

FOUR QUARTETS: VERS LIBÉRÉ, MUSICALITY AND BELIEF

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* in relation to figurative music. The introductory chapter explores the relationship between music and literature within the context of modernism, highlighting the diversity of recent criticism as well as reassessing the plethora of previous musical approaches to *Four Quartets*. The thesis itself is centred on three key concepts which are interlinked throughout: *vers libéré*, musicality and belief. In discussing the question of musicality, it explores the relationship between music and *vers libéré* in Eliot's work. It highlights the similarities between Ezra Pound's ideas on poetry, melopoeia, absolute rhythm and Eliot's conception of a freer verse form and 'the music of poetry'. It also investigates the influence of the French Symbolists, linking Eliot's method of conveying spirituality in *Four Quartets* with the musical aesthetic of French Symbolism. Finally, this thesis suggests that Eliot's use of figurative music in *Four Quartets* resolves the tension between poetry and belief seen in his previous works. It concludes that even in Eliot's different approaches towards the musicality of poetry there is an underlying thread that links them together, and that this is integral to the way in which Eliot conveys his Christian beliefs in *Four Quartets*.

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‘The value of music as elucidation of verse comes from the attention it throws on to the detail’

(Pound 1934, 140)

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INTRODUCTION

The notion that modernist literature should not be seen in a vacuum, but in relation to other art forms, has been well established. As Daniel Albright succinctly puts it: ‘The twentieth-century, perhaps more than any other age, has demanded a style of criticism in which the arts are considered as a whole’ (2000a, vii). Whilst figurative music is used within modernist literature for a variety of reasons, modernist writers were often drawn to music in order to transcend structure and reach a ‘harmonious coexistence’ (Aronson 1980, 32). Indeed, the modernists’ fascination with music was clearly linked to their preoccupation with the problems of form. In an attempt to overcome the ‘crisis of language’ (Sheppard 1976, 323) they 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 (Bucknell 2001, 3). 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.

Certainly, the relationship between music and literature within the context of modernism has been explored in a considerable amount of detail and in recent years there has been a resurgence of this type of criticism. It is necessary, therefore, to explore the great depth of musical-literary criticism that exists, as this study is no doubt inter-related to the wider body of modernist criticism. By highlighting the diverse array of recent criticism I shall not only put this study into context, but also

emphasize the fact that the debate surrounding literary modernism and musical aesthetics is far from over, and is evidently still creating engaging threads of critical discussion. Obviously I am unable to give an exhaustive account, but illustrating some areas that have already been covered by critics will enable me to establish the significance of my study: what it hopes to achieve; and where it builds on or departs from previous critics.

The best place to begin is with *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and other Arts* (2000) by Daniel Albright, which explores modernist literature in relation to other art forms. Albright encourages us to avoid seeing art forms in isolation from one another and looks for ‘figures of concord’ (2000b, 6) between them. He suggests that there exists ‘a deep concord amongst artistic media’ (6) and that this harmony between different art forms is especially evident in the modernist movement.¹ Significantly, whilst Albright acknowledges the difficulty of pursuing this type of critical analysis, he still believes that the links between various art forms within the modernist movement should be investigated: ‘The arts are an endless semblance, an endless dissembling – and a collaboration among several arts is at once a labyrinth and a thread that needs to be followed’ (33).

There have also been recent monographs exploring literary modernism specifically in relation to music, such as *Literary Modernism and Musical Aesthetics: Pater, Pound, Joyce and Stein* (2001) by Brad Bucknell. Bucknell explores how Walter Pater, Ezra Pound, James Joyce and Gertrude Stein engaged with music, but also how they chose to develop this interest in music within their own literature. Once again, as

¹ Elsewhere, John Adames also propounds that ‘artistic hybridity’ (2000, 129) often characterized the modernist movement.

Albright did, Bucknell reinforces the fact that musical-literary affinities are particularly prominent in modernism:

... in one way or another, music – either the concept or the practice of it – tends to underscore, and in some cases reinforce, the supplementary character of the modernist literary project with its desire for the absolute congruence between form and the transcendence of form.

(2001, 10)

Furthermore Bucknell explores how, and indeed why, this musical-literary preoccupation became so widespread within the modernist movement, reinforcing the idea that their engagement with music sprang from the nineteenth century's conception of music as a transcendent art form.

As Bucknell's monograph illustrates, the vast preponderance of recent criticism has chosen to focus on the significance of music in relation to the literature of several key modernists. Thus, for example, with regards to James Joyce there are several essays collected in *Bronze by Gold: the Music of Joyce* (1999), edited by Sebastian D. G. Knowles, which brings a fresh outlook to the wide-ranging musical approaches to Joyce's work. There has also been a series of enlightening essays regarding the relationship between Virginia Woolf's work and music. Elicia Clements, for instance, has published two articles in which she discusses Woolf's literature in relation to figurative music, whilst also taking account of her political and social concerns.²

² See Elicia Clements, 'Virginia Woolf, Ethel Smyth, and Music: Listening as a Productive Mode of Social Interaction', *College Literature* 32, 3 (2005a), 51-71 and Elicia Clements, 'Transforming Musical Sounds into Words: Narrative Method in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*', *NARRATIVE* 13, 2 (2005b), 160-181.

In this thesis my focus will remain on T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. Whilst I do not intend to suggest that reading Eliot in the light of music is the only way in which we as critics should engage with his work, I shall attempt to reinforce the fact that it is a rewarding means by which to do so. This in itself, I hope, will provide me with enough justification to offer another reading of *Four Quartets* in relation to figurative music. As with the rest of literary modernism, there has been a considerable amount of criticism which explores T. S. Eliot's work in relation to music.³ Unsurprisingly, in view of its title, *Four Quartets* has garnered the most critical attention in relation to the musicality of Eliot's work.⁴ Moreover, ever since Helen Gardner suggested, in the chapter entitled 'The Music of *Four Quartets*', that a critic must discuss the issue of music in relation to the poem, it has become common for critics to do so (1949, 119). Consequently, a great debt is owed by myself (and indeed various other critics) to this chapter, as much of the criticism regarding music and *Four Quartets* has stemmed from it. However, this chapter by Gardner has led to a plethora of criticism which tries to link *Four Quartets* either too loosely, or too strictly, to a musical form. Such criticism can be seen as a result of Gardner's chapter, as in it she attempted to locate the various musical forms that can supposedly be found within the *Quartets*: 'As the title shows, each poem is structurally a poetic equivalent of the classical symphony, or quartet, or sonata, as distinct from the suite' (120).

Another catalyst for this type of musical-literary criticism was Eliot's famous remark, made in a lecture in 1933, that in *Four Quartets* he tried 'to get *beyond poetry*, as Beethoven, in his later works, strove to get *beyond music*' (Matthiessen 1947, 90).

³ The most recent of which is an article by David Fuller entitled 'Music' in Jason Harding, ed., *T. S. Eliot in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 134-144.

⁴ As David Barndollar aptly states: 'The poem's general title specifically invites the analogy, and understanding something about musical quartet forms can illuminate Eliot's purpose in structuring the poem as he does' (2000, 179).

Yet, regardless of whether it is as a result of Eliot's remark or Gardner's article, there has been an abundance of criticism which draws comparisons between *Four Quartets* and Beethoven's Late String Quartets.⁵ As well as the familiar analogy with Beethoven's string quartets, critics have also drawn comparisons between *Four Quartets* and Béla Bartók's string quartets.⁶

As Barndollar has concisely pointed out: 'Comparing T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* with musical string quartets is both an obvious exercise and an infuriatingly elusive one' (2000, 179). But either way, it is ultimately an exercise which critics have now fully explored. Most importantly, I wish to suggest that it is not necessary to draw direct comparisons with the string quartet form in order to harness the musical analogy in *Four Quartets*. Whilst having a general awareness of musical quartet form will no doubt enhance, at least partially, an understanding of the poem, it should not have to become the sole premise for a 'musical' analysis, and can be restrictive. Music, after all, is a separate artistic form from literature, and although it is a thoroughly fruitful exercise to draw comparisons between the two, becoming too technical with musical analogies can be counter-productive. In fact Eliot himself had no technical knowledge of music, as he expressly stated in his essay 'The Music of Poetry': 'I think that a poet may gain much from the study of music: how much

⁵ The most notable attempts are Harvey Gross's article 'Music and the Analogue of Feeling: Notes on Eliot and Beethoven', *The Centennial Review of Arts and Science*, 3 (1959), 269-88, Keith Alldritt's *Eliot's 'Four Quartets': Poetry As Chamber Music* (London: Woburn Press, 1978), and John Holloway's article entitled 'Four Quartets and Beethoven's Last Quartets' in *The Fire and the Rose: New Essays on T. S. Eliot*, ed. by Vinod Sena and Rajiva Verna (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992). Moreover, in *T. S. Eliot's Orchestra: Critical Essays on Poetry and Music*, ed. John Xiros Cooper, (New York: Garland, 2000) there has been yet another contribution to this debate by David Barndollar, in the chapter entitled 'Movements in Time: *Four Quartets* and the Late String Quartets of Beethoven'.

⁶ This has been carried out by Mildred Meyer Boaz on more than one occasion, both in her PhD dissertation entitled *T. S. Eliot and Music: A Study of the Development of Musical Structures in Selected Poems by T. S. Eliot and Music by Erik Satie, Igor Stravinsky and Béla Bartók* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1977) and in a later article, 'Aesthetic Alliances in Poetry and Music: T. S. Eliot's "Four Quartets" and "String Quartets" by Béla Bartók', *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 13, 3 (1979), 31-49.

technical knowledge of musical form is desirable I do not know, for I have not that technical knowledge myself' (1957, 38). Most significantly, though, Eliot states that it is possible to take the influence of music too literally: 'I think it might be possible for a poet to work too closely to musical analogies: the result might be an effect of artificiality...' (38). The starting point of this thesis, therefore, is the contention that analogies with the string quartet form have become somewhat contrived, and lead us further away from a clear discussion of *Four Quartets*.

Ultimately, then, whilst I maintain that broad analogies can successfully be drawn between *Four Quartets* and music, critics have frequently sought to draw direct parallels between a literary work and a specific musical composition. Consequently, some criticism pertaining to the influence of music on literature has resulted in highly personalized analyses, which have often only succeeded in leading us further away from the text in question. Thus I am proposing that, rather than focusing on specific works of music, we should look more broadly at the concept of music when investigating it in relation to literature.

In each chapter of my thesis I shall provide an analysis of a section of *Four Quartets*, bringing in reference to Eliot's other poems, plays and criticism throughout to compare, contrast and reinforce my ideas. In framing my analysis, chapter by chapter, around 'Burnt Norton', 'East Coker', 'The Dry Salvages' and 'Little Gidding' consecutively, I shall ensure that I remain focused on *Four Quartets* as a work of literature. In my musical-literary analysis I hope not only to elucidate the figurative music of the poem, but also to enlighten our understanding of the central themes and concerns of *Four Quartets* as a whole. Through the influence of

figurative music, Eliot ‘makes connections’ (Gross 1964, 171) and ‘strengthens ideas’ (171) and I shall explore how he continually does this with the key themes and images of the poem.

Moreover, I also wish to demonstrate that the concept of figurative music need not only be used by those with an overtly musical background. Unsurprisingly, the notion of music as central to the modernist genre has seemed to heighten its perceived elitism. This is reinforced by Eliot’s comment in ‘The Music of Poetry’, which appears to imply that further discussion of the influence of music should be left to those with a more thorough knowledge than himself: ‘More than this I cannot say, but must leave the matter here to those who have had a musical education’ (1957, 38). However, we should not forget that Eliot also claimed his ideal ‘audience’ (1964, 152) would be one ‘which could neither read nor write’ (152). Despite the common misconception of Eliot as a highbrow elitist, Eliot actually aimed to reach out to a larger audience than one might expect:

I believe that the poet naturally prefers to write for as large and miscellaneous an audience as possible, and that it is the half-educated and ill-educated, rather than the uneducated, who stand in his way: I myself should like an audience which could neither read nor write.

(152)

Surely then, an exploration of the ideas surrounding figurative music and its influence in *Four Quartets* should not be an exclusive activity for the musically educated and elite, but a means for a wider audience to embrace the text and gain a clearer understanding of it. Emboldened by the fact that Eliot (without any formal training) used and advocated musical analogies, we should feel free to do so ourselves when

analysing *Four Quartets*. My analysis will try to ensure that the music of *Four Quartets* can be understood by a larger audience, and I shall elucidate my ideas on the issue of musicality later on in this introduction.

This thesis is centred on three key concepts which are interlinked and central to *Four Quartets*: *vers libéré*, musicality and belief. My reading of *Four Quartets* will be based on an exploration of these key concepts. As I shall be using *vers libéré* to ground part of my analysis of *Four Quartets*, it is necessary to explore and elucidate how *vers libéré* came to fruition; the ideas behind it and how it ties in with my thesis. In order to do so, I must first discuss the term *vers libre*, which has caused much critical disagreement. Various key figures, including Rémy de Gourmont, saw *vers libre* as one of the most long-standing aspects of Symbolism (Hough 1960, 84). In fact, there are many declarations that issued from the period which suggest that the main achievement of the symbolist movement was *vers libre* (Jones 1951, 93): ‘A RIOT of versification: that you know, was all the Symbolist movement was at bottom – a revolution in form’ (Huret 1891, 303). Even now critics generally agree that: ‘The establishment of the *vers libre* is one of the major French poetical revolutions’ (Hough 1960, 84). Yet *vers libre* continues to be debated and there are still ongoing uncertainties with regards to its origins and fundamental doctrines.⁷ Precisely when *vers libre* came into fruition has never been entirely agreed upon, though it tends to be

⁷ Interestingly Karl Shapiro stated that: ‘... if there is any one certainty in this field of study it is that dissension has been the rule from beginning to end’ (1947, 77-92). Although this may well be a case of dramatic hyperbole on the part of Shapiro, it emphasizes the great difference of critical opinion that has surrounded various aspects of *vers libre*.

accepted that it was especially prevalent during the Symbolist movement in the latter part of the nineteenth-century (Steele 1990, 5).⁸

Vers libre was initially, at least, seen as a complete departure from the confines of traditional versification and as such it was depicted as something radically new (Jones 1951, 94). For example, Stéphane Mallarmé famously remarked:

We are now witnessing a spectacle which is truly extraordinary, unique in the history of poetry: every poet is going off by himself with his own flute, and playing the songs he pleases. For the first time since the beginning of poetry, poets have stopped singing bass. Hitherto, as you know, if they wished to be accompanied, they had to be content with the great organ of official meter.

(1956, 18)

Indeed, the notion of *vers libre* when it was first conceived was ‘a radical, not to say revolutionary, departure’ (Scott 1980, 182). As such *vers libre* received much criticism, which in turn led its disciples to take a particularly strong stance against traditional verse in order to defend *vers libre* from those denouncing it (182). As Jones suggests: ‘Theoretically what the *verslibristes* were seeking was an infinitely variable medium compatible with their ideal of unrestricted freedom in opposition to the limitations and restraints of metre’ (1951, 94). This search for freedom was a particularly significant issue in France, where a far stricter, clear-cut definition of poetic rules obtained than was the case in England (Hough 1960, 87). These regimented poetic rules included, for example, the issues of where the caesura should be placed, and when to use masculine and feminine rhymes (87).

⁸ Furthermore, many would agree with Clive Scott that 1886 was ‘the watershed year’ (1980, 182) as this was when *vers libre* poems by Jules Laforgue and Rimbaud were published, with the first assortment of free verse poems by Gustave Kahn following shortly after in 1887.

Given the immensely varied critical stances on free verse, it is all too easy to get lost in the wilderness of differing opinions. Thus, in order to avoid this, I wish briefly to elucidate my own conception of free verse. I propose that free verse is not simply verse that is free, but rather verse that is not bound entirely by strict poetic rules.⁹ In many respects, then, *vers libre* was ultimately ‘a reaction only against the “rules” which prevented verse from rationalising itself earlier’ (Scott 1980, 192), and not a complete relinquishment of regular verse as many presumed. Although the French were desperate to rid themselves of the shackles of poetic rules, they often only loosened them.¹⁰ In reality the liberation from traditional metres was far more reserved than initial proclamations by those in favour of free verse may have us believe.¹¹ Thus my understanding of the term ‘free verse’ is more in line with what the French have termed *vers libéré*.

Vers libéré was seen as starting from within the traditions of French poetic rules, but ultimately able to break free from these restrictions (Hough 1960, 87). As the established poetic traditions were taken so seriously, the notion of *vers libéré* was born in order to try and make *vers libre* more acceptable. Hough succinctly describes the distinction between *vers libre* and *vers libéré* as follows: ‘We discover at once that the French distinguish between *vers libre* and *vers libéré* – verse which is born free and verse, so to say, which has been liberated from some pre-existing chains’ (87).

⁹ As Winifred Crombie propounds: ‘One thing that must by now be clear is that free verse is not verseless poetry: it is not poetry that lacks metrical structure’ (1987, 61).

¹⁰ Indeed, as G.S. Fraser suggests: ‘Much that is taken as free verse, or as breaking the old rules, is merely, in fact, an intelligent use of the great flexibility of the old rules’ (1970, 72).

¹¹ As Jones puts it: ‘The *vers-libristes* turned out to be far less audacious in practice than in theory, and more respectful of traditional forms than they had threatened to be’ (1951, 132).

When critics before me have used the term ‘free verse’, they often included both *vers libre* and *vers libéré* within this:

Since in English most of our greatest poetry has been written in verse which either enjoyed a pre-lapsarian liberty or was liberated without much fuss, we take the commoner kinds of *vers libéré* with anything else that looks formally eccentric and call them all free verse.

(Hough 1960, 88)

However, as there is such controversy surrounding the term *vers libre* (especially in relation to Eliot), in my discussion of *Four Quartets* I shall be using *vers libéré* instead. Eliot on several occasions distanced himself from *vers libre*, perhaps most famously when stating that: ‘no verse is free for the man who wants to do a good job’ (1957, 37). Eliot also claimed elsewhere that *vers libre* was ‘a preposterous fiction’ (1975, 31) and that unrestricted verse should not be welcomed because ‘it is a battle-cry of freedom, and there is no freedom in art’ (32). Yet perhaps his most damning indictment of *vers libre* was in ‘Reflections on “Vers Libre”’. Here Eliot mocked the idea that verse could be free, stating emphatically that ‘there is only good verse, bad verse and chaos’ (36).

Yet Eliot’s dislike and distrust of *vers libre* was not merely a personal matter but a result of a wider dissatisfaction with the free verse movement (Finch 2000, 96). As Finch quite rightly states: ‘Some of the major free verse poets themselves also began to become disillusioned with free verse by the end of the 1910s’ (96), and Eliot was in many ways vocalising his era’s disenchantment with the movement: ‘... now it is possible to print free verse (second, third, or tenth-rate) in almost any American magazine’ (Eliot 1978, 167). Similarly, Eliot expressed the growing antipathy

towards the free verse movement when he stated that ‘a monotony of unscannable verse fatigues the attention even more quickly than a monotony of exact feet’ (1975, 274).

Nevertheless, despite the fact Eliot concluded ‘the division between Conservative Verse and *vers libre* does not exist’ (1975, 36) there is a middle ground between the two which he reached. Eliot issued words of warning on the use of a looser, freer form, and in doing so reinforces the fact he was aspiring to what we might best think of as *vers libéré*, even if he does not mention it specifically:

But only a bad poet could welcome free verse as liberation from form. It was a revolt against dead form and a preparation for new form or for the renewal of the old; it was an insistence upon the inner unity which is unique to every poem, against the outer unity which is typical. The poem comes before the form...

(Eliot 1957, 37)

Here Eliot implies that far from being free from questions of form, poetry is still bound to it. Crucially, though, in this passage he essentially advocates what might best be thought of as *vers libéré*. Indeed, in many ways *vers libéré* can be defined by the aspects Eliot describes here – it was a ‘revolt against dead form’, ‘a preparation for new form’ and a ‘renewal of the old’ (37). In addition, when stating that ‘the poem comes before the form’ (37), Eliot highlighted that he felt one should avoid arbitrary rules surrounding poetry and instead use whatever form suits the poem best. In many respects, then, we can see Eliot as using the form of *vers libéré*, which enabled him to move from the restrictions of regular verse to a far more fluid form,

but without completely eschewing poetic form altogether.¹² Ultimately, Eliot was in favour of flexibility but not complete liberation, and it is useful to employ the term *vers libéré* to capture what Eliot advocates when discussing matters of form.

Moreover, Pound was in agreement with Eliot about using a freer form of poetry with caution:

I think one should write vers libre only when one ‘must’, that is to say, only when the ‘thing’ builds up a rhythm more beautiful than that of set metres, or more real, more a part of the emotion of the ‘thing’, more germane, intimate, interpretative than the measure of regular accentual verse...

(Pound 1954, 12)

In a similar manner to Eliot, Pound’s belief that ‘there is an anarchy which may be vastly overdone’ (Brooker 2004, 8) is much more in line with a more reserved conception of *vers libre* that we might productively think of as *vers libéré*. Thus, throughout this thesis I shall be addressing Eliot’s verse through the term ‘*vers libéré*’, which can act as a valuable shorthand term to capture Eliot’s ideas on a freer verse form, even as he rejects *vers libre*. Most importantly, even though ‘*vers libéré*’ is not a term he uses himself, by employing it throughout this thesis I remain in concordance with the views expressed by Eliot, and indeed Pound, who essentially believed that free verse was not as free as the name would have suggested (Kenner 1990, 240-241).

I shall now return to the issue of ‘musicality’ and expand upon my conception of this, as it differs considerably from that of some critics and is crucial to my thesis. Whilst there has been a plethora of criticism relating to Eliot and the importance of

¹² As Eliot himself famously stated, ‘there is no escape from metre; there is only mastery’ (1978, 188).

figurative music in his work, much of the recent criticism pertaining to Eliot has failed to look closely at the musicality of *Four Quartets* that is engrained within each line. Indeed, the last attempt to do so was Harvey Gross's seminal study *Sound and Form in Modern Poetry* (1964), but since then critics have been inclined to move towards more broad and wide-ranging discussions of Eliot and music.¹³ Although this has resulted in some insightful studies, quite often critics become too removed from the poetry itself in their musical analogies. Elsewhere critics have become too methodical and scientific in exploring the relationship between music and free verse, which has led to almost mathematically rigorous studies.¹⁴ However, there is surely a balance to be struck here which has yet to be found by critics, and I hope to do so in this thesis.

One must begin with the fact that, until relatively recently, critics have been inclined to eschew the connection between Eliot's figurative music and his use of free verse. Take, for example, H. T. Kirby-Smith in *The Origins of Free Verse*:

Such composition is not free verse; it is aimed at new and more subtle organization, the establishment of conventions rather than the ironic exploitation of previous rhythmic modes. To claim that such musically organized language as Eliot's *Four Quartets* is free verse seems to me radically misguided.

(1996, 196)

Interestingly Kirby-Smith, in the same chapter on Eliot and free verse, continues to develop this argument:

¹³ See for example: John Xiros Cooper, *T. S. Eliot's Orchestra: Critical Essays on Poetry and Music* (New York: Garland, 2000).

¹⁴ See for instance: G. Burns Cooper, *Mysterious Music: Rhythm and Free Verse* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) and Sister Mary Martin Barry, *An Analysis of the Prosodic Structure of Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1969).

Ultimately Eliot set himself to putting into practice concepts of musical form, suggestions for which he may have found not only in the original Imagist manifestoes, but in some of Harriet Monroe's speculations in earlier issues of Poetry magazine, and elsewhere, even in the theories of Sidney Lanier. But this question belongs to an entirely separate line of investigation. Verse organized upon musical analogy is not free verse.

(197)

However, contrary to Kirby-Smith's view, 'verse organized upon musical analogy' (1996, 197) can be seen very much in light of a freer verse. Indeed, as Schafer points out: 'The condition of music was invoked to argue for *vers libre*, the liberation of poetry from metrical imprisonment to find its natural cadence' (Pound 1978, 469). Additionally, as an earlier quote from Mallarmé no doubt reinforces, the rationale behind *vers libre* was not that of another literary modification, but a new literary venture that had begun out of a newly-heightened, musicalized conception of language. As Jones succinctly puts it, 'The contemporary ear, he insisted, was attuned to music, and this led to a perception of poetic form at once more fluid and more precise' (1951, 94).

Moreover, such a casual nod (as Kirby-Smith's) to the influence of Imagist manifestoes is not sufficient when investigating musical analogies in any modernist text; especially in relation to Eliot, who was able to absorb influences from a huge variety of sources and make them his own. In fact, such a flippant mention of Imagism without any further examination can only lead to a perspective that is 'radically misguided' (Kirby-Smith 1996, 197) in itself. By contrast, investigating Pound's ideas and theories in this thesis will enable me to establish that, rather than belonging to 'an entirely separate line of investigation' (197), Eliot's ideas about the musicality of poetry have much in common with the Imagists' conception of a freer

verse. Of all the Imagist poets, Pound was the one who most influenced Eliot, and as he is also often linked to music I shall choose to focus specifically on him.¹⁵ In fact, for Pound the chief source of influence was in many respects music.

Interestingly, when discussing the influence of music, Eliot's ideas and phraseology often echo Pound's own choice of language for his discussions of *vers libre*. For Pound, aiming towards music was ultimately 'an attempt to get beyond or under verbal language' (Pound 1978, 4). This is crucial to my investigation of T. S. Eliot and music: I shall aim to highlight how Eliot himself was able to 'get beyond' (4) and 'under verbal language' (4) in *Four Quartets*. I shall illustrate that Eliot was able to get 'under verbal language' (4) in *Four Quartets* by underlaying the words and phrases with a distinct 'musicality' through his use of *vers libéré*. Indeed, I shall demonstrate that *vers libre* was engrained with a notion of musicality, and reveal in turn how Eliot's use of *vers libéré* can be seen as musical through its rhythmical patterning. In addition, I shall demonstrate that Eliot strove to 'get beyond' (4) language by creating a 'music of imagery' (Murray 1991, 18) and that in doing so Eliot attempted to go beyond poetry to a heightened sense of spirituality.

Most importantly, then, I hope to bridge the gap between the critics who believe that the musicality of the *Four Quartets* is present within each line of the poem, and those who suggest it is a broader question concerning the 'music of imagery' (Murray 1991, 18). I shall aim to highlight that both are in fact present in Eliot's *Four Quartets*. In doing so I shall explore and reassess the relationship between music and *vers libéré* in Eliot's work. In investigating the influence of musical ideas upon the

¹⁵ Significantly Zukofsky referred to his technique as 'imagism in music' (1981, 81) and claimed in reference to *The Cantos* that the '...body of what is seen is in "the music"' (81).

conception of a freer verse I shall turn to Ezra Pound, by whom Eliot is known to have been influenced.

I hope to highlight that Pound's thoughts were often related to music, and that there are similarities between his ideas on poetry, a freer verse form, melopoeia, absolute rhythm, and Eliot's conception of 'the music of poetry' (Eliot 1957, 26). Certainly, Pound and Eliot were consistently preoccupied with the dilemma of representation and form. Both poets aimed towards a more musical poetry and felt that by focusing on music they could provide a better medium of communication. Pound often wrote criticism on music and harmony, but his criticism on the relationship between music and poetry is of particular importance vis-à-vis his influence on T. S. Eliot (Nadel 2007, 19). It is through an analysis of this criticism that we see that the interrelationship between a freer verse form and music is not, as Charles O. Hartman claims, a 'musical fallacy' (1980, 23). Yet, whilst it is essential with any musical analogy to focus closely on an analysis of the text, doing so should enable me to move into a broader discussion of Eliot's musicality. Thus in this thesis I also intend to explore the wider implications of Eliot's musicality. I shall show how the musicality seen in Eliot's use of *vers libéré* is developed in his music of imagery, demonstrating that the sense of variety in his use of *vers libéré* is also evident in his musical patterning of imagery.

