Hopkins' last poems, composed in Ireland, will be discussed in this chapter following their probable chronological order in the 1967 edition of his Poems edited by W.H. Gardner and N.H. MacKenzie. Hopkins' poetry written from 1885 to 1889 is not characterized by a uniform poetic tension, especially because he was depressed on account of religious and psychological reasons during much of this period. His most important compositions of this period are sonnets of desolation which, according to Canon Dixon, are characterized by a "terrible pathos". Hopkins' "terrible" sonnets are mystical utterances of his acute longing to unite his "Jackself" with God in order to find the consummation of his spiritual life in the Ignatian manner. His other poems of great philosophical and theological significance are Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves and That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection.

The first poem of this period is Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves. Hopkins inscribes an evening at the very outset of the poem. To portray its diverse characteristics, he tries to construct a unified image by using seven adjectives. All of them are coalesced by mixed vowel sounds.
while six of them make an alliterative phonic pattern. The sound-texture of the first line seems to point to a conscious effort on the part of the poet to harmonize the multifarious qualities of the evening. One basic thing that strikes a reader is that the evening is devoid of the qualities of pleasantness and freshness which are usually associated with it. It seems to be an ethereal, huge and formidable force quelling the vestiges of light in order to pervade the world of visual perceptions: "Earnest, earthless, equal, attuneable, vaulty, voluminous, ... stupendous".

The evening deepens into night. The whole process seems to be strenuous. The compounds "womb-of-all" and "hearse-of-all" in line 2 are not without significance. They seem to be pointing to two different kinds of dark: prenatal and posthumous. The night seems to be a visual reminder of the metaphysical fact that man came from the dark of the womb and will return to the dark of the grave. The dark, therefore, becomes the "home-of-all" by way of predestination. Herein lies the eerie and discomforting nature of the night in the octet of the sonnet. Her "fond yellow hornlight wound to the west" (the moon, as Leavis
believes) and her "wild hollow hoarlight hung to the
height" (the stars) seem to be wasting their lights as
the night is too dark to be illuminated by them. The
reader gathers the impression that the darkening of the
earth by night is not just the normal kind of phenomenon
that we notice in our daily lives. It is pregnant with a
certain symbolic moral significance of its own.

The "earliest stars", which are inscaped as
"earlstars", "overbend us" to sit in judgement on our
moral vices. The "Fire-featuring heaven" seems to be
suggestive of divine wrath occasioned by the fact that
man has tarnished the earth with sin to the extent that
the "hornlight" and the "hoarlight" are ineffectual in
illuminating the planet. While discussing the octet of
this sonnet, one is inevitably reminded of Hopkins' 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-citadels there!
Down in dim woods the diamond delves! the elves'eyes!
The sense of spiritual wonderment associated with the stars as innumerable reflectors of the glory of God in the foregoing stanza is conspicuously missing from Hopkins' Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves. The stars are no longer a "purchase" and a "prize" but the judges of human misdeeds. This also explains why their soothing radiance has turned into a "wild hollow hoarlight" amidst the moral dark of the earth. Hopkins' perception of the moon and the stars is apparently coupled with a consciousness of desolation. The stars still convey to us the news of God in the poem, but the news of a benign God that Hopkins gives through The Starlight Night has now changed into that of a wrathful Deity. The lines "her earliest stars, earlstars, stars principal overbend us,/ Fire-featuring heaven" also contrast in this particular respect with the following lines from The Deutschland:

I kiss my hand
To the stars, lovely asunder
Starlight, wafting him out of it.

The night in Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves is dark enough to dismantle the earth. Its variegated beauty seems either
to have blurred or to have become an indistinguishable part of the domain of darkness. There is thus an utter loss of distinctiveness: all different selves seem to have merged with the encircling darkness "disremembering, dismembering all now".

The first volta occurs rather belatedly in line 7 of the sonnet where the visual description of the night suddenly comes to a halt and Hopkins says:

... Heart, you round me right

With: Our evening is over us; our nightwhelms, whelms, and will end us.

The basic technique here is quite similar to that used in The Windhover. Just as the visual "Brute beauty and valour and act, ... air, pride, plume" of the falcon are transmuted into the moral attributes of Christ in the sestet of The Windhover, so does the visual dark of the night become in the sestet of Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves an interior moral consciousness of the annihilation of human life. "The wages of sin is death" seems to be what Hopkins' heart whispers to him. The moral implications of "heart" are quite obvious in regard to a poem like the one
in question. The "night" in line 8 shares the quality of the dark both with sin and death. It has now begun to "whelm" human life in a marked manner and will decidedly annihilate it. The reader, at this point, inevitably harbours the impression that Hopkins has now begun to invest the sonnet with the overtones of a parable and what follows will perhaps give a profound moral lesson:

Only the beak-leaved boughs dragonish damask
the tool-smooth bleak light; black,
Ever so black on it. Our tale, O our oracle!

Since the portrayal of the night in visual terms has ceased to have any meaning in the moral context of the poem, "the beak-leaved boughs dragonish" seem to acquire symbolic overtones in regard to human life. As Paul A. Mariani believes, the phrase means "the essential evil of the scapes of the speaker's past actions". Since Hopkins, as a man, represents the whole human race and his individual actions find myriad of recurrences in the actions of mankind as a whole, the phrase extends the applicability of its meaning accordingly. The only scape which finds reflection on the darksome earth in "the tool-smooth bleak light" of the stars is that of human evil. The intensity of this evil is
wonderfully captured by Hopkins in the words: "black, / Ever so black on it". Lines nine-and-a-half of the poem seem to be a sort of visual transmutation of the black human deeds which are perhaps the only discernible patterns in the bleak light of the heavens.

The "beak" is one of the organs of the devil because he, as Hopkins thinks, has the power to assume the "attributes of many creatures ... And therefore I suppose the dragon as a type of the Devil to express the universality of his powers ... and the horror which the whole inspires ... [It] symbolises one who aiming at every perfection ends by being a monster, a 'fright'." ²

The meaning of "Our tale" — the tale of human life — that Hopkins seems to be emphasizing through a heavy stress on "Our" — consists in moral blackness throughout the sestet of the sonnet. Herein also seems to lie the predicament of Hopkins' "poor Jackself" in one of his "terrible" sonnets.

As W.H. Gardner thinks, the use of the word "oracle" in line 10 suggests the Cumaean Sibyl who conducted Aeneas into the underworld (Aeneid, vi). Since the title of the poem mentions the Sibyl, some commentators are likewise led
to believe that the poem deals with pre-Christian times. What they seem to be forgetting is the fact that the Dies Irae, which is a traditional part of the Roman Catholic Burial Mass, juxtaposes David with the Cumaean prophetess:

Day of wrath, that day
Will unwind time into ashes
Both David and Sibyl are witness. 3

Hopkins establishes a close parallel between the foregoing tercet of the Roman Catholic Mass and the octet of Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves. The "Day of wrath" seems to be foreshadowed in the poem by "Fire-featuring heaven". The unwinding of "time into ashes" symbolizes the extinction of selves, both animate and inanimate, which the sonnet portrays at different levels of meaning.

The basic moral lesson, which Hopkins seems to have learnt from the leaves of the Cumaean prophetess, is that the "Day of wrath", symbolized by the "Fire-featuring heaven", will "unwind time into ashes". Life, in the sestet of the sonnet, wanes like the day and its "once skeined stained veined variety" ravel s itself onto "two spools" or into "two flocks": "black, white, right, wrong". All this
may well be a poetic scholium on the following verses from the New Testament:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit down upon the throne of his glory, and all nations will be gathered in his presence, where he will divide men one from the other, as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats; he will set the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Needless to say, the sheep are the blessed and the goats the damned. It is this moral sorting of mankind which Hopkins suggests through the words: "part, pen, pack" in line 11 of the poem. As Mariani puts it: "But here the application is rather to the multiplicity of our thoughts and our actions during our lifetime, which will be sorted out according to their underlying moral worth."

In lines 12-13, Hopkins expresses an acute consciousness of the fact that only the moral nature of his life will count on the Day of Judgement. He simultaneously becomes aware of a "rack" to be inflicted on his self by the constant friction between thoughts of good and evil:
... reckon but, reck but, mind

But these two; ware of a world where but these two tell, each off the other; of a rack

Where, selfwrung, selfstrung, sheathe-and shelterless, thoughts against thoughts in groans grind.

A similar "rack" also smarts the poet during his terrestrial life in his sonnet, I wake and feel the fell of dark:

Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see
The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.

The words "but worse" in the above tercet seem to point to a more painful scourge of the hereafter; the one termed as "rack" in line 13 of Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves. The repetition of "but" and the alliterative pattern in lines 12-14 (as also in "part, pen, pack") seem to intensify the moral overtones of the sonnet. For Hopkins, good and evil coexist in the world to highlight their moral contrast. He also affirms it in The Deutschland, 20:

(But Gertrude, lily, and Luther, are two of a town, Christ's lily and beast of the waste wood;)
It was perhaps with a moral intention that both these absolutes were created together by God so that the "two tell, each off the other". Their moral contrast is accentuated in the following lines of the poem with the help of the interaction of certain visual images:

Only the beakleaved boughs dragonish damask
the tool-smooth bleak light; black,

Ever so black on it.

The use of the word "damask" in the foregoing lines seems to point to a textural contrast produced on a damask scene cloth which is woven with two spools of black and white yarn. Sheeps and goats put together in two separate flocks also present the eye with a similar contrastive spectacle.

In a sermon on death, delivered after his Liverpool ordeal, Hopkins urged: "Work while it is day, and despair of any other chance than this: the night is coming says your master, when no man can work". Just as Hopkins talks of death as "night" in the quoted extract, so does the sonnet in question present a number of images directly or indirectly associated with darkness: "womb-of-all", "hearse-
of-all", "gold yellow hornlight", "wild hollow hoarlight", "Fire-featuring heaven", "evening", and "bleak light". These images not only build up a consciousness of dark and desolation, they also seem to be functioning as a prelude to that dark and desolation which Hopkins tries to portray in a more consistent manner in his "terrible" sonnets. The image of the night in the sestet of Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves discharges a more important function. It points to the darkness of hell which the poem suggests in a very pronounced manner. In Hopkins' hell, nothing is visible except the evil scapes of the actions of man's terrestrial life. Speaking of hell, St. Theresa writes: "I know not how it is, but in spite of the darkness the eye sees there all that to see is most afflicting". For Hopkins, the experience of hell is a "rack" inflicted on man's disembodied self. Mariani affirms: "In hell we are our thoughts and the disparity between what is and what might have been is made finally clear to us". As already stated, the real "rack" of the experience is born of a friction between the two millstones of right and wrong which produce groaning notes.

