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**ARTISTIC AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT
IN THE SONNETS OF
GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, 1865-1889**

by

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ABBREVIATIONS

- Journals Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. Humphrey House, completed by Graham Storey. London, 1959.
- Letters I Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges, ed. Claude Colleer Abbott. London, 1935.
- Letters II The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon, ed. Claude Colleer Abbott. London, 1935.
- Letters III Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. Claude Colleer Abbott. Second edition. London, 1956.
- Sermons Sermons and Devotional Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. Christopher Devlin, S.J. London, 1959.
- Poems The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. W.H. Gardner and Norman H. Mackenzie. Fourth edition. London, 1967.
- Boyle Robert Boyle, S.J. Metaphor in Hopkins. Chapel Hill, 1961.

- Gardner W. H. Gardner. Gerard Manley Hopkins:
A Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Re-
lation to Poetic Tradition. 2 vols. First
edition, New Haven, 1949.
- Pick John Pick. Gerard Manley Hopkins:
Priest and Poet. New York, 1966.
- Ritz Jean-Georges Ritz. Le poète Gerard
Manley Hopkins, 1844-1889. Paris, 1963.

I. THE EARLY SONNETS: MARCH - OCTOBER 1865

"Finally, it is a matter of love."

(Thomas More in Robert Bolt's A Man For All Seasons)

Having finally resolved to become a Jesuit, Gerard Manley Hopkins entered in his journal for 11 May 1868 the cryptic note: "Slaughter of the Innocents." It was most likely on this day that he gathered together all the finished copies of his poems and burned them because he did not believe that for him writing poetry was compatible¹ with his sacerdotal vocation.

Fourteen undergraduate pieces, all written in pencil in one of his Oxford copy-books (C II), which served as diary and potpourri of nature observations, college assignments, mementoes of breakfast parties, and verse drafts, together with revised copies in ink of the first and third sonnets of the incomplete sequence, The Beginning of the² End, constitute the entire extant corpus of Hopkin's early

1 Hopkins seems to have destroyed only those poems which no one had yet seen. He must have realized that poems already in the hands of others could not be destroyed completely and therefore kept copies of these. Writing to Robert Bridges on 7 August 1868, he mentions a "peculiar beat I have introduced into St. Dorothea," and adds, in a manner contrived to shock Bridges, that: "I cannot send my Summa for it is burnt with my other verses: I saw they wd. interfere with my state and vocation. I kept however corrected copies of some things which you have and will send them that what you have got you may have in its last edition." Letters I, p. 24.

2 These copies are found in Bridges' collection of Hopkins' manuscript poems (designated as A by Bridges), and are later autographs than those in C II.

sonnets. Three of these are sizable fragments (the mere scraps scattered throughout the note-book have not been counted), and another has a line so badly smudged as to make the sonnet virtually incomplete. Some are clearly only working drafts; but we cannot be sure in most of the other cases that what we have represents the poet's final draft. There is enough evidence from Hopkins' letters and notebooks to show that he regularly gave or sent finished copies of his poems to those among his Oxford classmates who showed an interest in his poetry, but none of these copies have been found. Of the two sonnets To Oxford³ (12), Hopkins writes: "The two following sonnets were sent to Addis,⁴ also that on Easter Communion [11], but I have now only the rough copies of the first two, which are not quite right." Twelve lines of a third sonnet (119), sent to Vincent Coles, another Oxford classmate, follow immediately under the same heading, which are in turn followed by the comment that "The last two lines I have forgotten and must get."⁵

3 All numbers to Hopkins' poems will refer to the numbering in Poems. The fourth edition was released 31 August 1967, when I was making final revisions on these chapters.

4 William Addis, Hopkins' closest friend at Oxford.

5 Journals, p. 64.

But having only the working condition of the notebook sonnets, if disappointing in giving us unpolished drafts of an already sparse number of sonnets, also has its virtues. For in several cases Hopkins' variant readings have survived, and we can be reasonably sure that the final extant version is virtually finished, or that Hopkins had reached, as he remarked of another of his early poems, a "fatal condition of satisfaction."⁶

Hopkins' earliest sonnet,⁷ Easter Communion, is one of his finished sonnets with variants. His first draft of this poem was written some time between the second and twelfth of March, 1865.⁸ Like all the early sonnets, in-

6 Letter to A.W.M. Baillie, 20 July 1864, in Letters III, p. 213.

7 Gardner's statement that the sonnets were "all written between April and October 1865" (Gardner, II, 79) stands in need of clarification. He arrives at an April date by accepting the date of the final revision of Easter Communion, 26 June 1865, which thus makes the next earliest complete sonnet (13), dated April 25-27, 1865, the first. But, as will be seen, the revisions of Easter Communion are of a minor character, and the earlier draft of March represents Hopkins' essentially complete version of the sonnet.

8 Two months before this first draft, Hopkins had commented in passing to Baillie, "Have you read Turner's sonnets? They are the things to read now; but again I had forgot that you have a standing interdict against new poetry, the unhappy books being put on the Index Expurg. at once after birth" (5 January 1865, Letters III, p. 225). Charles Tennyson Turner (1808-79), an older brother of the Poet Laureate, had published in 1864 a slim volume of his sonnets, composed in both the English and Italian modes. Many of them possess real poetic merit. Indeed, William Sharp, in his widely known anthology, Sonnets of this Century (1887) has remarked of Turner's

cluding the apparent formal design of the fragments, it is written in the Italian or Petrarchan mode, following Milton in a majority of instances in disregarding the strict turn in the argument between the octet and the sestet. Except for some minor recasting in lines five and six, Hopkins seems to have had little difficulty in composing until line twelve. Here the variant readings all try to outdo each other in their early-Keatsian lushness.

First Hopkins apparently wrote "Give fragrant-threaded change of gold raiment," forcing the accent of the last word unnaturally onto the second syllable, in an effort to ensure a smooth rhythm and to rhyme the word with both "spent" and the secondary stress of "punishment." Unsatisfied after reversing the order of "fragrant-threaded" and "change," he softened the entire line to "Give gladden fold of fragrant-threaded ease." Still unsatisfied, he changed "gladden fragrant-threaded" to the more emphatic and vivid image of "golden myrrhy-threaded" to describe, in language which Oscar Wilde would have applauded, the smoke of burnt incense at the Anglican communion service. Finally,

- 8 (Cont'd.) sonnets: "These beautiful poems speak more eloquently than any words of mine for their author's claim to one of the highest places among nineteenth century sonnet-writers." Were Turner's sonnets the immediate cause of Hopkins' experimenting with the sonnet form? We cannot be sure, but the following lines from Turner's sonnet, "Summer Gloaming":

The bat is circling softly by my door,
And silent as the snow-flake leaves his lair,
In the dark twilight flitting here and there
Wheeling the self-same circuit o'er and o'er
may have been echoed in these lines from Hopkins (19):
Let me be to Thee as the circling bird,
Or bat with tender and air-crisping wings
That shapes in half-light his departing rings,
From both of whom a changeless note is heard.

reversing the order of these two words, and changing the end comma to a colon (and later to a period), Hopkins settled on the pictorial "Give myrrhy-threaded golden folds of ease."

There are a few minor changes in the last two lines, and then the sonnet was laid aside until long after Easter was celebrated. On June 26, during the Long Vacation following his second year at Oxford, Hopkins copied out the sonnet into his notebook in its final form. Of the seventeen final changes made, twelve are revisions of punctuation, mostly in the direction of stronger stops. The most significant change is the substitution of the more common form "Jesus" for the Pre-Raphaelite preciousness of "Jesu."

Easter Communion (11) is made up of a series of six parallel contrasts between rather severe forms of Lenten⁹ self-chastisement (including, probably, self-flagellation),

9 In the Lenten season of the year before, Hopkins had written to Baillie: "My mother does not let me fast at all, and says I in particular must never do it again, and in fact I believe I must not." (Letters III, p.207.) Self-flagellation, then, was probably not one of Hopkins' Lenten practices. On the other hand, while at Highgate, to test his powers of endurance he went without any liquids for three weeks. In a letter of 13 June 1890 to Gerard's brother, Arthur, C.N. Luxmoore recalled "(your) brother's abstinence from all drink for three weeks, the pretext being a bet of 10/6d, the real reason a conversation on seamen's sufferings and human powers of endurance. I was only the other day chatting it over with the Wilsons in Sussex, and one, then a big fellow, said he remembered Gerard showing him his tongue just before the end and it was black" (Ibid., p. 395).

and the resultant spiritual rewards, which evoke the sensual phrasing of D.G. Rossetti's The Blessed Damozel rather than echoes of the Anglican prayer service. The adjective count is noticeably high: twenty-three, including five hyphenated compounds, such as "ever-fretting," and "scarce-sheathed," devices recalling the early Keats. The structure of the sonnet has no volta proper, although Hopkins does exploit the volta position by beginning the ninth line with the emphatic "God." The six linguistically similar contrasts are all preceded by "you," either implied or stated, the "you" being the "serged fellowship," perhaps the Brotherhood at Oxford to which Hopkins was attracted, but did not join. "You" is repeated five times; "your" twice. This count would have been even higher, ~~except~~ that in revision Hopkins substituted "come" for "you" in line three, and seems to have thought it the lesser evil to write "the" for a more logical "your" in the last line, thus further weakening an already "feeble" ending.

Hopkins' next sonnet, beginning "Confirmed beauty will not bear a stress," is entered in his note book for April 24, about six weeks later.¹⁰ It is clearly in the Italian mode, despite the condition of line four, which is so badly smudged as to mar permanently an otherwise complete sonnet. Probably for this reason Gardner had not printed

10 Journals, pp. 60-61 and Poems, p. 161.

it until his Fourth Edition; where he places it among the unfinished poems as No. 117. The sonnet is a good imitation of Shakespeare in its presentation of the argument and in its diction. And it shows a noticeable tightening and complexity of argument: major statement, development by examples, and resolution. The major statement--"Confirmed beauty will not bear a stress"--is a favorite of Hopkins', and was to be reiterated, for example, in The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo. It is the lament that beautiful things inevitably vanish even as one attempts to contain them. Three examples of vanishing beauty are given: color, sky, and the sonnet. With the volta in line eleven, the speaker reverses the traditional Elizabethan stance that his Muse can adequately instress his beloved's beauty. Beauty inherent in the object is a better thing than its pale imitation in the artist's work:

Ah! surely all who have written will profess
The sweetest sonnet five or six times read
Is tasteless nothing.

The only way to capture his beloved's beauty is to turn from the sonnet itself to her "not-staled unchartered memory." And this can be done because her beauty, being so complex that it can never be fully explored or "confirmed," must therefore always remain fresh.

There is a noticeable academic aroma about this sonnet, especially in its biblical and classical allusions, which is no more than to be expected in a mid-nineteenth

century Oxford undergraduate's poetry. The early poems of Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough, for example, come immediately to mind. But there is something of an ambiguity about who is being addressed; it seems reasonably sure that Hopkins' poem is a stylized erotic effusion thematically similar to Shakespeare's Sonnet XVII, addressed to the "young man":

Who will beleave my verse in time to come
If it were fild with your most high deserts?
Though yet heaven knowes it is but a tombe
Which hides your life, and shewes not halfe your parts.

Hopkins' pretty conceit to his beloved that he will "freshly turn instead/To thy not-staled uncharted memory" was to be transformed into the profound devotional compliment of God's Grandeur (1877):

There lives the dearest freshness deep down things
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright
wings.

Without pressing too hard on Hopkins' few rather frail erotic sonnets, I should suggest that even in these the hint of God as the beloved never seems too far from Hopkins' mind.

The next sonnet (13), Where art thou friend, whom I shall never see, written a few days later (April 25-27), has been explained by Humphrey House as referring to Digby Mackworth Dolben, an exceptionally devout young friend of Hopkins, possessed of a winning personality but manifesting at times an instability of character. However, Gardner's

explanation "that the poem was addressed to some fascinating stranger,"¹¹ a recurrent theme in Hopkins' poetry (e.g., 40 and 46), seems to explain better the internal evidence of the poem. One difficulty in explaining the meaning of the poem lies in its tortuous syntax and uncertain pronoun references. The whole poem is made up of only two sentences, the second of which drags its slow length along for twelve lines. Like the previous poem, its structure gives the impression of a subtle, highly-wrought argument. The delicate mechanism of the sonnet structure is almost swamped, not so much by any intrinsic complexity in the argument as by the confusion of the thought itself.

Although syntactical ambiguity does not allow for complete certainty, a prose paraphrase of the poetic argument might be as follows: Friend, whom I shall never see and must therefore err in conceiving, where are you? You are separated from me now and you always will be. You who can best accept the certainty that you would have borne a part in my happiness, who would have liked in me this or the other virtue, make all the virtues live in yourself for two reasons: a) because of my loving plea, in spite of its weakness (if God's dear pleadings haven't already moved you); b) because had I known you I would have been attracted to you in proportion to the virtues you already have.... But no! Rather be virtuous not for my sake (who have conceived

11 Poems, p. 250.

of you imperfectly and should love you only provisionally), but for Christ's sake, who knew you from always and has always loved you.

Where art thou friend, whom I shall never see (13) represents a clear example of one direction towards which Hopkins was working, as Easter Communion represents a second direction. In Easter Communion there is the impulse towards languorous, honeyed, and emotional diction and ungment rhythms, hardened somewhat by the ascetic subject. In 13, despite its serious weaknesses, there is the impulse towards a tightly controlled, intellectualized argument. Although the diction is tainted with a slight Elizabethan archaism, there is only one adjective proper, the "dear" of "God's dear pleadings" in line ten. Its uniqueness draws attention to itself, thereby focusing on the essential attribute of the central Figure of the poem. The series of five dashes in the second sentence, which serve as loose syntactic connectives, gives the effect of impassioned and earnest pleading rather than the studied impression of a set speech.

The Beginning of the End (14) is the start of what appears to be an abortive sonnet sequence, composed between May sixth and eighth. The entire sequence numbers three Italian sonnets and the fragment of a fourth, probably jettisoned as too imitative. In point of theme the sonnets recall George Meredith's sequence of fifty sixteen-line sonnets entitled Modern Love, published in 1862. In fact, Gardner

says that there is direct evidence in one of Hopkins' unpublished confessional entries scattered throughout his early notebook (C II), that Hopkins had read the sonnet sequence.¹² In point of form, syntax, and especially archaic diction, however, the sonnets recall the Elizabethan sonnet sequences. It is in their imitative diction that Hopkins' sonnets most noticeably fall short. The archaic astrological terminology of the second sonnet is so artificial as to short-circuit any sincerity of tone. No amount of sympathy can salvage such lines as,

no recorded devilish thing was done
With such a seconding, nor Saturn took
Such opposition to the Lady-star
In the most murderous passage of his book.

And the simile in the final lines of the third sonnet,

What have I come across
That here will serve me for comparison?
The sceptic disappointment and the loss
A boy feels when the poet he pores upon
Grows less and less sweet to him, and knows no cause, 13

overrides the subject for which it is supposed to serve as comparison.

12 Gardner, II, 87.

13 Cf. Hopkins' letter to Baillie (Sept. 10, 1864): "Do you know, a horrible thing has happened to me. I have begun to doubt Tennyson.... I think one had got into the way of thinking, that Tennyson was always new, touching, beyond other poets, not pressed with human ailments, never using Parnassian. So at least I used to think" (Letters III, pp. 215-219). The tone throughout the letter is so light that one wonders at the seriousness of the sonnet's comparison of disenchantment with Tennyson to lost love. The probability that the lost love theme in his sonnet sequence represents, indeed, anything more than a literary

The boyish histrionics and delicate silvery note of resignation in Hopkins, contrasted with the thirty-four-year-old Meredith's controlled yet tormented and bitter tone, complexity of thought, and masculine rhythms and diction all point to the undisputed superiority of Modern Love. Witness two thematically similar passages. In Sonnet XIII Meredith's speaker reflects on the simple lesson which Nature teaches, that love too must die, but that it is very hard to accept this knowledge when our own sensual passions are involved:

"I play for Seasons; not Eternities!"
 Says Nature, laughing on her way. So must
 All those whose stake is nothing more than dust! "
 Pledged she herself to aught, 'twould mark her end!
 This lesson of our only visible friend
 Can we not teach our foolish hearts to learn?
 Yes! yes!--but, oh, our human rose is fair
 Surpassingly! Lose calmly Love's great bliss,
 When the renewed for ever of a kiss
 Whirls life within the shower of loosened hair!

In Hopkins' first sonnet of The Beginning of the End the argument is less exclamatory and far simpler:

My love is lessened and must soon be past,
 I never promised such persistency
 In its condition. No, the tropic tree
 Has not a charter that its sap shall last
 Into all seasons, though no Winter cast
 The happy leafing. It is so with me:
 My love is less, my love is less for thee. (11.1-7)

- 13 (Cont'd.) exercise, would never even have arisen had it not been for Robert Bridges' ultra-decorous sensibility and a cryptic note pencilled in A. that sonnets one and three "must never be printed."
 (Cf. Poems, p. 250.)

This is the strongest of Hopkins' three sonnets, and despite its shortcomings as imitation, there is a noticeable freedom of movement, a closer approximation to natural speech, especially in the greater number of run-on lines (seven as compared to four in 8 and five in the first version of Easter Communion). As for tone, Meredith's would have struck a discordant note for Hopkins, whose youthful voice is softer and less harsh, more in line with Christina Rossetti, who is echoed in the nicely modulated "My love is less, my love is less for thee."

There are no further sonnets until the Long Vacation following Hopkins' second year at Oxford. And then there is a burst of poetic activity recorded in his notebook between the twenty-fourth and twenty-sixth of June. During these three days Hopkins entered those sonnets Gardner has numbered 16, 12 (To Oxford), consisting of two and what Hopkins could remember of a third (first printed by Gardner in the Fourth Edition as fragment 119) already sent to Coles, and 17. Easter Communion was also given its final revisions at this time.

Myself unholy, from myself unholy (16) resembles in point of theme the arcane Where art thou friend of two months before, although Hopkins now shows a stricter control over his syntactical structure. The sonnet is based on a series of parallel contrasts; the speaker turns from his "unholy" self to his more virtuous friends, which he compares to one's turning to brighter and fresher things in nature.

With troubled heart he realizes, however, that none of his friends are without flaw, and this absence of a worthy model to emulate confuses and depresses him. Line twelve "turns" the argument simply: while all of his friends are better than himself, only Christ will serve as best.

But if Hopkins' mastery of the argument shows improvement, the strain of lush Rossettian diction is a flaw, and several words are obvious compromises made to meet the strict requirements of end-rhyming. The most glaring example of this is Hopkins' choice of the unhappy first end-rhyme in "unholy," a choice which finally marred the entire sonnet. For line four, possibly thinking of the Victorian industrial cities, he compared "white clouds to furnace-eaten regions coaly," and then changed this to an equally weak "Or unsalt streams to teasing waters shoaly." But "unsalt streams" is too cumbersome a negative, and "teasing" is an ambiguous modifier at best. Hopkins compromised by finally adjusting this to the firmer and clearer "Fresh brooks to salt sand-teasing waters shoaly." The Keatsian-Miltonic inversion of "shoaly" still troubles the line, but Hopkins does not appear to have seen any solution to the difficulty. In the middle of line eight, he seems to have chosen "sultry" more for the alliteration with "seize" than for any precision of meaning. And the imperfect eye-rhyme of "melancholy" with "solely" Hopkins would never have allowed in his later poetry.

The problem with the sonnets To Oxford, besides their rough or incomplete state, is that they are abstruse and hermetic. They are written as if they were meant to be personal entries in an undergraduate's journal, for perusal by none or by only an "intimate" few friends at Oxford. The first sonnet turns on the mild paradox that what especially endears the speaker to Oxford can be as fully shared by all of Oxford's other admirers, without loss to any. For "all like me may boast, impeached not,/Their special-general title to thy love."

In the second sonnet, the speaker describes, in painfully minute and abstruse fashion, a special vantage point of Oxford, where "none besides me this bye-ways beauty try." But even if they do try it, he argues, he is made even happier, for then "unknown" others have only confirmed the peculiar pleasure which he has experienced and of which he has written. The volta is both strained and tedious, and makes much ado about nothing.

As has already been mentioned, the third sonnet (119), is only a fragment. Its meaning is unclear, even cryptic, although it seems that the name "Belleisle," an island off the coast of Brittany, is here used as a pun for Balliol. This inference is supported by another loose scrap of poetry which seems to be the beginning of an intended Petrarchan sonnet, entered in Hopkins' notebook for some time near April 24, while he was still at Oxford:

Bellisile! that is a fabling name, but we
 Have here a true one, echoing the sound;
 And one to each of us is holy ground;
 But let me sing that which is known to me.

The meaning of the incomplete third sonnet of To Oxford is tied up with the initiate and with some happy news which seems to have reached Hopkins from Balliol about some of his friends. Did it have to do with some religious news concerning them? However tempting to speculate, it is difficult to do more than merely guess, for unfortunately no letters or poems by Hopkins have been discovered among the papers of Vincent Coles, to whom the sonnet was sent.

See how Spring opens with disabling cold (17)

is a somber lament for wasted years which might have been spiritually profitable. Gardner has noticed some similarities with Milton's Italian sonnet, "On His Being Arrived to the Age of Twenty-three," which Milton composed in his last year at Cambridge, shortly before he took his Master's degree. Hopkins' sonnet opens with an extended simile; the image of Spring's late arrival is compared to the speaker's spiritual condition:

See how Spring opens with disabling cold,
 And hunting winds and the long-lying snow.
 Is it a wonder if the buds are slow?
 Or where is strength to make the leaf unfold?

The lines are a more leisurely unfolding of Milton's terser metaphor:

My hasting dayes flie on with full career,
 But my late spring no bud or blossom shewth.

One difference between the two sonnets lies in their respective resolutions; Milton's speaker is convinced that however slowly his talents appear to be ripening, he trusts that he will be equal to whatever task his great Taskmaster sets. This note of assurance is missing from Hopkins' poem. Here the speaker turns within himself to survey the lack of "yield" in his "poor and stinting weald." His depression is all the more severe because of his knowledge that Christ the "good sower once did sow" good seed with him, seed which he has failed to cultivate. He is specifically and painfully aware that his ties with his past have retarded his moving towards the Roman Catholic Church, a subject which his diary and letters of the time show to have been foremost among his concerns. The speaker has loaded "with obstruction that threshold/which should ere now had have led my feet to the field." The parallel of one's spiritual state with the farming of a good crop is, of course, one of the recurring similes in the Gospels, and Hopkins seems also to have had in mind the parable of the talents. The final rhetorical burst of "Therefore how bitter, and learnt how late, the truth!" is, despite the emphatic parallel placement of the double "how," a somewhat melodramatic resolution after the markedly controlled self-excoriation of the preceeding lines. Over all, however, this sonnet shows clear signs of improvement over Hopkins'

earlier experiments. But how very far is the adequate but unexceptional imitation of Milton in the phrasing of

That I may win with late-learnt skill uncouth
From furrows of the poor and stinting weald

from the dynamic rhythms and hard-won religious insight of "sheér plód makes plough down sillion/Shine," written eleven years later.

Between this and the next sonnet, two and a half months elapsed, during which time Hopkins, among other things, was touring the Devonshire countryside. In his notebook for September 13, he composed an octet of a Petrarchan sonnet called, simply, Shakspere (126). It is surprisingly good; the syntax is tight, the conception pleasingly complex. Shakespeare's final place among the great masters, argues Hopkins, despite our inability to judge that place absolutely while there are future artists to be judged, must nonetheless be considered very great. For just as there are saints who do not have to await the final "Doomsday" to be judged, but "start/Upwards at once," Shakespeare's canon has already been canonized. The diction, syntax, and modulated rhythms approximate normal speech patterns, an effect created by several stress adjustments. Of the eight lines, only three have end stops. The reversed first feet of lines three, five, seven, and eight, together with the masculine rhyme ending and heavy enjambment, create a virtual spondaic packing. And all working together create the movement of natural speech. In the following, the stresses are indicated to

demonstrate the natural speech quality (metrical stresses which are secondary in the actual reading are indicated by a broken line):

~~Are shut against~~ ^{but, for us the rolls} the canvassing of art.
~~Something we guess or know:~~ some spirits start
 Upwards at once and win their aureoles.

In a surprisingly short time Hopkins had learned what the syllabic-stress system could do in freeing poetic rhythms from the pitfalls of a sing-song musical facility.

Let me be to Thee as the circling bird (19) was composed on October 22, almost six weeks after the Shakspeare fragment, when Hopkins was back again at Oxford for his third term. Like See how Spring opens, this sonnet is an attempt to articulate his spiritual condition. The entries immediately surrounding this poem throw considerable light on the poem itself. Just before, Hopkins had written, "Note that if ever I should leave the English Church the fact of Provost Fortescue is to be got over." Provost Fortescue was a High Anglican Churchman with strong Roman Catholic leanings who for a time managed to reconcile himself to his Church with the Branch Church theory, which saw the English Church as a viable Branch of the older religious body. In 1871 he became a Roman Catholic. What is most important about this note is that the sonnet itself celebrates Hopkins' virtual acceptance of worshipping God as a Roman Catholic, knowing "infallibly which I preferred."

Immediately following the sonnet is The Halfway House, in which the speaker calls on Love, that is, Christ, to come down and be caught. The position held by many prominent members of the Anglican Church ("My national old Egyptian reed"), that Christ was only symbolically present in the Eucharist, for Hopkins gives way to the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence: "He is with you in the breaking of the bread." If there is any one doctrinal point which seems to have fired the intellect and imagination of Hopkins, it is precisely the doctrine of the Real Presence. Nearly seventeen months before, Hopkins had written to E.H. Coleridge (1 June 1864): "The great aid to belief and object of belief is that doctrine of the Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Religion without that is sombre, dangerous, illogical, with that it is--not to speak of its grand consistency and certainty--loveable. Hold that¹⁴ and you will gain all Catholic truth." This passage can serve as Hopkins' own best gloss on the closing lines of his sonnet:

The authentic cadence was discovered late
Which ends those only strains that I approve,
And other science all gone out of date
And minor sweetness scarce made mention of:
I have found the dominant of my range and state--
Love, O my God, to call Thee Love and Love.

14 Letters III, p. 17. Flannery O'Connor has summed up the crux of the problem of Christ's presence in the Eucharist in this fashion: "If it were only a symbol, I'd say to hell with it." Quoted in Robert Fitzgerald's "Introduction" to Everything That Rises Must Converge (New York, 1966), p. xiii.

There is a double meaning to "ends" in line ten, for the speaker has found his own proper end or goal, which thereby ends all further searching.

In the octet the speaker prays for unerring constancy and likens his call to that of "the circling bird" or the bat with its "departing rings." The "changeless note" is then altered and carried as a musical metaphor, "perhaps," as Gardner comments, "too cleverly sustained."¹⁵ The entire sonnet builds up to the speaker's "music in a common word," his "authentic cadence," and "dominant" in the crescendo of the final line, whose alpha and omega is simply and powerfully "Love." The emphatic repetitions and the delayed apostrophe to God have the authentic note of fine devotional verse. The sonnet has the characteristic ring of, and is indeed every bit as good as, the later religious sonnets of Christina Rossetti.

Let me be to Thee is the last sonnet we know Hopkins to have written for eleven years and four months, until he created the splendid God's Grandeur, February 23, 1877. This period of the early sonnets, then, extending from the beginning of March until late October of 1865, when Hopkins was in his late twentieth and early twenty-first years, has its own curve of development and maturation, albeit in a minor key relative to his later work. This

¹⁵ Gardner, II, 83.

cluster of sonnets stands like an island, isolated from the mature period by more than just years. In their intellectual sophistication, in their solid religious insights and profound spiritual depths, in their rhythmic sureness, in the earnestness and integrity of their emotional tone, and finally in their embodying an authentic poetic voice, the later sonnets are far enough separated from these early experiments to seem the work of another poet.

The very paucity of comment on Hopkins' early work, in stark contrast to the voluminous criticism on the later, speaks for the relative merits of the two periods. Had he continued in the direction indicated by this examination of his first sonnets, Hopkins might have become a silver-age George Herbert, or he might have been relegated to a few pages in a respectable anthology of Victorian poetry, following John Keble and John Henry Newman and Richard Watson Dixon in a section on devotional verse. But then, he did change.

It is important to remember that the sonnet is only one among the many literary forms with which Hopkins experimented in his early poetry. There is some admirable dramatic blank verse among his fragments of projected plays, and there is the loose but adequate ballad imitation of The Queen's Crowning. There are also his very early Spenserian stanzas in The Escorial, the languorous, Keatsian A Vision of the Mermaids in heroic couplets, the un-Dantesque terza

rime of Winter with the Gulf Stream, and the superbly haunting rhythms of Heaven-Haven, recalling Keats's bitter-sweet and wistful "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." And, while Hopkins' early sonnets show "a considerable mastery of the traditional sonnet-form,"¹⁶ his best early work is in other poetic forms.

The years 1860-1866 are years of experimentation, of adequate imitations of the masters and of Hopkins' better-known older contemporaries. For a number of reasons, which will better be taken up in the next chapter, it was not until his final year at Wales in 1877 that Hopkins chose the Italian sonnet as the form he felt most at home with. And a few years later this form was to become his familiar and almost only mode of poetic expression. In fact, it would become so much a part of him that by 1878 he was affectionately referring to his beautiful sonnets as his laundry.

16 Ibid., 79. Ritz says of these early sonnets that they "révélaient une technique très sûre, un juste sentiment des possibilités du sonnet traditionnel." But, he later adds, "La gravité de ton qu'il affecte est paralysante. Il écrit en style «parnassien», c'est-à-dire selon sa propre définition, en une langue et un style maîtrisés mais privés d'inspiration." (Ritz, pp. 479-81).

II. A BACKGROUND AND CHRONOLOGY FOR THE SONNETS OF 1877:

"KINGDOM OF DAYLIGHT'S DAUPHIN"

The heavens show forth the glory of God:
and the firmament declares the work of His hands.
(Psalm XVIII, 2. Introit for Saturday of the
Second Week in Lent. 24 February 1877.)

I kiss my hand
To the stars, lovely-asunder
Starlight, wafting him out of it; and
Glow, glory in thunder;
Kiss my hand to the dappled-with-damson west:
Since, tho' he is under the world's splendour and
wonder,
His mystery must be instressed, stressed;
For I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when
I understand.

When Hopkins began in December 1875 to write poetry once again, he finally broke his long, self-imposed silence and burst forth into the song of his great ode, The Wreck of the Deutschland. On this he was busy until sometime in the following spring; the spigot of his energies was opened until there was none "to spill or spend." Two occasional pieces were the only finished poems of 1876: Jubilee, composed in July, and Penmaen Pool: For the Visitor's Book at the Inn,¹ written in August. Apart from a few experimental fragments,

1 These are Moonrise (19 June 1876) and The Woodlark (5 July 1876). The first of these, as Elisabeth Schneider has noticed, is an experimental imitation of the anapestic rhythms of Swinburne's Hendecasyllabics (Poems and Ballads, 1866). For those interested in the nature of sprung rhythm, the technique Hopkins eventually worked into his sonnets, there is no better or more interesting study of the subject than Prof. Schneider's "Sprung Rhythm: A Chapter in the Evolution of Nineteenth-Century Verse," PMLA, LXXX (1965), 237-253.

Hopkins wrote nothing further until 1877, when he was in his final year of studies preparatory to the priesthood at St. Bueno's in North Wales. In the months leading up to his ordination as a priest of the Society of Jesus, an event he had been preparing for since the autumn of 1868, poetic and religious inspiration, that "fine delight that fathers thought," welled up again within him. This year was to become, in effect, his annus mirabilis, when he created ten religious sonnets, all of considerable brilliance, and at least one, 'The Windhover' a recognized tour de force.

To understand the development and direction of these sonnets, numbered 31 to 40 inclusively in Gardner's third edition, we must first know what the background and chronology of these sonnets are. What is their most probable chronological sequence? In what directions do they seem to be developing? Is there a continuing line of development, or is the development parabolic, falling off after a certain point? What constants are present in all the sonnets? This catechetical hodge-podge can be reduced to two main areas of investigation: what is the most likely sequence of the sonnets? what is the best approach to an understanding of the sonnets? This second point may perhaps be best defined by giving, in Chapter ~~Three~~, a reading of each of the sonnets employing what seems to be a key constant to them all--Christ's presence in the world.

The chronology of the 1877 sonnets cannot, unfortunately, be determined with any absolute assuredness. Unlike Hopkins' undergraduate sonnets which could all be dated with some accuracy by checking his Oxford diary, the 1877 sonnets were dated by the poet himself with widely varying degrees of precision. Half are handily dated to the day, two by the month, one is dated "Summer," and two carry only the year. Furthermore, it is important to remember that, as with Yeats, no matter how often or how much later he revised his sonnets, Hopkins never changed the original date of the poem.² So, for example, while he considerably revised The Sea and the Skylark, with which he was displeased, about 1883, he still retained the May 1877 date.

Nevertheless, there is enough evidence to plot, with some degree of confidence, the probable order of the sonnets. For this task we have two primary sources: the manuscript poems themselves, and the letters Hopkins wrote at the time to his parents, to Baillie, and particularly to Bridges. Let us first turn, then, to the manuscript evidence available for dating the poems.

- 2 "G.M.H. dated his poems from their inception, and however much he revised a poem he would date his recast as his first draft," Bridges noted in his Preface to the First Edition (Poems, 202). The only exceptions to this of which I am aware are Hopkins' dating of his revision of 31 and 32 from February to March 1877. Even then, he later replaced the February date for 31.

The earliest draft of God's Grandeur (31) is precisely dated February 23; The Starlight Night (32) is dated the next day, February 24. In the Valley of the Elwy (34) can now also be dated, because of a fortunate discovery, to the day: 23 May 1877.³ The Windhover carries the date May 30, 1877, and Hurrahing in Harvest is also dated to the day--1 September 1877. Both Spring and The Sea and the Skylark are dated May 1877. The curtal sonnet, Pied Beauty, is simply dated Summer 1877.

- 3 Norman H. Mackenzie (in "Hopkins MSS. Old Losses and New Finds," Times Literary Supplement, 18 March 1965, p. 220, and in "Gerard and Grace Hopkins: Some New Links", The Month, June 1965, pp. 347-50) explains how a copy of No. 34 with the May 23 date was recently discovered among the literary remains of Lady Pooley, Hopkins' niece. The sonnet was originally sent to Grace, Hopkins' "musical sister." This is both a welcome and crucial piece of evidence for my rearrangement of the 1877 sonnets. But I cannot, for reasons which should become apparent, accept Prof. Mackenzie's proposed rearrangement of the 1877 sonnets as they appear in the Fourth Edition. My objections are therefore more than merely theoretical.

In his "Forword" to the new edition, Professor Mackenzie sees the 1877 sonnets as forming "a sequence related with unusual immediacy to the flow of the changing seasons." But he would place The Lantern Out of Doors (40), because of its "sense of bereavement," as written sometime in the early autumn, after Hopkins had learned, to his great disappointment, that he would not be taking an additional year of Theology at St. Bueno's as he had expected, but would be assigned to Chesterfield. While the mood of the sestet of this sonnet is somewhat restrained in tone, it is even less so than The Sea and the Skylark, written in May. Besides, if we can judge by such a fleeting thing as a mood, Hurrahing in Harvest is an extremely enthusiastic piece, and this was composed at the beginning of September, where Prof. Mackenzie would fit 40. Furthermore, only six days after his ordination (September 23), Hopkins was confined to his bed, where he remained until shortly before his transfer, and probably did not feel like composing sonnets. Moreover, there is internal rhythmic evidence, as I hope to demonstrate, which points to an earlier date for the poem, probably May.

Finally, both The Lantern Out of Doors (40) and The Caged Skylark are dated only "1877," but since, like all the other sonnets, they were composed at St. Bueno's, both were definitely written before mid-October, when Hopkins was assigned to Mount St. Mary's College, Chesterfield. Furthermore, we know that The Caged Skylark had to be written before July 24, when Hopkins left St. Bueno's for a three-week visit to his parents' home and a stop-over to see Robert Bridges, because in a letter to Bridges of August 8 from Oak Hill, Hampstead, he sends him a correction of the last three lines of this sonnet, already in Bridges' possession.⁴ One final piece of evidence is Bridges' note to No. 40, which is there marked as "contemporary with No. 39."⁵ If I construe this remark correctly, then, The Caged Skylark may be dated around late May, 1877.

This appears to be as far as we can reasonably conjecture given the extant manuscript evidence of the poems themselves; it is possible, as Prof. Mackenzie and others have suggested, that further manuscript poems may turn up, but this is the dating as we now have it. One final conjecture from internal evidence is that Spring may have been

4 "Also correct the skylark one thus--
 Man's spirit will be flesh-bound when found at best
 And un-cumbered: meadow-down is not distressed
 For a rainbow footing it nor he for his bones, risen."
 (Letters I, p. 42.) The "And" of the second line was later
 changed to "But."

5 Poems, p. 265.

written for May 1, "Mayday" (1. 13); in tone and spirit it is like Hopkins' Marian poems.

Hopkins' letters can now provide us with an interesting, if fragmentary, background to this dating of the sonnets. In reconstructing the background we can follow, as in a mist, the setting for this period of generous and intense poetic activity. It should become clear that some of the sonnets are well-documented in the letters, especially the first two, which thus fittingly inaugurate Hopkins' mature composition in the form. But after an auspicious beginning there are lamentable gaps when we have no letters. This is especially true of May, when Hopkins probably wrote six of the ten sonnets. Still, there are valuable comments scattered throughout Hopkins' correspondence for this period, and, when these are collated with other evidence, a clear pattern does emerge.

If we rearrange the sonnets according to the partial dating thus far established; organize Hopkins' scattered comments on his sonnets; and then analyze his crucial rhythmical remarks appended to the manuscript sonnets themselves as pointing the direction in which he was developing the rhythms of his sonnets, I think that we will have sufficient evidence to reconstruct the sequence of these ten sonnets. Let us examine, then, that segment of Hopkins' last year of study at St. Bueno's as it affects his sonnets.

In 1877 Hopkins was in his final year of theological studies at the Jesuit seminary of St. Bueno's, which overlooks the rolling, hawk-haunted Vale of the Clywd and the small cathedral town of St. Asaph's.⁶ St. Bueno's is about five miles inland from the small coal-mining and fishing town of Rhyl, which borders on the Irish Sea. It was at Rhyl, in fact, that Hopkins composed The Sea and the Skylark. Hopkins had come to this peaceful, beautiful valley in late August of 1874. It was here that he took minor orders, and it was here that he became a priest on 23 September 1877, the Feast of St. Thecla. That he fell in love with the genius of the place is clear from his desire to learn Welsh and even to do missionary work among the Welsh. It is also clear from the tenor of his letters. Writing to his father shortly after his arrival at St. Bueno's, Hopkins described the view from the seminary in these words:

- 6 While this dissertation is not primarily concerned with the life of Hopkins, still some biographical information seems necessary for understanding the conditions under which the sonnets were composed. And, as every student of Hopkins is aware, since there is no adequate biography of the poet yet available, particular knowledge of his life cannot be assumed. Mention has been made of two proposed biographies dealing with the later Hopkins (his Jesuit years). Both of these are proposed by the Jesuits Frs. Devlin and Bischoff. On a biography of the earlier Hopkins, Humphrey House was at work at the time of his sudden death. Fr. Lahey's slim Life (1930) served largely to give the public a taste of Hopkins before the letters were published. Eleanor Ruggles' Life (1944) is a biographical novel, as interesting as it is inaccurate.

The house stands on a steep hillside, it commands the long-drawn valley of the Clwyd to the sea, a vast prospect, and opposite is Snowdon and its range, just now it being bright visible but coming and going with the weather. The air seems to me very fresh and wholesome.... I have half a mind to get up a little Welsh: all the neighbors speak it The garden is all heights, terraces, Excelsiors, misty mountain tops, seats up trees called Crow's Nests, flights of steps seemingly up to heaven lined with burning aspiration upon aspiration of scarlet geraniums. ⁷

And three weeks later he writes his mother that "I have always looked on myself as half Welsh and so I warm to them. The Welsh landscape has a great charm and when I see Snowdon and the mountains in its neighbourhood, as I can now, ⁸ with the clouds lifting, it gives me a rise of the heart."

But Hopkins was here primarily to master his Theology courses--"hours of study very close--lectures in dogmatic theology, moral ditto, canon law, church history, scripture, Hebrew and what not." ⁹ And trying to master his theology subjects, especially with their obsolete, latinate Thomistic ¹⁰ terminology and the dry, legalistic commentaries

7 Letters III, pp. 124-25.

8 Ibid., p. 127.

9 Ibid., p. 124.

10 Neo-Thomism is a twentieth-century phenomenon, and the exciting and freshly interpreted work of such neo-Thomists as Gilson, Maritain, and the English Blackfriar Fr. Gilby is not to be confused with the stolid and ponderous volumes of Thomism as it was understood in Victorian England.

by the Spanish Jesuit Suarez must have been especially trying to someone of Hopkins' temperament. Besides, he was personally more attracted by the comparatively radical and individualistic Duns Scotus. In any event, in the early months of 1877 Hopkins was in the midst of preparing for his last, but very important (and very difficult) examination in moral theology, which would specifically test his ability to hear confessions. This examination, ad audiendas confessiones, was held on Saturday morning, March 3. That it was much on his mind is clear from his letters. Writing to William Baillie, his Oxford classmate, he laments,

I am preparing for my last examination in moral theology. You see moral theology covers the whole of life and to know it is best to begin by knowing everything, as medicine, law, history, banking. But law is what I should most like to know: if you were to come to learn moral theology you wd. find your knowledge of law very advantageous. Emphyteusis, laudemium, mohatra, antichresis, hypotheca, servitus activa et passiva (dare I hope that at first sight you would take this for slavery, whereas it means easement?), these and the like would be pleasant technicalities for you: I have taken them from the treatise on contracts I am reading.

After admitting to being a blackguard in his treatment of Baillie, Hopkins casually added, "I hope to be ordained priest next September and after that shall be here, I suppose, for another twelvemonth."¹¹

Again, on February 24, Ember Saturday in Lent, he writes to Bridges that "I am on [next] Saturday to undergo

11 Letter to Baillie, 6-20 January 1877 in Letters III, pp. 241-42.

a very serious examination."¹² It is interesting to note that he had composed his first version of God's Grandeur the day before, and wrote The Starlight Night on the same day he wrote to Bridges. But he mentions neither. On the following Thursday evening, March 1, he writes his traditional birthday congratulations to his mother, unburdening himself about his impending oral examination: "I am to be examined in moral theology to see whether I am fit to hear confessions. Going over moral theology over and over again in a hurry is the most wearisome work and tonight at all events I am so tired I am good for nothing. But by Saturday night this will be over." And a few lines later he mentions his compositions, promising to "send you two sonnets I wrote in a freak the other day; they will make a little gift. They are not so very queer, but have a few metrical effects, mostly after Milton.... These rhythms are not commonly understood but do what nothing else can in their context."¹³

It seems probable, therefore, that Hopkins composed two of his most widely admired sonnets as a release from the intense pressures of prolonged study for an examination which was to determine more precisely his future duties as a Jesuit. But from the scant evidence available,

¹² Letters I, p. 32.

¹³ Letters III, pp. 143-44.

Hopkins was less successful with his examiners than with his muse, and his less-than-brilliant performance in the test seems to have been one of the factors which militated against his remaining an extra year in Wales.

Meanwhile he continued to perform his duties as a student. On March 11, Mid-Lent Sunday, he read a dominical, or practice sermon, before the other Theology students, became confused, and began repeating Christ's command to "Make the men sit down" while he fumbled for an ending to his sermon and his agony. At the end of his dominical, which has survived and which is rather beautiful on paper, Hopkins commented simply, "People laughed at it prodigiously."¹⁴ One wonders how he executed his practice sermon preached before the Theologians during dinner on Thursday, April 26.¹⁵

During Holy Week, the last week of March, Hopkins went to the seaside resort of Carnarvon, about fifty miles west of St. Bueno's,¹⁶ "for my Welsh," but he had to leave when his host's servant suffered a misfortune. A note of disappointment still lingers in the opening of Hopkins'

14 Christopher Devlin, S.J., The Sermons and Devotional Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins (London, 1959), p.233. Hereafter cited as Sermons.

15 For an incomplete list of the practice sermons, or tones as they are called in the Society of Jesus, delivered by Hopkins, see A. Thomas' "G.M. Hopkins and 'Tones,'" Notes and Queries, n.x. XII (1965), 429-30. Hopkins also mentions this second sermon in a letter to his mother of April 20 (Letters III, p. 145).

16 Letters III, p. 146.

letter to Bridges of April 3, two days after Easter. "You have no call to complain of my delay in writing," he writes hurriedly, "I could not help it." After criticizing Bridges volume of sonnets, The Growth of Love (1876), Hopkins confesses--for the first time since his Oxford days--that he too has been writing sonnets, but he carefully avoids any mention of the more radical experiments of The Wreck of the Deutschland. Like Hopkins, Bridges had also been experimenting with Milton's prosody, and it was this coincidence which may have caused Hopkins to finally speak about his own poetry:

It happened that the other day, before you had written to me on the matter, I composed two sonnets [31 and 32] with rhythmical experiments of the sort [based on Milton's prosody], which I think I will presently enclose. How our wits jump! Not but what I have long been on metrical experiments [The Wreck of the Deutschland in sprung rhythm] more advanced than these. 17
You will see that my rhythms go further than yours do in the way of irregularity. The chiming of consonants [cynghanedd] I got in part from the Welsh, which is very rich in sound and imagery. 18

Writing to his mother on April 20, he calls attention to this slim volume of Bridges, and remarks that they are "beautiful" and designedly written in Miltonic rhythms but not violent like mine."¹⁹

17 As will become clear in this chapter, Hopkins' first mature sonnets (31 through 35, and 40) are all primarily based on standard rhythm, with, at most, a few experimental counter pointed and (or) sprung lines in each of these poems.

18 Letters I, p. 38.

19 Letters III, p. 146. Italics mine.

From April 20 to June 13--a period of almost eight weeks--there are no extant letters either from or to Hopkins. This is unfortunate especially since it was in May that he composed Spring, The Sea and the Skylark, In the Valley of the Elwy, The Windhover, and very probably both The Lantern Out of Doors and The Caged Skylark. He had written six sonnets in one month in a spurt of creative energy. Moreover, in his short letter of June 13 to Bridges, he does not even hint at what he had composed in May, and excuses himself from having written both because of his work and because he has had "serious letters to write," Bridges had apparently written (and probably more than once) asking him to explain his theory of rhythm, but Hopkins has not the time now to enter on "unprofessional matter," and can only promise that²⁰ "you shall hear me soon."

What the "serious letters" were we do not know, but one subject that was much on Hopkins' mind at the time was Welsh phonetics and etymology, which we would suspect from the 1877 sonnets themselves. About a week after writing his hurried note to Bridges, Hopkins began a correspondence with the Welsh and Celtic scholar, Dr. John Rhys, then living at Rhyl (where Hopkins had composed the first version of The Sea and the Skylark, probably the month before) and asked to see him. We do not have Hopkins' side of this correspondence, but Dr. Rhys was "delighted" and invited Hopkins to his home

20 Letters I, p. 41.

on Saturday, July 1, an invitation which, it appears from²¹
 a later letter of Dr. Rhys, Hopkins gratefully accepted.
 Although Hopkins could just read easy Welsh and could speak
 it only awkwardly, nevertheless his enthusiastic and brilliant
 insights into the formations of certain words, especially as
 reflections of the Celtic mentality, were given the Welsh
 philologist's serious attention: "I should be delighted
 if you would work [your idea] out at more length--it is a
 side--nay I call it the psychological aspect?--of the²²
 Celtic character which I am quite unfit to deal with."

21 Cf. Letters III, pp. 414-16. It seems clear that Hopkins wrote at least four letters to Dr. Rhys between late June and late October of 1877.

22 Letter of 23 October 1877, after Dr. Rhys had just moved to Oxford. The quotation is typical of the praise Rhys gave to Hopkins. Letters III, p. 416. Etymology seems to have been a widely-practiced Victorian past-time among the educated; e.g., John Ruskin and Matthew Arnold. Cf. also Dixon's letter to Bridges, written during his three-weeks' tour of Ireland in September 1893. He had gone to see the university where Hopkins had taught and where he had died four years before. The letter emphasizes Hopkins' intense interest in language, and particularly Welsh:

I was courteously shewn over it by one of the Fathers who knew him well.... He, Father Cormac, had a great opinion of Gerard, without, I think, knowing of his genius. He spoke of him as a most delightful companion, & as excellent in his calling, and so on, intimating at the same time that there was something unusual about him; that he was fond of pursuing niceties to an extent that rather stood in the way of his general usefulness. As that he dwelt on the niceties of the languages, in his classical lectures, in a way that rather stopped the progress of the classes. Also he was fond of taking up unusual subjects for himself: that when he was in Wales he took up Welsh in the most extraordinary manner, pursuing it into local dialects, & becoming so skilled that Professor Rhys said he knew it as well as himself, or nearly so" (Quoted in James Sambrook, A Poet Hidden: the Life of Richard Watson Dixon, 1833-1900 (London, 1962), pp. 96-97.

Although it was not in Hopkins to follow through with the working out of the exacting "dryasdust" kind of scholarship required to verify his own conjectures, his sharpened interest in Welsh had already been manifested in his May poems and are also present in Pied Beauty and Hurrahing in Harvest. In a letter to Bridges dated 26 November 1882, Hopkins confessed that the "sonnet [35] you ask about is the greatest offender in its way that you could have found. It was written in my Welsh days, in my salad days, when I was fascinated with cynghanedd or consonant-chime, and, as in Welsh englyns, 'the sense,' as one of themselves said, 'gets the worst of it'; in this case it exists but is far from glaring."²³

But the letter Hopkins promised in June to send to Bridges, dealing with poetic matters, was simply discarded.²⁴ There is some slight correspondence dealing with the practical matter of determining the best time for visiting Bridges at 52 Bedford Square, London, and Hopkins expresses

23 Letters I, p. 163. Another brilliant insight, this time about "Welsh englyns," Hopkins passed on to Dr. Rhys in 1886. In his reply, Dr. Rhys wrote: "You mention the derivation of the Englyn from the rhymed elegiac: I have never heard the suggestion but I should be very glad if you would work it out, or at least indicate the sort of connection that has struck you" (Letters III, p. 418). Although Hopkins most likely did not respond (his fascination turning elsewhere) the insight remained with Dr. Rhys, who nearly twenty years afterwards published an article entitled, "The Origin of the Welsh Englyn."

24 "'All would not do,' I could not get that letter finished and have made up my mind not to go on with it." (Letters I, p. 41).

his anticipation of "seeing and hearing your treasures²⁵ (political and musical) and yourself." It is indeed unfortunate for us that Hopkins did not write "that letter," for in late July he and Bridges must have had a very interesting discussion of Hopkins' own "poetical treasures" as well.

Hopkins' next note to Bridges is from his parents' home at Oak Hill, Hampstead. He mentions that he is now forwarding his Deutschland manuscript, which has just turned up, and then, to "complete the set" he encloses "the sonnet²⁶ you have already got, a little corrected." It seems clear, then, that Hopkins waited until he saw Bridges before he gave him the rest of the sonnets to make up "the set." And it is probable that Bridges now had eight of Hopkins' sonnets.

Two days later, Hopkins dashed off a short note to Bridges explaining that he would not be able to see him again, "for I mean to go to St. Bueno's on Monday" (13 August). Hopkins was far from being in a playful mood as he brusquely replied to Bridges' letter. "What mystery is there about the Provincial? He is head of our province and as he wants to see me on Sunday there is no longer any reason for my not going away on Monday, as I meant at first." And then, in mid-letter, the real reason for Hopkins' ill-concealed sharpness breaks through: "Much against my inclination I shall

25 Ibid., p. 42.

26 Letter of 8 August (Ibid., p. 42).

have to leave Wales."²⁷ And so, sometime between August 8 and 10, Hopkins had received a shock: he was not to have a fourth year of Theology in Wales.

But his spirits seem to have risen again; besides, Hopkins was not one to smoulder over the inevitable. Writing to his father from St. Bueno's on August 15, The Feast of the Assumption, he again refers to his leaving Wales: "No sooner were we among the Welsh hills than I saw the hawks flying and other pleasant sights soon to be seen no more." Nevertheless he tells an anecdote of "a tall Lancashire man" he met while "merrily jaunting along" from Bedfari to St. Bueno's. Besides, he had not yet been given any concrete assignment, for he has "heard no appointments yet."²⁸ This removal from Wales was to have a dampening effect upon Hopkins' muse by almost completely silencing it for a good many months afterwards.

There is one final letter to Bridges from St. Bueno's, written August 21. It is a lengthy letter dealing primarily with the sprung rhythm of The Wreck of the Deutschland, a poem which Bridges had read once through and then had attempted to parody.²⁹ The only mention by Hopkins of his sonnets is a

27 Ibid., p. 43.

28 Letters III, p. 147. Italics mine.

29 "Your parody," Hopkins wryly commented, "reassures me about your understanding the metre. Only remark, as you say that there is no conceivable licence I shd. be able to justify, that with all my licences, or rather laws, I am stricter than you and I might say than anybody I know" (Letters I, p. 44).

comment that he has combined counterpoint and sprung rhythm in some of them, and that this combination "is the most delicate and difficult business of all."³⁰

The eight days between Friday, September 14, and Friday, September 21³¹ Hopkins spent in retreat preparing for his ordination on Sunday, September 23. We have no first-hand information about this very important event in Hopkins' life--no letters, no journals, and only two letters of congratulations; one from Dr. Rhys, and the other from the ageing John Henry Cardinal Newman, who had received Hopkins³² into the Roman Catholic Church. Six days after being ordained, Hopkins became very ill and was forced to take to his bed completely until October 9. What the illness was is not clear; it may have been any number of things, but the high-strung Hopkins may have had a severe attack of nervous prostration at the realization, now that classes were actually beginning (probably on October 1), that he was leaving Wales.

30 Ibid., p. 45.

31 There is no evidence for these dates in his letters, but ordination was regularly preceded by an eight-day retreat ending on the Friday before. On Saturday the minor orders would be administered to those beginning their Theology studies at St. Bueno's, and on Sunday ordination to the priesthood was conferred.

32 Dr. Rhy's letter of 23 October 1877, a month after Hopkins' ordination, reads in part, "In the first place I wish to congratulate you on your ordination and on your recovery from your recent illness." And a short note dated 13 November 1877 was sent by the seventy-six year old Cardinal which comments simply, "I congratulate you on your priesthood" (Letters III, pp. 415, 410).

It seems that Hopkins was in ~~an~~ mood to write poetry at this time.³³

There are two sonnets whose dating remains to be considered: Pied Beauty and Hurrahing in Harvest, the second written on Saturday, September 1, which was still vacation-time at St. Bueno's. Writing to Bridges in 1878 he recalled, "The Hurrahing Sonnet was the outcome of half an hour of extreme enthusiasm as I walked home alone one day from fishing in the Elwy."³⁴ As for Pied Beauty, this is merely dated by Hopkins "Summer, 1877" at St. Bueno's. But when Hopkins saw Bridges at the end of July, 1877, he does not seem to have had this poem with him. Nor is mention made of this "experiment" in his long letter of August 21, in which he expounded at such length on the Deutschland. Furthermore, since Hurrahing in Harvest begins "Summer ends now," it is probable that Pied Beauty was written shortly before Hurrahing in Harvest, perhaps in late August. That the two were written at about the same time seems probable from Hopkins' letter of 16 July 1878 to Bridges:

33 There is restrained disappointment in the way he tells his mother about his assignment: "(In) a few days time I shall be completely recovered, and am then to go to Mount St. Mary's College, Chesterfield, Derbyshire.... I cannot write more about it now. The work is non-descript--examining, teaching, probably with occasional mission work and preaching or giving retreats..." (Ibid., p. 148).

34 Letters I, p. 56.

You will learn that I have just called at Bedford Sq. I brought with me a basket of clean linen [his sonnets] but did not deliver it. It comes now between these sheets. [Here is] The Hurrahing Sonnet.... I am going to send you a slightly amended copy of the Falcon sonnet [The Windhover]. 35 The Curtal Sonnet explains itself, for an experiment in metre (that is, in point of form it is an experiment). I have several things unfinished and one finished, if I could find it. 36

This, then, is the background as it can presently be reconstructed for the 1877 sonnets. The excitement and enthusiasm of the poems reflect the excitement which the Welsh countryside and language generated in Hopkins; and the tensions of the poems are in part generated by Hopkins' meditation on and anticipation of his forthcoming ordina-

- 35 Hopkins was in no great hurry. A year later he still promises to send it: "I shall shortly send you an amended copy of the Windhover" (*Ibid.*, p. 85). The 1877 and 1879 versions of the sonnet (A_1 and A_2 respectively) significantly differ from the revision in Hopkins' own manuscript scrapbook. Hopkins revised his own copy (B) sometime between 1883 and 1887. He also revised, somewhat differently, the A_2 text between 1883 and 1889. The line to which he refers is probably the fourth, which was changed from
- ": Hung so and rung the rein of a wimpled wing"
- to
- ": O how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing."
- Another remarkable change from the 1877 version occurs in line 8, which was altered from the rather heavy
- ": Stirred for a bird--for the mastery of the thing!"
- to the dynamic fluidity of the final
- ": Stirred for a bird,--the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!"
- For an incisive interpretation of the development of The Windhover over a period of at least six years, cf. Eugene R. August, "The Growth of 'The Windhover,'" PMLA, LXXXII (October, 1967), 465-468.

- 36 Perhaps this last is a reference to The May Magnificat written two months before, in May, 1878.

37

tion. But there are at least two other factors for Hopkins' poetic creativity: his seeking for a creative release from the intense pressures of an important but nevertheless drily technical examination; and his discovery that Bridges too was working with new rhythms based on his study of Milton and that he had in Bridges an intelligent if often antipathetic audience.³⁸

37

Since Hopkins would have spent a good portion of his time meditating on the responsibilities and special nature of the priesthood, it would appear that his daily immersion in the Roman Catholic missal and breviary would be reflected in his sonnets. Robert Boyle, S.J., makes several fruitful connections along this line of investigation. But there is no attempt to give a systematic presentation of the connection between the given date of a poem and the Mass or Office for that day. Little has been published dealing with this relationship, but Ronald Bates ("Hopkins' Ember Poems: A Liturgical Source," Renaissance, XVII (Fall, 1964), 32-37) has uncovered what seem to be direct sources for several of the images in both The Windhover and God's Grandeur. Although not specifically connected with the Mass of the Day, several images have a probable origin with the Ember Days which occur four times a year at about the beginnings of each of the four seasons. They are "intended to consecrate to God the various seasons in Nature, and to prepare those who are about to be ordained." What some of these connections are will be considered in the readings of these two poems in the next chapter. Another more general connection between the liturgy and the poems was made by Bro. Adelbert Sheve, FSC, in a brief analysis of the sun image in Stanza 33 of the Deutschland (The Explicator, XVII, 60, June 1959). He noted that the sun image recurred also in Nos. 31, 37, and 38, and suggested that they referred to Psalm XVIII. This psalm appears at various times among the Introits of the Mass throughout the year. (Cf. my headnote.)

38

It should not go unnoticed that after Hopkins gained Bridges as an audience in the Spring of 1877, serious references to his poetry in letters to his parents virtually cease.

If we plot this information, then, and follow the notes on the rhythms of the sonnets which Hopkins himself has supplied us with, a clear pattern of increasing rhythmic complexity from "standard rhythm counterpointed" to "sprung and outriding rhythm" emerges. And if we accept this pattern as the rhythmic line with which Hopkins was working, the vaguely dated sonnets fall neatly into the positions I have given them. This pattern may best be demonstrated by first presenting my proposed sequence, together with the notes on their rhythms supplied by Hopkins, and then by commenting on this schema. The numbers refer, of course, to Gardner's Fourth Edition; asterisks before the numbers mark those sonnets dated to the day by Hopkins; daggers mark those sonnets dated to the month:

- *31) God's Grandeur. February 23, 1877. 'Standard rhythm counterpointed.'
- *32) The Starlight Night. February 24, 1877. 'Standard rhythm opened and counterpointed.' (Bridges explains that "'opened' means that both octave and sestet are opened with a 'sprung' line.")
- †33) Spring. May, 1877. 'Standard rhythm, opening with sprung leadings.' (probably May 1)
- 40) The Lantern Out of Doors. St. Bueno's '77, 'Standard rhythm, with one sprung leading and one line counterpointed.'
- †35) The Sea and the Skylark. May 1877. Rhyl. 'Standard rhythm, in parts sprung and in others counterpointed.'
- *34) In the Valley of the Elwy. May 23, 1877. 'Standard rhythm, sprung and counterpointed.'

- 39) The Caged Skylark. St. Bueno's 1877. 'Falling paeonic rhythm, sprung and outriding.'
- *36) The Windhover. May 30, 1877. 'Falling paeonic rhythm, sprung and outriding.'
- 37) Pied Beauty. Curtal Sonnet. Summer '77. 'Sprung paeonic rhythm.'
- *38) Hurrahing in Harvest. September 1, 1877. 'Sprung and outriding rhythm.'

