

BARBARA MALINOWSKA

Bydgoszcz

'THE WASTE LAND', 'THE HOLLOW MEN' AND 'SWEENEY
AGONISTES': THE BIRTH OF DRAMA-MYTHICAL AND
MUSICAL ASPECTS OF THE CHORIC ELEMENTS IN
T.S. ELIOT'S EARLY POETRY.

A style, a rhythm to be
significant, must also embody
a significant mind, must be
produced by the necessity of
a new form for a new content.

T.S.Eliot, The Use of Poetry

The aim of this paper is to examine how, in his early poetry, Eliot showed his deeply dramatic interest by utilising elements of Greek and Hebraic literature- the chorus and the psalm - to revitalize modern English verse; and how, in detail, by cultivating musical form he seeks to restore to poetry the spiritual power of myth.

What was particularly attractive for a modern poet in the Greek drama?

First of all, the origins of the Greek drama were religious rites devoted to gods and performed during festivals. This fact inspired Eliot to introduce some elements of Christian rites to his works. Moreover, the Greek drama contained at least three elements, dance, music and poetry, inseparably connected with one another and working together to achieve their mutual aim - the

enactment of the myth of god. This mythical aim was very attractive to Eliot, who was interested in the so-called 'mythical method'. The method itself, introduced by James Joyce, was meant to replace the popular one-dimensional narrative method of writing. Instead of a complex linear story /as in the narrative method/ this method used verbal and structural allusions to myth as a fundamental element of a literary work.

Besides, the Greek drama as a multilayer, living construction can be treated as reflecting the nature of life itself. This quality Eliot discerned and appreciated, saying:

Behind the dialogue of Greek drama we are always conscious of a concrete visual actuality and behind that of a specific emotional actuality. Behind the drama of words is the drama of action, the timbre of voice and voice, the uplifted hand or tense muscle, and the particular emotion. The spoken play, the words which we read, are symbols, a shorthand, and often, as in the best of Shakespeare, a very abbreviated shorthand indeed, for the acted and the felt play, which is always the real thing. The phrase, beautiful as it may be, stands for a greater beauty still. This is merely a particular case of the amazing unity of Greek, the unity of concrete and abstract in philosophy, the unity of thought and feeling, action and speculation, in life.¹

This 'amazing unity' of Greek drama attracts Eliot as an admirer of rhythmical and musical values in literature. As he states:

poetry, music and dancing constitute in Aristotle a group by themselves, their common element being invitation by means of rhythms - rhythm which admits of being applied to words, events, and the movements of the body.²

Eliot's views on Greek drama, together with his stress on its symbolical and musical values may lead to consideration of the drama in terms of Nietzschean philosophy.

In his work, The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche deals with the origin of the Greek drama. The elements he stresses are of particular significance. He noticed that from the very beginning of its existence there was a duality in Greek art, connected with the fact that homage was paid to two gods - Dionysus and Apollo. The nature of these rites is different. Nietzsche discussing them finds their origins in two 'states' of the human psyche, dreams and intoxication. In dreams man 'sees' fantastic images created by his liberated psyche. These visions, however, have some kind of harmony, smoothness and beauty. This state Nietzsche finds responsible for creation of fine arts. The god-patron of this visionary art was Apollo, the god of imagination.

Under the influence of narcotic, however, man is able to see worlds of a different kind. All his deepest layers of subconsciousness are awakened and tend to liberate not only man's psyche, like in dreams, but all his nature and most primitive instincts reminding of his connection with nature. This rebirth resembles reawakening of nature in spring. This kind of visionary world was ruled by Dionysus, the gay god of intoxication.

Both kinds of art had some connection with music. The dreamy, harmonious and beautiful world of Apollonic art resembled music in its 'external' shape, that is, in its ability to be arranged in a kind of composition, a complete structure /Nietzsche thinks that it is possible to discover a kind of logical, consistent structure in dreams/. The Dionysian element, spontaneous and highly symbolical /even to the extent of being incomprehensible/ reflected the true nature of music, a construction of sounds, Sounds, the components of any piece of music, are also connected with nature: they are its symbolical 'voice'. As under the influence of narcotic so under the influence of music the world animates. Music also excites to symbolical perception of universalities /i.e. notions and reality/ and gives to

the symbolic images the deepest meaning.

Nietzsche says that if music can generate images of the world, so it can also generate myth. Myth is, according to Nietzsche, a symbolical representation of the real world. In this way these parallel aspects are united. Their union constitutes tragedy.

However, if we take into consideration how the two aspects of art, music and poetry, operate in the theatre, we must first specify on whom they are to operate, because the drama anticipates the audience. Thus we came to the nature of the chorus. It is, according to Nietzsche, the embryo of tragedy. He treats the chorus as the representation of the ideal audience, the only audience that can participate in the world presented on the stage. The chorus is the symbol-making crowd. While the scene and plot are of dream-like quality, the chorus is reality. It creates the vision which the audience sees, and participates in the visionary world, performing its symbolical dances. The vision had a logical chain of events /as in real life/, the hero of which was Dionysus. This 'story' about god is myth.

In this way all three elements, myth, music and image contributed to the construction of drama. Myth presented the plot. It consisted of the chain of imaginary pictures animated by music and interpreted by the chorus.