Finally, throughout this thesis I shall examine the debate surrounding poetry and belief in Eliot's work. It is my contention that Eliot's use of figurative music in *Four Quartets* offers a resolution to his seemingly paradoxical views on the relationship between poetry and belief. I shall emphasize that Eliot turned to the imitation of

music as a new vehicle for expression in *Four Quartets*, and propound that, in turning towards figurative music, Eliot was attempting to find a means of articulating his new-found Christian beliefs in a manner that was not overtly dogmatic. Moreover, I shall illustrate how the influence of French Symbolism was in many ways paramount in shaping Eliot's ideas on figurative music within poetry, and that it was through the influence of poets such as Mallarmé and Baudelaire that, for Eliot, figurative music became linked with ideas of spirituality. It is my main contention, then, that Eliot transforms the influences of French Symbolism and Pound into what is, as he called it, a 'music of poetry' (Eliot 1957, 26).

In essence I shall propound that in *Four Quartets* we can see Eliot's 'music of poetry' on both a formalistic level, within the musical rhythms of *vers libéré*, and a metaphorical level of imagery, structure and symbolism. Additionally, I shall also highlight that Eliot's use of figurative music is integral to a full understanding of *Four Quartets* and the broader critical questions it raises; including the relationship between poetry, belief, and Eliot's Christian beliefs in general. Ultimately, I shall conclude that even in Eliot's different approaches towards the musicality of poetry there is an underlying thread that links them together, and that this is integral to how Eliot conveys his Christian beliefs in *Four Quartets*.

CHAPTER 1

‘BURNT NORTON’

The natural place to begin a discussion of *Four Quartets* is with the two Greek fragments from Heraclitus which, in addition to acting as a preface to ‘Burnt Norton’, shed considerable light on the poem as a whole (Oser 2009, 218). The first fragment translates as follows: ‘Though the word belongs to all in common, the many live as though they had a wisdom of their own’ (Crane 1987, 10). The spiritual nature of the poem then is hinted at from the outset, and by using this as a preface, Eliot subtly points towards the fact that spirituality and religion are a central aspect throughout the poem (10). More specifically, this first Greek fragment raises the issue of the divide between one’s own wisdom, and that of a higher spiritual wisdom (Reibetanz 1983, 20). Interestingly, Eliot discussed the separation between these two forms of wisdom shortly before writing ‘Burnt Norton’:

We are likely to assume as eternal truths things that in fact have only been taken for granted by a small body of people or for a very short period of time... human wisdom... cannot be separated from divine wisdom without tending to become merely worldly wisdom, as vain as folly itself.

(1936a, 119-21)

Significantly though, the fragment from Heraclitus is far less didactic than Eliot’s essay in 1936, which comes across as preaching or at the very least overt moralising. In this respect then, the first fragment reveals a key aspect of Eliot’s poetic method in *Four Quartets*. Throughout this thesis I shall suggest that Eliot is able to reinforce the

pervading sense of Christianity within the poem, but in a subtle manner that avoids didacticism.¹

The second Greek fragment translates as: ‘The way up and the way down is one and the same’ (Crane 1987, 11). It points to Heraclitus’s fascination with determining how the temporal, ever-changing reality which we inhabit, could be engrained with an eternal constant underneath it (11). Heraclitus saw the constant succession of changes that defined life as related to the movement of the elements (Milward 1968, 13): ‘Fire lives in the death of earth, and air lives in the death of fire; water lives in the death of air, earth in the death of water’ (Diels 1906, 73). Essentially Heraclitus’s ‘theory of cosmic change’ (Bodelson 1958, 33) can be summarized by the notion that ‘All matter is a state of flux’ (33), and the emphasis placed on movement and recurring patterns is crucial to the poem. Indeed, as Crane suggests: ‘The idea of pattern and detail... is deeply embedded in the *Four Quartets*, as is the essential circularity, the return upon itself of all pattern’ (1987, 12). In fact, a pattern is engrained in the very framework of *Four Quartets* as each section is divided into five parts, each repeating, developing and recapitulating various themes in different ways (Litz 1993, 179).

Yet as Brooker points out: ‘Repetition is not only evident in the overall skeleton or frame of *Four Quartets*’ (1993, 96), but it is a central factor in the musical patterning of the poem and adds to its unified sensibility. It is also my contention that Eliot does not attempt to convey meaning directly within *Four Quartets*, but rather seeks to express it through a musical pattern. This musical patterning exists both in the form

¹ Williams suggests that: ‘With his imagery and language Eliot continued the Romantic programme of using ambiguity to make the infinite appear through the finite’ (1991, 214). However, I shall suggest that rather than following the Romantic programme of ambiguity, it makes more sense to see Eliot as specifically adapting the influence of the French Symbolists, and I shall develop this idea in the following chapters.

of *vers libéré*, and in the repetition of words, symbols and imagery which he continually reintroduces and develops throughout the poem.² In many ways this patterning is central to both the subject matter of the poem and its structure (94). Yet, most importantly, this pattern of repetition originates from the influence of music on Eliot. Certainly, it is the ‘basic recycling of material – departure and return’ (Barndollar 2000, 189) which is ‘the primary musical element Eliot uses in his poems’ (189). Significantly, Eliot himself claimed that: ‘The use of recurrent themes is as natural to poetry as to music’ (1957, 38). Clearly, then, Eliot felt that repetition and recurrence were aspects of music which could be used effectively in his poetry.

For Eliot it was partly through the use of repetition that he was able to ‘replace[s] metrical certainties’ (Hartman 1980, 126), thus creating a more fluid and indeed ‘musical’ verse in *Four Quartets*. Moreover, in doing so Eliot was able to reinforce meaning. Thus, for example, in the opening passage of ‘Burnt Norton’, Eliot reinforces the inescapable ‘enchainment’ (Eliot 1969, 173) of time through the patterning of the words ‘time’, ‘past’ and ‘future’. The continual ringing out of the word ‘time’ in lines one to five is, as Weinig points out, almost ‘chime-like’ (1982, 1). This ‘chime-like’ (1) effect can be seen to act as a premonition of the bell signalling death in part IV, and thus serves to highlight the inevitable end to temporal time: ‘Time and the bell have buried the day,/The black cloud carries the sun away’ (Eliot 1969, 174). In addition, through the frequent repetition of the word ‘present’, Eliot emphasizes that time is ‘present in’ (171) all forms of time, and thus further reinforces the statement ‘all time is eternally present’ (171). It is through these repetitions that ‘Burnt Norton’ conveys a sense of timelessness, where time is ‘eternally present’ (171)

² Crucially, as Jewel Spears Brooker suggests: ‘The pattern emerges through repetition’ (1993, 91).

and as such ‘unredeemable’ (171). Evidently Eliot’s patterning of specific words is most striking in this philosophically pensive passage, and throughout his lifetime Eliot was very much concerned with language and the use of words (Weinig 1982, ix).³ Certainly the ‘musicality’ of *Four Quartets* is achieved in part through the ‘feelings, inhering... in particular words or phrases or images’ (Eliot 1951, 18). Crucially, Eliot sees such words and phrases in specifically musical terms, claiming that ‘the music of verse is inseparable from the meanings and associations of words’ (1942, 152).

Moreover, whilst in the opening passage the constant repetition of the word ‘time’ (along with ‘past’, ‘present’ and ‘future’) reinforces the inevitability of time, so do the departures from such repetitions (Hartman 1980, 127). Thus, for example, the use of the word ‘eternally’ solidifies the entire opening passage by unifying the words ‘past’, ‘future’ and ‘present’ (127). Interestingly, Eliot only brings in the first strong sense of traditional poetic rhythm in the line: ‘All time is unredeemable’ (1969, 171). In doing so, Eliot underlines the significance of the word ‘unredeemable’, which in turn reinforces the essence of the preceding line, and suggests that ‘all time is eternally present’ (171). Thus we can see that, as Eliot said of Kipling, equally for Eliot there is: ‘no single word or phrase which calls too much attention to itself, or which is not there for the sake of the total effect...’ (1942, 150).

Such a technique resonates with Pound’s own poetic. For example, in his essay on ‘Cavalcanti’, Pound expresses a similar concern when discussing the concept of the ‘Ornament’ (Jackson 1968, 142): ‘In Guido the “figure”, the strong metaphoric or “picturesque” expression is there... to convey or to interpret a definite meaning. In

³ Eliot claimed that: ‘It is the business of the writer as artist to preserve the beauty and precision of the language’ (1940, 774).

Petrarch it is ornament, the prettiest ornament he could find, but not an irreplaceable ornament' (Pound 1954, 154). The 'Ornament', according to Pound, is anything contained within a poem which is used merely as a decorative embellishment, but is not essential to the meaning (Jackson 1968, 142): 'embroidery of language, this talk about the matter, rather than presentation' (Pound 1954, 29). In the *ABC of Reading* Pound develops this point further, where he suggests that rather than being preoccupied with 'the prettiest ornament' (154), '...the good writer chooses his words for their "meaning"' (Pound 1934, 22). Furthermore, he establishes that 'meaning is not a set, cut-off thing like the move of knight or pawn on a chess-board. It comes up with roots, with associations, with how and where the word is familiarly used, or where it has been used brilliantly or memorably' (22). Pound's dismissal of the 'Ornament' and his notion of 'meaning' (22) in the *ABC of Reading* strike a chord with Eliot's poetic presentation in *Four Quartets*. Thus, as with Marianne Moore, there is a 'conscious and complete appreciation of every word, and in relation to every other word, as it goes by' (Eliot 1923, 595). Crucially, in *Four Quartets* this takes the form of musical patterning and repetition of words. Through this technique Eliot ensures that the 'meanings and associations of words' (1942, 152) are tied up with the 'music of verse' (152), which in turn serves to heighten the meaning.

Eliot continues to use the musical patterning of words throughout *Four Quartets*, and it is evident later on in 'Burnt Norton'.

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.

(1969, 175)

Once again, in this passage from section V of 'Burnt Norton', Eliot creates a musical patterning through the repetition of words in order to enhance the meaning. For example, in this passage the recurrence of 'only' and 'words' creates a lulling effect of meditative stillness (Hartman 1980, 123). The fact that such patterning is inherently musical is highlighted by Eliot himself, when elucidating this practice in 'The Music of Poetry'. Eliot propounds that 'the music of a word is, so to speak, at a point of intersection' (1957, 32-33):

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... This is an 'allusiveness' which is not the fashion or eccentricity of a peculiar type of poetry; but an allusiveness which is in the nature of words, and which is equally the concern of every kind of poet.

(32-33)

As this passage makes clear, Eliot has used the 'allusiveness' (1957, 33) that is engrained within 'the nature of words' (33) and crafted it into a form of musical technique within *Four Quartets* (Reibetanz 1983, 48). Thus as we read a section from *Four Quartets*, we hear at the same time echoes of other sections, as the words from one section evoke other parts of the poem. This is no doubt what Eliot was referring to when he stated:

... I find that I enjoy, and 'understand', a piece of music better for knowing it well, simply because I have at any moment during its performance a memory of the part that has preceded and a memory of the part that is still to come. Ideally, I should like to be able to hold the whole of a great symphony in my mind at once.

(Eliot 1958, xiv)

Eliot, then, through repetition creates what Pound called a ‘fluid force’ (Pound 1970a, 89), ‘a world of moving energies... magnetisms that take form, that are seen, or that border the visible’ (Pound 1954, 154).

As we have seen, the notion of repetition is central to the musicality of *Four Quartets*, and it is key to the passage of time itself. Throughout *Four Quartets* Eliot explores the concept of time, alongside the concept of eternity (George 1962, 133): he suggests that without eternity, time would be essentially meaningless.⁴ If all ‘time’ is simply an ongoing never-ending cycle of repetition, it would ultimately be void of significance: ‘What might have been is an abstraction/Remaining a perpetual possibility/Only in a world of speculation’ (Eliot 1969, 171).

The rose-garden experience is the first moment in the *Quartets* where there is a ‘point of intersection of the timeless/With time’ (Eliot 1969, 189-190). It is an instance of one of those rare moments which occur in temporal time, as well as being outside it. Such moments as these: ‘the moment in the rose-garden,/The moment in the harbour where the rain beat,/The moment in the draughty church at smokefall’ (173) – ultimately overcome the dilemma of time (Brooker 1993, 93). As Brooker insightfully suggests, ‘it is these places which permit glimpses of what is beyond place; they constitute, in a special sense, a way to transcendence’ (95). The ordinary conception of time does not allow such moments: ‘Time past and time future/Allow

⁴ As Matthiessen points out, ‘... the chief contrast around which Eliot constructs this poem is that between the view of time as a mere continuum, and the difficult paradoxical Christian view of how man lives both “in and out of time,” how he is immersed in the flux and yet can penetrate to the eternal by apprehending timeless existence within time and above it’ (1947, 183).

but a little consciousness' (Eliot 1969, 173). Hence, as Eliot states in *The Rock*, the realm of time:

Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.

(147)

Eliot suggests in 'Burnt Norton' that only such fleeting moments as those in the rose-garden are able to restore the 'Ridiculous... waste sad time/Stretching before and after' (176): 'Only through time time is conquered' (173). However, the experience in the rose-garden is 'Sudden' (176), 'Quick' (176), and ultimately fleeting: 'Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind/Cannot bear very much reality' (172). As Eliot expresses later in 'The Dry Salvages': 'For most of us, there is only the unattended/Moment, the moment in and out of time,/The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight' (190). For the vast majority, we only get mere glimpses or 'hints and guesses' (190) of transcendence. Moreover, even when we do, Eliot suggests that we may miss its significance: 'We had the experience but missed the meaning' (186).

At this point I must consider another central aspect of my reading of *Four Quartets*, which is the issue of poetry and belief. There is often an evident tension that exists between poetry and belief in Eliot's later work, and Eliot underwent an ongoing struggle to determine the appropriate relationship or balance that should exist between them. Indeed, the question of belief and how it ought to be related to poetry engrossed Eliot throughout the latter half of the 1920s, and these concerns emerged in both *Ash-Wednesday* and *Four Quartets*. Eliot was anxious about the disastrous effects a close cohesion between poetry and belief could bring about, and he makes

this apparent in the Preface of the 1928 Edition of *The Sacred Wood*: ‘...certainly poetry is not the inculcation of morals, or the direction of politics; and no more is it religion or an equivalent of religion, except by some monstrous abuse of words’ (1928a, viii –ix). One could assume then that Eliot felt poetry and belief should be kept separate.

However, Eliot’s opinions on the relationship between poetry and belief are far from clear cut.⁵ At first his inclination towards a possible link between poetry and religious belief was evasive, with Eliot stating that his conversion had led him to think about ‘the relation of poetry to the spiritual and social life of its time and of other times’ (1928a, viii). He then went on to claim that poetry ‘certainly has something to do with morals and with religion, and even with politics perhaps, though we cannot say what’ (x).

If, however, we look at some of T. S. Eliot’s further comments, we see how radically different his opinion on the connection between poetry and belief appears to be:

If you deny the theory that full poetic appreciation is possible without belief in what the poet believed... you will be forced to admit that there is very little poetry that you can appreciate... If, on the other hand, I push *my* theory to the extreme, I find myself in as great a difficulty.

(1951, 269-70)

⁵ Importantly, Warner points out that when investigating *Four Quartets* any ‘...simple dichotomy between what Eliot termed “philosophical belief and poetic assent” ... would undercut the challenge of the Quartets...’ (1999, 120).

This question of whether ‘the reader must share the beliefs of the poet in order to enjoy the poetry fully’ (269) is a question Eliot brings up in the essay on Dante, and it is one which is central to *Four Quartets*.

Many critics have claimed that Eliot never reached a final decision on how to maintain the ‘integrity of poetry’ (Eliot 1928a, viii), which was for Eliot the requirement to ‘consider it primarily as poetry and not another thing’ (viii). However, it is my contention that Eliot preserved the ‘integrity of poetry’ (viii) in *Four Quartets*, and that in doing so, Eliot ensured that readers can enjoy the poem without feeling they are being preached to or that they need to believe in religion to appreciate it fully. In using music figuratively Eliot was trying to achieve a higher level of communication to investigate religion, Christianity and spiritual life. As Moody aptly states:

Getting the better of words is of the essence of *Four Quartets*. Its major design is to so use words as to make them mean what is beyond words; or to put the same idea another way, to so transform the understanding of the world which is in its words that it will be perceived as the divine Word in action.

(1994, 147)

Yet whilst I agree with Moody that this is ultimately the ‘essence of *Four Quartets*’ (1994, 147), he overlooks the difficult balance that Eliot had to maintain between belief and poetry. Eliot did not want to aspire to be a mystic or become a condescending preacher. Thus, as Bergsten warns:

The *Four Quartets* are religious poetry, but Eliot has firmly declined the suggestion that he was disclosing a revelation in writing them. As a formulation of experience - religious though it be - the *Quartets* employ

ideas in a different purpose than the analytic discourse of Eliot's prose writings.

(1973, 120)

Essentially, then, I am propounding that Eliot aspired towards a 'music of poetry' (Eliot 1957, 26) in order to achieve a 'religious poetry' (Bergsten 1973, 120) that was not too explicit in its intentions. He sought the sense of spirituality he detected in his favourite French Symbolists, one which was evasive and not direct. Equally, as with the French Symbolists, throughout *Four Quartets* Eliot's imagery and symbolism is ambiguous as he constantly aspires towards the condition of music.⁶

This is certainly the case with the rose-garden experience in 'Burnt Norton'. Inside the garden contained in 'a formal pattern' (Eliot 1969, 172), the 'empty alley' (172) and 'the drained pool' (172) point towards a moment of transcendence: '...the lotos rose, quietly, quietly' (172). There is an intentional ambiguity here, so that 'What might have been and what has been' (172) is not clear. This is reinforced by the fact that the garden itself contains 'unheard music' (172) and 'the unseen eyebeam' (172). However, despite its hazy, indistinct nature it 'Point(s) to one end, which is always present' (172). This moment of transcendence is 'the still point of the turning world' (173).

The moment in the rose-garden is rich in symbolic associations and connotations (Milward 1968, 20).⁷ Moreover, Eliot shrouds the rose-garden episode in a sense of

⁶ I shall come to elaborate on the influence of the French Symbolists in the forthcoming chapters.

⁷ As well as pointing towards the garden of Eden, the rose-garden also captures childhood innocence ('our first world' (Eliot 1969, 171)) and youthful love (Milward 1968, 20): '...for the leaves were full of children,/Hidden excitedly, containing laughter' (Eliot 1969, 172). In addition, Ellis suggests that the rose-garden episode also points towards past regret and things we failed to achieve (2009, 103): 'the door we never opened/Into the rose-garden' (Eliot 1969, 171). Finally, there are several literary

mysticism, through musical patterning. Take, for example, the repeated use of repetition in the line: ‘And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly’ (Eliot 1969, 172), or the repeated use of ‘Go, go, go’ (172) used in the urgent call of the thrush: ‘Go, go, go, said the bird’ (172). Most interestingly, Eliot also used this device of repetition to convey the religious sensibility of the Lady in *Ash-Wednesday* (Reibetanz 1983, 28): ‘The Lady is withdrawn/In a white gown, to contemplation, in a white gown’ (Eliot 1969, 91). Eliot, in his essay on Dante, suggested that he was able to ‘realize the inapprehensible in visual images’ (1951, 267-68), and that:

Nowhere in poetry has experience so remote from ordinary experience been expressed so concretely, by a masterly use of that imagery of *light* which is the form of certain types of mystical experience.

(267)

Eliot’s comment here, though, could equally be applied to his own use of imagery in ‘Burnt Norton’.⁸ Take the image of the pool, for example, where in a glimpse of momentary enchantment the pool fills ‘with water out of sunlight’ (Eliot 1969, 172), and ‘The surface glittered out of heart of light’ (172). Here, as Cook propounds, this image of light is ‘both beneath and beyond... superficial illumination’ (2001, 89). Thus, as Eliot said of Dante, his ‘imagery of *light*’ (1951, 267) can be seen to create a ‘mystical experience’ (267).⁹ These moments where an image of ‘light’ appears to signal a moment of transcendence are repeated throughout ‘Burnt Norton’, but are

resonances which the rose-garden has. For the importance of Kipling’s ‘They’ see: Helen Gardner, *The Composition of ‘Four Quartets’* (London: Faber, 1978), 39-40. For the significance of *Alice in Wonderland* see: Grover Smith, *T. S. Eliot and the Use of Memory* (London: Associated University Press, 1996), 93-94.

⁸ As Reibetanz succinctly suggests, Eliot’s imagery: ‘realizes the inapprehensible while leaving it still a mystery’ (1983, 28).

⁹ Interestingly this phrase ‘heart of light’ (Eliot 1969, 172), also produces an ironic contrast with the hyacinth garden in *The Waste Land*. There the phrase ‘Looking into the heart of light, the silence’ (62) embodied complete vacancy, which is in stark contrast to the moment of transcendence it signals here in the rose-garden (Scofield 1988, 205).

always fleeting, such as the ‘white light still and moving’ (Eliot 1969, 173) or the repeated moment of the rose-garden at the end:

Sudden in a shaft of sunlight
Even while the dust moves
There rises the hidden laughter
Of children in the foliage

(176).

Moreover, light is also captured in the image of the kingfisher’s wing which, as Cook highlights, is ‘epiphanic’ (2001, 88) and represents a ‘kind of meeting point of spheres of existence’ (88).

...After the kingfisher's wing
Has answered light to light, and is silent, the light is still
At the still point of the turning world.

(Eliot 1969, 175)

Significantly the image of the kingfisher’s wing occurs in the lyric section of ‘Burnt Norton’. Traditionally the lyric sections have been seen as the most openly religious aspect of *Four Quartets*, and admittedly Eliot’s Christian message does become most ostensible in these sections. However, the musicality of these sections is also evident. As Brady points out, ‘... the term “lyric” has been applied to poems whose musical roots are apparent’ (1978, 5). Certainly in the lyric sections we see a continuation of the ‘affinity of the poem to music’ (5) which exists throughout *Four Quartets*, and Eliot uses this to point subtly towards his religious message. In the lyric section in ‘Burnt Norton’ Eliot raises the issue of death: ‘Time and the bell have buried the day’ (Eliot 1969, 174). This is underscored further by the fact that Eliot uses images

associated with the earth, such as that of the sunflower and the yew (Brady 1978, 75). Yet, most interestingly, Eliot points to religious meaning in response to the 'black cloud' (Eliot 1969, 174) of death, not in striking Christian terms, but in the subtle and mysterious image of the kingfisher's wing which is merged with the 'light' at the 'still point'. Thus, as we can see, Eliot develops and recapitulates 'Light' to have spiritual connotations.

Yet crucially, Eliot also illustrates the rapturous delight of the moment in the rose-garden through his use of rhythm, and not just through imagery (Reibetanz 1983, 29). The concept of music distinctly influenced Eliot's use of rhythm. In this respect Eliot's essay 'The Music of Poetry' is most enlightening, and offers us clear insight into Eliot's ideas on the relationship between music, poetry and rhythm:

...I believe that the properties in which music concerns the poet most nearly, are the sense of rhythm and the sense of structure... 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.

(1957, 38)

We can see then that Eliot believed the use of both 'rhythm' (38) and 'structure' (38) in *Four Quartets* is musical. This notion of seeing rhythm as 'musical' can be reinforced by Ezra Pound's theories and ideas on music and its relationship to poetry. Thus, rather than following the critical tendency of looking towards music to enlighten our conception of Eliot's 'music of poetry', it is my contention that it was purely the concept of music which influenced Eliot, and that this stemmed

predominantly from literary sources and literary practices.¹⁰ Let us turn then to Ezra Pound, with whom Eliot's ideas often resonate.

Pound's poetics were a considerable influence on Eliot with regard to the musicality of his poetry. Unsurprisingly, Pound is often linked to music as it was central to his life, and his fascination with music often inspired his poetry (Pound 1978, 3).¹¹ Ultimately, Pound saw music as such an integral part of poetry, that any definition of poetry which failed to mention it was to him 'indefensible' (1954, 437): 'Poetry is a composition of words set to music. Most other definitions of it are indefensible, or, worse, metaphysical' (437). Furthermore, Pound felt that 'in order to ensure the highest fruition of both arts, music and poetry must in some way be wedded together' (Pound 1978, 4).¹² This belief is reinforced in several of his statements. Indeed, Pound felt so strongly about the connection between music and poetry that he claimed without a sense of musicality poetry would decay: 'The proportion or quality of the music may, and does, vary; but poetry withers and "dries out" when it leaves music, or at least an imagined music, too far behind it' (1954, 437). Pound also conveyed this notion in the beginning of *ABC of Reading*, stating that 'music begins to atrophy when it departs too far from the dance' (1934, xii) and poetry 'when it gets too far from music' (xii). Evidently then, Pound felt that music was not only crucial to any definition of poetry but to poets themselves:

¹⁰ As Thomas R. Rees points out: 'although Eliot's control of accentual sequences is assuredly refined and intensified by his musicological perceptions, the influence here is still primarily literary...' (1969, 68).

¹¹ As Schafer suggests, music: '...had a profound influence on his poetry, both in its sound, and in its shape and structure' (Pound 1978, 3).

¹² In fact, Pound's experiments with opera came about as a result of this firm belief in the bond between words and music (Stock 1964, 106). Pound evasively stated as much in 1933 to Agnes Bedford (when discussing in a letter his arrangement of Provençal by Sordello): 'music fits the words and not some other words' (106).

Poets who are not interested in music are, or become, bad poets. I would almost say that poets should never be too long out of touch with musicians. Poets who will not study music are defective.

(1954, 437)

The importance of music's influence on Pound's poetics, then, is clearly visible.

Moreover, the significance of Pound's influence on Eliot is highlighted in a review of Pound's *Collected Poems* that Eliot wrote for *The Dial* in 1928:

I have in recent years, cursed Mr Pound often enough; for I am never sure that I can call my verse my own; just when I am most pleased with myself, I find that I have only caught up some echo from a verse of Pound's.

(1928b, 5)

Nevertheless, as Goodwin points out: 'Pound often made a distinction between poets whom one could imitate and poets from whom one could learn' (1966, 114) and as we shall see, Pound proved to be one of the latter for Eliot. Thus in the same way that Pound imitated the techniques of writers such as Browning and Swinburne before making poetry that was clearly his own, so we shall see that Eliot absorbed Pound's poetics, turning them towards his own 'music of poetry' in *Four Quartets*.¹³ Eliot himself stated in a manner typical of Pound: 'Technique... can only be learned, the more difficult parts of it, by absorption' (1918a, 61).

Still, despite seeing worth in his critical comments, Eliot in his early remarks on Pound is fairly critical: 'Pound is rather intelligent as a talker: his verse is well-meaning but touchingly incompetent; but his remarks are sometimes good' (2009, 93).

¹³ For an in-depth and insightful elaboration of the ways in which Pound has taken influence from writers such as Swinburne, Browning, Yeats and Rossetti see Thomas H. Jackson, *The Early Poetry of Ezra Pound*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968).

Furthermore, in the beginning of their friendship Eliot was not yet conscious of how their working relationship would develop: 'he is not the sort of person whom I wish to be intimate with my affairs... (he) has been and will be useful; but my acquaintance with him is primarily professional' (128). In many respects these comments characterize their engagement with one another as one which is difficult to explain. Hence, as Stillman correctly establishes, 'their relation... resists easy classification' (2011, 243). Questions still remain surrounding what Pound's influence on Eliot was and to what extent it affected Eliot's poetry, and perhaps these questions will never be fully answered (243). Eliot himself seemed to recognize such a difficulty when he stated that, 'I cannot say what Pound's critical writing will mean to those who have not known the man, because to me it is inextricably woven with his conversation' (1946, 331).

The key to looking at Pound's influence on Eliot, however, is to address Eliot's own ideas surrounding literary influence. In this respect Eliot's essay 'Reflections on Contemporary Poetry', which was printed in *The Egoist* in July 1919, is particularly important. Here Eliot states that:

There is a kind of stimulus for a writer which is more important than the stimulus of admiring another writer. Admiration leads most often to imitation; we can seldom remain long unconscious of our imitating another...

