'THE COMMON PRIVILEGES OF POETRY'

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ONE aspect of my subject might be described in Thomas Warton's words, 'This infectious frenzy of sacred song'.[1] But the title of the whole has its source in the work of Robert Lowth, who in one of his lectures, as translated by Gregory, spoke of 'the common privileges of poetry'.[2] The phrase applies to the poet's right (his by common consent) to heighten language, and to heightenings themselves—which, becoming established, may therefore be called privileges of Poetry. What degree of consent is to be given, to what privileges? Browning, arguing with Ruskin, defends licences in his own poetry by making the point that 'all poetry . . . [is] a putting of the infinite within the finite'. T. E. Hulme berates those to whom 'verse . . . always means a bringing in of some of the emotions that are grouped round the word infinite'. In our times this attitude has been influential. I recall Wordsworth's dictum on 'that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own pre-established codes of decision'. Codes of decision tend not only to become prescriptive but also to determine the direction of the critical gaze. Seeking to stand away from a purely contemporary focus, I have sought another among the insights of the past.

Lowth in his study of Hebraic poetry (considered in Murray Roston's recent book) identified a principle of its organization to which he gave the name *parallelismus membrorum*—that is, 'symmetry of units'. So the term is defined in Alex Preminger's *Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (1965, p. 337)—where, too, a related entry (p. 599), on parallelism as seen in poetry generally, notes that parallelism 'seems to be the basic aesthetic principle of poetic utterance'. This entry, however, goes on to cite a critic who in a work of 1898 averred that there was 'no modern poetry of any great importance in which this principle is the only determinant of form'. By that date—though 'they

[1] In his account of psalmody (*History*, III, [1781], 166).
[2] *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews: Translated from the Latin . . . by G. Gregory* (1835), p. 115.

. . . dared not print it'—Hopkins had written *The Wreck of the Deutschland*. And, by now, we have Eliot's *Four Quartets*. Hopkins held the view that in all poetry the structure is dominated by parallelism, antithetical or correspondent, abrupt or transitional. To this scheme he related many attributes of poetic style and organization now differently regarded or little discussed—as when, in his essay on Poetic Diction, he lists 'gradation, intensity, climax, tone, expression (as the word is used in music), *chiaroscuro*, perhaps emphasis'.[1] The interjection 'as . . . in music' is characteristic. Hopkins, like Eliot, is musically minded. Both have been said to concentrate on purely 'verbal' effects—despite differences in diction so great that Hopkins stands charged with 'copious, violent detail . . . matched by no corresponding intellectual . . . vigor',[2] Eliot with 'many tedious abstractions'.[3] Yet C. A. Smith, in his *Repetition and Parallelism in English Verse* (1894), could claim for the patterning he studies that it repays particular attention because in it 'we trace the precise movement of the poet's thought' (p. 18). With such considerations in mind I shall make some inquiry into Hopkins's and Eliot's use of parallelism. I shall use the term to refer to intensive patterning which functions as a determinant of structure in the poetic work. I am concerned, in short, with parallelism as relational device. 'Beauty', said Hopkins, 'is a relation.'

Hopkins's gift for rhythmical effects led him to fashion a continuity of linked patterns so intricate that the reader 'scarcely traces where one beauty strays And melts amidst another'. (I quote from his poem *The Escorial*.) Eliot's vision is of a kind which might be expected to lead him towards clarifying. Of him, as of Tennyson's Tiresias, it may be said that his eyes were 'keen to seek The meanings ambush'd under all they saw'.

The Rock is hortatory:

> Where is the Life we have lost in living?
> Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
> Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

Here the making of moral distinctions and the shaping of the rhetoric are one. This rhetoric is close to the debating style of Clough, whose moral and temperamental affinity with Eliot

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[1] *The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, edited by Humphry House, completed by Graham Storey (1959), p. 85.
[2] Austin Warren, *Rage for Order* (1948), p. 65.
[3] Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet* (1960), p. 272.

may briefly be suggested by quoting the words Clough gives to
his fallen Adam:

> . . . to discern the Voice amidst the voices
> Is that hard task, my love, that we are born to
> (*The Mystery of the Fall*, iv. 65–66)

—or the lines from *Amours de Voyage*:

> Is it religion? I ask me; or is it a vain superstition?
>   Slavery abject and gross? service, too feeble, of truth?
> Is it an idol I bow to, or is it a god that I worship?
>   Do I sink back on the old, or do I soar from the mean?
> So through the city I wander and question, unsatisfied ever . . .
> (i. 279–83)

Walter E. Houghton observes of these lines of Clough's that they
read 'like a dialogue of the believing heart with the critical
head, each rephrasing the other's question';[1] this 'double self'
he traces through *Dipsychus* and in *The Mystery of the Fall*.
Though Eliot came to have settled religious beliefs, he needs a
rhetoric of a cast similar to Clough's. Belief, in its application to
living, demands a governing of the fluctuating self—of what
Francis Thompson in his ode *From the Night of Forebeing* de-
scribed as 'the cyclic Me'; it involves discrimination between
attitudes; it puts Eliot into opposition with many of the ways of
the modern world. He meets the demands of his subject by a
rhetoric of counter-statement, weighted with a systematic
symbolism. Of these languages he asks much, aiming not only
at a meticulous decorum which elaborates stages of insight in
appropriate styles, but also at a music of formal relationships.

He could find a basis for a systematic language of symbols in
the work of Sir John Davies,[2] author of *Orchestra* and *Nosce
Teipsum*. An essay of 1926 (reprinted in Eliot's essays *On Poetry
and Poets*) records his admiration of Davies: '. . . he was primarily
a poet, but with a gift for philosophical exposition. . . . He speaks
like a man reasoning with himself in solitude, and he never
raises his voice.' Admiration had not waned by the forties. There
is a borrowing in *Dry Salvages*. Davies in his *Nosce Teipsum* has a
passage in which he associates the river and the clock, by a
play on the word *motion*:

> We seeke to know the mouing of each spheare,
>   And the strange cause of th'ebs and flouds of *Nile*;

[1] *The Poetry of Clough* (1963), p. 128.
[2] Quotations and page-references follow Grosart's ed., *The Complete Poems*
(1876), vol. i.

> But of that clocke within our breasts we beare,
> The subtill motions we forget the while.
>
> (p. 20)

Eliot, playing on the word *time*, connects the sea with the chronometer:

> . . . time not our time, rung by the unhurried
> Ground swell, a time
> Older than the time of chronometers, older
> Than time counted by anxious worried women
> Lying awake, . . .

(This is a creative borrowing. Hopkins would have appreciated its rhythmic art.)

