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Functions Of The Speaker In The Completed English Poems Of Gerard Manley Hopkins

Henry John Ferns

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**FUNCTIONS OF THE SPEAKER IN THE COMPLETED
ENGLISH POEMS OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS**

by
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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Graduate Studies
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyse the functions of the speakers of Hopkins's poems in order to obtain a fuller understanding of his poems. In fulfillment of this purpose, four related aspects of Hopkins's poetic technique are discussed in detail as they appear in each of his completed poems: Hopkins's presentation of himself, his relation to his audience, his handling of first person pronouns, and the way in which the rhetoric of particular poems is determined by these factors.

Since the nature of the speaker's role is intimately related to his functions, determines and often embodies his functions, it is discussed first in the examination of each poem. The roles in which Hopkins casts the speakers of his poems are explored as they develop through five main phases of his poetic career. In the early poetry the opposed voices of sensuous explorer and ascetic aspirant are analysed, and their fusion in the speaker of "The Habit of Perfection" is examined as an early development. Hopkins's attainment of a manifold voice in "The Wreck of the Deutschland" is then discussed; the way in which he creates a coherent poetic speaker out of the potentially divergent voices of anguished soul, preacher, narrator and celebrant. The sonnets of 1877 are then considered since they provide evidence of further developments of the speaker as preacher and the speaker as celebrant. In his middle poems of 1878 to 1883 the new role of speaker as priest appears and is described, both independently and as an anticipation of the final phase of Hopkins's poetic evolution. In this phase, in the sonnets of desolation, Hopkins develops a plain style in order to express the speaker's final role as spiritual antagonist.

Throughout, the speaker's relationship to his audience is discussed, since the speaker's most important function after his presentation of himself is his presentation of his meaning to his audience. The handling of first person pronouns, together with other significant aspects of Hopkins's poetic rhetoric are, also, regularly discussed. But the two main concerns remain the speaker's presentation of himself and the nature of his relationship to his audience.

This kind of analysis of Hopkins's poetry is offered as a means of establishing a unifying element within his poetic canon. There have been many commentaries on Hopkins's poems, but fewer attempts to portray the essential unity of his canon of completed poems. This study represents an effort in this direction. Thus, it is not only concerned with examining the development of functions of the speakers, but also attempts to relate this development to the overall unity of Hopkins's work.

This study is concerned throughout with aesthetic and critical issues rather than with biography, with Hopkins's rhetorical procedures as a lyric poet rather than with his life. However, the critical comments which Hopkins makes about poetry and poetic theory in his prose writings are never ignored. As a result, Hopkins's poetry is viewed, finally, as an ideal analogue to his devotional life, a canon of poems that represents, in effect, a spiritual autobiography, in which the speaker of the poems plays a continuously central part.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
Certificate of Examination	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.	vi
INTRODUCTION - THE TERRIBLE CRYSTAL	1
CHAPTER I - THE RIV'N VINE	38
CHAPTER II - BREATH AND BREAD	91
CHAPTER III - THE WIMPLING WING	137
CHAPTER IV - THE FORGED FEATURE	173
CHAPTER V - MY WINTER WORLD	229
SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY	276
VITA	vii

INTRODUCTION

THE TERRIBLE CRYSTAL

I shall I imagine be always looked at now -- but from a distance, as if set apart by my predestined temperament like some strange animal confined within a fence for public view.

-- Joseph Conrad (to Warrington Dawson)

Most critics would agree that one of the major concerns of nineteenth-century poetry is the poet himself. More narrowly than this, poets of this period were concerned with their own personalities, with the self as the most immediately reliable test of experience. Hopkins was no exception. His poetry can be initially described as a poetry of personality, with the exception that Hopkins wished in poetry to portray an ideal version of himself. He sought to present the self ideally ecstatic or ideally suffering, the self removed from the artistically irrelevant accidentals of actuality, and forged into the crystallized feature of a work of art.

Poetry of personality demands, I believe, a method of analysis that pays complete and unremitting attention to the speakers of such poetry. For these speakers are the artistically "forged" features" of their authors' human and perishable biographical identities. In this introductory chapter I provide both a general account of what I conceive to be the nature of Hopkins's poetry, and a description of the critical methods that will be employed in the detailed analysis undertaken in the study as a whole. Some brief, preliminary examples of the workings of these methods are also offered.

Writing of Hopkins's poetry in 1944, W. H. Gardner made the point that: "Unless the man behind and in the poetry is

reasonably well understood, the poetry itself must remain partially obscure."¹ The present study endeavours to throw some further light upon, "the man . . . in the poetry," upon the nature and workings of Hopkins's poetic personality. It is appropriate that criticism should be concerned with the expression of individuality of a poet who was himself so concerned with this aspect of poetry.

Hopkins himself would have preferred the term "character" to the terms "personality," or "autobiography." He believed that in reading poetry the reader came into lively contact with a poet's character. Even so, Hopkins was not a "biographical" critic, for he believed that the poet's character must be realized in satisfactory aesthetic terms, and must be fully embodied in his poems. As he said to his friend R. W. Dixon, "the life must be conveyed into the work and be displayed there, not suggested as having been in the artist's mind."² But with this distinction clearly in view, Hopkins did seek for evidence of the moral worth of a poet's character in his reading of poetry. It was for this reason that he preferred his friend Bridges's poems to those of Swinburne, and even to those of Tennyson and Morris. Thus, he told his friend that although he [Bridges] lacked the volume of imagery that Swinburne, Tennyson and Morris possessed, his poetry had a redeeming virtue, "but in point of character, of sincerity or earnestness, of manliness, of tenderness, of humour, melancholy, human feeling, you have what they

¹W. H. Gardner, Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) : A Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition, 2 vols. (2nd ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1966), I, 2 -- hereafter cited as Gardner.

²The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon, ed. C. C. Abbott (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 133 -- hereafter cited as Letters, II.

have not and seem scarcely to think worth having."³ Indeed, it was evidence of moral character and its expression that Hopkins sought for in all poetry, from classical to modern, and in all the arts. Writing to Bridges about Aeschylus, for example, he remarked, "What a noble genius Aeschylus had! Besides the swell and pomp of words for which he is famous there is in him a touching consideration and manly tenderness; also an earnestness of spirit and would-be piety by which the man makes himself felt through the playwright."⁴ And writing to A. W. M. Baillie, he remarked of Pope, "When one reads Pope's Homer with a critical eye one sees, artificial as it is, in every couplet that he was a great man."⁵ The use of the term "great man" is interesting, for one expects "great poet." But for Hopkins the two terms were synonymous. For him an artist had to possess moral worth, and express it in his art, to deserve the epithet "great." This implies, of course, a rigorous moral judgement of works of art. Hopkins always made such judgements. It was for this reason that he once walked out of a reading of Meredith's The Egoist,⁶ and was why he expressed to Bridges a highly Arnoldian view of the function of art, "a kind of touchstone of the highest or most living art is seriousness; not

³The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges, ed. C. C. Abbott (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 96 -- hereafter cited as Letters, I.

⁴Letters, I, 256.

⁵Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins : Including his Correspondence with Coventry Patmore, ed. C. C. Abbott (2nd ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 222 -- hereafter cited as Letters, III.

⁶Paul L. Mariani, A Commentary on the Complete Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1970), pp. 21-22 -- hereafter cited as Mariani.

gravity but the being in earnest with your subject -- reality.

.....
 What are works of art for ? to educate to be standards. Education is meant for the many, standards are for public use."⁷

If a modern descriptive term is required for Hopkins he is a "moral" and an "evaluative" critic. Most of Swinburne's poetry could be thrown out the window as far as Hopkins was concerned because it was morally unworthy, "d--d subjective rot."⁸

In the same way Hopkins's admiration for Weber's music was tied up with his respect for the man whose character he said he felt through the music. "I shd. like to read his life," he told Bridges. "He was a good man, I believe, with no hateful affectation of playing the fool and behaving like a blackguard."⁹ Hopkins did not know this for certain. He imagined Weber's rectitude from an acquaintance with his music. And we can be fairly certain that the dismissive references to "fool" and "blackguard" have a single object, and that that object is Algernon Swinburne. Of his contemporaries, Hopkins praised the poetry of Matthew Arnold and R. W. Dixon for the same qualities already discussed. Re-reading Arnold's Empedocles volume in 1873, he wrote to his friend Edward Bond that Arnold, "seems a very earnest man and distinctly seeing the difference between jest and earnest and a master in both."¹⁰ This praise is offered despite Hopkins's general indifference to Arnold's poems in other terms. Evidence of seriousness and a perception of the worth of an author's moral character were crucial to

⁷Letters, I, 225, 231.

⁸Letters, I, 84. Although Hopkins is not referring to Swinburne here, he might well have had him in mind.

⁹Letters, I, 99.

¹⁰Letters, III, 58.

Hopkins in the reading of poetry. The possession of these qualities made him champion R. W. Dixon's poetry, in spite of its general neglect.¹¹

For Hopkins the absence of character destroyed poetry. He considered that the contemporary critic-poet, Aubrey de Vere had, "all the gifts that make a poet excepting only that last degree of individuality which is the most essential of all."¹² Poetry, as an expression of character, made each poet unique. One grew to know a poet, a poem or a body of poetry as one grew to know a man. So Hopkins told Patmore that :

Poetry must have, down to its least separable part,
 an individualising touch --
 every true poet . . . must
 be original and originality a condition of poetic genius;
 so that each poet is like a species in nature (not an
individuum genericum or specificum) and can never recur.

 the essential and only lasting thing . . . -- what I call
inscape, that is the species or individually-distinctive
 beauty of style. 13

This is how Hopkins spoke of his own creative enterprise to produce a distinctive poetry of individuality and character, "The effect of studying masterpieces is to make me admire and do otherwise. So it must be on every original artist to some degree, on me to a marked degree."¹⁴ Hopkins sought to be an original poet, and his critics, right from the beginning, have noted his successful achievement of this aim.

¹¹Letters, II, 8-9, 177.

¹²Letters, II, 112. He is quoting Coventry Patmore's assessment of de Vere.

¹³Letters, III, 302, 370, 373.

¹⁴Letters, I, 291.

R. W. Dixon's first response to the poems was that they were "amazingly original."¹⁵ Two early commentators, Father Lahey and Miss Phare, also noticed this quality,¹⁶ while the editor of his letters, C. C. Abbott, speaks of Hopkins's "searching honesty and the peculiarly personal statement that is the core of his best work."¹⁷

The expression of character in art produced something permanent. Commenting on a painting Hopkins noted, "Intense expression of face, expression of character, not mood, true inscape."¹⁸ But poetry of character was not the only concern. Indeed, to be over-preoccupied with self-expression implied a limitation. As Hopkins noted in an undergraduate essay entitled "The Probable Future of Metaphysics," "A form of atomism like a stiffness or sprain seems to hand upon and hamper our speculation: it is an overpowering, a disproportioned sense of personality."¹⁹ The poetry of character had to emerge from somewhere, and had to proceed somewhere, in order to possess a meaningful existence. It was not, and never could be for Hopkins, simply a matter of solipsistic self-expression.

¹⁵Letters, II, 27.

¹⁶G. F. Lahey, S.J., Gerard Manley Hopkins (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 122 -- hereafter cited as Lahey, and E. E. Phare, The Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins (Cambridge: University Press, 1933), p. 12 -- hereafter cited as Phare.

¹⁷Letters, I, xxi.

¹⁸The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. Humphry House; completed by Graham Storey (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 245 -- hereafter cited as Journals.

¹⁹Journals, p. 120.

Not surprisingly Hopkins believed in a romantic, but also a classical, theory of poetic inspiration. Early he believed that poetic inspiration arose from a healthy constitution or a good meal.²⁰ Later he felt that poetry was the gift of the holy spirit. It came as inspiration, but it came from without, "the universal mind is outside of my inmost self and not within it; nor does it share my state, my moral standing, or my fate."²¹ Inspiration, whatever its source, awakened a response in the poet, awakened him to a state of feeling. Poetry of character became poetry of inspired emotion. Character and inspiration interacted to produce a poetry of personal feeling. In reading a poem, the quality of the feeling expressed in it was submitted to the test of character. Thus, Hopkins said of Tennyson's poetry, "When the inspiration is genuine, arising from personal feeling, as in In Memoriam, a divine work, he is at his best."²² Presumably, in the case of Tennyson, Hopkins located the source of inspiration within the self. This was not true for Hopkins, however, whose source of inspiration became increasingly (he felt) religious. He believed himself to be inspired from without. Christ became his source of poetic inspiration. Hopkins's poetry, particularly after 1868, is "Christocentric."

The Incarnation was the central event in history and for Hopkins it was an historical event. As early as 1866 he

²⁰See Letters, III, 215-220 where he expresses his early theory [1864] of poetic inspiration to his friend A. W. M. Baillie. He distinguishes primarily three kinds of poetry: the poetry of inspiration, Parnassian and Delphic, which are defined by the degree of "inspiration" that they reveal. It should be remembered that this is the poetic theory of a young man who had just turned twenty.

²¹The Sermons and Devotional Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. Christopher Devlin, S.J. (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 126 -- hereafter cited as Sermons and Devotional Writings.

²²Letters, II, 24.

told his friend E. H. Coleridge, "I think that the trivialness of life is, and personally to each one, ought to be seen to be, done away with by the Incarnation."²³ Related to this was a belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Mass. "The great aid to belief is the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar."²⁴ His critics have naturally stressed the centrality of the Christian Incarnation in Hopkins's thought and poetry. J. Hillis Miller, for example, states that, "The central principle of Catholicism, as Hopkins sees, is the doctrine of the Incarnation."²⁵ Geoffrey H. Hartman notes, "but whatever faculty we choose for analysis we come squarely against the poet's conception of Christ, just as wherever we start in Wordsworth we return to the dialectic of love between man and nature. . . . It is Hopkins as modern poet dealing with Christ, Hopkins as celebrant of 'the dense and the driven Passion,' who must finally concern us."²⁶ And Father Boyle contends that, "The life-giving power of divine life . . . the ultimate significance of the Incarnation, is the basic key to all of Hopkins's mature work."²⁷ Hopkins himself realized the central position of Christ in his poetry,

²³Letters, III, 19.

²⁴Letters, III, 17.

²⁵J. Hillis Miller, "Gerard Manley Hopkins," in The Disappearance of God : Five Nineteenth-Century Writers (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 311 -- hereafter cited as Miller.

²⁶Geoffrey H. Hartman, "Hopkins," in The Unmediated Vision: An Interpretation of Wordsworth, Hopkins, Rilke, and Valéry (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1966), pp. 64, 65 -- hereafter cited as Hartman.

²⁷Robert Boyle, S.J., Metaphor in Hopkins (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 195 -- hereafter cited as Boyle.

and in doing so acknowledged the related importance of inspiration and feeling. "Feeling, love in particular, is the great moving power and spring of verse and the only person that I am in love with seldom, especially now, stirs my heart sensibly and when he does I cannot always 'make capital' of it, it would be a sacrilege to do so."²⁸ As John Pick argues, "his poetry is the story of the relationship of his soul to God, . . . his poems are really love poems."²⁹

Poetry of character, inspiration, feeling, and love of Christ cannot exist in a vacuum. It demands an audience, and is always directed towards one. In his lifetime, Hopkins's audience was very small. Its most important members were Robert Bridges, R. W. Dixon, and later Coventry Patmore. Hopkins had both a lively awareness of his audience, and, what is frequently ignored, a palpable design upon it. He wished to convert its members. Thus, to Bridges he admitted bluntly, "I do not write for the public. You are my public and I hope to convert you."³⁰ To Dixon he wished at Easter 1881, "Paschal joy and a speedy conversion."³¹ With Patmore conversion was unnecessary. Patmore was already a Catholic.

Hopkins's poetry was intended to be persuasively, though not dogmatically, Catholic. In this connection, he acknowledged his poetry's oral and even oratorical nature; qualities

²⁸Letters, I, 66.

²⁹John Pick, Gerard Manley Hopkins: Priest and Poet (2nd ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 129.
-- hereafter cited as Pick.

³⁰Letters, I, 46.

³¹Letters, II, 49.

that his poetry acquired from his classical education, and his messianic desires as a Jesuit preacher. To Bridges he wrote, "My verse is less to be read than heard, as I have told you before; it is oratorical, that is the rhythm is so."³² Later, he told Patmore that, "such verse as I do compose is oral, made away from paper, and I put it down with repugnance."³³ The oratorical quality of Hopkins's poetry is, I believe, more than just a quality of rhythm. The desire to persuade affects the meaning and rhetorical techniques of the poetry too. As John Pick has argued, "The interaction between his sermons and his poems was obviously very deep. The path of influence was not in one direction : sermon might influence poem or the reverse might happen."³⁴ The briefest inspection of Hopkins's sermons, in fact, reveals the presence in them of techniques of direct address, manipulation of first person pronouns, buttonholing of the audience, repetition and accumulation, all of which are revealed in his poetry as well.³⁵ Few critics have acknowledged this aspect of Hopkins's poetry. Elisabeth Schneider, for example, argues that while Hopkins's poetry is a poetry of statement it does not present itself as a sermon. Two statements that she makes at either end of her excellent study of Hopkins's poetry are worth consideration in this regard. "For a long time the luxuriance of baroque imagery so conspicuous in even the earliest poetry of Hopkins has tended to obscure one of its fundamental characteristics. His is a poetry of statement, intellectually formulated even when at emotional white heat, and scarcely at all, in any usual sense,

³²Letters, I, 46.

³³Letters, III, 379.

³⁴Pick, p. 86.

³⁵See, for examples, Sermons and Devotional Writings, pp. 26, 28.

a poetry of suggestion or atmosphere."³⁶ This is true, and indicates a generally unrecognized feature of Hopkins's poetry. Intellectually formulated, implies that the poetry must be formulated about something. Of course it is, and it grows out of Hopkins's convictions, and his desire to disseminate them, even if only to a coterie audience. Indeed, Hopkins could not justify the writing of poetry to himself if it did not advance the cause of his religion. Thus, a statement later in Miss Schneider's study causes some concern, since it only provides a half-truth, "he never wrote without having something serious to say. Not that he was ever didactic; his aesthetic sense was too sure to allow confusion between poem and sermon. But the distinction of art must be bestowed upon what was worthy; and meaning, therefore, meaning in a translatable sense, was important. At the outset, he shared the general assumption of his day that clarity was a virtue, obscurity a fault."³⁷ It is Miss Schneider's desire to qualify that causes concern here. Hopkins did not confuse poem and sermon, but rather exploited sermon techniques frequently in his poetry. Miss Schneider's qualification appears to grow out of a modern distrust of didactic poetry. Hopkins's poetry is often didactic, sometimes successfully so and sometimes not, but as didactic poetry it employs sermon techniques. And it must be remembered that didactic poetry is not per se bad. Hopkins himself believed that the purpose of art was to educate. Its aesthetic and rhetorical aspects require careful examination. The didactic poem should be judged on its own terms.

³⁶ Elisabeth Schneider, The Dragon in the Gate : Studies in the Poetry of G. M. Hopkins (Berkeley and Los Angeles : University of California Press, 1968), p. 11 -- hereafter cited as Schneider.

³⁷ Schneider, p. 105.

In this respect Geoffrey H. Hartman seems nearer the mark in providing an adequate description of Hopkins's poetry when he says in his essay "Poetry and Justification" that "In a stray comment Hopkins once urged what he names 'contentio, or strain of address.' No phrase can better describe his own strain of style. Contentio is a term from rhetoric designating an antithetical or pointed repetition of words. But in Hopkins' mind the term has somehow fused with the Jobean contentio, with a raising of the voice to God, with a like insistence of address."³⁸ With the added remembrance that Hopkins frequently addresses himself to his audience, this view of the nature of his poetry is exact. Two further remarks of Hartman's are also apposite here, and reinforce his description. In Hopkins's case he believes that :

Language is shown to be contentio in essence; there is nothing disinterested or general about it; its end as its origin is to move, persuade, possess. Hopkins leads us back to an aural situation (or its simulacrum) where meaning and invocation coincide. We never forget, in Hopkins' poetry, that it is a priest speaking, and one more Roman than the Romans in his scruples as to what his religious order might allow. ³⁹

There should be no negative judgement suggested in this. One of the most compelling features of Hopkins's poetry is that he has something to say. He knew how to say it, and, moreover, he knew how to say it in poetry. At times, as we shall see later, his earnestness, his preacher's moralizing zeal, overcame aesthetic proprieties, but this was not always so. And one feels respect

³⁸ Geoffrey H. Hartman, "Poetry and Justification," in Hopkins : A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. : Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 7 -- hereafter cited as Hartman, "Poetry and Justification."

³⁹ Hartman, "Poetry and Justification," pp. 8, 14.

for a poet as much concerned with the truth of what he has to say as with the way he says it. For Hopkins, poetry did involve "the application of ideas to life," and he finally valued life above art. Hopkins was ultimately more thoroughly concerned to save his soul than to write poetry. And who can blame him. As he remarked to Bridges, "Still, if we care for fine verses how much more for a noble life!"⁴⁰ This did not involve any denigration of art, but rather a lively sense of an order higher than the order of art.

What this moral earnestness, in matters both of character and of communication of character, led to was a belief in "Bidding" as an especially important quality in poetry. The poet who referred to "The Wreck of the Deutschland" and "The Loss of the Eurydice" as "my two almost famous Rejected Addresses."⁴¹ was only being consistent to his aesthetic ideals when he told Bridges that he felt his friend's play Prometheus the Firegiver lacked "biddings." Hopkins was remarking the absence of a quality that he tried to attain in his own sermons, and also, I believe, in his poetry. Thus, he says of Bridges's play, "I do not think it has in a high degree a nameless quality which is of the first importance both in oratory and drama: I sometimes call it bidding. I mean the art or virtue of saying everything right to or at the hearer, interesting him, holding him in the attitude of correspondent or addressed or at least concerned, making it everywhere an act of intercourse -- and of discarding everything that does not bid, does not tell. I think one may gain much of this by practice."⁴² I am not trying to argue here that Hopkins's poetry is everywhere and always concerned with "bidding," indeed, he probably

⁴⁰Letters, I, 61.

⁴¹Letters, I, 59.

⁴²Letters, I, 160.

deliberately does not mention poetry in this passage. What I think is true, however, is that there is a definite extension from Hopkins's preaching, messianic urges as a Jesuit, and classical education into his poetry, and that this extension should be considered in delineating the rhetorical techniques of the poetry. While still at Oxford, Hopkins noted his friend Addis's criticism of himself. Addis felt that Hopkins put too much personal feeling into his arguments, thereby distorting them. "Addis says my arguments are coloured and lose their value by personal feeling. This ought to be repressed."⁴³ Hopkins may have succeeded in repressing personal feeling from his arguments in conversation, but he never excluded *it* from his poetry. However, what is inappropriate in conversation may be viable in poetry. One of Hopkins's chief successes in the rhetorical aspect of his art is the way in which he persuades through personal conviction and feeling, persuades us that, though the Catholic truth may not be the truth for us, it is certainly the truth for him.

Later in life, about the time that he was writing his apocalyptic poem, "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire. . .," Hopkins confessed to Bridges the way in which his activities as a preacher and his activities as a poet were bound together. Preaching and poetry might involve different styles, but they ultimately expressed the same meaning. "I will now go to bed," wrote Hopkins, "the more so as I am going to preach tomorrow and put plainly to a Highland congregation of MacDonalds, MacIntoshes, MacKillops, and the rest what I am putting not at all so plainly to the rest of the world, or rather to you and Canon Dixon, in a sonnet in sprung rhythm with two codas."⁴⁴ About the same time, Hopkins also realized that for his style

⁴³Journals, p. 58.

⁴⁴Letters, I, 279.

to become more direct and less ornate he required the experience of writing for a larger audience. He had always had an audience, but it had been a coterie audience, made up, for the most part, of a poet and a clergyman. So Hopkins told Bridges, "To return to composition for a moment : what I want there, to be more intelligible, smoother, and less singular, is an audience."⁴⁵

Hopkins's desire to communicate his thoughts and feelings is natural, and is intimately tied up with his search for character in poetry, and with his belief that poetry is concerned with education and moral truth. Indeed, Hopkins could never have allowed himself to write at all after 1868 if he had not worked out a "moral aesthetic."⁴⁶ In his sermons and devotional writings he speaks about the need to express oneself, because one may thereby articulate the concerns of others, and about the preacher's need to warn and to change his audience. As poetry of character, Hopkins's poetry was by definition a poetry of communication with a lively and continuous awareness of its audience. Of his desire to move an audience from a position of complacency, he noted, "A warning leaves a man better or worse, does him good or harm; never leaves him as it finds him."⁴⁷ The speakers of Hopkins's poems are artistic creations designed to communicate Hopkins the man, in an ideal form, and designed, also, to communicate Hopkins's beliefs and meanings to his audience. Indeed, poetry exists, as C. K. Stead has argued, as part of a triangular tension between poet and audience.⁴⁸ The poetry of character and feeling has no relevant

⁴⁵ Letters, I, 291.

⁴⁶ See Jerome Hamilton Buckley, The Victorian Temper (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951), ch. VIII for a discussion of this term.

⁴⁷ Sermons and Devotional Writings, p. 252.

⁴⁸ C. K. Stead, The New Poetic (New York : Harper, 1966), passim.

life unless it operates as an act of communication that seeks to define character and arouse feeling in others.

In this connection, Francis Noel Lees makes two very fine points about Hopkins's poetry. He describes it as containing "the revelation of feeling itself rather than the processed results of feeling." As such it involves, "for the reader, an embarrassing encounter with feeling in himself." He then says of Hopkins and his poetry generally, what I have endeavoured to stress, that it is the product of "an intelligence and sensibility held to a purpose by character, to the strength of which his poetry is not least in debt."⁴⁹ Thus, I have sought to describe the chief line of tension that we encounter in Hopkins's poetry, which Hopkins himself conceived as running from God, through himself to his audience. Both as a priest and as a poet Hopkins wished to be an intermediary between God and His people. There is, at least, this analogy between Hopkins's activities as a priest and his conception of poetry and its workings. As Robert Lowell puts it, "The life, of course, has its analogy in the poetry, in what might be called the élat [sic] of his utterance and technique."⁵⁰

One of Hopkins's critics has pointed out that his poetry provides us with a spiritual autobiography.⁵¹ Poetry of character or personality should inevitably provide an analogue to the poet's life, and as long as a lively sense of the word "analogy" is kept in mind the term "spiritual

⁴⁹Francis Noel Lees, Gerard Manley Hopkins (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), pp. 22, 46 -- hereafter cited as Lees.

⁵⁰Robert Lowell, "Hopkins' Sanctity," in The Kenyon Critics, Gerard Manley Hopkins (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1945), p. 89 -- hereafter cited as The Kenyon Critics.

⁵¹Norman H. MacKenzie, Hopkins (London and Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1968), p. 47 -- hereafter cited as MacKenzie, Hopkins.

autobiography" is not only accurate, but helpful. It helps us to define the drama and the development of such poetry, and to seek the unity of its "autobiography." Cardinal Newman, in his preface to Apologia Pro Vita Sua, described his work as "a whole book about myself, and about my most private thoughts and feelings."⁵² The same could be said of Hopkins's poems. They are his book of life, his Apologia Pro Vita Sua. John Pick speaks of Hopkins's poetry as the "expression of his inner drama."⁵³ W. A. M. Peters remarks that, "Hopkins set himself the task of expressing the inscape of his own self in poetry and . . . he looked for inscape in the poetry of others."⁵⁴ And Hopkins's most recent commentator, Paul L. Mariani, believes that the poems are, "in part a dramatic record of a man (and a priest) caught up in a dialogue with God about the things of God."⁵⁵ Thus, the poetry of character and feeling, that moves from divinity through the poet towards his audience is, also, a poetry of spiritual autobiography and a poetry of inner drama.

The shape of the cross provides an accurate configuration or paradigm of these related factors. The poet himself presents the horizontal of the cross, and a vertical line is struck through him from deity to audience. A simple spatial diagram can be made of a complex series of relationships, and it denotes the Christian agony, which is the central concern

⁵²John Henry Cardinal Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua, ed. David J. De Laura (New York: Norton, 1968), p. 1.

⁵³Pick, p. xii.

⁵⁴W. A. M. Peters, S.J., Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Critical Essay towards the Understanding of his Poetry (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 31 -- hereafter cited as Peters.

⁵⁵Mariani, p. xviii.

of Hopkins's poetry. This agony is acted out in the poet's own nature, and it is acted out as a drama. As personal struggle is changed into a type of Christian agony and is presented as drama, it is necessarily weaned away from any debilitating or limiting subjectivity and given an objective, mythic framework, based upon the Christian tradition. This is how Hopkins makes the potentially solipsistic lyric poem into a dramatic lyric, and creates a mode that expresses himself, by expressing his spiritual journey as a series of stances and an argument of opposed voices. As George T. Wright states, "the lyric is or becomes dramatic when it presents not a single point of view but a struggle between conflicting points of view."⁵⁶ Hopkins's poetry does this throughout. In the early poetry we encounter the struggle between the sensuous explorer and the ascetic, in "The Wreck of the Deutschland" we have the struggle of the soul of the poet to accept God, in the 1877 sonnets we find the opposed voices of celebrant and moralizer of God's grandeur, and finally in the last sonnets, the struggle of the soul with itself. Todd K. Bender believes that Hopkins's practice of the Ignatian colloquy is responsible for the elements of dramatic argument and dialogue in the poetry, "Hopkins practiced the colloquy in his daily devotions and it is therefore not surprising to find that he falls into a conversational or dramatic tone in his poems.

.....
 The fortuitous confluence of Jesuit colloquy and Victorian dramatic monologue produced the distinctive bidding tone of his verse."⁵⁷ Bender also interestingly notes the way in which in

⁵⁶George T. Wright, The Poet in the Poem (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962), p. 7.

⁵⁷Todd K. Bender, Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Classical Background and Critical Reception of his Work (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), pp. 153, 158 -- hereafter cited as Bender.

his Greek translations of Shakespeare's songs Hopkins tends to involve the speaker in the situations described much more than Shakespeare does. He also remarks upon the way in which excitement on the speaker's part is rhetorically designed to create excitement in the reader.⁵⁸ For as Paul L. Mariani argues, "A typical poem of Hopkins' is always an act of participation which permits us to experience for ourselves the 'doing-be' of a rising sun, or a gliding falcon, or a powerful blacksmith, or at times to behold the man 'acting' out himself."⁵⁹ This "'acting' out himself" is crucial in Hopkins, and it is essential to recognize the dynamic tension which this produces in his poetry.

Robert Lowell states the case exactly when he says that "Hopkins is substantially dramatic." Lowell means that both Hopkins's life and Hopkins's poetry are dramatic, for he continues, "for Hopkins, life was a continuous substantial progress toward perfection. He believed this, he lived this, this is what he wrote."⁶⁰ Yeats's familiar dictum is pertinent here, that poetry is made out of the quarrel with ourselves. In reading Hopkins we are continuously aware of inner debate, and of the movement toward a dramatic and poetically viable realization of urgent subjective concerns. Perception of this quality in the poetry leads to Alan Heuser's contention that "By taking issue with himself in more than one voice, the poet sets up an objective point of view to play upon a series of mystical paradoxes."⁶¹ W. S. Johnson puts the matter another

⁵⁸Bender, pp. 112, 118-119.

⁵⁹Mariani, p. 335.

⁶⁰The Kenyon Critics, pp. 90, 91.

⁶¹Alan Heuser, The Shaping Vision of Gerard Manley Hopkins (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 91
-- hereafter cited as Heuser.

way when he writes that Hopkins "combines the most intensely personal quality -- special diction, odd syntax, and spiritual autobiography -- with his apparently objective matter."⁶²

Austin Warren explains the situation in yet another way when he says that "There are two polar types of poet, -- the 'maker,' or craftsman and the self-explorer who renovates the art through work on himself and the language, -- from the Romantic movement, the type of our best poets. Hopkins is a curious case of 'maker' moving, by force of his tension, into self-explorer. . . . the small body of Hopkins' work, like that of Eliot, offers a series of poetic stances, every important poem constituting a new mode."⁶³

To appreciate this poetry of inner drama, changing stance, and spiritual evolution requires an awareness of different and developing voices within the canon of Hopkins's poetry. Although Warren may well be right that "it would require a catalogue to name all of his "incipient selves,"⁶⁴ this study attempts to define and illuminate some of them. There has been no study of the voices of Gerard Manley Hopkins as there has, for example, of Matthew Arnold, another poet of Victorian crisis and inner debate.⁶⁵ The only work of this kind appears in an appendicized account of Hopkins's sonnets in Paul L. Mariani's recent commentary. Here Mariani isolates three of Hopkins's voices that I will explore in more detail in the body of the present study, the voices of celebrant, priest and spiritual antagonist. Mariani perceptively observes

⁶²W. S. Johnson, Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Poet as Victorian (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 23 -- hereafter cited as Johnson.

⁶³The Kenyon Critics, p. 14.

⁶⁴The Kenyon Critics, p. 8.

⁶⁵See W. S. Johnson, The Voices of Matthew Arnold (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961).

that :

Within the restriction which he set for himself by employing the difficult Italian form, [of the sonnet] Hopkins was able to find a remarkable freedom and an authentic and individual voice, a voice with tremendous range. It is worth watching the gradual shift in emphasis in that voice. We hear the youthful enthusiasm of the poet at the discovery of God's presence in the world around him in the sonnets of 1877. For example, there is the powerful and ecstatic final tercet of God's Grandeur, the exclamatory openings of The Starlight Night and The Windhover, or the intoxicating headiness of Hurrahing in Harvest! . . . Later there is the tender, sensitive, manly, and, above all, distinctively individual voice of the priest reminiscing on the dead farrier: . . . Five years later, there is the straining, agonized voice of the speaker in Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves, with his new and terrifying realization of what it means to be confronted with the constant, wearying demands of a moral world. 66

Mariani goes on to delineate subtle modulations of voice within the last sonnets themselves. The present study is at once more broadly based and more limited than Mariani's analysis of voices within the sonnets, for it includes the whole canon of the completed poems, not just the sonnets, yet seeks to remark only the most primary kinds of voice, through which a broad pattern of development can be traced. Thus, in the early poems, the opposed voices of sensuousness and asceticism, with their final fusion in "The Habit of Perfection," are discussed. In "The Wreck of the Deutschland" the harmony achieved between the voices of anguished soul, preacher, narrator and celebrant, and its relevance to the poem's structure is the focus of attention. In the 1877 sonnets the distinction between the speaker as celebrant and the speaker as preacher is remarked and analysed, while in the poems of 1878 to 1883, the speaker as priest is the focus of concern. The final chapter of the

⁶⁶Mariani, p. 328.

study undertakes a discussion of the speaker as spiritual antagonist. These categories are established because they reflect the main lines of development of Hopkins's poetic persona, and because they reveal changing and developing functions of the speaker. Lest these voices be confused, however, some preliminary analysis and definition is necessary.

The sensuous voice, the voice of the speaker as romantic explorer that we meet in Hopkins's early poetry is best revealed in the poem "A Vision of the Mermaids." It is fully expressed here, and reaches its end in "The Alchemist in the City," or at least, the voice that seeks illumination through sensuous experience alone does. For sensuous experience as a mode of perception is incorporated into the life of spiritual perception, and this new amalgamation or harmonization (perhaps "transformation" would be a better term still) arrives in the culminating early poem, "The Habit of Perfection." However, the strictly limited sensuous voice is one that includes a perception of natural beauty with a romantic yearning that this mode of perception might achieve insight, which, of course, it never does beyond the sensuous dimension itself. As indicated, we find this voice primarily in "A Vision of the Mermaids," in the slothful longings of "A Soliloquy of One of the Spies left in the Wilderness," and in "The Alchemist in the City." Here is a representative example of its activity and range from the earliest poem of the three :

But when the sun had lapsed to Ocean, lo
 A stealthy wind crept round seeking to blow,
 Linger'd, then raised the washing waves and drench'd
 The floating blooms and with tide flowing quench'd
 The rosy isles: so that I stole away
 And gain'd thro' growing dusk the stirless bay;
 White loom'd my rock, the water gurgling o'er,
 Whence oft I watch but see those Mermaids now no more.⁶⁷

Three characteristics define this voice. Its detailed perception of natural objects, is the first characteristic, as in the description of the wind's activity on water :

A stealthy wind crept round seeking to blow,
 Linger'd then raised the washing waves and drench'd
 The floating blooms. . . .

Secondly, we have the fact that this mode of perception never extends beyond the natural or sensuous dimension. All that this speaker gains after his encounter with the sensuous mermaids is "the stirless bay," a dead end in the natural world, "so that I stole away / And gain'd thro' growing dusk the stirless bay." Finally, the voice expresses a wistful, yearning and elegiac melancholy, which is a by-product of its inability to attain anything beyond itself. "White loom'd my rock, the water gurgling o'er, / Whence oft I watch but see those Mermaids now no more." The speakers of "A Soliloquy . . . ," and "The Alchemist in the City" get no further than this. They end on similarly abject notes. The aspects of this voice that extend their life into later Hopkins's poems are a capacity for detailed, natural perception, which continues an enriched existence once wedded to spiritual vision, an elegiac sense, and a feeling of lack of attainment, that go underground to re-emerge in a different key in the last sonnets.

⁶⁷ Gerard Manley Hopkins, The Poems of . . ., eds. W. H. Gardner and N. H. MacKenzie (4th ed.; London : Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 11 -- hereafter cited as Poems. All quotations from Hopkins's poems are from this text. Poems will be quoted by title or first line in all cases. This text is beautifully organized and easy to refer to. Thus, to avoid cluttering, line numbers and continual footnotes to page references are avoided. All dates for the poems are taken from the notes to this edition.

"The Half-way House" provides a useful and representative example of the ascetic voice of spiritual aspiration that recurs throughout the early poems. Here, as it frequently does in these poems, it expresses a desire for, as yet unattained, union with deity. It has renounced sensation and seeks an abstract spiritual principle, which is not yet incarnated :

Love I was shewn upon the mountain-side
 And bid to catch Him ere the drop of day.
 See, Love, I creep and Thou on wings dost ride:
 Love, it is evening now and Thou away;
 Love, it grows darker here and Thou art above;
 Love, come down to me if Thy name be Love.

This stanza expresses a blueprint of the desire for what is attained later in "The Windhover." The divine principle of Love is above and beyond the speaker. Although it has wings it is not fully embodied. Spiritual and sensuous perception have not been fused to allow the speaker to present a complete and vital image of what he perceives. The ascetic voice is strainingly repetitive and prayerful. It asks for a state of union not yet attained. In fact, in opposition to sensuous yearning, what we have here is spiritual yearning. The speaker creeps. He is prepared to abase himself, in fact he does so, but he has not yet gained fulfillment.

At the end of the early poems we discover a development, and a significant fusion of these two opposed voices in "The Habit of Perfection." Two voices, two orders of experience are brought together in a new poetic voice that speaks without strain and with a sense of confidence bred of reconciliation and interfusion. The rhythm of strain is noticeably absent :

Elected Silence, sing to me
 And beat upon my whorled ear,
 Pipe me to pastures still and be
 The music that I care to hear.

Instead of a sense of disjunction, we have a sense of continuity, and of delicate, easy movement. Unlike the unattainable and

abstractly presented "Love" of "The Half-way House," "Elected Silence" sings to the speaker, whose capacity for detailed, natural perception is registered in the exact description of "whorlèd ear." The union of the sensuous and the ascetic is revealed in, "Pipe me to pastures still and be / The music that I care to hear," in which the natural and the biblical are brought together in the word "pastures." In this way, the two voices of the early poems are, finally, synthesized in the important development that takes place in "The Habit of Perfection."

In "The Wreck of the Deutschland" the speaker possesses several different voices through the use of which he fulfills several different functions. As anguished soul he communicates a sense of terror at God's wrath to his audience that overhears his dialogue with God. As preacher, the speaker's function is to impart his conviction of religious truth to his audience. Indeed, throughout Hopkins's poetry the speaker's function emerges as a question of the nature of the speaker's relationship to his audience, whether that audience be the speaker himself, Bridges and Dixon, or ourselves. Presented as narrator the speaker offers us a maximally intense account of his central subject, the wreck of the Deutschland. Finally, as celebrant of divine power and mercy, the speaker provides an expression of personal joy, which he clearly wishes his audience to share. Needless to say, these different roles reveal differentiated poetic voices, which in turn involve different rhetorical procedures. Yet the final effect produced is of a coherent speaker, who controls the structure of a poem in which he himself takes up the central place. The first voice that we hear in the poem is that of the anguished soul engaged in urgent dialogue with God. The speaker does not address us, but God, and as audience we overhear his words :

Thou mastering me
 God! giver of breath and bread;
 World's strand, sway of the sea;
 Lord of living and dead;
 Thou hast bound bones and veins in me, fastened me flesh,
 And after it almost unmade, what with dread,
 Thy doing: and dost thou touch me afresh?
 Over again I feel thy finger and find thee.

What distinguishes this voice from the voice of the later sonnets of desolation is the fact that it expresses a sense of spiritual certainty; its anguish is depicted as a thing of the past, as something that has been overcome. The voice of this speaker is urgently personal, full of "thou" and "me," a voice of colloquy and confession. Unlike the other voices in the poem, it is not immediately concerned with an audience beyond God. As the poem's larger audience we immediately recognize that we are being, as it were, secretly admitted to "overhear" something extremely personal, as though we were the audience of a soliloquy in a drama. Miss Phare makes some useful observations about the nature of Hopkins's relationship to his audience in poetry like this :

Hopkins's fondness for direct speech gives some of his poems the air of being dramatic monologues. The pains which he takes to make himself explicit and articulate sometimes makes his poetry curiously formal and curiously sophisticated. It is as though his personality was divided and one half was taking great pains to make itself clear to the other. I think that, to begin with at any rate, the reader feels himself a spectator rather than a participant in Hopkins's struggles and raptures: . . . Hopkins keeps him [the reader] a little aloof, treats him as an audience, does not allow him to take the poet's experiences for his own; the reader shares in them as he might in those of Hamlet or Lear : to some extent he becomes Hamlet or Lear, but still at the same time he knows that he is sitting in the pit or gallery while Lear or Hamlet is walking on the stage. 68

68 Phare, pp. 64-65.

What Miss Phare is delineating here is the peculiarly dramatic quality of Hopkins's lyric poetry. In this poetry we experience both a sense of dramatic struggle and an effort to objectify personal experience; to put it before the reader with intensity, but with clarity. The direct naming of God and the implicit context of Catholic dogma related to Him provide an objective frame of moral reference by which Hopkins's personal experience can be judged. Like Joyce and Eliot, but in a different way, Hopkins is concerned to recreate a mythic framework that will help to objectify, order and impersonalize the personal. In Hopkins's case, of course, the myth is a myth believed in, as it eventually became for Eliot.

The second voice that we meet in the poem is the voice of the speaker as preacher. This voice involves a different relationship on the speaker's part both to God and to his audience. This voice is necessarily more public, for as preacher the speaker can command and invoke God's power, and use it as a means of threatening an audience that he openly confronts. In stanza nine of "The Wreck of the Deutschland," the speaker attains a particularly elevated level, yet his related sense of human limitation and divine power anticipates the voice of the preacher-speaker of the sonnets of 1877. Thematic concern and relationship to audience are the best means of identifying this poetic voice. The preacher-speaker in Hopkins's poems is usually telling his audience that it has transgressed divine mandates, and therefore stands in danger of divine retribution. In the sonnets of 1877 the speaker usually addresses man more intimately than he does here, where he commands God, and speaks publicly at man from an elevated, pulpit position. As audience we sense our abject position from the speaker's attitude to his theme which is ourselves :

Be adored among men,
 God, three-numbered form;
 Wring thy rebel, dogged in den,
 Man's malice, with wrecking and storm.

Pulpit rhetoric is clearly in evidence here for the speaker employs a double imperative. He commands God to be adored by man, but he also commands men to adore God. We meet this voice again in Hopkins's 1877 sonnets, sometimes it is less hectoring and more intimately persuasive than it is here. What is certain is that a different vocal dimension, from that revealed in the poem's opening colloquy, is in action here.

The speaker as narrator makes his presence fully felt at the opening of the poem's second section. Here the speaker communicates his matter directly to his audience. It is his sense of excited intensity that relates the narrator-speaker to the earlier personal and preaching voices. It is through continuous intensity that Hopkins makes the different voices cohere :

On Saturday sailed from Bremen,
 American-outward-bound,
 Take settler and seamen, tell men with women,
 Two hundred souls in the round -- . . .

Into the snows she sweeps,
 Hurling the haven behind,
 The Deutschland, on Sunday; and so the sky keeps,
 For the infinite air is unkind.

The narrative voice in the poem is concerned with matter-of-fact material, but it presents it in a far from matter-of-fact way. For this voice shares the excitement of the voices already identified. Thus, we find in its expressive procedures alliteration, assonance, accumulation, and other devices of intensification. It is subject matter, and a narrative method of direct relation of subject to audience that defines this voice.

The speaker as celebrant again has an excited voice. If possible, this voice is even more excited than the personal, preacher-like or narrative voices. It is heard most fully at

the poem's conclusion, and announces its public nature primarily by use of the first person plural. The celebrant speaker presents himself as his audience's spokesman. This is clearly a rhetorical tactic designed to make the audience feel that the speaker is articulating the audience's own thoughts. At the end of the poem the speaker, celebrating God's power and mercy, addresses the poem's heroine on his audience's behalf :

Dame, at our door
 Drowned, and among our shoals,
 Remember us in the roads, the heaven-haven of the reward:
 Our King back, Oh, upon English souls!
 Let him easter in us, be a dayspring to the dimness of us,
 be a crimson-cressetted east,
 More brightening her, rare-dear Britain, as his reign rolls,
 Pride, rose, prince, hero of us, high-priest,
 Our hearts' charity's hearth's fire, our thoughts' chivalry's
 throng's Lord.

Subject matter and rhetorical technique define the voice of the speaker as celebrant, who shares in, and indeed, almost apotheosizes the poem's main stylistic feature, intensification.

In the sonnets of 1877 Hopkins selects two voices from the rhetorical armoury of the speaker of "The Wreck of the Deutschland" for further development: the speaker as celebrant, and the speaker as preacher. These voices express the central perception of these poems, that the natural world is full of emblems of divinity if viewed by a mind that has sloughed off its fallen state and regained a capacity for Edenic perception. Thus, the poems move between pure celebration of divinity and urgent attempts to call attention to the human errors that have created a fallen world. "The Sea and the Skylark" provides the classic case of a poem divided between these two voices. The octave of the poem depicts the pristine beauty of God's creatures, the sea and the skylark, whose actions the speaker has observed outside the North Wales's coastal town of Rhyl. In the sestet the celebrative speaker becomes

a moralist and turns his attention to human error. In the octave we experience a voice of enthusiasm and joy. The sestet drops this level and becomes earnest and full of care. The first voice is concerned with the realization of beauty alone; its tone is appropriately fresh and full of life. The second voice is irritated and pugnacious, the voice of a preacher disgusted by wickedness. This is, in poetic terms, a less successful voice, since its didacticism can become strident. The finest poems of 1877, "The Windhover," "Pied Beauty" and "Hurrahing in Harvest" are all poems without moralizing afterthought. It should be noted, however, that the preacher-like voice employs a more colloquial language than the celebrative voice, and its moral concern anticipates the later, colloquial sonnets of desolation. Also, the preacher is more fully engaged with his audience than the celebrant, whose note is characteristically one of joyful self-expression. In the sonnets of desolation the speaker preaches to himself and becomes his own audience. Christ-like he takes the cares of the world upon his own shoulders.

In "The Sea and the Skylark" the two predominant voices of the 1877 sonnets, and the differences between them, can be clearly heard :

On ear and ear two noises too old to end
 Trench -- right, the tide that ramps against the shore;
 With a flood or a fall, low lull-off or all roar,
 Frequenting there while moon shall wear and wend.

Left hand, off land, I hear the lark ascend,
 His rash-fresh re-winded new-skeinèd score
 In crisps of curl off wild winch whirl, and pour
 And pelt music, till none's to spill nor spend.

How these two shame this shallow and frail town!
 How ring right out our sordid turbid time,
 Being pure! We, life's pride and cared-for crown,

Have lost that cheer and charm of earth's past prime:
 Our make and making break, are breaking, down
 To man's last dust, drain fast towards man's first slime.

It is proper to remark a distinction here that is indicative of a development that has taken place in these two voices from their use in "The Wreck of the Deutschland" to their use here. The celebrative voice generally celebrates nature moving towards grace, rather than the pure grace that it celebrated in the earlier poem. The preacherly voice in the sonnets of 1877 is usually more intimate, buttonholing, and persuasive than it is in its hectoring and hortatory public stance in "The Wreck of the Deutschland." It is more personal, and is to become even more so, when it finally faces itself. The celebrative voice reveals Hopkins's baroque style at its best. The preacher-like voice anticipates the plain style of his later poetry.⁶⁹

The important new development that takes place in the middle poems of 1878 to 1883 is the emergence of the speaker as priest. He dominates the increasingly circumstantial poems of Hopkins's pastoral, professional life, poems like "Brothers," "The Handsome Heart," "Felix Randal," "At the Wedding March," and "The Bugler's First Communion." This voice is colloquial and narrative, since one of its chief functions is to record autobiographical experiences; experiences encountered by the priest in his day to day work. Here is an example of its tone and scope in "The Bugler's First Communion":

A bugler boy from barrack (it is over the hill
 There) -- boy bugler, born, he tells me, of Irish
 Mother to an English sire (he
 Shares their best gifts surely, fall how things will),
 This very very day came down to us after a boon he on
 My late being there begged of me, overflowing
 Boon in my bestowing,
 Came, I say, this day to it -- to a First Communion.

⁶⁹Miss Schneider discusses these two styles throughout her study The Dragon in the Gate.

Phrases like "he tells me," and "Come, I say, this day" exemplify the narrative, circumstantial style of the priestly speaker, while the use of "us" at the opening of stanza two reveals his priestly profession. The increased use of colloquial style is part of a general movement towards the plain style of the sonnets of desolation.