It seems reasonable to expect in working with a poetic form as formally conditioned as the Petrarchan sonnet was by centuries of tradition, that Hopkins would mount his radical sprung rhythms carefully and by degrees onto the sonnet. In The Wreck of the Deutschland of the preceeding year, Hopkins had largely created his own poetic form, based on his study of the Pindaric ode, and had there employed his sprung rhythm freely, although many of the Wreck's lines are simply traditional anapests. But with the sonnet Hopkins felt the weight of tradition on him and so moved more carefully to graft his new rhythms onto the sensitive Italian sonnet.

Hopkins begins, then, with 'Standard rhythm counterpointed' in God's Grandeur, and then experiments in The Starlight Night with 'Standard rhythm opened and counterpointed.' "Opened" rhythm for Hopkins, as Bridges explains,
 39 means that both the octave and the sestet of the sonnet open with a sprung line. "They are not so very queer,"

Hopkins explains to his mother on March 1, "but have a few metrical effects, mostly after Milton, as in his--

Líght fróm ábove, fróm thě fountáin óf líght--

or

Gód háth pěrformed fór Hís peóplě óf óld--

or

Bút tó vāquish bý wísdóm héllísh wíles.

These rhythms are not commonly understood but do what nothing else can in their contexts." ⁴⁰ A month later, in his long ⁴¹ letter to Bridges on, among other things, his new rhythms, ⁴² he repeats the first and last examples and gives two more, remarking that "These are the lines, I suppose, which...folks think will not scan.... The choruses of Samson Agonistes are still more remarkable." And then he adds, "I think I have mastered them and may some day write on the subject.... I composed two sonnets with rhythmical experiments of the ⁴³ sort."

40 Letters III, p. 144. Scansion mine. The first and third examples are from Paradise Regained, the second is from Samson Agonistes. Although this last is incorrectly quoted by Hopkins, what is important is the rhythm in which he was interested.

41 Letter of April 3-8, 1877 (Letters I, pp. 32-40).

42 These are: "By thě wátěrs óf lífe, whěre'ér thěy sát" (Paradise Lost, Book XI, l. 79) and "Hóme tó hís móthěrs house prívate rěturned (Paradise Regained, Book IV, l. 639). Scansion mine. Cf. Ibid., p. 38.

43 Ibid.

Despite the fact that both of these sonnets (31 and 32) were altered, the rhythms have remained unchanged. And it is fairly easy to see what Hopkins found of interest in Milton's counterpointed rhythms, if we compare two of the given examples of Milton which find parallels in Hopkins. Compare Milton's

Gód hãth pẽrformed fór hĩs chĩldrẽn ỏf ỏld

with Hopkins'

Thẽ wórld ỉs chargẽd wĩth thẽ grãndẽur ỏf Gód.

And this from Milton:

Bỹ thẽ wãtẽrs ỏf lífe, whẽr'ẽr thẽy sãt

with Hopkins'

Gẽnẽrãtĩõns hãvẽ trỏd, hãvẽ trỏd, hãvẽ trỏd.

(or his earlier, somewhat harsher version)

Gẽnẽrãtĩõns hãvẽ hãrd trỏd, hãvẽ hãrd trỏd.

In The Starlight Night Hopkins takes a further step
In The Starlight Night Hopkins takes a further step
beyond coun⁴⁴ -----

Compare, for example,

Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!

with Milton's line ("which...folks think will not scan"):

Light from above, from the fountain of light.

But Hopkins did not want his line to be read as a bold mixture of trochees and iambs, as follows:

44 Counterpointing occurs, for example, in line 3: "Thẽ
bright bórghs, thẽ cĩrclẽ-cĩtãdẽls thẽrẽ! In "standard"
counterpointing, the second foot is the least inverted
foot after the fifth.

Lóok áť | thé stárs! | lóok, lóok | úp áť | thé skíes!

The rhythm, rather, is sprung, and its energy is only released if read as a sprung line, the way Hopkins insisted:

Lóok áť thé | stárs! | lóok, lóok | úp áť thé | skíes!

The first scansion stumbles and starts; the second rhetorically emphasizes the meaning, placing the stress where the meaning demands it. The opening line of the sestet has an even more pronounced sprung line:

Búy then | bíd then!--Whát?-- | Práyer, | pátiénce, álms, |
vows.

The Starlight Night has sixteen exclamations in its fourteen lines, which is profuse even for one as enthusiastic about the beauty of nature as Hopkins was. But one reason Hopkins may have been so free with his hyperboles was to demonstrate to the Victorian sensibility the need for sprung rhythm where a more conventional rhythm would not have been able to carry the electrical charge of the earnest yet enthusiastic speaking voice.

In point of rhythm, Spring is similar to The Starlight Night; it too employs sprung leadings grounded on a poem mainly in standard rhythm.⁴⁵ The Lantern Out of Doors has only "one sprung leading" (line 9) and "one line counter-⁴⁶pointed" (line 4). The Sea and the Skylark and In the Valley

45 Line 1 may be scanned, "Nóthing is sò beáutíful á s'príng": line 9 may be, "Whát is áll thís júice ánd áll thís jóy?." These are not rising rhythms (iambes) with an acephalous first foot, but sprung in their falling rhythms.

46 Line 9 is exactly like the sprung leadings of Spring, and is scanned "Death ór dístance sòón cónsumes thém: wínd...."

of the Elwy have almost identical rhythmic directions; they are both structured on standard rhythm, but both use sprung⁴⁷ rhythm and counterpoint more freely.

The Caged Skylark and The Windhover have almost exactly similar directions for their rhythms; here the standard iambic rhythm has been discarded altogether for a "falling paeonic rhythm, sprung and outriding." Paeonic rhythm, a stress followed by three unstressed syllables (/xxx), is a standard Greek foot, and Hopkins seems to have been holding onto this terminology for reasons of maintaining a seemingly formal stress structure. Pied Beauty has the amphibious rhythmic direction: "sprung paeonic rhythm." And finally, in his tenth sonnet, Hurrahing in Harvest, Hopkins breaks through to a full-blown sprung sonnet which carries the directions, "sprung and outriding rhythm."

In the note to this last poem, Hopkins explains the subtle difference between the smoother paeonic rhythm and the more heavily stressed outriding rhythm: "Take notice that the outriding feet are not to be confused with dactyls and paeons, though sometimes the line might be scanned either way. The strong syllable in an outriding foot has always a great stress

47 "[In] some of my sonnets I have mingled the two systems [counterpointed and sprung rhythm]: this is the most delicate and difficult business of all" (Letters I, p.45). These would be The Starlight Night, The Lantern Out of Doors, The Sea and the Skylark, and In the Valley of the Elwy.

and after the outrider follows a short pause. The paeon is easier and more flowing." ⁴⁸ The great beauty of the mimetic rhythms of The Windhover has frequently been applauded; however, the paeonic rhythm as a grounding is best suited for special effects, such as the glide or hurl of the kestrel.

But the sprung rhythm with its more emphatic stress is better suited to embody the charged emotion of the speaker. Take, for example, the second quatrain of Hurrahing in Harvest:

^xI|wá|lk, ^xí|líft úp, ^xí|líft úp|hé|art,| é|yes
 Dó|wn|á|ll thát|gló|ry ín thē|hé|avens tō|glé|an óur|sá|ví|our;
 Á|nd,|é|yes,|hé|art, wát|ló|oks, wát|lí|ps yét|gá|ve yóu á
 Ráp|tú|rous ló|ve's|gré|et|ing óf|ré|al|er, óf|ró|und|er ré|pl|ies?

Hopkins was, then, consciously working towards a new metric which would free his rhetoric. He was attempting to employ in his sonnets a rhythm which would smoothly yet precisely capture the stress of his personal poetic voice. Sprung rhythm, he explains to Bridges in late August,

is the nearest to the rhythm of prose, that
 is the native and natural rhythm of speech,
 the least forced, the most rhetorical and
 emphatic of all possible rhythms, combining,
 as it seems to me, opposite and, one wd. have
 thought, incompatible excellences, markedness
 of rhythm--that is rhythm's self--and natural-
 ness of expression.... My verse is less to
 be read than heard, as I have told you before;

- 48 Poems, p. 269. While outriding feet "belong to counter-pointed verse, which supposes a well-known and unmistakable or unforgettable standard rhythm" (Letters I, p. 45), Hopkins has in Hurrahing in Harvest assimilated outriding feet to a basic sprung-rhythm grounding.

it is oratorical, that is the rhythm
 is so. I think if you will study what
 I have here said you will be much more
 pleased with it and may I say? converted
 to it. 49

Time has sadly demonstrated that he had more than just
 Bridges to convert. In any event by September 1877 Hopkins
 had successfully mounted a sprung rhythm on the normally
 iambic pattern of the Italian sonnet. He had, in effect,
 created a viable and fresh rhetoric for a traditional form
 haunted by the powerful voices of nearly three and a half
 centuries⁵⁰ of sonnet writing.

- 49 Letter of 21 August 1877 (Letters I, p. 46). While
 Hopkins is here specifically defending his Deutschland
 ode, his comments apply equally to what he was attempt-
 ing in his sonnets.
- 50 Hopkins perfectly demonstrates the truth of T.S. Eliot's
 comment that, in "a perfect sonnet, what you admire is
 not so much the author's skill in adapting himself to
 the pattern as the skill and power with which he makes
 the pattern comply with what he has to say." (From "The
 Music of Poetry," a W.P. Ker Memorial Lecture delivered
 at the University of Glasgow, 24 February 1942.)

III. THE SONNETS OF 1877: THE POEM AS MANIFESTATION OF THE INCARNATION

God's utterance of Himself in Himself is
God the Word, outside Himself is this world.
This world then is word, expression, news of
God. Therefore its end, its purpose, its
purport, its meaning is God, and its life or
work to name and praise Him.

(Hopkins' note on Principium sive Fundamentum
of 7 August 1882)

Readings which consider only the discrete images of a poem no doubt have their value as criticism, but Hopkins' mature sonnets ask to be read as organic entities operating at once on the levels of natural perception and supernatural vision. All the images of any one of Hopkins' mature sonnets elucidate, although often in an oblique fashion, the theological insight at its white-hot core. It is a simple fact that Hopkins' poems must be read and re-read until the meaning--the religious insight of the poem--manifests or reveals itself. We are not at the crucial center of Hopkins if we only add our own extrinsic meanings and glosses, or demonstrate a string of literary or biblical allusions, or even untwist the complexity of a particular metaphor. If the sonnet does not "explode" in upon us, we have "fabled and missed" the central meaning. The 1877 sonnets, therefore, by their own sacramental and poetic logic, should and will

be read primarily to glean from them what Hopkins believed he had gleaned from nature: ontological and concrete traces of the Incarnation in the countryside of Wales.

For Hopkins, the central fact of the world is the mystery of the Incarnation, Christ the Word (the Logos or Idea) become flesh by assuming matter. The Incarnation is operative in time and space, in Christ's time as in Hopkins', in Galilee as in Wales. Therefore God's workings can be discerned in the phenomenological world; there is spiritual meaning, news of God everywhere for those who are properly receptive. Sometimes this central mystery is "instressed," "wafted" freely in on us by God, and then we become aware of His presence. At other times we must do all the work, we must attempt to "glean" Christ from out of our surroundings.

There is no guarantee that we will find Him, and it will do no good to fool ourselves--it is finally Christ who must reveal himself, and we who should "bless" when we "understand." But one point cannot be emphasized too strongly: this "gleaning" Christ is not a mythopoeticizing of nature, nor is it a vague impulse towards a Wordsworthian Romantic transcendentalism, although this did have its appeal for the young Hopkins. For Hopkins, Christ--"Ipse"--is himself manifested in and under the beauty of nature. And it is this emphasis that we must consider in reading many of his sonnets.

T. S. Eliot has called Hopkins a "nature poet," and this he is, for his artist's eye, influenced by his reading

of John Ruskin, carefully and continually scrutinizes the designs of nature. Besides his poetry, his notebooks, journals, correspondence, and even letters to the editor of Nature all show an honest and clear perceptivity of natural phenomena. But nature observation is not an end in itself for Hopkins. He is searching for real traces of God, of the presence of the Incarnation, and sometimes he has his vision in a flash of insight. His sonnets imitate this same two-fold natural perception and supernatural vision.

The sonnets may be read for their celebration of nature: the stars on a clear late-winter's night, the springing dawn, the gliding kestrel, the "piecemeal" wind-swept clouds. But something more--another meaning--sometimes impinges, even forces itself, upon the periphery of our vision in reading these sonnets. We know we are reading in The Windhover about a kestrel, but we become increasingly aware that the kestrel is not only analogically like Christ; in its existence, insofar as it shares this with Christ's existence, it is linked with Christ. Or again, in Hurrahing in Harvest, we are reading about fields and clouds, but Christ's "world-wielding" shoulder is suddenly glimpsed among the hills of the valley of the Clywd. And when the spiritual meaning is finally glimpsed, there is a far greater immediacy to the spiritual reality than any symbol is likely to discharge.

This immediacy springs upon us like a gestalt, bringing with it a psychological impact greater than we receive from our knowing the traditional associations of a religious symbol. Knowing, for example, that the Holy Ghost is traditionally represented as a dove does not satisfy the meaning of the final image of God's Grandeur in more than a superficial way. It is only when we see that the Paraclete is the dawning sun--its breast the warming sun, its wings the spreading rays--that the immediacy and force of the image strike the reader.

This approach is not to presume any final understanding of Hopkins' sonnets; they are rich enough and "charged" enough that there will always be something to say about them, and informative glosses will continue to appear. Furthermore, the thesis about the central importance of the Incarnation has been discussed with varying degrees of complexity and illumination in several places.¹

1. Maurice B. McNamee, S.J. ("Hopkins: Poet of Nature and of the Supernatural," in Immortal Diamond (New York, 1949) p. 238) writes, for one, "If even the natural manifestation of God in the works of creation has found continual voice in the songs of poets, we would expect that the astounding condescension and generosity of this supernatural communication of God in the works of grace would be a perennial source of limitless inspiration to Christian poets. [Dante, Milton, Patmore, Crashaw sang of it] but Hopkins sang of it more consistently and beautifully than any other English poet." Boyle quotes this passage (p. 195) and then presents a similar conclusion that "the life-giving power of divine life as it pours from the Heart of Christ, the ultimate significance of the Incarnation, is the basic key to all of Hopkins' mature work, as I see it." Again, Eugene Paul Nassar ("Hopkins, Figura, and Grace :

Of the importance of the Incarnation for Hopkins there have been apologists enough. But of how this insight informs the very structure and meaning of his sonnets, little has been said. What I am particularly stressing is that Hopkins' poems imitate the natural-supernatural structure which he believed all phenomena revealed, without compromising the reality of either.

At the outset, however, it should be made clear that not all of Hopkins' sonnets are equally successful in revealing to us Christ's presence in nature, and some of the later ones are concerned with other religious questions and stress other poetic practices. But the 1877 sonnets will very clearly yield this two-fold reading, and it is the special excellence of these poems that the words intentionally reveal the Word with, when at last it flashes, the immediacy of lightning.

God's Grandeur is one of those perennial favorites which has continued to intrigue critics and explicators.

- 1 (Cont'd.) God's Better Beauty," Renaissance, XVII (Spring 1965), 128-30, 136) argues that, for Hopkins, "concrete objects were structured by God to render forth information of God's will and purpose," and quotes the following passage from Erich Auerbach's Mimesis on Figura:

In this conception, an occurrence on earth signifies not only itself but at the same time another, which it predicts or confirms, without prejudice to the power of its concrete reality here and now. The connection between occurrences is not regarded as primarily a chronological or causal development but as a oneness with the divine plan, of which all occurrences are parts and reflections.

Robert Boyle, S.J., spends a large part of a good-sized chapter in his Metaphor in Hopkins refining "the ooze of oil/crushed" image. Indeed, it is an image which regularly finds its glosses and explanations in the scholarly periodicals. And the very fact of its recurrence testifies to both the attractiveness and the elusiveness of the image. Rightly, most commentators attempt to link up the image with a moral message about one or another attribute of God, but the connection often seems to be an afterthought. Or, as with Gertrude White's perceptive reading, the emphasis is placed on the secondary or symbolic level without fully² ensuring the reader of the ground or literal meaning.

From my own reading of Hopkins, it has become clear to me that all images of a particular sonnet (both their "thingness" and their dynamism) serve to illuminate each other, so that when Hopkins told Bridges that the image of the shook foil in God's Grandeur was of paramount importance, we must assume that this was no hyperbole and that he³ meant exactly what he said.

2 "God's Grandeur," Victorian Poetry, IV (Autumn, 1966), 284-287.

3 "With more truth might it be said that my sonnet might have been written expressly for the [shook foil] image's sake." Letter to Bridges of 4 January 1883 (Letters I, p. 168).

Syntactically, the first quatrain of the sonnet speaks of God's grandeur as being manifested in two ways, or, more precisely, as two parts of the same operation. God's grandeur, that is, His glory and benevolence, are concretely manifested in and through the phenomena of nature. But Hopkins does not mean this in any vague, Wordsworthian sense; it is demonstratively true for those⁴ psychologically prepared to receive this news of God.

God's grandeur is, appropriately enough, manifested in terms of light and density. His glory can reveal itself of its own accord and with lightning rapidity, or it may also congeal in us by trickling increment, gathering its charged meaning slowly under our applied pressure (our stress) until finally it discharges itself and flows outwardly. For God wills to appear to Paul in one fashion and to Austin in another. This image of the process by which God's grandeur is manifested is presented in terms of small, common objects, and is held in check in the structure of the poem while the speaker contrasts this grandeur with man's own grubby, grimy, earthbent inclinations.

- 4 Margaret Giovannini (Hopkins' "God's Grandeur," The Explicator XXIV (1966), 36) has pointed to the French grandeur with its scientific meaning of "extension in space, the quality by which an object can be geometrically measured." Read with this meaning in mind, she argues that the 'grandeur of God' "is made to refer to those attributes of God which are measurable, that is, concretely demonstrated, in the physical world. The poem becomes a commentary on the world as a source of real knowledge rather than a dim reflection of transcendental abstractions."

But the final tercet relies for its full impact on recalling the first quatrain:

Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs--
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

If we will picture for a moment the dawning sun before it breaks over the horizon, we may recall how the rich light seems precisely to "gather to a greatness" in density and brightness (one of the meanings of greatness is brightness), until the orb of the sun itself seems to spring forth, and then the sun flames out its light in strong rays like wings from its center. Hopkins is equating ontologically, not pantheistically or even analogically, the rising sun with the glorious manifestation of the Triune God in the Person of the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete who descended in the shape of a dove over Christ at his baptism in the Jordan, and who appeared in the form of tongues of flame on Pentecost Sunday.⁵

Hopkins tells us in the very first line that the "world is charged with the grandeur of God." In the same way that potential electricity is stored in clouds or trees,

- . Cf. Brooks Wright's similar but analogical reading of the final line of "God's Grandeur" in The Explicator, X (October, 1951), 5: "Indeed, the dove, sun, and tongues of flame are so intimately merged that one can almost say that the warm breast is the disk of the sun itself, and the bright wings its rays." Rather, insofar as the sun shares in God's Being, it reflects that Being. In matters ontological, Hopkins inclines towards Scotus rather than St. Thomas.

the world is "charged" with God's glory and needs only a proper receptor to discharge and epiphanize this grandeur.⁶ On 8 December 1881, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Hopkins wrote in his private spiritual notes, "All things therefore are charged with love, are charged with God and if we know how to touch them give off sparks and take fire, yield drops and flow, ring and tell of him."⁷

Secondly, the "world is charged with" telling of God's grandeur. It is for this reason that it was created, as the Jesuit Hopkins felt instressed so deeply: to give greater glory to God.⁸ And because the world can only give back, reflect, God's own glory, the word "charged" here has not two separate meanings, but rather one radical meaning seen from two points. The world must manifest the beauty of God, a beauty so radiant, so charged, that it needs only to be perceived aright to discharge its light upon us.

6 Cf. Hugh Pendexter III's suggestive comment that the "electrical potential of a charged earth-cloud and of a Leyden jar is...compared to the spiritual potential of a world overcast by the materialism of trade,... apparently gloomy but constantly on the brink of a glorious flaming out of spiritual energy" (The Explicator, XXIII (1965), 2).

7 Sermons, p. 195.

8 This reading is certainly suggested by the double stress Hopkins gave to "charged with."

But men do not "reck his rod." All generations, not only Hopkins' contemporaries in industrial, Victorian England, "have trod," have stamped or crushed the earth, but wrongly, so that it discharges neither meaning to man nor the glory to God for which it was created. "God is holiness," Hopkins explained in a sermon for 5 October 1879, "loves only holiness, cares only for it, created the world for it (which, without man, if churned or pressed would yield God none)."⁹

Tread ("trod") and "trade" have more in common than cynghanedd; they are related etymologically, for "trade" derives from "tread," and originally meant a "path traversed." Man has "seared" all with his plodding trade. By working God's creation without taking cognizance of the Creator, man withers and burns everything, unlike nature, which "flames out" God's glory. Man has "bleared, smeared" all, so that everything wears his "smudge," and hides God's brightness. These three quoted words all have the meaning of dimming, blurring, or lessening light, and all work counter to the images of natural light which reveal the Light. Man is "shod" like a workhorse; he is dull and insensitive to the richness and wetness of fresh soil as he treads his well-worn, down-looking path.

Nevertheless, "nature is never spent" (depleted, tired, and financially exhausted) because there "lives the dearest [sweetest, most expensive] freshness deep down things."

And now the deeper significance of the poem yields itself. For the "dearest" gift by which Nature itself, as well as man, is kept from becoming bankrupt is to be found in Christ's Redemption, literally, his buying-back-again of man and nature with his life. And although the world remains bent (out of its correct alignment, following its own inclinations or "bent"), some are also "bent" in anguished supplication, so that the world is also the Holy Spirit's bent nest (thick with rushes, reeds, or heather), over which Love broods, concerned about its young, hovering over them protectively.¹⁰

The liturgical overtones of this poem are plentiful. There is Psalm XVIII for Saturday of the Second Week in Lent, quoted in the headnote to this chapter:

The heavens show forth the glory of God:
and the firmament declares the work of his hands.

And there is the scriptural link in Leviticus XXIV, 1-3, read for the Mass during the Lenten Ember Days, of the crushed oil for the lamps shining before the sanctuary of Jahweh, which shall be administered always by His people--His generations:

10 For a deeper theological reading of the poem, cf. Gertrude White's comments, *op.cit.* She holds that the crushed oil refers both to Christ's agony on the Mount of Olives and to his crucifixion, when he was "literally crushed at Gethsemane and on the cross for the sins of men." Furthermore, the darkness refers to the darkness which eclipsed the world at Christ's death, and the glory of the rising sun refers to his resurrection, as well as to the Holy Ghost and the Father-Creator. Perhaps.

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee the finest and clearest of olives to furnish the lamps continually, without the veil of the testimony in the tabernacle of the covenant. And Aaron shall set them from evening until morning before the Lord, by a ¹¹ perpetual service and rite in your generations.

But all the generations have not listened and have followed their own bent.

The Christian themes of God's manifest glory and man's black indifference, of Christ's incredible condescension in becoming man and of the paradoxical greater glory he achieved in his great sacrifice, of Christ's continual concern for men, whom he bought back at the cost of his own life, all of these supply the underthought as well as the plainly stated thought of God's Grandeur. And it is these themes which recur, in one degree or another, in all of the 1877 sonnets.

The Starlight Night, as good as it is, seems a falling-off in complexity after God's Grandeur. The speaker looks up into the clear winter heavens and sees the stars flaming in the night with all the intensity of Van Gogh's Starry Night. Hopkins stresses the dynamic vibrancy of this diamond-bright world, with its "bright boroughs" and "circle-citadels" inhabited by "fire-folk sitting in the air." But then Hopkins does something which, to my knowledge, has not yet been pointed out. He radically changes the point of vision

11 Cf. Ronald Bates, op. cit., who quotes this scriptural reference.

and while we are still looking up, up has become "Down" in line four. The reason this has escaped comment, perhaps, is that we may also be said to be looking down a field, at a point on the distant horizon. But here Hopkins is deliberately reversing our vantage point, literally turning us on our heads (or perhaps lifting us "above" the sky) to see the unity of all creation and to glean Christ operative in all nature.¹² The dark heavens studded with stars become "dim woods" studded with diamond mines, as well as grey lawns studded with myriad droplets of quivering, translucent dew ("quickgold"). The stars vibrant in the heavens are the white undersides of "white-beams" and "airy abeles" stirred up and shaking brilliantly and unsteadily in the wind. Again, they are frightened doves scattering in the distance into so many flakes of light.

This beauty and this vision, the speaker tells us, "is all a purchase, all is a prize." But what currency will buy it? what is offered for it? the speaker asks, in auction-room terms. Not money, but "Prayer, patience, alms, vows." Insofar as we can possess fleeting beauty, we can best do this by sacrificing ourselves freely and by buying for ourselves eternal beauty--Christ. For all of this beauty was bought back by Christ's purchase, by his Redemption.

12 In my reading of Hurrahing in Harvest, which in its unmitigated enthusiasm is cousin to The Starlight Night, the same device of radically altering our common vision by turning things on their head is again used, to even better advantage.

Then the speaker, like a good auctioneer, asks us to look again at the starlight night, up for bids, which is like the light, white May blossoms of an "orchard," or like the spotted, golden, young willow leaves of March. These stars are the barn, the edifice; within is housed the garnered grain. The stars in the heavens ("This piece-bright paling") form a fence (paling) shutting home Christ and Mary and "all his hallows." But a paling also has ecclesiastical overtones; a "pale" is a territory within which one is spiritually protected. "These" in line 12 also refers to the "Prayer, patience, alms, vows" as well as to the stars. This ambiguity of the reference pronoun is, in fact, intentional, because the stars and the spiritual currency are identified. Like money, both the stars and the spiritual goods are desirable, but both are means of buying God. Now "May-mess" (May mass, Mary's month; as well as May feast) and March-bloom (Lent, with its fastings making us "sallow," but also giving us pieces of gold, rewarding us-- "mealed-with-yellow") become the exterior currency--the bright pieces ("piece-bright")--by which we too buy our way home.

The stars then, creation's beauty itself, provide a means, a bright currency, not for hoarding up, but for freely spending to buy eternal beauty--heaven--, of which the heavens themselves are but a reflection. The stars cannot

be bought, nor do we want them, they are husks, Hopkins says; what we do want, rather, is the beauty they reflect, the grain within, Christ.

Spring, while having excellences of its own, does not appear to have the complex underthought of the previous two sonnets. The octet is a beautiful, vital recreation of the joys of spring. And Hopkins, as usual, has a perceptive eye for nature. In line 2 he describes the species of lily called Solomon's Seal, which still grows profusely and wildly in the Valley of the Elwy.¹³ The sky-blue eggs of the thrush "look little low heavens," and the thrush's "echoing timber " (timbre) echoes through the timber of the woods, striking like lightning. The blossoming peartree touches the blue, which comes down to meet it; the blue "is all in a rush" and the lambs too are "racing." Hopkins is clearly identifying all of nature again; everything is dynamic. To do this he has carefully chosen his verbs and his adjectives derived from verbs: "shoot," "echoing," "rinse and wring," "strikes," "rush" of blue, and "racing lambs."

This spring is a strain, a fragment of what nature was before the Fall (for even Christ's Redemption did not

13 John Driscoll, S.J., notes that in a visit to St. Bueno's he saw the Solomon's Seals, whose heavy flowers hang down, at intervals of several inches, bending the stem into an arc, so that they "look so much like the spokes of a wheel" (The Explicator XXIV (1966), 26).

restore nature to the beauty of God's first kingdom) in "Eden garden." The speaker, intoxicated by this "juice" and "joy," prays that this innocence be not blasted:

"- - Have, get, before it cloy,
Before it cloud, Christ, lord, and sour with
sinning,
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,
Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy
the winning."

The syntactical beauty of this sentence is that it operates in two ways simultaneously. Paraphrase may best bring these dual and, in fact, interweaving meanings out: (1) "Oh, Christ, lord, have, get the innocent mind and Mayday in the young, before it cloy, clouds, and sours with sinning, for they, Mary's son, are your first choice and most worthy of winning (since they have not yet been blasted by sin)." But the lines also mean (2): "Oh, condition of innocence found in the young, have, get Christ, your lord, before this quality in you cloy, clouds, and sours because of sinning, for he, oh you creatures of innocence, is (or should be) your first choice and most worthy of winning." This syntactical ambiguity precisely reflects the interaction between Christ and man; this intertwining occurs again in the final lines of Carrion Comfort, composed eight years later:

Cheer whom though? the hero whose heaven-handling
flung me, foot trod
Me? or me that fought him? O which one? is it each
one? That night, that year
Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with
(my God!) my God.

Hopkins' theme of our buying Christ, because Christ
¹⁴
 first bought us, as seen both here and, not so obviously,
 in the previous two sonnets, is a thought he never tired of
 reiterating. It appears again in a sermon he preached two
 years later, on 31 August 1879:

[The] man or woman, the boy or girl, that
 in their bloom and heyday [their "Mayday"],
 in their strength and health give themselves
 to God and with the fresh body and joyously
 beating blood give him glory, how near he
 will be to them in age and sickness and wail
 their weakness round in the hour of death! 15

The Lantern Out of Doors deals with two of Hopkins'
 favorite themes; with the fascination he had for the striking
 physical, mental, or spiritual beauty of a person, and,
 secondly, with Christ's especial interest in those he
 bought with his life's blood. The speaker is arrested by a
 lantern moving away from him in the dark and begins to wonder
 "who goes there," where is that person "from" and "bound...
 where/With all down darkness wide, his wading [walking] light."

- 14 On this theme of who loved who first, see Hopkins' sermon
 (Sermons, p. 83) on Mary Magdalen. Here, in baroque fashion
 he attempts to unravel the fine thread between the proper
 cause and effect of Christ's love and man's response:

(Mary Magdalen) not only loved because she was
 forgiven, she was also forgiven because she loved:
 both things are true. When she came as a sinner,
 she had heard no forgiveness spoken, she came to
 get it, and to get it she shewed all that love:
 in this way then she was forgiven because she
 loved. On the other hand she knew of Christ's
 love, she knew he offered mercy to the sinner,...
 this love of his was first, mercy, forgiveness,
 offered forgiveness, on Christ's part came first
 and because he forgave her, that is offered to
 forgive her she loved: so then she loved because
 she was forgiven.

- 15 Sermons, p. 19. Cf. also Morning Midday and Evening
 Sacrifice written at the same time as this sermon.

Then, in the second quatrain, the speaker turns within, recalling that men with rare bright beauty in "mould or mind" rain like "Rich beams" against our much-thick and marsh air" until such chance happens that they are bought by either death (time) or distance (space). The solicitous speaker is painfully aware of his limitations; no matter how he should strain after these people, he cannot "be in at the end," cannot follow them after they cross the threshold of death. Moreover, he is bound even to forget them as other objects or other people come into his consciousness. The old maxim remains true, that "out of sight is out of mind."

The powerful and exact image which Hopkins uses for man's journey through this world should be examined more closely. The octet continues the same image, except that in the second half, the second quatrain, the image assumes a wider scope. The single winding light against the encircling "marsh air" gloom which the speaker sees moving in the valley is a fine, existential image for the unsteady flickering quality of life as we see it even in our nearest and dearest ones. No matter how we may try to pierce through the darkness, a particular life will at best present only a fragmented picture, with large gaps between bright flickerings, and with life's final phase enshrouded in isolation and darkness, the last act known only to God and the soul.

It is only in the final tercet that we have the Christian resolution of the sonnet. For there is someone who does care and who, furthermore, is without the speaker's

mortal limitations: Christ. For "Christ minds" (he cares; but also he minds or keeps his property constantly before him). It is to Christ's "interest" to follow man; like a prudent owner, he is interested in man because man is the interest constantly accruing from Christ's life investment. Because man is His property, it is to Christ's interest to avow what is good in him and to amend what needs repair. He is a lover--a jealous lover--who eyes his "rare" possessions, who is haunted by care for them, whose foot follows after his kind, his people (and does it kindly). For he is their ransom, having paid for them with his life, he is their rescue, "and first, fast, last friend." Christ, then, the Alpha and Omega, was in at the beginning and will be "in at the end."

The Sea and the Skylark was originally entitled Walking by the Sea and the original version, with its heavy imitation of Welsh cynghanedd, or consonant chime, internal rhyme, and assonance, was altered about 1883. These chimes are perhaps most obvious in the original second quatrain of Walking by the Sea, which reads:

Left hand, off land, I hear the lark ascend
With rash-fresh more, repair of skein and score,
Race wild reel round, crisp coil deal down to
floor,
And spill music till there's none left to spend.

There is an ingenious example of cynganedd in "wild reel round" and "coil deal down the"; rhyming in "hand" with "land", "more" with "score," "spill" with "fill," and

"hear," with "repair" and "there's." Consonance is present in "left" with "off," "rash" with "fresh," "more" with "repair," "skein" with "score," and so forth.¹⁶

And although Hopkins noticeably toned down the chiming in his later revision, he kept the finely-wrought unravelling image to vividly present the skylark's song. There are two aural images of natural freshness and regeneration developed in the octet--the sea ramping on the shore, and the skylark's song. The speaker walks westward along the shore (the place of composition is given as Rhyl, a small Welsh mining town which faces onto the Irish Sea). On his right, from the sea, the waves lift up and crash against the shore, like a playful steed with its forelegs raised, ramping. On his left, from the land, he hears "the lark ascend," singing its heart out as it spirals vertically upward. The moon is seen to "wind" its way in unending and ever-fresh cycles across the heavens, as the skylark's song is "re-winded" again and again to "pour and pelt music."

- 16 Writing to Bridges on 26-27 November 1882, Hopkins explains the meaning of these lines in great detail, adding: "There is, you see, plenty meant; but the saying of it smells, I fear, of the lamp, of salad oil, and what is nastier, in one line of Robert Browning. [It is impossible to be sure, but perhaps the line he is referring to is "Race wild reel round, crisp coil deal down to floor," which has something of the clogged consonantal tongue-twisting of Browning's "Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?" in his "Rabbi Ben Ezra" (1864).] I felt even at the time that in the endless labour of recasting those lines I had lost the freshness I wanted and which indeed the subject demands. 'As a dare-gale skylark' is better in this respect" (Letters I, p. 164).

In the sestet, the speaker turns to "this shallow and frail town" which is shamed by "these two," who "Being pure," ring out their contrast with the town. And the town is "sordid" (dirty, filthy) and "turbid" (heavy with smoke and mist, but also confused and muddled in thought), fitting epithets to describe the over-emphasis of even this small Welsh mining village on profits at the expense of health, beauty, and especially human dignity. For man has soiled more than his skin. The argument, however, is more complex than this. Critics who have smiled at Hopkins' Christian-social ideals as being naive have neither understood Hopkins nor his ideals. His ideals are in the tradition of Victorian social writers like Carlyle, Ruskin, and Dickens, reinforced by the spirit of the great social encyclicals of Leo XIII, and by his own contact with missionaries among the poor, of whom he has to become one himself.

We, the speaker laments, we are the pride of life, we are the crown of creation, "cared-for" by our Creator, and it is we who have "lost that cheer and charm of earth's past prime," that is, in our post-Edenic world, where spiritual values have been passed over. It is not the mine-working which is sordid; it is rather that in this burrowing into the ground we find an expression of the modern condition of man. For man has also, in the post-Darwinian era, attempted to see himself, his own "make" as only a naturally evolved higher species of animal without an immortal, personal soul. If, therefore, his very exist-

ence is a matter of chance, and man is not "life's pride," in his despair he also finds no value in his "making," his works. Therefore he replaces the dignity of work with the dreadful working conditions of the creature masses, kept in subjection by a utilitarian economic philosophy based on personal selfishness rather than on communal welfare. Men live out their lives appropriately in the dust of the brick tenements and factories which blight England, and they return to the dust from which they came and from which they could not escape in life.

With this utilitarian philosophy, man's end is to return to dust, as he drains away steadily ("fast") to the primordial "slime" from which his life, according to the Darwinians, began. But there is also a suggestion of ore, man's making, also disintegrating into ore-dust and ore-slime, for man and his works (including his offspring) are identified by the same word ("make and making"), since, at bottom, they would be the same. Man has identified himself with his industry and trade, and is chillingly satisfied, when his vein is worked, to be quietly reduced to a similar annihilation. "I see the Academy no more," Hopkins wrote to his mother three years before, "but among the last things I read in it was Tyndall's address. I thought it interesting and eloquent, though it made me 'most mad.' It is not only that he looks back to an obscure origin, he looks forward with the same content to an obscure future--

to be lost in the infinite azure of the past' (fine phrase¹⁷ by the way)."

What is saddest for Hopkins, however, is that this philosophy has destroyed man's "cheer and charm," those regenerative qualities which even the lower creation has-- the ramping sea and the singing lark. Man has willed to follow the deterministic philosophies of the times and to accept every degradation to his own human dignity, even as nature itself gives the lie to this pessimistic philosophical view.

In the Valley of the Elwy is also concerned with the failure of man to recognize and live under the sway of God. Hopkins' "Englishness" comes through in this sonnet, as he compares the very air (in both senses of atmosphere and manner) of an English home, and its correspondingly good people, to the beautiful air of Wales and the failure of its "inmates" to correspond. Writing from Oxford two years after he had written the sonnet, Hopkins explained its structure to Bridges in this way: "The kind people of the sonnet were the Watsons of Shooter's Hill, nothing to do with the Elwy... The frame of the sonnet is a rule of three sum wrong, thus: As the sweet smell to those kind people so the Welsh landscape is NOT to the Welsh; and then the author and principle of all four terms¹⁸ is asked to bring the sum right."

17 Letter of 20 September 1874 in Letters III, pp. 127-28.

18 Letter of 8 April 1879 in Letters I, pp. 76-77. Shooter's Hill is in Blackheath, six miles southeast of London. What kindness these people showed to Hopkins we do not

The air is the central image of the poem, as it is also in The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air we Breath, written six years later. The speaker again begins by giving us a specific composition of place; once he was treated well, through no merit of his own. There is a cordial (warm, from the heart--cors) air, literally a smell of the place "Fetched fresh, as I suppose, off some sweet wood." It is not only "fetched" in being gathered, but the sweet air of nature also provides the very atmosphere of the home with its own "fetch," (a dialect word for "spirit") with its own penates. It forms a hood, a protective and gentle covering for its inmates, as a nesting bird will for its unhatched young, or the mild spring will for her "new morsels." The atmosphere of kindness pervading the house is literally incarnate and manifested by its very air.

So too, in his beloved "wild Wales" there is in the heady scents of Spring a protective and gentle covering. But while nature does her part, "Only the inmate does not correspond," neither corresponding in the sense of responding to the beauty of Wales and thence to the beauty of its author, nor corresponding in the mathematical sense of agreement. The equation will not work out:

<u>sweet smell</u>		<u>sweet Welsh landscape</u>
	::	
kind inmates		? Welsh inmates

- 18 (Cont'd.) know, but it is feasible that he saw them when he was home sometime in 1875, for on June 10 of that year he writes his mother: "Remember me very kindly to Mr. Manley, and to Watson and Tom Turner when next seen--and all Christen soules" (Letters III, p. 134).

God is then addressed as both "lover of souls" (mercy, charity) and as judge, "swaying considerate scales" (heavenly justice). There may be an allusion here to the constellation Libra (con + sidera = made up of stars; and Libra - scales), in which case the majesty and grandeur of God is presented against the backdrop of the Universe as a counterbalance to God's mercy. And the Creator is asked to complete the sum by bestowing on the Welsh kindness and cordiality, in short, an abundance of Christian charity. For though he is "mighty a master," God is also a "father and fond." That is, as a father he loves his people, it would seem, to the point of fondness, of "foolishness." And it is only in this way that God can make that intractable equation finally "come right." The final line is all the more aesthetically pleasing because it is also a theologically exact phrasing of God's complete identity and unity with what appear to be disparate attributes: "Being mighty a master, being a father and fond." God is both justice and mercy, master and father; the parallel phrasing beginning with God's essential quality, his name for himself--"Being"--superimposes the two attributes upon each other as complementary, ending on that finest chord and final note of love.

The Caged Skylark is a perennial favorite among teachers and students because of the relative ease with which it lends itself to explanation. Hopkins makes a comparison, as with the last sonnet, between four terms: [1] 'Man's

mounting spirit in [2] his bone-house, mean house "is compared to [3] a dare-gale skylark scanted [4] in a dull cage." The captured song-bird lives now not even recalling its original nesting place deep in the woods; man lives for the most part in drudgery, living out from day-to-day his life, looking only to his work for the day, like a day-laborer.

The second quatrain continues the analogy to include the range of moods through which both man's spirit and the bird struggle. Both are sometimes up and sometimes down; both sing sweetly; but both may wring against their own prisons, man against his imprisoning flesh and the bird against his cage, either out of fear or rage.

Even the free skylark cannot always be singing aloft; he too returns for rest to his "own nest, wild nest, no prison." And so does man's spirit need a place for rest, for even "when found at best," in the resurrection of body and soul, he will be "flesh-bound." But then his body will be no bone-house or "mean (lowly, half-way) house," but "uncumbered." His body will be to him as the wild nest to the free skylark--"no prison." To present immediately and forcefully the condition of the resurrected body, the spirit's best home, Hopkins employed one of his finest and most vivid analogies:

meadow-down is not distressed,
For a rainbow footing it nor he for his bones risen.

Just as fresh, wet "meadow-down" (perhaps the grain) is not weighed down, made slack, troubled, or unbound by a rainbow which rests upon it, neither is man's spirit--"he"--distressed or weighed down or troubled by his "bones risen." Then, like the rainbow itself (a symbol of hope),¹⁹ the body will be weightless, beautiful, luminous, no longer bound by time or space, a fitting home for the spirit. The analogy is felicitous, and so too is the epithet "flesh-bound," for while man's soul by its very nature requires the body to be complete, that body, that flesh, "bounds," jumps, leaps freely, is dynamic, and neither "droop[s]," nor lives now "day-labouring-out life's age."

Referring to The Wreck of the Deutschland, Robert Bridges warned his readers to circumvent this dragon at the entrance to Hopkins' poetry and to go another way. There was no real dragon in that poem, but there is another dragon, "a billion times told" bulkier, which has been conjured up by two generations of critics and which sits before the gateway to The Windhover, the poem Hopkins thought "the best thing I ever wrote."²⁰ This undoubtedly complex sonnet has had so many glosses in the past forty years that the sheer indiscriminate proliferation makes it difficult to separate the grain from the chaff. Discriminating students of Hopkins are

19 Cf. Margaret Giovannini, "Hopkins' 'God's Grandeur'," The Explicator, XIV (March 1956), 35.

20 Letter of 22 June 1879 to Bridges, Letters I, p. 85.

amazed and especially irritated at the flimsy webs of introspection spun out from this poem from very little substance; there are usually some brilliant hits scattered throughout too many pages of clear misses. There will be no attempt here to collate the explications of this poem, which would be a large task in itself. But there are, thankfully, several interesting and competent readings of ²¹The Windhover which do the poem justice.

As with the majority of his other sonnets, Hopkins maintains the original eight-six structure and resolution of the Italian sonnet. Briefly, the structure is as follows: in the octet, the speaker observes the majestic flight ²²pattern of the kestrel; in the first tercet of the sestet,

21 One reading with which I agree most in approach and meaning is the reading of F.X. Shea, S.J., "Another Look at 'The Windhover,'" in Victorian Poetry, II (Autumn 1964), pp. 219-239. Fr. Shea points out that "an agreed principle of hermeneutics is that further meanings be firmly grounded on the literal." Hopkins' poetic, he believes (as I do), was based on "philosophic realism and exact rendering of the object," and that while "classical theoreticians of poetry saw objectivity as merely a necessary condition of writing, Hopkins saw it as the almost unattainable end to be striven for, mightily and passionately."

22 The marvellous rhythmic imitation of the windhover in flight has been commented on frequently by critics of the sonnet. It should be emphasized just how closely Hopkins' eye was on a real windhover in flight, a sight he could have seen from the Rock Chapel, located a half-mile from the central complex of St. Bueno's, on the slopes of "dark Manaefa." It was here that the Jesuit seminarians traditionally assisted at morning Mass throughout May. Of the chapel Hopkins noted in his journals, "The Rock is a great resort of hawks and owls." (Cf. Eugene R. August, op. cit., p. 465.) Prof. Thomas P. Harrison, who has written many articles and books on the birds mentioned

the kestrel changes from glide to downward swoop. Its wings buckle in a V-shape, and the speaker remarks on its beauty. Then, in the final tercet the speaker comments that this earthward buckling is not surprising, for even a V-shaped plough buckling up the earth will flame out more brightly, as will seemingly dead embers when they collapse, buckle through the grate, and burst into vivid fire.²³ This, prosaic and brief as it is, is what a literal reading of the poem

- 22 (Cont'd.) by such English poets as Chaucer and Spenser, has accurately described the flight of this small twelve-to-fourteen inch falcon ("The Birds of Gerard Manley Hopkins," Studies in Philology, LIV [July 1957], 458).

In hovering, the kestrel

necessarily faces into the wind and flies with the exact velocity of the wind; to remain stationary with reference to the ground, the bird sharply depresses its tail, which increases the lifting surfaces. By flying forward shortly with glide and beat or by shooting downwind, then turning suddenly into the wind, it shifts the area to be inspected. When it sights food, it glides swiftly down at an angle, then rises to begin again hovering over a new spot.

If we follow Prof. Harrison's explanation of the kestrel's flight, which, he assures us, is a relatively common sight in rural areas and is similar to the flight pattern of the American sparrow-hawk, it follows the exact pattern of ll. 1-10 of The Windhover. It is also interesting to note that the kestrel is blue-gray above ("blue-bleak" as are embers and the steel plow) and russet red beneath, so that in swooping in the brilliant morning sun it would appear to be a buckling ember.

- 23 It is not by accident that I stress the word "buckle," which in this poem acts as the focal point for the entire sonnet, both on the natural and spiritual levels. In his Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Classical Background and Critical Reception of His Work (Baltimore, 1966), Todd Bender has demonstrated his thesis that Pindar's poetic method of using a key image, around which otherwise seemingly disparate images revolve like spokes around a

reveals. And, as I have tried to show in the other sonnets, this must be first insisted on. As Shea explains, "The realism of Hopkins drove him to place meaning in things first, to seek to utter things in such terms that they remain fully themselves while revealing the very pattern²⁴ of being in all its orders."

And of course in this sonnet the religious significance is so continually bursting through the natural scene that many commentators have spent most of their time with the secondary meaning without grounding it in the perceptual world. The essential religious meaning here expressed seems to me to be the earthly beauty of the God-man Christ. By self-mastery he was able to keep himself in perfect balance with all of the external forces to which he was subjected. And, in those three years of his public

- 23 (Cont'd.) hub, was also employed by Hopkins. He concludes that this method not only helps to organize the far-flung images of the Deutschland, but may help to explain other of Hopkins' poems. Of The Windhover he notes that the real subject of the poem is stated only in the dedication: that when the Jesuit novice dedicates himself to Christ, as St. Ignatius says, he buckles on the armor of the Lord and thus becomes more honorable in God's sight. So the hawk is more beautiful when it buckles or falls, so the plough is shined when it buckles or falls, so the ash at last flashes as it buckles and crumbles away to death. The unity of this poem exists in an extended pun on the word buckle.... The Pindaric "constellation" of The Windhover is the buckle around which the imagery clusters (pp. 95-6).

24 Op. cit., p. 239.

ministry, he seemed always to be victorious against those who came out to oppose him. For Hopkins, soon ready to begin his own public ministry, the example of Christ is enough to make his heart both withdraw "in hiding" and yet desire to emulate "the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!"

And yet, for all of Christ's "Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume," the speaker is drawn to that final sacrifice of Christ on the cross. It is in his giving of his life for his people, in the V-shaped collapse of his out-pinned arms, when his body buckled under its own weight, it is then that a fire (the unleashed graces of Redemption for billions of souls) "a billion/Times told lovelier, more dangerous" breaks from this gallant knight, God's minion, His dauphin, this chevalier.

There is nothing really strange here, the speaker now comments, for those who keep face forward and hands to the plough, although their lives, like Hopkins', seem to have no more adventure or seeming consequence than that of a day-laborer or a plow-horse. For they also make themselves receptors of the Light. Even "blue-bleak embers," with the fire all within (it is a fitting image for the ideal of St. Ignatius Loyola), when they buckle, as did the "blue-bleak" corpse of the dead Christ, will fall (die), and gall

themselves (Christ's great sacrifice was a self-willed breaking; he also took gall--common coarse wine--on the cross). But they will also "gash gold-vermilion," flaming into red and gold, as Christ's blood flames out into gold, for it was this great sacrifice, which he wears so proudly, that was the price for buying men back again.

Against the dappled-dawn-drawn natural light-- the necessarily variegated light of God's creation, and not the intense, terribly blinding light of God in Himself-- Christ's "brute beauty," his human beauty, is breath-taking. This was especially so to Hopkins, who was sensitive to physical beauty and wrote one of his best sermons on Christ's mortal beauty. But just as the dynamic fire of the bird is

- 25 Cf. the entire sermon prepared for 23 November 1879 for his congregation at Bedford Leigh in Sermons, pp. 34-38. Especially pertinent to The Windhover are the following passages:

I leave it to you, brethen, then to picture him, in whom the fulness of the godhead dwelt bodily, in his bearing how majestic, how strong and yet how lovely and lissome in his limbs, in his look how earnest, grave but kind. In his Passion all this strength was spent, this lissomness crippled (buckled), this beauty wrecked, this majesty beaten down. But now it is more than all restored, and for myself I make no secret I look forward with eager desire to seeing the matchless beauty of Christ's body in the heavenly light.... Poor was his station, laborious his life, bitter his ending: through poverty, through labour, through crucifixion his majesty of nature more shines. (pp. 36-37; italics mine).

The tremendous condescension of the Incarnation is also figured in the image of the small kestrel. Ronald Bates ("The Windhover," Victorian Poetry, II (Winter), pp. 63-64) notes that in falconry "there was a strict hierarchy of rank and degree.... [At] the very bottom--lower even than priest, holy water clerk, yeoman and poor man--(was) the knave or servant. The falcon designated for this class was the kestrel." Cf. also Sir Toby Belch's speech (Twelfth Night, I, iii, 37-38): "He's a coward and a coystrell that will not drink to my niece till his brains turn o' th' toe like a parish top."

best caught as it plunges downward so that the fire seems to generate from the bird itself and not from the sun, so in falling, Christ's especial beauty, as he offered himself up to his Father, generates a more brilliant flame by his human willingness to make the sacrifice. And just as it is the sun's light always on the kestrel, it is God's grace continually sustaining Christ-as-man. The Windhover is a tremendously complex poem. Hopkins could go no further in the direction of recreating in words the spiritual significance of a natural phenomenon. It is perhaps for this reason that Hopkins next experimented, in a radical manner, with the very structure of the sonnet, again, it is probable, for reasons of a new rhythm.

Pied Beauty is a curtailed or Curtal-sonnet, of ten and one half lines, with the critical ratio between the "octet" and "sestet" carefully maintained. Hopkins defended his Curtal-Sonnets (Peace and Ash-boughs are the others) in his "Author's Preface," written probably in 1883, as "constructed in proportions resembling those of the sonnet proper, namely $6 + 4$ instead of $8 + 6$, with however a halfline tail-piece (so that the equation is rather $12/2 + 9/2 = 21/2 = 10\frac{1}{2}$).²⁶" Another way of saying this would be simply to make "come right" the equation $\frac{8}{6} :: \frac{6}{x} = (8x = 36) = (x = 4\frac{1}{2})$.

Pied Beauty is beautiful in its, for Hopkins, relative simplicity. It is a prayer, a meditation, a

26 Poems, p. 49.

"Laus tibi Deus"for the variety and individuality of all of creation,which is founded on the eternal bedrock of permanence, on Being itself. And yet, although there is such variety, there is also a subtle interweaving of identity, as individual patterns are likened to other individual patterns.

In the first line the speaker sets the theme: "Glory be to God for dappled things." And then, in the rest of the first part of the sonnet, presents specifically variegated objects: dappled skies like dappled cows; the rows of rose-colored spots on trout; the beautiful coal-fire glow of the inner husks of freshly fallen chestnuts identified with coals themselves; the wings of finches; the dappled landscape; and "all trades, their gear and tackle and trim."

In the second part, the speaker continues to praise God for nature's variety, but now he does so in terms of abstract classification and by pairing opposites:

All things counter, original, spare, strange
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim.

For all of these are the dappled creation, the variegated lights, of the uncreated and eternal, pure, white dome of God's radiance:

He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

The rhythm, the slow measured tempo of those final two words which take up, in musical time, a full three beats, has a quality of serenity, of rest, of finality which is brought out perfectly by the poetic form itself. Even if that form cannot be completely defined as a sonnet,²⁷ still it is as perfect a prayer in miniature as the ancient canticle of Daniel, which Hopkins would have recited so often in his Office:

Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino:
laudate et superexaltate eum in saecula.
Benedicite aquae omnes quae super caelos sunt Domino:
benedicite omnes virtutes Domini Domino.

Hurrahing in Harvest, probably the last of the sonnets of 1877, although much admired, has received relatively little attention by the explicators. It is an enthusiastic performance; its rhythm, correctly read, captures the

- 27 Apart from my defense of the form of Pied Beauty as allowing for the resonance, finality, and resolution of the last line, I am in agreement with the remarks of Prof. Paul Fussell, Jr. (Poetic Meter and Poetic Form (New York, 1966), p. 132) that neither this poem nor Peace

justifies itself as a structure--neither performs the fundamental Petrarchan action which is implicit in the formal disproportion of their two parts, an action of complication and resolution.... Indeed the two parts of "Pied Beauty," despite their difference in weight and shape, are pretty much of a piece in substance.... [The] only thing that takes place in the white space between the two parts is an ascent to a slightly higher plateau of abstraction.

ecstatic yet controlled voice of the speaker. But the meaning is more complex, more radical, more surprising, than has so far been demonstrated. The sonnet contains a fleeting glimpse of Christ's presence in nature which is more exciting, I believe, than the accepted reading of Christ's "world-wielding shoulder" being glimpsed in the "azurous hung hills."

Attracted by the harvested fields and the fragmented cirrocumulus clouds, the speaker looks hard at nature to "glean our Saviour." In his choice of words, Hopkins is clearly seeking to identify the fields of cut grain and their "barbarous" (wild, bearded, barbed) stooks, the bundled sheaves of the freshly cut grain, with the wind-walks and the silk-sack, "Meal-drift" clouds. Furthermore, there is the verbal and adverbial confluence of "the stooks arise/Around; up above, what wind-walks," which forces the image of grain upward, and the cloud image downwards.

In lines 6 and 7, the merging of field with heavens is reinforced:

28

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean
our Saviour.

- 28 The rhythm of this sprung line Hopkins may have first heard suggested in Swinburne's halting "Lift up thy lips, turn round, look back for love," from the opening line of the first of his Hermaphroditus sonnets. Cf. also John, 5, 35. "Why, lift up your eyes, I tell you, and look at the fields, they are white with the promise of harvest already."

Again, the tremendous power and yet apparent airiness of the gravitational forces supporting the world would be "as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet." This gestalt, once seen, explodes upon the reader in the same manner as the original vision explodes upon the speaker of the poem.

Such gleanings of Christ were always here, needing, "wanting," but the proper receiver--a person "wanting," desiring, to find God in nature. When these two, the (for Hopkins) real presence of God in nature and the receptive human, "once meet," when they converge, and are harmoniously identified,"

The heart rears wings bold and bolder
And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for
him off under his feet.

Like the ending of Spring, lines 12-14 are brilliant in their simultaneous double reading. They mean that, when the beauty of the Incarnation and the beholder meet and greet, the heart half-hurls the world off from under the beholder's feet in an ecstatic vision. But the lines also mean that the heart, in glimpsing Christ, is so drawn to him that the heart half-hurls earth for the sake of Christ to place it under Christ's feet, for his greater honor and glory. The world is half-hurled and not fully hurled because Christ is present in the world. Again there is the suggestion in the "heart rears wings" of the plod-horse being transformed into the airy steed Pegasus, rising above its surroundings, a transforming image Hopkins perhaps implied in the "plow

down" image of The Windhover, and used to great effect, as we shall see, in Felix Randal. Here too there is the suggestion in "hurls earth for him off under his feet" of being literally turned on one's head to see the world not as we normally see it, but from a radically new and exciting viewpoint. With Hurrahing in Harvest, vision and voice meet in a mature sensitive union. And it is with this poetic style that Hopkins was to continue in his next series of sonnets.

These are the extremely powerful, necessarily complex, and dynamically beautiful ten sonnets which Hopkins composed between the late winter and late summer of 1877. They are intricately bound up with several intertwined factors: Hopkins' deep love for the Welsh countryside, his approaching ordination after nine years of preparation, the crystallization of rhythms which had been haunting his ear for years, and the need of a priest-poet to sing of God's creation. And when these delicate threads were unwoven abruptly with Hopkins' transferral to smoky Chesterfield, his "muse turned utterly sullen" for many months, and a full year and a half were to pass before he could coax her into creating another sonnet.

IV. THE BACKGROUND AND AN ANALYSIS OF THE OXFORD
SONNETS OF 1879: "FORGED FEATURE...ABRUPT SELF"

"I have two sonnets soaking, which if they shd. come
to anything you shall have."¹ This, the first hint we have
that Hopkins had resumed his writing of sonnets after having
left Wales in October 1877, is part of a long letter he
wrote to Bridges from St. Giles', Oxford, under the date 26
February 1879. The second large group of sonnets, those which
he wrote at Oxford in 1879, begin in early Lent at almost
exactly the same time as his 1877 sonnets had begun. And,
although he later confessed to his friend and Oxford Univer-
sity contemporary, Francis de Paravicini, that he was not
very happy during his stay at Oxford,² a complaint he reit-
erated both to Baillie and Bridges,³ 1879 was nevertheless a
productive year for his poetry. Here, besides the poignant

1 Letters I, p. 73.

2 "At Oxford, in my last stay there, I was not happy, but
there were many consolations.... Often I was in a black
mood, 'but still,' I used to say to myself like the people
in Euripides, 'I see the sun,' not only the literal sun
but nature and the many things which make Oxford attractive"
[Letter of 15 June 1881 in Letters III, pp. 62-63].

3 Cf. letter to Baillie of 22 May 1880 in Letters III, pp. 244-
45, and letter to Bridges of 22 October 1879 in Letters I,
p. 97.

lyric Binsey Poplars, the meditative narrative The Bugler's First Communion, the exhortative lyric Morning Midday and Evening Sacrifice, and several fine fragments, Hopkins composed six more sonnets.

Not that his muse had been silent altogether before this. He was sub-minister at Mount St. Mary's College in Chesterfield from mid-October of 1877 until late April of the following year, and his first assignment after his ordination had been largely that of a "catch-all" administrative assistant. Here his "muse turned utterly sullen," and it was not until the foundering of the Eurydice on 24 March 1878, with the loss of two hundred English sailors and trainees, that he was "sensibly moved" to write again, and composed his The Loss of the Eurydice, more restrained and less than half the length of the Deutschland, but still an impressive performance. About April 27, Hopkins was ordered to Stonyhurst in Lancashire to teach Latin and Greek to those young men preparing for entry into the non-sectarian University of London. Within a few weeks of his arrival, he wrote his lovely Marian lyric, The May Magnificat, with its sensitive, punning humor reminiscent of Herbert:

Their magnifying of each its kind
With delight calls to mind
How she did in her stored
Magnify the Lord.

It was here at Stonyhurst, probably in May, that Hopkins received the news that his second wreck poem had also foundered on the shoals of The Month's editorial policy of

literary conservatism and would not be published. Within a month he was consoling another hidden poet, who had been published but who had been unjustly neglected. Having learned from a recent review that one of his Highgate teachers, the Reverend Richard Watson Dixon, had just published the first volume of his History of the English Church from the Abolition of the Roman Jurisdiction, Hopkins sent a delicately worded letter to the Anglican curate whose poetry he had so admired as a young man. Hopkins wrote to Dixon not so much to congratulate him on his recent publication, for he cared little for reading history, but to tell the Canon how much he had admired his poetry, and to console him for his failure to gain the recognition Hopkins thought the poetry itself deserved. This completely unexpected letter was indeed welcomed by Dixon. In his Oxford undergraduate days in the mid-fifties he had been intimately associated with the Brotherhood, which included Burne-Jones and William Morris, and had been a friend of Rossetti's. Now, widowed only a short time, at forty-five he was the obscure curate of an undistinguished country living in Northern England. Dixon responded gratefully to this providential admirer, and thus began the first exchange of a correspondence that ended only with Hopkins' death. In return for his kindness, Hopkins found in Dixon his most perceptive and admiring critic, and Dixon enters here as a new factor in influencing Hopkins' poetry.