The "thoughts" Hopkins talks about in line 14 have been disembodied, have severed their basic relationship with the human mind, and are facing a naked encounter between
good and evil. The grinding of "thoughts against thoughts" — the worldly conflict between the spirit and the flesh — seems to be re-enacting itself in the posthumous consciousness of man. The disembodied human self, which (being a centre of these thoughts) was swayed by evil in the temporal world is groaning under a moral friction because it did not care to undergo the pain of renunciation before its disembodiment. As Mariani writes: "... this violent tension between what was and what is, is marvellously caught in the extreme muscular tension of Hopkins' rhythmic stressing of "thoughts against thoughts in groans grind". The intensity of the "rack" undergone by the disembodied human self is quite easily felt when Hopkins highlights the neutralization of all our moral actions by sin:

God is good and the stamp, seal, or instress he sets on each scape is of right, good, or of bad, wrong. Now the sinner who has preferred his own good ... to God's good, true good, and God, has that evil between him and God, by his attachment to which and God's rejection of it he is carried and swept away to an infinite distance from God; and the stress and strain of his removal is his eternity of punishment.
The sonnet in question seems to have been written in the meditative tradition. David A. Downes has pointed out in it the triple structure of the Ignatian meditation consisting of a seeing of the spot, an analysis of the hidden meanings, real and symbolic, of the event composed and an exhortation in an oracular fashion to heed the divine whispers which Hopkins hears in his heart. The basic moral fact highlighted in the sonnet consists in an "admonition to avoid trying to live a life, as it were, between right and wrong, for this is to be put on a fearful rack of suffering". This accounts for the highly reflective tone of the sonnet.

*Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves* is replete with several disquieting elements: a mood of desolation, a consciousness of impending doom and finally a "rack" that man has to undergo on account of his indifference to the basic moral distinctions of earthly life. The nature imagery employed in the poem has eerie, weird and sinister overtones. It does not set forth the idea of the benignancy and grandeur of God which is so pronounced in his 1877 sonnets. As suggested by certain commentators, the poem points to a new development in the Hopkins canon which foreshadows a spiritual unrest in the poet's mind. This unrest is given
a most personal kind of treatment in his "terrible" sonnets (1885-89). It is thus that the poem serves as an introduction to them.

To what serves Mortal Beauty? is more or less a poetic scholium on the following passage from "Principle and Foundation" in St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises:

Man is created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord and by this means to save his soul. All other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him fulfil the end for which he is created. From this it follows that man is to use these things to the extent that they will help him to attain his end. Likewise, he must rid himself of them in so far as they prevent him from attaining it.  

Hopkins explores two aspects of mortal beauty in the beginning of his poem: the negative which is "dangerous: does set danc-ing blood" and the positive which "keeps warm/ Men's wits to the things that are; what good means". The first aspect of beauty has an erotic quality of which man should "rid" himself because it "prevents" him from
attaining the "end for which he is created". The second aspect, which has moral overtones, can likewise be related to St. Ignatius’ passage. It implies that we should instead look at beauty as one of "All other things" which "are created for man to help him fulfil the end" of his creation. Mortal Beauty thus reflects a variation in the treatment of the basic theme when we compare it with The Sacrifice and The Echoes.

The "end for which man is created" was fulfilled, according to the poem, by Pope Gregory who, having glanced at the beauty of the English prisoners of war in the Roman Forum, ejaculated: "Not Angels, but angels". Needless to say, the word "angels" evokes associations with the concepts of physical chastity and God's moral good. The act of Gregory's looking at the physical beauty of the English lads (which reflected a tiny fraction of God's beauty) led him to despatch St. Augustine to Christianize England. The act was obviously tantamount to disseminating the moral good of God's beauty in pursuance of the fulfilment of the divinely ordained mission "to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord and by this means to save his soul".

Hopkins further affirms in Mortal Beauty that if the
physical beauty of the English lads had not been glanced at by Gregory, he could perhaps not have "gleaned" the greater beauty in the form of the Word and despatched it to England:

Those lovely lads once, wet-fresh windfalls of war's storm,
How then should Gregory, a father, have gleaned else from swarm-
ed Rome? But God to a nation dealt that day's dear chance.

Man feels an innate desire to love and worship some object even though it may be a "block or barren stone". Christianity, according to the poem, asks its followers to love "love's worthiest.../ World's loveliest — men's selves". Self, as Duns Scotus expounded in his theory of haecceitas which exercised a seminal influence on Hopkins, "flashes off frame and face" of a human being and gives him his individuation. As the human self is an infinitesimal portion of the Divine Self in Hopkins' Christocentric poetry, the human face also flashes a small fraction of divine beauty. The commission of sin adulterates the divinity of our physical beauty — a motif which is also found in "Spring" (1877):

... Have, get, before it cloy,
Before it cloud, Christ, lord, and sour with sinning,
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,

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

Hopkins, in the beginning of Mortal Beauty, finds himself beset with a sense of dichotomy on account of the two conflicting aspects of beauty which have already been analysed.

In the following queries made in line 12, he refers to it again in a state of mental urgency:

What do then? how meet beauty?

The dichotomy seems resolved when Hopkins asks us to give beauty a home in our hearts as "heaven's sweet gift" and "let that alone". Mortal beauty is a kind of bait in the poem with which we can hook "God's better beauty" in the form of His grace.

The Sacrifice, The Echoes and Mortal Beauty are marked by a thematic uniformity with certain variations of treatment. Needless to say, the fleeting quality of human beauty is highlighted in each of them. Hopkins urges his readers in The Sacrifice to give beauty back to God before it dies.
away. Herein lies the basic condition of its perpetuation through an act of willing sacrifice on the part of man.

Man's transitory beauty undergoes, by means of the Resurrection, an eternal transmutation in The Golden Echo:

The flower of beauty, fleece of beauty, too too apt to, ah! to fleet,

Never fleets more, fastened with the tenderest truth

To its own best being and its loveliness of youth: it is an everlastingness of, O it is an all youth!

A turn of argument is quite perceptible in Mortal Beauty. The poet lays stress on the preservation of mortal beauty in our hearts in a Scotist manner so that it may induce us to wish for "God's better beauty, grace" which is the final goal of human life.

The three poems, mentioned earlier, deal with a spiritual value: the offering up of mortal beauty to God. The concept of beauty in the three poems is closely associated with the human sense of sight and it constantly poses to man the danger of becoming an end in itself and thus distracting his attention from the greater beauty of God which, according to Hopkins, is, in an infinitesimal
proportion, the constituent of the beauty of man.

There is a consistent effort in Hopkins' mature poetry to fuse the sensuous with the spiritual, as in the poem in question. Here is one example from The Deutschland. 8:

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

In fact, the examples of this mode can be multiplied indefinitely. The three poems thus seem to point to the way in which Hopkins' mature religious poetry should be read with reference to his mode of sensuously apprehending the spiritual.

Hopkins' The Soldier, dated August 1885, was written
at Clongowes. Composed in alexandrines, the poem is based on the traditional analogy between the life of a soldier and the service of Christ. It might also have been suggested to the Jesuit poet by St. Ignatius' Meditation on the Kingdom of Christ in *The Spiritual Exercises*.

The sonnet begins in a colloquial manner: "Yes. Why do we all seeing a soldier, bless him?" Both the "redcoats" and "tars" are fundamentally human beings having their origin in "frail clay, nay but foul clay". The query in the first line is answered with colloquial overtones: "Here it is" — the expression we mostly use while offering something someone has asked about and is waiting to get it. The answer consists in the fact that the poet's heart is proud of the British soldiers. Hopkins regards their "calling" as manly. He simultaneously hopes, guesses, and pretends to himself that "the men must be no less". We imagine, pretend, consider, like to think that the stature of an artist ought to be consonant with his art. We, therefore, imagine that the soldier is as "sterling" within as he is "smart" without. The "scarlet" wear, which is reminiscent of the colour of blood, symbolizes the spirit of war.

The sestet, begins with the word "Mark" which reminds
us of The Deutschland, 22: "Mark, the mark is of man's make". The poet now turns to Christ who was himself familiar with the hardship of "war" and "soldiering" like the "redcoats" and "tars". Christ continually invites us to the calling in accordance with the following words which St. Ignatius puts into his mouth: "Whoever shall wish to come with me must be content to eat as I do, and so to drink and dress, etc. as I do. In like manner, he must labour as I do by day, and watch at night, etc. so that in like manner afterwards he may share with me in the victory".

The expression "He of all can reeve a rope best" is important. The nautical metaphor of reeving a rope seems to highlight the image of Christ as one who, being prominent on the land is also equally prominent on the sea. The Deutschland, 32 describes him as "master of the tides". Christ now "bodes but abides" in the bliss of eternity but he is not heedless of the events of the earth. He, therefore, leans forth out of heaven with love like the "blessed damozel" to kiss the man who does "all that man can do". His neck must affectionately fall on such a man just as it fell on St. Gualbert who was hugged by the figure of Christ from the crucifix above the altar for forgiving an enemy. Such a "deed" is basically Christ-like. What Hopkins seems
to be stressing in line 9 is the ideality of human actions: "all that man can do". If God-made-flesh were to come back to earth, he would perhaps cry: "it should be this". In other words, this is precisely what he would be doing. The word this seems to point to the Scotist theory of "haecceitas" in order to highlight the basic nature of the "Christ-done deed".

The "terrible" sonnets of Hopkins are characterized by a parallel between himself and St. Ignatius Loyola. Both underwent periods of intense disconsolation which became crucial tests of their spirits. They left for posterity the records of their torments: the saint in his *Spiritual Exercises* and the poet in his "terrible" sonnets. During his stay at Manresa, Ignatius felt a process of spiritual anguish and mystical transformation taking place so intensely in his personality that it almost bordered on desparation and even suicide.

