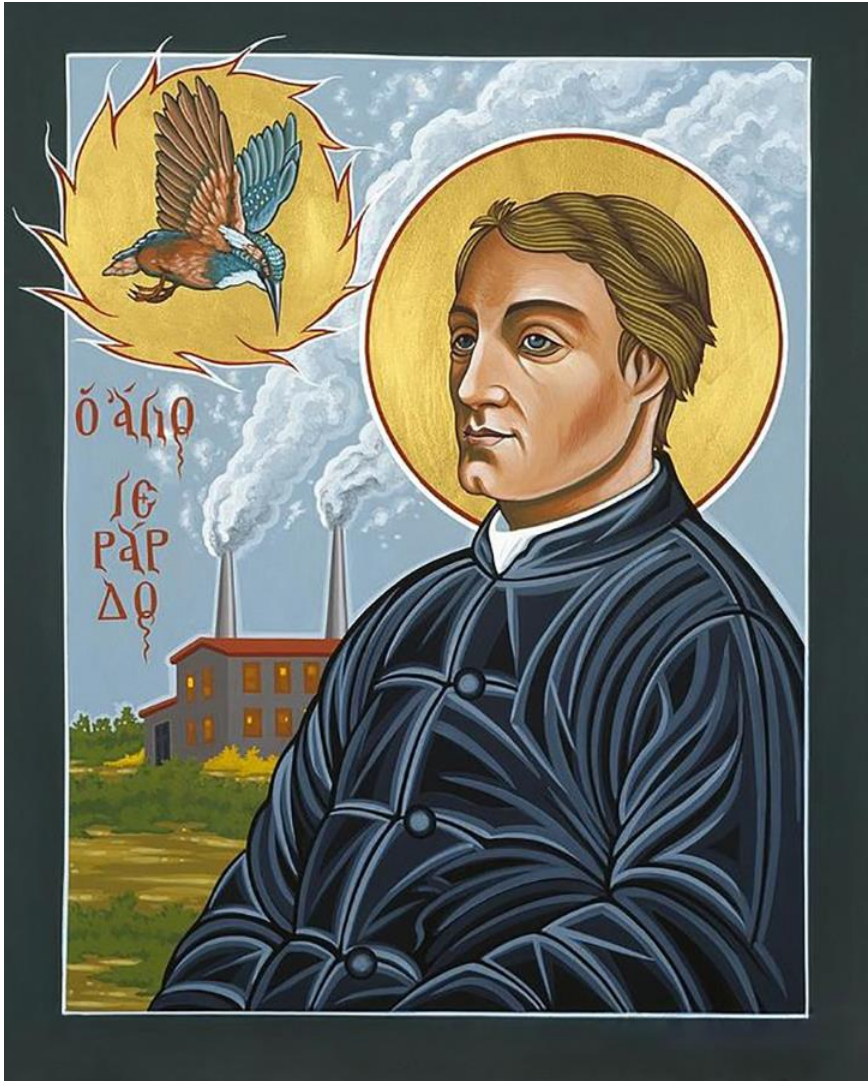


GERARD MANLEY
HOPKINS, SJ



Selected Poets



3. Heaven-Haven A nun takes the veil

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

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

All notes are from:

Hopkins, Gerard Manley. *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins Now First Published, Edited with Notes by Robert Bridges*. Humphrey Milford, 1918.

Contemporary autograph, on same page with last, in H. Text is from a slightly later autograph undated in A. The different copies vary.

7. God's Grandeur

THE WORLD is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

'Standard rhythm counterpointed.' Two autographs, Feb. 23, 1877; and March 1877; in A.—
Text is from corrections in B. The second version in A has *lightning* for *shining* in line 2,
explained in a letter of Jan. 4, '83. B returns to original word.

12. The Windhover

To Christ our Lord

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

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

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

‘(Falling paeonic rhythm, sprung and outriding.)’ Two contemporary autographs in A.—Text and dedication from corrected B, dated St. Beuno's, May 30, 1877.—In a letter June 22, '79: ‘I shall shortly send you an amended copy of *The Windhover*: the amendment only touches a single line, I think, but as that is the best thing I ever wrote I should like you to have it in its best form.’