In early July, about ten weeks after he had come to Stonyhurst, Hopkins was sent as Select Preacher to the Farm Street Church in West London, near Grosvenor Square, apparently because Fr. Gallwey, the ex-Provincial who had been so kind to Hopkins during his seminary days, was stationed there and wanted Hopkins under his wing. Hopkins did some mediocre preaching (including an uncomfortable Sunday ordeal with Bridges sitting in the pews), and he visited Bridges at Bedford Square when he could, although that was infrequently. But, although he presented Bridges with some of his 1877 sonnets, in his five months at Farm Street he seems to have written no poetry.

Between September 1877 and late February 1879, then, a period of just under a year and a half, Hopkins wrote just two poems, and these two were written within six weeks of each other. It was at Oxford, which was both dear and strange to him now (an attraction and repulsion shared also by Newman), and where so many of his earlier poems had been written, that his creative vein began to flow. For it was here, on about 9 December 1878, that Hopkins was transferred. This time he was sent as Preacher to St. Aloysius' Church, St. Giles', Oxford, where he worked for ten months. And although during his first three months there he seems to have written no poetry, with late February and the promise of Spring his muse revived. Duns Scotus's Oxford and Henry Purcell, the "two sonnets soaking" which Hopkins mentioned to Bridges in his letter of late February, initiate

a series of six sonnets. While not as impressive a group as his 1877 sonnets, nevertheless this second group of Oxford sonnets have among them new excellences of form, and at times they reach a more intense fusion of intellectual and spiritual complexity than do some of the Welsh poems.

The first of the six sonnets, Duns Scotus's Oxford, is written in the sprung and outriding rhythm which Hopkins had employed in his last sonnet of 1877, Hurrahing in Harvest. But Henry Purcell, written in sprung alexandrine lines, is a marked departure from all of Hopkins' earlier sonnets, which, for all of their experiments, maintain a "standard" five-stress line. Yet, having made the break, he continued to employ this line, writing Peace in "standard alexandrines." And Felix Randal, composed at Liverpool a year after the Purcell sonnet, is also written in wonderfully free sprung and outriding alexandrines. Hopkins wrote three of his Oxford sonnets, however, in a strict counterpointed iambic pentameter, or what he called "common rhythm counterpointed": The Candle Indoors, The Handsome Heart, and Andromeda.

The manuscripts of Duns Scotus's Oxford and Henry Purcell, although the poems were conceived in February, are dated March and April respectively. Duns Scotus, of course, was Hopkins' favorite philosopher, as is abundantly clear from his journals, his spiritual notes, and from Hopkins' poetry itself. "After all I can, at all events a little read Duns Scotus," Hopkins had written Bridges from Wales in February 1875, "and I care for him more even than Aristotle

and more pace tua than a dozen Hegels." ⁴ His discovery of the Doctor Subtilis Hopkins had made in the August vacation of 1872, when he came upon Scotus' two volume commentary on Peter Lombard in the Badeley Library at Stonyhurst's House of Philosophy. In his journal of 3 August for that year he wrote:

At this time I had first begun to get hold of the copy of Scotus on the Sentences (the Opus Oxoniense) in the Baddely [sic] library and was flush with a new stroke of enthusiasm. It may come to nothing or it may be a mercy from God. But just then when I took in any inscape of the sky or sea I thought of Scotus. 5

Hopkins had alluded to Scotus in The Loss of the Eurydice as the "one" (l. 103), and gave his own gloss on the line in a postcard to Bridges on April 8, from Oxford:

The One of the Eurydice is Duns Scotus, on whom I have a sonnet lately done which I will send you. The thought is: the island [England] was so Marian that the very Milky Way we made a roadmark to that person's shrine and from one of our seats of learning (to wit the above) [referring to Oxford from which the postcard was sent] went forth the first great champion of her Immaculate Conception, now in our days made an article of faith. 6

4 Letters I, p. 31.

5 Journals, p. 221.

6 Letters I, pp. 77-78. On the following day (April 9) the busy parish priest again writes promising that as "soon as I have time to write them out you shall have 'Duns Scotus's Oxford' (sonnet) and a little lyric 'Binsey Poplars'" [ibid., p. 78].

In fact, 1879 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the dogma, and Hopkins was always aware of religious anniversaries. His sonnet makes a contrast between the old Catholic Oxford of Scotus' day, with its "grey beauty" seeming to spring directly out of the meadows, and the modern brick architecture of the newer colleges springing up without proper planning or concern for preserving the "neighbour-nature" of trees and fields. It was this indiscriminate hacking of trees, which was destroying the traditional face of Oxford, that caused Hopkins to write, in the same month as Duns Scotus's Oxford, his lyric Binsey Poplars:

After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.
 Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve
 Strokes of havoc unselve
 The sweet especial scene,
 Rural scene, a rural scene,
 Sweet especial rural scene.

In a lengthy letter to Dixon of 27 February 1879, Hopkins, speaking as one fond alumnus of Oxford to another, lamented that "that landscape the charm of Oxford, green shouldering grey..is already abridged and soured and perhaps will soon be put out altogether, the Whytham and Godstow landscape (as I take it to be) of [your]⁷ 'Love's Consolation' and 'Waiting.' And in a postscript of 13 March to the same letter he remarked, "I have been up to Godstow this afternoon. I am sorry to say that the aspens that lined the river are⁸ everywhere felled." But this hacking signified for Hopkins,

7 Letters II, p. 20.

8 Ibid., p. 26.

as a similar lack of concern on the part of men for natural and architectural beauty did for Ruskin, the very change in outlook between Hopkins' Oxford contemporaries and the Oxford of nearly five hundred years before.⁹ The polluted upper reaches of the Thames, or the Isis as Oxonians call it, now form "a brickish skirt," a river polluted with industrial refuse by a society that condones, for a price, the destruction of its own natural resources.

The especial genius of Oxford for Hopkins is its closeness to the freshness of nature; blur that by hacking the "rural keeping," the surrounding landscape which forms an integral part of Oxford, and Oxford itself must suffer. For Hopkins' inscaping of Oxford focuses on this precise harmonious counterpoint between city and country. In the first quatrain of the sonnet the speaker remarks on this organic interrelationship:

Towery city and branchy between towers;
Cuckoo-echoing, bell-swarmèd, lark-charmèd,
rock-racked, river-rounded;
The dappled-eared lily below thee.

It was in the University itself that the distinctive powers of country and town once met, but both kept their individual nature in balance, touching but separate, "coped and poised."

9 Cf. Hopkins' remarks to Dixon (*ibid.*, p. 103) on the relationship between the love of country and a nation's architecture:

I should not have thought that Cobbett [the historian] was merely a utilitarian. His seemingly heartfelt remarks about love of country for instance (I mean patriotism) and its dependence on beauty of buildings and historic monuments are those of a man who has other ideals than utility.

But all has since been soured and confounded, all is now
"graceless growth."

In the first tercet of the sestet, the speaker reflects that there still does linger a shadow of that earlier Oxford in which a spirit like Duns Scotus' could be nurtured, could thrive and grow. It is because of these ever-fresh elements that the speaker's spirit can identify with the spirit of Scotus, for they breathe the same air and haunt the same "weeds and waters" and the same grey stone "walls." And the distinct self of Scotus, felt in these, "most sways my spirits to peace."

Then, in the final tercet, the speaker focuses on Scotus himself, who from Oxford about 1301 went to Paris to fire all of France with his "not/Rivallèd insight" into the nature of the Immaculate Conception, of Mary's necessary freedom from any trace of sin in order to house worthily the Incarnated Word of God. And this insight into the central mystery of the life of God and the nature of the Incarnation found its equal, its "rival," neither in the vast theo-philosophical learning of classical Greece nor in the neo-Platonic doctrines of Renaissance Italy. The poem, then, is a salute not only to Scotus but to Oxford itself, which could nurture a spirit like the Subtle Doctor's.¹⁰

10 On 5 December 1879 Hopkins, giving a sermon to his flock at Bedford Leigh on the Immaculate Conception, obliquely referred to the role of Scotus:

It is a comfort to think that the greatest of the divines and doctors of the Church who have spoken

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But having said this, we have still to get to the core or underthought of the sonnet, to its "echo or shadow of the overthought... [an] ¹¹ undercurrent of thought governing the choice of images used." There is, first of all, a shadow of Mary to be found in the very description of Oxford which Hopkins gives us. In the Litany of Loretto, dating back to 1587, which Hopkins would have prayed frequently, we find "Tower of David," "Tower of Ivory," "Seat of Wisdom," and "Mother undefiled," as well as "Regina sine labe originali concepta, ora pro nobis: Queen conceived without original sin, pray for us." And the sonnet echoes these praises in its very opening and closing lines, for Oxford, also a seat of wisdom, is "Towery city and branchy between towers," which inspired Scotus to defend "Mary without spot." And in the fourteenth century, Hopkins' Oxford was also a mother undefiled, unpolluted. In Mary too are to be found "coped and poised powers," for Mary is creature, but also mother of, housel of, God.

Medieval Oxford, too, had "coped and poised powers"; not only was the town set off while being complemented by the gown, but Oxford's teachers, the early and great generations of scholastics, were equipped to make fine but true distinc-

10 (Cont'd.) and written in favour of this truth came from England: between 500 and 600 years ago he was sent for to go to Paris to dispute in its favour.... (This) wise and happy man by his answers broke the objections brought against him as Samson broke the thongs and withies with which his enemies tried to bind him" [Sermons, p.45].

11 Cf. Hopkins' remarks to Baillie (14 January 1883) about the underthought to be found in classical literature. Letters III, pp. 252-53.

tions about and discoveries in the nature of humanity, as well as the divine, while maintaining the real distinctions governing each. This is sadly not the case today, the second quatrain suggests, when theological distinctions have collapsed and are "skirt[ed]," avoided because of difficulty or fear of controversy. They have become brickish and cloudy, and philosophy has degenerated into a concern for utilitarian matters, for industry. And cheap "brick" in place of the beauty of natural grey stone externally reflects this decay in the level of thought of Victorian England. Oxford has become a "graceless growth," without its earlier natural grace or that "neighbour-nature," God's grace, to keep pace with its physical growth. Oxford's "folk, flocks, and flowers," which contributed to its distinctive beauty, have been "confounded," blended together, but perhaps also theologically spoiled and confused by blurring the real distinctions between them.

If any one image is the center around which the other images coalesce, it is Hopkins' strategical employment of the word "realty." Most commentators understand it to mean, simply, reality. And this it does mean. But it quite properly refers to fixed, permanent, or immovable things, as in "real estate," as well as to that which is not artificial, fraudulent, or illusory. For Scotus, as Hopkins was well aware, was the "rarest-veined unraveller" of "realty," of the inscapes in all of nature, and he lived on "these weeds

and waters, these walls." And by looking hard into the untarnished nature of Oxford around him, he glimpsed his "not Rivalled insight" into the untarnished nature of Mary. Oxford's "realty" has suggested a spiritual "realty."

There is one other underthought flowing through the sonnet, the image of a stream at the root of several key-words. For "rarest-veined" (l. 12) is a submerged narrow water channel as well as a line of thought, and "rival" itself originally referred to a stream (as in "rivulet"). And in the Deutschland, Hopkins speaks of Christ's Incarnation as present in the world, in time, riding time "like riding a river" (St. 6, l. 8). For the Incarnation and the Immaculate Conception are inextricably bound up, as a stream to a river:

The first intention then of God outside himself or, as they say, ad extra, outwards, the first outstress of God's power, was Christ; and we must believe that the next was the Blessed Virgin.... The sacrifice would be the Eucharist, and that the victim might be truly victim like, like motionless, helpless, or lifeless, it must be in matter. Then the Blessed Virgin was intended or predestined to minister that matter.... She followed Christ the nearest. 12

Hopkins, then, while drawn to Oxford, is also

12 Sermons, p. 197.

13

alienated from it. Scotus had been able to fire all France for "Mary without spot" half a millenium before, but in 1879 Hopkins had to complain to Bridges that "small as Oxford compared to London is, it is far harder to set the Isis
14
on fire than the Thames."

On April 22, Hopkins finally sent Bridges Duns Scotus's Oxford and Binsey Poplars, and also sent that second sonnet which had been soaking, Henry Purcell. "What

- 13 It must be remembered that, strange as Oxford now was to Hopkins, it had a special meaning for him. In October 1878, before being sent to Oxford, he had written to Dixon saying, "Of Oxford I was very fond. I became a Catholic there. But I have not visited it, except once for three quarters of an hour, since I took my degree" [Letters II, p. 12]. And writing to Baillie in May 1880 from Liverpool, he took pains to pay his debts to his University. His remarks help to pinpoint his tone towards the present-day Oxford of his sonnet: "Not to love my University would be to undo the very buttons of my being.... And in that stay [December 1878-October 1879] I saw very little of the University. But I could not but feel how alien it was, how chilling, and deeply to be distrusted.... Religion, you know, enters very deep; in reality it is the deepest impression I have in speaking to people, that they are or that they are not of my religion."
- 14 Letter of 19 January 1879 in Letters I, p. 61. Writing to Coventry Patmore (3 January 1884) to console him for not being widely admired, Hopkins cited a similar case of public indifference in the unjust treatment of Duns Scotus, in words which largely echo Hopkins' own condition of literary fame:
 And so I used to feel of Duns Scotus when I used to read him with delight: he saw too far, he knew too much; his subtlety overshot his interests; a kind of feud arose between genius and talent, and the ruck of talent in the Schools finding itself, as his age passed by, less and less able to understand him, voted that there was nothing important to understand and so first misquoted and then refuted him. [Letters III, p. 349].

do you think of the effect of the Alexandrines?," Hopkins asked. "That meter unless much broken, as I do by outrides, is very tedious."¹⁵ We can only surmise what Bridges thought of Hopkins' latest innovation in the sonnet. Hopkins seems to have employed the longer line to give formal structural support to the density of the thought, and to approximate more closely the longer length of his Italian models. But Bridges was puzzled by the thought, and in the next four years Hopkins had to answer at length Bridges' queries about a sonnet which Hopkins thought "one of my very best pieces."¹⁶ In fact, in his very next letter after sending Bridges the sonnet, Hopkins explained the meaning of the sestet, showing the relation of the seabird to Purcell's genius. He followed with an extended crib on the word "shake," and finally gave two short glosses on "wuthering" and "moon-¹⁷marks."

Still, Bridges failed to catch Hopkins' inscaping of Purcell's particular genius as objectively seizing on "the very make and species of man." "By the by your remark on Purcell's music does not conflict with what my sonnet says,"

Hopkins replied on June 22, "rather it supports it. My sonnet means 'Purcell's music is none of your d---d subjective¹⁸ rot' (so to speak). Read it again."

15 Letters I, p. 80.

16 Ibid., p. 171.

17 Letter of 26 May 1879 (ibid., p. 83).

18 Ibid., p. 84.

In January 1883 the sonnet had again to be defended, this time at even greater length. It is worth examining how Hopkins, if thereby stating his case too baldly, precisely marks off the development of the thought within the 4-4-6 formal structure of the Italian sonnet. His crib outline suffers, unfortunately, by being too bald in being rigidly precise. (How Bridges must have started when he read):

The sonnet on Purcell means this: 1-4.
I Hope Purcell is not damned for being
a Protestant, because I love his genius.
5-8 And that not so much for gifts he
shares, even though it shd. be in higher
measure, with other musicians as for his
own individuality. 9-14 So that while he
is aiming only at impressing me his hearer
with the meaning in hand I am looking out
meanwhile for his specific, his individual
markings and mottlings, 'the sakes of him.'
It is as when a bird thinking only of soaring
spreads its wings: a beholder may happen
then to have his attention drawn by the act
to the plumage displayed.

Then he explains more fully and thereby softens somewhat his gloss on the first quatrain of the sonnet: "May Purcell... have died a good death...so that the heavy condemnation under which he...nominally lay for being out of the true Church may in consequence of his good intentions have been reversed." He also confesses that it is "somewhat dismaying¹⁹ to find I am so unintelligible."

There was, however, for Hopkins a more particular question not about theological, but about the grammatical

19 Ibid., p. 170.

validity of his opening line, "Have fair fallen, O fair, fair have fallen...." Hopkins' concern for the precise correctness of the line hints at that scrupulous concern for grammatical precision we have seen so frequently in his sonnets:

One thing disquiets me: I meant 'fair fall' to mean fair (fortune be) fall; it has since struck me that perhaps 'fair' is an adjective proper and in the predicate and can only be used in cases like 'fair fall the day,' that is, may the day fall, turn out, fair. My line will yield a sense that way indeed, but I never meant it so. Do you know any passage decisive on this? 20

Hopkins did not want the line read as merely a fond, sentimental hope; he is praying to God in his sonnet that Purcell's soul shall truly "have parted from the body and passed away, centuries since though I frame the wish, in peace with God!"²¹

A month later Hopkins again, and for the last time, defends the sonnet to Bridges, who had once more written that Hopkins still made himself misunderstood:

This is a terrible business about my sonnet 'Have fair fallen....Have...is the singular imperative (or optative if you like) of the past, a thing possible and actual both in logic and grammar, but naturally a rare one. As in the second person we say 'Have done' or in making appointments 'Have had your dinner beforehand' so one can say in the third person not only 'Fair

20 Ibid., p. 171.

21 Ibid., pp. 170-171.

fall' of what is present or future but also 'Have fair fallen' of what is past. The same thought (which plays a great part in my own mind and action) is more clearly expressed in the last stanza but one of the Eurydice. 22

The sonnet itself is indeed an exciting as well as precise piece of work; in its preoccupation with the exact nature of Purcell's idiosyncratic genius it stands beside Duns Scotus's Oxford. But whereas the Oxford sonnet implies or obliquely points to the underthought of medieval Oxford's appropriateness as a setting for Scotus' insight into the nature of the Immaculate Conception, the Purcell sonnet is based structurally on a more explicit analogy between Purcell's distinctive markings and the markings of the sea gull. Even so, there is here also a submerged metaphor, with one key

- 22 Letter of 3 February 1883, ibid., p. 174. The lines from The Loss of the Eurydice have not only the same thought, but use the same past optative construction:

And the prayer thou hearst me making
Have, at the awful overtaking,
Heard; have heard and granted
Grace that day grace was wanted.

Again, the same concern for rescuing even those long dead by prayers offered to an eternal God is found in Stanza 33 of the Deutschland:

With a mercy that outrides
The all of water, an ark
For the listener; for the lingerer with a love glides
Lower than death and the dark;
A vein for the visiting of the past-prayer, pent in prison
The-last-breath penitent spirits----the uttermost mark
Our passion-plunged giant risen,
The Christ of the Father compassionate, fetched in the storm
of his strides.

to the metaphor to be found explicitly in Hopkins' spiritual notes for the feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1881.

In making the Ignatian "Contemplation for Obtaining Love," Hopkins wrote:

Faciens me templum, cum creatus sim ad similitudinem et imaginem'-- The word Temple at first sight hides the thought, which is, I think, that God rests in man as in a place, a locus, a bed, vessel, expressly made to receive him as a jewel in a case hallowed to fit it, as the hand in the glove or the milk in the breast.... And God in forma servi rests in servo, that is/Christ as a solid in his member as a hollow or shell, both things being the image of God; which can only be perfect when the member is in all things conformed to Christ. This too best brings out the nature of the man himself, as the lettering on a sail or device upon a flag are best seen when it fills. 23

The opening quatrain, with its deeply sincere wish that Purcell's soul be at peace with God, then, is necessary to the artistic logic of the sonnet. For Purcell's sacred music and the distinctive voice in which he pronounced his art touch Hopkins as the authentic voice of man's ascendancy towards God, and that same spirit which so earnestly moves Hopkins now, Hopkins wishes to be with God. Unless Hopkins can reasonably hope that this correspondence between the sacred voice and the spirit of Purcell exists, the sonnet

23 Sermons, p. 195. Christopher Devlin, S.J., notes in his comment on this passage the similarity of the last tercet of Henry Purcell to the line from the Deutschland, "I whirled out wings that spell" [ibid., p. 305].

suffers prolapsis or "hernia" in more than its form. And while this religious consideration may be aesthetically irrelevant by the dicta of modern criticism, Hopkins' sonnets are colloquies or prayer-forms. Furthermore, Purcell possessed one of those rare geniuses whose voice²⁴ "seems something necessary and eternal," who has, as Hopkins wrote in the prose argument at the head of the Purcell sonnet, "uttered in notes the very make and species of man as created both in him and in all men generally."

From my own attention to Purcell's sacred music comes the unmistakable individuality of a particular voice speaking through the rather unexceptional lyrics. The following lines are from the choruses of the anthem "O Sing Unto the Lord " :

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;
 Let the whole earth stand in awe of Him.
 The Lord is King; and that is He that made
 the round world so sure that it cannot be moved;
 And now that He shall judge the people righteously.
 Allelujah. Amen.

The lyrics tell us little, however, about Purcell's music. It is

Not mood in him nor meaning, proud fire or sacred
 fear,
 Or love or pity or all that sweet notes not his
 might nurse.

24 Cf. Hopkins' letter to Dixon written six months before he wrote this sonnet. "[Milton's] verse as one reads it seems something necessary and eternal (so to me does Purcell's music)" Letters II, p. 13.

It is rather in the particular accent, in the unexpected and spontaneous repetitions of the canons, and in the unforced sincerity and joy that the "forged feature" of the anthem reveals itself.

"Rehearsal" has three meanings, all working simultaneously within the poem. The word has its strictly musical meaning of a musical performance. And in its meaning of presenting an account of oneself, it refers to the particular ²⁵ "sakes" of Purcell's spirit which are intrinsically bound up and repeated each time with the music itself, as well as referring also to that other rehearsal of Purcell's spirit before God, that other presenting an account of oneself.

Hopkins' extremely perceptive eye had noticed the peculiar "crescent-shaped markings on the quill-feathers" of storm fowls, "either in the colouring of the feather or

- 25 "Sake is a word I find it convenient to use," Hopkins explained to Bridges (Letters I, p. 83).

It is the sake of 'for the sake of', forsake, namesake, keepsake. I mean by it the being a thing has outside itself, as a voice by its echo, a face by its reflection, a body by its shadow, a man by his name, fame, or memory, and also that in the thing by virtue of which especially it has this being abroad, and that is something distinctive, marked, specifically or individually speaking, as for a voice and echo clearness; for a reflected image light, brightness; for a shadow-casting body bulk; for a man genius, great achievements, amiability, and so on. In this case it is, as the sonnet says, distinctive quality in genius.

- 26 Ibid.

made by the overlapping of one on another."²⁶ The "stormfowl" Hopkins is referring to is probably the common black-headed seagull which is to be found along the sea shores of Britain, as well as along the Thames River. Hopkins, of course, had closely observed the flight pattern of the kestrel at Wales. And he has given us a fine word-picture of sea-gulls on the Mersey River at Liverpool in a letter to Bridges of late January 1881:

The river was coated with dirty yellow ice from shore to shore.... The gulls were pampered; throngs of people were chucking them bread; they were not at all quick to sight it and when they did they dipped towards it with infinite lightness, touched the ice, and rose again, but generally missed the bread: they seem to fancy they cannot or ought not to rest on ground. ²⁷

But why did he choose the soaring sea gull as an analogy for Purcell's soaring spirit? Perhaps Hopkins wanted to draw attention to the contrast between the clumsily wobbling earth-bound bird and its effortless, graceful beauty in flight, and to suggest the contrast between man Jack (man in and of himself) and the ability of his spirit to soar in divine song. It is only when the breath of the wind lifts and supports the bird that its gracefulness is made manifest. At the same time its haeccitas, its particular self, also clearly flashes forth.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid., p. 116.

And it is only when man works in harmony with the Spirit that his grace-ful-ness is made manifest. And yet, his spirit is not absorbed by the Spirit of God; rather it is in identifying with God that the particular self is made most manifest. Hopkins explains this polarity of individuality and identification in this way:

The universal mind being identified not only with me but also with all other minds cannot be the means of communicating what is individual in me to them nor in them to me.... The universal cannot taste this taste of self as I taste it, for it is not to...him, that the guilt or shame, the fatal consequence, the fate, comes home.... And for all that this universal being may be at work in mine it leaves me finite. 28

Besides the majesty of the bird and the majesty of Purcell's music, there is, finally, the joyous humanity of the man. For he does what neither animal nor angel can do, what the bird only fancifully does; he scatters "a colossal smile/ Off him" in singing "his air of angels."

Sometime probably in late March, with Holy Week and Easter Week services approaching, the aging rector of St. Giles's Church, the Reverend T. B. Parkinson, S.J., was hurt in a carriage accident, and Hopkins found himself with more work than he could handle. On the Wednesday of Holy Week, 8 April 1879, Hopkins writes, "The reason you have not heard from me sooner is that my chief Rev. T. B.P.

28 Sermons, pp. 125-26 (italics mine).

has thought well to break his collarbone and he laid up in a charming country house commanding the White Horse Vale, throwing the whole of the work at the hardest time of the year on his underling. In fact I am very hard put to it."²⁹ But it was during this busy week that the experience occurred which Hopkins celebrates in The Handsome Heart.³⁰ Seven weeks later he apologizes to Bridges again for not having written: "Your answerable letterage is three deep at least, but nevertheless work is work and of late Fr. Parkinson has sprung a leak (exema) in his leg and been laid up and I in consequence laid on all the harder: indeed he will never, I believe, be very active more, though now he does go about a little."³¹

It is probably because he was so busy that his next two sonnets, written between mid-April and mid-June, are not exceptional poems. "I enclose you two sonnets, capable of further finish," he tells Bridges on June 22, referring to

29 Letters I, p. 75.

30 Cf. Hopkins' letter to Bridges of 14 August 1879 (ibid., p. 86): "The story was that last Lent, when Fr. Parkinson was laid up in the country, two boys of our congregation gave me much help in the sacristy in Holy Week. I offered them money for their services, which the elder refused, but being pressed consented to take it laid out in a book. The younger followed suit; then when some days after I asked him what I shd. buy answered as in the sonnet." As a postscript to this narrative, Hopkins wrote Bridges in October of the same year that "The little Hero of the Handsome Heart has gone to school at Boulogne to be bred for a priest and he is bent on being a Jesuit " (ibid., p. 92).

31 Letter of 26 May 1879 (ibid., p. 81).

The Candle Indoors, the companion-piece to The Lantern Out of Doors of 1877, and the autobiographical The Handsome Heart.

"I am afraid they are not very good all through. One is a companion to the Lantern, not at first meant to be though, but it fell in. The other is historical, autobiographical,³² as you would say, or biographical. Remark what strikes you."

In his next letter, almost two months later, the harried parish priest apologizes that he "must try and tersely scribble you something." He defends the analogy in The Candle Indoors of the candle to the human spirit. For Bridges never could understand Hopkins' deeply-instressed religious feeling, and it was he who was to complain in his 1918 Preface that Hopkins' poetry suffered from this mannerism of trying "to force emotion into theological or sectarian channels."³³ "Though the analogy in the Candle sonnet may seem forced," Hopkins writes, "yet it is an 'autobiographical' fact that I was influenced and acted on the way there said."³⁴ He also sends along a recast of The Handsome Heart, but defends the run-on rhymes with their "overreaving," rising and falling rhythm. Still, he is "somewhat surprised at your liking this sonnet so much. I thought it not very good."

32 Ibid., p. 84.

33 Cf., Bridges' Preface to the Notes of the First Edition of Hopkins' Poems (January 1918), reprinted in Poems, Third Edition (New York, 1965), p. 204.

34 Letters I, p. 85.

By comparison with Duns Scotus's Oxford and Henry Purcell, it is "not very good." There is a noticeable falling off in these next two sonnets. They are contemporary with The Brothers, The Buglar's First Communion, and Morning Mid-day and Evening Sacrifice, all composed within four months of each other, although The Brothers was changed in August 1880 from four-line stanzas in imitation of Wordsworth to trimeter couplets. Andromeda, dated August 12, was written just before Morning Midday and Evening Sacrifice. But it shows a radically new direction for Hopkins' sonnets in the treatment of its content, and will be best discussed apart from the other two sonnets.

Hopkins' short narrative pieces are not among his most successful poems, and The Handsome Heart: at a Gracious Answer is no exception. The first quatrain opens with two lines of dialogue, which capture the rhythms of an energetic colloquial speech between priest and altar boy:

'But tell me, child, your choice; what shall I buy
You?' -- 'Father, what you buy me I like best.'

The boy is "plied and pressed," but he continues to return to his first generous answer, as the needle of a compass, "plied and pressed" from its true reading, will continue to swing back to its "first purport of reply."

In the second quatrain, the priest turns within to muse on the nature of the uncorrupted heart, likening it now to the homing instinct of a carrier pigeon, an image of un-

swerving tendency towards a fixed point clearly related to the first image:

What the heart is! which, like carriers let fly--
Doff darkness, homing nature knows the rest--
To its own fine function, wild and self-instressed,
Falls light as ten years long taught how to and why.

Just as the carrier pigeon will fly to its home once the physical darkness has been removed, so the heart would naturally and instinctively follow the right path, its own self, were it not for the crippling scar of Original sin, and man's perverse propensity for evil. "Rest" has two simultaneous meanings: for the spirit, once darkness is lifted, knows what remains to be done, and it also knows that its true resolution or rest is to be found in the good.

The speaker marvels at the triple graces found in the boy's handsome face, in his handsome, maturing mind, and, most importantly, in his handsome heart:

Mannerly-hearted! more than handsome face--
Beauty's bearing or muse of mounting vein,
All, in this case, bathed in high hallowing grace....

In a letter to Bridges written in October 1879, there is a passage which can stand as prose paraphrase to these lines:

I think then no one can admire beauty of the body more than I do, and it is of course a comfort to find beauty in a friend or a friend in beauty. But this kind of beauty is dangerous. Then comes the beauty of the mind, such as genius, and this is greater than the beauty of the body and not to call dangerous. And more beautiful than the beauty of the mind is beauty of character, the 'handsome heart.' 35

An aposiopesis or hiatus follows line eleven as the priest considers that the best thing he could buy the boy would be the reward of heaven itself: "Of heaven what boon to buy you, boy, or gain/Not granted!" But the line also means that it is for such a reward as this boy that Christ was willing to spend his life, and in fact Christ will grant any gain he has made to have him. It is one of those fine meaningfully ambiguous lines in which Christ and man reciprocate and interact upon one another, as in the "O which one? is it each one?" of Carrion Comfort.

But a second hiatus follows closely on the first, for that instinctive goodness may be darkened, the magnetic pitch towards true north may at any time be distorted by Satan, the master of crooked paths: "O on that path you pace/Run all your race, O brace sterner that strain!" The internal rhyming of "pace" "race" and "brace" with "grace" in line eleven reinforces the note of urgency and alarm. Again, the emphasis is on staying on the straight and undeviating line, of running, as St. Paul says, to win the race.³⁶ The opening lines of dialogue now assume a deeper significance, for the priest's offer to buy the child something also echoes

36 St. Paul's racing metaphor seems to have been in Hopkins' mind in his letter of exhortation and deep concern to Bridges in January 1879, when he laments that "not to have the faith is worse than to have sinned deeply, for it is like not being even in the running" [ibid., p. 64].

the central fact for Hopkins of the redemption of Christ, a theme which runs just below the surface throughout much of Hopkins' poetry.

The Candle Indoors is the obverse of The Lantern Out of Doors. The speaker is out walking randomly during a mild evening and stops to muse at a light shining out from a window, cutting back the all-devouring, "blear-all black." The candle light is "yellowy moisture" and the "to-fro tender trambeams truckle at the eye," that is, the fine, delicate beams of light, like loose strands of silk yarn, bend and are subservient to the slightest motion of the speaker's eyelashes. But these fine lines of light are most noticeable (and the alliteration and harsh consonantal clusters of line four emphasize this line) when the eyes are moist. Sister Rosemarie Gavin explains that "the motion of the eyelashes was caused by tears welling to the eye of the wanderer.... [The] effort to restrain a flow of tears causes the crossbeams to tip (truckle) back and forth upon the retina."³⁷

In the second quatrain the speaker turns within to ask himself if the people indoors are magnifying God indoors within themselves:

By that window what task what fingers ply,
I plod wondering, a-wanting, just for lack
Of answer the eagerer a-wanting Jessy or Jack
There/God to aggrandise, God to glorify.

37 "Hopkins' 'The Candle Indoors,'" The Explicator, XX (February 1962), 50.

Are these common folk, these human representatives, doing that for which they were created, the lonely priest asks. For in just performing their duties, they do honor God. "It is not only prayer that gives God glory but work," Hopkins writes in his private spiritual notes on the Foundation:

Smiting on an anvil, sawing a beam, white-
washing a wall, driving horses, sweeping,
scouring, everything gives God some glory
if being in his grace you do it as your
duty.... To lift up the hands in prayer
gives God glory, but a man with a dungfork
in his hand, a woman with a sloppail, give
him glory too. He is so great that all
things give him glory if you mean they
should.

38

Hopkins in this sonnet is playing on the root meaning of "ply," which means to work at a task, but also to interweave the threads of yarn suggested by "tram" in line four. "Tram" derives from the Low German traam, meaning a wooden beam, and together with "beam" (from baum, meaning tree), the two words suggest the holy tree or rood upon which Christ was hung. These people, then, give God glory by manifesting a clear if small external light, a sign of the cross, in plying at their lowly task. But the speaker is impatient and wants God's glory increased, "aggrandized."

In the sestet, the speaker realizes what he has been doing. As John Pick aptly puts it, "Hopkins turns upon himself and closes with a terrifying question that echoes all the priest's own yearning for perfection and his an-

guished fear that he has himself failed in himself to live up to what he expects of others." ³⁹ It is not the manifestation of Jack or Jessy's spiritual light that he should now be concerned with; he recognizes the humbling fact that this concern may be merely a tactic to divert attention from his own "fading fire." And as if he were calling to a reluctant dog, tail between legs, he orders his spirit to come home for a tongue lashing:

Come you indoors, come home; your fading fire
Mend first and vital candle in close heart's vault:
You there are master, do your own desire;
What hinders? Are you beam-blind, yet to a fault
In a neighbour deft-handed? are you that liar
And, cast by conscience out, spendsavour salt?

This is terrible self-chastisement, and the lines echo loudly with Christ's warning to his disciples against spiritual complacency and the judging of others:

Do not judge others, or you yourselves will be judged.... How is it that thou canst see the speck of dust which is in thy brother's eye, and art not aware of the beam which is in thy own?.... Thou hypocrite, take the beam out of thy own eye first, and so thou shalt have clear sight to rid thy brother's of the speck (Matthew VII, 1-5).

And

You are the salt of the earth; if salt loses its savor, what is there left to give savor to it? There is no more to be done with it, but throw it out of doors for men to tread it under foot. You are the light of the world.... [Your] light must shine so brightly before men that they can see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matthew V, 13-16).

Hopkins plays again on the word "beam," asking himself if he is blind to the "beam" in his own eye, and also blind to the slender crossbeams shining outdoors from Jack and Jessy. His overzealousness, his eagerness and impatience for any manifestation of the cross, the beam, has as its deepest motivation the unwillingness to look at the unpleasant reality within. The poem, then, is an unflinchingly honest particular examen into Hopkins' own "close heart's vault." This preoccupation with inner purity of motive and self-scrutiny had been with Hopkins from his student days, and it was to become central to his later sonnets, which for their searing intensity into the void within were to gain the name "terrible."

Hopkins composed Andromeda on August 12 and sent it to Bridges in his letter of August 14-21. "Lately," Hopkins wrote, "I enclose a sonnet on which I invite minute criticism. I endeavoured in it at a more Miltonic plainness and severity than I have anywhere else. I cannot say it has turned out severe, still less plain, but it seems almost free from quaintness and in aiming at one excellence I may have hit another."⁴⁰

40 Letters I, p. 87. When in April 1881, at Dixon's pleading, Hopkins sent three sonnets to Hall Caine for possible inclusion in Caine's anthology of sonnets, he included his Andromeda as a sort of safety in case Caine were troubled by Hopkins' rhythmic novelties. Early in May Hopkins sighed to Bridges that he would not be printed, but added, "However he had Andromeda and one cannot say there is any novelty in rhythm there" [Letters I, p. 128].

If the Incarnation rides time like a river, this central act of history must in some dark way be foreshadowed in pre-Christian times. Certainly much of Hopkins' arcane and sometimes brilliant insights into classical and Egyptian antiquity are at least partially related to his search for shadowy correspondences between Christ's "great sacrifice" and ancient ritualistic sacrifice. In 1886, for example, Baillie was peppered with a deluge of letters from Hopkins asking for specific information on the possible influences of Egyptian religious practices on the early Greeks. And in March, 1889, just a little more than two months before he died, Hopkins writes his brother Lionel that he is busy tracing the significance of a sacrificial pagan rite performed annually by priests on May 14 in ancient Rome.⁴¹

Hopkins sees in the mythological story of Perseus and Andromeda a foreshadowing of Christ's protection of His Church.⁴² Andromeda, the myth goes, is a beautiful young maiden

41 "I shall be able, I hope, to settle my Paper on the Argei. I went yesterday to a public library to verify texts.... This Paper will now be in two parts--the Argei and the Pontifices" (Letters III, p. 193). This fragment on the Argei is unfortunately missing.

42 Cf. Hopkins' pertinent comments on Greek mythology in his letter to Dixon of 23 October 1886 (Letters II, pp. 146-147): [Mythology] is something else besides fairytale; it is religion, the historical part of religion.... I cannot enter on this consideration without being brought face to face with the great fact of heathenism.... [What] are we to say of it? For myself literally words would fail me to express the loathing and horror with which I think of it and of man setting up the work of his own hands, of that hand within the mind, the imagination, for God Almighty who made heaven and earth. But the Greek gods are rakes, and unnatural rakes....

tied to a rock on the seashore to be sacrificed as an innocent victim to a terrifying sea monster. The gallant Perseus, flying above on wings given him by Mercury and carrying the severed head of Medusa, sees Andromeda below and is attracted by her beauty. First gaining the consent of Andromeda's parents to wed her if he saves her, the bridegroom-to-be slays the beast after a terrible battle and marries Andromeda. The analogy of the bridegroom Christ looking over his beloved Church in distress below, who will, when "no one dreams," descend to rescue her and slay the beast of sin is of course clearly intended, as Professor Gardner's incisive notes on the poem make clear. The clarity of Andromeda is in part due to the poem's allegory, which is more pointed in this (and in Peace) than is usual for Hopkins. "Time's Andromeda" is the militant and persecuted Church of Christ working out its salvation in time, in the present, "Now." She is founded "on this rock rude," on Simon Peter the fisherman, by Christ's own punning command, "Thou art Peter (ΠΕΤΡΟΣ = rock), and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it [Matthew XVI, 18]." She who has "not her either beauty's equal or/ Her injury's, looks off by both horns of shore," both behind her to her scarred past and before her to her

- 42 (Cont'd.) But I grant that the Greek mythology is very susceptible of fine treatment for instance, allegorical treatment for instance, and so treated gives rise to the most beautiful results. No wonder: the moral evil is got rid of and the pure art, morally neutral and artistically so rich, remains and can be even turned to moral use.

uncertain future. "Her flower, her piece of being," is "doomed dragon's food"; that is, she seems destined to be sacrificed to the dragon (Satan), but we should not forget that the dragon has also been "doomed" already. And although he is the Prince of the world "Now," he will eventually be defeated here as well.

Although the Church has been frequently attacked and cursed throughout her long past, there are newer "wilder" forces arising out of the West, which are "more/Rife," "more⁴³ lawless, and more lewd." Among these, Professor Gardner points

- 43 Titian also christianized the Perseus and Andromeda myth, painting Andromeda as the Catholic Church attacked by serpents representing infidel Moslems. But here Perseus figures not as Christ but as Catholic Spain. James Anthony Froude, Carlyle's biographer, introduces his famous chapter on the defeat of the Spanish Armada (from English Seamen in the XVth Century, published posthumously in 1895) with a comment on this painting. The passage serves as an interesting cross-reference of the literary appeal which the myth held for Victorians. Hopkins' ardent voice is in obvious contrast with Froude's condescending distant tone:

In the gallery at Madrid there is a picture, painted by Titian, representing the Genius of Spain coming to the delivery of the afflicted Bride of Christ. Titian was dead, but the temper of the age survived, and in the study of that great picture you will see the spirit in which the Spanish nation had set out for the conquest of England. The scene is the seashore. The Church a naked Andromeda, with dissheveled hair, fastened to the trunk of an ancient, disbranched tree. The cross lies at her feet, the cup overturned, the serpents of heresy biting at her from behind with uplifted crests. Coming on before a leading breeze is the sea monster, the Moslem fleet, eager for their prey; while in front is Perseus, the Genius of Spain, banner in hand, with the legions of the faithful laying not raiment before him, but shield and helmet, the apparel of war for the Lady of Nations to clothe herself with strength and smite her foes.

In the Armada the crusading enthusiasm had reached its point and focus. England was the stake to which the Virgin, the daughter of Sion, was bound in captivity. Perseus had come at last in the person of the Duke of Medina Sidonia....

out, would be "rationalism, Darwinism, (and) the new pagan-
 44
 ism of Swinburne and Whitman." For all of these, as well
 as utilitarianism, liberalism, nationalism, Gladstone, and
 the general weakening of moral fibre among his own country-
 men, are constant sources of worry in Hopkins' letters.

But there is another meaning of "wilder beast from
 West" almost certainly suggested here, and to understand this
 we must turn first to a long passage in Hopkins' spiritual
 notes. In writing his exegesis on Chapter XII of the
Apocalypse during the Long Retreat of his Tertianship in
 November 1881, Hopkins makes some profound theological and
 mythopoetical comments which help to more fully explain
 several ideas in Andromeda:

As the woman is compared to the earth in
 the solar system so the dragon is to the
 constellation Draco, the tail of which
 sweeps through 120° or a third of the sphere
 and which winds round the pole (...a star
 in the head of Draco was then the polestar),
 this world's seeming axis and the earth's
 real one, so as to symbolize how Satan tried
 to possess himself of the sovereignty of
 things, taking...the culmination of the firma-
 ment towards the pole, as a throne and post
 of vantage and so wreathing nature and as it
 were constricting it to his purposes...though
 he was foiled, cast from heaven, and left
 master only of the material world, by a figure
 the earth.... The snake or serpent [is] a
 symbol of the Devil. So also the Dragon....
 And therefore I suppose the dragon as a type
 of the Devil to express the universality of
 his powers, both the gifts he has by nature
 and the attributes and sway he grasps, and
 the horror which the whole inspires. 45

44 Poems, p. 277.

45 Sermons, pp. 198-99.

Hopkins is here interested in the correspondence between the ancient mythopoeticizing of the constellations and the imagery of Sacred Scripture, both in the Old Testament and the Apocalypse, and it seems clear that the constellations of Perseus and Andromeda, as well as Draco and Cetus are all involved on one level of Andromeda. The constellation Perseus kneels with "barebill" drawn just beneath Andromeda. To the northwest lies Draco, coiled around the north pole. Far away and to the east in the southern hemisphere lies the constellation Cetus, the seamonster (or more specifically, whale) whom Perseus destroyed. It is not the seamonster Cetus who is the real threat to Andromeda, but the dragon Satan sitting "towards the pole."

The action of the time in the sestet is both sensitive and complex, for if Perseus-Christ now "treads a time," he will "then," at his own good time, descend to save Andromeda and slay the beast. But while we are given assurances of the outcome of the struggle, and the action of rescue appears to be happening within the poem, the "then" of line 13 makes it clear that this remains a future event. In the meantime, although seemingly forsaken, Andromeda must maintain her patience, which is being fragmented and nibbled at by the evil around her. But at the same time her patience "mounts." For while her patience becomes excruciatingly intense, it is also learning by necessity to ascend towards its only help, Perseus-Christ. And when her savior does come, he will "alight disarming," coming to disarm in one way his

his people by winning them over with his "disarming" mercy and kindness, while he appears simultaneously to his enemies as a matchless warrior "disarming" evil of its "fangs" and his people of their "thongs" or prisoner's chains.

There is yet another allegorical level, or better, another facet of the saviour-bridegroom, Christ, protecting his beloved maiden in distress. It is the legend of St. George, England's patron saint since 800, an emblem which of course would have deep significance for the priest eager for the conversion of England.⁴⁶ We have only to turn to the Epistle for the Feast day of St. George and the adjacent passages from St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy to see the echoes in the poem:

Fix thy mind on Jesus Christ...who has risen from the dead; that is the gospel I preach, and in its service I suffer hardship like a criminal, yes, even with chains [ad vincula = thongs]; but there is no imprisoning the word of God.... [In] firm resolve, in faith, in patience, in love, in endurance; all my persecutions and suffering, such as those which befell me at Antioch, Iconium, Lystra; what persecutions I underwent! And yet the Lord brought me through them all safely. And indeed, all those who are resolved to live a holy life in Christ Jesus will meet with persecution; while the rogues and the mountebanks go on from bad to worse, at once imposters and dupes. It is for thee to hold fast by the doctrine handed on to thee, the charge committed to thee [II Timothy II, 8-10; III, 10-14].

- 46 In fact there is evidence that the legend of St. George slaying the dragon was borrowed from the Perseus-Andromeda myth and attributed by English crusaders fighting in Asia Minor to their own national patron.

Finally, Andromeda can be read as Christ's abiding concern for each Christian in distress who is fighting the terrifying battle against evil, and who, in his seeming abandonment by Christ, is perfecting the gift of patience. In the end, in his own best time, Christ descends, bringing with him for his Andromeda a lasting peace and freedom from the wars without and within.

It is this last thought, this deeply felt need for spiritual peace, and its prior condition of learning patience, which leads directly to the last sonnet of this second Oxford period, the curtal sonnet, Peace. It does not seem likely that Hopkins sent this sensitive and personal poem to Bridges immediately, for the autograph copy is found in Hopkins' own collection of manuscript poems. Bridges had copied out those of Hopkins' manuscript poems in his possession and had given the copies to Hopkins in late 1883, in the manuscript book Bridges calls B. But this poem is in Hopkins' hand, dated 'Oxford, 1879' and an early draft of the poem is dated more precisely 2 October 1879. This was less than a week before Hopkins was assigned to the Bedford Leigh mission as Preacher. Furthermore, there is only one explicit reference to the sonnet, and that is in Hopkins' letter to Bridges written from Dublin in August 1884, almost five years after he had composed Peace:

If you do not like 'I yield, you do come sometimes,' (though I cannot myself feel the weakness you complain of it in it sic), and it has the advantage of being plain) will 'I yield, you foot me sometimes' do? 'Own my heart' is merely 'my own heart,' transposed for rhythm's sake and then tamquam exquisitius, as Hermann would say.

47

Like Pied Beauty, Peace is a relatively plain poem throughout, certainly, at least, on the surface of it. Peace itself, in the form of a "wild wooddove," is the prize desired. The speaker, picturing himself as a tree, pleads with the dove to settle in his boughs. And although Peace does sometimes rest there, it is easily alarmed and then flies away. There is then, a real distinction between Peace, with a capital "P," and the other peace in lower case. For the peace which can be easily shaken is "piecemeal peace" and "poor peace." It is the peace which relies on external conditions and which is gone when the fragile conditions which surround it are altered.

His letters frequently suggest how often Hopkins' peace was broken by "Alarms of wars, the daunting wars, the death of it." "I am very sad at heart about the battle of Majuba," he writes his mother in March, 1881. "It is a deep disgrace, a stain upon our arms; which indeed have not shone of late. The effect will, I am afraid, be felt all over the empire. Would that we had some great statesman, a patriot

and not a truckler to Russia or the Freemasons [Gladstone]."⁴⁸
 Hopkins may have been concerned also about the Berlin Conference of June-July 1878, when Disraeli demanded and got a "peace with honour." Again, he had been close to at least one young British soldier at the Cowley Barracks just outside Oxford--⁴⁹A bugler boy from barrack (it is over the hill there)--during his stay there. The boy, to whom he had administered first communion, was ordered during the Second Afghan War to "Mootlan [Multan] in the Punjaub [and] was to sail Sept. 30"⁴⁹ just two days before Hopkins wrote Peace. And in November, about six weeks later, he sadly, and correctly, noted to Baillie that "the Government is arresting Irish agitators,⁵⁰ that will do far more harm in prison than on the stump."

Hopkins always considered himself a great patriot. He wrote martial music to a poem he wrote for British soldiers, What Shall I do for that Land That Bred Me. And several of his piano melodies sound like variations on "The British Grenadiers." But Hopkins knew that it was another kind of peace he was looking for, the pax Christi. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the

48 Letters III, p. 158.

49 Note appended to The Bugler's First Communion by Hopkins and quoted in Letters I, p. 92, n.2.

50 Letter of 19 November 1879 in Letters III, p. 243.

world giveth, do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid" [John XIV, 27]. This is that perfect Peace which Hopkins so desired and which is so difficult to attain.

O surely, reaving Peace, my Lord should leave
 in lieu
 Some good! And so he does leave Patience exquisite,
 That plumes to Peace thereafter. And when Peace
 here does house
 He comes with work to do, he does not come to coo,
 He comes to brood and sit.

This Peace is the reward for patience, for aligning the self-bent of the soul to the will of God. For the speaker must first learn the very difficult lesson that he cannot receive any spiritual consolation except as the gift and grace of God. As the Exercises explain, God sometimes makes us desolate "to teach us not to build our nest in another's house."⁵¹ It is patience, itself the gift of the "reaving Lord," which will later be transformed into peace. But patience is not simply a passive state of mind; it is a willingness to make oneself a more perfect receptor of the Dove, the Holy Spirit, who is God's Peace.

Critics have commented on the inversions in the opening lines of the poem:

When will you ever, Peace, wild wooddove, shy
 wings shut,
 Your round me roaming end, and under be my boughs?
 When, when, Peace, will you, Peace? I'll not play
 hypocrite
 To own my heart....

Part of the reason for the transposition is to make the lines, as Hopkins said, "tamquam exquisitius," all the more

exquisite. As Prof. Ritz explains, "Aux questions inquiètes que soulignent les inversions du second vers, aux coupes nombreuses et diverses des vers du début s'oppose le calme battement ascendant des deux derniers vers."⁵² But perhaps there may be another reason for the most awkward, seemingly, of the inversions: "under be my boughs." If we remember that the wooddove, or woodpigeon,⁵³ builds its nest within the heart or trunk of the tree, and that Hopkins is not talking of an external peace but rather of a transforming Peace, then the dove also acts as a protection to the tree, and its wings become the boughs of the tree. Further, there may be a pun on "leave" in lines 8 and 9; the meaning would be that as the dove Patience "plumes" to "Peace," its wooden temple likewise "leaves" into a proper receptor of Peace, for the two must grow together.

This underplay of metamorphosis depends on a delicate punning similar to that which we find in the transformation of the souls of Suicides into the barren wood in Dante's Inferno: "Quando si parte l'anima feroce dal corpo ond 'ella stessa s'è disvelta--when the ferocious spirit leaves the body from which it has uprooted itself"(XIII, 94-95). Still, if this underlying punning complexity is suggested in Peace, it is not as developed as is the underthought

52 Ritz, p. 491.

53 In his journal for 17 October 1873, while teaching Rhetoric at Roehampton, London S.W., Hopkins noted that, "Wood-pigeons come in flock into our field and on our trees: they flock at this time of year" [Journals, p. 239].

of Duns Scotus's Oxford or Henry Purcell.

Hopkins may not have been at ease in his return to Oxford, but despite his heavy work load, he found time to compose more poetry in the eight months between late February and early October 1879 than he wrote in any other comparative period of his maturity except for 1885. But the sonnets of the middle period, for all their excellences, cannot as a group match either the lyric intensity of the 1877 sonnets nor the hard brilliancy of the sonnets of 1885. After Henry

54 As exquisite as this curtal sonnet is, it is clearly not among Hopkins' greatest poems. Nevertheless, it seems to have acted as a stimulus for one of Dixon's latest and finest sonnets, "To Peace," written sometime after his recovery in 1892 from a nervous breakdown:

O Peace, O Dove, O shape of the Holy Ghost
 I would not vex thee with too subtle thought,
 Put thee in fear by hopes, send thee to coast
 Regions unknown for what I dearest sought.
 To rough delights I would not open course,
 Nor thy composure fray with vague desire,
 Nor aspiration hold that did thee force,
 Nor move a step that I could not retire.
 Nay, nay, I pray thee, close thy startled eye,
 Compose again thy self-stirred plumes, nor aim
 At other station, in timidity
 Of fancied plots, which here I all disclaim.
 Well, fly then! for perchance from heavenward flight
 Gentler on me thou mayst again alight.

While the tenderness of the good Canon's sonnet is close to Hopkins', there is a paleness and fragility here that is foreign to Hopkins' poetry. And further, it is not doubt which frightens Hopkins' dove. Rather, it is the tree's present unsuitability to harbor Peace, for Peace can only live where the tree has grown in patience to house her. Dixon's dove remains unsteady, impermanent, and ready at provocation to fly. But there is with Hopkins' dove the possibility of staying permanently once patience has matured.

Purcell, Hopkins' diction in the remaining sonnets of 1879 becomes plainer, more severe, less quaint, and there is almost no further rhythmical experimentation. For he is consciously striving for a Miltonic severity, which seems in part the result of Bridges' dissatisfaction with the Purcell sonnet, and in part the result of his own fears of becoming too quaint by listening only to his own poetic voice in its isolation.

But there is also a concomitant falling off in poetic excellence in the last four sonnets. Hopkins' idiosyncratic muse, forced to sing in a more severe style and sticking to the lower registers, becomes harsh and prosaic and loses many of its fine trills and canons. And the echoes and hints of that deeper sacramental vision imbedded in the very fiber of Duns Scotus's Oxford and Henry Purcell are lost in his muse's attempt to be a plain woman and to say just what she means. It was to take all the frightful sweat of his sonnets of desolation, however, before his muse would strike the inner chord of a severe Miltonic style and sound it with an unmistakeable rightness.

V. 1880-1882 - - THREE YEARS, THREE SONNETS:

"CHRIST PLAYS IN TEN THOUSAND PLACES"

I like the Sonnet on Earth the Creature
("Ribblesdale")... very much, as I do
all your work: it has the rareness, the
sweetness that is in all: and could have
been written by none other.

Dixon to Hopkins - 12 August 1883

The years 1880 to 1884 are particularly barren as far as Hopkins' sonnet productivity is concerned. We have none, and probably none were composed, in 1881, 1883, and 1884. His only sonnet for 1880 was Felix Randal. Two others, As Kingfishers catch fire and Ribblesdale, were composed probably within a few months of each other sometime in the late summer or early fall of 1882. Furthermore, while all three sonnets show a maturation of rhythmic principles already established, they contain no further prosodic or structural innovations.

After Oxford, Hopkins still had two full years of parish duty among the poor. From early October till Christmas 1879, he was temporarily stationed at Bedford Leigh, his happiest post. In lines reminiscent of Dickens' Hard Times, he noted to Bridges (8 October 1879) the grim topography of Leigh:

[The] houses [are] red, mean, and two
storied: there are a dozen mills or so,
and coalpits also; the air is charged

with smoke, as well as damp.... I was yesterday at St. Helen's, probably the most repulsive place in Lancashire The stench of sulphuretted hydrogen rolls in the air and films of the same gas form on railing and pavement.

This bleak situation was saved, however, by the fact that¹ "the people are hearty."

Then, in his longest single assignment as parish priest, Hopkins was posted to St. Francis Xavier's Church in Liverpool from about 30 December 1879 to 10 August 1881, a period of nineteen and a half months. And in all that time at Liverpool he composed very little. He wrote only one sonnet, but a superb one, Felix Randal. He ~~rewrote~~ Brothers while home on vacation in August 1880. And on September 7 he composed his lyrical masterpiece Spring and Fall while at a country house in Lydiate, outside Liverpool, where he spent many of his days off from his grueling parish work. Then, for almost two months from 10 August to about 5 October, he filled in as Preacher at St. Joseph's in Glasgow, where he composed Inversnaid while on a short trip to the Scottish highlands. Still, between Peace (2 October 1879) and As

1 Letters I, p. 90. Cf. Dickens' description of Coketown in Hard Times (1854):

It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves forever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye (Book I, Chapter 5). Recall also the "brickish skirt" of Duns Scotus's Oxford.

Kingfishers catch fire (August 1882?), there is only one sonnet--Felix Randal.

Felix Randal, written 28 April 1880 at Liverpool, is the artistic culmination of Duns Scotus's Oxford and Henry Purcell, for all three "quaint" poems are specifically concerned with delineating the distinctive inscape of a person. The deeply human qualities of the blacksmith in his wild and random hardness and the underlying spiritual drama of sheep and shepherd are precisely and tenderly caught by Hopkins. "I will send what else I have whenever I can find an opportunity of copying it," he writes to Dixon on 14 May 1880. "The parish work of Liverpool is very wearying to mind and body and leaves me nothing but odds and ends of time: There is merit in it but little Muse, and indeed 26 lines is the whole I have writ²[ten] in more than half a year, since I left Oxford." And a month later he sends the twenty-six lines with a short letter to Bridges. Playing on his favorite parallel between poetic and human gestation, he closes his letter with the comment, "I will enclose a sonnet and a little lyric, the only things I have written in nine months."³

The enclosed "little lyric" was At the Wedding, a musical, rather uncomplex piece of twelve lines, written the previous October at the Bedford Leigh mission. And Felix Randal too, while written during his labors among the poor

2 Letters II, p. 33.

3 Letter of 18 June 1880 in Letters I, p. 103.

Irish in the slums of Liverpool, "of all places the most museless,"⁴ seems to have been based on his experience at Bedford Leigh, whose people he especially loved. But Felix Randal is no slight piece. Despite the absolute quantitative lack of poetic output in the months before and after he wrote it, this sonnet stands as an amazingly complex emotional performance which succeeds simultaneously as elegy and as a Christian celebration of the final victory over death.

It is surprising that Felix Randal, although widely admired and read, has had little analysis, compared, say, with other of Hopkins' poems, even forgetting The Windhover. And the glosses which have been given Felix Randal, despite their valuable insights, have not properly marked the poem's inscape. An analogical and anagogical interpretation, as with Duns Scotus's Oxford and Henry Purcell, is needed to show the organic center of the poem, and to articulate the poem's own inscape.

Felix Randal has most often been read as the poignant elegy of a priest for a dying and now dead blacksmith under his

4 Letters II, p. 42. Hopkins made several comments on his general unhappiness at Liverpool. In this same letter, for example, he tells Dixon that it "is indeed a most unhappy and miserable spot. There is moreover no time for writing anything serious--I should say for composing it, for if it were made it might be written" (ibid.). To Bridges he had written in October 1880 that "one is so fagged, so harried and galled up and down. And the drunkards go on drinking, the filthy, as the scripture says, are filthy still: human nature is so inveterate. Would that I had seen the last of it" (Letters I, p. 110). And to Baillie, as early as May of the same year, he had complained that "I am brought face to face with the deepest poverty and misery in my district. On this theme I could write much, but it would do no good" (Letters III, p. 245).

spiritual care. Recalling the confrontation of the grim and unalterable fact of death which he shared with the blacksmith, the priest remembers that he had given the dying farrier, along with the sacraments, consolation and hope, and had indeed been touched himself in the terrible encounter. This two-way exchange of a love matured in adversity is reflected in the parallel phrasing and in the dual repetition of three key words: "endear," "tears," and "touch":

This seeing the sick endears them to us, us too
it endears.
My tongue had taught thee comfort, touch had
quenched thy tears,
Thy tears that touched my heart, child, Felix, poor
Felix Randal.

In the final tercet, the priest turns back in memory to the blacksmith's healthy prime, which assumes an aura of radical innocence in the image of the blacksmith shoeing the powerful workhorse with "bright and battering sandal." Read in this way--and only the skeletal outline has thus been given--the sonnet assumes a curve similar, if shortened, to the resolution of Thyrsis or to one of the curves of In Memoriam: a confrontation with the fact of loss in death and then a moving back in time to a happier memory and a brighter landscape. Both Arnold and Tennyson realize that the final darkness is inscrutable, and so are poetically justified in turning back to memory. And Hopkins too, as a man, must turn backwards into memory to breathe a life into Felix Randal again. For it is as Shelley says:

And so thy thought when thou art gone
Love himself shall slumber on.

But such a reading leaves unanswered Hopkins' radically felt Christianity and the significance for him of the Incarnation. And while this reading may at first satisfy us, its success depends upon separating Hopkins as priest and as a "modern" man. If it satisfies the elegiac note, it does violence to Hopkins' theology.

The rhythm and the tone of the poem are our first clue to a different interpretation. These point away from a solely elegiac note; there is a consistent refrain of comfort throughout, which surges through in the final lines into the "roll, the rise" of sheer strength and a primal joy. Furthermore, if the priestly comfort is found precisely in the priest's role as ministrant of the sacraments, and if there is no evidence within the sonnet that these prepare the soul to meet God, if they are essentially empty forms, then the comfort is simply a sham, and so, therefore, is the ministrant. And so, too, is the poem itself, for the success of the poem rests on our acceptance of the priest-speaker's sincerity and intelligence.

