PARADOX IN THE POETRY OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

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GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS' PARTICULAR VISION OF REALITY DERIVES FROM HIS INTENSE AND UNIQUE INTELLECTUAL RESPONSE TO THE FACT OF THE INCARNATION. IN HIS VIEW, THE INCARNATION SO COLORS THE WORLD THAT EACH CREATED THING, BY VIRTUE OF ITS SELFHOOD, EXPRESSES CHRIST. HOPKINS' APPREHENSION OF THE INTEGRATION OF THE FINITE AND INFINITE IN ALL THINGS, WITHOUT THE LOSS OR DIMINUTION OF EITHER, CREATES HIS VISION OF A PARADOXICAL WORLD. THE PROBLEM EXAMINED IN THIS THESIS IS TO WHAT DEGREE SUCH A VIEW OF LIFE IS REFLECTED IN, AND BY, HIS POETRY. THERE IS NO EXAMINATION OF PURELY VERBAL PARADOX, EXCEPT INsofar AS IT REFLECTS OR REVEALS THE POET'S VISION OF A PARADOXICAL REALITY.

IN THE INVESTIGATION, HOPKINS' LETTERS, IN PARTICULAR, THOSE TO ROBERT BRIDGES AND TO RICHARD WATSON DIXON, HIS EARLY DIARIES, NOTEBOOKS AND JOURNALS, AS WELL AS HIS RETREAT NOTES, SERMONS AND OTHER DEVOTIONAL WRITINGS HAVE BEEN EXAMINED AND HAVE YIELDED VALUABLE INFORMATION ABOUT HOPKINS' VIEWS OF LIFE AND POETRY. THE FOCUS OF THE INVESTIGATION, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN THE POEMS THEMSELVES. IT IS WITH THESE THAT THE STUDY WAS BEGUN, AND TO THESE THAT IT CONSTANTLY RETURNED. FROM THAT STUDY, IT BECAME APPARENT THAT DEFINITE THEMES RECUR IN HOPKINS' POETRY. WHEN THE POEMS WERE GROUPED ACCORDING TO THEME, IT WAS FOUND THAT CERTAIN POEMS CENTER ON NATURAL BEAUTY AND MAN'S RESPONSE TO IT; OTHERS ON THE IDEA OF SACRIFICE; STILL OTHERS ON THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING, AND YET OTHERS ON THE FACT OF DEATH.
An examination of each of the poems in these groups revealed that Hopkins' poetry is his response and solution to the problems posed by his simultaneous awareness of the apparently contradictory elements in reality. In that group whose theme is mortal beauty emerge the paradoxes of the changing creation revealing the changeless creator, of God's simultaneous immanence in, and transcendence of, his works, and of man's consequent difficult, but necessary, response of attachment to, and detachment from, mortal beauty. From those whose theme is sacrifice emerge the paradoxes of the beauty and the merit of the good which the poet voluntarily, but with difficulty, abjures in his own life, and of the denial of self as the highest fulfilment of self. From those whose theme is the problem of suffering emerge, in one group, the paradox of the reconciliation of God's mastery and his mercy, and in another, of the poet's isolation from, and unity with, God. In the first such group, the reconciliation has been facilitated by a prior struggle and enlightenment of the poet. In the second group, the desolate sonnets, emerges acceptance through indomitable faith, rather than reconciliation. From the final group, whose theme is death, emerges the paradox of the resurrection. This paradox bring Hopkins full circle, for, in the new life, mortal beauty has become immortal.

It seems, then, that it is Hopkins' awareness of the duality of the response imposed on him by his perception of these paradoxes, and his efforts to make that response, which give to his poetry its particular tension and intensity. The poetry is the record of the poet's efforts to explain the inexplicable. Although the chronological and thematic progression of response do not always go hand in hand, in the main, they do. There is a definite progression from the poet's happy and untroubled acceptance of the mystery in "Pied Beauty", through his
more difficult, yet none the less fully accepted reconciliation in "Carrion Comfort", through his anguish in the desolate sonnets, to his final ringing cry of faith in "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire".

In his relentless questionings of the mysteries inherent in his views of a paradoxical world, Hopkins refused to surrender either his intellect or his faith. His poetry testifies to both, and each enhances the other.
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CHAPTER I
HOPKINS' VISION OF BEAUTY

1. The Basis of Hopkins' Vision

Gerard Manley Hopkins saw life as sets of incomprehensible certainties whose incomprehensibility at first intrigued, and later tormented him, but whose certainty he never doubted. The key to his vision of reality is contained in a few lines of his spiritual writings:

Suppose God shewed us in a vision the whole world inclosed first in a drop of water, all, everything to be seen in its natural colours; then the same in a drop of Christ's blood, by which everything whatever was turned scarlet, keeping nevertheless mounted in the scarlet its own colour too.¹

An integrated vision such as these lines reveal is necessarily a paradoxical one. Natural phenomena remain unique, individual selves; at the same time, these selves bespeak Christ, who does not superimpose His signature on them, but who rather imbues each thing so that it expresses, in a way that nothing else can, a portion of His inscape.

Hopkins' vision, thus, differs from the traditional Christian one that finds frequent expression in poetry. Hopkins does not, as does Herbert, for instance, use the natural object as a means of transcending it and reaching God. Neither does he treat it as a mirror whose sole merit is its reflection of its Creator. Nor does he use the natural object as analogy or allegory; the thing is always itself, concrete and unique, and only because it is, is it also a glimpse of its Creator.

His vision is not a pantheistic one, although Hopkins is well aware of the precarious balance between immanence and transcendence which such a vision implies. The infinity of God cannot be compassed by a finite world, yet He is so deeply present to all things that it would be impossible for him but for his infinity not to be identified with them. The dilemma inherent in such a vision - that of maintaining an equipoise between the claims of God and the claims of the world - is one which Hopkins faces in more than one of his poems.

Hopkins' firm faith and integrity precluded the surrender of either the certainty or the incomprehensibility. His life was a search for an intellectually satisfying reconciliation of the contradictory and conflicting elements which he perceived in reality. His poetry is a record of that search, and because it is, it has the intensity and the ruthless honesty of a personal quest. The only reconciliation which Hopkins achieves is the statement and re-statement of the tantalizing and, at times, agonizing mystery. But the interest is in the process, the poem itself, out of which no solution emerges, but which is, itself, a moment in the peace that the poet sought.

It is necessary, before examining the poems expressive of Hopkins' vision, to examine the basis for that vision, for unless one is aware of the intellectual honesty of the poet's search for a firm and integrated aesthetic, philosophical, and theological foundation for his ideas, one is apt to denigrate his sincerity. And unless one is aware of what that foundation is, one is apt to assume that the conventional, unquestioning attitudes and views long considered to be Christian

and religious are those of Hopkins, and, therefore, to misunderstand his poems.³

That the poet early felt the need for an explanation of life's mysteries is evident in a poem of 1866, whose bleakness of vision is reminiscent of Andrew Marvell's "deserts of vast eternity":

We see the glories of the earth
But not the hand that wrought them all:
Night to a myriad worlds gives birth,
Yet like a lighted empty hall
Where stands no host at door or hearth
Vacant creation's lamps appal.
"Nondum", No. 23.⁴

And another poem of the same year expresses poignantly Hopkins' yearning


for a breadth and depth of vision:

There on a long and squared height
After the sunset I would lie,
And pierce the yellow waxen light
With free long looking, ere I die.

"The Alchemist in the City",
No. 15.

The ideas and theories which were to provide the breadth and depth of vision which shaped the later poems were the result of his own sensitive and original response to the physical world, supported by his studies of Greek thought, the philosophy and theology of Duns Scotus, and the influence of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

The concepts of "inscape" and "instress" are basic to Hopkins' vision of reality. His journal is filled with acute and precise observations of natural phenomena, distinctively recorded, and sometimes sketched. Always he was concerned with catching and holding the skeletal shape expressive of the inner, creative unity of a phenomenon. For this expressive shape, he coined the term "inscape". His first known use of the terms "inscape" and "instress" occurs in his early notes on Parmenides, where he speaks of feeling "the depth of an instress" and "how fast the inscape holds a thing."

The words themselves, and the manner of their use, suggest that the former is energy, related to volition, and the latter a still moment in the flux of creation, related to knowledge. This view of inscape as a "fixing" is confirmed in a note in his journal for May 14, 1870: "...motion multiplies inscape only when inscape is discovered, otherwise it disfigures." In the same notes, he

5Notebooks, p. 98.
6Notebooks, p. 133.
defines inscape as "the proportion of the mixture" between Being and Not-being, "two principles which meet in the scope of everything."\(^7\)

Hopkins' discovery of Duns Scotus, in 1872, provided ontological, philosophical, and theological support for his theories of inscape and instress, and confirmed his views of reality. Scotus places the principle of a thing's particularity, which he calls "haecceitas", within the form itself, and not, as has St. Thomas Aquinas, the official theologian and philosopher of the Jesuits, in matter. Thus, to Scotus, individuality is intrinsic, not extrinsic, as it is to Aquinas. Moreover, the Scotus view is that the individual, not the universal, as Aquinas maintains, is immediately knowable to the intellect, in union with the senses. These views were congenial to Hopkins who, scrupulous of the concrete and particular, was always fascinated by those aspects of a thing which constitute that thing's distinctiveness. In his commentary on the Spiritual Exercises, Hopkins writes: "...every real person living or dead or to come has his quarter in the round of being, is lodged onewhere and not anywhere, and the mind has a real direction towards him."\(^8\)

In Hopkins' view of creation, each created object first exists in God's mind as the possibility of a member of a particular species; next, with the addition of form, as the possibility of a particular individual of that species; with the addition of matter, the individual truly comes into being. The correspondence discernible between the created thing and its design in God's mind before being overlaid with nature is its inscape; that is, to the degree that the

\(^7\)Notebooks, p. 133.

\(^8\)Notebooks, p. 341.
haecceitas of an object succeeds in impressing itself on matter, that object reveals its inscape.

Scotus' view of the primacy of man's will over his intellect, a view which was a necessary consequence of his theory of individuation, was similarly congenial to Hopkins and provided justification for his theory of instress. In Scotus' view, while it is true that man's will is directed towards what he knows, he first wills to know that object. In a doctrine such as Scotus', based on univocal rather than on analogical being, something other than the act of being is necessary to distinguish God from his creation. This act of distinction is performed by the Divine Will which bridges the ontological gap between the necessary existence of men. "Between the necessary and the contingent the only conceivable link is a Will."

This link between Creator and creature is, at one time, Hopkins' meaning of 'instress'. At another time, Hopkins uses the term to mean the link between the object and perceiver, when, by an act of will, the perceiver grasps and focuses inward the inscape of that object. At still other times, he uses the term to mean that force within an object which holds and sustains the inscape.

But it was not only for the support of his theories of inscape and instress that Hopkins loved Scotus. To Scotus, as to Hopkins, the Incarnation was the most important event of time and eternity, an event which determined every detail of one's life and one's

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9 Thus, when Scotus says "God is" and "Peter is", the word "is" means the same in both statements. But when Aquinas says them, the "is" in the first statement is only man's way of expressing God's act of being, formed by analogy with man's act of being; we do not really know what "is" means when it refers to God.

response to the world. Scotus' view of the Incarnation elevated the world of sensation to an immense dignity. In his view, the Incarnation was primarily an act of love of the Son for the Father, an act which would have taken place even if man had not sinned.\textsuperscript{11} This was, and is, not the conventional view of the Incarnation, but it was congenial to Hopkins who, like Scotus, recoiled from the idea that the Incarnation was dependent on man's creation and sin. In his, and Scotus' view, creation was dependent on the Incarnation, not the reverse:

\begin{quote}
The worlds of angels and men were created as fields for Christ in which to exercise his adoration of the Father, fields for Him to sow and work and harvest.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

The Incarnation is the means by which the Son gives back to the Father eminent beauty. This view gives meaning and dignity to the world of sensation, for, following the example of Christ, man, too, can through the physical world of the senses, praise God and give Him back beauty.

Moreover, in Hopkins' view, as in Scotus', Christ exists from all eternity, although he came on earth in time. The Incarnation is not an event which occurred once and is now past; it is one which is constantly renewed in the Eucharist and in the full response of the creature to its Creator:

\begin{quote}
Though much the mystery how,
Not flesh but spirit now
And makes, O marvellous!
New Nazareths in us . . .
\end{quote}

"The Blessed Virgin Mary compared to the Air we Breathe", No. 60.

This view of the universe as a necessary part in the fulfilment of the

\textsuperscript{11}Sermons, p. 109.

\textsuperscript{12}Sermons, p. 109.
plan of a continuous and recurring Incarnation finds expression in Hopkins' poetry.

Finally, the Ignatian practice of the application of the senses to an immaterial idea sharpened Hopkins' naturally-sharp sense perceptions, and confirmed him in his spiritualization of sensation. Louis L. Martz's study, first published in 1954, shows the importance for religious poetry of the use of the image-forming faculty to provide a concrete and vivid setting for a meditation on invisible things.¹³

These influences, important as they are, only reinforced and gave substance to Hopkins' existing ideas and tendencies; they did not initiate them. They did, however, provide the encouragement and support which he needed for the speculation out of which arose his vision of a paradoxical reality.

2. Mortal and Immortal Beauty

Gerard Manley Hopkins' sensuous apprehension of the changing beauties of the earth is a simultaneous spiritual apprehension of the changeless beauty of God. Just as his act of perception is one and indivisible, so, too, is his expression of that perception in his poetry. Each of his poems which celebrates the natural beauty of the world is a densely-compressed synthesis of the two kinds of beauty; in each is

¹³ The Poetry of Meditation, rev. ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 1965, p. 28. Martz's suggestion that this spirit of meditation fostered a long tradition of religious poetry, in which he places Hopkins, has been followed by others who have examined the influence of Ignatian spirituality on Hopkins' art. See, for instance, David A. Downes, Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Study of His Ignatian Spirit (New York: Bookman Associates, 1959). The editing by Christopher Devlin, S.J., in 1959, of Hopkins' sermons and devotional writings, with his comments on their Ignatian inspiration, has been influential.
evident the poet's sense of wonder at the paradoxes inherent in the
perception. "Pied Beauty", Hopkins' exquisitely simple sonnet of 1877,
gives substance to certain of these paradoxes:

| Glory be to God for dappled things-- |
| For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow; |
| For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim; |
| Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings; |
| Landscape plotted and pierced-fold, fallow, and plough; |
| And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim. |

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:

Praise him. (No. 37)

In the poem, Hopkins reveals his unique responsiveness to,
and intense delight in "all things counter, original, spare, strange".
As with the music of Henry Purcell, in his poem of that title (No. 45),
it is the "forged feature" which "finds him". Here, in his joyously-
haphazard catalogue of pied beauties, each is an inscape, a tiny insignia
of its creator, which, for a moment, the poet arrests and catches before
it hurries on in its ceaseless movement towards Being. The poet, creator
himself, through his use of the sonnet form and of rhyme, fixes the
motion which his poem celebrates. At the same time, his use of the words,
"dappled", "couple", "stipple", "tackle", "fickle", and "freckled", with
their antithetical sounds—in each, a stop followed immediately by a
lateral—recreates both the fixing and the motion. The poem, itself, is
a microcosm of the dappled universe which so entrances the poet.

By its uniqueness, each inscape reveals, as only it in the
world can do, an infinitesimal portion of God.\textsuperscript{14} The more clearly that
it exhibits self, the better does it exhibit the Other who fathers it

\textsuperscript{14}This is why, in another poem, the poet so regrets the
felling of the aspens: "O if we but knew what we do/When we delve or
hew/Hack and rack the growing green." (No. 43).
forth. Yet the inscape of each of these pied beauties is precisely its changefulness, that aspect which is at once a sign of its deficiency and of its plenitude. Each inscape, incomplete and imperfect, is, in one sense, most unlike God, "whose beauty is past change", yet, in the multiplicity of opposing aspects and qualities which it displays, best reveals him who is the sum of all possible aspects and qualities.

