

Savina Stevanato

“The Music of Poetry”?
T.S. Eliot and the Case of *Four Quartets*

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Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	7
Chapter I	
Theoretical and Methodological Tools of Interart Investigation	17
I.1. Updating the State of the Art: Intermedial Studies	17
I.2. A Philosophical Perspective	52
I.3. Approaching <i>Four Quartets</i>	60
Chapter II	
Towards <i>Four Quartets</i>	65
II.1. Contextualizing <i>Four Quartets</i>	65
II.2. Four Poems in One	93
II.3. Eliot and Music	98
Chapter III	
The 'Musical' Ways of <i>Four Quartets</i>	105
III.1. <i>Four Quartets</i> and Music	105
III.2. Points of Intersection: Words	116
III.3. Points of Intersection: the Word	149
<i>Bibliography</i>	157
<i>Index</i>	173

Introduction

In 1931, Eliot wrote to Spender of Beethoven: “I have the A minor Quartet on the gramophone, and find it quite inexhaustible to study [...]; I should like to get something of that into verse before I die” (qtd in Tate 1967: 54). Four years later he wrote *Burnt Norton*, the first of the *Four Quartets* (henceforth *FQ*)¹, and the above statement, together with other remarks on the composer, have significantly influenced critical studies on the relationship between Eliot’s poem and music. Concerned about the risk of overly vague interart comparisons among this wealth of interpretations, Weisstein issued a stark but still valuable warning: “[s]ometimes a search for parallels is unproductive even though the poet himself condones or provokes it” (1973: 164). Some of Eliot’s references to music in connection with *FQ* are generic, placing the poem in a liminal space that allows for interpretative forays into the musical domain thus resulting in music-based readings. This also fosters different critical approaches to Eliot’s musico-literary analogy, explaining it in relation to content (both codes aim to express the ineffable), to form (poetry patterned after musical devices), and to what music and poetry share as cultural signifieds. As Matthiessen stresses with reference to the “increasing musical richness” (1969: 92) of Eliot’s last two quartets (*The Dry Salvages* and *Little Gidding*), we must reflect upon “the poet’s consciousness of analogies with music, and whether such analogies are a confusion of the arts” (93). Eliot knew that the shared temporal and acoustic nature of music and poetry could entail comparable forms and arrangements of their specific material, but his reference to Beethoven’s last quartets in relation to his own *Quartets* does not necessarily imply that he literally imitated the musical medium or its effects. Without downplaying Eliot’s interest in music and its bearing on *FQ*, I intend to draw attention to a different, verbal, form of ‘musicality’, which Eliot himself explicitly illustrated in “The Music of Poetry” (1942), his most pertinent and exhaustive essay on the issue, and that peculiarly pertains to this poem as it is specifically related to its content and form.

¹ All quotes from *Four Quartets* are from Eliot (1959) with line numbers given in parentheses. *BN*, *EC*, *DS*, *LG* and *WL* are the abbreviations used for *Burnt Norton*, *East Coker*, *The Dry Salvages*, *Little Gidding* and *The Waste Land*.

Eliot openly connected his poem to music through the explicit musical reference of the title. This fosters polysemy and triggers the reader's expectations of some form of connection with music, which may range from thematic references to music on the content level to formal ones including compositional strategies at all textual levels and/or a factual interaction with music. As early as 1949, Helen Gardner stated that the overt titular reference to music entailed the critical need to investigate whether Eliot was indebted to music in devising the complex and highly patterned form of his long poem (1968: 36)². Since shortly after its publication, the musicality of Eliot's *FQ* has been much debated and variously examined: is the title merely metaphorical or does it imply a literal potential for comparing the verbal and musical codes? How are readers expected to interpret this allusiveness to music textually encoded in the poem? Why did Eliot explicitly refer to music and did he intend poetic musicality to be read in relation to the quartets of specific composers, such as Beethoven? How does the rhetorical design of the poem relate to Eliot's poetics and to his notion of musicality as expressed in his "The Music of Poetry"?