Anyone, who reads the poetry and prose of Hopkins, will inevitably be struck by a conspicuous element of sorrow which was so much a part of the poet's vision and which determined, to a very large extent, the tone and theme of his later poetry. As an idealist, Hopkins was
naturally downcast over the lamentable affairs of the world. The intensity of this "world-sorrow" was enhanced during the last four years of his life when it finally aggravated into an acute feeling of desolation:

My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main,  
a chief-woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old  
anvil wince and sing —

Then lull, then leave off.

This melancholic strain, which seems to have become a part of the poet's personality, is inherent even in such an early poem as *Spring and Death*. On analyzing the poet's melancholia, one finds that both personal and professional factors are involved in it. In 1884, Hopkins was appointed Professor of Classics at the University College, Dublin, where he was heavily burdened with examination work in spite of his failing health. On May 17, 1885, he wrote to Bridges: "I must write something, though not so much as I have to say. The long delay was due to work, worry and languishment of body and mind ... and indeed to diagnose my own case ... I think that my fits of sadness, though they do not affect my judgements, resemble madness. Change is the only relief that I can seldom get". 11
As a priest, Hopkins perhaps could not claim even a single soul converted to Catholicism through his own efforts. Even his closest relatives did not join hands with him in this particular respect. Hopkins must have treated it as a sacerdotal failure of his life. During his stay in Dublin, he embarked on several projects of authorship, all of which were left unfinished. He also left all his poetry unpublished because limelight was against the principles of Ignatian spirituality to be practised by a Jesuit. Man was created to praise and serve the Lord and, by this means, to save his soul. The following passage sheds ample light on the interior state of the poet's mind:

All my undertakings miscarry; I am like a straining eunuch, I wish then for death yet if I died now I should die imperfect, no master of myself, and that is the worst failure of all.  

One important point must be made regarding Hopkins' sonnets of desolation. While the poet's life was inseparably bound up with Ignatian spirituality, his sonnets in question seem to show a good deal of affinity with Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* which is obviously a prescribed book for
every Jesuit together with Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises. In these sonnets, Hopkins attempts to discern the spirit of Christ from the darkness of his own spirit — a motif which is common to both Ignatius and Kempis. For Ignatius the natural state of the soul is consolation, while for Kempis it consists in desolation as far as one's search for Christian fulfilment is concerned. In terms of the pattern of desolation in the "terrible" sonnets, Hopkins shows a conspicuous affinity for the spiritual philosophy of Kempis.

The priest dominated the poet in Hopkins and this brought about a tug of war in his personality. This domination for the glory of God was at times irksome, agonizing and unbearable and built up certain tensions which went into the making of his last sonnets in which the poet's self, showing the quality of a "dull dough", is finally surrendered to God.

Hopkins' "terrible" sonnets are undoubtedly his "supreme triumphs, unquestionably classical achievements" inasmuch as they deal with a rare synthesis between a suffering soul and its manifestation in a poetical language which is characterized by the quality of emotional compression. He uses the stylistic and technical excellences which
he meticulously developed to explore the deeper levels of his spiritual consciousness. These excellences comprise, in the main, his use of repetition and alliteration, a new rhythm and a new syntax — all culminating in a bewildering variety of artistry.

Hopkins' last sonnets explore a realm of consciousness where both the poet and his readers are caught in an acute but nebulous spiritual crisis. Yvor Winters is slightly offended by this nebulousness of the crisis which makes him dismiss the sonnet, No worst, there is none, as "emotional indulgence for its own sake". The sonnets of desolation have been approached by critics in a diversity of ways. Some view them as expressions of Hopkins' exigency to be both priest and poet. Some others think that the central conflict in the sonnets ensues from a struggle between good and evil, between heaven and earth. There are yet some others who tend to interpret these sonnets in terms of Freudian psychology. Barring the Freudian, all other approaches have something to do with Hopkins' spiritual vision.

A study of Hopkins' letters, journals and sermons leaves one with the impression that he was mostly preoccupied by a search for an "over-all order" which would enable him to
reconcile the oppositions he observed in the universe. He comments:

All thought is an effort of unity. This must be pursued analytically as in science or synthetically as in art or morality... In art we strive to realize not only unity, permanence of law, likeness, but also, with it, difference, variety, contrast; it is rhyme we like, not the echo, and not unison but harmony. But in morality the highest consistency is the highest excellence... But why do we desire unity? The first answer would be that the ideal, the one, is our only means of recognizing successfully our being to ourselves, it unifies us. 

Hopkins accomplished the task of ordering his universe not as a moralist, but as an artist. His first step in discovering life's unity was to explore the inscape of things. By perceiving the specific individuality of the visible, he tries to discover the stress of the Invisible:

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

Since Hopkins was a priest-poet, he naturally extended his idea of order to his religious life. In this particular venture, he found a philosophical mentor in Duns Scotus, the medieval theologian. Hopkins noted in his Journal in 1872: "It may come to nothing or it may be a mercy from God. But just then when I took in any inscape of the sky or sea, I thought of Scotus." In his search for a universal inscape through individual inscapes of nature, the poet was conspicuously influenced by Scotus. W.A.M. Peters further explains:

According to the theory of knowledge of Scotus the first object of all human knowledge is the individual as it here and now presents itself to our senses. As a man gains sensitive experience of the object, at the same time he arrives at an intuitive knowledge of the concrete individual and on this knowledge the mind works and reaches intellectual knowledge of the universal essence by the method of abstraction.
The Scotist mode of perception, explained in the above passage, is further illustrated by Hopkins, when he observes: “I do not believe I have seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it.” ¹⁷

Drawing on his Christological background as a Jesuit priest, he believed that man originated as an image in God’s mind. It further sanctions the idea that he is a portion of Divine Consciousness. In the poet’s terminology, he is “pitched” — turned to a higher degree of spirituality. God’s stress, His will, exerts itself in man’s pre-existent self and predisposes it towards its original home in the Divine Consciousness.

Hopkins writes in his essay, On Personality, Grace and Free Will:

Self is an absolute which stands to the absolute of God as the infinitesimal to the infinite. ¹⁸

The infinitesimal becomes the finite when the bare self acquires a human nature through the process of birth. On gaining an earthly identity, man loses sight of his pre-
existent place in the Consciousness of God. Elaborating the philosophy of self, Hopkins says:

So then the universal mind is outside of my inmost self and not within it; nor does it share my state, my moral standing or my fate. And for all that this universal being may be at work in mine it leaves me finite: I am selfexistent none the more for any part the selfexistent plays in me.¹⁹

Man, ignited by the residual divine spark, tries to regain his lost union with the Divine Self. In order to achieve this, he must learn to surrender his mortal selfhood to the Immortal Selfhood of God. Man becomes subordinate to God only when he submits his human will to the Divine. The merger of the human self into the Divine depends on personal volition to relinquish "limited human potency" in favour of Divine Omnipotence. The realization of this volition depends on a readiness to undergo a process of sacrifice.

The central conflict in the "terrible" sonnets constitutes a clash of impulses operating within the poet's personality. Hopkins seems to be on the horns of a dilemma: he
shows a desire to reach spiritual fulfilment together with a reluctance to surrender his human identity. As Hopkins demonstrates in line 8 of *Carrion Comfort* an affinity for his earthly selfhood, he tends to forget that it is no more than an evanescent entity. Later, in the sonnets, the poet tries to overcome the horror of the divine inscape and to accept his supernaturally preordained destiny in the world. Specifying the nature of the destiny that he craved for, Hopkins wrote the following passage during his 1883 retreat:

> I have much and earnestly prayed that God will lift me above myself to a higher state of grace, in which I may have more union with him... In meditating on the Crucifixion I saw how my asking to be raised to a higher degree of grace was asking also to be lifted to a higher cross.  

His prayer seems to have been answered in real life. Spiritually, Hopkins was lifted to a "higher cross" in terms of the surrender of his mortal selfhood in the sonnets of desolation. It is not surprising that, during the process of being lifted to a "higher cross", he, as David A. Downes says, "gave expression to his feeling of nothingness of the self and the overwhelming all of God". The poet learns
by degrees that a finite being must become infinitesimal before it can merge into the Infinite.

Hopkins refers to himself as "me, the oulprit, the lost sheep, the redeemed." A mortifying consciousness of being guilty in the eyes of God is juxtaposed in the comment with a fervent faith in the possibility of redemption. Herein lie the sources of the themes of spiritual desolation, patience, and resignation in the "terrible" sonnets.

In Carrion Comfort, the poet refuses to draw sustenance from "Despair". His is the plight of the hungry man tempted to feed on decaying flesh. The triple use of "not" in the first line expresses, on the poet's part, a positive resolve not to feed on despair, although "slack" indicates that he has lost much of the divinity that he brought with him from his pre-existent home: "Not untwist — slack they may be — these last strands of man/ In me." The triple use of "not" is juxtaposed with the triple use of "can" which gives rise to a "hope" in Hopkins' heart to reunite his mortal self with the Divine. The repeated use of "not" and "can" further indicates that the poet is outstepping the limits of human initiative prescribed by God, for it is not within the human resources of man to choose either life or death.
It is only after this extension of the boundary of the finite human self that Hopkins suddenly experiences the cryptic workings of "O thou terrible" and obstinately queries Him: "Why wouldst thou rude on me/ Thy wring-world right foot rock?" Why would he crush him with a "lionlimb" and "scan/ With darksome devouring eyes my bruised bones?"

There seems to be a significant contrast between the poet's un-Christian pride shown in his resolve not to "choose not to be" and the use of the word "wring-world". It would not be wholly wrong to conjecture that the "bruised bones" of the poet are tantamount to the fallen state of his self.