But there is another reason, Scotist in origin, for Hopkins' view that the multiplicity of qualities in a natural thing bespeaks God. Scotus holds, and Hopkins agrees, that the distinction which we make between God's attributes are formal distinctions and not merely virtual ones, as St. Thomas Aquinas holds. That is, the distinction, however slight, does actually exist in God, and not simply in virtue of our limited perception of their effects in creatures. Yet, to Scotus, as to Aquinas, there is no composition of parts in God; God is a unity, not a union, since the component parts can be neither finite nor infinite. The paradox of distinguishable attributes in God who is simple is, to Hopkins, an incomprehensible certainty which is embodied in the natural world by the multiplicity of opposing qualities in a pied beauty, "swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim", and objectified by this poem and examined in at least two others. The incomprehensibility remains; "(who knows how?)" is Hopkins' admission of the mystery. The

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16 "God's Grandeur" and "The Wreck of the Deutschland".
only answer is "the most tantalizing statement of the problem".\textsuperscript{17} The exquisite beauty of a pied creation is that which arises from a reconciliation of opposing qualities, a reconciliation which preserves, rather than destroys the individuality of each.

The paradox of God's simultaneous immanence in, and transcendence of, the natural world is at the heart of Hopkins' ecstatic "Hurrahing in Harvest" (No. 38). The poet looks first at the fields around him, "barbarous in beauty", then to the skies and the "lovely behaviour/Of silk-sack clouds". The recurrence of words suggestive of danger and daring - "barbarous", "wilder, wilful", "stallion", bold and bolder" - gives a virile tone to the poem, quite in accord with the loving violence of the poet-lover who, from the autumn skies, "gleans" his Saviour:

\begin{quote}
I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour;
\end{quote}

Through the strong stress on "down", the pause before it, and the antithesis between it and "lift up" in the preceding line, one feels the stress of the poet's aspiration towards Christ, and the joy in his harvest. The language is that of an impassioned, possessive lover, reminiscent of John Donne:

\begin{quote}
And éyes, heart, what looks, what lips yet gave you a Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies?
\end{quote}

In a luminous intuition, he inscapes the mountains as part of Christ's body:

\begin{quote}
And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding shoulder Majestic -- as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet!-
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Letters}, p. 187.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Notebooks}, p. 106.
Hopkins had perceived parts of the human anatomy in inanimate nature before he read Duns Scotus; in 1868, for instance, he compared the three stages of a glacier to the "heel, instep, and ball or toes of a foot."\(^{18}\) Clouds were "skins...full of eyebrows".\(^{19}\) But, after Scotus provided for the spiritualization of inscape, the anatomy became that of Christ, who personified nature, summing up in himself all degrees of common nature. The startling simile in the second line quoted is made more startling by its enclosed antithesis. The stallion parallels the strength of the hills, and the very-violet-sweet their azurous color. And as strength and sweetness are distinguishable, even seemingly irreconcilable, yet one in Christ, so too, are they in the simile which refers to him. One thinks of Hopkins' comment on the bluebell, whose inscape is strength and grace: "I know the beauty of our Lord by it."\(^{20}\)

The repetition in, "These things, these things were here and but the beholder/Wanting" reveals the poet's marvel at God's immanence and at man's blindness. In his journal, Hopkins writes:

I thought how sadly beauty of inscape was unknown and buried away from simple people and yet how near at hand it was if they had eyes to see it and it could be called out everywhere again.\(^{21}\)

Inscape is everywhere, but the creative stress from God must be responded to by stress in the beholder, and this, instressed, gives him an intuitive awareness of God. When this takes place,

\(^{18}\)Notebooks, p. 106.
\(^{19}\)Notebooks, p. 107.
\(^{20}\)Notebooks, p. 134.
\(^{21}\)Notebooks, p. 161
The heart rears wings, bold and bolder
And hurls for him, 0 half hurls earth for him off
under his feet.

There is no question of the scale of values here, and no slighting of
the natural in the praise of the supernatural. God is so immanent that
the world takes on his physical shape, yet he is so transcendent that
the heart half leaves the earth to reach him. The qualification in
"half hurls" is the poet's recognition and admission that, although man
aspires to Christ, in this life, it is only through and in the world of
sensation that he will find him. At the same time, the transcendental
implication in the phrase shows that Hopkins' attitude is not
pantheistic.22

God's simultaneous immanence in, and transcendence of,
objects of natural beauty evokes and dictates man's difficult response:
attachment to, and detachment from, such objects. The degree of each
prong of man's response is intensified by one's sensitivity to the
presence of God in his creatures, that is, to one's sensitivity to
inscape. The difficulty of such response to someone like Hopkins be­
comes apparent in those poems in which Hopkins considers physical beauty
in human form and attempts, through the catharsis of the poem, to
establish and hold an equipoise in the face of his dual response.

In "To what serves mortal beauty?" (No. 60), the poet, with­
drawn from the ensnaring appeal of this kind of beauty, analyses that
appeal and considers its purpose. Mortal beauty is dangerous, he admits -

22 The realization of God's infinity, unencompassable in a
finite world, saves Hopkins from pantheism. He writes: "Neither do
I deny that God is so deeply present to everything...that it would be
impossible for him but for his infinity not to be identified with them,
or, from the other side, impossible but for his infinity, so to be
present to them." Notebooks, p. 316.
it "does set danc/ing blood" - as he admitted to Robert Bridges in a letter of October 22, 1897: "I think then no one can admire beauty of the body more than I do...But this kind of beauty is dangerous." Yet it has a purpose:

See: it does this: keeps warm
Men's wits to the things that are;

The example which follows shows that Hopkins considers the function of natural beauty to be to lead man to God. Yet, it is as much the form as the function of natural beauty which Hopkins loves; the one is impossible without the other. Man's wits, even in the contemplation of God, must be kept warm "to the things that are", the concrete things of creation; man's knowledge is as much a product of sensation and intuition as of abstraction. Hopkins believes in the overwhelming importance of the spiritual, "God's better beauty, grace", but that is not the theme of this poem. The theme is the difficult balance between attachment and detachment which man must cultivate. Since man, by his nature, must love, he should love what are "love's worthiest,.../World's loveliest-men's selves", that is his personality, which "flashes off frame and face".

23 Letters, p. 95.


25 That "self", to Hopkins, means personality is made clear in Notebooks, p. 328, and in his poem, "As kingfishers catch fire..." (No. 57):

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.
When he arrives at this point in his reflection, the poet seems to be faced with the same problem that he started from, the danger of that love. "What do then? how meet beauty?" He answers:

Merely meet it; own,
Home at heart, heaven's sweet gift; then leave,
let that alone.
Yea, wish that though, wish all,' God's better
beauty, grace.

That is, admire and acknowledge - "own it"-, but be detached from it, be "home at heart", then "leave, let that alone", and pray for "God's better beauty, grace". The things that we are to be attached to, we are also to be detached from. The poet provides no answer to the dilemma; he asserts the paradoxes of man's necessary response to beauty, but has no easy solution as to how he is to effect such response. Perhaps the assertion itself is the only solution possible.

The "Echo" poem (No. 59) provides a readier solution to the problem it poses, probably because it is less personal, being written from the point of view of possessor, rather than observer of beauty. The "good but lively girl" of "The Leaden Echo" searches vainly for some key to keep back beauty. The clear, ringing voice of the Golden Echo, through whom the poet speaks, converts her note of despair to one of hope and joy: "Yes I can tell such a key, I do know such a place," and, in telling of it, recreates poignantly the sweetness and grace of the beauty that is fleeting. It is impossible not to feel, in the recreation, the poet's own tender sadness at beauty's transience, the same sadness that appears in "Spring and Fall: and in No. 157: "beauty's 26 whose thoughts ought to sound "not at all like Walt Whitman"! Letters, p. 158.
dearest veriest vein is tears". The only way to keep back beauty is to surrender it to "beauty's self and beauty's giver". In a sermon preached at Oxford in 1879, the priest-poet says:

...the boy or girl, that in their bloom and heyday, 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 wall their weakness round in the hour of death!27

By dedicating her beauty to God, the maiden assures herself of eternal beauty, and that not only of the soul, but also of the resurrected body:

...fastened with the tenderest truth
To its own best being and its loveliness of youth.

Physical beauty will be returned and increased:

Nay, what we had lighthanded left in surly the mere mould
Will have waked and have waxed and have walked with the wind that while we slept.

The idea of the hundredfold return is not new in Christian thought, but with Hopkins, the paradox is sharper, for surrender becomes, not the return of a higher good, but the retention and return of the very good surrendered. It is typical of Hopkins to single out for one of the joys of Heaven the immortality of physical beauty. One is reminded of his exquisitely beautiful and ingenuous sermon for November 23, 1879, preached at Bedford Leigh, in which he confessed, "...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."28 It is from the thought of the return of physical beauty that he seeks solace for his sense of loss at its transience:

27Sermons, p. 19.
28Notebooks, p. 263.
O then, weary then why should we tread? O why are we so haggard at the heart, so care-coiled, care-killed, so fagged, so fashed, so cogged, so cumbered,

The solace is not a denial of the sorrow, but an admission of it.

Delight and foreboding are concomitant aspects of Hopkins' attitude to human beauty. This ambivalence is nowhere more evident than in a poem written in 1886, "On the Portrait of Two Beautiful Young People" (No. 157). The poem begins:

0 I admire and sorrow! The heart's eye grieves
Discovering you, dark trampers, tyrant years.
A juice rides rich through bluebells, in vine leaves,
And beauty's dearest veriest vein is tears.

Although it seems, at first, that the poet's sorrow is caused by his awareness of beauty's transience, it soon becomes apparent that there is another, keener reason for it:

But ah, bright forelock, cluster that you are
Of favoured make and mind and health and youth,
Where lies your landmark, seamark, or soul's star?
There's none but truth can stead you. Christ is truth.

In Nature, which cannot foil God's plan, "outward beauty is proof of inward Beauty", Hopkins believes, but in men, "beautiful evil" may exist, because man's will is free.29 Great beauty may lead to great evil, since man, through the choices that he makes, completes his creation: "What I do is me". The poet expresses his fears:

Your feast of; that most in you earnest eye
May but call on your bones to more carouse.
Words will the best. What worm was here, we cry,
To have havoc-pocked so, see, the hung-heavenward boughs?

The poet's delight in human beauty makes intensely painful his awareness that it can cause evil. He cannot remove the danger; he can only state it:

   Enough: corruption was the world's first woe.
   What need I strain my heart beyond my ken?
   0 but I bear my burning witness though
   Against the wild and wanton work of men.

The same sense of man's unthinking spoliation of natural beauty is evident in "God's Grandeur" (No. 31), a sonnet which deals with the paradoxes of God's justice and his love, manifested through the world of nature. Here, though, the continuous resurgence of God's love revivifies the earth which man despoils.

The poem opens with the firm assertion of the immanence of God in the created world, an assertion made firmer by the period following the line: "The world is charged with the grandeur of God". The word "grandeur" combines the suggestion of awesome immensity and power with that of magnificence, and generates already the fearsome question: "Why do men then now not reck his rod?" Thus, although the first line speaks of God and inanimate Nature, it is man's relationship to God which is the poet's concern. At the same time, the word "grandeur" prepares the mind for the world-encompassing scope of the last image of the poem.

Of the word "charged", one is tempted to say, as Hopkins insisted of "shook foil", that no other word would do. The world trembles with the force of the God-current in it, the Divine stress. Although the image in the next line of the grandeur flaming out of the world like, as Hopkins said, "sheet and fork lightning" shows that this is the primary meaning of "charged", there are other meanings too. The
world is charged with, in the sense of "commissioned to" speak of God. That this was Hopkins' view is evident from his own words, quoted by G. F. Lahey:

*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 message, is God, and its life or work to name and praise Him.*

At the same time, the world is "charged with" in the sense of having to pay for the grandeur of God. She spends but is never bankrupt, never "spent". Although man's abuse of the earth threatens to impress his own sinful image on her, and obliterate that of God, from deep within her, God renews his image. By contrast, man buys and sells in daily trade and bankrupts himself spiritually:

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell:
the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

There is latent danger in the grandeur of God for it "flames out" and "gathers to a greatness". The God of the octet is the God of the Old Testament, a God of justice, whose divine retribution man's abuse of the earth is in danger of calling forth. The metaphors which refer to this God are immense, and charged with power, while, when the poet seeks in man's sphere for comparisons, the only images which he finds are small and insignificant -- the shaking of gold foil, and the crushing to produce a single drop of oil. What man calls power is pathetically puny in comparison with God's power, even when the images are those of man's...

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industrial achievements.\textsuperscript{32}

"Why do men then now not reck his rod?", the poet asks. Man can escape the wrath of God if he turns away from sin; the word "now" shows that, in the poet's view, he still has time. His sin is the despoiling of Nature, which needs man to tongue the glories which it can only dumbly instance:

And what is Earth's eye, tongue, or heart else, where Else, but in dear and dogged man? (No. 58)

But Nature has been thwarted in her purpose by man. The underlying reference of the last line of the octet is to God's words to Moses, "Come not nigh hither, put off the shoes from thy feet: for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." (Exodus 3:5). Thus the octet ends, as it began, with reference to the God of justice of the Old Testament.

If, in its references to God, the octet is all "grandeur", the sestet is all "love". "There lives the dearest freshness deep down things". Man may besmudge the earth's surface resemblance to its Creator, but, deep within, the resemblance remains, for it is constantly renewed. Its resurgence is analogical to the coming of morning after night, of Easter and spring after the bleakness of winter, of the resurrection after death, and is presented in imagery reminiscent of John Donne's "flatt Map":

\textsuperscript{32} Hopkins wants a figure which will express the flaming quality of God's grandeur as revealed in the world and will not carry with it any suspicion of threat or danger". Robert Boyle, S.J., \textit{Metaphor in Hopkins} (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 28. However, the suggestion of the eruption of God's wrath is implicit in the "flaming out" and gathering "to a greatness", and explicit in the reference which follows to God's rod.
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs--33

And why this constant renewal?

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah!
bright wings.

The God of love and mercy, the God of the New Testament, stays the hand of the God of justice, and pours into the world, as a spring into a well, life-giving love to balance and temper his wrath, implicit in his grandeur. Love transmutes the charge from one of destruction to one of redemption. This is the Divine stress in creation which man must himself instress.

The image in the last two lines of the sonnet is cosmic. The Holy Ghost encompasses within his wings the whole "bent" world, and warms it with his life-giving love. One critic has remarked on the unusual significance, to Hopkins, of particular lines and curves, which he saw as visible signs of unitive vitality, of creation.34 Such a curve is similarly suggestive in this image. But the "bent" world, with "bent" referring both to the curve of the world and the bending of the Holy Ghost over it, is bent in another sense too: it is a sinful world, distorted from the image of its Creator. It is this world which yet merits the protection and sheltering of the Holy Spirit; thus, although the word "broods" has this primary meaning, it carries as well the undertone of

33Hopkins' marvellous precision of diction, sometimes overlooked because of his exuberance of language, is strikingly evident here, where the resurgence of hope, love, and "dearest freshness" is felt in the lift and buoyancy of the verb "springs", with all its "prepossession", and its contrast with the dull flatness of "went".

concern for man.35

The image of brightness with which the sonnet ends lifts the poet's heart in his awareness of God in the natural world. It is the ever-new joy that the poet feels as he blindingly glimpses this vision into reality, the numinous opening out of the soul in its sudden intuition of the reconciliation of God's justice in his love.

Thus, in his poems which center on created beauty, Hopkins examines and revolves certain tantalizing paradoxes: the changing as imaging the changeless, the reconciliation of opposing qualities in an object as revelatory of the same reconciliation in God, God's immanence in, and transcendence of, the created world, and man's consequent necessity of simultaneous attachment to, and detachment from, such beauty. Only in man's response is there evidence of a troubled perplexity in the poet. This was to increase, as his poems dealt, more and more, with man's (most often his own) relationship to God and to the world.

35There are many points of resemblance between Hopkins and a recent Jesuit theologian, scientist, and writer, also a disciple of Duns Scotus, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who, during his lifetime, was suspected of pantheistic tendencies, but whose brilliant works are now beginning to receive recognition and acclaim. In a passage from Writings in Time of War, quoted in Catholic Digest, vol. 32, no. 8 (June 1968), p. 58, de Chardin writes: "Since today, Lord, I your priest have neither bread nor wine nor altar, I shall spread my hands over the whole universe and take its immensity as the matter of my sacrifice. Is not the infinite circle of things the one final Host that it is your will to transmute?" Hopkins' "bent world" is exactly this.
CHAPTER II
SELF-DENIAL AND SELF-FULFILMENT

There is discernible, through certain of Hopkins' poems, the development of an idea which is central to his life and poetry, the idea of self-sacrifice as the necessary means to self-fulfilment. What distinguishes Hopkins' treatment of the paradox is the intensity of his admiration for the sacrifice of self, his resistance to it, and his acceptance of it. Had his appreciation of selfhood not been so great, his denial of it would not have been so difficult. And had his originality of thought been less and his ability to compromise with himself greater, he would, perhaps, have been no more troubled by the idea of sacrifice than are most "Christians" who read him today and puzzle at his odd intensity. In a letter to his friend, Robert Bridges, in which he discusses the relative merits of virtue and art, he reveals in diction which, by its vividness and familiarity, shows his sense of the closeness of God in his life and anticipates his wrestling antagonist, an insight into the Incarnation which dominates and motivates his life. Speaking of Christ's annihilation, or emptying himself, of his godhood, so far as that was possible, Hopkins writes:

It is this holding of himself back, and not snatching at the truest and highest good, the good that was his right, nay his possession from a past eternity in his other nature, his own being and self, which seems to me the root of all his holiness and the imitation of this the root of all moral good in other men.¹

Hopkins, too, was aware of a unique selfhood, a true and high good, in

¹Letters, p. 175.
his poetic talent, and, never permitting himself to compromise, but always intent on reconciling his ideals and his actions, he, too, made that selfhood "no snatching-matter."

