Man's relation to external nature has always been an object of interest from the very earliest times, from the days of primitive polytheism to the modern days of scientific naturalism. The inter-relationship between man and nature has been a constant source of inspiration, as well as wonder, both to religious speculation and
to the poetic imagination. Like mythology which personifies natural phenomena, poetry has found in nature some of the most valuable sources of its inspiration and subjects of its interpretation. Nature's fascination for man has been perennial whether as a thing of beauty, a consoler of heart and mind, a suggestive symbol or a baffling mystery. Poets have periodically pointed out the importance of nature as a theme in poetry, and the relevance of nature as a frame of reference for man's ethical and spiritual considerations.

That Hopkins is a poet of Nature is hardly a debatable proposition. Landscape, Cloudscape, seascape; flowers, animals, birds, men — these things provide not merely the locale, but the very substance of Hopkins's nature poetry. If they are removed from Hopkins's work, something more than a symbol or an exemplum is gone: something that is intimately involved with a trend of thinking, a way of looking at the world, a set of instructive affirmations that have manifested themselves with an almost undeviating presence. Political and religious ideologies come and go, as also do literary fashions, but Hopkins meets us in the one world all share — the world of the senses, the natural world.
Out of our common treasury of sensible nature, Hopkins brings things both old and new - the song of the woodlark, woods carpeted with bluebells in spring, leaf, shadow, and cloud moving in the wind, the scents, sounds and feel of things. It is the immaculate freshness of the earthly paradise his poetry gives back to us. Probably never before has the word "Nature" been so richly complex in fullness of meaning as for the poet-priest Hopkins. An inherent interest in Nature persists throughout Hopkins's career. The work belonging to the 'nature period' is so excellent and so characteristic that it must, at any event, be given a prominent place in any account of his work. That Hopkins's view of Nature is unique is at once apparent, in spite of the average reader's attitude towards Nature poetry being determined by the Lake Poets and their immediate successors. The very act of writing about nature seems to mean a commitment to treat it as poets in England have done in the era of Romantic poetry, with the result that the ordinary reader feels he should react to Nature poetry as he reacts to the reading of a poem by Wordsworth or Tennyson. Yet, there is a definite difference in handling, a sharpness of outline in the imagery of Hopkins's Nature poems, quite foreign to say, Wordsworth's Cumberland.
Few modern nature poets will be able to free themselves completely from the Romantic way of treating Nature, and in the early Hopkins there are many reminiscences of Keats in particular. His early poem A Vision of Synaesthesia (1862), written before entering the Novitiate of the order of the Society of Jesus, shows the young Hopkins grasping form and colour:

"Plum-purple was the west; but spikes of light
Spear'd open lustrous gashes, crimson - while... .
And thro' their parting lids came and went
Keen glimpses of the inner firmament".

As a Jesuit priest, Hopkins had a sacramental view of life. The sacramental theory argues that although in its actual condition the whole world is evil, yet it still retains some of its original goodness. Thus every phenomenon of Nature has a double significance, one obvious (and natural) and the other hidden (and supernatural). The evidence of Hopkins's prose shows his beliefs as a priest, but as a poet, it is nature with which his sensibility is fundamentally concerned. A typical nature-lyric of Hopkins elicits an attitude to Nature, instead of presenting a theory of nature. It is not any very special complexity of this attitude which
is its important feature, but its primal simplicity and its universality. It is basically the same simple attitude to Nature that is found in the Bible. That sense of intimate communion with Nature which we gather in the teachings of Christ is precisely that which is obtained in the nature poetry of Hopkins. It is unnecessary to try to prove that Father Gerard Hopkins, Jesuit and poet, was familiar with the Biblical teachings. It is equally superfluous to labour to establish with the support of the journals and the Note Books that the Bible was one of the most decisive influences, if not the decisive influence in shaping his sensibility, and that the teachings of the Saviour and Master could have been more influential than those of Duns Scotus or St. Ignatius of Loyola.

At this point, it would do well to turn for a while to Christ's teachings on Nature. The Gospels in the New Testament show Jesus's keen sensitivity to the beautiful aspects of Nature. His metaphysic of Nature is almost the same as that of the Old Testament. The account of the Creation (Genesis) establishes God's providential rule over all things. The world, therefore, is a manifestation of God's goodness, power and glory. But the Old Testament conception of God is not that
of a God in Nature. No system of natural laws or cosmic
does not proceed from Nature to God after the fashion
of the cosmological theory, or arrive at God through
analogical inference. But it descends from the idea of
God into the world directly and in its manifold
beauty, goodness and power, it apprehends the free and
sovereign activity of God. This is precisely the view
of Nature contained in the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Christ's metaphysic of Nature is not
cosmological, teleological or analogical. Nature, the
wonder and majesty of Nature, are all explained simply
on the basis of the Creatorship of God. The sense of
the order the beauty of the world as the product of God's
own wisdom, beauty, power and goodness constitutes the
essential basis of Christ's view of Nature.

The attitude towards Nature and the world
which emerges from the Bible has both a sense of
direct involvement in the world-process and a sense of
intimate communion with it. Natural phenomena and their
aesthetic appeal are accepted as immediately available
data for man's sensibility, and not as problems demanding
interpretation or theoretical illumination. Nature
becomes a philosophic problem only when it is viewed
in the light of a particular theory? In the Bible, Nature appears as a background for human life and the possibility of close co-operation and communion between nature and man is postulated. All that is needed on the part of man is an attitude of responsiveness.

The Biblical theory of Nature, then, is not by any means a scientific or philosophic one. It is a simple assumption based on its general metaphysics, but capable of eliciting powerful aesthetic and devotional attitudes. It is this Biblical attitude to Nature that emphasises the 'gladness' of Christianity, its drawing from the spiritual world a sense of joy so profound and abundant that it runs over the material world and transfigures it.

This same sense of gladness is attained in the Nature lyrics of Hopkins. Even in the earliest poems written between 1860 and 1875 there is convincing evidence of the sense of abundant joy which illuminates the natural world. Beneath Hopkins's own acute sensibility to and the exuberant delight in the sensuous beauty displayed in these poems, there is a sense of spiritual joy transfiguring the entire natural scene. Wherever nature is used as the lyrical theme—whether it is in a landscape as in Inversnaid, or a skyscape as in Winter
with the Gulf Stream, or a cloudscape as in That. Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and Comfort of the Resurrection, or a treescape as in Binsey Poplars — an indefinable feeling of joy is first cast over the subject of description in the poems. It is only after having elicited this response of joyous communion that the poet begins the itemization of particulars in the scenery. Thus through the sensuous immediacy of poetic description, Hopkins establishes a sense of common solidarity between man and nature as created things.

II

"... . . . . . . For creatures, as Paul says are like a mirror which reflect God. But let us pause awhile here, and reflect upon the High and Venerable Master as mirrored in His works. Ah! gentle God, if Thou art so lovely in thy creatures, how exceedingly beautiful and ravishing Thou must be in Thyself! But look again, I pray thee and behold the four elements, earth, water air and fire, with all the wondrous things they contain in manifold variety — men, flowers beasts,
birds, fishes - and mark how they all cry aloud together. Praise and honour be to the unfathomable immensity that is in Thee! It is Thou who providest for all, each in its own way; for great and small for rich and poor. It is Thou, O God, who doest this Thou, O God, who art God indeed!³

- Suso the Dominican

"The Sun and the stars shining glorify God. They stand where he placed them, they move where he bid them; 'The heavens declare the glory of God'. They glorify God, but they do not know it ......