It is in this final phase of development that the inner style of the speaker as spiritual antagonist emerges. This poetic voice is remarkable for its counterpointing of plain language and inverted syntax that communicates the inner tension and turmoil of these poems. Frequently, in these poems, the speaker provides his own audience, himself. As readers we find ourselves once more in the position of overhearers. It is as though we were examining someone's spiritual diary. When the speaker of the sonnets of desolation rejoins his public audience it is a sign that he is overcoming his anguish and is no longer involved in urgent pleas to God, or dialogue between one half of a divided mind and the other. The opening of "I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day" provides a representative example of the syntactical distortion, the mode of inner address, and the overriding sense of distress that defines the voice of the speaker as spiritual antagonist. We are a long way from the personal voice of the opening of "The Wreck of the Deutschland," the colloquial style of the middle poems, and even the sense of strain present in the early poems, but these are the antecedents of this voice. It has developed logically from them :

I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day.
 What hours, O what black hours we have spent
 This night! What sights you, heart, saw; ways you went!
 And more must, in yet longer light's delay.

I have offered these preliminary examples of the different and developing voices that we discover in Hopkins's poetry because any discussion of the speaker's functions must

proceed from a discussion of the speaker's voice, nature and role. Frequently such discussion reveals function as well. If a speaker's role is definable as preacher, priest or narrator, his function is usually to preach, act as a priest, or narrate. Other aspects of function spring from here, and the study concentrates upon such related aspects of Hopkins's poetic technique as his manipulation of his audience, and the rhetorical tactics he employs in doing so. Detailed and regular attention is therefore paid to such devices as his handling of first person pronouns, which can tell us much about the way in which the speaker relates himself to himself or to his audience. But throughout, the central focus of concern is the speaker himself.

Robert Langbaum's distinctions are always borne in mind since we are in each instance dealing with "poetic" not "biographical" character and personality. "Because the observer has the same function whether or not he bears the poet's name, we should not -- in those poems where he is Wordsworth or Keats or Shelley -- think of him as the man his friends knew and his biographers write about; we should rather think of him as a character in a dramatic action, a character who has been endowed by the poet with the qualities necessary to make the poem happen to him."⁷⁰ The point that grows out of this one about the nature of the audience's relationship to this kind of poetry is also critically relevant to this study, "the autobiographical illusion is nonetheless important as precisely the plot -- a plot about the self-development of an individual with whom the reader can identify himself to make the poem an incident in his own self-development as well."⁷¹

⁷⁰ Robert Langbaum, The Poetry of Experience : The Dramatic Monologue in Modern Literary Tradition (New York : Norton, 1963), p. 52 -- hereafter cited as Langbaum.

⁷¹ Langbaum, p. 52.

I have already noted that Hopkins's poems provide a vivid analogue to the life we discover in his other writings. As a canon they comprise a work of spiritual autobiography deeply concerned with self-development, and offered to the reader in such a way that he too might undergo "conversion," or, at least, participate in the self-development described in them. They are poems of character, poems of the ideal self, poems in which the irrelevant aspects of experience are stripped away to allow for expression of the self ideally suffering, or ideally celebrating the glory of God. As J. Hillis Miller so aptly expresses it, "The fundamental method of Hopkins' poetry is to carry as far as it will go, into every aspect of his verse, the principle of rhyme."⁷² As far as the speaker and his functions are concerned this means an ideal, artistically viable expression of the biographical personality. Miller describes Hopkins's means of achieving this in this way, "The source of this unifying inscape is the artist himself. The artist and his work are different versions of the same inscape. They rhyme. Like a man who leaves his fingerprints on everything he touches, the poet makes his poems, whether he wishes to do so or not, in such a way that they match the pattern of his individuality. The poet is like a stamp or mold which shapes everything according to its design."⁷³ This is why Hopkins's poetic canon can be appropriately described as a spiritual autobiography, as an ideal analogue to his devotional life. The speaker himself provides its most important unifying element and this is why I have selected him for detailed discussion. As Miller once again notes of Hopkins, "In Purcell's music it is 'the forged feature' he likes best, and this distinctiveness of design is 'the rehearsal / Of own, of abrupt self' The artist has the

⁷²Miller, p. 281.

⁷³Miller, p. 306.

pleasure of seeing himself mirrored everywhere in his work.
 . . . Each poem is the casting forth of a new 'sake,' a new expression of the inscape of the poet."⁷⁴ The crucial term, here, that Miller quotes from Hopkins is the word "rehearsal." Like a rehearsal, Hopkins's poems are a continuous, dramatic preparation of the self for its ultimate human encounter with God. Within the speaker's nature, and within his expressions of that nature, we confront this dramatic preparation at its most intense and most engaging.

Thus, the present study is, ultimately, concerned with development and with unity. It describes the way in which the functions of the speaker develop through the canon of Hopkins's completed poems, which is viewed throughout as a unified canon. Paul L. Mariani recently stated that "explication de texte still seems to offer the greatest yield in understanding that canon."⁷⁵ For Mariani this may well have been true, but one hopes that his impressive commentary on Hopkins's poems will be the last. There are now too many commentaries on Hopkins's poems. My bibliography lists four in the last four years. The present study is aligned to this tradition of approaching Hopkins in that it offers a statement about each of Hopkins's completed poems in turn, and as they are arranged in chronological order,⁷⁶ but it also represents a new departure, in that it follows a single and, I think, central train of development through the poems; the development of the speaker himself. This development is, I argue, a unified development in that each stage that

⁷⁴Miller, p. 307.

⁷⁵Mariani, p. xx.

⁷⁶I have accepted the chronological order of Gardner and MacKenzie's Fourth Edition of the poems. Despite minor objections to it, suggested by Mariani with reference to the 1877 sonnets and the sonnets of desolation, and noted later in my text, it is generally accepted. And I am not concerned with minor points of chronology or with the stages of composition of particular poems, but with major lines of development.

the speaker goes through refers both forward and backward to stages already undergone and stages yet to come. There is, therefore, a logical development evident in Hopkins's poetry, a logical development that suggests a unified body of poetic achievement. There could, of course, be other ways of establishing the unity of Hopkins's poetic canon. Examinations of the development of his religious thought in his poetry, of his imagery, of the evolution of his poetic forms would all be richly rewarding, but I hope I have put first things first. By examining the functions of the speakers of the poems I have sought to throw light upon Hopkins's poetic development and to establish the presence of a unifying element in his canon of completed poems.

One or two points remain to be tidied up. I have only dealt with Hopkins's completed poems, and I have, besides the authority of Hopkins's own contempt for fragments,⁷⁷ the reason that it is difficult to determine fully the functions of the speaker of an unfinished poem. Furthermore, I have only examined Hopkins's completed poems in English. I have not dealt with his light verse, but have focussed exclusive attention upon the central body of his serious completed poems.

Hopkins held the unusual, but compelling, belief that Christ was the truest literary critic.⁷⁸ He hoped secretly that Christ would preserve and make use of his poems as, and if, he thought fit. It seems that Christ has done so. As human critics, however, we have our own contributions to make. One of Hopkins's first readers, Canon Dixon, was so impressed by Hopkins's poems that he wrote, "in the power of forcibly & delicately giving the essence of things in nature, & of carrying one out of one's self with healing, these poems are unmatched."⁷⁹ Dixon later revealed that Bridges felt the same

⁷⁷Letters, I, 218.

⁷⁸Letters, II, 8.

⁷⁹Letters, II, 32.

way, "Bridges struck the truth long ago when he said to me that your poems more carried him out of himself than those of any one."⁸⁰ The poems were intended, I believe, to carry their readers not only out of themselves, but, also, onward and upward toward the Christian life. Yet even for a man of Hopkins's faith something stood in the way. It was the other aspect of the poems that Dixon noted, their sense of terror, "something that I cannot describe, but know to myself by the inadequate word terrible pathos -- something of what you call temper in poetry: a right temper which goes to the point of the terrible; the terrible crystal."⁸¹ Despite their too frequently lamented narrowness, Hopkins's poems put the reality of existence before the reader in the most absolute terms. There is God, there is self, there is horror of self and fear of God, and there is the possibility of triumph over or reconciliation of these conflicts. We may no longer be as sharply aware of these realities as Hopkins was, but Hopkins puts religious perceptions and realities before us that it is finally impossible to back away from.

⁸⁰Letters, II, 100

⁸¹Letters, II, 80.

CHAPTER I

THE RIV'N VINE

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: I was twain.
-- James Thomson ('B. V.'), The City of Dreadful Night

Hopkins's early poems have not received sufficient critical attention, nor have they been very popular with his critics. One of Hopkins's earliest commentators, Father Lahey, for example, states that "before the 'Deutschland' in 1875 his poetry has but slight aesthetic interest."¹ Eighteen years later, Father Peters made the more perceptive comment that "Clever as these youthful efforts are, they miss the inscape of the poet; they are products of poetic fancy rather than expressions of the poet's self."² More recently still Paul L. Mariani summed up his own and the general critical response to the early poems as follows, "We glance at the early poetry, we may be struck by images or a phrase, but we are not tempted to remain among those bright shards. . . . The paucity of comment on Hopkins' early work in stark contrast to the voluminous criticism on the later speaks for the relative merits of the two periods."³

Whatever the merits of these "bright shards" may be they demand detailed attention in any discussion of the functions of the speaker in Hopkins's poetry. In these poems we can see

¹Lahey, p. 88.

²Peters, p. 40.

³Mariani, pp. 43, 46. A student at Queen's University, Irene Busterd, is presently at work on a Ph.D. thesis on the early poetry. See The Victorian Studies Association Newsletter (Ontario, Canada), No. 5 (March, 1970), p. 8.

Hopkins's early attempts to create a workable poetic voice. Although these early experiments were finally destroyed by Hopkins, they were important experiments, since they enabled him to discover his true poetid direction.

Hopkins's first extant poem, "The Escorial," was written in 1860 for a school poetry prize at Highgate school when Hopkins was only sixteen. Its epigraph from Theocritus points indirectly to the function of the poem's speaker ("and I compete like a frog against the cicadas").⁴ The speaker gives himself over entirely to the demands of his subject; his role is simply to present and describe the architecture and history of the Escorial. Although W. H. Gardner is probably right in stating that the poem lacks form, vital development or climax,⁵ it can at least show us some things about Hopkins's future development, especially if we follow the movement of the speaker's mind.

In deference to his subject, the speaker indicates at the opening of the second stanza that it is anonymous historians who tell the history of the Escorial. The speaker gives his subject the centre of the stage throughout and rarely intrudes upon it with interpretive comment. His function is that of a narrator whose presence in the poem is minimal. However, the progression of his narration reveals the embryonic features of a technique of presentation that was to become central in Hopkins's mature poetry. From describing the outworks and history of the Escorial the observing narrator moves into the building's interior and then withdraws from it at the poem's conclusion. The speaker's function is to give us a rounded view of his subject, just as later in "The Windhover" we move from circumference to centre and then back

⁴Poems, p. 245 for translation of the Greek.

⁵Gardner, II, 54.

again in following the bird's activity.

Even though the Escorial does not arouse the young poet's attention in the way the windhover was later to do, we can see a quickening of poetic interest when the martyrdom of St. Lawrence, in whose honour the Escorial was built, is presented :

For that staunch saint still prais'd his Master's name
While his crack'd flesh lay hissing on the grate;
Then fail'd the tongue; the poor collapsing frame,
Hung like a wreck that flames not billows beat --.

Apart from the fact that the final image anticipates "The Wreck of the Deutschland," nothing else in the poem is quite so vividly realized. The related images of fire, wreck and the broken body become central in Hopkins's later poetry. Besides, in the light of Hopkins's conversion and subsequent Jesuit asceticism it is interesting that as early as sixteen he should engage in recreations of martyrdom and the Escorial.⁶

In stanza ten the speaker invites us to enter the halls and perceive the art works of the inner building. We follow Philip, the Escorial's author, who parallels the function of the poem's speaker in leading his reader round the materials of his poem. After taking us into the building's centre, the speaker withdraws us from it, and in stanza twelve, which specifically echoes images from Tennyson's "Mariana," the speaker shows us the riches of the place slowly undermined by time :

Then through the afternoon the summer beam
Slop'd on the galleries; upon the wall
Rich Titians faded; in the straying gleam
The motes in ceaseless eddy shine and fall
Into the cooling gloom.

⁶I cannot therefore agree with Paul L. Mariani's charge that the poem is "too sententious to manifest any personal involvement with the material." Mariani, p. 4.

A truncated narrative of autumn rains and a peasant's report about two shepherds drowned in the ensuing flood lead to the poem's conclusion. It is only in the very last lines that the speaker allows himself a final interpretive comment :

-- such home forlorn
 The monks left long ago; Since which no more
 Eighth wonder of the earth, in size, in store
 And art and beauty: Title now too full--
 More wondrous to have borne such hope before
 It seems; for grandeur barren left and dull
 Than changeful pomp of courts is aye more wonderful.

The speaker of "The Escorial" is more conspicuous for his anonymity than his personality. His function is simply that of presenter of his subject and he does not intrude upon it. His method of presentation is more interesting than what he has to present. He begins with the early history of the Escorial, takes us into its interior and finally draws us away from the building and leads us down to its present state of ruin. The method is that of a typical historical chronicle, but the movement from outer to inner features of the place adumbrates one of Hopkins's later methods of presentation. The function of the speaker of Hopkins's next poem "A Vision of the Mermaids" written two years later, in 1862, provides us with a much more interesting case.

Unlike the detached speaker of "The Escorial," the speaker of "A Vision of the Mermaids" participates in, as well as describes, his vision. Its effect upon him becomes an important part of the poem. The poem opens :

Rowing, I reach'd a rock -- the sea was low --
 Which the tides cover in their overflow,
 Marking the spot, when they have gurgled o'er,
 With a thin floating veil of water hoar.

From the past tense of the first line we are informed that the poem will narrate a completed experience. The speaker's function is not only to present this experience but also its effect upon himself. This represents a significant enlargement

of the speaker's function from "The Escorial" in which the speaker's activity was limited to that of presenter.

As the speaker of "A Vision of the Mermaids" describes the sunset, he calls specific attention to his own physical perception of it :

(Where the eye fix'd, fled the encrimsoning spot,
And gathering, floated where the gaze was not;)
And thro' their parting lids there came and went
Keen glimpses of the inner firmament.

It is immediately clear that the speaker here sees more deeply "into the life of things" than the speaker of "The Escorial," since he records particular impressions of the scene before him; impressions which he has not yet been able to interpret decisively. His tentativeness not only tells us about his nature but also qualifies our response to what he describes, "Fair beds they seem'd of water-lily flakes / Clustering entrancingly in beryl lakes" [my italics]. Hopkins uses the speaker here to involve his reader in what the speaker sees. Although the poem is heavily descriptive and is narrated in the past tense, it does contain dramatic elements, for the speaker intensifies his account of his vision by unfolding it as he perceived it :

Then, looking on the waters, I was ware
Of something drifted thro' delighted air,
-- An isle of roses, -- and another near; --.

The use of dashes intensifies the sense of the speaker's immediate perception; and Hopkins uses the speaker to heighten the reader's response to what is described. In the line "And planets bud where'er we turn our mazèd eyes," the introduction of the first person plural works as a poetic device designed to include the reader in the experience presented.

The speaker continues to call attention to the effect of the vision on his own eyesight as the poem proceeds :

I gazed unhinder'd: Mermaids six or seven,
Ris'n from the deeps to gaze on sun and heaven,
Cluster'd in troops and halo'd by the light,
Those Cyclads made that thicken'd on my sight.

A thirty-one line passage of description of the mermaids is followed by a further reference by the speaker to his perception of the scene :

Then saw I sudden from the waters break
Far off a Nereid company, and shake
From wings swan-fledged a wheel of watery light.

An extended simile, that establishes the highly literary quality of the speaker's mind, is followed by a movement of the mermaids towards his rock. This movement intensifies the reader's perception of the mermaids. It also helps to fill out the role of the speaker himself, since his physical relation to the scene he describes is insisted upon :

So those Mermaidens crowded to my rock,
And thicken'd, like that drifted bloom, the flock
Sun-flush'd, until it seem'd their father sea
Had gotten him a wreath of sweet Spring-broidery.

While the diminution of the distance between the speaker and the mermaids creates a dramatic effect of intensification, the distance between vision and speaker is nevertheless maintained :

Careless of me they sported : some would splash
The languent smooth with dimpling drops, and flash
Their filmy tails adown.

The focus of vision in the poem is essentially "voyeuristic." The speaker describes the scene upon which he has secretly intruded and there is a parallel between the poem's lush and sensuous style and the speaker's own sensual enjoyment of what he witnesses. This correspondence between the vision and its perceiver is reinforced by the speaker's articulation of his response to the mermaids' sadness. The speaker locates the sadness in the mermaids themselves, but because he is a sympathetic perceiver we are not quite sure whether what the speaker is recording is a literal truth or his own sense of sadness and loss at the evanescence of his vision. Again the speaker accentuates his uncertainty :

But most in a half-circle watch'd the sun;
 And a sweet sadness dwelt on everyone;
 I knew not why, -- but know that sadness dwells
 On Mermaids -- whether that they ring the knells
 Of seamen whelm'd in chasms of the mid-main,
 As poets sing; or that it is a pain
 To know the dusk depths of the ponderous sea,
 The miles profound of solid green, and be
 With loath'd cold fishes, far from man -- or what; --
 I know the sadness but the cause know not.

Evening arrives and the furtive speaker departs from the scene of a vision which he is unable to regain. His sadness turns into an elegy for his inability to reattain his vision :

. . . so that I stole away
 And gain'd thro' growing dusk the stirless bay;
 White loom'd my rock, the water gurgling o'er,
 Whence oft I watch but see those Mermaids now no more.

The function of the speaker in "A Vision of the Mermaids" is to communicate the substance of his experience to his reader and thereby to dispose him to attend to what he has to impart. This Hopkins achieves through the use of comparatively simple tactics of dramatization. He creates a speaker who records how he rowed out to a rock, was allowed to see the sportings of mermaids and then returned to shore. We see again the pattern of perception evident in "The Escorial" of movement from the periphery to the centre of a poetic situation which is then followed by a retreat from it. The speaker of the poem is used to convince the reader of the reality of his vision and has an actual presence in the poem. He enjoys the vision granted him and laments its disappearance and his inability to regain it. His language and response establish him as a romantic-dreamer quite different in nature from the chronicler-presenter of "The Escorial." As Hopkins moves from history to vision the kind of persona necessary to such a different poetic occasion changes. The function of the speaker in "A Vision of the Mermaids" is, however, more complex than that of the speaker of "The Escorial," since he

participates in the action of the poem as well as delivering its substance. There is also in "A Vision of the Mermaids" a firmer tension established between the speaker of the poem and Hopkins the poet, who partially detaches himself from the experience presented by creating the persona of a romantic-dreamer figure to speak the poem. We are not nearly so conscious of the existence of a specialized persona in "The Escorial."

The speaker of "Winter with the Gulf Stream" is the careful observer of a winter scene perceived during the entirety of a winter day. Initially he identifies himself with his audience and speaks for it. He therefore employs a first person plural voice :

The boughs, the boughs are bare enough
 But earth has never felt the snow.
 Frost-furred our ivies are and rough. [my italics]

His role shifts slightly as the poem progresses and he expresses his own emotional response to the scene before him. In doing so, he assumes an independent, first person singular voice :

The bugle moon by daylight floats
 So glassy white about the sky,
 So like a berg of hyaline,
 And pencilled blue so daintily,
 I never saw her so divine.

Having led his readers into the poem by identifying himself with them, the speaker is then able confidently to assert himself and his own rapture. He continues to reveal his own perceptions :

I see long reefs of violets
 In beryl-covered fens so dim,
 A gold-water Pactolus frets
 Its brindled wharves and yellow brim,
 The waxen colours weep and run,
 And slendering to his burning rim
 Into the flat blue mist the sun
 Drops out and all our day is done. [my italics]

At the conclusion of the poem, the speaker reassumes identity with his audience. He leads his audience into the scene at the poem's opening, then takes control of the poem, and finally returns it to the point of rest from which it opened. The movement from circumference to centre, that we have noted both in "The Escorial" and "A Vision of the Mermaids," is evident again here. We also notice the speaker's function as manipulator of his audience's attention. He is one of us as he initiates the experience of the poem; he then breaks free of us to direct our way around the scene he perceives and finally returns into the ranks of his audience at the poem's close. Hopkins's control of such techniques of audience manipulation is considerable for so young a poet.

In "Spring and Death" we again encounter the technique observed in "A Vision of the Mermaids." The speaker of the poem emerges as a dreamer, just as the speaker of the earlier poem was given the role of romantic visionary. In this poem, however, the speaker encounters not mermaids but the figure of Death. Again a completed experience is reported :

I had a dream. A wondrous thing:
 It seem'd an evening in the Spring;
 --A little sickness in the air
 From too much fragrance everywhere : --
 As I walk'd a stilly wood,
 Sudden, Death before me stood.

The speaker describes and then speaks to Death who replies and then vanishes:

'Death,' said I, 'what do you here
 At this Spring season of the year ?'
 'I mark the flowers ere the prime
 Which I may tell at Autumn-time.'
 Ere I had further question made
 Death had vanish'd from the glade.

Here the speaker is even more directly involved in the poem's action than the speaker of "A Vision of the Mermaids." He is both narrator and agent. The speaker's perception of nature is altered by his encounter with Death. Even before meeting

Death he had felt a sense of unease in the spring evening ("-- A little sickness in the air").⁷ The sense of unease is not only confirmed by the meeting with Death but also by the alteration of the speaker's perception of nature which the meeting enforces :

Then I saw that he had bound
 Many trees and flowers round
 With a subtle web of black,
 And that such a sable track
 Lay along the grasses green
 From the spot where he had been.

The speaker, still in his dream, witnesses the passage of the seasons from spring to fall, and although the flowers especially marked by Death do not appear to die any sooner than the other flowers, it is the marked flowers that hold a spell over the speaker's attention. When they fall the speaker mourns their passage :

And the flowers that he had tied,
 As I mark'd, not always died
 Sooner than their mates; and yet
 Their fall was fuller of regret.

The poem ends with the speaker's reflection upon his dream experience, "It seem'd so hard and dismal thing, / Death, to mark them in the Spring." The speaker's function in this poem is to present his dream and reflect upon it. He does not try to involve the reader in it in any significant way. The reader may well share the dreamer-speaker's somewhat banal reflection at the end of the poem, but he is not specifically invited to do so. Thus, the speaker's function here is simpler than that of the speaker of "A Vision of the Mermaids." Although the perception of the dreamer in "Spring and Death"

⁷For an essay which takes this phrase as a point of departure for a discussion of Hopkins's poetry see James Hafley, "Hopkins : 'A Little Sickness in the Air'," Arizona Quarterly, XX (1964), 215-222. Considering the later use of the element of air in a poem like "The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air we Breathe," the use of the phrase here suggests Hopkins's early sense of division and malady prior to his Roman Catholic conversion.

is altered by his experience, the poem remains a simple dramatic lyric.

"A Soliloquy of One of the Spies left in the Wilderness" is appropriately titled for it is a soliloquy and not a dramatic monologue, since it does not combine those elements of sympathy and judgement typical of the dramatic monologue form.⁸ We do not sympathize with the spy even in a first reading of the poem. Our attitude to him is entirely judicial, and he is effectively damned out of his own mouth. He is a "lotus-eater", who cannot make the journey to Israel, but prefers the bondage of Egypt. As W. H. Gardner accurately observes, "Hopkins's spy is the type of man who seeks physical and mental ease even at the price of spiritual degradation." However, Gardner's subsequent suggestions that the spy involves an "oblique projection of its author's own spiritual problem" and "presents the sort of man Hopkins himself might have become without grace and self-discipline"⁹ ought to be questioned because there seems to be insufficient biographical evidence to substantiate such a view. Physical indulgence was never attractive to Hopkins and almost all his poems, including this one, reject it absolutely. The most we can say is that Hopkins explored such a position in order to dismiss it completely through dramatizing its nature.

What is essentially interesting for present purposes is that here we have our first poetic speaker who is given a distinct historical character, which the whole substance of the poem is designed to create. The speaker's function here is to present completely his inner responses to Moses's

⁸For this description of the form see Langbaum, ch. 2.

⁹Gardner, II, 68-69. Mariani also takes a biographical view of the poem. See Mariani, p. 9.

mission which we know from the Bible was a worthy one.¹⁰ Hopkins manipulates a tension between the biblical contexts, from which the poem is derived, and the moral nature of his speaker, the effect of which is to initiate our rejection of the speaker's ignominious attitudes. The strategy of the soliloquy is not as complex as that of the dramatic monologue. We do not begin by sympathizing with the speaker, as we do in a dramatic monologue. Rather, we attend to him, as we would to a Shakespearean villain, knowing him to be villainous, through information provided by the rest of the play in which he appears. In this poem the Bible provides the larger drama from which the soliloquy of the speaker emerges.

The opening stanza of the poem presents the arrogant attitude of the spy towards his leader Moses. He employs a royal "we", though he includes his fellow spies in his assessment of Moses's mission :

Who is this Moses ? who made him, we say,
 To be a judge and ruler over us ?
 He slew the Egyptian yesterday, To-day
 In hot sands perilous
 He hides our corpses dropping by the way
 Wherein he makes us stray.

As the poem proceeds the spy's instability and ultimate failure to convince himself with his own arguments is subtly though firmly established, in ways which help us to judge the spy unworthy even without the aid of biblical contexts outside the poem.

¹⁰ Elisabeth Schneider notes that "The speaker of the poem is one of those sent ahead by Moses to spy out the promised land of Canaan, who in discouragement report false difficulties and are struck down by a plague in punishment." Schneider, p. 6. See Exodus 12 and Numbers 13-14.

As early as stanza two his hectoring tone is ironically undermined by his reference to "flesh-pots." He cannot find a better name for manna, and such arrogant contempt emphasizes his moral limitations. As the poem proceeds the spy's protests and self-indulgence degenerate into an almost drivelling self-pity.

Stanza three intensifies our sense of the spy's moral ambiguity and radical limitations :

He feeds me with His manna every day :
 My soul does loathe it and my spirit fails.
 A press of winged things comes down this way:
 The gross flock call them quails.
 Into my hand he gives a host for prey,
 Come up, Arise and slay.

The speaker's false superiority and assassnatory bloody-mindedness clearly emerge here. The ensuing four stanzas continue to dramatize his depravity and irritated appeals for attention. The result is a fully articulated portrait of moral unworthiness. Hopkins uses his speaker to reveal fully the corrupting power of sloth, and stanza eight concludes with an irony that emphasizes the spy's limited nature. He refers to the refreshments he offers himself as "sweet messes without price or worth" which is precisely what they are, although he himself is unconscious of the irony that condemns both them and him. Indeed, the spy is so pitifully limited that he is incapable even of establishing a vocabulary that could present attractively his own false alternatives.

At the end of stanza nine, the spy re-expresses his desire merely to remain in Egyptian bondage, "We desire the Yoke we bore, / The easy burden of yore." Although his use of the first person plural indicates that he sees himself as a kind of spokesman, the opening of the poem's last stanza shows that he is deluded even here. Moses and his followers desert him at this very point in the poem, which ironically undercuts the spy's self-elected position. He is left completely

alone, and concludes languidly, incapable ever of knowing why his inner corruption is killing him. He bids his comrades farewell, and confirms his spiritual death out of his own mouth:

Go then: I am contented here to lie.
 Take Canaan with your sword and with your bow.
 Rise: match your strength with monstrous Talmai
 At Kirjath-Arba: go. --
 Sure, this is Nile: I sicken, I know not why,
 And faint as though to die.

"A Soliloquy of One of the Spies left in the Wilderness" fully indicates Hopkins's ability, even this early in his career, to create a completely independent dramatic speaker. This speaker's function is to express a moral position that the reader will condemn. Hopkins's controlling presence is firmly established behind the poem and directs our response to his morally unworthy spy. The "I" speaker of "A Vision of the Mermaids," although he emerges as a fairly well defined romantic-dreamer, would allow the biographically minded critic to equate his attitudes with those of Hopkins, and relate them to Hopkins's early interest in Keats and the Pre-Raphaelites. But with "A Soliloquy . . .," it is impossible to make any such simple identification. Our point of contact with Hopkins the poet in this poem is similar to the kind of contact we make with Browning in reading one of his dramatic monologues. We connect ourselves with the poet's manipulating presence behind the poem in an effort to discover the way in which he is directing our response. "A Soliloquy . . .," shows a considerable sophistication of technique on Hopkins's part. Why he did not follow this direction will be one of the questions that the rest of this study will try to answer. What is important to notice at this point, however, is Hopkins's ability to present different kinds of speaker in his early poems and to create a dramatic speaker here, who is given a particular moral position to express, which we as readers are

implicitly asked to judge and condemn, just as Hopkins himself condemns it.

"Barnfloor and Winepress" is a poem that beckons the reader to participate in the religious celebration which it presents. The speaker of the poem reveals himself as the spokesman of a converted brotherhood, a priest or choir leader. He invites others to join in his religious celebration. His function is to offer the joys of his own faith to an audience who he hopes will share them with him. The employment of the speaker as priest and celebrant provides us with an early example of a technique that was to become very important to Hopkins. It is a technique that he was later to use far more frequently than the technique of "A Soliloquy"

"Barnfloor and Winepress" is close in style to George Herbert, not least of all in its presentation of the poem as a kind of hymn, with all the hymn's methods of invitation to participate.

As a member of a celebrating chorus, the speaker opens by revealing his joy, and that of his fellows, to those who linger on in sin :

Thou that on sin's wages starvest,
Behold we have the joy in harvest:
For us was gather'd the first-fruits,
For us was lifted from the roots,
Sheaved in cruel bands, bruise'd sore,
Scourged upon the threshing-floor;
Where the upper mill-stone roof'd His head,
At morn we found the heavenly Bread,
And, on a thousand altars laid,
Christ our Sacrifice is made !

At the opening of the second stanza, the speaker again employs the method that opened the first stanza, "Those whose dry plot for moisture gapes, / We shout with them that tread the grapes." The use of a first person plural speaker, and the contrast with those who are caught in starvation and dryness, acts as an implied injunction to the reader to reject a position of dull passivity and join in the celebration of Christ's resurrection.

In this respect the poem possesses the rhetoric of "palpable design" upon the reader.¹¹ This emerges at the conclusion of stanza three as direct beckoning :

In Joseph's garden they threw by
The riv'n Vine, leafless, lifeless, dry :
On Easter morn the Tree was forth,
In forty days reach'd Heaven from earth;
Soon the whole world is overspread;
Ye weary, come into the shade.

The fourth and final stanza simply assumes that the "weary" have responded, and rises into an incantation of praise in which the first person plural speaker identifies himself, and the converted audience for whom he speaks, with their resurrected God. Contrast and bidding turn into paean and celebration :

The field where He has planted us
Shall shake her fruit as Libanus,
When He has sheaved us in His sheaf,
When He has made us bear His leaf, --
We scarcely call that banquet food,
But even our Saviour's and our blood,
We are so grafted on His wood.

The speaker's function here is to invite and to celebrate; a very different function from that of the speaker of "A Soliloquy . . . ," who presented a limited moral position. These two poems provide us with a fair indication of the range and differing functions that Hopkins assigns to the speakers of his early poems. In "The Escorial," we have the speaker

¹¹In this case, as with many of Hopkins's poems, the poem functions as a warning. In a later meditative discourse "On Death" Hopkins wrote, "One of God's providences is by warnings -- . . . This very discourse of mine, this meditation, is a warning. A warning leaves a man better or worse, does him good or harm; never leaves him as it finds him." Sermons and Devotional Writings, p. 252. It is fair to say that Hopkins frequently employs this "bidding" technique in his poetry. The reader is required to respond and is never left as found.

as chronicler, in "A Vision of the Mermaids," the speaker as romantic-dreamer, in "A Soliloquy . . .," the speaker as self-corrupted spy, and here the speaker as faithful celebrant. These widely different functions not only indicate the variety of Hopkins's concerns in his early poems, but also parallel the explorations that he was making toward a tenable spiritual position, which would require, as part of its ultimate definition, the incarnation of an appropriate poetic speaker. When we perceive variety at this stage in Hopkins's career we also perceive youthful uncertainty in the use of poetic methods that go off in all directions in an effort to find a central path. It is not until "The Habit of Perfection" that the differing stances of the early poems are gathered together and amalgamated into the creation of a fully flexible poetic speaker.

"New Readings" provides an afternote to "Barnfloor and Winepress," although here we have a first person singular, rather than a first person plural, speaker, whose task is to offer the reader his personal interpretation of a passage of scripture. Again the influence of Herbert and the tradition of iconographic and symbolic reading of scriptural imagery is evident. The title "New Readings" suggests the speaker's attempt to extract fresh spiritual and symbolic meaning from the scriptural letter:

Although the letter said
 On thistles that men look not grapes to gather,
 I read the story rather
 How soldiers plaiting thorns around CHRIST'S head
 Grapes grew and drops of wine were shed.

The speaker here, and in the concluding two stanzas, presents himself as a biblical commentator, who offers his audience a new interpretation of scripture. His function is to elucidate his text and convince his audience of his interpretation. The incantatory tone of "Barnfloor and Winepress," which went

along with the first person plural speaker's role as spokesman of a converted group, is dropped here as inappropriate to the less elevated and more expository manner necessary to this poem.

"He hath abolished the old drouth" is also related to the previous two poems, since it is concerned with spiritual affirmation. Here the speaker possesses a double role, and as a result acquires a double function. He opens the poem with a personal affirmation delivered in an appropriately first person singular voice, and then shifts his stance as he addresses a friend or lover, whom he seeks to include in his own salvation. Initially, his function is to present his own joy, but, as he assumes a first person plural voice, his function changes. He becomes a sharer of spiritual elation, in which he seeks to include his friend or lover. W. H. Gardner suggests that the poem was addressed to Hopkins's friend Baillie,¹² but whoever the poem was addressed to it is only addressed to a friend after line nine, since, as I have indicated, the opening nine lines of the poem express a conviction of faith, which is addressed as much to the reader as it is to a friend.

The shift from a first person singular to a first person plural speaker provides an early example of a strategy which Hopkins was to employ more fully in "The Wreck of the Deutschland," where the speaker's roles and functions shift freely as he approaches his audience in a variety of ways. Because the present poem is a short lyric, the shifting functions of the speaker are not as firmly integrated as they are in "The Wreck of the Deutschland," and the poem divides in half. The speaker simply moves from one position to another, without reverting to or recapitulating his earlier position.

¹²Gardner, II, 75.

Rhetorically the strategy has promising possibilities because the reader begins to feel himself personally drawn into the poem as the speaker's friend. The reader listens to an opening affirmation, and then finds himself almost gathered into the poem as the speaker assumes a more intimate tone of voice. The poem opens :

He hath abolished the old drouth,
 And rivers run where all was dry,
 The field is sopp'd with merciful dew.
 He hath put a new song in my mouth,
 The words are old, the purport new,
 And taught my lips to quote this word
 That I shall live, I shall not die,
 But I shall when the shocks are stored
 See the salvation of the Lord.

It then continues :

We meet together, you and I,
 Meet in one acre of one land,
 And I will turn my looks to you,
 And you shall meet me with reply,
 We shall be sheav'd with one band
 In harvest and in garnering,
 When heavenly vales so thick shall stand
 With corn that they shall laugh and sing.

It is only slowly that the reader realizes that a friend, rather than the reader himself, is being addressed.

"Heaven-Haven" possesses the sub-title, "A nun takes the veil," which immediately assigns the poem to a particular dramatic speaker. The nun expresses her longing for retreat from the world. The ascription of the poem to a specialized dramatic speaker suggests an attempt on Hopkins's part to detach himself from a direct connection with the sentiments expressed in the poem, although he may well have shared them when he first wrote the poem. The fact is that, unlike "A Soliloquy . . . ," the dramatic speaker's nature in "Heaven-Haven" is established by a sub-title and not by the poem itself. Without the sub-title the poem would simply be the expression of the opposite view to that offered by the lyric speaker of

"I must hunt down the prize," which is printed by Gardner and MacKenzie among Hopkins's unfinished poems because it possesses an alternative ending.¹³ It is idle to speculate whether Hopkins himself, at the time of writing, would have identified himself more closely with the sentiments of "I must hunt down the prize."

What the two contrasting poems indicate is the ambivalence of Hopkins's spiritual position at the age of twenty. The poems dramatize both a desire for asceticism and a desire for exploration; and we meet both these positions again, still unassimilated to each other, in "The Alchemist in the City" :

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

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

The speaker's function here is to present a desire for exploration similar in essence to that of Tennyson's Ulysses. The speaker is an unidentified lyric persona. The desire of the nun of "Heaven-Haven" is in direct contrast to this, and what is interesting about Hopkins's employment of a sub-title is that it operates as a strategy of detachment. The case of a specified speaker is being presented to the reader and not the overt wishes of a biographical poet. Why Hopkins sought to detach himself in this way must remain a mystery. In later poems his lyric speakers present such deeply felt affirmations or doubts that their author is always prepared to stand behind what they say and speak directly through their mouths. It is,

¹³Poems, pp. 128-129.

perhaps, the nun's passivity that caused Hopkins to abstract himself from any possibility of identification with her sentiments.

In "Heaven-Haven" the use of a sub-title has the further dramatic effect of suggesting that the poem presents a precise moment in time, the moment of the nun's decision to take the veil :

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

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

The addition of the sub-title was possibly an early addition. The poem occurs both in one of Hopkins's early notebooks (C. I.) and in a different version in the Dolben Family Papers without a sub-title.¹⁴ In this latter version the poem is entitled "Fair Havens - The Nunnery," which adds some weight to my suggestion of an early ascription of the poem to a nun as its dramatic speaker. This, together with the use of other dramatic speakers, such as the spy of "A Soliloquy . . . ," indicates Hopkins's early involvement with this method of presentation.¹⁵

"For a Picture of St. Dorothea" reveals not only a division of the speaker's function, as in "He hath abolished the old drouth," but also a division of the speaker himself.

¹⁴See Poems, p. 248.

¹⁵Also, Mariani rightly stresses the poem's debt to Tennyson's description of Avilion in Morte d'Arthur :
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep meadowed, happy, fair with orchard lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea.
See Mariani, p. 11. The difference of perspective should, however, be noted.

The poem is spoken first by St. Dorothea, who delivers the opening three stanzas, and is then brought to a close in stanza four by a lyric speaker who, while attending to her picture, has heard the saint speak, and ends the poem by reflecting upon her assumption.

St. Dorothea's function in the opening stanzas is to present her divine accoutrements. The poet of the concluding stanza records her heavenly assumption as she disappears before his eyes. What the whole poem offers us is the mental state of the second speaker, a state that allows him first to hear St. Dorothea speak, and then to perceive her assumption. Seen in this way, the poem expresses a spiritual response to a painting of a saint. The lines written "For a Picture of St. Dorothea" express the substance of the vision which the second speaker has been granted by the painting. Physically static, the painting cannot change, but the speaker's perception of it does, to the extent that he hears the saint's words and actually perceives her disappearance into heaven, even though the picture does not, presumably, depict this. The painting cannot register the moment of disappearance, only imply it, but the speaker responds totally to the painting's implication. The poem, in its subtle dramatization of interior vision, is brilliantly realized. When, later, Hopkins transfers the conclusion of the poem to a dramatic speaker, Theophilus, he spoils the subtle effect of internal registration that this poem attains.

At the opening of the poem we hear St. Dorothea speak from her picture. As we discover later, she comes to life as the second speaker perceives her:

I bear a basket lined with grass;
 I am so light, I am so fair,
 That men must wonder as I pass
 And at the basket that I bear,
 Where in a newly-drawn green litter
 Sweet flowers I carry, -- sweets for bitter.

As a dramatic speaker, the saint asserts herself with gentle delicacy. Her speech continues :

Lilies I shew you, lilies none,
None in Caesar's gardens blow, --
And a quince in hand, -- not one
Is set upon your boughs below;
Not set, because their buds not spring;
Spring not, 'cause world is wintering.

In stanza four, the second speaker expresses his perception of St. Dorothea's assumption. Her quince becomes the moon, her "larkspur row" the milky way, and she disappears before our eyes, as the speaker, employing the first person plural, identifies his perception with that of his audience, since he wishes his audience to share his experience :

Had she a quince in hand ? Yet gaze :
Rather it is the sizing moon.
Lo, link'd heavens with milky ways !
That was her larkspur row. -- So soon ?
Sphered so fast, sweet soul ? -- We see
Nor fruit, nor flowers, nor Dorothy.

The device of dramatic speaker, employed in "A Soliloquy . . ." to present a spy, is here used to introduce a saint, and the device of speaker as romantic-dreamer, used in "A Vision of the Mermaids" to present sensuous experience, is used here to present spiritual vision. What we have is an early coalescence of devices within the body of a single poem. We see here for the first time a development in technique rather than mere tactical variety. Hopkins has made an effort to use two different devices together; and it is significant to notice that his subject matter, on this occasion, is neither sloth nor sensuous dream, but spiritual vision. A coming together of devices is related to a significant development in religious experience; and growth in technique is directly related to a forward movement in perception.

"Easter Communion" was written in the Lent of 1865, and shows the religious direction which the sensuousness of

"A Vision of the Mermaids" had taken since the composition of the earlier poem. Like the later "The Habit of Perfection," though less successfully, "Easter Communion" dramatizes asceticism in sensuous terms. In "Barnfloor and Winepress," the speaker had acted as spokesman for a converted group; here he addresses those who have undertaken a Lenten retreat. His function is to invite his ascetic audience to enjoy the rewards which their penance has earned them :

Pure fasted faces draw unto this feast :
 God comes all sweetness to your Lenten lips.
 You striped in secret with breath-taking whips,
 Those crookèd rough-scored chequers may be pieced
 To crosses meant for Jesu's.

Echoing the Keats of "To Autumn," in the use of the verb "o'er-brim," the poem moves to a rather unsatisfactory conclusion:

God shall o'er-brim the measures you have spent
 With oil of gladness; for sackcloth and frieze
 And the ever-fretting shirt of punishment
 Give myrrhy-threaded golden folds of ease.
 Your scarce-sheathed bones are weary of being bent:
 Lo, God shall strengthen all the feeble knees.

The speaker emerges as a priestly beckoner who summons his audience to their Easter reward. In the last line, unfortunately, it is not just the knees of the ascetics but the knees of the poem which seem feeble.

The two sonnets, "To Oxford," which follow "Easter Communion," reveal two different approaches to the same subject. In the first poem the speaker addresses the university city as an Elizabethan sonneteer would address his courtly lady. Oxford is his lover, and the speaker's function here is to celebrate her virtues through declaring his faith and love :

New-dated from the terms that reappear,
 More sweet-familiar grows my love to thee,
 And still thou bind'st me to fresh fealty
 With long-superfluous ties, for nothing here
 Nor elsewhere can thy sweetness unendear.

The speaker continues to praise his beloved city, but reverses the ethics of fidelity of the courtly code; for he indicates that since the object of his love is a city and not a mistress she is available to all suitors, "And all like me may boast, impeached not, / Their special-general title to thy love." Thus, the speaker begins by assuming the position of the typical celebrant sonneteer, yet subtly modifies that position through the course of the poem by praising his beloved for her availability. His primary function, in using devices like these, is to celebrate. "The towers musical, quiet-walled grove, / The window-circles, . . ." of Oxford.

The companion poem is presented, initially, in a more personal way. The speaker does not adopt the role of courtly lover, but quietly reveals his love for special features of Oxford's architecture. At first he thinks that he may be the only person who has seen the city so closely; but at the end of this poem, as at the end of the first one, he admits that others may share his perception, and that he is only expressing a beauty that many have beheld. At the opening of the poem, he depicts his intimate explorations of the city :

Thus, I come underneath this chapel-side,
 So that the mason's levels, courses, all
 The vigorous horizontals, each way fall
 In bows above my head, as falsified
 By visual compulsion, till I hide
 The steep-up roof at last behind the small
 Eclipsing parapet; yet above the wall
 The sumptuous ridge-crest leave to poise and ride.

He concludes that, though he may be the only person to have perceived such beauty, its perception by others would only add to his happiness. The speaker's function here is to celebrate and communicate his intimate love of Oxford to the reader:

None besides me this bye-ways beauty try.
 Or if they try it, I am happier then :
 The shapen flags and drilled holes of sky,
 Just seen, may be to many unknown men
 The one peculiar of their pleased eye,
 And I have only set the same to pen.

"Where art thou friend, whom I shall never see," like the Oxford poems that precede it, is a love sonnet; and provides a further example of Hopkins's early interest in a lyric form that was later to become habitual to him. Once more the speaker is dramatized as a lover, whose function is to present a confession of love, which at first is offered as human and personal but is finally presented because of Christ's love for the speaker's friend :

Where art thou friend, whom I shall never see,
 Conceiving whom I must conceive amiss ?
 Or sunder'd from my sight in the age that is
 Or far-off promise of a time to be;

--if the sound

Of God's dear pleadings have as yet not moved thee, --
 And for those virtues I in thee have found,
 Who say that had I known I had approved thee, --
 For these, make all the virtues to abound, --
 No, but for Christ who hath foreknown and loved thee.

Gardner and MacKenzie tell us that in manuscript A, in which the three sonnets that comprise "The Beginning of the End" appear, there is a sub-title, which describes these poems as "a neglected lover's address to his mistress."¹⁵ Although this may be another disclaimer of personal involvement, designed to insist upon the dramatic nature of the poem's speaker, it also points up Hopkins's continued involvement and experimentation with aspects of the sonnet form and tradition. In the light of his later preoccupation with and development of this lyric form, his early work in it requires careful attention.¹⁶

In all three poems the speaker's function is to lament, by rehearsing, the passing of his love. Throughout, he remains

¹⁵ See Poems, p. 250.

¹⁶ Mariani's Commentary . . . is especially helpful here, particularly because it grew out of a doctoral dissertation on Hopkins's sonnets written for Hunter College of the City University of New York.

the conventional figure of the rejected lover inherited from Elizabethan poetry. At the opening of the first poem, he admits that his passion for his mistress is declining. His lady is his immediate audience, and we, as readers, "overhear" his confession. This device is, of course, a traditional feature of the sonnet, and neither the speaker's role nor his function in these poems reveal any progression beyond such conventions :

My love is lessened and must soon be past.
 I never promised such persistency
 In its condition. No, the tropic tree
 Has not a charter that its sap shall last

 My love is less, my love is less for thee.

The poem ends with an expected kind of word play which, rather than delineating a real emotion, merely provides a convenient and conventional ending for the poem :

But ah! if you could understand how then
 That less is heavens higher even yet
 Than treble-fervent more of other men,
 Even your unpassion'd eyelids might be wet.

The second sonnet in this brief sequence draws upon astrological references to make much the same point as the first sonnet. The lover describes his hopes as "evil-heaven'd" and his love as born under "malign conjunctions." The references to astrology indicate the learned, courtly character of the poem's speaker, whose function is to argue the futility of his position. All three of these poems are literary exercises in which Hopkins helped himself to gain a greater degree of technical control over a lyric form that he was later to adapt for much more dramatic and personal purposes. The restricted and conventional nature of the speaker of these poems only serves to highlight Hopkins's later advances and achievements; it helps us to see how far he could travel beyond the limitations of his early work.

The concluding sonnet conducts a verbal assault upon the beloved, which issues, rather limply, in a struggle to find an appropriate simile to sum up the speaker's condition. The lover is directly addressed :

You see that I have come to passion's end;
 This means you need not fear the storm, the cries,
 That gave you vantage when you would despise :
 My bankrupt heart has no more tears to spend.

.
 . . . now I am so tired I soon shall send

Barely a sigh to thought of hope forgone.
 Is this made plain ? What have I come across
 That here will serve me for comparison.

The sceptic disappointment and the loss
 A boy feels when the poet he pores upon
 Grows less and less sweet to him, and knows no cause.¹⁷

The final comparison ironically points up the literary, rather than experiential, quality of the situations presented. It is impossible to attempt to observe complexities in the function of the speaker of these three sonnets. They can only be seen as limited though ultimately useful experiments.

Considering that it was written in May, 1865, the same month as "The Beginning of the End" sonnets, and two months before Hopkins's twenty-first birthday, "The Alchemist in the City" is a remarkable poem. It represents an early synthesis of some of the techniques of presentation analysed so far. W. H. Gardner has accurately described the poem as "a lyrical monologue,"¹⁸ and it unites the techniques of "A Soliloquy . . ." and the more personal sonnets. The poem is spoken by a dramatic

¹⁷This last is probably a reference to Hopkins's own declining interest in Tennyson. On September 10, 1864 he wrote to his friend Baillie, "Do you know, a horrible thing has happened to me. I have begun to doubt Tennyson." Letters, III, 215.

¹⁸Gardner, II, 87.

speaker, an alchemist, but unlike "A Soliloquy . . . ," we feel the sympathetic, rather than judicial, presence of the poet behind the speaker. Here Hopkins assumes a simple mask through which to articulate personal desires and concerns.¹⁹ This is a strategy which he did not carry very far, but it is rewarding to analyse its operation nevertheless, since it forms a part of the evolution of the objectified lyric speaker that later became central in his poems. W. H. Gardner has described the alchemist as "an early projection of that personality 'in hiding' which was deeply moved by the behaviour of the windhover,"²⁰ but what requires consideration for present purposes is that "personality" here is projected in a quite different way to the way that it is projected later in "The Windhover." Hopkins only discovered adequate means of establishing a workable lyric speaker through early experimentation with more objective strategies of self-depiction. The advance upon the presentation of the dramatic speaker in "A Soliloquy . . . ," which we find here, lies in the movement from critical assessment to sympathetic identification. "Heaven-Haven" is the transitional poem between "A Soliloquy . . ." and "The Alchemist in the City" if we accept an early identification of the nun as the dramatic speaker of that poem. What the dramatization of lyric concerns through the character of the alchemist indicates is the still tentative way, in the early poems, with which Hopkins dealt with personal experience. Elizabethan sonnet conventions and the use of dramatic speakers offered themselves as ready means of cloaking personal experience

¹⁹Norman H. MacKenzie sees the poem as "an allegory of an Oxford man's efforts to find spiritual wealth through his laborious classical study, and of the fated futility of his search." Hopkins, p. 9.

²⁰Gardner, II, 88.

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that had not, as yet, resolved itself into a position of spiritual certainty. It is significant, however, that in his early religious poems he should speak more directly, for he presumably sensed that his true direction lay along a religious path. When he comes to present elegiac experience and a desire for natural satisfactions, as he does here, he selects a dramatic speaker to provide a means of distancing himself from experiences, which he was at least half aware that he ought to reject. Nevertheless, the importance of such experience to Hopkins should not be underestimated, especially since its reality to him is indicated, in this poem, by the precision of language with which he presents it. The clarity of language which we find in "The Alchemist in the City" constitutes a considerable advance upon many of the early poems.

