An Exploration of Sound & Sense in Poetry

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AN EXPLORATION OF SOUND AND SENSE IN POETRY

A Thesis
Presented to
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Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Stephen Denton Carden

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AN EXPLORATION OF SOUND AND SENSE IN POETRY

Recommended

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Approved April 3, 1991

Dean of the Graduate College
Various theorists have treated the problem of sound and sense in poetry. The influence of sound in poetry can be found both in the overall musical structure of a poem and in the internal sounds of rhythm and diction. Plato suggests that rhythm and harmony have a direct effect on man, and can establish either balance or disproportion within the soul. The debate whether sound determines sense or sense determines sound is rejected in favor of a third possibility: an interdependent relationship between sound and sense, an intrinsic formal structure, as the ideal governing the creation of poetry. Further, Aristotle proves to be quite close to Plato in suggesting a moral character to certain sounds. Poe, in emphasizing the distinction between poetry and prose, points to sound as the distinguishing characteristic of verse. Yeats stresses the rhythm of poetry in linking man with an ancient past. Eliot uses care in describing the function of music in poetry, but reaffirms its significance as interdependent with the meaning of the words.
Stevens explores the relationship of music and poetry, and offers a rich theory that poetry is the embodiment in sound of a bridge between spirit and reality. The influence of free verse on Eliot and Stevens appears in their conversational tone, yet the sound of their poetry determines its value to a significant extent. This tracking of the ideas about sound and sense from Plato and Aristotle to Poe, Yeats, Eliot, and Stevens helps to clarify the nature and range of the problem.
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I. ORIGINS IN PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

Plato recognized the distinction of sound and sense in poetry; in the Gorgias, he explains: "if you should strip from all poetry its music, rhythm, and meter, the residue would be nothing else but speech" (502c). In the Timaeus, Plato elaborates upon speech as a divine gift in order that we might

imitate the absolutely unerring courses of God and regulate our own vagaries. . . .

Moreover, so much of music as is adapted to the sound of the voice and to the sense of hearing is granted to us for the sake of harmony. And harmony . . . is meant to correct any discord which may have arisen in the courses of the soul, and to be our ally in bringing her into harmony and agreement with herself, and rhythm too was given by them for the same reason, on account of the irregular and graceless ways which prevail among mankind generally, and to help us against them. (47c)

Each of the elements of poetry is meant to bring man into accord with the good and the beautiful, to help us to live good lives—more than just an esthetic, but a moral purpose.
Rupert Lodge argues that one fundamental idea in the background of Hellenic theories of art was the "thought of a fundamental rhythm permeating the whole world of motions, a universal law" (14-5). He adds that the idea of the artist who acts as a medium for objective nature "will fit in with the parallel tendency in general ethics, which urges human beings to follow nature in all things... all individual and social norms will pattern themselves upon the rhythms of cosmic nature" (16-7). Lodge notes that in the *Timaeus*, Plato proposes the idea of God as goodness, and that "upon the datum of chaotic motility he superimposes patternings calculated to bring out its potentialities for value" (26). Further, Lodge claims that "it is the rhythms of art which set the tempo and establish the patterns of civic life" (129).

This is the reason why in the *Republic* Plato urges strict censorship over the poets, in order to limit any potential damage to society, and guarantee some good. Plato explains: "More than anything else rhythm and harmony find their way to the inmost soul and take strongest hold upon it, bringing with them and imparting grace, if one is rigidly trained, and otherwise the contrary" (401d). Lodge explains that the poet "amplifies by racial melody and rhythm the penetrative power of his message, and... this 'makes
its way into the inward places of the soul,' and there exercises its uniquely persuasive power, its educative charm" (65). Morriss Partee says that "Because of their immediate and powerful effect, noble rhythms and harmony in general are integral to education" (99). He adds further that "A man need not respond actively to the influences about him, for rhythm and harmony can grasp the soul without its cooperation" (100).

In the Republic, Plato wants the poet "who would imitate the diction of a good man" (398b), and rejecting the Lydian and Ionian modes, welcomes the Dorian and the Phrygian modes of music. Plato explains:

let us leave that mode that would fittingly imitate the utterances and the accents of a brave man who is engaged in warfare or in any enforced business, and who . . . confronts fortune with steadfast endurance. . . . And another for such a man engaged in works of peace, not enforced but voluntary . . . in all this acting modestly and moderately and acquiescing in the outcome. Leave us these two modes--the enforced and the voluntary--that will best imitate the utterances of men failing or succeeding, the temperate, the brave. (399b-c)
Desmond Lee explains:

The Greeks recognized several types or styles of music, and were inclined to associate them with different types of feeling and character, an association made by both Plato and Aristotle. So particular varieties of the Lydian style were regarded as mournful, the Ionian style as relaxing, the Dorian and Phrygian as expressing courage and self-control. (158)

Marian Bauer, in The International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians, notes that the Dorian and Phrygian modes were of medium pitch, whereas the others were too high or too low. In particular, "The Dorian was virile, energetic, and proper for the perfect citizen; the Phrygian made people headstrong; the Lydian induced effeminacy and slack morals." Partee explains Plato's position:

The rules of rhythm, like those of harmony, follow from Plato's antipathy toward artistic subtleties and variety. Just as the modes should be simple and the instruments have limited range, the rhythms should suggest order and regularity. Subtlety and variety of meter will be unnecessary, for the rhythms need only evoke a life of courage and
self-control. Once these rhythms have been determined, meter and melody will follow from the works expressing a life of that sort.

(93-4)

Harmony and rhythm act upon man with an immediacy unlike that of the other senses, affecting the internal balance within the soul that is so important for a happy life. Certainly man should not expose himself to unruly impulses, but allow only the harmony and rhythm which possess the proper structure to influence his immortal soul. Not only are the long sequences of harmony and rhythm, as found in poetry, capable of producing either balance or discord within man, even individual sounds may carry an emotive content. In the Timaeus, Plato says that "the sound which moves quickly is acute, and the sound which moves slowly is grave, and that which is regular is equable and smooth, and the reverse is harsh" (67b).

The Cratylus is a dialogue concerning problems about language. Hermogenes presents a conventionalist theory of names, claiming that names are correct only by agreement. Cratylus holds that names are natural signs, that they imitate or represent that to which they refer. Socrates destroys both these theories in turn. Rudolph Weingartner argues that "if either Hermogenes or Cratylus were correct, the method of
dialectic as a road to the achievement of knowledge would be impossible" (16). Against Hermogenes, "Unless the sounds that are used as names have a fairly stable relationship to the objects they are meant to denote, ... [communication] cannot be accomplished" (18). But if Cratylus is correct, "Either the statement is true or it is nonsense" (23); as such, dialectic would be impossible. As Weingartner says, "For him [Cratylus], names are not means at all; they are themselves the very objects of knowledge" (41).

Socrates puts forward a theory of names which, though he cautions that it is "truly wild and ridiculous," suggests that since names which occur as parts of a true sentence must themselves be true, or correct, by nature, that correctness may reside in the fitness of sound to the nature of the object named (426b). Socrates imagines an ancient legislator of names who uses letters and syllables to express this nature: "the letter 'p', as I was saying, appeared to the imposer of names an excellent instrument for the expression of motion. ... because, as I imagine, he had observed that the tongue was most agitated and least at rest in the pronunciation of this letter, which he therefore used in order to express motion" (426e). Likewise, "the 'v' he observed to be sounded
Weingartner argues that this long section on etymologies was meant "to lead Cratylus and fellow travelers by the nose" (38). He claims that Socrates shifts the discussion from the truth or falsity of names to correct or incorrect ways of naming: "His theory is not primarily an account of how names are actually made, but of how names ought to be made" (32). He adds that "the correctness of names is measured by their suitability for the dialectician's work" (35). He adds further that "Socrates makes clear . . . that what makes a sound a name is that we understand it as such. Whatever the ideal language may be like, actual languages are a product of custom" (39).

Because there is so much concern in Plato over the musical and rhythmic coloring of speech in poetry, it is important to look closely at the impressions here that he bequeathed antiquity. Termed by some critics a Pythagorean, his ties to this mystic philosopher can be identified especially in regard to music: whether or not he intends it metaphorically, Plato makes much use of the Pythagorean concept of harmony as a balance exhibited most purely in the mathematical relationships regarding harmonic intervals in the scales, as well as the orbits of the planets and stars. This balance
structures all reality, found in perfection in the
divine being, but, in varying degrees, also in man.
The closer he can come to participating in this rhythm
of the universe, the closer he is to the good; the
converse is true as well, that imbalance in man results
from not joining in this harmony, and makes for an
unhappy life. For the Pythagoreans, music and
mathematics purify the soul. Plato sees the importance
of mathematical truths for man when he finds them to be
the highest order of reason; the music, then, resulting
from the inherent harmony and rhythm in the deeply felt
balance, on the order of the music of the spheres, was
to be cultivated, and discordant sounds avoided.