The characteristics of the chorus as the 'mediator between the audience', and 'intensifier of the action by projecting its emotional consequences'³ attracted T.S. Eliot, so that he attempted to use the Chorus even in his early works, like 'The Waste Land', 'The Hollow Men', and 'Sweeney Agonistes'.

However, what was easily acceptable and enjoyed in the ancient times could not be so admired now unless it was 'modernized'. Helen Gardner describes the necessary precautions a poet must take when writing choric verse:

Choric speaking must be emphatic or the sense is lost: it must keep time, and cannot indulge in much variation of speed and tone. Many voices

speaking together are incapable of the subtle modulations of a single voice, and of the innumerable variations from a regular metrical base that make up the music of poetry. If the metre is regular, choral speaking will soon reduce it to the monotony of sing-song /.../ Choric verse must therefore be itself written in free meters; the necessary variety must be inherent in the metrical structure, in variation in the length of line, and the length of breath units. Where dialogue approximates to speech, choric verse must approximate to chant.⁴

The same view was expressed by Eliot when he wrote about his pageant-play, The Rock:

I learnt only that verse to be spoken by the choir should be different from verse to be spoken by one person; and that the more voices you have in your choir, the simpler and more direct the vocabulary, the syntax, and the content of your lines must be.⁵

Another aspect of drama is the music animating myth. Eliot's opinion on this aspect is deeply connected with his views on the origins of a poetic work.

T.S. Eliot sees English poetry as a kind of amalgam of systems of various sources. It very much resembles the amalgam of races that constitute the English nation itself. The rhythms of speech of various newcomers to the British Isles throughout history have made their mark upon English poetry. As with people in a composite race, different features may be dominant in different individuals even within the same family, so one or another element in a poetic compound may be valued in different periods in a different way. The kind of poetry that finally emerges is determined, from time to time by different factors. These may include the influence of literature in a foreign language; or special circumstances in the writer's own period

favouring one literary trend of the past over another; or dominant trends in education. However, there exists one law of nature, prevailing over all these factors: this law imposes on poetry the necessity of maintaining a close relation to the ordinary language which a nation uses and hears. Irrespective of its being accentual or syllabic, rhymed or rhymeless, formal or free, the poetry cannot lose its contact with the changing language of common relationships.

Moreover, poetry is also determined by the linguistic laws and restrictions operating within a language. The language imposes on poetry its own speech and sound patterns. A poet must accept and make the best of all the changes within the language: of the developments in its vocabulary, in syntax, pronunciation and intonation. In return for this he has the privilege of contributing to the development of the language and maintaining its quality, its capacity to express a wide range and subtle gradation, of feeling and emotion; his task is both

to respond to change and make it conscious,
and to battle against degradation below the
standards which he has learnt from the past⁶

Of course, no poetry is supposed merely to reflect / or rather: to record/ the same speech that the poet uses and hears; but it should be in so close a relation that it would appear sufficiently idiomatic when being read. This is the reason why the best contemporary poetry can give us a feeling of excitement and a sense of fulfilment different from any sentiment aroused by even much greater poetry of a past age. The music of poetry, then, must be latent in the common speech of its time.

This does not imply the necessity of all poetry to be melodious. Its content and shape is determined by its aim, i.e. whether it is to be sung or spoken. Modern poetry is meant to be spoken, so if it is to sound natural, it must make use of all the available means to imitate the natural sounds and even flow of the speech; therefore dissonance and even cacophony is justified in a modern literary work provided

they enable it to fulfil its aim.

Another factor that affects poetry is the so-called poetic diction. The diction - the vocabulary and artifices of construction - will determine the rhythm, and the rhythm which a poet finds congenial will determine his diction. The total impression of rhythm and diction working together on each other makes a poem attractive to the reader.

Sensitivity to language, in its rhythm and meaning together, is what Eliot means by the 'auditory imagination':

It is the feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word; sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back, seeking the beginning and the end. It works through meanings, certainly, or not without meanings in the ordinary sense, and fuses the old and obliterated and the trite, the current, and the new and surprising, the most ancient and the most civilized mentality⁷.

Extreme sensitivity to the sound, melody and rhythm of words is a musical talent. Consequently Eliot is conscious of the inexhaustible source of inspiration which a poet can find in music.

A sense of musical sound and construction are very productive in poetry. Eliot regards it as possible for a poet to work very closely to musical analogies without seeming artificial:

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... this rhythm may bring to birth the idea and the image
/.../ The use of recurrent themes is as natural to poetry as to music.⁸

This close analogy goes even further because:

there are possibilities for verse which bear some analogy to the development of a theme by

different groups of instruments; there are possibilities of transition in a poem comparable to the different movement of a symphony or a quartet; there are possibilities of contrapuntal arrangement of subject matter.⁹

Counterpoint, according to its musical definition, is 'the combination of simultaneous voice-parts, each independent, but all conducing to a result of uniform coherent texture'. In Eliot's conception of poetry this contrapuntal method of construction may be understood with reference to the basic component of poetry, the single word:

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 meaning in that context to all other meanings which it has had in other contexts, to its greater or less wealth of association /.../ at certain moments /.../ a word can be made to insinuate the whole history of language and civilization.¹⁰

This is what he means by the 'allusiveness' of the word, the allusiveness which is in the very nature of words. Therefore, what he means by a 'musical poem' is a poem which has not only a musical pattern of the sound but also a musical pattern of the secondary meanings of the words which compose it, so that these two patterns are inseparably connected and form a unique whole.

