TRADITION AND INDIVIDUAL TALENT IN *LYRICAL BALLADS*

ÅKE BERGVALL

Some time ago I read the following anonymous adage in my morning paper: "The future belongs to those that don't look back." This present article can be seen as a refutation of that claim. The Romantic period, with *Lyrical Ballads* as the initiatory event, has long been considered a revolution in the development of English literature. Indeed, many see it as the defining moment of modernity (a claim that, incidentally, has been made for the Renaissance as well, these days called "Early Modern"). Harold Bloom, for one, defines the historical break in terms of "Wordsworth's Copernican revolution in poetry". Bloom's Wordsworthian revolution consists of a radical subjectivity, revealing the poet's "uncanny originality, still the most astonishing break with tradition in the language".¹ Bloom's contrast of "originality" and "tradition" shows that he is thinking in terms of that later poet of Modernity, T.S. Eliot. Eliot's influential essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" no doubt reveals a Bloomian anxiety of influence. In a vain attempt to shake off the romantic burden of "the wordsworthian or egotistical sublime", Eliot reiterates the equally romantic objections

¹Harold Bloom, "The Internalization of Quest-Romance", in *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom, New York, 1970, 6-8. As the title of the essay indicates, naturally Bloom is fully aware of Wordsworth's intimate knowledge of the tradition.

of Keats and Coleridge,² in the process fathering a critical school that came to dominate the literary profession up to Bloom's essay of 1970.

What interests me, however, are the similarities between Wordsworth's and Eliot's strategies in relation to the Western tradition. Wordsworth, I will try to show, shares the conservative thrust of Eliot's description of "the historical sense" as involving:

a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity.³

In short, Wordsworth and Eliot are united in the paradoxical belief that the future belongs to those that do look back.⁴ Their "revolution" is less a break with tradition than an adherence to an older definition: "The return or recurrence of a point or period of time" (*OED* 2a). Despite Eliot's professed distrust of Wordsworth's formulation "emotion recollected in tranquillity",⁵ he himself devises a formula for the relationship between the present and the past that shares important components with Wordsworth's conception. "The conscious present", explains Eliot, "is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent

²In "The Perfect Critic", Eliot states that "Coleridge was perhaps the greatest of English critics, and in a sense the last" (*Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode, London, 1975, 50). For Keats's famous phrase, see his letter to Richard Woodhouse, 27 October 1818 (*The Letters of John Keats*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols, Cambridge: MA, I, 386).

³T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent", in *Selected Prose*, 38.

⁴Commenting on Wordsworth, Thomas Love Peacock for one did not appreciate his backward-looking conservatism: "While the historian and the philosopher are advancing in, and accelerating, the progress of knowledge, the poet is wallowing in the rubbish of departed ignorance, and raking up the ashes of dead savages to find gewgaws and rattles for the grown babies of the age" (*The Four Ages of Poetry*, in *The Prose of the Romantic Period*, ed. Carl R. Woodring, Boston, 1961, 577).

⁵Eliot, *Selected Prose*, 43.

which the past's awareness of itself cannot show".⁶ While he quibbles about Wordsworth's choice of words, he agrees with the earlier poet about the necessity of a durational perspective. Both poets act as if aware of the points of contact between *revolvere* and *recolligere*. While "revolution", according to the *OED*, may involve "the action of turning over in the mind", to "recollect" in turn may mean "To bring back again *to* or *from* some position or state". For both poets a creative distance between the past and the present lies at the centre of their respective poetical programmes. But while for Eliot that distance is seen as macro-historical and impersonal, creating ironic perspectives by juxtaposing fragments of past eras and cultures with a sordid present,⁷ Wordsworth's distance is traditionally perceived as micro-historical and personal, creating renovative perspectives by juxtaposing past biographical "spots of time" with a dispiriting present.