(1996, 399)

Thus Eliot reiterates the importance of moving past imitation, and being able to absorb literary influence. Eliot sees literary influence in the same vein as passion: 'It is a cause of development, like personal intimacies in life. Like personal intimacies in

life, it may and probably will pass, but it will be ineffaceable' (400). The fact that Eliot draws a parallel between literary influence and passion in 'Reflections on Contemporary Poetry' makes it particularly relevant to use for unlocking Pound's influence on Eliot, as a considerable part of their correspondence was scabrous. It has been well documented that their playful remarks often involved aspects of the sexual and Pound was one of the few to whom Eliot chose to circulate his bawdy King Bolo poems. Most tellingly, one of their private jokes is (Stillman 2011, 250): 'on each Occasion/ Ezra performed the caesarean Operation' (Eliot 2009, 626). This particular comment incorporates their ribald exchanges alongside Pound's critical engagement with Eliot's work (Stillman 2011, 250). Thus although in 'Reflections on Contemporary Poetry' Eliot is looking at the influence of what he states is 'probably a dead author' (1996, 399), this should not exclude us from looking at Pound in light of this essay, especially as Eliot does not explicitly refer to any specific author as such.

In 'Reflections on Contemporary Poetry' Eliot goes on to explain the passion he sees as literary influence, stating that it is 'a feeling of profound kinship, or rather of a peculiar personal intimacy' (1996, 399). Certainly Eliot had such 'a peculiar personal intimacy' (399) with Ezra Pound, which is apparent in Pound's blunt annotations in *The Waste Land*.¹⁴ But exigently, for Eliot the most important aspect of this 'peculiar personal intimacy' (399) is that:

... it secures us against forced admiration, from attending to writers simply because they are great. We are never at ease with people who, to us, are merely great. We are not ourselves great enough for that... We may not be great lovers; but if we had a genuine affair with a real poet of any degree we have acquired a monitor to avert us when we are not in love.

(400)

¹⁴ See: T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*, ed. by Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1971).

Thus for Eliot literary influence should allow us to absorb what we want and not lead to wholehearted acceptance as this will merely lead to imitation. As Eliot stated of Henry James, 'the "influence" of James hardly matters, to be influenced by a writer is to have a chance inspiration from him; or to take what one wants; or to see things one has overlooked' (1918b, 1). Significantly, then, we can see that Pound's influence on Eliot was not one of imitation, but the truer form of literary influence.

Eliot abstained from referring to Pound in relation to influence: 'I avoid the word influence, for there are dangers in estimating a poet by his influence. It takes at least two to make an influence: the man who exerts it and the man who experiences it' (1946, 336-7). But as Eliot, talking of literary influence, stated that: 'The imperative intimacy arouses for the first time a real, an unshakeable confidence... We have not borrowed, we have been quickened' (1919, 39), equally we can see that Eliot's musical sensibility was not merely 'borrowed' from Pound, but was 'quickened'. Thus it makes perfect sense to talk of Pound's influence on Eliot, especially with regards to musicality as this issue greatly fascinated both Pound and Eliot. Eliot's account of Pound's *Guide to Kulchur* can be seen to sum up Eliot's response to Pound's ideas more generally, but also specifically his thoughts on Pound's theories concerning the relationship between music, poetry and rhythm: '...for the perceptive there are a good many plums, and for the judicious who know how to trim the boat with their own intelligence there is a good deal of wisdom' (Schuchard 2007, 76).

In fact, as Sarker points out, 'Eliot was indebted to Pound not only for his theory of poetry, but also for his poetic technique' (1995, 45). Pound's influence on Eliot,

then, extended to questions of both theory and technique. However, his influence on Eliot went beyond this, and Eliot himself made this clear when referring to Pound in the following manner: ‘A man who devises new rhythms is a man who extends and refines our sensibility; and that is not merely a matter of “technique”’ (1928b, 5). Rather, as I have illustrated, this is a question of literary influence.

Upon closer examination of *Four Quartets*, the connection between Pound’s and Eliot’s ideas becomes even clearer. Take, for example, the opening to ‘Burnt Norton’ where Eliot reflects upon the nature of time:

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.

(1969, 171)

What is striking about this passage is that Eliot’s use of *vers libéré* is immediately apparent. As Reibetanz points out: ‘no single line is advanced ... as the principal measure’ (1983, 29). Instead we have lines that are constantly changing from having four, to five and even three main stresses (29). The opening passage, then, is a ‘rhythmic matrix’ (Weinig 1982, 4), and through using *vers libéré* Eliot is able to avoid arbitrary use of metre or rhythm, and instead use it to heighten meaning.

Pound's ideas surrounding rhythm and metrics are particularly relevant to Eliot's use of *vers libéré*. Pound concluded that ideas do not always come to the poet in an entirely orderly or controlled form, and that consequently, following exact poetic forms would merely result in a 'crippling rhythmic falsification' (Jackson 1968, 201). Pound, then, was very much aware of a need for restraint in avoiding 'meaningless poetical trappings' (201). He conveyed this sentiment to his father in 1925 (201):

The things I'm throwing out are the 'soft' stuff, and the metrical exercises. At least what I once bluffed myself into believing were something more than exercises but which no longer convince me that I had anything to say when I wrote 'em...

(Pound 1925, 778)

This statement resonates with Eliot's own conception of rhythm which, in a similar manner to Pound, appears to veer away from arbitrary use of metrics. Eliot suggested rhythm was a 'quality ... which no system of scansion can define' (1923, 595), 'a highly personal matter... the scheme of organization of thought, feeling, and vocabulary, the way in which everything comes together' (595). Most importantly though, neither Pound nor Eliot were shunning poetic form altogether. As Pound declared,

Your practice with regular metres is a good thing; better keep in mind that (it) is practice, and that it will probably serve to get your medium pliable. No one can do good free verse who hasn't struggled with the regular...

(1950, 79)

Pound and Eliot then were ridding themselves of entrapment from rigorous poetic rules and making them more flexible, but they were not avoiding poetic form altogether.

Through the use of *vers libéré* we can see that Eliot was able to follow this mentality out. Thus, for example, after the lively, fast-paced verse which led into the rose-garden experience in 'Burnt Norton', the verse becomes more torpid, giving a stable, measured and uniform consistency (Reibetanz 1983, 29). Significantly, Eliot avoided any consistent rhythm in the opening philosophical passage on time and crucially, in doing so, Eliot sets up a noticeable contrast when using a more consistent verse. For example, the use of a four-stress rhythm in the following passage creates a stately and decorous mood:

/ / / /
There they were, dignified, invisible,
/ / / /
Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves,
/ / / /
In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air,
/ / / /
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.

(Eliot 1969, 171-172)

This use of a contrast between a consistent verse pattern and a freer one is significant as it highlights Pound's influence on Eliot's verse. In his essays on Dolmetsch, Pound spoke at length on the 'freedom' he used in his own poetry: 'Art is a departure from fixed positions; felicitous departure from a norm' (Pound 1978, 50). Eliot himself

was aware of this aspect of Pound's poetry and stated that for Pound 'freedom' (1978, 172) is 'a state of tension due to (a) constant opposition between free and strict' (172). Certainly this state of 'freedom' is evident in *Four Quartets*, and Eliot consistently uses *vers libéré* to great effect. Eliot elaborated on this technique and it is most certainly worth quoting here in full, as his comments are extremely insightful:

... the most interesting verse which has yet been written in our language has been done either by taking a very simple form, like the iambic pentameter, and constantly withdrawing from it, or taking no form at all, and constantly approximating to a very simple one. It is this contrast between fixity and flux, this unperceived evasion of monotony, which is the very life of verse... We may therefore formulate as follows: the ghost of some simple metre should lurk behind the arras in even the 'freest' verse; to advance menacingly as we doze, and withdraw as we rouse. Or, freedom is only truly freedom when it appears against the background of an artificial limitation.

(1975, 33-35)

Clearly, as we have seen in 'Burnt Norton' thus far, Eliot can be seen to be 'taking a very simple form... and constantly withdrawing from it' (33). Yet, whilst Eliot gave no name to such a technique, this method of 'prosodic approximation' (Hartman 1980, 113) might usefully be termed *vers libéré*.¹⁵

Pound famously ordered the new generation of poets 'to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome' (Pound 1954, 3), and Eliot was certainly bound to 'the musical phrase' rather than the 'metronome'. Looked at in isolation, Pound's remark could be seen as equivocal, in the same way that Pater's aspirations towards the condition of music in *The Renaissance* were seemingly vague (Hartman 1980, 5): 'All art constantly aspires to the condition of music' (Pater 1998,

¹⁵ As my introduction highlighted, *vers libéré* was seen as starting from within a form, and breaking free from it.

86). However, when looked at in relation to the critical climate of the time, it becomes clear that Pound was advocating a freer verse form.

Most interestingly, in Pound's conception of a freer verse form the issue of rhythm became a matter of huge significance. Importantly, rhythm is seen in relation to music, and this is made evident in the Cavalcanti translations of 1910, where he had said:

...it should be possible to show that any given rhythm implies about it a complete form—fugue, sonata, I cannot say what form, but a form, perfect, complete. Ergo, the rhythm set in a line of poetry connotes its symphony, which, had we a little more skill, we could score for orchestra.

(Pound 1978, 469)

Pound asserted that what was crucial to poetry was the particular shape of the rhythms, and that this sense of 'rhythmic invention' (Grant 1982, 10) was just as important to the poet as to the musician:

No one is so foolish as to suppose that a musician using 'four four' time is compelled to use always four quarter notes in each bar, or in 'seven-eights' time to use seven eight notes uniformly in each bar. He may use one $\frac{1}{2}$, one $\frac{1}{4}$ and one $\frac{1}{8}$ rest, or any such combination as he may happen to choose or find fitting. To apply this musical truism to verse is to employ *vers libre*.

(Pound 1954, 93)

This musical sense of 'rhythmic invention' (Grant 1982, 10) is particularly evident in Pound's early poetry. Take, for example, the line 'the wandering of many roads' (Pound 1977, 79) in 'Praise of Ysolt' or 'Of such his splendour as their compass is' (7) in 'Grace before Song'. Jackson claims that such phrasing is 'curiously arbitrary' (1968, 126) but when seen in light of Pound's comments on rhythm it is clearly an

attempt to capture a sense of ‘musicality’ within his poetry, and avoid a strict monotonous verse which Pound consciously aims to avert. This is apparent in the poem ‘Camaraderie’: ‘and fast/My pulses run, knowing thy thought hath passed/That beareth thee as doth the wind a rose’ (Pound 1933, 176). Pound’s musicality in his poetry becomes even more evident in his later verse, and this is once again seen through his sense of rhythm (Jackson 1968, 127).

We can see, on various occasions, an attempt by Pound to liberate rhythm: but always within the bounds of poetic form, which is something he continually voiced in his criticism:

Any work of art is a compound of freedom and order. It is perfectly obvious that art hangs between chaos on one side and mechanics on the other. A pedantic insistence upon detail tends to drive out ‘major form’. A firm hold on major form makes for a freedom of detail.

(Pound 1978, 47-48)

Take Canto forty-five, for instance:

/ / / /
With usura hath no man a house of good stone (Pound 1964, 239).

Here Pound is able to use a ‘manipulation of spondees’ (Jackson 1968, 127) to create a flowing verse form, and it is a technique which he uses continually: ‘As you move among the bright trees...Make a clear sound’ (Pound 1933, 60), ‘ah, see the tentative/Movements and the slow feet’ (59). We can see, therefore, that Pound is able to use various clear stresses in order to avoid spondees subtly, and in doing so

illustrates how ‘a firm hold on major form makes for a freedom of detail’ (Pound 1978, 48).¹⁶

Similarly even where Eliot’s verse appears to fall into a clear-cut four-stress rhythm, he varies it. Consequently he can clearly be seen to be using *vers libéré*, and as the analogies with Pound illustrate, this can be viewed as musical. For example, he freely inserts a line with six stresses:

/ / / / / /
Along the empty alley, into the box circle (Eliot 1969, 172).

Moreover, in this same preponderantly four-stressed passage, Eliot also intersperses lines with three stresses, both in the line,

/ / /
And the bird called, in response to (172)

and again here,

/ / /
Had the look of flowers that are looked at (172).

Eliot consistently uses *vers libéré* through his ‘prosodic approximation’ (Hartman 1980, 113). For instance, the second line in section V of ‘Burnt Norton’ clearly resembles a normal pentameter (113):

/ / / / /
Only in time; but that which is only living (Eliot 1969, 175).

¹⁶ As Jackson illustrates, this technique is also found in *A Lume Spento*, ‘La Fraisne’, ‘Vana’ and ‘Threnos’ (1968, 127).

However, Eliot consciously breaks up this regular metricality with the following line: ‘Can only die. Words, after speech, reach’ (1969, 175). Hence Eliot moves away from any standard metrical scheme (Hartman 1980, 124). Furthermore, the line:

/ / / /
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still (Eliot 1969, 175)

nearly becomes a complete pentameter, but instead Eliot deliberately misses a syllable off to heighten the meaning (Hartman 1980, 124). In this instance, the withdrawal from the last syllable is again used in order to create a distinct musicality:

/ / / / / / /
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still/Moves perpetually in its stillness (175).

Here Eliot replaces the lost syllable ‘is’, with the use of enjambment which heightens the meaning of the phrase by imitating the perpetual movement of the Chinese jar. As Jackson points out, Pound felt that some ‘organic congruence must exist between rhythm and meaning’ (1968, 201), and this is evidently also the case for Eliot throughout *Four Quartets*.

Similarly, in line thirteen of the fifth section of ‘Burnt Norton’ Eliot again uses *vers libéré*: ‘And all is always now. Words strain’ (1969, 175). In this instance, in moving away from metrical pentameters Eliot reinforces the difficulty of writing poetry (Hartman 1980, 113): ‘Words strain,/Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,/Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,/Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place, Will not stay still’ (Eliot 1969, 175). Eliot also laments the difficult task the poet has in ‘East Coker’, where he states that ‘...every attempt/Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure’ (182), and each attempt at poetry is merely ‘...a raid

on the inarticulate/With shabby equipment always deteriorating/In the general mess of imprecision of feeling' (182).

Language itself exists within the constraints of time, and often merely becomes part of 'this twittering world' (Eliot 1969, 174). When language unaided attempts to reach or express some form of divine spirituality, all attempts ultimately result in 'failure' (182), and the only knowledge it imparts is that of an unsuccessful struggle: 'in the middle way, having had twenty years... Trying to learn to use words' (182). Hence language in itself is not able to reach a complete state of spiritual transcendence: 'Words, after speech, reach/Into the silence' (175). Furthermore even when a moment of transcendence is evident it can be denied by 'this twittering world' (174):

The Word in the desert
Is most attacked by the voices of temptation,
The crying shadow in the funeral dance,
The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera.

(175)

Yet what is at first seen as a literary dilemma for the poet, becomes merged with the still point. Indeed, although poetry is a temporal art form, it is able to achieve a timelessness which is out of temporality, and capture the stillness through a pattern (Reibetanz 1983, 47). Words are able to 'reach/Into the silence' (Eliot 1969, 175) towards a heightened spirituality through 'the form, the pattern' (175): 'Only by the form,/the pattern, Can words or music reach/The stillness' (175). Eliot himself achieves moments of transcendence through a musical patterning and repetition

throughout *Four Quartets* as a whole.¹⁷ The form, pattern and transcendence can be seen as embodied in the image of the Chinese jar which ‘Moves perpetually in its stillness’ (175). The Chinese jar is both ‘still and still moving’ (183), it is both fixed in its pattern and yet is continually moving.¹⁸ This ‘stillness’ (175) encapsulates the sense of eternity at ‘the still point of the turning world’ (173), and it is this which Eliot subtly moves towards in *Four Quartets*.

‘The still point of the turning world’ (173) is often featured within Eliot’s poetry and has been a central aspect of his poetic development. Eliot first used the notion of the still point when quoting Lancelot Andrewes in *Gerontion* (Milward 1968, 35): ‘The word within a word, unable to speak a word,/Swaddled with darkness’ (Eliot 1969, 37). He then went on to elaborate this in *Ash-Wednesday* (Milward 1968, 35): ‘Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,/The Word without a word, the Word within/The world and for the world’ (Eliot 1969, 96). The notion of the ‘still point’ is then developed fully into ‘the still point of the turning world’ (173), which is seen in *The Rock* (Milward 1968, 35): ‘The world turns and the world changes,/But one thing does not change’ (Eliot 1969, 148). Moreover, as Milward points out, ‘it is also expressed in the image of the wheel, which is deeply embedded in the history of religious and metaphysical speculation’ (1968, 35). Take, for example, *Murder in the Cathedral*: ‘the pattern is the action/And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still / Be forever still’ (Eliot 1969, 245).

¹⁷ Moreover Eliot is clearly aware of this, when in ‘East Coker’ he states: ‘You say I am repeating/ Something I have said before. I shall say it again’ (1969, 181).

¹⁸ The Chinese jar has been widely discussed in relation to ekphrasis, which Heffernan defines as ‘the verbal representation of visual representation’ (2004, 3). For more detailed discussion of ekphrasis see: Wendy Steiner, *The Colours of Rhetoric: Problems in the Relation between Modern Literature and Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), W. J. T. Mitchell, ‘Ekphrasis and the Other’, *South Atlantic Quarterly* 91, 3 (1992), 695-719, Peter Wagner, ‘Introduction: Ekphrasis, Iconotexts, and Intermediality – the State(s) of the Art(s)’ in *Icons – Texts – Iconotexts: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*, ed. Peter Wagner (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), 1-40.

The image of ‘the still point of the turning world’ (Eliot 1969, 173) is at the heart of *Four Quartets*, and is linked to the central theme of temporal time alongside eternity.¹⁹ In fact, the still point captures the divide and connection between the constant movement of temporal reality and the eternal stillness at the heart of the timeless point (Reibetanz 1983, 36). The flux is defined by ‘Desire’ (Eliot 1969, 175). This ‘Desire itself is movement/Not in itself desirable’ (175). Set against this ‘desire’, is ‘Love’ which ‘is itself unmoving,/Only the cause and end of movement,/Timeless, and undesiring’ (175). ‘The Still point’ (173), then, is God where there is ‘but one permanent point, without succession, parts, flux, or division’ (Browne 1886, 23). At such moments as those in the rose-garden we realize: ‘The inner freedom from the practical desire,/The release from action and suffering, release from the inner/And the outer compulsion...’ (Eliot 1969, 173). ‘The still point’ (173) instils life with purpose and meaning. Likewise Eliot instils ‘Burnt Norton’ with purpose and meaning through a musical patterning which is able to point towards a deeper, spiritual meaning when seen together as a whole. In fact, as I explore *Four Quartets* it should become apparent that it is very much a unified whole, and elucidating the ‘musicality’ of the poem reinforces this.²⁰ Yet, as I shall unpack, demonstrate, and develop in the forthcoming chapters, Eliot is also able to ensure the religious intensity of *Four Quartets* does not overflow into Christian didacticism by moving towards music, both in his poetic techniques and his use of ambiguous imagery and symbols.

¹⁹ As Maxwell highlights: ‘the still point evidently suggests the stillness of eternity, and contrasts with the fevered movement of the temporal’ (1952, 156).

²⁰ Contrary to Booty, therefore, who suggests that musical ‘...perspectives are partial and tend to distort the poem taken as a whole’ (1983, 4), this approach enables a clearer understanding of *Four Quartets*. Furthermore, it provides a useful means to explicate Eliot’s own Christian beliefs in relation to his poetry.

CHAPTER 2

‘EAST COKER’

The opening statement of ‘East Coker’, ‘In my beginning is my end’ (Eliot 1969, 177), brings us away from the glimpses of the universal which ‘Burnt Norton’ captured through the image of ‘the still point of the turning world’ (173). Whilst ‘Burnt Norton’ highlighted how ‘Time before and time after’ (173) is related to the ‘... one end, which is always present’ (172), ‘East Coker’ begins by looking towards ‘the waste sad time/Stretching before and after’ (176).¹ In looking towards history, Eliot highlights that without the sense of the ‘universal’ (202), a ‘beginning’ will merely result in an ‘end’. Indeed, the phrase ‘In my beginning is my end’ (177) captures the ephemeral nature of life and the inevitability of change.² In the opening passage of ‘East Coker’, Eliot is preoccupied with development and demolition, alongside death (Gish 1981, 104):

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.

(Eliot 1969, 177)

¹ As Gish points out, ‘Like “Burnt Norton”, “East Coker” begins with a speculation on the nature of time, but the focus is now on history...’ (1981, 104).

² Moreover, the phrase ‘In my beginning is my end’ reverses Mary Stuart’s motto ‘En ma fin est mon commencement’, and in doing so Eliot switches the concern from a religious sense of eternal life to the endless ‘succession’ (Eliot 1969, 177) of the past (Gish 1981, 104).

This opening image of 'succession' (177) is seen as an endless recurrence of growth and decay.³

As I illustrated in the chapter on 'Burnt Norton', we can detect throughout Eliot's *Four Quartets* the 'musical' patterning of words, phrases and images. Yet, most significantly, Eliot's 'music of poetry' is not merely decorative but is used to heighten meaning. Thus the theme of 'succession' (Eliot 1969, 177) is further emphasized through the repeated series of anapests at the start of the final four lines of the first stanza (Reibetanz 1983, 57): 'And a time... And a time... And to shake... And to shake...' (Eliot 1969, 177). Through the musical patterning of these rhythmic motifs Eliot creates the sense of a surge of succession, and in doing so underlines the constant ebb and flow in the changing flux of time. Evidently Eliot evokes a mood of endless, historical change through the repetition of syntax (Gross 1964, 173): '... or in their place... or a factory... or a by-pass' (Eliot 1969, 177). This repeated use of 'or' then reappears in the final line of this section, 'I am here/Or there, or elsewhere. In my beginning' (178). Through this musical 'diminution' (Gross 1964, 173) of the word 'or', Eliot is able to end this section of 'East Coker' with a reminder that history is a continual cycle of life and death, 'rising and falling' (Eliot 1969, 178).

In a similar manner to the opening of 'Burnt Norton', there is a musical development and recapitulation of words and phrases in 'East Coker' which is used to reinforce the cyclical nature of 'beginning(s)' and 'end(s)'. Thus, for example, in the second line Eliot states that 'Houses rise and fall' (1969, 177) which he then reiterates

³ Clearly at the beginning of 'East Coker' we have a depiction of time in terms of the cyclical repetition of 'beginning' and 'end'. As Smith points out, 'succession or flux means that nothing endures in time...' (1956, 265), which is echoed by the unidentified guest in *The Cocktail Party*: 'Ah, but we die to each other daily' (Eliot 1969, 384).

in a similar manner in line nine: 'Houses live and die' (177). Here Eliot has consciously mirrored the initial phrase 'Houses rise and fall' by using the same number of words in the phrase 'Houses live and die' (177). Evidently Eliot has developed the patterning of these phrases, so that the meaning is the same whilst the appearance is slightly different. By doing so he is able simultaneously to underscore the idea of repetition and change.

Eliot creates a similar effect in the following lines: 'Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,/Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth' (1969, 177). Here the repetition of the word 'old' creates a 'chantlike and prophetic rhythm' (Gish 1981, 104), and Eliot further evokes a sense of death in this passage through the musical patterning of the word 'ashes'. In addition, through the words 'live and die' (Eliot 1969, 177) Eliot is able to subtly engrain a sense of human mortality within the development and decay of buildings. Furthermore, the transposition of 'new fires' to 'old fires' combines the past and present within a single line, thus emphasizing how fast temporal time changes (Boaz 1979, 41): but it also simultaneously reinforces the circular nature of history and intensifies the fact that earthly existence will ultimately end in death, 'Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,/Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf' (Eliot 1969, 177).⁴

In fact, throughout *Four Quartets* (and in 'East Coker' especially) Eliot creates a musical patterning of certain words and phrases in a manner reminiscent of the motif. The motif is essentially a distinctive and recurring idea or feature and one which is elaborated on throughout a piece of music. Indeed, as Percy A. Scholes suggests,

⁴ Evidently then, as Rees aptly points out, '... the *Four Quartets* abundantly illustrate Eliot's skill in adapting a variety of formal devices, both musical and literary, to the changing flow of meaning' (1969, 68).

‘almost any passage of music will be found, on examination, to consist of a development of some motif’ (1964, 382): similarly when examined in detail, *Four Quartets* can be seen to use music figuratively and do so using recurring motifs. Intriguingly, many critics have seen the French Symbolists as using music in a similar manner. Warren Ramsey suggested that:

Mallarmé endeavoured to bring to poetry a quality it had never before possessed, an abstraction that would have invested words – no longer signs, no longer pointers to things – with the self-sufficiency of musical notes.

(1953, 8)

Equally Balakian suggests that Baudelaire saw the potential for the ‘musical’ use of words in a similar manner whereby (Adames 2000, 134):

words may be able to assume the same function as structured musical notes, creating beyond the description of a sensation the sensation itself, and even that complexity of sensations which we call a ‘mood’.

(Balakian 1977, 50)

Perhaps this is what Eliot was expressing admiration for when he spoke of Baudelaire’s poetry as of the ‘*first intensity* – presenting it as it is, and yet making it represent something much more than itself’ (1951, 426).

Certainly, as I shall establish in this thesis, the ‘musical influence’ (Hillery 1980, 9) of French Symbolism pervades *Four Quartets*. This distinct sense of musicality that is evident in both Eliot’s *Four Quartets* and the aesthetic of French Symbolism is partly down to the use of ‘repetitive devices’ (80). Hillery states that: ‘what differentiates the Symbolist poets from their predecessors is the extent of the

deliberate exploitation of repetitive devices' (80), and in many respects this is also true of Eliot's poetic technique in *Four Quartets*. Therefore the notion of the motif highlights one of the central ways in which figurative music operates throughout *Four Quartets*: as an idea that continually recurs and develops.

From an investigation of 'East Coker' we have so far seen that there is a constant musicality throughout in the repetition, recapitulation and development of words and phrases, which act in a manner which is similar to that of the musical motif. Interestingly, Pound also recognised the importance of words in relation to the notion of musicality. Most significantly, Pound's ideas on words are tied up with his notion of 'form' and the significance this has in relation to the 'shape', 'sound' and 'meaning' of rhythms (Stock 1964, 91). As Stock highlights:

Although taken up with that part of poetry which has parallels in music, Pound was too good a poet not to see that there is more to the sound of human speech than a variety of syllables: speech is made up of words, and words tend to impress themselves on their neighbours or exert an attraction; so the apprentice was warned to watch out that his rhythms did not destroy the shape of words, or their natural sound or meaning.

(91)

Pound's ideas on form are especially relevant to Eliot's use of *vers libéré*. As I discussed in the chapter on 'Burnt Norton', Eliot's use of *vers libéré* can be interpreted as musical and this notion of a freer verse form being seen as 'musical' is underscored by the poetics of Ezra Pound.

In Pound's essay 'Vers Libre and Arnold Dolmetsch' he suggests that whilst 'it is too late to prevent vers libre... conceivably, one might improve it' (1954, 437). Yet

in order to do so he claimed that one must ‘stop at least a little of the idiotic and narrow discussion based on an ignorance of music’ (437). As Pound goes on to lament: ‘Bigoted attack, born of this ignorance of the tradition of music, was what we had to live through’ (437). In a similar manner to Pound, I feel that ultimately our knowledge and comprehension of Eliot’s use of *vers libéré* can only be enhanced by exploring ‘the tradition of music’ (437). However, it is the tradition of music in relation to poetic theories that needs to be investigated in order to understand the important influence of music on Eliot. Although Eliot was very much concerned with ‘the music of poetry’, he was far more cautious in drawing analogies than Pound.

