Winter 1967

Archetypal patterns of death and rebirth in the mature poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins

Frank Thomas Hanenkrat

ARCHETYPAL PATTERNS OF DEATH AND REBIRTH IN THE MATURE POETRY OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

BY

FRANK THOMAS HANENKRAT

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
IN CANDIDACY
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

DECEMBER, 1967

Approved for the Department of English

and the Graduate School by

Director of Thesis

William B. Guthrie
Chairman of English Department

Edward C. Pepler
Dean of the Graduate School

PREFACE

This paper attempts to establish a viewpoint from which the mature poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins may be seen in an informing light. The method of the paper is to trace "exponents"--that is, images, words, or objects that form motifs or patterns in the poetry. Similar to leitmotifs in music, literary motifs are likewise used to set forth themes (Webster's New World Dictionary defines exponent as "a thing that is an example or symbol" of something). By tracing exponents we are "recognizing patterns of images and symbols that lead us to a constantly deepening appreciation of the literature. Image leads to image, idea to idea, until ultimately we are led to experience the 'meaning' of the work."[1]

While the word exponential is relatively new to criticism, its referent is not. As ancient as literature itself is the concept that

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[1]Wilfred L. Guerin and others, A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature (New York, 1966), p. 152.

images and symbols convey meanings or "stand for" ideas. Rather than saying "stand for," certain modern critics prefer to say that images are "exponents" of poetic themes. Though none uses the term, the concept of exponents underlies such significant critical contributions as Caroline Spurgeon's Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us, John Livingston Lowes' The Road to Xanadu, and Kenneth Burke's Counter-Statement, all of which trace images and symbols in order to discover underlying meanings.[2]

Almost any piece of literature might be used to illustrate exponents. A convenient example is Shakespeare's Sonnet 73, "That time of year thou may'st in me behold." It employs a different exponent in each of three successive quatrains: branches that are almost leafless as winter approaches, the time of day between sunset and darkness, and a fire that is reduced to glowing ashes. Each of these images is an exponent of things fading into darkness and cold, archetypal symbols of death. Each quatrain, then, though it differs from the others, reinforces and intensifies the others by its similarities to them. We recognize the motif in a different manifestation and our pleasure is increased by the recognition of difference. But more important, the recognition of sameness and difference opens out to "the richness and truth of a given experience by gradually revealing its essence to the reader."[3]

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[2] Ibid., pp. 152-153.

[3] Ibid., p. 154.

The result and the value of pursuing exponents, then, is that the reader is brought to experience the poem's meaning. Says Guerin,

> Bit by bit, as we notice instances of a motif, we work our way into the experience of the story, poem, or play. As we follow the hints of thematic statement, or recognize similar but new images, or identify related symbols, we gradually come to live the author's original experience. The evocative power of steadily repeated images and symbols makes the experience a part of our own consciousness and sensibility. Thus the image satisfies our senses, the pattern our instinctive desire for order, and the thematic statement our intellect and our moral sensibility.[4]

A great advantage of the exponential approach is that it allows the critic firmly to combine literary and meta-literary materials. Using the literary text itself as a touchstone, he is able to bring any kind of extra-textual considerations to the poem in order to shed light on its meaning; but at the same time, the necessity for relating these materials strictly to exponents found in the poem keeps the text firmly in mind. The result is that the reader's attention and understanding are directed to the poem, and not to biographical or philosophical considerations. This is not to deny the value of biographical and philosophical approaches to literature; but since the body of Hopkins criticism has already made use of these approaches and practically exhausted their possibilities, it would be merely repetitious to use them again.

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[4] Ibid.

In considering how to apply an exponential approach to Hopkins, I realized that almost all commentators on Hopkins recognize elements of stress in his work, but no one has, to my knowledge, attempted to work out the exponents of stress to discover if they provide an informing pattern to his work. This paper attempts to show that there is such a pattern and that it is a manifestation of the archetypal pattern of death and rebirth.

In her classic work, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry, Maud Bodkin explains that the death-rebirth archetype is central to the mythos of both pagans and Christians. Essentially the archetypal pattern involves a period in which suffering and anguish gradually intensify to an almost unbearable pitch, followed by a release from suffering as a result of the subject's attaining a new, higher vision and a concomitant new happiness. Examples of the pattern are found in Virgil's descent into and emergence from Hades; Dante's journey through Hell that leads ultimately to Paradise; and Christ's suffering and dying that led to His Resurrection and Ascension. The suffering stage of the pattern is often represented in literature as a physical journey into the underworld, but we recognize of course that this is only a metaphor for the descent of the soul into darkness and despair. That the pattern is archetypal means that it is something more or less universally experienced by those of religious or spiritual sensibilities. It is not surprising, then, that the

pattern should be found in Hopkins' poetry. The pattern is realized in images of tension, pressure, or stress followed by release and stasis. The period of stress is equivalent to the descent into the underworld, and the release is equivalent to the emergence into a new happiness, or rebirth.

The archetypal pattern is found not only in the imagery of individual poems, but also in the arc described by the development of his poetry during his years as a Jesuit: the poet descended into strongly felt despair, only to emerge at the end of his life with a new spiritual vision. This paper attempts to trace both the imagery of the individual poems and the arc described by the poet's spiritual development.

Part of the fun of doing this paper has been the surprising conclusions brought out by the critical method. I began with undefined goals and ended with an increased understanding of my own deepening appreciation for Hopkins' work.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF HOPKINS CRITICISM

Criticism of Hopkins' work actually began before his death in 1889, even though his poems were not published until 1918. During his lifetime he circulated his works among three friends--Robert Bridges, Richard Watson Dixon, and Coventry Patmore--who wrote criticisms to him in the form of correspondences. Dixon was delighted and enthusiastic about the poems, calling them "amazingly original." Patmore, sympathetic to the Catholic sentiments in the verses, nevertheless spoke of their "obscuring novelties." And Bridges, later to become poet laureate, wrote to Hopkins expressing both encouragement and discouragement.

Bridges was the most constant critic of Hopkins and was responsible for the first edition of Hopkins' poems in 1918. Bridges had been living patiently with the poems for thirty years and had occasionally introduced individual poems into anthologies. In his "Preface to Notes" to the first

edition, he

> presents the outlines of Hopkins criticism ever since that time, because all scholarship since 1918 has tended either to accept Bridges' position, to qualify it, or eventually completely to reverse it. Future critics were to weigh every word and phrase of the "Preface to Notes." (John Pick, "Gerard Manley Hopkins" in The Victorian Poets, ed. F. E. Faverty (Cambridge, 1956), p. 203)

Bridges praised the "masterly beauties that distinguish his work," but then proceeded to enumerate "faults of taste": "affectation in metaphor," "perversion of human feeling," "exaggerated Marianism," "the naked encounter of sensualism and asceticism which hurts the 'Golden Echo,'" and "oddity and obscurity" resulting from license with the language: he calls some of the rhymes "repellent," "freaks," and in speaking of Hopkins' mistakes says, "his childishness is incredible and appalling." Bridges' comments seem accurately to reflect the poetic tastes of the time, for the reception of the first edition was mixed and ten years were required to exhaust the 750 copies printed. Most of the early reviews were marked by "confusion." (Pick, ibid., p. 205)

After Bridges' criticism, the most important and influential criticism of Hopkins was that which began with I. A. Richards' article in Dial (1926) and his subsequent discussions in Practical Criticism (1930); and with William Empson's Seven Types of Ambiguity (1930). Richards and Empson not only recognized but also appreciated the complexity and richness of meaning in Hopkins' verse, and the reception of the

second edition of his poems (1930) was marked by the extent of critical praise accorded it. (Pick, ibid., p. 208)

Following a trend established by Richards and Empson, various other critics began to praise Hopkins' poems: F. R. Leavis (New Bearings in English Poetry, 1932), Sir Herbert Read (Form in Modern Poetry, 1933), T. S. Eliot (After Strange Gods, 1934), Edith Sitwell (Aspects of Modern Poetry, 1934), and C. Day Lewis (A Hope for Poetry, 1934).