But man can know God, can mean to give him glory. This then is why he was made, to give God glory, and to mean to give it, to praise God freely, willingly to reverence him, gladly to serve him. Man was made to give, and means to give, God glory".⁴

- Hopkins, Instructions 1883

"God's utterance of himself in himself is God the Word, outside himself is this world. This world, then, is word, expression, news of God. Therefore, its end, its purport, its meaning, is God, and its life or work to name and praise him"⁵.

-Hopkins, Note Book entry, 7 August 1882.
In Hopkins's soul, there is always a movement beyond the material to the spiritual. He perceives God behind it all. It would perhaps not be over-emphatic to say that his relation to the beauty of the natural world, and to the beauty of its ecstatic, as rapturous and highly-pitched as that of any of the Romantic poets, but it is also well worth contrasting Hopkins's insight into the transcendent God in Nature with other nineteenth-century poets who were struggling to insist, amid increasing scientific revelations of the inner secrets of Nature that Nature was mysterious, sacred and sublime, and somehow inevitably turning to a God in Nature. For Hopkins, exists primarily, as a manifestation of the Ignatian ideal, the guiding force of the Jesuit priesthood: all for the greater glory of God (Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam).

"Man was created to praise, reverence and serve Our Lord, and by doing so, to save his soul. And the other things on the face of the earth were created for man's sake and to help him in the carrying out of the end for which he was created. Hence it follows that man should make use of creatures so far as they help
him to attain his end and withdraw from them so far as they hinder him from so doing. . . . "6.

- Text of Exercises (Principles and Foundation)

This attitude is fundamental to Hopkins, for it marks the coming together of priest and poet. In poem after poem dealing with the natural world, Hopkins begins with a highly sensuous description of natural being; then there is a marked turn onto a higher plane in which the supernatural is discerned in and through the natural. The central and unifying notion of all of Hopkins's work is the human apprehension of the Divine Order upholding and continuing created Nature: "Mundus Universus nihil aliud est, quam Deus explicatus" ("The Universal world is nothing but the getting forth of God") says Cusanus. It is significant that, to Hopkins, Nature functions much, much more than as an anomalous symbol having the irreconcilable features of beauty and cruelty. To him, Nature is simultaneously beautiful, beneficent and representative of some higher reality. Although Nature at times may seem cruel, for Hopkins it is in a larger sense beneficent, not because one may see God in Nature (as Wordsworth could) but because nature reflects God's beneficence, benevolence, and power and because it functions to ready man for
God's harvest. Hopkins then, sees Nature from an entirely different point of view than do his predecessors, Tennyson, Arnold and the Pre-Raphaelites, a point of view determined by the Jesuit assumption that all things in this world are created by God in order to serve Him. It is specifically because of this assumption that Hopkins is able to reconcile the beautiful and cruel aspects of Nature into the larger beauty and order of God's plan, a reconciliation that sets Hopkins apart from the more traditional Victorian attitude towards Nature.

"No one is ever so poor that he is not ....... owner of the skies and stars and everything wild that is to be found on the earth. The bulk of Hopkins's work is the poems dealing with Nature and with God as ever present in Nature. Hopkins was happy at the time, and the country-side of Wales, where he was studying theology, buoyed up his spirits. His study of Scotus deepened his love and admiration of the observed natural phenomena, be they colour, movement or organic form. These, to him were news and word of God. With delight he turned to a fervent contemplation of Nature., and the poems of this period are alive with the joy and serenity which he expresses in his communication with her. The meticulous observer of Nature, who for so long as a Jesuit novice, had patiently looked at the clouds, trees, flowers
and birds, and painstakingly described them in great detail, was at last allowed to sing in rapture of them.

Freed from the self-imposed shackles of a self-imposed silence he instinctively turned to subjects which had for long been nearest to his heart, and had so often carried him into ecstasy.

TABLE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Period</th>
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<td>40</td>
<td>18</td>
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- Kathleen Raine.

According to the table made by Raine, it will be seen that Hopkins's use of Nature is progressive, and the poems as a whole may be regarded as constituting a cumulative definition of his views of
his own poetic purpose as well as his religious attitude. Since his poetry is predominantly religious (with fifty four religious poems out of seventy poems), and nature functions in the poems as the dominant image (used as the Central image in forty poems, referred to in eighteen poems, not used in only fifteen poems) one would expect the diminution of the nature images as well as the changes in tone to correspond with the changes in his religious attitude, and such is the case.

The changes in Hopkins's use of Nature suggest four chronological groups into which his poems fall. Determined by subject-matter, point of view and emphasis, these groups serve to define his changing religious attitude. The first group in the table made by Raine includes twenty five poems written during the pre-Jesuit years of 1860 to 1866. In these Hopkins uses nature to describe either an "aesthetic escape" or after 1864, to describe a religious experience. The second group, consisting of fifteen poems from the years 1876 to 1878 deals with what is regarded as the best of his Nature poetry, in which Nature is used as a central image to describe not only a personal response to it but nature's
reflection of God's beneficence. The third group consisting of twenty-one poems, from 1879 to 1885 make up what Raine aptly calls Hopkins's "human nature poetry"éné, poems in which Nature is used descriptively or as a setting in order to call man's attention to Nature as a reflection of God, or to investigate man's relation with God. The final group, which is made up of twelve poems from August 1885 to 1889, consists of the late poetry, including the "terrible sonnets", in which Hopkins is chiefly concerned with his own relation to God, so that external Nature is used very little; and when it is used at all, it is violent rather than beneficent.

From the preceding table, then, it will be seen that from 1860 to 1879 Nature is not only his primary subject matter, but he views it as beautiful and inspiring, creating a personal rapport moving from what he terms Inscape to Instress, that becomes for Hopkins a revelation of the divine message of God's might and beauty. After 1879, however, the subject-matter is not primarily Nature but man, finally particularized to himself. This view of Nature in relation to man and self becomes more violent, a change that Hopkins feels compelled to bring about
first by the fact that man is ignorant of Nature as a reflection of the omnipotent and omnipresent God, and then by the fact that while God may be reflected by Nature; He is not attainable solely through it. When Hopkins begins to investigate his own relation with God, he is less concerned with the reflection of God in Nature, experiencing a period of doubt and vacillation about his own ability either to reflect God or to reach Him, Hopkins is more concerned with God's violent means of restoring faith. His uses of Nature after 1864, then suggest two general trends in his religious attitude - a concern first with praising God and calling man's attention to God's message in Nature, and later, concern with man's and finally his very own relationship to God and salvation, a concern that is fraught with self-doubt about his own worthiness, not doubt about God's presence.

In the early poetry of the pre-Jesuit days, Hopkins was not essentially different from his predecessors in that he too viewed Nature for its aesthetic qualities only. In A Vision of Nymphs he is entranced first by the group of nymphs who represent perhaps an eternal and unanswered mystery in Nature.
"I know 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 . . . . .
I know the sadness but the cause know not".