13. Pied Beauty

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

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

'Curtal Sonnet: sprung paeonic rhythm. St. Beuno's, Tremeirchion. Summer '77.' Autograph in A.—B agrees.

29. Felix Randal

Felix Randal the farrier, O he is dead then? my duty all ended,
Who have watched his mould of man, big-boned and hardy-handsome
Pining, pining, till time when reason rambled in it and some
Fatal four disorders, fleshed there, all contended?

Sickness broke him. Impatient he cursed at first, but mended
Being anointed and all; though a heavenlier heart began some
Months earlier, since I had our sweet reprieve and ransom
Tendered to him. Ah well, God rest him all road ever he offended!

This seeing the sick endears them to us, us too it endears.
My tongue had taught thee comfort, touch had quenched thy tears,
Thy tears that touched my heart, child, Felix, poor Felix Randal;

How far from then forethought of, all thy more boisterous years,
When thou at the random grim forge, powerful amidst peers,
Didst fettle for the great grey drayhorse his bright and battering sandal!

(Sonnet: sprung and outriding rhythm; six-foot lines.) Liverpool, Apr. 28, '80.' A. Text from A with the two corrections of B. The comma in line 5 after *impatient* is omitted in copy in B.

33. Inversnaid

This darksome burn, horseback brown,
His rollrock highroad roaring down,
In coop and in comb the fleece of his foam
Flutes and low to the lake falls home.

A windpuff-bonnet of fawn-fróth
Turns and twindles over the broth
Of a pool so pitchblack, féll-frówing,
It rounds and rounds Despair to drowning.

Degged with dew, dappled with dew
Are the groins of the braes that the brook treads through,
Wiry heathpacks, fitches of fern,
And the beadbonny ash that sits over the burn.

What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.

'Sept. 28, 1881.' Autograph in H. I have found no other trace of this poem.

34. As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies dráw fláme

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies dráw fláme;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves — goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *Whát I do is me: for that I came.*

Í say móre: the just man justices;
Kéeps gráce: thát keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is —
Chríst — for Chríst plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

Text from undated autograph in H, a draft with corrections and variants. In lines 3 and 4 *hung* and *to fling out broad* are corrections in same later pencilling as line 5, which occurs only thus with them. In sestet the first three lines have alternatives of regular rhythm, thus:

Then I say more: the just man justices;
Keeps grace and that keeps all his goings graces;
In God's eye acts, &c.

Of these lines, in 9 and 10 the version given in text is later than the regular lines just quoted, and probably preferred: in l. 11 the alternatives apparently of same date.

39. (The Soldier)

Yes. Why do we áll, seeing of a soldier, bless him? bless
Our redcoats, our tars? Both these being, the greater part,
But frail clay, nay but foul clay. Here it is: the heart,
Since, proud, it calls the calling manly, gives a guess
That, hopes that, makesbelieve, the men must be no less;
It fancies, feigns, deems, dears the artist after his art;
And fain will find as sterling all as all is smart,
And scarlet wear the spirit of wár thére express.

Mark Christ our King. He knows war, served this soldiering through;
He of all can handle a rope best. There he bides in bliss
Now, and séeing somewhére some mán 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’.

‘Clongower, Aug. 1885.’ Autograph in H, with a few corrections which I have taken for lines 6 and 7, of which the first draft runs:

It fancies; it deems; dears the artist after his art;
So feigns it finds as, &c.

The MS. marks the caesural place in ten of the lines: in line 2, between *Both* and *these*. l. 3, at the full stop. l. 6, *fancies, feigns, deems*, take three stresses. l. 11, after *man*. In line 7 I have added a comma at *smart*. In l. 10 I have substituted *handle* for *reave* of MS.: see note on *reave*, p. 101; and in l. 13, have hyphenated *God made flesh*. No title in MS.

40. (Carrion Comfort)

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

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

Autograph in H, in three versions. 1st, deleted draft. 2nd, a complete version, both on same page with 38 and 39. 3rd, with 41 on another sheet, final (?) revision carried only to end of l. 12 (two detached lines on reverse). Text is this last with last two lines from the 2nd version. Date must be 1885, and this is probably the sonnet 'written in blood', of which he wrote in May of that year.—I have added the title and the hyphen in *heaven-handling*.