Thus unlike Pound, who constantly urged poets to move towards a closer understanding of ‘music’ itself, Eliot tried to capture a ‘music of poetry’. Eliot appreciated the divide between the two arts, and realized he could not turn poetry into music. He expressed this on countless occasions: ‘We can never emulate music, because to arrive at the condition of music would be the annihilation of poetry’ (Eliot 1957, 87). Furthermore, Eliot often issued reminders of the danger of trying to fuse the two arts seamlessly: ‘in even the most purely incantatory poem, the dictionary meaning of words cannot be disregarded with impunity’ (1949, 332). This comment reaffirms that, for Eliot, it was not purely the sound of poetry that was of importance, but that the ‘music of poetry’ should contain a union of sound and sense (Adames 2000, 133). For Eliot, sound and meaning needed to be amalgamated, but poetry and music could never be fully fused.

In later life Eliot increasingly saw poetry in light of the theatre: ‘The ideal medium for poetry... and the most direct means of social “usefulness” for poetry, is the

theatre' (Gallup 1970, 55). Pound, however, took a completely different stance: 'I (personally) believe that "the theatre" in general is no good, that plays are no good...' (55). Instead he became more and more concerned with music, which became apparent in his experiments with opera.⁵ Nevertheless, despite a slightly different stance in personal perspective, the poetic theories of Ezra Pound strike a distinct chord with Eliot's own sense of poetry and the important role that music had within this.

This becomes especially evident when exploring *Four Quartets*. Within 'East Coker' Eliot comes to the conclusion that the 'Long hoped for calm, the autumnal serenity/And the wisdom of age' (1969, 179) cannot be achieved through mere earthly knowledge, as this is only 'the knowledge of dead secrets' (179). Only through the spiritual can man acquire 'wisdom' (179). Yet, equally, it is only through 'waiting' (180) that we can reach true spiritual faith:

/ / / / /
 For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love
 / / / / /
 For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
 / / / / /
 But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.

(180)

Here we see Eliot's musical patterning of the central conceits of Christianity: 'hope', 'love' and 'faith' which he suggests are all contained within the 'waiting'. What is particularly noticeable is Eliot's commanding use of reiteration, and how he creates a

⁵ For more information on Ezra Pound's ventures with music see: Robert Hughes and Margaret Fisher, *Cavalcanti: A Perspective on the Music of Ezra Pound* (Emeryville: Second Evening Art, 2003). For more detail on his involvement with opera see: Margaret Fisher, *Ezra Pound's Radio Operas: The BBC Experiments 1931-33* (Cambridge, Mass: Mit Press Ltd, 2003), Kimberly Fairbrother Canton, 'Opera as Translation: Ezra Pound's *Le Testament*', *University of Toronto Quarterly* 79, 3 (2010), 941-957.

strong pulse within these lines (Reibetanz 1983, 73). However, this soon subsides into a far more delicate rhythm, created in part by a lack of stresses in the verse (74):

So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.

(Eliot 1969, 180)

In an essay called ‘Prolegomena’ Pound elucidated his ideas on form: ‘I think there is a “fluid” as well as a “solid” content, that some poems may have form as a tree has form, some as water poured into a vase’ (1912a, 73). Ultimately, in the passages above, Eliot moves between the notion of a ‘fluid’ and ‘solid’ content through his use of *vers libéré*. In the first section Eliot creates a ‘solid content’ (73) through his use of repetition, then in the line ‘So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing’ (Eliot 1969, 180) Eliot creates a very ‘fluid’ (Pound 1912a, 73) form in his use of rhythm, which is essentially what Pound was trying to capture in the image of ‘water poured into a vase’ (73). Evidently, through the lack of stressed syllables in this line, Eliot creates a dynamic and cascading sentence that effortlessly amalgamates the darkness and the light alongside the stillness and dancing (Reibetanz 1983, 74).⁶

In addition, Eliot's patterning is extremely effective in this line with 'So the darkness' being of similar length in terms of syntax to 'and the stillness' (Reibetanz 1983, 74). Similarly the ascending rhythm in the phrase 'shall be the light', coupled with the descending rhythm seen in the words 'the dancing', creates an extremely musical line of poetry (74). This line resonates with a real sense of the 'musicality' expressed in Pound's own theories. Pound claimed that the true poet will have a

⁶ Indeed, as Reibetanz points out, 'the radiance is felt in the very rhythms that describe it' (1983, 74).

We can also see the music of Eliot's poetry in another passage towards the end of movement two of 'East Coker':

(Eliot 1969, 179)

57

Pound's essays on Provençal poetry we get a clear indication of his ideas on the relationship between poetry and music (Jackson 1968, 204).

This is made especially apparent from an investigation of *The Spirit of Romance*. The most insightful chapter of *The Spirit of Romance* is the one in which Pound investigates Arnaut Daniel. One of the aspects of Daniel's Provençal songs and ballads which Pound most admired was that of rhyme. Indeed, according to Pound, not only did he 'satisfy the modern ear, gluttonous of rhyme, but also the ear trained to Roman and Hellenic music, to which rhyme seemed and seems a vulgarity' (1952, 22). Crucially, for Pound, Daniel 'was the first to realize fully that the music of rhymes depends upon their arrangement, not on their multiplicity' (38). In fact, Pound admired Daniel in particular because he used a form of canzoni whereby 'stanza answers to stanza not boisterously, but with a subtle persistent echo' (38). Pound himself was trying to create such an effect in 'Canzon: The Yearly Slain' (Stock 1964, 87):

Ah! red-leafed time hath driven out the rose
And crimson dew is fallen on the leaf
Ere ever yet the cold white wheat be sown
That hideth all earth's green and sere and red;
The Moon-flower's fallen and the branch is bare,
Holding no honey for the starry bees;
The Maiden turns to her dark lord's demesne

Fairer than Enna's field when Ceres sows
The stars of hyacinth and puts off grief,
Fairer than petals on May morning blown
Through apple-orchards where the sun hath shed
His brighter petals down to make them fair;
Fairer than these the Poppy-crowned One flees,
And Joy goes weeping in her scarlet train.

(Pound 1933, 180)

As Stock quite rightly points out, we can see hints of Daniel's influence here, and there is certainly a sense of 'musicality' within Pound's use of rhyme (Stock 1964, 87). However, his use of rhyme moves towards a sense of 'multiplicity' (Pound 1952, 38) and as such at times seems forced: whereas Eliot is able to create 'music of rhyme' (38) by ordering rhymes closely together into a pattern, and thus maintains the sense of 'arrangement' (38) that Pound so admired in Daniel. Ultimately, in *Four Quartets* Eliot maintains a 'subtle persistent echo' (38) but, unlike Pound, avoids consistently overusing rhyme at the end of stanzas:

The wounded surgeon plies the steel
That questions the distempered part;
Beneath the bleeding hands we feel
The sharp compassion of the healer's art
Resolving the enigma of the fever chart.

(Eliot 1969, 181)

As with the use of rhyme, Pound also saw the use of alliteration and assonance in light of music. He proclaimed that poets should use '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' (Rainey 2005, 96). This is especially evident in some of the poems he published in *Lustra*:

You were praised, my books,
because I had just come from the country;
I was twenty years behind the times
So you found an audience ready.

(Pound 1933, 68)

Here we see a less 'boisterous' (Pound 1952, 38) approach to the musicalized poetic effects and instead we see a regulated exactitude coupled with a definite

amalgamation of sounds (Stock 1964, 91). Moreover, Pound is able to capture this disciplined amalgamation of various musical devices elsewhere in his poetry. Take, for example, Pound's poem 'The Return':

See, they return; ah, see the tentative
Movements, and the slow feet,
The trouble in the pace and the uncertain
Wavering!

See, they return, one, and by one,
With fear, as half-awakened;
As if the snow should hesitate
And murmur in the wind,
 and half turn back;
These were the 'Wing'd-with-Awe',
 Inviolable.

Gods of the wingèd shoe!
With them the silver hounds,
 sniffing the trace of air!

Haie! Haie!
 These were the swift to harry;
These the keen-scented;
These were the souls of blood.

Slow on the leash,
 Pallid the leash-men!

(Pound 1933, 59-60)

Here we see possibly the best example of Pound's musicality, whereby he captures both the musical sonority he admired in Arnaut Daniel along with 'the rise of the rhythm wave' (Pound 1954, 6) he himself spoke of. Moreover, where he avoids this fluency it is where, as he suggested, the music longs for a 'definite longish pause' (6) such as at the end of stanza two: 'These were the "Wing'd-with Awe",/Inviolable' (Pound 1933, 59). Ultimately, in 'The Return' Pound creates an extremely elegant verse which stemmed from his vision to join music and poetry, which he first saw in Provençal songs and ballads.

Likewise Eliot achieves musical effects in his poetry through similar poetic techniques. Take, for example, the passage towards the end of movement two of 'East Coker'. Here we can see alliteration in the constant use of 'f' sounds (Reibetanz 1983, 68): 'Their fear of fear and frenzy, their fear of possession' (Eliot 1969, 179). In addition, in the following line there is a clear use of assonance created with the 'o' sound (Reibetanz 1983, 68): 'Of belonging to another, or to others, or to God' (Eliot 1969, 179). Certainly the frequent use of these devices, when seen in relation to *Four Quartets* as a whole, clearly heightens the musicality of Eliot's verse.

Yet Eliot does not aim towards a musical poetry purely to create a musical sonority. In fact, Eliot himself states that 'there are many other things to be spoken of besides the murmur of innumerable bees or the moan of doves in the immemorial elms' (1975, 112).⁷ Hence he was keen to establish 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' (1975, 110).⁸ Moreover, in 'Ezra Pound: His Metric and Poetry', he attests to the fact that: 'For poetry to approach the condition of music it is not necessary that poetry should be destitute of meaning' (Eliot 1965, 170). For Eliot the music of poetry is not 'the elemental sound of brasses, strings, or wood-winds, but the intellectual and written word in all its glory – music of perfect fullness and clarity, the totality of universal relationships' (Mallarmé 1956, 42). This phrase 'totality of universal

⁷ As Gross points out: 'To Eliot "the music of poetry" means a great deal more than melodious verse, achieved through smooth textures and verbal tone color' (1964, 170).

⁸ This is what Eliot was driving towards in 'The Music of Poetry' when he stated: '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 meaning of the words which compose it, and that these two patterns are indissoluble and one' (1957, 33). Certainly, Eliot would not have advocated Verlaine's mantra of 'the music before all else' (1974, 172).

relationships' (42) can be seen to have particular resonance in relation to Eliot's 'music of poetry' in *Four Quartets* (especially when considered in relation to Eliot's own comments).

Eliot can clearly be seen to be highlighting that the 'music of poetry' is not merely to do with the sound of a poem but, as Mallarmé suggests, 'the totality of universal relationships' (1956, 42). Certainly, as I have demonstrated, Eliot instils *Four Quartets* with meaning through the 'music of poetry' which, whilst including aspects of musical sonority, undoubtedly incorporates the patterning of specific words to create a 'harmony of meanings and connections' (Gross 1964, 171) or, as Mallarmé referred to it, the 'totality of universal relationships' (1956, 42). Ultimately, throughout the *Quartets* Eliot creates 'a masterful orchestration of sounds, words, tones and rhythms' (Rees 1969, 69), and this is evident throughout 'East Coker'. In addition, as we have seen, Eliot's *Four Quartets* can be made more pellucid by exploring its figurative music in relation to Ezra Pound's own poetic theories on the relationship between poetry and music. In my thesis I shall continue to investigate Pound's theories, and illustrate how they can illuminate the musicality of Eliot's own poetry. Now, however, I shall turn to another important aspect that is central to an interpretation of *Four Quartets*: the question of poetry and belief.

Eliot's own ideas surrounding the issue of poetry and belief are seemingly self-contradictory, and critics have understandably struggled to offer any closure on them. In *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, Eliot states:

The most generalised form of my view is simply this: that nothing in this world or the next is a substitute for anything else; and if you find that you

must do without something such as religious faith or philosophic belief, then you must do without it.

(1964, 113)

Clearly Eliot suggested here that a close cohesion between religion and poetry was not possible. Yet, at the same time, Eliot did not see a way in which he could completely rule out the inclusion of religious beliefs in poetry. He declared in 1948: 'I cannot see that poetry can ever be separated from something which I should call belief, and to which I cannot see any reason for refusing the name of belief, unless we are to reshuffle names altogether' (Eliot 1948a, 25).

Thus, whilst Eliot was wary about religious belief being substituted for poetry, or simply merged with it, he could not see how they could ever be kept entirely separated: 'Pure literature is a chimera of sensation; admit the vestige of an idea and it is already transformed' (1926, 3).⁹ Crucially then, Eliot attempted to maintain a balance that meant his poetry was not entirely secular, whilst at the same time ensuring it did not merely become a replacement for religion.

Most significantly, just a few months before *Ash-Wednesday* was published, Eliot set forth a new definition of poetry:

What poetry proves about any philosophy is merely its possibility for being lived...For poetry... is not the assertion that something is true, but the making that truth more fully real to us; it is the creation of a sensuous embodiment. It is the making the Word Flesh, if we remember that for poetry there are various qualities of Word and various qualities of Flesh.

(1930, 595-602)

⁹ Similarly George suggests that Eliot 'rejects the notion of a "pure literature" divorced from other interests' (1962, 86).

This new definition seems to be a stark contradiction of his initial cautious statements. As Tobin propounds: 'Eliot argued for the maintenance of solid boundaries between poetry and religion. But to say that poetry "is the making the Word Flesh" seems to shatter those boundaries' (1983, 61). Nevertheless Tobin goes on to highlight that the tension Eliot creates in these seemingly paradoxical statements regarding poetry and belief, eventually comes to a point of resolution:

The paradox resolves itself, however, in the realization that Eliot's theory of poetic incarnation, a theory to be developed more fully in *Four Quartets*, in no way implies an illegitimate raid into the religious domain.

(61)

Yet Tobin is wrong in suggesting that Eliot's *Four Quartets* '... in no way implies an illegitimate raid into the religious domain' (61). Certainly in *Four Quartets* Eliot moves towards 'the religious domain' (61); however, through the music of imagery Eliot is able to avoid mere dogmatism and assertion. Ultimately, through the notion of figurative music, Eliot is able to reinforce and heighten religious truths without imposing them upon others.

For example, in the lyric section of 'East Coker' Eliot addresses the Christian paradox that 'to be restored, our sickness must grow worse' (Eliot 1969, 181). Yet rather than using well-worn Christian images, he deliberately uses enigmatic imagery which, whilst pointing towards religion, is not completely didactic. For Eliot this was the 'function' (1951, 138) of poetry, to ensure that 'impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways' (20). Thus the common image of the 'divine physician' (Brady 1978, 64) becomes instead a 'wounded surgeon' (Eliot 1969, 181). As Brady points out, in doing so Eliot 'restores the concept of freshness

and vigor' (1978, 64) but he also avoids orthodox Christianity which would have been far more striking to a secular audience. Similarly, referring to Adam as 'the ruined millionaire' (Eliot 1969, 181) produces this same effect. Whilst Eliot may be looking towards 'making the Word Flesh' (Eliot 1930, 601) in his imagery of 'dripping blood' (Eliot 1969, 182) and 'bloody flesh' (182) associated with the Eucharist, it is actually less strikingly religious than if he had used orthodox Christian language as in *Ash-Wednesday* or *The Rock*. Rather, Eliot's use of imagery in the lyric section of 'East Coker' 'transforms common religious terminology' (Brady 1978, 65) and in doing so he simultaneously restores its meaning whilst making his imagery more perplexing and mysterious in the manner of French Symbolism. Throughout the lyric sections of the *Four Quartets* Eliot succeeds in 'making the familiar strange' (Eliot 1951, 301), which he deemed to be the purpose of poetry, especially with regards to the issue of poetry and belief.

Eliot maintained the 'integrity of poetry' (1928a, viii) through turning it as much towards music as possible. In this respect the influence of figurate music enabled him to discuss the issues of Christianity in a manner of heightened spirituality, whilst avoiding didacticism: 'What I want is a literature which should be *unconsciously*, rather than deliberately and defiantly, Christian' (Eliot 1951, 392). This approach ensures the readers can enjoy the poetry of *Four Quartets* without feeling they are being urged to believe in Religion. Thus, contrary to F. R. Leavis's opinion, the *Quartets* do not aim towards a 'general validity' (1975, 178) or to force you to 'verify' (178) your own 'ultimate beliefs' (178). Instead, as Traversi argues, 'The question of "truth"... is not raised' (1976, 181-3).

Critics, though, have yet to take into account the significance of music in relation to the question of poetry and belief in Eliot's work. Instead there has been a plethora of critics who have seen the ambiguity within *Four Quartets* as a resurgence of the Romantic Movement. However, I do not wish to get trapped within this ongoing critical debate, and I offer a different interpretation.¹⁰ Rather than following the Romantic programme of ambiguity, I believe that Eliot was in fact adapting the influence of the French Symbolists. Many critics have seen French Symbolism as simply a second flowering of Romanticism. However, I believe the influence of the French Symbolists is more relevant to Eliot than Romanticism with respect to the issue of ambiguity, as it is so clearly linked to their aspirations towards music. Accordingly, I shall highlight that it is the aesthetic of French Symbolism (and French Symbolist writers specifically) which resonates with Eliot's music of imagery and his use of ambiguity.

Undoubtedly it was the central influence of French Symbolism which encouraged Eliot to incorporate a music of poetry into *Four Quartets*. Eliot first came across French Symbolist writers in 1908, when he read Arthur Symons' *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* whilst studying at Harvard (Starkie 1962, 163). Eliot remarked that this 'was of more importance for my development than any other book' (1996, 395-96). Several years later Eliot still maintained the importance of *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, when in July 1940 he wrote in *Purpose* that 'the

¹⁰ This has already been discussed in considerable detail by various critics. For more information see: George Bornstein, *Transformation of Romanticism in Yeats, Eliot and Stevens* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), Edward Lobb, *T. S. Eliot and the Romantic Critical Tradition* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), Geoffrey B. Williams, *The Reason in a Storm: A Study in the Use of Ambiguity in the Writings of T. S. Eliot* (New York: University Press of America, 1991), John Paul Riquelme, *Harmony of Dissonances: T. S. Eliot, Romanticism and Imagination* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991).

kind of poetry I needed, to teach me the use of my own voice, did not exist in England at all, and was only to be found in France' (Starkie 1962, 163).

If we take into consideration the viewpoints expressed by Eliot, Starkie is right to suggest that these writers in *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* became 'his masters' (1962, 163) and that 'they gave him a new conception of poetry' (163).¹¹ It has become commonly accepted that music was essential to the Symbolists' conception of form. This is the case even as far back as Albert Schinz's article 'Literary Symbolism in France' where he suggests that '... of the elements of form more specifically connected with Symbolism... the most important seems to be... that the new poetry must, above all, be musical' (1903, 273-307). The French Symbolists were a huge influence on Eliot, but it was specifically their ideas on music (and music in relation to poetry) which helped Eliot develop his own 'music of poetry' that worked towards conveying spirituality in a suitably ambiguous manner.

As the name of the movement suggests, Symbolist literature often constituted use of symbols. Through the use of symbols the French Symbolists frequently composed 'evocative patterns' (Spencer 2008, 88), and Eliot does so in a similar manner in *Four Quartets*. Moreover, through the use of symbols they consistently strove for a higher reality.¹² In order to reach a higher reality, Paul Valéry suggested that: 'They made

¹¹ Other critics such as Barry J. Faulk back up such widely-held critical beliefs. Faulk suggests that Eliot's '... initial encounter with the Symbolist poets was transformative' (2009, 30) and that 'Symons's book brought a generation of experimental poets to Eliot's attention and revolutionized his technique' (31).

¹² As Spencer aptly points out, these symbols were 'often musical and extremely suggestive' (2008, 88) and as such they were '...filled with implication and that whisper of unseen realities' (88). In addition, Enid Starkie highlights: 'The Symbol was intended to suggest what could not be expressed adequately in words' (1962, 86).

use of delightfully ambiguous matter' (1958, 43).¹³ They aspired to achieve a 'mysterious sense of existence' (Hartley 1970, xxii- xxiii) and as such, the French Symbolists sought to amalgamate music with poetry as far as possible. Furthermore, through their enthrallment with music they soon came to realize the religious and mystical connotations which music could create. This is made apparent when Paul Valéry described their responses as:

Overwhelmed – dazzled; as though, transported to the seventh heaven by a cruel favour, they had been caught up to that height only that they might experience a luminous contemplation of forbidden possibilities and inimitable marvels.

(1958, 41)

Yet, whilst Eliot also saw the potential to evoke spiritual connotations through a 'music of poetry', he never expressed it in the same manner as the French Symbolists:

I have the A minor Quartet by (Beethoven) on the gramophone, and 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.

(Spender 1967, 54)

Crucially, though, Eliot's famous references to Beethoven have been misconceived. They are not to be taken as the catalyst for Eliot's move towards a 'music of poetry' but rather an example of where music was able to reach 'a sort of heavenly' (54) state. Indeed, in many respects this allusion to Beethoven's quartets was merely meant to be 'a symbol of wholly spiritualized, or "transparent" art' (Bergsten 1973, 135).

¹³ Murray also indicated that 'such a strangely refined poetry...served in fact, an almost mystical purpose' (1991, 18-19)

Therefore Eliot's well known statements in relation to Beethoven should lead us to an exploration of the spirituality in *Four Quartets* as opposed to an arbitrary look at Beethoven's string quartets.

The spirituality at the heart of *Four Quartets* is expressed in a manner that evokes French Symbolism. Eliot's most fervent expression of his admiration for the French Symbolists was given in his last Turnbull Lecture (Romer 2011, 211):

I know that when I first came across these French poets, some twenty-three years ago, it was a personal enlightenment such as I can hardly communicate. I felt for the first time in contact with a tradition, for the first time, that I had, so to speak, some backing by the dead, and at the same time that I had something to say that might be new and relevant. I doubt whether, without the men I have mentioned – Baudelaire, Corbière, Verlaine, Laforgue, Mallarmé, Rimbaud – I should have been able to write poetry at all.

(Eliot 1993, 287)

Following on from this, Eliot asserts: 'The ultimate purpose, the ultimate value of the poet's work is religious' (288). The fact that this statement occurs so soon after Eliot's announcement of the importance of a series of French Symbolist writers is hugely meaningful (Romer 2011, 211). It points to the fact that Eliot viewed French Symbolism as crucial to the relationship between poetry and religion, and that he addressed this issue through the 'French Mind' (Eliot 1921, 4). It is my contention, therefore, that in order to ensure Eliot did not merely produce what Bergsten calls 'versified philosophy and theology' (1973, 121), he drew from French Symbolism in aspiring towards a musical poetry.

Most interestingly, in Eliot's introduction to Valéry's *The Art of Poetry*, Eliot states that: 'Music... may be conceived as striving towards an unattainable

timelessness; and if the other arts may be thought of as yearning for duration, so Music may be thought of as yearning for the stillness of painting or sculpture' (1958, xiv).¹⁴ To Eliot, then, music is able to create a moment of transcendental stillness.¹⁵ Significantly, this paradox of music 'as yearning for stillness' (xiv) suggests an important aspect of the 'music' of *Four Quartets*, whilst also striking a direct chord with the mysticism of St. John of the Cross, whose spirituality and theology pervades 'East Coker'.

In the image of stillness in *Four Quartets* we see Eliot's aspirations towards music and spirituality unite. The notion of stillness is also central to *Ash-Wednesday*, with part one urging us towards inner tranquillity and divine stillness:

Because these wings are no longer wings to fly
 But merely vans to beat the air
 The air which is now thoroughly small and dry
 Smaller and dryer than the will
 Teach us to care and not to care
 Teach us to sit still

(Eliot 1969, 90)

¹⁴ Eliot's reference here to 'the stillness of painting or sculpture' (Eliot 1958, xiv) no doubt raises the critical debate surrounding ekphrasis which I addressed briefly in chapter one. In relation to Eliot's comment here, the most relevant critical work is Murray Krieger's 'The Ekphrastic Principle and the Still Movement of Poetry, or *Laokoön* Revisited' (1967). Krieger makes a comment in this essay which resonates with Eliot's aspirations in *Four Quartets*, claiming that ekphrastic art: 'retains its essential nature as time-art even as its words, by reaching the stillness by way of pattern, seek to appropriate sculpture's plasticity as well. There is, after all, then, a sense in which literature, as a time-art, does have special time-space powers. Through pattern, through context, it has the unique power to celebrate time's movement as well as to arrest it, to arrest it in the very act of celebrating it' (1967, 125). Of course, I am claiming here that Eliot is trying to capture the plasticity of music rather than sculpture, but nevertheless my argument clearly strikes a chord with Krieger's notion of ekphrasis. Interestingly in *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*, Krieger developed the notion of ekphrasis, suggesting that it acts as 'a general principle of poetics, asserted by every poem in the assertion of its integrity' (1992, 284). Similarly, in this thesis I am suggesting that Eliot asserted what he saw as the 'integrity of poetry' (1928a, viii) through moving it as much towards music.

¹⁵ As Bergsten insightfully points out: '...Eliot felt this "timelessness" was akin to that of spirituality' (1973, 126).

Most significantly, stillness and spirituality are first seen in relation to music in *Ash Wednesday* III (Adames 2000, 139): ‘Distraction, music of the flute, stops and steps of the mind over the/third stair’ (Eliot 1969, 93). Here the sense of allurement is heightened by the ‘music of the flute’, but this is followed by a moment of brief inner stillness (‘Fading, fading, strength beyond hope and despair/Climbing the third stair’ (93)) which then gives way to a traditional Christian call of spirituality: ‘Lord, I am not worthy/but speak the word only’ (93). Here, we can see Eliot interweaving music, stillness and spirituality closely together but to a different purpose. In *Ash-Wednesday*, Eliot illustrates that spiritual development comes in small increments and is not a sudden turn towards God, but a constant struggle and battle with oneself: ‘Because I do not hope to turn again/Because I do not hope/Because I do not hope to turn’ (89).

Later again in part IV, though, we have another momentary glimpse of transcendental stillness and silence, which is conveyed through the music of the bird song (Adames 2000, 139):

But the fountain sprang up and the bird sang down
 Redeem the time, redeem the dream
 The token of the word unheard, unspoken

(Eliot 1969, 95)

Whilst the Logos is everlasting and always present, in this ‘twittering world’ (174) it is not always possible to capture it (Adames 2000, 140). Yet, as with *Ash-Wednesday*, in *Four Quartets* birdsong is seen to heighten the moment of stillness and silence which is needed to capture a moment of intense spirituality. Take, for example, the moment in ‘Burnt Norton’ whereby ‘the bird called, in response to/The unheard music

hidden in the shrubbery' (Eliot 1969, 172). Interestingly, the 'unheard music' immediately recalls the 'word unheard' in *Ash-Wednesday*, and this is particularly important (Adames 2000, 140). From this we can see a clear connection between spirituality and music, relating to the same problem of finding the stillness, or indeed inner silence, to accept God's word.

Yet the connection is developed in the pattern of *Four Quartets*, where music and poetry are drawn closer together in a 'mystical paradox' (Bucknell 2000, 122). Crucially, in *Four Quartets* it is through the repetition of ambiguous images and paradoxes that Eliot pushes towards music. Indeed, through a variety of 'mystical paradoxes' (122) he is able to break what in 'The Music of Poetry' he calls the 'frontiers of consciousness beyond which words fail, though meaning still exists' (Eliot 1957, 30). It is this sense of a 'mystical paradox' (Bucknell 2000, 122) that combines music, stillness and spirituality. Ultimately, we have seen that in creating a 'music of poetry' Eliot has developed a distinct form of pattern in *Four Quartets* and, like Pound, he has linked words and music together. Most perceptively, Adames points out: 'Words and music move in time, but through artistic patterning both achieve the "co-existence" of motion and stillness' (2000, 140).