(11 118–124)

The poet's vision of the mermaids prompts him to question what they and the sea symbolize, whether the escape they represent is actually death or pain and his inability to search for the answer, to escape with them, is suggested by the fact that he rows away. Although he attempts to see them again, he cannot. He is entranced by them, but cannot escape with them and never knows what causes the sadness they represent. The sea, sunset and mermaids represent for him a kind of aesthetic escape, but it is finally an escape that he does not choose. Nature, in this early poem, represents an escape from worldly affairs. But the fact that he ultimately chooses the world of responsibility and life is significant in terms of his later decision to become a Roman Catholic, and later, of course, a Jesuit, a choice that changes his representation of Nature from that of mere escape to a symbol of God's presence.
By 1864, his conversion as well as his final, mature use of Nature imagery is already foreshadowed in a poem: He hath abolished the old drouth. God, in the form of rain, has renewed faith in Hopkins, so that he shall be amongst those harvested into Heaven. Furthermore, God has 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. (ll 6-9)

By choosing God, or at any rate by being inspired by God, Hopkins chooses life. Nor is Nature any longer a place of escape, a desirable setting away from the world of men; for it begins instead to function as a poetic tool, as a metaphor or symbol to illustrate the world and its creatures in relation to God. Though Nature may be represented merely as a place of peaceful solitude away from the world of men, the escape is only a temporary means of restoring oneself in the world of Nature, not a permanent escape from the world of men:

"Then come who pine for peace or pleasure Away from counter, court or school,"
Two assumptions lie behind Hopkins's use of Nature after 1864 - that Nature is a symbol of God's presence and that man may retreat to Nature only for his "measure of time and treasure", not eternally. As a symbol of retreat, then, Nature is also a symbol of God, and thus this early use of Nature foreshadows the poetry that Hopkins wrote after his Jesuit training.

By 1866, Hopkins is ready to claim that it is God who calls him into the Church, so that although he makes the choice, the decision has in a sense been made for him according to God's plan:

"I cannot fight against God who calls me to His Church . . . . I have no power in fact to stir a finger; it is God who makes the decision and not I."  

It is God's will working in Hopkins that brings about his conversion, but his conversion is also due to a reasoned conviction that the Church is the "idea of holiness". Once he joins the Church, and certainly
after his Jesuit training he appears to have reconciled any doubts about his worthiness and God's receptivity, since neither of these is present in the poetry written immediately after his Jesuit training. The poetry written between 1876 and August 1889 expresses an assumption of God's presence and attention to man's prospect of salvation as well as the significance of Nature in reassuring man of the beauty and majesty of God. Man must praise God for Nature's message:

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

(Ribblespdale, 11 9-14)

Hence there is a dual intent in Hopkins's nature poetry. He not only serves God by universalizing the message of Nature, but he serves God as well by preaching to the "selfbent", the need for man to preserve Nature as a symbol of God. These two intentions become the focal point of his poetry and the justification for it. At the
same time, they give his poetry an intensity it formerly lacked because "instressing" Nature in terms of God's plan changes his poetry from the narrative (A Vision of Miracles) to an analogical analysis.

The analogy in the main body of the Nature poems (those written for the greater part between 1876 and 1878) consists of the harnessing of Nature to express its analogy with God's plan. From a sacramental viewpoint, Nature can give Hopkins a sense of the beauty and mercy of the Lord or a sense of the might and majesty of God's plan, filling Hopkins with "a delightful fear". Both of these feelings are rooted in the Nature poems.

The bulk of Hopkins's nature poems usually give the feeling of Nature's beauty, rather than "delightful fear". Though Nature serves as the basic image, it is at once universalized and controlled by the religious analogy. These poems are in keeping with his comment on St. Ignatius's Spiritual Exercises, in which Hopkins expresses his view of nature and man in relation to God. Although God is greater than His creation and does not need to be praised, He did create man and Nature to praise, revere, and serve Him. Man, as a sensible creature, is the median between God
and Nature because through his intimate relationship with Nature, man is able to offer the praise Nature cannot give:

"The heavens glorify God, but they do not know it; The birds sing to him, the thunder speaks of his terror, the lion is like his strength, the sea is like his greatness, the honey like his sweetness; they are something like him, they make him known, they tell of him, they give him glory, but they do not know they do, they do not know him, they never can, they are brute things that only think of food or think of nothing. This then is poor praise, faint reverence, slight service, dull glory. Nevertheless what they can they always do."16

The critic17 is correct when he says that Hopkins attended to the world of Nature not so much as a Romantic poet than as a Christian endowed with a sacramental sense of reality:

"We often say, in moments of simplicity, that poetry helps us to see the world. But there are poets for whom sight is not enough. We have been told . . . that the function of sight is to keep things at a safe distance, so that we will not be drawn into complicity with them. But there are poets who are willing to
risk this complicity; they do not resent the intimacy of contact. They want to know the world's body by touching it. Hopkins is such a poet. So is Whitman. William Carlos Williams is a third. This accounts for the kinship between Hopkins and Whitman.

When Hopkins wrote *The Land of Earn and the Golden Apple*, Bridges suggested that he was imitating Whitman. At that time Hopkins had read only a few fragments of Whitman's poetry, culled mainly from Saintsbury's review in the Academy. But he remembered them, and would not refute Bridge's suggestion:

'But first I may as well say what I should not otherwise have said, that I always knew in my heart Walt Whitman's mind to be more like my own than any other man's living.\(^1\) The kinship is easy to explain. Both Hopkins and Whitman sought a knowledge of the world by attending to it in its fullness and individually...

Most of Hopkins's poems begin with the particular occasion, a sample of the natural life, and the attention in dynamic terms, as if the experience had muscles and ligaments; His response to the world's body is itself bodily, animated by bodily metaphors and gestures. Even when the natural event is placid,
Hopkins is so urgent in his attention that the event, when he has apprehended it, seeks all storm and stress. Normally, Hopkins cannot believe in an experience unless it is guaranteed by bodily metaphors.

"There was another consideration. It was part of Hopkins's Christianity to believe that the world was 'charged with the grandeur of God'. If you failed in care and attention to the world, you were sullen to God's creation and therefore churlish to God. It was an ethical matter and a matter of belief. This is the difference between Hopkins and Ruskin, both poets who were lavish in their attendance upon natural forms. Ruskin cared for the detail of the world because it was natural for him to do so, but he did not bring God into the question. . . . . Ruskin speaks of 'the bond between the human mind and all visible things'19, but offers no account of that bond, its source, the auspices under which it persists. Hopkins was never content with this. When he thought of the world, he saw it as a flow of energy between three terms God, Man and Nature. . . . This allowed him to think of the natural world as a great body mediating between himself and God. He would not try to address God directly, except in the privacy of prayer. Rather, he would devote himself to the natural forms in all their miraculous detail.
on the conviction that they were 'signatures' of God...
Attending of Nature, he devoted himself to God; poetry became prayer.

III

THE NATURE POEMS

It was simply the case for Nature as a declaration of his God's glory that Hopkins elaborated with subtlety and dignity; and it was this elaboration which allowed him to break out into the exultancy of what are labelled his Nature Poems. In nothing is he more Catholic and more Jesuit than in the sacramentalism of his attitude to Nature, which brings the encounter with the living God to the proof of the sense. An analysis of some of the more important of Hopkins's nature poems will reveal that he was absolutely clear on the belief that the

* This section provides an analysis of the major poems on Nature, written chiefly in 1877. The majority of them are written in the sonnet form, with Hopkins singing of the gladness of the creation in terms of his vocation as a Jesuit priest.
world is "charged with the grandeur of God"; he was explicit that the world of Nature is a leasehold let out by God, paying God for rent, he says, praise, reverence, service and God's own glory.