41. 'No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief'

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.
Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?
My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief
Woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing—
Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked 'No ling-
ering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief.

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

Autograph in H, on same page as third draft of 40. One undated draft with corrections embodied in the text here.—l. 5, at end are some marks which look like a hyphen and a comma: no title.

44. 'To seem the stranger lies my lot, my life'

To seem the stranger lies my lot, my life
Among strangers. Father and mother dear,
Brothers and sisters are in Christ not near
And he my peace my parting, sword and strife.

England, whose honour O all my heart woos, wife
To my creating thought, would neither hear
Me, were I pleading, plead nor do I: I wear-
y of idle a being but by where wars are rife.

I am in Ireland now; now I am at a third
Remove. Not but in all removes I can
Kind love both give and get. Only what word
Wisest my heart breeds dark heaven's baffling ban
Bars or hell's spell thwarts. This to hoard unheard,
Heard unheeded, leaves me a lonely began.

H, with corrections which my text embodies.—l. 14, began. I have no other explanation than to suppose an omitted relative pronoun, like *Hero savest* in No. 17. The sentence would then stand for 'leaves me a lonely (one who only) began'. No title.

44. 45. 46. 47. These four sonnets (together with No. 56) are all written undated in a small hand on the two sides of a half-sheet of common sermon-paper, in the order in which they are here printed. They probably date back as early as 1885, and may be all, or some of them, those referred to in a letter of Sept. 1, 1885: 'I shall shortly have some sonnets to send you, five or more. Four of these came like inspirations unbidden and against my will. And in the life I lead now, which is one of a continually jaded and harassed mind, if in any leisure I try to do anything I make no way—nor with my work, alas! but so it must be.' I have no certain nor single identification of date.

45. 'I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day'

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

With witness I speak this. But where I say
Hours I mean years, mean life. And my lament
Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent
To dearest him that lives alas! away.

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me;
Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.

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

H, with corrections which text embodies: no title.

46. 'Patience, hard thing! the hard thing but to pray'

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

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

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

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

As 45. l. 2, *Patience is*. The initial capital is mine, and the comma after *ivy* in line 6. No title.

47. 'My own heart let me have more have pity on; let'

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

I cast for comfort I can no more get
By groping round my comfortless, than blind
Eyes in their dark can day or thirst can find
Thirst 's all-in-all in all a world of wet.

Soul, self; come, poor Jackself, I do advise
You, jaded, let be; call off thoughts awhile
Elsewhere; leave comfort root-room; let joy size
At God knows when to God knows what; whose smile
's not wrung, see you; unforeseen times rather—as skies
Betweenpie mountains—lights a lovely mile.

As 45.—l. 6, I have added the comma after *comfortless*; that word has the same grammatical value as *dark* in the following line. 'I cast for comfort, (which) I can no more find in my comfortless (world) than a blind man in his dark world....' —l. 10, MS. accents *let*. —13 and 14, the text here from a good correction separately written (as far as *mountains*) on the top margin of No. 56. There are therefore two writings of *betweenpie*, a strange word, in which *pie* apparently makes a compound verb with *between*, meaning 'as the sky seen between dark mountains is brightly dappled', the grammar such as *intervariates* would make. This word might have delighted William Barnes, if the verb 'to pie' existed. It seems not to exist, and to be forbidden by homophonic absurdities.

50. 'Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend'

*Justus quidem tu es, Domine, si disputem tecum: verumtamen justa loquar ad te:
Quare via impiorum prosperatur? &c.*

Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend
With thee; but, sir, so what I plead is just.
Why do sinners' ways prosper? and why must
Disappointment all I endeavour end?

Wert thou my enemy, O thou my friend,
How wouldst thou worse, I wonder, than thou dost
Defeat, thwart me? Oh, the sots and thralls of lust
Do in spare hours more thrive than I that spend,
Sir, life upon thy cause. See, banks and brakes
Now leavèd how thick! lacèd they are again
With fretty chervil, look, and fresh wind shakes
Them; birds build—but not I build; no, but strain,
Time's eunuch, and not breed one work that wakes.
Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.

Epigram from Jeremiah 12:1:

Righteous art thou, O Lord,
when I complain to thee;
yet I would plead my case before thee.
Why does the way of the wicked prosper?
[Why do all who are treacherous thrive?]