Yet for Wordsworth there are equally important macro-historical aspects to his poetics. Where Eliot claims that "not only the best, but the most individual parts of [a poet's] work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously",⁸ Wordsworth, in the Advertisement to the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*, can defend his revolutionary use of simple language with the example of "our elder writers".⁹ This offhand reference may seem perfunctory, but behind it stands a deeply felt conviction that also comes to the surface in the "Preface" to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* and is argued at length in the "Preface" to the 1815 Edition with its "Essay Supplementary". Returning in the 1800 "Preface" to "The invaluable

⁶*Ibid.*, 39.

⁷A line at the end of *The Waste Land* is significant in this context: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" ("What the Thunder Said", l. 431). To collect and reassemble the fragments of personal or cultural history is an Augustinian pursuit that Eliot's *Waste Land* shares with Petrarch's *Rime sparse*, the "scattered rimes", as well as with Wordsworth's *Prelude* (for the Augustinian echoes in the two latter works, see my "Of Mountains and Men: Vision and Memory in Petrarch and Wordsworth", *Connotations*, VII/1 [1997-98], 44-57).

⁸Eliot, *Selected Prose*, 38.

⁹William Wordsworth, "Advertisement" to *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. W.J.B. Owen, 2nd edn, Oxford, 1969, 4. At the end of the "Advertisement" he also explains how "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere was professedly written in imitation of the *style*, as well as of the spirit of the elder poets".

works of our elder writers”, he specifies which writers he has in mind: “I had almost said the works of Shakespeare and Milton.”¹⁰ He immediately makes the characteristic move we also recognize from Eliot. Deploring the abysmal state of contemporary literature, the “frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse”, he sees it as his own mission to “counteract” this “general evil”, clearly through a return to the virtues of the elder poets, Milton and Shakespeare in particular, but also Chaucer, Spenser and Sidney whom he discusses approvingly in other contexts.

All of these are Renaissance authors or older, and clearly the period Wordsworth wishes to bypass is the immediately preceding century, distinguished by a combination of cold reason and “frantic” and “sickly” emotionalism.¹¹ Which of course is exactly what Eliot will try to do in his return to the writers of the Renaissance and Middle Ages, except that he includes the Romantic and Victorian periods in his definition of the present evil, since they are suffering from the same dissociation of sensibility that had set in at the end of the seventeenth century.¹² So while Eliot does not see Wordsworth as part of the solution, they both agree that things went downhill at the end of the Renaissance. And both poets, in Eliot’s words from “East Coker”, must “learn to use words” in an attempt to “recover what has been lost/And found and lost again and again”, values discovered by “men whom one cannot hope/To emulate” (V.3, 13-16).¹³ It only adds to the sense of *déjà vu* that the period selected for praise by both had presented itself in

¹⁰*Lyrical Ballads*, ed. Owen, 160.

¹¹All the Romantic poets, including Blake, explains Northrop Frye, “thought of the ‘Augustan’ period from 1660 to 1760 as an interruption of the normal native tradition. This sense of belonging to and restoring the native tradition helps to distinguish Romanticism in England from Romanticism on the Continent, especially in France” (“Blake after Two Centuries”, in *English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. M.H. Abrams, New York, 1960, 65).

¹²Eliot introduces the concept “dissociation of sensibility” in “The Metaphysical Poets” (*Selected Prose*, 64). I using large brush strokes here, ignoring the obvious differences between the two poets. Eliot’s tradition is not the same as Wordsworth’s, a truism most clearly revealed in their disagreement over the merits of Milton.

¹³*Four Quartets*, in *Collected Poems 1909–1962*, London, 1963, 202-203.

exactly the same terms: “Renaissance” literally means a “rebirth” of the views and writers of a golden age beyond the sterile chasm of an immediate past.¹⁴

I am fully aware of the very real influence of that immediate past on our two poets. We have already seen how Eliot in fact incorporates large chunks of Romantic ideology in his own project, and we have long known that Wordsworth is profoundly affected by the very century he so vehemently reacts against. The same can be said, incidentally, about the continued presence of scholastic concerns and methods throughout the Renaissance. However, when it comes to Wordsworth I think a broadening of perspectives is in place. For the last half century and more, much attention has been focused on the immediate past to the neglect of the larger historical patterns. Without claiming comprehensiveness, allow me to suggest a few areas where scholars have been able to elucidate Wordsworth’s reliance on the Renaissance, while proposing some tentative suggestions of my own.