**Fied Beauty**

The material object of Hopkins's poetic vision is beauty in its multi-faceted variety. In his discourse on the purpose of mortal beauty he argues that, however beauty may fade in the course of time, it still serves to "keep warm man's wits to the things that are" - to maintain them in contact with being and goodness. As a poet in the Romantic tradition (though certainly with a difference), he finds this being in nature, and rather in the wild and wanton than in the tame and domestic aspects of Nature. Hopkins has little use of classical simplicity or geometrical balance; he would much rather delight in the variety and profusion of riches found in the natural world. Hopkins recognises the fact that all colours may be resolved into the simplicity of white light, but he prefers to enjoy them in all their infinite variety. It is as if he feels himself unable to appreciate the rich simplicity, of the Creator, until he has delighted fully in the complexity of His creatures:
"Glory be to God for dappled things —
For skies of couple colour as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles in all stipple upon trout that swim
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced-fold, fallow
and plough
And all trades, their gear tackle and trim".

Created beauty is thus, for Hopkins "Pied Beauty" — beauty that is intricately woven with darkness and light, summer and winter, day and night, heaven and earth. Beneath the "dapple" of "things" the poet adores the pureness and simplicity of God who is all in all. Within the world's splendour and wonder he recognizes the presence of God, whose "mystery must be instressed, stressed."

The simple opening of the poem, "Glory be to God".. echoes the Jesuit motto Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam (For the greater glory of God). Likewise, the conclusion echoes another motto of the order of the society of Jesus, Laus Deo Semper (Praise Him). It is almost as if it is a school exercise, as an exercise in Logic, as the poem progresses from the general to the particular in the order of
argumentation, then again from the particular to the general in the conclusion. By framing the whole exercise between the two Jesuit motes, the whole poem becomes a prayer of praise and a meditation of the glory of God as manifested in His creatures:

"He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change: Praise Him!"

The skies are blue and white, the colours attributed to Mary, the Virgin Mother of Jesus Christ. One recalls a parallel use of the two colours in The Wreck of the Deutschland when the poet admires:

"the sky, - blue heavens appearing Of pied and peeled May",

and specifies the dappled contrast of

"Blue - beating and hoary-glow in them".

Oddly enough, the skies are compared to a "brinded ewe". At the first reading one is led to wonder where the connection might be. But one can imagine the poet rolling his eye from heaven to earth, from clouds to cow, from the dapple of blue and white to the dapple of brown and white.
Pursuing this imaginative line of thought, we follow the poets' eye to the stream and the trout with their spotted configurations. Further, beneath the trees, his eye rests on the chestnuts—gleaming brown nuts that are compared to fresh coals of fire.

Still following the poet's eye, we pass from the ground below to the tree above, and there notice the birds on the branches, dwelling on the dappled appearance of the finches' wings. This precise focus on the finches' wings extends to a whole survey of the countryside:

"Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow and plough"

The landscape is viewed as being like a patchwork guilts; some of it is pasture for sheep ("fold"); other parts are left unused to recuperate the energies for another season ("fallow"); yet other parts would be turned up for the growing of crops ("plough"). It is thus a panoramic though "dappled" landscape.

In viewing such a landscape, the poets' attention is drawn not only to the world of nature, but also the work of man, not in the derogatory sense implied in God's Grandeur, but in the orderly association evoked in
Hopkins thus descants on all things that stand, in contrast with other things, things that are unique in themselves, things that arouse surprise when looked at afresh.

Patricia M. Ball is careful in pointing out that in this poem the "contrasting pairs of adjectives are not chosen at random, but follow an underlying pattern according to the order of God's providence.

i) The stress and stroke of God's creative action in the world as in
"Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour, adazzle, dim";

ii) Man's response to God's action, whether sweet in acceptance or sour in rejection.

iii) Hopkins's characteristic fascination by all that is odd or eccentric, but finally proclaiming that the beauty of God is omnipotent and omnipresent:
"He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him."
The obvious conclusion is that the source of all this beauty and variety must proceed from Him whom St. Paul recognizes as the source of all fatherhood in Heaven and on earth - the immortal source of all that is mortal. Earthly beauty may be dappled, but in its very dappledness there is something that reminds us of Him who is perfectly simple and without differentiation. As Hopkins learned from Duns Scotus, all good attributes of creatures, however diverse amongst themselves, are fully present and united in the rich simplicity of the Divine Being. As St. Ignatius said in his "Contemplation for Obtaining Divine Love":

"... Descend from above, as my poor power from the supreme and infinite power above, and similarly justice, goodness, pity, mercy, etc. just as from the sun descend rays, from the fountain waters, etc....."

"Kaus Deo Semper" - In this brief exhortation, everything in the poem, as in the world of Nature, is drawn to a point, in which all creatures, by virtue of their Pied Beauty contribute to the grand symphony of praise in honour of their Creator.
The poem is Hopkins's poetic assertion of the belief that inspite of the sinful state of man and the sinful state of his soul, his essential freshness remains and wells up like a spring from time to time. Looking in his characteristic manner from the temporal to the eternal beginning of things, and "from their created effects to their uncreated Cause**, Hopkins begins his sonnet with an axiomatic preposition, a variant of Psalm 71, "The whole earth shall be filled with His majesty". But in Hopkins's opening line, the word "filled" is significantly altered to "charged" (like the force of electricity), so that the poet rapturously proclaims:

"The world is charged with the grandeur of God".

Hopkins envisages God not only as being present, but as being actively and energetically present in His creatures, as St. Ignatius points out in his Contemplation for Obtaining Divine Love:

"The third is to consider how God is at work, and labours for my sake in all created things on the face of the earth . . . . . . . .**\"
Thus, the world is seen as charged not so much with the being or the infinity or the presence, as with the grandeur of God. With the Psalmist, Hopkins sees the heavens as the throne of God and the earth as His footstool, while all things in heaven and on earth reveal His glory and ring out His praises in the one symphony of Creation.

This divine grandeur, hidden though it may be from mortal sight, is manifested in a variety of ways:

"It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed!"

One recollects a passage from a Sermon by Hopkins:

"All things therefore are charged with love,
are charged with God and if we knew how to touch them
give off sparks and yield fire, yield drops and flew....."

At times, the grandeur of God is made manifest in a gradual manner, "gathering to a greatness" from small particles. For this, the poet elsewhere uses the metaphor of Spring stealing through the world of Nature, appearing in a leaf here, a blossom there, till the whole face of the countryside is transformed in the
spring-time. The "oil" here comes out in a gradual "ooze" from the fruit that has been "crushed". Men, like the fruit, have also to be "crushed", so that God's grandeur may be manifested in them.

Hopkins next asks an apt question -

"... why do men then now not rock his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;"

Man is wild, wanton and wilful, and the dual repetition of "have trod" serves to emphasise the monotony of a life lived without God and without hope, in this world. It also emphasises the greater truth that this monotony is itself a divine punishment coming down from above, like an iron weight crushing the rock-like heart of man and reducing him to contrition:

"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".

