GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS'

USE OF NATURE IN HIS POETRY

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Since 1930, critics have given wide attention to the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Some of these critics have discussed the nature element in Hopkins' poetry; but, generally, they have considered the nature imagery as one of the less important elements of Hopkins' work, confining their criticism to general statements, or limiting their discussion to one, or to a very few, of Hopkins' poems. This thesis attempts to go beyond these generalities. By a thorough investigation of Hopkins' use of nature, it attempts to show that nature imagery constitutes one of the major unifying elements of his poetry. Special attention will be given to the discussion of the "terrible sonnets" whose nature imagery may be said to synthesize the anguish of soul which prompted the poet to write these sonnets.

Three groups of poems exemplify nature imagery as a unifying element in Hopkins' poetry: Hopkins' simple nature poetry, his poetry of praise, and the "terrible sonnets." In his simple nature poetry, Hopkins, by expressing his concept of the beauty of nature, allows the reader to share this vision of beauty with him. In the poetry of praise, Hopkins uses nature imagery to express one consistent theme, or "underthought"--the grandeur of God and man's consequent duty of praise. The "terrible sonnets" celebrate God's power, His justice and His mercy. These seven poems of poignant beauty are Hopkins'
expression of the terrible sufferings of the spiritual "nights" in which the only source of hope is God's mercy.

The nature imagery in each of these groups is closely connected with Hopkins' poetic theories of inscape and instress. Hopkins considered that the essence of the object is to be found in its individual distinctiveness. Closely connected with the teachings of Duns Scotus, this philosophy provided Hopkins with a basis for his theories of inscape and instress, the key concepts of Hopkins' poetry. In inscape, the intuitive glance which follows the sensuous perception of the object allows the beholder to see its individually distinctive essence. The word "instress" is used by Hopkins to mean two different principles. At times, "instress" is used to express the principle of actuality of the object; at other times, to define the total effect which an individual inscape produces upon the one who sees it.

Hopkins' poetic techniques are a natural result of his theories of inscape and instress. In an effort to express inscape accurately he sought to reproduce in his poetry exactly what he saw and what he heard. He called into play all the resources of language, of nature imagery, of poetic techniques and of prosody which he could command; and he produced a poetry which is at once dynamic, original, and beautiful.

An understanding of Hopkins' theology of nature is also
basic to the correct interpretation of his poetry. To Hopkins, all nature is a manifestation, an "utterance" of God; each separate object "utters" God in its own individual way. This sacramental view of nature was the result of Hopkins' unique ability to see things at once on both a natural and a supernatural level. He expresses the "underthought" of God, or of man's relations to God, by means of the "overthought" of nature. Nature imagery is, therefore, one of the principle unifying elements of Hopkins' poetry.
I wish to express my grateful thanks to all those who have so readily assisted me in the writing of this thesis. The amount of critical writing on Gerard Manley Hopkins is already so vast and varied that my principal research problem has involved selection rather than accumulation of material. In my research, the librarians at the University of British Columbia have given me generous and courteous service. During the summer of 1961, when I had the privilege of auditing an English class on Gerard Manley Hopkins given at the Seattle University by Father D. Anthony Bischoff, S.J., Father Bischoff went out of his way to help me. At all times, the members of the English Department at the University of British Columbia have been helpful and sympathetic. Dr. William E. Fredeman, my director, has been an ideal guide. To him I owe special thanks; for my success is, in no small part, due to his constant and willing assistance. Lastly, I wish to thank my own Community, the Sisters of the Child Jesus. They have made my work possible by their understanding and by their practical assistance. To my Community I also owe what this research work has given to me personally—a deeper appreciation of English Literature and of the beauty that it can bring into one's own life.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: "THE WHOLE WORLD UTTERS GOD"

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss the use that Gerard Manley Hopkins makes of nature in his poetry. Three kinds of poems exemplifying Hopkins' use of nature will be considered: simple nature poetry, poetry of praise, and poetry celebrating the power, justice, and mercy of God. By an analysis of the poet's attitude towards nature, of his methods of reproducing the world which he sees around him, and of his interpretation of creation as a manifestation of the Creator, an attempt will be made to demonstrate that nature forms one complete and consistent aspect of Hopkins' work and that this aspect is in keeping with the poet's own attitudes towards life. Special emphasis will be given to the study of "the terrible sonnets" since the nature images in them synthesize the desolation which the poet was experiencing at the time in which they were composed.

Many critics have discussed, in general terms, Gerard Manley Hopkins' use of nature. This thesis attempts to go beyond these general observations—to demonstrate how Hopkins' love of nature served as a source upon which the poet drew in expressing his varied sympathies, attitudes, and ideals. Thus the divisions made in the poetry reflect these different attitudes rather than strict, chronological categories. The complex nature of Hopkins' verse
necessitates a clear statement of the limitations of this thesis. I do not propose to discuss Hopkins' metrics; nor will I consider the theological aspects of Hopkins' work, except as they may be necessary to document the topic under discussion. Moreover, I will use Hopkins' prose works only to substantiate his poetic works.

Gerard Manley Hopkins loved nature passionately. Even as a child, his observant eye and inquiring mind taught him much about the beauty of nature in the world around him. He found beauty everywhere. A little waterfall, a cloud, a sunset, a star-filled sky—each pied or dappled thing—all had for him its own fascinating and absorbing beauty. He loved it all; and, because he loved it, he learned to write of nature intimately, confidently, and lovingly. His early work showed a decidedly Keatsian strain. "The boy Hopkins," says Dr. Gardner, "equals the twenty-two-year-Keats in the luscious quality of his Romantic imagery."¹ The description of the sunset in "The Vision of the Mermaids" is typical of the early Hopkins:

Now all things rosy turned: the west had grown To an orb'd rose which, by hot panting blown

Apart, betwix't ten thousand petall'd lips
By interchange gasp'd splendor and eclipse. ²

On the natural level this sensuous beauty of the world appealed so deeply to Hopkins that his heart thrilled to all that was good and beautiful. The many entries about nature in his early diaries and notebooks show that he accepted sensuous beauty as essentially good. Only once, in "The Habit of Perfection," he seemed to reject the sensuous appeal of beauty. Yet, even in this instance, he rejected beauty not as an evil but as a lesser good. Except for this one youthful, perhaps over-earnest appeal for austerity, Hopkins expressed his delight in the world of nature. In his mature years, however, nature was to become far more significant to Hopkins. He developed what John Pick has called a sacramental view of nature, in which all nature was for him something consecrated, possessing a sacredness within itself and having an influence analogous to that of a sacrament.³ Although Hopkins arrived at this sacramental view of nature from his own

²Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, The First Edition with Preface and Notes by Robert Bridges. Edited with additional Poems, Notes, and A Biographical Introduction by W. H. Gardner; 3rd edition (New York, 1948), p.18--hereafter cited as Poems. All subsequent references to poems will be inserted in the text, immediately following the quotation. Roman numerals will be used to designate the number of the poem (1948 Edition); arabic numbers, to designate the line of the poem.

experiences, his whole theory was undoubtedly influenced by his Jesuit training. It was Hopkins' application of "a concentrated vein" that was responsible for what John Pick called "absolute honesty, directness, passionate personal utterance and concentrated intensity."

This sacramental view of nature is perfectly in keeping with Roman Catholic theology, which holds that God the Son is the Manifestation, the Revelation—the Utterance—of God. Through the Incarnation, the Word of God has been revealed in human form, in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Perfect God-man. Hopkins' view is that just as God has revealed Himself within the Trinity by His Word, so He continually reveals Himself, outside the Trinity, through all His creation. Nature, then, is this utterance of God outside the Trinity.

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

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6Pick, p. 127.

All creation has as its purpose to glorify God. Each creature serves by being what God has willed it to be. The more perfectly it fulfills this purpose, the more glory it gives to God. Hopkins further added that there is a distinction to be made between the glory other created things give to God and that which man gives:

The sun and the stars shining glorify God. They stand where he placed them; they move where he bid them . . . . They glorify God, but they do not know it. The birds sing to him, the thunder speaks of his terror, the lion is like his strength, the sea is like his greatness, the honey like his sweetness; they are something like him, they make him known, they tell of him, they give him glory, but they do not know they do . . . . This is poor praise, faint reverence, slight service, dull glory. Nevertheless what they can, they always do. But amidst them all is man . . . [who was] created like the rest then to praise, reverence and serve God, to give him glory. He does so, even by his being, beyond all visible creatures. . . . But man can know God, can mean to give him glory.8

Hopkins' attitude was clearly that all natural beauty is to be classed as a part of the great whole of creation, performing the function for which it was created. He saw God as an underlying cause of all natural beauty. He was able to subordinate sensuous beauty to God's beauty because he could shift his attention and admiration from the natural beauty of the object to its intellectual, and then to its moral, beauty. "Hopkins habitually shifts his gaze from the order and perspectives of nature to the analogous but grander scenery of the moral and intellectual

8Sermons, p.239.
order."  Hopkins' next step was to refer whatever beauty he perceived to God who had first given it to man: "Give beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty back to God, beauty's self and beauty's giver." (LIX, 37).

Whenever Hopkins perceived an object with his senses, he accounted for it with his intellect in a detailed and scientific way. His description of the chestnut fan in "On the Origin of Beauty" offers a good illustration of how his mind worked. The chestnut-fan with its seven leaves is beautiful, not by its complete symmetry, but by the contrast afforded to its regularity. Six leaves are symmetrical; variety is furnished by the seventh leaf. As, in the chestnut-fan, regularity with variety is the principle of beauty, so the beauty of an object of a particular species lies in its individually distinctive pattern. "Hopkins habitually looked at objects with the fixed determination to catch what was individually distinctive in them in order to arrive at some insight into their essence as individuals." It is to

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label this pattern of individually distinctive beauty that Hopkins coined the name inscape. The sensation of inscape he called 'stress' or 'instress'.

W. A. M. Peters has discussed inscape and instress at length. To define "inscape" he compares it with "landscape" and "seascape."

The suffix 'scape' in 'landscape' and 'seascape' posits the presence of a unifying principle which enables us to consider part of the countryside or sea as a unit and as an individual, but so that this part is perceived to carry the typical properties of the actually undivided whole. By placing special emphasis on this second aspect of 'scape', ... 'scape' comes to stand for that being which is an exact copy or reflection of the individual whole on which it is dependent for its existence.

For Hopkins, every natural object, every work of art, and every human being has a unique individual self or "thisness." Later he coupled his own idea of the "self" with that of Duns Scotus' "haecceitas." According to Hopkins' theory, each separate object (whether a natural object, a work of art, a thought, or a human being) is different from every other one of its species,

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12 See Peters, Chapters I and II

13 Peters, p.2.

14 See Heuser, p.24 ff. for an explanation that Hopkins did not get his idea of inscape and instress from Scotus since he used both terms in "Parmenides," an undergraduate essay. Hopkins did not read Scotus until 1872, but reading it confirmed his intuitions and speculations about inscape and instress. "Haecceitas" is the individual nature as distinguished from the universal essence of an object.
and it is that which is particular to it which makes every object what it is.\textsuperscript{15}

One of Hopkins' best examples of inscape is his description of the lambs on a spring day: "'The young lambs bound to the tabour's sound.' They toss and toss: It is as if it were the earth that flung them, not themselves. It is the pitch of graceful agility when we think that."\textsuperscript{16} Here the inscape consists of two distinct phases, the conscious and the unconscious. Hopkins' conscious effort to regard these "bounding-to-the-tabour's sound" lambs allowed him to glimpse the relationship between the lambs and the earth until it appeared as if the earth were bouncing them rather than that they were tossing by their own efforts. Then, having caught this relationship, Hopkins saw in the particular lamb-earth unit the expression of all graceful agility, and through the lamb-earth unit he unconsciously inscaped the universal meaning of graceful agility.

Bluebells always had a special appeal for Hopkins. He describes them several times. His \textit{Journal} entry for May 9, 1871 is

\textsuperscript{15}Introduction," \textit{A Hopkins Reader}, edited by John Pick (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), xvi.\textit{ff}.

\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Journals}, p.206.
typical. After describing the bluebells in the woods "in blackish spreads or sheddings like the spots on a snake," he goes on to give a detailed description of their effects on each of the senses of touch, taste, and smell. For the sense of sight he says:

But this is easy, it is the eye they baffle. They give one a fancy of panpipes and of some wind instruments with stops . . . they take stronger turns, in the head like sheephooks or, when more waved throughout, like the waves riding through a whip that is being smacked . . . the inscape of the flower most finely carried out in the siding of the axes, each striking a greater and greater slant, is finished in these clustered buds, which for the most part are not straightened but rise to the end like a tongue and this and their tapering and a little flattening they have make them look like the heads of snakes.17

On May 18, 1870, his Journal reads: "I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful that the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of Our Lord by it. Its inscape is [mixed of] strength and grace."18 In both these quotations, Hopkins expresses his theory of the unique, individual essence of the bluebell as one distinct species of the plant world. It differs from all other plants in touch, smell and sight. Moreover, because each individual bluebell differs from every other bluebell, it expresses its own particular inscape. Hopkins

17 Journals, p.209.
18 Journals, p.199.
further expresses his intense love of nature when he comments on the ash tree felled in the garden: "I heard the sound and looked out and seeing it maimed there came at that moment a pang and I wished to die and not see the inscapes of the world destroyed any more." 19

Hopkins appeals to the modern reader because he writes of particular details rather than of the universal. The trend in modern times has been from the universal to the particular in subjects, methods of treatment, and style. Hopkins particularizes a universal idea. He takes a broad truth and works it down. Inscape is for him a broad truth. To get to its meaning he takes particular examples. He wants to know what it is in a bluebell that makes it a bluebell; he tries to understand its "bluebell-ness" in order the better to understand the law of all bluebells, in order also to get a better grasp of the law of all objects, and to grasp further the relationship of each of these creatures with its Creator. Hopkins felt that inscape was necessary for writing true poetry. It was only when he had caught the inscape of an object—when the individual nature of the object had made itself clear to him so that the object stood out for what it was—that he felt it possible to write about it. 20


20 I have taken this idea, and a number of other ideas from lecture notes of Father D. Anthony Bischoff who gave an English class on Gerard Manley Hopkins at Seattle University, Summer 1961. In succeeding pages these references will be marked by an asterisk.
The idea of instress follows naturally from that of inscape. Hopkins used the term "instress" in two widely different senses: as cause and as effect. Considered causally, instress is "that core of being or inherent energy which is the actuality of the object." Such instress "stems from the unique being" of the object, and uniqueness of being is brought to its fullest existence "only by the instress carried in it." In the causal sense, instress is "the supernatural force which binds in and bounds the finite One. . . . It is in effect the hand of God upon his creation." In "Parmenides" Hopkins explains how all things are upheld by stress, since it is "the stem of stress" between us and the objects which allows us to reach universals from particular knowledge. Considered as effect, instress is "the specifically individual impression an object makes on man," as when Hopkins writes "I felt the instress and the charm of Wales." When a person takes in an inscape he does so because of the instress which stems from the unique being of the object.

21 Peters, p.15.
22 For instress, see Marjorie Coogan, "Inscape and Instress: Further Analogies with Scotus," Publications of Modern Language Association. LXV (March 1950), 66-74. I have made use of this article as well as of Peters for my explanation of inscape and instress.
23 Gardiner, I, p.11.
24 Peters, p.15.
25 Journals, p.258.
Instress may be either active or passive. It is passive when the inscape is born in upon the mind; whereas, when deliberate contemplation produces a purely subjective revelation, it is active. Although the causal aspect runs like an undercurrent through all his works, the second sense of instress predominates in Hopkins' poetry, especially in his later works.