Eliot's line, in *Little Gidding*, 'Who then devised the torment? Love.', may well have developed from a line in *Orchestra* (p. 167), 'This wondrous myracle did Loue deuise', for the verbal echo goes along with other resemblances. Both poets link the idea of permanence with an instance of sewing or weaving. Davies makes the connexion in the lines,

> Loue when you sow, your needle's point aduanceth
> And makes it daunce a thousand curious straines
> Of winding rounds, whereof the forme remaines.
>
> (p. 201)

Eliot makes it in his emblem of Love in suffering's shirt of flame, which 'human power cannot remove'.

In *Orchestra* Davies treats the universal dance (in which Love manifests himself 'in the center of the ring' [p. 172]) with a metaphysical reflectiveness not infrequently supplying ambiguities, or turns of speech, like Eliot's, as in

> How iustly then is Dauncing tearmèd new,
> Which with the World in point of time begun?
>
> (p. 168)

Davies's development of the dance-symbol has importance as it suggests the advantages of a symbolism deriving from a simple geometrical abstraction. If value can be suggested by means of an abstraction, diction is freed of a burden, and can, at the poet's will, be magisterially and formally 'bare'. The possibilities could be extended by the use of an anti-symbol. This, I take it, Eliot finds in the uncurving line (jagged, as on fever chart and in winter lightning; straight; up and down; parallel; boxed). The system gives rise to an array of stage-properties or significant objects (crown, rounds of weaving, pool, pond, as

opposed to tombstone, box, book, squads, ditch). Davies, if not mere geometry, could give some hint of the use of the anti-symbol. Alongside Eliot's 'Undisciplined squads of emotion' one might put Davies's lines on the ranks of war:

> Wherein most perfect measure doth appear,
> Whether their well-set rankes respected are
> In quadrant forme or semicircular.
>
> (p. 194)

Symbol and anti-symbol are presented together in pattern in the first section of *Burnt Norton*, when the unidentified presences, 'They', and the unspecified 'We' meet:

> So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,
> Along the empty alley, into the box circle, . . .

   Leaving such symbols aside now, I turn to Eliot's 'music': the music of values, formalized in the countering and echoing units of the rhetoric, and using (especially in the lyrics) the tone value of images. Beauty is sought in the exact placing of the entries of the musical voice, as in the emphatic delayed entry of the word 'Dead' in this passage of the elegy of the four elements:

> There are flood and drouth
> Over the eyes and in the mouth,
> Dead water and dead sand
> Contending for the upper hand.

The dead water and sand meditate the dead eyes and mouth, and there emerges the one image of the drowning and clutching hand—the sudden plangency of an abstract music. Purity of tone and form is supported by colourless words flowing between those which are emphasized. Coleridge has the same beauty in the lines,

> And now 'twas like all instruments,
> Now like a lonely flute . . .

Interweaving of patterns is pursued in language's simultaneous orders, further intricated by the orderings of rhetoric. The dance of life and death in *East Coker* displays dense 'Elizabethan' tropes, decorous in their relation to the theme of a bygone world. Here the pairing of verbal units serves to mime partner-ing in the dance, antithesis to suggest the man partnering the woman. At the same time the couplings and antitheses, com-bined with the stress of natural speech-patterns, beat out the rhythm of the dance so strongly that one could put steps to it

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and follow through its variations the movements of the dancers.
It begins:

> Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter
> Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes,
> Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth

—here, it seems, you lift your partner in the air, and some
couples fall down, to the accompaniment of 'country mirth'
which changes and dies away in the collapse of the metre
('Mirth of those long since under earth'). The dance sounds
again, uncertainly (some, it seems, are 'Nourishing the corn')
until someone gives the beat:

> Keeping time,
> Keeping the rhythm in their dancing

—then they're off and they go faster and faster until the rhythm
of the dance is lost in the orgy:

> The time of the coupling of man and woman
> And that of beasts.

The next 'Feet rising and falling' is not dance but image. Then
they eat: 'Eating and drinking. Dung and death.'

Other patterns play through the dance. One of them,
emerging from antitheses and ambiguities, demands attention
here, for it extends the meaning of the dance, allowing simul-
taneous actions to go on in heaven and hell. In hell one lifts heavy
feet. In heaven one floats, and it is funny at first to find oneself
doing this in 'clumsy shoes, Earth feet'. (In heaven, earthly
feet are like unwanted shoes.) To get this meaning I have
darted round the corner of the line and inverted the metrical
stress. In 1935, in an introduction to the *Selected Poems* of Mari-
anne Moore, Eliot commented on the use of anti-pattern,
running against the main pattern of sense and rhythm, 'to give
a greater intricacy'. He remarked, incidentally, 'Some of the
internal rhyming of Hopkins is to the point'. (One musician
studying another.) He distinguished between anti-patterns
'heavy or light—that is to say, either *heavier* or *lighter* than the
other pattern', and added, 'The two kinds, heavy and light,
have doubtless different uses which remain to be explored'
(pp. 10–11). He is exploring them here; the anti-patterns run
through the dance; so the lost, in hell, hear the 'mirth' of
demons (for this is an 'Elizabethan' vision) 'long since under
earth', who laugh sardonically when the earthly dancers leap

and fall. 'Leaping', I take it, has the sexual sense it had for the Elizabethans. There is a different laughter in heaven for those who are learning to float.

Eliot has not, even yet, finished with under-pattern.

A curve drawn to represent a leap, with another joined on for a partner's leap, will give a looping outline such as a child might draw to represent a humping serpent or a row of tongues of flame. Weaving or knitting can loop in the same way. I think of this as a combining symbol. The up and down of the 'loops', if they are made tall, can look straight; the bends might be abstracted and joined. The dance is introduced by: 'Round and round the fire Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles.'

The implication that Man in this life does the dance of the next fits in with the *East Coker* theme, 'I am here Or there, or elsewhere. In my beginning.'—'Here and there does not matter'. Similarly, the apparent country scene with which this Quartet opens can be read as a city scene. The 'deep lane' could be a subway—American, for all I know. It is 'in the electric heat'. It 'insists on the direction Into the village'—perhaps by a poster ('Have a day in the country'); perhaps by the station's name; Greenwich Village, New York, perhaps. The lane—or the light—is 'Shuttered with branches'. The branches can be shut-up chain stores. The early owl that somebody is waiting for is a nightbird—of one kind or another. In the transformation scene it is not only hills and trees that are rolled away but also 'the bold imposing façade'—of the Bank? ('you lean against a bank while a van passes'). As we are explicitly told, later on in *East Coker*, 'The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies'. We think we know the context, that we 'know where we are'.