The "tempest" is a favourite image with Hopkins which delineates the way divine grace bursts upon the sinning human self. The poet's self has hardened to the extent that, instead of feeling the process of winnowing taking place in his personality, he frantically tries to "avoid thee and flee". It is much later that he realizes that the "tempest" is aimed at flying his chaff so that the grain of his self may "lie sheer and clear". The "toil", and the "coil", spoken of in the sestet, result in the poet's kissing the "rod" and "Hand" of God from whom his infirm heart "lapped strength, stole joy, would laugh, cheer". The process of the metamorphosis of his infinitesimal self does not end
here. Hopkins finds himself on the horns of a dilemma
when he asks: "Cheer whom though? The hero whose heaven-
handling flung me, foot trod/ Me? or me that fought him? O
which one? Is it each one?" In fact both the victor and
the vanquished triumph in this combat. The spiritual
significance of this simultaneous triumph of the divine and
human combatants is brought out with great insight by
Hopkins in the following passage:

That is Christ playing at me and me playing at
Christ, only that it is no play at all but truth;
That is Christ being me and me being Christ.\(^{23}\)

There seems to be a parallel between Hopkins’ "that
night" and the "dark night of the soul" described by St. John
of the Cross. With the advent of the divine light of grace,
"that night, that year" is "Of now done darkness" and the
lost sheep is redeemed. The agonized words of the dying
Christ "my God", which are used in the sestet, reveal that
"his has been the privilege of being crucified with Christ".\(^ {24}\)
There is also a kind of "startled, shrill whisper" in "(my
God!)", as Hopkins realizes that God was wrestling with him
in darkness.

"No worst, there is none" is by all probability the
sonnet "written in blood", as Hopkins informed his friend, Robert Bridges. The conjecture is based on the fact that the sonnet is replete with the most acute kind of what Ignatius calls "desolation". It reveals "a darkening of the soul, trouble of mind, movement to base and earthly things, restlessness of various agitations and temptations, moving to distrust, loss of hope, loss of love; when the soul feels herself thoroughly apathetic, sad, and, as it were, separated from her Creator and Lord".25

To gloss the first line, "No worst, there is none", one must consider the following passage by Hopkins:

All my undertakings miscarry. I am like a straining eunuch. I wish then for death yet if I died now I should die imperfect, no master of myself, and that is the worst failure of all.26

The poet is confronted with an enormous spiritual ordeal. His realization that he must become a master of himself by imitating Christ’s sacrifice poses difficulties as he initially finds it a herculean task to surrender his human identity. He is hindered by a human weakness and
tormented by the thought that he will perhaps not live up to the example of Christ. This spiritual ordeal is fraught with an exceptional degree of intensity: "Pitched past pitch of grief". Hopkins betrays the apprehension that, although he is "schooled at forepangs", "More pangs will, ...wilder wring" because of a loss of his sense of communication with the Divine. The poet invokes the Paraclete and cries out with an excruciating feeling of spiritual agony: "Comforter, where, where is your comforting?" In Hopkins, both the Holy Spirit and Christ are comforters. The ambiguity of the invocation is dispelled when we understand the fact that the poet is begging for grace in his sore exigency, but he perhaps does not know which person of the Trinity he should implore for this favour. The second invocation for grace is addressed to Virgin Mary. The Virgin's intercession is begged "because it was her more than all other creatures that Christ meant to win from nothingness and it was her that he meant to raise the highest". 27

The poet's invocations are neither answered by Christ nor by Mary, and his torment remains unabated. Hopkins specifies his agony in the lines, "My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief—/ woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing". Robert Boyle, in his
Metaphor in Hopkins, thinks, that the poet's "world-sorrow" emanates from the consciousness of sin. The roots of this sin lie, to my mind, in man's Godlessness stretching over successive generations. Having touched the climax of intensity, Hopkins' cries "lull, then leave off".

In the sestet, the poet ponders over the huge complexity of the human mind when he says: "O the mind, mind has mountains". The word "mind" unfolds a twofold significance in the context of this sonnet. It hearkens back to its pre-existent bond with the Divine, yet simultaneously affirms the fact of its entanglement with the fragmentary "Jackself" rooted deep in earthly existence. It is, therefore, a source of ecstasy and torment. There are "frightful cliffs of fall", the depths of which can perhaps not be fathomed by a human being who does not understand the nature of his fallen state. Those who "Hold them cheap" are the ones "who never hung there". It is usually beyond an average man's courage to withstand the terror aroused by these steep "cliffs". So the poet explains: "Nor does long our small/ Durance deal with that steep or deep". It is on "that steep or deep" that Hopkins, in this sonnet, creeps like a "wretch" under the fleeting comfort of the hope that "Life death does end and each day dies with sleep".
The first quatrain of *To seem the stranger* treats of Hopkins' estrangement from his "Father and mother dear,/ Brothers and sisters" for the sake of Christ who is his "peace, my parting, sword and strife". Here Hopkins seems to be very close to the following lines of the New Testament in terms of the similarity of motif:

Do not imagine that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have come to bring a sword, not peace. I have come to set a man at variance with his father, the daughter with his mother, ... a man's enemies will be the people of his own house.

The poet laments, in the octet, his loss of credibility in England, "whose honour" all his "heart woos" but, as he remarks sadly, she "would neither hear/ Me, were I pleading, plead nor do I". A loss of potency is perhaps responsible for the poet's ineffectuality in pleading the Catholic cause to his countrymen. Hopkins' inability to further the cause of the Irish struggle for political freedom also distresses him: "wear/y of idle a being but by where wars are rife".

Hopkins suffers from a triple degree of remoteness:
he is removed from his country, from his family, and from his Irish colleagues on account of distance, religion and political allegiance respectively. He believes that he can "kind love both give and get" in Ireland in all removes, but this love is perhaps not enough to afford him desired satisfaction on the artistic level. Hopkins' creativity seems to have failed him. His depression over this failure leads him to question whether it is "dark heaven's baffling ban" or "hell's spell" which "thwarts" his creativity. Prying into Hopkins' situation, one is led to believe it is both. When the poet laments, "This to hoard unheard, Heard unheeded, leaves me a lonely began", he admits the sterility of his creative endeavours on account of God's disapproval of their fructification.

Having undergone the various phases of his spiritual crisis, which have been described in the foregoing part of this chapter, Hopkins is now ready to face the acute suffering which will finally posit him in the "divine scheme of things".

I wake and feel expresses the deeply-felt anguish of Hopkins' heart inasmuch as he senses around himself "the fell of dark, not day". The "black hours", mentioned in the
first quatrain, seem to be akin to the "dark night of the soul" spoken of by St. John of the Cross. The ordeal does not appear to be a temporary phase because, as Hopkins says, "what sights you, heart, saw; ways you went!/ And more must, in yet longer light's delay". The "witness" to the poet's ordeal, which is protracted in nature, is his own consciousness of it: "But where I say/ Hours I mean years, mean life". Hopkins' "lament/ is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent/ To dearest him that lives alas! away". He must wait for the arrival of divine grace until the consummation of the sacrifice of his selfbent.

Hopkins dwells on the true nature of man when he comments: "I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree/ Bitter would have me taste; my taste was me;/ Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse". "God's most deep decree" is, in fact, the imprisonment of the human soul in bones, flesh and blood. The first tercet of the sestet is rooted deep in the poet's thorough background of traditional Christianity. The body prevents man from comprehending the nature of his infinitesimal place in the Infinite and thus it has been equated by the poet with a "curse". Hopkins' comment, "my taste was me", has a very
close parallel in the following prose passage:

That taste of myself, of I/ and me above and in all things, which is more distinctive than the smell of wallnutleaf or camphor, and is incommunicable by any means to another man. 29

The "taste" of himself that Hopkins tries to recreate for his readers in terms of his spiritual anguish remains, to a certain extent, "incommunicable". That is perhaps due to the nature of the occult which the poet deals with in his "terrible" sonnets.

When Hopkins states, "Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours", he seems to be drawing on St. Paul who exhorts us to become the unleavened bread and to purge ourselves of the "Selfyeast" which sours our whole being. As the poet believes, the spirits of the "lost" are soured by the yeast of their selves alienated from God. Their "scourge" is what Hopkins also shares with them: "sweating selves; but worse". "The wicked and the lost" are thus "like half-creations and have but a half being". 30

Hopkins writes: "Let him who is in desolation strive
to remain in patience, which is the virtue contrary to the
troubles which harass him". In *Patience*, hard thing!, the
poet tries to imbibe the philosophy of endurance and recovery.
Here he arrives at the conclusion that he can never attain
the ultimate virtue of patience without "war" and "wounds".
These are the roots of "rare patience" "and these away,/ 
Nowhere". Man must "pray" and "bid for" the attainment of
this virtue. "To do without" it, we "take tosses, and obey".
The poet designates patience as "Natural heart's ivy"
inasmuch as "Patience masks/ Our ruins of wrecked past 
purpose". Hopkins writes: "No, we have not answered God's
purposes, we have not reached the end of our being. Are we
God's orchard or God's vineyard? We have yielded rotten
fruit, sour grapes or none". "Our ruins of wrecked past 
purpose" can plausibly be equated with our past failure to
reunite with God. The "purpose" is ruined by man's pride
in himself, for he wants to become a master of the divine
vineyard.

Spiritual crisis entails a situation in which "our
hearts grate on themselves". When the poet says, "it kills
to bruise them dearer", he tries to save the heart from
dying completely because, apart from being a source of our
"rebellious wills", it is also a receptor of divine grace.
Herein lies the twofold significance of the word "heart" in its religious sense.

In the final tercet, "the speaker likens the patient man to the prepared crisp honeycombs which the bee, Patience, slowly fills with the honey of 'Delicious kindness'. This is the increased kindness of God bestowed on the patient man ... But unless the walls of the comb are securely firm, "crisp", the honeybee Patience will not fill them".  

The sonnet ends on a peaceful note on account of the poet's assuming the virtue of patience which brings him closer to God. He has resigned himself to his suffering in the true spirit of a Christian, and hence to his God.

To understand the sonnet, My own heart, the following passage by Hopkins is of great significance:

The heart is of all members of the body the one which most strongly and most of its own accord sympathizes with and expresses in itself what goes on within the soul. Tears are sometimes forced, smiles may be put on, but the beating of the heart is the truth of nature.
The pity felt by the poet on his "heart" seems to have been caused by the hiatus that has taken place between himself and the Divine. He expresses the desire: "let/ Me live to my sad self hereafter kind/ Charitable". This desire in Hopkins is an offshoot of the acquisition of the virtue of patience. In the lines, "not live this tormented mind/ With this tormented mind tormenting yet", Hopkins does not want to "torment yet" his already "tormented mind" by means of his "tormented mind". His unkindness to his heart has bred a protracted spiritual suffering. Reading between the lines, Hopkins seems to be realizing that there is a stage in spiritual consciousness where self-torment ends and Christo-centric vision begins.