It should be noted, too, that there exists a definite relationship between instress and inscape. Every inscape will have an instress. While inscape belongs to the object, instress conveys the distinctiveness of the object to the perceiver. Inscape can, therefore, be described in terms of sense impressions; instress in terms of impressions on the soul.26

Thomas Merton has summed up Hopkins' whole theory of inscape and instress, together with his sacramental view of nature:

A tree gives glory to God first of all by being a tree. For in being what God meant it to be it is imitating an idea which is in God and which is therefore not distinct from the essence of God, and therefore the tree imitates God by being a tree. / The more a tree is like itself the more it is like Him. If it tried to be anything else which it was never intended to be, it would be less like God and therefore it would give Him less Glory. . . . That particular tree will give God glory by spreading out its roots and raising its branches into the air and the light in a way that no other tree before or after it ever did or will do. Therefore each particular thing . . . gives God glory by being precisely what He wants it to be . . . The forms and individual characters of living and

26 Peters, p.15.
The tree is a unique creation because of its individuality. It has its own particular inscape whose instress, or effect upon the beholder, is also unique. At the same time, the tree because it is a creation—an utterance of God—derives both its life and its form from the Creator. Therefore it may be said to partake of the nature of God. The nearer it comes to being a perfect tree, the more perfect will be its "utterance" of God. This quality constitutes the tree's sacramental property which is closely dependent on its individuality, and is closely related to both its inscape and its instress.

The sacramental quality is present in much of Hopkins' nature poetry in which sensuous appeal of nature's beauty becomes the starting point for Hopkins to look deeper into its being, to realize its inscape, and to feel its instress. He might look long and hard at a stone in the garden until it appeared in its own individuality; by doing so he realized its inscape and, having caught its beauty, he confined it with his other "beauties" to his "Treasury of explored beauty."  


feeling made Hopkins most accurate in the technical aspects of his writing, so that his work, already beautiful in thought, received a form perfectly suited to its thought.

The typical structure of Hopkins' lyrics is a description, followed by a comment, an application. This method of writing is well adapted to the progress of thought from the sensuous beauty of the object, to the intellectual and moral beauty which he perceived behind it. Most of Hopkins' poems are sonnets. This form was suited to the intensity of Hopkins' expression. Because he had so little time for literature, Hopkins found it difficult to write long poems; he could, however, in the short intervals of time which he managed to salvage from his work, write down a sonnet which he had already created within his mind, or he could polish up one which he had previously written.

Hopkins made use of every technical skill which he possessed to express the individual distinctiveness of each nature object. He wished to express each of them so vividly that we would realize the inscape and with him feel the instress or impact which that inscape produced. This desire to express the real inscape by the word led Hopkins to the use of what are generally called his

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"oddities"—his peculiar use of words, his peculiar ordering of these words into sentences, and his various techniques of writing. Each of these aimed to do the same thing—to reproduce what he saw in its distinctive individuality.

Hopkins' original use of words was an effort to arrive at the one correct word which would express the inscape of the object. Thus ordinary, commonplace words were used if they suited his purpose. But, if he found it necessary, he employed little used but still acceptable words. He might, by a fresh and original use of an obsolete word, revive it. When such means failed there was still the old English custom of combining words to make new compounds or even of coining new words. Because Hopkins habitually used concrete words he was able to create vivid pictures of nature. Almost any of his nature poems may be used to exemplify this original use of words; one of the most effective is "Inversnaid" with its "darkness burn." (LVI, 1).

Hopkins' techniques also contribute to the same effect. He left out unnecessary words, to make his descriptions more startling, he changed the order of words in a sentence. The same idea of obtaining simplicity and of getting nearer to the language of common speech influenced Hopkins' use of alliteration and assonance. It is worth noting, too, that his use of accentual verse and sprung rhythm tends towards the same effect, though a separate essay would be necessary to pursue even a few of the ramifications of Hopkins' prosody. Such devices do seem confusing at first,
but when Hopkins' technique is understood, much of the difficulty of his poetry disappears. Frequently, the meaning of a whole poem "explodes," as he wished it to do. As complicated as Hopkins' poetry appears, especially to the uninitiated, there is a key to its understanding, a key which Hopkins himself gave to Bridges.\(^3^0\) Writing to Bridges concerning "The Eurydice," he tells him to "take breath and read it with the ears, as I always wished to be read, and my verse becomes all right."\(^3^1\) Every poem has a sense pattern and a sound pattern. While most Victorian poets tended to emphasize the sense pattern, Hopkins realized that, if poetry is read aloud with proper pronunciation, rhythm, and modulation, the sound pattern will both complement the sense pattern and be a source of beauty in itself.\(^3^2\)

To develop the meaning of his poems, Hopkins made such constant use of nature that it may be considered as one of the main motifs of his poetry. If it is classified according to its nature content, Hopkins' poetry falls into three main categories: simple nature poetry, poetry of praise, and poetry celebrating God's power, justice and mercy. In the simple nature poetry, Hopkins is primarily concerned with the expression of inscape in nature,

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\(^{3^0}\)Letters to Robert Bridges, p.50

\(^{3^1}\)Letters to Robert Bridges, p.79.

while in the poetry of praise he uses nature to express the "Grandeur of God." A number of the poems of this second group also express both the power of God and man's consequent dependence on Him. These serve as a natural link between the poetry of praise and the poetry expressive of God's power, justice and mercy. To this third group belong Hopkins' most celebrated poems, the "terrible sonnets." To use nature as a vehicle to express his emotions and beliefs, Hopkins had to so possess his environment that nature can almost be said to control his thoughts and feelings.

By following the above division of Hopkins' poems, a survey of the use which Hopkins makes of nature in his poetry should be at once more comprehensive and more enlightening. In this survey, the logical starting point is the discussion of Hopkins' simple nature poetry.
CHAPTER II

NATURE POETRY: "WHAT IS ALL THIS JUICE AND ALL THIS JOY?"

The actual beauty of nature was a perennial source of inspiration to Hopkins. The reading of his nature poetry conveys the impression that he had a complete knowledge and understanding of what he was describing and that he was anxious to pass on its inscape to his reader. He wrote from experience, from a lifetime of watching and listening; his seeing eye and tireless awareness allowed him to absorb the beauty of every object he contemplated. Only after a scene was vividly impressed on his mind did Hopkins look for words with which to express it. "It was because Hopkins saw the world with a child's piercing innocence as though it had only newly been created that his images are so concrete, his words so charged with new meaning."¹ His was the "joyous vision of a world in which all things are seen to be good."² Like Keats he was driven "by the urge to express beauty in its most perfect form."³ In writing, Hopkins

¹Anne Margaret Angus, "Gerard Manley Hopkins," Canadian Poetry, III (June 1938), 14.

²Elizabeth Jennings, "The Unity of Incarnation," The Dublin Review, No. 484 (Summer 1960), 184.

came to grips with nature, capturing in each description one facet, one moment of the beauty of the world; and to his minute observations he gave an intense response. In every picture Hopkins drew, he strove primarily to capture the inscape. If he devised new means of poetic description, it was so that he could more fully realize the inscape of the scene before him. Inscape was the purpose of his intense preoccupation both with words and with the technicalities of writing.

C. Day Lewis has pointed out that readers find Hopkins obscure for two reasons. First, "the world which Hopkins saw in such vivid detail is a world of which the modern metropolitan reader is becoming growingly ignorant." We simply do not have the awareness that Hopkins had. The second reason is Hopkins' concentrated method of writing which makes it difficult to follow "his lightning dashes from image to image." Many of Hopkins' sonnets illustrate these "lightning dashes" by the abrupt change of thought at the beginning of the sestet. Hopkins' concentrated style of poetry is closely connected with his attention to words and with his use of poetic techniques. Consequently, the reader must expect to find every word, even the most insignificant, important enough to deserve his close attention, and he must also learn to recognize and evaluate

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6Lewis, p.12.
Hopkinsian techniques.

If Hopkins' many nature descriptions could be surveyed as different panels on a canvas, three facts would immediately be evident. Because of Hopkins' peculiar use of inscape, each scene would be a recognizable and independent unit. Each panel would be so unique as to be a "Hopkinsian" panel. John Wain would say that the panels illustrated "the modern doctrines of irreducibility and simultaneity." The forceful, dynamic quality of each scene would be impressive, for Hopkins, being more than an observer of nature, is able to make others see and appreciate the beauty he sees. "Hopkins catches the material alive and thereby evokes a significant response." Even when Hopkins used nature as a springboard for other ideas, the actual nature image possesses a beauty of its own. Finally, there would be, almost as pivotal points of Hopkins' description, certain recurring themes of which the most prominent would be themes of water, of the seasons, of day and night and the heavens, of flowers and trees, and of birds.

Hopkins' descriptions of water are varied. The light and


graceful "Penmaen Pool" is a courtesy poem, a thank-you note written "For the Visitor's Book at the Inn." The pool nestles among the towering mountains which hob and nob to "halve the bowl of Penmaen Pool". The contrast of seasons is effective. In the summer pool, the almost fairy-like landscape rides "topsy-turvy." But the brightly shining stars disappear, and the swiftly tumbling Mawddock has a different appearance in stormy weather when "raindrop-roundels looped together" lace "the face of Penmaen Pool." Winter brings the "furred snows" which, "charged tuft above tuft, tower/ From darksome, darksome Penmaen Pool" while the visitors within the Inn drink the ale like "goldy foam/ That frocks an oar in Penmaen Pool." (XXIX, 35-36). Although "Penmaen Pool" is not one of Hopkins' better poems, it does illustrate Hopkins' ability to use words and Welsh names effectively. Its live, vibrant quality depends upon its imagery and its Anglo-Saxon vocabulary.

"Inversnaid" has forever captured the beauty of that little Scotch stream. This is the type of scene best suited to Hopkins' descriptive powers, for it is nature in motion. The poem is an excellent illustration of Hopkins' effective use of words, and of his poetic techniques. The "darksome burn" is "horseback brown"--not just brown like a horse, but "horseback brown" to give the connotative impression of the stream riding down its "rollrock highroad." (LVI, 2). These first two lines are, in themselves, a complete picture of the tumultuous dark brown
stream sweeping down the side of the mountain and carrying
even small pebbles with it. Hopkins describes how the water,
passing through coop and comb, separates into channels, like
fluting, just before it falls into the lake. One of Hopkins' own drawings illustrates just such fluting. As the froth turns
and "twindles" over the broth of a pool "so pitchblack, fell-
frowning" that it seems to drown even Despair, the dark pool
is suggestive of all the evils of witchcraft. "Twindles," is
a typical Hopkinsian coinage, The water flashes down the side
of the mountain where "degged with dew, dappled with dew/
Are the groins of the braes that the brook treads through."
Two words here attract our attention: "degged" and "groins."
"Degged" is a dialectal word meaning "sprinkled." "Groin,"
which formerly meant any depression, is used by Hopkins to de-
scribe the ravines through which the brook flows. Both words con-
voy an exact impression. As it flows, the stream sprinkles drops
of water on the heather, the fern, and the ash. But how different
from this prosaic statement is Hopkins': "Wiry heathpacks, flit-
tches of fern,/ And the bead-bonny ash that sits over the burn."
The last stanza of the poem is a truly Hopkinsian plea that all
this beauty may not be lost: "Let them be left/ O let them be
left, wildness and wet/ Long live the weeds and the wilderness.

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9"At the Baths of Rosenlau—July 18 (1868)," Journals,
Plate 28 facing pages 456 and 457.
"Inversnaid" pictures a stream somewhat similar to Tennyson's stream in "In the Valley of the Cauteretz." But the poems are essentially different. Hopkins' concentration on the scene before him gives greater intensity to "Inversnaid." Tennyson's stream flashes white and deepens its voice "with the deepening of the night." But it misses the dynamic quality which Hopkins gives to his "darksome burn" roaring down its highroad. Tennyson seems to stand by the water, his mind too absorbed with regret for former beauty and happiness to give undivided attention to the stream before him, while Hopkins is captivated by the actual beauty of the scene. "Inversnaid" is a direct, simple nature poem in which Hopkins has caught the beauty of the mountain stream and has added its particular beauty—in-scape—to the world's "treasury of beauty."

"Inversnaid" and "Penmaen Pool" are both, primarily, nature poems. In his non-nature poems, Hopkins frequently uses the sea as his setting. Both "The Wreck of the Deutschland" and "The Loss of the Eurydice" picture the sea vividly. The Deutschland travels across the merciless sea as the "Wiry and white-fiery and whirlwind-swivelled snow/ spins to the widow-making, unchilding, unfathering deeps." (XXVIII, 103-104). Here, every work is telling. Not only does this description picture the storm at sea, but it conveys overtones of the terror caused by
the shipwreck and of the sorrow experienced by the victims' relatives. Similarly, the Eurydice, a training ship for officers, sailing over the tranquil waters between the Isle of Man and England on "a blue March day," met a sudden destructive storm. The ship capsized, death teeming in "at her portholes" and racing "down decks, round messes of mortals." (XLI, 40).

The intensity of the storm is expressed in such phrases as "The champ-white water-in-a-wallow," "the revelling snowstorm," and "after hours of wintry waves." Winston Churchill, a young lad in 1878, had stood admiring the troop ship a few minutes before the storm. Churchill's description of the storm is in close agreement with the description in Hopkins' poem:

One day when we were out on the cliffs near Ventnor; we saw a great splendid ship with all her sails set, passing the shore . . . . Then, all of a sudden there were black clouds and wind and the first drops of a storm . . . . The next time I went out on those cliffs there was no splendid ship in full sail, but three black masts were pointed out to me, sticking up out of the water in a stark way. She was the Eurydice. She had capsized in this very squall and gone to the bottom with three hundred soldiers on board.10

Both "The Wreck of the Deutschland" and "The Loss of the Eurydice" display the power of the sea. In both, there is the tragedy of the inevitable as man fights against a force greater than himself. But this sense of tragedy is mingled with a

10Winston S. Churchill, A Roving Commission, New York: Scribner's Sons, 1940), 6. [I do not believe that the similarity of these descriptions has yet been pointed out.]
feeling of admiration for the strength and greatness of the sea during the storm. Besides these poems in which water is a controlling theme, other poems contain sample descriptions of water.

Such poems as "Winter with the Gulf Stream," "The Sea and the Skylark," "As Kingfishers Catch Fire . . . .," "Epithalamion," and some of the "terrible sonnets" vary greatly but in each of them Hopkins sees water as a source of imagery.

In the second group of poems, Hopkins uses the seasons for his setting. These poems illustrate the same effective use of words as do the poems about water. But, since further elaboration of this point is unnecessary, attention may now be turned to other methods by which Hopkins sought to express in-stress and inscape in his poetry.

References to spring are frequent in Hopkins' writings. The sonnet, "Spring," embodies the whole spirit of the springtime within its octave. Minute descriptions—the weeds in wheels, the blue eggs of the thrush, the playful lambs—make the scene attractive. To these spring sights Hopkins adds spring sounds, particularly the song of the thrush. This whole world of freshness and innocence and rebirth is summed up in Hopkins' question: "What is all this juice and all this joy?", and in his answer: "A strain of earth's sweet being/ In Eden garden."
In other poems, Hopkins makes short, but vivid, references to spring. In "The Wreck of the Deutschland" he speaks of "pied and peeled May." (XXVIII, 204). The Eurydice sails "on a blue March day" when the bright sun "lanced fire in the heavenly bay." (XLI, 22). "The May Magnificat" emphasizes spring as a time of rebirth and growth. Hopkins answers the question, "What is spring?" by "Growth in everything--/ Flesh and fleece, fur and feather./ Grass and greenworld all together." (XLII, 16-18). The alliteration of these lines serves a further purpose of telescoping all categories of living things so that it is possible for the reader to visualize them all simultaneously.