Felix Randal is actually a deeply moving journal of the loss of a loved one, of a "hardy-handsome" farrier, which simultaneously carries a note of quiet elation and of controlled exuberance. It is a journal of the priest-speaker's care for the fatally ill and now dead farrier, who was tendered the sacrament of holy viaticum by the priest. Both shepherd

and sheep have been "touched," in fact, changed, by the terrible encounter. The priest has been touched by Felix's child-like incomprehensibility and terror before death. And Felix, in a more profound spiritual metamorphosis, has been changed when "a heavenlier heart began" through the efficacy of the holy viaticum--"our sweet reprieve and ransom." The final change has taken place in Hopkins the poet-priest, who has been touched by the terrible joy of not only knowing, but of realizing the consequences of this change in Felix Randal.

In fact, the whole poem is a poem of metamorphosis, both natural and supernatural. For the underlying structure of the sonnet rests on an analogy which may be baldly stated in the following way: the image of the farrier who shielded the "great gray drayhorse" is an inscape on the natural level for the priest who has shielded the "hardy-handsome" farrier. The first is a figura, literally a "forethought," of the second. Holy viaticum ("spiritual provision for a journey") is precisely a sacramental "shield" to help protect the soul in its final journey into and beyond death.⁵ And the priest has prepared the hardy tough farrier for that road from out of the "random grim forge" of a fatal and fevered sickness, much as the workingman Felix had so frequently fettled for the workhorse, preparing and protecting it for a more humble road.

5 "[Viaticum] means money, provision, for a journey, that is/ the journey to the other world" (Sermons, p. 248).

If this is the correct inscape of the poem, as I believe it is, then each of the details, in fact, every word, should contribute to this core of poetic underthought. Even the wish in Lancashire dialect, "Ah well, God rest him all road ever he offended," appropriate as it is as a benediction for a Lancashire blacksmith,⁶ now flashes into its theological significance: the road is the age-old metaphor for the spiritual struggle through life, of direction rather than randomness.

Now too, the title assumes its real significance.⁷ For Felix Randal is probably not the farrier's name. Hopkins

6 In a sermon (14 December 1879) to a congregation made up largely of Lancashire working people, Hopkins uses this Lancashire usage: "There is a crowd of you, brethren, and amidst that crowd some must be in this road--I mean are out of your duty, out of God's grace, and in mortal sin" [Cf. Sermons, pp. 47 and 47. in.].

7 It should be emphasized that the poem is almost certainly autobiographical. But whatever the blacksmith's name was, it does not seem to have been Felix Randal. The tone of the first line of the poem strongly suggests that Hopkins had learned the news of the blacksmith's death at second-hand, as if he had ministered to him for a while, then had not heard from or of him, and only afterwards heard of his death. This suggests that the blacksmith was not from Liverpool, where Hopkins had been stationed for less than four months when the poem was written, but was rather from Bedford Leigh. Devlin too is certain that Hopkins experienced Felix Randal at Leigh (Sermons, p. 5). If Felix Randal was the farrier's real name, therefore, it should have shown up in the registries at Leigh. I therefore wrote to St. Joseph's, where Hopkins was stationed, asking someone there to please check the registries. Fr. Charles J. Horan, P.P., kindly sent me the following information in a letter from St. Joseph's dated July 10, 1967, from which I quote: "I have scrutinized the Baptismal Registers and the Liber Defunctorum without success for the name "Felix Randal"; the name "Shield" (just a faint hope) without success; I have asked the local Registrar at the Cemetery to search their records during the relevant years--for the name Randal, or Shield--with no success."

had too fine a sense of Victorian gentlemanly decorum to give us this, and in all of his poems he almost never gives us a contemporary name. "Randal" is of Anglo-Saxon origin and means a "shield," as well as a strip of leather placed on the heels of a shoe. "Rand-al" would then mean a shielding all around. Felix, of course, is Latin for "happy" or "blessed," so that the farrier's name both hearkens back to his "more boisterous years" when he plied his trade with rough good nature, and simultaneously points ahead to the purer and permanent joy of the "heavenlier" blacksmith, now sacramentally shielded and protected for the final journey into eternity.⁸ The metamorphosis of the "great gray drayhorse" into a light, supple Pegasus-like steed with "bright and battering sandal" is an exact parallel of Felix Randal's spiritual transformation, which telescopes the movement of the entire sonnet in the final resounding line.⁹ And the rhyme words "Randal" and "sandal" also suggest this transformation, as the humble leather strip becomes the light and elegant footwear with which the blacksmith will "batter" his way through whatever bars his way on his last road.

8 Cf. the Oxford English Dictionary under "Rand." The "Worcester Exhibition Catalogue" for 1882 describes a "Rand turning machine... (which) delivers the rands... in a horse shoe form ready for use." A rand is a strip of leather (or iron) placed under the quarters of a boot or shoe. Randall, significantly, was also an obsolete variation of "random," meaning a gallop, a rapid headlong course, and a disorderly life. Felix's boisterous, random life is given direction by the viaticum, metamorphosing randal to "bright and battering sandal."

9 W. H. Gardner comments on the final lines of the sonnet

It is worth underlining what Hopkins has done with time in the structure of this sonnet. In the final tercet, he moves back away from the contemplation of Felix's death. The note is struck in line eleven with "child." The sonnet then moves elegiacally back in time to recapture the "more boisterous years" of Felix's prime. But this lively and happy scene, so filled with the sense of strong animal vitality, is a recapturing in a double sense, for it simultaneously looks forward to Felix's promised state in terms which preserve the distinct inscape of Felix's "child-like" vigor.

As has been stressed before, for Hopkins, the very core of the Incarnation is to see everywhere in the reality of concrete and seemingly trivial objects and actions the instressed presence and activity of Christ.¹⁰

9 (Cont'd.) that there is "both reminiscence and promise.... [There is,] in these lines, the suggestion of angel-postillions--of hooves, lightningshod, beating aerially the golden macadam of some translunary paradise" [Gardner, I, p. 308]. But the emotional intensity, and again for some the poem is to be read solely as a beautiful Ave Atque Vale, rests on the diamond core of Hopkins' sacramental vision. Gardner's comments are quite good, but one feels that he is circling around the meaning of the sonnet, pointing correctly to its dual aspects of "reminiscence and promise" without pinning down the underlying thought.

10 While Hopkins was drawn by the similar attraction of pantheism, he insisted on an all-important, razor-sharp distinction. However deeply God is present to a thing, His infinity precludes his identification with any or all finite beings. Or, as Hopkins explained it in his retreat notes for late August 1880:

Neither do I deny that God is so deeply present to everything ('Tu autem, O bone omnipotens, eras superior summo meo et interior intimo meo') that it would be impossible for him but for his infinity

One of Hopkins' most striking comments on the central importance of the Incarnation in the daily and humble affairs of men comes in an early letter, written while he was still at Oxford, to E. H. Coleridge (22 January 1866):

I think the trivialness of life is, and personally to each one, ought to be seen to be, done away with by the Incarnation.... It is one adorable point of the incredible condescension of the Incarnation (the greatness of which no saint can have ever hoped to realise) that our Lord submitted...to the mean and trivial accidents of humanity.... It seems therefore that if the Incarnation cd. versari inter (dwell among) trivial men and trivial things it is not surprising that our reception or non-reception of its benefits shd. be also amidst trivialities. 11

Felix Randal translates into lyrical poetry of the highest order this theological insight. For Hopkins' vision is to have seen in the daily shoeing of horses by a common blacksmith, himself without "forethought of" its spiritual significance, the abiding presence of Christ. And Christ's presence is not more discernible to men only because men do not care to stress or instress the potential spiritual value of all things to worthily shout glory to God.

This spiritual vision of man's god-like worth, without mitigating any of his apparent trivialness, gives to Hopkins' poems of the common man their spiritual intensity

10 (Cont'd.) not to be identified with them or, from the other side, impossible but for his infinity so to be present to them. This is oddly expressed, I see; I mean/a being so intimately present as God is to other things would be identified with them were it not for God's infinity or were it not for God's infinity he could not be so intimately present to things. (Sermons, p.128.)

11 Letters III, pp. 19-20.

and profoundly personal charity. He has certainly caught the exact tone of resignation and restrained sorrow in his colloquial diction and remarkably free sprung and outriding alexandrines:

Felix Randal the farrier, O is he dead then?
 my duty all ended,
 Who have watched his mould of man, big-boned
 and hardy-handsome
 Pining, pining, till time when reason rambléd
 in it and some
 Fatal four disorders, fleshed there, all contended?

It is a poetic voice of which there is no parallel among the Victorian poets. And this voice had to be first fired and tempered in the slums of the Victorian industrial cities. By constant exposure to misery this young priest from a respectable and comfortable middle class background, who was temperamentally unsuited by his delicate sensibility to such raw work, found a new and more mature voice. For Hopkins had an astonishing capacity for love, a winning humility beneath his assertiveness, and a truly courageous desire to be transformed literally into an alter Christus whatever the personal cost to himself. And the one thing most needful for Hopkins was to cultivate an ever greater patience as a prelude to peace. "Impatient he cursed at first." It is the inscrutable finger of God working in the harried and galled Hopkins as well as in the victorious blacksmith.

About 8 October 1881 Hopkins arrived at Manresa House, Roehampton, the scene of his early noviceship, to devote the next ten months, until 31 July 1882, to his Tertian-

ship. To do this more fully, he voluntarily gave over all poetic composition for this period. "In no case am I willing to write anything while in my present condition: the time is precious and will not return again and I know I shall not regret my forbearance."¹² And it was here that Hopkins was to find that peace which he had for so long patiently waited. He wrote to Dixon explaining the nature of this spiritual peace:

[My] mind is here more at peace than it has ever been and I would gladly live all my life, if it were so to be, in as great or a greater seclusion from the world and be busied only with God. But in the midst of outward occupations not only the mind is drawn away from God, which may be at the call of duty and be God's will, but unhappily the will too is entangled, worldly interests freshen, and worldly ambitions revive. The man who in the world is as dead to the world as if he were buried in the cloister is already a saint. But this is our ideal. ¹³

It is from this period that many of Hopkins' finest spiritual insights are dated. And As Kingfishers catch fire may possibly have been written soon after he finished his Tertianship, perhaps in August 1882.¹⁴ This is the first mature

12 Letter of 11 November 1881 to Dixon. Letters II, p. 89.

13 Letter of 12 October 1881 to Dixon, ibid., pp. 75-76.

14 John Pick tentatively dates the sonnet as August 1882, and quotes from the passage below on page 151 in support of this dating. The close correspondence between the final tercet of the sonnet and this close paraphrase, together with the inner freshness of the sonnet itself are the strongest pieces of evidence for thus dating the sonnet. But this dating, I am convinced, is open to serious questioning. In a letter to Professor Norman MacKenzie of 4 April 1967, I asked him if an August-September 1880 dating were not too early. The evidence I adduced in favor of this dating

sonnet which Hopkins did not send to Bridges. The single draft, with corrections and variants, was found among Hopkins' literary remains sent to Bridges in 1889. August 1882 is probably the best date for the following reasons.

- 14 (Cont'd.) was the following. First, there is Hopkins' primary interest in creation, especially selving in creation and man and God in his retreat at Liverpool in late August 1880 (cf. infra, p. 151. Secondly, there are the verbal echoes of lines 33-36 of the revised The Brothers (Hampstead, August 1880):

Eh, how all rung!

Young dog, he did give tongue!

But Harry -- in his hands he has flung

His tear-tricked cheeks of flame...

with lines 1-4 of As Kingfishers catch Fire. And thirdly, while Hopkins found it difficult to compose at Liverpool, there is a pattern of spiritual refreshment following his retreats, and The Brothers and Spring and Fall are dated August and early September 1880 respectively.

Professor MacKenzie graciously answered at length (19 April 1967). His own evidence for an earlier dating, while not conclusive, is persuasive and shows both painstaking scholarship and brilliant insight:

Briefly, I am inclined to place the sonnet earlier than Professor Ritz does in his Le Poète Gérard Manley Hopkins (p. 670) [Roehampton, 1882 -- tentative]. The handwriting would accord well enough with any date close to 1880, but the sole surviving MS. is a rough draft on a sheet of cream-laid paper which most closely resembles the type used for first drafts of The Candle In-doors and Peace, both Oxford poems. None of these sheets bears a watermark. It is possible he had the many distinctive Oxford bells in mind when he composed the sonnet ["each hung bell's/Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name"], but this does not offer clear evidence for dating it.

Parallels in the Sermons and Letters are distributed over several years. As early as 26 May 1879, he wrote about "the being a thing has outside itself, as a voice by its echo...and that in the thing by virtue of which especially it has this being abroad." In a fragment of a sermon preached at Bedford Leigh 26 October 1879 he stresses the importance of the cuirass of Christ's justice for covering a man (Sermons, p. 234).

First, Hopkins at his own word gave over poetic composition during his Tertianship, which ended on 31 July 1882, the Feast day of St. Ignatius Loyola. On the first of September, he was sent north to Stonyhurst to teach classics to those preparing for entry into the University of London, a position he had filled also for a short period in 1878. Referring to Ribblesdale, he tells Bridges from Stonyhurst in the following March that he has "completed one sonnet,¹⁵ since I came north one." It is as if he were being intentionally ambiguous and unwilling to tell Bridges of As Kingfishers catch fire.

- 14 (Cont'd.) The occurrence of a certain theme in a sonnet could obviously be parallel to its appearance in his prose, but we know from personal experience that old thoughts which have been buried out of sight have a habit of re-appearing as though they were new inspirations after an interval of years. We have no strong proof that the prose version preceded the poetic, or vice versa. Professor MacKenzie has discussed this and other problems of dating the poems in his Foreword on the Text for the Fourth Edition of the Poems. He has been doing "further work on the sonnets in particular," but his discoveries will not be available until they are put into final form for publication next year.
- While, then, I have used the August 1882 date for As Kingfishers catch fire here, I emphasize the tentativeness of the dating. Yet even if the poem were dated as mid-1880, its order in the overall sonnet sequence would not be altered. If it is put back as early as late 1879, it precedes only Felix Randal in the established sonnet sequence.

- 15 Letters I, p. 178.

Second, there is a prose paraphrase of the final tercet of the sonnet,

Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces,

in his spiritual notes for late December 1881, "from thoughts
16
arising in the Long Retreat":

[Grace] is any action, activity, on God's part by which, in creating or after creating, he carries the creature to or towards the end of its being, which is its self-sacrifice to God and its salvation. It is, I say, any such activity on God's part; so that so far as this action or activity is God's it is divine stress, holy spirit, and as all is done through Christ, Christ's spirit; so far as it is action, correspondence, on the creature's it is actio salutaris; so far as it is looked at in esse quieto it is Christ in his member on the one side, his member in Christ on the other. It is as if a man said: That is Christ playing at me and me playing at Christ, only that it is no play but truth; That is Christ being me and me being Christ. 17

Hopkins had focused on creation and the self during his Liverpool retreat in late August 1880. In his notes he remarks that selving, the concomitant action of existence and individualizing a predetermined nature, is a perfection which, by the finite nature of things, points to God's operation in bestowing and sustaining this selving from without:

Now to be determined and distinctive is a perfection, either self-bestowed or bestowed from without. In anything finite it cannot be self-bestowed; nothing finite can determine its own being, I mean its being as a whole;

16 Sermons, p. 152.

17 Ibid., p. 154.

nothing finite can determine what itself shall, in a world of being, be. For to determine is a perfection, greater than and certainly never less than, the perfection of being determined. It is a function of a nature, even if it should be the whole function, the naturing [natura naturans], the selving of that nature. It always in nature's order is after the nature it is of [natura naturata.]

18

Hopkins came back to these thoughts again after his Tertianship. For he added an important postscript to his August 1880 notes on 12 August 1882: "Remark that the assumption in no. 2 [to identify as closely as possible the Self of God with the individual person's self¹⁹] is to assume in oneself a hypostatic union."

In fulfilling one's distinctive nature, any object gives glory back to God. In the action of their very selving, in proclaiming their nature, all things great and small speak of God's gift of creating them in their distinctiveness, just as the sun (God) turns static receptivity (natura naturata) into dynamic activity (natura naturans), as in the images of the first line:

As Kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies dráw fláme.
Even inanimate objects tell of themselves; and Hopkins has caught precisely, in the echoing long vowels and soft n's, m's and s's,

18 Ibid., p. 125.

19 Ibid., p. 129.

the echoing ring of a stone falling into a well:

As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring

He catches both the sharp metallic notes of plucked strings in the sharp t's and full stops of "like each tucked string tells," as well as the oscillating pounding of swinging bells in the heavy staccato rhythm and internal rhymes and assonance of "hung," "swung," "tongue," and "fling" in his next lines:

Each hūng bells
Bow swūng finds tōngue tō flīng out brōad its nāme.

In the second quatrain Hopkins translates the Scotist philosophical dicta of the particular and dynamic natures of all creation into a poetic statement:

Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves-- goes itself; myself it speaks and spells;
Crying What I do is me: for that I came.

The biblical echo of Christ's reply to Pontius Pilate is unmistakable. "What I was born for, what I came into the world for, is to bear witness of the truth. Whoever belongs to the truth, listens to my voice" (John, XVIII, 37).

But while all creation can do "one thing and the same," man himself, in acting in his human capacity, has in all of his actions a supernatural dimension, for man in acting as man, "keeps grace," since man's own proper end is, as the Spiritual Exercises state, "to praise, reverence and serve God Our Lord, and by so doing to save his soul." ²⁰ A man's state

20 Ibid., p. 122.

or condition is revealed in his actions; as long as he wills to do what is properly his to do, he is in the state of grace. Furthermore, this grace is frequently manifested in a man's exterior gracefulness. The sprung lines capture the dynamism of each man's being:

Í say móre: the júst man jústices
 Kéeps gráce: that kéeps áll his goings gráces;
 Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is--
 Christ

For in fulfilling his own individuality, he is a living temple of God, he is another Christ, who is most himself "when the member is in all things conformed to Christ. This too best brings out the nature of the man himself, as the lettering on a sail or device upon a flag are best seen when it fills."²¹

For the self, that about the individual "which is more distinctive than the taste of ale or alum, more distinctive than the smell of walnutleaf or camphor"²² is not annihilated by Christ's presence, but rather brought to its most perfect stress of pitch, to the actualizing of its fullest human potentiality. For since the self is the individuating existence of a nature, God's presence, which is Existence Itself, must hold that self at its highest quivering stress without absorbing it.

Ribblesdale, written sometime between September and the end of December 1882 (and probably in September) has many affinities to As Kingfishers catch fire. But whereas the earlier

21 Ibid., p. 195.

22 Ibid., p. 123.

poem is a brilliant and exact synthesis of a philosophical and theological insight without any underthought--there are no multiple levels there--Ribblesdale is like Duns Scotus's Oxford in its multi-level structure.

Writing to Bridges on 26 September 1882, Hopkins describes the surrounding topography of Stonyhurst, where he was preparing to teach Latin and Greek. "There are acres of flat roof which, when the air is not thick, as unhappily it mostly is, commands a noble view of this Lancashire landscape, Pendle Hill, Ribblesdale, the fells, and all round, bleakish²³ but solemn and beautiful."

In late March of the following year he sends the sonnet to Bridges, and on June 25 he also sends it to Dixon: "I enclose one sonnet, meant as a companion to one beginning 'I remember a house' [In the Valley of the Elwy], which perhaps you have. You will see that the first words begin a lyric²⁴ of yours -- or perhaps those are 'Earth, sad Earth.'"

Both Bridges' and Dixon's copies are prefaced by the following Pauline commentary: "'Vanitati enim creatura subiecta est, non volens sed propter cum qui subiecit eam in spe' cum praec. et sqq. Rom. viii 20." It will help in understanding this sonnet to quote this passage from St. Paul with what precedes and follows:

23 Letters I, p. 151.

24 Letters II, p. 108.

If creation is full of expectancy, that is because it is waiting for the sons of God to be made known. Created nature has been condemned to frustration; not for some deliberate fault of its own, but for the sake of him who so condemned it, with a hope to look forward to; namely, that nature in its turn will be set free from the tyranny of corruption, to share in the glorious freedom of God's sons. The whole of nature, as we know, groans in a common travail all the while [Rom. VIII, 19-23].

As in As Kingfishers catch fire, Earth can only give glory to God in being itself, in revealing its beauty, its goodness, back to God. But men have made of earth a dimmed beauty, a crippled goodness:

Earth, sweet Earth, sweet landscape, with leaves throng
And leached low grass, heaven that dost appeal
To, with no tongue to plead, no heart to feel;
That canst but only be, but dost that long--

Thou canst but be, but that thou well dost; strong
Thy plea with him who dealt, nay does now deal,
Thy lovely dale down thus and thus bids reel
Thy river, and o'er gives all to rack or wrong.

The scene is autumn, the leaves lie in throngs around the base of their trees, and the grass is bent; both are in the posture of humble supplication, crying out their fallen being as well as they can. Who is "he" who has "dealt" nature this blow? Biblical commentators are divided on this poetical passage of St. Paul. It can refer to Adam, and therefore generic man, who in falling dragged down earth itself with him. Or it can refer to God Himself, Who has made the straight-ways crooked, and Who cursed the very ground on which Adam stood. At the root of the curse of earth, in either event, is man's self-bent, his sin and fall. Nevertheless earth the creature, if wearing

"man's smudge" (No. 31), still continues good in God's eyes.

It is only man, nature's most distinctive self, her "clearest-selved spark" (no. 72), who can voice the praise due to the Creator of all this beauty. But man, turned to his "selfbent," continues to rob or misuse this world's wealth without any concern for his fellow man or for using this world's goods as means to buying the next:

And what is Earth's eye, tongue, or heart else, where
Else, but in dear and dogged man? -- Ah, the heir
To his own selfbent so bound, so tied to his turn,
To thriftless reave both our rich round world bare
And none reck of world after, this bids wear
Earth brows of such care, care and dear concern.

A key verb in Ribblesdale is "bids" in lines 7 and 13, for if God "bids" the beautiful river to run twisted, it is man who first broke the covenant. And in the sestet it is clearly man who "bids" Earth wear "brows of such care." For Hopkins the verb has a specifically theological sense:

God first entered into relations (or what I used to call bidding) with man in Adam and a commonweal arose--with its sovereign and one subject; its membership...its distribution of the common goods...; its justice, original justice; and so on. This commonweal may be looked on as not only a polity of sovereign and subject but also in the light of property, where God is the landlord, man the tenant, and this indeed not only as touches property strictly so called but also life and other bona or blessings. Then sacrifices, tithes, and so on will be rents, real or conventional; acknowledgements of dependence. 25

The tenant, however does not pay his rents of "sacrifices and tithes." As in God's Grandeur he is self-bent, he is selfish. And innocent earth is made to suffer. We remember that In the Valley of the Elwy, which Hopkins called the companion of Ribblesdale, that

Lovely the woods, waters, meadows, combs, vales,
All the air things wear that build this world of Wales:
Only the inmate does not correspond.

In Ribblesdale, however, the earth itself suffers and lies bleeding with brows of care. Professor Gardner thinks that it was the just man knitting "his brows with pain and sorrow at the sight of sin and ugliness [so that] the Earth too appears to 'wear brows of such care, care and dear concern.'" ²⁶ But Fr. Boyle is right in his insistence that it is earth itself which Hopkins sees as frowning, as a concerned mother frowns over her Prodigal, and he points to Hopkins' letter printed in the 3 January 1884 issue of the journal Nature. Describing a weird series of sunsets, caused by volcanic ash, Hopkins writes, "while these changes were going on in the sky, the landscape of Ribblesdale glowed with a frowning brown." ²⁷

While I agree with Fr. Boyle that we must look to the landscape upon which Hopkins himself is looking, there is an alternative reading for the final lines of Ribblesdale. If, in the second quatrain, Hopkins stresses the crookedness of

26 Gardner, II, p. 352.

27 Cf. Boyle, p. 169. Hopkins' letters to Nature are printed in Letters II as Appendix II, pp. 161-66.

nature, in the sestet it is man's bleeding of the earth, his unselving of it that concerns the speaker most. In a short but perceptive note, George Goodin remarks that "Hopkins' association of physical crookedness and moral wrong can... be seen in the Comments on the Spiritual Exercises, where crookedness is spoken of as the influence of Satan."²⁸ He then quotes a passage which also finds echoes in Andromeda:

God gave things a forward and perpetual motion:
the Devil, that is/thrower of things off track,
upsetter, mischiefmaker, clashing one with
another brought in the law of decay and con-
sumption in inanimate nature, death in the
vegetable and animal world, moral death and
original sin in the world of man. 29

In the sestet, man, "the heir/To his own selfbent so bound," the son of Adam, inheriting a proclivity towards setting himself up as the highest good, rather than acknowledging his Creator/creature dependence, is tied to his own little turn, treading in his own tracks. This self-bent is so strong in him that, selfish prodigal that he is, he robs "our rich round world bare" and does not reckon either the afterworld ("world after"); nor does he consider to provide or conserve nature's goods for his own heirs (the "world after" he is gone). He therefore "bids" only in his own perverted interests, he "buys" up what was meant for him to use properly as the tenant of God's earthly beauty. And he leaves the rich round earth

28 "Man and Nature in Hopkins' 'Ribblesdale,'" Notes and Queries, VI (1959), p. 454.

29 Sermons, pp. 198-99.

with brows caused by "such care" (man's care) and "dear concern" (an enterprise expensive and costly to the very earth itself). Men are primarily interested only in translating the earth's treasures into financial capital. He has by his negligence scarred the land with brows, for he has literally scooped gaping wounds into the hills to mine and quarry the land, and thus left his own "manmark" on the face of the earth.

Possibly there is an allusion to these "brows" made by such ill "care" in the letter of late September 1882 written to Bridges from Stonyhurst:

There is always a stirring scene, contractors, builders, masons, bricklayers, carpenters, stonecutters and carvers, all on the spot; a traction engine twice a day fetches stone from a quarry on the fells; engines of all sorts send their gross and foulsmelling smoke all over us; cranes keep swinging; and so on.

And a little further on in the same letter he describes the fells and Ribblesdale as "bleakish but solemn and beautiful."³⁰

(God) meant the world to give him praise, reverence, and service; to give him glory. It is like a garden, a field he sows: what should it bear him?.. it should yield him glory. The creation does praise God, does reflect honour on him, is of service to him.... But man can know God, can mean to give him glory. This then was why he was made, to give God glory and to mean to give it; to praise God freely, willingly to reverence him, gladly to serve him. 31

30 Letters I, p. 151.

31 Sermons, pp. 238-39.

Hopkins had made a similar cry of man's refusal to "reck" God's "rod" almost six years before where, however, there was the consolation that "there lives the dearest freshness deep down things." But here there is a darkening of the poet's vision reflecting his new awareness of the darkness which man has imparted to the earth itself. It is a vision caused by that peculiarly accelerated maturation which a sustained confrontation with the horrors and miseries of unregenerate but still dear man will wreak on even the toughest constitutions, a confrontation which, once experienced, is never forgotten.

Ribblesdale is the last sonnet Hopkins wrote for over two years. His powerful The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo is dated 13 October 1882 from Stonyhurst, and so is contemporary with Ribblesdale. In the following May he composed his finest Marian piece, The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air we Breathe. Besides these he wrote some Latin lyrics and published three comic triolets in the Stonyhurst Magazine which he had to defend against Bridges, who did not think them very funny.

"I am always jaded," he tells Bridges in late March 1883, "I cannot tell why, and my vein shews no signs of ever
³²flowing again." And two months later he voices a similar complaint to Dixon: "I see no grounded prospect of my ever doing much not only in poetry but in anything at all. At times I do feel this sadly and bitterly, but it is God's will and though

no change that I can foresee will happen yet perhaps some may
 that I do not foresee!' ³³ At thirty-eight Hopkins' vein of
 sonnets seemed apparently worked out. But when removed from
 Stonyhurst to Dublin and isolated from friends, family, and
 countrymen, his muse coaxed him to compose his next sonnet,
 there is a transformation in Hopkins' poetic voice which
 touches on the darkness of Lear in its confrontation, not
 with the world without, but with the self within. It is a
 confrontation with a darkness so profound and so terrifying
 that it leaves the shadows of Ribblesdale far behind and far
 above.

33 Letters II, pp. 108-109.

VI. THE SEVEN "TERRIBLE" SONNETS OF 1885

"I am not a great reader of mystical works. One must oneself, I think, be on the road they map and trace, and indeed well advanced on it, to give full meaning to a work which admits no "skimming" and whose worth is revealed only by a profound and, as it were, endless penetration of its workings. It requires a vital participation, which is quite different from a simple understanding of its text. Understanding is, of course, necessary: it is very far from being enough."
(Paul Valéry in his Preface to Les Cantiques spirituels de St. Jean de la Croix, translated into French verse by Father Cyprian (1941) trans. Denise Folliot).

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura
che la diritta via era smarrita.

O what black hours we have spent
This night! what sights you, heart, saw;
ways you went!

[Let] joy size
At God knows when to God knows what; whose smile
's not wrung, see you; unforeseen times rather--
as skies
Between pie mountains-- lights a lovely mile.

Sometime in the bleak twilight months between October 1884 and early January 1885, Hopkins seems to have conceived and begun Spelt From Sibyl's Leaves, for early drafts of the poem exist in the unpublished Dublin Notebook for this period. There is an appropriate shadowiness around the inception of this poem which stands at the threshold of the splendid series of sonnets of desolation written most probably between January and

mid-summer of 1885. Whatever lacunae exist in following the precise curves of the sonnets of 1877 or of 1879, their beginnings are heralded by Hopkins in letters to his mother or to Bridges.

But here the darkness is deeper, and almost two years elapsed before the reticent Hopkins confessed to having created his sonnet. Even then he remarks only on its rhythm. "I have at last completed but not quite finished the longest sonnet ever made and no doubt the longest making," he writes Bridges on 26 November 1886 from St. Stephen's Green, Dublin. "It is in 8-foot lines and essays effects almost musical."¹ And two weeks later he finally sends off the sonnet to Bridges with the almost fond remark that this is indeed an exceptional child of which to be proud:

I mean to enclose my long sonnet, the longest, I still say, ever made; longest by its own proper length, namely by the length of its lines; for anything can be made long by eking, by tacking, by trains, tails, and flounces. I shd. be glad however if you wd. explain what a coda is and how employed.² Perhaps I shall enclose other sonnets.³ Of this long sonnet

- 1 Letters I, p. 245.
- 2 As early as December 1886 Hopkins is haunted by the rhythm of a caudated sonnet. But it is not until the following September that he actually writes Harry Ploughman, the first of his three sonnets to employ a coda (of sorts).
- 3 It will be seen that from September 1885 until shortly before his death nearly four years later, Hopkins again and again promises to send Bridges the sonnets of desolation. But he never does. E.g., he writes him on 2 November 1887 that "I hope soon to enter a batch of sonnets in my book and when I do that I can send you copies. They are the thin gleanings of a long weary while, but singly good [Letters I, p. 264]."

above all remember what applies to all my verse, that it is, as living art should be, made for performance and that its performance is not reading with the eye but loud, leisurely, poetical (not rhetorical) recitation, with long rests, long dwells on the rhyme and other marked syllables, and so on. This sonnet shd. be almost sung: it is most carefully timed in tempo rubato.... I send tonight only one sonnet. 4

The music of the sprung eight-stress lines of this extraordinarily heavy sonnet is quite a departure from anything Hopkins had created before. The rhythm here is more percussive, and owes something of its grounding to traditional Gregorian chant and the older classical heptachord, both of which allow for a wide range of modulation in the chanting voice. The accompaniment remains throughout a steady eight-stress line, marked by a strong caesura after the fourth foot. But the fluctuation of speed between lines is surprisingly great, and Hopkins has here rid himself of the metrical equivalence of the musical "tyranny of the bar." For example, there is the difference between the slow, stately, echoing bass of

Éar^ˈnē^ˈst, éar^ˈthlē^ˈs, é^ˈquā^ˈl, ā^ˈttū^ˈnē^ˈā^ˈblē^ˈ, vā^ˈult^ˈy,
vō^ˈlū^ˈmī^ˈnō^ˈus, . . . stū^ˈpē^ˈndō^ˈus

of line one, and the muffled drum-beat finality of the second half of line eight,

whē^ˈlms, whē^ˈlms, ā^ˈnd wī^ˈll ē^ˈnd ū^ˈs,

whose six syllables receive (at least conceptually) the same metronomic time as either of the first two examples, with their ten and nine syllables respectively. The rhythm of the sonnet

was given Hopkins' careful attention and , in fact, is indispensable to the understanding of the poem, as we shall see.

If the length of the lines seems very long, they are not, however, monotonous. And certainly the serious subject matter demands a solemn, meditative, almost chanting line. In Caradoc's Soliloquy, which is contemporaneous with the sonnet, Hopkins uses a basic alexandrine line, which he sometimes expands to seven or eight feet. Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves is his only sonnet to employ an eight-stress line, but the rhythmical experiment is a success, because the thought demands such a line. How Hopkins evolved such a line is not clearly known, but some light can be thrown on the subject from a letter he wrote to Coventry Patmore on 4 April 1885: "[Ideally] every line [of poetry] has 8 feet, 8 stresses; but not equal-- 4 dimeters or bars of 2 feet each. Then at the pause in the middle of the line and at the end one of these 8 feet may be and commonly is suppressed, so that 6 are left." After this sonnet Hopkins reverted to the alexandrine line, perhaps because of the tendency of the eight-stress line with its pronounced caesura to break into two parts.

Spelt From Sibyl's Leaves has received close attention from several perceptive critics of Hopkins, including Leavis, Gardner, and Boyle. It has also received several quite different interpretations and some fine glosses. But that it is first of all an Ignatian meditation on the state of hell

has not, to my knowledge, been adequately stated. Nevertheless, there are several notes made for a meditation on hell among Hopkins' spiritual writings which together offer a prose paraphrase of the sonnet.

The poem opens with a vivid composition of place. The speaker is presumably walking as evening overtakes day,⁵ straining to blend inexorably and irreversibly into night. This blending of evening into night is mimetically captured in the diphthong chiming and smooth blending of word into word in "Earnest, earthless, equal, attuneable." But the dental stops work against a too easy blending. There is a pause and then a chiming at the other end of the alphabet with "vaulty, voluminous, ..stupendous." Hopkins uses seven epithets to capture the inscape of "Evening." Evening is radically different from the "dapple" of day, and the gay, pied complexity of the world of light gives way to somber, undifferentiated uniformity. The world which before seemed to be morally neutral peels away to reveal its essentially "Earnest" nature. Evening becomes strange and dark, and must be judged by quite other than diurnal standards; it is attuneable, able to be harmonized, to be blended into one indistinguishable mass, like matter returning to its primal chaotic

- 5 Cf. F.R. Leavis's perceptive comment on the opening lines of the sonnet in New Bearings in English Poetry (Ann Arbor: 1960, p. 183): "This poem opens with evening deepening into night. We are not merely told that evening 'strains,' we feel evening straining, to become night, enveloping everything, in the movement, the progression of alliteration, assonance and rime."

state, like the waters of Genesis.

It is evening which "strains" to become the night-time as well as the night, the end, of all time. Hopkins stresses that sense of vast interstellar emptiness with the last three epithets of evening, and the description of night as "vast, womb-of-all, home-of-all, hearse-of-all night." All returns to its primordial home, all returns to its original state (its "womb"), which is also its hearse, carrying everything back to its beginning. There is in the adjective "voluminous," besides the meaning of volume, the equally relevant meaning of foldings, coilings, and windings (volumen) as evening unrolls into night, like parchment leaves on which are inscribed the record of our life. The sense of awe and of terrifying isolation in a strange world where nothing of what we knew remains is captured in the muffled drum-beats of the first two lines. We are under the cavernous "vaulty" dome of evening, in the burial chamber of our life. And we are at the entrance to Virgil's hell, in Book Six of the Aeneid:⁶

6 Cf. also the comments of Professor Ritz on the suitableness of invoking the Sibyl:

Voyez comment il [Hopkins] déchiffre le livre de la Sibylle. Le problème de la valeur de nos actes, l'angoisse de savoir si nos actions sont bonnes ou mauvaises, la gravité et la certitude du Jugement final au cours duquel le bon grain et l'ivraie seront à jamais séparés, se trouvent inscrits dans les feuillets de la Prophétesse. L'allusion à la prêtresse païenne devient claire, dès qu'on se reporte au sixième livre de l'Enéide, où Virgile décrit la descente de son héros aux Enfers. «Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbram». C'est le soir, la nuit tombe, les objets perdent leurs couleurs; tout à l'heure, les voyageurs devront choisir entre les deux chemins qui conduisent aux Champs-Élysées et au Tartare [Ritz, pp. 575-76].

Dimly through the shadows and dark solitudes they
 wended,
 Through the void domiciles of Dis, the bodiless
 regions:
 Just as, through fitful moonbeams, under the moon's
 thin light,
 A path lies in a forest, when Jove has palled the sky
 With gloom, and the night's blackness has bled the
 world of colour
 (VI, 268-272). ⁷

Those commentators who see this sonnet as dealing only with a pre-Christian world are partially correct in that hell for Hopkins means experiencing eternal separation from God, regardless of religion. But the Dies Irae, which is a traditional part of the Roman Catholic Burial Mass, joins the pagan Sibyl's prophecies with those of the Bible. In the first tercet, David is linked with the Cumaean prophetess:

Dies irae, dies illa,
 Solvet saeculum in favilla:
 Teste David cum Sibylla.

Day of wrath, that day
 Will unwind time into ashes:
 Both David and Sybil are witness. ⁸

The receding "hornlight" of the sun, that opaque, horncolored, serene twilight which is so pervasive after the sun has sunk below the horizon, continues to fade in the west. Above, the cold, flickering white points of the first stars begin to appear, showing their light, but not altering

7 Translated by the poet C. Day Lewis, who was himself influenced by Hopkins (Garden City, New York: 1952).

8 My translation. Cf. Hopkins' remark insisting that the heathen is forewarned, in his meditation on hell: "All will be punished according to their guilt, according to their knowledge and their power...the heathen unwarned by faith, warned indeed but dimly warned by reason, may suffer little in the flame" [Sermons, pp. 243-44].

9

the disposition of blackness on earth. The "fire-folk" of The Starlight Night now seem to sit in judgment, as they "overbend us" and show us God's anger in the "Fire-featuring heaven." The stars reveal themselves as having always been behind the dappled sky, and their progressive unfolding etched against the darkening heavens is caught in the unfolding of the words. "Éarliest stárs" elides into the more sharply focused "éarl-stárs," and is then more forcefully stressed in "stárs príncipal. One phrase literally ravel off the preceding, as our life itself ravel off unto two spools. The heavens appear in all their terrifying vastness now that earth resolves herself into a world of shadows. There is a similar image of God's awesomeness in the heavens, eternally there, beyond the bright dapple of day, in The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air we Breathe (May 1883):

Whereas did air not make
This bath of blue and slake
His fire, the sun would shake,
A blear and blinding ball
With blackness bound, and all
The thick stars round him roll
Flashing like flecks of coal,
Quartz-fret, or sparks of salt,
In grimy vasty vault (ll. 94-102).

- 9 Speaking of Christ's promise of happiness hereafter, Hopkins commented in his retreat notes only five months before his death that it "is as if one were dazzled by a spark or star in the dark, seeing it but not seeing it: we want a light shed on our way and a happiness spread over our life" [Sermons, p. 262]. The hoarlight of the stars seems far away and hollow, and the sparkling presence of God which was so near in The Starlight Night of seven years before is removed, for we are entering hell.

As evening becomes night, and the light wanes, the complexity and variety which all things showed in the light now fade and are forced to blend together, to lose all distinctiveness and self-hood. Only the most elementary outlines breaking against the dark skyline can be made out, and the skeletal selves seem "self in self steeped." Left to themselves, without the external light of the sun, the beauty of the trees fades and only the grotesque, frightening, gnarled outline remains. What is true of the trees is true of all things. Earth's unbinding is rapidly and "quite/Dísremémbering, dísémbering'all now." There has been no signalled shifting from the vividly pictured natural scene of the falling night to the spiritual vision of the armageddon of the world and of the Last Judgment; the spiritual reality resides as by a sign in the natural, and any allegorical transition between the two would only water down the reality of both for Hopkins. The progression of the first six and one half lines has been from evening to night, from the evening of a man's life to death itself, from judgment to hell.

The speaker turns inward now to make the logical application to himself, and addresses his innermost self, his heart:

Heart, you round me right
With: Our evening is over us; our night whélms, whélms
and will end us.

There is a sense of drugged pain in the chiming of the diphthongs, in the "ow" of "round" and "oár," repeated twice, in the Greek

"aie" of "right," and in the repetition of the short "e" ceasing only in the finality of "end," percussively repeated on four stressed words within six syllables: "whélms, whélms, ánd will énd us."

In line nine the speaker, continuing to address his heart, remarks that in the dark night only the blacker outline of the leaves is etched against the sky:

Only the beak-leaved boughs dragonish¹damask
the tool-smooth bleak light; black,
Ever so black on it.

"Damask" is a rich and complex verb. It suggests, together with "beak-leaved" and "Tool smooth," the streaked metallic hardness of tempered damascene steel. But it also suggests the weaving of damascene cloth, in the images of two spools of thread, one black, one white, which follow. One type of damascene cloth is woven with a uniformly dark thread heightened against a uniformly lighter background, so that one is told off the other. Both images are there in the straining and grinding of adamantine steel strands (permanence), and in the heightening of one color against the other, with no smooth transition¹⁰ between.

- 10 We are in a different world from the aesthetic world of Hopkins' journals of nearly two decades before, where he could delineate the beauties of night. "Beautiful blackness and definition of elm tree branches in evening twilight (from behind)," he remarks on 20 May 1866 [Journals, p. 137]. And, on June 19, "Aspens blackened against the last light seem to throw their scarcer leaves into barbs or arrowheads of mackerel patterns" [Ibid., p. 141]. This last observation seems to have especially gestated in Hopkins' imagination and borne fruit in Sibyl's Leaves.

Hopkins insists on the centrality of this dark tree, for the speaker again turns to his heart with "Our tale, O our oracle!" Now he applies to himself what he has learned from the leaves, by which the Sibyl, the ancient prophetess of Cumae, foretold the future. Life wanes as surely as does the day; it too winds to its west, and all of its multiplicity and multicolor, its "once skéined stained véined varíety" resolves itself into two final and eternal opposites for each of us. The scapes--the essential, moral meaning of all of our past actions--are like a mixed flock of sheep and goats which are to be separated into "twó flocks, twó folds--black, white, right, wrong." The biblical allusion is to Christ's coming to judge the world: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit down upon the throne of his glory, and all nations will be gathered in his presence, where he will divide men one from the other, as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats; he will set the sheep on his right, and the goats on his left" [Matthew 25: 31-33]. But here the application is rather to the multiplicity of our thoughts and our actions during our life-time, which will then be sorted out according to their underlying moral worth.

In line twelve, the speaker makes the resolution to be more aware, and to be more wary, of this final moral judgment. He must realize more fully that in the final reckoning only the moral nature of his life will count, that it is

this which he must heed ("reck"). He must "mind," that is, regard this simple but difficult moral lesson; but the verb focuses on that total awareness to which he must turn his total mind. That world he must be "ware of" is hell, in which for all eternity he will be confronted with the scapes, the thoughts of his past actions. Now their real nature as displeasing to God will be revealed. Here in this inner hell, until the Final Judgment, the disembodied spirit will have to suffer the torture of tasting itself; here, what might have been and what is act on the consciousness like a "rack/ Where, selfwring, selfstrung, sheathe- and shelterless, thoughts against thoughts in groans grind."

"The fall from heaven was for the rebel angels what death is for man," Hopkins writes in his meditation on hell. With death, the soul loses all extension and activity outward and is confined in upon itself.

[In] man all that energy or instress with which the soul animates and otherwise acts in the body is by death thrown back upon the soul itself.... This throwing back or confinement of their energy is a dreadful constraint or imprisonment and, as intellectual action is spoken of under the figure of sight, it will in this case be an imprisonment in darkness, a being in the dark; for darkness is the phenomenon of foiled action in the sense of sight. 11

- 11 Sermons, p. 137. In his remarks by way of prologue to his meditation on hell, Hopkins makes a distinction which some unsympathetic critics have either missed or chosen to overlook. It is Hopkins' stress on the intellectual imagination, and the whole passage is most enlightening in clarifying the Ignatian rhetoric of the fire and brimstone sermon which Joyce, "the fearful jesuit," so subtly parodies in The Portrait:

The world of Spelt From Sibyl's Leaves is this world of darkness and frustration.

It is within this dark world that we are confronted with our past actions, which leave "in our minds scapes or species, the extreme 'intention' or instressing of which would be painful and the pain would be that of fire, supposing fire to be the condition of a body...texturally at stress."¹² It is these dark scapes of a man's past life which are outlined against the blackness of hell and which Hopkins figures in the "beak-leaved boughs dragonish" etched against the night. For "the understanding open wide like an eye, towards truth in God, towards light, is confronted by that scape, that act of its own, which blotted out God and so put blackness in the place of light."¹³ The dark background which highlights an even

- 11 (Cont'd.) [Ignatius] speaks only of the pain of sense: the reason is the end proposed in this meditation [on hell], which is by sensible consideration to deter us from sin.... [Ignatius] speaks of the present condition of the lost, who are disembodied; therefore it is, I suppose, that he mingles without reserve or remark physical and figurative things, like brimstone and tears (which the disembodied soul cannot shed) and the worm of conscience. And as it is by the imagination that we are to realize these things so I suppose it to be by the imagination that the lost suffer them and that as intensely as by the senses or it may be more so. This simple explanation will never strike our scholastics [as opposed to the great medieval tradition of scholastics], because they do not see that there is an intellectual imagination [Sermons, p. 136. Italics mine].

12 Ibid., p. 136.

13 Ibid., p. 138.

darker "self-in-self steeped" scape is a poetic rendition of St. Theresa's vision of hell, paraphrased by Hopkins: "'I know not how it is, but in spite of the darkness the eye sees there all that to see is most afflicting.' Against these acts of its own the lost spirit dashes itself like a caged bear and is in prison, violently instresses them and burns, stares into them and is the deeper darkened."¹⁴

In hell, then, we are our thoughts, and the disparity between what is and what might have been is made absolutely and finally clear to us. And the two spools of right and wrong become a rack where our very self wrings against itself, where our thoughts, disembodied and unprotected scapes, are forced to grind against each other. This fiery friction of the two opposing threads rubbing against each other discharges its strain in groaning. And this violent friction between what is expected and what is, is marvelously caught in the extreme muscular tension of Hopkins' tortuous rhythmic stressing of "thóughts against thoughts ín groans grínd."¹⁵

14 Ibid.

15 Ivor Winters comments in "The Audible Reading of Poetry" on the rhythm of the last lines of Spelt From Sibyl's Leaves that Hopkins "does not provide us with many accent marks until he is about half-way through the poem; from there on he provides marks in abundance, frequently with strange results.... We have here [in the last two lines] a kind of bad writing which is purely the result of bad reading; and even the best reading, if superimposed upon what the poet offers, can salvage the poem but very imperfectly." [Reprinted in The Structure of Verse, ed. Harvey Gross (Greenwich, Conn., 1964) p. 136]. But, as I have suggested, the violent cacophony is functional in instressing the strain or pressure of the soul which is forever frustrated from its proper correct stressing in God.

Of the underlying moral quality of all our actions, Hopkins stresses unequivocally that "God is good and the stamp, seal, or instress he sets on each scape is of right, good, or of bad, wrong. Now the sinner who has preferred his own good... to God's good, true good, and God, has that evil between him and God, by his attachment to which and God's rejection of it he is carried and swept away to an infinite distance from God; and the stress and strain of his removal is his eternity of punishment." For with death, "the soul is left to its own resources, with only the scapes and species [the instressed disembodied thoughts] of its past life; which being unsupplemental or undisplaced by a fresh continual current of experience, absorb and press upon its consciousness ['self in self steeped']¹⁶. That a morally wrong but pleasurable act is repulsive in hell Hopkins insists upon. In hell, it is the awareness of a scape's repulsiveness that is instressed upon us, continually burning itself into our consciousness, or, in other terms, into our very self.¹⁷ Hell-fire, then, is explained by Hopkins as that terrible counter-stress of the self as it is and as it

16 Sermons, p. 139.

17 "It would seem that there must be some revelation of himself by God to the soul to awake the strain or nisus [pressure] which is either to be gratified or denied. This revelation takes place through the species of a past life [an immaterial thought constantly present to our understanding], by means of which, by instress of which, God testifies that he is pleased or displeased and varies in its intensity with them. But it is one of attraction or repulsion, of yes or no, in any case" [Ibid.].

might have been. And if there is a lack of brimstone in Hopkins' sonnet, it is replaced by a suffering all the more terrible because all the more philosophically and logically viable.¹⁸

The "beak-leaved boughs dragonish" means the essential evil of the scapes of the speaker's past actions, for the "dragon," as we saw earlier, is for Hopkins the devil, the "thrower of things off track," the "coil or spiral." That the boughs are beak-leaved inscapes the terror and insidiousness of the speaker's past actions; the beak belongs to the devil because he gathers "up the attributes of many creatures.... And therefore I suppose the dragon as a type of the Devil to express the universality of his powers..and the horror which the whole inspires.... [It] symbolizes one who aiming at every perfection ends by being a monster, a 'fright.'"¹⁹

By meditating on the nature of judgment and hell, it comes home to Hopkins that he must constantly be aware and be wary of a moral world, in which the beautiful dapple of

18 Cf. John Henry Newman's The Dream of Gerontius (1865) which Hopkins must have certainly known. In the first separation of his soul from the body in death, Gerontius' soul experiences the strangeness of not being able to act within its habitual physical extension:

For it [the severance] drives back my thoughts upon
their spring

By a strange introversion, and perforce
I now begin to feed upon myself,
Because I have nought else to feed upon.

19 Sermons, p. 199.

creation is to be used for God's glory by giving it all back to Him. The sharpened agony of this realization of what essentially matters--right, wrong--evokes that bitter self-taste in himself, the frightening realization of his own unworthiness before the Judge of the Universe, and the pain of mastering himself. His meditation on hell evokes the hell within. The groaning of his thoughts is very like Robert Lowell's sobbing spirit:

I hear
My ill-spirit
Sob in each blood cell,
As if my hand were at its throat...
I myself am hell.

There is no consolation or hope to be found in this sonnet; it has been constructed carefully on Ignatian principles. David Downes comments that "the poetic colloquy ends with the admonishment to avoid trying to live a life, as it were , between right and wrong, for this is to be put on a frightful rack of suffering."²⁰ But the poem does not say to give over contemplating a strictly moral universe. And the only resolution of the sonnet is the summoning of the speaker's will and understanding to be more aware that only right and wrong finally count. The sonnet is a sonnet of desolation, and in his comments on making the Fifth Exercise, the meditation on hell, St. Ignatius writes, "Here it will be to ask for a deep awareness of the pain suffered by the damned, so that if I should forget the love of the Eternal Lord, at least the fear of

20 Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Study of His Ignatian Spirit
(New York: 1959), p. 154.

punishment will help me to avoid falling into sin."²¹ In meditating on a desolate subject, the exercitant is not to summon up images of consolation. And indeed Hopkins does not.

The bitter fruit which Hopkins gleans from the meditation is the "spelt," the hard-grained wheat derived from the Sibyl's leaves. For in the grinding of thought against thought, in the excruciating self-scrutiny of the particular examen, Hopkins hoped, as he wrote some months later, that his "chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear."²² "Make haste then," Hopkins urged in a sermon on death delivered sometime after his Liverpool ordeal, "work while it is day, and despair of any other chance than this: the night is coming,²³ says your master, when no man can work."

None of the other six sonnets of desolation were ever sent to either Bridges or Dixon; all were found among Hopkins' literary remains after his death. We cannot be sure of the order in which they were written, but all appear to have been composed sometime between May and mid-August of 1885. For on September 1 of that year Hopkins writes to Bridges, "I shall shortly have some sonnets to send you, five or more. Four of

21 The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, trans. Anthony Mattola (Garden City, New York: 1964) p. 59. Hereafter cited as Exercises.

22 Carrion Comfort.

23 Sermons, p. 245. The date is unknown. Internal evidence dates it after his stay at Liverpool.

these came like inspirations, unbidden and against my will. And in the life I lead now, which is one of a continually jaded and harassed mind, if in any leisure I try to do anything I make no way--nor with my work, alas! but so it must be."²⁴ But by September, the "war within" was at least temporarily over, and six terrible sonnets remain as fragments of a log-book charting those tempest-tossed waters within.

There are a few other pieces of literary flotsam which will help to serve in piecing together what was happening to Hopkins. "I am in a low way of health," he complains to Bridges towards the end of Lent, "The delightful French Father who teaches Logic here [Fr. Jacques Mallac, S.J.]... will have it that I am dying--of anaemia. I am not, except at the rate that we all are."²⁵ On Wednesday of Holy Week (1 April 1885), Hopkins proposes "to compose my own requiem," and complains of "that coffin of weakness and dejection in which I live."²⁶ And in mid-May he complains of "work, worry, and languishment," and, more seriously, of "fits of sadness [which]...resemble madness."²⁷

In this same letter he cries out for rain, for encouragement and inspiration: "There is a point with me

24 Letters I, p. 221.

25 Letter of 24 March 1885, ibid., p. 210

26 Ibid., pp. 214-15.

27 Letter of 17 May 1885, ibid., p. 216.

in matters of any size when I must absolutely have encouragement as much as crops rain; afterwards I am independent." And yet in his spiritual sterility he has still managed to create two sonnets. "I have after long silence written two sonnets, which I am touching: if ever anything was written in blood one of these was."²⁸

Obviously Hopkins was deeply troubled during this period. Writing to Baillie at about the same time that he told Bridges of his two sonnets, he apologizes for taking nearly a month to write a relatively short letter:

You will wonder I have been so long over it. This is part of my disease, so to call it. The melancholy I have all my life been subject to has become of late years not indeed more intense in its fits but rather more distributed, constant, and crippling. One, the lightest but a very inconvenient form of it, is daily anxiety about work to be done.... It is useless to write more on this: when I am at the worst, though my judgment is never affected, my state is much like madness. I see no ground for thinking I shall ever get over it or ever succeed in doing anything that is not forced on me to do of any consequence.

29

- 28 Ibid., pp. 218-19. Although he may have been referring to Spelt From Sibyl's Leaves, that was probably largely finished four months before. In any event, Sibyl's Leaves should be seen as inaugurating the sonnets of desolation, with its meditation on the nature of hell and the depressing sense of God's removal.
- 29 Letter of 24 April - 17 May 1885, Letters III, p. 256. This passage was written at the earliest on May 8, and probably later. In his meditation notes for 19 March 1885, the Feast of St. Joseph, Hopkins writes, "He is the patron of the hidden life; of those, I should think, suffering in mind and as I do. Therefore I will ask his help" [Sermons, p. 260].

After spending early August at Hampstead and Midhurst with his parents, and a few days in Hastings at the home of Coventry Patmore, Hopkins' spirits revived, and he wrote two and possibly three sonnets which show a new, if somewhat restrained ebullience: To what serves Mortal Beauty, The Soldier, and perhaps his third curial sonnet Ash-boughs, all of which will be treated in the next chapter. But in his letter to Bridges of September 1 he is already wary that although he has "had a holiday though not strong I have some buoyancy; soon I am afraid I shall be ground down to a state like this last spring's and summer's, when my spirits were so crushed that madness seemed to be making approaches--and nobody was to blame, except myself partly for not managing myself better and contriving to change."³⁰

Even if we could determine the chronological development of the six sonnets of desolation³¹ with certainty, Hopkins himself seems to have wanted them read as a series working from deepening desolation towards consolation. In analyzing the

30 Letters I, p. 222.

31 St. Ignatius defines desolation in his Rules for the Discernment of Spirits, the appendix to the Spiritual Exercises, in the following manner:

I call desolation all that is contrary to the third rule [spiritual consolation], as darkness of the soul, turmoil of the mind, inclination to low and earthly things, restlessness resulting from many disturbances and temptations which lead to loss of faith, loss of hope, and loss of love. It is also desolation when a soul finds itself completely apathetic, tepid, sad, and separated as it were, from its Creator and Lord [Exercises, p. 130].

sonnets, then, I will use the order which Professor Ritz gives as the logical order of the poems, without suggesting that this is the order of their composition.³² To Seem the Stranger, I Wake and Feel, and No Worst There is None each descend deeper into the emptiness within. Then there is the beginning of the upswing in Carrion Comfort, which continues in Patience, Hard Thing and My Own Heart. Of course the sonnets can be read in and for themselves, but the series provides an added dimension which follows too closely the classical descent and ascent of the Ignatian Exercises to be fortuitous. While, therefore, the following analysis will concentrate on the sonnets as individual and self-sufficient creations, their interrelationships will also be examined. In fact, the very order of explication will contribute to demonstrating the larger conception of the sonnets.

To Seem the Stranger is a cry from Hopkins' deepest self in his "third/Remove" in Ireland. It is a triple lament

32 "Quel ordre donc donner aux «sonnets terribles»? A défaut de toute indication sûre, l'ordre le plus logique me paraît être celui qui nous fera suivre la montée de la détresse du poète, l'explosion d'un immense désespoir, et le lent retour vers une acceptation apaisée de son mal. Des clartés plus vives se vont ainsi jetées sur le drame intime d'une âme." And, pointing at Bridges and Gardner, he adds "Mais, en disant cela, je n'oublie pas que la vie souvent ignore la logique et que l'ordre que je choisis n'est peut être pas plus l'ordre réel de composition de ces sonnets que celui auquel Bridges s'est arrêté, en l'absence de dates précises" [Ritz, p. 250]. It is not necessary to insist on Ritz's as the order of composition, but it does seem to make the best logical arrangement.

for an ever deepening isolation from those objects which were so dear to him. The first line and a half announce the theme of the sonnet: "To seem the stranger lies my lot, my life/ Among strangers." The key word, "stranger[s]," is repeated near the beginning and again at the critical close of the statement. Hopkins seems a stranger to those around him and those around him are strangers to him. Although it is the expected portion of the missionary priest, the separation is nevertheless difficult and even bitter. None of Hopkins' large family followed him into the church.

Indeed, in the weeks immediately preceding his own reception into the Roman Catholic Church nearly twenty years before his poetic lament, his parents had vigorously objected to the step he was bent on taking. "I have been up at Oxford just long enough to have heard fr. my father and mother in return for my letter announcing my conversion," Hopkins wrote to Fr. John Henry Newman on Monday, 15 October 1866. "Their answers are terrible: I cannot read them twice. If you will³³ pray for them and me just now I shall be deeply thankful." On the following Sunday he was received by Newman into the Church.

His parents were, however, soon reconciled to their oldest child; an outwardly stable rapprochement was made with his sisters; and an uneasy truce was kept with his

33 Letters III, p. 29.

brothers.

Father and mother dear,
 Brothers and sisters are in Christ not near
 And he my peace my parting, sword and strife.

Hopkins echoes the stern words of Christ, that in following him he would be expected to cleave himself from his family:

Do not imagine that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have come to bring a sword, not peace. I have come to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter with her mother, and the daughter-in-law with the mother-in-law; a man's enemies will be the people of his own house [Matthew 10: 34-36].

Hopkins always had a profound love for his native England; by his own admission he was a very great patriot who earnestly desired to forward the honor of his country whenever and in whatever way he could. ³⁵ He firmly believed, as did Carlyle and Ruskin especially, that there was a definite

34 In a letter to his mother from Dublin (26 November 1884) he complains about not hearing from his family:

If I knew Millicent's address I would write to her; I am sure I do not know what in the world, in which we scarcely ever meet, we gain by not writing. I might say the same of other people, but most of her. And I have never written to Lionel since he has been out: it seems a misery. And yet letter writing, so pleasant in doing, is a most harassing duty to set to with other work on hand" [Ibid., p. 163].

With Lionel the estrangement was most pronounced. Hopkins' brother had already been in China for over ten years when Hopkins wrote this letter and it was not until 1889 that a reconciliation of sorts was made. As late as 5 May 1889 he writes to his mother, "I am and I long have been sad about Lionel, feeling that his visits must be few and far between and that I had so little good of this one, though he and I have so many interests in common and shd. find many more in company" [Ibid., p. 197]. But the most important interest for Hopkins was a closed matter between him and his family. "Religion, you know," he told Baillie once, "enters very deep; in reality it is the deepest impression I have in speaking to people, that they are or that they are not of my religion" [Letter of 22 May 1880 in ibid., p. 245].

35 Cf. Hopkins letter to Bridges (Letters I, p. 231). Cf. also

cause-and-effect relationship between the strength of a nation and the moral fibre of its people. But for Hopkins, this also meant the conversion of England back to traditional Catholicism. This wish had been made strongly in both The Wreck of the Deutschland and in The Loss of the Eurydice, and the wish is there in In the Valley of the Elwy and in Duns Scotus's Oxford. And now Hopkins, estranged from England by his religion and by his very vocation, loving England as a "wife" but disappointed in her, laments:

England, whose honour O all my heart woos, wife
To my creating thought, would neither hear
Me, were I pleading, plead nor do I: I wear-
y of idle a being but by where wars are rife.