As Stuart Curran has argued, Wordsworth’s high regard for poetry, “just short of religious”,¹⁵ follows the lead of Shakespeare and Sidney. And in the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798 Wordsworth (and Coleridge) experimented with a whole range of Renaissance verse forms and genres: not just the ballad stanza of Coleridge’s “Rime” and Wordsworth’s “The Idiot Boy”, but also the blank verse meditation of “Tintern Abbey” and the Spenserian stanza of “The Female Vagrant”. This exploration was extended in later collections to pastorals, Horatian and Pindaric Odes, the rhyme royal of “Resolution and Independence”, not to mention “the finest sustained exploration of the [sonnet] form since Milton”¹⁶ and, emulating the Virgilian vocational pattern of Spenser and Milton, the crowning achievement of an Epic (its *post*

¹⁴A topos that was not lost on the Romantic era: Shelley, for example, affirms in his *Defence of Poetry* that English literature “has arisen as it were from a new birth” (as cited and elucidated in M.H. Abrams, “Revolutionary Romanticism 1790-1990”, in *Wordsworth in Context*, eds Pauline Fletcher and John Murphy, Lewisburg: PA, 1992, 22).

¹⁵Stuart Curran, “Romantic Poetry: Why and Wherefore?”, in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. Curran, Cambridge, 1993, 222.

¹⁶Curran, 224-25.

mortem publication was timed precisely to confirm Wordsworth's place in that august tradition).

Not only in his use of verse forms and genres does Wordsworth return to the Renaissance, but Don Bialostosky and others have shown his intimate knowledge of the rhetorical tradition that dominated sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poetics. While "rhetoric" as a concept in past post-structuralist decades has been appropriated and redefined by Paul de Man and his disciples, we can now see better that Wordsworth's "rhetoric" is more traditional than subversive. His conscious and informed use of figures of speech and figures of thought goes back to Quintilian,¹⁷ and the rhetorical structure of both "Tintern Abbey" and Book I of *The Prelude* closely adheres to the five parts of the formal classical oration: introduction, narrative, evidence, refutation, and close.¹⁸

More is at stake here than the simple adherence to rhetorical patterns or verse forms: behind the Renaissance use of those patterns and forms lies a world view that best can be described as logocentric and Augustinian, a world view that Wordsworth shared with Spenser, Sidney, Shakespeare and Milton (and with Eliot for that matter). By "logocentric" I mean a belief in the "logos" as an ultimate referent, whether for the meaning of human language or of the "real" world. This does not mean that there is an uncomplicated, direct or "natural" connection between the "logos" and human experience, whether existential or linguistic, but it does mean a world without irrevocable referential slippage. In a Christian context the "logos" is naturally associated with Christ the Word, but the concept has an equally strong Platonic and classical lineage that ensures that a strict adherence to Christian dogma is no prerequisite for a logocentric world view. If I call the logocentric culture "Augustinian" that is because it was St Augustine who most successfully and most influentially synthesized and popularized the Platonic and Christian traditions for Western Europe; it was his formulations that established the foundation for the

¹⁷See Don H. Bialostosky, *Wordsworth, Dialogics, and the Practice of Criticism*, Cambridge, 1992, 219-31.

¹⁸For *The Prelude*, see Bialostosky 206-19, and for "Tintern Abbey", Richard E. Matlak, "Classical Argument and Romantic Persuasion in 'Tintern Abbey'", *Studies in Romanticism*, XXV/1 (Spring 1986), 97-129.

theology, as well as the poetics of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

On the basis of two possible translations of the Greek word *logos*, in a recent article I suggested a fundamental distinction between a “formal” and a “verbal” logocentrism, the former based on number (*logos* as *ratio*) and the latter on language (*logos* as *verbum*).¹⁹ There is a built-in tension between the two, since the formal paradigm is idealistic and exact (associated with Plato’s *being*), while the verbal is unavoidably tainted with *becoming*, or, in Christian terms, with the consequences of the Fall. While numbers can be mathematically and logically precise, language can never fully reflect the “logos” since it is tainted with the imprecision that attends all human endeavours. Despite this taint, however, the verbal paradigm is in the Christian tradition ultimately more important because of the Incarnation of the divine Word. Language is not only part of the problem but can be part of the solution as well.