The Waste Land is not, on the whole, written as a choric work. In this poem Eliot makes successful use of various myths put together to enrich the meaning of his work. They are mainly connected with vegetation rites returning fertility to the dry land. The dominant myth seems to be the legend of the Grail. All myths, combined symphonically, are in a way 'projected' by one character, Tiresias. He is the conductor who tells various 'instruments' i.e. other

characters, to perform their parts in their due time, which seems to be in accord with the contrapuntal method. The construction of the poem resembles in fact the construction of a piece of music. That is, the first part may be treated as a kind of overture introducing all the themes that are to be developed later on. The second part is one of the best examples of Eliot's auditory imagination, both for its beauty of sound and for embedded richness of connotation. All other movements contribute to the symphonic effect of the whole, too.

Besides the mythological components and the unifying sensibility of Tiresias the next constructional factor is the musical pattern of repetition and variation of imagery, which proves, once again, the relationship of music and poetry. Eliot treats words, as earlier quotations explain, as musical notes working in relation to others while building short or elaborate imagistic constructions.

According to Nietzsche, myth animated by music and interpreted by the 'ideal' choric audience created drama. Of some dramatic elements that can be found in his earlier works Eliot said:

It may be, as I have read, that there is a dramatic element in much of my early work. It may be that from the beginning I aspired unconsciously to the theatre /.../ I have, however, gradually come to the conclusion that in writing verse for the stage both the process and the outcome are very different from what they are in writing verse to be read or recited.¹¹

In The Waste Land we hear many voices talking and speaking, mostly individually. They do not expect answers from their quasi-partners. There is only one character, Tiresias, who hears them speak and sees them.

In his first dramatic experiment, The Rock, Eliot also used speaking voices in dialogue. They sometimes speak in unison, sometimes as individuals addressing the audience, but even when they speak singly they are unidentified

members of a chorus. Their aim is to give advice and to show the way of God to the people they address. Therefore, in The Rock there are many imitations of the Biblical verses and Biblical stories; the preachers addressing the congregations teach them the Word of God.

There is no 'teaching' in The Waste Land. However, some fragments imitating Biblical verse or in the style of the prayer-book suggest that voices reminiscent of worship were not totally undesired by Eliot, even in his earlier work.

In the first movement there are the prophetic words of Ezekiel:

...Son of man,

You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images...

The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S.Eliot,
The Waste Land, I, 20-23

Of course, it is an individual voice. However, it does resemble the words from The Rock:

Son of Man, behold with thine eyes and hear with
thine ears

And set thine heart upon all that I show thee...

The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S.Eliot,
The Rock, p.164, IX

The third movement apart from having the Biblical element is called a sermon; it introduces 'the preacher', Tiresias, who first spoke Ezekiel's words. Its final lines are taken from St. Augustine's 'Confessions':

To Carthage then I came
Burning burning burning burning
O Lord Thou pluckest me out
O Lord Thou pluckest...

III, 307-310

The final movement also has many religious allusions: mainly from the Christian religion and Higher Buddhism. These two religions contributed to Eliot's conception of time and of meaningful moments in time, that led to the

doctrine of Incarnation of Christ. In this movement we can recognize the allusion to the apparition of Christ in Emmaus:

Who is the third that walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
-But who is that on the other side of you?

V, 359-365

This is not a choric voice, but the religious element suggests a shared experience. The next fragment refers to some whispered lamentation of many persons:

What is that sound high in the air
Murmur of maternal lamentation
Who are those hooded hordes swarming
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
Ringed by the flat horizon only

V, 366-370

This may not be a choric speech, either, but it refers to the idea of multiplicity of voices and persons.

The most choric element in the poem is the beginning of the fifth movement. The 'chorus' of ambiguous voices may be treated as a collective body; it is marked by the use of 'we'. This collective 'we' seems to unite all the persons appearing in the poem, incorporated in the choric crowd declaiming its sense of loss and despair. This chorus does not bring about any change of attitude in the poem-it is as pessimistic and desperate as any of the earlier voices.

Considering in musical terms one may treat the small choric part as an accompaniment imitating and supporting the main tune played by the protagonist, Tiresias. In literary terms this means that all the former images reappear in this fragment, but in a different shape. Using anaphoric repetition the first two lines introduce the image of garden:

After the torchlight réd on swéaty fáces
After the frósty silence in the gárdens

V, 322-324

At first this may suggest the Hyacinth garden of the first movement:

-Yet when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden,
Your arms full and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing.

Looking into the heart of light, the silence

I, 37-41

The words: 'silence' and 'garden' indicate the similarity of image. However, the Hyacinth garden of ecstasy in love turns to the garden of Gethsemene. The form is also strikingly different. The anaphoric repetition and the impersonal sentences resemble the anonymous voices of The Rock. Very personal confession, run-on rhyming lines, antithesis of 'life and death' in love characterize the fragment from the first movement. In the fifth movement the personal experience is turned to archetype, the basis of common experience. The lines I, 1-4 and I, 14-18 speak again though in different terms of spring and the mountains where Marie had her moment of fear:

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.