Lodge claims that for Plato,

Art originates in proportion as the would-be
craftsman is influenced by (1) the concrete
rhythmic patternings found existing in rerum
natura, (2) the abstractly regular
patternings deduced by mathematical insight
into the principle of the circle and what it
circumscribes, and (3) a selection of
patternings made to fit the needs of
biosocial humanity. (52)

Poetry combined verbal communication with harmony
and rhythm, the latter being very important in
establishing beneficial rhythms corresponding in man.
Certain rhythms were too soft, plaintive, and weak; others were more noble, enlightening, and fortifying. In other words, the sound of poetry, apart from the sense, has a substantial effect on man's well-being, either for the better or worse. The meter used may be debilitating, and discordant sounds may destroy inner harmony, effects which Plato would strongly urge should be avoided. But the impression is clear that the sound of poetry has at least a life of its own, and, as suggested in the Cratylus, may influence the meaning of speech as well.

Aristotle also notes the distinction between sound and sense in poetry; in the Poetics he lists rhythm, language, and harmony as the elements used by the poet (1447a). He says that poetry was created because imitation was "natural to us--as also the sense of harmony and rhythm--the meters being obviously species of rhythms" (1448b). Even a dancer, Aristotle says, "by the rhythms of his attitudes, may represent men's characters, as well as what they do and suffer" (1447a). In tragedy, the meter is important, for he says that when it changed from trochaic, which was connected more with dancing, to iambic, which resembled more the spoken word, it gained its "magnitude" (1449a). He speaks of tragedy as the "imitation of an action . . . in language with
pleasurable accessories . . . I mean that with rhythm and harmony or song added" (1449b). Considering these "pleasurable accessories," Aristotle establishes melody as one of the six parts of tragedy.

O.B. Hardison, Jr., comments that melody "is an adornment rather than an essential. . . . Melody is a part of 'the poetic art'. . . . However, it only achieves its full effect in performance. . . . Melody is a minor element and must be 'brought out' by the performer's art" (121).

Gerald Else claims that in the Poetics Aristotle has established for the first time in classical Greece a partial distinction between poetry and music. . . . For him, the mimetic activity which is the business of poetry is carried primarily by speech. . . . melody is a 'sweetening', nothing more. The lyric mode has no real separate status in his theory. (37)

Else adds further that "speech is the basic food, rhythm and melody are the frosting on the cake" (223). He argues that it is obvious that a melody or a rhythm cannot be a picture of courage or anger in any direct sense. In the Poetics, where
imitation is a representation of universals, it is doubly clear that there be no question of direct "image"; and in any case the heart and soul of the poetic imitation is the plot, while music stands next to the bottom in the list of its "parts." (28)

Indeed, Aristotle affirms in the Rhetoric that delivery has importance in oratory as in poetry, but that it is "not regarded as an elevated subject of inquiry" (1404a). He explains that the arts of language cannot help having a small but real importance. . . . the way in which a thing is said does affect its intelligibility. Not, however, so much as people think. All such arts are fanciful and meant to charm the hearer. Nobody uses fine language when teaching geometry. (1404a)

In de Anima, Aristotle notes the "distinction between sounds, such as acute and grave," but dismisses them as metaphors, transferred from touch, arising from some "parallelism" between what is acute or grave to hearing, and what is sharp or blunt to touch (420a-b). "Voice," he says, "is a sound with a meaning, and is not merely the result of any impact of breath as in coughing" (421a).

And in de Interpretatione, Aristotle says that
as there are in the mind thoughts which do not involve truth or falsity, and also those which might be either true or false, so it is in speech. . . . By a noun we mean a sound significant by convention. . . . The limitation "by convention" was introduced because nothing is by nature a noun or a name--it is only so when it becomes a symbol.

(16a)

As Miriam Larkin comments, "Aristotle's theory of conventional signification changes the nature of the question. No longer is the relation between words and things considered a natural one" (10). Yet still, she says that "sound and rhythm are important considerations in the production of the artistic effect" (21).

These realistic views serve to distinguish Aristotle's position from Plato in regard to the importance of harmony and rhythm to poetry and language: though the sound of poetry serves a highly ornamental function, it is rash to stress its significance, especially in regard to the sense. Speech is significant by convention, not by nature; unless sounds are imbued with meaning, they are gibberish.
This difference evident in these two ancient philosophers points to a difference in modern times: that is, whether sounds carry meaning by nature or convention. If we say that spoken language is sound encoded with meaning, most take either of two ways to explain: the sound, by nature, represents the sense, or the sound carries sense because of convention. If the former is the case, then the structure of sound in poetry should reveal the meaning; however, if the latter, the importance of sound for the meaning in poetry may be downplayed. Of course modern thought has turned toward descriptive explanations, and therefore fallen into the category of the latter, that meaning in poetry comes from the sense laid onto the sound, and that this comes from agreement, rather than nature.

Perhaps there is a third possibility: the harmony between sound and sense, like the balance achieved for a dancer or singer, comes from the many parts evoking one overall effect, and the poet captures the esthetic effect of such a balance in speech. Returning to the Cratylus, perhaps Socrates's picture of an ancient legislator of names is comparable to a poet when he uses a word to signify—perhaps it is the due proportion, or fitness, of sound and sense that encodes language with meaning in esthetic creation.
Plato speaks of harmony and rhythm as being capable of tuning or untuning the balance of the soul, but when Aristotle distinguishes melody as one of the primary parts of tragedy, he is merely noting its pleasing effects, and no more. However there is a section in Book XIX of the Problemata of Aristotle wherein he asks this provocative question:

Why is it that of all things which are perceived by the senses that which is heard alone possesses moral character? For music, even if it is unaccompanied by words, yet has character; whereas a colour and an odour and a savour have not. Is it because that which is heard alone has movement, not, however, the movement in us to which sound gives rise . . . but we perceive the movement which follows such and such a sound? This movement resembles moral character both in the rhythms and in the melodic disposition of the high and low notes. . . . Now these movements are connected with action, and actions are indicative of moral character. (919b)

This connection of sound with moral character through movement may not be too far from rhythm and harmony in poetry, and the difference between Plato and Aristotle would be diminished. The final difference
may simply lie in Plato's ability to see ideas as a fuller reality than physical embodiments of them: rhythm becomes, for Plato, a more vast, omnipresent force, close to the divine in nature. For Plato, the greater reality is found in the truths not bounded by time or space, knowable only through reason; in their more abstract sense he calls them "forms." Rhythm and harmony rank high among the forms, and are unique in that they act upon the soul directly by means of the hearing with less need for cogitation than language, yet with similar content. Man comes to participate in harmony in an immediate sense; Plato clearly thinks the soul is somewhat intoxicated at this point.

Aristotle, while taking a more descriptive, common-sensical approach, fails to see the other worldly connections of harmony, and treats it more as a practical matter for performers. Yet he cannot bring himself to adequately explain the causal connections between sound and character which the mind makes. The artist is able through imitation to expose the full meaning of his work: we see truth in the particular because its significance is universal. As rhythm and harmony are elements of poetry, we may assume that Aristotle never denied their integrity.

Differing as Plato and Aristotle do with regard to the status of universals, they both nevertheless leave
a common impression upon later ages: sound and sense
do interact in poetry--whether by nature or by
convention, they possess an intricate connection which
acts on a level that reason cannot explain. Plato adds
a great deal of color to this bare perception, and this
difference in temperament may stir a similar difference
in modern theorists more than anything else. In fact,
the richness of Plato's ideas suggests another means of
interaction: the intrinsic balance of formal
structures in effective poetry may establish a deeper
harmony that carries intellectual, emotional, and moral
values.
II. FIRST PRINCIPLES IN THEORY OF SOUND IN POETRY

Edgar Allen Poe had much to say about the distinction between sound and sense in poetry: in his critique of Longfellow's ballads he writes, "He must be blind indeed who cannot perceive the radical and chasmal difference between the truthful and the poetical modes of inculcation" (70). Dividing the mind into faculties of intellect, taste, and the moral sense, he claims that the "moral sense recognizes duty . . . intellect deals with truth . . . it is the part of taste alone to inform us of Beauty. And Poesy is the handmaiden but of taste" (71). Poetry, however, is not just dispassionate contemplation of beauty, but "a wild effort to reach the beauty above," whereby the soul "strives to allay its fever in futile efforts at creation" (71). In "The Art of Versification" he qualifies this creation as more properly personification, but he again makes clear the distinction between intellectual truth and poetic beauty. Finally in "The Poetic Principle," he makes this challenging claim:

And in regard to truth--if, to be sure, through the attainment of a truth, we are led to perceive a harmony, where none was apparent before, we experience, at once, the true poetical effect--but this effect is
referable to the harmony alone, and not in the least degree to the truth which merely served to render the harmony manifest. (291)

Richard M. Fletcher admits that "as an experimenter in language for its tonal, connotatively evocative potentialities solely for the sake of effect, Poe rates second to none in American literature" (32). He claims that in fact, Poe's symbolism depends on sound (10): "to Poe symbol evidently meant something that has to do not with sight but with sound" (20).

In "The Rationale of Verse," Poe cautions that "harmony is not the sole aim--not even the principal one. In the construction of verse, melody should never be left out of view" (213). It is in this essay that Poe remarks upon verse as "an inferior or less capable music" (220); to explain, however, Poe says that "the perception of pleasure in the equality of sounds is the principle of music" (219), and that "verse originates in the human enjoyment of equality" (218), and that "its idea embraces those of similarity, proportion, identity, repetition, and adaptation or fitness" (218). John Phelps Fruit explains that for Poe, "self-consistency is the test of the poem" (69).