The second quatrain projects Hopkins as a "comfortless" being casting for "comfort". Comfort and the poet's comfortless being seem to have become polarities as "blind/ Eyes" and "day", "thirst" and "Thirst's all-in-all in all a world of wet".

The poet, at this stage, acquires an insight into his human inadequacy which gives rise to the prayer that God "may give us a true knowledge and understanding whereby we may intimately feel that it is not in our own power to
acquire or retain great devotion, ardent loves, tears or any other spiritual consolation, but that all is a gift and grace of God our Lord.\textsuperscript{35}

The sestet is addressed by Hopkins to his "Jackself" which is advised by him to be content with its "jaded" state, and to call off thoughts of suffering "awhile/ Elsewhere" and to "leave comfort root-room". Exhausted by his protracted suffering, he is now content to "let joy size/ At God knows when to God knows what". It is at this stage that Hopkins is finally reconciled to the idea of receiving grace whenever and however God wills it. Herein lies the secret of his recovery from an acute spiritual distress.

Hopkins firmly believes towards the end of the last tercet that "joy" (tantamount to the ecstasy of grace) smiles to a suffering self "unforeseen times rather — as skies/ Betweenpie mountains — lights a lovely mile". In his expectancy for the sudden and unforeseen "smile" of God, he discovers the fountain-head of true spiritual consolation. He has undoubtedly striven for its attainment at the cost of profound "torment".

The experience that Hopkins expresses in terms of his
spiritual disconsolation is of a mystical character, although he was not a mystic. This is why Father Lahey directs us to such mystical writers as St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, Poulain and Maumigny for a proper appreciation of Hopkins' "terrible" sonnets.

**Tom's Garland** is one of Hopkins' most difficult poems because it is full of his characteristic syntactical inversions, and involution of thought and grammar. This particular difficulty of the poem has perhaps always prevented it from becoming popular with the readers of Hopkins.

The sonnet, written at Dromore, is dated September 1887. It is in *common* rhythm, but with hurried feet. It has two codas. This is why it is regarded as one of Hopkins' caudated sonnets. A detailed discussion of codas with reference to this particular category of Hopkins' sonnets is to be found in Chapter I. It will be fruitful to compare the use of codas in this sonnet with that in Milton's *On the New Forcers of Conscience*.

The subject of the poem is the unemployed. It also epitomizes Hopkins' reactions to some of the political
developments of his times.

The syntax, as Hopkins himself admitted, is "very highly wrought, too much so, I am afraid":

Undenized, beyond bound
Of earth's glory, earth's ease, all; no one, nowhere,
In wide the world's weal; rare gold, bold steel, bare
In both; care, but share care—

As always in Hopkins, there are some lively and impressive lines in the sonnet:

Tom—garlanded with squat and surly steel
Tom; then Tom's fellowbootfellow piles pick
By him and rips out rockfire homeforth—....

All the same, these characteristic lines of Hopkins do not neutralize the elements of grotesqueness and eccentricity in the syntax of the poem.

It will be superfluous to explain the theme and Hopkins' genuine concern for the working class inasmuch as
he himself does it in a letter written to Bridges from Dublin on February 10, 1888, when he and Canon Dixon failed to "construe" the sonnet: "... I laughed outright and often, but very sardonically, to think you and the Canon could not construe my last sonnet; that he had to write to you for a crib. It is plain I must go no farther on this road: if you and he cannot understand me who will? Yet, declaimed, the strange constructions would be dramatic and effective. Must I interpret it? It means then that, as St. Paul and Plato and Hobbes and everybody says, the commonwealth or well ordered human society is like one man; a body with many members and each its function; some higher, some lower, but all honourable, from the honour which belongs to the whole. The head is the sovereign, who has no superior but God and from heaven receives his or her authority; we must then imagine this head as bare (see St. Paul much on this) and covered, so to say, only with the sun and stars, of which the crown is a symbol, which is an ornament but not a covering; it has an enormous hat or skull cap, the vault of heaven. The foot is the daylabourer, and this is armed with hobnail boots, because it has to wear and be worn by the ground; which again is symbolical; for it is navvies or daylabourers who, on the great scale or in gangs and millions, mainly trench; tunnel, blast, and in other ways
disfigure, "mammock" the earth and, on a small scale, singly, and superficially stamp it with their footprints. And the "garlands" of nails they wear are therefore the visible badge of the place they fill, the lowest in the commonwealth. But this place still shares the common honour, and if it wants one advantage, glory or public fame, makes up for it by another, ease of mind, absence of care; and these things are symbolized by the gold and the iron garlands. (O, once explained, how clear it all is!) Therefore the scene of the poem is laid at evening, when they are giving over work and one after another pile their picks, with which they earn their living, and swing off home, knocking sparks out of mother earth not now by labour and of choice but by the mere footing, being strong-shod and making no hardship of hardness, taking all easy. And so to supper and bed. Here comes a violent but effective hyperbaton or suspension, in which the action of the mind mimics that of the labourer—surveys his lot, low but free from care; then by a sudden strong act throws it over the shoulder or tosses it away as a light matter. The witnessing of which lightheartedness makes me indignant with the fools of Radical Lewellers. But presently I remember that this is all very well for those who are in, however low in, the Commonwealth and share in any way the common weal; but
that the curse of our times is that many do not share it, that they are outcasts from it and have neither security nor splendour; that they share care with the high and obscurity with the low, but wealth or comfort with neither. And this state of things, I say, is the origin of Loafers, Tramps, Cornerboys, Roughs, Socialists and other pests of society. And I think that it is a very pregnant sonnet, and in point of execution very highly wrought, too much so, I am afraid".

Hopkins does not seem to have written any poems in 1886. He composed Tom's Garland and Harry Ploughman in September, 1887. Hopkins called them "touchings up" of earlier attempts. In both these poems, he does not describe his personal state of mind. The intricate and bold poetic technique employed here seems to suggest a certain restoration of creative energy in his poems. Both these sonnets cannot be regarded as examples of Hopkins' real poetic achievement. Harry Ploughman does not, therefore, necessitate exhaustive critical comment.

Harry Ploughman is a caudated sonnet like Tom's Garland, but the extensions here are designated by Hopkins
as "burden lines"; extra half-lines interspersed with the regular lines of the sonnet giving the effect of an echo. The poem is basically an uninterrupted descriptive attempt at exploring the inscape of a man in a manner which is closely similar to the same kind of exploration of the detail and richness of natural landscape. Although Harry Ploughman is characterized by awkwardness like Tom's Garland, it is reminiscent of The Windhover not only in the shining of the clods of earth dug up by the ploughshare but also in the "captured rhythm" of kinaesthetic action: "He leans to it, Harry bends, look". The line shows the resources of Hopkins' Anglo-Saxon vocabulary and his sensitivity to kinaesthetic action. The emphasis in the octet on "each limb" discharging its "rank" and "deed he each must do" establishes a certain kind of relationship between Harry Ploughman and As kingfishers catch fire: "... What I do is me: for that I came".

On October 11, 1887, Hopkins wrote to Bridges: "I will enclose the sonnet on Harry Ploughman in which burden-lines (they might be recited by a chorus) are freely used; there is in this very heavily loaded sprung rhythm a call for their employment. The rhythm of this sonnet, which is
altogether for recital, not for perusal (as by nature verse should be) is very highly studied. From much considering it I can no longer gather any impression of it: perhaps it will strike you as intolerably violent and artificial. 37

Mariani makes important observations on the poem when he writes: "Harry Ploughman is unlike any other poem of Hopkins'. Indeed in phonal and tonal patterns it is very highly pitched, even for Hopkins. The Petrarchan sonnet supplies the basic formal structure for the poem, but the poem does not really work as a sonnet, primarily because there is no "afterthought", as Hopkins himself said, no significant volta in the argument, for the poem does not develop any argument. Where the normal volta would occur there is a turn but it is only to a greater dynamic intensity; there is no logical or emotional shift. 38

He further believes that the poem is not a "perfect caudated sonnet, for it does not follow the formal pattern of the one famous caudated sonnet in English literature prior to Hopkins: Milton’s On the New Forces of Conscience. In fact Hopkins was not sure how to construct a formal caudated sonnet when he wrote Harry Ploughman. 39
Most of Hopkins' sonnets have a certain kind of theological significance attached to them, especially in the sestets. If one tries to find any such significance in this sonnet, it is only by implication. The figure of the ploughman was a favourite one for Hopkins. His figure, as it emerges in kinaesthetic action, is reminiscent of Hopkins' own comment on the human body as the living temple of God. The body "is in all things conformed to Christ..., [this] best brings out the nature of the man himself, as the lettering on a sail or device upon a flag are best seen when it fills".40 The Christian concept of the Mystical Body of Christ is not without significance in this regard.

The theme Hopkins develops through different images in the first sixteen lines of That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection (1888) is basically derived from the metaphysical speculation of the ancient Greek philosopher, Heraclitus (c.535 - c. 475 B.C). His theory of the universe is elucidated by S.E. Frost:

Heraclitus believed that "fire was the original stuff of which all else in the universe was made. Fire...was forever changing, never still, never the same. Since everything is constantly changing,
since change is the fundamental characteristic of
the universe, the forever-changing fire must be
the material of the universe. 'You could not', he
wrote, 'step twice into a river, for other and
yet other waters are ever flowing on'. There is
nothing permanent, stable. Change is all that is.
... If we had eyes powerful enough to see exactly
what is happening, we would realize that even the
most stable thing in the universe is actually chang­
ing all the time. The universe, then, is ruled by
"strife". The moment a thing is made, strife
begins to break it up.41

Hopkins catches sight of a process of flux on the
earth in the following lines of Heraclitean Fire:

Delightfully the bright wind boisterous ropes,
    wrestles, beats earth bare
Of yestertempest's creases; in pool and rutpeel
    parches
Squandering ooze to squeezed dough, crust, dust;
    stanches, starches
Squadroned masks and manmarks treadmire toil there
    Footfretted in it.

The poet's perception, sharp enough to penetrate the
unified complex of the characteristics of an object, registers a similar process at work in the formation of clouds. He expresses his perception of change through three distinct images: "Cloud-puffball", "torn tufts", and "tossed pillows". The successive changes reflected by these images are juxtaposed with a catalogue of dynamic verbs: "flaunt", "chevy", "throng" and "pair". The behaviour of wind in the quoted lines suggests a similar dynamism. The cumulative result of kinesis in clouds and the wind seems to be leading to a consciousness of flux in the world of nature.