The alchemist laments his passivity, reveals his dissatisfaction with his art and indicates his preference for direct experience of nature, in which he will be able to lose his sense of guilt. If the poem contains elements of personal allegory, such allegory is most pertinently revealed in the speaker's avowed preference for experience over art; a preference which Hopkins himself later firmly maintained.²¹ To the later Hopkins, the salvation of his soul was always more important than poetry; this order of values is paralleled here by the alchemist's preference for immediate experience of nature to the art of alchemy.

As already suggested, the poem has a threefold movement. The alchemist begins by depicting his own passivity :

My window shows the travelling clouds,
Leaves spent, new seasons, alter'd sky,
The making and the melting crowds:
The whole world passes; I stand by.

²¹On January 23, 1879 he wrote to Bridges, "Still, if we care for fine verses how much more for a noble life." Letters, I, 61.

He continues by indicating the ultimate futility of his art and his sense of social incapacity :

But now before the pot can glow
 With not to be discover'd gold,
 At length the bellows shall not blow,
 The furnace shall at last be cold.

Yet it is now too late to heal
 The incapable and cumbrous shame
 Which makes me when with men I deal
 More powerless than the blind or lame.

The alchemist then reveals his desire for "the wilderness / Or weeded landslips of the shore." He watches the flight of birds, and in doing so discovers one spot on the horizon that he hungers to attain. It is at times like this that he most hates his art. He desires to become a romantic wanderer, who can penetrate the reality of dying sunlight, before his own death. What he longs for is the reality of immediate experience and not the strenuous and ultimately hopeless effort to create gold :

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

The alchemist's position was one that Hopkins quickly rejected; the use of a dramatic speaker heralds that rejection. Spiritual, rather than natural or sensational, experience was to become the focal point of Hopkins's aspiration. The elegiac tone of this poem, like the conclusion of "A Vision of the Mermaids," suggests a comprehension on the poet's part of the transience of physical experience, and its essential meaninglessness, if disconnected from some permanent form of spiritual reality. Thus, the speaker's function here is to provide Hopkins with a mask through which to present an elegiac experience which he felt sufficiently deeply to need to articulate, but with which he was reluctant, even at this stage, to identify himself completely. For this reason, he could not present the experience

of the poem through the mouth of a first person speaker, who could too easily be equated with himself. Any poet who uses an "I" speaker, as Hopkins certainly realized, risks the equation of the position that his "I" speaker presents with his personal position. Later, when he had firmly evolved his spiritual position, Hopkins was quite prepared to take such risks. Like Yeats, once he has remade himself he walks naked with confidence.

The next sonnet, "Myself unholy, from myself unholy," written in June, 1865, shows the direction that the guilty sinner has to take, "No better serves me now, save best; no other / Save Christ : to Christ I look, on Christ I call." This poem is consequently more personal and is spoken in the first person singular. It expresses a sense of guilt, and the need for Christ's assistance. In contrast to the comparative virtues of his friends, the speaker sees himself as a rook and as salt water, while his friends are depicted as doves and fresh brooks. But though his friends are purer than he is, they are not completely pure. The lack of any wholly acceptable human ideal leads the speaker first to melancholy, but finally to Christ; and we accordingly see presented here the embryo of an answer to the alchemist's position. However, the fact that this sonnet is, in terms of language and emotion, an inferior poem to "The Alchemist in the City," suggests that the spiritual experience, which was later to be the centre of Hopkins's existence, was not yet sufficiently firmly grasped to allow for complete poetic articulation. With deepening conviction and Catholic conversion emerged the ability to express his total sense of reality. Here the conventions of the sonnet, rather than fully developed belief, produce the religious assertion that closes the poem.

The following sonnet, "See how Spring opens with disabling cold," another product of June, 1865, presents the speaker's sense of lingering guilt, and continues the theme

of halting movement towards spiritual truth. As in "Myself unholy . . .," the speaker is a sinner, whose function is to meditate upon his faults and attempt to find means of removing them. Christ is the necessary truth, and it is the slow movement towards Him that these sonnets dramatize. In its images, this sonnet is more coherent than "Myself unholy . . .," for it works its way painfully through a seasonal image, rather than scrambling after analogies to express a state of sin :

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

This image of struggling spring makes the speaker recall the failed spring of his own early life :

Chilling remembrance of my days of old
Afflicts no less, what yet I hope may blow,
That seed which the good sower once did sow.

The image of the good sower here is more effective, in its implication of a sense of hopeful imminence rather than attained certainty, than the direct and rather forced naming of Christ in the previous sonnet :

So loading with obstruction that threshold
Which should ere now have led my feet to the field.
It is the waste done in unreticent youth
Which makes so small the promise of that yield
That I may win with late-learnt skill uncouth
From furrows of the poor and stinting weald.
Therefore how bitter, and learnt how late, the truth!

The speaker communes with himself, and struggles to come to a comprehension of his guilt simply by expressing it. These early religious poems reveal the spiritual struggle which led slowly to Hopkins's Catholic conversion. They also anticipate the final sonnets of desolation, which explore the problem of personal anguish far more profoundly.

The image of slow spring is followed, in "My prayers must meet a brazen heaven," (September, 1865) by images of a

resistant heaven and earth, which communicate a sense of their speaker's spiritual dearth, imprisonment and immobility.²²

This poem continues the use of a confessional mode. Indeed, the speaker might well be addressing his remarks to a confessor :

My prayers must meet a brazen heaven
And fail or scatter all away.
Unclean and seeming unforgiven
My prayers I scarcely call to pray.
I cannot buoy my heart above;
Above it cannot entrance win.
I reckon precedents of love,
But feel the long success of sin.

The speaker cannot pass beyond the revelation of his immobility, and his expression of despair does not even appear to be therapeutic. His function is simply to articulate his anguish :

My heaven is brass and iron my earth:
Yea iron is mingled with my clay,
So harden'd is it in this dearth
Which praying fails to do away.
Nor tears, nor tears this clay uncouth
Could mould, if any tears there were.
A warfare of my lips in truth,
Battling with God, is now my prayer.

The only truly impressive feature of these poems is their directness, and the honesty with which their speakers confront their situations. Unfortunately, they lack the expressive range available to the later Hopkins of the sonnets of desolation.

"Let me be to Thee as the circling bird" presents both a poetic and a spiritual discovery. The speaker suggests that in finding a workable poetic language, of the kind that we first noticed in "The Alchemist in the City," he has simultaneously discovered an ability to express his love of God.

²²J. Hillis Miller notes the way in which "Repeatedly in his early poems Hopkins dramatizes the situation of exile, self-enclosure, impotence, even of damnation." Miller, p. 273.

The sonnet is not only a poem about spiritual attainment, but also about the state of Hopkins's poetry at the end of October, 1865, approximately a year before Newman accepted him into the Roman church.

The poem deserves quotation in full, and the opening image of the bird hints at the later and more resonant image of the windhover :²³

Let me be to Thee as the circling bird,
 Or bat with tender and air-crisping wings
 That shapes in half-light his departing rings,
 From both of whom a changeless note is heard.
 I have found my music in a common word,
 Trying each pleasurable throat that sings
 And every praised sequence of sweet strings,
 And know infallibly which I preferred.
 The authentic cadence was discovered late
 Which ends those only strains that I approve,
 And other science all gone out of date
 And minor sweetness scarce made mention of :
 I have found the dominant of my range and state --
 Love, O my God, to call Thee Love and Love.

The final assertion of the poem is perhaps a little premature, but religious poetry was certainly to become "the dominant" of Hopkins's "range and state," and he could speak with justice of the recent discovery of an "authentic cadence," which included the ability to realize music "in a common word." This discovery was about six months old, as old as "The Alchemist in the City," in which it was first made. In addition, this poem provides us with a useful critique of the mellifluousness of such early poems as "A Vision of the Mermaids." Hopkins, in order to find music in the "common word," had, indeed, tried "each

²³ Mariani rightly calls attention to Hopkins's debt to Tennyson's elder brother, Charles Tennyson Turner's sonnet "Summer Gloaming" which contains the lines :

The bat is circling softly by my door,
 And silent as the snow-flakes leaves his lair,
 In the dark twilight flitting here and there
 Wheeling the self-same circuit o'er and o'er.

Hopkins probably read Turner's sonnets shortly after their publication in 1864, and Mariani suggests that they may well have initiated Hopkins's interest in sonnet writing. Mariani, p.18.

pleasureable throat that sings / And every praised sequence of sweet strings." In the present poem, the speaker reveals a confidence which is the result not only of an increased sense of divine love but also of radical decisions about the language of poetry. Hopkins was slowly beginning to find himself as a poet, just as he was beginning to discover religious certainty.

"The Half-way House," (October, 1865) which immediately follows "Let me be to Thee as the circling bird" in the early notebook (C. II), provides us with a logical progression from the earlier poem. Love of God leads the distressed soul towards Holy Communion; yet the speaker describes his journey to God once again. The opening three lines of the poem recapitulate and modify images employed by Hopkins in several immediately preceding poems. "Love I was shewn upon the mountain-side" not only employs a reference to the mountain vision traditional to the religious poem, but also refers us back to the alchemist's pinnacled position from which he sought illumination from the dying sun. It is evening in this poem too. In line three, love is depicted as a bird, and we notice a transference from the preceding sonnet ("Let me be to Thee . . .") in which the speaker characterized himself as a bird. The speaker asks the dove-like Love, who is given specifically divine status by the capitalization of "Thy" and "Thou," to come down to him :

Love, it is evening now and Thou away;
 Love, it grows darker here and Thou art above;
 Love, come down to me if Thy name be Love.

Gardner and MacKenzie suggest that the poem implies Hopkins's loss of faith in the Anglican church, which is depicted as "My national old Egyptian reed :"²⁴

²⁴Poems, p. 251.

My national old Egyptian reed gave way;
 I took of vine a cross-barred rod or rood.
 Then next I hungered: Love when here, they say,
 Or once or never took Love's proper food;
 But I must yield the chase, or rest and eat. --
 Peace and food cheered me where four rough ways meet.

The implication of the images of "cross-barred rod" and "four rough ways meet" is of salvation through the cross of Christ. Crucifixion and its attendant resurrection were naturally central to Hopkins's faith. Even without his "national old Egyptian reed," the speaker still has the love of Christ to depend upon.

Finally, the concluding stanza possibly suggests an early Catholic communion, though the walls that the speaker enters at the end of the poem may still be the walls of an Anglican church which, while they do not afford complete spiritual satisfaction, nevertheless continue to provide the Christian sacrament. Hopkins did not, after all, declare his intention of entering the Roman church until the summer of 1866, but we do know that he had made up his mind to do so a considerable time before that date. The speaker concludes his intimate communion with Love by a movement towards Holy Communion. The "one" of the penultimate line, who directs the speaker to Communion, is presumably Love himself :

Hear yet my paradox : Love, when all is given,
 To see Thee I must see Thee, to love, love;
 I must o'ertake Thee at once and under heaven
 If I shall overtake Thee at last above.
 You have your wish; enter these walls, one said:
 He is with you in the breaking of the bread.

The speaker, it is assumed, will both enter and partake, for increased attainment of spiritual certainty is the developing theme of these poems. His immediate function is to record the stages of his journey.

"The Nightingale," which is dated January 18, 19, 1866,²⁵ is, as W. H. Gardner points out, "Hopkins's nearest approach

²⁵See Poems, p. 251.

to the Wordsworth of the Lyrical Ballads."²⁶ It reveals a logical development from the use of dramatic speakers in "A Soliloquy . . .," "For a Picture of St. Dorothea," and "The Alchemist in the City." The first seven stanzas are spoken by a female speaker, Frances, the lover of Luke, whose attempt to listen for her lover's passing steps, as he sets off for his last sea voyage, are drowned by the song of a nightingale. Her words take the form of an address to her dead lover, which is actually an interior monologue, a sigh, as the concluding stanza tells us. The final stanza is spoken by a narrator, who informs us that while Frances was rehearsing her experience to herself her lover was drowning at sea. An effect of cruel irony is achieved.

Through the seven stanzas of Frances's speech her situation is slowly and allusively established. The fact that she is speaking throughout to a dead lover intensifies our sense of her grief:

'From nine o'clock till morning light
The copse was never more than grey.
The darkness did not close that night
But day passed into day.
And soon I saw it shewing new
Beyond the hurst with such a hue
As silken garden-poppies do.

'A crimson East, that bids for rain.
So from the dawn was ill begun
The day that brought my lasting pain
And put away my sun.
But watching while the colour grew
I only feared the wet for you
Bound for the harbour and your crew.'

As with "For a Picture of St. Dorothea," "The Nightingale's" nearest equivalent technically, we have two speakers. The function of the concluding narrator here, however, is simply to clarify the situation for the reader. When Frances's

²⁶Gardner, II, 88.

sorrowful record closes he simply concludes :

Thus Frances sighed at home, while Luke
 Made headway in the frothy deep.
 She listened how the sea-gust shook
 And then lay back to sleep.
 While he was washing from on deck
 She pillowing low her lily neck
 Timed her sad visions with his wreck.

Although efficiently managed, the poem is an unusual one for Hopkins. Its dramatization of agonized loss relates it tangentially to several other early poems, but its nearest relation in Hopkins's canon is the unfinished ballad experiment "The Queen's Crowning."²⁷ Hopkins was always interested in popular poetry in which he found not only instances of music in the "common word" but, later, examples of sprung rhythm.

"The Habit of Perfection" heals the divisive tension between sensuousness and asceticism which we find so frequently in the early poems. It is a sensuous celebration of asceticism, and thereby turns division into suggestive and vital paradox. The speaker addresses each of his five senses in turn, and requests them to reject the world of sensation, and enter upon a state of asceticism.²⁸ The speaker hereby establishes himself as a man about to enter upon a cloistered existence, whose function is to redirect his own sensuous impulses. The ascetic world, however, is paradoxically revealed to possess a strongly sensuous appeal. Hopkins here begins to achieve the relationship between the natural, sensuous world and the divine one that we encounter, later,

²⁷ Poems, pp. 152-157.

²⁸ The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius require the use of the senses in creating "a composition of place." The poem suggests an early acquaintance on Hopkins's part with St. Ignatius's writings which may have initiated his desire to become a Jesuit at this early stage.

in the sonnets of 1877. In "The Habit of Perfection" "the riv'n Vine" is carefully grafted together, and shows signs of a future, healthy growth.

The earliest autograph of the poem is dated January 18, 19, 1866,²⁹ and is sub-titled '(The Novice)'. As with "Heaven-Haven," the sub-title indicates the nature of the poem's speaker. In the opening two stanzas of the poem, the speaker is concerned with redirecting his sense of hearing. In the first stanza he addresses silence, and in the second his own lips :

Elected Silence, sing to me
And beat upon my whorled ear,
Pipe me to pastures still and be
The music that I care to hear.

Shape nothing, lips; be lovely-dumb:
It is the shut, the curfew sent
From there where all surrenders come
Which only makes you eloquent.

Silence is asked to sing, and the speaker's lips are told that ascetic surrender alone will allow them true eloquence. The speaker's eyes are then asked to search for an inner and, as yet, "uncreated" light, different in quality from the alchemist's "yellow waxen light," which is implicitly dismissed as part of "This ruck and reel," that "teases simple sight." The novice's desire for spiritual sensation is certainly of a higher order of experience than the alchemist's longing for merely natural sensation :

Be shell'd, eyes, with double dark
And find the uncreated light :
This ruck and reel which you remark
Coils, keeps, and teases simple sight.

The speaker continues by addressing his sense of taste, and indicates that water and bread must become sweeter and fresher than wine. They will replace wine as sources of

²⁹Poems, pp. 251-252.

gratification :

Palate, the hutch of tasty lust,
 Desire not to be rinsed with wine :
 The can must be so sweet, the crust
 So fresh that comes in fasts divine!

In addressing his olfactory sense, the speaker offers the "relish" of censers as a replacement for worldly smells. The spiritual world may be sensuously enjoyed; and the poem also suggests Hopkins's later view that divinity provides the basis of the sensuous world :

Nostrils, your careless breath that spend
 Upon the stir and keep of pride,
 What relish shall the censers send
 Along the sanctuary side!

In the concluding stanzas six and seven, the speaker's sense of touch, and poverty, are successively addressed, and white vestments, are accepted in the place of walking on "plushy sward." Yet the vestments, which are referred to as "lily-coloured clothes," are to be enjoyed quite as much as the rejected grass :

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

And, Poverty, be thou the bride
 And now the marriage feast begun,
 And lily-coloured clothes provide
 Your spouse not laboured-at nor spun.

In its healing alignment of sensuousness and asceticism the poem stands as the culmination of Hopkins's early poems. It represents both a synthesis and a point of departure.

"Nondum," ("Not yet") which was written in the Lent of 1866, brings to a temporary impasse the determinations, spiritual strugglings, and syntheses analysed in several of the immediately preceding religious poems. This poem presents the "Victorian agony" at a hidden or absent God, whom the

poem's epigraph ("Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself." Isaiah 45: 15.) introduces.³⁰ "Nondum" is, initially, spoken by a first person plural speaker, who delivers, on behalf on his audience, a kind of anti-hymn. However, the last three stanzas of the poem drop this public level and are spoken by a first person singular speaker, who reveals an urgent need for intimate relationship with God.³¹ The employment of two different kinds of speaker effectively dramatizes a struggle for personal faith in a world of general doubt. The first person plural speaker's function is to express the universally felt sense of divine absence, while the second, first person singular speaker, indicates a private need for divine aid. Public testimony is followed by personal prayer. The first person plural voice speaks the poem's first six stanzas and the singular voice delivers the last three :

God, though to Thee our psalm we raise
 No answering voice comes from the skies;
 To Thee the trembling sinner prays
 But no forgiving voice replies;
 Our prayer seems lost in desert ways,
 Our hymn in the vast silence dies.

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

We guess; we clothe Thee, unseen King,
 With attributes we deem are meet;
 Each in his own imagining
 Sets up a shadow in Thy seat;
 Yet know not how our gifts to bring
 Where seek Thee with unsandalled feet.

³⁰ Francis Noel Lees is one of several critics who have pointed out the resemblance of the poem to In Memoriam. Lees, p. 15.

³¹ As Todd K. Bender observes this section of the poem is clearly a "colloquy" between the speaker and God. Bender, p. 153.

The sense of public address, dramatized through the use of a first person plural speaker, contributes to the effect of empty resonance that the poem also creates through references to "vast silence," "empty hall," and "Vacant creation." From this sense of emptiness grows the desperate personal need of the last three stanzas. The speaker steps down from his public position :

My hand upon my lips I lay;
The breast's desponding sob I quell;
I move along life's tomb-decked way
And listen to the passing bell
Summoning men from speechless day
To death's more silent, darker spell.

O! till Thou givest that sense beyond,
To show Thee that Thou art, and near,
Let patience with her chastening wand
Dispel the doubt and dry the tear;
And lead me child-like by the hand
If still in darkness not in fear.

Speak! whisper to my watching heart
One word -- as when a mother speaks
Soft, when she sees her infant start,
Till dimpled joy steals o'er its cheeks.
Then, to behold Thee as Thou art,
I'll wait till morn eternal breaks.

The radically different vocal levels of the poem's two speakers, and their contrasted functions, intensify the sense of spiritual uncertainty central in Hopkins's early poems. From a world of public doubt the speaker moves in this poem towards personal faith. Six months after writing "Nondum" Hopkins was received by Cardinal Newman into the Roman Catholic church.

"Easter," the poem that follows "Nondum," invites its audience to participate in the joys of celebration :

Break the box and shed the nard;
Stop not now to count the cost;
Hither bring pearl, opal, sard;
Reck not what the poor have lost;
Upon Christ throw all away:
Know ye, this is Easter Day.

The dark Lent of "Nondum" is over, and the speaker, who assumes the role of a priestly petitioner, invites his audience to rejoice :

Seek God's house in happy throng;
Crowded let His table be;
Mingle praises, prayer and song,
Singing to the Trinity.
Henceforth let your souls always
Make each morn an Easter Day.

Despite its hymn-like quality, it is possible to read "Easter" in a more personal way. The priestly beskoner not only invites an imagined audience to partake of the joys of Easter but he also invites himself. The speaker has to feel the joy of Easter himself in order to communicate it effectively to his audience, and in doing so initiates a renewal of affirmation.

"Lines for a Picture of St. Dorothea" provides us with a reworking of the earlier "For a Picture of St. Dorothea." It is a reworking of the earlier poem which takes a dramatic direction. In this later version's sub-title the speaker of the poem's conclusion is specifically identified as Theophilus, a Roman who was converted by St. Dorothea's miracles and martyrdom. In this later poem St. Dorothea herself again delivers the opening stanzas, and Theophilus reveals the process of his conversion in the last four stanzas. Rather than using the earlier technique of lyric perceiver to control the whole poem, and deliver its conclusion, Hopkins here simply divides the poem between two dramatic speakers. As a result, the quality of personal awe at St. Dorothea's changing picture is lost. Indeed, the picture is completely dropped from this version of the poem. The poem is more objective in simply attributing the vision and conversion that follows St. Dorothea's speech to Theophilus. In the last two stanzas of the poem Theophilus reveals his reaction to the saint :

You went into the partless air.
 It waned into the world of light,
 Yet made its market here as well:
 My eyes hold yet the rinds and bright
 Remainder of a miracle.
 O this is bringing! Tears may swarm
 Indeed while such a wonder's warm.

Ah dip in blood the palmtree pen
 And wordy warrants are flawed through.
 More will wear this wand and then
 The warped world we shall undo.
 Proconsul! -- Is Sapricius near? --
 I find another Christian here.

What we have is a further example of Hopkins's desire to dramatize and objectify the speakers of his poems. He transfers the more personal response of the earlier version to the dramatic speaker, Theophilus.³² It was not until later that Hopkins, like Yeats, learned that dramatic objectivity could best be gained by the realization of honestly felt and articulated subjective response. In both cases self-remaking was the necessary precondition of such an achievement.³³

The last two poems that Gardner and MacKenzie print in their collection of early poems were both written after Hopkins's conversion, during his years of poetic silence, the period between his conversion and burning of his early poems and the writing of "The Wreck of the Deutschland." Both are occasional poems, which was the only kind of poetic composition that Hopkins allowed himself during his early years as a Jesuit. "Ad Mariam" was probably written between 1870 and 1873 and "Rosa Mystica" sometime before 1878. "Ad Mariam" is

³²See Phare, p. 66 for a further comment on the dramatic character of this second version.

³³See Alan Heuser's perceptive comment that "In Oxford verse the two worlds of flesh and spirit, earth and heaven, had been set off against each other in choice and judgement. In the Jesuit verse the two worlds met by incarnational and sacramental vision." Heuser, p. 50.

a deliberate Swinburnean imitation, and appears to be an attempt to show that Swinburne's metres could be used for religious subjects.³⁴ Considering his general dislike of Swinburne, it is interesting to see how closely Hopkins could imitate him if he chose. The speaker of the poem presents himself as spokesman and celebrant. He expresses his audience's admiration for Mary :

And we that joy in this month joy-laden,
 The gladdest thing that our eyes have seen,
 O thou, proud mother and much proud maiden --
 Maid yet mother as May hath been --
 To thee we tender the beauties all
 Of the month by men called virginal.
 And, where thou dwellest in deep-groved Aidenn,
 Salute thee, mother, the maid-month's Queen!

.....

Wherefore we love thee, wherefore we sing to thee,
 We, all we, thro' the length of our days,
 The praise of the lips and the hearts of us bring to thee,
 Thee, oh maiden, most worthy of praise;
 For lips and hearts they belong to thee
 Who to us are as dew unto grass and tree,
 For the fallen rise and the stricken spring to thee,
 Thee, May-hope of our darkened ways!

The speaker's function here is to celebrate the virtues of Mary on his audience's behalf and he therefore employs the first person plural voice of a poetic spokesman.

Finally, "Rosa Mystica" is another presentation poem written in honour of the Virgin. The poem takes the form of question, answer and refrain through which the speaker seeks identification with God through the aid of Mary's intercessory power. Although the refrain strikes a personal note, the poem generally possesses the impersonal quality of song. The speaker emerges as a kind of religious troubadour whose

³⁴For this information I am indebted to Gardner and MacKenzie. Poems, p. 253.

task is to praise the Virgin through describing her many graces:

The rose in a mystery -- where is it found ?
 Is it anything true ? Does it grow upon ground ?
 It was made of earth's mould but it went from men's eyes
 And its place is a secret and shut in the skies.
 Refrain --

In the gardens of God, in the daylight divine
Find me a place by thee, mother of mine.

As the poem progresses the speaker, in the refrain, comes into a closer and closer relationship with Mary. Thus, the poem is not only written in her honour but also as a means of approaching her presence. The speaker asks questions in order to understand the nature of "Rosa Mystica" :

Tell me the name now, tell me its name.
 The heart guesses easily : is it the same ? --
 Mary the Virgin, well the heart knows,
 She is the mystery, she is that rose.

In the gardens of God, in the daylight divine
I shall come home to thee, mother of mine.

If Mary is the rose, Christ is the blossom. The poem concludes with an image that anticipates stanza twenty-two of "The Wreck of the Deutschland," and with the speaker's prayer for closer union with the Virgin :

How many leaves had it ? Five they were then,
 Five like the senses and members of men;
 Five is their number by nature, but now
 They multiply, multiply, who can tell how ?
In the gardens of God, in the daylight divine
Make me a leaf in thee, mother of mine.

Does it smell sweet too in that holy place ? --
 Sweet unto God, and the sweetness is grace :
 O breath of it bathes great heaven above,
 In grace that is charity, grace that is love.
To thy breast, to thy rest; to thy glory divine
Draw me by charity, mother of mine.

The speaker of "Rosa Mystica" possesses the role of divine celebrant that we have seen employed frequently in Hopkins's early poetry. His function is to praise God by praising His many mysteries and divine attributes.

Hopkins's early poems are not his best. We would not necessarily anticipate from reading them the much greater poet

that Hopkins was later to become. The early poems are best considered as experiments, and we should always remember that we do not have these poems in their most finished form. Many of the texts we have are taken from drafts in Hopkins's early notebooks. He probably possessed more finished copies of many of these poems which he burned on his entry into the Society of Jesus. However, a study of the function of the speaker in Hopkins's poetry must take the early poems fully into account, for we can see in them embryonic forms of methods of presentation that Hopkins used more successfully later in his career. After detailed analysis of these poems it is possible to offer some classification of the speaker's functions in them.

Primarily, we have observed the use of two distinct techniques of presentation : the use of a lyric speaker, and the use of a dramatic speaker. These two techniques take several different forms which include several different functions.

The lyric speaker generally speaks in the first person singular, but at times, especially in poems of religious celebration, he assumes a first person plural voice in which he addresses the reader as the spokesman of an initiated group. The function of this strategy is frequently to attempt to include the reader in the celebratory activities which the speaker expresses.

The first person singular speaker's function is usually simpler than this. At times he is merely the narrator, presenter or chronicler of an experience or situation. In "The Escorial," for example, he has an almost vestigial presence, and his task is simply to present the various features of the Escorial itself. In the first "St. Dorothea" poem, however, his function is to control the entire poem. He hears the saint's words as he contemplates her picture, and at the end of the poem expresses his awed response to her heavenly

assumption. However, in the lyrical ballad, "The Nightingale," the speaker is only a narrator whose function is to round off the poem and bring home its irony after Frances's speech has finished.

In the more explicitly personal poems the "I" speaker reveals again a variety of functions. An early poem, "A Vision of the Mermaids," presents the speaker as a romantic-dreamer whose primary function is to record his vision. His secondary function is to try to involve his audience in this vision by presenting it as dramatically as possible. "Spring and Death" is another poem in which the first person singular speaker possesses an active life within the poem in an effort to intensify the reader's response to his dream encounter with Death. These two poems anticipate such later poems as "Brothers," "The Bugler's First Communion" or "Felix Randal" in which Hopkins assigns himself a dramatic role in the poem. On a simpler level than this we have the first person singular speakers of the early religious sonnets and "The Habit of Perfection" whose function is to explore religious problems, and offer what are often only partial solutions to them. There is also the speaker of the brief sequence of love sonnets, "The Beginning of the End," who emerges merely as a derivative version of the Elizabethan courtly lover. Through the mouth-pieces of a variety of first person speakers Hopkins explores problems, chiefly religious, that concerned him at school, and as an undergraduate, prior to his conversion to the Roman church. The basic function of these speakers is to give poetic expression to these problems.

We can, therefore, identify five different kinds of lyric speaker in Hopkins's early poems : the first person plural speaker, who is frequently a spokesman and a religious celebrant, the speaker as narrator of poems like "The Escorial" and "The Nightingale," the speaker as a lyric persona in poems

like "A Vision of the Mermaids" and "Spring and Death," the speaker as an explorer of religious problems who is always an "I" speaker, and finally the speaker as courtly lover in "The Beginning of the End" sequence. The poetic functions of these speakers grow directly out of their different roles.

Hopkins's dramatic speakers can be classified in three distinct groups. First, we have the spy of "A Soliloquy of One of the Spies left in the Wilderness" whose function is to express a moral position which his speech itself destroys through Hopkins's controlled use of irony. Through the mouth of this speaker Hopkins explores a moral position which he rejects as he dramatizes it. Second, we meet dramatic speakers like St. Dorothea, Frances, and even briefly the figure of Death in "Spring and Death," who enjoy a more independent dramatic life in that they present feelings and points of view relevant to the poems in which they appear, but which are finally interpreted, commented upon or concluded by another speaker. Finally, we have the most important group of dramatic speakers, who stand in the closest relation to the lyric speakers of the early poems, speakers like the nun of "Heaven-Haven," the alchemist in "The Alchemist in the City," or Theophilus in the second "St. Dorothea" poem. These speakers emerge as masks used to distance and objectify personal concerns. They resemble the "novice" of "The Habit of Perfection" or the lover of "The Beginning of the End" sequence, except that they are more fully dramatic. They present points of view with which Hopkins was clearly sympathetic but which he either did not want to identify himself with fully, as in the case of the alchemist, or which he sought to bring to a point of more objective realization, as in the case of Theophilus, who grows directly out of the first person speaker of the first "St. Dorothea" poem.

What we notice primarily through this kind of analysis of Hopkins's early poems are two parallel procedures which begin to coalesce later in his career. On the one hand there appears to be a growing desire to objectify experiences with which the poet cannot honestly identify himself. Thus, in "A Vision of the Mermaids" we have a first person singular speaker, but in "A Soliloquy . . ." a somewhat similar experience of indulgence is presented through the mouth of a dramatic speaker as it is again in "The Alchemist in the City." The alchemist is very close in attitude to the speaker of "A Vision of the Mermaids" in his elegiac response to natural and sensational experience, but the degree of Hopkins's detachment from this kind of experience is emphasized by the shift from the use of a lyric speaker in the earlier poem to the use of a dramatic speaker in the later one. On the other hand we have throughout the early poems a concern with religious questions which are always directly dealt with through the mouthpieces of first person speakers. Hopkins's immediate personal concern with such problems, which we can also observe in his letters and notebooks, is given the most personal kind of treatment in his early poetry. As observed earlier, the poet who uses an "I" speaker always runs the risk of having the positions he presents identified with his own; in matters of real urgency Hopkins was always prepared to take such risks.

With "The Wreck of the Deutschland" these discrete methods of poetic presentation coalesce. We notice the slow beginnings of this coalescence in his early poems. The essential function of Hopkins's speakers is to act as the flexible vehicles for the communication of the most radical forms of personal experience. These speakers present Hopkins's readers with their author's explorations of divine reality. The creation of poetic speakers adequate to this task, and the assignment to them of increasingly various and complex functions goes hand in hand with the deepening and progression of these

explorations.

The crucial development that takes place in Hopkins's early poetry is best indicated in his most successful early poem, "The Habit of Perfection." In this poem we see a grafting of "the riv'n Vine," a uniting of the divided voices of sensuousness and asceticism, which had received separate expression in such polarized poems as "A Vision of the Mermaids" and the early religious poems. "The Habit of Perfection" shows us a sensuous perception and articulation of a desired ascetic and religious state, and we find this method employed again later and more fully in the sonnets of 1877, in poems like "The Windhover," "Pied Beauty" and "Hurrahing in Harvest."

As already observed "The Habit of Perfection" was originally entitled "The Novice," which describes the nature of the poem's speaker. The speaker is thereby given a partly dramatic definition, yet he is not a wholly dramatic character in the way that the spy of "A Soliloquy . . .," or even the alchemist of "The Alchemist in the City" is, both of which characters are judged as inadequate. In contrast, the speaker of "The Habit of Perfection" is a partially dramatic speaker, who, in being so, allows Hopkins a large degree of personal expression, allows him to give subjective concerns an aesthetic autonomy without relinquishing or diminishing their obviously personal importance. This tactic of expression, this function of the speaker, becomes the paradigm for Hopkins's future poetry. Thus, towards the end of the early poems a true orientation is discovered that unites approaches to experience, which had remained discrete in too many of those poems. What we see, then, in "The Habit of Perfection" is the formulation of a new poetic on Hopkins's part, that allows for a religious expression and interpretation of sensuous experience. A new style was to mature during Hopkins's seven years of "elected silence;" but it was in the very poem that announced this

election that Hopkins made an important and decisive step forward in creating a speaker adequate to his future poetic concerns. J. Hillis Miller has remarked that: "The early poems do everything they can to transcend subjectivism."³⁵ In "The Habit of Perfection" this transcendence is finally and fully achieved.

³⁵Miller, p. 275.

CHAPTER II

BREATH AND BREAD

This man whom just now we seemed to see dealing out the barley bread, this man, Jesus of Nazareth by name, at this moment while I speak seated at the right hand of the Father is dealing me out my life, my voice, my breath, my being.

-- Gerard Manley Hopkins, The 'Dominical' --March 11, 1877

i

The best way to appreciate the change which took place in Hopkins's poetry between the early poems and "The Wreck of the Deutschland" is to examine the Journal which he kept between 1866 and 1875,¹ the years of his Jesuit training and self-elected poetic silence. In this Journal we can witness at first hand Hopkins's developing response to both natural objects and divine reality. He comes to understand the beauty of the former through a deepening conviction of the presence of the latter. Careful, chronological examination of the Journal makes this development clear.

On May 4, 1866 Hopkins remarks that "Fields pinned with daisies. Buds of apple blossoms look like nails of blood" (p. 134). Twelve years later these words received poetic transformation in his poem "The May Magnificat" to "When drop-of-blood-and-foam-dapple / Bloom lights the orchard-apple." Ten days later, on May 14, Hopkins's natural observation leads him to a biblical comparison, "Young copper beech leaves seen against the sky pale brown with rosy blush along the ribs of each leaf. Solomon's seal" (p. 136). It is interesting to

¹Journals, pp. 131-263. Page references will be given in parenthesis after all quotations.

to notice the way in which these two prose sentences possess the structural juxtaposition of an imagist poem. The effect of natural objects upon Hopkins's mental processes is stressed a day later, on May 15, when he notes :

Elm trunks are blue or purple rich moist black at this time, as thrown out by the thick heaps and armfuls of the wet pellets of young green of which their leafing now 'stands.' To see the long forward-creeping curls of the newly-leaved trees, in sweeps and rows all lodged one with another down the meadow edge, beautiful, but distraction and want of the canon only makes these graceful shapes in the keen unseasonable evening air to 'carve out' one's thought with painful definiteness (p.136).

Close perception of nature, at this early stage, causes mental suffering; and it should be remembered that these early quotations from the Journal occur only a month or two after the writing of such early poems as "Nondum," and before Hopkins's reception into the Roman church, which did not take place until October.

Hopkins's readiness to translate the external landscape into his own state of mind is again evident on May 18, when he observes, "Mulberry budding. Lilac in full blow. -- Things look sad and difficult" (p. 137). On July 17, 1866 his decision to join the Roman Catholic church is noted, "-- It was this night I believe but possibly the next that I saw clearly the impossibility of staying in the Church of England, but resolved to say nothing to anyone till three months are over, that is the end of the Long, and then of course to take no step till after my Degree" (p. 146). Within a week he spoke to his friend Macfarlane about his decision, and within three months he was a member of the Roman Catholic church. The growing union between his response to nature and his newly achieved religious stability continues from this date.

On April 6, 1868 he records a merging of natural objects and personal feeling, and although the word "halo" is used in a technical sense the passage is a significant one,

"Fine but sky overcast with transparent cloud, which was sometimes zoned and blown in wild 'locks' -- altogether a moody sky. There were both solar and lunar halos, faint: it deserves notice. I do not know how long the first was but the latter may have lasted hours. -- A budded lime against the field wall: turn, pose, and counterpoint in the twigs and buds -- the form speaking" (p. 163). A month later on May 5, 1868 he notes his resolution to become a priest, and on May 11 he cryptically mentions the destruction of his early poems.

Throughout this Journal we can see Hopkins's movement towards a sacramental view of nature. This begins as a tendency to personify natural objects, as though behind the forms of nature he slowly comes to perceive the divine and human shape of the crucified Lord. On his excursion to Switzerland in July, 1868, for example, he mentions the way in which the Grindelwald glacier. "Becoming deep within . . . looks like deep flesh-cuts where one sees the blood flush and welling up --" (p. 175). Later, in September, 1873, he speaks of "Blue of the sky round and below changed to a pale burning flesh --" (p. 239). However, the fact that perception of nature and devotion to God often conflicted with each other in Hopkins's mind is revealed by an entry for January 24, 1869, "But a penance which I was doing from Jan. 25 to July 25 prevented my seeing much that half-year" (p. 190). Hopkins's tendency to castigate his immediate response to beauty, perhaps, accounts for the images of physical pain connected with it in such passages as the example quoted above from the entry for July 16, 1868. His emotional nature during his first years as a Jesuit was often under considerable pressure, as it was throughout his later life.

In a long entry for December 23, 1869 he mentions the fact that "One day in the Long Retreat (which ended on Xmas Day) they were reading in the refectory Sister Emmerich's

account of the Agony in the Garden and I suddenly began to cry and sob and could not stop"² (p. 195). But the Journal shows us, besides instances like this, the omnivorous quality of Hopkins's poetic sensibility. On February 12, 1870, he notes that "-- The slate slabs of the urinals even are frosted in graceful sprays."³ (p. 196). His use of his own term "inscape"⁴ increases throughout this Journal, and its proximity to perceptions of relationship between nature and God can be seen frequently. On May 14, 1870 he observes of chestnuts, "When the wind tossed them they plunged and crossed one another without losing their inscape. (Observe that motion multiplies inscape only when inscape is discovered, otherwise it disfigures)" (p. 199). In a crucial passage, on May 18, 1870, he says, "I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it" (p. 199). A detailed examination of the bluebell follows the discovery of relationship between the flower and Christ. The bluebell is compared to a cutwater, to steel, to trumpets, and finally to a mouth, in a typical series of comparisons that moves towards personification. Throughout, Hopkins's tendency is to humanize natural objects as he sees more clearly their divine relationships. Since God created the world, and since man is the apex

²See also Journal, March 13, 1872 when Hopkins broke down again and cried on hearing the reading of an account of De Rancé's conversion which led him "to enter his abbey of La Trappe" (p. 218).

³This passage should be compared with the entry for April 17, 1873 which provides another example of Hopkins's omnivorousness of perception. "Under a stone hedge was a dying ram: there ran slowly from his nostril a thick flesh-coloured ooze, scarlet in places, coiling and roping its way down, so thick that it looked like fat" (p. 230).

⁴For useful definitions of "inscape", see especially Peters, ch. I and Heuser, pp. 25-28. A recent discussion of the term is Adrian J. McCarthy, S.M., "Toward a Definition of Hopkins' Inscape." University of Dayton Review, IX(1967), 55-68.

of His creation, man is both able to see his creator in his creator's world, and to perceive that the natural world, despite its individuality and variety, is in essence a human world in so far as God has created it for man. However, Hopkins frequently feels that the natural world, in its limpid beauty, is closer to God than fallen man who has transgressed divine imperatives. On seeing the Northern Lights for the first time, at Stonyhurst on September 24, 1870, Hopkins observes, "This busy working of nature wholly independent of the earth and seeming to go on in a strain of time not reckoned by our reckoning of days and years but simpler and as if correcting the preoccupation of the world by being preoccupied with and appealing to and dated to the day of judgment was like a new witness to God and filled me with delightful fear" (p.200). Throughout the Journal, we notice, in Hopkins's perception of nature, an increased perception of God's presence behind the natural world. In many ways these passages of natural observation are sublimated or surrogate poems, and help to prepare the ground for Hopkins's future poetic activity.

In March, 1871, Hopkins notes the way in which interaction between natural objects and the perceiving mind occurs; and he also insists upon the need for perpetual freshness of vision. "What you look hard at seems to look hard at you, hence the true and false instress of nature. . . . Unless you refresh the mind from time to time you cannot always remember or believe how deep the inscape of things is" (pp. 204-205). Besides, the effort of accurate perception requires an increase in verbal capacity. Thus, on April 15, 1871 he says, "Take a few primroses in a glass and the instress of -- brilliancy, sort of starriness: I have not the right word -- so simple a flower gives is remarkable" (p. 206). On May 11, 1871 occurs a second, remarkable description of bluebells which will be analysed in detail later. The passage is, in effect, a

prose-poem and possesses almost all the structural features of poetry.

On February 23, 1872 we have an example of Hopkins's propensity to synaesthesia, "this sober grey darkness and pale light was happily broken through by the orange of the pealing of Mitton bells"⁵ (p. 218). Synaesthesia in Hopkins, at this stage of his development, indicates an increasing poetic sensitivity to the natural world. It is a difficult world to comprehend fully; and he remarks upon the need for solitude in order to achieve perception of inscape.⁶ In an entry of July 19, 1872 he laments the way in which the perception of inscape is withheld from simple people, "Stepped into a barn of ours, a great shadowy barn, where the hay had been stacked on either side, and looking at the great rudely arched timberframes -- principals (?) and tie-beams, which make them look like bold big As with the cross-bar high up -- I thought how sadly beauty of inscape was unknown and buried away from simple people and yet how near at hand it was if they had eyes to see it and could be called out everywhere again" (p. 221). The same summer, the unity of Hopkins's philosophical, natural and divine perceptions is strengthened by his discovery of the writings of Duns Scotus, "At this time I had first begun to get

⁵We have a further example of sensuous interpenetration recorded on August 10, 1873, when Hopkins was told by his friend Purbrick that "the scarlet or rose colour of flamingos was found to be due to a fine copper powder on the feathers. As he said this I tasted brass in my mouth. It is what they call unconscious cerebation, a bad phrase" (pp. 234-235).

⁶See entry for December 12, 1872, "I saw the inscape [of tufts of grass] though freshly, as if my eye were still growing, though with a companion the eye and the ear are for the most part shut and instress cannot come" (p. 228). Also, see the entry for May 11, 1873, when, again observing bluebells, he achieves a perception of inscape although somewhat distracted by his companions's talking (p. 231).

hold of the copy of Scotus on the Sentences in the Baddely library and was flush with a new stroke of enthusiasm. It may come to nothing or it may be a mercy from God. But just then when I took in an inscape of the sky or sea I thought of Scotus" (p. 221).

Intimate relationships in nature are stressed at this time. Thus, on August 18, 1872 Hopkins remarks upon the way in which "the sea, dark blue with violet cloud-shadows, was warped to the round of the world like a coat upon a ball and often later I marked that perspective" (p. 222). At times Hopkins reveals a comic, almost Dickensian, ability to personify objects, "I remember one little square house cushioned up in a thatched grove of green like a man with an earache" (p. 222). And describing waves, in a more characteristic and serious vein, his technique of depiction again involves personification as he adds an anthropomorphic dimension to the actual world, "When the wave ran very high it would brim over on the sloping shelf below me and move smoothly and steadily along it like the palm of a hand along a table drawing off the dust" (p. 225).

By February 24, 1873, we can see how far Hopkins had progressed in the seven years since the commencement of his Journal in 1866. His self-evolved theory of inscape had become a philosophical system. "All the world is full of inscape and chance left free to act falls into order as well as purpose: looking out of my window I caught it in the random clods and broken heaps of snow made by the cast of a broom" (p. 230). Through acute perception, and conviction of the divine stamp they bear, the minutest details become important to Hopkins, and he is keenly sensitive to any wanton intrusions upon the world of inscapes. Thus, he remarks on April 8, 1873 that, "-- The ashtree growing in the corner of the garden was felled. It was lopped first: I heard the sound and looking out and

seeing it maimed there came at that moment a great pang and I wished to die and not to see the inscapes of the world destroyed any more" (p. 230). In fact, Hopkins's recurrent fits of despair are usually depicted in terms of a destruction of the coherence of the natural world. In August, 1873 he characterizes such a sense of depression as follows, "being unwell I was quite downcast: nature in all her parcels and faculties gaped and fell apart, fatiscebat, like a clod cleaving and holding only by strings of root. But this must often be" (p. 236). Here we have a striking anticipation of the imagery of the sonnets of desolation which were not begun until ten years later.

On occasional visits to art exhibitions, Hopkins reveals the same capacity for detailed perception of works of art. His notes on Briton Rivière's "Apollo (from Euripides)" provide a representative example. "Like a roughened boldened Leighton, very fine. Leopards shewing the flow and slow spraying of the streams of spots down from the backbone and making this flow word-in and inscape the whole animal and even the group of them; lion and lioness's paws outlined and threaded round by a touch of fur or what not, as one sees it in cats -- very true broad realism; herd of stags between fir trees all giving one inscape in the moulding of their flanks and bodies and hollow shell of the horns" (p. 244). Throughout his notes on paintings his ultimate test is whether or not the artist in question has achieved a realization of "inscape."

The essential relation of God to His creation is firmly emphasized towards the end of the Journal in a passage that reveals the culmination of Hopkins's spiritual development during his years of poetic silence and Jesuit training. On August 17, 1874, about fifteen months before the storm that was to provide the occasion of "The Wreck of the Deutschland," Hopkins made a visit to Ugbrooke in Devon, the home of Lord

Clifford. During the course of the day he saw the place where Dryden wrote The Hind and the Panther. He keenly enjoyed the beauty of the park and the pleasure of meeting Lord Clifford's family. Of this happy holiday he concludes by remarking, "As we drove home the stars came out thick : I leant back to look at them and my heart opening more than usual praised our Lord to and in whom all that beauty comes home" (p. 254). It is clear that the day included for Hopkins an experience of totality and fulfillment at all levels of being. His interest in poetry was engaged by seeing the place where Dryden wrote, his love of nature by the beauty of Lord Clifford's park, his social impulses by the candour of Lord Clifford's children; and finally the day's experience is "brought home" to God, the creator and sustainer of all human beauty and happiness.

However, within a month of this affirmative experience, Hopkins records an instance of the return of the kind of contradictions that filled much of his life with guilt and depression. Shortly after his arrival at St. Beuno's in North Wales, where he wrote "The Wreck of the Deutschland" and spent three of the most fruitful years of his life, he recorded the following on September 6, 1874 :

Looking all round but most in looking far up the valley I felt an instress and charm of Wales. Indeed in coming here I began to feel a desire to do something for the conversion of Wales. I began to learn Welsh too but not with very pure intentions perhaps. However, on consulting the Rector on this, the first day of the retreat, he discouraged it unless it were purely for the sake of labouring among the Welsh. Now it was not and so I saw that I must give it up. At the same time my music seemed to come to an end. Yet, rather strangely, I had no sooner given up these two things (which disappointed me and took an interest away -- and at that time I was very bitterly feeling the weariness of life and shed many tears, perhaps not wholly into the breast of God but with some unmanliness in them too, and sighed and panted to Him), I had no sooner given up the Welsh than my desire seemed to be for the conversion of Wales and I had in mind to give up everything else for that;

nevertheless weighing this by St. Ignatius' rules of election I decided not to do so (p. 258).

These two contrasted passages occurring, as they do, within a month of each other, provide us with vivid examples of the nature of Hopkins's inner life. They also present in autobiographical terms the poles of experience that we find dramatized in his mature poetry: the movements between religious affirmation and thwarted despair. What is of primary interest is Hopkins's amazing honesty and scrupulosity of conscience, his integrity and capacity for understanding himself. In little over a year these qualities would begin to find poetic expression of a brilliant and unique kind. The effort of self-knowledge required of the Jesuit novice was to issue in celebratory and confessional poetry of rare honesty.

The complex and evolving relationships between poetry, self-knowledge and natural perception are indicated several days later, on September 10, 1874, when Hopkins visited the valley of the Elwy which was to become the subject of one of his poems of 1877. "Below at a little timber bridge I looked at some delicate flying shafted ashes -- there was one especially of single sonnet-like inscape -- between which the sun sent straight bright slenderish panes of silvery sunbeams down the slant towards the eye and standing above an unkept field staggged with patchy yellow heads of ragwort" (p. 259). A subtle relation between nature and art is perceived in ashes whose inscape is similar to that of a sonnet. Two years later such perceptions were to receive actual poetic expression in sonnet form.

Finally, on October 8, 1874, Hopkins visited St. Winefred's Well which was to become the subject of his unfinished drama, and again an experience of totality occurred. The extent of Hopkins's spiritual development between the early

poems and "The Wreck of the Deutschland" can be measured by this record of his visit :

The strong unfailing flow of the water and the chain of cures from year to year all these centuries took hold of my mind with wonder at the bounty of God in one of His saints, the sensible thing so naturally and gracefully uttering the spiritual reason of its being (which is all in true keeping with the story of St. Winefred's death and recovery) and the spring in place leading back the thoughts by its spring in time to its spring in eternity: even now the stress and buoyancy and abundance of the water is before my eyes" (p. 261).

Nature, divinity, and personal perception of both are related here in a way that reveals the central foundation of religious certainty upon which Hopkins's life and poetry were ultimately based.

To leap from the early poems directly into "The Wreck of the Deutschland" would be misleading, especially when we are able to consult such an ample chronicle of personal and poetic development as his Journal of 1866-1875. The preceding examination has sought to outline primarily the personal and spiritual development that Hopkins underwent during these years. Finally, it is worthwhile to examine an example of the poetic development that the Journal provides.

In the spring of 1871 Hopkins records his detailed observation of bluebells. The passage, in its wealth and detailed precision of analogy, has all the qualities of a prose-poem, even down to the recapitulation at the end of the passage of the image that opens it. Furthermore, we notice Hopkins's extensive participation in the bluebells's existence.