"Hurrahing in Harvest" may be considered a companion poem to "Spring." Just as Hopkins sees spring as the time for joy because of the rebirth of all nature, so he finds autumn a time for "hurrahing" because nature has reached its fulfilment. Only four lines are given to the actual description of the autumn. Nevertheless, the picture is a complete one. Stooks "barbarous in beauty" are set against a background of "silk-sack clouds" which wander across the "wind-walks of the sky" like "meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies," (XXXVIII, 2-4), while the blue autumn haze on the hills is a "very-violet-sweet." (XXXVIII, 16). This is autumn as we know and love it. In some poems, Hopkins is able to express his inscape very concisely. In "Spring and Fall" Hopkins' inscape of autumn is given in a single word by describing Goldengrove as
"unleaving." (LV, 2).

"Epithalamion" describes a typical summer scene, a swimming hole where carefree boys bathe in the "candy colored," "glue-gold brown marbled" waters of the river. (CXXI, 5). The peak of Hopkins' description is the unexpected, but most appropriate, picture of the divers:

... how the boys
With dare and with dowlolfinry and bellbright bodies
Huddling out,
Are earthworld, airworld, waterworld thorough hurled ... (CXXI, 16-18).

The enjoyment experienced by the bathers is further emphasized by the description of the stranger in which Hopkins obtains his desired effect both by the unusual position of words as "He ding/His bleached both and woolwoven wear," and by the minute description of him removing his shoes. In "Epitalamion" Hopkins uses the particular appeal of bathing, "summer's sovereign good," to suggest the universal appeal of all things in summer. By describing one particular aspect of its attraction, Hopkins gives to his reader a realization of the attractiveness of all summer.

The same ability to bring the whole scene before the reader is found in many of Hopkins' poems describing night and day, the moonrise, the clouds and the sunset. "The Starlight Night" is a poem of such great beauty that even Yvor Winters calls it
a "brilliant" description. Hopkins makes use of two tech-
niques in building his vivid picture of the sky at night: the
emphatic repetition of the word "look," which catches the
reader's attention immediately; and the use of a series of
fanciful comparisons. The stars are "fire-folk sitting in the
air," "boroughs," "circle-citadels," "diamond delves,"
"elves'-eyes," "a May-mess on an orchard bough." (XXXII, 2 ff.).
The effect of these accumulated comparisons is an impression
of beauty of a distinctly fairy-like quality. The brightness
of the stars is contrasted with the blackness of the heavens.
The stars are like diamonds shining in the dark pit of the sky,
while the star-filled sky is like the "wind-beat whitebeam" or
like "airy abeles." The leaves of the whitebeam are dark green
on top and light grey underneath so that, when the wind blows
upon the tree, the leaves become dark surfaces streaked with
light. The abele, or white poplar, seems to wave like a flame
or a flare when the wind rustles its leaves. The stars,
clustered in the dark heaven, resemble "flake-doves," or doves
as small as snowflakes which hover and float in the air. In
this poem, Hopkins is describing a sky such as he actually saw
one evening. He has recorded it in his Journal for August 17,
1874:

11Yvor Winters, "Gerard Manley Hopkins," Yvor Winters on
Modern Poets (New York: Meridian Book, 1939), 165—hereafter
cited as Yvor Winters.
As we drove home, the stars came out thick. I leaned back to look at them and my heart opening more than usual praised Our Lord to and in whom all that beauty comes home.  

The fragment "Moonrise" is developed by using one sustained metaphor of the poem. Hopkins, rising "in the white and the walk of the morning," (XCIX, 1), was arrested and aroused by what he saw when he looked out of his window—the sudden sight of the waning moon which, "dwindled and thinned to the fringe of a fingernail," appeared as if it had stepped from the stool and drawn back from the barrow of dark Maenéfa the Mountain. The moon, seemingly caught on the edge of the mountain, since a "cusp still clasped him, a flute yet fanged him," appeared to pause over the mountain, shedding a light which, though not too bright, completely awakened the poet. Hopkins contrasts the lovely but lusterless moon with its dark mountain background. Alliteration, as in "the white and the walk of the morning," and such assonance as "dwindled and thinned" add to the poetic effects. What Hopkins intended to do with this fragment is uncertain. Perhaps he intended to develop some further contrast between the moon disentangling itself from the mountain and his own mind disentangling itself from slumber, for in the last line he tells us that the "desirable sight . . . parted me leaf

12Journals, p. 254.
from leaf, divided me eyelid and eyelid from slumber." In other poems, Hopkins writes of the beauty of the Elwy Valley, of his regret that the Binsey poplars have been felled, and of the sight of lanterns moving in the dark.

One of the most beautiful poems of this group is "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves," in which, almost to the music of the pipe-organ, Hopkins pictures evening deepening into night. The leaves, pointed against the sky, "black, white," reminded Hopkins of the leaves on which Sibyl wrote her prophecies. Earth lays aside her variegated colors, as "Evening"—"Earnest, earthless, equal, attuneable, / Vaulty, voluminous . . . stupendous"—"strains to be time's vast/ Womb-of-all, hearse-of-all night." Proper appreciation of such a poem requires, not only the understanding of its words, but also the skilled reading which Hopkins desired that his poetry should have.

The group of poems descriptive of trees and flowers will need little further comment. Attention has already been drawn to Hopkins' description of the chestnut-fan, (pp.6-7) and of the bluebell, (p.9-10). The "beadbonny ash" in "Inversnaid," the "airy abeles," the starlight night, and the "primrose" feel of hands in "The Habit of Perfection" exemplify Hopkins' familiarity with, and love for, trees and flowers. Among the poems of this group two deserve special mention: "Ash-boughs" which contains the description of the bare winter trees sweeping the sky like "talons," and "Binsey Poplars" which expresses the
grief that Hopkins felt when the poplar trees were felled.

In a final group of nature poems Hopkins writes of birds. How he must have loved them, these "least earthy of earth's gifts." To Hopkins, who ever sought the dynamic qualities in objects, the sight of the birds on the wing must have been a thing of beauty. Three separate elements combined to give the bird the special appeal which it had for him: its appearance, its song, and its motion. Often, all three elements enter into Hopkins' inscape of the bird. Hopkins' vision of the bird, like his vision of the natural world, was neither vague nor dreamy, but something passionately precise. The throstle of "The May Magnificat" is star-eyed and strawberry-breasted, while the nest on which she sits contains "bugle" blue eggs. Hopkins describes the swallow which, resting for a moment on the moulding to take refuge from the gale, will "unvalve or shut his vaned tail and sheathe at once his leger wing," (XCVII, 11-12); then he is off again as if borne up by the wind.

The songs of birds attracted Hopkins even more than did their appearance. "With his passion for music not surprisingly

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14 *Passionate Science, Times Literary Supplement, No. 2772* (March 18, 1955), 165.
Hopkins cherished an interest in bird notes. "He loved the call of the cuckoo which opens up the springs of ear and heart and makes the whole land suddenly blossom out; [and] the thrilling song of the skylark that climbs longingly into the sunlight and sinks down in happiness." while

His rash-fresh re-winded new-skeined score
in crisps of curl off wild winch whirl, and pour
And pelt music, till none's to spill nor spend. (XXXV, 5-8).

In "Spring" he describes the song of the thrush: it "does so rinse and wring/ The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing." (XXXIII, 4-5).

Hopkins' greatest achievement in reproducing the songs of birds is the fragment "The Woodlark" which Father Bliss has so successfully refashioned and concluded. Though Dr. Gardner is persuaded that Hopkins is describing the tree pipit, which is sometimes known as a woodlark, Harrison objects to this for two reasons. The conclusive couplet, "Round a ring, around a ring/ And while I sail (must listen) I sing," describes "the

15Harrison, p. 449.


17Notes, "Poems," p. 256. For Father Bliss' explanation of his arrangements see The Month, CLXVII (1936), 528-535.

18Harrison, p. 454.
woodlark's habit of spiralling upward to a great height" and not the tree pipit's "upward flutter" to a lesser height. Secondly, "The tree pipit's shrill canary-like notes differ markedly from the sweet and mellow strains of the woodlark which Hopkins' lines more nearly suggest." This poem is "a tour de force." It is as if Hopkins wanted to see if he could really imitate the woodlark. Gweneth Lilly cites "The Woodlark" as an example of intricate alliteration and rhyme extending over several lines. The lines

The ear in milk, lush the sash,
And crush-silk poppies aflash,
The blood-gush blade-gash
Flame-rash rudred
Bud shelling or broad-shed
Tatter-tassel-tangled and dingle-a-dangled
Dandy-hung dainty head.

contain three sets of internal rimes (milk/silk, lush/crush, rud/bud) while "rash" rhymes with the end-rhyme gash which in turn forms half rhymes with lush, crush, and gush. While the intricate stanza form does bear out Lily's contention that the stanza, not the line, is the unit of the poem, it also illustrates Hopkins' use of rhyme and alliteration to obtain the desired musical effects. In phrases such as "blood-gush, blade-gash," Hopkins makes use of "cygghanedd," a Welsh device.

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somewhat similar to our internal rhyme. It is obtained by the alliteration of vowels which, in Welsh, produce an audible chime. If the poem is read correctly, and with no stop between "The ear" and "head", "The Woodlark" does imitate the song of the woodlark. In this respect it is, as has been noted, similar to Hilaire Belloc's "Tarantella," which "with its internal rhymes and shifting rhythms, is a skillful approximation of the dance which gives the poem its name." Further evidence of Hopkins' keen observations of bird songs is found in his writing about the cuckoo. Besides the fragment, "Repeat that, repeat," imitating the cuckoo's song, an extant letter to Bridges contains a full discussion of the cuckoo's method of singing.

Hopkins' birds are seldom at rest when they sing. The flight of the bird, soaring high in the heavens in happy abandon, must have seemed to Hopkins the symbol of that freedom of spirit and carefree abandon for which he himself so longed. Even the skylark, now "scanted in a dull cage" has been a "dare-gale" skylark. In its freedom, the "sweet fowl" had need of no rest but "babbles as it drops down to its nest." Hopkins wrote two poems on the skylark: "The Sea and the Skylark"

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21Letters to Bridges, p.145.
(XXXV), and "The Caged Skylark." (XXXIX). In "The Sea and the Skylark" Hopkins describes the skylark's song as "headlong, exciting snatches of song, "forever old yet new, descending to the earth in "skeins" or "coils" and forever vying with the sound of the sea."

Hopkins' skylark differs from that of both Shelley and Wordsworth. To Shelley, the skylark is a "blithe spirit," "an unembodied joy," in which he recognized the symbol of that supernatural happiness which he longs to share. To Wordsworth, the skylark, "ethereal minstrel, pilgrim of the sky," is a "type of the wise who soar but never roam/ True to the kindred points of heaven and home." But to Hopkins, the skylark remains a creature of nature. He loves the bird for what it is, and he finds in it a "kindred spirit" whether the bird is free, as in "The Sea and the Skylark" or whether, as in "The Caged Skylark," it is a prisoner in a cage. At the same time, he sees in the skylark a reflection of its Creator.

Their poems on the skylark bring into relief the characteristics of Shelley, Wordsworth, and Hopkins as nature poets. The three poets suggest one another both by resemblance and by contrast. All three, attracted by the skylark and its song, have produced nature poems of permanent beauty; while, to

all three, the skylark, was symbolic of other values. Their poems on the skylark are therefore comparable both for their poetic style and for their underlying symbolism.

Shelley's "To a Skylark" is a lyric, written with all the imagery which his rich imagination could supply. The reader, carried away by the sensuous appeal of color and sound, shares Shelley's enthusiasm for the skylark. The actual picture of the skylark is vague and aetherialized through its song; it seems more of a spirit than a bird, the embodiment of joy. Wordsworth's "To a Skylark" is a sonnet whose calm emotion has an intellectual appeal. The "kindred points of heaven and home" are focal points around which is centered both the bird's life and our own. The masculine strength of the quiet, unadorned language draws us to Wordsworth's skylark.

In "The Sea and the Skylark," Hopkins contrasts the song of the skylark with the sound of the sea. The language is forceful, but the force arises, not from passionate love as in Shelley's poem, nor from reason and intellect as in Wordsworth's, but from its dynamic quality. Movement and song combine to give Hopkins' skylark life. In comparison, Shelley's skylark appears more remote and impersonal; Wordsworth's skylark is more human; while Hopkins' skylark appeals to us through the in-scape which it expresses.

At the risk of carrying the comparison beyond the realm of
nature poetry, and into the realm of the metaphysical, a further parallel may be drawn from the poets' attitudes towards the skylark. All three poets see the skylark as a part of the natural world, but all three differ in their interpretation of the significance of the skylark. To Shelley the skylark is the outward manifestation of an inner divine beauty; it is not a bird but a spirit. Shelley's desire to imitate the skylark and to be identified with it gives the skylark an almost supernatural character. Wordsworth sees an interrelation between the skylark and man: both must be true to heaven and home. Wordsworth believes that man can, through mystic union, participate in the spiritual activity which, he believes, underlies nature. While his skylark is in union with the Divine, it is, at the same time, a companion to whom he can talk as an equal, and in whom he can find the echo of his own feelings. To Hopkins, as has been discussed in Chapter I, all nature remains nature but, as such, it is a revelation, an utterance of its Creator. Because Hopkins has that peculiar ability which allows him to see nature on two distinct levels at once—the natural and the supernatural—he can enjoy and admire the skylark for its physical beauty and for its actual song and, at the same time, contemplate the God who fashioned it. All three poets sought the divine in nature: Shelley groped blindly towards the divine force which he instinctively recognized in nature; Wordsworth set his foot firmly on the path in search of the divine; Hopkins
reached the goal.

Hopkins' sonnet, "The Windhover," has been widely discussed. Its fourteen lines have been analyzed and interpreted in almost as many ways as there have been critics writing about it. "The Windhover" is recognized as one of Hopkins' finest poems. He himself regarded it as the best thing he had ever written. No interpretation is completely satisfactory to every reader for "the poem is a good one and therefore gives relative satisfaction to our several relative demands."

23 On the level of simple nature poetry, the sonnet is an excellent example of Hopkins' close observation of nature and of his ability to describe exactly what he saw. The windhover, or European kestrel, is a little larger, but similar to, the American sparrow hawk. It is dark in color, brownish above and buff below. Like all birds, it occasionally pauses in flight, but it has the additional habit of hovering from twenty to thirty feet above the ground to look for food.

24 Three different movements of the bird are distinguished by Harrison. First, it hovers: "his riding/ of the rolling under.


24 See Harrison p.458 ff. for the description of the bird and the explanation of its flight.
neath him steady air." Harrison comments on this act:

The poet has dwelt upon the hovering act—the unique habit of the bird which enabled him to catch the bird flying, and yet not flying against the morning sky.25

The second movement of the bird is a forward one: "striding high there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimping wing."

After the stride it must start hovering again, this hawk which is rider and not steed, it must ring again upon the rein of its wing, to keep place in and on the wind, its steed and its environment.26

The third act of the kestrel is a downward movement

then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl
Rebuffed the big wind.

This third movement, depicting the bird's "flight downward is followed by the sharp turn necessary for hovering."27 By its

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25Harrison, p.459. For an explanation, Harrison comments on the bird's hovering act (p.458):

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


27Harrison, p.458.
description of three movements of the bird, the octave of the poem gives an inscape of the bird in flight. The poet is stirred by the "achieve of, the mastery of the thing." This inscape is further summed up in the sestet by the words "brute" and "buckle." "The marvellous adaptation of wing and wind, the proud activity of the bird seeking food: these are beautiful in a brute unawareness; they all unite--buckle--into a single integrated whole."28

"The Windhover" is a difficult poem. Several interpretations of the movements of the bird are possible. The meaning of the poem is further obscured because the poet uses key words with several different possible meanings, and because the comparisons in the last tercet are ambiguous.

