The readers of Gerard Manley Hopkins are already familiar with the circumstances of the composition of *The Wreck of the Deutschland* (1876). Hopkins had abandoned writing poetry seven years before he composed the ode on account of certain scruples which began to affect his conscience after his entry into the Society of Jesus in 1861. He, however, could not break away from his poetically subtle and sensitive mind. Although he wrote nothing for seven years, his mind was poetically active during the period. Naturally enough, his charged poetic sensibility found an outlet with such profusion in *The Deutschland* that he, for a time, showed signs of exhaustion, especially because he could not compose anything of greater poetic merit than *The Penmaen Pool* and *The Silver Jubilee* (1876).

It should be mentioned at the very outset that Hopkins wrote his verse to be declaimed:

> Indeed, when, on somebody returning me the Eurydice, I opened and read some lines, as one commonly reads whether prose or verse, with the eyes, so to say, only, it struck me aghast with a kind of raw nakedness and unmitigated violence I was unprepared for: but take breath and read it with the ears, as I always wish to be read, and my verse becomes all right.
The declamatory quality of *The Deutschland* is reinforced by the employment of Sprung Rhythm which helps the poet in giving vent to the immediacy of his thoughts and feelings. This quality of the poem becomes further conspicuous through the use of certain rhetorical devices: asyndeton, hyperbaton, and apophasis.

Robert Bridges described *The Deutschland* as "a great dragon folded in the gate to forbid all entrance" to Hopkins' poetry. Furthermore, he levels charges of obscurity and oddity against the poem. As for these charges, they seem to be valid to a certain extent only to a novice who is perhaps bewildered by Hopkins' twisted syntax and neologisms. Those who have already applied their brains to his poetry are familiar with his innate fondness for lateral thinking which does not necessarily take into account any logical progression. The impact of the "unified complex of the sensible qualities of an object" makes him think several thoughts together. In other words, he tries to transmute his multiple perceptual reaction to objects into an inscape of words. The inscape is intended to penetrate the deeper levels of human consciousness. This practice induces him to build a word-order which betrays a syntactical and grammatical intricacy. The involutions of meaning resulting from the practice are eased off considerably by the use of the devices of alliteration, assonance, internal rhyme and consonantal chiming. Once the reader learns how to tackle the labyrinthine syntax of Hopkins' verse with reference to his
habit of reducing a number of thoughts to a single emotional focality, the meaning of his poetic utterance begins to explode on him. This is, briefly speaking, how Hopkins reveals the semantic richness of his verse. One can, therefore, say that while using sprung rhythm, Hopkins also uses a sprung syntax.

The next difficulty is posed by Hopkins' neologisms and compound words. In order to ensure compression in language, he coins new words which are mostly Anglo-Saxon in origin. In this respect he is a very patriotic poet. I do not wish to suggest that he does not use Latinate vocabulary in his poems. He employs it only for the purpose of handling a sombre situation, as he does, for example, at the beginning of Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves.

The Deutschland has the distinction of being a ur-poem in the Hopkins canon inasmuch as the poet employs here all his stylistic devices. The poem basically deals with a religious experience.

At the very outset of the ode we find Hopkins piling up a whole series of epithets in apposition to God. The first of them is perhaps stylistically very important:

Thou mastering me

God! giver of breath and bread.

The first line, which has an adjectival force, is all-embracing with regard to the poet's subservience to God. The
alliterative link between "mástering" and "me" highlights the
closeness of the relationship between man and God. A similar
link exists between "breath" and "bread"—the two basic
necessities of human life dispensed by God — with the
addition that the link gets closer on account of a repetitive
c consonantal sound pattern. Through the image of the finger,
Hopkins wants to communicate tactically the advent of the
sudden consciousness of God under the conditions of sin:
"Over again I feel thy finger and find thee". Hopkins writes
in his Commentary on The Spiritual Exercises that grace "lifts
the receiver from one cleft of being to another and to a vital
act in Christ: this is truly God's finger touching the very
vein of personality, which nothing else can reach". He speaks
of the same "finger" to communicate a similar spiritual
experience in stanza 31 of the poem: "Finger of a tender of,
O of a feathery delicacy, ...". Before Hopkins is fully able
to express the idea of tenderness in regard to God's finger,
he jumps on to the idea of its feathery delicacy" which merely
highlights a difference of degree of the same divine attribute.
The adjective "feathery" points to a sense of lightness felt by
the human soul through the divine touch. It contrasts, for
example, with the heaviness of sin, of which the human soul is
divested through the Resurrection in The Caged Skylark:

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

In stanza 2, Hopkins deals with his assent to the Divine which has its roots in the perception of "lightning and lashed rod" — objects of awe, the first of which is associated with the world of nature. As for the "lashed rod", it may refer to the simulacrum of the object which lightning sometimes makes on the firmament. Both these images evidently evoke ideas of terror and punishment. The speaker seems to be reminiscing about, in a non-descript manner, some spiritual crisis related to his conversion to the Catholic Church and his subsequent entrance into the Society of Jesus: "Thou knowest the walls, altar and hour and night". Hopkins is very fond of showing his sudden encounter with God as a physical assault on himself:

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 the fire of stress.

The sudden and unforeseen descent of God causes a "swoon" in the speaker's human heart wherein lies the secret of his spiritual transformation. The word "sweep" denotes a cleansing action with reference to the filth of sin which has accumulated
in his heart. His infirm heart, which is incapable of bearing the impact of the descent of God, is thus purified by the "fire" of divine stress. The operation, which is similar in terms of God's assault on the speaker, also takes place in Carrion Comfort:

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?

Hopkins expresses his acute sense of human unworthiness in the following lines of stanza 3:
The frown of his face
Before me, the hurtle of hell
Behind, where, where was a, where was a place?

He is badly exposed to divine wrath. His efforts to "flee" from God ultimately bring him to the Host of the Holy Communion who, according to Christian theology, is the Redeemer. The words "dovewingd" and "Carrier-witted" in lines 6 and 7 highlight the idea of a "homing instinct". It also points to the fact that there exists an inalienable
speaker's heart and that of the "Host". The relationship was severed for a time by the speaker's "selfbent". The winged "fling" of his "heart" is in fact a journey of spiritual transformation during which he receives increased degrees of grace: "To flash from the flame to the flame then, tower from the grace to the grace".

In stanza 4, the disintegration of the body is contrasted with a spiritual steadying. The steadying of the speaker's soul is metaphorically compared to that of a well's water after some turbulence. Just as water is supplied to a well from a stream, the speaker is supplied with a new spiritual pressure in the form of "Christ's gift". The word "vein" is a felicitous choice inasmuch as it suggests the "appearance of a stream on a mountain-side as well as the way Christ's blood gushed during the Crucifixion to redeem the humanity". "Voel" — Welsh for hill — seems to have associations with the hill of Calvary where the historical drama of the Atonement took place.

In stanza 2 and 3, Hopkins' apprehension of the Godhead is rooted merely in His wrathful aspect. But in stanza 5, he explores His antinomic aspect which simultaneously consists of benignancy and wrath:

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-dawn west.

The next three lines of the stanza are a significant instance of the way Hopkins tries to decipher the existence of God through the application of the visual sense. For him the "splendour and wonder" of the created universe are always inhered by the Divine. It becomes the duty of man to instress the "mystery" through the application of his senses. The mode of apprehending God in the above lines is almost similar to the one in Hopkins' nature sonnets of 1877. Here is one specimen from *God's Grandeur*:

> 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.

In stanza 8, Hopkins presents an analogy of the way in which the consciousness of Christ dawns on a man by means of the sensuous image of a sloe which bursts and leaves its bitter-sweet taste in the mouth. The experience, which is uncomfortable, involves a cleansing action performed in an instant. The word "flesh-burst" used for the bursting of the sloe's pulp also seems to apply to the human flesh which is the symbol of carnal life. The sudden experience of God, presented sensuously in the
stanza, leads to an explosion in the human flesh which destroys
the carnal human self. The experience is basically of an occult
nature: "Never ask if meaning it, wanting it, warned of it— ..."

The ultimate image of God in Hopkins' religious experience
consists of certain paradoxical elements:

Beyond saying sweet, past telling of tongue,
Thou are 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.

The above-mentioned lines from stanza 9 are a conglomeration
of opposites. He presents God here as an admixture of wrath,
love, and compassion which He manifests in different ways.
In Hopkins, physical violence on the part of God seems to be a
precondition to the administration of the balm of His love.
God, as an embodiment of purity and sacredness, has first to
wring the moisture of sin from the human heart before He
darkly descends into it.

