

Portrayal of Life and Death: An Analytical Study of Tarik O'Regan's *Triptych*

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English composer Tarik Hamilton O'Regan (Figure 1.1) was born on January 1, 1978 in London. His name discloses three significant characteristics. In Arabic, the meaning for Tarik is “brightest star,” or “nocturnal visitor.” This given name reveals his mother’s culture; she is Algerian. O'Regan comes from his British father, whose family is Anglo-Irish. Hamilton refers to O'Regan’s famous great-great grandfather, William Rowan Hamilton, a renowned mathematician famous for his work in symplectic geometry.¹

¹ Tarik O'Regan, interview with author, December 17, 2012.



Figure 1.1 Tarik O'Regan. © Marion Ettlinger and used with permission.

O'Regan inherited his ancestor’s logical-mathematical intelligence, and an interest for patterns, their combinations and permutations. Such patterns are idiosyncratic to his compositional style of rhythmic layering and rhythmic complexity in vocal and instrumental parts. He is fixated on geometric abstraction and non-representational art, which he attributes to his early childhood spent in Morocco and Algeria. Figure 1.2 illustrates a typical Moroccan mosaïc. O'Regan talks about his awareness of visual mosaïcs: “I remember the tiles on the floor, tiles in the courtyards, tiles in all the rooms, even the tapestries.”² Similar to the artwork displayed in Figure 1.2, O'Regan methodically pieces his compositions together through musical “building blocks.”³ He organizes melodic/rhythmic patterns as he “hears it in his head. When I begin to forget ideas, I write them down.”⁴ O'Regan’s compositions are like “musical mosaïcs.”

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

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Figure 1.2 Typical Moroccan mosaic. © Picture taken in Fez. Used with permission.

Another inherited trait from his ancestors is O'Regan's understanding of languages. He mentioned that he constantly heard his parents fluctuate between languages—French, Arabic, and English⁵ while growing up in Algeria. He states, "Every sentence was a merging of those languages."⁶ O'Regan's inspiration for using multiple texts in his compositions comes from these linguistic influences, as well as "from a look at medieval European music, and how those composers and even the Renaissance composers would set multiple texts concurrently."⁷ O'Regan also implies that his selection of texts to set comes "from a mixture of all my background, being widely read, and interested in different religious, ethnic, and national traditions."⁸ His use of multiple texts can be seen in such compositions as *Triptych*, *Scattered Rhymes*, and *The Night's Untruth*.

O'Regan was educated at the Whitgift School, an independent prestigious all-boy's private institute with a strong music department, and

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Croydon's oldest school. The first experience that altered O'Regan, was when he was picked to play in the Whitgift School Dance Band, a prominent big band. O'Regan's involvement in the school's production of *West Side Story* was the other life-changing experience that motivated his desire to take his love for percussion more seriously. O'Regan shares: "I couldn't read music that well, and I remember a part of my learning was matching recordings of the score to the instrumental parts and seeing how they matched up."⁹ O'Regan states that by the end of his schooling, he started taking proper percussion lessons at the Royal College of Music, the Junior department.¹⁰ During his studies at the Royal College of Music, the orchestra director asked O'Regan to play in the symphony orchestra. This opportunity potentially shaped his interest in the world of composition. O'Regan states, "As a percussionist, you spend a lot of time watching the conductor work with everyone else. Eventually, I decided I wanted to ... start writing this stuff, instead of sitting there and playing it, so I asked around."¹¹

After graduating from Whitgift, O'Regan studied at Oxford University, Pembroke College. He sang in the choir from age eighteen to twenty-one. Steeped in a rich choral tradition, O'Regan found this experience to be pivotal since he didn't attend religious services as a child, because neither of his parents actively practiced religion. As he recalled his singing in the Pembroke College Choir, O'Regan shared that he wasn't a singer. "I sang bass very badly. In light of my singing, I remember various choral directors telling me, 'If you're going to write for the voice, even if you are not a singer, you should

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

sing.”¹² During O’Regan’s choral experience, he began to realize that writing for the voice was different than instrumental writing. He shared that he learned a valuable lesson about writing for voices. “Try and sing through what you are writing.”¹³

Separate from his academia at Cambridge, O’Regan held several jobs that proved to be influential learning experiences. He held the position of classical recordings reviewer for *The Observer* newspaper for four years, and worked for J.P. Morgan Chase, the investment bank. As O’Regan recalled his experiences at JPMorgan, some poignant perceptions surfaced. JPMorgan Chase was essentially a cultural melting pot of diversity: racially, religiously, ethnically, nationally, socially, and geographically. He pointed out that it was a largely male-dominated environment. At the time, there were no women working at JPMorgan. O’Regan clarifies that the broadness of cultural and social backgrounds have always been an influence on his writing.

O’Regan’s choral output breaks the mold of “easy listening” choral music through a sophisticated edginess as exemplified in his use of minimalistic techniques in variation and influences of rock and roll music.¹⁴ The innovative works of O’Regan are entering the spectrum of professional, educational, and community performing organizations across the United States and Europe. Due to his unprecedented success, O’Regan increased his output as a music commentator in print and on air, especially on BBC Radio 3 and BBC Radio 4.¹⁵ Print media and classical broadcasting stations frequently

interview him. With features in *British Music Magazine*, *The Times* (London), and on National Public Radio, British Broadcasting Corporation and BBC Radio, O’Regan’s musical voice has been described as having a “gritty freshness unlike that of anyone else.”¹⁶

A “Memory” of Music

“We have a built-in memory of music that is before our period.”¹⁷ During an interview with the author, O’Regan shared the following statement and went on to discuss how his aural experiences as a child impacted his seminal years. He shared that listening to his parents’ record collections during the early 80s provided him with a “social reference point” as he began to experience his own music. “The generation immediately before you is often a part of your reference growing up. My built-in memory is British Rock music from the 70s.”¹⁸ Today’s popular music resounds clearly in O’Regan’s choral works through rock-like motives. Reverb and resonance are decisive techniques used. O’Regan stated, “I see a direct parallel to rock music effects and what listeners in the Renaissance might have heard in giant cathedrals.”¹⁹ O’Regan’s musical and stylistic interests are inspired by numerous forces, British Rock music being one. Other forms that are prevalent in his writing style are: jazz, al-Andalusian music (North African influence), Renaissance music, English choral music, minimalism, art (specifically North African), and architecture.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Jeff Simon. Buffalo News, October 10, 2011.

¹⁵ <http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/long-bio/Tarik-O%27Regan> (last accessed on July 12, 2012).

¹⁶ Michael Church. “Rich Galleries of Sound by a Real Craftsman.” *The Independent*, April 26, 2007.

¹⁷ Tarik O’Regan, interview with author, December 17, 2012.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

TRIPTYCH

Genesis of Triptych

Within Western classical music, O'Regan is most inspired by music of both the Renaissance and the modern era. O'Regan acknowledges William Byrd, Guillaume de Machaut, Thomas Tallis, Orlando di Lasso, and Nicolas Gombert as the most influential Renaissance composers on his writing style. Minimalism also stimulates O'Regan's output. In *The Night's Untruth*, he explores the idea of rhythmic impetus through his utilization of canonic phasing, a technique that is common to the works of American minimalist composer Steve Reich. Reich helped pioneer and promote minimalist music in the 1960s along with La Monte Young, Terry Riley, and Philip Glass. As previously stated, rhythm is the catalyst that binds O'Regan's compositions together. He attributes "bringing rhythmic drive back as a focal point in composing"²⁰ to Reich and other minimalist composers. He states, "It's such a functional part of writing music ... especially in *The Night's Untruth*, *The Ecstasies Above*, and *Triptych*."²¹ O'Regan is fascinated by what he calls the "orchestration of voices."²² He shared, "I am interested in the full range of colors available to me because I'm an artist. I'm not painting my pictures only using primary colors. It's the impetus behind my choral compositions."²³ O'Regan did not grow up in the choral tradition. He states, "When I started writing music, I made a point of singing and was always amazed how homophonic everything was; I often remember that it was really hard to find my note."²⁴

Pierre Ruhe, classical music critic of www.ArtsCriticATL.com, asked O'Regan to describe his creative approach to *Triptych*. Scored for SATB chorus and string orchestra, *Triptych* is a reaction to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the desperate need for peace. Palestinians root the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in an apparently intractable dispute over land claimed by Jews as their biblical birthright. Despite repeated attempts to end the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians, there is no peace settlement in sight. Neither side has fulfilled the commitments to a phased timetable designed by the United States, European Union, Russia and the United Nations to lead to a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel.