The 1930's also saw important advancements in the understanding of Hopkins' relationship to certain spiritual exercises. Representative of this kind of approach are two articles by Christopher Devlin: "Gerard Hopkins and Duns Scotus" (New Verse, No. 14, April 1935); and "The Ignation Inspiration of Gerard Manley Hopkins" (Blackfriars, 1935). In addition, scholarship was put on a firmer footing by the publication of The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges and The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon in 1935, The Notebooks and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins in 1937, and Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins in 1938. The importance of these volumes in Hopkins scholarship is considerable for the insight they give into his prosody and his ideas of the nature and place of poetry in his life. Following these publications came a spate of admiring articles. (For a discussion of the important ones, see Pick, in The Victorian Poets, pp. 213-216.)

The 1940's saw some notable publications on Hopkins. Among these were John Pick's Gerard Manley Hopkins: Priest and Poet (1942); Eleanor Ruggles' Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Life (1944, the centenary of his birth); Gerard Manley Hopkins by the Kenyon Critics (1945); W. H. Gardner's Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889): A Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition (Vol. I, 1944; Vol. II, 1949); and Immortal Diamond: Studies in Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. Norman Weyand (1949). All of these publications reveal how far critical opinion had reversed itself since Bridges published his evaluation in 1918. All of the writers assumed that Hopkins is permanently established in English letters and that he has had a protean influence on modern British and American poetry.

The year 1948 saw the third edition of Hopkins' poems, edited by W. H. Gardner. The edition draws on the findings of his two-volume work, and together "they have established Gardner as the leading Hopkins scholar of our times." (Pick, ibid., p. 223)

Concerted critical praise for Hopkins seems to have reached a high point during the 1940's, the centenary decade of his birth, and during the 1950's and 1960's praise has continued, though some dissenting voices have been raised. In 1949 Yvor Winters thrust an attack upon Hopkins ("The Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins," Hudson Review, I, Winter and Spring 1949), but nevertheless conceded him to be among "the twelve

or fourteen best British poets of the nineteenth century." But Winters did break the trend of giving Hopkins unqualified critical praise. In 1959 Paull F. Baum, in a carefully analytical article ("Sprung Rhythm," PMLA, LIV, 418-423), attempted to prove that Hopkins' much-praised prosodic theories were imperfectly formulated in the poet's own mind, and that "sprung rhythm" did not exist, either in his theories or in his practice. Baum's article greatly diminished Hopkins' inflated reputation as a technical innovator.

In the present decade, as in the past three, Hopkins has been an object of study for a number of our best critics, who testify to his continuing high rank. However, the 1960's have seen no major book-length studies of Hopkins (aside from Hartman's collection of essays), the recent books being in the nature of specialised studies such as Robert Boyle's Metaphor in Hopkins (1961) and J. E. Keating's The Wreck of the Deutschland: An Essay and Commentary (1963). Critical opinions have multiplied into a confusing diversity, and today the opinion seems to be, as Geoffrey Hartman sums up in the Introduction to his Hopkins (1966), that

> After almost fifty years of close reading and superb editing, Hopkins' verse remains something of a scandal. . . . The basic questions about his greatness, direction, and even plain-sense are not yet answered. Almost every one of his poems has cruxes (like "Buckle" in "The Windhover") that defeat exegetical activity. There is a strange absence, among so many books and articles, of any that can be called definitive--definitive on some aspects of interpretation. (pp. 1-2)

The differing opinions about Hopkins are in one sense the subject of Hartman's book, for he states, "I have tried to juxtapose essays of very different persuasions." (p. 15)

But while there is disagreement over the value and meaning of Hopkins' work, there is one area of almost universal agreement: that Hopkins was a man in conflict, and that his conflict arose out of a struggle between sensualism or aestheticism on the one hand, and asceticism on the other.

Catholics, and especially Jesuits, have been quick to claim Hopkins, and their view of the nature of his conflicts is fairly well summed up by the title of Chester A. Burns' article in Immortal Diamond, the book that was intended to be the definitive study of Hopkins from a Jesuit viewpoint. The article, "Gerard Manley Hopkins: Poet of Ascetic and Aesthetic Conflict," asserts that Hopkins' conflict was between "two opposing elements in his life: the poetic urge and religious discipline" (p. 175). Understandably enough, Catholics, in praising Hopkins as a religious poet, tend to gloss over the "terrible sonnets" that come at the end of his career and to emphasize the "happy poems" of the period of roughly 1875-1878. Their tendency is to dismiss his dark poetry as being the result of his aesthetic-ascetic struggle and of his physical and professional sufferings in Ireland.

Some non-Catholics tend to treat his conflict as springing from something less respectable than "aestheticism" and speak of his "sensualism."

Speculation on the nature of his sensuality ranges as far afield as sado-masochism (Philip Henderson) and homosexuality (F. O. Matthiesson), but by far the majority of critical commentaries stay with the startling awareness of and attraction to physical beauty that is so evident in some of his poetry and seems somehow out of place in the work of a religious poet.

The first expression of critical interest in this aspect of Hopkins' work was undoubtedly Robert Bridges' comment about "the naked encounter of sensualism and asceticism which hurts the 'Golden Echo.'" This comment was picked up and amplified by the school of criticism that grew up around I. A. Richards and William Empson. In Seven Types of Ambiguity Empson says of the author of "The Windhover" that "Confronted suddenly with the active physical beauty of the bird, he conceives it as the opposite of his patient spiritual renunciation" (p. 225).

From that point on, to recount the view that Hopkins' conflict was essentially ascetic-aesthetic would be virtually to recount Hopkins criticism. A good indication of the validity of this statement is the basic assumptions underlying the representative critical essays in the three major collections: Gerard Manley Hopkins by the Kenyon Critics (1945); Immortal Diamond (1949); and the Twentieth Century Views collection, Hopkins (1966). In the last, which presumably represents the latest thinking about Hopkins, Geoffrey Hartman, the editor, says in

his article that

> Christ, as he appears in Hopkins, is dangerously near to physical man, while man is still dangerously near to physical beauty, so that Hopkins' work becomes an ode on the eternal nativity of Christ in the world of the senses. In that ode, "The Windhover" is one of the finest stanzas. (p. 127)

The continued interest in the relationship of Hopkins' sensory perceptions to his religious perceptions has quite naturally led critics to his early poems. This, combined with the basically biographical approach of most of the criticism, has resulted in a distorted view of Hopkins that has neglected some important aspects of his work. It is in order to present these aspects as I see them that I have laboured in the following sections.

I should note that while I was working on this paper, a new edition of Hopkins' poems came off the press (The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. W. H. Gardner and N. H. MacKenzie). The need for a new edition testifies to the continuing--and increasing--scholarly interest in his work.