I, 1-4

And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke's
My cousin's, he took me on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free.
I read much of the night, and go south on the winter.

I, 14-18

The description of the spring resembles that of Chaucer's Prologue to 'Canterbury Tales' /as far as subject is concerned/. Each line ends with a gerundial form of verb emphasizing the slow, continuous rebirth in nature. The lines are run-on. Marie's speech is a personal description. It is a recollection of a memory, told in a private conversation. The lines in the fifth movement referring to both spring and agony of fear are entirely different:

After the agony in stony places
The shouting and the crying
Prison and palace and reverberation
Of thunder of spring over distant mountains...

V, 324-327

There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain
There is not even solitude in the mountains

V, 341-343

The description is without personal character. Nor does it resemble the opening lines of the first movement about the spring. The form is different. There are no run-on rhyming lines of medieval verse. Lines do not end with continuous form of verbs, each referring to the next line. Instead there are anaphoric repetitions of impersonal sentences and epiphoric of the word 'mountains'.

The content of the impersonal sentences beginning with 'There is not'.. is in the semantic antithesis to that of the sentences beginning with 'But': 'silence' - 'thunder'. Anaphoric, epiphoric repetitions, impersonal sentences and antithesis in structure are the most frequent devices in Eliot's choric verse.

The line:

He who was living is now dead...

V, 328

refers, in part, to Phlebas, the Phoenician and in part to Christ unrecognized during the journey to Emmaus:

Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall
as you

IV, 321

The sentence specifying the name and features of the character was replaced by the general statement of somebody who from life passed to death. The line V, 329 repeats the structural pattern of the line 328 and the line 330 expresses the collective emotion:

Wé who were líving are nów dýing
With a líttle pátiénce...

V, 329-330

They both are the voices of the anonymous crowd Tiresias sees on London Bridge:

A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many.
I had not thought death had undone so many.

I, 62-63

However in the fifth movement the lines express direct collective utterance, whereas in the first movement the lines refer to the personal reflection of Tiresias upon the dead he sees. The lines V, 330-358 are very interesting in their form. They certainly refer to the previously described landscape:

... 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...

I, 23-26

The sentences are perfectly logical and consistent, of some similarity to Biblical verse/ 'and' connector/ preserving all the necessary punctuation. It is a realistic description of a landscape. The lines of the fifth movement are different. There is no punctuation mark in the whole choric passage. The characteristic feature of the passage is the recurrence of the words 'rock', 'water' and 'mountains':

Hére is no wáter but óly rók
Rók and no wáter and the sándy ród
The ród winding abóve among the móuntains
Which are móuntains of rók without wáter

V, 331-334

The repetitions are circular. The second part of each line introduces one of the recurrent words which immediately becomes the first word in the next line. The key word is repeated in the conditional sentences:

If there were wáter we should stóp and drínk

V, 335

If there were óly wáter amóngst the rók.

V. 338

The conditional from line 335 is followed by the sentence based on the principle of antithesis:

Amóngst the rók one cannot stop or think

V. 336

The final:

'... drink/...think'

are rhymed. The occasional rhyme of final verbs appears in this passage once again:

Déad mountain móuth of carious téeth that cannot spít
Hére one can neither stánd nor líe nor sít

V, 339-340

The conditionals with the word 'water' reappear in the final lines of the choric passage.

If there were wáter

And no rók

If there were rók

And also wáter...

V, 346-349

If there were the sóund of water óly

V, 352

The following sentences resemble the description in the stream of consciousness technique J. Joyce used in Ulysses. It is

particularly similar to the dreams of schizophrenics in Laing's account of schizophrenia in 'The Divided Self'. This is a dreamy, nightmarish landscape where:

Not the cicada
And dry grass singing
But sound of water over a rock
Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
But there is no water...

V, 354-358

The stress pattern is fairly regular in the lines 322-329, with four stresses to a line with the exception of line 330 where there are two stresses. In lines 331-345 there are four stresses to a line. Lines 346-358 present a variation in stress pattern. Each line consists of a broken utterance, some beginning with 'if' or 'and'.

They do not have any punctuation mark. Impersonality of utterances, regular rhythm, anaphoric and epiphoric repetitions, lack of punctuation are the differentiating devices of the 'choric' passage in this movement.

Lines 359-365, describing the journey to Emmaus begin and end with a rhetorical question. There are no repetitions of the kind used in the 'choric' passage. Besides, the use of 'I' and 'you' suggests a conversation between two people. There is a feeling of multiplicity of persons in Eliot's poetic transformation of Hesse's description of chaos in Eastern Europe. But there are neither repetitions nor regularity of stress:

What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal

V, 371-376

The images in the lines 377-384 also do not have the impersonality and archetypal character of the 'choric' part.

Nor could the following lines be thought of as collective utterance. Even if they possess a collective pronoun 'we' the passage resembles more a private conversation than a group speech:

Datta: what have we given?
My friend, blood shaking my heart
The awful daring of a moment's surrender
Which age of prudence can never retract
By this and this only, we have existed
Which is not to be found in our obituaries
Or in memories draped by a beneficent spider
Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor
In our empty rooms...