In a similar manner to the Chinese jar, which 'Moves perpetually in its stillness' (Eliot 1969, 175), so too does *Four Quartets*. The poem, which exists in time and is in motion when being read, is also in stillness (but still eternal) when not so (Adames 2000, 140). Paradoxically, then, *Four Quartets* is at once in movement and in quiescence (140). This paradox correlates with a central premise in *Four Quartets*: that we are at once 'in and out of time' (Eliot 1969, 190), and that 'Only through time

time is conquered' (173). Similarly, in this respect, once committed to writing, the poem conquers time by being both in time and outside it (Blamires 1969, 36).

Evidently, then, these notions of movement and stillness correlate directly with the transience of earthly existence and everlasting life, and thus have direct affinities with spirituality (Adames 2000, 140).

Once again, though, it is *Ash-Wednesday* which holds the key to unlocking the significance of this to Eliot's musical poetic technique. In *Four Quartets*, as we have seen, the words have a musicality of their own and it is this music which reaches the stillness (Adames 2000, 140): 'Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard' (Eliot 1969, 96). This notion of the 'word unheard' (96) in *Ash-Wednesday* resonates with *Four Quartets*, where the 'music (is) heard so deeply/That it is not heard at all' (190). This can be elucidated further by reference to what Eliot was expressing in an interview about his recording of *Four Quartets* (Fuller 2011, 142). He stated that: 'A great deal of the melodic arrangement is intuitive. As for chanting verse, for me the incantatory element is very important... When I read poetry myself I put myself in a kind of trance and move in rhythm to the rhythm of the piece in question' (Shahani 1949, 497). The notion of incantation, or 'the beauty of incantation' (Eliot 1969, 164) as he called it in *The Rock*, is vital to how Eliot wished to convey spirituality. It points to Eliot's 'music of poetry' which, as I have expatiated, is contained in the various poetic effects he employs. Fuller suggests that 'allowing oneself to receive it (Eliot's poetry) in terms of its "beauty of incantation" directs attention to the verbal music that was, for Eliot, so crucial an aspect of the poetry's meanings' (2011, 243). In this sense, the musicality is so deeply engrained within the poetry that it conveys a distinct spirituality, but in a manner that is not overt or striking to the secular reader.

Ultimately, through music, Eliot joins together a sense of silence and stillness with the Logos (Adames 2000, 141). Through his use of a ‘music of poetry’ he ensures that the ‘Word’ is only ‘heard’ through the pattern of the poem as a whole:

Words, after speech, reach
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,
Can words or music reach
The stillness

(Eliot 1969, 175).

Eliot, by moving towards a more musical poetry, subtly points towards Christianity and is ‘reach(ing) Into the silence’ (175) of spirituality. It is only by his ambiguous patterning of imagery and symbols (‘Only by the form, the pattern’) that Eliot felt he could point towards ‘The Stillness’ (which is essentially the spirituality at the heart of the poem), as he does not want to create an overtly didactic poem.

The key image of inner stillness in ‘East Coker’ can also be seen in relation to the theology of St. John of the Cross (Spencer 2008, 89).¹⁶ Indeed, ‘East Coker’ is heavily influenced by the mystical theology of St. John of the Cross, and is especially engrained with reference to *The Dark Night of the Soul*. Undoubtedly, then, Eliot’s *Four Quartets* can be seen within the Christian mystical tradition, especially given that Eliot stated: ‘in writing *Four Quartets*’ (Smidt 1973, 34) he ‘was seeking to express equivalents for small experiences he had had, as well as for mystical insight derived from his reading’ (34).

¹⁶ For more detailed information on the influence of St. John of the Cross on T. S. Eliot, see: Paul Murray, ‘The Influence of St. John of the Cross’ in *T. S. Eliot and Mysticism: The Secret History of Four Quartets* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), Sister Corona Sharp, “‘The Unheard Music’: T. S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets* and John of the Cross”, *University of Toronto Quarterly* 51, 3 (1982), 264-78.

According to St. John of the Cross, stillness is needed in order to allow one's soul to enter the dark night of the soul, whereby it has to be: 'profoundly hushed and put to silence' (Peers 1943, 98). This sense of inner stillness is encapsulated by the image of the 'theatre' (Eliot 1969, 180) when 'The lights are extinguished, for the scene to be changed' (180). A key aspect of this mystical stillness is the notion that in order for God to be able to meet the inner soul it must be free from any meddling thoughts or reflections: 'And we know that the hills and the trees, the distant panorama/And the bold imposing façade are all being rolled away —' (180). Eliot continually develops this image of stillness in 'East Coker', suggesting that: 'We must be still and still moving/Into another intensity/For a further union, a deeper communion' (183). Thus we must continually move towards a closer 'union' with God, whilst remaining 'still' so that the darkness of God can embrace us.

In 'East Coker', Eliot is also constantly referring to a darkness that recalls the mystical teachings of St. John of the Cross (Spencer 2008, 81). For example, in *The Dark Night of the Soul* St. John of the Cross suggests that the darkness of God is 'the way of illumination or infused contemplation, wherewith God Himself feeds and refreshes the soul, without meditation, or the soul's active help' (Peers 1943, 394). Thus, the image of 'darkness' in 'East Coker' can be interpreted as a longing for the purification of God: 'I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you/Which shall be the darkness of God' (Eliot 1969, 180). Yet the darkness of God which Eliot refers to is not accessible in the temporal realm: 'Not here the darkness, in this twittering world' (174). Moreover this darkness is not a physical darkness, but the darkness as described by St. John of the Cross in *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, where the

‘soul is deprived of the pleasure of its desire in all things, it remains, as it were, unoccupied and in darkness’ (Peers 1943, 21). It is a darkness which will bring illumination of God’s love, and an inner brightness that will allow us to eschew contemptible, worldly goods and avoid becoming ‘filled with fancies and empty of meaning’ (Eliot 1969, 174): ‘darkness to purify the soul/Emptying the sensual with deprivation/Cleansing affection from the temporal’ (173-4).

Most significantly, throughout ‘East Coker’ Eliot writes of such a darkness through the musical patterning of symbols and imagery. For instance, he compares the moment of the darkness of God descending upon an individual to the moment on the underground when the train stops:

... when an underground train, in the tube, stops too long between stations
And the conversation rises and slowly fades into silence
And you see behind every face the mental emptiness deepen
Leaving only the growing terror of nothing to think about

(Eliot 1969, 180).

In fact, Eliot uses several images and symbols which are patterned together to illuminate the notion of the darkness of God. The musical patterning and repetition of these images begins with: ‘I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you/ Which shall be the darkness of God’ (180). Interestingly, Eliot uses similar words to introduce each of these crucial images (Spencer 2008, 83): ‘As...as...when’ (Eliot 1969, 180), which underlines the fact that each of them is an elucidation of the darkness of God. For example, the moment when the inane conversation of the blatherskites is silenced on the underground highlights that the darkness of God will rid one of thought. Eliot’s image here emphasizes that in order for this to occur, and

for our thoughts to be emptied of temporal trivialities, we must be both silent and still so that God can reach us. This is in turn reinforced by the image of ‘ether’ (180), which leaves ‘the mind... conscious but conscious of nothing—’ (180). Such a state is also described earlier on in ‘Burnt Norton’: ‘Desiccation of the world of sense,/Evacuation of the world of fancy,/Inoperancy of the world of spirit’ (174). St. John of the Cross suggests that when abandoning the use of thought or religious reflection, many can feel God’s love has deserted them (Spencer 2008, 83). As such, the dark night of the soul can be truly terrifying (83). Eliot symbolizes this in the image of the passengers who are left with a ‘mental emptiness’ (1969, 180) and ‘the growing terror of nothing to think about’ (180).

Yet in *Four Quartets* the aspects of Christian thought and experience ‘reveal themselves only by implication and allusion’ (Bergsten 1973, 167). Most importantly, then, Eliot’s images often avoid moral didacticism and are evasive enough to evoke several different meanings. As Bergsten points out, *Four Quartets* ‘... consists in using words and phrases capable of bearing several meanings, of having several senses, or associations, at the same time’ (139). This is particularly the case with regard to Eliot’s use of imagery and symbolism in ‘East Coker’. Eliot himself was conscious of this:

We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be *difficult*. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning.

(1951, 289)

Here Eliot implies that as he comes closer to ‘meaning’ he must be more ‘allusive’ and ‘indirect’. This means that the reader is not forced into a single, authoritative interpretation, but is given a licence to interpret poetry as they see fit.¹⁷

As Geoffrey B. Williams suggests, ‘language, in ambiguity, points to the transcendent’ (1991, 212) in Eliot’s *Four Quartets*. However, unlike Williams, I believe Eliot’s deliberately ambiguous manner specifically recalls the aesthetic of French Symbolism. Take, for example, Hillery’s apt assessment: ‘For their part the Symbolist poets were determined to elevate the idea of suggestion to one of the principal positions of their poetic credo’ (1980, 100). The same can be said of Eliot’s imagery in ‘East Coker’. Thus, whilst the image of the train stopping can be seen to encourage an interpretation that incorporates the theology of St. John of the Cross, one can also read an entirely separate meaning alongside it. Through the same imagery, ‘East Coker’ can also be seen to suggest that the temporal aspects of life ultimately lead only to death, a theme that was present in Eliot’s earlier poetry: ‘Life you may evade, but Death you shall not./You shall not deny the Stranger’ (Eliot 1969, 156). The ‘mental emptiness’ (180) of those on the train can be seen as a result of the lack of distractions available to them. Thus the ‘mental emptiness’ (180) of the ‘time-ridden masses’ (174) grows ever more present, as the inevitability of death sinks in and they have no means of forgetting it through temporal concerns. As a result the emptiness horrifies them, and they are left with ‘the growing terror of nothing to think about’ (180). This terror grows because the more the emptiness continues, the more they will have to think about death and, ultimately, judgement. The same fear of

¹⁷ This is something Eliot invited: ‘the reader’s interpretation may differ from the author’s and be equally valid – it may even be better’ (1957, 31). Eliot then reiterated this statement when claiming: ‘what a poem means is as much what it means to others as what it means to the author’ (1964, 130).

death and judgement is also expressed in *The Hollow Men*: 'Eyes I dare not meet in dreams/ In death's dream kingdom' (83).

Crucially, then, Eliot ensures that the image of darkness does not have to be seen in relation to a context of Christian mystical theology. Certainly, as Murray points out, 'At least some of the enchantment arises from the fact that these images are not fixed' (1991, 19). Eliot creates this effect through the musical patterning of words, images and symbols. As Cook propounds:

The multiple significance of words... becomes – especially in *Four Quartets* – a token of the transcendent and a vehicle for its expression. Language, forced to know itself as approximate, limited and quintessentially of this world, finds itself part of a larger pattern.

(2001, 86)

For example, the third passage begins with the line: 'O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark' (Eliot 1969, 180). It is common knowledge that this line derives from Milton's *Samson Agonistes* (Spencer 2008, 84) but, more interesting than the origins of this line, is how Eliot is able to adopt it within his musical patterning of imagery to create various levels of meaning. Through the repetition of the word 'dark' Eliot avoids any simple, direct meaning. One plausible connotation of the word 'dark' in this passage is the darkness of death. This is reinforced by the fact that Eliot later states that we 'all go with them' (1969, 180) into the dark. This, when seen in relation to the opening phrase of 'East Coker' ('In my beginning is my end'), could be considered to highlight further that we shall all ultimately die.

However, this passage could also be interpreted as an extension of a common theme within Eliot's poetry; that of the living dead: 'I was neither/Living nor dead, and I knew nothing, Looking into the heart of light, the silence' (Eliot 1969, 62). The concept of the living dead is perhaps most famously expressed in *The Waste Land*, with the image of the crowd flowing over London Bridge, followed by the lament: 'so many, I had not thought death had undone so many' (62). Yet the notion of a civilization that can be characterized as the living dead and who are void of any substantial beliefs was also seen at the centre of 'The Hollow Men': 'We are the hollow men,/We are the stuffed men/Leaning together/Headpiece filled with straw' (83). Interestingly, Eliot includes us all within the notion of 'The Hollow Men': it is 'we' who are 'The Hollow Men'. As Ellis succinctly puts it, 'the poem incriminates a whole civilization in its mode of address' (2009, 66). Similarly, in the opening section of 'East Coker' movement three, the long list and the statement 'we all go with them' (Eliot 1969, 180) can be seen to include us all in progressing towards a 'funeral' (180). Furthermore, in 'The Hollow Men', Eliot suggests that whilst we have already crossed over into the other life of death, we remain of the same disposition:

Those who have crossed
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom
Remember us — if at all — not as lost
Violent souls, but only
As the hollow men
The stuffed men

(83).

Even when we have crossed over to 'death's other Kingdom' (Eliot 1969, 83) we remain 'only/As the hollow men/The stuffed men' (83). Likewise, in movement three

of 'East Coker' Eliot indicates that these successful and powerful men are void of any significant beliefs and as such are already dead. Thus their funeral is nonexistent, it is 'Nobody's funeral, for there is no one to bury' (180). Eliot implies that there is no one to bury because they were never truly alive and are lifeless. Like 'The Hollow Men', they are merely 'empty men' (85). In 'East Coker' section three, Eliot recognizes the insignificance of temporal achievement. Such achievements, he suggests, are 'petty' (180) when considered in light of the fact that we 'all go into the dark' (180).

Evidently, then, whilst passages from 'East Coker' can be interpreted in relation to the darkness of God and the theology of St. John of the Cross, crucially Eliot does not force any Christian mysticism on his readers. Instead, through the musical repetition and development of the image of darkness he is able to hint towards a variety of possible meanings, which serves to heighten the depth of meaning within the poem, whilst also enabling him to avoid burying his beliefs.

For both Eliot and the French Symbolists, 'Music was the most alluring of the arts, the most mysterious, the most capable of expressing an indefinite "infini", the most private and the most satisfying' (Hillery 1980, 32). One of the most salient aspects of Eliot capturing the enigma of music in *Four Quartets* is that in doing so he ensures that the reader is not made to feel he is being preached to or urged towards conversion. This was particularly important for Eliot: 'No one ever attempted to convert *me*; and looking back on my pre-Christian state of mind, I do not think that such a campaign would have prospered' (1948b, 5). Evidently Eliot did not believe in 'conversion' as a method in life, and especially not in his poetry. As he himself declared, he was

never ‘attempting to convert’ (1939a, 21), and he avoids giving this impression to the reader of *Four Quartets* through moving towards music. Thus, what Eliot said of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, is also true of *Four Quartets*:

You are not called upon to believe what Dante believed, for your belief will not give you a groat’s worth more of understanding and appreciation; but you are called on more and more to understand it. If you can read poetry as poetry, you will ‘believe’ in Dante’s theology exactly as you believe in the physical reality of his journey; that is, you will suspend both belief and disbelief. I will not deny that it may be in practice easier for a Catholic to grasp the meaning, in many places, than for the ordinary agnostic; but that is not because the Catholic believes, but because he has been instructed.

(1951, 257-8)

In *Four Quartets* Eliot ensures the reader ‘suspends both belief and disbelief’ (257-8), which enables him to maintain an intimate ‘approximation’ (1985, 19-20) of ‘the conceptual and the poetic’ (19-20). Through the musicality of his poetry and the multifaceted nature of his imagery, Eliot was able to engrain a Christian spirituality within *Four Quartets*: but this spirituality is only clearly visible through the pattern of the whole. The importance of the consummate pattern within *Four Quartets*, and the significance this has in relation to Eliot’s religious beliefs, will become clear in my conclusion.

CHAPTER 3

‘THE DRY SALVAGES’

We have seen so far a clear musicality engrained throughout *Four Quartets*, not only in Eliot’s use of sound and rhythm, but also in his use of imagery and symbolism. Yet the musical repetition and development of these motifs, whether they are in the form of images, rhythms, or even words, seem to be heightened by Eliot in his treatment of the river and the sea in ‘The Dry Salvages’. Certainly the dominant imagery in ‘The Dry Salvages’ is primarily associated with rocks, the sea, and rivers and it is developed from the ending of ‘East Coker’:

Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,
The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters
Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning.

(Eliot 1969, 183)

Eliot indicates at the opening of the poem that ‘The Dry Salvages’ are ‘a small group of rocks, with a beacon, off the N.E coast of Cape Ann, Massachusetts’ (184). In light of this, Eliot’s fascination with such imagery can be seen to have derived from his youth, when he spent holidays with his family at the coast of Cape Ann in Massachusetts between the years 1895 and 1909 (Reibetanz 1983, 99).¹ Eliot claimed that without the influence of America his poetry would not have been the

¹ More information about Eliot’s holidays at the coast of Cape Ann is given by Herbert Howarth in *Notes on Some Figures Behind T. S. Eliot* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), 113-21.

same, stating that 'in its sources, in its emotional springs' (Hall 1959, 70) his poetry 'comes from America' (70).

Moreover, Eliot felt that aspects of one's past make themselves present when one ages; and the group of rocks by Cape Ann, along with the images associated with it, was no doubt one aspect which remained with him: 'I find that as one gets on in middle life the strength of early associations and the intensity of early impressions become more evident; and many little things, long forgotten, recur....' (Eliot 1953, 29). In fact, Eliot commented at considerable length upon the influence of such 'early impressions' (29): '... Missouri and the Mississippi have made a deeper impression on me than any other part of the world' (29), and Eliot even went on to say that: '... I feel that there is something in having passed one's childhood beside the big river, which is incommunicable to those who have not' (29).

In these comments Eliot creates a picture surrounding the influence of the river as one which is 'incommunicable' (Eliot 1953, 29), and the initial passage in 'The Dry Salvages' certainly conveys this (Reibetanz 1983, 102): 'I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river/Is a strong brown god — sullen, untamed and intractable' (Eliot 1969, 184). This passage of 'The Dry Salvages' depicts an image of the river as an almost omnipotent, godlike power, and one which the modern age chooses to try and forget: '...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' (Eliot 1969, 184).

In the opening passage of ‘The Dry Salvages’ Eliot conveys the notion of the river being ‘a strong brown god’ (1969, 184) through his use of a six-stress line; whereby he underscores the essence of its puissant nature in his firm, penetrating rhythms (Reibetanz 1983, 103):

/ / / / /
 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.

(Eliot 1969, 184)

But crucially, despite engraining this passage with a clear and firm rhythm, he still uses a musical patterning of unstressed syllables. In using *vers libéré*, Eliot is able to adopt loosely the form of various metrical measures, whilst also allowing for a variation of stressed and unstressed syllables within the line. Ultimately this amalgamation of various metres throughout *Four Quartets* enables him to reinforce meaning through the musical patterning of rhythms, words, and sounds. As Rees points out, Eliot ‘... has succeeded in exploiting certain musicological and literary devices in an effort to articulate a new kind of poetry’ (1969, 69). Take, for example, the first line:

/ / / / /
 I do not know much about gods, but I think that the river

(Eliot 1969, 184).

Here Eliot has interwoven unstressed syllables within the clear stresses, and through this distinct patterning Eliot is able to underline the meaning of this passage

(Reibetanz 1983, 103). Without this patterning of unstressed syllables the mysterious yet forceful power of the river would not be nearly so evident.

Indeed, through the musical repetition of rhythmic motifs, Eliot further reinforces meaning. For instance, by way of the three stressed syllables that follow, Eliot is able to create a powerful image of the river (Reibetanz 1983, 103):

/ / /
strong brown god

(Eliot 1969, 184).

In fact, Eliot repeats this three stress patterning in the list of adjectives in the same line, which further heightens the image of the river as an impressive and dominant force in our lives:

/ / /
sullen, untamed and intractable

(184).

The continual repetition of the three stressed rhythmic motif,

/ / /
waiting, watching and waiting

(184),

further adds to the sense of a musical patterning within the passage, whilst also being pleasing to the ear in terms of its sonority (Reibetanz 1983, 103). Moreover, Eliot also repeats different rhythmic motifs within this passage, such as the double stress in the phrase:

Eliot ensures that the stressed syllables are evenly distributed both before and after the caesura (Reibetanz 1983, 104). Clearly then, as Boaz points out, we can see that ‘... Eliot’s *Four Quartets* use rhythmic and tonal alliances within and between movements, augmenting and diminishing motifs, providing transformations, moving around basic centres in sound and rhythm’ (1979, 48).

It is evident that Eliot constantly uses ‘rhythmic alliances’ (Boaz 1979, 48) to form what Boaz calls ‘basic centres in sound and rhythm’ (48). Take, for example, the dactylic rhythms he uses throughout the opening section of ‘The Dry Salvages’ (Reibetanz 1983, 104):

~ / ~ ~ / ~ ~ / ~ ~ / ~ ~ / ~
 Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges’ (Eliot 1969, 184).²

Through the use of these dactylic rhythms Eliot reinforces the constant ebb and flow of the river, whilst highlighting its driving force as it flows onwards (Reibetanz 1983, 104). The image of the river, therefore, serves to highlight the ever-flowing flux of time (104):

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.

(Eliot 1969, 184)

Furthermore, as ‘East Coker’ highlights, the flux of time is also a signal of death and destruction, and thus the river is an embodiment ‘Of what men choose to forget’

² / ~ ~ signifies the use of a dactylic rhythm.

(Eliot 1969, 184): the fact that all things will inevitably wither and decay. But the river remains omnipotent throughout time; even if forgotten it remains 'waiting, watching and waiting' (184). As such, 'The river is within us' (184), as we can never be freed from our own mortality: it is engrained within each and every one of us.

Eliot once stated that certain memories 'may have symbolic value, but of what we cannot tell, for they come to represent the depths of feeling into which we cannot peer' (1964, 148). For Eliot the river was clearly charged with significant 'symbolic value', and 'recur(s), charged with emotion' (148). The same can be said of Eliot's use of sea imagery, which follows on from the opening passage concerning the river: 'The river is within us, the sea is all about us' (1969, 184). In this phrase, Eliot suggests that the sea is connected to the river, whilst at the same time indicating that it is an enormous expanse of water. Thus whilst the river 'Is a strong brown god' (184), Eliot suggests that 'The sea has many voices/Many gods and many voices' (184). Like the opening of the first verse paragraph, this second paragraph involving the sea is extremely musical, and the musicality of Eliot's verse shines through in his use of rhythms. Indeed, as Reibetanz points out:

Eliot has relied upon the power of rhythm to a great extent here, and when we fail to hear the pattern of its movement, we miss part of the life of the poetry. To appreciate the *Quartets* fully, we must watch the changing movement of the verse and attune our ears to the patterning of rhythms within it.

(1983, 106)

Once again Eliot uses a firm and powerful rhythm in order to convey the vehement nature of the sea: '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' (1969, 184).

Eliot also expresses the mightiness of the sea through the verb 'tosses', which is further reinforced through the strong rhymes in 'reaches' and 'beaches' (Reibetanz 1983, 106). Moreover, Eliot maintains the musicality of his verse in the mellifluous line:

/ / / / /
The pools where it offers to our curiosity/The more delicate algae and the
/ /
sea anemone.

(1969, 184)

Here, Eliot creates a melodious sound through his use of rhythm, which is in stark contrast to the potent rhythms initially used to describe the sea. This more gentle rhythm is further heightened through the image of the 'delicate algae and the sea anemone' (184). Yet the next line signifies a return to a strong and firm rhythm. This is indicated by the repeated use of the verb 'tosses', which was used previously in relation to the granite, 'Into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses' (184). Similarly, as with this line, Eliot again uses interior rhymes to add a pervading sense of mystery to the brute force of the sea (Reibetanz 1983, 107): 'It tosses up our losses, the torn seine,/The shattered lobsterpot, the broken oar' (Eliot 1969, 184).

Reibetanz aptly propounds that in the opening to 'The Dry Salvages', '... Eliot is able to have the best of both worlds; the long expanse of the lines and their patterned rhythms reinforce each other, and together they convey the poet's sense of the vast

inner power of the river' (1983, 104). But what Reibetanz fails to pick up on in any significant detail is that the basis of patterning and repetition, which is crucial throughout *Four Quartets*, stems from the influence of Ezra Pound and the French Symbolists, and specifically their ideas on the significance of music to literature. Crucially, whilst rhythm is a central aspect of poetry, Eliot's sense of rhythm engrained in 'The Dry Salvages' and *Four Quartets* as a whole, takes its influence from literary ideas aspiring towards music, and in this respect is intrinsically musical. Indeed, as Eliot stated: 'I believe that the properties in which music concerns the poet most nearly, are the sense of rhythm and sense of structure' (1957, 38). Hence, considering Eliot saw rhythm in connection to music, it makes sense to describe and interpret it in relation to 'musicality' as I have been doing throughout this thesis. But by not taking into consideration the importance of music, or the key influences of Pound and French Symbolism on Eliot, critics often neglect to discuss rhythm in relation to the premise of musicality which is evident throughout *Four Quartets*.³ In failing to acknowledge the influence of music on Eliot's rhythms, critics such as Reibetanz ultimately 'miss part of the life of the poetry' (1983, 106). Thus, I shall now expand further on the link between rhythm and music, and illustrate why it makes sense to discuss rhythm in *Four Quartets* in terms of 'musicality'.

³ As Finch points out, 'Prosodically, T. S. Eliot has been seen as both a radical innovator and as an archconservative' (2000, 81). For example, Donald Stanford (1983) detects no standard use of metre, and Hartman (1980) sees Eliot in light of the free verse writing of William Carlos Williams. Roy Fuller also saw Eliot as a free verse poet, and explains any sense of regular metre in his poetry using his own term 'unintended metrical effects' (Fuller 1985, 45-6). By contrast, Derek Stanford and Julie Whitby (1985) see Eliot's verse as a middle ground between poetry and non rhythmic literature, whilst Gardner (1968) and Reibetanz (1983) suggest his norm is the use of four stresses in a line. Finch herself sees Eliot as being 'at the edge of the free verse movement' (2000, 98). Yet, whilst Eliot's use of rhythm has been seen as just about everything in between the two parameters Finch sets out, it has not been seen in relation to music, other than in the form of jazz rhythms (see Morris Freedman, 1952).

In many respects Eliot's mastery of poetry in *Four Quartets* comes across in his ability to amalgamate rhythm, sound, sense, and structure into a 'music of poetry'.

Eliot is able to achieve this through his 'auditory imagination' (Eliot 1964, 118):

What I call the 'auditory imagination' is the feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word; sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back, seeking the beginning and the end. It works through meanings, certainly, or not without meanings in the ordinary sense, and fuses the old and obliterated and the trite, the current, and the new and surprising, the most ancient and the most civilised mentality.

(118-119)

Evidently, rhythm is central to Eliot's 'auditory imagination' (118), and it is this sense of rhythm that unites Pound's and Eliot's ideas surrounding figurative music.

Moreover, Pound's conception of a freer verse form had much in common with Eliot's notion of musicality in that both were highly concerned with rhythm. In fact it was for his sense of rhythm that Pound held Eliot in high esteem: 'Mr Eliot is one of the very few who have given a personal rhythm, an identifiable quality of sound as well as of style' (1954, 422). Thus, Pound concluded: 'Confound it, the fellow can write – we may as well sit up and take notice' (Brooker 2004, 9).

Similarly Pound was a huge influence on Eliot, particularly with regard to form: '... of Pound I believe, that in form he foreran, excelled, and is still in advance of our own generation and even the literary generation after us' (Eliot 1928b, 5). Therefore, Pound is crucial to my conception of Eliot's rhythms as being essentially musical. Like Pound, Eliot was known for the 'auditory imagination' (Eliot 1964, 118):

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 may bring to birth the idea and the image.

(Eliot 1957, 38)

As Scofield elucidates:

One of the ways in which Eliot saw that the dark ‘embryo’ or ‘creative germ’ could first appear was as an intimation of music, a fragment of musical rhythm... sometimes the impulse came in a form which was inseparable from the mode of art itself.

(1988, 79)

As quoted earlier, Eliot himself explained his fascination with the ‘auditory imagination’ in considerable detail (Eliot 1964, 118). In that passage we get a real sense that, for Eliot, rhythm is engrained ‘below the conscious levels of thought and feeling’ (118). Furthermore, we get a glimpse as to how Eliot’s notion of the primitive is in fact instilled with a distinct rhythmic musicality. This was reiterated in 1932, when Eliot gave lectures at Harvard University:

Poetry begins, I dare say, with a savage beating a drum in a jungle and it retains that essential of percussion and rhythm ...