Iron has entered the very soul of man. His senses have been dulled, numbed by constant labour; things have become smeared with dirt and grime from human
teil, thus losing the freshness of their first being.
"Smudge" is no superficial mark; it amounts almost to
deletion. "Smell" is not an edeur inviting God's blessing,
but a foul stench invoking His curse and retribution.
Therefore, man is punished for his insensitivity to
God's Grandeur by becoming correspondingly insensitive
to the beauty of the natural world. The situation of
man is a tragic one after the Fall. He was originally
destined by God to care for the things of the world.
After the Fall, man was expelled from the Garden of
Eden so that "... ... now, through thy act, the
ground is under a curse. All the days of thy life
thou shalt win food from it with toil; thorns and
thistles it shall yield thee, this ground from which
thoudost win thy food. Still thou shalt earn thy
bread with the sweat of thy brow ... ." 27

But the gloomy description in the octave
serves to bring about a stronger relief in the sestet.
The resources of Nature are never exhausted, its treasury
never fully spent. There is ever a reserve of strength
and resilience in greater abundance than what seems
to have been wasted:

"And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things:"
The reason for Nature being "never spent" is that the Holy Ghost, the spirit of God Himself is continually and activity present in the world He has created. Sooner or later God's goodness triumphs over man's malice, bending down to save man from himself.

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

The Spirit of Divine Peace and Love finds expression in the traditional symbol of the Dove. Thus, in all Creation, in its harsh no less than in its pleasing aspects, the poet feels the warmth of the divine breast and glimpses the brightness of the divine wings. This poem, then, is not based on an abstract faith in the providence of God; rather, it seems to rise, in the climax of the poem, to the level of an almost mystical experience, as Hopkins first feels the warmth of the breast, and then sees - with an "ah!" of ecstatic wonder - the brightness of the wings. At the end,

"The image must be huge, because at this point in the poem, God Himself enters into the picture,
the sole answer to the destruction and malice of man. Hopkins begins with the renewal of the living creatures which have been trampled, the strength of the life which flows into them from the living and eternal Creator. They are never spent because their ultimate source of life is God Himself. That "dearest freshness" flows from the immediate and eternal freshness of God. And the sun to which these creatures owe their renewal, in so far as nourishment and warmth and the protection of daylight are concerned, merges with the symbolic dove to express the deep subject of the poem - the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in creatures, and above all in the souls of men.28

God is involved in the world of nature, of history, men. Hopkins's Holy Ghost is, in the same breath, an actual flesh-and-blood bird, warm and brooding, and a spirit "with ah! bright wings". There is, therefore, complete reconciliation and balance through the power of God manifested in the world of nature and man.

The structure of "God's Grandeur", then, is given by the central Catholic doctrine, of the Trinity, Original Sin, the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection. The poet's primary purpose is not so
much to condemn the world in which he found himself,
as to make a dramatic statement of the nature of
the Christian Triune God and His dealings with men,
and thereby to show that the two apparently contradictory
terms 'nature' and 'spirit' are inextricably interfused.

**Hurrahing in Harvest**

To witness the glory of God in created
Nature, objects and beholder have only to meet, as
Hopkins declares in this enthusiastic poem conceived
as he walked home across the Vale of Clwyd on the
autumnal evening of September 1, 1877.

"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?"

Hopkins records how he leant back and looked up at
the sky, and how he is filled with enthusiasm while
recognizing Christ's beauty in the world. Perhaps
there may be the slightest fleeting tone of regret
in the opening phrase "Summer ends now"; Gone is the
season of hope and promise, springtime. No more is
summer "icumen in". But the falling movement of
the first words gives way to a rising, lifting
movement. Hopkins perhaps recalls Keats's reminder
in the Ode to Autumn that no less than spring, Autumn
has her own music and beauty. At first sight, the
scene is hardly "barbarous": it is rather, more homely
and domestic. But the unkempt and ragged appearance
of the "stooks" suggests the word "barbarous".

Turning his eyes heaven-words, the poet
derives the main impulse and inspiration for the
poem; hence the heavenly origin of "barbarous" "beauty".
The wildness and wilfulness in the movement of the
clouds correspond to the "barbarous" beauty of the
stooks. It must be stressed that the word "barbarous",
for Hopkins, is used not in terms of disparagement,
but in terms of praise. In the wildness and the
wilfulness, there is a paradoxical combination of "silk"
and "sack". The first quatrain reveals his deep
fascination for the cloud scape. With his eyes he looks
at the sky-pattern, but in his heart he recognizes
within the clouds the presence of "Ipse, the only One,
Christ, King, Head".29
In the second quatrain, while looking at the sky in terms of the harvested field but with Christ in mind Hopkins recalls the story of Ruth and Boaz in the Old Testament:

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

It is certainly a delighted recognition, a crescendo in the octave.

In the sestet, after a brief lull, the third element in the scenery is introduced: the hills, "azurous" like the sky above them:

"And the azurous hung hills are his world — wielding shoulder
Majestic — as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet".

One again, Hopkins sees the presence of Christ, this time like the heavenly Atlas wielding the world on his unseen shoulders. Likewise, Christ bears up on his shoulders the whole of the degenerate, sinful
world. The majesty of Christ here is seen in two respects: (i) strong, like the stallion; (ii) sweet like the violet. In their shape, it is as if the hills are joined, by many a saddle, in their colour, violet in the haze of the late afternoon.

In the finale, Hopkins gathers sky, fields and hills in one comprehensive term — "These things":

"These things, these things were here and but the beholder
Wanting; which two when once they meet,
The heart rears wings bold and bolder
And hurls for him O half curls earth for him of under his feet".

Like Adam in Paradise Lost asking Raphael about the stars shining, Hopkins asks questions about "these things" that have waiting for him to come and behold them. Now he, the beholder, has come, and now the being and beauty of "these things" is fulfilled in his act of beholding them. Consequently, something extraordinary ensues — the "heart in hiding" "rears wings bolder and bolder", until it ultimately "hurls" for him, O half curls earth for him off under his feet". Therefore, it is that, filled with this
instinct, the poet feels an impulse to leap upwards to embrace Christ in Heaven. Not only would he leap to heaven, he would also "hurl" the earth from under his feet, spurning it as being an unworthy obstacle. This image is derived from the gambolling lambs in "Spring": "The racing lambs too have fair their fling".

Hence, the poet is far from feeling regret at the end of summer. The declining beauty of the earth in autumn serves but to fix his attention on the abiding beauty of Heaven and its inhabitants.

Binsey Poplars

In his love of Nature, Hopkins rests his delighted gaze as much on trees as on wild flowers. True, he admires the loveliness of bluebells and knows "the beauty of our Lord" by them, but for trees he has a kind of fellow-feeling that amounts to love, particularly in a tragic context, as in Binsey Poplars.

The variety of trees mentioned in his poems is indeed impressive. Father P. Milward, S.J., has taken care to place them in an alphabetical order
and says that Hopkins does not merely mention trees, but also appends the appropriate epithet to them:

1. abele (or white poplar) as "airy"
2. apple in bloom as "drop-of-blood-and foam-apples".
3. ash as "scrolled".
4. mountain ash (or rowan) as "beadbonny".
5. aspen as having "airy cages".
6. beech as "silk".
7. cherry in bloom as "silver-surfed".
8. elm as "arching"
9. wych elm as "wild".
10. hazel as "dog-eared".
11. hornbeam as "fretty" (like chervil)
12. peartree as "glassy"
13. sallow as "mealed-with-yellow"
14. sycamore as "packed"
15. white beam as "wind beat".

Hopkins's identification with trees, though scattered in numerous poems, is expressed in its most concentrated form in the unfinished poem Ashboughs. Such a deep, almost personal love for trees is accompanied with a sense of mourning and bereavement when they are maimed or felled, especially when deliberately done so by human hands:
"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 felled rank
Not spared, not one
That dandled a sandalled
Shadow that swam or sank
On meadow and river and wind—wandering
weed-winding bank"

Already while a scholastic studying Philosophy at Stonyhurst, Hopkins had made a note in his Journal for 1872:31

"At the beginning of March, they were felling some of the ashes in our grove".