V, 401-409

I have shown the difference between the handling of recurrent images in the 'choric' part and other movements of The Waste Land. The form is still more different. The beginning of the second movement is written in blank verse:

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Glowed on the marble, where the glass
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
From which a golden Cupidon peeped out...

II, 77-80

There are rhymes in the third movement:

...The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring
O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
And on her daughter
They wash their feet in soda water

III, 197-201

The time is now propitious as he guesses,
The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
Endeavours to engage her in caresses
Which still are unreproved if undesired

III, 235-238

The fourth movement, which describes and reflects on the fate of an individual, also possesses some rhymes:

...Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
... current under sea
Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell
Gentile or Jew
Consider Phlebae, who was once handsome and tall
as you

IV, 313-321

The impersonality of form and archetypal imagery of the opening of 'What the Thunder Said' suggest that lines 322 - 358 were meant to present a collective utterance. The feeling of futility and loss is shared by all the 'speakers'. They also express their common wish for returning of fertility. Imitating the sound of water they want to 'lure' the water.

The voices that are heard at the beginning of the fifth movement refer to the imagery based on experiences which the characters had. All the people in the poem are seen, heard and sometimes addressed by one character, Tiresias. He as an interpreter universalizes the personal experience of individuals. It is possible that the final choric part may be the result of such process. The protagonist makes all the characters speak together to express their wishes and to share their experiences. By doing so they restore fertility to their spiritual waste land, and regain their sense of identity which they lost in daily routine. Seen as individuals they are weak: puppets made to perform their roles. As a commune they feel that although they are hopeless they are not alone.

The second work in which Eliot deals with the theme of the emptiness of life without belief is 'The Hollow Men', 1925. This poem is also very significant as it is a 'boundary' of Eliot's change in metric. He gradually leaves the metrical verse of some parts of The Waste Land and approaches more flexible line of free verse preserving inner unity and rhythm.

The poem consists of five parts resembling five acts of

drama, the first containing the exposition, the second introducing a complication, the third the climax, the fourth a new complication arising from the climax and fifth a resolution. The five parts structure also resembles musical composition of sonata or symphony or quartet. The same form was also used in The Waste Land and Four Quartets.

It is possible to apply to 'The Hollow Men' the analysis Helen Gardner makes of Four Quartets, "The first movement immediately suggests a musical analogy. In each poem it contains statement and counter-statement, or two contrasted but related themes, like the first and the second subject of a movement in strict sonata form"¹². In 'The Hollow Men' the 'characters' are introduced and their personality is evoked by image of guys, rat's feet, wind and grass, the second subject is death.

"The second movement is constructed on the opposite principle of a simple subject handled in two boldly contrasted ways. The effect is like that of hearing the same melody played on a different group of instruments, differently harmonized, or hearing it syncopated, or elaborated on variations".¹³ Such is the second movement of 'The Hollow Men'; the image of eyes appears with its religious connotations and meaning of living idea in the kingdom of death. The death kingdom with 'living eyes' is contrasted to the land of the hollow men where eyes do not appear, there is no life. The voice asks to be able to avoid death and tries to 'cheat' it wearing deliberate disguises.

"...The third movement is a 'core' of each poem; it is an exploration with a twist of ideas of the first two movements."¹⁴ In 'The Hollow Men' the dead waste land is presented and some reflections on the kingdom of death.

The fourth part is in all three poems a lyrical movement. In 'The Hollow Men' the image of eyes reappears together with images of romantic poetry: stars, roses.

The fifth movement in The Waste Land and Four Quartets is the recapitulation of the earlier themes. This is not exactly the case with 'The Hollow Men'. Here the philosophical reasoning based on antithesis is presented. The

movement tries to 'define', emotions or lack of emotions. The Shadow is probably meant to depict the passionless souls of the hollow men.

What are the characters of this musical 'drama'? Is there any possibility that they speak in unision?

In this poem we encounter once again the empty men, inhabitants of the waste land. The difference is, that in The Waste Land they are presented mostly as individuals, sometimes anonymous, whose conversations are heard by the central character; and only at the end do they appear as a group speaking of their emotions and wishes. Here these people are performing their grand exposé as if in front of a jury, defending themselves and asking for mercy, stressing their weakness and inability as mitigating circumstances.

Variations in stress pattern and length of lines, collective or singular pronouns are the evident marks of change of 'voices' in the poem. It is possible to treat some lines, mostly regularly stressed and with regular inner rhythm, as the choric parts. Other lines, with singular pronouns and differentiation of stress pattern, may be treated as spoken by the individual hollow men.

The first two lines are certainly spoken in unision:

Wé are the hóllow men

Wé are the stúffed men

The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot;

The Hollow Men', p.83

They have an exact pattern of length of phrases and stresses, and repetition of similar constructions; these are factors that prove their choric nature.

The pattern of the next lines varies: the length is different, the components of each phrase differ as well. There are phrases with 2,3 and 4 stresses. Some elements are rhymed:

Léaning togéther

Heádpiece filled with stráw. Alás!

Our dried vóices, when

We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rat's feet over broken glass

p. 83

The following two lines, based on the principle of antithesis with four stresses and similar construction, are probably spoken by the voices in unison:

Shape without form, shade without colour,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion;

p. 83

The passage containing reference to the kingdom of death is marked by the inner assonance:

... Remember us-if at all- not as lost
Violent souls, but only...

p.83

Here also an individual is voicing doubts about the fate of the whole group. The final two lines with an exact pattern, as before, are spoken by the group in unison.