[Jer. xii. I (for title), March 17, '89.' Autograph in A.—Similar autograph in B, which reads line 9, *Sir, life on thy great cause*. Text from A, which seems the later, being written in the peculiar faint ink of the corrections in B, and embodying them.—Early drafts in H.

From the Editor's Preface to Notes:

The sources are four, and will be distinguished as A, B, D, and H, as here described.

A is my own collection, a MS. book made up of autographs—by which word I denote poems in the author's handwriting—pasted into it as they were received from him, and also of contemporary copies of other poems. These autographs and copies date from '67 to '89, the year of his death. Additions made by copying after that date are not reckoned or used. The first two items of the facsimiles are cuttings from A.

B is a MS. book, into which, in '83, I copied from A certain poems of which the author had kept no copy. He was remiss in making fair copies of his work, and his autograph of *The Deutschland* having been (seemingly) lost, I copied that poem and others from A at his request. After that date he entered more poems in this book as he completed them, and he also made both corrections of copy and emendations of the poems which had been copied into it by me. Thus, if a poem occur in both A and B, then B is the later and, except for overlooked errors of copyist, the better authority. The last entry written by G. M. H. into this book is of the date 1887.

D is a collection of the author's letters to Canon Dixon, the only other friend who ever read his poems, with but few exceptions whether of persons or of poems. These letters are in my keeping; they contain autographs of a few poems with late corrections.

H is the bundle of posthumous papers that came into my hands at the author's death. These were at the time examined, sorted, and indexed; and the more important pieces—of which copies were taken—were inserted into a scrap-book. That collection is the source of a series of his most mature sonnets, and of almost all the unfinished poems and fragments. Among these papers were also some early drafts. The facsimiles a and b are from H.

Commentary by Frank Fennell, International Hopkins Association

3. Heaven-Haven

Hopkins wrote this poem while he was an undergrad at Balliol College, probably in July or August of 1864, during his long vacation from school. In a letter to his friend Alexander William Mowbray Baillie, 20 July-14 August 1864, Hopkins records several things that may have provoked and influenced the writing of this poem: he has just met Christina Rossetti and written a response to her poem, “The Convent Threshold,” and he also describes an art show he attended where he may have been influenced by paintings like Charles Collins’s *Convent Thoughts* (1851) or John Everett Millais’s *Vale of Rest* (1859). Also, Hopkins’s sister Millicent was interested in the Anglican sisterhood and would later become an “out sister” of All Saints’ Home, an Anglican sisterhood in London, in 1874, and a full sister in 1878. While Hopkins in 1864 was still an Anglican, he had already begun to investigate conversion to the Catholic faith, and two years later he did in fact convert.

7. God’s Grandeur

A favorite of those who memorize Hopkins for pleasure, “God’s Grandeur” is a musically spectacular poem. The sonnet was composed in 1877, the year that Hopkins became a Jesuit priest and his final year in beautiful northern Wales. Hopkins gives the reader of this poem a sense of God’s beauty as contrasted with God’s immense power to create and destroy. God’s power is greater than that of man—the poem depicts humanity setting about to ruin the earth and never succeeding. The repetitions of “trod” and the brutal rhymes near the first stanza’s end aurally dramatize man’s destructive efforts. For all the violence of the octet, the majesty and tranquility of the sestet culminate in the appearance of a Holy Ghost that is caring (“brooding”), welcoming (“warm breast”) and good to behold (“ah!—bright wings”). From its turbulent start, the poem has come to rest in the breast of a merciful Holy Ghost. The poem relies on both power and beauty to be as persuasive as possible.

12. The Windhover

Hopkins called “The Windhover” the “best thing I ever wrote,” and many critics have agreed. It is one of Hopkins’s most famous and most widely anthologized poems. More than 100 analyses of the poem appeared before 1970! The poem’s title comes from an alternate name for the kestrel, a small hawk. The kestrel is known for its method of catching prey: it pauses in the air, appearing to “hover,” and remains relatively stable even in gusting winds. The bird dives suddenly in a controlled swoop when prey is in sight.