In the following pages I will argue that *FQ*'s peculiar relationship with music escapes literal interpretations since no actual music is involved. Not surprisingly, critical positions vary greatly, ranging from suggestively content-related comparisons to supposedly formal ones. On the one hand, these involve formal comparisons between the poem and musical forms, specific musical works or a single musical work with relevant and detailed one-to-one correspondences; on the other, they underline the thematic treatment of music in *FQ* and analogies between the moods evoked by the poem and by some musical works³. As concerns form, the verbal and musical codes naturally share general features and strategies that result from their common temporal and acoustic nature. This creates a zone of intersection between the two codes that may include, among other general characteristics, structural functions of individual or composite elements, repetition-and-variation patterning and the Leitmotiv-like treatment of thematic material. Nevertheless, unless explicitly stated by the author, these similar ways of using similar tools are inherent in both arts and need not be interpreted as formal borrowings by one art from the other. Nonetheless, criticism has relied greatly on this form of interaction.

A distinction may be drawn between critics who confine the analogy with music to a formal and structural likeness between the two arts, and those who argue the cause of an analogy with (a) specific musical form(s) and/or work(s)

² On how musical titles of literary works engender a polysemic space and new semantic possibilities to be explored, cf. Arroyas (2001).

³ For an overview of theoretical notions on emotion and affect in music cf. Smith (2016).

by different composers such as de Machaut, Beethoven, Bartók, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Berlioz. It is not always easy to distinguish clearly between these readings since, despite their different critical perspectives, theories and analyses may overlap, as may references to the same composers and musical forms, or to different works by the same composer. A brief overview of some of the most relevant critical positions may clarify this variation in perspectives.

Among the most quoted and significant instances is Gardner's study "The Music of *Four Quartets*" (1949), which suggests a structural equivalence between each poem of the *Quartets* and the forms of a symphony, a quartet or a sonata. She also compares some features of the poems to Beethoven's bridge passages, underlining the analogous effects obtained by the poet and the musician. Likewise, Howarth (1957) tackles Beethoven but proposes a triple comparison between Eliot's *FQ* and Beethoven's Op. 132 in A minor. First, he substantiates the five-movement scheme parallelism between the two works by comparing the quickness and slowness of Beethoven's movements to Eliot's images and rhythms in his poetic five movements⁴. Second, he traces Eliot's use of Op. 132 as a model back to a biographical resemblance between the two artists⁵, and argues that *FQ* too should be interpreted in the light of a personal and creative crisis that has been overcome. Third, he considers some verbal links that indirectly connect Eliot's poem to Beethoven through Sullivan's *Beethoven: His Spiritual Development* (1927), with which Eliot is supposed to have been familiar⁶. Holloway (1992) also makes recourse to Beethoven and grounds his comparison in three criteria: indirect verbal links (those traced by Howarth through Sullivan's book); direct verbal links between some of Beethoven's score indications in his late quartets and some of Eliot's lines in *FQ*⁷; "connections of

⁴ Beethoven's movements in this string quartet are: 1. Assai sostenuto – Allegro, 2. Allegro ma non tanto, 3. Molto Adagio – Andante, 4. Alla Marcia – Assai Vivace, 5. Allegro appassionato. Howarth argues, for instance, that the "allegro of *Burnt Norton* tries to catch music's motion by the use of time and the bird and the echo, the sudden flowering of the lotus, leaves and laughter, and time again" (1957: 322); in relation to *BN III*, he also affirms that "[t]he slow movement opens like Beethoven's with an exploration, in slow lines, of a place of disaffection" (*ibid.*).

⁵ With reference to the heading of the third movement of Op. 132 ("A Convalescent's Song of Holy Thanksgiving to the Deity, in the Lydian Mode"), Howarth states that, for Eliot, this quartet "was also the highest example of a hymn of thanks for safe passage through the dark" (1957: 324).

⁶ Among the verbal similarities Howarth detects, one is the use of the word "submission" which Sullivan quotes from Beethoven's journal and which Eliot uses in *East Coker*, another is Sullivan's triple reference to the composer as "the explorer" (328) which Eliot employs in the plural in *EC*.