In his composition *Triptych*, O'Regan selected the poetic fragments with a purpose to convey a personal belief in the inherent unity at the heart of all faiths and philosophies—PEACE. According to O'Regan, *Triptych* represents two different pieces that formed a bigger one. He completed the first movement, "Threnody," soon after he moved to New York from Oxford in 2004.²⁵ O'Regan felt the need to begin the creative process while he was still in awe of the dynamism of this vibrant American city, which was a dramatic contrast to the rather genteel British city of Oxford. *Triptych* is O'Regan's attempt to provide contrast to what he had observed to be a preponderance of slow

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Tarik O'Regan, at an office he maintains in Cambridge, England, in conversation with Pierre Ruhe, on March 22, 2011. <http://www.dancebloggers.com/2011/03/a-conversation-with-tarik-o%E2%80%99regan-on-his-stirring-%E2%80%99Ctriptych%E2%80%99D-in-a-free-emory-concert/> (last accessed on August 12, 2012).

contemporary choral music.”²⁶ O’Regan desires for his music to be successful in the reverberant acoustics that are common in British cathedrals and the Tudor cathedral music of Byrd and Tallis.”²⁷ O’Regan uses instruments and soaring harmonies in his desire to write upbeat music that is inspired by contemporary composers, in Britain, the States, and all over. For O’Regan, it seems composers tend to keep subdividing the bar into smaller and smaller fractions, but the harmonic motion tends to be slowing down in most contemporary music, especially choral music.”²⁸

Triptych is comprised of three movements, with texts coming from Jewish, Islamic and Christian writers. The common thread that connects the movements together is subject matter—death, the after-life, and visionary command. O’Regan’s text selection reveals a personal belief in the intrinsic unity at the heart of all faiths and philosophies. O’Regan wrote *Threnody*, the first movement, to fulfill a commission by The RVW [Ralph Vaughan Williams] Trust for the inaugural concert of the Choir of London. The first performance was a Country Première on 14th February 2004 by the Choir of London and the Orchestra of London, under the direction of Jeremy Summerly. Summerly went on to conduct the World Première performance of *Threnody* in Christ Church, Spitafields on 18th December 2004. He then programmed *Threnody* for a tour by the Choir of Jerusalem and the West Bank from 19th December to 26th December 2004.

²⁶ Tarik O’Regan, interview with author, December 17, 2012.

²⁷ Tarik O’Regan, at an office he maintains in Cambridge, England, in conversation with Pierre Ruhe, on March 22, 2011. <http://www.dancebloggers.com/2011/03/a-conversation-with-tarik-o%E2%80%99regan-on-his-stirring-%E2%80%99Triptych%E2%80%9D-in-a-free-emory-concert/> (last accessed on August 12, 2012).

²⁸ Ibid.

Movements II “As We Remember Them” and III “From Heaven Distilled a Clemency,” commissioned by Portsmouth Grammar School with financial support from the PRS Foundation, received their World Première as *And There Was a Great Calm* in an adjoining version for lower strings and upper voices by the Portsmouth Grammar School Chamber Choir and the London Mozart Players in a concert at Portsmouth Anglican Cathedral on 13th November 2005 conducted by Nicole Moldoveanu.²⁹ O’Regan wrote “As We Remember Them” and “From Heaven Distilled a Clemency” to commemorate those fallen in war. Portsmouth has a long association with the British Navy, which gives Remembrance Day special meaning. It was performed with the Fauré Requiem. Realizing that the Fauré had a rather slow aesthetic, O’Regan composed *Triptych* to be more vibrant, sometimes displaying a dance-like quality. During O’Regan’s research he found that many cultures don’t memorialize death in a slow manner. For example, an Irish wake utilizes a vibrant pulse and dance is incorporated during funerals in many cultures. O’Regan desired for his work to appeal to all those willing to think about the world beyond this world, so he didn’t write with any particular religious or secular angle in mind. A question that guided O’Regan’s compositional process was, “How do people get on with their lives beyond the initial sadness, and what happens to the lost loved ones?”³⁰

O’Regan mentioned that *Threnody* was commissioned with the desire to represent different regional influences and backgrounds, like the Bareboim-Said East-West Divan Orchestra. He decided to set texts from different cultural backgrounds, so it would have a more universal appeal. O’Regan also wanted it to

²⁹ Tarik O’Regan. *Triptych*. Chester: Novello & Co. Ltd., 2005. (General Notes)

³⁰ Ibid.

stimulate and rouse the interest of professional and amateur singers.³¹ He seems to enjoy that his music can be associated with the music of other cultures—*Threnody* perhaps displaying Arab or Asian qualities. O'Regan discovered an interest in al-Andalusian music from his early childhood experiences in Morocco and Algeria. Al-Andalusian music can be traced back to the eighth century through the 15th century in the southern Iberian realm called al-Andalus by the Arabs who lived and ruled there. It was one of the world's most influential musical cultures. Al-Andalusian has a peculiar fractal quality, where melodies are driven forward all the way through. O'Regan likens it to the rhythmic/motivic ideas that Janáček uses in his melodies. What appears to be the end of one line carries on and repeats and sometimes forms a repetitive pattern, which begins to merge with a new driving section.³²

On 9 March 2006 Jeremy Summerly conducted the world premiere of *Triptych* with the Choir of London and the Orchestra of London in St. John's, Smith Square,³³ a little over two years after he premiered *Threnody*.

O'Regan's earliest musical memories stem from the varying musical interests of his mother and father.³⁴ O'Regan's father was fascinated by jazz music from the era of Glenn Miller and other artists that recorded on the Blue Note label in the 1950s and 1960s, while his mother was interested in British rock bands *Led Zeppelin* and *The Who*,³⁵

groups which O'Regan says were a profound part of his musical heritage, specifically *Won't Get Fooled Again* (The Who). In the opening of *Won't Get Fooled Again*, O'Regan was enamored with the underlying repetitive rhythmic motives in the synthesizer, punctuated by the musical gesture of the guitar. These same musical elements from *The Who* are present in *Triptych*. Unlike his earlier compositions, O'Regan pays homage to his musical heritage, thinking more about the strong and influential musical memories from his childhood. During his interview with O'Regan, Ruhe suggests that the final movement of *Triptych*, *From Heaven Distilled a Clemency* has a distinctive dance quality to it, with a syncopated line. "There's almost a pop or rock energy and tunefulness." O'Regan confirmed Ruhe's insightfulness stating, "The music I'm drawn to and listen to a lot is '70s British rock, *The Stones*, *The Who*, *Led Zeppelin*. The bass line in *The Who* and *Led Zeppelin* were incredibly syncopated, even if the tune was quite simple. I'm attracted to that interplay."³⁶

O'Regan's introduction to the British choral tradition came later in life, because he began his musical journey as a percussionist. He shared, "Strangely enough, I learned Stravinsky, Bernstein, and Britten before I got into the English Tudor tradition of Byrd and Tallis, which I grew to love."³⁷ O'Regan was also drawn to the writing of Lassus and Gombert because of the sudden dissonances that often occur.

³¹ Tarik O'Regan, interview with author, December 17, 2012.

³² Ibid.

³³ Tarik O'Regan. <http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/performances/Tarik-O%27Regan/100/2> (last accessed on August 16, 2012).

³⁴ Tarik O'Regan, interview with author, December 17, 2012.

³⁵ The Who is an English rock band including Roger Daltrey, Pete Townsend, John Entwistle, and Keith Moon. The Who has been active periodically since 1964.

³⁶ Tarik O'Regan, at an office he maintains in Cambridge, England, in conversation with Pierre Ruhe, on March 22, 2011. <http://www.dancebloggers.com/2011/03/a-conversation-with-tarik-o%E2%80%99regan-on-his-stirring-%E2%80%99Triptych%E2%80%9D-in-a-free-emory-concert/> (last accessed on August 12, 2012).