Victorian Hopkins refuses to "plead" with his wife, although he loves her dearly, for in a very real sense his poems and songs are the offspring of this love. The middle-aged idealist sadly realizes that England will not listen, that she is too ingrained and set in her ways to change, so that pleading would be useless. He is weary, most obviously, of the constant and seemingly fruitless struggles of the British Empire, specifically in Ireland, to keep its possessions intact. On the theological level, he is weary of the incessant struggle to make England listen to the "word/Wisest," to Christ, the Logos, to whom he was giving his very life. For as the Empire grew, Hopkins was learning, it was also becoming more and more

- 35 (Cont'd.) his comment to Patmore in his letter of 4 June 1886, "Your poems are a good deed done for the Catholic Church and another for England, for the British Empire, which now trembles in the balance held in the hand of unwisdom [Gladstone]" (Letters III, pp. 366-67).

unchristian.

Both the political and theological themes interact in the second quatrain, and there is an illuminating passage in a letter to Patmore which sheds light on Hopkins' Christocentric vision of Empire:

I remark that those Englishmen who wish prosperity to the Empire (which is not all Englishmen or Britons, strange to say) speak of the Empire's mission to extend freedom and civilization in India and elsewhere. The greater the scale of politics the weightier the influence of a great name and a high ideal. It is a terrible element of weakness that now we are not well provided with the name and ideal which would recommend and justify our Empire.... Then there is [the Empire's gift of] civilization. It shd. have been Catholic truth. That is the end of Empires before God, to be Catholic and draw nations into their Catholicism. But our Empire is less and less Christian as it grows It is good to be in Ireland to hear how enemies, and those rhetoricians, can treat the things that are unquestioned at home. 36

But at least Hopkins had been in England, at Roehampton, in Wales, in London, at Stonyhurst; even in the industrial midlands near Manchester or in the north, at Liverpool and Glasgow, he was on his native soil. Then, in January 1884, he was elected to a fellowship at the Royal University of Ireland, in Dublin; his duties were to examine students from all over Ireland in the Classics for the B.A. Simultaneously he was placed on the faculty of University College, Dublin, to teach Latin and Greek. And this separation from his homeland, which meant intimate contact with a growingly nationalistic

and anti-British people, added a new loneliness to the limbo of his existence. "I am in Ireland now; now I am at a third Remove."

"We have enemies here--indeed what is Ireland but an open or secret war of fierce enmities of every sort?--and our College is really struggling for existence with difficulties within and without," he complains to his mother.³⁷ And a little over three months later he sighs that "the grief of mind I go through over politics, over what I read and hear and see in Ireland and about England, is such that I can neither express it nor bear to speak of it.... They are crying some bad news in the streets. All news is bad."³⁸ What particularly galled Hopkins was that in his position there was nothing he could do, for many of his co-religionists, and his students, were Irish

37 Letter of 26 November 1884 in ibid., p. 163.

38 Letter of 2 March 1885 to his mother in ibid., p. 170. With time Hopkins' sense of honesty and justice made him realize that if Ireland was a state of smouldering rebellion, England's arrogant aloofness was largely to blame. "[It] was felt with reason that to the royal family Ireland owes little gratitude," Hopkins told his mother on 17 May 1885, about Queen Victoria's recently concluded visit. "The Queen, who spends months every year in Scotland, does she not? or did once, has only thrice in all her reign visited Ireland and never lived there. But do not let us talk politics, it kills me, especially under the present Prime Minister [Gladstone]" (Ibid., p. 171). Hopkins more and more came to believe in Home Rule for Ireland as the only realistic solution to the growing clamor by the nationalists for freedom. But it was a solution for Hopkins based on a weariness with an intolerable situation.

nationalists. All that was left for him to do was to pray for Ireland and for himself as a Professor of Classics in Dublin. "Ask his help," he writes in his meditation notes for 17 March 1885, the Feast of St. Patrick. "Ask his help for Ireland in all its needs and for yourself in your position."

In line ten the delayed volta appears: "Not but in all removes I can/Kind love both give and get." Hopkins is never whining; he can, in the deepest gloom keep his judgment clear. There are always those of his "kind" who will give him "kind" love. And the one who really matters, Christ, is with him no matter where he goes. The ability to get and receive love is not what troubles Hopkins so much. The felt source of his own inner life is here in this sonnet. The trouble is without, in his relations to those around him:

Only what word
 Wisest my heart breeds dark heaven's baffling ban
 Bars or hell's spell thwarts. This to hoard unheard,
 Heard unheeded, leaves me a lonely began

It is the cry of a priest whose life seems outwardly to have been spent in vain. There may be a reference here to his poetry or to his many "beginnings of things, ever so many, which it seems to me might well have been done, ruins and wrecks."³⁹ But the "word/Wisest" is the Word of God, Christ, and the Christian message. He has tried to give, freely and without stint, to others what had been the transforming experience of his life, the "Word/Wisest." Christ, who, it

39 Letter of 24 April - 17 May 1885 to Baillie in ibid., p. 255. This reference is almost certainly contemporary with the probable date of the sonnet.

would have been thought, would benefit by the spread of his Kingdom, has apparently checked the priest. And the frustration is not so much that he has been checked, as that Christ's work does not go forward. His own family, for whom he must have prayed constantly, did not hear his "word," nor did his friends, Bridges or Dixon or Baillie or, years earlier, Urquhart. In fact, there is no extant evidence that Hopkins ever felt he had been the triggering action for even one convert. Yet conversions are what he wished for all his life.

Hopkins sees himself as one "hoarding" up treasures⁴⁰ which he would gladly share with others, but he goes unheard. And when he is heard, his words go unheeded, for men are turned to their own self-bent. "My Liverpool and Glasgow experience laid upon my mind a conviction...of the degradation even of our race, of the hollowness of this century's civilisation: it made even life a burden to me to have daily thrust upon me⁴¹ the things I saw." In the last line, Hopkins does not, as⁴² Bridges suggests, mean "leaves me a lonely (one who only) began."

40 Hopkins had a "passion" for explaining, as he himself said. And in those few passages where Bridges or Dixon asked him to gloss either a difficult passage from the Gospels or to explain the meaning of the Tertianship, for example, his genius for clarity, intellectual precision, earnestness, and charity is readily apparent. In a manner, it is sad that so many of his finest religious insights were directed to loose sheets of paper and left scattered among his "wrecks" of things.

41 Letter to Dixon of 1 December 1881 in Letters II, p. 97.

42 Poems, p. 289.

Hopkins has not omitted a relative pronoun. He is here making "began" a substantive, and thus inscaping his whole sacerdotal life as one who is a "lonely began." He is not simply a beginner; the curve of his action is relegated to the past, to what had seemed such a brilliant prologue in his years at Wales. But the intermittent years, the years of service in the field, as he himself deepened in his understanding and love of Christ, do not seem to have issued in any spiritual fruit in those he had been sent to work with. He is caught in a self-imprisoned past action ("a lonely began"), like a cob of ripe corn imprisoned in its own husk, unable to spread its own seeds, and steadily losing its own vitality.

The stark, bare, straightforward style of this poem, together with the delayed volta in the tenth line, show the influence of Milton, and, according to Hopkins himself, of Dryden. "My style tends always more towards Dryden," he tells Bridges in late 1887. "What is there in Dryden? Much, but above all this: he is the most masculine of our poets; his style and his rhythms lay the strongest stress of all our literature on the naked thew and sinew of the English language." ⁴³ There are few poetic experiments in this and the following sonnets. Besides the verbal substantive of line fourteen, there is the break of "wear/-y" in line seven, which acts to draw out the word and to imitate the speaker's weariness in getting the word out. What helps make the word-break successful, however,

43 Letters I, pp. 267-68.

is that Hopkins duplicates the chime-word of "hear/me" and "wear-/y," carrying the rhyme into the following line, and thus making a double rhyme. "I am sure I have gone far enough in oddities and running rhymes (as even in some late sonnets you have not seen) into the next line,"⁴⁴ he tells Bridges in February 1887. But it is an "oddity" only in relation to the starkness of the sonnet as a whole.

The style fits the stark somber colloquy between Hopkins and Christ. Christ is not once mentioned in the poem, but the very tone of the entire series becomes increasingly personal; it is the voice of one speaking to a very dear, close, and sympathetic listener. The sonnet in fact becomes more and more a prayer form, a personal talk between the priest and his God.

In I Wake and feel the fell of dark, the shadows have deepened, and the loneliness of the speaker has intensified to include Christ, who "lives alas! away." The rhythm of To Seem the Stranger is counterpointed, but here the rhythm is freer and sprung in places. There is a greater sense of anxiety and even that sense of fear experienced by a lost child. The speaker awakens from his broken sleep with a start to feel the palpable presence of darkness on him: "I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day." Several meanings of fell are operative here. First, it is the past tense of fall, used substantively. Night has already fallen; the process is complete. That night of the soul which Hopkins accepted but feared in Spelt From

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 250.

Sibyl's Leaves, that night which "whelms, whelms, and will end us" has come. Second, night is seen as a fell, or desolate moorland, similar to Dante's selva oscura in the opening of the Inferno. Again, night smothers him like the skin of some animal. And finally, the adjectival meaning of fell as fierce, cruel, or deadly, used substantively here, is probably also implied and certainly fits. It is that "intense darkness which one can feel" (Exodus, x, 21), which was the ninth visitation of God's wrath upon the Egyptians.

The speaker addresses his inmost self, his heart:

What hours, O what black hours we have spent
This night! what sights you, heart, saw, ways
you went!
And more must, in yet longer light's delay.

The blackness and terror of the seemingly unending night have revealed to the speaker a new and nameless night within. And the worst is not yet over, for although the speaker knows that light must come, that light itself seems purposely to linger. The images here are fundamental and basic: light and darkness, day and night. They represent God's disappearance and the terror of the soul which realizes its complete dependence upon Him. But they also represent God's eventual return in His own good time.

"There are three principal reasons why we are in desolation," St. Ignatius writes.

The first is because we are tepid, slothful,
or negligent in our Spiritual Exercises, and
so through our own fault spiritual consolation
is withdrawn from us.

The second is that God may try us to test our worth, and the progress that we have made in His service and praise when we are without such generous rewards of consolation and special graces.

The third is that He may wish to give us a true knowledge and understanding, so that we may truly perceive that it is not within our power to acquire or retain great devotion, ardent love, tears, or any other spiritual consolation, but that all of this is a gift and grace of God our Lord. Nor does God wish us to claim as our own what belongs to another, allowing our intellect to rise up in a spirit of pride or vain glory, attributing to ourselves the devotion or other aspects of spiritual consolation. 45

It is this last point which most concerns Hopkins' own especial bent, because it deals with Hopkins' essential self, and his growing realization that apart from God, he was nothing, a mere Jackself, a "scaffold of score brittle bones," as he wrote in his powerful sonnet, The Shepherd's Brow, only two months before he died.

Hopkins insists, as he had in The Wreck of the Deutschland, that what he is saying is autobiographical, absolutely true: "With witness I speak this." But what happened on one particular night happened, with varying degrees of intensity, over a much longer period. On the other hand, that one night itself seemed to last for years. Time itself becomes warped and plastic here; the subjective stress on the speaker and not the external regularity of any chronometer counts for the experience of time.

But where I say
 Hours I mean years, mean life. And my lament
 Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent
 To dearest him that lives alas! away.

The image of "dead letters" is a nightmarish simile which is unsettlingly modern; the speaker pictures himself as a lover sending love-letters to his beloved who has left no forwarding address. The lines of communication are cut, and the countless letters pile up unread, to gather dust somewhere in some dead-letter bin. It is up to "dearest him" to send the speaker news of his whereabouts; in the meantime all that the speaker can do is wait. This sense of frustration in being totally unable to act leads logically to the volta at the beginning of line nine. Metaphor replaces simile, as the speaker becomes what he is conscious of within him; a bitter taste, an uncomfortable, burning sensation:

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
 Bitter would have me taste; my taste was me;
 Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.
 Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see
 The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
 As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.

It is God's seeming withdrawal which has left the speaker with himself, his innermost being. We are at the opposite extreme of any Emersonian self-reliance. And the paeans which Hopkins had so often sung to the selves of a sprawling, diverse creation dwindle into stark, groaning pains when he looks at his own
 46
 poor self apart from the sustaining force of God.

46 Cf. Robert Boyle's comment: "[God] simply leaves Hopkins to himself. The bitterness he tastes is not brought in from outside or inflicted on him by God. It is simply his sinful self alone with himself. He himself is the curse... The curse is as intimate to him as he is to himself, as are his bones and flesh and blood to him" [Boyle, p. 155].

It is Hopkins' taste of loathing, of his utter unworthiness before his creator. "Searching nature," he writes during his retreat in late August 1880, "I taste self but at one tankard, that of my own being." That awareness of oneself, of "my selfbeing, my consciousness and feeling of myself, that taste of myself, of I and me above and in all things,...is more distinctive than the taste of ale or alum, more distinctive than the smell of walnutleaf or camphor, and is incommunicable⁴⁷ by any means to another man." And, a few pages later in his retreat notes, he mentions the bitter self-taste of his personal littleness, that isolation of the self within the self: "I have and every other has, as said above, my own knowledge and powers, pleasures, pains, merit, guilt, shame, dangers, fortunes, fates: we are not chargeable for one another. But these things and above all my shame, my guilt, my fate are the very things in⁴⁸ feeling, in tasting, which nothing in the world can match."

Hopkins had first written "my self-stuff" for "Self-yeast of spirit." The change is more felicitous, but the earlier also tells. For it is the small cake of yeast pressed into the kneaded dough which fills and raises the whole loaf, making the whole lighter and tastier. The image of preparing bread is used several times in both the Gospels and in the Pauline Epistles. Allison quotes one passage from 1 Corin-

⁴⁷ Sermons, p. 123.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 125.

thians V, 7-8, used in the Epistle for Easter Day:

Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new paste, as you are unleavened. For Christ our pasch is sacrificed. Therefore let us feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 49

St. Paul bids us to become the unleavened bread, the matzo of the Feast of Passover, made without yeast, and to purge ourselves of our self-yeast which sours the whole being. But Hopkins can do nothing of himself except realize the curse which brims up within, forcing him to taste the bitter regurgitated bile in his mouth.

This taste of one's self, of this dull intractable being, is, Hopkins says, what hell must be like, for hell is only incidentally, as he explains in Spelt From Sibyl's Leaves, the stress of fire. Hell is essentially a living with what one has really chosen in place of his Creator, to live chained for all eternity to one's self. As the choice of Dante's Paolo and Francesca for one another over God ends in their being intertwined forever, scattered by every and any prevailing impulse, so the fate of the lost for Hopkins is to have to taste at one same tankard forever their sweating selves.

- 49 Alexander W. Allison, "I Wake and Feel the Fell of Dark," The Explicator, XVII, 54, May 1959. The explosive reaction of a small quantity of one thing on a larger thing (here, the yeast on the entire loaf), is seen in Hopkins' earlier image in The Wreck of the Deutschland of the sloe, which reacts similarly, if more immediately, on the entire person:

How a lush-kept plumb-capped sloe
Will, mouthed to flesh-burst,
Gush!-- flush the man, the being with it, sour or sweet,
Brim, in a flash, full! (I, 8, 3-6).

"Sweating" is the inscape of the self deprived of God. There is the acute, pungent odor of living with one's own sweat, generated by one's own uncomfortable heat. God is He whom Hopkins asks in Thou art indeed just, Lord to "send my roots rain," and He is, in The Wreck of the Deutschland "A released shower." And when God is removed, the only waters which the self can of itself produce are the stinking, salt-bitter drops of sweat.

Hopkins is intensely aware of the hell of isolation within. But he is also intensely honest; as bad as he feels his condition to be, it is limited by the limitations of what a man can suffer before his very body short-circuits itself. But the bodiless souls of the lost do not admit this limitation; their suffering is forever. The theological dimension of this melancholy desolation was better understood by the forty-year-old Jesuit, but the attacks of melancholy themselves were a habitual recurrence. "I had a nightmare that night," the twenty-nine year old Hopkins wrote in his journal.

The feeling is terrible: the body no longer swayed as a piece by the nervous and muscular instress seems to fall in and hang like a dead weight on the chest.... It made me think that this was how the souls in hell would be imprisoned in their bodies as in prisons and of what St. Theresa says of the 'little press in the 50 wall' where she felt herself to be in her vision.

- 50 Entry in journal for 18 September 1873 in Journals, p. 238. The passage which St. Theresa wrote in her Autobiography to describe her vision of hell etched itself upon Hopkins' consciousness like acid, for he recalls another passage from this section during his Long Retreat in 1881, quoted earlier. The lost soul sees the moral scapes of its actions, although it is in the blackness of utter confusion. This gives a mean-

Earlier in that same month, completely depressed and fagged, he complained that "nature in all her parcels and faculties gaped and fell apart, fatiscebat, like a clod cleaving and holding only by strings of root. "But," he noted with resignation,⁵¹ "this must often be."

And again, in the valuable notes Hopkins kept of his eight-day retreat in January 1889, there is the following echo of the sestet of the sonnet: "Jan. 2 -- This morning I made the meditation on the Three Sins, with nothing to enter but loathing of my life and a barren submission to God's will. The body cannot rest when it is in pain nor the mind be at peace as long as something bitter distills in it and it aches. This

50 (Cont'd.) ing "to something I remember in St. Theresa's vision of hell, to this effect: 'I know not how it is, but in spite of the darkness the eye sees there all that to see is most afflicting'" [Sermons, p. 138]. Christopher Devlin quotes E. Allison Peers' translation of the relevant passage from St. Theresa:

To say that it is as if the soul were continually being torn from the body is very little, for that would mean that one's life was being taken by another; whereas in this case it is the soul itself that is tearing itself to pieces. The fact is that I cannot find words to describe that interior fire and despair.... I felt, I think, as if I were being both burned and dismembered.... In that pestilential spot, where I was quite powerless to hope for comfort, it was impossible to sit or lie, for there was no room to do so. I had been put in this place which looked like a hole in the wall, and those very walls, so terrible to sight, bore down upon me and completely stifled me. There was no light and everything was in the blackest darkness. I do not understand how this can be, but, although there was no light, it was possible to see everything the sight of which can cause affliction. [Sermons, p. 290].

The italics are mine and refer to the passage which Hopkins had in mind in his journal entry.

51 Journals, p. 236.

52

may be at any time and is at many."

The lowest pit of desolation and inner torment is touched in No worst, there is none. Here there is no relief, no escape except to wish for escape in death or in the temporary truce afforded by sleep. Here Hopkins, with the awareness of his own unworthiness before God, and tortured beyond his endurance, comes closest to accepting the corpse-comfort of despair. He wishes for cessation, although not, I think, for annihilation. God here seems to have forsaken Hopkins and Hopkins can do nothing but cling to the walls of the steep cliff. The poem is intensely honest and intensely painful. And while Bridges thought that Carrion Comfort was probably the sonnet Hopkins told him in May was "written in blood," I hold with Boyle that No worst, there is none was probably
 53
 meant. For in this sonnet alone there is no hope, no underlying comfort for the speaker in knowing that he is suffering with a purpose, as he realizes in Carrion Comfort. The poem is all darkness.

52 Sermons, p. 262. Cf. also Hopkins' comment in his somewhat "Joycean" Meditation on Hell about "the worm of conscience, which is the mind gnawing and feeding on its own most miserable self" [Ibid., p. 243].

53 "My personal conviction is that No. 65 is the poem 'written in blood'.... [Certainly] the octet of No. 64 deals with ultimate spiritual desolation and trial, when Hopkins, like St. Alphonsus, is left with nothing but the refusal of his consent.... But in the sestet...the light breaks.... There is no such relief in No. 65. Here...the only comfort that appears is that the pain can't last forever because the weak wretch who suffers must both sleep and die" [Boyle, p. 152].

The poet startles us with the intensity of his unnamed experience: "No worst, there is none." Hopkins employs the superlative, "worst," rather than the comparative. He has touched bottom.

Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.

Hopkins, like a violin-string, is strung tighter to play at the higher, more piercing and metallic tone of grief. "Pitch" for Hopkins is the distinctive self, and in man this pitch is the most distinctive, most highly strung or stressed, of everything in the world. "Nothing else in nature comes near this unspeakable stress of pitch, distinctiveness, and selving, this self-being of my own."⁵⁴ The pitching of the speaker, then, racks the whole being, twisting him even beyond grief.

But what grief? The grief itself is unstated, and Ivor Winters sees this outpouring of intense emotion over the nameless as a major flaw of the poem. Not that the grief need be stated, for the pain has the unmistakable ring of authenticity. Nevertheless, the affliction is "a chief/Woe, world-sorrow"; it is Hopkins' terrifying realization that, rebellious creature that man is, he is unworthy of God's concern. In strict justice, the spiritual syphilis passed on from generation to

54 Sermons, p. 123. Furthermore, God is also a Self of an Infinitely higher pitch than man, who shapes man towards his own particular pitch or stress of self:

For human nature, being more highly pitched, selved, and distinctive than anything in the world, can have been developed, evolved, condensed, from the vastness of the world not anyhow or by the working of common powers but only by one of finer or higher pitch and determination than itself and certainly than any that elsewhere we see, for this power had to force forward the starting or stubborn elements to the one pitch required [Ibid., pp. 122-23.]

generation, the "world-sorrow" of sin in both the first parents and in Hopkins, is enough to separate him forever from God. Again, the "cliffs of fall/Frightful" may also refer to man's original fall and severance from God.

Hopkins' retreat notes for January 1889 give us more light on this self-loathing and hopelessness of ever doing good which tormented him so often in last years. "I was continuing this train of thought this evening [January]," he writes after having summoned up his past life and passed an unfavorable verdict on it,

when I began to enter on that course of loathing and hopelessness which I have so often felt before, which made me fear madness and led me to give up the practice of meditation except, as now, in retreat and here it is again. I could therefore do no more than repeat Justus es, Domine, et rectum judicium tuum and the like. 55

The next morning he complains of more "loathing of my life and a barren submission to God's will." And "loathing" again that afternoon, and again the next day. 56

On September 8, 1883, while making his annual retreat at Beaumont, Hopkins wrote,

During this retreat I have much and earnestly prayed that God will lift me above myself to a higher state of grace, in which I may have more union with him, be more zealous to do his will, and freer from sin. 57

55 Ibid., p. 262.

56 Ibid., pp. 262-263.

57 Ibid., p. 253.

But he realized on the following day what he had in fact asked for. "In meditating on the Crucifixion I saw how my asking to be raised to a higher degree of grace was asking also to be lifted on a higher cross. Then I took it that our Lord recommended me to our Lady and her to me."⁵⁸ Hopkins had deliberately and actively sought a higher pitching or selving of himself. And in No worst, there is none he chronicles that whirlwind force which seems too much to bear. The priest, Devlin correctly observes, "insisted perhaps too strictly upon justice in his dealings with God; and doubts as to the acceptance of his sacrifice, accompanied by involuntary doubts about God's justice, were possibly at the root of the misery that now entangled him."⁵⁹ Beyond "grief," there are only the wincing "pangs" of helpless loathing.

There is no comfort or relief now; the Paraclete does not come in the form of a gentle dove, but as the terrible blasting Pentecostal wind which precedes the transformation of the Christian. In two sprung lines, the speaker seems almost to admonish the Blessed Virgin and the Comforter, who is Christ as well as the Holy Spirit, for not coming to his aid:

Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?

My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief
Woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing--
Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked 'No ling-
ering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief.'

58 Ibid., p. 254.

59 Ibid., p. 218.

All of Hopkins' anguished and "countless" cries coalesce around "a chief/Woe," like frightened sheep gathering closer together, so that their individual cries blend into one general confused woe. His cries are like the shrill metallic ring of searing metal being moulded on an anvil, only the heated metal is the speaker himself instressed with the transforming fire of God, whose hammer pounds the kinks from the twisted shape. "With an anvil-ding/And with fire in him forge thy will,"⁶⁰ Hopkins had asked of God almost ten years before. Now the reality of that metaphor comes home to the poet.

The pain has its duration, and the curve of pain drops away sharply, leaving a dull throbbing sensation. Fury realizes that its attacks must be swift and intense. And the curve of its attack and withdrawal is wonderfully caught in the hyphenation of "ling/-ering." The sharpness of the first syllable catches up the reserve of pain associated with the other chime words, "wring" and "sing." In "línġ/ĕrínġ" itself, the chime of the third syllable echoes the pain of the first, but the lack of a stress on the last syllable gives the impression of a dying-away. "Fell" in line eight has, of course, the same complexity of meanings which that word had in I wake and feel. But in its verbal connotations it seems to join with the preceding "be" to become "Let me befell." Fury does not say "Let me befall," for as soon as we are aware that the pain

60 The Wreck of the Deutschland (I, 10, 1-2).

has come, its intensity has already passed by; Fury's fiat is nearly co-extensive with its duration. The terrible thing, however, is that Fury has many fiats. "And worse I may be yet," Edgar says in King Lear. "The worst is not so long as we can say This is the worse."⁶¹

In the sestet, there is no turn in the argument. Rather, the speaker meditates on the bitter fruit of his ordeal: no man has plumbed the depths and the heights of his own interior world. Those who have never experienced the terror within will dismiss this anguish as histrionics; those who have experienced the anguish need no explanation:

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
Durance deal with that steep or deep.

The self is likened to a mountain-climber clinging desperately to a steep mountainside, unable to see either to the top above or to the bottom below. He is powerless to move while the strong "whirlwind" threatens to unhinge him. Hopkins is left

61 Cf. Gardner, I, 178 ff. for an excellent case that the underthought of the entire sonnet comes from King Lear. The dark horror and madness of Lear make an appropriate echo-chamber for the desolate, selftormented speaker of this sonnet. Sr. Mary Humiliata, in her "Hopkins and the Prometheus Myth" (PMLA, LXX [March 1955], pp. 58-68) says that "the Prometheus myth constitutes a source for the total body of images in Sonnet 65," and points to Hopkins' careful reading of Bridges' Prometheus the Firegiver at the same time that the sonnet was probably composed. No doubt there are echoes of the Prometheus figure in the sonnet, but Gardner's reading seems to hit closer to the mark. Ritz balances the relative weight of these two literary influences this way: "[Si,] comme il est probable, Hopkins songeait davantage au destin de Prométhée qu'à celui de Lear lorsqu'il composa son poème, le ton et le style font cependant songer à Shakespeare, parce qu'ils ont la même densité, le même rudesse" [Ritz, p. 603].

with only the barren submission of his will to God's will, with the will to keep on clinging and not to let go, which would be despair.

He can only take whatever small comfort is available, and despise his weakness for doing so:

Here! creep,
Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

Like the terrified mountain-climber who crawls into a mountain crevice as the winds blast against him, the speaker can only crawl under his bedsheets and hope for a dreamless sleep and temporary cessation from pain. The only comfort lies in the realization that all life comes to an end in death, and so must his. And every day "dies with sleep." The "all" of line thirteen seems ambiguous, and yet it is crucial to a correct understanding of the sestet. Since it receives a stress, "all/Life death does end," it seems to mean that with death⁶² there is total annihilation.

But while an argument might be made for such an interpretation, it does not square with what we know of Hopkins. The line more likely means that since death is a part of every life, it follows that the speaker too cannot suffer forever. Hopkins became increasingly weary of life, but he never seems

62 Cf., for example, The Explicator, XI, 11: "[The] final abyss amounts to a denial of the soul, heaven, and God ('all life death does end'- including a 'life hereafter'), and this connotation in a poem by the priest who had written 'God's Grandeur' and 'The Windhover' suggests the profundity of the grief expressed" (It should be remembered, however, that Hopkins was not yet ordained when he composed these two earlier sonnets)

to have surrendered himself to despairing of God's mercy, as the speaker does not let go and fall into despair here. "I do not feel then that outwardly I do much good," Hopkins admitted near the end of his life, "much that I care to do or can much wish to prosper; and this is a mournful life to lead. In thought I can of course divide the good from the evil and live for the one, not the other: this justifies me but it does not alter the facts.... I wish then for death."⁶³

The whirlwind or tempest is a rich symbol for the activity of God upon man. Suffering Job answers Baldad the Sueite's taunting about why he, Job, remains patient before God (9. 16-18):

If I appealed to him and he answered my call,
I could not believe that he would hearken to my
words;
With a tempest he might overwhelm me,
and multiply my wounds without cause.

But it is also the whirlwind (spiritus = spirit, wind) which preceded the tongues of fire that rested besides the disciples of Christ, the fire of the Comforter at Pentecost (Acts 2. 2-3): "et factus est repente de caelo sonus, tamquam advenientis spiritus vehementis: et replevit totam domum ubi erant sedentes." And while God is one, and his powers complementary, the speaker is aware of only the first manifestation of God's power, the terrifying whirlwind. The speaker manifests

only incomprehensibility and terror at the Holy Spirit's intimate workings on him. The terrible irony, of course, is that the speaker seeks to hide from his Comforter and to seek out a more cowardly comfort, but one, at least, which his animal fear can understand.

The sonnet implies a cyclical repetition of Fury's assault. The first quatrain describes the impending attack of Fury and the absence of any spiritual relief. The second quatrain presents the last attack of Fury so vividly that something of its pain is recreated. Finally, in the sestet, in place of any spiritual relief, which must come from without as a gift of God, the speaker ("Wretch") settles for the comforting thought that even these pangs cannot last forever, as he tries to hide from the fury of God. Nevertheless there is the hypertensive expectation of still another onslaught of the storm.

Carion Comfort shows Hopkins' pertinacity in at least willing not to despair, and to at least ally his arbitrium or free will with the will of God. Here, finally, light begins to shine through, and God's handling of the speaker at last becomes more readily discernible, both to the speaker and to us, as the age-old pattern of desolation followed by consolation and illumination crystallizes. The speaker has maintained his desire to do God's will; however weakly and sterile that fiat might seem, it is all he has managed to salvage from "the war within."

Defying the "carrion comfort" of despair which has been proffered him, the speaker resists the powerful temptation to go slack, to fall apart, and to cease to care any longer. The emphatic downbeat on the first syllable, and the four repetitions of "not" in the first eleven words stress the will's refusal to capitulate to the enemy. The roping imagery of "untwist," "slack," and "strands" makes it quite possible that there is a homophonic pun on "not" - "knot," which is quite striking when the poem is read aloud as Hopkins' poetry should be. He will not untwist; he will knot the strands which keep him a man, no matter how tired he is. "Can," repeated three times, is here the effective reversal of "not," and the quatrain ends with an emphatic yet humble double negative which stresses the final negation of "not":

Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast
on thee;
Not untwist-- slack they may be-- these last strands
of man
In me or, most weary, cry I can no more. I can;
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not
to be.

The rhyme words of the first quatrain are particularly important, for "thee" (Despair) is essentially the choice of "not to be"; and what assures the continuation of the speaker as a "man" is his ability as a free agent, and his choice of continuing to say he "can."

64

As one critic has pointed out recently, Hopkins' first quatrain very likely is consciously repudiating Newman's The Dream of Gerontius. Gerontius, the "old man," is in his

64 Brian Vickers, "Hopkins and Newman," Times Literary Supplement, 3 March 1966, p. 178.

death agony, lying in bed and surrounded by those praying for his soul. As the tide of death overwhelms him, Gerontius can only gasp,

I can no more; for now it comes again,
That sense of ruin, which is worse than pain,
That masterful negation and collapse
Of all that makes me man, as though I bent
Over the dizzy brink
Of some sheer infinite descent.

But Hopkins refuses to untwist "these last strands," for as long as he is man he can at least refuse to give his consent to annihilation. Newman's position seems to suggest a more passive state, in which the soul dissolves with a whimper before the oncoming flood of darkness. But Hopkins' arbitrium is more stubborn. The responsibility to "not choose not to be" can not be surrendered; surrender is co-terminous only with death.

The second quatrain opens with the speaker abruptly directing a string of four questions to a second addressee, who is called only "terrible," and who combines the power and terror of the lion and the tempest. The questions at once show the anger of someone deeply frightened, something of an erotic admiration for a champion (especially in the triple sighs), and a pervading tone of respectful awe:

But ah, but O thou terrible, why wouldst thou
rude on me
Thy wring-world right foot rock? lay a lionlimb
against me? scan
With darksome devouring eyes my bruised bones? and fan,
O in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic to
avoid thee and flee?

God is a herculean contender who rudely rocks the speaker, a contender powerful enough towering the entire universe and keep it under his sway. Like a victorious lion over its prey, he seems to rock his still-living victim contemptuously back and forth with his foot-limb. There is no rebellion now, no movement that would bring the foot crashing down.⁶⁵ The verbal action of rocking back and forth is continued in the sifting action of fanning the wheat, as the hot summer wind burns through the speaker who lies now completely passive to the Winnower.

"I will reign over you with a strong hand," Yahweh tells his people, "and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of people, and there will I plead with you face to face" (Ezekiel 20: 33-34). But it is God's foot which rolls the supine wrestler back and forth in that ring-world ("wring-world") of the wrestlers. The "darksome devouring eyes" of God have the qualities of a terrible, awesome power, but they are also erotic epithets given to a passionate lover. For God's single love

65 Hopkins here feels the terrible ordeal of what he had besought God to do to the human vessel in The Wreck of the Deutschland:

Be adored among men,
God, three-numbered form;
Wring thy rebel, dogged in den,
Man's malice, with wrecking and storm
(I, 9, 1-4).

Cf. also John Donne's:

Batter my heart, three person'd God; for you
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to men;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee, 'and bend
Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new.

66

manifests itself to man as man can best cope with it. Hopkins admits his terror in feeling God's searing love; rebel and coward that he is, he would still "avoid thee and flee."

The volta comes in line nine with the one-syllable question, so simply asked yet so profoundly answered:

Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer
and clear.

Using one of the metaphors which Christ himself frequently employed, Hopkins realizes that his ordeal has been fraught with meaning, a meaning that is only glimpsed when his will has submitted to that ordeal.⁶⁷ Hopkins' non-essential concerns have been burned away, and the essential self remains purged, "sheer and clear"; the arbitrium, the will of the self, is coiled more intimately with the self of God.

Speaking of Christ under the figure of the Winnower, Hopkins wrote in his last retreat in January 1889 that Christ

baptises with breath and fire, as wheat is
winnowed in the wind and sun [tempest and
fire], and uses...a fan that thoroughly and
forever parts the wheat from the chaff....
The grain is either scooped into this or
thrown in by another, then tossed out against
the wind, and this vehement action St. John
compares to his own repeated 'dousing' or
affusion [in his baptism of water]. The

66 Cf. The Wreck of the Deutschland (I, 9, 6-8):
Thou art lightning and love, I found it, a winter and
warm;
Father and fondler of heart thou hast wrung:
Hast thy dark descending and most art merciful then.

67 Cf. Ibid., II, 31, 8: "[Is] the shipwreck then a harvest,
does tempest carry the grain for thee?" Also, cf. The
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separation it makes is very visible too:
 the grain lies heaped on one side, the chaff
 blows away the other, between them the win-
 nower stands; after that nothing is more com-
 bustible than the chaff, and yet the fire he
 [Christ] calls unquenchable. 68

But Almighty God is seen under other figures: besides the lion and the wind, he is the wrestler, the hero, the giant; he is a python, strength-giving water, the rod, and the hand of a master which Hopkins, like a thankful dog, kisses. The ambivalence of the speaker's feeling, oscillating between terror and fawning, is admirably caught in the nervous, staccato alternating exclamations and questionings. Both the Adversary and the mortal speaker dissolve and crystallize into protean shapes on the wrestling-threshing floor; this metamorphosis approximates the speaker's attempt to freeze the dynamic, blurred violence within:

Nay in all that toil, that coil, since (seems) I
 kissed the rod,
 Hand rather, my heart lo! lapped strength, stole joy,
 would laugh, cheer.
 Cheer whom though? the hero whose heaven-handling
 flung me, foot trod
 Me? or me that fought him? O which one? is it each
 one? That night, that year
 Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my
 God!) my God.

It is the paradoxical nature of the religious struggle that the speaker, in his sound thumping, has also been victorious, for it is in finally bending to God's will that he has found himself. In kissing the rod, the sign of capitulation,

he realizes that his freedom is to be found in becoming God's servant. As he kisses the hand, his heart drinks in strength and joy, and would "laugh, cheer" for the match in which both God, with his "heaven-handling" might, and Hopkins are winners.⁶⁹

As the sonnet rounds to an end, the syntax and the rhythms become surer and more regular, although the outrides give a sense of astonishment and breathlessness. Furthermore, as the meaning of the struggle assumes its final shape in the last line, the real nature of the two contenders becomes clear and fixed: it is the "cur" Hopkins, the "wretch," who has been fighting with God, who is only now named.

In his illumination of whom he has been fighting in "That night, that year / Of now done darkness," he sees that his has been the privilege of being crucified with Christ, and he echoes the agonizing words of the dying Christ in his "(my God!) my God." But there is also the startled, shrill whisper as it comes home to him just Who was wrestling in the darkness with him. With the second "my God" there is a

69 Cf. Hopkins' appropriate references to Christ as the powerful giant against his weak contender, St. John the Baptist, and to the fiery baptism of the Spirit:

[The Baptist] dwelt with enthusiasm on this thought, representing Christ as a heroic figure, of gigantic size, strength, and equipment; to whom he was a pygmy child. To his [the Baptist's] hearers too this point of view was not unwelcome; the Jews, St. Paul says, [were looking for] signa petunt (I Cor. i. 22), signs of power; the Greek has *δυναμεις* The struggle between Christ and St. John, two innocent lambs, over Christ's baptism was like the momentary encounter of rams: then St. John recognizing himself the weaker withdraws [*Ibid.*, p. 268].

To capture the underlying power dormant in the innocence of Christ, Hopkins has metamorphozed "lambs" into "rams."

sense of resolution, of fulfillment in submission.⁷⁰ "Our hearts will not rest, O God, until they rest in thee," is the prayer of St. Augustine as well as of Hopkins.

"One who is in desolation," St. Ignatius tells us in the eighth of his Rules for the Discernment of Spirits, "must strive to persevere in patience, which is contrary to the vexations that have come upon him. He should consider, also, that consolation will soon return, and strive diligently against the desolation."⁷¹ Patience is the virtue which the hypersensitive and fastidious Hopkins had constantly to work hard for. His will, he knew, was imperfectly aligned to God's will. Nearly six years before, he had lamented the loss of peace in his curial sonnet of that name. In its place his Lord had left behind "Patience exquisite." But Hopkins had struggled too hard with himself in the interim to use any such delicate epithet now. Patience is now that "hard thing"; in place of the cooing of the wooddove, we now "hear our hearts grate on themselves."

70 Cf. Ritz's comments on the rich ambiguity in the dual repetition of God's name:

Son cri final: «...avec (mon Dieu!) mon Dieu!», qui coupe d'une surprise angoissée son affirmation tragique, nous livre l'ambiguïté de ses sentiments; sa douleur et sa fierté; c'est Dieu (est-ce possible!) qui est son adversaire. Violent témoignage de son déchirement intérieur, mais qui nous frappe surtout par la franchise avec laquelle il révèle une dualité d'attitude. Dualité née du duel sans merci qui est livré. C'est ainsi, je crois, qu'il faut comprendre la volonté de Hopkins de s'affirmer en face de l'Adversaire. Dans son triomphe sur la désespérance, il retrouve sa personnalité et la dresse hautement, pour d'ailleurs la soumettre aussitôt à son Dieu et reconnaître sa misère [Ritz, p. 253].

71 Exercises, p. 130.

Hopkins realizes wearily what it means even to pray for patience, and in the three-fold repetition of the word in the opening two lines there is the sense of endearment, but also the gritty ache as if he were biting on a cinder.

Patience, hard thing! the hard thing but to pray,
But bid for, Patience is! Patience who asks
Wants war, wants wounds; weary his times, his tasks;
To do without, take tosses, and obey.

Not only is patience a difficult acquirement, but it is extremely difficult even to ask for it. Those who ask for it are asking for a bitter conflict and suffering within. They are asking for a constant weariness and drudgery in their work, as Hopkins was constantly harried in having to "examine a nation." One must learn self-abnegation, be buffeted about, and, what seems to become increasingly more difficult as time goes on, one must learn to give perfect obedience. It is no wonder, then, that the virtue of patience is not widely understood, is seldom sought, and less seldom attained.

But unless one has actively sought patience (for it is the paradox of patience that it is a virtue not for the weak but for the heroic and iron-willed) in these things, it cannot be bought. These are the currency with which patience is "bid for" and purchased. In the second quatrain, we see the fruit of patience:

Rare patience roots in these, and these away,
Nowhere. Natural heart's ivy, Patience masks
Our ruins of wrecked past purpose. There she basks
Purple eyes and seas of liquid leaves all day.

The difference in tone between the first and second quatrain is distinctive, and is meant to be so. One notices in the first quatrain the frequent harsh dentals and full stops, the exclamations, monosyllables, frequent end-stop punctuation, and the sprung lines. These are countered in the second quatrain by the many liquid l's and r's, the frequent sibilants, the more frequent polysyllables, the relative scarcity of punctuation, and the approximation of a stately prose rhythm reminiscent of Newman.

Patience, like ivy, grows slowly, but it covers over the ruins of our past plans and projects which we had hoped to see completed. Patience, writes Boyle commenting on these lines, "is rooted in pain and endurance, it stays with the suffering heart, wrecked so often in its past high endeavors, and masks the scars."⁷² While all one's past lies like ruined edifices, then, the lowly ivy dresses up the ruins and imparts a serenity and hallowedness to those ruins which is like nothing else. The picture of the purple berries surrounded by the multi-shaded green ivy, which from a distance look like a rippling sea, is almost Virgilian in its bucolic evocativeness.

The two themes of the severity and serenity of patience, so admirably caught in the rhythms of the octet, are repeated in the sestet. The tone of harshness and severity in the first tercet catches the emotional strain the speaker

72 Boyle, p. 114.

feels in learning that hard thing, patience. But the tone of the final tercet is muted and serene:

We hear our hearts grate on themselves: it kills
To bruise them, dearer. Yet the rebellious wills
Of us we do bid God bend to him even so.

And where is he who more and more distils
Delicious kindness?-- He is patient. Patience fills
His crisp combs, and that comes these ways we know.

The argument of the sonnet is starkly clear; each word is a mark of acceptance etched on the speaker's heart. In Spelt From Sibyl's Leaves the speaker, painfully confronted with the moral value of his every action, laments that the self-stress working against God's stress, creates a terrible friction, so that his "thoughts against thoughts in groans grind." Here too the desire to go against his own natural bent is to hear his very heart grate against itself. To continue the siege upon his heart is to bruise himself more seriously. Yet even so, we do "bid" God to straighten the heart's ways. Hopkins, continuing the suctioneering diction of the opening lines, will bid the dear price necessary to buy patience.

In the final tercet, Hopkins uses another bucolic image. The speaker likens the patient man to the prepared crisp honeycombs which the honeybee, Patience, slowly fills with the honey of "Delicious kindness." It is the increased kindness of God bestowed on the patient man, as well as the growing kindness of the patient man towards others. But unless the walls of the combs are securely firm, "crisp," the honeybee Patience will not fill them. And the way to make them crisp, Hopkins sighs, with a possible pun on "comes" and

and "combs" as a verb, "comes those ways we know." Those ways have been mentioned in the first quatrain. There is no other way to gain patience (patiens - suffering, and also the Passion of Christ) but by bending (crisp - crispus - curvus = curved) the stubborn, grotesquely twisted heart to God. Patience, like every other grace, is a gift from God. And in the last entry in his Dublin meditation notes, for the Feast of the Annunciation, 25 March 1885, Hopkins speaks of grace in terms metaphorically similar to those of the final lines of the sonnet. The Blessed Virgin, he notes, "was full of grace, that is/ she had received and stored up in her every grace offered and now overflowed in the Son/Christ. So the preparation for grace is grace corresponded with."⁷³ For Hopkins, this last sentence, like the sonnet on patience, was more than an imaginative exercise in thought. It was a means for transforming himself into the likeness of his Lord.

My own heart let me more have pity on is the last of Hopkins' terrible sonnets, and it signals Hopkins' awareness that he has been too hard upon his "poor Jackself." The opening quatrain is in the form of a triple imperative to his will to lift the seige on his all-too-human heart. The "let me" formula is repeated twice and implied in the third elliptical clause:

My own heart let me more have pity on; let
Me live to my sad self hereafter kind,
Charitable; not live this tormented mind
With this tormented mind tormenting yet.

73 Sermons, p. 260.

The "me" of line one is used to signify Hopkins' arbitrium, his free will, aspiring at whatever cost towards complete harmony with God. "My own heart," on the other hand, is the natural bent of the self, bent into its own curve of interests. Still, there are not two selves, but one with two contrary stresses, and that self which would force itself beyond its endurance ends by simply being a "sad self."

Among the insights of the final lines of the previous sonnet was the realization that kindness would come to the man who was patient. In this sonnet Hopkins literally takes this insight to heart; he is to be more kind and charitable to himself, and to pity himself for his past sins and imperfections.⁷⁴

"Pray not to be tormented," Hopkins writes in a meditation on the devils who tormented the demoniac in St. Matthew. The note is contemporary with his composing of Spelt From Sibyl's Leaves. By the summer, when Hopkins wrote My own heart, the fury

74 "There is a way of thinking of past sin," Hopkins had written while making the Third Exercise of the First Week during his retreat at Beaumont Lodge in September 1883, such that the thought numbs and kills the heart, as all this Week of the Exercises will do if care is not taken in giving it. It does not seem that we are to pray for this, but for that feeling towards past sin which our body felt or would feel when sins were presented to her and shrunk from them instantaneously and which our Lord Himself, who means us to copy His nature and character as well as we can and put on His mind according to our measure. For they turn from sin by nature (or our Lady as if by nature) and finding it embodied with a thing they love find it infinitely piteous: 'O the pity of it!' and why should it ever have been?-- these are the sort of words that express it. So that we may pity ourselves in the same way, that such a thing as sin should ever have got hold of us [Ibid., pp. 134-35].

75 Entry for 19 January 1885 in ibid., p. 259.

of the attack has at last temporarily subsided. But the speaker recalls here that so all-pervasive was the tormenting of the speaker that he does not only have a tormented mind, he lives it. The mind begets torments which yet beget further torments in a cyclical frenzy caught in the triple verbal repetition: "tormented," "tormented," "tormenting."

In the second quatrain, the speaker realizes that he is utterly incapable of being the author of his own comfort:

I cast for comfort I can no more get
By groping round my comfortless, than blind
Eyes in their dark can day or thirst can find
Thirst's all-in-all in all a world of wet.

76

"Cast" is a key word here; it has the meaning of directing one's eyes in search of something. But it also means that the speaker sends out his thoughts like a pack of hunting dogs in search of a trail. To look within oneself for comfort is an empty task, for the speaker himself is "comfortless," and the epithet has a substantival force. His thoughts can only feel about blindly, as they stumble in the interior darkness.

The search is as fruitless, the speaker laments, as blind eyes groping around in the darkness within for the day which is without. Or the search is as fruitless as thirst

76 Cf. Boyle's opening remarks on the imagery of this sonnet in Chapter Seven, "The Valley of the Shadow." Boyle's is certainly the most responsive reading of this sonnet (despite some scholarly meanderings), and of necessity I have had to cover some of my ground in his tracks. Cf. Boyle, pp. 147-161, but particularly the lucid and exciting opening paragraphs on the "casting" imagery and the substantive force of "comfortless," "blind eyes," and "thirst."

itself, used substantively, being satisfied, although there is a whole world of water which remains exterior to it.

There is a pronounced sense of panic in the metaphors Hopkins has chosen to present the futility of the self to comfort oneself. Only the comfort of the Comforter, directly addressed in No worst, there is none, can bring the speaker what he casts for. For God is as pervasive as the daylight, although the blind man can not see it. He is as omnipresent as the waters themselves, although thirst can be present in the midst of plenty.

The tone of the hortatory sestet is remarkably tender and kindly cajoling as the speaker addresses his "Jackself," much as St. Francis affectionately referred to his body as his jackass. He "advises" himself to stop probing the darker recesses of his soul, and to stop tormenting himself. He has let his thoughts, like a vicious hunting pack of dogs, snipe too long at his poor Jackself, tormenting the poor beast to near-madness. There may be here an intentional sardonic parallel on Hopkins' part between Actaeon, turned into a stag and torn apart by his own hunting dogs, and the poor, jaded Jackself of Hopkins being internally torn apart by his own tormenting thoughts:

Soul, self; come, poor Jackself, I do advise
 You, jaded, let be; call off thoughts awhile
 Elsewhere; leave comfort root-room; let joy size
 Æ God knows when to God knows what; whose smile
 's not wrung, see you; unforeseen times rather-- as skies
 Betweenpie mountains-- lights a lovely mile.

Unless the thoughts which dog the speaker are called off, comfort, or consolation, will never be able to take hold,

take root, within. Like the slow, steady growth of patience imaged in the fledgeling and the ivy, comfort will not take root unless the soul prepares itself for its reception.⁷⁷

"[Consolation] should be our normal state and...when God withdraws it he wishes us to strive to recover it/. Cf. "da nobis in eodem Spiritu recta sapere et de ejus semper consolatione gaudere,"⁷⁸ Hopkins wrote during his Long Retreat. The priest must prepare himself for the graces of consolation, which will come from without in God's own good time and in God's own good place and meted out with God's own measure ("size"). The colloquial phrasing emphasizes the intimacy between the speaker and his self, which almost touches on good-natured swearing in "God knows what."

77 Ignatius defines spiritual consolation as follows:

I call it consolation when the soul is aroused by an interior movement which causes it to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord, and consequently can love no created thing on the face of the earth for its own sake, but only in the creator of all things. It is likewise consolation when one sheds tears inspired by love of the Lord, whether it be sorrow for sins or because of the Passion of Christ our Lord, or for any other reason that is directly connected to His service and praise. Finally, I call consolation any increase of faith, hope, and charity and any interior joy that calls and attracts to heavenly things, and to the salvation of one's soul, inspiring it with peace and quiet in Christ our Lord [Exercises, pp. 129-30].

78 Sermons, p. 205. As Devlin notes, the Latin is from the Collect for Whit Sunday: "give us by the Spirit a correct judgment in all things and to rejoice always in His consolation."

The consolation (smile) of God is likened to the sudden appearance of the "pied," dappled skies breaking through the overcast heavens between two mountains like a pie-wedge, lighting up a "lovely mile" on the pilgrim's journey. The largeness and bountifulness of God's consolation are reflected in the macrocosmic terms of the simile: "skies" - "mountains" - "mile," and are contrasted with the smallness, darkness, and thirst of the self. The wedge of light between the mountains also suggests God's enormous smile, which, when it comes, is completely disproportionate to what was reasonably expected. "[We] want a light shed on our way and a happiness spread over our life," ⁷⁹ Hopkins writes near the beginning of his last retreat. And that light, which is the consolation of God, when it breaks through the gloom, shines without stinting:

Even natural 'consolation' or good spirits come and go without any discoverable reason and certainly God could make us most happy without our knowing what we were happy about, though of course the mind would then turn with pleasure to any, the first pious thought that came, as its object.... But the greater the disproportion [between what is expected and what is given] the greater the likelihood of the consolation being from God. 80

Significantly, to find in Hopkins' sonnets a cousin to this sacramental image of God's smile flashing between the mountains in the valley of the shadows, we must go back almost

79 Ibid., p. 262.

80 Ibid., p. 207, from notes made in the Long Retreat.

eight years to Hurrahing in Harvest of September 1877, with its vision of God's shoulder wedged between the hills upholding his world. For while some of the sonnets of 1879 and 1880 inscape the distinctive selves of places and men, the vision of God in nature belongs uniquely to the sonnets written in the spring-time world of Wales, just as much as the "terrible" sonnets are a product of the "winter-world" of Dublin. And even the image of light breaking through the mountains recalls "dark Maenefa the mountain" of northern Wales rather than the terrain of Dublin.

The dark sonnets, conceived and written in an appropriate secretive darkness, are the literary remains of a dark night of the soul which most of us can only imagine, in which there are few lights and in which even the lettering on the road signs is in a different language. Road-maps usually make poor literature, because their purposes are utilitarian rather than aesthetic. And the seven leaves which form the remains of Hopkins' poetic journal, and which have been admired by so many readers for so many different reasons, are most clearly read by following the directions of St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises. With this guide for the Way, it is clear that Hopkins, like Dante before him, was going down profound-ward depths only to go upwards towards God.

VII. THREE SONNETS AND THREE SHARDS OF 1885

Give beauty back, beauty, beauty,
beauty, back to God, beauty's self
and beauty's giver.

After bidding Hopkins to create out of his very marrow the terrible sonnets, Hopkins' muse was tired. While, therefore, Ash-boughs, To what serves Mortal Beauty, and The Soldier are certainly good poems, they do mark a certain falling off. There is an upswing in the spirit, but a descent from the highest plateaus of inspiration. Ash-boughs, like the "terrible" sonnets, was never sent to Bridges or Dixon, but was found in draft form in two versions among Hopkins' posthumous papers. The earlier draft, Bridges tells us in his notes to the poem, is a curtal sonnet on the "same sheet with the four sonnets 68-71, and preceding them: second, an apparently later version in the same metre on a page by itself; with expanded variation from seventh line, making thirteen lines for eleven."¹ Both Bridges and Gardner have relegated Hopkins' third and final curtal sonnet to the section entitled "Unfinished Poems, Fragments, Light Verse, & c. (1862-89)" because, as Ritz says it "est accompagné d'une variante inachevée." Nevertheless, "la première version écrite sur le modèle de Pied Beauty possède les onze vers nécessaires.

1 Poems, p. 313.

C'est un sonnet «caudé» parfaitement achevé."²

Any exact dating is impossible, but manuscript evidence points to a period contemporary with the terrible sonnets, probably sometime in the summer of 1885. Both Gardner and Ritz are aware that Ash-boughs harks back to that earlier time in Wales.³ For aesthetic reasons, then, it seems fitting to place the poem immediately after My own heart let me more have pity on, which also ends with a backward glance at Wales.

The curtal sonnet, the first form which Hopkins gave the poem, is in a light, sprightly, five-stress sprung rhythm with many hurried feet:

Not of all my eyes see, wandering on the world,
Is anything a milk to the mind so, so sighs deep
Poetry to it, as a tree whose boughs break in the sky.
Say it is ashboughs: whether on a December day and furled
Fast or they in clammyish lashtender combs creep
Apart wide and new-nestle at heaven most high.

- 2 Ritz, p. 548n. As with The Shepherd's Brow, this curtal sonnet should also be given its proper place among the poems of 1876-1889. But even in the Fourth Edition, it remains among the slim number of mature fragments.
- 3 Cf. Gardner, II, p. 348. "[We] are probably right in assuming that Hopkins had recovered sufficiently from the gall and heartburn of I wake and feel the fell of dark to return to the nature-poem in the hope of recapturing the mystical vision and pure delight of the poems of 1877." There is some truth here, although Gardner oversimplifies, for Hopkins did not have to recapture what was never lost. Ritz's statement here is more balanced: "[Cette] courte pièce montre clairement que la pensée du poète n'a pas varié, pendant les huit années qui ont passé depuis les sonnets de 1877..." [Ritz, p. 549].

Nothing, the poet sings, nurtures the mind or has in it such deep poetry, as a tree whose boughs seem to explode against the heavens. Indeed, the organic unity of the tree, with its roots in the earth and its branches taboring in the heavens, seems to have had, from scattered remarks of Hopkins, the same Coleridgean esemplastic unity as a well-wrought poem. "I looked at some delicate flying shafted ashes-- there was one especially of a single sonnet - like inscape," he had⁴ written in his journal years before.

And, indeed, the meticulously natural description of the ash-boughs in lines four to six is unlike anything Hopkins had written in his poetry for years. They too seem to belong to the young Hopkins at Oxford and at Roehampton and at Mt. Marresa. In his fragment, Richard, written in mid-July 1865, almost twenty years before, Hopkins had described a "brush of trees" as

thinning skywards by degrees,
With parallel shafts,-- as upward - parted ashes,--
Their highest sprays were drawn as fine as lashes,
With centres duly touch'd and nestlike spots.

The precision of observation and the obvious relish which he took in observing are still with the jaded, prematurely aging priest of forty. Gardner thinks ~~there~~ is a greater, more primitive gusto here. And since Gardner is the only critic to give Ash-boughs anything like a full treatment, it may be well to hear what he says:

⁴ Journals, p. 211.

When we have read and pondered the poem many times we find that the predominant image... is physiological, progenitive. We are made to think of a newborn child nestling against the bosom of the mother. The tapering, talon-like fingers of the eager suckling grope for, tabour on and clutch at the full breast (cf. "mild to the mind")--snow-white clouds with veins of blue sky between--the seemingly near yet mysteriously remote source of that heavenly milk ("heaven most high"); for both the tree and the mind of man reach upwards as well as downwards for their sustenance.... Nature herself (or "earth"...) is not the real fons et origo; for earth herself, who yields to the male embrace of One who begets upon her a numerous progeny, is still like a mere babe groping up and grasping at "steep Heaven"-- the God who is at once husband and father.... Indeed, Ash-boughs may well strike us as being a subtle poetic embodiment of a very ancient religious concept-- that God, in His infinite Being, includes both sexes: He is both Father and Mother, Seed and Matrix. 5

It is an interesting and even exciting reading of the poem, as speculation engenders speculation, and Spinoza democratically embraces St. Thomas Aquinas. But Gardner makes late Hopkins sound more like middle Yeats.

The trouble is that the root meaning --the syntactical argument of the poem --has not been first adequately determined, so that the branches of Gardner's reading become increasingly exotic and convoluted. There is a logical excuse for this, however, and this appears in the strained syntax of the second half of the curtal sonnet:

They touch heaven, tabour on it; how their talons sweep
 The smouldering enormous winter welkin! May
 Mells blue and snowwhite through them, a fringe and fray
 Of greenery: it is old earth's groping towards the steep
 Heaven whom she child us by.

The difficulty is in the final two lines. How are they to be read? Does "it" of line ten refer to an object-- the ash tree? Or does it refer to an activity - the groping of the tree towards heaven? What do "whom" and "she" refer to? Heaven or earth? And, finally, how are we to interpret the verbal force of "childs"? Does it mean "to beget with child," or does it mean "to make as a child again?"

The sonnet demands a good deal of attention before it reveals its meaning, but reveal it it does.⁶ The most satisfactory reading seems to be this: this stretching of the boughs of the tree towards heaven is old earth's groping towards the steep / Heaven by whom earth (she)⁷ child us (my eyes [line 1] and myself, as well as those who are perceptive to a sacramental vision of nature). That is, we are impregnated with inspiration when we see how mute nature itself literally stretches

6 This relatively little-known sonnet of Hopkins' is a classic example of the Russian Formalist Victor Shklovsky's theory of defamiliarization, of making objects strange to make them new for us. For the sonnet moves at a fairly rapid pace until the last two lines, when the fruit drawn from the nature-meditation forces us to stop and slowly retrace our steps, to see anew the significance of the ash-boughs.

7 In line seven, "They touch heaven, tabour on it," Hopkins uses the indefinite pronoun "it" to refer to heaven. He is much too careful a poet to have "she" refer to "heaven" four lines later.

out its gnarled hands towards heaven, how all things, but more noticeably trees, cry their dumb hosannahs to God. The gnarled hands are called "talons" to suggest that nature's unconscious praise is less perfect than the conscious, self-willed praise which man alone of all earthly things can give, just as the gnarled branches in their groping only approximate the human hands outstretched in supplication.

But a second meaning of "child" is also there, for this seeing the old twisted trees groping upward towards heaven gives us another hint of that Edenic world, when man and nature were in their radically innocent state, like little children. For a few moments, this sacramental glimpse of heaven "childs" us and makes us children again. It is difficult not to see the jaded priest in the image of the ash-tree, with hands upstretched in praise in all seasons, in his

- 8 Gardner's reading of the final line of the variant is also unfortunately misleading. He thinks that Hopkins probably changed "Heaven whom she childs us by" to "Heaven with it whom she childs things by" because "it seems Hopkins may have 'feared the monistic or pantheistic implications of 'us.'" His very first thought had been, 'Heaven once Earth childed by' [sic], which could refer equally to the creation of Adam and ash-boughs; so that his second [first?] thought, 'us,' is more authentic than the ugly and timid 'things'; for in a physical sense human beings are indeed children of Earth (Gardner, II, pp. 351-52)." What the emendation probably means, and it is certainly less satisfying than the first version, is that, seeing this groping of the old trees towards heaven, we are inspired to see how all things

"winter-world" as well as in his spring world, but grateful now for his breaking-forth again into blossom after the freezing, numbing cold of his desolation.