CHAPTER II

STRESS AND RELEASE, OR SUFFERING AND RELIEF, AS EXPONENTS OF THE DEATH-REBIRTH ARCHETYPE IN HOPKINS' POETRY

This chapter will trace motifs of stress and release and show how they are exponents of a complex pattern that corresponds to the archetypal pattern of death and rebirth. It will emphasize that Hopkins' suffering was not, as many critics have suggested, the result of a conflict between asceticism and aestheticism, but rather the result of a conflict between religious belief and despair. Section I will show, I believe, that Hopkins' attitude toward beauty changed significantly between his early mature period beginning 1875 and his late mature period beginning roughly 1884, emphasizing the waning sensuality and waxing spirituality evident in his poetry. Section II will show that corresponding to that change is a deepening awareness of and attachment to images of stress and release as exponents of the death-rebirth archetype as exemplified in the Passion,

Crucifixion, and Resurrection of Christ.

I

One of the main areas of interest in Hopkins criticism has been the poet-priest, or sensual-spiritual, conflict that is supposedly expressed in his poems. In an admirably cogent and clearly written essay, Lawrence Durrell summarizes the traditional view that Hopkins the Jesuit suffered anguish at the sensuality of Hopkins the poet:

> Perhaps he knew how sensual his eye and mind were, and recognised the forbidden fruit in those outbursts of sprained sexuality which dot his notebooks and poems with splashes of bright light. [1]

The ascetic-aesthetic conflict is often taken to be the key to his poetry, and the cause of the so-called "terrible sonnets" that he produced near the end of his life. But such a view, it seems to me, is inconsistent with the evidence in the mature poetry, by which I mean the poetry beginning with "The Wreck of the Deutschland" in 1875.

"The Wreck of the Deutschland" was written after a seven year silence that ensued upon Hopkins' entering the Jesuit order. In that period a deepening religious maturity significantly altered him. The young Hopkins

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[1] A Key to Modern British Poetry (Norman, Okla., 1952), p. 168.

who in 1862 wrote "A Vision of the Mermaids" that, says Robert Bridges, "betrays the influence of Keats,"[2] was frankly sensual. By 1866 an increasing religious concern was pulling him away from sensuality, as we see in "The Habit of Perfection":

> Elected Silence, sing to me
> And beat upon my whorled ear,
> Pipe me to pastures still and be
> The music that I care to hear.
>
> Shape nothing, lips; be lovely-dumb:
> It is the shut, the curfew sent
> From there where all surrenders come
> Which only makes you eloquent.
>
> Be shelled, eyes, with double dark
> And find the uncreated light:
> This ruck and reel which you remark
> Coils, keeps, and teases simple sight.
>
> Palate, the hutch of tasty lust,
> Desire not to be rinsed with wine:
> The can must be so sweet, the crust
> So fresh that come in fasts divine!
>
> Nostrils, your careless breath that spend
> Upon the stir and keep of pride,
> What relish shall the censers send
> Along the sanctuary side!
>
> O feel-of-primrose hands, O feet
> That want the yield of plushy sward,
> But you shall walk the golden street
> And you unhouse and house the Lord. (31-32)

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[2]The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. W. H. Gardner and N. H. MacKenzie (New York, 1967), p. 246. All additional textual references are to this source.

It is evident in this poem that the young Hopkins possessed a nervous system that conveyed the physical world to him in exquisite sensations; it is also apparent that he felt the beauty of the physical world to be dangerously meretricious and at odds with his spiritual aspirations. But after the long self-imposed silence that broke with "The Deutschland" in 1875 and the joyous sonnets of 1877, we see that his attitude has changed: physical beauty is no longer dangerous--it is "news of God," a manifestation of His own surpassing beauty. In "The Starlight Night" the speaker cries, "Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!" and exults over the beauty of the night sky because it is a beautiful paling that "shuts the spouse/ Christ home, Christ and his mother and all his hallows" (66-67). In "Spring" he says that "Nothing is so beautiful as spring," and asks "What is all this juice and all this joy? / A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning in Eden Garden" (67). Beauty is a manifestation of the innocent world uncorrupted by sin. And in "Pied Beauty" he sings "Glory be to God for dappled things," and enumerates a catalogue of multicolored and various things, ending with an assertion that "pied beauty" is a revelation of the manifold yet unified beauty of God: "He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change: / Praise him" (69-70). The quiet ending of this poem does not show the poet in conflict with the physical world, any more than does the ending of "Hurrahing in Harvest," in which the speaker, looking at things that are "barbarous in beauty,"

says that "these things, these things were here and but the beholder/ Wanting: which two when they once meet, / The heart rears wings bold and bolder/ And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him off under his feet" (70). Physical beauty manifests God and so fills the heart with rapture of Him that the heart almost takes wings. There is no conflict between sensuality and spirituality in the poems of this period.[3]

But a later period, that of the so-called "terrible sonnets," shows a significant change in the poet's attitude toward physical beauty. The change is partly indicated by a poem title, "To What Serves Mortal Beauty?" The poem concludes with

> What do then? how meet beauty? Merely meet it; own
> Home at heart, heaven's sweet gift; then leave, let that alone.
> Yea, wish that though, wish all, God's better beauty, grace. (98)

By this time (1885) physical beauty no longer exerts a powerful hold over the poet, either as a meretricious distraction from spirituality, or as a manifestation of God; rather, the poet seems to have become almost neutral toward the physical world and to have withdrawn into a world that is more exclusively spiritual.

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[3]Pick had noted this as early as 1942. He traces the concept of physical beauty as "news of God" to St. Ignatius and Duns Scotus. Since Pick's book is so single-minded in its insistence on the importance of Ignatius' Exercises in Hopkins' life and work, it has been ignored by many as being intolerably narrow in its interpretations. See Gerard Manley Hopkins: Priest and Poet, passim, but esp. pp. 31-39.

By the time of "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection" (1888), the poet can once again capture the variegated world that so delighted him during the earlier period in which "Pied Beauty" was composed. The poem begins

> Cloud-puffball, torn tufts, tossed pillows flaunt forth,
> then chevy on an air-
> built thoroughfare: heaven-roysterers, in gay-gangs
> they throng; they glitter in marches. (105)

But the poem ends, as the title suggests, with a rejection of "mortal trash" and a wish for the purely spiritual state that follows death:

> Flesh fade, and mortal trash
> Fall to the residuary worm; world's wildfire, leave but ash:
> In a flash, in a trumpet crash,
> I am all at once what Christ is . . . immortal diamond. (105-106)

Here, a longing to be free from the life of the body is clearly expressed in one of the last poems Hopkins was to write. The poet has by this time receded so far from the sensual world into the world of the spirit that the only significance he sees in nature is the inevitable destruction of physical existence ("Million-fueled, nature's bonfire burns on") which he so longs for in himself.

The transition between the early and later attitudes toward beauty is marked in "Spring and Fall" (1881) and "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo" (1882). In an excellent analysis of "Spring and Fall" Sister Robert Louise (Explicator, XXI, Item 65) has shown that the poem can be read as a statement by an older man to a young girl who is passing from

a state of innocence and beauty (Goldengrove = Eden) into the corrupt state of experience. Sister Louise's analysis suggests that freshness and innocence are strongly associated in Hopkins' mind with young and physical beauty. We could then expect that experience and disillusionment would be associated with old age. This is exactly what occurs in "The Leaden Echo," where the speaker asks if there is not some "catch or key to keep / Back beauty, keep it, beauty, beauty, beauty, . . . from vanishing away?" The answer is that there is none, for "Age and age's evils, hoar hair," are inevitable, and "wisdom is early to despair" (91). An amplification is found in "The Golden Echo":

> The flower of beauty, fleece of beauty, too too apt to, ah! to fleet,
> Never fleets móre, fastened with the tenderest truth
> To its own best being and its loveliness of youth: it is an everlastingness of, O it is an all youth!
> Come then, your ways and airs and looks, locks, maidengear, gallantry and gaiety and grace,
> Winning ways, air innocent, maiden manners, sweet looks, loose locks, long locks, lovelocks, gaygear, going gallant, girlgrace--
> Resign them, sign them, seal them, send them, motion them, with breath,
> And with sighs soaring, soaring síghs, deliver
> Them; beauty-in-the-ghost, deliver it, early now, long before death
> Give beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty, back to God, beauty's self and beauty's giver. (92)

The argument might be paraphrased thus: physical beauty is associated with youth, and so is spiritual beauty (innocence); physical beauty will fade with age, and so will spiritual beauty unless it is given back to God

through love while still untarnished by experience, in which case it is "an everlastingness"; therefore, one should place no value on physical beauty, and all value on spiritual beauty and freshness.