³⁷ Ibid.

Musical Analysis of Triptych

The word *Triptych* refers to an altarpiece that has a central panel and two side panels that fold over the centerpiece. In his composition *Triptych*, Tarik O'Regan has produced a musical painting on the theme of mortality and immortality.

Triptych is fundamentally tonal but not based on traditional ideas of melodic themes and harmonic movement. There are some recurring structural and thematic features, including the use of imitative, often overlapping layers of melodic/rhythmic fragments (additive instrumentation in the strings, additive texture from monophony/homophony to polyphony in the voices, as well as

minimalist rhythms). Another salient feature is the increasing and decreasing density of textures, which range from clusters to wider voicings, dissonances, and unaltered chords or unisons. Ostinatos and pulsing, momentum-building rhythms (reminiscent of minimalist techniques) usually in the instrumental accompaniment; and moods of high energy contrasted with ethereal, meditative transparency are other innovative ideas O'Regan uses to make his music original. Combining these compositional techniques and other fresh influences from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, O'Regan is able to create engaging choral writing with texts that show concern for and ability to "get inside" the poetry. Table 1.1 illustrates the duration and instrumentation for *Triptych*.

Table 1.1 Duration and Instrumentation of *Triptych* by Tarik O'Regan

Duration

I.	<i>Threnody</i>	c. 5'
II.	<i>As We Remember Them</i>	c. 7'
III.	<i>From Heaven Distilled a Clemency</i>	c. 5'
TOTAL		c. 17'

Instrumentation

SATB Chorus:
Soprano solo

String Orchestra:

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

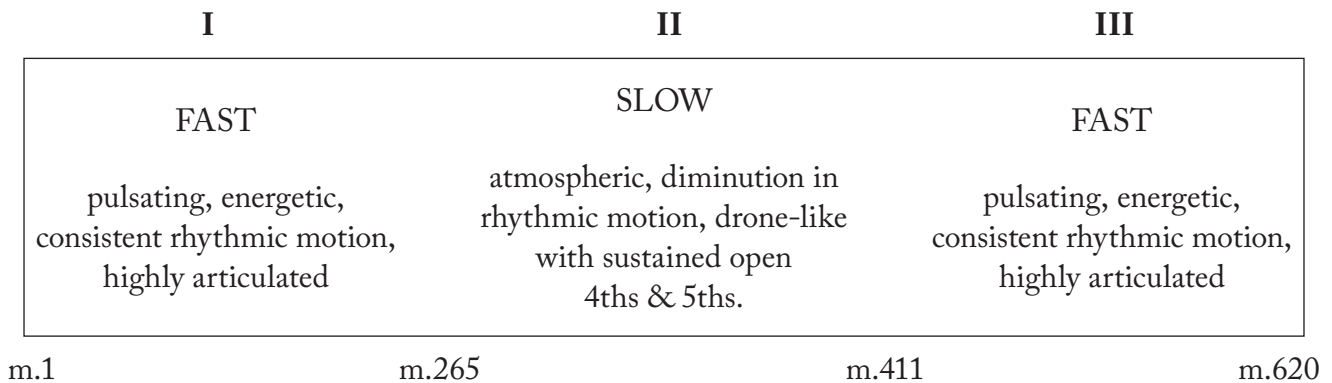
Contrabass

(minimum desks – 2.2.2.2.1)

Form

Triptych is a three-movement composition based on spiritual poem fragments selected by O'Regan, through the assistance of his parents, Bruce Ruben and Judith Clurman.³⁸ Scored for string orchestra, minimum of 2.2.2.2.1 and SATB chorus, his mastery of orchestration is in full effect. Figure 1.3 illustrates the

Figure 1.3 Tarik O'Regan, Italian form and textual description of *Triptych*.



overall organization of *Triptych* in a traditional fast-slow-fast [Italian] form, with the fast sections primarily featuring pulsating rhythms, and the slow movement (*As We Remember Them*) a melody over coalescing drones that open and close the movement, while the violin II, viola, and cello take turns doubling vocal lines. Figure 1.3 also shows O'Regan's abrupt transition from one movement to the next, and the distinction between tempi and textual ideas. Even though, movements I and III are similar in tempi and texture the rhythmic material is altered because of the change in meter (3/8 [mvt. I] to 4/4 [mvt. III]).

THRENODY

Threnody is a poem, or musical setting, expressing a strong feeling of grief for the dead.³⁹ It is a lament composed or performed as a memorial to a dead person. The term originates from the Greek word *thrēnōidia*, from *thrēnos* ("wailing") + *oide* ("ode"). In movement I of *Triptych: Threnody*, O'Regan incorporates poem fragments from William Penn, devout Quaker and founder of Pennsylvania, William Blake, an English poet, Psalm 133 from the Bible, and an Egyptian poet, Muhammad Rajab Al-Bayoumi. O'Regan was introduced to the writings of Muhammad Rajab Al-Bayoumi by

³⁸ Tarik O'Regan. *Triptych*. Novello & Co. Ltd., 2005. (Text)

³⁹ "Threnody." http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/27902?q=threnody&search=quic&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (last accessed on August 27, 2012).

his mother, who is Algerian. O'Regan shared, "she was always interested in English translations of Arab poets."⁴⁰ This composite poetic narrative and musical analysis shares incite into O'Regan's personal story on themes of life, death and the fundamental sameness of all humans beyond the outer form.

Text

*When death takes off the mask, [we] will know
one another,
though diverse liveries [we] wear here make
[us] strangers.*

William Penn (1644–1718), from
'Some Fruits of Solitude In Reflections
and Maxims' (1682)⁴¹

William Penn's poem fragment refers to death as the one who takes off the mask of our earthly identities that separate us from truly knowing one another; then stripped of all the trappings of prestige or poverty, we recognize who we are—children of a loving God. Societies are divided into different classes—those who have and those who have not. In some societies classes of people are divided into major classes and their subdivisions. However, in the city of the dead, there are no more distinctions, for all persons discover that they are one with each other—no longer strangers.

⁴⁰ Tarik O'Regan, at an office he maintains in Cambridge, England, in conversation with Pierre Ruhe, on March 22, 2011. <http://www.dancebloggers.com/2011/03/a-conversation-with-tarik-%E2%80%99regan-on-his-stirring-%E2%80%99Ctriptych%E2%80%99D-in-a-free-emory-concert/> (last accessed on August 12, 2012).

⁴¹ Tarik O'Regan. *Triptych*. Novello & Co. Ltd., 2005. (Text)

O'Regan sets this music in F-Dorian with textual overlapping in the vocal parts. After reflecting on the significance of Penn's text and the other fragments that are set in this composition, passing the text from one vocal line to another could be O'Regan's musical representation of the equality of all mankind and the acknowledgment that all of us have differing messages and beliefs.

*Tremblest thou when my face appears
To thee? Wherefore thy dreadful fears?
Be easy, friend; 'tis thy truest gain
To be far away from the sons of men.
I offer a couch to give thee ease:
Shall dreamless slumber so much displease?*

Muhammad Rajab Al-Bayoumi (dates unknown), from 'Death Speaks', translated by Arthur J. Arberry (1950)⁴²

In the second passage from Muslim poet Muhammad Rajab Al-Bayoumi, death addresses the fearful soul that dreads death's sting. At the beginning of this poem, Death asks two questions of the dying: Why do you tremble in fear when faced by death? Why are you filled with fear? Death then proceeds to assuage the grief of the dying with two pleasant sides of one's demise: It will be a blessing to be on retreat from the clamor of the human race; Death will provide the deceased with a comfortable cushion to rest his weary bones. Death states that the gift of "dreamless slumber" is the "truest gain." Then Death concludes with this question: Shall dreamless sleep bring so much displeasure? O'Regan saturates this section of text with rhythmic layering and complexity in the instrumental and vocal lines at a *Prestissimo* tempo. The sonorous F-pedal tone throughout this movement might represent eternity, and

⁴² Ibid.

O'Regan's first portrayal of life and death through this resonant pitch.