But in the following year, after noting a similar occurrence

"The ashtree growing in the corner of the garden was felled",32 he can no longer refrain from uttering his emotion:33

"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".

In the poem entitled *Binsey Poplars*, he speaks of the trees with a deep personal affection, as if they belonged to him by reason of their dearness to him. It was his delight to deck up at the branches against the blue sky – they seemed to "quell" the sun's impetuosity and to "quench" its ardour for the benefit of the passer-by on a hot summer day, thus earning his gratitude.

Hopkins next pours out his lament – (the repetition of "all" and "felled" is most strikingly effective). Hopkins is sorrowing with a deeper grief than his Margaret "Over Goldengrove unleaving", since her grief was for a fall in the course of Nature, but his is for a fall contrary to Nature – a stoke dealt by "dear and dogged man" who, as he complaints in "Ribblestake" must

". . . . . . reave our rich round world hare
And none reck of world after".

From lament Hopkins passes to reminiscence, picturing the poplars as children sitting by the river bank, and dangling their "sandalled" feet in the water.
The second stanza generalizes Hopkins's lamentation, involving the whole of man's fallen race, with an application of the words of the crucified Saviour, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do". Hopkins rephrases the words in the form of an unfulfilled wish:

"O if but we 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",

He deprecates the way men ill-treat the world of Nature when they

"... delve or hew
Hack and rack the growing green"

as in Ribblesdale he laments how man "bids reel" the river and "o'er gives all to rack or wrong".

The tenderness of Nature is compared to the human eye:
"But a prick will make no eye at all", with the implication that the trees have not been unearthed
at the roots, but have merely been lopped down. The sight presented by the maimed trees must have been painfully repulsive to Hopkins's eyes. The concluding lines build up to a climax:

"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 unsolve
The sweet especial scene,
Rural scene, a rural scene,
Sweet especial rural scene."

What here is unsolved, then, is the "Sweet especial rural scene" of the Binsey Poplars. The poem is the mournful recollection of a scene that is no more, and as he leaves it, though it has outwardly departed, it is deeply imprinted on the mind and memory of poet and reader alike.

The May Magnificat

To Roman Catholics, the month of May, "pied and peeled May" is traditionally consecrated to Mary,
the "mighty Mother". As a member of the Society of Jesus, Hopkins cherished a special devotion to Mary the Mother of Christ. Whereas other feast-days of Mary occur on particular days, celebrating various events in Her life, the whole month of May is set aside in Her honour. The Jesuits followed a tradition of offering "May verses" to Mary during this month; hence the composition of *The May Magnificat* by Hopkins. May is "brighter" than most months, and the "opportuneest" time of the year for finding flowers to bedeck Her altar. In the very nature of spring, at its height in May, there is an underlying analogy with Mary as the Mother of God. She is the "mighty Mother" replacing in the Christian dispensation the Great Mother of ancient religion, Cybèle, Isis, Demeter. So, to the question, "What is spring", the poet gives the simple answer "Growth in everything", under the influence, as it were, of Her who is the Mother of God.

In this context, Hopkins enumerates various kinds of growth:

"Flesh and fleece, fur and feather,
Grass and greenworld altogether,
Star-eyed strawberry-breasted
Throstle above her nested
Cluster of bugle blue eggs thin
Forms and warms the life within;
And bird and blossom swell
In sod or sheath or shell

Spring, or May, is the season of "all this joy!" (Spring). There is special mention by Hopkins of the thrush (Throstle") whose eyes he compares to the stars and whose heart to strawberries. He represents the bird not as singing (as in Spring) but as sitting on its: "Cluster of bugle blue eggs thin" - in the month of May, life is being formed and warmed by the mother bird. Not only the tiny birds within their shells, but the shoots in their earthly "sod" and the blossoms in their green "sheath" are swelling to a bursting-point.

All these, the poet sees in their "rising and sizing":

"All things rising, all things sizing
Mary sees, sympathizing
With that world of good
Nature's motherhood".
Mary looks at the whole of created Nature with her motherly sympathy and the creative recognition that they are "good". In them he finds the mysterious working of "Nature's motherhood" as Nature bears them all in her womb and finally brings them to birth in May "with delight":

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

This is the underlying analogy between the motherhood of Nature repeated year after year and the motherhood of Mary which happened once for all what happened at Nazareth and Bethlehem, in what T. S. Eliot calls the "Intersection moment" of time and the timeless, is renewed in the order of Nature in the recurring course of the seasons.

All this is, the poet says, sufficient reason for "offering Mary May", but he has "more than this". The remainder of the poem rushes to an enthusiastic crescendo, with an even more detailed description of the countryside:
"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 greyball makes
Wood banks and brakes wash wet like lakes
And magic cuckoo-call
Caps, clears, and clinches all—"

Hopkins rejoices at the inscape of "drop-of-blood-and-foam-dapple", at the "thicket and thorp" in the villages, and the silver-surfed cherry" with its blossoms floating on the branches like the silvery surf on the waves of the sea. The attention then focuses on the chanting of the little birds in the trees. Here it is not the thrush (as in Spring) or the skylark (as in The Sea and Skylark), but the magic call of the cuckoo; In a Journal entry for 1878, Hopkins hears

"the cuckoo with wonderful clear and plump and fluty notes"

and goes on the describe

"how the hollow of a rising conceives them and palms them up and throws them out, like blowing into a big humming over".
Thus, for Hopkins, May is not just the month of brightness and delight. It is more precisely, the month of motherhood, with its ecstasy — as Nature fills all things with ecstasy on the face of the earth, so May recalls the ecstatic memory of Mary when she partook of the Immaculate conception and gave birth to the Saviour:

"This ecstasy all through mothering earth
Tells Mary her mirth till Christ's birth
To remember and exultation
In God who was her salvation."

What Hopkins gets rapturous over in this poem is not the actual birth of Christ in the dead of winter, but rather the time She bore Him in her Virginal Womb. Then it was that She broke out with "exultation" and praise of "God who was her salvation". The "exultation" of Mary is, for the poet, at the heart of what happens every year in Maytime. One might be let to recall the prayer that ends the poem The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air we Breathe:

"O live air,
Of patience, penance, prayer;
World-mothering air, air wild,"
Wound with thee, in thee isled,
Fold home, fast fold thy child*.

The Starlight Night

A command as well as an invitation to see the heavens in imagination opens Hopkins's sonnet The Starlight Night:

"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-sitadels there!
Down in the dim woods the diamond delves!
the elves' eyes!"

The reader is told to view the stars as distant marks shaped like circular medieval castles and towers. Hopkins presents a world of fairyland as a mythological system through which man views the universe. The pre-Christian folk myth of elves and fairies is further fortified by references to the ordinary world of the farmyard.

"Wind-boat whitebeam! airy aebles set on a flare!
Flame-doves sent floating forth at a farmyard scare'.


Ah well! it is all a purchase, all is a prize.

Make-believe and everyday living look forward to completion in the realism of the One True God. He makes all myths true, and life itself is mythical in His person, human and divine.

But how is Christ to be sought and found?
The sestet answers:

"Buy then! bid then! - What! - Prayer, patience, alms, vows".