Having carved such a vast ground for working with sound rather than sense, Poe sees the origin of poetry in the spondee: "the very germ of a thought seeking
satisfaction in equality of sound, would result in the
construction of words of two syllables, equally
accented" (253). From this he soon draws out the
classical meters. Edd Winfield Parks comments that
"the prosody of words is likewise founded on equality,
although with word sounds that equality must always be
proximate rather than absolute" (84).

Poe, then, talks freely about harmony, music, and
melody as well as rhythm in regard to poetry.
Important to keep in mind, however, is what Poe means
by music, and in a selection from "Marginalia," he
refers to Plato: "By 'the music of the spheres' is
meant the agreements--the adaptations--in a word, the
proportions--developed in the astronomical laws. He
[Plato] had no allusion to music in our understanding
of the term" (163). Fletcher suggests that "it is not
the poem or the music itself that excites and moves us,
to Poe's way of thinking; it is the harmony of the
universe, the presence behind the veil" (21). The
influence of Plato on Poe's esthetic theory is clear in
the later poet's establishment of ideal forms reached
by poetry. The concept of harmony again provides the
bridge between sound and signification.

Poe certainly places great stress upon the
importance of sound in poetry, seeing in the proportion
and balance of sound a structure which delivers the
poetic effect. This form of knowledge he characterizes as a mediating between the intellectual and moral faculties, whose object beauty is personified in the poem itself through its sound structure, which is described by its tone. Fruit comments on Poe's doctrine that "the pleasure of poetry resides in the indefinite sensations produced by the association of music with perceptible images" (91). Parks notes, "At least in part, Poe tended to judge other poets by the melodic effects which they imparted to their lines" (83).

In "The Philosophy of Composition," Poe explains the process he went through in composing "The Raven": "Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the tone of its highest manifestation" (198), which he finds in melancholy. The chief sound structure he chooses is the refrain, which "depends for its impression upon the force of monotone--both in sound and thought. The pleasure is deduced solely from the sense of identify--of repetition" (199). Seeking a "sonorous" sound capable of "protracted emphasis," Poe uses the long "o" with the "r" being the easiest consonant to pronounce; finally, he selects words with this sound which fit the tone, e.g., "Lenore," "nevermore" (200). Fruit points out that Poe's belief, "that melancholy is inseparable
from the higher manifestations of the beautiful, is omnipresent, and that the belief has a firm basis in nature and reason" (114).

The point Poe makes is that truth is not the object of poetry, but beauty. Truth must be expressed in propositions, but beauty is expressed in music and poetry. Music uses a more abstract medium than poetry, but poetry achieves its special effect through the arrangement of meaningful sounds. Sound and sense always accompany each other, and it is their harmony that determines whether or not it is poetry. The sense can be expressed just as well in prose.

Criticisms of Poe have been that he carried this too far, and T.S. Eliot, in *From Poe to Valery*, admonishes the earlier poet for sacrificing sense for sound. Fletcher complains that there is a "dilemma occasioned by Poe's insistence on the aural rather that the visual . . . Sound is aural; writing visual . . . Tone, therefore, is of secondary importance in writing to the visualizable" (22). But Fruit argues that "harmony of sense and expression" is "Poe's forte of technique" (84).

What Poe leaves is a suggestion that something other than truth and morality may be equally important for man, that is, that the esthetic sphere has its own domain of objects and relationships, and that poetry
lies within this field. In the word "nevermore," sound and sense agree in tone, and their fitness or harmony evokes the value and significance of the word. Indeed, such a belief lies behind this idea from Poe's "A Chapter of Suggestions:"

The great variety of melodious expression which is given out from the keys of a piano, might be made, in proper hands, the basis of an excellent fairy tale. Let the poet press his finger steadily upon each key, keeping it down, and imagine each prolonged series of undulations the history of joy, or of sorrow, related by a good or evil spirit imprisoned within. There are some notes which almost tell, of their own accord, true and intelligible histories. (190)

That sound itself can deliver an effect which "lifts" man may seem a quaint Romantic notion coming from Poe, but it is an idea which serves repeatedly to explain the peculiar phenomenon of poetry, which rises above prose in its integrity as an esthetic experience. The language is remarkably powerful, and the attention is suspended in a moving train of images and sound. The current of sound washes over the sense until the listener is brought to experience the deliverance poetry can provide. Beauty is an object inexpressible
in truth and morality, but it borders both realms. It seems to convey something expressible in language, but it is said with such a precision that no amount of paraphrasing can equal. It tinges the moral sense with perceptions, but no clear duty or command is given. Beauty is an indescribable object, but one which can be approached by the poet in his efforts to soar to the heavens with the timeless essences. As Parks summarizes, "It is not by accident that 'The Philosophy of Composition' was to become to other conscious artists, especially to French poets, critics, and even musical composers, a guiding light" (88).

Like Poe, W.B. Yeats too thinks that the sound of poetry is important. In "An Introduction for My Plays," he writes, "I have spent my life in clearing out of poetry every phrase written for the eye, and bringing all back to syntax that is for ear alone" (529). He seems to carry sound primarily in syntax: "As I altered my syntax, I altered my intellect. . . . I had begun to get rid of everything that is not . . . in some sense character in action. . . . 'Write for the ear,' I thought, so that you may be instantly understood" (530). As A. Norman Jeffares writes in "W. B. Yeats and His Methods of Writing Verse," "Yeats always chanted his verse aloud as he wrote, seeking
always the right word, which would convey his meaning and yet fit into the sound effect which he desired to create" (302).

Sound in poetry takes on a rich sense for Yeats in traditional stanzas, ancient memories, and psychological experience. His use of symbolism to express sound effects ("memories," as Plato might call them) in syntax gives new significance to the notion of harmony in poetry. Yeats complements Poe's theory of beauty as the province of the poem. For Poe, a faculty of mind provides the link between ideas and experience, while in Yeats, the bridge is formed by the evocation of symbols; both, however, transport the soul through harmony and rhythm to an ideal world.

Yeats is remarkable for his ties with the ancient Irish tradition of the bard who sang his poetry, though he remarks in "Speaking to the Psaltery," "I . . . did not often compose to a tune, though I sometimes did, yet always to notes that could be written down and played on my friend's organ" (15). In this essay, he comments that

The relation between formal music and speech will yet become the subject of science . . . .
I suggest that we will discover in this relation a very early stage in the development of music, . . . . and that those
who love lyric poetry but cannot tell one
tune from another repeat a state of mind
which created music and yet was incapable of
the emotional abstraction which delights in
patterns of sound separated from words. (20)

Yeats's stress on music in his dramatic verse is
evident also in his essay "The Theatre": "Verse spoken
without a musical emphasis seems but an artificial and
cumbersome way of saying what might be said naturally
and simply in prose" (168-9). It seems that this
"musical emphasis," then, serves to distinguish poetry
from prose, by producing a particular effect on the
reader. Yeats analyzes this effect in terms of
emotion—not just a physical emotion, but an
intellectual emotion. He mentions this effect in this
essay when he writes, "The emotion that comes with the
music of words is exhausting, like all intellectual
emotions" (168).

The music of words is captured, it seems, by the
rhythm of poetry. In his essay "Modern Poetry," Yeats
affirms this idea, as well as Jeffares's claim that
Yeats intended his poetry to be chanted aloud:

When I have read you a poem I have tried to
read it rhythmically . . . there is no other
method. A poem is an elaboration of the
rhythms of common speech and their
association with profound feeling. To read a poem like prose, that hearers unaccustomed to poetry may find it easy to understand, is to turn it into bad, florid prose. (508)

It should be noted that Yeats points to the association of rhythms with profound feeling, a link with an ancient past revealed in deep memories. In "Certain Noble Plays of Japan," he argues, "It should be again possible for a few poets to write as all did once, not for the printed page but to be sung" (223). This memory of older traditions is emphasized when he comments further, "A poetical passage cannot be understood without a rich memory . . . for the ear must notice slight variations upon old cadences and customary words" (227).

Yeats makes it clear that his poetry attempted to appeal to the rhythms of an older tradition. Concern with syntax that echoed ancient rhythms led to his powerful poetry. In "A General Introduction for My Work," he writes,

I tried to make the language of poetry coincide with that of passionate normal speech . . . I must seek, not as Wordsworth thought, words in common use, but a powerful and passionate syntax, and a complete coincidence between period and stanza.
Because I need a passionate syntax for passionate subject-matter I compel myself to accept those traditional meters that have developed with the language . . . I must choose a traditional stanza, even what I alter must seem traditional. (522)

As Robert Lawrence Beum writes, Yeats "instinctively recognized that metrics is a crucial aspect of the poet's trade" (30). Adelyn Dougherty concludes that "Yeats is clearly to be located, as metrist, in the mainstream of English tradition" (27).