There is ample evidence in his early poetry of the poet's admiration for self-denial, and in incidents related of him, of his practice of it. Hopkins' earliest poem, "The Escorial" (No. 1), reveals a boyish admiration for the "fiery constancy" of the martyr, St. Lawrence:

For that staunch saint still prais'd his Master's name
While his crack'd flesh lay hissing on the grate;

The relish with which the boy of sixteen details the martyrdom is amusing, but his use of the word "staunch" reveals his sympathy. Besides the brilliant verbal paradox in the phrase "fiery constancy", there is an early indication of the later poet's economy and precision of diction, where the word "fiery" refers both to the actual fire and to the ardent quality of the saint's constancy.

An incident which took place two years later is of interest because it reveals the amazing power of self-denial in the young man. Following a conversation on seamen's sufferings and human powers of endurance, Hopkins accepted a wager and abstained from all drink for three weeks.² Only when he collapsed on the twenty-second day of his abstinence did the school authorities discover what had taken place. It is scarcely surprising that, when the motive was spiritual, as it was soon to be, Hopkins did not refuse a life of sacrifice.

In his poem, "New Readings" (No. 7), written in 1864, the poet interprets the new readings - the "story", rather than the "letter" - as a call to recognize, and perhaps to emulate, in his own life, the sacrifice of Christ:

²Further Letters, p. 395. The incident is related in a letter from C. N. Luxmoore to Arthur Hopkins, the poet's brother.
Although the letter said
On thistles that men look not grapes to gather,'
I read the story rather
How soldiers platting thorns around CHRIST'S Head
Grapes grew and drops of wine were shed.

The remaining two stanzas render more readings, paradoxical in nature.
The rules governing natural growth are confounded by Christ, who triumphs
over nature in his Passion and death: grapes and grain grow from thorns;
to him, barren rock yields food. The last two lines of the poem imply
that the way of sacrifice is the perfect way:

And would not have that legion of winged things
Bear Him to heaven on easeful wings.

The poet's call to the hidden life and the powerful counter-
attraction of a life of achievement in the world are beautifully revealed
in a four-stanza poem of the same year, entitled, in his early diary,
"Rest", and later revised, in 1866, as "Heaven-Haven (No. 9), in which
only the first two stanzas remain:

I have desired to go
Where springs not fail,
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be
Where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,
And out of the swing of the sea.

In this poem, reminiscent of Herbert in its delicate strength and purity
of tone, the call to a life of sacrifice is made more explicit and there
is a halting step towards a response. The use of the negative statements
reveals an ambivalence in the poet; only because they convey the impression
of one thing, do they also convey its opposite. "Where springs not fail"

3 Printed in full in Notebooks, p. 27.
brings before the mind the ideas of both drought and moisture; "To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail/And a few lilies blow" brings to mind both the hail and its absence and the lilies and their scarcity. Similarly with the storms and the swing of the sea. At the moment that he is professing the attraction towards a life of retirement, he is revealing the counter-attraction towards a life of glorious achievement in the world, and both profession and revelation are equally sincere. Fields where "a few lilies blow" are strangely contrasted with other fields where stinging hail lashes the face, and it is by no means certain that the poet does not feel as much the exhilaration of the latter, as the peace of the former. The poem holds the dual attractions to the two kinds of life in unresolved balance. The sub-title added with the revision, "A nun takes the veil", scarcely conceals the personal dilemma.

The sequel which follows immediately in his early diary makes explicit the attraction of the active life:

I must hunt down the prize
Where my heart lists.
Must see the eagle's bulk, render'd in mists,
Hang of a treble size.

Must see the waters roll
Where the seas set
Towards wastes where round the ice-blocks tilt and fret
Not so far from the pole.

(No. 88)

The reason for Hopkins' omission of these stanzas in his revised poem may have been that he felt their redundancy. Or it may have been that, in suppressing the overt admission of the appeal of the life of worldly

"Compare the last line of John Keats' "La Belle Dame sans Merci": "And no birds sing." For Hopkins' admiration of Keats, and his defense of that poet against the charge of sensuousness, see Futcher Letters, pp. 381, 386.
glory, he was resisting the appeal itself. In its tension between the hidden life and the worldly life, the poem anticipates the great conflict of "The Windhover".

In his exquisite lyric of 1866, "The Habit of Perfection", again reminiscent of Herbert, Hopkins makes his choice of a life of renunciation. In a series of paradoxes, he closes, one by one, his senses to the things of the world that he might re-open them to those of God:

Elected Silence, sing to me

... Shape nothing, lips; be lovely-dumb:

... Be shelled, eyes, with double dark

... Palate, the hutch of tasty lust,

... Nostrils, your careless breath that spend

... 0 feel-of-primrose hands, 0 feet

Elected Silence is asked to pipe him to quiet pastures; the clear notes of Silence sound without destroying the sense of an intense withdrawal. Speaking nothing is the Christ-curfew which alone will make him eloquent. Eyes shelled with "double dark" will find God, the uncreated light. The sense of taste is both affirmed in its former attraction and purified now for the reception of the Holy Eucharist. The nostrils that once relished things of pride, will "relish" the fragrance of incense, the symbol of holiness. Hands feel primroses, and feet feel the soft, yielding grass of a meadow at the same time as they withdraw from these to walk the quiet steps to the tabernacle. In the moment of his renunciation of them, the poet is poignantly aware of the beauties of the senses. The theological support of Duns Scotus, with his theory of the Incarnation, who
was to show Hopkins so clearly the role of man's senses in his service to God, was not to come for another six years. But now, in 1866, there was an unwilling and uneasy but undeniable lingering on those beauties, a lingering which reveals the poet's intense love of them and his even more intense desire to renounce them in order to serve God in the most perfect way. The emotional "O", the ambiguous "want", and the compensating "But" of the following stanza clearly show the tension:

    O feel-of-primrose hands, O feet
    That want the yield of plushy sward,
    But you shall walk the golden street
    And you unhouse and house the Lord.

It is in his magnificent sonnet, "The Windhover", written in 1877, the year of his ordination to the priesthood, that Hopkins powerfully asserts the paradox that the hidden life of self-denial is, in reality, the life of true self-fulfilment, the life of most "achieve" and "mastery". The assertion gains force and sincerity because it evolves out of the struggle enacted within the poem between the poet's still-dormant and still-intense desire for worldly honor, and his equally intense desire to renounce such honor and dedicate himself completely to God. The poem does not record, but actually creates the breaking-out of the desire, the fierce resistance of the embattled will, and its exhausting, but glorious victory. Because each reading is a re-enactment of that drama, the sonnet never stales, and no explication is definitive.

    Worldly honor, to Hopkins, means one thing: the achievement

5 Later, thanks to Duns Scotus, Hopkins was to see that he need not renounce them, but rather re-direct them.

6 This is the reason that Hopkins added the dedication: "To Christ our Lord", with, perhaps, a stress on "our" to distinguish His Master from the natural master of the air, the windhover.
of recognition through his poetry. Three quotations are sufficient to show the value that Hopkins places on fame, hence the value and nature of his sacrifice, that he did, indeed, make the sacrifice, and that it was not an easy one for him to make. In a letter to Robert Bridges, dated October 13, 1866, Hopkins writes:

I would have you and Canon Dixon and all true poets remember that fame, the being known, though in itself one of the most dangerous things to men, is nevertheless the true and appointed air, element, and setting of genius and its works.... Art and its fame do not really matter, spiritually they are nothing, virtue is the only good; but it is only by bringing in the infinite that to a just judgment they can be made to look...less than vastly great.7

But, for himself, Hopkins did bring in the infinite. In reply to a letter from Canon Dixon, who protested reasonably, "Surely one vocation cannot destroy another"8, Hopkins writes:

When a man has given himself to God's service, when he has denied himself and followed Christ, he has fitted himself to receive and does receive from God a special guidance, a more particular providence... 9

And, after citing the example of St. Ignatius, a brilliant man who lived a hidden life, and other examples, he continues:

I quote these cases to prove that show and brilliancy do not suit us, that we cultivate the common-place outwardly and wish the beauty of the king's daughter the soul to be from within.10

7Letters, p. 231.
9Correspondence, p. 94.
10Correspondence, p. 96.
That the renunciation is not easy, and must be constantly renewed, Hopkins admits in another letter to Canon Dixon:

The question then for me is not whether I am willing...to make a sacrifice of hopes of fame... but whether I am not to undergo a severe judgment from God for the lothness I have shown in making it, for the reserves I may have in my heart made, for the backward glances I have given with my hand upon the plough, for the waste of time the very compositions you admire may have caused and their preoccupation of the mind which belonged to more sacred or more binding duties, for the disquiet and the thoughts of vainglory they have given rise to....I have never wavered in my vocation, but I have not lived up to it.11

"The Windhover" resists tidy summary, since the poem is operating on, and the poet responding to, literal and analogical levels simultaneously. As far as they can be separated, the natural divisions of the poem are these: the octet is a vivid recreation of an experience which the poet had had earlier that day; the first three lines of the sestet are the poet's reflection on, and response to, that experience, and the last three lines are analogies from the natural world (with undertones of the supernatural) of his spiritual response.

The poet catches sight of a dawn-attracted falcon riding masterfully the morning air, subduing its turbulence, rising, hovering with rapidly beating wings, then turning and gliding smoothly downward in a wide, curving arc. The easy, heroic mastery which it displays strikes a responsive chord in the poet's heart "in hiding", that is, in his heart which has chosen, as its field of action, in contrast to the bird's, the hidden life of imitation of Christ through sacrifice. Now, however, the heart is dangerously stirred by the qualities which the bird displays, qualities incompatible with the life that the poet has chosen.

11 Correspondence, p. 88.
In his empathy with the bird, the latter's glorious mastery and "achieve" becomes, vicariously, his own achievement of worldly recognition and fame, and the desire for these, repressed and still-smouldering, breaks out, unbidden, from his heart.

Now, reflecting on his response, and in the very reflection, recreating it, the poet steels himself against these allurements and ambitions, and, in a fierce act of the will, bids them, and makes them, collapse in his heart. Then, the incomparable beauty and mastery of Christ, the priest and poet's chevalier, flames out.

It is no wonder, the poet reflects wearily, that this is so. Sheer plod, that is, dull and arduous work of the plowman, makes the soil shine when it is broken by the plough and dull embers break open, in their dying, to explode in a shower of red and gold sparks.

The dramatic opening of the poem, with the words "I caught", suggests an intense activity and involvement on the part of the poet. More than a catching sight of is meant here; by a piercing set of intellect, the windhover is inscaped, seen in its essential qualities, qualities which are represented later, in inverse order, each by its most intimate association:

"Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume". The "catching" of the windhover by the poet suggests his mastery over it, prefiguring his mastery, in the sestet, over the allurements of the kind of life it represents. At the same time, he is "caught by", that is lured, attracted, stirred with an almost magnetic pull, by the glory of the falcon's act:

My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird, - the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!
As the falcon is drawn by the dawn, so is he drawn to, and caught by the kind of life it represents. The dual masterful control and unbidden attraction suggested by "caught" and "stirred", testify to the tension that is at the heart of this poem. The reciprocal enmeshing of bird and poet (caught, caught by) makes evident the identity, in the octet, of the poet with the bird.

It is because the poet perceives in the bird's flight an easy and royal superiority over the element that he calls the windhover "morning's minion", "king/dom of daylight's dauphin". He "rides" the air, "strides" high there, and "rings" upon the "rein" of a wimpling wing. The characterization of the bird as the knight of the morning, morning's chevalier, established one term in each of a complex set of contrasts, the other term of which is to be provided in the sestet.

Opinions vary as to what Hopkins means by his heart "in hiding". Many choose to interpret literally the phrase, and have claimed that, in choosing the life of a Jesuit priest, Hopkins was hiding from the life of the senses, of imagination and emotional risk, and have implied, therefore, that he chose the life of the priest as a safe, easy, passive, and negative insurance against eternity. Others have considered it to mean that Hopkins was hiding timidly from a more heroic

The interpretation of "drawn" as "attracted" is made by A. A. Hill, "The Windhover Revisited", Texas Studies of Language and Literature, vol. 7 (1966), p. 350. To the evidence he gives may be added the application of Levin's theory of correspondences, so important in this poem in the interpretation of the key word "Buckle!": as the falcon is "dawn-drawn", so is the poet "bird-stirred". Samuel Levin, Linguistic Structures in Poetry (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1964), p. 38. The meaning, too, supports such an interpretation: if he is a dauphin, is it any wonder that he is drawn to his Father's kingdom?

life of service to which Christ was calling him.  

The poem was written in 1877, the year of Hopkins' ordination. It seems reasonable to assume that Hopkins means that he has chosen the hidden life of service to Christ, "out of the swing of the sea" in contrast to the public life of heroic action in the world, as exemplified by the bird. In a letter to Canon Dixon, previously referred to, Hopkins uses the same phrase, lauding the example of St. Ignatius, who "lived...so hidden a life, that...one of the Cardinals...said that he had never remarked anything in him more than in any edifying priest." To interpret the hidden life as one of dull passivity and dejected renunciation is to ignore the fact that, if the poet has chosen this life, it is in order, paradoxically, to enter more actively into the combat against self. The difficult, but glorious resolution which the poem achieves is activity of the most intense kind, of the kind suggested by Hopkins, when, in another sonnet on the same theme, he speaks of crowding career with conquest.

The octet, then, is an admission of the desire for worldly recognition that the bird's flight has aroused in him, and a re-arousal of that desire, through the re-creation of the morning's experience. Now, in the imperative "Buckle!", he bids that desire break in his heart:

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride,
    plume, here
    Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then,
        a billion
    Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

    "in hiding" from something it fears, from the bitter implications of life and from Christ's insistent challenge to a more heroic plane of activity."

15Correspondence, pp. 95, 96.

16"In honour of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez" (No. 73).
When it does, when self is immolated, self is truly fulfilled; the reward that flashes from Christ is incomparably more beautiful than would be that achieved by worldly recognition. The breaking or buckling has no reference to the actual swoop of the bird. From the stirring of his heart in hiding, at the end of the octet, the poet has been concerned with his own struggle and does not return to the morning scene of the actual bird and its flight. The qualities which must buckle here, that is, within him, are the essence of the worldly ambition which the bird's flight re-awakens in him: the natural - "brute" - glory, pride, and achievement that he must, and does, again renounce.

On the interpretation of the word "Buckle!" depends the interpretation of the poem. Hopkins provides strong and ample evidence for its meaning as "break": evidence of correspondence in structure, correspondence in sound, and evidence of analogy.

The images throughout the poem have been those of breaking and breaking out. Admiration and the desire for emulation break out of the poet's heart when he sees beauty and mastery breaking out from the bird. He bids his purely natural ambitions break here, that is, in his heart; then a much greater beauty and mastery will break out from Christ. No wonder, he reflects: light breaks out of soil when it is broken by the work of the ploughman, and beauty breaks out of dull embers when they fall and break. This structural correspondence in a poem so interlocking in its various levels is a signpost to the poet's meaning.