The passage requires quotation in full :

This day [May 9, 1871] and May 11 the bluebells in the little wood between the College and the highroad and in one of the Hurst Green cloughs. In the little wood / opposite the light / they stood in blackish spreads or sheddings like the spots on a snake. The heads are then like thongs and solemn in grain and

and grape-colour. But in the clough / through the light / they came in falls of sky-colour washing the brows and slacks of the ground with vein-blue, thickening at the double, vertical themselves and the young grass and brake fern combed vertical, but the brake struck the upright of all this with light winged transomes. It was a lovely sight. --The bluebells in your hand baffle you with their inscape, made to every sense: if you draw your fingers through them they are lodged and struggle / with a shock of wet heads; the long stalks rub and click and flatten to a fan on one another like your fingers themselves would when you passed the palms hard across one another, making a brittle rub and jostle like the noise of a hurdle strained by leaning against; then there is the faint honey smell and in the mouth the sweet gum when you bite them. But this is easy, it is the eye they baffle. They give one a fancy of panpipes and of some wind instrument with stops -- a trombone perhaps. The overhung necks -- for growing they are little more than a staff with a simple crook but in water, where they stiffen, 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 -- what with these overhung necks and what with the crisped ruffled bells dropping mostly on one side and the gloss these have at their footstalks they have an air of the knights at chess. Then the knot or 'knoop' of buds some shut, some just gaping, which makes the pencil of the whole spike, should be noticed: 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 (pp. 208-209).

Apart from the poetic elements already mentioned, the transformation of the early use of "thong" into "whip" later in the passage, the personificatory quality of "vein-blue" used in describing the colour of the flowers, and the varying images evoked by all five senses give the passage a rich density of poetic suggestion. Besides, Hopkins's embodiment of his perceiving self is more fully achieved here than in many of the early poems; and, as argued earlier, this embodiment springs directly from a deepened response to nature and an enlarged

capacity for perception. Furthermore, when we compare this passage to the sensuous solipsism of an early poem like "A Vision of the Mermaids," we notice a minimum of subjective involvement with the flowers, and consequently a more thorough surrender of the perceiving self to the objects under scrutiny. A new access of objectivity in perception is the result. As we hear less of the speaker, we learn more about the flowers that he presents. The passage is very close, in its richness of imagery, its lack of self-concern and depth of poetic realization, to the celebratory sonnets of 1877~~8~~ to poems like "Pied Beauty" and "Hurrahing in Harvest." Like several other passages of detailed natural description in the Journal, this passage marks a crucial stage in Hopkins's poetic development. It is this kind of detailed concern with natural objects which led to the emergence of a completely new poetic voice when, in 1876, Hopkins came to write "The Wreck of the Deutschland."⁷

The passage's two predominant and related features are its objective mode of presentation and its complete realization of the bluebells themselves, achieved through Hopkins's vivid series of comparative images. It is, finally, significant that the passage should contain both the term "inscape" and a compelling demonstration of its activity. The evolution of this theory of perception lies at the root of Hopkins's development from his early poems into the poetry of "The Wreck of the Deutschland."

⁷As Hunter observes, "The Journal becomes, during these years, his primary means of artistic expression. . . . The creative imagination at work is as keen as in many poems and more so than in much descriptive prose of novels." See Jim Hunter, Gerard Manley Hopkins (London : Evans, 1966), p. 112 -- hereafter cited as Hunter.

ii

There is no doubt that "The Wreck of the Deutschland" is Hopkins's most important poem.⁸ Not only does it provide the first full demonstration of the rhythm that Hopkins helped to restore to English poetry, but it also anticipates many of the themes and images with which he subsequently concerned himself. In his recent study of Hopkins, W. S. Johnson has described "The Wreck of the Deutschland" as "an extended personal lyric." He qualifies this description by adding, "although it is much more than that as well. It is certainly not a dramatic monologue."⁹ W. S. Johnson is correct in his last statement, yet the poem cannot be adequately defined as "an extended personal lyric." The poem is surely a dramatic lyric.¹⁰ It is neither sufficiently subjective to warrant the description "personal lyric," nor so detached from personal concerns to be accurately described as a dramatic monologue.¹¹ In providing the first substantial solution to the problems of the speaker and his function analysed in the previous chapter, the poem achieves an active tension between personal interest and dramatic

⁸This section of ch. II is an expanded version of an essay "'The Wreck of the Deutschland': Voice and Structure" scheduled to appear in Victorian Poetry in 1971.

⁹Johnson, p. 45.

¹⁰For further discussion of the term "dramatic lyric" see Langbaum, pp. 52-53. It is unfortunate that Johnson should have ignored Langbaum's important categorical discriminations, and used instead the tautology "personal lyric" to describe a poem of the complexity of "The Wreck of the Deutschland."

¹¹As David Morris has observed of the poem, "We are aware of a certain detachment of the poet from himself, the projection of his own personality outside himself where it can be objectively observed." The Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins and T. S. Eliot in the Light of the Donne Tradition: A Comparative Study (Berne: A. Francke, 1953), p. 38.

realization of that interest. The poem is a dramatic lyric because its speaker possesses an aesthetic independence of biographical definition. We do not need biographical information to appreciate the speaker's role and function in this poem, since he emerges as a speaker sufficiently realized for the purposes of the particular occasion in which he is involved. However, the speaker cannot be usefully defined as an independent dramatic character as can the alchemist or the spy in the early poems. For although he emerges in the poem, at different times, as anguished soul, preacher, narrator and celebrant, and although these differing roles are fused into the embodiment of a fully coherent dramatic speaker, this speaker depends for his life upon the experience of Hopkins the poet. The speaker of "The Wreck of the Deutschland" is Hopkins's dramatic persona. Thus, while biographical information about Hopkins's life and response to the disaster would be helpful to a complete understanding of the poem, it is not essential to any fundamental aesthetic and critical analysis of the poem's speaker or structure. The poem is sufficiently weaned from Hopkins's private concerns to achieve an independent, aesthetic and dramatic status.

"The Wreck of the Deutschland" opens with the most intimate address to God presented in Hopkins's poetry to this date. The intimacy suggests that a considerably deepened relationship with God had developed since the beginning of the poetic silence that followed the early poems. The poem's first stanza presents a record of struggle and reconciliation. The first person singular speaker addresses God respectfully in the archaic second person form "thou" rather than in the more colloquial form "you." Despite intimacy there is respect, since the relationship presented is in every way a master-servant relationship. God is both creator and master, and the "I" speaker is a subject who accepts his master's will. The

speaker's function in the opening stanza is to reveal a complete sense of God's power and his own humble obedience :

Thou mastering me
 God! giver of breath and bread;
 World's strand, sway of the sea;
 Lord of living and dead;
 Thou hast bound bones and veins in me, fastened me flesh
 And after it almost unmade, what with dread,
 Thy doing : and dost thou touch me afresh ?
 Over again I feel thy finger and find thee.

God is the humble speaker's only friend.

In stanza two the first person speaker continues by recording the struggles that his soul and body underwent in accepting God. The stanza is again presented as a dialogue with God, and the speaker's function is confessional as he reveals the intimate details of his struggle. As audience, we overhear the dialogue that reveals the speaker's personal anguish and painful acknowledgment of God's power. Hopkins here anticipates the confessional mode that has become central in the work of such contemporary poets as Robert Lowell and Sylvia Plath, and Hopkins's influence has been direct and extensive on this kind of poetry. Like Lowell, Hopkins seeks to deal directly and precisely with the most intimate and painful facets of personal experience. Such poetry, as Hopkins realized, demands two things : first, the most acute honesty with oneself, and second, to allow this honesty to be transmuted into poetry, the most careful artistic manipulation of autobiography. To become artistically convincing, subjective experience has to be given the fullest degree of dramatic realization. The difference between a successful and an unsuccessful confessional poem will depend entirely upon the ability of the poet to detach himself from his most intimate experiences in order to transmute them into art. Like Lowell or Plath, Hopkins was prepared to run all the risks present in

this kind of poetry, and he is one of the real fathers of what A. Alvarez in 1962 described as "The New Poetry."¹²

Thus, in the second stanza of "The Wreck of the Deutschland," Hopkins gives an intimate, spiritual experience a maximally intense degree of artistic presentation. He treads the borders of hysteria without entering its world of chaos and cacophony. Hopkins's mastery of the complicated stanzaic form that he selected for the poem seems crucial in his avoidance of hysteria. In free verse the emotional intensity of the stanza might well have turned into rant. But, as this chapter will go on to show, the careful manipulation of the speaker's function is important too. A. R. Jones has recently argued that in "The Wreck of the Deutschland," "Hopkins maintains the rhetoric of his poem at one breathless level throughout," and he continues later by observing that, "It is in this area of tone and mood that Hopkins so often fails and where he might have learnt so much from Tennyson. Hopkins moves his poems from breathless excitement to blank despair but both these extremes court the dangers of hysteria; nowhere for long does he successfully manage the disciplined control of tone and mood that enabled Tennyson and the Victorian masters of poems expressing moods and states of feeling to gather the meaning of their poems together in one final and satisfying gesture."¹³

¹²See A. Alvarez, "Beyond the Gentility Principle," in The New Poetry (London : Penguin, 1962), pp. 17-28.

¹³A. R. Jones, "G. M. Hopkins: Victorian," in The Major Victorian Poets : Reconsiderations, ed. Isobel Armstrong (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969) pp. 299-318, pp. 311, 317 -- hereafter cited as Jones. See also his contention that "Hopkins in so many ways echoes Browning although he lacks Browning's psychological awareness and does not attempt to mediate his poetry through personae. Even if projected dramatically, Hopkins's impulse is always lyrical." Jones, p. 311. It is entirely the point that Hopkins projects a lyric impulse dramatically. With A. R. Jones's adverse judgements, however, I completely disagree.

I find it impossible to agree with A. R. Jones's view and trust that the ensuing analysis of the variety of the poem's vocal levels, achieved in part through the diversity of the speaker's functions, will make the reasons for my disagreement clear.

Stanza two is also "breathless," but breathlessness is dramatically appropriate at this point in the poem:

I did say yes
 O at lightning and lashed rod;
 Thou heardst 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:
 And the midriff astrain with leaning of, laced with fire of
 stress.

The speaker's tone is urgent, but such a tone is appropriate in recording a spiritual dilemma of life and death importance. We need only look to stanzas four and five to find a quite different tone, one in which the peace which God's presence brings replaces the anguish of struggle.

In stanza three the speaker's function shifts slightly as he ends his dialogue with God and presents instead a soliloquy, or more precisely an interior monologue, addressed to his own divinely directed heart. God is referred to in the third person. The speaker's heart is addressed as "you" to distinguish it from the more formal and archaic second person singular used in stanzas one and two to denote God. The shift from "thou" to "you" reinforces the sense of a master-servant relationship. However, the master's presence in the servant's heart is clear since the heart, through submission to God, is "dovewinged," and thus able to fly heavenwards. The tone of urgency that depicts spiritual crisis is continued, for the speaker's function here is to show that the crucial decision to join God was bred of a terror of hell more poignant than the emptiness of divine absence presented ten years earlier

in "Nondum" :

The frown of his face
 Before me, the hurtle of hell
 Behind, where, where was a, where was a place ?

The use of repetition contributes to the graphic transcription of spiritual crisis :

I whirled out wings that spell
 And fled with a fling of the heart to the heart of the Host.
 My heart, but you were dovewinged, I can tell,
 Carrier-witted, I am bold to boast,
 To flash from the flame to the flame then, tower from the
 grace to the grace.

The record of past spiritual crisis is over. Through a movement of feeling in the speaker's "dovewinged" heart he is able to reject the flames of hell and attain a state of divine grace. As in many other Victorian conversions, the speaker's attainment of grace depends directly upon a movement of feeling.

From this position of attained grace, the speaker, in the quieter stanza four, is able to analyse his situation in life. This stanza is perhaps the most important single stanza in the whole of Hopkins's poetry, for in two remarkably precise images Hopkins is able to realize the essential paradox of human existence. On the one hand, human life is like an hourglass in which the sands of time run away towards death. But with Christ's gift of grace, on the other hand, life can be as steady as water in a well which is continually fed by water that flows into it from the heavenly hill. After urgency and breathlessness, the speaker's tone achieves a more meditative note. The sense of haste is still present in the depiction of the hourglass with the use of verbs like "crowds" and "combs," but a sense of steadiness and peace is realized in the depiction of the well. The speaker's function changes here. From providing a vivid account of struggle, he moves into a calmly meditative analysis of his physical and spiritual existence. Initially presented as an anguished soul, the

speaker becomes meditative :

I am soft sift
 In an hourglass -- at the wall
 Fast, but mined with a motion, a drift
 And it crowds and it combs to the fall;
 I steady as a water in a well, to a poise, to a pane,
 But roped with, always, all the way down from the tall
 Fells or flanks of the voel, a vein
 Of the gospel proffer, a pressure, a principle, Christ's
 gift.

The speaker's calm sense of grace and divine certainty continues in stanza five, but he realizes that he cannot be passive. There must be a perpetual renewal of grace through instressing and stressing the divine mystery in one's soul. The ways of God are strange, but when one meets Him one must greet Him, and offer benediction when understanding occurs. Hopkins's religious position becomes clear in this stanza. The stanza opens in celebration, but closes more quietly in a recognition of the need for perpetual renewal. This stanza also reveals the inaccuracy of A. R. Jones's remarks. Hopkins does more than rush between breathless affirmation and total despair; he is able to control tone and quietly dramatize a middle state between heaven and hell. Hopkins's range of experience may have been narrow, but it was honestly and firmly grasped, and given a complete poetic articulation. Thus, in stanza five, the speaker begins as an excited celebrant of God's presence, but ends, in lines six to eight, as an ordinary Christian soul who realizes the need for daily renewal of his spiritual task. For this variation in tone to emerge properly the stanza requires careful reading :

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

The last three lines contain the suggestion of a sermonical tone as well as a recognition of the need for continued confrontation with the ways of God. In stanza six this tone develops until we almost feel that the speaker, who began life in a private dialogue with God, is making his spiritual experience and insight publicly available. As the tone shifts it becomes more excited; but here we have an approximation to the excitement of the convinced preacher rather than to the anguished private expression of spiritual crisis.¹⁴ It is the stanza's two parentheses, "(and few know this)," and, "(And here the faithful waver, the faithless fable and miss)," that suggest that the speaker is seeking to communicate knowledge and correct errors as a preacher might. The speaker seeks to reveal his spiritual philosophy here, and indicates that our sense of God does not come directly from heaven into our souls. It is communicated through events in God's created world, such as the storm which is dealt with later, through the activity of which we read God's meaning. Having wrestled with God, and familiarized himself with God's ways through careful and continuous efforts of attention, the speaker seeks to present his spiritual position. We do not learn about God through experiences of bliss but through the overcoming of difficulties. As we know, this had been Hopkins's course :

Not out of his bliss
 Springs the stress ~~fall~~
 Nor first from heaven (and few know this)
 Swings the stroke dealt --
 Stroke and a stress that stars and storms deliver,
 That guilt is hushed by, hearts are flushed by and melt--
 But it rides time like riding a river
 (And here the faithful waver, the faithless fable and miss).

¹⁴ Norman H. MacKenzie is right when he comments upon the presence in the poem of a preacher-like voice. He describes the poem as in part "a sermon in verse to 'startle the poor sheep back.' It was the work of a man whose profession was not poetry but the priesthood." MacKenzie, Hopkins, pp. 23-24.

Following the development of a sermon-like tone in stanza six, the speaker, in stanza seven, provides his audience with a history of Christ's gracious presence in the world. As in stanza six, so in stanza seven, the speaker reveals that it is Christ's effect upon human feeling, symbolized by the heart, that is all important. In stanza six the speaker had indicated that "hearts are flushed by" divine activity in the world, even when it is manifested in the stress of stars and storms. Similarly, in stanza seven, it is "only the heart," pressed by fatal circumstances, that declares Christ. Both these instances take us back to the earlier reference (in stanza three) to the "dovewinged" heart that flies from hell to heaven. Thus, although the speaker's tone changes from a private to a public one as we move towards the climax of the first part of the poem, his beliefs remain constant. What has been felt privately, and discussed only in intimate dialogue with God, is now given a more public expression. Christ is the centre of the speaker's being; it is his perception of Christ's power that allows the speaker's role to become increasingly messianic. Initially, the speaker's function was to communicate to God a private experience which his audience overheard, but as "Part the First" of the poem concludes he turns his face directly towards his audience. The effect is of gradual widening out from a private centre :

It dates from day
 Of his going in Galilee;
 Warm-laid grave of a womb-life grey;
 Manger, maiden's knee;
 The dense and the driven Passion, and frightful sweat:
 Thence the discharge of it, there its swelling to be,
 Though felt before, though in high flood yet --
 What none would have known of it, only the heart, being hard
 at bay,

8

Is out with it! Oh
 We lash with the best or worst
 Word last! How a lush-kept plush-capped sloe
 Will, mouthed to flesh-burst,
 Gush! -- flush the man, the being with it, sour or sweet,
 Brim, in a flash, full! -- Hither then, last or first,
 To hero of Calvary, Christ's feet --
 Never ask if meaning it, wanting it, warned of it -- men go.

Stanza eight confirms the arrival of a public level in the poem, for the speaker adopts a first person plural voice which helps to include his audience in what he says. "We lash with the best or worst / Word last! . . ." Besides, the use of the analogy of biting a sloe to an accession of grace suggests the kind of concrete examples that a sermon speaker would provide. Furthermore, the "Never ask . . ." of the last line has a highly rhetorical, almost hectoring, quality that a sermon preacher would use to rivet his meaning. The image of the sloe is sacramental in suggestion, its flesh and juice suggesting bread and wine.¹⁵ But the image is even closer to the image of the voel and the well in stanza four. Just as the water running through the voel fills the well so the sloe :

Will, mouthed to flesh-burst,
 Gush! -- flush the man, the being with it, sour or sweet,
 Brim, in a flash, full!--.

In stanza four the speaker related the image of the well directly to himself. Here he relates the image of the sloe to a hypothetical member of his audience. The speaker's function has changed. In stanza four his task was to express private meditation. By stanza eight he is seeking to make his private meditations publicly available.

¹⁵"It [the sloe] is used here as an image of Christ's body on the Cross, a bitter-sweet fruit on a bitter tree." Donald McChesney, A Hopkins Commentary: An Explanatory Commentary on the Main Poems, 1876-89 (London: University of London Press, 1968), p. 40 -- hereafter cited as McChesney.

The high rhetorical tone that closes stanza eight is followed in stanza nine by a hymn of praise to God. As at the opening of the poem God is directly addressed, but in a more celebratory and less intimate manner. Man, the speaker's audience, is the object of the speaker's concern; he hopes that God will wring "Man's malice" from him "with wrecking and storm." These images anticipate the second part of the poem. One would expect the speaker's audience to be suitably terrified by a dialogue with God, publicly conducted, that invokes divine punishment for the audience. The speaker, however, offers a comforting personal testimony that he too has experienced the lightning that precedes love, "I found it, a winter and warm." God is the authoritarian father, but also the fond lover of the heart that he wrings. Throughout, Hopkins insists that an experience of harrowing terror precedes the accession of divine consolation. A night of darkness is followed by the arrival of mercy. The speaker's function has both expanded and become more flexible. In this stanza he establishes a dialogue with God that has a public context. Private experience, that, at the opening of the poem, was shared with God alone, is here considered before an audience whom the speaker hopes will undergo his experience. The poem takes an increasingly messianic direction. Hymn-like celebration of God becomes an appropriate culmination to a successful sermon :

Be adored among men,
 God, three-numbered form;
 Wring thy rebel, dogged in den,
 Man's malice, with wrecking and storm.
 Beyond saying sweet, past telling of tongue,
 Thou art lightning and love, I found it, a winter and warm;
 Father and fondler of heart thou hast wrung:
 Hast thy dark descending and most art merciful then.

Stanza ten, which ends the first part of the poem, is climactic. The speaker-preacher, who is spokesman for his audience, asks God to forge His will in man either by an

overpowering revelation, such as St. Paul experienced before the gates of Damascus, or by a slow emergence of certainty, such as St. Augustine discovered. The speaker's subject is God's relation to man. At the end of stanza ten he uses a first person plural voice, as he did at the opening of stanza eight, through which he identifies himself with his audience, and both audience and self with God. The use of a first person plural voice by a singular speaker is a rhetorical tactic designed to assert the maximum degree of psychological pressure upon an audience that is assumed to share the speaker's position. The first part of the poem ends with further celebration of God's power and an implied summons to adore Him:

With an anvil-ding
 And with fire in him forge thy will
 Or rather, rather then, stealing as Spring
 Through him, melt him but master him still:
 Whether at once, as once at a crash Paul,
 Or as Austin, a lingering-out sweet skill,
 Make mercy in all of us, out of us all
 Mastery, but be adored, but be adored King.

The careful expansion of the speaker's voice from private dialogue to public address is appropriate to the movement towards the public subject, the wreck itself which is introduced in the second part of the poem. In the second part, Hopkins's speaker not only relates his personal experience of God to a public situation, and sees in what happens to the nun a reflection of his own experience, but also continues the messianic direction initiated in the later part of the poem's opening section.¹⁶ From struggling soul, the speaker of the

¹⁶As Geoffrey H. Hartman puts it, "The objective and subjective, narrative and lyrical parts of the theme are interwoven, so that turns of the action become (after stanza 11) turns in the poet's mind, and narrator is transformed to celebrant. Thus the illumination which redeems the catastrophe is Hopkins' own illumination: it is he who delivers the meaning of the nun's call to Christ, and it is he who labors for it." See Hartman, "Poetry and Justification," p. 5. My only quibble with Hartman here would be that the kind of activity he describes is at work in the poem before stanza eleven.

poem becomes both priest and preacher, and these changing roles involve a changing function. At first the speaker's function is simply to communicate with God. As the poem develops, his function is to put both private experience and a public catastrophe before his audience, and relate the two to each other.

The opening stanza of the poem's second part is related to the close of "Part the First" by a continuation of the rhetorical tone that ended that part of the poem. The reader is both surprised and terrified when he discovers that what seem like the preacher-speaker's words are, in fact, spoken by Death :

'Some find me a sword; some
The flange and the rail; flame,
Fang, or flood' goes Death on drum,
And storms bugle his fame.

The speaker rivets the irony further through continued identification with his audience which is achieved by the use of a first person plural voice :

But wé dream we are rooted in earth -- Dust!
Flesh falls within sight of us, we, though our flower the
same,
Wave with the meadow, forget that there must
The sour scythe cringe, and the blear share come.

The stanza provides an appropriately powerful opening to the poem's second part which is concerned dramatically with death and salvation. The introduction of the morality play figure of Death is apposite to the sermon technique which continues here.

In stanza twelve, however, the speaker's technique of presentation changes as he begins his narrative of the wreck. The first four lines of the stanza are strict narrative and the speaker's function is simply that of narrator :

On Saturday sailed from Bremen,
American-outward-bound,
Take settler and seamen, tell men with women,
Two hundred souls in the round --.

Nevertheless, the stanza concludes with renewed address to God in which the speaker asks whether God saved the people on board who left Germany ignorant of the wreck He had decreed. Direct reference to God is continuous throughout the poem:

O Father, not under thy feathers nor ever as guessing
 The goal was a shoal, of a fourth the doom to be drowned;
 Yet did the dark side of the bay of thy blessing
 Not vault them, the million of rounds of thy mercy not reeve
 even them in ?

Throughout the narrative of the wreck, the speaker interjects questions to God and his personal response to the situation. The narrative is thereby given considerable lyric intensity, but such questions are also a part of pulpit technique. There is interaction here for lyric concern and pulpit rhetoric take life from the excitingly presented events of the narrative, and vice versa. As F. R. Leavis has acutely observed, "The wreck he describes is both occasion and symbol. He realizes it so vividly that he is in it; and it is at the same time in him."¹⁷ Thus, in stanza thirteen, the speaker as narrator presents the gathering storm that leads to the Deutschland's wreck. The passage, with its verbal power and repeated use of alliteration, is one of the most exciting in all Hopkins's poetry:

Into the snows she sweeps,
 Hurling the haven behind,
 The Deutschland, on Sunday; and so the sky keeps,
 For the infinite air is unkind,
 And the sea flint-flake, black-backed in the regular blow,
 Sitting Eastnortheast, in cursed quarter, the wind;
 Wiry and white-fiery and whirlwind-swivellèd snow
 Spins to the widow-making unchilding unfathering deeps.

The poem's dominant images of water and fire are here used together at full poetic pressure.

¹⁷F. R. Leavis, New Bearings in English Poetry : A Study of the Contemporary Situation (London: Penguin, 1963), p. 143.

The next four stanzas continue the graphic account of the shipwreck and the speaker's function is simply to narrate what occurs. He fulfills his function with an excited intensity of poetic realization, although in these stanzas, remaining as much as possible outside the events. However, at times his interpretive presence is felt. At the end of stanza sixteen he asks rhetorically what the sailor could do to save: "The wild woman-kind below," and at the end of stanza seventeen his introductory depiction of the nun as a "lioness" and a "prophetess" reveals his belief in her heroic qualities. Besides, his description of the storm's power indicates the speaker's awe at the divine energy behind it. His presentation of human impotence in the face of such energy re-establishes the decisive contrast that opened the poem, when the speaker revealed his subservience in the face of God's magnitude. Thus, the shock of the breakers on the ship's beam is "ruinous" and the nightfall that follows the wreck is "frightful," for God has created them to be so. The storm is willed by God; and the weather which the helpless passengers encounter is specifically described in stanza seventeen as "God's cold." The speaker is unshrinking in his conviction that everything in the world is divinely appointed; nothing is arbitrary. The limitations of man are emphasized at the opening of stanza fifteen, and in the depiction in stanza sixteen of the brave sailor's failure despite his physical prowess. In fact, physical resistance in the face of a divinely ordained storm is futile. It is spiritual strength that is required in order to achieve salvation of the soul. This the nun possesses. Stanzas fourteen to seventeen establish a firm contrast between divine omnipotence, expressed through the activity of the storm, and human frailty. The ship, of course, is a traditional symbol for the human soul; and at a level of allegorical

symbolism the poem asks and answers the simple question, what does the soul do when confronted by disaster? The answer is direct. The soul turns completely to God. This is the position that these narrative stanzas begin to establish :

14

She drove in the dark to leeward,
 She struck -- not a reef or a rock
 But the combs of a smother of sand: night drew her
 Dead to the Kentish Knock;
 And she beat the bank down with her bows and the ride of
 her keel:
 The breakers rolled on her beam with ruinous shock;
 And canvas and compass, the whorl and the wheel
 Idle for ever to waft her or wind her with, these she endured.

15

Hope had grown grey hairs,
 Hope had mourning on,
 Trenched with tears, carved with cares,
 Hope was twelve hours gone;
 And frightful a nightfall folded rueful a day
 Nor rescue, only rocket and lightship, shone,
 And lives at last were washing away:
 To the shrouds they took, -- they shook in the hurling and
 horrible airs.

16

One stirred from the rigging to save
 The wild woman-kind below,
 With a rope's end round the man, handy and brave --
 He was pitched to his death at a blow,
 For all his dreadnought breast and braids of thew:
 They could tell him for hours, dandled the to and fro
 Through the cobbled foam-fleece. What could he do
 With the burl of the fountains of air, buck and the flood
 of the wave ?

17

They fought with God's cold --
 And they could not and fell to the deck
 (Crushed them) or water (and drowned them) or rolled
 With the sea-romp over the wreck.
 Night roared, with the heart-break hearing a heart-broke
 rabble,
 The woman's wailing, the crying of child without check --
 Till a lioness arose breasting the babble,
 A prophetess towered in the tumult, a virginal tongue told.

The arrival of the heroic nun causes the speaker, in stanza eighteen to turn from narrative to lyric concerns. The speaker addresses his own divinely directed heart which responds to the nun's arrival. Moved by the nun's heroism, the speaker's heart is related to her since it is given a feminine appellation, "--mother of being in me, heart." The speaker is overcome by the fact of his emotional response to the nun's virtue. Although he realizes the evil potentialities of emotional response, he is pleased that his heart responds to virtue. Earlier in the poem it was the speaker's emotions that responded to God; the same response occurs again here. As with many Victorian conversions, feeling is central; a change of heart followed by subsequent emotional reaffirmations is crucial for complete self-renovation. Thus, the speaker's turning in upon himself, in stanza eighteen, is stringently juxtaposed to the narrative stanzas that precede it, and involves a manipulation of vocal levels that is continuous through the poem. The speaker's function freely accommodates such shifts. His role changes from narrator to self-questioner and his poetic function alters with his role :

Ah, touched in your bower of bone,
 Are you! turned for an exquisite smart
 Have you! make words break from me here all alone,
 Do you! -- mother of being in me, heart.
 O unteachably after evil, but uttering truth,
 Why, tears! is it ? tears; such a melting, a madrigal
 start!
 Never-eldering revel and river of youth,
 What can it be, this glee? the good you have there of
 your own?

The subtly established flexibility of the speaker allows him,

in stanza nineteen, to express both lyric and narrative concerns.¹⁸ His heart which responds to the nun in stanza eighteen allows him in the next stanza to identify her as his sister who calls upon their mutual master God. Within the first line of the stanza there is a subtle shift from direct address to the nun, in the first "sister", to a narrative depiction of her activity. This is followed by the speaker's own identification of himself with the nun and God. A doubling of narrative and lyric functions occurs here, "Sister, a sister calling / A master, her master and mine! --." The speaker then reassumes his activity as narrator through the remainder of the stanza as he continues to present the nun's heroic actions. Having fully committed himself to her, he presents her actions with complete, sympathetic identification :

And the inboard seas run swirling and hawling;
 The rash smart slogging brine
 Blinds her; but she that weather sees one thing, one;
 Has one fetch in her: she rears herself to divine
 Ears, and the call of the tall nun
 To the men in the tops and the tackle rode over the storm's
 brawling.

The speaker has introduced the nun dramatically, and using the epic in medias res convention has presented her in action. In stanza twenty, he turns to a presentation of her history. However, the storm is at its height, and the speaker

¹⁸ Referring to the phrase, "a madrigal start," W. S. Johnson observes that "this part of 'The Deutschland,' from stanza nineteen to the end, is like a madrigal because it includes several melodic lines or voices: the voice of the nun herself calling, the voice of the lyric poet which becomes at one point, under stress, a stuttering voice almost incapable of utterance, and the solemn voice of the hymn, recurring now and then and finally dominant." Johnson, p. 61. This is one of the few critical comments I have discovered on Hopkins's technique of shifting voices in the poem.

has created a maximally intense context for historical narration into which he also interjects personal interpretation. As narrator, the speaker returns to the past tense narrative procedure, used earlier in stanza twelve. As well as employing epic convention, he here anticipates the flashback technique more normal in modern fiction. The nun's history is given before her miraculous vision in a similar manner to the way in which Faulkner in Light in August takes us back through Christmas's life immediately before he commits murder. In the light of the contrasting tones created by this technique of presentation it is difficult to agree with Austin Warren that Hopkins, "wasn't a story teller."¹⁹ It would seem rather that he was both a complex and dramatic one. Again in this quieter stanza, quieter since the storm is temporarily forgotten, the narrative voice turns back into the earlier pulpit voice, emphasized by parentheses, which glosses the name "Deutschland." St. Gertrude is praised, Luther derided, and the Roman Catholic conviction of the preacher-speaker, particularly strident here, is guaranteed to provoke Protestant retort :

She was first of a five and came
Of a coifed sisterhood.
(O Deutschland, double a desperate name!
O world wide of its good!
But Gertrude, lily, and Luther, are two of a town,
Christ's lily and beast of the waste wood:
From life's dawn it is drawn down,
Abel is Cain's brother and breasts they have sucked the same.)

Although we may not agree with this evaluation of Luther, it does not necessarily constitute any breach of poetic decorum. It is the inevitable view of the preacher-speaker's openly

¹⁹Austin Warren, "Instress of Inscape" in *The Kenyon Critics*, p.88.

impassioned Catholicism. As W. H. Gardner has observed, it is comparable to Milton's diatribe in Lycidas.²⁰ It is not as well done, perhaps, but its intention is similar. Of course, this preacher-like activity in stanza twenty has the effect of making us especially conscious of the poem's recurrently public level. The preacher-speaker continues to assert his presence at the opening of stanza twenty-one.

The opening of this stanza dramatically enforces the nuns' dilemma :

Loathed for a love men knew in them,
Banned by the land of their birth,
Rhine refused them, Thames would ruin them.

The stanza closes with a return from a mixture of preaching and narration to direct address to God. The speaker's function here is to indicate decisively the presence behind the storm of the God he extols :

Surf, snow, river and earth
Gnashed: but thou art above, thou Orion of light;
Thy unchallenging poisoning palms were weighing the worth,
Thou martyr-master: in thy sight
Storm flakes were scroll-leaved flowers, lily showers --sweet
heaven was astrew in them.

God, it is clear, is both present behind the storm and able to see the spiritual harvest that it will realize. The lines contain an expression of the poem's central paradox. The destructive storm is, in fact, a storm of love. Physically destructive, it is spiritually liberating. God is the judge who controls and He weighs man's activities in the fallen world in His own balance. Although God allowed the nuns to be turned out of their German nunnery, He is able to transform the flakes of the storm into heavenly flowers. The speaker reveals the same awe at and celebration of God's power that he

²⁰Gardner, I, 68.

did at the opening of the poem.

Having glossed the name "Deutschland" in stanza twenty, the speaker in stanza twenty-two elaborates the significance he finds in the number of nuns drowned in the storm. The speaker again reveals his recurrent preacher-like role since he asks his audience to take special notice of the fact that there were five nuns as there were five wounds inflicted upon Christ on the cross :

Five! the finding and sake
And cipher of suffering Christ.
Mark, the mark is of man's make
And the word of it Sacrificed.

The speaker continues by indicating that Christ gives grace to his followers by allowing them to suffer as he had suffered. The need for martyrdom is clearly seen by Hopkins as central to the Christian faith. Like Christ himself, the nuns are gathered to God before their time. Some readers might find such a numerological interest either pedantic, over-ingenious or irrelevant when discussed in the midst of a storm. But the stanza both contributes to the development of the speaker's preacher-like and messianic activity and provides a point of rest before the poem's climax. Furthermore, numerological speculation is given heightened emphasis since it is fitted in between narratives of the storm. The overall effect of a strategy like this is to show the way the whole of the speaker's mind is engaged by the events of the paradoxical disaster which focusses and expresses his love for Christ :

But he scores it in scarlet himself on his own bespoken,
Before-time-taken, dearest prized and priced --
Stigma, signal, cinquefoil token
For lettering of the lamb's fleece, ruddying of the
rose-flake.

Again in stanza twenty-three, the speaker continues the digressive diminuendo that precedes the poem's climax by offering praise to St. Francis, patron of the nun's order.

Celebration of the saint at this point and in this way clearly partakes of elements of Roman Catholic prayer and ritual. The speaker during the course of the poem resorts frequently to celebratory prayer and meditation. His shifts from a private to a public voice recall the alternations of the priest's role in the mass from a Domine non sum dignus voice to a Domines vobiscum voice. Like Christ, St. Francis had experienced the wounds of the cross in his famous stigmata on Mount Alvernia. The references to the number five and to St. Francis suggest the inner cohesion of the Catholic world, which the speaker feels very strongly as he meditates upon the nuns' death. All his religious experience is defined and focussed by the events of the wreck. Stanza twenty-three also anticipates the later celebratory stanzas of the poem and in doing so provides an early hint of the rejoicing to come. Although the nuns die they are gathered into the bosom of God because of their faith in the face of disaster :

Joy fall to thee, father Francis,
 Drawn to the Life that died;
 With the gnarls of the nails in thee, niche of the lance,
 his
 Lovescape crucified
 And seal of his seraph-arrival! and these thy daughters
 And five-livèd and leavèd favour and pride,
 Are sisterly sealed in wild waters,
 To bathe in his fall-gold mercies, to breathe in his
 all-fire glances.

Through contemplation of the five nuns the speaker is led to think of the five wounds of Christ. Thoughts of both the nuns and Christ's wounds lead him to celebrate St. Francis who is intimately related to both as patron of the nuns' order and as sufferer of the stigmata. Although outside the immediate action of the narrative, stanzas twenty-two and twenty-three reveal the incremental movement taking place in the speaker's mind. The events of the storm increase the depth of his initial response to God.

Before leading up to the poem's climax with the nun's vision of Christ sweeping through the storm, the speaker depicts his own situation at the time when the storm was taking place. The contrast between the pastoral peace of St. Beuno's seminary on the other side of the country and the storm-driven wreck in the mouth of the Thames begins to renew the intensity that grows into the poem's climax. The speaker's reference to himself also has the rhetorical effect of showing his audience that, like himself, the audience was enjoying the peace of home while the passengers on the Deutschland wrestled with death. With the return to the nun's circumstances the narrative is renewed. This stanza typifies the poem's movements between lyric and narrative, private and public concerns, and the dramatic interchange between them. Stanza twenty-four possesses the structure of the poem in miniature :

Away in the loveable west,
 On a pastoral forehead of Wales,
 I was under a roof here, I was at rest,
 And they the prey of the gales;
 She to the black-about air, to the breaker, the thickly
 Falling flakes, to the throng that catches and quails
 Was calling 'O Christ, Christ, come quickly' :
 The cross to her she calls Christ to her, christens her
 wild-worst Best.

The next three stanzas examine the meaning of the nun's words before her vision of Christ is described. The speaker in analysing the nun's words reverts from his function as narrator to his function as meditative analyst and preacher-like expositor of Christian mysteries.

In stanza twenty-five the meditative speaker asks three questions about the nun's cry in stanza twenty-four, "'O Christ, Christ, come quickly.'" The speaker seeks to discover the spiritual grounds upon which her utterance was based. He asks the Holy Spirit ("arch and original Breath") to help him to interpret the nun's meaning. Returning to the practice at the poem's opening, the speaker invokes and holds dialogue with

God :

The majesty! what did she mean ?
 Breathe, arch and original Breath.
 Is it love in her of the being as her lover had been ?
 Breathe, body of lovely Death.
 They were else-minded then, altogether, the men
 Woke thee with a We are perishing in the weather of
 Gennesareth
 Or is it that she cried for the crown then,
 The keener to come at the comfort for feeling the combating
 keen ?

The speaker first asks the Holy Spirit to tell him what the nun meant, and moves from question to invocation. He then asks whether it was her love of being in a Christ-like situation which led her to call upon Him. He invokes the "body of lovely Death," (presumably the crucified Lord) to help him here. Briefly resuming his narrative function he then reveals that the men on board were not as mindful of Christ in the face of disaster as the nun was. Yet the passengers' call for aid awoke the nun to play her heroic role. The speaker concludes by asking whether it was the pressure of the conflict that made the nun anxious to receive the comfort of divine succour.

Stanza twenty-six presents in rather complex syntax a contrast between the immediate storm and a paradise, expressed in terms of natural images, to which, perhaps, the nun aspires. Is it a vision of heaven even beyond the possibility of poetic depiction that cheers the nun in the midst of her conflict? The speaker continues his meditative and analytical functions here as he tries to plumb the depths of the nun's psychological state at the height of the storm. Through sympathetic imagination, the speaker tries to understand what passed in the nun's mind during her highest moments of anguish. He wants to know what the nun would think of as. "the heaven of desire :"

For how to the heart's cheering
 The down-dugged ground-hugged grey
 Hovers off, the jay-blue heavens appearing
 Of pied and peeled May!
 Blue-beating and hoary-glow height; or night, still higher,
 With belled fire and the moth-soft Milky Way,
 What by your measure is the heaven of desire,
 The treasure never eyesight got, nor was ever guessed what
 for the hearing ?

The images used to depict the spring-time alternative to the seascape of the storm anticipate the celebratory sonnets of 1877, poems like "Pied Beauty" and "The Starlight Night." Although he does his best to present it, the speaker wishes to know at the end of the stanza how the nun herself would measure and envision heaven. He does all he can to imagine the perfection she would desire, but finds it ultimately impossible to completely penetrate her mind.

At the opening of stanza twenty-seven the speaker rejects the possible reasons, explored in the previous two stanzas, why the nun cried so eagerly upon Christ. "No, but it was not these." It was not a love of martyrdom for its own sake, a need for immediate aid or a desire for a May-like paradise that led her to call upon the Lord. It was, the speaker believes, dissatisfaction with the strains of earthly life, and a true appreciation of the meaning of the Passion, achieved through careful meditation, that led the nun to Christ at the height of her distress:

No, but it was not these.
 The jading and jar of the cart,
 Time's tasking, it is fathers that asking for ease
 Of the sodden-with-its-sorrowing heart,
 Not danger, electrical horror; then further it finds
 The appealing of the Passion is tenderer in prayer apart:
 Other, I gather, in measure her mind's
 Burden, in wind's burly and beat of endragonèd seas.

The nun did not call on Christ because of any fear of the storm itself, but out of her ascetic rejection of the world of the flesh, and out of her understanding of the meaning of the

Passion gained through a life of prayer. It is these things, and not the possibilities discussed earlier, that held the nun's attention at the point of crisis. Spiritual insight was achieved by a heart over-burdened by life. In these three stanzas (twenty-five to twenty-seven) the speaker has done his best to imagine the state of the nun's mind. He finally believes that she achieved a sense of Christ through the efficacy of meditation ("prayer apart"). The speaker seeks grace in the same way. He seeks to understand God through understanding another Christian soul who responded to Him completely. The speaker's power of sympathetic identification is used throughout the poem not only to render the force of the storm but also to understand the nun and God as well as himself.

Stanza twenty-eight depicts the nun's climactic vision. The speaker dramatizes it brilliantly through the use of a kind of lyric aphasia that expresses his inability to present the vision :

But how shall I . . . make me room there:
Reach me a . . . Fancy, come faster --
Strike you the sight of it ? look at it loom there,
Thing that she . . . There then! the Master,
Iipse, the only one, Christ, King, Head.

As Elisabeth Schneider argues so persuasively, the lines depict an actual vision of Christ allowed to the nun which is, as Miss Schneider says, "a supernatural event, not an ambiguous 'vision' or a hallucination."²¹ What is also significant is that the speaker of the poem himself appears to be granted the vision that the nun attains. At last, he coincides with the mind that he has, through the previous three stanzas, tried

²¹Elisabeth W. Schneider, "The Wreck of the Deutschland: A New Reading," PMLA, LXXXI (1966), 117. --hereafter cited as Schneider, PMLA.

so hard to understand. The speaker achieves identity with the nun by sharing her vision. The opening half of the stanza confirms decisively the speaker's role as celebrant who in this instance cannot find the words with which to celebrate. Yet what could be a more subtle way of dramatizing the ineffable than by making it appear inexpressible? Control, rather than hysteria, is necessary to exploit the possibilities of rhetorical strategies like this. The stanza closes with a more articulate celebration of God, more articulate because no longer concerned with unrealizable vision:

He was to cure the extremity where he had cast her;
Do, deal, lord it with living and dead;
Let him ride, her pride, in his triumph, despatch and have
done with his doom there.

The poem's climactic twenty-eighth stanza with its brilliant registration of vision is followed by reflection and celebration on the speaker's part. The speaker moves again between private meditation and public testimony as he grasps the importance of the nun's heroic integrity. The poem moves into its final round of Catholic celebrations. The tragic possibilities of the storm have been overridden by Christ's arrival in response to the nun's request. In the face of disaster the nun took the correct course of action and the speaker rejoices:

Ah! there was a heart right!
There was single eye!
Read the unshapeable shock night
And knew the who and the why;
Wording it how but by him that present and past,
Heaven and earth are word of, worded by? --
The Simon Peter of a soul! to the blast
Tarpeian-fast, but a blown beacon of light.

From celebrating the nun in stanza twenty-nine, the speaker turns in stanza thirty to address and celebrate Christ, the nun's master and lover. The nun's victory alone would provoke a heavenly feast, but December 8, the day after the

drowning of the nuns, is the actual day of the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Divine intervention and the human calendar appropriately coincide :

Jesu, heart's light,
 Jesu, maid's son,
 What was the feast followed the night
 Thou hadst glory of this nun ? --
 Feast of the one woman without stain.
 For so conceived, so to conceive thee is done;
 But here was heart-throe, birth of a brain,
 Word, that heard and kept thee and uttered thee outright.

Mary conceived Christ in her womb and the nun conceived him in her mind. The speaker in celebrating Christ and the nun returns to his technique of direct address to God which opened the poem. The difference, at this stage of the poem, is that his tone of voice is confidently public. After an initial record of struggle and conversion, the poem takes an increasingly messianic direction and in this respect mirrors the movement of Hopkins's own Jesuit training. From a basis of keenly sought self-understanding the novice prepares himself for active ministry in the world. "The Wreck of the Deutschland," in its movement from an account of private experience to a fully public articulation of it, provides a poetic rendering of the movement simultaneously occurring in Hopkins's life.²²

In stanza thirty-one the poem's celebratory movement is briefly curtailed. The nun has achieved union with Christ, but what of the other passengers, non-Catholics or Catholics

²² Thus, in his "Dominical" sermon of March 11, 1877 Hopkins said, "I speak of what I know in myself, and it may be something of the same is true in you." Sermons and Devotional Writings, p. 230. In this sense the poem is "a song of myself" which is designed to have a particular effect upon its audience.

that died unconfessed ? The speaker asks his heart to mourn for them. Then he reconsiders and sees that providence working through the nun may well have converted the passengers, and turned the shipwreck into a divine harvest of souls. Again we are given two images, shipwreck and harvest, between which the poem moves. From physical shipwreck to spiritual harvest is the road the speaker and the nun travel. We, like the storm-tossed passengers of the Deutschland, are implicitly, and often directly, invited to travel it too :

Well, she has thee for the pain, for the
 Patience; but pity of the rest of them!
 Heart, go and bleed at a bitterer vein for the
 Comfortless unconfessed of them --
 No not uncomforted: lovely-felicitous Providence
 Finger of a tender of, O of a feathery delicacy, the breast
 of the
 Maiden could obey so, be a bell to, ring of it, and
 Startle the poor sheep back! is the shipwreck then a harvest,
 does tempest carry the grain for thee ?

The stanza opens with the meditative speaker addressing himself. He then speaks specifically to his "heart," and because of the earlier, divine ordination of his centre of feeling he is provoked to reconsider. Is there really any need to mourn ? His heart makes him think of the harvesting and shepherding work of divine providence. Its finger worked on himself, and on the nun. Why should it not have worked upon the passengers as well ? From addressing himself at the opening of the stanza, the speaker closes by addressing God, and employs the biblical imagery appropriate to Him, "is the shipwreck then a harvest, does tempest carry the grain for thee ?"

His realization of the working of providence turns, in stanza thirty-two, into a paean of praise directly addressed to God.²³ The celebratory testimony is a personal one presented

²³As Peter Milward, S.J. notes, "As at the end of the first part, so at the end of the second part, the poet makes a transition to the final doxology, or hymn of praise, through consideration of God's salvific will and providence." A Commentary on G. M. Hopkins' *The Wreck of the Deutschland* (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1968), p. 144.

by the speaker in a first person singular voice :

I admire thee, master of the tides,
 Of the Yore-flood, of the year's fall;
 The recurb and the recovery of the gulf's sides,
 The girth of it and the wharf of it and the wall;
 Stanching, quenching ocean of a motionable mind;
 Ground of being, and granite of it: past all
 Grasp God, throned behind
 Death with a sovereignty that heeds but hides, bodes but
 abides.

God controls both cataclysmic events like Noah's flood and the seasonal fall of the year. He is complete master of the sea and thus controller of storms and wrecks; God is throned behind Death. The stanza's last line re-expresses the poem's central paradox. God, although he "hides" from us, takes "heed" of the human condition; and although he "bodes" threateningly in storms he "abides" in them and in their outcome. This is the poem's fundamental assertion. Although God may destroy us physically he offers us spiritual salvation :

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

Stanza thirty-two contains a personal celebration, but this stanza (thirty-three), reassuming a preacher-like tone, attempts to demonstrate the ways in which God is available to all and can help everyone. In the sea of destructive time God is an ark. The allegorical image of the ship of the soul is subtly recapitulated here. God is an ark for those who will listen to Him and for the spiritually errant and undecided ("the lingerer"). He asserts His love like the unseen section of an iceberg that moves into the soul at a level lower than death and darkness. This image has astonishing power. Even for those who seem "past-prayer," who are locked in the prison of

themselves, or oblivious souls, who can only bring themselves to repent at the last breath of life, God offers a vein of spiritual life. These qualities should make Christ (and here the speaker assumes a first person plural identification with his audience): "Our passion-plungèd giant risen," who as messenger of his "compassionate" father strides through the storm of life. More precisely the storms of life are the moving feet of Christ who is present in pain as well as love. Again in stanzas thirty-two and thirty-three we see the poem's characteristic movement from private assertion to public and messianic assurance of divine power.

The poem concludes with celebrations of, and prayers addressed to, Christ and the nun. The speaker assumes the function of spokesman for his audience, and he offers an earnest hope that Britain will be reconverted to Roman Catholicism. In the penultimate thirty-fourth stanza he praises Christ and invokes Him. The speaker re-emphasizes Christ's mercy. Christ, in the speaker's view, is now the light of the world and "not a lightning of fire hard-hurled." He is the dispenser of "A released shower" of baptismal and sanctifying holy water, and no longer the author of storms :

Now burn, new born to the world,
 Double-naturèd name,
 The heaven-flung, heart-fleshed, maiden-furled
 Miracle-in-Mary-of-flame,
 Mid-numberèd he is three of the thunder-throne!
 Not a dooms-day dazzle in his coming nor dark as he came;
 Kind, but royally reclaiming his own;
 A released shower, let flash to the shire, not a lightning
 of fire hard-hurled.

The last stanza expresses a general affirmation of Christ's omnipotence; and the speaker prays to the nun to intercede for his audience. As spokesman, the speaker employs a first person plural voice and reveals his hope for the reconversion of his country. Hopkins's intense patriotism joins with his equally

intense Catholicism at the poem's coda:

Dame, at our door
Browned, and among our shoals,
Remember us in the roads, the heaven-haven of the
reward. 24

The speaker emerges as spokesman for the British people whose breach of nautical integrity allowed the death of the nuns and the other passengers.²⁵ The nun is asked to remember the British people and participate in the speaker's wish for national reconversion :

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

I cannot agree with Elisabeth Schneider that the last line of the poem constitutes a failure of poetic execution.²⁶ The six accumulating genitives of the last line enforce conclusively the essential link between God and the audience for and to whom the poet speaks.

As usual, the movement from the "I" of stanza thirty-two to the "our" of the poem's last stanza is subtly achieved by a characteristic movement from private to public speech developed in stanza thirty-three where God's mercy is depicted as permanently available to the speaker's audience.

