when he wrote that "all art constantly aspires toward the condition of music," then poetry, to be as pure and direct as absolute music, would have to renounce any explicit externalization of abstract ideas in favor of only the suggestive and sonorous quality of language. Eliot does not believe this to be a desirable goal, because "poetry is only poetry so long as it preserves some 'impurity' in this sense: that is to say, so long as the subject matter is valued for its own sake."[5]

Like the Symbolists, Eliot felt it unnecessary for a poem to be too explicit in describing an emotion. Instead, feelings should be aroused or evoked by means of an "objective correlative" — Eliot's term for "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion" (*Hamlet*, 1919). This concept, though somewhat vague and imprecise, calls to mind the eighteenth-century musical system known as *Affektenlehre*, whereby music was considered an oratorical art capable of arousing certain emotions through structural and stylistic formulas. Insofar as Eliot's notion implies a subjective detachment on the part of the poet, his theory might also be compared to the "new objectivity" prevalent in much twentieth-century art that calls for a return to Apollonian principles.

For Eliot, the emotions derived from a certain pattern of words often took the form of quotations from or allusions to earlier literary masterworks from a wide variety of sources. These quotations took on a personal meaning for the poet, and the feelings they conjure up are subsequently pondered throughout the poem. In this way, "time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future" — to borrow from the opening of Eliot's *Four Quartets*. Eliot is aware that such borrowings may affect the reader's comprehension of the poem: " . . . the meaning of a poem may be something larger than its author's conscious purpose, and something remote from its origins . . .; the author may have been writing [of] some peculiar personal experience, which he saw quite unrelated to anything outside; yet for

[4] "The Music of Poetry," in *On Poetry and Poets*, p. 22.
[5] "From Poe to Valéry" p. 39.

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the reader the poem may become the expression of a general situation, as well as some private experience of his own."[6] This situation is not unlike that found in some of the music of Ives, Stravinsky, Copland, Crumb, Rochberg, and others who quote or allude to other composers' music. The opening motive of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, in the "Alcotts" movement of Ives's *Concord* Sonata, the allusions to Bach, Pergolesi, and others in Stravinsky's neo-Classic music, and the "Tristan" quotation in Berg's *Lyric Suite* are only a few parallels. The significance of these particular quotations may affect the listener quite differently from what was intended by the composers, for no doubt there is some autobiographical significance in such quotations. But in the best art they will transcend their original purposes. Ralph Waldo Emerson knew the value of a well-chosen quotation when he wrote: "We are as much informed of a writer's genius by what he selects as by what he originates. We read the quotation with his eyes, and find a new and fervent sense; as a passage from one of the poets, well recited, borrows new interest from the rendering."[7]

T. S. Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1888 of transplanted New England stock. It is entirely possible that the thriving musical atmosphere of St. Louis in the 1890s and early 1900s provided him with his first important knowledge of music. Henry Ware Eliot, his father, was a prosperous businessman who, in his younger days, belonged to the city's Philharmonic and Choral Societies. Eliot's mother was a social worker and feminist with some ability as a poet. One of her poems, "A Musical Reverie," recalls the musical practice of placing tempo indications before each "movement" of the poem.[8] While Eliot never employed this device himself, he was fond of placing epigraphs, usually in a foreign language, at the beginning of his poems. Their function is often similar to a composer's use of a key signature and tempo markings to suggest the mood or character of a piece.[9]

In 1906, Eliot entered Harvard and while an undergraduate read

[6] "The Music of Poetry" pp. 22-23.

[7] "Quotation and Originality" in *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Centenary Edition, Vol. VIII: *Letters and Social Aims* (Boston and New York, 1903), p. 194.

[8] This poem is briefly discussed in Herbert Howarth, *Notes on Some Figures Behind T. S. Eliot* (Boston, 1964; London, 1965), pp. 29-30.

[9] Harold E. Cook, "A Search for an Ideal: An Interpretation of T. S. Eliot's 'Marina,'" *Bucknell Review*, V/1 (December, 1954), 35.