In Augustine’s own thought there is a clear development from the predominantly formal logocentrism of his youth to a growing preoccupation with the “logos” as the Word. This might have been of interest only to patristic scholars and theologians if these two paradigms had not left irrevocable traces in the literature and culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. I have studied their imprints on Petrarch and Spenser in some detail,²⁰ and the same could be done on a number of other authors, Milton not the least.

¹⁹I am basing my terms, and my distinction, on Augustine’s comment on John 1:1: “‘In the beginning was the Word.’ The Greek word *logos* signifies in Latin both ‘reason’ [*ratio*] and ‘word’ [*verbum*]” (Question 63, “On the Word,” in Augustine, *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, tr. David L. Mosher, Washington, 1982). For a fuller discussion of the terms, and of Augustine’s employment of the two types of logocentrism, see my “Formal and Verbal Logocentrism in Augustine and Spenser”, *Studies in Philology*, IIC/3 (1996), 251-66.

²⁰See my book-length study, *Augustinian Perspectives in the Renaissance*, Uppsala, 2001. Sections of the book, on Spenser, have also come out as articles: “The Theology of the Sign: St Augustine and Spenser’s Legend of Holiness”, *SEL: Studies in English Literature*, 33 (1993), 21-42; “Between Eusebius and Augustine: Una and the Cult of Elizabeth”, *English Literary Renaissance*, XXVII, 1 (Winter 1997), 3-30.

By way of Milton and Spenser we can now return to Wordsworth and the Romantic period. For to my own initial surprise I have begun to realize that the same distinctions between logocentric paradigms also apply to Wordsworth's poetry. Given Wordsworth's professed admiration for the poets of the Renaissance perhaps I should not have been surprised. We are used to considering Wordsworth from an Augustan perspective. What I want to propose is a renewed look at his writing from an Augustinian perspective. To what extent Wordsworth was familiar with Augustine's writings is secondary. No one going through a formal English education at the time could have completely avoided the Father, and there were other possible channels, both secular and religious.²¹ Yet to be affected by the logocentric paradigms one did not need to have read a word of Augustine, since they were still an inescapable presence in the cultural and religious landscape of Europe, especially for someone who like Wordsworth looked back in order to move forward.

As we are reminded in both Myra Cottingham's and Jim McGonigal's essays in this book, Wordsworth was painfully aware of the "sad incompetence of human speech",²² to the point of seemingly giving up on it halfway through the *Lyrical Ballads*.²³ Ultimately, however, as a poet he was committed to words as a medium. Despite, or perhaps because of, personal traumas and shortcomings, he had faith in the power of language to heal, reform and educate. His use of classical rhetoric is only one indication of a logocentric commitment: he expected not only to entertain his readers, but to change them through persuasion. To claim that Wordsworth aims at "pleasure", narrowly defined, at the expense of human improvement is a misunderstanding. As we shall see in a moment, the term "pleasure" in

²¹For the religious channels, see Richard E. Brantley, *Wordsworth's "Natural Methodism"*, New Haven and London, 1975, 6-12.

²²*The Prelude* (1850), VI, 593, quoted and discussed in William Keach, "Romanticism and Language", in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, 106-10.

²³If Myra Cottingham is right – and I think she is – about the loss and recovery of language in *Lyrical Ballads*, then the earlier collection must be seen as a blueprint for *The Prelude*, which redraws the same down-and-up curve in an autobiographical mode.

itself has connotations far beyond simple well-being. Even a cursory reading of Wordsworth's poetry or criticism reveals a moral pathos: "The understanding of the being to whom we address ourselves ...", the poet explains in the "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*, "must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, his taste exalted, and his affections ameliorated".²⁴ Let us not confuse the rhetorical means with the remedial goals. No rhetorically trained orator or poet would hesitate to sugar-coat the pill. For a poetical justification of this principle, one only has to go to Sidney's *Defence of Poesie* or Spenser's "Letter of the Authors".²⁵