If "The Windhover" is considered on the level of nature poetry, it is a poem of exaltation and praise, with all its terms taken from chivalry and falconry. The theme of the poem at this level is simple: the poet sees the bird, he is exhilarated by it and describes it in terms of nobility. The windhover is a "dauphin"--the prince of the morning. The use of chivalric terms allows the poet to suggest connotations of beauty and freedom. The whole description must, then, be interpreted as an inscape of beauty and freedom. Geoffrey

28 Harrison, p.462.
Grigson makes the important comment that in no critique, down to the most recent interpretations, does "any commentator seem to have studied, as a watcher of the bird, the one activity upon which the fullness of the poem must hang." The poet sees the windhover as etched or "drawn" against the dapple sky. This meaning is preferable to that of the bird being attracted by the dawn because such attraction would necessarily take from the freedom with which the poet seeks to invest the bird. The three movements of the bird support Hopkins' inscape of beauty and freedom. The kestrel hovers in the air by riding against the wind, at the same velocity as the wind; it strides high as, by a forward motion, it rides the "wimpled air," and "reins" it as one might a charger; then the bird swoops, as a skater swoops around a corner. All three movements reveal the kestrel as the master, the possessor, of his environment; and in this way all three are an integral part of the inscape of freedom and beauty. In all three movements of the kestrel, the poet is drawn by "the achieve of, the mastery of the thing." In the sestet, the natural meaning which corresponds to this interpretation requires that "buckle" be taken to mean the imperative "draw together --into one." This buckling increases rather than diminishes the beauty and freedom of the bird, for it brings together the windhover's beauty as it hovers in the air, its valor as in pride it rides the wimpled air, and its act, or swoop, of which the plume is a symbol. This "buckling"
increases rather than diminishes the beauty and the freedom of the bird.

Besides the poems already mentioned, many others could be studied as simple nature poetry. "Pied Beauty," which belongs to this group, has the characteristic freshness of Hopkins' nature poetry; it is also an expression of Hopkins' theory of the individually distinctive quality of each object. Whenever Hopkins writes of nature, the essential characteristic of his work is his awareness of each and every object in nature. This awareness, cultivated by careful observation, makes him see objects in such minute detail that each object becomes individually distinct from every other object of the same species. Furthermore, this individually distinctive object, which he so carefully observes, is to him worthy of detailed and painstaking description. The desire to describe exactly what he sees forces Hopkins to search for the correct word and the proper turn of phrase; and this searching effort on the part of Hopkins makes his poetry so appealing that he communicates his own enthusiasm to his reader. In the measure of his capacity, each reader shares Hopkins' own great love of all nature.

But Hopkins does not stop with the actual, physical description of what he sees. Physical beauty is, as it were, the outward shell which encloses the inner core of spiritual
beauty. Spiritual values are present, at least implicitly, in all Hopkins' nature poetry; in many poems, these values form the express purpose of his writing. Hopkins believes that poetry should have an "underthought" as well as an "overthought:"

There are usually . . . two strains of thought running together and like counterpointed; the overthought, that which everybody, editors, see . . . the other, the underthought, conveyed chiefly in the choice of metaphors . . . and not necessarily having any connection with the subject in hand . . . Perhaps what I ought to say is that the underthought is commonly an echo or shadow of the overthought . . . but that sometimes it may be independent of it.30

The direct meaning of the poem constitutes "the overthought." "The underthought" results from analogy, which is found in most of Hopkins' poems and which suggests a secondary meaning. To Hopkins, each object of the exterior, visible world was potentially capable of revealing, by the underthought suggested to the mind, the ideal type for which each object stood. The identification of "the underthought" with "the overthought" was, for Hopkins, an immediate association. His poetry suggests both "the overthought" and "the underthought" to the careful reader.

It is "the underthought" which harmonizes the writing of Hopkins with his ideals and beliefs so that he is able to use his nature poetry to express a world which he sees as "charged with the grandeur of God." Nature poetry, as an expression of the praise of the Creator, will be the subject discussed in Chapter III.
CHAPTER III

POETRY OF PRAISE: "THE WORLD IS FILLED WITH THE GRANDEUR OF GOD"

I

What Hopkins called "the underthought" in poetry constitutes a second level on which most of his own nature poetry may be read. Because he was so aware of all objects around him, Hopkins was strongly attracted by the sensuous beauty of nature. But beauty also appealed to the higher faculties of his mind. He caught the inscape of each individual object, and this inscape, in its turn, produced an impact, or instress, upon the poet's mind. To Hopkins, each object was a unique creation of God, owing both its existence and its preservation to Him. The result was a twofold relationship with nature which allowed Hopkins to enjoy the sensuous beauty of nature and to hold, at the same time, a sacramental view of nature. By this sacramental view nature, as a revelation of the God who had created it, became "an outward sign of inward grace." "Artist and priest were ever joined in his poems and when the theme was God and nature he was nature's noblest worshipper."¹

Hopkins' poetic theories are compatible with his beliefs and with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. To him, the whole world, as the manifestation, the utterance of God, is filled with the grandeur of God. Each creature, by being what it is, praises God. This twofold aspect of God and creation—the grandeur of God manifested in all creation, and the creature's duty to return praise to Him—constitutes the theme of that poetry which is generally considered as Hopkins' poetry of praise. The major contention of Hopkins in this poetry is that one can know God from the beauty of the world. To understand this contention is to find the secret to much that Hopkins has written. To Hopkins, the world is charged with God's grandeur. Since Hopkins' poetic love of nature is always fused with his vision of nature's Creator, when he starts to write poetry he is able to write on a supernatural level while, at the same time, remaining fully concerned with the natural level.

"God's Grandeur" is a direct expression of this theme. As clouds may be charged with lightning, so the whole world is charged with the grandeur of God which "flames out" as does shook foil or the gleam of crushed oil. The stumbling block of all this glory is man. Hopkins sees all around him men who, like the people of Wordsworth's sonnet, "The World is too much with us" are "getting and spending" and have little time to heed the beauty around them. But Hopkins' poem carries the idea a step further
than does Wordsworth's. In his sonnet Wordsworth expresses a nature-man relationship, while Hopkins expresses a God-man-nature relationship. Wordsworth sees the world as something which man may possess for the taking; Hopkins sees each unique object as possessing "the dearest freshness deep down things" which allows that object, by its very existence, to return glory to God. (XXXI, 10). Wordsworth's note of disgust that man should pass by all this glory unheeded becomes, in Hopkins, a note of hope; for the Holy Ghost, far from abandoning man, bends brooding over the earth, warming and directing it for man. In this poem, Hopkins' usual procedure of using the octave to prepare us for the deeper thought of the sestet is particularly apt. The octave represents the earth as flashing off the glory of God like streaks of light; the sestet represents the Holy Ghost, the spirit of life and of love, brooding over His world and preserving both its physical and its moral beauty.

Many of Hopkins' most beautiful poems owe at least part of their loveliness to this "underthought" of God's grandeur which seems to rise, almost spontaneously, from his vision of the natural world. In "The Starlight Night" the heavens become the doors beyond which "is housed the shocks:" beyond these doors one finds "Christ's home, and his mother and all his hallows." (XXXII, 14). The beauty of the spring day brings to the poet's mind the vision of innocent youth; he finishes his sonnet "Spring" with a plea that Christ may possess the innocent mind before "it cloud . . .
"and sour with sinning." (XXXIII, 12). "The Sea and the Skylark" leads to the almost inevitable contrast of these two unspoiled creations of God with man, "Life's pride and cared-for crown" who, having lists "his innocence," is fast breaking down again to the dust, "man's first slime."

When Hopkins gazes down the Valley of the Elwy with its lovely woods, waters, and meadows, he finds that "only the inmate does not correspond." (XL II). No wonder a prayer rises spontaneously to his lips that God, the lover of souls will complete his "creature dear." In "Hurrahing in Harvest" the grandeur of the hills with their blue haze is caught by the metaphor, "And the azurous hills are his world-wielding shoulder/ Majestic."

All this beauty of the world, the poet tells us, was here "and but the beholder wanting." (XXXVIII, 11-12). Hopkins' enthusiasm seems to carry him away; for, to him at least, when beauty and the beholder meet, the heart "rears bold and bolder/ And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him off under his feet."

In "Ribblesdale" Hopkins again uses nature, this time to express his belief that each thing glorifies God by being what it is created to be. (LVIII). Hopkins contrasts the river with man; the river is ever appealing to Heaven though it has no tongue to plead, no heart to feel; man, independent and unconcerned,
goes his own way. In this poem Hopkins represents God as "dealing out" creation—"here a hill, there a dale", God has made creation beautiful and He goes on making it beautiful. Earth is being what it is—its own "self." Everything is "is-ing" and how well it "is-es"! But only man can realize the sacramental value of creation; only man can interpret this "outward sign of inward grace." Man is "earth's tongue, eye and heart," for the heir of all God created is "dear and dogged man." Yet it is man who has despoiled the world of the beauty of the earth. Since man does not reckon his rod, so that all is "smeared with trade, bleared, smeared with toil/ And wears man's smudge and shares man's toil." (XXXI, 4-8). Man has given Oxford its "brickish skirt;" he has felled the Binsey Poplars and destroyed that "sweet rural scene." Man seems so intent on his own purposes that he wilfully destroys nature's inscapes by thoughtlessly wasting them. It is man alone who prompts earth to wear "its brows of concern." "

"As Kingfishers Catch Fire" carries the idea of God in creation a step farther. "The theme is the individuality possessed by 'each mortal thing' and then as it appears in 'the just man.'" Each

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2 See George Gooden, "Man and Nature in Hopkins", Notes and Queries, CCIV (continued series), No. 11 (December 1959), 453-454.

individual object produces a unique inscape of sight or sound. The brilliantly plumaged kingfisher is most itself when it streaks through the air like a flash of red fire; the iridescence of the dragonfly's wings belong to it alone. Stones form "roundy rings" in water. Bells toll, each with its own peculiar note, so that people know the bell by its tone. "Each mortal thing does one thing and the same . . . myself it speaks and spells; Crying What I do is me." (LVIII, 8). The fact that all things do what is characteristic of them "brings out the particularity of each creature, . . . and provides Hopkins with a basis for observing the likenesses of creatures" and for contemplating their relationship with the Creator.

By perceiving in the sensible image the prototype of its beauty, men achieve an insight into the nature of God. Thus Hopkins wrote "I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful that the bluebell I have been looking at; I know the beauty of Our Lord by it." "Inscape refers to the ultimate reality—God—but also to reflections of Him observable in the world; a perception of "inscape" in the world is a recognition of the relation of any earthly object to its Maker. . . . And it is only man in a state of grace who . . . is capable of recognizing it.5

The words "I say more" with which Hopkins begins the sestet indicate that the poet is here speaking "from a higher, though not a different, perspective."6 The true reality of things is under-

4Cohen, p. 200.

5Cohen, p. 200.

stood only by the person who sees their purpose. Man is included in all that is said in the octave; but, for man, there is something more. Man gives glory to God by acting as the image of his Maker. In this sense, Hopkins says of man that, when acting in grace, he "deals out that being" which dwells in him. All his actions are performed in Christ who "plays in ten thousand places," and acts through man who thus becomes "another Christ" in the sense of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ.

Hopkins uses nature in "God's Grandeur" to express the idea of God's power, and in "As Kingfishers Catch Fire" to express the concept that all men have within them a supernatural life. In "Pied Beauty" the poet uses nature to express the complementary contention that all creatures owe to God the duty of praise. In this poem, the poet gives glory 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;  
Landscapes plotted and pieced . . . (XXXVII, 2-5).

"All things counter, original, spare, strange" (XXXVII, 9) have this peculiar attraction for Hopkins. The attraction lies in the contrast of the "fickle" with the "freckled," the "sweet" with the "sour" and "adazzle" with "dim." "Pied Beauty," a study of individuality in nature, expresses Hopkins' delight in contrasts. Pied things express variety; by their very contrast with God's
simplicity "they tell of God by their inability to be simple like God." The appeal which nature had for Hopkins stems from his theory that all things are unique and individual. Each thing appears to him as beautiful in its own inscape, and he loves each one for its own individual "self." Yet Hopkins is not a pantheist. His theory is that nature is not to be worshipped as beauty absolute, but is to be referred to the glory of its Creator. In "Pied Beauty," the words "Praise Him" tie together Hopkins' two levels of thought so that the reader sees the beauty of nature and simultaneously refers it back to the Creator of all nature.

Hopkins' use of nature to express the grandeur of God and man's consequent duty of praising Him is only one aspect of his theory that nature is an expression of God. Since Hopkins' concept of God rests on a sound theological basis, he considers God, not only as a Creator, but also as a Redeemer and a Sanctifier. Consequently, he feels that nature should be an expression of other attributes of God as well as of His creative powers. In the "terrible sonnets" Hopkins uses nature to express God's justice and mercy. The gap between the poetry of praise and the "terrible sonnets" is bridged by a small but important group of

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8See Pick, pp. 53-54.
transition poems in which Hopkins combines both praise and reverence to God as Creator with expressions of awe at the thought of God's justice, of confidence in His mercy, and of submission to His most "just decrees."

II

"The Wreck of the Deutschland" is a transition poem in several ways. It was the first of Hopkins' mature poems after his seven years of silence, and it inaugurated the new rhythms which had been "haunting" his ear.9 As a nature poem, "The Wreck of the Deutschland" stands half way between the poetry of praise and the poetry which expresses submission to God. "Its first lines burst into a magnificent apostrophe to the Creatorship, Providence, and mastery of God."10 The themes of the poem are two: "it expresses awe and respect toward the grandeur of God, and wonder that God's ways should include the sacrifice of the innocent nuns who have already been persecuted for the love of God."11 The first half of the poem is a discussion of God's Providence and of His ways with man; the second half is an example of God's ways


of mastering man. In the first part, the poet recalls a profound religious experience of which this shipwreck reminds him. He had been kneeling before an altar, nearly overcome by the terror of God's overwhelming masterhood, but had saved himself by turning to Christ in the Eucharist. He delights in God whenever he meets Him in nature; but here he experiences a special stress which comes not so much from God in heaven as from God in time. The human heart is penetrated with this sense of God's pressure through Christ, and this brings him to surrender at last to Christ, the Hero of Calvary. He then begs God to dominate and master man so that man is brought to accept God's will and to adore Him.  

In the second part, to illustrate this mastery of God over man, Hopkins uses the description of the shipwreck. Throughout the whole poem, nature is used as a background. Sometimes nature forms an analogy with the supernatural, while at other times it is contrasted with the supernatural. The poem impresses one with the idea that the poet has consistently marshalled his sensuous love of nature to uphold and strengthen his deeper love of God.  