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Arthur Symons' *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), a book that profoundly influenced him. One of his classmates, who remained a lifelong friend, was Conrad Aiken, who also influenced him, chiefly with respect to music. Several of the early poems that Eliot wrote before 1920 have titles that suggest short musical genres: "Nocturne," "Humoresque," and "Song," some of which were published in *The Harvard Advocate*. The years 1910-11 saw the completion of the first two *Preludes, Rhapsody on a Windy Night,* and the first part of *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. The most "musical" of the early poems, with respect to symbolism and metrical effects, is *Portrait of a Lady*, completed in 1910. There are several references or analogies to music in this poem, the most famous being a satirical depiction of a recital of Chopin's Preludes and the lady's reaction to them. The poet, however, hears a different sort of music — one full of the anguish and embarrassment he feels for the lady and her "buried life":

> Among the windings 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."[10]

These lines reveal the extent to which Eliot had already begun to liberate poetic meters from nineteenth-century strictures. They might even be said to resemble the syncopated ragtime rhythms of popular songs of the day.[11] In addition, Eliot's very choice of instruments in these lines — violins, cornets, and tom-tom — does not suggest the lushness of late nineteenth-century orchestration, but a more modern, astringent sonority anticipating the instrumentation of a work such as Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du Soldat*. Stephen Spender has also suggested that the tom-tom "is an early example of the savage and the jungle which Eliot senses ever more insistently under the mask of so-called civilization."[12]

[10] From "Portrait of a Lady" in *Collected Poems 1909 - 1962* by T. S. Eliot, copyright 1936, by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc.; copyright © 1963, 1964, by T. S. Eliot. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

[11] Eliot was to capture the essence of these so-called "jazz rhythms" in *Prufrock, The Waste Land*, and especially in *Sweeney Agonistes*. See Morris Freedman, "Jazz Rhythms and T. S. Eliot," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, LI (1952), 419-35.

[12] Stephen Spender, *T. S. Eliot* (New York, 1976), p. 39.

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Compared to the later poetry and plays, these early poems reveal only a superficial absorption of musical techniques in which "musical style" is merely the result of interaction between rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, and meaning. The next phase of Eliot's development was launched when he began to comprehend the possibilities of adapting musical forms to extended poems. Musical allusions and contemporary speech and song rhythms continue to permeate his poetry, but beginning with *The Waste Land* one can also detect the aesthetic content of the sonata cycle or the single-movement "sonata-allegro." There has been much critical recognition of this influence by Eliot scholars; one may read studies claiming either structural or thematic similarities with Beethoven's piano sonatas (e.g. *Murder in the Cathedral*) and late string quartets (*Ash-Wednesday, Four Quartets*), Wagner's operas, Strauss's tone poems, a Stravinsky ballet (*The Waste Land*), and even a medieval rondeau by Machaut (*East Coker*). Not surprisingly, the most scholarly attention has been lavished on *Four Quartets* because of Eliot's avowed passion for Beethoven's late quartets, especially Opus 132.[13]

For the purposes of this essay, I would like to focus on an article by Paul Chancellor entitled "The Music of *The Waste Land*"[14] and add some thoughts of my own on another source of musical influence on this poem.

Thematically, *The Waste Land* belongs to Eliot's early period, when he was still occupied (as in *Prufrock*) with aspects of cultural and moral decay in modern society. He had settled in London in 1914, hoping to find a stronger sense of tradition than existed in America, but London, too, was contaminated by a spiritual drought and proved to be an "Unreal City." The complexities of urban living are projected in the poem by an elliptical and fragmented style and a technique, foreshadowed by James Joyce, which Eliot called the "mythical method" in which the message is transmitted in terms of a myth designed to provide "a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity." Yet, like many great works of art, this poem may be appreciated on several levels, not the least of which is the

[13] See Howarth, *Notes*, pp. 277 ff. For an annotated bibliography of books and articles (1916-65) in English, see Mildred Martin, *A Half-Century of Eliot Criticism* (Lewisburg, Pa., 1972). A recent study concerned with Eliot's "theoretical metaphor of music" is by Keith Alldritt, *Eliot's "Four Quartets": Poetry as Chamber Music* (London, 1978).

[14] In *Comparative Literature Studies*, VI (1969), 21-32. (Page references in the text refer to this article.)