Hopkins reconstructs in the poem, with great imaginative skill, a play of sunlight on the rain-drenched earth:

Down roughcast, down dazzling whitewash, whenever an elm arches,

Shivelights and shadowtackle in long lashes lace, lance and pair.

The principle of kinesis is, once again, emphasized in the journey of light and its multifarious patterns on the earth. The verbs, which particularly suggest motion in light patterns, are "lace", "lance", and "pair". The sprung rhythm employed in the poem further intensifies this feeling.
Besides, the subtle vowel patterns in line four highlight, on the phonic level, the phenomenon of flux in the behaviour of light.

It is interesting to refer to a similar play of light in Hopkins' early poem, *A Vision of the Mermaids*:

Plum-purple was the west, but spikes of light Spear'd open lustrous gashes, crimson white;
(Where the eye fix'd, fled the encrimsoning spot,
And gathering, floated where the gaze was not;)
And thro' their parting lids there came and went Keen glimpses of the inner firmament:

The verbs "spear'd", "fled", "floated", "came", and "went" in the lines also point to the idea of kinesis which Hopkins develops in a more concentrated form in *Heraclitean Fire*. In this poem, Hopkins' powers of perception and his sound patterns, arising from a careful choice of words, show a marked turn towards maturity. This is quite natural because there was an interval of 26 years between the compositions of *A Vision of the Mermaids* and *Heraclitean Fire*. Hopkins' interest in the vivid portrayal of visual beauty is poetically more seasoned in the later poem,
although the sensuous influence of Keats is unmistakably to be felt in the earlier one. There, however, exists a certain kind of similarity in the use of the verbs "lance" in line 4 of Heraclitean Fire and "spear'd" in line 8 of A Vision of the Mermaid, both of which suggest the idea of strife as the basic condition in Heraclitean philosophy of the onset of change in the physical world. The idea is given a renewed emphasis in the following lines of Heraclitean Fire:

Delightfully the bright wind boisterous, ropes, wrestles, beats earth bare

Of yesternight's creases: in pool and rutpeal parches

Squandering ooze to squeezed dough, crust, dust; stanches, starches

Squadroned masks and manmarks treadmire toil there
Footfretted in it.

The verbs which contribute to a cumulative effect of strife in the lines are "ropes", "wrestles", and "beats". The effect of this incessant process seems to be gradually pulverizing in an Atomistic manner in line 7 of the poem. Line 8 seems to be widening the applicability of the forces of strife to the domain of human life. The process, which has now a widened applicability, provides fuel to "nature's
bonfire" burning incessantly and quenching "her bonniest, dearest to her, her clearest-selved spark/ Man". It is here that Hopkins strikes the idea of the utter insignificance and impermanence of man's life in the scheme of creation, although human nature is, according to Hopkins, "more highly pitched, selved, and distinctive than anything in the world".

The principle of strife in Heraclitus' theory of fire, as already said, does not exclude human life from its purview:

Man, how fast his firedint, his mark on mind, is gone!
Both are in an unfathomable, all is an enormous dark
Drowned.

The sense of the virtual ephemerality and insignificance of human life, so conspicuous in these lines, was also expressed with no less vigour in The Lantern out of Doors, although the theme of this poem is widely different:

Death or distance soon consumes them; wind
What most I may e'er after, be in at the end
I cannot, and out of sight is out of mind.
The "enormous dark" in line twelve of *Heraclitean Fire* is a "disremembering, dismembering" agent in regard to human life. Both in Greek mythology and Christian theology, the dark is the destination of sinful human souls. It constitutes the essential quality of the hell that Hopkins portrays in *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*. It is also the quality of the Hades and the Stygian waters across which Charon ferries the shades of the dead. There seems to be a good deal of credibility in the surmise that the use of the word "Drowned" in line 13 of *Heraclitean Fire* may have certain associations with Stygian waters, especially because Hopkins is very much influenced in this poem by Greek thought.

Being a member of the human race, Hopkins' reaction to the utter insignificance and impermanence of human life is naturally "pity" and "indignation". In spite of man's efforts to immortalize himself, death does not cease to be a moral certainty:

Manshape that shone  
Sheer off, disseveral a star, death blots black out; nor mark  
Is any of him at all so stark  
But vastness blurs and time beats level.
Again the principle of strife in Heraclitus' theory of fire is emphasized by the phrase "beats level" while the verbs "blot" and "blur" suggest the extinction of the vestiges of human existence on the earth.

An interesting Biblical parallel comes to mind in regard to the havoc wrought by the Heraclitean fire in the physical world:

But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. 42

The words "heat" and "burned up" in the above verse and "world's wildfire" in line 18 of the sonnet in question build up the impression that Hopkins is trying to establish certain analogues between the early Greek philosophical thought and the Christian apocalypse, although their areas of application bifurcate as the poem unfolds its meaning.

"Enough" in line 15 seems to express the poet's sense
of surfeit with the impermanence of man's life in his constantly changing milieu. A Hopkins poem does not seem to have served its purpose if it does not glorify Christ for having redeemed the sin-soaked humanity through the Passion. The poet looks for the perpetuation of his self in the theological fact of the Resurrection, especially because he, as a priest, is convinced of his theandric nature derived from the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. He regards the Resurrection as a catalytic agent transmuting, in a miraculous manner, the transient character of human self in a strife-ridden world into an eternal entity:

... the Resurrection,
A heart's-clarion. Away grief's gasping, joyless days, dejection.

The lines clearly reiterate Hopkins' conviction that the Resurrection is a supernal mode of eternalizing the human self. It acts as a foil to "grief's gasping, joyless days, dejection" of man's earthly life which is constantly annihilated by "world's wildfire". He also talks about the resurrected human body in *The Caged Skylark*:

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

For Hopkins, the Resurrection is an event which reunites the human soul with the "mortal trash" after its "Fall to the residuary worm". The adjective "uncumbered" in The Caged Skylark may well qualify human consciousness without its sense of heaviness arising from "grief's gasping, joyless days, dejection" as a result of man's strife with "world's wildfire".

Now, we come to the following lines of the poem:

Across my foundering deck shone
A beacon, an eternal beam. Flesh fade and mortal trash
Fall to the residuary worm; world's wildfire, leave but ash:

The poet, across the "foundering deck" of his voyage through the waters of flux, has the vision of a beacon of light — the risen Christ — almost the same vision as the nun sees in the "unshapeable shock night" of The Deutschland, 29. It is rewarding to correlate these lines of Heraclitean Fire with the following description of the coming of Christ in the New Testament.
For as the lightning cometh out of the east,
and shineth even unto the west; so shall also
the coming of the Son of Man be. 43

The quoted verse seems to describe what Hopkins means by "a beacon, an eternal beam". He perhaps alludes here to the above verse to demonstrate his interest, as a priest, in the Scripture.

The final coda is a masterpiece because it is here that the redeemed Hopkins becomes immortal after "world's wildfire" completes its cycle of annihilation. The expression "In a flash, at a trumpet crash" in line 20 strikes, once again, an interesting parallel with the New Testament:

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. 44

The resemblance of content between the final coda of
the poem and the foregoing text from the New Testament is unmistakable.

Needless to say, Hopkins consummates his self by theandrically imitating Christ in the following line of the poem:

I am all at once what Christ is, since he was what I am, ...

In other words, the line instresses Hopkins' craving for emulating the post-Resurrection example of Christ by theandrically trying to assume a similar stature in his own right. One of the basic presuppositions of Hopkins' later religious poetry lies in the fact that the human self is a part of the Divine Self and it should always be the earnest endeavour of man to restore it to God by becoming an Alter Christus so "That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear". It is thus that the process of this restoration is consummated in the final coda of the sonnet.

The last two lines of the poem also delineate the direction an "accidental being" has to take to reassume its "intrinsic being". Hopkins made the following observations
on these two kinds of being:

Self is the intrinsic oneness of a thing, which
is prior to its being and does not result from
it ipso facto, does not result, I mean, from
its having independent being; for accidental
being, such as that of the broken fragments of
things purely artificial or chance 'installis';
has no true or intrinsic oneness or true self;
they have independent existence, that is/
they exist distinct from other things and by
or in themselves, but the independence, the
distinctness, the self is brought about
artificially.\[^{45}\]

The words "potsherd" and "matchwood" undoubtedly point
to the accidental being of the poet in Heracleitus' world of
mutability. Hopkins' intrinsic being — the one which was
originally very like that of a "diamond" and which perhaps
subsequently waned through his contact with the workaday
world — is restored to him "in the twinkling of an eye",
"at a trumpet crash" by imitating the resurrected Christ.
That is how

This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood,
immortal diamond
Is immortal diamond.
One obviously cannot side-track the persuasive force with which the poet has charged the verb "Is" in the last line of the sonnet to hammer home the theological truth of his argument. He himself writes: "... nothing is so pregnant and straightforward to the truth as simple yes and is".46

Although Hopkins was obviously interested in the philosophical speculation of Heraclitus, Empidocles and Perminides, he found each of their theories inadequate within the framework of Christian ontology which affirms the facts of "flux" and "being" without restricting itself to either.47 His Heraclitean Fire is undoubtedly a seminal poem dealing with the impact of the Resurrection on the human self in the form of a miraculous spiritual transformation.

There seem to be at work two kinds of catalysts in the poem. Both of them take stock of the fact of flux. While Heraclitean philosophy treats of flux in the physical universe, Christian ontology concerns itself with flux in the transcendental realm of the spirit. The real difference between these two processes lies in their annihilative and regenerative powers respectively. The transcendental flux, dealt with by Hopkins in the last four lines of the poem, acts as a foil to its counterpart in the physical world by
virtue of its power to reunite the human self to its
Original Source by neutralizing the annihilative powers of
the "world's wildfire". There are, however, two prerequisites for actualizing the immortalizing union of the finite
human self with the Infinite Self: grace and moral upright-
ness. Although Hopkins does not directly mention them in
the poem, they are definitely implied by the phrase
"immortal diamond" in its religious sense. The following
lines of Hopkins in *As kingfishers catch fire*, ... elucidate
the religious dialectic of the last four lines of
*Heraclitean Fire*:

I say more: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is —
Christ —for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

Hopkins' sonnet, *In Honour of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez* (1888), opens in an abrupt manner: "Honour is flashed off
exploit, so we say". The line expresses an irrefutable
truth in regard to the martial exploits of Christian warriors
which, according to Hopkins, deserve to be retold and
glorified in our time:

And those strokes once that gashed flesh or galled shield
Should tongue that time now, trumpet now that field,
And, on the fighter, forge his glorious day.