The link of rhythm with memory provides deeper insight into the emotional effect of the sound of poetry, a rich, intellectual emotion, captured by the struggle of the poet to work in static forms. It is this struggle which elicits the passion of his verse. Later in this essay Yeats explains his interpretation of what takes place within the esthetic effect he sought:

The contrapuntal structure of the verse . . . combines the past and the present. . . . What moves me and my hearer is a vivid speech that has no laws except that it must not exercise the ghostly voice. I am awake and asleep, at my moment of revelation, self-possessed in self-surrender. (524)
As W. H. Auden remarks, "Yeats released regular stanzaic poetry, whether reflective or lyrical, from iambic monotony" (350). Indeed, Yeats's unique style results from his skill in manipulation of traditional forms. As he claims in "Poetry and Tradition," "We ought to make a more subtle rhythm, a more organic form" (248). Further, in "Edmund Spenser," Yeats notes, "Every generation has more and more loosened the rhythm, more and more broken up and disorganized, for the sake of subtlety of detail, those great rhythms which move, as it were, in masses of sound" (380).

Delmore Schwartz comments that "The metrical mastery which accomplishes so much works through variations of the iambic structure of a complexity which is such that the proper names for all the devices do not, so far as I know, exist" (325).

Yeats seeks his own voice by experimenting with the rhythms of tradition, seeking both to unearth ties to the past and to capture new insights that play upon reason and the imagination. In "Discoveries," he hints at a fuller theory of intellectual emotions: "We have found a new delight, in essences, in states of mind, in pure imagination, in all that comes to us most easily in elaborate music" (266).

In "The Symbolism of Poetry," Yeats gives his most complete theory of poetry; it is here that he combines
all his ideas concerning rhythm and form into a penetrating esthetics. The most famous passage from this essay certainly displays a timeless quality:

All sounds, all colours, all forms either because of their pre-ordained energies or because of long association, evoke indefinable and yet precise emotions, or, as I prefer to think, call down among us certain disembodied powers, whose footsteps over our hearts we call emotions; and when sound, and colour, and form are in a musical relation, a beautiful relation to one another, they become, as it were, one sound, one colour, one form and evoke an emotion that is made out of their distinct evocations and yet is one emotion. (157)

Yeats preserves the ambiguity concerning the significance of sound, whether by nature or convention, in his distinction of "pre-ordained energies" or "long association." Yet it is clear that he has expanded the concept of an esthetic effect to be the end of all art forms. This important effect cannot be rendered by the particular rhythms or sounds, but comes with the blend of the many into one. As Beum writes, "a fully satisfying poem is not rhythms . . . but the harmonization of rhythm, image, diction, conception,
and all else" (33). It is important to note the appeal to harmony of the parts--a Platonic notion of an intellectual, proportional tone. Beum explains further,

Ultimately what is required in terms of prosody is the ability to give perfect structure to a poem, that is, to give it a shape expressive of the experience with which the poem deals--and beyond that, to adjust, insofar as the language will allow, every particle of the structure so that its timbre and movement will help enact, or at least not contravene, the sense. (14)

T.S. Eliot echoes this idea in his essay "The Poetry of W.B. Yeats" when he explains, concerning Yeats's dramatic verse,

what is necessary is a beauty which shall not be in the line or the isolable passage, but woven into the dramatic passage itself; so that you can hardly say whether the lines give grandeur to the drama, or whether it is the drama which turns the words into poetry. (340)

Yeats returns, however, in "The Symbolism of Poetry," to emphasize again the importance of rhythm in delivering the poetic effect:
The purpose of rhythm . . . is to prolong the moment of contemplation, the moment when we are both asleep and awake, which is the one moment of creation, by hushing us with an alluring monotony, while it holds us waking by variety, to keep us in that state of perhaps real trance, in which the mind liberated from the pressure of the will is unfolded in symbols. (159)

Yeats reveals here his belief that an ancient, perhaps primordial, mind or spirit lurks beneath the surface of our conscious life, and that in the deepest throes of poetic rhythm our link with a common past reveals itself in powerful emotional or intellectual symbols. In a sense, then, the sound of poetry elicits the most powerful effects that play upon the intellect.

In this essay, he asserts that "Besides emotional symbols . . . there are intellectual symbols, symbols that evoke ideas alone, or ideas mingled with emotions" (160). Yeats explains in one of the most profound passages of this essay:

It is the intellect that decides where the reader shall ponder over the procession of symbols, and if the symbols are merely emotional, he gazes from amid the accidents and destinies of the world; but if the
symbols are intellectual too, he becomes a part of pure intellect, and he is himself mingled with the process. (161)

As A.C. Partridge writes, "His contribution to the modernist movement lay in the rhythmical flexibility and common syntax he was able, after 1915, to command" (130). Partridge comments further: "A recognized gift of Yeats was his ability to animate or retard rhythm through his sensitive command of expression. Whatever the subject or form of a poem, he had an instinctive feeling for the rhythm proper to its self-determining pattern" (100).

The overall harmony Yeats meant to achieve in poetic sound results in his idea of intellectual and emotional symbols, archetypes or forms, ancient memories that bridge the hearer with a spiritual world. Yeats's work in freeing traditional stanzaic patterns for modern poets sets in their sound structure the foundation for all subsequent work.

T. S. Eliot also recognized the distinction of sound and sense in poetry. His use of iambic rhythm allows for conversational speech, while his fragmentary phrasing emphasizes, in fact, carries, the meaning. Eliot's style is critical to understanding the meaning of his poetry; as much as in what the words mean, or
the sense of the poem, the way in which the speech is made continually undercuts or amplifies the conventional meaning of the words. Eliot's poetry is intended to be experienced; the overall effect is rendered by the sound as much as by the sense--fitness of both is essential to produce the overall harmony of the poem. The aim of his poetry is to elicit thought and feeling, an intellectual and emotional effect.

Eliot seeks a return to common speech as much as Yeats, and like the Irish poet, he feels ancient rhythms must be echoed in his creations. These rhythms carry the intellectual and emotional values of the culture, and while the esthetic purpose of poetry is to recreate these values, insofar as they represent what man holds to be universally good and beautiful, poetry has a moral purpose as well.

Eliot is too much of an Aristotelian to think that the sounds of words alone carry meaning: he argues that both sound and sense are mere abstractions from the poem itself; however, the overall effect of the poem is rendered by the musical relationship established by the fitness of the word with the words near it in syntax, and by the echoing of the word throughout the poem. Eliot came to master the role of composer of poetry.
Eliot addresses the distinction of sound and sense as a literary legacy when he writes in *From Poe to Valery*.

Poetry, of different kinds, may be said to range from that in which the attention of the reader is directed primarily to the sound, to that in which it is directed primarily to the sense. With the former kind the sense may be apprehended almost unconsciously; with the latter kind--at these two extremes--it is the sound, of the operation of which upon us we are unconscious. But with either type, sound and sense must cooperate; in even the most purely incantatory poem, the dictionary meaning of words cannot be disregarded with impunity. (14)

Because Eliot recognizes the relationship between sound and sense as a polarity, it is clear that this distinction is significant in his poetic theory. In this work, Eliot complains of some excess of sound over sense in Poe's poetry, but in his essay on "Milton I," he makes clear that too much emphasis on sound can destroy the poetry entirely: "Milton writes English like a dead language. . . . dictated by a demand of verbal music, instead of by any demand for sense" (159). He claims this style has hampered subsequent
poets from reclaiming originality in verse: the music has overcome the poetry. Eliot thinks that in Milton's verse, "The syntax is determined by musical significance, by the auditory imagination, rather than by the attempt to follow actual speech or thought" (160). The auditory imagination, according to Partridge, is "the true poetic instinct . . . sensitivity to syllable and rhythm" (141). In Milton's poetry, however,

a dislocation takes place, through the hypertrophy of the auditory imagination at the expense of the visual and tactile, so that the inner meaning is separated from the surface, and extends to become something occult, or at least without effect upon the reader until fully understood. . . . for the pleasure of the ear the meaning is hardly necessary. (161)

A new and different significance for music in poetry emerges with Eliot. As Partridge comments,

Musical verse is not likely to endure, unless meaning is deeply associated with the words used. Choice of words may be inspired, and their order in an effective line may need to be manipulated; but the organization of the
poem, as a whole, is what chiefly matters.

Eliot implies the need for the cooperation between sound and sense when he writes in "Johnson as Critic and Poet," "The modern inclination is to put up with some degree of incoherence of sense, to be tolerant of poets who do not know themselves exactly what they are trying to say, so long as the verse sounds well and presents striking and unusual imagery" (173). Eliot attempts to refine the significance of sound in this essay when he writes,

by "ear" for poetry I mean an immediate apprehension of two things which can be considered in abstraction from each other, but which produce their effect in unity: rhythm and diction. They imply each other: for the diction--the vocabulary and construction--will determine the rhythm, and the rhythms which a poet finds congenial determine his diction. (190-1)

Words and rhythm must coalesce in harmony to convey thoughts and feelings effectively; this relationship goes far beneath the conscious level. In his essay "Poetry and Drama," he remarks, "The chief effect of style and rhythm, in dramatic speech, whether prose or verse, should be unconscious" (77). Further,
he claims that with "Dramatic poetry, at its moments of greatest intensity. . . . we touch the border of those feelings which only music can express" (78). Still, he believes the poet should write for the ear as well as the eye, for he adds that "the way it sounds when you read it to yourself is the test" (83).