Other Quartets, too, take up problems of knowing. Can you see a hidden symbol? So *Dry Salvages*[1] asks us. Can you read symbols properly? We meet this problem in *Little Gidding*.

Section IV of *Little Gidding* puts in parallel two stanzas based

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[1] If *Dry Salvages* is pointed to in the 'desolation' and 'vast waters' at the close of *East Coker* the petrel there may be a 'hint' (cf. *N.E.D.*'s citation, 'As they fly . . . they pat the Water . . . hence the Seamen give them the name of Petrels, in allusion to St. Peter's walking upon the Lake of Gennesareth'); porpoises are associated with storms, and in 'the sudden fury' [*Dry Salvages*] the rock 'is what it always was'. Eliot may be attacking—though with compassion for Man's 'guesses'—the replacing of Soul (or God?) by Mind. The river may suggest either. In *Nosce Teipsum*, pp. 85–87, it is Soul. Its 'rhythm' is 'In the . . . grapes', and 'In the . . . ailanthus' [the Tree of Heaven]. With 'the whale's backbone' cf. in Tennyson's *The Princess* [iii. 294], 'the bones of some vast bulk', and the talk they bring on.

on the seventeenth-century 'device' or 'emblem'. One of them
suggests a 'dove' of war: the other, Love on the Cross:

> The dove descending breaks the air
> With flame of incandescent terror
> Of which the tongues declare
> The one discharge from sin and error.
> The only hope, or else despair
>   Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre—
>   To be redeemed from fire by fire.
>
> Who then devised the torment? Love.
> Love is the unfamiliar Name
> Behind the hands that wove
> The intolerable shirt of flame
> Which human power cannot remove.
>   We only live, only suspire
>   Consumed by either fire or fire.

A single 'abstract' or stylized device could underlie both 'dove'
and 'shirt of flame'; the verbal text would then represent
different ways of interpreting what is seen in the picture (some
saying 'It is the Dove', others saying, 'It is the Crucifixion').
The one underlying device, as I will imagine it, looks like this:
Above, there is an unfamiliar Name, *Jahwe* (the hidden Name
of the Old Testament, where the Name stands for the Person
of God, and, revealed, declares a relationship). It is misread
as *Taube* (German for *dove*). The Name is behind—and parti-
ally obscured by—an outline which is that of hands (in the act
of weaving); the outlined hands are taken for the wings of a
dove. Below is an ovoid shape: the shirt, misread as the body of
the dove made in the shape of a bomb. Across the ovoid runs a
looping curve: flame. This, then, is a 'shirt of flame'; in another
interpretation of it, the flames are coming from the bomb. The
flame is also power. The power of love in the flame of suffering
is misread as the destructive fiery power of war and hell.

If one studies the verbal setting-out of these stanzas, one sees
that it leaves open a number of ways of construing the meaning.[1]

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[1] And of visualizing the 'picture'. Plasticity of syntax and the adaptability
of the 'looping curve' allow of many relations. The idea of simultaneous
relations might have been pursued differently, by reference to the shirt of
Nessus. Cf. also *The Devices* in Patmore's *Angel in the House* (I. x. ii). Cf. also
Hopkins's visualization of the lark's song (*Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to
Robert Bridges*, edited by Claude Colleer Abbott, second [revised] impression,
1955, p. 164), and Eliot's comment on Marianne Moore's poetry (op. cit.,
p. 8): 'startling us into an unusual awareness of visual patterns'.

I shall not go into the alternatives here, but move on to the final passage of the Quartets.

In *Little Gidding*, as critics have shown, themes running through the whole are drawn together and unified.[1] The final symbol of union is 'the crowned knot of fire':

> All manner of thing shall be well
> When the tongues of flame are in-folded
> Into the crowned knot of fire
> And the fire and the rose are one.

The crown (as I imagine it) has the looping curve (the combining symbol) repeated all round the rim. Since the 'tongues' of the curves are 'in-folded', the outside of the crown will seem to show only straight lines. The in-folded 'tongues' overlap within the rim, forming an inner crown which, seen from above, looks like a rose of fire (the 'tongues' being its petals). The lines showing on the outer rim of the crown I think of as being woven from the thorns of the rose.

The 'knot' is an emblematic form—as the (modern) love-knot still is. Formerly knots were much in use: both in dress, and in representational devices in heraldry, where often they were used to symbolize the union of two families by marriage. Here in this 'knot' God and Man are two families joined in love, and divine and human love are united.

Verbally, too, the 'knot' carries many meanings. In one of the meanings the word used to bear, a *knot* was an intricate flourish of the pen. Scribes took special pride in their skill in this respect, as a citation in the *New English Dictionary* indicates:

> As Scriveners take more pains to learn the Slight
> Of making Knots, than all the hands they write.

This knot, then, is Eliot's verbal flourish; relevant meanings of the word *knot* include these: the marriage bond, a bond of obligation, a group of people united, the main point of a problem, a point in the Creed. These and other meanings of *knot* and of related words such as *knot-garden* recall themes running through

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[1] It presents, throughout, a state of true insight, the opening 'landscape' being analogical of the soul in purgation; the soul's 'quiver' is—more reticently, and poignantly—*East Coker*'s 'quake in frigid purgatorial fires'; 'Suspended in time' (which transforms the 'endless' state of *Dry Salvages*) may first suggest dumb expectancy and some experience of timelessness, but further, if visualized, suggests a state suspended *into* 'time', as on a thread from above; cf. Hopkins's 'roped with, always, all the way down from the . . . voel, a vein Of . . . Christ's gift').

the Quartets. Even the dance can be brought in. Under the term *maze* in the *New English Dictionary*, in illustration of the sense 'a winding movement, especially in a dance', there is cited a passage of Ben Jonson's which runs,

> In curious knots and mazes so
> The Spring at first was taught to go.

Eliot's 'knot', the climax of the work, shows the 'easy commerce of the old and the new' in the English language itself.

The maze and the rose take us back to *Burnt Norton*. And a *maze*, in another meaning, was 'a state of bewilderment', a 'trick' or 'deception'.

> . . . shall we follow
> The deception of the thrush?

In *Burnt Norton* a fundamental problem of knowing is dramatized. We see and hear—Davies says—'by spectacles', 'by report of double spies'. In Eliot's garden, treacherous intelligence (the mental eye) makes the image it sees:

> the roses
> Had the look of flowers that are looked at.