No one would call this argument profound, but it does bespeak a devaluation of physical beauty which was to mark Hopkins' attitude hereafter. And the relationship of the poet to beauty is an exponent of a spiritual movement that describes a deepening desire for and participation in an archetypal pattern: rebirth through death. An examination of other exponents will illuminate this spiritual progression and show that stress and suffering are seen by the poet, in his last years especially, as a means of attaining a spiritual release; and will show how this progression suggests and resembles the stages of the Crucifixion.

II

Corresponding to the change in Hopkins' attitude toward physical beauty is a change in his attitude toward his earthly, physical existence. As early as the relatively peaceful period of "The Deutschland" there are hints that he felt the body to be a prison of the soul, for in that poem he says of the nun, "Ah, touched in your bower of bone / Are you! turned for an exquisite smart" (57). And in 1877 he composed a sonnet on the

subject, "The Caged Skylark," in which he states that "Man's mounting spirit in his bone-house, mean-house dwells" (70). As he matures, his poetry begins to express with more intensity his feeling that the body is oppressing, and to express his desire to escape from it, so that these expressions become a motif. Closely related to this motif is another one formed by metaphors showing states or conditions of stress followed by bursting release. These metaphors do not always refer to the release of the soul from the body: they may refer simply to the cessation of spiritual suffering. However, it seems that in the end Hopkins felt that the ultimate release from suffering--physical and spiritual--was the release of the soul from the body.

In the beginning of "The Deutschland" we find exponents of both body-consciousness and the stress-release cycle:

> Thou hast bound bones and veins in me, fastened me flesh,
> And after it almost unmade, what with dread,
> Thy doing: and dost thou touch me afresh?
> Over again I feel thy finger and find thee. (51)

What has filled the poet with dread was the death of five nuns in the wreck of the ship Deutschland. In other parts of the poem he explains that he has suffered, vicariously, the horror the nuns experienced; and also that he has felt dread over a God who could allow them to die so horribly. We note here that the suffering was vicarious and short lived, for God's finger (possibly a reference to the finger in Michelangelo's picture in the Sistine Chapel) restores new life to his soul,

replacing dread with happiness. He is restored by the realization that the stress and suffering of the nuns had a purpose, and also that his own suffering over their experience had the same purpose.

> Not out of his bliss
> Springs the stress felt
> Nor first from heaven (and few know this)
> Swings the stroke dealt--
> Stroke and a stress that stars and storms deliver,
> That guilt is hushed by, hearts are flushed by and melt--. (53)

Stress and suffering are necessary atonements that are not unlike the Passion and Crucifixion:

> It dates from a day
> Of his going in Galilee;

in which the suffering is followed by sudden release:

> The dense and the driven Passion, and frightful sweat:
> Thence the discharge of it. . . . (53)

This passage is followed immediately by a metaphor which repeats the stress-release cycle:

> How a lush-kept plush-capped sloe
> Will, mouthed to flesh-burst,
> Gush!--flush the man, the being with it, sour or sweet,
> Brim, in a flash, full!--Hither then, last or first,
> To hero of Calvary, Christ's feet-- (54)

Images of stress or tension built to a bursting point recur in "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.

And again:

> 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. (66)

And in the famous lines from "The Windhover":

> 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. . . . (69)

From these early poems it seems that the speaker understands the significance of the renewal-out-of-suffering theme only academically, as it were, and that he has himself not experienced the actual stress of real spiritual agony. But by the time of "Carrion Comfort" (1885) the poet is in the midst of intense personal suffering, and again the stress-release metaphor emerges, but this time with the conviction that comes of first-hand experience. Asking why God has caused him to suffer, the poet answers himself:

> "Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and
> clear. (100)

In one of his last poems, "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection," the poet established analogues in how the "wind boisterous ropes, wrestles, beats earth bare" and how man, too, is obliterated: "But vastness blurs and time beats level. Enough! the Resurrection." The stress of being beaten down is in both cases followed by renewal, and the Resurrection is seen as the ultimate release

in which the body is shed and the soul bursts free into immortal splendor:

> World's wildfire, leave but ash:
> In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
> I am all at once what Christ is, since he was what I am, and
> This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood, immortal diamond,
> Is immortal diamond. (105-106)

The exponents just traced are of course archetypal: they point back into the immemorial traditions of mythology to the death-rebirth patterns which depict the descent into Hades as the way to renewal of life (see Maud Bodkin, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry, chapter 2). This same archetype is apparent in the central paradox of Christianity, that by death man attains new life. That paradox reaches its most concentrated expression in the Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of Christ, whose suffering, of course, was both physical and spiritual. A tracing of exponents shows that Hopkins was deeply involved in the problem of suffering, which since the time of the writing of the Book of Job has been a central issue in literature and which stands, I believe, more than has been recognized, in a central position in the poetry of Gerard Hopkins.

III

The Notes to the third edition of Hopkins' Poems tell us that "The Soldier" (1885) was inspired by the Ignatian analogy between "a great

temporal king and the spiritual King, Christ" (286). The Jesuit order was of course founded by a military man, St. Ignatius of Loyola, who viewed Christ as the leader of the Christian army. In the Second Week of Spiritual Exercises the Jesuit novitiate meditates upon this:

> "My will is to conquer the whole land of the infidels: therefore 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. . . ." So Christ says to every man: "My will is to conquer the whole world and all mine enemies, and so to enter into the glory of my Father." (286-287)

The idea of suffering is more succinctly expressed in Second Timothy, I, 3: "Thou therefore endure hardships, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." And the faithful soldier who endures will then be admitted into "the glory of my Father."

With the Ignatian tradition, as well as the more ancient tradition of the Church Militant and Christ as soldier, behind him, it is not surprising that military imagery should appear as a motif in Hopkins' poetry. Its first significant appearance is in "The Windhover"[4] with the martial allusions implied by "chevalier."[5] From this beginning, the military

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[4]The appearance may actually have been later than 1877. Cf. p. 46.

[5]Marshall McLuhan develops this idea in a curious way in his article reprinted in Gerard Manley Hopkins by the Kenyon Critics.

motif picks up, hook-and-eye fashion, other motifs that combine with it to form a complex pattern. The other motifs are built around images and ideas of war and conflict, peace, endurance, and patience. The pattern emerges fully in the curtal sonnet "Peace" of 1879:

> When will you ever, Peace, wild wooddove, shy wings shut,
> Your round me roaming end, and under be my boughs?
> When, when, Peace, will you, Peace? I'll not play hypocrite
>
> To own my heart: I yield you do come sometimes; but
> That piecemeal peace is poor peace. What pure peace allows
> Alarms of wars, the daunting wars, the death of it?
>
> O surely, reaving Peace, my Lord should leave in lieu
> Some good! And so he does leave Patience exquisite,
> That plumes to Peace thereafter. And when Peace here does
> house
> He comes with work to do, he does not come to coo,
> He comes to brood and sit. (85)

The speaker of this poem finds that peace comes infrequently and that he should be contented with patience, which will "plume to peace." Yet the poem ends on a strange note, saying that when peace does come, it comes "with work to do" and "to brood and sit." I see no reason to believe that the absence of peace in the speaker is the result of a conflict between his senses and his spirit. Rather--and I believe evidence in the later poems will support this--the stress and conflict experienced by him are entirely within the world of his spirit.