13. **Pied Beauty**

This poem is another from the series of exuberant nature poems which Hopkins composed in the year 1877 while living at St. Beuno's in northern Wales. Besides that exuberance the poem may be best known for its experimentation with the sonnet form. You may wish to consult the terminology guide for an explanation of the curtal sonnet, which is what he called this experiment: suffice it to say here that you could think of the usual characteristics of a sonnet and then ask yourself what would happen if you multiplied them by .75! The poem also contains sprung rhythm, which will be apparent when you observe how many lines begin with falling rather than rising rhythm, in other words begin with stressed syllables rather than unstressed ones.

29. **Felix Randal**

From December 1879 to August 1881, Hopkins was a parish priest at St. Francis Xavier's in Liverpool. His time was spent mostly in overcrowded and unsanitary slums, which he called "of all place the most museless." The sonnet "[Felix Randal](#)" is one of only three poems Hopkins wrote during this time. While many of Hopkins's works are suffused with his spirituality and religious understanding of the world, this is one of only a few poems that feature the actual daily work of a priest.

33. **Inversnaid**

In 1881 Hopkins became an assistant pastor at a Jesuit church in Glasgow, Scotland. While there he toured the Scottish Highlands and spent some time in the little village of Inversnaid on the shores of Loch Lomond; that village in turn is adjacent to some streams that race down over rocks to the lake. Hopkins always loved to hear how people speak—their dialects, their accents, their intonation patterns—and that love shows up in this poem. See if, when you read it aloud, you can hear a Scottish burr in the r sounds of the poem (it offers many such sounds). The poet describes a particular burn (Scottish dialect for brook) in great detail—see the photo accompanying the poem itself and scrolling on the home page. He then ends with an environmental plea that still resonates with us today.

34. **"As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame"**

Once believed to be a later poem, "As kingfishers catch fire" is now widely accepted as one of the eleven sonnets Hopkins wrote in Wales in 1877. Like several others from this period, the poem begins with an image of a bird and connects the bird's activity to truths about the nature of reality, God, and humanity. Although the poem was neither titled nor mentioned in any of Hopkins's letters, it is often seen as the fullest expression of one of Hopkins's central poetic ideas: "inscape," a concept he derived from the medieval philosopher John Duns Scotus (see also "Duns Scotus's Oxford").

40. **Carrion Comfort**

This poem, one of the so-called "terrible sonnets," was probably written in August of 1885 and revised in September of 1887, during that difficult early time in Ireland. In Catholic doctrine, despair is considered a mortal sin because it indicates a belief

that God cannot be trusted to help save one's soul. In this sonnet, the speaker sets himself resolutely against suicide, the comfort of "choosing not to be," of giving in to his impulse to do away with his flesh. He vows not to undo the last strands that hold him to humanity, although those strands may be very loosely connected. He does, however, feel confident to question God about why these terrible things are happening to him.

41. 'No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief'

You don't have to go past the first five words of this poem to know how badly the poet was feeling in that year of 1885, his first full year in Ireland. As a Jesuit, he was very familiar with the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, the first week of which asks the retreatant to meditate on his or her experience of desolation, of what another saint called "the dark night of the soul." Always subject to periodic bouts of depression anyway, Hopkins now felt that desolation deeply, and the result was a group of five poems often called the "terrible sonnets"—not an aesthetic judgment, but a description of how the poet felt. This poem is one of those sonnets.

44. 'To seem the stranger lies my lot, my life'

This poem is undated, but was probably written during the first part of Hopkins's Irish period, in 1884-85. It is one of the so-called "terrible sonnets" or "sonnets of desolation." These sonnets were found in his notebooks after his death. With his 1884 arrival for his new teaching assignment in Dublin, Hopkins finds himself separated from his Anglican family and his English homeland. He also finds himself not at home among his Catholic, often Jesuit, brothers at University College and the Royal University of Ireland, because he is a convert to Catholicism and not an Irish "born Catholic," and also because he feels politically estranged from a majority so vigorously supporting Irish home rule. Isolated and lonely, he is moved to write this poem.

45. 'I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day'

Sometimes seen as the darkest of Hopkins's dark sonnets of 1885, this poem offers almost no hope in the depths of spiritual and mental anguish. It is likely one of the four sonnets Hopkins claimed "came like inspirations unbidden and against my will."