There is evidence, too, in the sounds in the words which

17John Pick thinks that it does refer to the crumpling of the bird's flight. See his Priest and Poet, p. 71. This interpretation poses insurmountable difficulties; how could Hopkins will the destruction of the magnificent bird which he so admires?
immediately precede "Buckle!", and in the word itself, to support its meaning as "break". Hopkins' notebooks and letters reveal his sensitivity to sounds and their combinations, and his awareness of how such things as position and tension of the speech organs can, in a particular context, reinforce meaning.\textsuperscript{18} The stops - "b", "t", "p", "k", - as well as the fricative "v" and the consonant clusters "br" and "pr", combined with the frequent junctures and heavy stress, suggest the force of the opponent the poet battles. The vowels in the phrase "oh, air, pride, plume, here/Buckle'." are worthy of notice. There is a correspondence between our experience of how these are produced and their effect. Muscular tension increases, the line "climbs" to "here", conveying an effect of almost intolerable strain and difficulty which is released, at a gush, with the second syllable (the break) of "Buckle!". Within the word itself, the opposition of the two phonemes /k/ and /l/ in this context - the one a stop, the other a continuant - suggests a total break, with the /l/ sound suggesting a gushing out with the release of tension, and the poem falls to an exhausted quietness which, in the last words, explodes into scintillating beauty.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18}I think the onomatopoetic theory has not had a fair chance", \textit{Notebooks}, p. 6. For a reference of his to the position of the speech organs, see his letter to Alexander Baillie of April 28, 1886, \textit{Further Letters}, p. 273.

\textsuperscript{19}A favorite word of Hopkins to express a break or complete change is the word "dapple", and contains just such a sequence of sounds. One critic has remarked of Hopkins:

\begin{quote}
The words which most attract him are those which are a kinesthetic imitation of their meaning, and give a deep bodily, muscular, or visceral possession of the world. For him language originates in a kind of inner pantomime, in fundamental movements of the body and mind by which we take possession of the world through imitating it in ourselves. Words are the dynamic internalization of the world. J. Hillis Miller, "The Univocal Chiming", \textit{Essays}, p. 97.
\end{quote}
The strongest evidence, however, that Hopkins uses "Buckle!" to mean "break" is provided by the analogies of the last tercet:

\[
\text{sheer plód makes plough down sillion} \\
\text{Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,} \\
\text{Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.}
\]

The images are of soil and embers breaking. Since it is the purpose of analogy to illuminate by comparison, it follows that that to which the soil and embers are analogous also breaks. And that to which the soil and embers are analogous is his self-will. Through the denial of self, he fully achieves self.

Soil and embers, both blue-bleak, shine when broken. The association of "fall", "gall", and "gash" with Christ's crucifixion and death is prepared for by the poet's words, "ah my dear", addressing Christ in an overflowing of sympathy and love, just as Herbert had done. The beautiful explosion of "gold-vermilion" with which the poem ends catches the total meaning; gold representing the "achieve" and vermilion the sacrifice which buys it - the "failure" which is the highest success, and applies to Hopkins and to Christ, whom he imitates.

Less than a year before he died, in his sonnet, "In honour of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez", Hopkins objectified the intensely personal experience of "The Windhover". His letter to Bridges tells something of the humble laybrother, a hall-porter in one of the Jesuit colleges for forty years:

\[\text{20 Hopkins would not speak of the shine of a ploughshare which is "down /in the/ sillion", and therefore cannot be seen. He objected to just such a careless phrase of Bridges who wrote of "domeless courts": "Nothing can reconcile me to 'domeless'.... It has two independent faults, either of which would condemn it: courts are uncovered places in their nature; all then are roofless, a fortiori domeless; so that the word is without point. And next domes were not used by the Greeks,..." Letters, p. 243.}\]
...he was, it is believed, much favoured by God with heavenly lights and much persecuted by evil spirits. My sonnet (I say it snorting) aims at being intelligible.

In a later letter, however, he feels it necessary to defend and explain his first line: "Honour is flashed off exploit, so we say."

Significantly for our understanding of "The Windhover", he defends his use of the word "exploit": "...there is no other for the thing meant but 'achievement', which is not better." And of "so we say" he explains, "I mean 'This is what we commonly say, but we are wrong'."

The real honor, the true "achieve", comes from the heroism that only God sees, when the fighter, unseen, wages his war within:

But be the war within, the brand we wield Unseen, the heroic breast not outward-steeled, Earth hears no hurtle then from fiercest fray.

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.

The restrained excitement and activity of the military imagery, as in the octet of "The Windhover", and in particular of "crowd career with conquest", juxtaposed against the sheer plod of "those years and years by of world without event", demonstrate powerfully the poem's theme and the poet's

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21 Letters, p. 293.

22 Letters, p. 297. It is the measure of Hopkins' skill that in his dramatic sonnet of 1877, he uses "achieve" rather than "achievement", which would suggest something completed, rather than in action, whereas here, where the poem is non-dramatic, he uses "exploit" for the completed act. Hopkins always had a sound reason for his unorthodox and unconventional grammatical constructions, and his reason makes better sense than does Bridges' complacent dictum that "the grammar should expose and enforce the meaning, not have to be determined by the meaning. Preface to Poems, 1st ed., quoted in "The Oddities of Genius", Essays, p. 73.
disciplined victory over his own "war within".

In a letter quoted from at the beginning of this chapter, Hopkins wrote to Bridges:

This is that chastity of the mind which seems to lie at the very heart and be the parent of all other good, the seeing at once what is best, the holding to that, and the not allowing anything else whatever to be even heard pleading to the contrary.²³

Hopkins, in his chastity of mind fought valiantly against the voice of his worldly ambition, and held to his ideal of what was best - self-fulfilment through self-denial.

²³Letters, pp. 174, 175.
CHAPTER III
MASTERY AND MERCY

It is characteristic of Hopkins that he perceives seemingly contradictory agents or qualities, simultaneously acting on, or existing in, an entity, and derives comfort from their reconciliation. This is especially true when the reconciliation is that of affliction and serenity in man, through the simultaneous exercise on him of God's mastery and mercy. Not often, in his poetry, does Hopkins ponder overtly the mystery of the coexistence of God and of evil in the world. It is true that, in many poems, Hopkins acknowledges the evil done by man, but that evil is a result of man's wicked will. Sinners' ways may temporarily prosper, but, in the end, the sinner brings affliction on himself and on the world; there is no mystery in the existence of that evil, in Hopkins' mind. But when the affliction is apparently dealt out by the hand of God, or is not stayed by him, and comes to those who are striving to do God's will, the reconciliation of the problem becomes more difficult, as his "desolate" sonnets testify. This is the problem behind "The Wreck of the Deutschland" (No. 28).

Unlike his later sonnets, the poem is not one expressive of torturous inner debate, for the poet has already experienced in his own life a spiritual crisis, a storm of the soul comparable to the actual storm of the "Deutschland", and, flinging himself to the heart of its sender, has found warm and loving shelter. This poem, then, does not so much examine the problem of suffering as provide the answer. With a faith
as unwavering as that of the tall nun, Hopkins has found the key to the mystery of innocent suffering, and that key is grace.

In his comments on the "Spiritual Exercises", Hopkins defines grace as "any action, activity, on God's part by which, in creating or after creating, he carries the creature to or towards the end—that is, purpose—of its being, which is its self-sacrifice to God and its salvation." The storm of the "Deutschland" is such an activity. Although based closely on the newspaper accounts of the shipwreck, the poem is not primarily a narrative, as Hopkins, himself, points out. It is the spiritual movement below the event which possesses the poet; the wreck is, as one critic writes, "both occasion and symbol." The profound power and cosmological sweep of its movement derive from the poet's perception of the masterful and merciful hand of God in the hurl of the storm and sea.

The poem is structured upon, and by, the parallel that Hopkins intuits between the actual storm and the earlier spiritual crisis of his own life. Part I treats of the personal experience of the poet, and Part II of the experience of those on board the Deutschland, in particular of the tall Franciscan nun. In both, there are three

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2. "The 'Deutschland' would be more generally interesting if there were more wreck and less discourse, I know, but still it is an ode and not primarily a narrative." "Letters", p. 49.


4. This does not agree with the view that "the poem is an ode on conversion to the Catholic Church" or that the essential parallel in it is between his own conversion and the hoped-for conversion of England. For that view, see Elisabeth W. Schneider, "'The Wreck of the Deutschland': A New Reading", PMIA, LXXXI (March, 1966), 111.
parallel movements: the affliction or storm (activity on God's part),
the response (correspondence on man's part), and the effect (salvation).
Included in Part I is the poet's theological justification for suffering,
and a prayer that the purpose of the Incarnation may be fulfilled by
the exercise of God's mastery over men. In Part II, the poet's examination
of the nun's motives is closely related to the prayer of Part I. The
poet acknowledges the mastery and mercy of God and prays that the
example of the nun may bring many souls to Christ. By linking his own
experience to that of the nun, Hopkins ascribes universal significance
to each; each gives meaning to the other. The storm in the poet's
personal life is referred to in terms of the actual storm which it
parallels, thus further stressing the similarity of the two and unifying
them in their spiritual meaning.

Part I opens with an apostrophe to God in terms of his immensity
and power. The personal note is introduced immediately, as the poet
acknowledges God's mastery over him and his utter dependence
upon God:

Thou mastering me
    God! giver of breath and bread;
    World's strand, sway of the sea;
    Lord of living and dead;

At the same time, the universal note is sounded, for God is master of
all--land and sea, living and dead--and sustainer of soul and body.
In words reminiscent of Job, but which were, more likely, called up
by his own conception of being, the poet recalls the terror of the

5"Your hands have formed me and fashioned me; will you then
turn and destroy me?...With skin and flesh you clothed me, with bones
and sinew knit me together." Job X: 8,11.
crisis now over. The unbinding of his being—the collapse of instress with the resultant falling apart of inscape—was an experience Hopkins had felt in the past and was to feel again in the dark later years. So strong was his sense of the unity of being that even ill-health appeared to him as an unbinding: in his journal, in 1873, he writes, "In fact being unwell I was quite downcast: nature in all her parcels and faculties gaped and fell apart,..., like a clod cleaving and holding only by strings of root." It is God, "World's strand", who sustains all, and when man resists him and seeks to withdraw from him, as the poet, at first, did, he loosens the fibres of his being. What the experience was—whether it was his conversion, as Elisabeth Schneider suggests, or his vocation, as John Pick suggests, is not known but the evidence of one of his contemporaries seems to support Pick's view:

I have rarely known any one who sacrificed so much in undertaking the yoke of religion. If I had known him outside, I should have said that his love of speculation and originality of thought would make it almost impossible for him to submit his intellect to authority.

In any case, we have Hopkins' word that what refers to himself in the poem is all "strictly and literally true and did all occur; nothing is added for poetical padding."

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6 Notebooks, p. 182.
7 PMLA, LXXXI (March, 1966), 111.
8 Priest and Poet, p. 43.
9 Quoted in Lahey, p. 132.
10 Letters, p. 47.
Now the poet marvels at the fresh insurge of grace:

...and dost thou touch me afresh?
Over again I feel thy finger and find thee.

The emotion of incredulous joy and gratitude is similar to that George Herbert expressed in "The Flower":

It cannot be
That I am he
On whom thy tempests fell all night.

In his comments on the Spiritual Exercises, speaking of the threefold action of grace, Hopkins uses the same imagery as in the lines of his poem: "This is truly God's finger touching the very vein of personality, which...man can respond to by...bare acknowledgement only, the counter-stress which God alone can feel..., the aspiration in answer to his inspiration."\(^{11}\) The grace of which the poet speaks may well be that renewed clarity of vision by which he perceives afresh God's purpose in human suffering.

The next two stanzas recreate the second movement, the correspondence on the part of man to God's grace. "I did say yes/
0 at lightning and lashed rod;". In the same passage on grace, Hopkins writes, "For there must be something which shall be truly the creature's in the work of corresponding with grace: this is the...verdict on God's side, the saying Yes,...; correspondence itself is on man's side not so much corresponding as the wish to correspond, and this least sigh of desire...is the life and spirit of man."\(^{12}\) The imagery of the poet's struggle before his capitulation, with the spiritual buffeting localized

\(^{11}\text{Notebooks, p. 337.}\)

\(^{12}\text{Notebooks, p. 333.}\)
physically, is suggestive of that of "Carrion Comfort", written ten years later, and the experience referred to is similar, if not the same:

Thou knowest the walls, altar and hour and night:
The swoon of a heart that the sweep and the hurl of thee trod
Hard down with a horror of height:
And the midriff astrain with leaning of, laced with fire of stress.

The lines witness the poet's simultaneous sensations of fear and love, of resistance and burning attraction--"the midriff astrain with leaning of, laced with fire of stress"--so that his very self is split, giving rise to, as Christopher Devlin suggests, the wrestling image through which Hopkins objectifies the conflict within him.\(^1\) The poet keeps, in stanza 2, just below the conscious level, the memory of the other storm and wreck which his own parallels. The sweep of the waves, the perilous tilt of the ship, the clinging to the mast, and the horror of the long night are experienced in the diction and rhythm of this stanza.\(^2\)

The palpitating line, "where, where was a, where was a place?" reproduces the panic of one fronted with God's anger from which there is no escape but hell. Like a carrier-pigeon, he "whirled out wings that spell/ And fled with a fling of the heart to the heart of the Host."\(^3\) The completeness of the surrender is captured in "a fling of the heart,"

\(^{13}\)cf. "...why wouldst thou rude on me/Thy wring-world right foot rock?" "Carrion Comfort" (No. 64).

\(^{14}\)\textit{Sermons}, p. 118.

\(^{15}\)Although the finished form places the poet's personal storm first, the narrative of the actual storm and wreck was composed first, as Hopkins' letter to Bridges testifies. \textit{Letters}, p. 44.

\(^{16}\)"spell" may be considered the verb of the subordinate clause "that spell", which modifies "wings". This is partly because the use of the colloquial "spell" as a "short space of time" seems out-of-place in this intense context, and partly because of a felt association: carrier-pigeon, letters, spell. "I whirled out wings addressed to God" is a possible meaning of the line.
while, at the same time, the phrase shows that correspondence to God's will is not a passive acquiescence, but a choice of the heart, an act of the poet's will. With the surrender of self-will, the "selvesacrifice to God" of which Hopkins spoke,\(^{17}\) the flame of God's power ("lightning") becomes the flame of his love: "To flash from the flame to the flame then, tower from the grace to the grace." The two graces refer, respectively, to the grace of correspondence, within himself, and to its source, God.

Stanzas 4 and 5 show the third movement, the effect of man's selvesacrifice; the grace of correspondence opens the way to other graces:

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I am soft sift
In an hourglass-at the wall
Fast, but mined with a motion, a drift,
And it crowds and it combs to the fall;
I steady as a water in a well, to a poise, to a pane,
But roped with, always, all the way down from the tall
Fells or flanks of the voel, a vein
Of the gospel proffer, a pressure, a principle, Christ's gift.
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In this memorable stanza, the poet presents two parallel, but contrasting images of himself, the first without God's grace, and the second with it. Without grace, he is "soft sift/ In an hourglass", seemingly firm, but collapsing inwardly. The hourglass figure is particularly apt, for the walls of the hourglass enclose the sand completely, so that nothing enters and the motion can only be one of diminution. But, with grace, a vein of the gospel proffer, he is steady as water in a well which is held to its level by the pressure of springs flowing down the mountainside, feeding the well from beneath. The motion is imperceptible, except for a slight trembling on the surface, suggested by the word "poise".

\(^{17}\)Notebooks, p. 332.
"Roped with" refers both to the twisting stream of water down the tall mountain-side, and to the binding of the poet's being by grace. The rhythm and diction of each section correspond to the idea of diminution in the one, and sustenance on the other, conveying, in their union, in the one part, lethargy, and, in the other, energy.

The effect, then, of self-sacrifice is an insurge of grace, by means of which man perceives Christ in the universe:

I kiss my hand
To the stars, lovely-asunder
Starlight, wafting him out of it; and
Glow, glory in thunder;

The gesture is as spontaneous as the fling of the heart. One is reminded of Hopkins' entry in his journal in August, 1874: "As we drove home the stars came out thick: I leant back to look at them and my heart opening more than usual praised our Lord to and in whom all that beauty comes home." It is not only in calm ("starlight") that the poet perceives Christ, but also in storm ("thunder"), not only in comfort, but also in affliction. Hopkins' Christocentric view of the universe is based, not on pious sentiment, but on his philosophy, supported by that of Duns Scotus. Through the Incarnation, the Divine enters the natural; all of nature—the terrifying as well as the beautiful—words him. The incarnation means not only "manger, maiden's knee", but also "the dense and driven Passion", not only Nazareth but also Calvary. Man must constantly instress, stress God's presence in the world:

Since, tho' he is under the world's splendour and wonder,
His mystery must be instressed, stressed;

Hopkins, in the discussion of grace previously referred to, has said

18 Notebooks, p. 204.
that "so far as this action or activity [that is, grace] is God's it is divine stress"\textsuperscript{19} and has called man's correspondence "the counter-stress which God alone can feel."\textsuperscript{20} He means, then, that the mystery of God's indwelling in the world through the Incarnation must be discovered by the receptive Heart (instressed) and responded to (stressed). This is the only means by which man, on earth, can know God. Ten years later, in an unfinished poem, he said the same thing more explicitly:

\begin{quote}
What I know of thee I bless,
As acknowledging thy stress
On my being and as seeing
Something of thy holiness.
\end{quote}

(No. 155)

The next three stanzas (6-8) provide the theological justification for suffering:

\begin{quote}
Not out of his bliss
Springs the stress felt
Nor first from heaven (and few know this)
Swings the stroke dealt-
\end{quote}

The vast reservoir of God's grace ("stress") available to man and mediated through nature ("stars") is not earned by Christ in his divine nature ("bliss"), nor does suffering ("stroke") originate in heaven.

\begin{quote}
It dates from day
Of his going in Galilee;
Warm-laid grave of a womb-life grey;
Manger, maiden's knee;
The dense and the driven Passion, and frightful sweat:
Thence the discharge of it, there its swelling to be,
\end{quote}

Grace is earned by Christ in his human nature, through his passion and

\textsuperscript{19}Notebooks, p. 332.