⁷ For Holloway, the phrase at the head of the last movement in Op. 135 in F is comparable to a line in the poem's last paragraph in terms of chronology, position and semantic significance: both works are late productions; Beethoven's phrase is "the decision hard to take" and, above all, "Must it be? It must be!" (1992: 148) and Eliot's is "We shall not cease from exploration" *LG V* (239); both are placed in a final position.

a directly musical kind" (149) such as that between the trio-part in the second movement of Op. 132, derived from a German "traditional, popular peasant-dance" (150), and Eliot's "peasant dancing" in *East Coker I*.

Though Boaz (1979) similarly proposes an analogy between Eliot's *Quartets* and Beethoven's late quartets (in particular Op. 132 in A Minor) in the light of some structural and thematic affinities (five movements and transcendental overtones), she spots detailed parallels between Eliot's *FQ* and Bartók's Fourth and Fifth String Quartets which, she argues, are all based on an arch structure. She further explains the comparison by noting that Eliot and Bartók shared the same historical background and that their quartets "retain the classical qualities of chamber music, intimacy and control; yet they also exhibit modern structures and textures" (48). Dallas (1965), by contrast, rejects the comparison with Beethoven's quartets on the grounds that the dynamics of opposites in *FQ* resembles the "rhythmically patterned rondeau structure" (208) of canon *cancrizans*, illustrated by a detailed comparison with a rondeau by the fourteenth-century poet and composer Guillaume de Machaut⁸.

⁸ As concerns comparisons with Beethoven, cf. also Spender (1936), Preston (1946), Wilson (1948) and Gross (1959). The latter's consideration of Beethoven is founded on the belief that poetic syntax and prosody are comparable to musical harmony and rhythm respectively. The critic sets out to demonstrate the connection between *FQ* and Beethoven's late quartets on the basis of formal analogies leading to the basic emotional-response resemblances. Though he believes that Eliot "was certainly not influenced by a specific musical work" (Gross 1959: 281), he describes some sections of Beethoven's Op. 131 in C sharp minor because both it and Eliot's poem are "cyclical structures [and] they develop organically out of a single controlling idea" (282). By briefly hinting at some of this quartet's thematic variations in comparison to Eliot's thematic tension, at the use of pauses in comparison to Eliot's use "of silence in metrical schemes" (285), at the overall development of tonality through tension and resolution, Gross aims to prove that, in similar ways, both artists convey their understanding of "an ordered universe as the inevitable expression of its conflicts and tensions" (288).

Other scholars are more cautious: Hatton (1979) rejects the semantic analogy as a thorny issue. On the same basis he also dismisses both Howarth's and Gross's abandonment of "the poem's structure in favour of vague generalizations about an emotional response to it" (4). He focuses on the parallelism between the poem's "complex logic [and] the complex harmonic structure of Beethoven's late quartets", in particular Op. 130 in B flat, stressing that the relationships between Beethoven and Eliot are "fortuitous [...], not of imitation nor of similar signification" (5). To prove the analogous logical complexity, he compares some harmonic, rhythmic and melodic structures taken from Op. 130 in B flat to the way in which the logical relations between the three senses of "time" work in *BN I*. He also detects an analogous use of the variation-form and of "musical Development" (11).

Berard's investigation of the poem (1984), by contrast, is based on a comparison between the poetic thematic structure and the structure of Beethoven's five-movement Op. 132 in A minor. His quartet-by-quartet analysis relies on the belief that Eliot's thematic five-movement structure is compatible with the key changes and thematic development of the five movements of Op. 132, establishing a comparison between the typical key change of a musical exposition and the semantic-key change in the poetic exposition.

Unlike many critics who focus the comparison on Beethoven's late quartets, Wiersma (1980) believes that the earlier Op. 18, Number 6 in B flat major with its traditional fourfold framework suits

Some scholars privilege comparisons with musical forms rather than specific composers; they include Rees (1969) who avoids referring to specific musical compositions so as not to run into “confusing and inaccurate oversimplifications” (63). Instead, he stresses the interplay between musical and literary techniques, connecting, for instance, the thematic organization of *FQ* with the opposition and reconciliation of musical themes in the sonata-allegro form. He does refer both to Beethoven’s string quartets, stressing that the compactness of the poem is more in keeping with that of a single quartet than four musical quartets, and to Berlioz’s symphonies with their cyclical form, but only to provide a general basis for comparison. Others, though referring to music, focus on Eliot’s textual strategies; they include Pagnini (1958) who also touches on the sonata form but who principally stresses the text’s verbal peculiarities; or Verheul (1966), who reads *FQ* and its musicality in the light of a *Gestalt* approach to the aesthetic role of poetic language and of the fact that the workings of the *Gestalt* in poetry and music are remarkably similar.