The mysterious presences encountered in the garden—'They'—are unidentified. 'There they were, dignified, invisible.' Unspecified people, 'We', are looking at them. The reader cannot know whether one of the presences is dignified and one invisible, or both both, or whether 'We' are seeing them like that (one of us seeing 'dignified', one seeing 'invisible'—or both both). The presences may be alike or different, the observers alike or different, or both both. 'We' may be a 'double self', a Dipsychus, looking at a symbol of our own living or deathly soul. Eliot complicates the old problem of 'Is it really "out there" or is that only the way I see it?' by bringing in the 'modern' complex self and a religious dimension. He contrives the situation and the rhetoric so that we (the readers), trying to make out what goes on, seem to be in a kind of knot.[1]

There is another 'knot' at the end of the poem. I should like to have some mental diagram of the connexions. But 'diagrams' don't seem to work. May I assume that if rose and fire are 'woven' in *Little Gidding*, they are opposed in *Burnt Norton*, and that the mysterious presences there symbolize two possibilities

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[1] Cf. Hopkins's poem 'It was a hard thing to undo this knot.' ('The rainbow shines but only in the thought Of him that looks. . . . And many standing round a waterfall See one bow each, yet not the same to all. . . .')

—so to speak, to be 'burnt' or to be 'rosy'? Here I add another speculation: that the seraphim and the cherubim offer a 'model' for the presences in *Burnt Norton*. The seraphim are by tradition 'the burning angels'. They have also been conceived of as winged serpents, for reasons which may be connected with two different meanings of one word-root in Hebrew. The cherubim are often thought of as rosy. In the long course of various traditions their attributes have changed. The *New English Dictionary* gives this note on the confusion of their colour: 'In early Christian art, cherubim were apparently coloured red, but according to some, blue, the seraphim being red.'

If I go back to the text and try to sort out the dancing epithets and phrases applied to the presences, I seem to get, on the one hand, a death-figure ('dignified', associated with 'dead leaves', moving in 'the autumn heat') and, on the other, a figure 'invisible', moving 'without pressure', through 'the vibrant air'. The first brings to my mind thoughts of Milton's Lucifer and fallen angels like Vallombrosan leaves. Or is it Milton's sometimes dignified serpent (sliding 'over the dead leaves')?

Shall we get rid of the 'figures'?

> And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight
> And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
> The surface glittered out of heart of light, . . .

What is to be made of the vision? There are ambiguities. 'Water out of sunlight'—is this water from sunlight? or is the pool dark (out of the sun)? And why 'out of heart of light', not *out of the heart*, or *out of a heart*? Not to be too tedious about the detail of the ambiguities in the passage, I will simply say that from them one might assemble four ways of looking, thus: a matter-of-fact observer says that the water was a sun-mirage; an imaginative one says that the water rippled with light from the lotos in the heart of the pool; a deadly voice says that the pool, in shadow, glittered falsely in a disheartened sort of way ('out of heart') with no hope of real light; a visionary says, 'The visible forms, lotos and pool, were radiated out of the heart of Eternal Light'.

Hugh Kenner has said that the Eliotic character 'is what he sees'; he is 'the name of a possible zone of consciousness where the materials . . . he is credited with being aware [of] . . . can co-exist'.[1]

Sir John Davies in *Nosce Teipsum* has, among his many images of the mirror, one where a woman looks in a 'watry glasse' (p. 21)

[1] Op. cit., p. 36.

and has a sight of her own soul. He also speaks (p. 25) of the eyes that view the world and the light that shows the self—and, in the self, the inner soul:

> That *Power* which gaue me eyes the World to view,
>   To see my selfe infus'd an *inward light;*
> Whereby my *Soule,* as by a mirror true,
>   Of her own forme may take a perfect sight.

Francis Thompson's *Orient Ode* may be mentioned here. It has several ideas which have a bearing on *Burnt Norton*:

> Yea, thy gazes, blissful Lover,
> Make the beauties they discover!

and also:

> With love that trembleth, fear that loveth,
> Thou join'st the woman to the man;
> And Life with Death
> In obscure nuptials moveth,
> Commingling alien yet affinèd breath.

Again, he speaks of seeking

> such a song as hath within
> A smouldering core of mystery,
> Brimmèd with nimbler meanings up . . .

The joining of the woman to the man is a prominent theme in *Burnt Norton*. The 'double' image of love is emphasized. The first lyric concerns a fall among flowers. One (or both) of the people or selves concerned speaks of smelling the wild garlic, another of the brilliant blue of the wood-anemone: 'Garlic and sapphires in the mud'. I take it that we are meant to think of Tennyson's 'sapphire-spangled marriage ring' (*Maud,* iv. 1) and of the symbolism of the anemone, the pasque or paschal flower. The stress on 'Time before and time after' in this Quartet is reminiscent of Shakespeare's sonnet (129) on 'The expense of spirit in a waste of shame'—'Before, a joy propos'd; behind, a dream'. The Quartet ends:

> Ridiculous· the waste· sad time·
> Stretching before and after.

I have split this into four 'voices'. Perhaps *Burnt Norton*'s most startling experiment is a rhetoric that can be fragmented meaningfully. In its opening section, the passage beginning with 'Footfalls echo in the memory' can be made out as a conversation which goes something like this: 'Footfalls!' (*agog*)—'Echo.'

(*dismissive*)—'In the memory . . .' (*dreamy*)—'Down the passage!' (*the first voice insists*)—'Which we did not take.' (*a deadly voice, regretting the might-have-been*). (This voice seems to return a grim echo to the dismissive, matter-of-fact voice.) Then again: a voice (it seems to be the author's, addressing the reader) declares, 'My words echo Thus, in your mind.' (Or does another voice supply the comment, 'In *your* mind.'?) Another voice asks, 'But to what purpose?' Another complains, rather sourly, 'Disturbing the dust.' But—'On a bowl of rose-leaves.' (A much pleasanter voice, this.) The author replies, 'I do not know.' In the passage with which the Quartet ends, I seem to hear in the word 'Ridiculous' a double voice. One is the voice of scorn. The other, lighter, is a feminine voice. Coventry Patmore, one may remember, has a passage [1] on masculine and feminine elements in literary creativity (a passage containing several ideas Eliot held dear, as his criticism shows), where he speaks of 'the feminine faculties of "taste", of emotion that must have music for its rendering, . . . of quickness to "scent the ridiculous from afar" '. Double meanings can be heard (with some help from Shakespearian senses of words) in the rest of the line too. The whole line, the sum of contending meanings, reads normally.

I have suggested that 'voices' run through the Quartets. May I suggest that one, 'feminine' and associated with the rose, is that of a Mistress of Vision—reminiscent of Francis Thompson's Mistress of Vision in the secret garden 'in the land of Luthany'?