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musical or emotional. Edmund Wilson pointed out in one of the earliest and most perceptive reviews of *The Waste Land* that "the very images and the sound of the words — even when we do not know precisely why he has chosen them — are charged with a strange poignancy which seems to bring us into the heart of the singer."[15]

Paul Chancellor poses the interesting notion that Eliot's use of symbols in *The Waste Land* "give[s] the poem a kind of musicality not heard by the ear." Basing his theory on some key passages in *The Music of Poetry,* Chancellor argues that the poem arrives at what Eliot called "a musical pattern of the secondary meaning of the words." Literary allusions and mythical symbols might operate similarly to Wagnerian leitmotifs, and the various symbols reduce the necessity for lengthy first-person connective material. "What is retained," says Chancellor, "is something closer to the pure, self-sufficient stuff of poetry — something closer to the nature of music and musical structure" (p. 29). If we disregard the five sections of the poem and consider it as a whole, Chancellor sees *The Waste Land* as "a symphonic poem in sonata form using the chief symbols as its themes, and with a declaiming voice woven with it, partly to supply related but dissonant leitmotifs" (p. 30). Furthermore, we are not to consider the poem as being inspired by chamber music, say the late quartets of Beethoven (as in *Four Quartets*), since "*The Waste Land* is not poised and meditative like chamber music [but] declamatory and dramatic." Rather, Chancellor says, the poem is program music. Comparisons with Beethoven, he adds, should be ruled out since "Eliot's sensibility as it is felt in *The Waste Land* is not Beethoven's — early, middle, or late. It is as distinctly a twentieth-century sensibility as Stravinsky's or Schoenberg's and, in 1922 at least, as new and startling " (p. 29).

While Chancellor admits that only "tentative acceptance of such an analogy may be useful as a 'musical' approach to the meaning of the poem," I would like to point out some problems and offer some alternatives to his theory. To begin with, while the parallel with sonata form has its merits, the fact remains that there is still no direct poetic equivalent for such devices as key relationships, modulation, and counterpoint which are so vital in sonata form. When these

[15] Edmund Wilson, Jr., "The Poetry of Drouth," *The Dial,* LXXIII (July-December, 1922), 616.

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terms are sometimes used to describe a poem, their meanings, of necessity, must be radically modified. Chancellor also seems to confuse musical form with musical content when he disavows any Beethoven influence in *The Waste Land.* No one can be sure of Eliot's model, if he had one, but he could very well have based his poem on Beethoven's *forms* without necessarily adopting the composer's "sensibility." It may be somewhat more plausible to accept the five divisions in the poem at face value and compare them to a musical theme and variations form. However, as Calvin Brown reminds us, "such a procedure would be a normal tendency in poetry [and] we cannot with any certainty attribute it to musical influence."[16] Another possibility is to consider the five sections of *The Waste Land* as movements of a sonata or symphony (say, Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*) in which there is a cyclic recurrence of the principal motive. Here the parallel with music would depend less on the elaborate structural details of sonata-allegro and coincide more with the changes in mood, tempo, or meter in a symphony.

If one accepts this theory of the "symphonic" plan in *The Waste Land,* it is then necessary to inquire about the origins of such a technique. Was it original with Eliot or did he borrow it as he did so many quotations? I would submit that the symphonic orientation of *The Waste Land* has its genesis in Eliot's familiarity with the early poetry of his fellow expatriate, Conrad Aiken (1889-1973).

It is well known that Aiken's poetry during the years 1915-20 owes something of its "tone and rhythms"[17] to T. S. Eliot. Like Eliot, he studied Arthur Symon's book on the Symbolists and during several trips abroad became acquainted personally with Ezra Pound and Amy Lowell, in addition to Eliot. He, too, reviewed contemporary poetry for American magazines and ultimately settled in England. Yet Aiken, perhaps even more than Eliot, was determined to translate everything, not just into the *sounds* of music, but into the *forms* of music as well. In his late twenties, Aiken wrote a series of poems subtitled "symphonies," which were later collected under the title, *The Divine Pilgrim.* He explained his novel approach in these poems in a review of his *The Charnel Rose:*

[16] Calvin S. Brown, Jr., "The Poetic Use of Musical Forms," *The Musical Quarterly,* XXX/1 (January, 1944), 99.

[17] Joseph Warren Bench, "Conrad Aiken and T. S. Eliot: Echoes and Overtones," *Publications of the Modern Language Association,* LXIX (1954), 753.