To what serves Mortal Beauty? and The Soldier were most likely written within a week of each other. The first is precisely dated 23 August, 1885, a time when Hopkins was making his annual eight-day retreat at Clongowes Wood College in County Kildare, where he went on August 21.⁹ The Soldier, dated "Clongowes, Aug. 1885," would then have been written between the twenty-first and the end of the month. In fact, the sonnets form a pair, for both are poetic commentaries on the Ignation Exercises. To what serves Mortal Beauty? is a commentary on

- 8 (Cont'd.) praise their Creator. And we see also how all things seem to recover their pristine innocence. This is true in all seasons, but, as Hopkins says, it is especially so in May. Cf. Spring May ? 1877):

What is all this juice and all this joy?
A strain of the earth's sweet being in the
beginning
In Eden garden.

And also Ribblesdale:

Earth, sweet Earth, sweet landscape, with leaves
throng
And louchèd low grass, heaven that dost appeal
To, with no tongue to plead, no heart to feel;
That canst but only be, but dost that long.

- 9 He writes his mother on 20 August 1885 from Dublin that he has just returned from Hastings and that he is to go to Clongowes on the following day to make his retreat. Letters III, p. 172.

the Principle and Foundation, which begins the exercises for the "First Week," as The Soldier is a commentary on the Kingdom of Christ, which serves as prologue to the exercises of the "Second Week." Both sonnets are also written in the same meter, sprung alexandrines, and both use the strong medial caesura to help break up the monotony to which the even-stressed alexandrine line is vulnerable, as Hopkins well knew.

To what serves Mortal Beauty? was sent to Canon Dixon sometime, it seems, near the August 23 date which appears on it. But a slightly altered version was not sent to Bridges until three years later. "I enclose by the same hand a sonnet of some standing which Canon Dixon has had and you have not. I have also several more, done at long intervals. Also another,"¹⁰ he writes Bridges on 7 September 1888. That it was To what serves Mortal Beauty? of which Hopkins was speaking is clear from a parenthetical remark he makes in a letter which followed eighteen days later: "(While I remember it, in the other sonnet that went with that [That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire] was a false rhyme you overlooked -- thronged instead of swarmed:¹¹ please make the correction.)"

10 Letters I, p. 283.

11 Letter of 25 September 1888 in ibid., p. 291. That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire was sent on the seventh. Dixon's version has the false rhyme "thronged" in line seven.

To what serves Mortal Beauty? is a didactic poem, a subtle and balanced judgement of the meaning of human beauty. It is Hopkins' particular poetic understanding of the Ignatian Principle and Foundation which reads in part:

Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. All other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him fulfill the end for which he is created. From this it follows that man is to use these things to the extent that they will help him to attain his end. Likewise, he must rid himself of them in so far as they prevent him from attaining it. 12

It is this text which Hopkins would have read and pondered at the beginning of his annual retreat. The sonnet begins with the statement of the question in the first two and one-half lines; it is answered in general terms in the next two and one-half lines. A particular example is given in lines six to eight, so that the traditional division of the Petrarchan octet into two quatrains is not followed, except in rhyme scheme:

To what serves mortal beauty¹--dangerous; does set dancing blood --the O-seal-that-so¹feature, flung prouder form
Than Purcell tune lets tread to?¹ See: it does this: keeps warm
Men's wits to the things that are;¹ what good means -- where a glance
Master more may than gaze,¹ gaze out of countenance.
Those lovely lads once, wet-fresh¹windfalls of war's storm,
How then should Gregory, a father,¹ have gleaned else from swarm-
ed Rome? But God to a nation dealt that day's dear chance.

What purpose does the beauty of a particular person
 13
 serve, asks Hopkins. That proud but fleeting form which the
 artist tries to capture forever ("the O-seal-that-so feature")
 is dangerous because it can set the blood dancing more wildly

- 13 The formulation of the question of the metaphysical value of physical beauty would be as meaningless to a late-Victorian esthete like Robert Bridges as it would be to a twentieth-century logical positivist. Looking back half a century before to a confrontation with Hopkins over some pilfered peaches, the octogenarian poet laureate wrote of moralists like Hopkins that

pleasure with them,
 instead of being an in-itself absolute good
 as nature would have had it, and which men would
 wish
 to be always present and with his perfection
 increase,
 came to be bann'd as the pollution of virtue;--

And so,
 when the young poet my companion in study
 and friend of my heart refused a peach at my
 hands,
 he being then a housecarl in Loyola's menie,
 'twas that he fear'd the savor of it, and when
 he waived
 his scruple to my banter, 'twas to avoid offense.
 But I, upon that day which after fifty years
 is near as yesterday, was no stranger to fear
 of pleasure, but had grown fearful of that fear

[The Testament of Beauty, IV, Ethick, ll. 423-35].
 But the poet who had written Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves
 could hardly accept Bridges' assumption that the pleasure
 was an absolute good, especially in a fallen nature. Like
 many of the late-Victorian aesthetes, it seems to have
 been Bridges who over-reacted against an inbred puritan-
 ism, although Hopkins himself did not escape its touch
 completely. Nevertheless, in spite of his misunderstand-
 ing of Hopkins' position, there is a tenderness in Bridges'
 lines which reminds us of Hopkins' fine compliment to his
 friend: "If I were not your friend I shd. wish to be the
 friend of the man that wrote your poems. They shew the
 eye for pure beauty and they shew, my dearest, besides,
 the character which is much more rare and precious"
 (Letters I, p. 96).

and heatedly, Hopkins is aware, than even Henry Purcell's stirring rhythms can. In Christian-Platonic terms, Hopkins explains that physical beauty keeps us aware of the absolute, eternal good of God. For God has created beautiful people to give us some inkling of what His goodness and beauty must be. A quick glimpse of physical beauty can give us a spiritual insight into the goodness of God as well as into the spark of divinity in man. In this sense, beauty has an effect of serenity and stasis. But too long a gaze at beauty can be disturbing, can arouse the erotic impulse, and become a self-absorbing end in itself. This awareness of the charm and yet potential danger of physical beauty is a constant theme in Hopkins' letters, sermons, and poetry.¹⁴ "I think... no one can admire beauty of the body more than I do, and it is of course a comfort to find beauty in a friend or a friend in beauty.

14 Cf. Spring (1877):

Have, get; before it cloy,
Before it cloud, Christ, lord, and sour with sinning,
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy
Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy the winning.
Also, see Hopkins' sermon for 31 August 1879 in Sermons,
p. 19, and the superb late fragment, On the Portrait of
Two Beautiful Young People (Christmas, 1886), esp. 11.29-32:
Your feast of; that most in you earnest eye
May but call on your banes to more carouse.
Worst will the best. What worm was here, we cry,
To have havoc-pocked so, see, the hung-heavenward
boughs?

But this kind of beauty is dangerous," he once told Bridges. ¹⁵

And a Jesuit who knew Hopkins remembered about him that

What struck me most of all in him was his childlike guilelessness and simplicity, his gentleness, tender-heartedness, and his loving compassion for the young, the weak, the poor, and for all who were in any trouble or distress. Joined to this and closely connected with it, was his purity of heart and shrinking dread of anything that tended to endanger, especially in the young, the angelic virtue. ¹⁶

The angelic virtue is chastity. It is this traditional identification of chaste innocence with the angelic virtue which gives special point to Hopkins' example of the boys' angelic beauty to show the force of physical beauty to act for spiritual good. For Pope Gregory, walking through crowded Rome about the year 600, and seeing some recently arrived young prisoners, golden-haired, blue-eyed Angles from far-off Britain, quipped his famous pun, "Non Angli sed angeli." It was this chance encounter which sparked Gregory to send the first Christian missionaries, led by St. Augustine, to convert Britain. And had it not been for their physical beauty, Hopkins suggests, Gregory might never have noticed these British lads. Father Gregory was struck by their physical beauty, which led him to turn to the far more valuable beauty

15 Letter of 22 October 1879 in Letters I, p. 95.

16 Quoted in Lahey, p. 132.

17

of their souls.

The sestet marks not so much a turn in the argument as a mildly hortatory insistence on maintaining a proper hierarchy of values. All men find the need to worship and love something, some image of beauty, even if it be only an idol, and Hopkins also takes an oblique glance at those who would worship art, the "block or barren stone." Christianity says, however, to love that which is most worthy of our love, the "selves" or souls of men, and the soul is reflected in the mold of the body, and particularly in the face. It is, then, perfectly in accord with Christianity to admire physical beauty,

- 17 As Devlin suggests, the germ for this sonnet may perhaps be found in some meditation notes Hopkins jotted down for the Feast of St. Gregory, 12 March 1885. Notice how even here natural beauty is linked in Hopkins' mind with the fear that that beauty may be pockmarked by sin:

St. Gregory the Great -- (1) His meeting with the boys in the market place
Angeli -- natural endowments; De ira -- state of sin; Alleluia -- employment in God's service. Consider under the first point [of the Ignatian meditation] the best you know of England, under the second the worst, under the third the hopes of its conversion and pray for that.

- 18 Cf. Hopkins' belief that the beauty of the soul manifests itself in the beauty of the body:

"For though even bodily beauty, even the beauty of blooming health, is from the soul, in the sense, as we Aristotelian Catholics say, that the soul is the form of the body, yet the soul may have no other beauty, so to speak, than that which it expresses in the symmetry of the body -- barring these blurs in the cast which wd. not be found

the first tercet explains. Yet, the second tercet tacitly admits that this kind of beauty is dangerous, so how are we to "meet" it?

Merely, meet it; own,
Home at heart, heaven's sweet gift;
then leave, let this alone.
Yea, wish that though, wish all,
God's better beauty, grace.

We are to acknowledge within ourselves that mortal beauty is "heaven's sweet gift." For it is meant to be a pointer towards "God's better beauty, grace." Wish for grace and you wish for "all," since it is spiritual beauty which informs physical beauty and gives to physical beauty its value within an absolute hierarchy of values. "Il reconnaît dans la beauté de la nature et dans la beauté humaine une valeur positive. Il s'installe à égale distance de l'ascétisme et de l'esthetisme, et remet chaque chose à sa place, dans la hiérarchie qui s'élève des objets inanimés à la grâce divine."¹⁹

- 18 (Cont'd.) in the die or the mould" [Letters I, p. 95]. For Hopkins, a favorite corollary to the idea of the beauty of the soul is that, in commending and sacrificing himself entirely to God, the physical beauty of the individual is kept and will shine forth in greater splendor in the resurrection. Cf. The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo, which deals with this theme, especially the following:

O why are we so
haggard at the heart, so care-coiled, care-killed,
so fagged, so fashed, so cogged, so cumbered,
When the thing we freely forfeit is kept with
fonder a care,
Fonder a care kept than we could have kept it....

Unlike To what serves Mortal Beauty?, Hopkins' other poem, The Soldier, was never sent to either Bridges or Dixon, and like the greater number of the sonnets of 1885, was found after his death among his papers. The reason it was probably not sent, if we exclude for a moment Hopkins' self-admitted growing indifference towards his poems, lies in the tone of the sonnet, which comes close to being chauvinistic. "[It is] a task of great delicacy and hazard to write a patriotic song that shall breathe true feeling without spoon or brag," he explains to Bridges, speaking of his musical score for his What shall I do for the land that bred me. "How I hate both! and yet feel myself half blundering or sinking into them in several of my pieces, a thought that makes me not greatly regret their likelihood of perishing."²⁰

The tone of the sonnet does need some explanation. Hopkins was proud of his love for Britain and the Empire, and yet he was not blind to its faults. The Soldier, based as it is on the military simile of the soldier Christ, evokes the sense of manliness we feel is, or at least should be, present in the military profession. And yet Hopkins' tone is ambivalent, for he realizes that many redcoats and tars fall sadly short of the qualities of courage, sacrifice,

obedience, and the willingness to lay down one's life in defense of a just cause. Nevertheless, the very wearing of the smart uniform, a symbol of manliness and pride in one's country, of itself may help to make the soldier himself manly and patriotic.

Still, while Hopkins qualifies his remarks, there is a sense of slight discomfort in the octet:

Yes. Why' do we áll, seeing of a soldier,
 bless him? bless
 Our redcoats, our tars? Both these being,
 the greater part
 But frail clay, nay but foul clay. Here
 it is: the heart,
 Since, proud, it calls the calling manly,
 gives a guess
 That, hopes that, makes believe, the men
 must be no less;
 It fancies, feigns, deems, dears the artist
 after his art;
 And fain will find as sterling all as all
 is smart,
 And scarlet wear the spirit of wár thére
 express.

There is an uneasy sense of patriotism here which seems to have been shared by many Victorian writers, for many of those who signed up for voluntary duty in Her Majesty's service signed up for quite other reasons than honour and sacrifice,
 21
 as Hopkins very well knew. We cannot lay the apparent tone

21 Cf. Hopkins' letter to Baillie of 1 May 1888, where he is still rankling at the military disgrace suffered by the British soldiers on Majuba Hill in South Africa (26-27 February 1881) at the hands of the Boers.

of an inbred British middle-class superiority to Hopkins alone, for the distinction between the Ideal Soldier and the demos is clear in Thomas Carlyle, a product of the Scottish peasant class. In Past and Present, written forty-two years before The Soldier, Carlyle, in his inimitable diachronic style, marks the hiatus between soldierly ideal and soldierly reality:

Who can despair of Governments that passes a Soldier's Guard-house, or meets a redcoated man on the street?... Often, in these painfully decadent and painfully nascent Times, with their distresses, inarticulate gaspings and 'impossibilities;' meeting a tall Lifeguardsman in his snow-white trousers, or seeing those two statuesque Lifeguardsmen in their frowning bearskins,

- 21 (Cont'd.) The cowardice of the British fighting men Hopkins attributes to their poverty and general misery, brought about by poor urban living conditions:

What I most dislike in towns and in London in particular is the misery of the poor; the dirt, squalor, and the illshapen degraded physical (putting aside moral) type of so many of the people, with the deeply dejecting, unbearable thought that by degrees almost all our population will become a town population and a puny unhealthy and cowardly one. Yes, cowardly. Do you know and realise what happened at Majuba Hill? 500 British troops after 8 hours' firing, on the Dutch reaching the top, ran without offering hand to hand resistance before, it is said, 80 men. Such a thing was never heard in history. The disgrace in itself is unspeakable (Letters III, p. 293).

pipe-clayed buckskins, on their coal-black sleek-fiery quadrupeds, riding sentry at the Horse-Guards, -- it strikes one with a kind of mournful interest, how, in such universal down-rushing and wrecked impotence of almost all old institutions, this oldest Fighting Institution is still so young! Fresh-complexioned, firm-limbed, six feet by the standard, this fighting man has verily been got up, and can fight.... He of the red coat, I say, is a success and no failure! Multifarious ragged losers, runaway apprentices, starved weavers, thievish valets; an entirely broken population, fast tending towards the treadmill. But the persuasive sergeant came; by tap of drum enlisted, or formed lists of them, took heartily to drilling them.... Let no man despair of Governments who looks on these two sentries at the Horse-Guards.... 22

Hopkins, by his very nature, had a deep-seated admiration and love for the military ideal. His ambivalence in tone, however, derives from his lofty application. His analogy is between the propagation of the British Empire's aims, which he found unspiritual and therefore partly unjustifiable, and the propagation of the heavenly kingdom of his Commander-in-Chief, Jesus Christ. And the analogy between the two is self-consciously strained, and almost "blunders" into "spoonying."

For it is clear that Hopkins saw his own life as a Knight or soldier of Christ's, a metaphor which had the sound

22 Past and Present, Bk. IV, Ch. III, "The One Institution," in Everyman's Library ed. (London: 1962), pp. 250-252.

approval of the Spanish knight-turned-priest who had founded
 23
 the Order of Jesus. "There is something of the soldier about
 Hopkins," Ritz explains:

Il y a du soldat chez Hopkins. Le corps
 est faible mais l'âme est virile. Les
 images militaires le touchant. Pour lui

- 23 Cf. the metaphor of the king-knight relationship which
 opens the Second Week of the Ignatian Exercises, "The
 Kingdom of Christ":

The call of the earthly king helps us to con-
 template the life of the Eternal King....

First point: I will see in my mind a human
 king, chosen by God our Lord Himself, to whom
 all princes and all Christians pay reverence
 and obedience.

Second point: I will consider how this king
 speaks to all his subjects, saying, "It is my
 will to conquer all infidel lands. Therefore,
 whoever wishes to come with me must be content
 to eat as I eat, drink as I drink, dress as I
 dress, etc. He must also be willing to work
 with me by day, and watch with me by night.
 He will then share with me in victory as he
 shared in the toils."

Third point: I will consider what the answer
 of good subjects ought to be to such a generous
 and noble king, how he would deserve to be
 despised by everyone and considered an unworthy
 knight (Exercises, p. 67).

On this last point, Hopkins made the following comments
 during his Long Retreat, continuing the military
 metaphor:

But what of those who refused to come not
 from dislike of (Christ) the king's terms, the
 particular hardships of this campaign, but from
 dislike of soldiering altogether, from complete
 cowardice, and yet able-bodied men? -- Not only
 they would be despised for cowardice but in the
 general movement of the commonwealth towards the
 great war this would be held disaffection and
 they would be disfranchised in the hour of triumph

comme pour St. Ignace, le myth de l'armée est essentiel. La vie est une «dure campagne». Il s'agit de «s'entraîner rigoureusement». Courage, loyauté, obéissance sont les vertus nécessaires, car le «Chef» est le Christ et il combat. C'est l'enseignement constant de St. Ignace.... De ce Dieu des armées, il veut être le combattant exemplaire. L'ordre «militaire» des Jésuites répondait donc bien à son tempérament autant qu'à l'idéal spirituel qu'il s'était donné. 24

The operation of the Incarnation in the man who bravely serves his "soldiering through" recalls the theme of As Kingfishers catch fire where "Christ plays in ten thousand places" in the activities of the virtuous man:

Mark Christ our King. He knows are, served
 this soldiering through;
 He of all can reeve a rope best. There he
 bides in bliss
 Now, and seeing somewhere some man do all
 that man can do,
 For love he leans forth, needs his neck
 must fall on, kiss,
 And cry 'O Christ-done deed! So God-made-flesh
 does too:
 Were I come o'er again' cries Christ 'it should
 be this.'

Hopkins identifies the operation of the Incarnation in men not with the distinctive personality, the particular self of a man,

- 23 (Cont'd.) The point is that we are in duty and loyalty bound to follow Him ('Regis', Christum Dominum nostrum, Regem aeternum') and it is for Him to choose what or where [Sermons, pp. 163-64].

- 24 Ritz, p. 143.

but with the nature of the activity of a person. A man becomes Christ insofar as he imitates the activity of Christ, especially in doing his part in the Great Sacrifice, in the great life-campaign of the De Processo, in which all returns to God.

"But our lives and in particular those of religious, as mine, are in their whole direction, not only inwardly but most visibly and outwardly, shaped by Christ's," Hopkins²⁵ wrote near the end of his life. For the rope which Christ reeves or fastens is the life of the Christian,

roped with, always, all the way down from
the wall
Fells or flanks of the voel, a vein
Of the gospel proffer, a pressure, a
principle, Christ's gift
(The Wreck of the Deutschland, I, 4, 6-8).

And Christ will reeve the soldier in his service to the long and arduous campaign, as he gave the first example. Christ "led the way," he told a Liverpool congregation, "went before his troops, was himself the vanguard, was the forlorn hope, bore the brunt of battle alone, died upon the field, on²⁶ Calvary hill, and bought the victory by his blood."

25 "Without that even outwardly the world could be so different that we cannot even guess it. And my life is determined by the Incarnation down to most of the details of the day" (Sermons, p. 263).

26 Sermon of 25 April 1880 in ibid., p. 70. Cf. also Hopkins' remark in his sermon for 14 December 1879: "If we do well he [Christ] smiles, he claps his hands over us" (Ibid., p. 49).

There remain to discuss only the three sonnet fragments of 1885, which are numbers 150, 153, and 154 in Gardner.²⁷

Strike, churl; hurl cheerless wind is apparently the first quatrain of an unfinished Petrarchan sonnet in sprung rhythm. The speaker addresses the unseasonable wind and hail which destroy the May blossoms, and which affect the speaker himself by holding joy back and keeping "Hope pale." Spring brings with it the promise of good things, which the "churl" winter destroys. "May 17, and still winter." Hopkins complained in a postscript to a letter to Baillie written at about the same time as the fragment.²⁸

The fragment is similar to the lines of a younger contemporary of Hopkins, A. E. Housman, written eleven years later:

The chestnut casts his flambeaux, and the flowers
Stream from the hawthorn on the wind away,
The doors clap to, the pane is blind with showers.
Pass me the can, lad; there's an end of May.
We for a certainty are not the first
Have sat in taverns while the tempest hurled
Their hopeful plans to emptiness, and cursed
Whatever brute and blackguard made the world.

27 Ritz calls the fragment Moonrise (19 June 1876) an unfinished sonnet; but the seven seven-stress lines show no discernible rhyme scheme. Ritz, p. 34 n.

28 Letter of 24 April - 17 May 1885 in Letters III, p. 257.

But, whereas the speaker in Housman's poem blames the Creator for this evil, Hopkins' evil force works in opposition to the good force, hope. "(Il y a) le vent et la grêle qui massaient la beauté de mai, c'est pour voir en eux le mal qui chasse la joie, s'en prend aux moissons et fait pâlir à jamais l'Esperance."²⁹

The times are nightfall is akin in imagery to Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves, and in theme is close to To seem the stranger. The times, and Hopkins undoubtedly is referring to the political unrest in Ireland, are nightfall, are winter; the light fades and will soon be gone. "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold." Hopkins laments in the second quatrain that he can do nothing in this commonweal:

And I not help. Nor word now of success: 30
All is from wreck, here, there, to rescue one--
Work which to see scarce so much as begun
Makes welcome death, does dear forgetfulness.

29 Ritz, p. 247.

30 Ritz dates this fragment as January 1885, which would make it contemporary with Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves. This or the previous month would fit in well with the season and time mentioned in the fragment. The "one" of line six may refer to the attempt of the Liberals to save Gladstone's failing reputation, since his foreign policy had snagged in Ireland and in Egypt, where he failed to end the siege of Khartoum, which ended in a British defeat. In his Dublin Notebook Hopkins notes, "Khartoum fell Jan. 26 [1885]." Seven weeks later he writes in his meditation notes the following: "Let him that is without sin etc. -- Pray to keep to this spirit and as far as possible rule in speaking of Mr. Gladstone for instance" (Sermons, pp. 260 and 318).

There is, then, little that the speaker can do to help the worsening condition around him. But, with the volta or turn in line nine, the speaker turns withindoors, for at least here his "will is law in that small commonweal." There is no final resolution to the poem, however, for the fragment ends with the end of line eleven.

It is almost the same with To his Watch, which in its fragmentation unintentionally offers an ironic answer to Hopkins' question, "shall I / Earlier or you fail at our force," by admitting a third alternative, for the inspiration for the sonnet fails before either. The speaker addresses his watch, which is, like himself, subject to cessation. The tick-tock regularity of his heart beats like his watch; both are works of intricate, delicate art, but both will one day lie in ruins. The duty of both is to "tell" time; the watch tells time with metronymic fidelity, the speaker makes time "tell" or count, for all life winds off "all on two spools" (Sibyl's Leaves). Our one spell of life ends either in "comfort's carol of all or woe's worst smart."

Day succeeds day and there is no way that we can hold back time and call it our own. The fact that "that last and shortest" day of our death is coming is one of the few things of which we can be certain. There is a great uneasiness

in the tone of the poem, as if the speaker were to be weighed
 and were to be found wanting.³¹ "[If] I died now," Hopkins confessed despondently five months before his death, "I should die imperfect, no master of myself, and that is the worst failure
 of all. O my God, look down on me."³²

The Soldier is probably the last sonnet Hopkins wrote in 1885. Hopkins' muse had forced him to utter things about which he was usually reticent, partially because he did not like to "make capital" on his religious insights, as he had expressed it in 1879. His muse had squeezed at least five of

31 "Le temps est precieux; selon l'emploi qu'il enfera, il connaîtra le chant du reconfort ou la plus cruelle brulure; pensee effrayante; l'angoisse, a nouveau, le saisit" (Ritz, p. 259).

32 Sermons, p. 262. Cf. Devlin's comment on this passage:

There may be a symptomatic confusion of thought here. The state of perfection which the profession of a religious enjoins is a constant striving for perfection; the complete attainment of it is not possible in this life. Cf. St. Thomas:

'Unde non oportet quod quicumque est in religione, iam sit perfectus, sed quod ad perfectionem tendat.' (Sum. Theol. II a II ae, 9. 186, 2.1, ad 3.)

Further, self-mastery is a means to closer union with Christ; it is not an end in itself. Perfect self-mastery is an academic rather than a religious ideal.

his desolate sonnets from him, most of them poems of the highest excellence. The poetic aftermath was a temporary cessation from the via purgativa and a return to earlier themes: the value of mortal beauty, and the presence of Christ in the just man. But there is in the last few poems of 1885 a certain flatness after the strain of the desolate sonnets. Hopkins had seen something in the dark. And while the sense of the beauty of freshness and innocence in the sonnets of 1877 was not lost, it was tempered in To what serves Mortal Beauty? Hopkins could hardly have gone the way he went without an intensified awareness that life is not a matter of burning always with a "hard, gemlike flame" or being "present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy," as his Oxford tutor and friend, Walter Pater, had urged.³³

The sonnets of 1885 form the last concentrated series of sonnets, if ten sonnets can be so considered. In all likelihood, Hopkins composed no sonnets after The Soldier for two full years, from late August 1885 to September 1887. When, however, he finally did create his next sonnets, the companion-pieces Harry Ploughman and Tom's Garland, there

33 From Pater's famous Conclusion to The Renaissance, which he wrote in 1868.

was to be an amount of energy and experimentation in the sonnet form which is astounding by any measure in a poet in his mid-forties. Hopkins' muse would not only trip along again; in 1887 it would dance a mazurka.

VIII HOPKINS' THREE CAUDATED SONNETS: 1887 - 1888

I did indeed observe, that the Yahoos were the only animals in this country subject to any diseases; which, however, were much fewer than horses have among us, and contracted not by any ill treatment they meet with, but by the nastiness and greediness of that sordid brute.

(Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels, Bk. IV, Ch. 7)

While I admired the handsome horses I remarked for the thousandth time with sorrow and loathing the base and bespotted figures and features of the Liverpool crowd. When I see the fine and manly Norwegians that flock hither to embark for America walk our streets and look about them it fills me with shame and wretchedness. (From letter of 27 April - 1 May 1881 to Bridges)

Framed around the walls images of vanished horses stood in homage, their meek heads poised in air; lord Hastings' Repulse, the duke of Westminster's Shotover, the duke of Beaufort's Ceylon, prix de Paris, 1866.... Dicers and thimblerriggers we hurried by after the hoofs, the vying caps and jackets and past the meatfaced woman, a butcher's dame, nuzzling thirstily her clove of orange. (James Joyce's Ulysses, Nestor)

How far from then forethought of, all thy more boisterous years,

When thou at the random grim forge, powerful amidst peers,
Did'st fettle for the great grey drayhorse his bright and
battering sandal!

I hear the ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry, and time one livid final flame. What's left us then? (Ulysses, Nestor)

In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is, since he was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood, immortal
diamond

Is immortal Diamond.

On 28 September 1887 Hopkins wrote to Bridges from
The Mourne Hotel, Rostrevor, County Down, in Northern Ireland.
He had just spent several days vacationing near the market

town of Dromore, about seventeen miles southwest of Belfast, in a house where Bishop Percy, the famous editor of Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, had once lived. "With other things I have not got on," Hopkins wrote,

but I have been touching up some old sonnets you have never seen [probably the "terrible sonnets"] and have within a few days done the whole of one, I hope, very good one and most of another, the one finished is a direct picture of a ploughman without afterthought. But when you read it let me know if there is anything like it in Walt Whitman, as perhaps there may be, and I should be sorry for that.

Nevertheless, Hopkins did not send Harry Ploughman to Bridges until his next letter two weeks later, when he was back at St. Stephen's Green. On October 11 he writes:

I will enclose the sonnet on Harry Ploughman, in which burden-lines (they might be recited by a chorus) are freely used: there is in this very heavily loaded sprung rhythm a call for their employment. The rhythm of this sonnet, which is altogether for recital, not for perusal (as by nature verse should be) is very highly studied. From such considering it I can no longer gather any impression of it: perhaps it will strike you as intolerably violent and artificial. 2

Apparently Bridges had some strong reservations about the sonnet, for Hopkins goes to some length to defend

1 Letters I, p. 262.

2 Ibid., p. 263.

the plasticity of its syntax and musical rhythms. But Hopkins insisted that his experiments functioned to present more immediately the dynamic activity of the ploughman. "I want Harry Ploughman to be a vivid figure before the mind's eye; if he is not that the sonnet fails." Hopkins was aware of the strangeness of his syntax to an English ear, especially to one trained in the conventional metrical patterns and rhetoric of Victorian poetic practice. And even Hopkins wavers before his own "wind-lilylocks-laced." "The difficulties are of syntax no doubt. Dividing a compound word by a clause sandwiched into it was a desperate deed, I feel, and I do not feel that it was an unquestionable success."³

Hopkins is bent on presenting the dynamic figure of Harry Ploughman; if language must be remolded and the modulation of stresses increased, and if this means sacrificing immediate comprehension, then so be it. For a poem is the hard crystal which presents experience in a fresh and compressed manner, so that the total experience of the poem explodes against the brain. He will defend any amount of prose glossing on the poem, for there are many tensions working simultaneously within the poem to present the experience which in prose is only described. All such explanation

3 Ibid., p. 265.

should be exterior to the poem itself:

I do myself think, I may say, that it would be an immense advance in notation (so to call it) in writing as the record of speech, to distinguish the subject, verb, object, and in general to express the construction to the eye; as is done already partly in punctuation by everybody, partly in capitals by the Germans, more fully in accentuation by the Hebrews. And I daresay it will come. But it would, I think, not do for me: it seems a confession of unintelligibility. And yet I don't know. At all events there is a difference. My meaning surely ought to appear of itself; but in a language like English, and in an age of it like the present, written words are really matter open and indifferent to the receiving of different and alternative verse-forms, some of which the reader cannot possibly be sure are meant unless they are marked for him. Besides metrical marks are for the performer too. But however that reminds me that one thing I am now resolved on, it is to prefix short prose arguments to some of my pieces....[nor is it] a real objection....that the argument should be even longer than the piece; for the merit of the work may lie for one thing in its terseness. 4

Harry Ploughman is unlike any other poem of Hopkins'.

Indeed, in phonal and tonal patterns, it is very highly wrought. The Petrarchan sonnet supplies the basic formal structure for the poem, but the poem does not really work as a sonnet, primarily because there is no "afterthought," as Hopkins himself said, no significant volta or turn in the argument, for the poem

4 Ibid., p. 265-66.

does not develop any argument. Where the normal volta would occur there is a turn, but it is one only of greater dynamic intensity; there is no logical or emotional shift.⁵

Nor is the poem quite a perfect caudated sonnet, for it does not follow the formal pattern of the one famous caudated sonnet in English literature prior to Hopkins: Milton's On the New Forcers of Conscience. In fact Hopkins was not sure how to construct a formal caudated sonnet when he wrote Harry Ploughman. "I shd. be glad...if you wd. explain what a coda is and how employed," he mentioned in a letter to Bridges of 11 December 1886.⁶ And, on 2 November 1887, three weeks after he had sent Bridges Harry Ploughman, he asks him to

5 Cf. Fussell, op. cit., p. 120 on the nature of the volta:

A characteristic of the Petrarchan sonnet is its convention of the "turn," which normally occurs at the start of line 9, the beginning of the sestet. It is perhaps more accurate to say that the turn occurs somewhere in the white space that separates line 8 from line 9, and that line 9 simply reflects or records it.... [Something] indeed indispensable to the action of the Petrarchan sonnet happens at the turn: we are presented there with a logical or emotional shift by which the speaker enables himself to take a new or altered or enlarged view of his subject.

6 Letters I, p. 246.

please tell me how correctly to make codas to sonnets; with the most approved order of rhymes and so on. And do not say that I know and that I can find for myself and that there is one in Milton (that one is not enough), but do what I ask you. 7

Bridges in his generous way responded immediately, for four days later Hopkins replies:

I am thankful to you for the account of the coda, ever which you gave yourself even unnecessary trouble.... It seems they are formed on an invariable plan and that Milton's sonnet gives an example. Of course one example was enough if there is but one type; but you should have said so. 8

Hopkins himself calls the five half-lines "burden lines" suitable for a "chorus." There seems to have been a very strong rhythm haunting the poet's mind, a rhythm which had to break out of the conventional 4-4-(turn)-3-3 sonnet pattern, and the choric chiming of the burdens served Hopkins' need. Despite the idiosyncratic mode of the poem, however, the sonnet is justified by Hopkins' personal success with it. 9

7 Ibid., p. 263.

8 Ibid., p. 264.

9 "Il reprendra même une forme rare du sonnet, le sonnet «caudé», et en composera trois, qui par les «codas» qu'il y joint, donnent à cette forme classique une longueur inusitée, mais valable et qu'en tout cas il justifie par sa réussite personnelle" [Ritz, pp. 244-45]. Ritz, along with Gardner, has treated Harry Ploughman as if it were a caudated sonnet, and, for purposes of general classification, this will do.

The sonnet is primarily constructed around the two chief qualities of the ploughman: his hard strength and his fluid, graceful movement. Gardner perceptively demonstrates that these two qualities are caught in the repetition of the hard br, or b...r..., and the liquid l sounds

to signalize the two chief characteristics of Harry's physique and action-- strength and grace. The keywords of the first motif are broth..., barrelled, barrowy, brawn, beechnole, broad, and [sic] bluff (hide). At the beginning of the sestet, the two motifs are delicately interlaced.... The whole poem comes as near to "the condition of music" as language may. 10

The first eleven lines, that is, the octet and three burden lines, present Harry Ploughman rather statically, in architectural terms, almost as if he were a sculptured figure. The muscular knotting and slack of the well co-ordinated ploughman is particularly stressed, for the individual parts are subservient to one organic whole and form "one crew":

Hard as hurdle ^{arms}, with a broth of goldish flue
Breathed round; the rack of ribs; the scooped flank;

lank

Rope-over thigh; knee-nave; and barrelled shank--

Head and foot, shoulder and shank--

By a grey eye-s heed steered well, one crew, fall to;
Stand at stress. Each limb's barrowy brawn, his thew
That onewhere curded, onewhere sucked or sank--

Soared or sank--

Though as a beechbole firm, finds his, as at a rolloall,
rank

And features, in flesh, what deed he each must do--
His sinew-service where do.

There is a muscularity and restricting force in the consonantal clusters and many stops, as though the potential energy were straining slowly, and then with increasing rapidity as the poem progresses, to break through the constricting phonetic elements themselves, as the plougher begins slowly to plough through the sillion and then picks up speed.

Harry is partially defined in terms of the structure of a Gothic cathedral, which also combines strength with grace and movement; his anatomy includes "rack of ribs," "flank," "nave," and "barrelled" [vault], and the whole "stand[s] at stress." Harry's "churlsgace" is a result of all his members in complete harmony.

In the second part of the sonnet, lines 12-19, the movement of the lines mimetically gathers momentum with the plougher, and with speed, the muscular strain of the movement increases. There is the sense of a forward glide being pulled down by the number of stops in the last two lines. We have, then, the upward curve of the action described: a slow movement as the plough grips into the soil, and then an increased movement as the plough wallows through the stubborn earth. The furrow is formed and the dirt sprays up in the wind or falls behind, while the ploughman's locks

whirl out or hang, intermittently caught in the same wind, with earth and hair furling like the shining spray of water from a fountain. Stress and slack, Hopkins realizes, are necessary to any movement:

He léans to it, Harry bénds, look. Báck, élb^{ow}, and
 líquid waíst
 In him, all quáil to the wallowing o' the plough. 'S
 cheek crímsons; cûrls
 Wág or cróssbridle, in a wínd lífted, wíndláced--
 See hís wínd-lílylocks-láced;
 Chûrlsgrace, too, chîld of Amansst^{re}ngth, how it
 hangs or hûrls
 Them--broad ín bluff híde hís frówníng f^{ee}t lashed! ráced
 With, álong them, crágíron under and cóld fûrls--
 With-a-fóuntain's shíning-shot fûrls.

The rhythm of line 9 is forceful and excited, like the opening of The Starlight Night; the fluid movement becomes more noticeable, along with the dragging tension on the straining ploughman, whose "cheek crimsons." His curls are thrown out as if interlaced with the wind. But it is also the man's strength, his "churlsgace," which hurls out his locks. And as the frowning feet lash to the work, the locks furl out gracefully, as do the cold furls of earth which now shine out. There is generated a harmony of action between the man and his work well done, an interaction imaged in the final simile of gracefully spraying water, which simultaneously describes the action of the flowing locks and liquid soil.

Harry Ploughman has not received much attention by the critics, but all seem to hold that there is either no central theological significance to the poem, or that, if there is, it is only by implication. Some of these implications, however, should be examined. "When a man is in God's grace and free from mortal sin" Hopkins wrote in one of his discourses,

then everything that he does, so long as there is no sin in it, gives God glory.... It is not only prayer that gives God glory but work. Smiting on an anvil, sawing a beam, white-washing a wall, driving horses, sweeping, scouring, everything gives God some glory if being in his grace you do it as your duty.... To lift up the hands in prayer gives God glory, but a man with a dungfork in his hand, a woman with a sloppail, give him glory too. He is so great that all things give him glory if you mean they should. 11

The figure of the ploughman was particularly important for Hopkins, because of Christ's admonition to the man who had put his hands to the plough not to look back. The priest links "the disgrace of putting the hand to the plough and looking back in the kingdom of heaven" with the "recreant knight" of the Third Point of the Ignatian Exercises on
12
The Kingdom of Christ. Again the figure of the active

11 Sermons, pp. 240-41.

12 Ibid., p. 163. Cf. Also Letters II, p. 88, where Hopkins confesses to Dixon that he is afraid of "a severe judgment from God... for the backward glances I have given with my hand upon the plough."

ploughman, hair and soil "furled" out in the wind, recalls Hopkins' comments on the body as the living temple of God, who, when the "member" of Christ (the allusion to the Mystical Body is important), "is in all things conformed to Christ..., [this] best brings out the nature of the man himself, as the lettering on a sail or device upon a flag are best seen when it fills." ¹³ So the dynamic energy and inherent dignity in the ploughman doing his work well manifests the living temple, or living cathedral, of the Holy Spirit. The wind which "crossbridles" (reined in by the cross, but moving easy in harness as Frost would say) and fills out the ploughman is the Holy Spirit inspiring (breathing into) the ploughman. He, on his side, cooperates with his own strength and "churl's grace," so that the whole scene presents the intimate interaction of God, man, and the earth in grace-giving work.

"For there is a perennial nobleness, and even sacredness, in Work," Carlyle had pronounced in Past and Present.

Were he never so benighted, forgetful of his high calling, there is always hope in a man that actually and earnestly works.... The latest Gospel in this world is, Know thy work and do it. 'Know thyself:' long enough has that poor 'self' of thine tormented thee; thou wilt never get to 'know' it, I believe! ... Consider how, even in the meanest sorts of Labour, the

13 Ibid., p. 195.

whole soul of a man is composed into a
kind of real harmony, the instant he
sets himself to work! 14

Despite the difference of the tone and the anti-intellectual
appeal of Carlyle to leave off examining the inner spaces--
"Think it not thy business, this of knowing thyself; thou
art an unknowable individual,"--¹⁵ Hopkins' presuppositions
about the dignity of work are as much a part of Victorian
England as they are of the Gospels.

In fact, it seems certain that Hopkins is trans-
lating into verbal signs the dynamic peasant figures of two
contemporaries: Frederick Walker and Sir (William) Hamo
Thornycroft. "I saw the Academy," he tells Dixon on 30 June
1886 from Dublin.

There was onething, not a picture, which
I much preferred to everything else there--
Hamo Thornycroft's statue of the Sower, a
truly noble work and to me a new light.
It was like Frederick Walker's pictures put
into stone and indeed was no doubt partly
due to his influence. The genius of that
man, poor Walker, was amazing: he was cut
off by death like Keats and his promise and
performance were in painting as brilliant
as Keat's in poetry; in fact I doubt if a
man with purer genius for painting ever
lived.... I revere everything that Walker

14 Past and Present III, XI, "Labour," p. 189.

15 Ibid.

did (I remember the news of his death gave me a shock as if it had been a near friend's).

He concludes by saying that if Dixon has "not yet studied Walker's work you have a new world of beauty to open and go in."¹⁶

Walker had died at the age of thirty-four on 5 June 1875, a few months after Hopkins' journals end, unfortunately. However, there is a very telling criticism of the mower in a watercolor reproduction of Walker's Harbour of Refuge, which Hopkins saw at the winter exhibition of the Water Colours soon after Christmas 1873: "The young man mowing was a great stroke, a figure quite made up of dew and grace and strong fire: the sweep of the scythe and swing and sway of the whole body even to the rising of the one foot on tiptoe while the other was flung forward was as if such a thing had never been painted before, so fresh and so very strong." 17

16 Letters II, pp. 132-34. Italics mine. Cf. Abbot's remark on The Plough in ibid., p. 134. "[A] work that has poetry, movement, passion, strength, and a strange 'newness.' The artist evidently shared G.M.H.'s admiration for virility and native grace (e.g. Harry Ploughman)."

17 Journals, p. 240. A reproduction of this painting may be found in Representative Painters of the Nineteenth Century, by Mrs. Arthur Bell (D'Anvers), London, 1899, p. 19.

Hopkins' praise of Walker is generous, but there is a dynamic mobility about the mower as if he were about to step off, and Hopkins justly admired the nervous movement of the figure which breaks through the serenity and repose of the rest of the landscape. It is this dynamism which also informs Thornycroft's A Sower, as if the stone itself would begin to move. And this is what Hopkins has caught in verbal signs in Harry Ploughman: the phonetic constrictions and fluidity imitate the stress and slack of the ploughman himself, as the poem progresses from the stone-like "Hard as hurdle arms" to the tnesis of "wind-lilylocks-laced," to the final liquidity of "with-a-fountain's shining-shot furls."

The clearest parallel, however, is with Walker's The Plough (Plate 1). There is something artificial about the painting, as if the dynamic figure of the ploughman had been superimposed upon a realistic but rather static landscape. Even the two yoked drayhorses and the lithe figure of the boy guiding the horses seem too relaxed beside the racing, straining ploughman. Walker has again drawn his figure with one leg hurled back, and the other at stress, frowning forward. The "hard as hurdle" arms grip the cragironed plough, and the whole figure looks as if it were about to move across the picture. And yet the figure is not as dynamic as it might be; the soil does not fly up around the ploughman as it might do. The figure



PLATE I. THE PLOUGH (1870) by FREDERICK WALKER

wears a hat, so that his hair does not furl out in the wind. But there is no doubt why Hopkins-- one of our most dynamic poets-- called The Plough "a divine work." For there is a dynamism about the work foreign to the languor and repose of the Pre-Raphaelite painters. And even the posing navvies in Ford Madox Brown's Work look like the stylized workers in a Communist propaganda poster beside Walker's laborers.

Gardner has pointed to the Greek influence on the fluid syntax of Harry Ploughman, especially in the difficult
 18 close. And there is in Walker's painting also something of the nervous energy found in the work of the Greek sculptor
 19 Lysippos, such as in his Apoxyomenos-- The Scraper. For δυναμῖς as well as στρασις was an artistic virtue with the Greeks, a fact which many Victorian artists and writers did not take sufficient cognizance of.

- 18 Hopkins intends the simultaneity and fusion of images created by the breathless interpolation between "Them" (line 17) and "With" (line 19). Cf. Gardner, II, p. 123.

In one of Pindar's odes (Pythia, iv, ll. 227-8) we read

ῥοθὰς δ' αὖλακας ἑρτανύσαις
 ἡλανν', ἀνα βωλακίαις δ' ὀρογυῖαν σχεζενῶτον
 25.

"Straight and the furrows (he) stretching
 drove, up - (of clodded) and a fathom's
 length - ripped a ridge of earth."

A barbarous literal translation such as this, which plunges like a ploughshare through the conventional concords and juxtapositions of English, produces on ear and mind an effect not unlike [the final lines of Harry Ploughman].

- 19 This contrast between στρασις and δυναμῖς in two Greek

In an early letter to Bridges (2 August 1871), the young seminarian Hopkins, deeply troubled by the news coming out of Paris of a revolutionary government, evoked a coming Apocalypse, tragic but necessary:

I must tell you I am always thinking of the Communist future. The too intelligent artisan is master of the situation I believe.... It is what Carlyle has long threatened and foretold. But his writings are, as he might

19 (Cont'd). sculptors is described by David Robb as follows:

The Doryphoros [Spearbearer] by Polykleitos... [ca. 440 B.C.] is represented in the act of taking a step; the contrasted tense and relaxed muscles suggest that it is capable of moving but the figure is rendered immovable by the functional balance of the arms and legs. In the Apoxyomenos [ca. 380 B.C.].... the movement is actually represented for the figure is twisted in the act of shifting weight from one leg to the other, in contrast with the Polykleitan figure which is capable of moving but does not [Art in the Western World, Third ed., Robb and J.J. Garrison (New York, 1953), p. 443].

Hopkins, so influenced by the dynamism of Pindar, undoubtedly would have admired the stately dynamism of Lysippos. For it is the sense of actual movement, combined with a classical dignity, in Walker's workingclass figures which seem to have been for Hopkins "a new light." That Walker did attempt to bathe his figures in a Greek light has been noted before:

[Walker's] figures hint ever so slightly at Greek influence... [The] boy who guides the horses in The Plough has a classic balance and health of aspect.... The artist undoubtedly has seen the relation of his models to the Greeks of sculpture, but it is a resemblance that may be found throughout England [Elizabeth Luther Cary, Print-Collector's Quarterly, ed. Fitzroy Carrington, VII, Feb.-Dec. 1917, 406].

himself say, 'most inefficacious - strenuous heaven - protestations, caterwaul, and Cassandra-wailings.' He preaches obedience but I do not think he has done much except to ridicule instead of strengthening the hands of the powers that be.... However I am afraid some great revolution is not far off. Horrible to say, in a manner I am a Communist. Their ideal bating some things is nobler than that professed by any secular statesman I know of (I must own I live in bat-light and shoot at a venture). Besides it is just.-- I do not mean the means of getting it are."

He suggests that the old tradition and civilization are justifiably in the line of fire because modern English society itself is founded on such upheavals as the dissolution of the extensive Medieval monasteries by Henry VIII, as well as on the great industrial upheaval. Therefore England

is itself in great measure founded on wrecking. But [the working classes] got none of the spoils, they came in for nothing but harm from it then and thereafter. England has grown hugely wealthy but this wealth has not reached the working classes; I expect it has made their condition worse.

Furthermore, he continues in the same letter, the old traditions are unfortunately linked to the "iniquitous order" of society in the eyes of the masses. "But as the working classes have not been educated they know next to nothing of all this and cannot be expected to care if they destroy it. The more I look the more black and deservedly black the future looks, so I will write no more."

20

For all of its radical sentiments, there remains something about this early letter which suggests the young man. It is earnest and impassioned, but its tone is that of someone who has not had much first-hand experience with the working classes. In any event, this startling letter to a young conservative like Bridges seems to have nearly terminated their friendship. For almost two and a half years Bridges did not respond, and Hopkins finally had to reassure his friend (22 January 1874) that "I have little reason to be Red: it was the red Commune that murdered five of our Fathers lately." But, he insists, "So far as I know I said nothing that might not fairly be said."²¹ Hopkins did not, however, bring up the issue of the rights of workers again until 1888, a year before his death. And then he took pains to express his views in a more traditional manner, and only as providing a 'crib' to Tom's Garland.

Moreover, first-hand contact with both the Liberals and with the working class had tempered his enthusiasm; a growing sense of man's moral intransigence had made the priest skeptical of the claims of revolutionaries. One is so fagged, he complained to Bridges after hearing the confessions of the day-laborers living in the Liverpool slums, "one is so fagged,

21 Ibid., p. 29.

so harried and gallied up and down. And the drunkards go on drinking, the filthy, as the scripture says, are filthy still; human nature is so inveterate. Would I had seen the last of it."²²

These cursory remarks have been necessary to exonerate Hopkins of the charge brought against him that in matters social he was naive, or worse, indifferent.²³ Hopkins was, if we must label him, a social idealist, a Tory, who in broad outline accepted the political and social ideas of Disraeli, Lord Beaconsfield. If he does not describe any particular member of the English laboring class, it is because his poetry is concerned primarily with other things. But he was painfully aware of the severe economic difficulties of the workers in the eighties due to widespread unemployment. He knew too

22 Ibid., p. 90.

23 E.g., Gardner quotes Muir (The Present Age, from 1918): "In nature Hopkins saw the glory of God, and in himself he felt the terror of God. There is little in his poetry between these two extremes, little objective concern with ordinary human life. In poems like Harry Ploughman, Harry is merely a section of the physical universe" (Gardner II, p. 356).

what the lack of bread on the table could do to a man's
 24
 moral constitution.

Of his first parish assignment at Oxford the usually unruffled Hopkins had written Bridges that the people "criticized what went on in our church a great deal too freely, which is d--d impertinence of the sheep towards the shepherd, and if it had come markedly before me I shd. have given them
 25
 my mind." Here is that recourse to obedience in traditional terms. For, as Hopkins demanded of himself the strictest obedience to his superiors, as shepherd he expected the same from his sheep. And he expected the workers to obey their leaders. In return, the leaders had a duty and responsibility to the people which Hopkins, like the Victorian social critics, felt had not been met. The failure of the leaders to meet their responsibility was the major cause of unrest among the workers. The tragic unemployment of thousands of able-bodied

24 Ritz makes a balanced statement of Hopkins' understanding of the laborer, but he too quails before Hopkins' calling the enraged workers "packs [which] infest the age": "Il a mis en eux [his caudated sonnets] son amour des travailleurs manuels, et si son paysan est modelé d'un pouce puissant et généreux, ses deux ouvriers Tom et Dick, en dépit de la violence de l'image finale du poème, sont décrits par un homme qui a vu de près la grandeur et la misère des masses laborieuses et qui comprend les raisons de leur désespoir, sinon de leurs colères" [Ritz, p. 250].

25 Letters I, p. 97.

workmen in the eighties, and probably the march of the Unemployed on "Bloody Sunday," 1886, were the stimuli for Hopkins' writing Tom's Garland: upon the Unemployed.

The first mention of Tom's Garland is in a short letter to Bridges of 2 November 1887, in which he asks Bridges to tell him "how correctly to make codas to sonnets.... And soon: a sonnet is hot on the anvil and wants the coda. It is the only time I have felt forced to exceed the beaten
²⁶ bounds." Bridges responded immediately: there was only one model-- Milton's On the New Forcers of Conscience. On the sixth of the month, Hopkins thanked him and added, "I wanted the coda for a sonnet which is in some sort 'nello stilo satirico o bernesco.'
²⁷ It has a kind of rollic at all events. The coda is an immense resource to have. This sonnet, I hope,
²⁸ very shortly."

26 Ibid., p. 263.

27 Francesco Berni (1497 8. - 1535), a satiric poet who frequently mocked the Petrarchan style, often appended very long codas to his sonnets for satiric effects. He raised satirical poetry to a literary genre called after him bernesco. "Nelle sue Rime si leggono anche sonetti con lunghissime code" [Francesco Flora, Storia Della Letteratura Italiana, II, i (Italy, 1950)].

28 Letters I, p. 266.

"Very shortly" was two months later. On 12 January 1888, Hopkins tells Bridges he has been preparing some sonnets for him and that he may send him one. Finally, at the end of the letter he writes, "There, I have copied one-- Tom's Garland. It has many resemblances to Harry Ploughman, a fault in me the sonneteer, but not a fault that can be traced home to either of the sonnets. They were conceived at the same time: that is how it is. But I have too much tendency to do it, I find."

The sonnet which Bridges received is the only one of Hopkins' three caudated sonnets actually modeled on Milton's sonnet. The rhyme scheme of On the New Forcers of Conscience is as follows (slash lines indicate half-lines):

abba abba cdedec /cee /eff

Tom's Garland has the following rhyme scheme:

abba abba ccdccd /dee /eff

Both sonnets have the same number of lines -- twenty. The only difference between the two occurs in the Petrarchan sestet, which traditionally allows for variation.

Tom's Garland begins as a rollicking, carefree poem, which pokes some good fun at thick-skinned Tom and Dick. Tom is garlanded, not with a crown of flowers or gold upon his head, but with "squat and surly steel." The string of epithets works

like a transcribed Greek adjectival construction which affectionately inscapes Tom; a strong caesura after the first half-foot of the second line brings us full circle:

Tom-- garlanded with squat and surly steel
Tom;...

Tom is king of his domain, the earth, and crowned on his feet with hobnail boots. The idea of king is implied in "garlanded," "squat[ter]" (ownership of domain by right of possession and working of the earth), and "surly" (from the Middle English sirly, meaning lordly or imperious). But the epithets work simultaneously in an opposite and satiric manner. For a "squatting" position is certainly comic in connection with a king, "surly" has degenerated from its meaning of imperious to its meaning in Hopkins' time of simply "harsh" or "rude," and even "threatening." And finally Tom's proper garland is on his feet, not on his head.

"Sturdy Dick" is likewise inscaped in terms of footwear. It is the end of the day's work, and "Tom's fallowbootfellow piles pick/ By him and rips out rockfire homeforth." Dick's activity is likewise described in terms of his feet, as the heavy hob-nail workman's boots scrape out sparks in a lively manner on the stones while he goes home to his meal. Here is that sense of friendship and community, of being part of the polis-- the Commonweal.

Hopkins dwells fondly on the figure of Tom, whose name he repeats seven times in the first six lines: What are the things that really concern Tom? Hopkins, who had worked among the Toms in Bedford Leigh, Glasgow, London, and Liverpool, where he labored largely with the Irish, answers, incorporating the Irish speech pattern:

Tom Heart-at-ease, Tom Navvy: he is all
for his meal
Sure, 's bed now.

There is an extra poetic yield as Hopkins works across the second line; the line means, "and sure he has his meal and his bed." But also Tom's heart can be at ease as long as he can be sure of food and bedding for himself and his family ("sure of his bed now").

The poet puts his and Tom's blessing on this lowly but secure and carefree way of life, as "So be it" (Amen) becomes "Low be it." Tom can swing his low lot lustily and heartily, though. And the reason he can swing through is given simultaneously with the statement of his ability to do so in a hyberbaton which extends from the end of line 5 to the middle of line 8. Using the same freedom of syntax as in the first line, of a string of epithets leading up to and ending in Tom, and then reversing itself and leading away from Tom, the rhythms swing and rollic through the suspended

parenthesis in the same carefree way as "sturdy Dick" swings home. And Hopkins catches some of the light play in the clever finger exercise on the "ough" eye-rhymes:

Low be it: lustily he his low lot (feel
That ne'er need hunger, Tom; Tom seldom sick,
Seldomer heartsore; that treads through,
prickproof, thick
Thousands of thorns, thoughts) swings though.

Hopkins gives us a linguistic jaw breaker in the play on "through," "thoughts," and "though." (The mind almost boggles before "swings though," and tends to substitute "swings through.") The alliteration of "thick thousands of thorns" adds to the complexity. It is as if Hopkins were intentionally teasing his navy, who couldn't be bothered with such linguistic subtleties, much less with complex thoughts. There is no insult or haughtiness intended. The attitude that the intellectual complexities of life are for others and not for Tom is simply and honestly the attitude of many of the working class. Hopkins lets Tom speak for himself; there is a strong stress

on the "I", as Tom gives his own opinion: "C^om^monweal/ Little
I re^{ck}/ .x. .x. / .x x- / x- / .x. .x / .x x
I re^{ck} ho^l lack le^{vel} in, if all ha^d bread:/ What! Coun^{try} is
hono^r / .x x x x /
honour enough in all us."

And what is country? It is the body politic, the forty-three year-old traditionalist and conservative tells us.

It is

lordly head,
With heaven's lights high hung round,
or, mother-ground
That mammo^{cks}, mighty foot.

Here the commonwealth is compared to the age-old metaphor of the human body, each part of which has a purpose, and all parts are organically subordinated to the head for the common good of all.³⁰ The Commonweal is either the head, with its crown of stars ("quickgold" stars Hopkins had called them in The Starlight Night), or the "mighty foot" which breaks up, "rips out," and thus gains sustenance for the body ("mammoths mimics "mama") from "mother-ground." The macrocosmic figure of the mighty foot digging up the earth echoes the similar but microcosmic figure of sturdy Dick ripping out rockfire.

The volta occurs only now, in the second half of line 12. Tom is satisfied with his low lot; he is the lower part of the body politic, but he has freedom from want and freedom from care. But what if he can not speed on either road. He is not adequately equipped for those professions

30 W. H. Gardner's comments about Hopkins' view of society are illuminating:

"[There] is the mystical sense of Relationship and Degree from which the whole poem springs -- an adaptation to the social sphere of St. Paul's statement regarding the mystical Body of Christ's Church: 'that there should be no schism in the body but that members should have the same care for one another' (I Corinthians, xii, 25)

.... The ideal state or society is a graded hierarchy of function; but broadly speaking, all people fall into one or other of two classes:

'earth's glory, earth's ease'.... [Each] member of the state must feel that 'honour' consists in working according to his ability and in being contented with his lot" [Gardner, II, pp. 358-59].

which demand a good deal of intellectual activity. Besides, he knows that such ways are perilous, thought-wearying, disheartening. Most Toms are not overly-ambitious in this direction. But if the way that Tom would normally go is closed to him, so that he can not do his work safely and his needs are not provided for in return for his labor ("nor yet plod safe shod sound"), he has nowhere open to him. Big, good-natured Tom cannot nor does he care to rule, and if he cannot work with his hands and his feet, and gain a just wage for himself and his family, then he is without so much as a place among men:

Undenizened, beyond bound
Of earth's glory, earth's ease, all;
no one, no where,
In wide the world's weal. 31

- 31 On the nature of justice and the Commonweal, see Hopkins' sermon for Sunday evening, 11 January 1880, delivered at St. Francis Xavier's, Liverpool. The whole sermon is important in connection with Hopkins' ideas on the duties and responsibilities of the head to its members and vice versa. Cf. especially:

[The] common good is being provided for, we share it more or less, we share the common weal, we are part of the commonwealth; we may dislike this or that ministry or measure, move and agitate to get it changed, but as for refusing to be ruled at all and putting ourselves out of the commonwealth, to most people the very thought would never occur; they are born to share its advantages and therefore they suppose themselves born to share in its duties and be in its allegiance.....The aim of every commonwealth is the well being, the welfare of all and this welfare of all is secured by a duty binding all

In the whole circumference (there is probably a homophonic pun here on weal-wheel) of the world's wealth, there is no place for the unemployed, who now become "no one."

The force of "Undenized" inscapes graphically and emotionally the nameless and now dehumanized unemployed masses out of their natural environment, like fish out of water. There is that sense of suffocation, that terror of gasping for oxygen which will not come that becomes the new lot of the nameless "Toms" when economic constrictions overwhelm them and threaten to end them. It is being bare of both "gold" and "steel" which brutalizes the "seldom sick/Seldomer heartsore" Tom, for Tom now has the cares which go with having possessions, without having any of those possessions. The unemployed are bare of wealth, and share the cares of both the rich and the poor. But the clause can also be read as an imperative demanding that the entire Commonweal "care, but share care."

The failure to care for the unemployed transforms them in the eyes of those safely within the Commonweal from nameless masses with no place in the body politic into a sub-human species, feeding like werewolves on the body itself:

- 31 (Cont'd.) How bright a thing then is good government and loyal submission, how bright a thing a well ordered commonwealth, where all the citizens, every last member of the state, is glorified by one equal justice [Sermos, pp. 56-57. *Italics mine*].

This, by Despair, bred Hangdog dull; by Rage,
Manwolf, worse; and their packs infest the age.

Hopkins does not mitigate the potential brutality of the unemployed, but he does emphasize that this is an abnormal character "bred" by an abnormal situation. "Bare" of bread, he "bares" his fangs. The sympathy and charity of the portrait of Tom are qualities, however, which came of Hopkins' own growing humility and charity in his capacity as a slum priest who had come to know the dignity as well as the potential danger
32
of the working masses.

This emotional and intellectual complexity is necessary to understand the assumptions underlined in the sonnet, for Hopkins knew the shortcomings of the navy as well as the dignity-- the grace-- he acquired through work. This Victorian attitude of the dignity of the worker, preached in an over-

- 32 The harsh language which Hopkins uses towards the unemployed mobs was echoed by many thinkers in the mid-eighties. E.g., see the concluding paragraphs of Thomas Hardy's "The Dorsetshire Labourer," which first appeared in Longman's Magazine in 1883, and which Irving Howe calls "a careful and realistic study of English agricultural workers." Speaking of the depopulation of the villages and the exodus of the workers to the industrial centers, Hardy laments that they "are nobody's care." Every undensitized villager "imbibes a sworn enmity to the existing order of things, and not a few of them, far from becoming merely honest Radicals, degenerate into Anarchists, waiters on chance, to whom danger to the State, the town --nay, the street they live in, is a welcomed opportunity" [The Selected Writings of Thomas Hardy, ed. Irving Howe, New York, 1966, pp. 136-37].

simplified manner by Carlyle, but more balanced in the social writings of Ruskin and of Morris, as well as of Leo XIII, was accepted whole-heartedly by Hopkins. More especially, Tom's Garland was undoubtedly influenced by Ford Madox Brown's famous oil painting, Work (Plate 2), as well as by the sonnet of the same name which Brown composed to accompany it.