The exploits of Christ have their own historic significance because they were performed to save mankind from the blight of the Original Sin. The lives of Christian martyrs exemplify brilliant achievements in warfare which was undertaken to wipe out evil from the world. It is thus that Hopkins, in the octet of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, affirms the positive moral value of "Christian valour" in the domain of "public action".

A careful reading of the octet of The Windhover (1877) presents us, on the visual level, with the physical exploits of a falcon against the force of the wind:

... in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend:
the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind.

The valorous act of the falcon, the essence of which lies in exerting motion against countermotion, is characterized by heroism which is quite akin to that demonstrated on the battlefield by a Christian warrior. The image of the bird is, therefore, charged with martial overtones with respect to its struggle against a powerful elemental opponent. The feeling of "ecstasy" in the falcon seems to be a result of having vanquished the opponent by piercing through and finally rebuffing it with amazing vehemence. The phrase "hurl and gliding" also provides an image of physical force in regard to the bird's war against the wind. Since a Christian warrior shares this physical force with the falcon in his martial exploits, Hopkins insists on the propriety to "tongue that time now, trumpet now that field,/
And, on the fighter, forge his glorious day".

Hopkins dwells on a spiritually and morally aloof heart in the first of the following lines of *The Windhover*:

... My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!
The second line explicitly deals with a rousing in the poet's heart which seems preparatory to an inception of the "war within". This war is to be fought against himself with the moral aid of the inspiration which Hopkins seems to have received from the example of the falcon. The physical strength of the bird is an obvious variant in the poem of the moral strength of Christ. The "achieve of, the mastery of the thing" seem to have been transmuted into a kind of moral current with which Hopkins wants to charge his heart for a warfare against his "poor Jackself". Needless to say, his heart has so far been shying at "Christ's insistent challenge to a more heroic plane of activity".

The "war within", on which the poet dwells in line 6 of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, seems to be of a similar nature. The "brand" that provides the warrior with a spur to undertake an interior warfare is the heroic brand of Christ which has now become invisible on account of an interiorization of the warfare. It is perhaps the same invisible brand which was impressed on "My heart in hiding" by the physical variant (or symbol) of Christ's moral force — the falcon. The "heroic breast" of such a warrior is, according to Hopkins, "not outward-steeled" but its inward strength is
is undoubtedly terrific:

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

In Hopkins' system of Christian values the "fiercest fray" in the world occurs between good and evil whose primordial simultaneity of operation he affirms in *The Deutschland*, 20:

(But Gertrude, lily, and Luther, are two of a town,
Christ's lily and beast of the waste wood:
From life's dawn it is drawn down,
Abel is Cain's brother and breasts they have sucked the same.)

Hopkins calls this simultaneity of good and evil by different names in *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*: "black, white", "right, wrong". He also emphasizes the need to "wind off" the "skeined, stained, veined variety" of human life on to "two spools" in order to highlight its moral distinctions.

The phrase "heroic breast not outward-steeled" is
reminiscent of Christ's outward fleshy breast which housed a heart with a steely resolve to enforce his mission of the moral regeneration of mankind. The warrior, who wages a "war within" in St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, perhaps strives to interiorize the arduous struggle of Christ's life so tersely described by Hopkins in The Soldier:

Mark Christ our King. He knows war, served this soldiering through;
He of all can reeve a rope best.

The "Brute beauty and valour and act, ... pride, plume" of the falcon, which by analogy are the attributes of the person of Christ in The Windhover, are bidden by Hopkins to "Buckle" in his heart — to grapple with his self which bears the taint of the Original Sin ever since the inception of his earthly life. The word "Buckle", on the score of its martial associations, points to a beginning of the "war within" to secure for the poet a "private spiritual conquest".

The lines "AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion/ Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!" seem to affirm the moral significance of "Earth hears no hurtle then from fiercest fray" in St. Alphonsus Rodriguez.
The apostrophe "O my chevalier!", which Hopkins makes to his heart in The Windhover, further deepens the inner consciousness of this warfare, especially because the sin-laden heart of the poet now assumes the changing role of a "crusading knight of Christ". The theological and spiritual implications of "heart" are quite explicit in the context of a religious poem like The Windhover. The "fire", which breaks from the poet's heart when it is aided in its interior warfare by Christ's "Brute beauty and valour and act, ... pride, plume", proves "more dangerous" than the "hurtle" of the "fiercest fray" on the earth. The fire is obviously that of divine grace for the attainment of which were spent

Those years and years by of world without event
That in Majorca Alfonso watched the door.

The above lines, which follow the octet, seem to suggest the idea that several graduations of spiritual service were established by Christ, Christian saints, and martyrs. The service performed by Rodriguez in his own patient, silent manner and lowly status as a doorkeeper at the College of Palma in Majorca for forty years conformed
in its spiritual implications to one of those gradations. Hopkins writes in "The Principle or Foundation":

> It is not only prayer that gives God glory but work. Smiting on an anvil, sawing a beam, whitewashing a wall, driving horses, sweeping, scouring, everything gives God some glory if being in his grace you do it as your duty... To lift up the hands in prayer gives God glory, but a man with a dungfork in his hand, a woman with a sloppail, give him glory too.

What ultimately comes to the fore in lines 13 and 14 of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez is the fact that, given the requisite will, patience, and sacrifice, God does not forget to irradiate the hearts of even the lowly with the fire of grace.

Mention should be made of lines 9-11 of the sonnet where Hopkins speaks of the annihilative and sustaining powers of God in order to emphasize his antinomic character:

> Yet God (that hews mountain and continent,
Earth, all, cut; who, with trickling increment,
Veins violets and tall trees makes more and more)

Needless to say, Hopkins is very fond of highlighting God's antinomy in a scriptural manner. He also does it in The Deutschland, 9, though the antinomy emphasized there is of a slightly different sort.

By emphasizing the antinomic character of God as One "that hews mountain and continent", streaks violets and makes the trees grow, the poet wants to establish a logical plausibility in regard to His power to "crowd career with conquest" by way of the spiritual consummation of the human self.

The two verbs, which lead W.H. Gardner, John Pick and Jean-Georges Ditz to explore the underlying relationship between St. Alphonsus Rodriguez and The Windhover, are "gashed" and "galled". These have been used in both these poems in different situations. The significance of this verbal link between the two sonnets is highlighted by the last two images in The Windhover:
No wonder of it: sheer plod makes plough down
shillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermillion.

The image of the ploughshare obviously belongs to the
commonplace humdrum life — the same sort of life to which
the lowly vocation of Rodriguez belonged. Needless to say,
a ploughshare has close associations with the idea of
fecundity. As a ploughshare pierces through the earth and
prepares it for productivity, it may well serve as a symbolic
vehicle of the subjection of the human self to the piercing
experience of mortification which gradually prepares the
self to yield a spiritual harvest. Man's self, thus plough-
ed, is irradiated by "heavenly lights" just as the soil of
a newly turned furrow gleams in the sunlight. The job of
ploughing is apparently "sheer plod" and, in this particular
respect, identical with the tiring duties which were perfor-
med by Rodriguez with utmost patience and integrity for a
number of years.

It was exactly this "sheer plod" undertaken by
Rodriguez which was prized by God and by virtue of which he
was canonized. The lines "he is strung by duty, is strained
to beauty" in Hopkins' *The Loss of the Eurydice* incidentally unfold the secret of Rodriguez's spiritual elevation, although they occur in that poem in a different context.

In conformity with the basic doctrines of Christian theology, Hopkins' religious poetry grows on the presupposition that divine grace is always the harvest of self-sacrifice — a motif reiterated with greater vigour in *The Deutschland*. The coalescence of images in the last three lines of *The Windhover* further crystallizes the truth of this statement.

The "law of glory through sacrifice" is emphasized in *The Windhover* by the image of "blue-bleack embers" which "Fall, gall themselves and gash gold-vermilion" and thus show their crimson glory to the world. The verbs "Fall", "gall", and "gash" seem to be suggestive of attrition and annihilation while "gold-vermilion" evokes the idea of the glory of crucified Christ especially because his blood flamed into gold. As Raymond V. Schoeder observes with regard to this image: "In Christ's eyes the lowly role can be just as glorious, though the glory be hidden from men's notice." 49 Similar was perhaps the spiritual worth of the lowly role of Rodriguez by virtue of which he was
"favoured by God with heavenly lights".

As Hopkins once wrote of Christ: "... through poverty, through labour, through Crucifixion his majesty of nature more shines". St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, as he was called after his canonization, explicitly shares the first two attributes of Christ through the example of his lowly life. The physical agony, which he is reported to have experienced through the constant persecution of evil spirits, might have approximated to the agony suffered by Christ through the Crucifixion. This explains the fact of divine irradiation on St. Rodriguez's self as well as his election as Alter Christus.

It is rewarding to refer, in this connection, to what Hopkins says in The Soldier:

... There he bides in bliss

Now, and seeing somewhere some man do all
that man can do,

For love he leans forth, needs his neck must fall on kiss,

And cry 'O Christ-done deed! So God-made-flesh does too:

Were I come o'er again' cries Christ 'it should be this'.
Within the limitations of his lowly life, which he shared with Christ, St. Rodriguez did "all that man can do" by silently, patiently and obscurely imitating Christ in his own way. It was thus that his plodding through humdrum duties at the College of Palma were a "Christ-done deed", as is evident from the foregoing prose quotations from Hopkins.

A close examination of the interior warfare in the personality of Rodriguez clarifies the fact that, while talking about the saint, Hopkins also strikes an autobiographical chord in the poem. He shows evidence of a "war within" which he strives (like Rodriguez) to win with the weapon of resignation in My own heart ... .