46. ‘Patience, hard thing! the hard thing but to pray’

Patience was to become a focus during the last eight years of Hopkins’s life, strained slowly out of his experiences. As Ignatius counseled, it was to be patience in the midst of desolation, and Hopkins knew a fair bit of desolation in his short forty-four years. Hopkins practiced attentive patience, learning from spiritual writings, creation, other people, and from Him who is Patience, storing away little kindnesses. Patience, the “hard thing,” crystallized into “crisp cones,” and the “crisp cones” filled with “delicious” sweetness. One hundred and thirty years later, we can rob the hive and savor the honey of his words as a remedy for our own troubled souls.

47. ‘My own heart let me have more have pity on; let’

This poem is another of the dark sonnets Hopkins wrote in Dublin in 1885. In a letter to his friend Robert Bridges, Hopkins described four of these dark sonnets as coming to him “like inspirations unbidden and against my will.” But unlike the earlier sonnets in this group—one of which Hopkins described as having been “written in blood”—this poem gestures toward a sense of relief from the mental and spiritual anguish that had been plaguing the poet.

50. ‘Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend’

This poem was written in Dublin on 17 March, 1889, one of the last poems that Hopkins wrote before he died of typhus on 8 June. Hopkins’s life in Ireland had been one of hardships: physical illness, a heavy teaching load, little time for research or for poetry. Also he lived in a country torn by unrest and violence, and his physical surroundings were in dangerous disrepair. On top of all this, Hopkins felt like he could never get anything accomplished. He started many projects, but saw few of them all the way to completion. His great promise as a young man—double firsts at Oxford, for example—seemed to be coming to no fruition, while others, perhaps less talented, were thriving. No wonder he shared Jeremiah’s complaint.

Understanding Hopkins' Craft

Sprung Rhythm

A metrical system devised by Gerard Manley Hopkins composed of one- to four-syllable feet that start with a stressed syllable. The spondee replaces the iamb as a dominant measure, and the number of unstressed syllables varies considerably from line to line. According to Hopkins, its intended effect was to reflect the dynamic quality and variations of common speech, in contrast to the monotony of iambic pentameter. His own poetry illustrates its use; though there have been few imitators, the spirit and principles of sprung rhythm influenced the rise of free verse in the early 20th century.

From: "Sprung rhythm." *Glossary of Poetic Terms*. Poetry Foundation. n.d.
www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/glossary-term/sprung%20rhythm.

Strong-stress meters or accentual verse.

In this meter, native to English and other Germanic languages, only the beat of the strong stresses counts in the scanning, while the number of intervening light syllables is highly variable. Usually there are four strong-stressed syllables in a line, whose beat is emphasized by alliteration. This was the meter of Old English poetry and continued to be the meter of many Middle English poems, until Chaucer and others popularized the syllable-and-stress meter. In the opening passage, for example, of *Piers Plowman* (later fourteenth century) the four strong stresses (always divided by a medial caesura) are for the most part reinforced by alliteration (see alliterative meter); the light syllables, which vary in number, are recessive and do not assert their individual presence:

In a sómer séson, // whan sóft was the sónne,
I shópe me in shróudes, // as Í a shépe were,
In hábits like an héremite, // unhóly of wórkes,
Went wýde in this wórld, // wónders to hére.

Strong-stress meter survives in some folk poetry and in traditional children's rhymes such as "Hickory, dickory, dock" and was revived as an artful literary meter by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in *Christabel* (1816), in which each line has four strong stresses but the number of syllables within a line varies from four to twelve.

What G. M. Hopkins in the later nineteenth century called his sprung rhythm is a variant of strong-stress meter: each foot, as he describes it, begins with a stressed syllable, which may either stand alone or be associated with from one to three (occasionally even more) light syllables. Two six-stress lines from Hopkins' "The Wreck of the Deutschland" indicate the variety of the rhythms in this meter, and also exemplify its most striking feature: the great weight of the strong stresses, and the frequent juxtaposition of strong stresses (spondees) at any point in the line. The stresses in the second line were marked in a manuscript by Hopkins himself; they indicate that in complex instances, his metric decisions may seem arbitrary:

The | sóur | scythe | crínge, and the | bléar | sháre | cóme. |
Our | héarts' chárity's | héarth's | fire, our | thóughts' chivalry's | thróng's | Lórd. |

From: Abrams, M H, and Geoffrey G. Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009.