The second and third movements are wholly spoken by individual voices, in which the impersonality of the sentences may be a mark of their being the expression of common opinion. Lines are often run-on, containing varying number of stresses /2-3/ and quasi-rhetorical questions and rhymes:

Here the stone images
Are raised, here they receive
The supplication of a dead man's hand
...Is it like this
In death's other kingdom
Waking alone...
...Lips that would kiss
Form prayers to broken stone.

p. 84

The fifth movement is musically very interesting. The beginning is a nursery rhyme of almost metrical quality of variations of strong and weak syllables, in which the infantile quality stresses the hopelessness of the hollow men:

Hĕre wĕ gŏ rŏund thĕ prickly pĕar
Prickly pĕar prickly pĕar
Hĕre wĕ gŏ rŏund thĕ prickly pĕar
At five o'clock in the mŏrning

p. 85

The two verses in the middle are unusually symmetrical. They have a fixed pattern of stresses /2-1-2-1-2/ and only the last components in each line are variable.

Between the idĕa
And the áction
Between the motion
And the áct
Falls the Shádw

For Thine is the Kíngdom

Between the concĕption
And the création
Between the emótion
And the réspōse
Falls the Shádw...

Life is very lŏng

p.85

It is possible to hear these stanzas as though each item beginning 'between' is uttered by one person, but the final phrase 'Falls the Shadow' by all the four persons speaking together. The broken line of prayer and the cliché 'life is very long' could be spoken by individual voices mixing up in a total chaos of utterances. The final 'envoi' has an exact repetition for three lines, and an identical stress pattern in all four lines. It seems, therefore, to be designed to be spoken in unison:

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.

p. 86

The poem begins and ends with a fixed verse pattern. There are variations in number of stresses, line length and construction within the movements. There is a song-like effect of the nursery rhyme. The choric utterances are incantations almost without variation. The imagery-images of stars, rose, trees, broken jaw, eyes-reappears in The Waste Land, 'Preludes' and 'Gerontion'. This fact proves the principle of poetic unity of inner construction in Eliot's works.

The third work I want to concentrate on is the so-called 'Aristophanic Melodrama', i.e. Sweeney Agonistes. Here Eliot makes use of the only remnant of theatrical tradition he regards as alive, namely, the music-hall. This kind of dramatic expression seemed vital enough to influence the musically sensitive author of the Unreal City epic. Therefore, certain features of the music-hall, such as songs, and the minstrel-show stylization of the chorus, find their place in Sweeney Agonistes alongside with the exact depiction of two women engaged in domestic activities, discussing their guest-list, and so on.

In this work Eliot's verbal music resembles jazz chamber music, especially in the two songs of the chorus. These present the dream lands of idyllic islands where the fairies serve people and fulfil their wishes, where there is harmony in nature /land and sea/ as opposed to the hasty, dull present day life, and where people may enjoy happiness and love without worries. However, the conversation that follows reveals that these people are conscious that such life does not exist, their real life is as still as death. There is the implication that this idyllic life can only be realized in death. But nobody seems to be brave enough to suggest this kind of answer.

The final 'envoi' of the chorus expresses fears that exist deep inside human souls and are revealed unconsciously in their nightmares because in the daylight people do not dare to express them. It is the irrational fear of the unknown. The drum-beat effect of:

Knock knock knock
Knock knock knock
Knock
Knock
Knock

The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot,
Sweeney Agonistes, p. 126

reminds of horror awaiting 'behind the door'. The chorus of Sweeney Agonistes is not an abstract crowd of people; it consists of named characters. Thus these characters perform a double role as individuals and as a group in the chorus.

All the characters in Sweeney Agonistes resemble waste land inhabitants seen in close up and given the opportunity to express and analyze their pains but unable to do so. Some pieces of the work resemble the rhythm of jazz chamber music. Rhythmical elements in Sweeney's speech express his raw emotion and ritualistic quality of his way of life:

SWEENEY: In a nice little, white little, soft little,
tender little.
Juicy little, right little, missionary stew
You see this egg
You see this egg
There's no telephones
There's no gramophones
No two-seaters, no six-seaters
No Citroën, no Rolls-Royce
Nothing to eat but the fruit as it grows
Nothing to see but the palm trees one way
And the sea the other way...

p. 121

The first two lines of Sweeney's speech have the quality of refrain. The pattern of lines describing the crocodile

island is different in quality from the pattern describing the attributes of modern life: the beginnings and the endings are stressed, whereas the lines describing modern life possess fewer strongly stressed syllables.