Although an interval of eleven years exists between the compositions of both the poems in question, Hopkins' St. Alphonsus Rodriguez exemplifies "in the life of a particular saint the moral generalization of the earlier poem."Honour is flashed off exploit" links the particular activity of the falcon to that of the martyr..."^51 Besides, the law of "private spiritual conquest" through sacrifice seems to be thematically operative in both the poems. It is thus that there exists an underlying similarity in the religious implications of these sonnets, although the
poetic technique employed in the earlier poem is more complex than in the later. Both the poems are, however, complementary to one another on the level of religious significance.

Thou art indeed just is dated March 17, 1889. In place of a title, Hopkins uses the Latin text of Jeremiah, xii. 1. The literal translation reads:

Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I dispute with thee; yet what I say to thee is just: Why does the way of the impious prosper?

Hopkins, in a letter to Bridges for March 20, 1889, writes that the sonnet "must be read adagio molto and with great stress" obviously because loving protests carry a vocal kinaesthesia of their own. For Hopkins, the fundamental attribute of God lies in His being "just". The use of the vocative "sir" implies three things: the mode of address is formal; the poet visualizes a sort of face-to-face argumentation being fully aware of His Omnipresence; he addresses God considering Him to be a hard task-master perhaps in the manner in which a pupil addresses a master at his school. The theme finds a recurrent expression
in Job, ix and xxi. Ecclesiastes, viii.14, and Psalms, xxix and Ixxiii. The poet seems to be equating the justness of his pleadings with the justness of God. In this background, it is hard to justify the fact of the poet's contending with Him. One should not ignore the fact that the poet's contention with God is very like that of a mystic who has already established a relationship of love with Him.

Hopkins' gravamen is expressed in the following lines:

Why do sinners' ways prosper? and why must
Disappointment all I endeavour end?

The poet, on the basis of the holy text, complains like St. Teresa of Avila that God seems to be rather his enemy than his friend, though he fully affirms his faith in God's love in his sonnet, I wake.

Hopkins contrasts the frustration of his life with the prosperous condition of "the sots and thralls of lust". They thrive more than the priest-poet who spends his life in the service of God. Hopkins' sensibility becomes really
poignant when he complains:

How wouldst thou worse, I wonder, than thou dost
Defeat, thwart me.

Hopkins seems to be shedding away his gloom for a

time joining the luxuriance of the world of nature:

See banks and brakes
Now, leaved how thick! laced they are again
With pretty chervil, look, and fresh wind shakes
Them.

The lines seem to be pointing to the rejuvenation and
luxuriance of spring which returns to the earth every year.
The phrase "banks and brakes" is reminiscent of Burns' song,
"Ye banks and braes o' bonny Doon". He thinks of the
birds building nests on tree tops and hedgerows which
again produces a sense of contrast in his mind with his own
condition: "birds build — but not I build". The phrase
expresses the frustration of Hopkins' creative endeavours,
especially because he does "not breed one work that wakes".

The sense of contrast Hopkins expresses between the
instress of spring and the birds and his own sorrowful condition is reminiscent of the following lines of Milton in *Paradise Lost*, III. 40-2:

Thus with the year
Seasons return, but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn.

The poet's basic sorrow is caused by the fact that he, as he believes, has not been able to produce "one work that wakes" — one poem that lives and lasts to posterity. This is why he designates himself as "time's eunuch" in contradistinction to those "who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew, xix. 12).

Hopkins, howsoever gloomy and frustrated he may sound, always shows faith in God and a fervent hope of his spiritual rejuvenation at the close of a poem characterized by a religious dialectic. This is why he supplicates God to send rain on the dry roots of his poetic endeavour. The close of this poem is, therefore, a prayer to God — the "lord of life". The word "roots" seems to have an echo in "leave comfort root-room" in My own heart. The title "lord of life" occurs in Acts, iii. 15 and echoes in *The Deutschland*. 
The final draft of The shepherd's brow is dated April 3, 1889. It was usually excluded from editions of Hopkins' poems because of its striking quality of "cynicism". The poem was included by W.H. Gardner in the fourth edition perhaps because the editor thought that it was important in that Hopkins finalized it in the fifth draft. Even after a cursory reading of The shepherd's brow, one is usually reminded of Hamlet's "Man delights not me" (ii.2).

At the outset, we find two examples of heroic events which highlight a sense of contrast with ordinary human beings like the poet. He thinks of Moses who confronted thunder and lightning on Mount Sinai when he went there to meet God. Moses' "face was horned from the conversation of the Lord (Exodus, xxxiv. 29).

For his second example, Hopkins is reminded of the thought of Milton from Moses to the Fall of the Angels described in Isaiah, xiv. 4-15. Hopkins describes the Fall of Angels on the basis of the scriptural text: Isaiah, xiv.12 and Luke, x.19:
Angels fall, they are towers, from heaven—

Of just, majestical and giant groans.

The poet is also thinking of Milton's description of Satan in *Paradise Lost*, I. 589-91: "He above the rest/ In shape and gesture proudly eminent/ Stood like a tower".

In line 5, Hopkins talks about the basic nature of man and calls him a "scaffold of score brittle bones". He breathes "from groundlong babyhood to hoary age" when he finally begins to gasp on account of physical debility. "Groundlong babyhood" is a phrase of Hopkins' coinage which expresses the idea of crawling on the ground with great felicity. Line 7 speaks of the fact that our "breath", shortly to cease as we die, serves to remind us of our end like the skulls which used to be kept in olden times with the inscription: "Memento mori" (Remember thou art to die).

The poet asks what "bass-viol" gives a sound deep enough to suit the "tragic tones" of humanity. Man, Hopkins believes, lives from "hand to mouth" as he feeds and voids "with shame". The poet becomes contemptuous
when he calls man "Jack" and the housewife "hussy". Hopkins speaks of his "Jackself" in *My own heart*, and of "This Jack, joke, poor potsherid" in *That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire*. This, according to the poet, is the precise status of man, though his "name" or reputation may be "blazoned" in bold letters in the world.

Mariani offers a profound insight when he glosses line 11:

Man Jack has high pretensions about himself, but his acts are tediously cyclical and basically undifferentiated from the animal: breathing, eating, voiding, .... mating and death. Here is T.S. Eliot's descriptive triad of "birth, copulation and death". 52

In the last three lines, the poet turns his attention from the general condition of man to himself. The line, "I that die these deaths, that feed this flame", perhaps refers to Hopkins' pastoral or poetic function of observing and sharing men's lives. He, then, breaks off and says that he sees "life's masque" in the concave mirror of spoons — the ordinary utensils of daily use. This lamentable
nature of human life abates his stormy feelings. He finally thinks that he had been making a fuss about nothing. Such a conclusion is consonant with The Spiritual Exercises wherein St. Ignatius advises the retreatant in the Second Exercise of the First Week to demean himself by various examples.

Hopkins' To R.B. is dated April 22, 1989. It is dedicated to his friend Robert Bridges — fittingly so because he kept Hopkins' poems for us. In a subsequent letter, Hopkins describes it as a "new sonnet". Its theme is poetic inspiration with special reference to the case of Hopkins.

The first four lines are devoted to the description of the basic nature of poetic inspiration through the metaphors of marriage and conception. This inspiration, according to the poet, is a "fine delight" and fathers the intellectual working of a poet's mind. Poetic inspiration is likened to a "strong spur" and a "lancing" movement like that of a flame from a "blowpipe". It "breathes once" like the "arch and original Breath" in The Deutschland, 25 and is "quenched faster than it came"
because its life is ephemeral. The ultimate effect of inspiration on a poet's mind is that it makes it "a mother of immortal song". Extending the applicability of the same metaphor, Hopkins considers the mind as a mother perhaps because she keeps the thought within her womb for "nine months" of gestation which may even be "nine years". It is reminiscent of Hopkins' I wake: "but where I say hours, I mean years". During this period of gestation, she keeps the thought within her as a gradually growing embryo and "cares and combes" it as a loving mother. Bridges disapproved of "combes" and replaced it with "moulds" which hardly fits into the alliterative pattern of the line. The poet's mind subsequently becomes the "widow of an insight lost". The lost insight in the form of poetic inspiration is what Wordsworth calls a "visionary gleam", short-lived in its basic character. The "widow", however, continues to live in order to see the realization of a definite aim in due course of time. The poet's hand "at work" is "now never wrong" (never amiss) in the ultimate realization of this aim. Hopkins says all this in the octet by way of general statement regarding the inception and growth of poetic inspiration by using the extended metaphor of conception and gestation.
In the sestet, the poet reflects on himself. What Hopkins so direly needs is precisely the arrival of "sweet fire" (poetic inspiration) which he rightly regards as the "sire of muse". What he needs is "the one rapture of an inspiration" so that his mind may become "a mother of immortal song". But Hopkins feels that his lines are cumbersome and "lagging behind", like a lame walker. He feels that his muse is shorn of "The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation" which, for example, characterize his 1877 nature sonnets. His inner world, at this stage of his poetic evolution, is not characterized by the warmth of summer and the joy of spring, but by chill winter "that scarcely breathes that bliss". Its precise character can perhaps be described by Hopkins' own neologism: "blue-bleak". This is, in fact, the "explanation" of Hopkins' lack of poetic inspiration he presents to his friend, Robert Bridges. What he can, according to himself, really present to him are "some sighs" in lieu of a single breath of "fine delight" he longs for.

Hopkins was definitely a poet who captured "The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation" in the pulsating rhythms of his poetry. His last poems constitute a
diverse poetic achievement. On the one hand, they are utterances of terrible desolation and, on the other, masterly creations affirming the ideas of human nobility, the permanence of art, and the relevance of Christian values to the affairs of human life.
REFERENCES


3. Translated from Latin by Mariani in his Commentary, p. 201.

4. Matthew, xxv. 31-32.

5. Commentary, p. 204.


8. Ibid., pp. 206-207


15. Ibid. p. 221.


22. Sermons, p. 197.
27. Ibid, p. 197.
28. Matthew, x. 34-36.
29. Sermons, p. 123.
31. Ibid, p. 204.
33. Commentary, p. 236.
34. Sermons, p. 130.
35. Ibid, p. 205.
37. Ibid, p. 263.

42. II Peter, iii. 10.

43. Matthew, xxiv. 27.

44. I Corinthians, xv. 52-53.

45. Sermons, p. 146.


50. Poems and Prose, p. 141.


52. Commentary, p. 308.