Here I recall the prologue to the play-within-the-play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where Quince changes every meaning by running the sense over the proper punctuation, and declares,

> To show our simple skill,
> That is the true beginning of our end.
>
> .   .   .   .   .   .
>
> All for your delight,
> We are not here. That you should here repent you
> The actors are at hand, and by their show—
> You shall know all that you are like to know.

'Some dead master . . .' (seen by Eliot in the 'familiar compound ghost')—he ought to be whoever it was that prompted Eliot's unorthodox treatment of the sentence. Perhaps the dead master did get his due, for that 'familiar compound ghost' puts one in

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[1] See J. C. Reid, *The Mind and Art of Coventry Patmore* (1957), pp. 195–6, and his discussion (pp. 135–8) of Patmore's ideas on sexual duality.

mind of Shakespeare's Sonnet 86, which has an 'affable familiar ghost', and an author in it 'by spirits taught to write'.

It is not easy to substantiate the idea that conversing voices run through the rhetoric of the *Four Quartets*. I may say, of my own experience as a reader, that the conversations of voices which I think I can catch strike me as being of great animation and beauty. I do not know how to find arguments with which to press this view on other readers. I make a suggestion only. Other readers will determine what bearing it has on their experience of the poem. Critical caution would point out that the very intricacy of the conversations I have suggested (voices sounding together, a leaden echo and a golden echo caught in undertones and ambiguities) puts them beyond verification. The difficulties are the greater if, as I think, a process of unification of the self might be traced in the developing relations of the voices. The ideas one forms or the pattern one seems to see in reading one Quartet cannot then simply be transferred to and checked by another. One may see in *Little Gidding* a depth which suggests that there Eliot attempts a kind of 'fourfold meaning', but one cannot from this make inferences back to earlier Quartets, for it is to be remembered that the concept of fourfold meaning is a traditional one in the exposition of sacred texts, and might seem to Eliot to be especially fitting in a Quartet which dwells on the meaningfulness of sacred symbols. Again, other critics have seen analogies with music in the formal features of the Quartets, and it is not clear how one could argue a distinction between 'musical voices' and 'conversational voices'. I can then only say that for me the Quartets are of endless fascination when I listen to them as conversations between different voices putting forward attitudes to life— countering and qualifying, talking over one another, joining in chorus, interrupting one another. I seem to hear a voice forestalling an objection from another in:

> . . . neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,

and taking an interruption in its stride in

> The poetry does not matter.
> It was not (to start again) what one had expected.[1]

Eliot did not 'start again' all by himself. Nineteenth-century

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[1] Cf. Hopkins to Bridges, 'Art and its fame do not really matter, spiritually they are nothing . . . but it is only by bringing in the infinite that . . . they can be made to look . . . less than vastly great.' (*Letters*, 1955, p. 231).

poets offer many suggestions. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's
Drama of Exile could help with the staging of the illusion in
Burnt Norton. It has some 'love-angels' who are 'Invisible but
gracious'; a Bird Spirit who sings 'Over the gate . . . Over the
gate and after you'; hauntings by 'ideal sweetnesses' from lost
Eden; a repeating refrain in which 'Each footstep. . . Treads
out some murmur which ye heard before'; and a (rather lush)
dreaming lotos. Clough's *Uranus* too affords a cluster of sugges-
tions. It begins,

> When on the primal peaceful blank profound,
> Which in its still unknowing silence holds
> All knowledge, ever by withholding holds—
> When on that void (like footfalls in far rooms),
> In faint pulsations from the whitening East
> Articulate voices first were felt to stir . . .

and later, 'deafly heard', there are 'hauntings dim',

> . . . with gossip light
> From modern ologistic fancyings mixed,
> Of suns and stars, by hypothetic men
> Of other frame than ours inhabited . . .

Turning over the pages of Clough's shorter poems, one sees
passage after passage which bears on Eliot's poetry. In *Sehnsucht*,
for instance, there are the lines,

> A call to heavenly good,
> Or fever in the blood:
> What are ye, vague desires?

Of the many poems in *Ambarvalia* which might well be men-
tioned, I quote from one whose very title is significant: *The
Music of the World and of the Soul*. It opens with

> Why should I say I see the things I see not,
>   Why be and be not?
> .   .   .   .   .   .
> he that stops i' the dance shall be spurned by the dancers' feet,—

and in the line 'Who here are living in the living dance',
Clough has even the cadence we find in Eliot's 'As in their
living in the living seasons' (in the dance in *East Coker*). The
poem continues,

> Are there not, then, two musics unto men?—
>   One loud and bold and coarse,

> And overpowering still perforce
> All tone and tune beside;
>
> .   .   .   .
>
> The other, soft and low,
> Stealing whence we not know,

and it has the beautiful, Eliot-like close,

> So the bare conscience of the better thing
> Unfelt, unseen, unimaged, all unknown,
> May fix the entrancèd soul . . .

—which makes one realize what it was that Eliot saw in Clough.

Francis Thompson seems to haunt the *Four Quartets*. His poetry, dominated by the theme of the divided and troubled self, has symbols which Eliot echoes: his secret garden, his yew-tree which symbolizes 'the essence of his particular personality, his deep-hid secret self'.[1] In his poem *Contemplation* he has an image of the soul of the poet 'floating like a water-flower Upon the bosom of the glassy hour'. He hoped to be 'the poet of the return to God'. Much is made, in *Little Gidding*, of the idea of coming home.

I have implied already that *The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo* of Hopkins may have suggested a technique. Tennyson in *The Princess* could also give a hint, with this passage of the 'Conclusion':

> Then rose a little feud betwixt the two,
> Betwixt the mockers and the realists:
> And I, betwixt them both, to please them both,
> And yet to give the story as it rose,
> I moved as in a strange diagonal,
> And maybe neither pleased myself nor them.

Here I may mention Tennyson's poem *The Mystic*, in which he describes an encounter with strange presences, first seen as standing 'Fourfacèd to four corners of the sky', and then collapsing, through intricate changes, into 'One reflex from eternity on time'. And Patmore's *Angel in the House*, with its emphasis on woman as a spiritualizing force, should not be forgotten.