Some critics concentrate on the figurative aspect of musicality and on comparable effects rather than on specific formal strategies: Gatta (1980), for instance, advises against drawing precise structural parallels with music and proposes a “conceptual and metaphoric import” (194) of the musical analogy underlining the explicit “evocative aural techniques”, the patterns of “thematic repetition, tonal variation, contrapuntal arrangement of images” (*ibid.*) and allusions that create the musical effects of *FQ*. In line with Gatta is Barndollar (2000), who proposes a general comparison in terms of effects rather than a one-to-one correspondence between the poem and Beethoven’s quartets. Starting from the assumption that the two codes share media affinities, albeit differently applied, and that it is difficult to precisely map poetry onto music, Barndollar chooses to ground the comparison in the fact that Beethoven’s quartets are characterized by an organic form that unusually links the movements through shared tonalities, lack of breaks, motivic material. Barndollar emphasizes that the quartet’s break from tradition, achieved by using analogous materials in the movements, which are thus unusually closely interrelated, compares to *FQ*’s interrelatedness and cohesive self-referential strategies; all

Eliot’s *FQ*’s fivefold pattern more precisely than the later Op. 132, and his criterion of comparison merges formal, semantic and effect-related elements.

Salamon’s comparison (1975) is quite different from the above as it does not concern music directly but specifically focuses on *BN II* and its relationship with Davies’s *Orchestra* in the light of a common and unifying vision of the Cosmos. The author believes that, through Eliot’s unconscious allusions and reminiscences, *Orchestra* reverberates in this second movement of *BN* on the level of both content and form. For Salamon the two writings share an analogous method of “sudden juxtaposition of objects far apart in the vast chain of beings” and the two poets seek unity and believe in an organic universe and a “patterned world” (52).

Beethoven's last quartets and Eliot's poem therefore share similar means of coherence. After considering some comparable formal structures (theme-and-variation, fugue, sonata) in both works, the focus moves to relevant comparable effects such as recurring ideas, departure and return, and circularity, thus confirming the validity of the musical metaphor in interpreting *FQ*.

Critics also emphasise the ideological, cultural and aesthetic context. Nicolosi (1980), though mainly dealing with *The Waste Land*, detects a parallel between Eliot's achievements and those of Stravinsky in the light of a shared aesthetic background and conceptually analogous compositional techniques, which also throws light on *FQ*. Like Stravinsky, Eliot quoted freely from previous authors and works to create new coherent wholes out of a multitude of quotations, allusions and fragments. So, while stating that *WL* recalls either "the aesthetic content of the sonata cycle or the single-movement 'sonata allegro'" (196), Nicolosi also underlines the relationships between Beethoven's piano sonatas and late string quartets, Wagner's operas, Strauss's tone poems, a Stravinsky ballet, and Eliot's *The Waste Land*, *Ash Wednesday* and *Four Quartets*. In this case, the comparison may be understood as a general "musical theme and variation form" (198). Likewise, Stayer (2000) offers a comparison between Eliot and Stravinsky that departs from a purely formal perspective and is, instead, historically, culturally and ideologically grounded. It is an aesthetic and political parallel which also considers a common turn to spirituality, austerity, discipline, control and order, downplaying the traditional contrast between these as the "scapegoat of modernist sins" and the "hero of postmodernism" respectively (297). Witen (2016) shifts the focus to the influence exerted by the contemporary musicological debate over absolute music on Eliot's "appeal to the form and structure of absolute music in *Four Quartets*" (179) and on the terminological choices made in his prose. Witen first provides an overview of the parallel changes in music, from programme to absolute, musical aesthetics and the related vocabulary, from the nineteenth century onwards. She then illustrates Eliot's title changes, from his early works recalling programme music to *FQ*, and a shift of focus onto form that allowed Eliot's referential medium to be inspired by music despite the latter's areferentiality. This study establishes no comparison with specific musical works but aims to illustrate a broader aesthetic context that may explain Eliot's music of poetry. Witen interprets Eliot's reference to the quartet form as commensurable with the preference of the aesthetic context for pure music. This points to a principal "analogy in relation to Eliot's musical patterning" (184) which shows the attempt, in the verbal medium, to abstract meaning from structure as absolute music does.