²⁴As Francis Noel Lees points out, "In this prayer a Victorian's patriotism (elsewhere in Hopkins made very plain) is combined with the natural wish of the pastor." Lees, pp.10-11.

²⁵See Norman Weyand, S.J., "The Historical Basis of 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' and 'The Loss of the Eurydice'," "Appendix," in Immortal Diamond: Studies in Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. Norman Weyand, S.J. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1949), pp. 353-374. Weyand provides accounts of the wreck from The Times which reveal that insufficient help was offered to the foundering ship.

²⁶Schneider, PMLA, 119.

Hopkins's struggle in his early poems to achieve a fully flexible poetic voice with which to articulate lyric and narrative concerns is completely overcome in "The Wreck of the Deutschland." Here he succeeds in fusing the potentially divergent voices of anguished soul, preacher, narrator and celebrant into a fully embodied dramatic speaker whose achieved status depends upon the ease with which he moves from a personal to a public expressive mode; and in doing so helps to give structural coherence to a poem in which he occupies a continuously central position. So fully embodied and articulated is the experience dramatized in the poem that it separates itself from any debilitating personal concerns and attains the universal relevance and structural solidity shared by the highest art. In speaking of "The Wreck of the Deutschland" we no longer speak as Bridges once did of "a great dragon folded in the gate to forbid all entrance,"²⁷ but of the cornerstone or better still the foundation of Hopkins's considerable poetic achievement.

²⁷ See Gardner, I, 40, who quotes Bridges, Poems, 2nd ed., p. 104.

CHAPTER III

THE WIMPLING WING

We attain to heaven by using this world well, though it is to pass away; we perfect our nature, not by undoing it, but by adding to it what is more than nature, and directing it towards aims higher than its own.

-- John Henry Newman, The Idea of a University

In "The Wreck of the Deutschland" Hopkins succeeded in creating a coherent, yet versatile, speaker. Through the controlled interchange between urgent subjective concerns, and a dramatic realization of those concerns, he constructed a speaker able to move freely between the varying roles of anguished soul, preacher, narrator and celebrant. In the creative elation that followed "The Wreck of the Deutschland," in 1877, he concentrated on exploring two of those roles: the role of celebrant and the role of preacher.

The first poem to follow "The Wreck of the Deutschland" was written in celebration of the 25th year of the Bishop of Shrewsbury's episcopate, the anniversary of which occurred on July 28, 1876. The poem was an occasional poem and as Bridges notes, "was published with a sermon by Father John Morris, S.J., on the same occasion."¹ The speaker is a first person plural spokesman whose function is to address the bishop and celebrate his twenty-five years of episcopal care. Although the poem is a simple lyric of praise, its public level is announced by its prefatory dedication "To James First Bishop of Shrewsbury on the 25th year of his Episcopate July 28, 1876," and by the poem's opening rhetorical question:

¹See Poems, p. 263.

Though no high-hung bells or din
 Of braggart bugles cry it in --
 What is sound? Nature's round
 Makes the Silver Jubilee.

The four stanzas that follow reveal the speaker's joy at the festive occasion he celebrates :

Five and twenty years have run
 Since sacred fountains to the sun
 Sprang, that but now were shut,
 Showering Silver Jubilee.

Feasts, when we shall fall asleep,
 Shrewsbury may see others keep;
 None but you this her true,
 This her Silver Jubilee.

The transitory existence of the speaker and his audience is used to highlight the bishop's attainment. Although the occasion grows out of an extended passage of time, there is no cause for sorrow :

Not today we need lament
 Your wealth of life is some way spent:
 Toil has shed round your head
 Silver but for Jubilee.

Then for her whose velvet vales
 Should have pealed with welcome, Wales,
 Let the chime of a rhyme
 Utter Silver Jubilee.

Compared to "The Wreck of the Deutschland" the poem is somewhat wooden and conventional, which suggests that for Hopkins to write successful occasional poetry an inner need had to accompany any occasion he was required to celebrate. However, the concluding image of the "velvet vales" of Wales anticipates the celebrations of God and nature which followed this poem in 1877.

From celebrating a bishop, Hopkins moves in "Penmaen Pool" to celebrating a place. Again the poem is prefaced by a dedication, "For the Visitors' Book at the Inn," which indicates its occasional or public nature. It is dated August, 1876.² The poem is Horatian in style. It praises the joys

²See Poems, p. 263.

and peace of Penmaen Pool in a similar fashion to the way in which Horace praises the qualities of his Sabine country retreat. The speaker invites his reader to come and partake of aspects of the place that he has learned to love. His function is to celebrate Penmaen Pool by revealing its qualities to his reader :

Who long for rest, who look for pleasure
 Away from counter, court, or school
 O where live well your lease of leisure
 But here at, here at Penmaen Pool ?

You'll dare the Alp ? you'll dart the skiff ?
 Each sport has here its tackle and tool:
 Come, plant the staff by Cadair cliff;
 Come, swing the sculls of Penmaen Pool.

In the poem's middle six stanzas the speaker ceases to address the reader explicitly. Instead, he conducts him upon a guided tour in which he describes the place's many qualities, often asking himself questions about it which he immediately answers. This technique is employed both in stanza three and stanza seven :

What's yonder ? Grizzled Dyphwys dim:
 The triple-hummocked Giant's Stool,
 Hoar messmate, hobs and nobbs with him
 To halve the bowl of Penmaen Pool.

.

But what's to see in stormy weather,
 When grey showers gather and gusts are cool ? --
 Why, raindrop-roundels looped together
 That lace the face of Penmaen Pool.

The variety of the place is established by the speaker's assurance that it affords pleasure in all weathers and seasons. Finally, Hopkins gives the poem structural symmetry by returning in the last two stanzas to the technique with which the poem opens. The speaker again addresses the reader directly and renews his invitation.³ As in some of the early religious poems,

³As Mariani amusingly remarks, "If he had not become a priest, Hopkins would certainly have made a fine travel agent." Mariani, p. 77.

the speaker is both beckoner and celebrant:

And ever, if bound here hardest home,
You've parlour-pastime left and (who'll
Not honour it?) ale like goldy foam
That frocks an oar in Penmaen Pool.

Then come who pine for peace or pleasure
Away from counter, court, or school,
Spend here your measure of time and treasure
And taste the treats of Penmaen Pool.

The Jesuit novices of St. Beuno's spent their holidays at the house in which Hopkins wished to leave his poem. "Penmaen Pool" expresses a joy that Hopkins felt personally, and wished to share with others. The desire to share consolation and joy that we find expressed in "The Wreck of the Deutschland" is present again here.

The ten sonnets that follow these two poems of 1876 were all written in the late winter, spring and summer of 1877.⁴ This was Hopkins's most intense and joyful period of creative life.⁵ The first of these poems, "God's Grandeur," was begun in February, 1877. The octave of the poem is spoken

⁴I have accepted Gardner and MacKenzie's chronological arrangement of these poems. Mariani offers a different chronological arrangement based upon growing rhythmic experimentation. See Mariani, pp. 77-90.

⁵Considering the detailed realization of natural settings that these poems present, it is interesting to discover that shortly before embarking upon them Hopkins delivered a paper to the St. Beuno's College essay society on "The composition of place in the Spiritual Exercises." See Alfred Thomas, S.J., Hopkins the Jesuit: The Years of Training (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 173 -- hereafter cited as Thomas. This confirms the growing recognition of the important influence of the Exercises upon Hopkins's poetry. Records of the essay society reveal that Hopkins maintained, "1° the composition was always of a real, never of a fictitious place -- 2° it is not principally intended to keep the mind from wandering or to assist imagination. -- 3° Its true object is to make the Exercitant present in spirit at the scenes, persons, etc. so that they may really act on him and he on them." Thomas, p. 178, n. 3. The essay was delivered on April 28, 1877. At least four of the 1877 sonnets were written the next month, in May.

in the assertive and judicial tones of a preacher. We have already encountered this kind of voice in "The Wreck of the Deutschland." It is in the sestet that the speaker emerges as a celebrant. However, the poem's opening assertion assumes a celebrative awe, since it is spoken with ringing conviction:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
 It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
 It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
 Crushed.

God is omnipotent, but man, the speaker continues with preacher-like disdain, has blighted the creation. However, man can never do this completely, since God is so much more powerful than he is, and continually reasserts His divine superiority. Even so, the preacher-like speaker is clearly annoyed by human wantonness. "Why do men then now not reckon his rod? / Generations have trod, have trod, have trod." Repetition asserts the willful stubbornness of human blindness to divine mandates:

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

In the sestet all this is reversed. Despite the lapses of man, nature continues to express and reaffirm God's presence. The speaker reveals his celebratory awe by the use of ejaculatory notations like "Oh" and "ah!" which are characteristic features of these sonnets. The poem's movement, from concern over human weakness to affirmation of divine power, is similar to the movement of "The Wreck of the Deutschland." At this stage, Hopkins was clearly filled with a sense of spiritual certainty, "And for all this, nature is never spent; / There lives the dearest freshness deep down things." The discovery of this "freshness" was firmly articulated in the Journal discussed in chapter two, and we find its full poetic realization here:

And though the last lights off the black West went
 Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs --
 Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
 World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

It is significant that in these sonnets the speaker's actual presence in the poems is minimal. He is so caught up with his sense of God's presence, and his desire to celebrate it, that he loses all self-concern in fulfilling his laudatory function.⁶ What is most remarkable about "God's Grandeur," when we compare it to Hopkins's early religious poems, is the assurance and directness with which the speaker expresses himself. Years of meditation, close observation of nature and self, and the writing of "The Wreck of the Deutschland," all contributed their part to the arrival of this new and confident poetic voice.

In "The Starlight Night," which, like "God's Grandeur," was begun in February, 1877, the speaker emerges as a director of his audience's response.⁷ At the opening of the sestet, he asks a question on his audience's behalf which he then proceeds to answer. Confidence, in the handling of this difficult technique, is again evident here. The speaker, as in "Penmaen Pool," invites his reader to participate, but this invitation

⁶ As Mariani suggests, "Hopkins is equating ontologically, not pantheistically or even analogically, the rising sun with the glorious manifestation of the Triune God in the Person of the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete who descended in the shape of a dove over Christ at his baptism in the Jordan, and who appeared in the form of tongues of flame on Pentecost Sunday." Mariani, p. 95.

⁷ W. A. M. Peters, S.J. finds Hopkins's technique here a little brusque. "To impress us with the beauty of the moonlit night and to make us share his enthusiasm, he makes no appeal whatever to the intellect through a reasoned exposition of how and why he is himself so moved by this beauty in nature; he endeavours to infect us with his own joy, so he buttonholes the reader." See Peters, p. 74. In my view the technique is extremely effective. As Mariani says the speaker is "like a good auctioneer." Mariani, p. 99.

involves a more total attempt to grasp his reader's response. Also, as in "God's Grandeur," the speaker celebrates God through celebrating His creation. The starlight night, that the speaker beckons his reader to observe and rejoice in, is also: "charged with the grandeur of God." Repetition and exclamation reveal the speaker's awed rapture:

Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!
 O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!
 The bright boroughs, the circle-citadels there!

Rejoiced in, God's creation takes on human and magical characteristics :

Down in dim woods the diamond delves! the elves'-eyes!
 The grey lawns cold where gold, where quickgold lies!
 Wind-beat whitebeam! airy abeles set on a flare!
 Flake-doves sent floating forth at a farmyard scare! --
 Ah well! it is all a purchase, all is a prize.

The octave concludes with the realization that this kind of perception of the natural world is both a reward, and something which must be paid for. As the sestet reveals, the forms of nature are outward forms of an inner condition. Perceived as beautiful, perceived in human or magical terms, perceived as replete with divine presence, nature, for the speaker, becomes sacramental. Harvesting natural beauty means turning it into Christian grace. What inscape means for Hopkins is the full perception of God behind the forms of His creation. The created world is a medium through which man can perceive his creator.

Thus, as the sestet opens, the speaker asks his reader to "Buy then! bid then!" On behalf of his reader and himself he asks "What?" The answer is "-- Prayer, patience, alms, vows." Equipped with these aids to grace, the reader is again asked to observe the natural world, and discover the ways in which it leads him to Christ:

Look, look: a May-mess, like on orchard boughs!
 Look! March-bloom, like on mealed-with-yellow shallows!
 These are indeed the barn; withindoors house
 The shocks, This piece-bright paling shuts the spouse
 Christ home, Christ and his mother and all his hallows.

The natural world is a barn within which Christ's presence can be found. Correct spiritual perception of the outer world will lead to an inner harvest for man, who will see Christ in it, and bring Him home to his own mind. "The Starlight Night" reverses the procedure of "God's Grandeur" in which man is admonished and then God celebrated. In "The Starlight Night" the speaker first celebrates the beauty of the created world and then advises man to partake of the rewards it offers. The tone of address in "The Starlight Night" is more intimate than the preacher-like tone of the octave of "God's Grandeur." The speaker of "The Starlight Night" is more like a father confessor speaking directly into his listener's ear.

In "Spring," written in May, 1877, the speaker begins by celebrating the season. He ends by asking a question about the season's meaning. The combination of celebrant and spiritual director is similar to the use of these roles in both "God's Grandeur" and "The Starlight Night." As always in Hopkins, the forms of nature are felt to contain spiritual meanings if properly perceived. We may rejoice in spring, but we should also realize that this transitory season warns us to give everything to God while we are young, and before the best fruits of our lives are soured with sin. As in "The Starlight Night," the speaker seeks to capture his reader's attention at a high point of identification. Both poems are extremely rhetorical in this respect, and have an undoubtedly palpable design upon their readers. Actually it is Christ who is asked in the final tercet to gather up man before he becomes sinful. But these final lines are subtly ambiguous, in a way that forces the reader to feel that he too should

actively seek Christ.⁸

The limpid celebration of spring in the octave contains a reworking of images from both "The Wreck of the Deutschland" and the 1866-1875 Journal. The blue of the heavens, which the speaker is able to perceive even in such minute objects as thrushes' eggs, recalls "the jay-blue heavens . . . / Of pied and peeled May!" of the twenty-sixth stanza of "The Wreck of the Deutschland." The flinging lambs of the eighth line of the poem recall the reference to lambs on page 206 of the Journal in which Hopkins observed that "They toss and toss: it is as if it were the earth that flung them, not themselves." This is just one of many examples of the poetic transformation that Journal observations underwent. The poem's opening assertion, "Nothing is so beautiful as Spring --," is designedly rhetorical since it is later implicitly refuted. Christ is, of course, more beautiful than spring since he is the creator of the season. The octave contains one of Hopkins's most beautiful and subtle realizations of the natural world:

Nothing is so beautiful as Spring --
 When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;
 Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush
 Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring
 The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing;
 The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush
 The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush
 With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.

It is hard to believe that the young poet of the early poems could have remade himself so completely; but this was not, as we have noticed earlier, an overnight occurrence. It was the result of twelve years of creative and personal self-discipline.

⁸ Mariani also comments upon the "syntactical ambiguity" of these lines which he suggests "precisely reflects the interaction between Christ and man." Mariani, p. 101.

Having celebrated the season of spring by bringing it completely to life, the speaker stops at the opening of the sestet to ask: "What is all this juice and all this joy?" His answer is that spring is a perennial assertion of the continued presence of Edenic beauty in the world. "A strain of earth's sweet being in the beginning / In Eden garden." The speaker ends by asking Christ to garner in human beauty and innocence, which expresses Him most aptly, before it turns sour. As suggested earlier, a kind of "trompe d'oeil" effect is created, since the reader may feel initially that he rather than Christ is being addressed. However, to insist upon the presence of this meaning would be to misread the poem. I am simply arguing for the possibility of a subtle rhetorical effect. "Syntactical ambiguity" reinforces this point. The verbs "--Have, get" are imperatives directed to "Christ," yet "Christ" could also be the object of them :

Have, get, before it cloy,

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

The celebrator of spring ends by asking the creator of the season to harvest for Himself the early fruits of human innocence. Although it begins in rejoicing, the poem ends in a prayer. Hopkins always felt the tenuousness of innocence, and the way it seemed to be under constant threat in a fallen and transitory world.

Donald McChesney has described "In the Valley of the Elwy," again written in May, 1877, as "a priestly meditation on fallen mankind."⁹ He is right to stress the priestly

⁹McChesney, p. 61. Besides this, the poem provides us with a classic example of the influence of the tripartite structure of The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola upon Hopkins' poetry, "the evocation of a mental image of a physical place, a meditation on the spiritual significance of that image, and a colloquy or personal prayer to God asking for the spiritual good that has been meditated on." Mariani, p. xxiii.

nature of the poem's speaker. The first eleven lines of the poem are, indeed, meditative or reflective, but, like "Spring," "In the Valley of the Elwy" ends in prayer. Once more the speaker feels the instability of human good. Although able to celebrate the beauties of Wales, he is forced to call upon God to assist mankind. Besides this, "In the Valley of the Elwy" is a more personal and less ecstatic poem than the three previous sonnets. The meditative speaker introduces actual memories. At the opening of the sestet he celebrates the natural world of Wales, yet this leads him to end his poem with a prayer. The speaker's celebratory role is less pronounced in this poem. His meditative voice gains ascendancy: "I remember a house where all were good / To me, God knows, deserving no such thing." As in later poems, the speaker stresses his own limitations. The inner consistency of Hopkins's poetic canon depends upon anticipatory notes like these. The poem continues:

Comforting smell breathed at very entering,
Fetched fresh, as I suppose, off some sweet wood.

That cordial air made those kind people a hood
All over, as a bevy of eggs the mothering wing
Will, or mild nights the new morsels of Spring:
Why, it seemed of course; seemed of right it should.

Human fallibility, it seems, is held off, and human good protected by beautiful natural surroundings. This allows the speaker to celebrate Wales, even though he qualifies his celebration almost immediately:

Lovely the woods, water, meadows, combes, vales,
All the air things wear that build this world of Wales;
Only the inmate does not correspond.

Although the speaker is able to praise people who were good to him, he still feels that man is generally at fault. As in "The Wreck of the Deutschland," God is the completing power who can turn human weakness and error into strength. The poem

ends in a prayer:

God, lover of souls, swaying considerate scales,
Complete thy creature dear O where it fails,
Being mighty a master, being a father and fond.

The final image recapitulates the image of God in the twenty-first stanza of "The Wreck of the Deutschland" whose "unchallenging poisoning palms were weighing the worth." In "In the Valley of the Elwy" celebration is considerably muted. Indeed, it is superseded by reflection and prayer.¹⁰

"The Sea and the Skylark," also written in May, 1877, presents once again a contrast between natural beauty, represented here by the sea and the skylark, and human frailty. Celebration is once more followed by a meditation upon man's weakness. The effect of this is to qualify severely the celebratory note on which the poem opens. The speaker shifts from a first person singular voice in the octave to a first person plural voice in the sestet. This change of stance is connected with the movement from celebration to moral concern. In the octave the speaker expresses his individually perceived joy, and in the sestet he acts as a spokesman, employing a first person plural voice in order to impress his moral reflection upon his audience. Thus, the poem moves from lyric celebration to preacher-like moral concern. The poem's speaker possesses two distinct and contrasted functions. His first function is to reveal the beauty and spontaneity of the sea and the skylark by dramatizing their separate, though related, activities, while his second function is to impress upon his audience a

¹⁰ Sensitivity to shifting tones is the best way to appreciate the difference between "celebration" and "prayer" or "meditation" in these poems. The "celebratory" tone is excited and ecstatic, the "prayerful" tone is more sombre, the "meditative" tone more reflective. Throughout, I have sought to provide convincing examples of these contrasting tonalities.

sense of human limitation and weakness. The first quatrain of the poem expresses the sound and movement of the sea, and the second the song of the skylark:

On ear and ear two noises too old to end
 Trench-- right, the tide that ramps against the shore;
 With a flood or a fall, low lull-off or all roar,
 Frequenting there while moon shall wear and wend.

Left hand, off land, I hear the lark ascend,
 His rash-fresh re-winded new-skeinèd score
 In crisps of curl off wild winch whirl, and pour
 And pelt music, till none's to spill nor spend.

The moral concern of the sestet comes as a considerable surprise after the lyric response to the perpetual freshness and vigour of the natural world:

How these two shame this shallow and frail town!
 How ring right out our sordid turbid time,
 Being pure! We, life's pride and cared-for crown,

Have lost that cheer and charm of earth's past prime:
 Our make and making break, are breaking, down
 To man's last dust, drain fast towards man's first slime.

Close inspection of the sonnets of 1877 reveals the presence in them of two distinct poetic voices: the voice of the speaker as celebrant, and the opposed voice of the speaker as a meditative priest or preacher morally concerned by man's failure to maintain the high position designed for him by God. The celebrative octave and the reflective sestet of "The Sea and the Skylark" clearly reveal these two contrasted voices. Perception and lyric expression of natural beauty lead into a comparison with human frailty. Celebration and moral reflection are stringently juxtaposed in these poems even though they appear, at first sight, to emerge from the same poetic perception. Readers of these sonnets have been too much preoccupied with their realizations of natural beauty to pay sufficient attention to their

expressions of moral concern.¹¹ If we take note of this concern with human frailty, even at this sanguine stage in Hopkins's career, we will not be so surprised by the later sonnets of desolation. Throughout his creative life Hopkins was concerned with the contrast between the beauty of the creation and man's failure to live up to the place God had prepared for him.

"The Windhover," another product of May, 1877, is one of the most frequently discussed poems in English literature. There are over fifty scholarly articles devoted to it.¹² The titles of some of these essays, such as "Once More, 'The Windhover'," "Windhover's Meaning," "'The Windhover': A Further Simplification," suggest earnest endeavours to arrive at a single and satisfactory interpretation of the poem. They also suggest a sense of strain, as though their authors are aware that they are adding to an already prodigious body of commentary among which their own contributions may ultimately be lost. One imagines an eventual thesis that will bring all readings together under some improbable title like, "Fifty-five ways of looking at a windhover."

In his book on Hopkins, Father Boyle suggests that there are three groups of "Windhover" critics: the simpliste, the pagan and the Christian.¹³ I think it would be more useful to say that there are basically two views of the poem. One sees it simply as a poem about a bird, and the other

¹¹Hunter, for example, states that "Taken together, they [the 1877 sonnets] make a sustained expression of the goodness of life and God, which is great Romantic poetry." Hunter, p. 75. More perceptively, Norman H. MacKenzie notes that only three of these poems "escape from sadness." Hopkins, p. 50.

¹²For a representative selection of these see John Pick, Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Windhover (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1969), which contains in whole or in part over twenty essays on the poem. A special section of my bibliography lists items on "The Windhover."

¹³Boyle, p. 91.

believes that it contains a Christian meaning. My own view is that these two, frequently opposed, perspectives are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Their present exclusiveness depends upon how the poem is read; whether independent of all Hopkins's other poems and writings, or contextually. If the reader simply dons his "new critical" spectacles and casts all knowledge of Hopkins and Hopkins's other poetry from his mind he will probably see the poem as only a poem about a bird. This view is quite legitimate. It is the view that one would initially and most honestly present to a class of students who were reading the poem alone, or for the first time. However, when one reads the poem in the context of Hopkins's other poems and writings its Christian meaning, the fact that the bird is seen to be analogous to Christlikeness, becomes insistent to the point that it cannot be denied. What I think is necessary is "a reconciliation of opposites," an open admission that there are two ways of reading the poem dependent upon the situation in which one reads it.

In both readings the speaker of the poem plays a crucial, yet in each a different, part. For one of the greatest causes of confusion springs from who the speaker addresses, both within the poem itself and overall. Who is the speaker's audience both inside and outside the poem is a question that requires further consideration. Thus, it is necessary to examine both possible interpretations of the poem, and analyse the speaker's function in each. It is essential to have the poem before us. For the moment we must pretend that we have never seen it or heard of Hopkins and his other work before. Here is Hopkins's final version of "The Windhover:"

The Windhover:

To Christ our Lord

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
 dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in
 his riding
 Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
 High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
 In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
 As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and
 gliding
 Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
 Stirred for a bird, -- the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!
 Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
 Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
 Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!
 No wonder of it: shéer plóid makes plough down sillion
 Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
 Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

The title of the poem, "The Windhover," states the poem's subject. The poet is primarily concerned with a bird. We then come to the poem's dedication To Christ our Lord. The dedication does not necessarily mean that the poem is addressed to Christ, but it might. We have to bear the possibility in mind, since dedicated poems are frequently addressed to the person to whom they are dedicated. We must see if the evidence of the poem bears this out. At any rate, as audience we have to decide in reading the poem whether its speaker is speaking to us directly or whether we "overhear" a poem that is primarily spoken to Christ. In either case we are finally addressed since poetry is an act of communication. These questions borne in mind we proceed to what the speaker says; and in deciding about the nature of his function we must also be alert to how he presents himself in the poem.

The poem opens with the speaker's "I." "I caught this morning," I perceived or grasped the meaning of the darling of the morning, the kingdom of daylight's liege (dauphin, next in line to the throne), "dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon," which makes it clear that the earlier epithets refer at least primarily

to the windhover itself. The activity of the bird as perceived by the speaker is then described. The past tenses of the octave reveal that the speaker's perspective is recollective. He recounts, as in a diary, perhaps in the evening, what he had seen in the morning. The first six and a half lines of the poem provide us with a vivid depiction of the windhover's activity which is addressed either directly or indirectly to us, or to Christ or to the speaker himself as in a diary :

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
 dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in
 his riding
 Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
 High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
 In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
 As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and
 gliding
 Rebuffed the big wind.

Such vivid depiction necessarily informs us about the nature of the poem's speaker, who has clearly been excited by the experience that he takes the trouble to record poetically. For him the bird is a "minion," is a "dauphin." Its activity is intense and creates excitement in the speaker. Its wing excites a religious comparison and is felt to resemble a nun's wimple. The bird is described as in "ecstasy," yet since the bird's feelings cannot actually be known we feel that this attribution on the speaker's part reflects his own ecstatic excitement in observing the bird's motion. This excitement is, of course, further revealed by the ecstatic, alliterative language in which the bird's flight is described. The speaker is then in a state of high excitement which he openly admits at the conclusion of the octave. "My heart in hiding / Stirred for a bird, -- the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!" He confirms for us what we already know from the nature of his descriptive account. Yet he tells us something further about himself. In contrast to the active windhover, the speaker's heart is "in hiding,"

withdrawn, in retreat. When connected with the reference to "wimple" this reference to "in hiding" may imply the speaker's priestly nature. But these references are not sufficiently specific to reach beyond implication. What is important is what we already know, that the speaker's heart was roused by the intense activity of a bird in flight. Subject responded to object.

As we have seen the octave of the poem is presented from a recollective perspective, but in the sestet there is a movement from past to present tense. The speaker either relives his morning experience again, or more likely, lives it more fully now, as he writes. This is rhetoric, of course. The poet creates an "illusion" of present tense experience in the interests of poetic intensity. What is important, however, is that what is now being denoted is not so much outer experience (the experience of perception in the morning) but inner experience. Yet there is reference back. The bird seen in the morning rebuffing the wind now dives. It may have dived in the morning too, but it dives again now. Recollection in tranquility leads here to recreation of, or actual participation in, present experience. The whole thing, of course, is a deliberately controlled poetic effect, an effect of intensification, an act of "bidding" to the speaker's audience:

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

I do not think that "Buckle!" is an imperative. "Brute beauty," the bird's beauty already described, courage and action (the bird's but the speaker's too) -- the ejaculatory "oh" records present excitement -- "pride" (the bird's and the speaker's, we have attribution again, as in the case of "valour"), "plume," a reference back to an aspect of "Brute beauty," also, to "the wimpling wing," "the plume," the feather, here merge or collapse together. A critical moment of internalization is

presented, the act of "catching" as the poet writes the poem. "AND" is an intensive, created typographically, "the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion / Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!" This is simply to say that spiritual experience is more lovely and dangerous than physical or sensational experience. The creative act of art is more exciting and dangerous than the act of perception that forms its subject matter. Hopkins's poem about a windhover is more exciting than actually seeing one.

"O my chevalier!" has three possible referents. It may mean the bird, since the bird has already been compared to a horseman as "he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing." This is taking the term "chevalier" at its most literal level, its meaning as "horseman." It could refer to Christ, here named for the first time within the poem, though possibly implied in "dauphin" too. Christ is the speaker's leader, he may even be the "he" who "rung upon the rein" of the windhover's "wimpling wing." One can see the way in which the Christian implications of the poem, given a viable authority by the poem's dedication begin to clamour for attention even in a strictly independent reading. The last possibility is that "O my chevalier!" could refer to the speaker's heart, now the captain of the speaker's nature, since it stirred in response to the windhover's action. One thinks of the heart's response in other Hopkins's poems. But this is to anticipate. As humble knight (chevalier), the speaker could be the follower of Christ (the dauphin).

And then the final tercet:

No wonder of it: shéer plóð makes plough down sillion
 Shine and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
 Fall gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

The experience, though felt to be extraordinary, the experience of "buckling," of internalizing unification of subject and object, is not really so, "No wonder of it." "Shéer plóð," an effort of pressure like that of "buckling," makes a dull

coloured ploughshare shine with moisture as it breaks the soil. It also makes the moist soil shine. A common analogy is found for the sense of "implosion" that occurred as the speaker "inscaped" the windhover into his own mind. Also, "blue-bleak embers," when they "buckle" in the fire, release a "gold-vermilion" flame. The windhover is similarly a grey and red coloured bird that shows its redness as it dives.¹⁴ The analogies are simple, it is the "ah my dear" that causes trouble as throughout the poem the problem of who is spoken to, how and when, keeps cropping up. Many would feel it excessive for the speaker to call the windhover "ah my dear," but he has already called the bird a "minion." Alternatively, "ah my dear," if we read the dedication as an instruction to anticipate an address to Christ, would very appropriately refer to Christ. Herbert refers to God is this way, but this is to allow external evidence once more. "Ah my dear" does not, I think, as W. S. Johnson suggests, refer to the reader of the poem.¹⁵ It can consistently be attributed to the bird, but personally I feel a sense of considerable strain here. The poem's Christian meaning seems most clamorous at this point. Yet I have sought to suggest, and I hope done so fairly, the way in which the poem can be read simply as the speaker's recollection of his encounter with a bird, which he experiences more deeply as the recollection occurs. In experiencing the bird's "buckling," or diving, more deeply he feels the pressure of a Wordsworthian "spot of time," a moment of high intensity and identification. The speaker's heart "with pleasure fills," but more intensely and more spiritually than Wordsworth's does in "Daffodils." Even read

¹⁴See Mariani, p. 111.

¹⁵Johnson, pp. 95-96. He does consider other possibilities, but prefers this one.

quite independently the poem reveals that the speaker's perception of the windhover affords him a glimpse of an inner and spiritual order.

To read the poem in its proper context as we ultimately have to (poems do not after all exist in "new critical" limbos) brings to full focus its Christian implications and ultimate meaning. We do not even have to insist upon an address to Christ to perceive this. It is simply that throughout his poetry Hopkins seeks spiritual significance in natural experience. Most of the poems that provide "The Windhover's" immediate context (the other sonnets of 1877) reveal examples of this. "The Starlight Night," "God's Grandeur," and "Hurrahing in Harvest" should be enough to make even the most stolid bird-watcher feel that he is clinging to a finally unacceptable interpretation. A strictly bird-watching interpretation is where we begin, but it cannot be where we end with "The Windhover." If the poem's "overthought" is ornithological its "underthought" is Christian. And Hopkins's own terms are most useful to us here for the "heart in hiding," "Buckle," "O my chevalier," "ah my dear," "Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion," point finally, and I think decisively to a Christian interpretation.¹⁶ As we know, from "A Vision of the Mermaids" on Hopkins could never be content with purely sensuous experience; such experience must lead to spiritual perception or else the alchemist in the city's sense of dereliction follows.

A contextual reading of the poem quickly confirms H. M. McLuhan's contention that, "Familiarity with Hopkins soon

¹⁶ See Letters, III, 252-253, for Hopkins's discussion of the workings of "overthought" and "underthought" in poetry.

reveals that each of his poems includes all the rest, such is the close-knit character of his sensibility. A relatively small number of themes and images -- such is the intensity of his perception -- permits him an infinitely varied orchestration. Thus it is really impossible to feel the full impact of "The Windhover" without awareness of the tentacles which its images stretch out into the other poems."¹⁷ W. S. Johnson in his chapter on "The Windhover," does much to furnish the evidence for this claim.¹⁸ I will content myself by concluding with a contextual reading of the poem's speaker.

Excited rhetoric, the references to "wimpling wing" and "heart in hiding,"¹⁹ to "dauphin," "chevalier" and "ah my dear" suggest the nature of the speaker as the priestly celebrant that we have encountered before in Hopkins's poetry: in his early poems, in "The Wreck of the Deutschland," and in other sonnets of 1877. His function is essentially to communicate his response to the windhover both to Christ, in an urgent colloquy, and to his audience, who "overhear" this colloquy. This seems to me to be the most rewarding way to read the poem. Hopkins addresses Christ directly and frequently

¹⁷ Herbert Marshall McLuhan, "The Analogical Mirrors," in *The Kenyon Critics*, p. 26.

¹⁸ See Johnson, ch. 3, who amasses a veritable arsenal of bird references from Hopkins's other poems. Also Thomas P. Harrison, "The Birds of Gerard Manley Hopkins," *SP*, LIV (1957), 448-463.

¹⁹ "Erat subditus illus: the hidden life at Nazareth is the great help to faith for us who must live more or less an obscure contrained, and unsuccessful life." This is Hopkins's own view of his priestly profession. Sermons and Devotional Writings, p. 176.

in his poems, and he does so here. The late dedication of the poem To Christ our Lord early in 1884, and some seven years after the poem was written, clarifies the direction of the speaker's address in the poem that was already implicit.²⁰ Hopkins believed that "The Windhover" was "the best thing I ever wrote."²¹ He wished to present the poem to Christ for this reason. It is hard to imagine that a religious poet like Hopkins would have believed a poem strictly about a bird to be the best poem he had ever written.

The poem, in fact, expresses the speaker's excited perception of the windhover, and also his spiritual response to the bird, who is implicitly seen as an emblem of Christ's activity. When we consider the implication of the word "Buckle" a passage from Hopkins's sermons springs to mind. On November 23, 1879, two and a half years after the poem was written he told his sermon audience about Christ:

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

²⁰For an important discussion of the reason for the addition of the dedication see MacKenzie, Hopkins, pp.56-59.

²¹See Poems, p. 266.

through poverty, through labour, through crucifixion
his majesty of nature more shines. 22

In the poem the speaker begins by dramatizing the literal activities of the bird; but his inner response to these actions is already evident. He quickly associates the bird with its master and creator, Christ, who as God's son, can also lay claim to being "daylight's dauphin" and the darling of the morning. There is nothing exceptional about this, since at moments of heightened awareness Hopkins always perceived the presence of God behind the natural world. What the windhover provides is a meeting point for Christ and the speaker. As St. Bonaventure puts it, "The creatures of the visible world signify the invisible attributes of God, because God is the source, model and last end of every creature, and because every effect points to its cause, every image to its model, every road to its goal."²³ The bird's movements reveal to the speaker Christ's presence behind the natural world; his "buckling," which the speaker relives as he writes, is like a crucifixion in which beauty is spiritualized at the very moment that it is broken. By the end of the octave the speaker has emerged as a priestly person who has responded to Christ's presence behind the world on observing the movements of a windhover. It is this religious response that accounts for the degree of excitement revealed in the octave.

²² Sermons and Devotional Writings, pp. 26-27. I am grateful to Mariani for calling my attention to this passage which seems in its shape and rhythm a virtual prose recapitulation of the poem. Mariani also calls attention here to the fact that like Christ in the world of men the small kestrel was lowest in the class of falcons. He quotes Ronald Bates, "The Windhover," Victorian Poetry, II (1964), 63-64 for this information about falconry. See Mariani, pp. 112-113, n. 52.

²³ Quoted by Pick, p. 54. Hopkins had listened to Refectory readings from St. Bonaventure during 1869. See Thomas, p. 225.

If one accepts that the poem is essentially concerned with inner response to an outer and natural manifestation of divine presence, the sestet becomes comparatively easy to understand. In the first tercet the speaker addresses Christ, whose presence he has felt in the bird's actions. In the second tercet he reflects upon his experience, finds other, and more limited, natural analogies to it, and again addresses Christ. As argued earlier, it is most likely Christ whom the speaker addresses in the sestet. Although a possible reading, "my dear" and even "my chevalier" for the windhover seem excessive, unless the bird had been transformed to something like the status of the holy dove. Perhaps it is a transformation of this kind that the sestet dramatizes. As the speaker inscapes or internalizes a natural observation it becomes a religious perception. At all events Christ's presence, especially in the sestet, must be insisted upon.

The first tercet of the sestet presents the moment of change from natural observation to religious perception. It is a change that the octave has subtly anticipated. Besides, the first tercet can be compared helpfully with the twenty-eighth stanza of "The Wreck of the Deutschland," which also depicts a visionary moment. A similar listing of substantives occurs in line nine of "The Windhover" and line five of "The Wreck of the Deutschland" stanza, and both contain a similar rhythmic effect. The first dramatizes the moment immediately prior to vision, which occurs in line ten, and the second the moment of vision itself, "Ipse, the only one, Christ, King, Head." This is interesting, for in "The Wreck of the Deutschland" stanza the speaker is dramatizing another person's vision, the nun's, while in "The Windhover" he enacts his own. The "brute beauty" of the windhover is sacramentally broken when the speaker

perceives it as an emblem of the "gold-vermilion" of Christ's presence.²⁴ Thus, the speaker is concerned here, as he is again later in "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire . . ." with apocalyptic vision. In the later poem carbon becomes diamond; here blood is changed into gold. "The free-long-looking" of Hopkins's earlier alchemist bears fruit. The embers anticipate the ash that becomes diamond in the later Heraclitean poem.

Clearly, "The Windhover" is the most complex and important of the 1877 sonnets, it is the most complex and, perhaps, the best of all Hopkins's poems. It renders a more profound experience than any of the other 1877 poems seek to dramatize. Here the speaker is not concerned with moral reflection, as he is, for example, after his experience of the sea and the skylark, but with inner illumination. Moral perception of natural beauty (the recognition of its danger and its true meaning) leads to religious vision. There is continuous development through the 1877 sonnets up to the point of vision attained in "The Windhover," in which a significant movement from outer action to internal transformation of that action occurs.²⁵

²⁴Ten years earlier in Devon on August 29, 1867 Hopkins recorded an old woman's vision of doves with blood falling from their beaks which was followed by the appearance of Christ displaying his five wounds. See Journals, p. 154. A similar movement in perception, from a perception of a bird to a perception of Christ's presence occurs in "The Windhover."

²⁵The poem exactly fulfills the requirements of an Ignatian "composition of place" as defined by Hopkins himself in his essay "The composition of place in the Spiritual Exercises." "Its true object is to make the Exercitant present in spirit at the scenes, persons, etc. so that they may really act on him and he on them." See Thomas, p. 178, n. 3. Hopkins enters so fully into the spirit of the windhover that he achieves a perception of its divine significance.

The two predominating interpretations of the poem are not mutually exclusive. A reconciliation of their opposite perspectives is possible once it is understood in what way the poem is being read, whether independently or contextually. An independent reading leads us to the perception that the poem is about a moment of transformation in which ~~sensational~~ experience is spiritualized, in which subject and object join. A contextual reading explains the nature of this experience. Actually an independent reading, at least, implies the meaning that the contextual reading explains, unless we adopt a stringently narrow view of the poem. However, I think, most readers would agree that increased familiarity with the poem reveals that it provides an ample and rewarding demonstration of Hopkins's belief that a poem's meaning should "explode." "One of two kinds of clearness one shd. have -- either the meaning to be felt without effort as fast as one reads or else, if dark at first reading, when once made out to explode."²⁶ "The Windhover" is an explosive poem which also possesses, what is frequently denied, a remarkable clarity. Unfortunately, the critical mountain that sits beside "The Windhover" has often more to tell us about the confused and contradictory procedures of modern criticism than about the poem with which it is supposedly concerned.

"Pied Beauty," written in the summer of 1877, invites the reader to praise God, the father of the world's varied beauties.²⁷ The speaker's celebratory function is ascendant here. His lyric of praise is followed by the simple imperative

²⁶ See Letters, I, 90.

²⁷ Mariani describes the poem as "a prayer, a meditation, a Laus tibi Deus for the variety and individuality of all creation." Mariani, p. 114. In my view the poem would be better and more simply described as a celebratory lyric.

"Praise him." In "Pied Beauty" the speaker is a happy celebrant of God's creation :

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

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

The speaker's presence is unobtrusive; and he does not follow his celebration with moral reflection. Instead, he offers a simple instruction to praise. The result is a limpid celebration of natural beauty. In terms of unity of tone, "Pied Beauty" is one of the most successful of the 1877 sonnets.

"Hurrahing in Harvest," as the title suggests, was written in the early autumn of 1877. An early draft of the poem bears the title "Heart's Hurrahing in Harvest."²⁸ For Hopkins, the heart, as we have seen earlier in "The Wreck of the Deutschland" and "The Windhover," is the centre of religious feeling. References to the heart demand careful attention throughout his poems. Like "The Windhover," "Hurrahing in Harvest" dramatizes an ecstatic response to nature. The poem provides a useful gloss upon the earlier and more complex visionary sonnet, for in it the speaker reveals the need for deep communication between perceiver and perceived object. When such communication is achieved, the result is ecstatic affirmation. "These things, these things [the beautiful objects of nature] were here and but the beholder / Wanting," yet when the beholder responds totally to nature and sees God's presence behind it, "which two [nature and the perceiving heart] when

²⁸ See Poems, p. 269.

once they meet, / The heart rears wings bold and bolder" and responds to God, "And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him off under his feet." As Hopkins himself admitted a year later, "The Hurraing sonnet was the outcome of half an hour of extreme enthusiasm as I walked home alone one day from fishing in the Elwy."²⁹

Like "The Windhover" and "Pied Beauty," "Hurraing in Harvest" is essentially concerned with lyric celebration of God and nature. There is no moral reflection or preacherly concern of the kind that we observed in "God's Grandeur," "The Sea and the Skylark" or "In the Valley of the Elwy." The poem benefits from the absence of these concerns. "Hurraing in Harvest" sounds the primary celebrative note which is dominant in the 1877 sonnets. The speaker employs a first person singular voice, in which he presents his lyric response to the harvest scene before him. As in "The Windhover," the speaker's complete response is brought to life in the poem. This poem, however, dramatizes affirmative joy rather than attained vision. The speaker reveals his "extreme enthusiasm," and clearly feels God's presence behind the natural world. Here he responds to a more generalized scene than that depicted in "The Windhover," where his attention was totally concentrated upon one object. It was totality of concentration that "caught" Christ's presence. Here, the speaker's joy is more widely diffused:

Summer ends now; now, barbarous in beauty, the stooks rise
 Around; up above, what wind-walks! what lovely behaviour
 Of silk-sack clouds! has wilder, wilful-wavier
 Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies ?

²⁹See Poems, p. 269.

We are presented with the shifts of the speaker's perception as he looks first at the autumn landscape, and then up at the sky. Exclamation and question reveal his joyful response, "What wind-walks! what lovely behaviour / Of silk-sack clouds!" and, "has wilder, wilful-wavier / Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?" In the second quatrain, the speaker explicitly refers to his activities of perception. He looks for Christ's presence behind the natural world; and Christ responds to him through it. His eyes and his heart are lifted up:

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour;
And, éyes, héart, what looks, what lips yet gave you a
Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies?

As in the early poem, "The Habit of Perfection," the speaker communes with his own senses, but also, here, with his heart. He asks them if any human looks or lips have ever responded with such complete manifestations of love as Christ does through His created world.

In the sestet, the world emerges as an emblem of Christ's body. Although the speaker is slightly worried about his ability to respond, he finally does so, and discovers a sense of divine rapture:

And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding shoulder
Majestic -- as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet! --
These things, these things were here and but the beholder
Wanting; which two when they once meet,
The heart rears wings bold and bolder
And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him off under his
feet.

Responding to Christ, the heart is elevated, and almost leaves its earthly condition to join him. However, the poem is not one of complete vision. Although the speaker is sufficiently ecstatic to utter a characteristic "O" of rapture, his heart only "half hurls earth for him off under his feet." Nevertheless, this is an important experience, an experience of "extreme

enthusiasm" and religious joy. The poem is one of the most completely affirmative of the 1877 sonnets.

"The Caged Skylark," as its title suggests, initially strikes a more sombre note, and anticipates, in some respects, the later sonnets of desolation. Man's spirit, housed in its fleshly body, is compared to a skylark in a cage. We encounter, once again, Hopkins's sense of human frailty and inadequacy, which strikes a dissonant note in several of these sonnets. The speaker's moral concern and ascetic nature reappear here.³⁰ The pressures that later led Hopkins to despair at his own human weaknesses can be felt:

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

A free skylark could fly into the wind like the windhover, but here it is constrained by imprisonment until it ceases to remember its former freedom. Similarly, man's "mounting spirit," of the kind revealed in "Hurrahing in Harvest," is often restricted by the limitations of flesh and bone, and is required to labour through life in a dull routine of "drudgery." Why the house of flesh should be felt to be "mean," or why man's platform of action should be called, at the opening of the second quatrain, a "poor low stage," when the bird's is "aloft on turf or perch" is not quite clear. The speaker reveals, in this poem, traits which suggest a somewhat neurotic obsession with earthly limitation; a self-laceratingly ascetic sense that human life is essentially and inevitably "mean," "poor" and "low" :

³⁰As Donald McChesney points out the poem "is, in its way, a personal allegory of Hopkins's life, bound in, albeit voluntarily, to routine and the constant thwarting of his individual and creative impulses." McChesney, p. 74.

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

Though speaking generally of the human condition, the speaker's own intense frustration breaks through at the end of the octave. Even though the poem is set out as a priestly meditation developed upon a principle of analogy, the emotional effect created is of a meditation that runs out of control as it releases volatile elements of personal frustration that can only be resolved by a perception of resurrection.

In the sestet, the speaker breaks free of this anguish; his freedom is achieved by departing from the logic of his meditative analogy. By self-willed fiat the speaker liberates the bird in the first tercet, then man, and in consequence himself. "The Caged Skylark" provides a remarkable case, amongst these sonnets, of a poem that depends for its power upon acute conflict :

Not that the sweet-fowl, song-fowl, needs no rest --
 Why, hear him, hear him babble and drop down to his nest,
 But his own nest, wild nest, no prison.

One wonders how the caged skylark has been released. He has to be for the speaker to achieve peace. This release answers an inner demand of the speaker's, which compels him to drop the structural, meditative analogy employed in the octave. The final tercet, re-enlisting the logic of meditation, insists that man will always be limited by his earthly state, even at his best. This is a view which other Hopkins's poems, such as "The Windhover" and "Hurrahing in Harvest," deny. Man needs resurrection, just as the bird needs to be freed. Finally, in "The Caged Skylark," we have a poetic movement towards resurrection of the kind achieved in the later Heraclitean poem. When "uncumberèd" by its fleshly dress the spirit will rise, and earth will no more feel the touch of the spirit than a

meadow feels the foot of a rainbow. The poem concludes with an invigorating sense of release :

Man's spirit will be flesh-bound when found at best,
 But uncumberèd: meadow-down is not distressed
 For a rainbow footing it nor he for his bones risen.

"The Lantern out of Doors" is the last of the 1877 sonnets. Hopkins later provided a gloss for the difficult verbal construction in the poem, "wind . . . eye after." "I mean that the eye winds / only in the sense that its focus or point of sight winds and that coincides with a point of the object and winds with that. For the object, a lantern passing further and further away and bearing now east, now west of one right line, is truly and properly described as winding."³¹ Although the speaker uses a first person plural "our" in line two of the poem, he follows it in line three with a singular "I." The "our" includes the reader as well as the speaker. However, in this poem, the speaker is primarily concerned with his own experience :

Sometimes a lantern moves along the night,
 That interests our eyes. And who goes there ?
 I think; where from and bound, I wonder, where,
 With, all down darkness wide, his wading light ?

A meditative note is struck, and the speaker, following with his eyes a lantern that moves away in the darkness, speculates about the destiny of the human bearer of the lantern. In the second quatrain, the speaker continues by saying that men of beautiful body or mind pass us in life, and impress us as they pass, until they are gathered up in death. By a second use of "our," the speaker seeks to generalize his experience, and share it with his reader. The speaker implies that we all know this kind of experience. In his meditative manner, he

³¹Letters, I, 66.

then formulates and revives the experience for us, his audience:

Men go by me whom either beauty bright
 In mould or mind or what not else makes rare:
 They rain against our much-thick and marsh air
 Rich beams, till death or distance buys them quite.

The reference to our humanly limited perception as "much-thick and marsh air" again strikes the troubled note, which recurs in these poems. Earthly life is essentially inadequate and, "flesh-bound when found at best," even though we perceive in it the "Rich beams" of good or beautiful lives.

In the sestet, the speaker concludes that, like the man with the lantern, good and beautiful people finally disappear into the darkness of death. Because of our human frailty we cannot maintain a firm sense of them, "out of sight is out of mind." The speaker continues his insistence upon human limitation. We cannot, he suggests, even maintain a lively sense of the beautiful dead. His sense of human inability is total. It is only Christ who cares, who can overcome death, who can follow good and beautiful men into death, and become their ultimate friend and security. Christ's power is praised at the expense of human limitation. Clearly the speaker's reverence for and dependence upon Christ grows out of a deep conviction of his own and other men's weakness :

Death or distance soon consumes them: wind
 What most I may eye after, be in at the end
 I cannot, and out of sight is out of mind.

Christ minds: Christ's interest, what to avow or amend
 There, éyes them, heart wánts, care haúnts, foot fóllows
 kind,
 Their ránsom, théir rescue, ánd first, fást, last friénd.

The sonnets of 1877 can be usefully defined as poems of "two voices," as long as it is clear that this definition is not intended in a Tennysonian sense. On the one hand, we have the speaker as celebrant in poems like "Pied Beauty," the octave of "Spring" and "Hurrahing in Harvest," who can rise to

a moment of total identification and vision in "The Windhover." On the other hand, we have an insistent, though slightly less frequently heard, voice of moral reflection and concern, which articulates a sense of man's inadequacy. This voice expresses a deep feeling of contemptus mundi. Between these two poles the 1877 sonnets move; and some of the poems, like "God's Grandeur" and "The Sea and the Skylark," are divided between them. From an ascetic rejection of man, the speaker can at times rise to a complete perception of divine presence behind the forms of nature. However, he is equally capable of falling back into an ascetic position.