(1964, 155)

Significantly, this primitive sense of rhythmic music strikes a direct chord with Pound’s own argument for a freer verse form which touches on a rhythm of the primal. Pound was not merely confined to a basic sense of rhythm, but rather rhythm became what he called ‘absolute’ (Pound 1978, 15). As Schafer highlights, this is essentially ‘a rhythm which was part of the poetic idea itself, not a discipline over which the poem was strung’ (15).

Pound himself elucidated his conception of absolute rhythm: 'I said in the preface to my *Guido Cavalcanti* that I believed in an absolute rhythm. I believe that every emotion and every phrase of emotion has some toneless phrase, some rhythm-phrase to express it' (1970a, 84). This definition, however, is somewhat vague and evasive. Nevertheless, the term 'absolute rhythm' was defined with greater precision by Pound in the introduction to his Cavalcanti translations in 1910 (Pound 1978, 469):

Rhythm is perhaps the most primal of all things known to us. It is basic in poetry and music mutually, their melodies depending on a variation of tone quality and of pitch respectively, as is commonly said, but if we look more closely we will see that music is, by further analysis, pure rhythm; rhythm and nothing else, for the variation of pitch is the variation in rhythms of the individual notes, and harmony the blending of these varied rhythms. When we know more of overtones we will see that the tempo of every masterpiece is absolute, and is exactly set by some further law of rhythmic accord. Whence it should be possible to show that any given rhythm implies about it a complete musical form—fugue, sonata, I cannot say what form, but a form, perfect, complete. Ergo, the rhythm set in a line of poetry connotes its symphony, which, had we a little more skill, we could score for orchestra.

(469)

Here Pound talks of how 'rhythm implies about it a complete musical form' (469), and ultimately I am suggesting that Eliot's varying use of rhythm, and his use of *vers libéré*, has a musical form. Moreover, I am propounding that Eliot consciously engrained a musical sense of rhythm within *Four Quartets* in order to give his poetry what Pound called 'a complete musical form' (469):

For other poets – at least, for some other poets – the poem may begin to shape itself in fragments of musical rhythm, and its structure will first appear in terms of something analogous to musical form; and such poets find it expedient to occupy their conscious mind with the craftsman's problems, leaving the deeper meaning to emerge from a lower level. It is a question then of what one chooses to be conscious of, and of how much of the

meaning, in a poem, is conveyed direct to the intelligence and how much is conveyed indirectly by the musical impression upon the sensibility...

(Eliot 1957, 238)

Here, Eliot's choice of words is critical in supporting my argument. Firstly, he starts by stating that 'the poem may begin to shape itself in fragments of musical rhythm' (238). In addition, he also states that for him it is '...expedient to occupy... (his) conscious mind with the craftsman's problems, leaving the deeper meaning to emerge from a lower level' (238). In many respects Pound's theories surrounding absolute rhythm entail this sentiment also: 'In its broadest sense rhythm organizes the parts into a whole. Rhythm articulates the journey' (Pound 1978, 467). Key to this passage is also the sense that music cannot be separated from rhythm, which is again central to Eliot's poetic practice in *Four Quartets* (Scofield 1988, 80).

It is my contention that critics have neglected the musicality of Eliot's rhythms. This is in part because they have simultaneously failed to explore how important Pound's influence on Eliot was, and to realise how crucial music was to the Imagist manifesto and subsequently to Eliot. Furthermore, the failure to address Eliot's use of rhythm in light of the 'musical rhythm(s)' (Eliot 1957, 238) he speaks of, is also neglecting the important influence of the French Symbolists who, according to Glenn Hughes; were '... of special importance' (1960, 4).

When exploring Pound's and Eliot's ideas on the relationship between music, poetry and rhythm it makes perfect sense to explore the significance of Laforgue, as he was a huge influence on both poets. Arguably Eliot was fascinated by Jules Laforgue more than any other French Symbolist, and in many ways Laforgue is

responsible for helping Eliot write a more musical poetry.⁴ Undoubtedly, as well as being heavily influenced by Pound, Eliot also grasped the importance of rhythm from Laforgue, whose work he read intensely early in his poetic career in 1909 (Chinitz 2003, 34). Eliot's early conception of musical poetry was very much influenced by Laforgue's *Derniers Vers*, which helped to raise the profile of *vers libre* in French (34). Moreover, some of Eliot's early poetry in *Prufrock and Other Observations* was written in the verse which Laforgue chose to adopt. In fact Eliot himself admitted as much: 'My early *vers libre*, of course, was started under the endeavour to practise the same form as Laforgue...' (Hall 1963, 97). Yet, as Russell Elliott Murphy declares:

In Laforgue's case, and where Eliot may be seen later to mimic him the most, his use of *vers libre* is best defined as a mode of poetry writing that liberated both language and meter from the rigid constraints of convention and traditions, rather than one that set out deliberately to break all the rules or obstinately to create new ones.

(2007, 538)

Murphy here reinforces my conception of Eliot's verse as being *vers libéré*, and highlights that it was not only Pound but also Laforgue who influenced him in forming this type of verse.

Laforgue's use of *vers libéré* is evident in 'L'Hiver qui vient', which translates as 'The Coming of Winter' (Maddrey 2009, 16):

Sentimental blockade! Cargoes due from the East!...
Oh, rainfall! Oh, nightfall!
Oh, wind!

⁴ Chinitz notes: 'This achievement is Laforgue's most significant gift to Eliot, surpassing even the better-noted attributes of urbanity and self-reflexive irony' (2003, 35). Whilst this may be a slight exaggeration, it certainly highlights that we are right to see Eliot's use of rhythm in *Four Quartets* as ultimately musical, and to interpret it in terms of musicality.

Halloween, Christmas, and New Year's,
Oh, my smokestacks lost in the drizzle, all
My factory smokestacks!
Where can one sit? The park benches are dripping and wet;
The season is over, I can tell you it's true
The woods are so rusty, the benches so dripping and wet,
And the horns so insistent with their constant halloo!...

(16)

Most importantly, though, the manuscript of 'L'Hiver qui vient' is also the first attempt Laforgue made towards a 'musical effect' (Chinitz 2003, 34). Holmes claims that Laforgue managed to produce this 'musical effect' through 'repetition, rhyme, near rhyme, and internal rhyme' (1993, 119-20). Yet, crucially, the form of *vers libéré* also enables a 'ductile, song-like patterning rich in unpredictable aural effects' (Chinitz 2003, 35). Such effects are used frequently in Eliot's *Four Quartets*. Whilst these effects are often seen in poetry, the fact that Eliot was influenced by Laforgue and Pound to such a large extent means that it makes sense to speak of Eliot's verse as also producing these 'musical effects' (34).

Indeed, the music of Eliot's poetry is not only conveyed through rhythm, but is also evident through its sonority. In 'The Dry Salvages' Eliot states: 'The sea has many voices,/Many gods and many voices' (1969, 184) and he conveys this through the sonority in the onomatopoeia of such phrases as 'sea howl' (185) and 'sea yelp' (185). Furthermore, the phrase 'wailing warning' (185) combines alliteration and onomatopoeia to convey the various voices of the sea. In doing so, Eliot contributes to the image of the sea as an unfathomable and unusual force of nature. Throughout this passage we can hear Eliot's 'musical pattern of sound' (Eliot 1957, 33), which he amalgamates with 'a musical pattern of the secondary words which compose it' (33).

Correspondingly, Pound placed particular importance on the sound of poetry. In his essay on 'Arnaut Daniel', Pound illustrates 'Arnaut's system of echoes and blending' (Pound 1954, 115) and comments further on his use of 'the blending and lengthening of sounds, and their sequence' (112). Pound employed these effects himself. Take, for example, stanza five from 'Laudantes Decem':

Red leaf that art blown upward, and out and over
The green sheaf of the world,
And through the dim forest and under
The shadowed arches and the aisles,
We, who are older than thou art,
Met and remembered when his eyes beheld her
In the garden of the peach-trees,
In the day of the blossoming.

(Pound 1909, 28)

In this passage from 'Laudantes Decem' we can see a clear attempt to use the devices that Arnaut Daniel employed (Jackson 1968, 204). For example, Pound deliberately employs the 'system of echoes and blending' (Pound 1954, 115) by using 'Red leaf' and 'green sheaf' in close succession (Jackson 1968, 205). Pound then attempts to carry out Arnaut's 'blending and lengthening of sounds' (Pound 1954, 112) in the line: 'The shadowed arches and the aisles' (Jackson 1968, 205).

Eliot was also concerned with ensuring that aspects of sound and rhythm were often combined (Reibetanz 1983, 108). Take, for example, the phrase 'The menace and caress of wave that breaks on water' (Eliot 1969, 185). Here the rhythm of an equal stress on both 'menace' and 'caress', along with similar vowel sounds, solidifies the mysterious strength of the sea, whilst also confirming that rhythm and sound are essential to Eliot's conception of a 'music of poetry'. This merging of sound and

rhythm, which Eliot saw as an integral part of ‘the music of poetry’, can once again be seen to stem from the influence of Ezra Pound and his ideas surrounding absolute rhythm. One passage where Pound commented on his beliefs concerning absolute rhythm is particularly insightful:

I believe in an ultimate and absolute rhythm as I believe in an absolute symbol or metaphor. The perception of the intellect is given in the word, that of the emotions in the cadence...The rhythm of any poetic line corresponds to emotion. It is the poet’s business that this correspondence be exact, i.e, that it be the emotion which surrounds the thought expressed.

(1970b, 23-4)

Most interestingly, what this extract highlights is that Pound’s explanation of absolute rhythm was closely tied up with sound in poetry. Pound deemed that sound in poetry was crucial, and that the way in which it was arranged could produce spiritual properties.⁵ Pound referred to this property of poetry as ‘melopoeia’ (Pound 1954, 25):

MELOPOEIA, wherein the words are charged, over and above their plain meaning, with some musical property, which directs the bearing or trend of that meaning.

(25)

This definition of melopoeia certainly has much in common with Pound’s claim in *ABC of Reading* that ‘Great Literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree’ (1934, 14). In *ABC of Reading* Pound goes on to identify melopoeia in a slightly clearer manner, stating that one way to ensure that ‘language (is) charged with meaning’ (14) is through ‘inducing emotional correlations by the

⁵ Ayers suggests that there was an ‘almost mystical importance that Pound gave to the organisation of sound in poetry’ (2004, 6).

sound and rhythm of speech' (49). Yet perhaps Pound's most insightful elaboration of melopoeia is in the essay 'How to Read', where he declares that it is 'a force tending often to lull, or distract, the reader from the exact sense of the language. It is poetry on the borders of music...' (1954, 26). Significantly, this is also the essay in which he points towards the spiritual aspect of melopoeia: 'It is practically impossible to transfer or translate it from one language to another, save perhaps by divine accident...' (25). But as Bucknell astutely highlights: 'if the "divine accident" has occurred, it is still largely an achievement of a technical nature' (2001, 61). Hence, on this basis it makes sense to see melopoeia as capable of conjuring up spiritual properties, and Pound as able to 'transform the stuff of poetry and music into a sort of combined sensuous and spiritual material' (61).

Yet, crucially, Pound was not merely engaged with creating a poetry that was sonorous and pleasing to the ear (Ayers 2004, 6). Rather, for him the sound and rhythm of poetry were together tied up with the meaning. Certainly Pound was one of the most innovative thinkers in modern poetry, but as a result of his fairly radical attempts to 'make it new' (Pound 1964, 275), his poetic techniques and methods have been focused on by critics and the content sidelined. As Eliot stated in his essay 'Isolated Superiority' in *The Dial*: 'Pound has had, and has an immense influence, but no disciples' (1928b, 4-7). Eliot explains his thoughts behind this, claiming: 'the reason is this: that influence can be exerted through form, whereas one makes disciples only among those who sympathize with the content' (4-7). Nevertheless, for Pound technique and content were bound together, and he never substituted one for the other (Ayers 2004, 7). Thus he was keen to establish that writers should 'use no superfluous word, no adjective which does not reveal something' (Pound 1954, 4) and

warned them to ‘go in fear of abstractions’ (5). Moreover, his declaration that ‘man reading shd. Be man intensely alive. The book shd. Be a ball of light in one’s hand’ (Pound 1938, 55), was not achieved merely through matters of technique but through an amalgamation of content and technique. Equally, Pound felt there should be a connection between sound and meaning. Pound’s methods and ideas were always tied up with the poetic content, and this undoubtedly influenced Eliot’s ‘music of poetry’ and the way in which he perceived sound, rhythm, musicality and meaning as intertwined.

Throughout ‘The Dry Salvages’, we become aware that Eliot’s ‘music of poetry’ is not only contained in aspects of rhythm and sound, but also imagery. As Gardner points out, ‘One is constantly reminded of music by the treatment of images, which recur with constant modifications, from their context, or from their combination with other recurring images, as a phrase recurs with modifications in music’ (1968, 48). Crucially, through the musical development of imagery Eliot consciously tried to ensure that he could discuss aspects of spirituality without merely descending to didacticism. The musicality and meaning of the *Quartets* intertwine to ensure that readers are not able simply to interpret the river and the sea in a religious capacity. As Eliot wrote in 1937: ‘The division between those who accept and those who deny Christian revelation, I take to be the most profound difference between human beings’ (Aulén 1937, 2), and such a difference in belief could potentially extend to an interpretation of *Four Quartets*. Thus Eliot aims to ensure that he avoids a purely Christian poetry.

Consequently the key images of the river and the sea in 'The Dry Salvages' are not given any overt spiritual connotations, or presented in a manner that becomes self-evidently liturgical. In this respect, the river can be seen to represent our own intimate conception of time and our own daily events; whereas the sea can be seen to embody the unceasing nature of time which has existed before and after (Scofield 1988, 222): it 'hints of earlier and other creation' (Eliot 1969, 184). In light of this, the conception of time in 'The Dry Salvages' can be interpreted as that of history, both of the Earth and the Universe (Brooks 1970, 141): it is 'time' (Eliot 1969, 185) but 'not our time' (185). The sea represents not the time of humanity, then, but a time that is 'Older than the time of chronometers' (185). It is a time which is before that of mankind, and as such represents eternity (Bodelson 1958, 85). Thus the everlasting nature of time is rung out by 'by the unhurried/Ground swell' (Eliot 1969, 185).

The imagery surrounding the tolling bell in the first movement is typically ambiguous:

The future futureless, before the morning watch
When time stops and time is never ending;
And the ground swell, that is and was from the beginning,
Clangs
The bell.

(Eliot 1969, 185)

Here the clanging of the bell is developed from the initial motif of 'The tolling bell' (185) which 'Measures time not our time, rung by the unhurried/Ground swell' (185). As with the imagery surrounding the river and the sea, the image of the bell is equivocal. It can be seen to represent many things, and could simply be the bell that signifies death: 'When time stops' (185). However, it can also be seen in a Christian

context as a call to worship Christ, or as a reminder that eternity beckons after the death of this temporal realm (Bodelson 1958, 86). The bell is rung 'by the unhurried/Ground swell' (Eliot 1969, 185), and hence it is not a signifier of human temporal time, but can be seen to signify that it is the realm of timelessness which is truly important. Therefore it is not only a reminder of death, but also an awakening to our souls for a new life in Christ (Bodelson 1958, 86). Undoubtedly, in this respect the influence of French Symbolism connects Eliot to this method of using ambiguity as a means to express spirituality.⁶

The ambiguity behind Eliot's *Four Quartets* has a distinct spirituality to it and is also bound up with the musical patterning and repetition of Eliot's poetry. As Poe stated: 'I know that indefiniteness is an element of the true music (of poetry) – I mean of the true musical expression... a suggestive indefiniteness of vague and therefore spiritual effect' (Smidt 1961, 109). Music became a central means of looking at the language of poetry during the late nineteenth century. It was in many ways an ideal to which the French Symbolists aspired, and thus it became second nature for the French Symbolists to engage with, contemplate and discuss poetry in relation to music. Take, for example, this extract from Mallarmé's 'Symphonie Litteraire':

It is the fact that this man (Banville) represents in our time the poet, the eternal and classical poet, who is faithful to the goddess, and living amongst the forgotten glory of heros (*sic*) and gods. His word is, unendingly, a song of enthusiasm, from which music takes off and the cry of the soul drunk on all this glory.

(1998, 284)

⁶ Smidt poetically points out that 'Symbolism may be said to be the link between Eliot's art and his life, or rather the channel by which his beliefs flowed into his poetry and his poetry into his beliefs' (1961, 153).

In this passage, we see how music had become a central way of contemplating poetry for the French Symbolists.⁷ Equally, Baudelaire spoke of ‘how poetry touches music through a prosody whose roots are to be found far deeper within the human soul than any classical theory suggests’ (1975, 183). Significantly, it was through musical language that the French Symbolists expressed the importance of ambiguity. Moreover, it was through aspiring towards music that they saw the potential to capture an evasive mystery:

there must... only be allusion. The contemplation of objects, the image flying away from the reveries inspired by them, are song: the Parnassians, for their part, take the thing in its entirety and show it: by doing this they lack mystery... To name an object is to suppress three-quarters of the pleasure of a poem which comprises the delight of guessing little by little; to suggest, that is the ideal.

(Mallarmé 1998, 699-700)

It is through ‘allusion’ (699) then, as Mallarmé suggests, that the French Symbolists sought to capture ‘mystery’ (700). Moreover, whilst this correlation between poetry and music was aimed at ensuring there was mystery, this striving towards mystery was towards a further end: to try and capture a sense of the divine. As Banville suggested: ‘man needs it in order to express the divine and supernatural within him, and, if he were unable to sing, he would die’ (1872, 4). This overblown statement is typical of the hyperbole that French Symbolists often used, but crucially it captures the correlation between music and the divine.⁸

⁷ Indeed, as Abbott points out, ‘theoretical formulations about the relationship between poetry and music abounded during the latter decades of the nineteenth century’ (2009, 47).

⁸ This correlation stems back to ancient classical ideals of poetry, and also saw a resurgence with Romanticism (Abbott 2009, 188). Yet, as I have already explained, in this thesis I am investigating it specifically in relation to French Symbolism.

According to Eliot: 'the true claim of Baudelaire as an artist is not that he found a superficial form, but that he was searching for a form of life' (1951, 424). Similarly, Eliot was striving towards a form in which he could express his Christian and religious sensibilities in a suitable manner. Eliot claimed that 'a poet is occupied with the frontiers of consciousness beyond which words fail though meanings still exist' (Thorp 1944, 396), and it is through a 'music of poetry' that he attempted to reach beyond the frontiers of consciousness. This 'music of poetry' was achieved in part through the repetition and development of words and images, along with a use of rhythm that was influenced by Pound's aspiration towards music. Yet Eliot's 'music of poetry' was also shaped in part by the French Symbolists' use of evocative and evasive symbols.

In 'The Dry Salvages' Eliot chooses to use the symbol of the tolling bell to evoke a sense of spirituality, and interestingly this was also used by both Baudelaire and Mallarmé. Baudelaire's *The Cracked Bell* and Mallarmé's *The Bell-Ringer* both centre around the symbol of a bell. Moreover both poems focus on death, with *The Cracked Bell* ending in death: 'Wounded, forgotten, 'neath a mound of slain/And dies, pinned fast, writhing his limbs in vain' (Baudelaire 1997, 83). Both of these poems can help illustrate the ways in which the French Symbolists' use of symbols was associated with a musical 'suggestive indefiniteness' (Smidt 1961, 109). As Abbott insightfully points out, we can interpret the death in these poems as 'a symbolic death of an overly-subjective poetic voice which fails to resonate or ring out' (2009, 207). Yet, despite this death of the subjective poetic voice, the poems themselves still manage to resonate, and thus they highlight the way in which both Baudelaire and Mallarmé moved towards a use of musicality within their poetry (207). In this

instance they ‘make their poems ring out as a proto-music by borrowing the instrumental music metaphor of the bell whose voice is more abstract’ (207). In doing so, both poets illustrate how it is through ambiguous and evasive imagery that poetry moves towards music. Baudelaire can be seen implicitly to long for this bell-like quality in *The Cracked Bell*, which produces a resonance enabling his poetry to abound with abundant symbolic possibilities: ‘Happy the sturdy, vigorous-throated bell’ (Baudelaire 1997, 83). Equally, Mallarmé longs for ‘the bell with vibrant voice’ (Ellis 1927, 98) to awaken its ‘vibrant voice... Into the pure and limpid depths of morning prime’ (98). In order to ensure that their poetry remains vague and ambiguous (and that the bell continues to resonate in a manner that is clear and ‘vibrant’ (98)) they also use the method of repeating and developing motifs. These repeated motifs include such simple techniques as alliteration, assonance, or specific rhythms.⁹ For example, Baudelaire commences ‘The Balcony’ with such repeated motifs (Abbott 2009, 208): ‘Mother of Memories, mistress of all mistresses’ (Baudelaire 1997, 47). Here we have an example of both alliteration on the ‘M’ sound and assonance on the ‘s’ sound (Abbott 2009, 208). Crucially, these poetic techniques as used by the French Symbolists were influenced greatly by their ideas on music in relation to poetry. In aspiring towards music they ensure that there is a continuous tinkling of a ‘distant chime’ (Ellis 1927, 98).

Certainly the central premise for the French Symbolists was to try and amalgamate music and poetry, so that they could ensure that a strange ambiguity would reverberate throughout their poetry like the tolling bell (Abbott 2009, 221). They achieved this through a constant use of musical imagery and metaphors and through

⁹ For a very extensive and insightful discussion of Baudelaire’s use of these repeated motifs see Graham Chester, *Some Functions of Sound Repetition in ‘Les Fleurs du Mal’* (Hull: University of Hull, 1975).

musical patterning of motifs (220). Furthermore, they also achieved this through pushing rhythm towards music: 'Poetry is human language made rhythmic so as to be sung, and, strictly speaking, there is no poetry without song' (Banville 1872, 3). In fact, music pervaded their poetry to such an extent that Mallarmé eventually claimed that 'Poetry is more musical than music' (Abbott 2009, 220). Given the influence of the French Symbolists on Eliot, then, it makes sense to explore Eliot's rhythms, sounds and imagery in terms of music.

Moreover, it also makes sense to see Eliot's own aspirations towards music, and his search for a complexly ambiguous spirituality, in light of the French Symbolists. However, at the same time, it is important to note that the French Symbolists' use of a mysterious spirituality was to an altogether different end than Eliot's. As Mallarmé expressed in 1945: 'Everything, in the world, exists to end up in a book' (1945, 378). Yet this is often where it was to remain. Certainly the French Symbolists' sense of spirituality was most fully realized in their work. Furthermore, their spirituality, as Cassedy points out, was often merely 'a religious structure in which the divinity has been replaced by an aesthetic quality or object' (1990, 89).

In many respects, the French Symbolists' ideas surrounding spirituality and music became a religion of aesthetics (Cassedy 1990, 89). This is reinforced by some of Mallarmé's prose written in a three year period between 1892 and 1895 (89). In the volume called 'Offices' (which translates as Religious Services), the three essays 'Plaisir sacré', 'Catholicisme' and 'De même' deal with the topics of Sacred pleasure alongside Catholicism (89). These prose writings in particular embody how the French Symbolists saw a relationship develop between religion and art (90):

Our communion or share of one to all and of all to one, thus, removed from the barbarous food that the sacrament designates—in the consecration of the host, nonetheless, the Mass, prototype of ceremonials, in spite of the difference with a tradition of art, asserts itself.

(Mallarmé 1945, 394)

Mallarmé then proclaimed: ‘Let’s penetrate into the church, with art’ (395), before going onto merge the two together in the following description (Cassedy 1990, 90):

Say whether it is artifice, prepared better and for many, egalitarian, this communion, aesthetic at first, in the hero of the divine Drama. Even though the priest of this church is not qualified as an actor, but officiates—designates and repels the mythic presence with which one has just merged.

(Mallarmé 1945, 396)

As a result of this playful, sometimes derisive, relationship between religion and art: ‘Religion becomes aestheticized, and art becomes divinized. Religious words become secular, and secular words become religious’ (Cassedy 1990, 90).

The merging of art and religion which Eliot achieves in *Four Quartets* however, was sought for an entirely different purpose. Unlike the French Symbolists, Eliot’s spirituality and religious sensibility manifested itself outside of his poetry and involved an active movement towards God on a daily basis. This is reflected by the fact that Eliot became a devout Anglo-Catholic and subsequently a church warden at St. Stephen’s, Gloucester Road for twenty-five years.¹⁰ Thus his movement towards ambiguity in *Four Quartets*, whilst inspired by the French Symbolists, was for a starkly different purpose. The French Symbolists’ longing for the mysterious, as

¹⁰ See Barry Spurr’s recent monograph entitled ‘*Anglo-Catholic in Religion*’: T. S. Eliot and Christianity (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2010) for a detailed account of Eliot’s religious practice.

Cassedy states, ‘rests on the conviction that there is an essence to be discovered, through language’ (1990, 92). This essence is ultimately seen as divine: ‘The moment of the Notion of an object is thus the moment of the reflection of its pure present in itself, or its present purity’ (Mallarmé 1945, 853). Yet Eliot’s tendency towards the mysterious was as a result of his belief in the true Catholic faith, the dogma of the Incarnation, the complicated bearing his faith had on the issue of poetry and belief and the appropriate balance between them. Eliot’s use of an evasive spirituality rests on the conviction that a balance between poetry and belief could be achieved, and the ‘integrity of poetry’ (Eliot 1928a, viii) maintained. Thus Eliot’s use of ambiguity was an attempt to be able to capture his own personal conviction of Christianity, but in a manner that did not isolate, or indeed irritate, a secular audience. Ultimately, Eliot ensured his Christian beliefs were intricately woven into the whole pattern of the *Quartets*, and I shall address the significance of this in my conclusion.

CHAPTER 4

‘LITTLE GIDDING’

‘Little Gidding’ begins with a ‘moment’ (Eliot 1969, 190) that is ‘in and out of time’ (190). This moment is not constrained by the earthly conception of time but is ‘its own season’ (191). It occurs both within time and beyond it; like the moment in the rose-garden, it represents an ‘intersection of the timeless/With time’ (189-190). Therefore the experience is at once ‘Sempiternal’ (191) but also ‘sodden towards sundown’ (191): it contains both aspects of the eternal alongside the temporal (Reibetanz 1983, 141). Most importantly, though, a comparison between the rose-garden scene of ‘Burnt Norton’ with the opening of ‘Little Gidding’ indicates how Eliot has in many ways reached a climactic stage in the development of his imagery in *Four Quartets*.¹

The openings to both ‘Burnt Norton’ and ‘Little Gidding’ point towards some kind of enlightening experience which is indicated by Eliot’s use of imagery (Reibetanz 1983, 141). Thus, in ‘Burnt Norton’ we have the description of ‘The surface glittered out of heart of light’ (Eliot 1969, 172), which is developed in ‘Little Gidding’: ‘The brief sun flames on ice... Reflecting in a watery mirror/A glare that is blindness in the early afternoon’ (191). Significantly, Eliot amplifies the imagery used in ‘Burnt Norton’; thus in ‘Little Gidding’ the glittering image has now become so strong that it

¹ David Perkins insightfully investigates the similarities between the opening of ‘Burnt Norton’ and ‘Little Gidding’ in ‘Rose Garden to Midwinter Spring: Achieved Faith in the Four Quartets’, *Modern Language Quarterly* 23, 1 (1962), 41-45.

is blinding (Reibetanz 1983, 141). This image in 'Little Gidding' is both mystical and spiritual in a similar manner to the image of the rising lotos in 'Burnt Norton'.²

However, it has become far more powerful and is now a 'glow more intense than blaze of branch, or brazier' (Eliot 1969, 191) and one which 'Stirs the dumb spirit' (191). Ultimately, then, it can be seen as a celestial radiating light (Reibetanz 1983, 141). Unlike the image of the rose-garden, which is embedded with earthly connotations, here: 'There is no earth smell/Or smell of living thing' (Eliot 1969, 191). Hence, we can see this 'glow' (191) as spiritual. In addition, whilst there is an image of a 'hedgerow' (191) it 'Is blanched for an hour with transitory blossom/Of snow' (191). Here the whiteness of the snow can be seen to embody a heavenly condition and in this respect, as Reibetanz points out, it connotes the 'purity of unalloyed divine love' (1983, 141).