In "The Social Function of Poetry," Eliot discusses the effect of poetry on thought and feeling as well as the ties between the poet and the people. He argues that "poetry has primarily to do with expression of feeling and emotion" (8). The aim of poetry is "to give pleasure" (6), and "the communication of some new experience" (7). This emotional content, he claims, is best expressed in the common language of the people--that is, in the language common to all classes: the structure, the rhythm, the sound, the idiom of a language, express the personality of the people which speaks it" (8-9). The poet's ties to the people are through language, and in this poetry clearly serves a moral purpose: "In expressing what other people feel he is also changing the feeling by making it more conscious; he is making people more aware of what they feel already, and therefore teaching them something about themselves" (9).

In exercising his many functions, the poet must realize Eliot's well-known conception of a "unified
sensibility.\" As Thomas R. Rees explains, Eliot's poetic theory was influenced by the philosopher Bradley in his claim that

a unified sensibility implies a high degree of coordination between the sensory, affective, and intellectual faculties of the mind. But if there is a dissociation of sensibility, the creative and cerebral processes are not only uncoordinated but each act of the mind is partly dissociated into its sensory, affective, and intellectual components. A well-developed sensibility would therefore involve the harmonious operation of all faculties of the human mind, with sensations, emotions, and ideas existing as synthesized elements of a unified sensibility. (20)

Perhaps such poems that polarizes sound and sense in allowing one to dominate are best understood as examples of a dissociated sensibility. Certainly, the idea of the unity of sensibility seems applicable to Eliot's notion of the music of poetry. The fact that he devotes a major essay to this idea points to his realization of its significance, and the theoretical principles he establishes in "The Music of Poetry" are indeed among his most influential.
In this essay, Eliot depreciates the importance to him of scansion:

> it is only the study, not of poetry but of poems, that can train our ear. It is not from rules, or by cold-blooded imitation of style, that we learn to write: we learn by imitation indeed, but by a deeper imitation than is achieved by analysis of style. (19)

He reaffirms the importance of sound in poetry, but that "poetry must not stray too far from the ordinary everyday language which we use and hear" (21). The sound of poetry is an abstraction from the poem itself, yet it is nevertheless important to its effectiveness. The music of poetry refers to the overall harmony of all the interrelationships of sound and sense. A larger conception of technique in poetry emerges which sheds light on Eliot's style. He claims that "the meaning of a poem may be something larger than its author's conscious purpose, and something remote from its origins. . . . the poet is occupied with frontiers of consciousness beyond which words fail, though meanings still exist" (22-3).

As Partridge notes, "Poems that convey mystical experience strive unceasingly to achieve an identity between their self-determining form and their subject, between the rhythm and the thought" (180). Eliot
argues, "The poem comes before the form, in the sense that a form grows out of the attempt of somebody to say something" (31). He claims that "while poetry attempts to convey something beyond what can be conveyed in prose rhythms, it remains, all the same, one person talking to another" (23). The poet must "be faithful to the material in which he works; it is out of sounds that he has heard that he must make his melody and harmony" (24). The sound structure must cooperate with the sense of the words. Eliot explains that in poetry, "there must be transitions between passages of greater and less intensity, to give a rhythm of fluctuating emotion essential to the musical structure of the whole" (23).

Mary Cleophas Costello remarks on "Eliot's insistence upon the necessity for incorporating the rhythms of contemporary speech into verse and the necessary modifications which this brings about in the sound structure" (23). She claims that he "modified the conception of music to include the rhythms of common speech" (24). Costello argues, "Formal discourse of whatever kind, he implies, comprises a union of sound structure and meaning structure" (15); furthermore, "Verse is the most convenient general term to designate the more or less regular patterning of rhythmic sound in a language" (16).
Partridge notes that "Eliot tended to conceive his longer poems as musical compositions" (174). Eliot seems quite similar to Yeats in his adherence to traditional forms, seeking creative freedom and originality within formal bounds. Partridge claims, "He was strenuously preoccupied with the paradox of versification, which was to be free to capture the nuance of actual conversation, and yet be highly disciplined in its technical structure" (172). He adds that "Eliot is a skillful artist in phonetic effects, his use being both deliberate and unobtrusive" (171).

Eliot explains his conception of sound in poetry clearly when he says,

I believe that the properties in which music concerns the poet most nearly, are the 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. (32)

Further, he adds that "so far as it [poetry] may go in musical elaboration, we must expect a time to come when poetry will have again to be recalled to speech" (33).

Eliot's conception of sound in poetry is rich, and though he may seem to downplay its importance in
itself, this is only because he finds the larger unified sensibility to be threatened by excessive stress on sound alone. He argues,

What matters, in short, is the whole poem: and if the whole poem need not be, and often, should not be, wholly melodious, it follows that a poem is not made only out of "beautiful words." I doubt whether, from the point of view of sound alone, any word is more or less beautiful than another. . . . the ugly words are the words not fitted for the company in which they find themselves.

(24)

The larger harmony of sound structure and meaning rendered by the whole poem is explained as a complex relationship:

The music of a word is, so to speak, at a point of intersection: it arises from its relation first to the words immediately preceding and following it, and indefinitely to the rest of its context; and from another relation, that of its immediate meanings in that context to all the other meanings which it has had in other contexts, to its greater or less wealth of associations. Not all words, obviously, are equally rich and
well-connected. . . . for it is only at certain moments that a word can be made to insinuate the whole history of a language and a civilization. (25)

Eliot clearly insists on the significance of music in poetry, not as pure sound but as a composite of sound and form. He summarizes:

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 secondary meanings of the words which compose it, and that these two patterns are indissoluble and one. And if you object that it is only the pure sound, apart from the sense, to which the adjective "musical" can be rightly applied, I can only reaffirm my previous assertion that the sound of a poem is as much an abstraction from the poem as is the sense. (25-6)

Wallace Stevens exercises great care in expressing the distinction between sound and sense in poetry, and establishes perhaps the richest content for the music of poetry of all his predecessors. As Alan Perlis writes, "Throughout his writing career, Stevens demonstrated an intense interest in the relationship
between poetry and music" (136). Frank Doggett agrees when he comments, "Music, running the scale of meaning between the ordinary sense of the word and its symbolic essences, is Stevens' most pervasive figure" (189). Finally, Robert Buttel adds, as a note, that "however subtle the influence of music on his poetry was, the influence was great" (139).

The concept of the music of poetry takes on various uses by all poets, but as Socrates might have noted, few can explain well what it means. Stevens, in "The Nobel Rider and the Sound of Words," offers this observation: "I do not know of anything that will appear to have suffered more from the passage of time than the music of poetry and that has suffered less" (32). In the passage that follows this apology, Stevens sees most clearly the reason for its survival:

The deepening need for words to express our thoughts and feelings which, we are sure, are all the truth that we shall ever experience, having no illusions, makes us listen to words when we hear them, loving them and feeling them, makes us search the sound of them for a finality, a perfection, an unalterable vibration, which it is only within the power of the acutest poet to give them. Those of us who may have been thinking of the path of
poetry, those who understand that words are thoughts and not only our own thoughts but the thoughts of men and women ignorant of what it is that they are thinking, must be conscious of this: that above everything else, poetry is words; and that words, above everything else, are, in poetry, sounds... A poet's words are of things that do not exist without the words... Poetry is a revelation in words by means of the words. (32-3)

Stevens exhibits the sense and sound of these remarks when he writes in "Adagio", "Words are the only melodeon" (171).

Sound serves as a link for man with life; Doggett explains, "The word, like the noise of motion, the cry of the self, even the utterance of the poem that gives meaning to the world, is only another sound issuing from the ground of being" (165). As such, sound is a crucial aspect of poetry. Perlis writes, "Sound unites tangible reality with spirit, enabling each to change with nature" (97).

The sound of a word of poetry would seem to have to do with its connotation rather than its denotation. The imagination is bound in relation to reality; the connotative nature of words is limited by their
denotation. In the past, for example, music in poetry had different sounds—the same effects will not work now. As Stevens explains, "A variation between the sound of words in one age and the sound of words in another age is an instance of the pressure of reality" (13). Today, some view the whole notion of music in poetry as romantic sentimentality, but Stevens explains this as the interplay of imagination and reality: "A tendency toward the connotative . . . cannot continue against the pressure of reality" (16).

Nevertheless, for Stevens, as Edward Kessler notes, "the sound of words sometimes seems to be a reality in itself, a defense against the pressures of disorder from within as well as without" (114). As Stevens writes in "Three Academic Pieces,"

Perhaps the whole field of connotation is based on resemblance. Perhaps resemblance which seems to be related so closely to the imagination is related even more closely to the intelligence, of which perceptions of resemblance are effortless accelerations.

(75)

Stevens offer a definition of poetry in terms of this idea:

Poetry is a satisfying of the desire for the resemblance. As the mere satisfying of a
desire, it is pleasurable. . . . Its singularity is that in the act of satisfying the desire for resemblance it touches the sense of reality, it enhances the sense of reality, heightens it, intensifies it. (77)

This concept of resemblance seems appropriate for Poe's notion of the spondee--an equality of sounds generating thought. In fact, Poe's use of the refrain, Yeat's use of repetition, and Eliot's use of incantation, may all be examples of resemblance.