Brown worked on his large painting (53" x 77 1/8") intermittently from 1852 till 1865 and composed his sonnet for it in 1865. Both painting and poem are on the Victorian theme of honest work. The painting portrays at the center of its rather cluttered scene a group of navvies "mammocking" the earth. To the right stand Frederick Denison Maurice, founder of the Working Men's Colleges, and Thomas Carlyle, whose Past and Present (1843), with its propagation of the Gospel of Work, influenced Brown to such a degree that Rossetti described Work as full of "all kinds of Carlylianisms."³³

33 Quoted by D. S. R. Welland in The Pre-Raphaelites in Literature and Art (New York: no date), p. 23. Cf. also Welland's comment: "Unemployment is represented [in Work] as the only evil, and the excavating labourers are held up for admiration as the pillars of English society." There is a black-and-white reproduction of Work facing p. 97 of Welland's book.



PLATE II. WORK (completed 1865) by FORD MADOX BROWN

Hopkins does not mention Brown in his letters, but he jotted down the name-- "F. Madox Brown" -- in mid-July 1864³⁴ in one of his Oxford note-books. And among Hopkins' early papers are copies of two of Brown's poems: "The Last of England" and "Work -- Sonnet."³⁵ From an esthetic point of view, "Work" is not a very good sonnet, but the progression of the thought, especially the first five and one half lines and the last three, clearly foreshadow the development of the argument in Tom's Garland:

Work, which beads the brow and tans the flesh
Of lusty manhood, casting out its devils.
By whose weird art transmuting poor men's evils,
Their bed seems down, their one dish ever fresh.
Ah me. For lack of it what ills in leash
Hold us. 'Tis want the poor mechanic levels
To workhouse depths, while Master Spendthrift revels
For want of work, the fiends him soon enmesh.

Ah, beauteous tripping dame with bell-like skirts,
Intent on thy small scarlet coated hound,
Are ragged wayside babes not lovesome too?
Untrained, their state reflects on thy deserts,
Or they grow noisome beggars to abound, 36
Or dreaded midnight robbers breaking through.

34 Journals, p. 32.

35 Cf. D. Anthony Bischoff, S.J., "A Critical Catalogue of the MSS of Gerard Manley Hopkins," Thought, Winter 1951-52, pp. 551-580.

36 As printed in John Gere and Robin Ironside, Pre-Raphaelite Painters (London, 1948), p. 23.

Brown, in describing Work, relates that the

picture was begun in 1852 at Hampstead...
 [and] painted on the spot.³⁷ At that time
 extensive excavations were going on in the
 neighborhood, and, seeing and studying daily
 as I did the British excavator, or navvy, as
 he designates himself, in the full swing of
 his activity... it appeared to me that he was
 at least as worthy of an English painter as
 the fisherman of the Adriatic, the peasant
 of the Campagna, or the Neapolitan lazzarone.
 Gradually, this idea developed itself into
 that of Work as it now exists, with the
 British excavator for a central group, as the
 outward type of Work. Here are presented the
 young navvy in the pride of manly health and
 beauty; the strong fully developed navvy who
 does his work and loves his beer; the selfish
 old bachelor navvy, stout of limb, and perhaps
 a trifle tough in those regions where compassion
 is said to reside; the navvy of strong animal
 nature.... Then Paddy with his larry and his
 pipe in his mouth. 38

In this last sentence Hopkins probably found a hint
 for the Irish construction, "he is all for his meal/ Sure, 's
 bed now." Hopkins' choice of the navvy to represent the worker
 was probably influenced by Brown's choice. The simple pleasures
 of Brown's navvy are similar to Hopkins' Tom's. But the

37 Hopkins, whose home for most of his life was at Hampstead,
 may very well have seen Brown at work. He certainly
 would have recognized the backdrop," which represents the
 main street of that suburb not far from the Heath"
 [from Brown's "Descriptive Commentary on 'Work'" in
 Welland, op. cit., p. 51].

38 Ibid., pp. 51-52.

"dreaded midnight robbers breaking through" have been transformed into the more apocalyptic image of "packs" of manwolves who "infest the age."

"I laughed outright and often, but very sardonically, to think you and the Canon could not construe my last sonnet; that he had to write to you for a crib," Hopkins told Bridges a month after he had sent Tom's Garland. "It is plain I must go no farther on this road: if you and he cannot understand me who will?"³⁹ With Bridges' bewildered reception of

39 Letter of 10 February 1888 in Letters I, p. 272. What follows in the same letter is the longest and fullest gloss Hopkins ever gave to any of his sonnets, so that he does lay himself open to giving a prose argument "even longer than the piece." For one of the merits of Tom's Garland is its economy of means, "its terseness" (Letter of 6 November 1887 to Bridges). Hopkins offers a lengthy explanation of the socio-philosophical framework informing the poem. Besides its close analysis of the meaning of the caudated sonnet, this letter is important for clarifying the traditional and hierarchical framework of Hopkins' social thought. Hopkins' "crib" is appended here for the sake of convenience, but it can also be found in Poems, pp. 291-292.

[D]eclaimed, the strange constructions would be dramatic and effective. Must I interpret it? It means then that, as St. Paul and Plato and Hobbes and everybody says, the commonwealth or well ordered human society is like one man; a body with many members and each its function; some higher, some lower, but all honourable, from the honour which belongs to the whole. The head is the sovereign, who has no superior but God and from heaven receives his or her authority: we must then imagine this head as bare (see St. Paul much on this) and covered, so to say, only with the sun

Tom's Garland, Hopkins' brief excursion into the poetry of social criticism began and ended. But if this road was now closed to Hopkins, the way was open to further experiment with the coda itself.

39 (Cont'd). and stars, of which the crown is a symbol, which is an ornament but not a covering; it has an enormous hat or skull cap, the vault of heaven. The foot is the daylabourer, and this is armed with hob-nail boots, because it has to wear and be worn by the ground; which again is symbolical; for it is navvies or daylabourers who, on the great scale or in gangs and millions, mainly trench, tunnel, blast, and in other ways disfigure, "mammoth" the earth and, on a small scale, singly, and superficially stamp it with their footprints. And the "garlands" of nails they wear are therefore the visible badge of the place they fill, the lowest in the commonwealth. But this place still shares the common honour, and if it wants one advantage, glory or public fame, makes up for it by another, ease of mind, absence of care; and these things are symbolized by the gold and the iron garlands. (O, once explained, how clear it all is!) Therefore the scene of the poem is laid at evening, when they are giving over work and one after another pile their picks, with which they earn their living, and swing off home, knocking sparks out of mother earth not now by labour and of choice but by the mere footing, being strongshod and making no hardship of hardness, taking all easy. And so to supper and bed. Here comes a violent but effective hyperbaton or suspension, in which the action of the mind mimics that of the labourer--surveys his lot, low but free from care; then by a sudden strong act throws it over the shoulder or tosses it away as a light matter. The witnessing of which lightheartedness makes me indignant with the fools of Radical Levellers. But presently I remember that this is all very well for those who are in, however low in, the Commonwealth and share in any way the common weal; but that the curse of our times is that many do not

At the close of his last letter to the Rev. Canon Dixon, written on 29 July 1888 from St. Stephen's Green, Hopkins noted that he was nearing the end of yet another batch of examination papers and was beginning to see light.⁴⁰ He also complained about the cloudy days and rainy weather. "What a preposterous summer! It is raining now: when is it not? However there was one windy bright day between floods last week: fearing for my eyes, with my other rain of papers, I put work aside and went out for the day, and conceived a sonnet. Otherwise," he lamented, realizing that his literary energies had for so long been spent on reading and grading student themes, "my muse has long put down her carriage and now for years 'takes in washing' [.] The laundry is driving⁴¹ a great trade now.

39 (Cont'd). share it, that they share care with the high and obscurity with the low, but wealth or comfort with neither. And this state of things, I say, is the origin of Loafers, Tramps, Cornerboys, Roughs, Socialists and other pests of society. And I think that it is a very pregnant sonnet, and in point of execution very highly wrought, too much so, I am afraid.

40 Cf. Gardner's mistaken remark that the "two Dromore sonnets and That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire (the only finished poem of the year 1888) were all begun when the poet was away from Dublin on vacation, at times when he felt justified in forgetting his lectures and examination papers" [Gardner, II, p. 360]. Furthermore St. Alphonus Rodriguez was composed in October 1888.

41 Letters II, p. 157.

Hopkins did not send Dixon this new sonnet, and he does not mention it by name. But there is no doubt that he was referring to That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection, for the autograph copy carries the information "July 26, 1888. Co. Dublin." Not only did he not send the poem to Dixon; he apparently did not even keep a copy for himself, for the only copy is the one he sent Bridges from Monzie Villa, Fort William, on Saturday, 18 August 1888. Fort William was the touring center for the Scottish West Highlands, over one hundred miles north-northwest of Glasgow, and the starting point for the ascent of Ben Nevis. It was here that Hopkins had come for his summer vacation soon after writing to Dixon. "Six weeks of examination are lately over," he wrote Bridges, "and I am now bringing a fortnight's holiday to an end.

I have leave to prolong it, but it is not very convenient to do so and I scarcely care. It appears I want not scenery but friends.... I am feeling very old and looking very wrinkled.... I will now go to bed, the more so as I am going to preach tomorrow and put plainly to a Highland congregation of MacDonalds, MacIntoshes, MacKillops, and the rest what I am putting not at all so plainly to the rest of the world, or rather to you and Canon Dixon, in a sonnet in sprung rhythm with two [sic] codas." 42

There is one further mention of the poem in a letter to Bridges written five weeks later from St. Stephen's Green.

"I am sorry to hear of our differing so much in taste,"

Hopkins writes.

I was hardly aware of it. (It is not nearly so sad as differing in religion). I feel how great the loss is of not reading, as you say; but if I did read I do not much think the effect of it would be what you seem to expect, on either my compositions or my judgments.

I must read something of Greek and Latin letters and lately I sent you a sonnet, on the Heraclitean Fire, in which a great deal of early Greek philosophical thought was distilled; but the liquor of the distillation did not taste very Greek, did it? The effect of studying masterpieces is to make me admire and do otherwise. So it must be on every original artist to some degree, on me to a marked degree. 43

Structurally, That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire is a further experiment on the caudated sonnet form. It has twenty-four lines, "eked out" by three codas and a final refrain or echo line, and has the following rhyme scheme (slash lines again represent half-lines):

abba abba cdcdcd /dee /eff /fgg /g

Again, for comparison, Milton's caudated sonnet is:

abba abba cdedec /cdd /eff

The final burden line of That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire links this sonnet with Harry Ploughman, which ends with a

similarly short line. But it is clear from the pattern of the two rhyme schemes that Hopkins has firmly grounded his sonnet on Milton's, and gone on his own road from there. Another extension of the caudated sonnet is Hopkins' employment of an alexandrine sprung line with a heavy medial pause, which creates a marked percussive tempo, in fact, a vigorous chant. The rhythms mirror the widely modulated activities presented in the poem, from the nuances of subtle, rapid change to a grave, heavy flatness, and finally to the stark, emphatic monosyllabic beat of the closing lines.

That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire opens with a vivid composition of place. It is the day following a heavy storm, which Hopkins renders "yestertempest." The speaker is out walking, apparently alone with his own thoughts, observing the storm-scape of scudding, fast-moving clouds racing over the countryside. Sensitive to and perceptive of his surroundings, his imagination catches fire and responds joyfully and playfully to the protean cloud formations. The storm-clouds are unsubstantial, and their shape changes as rapidly as the rate of their mobility:

Cloud-puffball, torn tufts, tossed pillows¹ flaunt
 forth, then chevy on an air-
 built thoroughfare: heaven-roysterers, in gay-gangs¹
 they throng; they glitter in marches.

The speaker watches the light through the trees and observes the kaleidoscopic effect of altering "roughcast" and "dazzling whitewash" light fleck and change as the clouds pass behind the "elm" branches. Light and shadow change patterns constantly:

Down roughcast, down dazzling whitewash,¹ wherever an
elm arches,
Shivelights and shadowtackle in long¹lashes lace,
lance, and pair.

Turning his eyes earthward, now, he sees how the strong warm wind seems like a giant to wrestle the earth and dry up all the standing pools from the recent storm. He checks off the steps by which the sun and wind transform watery mud into dust, literally pulverizing the soft footprints of the men who preceeded him on the dirt road he is now walking:

Delightfully the bright wind boisterous¹ropes,
wrestles, beats earth bare
Of yestertempest's creases;¹in pool and rutpeel
parches
Squandering ooze to squeezed¹dough, crust, dust;
stanches, starches
Squadroned masks and manmarks¹treadmire toil there
Footfretted in it.

The gay mood of the speaker, who humanizes the activity of the clouds and the wind, becomes more sober as he is made more aware that nature itself is indifferent to the cyclic processes which it generates, and that the process

is always towards change, and annihilation of the scape of a particular object. The apparent carefreeness with which the wind and heat obliterate all traces of the storm obliterates also all signs of man's signature in the earth, here scaped in the lowly image of footprints -- those "Squadroned masks and manmarks" -- "Footfretted" in the soft mud which crumble away to dust. In fact, the kinetic beauty of nature rests upon its continuing processes of destruction and generation; the old is peeled away to reveal the new. And this process of the new springing from the funeral pyre of the old exists, seemingly, for its own sake: "million-fuelèd, nature's bonfire burns on." The clouds moving across the heavens now assume an uncanny resemblance to the smoke from a hugh conflagration, the bonfire of the whole world.

With line 10, the speaker's reflection continues to spiral downward and inward, towards the inevitable chaos and strife at the center of a materialistic and atomistic universe: the dark cold waters of Heraclitus. For even man, nature's "bonniest, dearest to her, her clearest-selved⁴⁴ spark," is part of nature's vast bonfire, and is eventually

44 Cf. Sermons, p. 122. Human nature is "more highly pitched, selved, and distinctive than anything in the world."

"quenched" in the black waters of personal extinction. And what is more, even the most individuating marks of collective humanity-- the fame of man's greatest exploits (firedint"), as well as the genius of man's ideas ("mark on mind")-- to say nothing of the vast, anonymous majority of mankind, all are soon erased from the fluctuating and unsteady consciousness of the mind. From the long-range viewpoint, man and his works are all "beat level":

But quench her bonniest, dearest¹ to her, her
 clearest-selved spark
 Man, how fast his firedint,¹ his mark on mind,
 is gone!
 Both are in an unfathomable, all is in an
 enormous dark
 Drowned.

The speaker has plumbed as far downwards into chaos as the mind can go. Following this desolate meditation to its inexorably logical conclusion, he has unsparingly and unswervingly come to a modernistic vision of the nada within, of man's utter insignificance and impermanence in an atomistic flux. Despite his apparent worth, in a world thus conceived (and Heraclitus speaks for many), man seems to have no more intrinsic or lasting value than the four elements-- the air, earth, fire and water -- of which he is composed. Nature's bonfire scoffs at man's claims to any special dignity or permanence:

O pity and indignation! Manshape, that shone
 Sheer off, disseveral, a star, death blots black out; nor mark
 Is any of him at all so stark
 But vastness blurs and time beats level.

The speaker's mood has shifted from gaiety and playfulness in the opening lines to a growing depression from line 10 to the middle of line 16. Now, the second volta in the speaker's meditation occurs. And it occurs immediately and at once:

Enough! the Resurrection,
 A heart's-clarion! Away grief's gasping, joyless
 days, dejection.

There is a summons to the heart, a clear, shrill unmistakable trumpet blast. The terrors of the dark waters of chaos and despair which had threatened to swamp and end the poor wreck which is the speaker are suddenly dispersed. The welcome sight of the strong, steady, eternal beaconlight of the risen Christ beckons. It had always been there had the speaker but looked upwards; it was there for the nuns in the terrible night on deck of the wrecked Deutschland, and it is there for the fagged and harried wreck of a priest. There is a significant poetic yield in declaiming the preposition "Across" slowly, so that what is suggested is "a cross" shining in the dark to the speaker:

Across my foundering deck shone
 A beacon, an eternal beam.

Given this assurance of the theandristic nature of man, which is therefore a guarantee of the intrinsic worth of all that man does, however trivial or apparently meaningless, the speaker can afford to flaunt death with an outrageous impunity. Let the body "fade" out like a light waning, he orders:

Flesh fade, and mortal trash
Fall to the residuary worm; world's wildfire,
leave but ash:...

The "residuary" worm, a legal term meaning the inheritor of a man's estate, will receive the "mortal trash," what Hopkins had elsewhere called his "bone-house, mean-house." The "world's wildfire," which is the seemingly eternal flux of nature, will burn up all substances (wildfire was an inflammable mixture used by the Greeks which would burn on all substances). But, in the Christian revelation, the bonfire too will end in the final consummation of the world and will leave but ash. The classical Greek Weltanschauung is thereby imaginatively reduced to a mere instrument of God, rather than a self-perpetuating

45

alpha and omega.

"When the Son of Man comes, it will be like the lightning that springs up from the East and flashes across to the West," Christ himself said of his second coming:

- 45 Cf. 2 Peter 3. 10: "But the day of the Lord is coming, and when it comes, it will be upon you like a thief. The heavens will vanish in a whirlwind, the elements will be scorched up and dissolve, earth, and all earth's achievements, will burn away."

Immediately after the distress of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will refuse her light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will rock; and then the sign of the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven, with great power and glory; and he will send out his angels with a loud blast of the trumpet, to gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other"
[Matthew 24. 29-32].

The immediacy of the Resurrection is caught by St. Paul:

"It will happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when the last trumpet sounds; the trumpet will sound, and the dead will rise again, free from corruption, and we shall find ourselves changed; this corruptible nature of ours must be clothed with incorruptible life, this mortal nature with immortality"
[I Cor. 15. 52-52].

Hopkins incorporates these biblical images of man's sudden metamorphosis in a visual and auditory image. We are given a superb catalogue of worthless fragments, which have in common their accidental being. But the catalogue ends with a substance-- a self-- which is as permanent and immutable as
46
any we know. There is no doubt that man changes constantly,

46 On the distinction between intrinsic and accidental being, cf. Sermons, p. 146:

Self is the intrinsic oneness of a thing, which is prior to its being and does not result from it ipso facto, does not result, I mean, from its having

but the essential self abides within the trash:

In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is, since he was what
I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood,
immortal diamond,
Is immortal diamond. 47

The final coda is a masterpiece, which will repay very close study. A "Jack" is a generic and pejorative name for a common fellow, but it also denotes that which is without any specific or definitive self. A "joke" is a laughing stock, but it is also something lacking substance or genuineness. The "poor potsherd" recalls the shard with which poor Job scraped

46 (Cont'd.) independent being; for accidental being, such as that of the broken fragments of things or things purely artificial or chance 'installs,' has no true and intrinsic oneness or true self: they have independent existence, that is/they exist distinct from other things and by or in themselves, but the independence, the distinctness, the self is brought about artificially.

47 Cf. Journals, p. 201. The following observations may have crystallized into the images of the final lines:
The winter [of 1871-72] was long and hard. I made many observations on freezing. For instance the crystals in mud.-- Hailstones are shaped like the cut of diamonds called brilliants.-- I found one morning the ground in one corner full of small pieces of potsherd from which there rose up... long icicles.

his oozing sores. But it is also a fragmentary object with only accidental being.

A "patch" is a nimmy or dolt (from the Italian paccio), but it is also a scrap or odd leftover used to mend something and has only accidental being. "Matchwood" is wood splinters, which burn away quickly to ash; wood shavings too have no more than accidental being.⁴⁸ But beyond this list of insignificant, comical objects, there abides the immortal diamond, which has both an intrinsic as well as a transcendent self. What had always been there is suddenly purified and raised to a new level of being.

Immortal diamond, which on the one hand means a hard, imperishable substance, a fragment of petrified coal buried in the earth, is suddenly ("in a flash") made a precious, beautiful object by reflecting the light of the beacon (Christ, Life, Light) which gives the diamond its especial value and without which it is merely a cold, hard, stone.⁴⁹ For it is of

48 The fragmentary nature of the objects listed is suggested in Ritz's translation of the final lines, especially "brin de rien, brin de bois" ("patch, matchwood") Ritz, p. 501 .

49 Cf. Houghton and Stange's note on the final image: "The diamond, pure and enduring substance produced by the flux and heat of nature, provides in a single image a triumphant reply to the despairing view of nature and death" [Victorian Poetry and Poetics, (Boston, 1959), p. 678] .

the nature of the Incarnation and of its corollary, the Resurrection, that God communicates his divine life to man, and the human vessel reflects this life, while maintaining its distinctive self.

50 Despite his remarkable presentation of much of Hopkins' philosophical and theological thought, J. Hillis Miller's evaluation of Hopkins' insight into the immediacy and personal significance of the Resurrection is a falling off from the earlier sections of his long essay. He does not see that for Hopkins the self is transformed without being obliterated. And he underplays the all-importance of the Resurrection in a theology of Incarnation:

[Hopkins] is sustained by nothing but the comfort of the Resurrection, the hope of that miracle of transubstantiation which will change him from the impure carbon of matchwood, into diamond, change him from one allotropic form of himself to another so different that if there is any secret continuity between the two it is only that the same neutral possibility of being is, in each case, made real by God, made real in forms which are as far apart as the whole distance from hell to heaven [The Disappearance of God (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. 358].

Hopkins' whole point, of course, is just that as a particular human self, the "neutral possibility" has already been negated by God's choice, and man's essential being needs only to be purified and perfected.

The law of incarnation signifies that God communicates his life to man in such a way that

while leaving intact the substantial distinction between God and Man, [it] raises man to a divine way of being and acting, not only of a moral order but really of an ontological and physical order.

Hence the law of incarnation expresses a mysterious but very real theandrisim, a union of the divine and the human, both in the end result of the relations between God and man and in the way which leads to it. The divine somehow becomes embodied in the human, in sensible human nature, to raise it to a divine way

What Hopkins has done with the diamond image is to equate it with itself, to see it at once from two points, just as by concentrating on two images superimposed one upon the other, and by shifting one's viewpoint, the underlying image
51
shines through the overlying one. The continuous becoming and unbecoming of natural processes are transcended in the case of "disseveral" man by the dynamic affirmation of dynamic stasis. The concept of theandricism, which can be conceived for the most part only abstractly and statically by the intellect, is dynamically presented by the poetic imagination.

It is interesting to note how Hopkins has caught the dynamism of flux and the dynamism of theandric permanence. The order of the poem is chronological and non-spatial. The poet

50 (Cont'd.) of being and of acting.

[Cyprian Vagaggini, O.S.B., The Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy, I, trans. Leonard J. Doyle (Collegeville, Minnesota, 1959), 166].

51 To appreciate the concentrated and dynamically static image of the "immortal diamond" equated with itself, it is well to recall a similar paradoxical vision in Dante, who is straining to render the dynamic and eternal Godhead "whose beauty is past change":

Not that the living light I looked on wore
More semblances than one, which cannot be,
For it is always what it was before;

But as my sight by seeing learned to see,
The transformation which in me took place
Transformed the single changeless form for me.

(Paradiso, xxxiii, II. 109-114, trans. by Barbara Reynolds.)

has succeeded in capturing and presenting a moment; the syntax is forced forward by the catalogue, but the copulative verb "is" holds the last movement in the permanent moment of self-identity.

The rich flurry of dynamic verbs in the opening section reflects and imitates the continual process of the Heraclitean flux itself: "chevy," "throng," "glitter," "arches," "lashes, lace, lance, and pair," "ropes, wrestles, beats earth bare," "parches, "stanches, starches," and "burns." The first movement of the sonnet, including the first volta, is marked by transitive verbs, shading off in the second part into verbs reflecting processes which are reversible in the Heraclitean flux, but which are final in man: "quench," "Drowned," "blurs."

But in the second turn, the copulative verb, which some critics (among them Fenollosa and by implication, Pound) have declared colorless and to be assiduously avoided, is made at once not only the most affirmative, but also the most dynamic verb of the sonnet. ⁵² It is the perfect verbal equivalent for the

52 Cf. Ernest Fenollosa in "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium of Poetry" (in Ezra Pound's Instigations [New York, 1920], pp. 369-70):

Lastly comes the infinitive which substitutes for a specific colored verb the universal copula "is," followed by a noun or an adjective. We do not say a tree "greens itself," but "the tree is green;" not that "monkeys bring forth live young," but that "the monkey is a mammal." This is an ultimate weakness of language. It has come from generalizing all

supra-spatial and supra-temporal shift from dynamic flux to
 transcendent permanence.⁵³ The transmutation from dust to
 risen god is conceived artistically as being realized co-
 temporally with its realization in the mind.

52 (Cont'd.) intransitive words into one. As "live,"
 "see," "walk," "breathe," are generalized into
 states by dropping their objects, so these
 weak verbs are in turn reduced to the abstractest
 state of all, namely, bare existence. There is in
 reality no such verb as a pure copula, no such
 original conception; our very word exist means
 "to stand forth," to show oneself by a definite
 act. "Is" comes from the Aryan root as, to
 breathe. "Be" is from bhu, to grow.

But Hopkins has made the copula the most powerful and
 most dynamic of all the verbs in his final lines. For
 here the copula serves to declare the essential identity
 of the self, the self beyond transition, utterly and
 permanently transformed. Dante too has given the
 copulative some of this dynamic force in the one place
 in the Commedia where he identifies himself.
 In his illuminating note, "Grammar as Thaumaturgy,"
 Joseph Grennan comments on the force of Hopkins'
 copulative verb: "[By] means of the last bold and
 simple predication... this coda is made to reflect
 the suddenness and the mystery, the imperviousness
 to discursive analysis, of the change in man's relation
 to nature which the Resurrection bespeaks" [Renascence,
 XV (1964), 209].

53 Hopkins himself has written on the force of "is":
 "But indeed I have often felt... the depth of an
 instress or how fast the inscape holds a thing that
 nothing is so pregnant and straight-forward to the
 truth as simple yes and is" [Journals, p. 127].

In his all-too-short notes on the Contemplation for Obtaining Love, Hopkins wrote on the gift of the Resurrection:

Man's praise is good and highly prized by God if it corresponds to his works or true intentions.... Otherwise it is worth little or nothing. What is meant on God's side is the promises He makes, He has created us for bliss and He will give it, or the failure will be ours; He has paid the price of our redemption and it has been accepted; He has said "Quaerite... primum regnum Dei" etc, 'Centuplum accipiet', etc and He will fulfil. In particular He has suffered in the flesh as man, the Word but really made flesh. 54

It is the assumption of human nature by God which strikes Hopkins as the strongest argument for the resurrection of man. For if Christ condescended to suffer for man, then the value of men is infinitely more than we may suspect. This is the argument Hopkins hammers home in the pounding monosyllables of

I am all at once what Christ is, since
he was what I am.

The end rhymes of the last two codas also intensify and clarify the emotional import of the thought. In the grouping of "trash," "ash," "flash," and "crash," the sharp, shrill rhymes suggest that sudden transformation which will burn away

man's trash, revealing the glorified body. Again, the "[w~~ha~~]t I am, and" is ingeniously rhymed with "diamond" to show the identity between the essential self and its divine spark. These are again rhymed with the second "d~~i~~amond" to reinforce and make final the identity.

One further point on the rhymes: it will be noted that I have not rhymed "shone" (l. 13) with "shone" (l. 18). This is because the second "shone" is part of the double rhyme "deck shone," which rhymes with "[Resur]rection" and "[de]jection" to form a compact coda. However, Hopkins was probably playing on the fugitive, momentary "shone" (l. 13) of man's "spark" of life as similar yet distinct from the eternal beam of Christ's "shone" (l. 18). Therefore, though they should normally rhyme, Hopkins has created a significant tension by dividing them as rhyme words.

Hopkins' use of verbal parallelism "ropes" the various parts of the sonnet together. Both the "cloud-puffballs... in gay-gangs" and the "Squadroned masks" (man's mudprints) are similarly acted upon by the wind. And the repetition of the key verb "beats" links the action of wind upon the earth with the action of time upon man's significations -- his "marks."

Hopkins' sound patterns and rhythms show how closely interrelated are sound and sense. The alternation of open vowels and consonantal stops played against elisions and gliding vowels captures the alternating stasis and kinesis of the clouds themselves: "Cloud-puffball, torn tufts, tossed pillows flaunt forth, then chevy on an air-/built thoroughfare." In the following lines, Hopkins captures the sense of being swallowed up, created, in part, by the absence of stops and the surfeit of full-mouthed long vowels; the words themselves seem swallowed up by the uncontrollable verbal elisions: "Both are in an unfathomable, all is in an enormous dark/ Drowned."

Again, the involved and involuted sentence structure, with its Welsh richness of vowels and syntactical parallelism (dyfalu) gives way to the stark outlines, chaste syntax, and emphasized rhythm of the resolution, thus reflecting the "starkness" of that which does abide. Alliteration, consonance, and internal rhyme Hopkins regularly employs to hint at the essential unity behind the splendid diversity of creation. In his catalogue of insignificant fragments (l. 23), Hopkins yokes various and, at first glance, unrelated objects together by their similarities of sound. These are then transmuted into the virtually different image (and sound) of "immortal

diamond." Alliterative consonants are underlined once, internal rhymes underlined twice, and consonance marked with an asterisk; the progression of "o" sounds should also be noted:

* * * * *
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood,
Immortal diamond,
Is immortal diamond.

Images of light and sound recur throughout the poem, and these constitute one of Hopkins' most subtle effects within the poem: the bright lights are reflected off the whitewashed clouds, forever changing in intensity; it is an image of strong, but diffused and blurred light. Man is nature's "clearest-selved spark," a "star" shining apart and above; his mark or impression on mind is "firedint." But both man and his works are "quenched," "blurred" and blotted "black out" in the primordial flood of chaos, fire's opposite. The images of sound parallel the images of light; there is the boisterous and mindless moan of the wind, a correlative of the eternal flux which pervades the first two parts of the sonnet.

But the blurred and muffled quality of the sound and light images, like the involved and congested syntax, gives way to the sharpness and clarity of "flash," "heart's clarion," and "trumpet crash," just as amorphous, everchanging clouds give way in the poem to the permanence of diamond. Suffocating

with the terrible darkness of formless flux without and within, the wreck of the poet suddenly sees the strong, clear, steady beam of the Light shine forth.

That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire is clearly a masterpiece. The amount of sheer intelligence at work in fusing so many elements of sound and sense into an organic experience is both surprising and exciting. And while the conclusion rests on Christian doctrine, the attempt has been made here to show the integrated and esemplastic harmony of the poem's conclusion with the rest of the poem. Those critics like Claude C. Abbott who suggest that the conclusion of the sonnet jumps out of the pattern like a pious afterthought have not adequately conceived of what Hopkins is doing. And even Gardner seems to be straining in his defense of the second volta of this sonnet.

The three caudated sonnets represent a new direction, a further stretching of the traditionally rigid limits of the Petrarchan sonnet. There is an opulence, a joy in creativity, a new plumbing of the dynamic potentialities of language and melodic rhythm, which constitute no less than a chant to the
55
risen Christ. Hopkins had just over ten months to live when

55 That Hopkins was consciously working toward a chanting voice in his caudated sonnets, culminating in That Nature

he created his optimistic carol to the permanence of men in the Resurrection. In his last sonnets, his muse doffed her glittering dancing clothes and once more resumed her plain dress. The sonnets cease to be hymns and become more and more personal colloquies whispered by Hopkins to his God. We are invited to listen, but it becomes increasingly clear from Hopkins' tone that he is busy talking to Someone else.

55 (Cont'd.) is a Heraclitean Fire, may be gathered from the absence of counterpoint, which pitches a melodic line against a line approximating the speaking voice. What is substituted is a line "with long dwells on the rhythm," a chanting voice in fact, the next step beyond recitation. Speaking of music, which for Hopkins had many correspondences to poetic recitation, the poet told Bridges in the same letter in which he sent his last caudated sonnet that the "only good and truly beautiful recitative is that of plain chant; which indeed culminates in that. It is a natural development of the speaking, reading, or declaiming voice, and has the richness of nature," [Letters I, p. 280].

IX LAST SONNETS, OCTOBER 1888 - APRIL 1889:

"FRONTING FORKED LIGHTNING"

And chiefly Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first
Was present, and with mighty wings outspread
Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss
And mad'st it pregnant: What in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support....

(Paradise Lost, I. 17-23)

(If) I were obliged, not to define poetry, but to
name the class of things to which it belongs, I should
call it a secretion....

(A.E. Housman, "The Name and the Nature
of Poetry")

Os ad os loquar ad illum in specie et non
per aenigmata, et claritatem Domini vidit.

(Numbers xii, 8.)

In fact, the marvellous effects produced upon the
mind and body of an Arab Sheik, who was impervious
to all native medicines when I administered to him
five COCKLE'S PILLS will never fade from my memory.

(From the testimony of Captain Fred
Burnaby for an advertisement appear-
ing in The Tablet, 1 Jan. 1881, p. 27)

Do not let me hear
Of the wisdom of old men, but rather of their folly,
Their fear of fear and frenzy, their fear of possession,
Of belonging to another, or to others, or to God.
The only wisdom we can hope to acquire
Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless.

(T. S. Eliot, East Coker)

And I that die these deaths, that feed this flame,
That... in smooth spoons spy life's masque mirrored:
tame
My tempests there, my fire and fever fussy.

In the midst of the drudgery of preparing examinations in the classics, Hopkins rushed a short, hurried letter off to Bridges. He had been asked to write a poem in honor of a recently canonized member of the Society of Jesus, St. Alphonsus Rodriguez.

I ask your opinion of a sonnet written to order on the occasion of the first feast since his canonization proper of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, a laybrother of our Order, who for 40 years acted as hall-porter to the College of Palma in Majorca: he was, it is believed, much favoured by God with heavenly lights and much persecuted by evil spirits. The sonnet (I say it snorting) aims at being intelligible.

There followed the earlier and more "singular" version of the sonnet, with two modified versions of the ninth and tenth lines, the second version cancelling the first. "And please do not put it aside 'for further neglect' but answer smart," he added. "It has to go to Majorca. Call in the Canon, have¹ a consultation, sit, and send result by return-- or soon."

The first extant version of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez differs from the published version in seven of the fourteen² lines. The most extensive changes occur in lines nine and

1 Letters I, pp. 292-93. Canon Dixon was staying at Bridge's house at this time.

2 The following is the version Hopkins originally sent Bridges for comment. Lines preceeded by an asterisk were

the first half of ten, where Hopkins worked from the triple epithet towards the focal monosyllabic verb -- "hews."

Since Hopkins would have an audience for this sonnet, he revised it, it appears, "to be more intelligible, smoother³ and less singular."

2 (Cont'd.) changed in the final, printed version:

- * Honour should flash from exploit, so we say;
- * Strokes once that gashed the flesh, that
galled the shield,
Should tongue that time now, trumpet now
that field
And, on the fighter, forge his glorious day.
- * On Christ they do; on martyr well they may:
- * But, be that war within, the sword we wield
Unseen, the heroic breast not outward-steeled,
Earth hears no hurtle then from fiercest fray.
- * Yet God the mountain-mason, continent-
- * Quarrier, earthwright; who, with trickling
increment,
Veins violets and tall trees makes more and more,
Could crowd career with conquest while there went
- * Those years on years by of world without event
That in Majorca Alfonso watched the door

3 Letter of 25 September 1888 in Letters I, p. 291. The "singularity" of lines 9 and 10 are first changed from the triple epithet to a periodic construction ending with the verb "builds." The same end-rhymes and the strong medial pause in line 10 are preserved in all the revisions. The first revision is:

Yet God that mountain, and that continent,
Earth, all, builds; or with trickling increment....
But Hopkins was obviously not satisfied with "builds" to describe the wearing, shaping action on stone, and he substituted the more exact word (what he calls, following Aristotle, the (ὄραμα κῦρσις))
"hews":

Yet God that hews mountain and continent,
Earth, all; that else, with trickling increment....

increment" of growing things the different activity of God's hewing mountains. Hopkins defends the verbal exactness of the two opposing forces by which God shapes nature:

But now I cannot quite understand nor so far as I understand agree with the difficulty you raise about the continents and so on. It is true continents are partly made by 'trickling increment'; but what is on the whole truest and most strikes us about them and mountains is that they are made what now we see them by trickling decrements, by detrition, weathering, and the like. And at any rate whatever is markedly featured in stone or what is like stone is most naturally said to be hewn, and to shape, itself, means in old English to hew and the Hebrew bara/ to create, even, properly means to hew. But life and living things are ~~not~~ naturally said to be hewn: they grow, and their growth is by trickling increment.

Hopkins also insists on "exploit" as the ὄναμα κύριον, the right word. He insists on broad boundaries for a poetic language: if the proper word "has nothing flat or poor about it it is the best word to use in poetry as in prose." Finally, he insists that he does not use verbal filler:

By 'regular indoors work' I understand you to mean a drawing finished at home with the eye no longer on the object, something poorly thrown in to fill up a blank the right filling of which is forgotten. But 'so we say' is just what I have to say and want to say (it was made out of doors in the Phoenix Park with my mind's eye on the first presentment of the thought): I mean 'This is what we commonly say, but we are wrong.' 6

In his next letter to Bridges, on October 19, Hopkins thanked Bridges for his criticisms:

However with no more stropping than the
palm of my hand and chopping at a hair,⁴
no but at the 'broth of goldish flue'
(how well now does the pleasing modern
author come in in his own illustration
and support!),⁵I can deal with one matter,
the sonnet on St. Alphonsus. I am obliged
for your criticisms, 'contents of which
noted', indeed acted on.

Bridges had objected to the epithets applied to God -- "mountain-mason, continent-/Quarrier, earthwright"-- as "cheeky." And he had apparently disliked what he thought was a confusion of thought on Hopkins' part in setting next to the "trickling

- 3 (Cont'd.) Hopkins' own copy of the poem kept line nine, with its reversed third foot to stress the power of the verb, but it added the necessary preposition to the verb-- "hews out." The "who" of the original is replaced:

Yet God (that hews mountain and continent,
Earth, all, out; who, with trickling increment,
Veins violets....

The changes are all in the direction of plainness and directness, while maintaining precision.

- 4 From the opening line of Harry Ploughman.

- 5 It seems clear from the extant letters of Hopkins to Bridges that Bridges, in a light, slightly deprecatory manner tagged Hopkins as the "pleasing modern author," especially for his intellectual complexity, in the last year of Hopkins' life. The tag is repeated several times in the last letters.

What Hopkins says of the sestet that it is "both
⁷
 pregnant and exact"-- is true of the entire sonnet. The poem
 has two turns; the first occurs at the beginning of line 6
 ("But"), the second at the standard ninth line ("Yet"). There
 are also two kinds of activity portrayed, working in two
 relatively opposing quantities. Swift, short-lived action in
 the magnanimous spirit--the grand heroic gesture of Christ
 and the martyrs--is the most easily understood type of glorious
 conquest, because it can be readily perceived by most. But,
 Hopkins insists, it is not the only kind of heroic exploit:

Honour is flashed off exploit, so we say;
 And those strokes once that gashed flesh or galled
 shield
 Should tongue that time now, trumpet now that field,
 And, on the fighter, forge his glorious day.
 On Christ they do and on the martyr may;...

There is another kind of glory to be won on another kind of
 battlefield: the long, agonizingly drawn-out holding action
 within. They are smaller actions only in that they occupy the
 inner spaces. Otherwise the heroism is as great. And despite
 the seeming lack of external events, the world within is
 crowded with the contenders of that inner war:

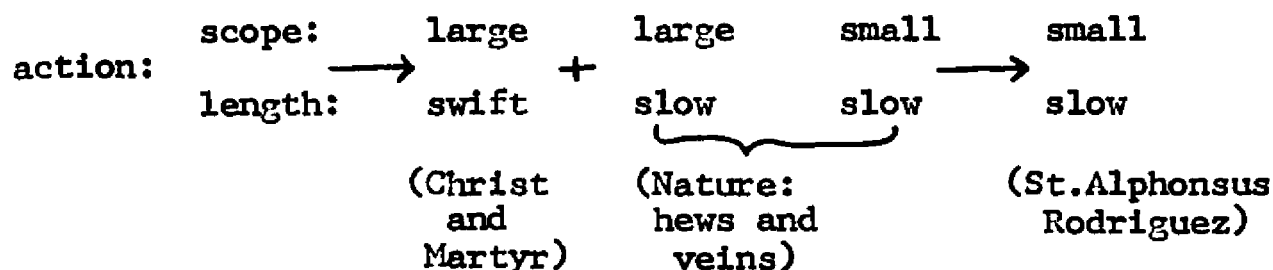
But be the war within, the brand we wield
 Unseen, the heroic breast not outward-steeled,
 Earth hears no hurtle then from fiercest fray.

7 Ibid., p. 297.

Although we cannot see this long inner conflict and ultimate conquest, Hopkins argues that what Earth does not hear, it nevertheless demonstrates. The second volta demonstrates the unseen activity of God within by the demonstrable activity of God operating in and through external nature. God operates in sundry and even opposing ways, for He is both "a winter and warm," Who works on St. Paul in one way and on St. Augustine in another. He can shape in the large scale, hewing out mountains and whole continents, but He is also the power Who with indiscernible slowness delicately veins flowers and gives length to the tall trees. The entire sestet is a loose sentence constructed in two parts. The three-line parenthesis describes God's differing activities in nature; the final three lines describe the growth of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez by the second manner of God's activity-- by "trickling increment."

Yet God (that hews mountain and continent,
Earth, all out; who, with trickling increment,
Veins violets and tall trees makes more and more)
Could crowd career with conquest while there went
Those years and years by of world without event
That in Majorca Alfonso watched the door.

We have presented in the sonnet, then, a quaternary pattern of progressive actions, which may be expressed this way:



The progression of the verbs precisely conveys this line of development. The terrible shaping action of the "strokes" which "gash" flesh and "gall" shield, sound ("tongue" and "trumpet") now the victory, and "forge" the martyr's day. God shapes, literally "hews out," conquest from the very flesh of Christ and the martyrs. And God "hews out" the great mountains and the continents, natural figures of greatness and largeness. But just as He "veins" violets and "makes trees more and more," He could, in the silent world within (and the emphasis on silence is important) "crowd career with conquest" ⁸ during all those outwardly eventless years that Alfonsus, in strict obedience to his calling as porter, seemed simply to have "watched the door."

- 8 The felicity of this phrase needs further comment. "Crowd," of course, suggests "crown." But crowd is the perfect stroke, for it suggests that the inner world was so thronged and filled up with events that the victory itself had to be squeezed in as the sweet culmination. The phrase is also a good example of what Kenneth Burke has called the poetic analogue to musical augmentation. For the cr consonants which first appear in juxtaposition are then repeated in the same order, but now with a vowel

reward which crowns the menial tasks of Alfonso. There is also here an echo, probably, of a stanza of Hopkins' patriotic military poem, of which he had sent Bridges an improved musical score in late September, about the time he wrote this sonnet. The fourth stanza of What shall I do for the land that bred me says that honour is gained by sticking to one's duty until death:

Where is the field I must play the man on?
O welcome there their steel and cannon.
Immortal beauty is death with duty,
If under her banner I fall for her honour.

If, in his previous sonnet, That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire, Hopkins had stressed the anticipation of the final utter transformation, here he dwells on the long process, "the years and years by of world without event," which leads finally to spiritual victory. And what Hopkins has done in the last line of this sonnet is to stress the apparent insignificance and triviality of Alfonso's position at the same time that the music of that line seems to sigh after Alfonso's mastery of means used for the final victory.

- 11 (Cont'd.) l'ascete peuvent recevoir leur récompense; la vie d'un homme, apparemment privée de tout événement marquant, peut être couronnée par Dieu, qui sculpte puissamment continents et montagnes ou délicatement veine la violette.

We recall that final, tender, almost swooning exclamation of the close of The Windhover, with its modulation of "ah" and "awe" sounds:

blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermillion.

There the color and activity were complemented by the exclamations. But in the final line of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, Hopkins has felt the significance of the victory of this saint who heroically prepared himself to receive the transforming mastery of God. And if the poem ends on an apparent anti-climax, it exults in the serene victory behind these undramatic appearances.

The last line, which includes four "ah" sounds, two close a sounds elided to produce a prolonged exclamation, two "ahh" sounds, two "awe" sounds, and a long "oh," makes up a variation on a sigh.

"That in Majorca Alfonso watched the door" may be transcribed according to the value of its vowels as:

ah ih ah awe a[^]ah ahh oh ahh a awe.

Hopkins was clearly sighing after his saint's forty year victory.

And he had good reason to. For the Spanish lay-brother shows many affinities to the English priest. Alphonsus had been given the menial and humbling task of porter, a position which

he held from near the time he entered the Society of Jesus at thirty-nine, having lost his wife and three children, until his death about the age of ninety. For forty-six years he watched the door at the College of Montesión in Majorca, leading an outwardly uneventful existence. But within he was long tormented by severe temptations and mental agitation,¹² and underwent long periods of spiritual dryness.

Again, Alphonsus' saintliness was a protracted affair, won by a perfect obedience to and patience before God's will. In his exegesis of the fifth and sixth chapters of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, an exegesis undertaken at Bridges' request, Hopkins had written that it is useless for any man to compare his moral actions with another man's.

- 12 Cf. Gardner, II, p. 362, who quotes from Butler's Lives of the Saints, ed. Herbert Thurston, S.J., X, Oct.30: [To] illustrate the affinity between the two men, and to show that Hopkins' spiritual unrest was not incompatible with the orthodox Catholic conception of sainthood, we quote from Butler's Life of St. Alphonsus:

Every minute left free by his work and what it entailed was given to prayer; but though he achieved a marvellous habitual recollection and union with God, his spiritual path was far from an easy one. Especially in his later years he suffered from long periods of desolation and aridity.

Each man has different strengths and weaknesses, so that exulting in one's strengths is simply pride, since of themselves men can do nothing. "If they once did the works of the flesh," he continued, "and now do those of the spirit or if they once did a little of those good works and now do a great deal, then there is a positive gain, an advantage of themselves over themselves, and of this they may be proud, that is they may exult at it; but always within the world of their own beings."¹³

This is what Hopkins was looking for in his own life: the patient, gradual metamorphosis of the grey drayhorse into noble steed. It is what he had asked of God in that important retreat at Beaumont in September, 1883:

During this retreat I have much and earnestly prayed that God will lift me above myself to a higher state of grace, in which I may have more union with him, be more zealous to do his will, and freer from sin. In this evening's meditation on the Temptation [of Christ; Fourth Week of Spiritual Exercises] I was with our Lord in the wilderness in spirit and again begged this, acknowledging it was a great grace even to have the desire. For it is a pure one and it is long since I have had so strong and spiritual a one and so persistent. 14

13 Letter of 10 September 1888 in Letters I, p. 288. About three weeks later he composed his sonnet in honor of the saint.

14 Sermons, p. 253. Italics mine.

Hopkins was clearly aware that God would work in him with a "lingering-out sweet skill," that his own holiness would come in the "well performance" of the duties sent his way. Just before he had asked God's help, he had recalled that in his covenant of obedience with God, he had to perform his share as well as he could:

For thus it behoves us to fulfill all justice: I remembered Fr. Whitty's [Hopkins' Master of Tertians during his Long Retreat] teaching how a great part of life to the holiest of men consists in the well-performance, the performance, one may say, of ordinary duties[.] And this comforted [me] against the thought of the little I do in the way of hard penances; for if I am not now called to those it is better not to bewail my cowardice or nonperformance in the matter but to say thus, in such and such an appointed way, it behoves me to fulfill all justice [.]

Also since God gives me at present no great humiliations and I am not worthy of them and did not accept them well when they came to welcome the small ones whenever such shall occur [.] 15

The work which had been given Hopkins was to prove a grinding, eventless existence, the galling, fatiguing work of "examining a nation." In his last retreat, he closely examined himself. The conclusions are not histrionic or blown up so that he can pity himself. In real humility and honesty

he passes judgment on his five years spent in Dublin lecturing and grading innumerable essays ("fallen leaves of my poor life between all the leaves of it").¹⁶ It is not his work he is hard on; he had done this well enough. It is the self-bent will which chafes and will not rest under the dry, fruitless work assigned, for Hopkins had fears that the whole structure of the University itself would collapse of dry-rot at any time. Simply as a scholar Hopkins needed the sense of permanence and stability:

The Incarnation was for my salvation and that of the world: the work goes on in a great system and machinery which even drags me on with the collar round my neck though I could and do neglect my duty in it. But I say to myself that I am only too willing to do God's work and help on the knowledge of the Incarnation. But this is not really true: I am not willing enough for the piece of work assigned me, the only work I am given to do, though I could do others if they were given. This is my work at Stephen's Green. And I thought that the Royal University was to me what Augustus's enrolment was to St. Joseph: exit sermo a Caesare Augusto etc.; so resolution of the senate of the R. U. came to me, inconvenient and painful; and then I am bound in justice, and paid. I hope to bear this in mind [.] ¹⁷

16 Letters I, p. 296.

17 Sermons, p. 263

It is no wonder that Hopkins was so taken by the patience and final peace which Alfonso had won. The last line of the sonnet sighs with such deep serenity and victorious finality because this exploit, this mastery Hopkins himself had long desired in the very marrow of his soul.

From mid-October until mid-March 1889, a period of five months, Hopkins seems to have written no poetry. After the twentieth of October, he did not write again to Bridges until 23 February 1889. One reason for the long silence was that Bridges was in Italy during the month of January. Hopkins' last letters to Baillie and Patmore were written in May 1888; his last letter to Dixon was in late July. There are a few short notes to other correspondents like Harry Bellamy, a singer, in January 1889, and Miss Kate Tynan, the Irish poetess, in September 1888. And he writes punctually to his family. But the only letters which uncover something of the man himself are those he writes to Bridges. And it may seem intolerable and frustrating that two of these important documents covering the last months of Hopkins' life should have been destroyed by Bridges.

Still, several facts emerge in a careful reading of the last extant letters. The importance of these facts should become evident in solving the problem of discovering the tone

of the last three sonnets. First, it is clear that Hopkins, up through the end of April, by which time all three sonnets were finished, still possessed his sharp wit and imaginative edge, despite the deep-rooted weariness and fatigue he was
 18
 experiencing.

Secondly, there emerges in the letters a note of irony and humor, which is dark but crystalline, deflating without being morose. This is important in giving us a clue to Hopkins' frame of mind during the little more than five weeks between the writing of the first and the third of the last sonnets. There is little doubt in my own mind that Bridges destroyed two letters written between March 24 and April 29 because in them Hopkins continued to poke unusually strong humor at Bridges' habit of publishing in very small quantities at the same time that he clearly wanted a poet's fame. In his last letter, April 29, he tells Bridges to stop pouting:

- 18 For example, he tells Bridges on March 20 that he is "languishing," and that he is writing only "because I cannot do anything needing a greater effort." And on April 29, his last letter, he tells Bridges, "I am ill to-day, but no matter for that as my spirits are good." Towards the end of the letter he excuses himself with, "Now I must lie down" [Letters I, pp. 301-05].

And I want you too to 'buck up', as we used to say at school, about those jokes over which you write in so dudgeonous a spirit. I have it now down in my tablets that a man may joke and joke and be offensive; I have had several warnings lately leading me to make the entry, tho' goodness knows the joke that gave most offence was harmless enough and even kind. You I treated to the same sort of irony as I do myself; but it is true it makes all the world of difference whose hand administers. 19

All three final sonnets treat the speaker with self-deflating irony and even dark comedy; there is no self-pity in them that is not exploded by the speaker himself. The speaker finds it harder and harder to take either himself or others seriously in the face of a growing awareness of the all-pervasive presence of God. While the awareness of man's smallness before the blinding presence of God is only obliquely shadowed in Hopkins' last letters, it informs the core of all three of his last sonnets.

Finally, there emerges in these last sonnets a sense of patience and of waiting which is more deep-rooted than in the poems of desolation written four years before. In those there had been a sense of anxiety, presented most vividly in the image of the speaker's wrestling with God as with a contender. But that sense of rebellion against God, which is perhaps

what Devlin meant when he called the image "somehow alien to Catholic spirituality,"²⁰ is gone from the last sonnets. True, there is in 1889 an aridity, a spiritual dryness of the soul, but what is present is a significant realignment of the will, a total dependence upon God, the lord of all life. There is no doubt that Hopkins is again undergoing a period of desolation, but he seems more fully aware of the nature of the dark night, and waits patiently for God's consolation.

"In time of desolation," writes Ignatius in the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits, "one should never make a change, but stand firm and constant in the resolutions and decision which guided him the day before the desolation, or to the decision which he observed in the preceding consolation." And again: "One who is in desolation must strive to persevere in patience, which is contrary to the vexations that have²¹ come upon him."

Along with this greater patience, a radical change in a man who by temperament was so hypersensitive and self-exacting, there is a growing feeling of his own littleness before his Lord, a feeling of complete dependence and trust.

20 Sermons, p. 118.

21 Exercises, p. 130.

This new sense of his own unimportance does not give rise to self-loathing and disgust, however, as it does in his notes to his last retreat. Rather, it expresses itself in a quiet, sophisticated humor at his own expense. In the war waged within, this transformation was certainly no small victory for a man as aware of the self as Hopkins. In one sense God has disappeared, but it is only to draw Hopkins after Him.

For some critics of Hopkins, looking for other signs, there is in the priest's last poems a falling off, a bitterness, a collapse. J. Hillis Miller, for example, sees Hopkins at the end as back where he began, with a hidden God, undergoing something close to a crisis of faith. And James Reeves holds, even more untenably, that it "is doubtful if any great poet has ended his poetic life on a note of deeper hopelessness and desolation."²²

My point is that there is a very real spiritual gain at the end of Hopkins' life, if we can read the signs. He seems to have entered here into the vestibule of orthodox contemplation, or something very like it. Here is an extended anatomy of the beginnings of contemplation, which sensitively follows St. John of the Cross:

22 Selected Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins (London, 1964), p. 98.

Meditation carefully practised leads on to affective prayer. This in turn leads just as surely to the 'prayer of faith'. The grace of prayer generally terminates here, for it has reached the degree of ordinary perfection. Beyond that point prayer becomes extraordinary. When a soul is drawn to the prayer of faith, the Holy Spirit inspires no special idea in the intellect, and excites no emotion in the senses. He goes directly to the will and attracts it, revealing His presence to the soul by the light of faith directed towards the highest point of the intelligence, without stirring up the imagination or the lower faculties. Feeling itself thus near to God, the will keenly perceives the need of loving Him, and of entire self-abandonment into His hands. Three things take place at the moment of this prayer. First: the mind is roughly stricken, as it were, with a kind of paralysis; it is powerless to devote itself to things divine, or to have any experience of them; before the moment of prayer there was plenty of intellectual vigour; but now when the soul desires to pray there is not one thought forthcoming. Secondly: the same phenomenon appears in the senses; the heart is absolutely dry; far from experiencing sweet delightful emotions which direct it towards God, it more often feels only aversion (from prayer) and disgust. But thirdly: the will, on the other hand, is strongly attracted towards God; it feels the need of Him; it has no peace except in adhering to Him. This paralysis of mind and heart is only in regard to God; the soul is absolutely unable to frame any good thought or sentiment to help the will to pray. But the heart and mind are by no means powerless with regard to creatures; on the contrary, the imagination often runs at random, and the senses feel attracted to earthly things; the will alone is drawn towards God.

When these three signs are found together, it is impossible to have any doubt. The Holy Spirit

is present, and bestowing the grace of prayer, but not in the same way as before. If the soul wishes to return at whatever cost to one of the previous methods, it resists the Holy Spirit; it neglects the grace offered, and spends its energies in waste, seeking to frame some good thought in the mind, or stir up some pious feeling in the heart. God asks simply for our will, unadorned with good thoughts and sensible devotion: let us then give up our will to Him. Be united with Him by obscure faith in His presence, by one glance full of love, submission, and utter abandonment. Remain peacefully in this state. It is a prayer and a most excellent one. 23

There is much here that reminds us of Hopkins' last poems the seeming lack of spiritual inspiration, the state of a winter world, of absolute sterility, but, on the other hand, the strong attraction of the will for God. It is what makes the last poems, including the dedicatory To R. B., prayers--and excellent ones. With this rather lengthy prolegomenon in mind, then, let us turn to the sonnets themselves.

On the Second Sunday in Lent, after five months of poetic silence, Hopkins composed his next sonnet, Thou art indeed just, Lord. On the following Wednesday he wrote to Bridges: "I enclose a sonnet and am your affectionate friend." But he added a postscript on Sunday the twenty-fourth from the estate of Monasterevan, where he was a frequent guest of the

23 From Père Ludovic de Besse, La Science de la Priere, 1903, trans. as The Science of Prayer (1925), quoted in Dom Cuthbert Butler's Western Mysticism (New York, 1960), pp. 12-13.

kind, elderly Miss Cassidy: 'The sonnet will, I am afraid, fade: Miss Cassidy's ink is, I must say, shocking. Observe, it must be read adagio molto and with great stress.'²⁴ At the heading of the copy sent to Bridges he wrote 'Justus es, &c. Jer. xli I (for title), March 17, '89'. The first quatrain is a powerful translation of Jeremias, and the entire sonnet continues the images of fruitful vegetation in contrast to the sterile speaker. In its context, the opening verses of the twelfth chapter of Jeremias concern the just man's lament that his ways fail while the wicked man's ways prosper. But the Lord promises to restore the balance. What we have in the sonnet, however, is only the just man's lament. Here are the relevant verses from Jeremias:

Thou indeed, O Lord, art just, if I plead with thee, but yet I will speak what is just to thee: why doth the way of the wicked prosper: why is it well with all them that transgress, and do wickedly? Thou hast planted them, and they have taken root: they prosper and bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.

And thou, O Lord, hast known me, thou hast seen me, and proved my heart with thee.

But there seems to be another passage from Jeremias which also echoes the images of fertility and sterility in the sestet of the sonnet. In the Epistle for the Mass of the

²⁴ Letters I, p. 303.

previous Thursday, March 14, taken from Jeremias 17. 5-10,
Hopkins would have read the following:

Thus saith the Lord: Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like tamaric in the desert, and he shall not see when good shall come: but he shall dwell in dryness in the desert in a salt land, and not inhabited.

Blessed be the man that trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord shall be his confidence. And he shall be as a tree that is planted by the waters, that spreadeth out its roots towards moisture: and it shall not fear when the heat cometh. And the leaf thereof shall be green, and in the time of drought it shall not be solicitous, neither shall it cease at any time to bring forth fruit. The heart is perverse above all things, and unsearchable, who can know it? I am the Lord who search the heart, and prove the reins: who give to every one according to his way, and according to the fruit of his devices.

These verses from Jeremias form the background against which the speaker of the sonnet presents his case. God has promised greenness and fruition to the just man, so that the speaker has a just cause which he pleads, in the role of a skillful advocatus, before the dominus. He begins by stressing the justice of his Lord, and then the justness of his cause. The speaker is a just man (although he does not say this bluntly) but his ways are disappointed, defeated, thwarted, while the ways of the sinner prosper. He has presented his grievances formally, but he is a friend of the dominus and he says so.

The tone is ambiguous and even confused. He will plead his
 25
 cause in justice, but he pleads like a rejected lover.

There is no "O thou my friend" in the passages from Jeremias:

Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend
 With thee; but, sir, so what I plead is just.
 Why do sinners' ways prosper? and why must
 Disappointment all I endeavour end?
 Wert thou my enemy, O thou my friend,
 How wouldst thou worse, I wonder, than thou dost
 Defeat, thwart me? Oh, the sots and thralls of lust
 Do in spare hours more thrive than I that spend,
 Sir, life upon thy cause.

The force of the double "sir," the respectful "thou,"
 and the tender, almost heart-breaking "friend" makes for a
 26
 simultaneous distancing objectivity and intimacy. And the

25 Cf. Ritz's sensitive comment that this sonnet, "unissant à la rudesse du prophète l'inquietude du prêtre, prend une gravité poignante grâce aux vieilles images bibliques qui lui ont fourni à la fois les termes de sa protestation et de son ardente supplique" [Ritz, p. 261]. Ritz is, however, wrong in calling Justus es Hopkins' "last religious poem."