\textsuperscript{20}Notebooks, p. 337.
death, a suffering both caused and inflicted by man. Christ's Incarnation is both life and death; the womb becomes a grave, and the tomb a womb: "Warm-laid grave of a womb-life grey." From the moment of his conception, Christ was doomed to die, and from the moment of his death, to live forever and to bring the life of grace and redemption to all mankind. The great sacrifice of Christ's Incarnation "rides time like riding a river", that is, was destined from all eternity and gives a new current of meaning to the world.  

And when he considers the reason for the Incarnation, he finds that reason to be, "To give God glory and that by sacrifice." Christ's sacrifice is one of perfect love; he is the archetype of the innocent victim. In Hopkins' theology, just as Christ's sacrifice earns grace for man, so, too, does man's sacrifice, his imitation of Christ, earn grace and salvation for himself.  

It is affliction ("the heart, being hard at bay") which most

21 In his notes on Creation and Redemption, Hopkins writes, "Time has 3 dimensions and one positive pitch or direction. It is therefore not so much like any river or any sea as like the Sea of Galilee, which has the Jordan running through it and giving a current to the whole."  

Notebooks, p. 343.

22 Notebooks, p. 344.

23 This differs from the view advanced by Elisabeth Schneider: "To conceive Christ's sacrificial incarnation, as well as the concomitant "storms" of nature, not as solely redemptive of man and therefore not as spiritually practical or functional for man's good but rather as free supernatural sacrifice for its own sake, is to conceive both sacrifice and storms as exquisite, to be rejoiced in for themselves..."  

PMLA, LXXI (March, 1966), 115. It is true that, in Scotus' and Hopkins' view, the Incarnation is not solely (rather, primarily) redemptive. However, it does not follow that it is, therefore, not spiritually practical or functional for man's good. Her own use of the world "solely" contradicts the view that she expresses. Hence the "undeniably masochistic implications" that she speaks of are quite deniable.
brings the realization of Christ's power ("Is out with it!") and it is affliction that forces man to acknowledge God: "Oh,/ We lash with the best or worst/ Word last!" This is the moment when, in the poet's words in another poem (No. 148),

...right must seek a side
And choose for chieftain one.

Man's will is free; he may say "Yes" (the best word), as the poet did, or he may say "No" (the worst). Like the flooding with tartness of a sloe bitten, affliction will flood with bitterness the man who does not perceive it as Christ's call to imitate him, but it will flood with sweetness the man who does so perceive it. Whatever his response to Christ's call, each man will eventually have to submit to it:

Hither then, last or first,
To hero of Calvary, Christ's feet-
Never ask if meaning it, wanting it, warned of it- men go.

In the remaining two stanzas of Part I (9, 10), the poet prays that God's will may be done in man, and the purpose of the Incarnation be fulfilled. It is not often noticed that the emphasis on the prayer with which Part I concludes is on God's glory, not on man's salvation, although that follows:

Be adored among men,
God, three-numbered form;

...Make mercy in all of us, out of us all
Mastery, but be adored, but be adored King.

This emphasis is consistent with Hopkins' view of the Incarnation as primarily to give God glory, and secondarily to redeem man. It explains Hopkins' five-stanza examination of the nun's motives in Part II, any one of which would, in the view of most people, be sufficient for salvation, and eliminates the necessity of positing "a new reading"—
that of the nun's miraculous vision of Christ—in an effort to make meaningful these otherwise redundant stanzas. In imagery reminiscent, in the one instance, of John Donne, and, in the other of George Herbert, the poem prays that God will work his will through man, whether by storm ("anvil-ding"), as with St. Paul, or by patience ("stealing as Spring/ Through him"), as with St. Augustine. The poet, with complete honesty admits the rigor of God's mastery, but, with the same honesty and out of the experience of his own "storm", he affirms the truth of the paradoxes reconciled in Christ:

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.

It is appropriate that Hopkins should link the two parts of his great ode with a reminder of the inevitability of death. In both experiences—that of the nun and that of the poet—God empties the being of self in order to fill it with Himself: in the case of the poet, by lifting him, through grace, "from one cleave of being to another and to a vital act in Christ," and, in the case of the nun, by this, and, literally, by death. The dramatic vitality of the language and sharpness

25"Batter my heart, three person'd God."
26"The Flower".
27*Notebooks*, p. 337.
of the metaphors for death make Hopkins' stanza 11 a forceful and memorable statement of the time-worn theme. No air of languid, ineffable sadness hangs over the lines. Death beats his drum; "storms bugle his fame"; death comes purposefully with the hurl and the sweep of the storm. "But we dream we are rooted in earth" and "forget that there must/ The sour scythe cringe, and the blear share come", and that, willingly or not, "last or first", all men go to Christ's feet.

The narrative of the storm and wreck (12-17) is the movement corresponding to the spiritual storm of Part I. In both, the storm is God's activity carrying the creature towards the end of its being. The image of the storm, God's use of the violence of nature to overthrow man in order to bring him home, is comparable to the wrestling image of Part I. The narration is vigorous, swift, and factual; one is aware, in the dynamic recreation of the tumult, of the poet's sense of God's power and purpose, carrying the creature towards the end of its creation:

Yet did the dark side of the bay of thy blessing
Not vault them, the million of rounds of thy mercy not reeve
even them in?

The same sense of the mastery of Christ is evident in the poet's description of the tall nun:

Till a lioness arose breasting the babble,
A prophetess towered in the tumult, a virginal tongue told.

Her "telling" of Christ, calling his name, is her response, her counter-stress to God's stress, delivered by the storm. Although the literal meaning of the lines quoted above is clear, the association of "told" with "tower" and "tongue" suggests the homonym "tolled" and points forward to the later "be a bell to, ring of it", so that, from the first,
she is an instrument for bringing souls to Christ. She has "one fetch" in her, one aspiration; she is totally bound to Christ. The perfection of her response overwhelms the poet's heart with joy, the joy of empathy with one whose insight into suffering is unclouded. Like the poet, she reads the storm aright:

Storm flakes were scroll-leaved flowers, lily showers-sweet heaven was astrew in them.

Hopkins relates the suffering, response, and achievement of the nuns to the suffering, response, and achievement of the Passion of Christ, whose five wounds, man-inflicted, were "scored in scarlet" on St. Francis, spiritual father of these nuns. Like the "Life that died", who "was doomed to succeed by failure" these, too, achieved salvation through selfsacrifice: "The cross to her she calls Christ to her, christens her wild-worst Best."

The call of the tall nun, heard above the storm's confusion, electrifies the poet's heart. What does she mean? Is it that she yearns for martyrdom, or that she is weary of suffering and eager for her reward? In stanzas 26 and 27, the poet examines each of these reasons and rejects both. Each of these contains an element of self; the nun's response is more perfect. It is total obliteration of self; she becomes another Christ. "It is as if 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." To her as to Hopkins, glorification of God is primary; salvation follows from it, but is not her primary

28 Correspondence, p. 137.

29 Notebooks, p. 332.
motive. Hers is a new immaculate conception: "...here was heart-throe, birth of a brain,/ Word, that heard and kept thee and uttered thee outright." The Incarnation recurs; Christ is "newborn to the world" in her and in those whose self-sacrifice is total. He is newborn, too, in the poet who interprets her call; his poem, no less than the nun's response, is "birth of a brain", and bears evidence of the tension (heart-throe) of its conception. The poet prays that others who died in the storm, the "comfortless unconfessed of them", will have said "Yes" to Christ through her example, and believes that this is so: "is the shipwreck then a harvest,/ does tempest carry the grain for thee?" The poet acknowledges the mastery of God, "Stanching, quenching ocean of a motionable mind", the fixed and fixing point of the flux of the world, "the unchanging register of change", and acknowledges his mercy that extends to all. From Christ's compassionate descent into purgatory, Hopkins gains the comforting hope that, to those who died in the storm, Christ will be no less compassionate. The poem ends with a prayer for the conversion of England:

Our King back, oh, upon English souls!
Let him easter in us, be a dayspring to the dimness of us,
be a crimson-cresseted east,
More brightening her, rare-dear Britain, as his reign rolls,
Pride, rose, prince, hero of us, high-priest,
Our hearts' charity's hearth's fire, our thoughts' chivalry's throng's Lord.

As so often in Hopkins, there is a brightening, a spacious glowing and growing warmth in the imagery of the last lines. It is as if the soul of the poet soars in an ecstasy of hope and love. That such imagery should end a poem whose theme is grace, the key to the reconciliation of the exercise of God's mastery and mercy on man, is proof of Hopkins' integration of religious vision and poetic technique.
There are many similarities between "The Wreck of the Deutschland" and "Carrion Comfort" (No. 64), written ten years later. In the sonnet, as in Part I of the ode, there is the same reconciliation of affliction and serenity in the poet, through the exercise on him of God's power and his love. One critic suggests that both poems may refer to the same occasion.

Although generally considered one of Hopkins' "dark" sonnets, there is a definite turn in the sestet from the violence of the conflict to the victory of its resolution, a movement not easily discernible in the "darker" sonnets (although discernible in the total pattern), but evident in the "Deutschland".

The octet opens dramatically, plunging immediately into the torment in the poet's mind:

Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee; Not untwist-slack they may be-these last strands of man In me...

The poet summons strength enough to resist vigorously the feast of despair, which is carrion comfort, for it takes the spirit out of man, and leaves him lifeless flesh. The ambivalence of the poet's attitude towards despair is revealed in the accumulation of negatives in the first line and in the antithetical "feast" and "carrion comfort". In Hopkins' distinctive view, to despair would be to untwist the last strands of man in him, strands which bind his nature, self, and will into his particular being. The collapse of instress would unbind him from the unitive vitality of creation, and mean the disintegration of his being.

The same idea is responsible for the binding and unbinding imagery in the first stanza of the "Deutschland". Desperately, he continues to struggle; his will to resist seems greater than his resources.:

"I can; / Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be."

To say "I can" is to say that he has life and will; the embattlement of the latter is indicated in its non-choice, "not choose not to be", rather than the positive "choose to be". His inclination, his lower will, is to give up the struggle; his choice, his higher will, is to continue it.

In the second quatrain, the strength of the adversary contrasts forcibly with the feeble, but tenuous resistance of the protagonist in the first quatrain:

But ah, but 0 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,
0 in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic to avoid thee and flee?

There is some question as to whether the adversary in this quatrain is Despair or God, but the imagery of "thy wring-world right foot", reminiscent of Christ, who trod him hard down with a horror of height in the opening stanza of the "Deutschland", suggests that it is God. But, whether Despair or God, the suffering is permitted or inflicted by the divine will. After having refused to feast on despair, he is now, himself, in danger of being devoured: "scan/ With darksome devouring

31In a letter to his friend, William Baillie, written in 1880, Hopkins uses the same metaphor, "Not to love my University would be to undo the very buttons of my being." Further Letters, p. 244.

eyes my bruised bones?" In view of the later identification of the antagonist, there is something breathlessly daring in this reversal of the Eucharist image. He is in danger of being not only conquered, but also consumed; what his embattled self is struggling to accomplish and at the same time resisting is the complete annihilation of self-will, a total act of self-sacrifice, as was the nun's. To succumb to despair would be to abdicate his man-duty of exercising his will; it would be the reduction to nothingness of both claimants— that of selflessness and that of self. It is his refusal to despair in the first quatrain which results in the continuance of the struggle of which the second quatrain speaks. The fact that there is a conflict testifies to the grace of God in him, the "finger of God" touching him. Christ, within him, calls him to self-sacrifice and the self opposes. The octet itself objectifies that inward tension, and helps to resolve it.

The similarity of imagery in the poem with that in his notes on a retreat in Ireland shows that, in this conflict, he compares his weakness to that of John the Baptist, who struggled with Christ over Christ's baptism. In those notes Hopkins writes:

Christ is "a heroic figure, of gigantic size, strength, and equipment; to whom he [John] was a pygmy child."33

"he [i.e. Christ] baptises with breath and fire, as wheat is winnowed in the wind and sun, and uses no shell like this which only washes once but a fan that thoroughly and forever parts the wheat from the chaff..."34

He refers to the winnowing as "vehement action" and the separation as

33Sermons, p. 268.
34Sermons, p. 267.
visible: "the grain lies heaped on one side, the chaff blows away the other, between them the winnower stands." (underlining in quotations above are mine).

In a sudden illumination, which distinguishes this from his desolate sonnets, Hopkins sees the reason for his trial: "Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear". God has sent the trial so that, through forcing into the battleground of the will the rival objects of the will, Christ and self, he may purge self. In private notes of a retreat made in late 1883, Hopkins writes, "During this retreat I have much and earnestly prayed that God will lift me above myself to a higher state of grace...". The next day, he adds, "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." And in notes made about the same period as "Carrion Comfort" was written, he frequently writes such reminders as this: "Try to attach yourself more to God's will and detach yourself from your own." The joy that floods "Carrion Comfort" is the realization that his struggle is God's answer to his prayer; God, through suffering, is urging him to a higher state of grace. The dazed incredulity is the sheer wonder at the mystery of God's mastery and mercy.

The joy of the illumination is the reason for the change to the past tense, for, because of that illumination, the long night or year of darkness is now done. He can look back on it objectively.

35 Sermons, p. 253.
36 Sermons, p. 254.
37 Sermons, p. 255.
Since he accepted the life of self-sacrifice, "since (seems) I kissed the rod,/ Hand rather", his heart, paradoxically, "lapped strength, stole joy, would laugh, cheer". He does not know whom he should applaud--Christ or he who fought him. "O which one? is it each one?" The answer is yes, for, through self-sacrifice, he has become another Christ, as Hopkins himself says one does. It is not possible to separate the identical. He loses self in God, and yet God is the very source of his selfhood, his individual being. His victory has come, paradoxically, from submission to, or, more properly, from the consuming and transmuting of the will of the poet into the will of Christ. The awesome recognition of his antagonist, less immediate than the recognition of the tall nun in the "Deutschland", forces the accusation and the interpolation in the last line, "I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God."

Hopkins was not always able to regain his equanimity in the face of the frightening paradoxes of Christ's "heaven-handling". When the dark closed in, he had once more to battle despair. The intensity of that struggle and the honesty with which he records it speak for his equal honesty in these poems of more definitely achieved reconciliation. It was not from "an idiosyncrasy of [Hopkins'] mind, to push everything to its logical extreme, and take pleasure in a paradoxical result" that Hopkins affirmed his vision, but from profound integrity and faith:

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.

38 "That is Christ being me and me being Christ," *Notebooks*, p. 332.