If Wordsworth's use of rhetoric is an example of the poet's commitment to the verbal paradigm, his return to the verse forms of the Renaissance is an example of formal logocentrism.²⁶ Again, much more than a simple aping of outward gestures is involved. Mathematics, geometry and music are the leading arts within the formal paradigm, while its favoured metaphors are proportion and harmony. The symmetry of a logocentric universe finds an echo in the harmonious proportions of a poem, a painting, or a piece of music. That is why "pleasure" is such an important concept to Wordsworth: it is the soul's harmonious response to the beauty of the universe, transmitted largely through the geometrical and musical aspects of a poem. As the poet himself explains in the "Preface" of 1802:

Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure be considered as a degradation of the Poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an acknowledgement of the beauty of the universe.²⁷

²⁴*Lyrical Ballads*, ed. Owen, 158.

²⁵Indeed, a thorough comparison of Sidney's *Defence*, with its rhetorical and logocentric poetics, and Wordsworth's "Prefaces", while beyond my present scope, would put meat on many of the bare bones presented in this article.

²⁶Another example of formal logocentrism is the romantic revival of renaissance emblematics. On Wordsworth's "emblematic vision", see John A. Hodgson, *Wordsworth's Philosophical Poetry, 1897-1824*, Lincoln: NB, 1980.

²⁷*Lyrical Ballads*, ed. Owen, 167. Wordsworth may seem to deny a formal component in the continuation of the quotation: "an acknowledgment the more sincere because it is not formal, but indirect", but by "formal" he means the obvious verbal message rather than the indirect harmony of the poem.

As S.K. Heninger has convincingly argued, the formal aspects of a poem speak a language of its own that is based on numerical and geometrical proportions, a language distinct from the verbal content which may or may not give the same message.²⁸ The two verse forms Heninger pays special attention to are rhyme royal and the sonnet, both used by Wordsworth. The sonnet is of special interest given Wordsworth's sustained attention to the form, inspired by his reading of Milton's sonnets in 1802. Significantly, Wordsworth preferred the Petrarchan to the Shakespearean sonnet, and for formal reasons as Lee M. Johnson has shown:

The chief technical feature of Wordsworth's blank verse sonnets is his decided preference for the Petrarchan form – a preference which upholds the Miltonic origins, form, and imperatives of his own examples and which also reveals his tastes in proportion and symmetry. He disliked the varied segments, concluding couplet, and imbalanced design of the Shakespearean form, only two minor instances of which exist among the hundreds of sonnets he wrote.²⁹

The Petrarchan sonnet, with its octave followed by a sestet, can be reduced to the relationship between 4 and 3. Since four is traditionally the mundane number, and three signifies the deity, explains Heninger, “the [sonnet] form represented by the proportion 4/3 leads inexorably toward heaven ...”.³⁰ The verbal content of the sonnet, especially in early examples, often reinforces that ascent.³¹ Soon, however, the sonneteers, starting already with Petrarch, begin to pit the formal and

²⁸S.K. Heninger, Jr., *The Subtext of Form in the English Renaissance: Proportion Poetical*, University Park, 1994.

²⁹Lee M. Johnson, *Wordsworth's Metaphysical Verse: Geometry, Nature, and Form*, Toronto, 1982, 33. By “blank verse sonnets” Johnson means the unrhymed sonnets that Wordsworth, following Milton's example, incorporated within his larger poems. The same formal principles, however, are equally applicable to his rhymed sonnets.

³⁰Heninger, 77-78.

³¹As Johnson explains, “The sonneteer may in the octave present a subject in an earthly context and then in the sestet consider it from a celestial perspective. This is often the practice of Petrarch, Dante, and Milton” (33).

the verbal messages against each other, thereby creating complex analyses of the difficulties involved in maintaining an idealized love, sacred or secular, in a fallen world.