Martial motifs appear obliquely in "Andromeda" (84) in which Andromeda (the Church) waits "All while her patience, morseled into pangs, / Mounts" for Perseus (Christ) to slay the dragon of anti-Christ. (277)

The treatment is direct again in "The Soldier," a late poem composed in 1885:

> Mark Christ our King. He knows war, served this soldiering through;
> He of all can reeve a rope best. There he bides in bliss
> Now, and 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'. (99)

No more explicit statement of his theme could be expected from Hopkins. Here Christ, king and soldier, who "knows war" and "served this soldiering through" and now "bides in bliss," gives his blessing to any man who will "do all that man can do" in the service of God.

Man's soldiering must then parallel that of Christ if he is to do a "Christ-done deed." It is important to remember here that Christ's conflict was not between his soul and his senses, because he rejected worldly things in the Temptations. Christ's struggle was spiritual, the "frightful sweat" of Gethsemene; it was given harrowing expression in the cry from the cross, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me!" The physical suffering which Christ endured was actual pain, not a denial of active physical pleasure, and the physical suffering was only incidental beside the all-important struggle against the doubt that grew out of his suffering.

That the speaker of "The Soldier" is undergoing a parallel experience is implicit within the poem itself. Biographical material supports this,

for we know that in his last years Hopkins was doing "all that man can do" to succeed in his religious vocation as a Jesuit, but suffering intense feelings of frustration and failure (see Fick's Gerard Manley Hopkins, Priest and Poet, chapter VI). But it is not necessary to go outside the poetry itself to find the nature of his struggle. His frustration arose not, as many critics believe, out of his denying himself poetry--for we have his poetry from that period--nor, as others believe, from his conflict with meretricious beauty, for we have seen how he conquered that temptation. (His next poem after "The Soldier" explicitly states "Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feed on thee.") His struggle is spiritual, and like the good soldier, he will continue to endure and not cry "I can no more." The exact nature of the struggle is explicitly stated in the next poem:

> 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. (100)

The war, then, is between himself and doubt, or despair. This poem is from the period of 1885, and he is now learning the real meaning of "Thou therefore endure hardships, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." And in a climactic moment of agonizing doubt he cries, with a sound that is much like that of Christ's cry on the cross, "I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God." (100)

He remains the good soldier, though, for in that same year he remembers that one of the qualities of endurance is patience, and he writes

> 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. (102)

The martial motif, woven out of a pattern of imagery and ideas involving soldiery, war, conflict (even wrestling), endurance, and patience, is one exponent of a more inclusive motif of suffering that runs throughout Hopkins' poetry. Let us trace the development of those exponents.

IV

Quoting from Philip Henderson's The Poet and Society, Maurice Charney writes the following passage.

> "His [Hopkins'] sensuality, constantly inhibited, gave rise in his poems to recurrent images of mutilation." This is the result of Freudian readings and hunting out sado-masochistic tendencies.[6]

Charney's remark indicates the kind of physical, sensual emphasis that has been given to Hopkins' work, which does contain a great many

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[6]"A Bibliographical Study of Hopkins Criticism, 1918-1949," Thought, 25 (1950), p. 307.

references to suffering. But the suffering, I believe, is more spiritual than physical or "psychological" in the Freudian sense; and it grows more intense, becomes more prominent, in the later poems. The references to suffering are exponents of what Soren Kierkegaard calls "dread"--the existential dread which even Christ felt, and which comes of facing the awful possibilities posed by a wavering faith:[7]

> If a man were a beast or an angel, he would not be able to be in dread. Since he is a synthesis he can be in dread, and the greater the dread, the greater the man. This, however, is not affirmed in the sense in which men commonly understand dread, as related to something outside a man, but in the sense that man himself produces dread. Only in this sense can we interpret the passage where it is said of Christ that he was in dread (aengstes) even unto death, and the place also where he says to Judas, "What thou doest, do quickly." Not even the terrible word upon which even Luther dreaded to preach, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"--not even this expresses suffering so strongly. For this word indicates a situation in which Christ actually is; the former sayings indicate a relation to a situation which is not yet actual.[8]

But this dread is actually a stage of the progression into real faith: "Then dread enters into his soul and searches it thoroughly, constraining

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[7]I am not suggesting, of course, that Hopkins was influenced by Kierkegaard, who lived from 1813 to 1855, and whose work may not have been translated into English during Hopkins' life, or otherwise known to him. But then dread was not introduced into the world by Kierkegaard; he only philosophized about it.

[8]"Dread As a Saving Experience by Means of Faith," in A Casebook on Existentialism, ed. William V. Spanos (New York, 1966), p. 252.

out of him all the finite and petty, and leading him hence whither he would go."[9] Dread is analogous to the Passion and Crucifixion, and is followed by the bliss of union with God--and our archetypal death-rebirth metaphor appears again! And once again, we see that Hopkins was aware of the death-rebirth pattern by the time of "The Deutschland," for he says in the first stanza,

> Thou hast bound bones and veins in me,
> fastened me flesh,
> And after it almost unmade, what with dread. (51)

And he speaks of "Thou mastering me" (51) and says that he felt

> The sweep and hurl of thee trod
> Hard down with horror of height:
> And the midriff astrain with leaning of, laced with
> fire of stress. (52)

And he prays, "Of the gospel proffer, a pressure, a principle, Christ's gift" (52). In another stanza he speaks of the nun who is suffering before the moment of death "With the gnarls of the nails in thee, niche of the lance" (59); and after her death she attains paradise, which she gained by way of her suffering: "Well, she has thee for the pain, for the / Patience; but pity of the rest of them" (61).

In the same poem he speaks to the God who is "Father and fondler of the heart thou hast wrung" and asks him to "Wring thy rebel, dogged

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[9] Ibid., p. 255.

in den, / Man's malice, with wrecking and storm. . . . / With an anvil ding / And with fire in him forge thy will" (54). This imagery recalls to my mind a poem by another famous religious poet who in many ways presents striking similarities to Hopkins, not the least of which was his youthful sensualism and his mature rejection of sensuality in favor of spirituality. I mean John Donne, who wrote

> Batter my heart, three-personed God; for you
> As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
> That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
> Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
> I, like an usurped town, to another due,
> Labor to admit you, but oh, to no end,
> Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
> But is captived, and proves weak or untrue.
> Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,
> But am betrothed unto your enemy:
> Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,
> Take me to you, imprison me, for I
> Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
> Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

Donne, too, asks God to beat him down in order that he may be saved. (An interesting incidental is the military and "blacksmith" imagery employed by both poets.)

If Hopkins beseeches God to let him suffer in the early poems of 1875-1877, the later poems show him crying out the agony of his suffering. In "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" (1884) he speaks of himself as on

> a rack
> Where, selfwrung, selfstrung, sheathe- and shelterless,
> thoughts against thoughts in groans grind. (98)

In "Carrion Comfort" (1885) Christ is "the hero whose heaven-handling flung me, foot trod / Me" (100); and the same poem becomes an agonized attempt to describe his suffering:

> 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 bruisèd bones? and fan,
> O in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic to avoid
> thee and flee? (99)

The next poem (untitled) cries out for relief, saying that his suffering is "past 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? (100)

and continues with

> 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'. (100)

The sestet of this sonnet shows his dread, and his awareness (with which Kierkegaard would agree) that many have never experienced it:

> Oh 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 I creep,
> Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
> Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

A subsequent sonnet addressed to "Patience" shows that in spite of his suffering and dread he will maintain his will to believe, and that he feels

God ordains his suffering and that it has a purpose:

> 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. (102)

Relief seems finally to have come in "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection," dated 1889, the year of his death. The poem hints that he may have passed through the stage of dread, but final release, as we have noted before, is bound up with physical death.