*To see a World in a Grain of Sand,
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
And Eternity in an hour.*

William Blake (1757–1827), from
'Auguries of Innocence' (1808)⁴³

In the third passage the mystic poet of nineteenth-century England, William Blake, compares this world to a grain of sand and heaven to a wild flower both of which can be held in the palm of someone's hand. To hold these small objects in the hand is the same as holding infinity, for each of these parts of nature represents the incalculability of the grains of sand and the myriad fields of wild flowers. Each person represents all humanity. In one hour the

⁴³ Ibid.

totality of nature, humanity, and all creation with the infinite vastness of galaxies far-flung across the universe embrace infinite eternity in a fleeting span of time. The duet between the violins and the soprano and alto line following the Al-Bayoumi text: "Shall dreamless slumber so much displease?" creates an atmospheric and celestial answer. As the violin I creates a "blank canvas" for new material on a pulsating sixteenth-note C-pedal tone, the violin II begins the instrumental answer to Al-Bayoumi's question that is passed back and forth between the violin parts. The soprano and alto then join in the reply with otherworldly "ahs." Examples 1.1 and 1.2 illustrate the instrumental answer to Al-Bayoumi's final question. This recurring eight-bar phrase that opens the polyphonic section at measure 82, continues through measure 139, outlining a reduced F-Major¹¹ chord found in the violin I and II parts.

*Behold how good and how pleasant it is
for [people] to dwell together in unity.*

Example 1.1 Tarik O'Regan, *Triptych*, Movement I (*Ibrenody*), p. 4, measures 82–88.



Example 1.2 Reduced F-Major¹¹ chord articulated between violin I and II parts in measures 82–139.



Psalm 133, from the Bible
(King James Version, 1611)⁴⁴

The last writing of “Threnody” quotes the first verse of Psalm 133 that celebrates the unity of humanity. It describes the joy of living together without division and welcomes our inherent sameness outside superficial differences and releases us from the fear of death. In this psalm, the writer compares this unity to the oil of ordination flowing down the head and beard of Aaron the priest and the dew of Mount Hermon flowing down upon the hills of Zion. The psalm

concludes with this passage that completes this song of lamentation:

For there the LORD has commanded the blessing:
life forevermore.

O’Regan celebrates this final section of text by harkening back to his setting for the Al-Bayoumi text with a celebratory and jubilant musical palette. Even though the overarching theme is death, O’Regan’s representation within *Tryptych* is a musical story of promise and embracing the afterlife. Table 1.2 illustrates the analysis and form of movement I, *Threnody*.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Table 1.2 Analysis and Form of Movement I, *Threnody*.

Measures	Section	Tonal Center
1–10	Introduction	F-Dorian
11–79	A	F-Mixolydian
80–149	B	F-Lydian/F-Dorian
150–187	Introduction ¹	F-Dorian
188–231	A ¹	F-Mixolydian
232–260	Coda	F-Mixolydian

Structure

Threnody is constructed through an embellished ternary form. Table 1.3 outlines the seven major sections with subsections, including measure numbers and text that corresponds.

(Table 1.3 on next page.)

Table 1.3 Structure—*Threnody*

Measures	Section	Text
1–10	Introduction	"When death takes off the mask..." —Penn
11–79	A	
11–24	A Intro	Instrumental
25–72	A Theme	"Tremblest thou..." —Al-Bayoumi
73–79	A Coda	Instrumental
80–149	B	
80–106	B Intro	"Ah's"
107–149	B Theme	"To see a World in a Grain..." —Blake
149–187	Introduction1	"When death takes off the mask..." —Penn
188–231	A1	
188–199	A Intro ¹	Instrumental
200–231	A ¹ ; same as B, mm. 25–29	"Tremblest thou..." —Al-Bayoumi
232–260	Coda	
232–247	B ¹ ; Theme from mm. 88–91	"Ah's"
248–260	Coda Theme	"Behold, how good..." —Psalm 133

Texture

Introduction

O'Regan's dramatic opening to *Threnody* (about death and eternity) with the Introduction (measures 1–10), at a *Maestoso* tempo, draws the listener's attention to his aural image of "wailing." His setting of the poetic fragment from Penn's 'Some Fruits of Solitude In Reflections and Maxims' for a *capella* voices demonstrates textual overlapping as the sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses take turns completing the text, with an

accented *forte* entrance. A compelling observation (through the author's analysis) is O'Regan's setting of the vocal lines. He introduces the text in a descending fashion through the parts, until the bass entrance on the text "one another", where the completion of the Penn fragment changes direction and ascends. This textual overlapping could be thought of as an altered form of homophony. Example 1.3 illustrates the textural overlapping found in the opening measures of *Triptych*.

(Example 1.3 on next page.)

Example 1.3 Tarik O'Regan, *Triptych*, Movement I (*Ithrenody*), p. 1, pickup to measures 1–9.

The image shows a page of a musical score for 'Triptych' by Tarik O'Regan. The title 'TRIPTYCH' is centered at the top, with 'Cantata for String Orchestra and Chorus' below it. The movement is 'I Ithrenody'. The tempo is 'Maestoso' with a metronome marking of 52. The score includes vocal parts for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass, and string parts for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabasso. The vocal parts have lyrics: Soprano: 'When death, we will, di - verse, make us'; Alto: 'When death takes off, we will know one, di - verse li - ve - ries, make us'; Tenor: 'When, the mask, a - no - ther, di - verse, we wear here, make us'; Bass: 'One a - no - ther, though, make us'. The string parts are mostly silent, with some dynamics like 'p' and 'div.' indicated.

The aural effect is quite profound. O'Regan's ability to put vocal lines in a form of stasis as he passes the text to other lines increases the impetus of text. In some cases, O'Regan uses accents to articulate the passing of text among the vocal parts. Using these techniques, he is able to emphasize the melody through all ranges until the intense declamation of "strangers" on the (Fmin⁹/G) chord illustrated in Example 1.4.

The image shows two versions of a chord in G minor. The 'orchestrated' version is a 9th chord (Fmin⁹/G) with notes G2, Bb2, D3, F3, Ab3, Bb3, and G4. The 'reduced' version is a triad with notes G2, Bb2, and D3. The notation is in G minor (one flat) and 4/4 time.

Example 1.4 "Strangers" chord = Fmin⁹/G chord, p. 1, measure 10, and recurs p. 8, measure 184.

The texture begins to shift in measure 9, when the upper strings enter, almost inaudibly, then surge to a *molto ff* within three beats to enhance the tension created on the word "strangers." At Rehearsal A, O'Regan dramatically moves from F-Dorian to F-Mixolydian, at a *Prestissimo* tempo (the beginning of the A section) in measure 11, and changes the pulse and meter to an energetic, highly articulated, "rock-like" sound found in the violoncello part. The open 5th can be considered the first musical motive heard throughout the movement, particularly in the string texture of the violoncello and contra bass. The cello part's four measure accented and detached 16th note pattern is a repeated rhythmic cell [ABCB], inspired by Al-Andalusian music from North Africa, whose accent markings divide the rhythms into duple or triple. Example 1.5 illustrates the [ABCB] rhythmic cell, one of the rhythmic motives that occur in the cello part throughout the movement.

Example 1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF NEIGHBORS—Accents denotes a rhythmic motive (first instance measures 13–16); occurs throughout movement. [A, B, C, B]

The image shows a musical score for Violoncello, measures 13 through 16. The music is in 9/8 time with a key signature of two flats. The score consists of two staves. The upper staff begins with a 'div.' (divisi) marking and contains a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents. The lower staff plays a complementary bass line. The dynamic marking is *p* (piano).

It is through this melodic/rhythmic motive and others that occurs in the viola and contrabass, that O'Regan explores minimalism with the use of repeated canonic material. This accented pattern is only broken in the violins when handling melodic material. At measure 24, the violas join the cellos in a two measure repeated *ostinato* that is compatible with the violoncello motive while the contra bass part plays a *pizzicato* F-C motive in longer 8ths and dotted quarter notes. Rhythmic

layering occurs through the doubling or echoing of motivic lines either through continuous double lines (measures 25–28, in the violin II part), or the sharing of the melodic line through scaffolding of instrumental lines (displaying melodic material between two or more instrumental parts), and alternating accents between the strings (e.g. measures 29–32, in the violin II part). Example 1.6 illustrates these melodic characteristics.