Furthermore, Wordsworth not only develops the time-honoured symbolism of the 4/3 proportion. As Johnson demonstrates in great detail, he also introduces an abstract geometrical device of his own drawn from Euclid: continuous geometrical proportion or the golden section. This formal device can be detected in (blank verse) passages of heightened semantic content, and first appears in *Lyrical Ballads*.³² The golden section simply means that in a passage comprising two unequal parts the length of the smaller part is to the larger part as the larger is to the whole, in other words A is to B as B is to A+B.³³ The formal semantics behind the golden section is similar to that informing the Petrarchan sonnet, with the difference that it is an ideal geometrical proportion that can never be perfectly realized in numbers, and therefore even less in its incarnation as a verbal form. The message is clear: through imperfectly realized words, symptomatic of a world of becoming (to use Platonic terminology) or a world of sin (in Christian terminology), the poet is reaching for an ideal world of being or a sinless and perfect heaven.

Let me sum up: there is a built-in tension between the formal and the verbal logocentric perspectives, already seen in Augustine and acutely felt, among other places, in the strain between ideal form and verbal content in Petrarch's sonnet sequence, the *Rime sparse*. It seems to me that the very same tension between idealism and actuality (or between innocence and experience as Blake no doubt would have put it) also characterizes Wordsworth's poetry. Professor Wilkinson gives us a very good example of this in his article in this book when he demonstrates the incongruence between the Spenserian stanza and the verbal content of "The Female Vagrant".³⁴ This poem, furthermore, is in the middle of a collection in which, according to Cottingham, language falters. Significantly, she also shows how in these middle

³²Johnson finds the golden section in "Yew-Trees", the very first of Wordsworth's poems in the collection, as well as in his last, "Tintern Abbey" (52-65).

³³In logical terms: $a:b::b:a+b$ (see Johnson, 11).

³⁴Pinkney Seabrook Wilkinson, "Wordsworth's Artless Tale: 'The Female Vagrant'", xxx.

poems in *Lyrical Ballads* the forms falter as well.³⁵ If so, the collection as a whole is not only about the loss and recovery of language but of logocentrism, verbal and formal. From such a perspective it is significant that “Tintern Abbey” not only rehabilitates language as a poetic medium, reinforced by the poem’s rhetorical structure (an oration), but, together with his first poem in the collection, is Wordsworth’s first sustained use of formal semantics (the golden section).

The tension between ideal and actual is of course a commonplace of Romantic scholarship. Geoffrey Hartman’s influential discussion of “apocalypse” and “humanization” is built around such a dichotomy,³⁶ while Jerome McGann, to give just one more example from a very different critical perspective, discusses a similar opposition in terms of a “pure” Hegel and a “scattered and unintegrated” Coleridge, both to be supplanted by Heine.³⁷ The tension at the centre of the Romantic movement has long been interpreted as the mark of its modernity, the proof of a loss of stable foundations, namely the death knell of a logocentric culture. I would like to suggest that this may be too hasty a conclusion. The tension has been there all along, endemic in a world of becoming, yet it does not necessarily disprove a world of being. Even the tormented subjectivity, which Bloom and many with him regard as the defining mark of Wordsworth’s break with tradition, can be shown to have deeply traditional roots in the struggles of Augustine’s divided and introspective self as recorded in *The Confessions*. Wordsworth’s individual talent may rather reside in his ability to reformulate that traditional tension between ideal and actual for his generation, much like Eliot was to do for his.

Let me end with a few lines by that more recent poet that powerfully if allusively express the tension:

Words move, music moves
Only in time; but that which is only living

³⁵See Cottingam, xxx.

³⁶Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Wordsworth’s Poetry 1787-1814*, 2nd edn, Cambridge: MA, 1987.

³⁷Jerome J. McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* Chicago and London, 1983, 46-48.

Can only die. Words, after speech, reach
 Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,
 Can words or music reach
 The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
 Moves perpetually in its stillness.

...

Words strain,
 Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
 Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
 Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
 Will not stay still. Shrieking voices
 Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering,
 Always assail them. The Word in the desert
 Is most attacked by voices of temptation,
 The crying shadow in the funeral dance,
 The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera.³⁸

³⁸T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton" (V.1-22) from *Four Quartets*, in *Collected Poems 1909–1962*, 194.