These poems have been read too frequently as poems of excited affirmation, even though a completely opposed note is often struck in them. The speaker's function in these poems is dual, since he expresses two distinct views of life. Men have frequently ruined what God has given them, and are often incapable of rising above their limitations. They must depend completely upon Christ. This is the decided view of the poems' preacher-like voice. However, the natural world is full of divine beauties. If these beauties are truly perceived, Christ's presence may be discovered through them. This will be a personal discovery, not made by men in general, but by the poem's lyric speaker alone. The sonnets of 1877 are divided between desire for the correction of human weakness, and personal celebration of "God's Grandeur." The best of these poems, "The Windhover," "Pied Beauty" and "Hurrahing in Harvest," ignore the former, more poetically limiting, concern, and concentrate entirely and successfully upon the latter.

These poems, finally, continue a development that we have already perceived in "The Wreck of the Deutschland" which makes full use of the voices of celebrant and preacher. Hopkins's poetic "Vine" is no longer "riv'n," however, as it was in much of his early poetry. For the speaker as celebrant

and the speaker as preacher are two aspects of a unified moral nature. As we have seen in "The Windhover" moral perception of natural beauty can lead to celebratory affirmation and religious vision. The preacher-speaker's moral concern may at times qualify his celebratory awe, but it does not, finally, deny it. The morally perceptive, yet frequently excited, speaker of these poems fulfills two contrasted, though ultimately related, functions. He is concerned with human misuse of God's gifts, and of the natural world, and he seeks to correct such misuse in a properly preacher-like manner, but he does so for a purpose. He wishes men to prepare their spirits so that they, like him, may experience moments of illumination of the kind dramatized in "The Windhover." Yet if we are more fully persuaded by the speaker as celebrant than by the speaker as preacher who can wonder. What needs to be stressed, however, is that the two voices that we hear in these poems spring from the same coherent and convinced spiritual centre. They carry forward a development that took place as early as "The Habit of Perfection." In the poems written between 1878 and 1883 we notice significant changes in, and further developments of, the speaker's function; the emergence of the poet as priest.

CHAPTER IV

THE FORGED FEATURE

I find within my professional experience now a good deal of matter to write on.

-- Hopkins to Bridges, August 14, 1879.

The twenty poems that Hopkins completed in the five years from 1878 to 1883 constitute his most diverse body of work. Although individual poems within the group have been admired, most critics feel that compared with the sonnets of 1877 that precede them, or the sonnets of desolation that follow, these poems reveal a falling off in inspiration. They are regarded as Hopkins's "Parnassian" poems. Critics also note a new concern in these poems with human themes. Thus, E. E. Phare believes Hopkins's poems of natural sympathy are better than his poems of human sympathy.¹ W. A. M. Peters, S.J. stresses the "autobiographical" nature of these poems, but concludes that they are not Hopkins's best.² Both Jim Hunter and Paul L. Mariani feel that the poems are less inspired, yet note their human concern.³ John Pick attempts an explanation, "They are the poems of his priesthood. The priestly spirit which appears in almost all these poems is the distinguishing mark of the group. The poems of this period have a very circumstantial air about them."⁴ Examination of the functions of

¹Phare, p. 47.

²Peters, p. 43.

³Hunter, p. 79., Mariani, p. 163.

⁴Pick, pp. 87-88.

the speaker in these poems will, I hope, shed still further light.

In these poems Hopkins makes a fuller attempt than ever before to incorporate himself and his daily life into his poetry. He concentrates upon a particular aspect of himself, upon his professional, priestly experience. He deals with his outer or public self, while in the sonnets of desolation there is a further development as he moves inward. It is in the poems of 1878 to 1883 that we meet most frequently the speaker as priest. Celebrant and preacher remain, also, but priest is the most important role. In these poems Hopkins forges a particular feature of his poetic personality that is brought to a point of final definition within this group of poems. By 1883 he is poised for the last phase of his poetic development.

The first of these poems, "The Loss of the Eurydice," like "The Wreck of the Deutschland," is a poem about a shipwreck. It is a poem that improves as it proceeds and as Hopkins discovers his new priestly persona. It was begun in the spring of 1878 shortly after the foundering of the Eurydice, which occurred on March 24, 1878. Unfortunately, this second shipwreck poems does not attain the same high level of artistic achievement as the first. An examination of the speaker's function in the poem should help to explain some of the reasons why this is so. As with "The Wreck of the Deutschland," the poem opens with an address to God, but we do not hear the same authentic note of personal concern and involvement that opened the earlier poem. The speaker begins his account on a public level of address, and moves into his narrative of the disaster almost immediately. He almost appears to tell God what has happened. At the opening of this poem there is not the same subtle relation of personal experience

to public disaster of the kind we experienced in "The Wreck of the Deutschland" :

The Eurydice -- it concerned thee, O Lord:
Three hundred souls, O alas! on board,
Some asleep unawakened, all un-
warned, eleven fathoms fallen

Where she foundered! One stroke
Felled and furlled them, the hearts of oak!
And flockbells off the aerial
Downs' forefalls beat to the burial.

The "O, alas!" of the second line of stanza one emerges as an almost stereotyped expression of grief, partly because it is immediately introduced into the poem with no developed correlative to sustain its expression.

Awkward rhyme and rhetorical question in stanza three again fail to communicate a convincing sense of loss.⁵ Although the speaker expresses grief he does not dramatize it sufficiently:

For did she pride her, freighted fully, on
Bounden bales or a hoard of bullion?--
Precious passing measure,
Lads and men her lade and treasure.

It is true that we can read over the awkward polysyllabic rhyme of lines one and two, but its bathetic presence remains poetically unfortunate.⁶ Indeed, the use of bathetic rhymes throughout the poem is one of its major weaknesses. For although rhythmic variety can at times override them in a reading aloud, they assert themselves uncomfortably nevertheless, and fail to contribute anything positive to the poem. Stanzas four and five continue the narration of the wreck. As recording narrator,

⁵Hopkins's own comment to Bridges on bad rhymes seems pertinent here, "I can't abide bad rhymes and when they are spelt alike I hate them more." See Letters, I, 35. April 13, 1877, about a year before he began "The Loss of the Eurydice."

⁶As Jim Hunter notes, "In spite of the poet's instructions that the poem should be read 'with the ears,' it is above all the listener that these lines offend." Hunter, p. 77.

the speaker is detached, and his lack of personal engagement in what he narrates, despite interjected questions, pitches the poem at an unhappily uneven dramatic level:

She had come from a cruise, training seamen--
Men, boldboys soon to be men:
Must it, worst weather,
Blast bole and bloom together ?

No Atlantic squall overwrought her
Or rearing billow of the Biscay water:
Home was hard at hand
And the blow bore from land.

The speaker's direct, personified attack upon the weather in stanza six has an almost hysterical, rather than a successfully poetic, effect; and the recognition of the paradox, suffused through "The Wreck of the Deutschland," of the physical storm as a divine storm of love, is absent here. In the first line of this stanza the speaker is almost petulant:

And you were a liar, O blue March day.
Bright sun lanced fire in the heavenly bay;
But what black Boreas wrecked her ? he
Came equipped, deadly-electric,

A beetling baldbright cloud thorough England
Riding: there did storms not mingle ? and
Hailropes hustle and grind their
Heavengravel ? wolfsnow, worlds of it, wind there ?

Accusation of the weather is followed by four rhetorical questions designed to create the intensity of sudden storm. Realization of the storm in this way leads, at last, to increased involvement on the narrator's part. The use of rhetorical questions in stanzas six and seven is followed by extensive repetition in stanzas eight and nine, which is again employed to create intensity. The speaker seeks to dramatize the storm by a quasi-reportorial account of its rapid passage:

Now Carisbrook keep goes under in gloom;
Now it overvaults Appledurcombe;
Now near by Ventnor town
It hurls, hurls off Boniface Down.

Too proud, too proud, what a press she bore!
 Royal, and all her royals wore.
 Sharp with her, shorten sail!
 Too late; lost; gone with the gale.

The strategies employed to create intensity are not nearly as subtle as the juxtapositions, paradoxical images, and deep personal involvement evident in "The Wreck of the Deutschland." Besides, the tripping four line stanzas of this poem do not allow for the same modulations and accumulations of rhythm present in the eight line stanzas of the earlier poem. Thus, the tenth and eleventh stanzas that depict the actual moment of wreck are not nearly as successful poetically as the depiction of the similar moment in stanza fourteen of "The Wreck of the Deutschland:"

This was that fell capsized.
 As half she had righted and hoped to rise
 Death teeming in by her portholes
 Raced down decks, round messes of mortals.

Then a lurch forward, frigate and men;
 'All hands for themselves' the cry ran then;
 But she who had housed them thither
 Was around them, bound them or wound them with her.

In stanzas twelve and thirteen the narrator informs us of the captain's heroic drowning with his ship. He is presented as hearing a voice, presumably divine, that commands him to follow his ship down. This is clearly a fancy of the narrator's, which is not nearly as successful as the deep interfusion of the real and the imagined in the earlier poem :

Marcus Hare, high her captain,
 Kept to her -- care-drowned and wrapped in
 Cheer's death, would follow
 His charge through the champ-white water-in-a-wallow,
 All under Channel to bury in a beach her
 Cheeks: Right, rude of feature,
 He thought he heard say
 'Her commander! and thou too, and thou this way.'

This action leads to an interpolated comment on the speaker's part. He reflects that an oppressed man will instinctively

take the right course of action. The implication is that at such times a man is divinely guided :

It is even seen, time's something server,
In mankind's medley a duty-swerver,
At downright 'No or Yes ?'
Doffs all, drives full for righteousness.

Stanzas fifteen to eighteen provide a narrative account of one of the ship's company, Sidney Fletcher, who was saved by "a lifebelt and God's will." The description of his struggle is graphically presented, but it does not knit into the theme of the poem in the way that the destruction of the sailor "handy and brave" does in "The Wreck of the Deutschland." Besides, in the earlier poem Hopkins spent no time upon those who were saved from the wreck, primarily because accounts of them would serve no dramatic or thematic purpose. Thus, while the description of Fletcher's struggle adds something to the account of the storm, it adds little or nothing to the meaning and movement of the poem, and seems to be merely a narrative digression. "The Loss of the Eurydice misses "The Wreck of the Deutschland's" dramatic compression and economy :

Sydney Fletcher, Bristol-bred,
(Low lie his mates now on watery bed)
Takes to the seas and snows
As sheer down the ship goes.

Now her afterdraught gullies him too down;
Now he wrings for breath with the deathgush brown;
Till a lifebelt and God's will
Lend him a lift from the sea-swirl.

The speaker continues his reportorial manner in presenting Fletcher's parenthetical adventure. The almost bathetic linking of "a lifebelt and God's will" would have been allowable in "The Wreck of the Deutschland," and provides a further unfortunate example of the bathos which this poem too frequently reveals. Stanzas seventeen and eighteen continue the running commentary on Fletcher's adventure :

Now he shoots short up to the round air;
 Now he gasps, now he gazes everywhere;
 But his eye no cliff, no coast or
 Mark makes in the rivelling snowstorm.

Him, after an hour of wintry waves,
 A schooner sights, with another, and saves,
 And he boards her in Oh! such joy
 He has lost count what came next, poor boy --.

In stanzas nineteen to twenty-one the speaker provides an increasingly elegiac account of a beautiful, drowned sailor, who was observed by some of the witnesses of the disaster. The extreme indirection of reportage here emphasizes the speaker's distance from his subject, a distance rarely felt in "The Wreck of the Deutschland :"

They say who saw one sea-corpse cold
 He was all of lovely manly mould,
 Every inch a tar,
 Of the best we boast our sailors are.

Nevertheless, the "we" of the last line of the stanza indicates the speaker's assumption of a national identity. Like any Englishman, he is proud of his nation's nautical prowess, and therefore speaks on his nation's behalf. This shift of perspective is both appropriate, and important as the poem's conclusion makes clear. In stanza twenty, the speaker invites his audience to consider this sailor's qualities:

Look, foot to forelock, how all things suit! he
 Is strung by duty, is strained to beauty,
 And brown-as-dawning-skinned
 With brine and shine and whirling wind.

Stanza twenty-one, with its opening ejaculation, strikes the elegiac note that contemplation of death has prepared the way for :

O his nimble finger, his gnarled grip!
 Leagues, leagues of seamanship
 Slumber in these forsaken
 Bones, this sinew, and will not waken.

Stanza twenty-two initiates a series of moral reflections upon the sad and wayward state of non-Catholic England, which

leads the speaker to prayer at the poem's conclusion. The loss of young manhood in the disaster, followed by consideration of a single sailor, leads the speaker to thoughts of his country's wantonness, with its thousands of unconverted non-Catholic souls. The speaker begins to assume his role as priest, and in doing so helps to improve the poem. "The Loss of the Eurydice" does improve as it proceeds. Its speaker's shift from reporter to priest is decisive in effecting this improvement.

The dead sailor provides a single instance of a general state. It becomes evident, at this point in the poem, that the loss of the Eurydice affords a moral lesson, or should afford one, to all unawakened souls. It is the newly arrived speaker as priest who provides this information. Death can strike at any time, and can strike quickly, and what will the unprepared soul do then? In bemoaning the state of his nation, the speaker shifts from the first person plural voice, that spoke of nautical pride, to a preacher-like first person singular voice. This is an appropriate movement. The speaker is, after all, only an isolated voice of admonition in, what is to him, an heretical country. A deepened, priestly concern emerges. The priest speaks first of the dead sailor:

He was but one like thousands more.
 Day and night I deplore
 My people and born own nation,
 Fast foundering own generation.

Yet in stanza twenty-three, the speaker returns briefly to his national identity, when he refers to the events of the English reformation as "our curse." The speaker's Catholic zeal is as much in evidence as it was in stanza twenty of "The Wreck of the Deutschland:"

I might let bygones be -- our curse
 Of ruinous shrine no hand or, worse,
 Robbery's hand is busy to
 Dress, hoar-hallowèd shrines unvisited.

The speaker appears to refer, in the second half of the stanza, to contemporary church restoration. But his bitterness is keen, for he still thinks of the hand of the Anglican church as a robber's hand.

Stanza twenty-four brings us, at last, to the centre of the poem.⁷ The untimely destruction of young and unhallowed souls in the wreck provides the main focus of the speaker's moral concern:

Only the breathing temple and fleet
Life, this wildworth blown so sweet,
These daredeaths, ay this crew, in
Unchrist, all rolled in ruin --.

In stanza twenty-five, the speaker deplores the fact that so many young souls should have died in a state of "Unchrist." He even wonders how his master, Christ, could have allowed such a thing to happen. The speaker's state of mind is not as closely attuned to God's workings as it was in "The Wreck of the Deutschland." Nevertheless, the impetus of his annoyance is certainly not at God, but at his country's rejection of Catholicism:

Deeply surely I need to deplore it,
Wondering why my master bore it,
The riving off that race
So at home, time was, to his truth and grace.

In the middle-ages England was a happily Catholic nation, to such an extent that one of "ours" (here the first person plural clearly refers not to the English nation, but to a medieval member of Hopkins's priestly profession) could describe the Milky Way as "Walsingham Way." The speaker, however, refuses to spend time in harking back to a medieval Catholic past. At

⁷As Jim Hunter observes, "The later part of the poem, where narrative gives way to meditation, has a much surer dignity. The short stanza lends itself better to this calmer statement and to epigrammatic balance." Hunter, p. 78.

the end of stanza twenty-six he re-expresses the hope, previously articulated at the end of "The Wreck of the Deutschland," that Britain may once again become Catholic:

That a starlight-wender of ours would say
The marvellous Milk was Walsingham Way
And one -- but let be, let be:
More, more than was will yet be.

In the third line of the stanza the speaker addresses himself, and implores himself to discontinue a nostalgic preoccupation with the Catholic past.

Stanza twenty-seven is elegiac.⁸ The speaker praises the spontaneous grief of a mother and a wife, who lost loved ones in the wreck. However, the speaker's religious preoccupation compels him to insist that the grief of relatives can do the souls of the sailors no actual good:

O well wept, mother have lost son;
Wept, wife; wept, sweetheart would be one:
Though grief yield them no good
Yet shed what tears and truelove should.

The speaker addresses the mother and the wife directly, and invites them to weep the tears of their love.

In stanza twenty-eight the speaker asks the mother and wife to kneel. As a priest, he then offers a prayer for the souls of the seamen, which occupies the second half of stanza twenty-eight and the whole of stanza twenty-nine. The speaker's prayerful voice emerges as an additional voice within the poem, and is indicated by single quotation marks. The speaker prays not just on his own behalf, but on behalf of the mother and wife. He is their priestly spokesman:

⁸ Also, as W. A. M. Peters, S.J. notes, there is a change of technique here. "From being merely an interested observer of the event, the poet suddenly takes an active part in it by addressing the mother and the sweetheart." Peters, pp. 97-98. This is an important movement and indicates further the poem's increasingly certain tone which arrives with Hopkins's dramatization of his priestly role.

But to Christ lord of thunder
 Crouch; lay knee by earth low under:
 'Holiest, loveliest, bravest,
 Save my hero, O Hero savest.

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

The speaker asks his heavenly Hero, Christ, to save the human heroes of the mother and wife. The speaker asks Christ to attend to his prayer by the time of "the awful overtaking," which is presumably the day of judgement.⁹ He has prayed, and wishes his prayer to be granted, because true Catholic "grace" was not present with the sailors on the day that they drowned. All the speaker can do to help the sailors is to pray for their souls. In the final, thirtieth stanza, the speaker acknowledges that hell cannot be redeemed. Yet he hopes that there will be mercy shown to souls who died so young. Until the fires of judgement eat up the world, prayer is the only means available to mobilize divine pity on the seamen's behalf. A poem that began with a graphic account of shipwreck, ends in prayer. However, the celebratory note that ended "The Wreck of the Deutschland" is absent. There was no heroic nun aboard the Eurydice, and Marcus Hare's courage was physical, not spiritual. The speaker, at the end of "The Loss of the Eurydice," does not have the same lively assurance of a divine harvest, that he had at the end of the earlier poem. Instead we have a combination of recognition of bleak realities and heavy dependence upon prayer:

Not that hell knows redeeming,
 But for souls sunk in seeming
 Fresh, till doomfire burn all,
 Prayer shall fetch pity eternal.

⁹It could equally well refer to the moment of shipwreck, of course. Hopkins wishes his prayers to be retroactive.

In "The Loss of the Eurydice" the speaker has a twofold function: he is first a narrator, and second a prayerful priest. In addition, the poem contains some interesting shifts between a first person singular, and a first person plural voice. The speaker's narration of the disaster, and his attack upon non-Catholic Britain are both spoken in a singular voice. In stanza nineteen he identifies himself with English national pride in seamanship when praising the dead sailor. In stanza twenty-six he reveals his own priestly profession, while speaking of medieval Catholic England. At the poem's conclusion, when he addresses Christ, and asks for aid for the sailors' souls, he speaks appropriately on behalf of those who have lost relatives in the disaster.

"The Loss of the Eurydice" suffers by comparison with "The Wreck of the Deutschland." One of the reasons for its comparative lack of success lies in its speaker's lack of the range and flexibility possessed by the speaker of the earlier poem. The speaker of "The Loss of the Eurydice" is also far less sanguine than the speaker of the earlier poem. His vision of life has become bleaker. Unlike "The Wreck of the Deutschland," "The Loss of the Eurydice" is a poem without a heroine. However, as the speaker's priestly role emerges, the poem gains certainty of tone, bathetic rhyme disappears, and a more balanced meditative voice takes over. An increase in confidence once the priestly speaker establishes himself is reflected in the poem's style.

"The May Magnificat," written in May, 1878, is Hopkins's only completed poem of that spring and summer. The creative exuberance of 1877 was not relived a year later. Hopkins told Bridges that he saw "little good" in "The May Magnificat," "but the freedom of the rhythm."¹⁰ It is true that "The May

¹⁰ Letters, I, 65.

Magnificat" is a small piece, but it is delightful nevertheless; it is a joyous meditation upon the Virgin's association with May.¹¹ The meditative technique is immediately announced in stanza one, and a question for consideration follows in stanza two:

May is Mary's month, and I
 Muse at that and wonder why:
 Her feasts follow reason,
 Dated due to season --

Candlemas, Lady Day;
 But the Lady Month, May,
 Why fasten that upon her,
 With a feasting in her honour ?

In stanza three the speaker attempts to answer his own question by asking further questions. He realizes that he must ask the Virgin herself in stanza four. Her reply comes in the form of another question, which is answered this time:

Is it only its being brighter
 Than the most are must delight her ?
 Is it opportunist
 And flowers finds soonest ?

Ask of her, the mighty mother:
 Her reply puts this other
 Question: What is Spring ?--
 Growth in everything --.

The three stanzas that follow provide a further example of Hopkins's happiest poetic vein. A sense of natural beauty associated, as it is here, with divinity, leads to joyful celebration. We see the speaker briefly enjoying again the affirmative moments of the previous year:

Flesh and fleece, fur and feather,
 Grass and greenworld all together;
 Star-eyed strawberry-breasted
 Throstle above her nested

¹¹I do not agree with Paul L. Mariani that "the poem lacks inspiration." Mariani, p. 127. He cannot have read stanzas six, ten and eleven of the poem very carefully.

Cluster of bugle blue eggs thin
 Forms and warms the life within;
 And bird and blossom swell
 In sod or sheath or shell.

All things rising, all things sizing
 Mary sees, sympathising
 With that world of good,
 Nature's motherhood.

As the poem's title suggests, the joyous meditation takes the form of a hymn of praise. The celebrative and meditative speaker finds in the burgeoning of spring an emblem of the Virgin's spotless pregnancy:

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

In the poem's concluding four stanzas meditation turns once more into celebration. The diverse life of spring is like a rosary that, "Tells Mary her mirth till Christ's birth:"

Well but there was more than this:
 Spring's universal bliss
 Much, had much to say
 To offering Mary May.

When drop-of-blood-and-foam-dapple
 Bloom lights the orchard-apple
 And thicket and thorp are merry
 With silver-surfed cherry

And azuring-over greybell makes
 Wood banks and brakes wash wet like lakes
 And magic cuckoocall
 Caps, clears, and clinches all --

This ecstasy all through mothering earth
 Tells Mary her mirth till Christ's birth
 To remember and exultation
 In God who was her salvation.

The poem is a magnificent, indeed. It is an example of Hopkins at his most joyous and spontaneous. A successful wedding of religious faith and natural observation frees the speaker entirely from personal guilt and moral reflection. Celebrative, lyric expression is the satisfying result.

"Binsey Poplars" was first written in March, 1879, almost a year after "The May Magnificat."¹² It is one of the few poems in Hopkins's canon that is not at all concerned with religion. Instead, the poem is a moralized elegy. It reveals the diversity of interest that we find within this group of poems. The speaker laments the felling of Binsey Poplars in the first stanza, and reveals his own personal concern in a first person singular voice :

My aspens dear, whose airy cages quelled,
 Quelled or quenched in leaves the leaping sun,
 All felled, felled, are all felled;
 Of a fresh and following folded rank
 Not spared, not one
 That dandled a sandalled
 Shadow that swam or sank
 On meadow and river and wind-wandering
 weed-winding bank.

In the concluding two stanzas the speaker assumes a first person plural voice, in which to warn his audience that the destruction of natural beauty means the destruction of something irreplaceable. Identity with his audience involves a subtle, rhetorical tactic on the speaker's part. He assumes part of the guilt for the poplars destruction, but more important, he assumes that his audience shares his response to that destruction. The poem's elegiac quality grows out of Hopkins's delicate recreation of the life of the destroyed trees in stanza one, and his moral concern at their destruction. Response to beauty and moral concern are more completely interwoven in this poem than they are in some of the 1877 sonnets:

O if we but knew what we do
 When we delve or hew --
 Hack and rack the growing green!
 Since country is so tender
 To touch, her being so slender,
 That, like this sleek and seeing ball
 But a prick will make no eye at all,

¹²Hopkins described the poem as "a little lyric." Letters, I, 78. As my analysis attempts to demonstrate, the poem has a more subtle rhetoric than such a description would imply.

Where we, even where we mean
 To mend her we end her,
 When we hew or delve:
 After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.
 Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve
 Strokes of havoc únselve
 The sweet especial scene,
 Rural scene, a rural scene,
 Sweet especial rural scene. 13

The poem reveals both a subtle handling of the speaker's function, and Hopkins's sensitivity to natural life, which is fully revealed in his poetic recreation of it.

Like the two early sonnets "To Oxford," "Duns Scotus's Oxford," probably written in March, 1879,¹⁴ is initially addressed to the university city, where Hopkins had been an undergraduate:

Towery city and branchy between towers;
 Cuckoo-echoing, bell-swarmèd, lark charmèd, rook-racked,
 river-rounded;
 The dapple-eared lily below thee; that country and town did
 Once encounter in, here coped and poisèd powers;
 Thou hast a base and brickish skirt there, sours
 That neighbour-nature thy grey beauty is grounded
 Best in; graceless growth, thou hast confounded
 Rural rural keeping -- folk, flocks, and flowers.

The poem provides a fair yardstick for measuring the development that had taken place in Hopkins's poetry in the fourteen years since the earlier Oxford sonnets. Then, Hopkins was an undergraduate not yet twenty-one. In March, 1879 he was almost thirty-five, and at the height of his poetic powers. In the sestet, the speaker turns from contemplation of and address to Oxford, to a meditation upon the fact that his favourite philosopher, Johannes Duns Scotus, had once lived in the university city.

¹³As Paul L. Mariani acutely observes, "the repetition of 'rural scene' serves as an echo in the reader's memory of a distinctively beautiful local country scene forever lost." Mariani, p. 129.

¹⁴See Poems, p. 272.

The poem ends by praising him; one priest identifies himself with another:

Yet ah! this air I gather and I release
 He lived on; these weeds and waters, these walls are what
 He haunted who of all men most sways my spirits to peace;

Of realty the rarest-veinèd unraveller; a not
 Rivalled insight, be rival Italy or Greece;
 Who fired France for Mary without spot.

The poem becomes increasingly personal. From general contemplation of and address to a city, it moves to meditation upon, and personal praise of, the life of a particular man. The speaker believes that Scotus has no philosophic rivals, whether Italian or Greek. The last line of the poem refers to the British philosopher's defence of Mary's immaculate conception in a French disputation. The poem shows Hopkins's ability as a meditative poet at its best.

"Henry Purcell" is dated April, 1879, in the A manuscript. It is a central poem for an understanding of Hopkins, because the praise that its speaker bestows upon Purcell's music is equally appropriate to Hopkins's poetry.¹⁵ Hopkins offered Bridges several explanations of the poem's meaning and intention. These glosses contribute importantly both to an understanding of this particular poem, and of Hopkins's poetry in general. He explains the poem's meaning as follows:

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

¹⁵I cannot agree with Geoffrey H. Hartman's condemnation of the poem as "an abstract admiration-piece beset by religious scruple." See Hartman, "Poetry and Justification," p. 11. Hopkins himself rightly regarded the poem as "one of my very best pieces." Letters, I, 171.

thinking only of soaring spreads its wings: a beholder may happen then to have his attention drawn by the act to the plumage displayed.

Explaining the use of the word "sake" in the poem, Hopkins offers the following suggestive comments, which again are relevant to his whole poetic activity as well as to the present poem:

I mean by it the being a thing has outside itself, as a voice by its echo, a face by its reflection, a body by its shadow a man by his name, fame, or memory, and also that in the thing by virtue of which especially it has this being abroad, and that is something distinctive, marked, specifically or individually speaking, as for a voice and echo clearness; for a reflected image light, brightness; for a shadow-casting body bulk; for a man genius, great achievements, amiability, and so on. In this case it is, as the sonnet says, distinctive quality in genius.
 My sonnet means 'Purcell's music is none of your d--d subjective rot' (so to speak). 16

Like Purcell's music, Hopkins's poetry, at its best, is far from "subjective." It is a highly individualized, at times idiosyncratic, kind of poetry; for Hopkins, unlike Browning and Tennyson in their dramatic monologues, rarely employs strategies of indirection. His personality is projected fully into his poems, yet it is a personality, in the best poems, that has a fully realized poetic, rather than biographical, existence. Hopkins poetry is poetry of the romantic tradition of the dramatized self. But, as the Purcell sonnet argues, individuality, used in this way, need not be debilitatingly subjective or egotistical. A complete realization of one's own humanity is an effective way of presenting humanity is essence or in general. This is Hopkins's creative method as it was Purcell's. At their best, the speakers of Hopkins's poems are the poetically "forged features" of their author's deepest convictions and concerns.

¹⁶ Letters, I, 170, 83-84.

The way in which complete self-realization partakes of both God and humanity is expressed in the prose gloss that prefaces the poem. "The poet wishes well to the divine genius of Purcell and praises him that, whereas other musicians have given utterance to the moods of man's mind, he has, beyond that, uttered in notes the very make and species of man as created both in him and in all men generally." It is the central contention of the present study that Hopkins's poetry does this too. The praise that Hopkins bestows upon Purcell is, in my view, equally due to Hopkins. Like Purcell's music, Hopkins's poetry is, above all, poetry of "the forged feature." "It is the forged feature finds me; it is the rehearsal / Of own, of abrupt self there so thrusts on, so throngs the ear." In expressing himself completely and precisely in poetry, the poet truly discovers himself, both as an artist and a man. Even though Hopkins himself may not have shared this view, his poetry is our best means of appreciating, what to him was more important, his life of devotion.

The poem opens as an imperative prayer that the Protestant Purcell's soul may not have been damned. Unsympathetic critics may find a certain priestly narrowness in this, yet Hopkins's true catholicity is evident in his admiration of Purcell's art. Sectarianism does not separate him from Purcell here. In fact, it leads him to pray especially earnestly for Purcell's salvation.

Have fair fallen, O fair, fair have fallen, so dear
 To me, so arch-especial a spirit as heaves in Henry Purcell,
 An age is now since passed, since parted; with the reversal
 Of the outward sentence low lays him, listed to a heresy,
 here.

The octave continues with the speaker's declaration of personal admiration. The speaker's individuality responds to the created personality that he discovers in Purcell's music. It is this evocation of individuality that the speaker finds central in

Purcell's work, even above his ability to dramatize mood, meaning, pride, religious fear, love, pity or sweetness:

Not mood in him nor meaning, proud fire or sacred fear,
Or love or pity or all that sweet notes not his might nurse:
It is the forged feature finds me; it is the rehearsal
Of own, of abrupt self there so thrusts on, so throngs the
ear.

In the sestet the speaker opens with his personal response to Purcell. He wishes his favourite musician's "air of angels" to "lift me, lay me." Properly limited, even the modern colloquial suggestion in "lay me" does not seem inappropriate here; Hopkins clearly means "ravish me." By the last line of the sestet the speaker has moved from a personal to a general response. He wishes "our wits" to be fanned fresh with wonder. In finally identifying himself with his audience, he clearly hopes that his readers will respond to Purcell as he has himself. To dramatize Purcell's power and individuality, Hopkins compares it to "some great stormfowl." The image of the bird always possesses visionary and transcendent connotations in Hopkins's poetry, and it has such connotations here:

Let him oh! with his air of angels then lift me, lay me!
only I'll
Have an eye to the sakes of him, quaint moonmarks to his
pelted plumage under
Wings: so some great stormfowl, whenever he has walked
his while

The thunder-purple seabeach plumèd purple-of-thunder,
If a wuthering of his palmy snow-pinions scatter a
colossal smile
Off him, but meaning motion fans fresh our wits with
wonder.

The individuality that Hopkins himself reveals in writing of a highly individual musician is what we value most in his poetry, a poetry of the fully articulated self.

Although written two years later, at Oxford in 1879, "The Candle Indoors" is a companion poem to the earlier "The Lantern out of Doors." Hopkins actually mentions the companionship of the poems in a note in the B manuscript, and also in a

letter to Bridges of June 22, 1879.¹⁷ In the earlier poem, the speaker observed the passage of light and human beauty into darkness and death, and turned to Christ as the sole source of support to human transience. In the second poem the speaker ends by turning in upon himself, and meditating upon his own faults. The poem provides an interesting transition towards the later sonnets of desolation, in which despair and self-castigation become paramount.

As with "The Lantern out of Doors," the speaker of the second poem begins as an observer of light in darkness. In the earlier poem the speaker was static, and observed a moving light. Here, he is himself in motion, and comes upon a static light. The reversal is significant, in so far as it suggests the speaker's personal involvement with his own movement in darkness, and towards death. In the earlier poem, he offered Christian advice in the face of this movement in others. In reversing this procedure, the second poem is more personal, meditative and introspective. Nevertheless, the octave of the second poem begins from the perspective of the earlier poem. On seeing a light in the night, the speaker wonders about the human life, which its presence signifies:

Some candle clear burns somewhere I come by
 I muse at how its being puts blissful back
 With yellowy moisture mild night's blear-all black,
 Or to-fro tender trambeams truckle at the eye.

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

¹⁷ See Poems, p. 274. This is, besides, another poem that Hopkins considered "autobiographical." Writing to Bridges on August 14, 1879 he says, "Though the analogy in the Candle sonnet may seem forced, yet it is an 'autobiographical' fact that I was influenced and acted on the way there said." Letters, I, 85.

The speaker reveals a characteristic, priestly concern for the moral righteousness of ordinary humanity. In the sestet, however, his perspective shifts as he realizes that he should be concerned first about his own worthiness, before worrying about, or finding fault with, the moral nature of others. The speaker questions his right to make the kind of preacher-like assertions that appeared in the sonnets of 1877. We see here the beginnings of an uncertainty about himself that dominates the attitudes of the speaker of the last sonnets. The sestet dramatizes the speaker's deep need for self-analysis. From considering a candle burning in a house, the speaker turns in upon himself to examine the satisfactoriness of his own inner light. Assuming a meditative voice, he addresses himself :

Come you indoors, come home; your fading fire
Mend first and vital candle in close heart's vault:
You there are master, do your own desire;

What hinders ? Are you beam-blind, yet to a fault
In a neighbour deft-handed ? are you that liar
And, cast by conscience out, spendsavour salt ?

Donald McChesney rightly calls attention to the bearing of two passages from St. Matthew's Gospel upon the sestet, "Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull the mote out of thine eye; and behold a beam is in thine own eye. Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." (Matt., vii, AV)" and "an echo of Matt., v, 13, [in line fourteen of the poem] where Christ calls his disciples the salt of the earth and warns them not to lose their savour."¹⁸ The poem clearly reveals, when compared to its companion poem, and other poems of 1877, a loss of composure, a new inwardness, and a need for self-examination. From castigating the moral weaknesses of man, the speaker moves to castigating himself.

¹⁸ See McChesney, p. 93. Besides the colloquial language in the sestet anticipates the colloquial, inward-looking, spiritual diary-like style of the later sonnets of desolation.

Moral concern is now a concern on the speaker's part with his own inner nature. The emergence of this concern is part of a new development in the speaker's function in Hopkins's poetry.

"The Handsome Heart: at a Gracious Answer," which was also written at Oxford in 1879, is one of four poems in this group of middle poems in which Hopkins explicitly dramatizes his priestly profession. The other poems are "The Bugler's First Communion," "At the Wedding March" and "Felix Randal." In fact, Hopkins described "The Handsome Heart" as yet another "autobiographical" poem and recounted to Bridges the occasion out of which it arose. "Last Lent . . . two boys of our congregation gave me much help in the sacristy in Holy Week. I offered them money for their services, which the elder refused, but being pressed consented to take it laid out in a book. The younger followed suit; then when some days after I asked him what I shd. buy answered as in the sonnet."¹⁹ The poem opens with colloquial dialogue and continues with reflection. In this poem, the speaker uncharacteristically reveals an optimistic view of human nature:

'But tell me, child, your choice; what shall I buy
You?' -- 'Father, what you buy me I like best.'
With the sweetest air that said, still plied and pressed,
He swung to his first poised purport of reply.

The first quatrain presents the situation from which the poem grows. The speaker presents himself as priest, the child's response to his question, a brief narrative of what followed, and then meditates upon the significance of his experience:

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

¹⁹Letters, I, 84, 86.

This second quatrain recalls the third stanza of "The Wreck of the Deutschland," in which the speaker's own "carrier-witted" heart flew to God. The boy's innocent heart takes the same direction here, and a similar image of a bird is used to depict it.

In the sestet, the speaker inwardly praises the boy, and hopes that he will continue upon the path of grace, on which he has begun so early:

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

Of heaven what boon to buy you, boy, or gain
 Not granted! -- Only . . . O on that path you pace
 Run all your race, O brace sterner that strain!

Like his encounters with natural beauty, the speaker's encounter with human beauty and virtue, here, leads him to ejaculatory statement. The speaker's dual function in the poem is to describe the boy's response and then to elaborate its significance.

"The Bugler's First Communion" was written in Oxford in July, 1879. As in "The Handsome Heart," its speaker is presented as a priest.²⁰ It is again an "autobiographical" poem based upon Hopkins's pastoral work. The opening stanza indicates the bugler's relationship with the speaker, who is his priest:

A bugler boy from barrack (it is over the hill
 There) -- boy bugler, born, he tells me, of Irish
 Mother to an English sire (he
 Shares their best gifts surely, fall how things will).

Within parentheses, the speaker is able to elaborate his narrative, and also reflect upon the bugler's nature. The "us" of the first line of stanza two refers to the speaker's priestly

²⁰ As Paul L. Mariani notes, "The poem is largely narrative, with a personal commentary for coda." Mariani, p. 147.

profession. He speaks as a member of a priestly body. He also reveals the nature and purpose of his relationship with the bugler:

This very very day came down to us after a boon he on
 My late being there begged of me, overflowing
 Boon in my bestowing,
 Came, I say, this day to it -- to a First Communion.

In stanza three, the speaker describes his clerical function at this important event in the bugler's life:

Here he knelt then in regimental red.
 Forth Christ from cupboard fetched, how fain I of feet
 To his youngster take his treat!
 Low-latched in leaf-light housel his too huge godhead.

The speaker is the intermediary between Christ and the bugler, who is described as Christ's "youngster." The remaining nine stanzas of the poem are taken up with prayers and reflections of the speaker-priest, who hopes and prays to God that the bugler will always be one of Christ's virtuous soldiers. In stanza four, the speaker reveals his inner feelings at the actual moment of administering the sacrament:

There! and your sweetest sendings, ah divine,
 By it, heavens, befall him! as a heart Christ's darling,
 dauntless;

 Tongue true, vaunt- and tauntless;
 Breathing bloom of a chastity in mansex fine.

The "There!" of the first line depicts the exact moment of ministrations. The remainder of the stanza contains both prayer on the bugler's behalf, and response, on the speaker's part, to the bugler's natural beauty, which, to the speaker, is a symbol of his relationship to God.

The speaker-priest, appropriately employing military imagery, then prays to the bugler's guardian angel in stanza five:

Frowning and forefending angel-warder
 Squander the hell-rook ranks sally to molest him;
 March, kind comrade, abreast him;
 Dress his days to a dexterous and starlight order.

In stanzas six to eight, the speaker reflects upon the joys of his priestly profession, which allows him to encounter such examples of pristine youth as the bugler reveals:

How it does my heart good, visiting at that bleak hill,
 When limber liquid youth, that to all I teach
 Yields tender as a pushed peach,
 Hies headstrong to its wellbeing of a self-wise self-will!

Then though I should tread tufts of consolation
 Days after, so I in a sort deserve to
 And do serve God to serve to
 Just such slips of soldiery Christ's royal ration.

Nothing else is like it, no, not all so strains
 Us: fresh youth fretted in a bloomfall all portending
 That sweet's sweeter ending;
 Realm both Christ is heir to and there reigns.

This poem, like many of Hopkins's poems, is, in effect, a poem of meditation, or interior monologue, in which the speaker communes with himself. Yet there are different kinds of communion in this poem, which turns from reflection to prayer. In prayer, the speaker ceases to commune with himself, and addresses God. Thus, in stanzas nine to eleven the speaker prays for the bugler's future:

O now well work that sealing sacred ointment!
 O for now charms, arms, what bans off bad
 And locks love ever in a lad!
 Let me though see no more of him, and not disappointment
 Those sweet hopes quell whose least me quickenings lift,
 In scarlet or somewhere of some day seeing
 That brow and bead of being,
 An our day's God's own Galahad. Though this child's drift
 Seems by a divine doom channelled, nor do I cry
 Disaster there; but may he not rankle and roam
 In backwheels though bound home? --
 That left to the Lord of the Eucharist, I here lie by.

The last stanza of the poem returns to reflection, as the speaker records the fact of the earnest prayers he has made for the bugler's spiritual success through life. Increasingly in Hopkins's poems, prayer becomes the means of contending with the machinations of earthly life. Hopkins even half-hoped

that the bugler might meet an early death so that his sanctity would be preserved:²¹

Recorded only, I have put my lips on pleas
 Would brandle adamant heaven with ride and jar, did
 Prayer go disregarded:
 Forward-like, but however, and like favourable heaven heard
 these.

Thus, the speaker's function in "The Bugler's First Communion" is twofold. He reflects upon his priestly encounter with the bugler, and he, also, prays on the bugler's behalf. The embodiment of the speaker as priest continues its development in these middle poems.

"Morning, Midday, and Evening Sacrifice" was written in Oxford in August, 1879. In three stanzas, Hopkins depicts conditions of youth, maturity and age, which should all be devoted to God. Each stanza is addressed to the reader, who is asked in the final line to give the fruits of his life to Christian service:

The dappled die-away
 Cheek and the wimpled lip,
 The gold-wisp, the airy grey
 Eye, all in fellowship --
 This, all this beauty blooming,
 This, all this freshness fuming,
 Give God while worth consuming.

The injunction to the reader recalls the moral concern of the 1877 sonnets, although the earnestness of parts of those poems is somewhat muted here by gentle lyric rhythm. The poem continues and concludes in the same way:

Both thought and thew now bolder
 And told by Nature: Tower;
 Head, heart, hand, heel, and shoulder
 That beat and breathe in power --
 This pride of prime's enjoyment
 Take as for tool, not toy meant
 And hold at Christ's employment.

²¹ Letters, I, 92.

The vault and scope and schooling
 And mastery in the mind,
 In silk-ash kept from cooling,
 And ripest under rind --
 What death half lifts the latch of,
 What hell hopes soon the snatch of,
 Your offering, with despatch, of!

Lyric rhythm in this poem cloaks a preacher's moral concern. The speaker's role here is again that of preacher, whose function is to persuade his audience to devote their lives to Christ. Thus, from dramatizing himself as priest in "The Bugler's First Communion," Hopkins moves in "Morning, Midday, and Evening Sacrifice" to re-establishing the speaker's role as preacher. This role is subtly created here under the disguise of lyrical rhythm. Hopkins knew very well how to employ the rhetoric of lyric poetry for moral purposes. As in the 1877 sonnets he continues here to develop the poetic possibilities of preaching.

"Andromeda," written in Oxford on August 12, 1879, is one of Hopkins's few poems to require allegorical elucidation. "Time's Andromeda" stands for the Church of Christ, "this rock rude" for England or St. Peter, "A wilder beast from West" represents the new nineteenth-century forces of Antichrist, and Perseus stands for Gabriel or Christ.²² In a letter to Bridges, Hopkins explained the reason why the poem seems different in style to his other poems of this period. "I endeavoured in it a more Miltonic plainness and severity than I have anywhere else. I cannot say it has turned out severe, still less plain, but it seems almost free from quaintness and

²² See Poems, p. 277. For a different view of this poem see Schneider, pp. 177-185, who believes that "A wilder beast from West" refers specifically to Ireland and the contemporary political turmoils there. This "rock rude" she suggests refers to England, and Andromeda to Britannia. The allegorical framework certainly allows for this interpretation.

in aiming at one excellence I have hit another."²³ The speaker's presence in the poem is not immediately felt.²⁴ His function is simply to present his allegory as clearly and pungently as possible. Nevertheless, the poem reveals its speaker's deeply felt concern for the Catholic church beset by modern forces of Antichrist.²⁵ Concern is overcome by the speaker's conviction that Christ (Perseus) will not forsake his Andromeda. Read as a simple mythical poem, the poem has power, yet elucidation of its allegory is necessary for a full understanding of its meaning. Without such an interpretation, references like "A wilder beast from West" would remain obscure:

Now Time's Andromeda on this rock rude,
With not her either beauty's equal or
Her injury's, looks off by both horns of shore,
Her flower, her piece of being, doomed dragon food.

Time past she has been attempted and pursued
By many blows and banes; but now hears roar
A wilder beast from West than all were, more
Rife in her wrongs, more lawless, and more lewd.

Her Perseus linger and leave her to her extremes?--
Pillowy air he treads a time and hangs
His thoughts on her, forsaken that she seems,

All while her patience, morselled into pangs,
Mounts; then to alight disarming, no one dreams,
With Gorgon's gear and barebill/thongs and fangs.

²³Letters, I, 87. Elisabeth W. Schneider sees this poem as crucial in the evolution of Hopkins's final, plain style. Schneider, pp. 177-185.

²⁴However, I cannot agree with Jim Hunter that the poem fails because it is "impersonal." Hunter, p. 82.

²⁵For Hopkins, the image of a dragon attacking a woman was symbolic of Satan's continuous attack upon the human race. See Sermons and Devotional Writings, p. 200.

At a primary level the speaker's function is to depict a mythical situation, but beneath this depiction lies his concern for his church, and his faith in the apocalyptic power of Christ. A fuller sense of the speaker's nature emerges from an allegorical explication of the poem's subject and meaning. We perceive once again his priestly nature.

"Peace," which was probably written in October, 1879, is a much more personal poem than "Andromeda." It describes the unrest, and need for peace, which beset Hopkins during the last years of his life. At the time of writing the poem he was a little over thirty-five, and he died within ten years, before his forty-fifth birthday.

The first two stanzas and the first line and a half of the last stanza are addressed to "Peace," personified as a "wild wooddove." The speaker asks this bird of peace when he will take permanent possession of his being:

When will you ever, Peace, wild wooddove, shy wings shut,
 Your round me roaming end, and under be my boughs ?
 When, when, Peace, will you, Peace ? I'll not play hypocrite
 To own my heart: I yield you do come sometimes; but
 That piecemeal peace is poor peace. What pure peace allows
 Alarm of wars, the daunting wars, the death of it ?
 O surely, reaving Peace, my Lord should leave in lieu
 Some good!

Although primarily an address to "Peace," the poem also involves reflection and prayer. In reflecting upon his situation, the speaker is forced to acknowledge that he sometimes enjoys peace. By addressing "Peace" at the opening of the last stanza, he also implicitly prays, through "Peace" to his Lord, that he will indeed be left "Some good!"

The last stanza closes with a second acknowledgement, that amounts to a recognition. The Lord leaves the meditative speaker patience, which will become peace. Besides, peace achieved through patience will not be a merely languorous

state, but will become the proper condition of a life leading to action. Behind the address to "Peace," we can observe the mental workings of a meditative speaker concerned with putting his spiritual house in order. Hopkins's many Jesuit retreats, and daily attentions to the Ignatian spiritual exercises, lie behind the poem. The Lord is just to the soul who seeks Him:

And so he does leave Patience exquisite,
That plumes to Peace thereafter. And when Peace here does
house
He comes with work to do, he does not come to coo,
He comes to brood and sit.

From address to a desired quality, this meditative poem moves towards a recognition of the nature of the quality desired, and the conditions it will impose. The poem also reveals its speaker's spiritual state. Although the speaker's immediate function in the poem is to address "Peace," he also succeeds in revealing himself to himself. In doing so he discovers a solution to his needs; his meditation is successfully resolved.

In "At the Wedding March," which is dated October 21, 1879, the priestly speaker blesses a bride and groom.²⁶ After his address, the speaker turns to Christ, the patron of marriage. This turning involves a movement from a first person plural voice, through which the speaker identifies himself with the married couple and the congregation at their wedding, to a first person singular voice, in which the speaker confronts Christ as one of His priests.²⁷ From direct address to the

²⁶ Like "Binsey Poplars," Hopkins referred to this poem as a "little lyric." See Letters, I, 103. Closer analysis reveals that the poem is more than this, for as Donald McChesney notes, "The title was originally 'At a wedding.' The alteration pinpoints the priestly meditation at the climax of the ceremony, as bride and groom, newly wed, walk down the aisle away from the altar and out towards life. The poem is the thoughts and prayers of the priest as he watches them go." McChesney, p. 110.

²⁷ Hopkins told Dixon that the poem was both "personal" and "plainspoken." See Letters, II, 132.

wedded pair, the speaker-priest turns to His master, Christ, in the poem's last stanza. In both activities the speaker fulfills his differing functions as priest; and the poem provides a further example of the emergence of Hopkins's new priestly persona:

God with honour hang your head,
Groom, and grace you, bride, your bed
With lissome scions, sweet scions,
Out of hallowed bodies bred.

Each be other's comfort kind:
Déep, déeper than divined,
Divine charity, dear charity,
Fast you ever, fast bind.

Then let the March tread our ears:
I to him turn with tears
Who to wedlock, his wonder wedlock,
Déals triumph and immortal years.

The last stanza reveals the necessary isolation of the speaker-priest, who, even while officiating at a communal occasion, must always remember the sacred duties that define his professional function.

From officiating at a marriage, the speaker moves in "Felix Randal," written in Liverpool in April, 1880, to describing his duties at a blacksmith's death. "Felix Randal" is yet another poem in this group in which Hopkins's priestly profession is presented. The poem is at once a triumphant elegy and a depiction of the speaker's relationship with the dying farrier.²⁸ The speaker is able to console both Felix and himself with the spiritual comforts that he, as priest, can afford the farrier. The intimacy of the relationship

²⁸ Paul L. Mariani describes the poem as "an astonishingly complex emotional performance which succeeds simultaneously as elegy and as Christian celebration of the final victory over death." Mariani, p. 167. He points out further that just as Felix has "shielded" horses, the speaker-priest has "shielded" Felix for his spiritual journey into death. "Felix," of course, means "happy or blessed" and "Randal" means "shield" as well as a strip of leather placed on the heels of a shoe. Mariani, p. 169.

between priest and dying man is delicately realized in the internal rhyme of line eleven of the poem, "Thy tears that touched my heart, child, Felix, poor Felix Randal." The tears of the dying man move the priest to love and sympathy. Thus, what emerges from the poem is a lively sense of both the priest and the blacksmith, of their human relationship, and of the final irrelevance of physical death. The poem opens dramatically with the speaker's reception of the news of the farrier's death. What follows is a meditation upon the blacksmith's nature and predicament, and a revelation of the speaker's own relationship to both:

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

News of the blacksmith's death immediately calls to mind, in the speaker, his priestly duties towards him. In the second quatrain, the speaker proceeds to describe the farrier's sickness, and the spiritual ministrations undertaken on his behalf:

Sickness broke him. Impatient, he cursed at first, but mended
Being anointed and all; though a heavenlier heart began some
Months earlier, since I had our sweet reprieve and ransom
Tendered to him. Ah well, God rest him all road ever he
offended!