In the first stanza, the praise of God's grandeur is made greater by comparing it with man's pettiness. God, "the Lord of the living and dead," masters man as He masters all else;¹² and

¹²See Heuser, p.43 ff.
man is in his rightful place when he can say "Over again I feel thy finger and find Thee." Then the stress of the natural storm, with its lightning and horror and strain, is introduced to describe this greater storm of the poet's heart, until he "whirled out wings that spell/ And fled, with a fling of the heart to the heart of the Host."(20-21). The two figures of sand in an hourglass and water running into a well are expressions of the steady stress of God bearing uninterruptedly and relentlessly down upon his life.13 Yet even the stress of suffering does not destroy Hopkins' love for nature. "The stars, lovely asunder," to which he kisses his hand, "the starlight wafting him out of it," the "glow" and "the glory of thunder," "the dapple-with-damson west" provide a list of natural loves equally impressive as Rupert Brooke's in "The Great Lover." Like Rupert Brooke, Hopkins feels that "All these have been my loves," but, for him, they are not passing things but expressions of God's grandeur since "He is under the world's splendor and wonder." For him, all things are both an utterance and a proof of the timeless grandeur of God. Through faith, nature reveals to Hopkins the God of the Incarnation, and his faith in the God of the Incarnation reaches fulfilment when he comes to "Hero of

13 For a full explanation of these two figures, see Elizabeth Schneider, "Two Metaphysical Images in Hopkins' 'The Wreck of the Deutschland,' "Modern Language Notes, LXV (May 1950) 306-311.
Calvary, Christ's feet." "The lush-kept plush-capped sloe" is an apt illustration of the place of suffering in this transition:

If the sloe is ripe, we are suffused with sweetness; if it is not ripe, we are puckered up with sourness. If we inscape our suffering with Christ, Our Suffering Lord and Redeemer, it fills us with sweetness; the sweetness of a sacrifice made for one we love; if we do not inscape it, it puckers us to the roots of our souls with its bitterness.14

For Hopkins, Christ is "lightning and love . . . a winter and warm." Hopkins' choice of these four words to describe Christ may have come from "an underthought" of the Trinity itself; the enlightenment and love of the Holy Ghost being suggestive of "lightning and love," the remote, austere glory of the Father by "the winter," and the warm compassion of the God-man by "warm." Again, the ways of God, dark and difficult as they are to understand, bring a "winter" to the soul. Hopkins uses nature to express his belief that blessings may be derived from suffering. It is fitting that this first part of the poem—which is really the whole poem in miniature—should end with a prayer for God's mercy and an acknowledgment of His kingship: "Make mercy in all of us, out of all Mastery, but be adored, but be adored King."

Throughout the second part of the poem, the storm at sea parallels the trial of the nuns and also, indirectly, the trial

of Hopkins himself. Through his use of the storm, Hopkins is able to bring these spiritual struggles into full relief. The soul, bravely journeying through life and meeting the unforeseen and inevitable struggles, is typified by the disaster of the Deutschland. The majestic ship sets out on its journey and moves through the stormy sea towards its trial. Not only this; the trial comes from an unsuspected and even trivial cause, for it is not on a reef or a rock in the open sea that the ship flounders, but on the "combes of a smother of sand" in the Thames. The heroic struggle of the soul is discernible in the description of the long hours of desperate waiting until "hope was twelve hours gone" and "frightful a nightfall folded rueful a day," and also in the pitiful efforts of the heroic sailor who matches his strength against the storm only to be "dandled the to and fro/ Through the cobbled foam-fleece." When the strong nun rises to call on God, we have a contrast of the physical and the spiritual struggle. The nun calmly rises above the earthly struggle. She may be blinded by "the rash smart sloggering brine"; she may be outcast from Germany and shipwrecked near England, but she keeps her gaze fixed on the "Orion of light" above, who controls the sea and the storms, and she makes of her death a victory.

In this poem Hopkins also uses nature to bring out the contrast between his own rest and security "in lovable Wales" with the plight of the shipwrecked nun. Both the triumph of the nun
and Hopkins' own peace after submission to God are symbolized by the lifting of the fog. Then night settles over the land, the darkening sky enriched by the "moth soft milky way." Complete submission brings peace both to the nun and to Hopkins. The poet also makes the storm a mark of God's providence, for the nun's voice, like a sheep bell calling the sheep home, directs all on board to call upon Christ, their true home.

Through the symbolic use of nature, "The Wreck of the Deutschland" reaches out in different directions: God is to be adored; His mercy outrides all, and Christ is the Christ of a compassionate Father. For his part, man must, even through a struggle similar to that pictured in the storm, bring his heart to God, for He is His "Pride, rose, prince, and hero." Man owes to Him both praise for His greatness, and submission to His will.

In "The Windhover" Hopkins uses nature to show both the magnificence and the love of Christ. As has been noted (pp.40-43), interpretations of this poem vary greatly. Some critics consider it as a simple nature poem, others as a nature poem with a religious analogue, and still others as a highly symbolic religious poem. Little difficulty is experienced in interpreting the octave. But the sestet, which contains "the underthought," is difficult. Much of the difficulty comes from the various meanings given to the terms "buckle," "break,"
"Chevalier"; to the meaning of "Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here/Buckle"; to the identification of the one the poet addresses as "thee"; and to the interpretation of the two comparisons at the end of the poem. That Hopkins meant to use the kestrel as a symbol of Christ is by no means certain. He did dedicate it, as "the best thing I ever wrote," "To Christ Our Lord." But this dedication is inconclusive, since it was added after the poem was composed. Whatever Hopkins' intentions, it seems obvious that he wished to bring men into closer contact with the divine, at least through the natural "utterance" of the kestrel. Following his usual procedure, Hopkins uses the octave of the poem to describe the kestrel as an object of nature, and the sestet to develop "the underthought." It is "the underthought" which allows "The Windhover" to be considered as a poem of praise. The octave of the poem describes the beauty and strength of the kestrel in flight. The sestet, in which Hopkins uses the bird to bring before men his idea of Christ, presents the poet's reaction to the experience of seeing the bird. The sight of the bird stirs his heart to admiration for its achievement and its mastery. Its undisciplined beauty causes him to reflect on the greater achievement which, by disciplined strength, he has given to Christ, his Leader. He explains this greater strength by the comparison of the shining

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15 Letters to Robert Bridges, p. 85.
furrows and of the "blue-bleak embers." In this explication, the last line of the poem "Fall, gall themselves, and gash Gold-vermilion" is a key line. This line is pregnant with possibilities. If Hopkins considered Christ as his "chevalier," then he considered himself as a follower of that Chevalier—the Crucified King. Many critics connect the Windhover with the Passion. But they stop short of the real significance of the comparison. The three words "fall", "gall" and "gash" can be considered to have definite reference to the Passion in which "fall" symbolizes Christ as having lowered Himself to the position of a sinner; "gall" represents the humiliations of the Passion; and "gash" conveys the physical sufferings of the Passion. These ideas are climaxed by "gold-vermilion." The brilliant red-vermilion of Christ's Blood on Calvary is juxtaposed with the symbolic gold of the kingship Christ achieved through the Passion. This interpretation is consistent with the ideas expressed by Hopkins in two of his most important sermons, that of Christ as a Hero, and that on the Kingship of Christ. At the same time, it makes use of natural phenomena to illustrate both Christ's grandeur and his love for men.

"Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" portrays both the immensity of God and the submission which man owes Him in all events of life. In restrained and subdued tones this poem describes the
twilight zone of day as it strains to become night. The poem is unique in two ways. First, it is actually an Ignatian meditation comprising the three principal points: composition of place, application, and resolution. The octave, which forms the composition of place, is the image of evening's transition into night; while the sestet, forming the application and resolution, introduces the religious themes of the poem.

Secondly, the poem uses the Sibyl theme which, at first, appears to be drawn from paganism. Alan Heuser, however, offers an explanation which makes Hopkins' use of the Sibyl theme consistent with his purpose.

Among the Jesuit rules for professors of rhetoric, the subject of the Sibyls is considered an acceptable topic for prelections. The Sibyl (from Aeneid VI) is the will of God, an oracle speaking through the heart.

Two interpretations of the poem have been advanced by critics. Night may conceivably symbolize either the coming of death or the spiritual experience known as the "night of the soul." Of these two interpretations, that of death is the most common as well as the easiest, for night is a century-old symbol of death. It is the mutability theme in its most

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16 For a discussion of this poem as an Ignatian meditation see Sister Mary Teresa, S.N.D., "Spelt from Sibyls Leaves," Explicator, XLV (April 1959), No. 45.

17 Heuser, p.114.
solemn and dignified form. Every detail of the coming of night by which all things are made "earnest, earthless, equal, attuneable," has been used to develop this "underthought." As evening descends, sublimating all things and reducing them to a common neutrality, so death brings all to the equality and neutrality of the grave. Although the symbolic association of night with death is commonplace, Hopkins' fresh approach to the subject gives the reader the impression of seeing old territory from an entirely new vantage point.

Here was an inversion of the Christian story of woman and dragon, for "boughs dragonish" were in the grotto of the heart, while in the sky was a mock image of the Virgin, evening, straining to become the mother of all being. Evening was but a part of the vision of good and evil which was interpreted or 'spelt' allegorically as a warning of death and judgment upon the soul.18

"Paraphrasing the sestet, which is the spiritual application of the subject, the evening of life is over. Let life, dwindling and retiring, draw to its end; let her now unwind her "once-skeined" variety onto two spools "black, white; /right, wrong." (LXII, 11-12). The warning comes: "My heart rounds me that each man, at some moment of his life, must sacrifice the dapple of existence for the stark dichotomy

18 Heuser, p.77.
of right and wrong."¹⁹ As the gradations of daylight die away, making the once-beautiful trees strange, hard, cruel, "beak-leaved," man is left tortured by his "selfwrung self-strung, sheathe-and shelterless," thoughts. He must now try to simplify life's variety and to turn his attention to those things which really matter. This decision will bring the "rock," suffering, with it; but its coming means that he is preparing for death. In this didactic theme of the poem, Hopkins presents the world as a listing ground, a place of trial, and urges man to make use of "evening" as a preparation for death. Heuser carries the interpretation of the poem still farther, finding it to be symbolic of the end of the world.

In this explication evening becomes a "cosmological vision of heaven and earth" which is represented as "a sign of the last things."²⁰ However, since the strength of this interpretation rests upon the general association of the idea of death and the idea of the end of the world, Heuser may be reading into the poem more than Hopkins intended. Other writers see evening as symbolic of the dark night of the soul. Since this

²⁰Heuser, p.77.
reading places the theme of "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" very close to that of "the terrible sonnets," this poem may be more properly treated with the "terrible sonnets," in Chapter IV.
CHAPTER IV

THE TERRIBLE SONNETS: "GOD'S MOST JUST DEGREE"

Many critics are of the opinion that at the time he wrote the "terrible sonnets"¹ Gerard Manley Hopkins was experiencing either the "night of the senses" or "the dark night of the soul." Because these two terms convey, even to the well-informed reader, only a very vague concept, and because an understanding of these terms is central to any discussion of Hopkins' "terrible sonnets," it seems profitable to start this chapter by defining these terms, and by stating the extent to which Hopkins, in his later years, may be said to have experienced these religious phenomena.

The "night of the senses" and the "dark night of the soul"

¹The "terrible sonnets" are seven in number: "To seem the stranger lies my lot, my life," "I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day," "No worst, there is none," "Carrion Comfort," "Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend," "Patience hard thing! the hard thing but to pray," and "My own heart let me have more pity on." Dixon uses the terms "terrible pathos" and "terrible crystal" in his letter to Hopkins. Concerning Hopkins' poetry he writes: "charm . . . something I cannot describe, but know myself by the inadequate word 'terrible pathos' . . . the terrible crystal." The term, "terrible sonnets" was first applied to the seven sonnets by Robert Bridges in his introduction to Hopkins' poems, (1918 edition), in which he speaks of them as the "terrible posthumous poems."
are properly subjects of theological study.\textsuperscript{2} The two terms apply to the two major purgations experienced by the soul in search of God. The whole principle underlying the experience is based on the recognised fact that persons who determine to follow God closely, frequently, after an initial period of enthusiasm and spiritual "sweetness," experience long periods of trial and desolation which bring intense suffering. These periods of trial often increase both in duration and intensity as the soul continues its search for God. The Christian concept of the value of suffering and trial is based on Plato's theory that the idea is the essence and the perfection of the object and that the natural object participates in this essence after the manner of a reflection. Since all objects participate in the essence, they also participate in the Absolute Good which transcends the world and is distinct from it. Man shares in this participation in Absolute Good. The soul tends to reach the Absolute Good, and, in its turn, the Absolute Good illumines the soul. This relationship between the soul and the Absolute Good constitutes the upward striving of the soul. Tension is set up in the soul because, while the

soul aspires to the Absolute Good, it is also pulled earthward by the senses. Thus the soul is held a prisoner by the body.

In his philosophy, Duns Scotus accepted the platonic belief that the idea is the essence, seeing God as both imminent in creation and transcendent above it. In Duns Scotus there is also a two-way communication between God and man: man seeks to aspire to God; God, in his turn illuminates man. Duns Scotus' teachings were an inspiration to Hopkins who saw each individual essence as an object of God's special love. Moreover, Duns Scotus looked upon the Incarnation-Redemption theme as one unit which is the culmination of God's love for man.

When St. John of the Cross wrote his account of the mystical life of the soul, he made use of Duns Scotus' philosophy. His treatises describe the struggles of the soul to reach God. In the conflict of the soul with the senses every hindrance to the soul in its search for the Infinite must be ruthlessly overcome. All sin must be rejected; for sin, being the negation of good, is the one real evil. Even those objects, which are good in themselves, are to be used only in so far as they further the soul's ascent to God. Little by little, the soul searching for God disentangles itself, first from sin, then from imperfections, and finally even from attachment to all things of this earth, even the most holy. According to the plan which St. John of the Cross drew up and called "The Mount of Perfection," Christian mysticism considers that the soul's progress toward the
possession of God implies a scale of perfection comprised of three stages: the Purgative Life, in which sin is atoned for, the Illuminative Life in which the soul, illuminated by God's grace seeks Him with both will and intellect; and the Unitive Life, or life of complete absorption in God.

In order to grasp this idea of the soul's ascent, suffering must be thought of as existing simultaneously on two levels. On the natural level, suffering and trials take a variety of forms such as illness, lack of success, misunderstanding, and even calumny. Frequently, an added source of suffering lies in the fact that the sufferer, being totally unaware of the real purpose of his sufferings, considers himself responsible for the condition in which he finds himself; he may even believe himself to be outside the pale of God's friendship. On a supernatural level, suffering is one of God's means of bring a soul to Him. Why God exacts suffering from man, especially from the just man, is a difficult problem. According to Roman Catholic doctrine suffering is not an evil; it may even be a very great blessing if it furthers the eternal salvation of the one who suffers. Moreover, the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ makes Christ the example of vicarious suffering. Linking together the doctrines of the Incarnation and of the Redemption brings suffering into its true focus. It emphasizes the privilege of the sufferer who takes his place, not under the feet of a tyrannical outraged Deity, but at the side of a God of Infinite love who has redeemed all men through suffering.
The soul, suffering the "night of the senses" or the "dark night of the soul" reflects the sufferings experienced by Christ in "the dark night" of Gethsemane.

Several important facts should be noted by the reader. First, since faith is not a question of feeling, these trials are not sinful. Secondly, a very sensitive person would be more apt to suffer, and would suffer more intensely, than would other persons. Moreover, such trials are not necessarily limited to persons in religious life; but the religious, by the very nature of their lives, are more susceptible to these trials than are others who may more readily distract their attention from these trials by other occupations. Finally, the trials may be intermittent. Desolation and anguish may be interspersed with times of peace and contentment, so that the whole ascent of the soul to God may be said to resemble a journey of many days and nights, or a journey of one long night frequently illuminated by light from heaven.

Of these periods of trial, the "night of the senses" and the "dark night of the soul" are the most prolonged and the most severe. "The night of the senses" pertains to beginners and is relatively common. It occurs when God begins to bring the soul to realize his presence and to accept its dependence upon Him. This purgation strips the soul of desires--first sinful ones, then involuntary ones. This night is an active state because the soul is able to better its condition and to alleviate its suffering through active efforts and through
sacrifices; but it no longer finds delight in beautiful things; what was formerly enjoyable is now dry, irritating, and unconsoling, and all experiences of the senses have become meaningless. In this state, the soul will avoid failure by its active cooperation with God's grace.