> Enough! the Resurrection,
> A heart's-clarion! Away grief's gasping, joyless days, dejection.
> Across my foundering deck shone
> A beacon, an eternal beam. Flesh fade, and mortal trash
> Fall to the residuary worm; world's wildfire, leave but ash:
> In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
> I am all at once what Christ is, since he was what I am, and
> This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood, immortal diamond,
> Is immortal diamond. (105-106)

This passage suggests that the metaphorical journey through Hades has been completed, or at least that light is visible at the end of the dark tunnel leading upward. A slightly different perspective on the same archetype is obtained by invoking a different myth--that of Oedipus who had to be purified by suffering; and who <u>because</u> of his suffering was initiated into the heavenly mysteries in the Sacred Grove at Collonus.

The death-rebirth archetype has thus been completed. It may be

summarized as follows: it began in 1875 with "The Wreck of the Deutschland" in which he expressed his awareness of the necessity of suffering, but the poems of 1875-1877 show him to be relatively free of spiritual dread. By 1884-1885 such poems as "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" and "Carrion Comfort" show that the poet had descended into spiritual despair, which is given agonized expression also in sonnets 65-69, composed most likely in 1885. The final stage of the pattern is hinted in "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection," composed in 1889, the year of his death. The poem suggests that the poet has attained a new vision and a new happiness. If, however, in Hopkins' view, the pattern was not to be completed until his actual physical death, then of course we have no record of that in his poetry. But we do have an indication in his dying words, which he is said to have repeated three times: "I am so happy. I am so happy. I am so happy."

CHAPTER III

LANGUAGE AND SYNTAX AS ANALOGUES OF THE DEATH-REBIRTH ARCHETYPE

We have seen that the content of Hopkins' poems expresses the stress and release phases of the death-rebirth archetype. It would come as no surprise if the form also expresses these phases, for most of us would agree with the critic who writes,

> The great poets manipulate the rhythms of their language to express the rhythm of the object of which they speak or to express the rhythms they feel within themselves as their response to those objects, or to do both. [1]

In examining Hopkins' poetic language we see that stress is realized by what Hopkins called "sprung rhythm."

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[1]Robert Boyle, Metaphor in Hopkins (Chapel Hill, 1961), p. xiii.

In the Preface to his poems, Hopkins wrote that he considered his poems to be written either in "running rhythm" or in "sprung rhythm," and occasionally in a combination of the two. Running rhythm--which is essentially any continued metric pattern with a fixed number of syllables in each foot, such as iambs--may be "counterpointed" by placing two or more reversed feet (for example, trochees in an iambic metre) in a single line. The reversed feet cause new rhythms to be mounted upon the old, and set up new metric patterns (45). An example of running rhythm would be

Elected Silence, sing to me
And beat upon my whorled ear (31);

and an example of counterpointed rhythm would be

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod (66).

Even with a prosody utilizing a fixed number of syllables in each foot, then, Hopkins was interested in setting together two forces, one force continuing the basic metric pattern, another force attempting to impose a new pattern upon it. The result of these two forces working within a passage is an internal stress caused by the one rhythm striving to dominate the other.

More subtle and complicated is sprung rhythm, which may be measured by feet of from one to four syllables, and "for particular

effects" any number of weak syllables. There may be any number of unaccented syllables, or none, between stresses, and a foot is always assumed to begin on a stress; thus, if two stresses are juxtaposed, two feet are created, the first of which is monosyllabic. Moreover, all feet are considered to be equally long or strong, their seeming inequality being made up by pause and/or stress. Hence there can be no reversing of feet, and sprung rhythm cannot be counterpointed (47-48). An example of sprung rhythm from Hopkins' own notes is this passage from "The Windhover":

> 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. (266)

In the same preface to his poems, Hopkins made several analogies between his verse and music:

> . . . for purposes of scanning it is a great convenience to follow the example of music and take the stress always first, as the accent or the chief accent always comes first in a musical bar. (45)

> [a license of sprung rhythm] is rests, as in music; . . . [and one of the marks used is] what in music are called pauses ⌒ , to shew that the syllable should be dwelt on. (48)

From these statements, some critics have concluded that Hopkins was striving to form a stress pattern that would correspond to the rhythmic beat in music which occurs at regular time intervals and marks the beginning of a new musical bar or foot. One critic believes that Hopkins' stress patterns can be indicated by means of musical notation, as in the following example:

. . . thóughts against thóughts in gróans grínd.

He remarks, however, that there is a conflict between musical rhythm and speech accent, as his accent marks indicate.[2]

If we view Hopkins' prosody as essentially musical, says Harold Whitehall, then Hopkins was creating sound-pattern poetry and it must be read with sound-pattern stresses and not, as is usual with English literature, with either metrical or with sense stress.[3] He further observes that the musical view would help to explain two of the most distinctive characteristics of Hopkins' language: first, the twisted syntax was an attempt to order the musical elements of a line; and second, his

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[2]Ibid., pp. xiii-xiv. For two somewhat different discussions of Hopkins' use of musical time in his verse, see Walter J. Ong's "Sprung Rhythm and English Tradition" in Twentieth Century Views, pp. 151-159; and also Harold Whitehall's "Sprung Rhythm" in The Kenyon Critics, pp. 28-54, esp. p. 36.

[3]Whitehall, pp. 30-31.

compound words were attempts to create patterns that would continue the musical timing underlying the words by means of stress and juncture, the equivalents of beats and pauses in music.[4]

Note that if Hopkins' poems are viewed as structures of sound patterns based on musical analogies, then lines such as the following

Márgarét, áre you gríeving
Over goldengrove unleaving?
Leáves, líke the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you? (88)

create stress on at least three levels by thwarting the reader's expectations based on the normal flow of the English language: 1) the syntax is wrenched out of its normal order ("you / With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?"); 2) sense-stress or regular metrical stress is replaced by stresses chosen and marked by the author ("Leáves, líke the things of man, you"); and 3) syllable length is qualitatively altered by the introduction of such phenomena as four-syllable feet ("góldĕngrŏve unléavĭng") and pauses (which he creates by junctures based on alliteration, as in "Leáves, líke . . . !"), which either speed up or slow down

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[4]Ibid., p. 53.

syllables. Thus the language resists the syntactical, quantitative, and qualitative characteristics we have come to expect from English. This resistance is certainly too complex and obvious to be accidental, and one can speculate that Hopkins was consciously employing it as an analogue of stress.

It is not necessary, of course, to view sprung rhythm as based strictly on a musical analogy. At least one critic feels that Hopkins did not intend a musical analogy, and that he in fact had not clarified his own prosodic theories, so that while he perhaps understood what effect he was after, he was unable to describe the means by which he could achieve it.[5] Moreover, it is possible that he may never have fully mastered the means of achieving it. Hopkins insisted that his verse be read aloud the way he heard it,[6] which indicates that he could not transfer

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[5]Paull F. Baum, "Sprung Rhythm," PMLA (Sept., 1959), pp. 418-425.