The achievement of the relationship between the priest and the blacksmith lies in the fact that the speaker was able to make Felix Randal accept and overcome his death. The fact that the blacksmith "mended" spiritually before dying reveals that the speaker's sigh of resignation at the end of the octave is something other than a sigh of despair.

In the sestet, the speaker reflects further upon the transience of life. He also recognizes the possibility of

forming new and significant human relationships even at the point of death:

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

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

The speaker's sense of death defeated is revealed in the resurgent imagery of the final tercet. "Felix Randal" is one of several poems of this period specifically concerned with people. It belies suggestions that Hopkins was indifferent to humanity,²⁹ and provides modification of his attacks on man in the 1877 sonnets. Hopkins had a lively sense of human limitation; but he clearly loved individual men. In "Felix Randal" the speaker's function is to present three things: a portrait of Felix Randal's triumphant death struggle, an account of his own priestly responsibilities in this situation, and finally a human relationship of critical importance; it is a human and spiritual relationship through which death is transcended. The poem's last heroic line indicates the speaker's sense of the regenerated blacksmith's spiritual power.³⁰

Where "Felix Randal" depicts a relationship between a blacksmith and his priest, Hopkins's next poem, "Brothers,"

²⁹See A. R. Jones who suggests that Hopkins "divested himself of the love of created beings." Jones, p. 310.

³⁰As Paul L. Mariani observes, "The metamorphosis of the 'great grey drayhorse' into a light, supple, Pegasean steed with 'bright and battering sandal' is an exact parallel of Felix Randal's spiritual transformation. The movement of the entire sonnet towards transformation is telescoped in the two halves of the final resounding line." Mariani, p. 171.

written in August, 1880, describes the love of one brother for another. The speaker is a narrator and observer, who watches the emotion felt by an elder brother, Henry, for his younger brother, John, who is performing in a play. The elder brother is filled by embarrassment and love at his brother's performance. The speaker-observer carefully delineates the human situation before him, and then, at the close of the poem, reflects upon its significance. Although we are fallen ("framed in fault"), we are, nevertheless, capable of love. Love, the speaker implies, is a virtue that can lead to regeneration. Nature may well be "bad, base, and blind," but it is capable of kindness. In terms of narrative technique the poem is subtly constructed. While Henry watches John in a play, the speaker watches Henry, who becomes the speaker's own dramatic subject. Careful description of this second and, for the speaker, more important drama is followed by concluding reflection. The poem opens with praise of brotherly love:

How lovely the elder brother's
Life all laced in the other's
Love-laced!

The situation which has allowed the speaker to make this opening comment is then described in detail:

-- what once I well
Witnessed; so fortune fell.
When Shrovetide, two years gone,
Our boys' plays brought on
Part was picked for John,
Young John; then fear, then joy
Ran revel in the elder boy.
Now the night come; all
Our company thronged the hall;
Henry, by the wall,
Beckoned me beside him:
I came where he called, and eyed him
By meanwhiles; making my play
Turn most on tender byplay.
For, wrung all on love's rack,
My lad, and lost in Jack,
Smiled, blushed, and bit his lip;
Or drove, with a diver's dip,

Clutched hands through clasped knees;
 And many a mark like these,
 Told tales with what heart's stress
 He hung on the imp's success.
 Now the other was brass-bóld:
 Hé had no work to hold
 His heart up at the strain;
 Nay, roguish ran the vein.
 Two tedious acts were past;
 Jack's call and cue at last;
 When Henry, heart-forsook,
 Dropped eyes and dared not look.
 Thére! the háll rúng!
 Dog, he did give tongue!
 But Harry -- in his hands he has flung
 His tear-tricked cheeks of flame
 For fond love and for shame.

Close observation of Henry's love for his brother allows the speaker his general, concluding reflection. Human nature is capable of love:

Ah Nature, framed in fault,
 There's comfort then, there's salt;
 Nature, bad, base, and blind,
 Dearly thou canst be kind;
 There dearly thén, déarly,
 Dearly thou canst be kind.

The speaker's description of human nature as "bad, base, and blind" is consistent with the moral voice of the 1877 sonnets, but Hopkins is not narrow-minded. He is prepared to make exceptions, and he makes one here. His concern with individual human beings in these middle poems reveals an effort to test his pessimistic view of man against actual examples of humanity. In his final sonnets of desolation he makes the Christ-like effort of taking the whole of human limitation and failure upon himself. Perception of failure in the human world leads eventually to exploration of this failure in himself. But "Brothers" is a poem that celebrates the power of love. It was Hopkins's abiding love of Christ that, finally, saved him too, and allowed him, on his deathbed, to say that he was "happy" to die.

Intuition of death is the subject of his next poem, "Spring and Fall," which is addressed "to a young child."³¹ This poem is dated September 7, 1880. Together with "Pied Beauty," it is the most frequently anthologized of Hopkins's poems. Its elegiac note strikes like a remembered loss of innocence. As in "Felix Randal," the speaker is sympathetic; this time to a young child, Margaret, who grieves at the fall of the year.³² The speaker is older and wiser than the child, and the poem's painful truth emerges from his inability to deceive her about the cause of her grief. Death is "the blight man was born for," and the poem dramatizes once again Hopkins's keen sense of the transience of human and natural life. His need is always for a reality beyond life's limitations. The speaker begins by questioning the child, and ends by explaining the situation to her.³³ It is hard to imagine any child being consoled by such a speaker, yet the poem's elegiac tone conveys a bitter and stubborn truth. In earthly terms there is no escaping the reality that the poem presents. Taken in context, however, the poem implies Hopkins's spiritual alternatives to the situation that Margaret confronts:

³¹Unlike "The Wreck of the Deutschland" or the "professional" poems of this period the situation of "Spring and Fall" is entirely fictional. The poem is "not founded on any real incident," Hopkins told Bridges. Letters, I, 109.

³²As E. E. Phare suggests, the speaker "uses the subtlety and shews the insight of a good confessor." Phare, p. 51. Again the priestly role is suggested.

³³W. S. Johnson appropriately notes that here "The Romantic, Wordsworthian, child, the visionary, has become the Victorian child, more victim than visionary." Johnson, pp. 117-118.

Márgarét, áre you gríeving
 Over Goldengrove unleaving ?
 Leáves, líke the things of man, you
 With your fresh thoughts care for, can you ?

Opening questions are followed by the speaker's relation of his own longer experience to Margaret's youthful grief. Elegy, here, grows out of a sense of mutual loss:

Áh! ás the heart grows older
 It will come to such sights colder
 By and by, nor spare a sigh
 Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
 And yet you will weep and know why.
 Now no matter, child, the name:
 Sórrów's springs áre the same.
 Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
 What heart heard of, ghost guessed:
 It ís the blight man was born for,
 It is Margaret you mourn for.

In "Spring and Fall," the carpe diem moralizing of some of the 1877 sonnets is distilled into a delicate expression of elegiac emotion.³⁴ At a literal level, Margaret is offered a hard lesson, but rhythmically and emotionally a sense of sympathy and shared grief is communicated. One cannot help feeling that Hopkins's open-minded confrontation with actual and imagined people like Randal, the Bugler, Henry, the boy of "The Handsome Heart," and Margaret, was responsible for his modification of a bleakly pessimistic view of human nature. Man is inadequate, but there is need to, at least, sympathize with individual men. Hopkins's pastoral work in these years, after years of cloistered preparation, is, perhaps, the biographical reason for this development of his view of the human situation. His priestly profession becomes the central subject in these poems in which he recurrently dramatizes himself as a priest.

³⁴ Jim Hunter's charge that the poem expresses a "knowing sentimentality" is erroneous in my view. Hunter, p. 84.

"Inversnaid" is dated September 28, 1881. It is a more complex poem than a first reading would suggest. At first sight the poem, like "Penmaen Pool," seems to be a simple celebration of a place. The first three stanzas depict the natural vitality of Inversnaid. However, the last line of the second stanza indicates something that natural beauty and life can achieve. "It rounds and rounds Despair to drowning." The capitalization of "despair" seems curious. It is used to call attention to a state of mind that Inversnaid is able to destroy. This insertion into the midst of three stanzas of celebration, and depiction of Inversnaid, prepares the ground for the speaker's conclusions in stanza four. At the opening of this final stanza the speaker asks a question. His question is addressed to himself, to the audience of his poem, and, also perhaps, to God. For after his question, the speaker prays in the second and third lines of the stanza that the beauties of Inversnaid may never be destroyed. As in "Binsey Poplars," Hopkins is concerned that the natural life of Britain be preserved wherever possible. In 1881 he was already occupied with a problem which is still with us, the need to preserve natural life in the face of industrial expansion and pollution. In "Inversnaid," Hopkins's prayer for the preservation of wild life is addressed to his reader and to God, and his poem ends with an exhortation, "Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet."

Thus, "Inversnaid" is something more than a simple celebration of natural life. It includes, in the form of a prayer, a request for its preservation. The speaker gives one explicit reason why he desires this preservation: God's creation is beautiful, and is able to overcome despair in man. What could be a stronger reason for maintaining the beauties of Inversnaid? The speaker, therefore, has two functions in the poem. First he celebrates Inversnaid by bringing it to life

poetically, and secondly he makes an urgent appeal for the preservation of its beauty. The fourth line of stanza two relates the two functions by suggesting the kind of positive benefits that a place like Inversnaid has to offer man. Careful reading of the poem reveals the presence of these two related functions of the speaker, who emerges as a man who loves natural life, and is earnestly concerned that it be allowed to continue its existence. His own despair, it would seem, has been overcome by Inversnaid. The speaker offers us a personal testimony:

This darksome burn, horseback brown,
His rollrock highroad roaring down,
In coop and in comb the fleece of his foam
Flutes and low to the lake falls home.

A windpuff-bonnet of fáwn-fróth
Turns and twindles over the broth
Of a pool so pitchblack, féll-frówning,
It rounds and rounds Despair to drowning.

Degged with dew, dappled with dew
Are the groins of the braes that the brook treads through,
Wiry heathpacks, fitches of fern,
And the beadbonny ash that sits over the burn.

What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and wildness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.

Hopkins's sensitivity to natural beauty is revealed in his lively realization of Inversnaid. It is appropriate that the poem has been influential upon later poets of natural life. Theodore Roethke, for example, paid Hopkins the tribute of using the last line of the poem as a title.³⁵

"As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame," which is undated, but is placed by Gardner and MacKenzie with this group of poems, is a poetic demonstration of Hopkins's

³⁵Theodore Roethke, "Long Live the Weeds," in Words for the Wind (London: Secker and Warburg, 1957), p. 27.

Scotist view of individuality.³⁶ Each created thing, whether it be a kingfisher, a dragonfly, or stone, the string of an instrument, a bell, or a man, reveals its individuality in acting out its nature. Thus, the just man is called a just man because he does just things. As in "Henry Purcell," everything is felt to possess a unique self, a "forgèd feature," which is "forgèd" through the active play of its nature in the world. The unique thing about man, however, is his potential Christ-likeness; and through his active presence in man Christ pays tribute to God, his father. The poem dramatizes both Hopkins's conviction of the individuality of created things, and his belief that Christ is central in human life. Besides, Hopkins's desire to write a unique kind of poetry, that would express his own individuality is evident in this poem. The style of the poem is Hopkins's style and no one else's, "myself it speaks and spells, / Crying What I do is me: for that I came." Again, we have an example of a poem thematically concerned with "the forgèd feature," which is also a practical demonstration of its presence in Hopkins's poetry.

As far as the speaker is concerned, the poem is yet another meditation. In the octave, he elaborates a series of examples of individuality, drawn from the world of nature, and the world of objects. In the sestet, he goes further; these examples have a human analogy. Like birds, insects, and objects, men are unique, and their uniqueness lies in Christ's activity in their lives. Thus, the poem progresses logically, with the logic of a meditation that begins by considering the life of trivial things, and then moves up to man, and thence, further, to Christ and God. The poem's movement towards its climax includes a hierarchical progression from dragonflies to deity:³⁷

³⁶See Poems, p. 281.

³⁷See Pick, p. 54 for the Thomistic origins of this hierarchical progression.

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
 As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
 Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
 Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
 Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
 Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
 Selves -- goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,
 Crying What I do is me: for that I came.

I say more: the just man justices;
 Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;
 Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is --
 Christ. For Christ plays in ten thousand places,
 Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
 To the Father through the features of men's faces.

Besides having a climactic movement, as it progresses upwards from birds and insects to God, the poem possesses an implicitly cyclic movement. In its end is its beginning, for God is, finally, responsible for the individuality of the creatures and objects described in the octave. As we come to the poem's climax, in which Christ plays out his nature before his father, through man, we are reminded of God's creative role, and the way in which the whole world reveals signs of divine activity. The meditative speaker offers us his view of the world.

"Ribblesdale," which was written at Stonyhurst in 1882, bears a superficial similarity to "Inversnaid," but it goes deeper than the earlier poem. It also reaches back to the theme of the sonnets of 1877, with their concern about human inadequacy.³⁸ Hopkins, it seems, cannot meditate for long on nature without meditating upon man and his relationship to the divine and natural world.

³⁸ Writing to Dixon on June 25, 1883 Hopkins mentions that the poem was intended "as a companion" to "In the Valley of the Elwy." Letters, II, 108.

In "Ribblesdale" meditation leads the speaker to several sober recognitions.³⁹ To begin with the earth is seen to be insentient, despite its endurance, and although it appears to plead to heaven:

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

In the second quatrain the meditative speaker continues his address to the earth, and maintains his tone of affection towards her, already evident in the first quatrain. The earth pleads with man, who controls, yet misuses her. Even in simply enduring, the earth is true and faithful, both to her creator, God, and to her temporal master, man:

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

The octave is not entirely clear at a first reading. The reference to earth pleading to heaven in lines two and three of the first quatrain creates the suggestion that it is God to whom the earth pleads in the second quatrain. However, consideration of the sestet, and closer reading of the octave reveal that the earth, in fact, appeals, or would like to appeal, to heaven on man's behalf. As the sestet indicates, the earth is careworn because of man's inadequacy. Man, it becomes clear, is the dealer down of dales, the reeler of rivers, and the giver over of "all to rack and wrong" presented in quatrain two.

³⁹ Donald McChesney points out that MSS of the poem bear a Latin epigraph from Romans 8: 19-20. "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain glorious liberty of the children of God." McChesney, p. 122.

Although the earth in "Inversnaid" was presented as capable of healing human despair, such an ability is not felt, by the speaker of "Ribblesdale," to be permanent. Because of man's failings the earth wears a careworn aspect. Hopkins returns, here, to the theme of human frailty, which preoccupied him in the 1877 sonnets. Man is, in fact, earth's eye, tongue, and heart, and these crucial organs, the sestet considers, let the earth down, and cause her to show "dear concern" for her errant, temporal master. The speaker sympathizes with nature, while he castigates man. Man, the speaker believes is selfish, and fails to consider eternity. In the sestet, the speaker uses the first person plural "our" to identify himself with an audience that he, also, attacks. As readers, we are the recipients of the admonition that the poem directs at man. Man has abused his charge, God's creation, and the earth, if she could, would weep for him.

In this meditation Hopkins manipulates such pastoral conventions as a sympathetic nature for a particular moral purpose:

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

The speaker's sympathy for nature, and near contempt for man, is revealed in the different emphases given to the same adjective "dear." When referred to man in "dear and dogged man" the tone is patronizing to the point of contempt and exasperation. However, when used to describe the earth's concern in "dear concern," the tone, partial and sympathetic, is the reverse of this. "Ribblesdale," then, comes to a quite different conclusion to "Inversnaid," and reveals a speaker, who is approaching a despair at human limitation that natural beauty alone cannot cure.

The next poem, "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo" (Maidens' song from St. Winefred's Well), which is placed and dated, Stonyhurst, October 13, 1882, proposes an answer to the encroaching despair of "Ribblesdale." However, in the first half of this poem, the maiden chorus, who speak the poem rehearse the "Ribblesdale" problem once again. Although the poem is spoken by dramatic characters (the poem is part of an unfinished drama), it reveals a strong lyrical concern. The question posed by the poem is how can natural beauty be maintained? In the first section the maidens present the voice of the mournful and pessimistic "Leaden Echo." "The Leaden Echo" asks:

How to kéeep -- is there ány any, is there none such, nowhere
 known some, bow or brooch or braid or brace, láce,
 latch or catch or key to keep
 Back beauty, keep it, beauty, beauty, beauty, . . . from
 vanishing away?
 Ó is there no frowning of these wrinkles, rankèd wrinkles
 deep
 Dówn? no waving off of these most mournful messengers,
 still messengers, sad and stealing messengers of grey?--

Consistent with its leaden despair, the echo replies to its own question as follows, "No there's none, there's none, O no there's none, / Nor can you long be, what you now are, called fair." The echo addresses both fading beauty and the members of the play's audience, "Do what you may do, what, do what you may, / And wisdom is early to despair." The absurd sententiousness of "wisdom is early to despair" is then followed by the complete collapse of "The Leaden Echo," incapable of finding any solution to the transience of earthly things:

Be beginning; since, no, nothing can be done
 To keep at bay
 Age and age's evils, hoar hair,
 Ruck and wrinkle, drooping, dying, death's worst, winding
 sheets, tombs and worms and tumbling to decay;
 So be beginning, be beginning to despair,
 O there's none; no no no there's none:
 Be beginning to despair, to despair,
 Despair, despair, despair, despair.

Presumably, the two voices of the echoes are spoken by two halves of the maidens' chorus. "The Golden Echo" picks up the word "despair," divides and conquers it, and replies:

Spare!

There is one, yes I have one (Hush there!),
 Only not within seeing of the sun.
 Not within the singeing of the strong sun,
 Tall sun's tingeing, or treacherous the tainting of the earth's
 air,
 Somewhere elsewhere there is ah well where! one,
 One.

Although the poem is perhaps too neatly dialectical, and smacks of an exercise in opposites, the transition is subtly achieved, and is consistent with the device of verbal repetition used throughout. Words are melted apart to their nearest associates in sound; and it is appropriate to the positive and optimistic nature of "The Golden Echo" that it should be able to see the part of the word "despair," that spells an exit, when "The Leaden Echo" is grinding itself into a repetitive mire. Beauty must be related to faith, and become a condition of the spirit, in order to survive the passage of time. The poem dramatizes a movement from natural to supernatural beauty. It is, also, interesting, in the light of Hopkins's personal concern with the problem posed in the poem, that he should give "The Golden Echo" a first person singular voice as its reply proceeds. This suggests his own lyric identification with what "The Golden Echo" has to say, although the echo's words are ostensibly spoken by a chorus of maidens, whose voice, logically, should be first person plural:

Yes I can tell such a key, I do know such a place,
 Where whatever's prized and passes of us, everything that's
 fresh and fast flying of us, seems to us sweet of us and
 swiftly away with, done away with, undone.

Although writing a choral speech, Hopkins's personal concern and desire to engage his audience directly is evident in the use of "I" and "us" in these lines. Continuing the device of

repetition, the echo proceeds to describe the delicacy and transience of beauty:

Undone, done with, soon done with, and yet dearly and
 dangerously sweet
 Of us, the wimpled-water-dimpled, not-by-morning-matched
 face
 The flower of beauty, fleece of beauty, too too apt to, ah! to
 fleet,
 Never fleets móre, fastened with the tenderest truth
 To its own best being and its loveliness of youth: it is an
 everlastingness of, O it is an all youth!

The closing lines of this section propose an answer to transience; beauty must be related to truth. Ejaculatory response, "O it is an all youth!" characteristic at such moments in Hopkins's poetry, follows this perception.

Invitation and invocation follow. "The Golden Echo" exhorts "The Leaden Echo," and the drama's audience, to cherish beauty, and return it to its fountainhead, God. Seen in divine, rather than natural, terms beauty's transience disappears, and beauty becomes an eternal and spiritual condition. We are reminded, here, of the conclusion of "Spring," in which Christ was requested to gather up beauty while it was fresh and young. If beauty is returned to God it will expand rather than disappear:

Come then, your ways and airs and looks, locks, maidengear,
 gallantry and gaiety and grace,
 Winning ways, airs innocent, maiden manners, sweet looks,
 loose locks, long locks, lovelocks, gaygear, going gallant,
 girlgrace --
 Resign them, sign them, seal them, send them, motion them
 with breath,
 And with sighs soaring, soaring síghs, deliver
 Them; beauty-in-the-ghost, deliver it, early now, long before
 death
 Give beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty, back to God,
 beauty's self and beauty's giver.
 See; not a hair is, not an eyelash, not the least lash lost;
 every hair
 Is, hair of the head, numbered.

Opening with the imperative "Come," the passage closes with a demonstrative "See." "The Golden Echo" offers its proof. If

beauty is returned to God, "beauty's self and beauty's giver," the attainment of immortality, "beauty-in-the-ghost," will be the result. In fact, "beauty-in-the-ghost" is the passage's crucial phrase, and it sums up the poem's entire progression in its movement from natural to spiritual beauty.

"The Golden Echo" continues, in its choral and now first person plural voice, that while we sleep the dream of earthly life, beauty is maintained by its creator, God:

Nay, what we had lighthanded left in surly the mere mould
 Will have waked and have waxed and have walked with the
 wind what while we slept,
 This side, that side hurling a heavyheaded hundredfold
 What while we, while we slumbered.

The poem, then, concludes with a temporary reservation, which is overcome, a brief return of "The Leaden Echo," and a re-direction and re-dedication of the efforts of the chorus, and the audience. If God cares for beauty, why are we smitten with despair, the chorus asks. The "O" of perception employed earlier in the poem becomes a sigh of anguish here, and again we anticipate briefly Hopkins's last sonnets:

O then, weary then why should we tread? O why are we so
 haggard at the heart, so care-coiled, care-killed, so
 fagged, so fashed, so cogged, so cumbered,
 When the thing we freely forfeit is kept with fonder a care,
 Fonder a care kept than we could have kept it, kept
 Far with fonder a care (and we, we should have lost it) finer
 fonder
 A care kept.

Another voice, that can only be "The Leaden Echo's," then asks "The Golden Echo" where God harbours beauty, "--Where kept? do but tell us where kept, where --." The members of "The Leaden Echo" side of the chorus beseech the advice of "The Golden Echo" on their own behalf, and, also, on behalf of the drama's audience. "The Golden Echo," indicating heaven with a dramatic gesture, simply replies "Yonder." "The Leaden Echo" responds. " --What high as that!," and is clearly

surprised by the effort of attainment that will be required of it, but nonetheless agrees to pursue the quest with: "We follow, now we follow --." The poem ends with "The Golden Echo" repeating its direction. Thus, from "The Leaden Echo's" "despair," that ended the first part of the poem, we move towards heaven, which is: "Yonder, yes yonder, yonder, / Yonder."

"The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo," then, is a choral poem, divided between two groups of dramatic speakers, who represent two contrasted points of view about what can be done in the face of the transience of natural beauty. For "The Leaden Echo," "despair" seems to be the only course to follow when the inevitable passage of natural beauty is perceived. "The Golden Echo," however, initiates, in reply, a search for "God's better beauty, grace," which even "The Leaden Echo," finally, agrees to follow. This is Hopkins's only completed poem that is part of a play, and it makes successful use of contrasted choral speakers.

The final poem before Hopkins's last group of poems, that includes the sonnets of desolation, is "The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air we Breathe." It was written five years after "The Loss of the Eurydice," with which this chapter began, in May, 1883. W. H. Gardner provides an illuminating introductory comment on the poem. "In this poem G. M. H. says that just as the atmosphere sustains the life of man and tempers the power of the sun's radiation, so the immaculate nature of Mary is the softening, humanizing medium of God's glory, justice, and grace. Through her the ineffable Godhead becomes comprehensible -- sweetly attuneable to the limited

human heart; through her God's glory, as 'the life of God,' becomes actualized in Man."⁴⁰

"The Blessed Virgin . . ." is written in six verse paragraphs. The speaker begins the first paragraph by describing and praising the element of air:

Wild air, world-mothering air,
Nestling me everywhere,
That each eyelash or hair
Girdles; goes home betwixt
The fleeci-est, frailest-flixed
Snowflake; that's fairly mixed
With, riddles, and is rife
In every least thing's life;
This needful, never spent,
And nursing element;
My more than meat and drink,
My meal at every wink.

He continues by introducing the analogy suggested in the poem's title. The connection between air and Mary has, however, already been hinted at in the poem's opening line, when the air is described as "world-mothering." No poem of Hopkins's is more reminiscent of seventeenth-century poetry in its bold use of comparison. The poem, also, takes its place in the meditative tradition defined by Louis L. Martz,⁴¹ for comparison grows, here, out of deep reflection:

⁴⁰ Poems, p. 283. Besides, the poem finds a parallel in a sermon that Hopkins preached on October 5, 1879 in which he quotes St. Bernard's saying, "All grace given through Mary: this a mystery. Like blue sky, which for all its richness of colour does not stain the sunlight, though smoke and red clouds do, so God's graces come to us unchanged but all through her. Moreover she gladdens the Catholic's heaven and when she is brightest so is the sun her son: he that sees no blue sees no sun either." Sermons and Devotional Writings, p. 29.

⁴¹ See Louis L. Martz, The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1954).

This air, which, by life's law,
 My lung must draw and draw
 Now but to breathe its praise,
 Minds me in many ways
 Of her who not only
 Gave God's infinity
 Dwindled to infancy
 Welcome in womb and breast,
 Birth, milk, and all the rest
 But mothers each new grace
 That does now reach our race --.

The first paragraph concludes with praise of Mary, as it had opened with praise of the element of air. The two apostrophes are linked by an intermediate elaboration of analogy:

Mary Immaculate,
 Merely a woman, yet
 Whose presence, power is
 Great as no goddess's
 Was deemèd, dreamèd; who
 This one work has to do --
 Let all God's glory through,
 God's glory which would go
 Through her and from her flow
 Off, and no way but so.

The poem's second paragraph is much shorter than the first, and it expands the possibilities of comparison between air and Mary. We are wound round with mercy "As if with air." the speaker tells us, and so is Mary. Like air, she surrounds the world, since God has given her "providence" to dispense. The logic of analogy is yet more cunningly wrought as the paragraph concludes, "men are meant to share / Her life as life does air."

As we move into the centre of the poem, we progress naturally from a consideration of Mary to a consideration of her more important son, Christ, who always holds the middle of the stage for Hopkins. Mary bore Christ in her body, and can help us to bear him too. The speaker is as eager, as always, to instruct his reader, as he is to meditate upon a religious subject. The two activities are inseparably connected in

Hopkins. In a Jesuit priest it is natural and inevitable that they should be; the poem is very like a sermon:

If I have understood,
 She holds high motherhood
 Towards all our ghostly good
 And plays in grace her part
 About man's beating heart,
 Laying, like air's fine flood,
 The deathdance in his blood;
 Yet no part but what will
 Be Christ our Saviour still.

The rest of third paragraph is concerned with Christ's power in the world, and in our lives. But His holy mother is never long forgotten, since:

Of her flesh he took flesh:
 He does take fresh and fresh,
 Though much the mystery how,
 Not flesh but spirit now
 And makes, O marvellous!
 New Nazareths in us,
 Where she shall yet conceive
 Him, morning, noon and eve;
 New Bethlems, and he born
 There, evening, noon, and morn --;

The paragraph ends with the speaker's reflection upon the implications of "Bethlem or Nazareth." The places where Christ was born and conceived make the speaker think again about Christ's birth in himself, which will effect his spiritual re-birth:

Men here may draw like breath
 More Christ and baffle death;
 Who, born so, comes to be
 New self and nobler me
 In each one and each one
 More makes, when all is done,
 Both God's and Mary's Son.

Paragraph four parallels paragraph one in its return to description and praise of air. The element is explored further in all its varied beauties. The speaker exhorts the reader to test his sensuous experience of air:

Again, look overhead
 How air is azured;
 O how! Nay do but stand
 Where you can lift your hand
 Skywards: rich, rich it laps
 Round the four fingergaps.
 Yet such a sapphire-shot,
 Charged, steepèd sky will not
 Stain light. Yea, mark you this:
 It does no prejudice.
 The ~~glass~~-blue days are those
 Where every colour glows,
 Each shape and shadow shows.
 Blue be it: this blue heaven
 The seven or seven times seven
 Hued sunbeam will transmit
 Perfect, not alter it.
 Or if there does some soft,
 On things aloof, aloft,
 Bloom breathe, that one breath more
 Earth is the fairer for.
 Whereas did air not make
 This bath of blue and slake
 His fire, the sun would shake,
 A blear and blinding ball
 With blackness bound, and all
 The thick stars round him roll
 Flashing like flecks of coal,
 Quartz-fret, or sparks of salt,
 In grimy vasty vault.

The virtues of air are beautifully elaborated through this long paragraph, and its many activities are subtly brought to life. Without the intermediary of air the sun would overpower us, just as without Mary's mediation we would be overpowered by God's glory.

In paragraph five, which parallels paragraph two, in its central concern with Mary, her power to intercede on our behalf is presented, and the analogy of paragraph four is completed:

So God was god of old:
 A mother came to mould
 Those limbs like ours which are
 What must make our daystar
 Much dearer to mankind;
 Whose glory bare would blind

Or less would win man's mind.
 Through her we may see him
 Made sweeter, not made dim,
 And her hand leaves his light
 Sifted to suit our sight.

In concluding his poem, Hopkins, perhaps, remembered his earlier poem to Mary, "Rosa Mystica," for in both, the speaker praises Mary as his mother, and asks to be drawn to her like a child. The speaker wishes Christ's Virgin mother to become his native element, his "atmosphere." Appropriately, the poem ends in celebratory prayer:

Be thou then, O thou dear
 Mother, my atmosphere;
 My happier world, wherein
 To wend and meet no sin;
 Above me, round me lie
 Fronting my froward eye
 With sweet and scarless sky;
 Stir in my ears, speak there
 Of God's love, O live air,
 Of patience, penance, prayer:
 World-mothering air, air wild,
 Wound with thee, in thee isled,
 Fold home, fast fold thy child.

Analogy leads to a kind of transformation, in which Mary becomes the air the speaker wishes to breathe. Meditation upon Mary's similarity to air issues in prayer to her, and celebration of her virtues. The speaker's dual function is to evolve his analogy while involving his audience. In doing both he seeks to reveal Mary's powerful nature, and her critical place in our spiritual life.

In the twenty complete poems that he wrote between 1878 and 1883, from his thirty-fifth to his fortieth year, Hopkins concentrated upon religious, human and natural themes. These themes are frequently related, and they discover the speaker of these poems in several different roles. The most important is his role as priest. Indeed, the most interesting new development that emerges in this period of Hopkins's

creative life is his establishment of the speaker as priest. This persona grows out of Hopkins's pastoral work during this period. Its most obvious appearances are in poems like "The Handsome Heart," "The Bugler's First Communion," "Felix Randal" and "At the Wedding March," but it emerges, implicitly at least, in several of the other poems in this group; "The Loss of the Eurydice" and "Spring and Fall" provide good examples. This new persona becomes a part of the increasingly fully "forged feature" of Hopkins's poetic personality, as he transmutes experiences from his daily professional life into poetry with growing ease. If there is a lessening of inspiration there is an important, compensatory confidence in the handling of new, and previously unexplored, areas of experience. Hopkins begins to prepare the ground for his final development by exploring circumstantial events in an increasingly colloquial manner. Indeed, it is well worth noting that it is his external, professional life that provides a central focus of concern in these poems. In the poems that follow a crucial and final development inward takes place. From professional duties, the speaker moves to a confrontation with his inner life. Perhaps Hopkins instinctively recognized the need to explore external reality as fully as possible before embarking upon his final voyage within. New techniques of presentation and new handlings of the speaker's function emerge in this last poetic phase. The circumstantial, "autobiographical" poems of 1878-1883 in their plainer style help to initiate the spiritual diary-like style of the last poems in which we discover a movement from the outer to the inner circumstance.

Following the developing functions of the speaker, we have, by this time, moved a long way from the early poems. Yet there is a continuity of spiritual exploration that holds the poems together as a canon. Their speakers' explorations of spiritual reality provide the continuously central concern.

From "the riv'n Vine" of sensuous and ascetic yearning, we move to a new coherence of poetic personality bred of religious certainty, and successfully dramatized in "The Wreck of the Deutschland," thence to the speaker as the celebrant and preacher of the 1877 sonnets, and here to the speaker as priest. What requires final examination is the speaker's function as spiritual antagonist.

CHAPTER V

MY WINTER WORLD

I I; I more than I or I will die.
-- Robert Lowell, Notebook, 1967-68

Hopkins's desolate sonnets, of all his poems, are the ones that appeal most immediately to the modern reader. They are perennial favourites with his critics, and it is probably because of them, because of their "waste land" notes of despair, that Hopkins is more frequently presented as a modern than a Victorian poet. They will be my primary focus of concern in this final chapter, since in them we discover a new development in the function of the speaker, which has been the centre of attention in this study.

The pertinence of the epigraph from Robert Lowell will become clear as we follow the way in which Hopkins slowly transforms the "I" speaker of the desolate sonnets, whose condition of despair is, finally, seen as essentially limited, into the immortal "I" of his apocalyptic poem, "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire . . ." From an "I" that gropes through a world of darkness, and dramatizes its perception in a newly condensed, contorted and inward style, we move to the public affirmation of the eternal "I" who speaks the words of the triumphant poem that logically concludes the canon of Hopkins's poems. However, analysis of the speaker's new function as inner explorer will be the major concern. Close attention must be paid to his language, to his techniques of presenting himself both to himself and to his audience. In doing so we will discover how Hopkins fulfilled the curve of his poetic

achievement. Almost all major artists undergo a crucial last phase of significant development, Shakespeare, Beethoven and Yeats provide distinguished examples, and Hopkins is no exception.

Hopkins's last sixteen complete poems were written between the early months of 1885, when he was forty, and the end of April, 1889, before he was forty-five, and within two months of his death. Of these sixteen poems, six, written during 1885, comprise a group that has come to be known as the sonnets of desolation.¹ These poems, together with "The Wreck of the Deutschland," and the sonnets of 1877, are Hopkins's best known poems, and form the primary basis of his present reputation as a poet. But besides this group, there are ten other completed poems that require discussion, and several of them are far from desolate. Indeed, it becomes evident that in his last four years, Hopkins continued to explore the contrasts present in human existence that had concerned him throughout his poetic life.

"Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves," which belongs to the early months of 1885, ushers in Hopkins's explorations of anguish and despair.² Hopkins described the poem as "the longest sonnet ever made," and commented further, "Of this long sonnet above all remember what applies to all my verse, that it is, as living art should be, made for performance and that its

¹ Although not intended as a sequence, these poems possess a unity of concern which has led me to stress a developing movement in them. I have accepted Gardner and MacKenzie's chronological arrangement of these poems. See Poems, pp.287-290. For a different ordering see Mariani, p. 212.

² As Alan Heuser observes, "Hopkins confronted a winter world of barren prayer and barren work in an alien land. His heart began a long night watch against a panorama of last things." Heuser, p. 88. Paul L. Mariani reads the poem as a meditation on hell. Mariani, p. 199.

performance is not reading with the eye but loud, leisurely, poetical (not rhetorical) recitation, with long rests, long dwells on the rhyme and other marked syllables, and so on. This sonnet shd. be almost sung: it is most carefully timed in tempo rubato."³ Careful reading of the poem, together with attention to Hopkins's crucial phrase "poetical (not rhetorical) recitation" should further discountenance A. R. Jones's charge that Hopkins lacks the ability to control "tone and mood" in poetry.⁴

The poem describes a grimly personal experience of the earth, at evening, breaking to pieces. This event becomes a metaphor for internal or psychic dissolution, "thoughts against thoughts in groans grind." The poem is an appropriately dark herald of the sonnets to come. Although the speaker employs a first person plural voice, which would suggest a link with his audience, or a public occasion, the poem is deeply meditative. It becomes increasingly clear as the poem proceeds that "our" refers to different, slowly disjuncting, aspects of the speaker's own mind. Earthly dissolution becomes a powerful symbol of psychic disjunction. The poem opens with a deliberately ponderous description of the arrival of night:

Earnest, earthless, equal, attuneable, | vaulty, voluminous
 . . . stupendous
 Evening strains to be tíme's vást, | womb-of-all, home-of-all,
 hearse-of-all night.
 Her fond yellow hornlight wound to the west, | her wild
 hollow hoarlight hung to the height
 Waste; her earliest stars, earlstars, | stárs principal,
 overbend us,
 Fíre-feáuring heaven.

The detailed description of evening, and the telling phrase "overbend us" indicate that the observation of the world by the

³Letters, I, 245-246.

⁴See Jones, p. 317.

speaker enforces or provokes his sense of inner darkness which is revealed as the poem proceeds. The natural world reminds the speaker of things about himself:

For earth | her being has unbound; her
 dapple is at an end, as-
 tray or aswarm, all throughther, in throngs; | self in self
 steeped and pashed -- quite
 Disremembering, dismembering | all now. Heart, you round
 me right
 With: Our evening is over us; our night | whélms, whélms,
 and will end us.

"Self," as we know from "As kingfishers catch fire . . .," can refer to the quintessence of things as well as of persons. But with the arrival of the reference to "Heart," we realize that the earlier reference to "self" has a human and personal application too. Significantly, it is the heart, centre of emotion and intuition, that reminds the speaker of the approach of death, and collapse of his human nature. Earlier, in "The Wreck of the Deutschland," the heart had registered the speaker's immediate response to God. We are recalled also, by the use of a word like "dapple," to the celebratory poems of 1877; but here "dapple is at an end." The world of beauty is collapsing before the speaker as he senses the encroachment of death. Further, it is clear in the last line of the octave that the heart delivers a deeply personal message to the whole of the speaker's nature, every part of which is at the point of dissolution, "Heart, you round me right [i.e. Heart, you call my conscious self to attention] / With: Our evening is over us; our night | whélms, whélms, and will end us."

In the sestet attentive observation of the physical world continues, but the poem becomes increasingly personal. "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" dramatizes the transformation of a natural scene within the speaker's mind. It is the speaker's inner state, we begin to realize, that makes the evening world appear so threatfully demonic. As the speaker's thoughts of

death and destruction grind against each other, the natural world looks more and more dragonish. Nevertheless, it was originally a movement in nature, from day to night, that provided the initial impulse for this meditation. Once the meditation is begun, however, the transforming mind takes over to make all things in nature like itself, and tell of its own condition. We see the movement inwards at work that characterizes these poems of desolation. The external world used in the sonnets of 1877 as a metaphor of divine presence is now used increasingly as a metaphor of inner dislocation. What we have is the arrival of a bleak mental landscape:

Only the beakleaved boughs dragonish | damask the tool-
 smooth bleak light; black,
 Ever so black on it. Our tale, O our oracle! | Let life,
 waned, ah let life wind
 Off her once skéined stained véined variety | upon, all on
 two spools; part, pen, pack
 Now her all in two flocks, two folds -- black, white, | right,
 wrong; 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, selfwring, selfstrung, sheathe- and shelterless, | thoughts
 against thoughts in groans grind.

In "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" the function of the meditative speaker is to articulate his deepening, and increasingly desperate, response to the advent of night. An actual event in the physical world comes to symbolize the arrival of a tormented state of mind. The sonnets of desolation are near at hand, and we notice a new and more profound concern with inner experience on Hopkins's part. Hopkins's poetic persona, or speaker, is required to plumb the depths of his creator's psychic situation. The speaker becomes a mental traveller in a demonic world.

"To what serves Mortal Beauty?" which is dated August 23, 1885, returns to the theme of "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo," for it reasserts the need to reach beyond mere

"Mortal Beauty" to "God's better beauty, grace." The poem, then, is another meditation upon beauty, in which the speaker explores the nature and significance of mortal beauty, before deciding upon the need to attain grace. In this meditation, which consists of a series of questions that the speaker puts to himself and then answers, the importance of mortal beauty, and its power to effect grace, is acknowledged. Pope Gregory, for example, would not have sought the conversion of Britain if he had not admired the fair hair of British slave boys. Also, the beauty of the physical world helps us to think of God, its divine creator. We notice here a brief return both in theme and treatment to earlier poems like the sonnets of 1877. Hopkins's poetry in this last period is able to recapitulate former positions as well as advance on new frontiers of consciousness. In the sestet of the poem, the speaker turns to the laws of religion, "Our law," to which he, as a Catholic, is bound, and seeks its directives. It teaches us to love the inner beauty in men, to love their grace or spiritual light. This is the eternal quality of "God's better beauty" which we must, finally, seek.

In a poem that is structured as an inner argument, the meditative speaker's function is to canvass and answer the questions that come to his mind, and to express for his over-hearing reader his solution to the problem raised, "To what serves Mortal Beauty?" As readers, we share this meditative speaker's search for truth as he proceeds through the intricacies of his argument. In order for the argumentative structure of the poem to emerge clearly the sonnet requires quotation in full:

To what serves mortal beauty | --dangerous; does set danc-
 ing blood -- the O-seal-that-so | feature, flung prouder form
 Than Purcell tune lets tread to ? | See: it does this: keeps
 warm
 Men's wits to the things that are; | what good means -- where
 a glance

Master more may than gaze, | gaze out of countenance.
 Those lovely lads once, wet-fresh | windfalls of war's storm,
 How then should Gregory, a father, | have gleaned else from

swarm-
 ed Rome ? But God to a nation | dealt that day's dear chance.
 To man, that needs would worship | block or barren stone,
 Our law says: Love what are | love's worthiest, were all known;
 World's loveliest -- men's selves. Self | flashes off frame
 and face.

What do then ? how meet beauty ? | Merely meet it; own,
 Home at heart, heaven's sweet gift; | then leave, let that alone.
 Yes, wish that though, wish all, | God's better beauty, grace.

Although the poem is clearly a meditation, and although the speaker seems to be primarily concerned with questioning and answering himself, he is, in addition, aware of the need to direct his audience's response. Such phrases as "See: it does this;" the first person plural reference to "Our law," meant to include all Catholics as well as the speaker, and the practical advice of the poem's conclusion, all suggest that the meditative speaker has, at least partly, a preacher's concern that his meditation is having the right effect upon his readers. The speaker does not merely answer the question "To what serves Mortal Beauty ?" for his own edification. His function is to enlighten his reader as well as himself. Rhetorically, this effect is achieved primarily by the technique of questioning. The speaker asks four questions within the poem, and, as audience, we are forced to consider them. Having been asked questions we expect answers, either from ourselves or from the poem's speaker. Fortunately, he provides answers for us and in doing so directs us to think as he does. The technique of questioning creates a temporary sense of uncertainty that is then allayed as the speaker helps us to answers -- his own, of course. But once disturbed we are all the more willing to accept the speaker's answers. The question-answer technique is a central method both in education and political oratory; Hopkins uses it cleverly in this poem.

Like "To what serves Mortal Beauty ?," "(The Soldier)" is dated August, 1885. Both poems are far from desolate. "(The Soldier)" is more conversational in style than "To what serves Mortal Beauty ?," and in consequence, it seems more public. Later, in contradistinction, we have colloquial style used for more private poetry. From meditating upon beauty, the speaker turns, here, to celebrating Christ's protective power. If men follow the inner light of grace and do good deeds, Christ will champion and reward them. The speaker approaches this theme from a consideration of our admiration for soldiers, a perspective more congenial to the nineteenth than the twentieth century. Hopkins's intense patriotism and his own enlistment in St. Ignatius's army should be borne in mind in reading this poem. The speaker of the poem appeals to a contemporary British love of its soldiery. From admiration for "redcoats." the speaker, granted his terms, moves logically to admiration for Christ. To Hopkins, Christ provides the archetype of the perfect soldier. The speaker openly assumes, in praising soldiers, that his audience shares his admiration. He invokes it by opening the poem in the first person plural. The rhetoric of the question-answer technique is at work again:

Yes. Why do we all, seeing of a soldier, bless him? bless
 Our redcoats, our tars? Both these being, the greater part,
 But frail clay, nay but foul clay. Here it is: the heart,
 Since, proud, it calls the calling manly, gives a guess
 That, hopes that, makes believe, the men must be no less;
 It fancies, feigns, deems, dears the artist after his art;
 And fain will find as sterling all as all is smart,
 And scarlet wear the spirit of war there express.

The speaker, relying upon his reader's shared response, analyzes our reasons for admiring soldiers. In the sestet, he turns to his real subject, Christ, the true soldier. Having relied upon emotional sympathy, and the question-answer technique to get his poem underway, the speaker commands his audience's attention

as he elaborates his analogy. The poem provides us with another approximation in Hopkins's poetry to pulpit rhetoric:⁵

Mark Christ, our King. He knows war, served this soldiering
through;
He of all can reeve a rope best. There he bides in bliss
Now, and seeing somewhere some man do all that man can do,
For love he leans forth, needs his neck must fall on, kiss,
And cry 'O Christ-done deed! So God-made-flesh does too:
Were I come o'er again' cries Christ 'it should be this'.

The sermon-like technique of the poem is evident enough. The speaker seeks to dispose his audience towards Christ by casting him in an attractive light. Yet there is a sting in the tail of this kind of audience manipulation. Were Christ to come again, the speaker avows, and he actually speaks on Christ's behalf, He would come as a soldier. The poem's ending implies apocalyptic consequences. We, as audience, the speaker suggests, must act as Christ's soldiers in order to receive His blessing. We must prepare ourselves for Christ's second coming by enlisting in His army. There is, at least, a hint of military propaganda in the poem's technique of persuasion.

"(Carrion Comfort)" was written in 1885, perhaps as early as May.⁶ It is the first of the sonnets of desolation.⁷

⁵Hopkins's sermon on Christ the hero can be usefully compared with this poem. See Sermons and Devotional Writings, pp. 34-38. The sermon was delivered six years earlier in November, 1879.

⁶See Poems, p. 287.

⁷In dealing with these poems as a group I am following Elisabeth W. Schneider's suggestion that "These 'terrible' sonnets, though they do not record in chronological order a succession of episodes or states of mind, nevertheless make up a sequence or cluster of poems springing about a central situation, in reading which, unless one is prepared on a priori aesthetic grounds to rule out all connected series of poems qua series (at what loss when it comes to Shakespeare's sonnets), one does not ask that what is relevant to all must be repeated in all: the reader's mind need not be wiped blank between poems in order to come at the next freshly. The main 'cause' behind the terrible sonnets is set forth quite as explicitly as need be in the 'Stranger' sonnet." Schneider, p. 187.

We would expect the inward looking style of "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves," and it is certainly present in this poem. In these sonnets we return to the spiritual struggles of the opening stanzas of "The Wreck of the Deutschland," with the difference that these poems frequently fail to issue in the kind of affirmation that follows the opening of the earlier poem. "(Carrion Comfort)" describes its anguished speaker's efforts to resist despair, which had been "The Leaden Echo's" sole alternative, and to face up to his struggle with God. The speaker is so downcast that he would rather fly from God than confront him. Self-recognition, and an acceptance of struggle, is the Pyrrhic victory gained by the speaker in this poem. In the first quatrain of the sonnet the speaker, clearly in a dire state of mind, manages to fight off the suicidal threats of despair. The poem opens with a refusal of despair's "carrion comfort" of non-existence:⁸

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.

Repeated negatives, contorted syntax, and the absence of articles suggest the speaker's anguished state of mind. This is a style of speech that we have not met often in Hopkins's poetry before. Through it the speaker denotes his inner conflicts. They are etched in a quasi-note form, like notes in a spiritual diary.⁹ The speaker's conflict is created by his direct address to Despair, who is personified as a carcass. From the depths of

⁸ Actually to a man of Hopkins's persuasions "non-existence" would mean the fires of hell. A man who accepted despair would end in hell, which would provide a further potent reason for the speaker's refusal of such a spiritual condition.

⁹ This style should be compared with Hopkins's later prose notes which are printed in Sermons and Devotional Writings, pp. 253-271.

his remorse the speaker struggles for a grain of hope, and finds one in his resolution not to cry. "I can no more."¹⁰ His consequent admission to himself is that he can endure more. He does wish that the dark night of despair would pass, and he refuses to choose suicide as a way out of his torment. Indeed, it is remarkable that Hopkins, in the first four lines of the first sonnet of desolation, succeeds in presenting the total movement of these poems in miniature. From the pit of desolation he summons up the resolve to emerge from it. All these poems express a sense of inner darkness which is, finally, overcome. The morning light of persistent faith is ultimately achieved.

In the poem's second quatrain, the speaker recognizes that his struggle with despair is a struggle with God. God has imposed hard conditions upon the speaker in order to try him. But the speaker is so weakened by darkness that he feels unable to undergo his divinely appointed trial. In this state of desolation, God appears to the reluctant speaker as a monstrous form. Hopkins, here, brilliantly realizes the state of inner crisis that has been the concern of so much modern poetry. His present popularity, contemporaneity, and continued relevance resides, in part, in this ability to present spiritual crisis as authentically and powerfully as any poet writing of it before or since his time. In the second quatrain, the speaker turns from addressing "Despair" to questioning God. This shift is highly significant since it implies a crucial recognition

¹⁰ Mariani suggests that Hopkins is here repudiating the lines from Newman's The Dream of Gerontius:
 I can no more; for now it comes again,
 That sense of ruin, which is worse than pain,
 The masterful negation and collapse
 Of all that makes me man; as though I bent
 Over the dizzy brink
 Of some sheer infinite descent.
 Mariani, p. 230.

on the speaker's part. His very having-it-out with God indicates a belief in divine omnipotence and reality:

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 ?

To the helpless speaker, his persecuting and pursuing God has the foot of a giant, the limbs of a lion, and the eyes of a monster. These are all, it becomes clear, the nightmare images of a tormented mind.

In the sestet, the speaker slowly realizes why God works with him in this way. It is to bring out the best of his faith, to show him that he would and does yield to his master at the point of absolute need. It is in extremity that God is powerful. The poem's final shift from oath to intimate possessive indicates again, in miniature, the poem's, and these poems', entire movement. From the anguish of despair and rejection, the speaker moves towards renewed contact with divinity:

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.