Coinages

Words invented by a poet to convey something for which the “ordinary” English language proves inadequate: in other words, the coinage derives from bringing together other, more recognizable words into a new and fresh combination that accomplishes what the poet cannot otherwise achieve. Hopkins is a great inventor of coinages. Consider these, all having to do just with color: “dappled-with-damson” (from “The Wreck of the Deutschland”); “mealed-with-yellow” (from “The Starlight Night”); “gold-vermilion” (from “The Windhover”); “fresh-firecoal” (from “Pied Beauty”). But it’s not only colors, it’s qualities like “very-violet-sweet” (from “Hurrahing in Harvest”) and “dare-gale” (from “The Caged Skylark”), qualities which can be added one to another, like in the second line of “Duns Scotus’s Oxford”: “Cuckoo-echoing, bell-swarmèd, lark-charmèd, rook-racked, river-rounded.” Even nouns can be coined, like the “moonmarks” of Henry Purcell.

Consonant-chime (also known as *cynghanedd*)

A feature of Welsh poetry, and when Hopkins learned Welsh during his residence there (1874-1878) he began to incorporate *cynghanedd* into his own poems by creating patterns of alliteration and internal rhyme. While there are many such patterns in his poetry, perhaps a good example is line 162 of the “Wreck of the Deutschland”, i.e. “Banned by the land of their birth”. Do you see how “Banned” and “land” rhyme (internal rhyme), and also how the first and last words of the line (“Banned” and “birth”) alliterate?

Counterpoint

A term normally applied to music which Hopkins then adapts to his poetry. In music counterpointing occurs when a different melody runs at the same time “above” or “below” another melody, each retaining its own characteristics but the two complementing and enriching each other as they run together. Hopkins often does the same in poetry with rhythms. A simple example might be the opening lines of “The Windhover:”

Line 1 is regular iambic pentameter, i.e. five regular iambic feet, ten syllables total, and can be scanned in a familiar way (with italics here representing stressed syllables):

I *caught* this *morning* *morning*’s *minion*, *king*-

But line 2 introduces a new and very different rhythm:

dom of *daylight*’s *dauphin*, dapple-*dawn*-drawn *Falcon*, in his *riding*...

Note both the total number of syllables (16) and the irregular number of unstressed syllables in each foot—you know you are in sprung rhythm territory. Yet the previous iambic pattern still persists on occasion, as in the stretch “-ple *dawn* drawn *Fal*”. So the two rhythms run together and complement each other, they counterpoint.

Curtal sonnet

A Hopkins coinage. He uses it to describe his practice in “Pied Beauty” and two other poems, “Peace” and “(Ashboughs).” A curtal sonnet is best explained as three quarters of a regular sonnet: in other words, it’s as if you took the identifying features of a regular sonnet and multiplied by .75. Thus “Pied Beauty,” instead of having the normal fourteen lines, has 10 ½ lines and consists of a six-line equivalent of the octet (thus $8 \times .75 = 6$) and a 4 1/2 -line equivalent of the sestet ($6 \times .75 = 4 \frac{1}{2}$). How can you have a half-line? Notice how the last “line” of the poem has a long space, the equivalent of a long rest in music, before you get to the two stressed syllables that make up the two feet of this last line, which in its sound lasts about as long as half a line should. While “Pied Beauty” is Hopkins’ best-known example, the other two curtal sonnets represent an advance in technique by applying the .75 principle to the rhythm as well. It’s worth noting that in addition to making sonnets shorter (i.e. curtal), Hopkins also experimented with making them longer: for an example of a caudal sonnet, see “Tom’s Garland”, “Harry Ploughman”, or “Spelt from Sibyl’s Leaves.”