[6]"Indeed when, on somebody returning me the Eurydice, I opened and read some lines, as one commonly reads whether prose or verse, with the eyes, so to say, only, it struck me aghast with a kind of raw nakedness and unmitigated violence I was unprepared for: but take breath and read it with the ears, as I always wish to be read, and my verse becomes all right." (240-241)

"You [Bridges] were right to leave out the marks: they were not consistent for one thing, and are always offensive. Still there must be some. Either I must invent a notation applied throughout as in music or else I must only mark where the reader is likely to mistake, and for the present that is what I shall do." (235)

the rhythm he heard to the words he wrote. So his explanation of sprung rhythm is a failure, and ". . . Sprung Rhythm is not a form of verse, to be scanned by feet, but a form of Prose Rhythm not amenable to scansion and therefore not to be explained as verse."[7]

Baum reaches his point of view after a careful consideration of Hopkins' own contradictory statements about his prosody and his statement that sprung rhythm was "the rhythm of common speech and of written prose" (49). From Baum's point of view, there is no systematic basis, musical or metrical, for Hopkins' rhythms, and all he really did was to force the rhythms of prose into poetic lines. Hopkins' lines forge on "oblivious to enjambement in the usual sense" and this practice, too, Hopkins employed with no apparent basis in tradition.[8]

Speaking of "Carrion Comfort," Baum says,

> In a word, the sonnet is not metrical enough to be heard as verse, and it is too rough to be felt as good prose. It has, properly speaking, no rhythm at all. . . . And yet the sonnet is quite perfect in its way, because the language both in syntax and in imagery reproduces the torment and agony which Hopkins had to express. . . . If one may risk a definition: "Sprung Rhythm" is the name Hopkins gave to his own blend of the freedom of prose and the ordered patterns of verse.[9]

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[7]Baum, p. 424.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid., pp. 424-425.

The idea of the freedom of prose being restricted by the ordered verse pattern of "Carrion Comfort" is illustrated in detail by Baum, who concludes that ". . . if the sonnet were printed as prose, one would hardly suspect it of being meant as verse, nor would one read it as rhythmic or flowing prose. The metrical runs, consecutive recognizable 'feet,' are less noticeable than one finds in ordinary prose."[10]

To see the strained effect of prose forced into verse form, we need only look to the first eight lines of "The Windhover."

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! (69)

We notice at once the forcing of lines into poetic configurations by ending line 1 in the middle of a word ("king-"), which causes line 2 to begin in the middle of a word--certainly not enjambement in the usual sense, as it destroys not only the grammatical autonomy of <u>lines</u>, but also of a <u>word</u> as well. Lines 2-6 employ enjambement in the usual sense, further

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[10] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 424.

distorting the traditional sonnet syntax which provides at least a greater coincidence of syntactical construction with verse construction. Lines 1-8 contain only two sentences, and sentence termination and line termination coincide only once, at the end of line 8. This fact, combined with the fact that there are no set number of syllables to a foot, gives the impression that the verse lines are made simply by bending prose sentences into a sonnet configuration. A sense of the difficulty of this achievement is conveyed by the difficulty of the single-rhyme scheme, the a rhymes being masculine and the b rhymes being feminine, but both being ing sounds! This further breaks down the sense of metrical regularity and contributes to the effect of a linear force being bent and forced into an intricate configuration.

The language thus exemplifies--and conveys--the same kind of stress that is created when a linear strip of spring steel is coiled and placed inside a small container. The effect, as Baum says, is that it "reproduces the torment and agony which Hopkins had to express."

If Hopkins intended the tortured language to be a metaphor of the stress phase of the death-rebirth pattern, then we should expect the language at the end of the poems to soften, to express some sort of release or peace to correspond with the rebirth phase. This is what often does happen. The images of building tension in "God's Grandeur" are given release in the quiet final lines, "the Holy Ghost over the bent/

World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings." The almost hysterical language of "The Starlight Night" ends with "Christ and his mother and all his hallows." The stress and hurling of "The Windhover" ends with the soft image of embers which "Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermillion," the gold and vermillion being an implied reference, almost explicit, to the Resurrection itself. "Pied Beauty" ends on a singularly (for Hopkins) quiet note: "Praise him." "Hurrahing in Harvest" has the speaker almost flying off the earth with the rising language of "And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him off under his feet."

Some of the poems which express tension do not end quietly. "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves," "The Soldier," and "Carrion Comfort," all sonnets expressing unrelieved agony, are examples. Some of the last sonnets, beginning with number 65, resume the quiet ending, and of course "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire," though it does not end "quietly," does follow tortured language with a direct reference to the Resurrection and ends with the image of "Immortal diamond." The language of many of the poems, then, in terms of its syntactical stress and release pattern, is itself a metaphor of the death-rebirth archetype.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

Some conclusions may be drawn from the evidence presented, but they need first to be put in relief. One of the bases of my thesis is that Hopkins was not so emphatically sensual as the current view would have him. By this I do not contend that Hopkins was never a sensualist, or even that his later works are free of sensualism. The lines of his 1889 sonnet (number 74) that read "birds built--but not I build; no, but strain, / Time's eunuch, and not breed one work that wakes" can be cited as an indication that even in his last years Hopkins suffered sexual frustration. But it would seem exceedingly strange if he were not sexually frustrated, and to witch-hunt for symbols of repressed sexuality and frustrated sensualism is to lose sight of far more important aspects of Hopkins' work. It is to assume the view that the only significance of the Crucifixion is that it was a token physical death. The physical death is significant; but of far greater significance was the spiritual agony of

Gethsemene, the agony of "God become man" in the truest sense of the word. And so it is with Hopkins: his sensual nature is clearly apparent in his poetry, but, like Christ's physical death, it is only a corollary to a more important spiritual action. The real action, like Aristotle's concept of action in the drama, has significance above and beyond the mere physical action on the stage.

Against this background I have drawn two conclusions: the first is that Hopkins, in one period of his life, had (for a Catholic priest) striking similarities to what Kierkegaard called a Christian existentialist; the second is that Hopkins' work contains patterns of stress and release similar to the death-rebirth archetype.

The fact that Hopkins experienced suffering has long been recognised. Most writers, such as William Empson, suggest that his suffering was the result of frustrated sensuality, of being "strung to duty and strained to beauty." I hope that I have presented a convincing argument to show that the conflict arising out of his attraction to physical beauty was resolved by Hopkins midway in his mature period. Other writers, notably Catholics, contend that Hopkins' suffering was the result of physical strains brought about by his zeal for work, combined with the frustration of his poetic impulse. (See Immortal Diamond, pp. 175-191, esp. p. 177.) Again it seems to me that the source of suffering as recorded in his poetry was not physical; and it seems completely illogical that a frustrated poetic impulse

should be revealed by a respectable poetic output.

Few critics have dealt with the nature of Hopkins' spiritual suffering, and John Pick and W. H. Gardner are the only ones to consider it in depth. Says Gardner,

> Now Hopkins's 'desolation' was the aridity, protest, rebelliousness, terror, resignation, self-pity, quasi-cynicism, self-reproach, self-disgust and renewed self-dedication of the just man of declared faith who felt that he had been deserted by his God and could not be sure why. . . .[1]

It is convenient to sum up Gardner's paragraph by saying that Hopkins experienced existential dread. I do not wish to make an issue out of Hopkins' affinities with existentialism in the sense of making a formal comparison; but rather to use existentialism, with its emphasis on the necessity of dread, as a convenient reference by which to trace the development of Hopkins' suffering that seems to have begun before "The Wreck of the Deutschland" was composed. To speak of anyone as an existentialist raises problems, because as William Spanos notes in his book A Casebook on Existentialism, "there are as many definitions of existentialism as there are existentialists," but I hope there can be agreement that dread in the face of ultimate reality is a central aspect of existentialism, and that the evidence presented shows that Hopkins experienced that dread.