Example 1.6 Tarik O' Regan, *Triptych*, Movement I (*Threnody*), p. 2, measures 23–32, (recurs at measures 200–207).

The image shows a page of a musical score for measures 23 through 32. It includes vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and instrumental parts (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, Contrabass). The vocal parts have the lyrics: "Trem-blest thou... when my face ap-pears... to thee?". The instrumental parts feature complex rhythmic patterns, including a 'div.' marking in the Viola part and 'uris' markings in the Violin parts. Dynamics range from *mp* to *mf*.

In *Threnody*, O'Regan explores his interest in orchestration by having the contrabass articulate the F-pedal tone while the violins double the vocal line with scaffolding, accented 16th note figures. Towards the closing of vocal lines, the violin's role changes to echoing the vocal lines with accented 16th note figures.

A Section

The A section begins at measures 11–79 with a *Prestissimo* tempo (marked by the entrance of the cello). O'Regan uses additive instrumentation from the lowest to highest strings, spanning the range of an octave and a half, to create texture and forward momentum. The parts arc from low to high in large leaps in the antecedent phrase, and from high to low in the subsequent (measures 25–38). The first antecedent phrase ends with a *hemiola* in measures 29 through 30. The voices in this section behave in a conductus-like style (all voices moving in homophony at the same rhythmic rate; syllabically), typical of the 14th century and used for economic declamation of large amounts of text and also for aural clarity throughout important textual moments. Within these passages, O'Regan explores his creativity by doubling the alto line in the violin II part in measures 25–28. In addition, he echoes the soprano line (measures 25–28) between the violin I and violin II parts (measures 29–32 [“tremblest thou” theme], underneath voices [“to thee”] in alternation), delineated with use of accents to discern which instrument has the material. The “tremblest thou” theme recurs in measures 46–48.⁴⁵ (see Example 1.6).

At measure 72, O'Regan indicates a transition between the homophonic and polyphonic sections with an ascending gesture that begins in the

contrabass and is passed on to the violoncello. The upper strings are layered over the top either doubling the material introduced or propelling the music forward with repeated Cs. From the beginning of the composition to this point, O'Regan has used additive instrumentation to create his expression; however, during this transition, he introduces a diminution of strings. Example 1.7 shows the thinning out of texture in the strings from low to high, until the violin II sustains a high C while the violin I repeats articulated, detached 8th notes on a high C.

(Example 1.7 on next page.)

⁴⁵ Tarik O'Regan. *Tryptich*. Novello & Co. Ltd., 2005, 3.

Example 1.7 Tarik O'Regan, *Triptych, Movement I (Threnody)*, p. 4, measures 70–79.

B Section

The B section includes measures 80–149 and contains the second main section of text; an awe inspired setting that breathes a sense of wonder. The first rhythmic melodic material of the B section is the violin duet that occurs in measures 80 through 139. At measure 88, O'Regan displays heaven through ethereal “ahs” that begin the theme subject in the sopranos and is answered down a 5th in the alti (measure 91) respectively. O'Regan then cleverly produces a hybrid answer of the alto and soprano lines for the tenor entrance, before introducing the bass part on the text, “And infinity in the palm of your hand, And eternity in an hour”⁴⁶ at measure 122. O'Regan characterizes this compositional idea as “blocks of sound”.⁴⁷ Example 1.8 illustrates the first rhythmic melodic material of the B section that occurs in measures 80 through 139 of the violins, and O'Regan's representation of “Infinity” and “Eternity” with the ethereal

“ahs” introduced first in the soprano and alto voices and how the thematic motives overlap and circle around each other with a non-traditional chain of falling suspensions.

(Example 1.8 on next page.)

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 6 – 7, measures 131–147.

⁴⁷ Tarik O'Regan, interview with author, December 17, 2012.

Example 1.8 Tarik O'Regan, *Triptych*, Movement I (*Threnody*), p. 5, measures 92–121.

Musical score for measures 92–121 of 'Threnody'. The score is for a vocal quartet (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a string ensemble (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, Contrabass). The vocal parts feature melodic lines with 'ah' vocalizations. The instrumental parts include a dense texture of sixteenth-note patterns in the Violin I and II parts, and sustained chords in the Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass parts. Dynamics include *pp* and *arco*.



Musical score for measures 102–121 of 'Threnody'. The score is for a vocal quartet (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a string ensemble (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, Contrabass). The vocal parts feature melodic lines with lyrics. The instrumental parts include a dense texture of sixteenth-note patterns in the Violin I and II parts, and sustained chords in the Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass parts. Dynamics include *mf* and *rit*.

E

To see a World in a Grain of Sand, hea - ven in a

And a hea - ven in a

In traditional falling chained suspensions, the suspended voice sounds the same note from consonance to dissonance, before falling to a consonant resolution on the following beat. The rhythmic quality found in measures 107–140, seems to deny a sense of meter by introducing text on weak pulses (almost like cross-rhythms [simultaneous use of two or more conflicting rhythms]) and having the II parts in each vocal line change pitches on weak beats with “ahs” entering consistently on downbeats.

Figures 1.4 and 1.5 indicate thematic material that first begins in the soprano line (measure 108) and is answered by all voices on different text. At measure 116, the alto I part takes over the diatonic material, while the second part begins the sequential material transposed down a 7th. The tenor parts open with the material at measure 124. The sequential material is down a 4th. Finally at measure 132, the bass line has the descending diatonic and sequential material. O’Regan introduces the sequential material in the bass II part down a 3rd.

Figure 1.4. Descending diatonic motive of SI part, occurs in AI, TI, and BI parts (on different starting pitches and text).



Figure 1.5. Descending sequential motive of SII part, occurs in AII, TII, and BII parts (on different starting pitches and text).



In measures 149–187, O’Regan develops the Introduction¹ material through elongation. Two notable differences take place in this section; the text is extended over 40 measures instead of

12, and the rhythmic canonic material shown in Example 1.5 is an alteration to the material found in Example 1.9.

Example 1.9. SIGNIFICANCE OF NEIGHBORS—Accents denote a rhythmic motive (first instance measures 152–155, continues till measure 211), alteration of Example 1.5. [C, B, A, B]



The varying combinations of all of these motives, through static pedal tone harmony, create lush polyphonic, polyrhythmic textures throughout *Threnody*. The movement concludes at the *Prestissimo* tempo that was first introduced at measure 13. A poignant compositional device that O'Regan uses to end this movement and abruptly transition to the second is found in measures 263–264. On the text “together in

unity”, O'Regan has the soprano and bass, alto and tenor lines doubling at the octave with accents. In addition, he has the violin I sharing the same material as the soprano and bass lines on 16th notes with accents and the violin II part sharing the same material as the altos and tenors to create more strength in this statement of “unity.” Example 1.10 illustrates O'Regan's compositional declamation of “unity”.

Example 1.10 Tarik O'Regan, *Triptych*, Movement I (*Threnody*), p. 11, measures 261–264.⁴⁸

The musical score for measures 261–264 of *Threnody* is presented in a multi-staff format. The vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) are in 3/8 time and feature the lyrics "peo - ple to dwell to - ge - ther in u - ni - ty." The instrumental parts (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, Contrabass) are in 3/8 time and feature a polyphonic texture with accents. The score is marked with *ff* (fortissimo) and includes a *div.* (divisi) section for the violins in measure 264, with a *pp subito* (pianissimo subito) marking.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 11, measures 263–264.

As We Remember Them

Threnody seamlessly gives way to *As We Remember Them*, which depicts remembrance and hope. *As We Remember Them* incorporates short poems from Rabbi Roland B. Gittlesohn, Jewish poet, and John Milton, a renowned English poet.