Thus, whilst in the opening of 'Little Gidding' Eliot's imagery has much in common with that of 'Burnt Norton', it is elevated to such a high intensity that it shakes the 'soul's sap' (Eliot 1969, 191). Yet crucially, as Eliot's imagery reaches its climax, it becomes more complexly ambiguous and mysteriously evocative. In many respects, then, the moment in the opening of 'Little Gidding' carries on from the experience of Incarnation first seen in 'The Dry Salvages' (Reibetanz 1983, 142): 'The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation' (Eliot 1969, 190). Importantly, Eliot maintains the sense of unity described in 'The Dry Salvages' ('Here the impossible union/Of spheres of existence is actual' (190)) whilst also achieving a mysterious sensibility in 'Little Gidding' through an 'impossible union' (190) of 'Midwinter spring', 'melting and freezing' along with the patterning of

² For a more detailed explanation of the spiritual aspects of the lotus flower see: Paul Foster, *The Golden Lotus: Buddhist Influence in T. S. Eliot's 'Four Quartets'* (Sussex: The Book Guild, 1998), 81-2.

imagery surrounding ‘flames’ and ‘ice’ (Reibetanz 1983, 142). As with the description of Incarnation in ‘The Dry Salvages’, the revelatory moment in the opening of ‘Little Gidding’ is achieved through equivocal imagery which avoids didacticism, whilst simultaneously creating a sense of spirituality. The imagery reaches its peak in the end of the opening verse paragraph of ‘Little Gidding’: ‘Where is the summer, the unimaginable/Zero summer?’ (Eliot 1969, 191). In this ‘unimaginable’ image we have an extreme uniting of ‘Zero’ with ‘summer’ (Reibetanz 1983, 142). To our temporal minds the concept of ‘Zero summer’ (Eliot 1969, 191) is simply ‘unimaginable’ (191) and Eliot reinforces this through his evasive imagery (Reibetanz 1985, 142). Ultimately, at the ‘point of intersection of the timeless/With time’ (Eliot 1969, 189-190) Eliot creates a union that seems paradoxical to temporal vision, and he captures this by using mystifying imagery.

Crucially, then, even at the spiritual climax of *Four Quartets*, Eliot still maintains an evasiveness surrounding his imagery so as not to create an overtly Christian poetry. As I have suggested throughout this thesis, Eliot’s method of using symbols and imagery to create a combined sense of mystery and spirituality comes from the influence of French Symbolism. As Genesius Jones points out, the French Symbolists ‘were concerned with exploiting possibilities of connotation’ (1964, 33) and ‘experimenting with the resources of connotation’ (33). A key way in which the French Symbolists sought to exploit the possibilities of connotation was through the use of symbols and imagery, but most importantly their use of both symbols and imagery was an attempt to capture the evasiveness and evocativeness of music. For Baudelaire, and indeed for the vast majority of the French Symbolists, music remained ‘an inexhaustible source of suggestions’ (Hyslop 1964, 197). Mallarmé

especially, was an advocate for suggestion rather than clear statement (Adames 2000, 135): 'It is not description which can unveil the efficacy and beauty of monuments, seas, or the human face in all their maturity and native state, but rather evocation, allusion, suggestion' (Mallarmé 1956, 45). Furthermore, Mallarmé proclaimed, the 'perfect poem we dream of can be suggested by Music itself' (102-3), and this underscores how for the French Symbolists music had become a key means in which to discuss exploiting connotation in poetry. In essence, it was through aspiring to music that they sought to create a mysteriousness. In fact, as they sought to conjure up 'an inexhaustible source of suggestions' (Hyslop 1964, 197) in their poetry, it was only natural for them to seek inspiration from music (Adames 2000, 135).

The influence of music upon the French Symbolists can certainly be further illuminated by comments made by Richard Wagner, who 'has long been recognized as the father of French Symbolist poetry' (DiGaetani 1978, 16).³ Wagner claimed that the 'most complete work of the poet should be that which in its final realization would be most perfect music' (Hyslop 1964, 207). This comment clearly echoes the sentiments of Baudelaire and Mallarmé, both in its aspiration towards a 'perfect music' (207), and in the evasiveness of expression. Yet despite the vagueness of

³ Any study that looks at the influence of music on French Symbolism would be incomplete without at least a brief mention of Richard Wagner. However, I have not discussed Wagner's influence in any great detail here as it has already been explored in considerable depth elsewhere. See for instance: Elwood Harman, *French Literary Wagnerism* (New York: Garland, 1988); Heath Lees, *Mallarmé and Wagner: Music and Poetic Language* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Margaret Miner, *Resonant Gaps between Baudelaire and Wagner* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995); Simon Shaw-Miller, *Visible Deeds of Music: Art and Music from Wagner to Cage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). There have also been a number of important studies on the influence of Wagner on Eliot. See: Margaret E. Dana, 'Orchestrating *The Waste Land*: Wagner, Leitmotiv, and the Play of Passion', in *T. S. Eliot's Orchestra: Critical Essays on Poetry and Music* (New York: Garland, 2000), 267-294; Martin Stoddard, *Wagner to 'The Waste Land': A Study of the Relationship of Wagner to English Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1982); Raymond Furness, *Wagner and Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982).

expression, Wagner's comments often clearly strike a chord with the aesthetic of French Symbolism (Jones 1964, 41):

What music expresses is eternal, infinite and ideal: it does not express the passion, love or longing of such-and-such an individual on such-and-such occasion, but passion, love or longing in itself, and this is present in that unlimited variety of motivations, which is the exclusive and particular characteristic of music, foreign and inexpressible to any other language.

(Langer 1942, 222)

In this brief extract, Wagner highlights the two crucial reasons why the French Symbolists were greatly influenced by music. Firstly, the meaning behind music is ambiguous, which ensures there is a variety of possible interpretations. Furthermore, in stating that 'what music expresses is eternal, infinite and ideal' (222) Wagner points to another essential reason why the French Symbolists aspired towards music: to achieve a spiritual aspect to their poetry. In a similar manner, Eliot was eager to explore poetry which moved towards spirituality whilst also exploiting a series of possible interpretations, and in doing so avoiding didacticism. Consequently Eliot was drawn to French Symbolism and became greatly influenced by the movement.

Eliot himself articulates this aspect of his poetic sensibility (Jones 1964, 46): 'It is true, I think, that poetry, if it is not to be a lifeless repetition of forms, must be constantly exploring "the frontiers of the spirit"' (Eliot 1939a, 27). As Eliot tried to ensure that he was 'constantly exploring "the frontiers of the spirit"' (27), he became greatly concerned with the connection between language and meaning, and especially with what he called the 'still undeveloped resources of the language' (1957, 57). He deliberated upon this in several of his critical essays (Jones 1964, 46), including

‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ (1919), ‘The Metaphysical Poets’ (1921) and his essay on ‘Dante’ (1929):

In English poetry words have a kind of opacity which is part of their beauty. I do not mean that the beauty of English poetry is what is called mere ‘verbal beauty’. It is rather that words have associations, and the groups of words in association have associations, which is a kind of local selfconsciousness, because they are the growth of a particular civilization...

(1951, 239-240)

Most interestingly, Eliot expands upon this notion of words having associations and connotations in a manner that incorporates music and the aesthetic of the French Symbolists in ‘The Music of Poetry’ (Jones 1964, 47). Eliot suggests that it is ‘the arrangement of the right words in the right order’ (1957, 97) that creates ‘their connotations, their music’ (98). Significantly, then, Eliot refers to poetic ambivalence in relation to ‘music’ and reinforces this when he talks of trying to capture something beyond ‘ordinary speech’ (31): ‘The different interpretations may all be partial formulations of one thing; the ambiguities may be due to the fact that the poem means more, not less, than ordinary speech can communicate (31). In this sense, ‘the different interpretations’ (31) which a poem may be open to as a result of its ‘ambiguities’ (31), are all part of Eliot’s ‘music of poetry’, and this aspect of it evidently stems from the influence of French Symbolism.

As we have already seen in the opening passage of ‘Little Gidding’, Eliot’s use of imagery reaches the pinnacle of its spirituality at the same point as he heightens his use of poetic ambivalence. The best example of this is undoubtedly in his use of fire imagery: ‘The dove descending breaks the air/With flame of incandescent terror’ (Eliot 1969, 196). This particular image serves as a perfect example of Eliot’s poetic

ambivalence and spirituality being intertwined in a single image.⁴ In this instance, the image of the dove associated with fire can be seen to represent both an image of a German air-raid bomber at the same time as it is an embodiment of Pentecost (Bodelson 1958, 20). Moreover, Eliot's patterning of the word 'fire' does not have one strict meaning. As Bodelson points out, 'fire' in *Four Quartets* has a whole host of associations, including 'actual fire, desire, suffering, purification through suffering, Purgatory, and divine love' (20). Thus, in ensuring that a variety of possible connotations are connected with 'fire', he maintains a level of poetic ambivalence even when *Four Quartets* takes on spiritual significance.

Furthermore, Eliot uses the musical process of repetition and recapitulation in his use of fire imagery. For example, he first brings in the theme of 'pentecostal fire' (Eliot 1969, 191) in the opening to 'Little Gidding', which is then developed into the inflamed image of the Pentecostal dove (Bodelson 1958, 103). The image of the dove then occurs again in movement two as 'the dark dove with the flickering tongue' (Eliot 1969, 193), before the image of fire takes on a heightened sense of significance:

Water and fire succeed
The town, the pasture and the weed.
Water and fire deride
The sacrifice we denied.

(193)

⁴ Most significantly, Eliot's use of fire imagery here occurs in the lyric section of 'Little Gidding'. Evidently, then, Brady (along with countless other critics) oversimplifies the matter when she states that 'Eliot's lyricism becomes a vehicle for his theology' (1978, 100). On the contrary, throughout *Four Quartets* Eliot consciously tries to maintain a balance between poetry and belief through his multifarious imagery. In doing so, he ensures that the only faith a reader needs in order to appreciate his poetry is 'that willing suspension of disbelief... which constitutes poetic faith' (Coleridge 1956, 169).

As the image of fire is further developed in the second movement of 'Little Gidding', Eliot depicts London after an aerial bombardment. He captures a moment of brief relief, with the possibility of another sudden and intense attack ever present (Bodelson 1958, 108):

Near the ending of interminable night
At the recurrent end of the unending
After the dark dove with the flickering tongue
Had passed below the horizon of his homing

(Eliot 1969, 193).

Here we have a recapitulation of the 'pentecostal fire' (191) which is seen at the opening of movement one, and which reaches its climax in movement four. Crucially, this development of the pentecostal theme is executed in a context which is not overtly spiritual. Thus, whilst the image of the dove as 'tongued with fire' (192) can be seen as envisaging an airplane during the blitz in its 'incandescent terror' (196), it also has spiritual resonances as a divine embodiment of God's unceasing devotion (Bodelson 1958, 108).

In addition, Eliot subtly points to hidden depths of spiritual meaning by using wording that is similar to passages from Scripture. In this instance, the phrase 'flickering tongue' (Eliot 1969, 193) no doubt connotes the phrase 'tongues like as of fire' from Matthew iii, 16 (Warner 1999, 111). Yet, crucially, Eliot ensures the passage remains suitably ambiguous so that the religious aspect of this phrase is not overly striking to a secular audience. By contrast, in *Ash-Wednesday* Eliot uses far more recognisably Christian phrases verbatim, which are starkly apparent even to those who are not especially religious: 'Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our

death/Pray for us now and at the hour of our death' (Eliot 1969, 90).⁵ However, in *Four Quartets* Eliot maintains an equivocal poetry, by finding a balance between poetry and belief through his musical patterning of imagery and symbols.⁶

Yet not only does this ambiguity in *Four Quartets* help to avoid Christian didacticism, it also serves to heighten subtly Eliot's spiritual message. In combining two distinct aspects in the image of the dove, Eliot reinforces the sense that suffering and God's love are one and the same, and that this is 'The one discharge from sin and error' (Eliot 1969, 196):

The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre —
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

(196)

Eliot, then, is able to reinforce his message of divine love, whilst simultaneously avoiding any one-dimensional religious overtones:

Who then devised the torment? Love.
Love is the unfamiliar Name
Behind the hands that wove
The intolerable shirt of flame
Which human power cannot remove.
We only live, only suspire

⁵ Spurr highlights where the biblical echoes are most apparent in Eliot's poetry, and perceptively indicates how he has taken influence from both the language of the Prayer Book and the Bible. Significantly, he does not discuss any biblical echoes in *Four Quartets*, which reinforces my argument here. See: Barry Spurr, 'Anglo-Catholic in Religion': *T. S. Eliot and Christianity* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2010).

⁶ *Ash-Wednesday* is the first poem Eliot published after his conversion and thus it is somewhat inevitable that the religious overtones would be clearly visible. Nevertheless, Eliot can be seen to be using some symbols and imagery in a manner that is similar to his technique in *Four Quartets*. In fact, some have considered *Ash-Wednesday* to be distinctly 'musical' in itself. See for example: Babette Deutsch, 'The Most Influential Poet of Our Time', *New York Herald Tribune*, 31 May 1936, 7, and the chapter 'Beyond Music' by Ronald Bush in his monograph *T. S. Eliot: A Study in Character and Style* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

Consumed by either fire or fire.

(196)

Once again in this passage Eliot's imagery conveys a deliberate ambiguity. As Ward points out, '...the image of fire is... a highly ambiguous one; destructive and yet creative...' (1973, 265), and through this ambivalent image Eliot ultimately avoids any hint of moralising. Take, for example, the phrase 'Consumed by either fire or fire' (Eliot 1969, 196). Here the word 'Consumed' (196) can either be seen to connote an image of human kind being ruined by lusts, or reaching perfect fulfilment through the way of Christ and realizing that suffering is part of the divinely ordained pattern of life (Warner 1999, 110). The fire either annihilates us in anguish or it expiates our wrongdoings: 'that refining fire/Where you must move in measure' (Eliot 1969, 195). For us it is the choice of the burning lusts of *The Waste Land*, seen throughout 'The Fire Sermon': 'To Carthage then I came/Burning burning burning burning' (70), or the purification from these lusts (Warner 1999, 110): 'From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit/Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire/Where you must move in measure, like a dancer' (Eliot 1969, 195).

From an investigation of Eliot's *Four Quartets* we have seen that, as Warner suggested: 'The richness, force and music of his imagery is one quality of this poem's greatness' (1999, 116). Interestingly though, Warner's statement could equally be applied to Eliot's use of rhythm. In the opening passage to 'Little Gidding' Eliot ensures there is a vibrant vitality through his use of *vers libéré*. In fact, Eliot creates a sense of fervour associated with the Incarnation as he moves freely between various stress patterns and consciously avoids consistent use of one standard stress pattern. Crucially, though, as we have seen throughout *Four Quartets*, what Eliot uses in order

to give his poem a structured intensity is repetition and development of motifs. The musical patterning of motifs that occurs in the opening to 'Little Gidding' is more elaborately daedal than anywhere else in *Four Quartets*, in terms of the patterning of both sound and rhythms. For example, in the beginning lines there is a striking use of sibilance (Reibetanz 1983, 143): 'Midwinter spring is its own season/Sempiternal though sodden towards sundown,/Suspended in time, between pole and tropic' (Eliot 1969, 191). Eliot's use of sibilance is present in the entire opening section of 'Little Gidding', and where he does refrain from using it, he does so in order to reintroduce it with more power and force (Reibetanz 1983, 144): 'no wind, but pentecostal fire/In the dark time of the year. Between melting and freezing/The soul's sap quivers' (Eliot 1969, 191). Furthermore, within his use of sibilance, Eliot also uses alliteration (Reibetanz 1983, 143). For instance, in the phrase 'sodden towards sundown' (Eliot 1969, 191) we have a clear patterning of both 'n' sounds, 'd' sounds and the sibilant sounds of the 's' (Reibetanz 1983, 143). Evidently, Eliot intertwines his use of alliteration with other sounds (143): 'Now the hedgerow/Is blanched for an hour with transitory blossom/Of snow, a bloom more sudden/Than that of summer' (1969, 191). Here Eliot develops both an 's', 'm', 'n' and 'bl' sound in this short passage (Reibetanz 1983, 144). This repetition and development of such sounds occurs frequently in 'Little Gidding'. Thus, in the phrase 'Suspended in time, between pole and tropic' (Eliot 1969, 191) Eliot repeats both 't' and 'p' sounds (Reibetanz 1983, 143). Similarly, his use of the 't' sounds recurs in 'the short day is brightest, with frost' (Eliot 1969, 191). Most importantly, though, because of the frequency with which Eliot repeats and develops these sounds, they become more akin to musical motifs than a simple use of standard poetic technique. This whole passage, then, can

be seen as a repetition and recapitulation of musical motifs which serves to create a particularly sonorous effect.

In addition, this passage resonates with the quality of melopoeia, which Pound saw as crucial to the ‘musicality’ of poetry and which he defined as ‘poetry which moves by its music’ (1918, 57). As Duffey points out, for Eliot: ‘form is something he finally decided upon with the advice of Ezra Pound’ (1974, 1092), and undoubtedly the concept of melopoeia was something which influenced Eliot’s conception of form in *Four Quartets*. For Pound, music and poetry were very much inter-related. Hence Pound claimed in his essay ‘Vorticism’ that: ‘there is a sort of Poetry where music, sheer melody, seems as if it were just bursting into speech’ (1970a, 82). Clearly, then, Pound saw the potential for ‘musicality’ to emerge through poetry, and his conception of poetry as music ‘bursting into speech’ (82) is evident in his own poetry and criticism, along with his translations of other poetry (Stark 2009, 1). More specifically, this notion of melopoeia (which he also termed ‘cantible values’ (Pound 1954, 167)) was evident for Pound in ‘the formal features that register when a poem is spoken, chanted or sung’ (Stark 2009, 2).

As Stark points out, Pound felt that ‘the hackneyed quality of some of the more mechanical devices can be invigorated, and indeed modernized, by melopoeic means’ (2009, 6). For instance, in the translated poem entitled ‘From Syria’, we can see Pound employing melopoeia to enliven traditional poetic effects (5):

In April when I see all through
Mead and garden new flowers blow,
And streams with ice-bands broken flow,
Eke hear the birds their singing do;

When spring's grass-perfume floateth by
Then 'tis sweet song and birdlet's cry
Do make mine old joy come anew.

(Pound 1977, 92).

Here Pound is describing the sound of birdsong in April (Stark 2009, 6). Yet, crucially, Pound is able to enliven this image of birdsong with the onomatopoeia in the phrase 'birdlet's cry' which captures the sonorous quality of the 'sweet song' (6). In addition, Pound reinforces the nature of the birdsong through the dulcet and resonant rhyming couplet (6): 'Mead and garden new flowers blow/And streams with ice-bands broken flow' (Pound 1977, 92). Here the internal rhyme of 'blow' and 'flow', coupled with the use of enjambment, gives Pound's verse a melodious and musical quality, and thus captures the spirit of melopoeia.

The notion of birdsong is integral to Pound's conception of melopoeia.⁷ Take, for example, Pound's comments on Arnaut Daniel (Stark 2009, 7):

made the birds sing IN HIS WORDS; I don't mean that he merely referred to the birds singing... he kept them at it, repeating the tune, and finding 5 rhymes for each of 17 rhyme sounds in the same order. Having done that he constructed another perfect strophe, where the bird call interrupts the verse... That again for six strophes WITH the words making sense.

(Pound 1934, 39-40)

From this extract we see that, for Pound, birdsong is a work of art that is similar to that of poetry (Stark 2009, 7). Indeed, Pound felt the similarities between the two mediums so strongly that he himself sought to underscore the affinity between them

⁷ For an in-depth discussion of the importance of birdsong to Pound's development of melopoeia see Robert Starks's insightful article, which has greatly aided my discussion here: 'Pound Among the Nightingales – From the Troubadours to a Cantabile Modernism', *Journal of Modern Literature* 32, 2 (2009), 1-19.

in his translations of Arnaut Daniel's verse, such as in the beginning of 'Doutz Brais e Critz' (7):

Sweet cries and cracks
and lays and chants inflected
By auzels who, in their Latin belikes,
Chirm each to each, even as you and I
Pipe toward those girls on whom our thoughts attract;
Are but more cause that I, whose overweening
Search is toward the noblest, set in cluster
Lines where no word pulls wry, no rhyme breaks gauges.

(8)

Crucially, as Stark points out, the bird songs: '... include a whole spectrum of musical sound from the percussive to the harmonic' (2009, 8). It is the melopoeic quality of Arnaut's bird songs which greatly appealed to Pound:

Here are some of his canzos, the best that are left us; and he was very cunning in his imitation of birds, as in the poem *Autet*, where he stops in the middle of his singing, crying: 'Cadahus, en son us,' as a bird cries, and rhyming on it very cleverly, with no room to turn about on the words, 'Mas pel us, estauc clus,' and in the other versets. And in *L'aura amara*, he cries as the birds in autumn, and there is some of this also in his best poem, *Doutz brais e critz*.

(Pound 1954, 109)

Interestingly, whilst Pound was seemingly unconcerned with Daniel as a 'living individual' (McDougal 1972, 102), he remained for Pound 'the finest of the troubadours' (Pound 1912b, 370). Pound, then, was entirely preoccupied with what McDougal calls Daniel's 'technical virtuosity and "craftmanship"' (1972, 104). By contrast, Eliot was fascinated with the persona of Arnaut Daniel, with Bacigalupo going as far as to suggest that Daniel is 'the Eliot persona' (2011, 180). Hence Eliot can also be looked at in relation to Arnaut Daniel. The context in which Eliot was most familiar with Arnaut Daniel would have been the passage from canto twenty-six

of Dante's *Purgatorio* (180). In this canto Arnaut describes himself in the following manner: 'I'm Arnaut that weep and sing at once: in thought/I see my previous madness' (Dante 1996, 248). The fact Arnaut Daniel is punished amongst the lustful is perhaps why Eliot was particularly struck by this passage from the *Purgatorio*. Eliot himself is widely regarded to have possessed a sense of tortured sexuality which is often reflected in his early poetry.⁸ Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, reference to the speech Daniel utters in the *Purgatorio* recurs throughout Eliot's poetry. It is present in Eliot's chosen title (*Ara Vos Prec*) for the set of poetry published in the 1920s, in the fourth section of *Ash-Wednesday* ('Sovegna vos' (Eliot 1969, 94)) and in the 'refining fire' (195) present in *Four Quartets* (Bacigalupo 2011, 180). Yet perhaps Eliot's most well-known reference to Daniel's speech is in the ending of *The Waste Land*, where it is present amongst 'these fragments I have shored against my ruins': 'Poi s'ascese nel foco che gli affina' (Eliot 1969, 75).

Yet Pound was not alone in his reverence of Arnaut Daniel as a poet. Dante also greatly respected Daniel's poetry and even went so far as to call him 'il miglior fabbro' which translates as 'the better craftsman' or 'creator' (Stark 2009, 8). Most significantly, this same phrase was used by Eliot when dedicating *The Waste Land* to Pound. This, of course, is no coincidence for a writer as well-read and meticulous as Eliot, who was dubbed the 'elephant' for his ability to recall passages of literature (Badenhausen 2004, 173). Rather, it can be interpreted as a telling nod to the influence of Pound, and particularly his concept of melopoeia, on Eliot's own writing.

⁸ Carole Seymour-Jones draws attention to this aspect of Eliot's sexuality when writing: 'Sex lies at the heart of much of Eliot's poetry, becoming his personal synonym for sin. Sex attracts and repels, its urgency creating in the poet the same engulfing horror that he feels he, like Kurtz, deserves for breaking moral rules' (2001, 315). For more on Eliot's sexuality see: Patrick Query, "'The pleasures of higher vices': Sexuality in Eliot's Work', in David Chinitz, ed., *A Companion to T. S. Eliot* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

In using this phrase, Eliot subtly highlights the important influence that Arnaut had on Pound, and in turn the important influence Pound had on Eliot himself. For Pound, Arnaut's verse poetry was 'not literature' (1954, 112), but rather 'the art of fitting words well with music' (112). This notion of viewing literature in relation to music, as we have seen, became crucial for Eliot and it stemmed in part from the influence of Ezra Pound. As with Arnaut and Pound before him, Eliot in *Four Quartets* uses an array of poetic techniques in order to enhance the aural qualities and push his poetry towards sound and music. In doing so, Eliot can be seen to be adopting the principle of melopoeia in his poetry and incorporating a distinct musicality into *Four Quartets*. Crucially, Eliot's poetic effects are used in a manner that is distinctly musical, and thus he maintains 'the language of exploration' (Pound 1970a, 88) that Pound advocated in his essay 'Vorticism'.

I am suggesting that we need to see Eliot's use of 'poetic techniques' in relation to his ideas surrounding the 'music of poetry', in the same way that Pound saw poetic effects as central to his conception of melopoeia. As I have mentioned previously in this thesis, Eliot felt 'that the properties in which music concerns the poet most nearly, are the sense of rhythm and the sense of structure' (Eliot 1957, 38). This 'sense of structure' (38), whilst being essential to Eliot's conception of a 'music of poetry', is vague. Yet this vagueness is deliberate on Eliot's part, as it ensures that the term is as wide-ranging as possible, and that its meaning can be interpreted in a variety of different ways. I am propounding that for Eliot this 'sense of structure' (38) included the premise of repetition and development which, whilst being a poetic technique, Eliot saw specifically in relation to music. Ultimately, whether this repetition and development occurs in the form of words, images, sounds or themes, it is tied up with

Eliot's 'sense of structure' (38) and thus can be seen as having distinct musical properties:

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. It is in the concert room, rather than in the opera house, that the germ of a poem may be quickened.

(38)

Also of crucial importance is the significance that this 'sense of structure' (Eliot 1957, 38) has in relation to the musicality of Eliot's *vers libéré*. In this respect the term incorporates his determination not to be constrained by metre, but to move more freely towards a 'musical phrase' (Pound 1954, 3). Often in *Four Quartets* this 'sense of structure' (Eliot 1957, 38) does not entail an obvious use of metric. Rather, Eliot relies upon the 'musical' sense of repetition and development. In order to achieve this he uses *vers libéré*, which allows for a more fluid and freely ranging use of metric. Eliot's 'sense of structure' (38), then, is tied up with *vers libéré* and the musical patterning of rhythmic motifs. It is through this method that Eliot gives *Four Quartets* both fluidity and poetic force. I am proposing that it makes sense to see Eliot's use of *vers libéré* as musical because it often consists of repetition and development, which in *Four Quartets* occurs as an essential part of Eliot's musical patterning.

Contrary to other critics who have commented on the various rhythms that occur in Eliot's verse, I see Eliot's use of rhythm in *Four Quartets* as 'musical'.⁹ In fact, no

⁹ The most well-known studies include: Dorothy E. Rambo, 'An Analysis of *Four Quartets* by T. S. Eliot with Particular Respect to Its Prosody' (Ph.D. diss: Northwestern University Press, 1958); Sister M. Martin Barry, *An Analysis of the Prosodic Structures of Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot* (Washington,

critics have yet commented at any length on the sheer musicality of Eliot's use of metre and rhythm, and have been content to give it a passing mention.¹⁰ Nevertheless, some critics have recognised that Eliot's use of rhythm and sound is made up of recurring patterns, and this is a significant development.¹¹ Most importantly, Eliot's 'sense of structure' (1957, 38) is centred around repetition and development of motifs, and thus it makes sense to see his use of rhythm as musical. Indeed, as Adames aptly suggests: 'rhythm is the poet's most direct link with music because it is directly transferable from one medium to the other and not construed by analogy' (2000, 133).