The way to progress in the path of seeking Christ is to follow the path of sacrifice expressed in deeds of living and giving. The line ends with the culminating gift of the imitation of Christ by the three Jesuit vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. This moves man towards fullness of being, it is not a falling away to nothingness: Paradoxically, one wins the world by losing it. Christ's bidding and pledge are thereby substantiated:

"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth consumes, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the
body is the eye; if your eye be single, your whole body will be full of light*1 (Matt. 6:20-22)

Hence the second command:

"Look, look: a May-mess, like on orchard boughs!
Look! March-bloom, like on mealed-with-yellow sallows!"

The stars are a springtime of renewal, the risen world made real; they are the harvest of Christ's victory:

"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 stars are thus the surface of the Being of Christ, the cleaves through which the watcher glimpses the light of the godhead housed within. The myth of fairyland and the domesticity of the farmyard come true in the Heavenly City. The "bright boroghs" of the octave become "the barn" and the "fire-folk" are Christ and His saints.
Spring

With the simple opening exclamation, "Nothing is so beautiful as Spring", the poet introduces one of his richest evocations of the fullness of eastering earth. Heaven appears in earth and earth in heaven, both transformed by the poet's vision:

"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
Though 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".

Here, the "lambs" are both their literal selves and at the same time clouds racing across the sky. The absence of "like" after "look" identifies the thrush's eggs with the heavens, the natural with the godly, the visible
with the invisible, in Christ. In Hopkins's poetry, conventional metaphors and comparison are rarely employed because he believes that things are similar by being known for what they are: Christlike. Natural objects are fused in man's unifying encounter of thought with things.

In the sestet, "What is all this juice and all this joy"? The poet asks and answers:

"A strain of earth's sweet being in the beginning
In Eden Garden - Have, get before it cloy,
Before it cloud, Christ, Lord, and sour with sinning,
Innocent mind in Mayday girl and boy,
Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy
thy winning".

This "sweet being" of creation and "Innocent mind in Mayday girl and boy" issue from Christ Himself, born of Mary, who as Creator and Redeemer returns all reality to Himself:

"Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy
thy winning".

Hopkins's Spring depicts a picture of the Eden of pristine purity.
"There it lies, the bliss of that Paradise, the native virtue of the green garden, the easy constitution of that first commonwealth of God."

The whole sonnet reverberates with freedom. Everything is unconfined, everything is fluid, instead of set. But only Christ can preserve this Eden-like state of existence. Sin makes the flow of joy cloy or "cloy"; it can cloud over the freeze the heaven; it can sour and clot the juice. The May day of a youthful world can turn to a Christless winter. Hence the poet's fervent appeal to preserve,

"A strain of the earth's sweet being".

**In the Valley of Elwy**

This is the only sonnet written by Hopkins with explicit references to the Welsh surroundings. The actual valley is the larger Vale of Clwyd, but into the River Clwyd, just below the cathedral city of St. Asaph, flows the smaller but lovelier River Elwy. The "house" referred to is that of the Watsons of Shooter's Hill. Hopkins appreciates their goodness as he feels his own unworthiness:
"I remember a house where all were good
To me, God knows, deserving no such thing".

There is a correspondence between the inner disposition of "these kind people" and the "cordial air" of the outer habitation which is developed in a series of comparisons:

"This cordial air made those kind people a heed
All over, as a bevy of eggs the mothering wing
Will, or mild nights the new morsels of Spring."

The poem thus employs the use of objects established previously - eggs, wings, air, and spring - in a fresh context of the familiar and the mysterious, the literal world and the mystical reality (of Christ). But where the family treated Hopkins with warmth and kindness and much more, where the Father pours all His hospitality and warmth on His guests, men will not turn in love to Him by simply recognizing the beauty and cordiality of their dwelling place:

"Lovely the woods, water, meadows, combes, vales
All the air things wear that build this world of Wales;
Only the inmate does not correspond:"
God, lover of souls, swaying considerate scales,
Complete thy creature dear O where it fails,
Being mighty a master, being a father and fond.

But this poem, unlike *In Memoriam* or
*The Sea and the Skylark* does not end on a note of
lamentation. Hopkins appeals to God not primarily as
Lord and Master, but as "lover of souls", praying God
to complete His creatures, to fill up what they lack
in virtue out of His own love which discerns something
endearing even in their defects - "being a father and
fond".

Once more, Hopkins returns to the fundamental
direction of his thought: moving through the loveliness
of nature and the sinful state of man, to that glory
and grandeur of God which lies at the heart of his poetic inspiration as well as of his religious vocation, *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* - for the greater glory of God. God can bring the world to completeness because He is almighty, and He will do so because He is all-loving.

**The Windhover**

This is one of the most significantly representative poems written by Hopkins, for it propounds his poetic theory, with the characteristic emphasis on inscape (inner form) of nature, and instress (inner vitality) of things. Hopkins himself described *The Windhover* as the "best thing I ever wrote". In the other sonnets of the "bright period" at St. Beuno's, Hopkins dwells on the various inscapes he delights to find in Nature: scenery, flowers, animal life and human beings. Nowhere does he succeed in capturing the Instress of a particular even in Nature so skilfully, or in applying it to his own peculiar position so aptly as in *The Windhover*. The poem concentrates on a single moment of high instress in the flight of the Kestrel.

Hopkins read the name "Windhover" from an inscription on a glass case of stuffed birds at
St. Beuno's, which was subsequently removed to Stonyhurst College in 1887. The inscription reads: "The Kestrel at Windhover: The commonest and most conspicuous of British falcons remarkable for its habit of remaining suspended in the air without changing position while it scans the ground for its prey".

But the content of Hopkins's poem could have come only from the experience of "the thing" in Nature, combined with the interpretation of the Kingdom of Christ contained in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. From this meditation Hopkins derived the terms of medieval chivalry, the movement of thought from the location of the bird's flight in the octave to the colloquy in the sestet, and above all the ultimate dedication of the sonnet, "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!."
The temporal circumstances of the sonnet is "this morning", with its implication, shortly to be developed, of the freshness of dawn. There is a procession of titles, as in some royal proclamation of medieval pageantry. Finally, the bird is introduced but not by the generic name of Kestrel; it is rather, accompanied by an appropriate attribute of light, "dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon". What has impelled the bird forth at this early hour is the "dapple-dawn" with all its varied inscape.

The poet resorts to imagery of medieval chivalry in that he envisages the bird in terms of a rider on a horse. The bird seems to ride the air without any effort, which remains, for all its "rolling", level and steady under his firm control of the reins. There is an intense combination of physical power and intellectual skill in his momentary motionlessness as he hovers in the wind - (like an expert trainer pulling on the reins of a fierce, untamed animal, and forcing it to keep within the limits of the reins he controls). The rein itself is identified as "wimpling wing", extended in flight and rippling in the wind since by its "mighty wings outspread" the Falcon controls the force of the wind and uses
it for its flight. There is, even if unseen, an intense struggle, a pitting of strength between mighty opposites. In this, the bird maintains mastery over the wind, and from it, he derives a feeling of sheer ecstasy, which is in turn conveyed to the watching poet, and by him to the reader:

"... 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!"