Text

*In the rising of the sun and its going down, we
remember them.*

*In the glowing of the wind and in the chill of
winter, we remember them.*

*In the opening buds and in the rebirth of
spring, we remember them.*

*In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of
summer, we remember them.*

*In the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty
of autumn, we remember them.*

*When [we're] weary and in need of strength,
we remember them.*

*When [we're] lost and sick at heart, we
remember them.*

*So long as we live, they too shall live, for they
are part of us,
As we remember them.*

Roland B. Gittlesohn (1910–1995) [adapted],
from 'The Gates of Repentance' (1978)⁴⁹

O'Regan opens the second part of *Triptych* with a soprano solo as the upper voices sing an incantation on the text "we remember them". Gittlesohn's text is a litany of natural phenomena, such as the rising and setting of the sun, the blueness of the sky and the warmth of summer. These natural marvels evoke fond memories of

⁴⁹ Tarik O'Regan. *Triptych*. Novello & Co. Ltd., 2005. (Text)

departed loved ones. Moreover, in the last four lines of this poem, the author shifts the litany from the natural world, where we remember those who have died, to the human condition in which we find ourselves weary and lost when "we remember them." In our remembering the dead, they live in our hearts.

The second passage of *As We Remember Them*, is a two-line quotation from John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book III:

*And the Heav'nly Quire stood mute,
And silence was in Heav'n.*

John Milton (1608–1674), from
Paradise Lost, Book III (1667)⁵⁰

The context of this quotation is the Fall of Humankind when Adam and Eve eat of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. Before this transgression, these first two human beings were to have lived on earth forevermore. However, as a result of their sin, the heavenly beings enter a time of pregnant pause in their eternal praises of God. Deep silence is the language of mystics; likewise, silence speaks volumes during times of great loss.

The only piece of musical material connecting the Gittlesohn and Milton fragments is a *subito pp* on open 5th in the violin II part. Table 1.4 illustrates the analysis and form of movement II, *As We Remember Them*.

(Table 1.4 on next page.)

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Table. 1.4 Analysis and Form of Movement II, *As We Remember Them*.

Measures	Section	Tonal Center
1–33	A Introduction	F-Mixolydian
34–62	B	F-Mixolydian
62–101	B ¹	F-Mixolydian/F-Dorian
102–142	A Coda ¹	F-Mixolydian

Structure

Overall, *As We Remember Them* is a large ternary form. The A Introduction and A¹ Coda are structured similarly through the use of open 4th and 5th drones in the strings, including the violin II solo that first appears in measures 28–34 and is recalled in measures 132–137. The first repetition

of the vocal lines found in the soprano solo and women's voices in measures 34–41 is considered strophic because it introduces material that is then repeated in variations throughout the other parts, specifically the call and response between the upper voices and lower voices in measures 77–90. Example 1.11 illustrates this compositional technique.

(Example 1.11 on next page.)

Example 1.11 Tarik O'Regan, *Triptych*, Movement II (*As We Remember Them*), p. 15, measures 77-90.

The musical score for Example 1.11, measures 77-90, is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 77-83) features vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and instrumental parts (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, Double Bass). The lyrics are: "When we're wea-ry and in need of strength, we re-mem-ber them... When, when we're wea-ry and in need of strength, we re-mem-ber them... them... We re-mem-ber them... We re-mem-ber them...". The second system (measures 84-90) begins with a rehearsal mark 'M' at measure 84. The lyrics continue: "When we're lost and sick at heart, we re-mem-ber them... So... When, when we're lost and sick at heart, we re-mem-ber them... So... We re-mem-ber them... We re-mem-ber them... So...". The score includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *mp*, *pp*, *mf*, and *f*.

Table 1.5 outlines the overall structure through measure numbers and the corresponding text.

(Table 1.5 on next page.)

Table 1.5 Structure—*As We Remember Them*

Measures	Section	Text
1–33	A Introduction	Instrumental
28–33	B Theme Introduced—Violin II	
34–62	B	
34–42		"In the rising of the sun..." —Gittlesohn
42–50		"In the blowing of the wind..."
50–54		"In the opening buds..."
55–62		"In the blueness of the sky..."
62–101	B1	"In the rustling of the leaves..."
62–76		"In the rising...in the rustling..."
77–83		"When [we're] weary and in need..."
84–90		"When [we're] lost and sick at heart..."
90–97		"So long as we live, they too shall live..."
97–101		Instrumental
102–142	A1 Coda	
102–137	mm. 104–137, same as mm. 1–33	Instrumental
138–142	B ²	"And the Heav'nly Quire..." —Milton

Texture

As We Remember Them begins in stark contrast to the electric first and third movements. *As We Remember Them* retains a slow, solemn atmospheric mood at a *Moderato* tempo. The opening texture highlights the strings in 33 measures of sustained sonorities with an open 5th drone of [F, C] in the violins. The viola and violoncello sustain an F-pedal tone for the duration, while the contra bass solidifies the texture in measure 13 and 24 respectively. These sustained sonorities create an ethereal texture. A brief harmony enters and leaves, then a new harmony enters and moves into dissonance. Example 1.12 illustrates the ethereal melody that

merges into the “white noise”⁵¹ of this movement at 1:26.⁵² This motive recurs throughout the entirety of *As We Remember Them* with slight alterations in ornamentation in the soprano solo. The B section texture is sparse, featuring the soprano soloist in relief against the violin I sustaining an F-pedal with a B^b harmonic. After the opening motive is introduced vocally as an echo of the instrumental solo, O’Regan alternates the chant of remembering with the soprano and alto lines thoroughly embellishing “we remember them.”

⁵¹ Tarik O’Regan, interview with author, December 17, 2012. During the interview, O’Regan shared his fascination with the “white noise” of the city.

⁵² Johnson, Craig Hella. *Threshold of Night* (CD). Track 9. Harmonia Mundi, HMU 807490, 2006.

Example 1.12. Tarik O'Regan, *Triptych*, Movement II (*As We Remember Them*), B Theme introduced through Violin II solo, p. 12, measures 28–34.

Violin II

28 solo

p *pp*

Another salient feature within this movement is O'Regan's reversal of roles in instrumentation from *Threnody*. In measures 38–42, 46–50, and

54–58, the viola doubles the soprano line, while the cello doubles the alto. Example 1.13 reveals the role reversal for strings in instrumentation.

Example 1.13 Tarik O'Regan, *Triptych*, Movement II (*As We Remember Them*), p. 13, measures 38–42.

(solo) *p*

In the ris-ing of the sun and at its go-ing down, In the blow-ing of the

p we ré - mem - ber them.

p we re - mem - ber them.

unis. (♩)

ppp *pp sempre*

tutti unis. (♩)

ppp *pp sempre*

p

p

p

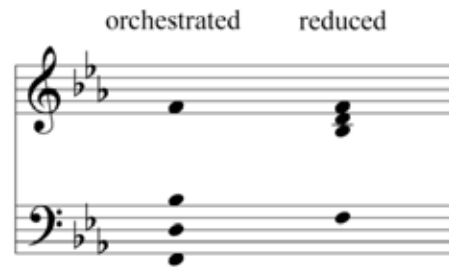
At the end of the B section, O'Regan creates a thicker texture by introducing the tenor and bass lines with the same melodic motive as the strings. In measures 60–65, a sense of instability is created with the embellishment of G^b and G[♯]. By measure 63, the melody shifts from the sopranos and altos, to the tenors and basses with the viola and violoncello doubling their unison line. On the words “rising of the sun”⁵³ and “and

⁵³ Tarik O'Regan. *Triptych. Movement II (As We Remember Them)*, p. 14, measures 63–64. Novello & Co. Ltd., 2005.

at it's going down”,⁵⁴ O'Regan expresses his sensitivity to the poetry by shaping the contour of the vocal and instrumental lines to match the text. Example 1.14 indicates the “PEACE” chord (term designated by the author) to depict a departure from harmonic instability to a sense of release.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14, measures 65–66.

Example 1.14. “PEACE” chord (B^b major in 2nd inversion) at downbeat of rehearsal L, p. 14, measure 66.



From measures 77–89, O'Regan develops the soprano solo material found in measures 34–38, having the soprano voices on the melodic motive and the altos echoing a fragment of the melodic material, while the tenor and bass lines embellish “we remember them.” *As We Remember Them* reaches its most passionate and dynamic climax on the text, “So long as we live, they too shall live, for they are part of us, As we

remember them.”⁵⁵ Example 1.15 illustrates this climactic moment.

(Example 1.15 on next page.)

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15–16, measures 89–97.