I turn now from Eliot to Hopkins. Hopkins, like Eliot, has been said to seek 'verbal' effects; worse, to lack a sense of structure; worse again, to lack what Patmore thought essential to greatness in poetry: masculinity. A recent critic, writing on *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, says, 'Teeth grit against God, but

[1] J. C. Reid, *Francis Thompson* (1959), p. 88.

no man emerges'.[1] By some critics, even now, Hopkins is seen much as George N. Shuster saw him, in 1922: 'a master of the phrase but a mere tinker at composition'.[2] Hopkins himself said that 'an emphasis of expression stronger than that of common speech . . . [asks for] an emphasis of thought stronger than that of common thought' (*Journals*, p. 85). The relevance of his force has been disputed; it has been asked to what it is related. One might say, to his subject—God, and human suffering; this, if one may appeal to the old principle of decorum, is a sufficient general justification of the elevated style. The nature of the subject demands 'emphasis of thought'. On this issue many differences of opinion about *The Wreck of the Deutschland* turn, and so, if I may, I will put my own view before discussing the detail of the poem.

The main structure seems to me to be a strong one, if its centre is that sublimity which Hopkins finds in the cry of the nun in the storm—a cry which he is so much concerned to explain, that he keeps on 'intruding' into the narrative to consider how to take it, and to tell how it affected him (to tears, to 'an exquisite smart').

It is easier to grasp the nature of his concern if his own devotional experience is taken into account. In a life such as his, the bare tenets of religious belief are overlaid by a whole structure of personal devotion. Some idea of this may be gathered from a letter Hopkins wrote to Bridges.[3] Trying to explain what is meant by a mystery of faith, he talks of the relation between certainty and the incomprehensible, between firm faith and deepening devotion. He uses in illustration of his point the example of 'some resolutions of suspensions so lovely in music that even the feeling of interest is keenest when they are known and over', and he explains that 'interest' of music by saying, ' . . . the source of interest is . . . the unknown, the reserve of truth beyond what the mind reaches and still feels to be behind'. Going on now to mysteries of the faith, he says, 'How must it then be when the very answer is the most tantalising statement of the problem and the truth you are to rest in the most pointed putting of the difficulty!' Of the mystery of the Trinity he says that it leaves the mind 'swinging; poised, but on the quiver. And this might be the ecstasy of interest, one would think'. Of the Incarnation he says, '. . . interest is in the locked

[1] J. B. Broadbent, *Poetic Love* (1964), p. 102.
[2] *The Catholic Spirit in Modern English Literature* (1922), p. 119.
[3] *Letters*, 1955, pp. 187–8.

and inseparable combination'. His poems seek to seize just such a 'reserve of truth beyond'. In *The Wreck of the Deutschland* there is a great thrust of the mind to seize the reserve of truth in the action of God and the nun in the storm that wrecked the *Deutschland*—an action which, as he read it in the newspapers, affected him profoundly.

R. L. Brett, in a recent study,[1] comments on 'the intensely personal conviction' which 'dictates . . . form' in this poem. I judge of that conviction by analogy with Herbert's poem *Love Unknown*. There, Herbert speaks of a 'wringing' that comes from his own Lord and 'enforceth tears'; nevertheless he goes to present a gift to his Lord, and his heart with it; promptly his heart is thrown into the cauldron marked 'Affliction':

> My heart . . . (do you understand?)
> The offerers heart.

Surviving this, and going to his bed, he finds it full of thorns:

> . . . Deare, could my heart not break,
> When with my pleasures ev'n my rest was gone?
> Full well I understood, who had been there:
> For I had giv'n the key to none, but one:
> It must be he.

Hopkins, as I suppose, sees God's dealings with the nun—and with himself—as Herbert in his poem sees the afflicting of 'the offerers heart'. Yet the heart flings itself again on God. I take this to be his point, the thing he finds sublime in the nun: 'He was to cure the extremity where he had cast her.' This response, it would seem, is one which in his own devotional experience had been demanded of him, and it is for this reason that the poem begins with his recall of how, himself 'almost unmade . . . with dread', he 'fled with a fling of the heart to the heart of the Host' and 'flash[ed] from the flame to the flame then, tower[ed] from the grace to the grace'.

If this spiritual experience is Hopkins's bond with the nun, it will be of importance to understand, as much as may be, the experience he describes. The dread by which he was 'almost unmade' I take to be that holy dread of which Claude Tresmontant writes (I translate): 'Man hides himself because he feels naked . . . he is "found wanting" in his very nature'; he writes too that the presence of God is then 'felt, by Man, to be mortally

[1] *An Introduction to English Studies* (1965), p. 5.

dangerous'.[1] Hopkins's fling and flash is *towards* the object of his dread. (He cannot mean that he fled to the Son for refuge from the majesty of the Father, since he confesses 'Thy terror, O Christ, O God'. He speaks of himself as one who 'fled', but what he flees *from* is 'the hurtle of hell Behind'.) Gardner found the flame and the towering vague, but one might compare here the sonnet on St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, where the same image is used: 'Honour is flashed off exploit, so we say', or the wind-hover, at the height of its power, buckling:

> . . . AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
> Times told lovelier, more dangerous . . .

Whether or not the windhover is analogous with the heroic suffering of Christ, what is evident is that Hopkins saw the going to the pitch of one's powers, in struggle, as heroic and fiery, and that the experience was associated with the inner spiritual life. In his *St. Alphonsus* the war is within, 'the heroic breast not outward-steeled',

> Yet God . . .
> Could crowd career with conquest while there went
> Those years and years by of world without event
> That in Majorca Alfonso watched the door.

In flinging himself upon God he is (as Tennyson put it in his *Love and Duty*) 'like those, who clench their nerves to rush Upon their dissolution', and he does so in order to 'kindle and flash to the heights of His will'. (This last phrase is Elizabeth Barrett Browning's, in her poem *Confessions*, which at other points too bears on *The Wreck of the Deutschland*—as for instance in the lines, 'God, over my head, Must sweep in the wrath of His judgment-seas'.)

That the nun in the wreck should fling herself upon 'the most pointed putting of the difficulty' might well excite in Hopkins 'the ecstasy of interest' and lead him to dwell on her cry, 'O Christ, Christ, come quickly', until he finds the gloss expressive of its spirit: 'He was to cure the extremity where he had cast her'. The question then is, whether this gloss is in itself the climax towards which the narrative part of the poem drives, or whether as many scholars think (as, for instance, Gardner, Peters, Martin, Ritz in his study of 1963) the stanza in which the gloss comes [XXVIII] attempts to express the impact of a vision, a sensible manifestation of the Divine, seen by the nun. In a

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[1] *Essai sur la pensée hébraïque* (2nd ed., 1956), p. 150.

recent study of the poem, John E. Keating speaks rather of an insight than of a vision. He writes, 'the poet breaks out with his solution: the nun's words express an all-comprehending inscape . . .'[1] In saying that (with this exception) the critics I have read on the matter seem to think of the nun as having a vision, I speak, of course, out of my own interpretation of their meaning, for in such a matter as this, figurative language can hardly be avoided, and it is easy enough to mistake what essentially is meant; however, it seems true enough to say that most critics think of a vision as the climax of the narrative.