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What I had from the outset been somewhat doubtfully hankering for was some way of getting contrapuntal effects in poetry — the effects of contrasting and conflicting tones and themes, a kind of underlying simultaneity in dissimilarity. It seemed to me that by using a large medium, dividing it into several main parts, and subdividing these parts into short movements in various veins and forms, this was rendered possible. I do not wish to press the musical analogies too closely. I am aware that the word symphony, as a musical term, has a very definite meaning, and I am aware that it is only with considerable license that I use the term for such poems as *Senlin* or [Jig of] Forslin, which have three and five parts respectively, and do not in any orthodox way develop themes. But the effect obtained is, very roughly speaking, that of a symphony, or symphonic poem.[18]

Aiken goes on to explain that each major section in *The Jig of Forslin* (1916) depended for its emotional effect on its precise position within the poem, similar to the way different musical tonalities and moods are employed in the movements of a symphony. All of this, claims Aiken, is "in quest of a sort of absolute poetry, a poetry in which the intention is not so much to arouse an emotion . . . as to employ such emotion or sense of reality . . . with the same cool detachment with which a composer employs notes or chords. . . . Such a poetry, in other words, will not so much present an idea as use its resonance."[19]

Aiken's review of *The Waste Land* appeared in *The New Republic* on February 7, 1923, under the title "an Anatomy of Melancholy." He claims no credit for influencing Eliot, but he does mention certain musical analogies he detects in the poem:

Mr. Eliot is perhaps attempting a kind of program music in words. . . . He himself hints at the musical analogy when he observes [in the Notes to the poem] that "in the first part of Part V three themes are employed." . . . We "accept" the poem as we would a powerful, melancholy tone poem. We do not want to be told what occurs; nor is it more than mildly amusing to know what passages are, in the Straussian manner, echoes or parodies.[20]

Three months before this review was published, and shortly after *The Waste Land* first appeared in print, Aiken had written to his friend, Robert Linscott, praising the poem:

Eliot's mag. [*The Criterion*, I/1 (October, 1922)] is well received, and his poem ["The Waste Land"] called "great." Great it may not be, but it's certainly delicious. Am I cuckoo in fancying that it cancels the debt I owed him? I seem to detect echoes

[18] "Counterpoint and Implication," in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, XIV (1919), 155.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 157.
[20] In *T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work*, ed. Allen Tate (New York, 1966), pp. 200-2.

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or parodies of Senlin, House [of Dust], [The Jig of] Forslin: in the evening at the violet hour etc, Madame Sosostris etc, and in general the "symphonic" nature, the references to music (Wagner, Stravinsky) and the repetition of motifs, and the "crowd" stuff beginning "Unreal City." However, that's neither there nor here; it's the best thing I've seen in years.[21]

This statement supports my belief that a link exists between Conrad Aiken's early experiments in "symphonic" poetry and the formal layout of *The Waste Land*. In *The Music of Poetry*, Eliot disavowed having any technical knowledge of musical form himself, but did admit that "a poet may gain much from the study of music. . . . 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 different movements of a symphony or a quartet; there are possibilities of contrapuntal arrangement of subject-matter."[22]

Another interesting connection alluded to by Aiken is the "echo" of Stravinsky in the poem. Although Eliot and Stravinsky did not meet until 1956, their careers often intersected and their attitudes toward, and respect for, "tradition" in art were not at all dissimilar. The special relationship between poet and composer started in the summer of 1921 when Eliot attended the London première of *The Rite of Spring*. In his review, which appeared in *The Dial* that fall, Eliot was elated with the performance but felt that the dancing failed to express the modernity of the music:

Music accompanying and explained by an action must have a drama which has been put through the same process of development as the music itself. The spirit of the music was modern, and the spirit of the ballet was primitive ceremony. The Vegetation Rite upon which the ballet is founded remained, in spite of the music, a pageant of primitive culture. It was interesting to anyone who had read The Golden Bough and similar works, but hardly more than interesting. . . . In everything in the Sacre du Printemps, except in the music, one missed the sense of the present.[23]

Those familiar with *The Waste Land*'s symbols will notice immediately the importance of Eliot's reference to vegetation rites and Frazer's classic anthropological work, *The Golden Bough*, which were important sources of ritual symbolism derived from the past. Yet Eliot was also concerned with the present, and he regretted that

[21] *Selected Letters of Conrad Aiken*, ed. Joseph Killorin (New Haven, 1978), p. 72.
[22] *Music of Poetry*, p. 32.
[23] "London Letters," *The Dial*, LXXI (1921), 543.