Example 1.15 Tarik O'Regan, *Triptych*, Movement II (*As We Remember Them*), p. 15–16, measures 90–97.

N

90

S. *f* *ff*
So long as we live, they too shall live, for

A. *f* *ff*
So long as we live, they too shall live, for

T. *f* *ff*
So long as we live,

B. *f* *ff*
So long as we live,

Vln. I *f* *ff*

Vln. II *f* *ff*

Vla. *f* *ff*

Vc. *f* *ff*

Cb. *mf* *f* *ff*

94

S. *ff*
 they are part of — us, As we re - mem - ber them.

A. *ff*
 they are part of — us, As we re - mem - ber them.

T. *ff*
 they too shall live, As we re - mem - ber them.

B. *ff*
 they too shall live, As we re - mem - ber them.

Vln. I *ff* *p subito*

Vln. II *ff* *p subito*

Vla. *ff* *p subito*

Vc. *ff* *p subito*

Db. *ff* *p subito*

In the context of this musical moment, the soprano and alto lines are doubled by the violin I and II parts on steady quarter notes, while the tenors and basses elongate the text, solidifying the imagery of eternity.

Following this impassioned, compelling expression of remembrance, O'Regan thoughtfully transitions from the string-voice texture back to the atmospheric open 4^{ths} and 5^{ths} of the strings that opened the movement. Before the solo voice intones the final phrase, "And the Heav'nly Quire stood mute, and silence was in Heav'n",⁵⁶ the violin II reintroduces the ethereal melody first heard at 1:26, before fading into nothingness.⁵⁷

From Heaven Distilled a Clemency

From Heaven Distilled a Clemency incorporates pieces from Hindu poet Bundahis-Bahman Yast (Pahlavi texts), the *Masnavi* of Sufi poet Jalal al-Din Rumi (a massive poem of some 25,000 rhyming couplets divided into six books),⁵⁸ and short poems from renowned English poets, William Wordsworth and Thomas Hardy. These four brief passages of poetry and sacred verse explore the merciful aspect of death.

Text

*Each shall arise in the place where their life
[spirit] departs.*

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 17, measures 138–end.

⁵⁷ Johnson, Craig Hella. *Threshold of Night* (CD). Track 9. Harmonia Mundi, HMU 807490, 2006.

⁵⁸ http://www.rumi.org.uk/tales_intro.htm (last accessed on August 16, 2012).

'Bundahis-Bahman Yast'; Indian Bundahishn (ninth century) [adapted], from 'Sacred Books of the East', Volume 5, translated by Edward W. West (1860)⁵⁹

*[So] Why then should I be afraid? I shall die once
again to rise an angel blest.*

'Masnavi i Ma 'navi'; Mathwani of Jalalu-'d'Din Rumi (thirteenth century) [adapted], from 'Masnavi i Ma 'navi', Book III, translated by Edward H. Whinfield (1898)⁶⁰

*Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar.*

William Wordsworth (1770–1850), from 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' (1807)⁶¹

In each of these passages, the authors speak of immortality as a rising of the soul at the end of life's journey; in other words, reincarnation, where immortality is achieved through the raising of consciousness in the progression of each life's spiritual journey. In the last quotation from Thomas Hardy, we hear his poetic reflection on the signing of the armistice that ended the First World War:

⁵⁹ Tarik O'Regan. *Triptych*. Chester: Novello & Co. Ltd., 2005. (Text)

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

*Calm fell. From heaven distilled a clemency;
There was peace on earth, and silence in the sky.*

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928), from ‘And There Was a Great Calm’—on the signing of the Armistice, (1918)⁶²

In these closing verses of *Triptych*, we find a recapitulation of the themes present in all three sections of this composition. A peaceful stillness descends to earth from heaven—a gift of mercy and forgiveness. A profound silence attends the heavenly places; just as in the Milton quotation in the middle section of *Triptych* when “the Heav’nly Quire stood mute” at the Fall of Humanity into the cycle of life and death. In the phrase “From heaven distilled a clemency,” the word “distilled” calls to mind the process of droplets being transformed into the liquid essence of a substance; in this case, the essence is of “clemency,” or divine mercy.

Triptych ends on a note of hope for seasons of sorrow, whether for humanity as a whole, or a loved one in particular. This composition celebrates the insight of the ages, imparting the wisdom that there is more to this life than the passing of years followed by endless death. Instead, there emerges new life out of death. In the funeral ceremony of Christian churches, there is the phrase “In the midst of life we are in death.” In every moment of life there is a process of dying that takes place, so that one can make spiritual progress on a journey that leads to ultimate transformation.

O’Regan opens the final movement of *Triptych*, *From Heaven Distilled a Clemency*, on the F-pedal tone that concludes *As We Remember Them* under

⁶² Ibid.

the driving canonic material shown in Example 1.16. This pulsating, energetic rhythmic motive continues through measure 30⁶³ and reoccurs in measures 136–164⁶⁴ at the same *Prestissimo* tempo that opens the movement. The difference between the material shown in Example 1.16 and the rhythmic pattern that opens the *Prestissimo* section in movement I illustrated in Example 1.5 is O’Regan’s revoicing of the line from a double stop on the violoncello to a divided line between violas and cellos. This is the basic textual building block of *From Heaven Distilled a Clemency*, and modeled after *Threnody*. The cellos and violas use the same pitches and rhythmic pattern found in measures 13 onward from *Threnody* at the introduction of this movement. The rhythm is modified slightly to fit the new time signature (4/4), from the 3/8 in movement I. When the voices enter at measure 9, they rise above the heavily articulated and detached 8th note texture of the strings in contrasting homophonic whole and half note values.

Table 1.6 illustrates the analysis and form of movement III, *From Heaven Distilled a Clemency*.

(Example 1.16 and Table 1.6 on next page.)

⁶³ Tarik O’Regan. *Triptych*. Movement III (*From Heaven Distilled a Clemency*), p. 20. Chester: Novello & Co. Ltd., 2005.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 25–27.

Example 1.16 Tarik O'Regan, *Triptych*, Movement III (*From Heaven Distilled a Clemency*), p. 18, measures 1–2.

Table 1.6 Analysis and Form of Movement III, *From Heaven Distilled a Clemency*.

Measures	Section	Tonal Center
1–39	Intro. /A	F-Mixolydian
40–61	B	D-Mixolydian
62–85	C	G-Lydian
86–105	B ¹	D-Mixolydian
106–174	D/A ¹	F-Mixolydian
175–209	B ² /Coda	D-Mixolydian

Structure

Introduction—ABCB¹DA¹B¹—Coda. The form indicated here is the composite for *From Heaven Distilled a Clemency*, which is a hybrid of ternary and rondo form. The ternary portion is present in the beginning and ending of the movement with the AB sections. The CB¹D sections are considered the middle section of the ternary form. The author makes a declamation later in this chapter on the significance of “three” based on the returning element of the B section, which

creates an idea of rondo form. The final structural note to be examined is present in the D section, where O'Regan reuses material from the second movement, without the augmented theme of the violin II solo, and inserts it before the return to the music found in the AB section. Table 1.7 provides a framework of the structural material that makes up movement III with measure numbers and related text.

(Table 1.7 on next page.)

Table 1.7 Structure—*From Heaven Distilled a Clemency*

Measures	Section	Text
1–8	Introduction	Instrumental
9–39	A	"Each shall arise..." —Bahman
35–39	Transition—based on Mvt. 1, [mm. 72–77]	Instrumental
40–61	B	"[So] Why then should I be afraid?" —Rumi
62–85	C	"Our birth is but a..." —Wordsworth
86–105	B1—same as mm. 40–55	"[So] Why then should I be afraid?" —Rumi
102–105	Transition—based on Mvt. 1, [mm. 72–77]	Instrumental
106–135	D	
106–122	Same as Mvt. II, [mm. 2–15]	Instrumental
122–135	Based on Mvt. II, [mm. 138–142]	"Calm fell. From heaven..." —Hardy
136–174	A1—same as mm. 1–39	"Each shall arise..." —Bahman
175–190	B2—same as mm. 44–55	"[So] Why then should I be afraid?" —Rumi
191–209	Coda	"[So] Why then should I be afraid?" —Rumi

Texture

Introduction / A Section

O'Regan opens *From Heaven Distilled a Clemency* (about resurrection and peace) at a *Prestissimo* tempo in the Introduction and A section (measures 1–39, recurs at measures 136–174), sonically expressing his aural image of "overcoming death." The notion of resurrection is first expressed through the ascending additive instrumentation from the lowest to highest strings with heavily articulated *staccati* and accents, until the *mf* entrance of the chorus

in homophonic texture on the text, "Each shall arise in the place where their life departs."⁶⁵ Example 1.17 demonstrates the ascending additive instrumentation from lowest to highest strings. This thematic material reoccurs in measures 136–174.