In addition, the fact that Pound's concept of *melopoeia* also influenced Eliot's use of *vers libéré* further reinforces my interpretation of it as 'musical'. Pound was particularly influenced by the way Arnaut managed to incorporate a distinct musicality in his poetry by avoiding any strict line length, and instead focusing on producing various sounds (Stark 2009, 14):

The songs of En Arnaut are in some versets wholly free and uneven the whole length of the verset, then the other five versets follow in the track of the first, for the same tune must be sung in them all, or sung with very slight or orderly changes.

(Pound 1954, 110)

D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1969). Neither of these studies looks at how Eliot's use of rhythm can be seen as 'musical'.

¹⁰ Despite the fact that hardly any critics have discussed the 'musicality' of Eliot's use of rhythm in *Four Quartets*, there has been a whole plethora of critics who have explored Eliot's use of 'jazz rhythm' in his other poetry. The vast majority of these discussions have focused on *Sweeney Agonistes* and *The Waste Land*. See, for example: David Chinitz, *T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 19-52, David Chinitz, 'A Jazz-Banjo, Not a Lute: Eliot and Popular Music before *The Waste Land*', in *T. S. Eliot's Orchestra: Critical Essays on Poetry and Music*, ed., John Xiros Cooper (New York: Garland, 2000), 3-24, Morris Freedman, 'Jazz Rhythms and T. S. Eliot', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 51 (1952), 419-35, Carol H. Smith, 'Sweeney and the Jazz Age', in *Critical Essays on T. S. Eliot: The Sweeney Motif*, ed., Kinley E. Roby (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1985), 87-99.

¹¹ The best examples of such critical work are: Julia Maniates Reibetanz, *A Reading of Eliot's Four Quartets* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1983) and Sister Mary Anthony Weinig, *Verbal Pattern in Four Quartets: A Close Reading of T. S. Eliot's Poem* (Troy, Michigan: International Book Publishers, 1982).

Significantly, Pound describes Arnaut's poetic technique as 'free' (110), and of course Pound became known for advocating a freer verse form. In many ways, then, Pound discovered the 'musical phrase' (1954, 3) through studying Arnaut. Moreover, the musicality which Pound sought in his poetry owed a lot to the sounds which Arnaut placed before any strict ideas of poetic form (Stark 2009, 14). Pound later articulated this idea himself: 'prosody is the articulation of the total sound of a poem' (Sullivan 1970, 80). This approach to poetry dramatically changed ideas of poetic form. As Stark aptly points out: 'For one, it makes rhythm a spontaneous and organic phenomenon again, forever banishing the image of the poet pacing his garden, ten steps one way, ten steps the other, muttering his nascent verses' (2009, 15). This sense of freedom is evident in Eliot's *Four Quartets*, and we can see that in many ways 'the sound of language' (15) and its musicality become more prominent as a result.

Certainly, Eliot's musical patterning of rhythmic motifs reverberates throughout the opening of 'Little Gidding'. Thus, for example, the three sharp stresses in the phrase (Reibetanz 1983, 144),

/ / /
When the short day is brightest (Eliot 1969, 191),

are heard again in the phrase:

/ / /
The soul's sap quivers (191).

Equally, a rhythmic motif of two stresses reverberates in this passage, both in the phrase (Reibetanz 1983, 144),

/ / / /
Suspended in time,/Between pole and tropic (Eliot 1969, 191)

and later in the line:

/ /
Between melting and freezing (191).

Evidently through the patterning and repetition of these rhythms, Eliot creates a passage that is rich in musicality. By the use of *vers libéré*, Eliot creates a verse that is free and flowing, yet he also engrains it with a sense of structure through musical repetition of rhythmic motifs. In doing so, Eliot is able to underline the immensely sonorous quality of this passage of ‘Little Gidding’ and capture Pound’s sense of melopoeia. Indeed, as Eliot himself made clear: ‘no prosodic system ever invented can teach anyone to write good English verse. It is, as Mr. Pound has so often remarked, the musical phrase that matters’ (1964, 38-39). Significantly, though, in 1870 Louis Becq de Fouquières propounded a remarkably similar relationship between poetry and music, claiming that: ‘to compose a verse is to construct a musical phrase’ (Abbott 2009, 47).

In this thesis I have continually tried to establish that Eliot’s development of his own ‘music of poetry’ was not only formulated from the influence of Pound, but that it also owes a lot to the French Symbolists, who used *vers libre* in order to escape the restrictions of French Verse (Adames 2000, 137).¹² Most importantly, this movement away from restrictions of form (such as the alexandrine) is seen in light of a

¹² See my introduction for a detailed discussion of the emergence of *vers libre*.

movement towards music (137). For example, in 'Crisis in Poetry', Mallarmé exultantly declared (137):

...any poet with an individual technique and ear can build his own instrument, so long as his fluting, bowing, or drumming are accomplished — play that instrument and dedicate it, along with others, to Language... Each soul is a melody; its strands must be bound up. Each poet has his flute or viol, with which to do so.

(Mallarmé 1956, 37)

This particular section of 'Crisis in Poetry' resonates especially with Eliot's own conception of how poetry and music should work together. Rather than following any strict metrical formula, Eliot instead 'gives priority to the soul's individual music' (Adames 2000, 137).

Furthermore, there are other parallels to be found between Mallarmé and Eliot which shed important light not only on the musicality of Eliot's poetry, but also on the correlation between music and spirituality. One central aspect of Eliot's 'music of poetry' which I have not yet addressed is the balance between common speech and his poetry (Scofield 1988, 81). In consideration of the balance between these, Eliot felt that: 'Whether poetry is accentual or syllabic, rhymed or rhymeless, formal or free, it cannot afford to lose its contact with the changing language of common intercourse' (1957, 29). Clearly, then, Eliot was keen to avoid poetry becoming unnatural, forced and ultimately disingenuous. Moreover, Eliot was almost certainly aware that this conscious move away from poetry becoming hollow and false was also sought by poets of his era such as Pound; and indeed those before him, including Wordsworth and Donne (Scofield 1988, 81).

Perhaps most importantly, though, Mallarmé was also amongst these poets who sought to stop poetry becoming too overblown. Mallarmé asserted that poets must avoid: ‘all virtuosity and bravado’ (1956, 55), and he claimed that a poet, ‘must project his vision of the world’ (55) by using ‘the languages of the school, home, and market place which seem most fitting to that purpose’ (55). Significantly, this is reiterated by Eliot: ‘The music of poetry, then, must be a music latent in the common speech of its time’ (Eliot 1975, 112). Crucially, though, for Mallarmé, this notion of using a common speech was to reach an altogether higher realm (Adames 2000, 137): ‘The poetry will be lifted to some frightening, wavering, ecstatic pitch — like an orchestral wing spread wide in flight, but with its talons still rooted deep within your earth’ (Mallarmé 1956, 55). Here Mallarmé’s notion of the ‘orchestral wing’ (55) has much in common with the musicality that Eliot perceives in *Four Quartets* (Adames 2000, 137).

For Mallarmé, ‘the magic charm of art’ (1956, 55) is ‘that, beyond the book itself, beyond the very text, it delivers up that volatile scattering which we call the Spirit, Who cares for nothing save universal musicality’ (55). Here the key words are ‘spirit’ and ‘universal musicality’, which resonate with Eliot’s own use of the ‘music of poetry’ in *Four Quartets* and his method of using ‘musicality’ to reach a religious sensibility (Adames 2000, 137). In fact, such key words as these pervade Mallarmé’s remarks and critical writings. For instance, ‘Ideal’, ‘Mystery’, ‘Truth’, and ‘Word’ also seem to embody a clear sense of spirituality, which Mallarmé was trying to reach through poetry (138).

In addition, these words create a picture that is characteristic of the French Symbolist movement, which consistently strove to a higher realm through merging poetry and music. Take, for example, the following extract which sees Baudelaire essentially paraphrasing Edgar Allan Poe (Ellis 1927, 15-16):

It is this immortal instinct of Beauty which makes us consider Earth and its spectacles as a glimpse, a *correspondance* of Heaven. The unquenchable thirst for something in the distance, which life reveals, is the most living proof of our immortality. It is by Poetry or by Music that the soul perceives the glories beyond the grave, and when an exquisite poetry or music brings tears to our eyes, we weep not through excess of pleasure, but through a certain petulant, impatient sorrow at our inability to grasp here on earth, at once and for ever, those divine and rapturous joys of which through the poem or through the music we attain to but brief and indeterminate glimpses.

(15-16)

Most significantly, this passage points towards a kind of interrelation between Earth and Heaven, but one where only music can make a connection between the two. Both Eliot and Mallarmé sought to capture a sense of the religious and sacred through the ‘language of common intercourse’ (Eliot 1957, 29). As Adames points out, ‘Mallarmé believes that poetry must seek to enact correspondences between the earthly and the divine’ (2000, 137). Most importantly though, he achieves this through using symbols which are open to a variety of interpretations (137):

What, then, will the work itself be? I answer: a hymn, all harmony and joy; an immaculate grouping of universal relationships come together for some miraculous and glittering occasion. Man’s duty is to observe with the eyes of the divinity; for if this connection with that divinity is to be made clear, it can be expressed only by the pages of the open book in front of him.

(Mallarmé 1956, 25)

In this passage, Mallarmé's choice of language reveals a clear preoccupation with music (Adames 2000, 137): 'a hymn, all harmony and joy' (Mallarmé 1956, 25). Indeed, from this passage it becomes evident that if the 'connection with... divinity is to be made clear' (25) it must be done through the musicality of poetry (Adames 2000, 137). Thus, Mallarmé claims that the most important undertaking for the poet 'is to find a way of transposing the symphony to the book' (1956, 42).

Yet the French Symbolists were unable to develop this musical sensibility into a longer work. In fact in 'The Poetic Principle', Poe (whose work greatly influenced the French Symbolists) denied that a long poem was even possible. As Chiari suggests, Poe never saw the musicality of poetry as conducive to a longer poem:

The idea that a long poem is an imaginative synthesis like a painting a symphony or a tragedy does not seem to have occurred to Poe, ever preoccupied with the idea of a poem as being the expression of one single mood or one single emotion.

(Chiari 1956, 130)

This sentiment characterized the fruits of the French Symbolist movement. Despite aspiring to 'find a way of transposing the symphony to the book' (Mallarmé 1956, 42), they were never able to amalgamate music and poetry in a longer work. Yet Eliot, in *Four Quartets*, saw the potential for a 'music of poetry' to emerge in a larger poem, and in many respects it emerged from the influence of the French Symbolists.

What is particularly interesting is how Eliot's famous notion of 'poetic impersonality' (Nicholls 2007, 55) is also bound up with this notion of influence: '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... The emotion of art is impersonal' (Eliot 1951, 21-22). Consequently, Eliot claimed that: 'The poem which is absolutely original is absolutely bad; it is, in the bad sense, "subjective" with no relation to the world to which it appeals' (1928c, 10-11). Eliot then goes on to suggest that 'Pound is often most "original" in the right sense, when he is most "archaeological" in the ordinary sense' (10-11). In fact according to both Pound and Eliot, the modern sensibility was in many ways defined by taking in other 'literary' influences (Nicholls 2007, 55): 'The ordinary life of ordinary cultivated people is a mush of literature and life' (Eliot 1928c, 10).

Thus, in light of this, Pound can be seen as somewhat misguided when he suggested that Eliot, 'has actually trained himself and modernized himself on his own' (1971, 40), when in fact the influence of French Symbolism helped formulate Eliot's own poetic. Eliot himself indicated to what extent the French Symbolists can be seen to be an influence:

What we get from a study of these French poets in relation to Poe, is an understanding of their aesthetic which enlarges our understanding of their poetry. And by 'aesthetic' here I do not mean merely an abstract theory of what poetry should be; I mean an attitude to poetry, by poets of great critical capacity which has affected indirectly a good deal of poetry written since and which has also affected the attitude of readers towards their poetry.

(Chiari 1956, vii)

In this passage, Eliot is essentially talking about the poetic aesthetic of French Symbolism and its influence. Certainly, then, in Eliot's literary criticism (which he called 'a by-product of my private poetry-workshop, or a prolongation of the thinking that went into the formation of my own verse' (1957, 106)) we can clearly detect the

influence of French Symbolism. Moreover, here Eliot suggests that the French Symbolist movement also had an effect on his poetry. Even if this influence was indirect, Eliot suggests that the French Symbolists' ideas and theories concerning poetry resonated with his own.

Thus, as I have attempted to illustrate throughout my thesis, Eliot was able to absorb the influences of both French Symbolism and Ezra Pound in *Four Quartets*.

In *The Sacred Wood*, Eliot said:

Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take,
and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different.
The good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique,
utterly different from that from which it was torn...

(1951, 206)

Ultimately, this is what Eliot does with his influences from both French Symbolism and Pound: he transforms their musical ideas into what is, as he called it, a 'music of poetry' which works on both a formalistic level within the musical rhythms of *vers libéré*, and a metaphorical level of imagery, structure and symbolism. Most significantly, the way in which he uses *vers libéré* can be seen as similar to the way he uses imagery, whereby there is repetition and reiteration forming some kind of pattern; but these patterns change and interweave with each other, so that the pattern becomes ambiguous and indeterminate. It is the significance of the pattern of the whole in *Four Quartets* that I shall now turn to.

CONCLUSION

Through an analysis of *Four Quartets*, I have illustrated that Eliot's 'music of poetry' consists of various levels of musicality. Firstly, Eliot's heightened use of poetic techniques such as assonance, alliteration and rhyme, along with his use of rhythm, evidently added to the musicality of the poem. But we have also seen a clear sense of musicality in his use of imagery and symbolism. Eliot's *Four Quartets* addresses 'feeling which we can only detect, so to speak, out of the corner of the eye and can never completely focus...' (Eliot 1957, 86). As a result, Eliot moved towards the musicality he detected in Pound and French Symbolism because 'At such moments, we touch the border of those feelings which only music can express' (87). Ultimately, the manner in which Eliot saw music in relation to poetic drama is the way in which we should see Eliot's musicality in *Four Quartets*: 'To work out a play in verse is to be working like a musician... it is to see the whole thing as a musical pattern' (1936b, 994). In *Four Quartets* Eliot creates 'a musical pattern' (994) and thus the 'music of verse' (Eliot 1957, 36) becomes 'a question of the whole poem' (36). This notion of wholeness is crucial to the meaning at the centre of *Four Quartets* and integral to my conclusion.

Eliot commented in an initial draft of 'The Three Voices of Poetry' that: 'The last three of my quartets are primarily patriotic poems' (Moody 1979, 203). Although Eliot withdrew this remark from the final version of 'The Three Voices of Poetry', its significance to the final three *Quartets* should not be overlooked (203). Furthermore, it is central in leading me towards my concluding thoughts on wholeness and unity in

relation to Eliot's ideas on musicality and the question of poetry and belief. Despite the fact that *Four Quartets* were written during the war, they are not 'patriotic' (203) in the traditional way that Eliot's remark might initially seem to imply. 'East Coker', for example, is not a patriotic poem in the sense that it expresses a devoted love or support towards one's country. In fact, to view it as such would be entirely misleading and this may well be why Eliot decided to remove his initial remark. Yet briefly elucidating Eliot's statement will provide a considerable amount of insight into the central aspects of *Four Quartets* that I have been investigating in this thesis.

In order to elucidate Eliot's comment in 'The Three Voices of Poetry' we must consider the context of the war and particularly Eliot's comments surrounding it. Unsurprisingly, the war is crucial to Eliot's conception of the final three *Quartets* as 'patriotic poems' (Moody 1979, 204). In an issue of *The Criterion* in 1939, Eliot commented on the experience of the war and stated that: 'the present state of public affairs... has induced in myself a depression of spirits so different from any other experience of fifty years as to be a new emotion' (1939b, 274). Later that same year Eliot elucidated this 'new emotion' (274) in the conclusion of *The Idea of a Christian Society*: 'The feeling which was new and unexpected was a feeling of humiliation, which seemed to demand an act of personal contrition, of humility, repentance and amendment' (1939c, 63-4). Furthermore, in another extremely insightful comment Eliot remarked that:

The notion of communal responsibility, of the responsibility of every individual for the sins of the society to which he belongs, is one that needs to be more firmly apprehended: and if I share the guilt of my society in time of 'peace', I do not see how I can absolve myself from it in time of war, by abstaining from the common action.

(1939c, 73-4)

As Moody has indicated, ‘Patriotism implies a social and political vision’ (1979, 204), but Eliot’s patriotism did not tend towards ‘human fellowship’ (204). Rather, even whilst referring to collective experience, Eliot places importance on the individual. Thus, for example, in Eliot’s following reflection (203): ‘you remember how the conditions of our lives changed, how much we were thrown in on ourselves in the early days?’ (Bergonzi 1969, 23). As the title suggests, ‘A Note on War Poetry’ can serve to highlight Eliot’s conception of patriotism in the final three *Quartets* (Moody 1979, 204). In it Eliot eschews what Moody calls ‘the immediate consciousness of the people’ (204): ‘Not the expression of collective emotion/ Imperfectly reflected in the daily papers’ (Eliot 1969, 202). Instead Eliot focuses on ‘private experience at its greatest intensity/Becoming universal’ (202). ‘East Coker’, for instance, certainly seems to move towards embodying the essence conveyed in these lines from ‘A Note on War Poetry’: it is not a static entity but is constantly attempting to move ‘private experience’ towards the ‘universal’ (202). Thus Eliot highlights the importance of an individual and private experience in ‘East Coker’, and any communal feeling is seen specifically in relation to the ‘universal’ (202).

Equally, in ‘The Dry Salvages’ we see ‘private experience’ (Eliot 1969, 202) at its most intense in ‘the final addition’ (186) of dying and ‘the failing / Pride or resentment at failing powers’ (186). Eliot suggests that in this ‘private experience’ (202) we have to move towards the universal, as we are ‘In a drifting boat with a slow leakage’ (186). As we grow older we must move more towards self-sacrifice in order to embrace God’s love. This ‘unattached devotion’ (186), Eliot suggests, ‘might pass for devotionless’ (186), but in the scheme of the whole of *Four Quartets* it is far more

significant than this. Such ‘unattached devotion’ (186) is seen in ‘East Coker’: ‘wait without hope,/For hope would be hope for the wrong thing’ (180), and it is most evident where ‘here and now cease to matter’ (182).

Eliot develops this notion of the ‘unattached devotion’ (Eliot 1969, 186) in ‘The Dry Salvages’. He suggests we must aspire to be like fishermen, whereby we must ‘think of them as forever bailing,/Setting and hauling’ (186). We have to cast our minds away from the possibility that they may be ‘making a trip that will be unpayable/For a haul that will not bear examination’ (186), and instead we must ‘fare forward’ (188).¹ In ‘The Dry Salvages’ there is a move towards a more spiritual conception of life through a means of detachment from self (Reibetanz 1983, 122). Thus Eliot strives towards the universal, to ‘consider the future/And the past with an equal mind’ (Eliot 1969, 188). In movement five of ‘The Dry Salvages’, Eliot dismisses various pursuits as merely an enchainment to temporal time, reinforcing that: ‘Men’s curiosity searches past and future/And clings to that dimension’ (189). Against this, Eliot suggests that we should seek an apprehension of ‘The point of intersection of the timeless/With time’ (189) by moving towards ‘a lifetime’s death in love’ (190) through ‘Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender’ (190). In many ways this image of ‘The point of intersection of the timeless/With time’ (189) is a development of that initial image in ‘Burnt Norton’, ‘the still point of the turning world’ (173).²

¹ This theme is one that recurs and is developed within Eliot’s poetry. For example, Eliot comments in ‘East Coker’: ‘Old men ought to be explorers’ (Eliot 1969, 182) by faring forward towards God, but they must do so without any thought of reward. Eliot reiterates this in *The Rock*: ‘I say to you: *Make perfect your will.*/I say: take no thought of the harvest,/But only of proper sowing’ (148). Evidently, then, Eliot continues to urge us to ‘Fare forward, travellers!’ (188).

² Crucially, Eliot uses the same word ‘point’ within each phrase, which is yet another example of how Eliot’s musical repetition and development of words and phrases serves to try and point to a higher purpose, in a manner that is subtle and not overtly didactic.

Within traditional Christianity this union is known as the Incarnation, and is the point when Jesus became both man and God: ‘And the word became flesh, and dwelt amongst us’ (McKim 1996, 140). For Eliot, the Incarnation was integral to his religious faith, and he often addresses it in his critical writings: ‘I take for granted that Christian revelation is the only full revelation; and that the fullness of Christian revelation resides in the essential fact of the Incarnation, in relation to which all Christian revelation is to be understood’ (1937, 1-2). Most significantly, he often expatiates on the issue of the Incarnation in a sententious manner:

The Christian thinker — and I mean the man who is trying consciously and conscientiously to explain to himself the sequence which culminates in faith... — proceeds by rejection and elimination. He finds the world to be so and so; he finds its character inexplicable by any non-religious theory: among religions he finds Christianity, and Catholic Christianity, to account most satisfactorily for the world and especially for the moral world within; and thus, by what (Cardinal) Newman calls ‘powerful and concurrent’ reasons, he finds himself inexorably committed to the dogma of the Incarnation.

(Eliot 1951, 408)

In *The Rock*, Eliot elucidates the Incarnation in a manner that retains the sermonizing tone of previous comments in his critical writing:

Then came, at a predetermined moment, a moment in time and of time,
A moment not out of time, but in time, in what we call history:
transecting, bisecting the world of time, a moment in time but not like a
moment of time,
A moment in time but time was made through that moment: for without
the meaning there is no time, and that moment of time gave the meaning.
Then it seemed as if men must proceed from light to light, in the
light of the Word,
Through the Passion and Sacrifice saved in spite of their negative being

(1969, 160-161).

Crucially, though, in 'The Dry Salvages' this 'point of intersection of the timeless/
With time' (1969, 189) is seen in a manner which is far less direct than in *The Rock*:

Remember, all you who are numbered for GOD,
In every moment of time you live where two worlds cross,
In every moment you live at a point of intersection,
Remember, living in time, you must live also now in Eternity.

(Eliot 1934, 52)

The universal, for Eliot, represented the essence of life, combining all aspects of experience into one coherent, cohesive and meaningful pattern. The universal, as Moody points out, 'meet(s) in the idea of the Logos' (1979, 205), but it is also seen in the musical repetition and development of Eliot's imagery and themes. Throughout this thesis, it has become clear that the musicality of *Four Quartets* is present within each line of the poem. We have seen how the influence of Pound and French Symbolism on Eliot was crucial in allowing him to explore fully the 'musicality' of poetry by placing the emphasis on sounds and a freer verse, rather than following strict rules. Through his 'music of poetry' Eliot creates a sense of unity throughout *Four Quartets* as a whole, which serves subtly to reinforce a sense of the poem 'Becoming universal' (Eliot 1969, 202).

Eliot suggests the only real order can come from a universal conception of life, as in the vast expanse of the temporal realm there can be no order or pattern: 'As we grow older/The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated/Of dead and living' (1969, 182). Thus, in providing a sense of order and unity within *Four Quartets* through his musical patterning, Eliot can evidently be seen to be pushing towards the universal. Most importantly, though, he does so without moving towards

an overtly Christian orthodoxy. Rather, through his use of ambiguous imagery he is able to express the moment of incarnation in 'The Dry Salvages' in a manner which is profound, but not intrusive to a secular audience. In this respect, through 'the music of poetry' Eliot ensures the poem is engrained with meaning for both a secular audience and for a religious one. A quotation from Paul Valéry embodies this notion, wherein he suggests that by using musicality, 'you will finally introduce it [the meaning] as the supreme nuance which will transfigure your piece without altering it' (1958, 165). Eliot, then, is able to achieve, for the first time in his poetry, a balance of poetic belief. Music can be seen as the missing piece in the perplexing puzzle made up of Eliot's views on poetry and belief, and it helps create a resolution to the seemingly paradoxical opinions he held on the relationship between the two.

Throughout *Four Quartets* Eliot suggests that the ending of the poem is merely 'where we start from' (1969, 197) and that, for him, ultimately 'The poetry does not matter' (179). Given the subject matter of *Four Quartets* this is significant, especially in relation to Eliot's notion of the purpose of art, and his ideas surrounding his own religion (Scofield 1988, 237). As Scofield points out, in *Four Quartets* Eliot creates an impression that the poem is merely an 'epitaph', 'in that it closes an experience, leaves the mind and spirit free for a new departure' (237):

Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,
Every poem an epitaph. And any action
Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat
Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start.

(Eliot 1969, 197)

In 1951, Eliot made the following comment on the function of art:

For it is ultimately the function of art, in imposing a credible order upon ordinary reality, and thereby eliciting some perception of an order in reality, to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness, and reconciliation; and then leave us, as Virgil left Dante, to proceed toward a region where that guide can avail us no farther.

(1957, 87)

Ultimately, this is what Eliot achieves at the end of *Four Quartets*. Indeed, in the final section of 'Little Gidding' there is a sense of the poem reaching a conclusion, and Eliot draws the poem to an end through the interweaving of the motifs into a whole unity (Warner 1999, 112). Eliot creates a union within *Four Quartets* and ensures that he moves beyond words, 'though meanings still exist' (1957, 30). Thus, Eliot's words no longer 'strain' (Eliot 1969, 175) and 'fail' (197), but instead they are 'transfigured' (195) into a 'pattern' (195) where: 'every word is at home,/Taking its place to support the others,/ ...The complete consort dancing together' (197). This sense of unity also comes together at the opening of Part V, where Eliot recalls the ending of 'East Coker', 'In my end is my beginning' (Scofield 1988, 237):

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.

(Eliot 1969, 197)

This sense of unity not only reinforces the religious sensibility of the poem, but also subtly points towards Eliot's conception of his own religion. In 1931, Eliot described the process by which one is drawn to Christianity (Brooker 1991, 12):

One finds the world to be so and so; he finds its character inexplicable by any non-religious theory; among religions he finds Christianity... to account most satisfactorily for the world and especially for the moral world within; and thus he finds himself inexorably committed.

(Eliot 1931, xii)

Eliot then went on to describe his own personal conversion in a manner that is reminiscent of the description he made the previous year (Brooker 1991, 12): ‘the Christian scheme seemed to me the only one which would work... the only possible scheme which found a place for values which I must maintain or perish’ (Eliot 1932, 382–83).

Interestingly, Jewel Spears Brooker highlights that ‘Eliot’s early references to religion... indicate that he thought of religion not in terms of a god, or even a primary allegiance, but in terms of a scheme, a system of ideas, whose object is first, to enable one to make sense out of experience’ (1991, 12). In many ways, *Four Quartets* can be seen as: ‘a scheme, a system of ideas... which allows one to make sense of the universe and to maintain values’ (12). But, crucially, it is a system of ideas that aspires towards music, and in doing so avoids any sense of didacticism. In adopting ‘a music of poetry’ in *Four Quartets*, Eliot was able to make sense of the relationship between poetry and belief, sustaining an equilibrium between the two whilst also maintaining his Christian values.

In the final image of the poem: ‘Into the crowned knot of fire/And the fire and the rose are one’ (Eliot 1969, 198), Eliot creates an image of harmony, and ensures there is a resolution to the tension of the poem. Here the image of the ‘knot’ creates a sense of cohesion, which he achieves through finding a harmony between music and poetry.

As I have suggested throughout this thesis, this harmony came through engraining the poem with a clear musicality, which stemmed from the influence of Ezra Pound and the French Symbolists. Ultimately, through the balance of musicality and poetry in *Four Quartets*, Eliot achieves a resolution to the life-long tension in his work between poetry and belief. But, at the same time, through creating a union and a sense of wholeness, he ensures that ‘at its greatest intensity’ (202) the *Four Quartets* is ‘Becoming universal’ (202).

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