The "dark night of the soul," by far the most severe of these trials, is sent by God only to those great souls, such as St. John of the Cross, who can bear it without despairing. It occurs at the beginning of the Unitive Life, when God seeks to bring the soul into complete union with Him. The soul feels that even God has abandoned it. There is no consolation. There may even be the temptation, against both faith and reason, to feel that God does not exist. This is a passive state, for the soul is only capable of resigning itself to God's will. This passive resignation of the soul saves it from despair.

To what extent, if any, these two major purgations of the soul entered the life of Father Gerard Hopkins will probably never be completely known. However, this lack of information is not of very great importance for an adequate discussion of nature in "the terrible sonnets." What is essential to understand is that the road on which a soul may pass in its search for God may be one of suffering, and that the continual recurrence of these sufferings is a means both of divesting the soul of its desire for earthly happiness and of turning it to God.
During his life, Hopkins was most certainly subjected to many severe trials which had the characteristics of "the night of the senses" and "the dark night of the soul." His sufferings were more intense during the last years of his life, but they did not begin then. He had known suffering even when he found life so congenial in the happy days of his scholasticate at St. Beuno's. Here, before his ordination to the priesthood, he had written his autobiographical poem, "The Wreck of the Deutschland." He himself assured Bridges: "what refers to me in the poem is all strictly and literally true and did occur; nothing is added for poetic padding."^3

During the last years of his life, Hopkins' periods of suffering became increasingly more frequent and more intense, and they came from a number of different causes. He was plagued by ill-health and general physical fatigue. In spite of an apparent good humour, he had a natural tendency to consider his undertakings unsatisfactory. This tendency, together with the monotonous labour of correcting examinations, made his tasks uncongenial, and increased the tension of his life. Living in Ireland was a further source of suffering; for, while Hopkins seems to have loved the Irish people, his English patriotism could not approve the current political attitudes and activities of the country. Above all, there was the ang-

^3Letters to Bridges, p.47.
uish of not being able to use his fine mind for writing. He wished to write, he had the necessary authorization from his superiors to write, but he could not succeed either with poetry or with prose. All these sufferings weighed heavily on the gentle, kindly soul of the little priest and made his life, at times, almost unbearable. But his years were not completely dark. There were periods when the tension and strain lifted, and when he enjoyed both consolation from God and companionship with his fellow men. Life became for him a series of crises of varying intensity.

Hopkins' writings make it evident that his sufferings brought him closer to God. Yet no one can say with certainty how far these sufferings brought him up the "Ascent" towards God. Circumstances seem to justify the conclusion that he was passing through the night of the senses. He was still acutely aware of the nature of his sufferings, and of their causes; he even sought professional advice from Bridges concerning his health, and from experience he knew that change did help to lift his depression. At times, he was still able to find comfort in his friends. Occasionally, too, nature still had power to overwhelm him by its beauty. Even the outpourings of his heart in the "terrible sonnets" provided him with a measure of relief. At other times suffering increased until he became incapable of helping himself. Since the night of the senses and the dark night of the soul may overlap, it is difficult to
pinpoint Hopkins' condition. At times Hopkins' state did seem to reflect that of Christ in Gethsemane. In "The Wreck of the Deutschland," "the lightning and lashed rod" of the storm drove him to Christ. He "whirled out wings that spell / And fled with a fling of the heart to the heart of the Host." (XXVIII, 20-21). Here only, when he had sought refuge in his God and had accepted the mastery of his King, did he obtain peace.

The "terrible sonnets," written during the last years of Hopkins' life, are accepted as being autobiographical in character. They are some of Hopkins' finest poems, and they will repay more study than has yet been made of them. Some critical work has been done on one or more of these sonnets as individual poems. But what no critic has so far shown is the manner in which Hopkins by the "terrible sonnets" gives a unified expression to his account of his relationship with God. Yet these sonnets may be considered as different phases of the same struggle, and when so considered they are the expression of Hopkins' inscape of suffering. By inscaping this spiritual experience, Hopkins brings the reader face to face with the problem of suffering. Since suffering is a vague, internal experience, its inscape is more difficult to catch than is the inscape of concrete objects. Consequently the "terrible sonnets" represent Hopkins' most difficult accomplishment in writing poetry. In a unified treatment of the "terrible sonnets," each individual sonnet expresses
one phase of the total problem of suffering. The order of
treatment of the sonnets has more significance when their
theme is considered as a part of the great mystical experience
of suffering, for in the total context they are more forceful
and more beautiful. Even the night images in "Spelt from
Sibyl's Leaves" have this added intensity when the poem is
interpreted as symbolic of "the nights" of the soul. Most
critics consider this poem as symbolic of either death or "the
nights" of the soul. The symbolism of "the nights" of the
soul is supported by the imagery contained in the last lines

. . . reckon but, reck but, mind
But these two; ware of a world where but these two tell,
each off the other; of a rack
Where, selfwrung, selfstrung, sheath-and shelterless,
thoughts against thoughts in groans grind.

In physical death, thoughts are at rest, but in "the nights" of
the soul there can be no rest. On the other hand, death seems
a more logical explanation. The soft beauty of the coming
evening, the inevitability of its coming, and the reckoning
to which it leads all harmonize with thoughts of death. As a
symbol of death the poem also has a more universal appeal.
Conceivably, Hopkins may have meant either interpretation. But
it is more probable that he wished to fuse the two symbolic
meanings, that, by drawing a parallel between death and "the
nights" of the soul, he might show that the spiritual "night"
is the more terrible of the two experiences, and that the
accumulated sufferings of life will end with death.
Taken as a whole, the "terrible sonnets" give an almost unified expression of the pattern followed by each of these periods of trial. Nature imagery plays an important part in these sonnets. Hopkins lived in such close association with nature that, even in these years of bitter struggle, he turned to nature for the adequate expression of his thoughts. At this time, he uses nature imagery to reflect the ominous, destructive elements of nature rather than the consoling ones. In keeping with his own feelings, nature appears as most forbidding and most terrifying. This representation of nature differs from that used in Hopkins' other poems. While less emphasized, nature imagery is intensified by repetition, and it is more truly representative of the total inscape of suffering which Hopkins is presenting. Imagery containing cliffs, storms, darkness and struggle predominate and form an "underthought" for the whole series of sonnets. Like the sonnets themselves this nature imagery must have risen "unbidden" in Hopkins' mind as a spontaneous reflection of his own mental states. Subconsciously equating his own spiritual difficulties with physical storms and dangers, Hopkins links the whole series of sonnets together by means of nature imagery which, therefore, forms an integral part of the poems.

The sonnets are a "magnificent expression of his spiritual desolation"\(^4\) in which love predominates over fear and suffering.

\(^4\)Pick, Priest and Poet, p.132.
As such, they have a universal appeal. Even from this dark region they "echo words in which each man finds his own troubles reflected." They are the cry of the just man who feels himself abandoned by God but whose definite faith gives him the power of recovery.

When the "terrible sonnets" are considered as essential parts of one whole experience, Sonnet 68, "To seem the stranger. . .," should be placed first, for it is a statement of the causes of Hopkins' suffering and desolation. Many and varied as these causes are, their total effect on Hopkins is the feeling of loneliness which he voices in this sonnet:

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.

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.

I am in Ireland now: now I am at a third
Remove. Not but in all removes I can
Kind love both give and get. 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.

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5 Kranz, Gerard Manley Hopkins, p.125.
friends was not caused by lack of sympathy on the part of either Hopkins or his family. His suffering was the more poignant suffering arising from the knowledge of his inability to pass on to those he loved the faith which meant so much to him. As an Englishman in an Ireland devoted to the cause of Home Rule, he could not but suffer. By far the greatest source of suffering was his lack of inspiration to write. For Hopkins, there was no royal road to poetry. He had to feel his way to it. This difficulty which he experienced in writing was one of the tensions which he felt and which involved him in a suffering similar to that experienced in the "nights" of the soul. Hopkins' theory of poetry is that real poetic language must be "current language heightened," when "heightened" is used in the sense of language which is a little more carefully put together than ordinary speech. It is current language, but such as people use when speaking carefully. When the poet uses words and thoughts to form a pattern specifically for beauty, he is writing poetry. As had other poets before him, Hopkins recognized a distinction between poetry and mere verse. Verse lacking distinctiveness, individuality, inspiration, he called "Delphic verse," or verse of the sacred Plain. "Parnassian" is verse written in the

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7 Journals, p.23.

8 For Hopkins' explanation of the types of poetry, see Journals, p.38.
language of poetry, but lacking the inspiration of really
great poetry. Parnassian poetry is that poetry ordinarily
written even by great poets when they are not inspired. The
highest type of poetry Hopkins designates as "poetry of in-
spiration." Such poetry is generated during a mood of mental
acuteness, which may be active—when thoughts which arise in
this mood strike into it unasked. To write poetry of inspira-
tion requires both the moment of inspiration and the poetic
ability to write the experience. Without inspiration, true
poetry cannot be produced.

Hopkins expresses this theory of inspiration in the poem,
"To R. B." Inspiration, "the fine delight which fathers
thought" must be present; otherwise it will miss "the roll,
the rise, the carol, the creation" of true poetry. (LXXV, 12).
It is the lack of this true inspiration which makes of Hopkins'
last years a "winter world." In "To seem the stranger," Hopkins
uses very little nature imagery to express his spiritual state,
yet because he is able to put so much into a few words the
whole world of nature is suggested in the overtones and nuances
of the poem. The poem does point inevitably to an analogy with
nature, for the dominating theme of loneliness and desolation
is conveyed to the reader by the idea of the vast distance
which his separation implies. In the last tercet Hopkins ex-
presses his inability to write by calling himself "a lonely
began." "Began" is similar in formation to "also-ran."
ran," a term used at first in horse-racing, is now used to refer to any person who fails to win distinction. Used as a noun, "began" means one who fails in the beginning, but from "also-ran" it has an added overtone of the defeat of frustration experienced by one who loses at the very beginning of a race. To Hopkins, life seems an unsuccessful race but he does not give up. As the race continues, there is no despair only the continual beginning again which accompanies such hours of trial, and makes of him a lonely "began."

"To seem the stranger" lists the causes of the approaching struggle. With Sonnet 69, "I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day," Hopkins enters into the initial stages of the conflict. As a person may sometimes awaken in the night to find himself dangerously ill, so Hopkins on this spiritual "night" has awakened to intense spiritual suffering which he here describes:

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.

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 idea of the intensity of Hopkins' sufferings is conveyed by the poet's use of nature imagery. The night, far from
being the starlight night of other times, is a night of utter
darkness and unknown terror. This overwhelming character of
the night is further emphasized by the multiple meanings of
the word "fell." The night is "fell"—cruel, inhuman and
painful; as a noun, "fell" denotes a wasteland of vast, desolate,
and empty spaces; and so full of terror is the night that it
seems to enclose and smother one, as would the hairy skin of
some wild animal. Since a fell of timber is the total timber
cut from an area, the word further denotes the complete des­
truction of the day and the entrance into this dark night of
suffering. Another common experience of the person confronted
by darkness or danger is that time seems to take on new di­
dimensions: Hopkins' struggle stretches before him until it en­
compasses not only discouraging days, but even years. So
utterly alone is he that even his cries to heaven seem as
"dead letters" to someone not there. Since the octave of this
poem is a close, but intensified, re-creation of the experience
which Hopkins describes in "The Wreck of the Deutschland," the
reader tends to apply that poem's imagery to this new storm.

In the sestet, the blackness of the night pierces even to
the depths of the poet's being; he no longer feels bitterness;
he is bitterness, gall, and heartburn. The impression which

9For multiple meanings of "fell" see Raymond V. Schoder, S.J.,
"An interpretive Glossary of Difficult Words in the Poems,"
The Immortal Diamond, edited by Norman Weyand, p.212. Also
Anthony Thwaite, "Gerard Manley Hopkins," Contemporary English
the poet conveys in this line is that the struggle, begun in the senses (by the "taste"), has now become a soul-searing experience. Gall, a reminder of the Passion, connects Hopkins' sufferings with those of Christ.\textsuperscript{10}

The line, "bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse," echoes so closely the line of "The Wreck of the Deutschland"—"Thou hast bound bones and veins in me, fashioned me flesh"—that the reader subconsciously recalls the remaining stanzas of "The Wreck of the Deutschland" and applies them to the poet's present situation. The terror of the night echoes:

\begin{quote}
Thou heardest me truer than tongue confess
Thy terror, O Christ, O God;
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: (11-15)
\end{quote}

and the "cries countless" that are like "dead letters" is a reminder of the cries for help of the shipwrecked people.

In the octave also, Hopkins uses the homely image of the action of yeast on dough to draw his comparison—to clarify, his soul state. If the yeast is sour, the dough will not rise. Similarly, Hopkins feels that his "selfish ego which makes his body, and hence his spirit, chafe and fret[is] souring his

\textsuperscript{10}See Gardner, II, p.339.
wholesomeness."\textsuperscript{11} Nevertheless, one ray of hope remains in the blackness of this night; for Hopkins realizes, even at this time, that his plight on earth has not reached the wretchedness of the lost souls: their plight is worse.

One of the clearest distinctions between the "night of the senses" and "the dark night of the soul" is the degree of activity which the sufferer is still capable of. Since Hopkins can still actively hope, since he can still respond to the beauty of nature, and since he is still articulate enough to express his feelings in poetry, it is justifiable to consider this poem as representing the initial stages of the "night of the senses."

The storm of suffering, begun in "I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day," reaches its full fury in Sonnet 65, "No worst, there is none." The octave is "a dramatic presentation of the emotion of mental anguish;" the sestet, "the speaker commenting of the experience." The whole poem represents the pattern of Hopkins' struggles.\textsuperscript{12} The sonnet opens with the victims' cry for help:

\textsuperscript{11}Thwaite, p.24.

\textsuperscript{12}Sister Marcella M. Holloway, "Sonnet 65: No Worst, there is None," Explicator XIV, No. 8. (May 1956) No. 51.
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? 
My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief 
Woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing— 
Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked 'No lingering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief.

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall 
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap 
May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small 
Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep, 
Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all 
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

Throughout the sonnet, Hopkins has used nature imagery 
to present his inner struggle. The victim's cry for help 
is answered only by the shriek of Fury. In his anguish, 
Hopkins cries "herd-long," for sorrow follows sorrow closely 
as cattle are wont to do when returning from pasture. "World 
sorrow" adds an "underthought" by revealing a new meaning to 
Hopkins' sufferings. His role is that of a victim for the sins 
of the world. The Roman Catholic doctrine of vicarious suf- 
ferring is based upon the vicarious nature of the sufferings of 
Christ. Hopkins, as a vicarious sufferer, was applying to 
the following of Christ the same thoroughness which he applied 
to every other aspect of his life. The "age old anvil" which 
forms his "cross" forces him to cry out, and to "wince" with

13For explanation of this poem as an example of vicarious 
suffering see Sister Mary Humiliata, "Hopkins and the 
LXX (March 1955) 58-68.
pain.\textsuperscript{14} No hope seems to come from either heaven or earth. His cry, like Christ's cry of abandonment on the Cross, receives no answer except the shriek of Fury.\textsuperscript{15}

In the sestet, developed by means of evocative nature imagery, the poet recollects his anguish. He looks back over his struggle, and he considers the enormity of the sufferings which he has undergone. Mountains and depths, sheer cliffs, and dangerous precipices seem nearest to the peril he has passed through. The mountains of the mind are not only sheer and frightful, but also "no man fathomed." The line, "Hold them cheap/ May who ne'er hung there," serves two purposes: it emphasizes the depths of the suffering, and it also shows man clinging to the cliff. Man hangs there, as if suspended between earth and heaven. His cries to heaven seem fruitless; he can hope for nothing but destruction from below.\textsuperscript{16} In such a condition, man will grasp at whatever comfort he can find—even the very elemental comfort of sleep. This thought of hope is a clear indication that Hopkins had not despised.