A vision, however, would not resolve the tensions of the poem. Indeed it would weaken the parallel between the nun and the poet (which, it will be remembered, William York Tindall stressed as the basis of the poem's unity: 'Her shipwreck is a metaphor for his spiritual trouble and its relief.'[2]) To such a man as Hopkins there would have been a great impropriety in claiming—even by implication—visionary experience himself. Moreover, Hopkins's very fidelity to the newspaper accounts, in which the nun's calling in the storm is represented as long-continued (together with the fact that the poem marks no transition to any other action) speaks against a vision. Boyle, arguing that the unifying element in the poem is the concern with conversion, says that the nun shares in the work of conversion by 'bringing forth, uttering outright, the Word to whose Heart she too has fled';[3] this restores analogy, but the word 'fled' (whatever it meant when Hopkins used it of himself) is not expressive of the heroic quality of the nun. Hopkins sees heroism as sublime; this sublimity, I believe, he finds in her cry—the sublimity of hurling oneself on the very source of affliction.

There are possible objections to the view that one may take the gloss, 'He was to cure the extremity where he had cast her', as the climax. Objection might seem to lie in the brevity and abruptness of the gloss. But its abruptness is no proof of insignificance. In this stanza he calls on Fancy to help him, and in a passage of his essay on Poetic Diction (one to which I have already referred [*Journals*, p. 85]) one finds adequate explanation of his calling on Fancy. Distinguishing parallelisms into two kinds, the 'marked or abrupt' kind and the 'transitional', he

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[1] *The Wreck of the Deutschland: An Essay and Commentary* [Kent State University Research Series, vi] (1963), p. 94. This enlightening study drew my attention to the letter of Hopkins to Bridges upon which I have dwelt.

[2] *The Literary Symbol* (1955), p. 114.

[3] *Metaphor in Hopkins* (1961), p. 9.

says that Fancy belongs 'more especially to the abrupt than to the transitional class'. In short, he chooses to be abrupt. And if here he is attempting the sublime, an effect of simplicity would be the prime requisite, since—as all know—

<div align="center">

the true Sublime attains
The noblest Purpose by the simplest Means.

</div>

'The sublime', says Monk, expounding Boileau, 'can be found in a single thought, in a single figure, in a single turn of phrase.'[1] Patmore, as J. C. Reid notes (p. 178), 'believed that mystical apprehensions must be to a large degree expressed aphoristically'. The aphoristic form here also corresponds to Hopkins's idea of beauty as the union of likeness and difference.

If then the gloss is indeed the insight sought through so many stanzas, the climax, then one may relate this climax to the opening of the poem: to Hopkins's casting himself on the source of his dread, with fling and flash, in the heroism of the weak called on to be strong, which enables him to identify himself with the nun in her sublimity in the storm. She in turn is identified with Christ as 'passion-plungèd giant'. This latter identification justifies the force and brutality of the diction in the storm scenes, since they correspond to 'the dense and the driven Passion'.

Bernard Kelly, in an essay which illuminates the most difficult aspect of the poem, has said of the spiritualized personality that its principal virtues become almost indistinguishable in the ground of the spirit. J. L. Roche, writing in *The Downside Review* (July 1965, p. 222) on the ideas of Aimé Forest, has the reflection, which I should like to quote here, that

because values are never seized in isolation but only in the total system of liaisons and interconnections, the experience of value must include an effort to situate things in the totality which encompasses them.

These considerations have a bearing on the apparent fragmentariness of the opening of the poem, which runs through so many emotions and attitudes, and they may help to explain the major ambiguity there (an unfortunate one) as to whether the finger of God is felt as touch or as terror. (Though later in the poem it is 'of a feathery delicacy', in the opening stanza it evidently has to do with being 'unmade ... with dread'.) If for Hopkins the main features of his spirituality were not discon-

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[1] *The Sublime* (2nd ed., 1960), p. 31. Monk cites (p. 66) the lines of Isaac Hawkins Browne quoted above.

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tinuous, what must be meant is that he recognizes that 'touch' as beginning the whole process of the suffering and the 'fling' as he knew it from experience. It is the mark of a vocation that its demands are re-enacted time and again as it is lived out, and I suppose that what is stirred by the touch of God's finger is the knowledge that he must 'burn through'—as Keats said of the re-reading of *Lear*—the whole experience he knows of old.

These are considerations which should protect the poem from the imputation that it is a rhetorical exercise. (They may not protect the reader from a sense of recoil from some touches, such as the 'scroll-leaved flowers' of snow, the 'poor sheep' called back by the shipwreck, Hope with grey hairs, and other immaturities and devotional intimacies.) The sublimity of the poem is proportioned to the kinds of heroism it puts in parallel. The sweet and enthusiastic passages, however limited their intrinsic appeal, meet the need for repose between the throbs of force. Without them, the structuring into major rhythms of aspiration—of contemplation renewing itself by meditation— would be lost. And it is in a structure of varied and transformed rhythms that Hopkins embodies and resolves the issues of *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, a musical invention as remarkable as Eliot's, and perhaps more difficult to articulate in critical terms.

In trying to find some way of estimating this achievement, I shall not think to add, to the scholarly studies which have been made, any new comment on the major organizing relations which are to be seen in the poem. I shall try only to say in some detail how I think Hopkins's rhythms and patterns work. In attempting such a thing I must move about in the no-man's- land between the poem and the mind of the reader, and talk, as if in terms of cause and effect, about matters which (however important) are known to us rather as we experience them than as we are able to discuss them. In the present state of our know- ledge there is not much one can do about this problem, beyond pointing to the features of the poem, then to the effects one knows it to have, and trying to relate the two as best one can. The difficulty besets all critics of all poems. But it is felt very acutely in the case of a poet whose imagination works with patterns and manipulates them with brilliance. If in speaking of the 'working' of Hopkins's poetic devices I seem to speak as if I understood the relation between the poem as cause and the reader's experience as effect, this is only because I have no better critical language at my disposal. I shall try, then, to

relate what I can see of Hopkins's design to my own responses
to the poem.

The ending of the poem transforms the rhythms of its prelude
and of the storm:

> I admire thee, master of the tides,
> Of the Yore-flood, of the year's fall;
> The recurb and the recovery of the gulf's sides,
> The girth of it and the wharf of it and the wall; . . .