Inscape

A Hopkins coinage. He invented and started using the word in his letters and journals shortly after graduating from Oxford, and he continued to employ it, both as a noun and as a verb, for the remainder of his life. He may have derived it in part from Duns Scotus’s concept of *haecceitas*, or “this-ness”. Inscape has to do with the very essence, the individual distinctiveness, of something—what makes it distinct from all others of the same kind, and therefore memorable. “Something” of course seems vague; for Hopkins it could be a scene, or a specific part of nature, or a person, or... Maybe the best way to understand it would be to put yourself into the world of “Pied Beauty,” which could be said to consist of a number of inscapes flashing by, like “skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow” and “fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls.” Then take just one inscape, that of “rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim.” Now anyone carefully observing a trout stream could see fish swimming by, and could make several observations about trout and much else. But to be an observer who sees and remembers and puts into words that sort of instantaneous image, not just of “a trout,” but of a trout whose side shows little rose-colored moles as if they had been stippled (a technique of the then-current Impressionist painters like Seurat), that’s an observer sensitive to an inscape, the individual and distinctive essence of that fish at that moment of time. Some other observer would grasp different inscapes. You have had the experience, I am sure, of visiting a beautiful scene—mountains, seashore, park, garden—and retaining a vivid mental image of something you saw, a scene or a plant or a person or something else. Now the entire experience would have afforded you a myriad of inscapes, of individually distinctive observations. But the one among many that you retain in your memory, the one you could put into a poem or a painting—that’s the inscape that counts for you. At the time you were there you inscaped it (verb), whether or not you were aware of it; now in your memory you retain it as an inscape (noun).

Instress

A Hopkins coinage, and a simpler one. See the example of the swimming trout above. If, among a myriad of possible inscapes, the observer remembers and puts into his poem “rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim,” what power allows that inscape to be retained and used rather than some other one? For Hopkins the answer would be that this particular image, or inscape, had *instress* (noun), was *instressed* (verb). In other words the inscape had a force, an energy, that allowed it to be retained (stressed upon the mind) and put to poetic use.

Parallelism

A useful term for so much of what Hopkins tries to accomplish in his poetry. He loves repetition, that is, repetition of words and sounds (alliteration and assonance), sometimes in a specific pattern as in *cynghanedd*, but also repetition of lines and phrases and grammatical structures, as in the final three lines of *Binsey Poplars*:

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

Sprung rhythm

Occurs in most of Hopkins’ mature poetry—he explains it as early as an 1877 letter to his friend Robert Bridges. Most English poetry written before this time, and also a good portion written afterwards, is in what is called rising rhythm. The most familiar example is the iambic foot consisting of a slack or unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one, as in Hamlet’s “To be or not to be . . .” where the stress falls on BE and then NOT and then BE, and goes on in a similar manner. Such a rhythm is called rising because within each foot the emphasis or stress usually rises or gets stronger. Moreover the rhythm requires some measure of regularity, such as when each line of a poem has five iambic feet (iambic pentameter), each foot of which normally has an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one. Hopkins jettisons those requirements: for him a foot will contain one stressed syllable, but it can have any number of unstressed syllables, even none, and the stressed syllable can be the first one in the foot, so that it becomes what we call falling rhythm. Here are some varying examples, which you will understand if you read aloud the passage in question and put the stress either where it falls naturally in speech or where Hopkins especially marks it:

Line 3 of “The Windhover”:

Of the rolling level under **néath him steady** air, and striding

Stressed syllable, marked as such by Hopkins, followed by three unstressed syllables before the next marked syllable occurs.

Line 8 of “Hurrahing in Harvest”:

“ . . .greeting of realer, of . . .”

Two feet, stressed syllable followed by two unstressed.

Entire line 11 of “Pied Beauty”:

“Práise hím.”

Two syllables, both marked as stressed by the poet, i.e. there are two “feet” but no unstressed syllables in this line.

Sprung rhythm occupies a kind of middle ground between such very regular meters as iambic pentameter (each line has five iambic feet) and iambic quadrameter (each line has four iambic feet) and the kind of free verse practiced by Walt Whitman and others, which also uses any number of unstressed syllables. Hopkins, unlike Whitman and most modern poets, keeps a portion of the old regularity by specifying the number of feet for each line. Thus each eight-line stanza of “The Wreck of the Deutschland,” for example, has the following number of stressed syllables (and thus feet) per line: two / three / four / three / five / four / six. There can, of course, be any number of unstressed syllables, as when the eighth line of stanza 2 has six stressed syllables and nine unstressed ones, total 15, whereas the eighth line of stanza 3 has the same six stressed but eleven unstressed, total 17. In sum, Hopkins keeps the regularity of the number of feet per line and adds the irregularity of the number of unstressed syllables per foot.