(Example 1.17 on next page.)

⁶⁵ Tarik O'Regan. Triptych. Movement III (*From Heaven Distilled a Clemency*), p. 18–19, measures 9–20. Chester: Novello & Co. Ltd., 2005.

Example 1.17 Tarik O'Regan, *Triptych*, Movement III (From *Heaven Distilled a Clemency*), p. 18, measures 1–9.

III
From Heaven Distilled a Clemency

Prestissimo ♩ = 192

B Section (Chorus)

O'Regan separates sections C and D of *From Heaven Distilled a Clemency* with the chorus (B section), found in measures 40–61, 86–105, and 175–190. During his interview with the author, O'Regan revealed a poignant moment that

occurs in the violin II part at measures 40–55 with strategically accented eighth notes on the pitches F#, G, A, and B to create a “rock-like” rhythmic and melodic motive. He expressed that this motive is “commonly overlooked”.⁶⁶ Example 1.18 reveals the rhythmic and melodic motive on the pitches F#, G, A, and B.

⁶⁶ Tarik O'Regan, interview with author. December 17, 2012.

Example 1.18 Tarik O'Regan, *Triptych*, Movement III (From *Heaven Distilled a Clemency*), p. 20–21, measures 40–45.

C Section

The C section includes measures 62–79 and contains the third main section of text, a reflective inspired setting that breathes a sense of marvel. The upper strings are solely responsible for the forward momentum of the movement through driven, *staccato* and accented 8th note material. The soprano and alto lines intone the text through a *legato* line, while the tenors and basses sing “ahs” a 5th apart until “And cometh

from afar”⁶⁷ when they sing in unison and the soprano line echoes. Example 1.19 displays the double homophony of the upper voices intoning the text, while the lower voices sing “ahs” a 5th apart. O’Regan stretches the listener’s ear a little further by giving the impression that one voice is singing the melody while the other provides a harmonic counterpoint. Looking carefully at Example 1.19 we recognize that the listener is hearing the melody being exchanged between the voices from one measure to the next.

⁶⁷ Tarik O’Regan. *Triptych*. Movement III (*From Heaven Distilled a Clemency*), p. 23, pickup to measure 78–79. Chester: Novello & Co. Ltd., 2005.

Example 1.19 Tarik O’Regan, *Triptych*, Movement III (*From Heaven Distilled a Clemency*), p. 22, measures 62–65.

The musical score for Example 1.19, measures 62–65, is presented in a standard orchestral layout. It begins with a soprano line in treble clef, 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The soprano and alto parts sing the text "Our birth is but a sleep and" in a legato line. The tenor and bass parts sing "blest." followed by "Ah," in a legato line. The instrumental parts include Violin I and II with staccato and accented eighth notes, Viola with staccato and accented eighth notes, Violoncello with arco and pizzicato markings, and Double Bass with pizzicato markings. The score is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic throughout.

D Section

The D section includes measures 106–135, and contains material from movement II, albeit without the augmented theme in the violin II part. Before this portion is introduced, O'Regan harkens back to an instrumental transition in measures 72–79 of *Threnody*⁶⁸ where he reduces the instrumentation, but this time it is fragmented. The tempo for these 30 measures abruptly changes from the *Prestissimo* of the C section, to a *moderato* tempo with the upper strings droning on open 4^{ths} and 5^{ths} at a *ppp* dynamic level, until the entrance of the soprano solo where O'Regan dictates a *meno mosso* tempo to create an atmospheric mood for the text, “Calm fell. From heav'n distilled a clemency; There was peace on earth, and silence in the sky.”⁶⁹ *From Heaven Distilled a*

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

⁶⁹ Tarik O'Regan. *Triptych*. Movement III (*From Heaven*

Clemency closes with a hybrid of sections A and B to champion O'Regan's vision of overcoming death to “rise an angel blest.” Underneath, the strings surge forward with highly articulate, irregularly accented, detached 8th notes. Example 1.20 illustrates O'Regan's musical vision of overcoming death.

(Example 1.20 on next page.)

Distilled a Clemency), p. 25, measures 125–136. Chester: Novello & Co. Ltd., 2005.

Example 1.20 Tarik O'Regan, *Triptych*, Movement III—*From Heaven Distilled a Clemency*, p. 30, measures 196–end.

The musical score consists of two systems of staves. The first system covers measures 196 to 220, and the second system covers measures 221 to 227. The vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) have the following lyrics:

Soprano: -gain to rise an an - gel blest. So why then should I be a - fraid? I shall
 Alto: -gain to rise an an - gel blest. So why then should I be a - fraid? I shall
 Tenor: -gain to rise an an - gel blest. So why then should I be a - fraid? I shall
 Bass: -gain to rise an an - gel blest. So why then should I be a - fraid? I shall

The instrumental parts include Violins I and II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The Contrabass part includes the instruction "arco" and "ff". The score concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Manhattan, September 2001

Significance of “Three”

As previously stated, *Triptych* is organized into three movements, by a traditional fast-slow-fast [Italian] form, with the fast sections primarily featuring pulsating rhythms, while the slow movement (*As We Remember Them*) is formulated from an ethereal melody over coalescing drones that open and close the movement. Each movement is bound by shared material used without regard to abruptness in texture or dynamics. Other salient examples that make a compelling case for the symbolism of “three” in O’Regan’s *Triptych* are the following: The opening key signature has three flats. The *Prestissimo* section of *Threnody* is in 3/8. While *As We Remember Them* is in 4/4 time, three is still remnant with the triplet figure found in the violin II solo and the soprano solo (refer back to Example 1.12). Another significant instance is O’Regan’s use of the material from the A Introduction of *As We Remember Them* (measures 1–33), the A¹ Coda of *As We Remember Them* (measures 102–end) and the D section in *From Heaven Distilled a Clemency* (measures 106–135) to act as a trinity. The final, and probably the most striking compositional element to defend the significance of “three” is the use of the chorus (B section) three times in *From Heaven Distilled a Clemency* (measures 40–55, 86–101, 175–198), but on the final return, O’Regan repeats the text three times, “[So] why then should I be afraid? I shall die once again to rise an angel blest”⁷⁰ at a *ff* dynamic, until the final “blest”, when O’Regan writes in a *sfz* accent, the loudest and most articulated moment in the entire composition (see Example 1.20). Whether it was spiritual motivation or divine intervention that encouraged the genesis of *Triptych*, is not the decisive point of the author’s exploration of O’Regan’s *Triptych*. O’Regan’s musical expression illustrates the

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 29 – 30, pickup to measures 183–end.

victory over death. “O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory?”⁷¹

O’Regan’s methodical approach to permuting the melodic and rhythmic motives provides not only a snapshot of his compositional genius, but one of the basic building blocks to his music. In order for the rhythmic and melodic building blocks to fit together, O’Regan uses static harmonies via pedal tones in varying tessituras. This represents another example of minimalism where developing texture is the main attraction, and not changing progressions in harmony. O’Regan’s use of rhythmic melodic motives are often inspired by dance motives he heard in his childhood with his mother’s family in North Africa. Melody and rhythm are also inspired by O’Regan’s love of minimalism, and rock and roll music.

Despite the attention his music is receiving and its recognition and performances by groups of great renown, O’Regan remains humble. He is at home in the genre of choral music despite his lack of choral experience during childhood and formative years of musical training.

Editor’s Note: All musical examples reprinted with permission from The Music Sales Group.

⁷¹ Holy Bible, King James Version, 1 Corinthians 15: 55.

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