CHAPTER IV

ISOLATION AND UNION

In the poems which we have just examined, Hopkins' religious experience was depicted in terms of a wrestling with God. Intense and painful as was the experience, it had, inherent in its imagery the comforting awareness of God's presence. The very image of wrestling is an assurance of contact and concern. God's struggle for the poet's soul is much like his pursuit of it in Francis Thompson's "Hound of Heaven". After the pursuit is over, it is not too difficult to feel that the poet's gloom was, after all, in that poet's words, "Shade of [God's] hand, outstretched caressingly". But there is no such comforting awareness in the "dark" sonnets of Hopkins' Dublin period, when God has seemingly withdrawn and abandoned the poet to self: "God's most deep decree/ Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me,". The imagery is stark and spare; the compression and restraint of the sonnets speak a soul-anguish searing in its intensity. An assault by Christ, fighting within him as much as against him, would be a sign of his continuing presence and concern, but none is forthcoming. The mind is alone in its mountains. It is this Lear-like isolation that, as W.H. Gardner suggests, finds a responsive echo in modern man's alienated heart.¹

But the parallel with modern man is not exact, for Hopkins, even in his darkest moments, never loses his faith in God. God may withdraw from him for His own inscrutable purposes, but if man strives patiently to do God's will, God will not withdraw eternally. When Hopkins advises himself to creep under the comfort that serves in a whirlwind (No. 65), and that comfort is the fact that "all/ Life death does end", he is not being cynical. Death, in his view, is the prelude to the resurrection, and provided that man has tried to do God's will on earth, the attainment of the Beatific Vision. With the absolute honesty that is Hopkins' seal, he lays bare the anguish of his soul, when his prayers are "like dead letters sent/ To dearest him that lives alas! away". But, always, there is the terrible and glorious sense of the man straining towards God, his striving to bridge the chasm that widens between himself and his now-hidden Creator. The sonnets, four of which came "like inspiration unbidden and against the will" 2 "bear the marks of having issued from his soul in a catharsis of his burdened spirit". 3 Through them, he exposes his suffering, measures it against his meager strength, and wearily shoulders it again, to continue his wait for God's "not wrung" smile. For baffling as is "dark heaven's" ban, and deep as is God's decree, that smile will come "unforeseen times" to light "a lovely mile". It is this indomitable faith of Hopkins that justifies the view of his somber sonnets as "a series of mystical paradoxes." 4

2 Letters, p. 221.

3 John Pick, Priest and Poet, p. 143.

Before discussing the sonnets, it will be necessary to examine the reasons for Hopkins' desolate state of mind at this period, since at least some of the poems make reference to specific trials, and all of them are the outcome of his spiritual drought. That state was a result of the interaction of causes both natural and supernatural. Foremost among the natural causes was Hopkins' poor health, with its resultant mental and emotional fatigue and dejection. One has only to consider Hopkins' unique concept of creative unity to realize the sense of disintegration of being that illness would bring to him. The state of his health and the drudgery of marking numerous examination papers, drudgery made more tedious by Hopkins' scrupulosity, combined and interacted to wear down Hopkins' spirits. There is scarcely a letter of this period which does not make reference, often caustically humorous, but not the less sincere for that, to one or both of these trials. His first letter to Bridges from Dublin (March 7, 1884) mentions his physical weakness and anticipates, with dread, the examination work. In the letters which follow, we find such remarks as, "I am in great weakness"; "I am...recovering from a deep fit of nervous prostration...: I did not know but I was dying"; "in that coffin of weakness and dejection in which I live"; "I think that my fits of sadness, though they do not affect my judgment, resemble madness"; "My examinations are over till the next attack of the plague". There is no point in multiplying examples:

5Letters, p. 192.
8Letters, p. 216.
9Letters, p. 236.
which, out of context and gathered together, somewhat distort the truth. There were times, especially after a holiday, when Hopkins was in buoyant spirits and, in the later stages, when poor health did not affect his equanimity of spirit. In his last letter to Bridges, written about a month before he died, he writes, "I am ill today but no matter for that as my spirits are good."\textsuperscript{10} But this peace was to come later, after pitiless self-examination which ended with the "cliff-face scaled\textsuperscript{11}, a few months before he died. Now, Hopkins sums up his usual state when he writes: "I only need one thing—a working health, a working strength: with that, any employment is tolerable or pleasant, enough for human nature; without it, things are likely to go very hardly with it.\textsuperscript{12}

Another reason for Hopkins' desolation of mind stemmed from the political situation in Ireland at the time, and his own strong love for England. He disapproved of the Irish political movements of the 1880's whose object was to destroy the monopoly of English power over the nation. What made his situation particularly painful in this respect was that the Royal University was nationalist in its objectives, and that some of the Catholic bishops identified themselves with the nationalist cause. It is recorded of him that, once, when the University was conferring degrees, the audience sang a nationalist song, and Hopkins got up and left. The next day he explained that he would not have left if it (the action of singing the nationalist song) had not been so wicked.\textsuperscript{13} In

\textsuperscript{10}Letters, p. 303.
\textsuperscript{11}Sermons, p. 221.
\textsuperscript{12}Letters, p. 251.
\textsuperscript{13}John Pick, Priest and Poet, p. 114.
his notes on his retreat in Ireland (1888), he writes: "...the Catholic Church in Ireland and the Irish Province in it and our College in that are greatly given over to a partly unlawful cause, promoted by partly unlawful means, and against my will my pains, laborious and distasteful, like prisoners made to serve the enemies' gunners, go to help on this cause....This is a mournful life to lead."^{14}

A particularly poignant cause of his desolation, one linked to his spiritual aridity, was the failure of his Muse; he felt himself unable to write poetry or to complete any other works which, in his view, his position demanded. The intolerable pain which he feels at this failure is hinted at in his letters: "I wish, I wish I could get on with my play".^{15} The belief that his aridity is God's plan for him comes in these words to Bridges, "All impulse fails me: I can give myself no sufficient reason for going on. Nothing comes: I am a eunuch—but it is for the kingdom of heaven's sake."^{16}

As early as 1879, in a letter to Bridges, Hopkins admitted the close relationship between his poetic inspiration and religious inspiration. After reiterating his intention not to publish, he adds: "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."^{17} It may reasonably be asked why, if he felt

^{14}Sermons, p. 262.
^{15}Letters, p. 191.
^{16}Letters, p. 270.
^{17}Letters, p. 66.
unjustified in spending time on poetry, and if he did not intend to publish, he should so regret the failure of poetic impulse. Since Hopkins' honesty is at stake, the question deserves to be answered.

The answer must be begun by recalling to mind the idea central to Hopkins' life, the idea of sacrifice. Hopkins chose as his 'great sacrifice' the sacrifice of fame, a good due him and, on the natural level, greatly desired by him. It was his decision to choose this sacrifice which permitted, and indeed prompted him to write, for how could he sacrifice publication if there were nothing to publish? At the same time it solved his other dilemma, that of rejecting or allowing to rust the particular talent which God had given him. Yet his very sacrifice, the withholding of publication, dried up inspiration; to Canon Dixon he writes: "But even the impulse to write is wanting, for I have no thought of publishing". Thus, having chosen his "counterpoise" in his career, and made his great sacrifice, he has nothing to offer, for God withholds inspiration. This is the pain. It is as if God scorns and rejects his offering, the most intense, personal, and painful that Hopkins can make. No wonder that his spirit is torn by his failure of inspiration! In a letter to Bridges, he writes:

...the fine pleasure 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...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...19

It is this baffling pain at God's unsearchable ways that wrings from

18 Correspondence, p. 15.

19 Letters, pp. 221, 222.
Hopkins the tormented cry:

...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.

(No. 74)

One further cause of his condition, and the most important of all of them, remains to be mentioned, and it is what St. Ignatius, in his "Rules for the Discernment of Spirits", calls spiritual desolation. He defines it as "darkness and confusion of the soul, attraction towards low and earthly objects, disquietude caused by various agitations and temptations, which move the soul to diffidence without hope and without love, so that it finds itself altogether slothful, tepid, sad, and as it were separated from its Creator and Lord". It is, as the rules show, and as Hopkins' notes on them remark, a trial sent by God to the soul which is already penitent and bent on following Christ. Its causes, stated in Rule IX, are tepidity or negligence in spiritual exercises, God's trial of the soul's ability to progress in his service without consolation and special graces, and his wish that man truly understand his dependence on grace. He who is in desolation is urged to strive to remain in patience, while making diligent effort against the desolation. Hopkins notes, "The purport of this body of rules... is that consolation should be our normal state and that when God withdraws it he wishes us to strive to recover it." His private retreat and contemplation notes during the period 1883-1885 reveal both the desolation and his valiant attempts to overcome it. He acknowledges his "tepidity" and his utter dependence upon God. Thus, for September 10,

20 Quoted from Sermons, p. 204.

21 Sermons, p. 205.
1883, he writes:

The walk to Emmaus,...much bitter thought but also insight into things. And the above meditation was made in a desolate frame of mind; but towards the end I was able to rejoice in the comfort our Lord gave those two men,...and that it was meant to be of universal comfort...and that this was all I really needed; also that it was better for me to be accompanying our Lord in his comfort of them than to want him to come my way to comfort me.22

In June, 1884, he writes, "Take it that weakness, ill health, every cross is a help".23 But it is his retreat notes for the first few days in January, 1889, that most reveal his desolation and his battle. One quotation will suffice to show the depth of his suffering:

I was continuing this train of thought this evening when I began to enter on that course of loathing and hopelessness which I have so often felt before, which made me fear madness....What is my wretched life? Five wasted years almost have passed in Ireland. I am ashamed of the little I have done,...although my helplessness and weakness is such that I could scarcely do otherwise. And yet the Wise Man warns us against excusing ourselves in that fashion. I cannot then be excused; but what is life without aim, without spur, without help? All my undertakings miscarry: I am like a straining eunuch,...O my God look down on me.24

Yet he notes that there is the anticipation of happiness hereafter which is better than happiness, but is not happiness now; it is like a star in the dark that we see but do not see by. Helpless loathing and self-accusation continue, until the notes for January 6, which begin, "Yesterday I had ever so much light...and last night...and today...more than I can easily put down."25 But the light had not yet come, in 1885,

22Sermons, p. 254.
23Sermons, p. 256.
24Sermons, p. 262.
25Sermons, pp. 263-264.
when the sonnets, one "written in blood", and four unbidden and against his will were torn from him in an agony of spirit.

Although not itself one of the desolate sonnets, "Spelt From Sibyl's Leaves" (No. 61), in its intense, introspective quality, its mood of scarcely-concealed terror, and its somber thought, anticipates and introduces them. It was written in the same period and reflects a similar state of mind. Evening, solemn, shadowed, indistinct, silent and vast strains to be all-encompassing night: "womb-of-all, home-of-all, hearse-of-all". Earth with her comforting, familiar features disappears in the darkness; the sky, distant, alien, primitive, and threatening closes over man and traps him beneath. No words better convey the terror and anguish of the poet's mind than the words, "For earth her being has unbound, her dapple is at an end". The beautiful, dappled creation disintegrates; words broken at the end of the line, "as/tray", words jammed together, "throughther", violent words--"pashed", "disremembering", "dismembering"--reflect the mind's torment. Night, frightening in its blank impersonality, becomes more frightening still as a symbol of man's death and judgment. The sinister quality of the imagery and diction adds to the ominous atmosphere: "beakleaved boughs dragonish", "tool-smooth", "black,/ Ever so black" convey a pathetic, almost child-like fright. Life, once a skein of variegated beautiful multiplicity, is now unwinding onto two stark spools of black and white. Nothing can stop it, so let it; let it separate into two inescapable categories, right and wrong. But man must "ware of" such a world-be aware of, prepare for judgment. In a meditation on hell, Hopkins writes, "taste...all that is bitter there,...the worm of conscience, which is the

26Letters, p. 219.
worm gnawing and feeding on its own most miserable self." Earth has been "self in self steeped and pashed", and man must watch that he escape this torture-("rack") where, "selfwrung, self-strung, sheathe-and shelterless, thoughts against thoughts in groans grind." This self-torture anticipates the terrible suffering of "I wake and feel the fell of dark" (No. 67), where self grinds against self.

In this distinctive sonnet, Hopkins combines pagan and Christian elements, without falsifying or sacrificing either. The long lines and incantatory rhythms contribute to the somber atmosphere of a vision of the world in which man, insignificant, threatened, must look to his own destiny if he is not to be lost forever. The vision of the world is Greek, and, to a point, so is the vision of man, but Hopkins adds the Christian concept of possible salvation, even though it is in the form of an ominous warning "spelt from Sibyl's leaves". The bleak tone does not arise simply from the facts of death and judgment, but from the absence of any reference to the Redeemer and grace. On January 6, Hopkins wrote in his Dublin notebook, "pray...for the spirit of love in all your doings. For indeed it seems a spirit of fear I live by." It is precisely this spirit of fear which underlies "Spelt From Sibyl's Leaves." The blend of pagan and Christian elements reminds one of the similar blend in the poems of the seventeenth century. Hopkins, however, as one writer points out, has an example in Catholic liturgy

27 Sermons, p. 243.
28 Sermons, pp. 258, 259.
in the "Dies Irae", a hymn in the Mass for the dead.\textsuperscript{29} The Christian vision does not exclude, but builds on, the pagan vision. Yet, in this sonnet, the Christian vision is unbalanced. There is no despair, for the poet-prophet urges himself and all men to work for their salvation, but the work is lonely and the stakes are high.

"No worst there is none" (No. 65) sets forth "a paradox of comfort in the school of prayer".\textsuperscript{30} It is the tormented cry of a soul suffering the worst anguish that it can experience—that of its abandonment by God:

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief, 
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring. 
Comforter, where, where is your comforting? 
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?

There is implied in a word "pitched" the rejection by God of the poet, as if he is cast away as a thing of no value. At the same time, it implies the highest peak or sharp point, so that he is cast beyond the limits of grief, whose points threatens to impale him. The excruciating sharpness of pain thus suggested is echoed in the remainder of the octet by such words as "pang", "wring", "anvil", "wince", "shrieked", and the stretched-out "ling-/ering". His prayers, now "pangs", because they meet no answer and are turned back on himself like boomerangs, become more and more painful as they learn from the bitter experience of earlier unanswered prayers. The assertion that they can still "wilder

\textsuperscript{29} Robert Boyle, \textit{Metaphor in Hopkins}, p. 129. The first verse of the hymn follows:

Dreaded day, that day of ire, 
When the world shall melt in fire, 
Told by Sibyl and David's lyre.

Sibyl: is the natural witness and David the inspired witness of the day of judgment, as in the poem, the earth is the natural and the poet's heart the inspired witness.

\textsuperscript{30} Heuser, \textit{The Shaping Vision}, p. 89.
wring" contradicts the earlier assertion, "No worst, there is none", proving that with the measure of objectivity involved in putting the pain into the words and form of the poem, the poem has begun its cathartic work. One hears the metallic clang of prayer on prayer as all, unanswered, are deflected back to the sender. And yet, he must keep praying; to stop would be to despair. Prayer, unanswered, sharpens the soul's tormented awareness of its isolation, but, unthought, unuttered, would accept that isolation for eternity. This the poet refuses to do. And so he prays bitterly, "Comforter, where, where is your comforting?/ Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?" Although he gets neither comfort nor relief, the fact that he calls for them tells of his faith.

My cries heave, heards-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 lingering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief'.

Where, in the "Deutschland", the anvil image was a sign of God's mastery, here it is a sign of his anger. The whole of the poet's being is concentrated on the intensity of his suffering; he cannot now look beyond, as he did in the "Deutschland" to the mercy of God. Like the single motion of the herd huddled in a valley or like a wave on the ocean main, pain comes in surges, breaking and falling off, for the victim cannot long endure the agony.

The sestet lifts the victim from the age-old anvil to the brink of frightful chasms:

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

31 For the view that Hopkins thinks of himself as voluntary co-victim with Christ expiating the sins of the world, see Sister Mary Humiliata, "Hopkins and the Prometheus Myth", PMLA, LXX (March, 1955), 58-68.
Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep, Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

Man is dignified in the mountain and cliff imagery of these magnificent lines. He may look up or down; he may elect to scale the mountain, or descend the chasm. But now the poet can no neither. Unsupported, abandoned by God, he is terrified by both, and his only relief is to creep "under a comfort serves in a whirlwind": the thought that sleep and death will end his suffering. The image is that of a frightened wretch, creeping on hands and knees, to a ledge under an overhanging rock, and hiding there to await merciful oblivion. There is ironic contrast between the inherent dignity of man's mind and the indignity of the poor creeping wretch whose only comfort is to blot out that mind by sleep. Yet, in enduring, in "not choosing not to be", in waiting for the sleep that follows each day, he reaffirms his dignity and his faith that ultimately, if only after death, he will be reunited with God. For sleep is only a comfort because it is a brief death; the death that ends life is the greater comfort. The comfort, even if hard, is real; it is the poet's faith that makes it so. Death is the greatest of earthly evils, Hopkins more than once affirms. But beyond death is the resurrection. It does not enter into this poem as it does in many of his others, but the fact that death is seen as a comfort implies that the resurrection is anticipated. In a sermon, Hopkins once said:

^Partly through the Shakespearian underthought which W.H. Gardner has shown. Studies, I, pp. 178, 179.

^Heuser sees a different image: "comfort or counterpane on bed supplied the only comfort available, sleep the only relief, in the absence of spiritual comforts.". The Shaping Vision, p. 89.