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the ballet did not, in his view, transcend its primitive pageantry. There is no question that *Le Sacre* impressed Eliot deeply, and at least one of his biographers believes that it "gave him the ambition of achieving in words the effects Stravinsky had accomplished in music."[24] Because of the essential differences between poetry and music, however, only the most general comparisons can be made:

1. Both *The Waste Land* and *Le Sacre* are concerned superficially with ancient fertility rituals associated with the vegetation cycle.
2. The numerous interruptions in the poem's narrative may correspond to the fragmented melodies and interrupted ostinato patterns.
3. The constant shifts of time from present to past (Eliot's "mythical method") and the many irregular rhythms may be analogous to the jagged rhythms and changing time signatures in Stravinsky's score.
4. The numerous literary allusions and the several voices in the poem (delivered orally with a slightly different timbre) may have their counterpart in the dense contrapuntal and polytonal texture of the music.
5. Finally, just as the complex style of the poem is itself a symbol of a confused and fragmented society, the dissonance and "brutality" of the ballet could be symptomatic of the turbulence of the early twentieth century.

Some of these parallels may seem more plausible than others, but it is unlikely that Eliot was too literal in transferring effects from one medium to another: "I think it might be possible for a poet to work too closely to musical analogies: the result might be an effect of artificiality."[25]

Even before *The Waste Land* was written, literary critics were attempting to correlate elements in Eliot's poetry with the new styles in music. Clive Bell, for example, saw both Eliot and Stravinsky as products of the jazz idiom, sharing the characteristic trait of syncopation. Bell speaks of "a ragtime literature which flouts traditional rhythms and sequences and grammar and logic."[26]

[24] T. S. Matthews, *Great Tom* (New York, 1974), p. 70.
[25] *Music of Poetry*, p. 32.
[26] "Plus de Jazz," *The New Republic*, XXVIII (September 21, 1921), 94.

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By the 1920s, Stravinsky was already in his so-called neo-Classic phase. Such works as the Octet for wind instruments (1923) and the Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments (1924) embodied an anti-Romantic spirit, and he was both attacked and hailed for his leadership in promulgating the new mode of objectivity derived from the eighteenth century. In his autobiography, first published in 1936, he explains how he came upon his new aesthetic:

> My profound emotion on reading the news of the war, which aroused patriotic feelings and a sense of sadness at being so distant from my country, found some alleviation in the delight with which I steeped myself in Russian folk poems.
>
> What fascinated me in this verse was not so much the stories . . . as the sequence of the words and syllables, and the cadence they create, which produces an effect on one's sensibilities very closely akin to that of music. For I consider that music is, by its very nature essentially powerless to *express* anything at all. . . .[27]

The remainder of this much-quoted passage is familiar enough, but the interesting point here is that Stravinsky's notion of the objective nature of music (which he later modified) seems to have been inspired by what he considered to be the *musical* qualities of poetry. Accordingly, music was only an object that followed its own laws, with no other meaning or purpose. Eliot, too, proclaimed an impersonal aesthetic behind his work. Stephen Spender points out that Eliot "believed that the aim of the poet should be to make an object out of words . . ." and that the ultimate goal was "escaping from the subjective self into a world of objective values."[28] Eliot confirms this in his early essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," when he says that "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."[29] What the poet and the composer were, in fact, searching for was an authority, which manifested itself in "tradition."

Some critics interpreted this reliance on tradition and traditional values as a symptom of "an undernourishment of the artistic imagination."[30] Edmund Wilson was one of the first to diagnose this condition with reference to Eliot and Stravinsky in an article in *The New Republic* in 1925. Referring to a performance of the Octet and Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments, Wilson observed:

[27] *An Autobiography* (1936; reprint, New York, 1962), p. 53.
[28] Spender, *T. S. Eliot*, pp. 4, 6.
[29] In *Selected Essays*, new ed. (New York, 1932), pp. 10-11.
[30] "Stravinsky," *The New Republic*, XLII (April 1, 1925), 156.