The second part of the poem unfolds a parallel religious
experience associated with the tall nun who faces the extremity
of a shipwreck on the Kentish Knocks. Her tragedy involves
indescribable physical suffering resulting in death:

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. (Stanza 17)

The question that arises from the last quoted line is:
What did the virginal tongue tell of? It obviously told of the
Incarnation which, according to Hopkins, is an event that keeps
itself repeating in the lives of devout Christians.

The tragedy of the nun, her colleagues and the rest of the
passengers in the 'Deutschland' evokes tears of joy in the speaker's
eyes. The speaker goes into ecstasies over the spiritual benefit
he derives from the experience of the nun. Her physical extremity
is in fact the fountain-head of divine grace. Herein lies the
essential paradox of her spiritual experience:

Thy unchannelling poising 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. (Stanza 21)

In stanza 22, Hopkins speaks of the five stigmata of which
the five Franciscan nuns are the "sake" in the ode. Like the
event of the Incarnation, the event of the Crucifixion also
recurs, according to Hopkins, both in the lives of human beings and the world of nature:

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.

The drowning of in the wild waters of the Thames in stanza 23 is symbolic of their immersion in Christ's "fall-gold mercies". The compound adjective "fall-gold" is instinct with a richness of spiritual meaning. The mercy showered on the nun consists of spiritual gold and its fall is intended to "redeem the Fall" because the nun has mimed the Passion and Crucifixion in order to be a recipient of Christ's "all-fire glances".

Stanzas 25-27 analyze the motives of the nun in calling her "wild-worst Best". Her basic motive seems to be rooted in a desire for deliverance from the "jading and the jar of the cart", and "time's tasking". She also craves for a transformation of her "sodden-with-its-sorrowing heart" into a seat of spiritual consolation. The formidable spiritual lesson that she learns at this stage of her ordeal is that the meaning of the Passion in solitary meditation is much "tenderer" than she now finds it "in wind's burly and beat of endragoned seas". This new meaning
of the Passion depends for its understanding on the practical assimilation of Christ's suffering on the Cross into the human personality. Herein lies the secret of one's becoming an Alter Christus.

The significance of the nun's vision is so complex that Hopkins perhaps lacks words with which to bring out its true spiritual profundity:

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,
Ipse, the only one, Christ, king, Head:

By stanza 29, the nun has fully grasped the meaning of the "unshapeable shock night". She recognises Christ and the purpose of his appearance in the storm. She has also become conscious of the fact that hers is the vision of the one for whom heaven and earth were created. There seems to be a great spiritual truth in it because it was through his sufferings on the earth that Christ gave a promise of salvation to man and thus ensured his entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. She has become another Simon Peter: Christ's recognition is being repeated through her in human history with the firmness of a Tarpeian rock.
A new spiritual significance arises from the fact that the wreck occurred on the eve of the Immaculate Conception. Hopkins speaks of two parallel conceptions in the poem: the conception of Christ in Mary's womb and the one in the nun's heart. As, for the nun, she reconceives and redelivers Christ. It is thus that the nun becomes another Virgin Mary. This new birth of Christ is in the form of the "birth of a brain" which understands the Word and testifies to it "outright".

The spiritual glory that the nun achieves does not have an individual significance related to her own self. The sacrifice that she makes in imitation of Christ is fully effectual to redeem the "Comfortless unconfessed" of the passengers and the crew of the 'Deutschland'. The question,

....is the shipwreck then a harvest,

...does tempest carry the grain for thee?,
is, therefore, an answer in itself which carries profound spiritual implications. The "grain" is a metaphor in Hopkins for the purified human spirit. The metaphor is also used in Carrion Comfort: "Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear".

Stanzas 32-35 are replete with epithets in apposition to God and Christ: "master of the tides", "Ground of being and granite of it", "an ark/For the listener", "The Christ of the Father compassionate", "Miracle-in-Mary-of-flame", "a released shower"
and so on. The juxtaposition of God and Christ throughout the ode, especially in the stanzas in question, points to the theandric character of Christ's personality. Hopkins pays his final tribute to Christ in the last two lines of the poem using epithets drawn from the worlds of chivalry, romance, and religion. The intricate assonantal and alliterative link between them makes Christ an integral part of the religious and secular lives of men:

Pride, rose, prince, hero of us, high-priest
Our hearts' charity's hearth's fire, our
thoughts' chivalry's throng's Lord.

REFERENCES