From the self-questionings of the penultimate line, the speaker moves closer to God. Whether God fought the speaker, or the speaker God is irrelevant, for God won both battles. In the last line, even the parentheses are poetically at work, for the oath expressed in them is, finally, flayed "sheer and clear."

The poem ends by rising from an oath to an embrace, from "my God!" to "my God."

"No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief," is much bleaker than "(Carrion Comfort)," for, here, death is accepted as a comfort, if not a consolation. Faced with atrocious afflictions, the speaker comforts himself with the recognition that, at least, earthly life is not eternal. His afflictions in their present form, will eventually go away. However, "(Carrion Comfort)" provides us with a measure for what a small comfort this is. In "No worst, there is none. . ." the speaker does succumb to despair. His concluding acknowledgment that he is a "wretch" is appropriate, for to take such counsel certainly makes him one within the moral framework established by "(Carrion Comfort)". "No worst, there is none. . ." is a cry of despair. It reveals a speaker whose mind is veritably "Pitched past pitch of grief." As Gardner and MacKenzie note, "This sonnet is the first to sound the uttermost depths of what St. Ignatius calls 'desolation'; this is 'a darkening of the soul, trouble of mind, movement to base and earthly things, restlessness of various agitations and temptations, moving to distrust, loss of hope, loss of love; when the soul feels herself thoroughly apathetic, sad, and as it were separated from her Creator and Lord.'"¹¹ The speaker's function is primarily expressive here, as he gives voice to an inner state of anguish. The articulation of his condition provides us with a map of his mind. We are presented with a "bare, forked" creature standing in agony before his God, and then, losing sight of Him, standing simply alone. The poem reverses the direction of "(Carrion Comfort)," for it moves from questioning God and Mary, to offering the divided self a specious form of consolation.

¹¹Poems, p. 287.

Again we meet the speaker as spiritual antagonist, his role defined by the poem's condensed, contorted and nearly hysterical language:

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?

It becomes clear that the speaker's questions of lines three and four are unanswered, since he continues by simply revealing his depths of mental grief, before concluding with a lame comfort:

My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief-
woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing --
Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked 'No ling-
ering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief'.

The speaker's cries of anguish, which he both recalls and expresses in this poem, are like shepherdless sheep. The speaker's loss of "the good shepherd" is suggested. Besides, the speaker feels himself beaten as on an anvil and, resorting to despair, appropriately hears the voice of a pagan Fury echo in his mind. The inner geography of desolation is realized with grim intensity.¹² In the sestet, before collapsing before the chimerical comfort of death, the speaker explores his mental waste land further. What we have, here, as we do in Browning's "Childe Roland . . ." or Eliot's The Waste Land, is poetry of the bleak inner landscape. Hopkins's speaker is a near relative to the speakers of both those poems:

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.

¹² Elisabeth W. Schneider makes the acute suggestion that the sense of conflict and intensity in these poems is subtly created by the technique of syntactical inversion of colloquial language. Schneider, p. 192.

At the end of the poem, in an injunction to himself that recalls the heath scene in King Lear, the speaker accepts death as a relief from, or a way out of, his present mental tempest. From a reading of "(Carrion Comfort)" we know that this kind of comfort is inadequate, but it is appropriate to the dramatic movement of the sonnets of desolation as a whole that we should have at least one poem that sinks into the bottom of the pit. A counter-thrust is temporarily impossible.

"To seem the stranger lies my lot . . ." is a quieter, more reflective, poem than "No worst, there is none . . .," and, therefore, less anguished.¹³ Nevertheless, it expresses a state of extreme isolation and meaninglessness. The speaker thinks himself "a lonely began," and "also ran," who has spent a wasted life. It is the most obviously autobiographical of the sonnets of desolation in that it refers to Hopkins's actual estrangement from his family that followed his conversion, his love of England, and his life in Ireland, where he was teaching at the time of the poem's composition. The speaker's sense of separation from his family, and even from Christ, is immediately indicated in the opening quatrain. Using the image of the stranger, which has become recurrent in the modern literature of alienation, the speaker stresses his sense of isolation from those he loves:

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.

¹³Both Paul L. Mariani and Elisabeth W. Schneider see this poem as the one that sets up the public terms of reference for the sonnets of desolation generally. They use it as the introductory poem of the group, for in it Hopkins provides the biographical reasons for his state of dejection. See Mariani, p. 212., and Schneider, p. 187.

The poem is different in tone from "No worst, there is none. . . ." Here, the speaker expresses a worn out mood of defeat. Yet in the last line of the quatrain, when he expresses his sense of separation from Christ, his earlier note of anguish is re-awakened, "And he my peace/my parting, sword and strife." As with the parentheses of "(Carrion Comfort)," the slash mark of this line is poetically active, since it helps to enforce the sense of separation from Christ. Christ, who should be the speaker's haven of peace, is, in fact, separated from him, and the slash mark helps typographically to enact this sense of isolation.

Thoughts of his parents, who live in England, lead the speaker, in the second quatrain, to thoughts of his beloved country. The country that inspired so much of his poetry pays no attention to him, the speaker reveals. But he does not plead for attention; he is abject and exists only in a state of turmoil. As in the first quatrain, the second quatrain crawls slowly from a state of drab dejection towards a renewal of the inner turmoil of "No worst, there is none. . . ." By the end of the quatrain, the speaker is, once more, almost ready to break out:

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

In the sestet, the speaker brings his situation up to the present. He states his predicament, the cause of his anguish, and his sense of having wasted his life. Although he feels removed or separated in Ireland, he acknowledges that even there he can both give and receive love. Yet a sense of inexpressible spiritual desolation, inexpressible to anyone but himself, leaves him with a feeling of utter isolation. There is something of a contradiction even here, however, which resides in the fact that Hopkins expressed his state of anguish

in this poem. What the poem grimly denies is the therapeutic power of poetry of desolation; even expressed, a sense of desolation remains. Yet, perhaps, the self-analysis afforded by this kind of poetry did help Hopkins to put his spiritual house in order, and did help him to achieve the sense of peace that he knew at his death. However, poetry of this kind depends for its power upon overstating its case, and, paradoxically, one feels the overstatement to be authentic. The rhetoric of desolation is persuasive and poetically successful here:

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.

Although the tone of "To seem the stranger . . ." is less turbulently anguished than the tone of "No worst, there is none . . ." the poem expresses an equally abject spiritual condition. Indeed, it is the logical expression of a mind that has accepted the counsel of despair that concludes the preceding poem. "Life death does end and each day dies with sleep." "To seem the stranger . . ." looks back across a life that has reached this kind of impasse. The function of the speaker, who finally presents himself as "a lonely began" is to give us another glimpse of his mental landscape. This time his mind is arid and melancholy, rather than mountainous and anguished, although the note of frenzy is never far from the surface, and continually threatens to break out.

The next three sonnets of desolation initiate a slow and painful struggle out of the slough of despond. Nevertheless, "I wake and feel the fell of dark . . ." begins with a return to the nightmare world of "(Carrion Comfort)." It is only in finally acknowledging that the souls in hell are in a worse

state than himself that the speaker achieves a renewal of recognition that can lead him towards redemption. In recognizing this truth, that hell is worse than despair on earth, the speaker begins to push aside the counsel of desolation that had dogged him in "No worst, there is none. . ." and "To seem the stranger. . . ." Close reading indicates that the sonnets of desolation are not only subtly interrelated, but contain an identifiable dramatic progression, from utter desolation to a rejection of that state.¹⁴

A state of inner division is revealed in the poem's opening quatrain. The speaker's conscious self awakens in a night of struggling, and addresses his emotional or intuitive self, his heart, that has wrestled with him. Far from indicating a relationship with an audience, here, the use of the first person plural suggests the presence of a fragmented nature, divided into different aspects:

I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day.
 What hours, O what black hours we have spent
 This night! what sights you, heart, saw; ways you went!
 And more must, in yet longer light's delay.

Through hours of anguish the speaker's emotional nature endures greater pains than his conscious or rational nature, which presumably continues to adhere to faith, though only mentally, and not with emotional conviction. In "The Wreck of the Deutschland" we noticed the way in which the heart, or emotional self, makes the first movement towards God. Here, in a poem of self-division, it is the speaker's emotional nature that

¹⁴As already indicated, the strict chronology of these poems is not known. I have accepted Gardner and MacKenzie's chronology. Paul L. Mariani and Elisabeth W. Schneider prefer different orderings of the poems. I do not think, finally, that chronology is an absolute factor in a reading of the sonnets of desolation. They could, it seems to me, be read in any order as long as sufficient attention is paid to the moral framework provided by the poems as a whole.

experiences the greatest sufferings, and is farthest from God.¹⁵

In the poem's second quatrain, the speaker reveals his inability to make contact with God. His cries of anguish are like letters sent to a house where the owner, and intended recipient, is absent. Emotional anguish leads to a sense of divine absence. God has left his house, which is the speaker's own heart; the speaker's core of deity seems to have disappeared:

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.

In the sestet, the speaker comes to a recognition, which moves him beyond the impasse expressed in the octave. God is no longer felt to be absent, but is now seen as a being, who has deliberately imposed hard conditions upon the speaker. Frequently in these poems, the speaker wavers between a sense that God is wholly apart from him, and a sense that God is trying him. This is the experience of Gethsemane, the experience of the dark night of the soul. Thus, in the sestet, the speaker, like Christ, struggles with a bitter cup, which he wishes would pass from him.¹⁶ He tastes his own repugnant human nature, and it makes him realize that the kind of desperate self-absorption

¹⁵Writing four years earlier in 1881, Hopkins expressed the circuitous torture of this kind of feeling, "Against these acts of its own the lost spirit dashes itself like a caged bear and is in prison, violently instresses them and burns, stares into them and is the deeper darkened." Sermons and Devotional Writings, p. 138.

¹⁶Jim Hunter notes "the appropriateness of the image of gall rising to the mouth -- bitterness from within," Hunter, p. 98. Hopkins lacks the sense of grace flowing from without which is so beautifully described in stanza four of "The Wreck of the Deutschland." Instead, he is faced by gall rising from within. Again the inner landscape is dramatized.

he has been involved in is similar to the state of the damned in hell. The difference is that for the damned this state is eternal. This is a crucial recognition for the speaker, since acknowledging the temporary nature of his anguished condition implies the possibility of escape from it:

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. 17

Recognition is squeezed into the poem's last two words. It is characteristic of the dramatic economy of these poems that two words can have such vital poetic force. In seeing that the damned are worse than himself, the speaker begins to perceive a fire exit through which he can regain God.

One of the ways to regain God is to forsake anguish and self-torment through patience. Patience becomes the subject of the next sonnet, "Patience, hard thing! the hard thing but to pray." However, asking for and winning patience cannot be facile; the patient man, like Job, has to suffer, and endure suffering. Indeed, Job, and Jacob wrestling with the angel, are important archetypes for the spiritual condition expressed and analyzed in these poems. The octave of the poem suggests that an access of patience can cover over the ruins of anguished life. The poem is appropriately more meditative, and less turbulent, than a poem like "No worst, there is none. . . ."

¹⁷ Although these poems came unbidden and against Hopkins's will he certainly touched and improved them. For evidence of this compare an earlier draft of these lines quoted by Norman H. MacKenzie:

My bones build, my flesh fills, blood feeds / this curse
Of my self stuff, by selfyeast soured. I see
The lost are like this, and their loss / to be
Their sweating selves, as I am mine, but worse.
MacKenzie, Hopkins, p. 90.

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.

The use of a first person plural voice in the third line of the second quatrain is interestingly different to its use in "I wake and feel the fell of dark. . . ." Rather than expressing a divided mind, it indicates the return of a speaker, who, at last, includes his audience in his own experience. The return of a public level of speech that includes other people, an audience outside the self, implies an alleviated mental condition. The "Natural heart's ivy" of patience is at work at last, covering over the ruins of despair.

Again, in the sestet, the speaker speaks for his audience as well as himself. From his experience of desolation he begins to draw conclusions that will be relevant to others. Self-absorption has been shrugged off to the extent that the speaker realizes that he is not alone in his experience of despair. Others have suffered this condition. The poem ends with the admission and recognition that even in torment we ask God to bend us to His will, rather than following our own mortal wills. In doing so, we find "Delicious kindness," we find God, and God is himself patient. Far from being an absentee landlord, God is willing to fill the interstices of despair in the human heart with the distilled honey of patience. The implied image of the empty house in "I wake and feel the fell of dark. . . ." is followed by the image of the replete honeycomb in "Patience, hard thing! . . ." A dramatic movement from despair towards hope is again involved here:

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

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

Recalling the unanswered questions of "No worst, there is none . . ." gives a special emphasis to the last tercet of the poem, for here the speaker receives an answer. Renewed contact with his audience includes a renewal of contact with his creator and master, God.

In "My own heart let me more have pity on . . ." the speaker, at last, catches a glimpse of divine light through the mountains of his mind. The poem is a poem of advice to himself on the speaker's part. While providing a further picture of his mind, the speaker's function is to consult with and console himself:

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.

The speaker acknowledges that anguish and desolation are the products of self-absorption.¹⁸ In the second quatrain, he further recognizes the need to reach beyond himself, since it is impossible to find comfort by groping through the contents of a comfortless mind. The kind of efforts that restored the speaker to his audience in "Patience, hard thing! . . .," and reached beyond the self to God, are seen to be absolutely necessary. Yet this perception is not fully attained in this poem until the sestet. Nevertheless, having achieved a hard-won state of patience, the speaker is positively able to instruct himself, and no longer succumbs to such false counsels of despair as the desire for death presented in "No worst, there is none. . .!"

¹⁸ Jim Hunter astutely notes the way in which repetition here creates a treadmill sense of circular introversion. Hunter, p. 100. This provides yet another example of the technique of interior style in these poems.

I cast for comfort I can no more get
 By groping round my comfortless, than blind
 Eyes in their dark can day or thirst can find
 Thirst's all-in-all in all a world of wet.

Therefore, in the sestet, the speaker addresses his soul, and day begins to break in a long gleam of divine light, that announces the speaker's departure from the dark night of the soul. The detachedly ironic reference to "Jackself" subtly anticipates the enormous transformation of the "Jackself" to "immortal diamond" in the culminating Heraclitean poem:

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.

The reference to "root-room" recalls the slow rooting of patience in the previous poem; the speaker is moving out of darkness now. Through advising himself to renounce self-torment, he is able to reach the light. The function of the speaker in the sonnets of desolation is to explore his inner state, and discover means to gather hope even out of the pit of despair. Throughout, the speaker's focus of attention is himself as he constructs what approximates to a log book or diary of his spiritual journey. As audience we "overhear" the speaker's records of inner conflict. Yet in the last two poems of the group the speaker slowly re-assumes identity with his audience. He does so as he begins to realize that others might suffer and have suffered as he has. Like the experiences recorded in the early stanzas of "The Wreck of the Deutschland," the experiences of the sonnets of desolation are finally made publicly available. As he regains a sense of God, the speaker regains his sense of humanity, also.

In "Tom's Garland: upon the Unemployed" Hopkins returns to his concern for people. The poem reveals the speaker as observer and social commentator. Tom and his "fallowbootfellow"

Dick are described at work. Later in the poem the speaker stresses the need for employment for the poor, since without it they will turn to despair and social revolution. It is dated September, 1887, less than two years before Hopkins's death. It indicates Hopkins's concern with a social issue that preoccupied artists and politicians throughout the nineteenth century. Hopkins offered Bridges an extensive commentary on the poem, since both Bridges and Dixon had considerable trouble in understanding it. It is worth quoting this commentary in full, for it makes Hopkins's social views very clear:

It means then that, as St. Paul and Plato and Hobbes and everybody says, the commonwealth or well ordered human society is like one man; a body with many members and each its function; some higher, some lower, but all honourable, from the honour which belongs to the whole. The head is the sovereign, who has no superior but God and from heaven receives his or her authority: we must then imagine this head as bare (see St. Paul much on this) and covered, so to say, only with sun and stars, of which the crown is a symbol, which is an ornament but not a covering; it has an enormous hat or skull cap, the vault of heaven. The foot is the daylabourer, and this is armed with hobnail boots, because it has to wear and be worn by the ground; which again is symbolical; for it is navvies or daylabourers who, on the great scale or in gangs and millions, mainly trench, tunnel, blast, and in other ways disfigure, 'mammoth' the earth and, on a small scale, singly, and superficially stamp it with their footprints. And the 'garlands' of nails they wear are therefore the visible badge of the place they fill, the lowest in the commonwealth. But this place still shares the common honour, and if it wants one advantage, glory or public fame, makes up for it by another, ease of mind, absence of care; and these things are symbolized by the gold and iron garlands. (O, once explained, how clear it all is!) Therefore the scene of the poem is laid at evening, when they are giving over work and one after another pile their picks, with which they earn their living, and swing off home, knocking sparks out of mother earth not now by labour and of choice but by the mere footing, being strongshod and making no hardship of hardness, taking all easy, And so to supper and

bed. Here comes a violent but effective hyperbaton or suspension, in which the action of the mind mimics that of the labourer -- surveys his lot, low but free from care; then by a sudden strong act. throws it over the shoulder or tosses it away as a light matter. The witnessing of which lightheartedness makes me indignant with the fools of Radical Levellers. But presently I remember that this is all very well for those who are in, however low in, the Commonwealth and share in any way the Common weal; but that the curse of our times is that many do not share it, that they are outcasts from it and have neither security nor splendour; that they share care with the high and obscurity with the low, but wealth and comfort with neither. And this state of things, I say, is the origin of Loafers, Tramps, Cornerboys, Roughts, Socialists and other pests of society. And I think that it is a very pregnant sonnet and in point of execution very highly wrought. Too much so, I am afraid. 19

The poem's opening lines depict in close detail Tom's homeward journey at the end of a day's work. The speaker's function is simply to describe, although reference to Tom's "low lot" inaugurates the interpretation of the social situation which follows:

Tom -- garlanded with squat and surly steel
 Tom; then Tom's fallowbootfellow piles pick
 By him and rips out rockfire homeforth -- sturdy Dick;
 Tom Heart-at-ease, Tom Navvy: he is all for his meal
 Sure, 's bed now. Low be it: lustily he his low lot (feel
 That ne'er need hunger, Tom; Tom seldom sick,
 Seldomer heartsore; that treads through, prickproof, thick
 Thousands of thorns, thoughts) swings though.

In the final twelve lines of the double-coda'd sonnet, the speaker's interpretive voice takes charge of the poem, as he reflects upon the integrity of a commonwealth in which both navy and monarch have work to do. However, at the poem's conclusion the speaker laments the fact that unemployment leads to despair and rebellion. Like many of Hopkins's poems, this sonnet is a poem of two voices in which the speaker fulfills

¹⁹ Letters, I, 272-274.

distinct, though related, functions: his first function is to provide a detailed realization of Tom, his second is to reflect upon the social situation of which Tom is a part. But without food and work what would Tom become? The speaker reflects, finally, upon the social unrest caused by unemployment:

Commonweal

Little I reckon lacklevel in, if all had bread:
 What! Country is honour enough in all us -- lordly head,
 With heaven's lights high hung round, or, mother-ground
 That mammoths, mighty foot. But no way sped,
 Nor mind nor mainstrength; gold go garlanded
 With, perilous, O no; nor yet plod safe shod sound;
 Undenized, beyond bound
 Of earth's glory, earth's ease, all; no one, nowhere,
 In both; care, but share care --
 This, by Despair, bred Hangdog dull; by Rage,
 Manwolf, worse; and their packs infest the age.

We are lucky to have Hopkins's commentary on the poem, for its last lines are difficult to understand. Both Bridges's and Dixon's difficulties with the poem are not surprising, and most readers share them. Hopkins was certainly right when he said to Bridges, "It is plain I must go no farther on this road: if you and he [Canon Dixon] cannot understand me who will?"²⁰ Consideration of the function of the speaker in Hopkins's poems should, however, be able to cast some light on why the last lines of the poem are more resistant to interpretation than the first eight. Hopkins is throughout his work more at home poetically in realizing a natural or human scene than in commenting or philosophizing upon it. In "Tom's Garland" he tries to give a greater poetic thickness to interpretive comment than he did in the moral comments contained in some of the sonnets of 1877. In both cases he is less successful poetically than he is in direct depiction or registration of nature. But in "Tom's Garland" he attempts unsuccessfully to overcome

²⁰ Letters, I, 272.

the problem of the divided voice, and make the voice of the social commentator more consistent with the voice of the human observer. While we have to lament the failure of poetic execution, we must, nevertheless, respect the effort of poetic and vocal synthesis. Hopkins, it appears, never wholly succeeded in giving his more rhetorical, moralizing voice complete poetic articulation. This is a perennial problem with poetry of the "palpable design," and Hopkins like many other teacher-poets failed to resolve it. The presence of this kind of voice in Hopkins's poetry demands recognition, since it is so rarely remarked by his commentators.²¹

"Harry Ploughman," like "Tom's Garland," is dated September, 1887. It is far more successful than "Tom's Garland" precisely because it stays within the limits of depiction, and refrains from interpretive comment.²² Harry Ploughman is simply brought before us in all his beauty and power. The

²¹The last lines of the poem seem to me to fail because their precise meaning cannot be grasped independent of the commentary Hopkins has provided. Even with the aid of the commentary their meaning cannot be fully revealed. Careful reading of Hopkins's complex syntax in most cases realizes paraphrasable meaning, but this is not one of them. Of course, the presence of paraphrasable meaning is not an ultimate test of poetic excellence, but it is a good test of obscurity. As Graham Hough has argued, "Perhaps we ought never to paraphrase a poem; but as with many other things that we ought never to do, we ought also to be able to feel that we could do it." Graham Hough, Image and Experience: Reflections on a Literary Revolution (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1960), p. 28.

²²Hopkins himself described the poem as "a direct picture of a ploughman, without afterthought." Letters, I, 262. It is the absence of "afterthought" that makes the poem superior to "Tom's Garland." In this regard F. R. Leavis's failure to discriminate between the two poems seems surprising. See his essay "Metaphysical Isolation," in The Kenyon Critics, pp. 133-134. He finds both poems unsuccessful.

speaker's detailed presentation of Harry's actions bespeaks a love for his subject, which he, no doubt, also felt for Tom, yet the simple concentration upon Harry's movements provides us with a fuller sense of his human reality than we received of Tom's. Here, the speaker's function is solely that of observer. The speaker invites the reader to share his observation of Harry Ploughman, and experience a poet's perception of human strength and beauty in action. The poem is concentrated exclusively upon bringing Harry Ploughman to life poetically:

Hard as hurdle arms, with a broth of goldish flue
Breathed round; the rack of ribs; the scooped flank; lank
Rope-over thigh; knee-nave; and barrelled shank --

Head and foot, shoulder and shank --
By a grey eye's head steered well, one crew, fall to;
Stand at stress. Each limb's barrowy brawn, his thew
That onewhere curded, onewhere sucked or sank --

Soared or sank --,
Though as a beechbole firm finds his, as at a rollcall, rank
And features, in flesh, what deed he each must do --
His sinew-service where do.

As readers we see Harry's strong arms with golden hairs, or skin surface, that catch the light, his powerful torso and legs, his grey eyes, his tree-like body full of potential energy that seems specifically designed for the work he undertakes.²³ This opening portrait, in the octave, is essentially a static portrait, although its depiction of potential energy implies movement.

²³As Hopkins said himself, "I want Harry Ploughman to be a vivid figure before the mind's eye; if he is not that the sonnet fails." See Letters, I, 265. Hopkins certainly succeeded in realizing his intention.

As the sestet opens Harry bursts into action, and the speaker with his "look" and "See," requests the reader to watch his "still life" portrait explode into movement.²⁴ This development from stasis and potentiality into energy and movement is highly effective poetically. At the opening of the poem we observed the hardness and colour of Harry's arms, now we see them in motion:

He leans to it, Harry bends, look. Back, elbow, and liquid
 waist
 In him, all quail to the wallowing o' the plough. 'S cheek
 crimsons; curls
 Wag or crossbridle, in a wind lifted, windlaced --
 See his wind- lilylocks -laced;
 Churlgrace, too, child of Amansstrength, how it hangs or
 hurls
 Them -- broad in bluff hide his frowning feet lashed! raced
 With, along them, cragiron under and cold furls --
 With-a-fountain's shining-shot furls.

"Harry Ploughman" combines the capacity for detail of a Pre-Raphaelite painting with a vivid sense of dramatic rhythm. It is as though we were watching the workmen in Ford Madox Brown's painting Work (1863) in actual motion.²⁵ The speaker's functions here, are to express Harry's vital activity, and direct his readers' attention to its movements.

"That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection" is dated July 26, 1888, about eleven months before Hopkins's death. It provides the logical, if not chronological, conclusion to his poetry. Here the anguish of

²⁴ A comment in Hopkins's devotional writings is apposite here, "This too best brings out the nature of a man himself, as the lettering on a sail or device upon a flag are best seen when it fills." Sermons and Devotional Writings, p. 195.

²⁵ For a reproduction of this painting see Richard Ormond, The Pre-Raphaelites and Their Circle (City of Birmingham Art Gallery Publication, n.d.).

the sonnets of desolation, and the need to moralize to fallen man, are overcome in an experience of apocalyptic transformation:

Across my foundering deck shone
A beacon, an eternal beam. | Flesh fade, and mortal trash
Fall to the residuary worm; | world's wildfire, leave but ash:
In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is, | since he was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, | patch, matchwood, immortal
diamond,

Is immortal diamond.

This is the climax of Hopkins's poetry, and reaches even beyond the central vision and culminatory celebrations of "The Wreck of the Deutschland," or the perception of Christlikeness in "The Windhover."

The poem opens with a beautifully realized description of process achieved through Hopkins's unique capacity for perceiving nature. Although the world is in perpetual flux the speaker knows and loves its beauty:

Cloud-puffball, torn tufts, tossed pillows | flaunt forth, then
chevy on an air-
built thoroughfare: heaven-roysterers, in gay-gangs | they
throng; they glitter in marches.
Down roughcast, down dazzling whitewash, | wherever an
elm arches,
Shivelights and shadowtackle in long | lashes lace, lance, and
pair.
Delightfully the bright wind boisterous | ropes, wrestles, beats
earth bare
Of yestertempest's creases; | in pool and rutpeel parches
Squandering ooze to squeezed | dough, crust, dust; stanches,
starches
Squadroned masks and manmarks | treadmire toil there
Footfretted in it. Million-fuelèd, | nature's bonfire burns on.

From a vivid description of natural flux, the speaker continues by relating man to this condition of change. Throughout Hopkins

is intensely aware of his audience.²⁶ Man is nature's "clearest-selvèd spark," but unhappily he is no less subject to natural change. For Hopkins, man is the apex of God's creation, but he needs God precisely because his situation is temporal. In the poem's rigorously dramatic conclusion Hopkins jolts man from time into eternity. But first he gives his reader a clear perception of man's tragically limited condition on earth:

Million-fuelèd, | nature's bonfire burns on.
 But quench her bonniest, dearest | to her, her clearest-selvèd
 spark
 Man, how fast his firedint, | his mark on mind, is gone!
 Both are in an unfathomable, all is in an enormous dark
 Drowned. O pity and indig | nation! Manshape, that shone
 Sheer off, disseveral, a star, | death blots black out; nor mark
 Is any of him at all so stark
 But vastness blurs and time | beats level.

This, in Hopkins's view, is the human situation. The only answer to it is identification with God. The only true comfort (and we recall the "carrion comfort" of despair) is the resurrection. Hopkins will not go into the problem of despair any further, he has explored every quirk of its labyrinth in his sonnets of desolation. Thus, in a tremendously dramatic conclusion, which rises to a crescendo in which ash becomes diamond, he simply cries out: "Enough! the Resurrection, / A heart's-clarion! Away grief's gasping, | joyless days, dejection." The speaker rejects the situations described so vividly in his preceding sonnets. And then come the concluding lines in which the true apex of human possibility is perceived, and the apex of

²⁶The intimate relation between preaching and poetry in Hopkins's case is stressed with regard to this poem in a letter to Bridges of August 18, 1888. "I will now go to bed, the more so as I am going to preach tomorrow and put plainly to a Highland congregation of MacDonalds, MacIntoshes, MacKillops, and the rest what I am putting not at all so plainly to the rest of the world, or rather to you and Canon Dixon, in a sonnet in sprung rhythm with two codas." Letters, I, 279.

Hopkins's own statement as a poet is simultaneously attained:

Across my foundering deck shone
A beacon, an eternal beam. | Flesh fade, and mortal trash
Fall to the residuary worm; | world's wildfire, leave but ash:
In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is, | since he was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, | patch, matchwood, immortal
diamond,
Is immortal diamond.

Hopkins, here, recapitulates the imagery of "The Wreck of the Deutschland," especially in his use of the image of the ship. Yet he reaches beyond this to an apocalyptic insight, and in doing so attains the limits of his poetic and spiritual perception.²⁷ He then left it to Christ, working slowly through the machinations of Robert Bridges, to bring the results before the poetry reading public.

After his culminatory Heraclitean masterpiece, Hopkins completed four more poems in the ten months before he died. The first of these, a sonnet "In honour of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez Laybrother of the Society of Jesus," was probably written in late September or early October of 1888. Hopkins must have felt that the saint's situation paralleled his own. He described St. Alphonsus as "a laybrother of our Order, who for 40 years acted as hallporter to the College of Palma in Majorca: he was, it is believed, much favoured by God with heavenly lights and much persecuted by evil spirits."²⁸ The poet shared the saint's

²⁷What the poem finally and effectively dramatizes is the activity of "grace" as Hopkins himself described it, "an exchange of one whole for another whole, as they say in the mystery of Transubstantiation, a conversion of a whole substance into another whole substance, but here is not a question of substance; it is a lifting him from one self to another self, which is a most marvellous display of divine power." Sermons and Devotional Writings, p. 151. The movement from "ash" to "immortal diamond" is analogous to the movement described here.

²⁸The poem was actually written "upon the first falling of his feast after his canonisation." See Poems, p. 295.

Jesuit experience and, also, his sense of divine blessing and persecution. One cannot help feeling that, in discussing the saint's inner struggles, the speaker also refers to his own. What is equally interesting, however, in the light of the progression from desolation to "immortal diamond," is the new accent of endurance in this sonnet, and its sense of love for and faith in God's creative power, and support of the human soul. The speaker feels delight in the fact that St. Alphonsus's trials have been rewarded by the ultimate crown of canonization. The humble door keeper (Hopkins had watched to door too, during his novitiate), finally, became a saint. The need for faith is acknowledged. Hopkins hoped that Christ would dispose of his poetry in the way that He thought best. The unknown Jesuit priest and teacher became a universally recognized religious poet.

The poem opens with the use of a first person plural voice that suggests the speaker's renewed confidence, and ability to speak on his reader's behalf. The difference between outer and inner struggles is stressed; but both can issue in glory:

Honour is flashed off exploit, so we say;
 And those strokes once that gashed flesh or galled shield
 Should tongue that time now, trumpet now that field,
 And, on the fighter, forge his glorious day.
 On Christ they do and on the martyr may.

The speaker's use of the first person plural voice then becomes somewhat more personal, if we accept the suggestion that the speaker identifies St. Alphonsus's struggles with his own. In using "we" he now refers more intimately to St. Alphonsus and himself; although the pronoun continues to include his audience, its stress is slightly more personal:

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

Hopkins once more describes the world of spiritual desolation so agonizingly delineated in the preceding sonnets. But, here, that world is placed in a victorious context. It has been overcome through God's help. It is God alone, who can "crowd career with conquest" as he did for St. Alphonsus, and later for Hopkins himself:

Yet God (that hews mountain and continent,
 Earth, all, out; who, with trickling increment,
 Veins violets and tall trees makes more and more)
 Could crowd career with conquest while there went
 Those years and years by of world without event
 That in Majorca Alfonso watched the door.

Viewed in the light of Hopkins's own lack of recognition in his lifetime, and his continuous experience of "world without event," the poem is deeply moving. Hopkins has discovered in St. Alphonsus an archetype of his own situation.²⁹ St. Alphonsus reveals to Hopkins the need for perseverance and faith that turns a crown of thorns into a glory. Both men ultimately received their richly merited rewards.

The Latin epigraph to "Thou art indeed just, Lord . . .," is taken from the twelfth chapter of Jeremiah, "Lord, I know well that right is on thy side, if I plead against thee, yet remonstrate with thee I must; why is it that the affairs of the wicked prosper."³⁰ The poem is dated March 17, 1889, within three months of Hopkins's death. Earlier in this study I discussed the way in which several of Hopkins's poetic ideas had their embryo in his Journal entries. There is a prose version of the present poem in Hopkins's later retreat notes. In January, 1888, before the Heraclitean poem was written, Hopkins considered his life during a retreat, and came to the

²⁹ See W. H. Gardner's comment that "Despite its objective theme, it is, one feels, strongly subjective . . . this projection of the self into another." Gardner, I, 33.

³⁰ See Poems, p. 295 for this translation.

recognition, later dramatized in his "St. Alphonsus Rodriguez" poem, that while his outward service to God seemed of little avail his inward service remained. However, desolation continued its hold, and in a paragraph which anticipates "Thou art indeed just . . ." Hopkins wrote the following:

I was continuing this train of thought this evening when I began to enter on that course of loathing and hopelessness which I have so often felt before, [we think of the desolate sonnets of the previous year] 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. And yet the Wise Man warns us against excusing ourselves in that fashion. I cannot then be excused; but what is life without aim, without spur, without help? All my undertakings miscarry: I am like a straining eunuch. I wish then for death: yet if I died now I should die imperfect, no master of myself, and that is the worst failure of all. O my God, look down on me. 31

This important passage reveals in miniature prose form many of the thoughts and arguments of the sonnets of desolation, and it also helps to indicate the complex ups and downs of Hopkins's state of mind in his last years. He had already written the grimmest of the desolation sonnets by the time he wrote this passage, yet six months after writing it he was able to triumphantly overcome this state in the Heraclitean poem of July, 1888. However, although I have argued that that climactic poem provides the logical conclusion to Hopkins's poetry, it was not his last word. In the early spring of 1889, if not before, the desolate state returned, and in writing of it in

³¹ Sermons and Devotional Writings, p. 262.

"Thou art indeed just, Lord . . .," he recalled his retreat notes of fourteen months earlier. "Thou art indeed just, Lord . . ." has an almost identical movement to the prose passage and reaches a similar conclusion. Prayer to God, whose reality Hopkins always recognized, even if he sometimes lost sight of His presence, is the only possible exit from despair. What is of further interest when we compare closely the prose passage with the later sonnet is that the apocalyptic experience expressed in the Heraclitean poem helps Hopkins in the later sonnet to a more positive position than the prose passage reveals. In the prose passage he refers to himself simply as "like a straining eunuch," while in the sonnet he describes himself more specifically as "Time's eunuch."³² The recognition of this temporal dimension implies a recognition of eternity, of which the Heraclitean poem so emphatically stressed the need. Eternity goes unmentioned and unimplied in the prose passage. And, finally, in the prose passage Hopkins only asks God to look down on him. In the sonnet he is much more specific. God becomes "O thou lord of life," and Hopkins's request is particular. He does not merely ask God to look down on him, but prays "send my roots rain." Although, "Thou art indeed just, Lord . . ." returns to the theme of desolation, it implies recognition of the means of emergence from despair expressed so forcibly, nine months earlier, in the Heraclitean poem, and confirmed by the "St. Alphonsus Rodriguez" sonnet of the previous fall. By the time of his death Hopkins, though beset by recurrent bouts of despair, had acquired a spiritual perception

³² Interestingly, he had used the phrase "time's eunuch" earlier in September, 1885 in a letter to Bridges shortly after the writing of the desolation sonnets. See Letters, I, 222. What this suggests is that in a state of dejection he would think of himself as a "straining eunuch," while once he had placed his mental state in its correct Christian context he would regard himself less dejectedly as "Time's eunuch."

unknown to him in the lowest depths of 1885. In "Thou art indeed just, Lord . . ." God is a hard master, but he is no longer the monster of "(Carrion Comfort)":

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?

Job-like, the speaker's function here is to question his God, describe his condition to Him, and finally, to pray:

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, leavèd how thick! lacèd they are again
With fretty chervil, look, and fresh wind shakes

Them; birds build -- but not I build; no, but strain,
Time's eunuch, and not breed one work that wakes.
Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.

Throughout, the speaker's audience is God, and we overhear his address to his master.³³ The technique is the same as in the opening stanzas of "The Wreck of the Deutschland." The speaker is a suppliant, here, and his functions move from questioning God, to stating his situation, and finally to praying to Him. Once again we see the road of self-humiliation, which the speaker followed through the earlier sonnets of desolation. If God cannot answer questions, perhaps he will respond to prayers.

"The shepherd's brow . . ." is dated April 3, 1889 and is Hopkins's last glimpse of the bottom of the pit. It should be included with the sonnets of desolation for it re-expresses, in grimly Swiftean terms, their sense of anguish. It also

³³As Paul L. Mariani notes, "the speaker . . . pleads in the role of a skillful advocatus before the dominus." Mariani, p. 302.

reveals the human actuality of the fact that Hopkins's spiritual certainty was not unwaveringly maintained. Although "Thou art indeed just, Lord . . ." implies a recognition of the realities of the Heraclitean poem, this poem does not. Or rather it cannot reach beyond that poem's middle stage, which presents the physical limitations of man. There is no implication of resurrection here. The poem expresses Hopkins's view of the hideously circumscribed state of man on earth that had hurt him throughout his life. The speaker moves painfully through the poem down from divine shepherds and angels, to an analysis of man, which includes his audience, through the use of the first person plural, to a final, first person singular confrontation with his own limited condition. The poem becomes increasingly personal as it narrows down to the speaker's real subject, himself. However, as readers, we are not let off the hook. The speaker's honesty about his own limitations requires our own. If we reject this speaker's view of man, and many of us would, we should at least share his candour of self-confrontation before announcing our alternatives:

The shepherd's brow, fronting forked lightning, owns
 The horror and the havoc and the glory
 Of it. Angels fall, they are towers, from heaven -- a story
 Of just, majestic, and giant groans.

From these the speaker veers round upon man, and all the scorn of the moralistic sections of the 1877 sonnets is unleashed once more:

But man -- we, scaffold of score brittle bones;
 Who breathe, from groundlong babyhood to hoary
 Age gasp; whose breath is our memento mori --
 What bass is our viol for tragic tones ?

By the use of the first person plural the speaker includes himself and his audience in his opening diatribe. He asks his question to his reader, and, also, as the poem's more personal

conclusion makes clear, to himself.³⁴

In the first three lines of the sestet the speaker withdraws himself, and simply castigates man. The effect of this is to create a rhetorical suspension, for in the final tercet the speaker rounds upon himself. He is not superior to man or to his audience, but is one with them. This sense of personal limitation provides the poem, for all its obsessive quality with an acute perspective of self-awareness. Thus, perception of human limitation leads to perception of personal limitation, a progression in self-knowledge that had gone uncanvassed twelve years earlier:

He! Hand to mouth he lives, and voids with shame;
 And, blazoned in however bold the name,
 Man Jack the man is, just; his mate a hussy.
 And I that die these deaths, that feed this flame,
 That . . . in smooth spoons spy life's masque mirrored: tame
 My tempests there, my fire and fever fussy.

This is not an attractive poem, yet it comes to the implied conclusion that spiritual perception can only commence from a full understanding of the physical and temporal littleness of man and, more particularly, of oneself.

"To R. B." concludes the canon of Hopkins's completed poems on a higher note. It is appropriate that Hopkins's last poem should be addressed to the principal member of the small audience that he possessed in his lifetime, and the preserver and eventual editor of his poems. In this last poem dated April 22, 1889, within weeks of his final illness, Hopkins talks to

³⁴Writing to Bridges in October, 1886 Hopkins said, "But all my world is scaffolding." Letters, I, 229. For a quite different view of this poem see Mariani, pp. 304-311. He believes that the poem contains a poised and subtle humour and that it contrasts heroic figures with man's essentially comic littleness. He would deny any Swifitean sense of self-loathing. I am unconvinced by his interpretation and do not find the same degree of equilibrium in the poem as Mariani does. Mariani wishes to see a sense of symmetry in the last poems that I do not believe is present.

his friend about the conception and development of poetry.³⁵ His final poems have been, the speaker reveals, an explanation of "My winter world" of desolation. They lack, he says, "The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation," of inspired, celebratory poetry. However, we have experienced these affirmative qualities in many of Hopkins's earlier poems, and his candid analyses of desolation added in his last years a further, important dimension to his achievement as a poet. The poet who could celebrate the beauties of nature could, also, explore the caverns of hell, and he is a richer poet because of this. Even so the beautiful presentation of the gestation of poetry in the octave takes us back to earlier aspects of Hopkins's work. The intimate tone of address, which the speaker employs to his friend in this final poem is one we have come to know and respect. Indeed, it seems entirely right that the canon of Hopkins's poems should end in this way, and that the speaker's final function should be to inform a cherished friend about the birth of poetry itself in the exploring and creative mind, and about the nature of the last phase of his own poetic work:

The fine delight that fathers thought; the strong
 Spur, live and lancing like the blowpipe flame,
 Breathes once and, quenched faster than it came,
 Leaves yet the mind a mother of immortal song.

Nine months she then, nay years, nine years she long
 Within her wears, bears, cares and combs the same:
 The widow of an insight lost she lives, with aim
 Now known and hand at work now never wrong.

Sweet fire the sire of muse, my soul needs this;
 I want the one rapture of an inspiration.
 O then if in my lagging lines you miss

The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation,
 My winter world, that scarcely breathes that bliss
 Now, yields you, with some sighs, our explanation.

³⁵Hopkins provides us, besides, with a description of his own poetic process.

In his last phase Hopkins explored the depths of desolation, yet was able to rise in his Heraclitean poem to his most complete perception of immortality. The functions of the speaker, to express this effort and journey, were expanded as never before. It is undoubtedly true that in his last years of human and poetic life Hopkins was writing at the top of his powers, and was enriching his techniques of expression and self-presentation. The speaker of the last poems takes us through hell to heaven, never loses consciousness of us, and always seeks to involve us in the intricacies of a spiritual journey, that is a journey of self-discovery for both speaker and reader.

There are five important phases of development in Hopkins's handling of the functions of his poems' speakers, each of which I have considered in a separate chapter. In the early poems we see Hopkins wrestling to create a speaker adequate to his present and future poetic needs. The early poems are primarily experiments, poems of the "riv'n Vine," and the divided voice. A division between sensuousness and asceticism is revealed in them, which is finally healed towards the end of this phase in that crucial poem, "The Habit of Perfection" in which Hopkins creates out of his earlier experiments with lyric, soliloquy and dramatic monologue a dramatic speaker that enables him to unify sensuous and ascetic concerns. This effort prepares the ground for Hopkins's first major achievement in poetry, "The Wreck of the Deutschland."

In this important poem Hopkins undertakes the seemingly insuperable task of uniting several contrasting poetic voices within the substance of a single speaker. He succeeds in bringing the frequently opposed voices of anguished soul, preacher, narrator and celebrant within the form of a coherent dramatic persona, capable of expressing all of these different concerns. This dramatic persona provides the poem's structural

centre and the chief source of its unity. It required seven years of silent preparation to produce what will always be considered his major poetic achievement. "The Wreck of the Deutschland" is Hopkins's most important poem, not only from the point of view of this study but also because it provides a basis and point of departure for all his subsequent work. The confidence he revealed in his three final phases depends, in part at least, upon the effort that went into "The Wreck of the Deutschland" and the creative range which that work released.

In the sonnets of 1877 we see Hopkins developing the possibilities of two poetic voices that had already been employed in "The Wreck of the Deutschland": the voices of celebrant and preacher. In the sonnets of 1877 they reflected Hopkins's attitudes to the natural and human worlds. On the one hand, the natural world provided occasions for celebrating God's bounty towards man. In a starlight night or in "Pied Beauty" Hopkins regained a sense of Eden, of what an unfallen world could be like. These perceptions released his voice of celebration. On the other hand, Hopkins rarely, even in his most ecstatic moments, lost his sense of man's limitation; man not God, was responsible for the fallen world. A Jesuit priest, trained as a preacher, and in 1877 about to embark upon his pastoral work (Hopkins was ordained in September, 1877) could not forget, even in poetry, his duty to point out human error. Such responsibility led to the creation, in these poems, of a preacher-like voice. "The Sea and the Skylark" provides, perhaps, the best example among the 1877 sonnets of the presence of these two voices within a single poem. The speaker of the poem possesses a double function, although I have suggested that these two functions are vitally related. In the octave of "The Sea and the Skylark" we find a beautiful celebration of two

aspects of the natural world, but in the sestet the morally alert speaker changes his tone as he calls attention to human error. At times in these poems, notably in "The Windhover," "Pied Beauty" and "Hurrahing in Harvest," the speaker reaches beyond preacher-like concern to perceptions of divine meaning, yet these perceptions depend, in part at least, upon their speaker's moral and religious nature. Thus, in his sonnets of 1877 Hopkins develops the functions of his speakers along two significant paths that reveal two of his major poetic concerns. As a poet acutely sensitive to natural beauty, and its basis in divine reality, he seeks to celebrate God's creation. As a Jesuit priest concerned with the reformation of fallen man he seeks to improve the human condition whenever possible, even in the writing of poetry. These two concerns, that produce two distinct poetic voices, can be seen closely related in a poem like "God's Grandeur" in which he sees fallen man belittling the very world he cherishes as a celebrant of God's munificence. The sonnets of 1877 discover Hopkins defining and developing two functions of the speaker that had begun life in "The Wreck of the Deutschland."

From 1878 to 1883, the period of his middle poems, Hopkins was closely engaged in pastoral work. Out of this professional activity emerges a new poetic speaker, the speaker as priest. The speaker's function in the specifically professional poems of this period, in poems like "The Bugler's First Communion," "Brothers," "At the Wedding March" and "Felix Randal" is to communicate Hopkins's priestly experiences and concerns. These poems reveal a new circumstantial quality, and help to initiate the plain style that distinguishes the final phase of Hopkins's poetry. One of the reasons for this is the "autobiographical" nature of these poems. Hopkins had rarely dealt before so openly with aspects of his every day life. While these poems

provide us with insights into Hopkins's professional life, they prepare the way for his last phase of spiritual autobiography. In the professional poems of 1878 to 1883 we discover a speaker newly open to actual pastoral experience, who is provided with the technical means (a more colloquial style) with which to express it.

In Hopkins's last phase of development this style becomes yet more radically colloquial, more contorted and compressed into a style that expresses the conflicts of inner debate. It becomes the vehicle for spiritual autobiography of a particularly harrowing kind. The speaker's final function here is that of inner explorer, explorer and exponent of the dark world of mental strife and desolation. This is to isolate the most important development that takes place in the speaker's function during the last years of Hopkins's poetic life. The state of desolation is overcome in "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire . . ." in which we meet once more the speaker as celebrant, this time as celebrant of apocalypse. It is appropriate that the canon of Hopkins's poems should logically culminate on a high note like this.

My discussion of the functions of the speaker in Hopkins's poems has concentrated attention upon four related aspects of Hopkins's poetic technique in the belief that consideration of these aspects will improve an understanding of Hopkins's poetry. The way in which Hopkins presents himself, the role he selects for each poem has been my first concern, for in defining the speaker's function there is an initial need to describe the speaker's nature. I have also paid detailed and regular attention to Hopkins's handling of the personal pronouns "I", "we", "my" and "our", since this throws light both upon Hopkins's relation to himself in his poems and upon his relation to his audience. Since two functions of a poetic speaker are to express a poetic

subject, and present this subject to the reader in a particular way, I have throughout paid close attention to the rhetorical form of Hopkins's poems to see in which instances he addresses himself primarily, in which instances his reader, why he chooses a particular method, for what purpose, and with what results.

Finally, from a consideration of the speaker's relation to his audience, I have tried to establish how Hopkins's self-presentation in his poems affects the technique of particular poems. As indicated, I believe that the understanding of Hopkins's poetry is improved by devoting considerable attention to these aspects of his poetic technique. Throughout, I have attempted a close reading of each of Hopkins's seventy-six completed poems. I have dealt with the poems in the chronological order established by the editors of the fourth edition of his poems. As a result the study is offered as a commentary on these seventy-six poems, but also as a commentary that seeks to advance a single approach to the poems for the sake of a central argument that attention to the functions of the speaker^s of Hopkins's poems will advance our understanding, and improve our close reading of these poems. My conclusion is that by these means, an improved understanding is achieved. Hopkins, despite his romantic aesthetic of "inspired" poetry, was a careful craftsman deeply aware of rhetorical technique. His technique of self-presentation, his handling of the functions of his speakers underwent five important phases of development during his poetic life. When we notice this development we, also, begin to perceive the unity of Hopkins's poetic canon. My discussion of the functions of the speaker seeks, finally, to identify an important, and central, unifying element in Hopkins's poetry.

The ultimate intention of this study has been to call for a closer consideration of the methods of nineteenth-century poetry of personality. The aesthetics of this poetry, as we

know, were seriously challenged earlier in this century, and an aesthetic of "impersonality" was offered as a corrective to its supposedly subjective excesses. In his famous essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," T. S. Eliot stated, "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material." And he concluded, "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things."³⁶ The implication was that many nineteenth-century poets simply indulged in a poetry of self-expression. Hopkins did not indulge, though he sought in poetry to express himself. He would have agreed with Eliot that "The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice," but he would not, I think, have agreed that such self-sacrifice required "a continual extinction of personality."³⁷ He would have preferred the term "purification" of personality. In poetry, Hopkins believed that the personality of the poet must be fully "forged." It must be dramatized appropriately for the poem in which it appeared.

My belief is that poetry of personality, and especially Hopkins's poetry, makes very careful and selected use of personal experience. The speakers of Hopkins's poems are not projected "willy nilly" from their author's life, but are created for specific rhetorical purposes, with specific attention paid to their audience, as well as to Hopkins's personal concerns. The

³⁶ T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in Selected Prose, ed. John Hayward (London: Penguin, 1953), pp. 27, 30.

³⁷ "Tradition and the Individual Talent," p. 26.

poems are designed to express as much or as little of their author as he thinks proper for a particular poetic occasion.

If more attention were paid to the functions of the speakers of personal poems a truer understanding of their aesthetic form would be the result. This is the first time, as far as I am aware, that extensive consideration of role, voice, and attitude to audience has been paid to Hopkins's poems. The result, I trust, is an enriched understanding of his poetry.

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