Some parts of the choric songs are similar to the element of swing occurring in jazz music with its syncopated rhythm of the accentuated ending:

Under the bambōo
Bambōo bambōo
Under the bambōo tree...
Under the bam
Under the bōo
Under the bambōo tree

p. 121

The effect of the diminuendo in the second song of the chorus is very characteristic. It appears to resemble the fading away of the dream and returning to the reality:

And the mōrning
And the ēvening
And noontide
And night
Mōrning
Noontide
Night

p. 123

The effect of the 'hoo-ha' resembles the effect of syncopated knocking and drum beats:

Hōō hā hā
Hōō hā hā
Hōō
Hōō
Hōō

p. 126

Quick change in the choric songs, and their superficial unrelatedness give the effect of improvisation. This element of creativity distinguishes the song from the dull rhythm

of speeches. The lines are endstopped with rhymes: 'three-sea', 'fall-call', 'maids-shades'-unlike most of the free verse:

Two live as one
One live as two
Two live as three...

p. 122

...Where the breadfruit fall
And the penguin call
And the sound is the sound of the sea...

p. 122

Where the Gauguin maids
In the banyan shades
Wear the palmleaf drapery...

p. 122

...Tell me in what part of the wood
Do you want to flirt with me?...

p. 123

At the end of the improvisation the tempo quickens:

...Any old tree will do for me
Any old wood is just as good
Any old isle is just my style
Any fresh egg
Any fresh egg
And the sound of the coral sea

p. 123

Fragments of patterns reappear once again to finish the piece of melody. Internal rhymes: 'tree-me', 'wood-good', 'style-isle'-replace the end-stopped lines of the beginning. A similar improvisation pattern reappears in one part of Sweeney's speech. The rhythmic effect of this fragment emphasizes its content. The fragment uttered rhythmically is a threat of some danger, it may refer to the irrational horror waking people at night:

Any man might do a girl in
Any man has to, needs to, wants to
Once in a lifetime do a girl in

p. 124

These final accords provide the crescendo of threat.

The final chorus also resembles a piece of music. Recurrent pattern of rhythm may be associated with ritualistic drum beats of a shaman who is going to foretell some kind of danger for his tribesmen:

When you're alone in the middle of the night and
you wake in a sweat and a hell of a fright
When you're alone in the middle of the bed and
you wake like someone hit you in the head
You've had a cream of a nightmare dream and
you've got the hoo-ha's coming to you...

p. 125

Towards the end the rhythm of the beats approaches staccato of persistent knocking:

You dreamt you waked up at seven o'clock and it's
foggy and it's damp and it's dawn and it's dark
And you wait for a knock and the turning of a lock
for you know the hangman's waiting for you
And perhaps you're alive
And perhaps you're dead...

p. 126

Strong beats emphasize the key images: the idea of death awaiting /personified as the hangman/, sleep and waking, death and life, dawn and dark as antithetic ideas. The words have some onomatopoeic quality: knock, lock, clock; all three words form a rhyme pattern.

The musical notation is more daring in Sweeney Agonistes than in The Waste Land and 'The Hollow Men'. It is a valuable experiment in using the choric parts to add melody or to alter the main 'tune' of the work of art: and it brings the literary work still closer to musical construction.

The concerto of The Waste Land pictures the large panorama of various aspects of living projected in the protagonist's head. He, Tiresias, as the concerto soloist, plays the main tune, letting others be his accompaniment imitating his melody and following his instructions. All the characters are like puppets performing the play of Tiresias'

vision puppets that have no will of their own nor even suspect their identity. It is he, who sees their emptiness and hollowness, and the futility of their place of living. They do not realize anything. However, the end of the poem seems to be rather optimistic with its reassuring 'Shantih'-peace. But the repetition of this word may imply that it is not the final reassurance. It sounds as if somebody wanted to hush his doubts with verbal eloquence. Let them hope that the rain will fall and the fertility will be restored to this poor land!

'The Hollow Men' presents the same characters 'liberated' from the influence of the central consciousness. They speak of their own spiritual weakness, try to probe the darkness of their lives even to the kingdom of death. Although the final movement contains elements of prayer this fact does not mean that the characters have found the way out of their cage. The prayer is broken.

Only the third work, Sweeney Agonistes, presents some of the socially inferior inhabitants of the waste land in their privacy. They have ceased to be treated like dull puppets and speak for themselves. They are not quite used to this new role. Something awakens in them, but they cannot express it. They are constantly reminded of the irrational horror, of the unknown that exists in their lives. At the end the horror anticipated by the characters enters their lives with knocking of an expected but unwelcome guest.

The choric component existing, as the above analysis has shown, in The Waste Land, 'The Hollow Men' and Sweeney Agonistes may be compared on four levels; the function of the choric element in each work, the theme, the verse quality and the overall effectiveness. In The Waste Land and 'The Hollow Men', however, it is difficult to specify the function of the 'chorus' because in the former the chorus is 'ghostly; barely given voice in the last movement, and in the latter there are elements which may be spoken by the chorus in unison as well as elements spoken by individual 'characters' making up the 'chorus'.

Only when the chorus has a formal existence it is possible

to consider its function according to the ancient principles. These principles stated that the chorus functioned partly as an ideal audience participating in the play and needing sometimes to be enlightened on the matter of the drama, and partly as an omniscient narrator explaining the matter to the real audience and interpreting the given conflict.

The 'chorus' in The Waste Land, certainly is not the interpreter, this function being performed by Tiresias. Nor is it possible to treat this 'chorus' as an audience, since it does not witness events. However, although it does not have these functions of the Greek chorus, it gained another, namely, that of voicing the feelings of what might be called common man, including perhaps the individual voices in the poem.

Eliot's attachment to the musical qualities is well known. Therefore, it seems to be justified to treat the 'choric' element of the last movement of The Waste Land as contrapuntal transformation of imagery used in other movements.