A quite different perspective is suggested by McCracken (1990) who interprets *FQ* in postmodern terms, focusing on "the music of the multivocalized,

common logos” that induces a “multivocal reading” (38). Besides considering the irreducible plurality of *FQ* which belongs to a “world where a single semantic unity is impossible” and epitomized by Eliot’s “fugal layering of voices [...] and *bricolage* of quotations and intertexts” (*ibid.*), he also generally compares the poem to the twelve-tone dissonant music of Schoenberg, to the “dissonance-drenched late quartets of Beethoven, or the transcendence-longing of Messian’s [sic] *Quartet for the End of Time*, or John Zorn’s *Forbidden Fruit: Variations for Voice, Quartet and Turntables*” (44).

All these studies have contributed significantly to the understanding of one of the most important and complex works of twentieth-century English literature. Yet it seems to me that the wide range of possible comparisons proposed by scholars reveals a fundamental and thorny issue inherent in interart comparison, which should consider the deep divide between cases of direct mutual influence (including double-talent artists) and instances of more general and indirect analogies between poetics, contents and forms. Despite Eliot’s interest in music and explicit reference to Beethoven in relation to his *FQ*, this seems not to be a case of direct formal influences of music on his poetry. On a formal level, no specific piece of music has a demonstrably direct, unambiguous or one-to-one influence on the *Quartets* and Eliot had no technical knowledge of music on the basis of which to attempt an intercode translation. There is clear evidence, by contrast, of his love for music and his reflection on the musicality of poetry from a purely literary perspective.

Interest in, theorizing and practicing the relationships between the arts was a peculiarly common feature of twentieth-century artistic aesthetics, and thus a trait running through different poetics belonging to different artistic disciplines. Eliot’s interart interests were rooted in his native Missouri soil, then developed during his Harvard years and consolidated in Europe where he was immersed in a cultural milieu teeming with interart exchanges. In this environment he interacted and debated with major artistic figures such as Pound and Stravinsky. Nonetheless, to my knowledge at least, there is no evidence that musical theories and practices actually shaped his own. All the musical implications of his works are objective only when thematized (titles recalling musical forms or music dealt with on the content level), but can only be guessed at when applied to the formal level. Nicolosi (1980) argues that the musicality of Eliot’s poetry has two phases. In the earlier phase, Eliot’s first musical effects were thematic and rhythmical, taking the form of musical titles (“Song”, “Preludes”, “Nocturne”), references to musical instruments and broken metres perhaps suggesting an indirect influence on his verbal practice by the ragtime syncope he was acoustically familiar with. In the later phase, the musical influence also became structural since, in Nicolosi’s opinion, Eliot saw the possibility

of formal similarities with music in his long poems. Nevertheless, there seems to be no incontrovertible evidence of this. Not even during Eliot's meetings with Stravinsky, and in particular at a dinner also planned to discuss the composer's decision to set some lines from *LG* to music (all meticulously reported both by the composer and by Robert Craft), did the poet discuss theories or practices with the musician. It is a fact that artists sharing a common aesthetic environment and/or intellectual background, and working with/in different media, such as Eliot and Stravinsky, might reflect on and partake of generalized compositional tendencies to use, for instance, intertextuality, *collage* techniques assembling fragmentary materials, allusions, quotes, subverting and/or breaking and revisiting tradition (Nicolosi 1980, Stayer 2000). Despite this, in considering *FQ*, I would shift the focus to an undeniable fact: Eliot's own counterbalancing written warning in "The Music of Poetry" about not pressing the analogy with music too far since, though he thought that "a poet may gain much from the study of music", he admitted: "I do not know, for I have not that technical knowledge myself" (1957a: 38). In the same essay, he also stated that some formal devices are common to both arts, allowing for some general and metaphorical analogies rather than 'borrowings' since "the development of a theme [...] transitions [...] contrapuntal arrangement of subject matter" are strategies that belong to both codes (*ibid.*). A further confirmation of Eliot's cautious attitude comes from a letter to Hayward on *FQ* where he explains his terminological choice of "Quartets" as a simple clue to readers, a "suggest[ion]" on the structure of his poems which weave "in together three or four superficially unrelated themes: the 'poem' being the degree of success in making a new whole out of them" (qtd in Gardner 1978: 26). And the fact that the word 'quartet' has a purely indicative function is clear from his statement that he avoided 'sonata' because "'sonata' in any case is *too* musical" (*ibid.*).