The execution here is masterly. The use of colourless connectives
makes the rhythm pivot on prominent words, so placed and
stressed that, in reading, one introduces pauses to balance the
rhythms of half-lines, and those of successive lines, and these
pauses establish weight and pace. When the regular sway of the
sea has been established, in the double-stressed 'Yore-flood' and
'year's fall', these double-stressed groups are replaced by single
words of single stress—'recurb' and 'recovery'—which express
restraining power, and at the same time, rhythmically, set up a
running and expanding movement which fetches in 'the gulf's
sides'. The forces of the gulf are then reduced to insignificance;
they appear now only in the repeated 'of it' ('girth of it', 'wharf
of it'), and they are now dominated by 'girth', 'wharf', 'wall'.
This art meets the ideal of what has been called 'leading the
sense of [the] periods through the emphases of the form'[1] (no
easy art). It also dominates, in retrospect, the burling and
hurtling of the sea in the storm, by an act of contemplation of
God's quiet mastery, and, looking back even to the first stanza
of the poem, transforms ideas set out there. There, God as
'World's strand, sway of the sea' is contrasted with the poet's
nothingness: 'soft sift In an hourglass . . . water in a well'. Here,
the poet is absorbed into the great object of his contemplation,
into the

> Stanching, quenching ocean of a motionable mind;
> Ground of being and granite of it: past all
> Grasp God, . . .

In the next stanza, Christ's gliding 'Lower than death and the
dark' recalls the earlier 'dark descending'; the fetch of 'the
storm of his strides' (the fetch which rescues men's souls)
transforms that romp of the sea over the deck which had rolled
human beings like dolls. For, as Philip M. Martin has explained,[2]

[1] J. C. Reid, on Patmore (op. cit., p. 280).
[2] *Mastery and Mercy* (1957), pp. 67–68.

fetch is a technical term for the distance over which a powerful sea runs, and implies also the uttermost point reached by that run.

In the next stanza again, Christ's power, reborn in the greatly devoted soul, is described as 'heaven-flung', and as 'A released shower, let flash'; this recalls the opening, and at the same time leads to the quiet litany of intercession, 'Remember us in the roads, the heaven-haven of the Reward'. Then, suddenly, the diction intensifies the 'flash' into a 'crimson-cresseted east' and the rhythm swells into the anthem of 'Our hearts' charity's hearth's fire, our thoughts' chivalry's throng's Lord'.

To demonstrate that Hopkins's patterned effects support, but do not consist in, the logic of his religious tenets, one could wish for no better example than this. Though the recall of England to the faith is not an idea guaranteed to excite all readers, all can respond to the poetic triumph here—a triumph in which, as I would stress, rhythm is established by the play of concepts rather than by sound. The halves of the line are in antithetical parallel, in that the first half narrows to the focus of fire on the hearth, whilst the second swells to 'throng's'— before focusing on 'Lord'. Yet there is also a parallel of sameness, in that each half of the line is grammatically inverted [fire on the hearth of the charity of our hearts; Lord of the chivalrous throng of our thoughts]; this correspondence enables us to reach forward towards the completion of the pattern of the repeated genitives in the second half of the line, as they march towards the word 'Lord' which makes sense of their procession. The pattern has a spiralling effect, closing one genitive group and at the same time opening another ['hearts' charity's hearth's fire'], proceeding all the while towards the interiority of fire on the hearth of the heart—then, in contrast, in an outgoing movement, generalizing and multiplying into 'throng's'—then in the one word 'Lord' focusing the throng of thoughts, as the fire focused the other half-line's movements. This conceptual pattern of 'innering and outering' (I have to invent words to describe it) is supported by sound-pattern. The line loops back from 'thoughts' ' to 'hearts' ' (this chiefly by conceptual pattern), then with the help of strong sound-pattern from 'hearth's' to 'hearts' ' and from 'chivalry's' to 'charity's'. On the penultimate word, 'throng's', the line surges forward and finishes its *sostenuto* with 'Lord'—at the topmost point of a spiral thrust away from the centre of the line. The effect is directly felt and responded to. The detail of its execution shows a genius for

dominating rhythm by elements which are essentially concep-
tual. This is a music demanded by the structure of the poem.
Word-play it is—and much more.

An imaginative use of parallelism is seen again in that
tremendous stanza describing the storm of snow, which ends:

> Wiry and white-fiery and whirlwind-swivellèd snow
> Spins to the widow-making unchilding unfathering deeps.

The snow expands as the epithets for it expand, until it has the
dimensions of a whirlwind; similarly, in the next line, the depth
goes on deepening with the increase in emotional intensity:
from 'widow-making' (ordinary enough) through the stranger
'unchilding', and so on to 'unfathering' (charged as it is with
all the force of 'O Father, not under thy feathers nor ever as
guessing . . . the doom to be drowned'). These two crescendos
are linked by the word 'Spins'. Monosyllabic, at the turn of the
lines, at the turn of the sound-pattern (which has within it that
repeating *and . . . and*, like the in-spin of the whirlwind), it seems
to turn the whirlwind of snow fast about and force it down
through the waters to the bottom, spinning it down on the
recurring *-ing* and *un-* until it reaches total finality when its
own sound-pattern locks with that of 'deeps', and the tremendous
finality of depth explodes. Snow cannot spin to the deeps, but
in the imagination the sweep of the ship into the snows, with
which the stanza begins, unites with the whirlwind sweep and
so with the down-spin. The horror is the more explosive because
we do not know, as we read, exactly where it is coming from. It
comes from the whole pattern of this stanza and indeed from as
far back as the preceding stanza, contrasting mercy with doom:

> . . . [did] the millions of rounds of thy mercy not reeve even them in?
>
> Into the snows she sweeps . . .

The placing of that antithesis—*in, Into*—makes the haven recoil
as if a cable had snapped.

Hopkins's conception of beauty as likeness and unlikeness
held together in pattern is exemplified in his most astonishing
effects. As a critical theory his scheme of parallelism is as
workable as any other scheme, and more so than many which
promote imagery or a particular kind of diction or indeed any
limited group of the attributes of poetic language above the
other 'privileges' of poetry.

In this lecture I have spoken (with much speculativeness) of
innovators whose methods have at various times provoked

sharp comment. Fortunately, whatever code may prevail when a great poet is writing, he will exercise, as he thinks fit, his self-appointed privilege of breaking it—giving his critics the pleasure and the excitement of trying to catch up with him. I have not spoken of the prince of parallelists, Christopher Smart. I shall draw all to an end by applying, to poetry and codes, what he said of nature and observation: 'For nature is more various than observation tho' observers be innumerable.'