...we must put a stress on ourselves and make ourselves find comfort where we know the comfort is to be found,... it is a comfort that the sufferings of the present world... are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us; such thoughts are comfort, we have only to force ourselves to see it, to dwell on it, and at last to feel that it is so.35

In this poem Hopkins follows his own earlier advice.

Through his poetry, Hopkins achieves a measure of detachment, takes stock of his sufferings and meager resources, and maintains control. He becomes "ironic schoolmaster to his own heart"36: "Here! creep,/ Wretch, under a comfort..." There is not a great distance in tone from this to the last lines of "The Shepherd's Brow" (No. 75), often called cynical:37

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.

The poet's discipline of the elements of his poem—form, rhythm, rhyme and diction—is in itself reassuring in its strength, for the poem's content, which is his suffering, is made to conform to all of these. The poem, although it brings no final resolution to the tension which it expresses, is a moment of peace in that tension, and a means to eventual peace.

"To seem the stranger..." (No. 66) is less intense, for the separation is from family and country rather than from God. It is less universal in its application, too, for, in it, the poet sets forth some of the reasons for his sorrow, and they are not everyman's.

35Sermons, pp. 47, 48.

36The Shaping Vision, p. 89.

37Gardner, Studies, II, p. 249.
To seem the stranger lies my lot, my life
Among strangers. Father and mother dear,
Brothers and sisters are in Christ not near
And he my peace my parting, sword and strife.

It is not the physical separation from his family which makes him a stranger; it is the religious separation. Some idea of the pain of the cleavage may be gleaned from the few lines of a letter Hopkins wrote to Reverend John H. Newman in October, 1866, just days before his reception into the Catholic Church: "I have been up at Oxford just long enough to have heard from my father and mother in return for my letter announcing my conversion. Their answers are terrible: I cannot read them twice. If you will pray for them and me just now I shall be deeply thankful." That rift healed, but the thought that those he loved did not share his religion, the core of Hopkins' life, remained painful to him. The paradox of Christ, "my peace my parting", Hopkins accepts, but it goes to the heart; union with Christ, the poet's peace, involves separation from and war with those he loves, "parting, sword and strife." It involves, too, separation in spirit from his beloved country, whom he loves as tenderly as a lover his bride, for she does not understand his union with Christ, and will not share it:

    England, whose honour 0 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.

The pleading of which he is weary is that for which he prays in the "Deutschland", the conversion of England; hence the wars refer to the same war implied in the first quatrain, that with Christ, his "sword and strife." Now he is too weary to pray. His physical separation from

38Further Letters, p. 29.
loved ones and country is his "third: remove". In all removes, he can get and give kind love, he admits.

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.

The love he can give and get is a natural love; what he yearns for is the supernatural love, the union in Christ with his family and countrymen, but this is denied him. He can communicate in everything except in the dearest thought and wish of his heart. His failure he ascribes to "dark heaven's baffling ban" or to "hell's spell"; either it is God's mysterious will or it is sin which blocks him. To be silent about his "wisest word", his faith, or to speak and be misunderstood leaves him "a lonely began". We know from his letters that Bridges had been angered when Hopkins wrote to him, "You understand of course that I desire to see you a Catholic, or, if not that, a Christian or, if not that, at least a believer in the true God", and he went on to urge Bridges to give alms to the point of sensible inconvenience. From his next letter explaining and defending himself, we may judge Bridges' reaction. He expresses gratitude that Bridges "only misunderstood and got vexed and did not drop correspondence." Hopkins, sensitive as he was, desperately needed love and encouragement. To be separated by, and rejected in, what matters most, his religion, leaves him a "lonely began". No comment can do justice to the brilliance of that phrase. To call himself the past tense of the verb "begin" is to suggest the simultaneous birth and death of his inspiration; his wisest word is killed in the moment of its con-

39 Letters, p. 60.
40 Letters, p. 64.
ception. He is a began; his union with Christ is his isolation.

Nowhere is the paradox of isolation and identity more profoundly and poignantly expressed than in the sonnet, "I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day" (No. 67). In the measure that Hopkins expresses his isolation from Christ, he reveals his unity with him, for only a soul intensely in love with God can so feel the pain of God's withdrawal.

I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day.
What hours, 0 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.
With witness I speak this. 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.

Darkness: becomes a symbol for God's absence from the soul. Oppression settles heavily on the poet's heart, like the thick, smothering hide of a beast, pinning him cruelly and helplessly beneath it. Here, as in the sestet, he is his "sweating self". The sights he saw and the ways he went are sights and ways into his own sinful self; no other vision is possible. The experience of the night becomes the experience of his life, just as in "Carrion Comfort" "that night" becomes "that year" of done darkness. His prayers return unanswered, unacknowledged, like dead letters to the sender. But still he prays ("cries countless") and still he loves ("dearest him that lives alas! away"). There is deep pathos in that small "away"; to the soul suffering the torment of seeming abandonment, it is God's presence—or absence—in relation to himself that matters; if God is "away", it does not matter where.

In the sestet, he tastes the bitter distillation of self:
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.

The poet recognizes that his suffering is God's will, his most
bailing decree.\(^41\) He is gall and heartburn, bitter and sour, the
sinful self tasting itself. In his notes, Hopkins refers to the taste
of himself; "of I and me above and in all things, which is more
distinctive than the taste of ale or alum, more distinctive than the
smell of walnutleaf or camphor..."\(^42\) Now the taste is sour, for the
leaven of God's grace has seemingly departed, and instead of rising
towards God, the self turns inward and corrupts. Hopkins' notes show
that such self-accusation is not pietism; he feels his sinfulness:
"Then I went out and I said the Te Deum and yet I thought what was
needed was not praise of God but amendment of life."\(^43\) Hopkins con-
ceives of the pain of hell as that of separation from God, of the self
condemned forever to grind on itself: "the worm of conscience, which
is the mind gnawing and feeding on its own most miserable self."\(^44\) The
self is totally enclosed, as in the hourglass figure of the "Deutschland",
so that no grace from God enters. The only difference between the poet's
state and the state of the lost is that theirs is worse, but that difference
is his salvation. By being able to conceive of worse torment, the poet

\(^41\)Mark 14:36. The submerged analogy in the lines is to Christ
in Gethsemane who prayed that the cup might be removed from him, "yet
not what I will, but what thou wilt".

\(^42\)Notebooks, p. 309.

\(^43\)Sermons, p. 263.

\(^44\)Sermons, p. 243.
is able to endure. By turning his mind from himself to others, he escapes, momentarily, from the agony of self-torment. Surely no escape was ever later or weaker! It is this that Heuser refers to when he speaks of the mystical paradox of "the proximity of the purgation from self to the sense of utter damnation".45

In "Thou art indeed just, Lord" (No. 74), Hopkins once more complains of his aridity, both spiritual and poetic, for, as he makes clear in his last sonnet, "To R.B." (No. 76), the two go hand in hand. The tone is respectful, but not servile; the poet contends with God, not physically as in the earlier poems, but verbally, as in legal contention, arguing the justice of his case:

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.

Here the poet has come through the period of self-accusation and is confronted with the unsearchable paradox of God's justice. In a manly tone, righteous, but not pharisaical, humble, but not subservient, he ponders God's incomprehensible justice. There is no rebellion; God is his friend, yet the poet recognizes and acknowledges God's hand in his suffering. In the same year as this poem was written (1888), in a letter to Bridges, Hopkins wrote:

It is now years that I have had no inspiration of longer jet than makes a sonnet...it is what, for more than direct want of time, I find most against poetry and production

45Heuser, _The Shaping Vision_, p. 91.
in the life I lead. Unhappily I cannot produce anything at all...All impulse fails me: I can give myself no sufficient reason for going on. Nothing comes: I am a eunuch- but it is for the kingdom of heaven's sake.\footnote{Letters, p. 270. The imagery is the same as that Hopkins uses in a letter to Bridges (1885): "There is a point with me in matters of any size when I must absolutely have encouragement as much as crops -- rain; afterwards I am independent." Letters, pp. 218, 219.}

He accepts, but does not understand. He turns to the world of nature and points out to the Creator-of-all his marvellous generosity to that world, in contrast to his economy with the poet:

\begin{verse}
See, banks and brakes
Now, leave, how thick! laced they are again
With pretty 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.
\end{verse}

Nature's world is fecund, fertile, alive; his is a "winter world", arid, sterile and lifeless. Then comes the sudden rending cry of faith and capitulation: "Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain". Nothing has changed; he has had no answer, no illumination of the mystery of God's justice, but from the depths of his belief in that justice, comes the magnificent cry. Never has the prayer for inspiration been made tersely or more powerfully. And, paradoxically, never has that prayer been more abundantly answered, for, from the depths of his sterility, Hopkins breeds this magnificent "work that wakes".

The remaining two sonnets of this period, "Patience" (No. 68) and "My own heart..." (No. 69) are poems of recovery rather than of desolation. Comfort comes through forcing the will to patience and self-charity. It is hard to pray for patience, because to ask for it is to ask for combat and suffering, of which the soul is weary, and of which it has had enough. In a beautiful image from the world of nature-its
use itself a sign of recovery - the poet speaks of patience as ivy, which roots in spiritual combat, and mortification of self, and covers the ruins of our past failures. But it must have roots. To ask for patience to endure suffering is to ask, not for the removal of suffering, but for its continuance as long as God wills it. Though this is hard to do ("we hear our hearts grate on themselves"), we must do it. After our complete resignation to his will, will come the peaceful healing of our wounds. One senses, in the poem, the effort of the poet's will and intellect to force a measure of comfort.

But real comfort cannot be forced, and in "My own heart", he calls off his tormenting thoughts to "leave comfort root-room". In his notes on the Spiritual Exercises, Hopkins writes, "There is a way of thinking of past sin such that the thought numbs and kills the heart".

And in this sonnet, he says:

My own heart let me more have pity on; let
My live to my sad self hereafter kind,
Charitable; not live this tortured mind
With this tortured mind tormenting yet.

The last two torturous lines of those just quoted show how badly he needs the advice. Comfort cannot come from blind and aimless treadmill circlings of his mind; he cannot create the comfort he needs:

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.

He cannot find comfort in his comfortless self any more than blind eyes find light in themselves or thirst finds water in itself. Self does not provide comfort; it must come from outside. In the sestet, the poet addresses himself as a tolerant, older brother would a younger who has

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47 Sermons, p. 134.
been making a somewhat foolish figure of himself by his constant worry-
ing. "Relax, relax", he says:

Soul, self; come; poor Jackself, I do advise
You, jaded, let be; call off thoughts awhile
Elsewhere; leave comfort root-room; let joy size
At 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.

Seek comfort by not seeking it, is the paradoxical advice; by not casting
for it, it will come your way. The advice is sound common sense, the
kind of advice that, we know from his notes, Hopkins had more than once
been given. Relief comes through movement out of self opening up the
self to grace from God. The true meaning, to have patience and be
resigned, for God will send comfort in his own time and in his own way,
is rendered less remote and less difficult by the dryly-humorous,
lightly ironic tone of "God knows when" and "God knows what". Here,
too, Hopkins is ironic schoolmaster to his own heart. He reminds
himself that God's smile cannot be forced; God is dispenser of his
grace. It comes upon one unexpectedly, as a patch of dappled sky between
mountains, and "lights a lovely mile".49

In his last sonnet, "To R.B." (No. 76), Hopkins, in an
exquisite metaphor, describes the moment of conception and the long
gestation of the poem. Inspiration, "the fine delight that fathers thought;

49 Laura Riding and Robert Graves make "skies" the subject of
"lights", but the grammar suggests otherwise. A Survey of Modernist Poetry
(London: W. Heinemann, 1927), p. 90. Elisabeth Schneider makes "smile"
the subject of "lights", but considers that it is joy's smile, rather than
God's. The Explicator Cyclopedia, ed. Charles Child Walcutt & J. Edwin
the strong/Spur, live and lancing like the blowpipe flame", breathes once and dies, yet leaves the mind "a mother of immortal song", "the widow of an insight lost", who lives with aim/Now known and hand at work now never wrong". He explains that it is the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "Sweet fire the sire of muse", that he lacks and offers an apology for his "lagging lines":

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.

The paradox by which a poem about lack of inspiration displays, in the delicacy and control of its metaphor, the truest inspiration is a particular delight of the poem. "The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation" of Hopkins' earlier poems are indeed absent from those of his winter world, but these dark sonnets, both sign and cure of his soul's turmoil, more than make up the lack in their consummate artistry and in their testimony to the courage and nobility of the human mind. From his winter world of spiritual struggle came spiritual strength, from his isolation, union, and from his aridity, his finest poetry. Hopkins' magnificent courage and faith refused Despair and dispelled the darkness and won, at last, that grace that, like his own poetry, "lights a lovely mile".
CHAPTER V

DEATH AND RESURRECTION

The consciousness of man's mortality has preoccupied poets through the ages. Responses to that consciousness have varied from despair, defiance, and stoicism to attempts at transcendence through art, love, or religious faith. Transcendence through a faith, based on divine love, is Hopkins' response.

Hopkins' faith is not one of easy acquiescence, as his notebooks and many of his poems show. This is not to say that, once convinced of the truth of the religion he chose, he ever changes his outlook. But, as we have seen in his "Wreck of the Deutschland", and again in the desolate sonnets, he always remains aware of the problems which he transcends. The paradoxes that confront the Christian remain: the bewildering paradoxes of good and evil, of God's severity and his mercy, of man's natural weakness and his supernatural strength, and of man in a world of mortality destined for immortality. The reconciliation of the problems which these paradoxes pose occupies Hopkins throughout his life, and forms the pith of his poetry.

Poets, more than other men, recoil from the thought of death. Hopkins' natural revulsion from the thought of desolation is revealed in his sermons, spiritual writings, and in his poetry. In a poignant meditation on death, he writes:
Death] is the greatest of earthly evils. It robs us of our all. Do you love sunshine, starlight, fresh air, flowers,...? Despair then: you will see them no more; they will be above ground, you below;... the dark day is coming,... then rottenness and dust and utterly to be forgotten.1

His "Spring and Fall" (No. 55), dated 1880, gains its poignancy from its tone of sad resignation to death, symbolic and real: the death of innocence and the ending of life.

It is the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.

But it is also true that "Spring and Fall" derives poignancy from the fact that the attitude which it expresses is so unusual for Hopkins. Seldom does he permit himself, as he does here, to remain on a purely naturalistic level, for, to Hopkins, because of the Incarnation, the natural is permeated with, and transmuted by, the supernatural. Because of Christ's birth, death, and resurrection, death has been transformed into life. "The Incarnation was for my salvation and that of the whole world", he writes.2 An eternal life of bliss for man, the complete human being, body and soul, becomes, not inevitable, but possible. The inevitability of annihilation becomes the possibility of salvation. "[God] has created us for bliss and He will give it, or the failure will be ours", Hopkins writes in his Contemplation for Obtaining Love.3

In the possibility, depending on man's free will, lie the solace and the fear. Hopkins' belief in a life beyond death helps him to accept the problem posed by the paradox of good and evil. Not only does final death become the possibility of salvation, but any affliction or "death in miniature"4 as Hopkins calls it, becomes a possible means of salvation.

1Sermons, p. 245.
2Sermons, p. 263.
3Sermons, p. 194.
4Notebooks, p. 275.
It was in this light that he regarded the natural storm of the "Deutschland" and his own spiritual storms of the desolate sonnets. His belief that they were sent by God for an ultimate good does not make more comprehensible the paradoxes of God's mastery and his mercy; but renders them in the darkest times, endurable, and in the happiest times, acceptable.