Though critics have acknowledged this and coherently stated, like Boaz, that Eliot's poem has no "explicit analogue for music, nor is it a verbal transcription of any musical quartet" (Boaz 1979: 31), formal and often brilliant comparisons have proliferated. Whilst on the one hand, this teeming critical activity testifies to the *Quartets'* continuing vitality and contributes to its understanding, on the other I would suggest considering, or strongly stressing, another element to get at what I believe is the crux of the matter: Eliot's own sense and theorizing of poetic musicality and, in *FQ* in particular, the necessary relationship this has with the religious content.

I believe that the concept of musicality in *FQ* does not depend on a specific formal relation between the two arts relevant to a specific composer, and in this study I aim to draw attention to and illustrate the musicality of Eliot's poem in the light of a different, composite perspective. The influence of music

and specifically of Beethoven's music on Eliot's *FQ* does not imply any precise formal borrowings but should be read through Eliot's own words and aims: for him, "the thing to try for" was "[t]o get *beyond poetry*, as Beethoven, in his later works, strove to get *beyond music*" (lecture qtd in Matthiessen 1958: 90). *FQ*'s content deals with eternity revealed in time, with a coexistence of beginning and end in time itself. Poetic words are temporal and linear in nature but they are asked to convey and mimic this timelessness, which is *beyond* themselves. I believe that in the 'beyondness' of Beethoven's late music Eliot admired the composer's ability to convey this sense of transcendence, coexistence and unity against the chronological death of music itself which, like poetry, develops in time. This aspect emerges early in *FQ*: "Words move, music moves | Only in time [...] | Only by the form, the pattern, | Can words or music reach | The stillness [...] | Not that only, but the co-existence, | Or say that the end precedes the beginning" (*BN V*, 138-46). The transcendental and religious content of *FQ* required a form of poetry that attempted "to extend the confines of the human consciousness and to report of things unknown, to express the inexpressible" (Eliot 1957e: 169), something that, according to the poet, Beethoven's later works had achieved. Thus, albeit approximately given his avowed lack of technical knowledge of music, Eliot stressed the musician's ability to tackle a wide variety of themes and moods, and saw "possibilities for verse which bear some analogy to the development of a theme by different groups of instruments; [...] possibilities of transitions in a poem comparable to the different movements of a symphony or a quartet; [...] possibilities of contrapuntal arrangement of subject-matter" (1957a: 38). Nonetheless, I do not believe this necessarily means reading *FQ* in the light of a precise musical model, since Eliot's poetry has its own compositional strategies based on highly relational intra-and inter-textual dynamics ensuring a final significance that counters chronological disappearance. The poetry of *FQ* may envy music its factual and harmonic simultaneity and its lack of reference which makes it freer to go beyond itself, but I believe that Eliot intentionally remained within the verbal domain, pointing to music as a useful metaphorical clue. This metaphoricity does not invalidate his notion of musicality since it has both aesthetic foundations in his own and his fellow-artists' poetics, and theoretical foundations underpinned by comprehensive critical studies including the ongoing critical intermedial discourse which will be expounded in detail later on.

I therefore concentrate on Eliot's specific notion of poetic musicality, which assumes no textual commitment to music, and on its role in *FQ*. I interpret the poem's musicality through an integrated approach consisting of three investigative categories based on: up-to-date theoretical notions and tools from the intermedial research field which, from both formalist and cultural perspectives,

support the validity of verbal musicality even when no real music is involved; a cultural and aesthetic contextualization of Eliot's poetics within modernist poetics; a textual analysis of the poem.