\textsuperscript{14}Sister Mary Humiliata, p. 65.

\textsuperscript{15}See Heuser, p. 89.

\textsuperscript{16}See Heuser, p. 89.
Two theories have been advanced to account for the "underthought" of the sheer cliffs. The first theory, advanced by Gardner, is that Hopkins had in mind the sheer cliffs of King Lear's despair. Its chief merit lies in the comparison of the causes of sufferings: Lear's suffering is caused by the ingratitude of his daughters, while Hopkins' stems from the seeming abandonment by his God. The second theory is that of the Prometheus myth. This theory emphasizes the vicarious nature of Hopkins' sufferings. Hopkins would be familiar with both of these sources, and may have had both in mind. The Prometheus myth, however, would seem the more probable, for the situation of Hopkins is nearer to that of Prometheus. Both suffer vicariously; both are completely helpless in sufferings which they can do nothing to prevent. The nature imagery in this sonnet is successfully used to create the agony and tension which Hopkins requires. It has a compelling actuality which communicates Hopkins' mood to his reader. The symbolic meaning of the imagery makes the poem appear as a cry of soul to God. The full agony of Hopkins' sufferings described in this poem is close to the "night of the soul." Here the victim, suspended between heaven and the bottomless

abyss, can find no solace. The sonnet ends in a whirlwind as if even that were a comfort. The sufferer's last thought is that the storm must abate because "each day dies with sleep."

Sonnet 64 "Carrion Comfort," is the next phase of the struggle. In the danger, as Hopkins clings desperately to the sheer rock, one "creature" seems to offer him help and consolation. It is "Carrion Comfort"—despair. Hardly beautiful, carrion is in fact the loathsome residue of something that once was beautiful, and which now is essentially evil. "Carrion Comfort" is Hopkins' refusal to feast on despair. He will not undo these last strains of man within him.

Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee;
Not untwist—slack they may be—these last strands of man
In me or, most weary, cry I can no more. I can;
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.
But ah, but O thou terrible, why wouldst thou rude
on me
Thy wring-world right foot rock? lay a lionlimb against me? scan
With darksome devouring eyes my bruised bones? and fan,
O in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic to avoid thee and flee?

Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear.
Nay in all that toil, that coil, since (seems) I kissed the rod,
Hand rather, my heart lo! lapped strength, stole joy, would laugh, cheer.
Cheer whom though? the hero whose heaven-handling
flung me, foot trod
Me? or me that fought him? O which one? is it each one?
That night, that year
Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God.

Just what this temptation was—despair or a lesser discouragement—is not stated; neither is the strength of the temptation described. It does however seem hard to reconcile the idea of actual despair (which some critics have suggested) with the faith of the man who could write:

I was a Christian from birth or baptism, later I was converted to the Catholic faith, and am enlisted 20 years in the Society of Jesus. I am now 44. I do not waver in my allegiance. I never have since my conversion to the Church. 19

Whatever the temptation may have been, its involuntary nature is assured, for immediately after his cry of "I can not more," Hopkins firmly states "I can; /can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be" [what I am].

In the first quatrain Hopkins refuses to feast on Carrion Comfort; in the second, his adversary assumes the role of aggressor, while Hopkins, powerless to escape from under his "world-rocking foot" and to get beyond the reach of his "lionlimb" and his "devouring eyes" now seeks for escape in flight. The change of the relative positions of the opponents, as well as

19Further letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins, p.447, note J.
the shift from the third person to the second, raises the question as to whether the opponent in the second quatrain is Carrion Comfort or whether it is God. The best explanation seems to be that Carrion Comfort is the immediate opponent; God, the ultimate one. In the sestet, there is a change from the past to the present tense, which means that the struggle is now past. Hopkins looks back over the struggle, and realizes the reason for it. Having accepted suffering, as would be required of a vicarious sufferer, Hopkins is encouraged to continue the struggle. But he is not sure whether he should cheer God, or cheer himself for having dared to wrestle with God. In the end, Hopkins contends with God, after the manner of Job.  

In "Carrion Comfort" nature imagery is the vehicle by which Hopkins develops his thought. The repulsive carrion, the ultimate destruction to which all nature must submit, makes the sonnet a natural sequel to "No worst, there is none." The storm theme is a further connecting link between these two poems. In "No Worst, there is none," Hopkins shrinks before the shriek of "Fury" and seeks whatever comfort from the whirlwind he can find—even sleep. In "Carrion Comfort" Hopkins

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still seeks escape from "the turns of tempest." It is a terrifying experience to be crushed beneath the "lion-limbed" beast of prey and to be made its helpless victim. The headlong flight is a physical parallel to Hopkins' flight from evil. The "lionlimbed" adversary with its "darksome, devouring eyes" suggest two "underthoughts." The reader at once recalls "The Tiger" by Blake. The feeling of awe associated with Blake's tiger is now associated with the "lion-limbed" adversary of "Carrion Comfort." Although no record has been found to prove that Hopkins had Blake's poem in mind at the time he wrote "Carrion Comfort," Blake was popular at the time, and Hopkins was interested in him. 21 In a letter Hopkins writes: "I have Blake's poems by me . . . . The best are of an exquisite freshness and lyrical inspiration . . . ." 22

The second "underthought" is suggested by the association of the "lionlimbed" adversary in the octave with the separation of the wheat from the chaff in the sestet. Together, these two images recall the story of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the early Christian martyr who, condemned to the lions in the amphitheatre of Rome, declared that he must be ground in the

21 See Anne King "Hopkins' Windhover and Blake," English Studies, XXXVII (December 1956), 245-252.

22 Correspondence with Dixon, p. 153.
jaws of the lion to produce the good wheat of Christ. This physical parallel to Hopkins' mental sufferings renders comprehensible the reference both to the "lionlimbed" adversary with its "darksome devouring eyes" and to the separation of the wheat from the chaff. Hopkins' grain, too, must be "sheer and clear," even though the nature of his martyrdom differs from that of St. Ignatius. The martyrdom of St. Ignatius seems a most probable source of "the underthought" of "Carrion Comfort." Hopkins would be perfectly familiar with this story since, as a Roman Catholic priest, he would, each year, on February the first, celebrate Holy Mass in honor of St. Ignatius, the Martyr of Antioch.

Nature imagery similar to that of the chaff and the grain used in "Carrion Comfort" is found in Hopkins' earlier poems. It is the harvest from which, Hopkins "gleans the Savior" in "Hurrahing in Harvest." By this association with the thought of "Hurrahing in Harvest," added significance, from the ideas of beauty and purpose already predicated to the harvest, is given to "Carrion Comfort." The harvest theme also links "Carrion Comfort" with "Spring and Fall," whose "underthought" is the inevitable approach of death and dissolution. Thus, both "Hurrahing in Harvest" and "Spring and Fall" are linked with "Carrion Comfort" by their expression of the nature imagery of the harvest season. By this association "Carrion Comfort" implies that Hopkins' struggle against evil is worth-
while, and that he is right to resist "Carrion Comfort, Despair." The final complete surrender to God's will represented in "Carrion Comfort" is "the triumph of the spirit over the flesh." On the scale of perfection, this is a further step towards the Unitive Way. While Hopkins here seems to be overwhelmed with terror at the struggle in which he is engaged, he clings to God with his will. "I can; I can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be." This is not achieved mysticism for, as Gardner assures us, "The mystics have rarely attempted to describe 'the war within' (their purgative phase) in such vivid terms." But it does, he continues, belong to the mystic way, for no mystical union is possible until "self has been completely mastered."

With the rejection of "Carrion Comfort, Despair," Hopkins has reached the turning point in his spiritual purgation. He has rejected evil. The next phase of the struggle is the positive submission to God's decree. This is the theme of Sonnet 74 "Thou art indeed just." Though not always included as one of the "terrible sonnets," Sonnet 74 belongs in the present grouping, for it reveals an important turning point in Hopkins' struggle:


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. See, banks and brakes
Now, leaved 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.
Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.

The sentiments expressed in this sonnet follow closely

Hopkins' retreat notes, for January 1888:

I was continuing this train of thought concerning
difficulties when I began to enter on that course of
loathing and hopelessness which I have so often felt
before, which made me fear madness and led me to give up
the practice of meditation except, as now, in retreat and
here it is again. I could therefore do no more than repeat
"justus es, Domine, et rectum judicium tuum" and the like,
and then being tired I nodded and woke with a start.
What is my wretched life? Five wasted years almost have
passed in Ireland. I am ashamed of the little I have
done, of my waste of time, although my helplessness and
weakness is such that I could scarcely do otherwise.
. . . . . All my undertakings miscarry: I am like a
straining eunuch. I wish then for death: yet if I died
now I shd. die imperfect, no master of myself, and that
is the worst picture of all. O my God, look down to me.25

These notes confirm the autobiographical character of the
sonnets. Moreover, this complete account of Hopkins' dis-
couragement and hopelessness throws considerable light upon

25Further Letters, p. 447, Note J.
the real nature of his struggle. It justifies the consideration that a large portion of Hopkins' sufferings came from his oversensitive, ardent temperament. For Hopkins to do less than what was perfect was always to have failed to reach the standard; this was a trial in itself. In both his notes and his sonnets, Hopkins reaches the comforting conclusion that, since "Justus es Domine et rectum judicium tuum," he may confide his sufferings to God and rest in Him. The phase of struggle which this sonnet reveals is that Hopkins, although still suffering and still struggling, has come to the realization that God, in His inscrutable justice, requires this suffering to separate the wheat from the chaff. Though Hopkins recognizes God's justice, he does not understand it, and he complains to God that the treatment he is receiving is more befitting God's enemies than His friends. The "sots and thralls of lust" prosper, while everthing he does ends in failure in spite of his dedication to Christ's service. Heuser considers that Hopkins "pleads his cause"\(^26\) as a lawyer would, setting forth his case in a correct and respectful manner. Gardner calls it a "masterly pleading,"\(^27\) and considers it the real beginning of Hopkins' recovery.

\(^{26}\)Heuser, p.93.

\(^{27}\)Gardner, II, p.365.
In the sestet, Hopkins reinforces his argument by analogies from nature. His main contention is that, while all nature is fulfilling its purpose, he alone strains, as "time's eunuch," and does not succeed. The sonnet ends with a prayer of humble submission from this needy soul to the "lord of life" to "send my roots rain." The first nature image employed is that of the banks and brakes, thick with foliage and intertwined with lacy chervil. The brakes are heavy clumps or thickets of underbrush or bushes which grow wild. They experience no restraint, yet God is satisfied with them. The chervil, or cow parsley, a native of Europe, is common throughout the British Isles. It has curved leaves which give that lacy appearance which Hopkins loved in nature objects. Geoffrey Grigson asserts that the pretty chervil is a key plant:

which leaves and laces the banks and brakes ... in contrast to Hopkins himself who was then the eunuch of time with no water at his roots ... The pretty chervil is that species which so whitely and lacily is part of the juice and joy ... along every road and every lane of Hopkins' elmy England.28

The smell of the chervil is so attractive to the bees that beehives are rubbed with it to induce the swarming of the bees. Since reference to the honey and to the honeycomb is

found in "Patience hard thing!" the imagery of this vine-like creeper becomes a link between the two sonnets. At the same time, it is a true description of English scenery.

Not only do plants "utter God" by fulfilling what He purposes. Birds "utter God" by building, Hopkins uses this nature imagery as a contrast to his own poetic sterility. Birds build nests for reproduction; but, as "time's eunuch," he can produce no poetry that "wakes." As symbols of peace, nesting birds form a second point of contrast with Hopkins, who can neither find internal peace nor bring peace to the Irish with whom he is living. The frustrated cry of the unproductive poet is further contrasted with nature's harmony by his cry: "Mine: O thou Lord of life, send my roots rain."

In the world of nature, the brakes and the fretty chevril require water for survival and growth, and their roots receive the rain they require. But Hopkins, like the barren fig-tree of the Gospel, finds his "roots" withered by crippling sterility. Only inspiration, or grace, can revive him.

Yvor Winters finds the imagery of this sonnet "irrelevant to the problem" and states that

the poem ends with a sexual image and a vegetative image in somewhat curious conjunction; neither is

29Yvor Winters, p. 88.
particularly good in itself and neither is particularly appropriate to the theme; both are trite.

But if the sonnet is considered in the total context of the "terrible sonnets," this nature imagery is most appropriate. The juxtaposition of the sexual image and the vegetable image serve to draw a parallel between natural life, supported by the rain received through the roots of the chervil—the "juice" and "joy" of the countryside—and spiritual life which is nourished by the grace of God. The storm has not yet abated but there is now a note of quiet expectancy. This impression is strengthened by the peaceful quality of the nature imagery. The sense of approaching peace brings Hopkins to a moment of respite such as can be obtained only by submission to "God's most just decrees." "This belief in God's justice forms the pith and marrow of what we call his powers of 'recovery'."  

"The masterful pleading" with which the poem ends is an expression of hope that God will send help if Hopkins has the patience required to wait for God's time. This new phase of struggle which Hopkins describes in Sonnet 70, "Patience, hard thing!," conveys the impression that the fury of the storm has abated:

Patience, hard thing! the hard thing but to pray,
But bid for, Patience is! Patience who asks
Wants war, wants wounds; weary his times, his tasks;
To do without, take tosses, and obey.

Rare patience roots in these, and, these away,
Nowhere. Natural heart's ivy, Patience masks
Our ruins of wrecked past purpose. There she basks
Purple eyes and seas of liquid leaves all day.

We hear our hearts grate on themselves: it kills
To bruise them dearer. Yet the rebellious wills
Of us we bid God bend to him even so.

And where is he who more and more distils
Delicious kindness?—He is patient. Patience fills
His crisp combs, and that comes those ways we know.

The theme of this sonnet is patience, and the means of obtaining it. Patience is difficult; it is hard even to pray for, because asking for patience is also asking for difficulties and for suffering. Patience involves doing without things, taking one's chances for the future, and obeying. But it is on just such self-renunciation that patience thrives. Yet Hopkins will ask God, in spite of what it involves, to bend his "rebellious" will to Him. By patience he will reach God. But this patience will only be attained by sacrifice—"those ways we know." In the sestet, the use of the first person plural gives it a universal application, making patience the remedy for the "world-sorrow" of "No worst, there is none."

The nature imagery of this sonnet hinges on two main images; the patience plant, or ivy, and the honeycomb. The first quatrains contains no direct nature imagery; but through "who asks / Wants war, wants wounds" and its expression of "weary"
time and tasks, it suggests both the struggle to obtain patience and the weariness caused by the struggle. "Take tosses" is used in the sense of "takes chances" as to what the future will bring. By the suggested picture of a small boat being tossed on a stormy sea, it also implies a storm at sea, and it thereby keeps the idea of a storm before the reader's mind. The second quatrain develops the symbol of the patience plant. The word "patience" is used to signify both the patience that the heart must possess, and the patience plant or ivy with its heart-shaped flower. When the ivy plant "takes root!! on a ruin it masks (covers) the ruin so that it, once again, appears beautiful. The ivy, with its "purple eyes" basks the whole day, its purple berries glinting in the sun and its leaves rippling liquidly in the air. Patience, too, must take firm root. The virtue of patience will mask the "ruins of wrecked past purposes," so that all unworthy inclinations and desires are concealed, and the person, once more, through patience, appears to the best advantage. The words "roots" does two things. It forms direct connection with "Thou art indeed just," for, when Hopkins prays, "Mine 0 thou lord of life, send my roots rain," one of the "roots" he desires is that of patience. It also expresses the need of this suffering, since patience takes a firm root only in such suffering. The ivy plant further emphasizes Hopkins' condition at the time he wrote the sonnet. The ivy is a symbol of both weakness and perseverance; it must
rely on other plants for support, but by perseverance it manages to survive and to climb upwards. Similarly, Hopkins feels himself to be weak, but he continues to cling to God that he, too, may survive and aspire towards God.