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There seems to appear in these works a tendency plainly recognizable as analogous to the tendency in poetry and fiction . . . that is, the dissatisfaction of modern artists with the emotions and materials of their own time and their attempt to supply the deficiency by falling back on the artistic forms of the past, as if by reproducing the form they could recapture the feeling. . . . And in his octuor and concerto he [Stravinsky] reproduces Handel and Bach in the latter, the Bachesque development is finally broken by momentary ragtime rhythms and fragments of sarcastic parody, just as Eliot interrupts his Elizabethan blank-verse with burlesque and music-hall refrains.[31]

Writing many years later, Stravinsky mused:

Were Eliot and myself merely trying to refit old ships while the other side — Joyce, Schoenberg — sought new forms of travel? I believe that this distinction, much traded on a generation ago, has disappeared. . . . Of course, we seemed, Eliot and myself, to have exploited an apparent discontinuity, to have made out of the *disjecta membra*, the quotation from other poets and composers, the references to earlier styles . . ., the detritus that betokened a wreck. But we used it, and anything that came to hand, to rebuild, and we did not pretend to have invented new conveyors or new means of travel. But the true business of the artist *is* to refit old ships. He can say again, in his way, only what has already been said.[32]

But for all this insistence on the necessity of tradition, it is sometimes thought that Eliot, like Stravinsky, abandoned it in some of his later works. To a certain extent this is correct, insofar as some late poetry does not conform to conventional principles of scansion. Once again, Beethoven's late quartets may have set the example.[33] Eliot said in a lecture in 1933 that he attempted "to get beyond poetry, as Beethoven, in his later works, strove to get *beyond* music."[34] The final lines from *East Coker* put it another way:

> Old men ought to be explorers
> Here and there does not matter
> We must be still and still moving
> Into another intensity
> For a further union, a deeper communion . . .[35]

In *The Music of Poetry*, Eliot observed that "the task of the poet will differ, not only according to his personal constitution, but ac-

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Dialogues and a Diary* (Garden City, N.Y., 1963), p. 30.

[33] Howarth, *Notes*, p. 278.

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] From "East Coker" in *Four Quartets*, copyright, 1943, by T. S. Eliot; renewed, 1971, by Esme Valerie Eliot. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc.

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cording to the period in which he finds himself."[36] Both Eliot and Stravinsky were blessed with long life and, either out of a sense of duty or more likely because of an inner compulsion, they felt it imperative to change with the times, even though their reputations were already secure. For Eliot, this took the form of experiments in dramatic verse for the theater in such plays as *The Cocktail Party* (1949) and *The Confidential Clerk* (1953) and a new poetic idiom incorporating contemporary speech rhythms. For Stravinsky, the neo-Classic tradition, which he was instrumental in establishing, was seemingly abandoned with his sudden conversion to serialism in the early 1950s after *The Rake's Progress*. While one could argue whether either actually broke with their earlier styles in these works, there was at least a new technique if not an entirely new aesthetic. Fortunately, the Stravinsky-Eliot alliance produced one short work, the anthem *The Dove Descending* from Part IV of *Little Gidding* (Four Quartets), in which we can judge for ourselves the vicissitudes of each man's style in his later years.[37] The character of the music matches the text: somber, religiously austere, but not despairing. Stravinsky would eulogize his friend only three years later with music of similar caste in *Introitus (T. S. Eliot in Memoriam)* for male chorus and chamber ensemble.

In summing up T. S. Eliot's achievements as a poet, the parallel with Stravinsky's career is not without some validity. T. S. Matthews compared the impact of *Prufrock* and *The Waste Land* on literary circles to that of *The Firebird* and *The Rite of Spring* in the music world. Most certainly, however, Eliot recognized and understood the uniqueness and individuality of these two art forms. "We can never emulate music," he said, "because to arrive at the condition of music would be the annihilation of poetry. . . . "[38] Thus extreme caution should be exercised in assessing the scope and profundity of musical influence on the poetry of T. S. Eliot or any other poet. Perhaps H. L. Mencken put it best when he wrote: "Poetry that is all music is obviously relatively rare, for only a poet who is also a natural musician can write it, and natural musicians are much rarer in the world than poets."[39]

[36] *Music of Poetry*, p. 28.

[37] For a descriptive analysis of this piece, see Eric Walter White, *Stravinsky: The Composer and His Works* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966), p. 476.

[38] Freedman, "Jazz Rhythms and T. S. Eliot," p. 435.

[39] *An Encyclopedia of Quotations About Music*, ed. Nat Shapiro (New York, 1978), p. 149.

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