But there is another attitude to death discernible in Hopkins' writings. As his desolate sonnets reveal, his most intense desire is for union with Christ. It is the presence of self which precludes that union. Total self is hell; complete absence of self is total bliss. Death is the ultimate ecstasy, the last going out of oneself. Transformed by the Incarnation, it means not only the possibility of salvation, but also the possibility of complete union with Christ. In all man's efforts at union, something of self remains. Death is the emptying of self by God so that he can fill the being with himself. Through it, dissolution becomes unity. With typical imaginative vigor, Hopkins writes:

God rests in man as in a place...expressly made to receive him as a jewel in a case hollowed to fit it, as the hand in the glove or the milk in the breast.\(^5\)

It is this ecstasy that Hopkins desires. The desire for salvation, natural as it is in man, yet has something of self in it; the desire for union is the desire for selflessness. The two desires go hand in hand, yet it is for the second that Hopkins strives. At times it appears that he loses his perspective and sees merit only in the attaining of perfection, and not in the striving for it. A sentence in his spiritual

\(^5\text{Notebooks, p. 343.}\)
writings of 1888, written at the time of his greatest despondency, is revealing: "I wish then for death: yet if I died now I should die imperfect, no master of myself, and this is the worst failure of all." It is an impossible death-in-life that Hopkins asks of himself, and considers all else a failure. But it is pleasing to remember that this is not Hopkins' ordinary state of mind. His frequent references to Easter and the resurrection, either explicitly, as in the early poems, or implicitly as in the later, show his view that the attainment of ultimate bliss comes, not here through man's efforts, but in eternity, through the merits of Christ's death and resurrection. His poetry is "par excellence the poetry of death and resurrection [wherein] one hears, between the bouts of pain and grief, the golden echo of immortality." It is this joy in the resurrection which underlies the explosive pattern in many of Hopkins' poems. Following pain, darkness, and death, a beautifully lambent light breaks and the poem rises in a symbolic resurrection. This is so in at least four of the poems which we have examined: the bright wings of "God's Grandeur", the eastering, day-spring and crimson-cresseted east of the "Deutschland", the shower of gold-vermillion sparks at the close of "The Windhover", and the lovely lighted mile of "My own heart...". It is so, too, in others: "The Caged Skylark" (No. 39), "Felix Randal" (No. 53), and "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection" (No. 72).

In "The Caged Skylark", the poet compares man's soul, imprisoned in his body, to a "dare-gale skylark scanted in a dull cage". The idea is Platonic and Augustinian; although found frequently in

6Sermons, p. 262.

7Gardner, Studies, I, p. 161.
Christian writings, it is unusual in Hopkins who loved the world of the senses and found it good.

As a dare-gale skylark scanted in a dull cage
Man's mounting spirit in his bone-house, mean house, dwells-
That bird beyond the remembering his free fells;
This in drudgery, day-labouring-out life's age.

There is exact analogy in the opening quatrain; man's soul, his "mounting spirit", is a "dare-gale skylark"; his body, his "bone-house, mean house" is a "dull cage". Both man and bird are "scanted". The analogy extends to the action of the mind of each: the bird has forgotten his wild free home, and man forgets, in the drudgery and monotony of daily life, his spiritual home.

The next quatrain speaks of the happinesses and sorrows of each simultaneously:

Though aloft on turf or perch or poor low stage,
Both sing sometimes the sweetest, sweetest spells,
Yet both droop deadly sometimes in their cells
Or wring their barriers in bursts of fear or rage.

Just as the caged bird is sometimes happy, but often not, man's spirit has its moments of peace, but, confined in its prison cell, often sorrows, and longs to leave. In the first three lines of the sestet, the poet says that the bird needs a home, a nest, but its own "wild nest, no prison"; the expectation is that, in the remaining three, the poet will assert that the same is true of man. But here is the reversal and the paradox of the resurrection of the body:

Man's spirit will be flesh-bound when found at best,
But uncumberèd: meadow-down is not distressed
For a rainbow footing it nor he for his bones risen.
To appreciate these lines it is necessary to be aware of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, held, not only by Catholics, but by many other Christians as well. That doctrine is that, on the day of general judgment, God will raise from the dead the bodies of all men and will reunite them with their souls for all eternity. Just as the body shares in the good acts or in the sins of the soul in this life, so it will share in its reward or its punishment in eternity. The risen body will be man's own body, but without any defect of human nature and in a condition like Christ's glorified body after his resurrection: immune from decay, suffering, and death.

But all that such explanation explains is the phrase "Man's spirit will be flesh-bound"); Hopkins says more than this. He says, in his poem, that man's soul, so reunited to its body, will be "at best" and "uncumbered"; contrary to Augustine, and like Aquinas, he asserts that the soul needs the body to be "at best"; it is incomplete until reunited with its body. The body is not a cumbrance, but a necessity for the soul's bliss. One can imagine the comfort of this consoling doctrine to Hopkins, whose love for individuality was so strong, and whose delight in beauty was so great. Hopkins reverses the first eleven lines of Platonic deprecation of the body and exults in its glorious resurrection. The antithesis between "flesh-bound" and "uncumbered"

8 For lack of such awareness, one writer does not "fully understand the image of the last three lines" and finds the final image "so little of an analogy" that it is, to him unpersuasive. Jim Hunter, Gerard Manley Hopkins (London: Evans Brothers Limited, 1966), p. 74.

maintains the paradoxical vision, while asserting its truth.

The last analogy of the poem, where meadow-down is man's soul and a rainbow is man's body is a similar reversal of the expected, and parallels the reversal in the poem. The "mounting spirit" of the first quatrain is now earth-covering, "meadow-down", yet with the suggestion of airiness and lightness that "down", in its meaning of soft, fine feathers or hair, conveys. Man's "bone-house, mean house" is now a rainbow footing the earth but spanning the heavens, yet with the suggestion of heaviness and fixity that "footing" conveys. These lines illustrate Hopkins' delight in turning over and over in his mind the metaphysical possibilities of Christian dogma. Hopkins, himself, in a letter to Robert Bridges, explains his attitude:

...to some people this [the Trinity] is a 'dogma', a word they almost chew,...the dull algebra of schoolmen; to others it is news of their dearest friend or friends, leaving them all their lives balancing whether they have three heavenly friends or one - not that they have any doubt on the subject, but that their knowledge leaves their minds swinging; poised, but on the quiver.

Hopkins' mind, apprehending acutely the paradoxes of life, was, like a sensitive receptor, always "poised, but on the quiver".

"Felix Randal" (No. 53), is a deceptively simple poem. In it Hopkins effects the paradoxical theme which John Donne expresses in his "Hymne to God my God in my sicknesse":

As West and East
In all flatt Maps (and I am one) are one,
So death doth touch the Resurrection.

10See Gardner, Studies, II, p. 252.
11Letters, pp. 187, 188.
Nowhere in "Felix Randal" is the theme made explicit; it evolves with and by means of the sonnet's structure. As the poem wakes from death to resurrection, the tone changes from one of pity to one of exultant joy.

The sonnet opens with news of a death: "Felix Randal the farrier, O is he dead then?..." The death is not unexpected; the priest has tended the man through his illness and has watched the advance of the disease and its effects on the latter's body and mind. The tone is one of a pitying, compassionate acceptance of the inevitability of death. The relationship that has existed between the two men is immediately suggested in words, "my duty all ended". Then follows the swift, imaginative recreation of the man:

Who have watched his mould of man, big-boned and hardy-handsome Pining, pining, till time when reason rambled in it and some Fatal four disorders, fleshed there, all contended?

The contrast between Felix's former strength and virility and his later weakness and debility stresses the pathos of his physical and mental decline. The word "contended", with its suggestion of the peevish irritability of an ailing child, looks forward to the second quatrain and to the "child, Felix, poor Felix Randal!" of the first part of the sestet. Similarly, in his "mould of man", the word "mould", while denoting primarily pattern or scape, carries with it the association of death and decay. Thus, in the very act of recreating the natural beauty of the man, the poet suggests its imminent decay.

As in "The Windhover", there is a correspondence between the
sounds used in the lines and the ideas which these lines express.12

The last three lines of the quatrain provide, in their sound-patterning, a parallel to the swift recreation and slow wasting away of vigor in Felix Randal. The alliteration in "mould of man, big-boned and hardy-handsome" creates an impression of strength and beauty, and gains poignancy from the latent ambiguity of "mould". The diphthongs in the words "pining, pining" emphasize at once the lingering wasting away and the anguished but futile resistance to it. The lax, open, short vowels of "rambled in it", with their release of muscular tension, suggest the collapse of all resistance, and the alliteration of the soft "f's", in the last line, in this context, suggest the capitulation of the body and mind to the disease.

The transition to the next quatrain is smooth and logical; the first line of the quatrain carries forward the idea of illness and contention in the line preceding:

Sickness broke him. Impatient, he cursed at first, but mended Being anointed and all;

The impatience and irritability of Felix Randal have their correspondence in the staccato abruptness of the rhythm and in the startling nearness and unexpectedness of the rhyme of "cursed at first". Immediately following, the long smooth sweep of

...though a heavenlier heart began some

Months earlier, since I had our sweet reprieve and ransom Tendered to him

12"There is no doubt that synaesthetic combinations and associations permeate all languages and that these correspondences have been, quite rightly, exploited and elaborated by the poets." René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1956), p. 162. For Hopkins" remarks on the effects of certain diphthongs, see Notebooks, p. 248.
suggests the calming effect of the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist, and the burgeoning of grace in the man. The words "reprieve" and "ransom", followed by "tendered", which conveys simultaneously the ideas "offered", "payment", and "love", reinforce the idea of an offender who has mended (amended) and been lovingly pardoned, and of the purchase of that pardon by Christ.

Below the first abrupt lines of this quatrain, with its antithesis between "broke" and "mended", is the typical Hopkins image of the resistant metal being melted in the fire and beaten into shape on the anvil. As Felix, in his happier days in his forge, prepared the "great grey drayhorse" and others like it for their journey, so now, he is himself prepared for his journey into eternity by being forged in the fire of suffering. The irony in the image of the preparer prepared toughens the fiber of the poem. Through the efficacy of the sacraments administered by the priest, Felix Randal changed from a state of rebellious sin to one of resigned grace. Thus, the second quatrain parallels the first, but the order of the change it depicts is reversed. Whereas in the first quatrain, the movement was from physical health to physical illness, in the second, the movement is from spiritual illness to spiritual health. The second quatrain ends with a resigned, trustful prayer, committing the man's soul to the mercy of God: "...Ah well, God rest him all road ever he offended!"

The poet, in the first line of the sestet, turns his thoughts from the particular man and situation to the sick in general, and the priest's relationship with them: "This seeing the sick endears them to us, us too it endears." The two parts of the line refer, respectively, to the two quatrains of the octet. The decline from manly vigor to child-like dependency gives the sick a special claim on the priest's
love; the ascent from rebellious sin to calming grace arouses gratitude to, and love for, Christ in the priest's heart. The consolation that he brings to others is his own consolation. The image of the comforter comforted in this and the two succeeding lines parallels that of the preparer prepared in the last lines of the octet. The two uses of the word "touch"—the one, physical, the actual anointing which comforts Felix Randal, and the other, emotional, which acts on the priest's heart—unite the physical and the spiritual.\[13\]

The last three lines of the sestet realize, dramatically, the transmutation that has been the theme of this sonnet:

How far from then forethought of, all thy more boisterous years,
When thou at the random grim forge, powerful amidst peers,
Didst fettle for the great grey drayhorse his bright and battering sandal!

For one reader, the above lines "are both reminiscence and promise."\[14\]

They are, indeed, reminiscence of Felix's youth, but they are more than a promise of the resurrection of his body: they are that resurrection. As through the offices of the priest, Felix Randal has been brought, earlier, to spiritual life, so, through the offices of the poet, he is brought, now, to physical life. And this new life of the body of which the imaginative recreation in the first stanza was a pale parallel, is the glorious, resurrection of it in Eternity, where, as Hopkins says in "The Leaden Echo and The Golden Echo",

\[13\] The poem, in the parallel structure of its parts and images, provides a good illustration of one of Hopkins' ideas about art: "As soon as composition...enters the bounds of Art, it is curious to see how it falls into parallelisms". Notebooks, p. 89.

\[14\] Gardner, Studies, II, p. 308.
...Whatever's prized and passes of us, everything that's fresh and fast flying of us...
...too too apt to, ah! to fleet,
Never fleets more, fastened with the tenderest truth
To its own best being and its loveliness of youth:
    it is an ever-lastingness of, O it is an all youth!

It would be hard to conceive of anything more "all youth" than the image of Felix Randal in these powerful lines. From the slow, quiet beginning, with its soft alliteration of "f's", the lines gather speed and force, and explode into clangorous life. Just as the "bone-house, mean house" of "The Caged Skylark" is transformed into the arching rainbow, so here, the "great grey dray-horse", heavy and ponderous and made more so by the impossibility of hurrying over the words, with their rough consonant clusters and their repeated vowel sound, is transformed by the magical antithesis, "battering sandal", into a "Pegasus-like steed" of incredible beauty, the figure of Felix transmuted by grace. The sonnet's theme, the equating of death with life, is realized by the resurrection that Hopkins effects within the poem.

Hopkins begins his poem where most poets who speak of death end theirs. He reverses the natural pattern of life-to-death to the supernatural one of death-to-life, and makes the two identical. The greatest earthly evil becomes man's greatest good. Many poets have expressed the paradox, but few have effected the resurrection of which they speak by, and within, the poem itself. Herbert, for example, in his "Mortification" traces man's inexorable march to death from

infancy to old age, and in the last two lines prays:

    Yet, Lord, instruct us so to die,
    That all these dyings may be life in death.

But Hopkins goes beyond death to the resurrection, not just hoped and prayed for, but enacted by, and within the limits of his poem.

The full title of the sonnet "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection" is a statement of its theme. Besides the comfort of the resurrection Hopkins also expresses the paradox of man's insignificance and his inestimable worth.

As befits a poem based on Heraclitus' philosophy of flux, the octet presents a tossing, tumbling, lancing, moving world of change. "Million-fueled, nature's bonfire burns on". The thought that man, Nature's most individual inscape, her "clearest-selved spark", is annihilated, "in an enormous dark/ Drowned", fills the poet's mind with pity and horror. But with sudden energy and certainty, the poet rejects the despondent thought:

    Enough! the Resurrection
    A heart's-clarion! Away grief's gasping, joyless days, dejection.
    Across my foundering deck shone
    A beacon, an eternal beam! 'Flesh fade, and mortal trash
    Fall to the residuary worm; 'world's wildfire, leave but ash:
    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 potsherdl patch, matchwood, immortal
diamond,
    Is immortal diamond.

Here is no tortured questioning, no tentative explanation. Here is triumphant faith, in images of piercing light and sound: "beacon", "flash", "heart's clarion", "trumpet crash". The vision is apocalyptic: from the four corners of the earth, the angels sound the trumpet, summoning all to a new life. The image of the foundering deck recalls to mind Hopkins' terrible desolation, now overcome. Let all else die,
and leave but ash; man has another destiny. Because Christ became man, man can become Christ. Humble, pitiful, sinful, weak, he yet has something inextinguishable in him, the dignity conferred on him by Christ's assumption of human nature. The first uncertain phrasing of the common factor in the divine equation rings out, the second time, in a clarion-call of triumph:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{immortal diamond,} \\
\text{Is immortal diamond.}
\end{align*}
\]

In this study, certain of Hopkins' poems have been grouped according to the themes of mortal beauty, self-denial, suffering, and death. From that group whose theme is mortal beauty emerge the paradoxes of the changing revealing, by its very variety and multiplicity of opposing qualities, its one and changeless creator; God's real and intimate presence in the world, and his transcendence of it; and man's consequent difficult, but necessary, response of attachment to, and detachment from, mortal beauty. From that whose theme is sacrifice emerge the beauty and merit of the good which the poet voluntarily abjures in his own life, the attraction of that which he renounces, his difficult struggle over self, and his exhausting, but never final victory, for the battle must be constantly re-fought and the victory re-won. Because, to Hopkins, self was of the highest value, it was this, in his own life, which he chose to deny as his way to self-fulfilment. From that group whose theme is suffering, emerge the paradox of the reconciliation of seemingly opposing qualities, as manifested in the world of nature in a simple God, and the discovery that his mastery is his mercy and his severity his love. In the first group of such
poems, the reconciliation has been facilitated by a prior struggle and enlightenment of the poet. In the second group, emerges acceptance through indomitable faith, rather than reconciliation. The paradox of God's abandonment of the poet's soul in order to effect its unity with him is an incomprehensible agony; he can only resist despair as well as he is able, and wait for God's return, for his suffering cannot quench the spark of faith in him which tells him that isolation and unity are not antithetical, but identical. From the final group, whose theme is death, emerges the paradox of resurrection: man's greatest evil becomes his greatest good. This paradox brings Hopkins full circle, for, in the new life, when man's body is resurrected, mortal beauty has become immortal.

It is the perception of the paradoxical nature of life which gives to Hopkins' poetry its unique character. With complete honesty the poet records his response in his relentless effort to understand. That response progresses from untroubled acceptance in the early nature poems through difficult but fully accepted reconciliation in the earlier poem of spiritual storm, to anguish in the desolate sonnets, and emerges in an exultant shout of faith in "The Nature is a Heraclitean Fire". It is a response which engages both his intellect and his faith, and in which the one is always at the service of the other. His poetry testifies to both.
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