Poetry can create perceptions of resemblance through the connotative power of words, especially their sounds. The effect of the whole, the harmony of all the parts, can be described as the music of poetry, although both Eliot and Stevens caution that it must not overcome the sense. In fact, it is the sound linked with sense that seems like music expressing thoughts and feelings with intellectual and emotional content.

Stevens explains in "Effects of Analogy" that "another mode of analogy is to be found in the music of poetry" (124). It is in this essay that he refers to Eliot as a musical poet. Pointing to the stanzaic forms with strict meter and rhyme that preceding ages used, he argues that the music of poetry had to change. As John Hollander comments, "Music used naively is like
all manifestly available public mythologies; for the imagination, they are all like statues, immobile. Metaphors reached down from a shelf cannot descend" (254). Stevens explains,

It is simply that there has been a change in the nature of what we mean by music. It is like the change from Haydn to a voice intoning. . . . There is no accompaniment. . . . Instead of a musician we have an orator whose speech sometimes resembles music. We have an eloquence and it is that eloquence that we call music everyday, without having much cause to think about it. (125-6)

The modern age has allowed more freedom with traditional stanzaic form, meter, and rhyme; but music has ancient ties with all other art forms, and it changes as life changes. As Stevens suggests, the connotation of words, essential for poetry, is limited by the pressures of reality. He argues, "Art, broadly, is the form of life, or the sound or color of life. Considered as form (in the abstract) it is often indistinguishable from life itself" (158). As Irvin Elirenpreis comments, "The peculiar feature of music is that it seems both a human and a natural form of pleasing significant sound;" natural sounds differ in
being "perfectly spontaneous. . . . As a poet, Stevens wanted to find words that could convey his moods and meanings with such propriety and inevitability. It is in this sense that his poetry aspires to the condition of music" (227).

Poe thought of poetry as verse, and in his day, as Stevens commented, "there actually was a music" (125). The harmony or fitness of sound and sense over the whole of the poem rendered pleasure in contemplation of beauty. Some sounds are more conducive to this, and should be used with the right proportion of reason and imagination. Yeats appealed to much the same notion of harmony over the whole poem creating pleasure in the expression of thought and feeling through the evocation of intellectual and emotional symbols. Rhythm was the primary element of the verse that he thought would link man with his cultural past. But the sound of his poetry had changed greatly from Poe's; anachronistic music in poetry was already connotatively dead. For Eliot, poetry was the creation of a unified sensibility, and he makes it clear that music can be too dominant; if in fact it comes to be noticeable it is probably too much. But Eliot, like Yeats, turned to traditional verse forms, seeking to express thought and feeling in highly musical frameworks.
Stevens defined poetry as "a satisfying of the desire for resemblance." This pleasurable effect is due to its linking of man with reality. The imagination is man's expressive force, his will against the pressures of reality. As Doggett remarks, "Music, in Stevens' figurative use of it, may also stand for a personal experience of the world" (186).

The music of poetry may mean no more than the harmonic or unified arrangement of word sounds based on their connotations. Word sounds take form in resemblance, a function of the imagination and the intelligence. In giving pleasure through the satisfaction of the desire for resemblance, poetry differs from music because, in expressing life, it enhances the sense of reality. As Kessler explains, "Because poetry, by employing words and not notes, is anchored in a world of denotation, the poet must face the 'reality' of an impure language that only at times reaches the condition of music" (113).

Ultimately, Stevens finds this a worthy trade, as he claims in "On Poetic Truth":

The poet exercises a power over life, by expressing life, just as the novelist does; and I am by no means sure that the poet does not exercise this power at more levels than the novelists, with more colors, with as much
perception and certainly with more music, not merely verbal music, but the rhythms and tones of human feeling. (245)

The power Plato realized in poetry to establish beneficial rhythms in man can be seen in Stevens as well. As Kessler claims,

The task of the artist faced with an unruly reality is not to invent forms but to discover ‘ideas of order’ and to share them with others. He must not impose order on life; he must try to illuminate through his imagination a changing world that can never be held by one system of beliefs. . . . Once he has experienced that image, the poet has a responsibility to his fellow man that is not social or political, but is moral nevertheless. (147)
III. INFERENCES FROM THE WASTELAND

Eliot's verse displays his technical virtuosity in the use of sound effects. Rhythm and harmony exist within and without the lines. Able to write flawlessly in the strictest meters, he also contributed original variations to English literary tradition that have had tremendous impact; at times he unites verse with prose in conversational rhythms. The use of different voices, as in *The Wasteland*, creates a collage effect (a visual metaphor for an essentially poetic experience). The many voices and various rhythms merge into an overall harmony or fitness, even though it may be debilitating, as in this poem. Comparable to innovators in painting or in music, Eliot mastered a new artistic form for poetry.

Rhythm and color are indeed two major elements of the sound of words, and they play an important part in Eliot's poetry. As Rees explains, "the sonal and the rhythmical patterns give support and corroboration to the flow of meaning" (46). He points out that "Eliot's lineation patterns are often reinforced . . . by concurring patterns of consonance" (45). Rees argues that "Eliot unified the diverse effects in his poetry by means of fairly regular metrical sequences, these sequences being extracted and synthesized from the common speech of his time" (42); he supports this claim
by referring to Eliot's "habit of stringing his sequences together in succession of rhythmical phrases, most of which are conversational and iambic" (43). Partridge agrees that Eliot "flouts traditional syntax by introducing phrases that appear to have no grammatical function. The fragmentary style results from terse, conversational sentences." (141). Further, along with the importance of rhythm, he confirms Eliot's concern with other aspects of the sound of words: "Eliot employs precise verbal repetition, as well as phonological echoes" (177).

In The Wasteland several techniques of manipulation of sound enforce the central theme of sterility. Rhythmic sequences are a key to interpreting the severely fragmented ideas. In certain contexts, the same words will be uttered sometimes with authority, sometimes with irony. The dominant rhythm seems iambic, and most lines are pentameter, but no regular verse form has a majority, only a share, of the lines which vary constantly throughout. Heroic verse may be the dominant meter early, but it is subject to progressive decay through the course of the poem. The medley of rhythms propels the poem throughout, and the various metrical sequences carry the meaning and tone of each fragmentary passage. Blank verse serves meditative, somber, and grave ideas; the disjointed
meter creates fragmented, alienated, and anxious impressions. Regular metrical rhythms alternate with various accentual rhythms and broken syntax. The effect is a loss of centrality and stability. The progressive decay of meter causes a parallel effect on the mind, dominated by an increasing sense of sterility of forms.

The strong blank verse rhythms do provide unity to the poem—as do various effects caused by repetition of words and images. The overall theme of sterility is counterpoint to subthemes as in a symphonic composition. Rees refers to Gordon Kay Grigsby in identifying three overall themes: sterility, sexual love, and rebirth, symbolized in such dominant images as aridity, fire, and water. Although these themes appear in fragmentary form, a high degree of thematic integration occurs with the pattern of repetitions that govern the images. In fact, Rees indicates a circular movement in the poem as a whole, whereby each theme is developed, beginning and ending, he claims, with sterility.

"The Burial of the Dead" is broken into four stanzas of approximately equal length; from the beginning lines, however, a sense of disorientation and failure is apparent:

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.

The first two lines begin with strong trochaic rhythm, except that the last foot in each is set off by a pause. With strong assonance and alliteration, each of the first three lines ends with the present participle, which propels the thought on to the next line. However, in the third line, the accents are somewhat suspended, followed by the fourth line which slows to a halt. This is repeated in lines five through seven. Where the rhythm drags, in lines four and seven, the central theme of sterility is introduced. The rhythm changes then to include several dactyls, a line of German, and the fragmented conversation of the first feminine image in the poem, the cousin of the archduke. The last line resolves the chaotic stanza with a strong accentual rhythm.

The second stanza maintains a regular meter except for the lines from Wagner. Iambic pentameter sets the tone for the more solemn monologue with repetition to reinforce the grave images, especially "dry stone," "red rock," "shadow," and "sound of water." As they
are repeated in close proximity, and with line 26 a parenthetical statement, the effect is disquieting, enforcing the emotion captured in line 30: "I will show you fear in a handful of dust."

The first mention of sound comes in this stanza:

A heap of broke images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock).

The point is that there is no sound of water; there are no sounds at all, not in man nor in the poem. "Water" is not repeated here; in fact, the images that are repeated intensify the lack of water. The extreme aridity found here is repeated only in the last section, "What the Thunder Said," when the poet makes a final attempt to inspire his voice, and cannot. The sudden appearance of lines from Wagner's opera Tristan and Isolde is also the first noticeable use of music, though it appears throughout the poem, even to the nursery rhyme in the last stanza. Introducing the theme of sexual love in the hyacinth girl, this music closes the scene with a tragic finality. In between, the speaker failed to act. Music speaks; man cannot; music closes.
The third stanza introduces the third voice, Madame Sosostris, whose speech is bland conversation with shrill repetition of "Here." Most of the lines break in the middle, carrying the images of her Tarot cards that will recur later.

The final stanza is a return to regular iambic pentameter, but it gives way to the voice of the poem's persona--still in rhythm, but suddenly passionate, rather wild, befitting the leap in time and civilization underlying the image of a corpse planted in a garden. Given the orderly flow of rhythm until this point, this image is abrupt and disconcerting, emphasizing the horror of the question itself. The last line breaks down, containing two strong pauses, finishing the eruption of anxiety.