The 'chorus' in 'The Hollow Men' seems to represent the 'audience', its readers. It confesses the deepest fears of human hearts. As the representation of real people, the 'chorus' cannot interpret the world around it satisfactorily. It can only speak of its emotions. Eliot's 'solution' to the riddle of existence is only partly given, as the 'chorus' is sure about nothing:

Sightless, unless
The eyes reappear
As the perpetual star
Multifoliate rose
Of death's twilight kingdom
The hope only
Of empty men...

The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S.Eliot,
'The Hollow Men', p. 85

The chorus in Sweeney Agonistes consists of the characters who take part in the action. As the chorus they sing two songs and deliver a quasi-speech at the end. The chorus here speaks about the characters' collective fears and dreams. It does not give any solution, does not interpret the situation.

The thematic content of the literary works is always revealed by the imagery. The messages are as clear or as obscure as the imagery is. The message of the thunder in The Waste Land concerns the problem of human emptiness and the aimlessness of life. The images of a deserted, rocky land where is no place to move, and of weak people, spiritually dry, present the truth about human life very boldly. Some of the speakers may hear and understand a remedy to restore fertility to life. In the three words 'Da, Datta, Danyatta', meaning 'Give, Sympathize, Control'. But these words do not, within the poem, become animated.

The 'hollow men' are also inhabitants of the waste land. They also criticize their way of life. However, the meaningful image of eyes presents a kind of hope for 'the empty men'; hope for better life in 'death's twilight kingdom'. They wrap their hope with many doubts but still they have no other. Especially their final 'envoi' is very ambiguous, a kind of a broken prayer, it may mean either that the speakers find prayer impossible or that they are only learning to revive it in their hearts. In this connection the final statement about the inglorious end of the world is bitter truth, and the only future of the world of empty men. So the chorus offers a kind of solution to 'real' people whose need is to choose something.

The Sweeney Agonistes' chorus does not present any solution. The two songs describing the idyllic life on a far away island are the presentation of dreams, a little naive but nobody believes them to be realizable. The third speech expresses irrational fears, unexpected disturbances that people sometimes must face. And there seems to be no way of escaping, even in dreams.

The most regular verse seems to be that of the choric element in The Waste Land. This regularity, giving the monotonous effect of choral speech, is gradually lost and the verse comes closer to real utterance. It is still monotonous and rather regular in 'The Hollow Men'. But it does not resemble speech either. It is rather a broken utterance. However, in both poems the verse quality is adequate to the function given to the chorus. Although there is a musical quality in the verse and, particularly, construction of The Waste Land and 'The Hollow Men', the closest affinity to music is found in Sweeney Agonistes where the verse resembles jazz chamber music notation.

The effectiveness of the device of the chorus is not easy to determine as in each work it has special role. However, in all the poems the device is still embryonic and too rigid. This experience, however, proved for Eliot promising enough to make him use the device in some of his plays like Murder in the Cathedral and The Family Reunion.

NOTES

¹ T.S.Eliot, 'Greek Drama', Points of View, 1942, p.61.

² T.S.Eliot, 'The Beating of a Drum', cited by F.O.Matthiessen, The Achievement of T.S.Eliot, 1959, p.156

³ F.O.Matthiessen. The Achievement of T.S.Eliot, 1975, p.162.

⁴ H.Gardner, The Art of T.S.Eliot, 1975, p.132.

⁵ T.S.Eliot, 'The Three Voices of Poetry', On Poetry and Poets, 1972, p.99.

⁶ T.S.Eliot, 'The Music of Poetry', On Poetry and Poets, 1972: pp. 31-32.

⁷ T.S.Eliot, 'Auditory Imagination', Points of View, 1942, p. 55.

⁸ T.S. Eliot, On Poetry and Poets, p. 32.

⁹ T.S. Eliot, On Poetry and Poets, p. 32.

- 10 T.S.Eliot, On Poetry and Poets, p. 25.
- 11 T.S.Eliot, On Poetry and Poets, p. 98.
- 12 H.Gardner, The Art of T.S. Eliot, 1975, p. 37.
- 13 Gardner, p. 38.
- 14 Gardner, p. 41.

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Streszczenie

Muzyka i poezja: 'The Waste Land', 'The Hollow Men' and 'Sweeney Agonistes'

Artykuł niniejszy prezentuje poglądy T.S.Eliota na twórczość poetycką oraz analizę wczesnych utworów poetyckich Eliota w świetle jego poglądów. Najważniejszym stwierdzeniem, stanowiącym punkt wyjścia dla analizy, jest przekonanie T.S.Eliota o bliskich związkach muzyki i poezji - zarówno w kompozycji /metoda kontrapunktu, budowa wielowarstwowa - sonata, suita/ jak i w substancji utworu /naśladowanie zapisu rytmu muzycznego/. Celem artykułu jest potwierdzenie poglądów poety oraz wykazanie iż dzięki "muzyczności" utwór poetycki zyskuje na głębi ekspresyjnej i estetycznej oraz, w przypadku zastosowania metody kontrapunktu ewidentnej w 'The Waste Land', zawiera pierwiastki dramatyczne /chór/, które zostają wykorzystane w późniejszej twórczości dramaturgicznej.