After the static tension of the bird in hovering, there is now swift movement as the bird goes "off forth on swing", gliding on the wings of the wind, but still subduing it to its own purpose. From the "ecstasy" with which the poem begins, there is now a breathless pause - it reminds the poet of the graceful movement of an experienced skater. In it he finds the paradoxical combination of dynamic effort in "the hurl" and effortlessness in "gliding". In either case, the bird (like the skater), is the perfect master of the situation, rebuffing the mighty force of the wind with his superior skill.
Now the poet has leisure to reflect on his own "heart in hiding". He feels a deep sense of admiration at the achievement and mastery of the bird in its superb control of the wind. Perhaps Hopkins might also be contrasting the might action of the bird with his own apparent inactivity in the life of contemplation and prayer at St. Beuno's. Yet, the emphasis of the poet's reflection is not introverted, but looks outward from himself to the "achieve" and the "mastery" of what he can only call "The thing". "The Thing" may seem too weak an expression, or too generalized, but to Hopkins it is strong precisely in its generality and universality emphasizing the concrete actuality.

The climax of the octave is now contrasted with the subjective reflection that ensues in the sestet:

"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!"

Hopkins sums up the admirable qualities of the bird, its "brute beauty" masculine courage, its intense
activity in the fullest sense of the Aristotelean expression of energia. In the bird's flight, the poet finds not only the beauty of the natural inscape, but also the force of the individual instress, which wells up from the source of created existence. As for the poet himself, he recognises a far wider possibility of mastery and achievement open to him as a man, even as his human nature is far nobler than the animal nature of the bird. His is a far higher vocation. Paradoxically, it is to be achieved not by mastery, but by service: not by the exertion of physical strength or even intellectual skill, but by the renunciation of his natural powers to a higher ideal, the service of "Christ our Lord". The poet turns his attention in the sestet from "The Thing" in the world of Nature to his own "heart in hiding", and from the realm of Nature to that of Grace. He is thinking primarily of himself, exhorting himself to put off envy at the "Brute beauty and valour and act" he so admires in the bird, and to "Buckle" his natural pride under the supernatural ideal of serving Christ the King. It is precisely to this ideal that St. Ignatius leads him in his meditatio on the Kingdom of God, where the exercitant is encouraged to
make a personal application of it to himself as a knight or "chevalier" of Christ. Once this condition is fulfilled, then the fire of Divine Love will be immeasureably lovelier and more effective than the "Brute Beauty" witnessed in the bird. To worldly people, this may seem a merely pious exaggeration, but for Hopkins it is a simple statement of fact - "No wonder of it". He substantiates his statement with two examples from the world of Nature:-

"... ... sheer plod makes plough down sillien Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear, Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermillion".

The first of these examples is suggested by the words of Christ about putting one's hand to the plough, pointing to the "sillien" that comes out shining from the muddy earth of the furrow it has been ploughing. The general sense implied in this example is that the He reminds himself that in the labour of ploughing there is the hidden light of grace, and what he sows in tears, he will reap in joy.

The second example, the embers are now "blue" and "bleak", and this, again, is how the poet is tempted to feel about his life as Jesuit priest.
Hopkins then sees how the embers fall (by analogy with human suffering). Even in the act of galling themselves, they break open and reveal the hidden glory or "gold-vermilion" of fire (or Divine Love).

Everything, therefore, leads up to the final revelation of "gold-vermilion". This is the fundamental lesson on the particular meditation on the Kingdom of Christ, and on the spiritual teachings of St. Ignatius in general — both the hidden life of Jesus Christ, at Nazareth, the labours and suffering of Christ in public life, and the agony leading up to His Crucifixion — on which Hopkins comments in a Sermon for 23 November 1879:

"Poor was his station, laborious his life, bitter his ending; through poverty, through labour, through crucifixion his majesty of nature more shines".

The Windhover is rightly dedicated "To Christ our Lord" in perfect submission to His loving will. It is a declaration of Christian purpose and a triumphant confirmation of the poet's personal faith, the faith that was his very existence:

"I have not only made my vows publicly some two and twenty time but I make them to myself every
day" - we need not wonder that this sonnet was so dear to him. For Hopkins himself says, in a letter to Dixon:  

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

In this truly great poem *The Windhover*, then, there is something vitally, even powerfully dynamic about his spiritual perception of Beauty to which Hopkins's spirit responds. But it is not Beauty in its peaceful, static state which Hopkins talks about here; but a portrayal of it in terms which are simply magnificent, in colour and movement. The dynamic sight - momentary though it may be - of "brute beauty and valour and act", and "air, pride plume", (the complex play of varied associated ideas and associations may be noted) as he watches a high-winging falcon, has something so intense and fiery about it that it at once touches and rouses the poet's dynamic spirit to a flaming height: "my heart in hiding stirred for a bird, - the achieve of the mastery of the thing!"

And the poet finds himself face to face with the "gold-vermilion" beauty of his Lord, Christ, breaking forth a "billion times" more lovely and "dangerous"
than of the splendidly moving bird before him. No wonder he finds such a "dangerous" beauty gushing in his very soul. The falcon's beauty and majesty, its "air, pride plume" are no other than a faint reflection of the imperial, dazzling beauty that characterizes "Christ our Lord", to whom the poem is dedicated. The felicitous fusion of the spiritual and the physical is done in a manner more daring and original than that of even the metaphysical devotional poets. Only those who can properly respond to the "Burning bright" beauty of Blake's Tiger can really thrill to the reading of such a poem as The Windhover; and one's sense of appreciation increases when one realises that it is in the severely defined mould of the sonnet form that Hopkins succeeds in compressing so much of intense dynamic perception and passion in his complete welding of the natural and the spiritual.

Nature, in relation to God, forms the underlying theme of the Nature poetry, most of which was written in 1877, the year of Hopkins's ordination at St. Beuno's in Wales. 'Nature' and 'Spirit' may be seen as conflicting one with the other in Hopkins's response to the real; but the Nature poems not only join the two, they are the unity they express. They proclaim the oneness—induality that Christ Himself embodied as Man and as God.
The world of nature is reached by the poet-priest's fusion of meticulous observation and religious fervour. 'Spirit' or 'Grace' does not oppose Nature, but fulfills and upholds it. Through the lines of the Nature poems, the risen Christ shines from within the poet's heart and in the physical world. The sonnets trace a unifying growth in phrasing the promise and prayer that concludes the Deutschland:

"Let him easter in us, be a day-spring to the dimness of us, be a crimson-cresseted east".

NOTES

1. The Holy Bible. Isaiah, 40; Genesis 12.
2. Ibid. The Psalms, especially, 19, 29, 104.
4. Sermons and Devotional Writings of GMH ed. C. Devlin (Oxford, 1959) p. 239.
5. Ibid.


10. Ibid

11. Ibid


13. Ibid


15. Ibid. p. 93

16. Sermons and Devotional Writings of GMH ed. C. Devlin (Oxford, 1959) p. 239


22. The Scotian term for this is "Haecceitas" (dealt with in the previous chapter)


25. Sr. Marcella. Quoted in her Ph. D. Thesis
   "Meditation in Hopkins" University of Iowa. 1981
   p. 33.

26. Sermons and Devotional Writings of GMH ed. C. Devlin.
   p. 195.


   2, p. 37.

29. The Wreck of the Deutschland.

    of Hopkins" (Tokyo, 1969) p. 80.

    1959) p. 124.

32. Ibid

33. Ibid

34. The Wreck of the Deutschland

35. T. S. Eliot, Four Quartets.

36. Sermons and Devotional Writings of GMH ed. C. Devlin
   p. 60


38. cf "crimson- cresseted east" - Deutschland, stz. 35;
   "brown brink eastward" - God's Grandeur.

39. Paradise Lost, Book I, the Invocation L. 1-26
40. Sermons and Devotional Writings of GMH, ed. C. Devlin, p. 37.