"A Game of Chess" begins with twenty-seven lines of rich blank verse, punctuated by the degraded sound of Philomel: "'Jug Jug' to dirty ears"--a sound of nature diminished by man's impurities. The regular rhythm emphasizes the richness of the next female's boudoir, as following the cry of the nightingale the verse becomes irregular, carrying frightening images. Another reference to sound, "Footsteps shuffled on the stair," intensifies the fear. The voice of the woman is quite unnerved. She demands: "Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak." The poem's persona can only
respond with cruel irony. Another reference to sound—"the wind under the door"—symbolizes all these voices and sounds; it says nothing—empty sound. The voices interchange, become noises connoting irony, "waiting for a knock upon the door." The poem's persona breaks into song, albeit music of the lower class.

In fact, the voices themselves, of all the characters, have become sounds, coming and going, talking, breaking—the tense woman talking at the man; she could as well be his conscience. Voices destroy unity in the poem—abrupt noises that carry in speech fragmented people. The sound of their speech is disturbing, disconnected, halting, as their words become noise with no meaning. Each voice has broken further into the metrical pattern as well as the coherence of thought. A sense of agitation, of unrest, is created by the sound. Voices speak in the poem but say nothing, sounds with no meaning—sterile voices seeking always to substantiate themselves.

The female voice in the bar drones painfully, constantly interrupting with "I said," "she said," or "he said," as if something had meaning because it was uttered: "But if Albert makes off, it won't be for lack of telling," or "The chemist said it would be all right." The intruding voice, "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS
TIME," carries authority with no personality at all. There is no purpose here, no point; even the sense of the speech concerns lack of action. The meaning of the poem is that there is no meaning, or at least none of the characters find it. Ultimately, it is in the voice of thunder, like the whirlwind that questions Job.

Spenser's voice is heard in "The Fire Sermon" referring directly to his own song: "Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song." Placed as it is in the midst of long lines of accentual meditative verse, the images of the river are juxtaposed with those from modern times. Spenser is followed closely by Marvell: "But at my back in a cold blast I hear." The sounds heard are of rattling bones or horns and motors. Again the voice breaks down into a comic ditty: "O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter/And on her daughter/They wash their feet in soda water." The anachronistic sounds of Philomel, "rudely forc'd," carry dead connotations.

Tiresias finally identifies himself as the poem's persona as he witnesses the scene between the typist and the clerk, framed in heroic verse that has a carefully controlled rhyme; distant at first, the end rhymes tighten to ABAB for twelve lines during the act of love, ending with the fading slant rhyme in the last two lines: "Bestows one final patronizing kiss,/And
gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit...." Neither the lovers nor the poet finds any inspiration here. Music comes to the typist; however this passion is with the mechanical gramaphone. The music slips by--only sometimes a "pleasant whining of a mandolin," followed by "a clatter and a chatter from within."

The songs of the Thames-daughters follow with very short, fragmented lines with punctuating rhyme. Although elegant in verse, the love story here is just as sterile as that between the typist and clerk. The purgatorial message of Augustine follows in strong accentual rhythm, but is progressively cut short.

The short section "Death by Water" captures the sound of the sea in its rhythmic phrases and consonance: "the deep sea swell," "the profit and loss," "a current under sea," and "As he rose and fell." The lines are quite varied, broken, and although they end with strong iambic pentameter, any dominant metric in the poem has now broken down completely.

As "What the Thunder Said" begins, a reference to silence is followed by shouting and crying. The age is dying. The sound of water is greatly anticipated throughout the poem, but in the interplay between water and rock, reappearing here from the first of the poem, it receives its full treatment. One of the most unique
passages in all English poetry, the singular repetition of these sounds reaches a climactic moment in Tiresias's search for inspiration. All accompaniment disappears. He must find water, produce the sound that will bring rebirth. He finds "A spring," "A pool"—these sounds cause lines to lengthen, but only arid images appear: "cicada," "dry grass singing." But then, "Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees/Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop"—the song of the thrush cannot lift the poet now: "There is no water."

What does the final voice say?—thunder, breaking upon silence: the voice of the sky, primeval fear, beyond the limited capacity of man, demanding all, the voice of duty. Finally, peace, and sound gives way to silence altogether.

Perhaps the "sound" of Eliot's poetry is a more apt term than "music," for this is not the music of earlier poetry; at times there appears to be no music at all, although sounds of rhythm, alliteration, assonance, and repetition still exist. Perhaps Stevens expresses it most clearly when he simply says that what is meant by music has changed. Nevertheless though discordant at times, the sounds of his poetry do determine its meaning.
IV. INFERENCES FROM SELECTED WORKS OF STEVENS

Stevens makes extensive use of sound in his verse. Several poems possess the overall form of musical compositions. Frank Doggett writes that "Stevens usually sets forth the idea of individual will in the figure of the musician creating in his music his individual sense of reality" (191). According to Alan Perlis, "Stevens used it [music] to demonstrate the relationships between poetry and thought, poetry and feeling, and poetry and external nature" (136). Many references are made to sounds and music in his poetry. Kessler notes that "Even when glorifying music, Stevens frequently selects images of vocal music (hymn, choir, chant, choral) rather than the purely symbolic 'signs' that Mallarme' hoped to discover by divorcing poetry from prose" (114). Every line he wrote was directed to the ear as much as, and sometimes more than, to the eye. Robert Buttel comments upon "Stevens' extraordinary control of sound, which adds so much tautness and exactitude to his style" (143).

Stevens captures the rhythms of life in the natural, conversational, rhythmic flow of his cadenced verse, perfecting his art in the form of blank verse. As Buttel remarks, "More often than not, within his seemingly prosaic free verse, Stevens created the 'intensely cadenced' effects that are an identifying
characteristic of his style" (208). Stevens many times equates music with sound in practice, his lines becoming melodic strains. Music seems to permeate his verse, sustaining the link of imagination and reality achieved in his poetry. The sound expresses man's feelings in music of spirit, bridging him with his life experiences. Hollander claims that "There is, in fact, hardly a scrap of traditional auditory mythology upon which Stevens has not improvised" (246); further, he adds that Stevens was a champion of sound in verse, mastering "that game of rhyme and assonance and alliteration used as implicit copulas of prediction" (252). These techniques of rhythm and harmony are evident in Stevens's poetry, from his early creations, such as "Sunday Morning" and "Peter Quince at the Clavier," to his later works, like "Certain Phenomena of Sound."

"Sunday Morning" is composed in eight stanzas, each with 15 lines of blank verse. Each stanza has the sonnet's logical form of posing a questions or dilemma in the first part, and answering it in the later lines. Stevens displays his mastery of this metrical form by the ease with which his inescapable rhythms unfold.

The poem begins with suspended rhythm in the first two lines: "Complacencies of the peignoir, and late/Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair." The first
line has only three heavy stresses, while the second line has four; only with the last three feet does the iambic meter establish itself, but it then provides a tender, meditative rhythm for the rest of the poem. The natural rhythms of speech thrive in the metrical flow. The relaxed atmosphere and the exotic pleasures of life are celebrated in the third line with striking sound, "And the green freedom of a cockatoo," contrasting with the smothering sound of line five, "The holy hush of ancient sacrifice." The female's mind begins to meditate on dark, quiet images, and though the earlier rich sounds are repeated in line nine, "The pungent oranges and the bright, green wings," she is drawn dreaming into the old, lifeless ritual. Lines eleven and twelve capture the dry, empty world in which her mind moves: "Winding across wide water, without sound./The day is like wide water, without sound." Each of these lines contains one extra foot, and the long, open vowels and liquidity create the sense of prolonged measures of emptiness. The next line, "Stilled for the passing of her dreaming feet," renders a detached sound in its rhythm and repetition of the vowel in the last two feet. Stevens has made special use of close repetition of sound throughout this stanza, not only in rich alliteration and assonance, but in carefully chosen word pairs: "Coffee and oranges," "green
freedom," "holy hush," "calm darkens," "pungent oranges," "wings/Seem," "dreaming feet," and especially in the repetition of "without sound." These sounds feed a soporific state of meditation induced by ties to a dead religion in striking contrast with the sounds that celebrate the physical pleasures of life.

This contrasting theme--rejection of a lifeless myth for a living myth--is played out in the sounds of the words in various stages of the poem. The Christian religion is couched in dry, vacuous tones ("Only in silent shadows and in dreams?") while earthly images are rendered in rich expressions: "In pungent fruit and bright, green wings." Images of life are richly embellished in diction:

Passions of rain, or mood in falling snow;
Griefings in loneliness, or unsubdued
Elations when the forest blooms; gusty
Emotions on wet roads on autumn nights.

The myth that replaces the old religion is a natural, even savage, acceptance and celebration of life; the chant of the ring of men is enriched by rhythm and diction, as several images of music and sound occur in the last two stanzas. These are the sounds of life, the music of the natural man, full and stimulating, changing, not dry, empty, and silent.
Eventually, even the female figure must hear the new myth:

She hears upon that water without sound,
A voice that cries, "The tomb in Palestine
Is not the porch of spirits lingering.
It is the grave of Jesus, where he lay."