Chapter I first offers a historical overview of the relationship between the two arts illustrating the main theoretical issues and intermedial research tools of relevance to the musico-literary field of investigation. This is meant both to provide an up-to-date state of the art and to explain why the musicality of *FQ* cannot be interpreted factually but should be differently, conceptually and metaphorically, conceived. A brief foray into a philosophical perspective serves the same purpose.

Chapter II introduces *FQ* and Eliot's own approach to the music of poetry by contextualizing his work and poetics within his cultural milieu, referring to the main aesthetic theories and poetics on the issue which bear some relation to his own reflections and writings on the topic. A final brief section on Eliot's relationships with music further clarifies the role of music and contextualizes his references to Beethoven.

Chapter III specifically concerns the poem and consists of a first section that briefly considers the formal features of a musical quartet, in particular the sonata form, to show that there are no precise or unambiguous analogies between this form and *FQ*. The second section contains a formal analysis of some aspects of *FQ* to illustrate what I believe Eliot meant by 'the music of poetry' and how this definition peculiarly pertains to the poem on both a thematic and formal level.

What I hope will emerge is the validity of reading *FQ*'s musicality in the light of a triple notion of intersection: conceptual, formal and thematic. The first stems from Eliot's tendency to abstraction and his theoretical reflections on the music of poetry in terms of the formal principle that he termed the "point of intersection" (Eliot 1957a); the second corresponds to the poem's formal strategies, based on an all-encompassing and highly complex pattern of intersections at all textual levels; the third coincides with the poem's religious theme and the intersection between time and timelessness embodied in the Incarnation of the Word. Finally, I demonstrate that the peculiar nature of musical analogy in *FQ* results from a triple interaction between formal/poetic words, the thematized/religious Word and a notion of music. I believe that this interaction hinges on the shared concept of "intersection" as formulated by Eliot. Hence, my focus is on Eliot's literary notion of musicality – wedded to what he termed "the music of poetry" (*ibid.*) – and on its relation to the thematic and formal correspondences between the poetic words making up *FQ* and the religious Word they thematize. The formal and figuratively musical device of "intersection" (*ibid.*) in Eliot's poetry marries music and the Incarnation in a threefold fusion of poetry, the Word and music, where poetic words epitomize the Word.

Chapter I

Theoretical and Methodological Tools of Interart Investigation

How misleading are all literary descriptions of musical form!
Conversations with Igor Stravinsky

Employez Musique dans le sens grec, au fond signifiant Idée
ou rythme entre des rapports.

Mallarmé, *Correspondance VI*, 10 January 1893 to E. Gosse

I.1. *Updating the State of the Art: Intermedial Studies*

Before dealing with the specific case of Eliot, I think it necessary to consider the topic of intermediality by illustrating the theoretical context and relevant advances in musico-literary studies. What follows is meant to be a representative and up-to-date selection of theoretical approaches and terms of reference used to study the relationships between music and word, and the related intermedial research tools. This will serve to clarify the field of enquiry and contextualize my approach to the topic.

In the 1970s, Weisstein defined academic research into the interrelations of the arts as still being a “twilight zone” (1973: 151)¹. The term “intermediality” often appears more appropriate to recent critical discussion than previous alternatives, such as “interdisciplinary”, “interart” or “sisterhood”, because of its stress on the continuous crossing of medial and disciplinary boundaries, and on the changing practices hastened and fostered by the incremental technological developments of our digital and globalized era. Within this shifting technological and cultural panorama where the arts increasingly intersect, purist distinctions between artistic domains are no longer believed to hold up and the only sensible contrast proposed seems to be that between different media rather than separate arts. Dayan argues that “[t]here is no fundamental dissymmetry between the three arts, of ‘word’, ‘music’, and ‘image’. There is, however, a fun-

¹ The chapter on the comparative study of literature and the other arts is entitled “The Mutual Illumination of the Arts”. The perspective adopted still falls within the field of comparative literature and Weisstein draws attention to the fact that scholars were rarely both literary critics/historians and musicologists, and that collaborative efforts between musicologists and literary critics were even rarer.

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