The imagery of the first tercet is closely connected with the ideas of war and strife, and of submission. "Grating" denotes prisons—not simple prisons, but dungeon holds whose very doors grate as they close. Thrust into such a dungeon, the prisoner feels that he has reached the depth of suffering; there can be "no worst." Yet there is more. Long imprisonment finally wears the prisoner down until he submits to his lot. Similarly, Hopkins closes the door of his heart to the things for which he naturally wishes, such as peace, security, and his own will. But this is not the end. He must learn, even beyond this, a greater submission to God's will which comes through Patience; and for this submission he finally asks in spite of the suffering it causes.

The honeycomb is the controlling image in the last tercet. The bee distils its sweetness in honey; and patience must fill man's "honeycomb," his soul, with the sweetness of God's grace. Patience "comes those ways we know," that is, it is to be attained by "the war," "wounds," and weariness already listed. Honey and the honeycomb enter into Biblical passages frequently, and are often considered as a mark of God's grace and favour.
The ancients knew nothing sweeter than honey, so that honey was their symbol of sweetness. The Promised Land was to be "a land flowing with milk and honey." Again, "Pleasing words are a honey-comb." In both these contexts honey, like the patience Hopkins is in search of, is considered something desirable. Moreover, the honey-comb is the source of beeswax from which the best candles are made. Tallow candles and oil lamps smoke and give off an unpleasant odour. Beeswax candles have a pleasant smell, and have always been associated with sunshine and flowers. Being totally consumed, the beeswax candle is a religious symbol denoting total dedication to God.

The symbolism of the honeycomb suggests a possible "underthought" which greatly enriches the meaning of the sonnet—that of the Pascal Candle. Two reasons underlie this suggestion. First, it is a most appropriate symbol of Hopkins' recovery from his internal struggles; secondly, Hopkins would be perfectly familiar with both the ceremony and its symbolism, and would be further attracted by the nature imagery of the prayer used in its blessing.

The Pascal Candle, made of pure beeswax, is blessed during

Proverbs, 16, 24.
the ceremonies of Holy Saturday (Easter Eve). Its symbolism looks both to the past and to the future. It symbolizes the deliverance of the Children of Israel from the Egyptian Captivity, and it further symbolizes the risen Christ, the Light of the world, who, by his Death and Resurrection, has freed man from the far greater captivity of sin. As the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and came to the Promised Land, the land "flowing with milk and honey," so Hopkins has passed through his period of trial to the peace which comes through suffering, and which is symbolized by the "crisp" combs. His deliverance from suffering is to be reached through a patience similar to that of the bee. Finally, the honeycomb produces the Pascal Candle which is totally consumed in God's service, and Hopkins, by his total surrender to God through Patience, reaches Christ, the Light of the World.

Through the exercise of a Job-like patience, Hopkins reaches the final phase of spiritual purgation. The suffering so sorely trying him is still present; but, possessing his soul in peace, he learns, while waiting for the alleviation of his trials, to take pity on his own weary soul. Sonnet 71, "My Own heart let me have more pity on," expresses Hopkins' realization that one of the greatest obstacles to his return to peace is his own impatient self:

My own heart let me more have pity on; let Me live to my sad self hereafter kind, Charitable; not live this tormented mind With this tormented mind tormenting yet.
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 a world of wet.

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.

He calls upon his own soul to relax and to trust that God
will return in His own time and in His own way; he tells
himself that he must have more charity, more pity towards
this poor "Jackself" rather than drive him on mercilessly
through these difficulties. "Jackself," a Hopkinsian coinage,
represents "the useful, hard-working, undistinguished" person.\(^{32}\)
It is suitably used to refer to Hopkins.

Although no nature imagery is found in the first quatrain
of this sonnet, "the tormented mind/With this tormenting mind
tormenting yet" reminds the reader of the "hearts grating" of
"Patience, hard thing." There is, however, a subtle difference
in the two images. In Sonnet 71, it is the mind which has
become the prison, while Hopkins is not only the prisoner but
also the jailer tormenting himself. His delicate, sensitive
nature increased the torments beyond what another person would

\(^{32}\text{Gardner, } Gerard Manley Hopkins, I, p.119.\)
feel. Although the world is still the same dark, comfortless world as it was when this "fell" suffering closed in upon him, patience now makes his lot easier. This lightening of care is felt by the reader both in the more confident mood of the poem and in the choice of words used. His spiritual darkness leaves Hopkins as unable to see in his comfortless prison as a blind man groping his way in the broad light of day. Hopkins can no more find comfort than can a thirsty man find drink in "a world of wet." Both nature images are symbolic of the dark night of suffering through which Hopkins is passing as he treads the parched and rocky path of spiritual desolation. As the thirsty man in the "world of wet," Hopkins, by his cry, "Send my roots rain," expresses his thirst for the return of God's sensible presence.

In the sestet, Hopkins urges his poor "Jackself" to "call off" thoughts awhile, and give comfort "root-room." "Call off" carries with it the thought of hounds worrying and tormenting their "jaded" prey. As the dogs must be called off to give the prey respite, so now he must cease his troubled thinking. Comfort must have "root-room." This second root (of comfort) must be planted beside the patience of "Patience, hard thing," for the two roots thrive together. With patience near, comfort will "size" (increase) when and how God wants it to. In the close connection between "comfort" and "joy" there is even a hint of birds and their songs, for "Comfort" reflects the
reflects the "Comforter" of the Holy Ghost, so often symbolized in the form of a Dove, and "Joy" is one of the fruits attributed to the presence of the Holy Ghost. A further interpretation of these lines is given by Robert Boyle who considers that "the protagonist, the eyes, and thirst are all compared on the basis of yearning, searching, and not finding. Each one of them is involved, within its own branch, in metaphor, so really three metaphors are compared among themselves to make up one simile."33

This newly found peace will continue to increase until Hopkins, once more, experiences "the smile" of God, a "smile" neither wrung from God nor extracted by force, but given freely and often unexpectedly. This "smile" of God is expressed by the last nature image of the series of poems; it is one of the most beautiful of the group. A mountain climber may have an unexpected but welcome surprise when he rounds a sharp corner on the mountain. He expected to find nothing but forbidding rock. Instead, he finds that the mountains have opened out, revealing a long vista of sky between two mountains. The sun, shining upon the clouds, tints them all colors. The traveller, viewing this lovely stretch of "pied" beauty, finds it so much the more beautiful because it is so unexpected.

33"The Imagery of Hopkins," Thought, XXV, No. 136 (Spring 1960) 70.
In the same way, Hopkins, trudging up the mountain to God through the darkness of spiritual desolation, feels that, in God's good time and in God's own way, the mountains will open and (since God rightly dwells upon the mountain tops) reveal the "smile" of God, which will light "a lovely mile" of his journey through life.

The seven sonnets discussed in this chapter are an expression of Hopkins' sufferings during the last years of his life. When his trials are compared with the trials that afflict the soul during the "night of the senses" or "the dark night of the soul," their similarity is immediately evident. Like souls in these states, Hopkins' suffering is fundamentally the suffering of a deeply religious man who feels himself alienated from God. Both the external causes of Hopkins' sufferings, and the pattern which these sufferings followed make it possible to think of Hopkins as passing through the various stages of these states. However, the theological aspect of Hopkins' condition affects the student of literature only in so far as it establishes the reality of such a spiritual purgation and leads to a truer understanding of the poet. The main interest lies in the fact that these trials were the occasions of some of the most beautiful of all Hopkins' poems. Nature imagery is so interwoven with the thought of these sonnets that, by forming an
essential part of their total inscape of suffering, it serves to make these sonnets at once more beautiful and more forceful. These sonnets—one of which Hopkins assures Bridges was "written in blood"—indicate the depth and poignancy of his suffering. Since Hopkins never intended these poems for publication, they may be considered as expressions both of Hopkins' own weariness and frustration and of his trust in the God who has sent him these trials.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: "THEE, GOD; I COME FROM, TO THEE GO."

The sufferings and dejection which Hopkins experienced, especially during the crucial years he spent in Ireland, might well have led to despair a man of lesser faith. That Hopkins kept faith was, in some degree, due to his vivid awareness of the pulsing, throbbing life around him; for he could, at all times, see in nature the reflection of the Creator. Nature revealed itself to him so intimately that he found it a logical vehicle of expression. Nature is, in fact, one of the great unifying factors in Hopkins' poetry.

The analysis of Hopkins' nature poetry in the previous chapters has demonstrated that nature forms one complete and consistent aspect of his poetry, and that this aspect is in keeping with the poet's own attitudes towards life. Three categories of Hopkins' nature poetry have been discussed. In the simple nature poetry, Hopkins expresses a sensuous love of the colors, the sights, and the sounds of the world around him. In other poems, Hopkins celebrates the grandeur of God through the beauty and variety of God's creation. In this group of poems, Hopkins expresses God's greatness and His grandeur by its revelation in the world of nature. Most of these poems
have the same theme: the beauty of all nature as the expression of the still greater beauty of nature's Creator. The wind-hover, the "Binsey" poplars, and the moon disentangling itself from the mountain are three of a long list of nature objects whose imagery Hopkins uses inscapes both the beauty of nature and the greatness of God. Nature is also a unifying factor in the "terrible sonnets" in which nature imagery expresses God's power, His justice and His mercy. Hopkins' distinctly different use of nature results in an entirely different impression. Generally, the terrible sonnets are not classed as nature poetry, for, in them, nature imagery is less prominent than it is in his other poems. But the unity of theme of the "terrible sonnets" is reinforced by the intensity of the nature imagery as well as by the similarity of the images used and the repetition of the same images. Through nature imagery, Hopkins arrives at a continuity and completeness of form which allows these sonnets to be considered as seven parts of one master poem rather than as seven distinct sonnets. This use of nature also makes it possible to consider the sonnets as different aspects of one protracted struggle. The "terrible sonnets" are, therefore, unified to a special degree by their nature imagery.

Hopkins' nature poems may be qualified by the two adjectives, "beautiful" and "dynamic." Hopkins could seek out beauty in the most ordinary object, and he could express that beauty in
words which make his reader see the same beauty. Because Hopkins sees each object of nature as existing for the definite purpose of praising God, he is able to invest all nature imagery with the dynamic quality peculiar to his poetry.

Hopkins' intense apprehension of each object in its least detail led him to accept philosophical principles which, like that of Duns Scotus, considers the essence of each object to be in its individual distinctiveness. The effect of this philosophy is expressed in Hopkins' poetry through his poetic theories of inscape and instress. Inscape is the essence of the object revealed by the intuitive glance which allows the beholder to grasp the inner significance of the object. Instress is a term which may imply either the principle of actuality of the object or, more often, the perfection of being, proper to that object.

Hopkins' poetry is in harmony with his literary characteristics. In all his poetry Hopkins seeks to express his inscape in the tersest and most forceful way possible. To do this he prunes and trims his work. The increased terseness of expression is observable in Hopkins' later poems, especially in the "terrible sonnets." Hopkins' ability to express two levels of meaning by the same image makes it possible for him to combine in his writing the "overthought" which describes the beauty of the natural image, and the "underthought" which expresses the inscape of the greatness of
the Creator. Hopkins accomplishes this by using a description of nature, followed by a comment or application. Beauty is obtained by the use of such poetic techniques as alliteration, word compounding, and coinage, as well as by Hopkins' special use of metre. The beauty of Hopkins' poetry, therefore, depends upon both the thought of the poem and the expression which he gives to that thought.

Two poems might be taken as a final illustration of Hopkins' ability to combine simple nature imagery with the "underthought" of Creation, or Redemption. At the same time, they may be considered as the concluding poems of the "terrible sonnets." The "underthought" of "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection" is that life and death are a part of God's eternal plan for man.

At first glance, the fire of Heraclitus may seem to be a rather odd symbol for the Christian theme of life, death, and resurrection. But a little reflection will be enough to convince the reader that this is one of Hopkins' most unexpected and appropriate choices. Heraclitus taught that the basic element of all things is fire, and that all things exist in a state of flux. In his sonnet, Hopkins uses this Heraclitean theory but he also introduces the three other elements of earth, air, and water as subordinate symbols to the Heraclitean flux. The philosophic explanation of this
poem is adequately dealt with by both Gardner\textsuperscript{1} and Heuser\textsuperscript{2}. In this present study further considerations may be added. Because the sonnet was written in 1888, some months before Hopkins' death, its theme can easily be linked with that of the "terrible sonnets." In the "terrible sonnets" the nature imagery is dark, tempestuous, and terrifying. "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire" has all the beauty and tranquility of a peaceful morning after a night of storm. The nature imagery used is familiar to everyone, but Hopkins elevates it to the higher level in which these common things of life become symbolic of both the Grandeur of God and of His Mercy and Goodness to man.

Nature imagery is used to express this new "lease" on life. This is a morning when all the "juice" and the "joy" of Creation makes it good to be alive. Over the skies the clouds--"puffballs," "pillows"[rest at last!] and "heaven roysterers"--throng. (LXXII, i-2). The wind laps up the water in "pools" and "rut-peel patches" until the "ooze" becomes first "dough," then "crust," and, finally, "dust." Man's footprints, made during the "treadmire" toil of the storm, are being obliterated. Nature's "millioned-fueled bonfire" burns on, changing all things through the continuous flux. Here

\textsuperscript{1}Gardner I, p.161-5.

\textsuperscript{2}Heuser, p.93-94.
"the underthought" of the poem becomes apparent, for not only are the signs of yesterday's storm blotted out but even man and man's "footsteps," his place even, becomes obliterated and forgotten. This is the earthly end of man. The subsequent corruption of the body is described by imagery which is startling, and yet theologically exact. The flesh dies and is corrupted through the action of "the residuary worm." Man returns to ashes. "Ashes" are "the dust" to which man returns. But this is not the real fate of the Christian. He is not there. The triumphant Cross of Easter Sunday shines across "the floundering deck" as a symbol of hope. Freed from "his bonehouse," man has, at last, found his real place by the side of Christ. Christ's death assures man that his body will rise in glory. No more appropriate symbol could be found of this culminating stage of the Incarnation-Redemption theme than that of the "diamond." As it is found in nature, the diamond does not show its beauty: it is rough and dull. It must be polished until this poor "Jackself" has become the "immortal diamond."

The highly developed imagery of this sonnet contrasts with the simplicity of imagery in the fragment, "Thee God I come from, to Thee go," in which, in the first seven lines of nature imagery, Hopkins gives the theme of the poem, submission to God's will and confidence in his guidance:

Thee, God, I come from, to Thee go,
All day long I like fountain flow
From thy hand out, swayed about
Mote-like in thy mighty glow.
What I know of thee I bless,
As acknowledging thy stress
On my being . . .

As water flows from a fountain so man receives his life, minute by minute, from God's hand. Man's life is like the mote which assumes beauty in the "mighty glow" of God's grace which sways it. These six lines are a good example of Hopkins' ability to use nature imagery to express a religious thought.

Throughout his life, Hopkins retained his sensuous love of nature; it was as a thread of gold running through both his dullest and his most difficult moments. Hopkins' awareness of the beauty of nature invests his poetry with a singularly direct, powerful, and beautiful quality. Yet he never loses sight of the fact that nature, for all its beauty, is but the "utterance" of its Creator. Hopkins' inscape is ever accompanied by the deeper thought of the God who created nature and to whom he dedicated his own life.
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