The poem ends with sights and sounds of earth:
"Deer walk upon our mountains, and the quail/Whistle about us their spontaneous cries;/Sweet berries ripen in the wilderness." This is a worship of the sensuous pleasures of life, where the end is as easy as the beginning: "At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make/Ambiguous undulations as they sink,/Downward to darkness, on extended wings." Again, Stevens has paired words to create a desired sound effect: "Ambiguous undulations," and "Downward to darkness." These iconoclastic ideas in an overall harmonic form allow esthetic beauty to exist in literary ritual.

"Peter Quince at the Clavier" displays Stevens's gift of an ear for the sounds of words to capture music. The theme concerns music, feeling, and spirit by contrasting the poet limited by physical reality with beauty expanded in imagination incarnate. Suzanne, moving in the imagination, hears the music of nature, becoming for the poet the reality of beauty. The elders, like insensitive voyeurs, seek to grasp her
body, managing only to disrupt the delicate balance; they are changed, however, and her music becomes the object of their unceasing praise.

The poem's four stanzas are four movements of musical poetry, each with a particular rhythm and texture that deliver the feelings that Stevens imagines to be the purpose of the poem itself: the tender, delicate balance that beauty achieves in the embodiments of nature is transitory, but in death the cycles of nature perpetuate the fleeting link with reality that poetry can achieve. The whole poem itself functions as a metaphor for a musical composition. The two themes, introduced in the first movement, are presented in counterpoint by the rhythmical and harmonic foundations for each. The second movement treats the first theme (Susanna), and the third movement develops the second theme (the elders). Finally the two themes are resolved in the fourth movement. Each movement differs from the others in rhythm and color of sounds. The first movement begins with a flexible, meditative tone capable of introducing of each theme distinctly in sound. The second movement presents a touching, spiritual music to develop the fragile incarnation of beauty. In contrast, the third movement hurries in nervous rhyming couplets that capture the self-conscious elders in their failure to
understand what they behold. The fourth movement unfolds in a grand, sweeping cadence of stately rhythms and harmony, resolving the drama depicted between the two themes in the previous movements.

The first movement consists of five stanzas with three lines of accentual tetrameter. The verse here captures the musings of the musician concerning his feelings of desire. The physical production of sound captured in the assonance in the first line melts into the harmonic alliterations in lines two and three:

"Just as my fingers on these keys/Make music, so the selfsame sounds/On my spirit make a music, too." Two kinds of music are presented here--the sounds of "music," and the feeling of "a music." The musician affirms music as feeling, not sound, and his desire is given form in his reasoning about the imagination:

"Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk." The soft sounds in the fourth stanza describing Susanna are disturbed by the harsh sounds of the elders' comic excitement:

Of a green evening, clear and warm,
She bathed in her still garden, while
The red-eyed elders watching, felt

The basses of their beings throb
In witching chords, and their thin blood
Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna.
The second movement is written in four stanzas of from eight to five lines each. Each line varies with from one to four feet of primarily iambic rhythm, from long, lingering sounds ("In the green water, clear and warm") to quicker, easier notes ("Concealed imaginings"). Rhyme is scattered through this movement, creating anticipation before the resolution of sound. The whole movement connotes dreamy music in slow time; it could be labeled "Adagio." A sudden change in sound occurs in the last two lines: "A cymbal crashed,/And roaring horns." Here, two uses of onomatopoeia that occur with "crashed" and "roaring" make evident the transition in the poem to a second theme or melodic line.

The third movement picks up where the crescendo at the end of the second movement left off. Composed of five pairs of rhyming couplets in accentual tetrameter, the meter is quick; this movement could be termed "Allegro." Interrupting upon Susanna's reveries, they come "with a noise like tambourines." The middle couplet is noticeable, however, for its unique timbre: "And as they whispered, the refrain/Was like a willow swept by rain." The soft consonants used in alliteration are emphasized by the rhyme in "refrain" and "rain." The effect of loss is engendered by the
couplet placed at this strategic moment, which allows for the integration of themes in the final movement.

The last movement is composed of three stanzas, consisting of three, seven, and six lines respectively, put in regular blank verse with strong rhymes, closing with the masculine rhyme of "plays" and "praise." The strong meter and feminine rhymes propel the verse in a moving train of images in sound, allowing a resolution of themes in this more philosophical section of the poem. The resonance in the first line, "Beauty is momentary in the mind," contrasts with the harsher consonants in the second line, "The fitful tracing of a portal," but is reaffirmed in the third line, "But in the flesh it is immortal," resolving the two conflicting themes in music. Susanna's earthly beauty, captured by the musicians's imagination, lives in the cycles of nature, the motions of life that make music. A continuity underlies change in the natural world, creating the esthetic form that becomes the object of celebration, the "maiden's choral." Music connects man with his world in its fleeting rhythms of nature's flux. Susanna's beauty is transformed from physical sensations into the memories of living people who think of her. The residuum is the essence of the experience that carries lasting value.
"Certain Phenomena of Sound" attempts to embody and translate the sounds of nature into the feelings of spirit, in their preconscious effects on man. Poetry is man's attempt to join in the sounds of nature through the fusion of imagination and reality. There is a music of nature, but is it silent; it can only be rendered in forms of life.

The first movement proceeds in six pairs of couplets in blank verse. Strongly cadenced, the rhythm is not hurried, but slowly, lazily, unfolds in clear images that do not circulate around reality, but simply exist. Stevens is creating the sounds of life that need not go beyond, but return unto themselves. There is only quiet, emptiness, stillness. The only sound is "the beating of the locust's wings." This "Sunday song" does not connote division nor separation from reality; it simply is, and in examining it, our ties to the cycles of life are confirmed. In the sounds of the fourth couplet there is being in the nothingness: "The room is emptier than nothingness./Yet a spider spins in the left shoe under the bed." The purely conversational rhythm works unnoticeably in the dominant metrical flow: the former line is light in accents, while the latter line is ornate in rhythmical flow. Stevens finds the interesting in the ordinary,
using sounds to lull the reader into a satisfied slumber.

The second movement is cast in similar metrical form, but rich in images and exciting in its rhythm and diction:

... The sound of that slick sonata,

Finding its way from the house, make music seem
To be a nature, a place in which itself

Is that which produces everything else.

The sound of the words becomes the vehicle of feeling for the rich variety of life, in itself, for itself: "A sound producing the things that are spoken." The sounds of the words become a music, not separate, but one with life, the imagination fused with reality.

As the first two movements are meant to contrast while being parallel in form, the third movement is a lyrical song itself. What the first two parts of the poem say is rendered by the third part incarnating the sounds. "Eulalia" is a musical name connoting eulogy. The speaker, "Semiramis, dark-syllabled," connotes the imagination made real through sound: "There is not life except in the whole of it." In becoming, words pass over into the sounds which merge the poet and reality,
as the poem has merged with the sound for its rhythmical and harmonic significance. Not to separate, but to embody the sounds of life, the poem is the spirit as feeling, capturing the music of reality in the imagination.
V. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the philosophical basis for a theory of sound in poetry was established by Plato, both in the musical aspects of rhythm and harmony as they effect a balance in man, and in his picture of an ancient legislator of sounds to represent sense. Names result from the proportion of each in establishing a fitness of elements. Sound and sense are dependent upon each other, each contributing essential elements to speech, that divine gift which helps us "imitate the absolutely unerrning courses of God and regulate our own vagaries."

Poe emphasizes the importance of sound in poetry, claiming that the equality of sounds produces an esthetic perception of pleasure. The effect created by poetry is an overall balance expressive of the harmony of the whole universe which lies behind its tangible sense. The fitness of the sound and sense evoke the significance of words, much as Plato's figure of the legislator of names chooses sounds that express ideas.

Yeats feels that the sound of poetry establishes corresponding rhythms and harmonies in man. It evokes intellectual and emotional symbols that link him with an ancient past. Poetry should embody the rhythms of common speech; the music of poetry is the unity of all the elements of sound and sense.
Eliot argues that sound and sense are abstractions from the poem. One may determine the other, but as the product of a unified sensibility, they must cooperate. He claims that style and rhythm should be unconscious in a poem. Further, musical poetry involves a return to common speech, eliciting ancient rhythms that carry intellectual and emotional values. Eliot intends a musical relationship overall to be created through rhythm and structure; thus the fitness of sound and sense renders the esthetic effect of poetry as an intrinsic formal structure.

Stevens made much use of the relationship between music and poetry. He regards it as a valuable analogy, a resemblance that links imagination and reason. The poet expresses life with the rhythms and tones of human feeling, reaching in an overall harmony the form of musical compositions. The sound of words releases their connotative power to unite spirit with reality. Again, it is the fitness of sound and sense that satisfies man's desire for resemblance, which is the primary aim of poetry.

The fascination of all these major philosophers and poets with the music of poetry and the sound of words displays the continuing importance that this area of study has for literary tradition. That so much concern with sounds is evident in the fragmented style
of Eliot and the conversational tone of Stevens supports the claim by Poe that truth can be expressed as well in prose, and the suggestion by Yeats to write for the ear to be understood. The fitness of the sound for the sense is a necessary presupposition, at least for these poets. This fitness reveals itself within and without their poems; from the individual syllables to the overall structure, it is the sound that allows their speech to sing.
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