26 This powerful use of "sir" is presented again in W. H. Auden's "Petition," a para-sonnet employing para-rhymes. Here, however, God is addressed only in a formal manner, and prayer presented only in its more formal aspect of petition:

Sir, no man's enemy, forgiving all
 But will its negative inversion, be prodigal:
 Send to us power and light, a sovereign touch
 Curing the intolerable neural itch,
 The exhaustion of weaning, the liar's quinsy,
 And the distortions of ingrown virginity.
 Prohibit sharply the rehearsed response
 And gradually correct the coward's stance;
 Cover in time with beams those in retreat
 That, spotted, they turn though the reverse were great;

emphatic placing of the second "sir" where the volta would normally come further emphasizes the formal yet chaffing address. To make matters more galling, there appear all around the speaker the first signs of green spring. Even the common cow parsley-- "fretty chervil"-- laces the banks and is shaken by the wind. But he is not moved by the wind. In a literal sense, he is not sensibly moved by inspiration, breathed into by the "lord of life." The appeal now is to God's universal bestowal of life and energy upon all nature:

See, banks and brakes
Now, leaved how thick! laced they are again
With fretty chervil, look, and fresh wind shakes
Them; birds build-- but not I build; no, but strain,
Time's eunuch, and not breed one work that wakes. 27

26 (Cont'd.)

Publish each healer that in city lives
Or country houses at the end of drives;
Harrow the house of the dead; look shining at
New styles of architecture, a change of heart.

27 There are two other comparisons of the dry speaker in a fecund landscape in poems which Hopkins would have known. Ritz (p. 595) compares Justus es with these lines from Donne's Employment:

All things are busie; onely I
Neither bring hony with the bees,
Nor flowers to make that.

And Reeves notes the striking comparison of this sonnet with the fifty-three year old Coleridge's "Work Without Hope: Lines Composed 21st February 1825," especially the first six lines:

All Nature seems at work. Slugs leave their lair--
The bees are stirring--birds are on the wing--
And Winter slumbering in the open air,
Wears on his smiling face a dream of Spring!
And I the while, the sole unbusy thing,
Nor honey make, nor pair, nor build, nor sing.

Then, in the final one-sentence line the advocate-friend makes his plea for inspiration, for growth. The force of "mine" is two-fold; it refers to both the "lord of life" as well as to the speaker's "roots":

Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.

So the final plea is a request, but it is a request made as much to a friend as to the Almighty.

Hopkins has precisely caught the nervous rhythms of unfolding, budding, vegetation in "fretty" (fretted like lace-work, but also nervous), and in "wakes," which derives originally from the Latin vegere, to rouse or excite (vegere is of course the root for "vegetation"). It is precisely what Hopkins himself desires: the keen nervous energy which allows for productive work.

Hopkins has crystallized here several recurring complaints made in his letters and in his retreat notes. "There is a point with me in matters of any size," he wrote Bridges in mid-May 1885 when he was in the grip of his earlier period of desolation, "when I must absolutely have encouragement as much as crops rain."²⁸ And on the following first of September

- 27 (Cont'd.) Finally, there is Hopkins' own early fragment, composed 24 September 1865, of which the opening lines are:

Trees by their yield
Are known; but I--
My sap is sealed,
My root is dry.

28 Letters I, pp. 218-19.

he wrote again to Bridges, in lines which also echo the opening lines of his last poem, To R.B.:

[It] is widely true, the fine pleasure [fine delight] is not to do a thing but to feel that you could and the mortification that goes to the heart is to feel it is the power that fails you: qui occidere nolunt Posse volunt [those who won't kill want to feel they can]: it is the refusal of a thing that we like to have. So with me, if I could but get on, if I could but produce work I should not mind its being buried, silenced, and going no further; but it kills me to be time's eunuch and never to beget. 29

And finally, there is this entry in his private notes during his last retreat on New Year's Day, 1889:

.... I began to enter on that course of loathing and hopelessness which I have so often felt before, which made me fear madness and led me to give up the practise of meditation except, as now, in retreat and here it is again. I could therefore do no more than repeat Justus es, Domine, et rectum iudicium tuum and the like, and then being tired I nodded and woke with a start. Five wasted years almost have passed in Ireland. I am ashamed of the little I have done, of my waste of time.... [But] what is life without aim, without spur, without help? All my undertakings miscarry: I am like a straining eunuch. 30

There is, however, far less anxiety and fretfulness and far more waiting on the Lord in the tone of the sonnet than there is in these prose selections. Still, in his contention with God there is a wasting of the speaker's energies

29 Ibid., pp. 221-22.

30 Sermons, p. 262.

in not being fully content to remain peacefully in this dry state. There is still a chaffing at the rein. It is only with his next sonnet, The Shepherd's Brow, that he can finally laugh at himself for even contending with his Lord, he whose final self-evaluation is to see himself as a finicky perfectionist who in strict justice can demand nothing of God.

The Shepherd's Brow bears the autograph date 3 April 1889. It was never sent to Bridges, and Hopkins did not paste a copy into his own manuscript volume. Five full drafts, however, were found on the same sheet as a complete draft of To R.B. That it was not sent, however, says nothing in favor of an unfinished state. "I believe I enclose a new sonnet," Hopkins wrote on April 29, in his last letter to Bridges. "But we greatly differ in feeling about copying one's verses out: I find it repulsive, and let them lie months and years in rough copy untransferred to my book. Still I hope to send you my accumulation."³¹

Despite Hopkins' own comment on his personal manuscript methodology, Bridges insisted that The Shepherd's Brow, a "cynical" sonnet, was not worthy of inclusion among Hopkins' "last serious poems."³² But in the last half dozen years or so

³¹ Letters I, p. 304.

³² Cf. Poems, p. 296. "It might be argued that this sonnet has the same right to be recognized as a finished poem

this sonnet has found strong and able defenders for admitting it into the canon of Hopkins' finished and considered poems³³ between Justus es and To R.B. And in their revised editions of Hopkins' poetry, Pick (A Hopkins Reader) and Gardner (Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Selection) have both so placed the³⁴ sonnet. Again, what we must especially stress is the probable tone of the speaker, which can be most reasonably ascertained by examining the meaning, diction, and rhythms of the poem itself and whatever ancillary light Hopkins' other writings can lend.

- 32 (Cont'd.) with the sonnets 68-71, but those had several years' recognition whereas this must have been thrown off one day in a cynical mood, which he could not have wished permanently to intrude among his last serious poems."
- 33 Cf. Boyle, esp. pp. 132-34 and 156-57; Robert B. Clark, S.J., "Hopkins' 'The Shepherd's Brow,'" VNL, no. 28 (Fall 1965), 16-18; and Sr. M. Mary Hugh Campbell, S.C.M.M., "The Silent Sonnet: Hopkins' Shepherd's Brow," Renascence, XV, No. 3 (Spring 1963), 133-42.
- 34 Also, Cf. Ritz's comment: "Le sonnet The Shepherd's Brow, No. 122 [in Poems, Third Ed.] est un sonnet complet, et je ne crois pas que les raisons invoquées pour ne pas l'inclure parmi les Poèmes (1876-1889) soient vraiment satisfaisantes." In Gardner's Fourth Edition (1967) the sonnet takes its rightful position. Boyle's criticisms seem to have persuaded Gardner to take this step.

The Shepherd's Brow is primarily based on a strong contrast between truly heroic figures and man's essentially comic littleness when viewed in and of himself. The Gradual for Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent, which fell on the day the sonnet was composed, serves as an ironic contrast to the opening of the poem: "Come, children, hearken to Me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Come ye to Him and be enlightened: and your faces shall not be confounded" (Psalms 33. 12,6). The sonnet is also in one sense an expansion of a gloss Hopkins had written for Bridges on a difficult Pauline passage: Galatians 6.3: "The man who thinks he is of some worth, when in truth he is worth nothing at all, is merely deluding himself." Only six weeks after he had written That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire, Hopkins glossed this passage as follows: "However men may deceive themselves, of themselves they are nothing and nothing they do has any moral goodness from their doing it."³⁵

We have seen, presumably, that Hopkins is not guilty of a facile optimism. He was fully aware that God's gifts were freely and bountifully given, and that man of his own merit was not worthy of these gifts, nor in strict justice

35 Letter of 10 September 1888 in Letters I, p. 288.

were they owing to him. It is the especial beauty of The Shepherd's Brow that the priest who had given his all to his Friend, can turn the lesson of Job to his own account, and even smile at his own temperamental fussiness.

Of the opening sentence of the poem, Clark has probably given us the best explanation when he interprets the shepherd to be Moses or a Moses figure, as described by Milton in Paradise Lost. The literary allusions to this epic which Hopkins so deeply admired and which so markedly influenced his own poetic diction and rhythms are many, and the angels falling from heaven are certainly a distinct pointer to Milton's epic.³⁶ Moses is called "That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed (I.8)" In Book XII, we find God appearing before Moses on Mount Sinai "In Thunder, Lightning and Loud Trumpet's sound (XII. 229)," as mediator for the rest of the chosen people, who are too terrified to confront "the voice of God" which is "To mortal ear... dreadful (XII. 235-36).

Besides Moses, however, the shepherd may refer to St. Peter, transformed with the other disciples by the Paraclete appearing in the form of tongues of fire on Pentecost Sunday.

36 Devlin notices several Miltonic references in Hopkins' treatment of Satan. Cf. especially Sermons, p. 309.

There is both horror and glory felt in the presence of God.
 "His mighty breath ran with roaring in their ears," Hopkins
 told his congregation years before,

his fire flamed in tongues upon their foreheads
 and their hearts and lips were filled with him-
 self, with the Holy Ghost. And they went forth
 and he went forth in them to convince the world.
 Hear a sample of how he convinces it. St. Peter
 spoke to the multitude, a crowd well representing
 the world, for there were men there, it is said,
 from every nation under heaven. At the end of
 his speaking 3000 souls were added to the Church.
 Three thousand were at one stroke convinced:
 here was a beginning of the world's being con-
 vinced and converted indeed. 37

From the Old and the New Testaments, then, there are evidences
 of God's working through and uplifting man.

In the next sentence of the sonnet, by contrast,
 Hopkins vividly etches the still-heroic figures of the fallen
 angels in epic rebellion against God. This too is a literary
 echo from Paradise Lost. The fallen Satan

above the rest
 In shape and gesture proudly eminent
 Stood like a Tow'r (I. 589-91).

Between the "Arch Angel ruin'd" and Moses' confrontation with
 God's terrifying and glorious presence in the form of lightning

37 Sermon for Sunday, 25 April 1880, at Liverpool in Ibid.,
 pp. 74-75. This passage is also important for an under-
 standing of the theological nature of inspiration in
To R.B.

there is a further implied comparison. Satan's visage is described by Milton in this manner:

his face

Deep scars of Thunder had intrencht, and care
 Sat on his faded cheek, but under Brows
 Of dauntless courage, and considerate Pride
 Waiting revenge... (I. 600-05).

God's mediator or God's rebel, Hopkins underlines the heroic majesty of both and the epic tragedy of the latter. It is around this contrast that the first quatrain is generated:

The shepherd's brow, fronting forked lightning, owns
 The horror and the havoc and the glory
 Of it. Angels fall, they are towers, from heaven--
 a story
 Of just, majestical, and giant groans.

But against this dramatic and heroic setting, man simply as man is contrasted in language which may perhaps be best described as astringent and darkly comic. In the second quatrain Hopkins includes himself-- "we"-- in his description of man as no "tower" but merely a "scaffold":

But man--we, scaffold of score brittle bones;
 Who breathe, from groundlong babyhood to hoary
 Age gasp; whose breath is our memento mori....

Man is a pathetically dependent creature whose very existence depends upon his ability to draw in his next gulp of air, and who, with every breath, may be reminded of his own mortality. Seen in the light of his frail ground of being, man's pretensions to any semblance of heroic or tragic stature are

presumptuous and comic. And the speaker, recalling Isaiah's rebuke to Satan, "Thy pomp is brought down to the grave and the noise of thy viols (14.11)," ironically deflates the stormy pretensions of man:

What bass is our viol for tragic tones?

Of the fallen angels with their "giant groans"

Hopkins had already chronicled, in his meditation notes written during his Long Retreat, his admiration for their epic heroism in spite of his abhorrence of their rebellion:

This song of Lucifer's was a dwelling on his own beauty, an instressing of his own inscape, and like a performance on the organ and instrument of his own being; it was a sounding, as they say, of his own trumpet and a hymn in his own praise. Moreover it became an incantation: others were drawn in; it became a concert of voices, a concerting of self praise.... They would not listen to the note which summoned each to his own place (Jude 6.)... they gathered rather closer and closer home under Lucifer's lead and drowned it, raising... a counterpoint of dissonance and not of harmony. 38

Against these angelic groans, Hopkins contrasts man's meager gasps for breath, and perhaps the groans of man's voiding in shame. Angelic beauty has some pretensions for "a grasp of godhead," as Hopkins remarks a few lines later in the same meditation. But the same is not true for "man Jack", whose

ground of being, whose essential self is "just" (i.e., only, but also, in strict justice, that only) air and gas.

Apart from God's uplifting power, man is a sorry thing:

He! Hand to mouth he lives, and voids with shame;
And, blazoned in however bold the name,
Man Jack the man is, just; his mate a hussy.

The first half of the sestet is a further emphasis and concentration of "Man Jack", in language which recalls the starker mood of Shakespeare. Boyle has accurately defined Hopkins' meaning of "Jack" as a "male representative of the nature of something,... the individual supposit or person with reference to his nature merely, without speaking of his individual good or bad qualities."³⁹ Man Jack has high pretensions about himself, but his acts are tediously cyclical and basically undifferentiated from the animal: breathing, eating, voiding (there may be a pun here on the Elizabethan Jack-jake), mating, and death. Here is T.S. Eliot's descriptive triad of "Birth, copulation and death."

Furthermore, pride and vanity in a woman, which leads her to blazon forth her name, can also make of her a hussy. For this connection between vanity and sexual promiscuity, Hopkins has supplied his own lengthy gloss in a letter of 24

39 Boyle, pp. 156-57.

September 1883 to Coventry Patmore, strongly criticizing that poet's line, "Women should be vain":

In particular how can anyone admire or (except in charity, as the greatest of sins, but in judgment and approval) tolerate vanity in women? Is it not the beginning of their saddest and most characteristic fall? What but vanity makes them first publish, then prostitute their charms? In Leonardo's famous picture 'Modesty and Vanity' is it not almost taken for granted that the one figure is that of a virgin, the other that of a courtesan? If modesty in women means two things at once, purity and humility, must not the pair of opposites be no great way apart, vanity from impurity? Who can think of the Blessed Virgin and of vanity? Then in one's experience, in my own, it seems to me that nothing in good women is more beautiful than just the absence of vanity and an earnestness of look and character which is better than beauty.... It is the same in literature as in life: the vain women in Shakspeare are the impure minded too, like Beatrice. 40

"Hussy," then, if strong, is again the *ὕψος κῦρος* in a poem exposing the ludicrousness of man's (and woman's) pride.

When Hopkins writes that man blazons his name boldly, the implied comparison is again with God's lightning on the brow of Moses; it is a light from without informing Moses, not his own small light. The comparison is also with Satan's fallen but still visible glory, manifested by Milton in images of dimly majestic light:

his form had yet not lost
All her Original brightness, nor appear'd
Less than Arch Angel ruin'd, and th' excess
Of Glory obscur'd: As ... the Sun new ris'n
Shorn of his Beams (I. 591-96).

But it will be noted that Hopkins, who had identified himself with man in lines 5 ("we") and 8 ("our"), in line 9 contemptuously disassociates himself from Man Jack with an emphatic "He!" The speaker has set up a comparison between Man Jack, undistinguished by his generically undifferentiated "manmarks," and the distinctively individuated selves of the shepherd with God's lightning on his brow and the heroic figures of the fallen angels. In line 12, the speaker isolates himself above the Jacks to plead his own particular case, his own self, and his intensely personal agony. It is a rhetorical and, I think, an intentionally histrionic line which, for one who had spent life itself "upon thy cause," is also seriously meant. In its pounding parallel structure the line gathers to a final crescendo, complete with trombone orchestration:

And I that die these deaths, that feed this flame,
That...."

The delayed volta of the sonnet-- the real turn-- comes with the aposiopesis at the beginning of the thirteenth line. In effect, the last two lines act much like the final summary in the tag-couplet of a Shakespearian sonnet. Throughout the poem there have been two implied comparisons: visual images of light and its particular reflections, and audio images of heroic angelic groaning and unheroic human gasping. In the final two lines the speaker effectively diminishes

both of these sakes in humbly and wryly estimating his own small stature. First the speaker, "fronting" his own tiny reflection in the concave mirror of a polished spoon, sees his own upside-down, grotesque, and comical "masque" there. The implied comparison with the glory of the visages of Moses and Satan completely and effectively deflates his own contentious and presumptuous pleading. The speaker catches himself up short-- the sudden catch in his voice is mirrored in the break in the thought-- and ends his meditation with a prayer of humility, chiding himself for having thought that his "tempests" counted for much more than the "fire and fever fussy" of a precisionist. "Fussy" is Hopkins' own particular inscape for himself, and it is both comical and unflattering.

Secondly, not only do Hopkins' tempests find their effective diminuendo in "fire and fever fussy," but the large number of s's and m's, together with the many long vowels in the last two lines, seem to imitate the speaker's own breath quietly but unmistakably escaping from his brittle diaphragm like air hissing through the wrecked frame of a balloon. The rhythm, temporarily reinforced by the t and f sounds of Hopkins' prayer, undergoes a further but delicately humorous deflation in the s's of the final "fussy":

That... in smooth spoons spy life's masque mirrored: tame
My tempests there, my fire and fever fussy.

The very real suffering has been deflated by the speaker himself to fussiness, but there is a deeply instressed heroic patience in this self-chiding which should not escape the reader. The jaded poet who almost four years before had felt the agony of Carrion Comfort has not suffered less in The Shepherd's Brow but mastered himself more completely. Here is the Pauline paradox of finding the strength of God in recognizing one's own weakness.

The sonnet, with its quiet but powerful ending, is an important chapter in the journal of Hopkins' struggle for self-mastery, for a more complete humility and patience through remaining fully receptive to God's will. It is a buckling under, a refusal to "contend" even ironically with his Lord as he had in Justus es. Bent more completely out of himself in the unrelenting forge of Christ, tempered under terrible pressures, Hopkins has stubbornly retained his poised and subtle humor. It is one of the most noble and endearing sakes of his character, this private joke between himself and his Lord who knows him better than he knows himself. This same patient humor is seen again in the sestet of To R.B., where the breath of divine and poetic inspiration (the inbreathing of the Holy Spirit) seems also to be unavoidably escaping from the jaded and broken Hopkins.

In his analysis, Clark has said that this sonnet "rather implies that awareness of the triviality of modern life comes from religious meditation." There is no doubt that this is true, especially in connection with the poem's deeply in-stressed religious tone. But there seems to have been a more direct and literary influence for the structural curve of Hopkins' sonnet in a passage from George Eliot's Middlemarch (1871-72). As in discussions of Donne's influence on the poet, we have no extant published proof that Hopkins did reach Middlemarch. He did enjoy contemporary novels, and he did know of George Eliot's novels and had read Romola. Furthermore he mentions in a letter to his mother that passages of Eliot's work were read during holiday gatherings at St. Bueno's in
41
1876.

But the passage itself is so similar to the content of The Shepherd's Brow that there does seem to have been a direct influence. What is interesting is the tonal contrast

- 41 "In my judgment the amount of gift and genius which goes into novels in the English literature of this generation is perhaps not much inferior to what made the Elizabethan drama, and unhappily it is in great part wasted. How admirable are Blackmore and Hardy! Their merits are much eclipsed by the overdone reputation of the Evans-- Eliot-- Lewis-- Cross woman (poor creature! one ought not to speak slightly, I know), half real power, half imposition" [Letter of 28 October 1886 in Letters I, pp. 238-39]. Cf. also his letter to his mother of 2 March, 1876. "We now have entertainments on holidays....[Pieces] are read from Dickens, George Eliot, etc..." [Letters III, p. 136].

between George Eliot's passage, at once urbane and somewhat distant, and Hopkins' personal involvement, shifting from awe to almost sardonic disgust, then to nervous intensity and contentiousness, and finally to resignation and a quiet, humorous self-chiding. In Middlemarch (Bk. I. Ch. 10),⁴² the speaker discusses the various judgments held of Mr. Casaubon, among which are contempt for this clergyman's alleged greatness of soul," and "criticism of a middle-aged scholar's personal appearance":

I am not sure that the greatest man of his age, if ever that solitary superlative existed, could escape these unfavorable reflections of himself in various small mirrors; and even Milton, looking for his portrait in a spoon, must submit to have the facial angle of a bumpkin.... Suppose we turn from outside estimates of a man, to wonder, with keener interest, what is the report of his own consciousness about his doings or capacity: with what hindrances he is carrying on his daily labours, what fading of hopes, or what deeper fixity of self-delusion the years are marking off within him; and with what spirit he wrestles against universal pressure, which will one day be too heavy for him, and bring his heart to its final pause.

Whether or not this particular passage was in Hopkins' mind does not in the final analysis matter. What does matter is

42 My reading of The Shepherd's Brow was submitted to Victorian Poetry for publication in February, 1967. I am happy to see that Professor Gardner has also remarked the similarity between this sonnet and the Middlemarch passage in his Fourth Edition, released here in August, 1967.

that the Middlemarch passage sheds a new if diminutive light on the different treatments of the same idea by Hopkins and a Victorian contemporary. The mention of Milton, of his "bumpkin" reflection in a spoon, of the inner conflicts and of the growing uneasiness with what is or is not found within us when we submit to an earnest self-examination, and perhaps even the unflattering figure of Casaubon himself have all been transformed in the alembic of Hopkins' poetic imagination into a deeply in-stressed, personal colloquy between Hopkins and his Lord. George Eliot's wittily probing scrutiny of Casaubon has become Hopkins' intense and self-deflating look at his own Jackself.

On the twenty-second of April, the day after Easter, Hopkins composed his last poem, To R.B. It was a holiday and Hopkins did a sketch of a brook on Lord Massey's domain. It was probably here too that he wound up his literary affairs with a dedicatory sonnet to Bridges, his friend and literary executor, whom he had corresponded with over a period of nearly twenty-four years. A week later he enclosed his last poem in his last letter to Bridges.

The sonnet is about the poet's loss of inspiration. But the poem itself tells us otherwise, for there is no flagging in execution, no falling off of poetic excellence. The poet is in masterful control of his central images of gestation and the

"blowpipe flame," as well as of his melodic line and his tonal shifts. As Gardner tellingly remarks, "We should hardly expect the really moribund writer to give us such a perfect description of incipient life."⁴³

The sonnet opens with a sentence which in length exactly coincides with the first quatrain. Inspiration, or insight, that "fine delight," Hopkins says, impregnates the receptive mind with the seed, the nucleus, of "immortal song." Speaking of the inspiration he had for a tune, Hopkins had written Dixon three years before that the "disproportion is wonderful between the momentary conception of an air and the long long gestation of its setting."⁴⁴ The moment of inspiration, literally, "the breathing into," burns into the mind; there is an explosion of ecstasy and then the long period of quiet activity fructifying in the work of art. The concentration of the inspiration is stressed explicitly in the image of the blowpipe, which concentrates a flow of air and gas to create a more intense flame in a particular direction (the "aim" of line 7):

43 Gardner, II, p. 366.

44 Letter of 30 June 1886 in Letters II, p. 135.

The fine delight that fathers thought; the strong
 Spur, live and lancing like the blowpipe flame,
 Breathes once and, quenched faster than it came,
 Leaves yet the mind a mother of immortal song.

Once the inspiration has been given-- and it is given from without, not from within the receptive mind-- the mind, like the mother, can now (and the word is twice repeated) alone bring the seed of inspiration to fruition. The period of poetic gestation, however, is not the mother's nine months, but rather Horace's nine years. The mind can "comb" her song, that is, unravel it of any snags, but also, like the bees, strengthen the structured parts of the poem (the combs) to produce a sweeter honey. Direction ("aim") and intensity given, the rest is largely a matter of the good craftsman:

Nine months she then, nay years, nine years she long
 Within her wears, bears, cares and combs the same:
 The widow of an insight lost she lives, with aim
 Now known and hand at work now never wrong.

The octet has presented a precise and stimulating classical account of the nature of inspiration as prime ~~mover~~. In the sestet, Hopkins offers his explanation for his own relative scarcity of poetic output:

Sweet fire the sire of muse, my soul needs this;
 I want the one rapture of an inspiration.
 O then if in my lagging lines you miss
 The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation,
 My winter world, that scarcely breathes that bliss
 Now, yields you, with some sighs, our explanation.

This is a superb closing for several reasons. First, there is the syntactical reason. We are given a direct statement in lines 9 and 10 for Hopkins' falling off: lack of the "Sweet fire." The long final periodic sentence then strains upwards in the drum-roll crescendo culminating in the magnificent twelfth line. This line is another good example of Hopkins' musicality. "Roll" and "rise" are alliterated, and "carol" is a chime of "roll." The fourth term is related to the third by augmentation: "c-r-l, the cr-t-n." The long o of "roll" suggests a low bass, which shifts to the upward long i of "rise." This is followed by the downard short a and o of "carol," and followed by the two long, ascending vowels, e and a, of "creation." The overall effect is a surging upward, like a long drum roll, which just begins to falter in the last unaccented syllable of line 12.

But having reached this height, the rhythms begin to fall back, breaking up finally into the gasping last line which threatens, like a cranky blowpipe, to expire before the end of the thought. Secondly, the feminine rhyme endings are a master stroke, for the weak, unstressed final syllables seem to be barely hissed out. And in the final line the frequent pauses and the large ratio of unstressed syllables of the last phrase compared to the other phrases, create a purposely flat ending:

Now, | y^xields you, | w^xith some s^xighs, | o^xur ex^xplan^xation.

There is "scarcely" any inbreathing or inspiring now. Left almost entirely to himself, the poet can only emit "sighs," small gasps of breath. With inspiration sputtering irregularly, Hopkins for many years had been able to produce only a few sonnets at long intervals. "It is now years that I have had no inspiration of longer jet than makes a sonnet," he had mentioned to Bridges in early 1888.⁴⁵

The metaphor of the blowpipe goes back even earlier. In his meditation on hell during the Long Retreat of 1881, Hopkins had made the following relevant comments:

How then is the soul so set at stress? As I suppose by some main stress from without, and that this is expressed by 'ingentes illos ignes' [those huge fires] St. Ignatius speaks of, as the current of air in the blowpipe casts or addresses a jet of flame this way or that. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are spoken of as seven spirits, seven jets or currents of breath. 46

The inspiration which Hopkins laments is the gift of the Holy Spirit. God scarcely ever moves him now; the longest poem he can create is a sonnet.

45 Letter of 12 January 1888 in Letters I, p. 270. William M. Gibson remarks that it "is not to be concluded that 'To R.B.' is a perfect poem. The... irrelevance of "sighs" in the last line to the central metaphor [of gestation] one may regard as [a flaw]" [To R.B., the Explicator, 1947, 12]. But in the light of the whole play on "inspiration" this difficulty vanishes.

46 Sermons, p. 137.

The complaint is an old one. More than ten years before he had made a similar lament to Bridges:

I cannot in conscience spend time on poetry,
neither have I the inducements and inspirations
that make others compose. Feeling, love in
particular, is the great moving power and spring
of verse and the only person that I am in love
with seldom, especially now, stirs my heart
sensibly and when he does I cannot always 'make
capital' of it, it would be a sacrilege to do so. 47

Hopkins' ideas on the nature of poetic inspiration had undergone a profound religious metamorphosis since his Oxford days. At twenty he had propounded, in a somewhat magisterial tone, the theory that inspiration was grounded purely in a poet's physical constitution:

The first and highest [kind of poetry] is poetry proper, the language of inspiration. The word inspiration need cause no difficulty. I mean by it a mood of great, abnormal in fact, mental acuteness, either energetic or receptive, according as the thoughts which arise in it seem generated by a stress and action of the brain, or to strike into it unmasked. This mood arises from various causes, physical generally, as good health or state of the air or, prosaic as it is, length of time after a meal. But I need not go into this; all that is needful to mark is, that the poetry of inspiration can only be written in this mood of mind, even if it only lasts a minute, by poets themselves. 48

47 Letter of 15 February 1879 in Letters I, p. 66.

48 Letter of 10 September 1864 to Baillie in Letters III, p.216. Cf. the very similar remarks of the seventy-four-year old Housman in the conclusion of his Leslie Stephen Lecture, "The Name and Nature of Poetry" (1933):

As Devlin remarks, "It is interesting to compare this youthfully sophisticated theory of atmospherics and meal-times with the more primitive belief of twenty years later-- that natural inspiration comes direct from God." 49

48 (Cont'd.) I know how this stuff [poetry] came into existence; and though I have no right to assume that any other poetry came into existence in the same way, yet I find reason to believe that some poetry, and quite good poetry, did.... In short I think that the production of poetry, in its first stage, is less an active than a passive and involuntary process; and if I were obliged, not to define poetry, but to name the class of things to which it belongs, I should call it a secretion; whether a natural secretion, like turpentine in the fir or a morbid secretion, like the pearl in the oyster. I think that my own case... is the latter; because I have seldom written poetry unless I was rather out of health, and the experience, though pleasurable, was generally agitating and exhausting. If only that you may know what to avoid, I will give some account of the process.

Having drunk a pint of beer at luncheon... I would go out for a walk of two or three hours. As I went along, thinking of nothing in particular, only looking at things around me and following the progress of the seasons, there would flow into my mind, with sudden and unaccountable emotion, sometimes a line or two of verse, sometimes a whole stanza at once, accompanied, not preceded, by a vague motion of the poem which they were destined to form part of. Then there would be a lull of an hour or so, then perhaps the spring would bubble up again. I say the source of the suggestions thus proffered to the brain was an abyss which I have already had occasion to mention, the pit of the stomach. When I got home I wrote them down, leaving gaps, and hoping that further inspiration might be forthcoming another day.

It should be stressed that Hopkins was as aware as Housman or any other poet of the artist as craftsman. But he came to realize that rhetoric and inspiration (or insight) were qualitatively different things. "The strictly poetical insight and inspiration of our poetry seems to me to be of the very finest, finer perhaps than the Greek," he wrote to Dixon in August 1886,

but its rhetoric is inadequate--seldom first-rate, mostly only just sufficient, sometimes even below par. By rhetoric I mean all the common and teachable element in literature, what grammar is to speech, what thorough bass is to music, what theatrical experience gives to playwrights. 50

In his last year, Hopkins again took to sketching, a pasttime he had practiced mostly during his Oxford years. He actually did very few pictures in that final year, but the last one, a rough, energetic line-sketch of water, ⁵¹ can be reasonably interpreted as a pictorial counterpart to the subject of Hopkins' last poem: the two-fold flow of inspiration. In the lower right-hand corner of the sketch Hopkins has written "Lord Massey's domain, Co. Dublin April 22 1889," the same day that he composed To R.B. The sketch must be studied for a while before we realize that we are looking down directly from above into a rather dark, swirling, deep-pocketed brook. What is

50 Letters II, p. 141.

51 Collected in Journals as Drawing No. 33 of "Appendix I."

most powerful about the sketch is the constriction of water squeezed through the pressure of jutting rocks and then flowing outwardly in fan-like lines. It seems to have been the compression of water into a jet followed by its easeful release which caught Hopkins' attention. And this same compression is found in the first twelve lines followed by the release in the final two lines of To R.B. (as well as The Shepherd's Brow).

In this poem on the nature of poetic inspiration, however, Hopkins' account falls somewhat short. His is an admirable account of the second phase of inspiration, but not of the primary movement: the silent brooding of the Spirit over the dark waters within. Jacques Maritain has given a lucid and convincing anatomy of the two phases which constitute poetic experience, an anatomy which shows the shortcomings of Hopkins' view. The French Thomist also employs the figures of gestation and of breath:

Poetic experience implies... two phases, a first phase of systole and second phase of diastole; and in the second phase... everything seems to be given at once and, as it were, from the outside, though in reality everything was already there, hidden. Such a fact is probably what misled Plato, and caused him to believe that poetic inspiration came from above the soul. There is no muse outside the soul; there is poetic experience and poetic intuition within the soul, coming to the poet from above conceptual reason.

Still, this would be dissatisfying to Hopkins. For it is Milton's Holy Spirit working within the deepest recesses of the poet's soul which gives the poet inspiration. Maritain does not give sufficient cognizance to this spiritual aspect of the creative process. "In the first phase, then," Maritain continues,

in the phase of systole and unifying repose, all the forces of the soul, gathered together in quietude, were in a state of virtuality and dormant energy. And poetic intuition, still preconscious, was the only act formed within the preconscious life of the intellect, and was the secret reason for this silent concentration....

Thus it is that after the silent gathering a breath arises, coming not from the outside, but from the center of the soul-- sometimes a breath which is almost imperceptible, but compelling and powerful, through which everything is given in easiness and happy expansion; sometimes a gale bursting all of a sudden, through which everything is given in violence and rapture; sometimes the gift of the beginning of a song; sometimes an outburst of unstoppable words.

That is the phase of diastole, and of "inspiration" as it manifests itself in its most apparent and usually recognized forms....

Sometimes inspiration remains unperceived when it is especially deep and steady. 52

It is this last comment which perfectly fits Hopkins' own case. In the years when he was most lamenting the loss of his muse-- the Dublin years--he was creating his finest poetry. Whether in the lavish experimental style of That Nature is a

Heraclitean Fire or in the plain style of the desolations of Jeremias in Justus es, Hopkins' poems do not demonstrate any falling off of poetic utterance. And if there is a quantitative loss in the creation of only a handful of poems for these years, there is towards the end a positive gain in the flowering of a poetic voice with the authentic ring of spiritual humility and acceptance.⁵³ In the last poems, there has been, to paraphrase Hopkins' own words on the nature of grace, an advantage of himself over himself.

- 53 If the enthusiasm of hyperbole so present in the Welsh sonnets of 1877 is missing in Hopkins' last sonnets, it is replaced by a more sophisticated kind of enthusiasm. As his poetry matured, his poetic voice assumed the full range of emotion wedded to precise religious insight. With qualification, Frost's wry comments on the maturation of enthusiasm are to hand here (Hopkins is one of the few modern poets who could successfully generate the enthusiasm of God's Grandeur, for example, without any hint of artificiality):

I for my part would not be afraid to go in for enthusiasm. There is the enthusiasm like a blinding light, or the enthusiasm of the deafening shout, the crude enthusiasm that you get... outside of poetry. It is exemplified in what I might call "sunset raving." You look westward toward the sunset, or if you get up early enough, eastward toward the sunrise, and you rave. It is oh's and ah's with you and no more.

But the enthusiasm I mean is taken through the prism of the intellect and spread on the screen in a color, all the way from hyperbole at one end... to understatement at the other end. It is a long strip of dark lines and many colors.... [Like a good speech, poetry should have] range, something of overstatement, something of statement, and something of understatement.... [Poetry should have] all the colors of an enthusiasm

Read correctly, these last sonnets amount to a new direction in lyrical poetry. Just as those last unfinished statues of Michelangelo mark a radical departure from the familiar terrain of classical sculpture in probing the little-known spiritual regions within and beyond death, so too do Hopkins' last sonnets mark a similar break with tradition. For there is little in the whole of English lyrical poetry which touches so convincingly that darkness preceeding dissolution, when the soul must finally confront its Creator stripped to its essential self. There has been no falling off of inspiration here. Rather insight into a rarely visited, dark, spiritual plateau has been translated into religious poetry of the highest order. In the story of his sonnets, it is the final victory-- without exultation-- of Hopkins to have soldered his will more firmly to God. The exultation, we are told, came in the early afternoon of Saturday, June 8, the eve of Pentecost, when Hopkins is reported to have cried, "I am so happy. I am so happy. I am so happy," shortly before he expired. And while this

53 (Cont'd.) passed through an idea. (From "Education by Poetry: A Meditative Monologue," an address given at Amherst College (1930), in The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Expository Prose, ed. Arthur M. Eastman et al. (New York, 1965), p. 596.)

is extra-poetical knowledge, the last sonnets certainly point towards, rather than away from, such a resolution.

Hopkins once explained the distinctive quality of Handel's style in this way: "A piece of his at a concert seems to flutter the dovecot of the rest of them, to be a hawk among poultry. The immediateness of the impression must be due, I suppose, to his power being conveyed into smaller sections of his work than other men's and not needing accumulation for its effect."⁵⁴

The words describe perfectly the impression we have of Hopkins' own small but powerful poetic output. A sonnet like God's Grandeur or The Windhover or Felix Randal or Carrion Comfort or The Shepherd's Brow, to pick just a⁵⁵ few, has no equal among Victorian practitioners of the form. In the whole range of the sonnet, Hopkins is truly one of the few hawks among so many poultry. Only a small number of poets, considered as self-conscious sonneteers, can consistently meet

54 Letter to Dixon of 3 July 1836 in Letters II, p. 137.

55 Rossetti probably comes closest, and his music plays in a softer, more delicate key.

Hopkins' level of excellence in the form: Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton, and perhaps Sidney and Keats before him, and Edward Arlington Robinson and Dylan Thomas after him. We need only a line or two, normally, to recognize unmistakably the dynamic cadences of Hopkins. His poems, like his vision of the world, are "charged with the grandeur of God."

Each of these nine chapters has been a self-contained unit. It has considered a group of sonnets both individually and as linked by similarities of form and content to the development of the sonnets as a whole. As in any organic development, there are backslidings in Hopkins' sonnet development to earlier modes and unexpected changes in the direction of tone, subject, and even of rhythm. But taken together, these chapters may be read as a single and singular story of the life-long interplay between one of our finest English lyrical voices and the tempting, difficult, yet liberating sonnet mode. They have sought to add some further light to the multidimensional significations of Hopkins' words, those bright hard crystals reflecting for him something of the infinite beauty and wisdom of the inexpressible Word.

APPENDIX. TRADITION AND EXPERIMENTATION IN THE SONNET:

MOVING EASY IN HARNESS

Father of further sons who wear your plumage
For the good glory of the world, I speak for
All of us who inherit any merit of your image:
O long-faced convert, look down and seek for
Worthiness in one of us, and let him speak
Evangelizing the incomprehensible message.
(from George Barker's sonnet, "To Father
Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.")

A checklist of those who conscientiously employed the sonnet form in English would have to include nearly every British (and American) poet of major standing since Wyatt and Surrey introduced the Italian sonnet to England in the 1530's. Geoffrey Chaucer just missed the honor of introducing the form himself a century and a half earlier when he translated Petrarch's sonnet, "S'amor non è, che dunque è quel ch' io sento?" into three stanzas of rhyme royal.¹

From the beginning English poets felt both at ease and uncomfortable with this foreign form. They admired its gravity and dignity, but rightly wished to adapt it to fit their own poetic voices. But just how far the form can be stretched without breaking its back is more than a matter of

1 The Canticus Troili, I. 400-420 of the Troilus and Criseyde,
which begins, "If no love is, O God, what fele I so?"

mere whim. Furthermore, there seems never to have been a shortage of sonnet legislators--and this is especially true of the period from about 1885 to 1920--who have questioned every departure from the form, whether organic or not, and who have attempted to frieze the flower into Italian marble. It must be confessed that some very good poets, such as Wordsworth, have not always grasped the peculiar potentialities of the sonnet.² It is to such poems that the truism has been repeatedly directed, "They are very good poems, but they are not sonnets."

- 2 Wordsworth has, of course, many first-rate sonnets. He stands like the Colossus of Rhodes at the entrance-way as leader of the modern practitioners of the sonnet form. Furthermore, a student of Milton as serious as Wordsworth was would hardly have misunderstood the structure of the Italian sonnet. It is clear that Wordsworth purposely altered the rhyme schemes and worked against the emotional crescendo effect towards which the Italian sonnet lends itself. But the deliberate use of anticlimax and the accordion compression which results from running the rhymes of the octet into the sestet work against the potentialities of the sonnet form itself, whether done consciously or unconsciously.

In choosing not to exploit the potentialities of the Italian model, Wordsworth seems at times to have ruptured the delicate tension between freedom of expression and the traditional mold by not sufficiently heeding the dynamic potentialities of that mold. And this is what Hopkins was probably objecting to in some of Wordsworth's sonnets. For many of them have the curve of a fireworks display: an emotional discharge somewhere around the traditional volta and then a soft anticlimax in the last five or six lines like sparks wafting softly back to earth. There is seldom any steady crescendo building up and exploding only in the final lines, such as Hopkins' sonnets normally do.

There are, however, two sonnets in which Hopkins seems to have followed Wordsworth's curve of development. In his last sonnets, The Shepherd's Brow and To R.B., both poems reach their drum-roll crescendo at the end of the twelfth or beginning of the thirteenth lines, and then fall away to a deflated whisper. But here Hopkins is manipulating the form so that it organically follows the curve of his emotional weariness.

By his own testimony we know that Hopkins himself was not a close student of sonnet literature. He did know the sonnets of Petrarch, Surrey, Shakespeare, Herbert, Milton, Wordsworth, and Keats. In all likelihood, he knew Donne's work in the form. He admired Gray's one sonnet, "On the Death of Richard West," probably through his reading of the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads. He had read Coleridge's sonnets, because there seems to be a distinct echo of one of them in his Justus es. As an undergraduate he had read Charles Tennyson Turner's sonnets and had been influenced by George Meredith's sequence of sixteen-line sonnets, Modern Love. No doubt he knew the sonnet literature of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and of Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. And of course he would know Bridges' work.

But most of his reading of sonnet literature had been done in the mid-sixties at Oxford. He admitted to Dixon in 1881 that he had not read much literature in recent years because he had been so busy with his priestly duties: "On the Sonnet and its history," he told Dixon, "a learned book or two learned books have been published of late and all is known³ about it--but not by me." Hopkins had few literary texts near him. Because of his vow of poverty, which he scrupulously observed, he could take no personal property, and this included books, from assignment to assignment. Often he asks Bridges to send him new copies of his poems because he has been forced

3 Ibid., p. 85.

to leave his friend's old volumes behind at Stonyhurst or Liverpool. He reads novels from time to time, but they are found at random at the houses where he is staying. He has not read Dixon's History because he has been too busy at Liverpool and can not get to the library.

Nowhere, perhaps, is Hopkins' lack of fresh knowledge about the development of the sonnet clearer than when he comments on Surrey. When Hopkins censured Dixon's sonnets for their departure from the Italian or Shakespearian norm, Dixon mildly remonstrated with him. There were, Dixon held, great temptations to abandon the Italian form. Hopkins' demonstration of the beauty of this form, however, had been forcible and Dixon promised that he would attempt in the future to follow it. Yes, "hernia" in the rhyme pattern was especially to be avoided. But what of the practice of Surrey and Spenser, the Canon asked. He may have been thinking of Surrey's adaptation of Petrarch's Sonnetto in Morte 42, "The Soote Season," which has only two rhymes throughout. Or he may have recalled the same poet's "Alas so all things nowe do hold their peace," in which the rhymes of the octet are continued in the sestet. And the rhyme scheme of Spenser's Amoretti also mingles the rhymes of the octet with the sestet (abab-bcbc-cdcd-ee). Spenser even translated some sonnets of Du Bellay into fourteen-line blank verse poems. Elizabethan sonnetteers, who established the genre in England, Dixon knew, experimented freely with the form, "doing in English what it did in Italian,

but yet not the same. They were the men, I suppose, who brought the sonnet into England: but, so far as I know, they did not write in the regular sonnet way, any of them. Was not Milton the first who did?" And in his usual deferential manner, Dixon concluded his remarks by saying, "I am not at all up in the subject, so if I have shewn lamentable ignorance of the history of the sonnet in these remarks, you must overlook it."⁴

"Surrey's sonnets are fine," Hopkins answered three days later, "but so far as I remember them they are strict in form. I look upon Surrey as a great writer and of the purest style." Still, it had been long since he had studied Surrey, and there were few literary works at Manresa House where his Tertianship was about to begin in earnest. So Hopkins added, "But he was an experimentalist, as you say, and all his experiments are not successful. I feel ashamed however to talk of English or any literature, of which I was always very ignorant and which I have ceased to read."⁵

This is the point. In the final analysis, he did not really care what English poets in an earlier age had done with the form. He had hit upon the intrinsic potentialities and beauties of the Italian form. And it was the form itself rather than the work of earlier sonneteers that most interested him. In effect, what he did was to inject his own life into

⁴ Ibid., p. 80.

⁵ Ibid., p. 87.

the tight, beautifully carved, formally perfect Italian mold. "The strength of the genie," Richard Wilbur has remarked, "comes of his being confined in a bottle." Hopkins' mature sonnets manifest the truth of this statement thirty-six-fold.

Hopkins is certainly an original poet of rare genius. His is one of the most distinctive and unmistakable voices in the whole history of English poetry, and it is remarkable that he used one of the most rigid forms in English poetry as his vehicle. As might be suspected, he had some strong ideas about what a sonnet is and is not. He had an acute sense of the musical and lexical potentialities of the sonnet, and with those things which he recognized as distinctive to the form he never tampered: proportion and rhyme scheme. When he did alter the sonnet form, he gave it a new name; it became a subspecies, as it were, of the genus sonnet. This alternation occurs only six times: with his three "curtal" sonnets, short or bobbed sonnets which maintain the same proportions between octet and sestet but in an abbreviated form; and the three sonnets with codas (or burdens) which had the sanction of a whole host of Renaissance Italian poets and of the venerable Milton himself.

Proportion and rhyme-scheme both pertain to the extrinsic form of the sonnet. Hopkins invariably employs the Italian sonnet with its fourteen lines and four rhymes, two rhymes each for the octet and sestet with no crossing of bound-

aries. Of his forty completed sonnets of fourteen lines, all are written in the Italian mode. All have the necessary octet rhyme scheme: abba - abba. Thirty, including all of his sonnets of 1865, end in the most accepted order of rhymes for the sestet: cdc⁶dc⁶d. The other ten end with the order ccd - ccd.

What Hopkins does in practice, he insists upon in theory. Writing to Richard Watson Dixon, who had sent him a batch of manuscript sonnets for his critical comments in mid-October 1881, Hopkins went to some lengths to explain why these fell short as sonnets. He insisted, as strongly as the sonnet legislators William Sharp and T.W.H. Crosland were to do, on the organic necessity of proportion and rhyme. There is only one "sonnet proper"-- the Italian form. There are stricter and looser forms, and the Shakespearian form is "a very beautiful and effective species" of sonnet, although simpler than the Italian. It passes because it maintains, although less powerfully than the Italian, the necessary bipartite division of eight and six. On this Hopkins is insistent:

- 6 Ritz, pp. 478-479. [Hopkins] observait l'ordonnance des vers et celle des rimes. C'est ainsi, par exemple, que sur les quarante sonnets de quatorze vers qu'il a composés, trente ont le dessin le plus traditionnel des rimes (abba - abba-cdc⁶dc⁶d) et dix organisent le sixain selon un autre arrangement classique des rimes (ccd - ccd). La preuve est ainsi donnée que Hopkins savait renoncer à innover, lorsqu'une certaine forme lui paraissait proche de la perfection, et pleinement équilibrée. Tous ses sonnets sont donc construits sur quatre rimes, et sur deux combinaisons.

Now it seems to me that this division is the real characteristic of the sonnet and that what is not so marked off and moreover has not the octet again divided into quatrains is not to be called a sonnet at all. For in the cipher 14 is no mystery and if one does not know nor avail oneself of the opportunities which it affords it is a pedantic encumbrance and not an advantage. The equation of the best sonnet is

$$(4+4) + (3+3) = 2 \cdot 4 + 2 \cdot 3 = 2(4+3) = 2 \cdot 7 = 14.$$

From this mathematical equation Hopkins draws three conclusions. First, that the sonnet is unsymmetrical according to the simple ratio of 4:3. He cites several examples of the playing of unequal parts off against one another. He calls to mind St. Augustine's example from the De Musica of the hexameter and the ionic trimeter divided by their caesura, and he recalls the major and minor 5:4 scales. Hopkins also suggests that the 4:3 ratio is perfect; higher ratios would be impracticable; lower ratios too simple.

Second, the ratio is doubled ("as all effects in time tend to be, and all very regular musical composition is"), $(2 \cdot (4+3) = 14)$. Third, even parts are paired against even, uneven against uneven: $(4+4)$, $(3+3)$. The rhymes too "are founded on a principle of nature and cannot be altered without loss of effect." Since the octet and sestet are distinctive parts which allow for a musical balance, their rhymes must be kept separate. Otherwise "a downright prolapsus or hernia⁷ takes place and the sonnet is crippled for life."

7 All of above relevant quotations are from Hopkins' letter to Dixon of 12 October 1881 in Letters II, pp. 71-72. As a result of Hopkins' strictures, Dixon never published any of the sonnets mentioned in the letter; one may have been published posthumously.

With the internal proportions of the English sonnet, however, Hopkins was dissatisfied. The length of the English iambic pentameter line was, in most cases, absolutely shorter than the "equivalent" Italian endecasillabo. "The reason why the sonnet has never been so effective or successful in England as in Italy," Hopkins told Dixon at the end of October, "I believe to be this: it is not so long as the Italian sonnet; it is not long enough...."⁸ While the proportion of part to part and part to whole is most important, Hopkins asserted, nevertheless size as an absolute is also important. Using the architectural analogy of the Parthenon, Hopkins correctly noted that if a building were to be built on a markedly larger scale the intrinsic proportions of the Parthenon would no longer serve. Either "the proportions must be changed or the Order abandoned."

The same held true of the English sonnet. The difference in vowel quantity between Italian and English was a real difference, not merely a relative one, a difference which made the English model, in comparison, "light, tripping, and trifling." The Italian sonnet, like the Parthenon, had long been admired for the perfection of its internal and external proportions. And since the external proportions of the English sonnet ("14 lines, 5 feet to the line, and the rhymes") could be

8 All of the quotations from Hopkins in this section are from his letter to Dixon of 29 October 1881 in Letters II, pp. 85-87.

strictly modeled on the Italian model, the shortcomings were to be found in the shorter English decasyllabic line itself.

Taking two lines from an Italian sonnet, Hopkins illustrated their absolutely greater length. First, the Italian endecasillabo line has more syllables, although the final light syllable and elided syllables do not count in the scansion:

Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto
 Che un marmore solo in se non circonscriva.
 Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto
 Che un marmore solo in se non circonscriva.

The Italian line with its thirteen syllables to the English ten is nearly a quarter again as long.

And, secondly, the Italian syllables themselves carry more weight and, properly read, take longer to read. "We have seldom such a delay in the voice as is given to the syllable by doubled letters (as ottimo and concetto) or even by two or more consonants (as artista and circonscriva) of any sort, read as Italians read. Perhaps then the proportions are nearer 4:3 or 3:2." The Italian sonnet too, then, was actually from a quarter to as much as a third longer than the English.

There were various devices, however, used in the best English sonnets to counteract this intrinsic shortcoming. Hopkins lists seven, all of which he himself employed in his own sonnets.

9 Ritz has also followed the format of glossing Hopkins' own excellent comments on the sonnet in developing one section of his chapter on "Les Sonnets," the section "Moyens d'enrichissement," pp. 481-487.

First, there is "gravity of the thought, which compels a longer dwelling on the words." The opening, meditative lines of God's Grandeur, Peace, Ribblesdale, Justus es, and To R.B. readily illustrate this device.

Second, there are "inversions and a periodic construction." The opening lines of Peace illustrate both perfectly:

When will you ever, Peace, wild wooddove, shy wings
shut,
Your round me roaming end, and under be my boughs?

Again, Ritz points to the late sonnet To what Serves Mortal Beauty? with its catechetical question-and-answer form which withholds the answer until the final phrase of line fourteen. And four inversions in the first five lines force the thought to keep to the line of argument without speeding up the movement.¹¹

Third, "by breaks and pauses." The second quatrain and final tercet of Carrion Comfort, with their manifold questions, is perhaps the most famous use Hopkins made of this device. But in the final lines of all three of Hopkins' last sonnets this retarding device is used to great effect. In

10 For ease of reading I have underlined all of Hopkins' poems throughout rather than use quotation marks. In this I follow the typographical method of both Gardner and Ritz. The only time I have deviated from this norm is in quoting those authors who prefer the use of the more exact quotation marks.

11 Ritz, p. 482. "Et quatre inversions dans les cinq premiers vers obligent la pensée à suivre l'argumentation sans en précipiter le cours."

Justus es, for example, we have fifteen stops of varying degrees in the last five and one half lines:

See, banks and brakes
Now, leaved how thick! laced they are again
With fretty chervil, look, and fresh wind shakes
Them; birds build--but not I build; no, but strain,
Time's eunuch, and not breed one work that wakes.
Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.

And there is the strong break in the thirteenth line of The Shepherd's Brow which acts like the final about-face in a Shakespearian sonnet.

Fourth, "by many monosyllables." Almost any sonnet of Hopkins' will reveal how much he favored a strong monosyllabic line. Lines 4,6,7,8,11, and 14 of God's Grandeur are entirely monosyllabic. So is the excited opening of The Starlight Night and the fifth and last lines of Hurrahing in Harvest. Here are some other lines randomly selected:

- Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie,
sheer and clear.
Nay in all that toil, that coil, since (seems)
I kissed the rod.... (Carrion Comfort)
- No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief....
(No Worst)
- In wide the world's weal; rare gold, bold steel, bare
In both; care, but share care--
(Tom's Garland)
- Nine months she then, nay years, nine years she long
Within her wears, bears, cares and combs the same.

The last example has only one polysyllable in two lines. The point here is that whole quatrains with only a few polysyllabic words could be taken to illustrate Hopkins' masterful use of the monosyllable for gravity and emphasis.

Fifth, the line may be retarded "by the weight of the syllables themselves, strong or circumflexed and so on, as may

be remarked in Gray's sonnet, an exquisite piece of art, whatever Wordsworth may say,

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine...."

Hopkins has learned his lesson well, for example, in the strong vocalic opening of No. 68:

To seem the stranger lies my lot, my life.

If we transcribe the vowels in Gray's opening we have six full vowels (or diphthongs): $\text{ĩ} \text{ā} \text{ōō} \text{ē} \text{ə} \text{ĩ} \text{āu} \text{ĩ}$. Hopkins goes one better: $\text{ōō} \text{ē} \text{ə} \text{ā} \text{ŕ} \text{ĩ} \text{ĩ} \text{ö} \text{ĩ} \text{ĩ}$. The full vowel sounds of both add dignity to the line and give the sense of both poets' ¹²sighing.

In the sixth and largely in the seventh instances, Hopkins was breaking new ground, or better, exploring and fixing as principles what earlier poets had experimented with. The sixth device, "'outriding' feet," Hopkins calls a "mechanical remedy" for a "mechanical difficulty." By outriding feet he meant his system of sprung feet, a truly accentual verse, which he grafted gradually to his sonnets of 1877 until he had achieved in them a fully sprung rhythm. Gardner and, after him, Ritz have painstakingly dealt with sprung rhythm in all of its manifestations, and in Chapter Two

- 12 Hopkins has also caught the same trochaic rhythm of Gray's sonnet in No. 68. He scans Gray's opening line "In/ vain to/ me the/ smiling/ mornings/ shine." The scansion of the opening of No. 68 is also falling, an effect created in part by the strong vowels, the vers enjambment, and the sense of dejection itself: "To/ seem the/ stranger/ lies my/ lot, my/ life...." This is true also of No. 69, where the falling rhythm is aided by the dulling effect of the transition from the sharp "feel" to the weaker "fell": "I/ wake and/ feel the/ fell of/ dark, not/ day."

of this study I have dealt at some length with the probable development of this dynamic accentual rhythm as it evolves from the standard rhythm of God's Grandeur to the fully sprung lines of Hurrahing in Harvest. Suffice it to say for now that the accentual concept allowed him to go from a line like the counterpointed "Génération^xs h^xave tró^xd, h^xave tró^xd, h^xave tró^xd" to the flexibility of these sprung lines composed just six months later:

The^x heart rears wings bold^x and bolder^x
 And h^xurls f^xor h^xim, O h^xalf h^xurls earth f^xor h^xim off
 under his feet.

Of these two sprung lines, the first has only eight syllables, the second fourteen. There are four accents running together in the first line and they seem to coil up to spring into the final "bolder." The second line has two outriding feet, following the first and third rising feet. The rhetorical emphasis thus supplied here by the metrical rhythm is of itself one of the most exciting chapters in the history of nineteenth century verse.

But Ritz is right when he holds that while these sprung devices add a dimension of flexibility and grace to the line, it is the potentialities of the alexandrine (and the line of eight accents used in Spelt From Sibyl's Leaves)¹³ which gave Hopkins a line of the highest gravity and dignity.

13 "Il n'est pas sûr qu'ils [the elements of sprung rhythm] apportent au sonnet la largeur et le poids que le poète en attend. Leur jeu est fait de souplesse et de grâce. Aussi comprend-on que Hopkins ait demandé à l'alexandrin-- et même à un vers de huit accents-- la noblesse et l'ampleur qu'il recherchait" [Ritz, p. 486].

He had the prior example of the French sonnet in alexandrines, a measure used to approximate the Italian line in French. It was with Henry Purcell in the Spring of 1879 that Hopkins began to employ the longer alexandrine in his sonnets. Over the next ¹⁴ nine years he used it six more times, perhaps to greatest effect in the poignant Felix Randal and in the percussive plain-chant of That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire. The logical development of the alexandrine led to the seven-and-eight-foot-line of Caradoc's Soliloquy (late 1884) and to the eight-stress line of Spelt From Sibyl's Leaves (October 1884-January 1885), which Hopkins called the longest sonnet ever written. Here he comes close to straining the integrity of his line, which is saved almost solely by his subject. As Ritz sensitively explains, Hopkins' line, which risks dissolving into a tremendous rhapsodic transport, is justified by his subject, where man, nature, and the world are plunged into one huge apocalyptic vision.¹⁵

Within the restrictions which he set for himself by employing the difficult Italian form, Hopkins was able to find a remarkable freedom and an authentic and individual voice. It is a voice with tremendous range. And it is worth watching the gradual shift in emphasis in that voice. We hear the youthful enthusiasm of the poet at the discovery of God's presence

14 These are the curial sonnets Peace (1879), Felix Randal (1880), Carrion Comfort, To what serves Mortal Beauty, The Soldier, (all 1885), and That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire (1888).

15 Ritz, p. 486.

in the world around the poet in the sonnets of 1877. For example, there is the powerful and ecstatic final tercet of God's Grandeur, the exclamatory openings of The Starlight Night or The Windhover, or the intoxicated headiness of Hurrahing in Harvest:

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean
up our Saviour....

And later there is the tender, sensitive, manly, and above all, distinctively individual voice of the priest reminiscing on the dead farrier:

Felix Randal the farrier, O is he dead then? my
duty all ended...?

And again, five years later, there is the straining, agonized voice of the speaker in Spelt From Sibyl's Leaves, with his new and terrifying realization of what it means to be confronted with the constant, wearying demands of a moral world. Or there is the gentle, self-deprecatory tone of My own heart: "Soul, self; come, poor Jackself, I do advise/ You, jaded, let be." Or again, there is the more sardonic self-scorn of the very late The Shepherd's Brow, where the speaker, catching a glimpse of himself, perhaps in one of J. Alfred Prufrock's coffeespoons, can only beg his Lord to tame his fussy fevers.

It has been one of the tasks of the preceding chapters to listen for the tone of the sonnets. Those who have read any large amount of sonnet literature are aware just how difficult it is to sound distinctive in a mold as imitative and tradition encrusted as the sonnet form had become by Hopkins' time. The sonnets of 1877, studded so often with exclamation marks, are easy signposts for reading hyperbolic emotion, and

Hopkins seems often in these sonnets to be shouting out the good news of the Incarnation with just a breath of quaintness. But it is the special value of the late sonnets, as we saw in Chapters Six through Nine, to have captured the older, storm-weathered voice of the poet. Here is the full spectrum of emotions with all their subtle nuances, from contentious irony to loving supplication.

Hopkins complimented Dixon on possessing a "true humanity of spirit, neither mawkish on the one hand nor blustering on the other." It was one of "the most precious of all qualities in style, and this I prize in your poems, as I do in Bridges. After all it is the breadth of his human nature that we admire in Shakespeare."¹⁶ More than either of his friends, and both had this quality in a high degree, Hopkins attained a poetic voice at once distinctive and filled with a broad, deep caritas. It is perhaps this fine humanity of spirit which endears him, finally, to so many.

16 Letters II, p. 85.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The oldest of seven children--four boys and three girls--I was born on 29 February 1940 in New York City and spent most of my early years in tenements between the East fifties and sixties. From 1949 to 1953 I lived in two Levitt homes, and then my family settled in Mineola, where they still live. I attended public grade schools; I then spent three years in Chaminade High School, run by the Marianists, spent another year in their preparatory at Beacon studying for the religious life, and finally graduated from Mineola High School. From 1958 to 1962 I went to Manhattan College, where I graduated with a B.A. in English. Besides earning my M.A. in English from Colgate University in 1964, I did some preceptorial work and taught English there. From September 1964 until now I have been pursuing the doctorate in English at Hunter College of the City University of New York. I have taught at both branches of Hunter and am presently a full-time Instructor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

I was married in August 1963; my wife, Eileen, and I have two small boys: Paul (2½) and Mark (10 months).

I plan to continue my studies and college teaching, specializing in the poetry of the late Victorian--early Modern period. I have published an article on Carlyle and two on Hopkins, and hope to continue publishing critical essays and some books. Besides turning this dissertation into a book, I should like to do another on the cultural milieu of Hopkins' Dublin.