A second conclusion is that Hopkins' work embodies archetypes of the death-rebirth pattern. There is strong indication that the language

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[1]W. H. Gardner, Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) (New Haven, 1949), Vol. 2, p. 330.

and structure of the individual poems are analogues of that pattern. There is also evidence that the pattern exists in individual poems in such images as that of a sloe bursting under pressure, that of an ember breaking open to reveal light, that of the soul bursting free of "mortal trash," and others cited in the text. Hopkins seems to have been aware of the significance of the death-rebirth experience in the life of a Christian as early as the time of "The Deutschland," the first poem of his mature period, when he prayed "Wring thy rebel, dogged in den, / Man's malice."

This leads to a consideration of the third level of the archetypal pattern, and that is the arc described by the progression of his spiritual stages over the years--as recorded, of course, in his poetry. That arc begins with an initial awareness of (perhaps even a longing after) purification by stress; proceeds on a descent into deep spiritual suffering; and, at the end of his career, strongly hints of an ascent into divine tranquility. It is the arc described by Dante's journey into Paradise, which began with the descent into Hell. It is a pattern deeply embedded in the Christian religion in a myriad of symbols, and one which, as we noted earlier, extends back through Virgil, Sophocles, and Homer into the ancient traditions of mythology.

The death-rebirth archetype underlies Hopkins' poetry at several levels and is one of the reasons, I believe, that so many readers find his

poetry so compelling. It is the underlying structure of "The Windhover," that poem which defies satisfactory exegesis at the literal level, for the word "Buckle!" cannot be satisfactorily explicated; but behind the puzzling facade of words one feels a moment of stress built to a climax, a sudden release at the word "Buckle!" and a resplendent rebirth in the far-reaching echoes of the words "gold-vermillion." This archetypal movement is reinforced by the subsequent images of stress and release found in the sestet.

"The Windhover," which Hopkins considered "the best thing I ever wrote," was, significantly, the poem that stayed longest in his mind, for Eugene R. August notes that the final version of the poem may not have been composed until 1887 or 1889.[2] It was perhaps because of the archetypal significance of the poem that it so long haunted him, and that it so interests modern critics. It may indeed represent not only his best technical production, but also the best of his early period in its rich sensual imagery and the best of his mature perceptions in its full realisation of the archetypal pattern. Like all of his poetry, because it is Christian it is more than archetypal; and because it is archetypal it is more than Christian.

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[2] "The Growth of 'The Windhover,'" PMLA, LXXXII (October, 1967), p. 465.

CHAPTER V

GUIDE TO RESEARCH

I: Bibliographical Materials

A necessary guide to the study of Hopkins is the gracefully written essay by John Pick in The Victorian Poets: A Guide to Research, ed. Frederick E. Faverty, pp. 196-227. Pick, a thorough scholar and one of the two or three leading authorities on Hopkins, discusses here bibliographical materials, editions and selections, biographical studies, and the history of Hopkins criticism.

When Pick was writing his essay in 1956, he noted that the number of critiques, articles, essays and books devoted to Hopkins "is now close to a thousand," and since that time Hopkins scholarship has continued apace. A conservative estimate of the number of titles now available would be 1,200-1,300, and the number will undoubtedly be swelled by a spate of reviews and critiques following the recently published fourth

edition of Hopkins' poems. To my knowledge, there is no recent bibliography of Hopkins criticism, though there are three good ones that extend into the 1940's. These are in Immortal Diamond: Studies in Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. Norman Weyand, which is generally regarded as reliable and complete through 1944; in "Forty Years of Criticism: A Chronological Check List of Criticism of the Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins from 1909 to 1949" in Bulletin of Bibliography (1950); and in "A Bibliographical Study of Hopkins Criticism, 1918-1949" (Thought, 1950), by Maurice Charney. All of these are now available in the University of Richmond library. The "Forty Years of Criticism" is intended to be as complete as possible, and the Charney collection is selective and annotated, listing one hundred entries.

Some more up-to-date selective bibliographies may be found in recent books about Hopkins, one of the more recent and useful being that in the Twentieth Century Views series entitled Hopkins, ed. Geoffrey Hartman.

The most complete source of Hopkins criticism from 1950 to the present, and the bibliographical source for those years for this thesis, is the annual volumes of the PMLA.

A valuable guide to the criticism of individual poems by title is Poetry Explication, by Joseph M. Kuntz.

II: Biographical Studies

In his article in The Victorian Poets, Pick states that "no satisfactory biography of Hopkins exists" at the present, though a two-volume, definitive study is projected (p. 199). Neither volume has been published as of this writing.

The first biography of Hopkins, by G. F. Lahey, appeared in 1930. Titled Gerard Manley Hopkins, it is only 150 pages long and is considered inadequate and fragmentary. Another biography, by Eleanor Ruggles, appeared in 1944. Titled Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Life, it is considered to be facile and fictionalized. (Pick, ibid., pp. 199-200)

Two special biographical studies of some interest are Gerard Manley Hopkins: Priest and Poet, by John Pick, and "Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Society of Jesus," by Martin C. Carrol, S. J., in Immortal Diamond (ed. Norman Weyand). The most useful brief biographies are those by Austin Warren in Gerard Manley Hopkins by the Kenyon Critics, and by W. H. Gardner in the introductions to the third and fourth editions of the Poems (1948 and 1967). Also some detailed but scattered material is to be found in Gardner's two-volume study, Gerard Manley Hopkins.

III: Surveys of Criticism

By far the best survey of Hopkins criticism is contained in John Pick's article in The Victorian Poets. (The first half of the summary of Hopkins criticism in this thesis is a distillation of that article.) Another survey is contained in W. H. Gardner's Gerard Manley Hopkins, and a more useful one is found in "A Bibliographical Study of Hopkins Criticism, 1918-1949," by Maurice Charney (Thought, 1950). Also useful is "Introduction: Poetry and Justification," by Geoffrey Hartman in his book entitled Hopkins. There is also a doctoral dissertation study of Hopkins criticism, "Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Critics," by Dorathy Elizabeth Hagman Parker (see DA, xxii, 263), which concludes that the best Hopkins criticism is that dealing with "individual poems."

IV: Collections of Criticism

A provocative collection of criticism is Gerard Manley Hopkins by the Kenyon Critics which contains some classic essays in Hopkins study. Also of great interest is Immortal Diamond: Studies in Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. Norman Weyand, S. J., which is a thorough-going study of Hopkins from a Jesuit viewpoint (all the contributors are Jesuits). The most recent collection is the Twentieth Century Views volume, Hopkins, ed. Geoffrey Hartman. This book is helpful in revealing the

extremely divergent views modern critics have taken toward Hopkins, but that is also its weakness: it fails to give the reader a balanced, middle-ground view of Hopkins' work.

V: Language Studies

Because Hopkins made use of archaic and dialect words, and even neologisms, a useful aid is Raymond V. Schoder's "An Interpretive Glossary" in Immortal Diamond, ed. Norman Weyand. However, many of Schoder's comments have now been superseded. More recent comments on Hopkins' language can be found in the Explicator Cyclopedia (Vol. I), and in articles (too numerous to mention here) in The Explicator. W. A. M. Peters' book, Gerard Manley Hopkins, A Critical Essay toward the Understanding of his Poetry, is valuable as a study of Hopkins' inscape and instress (though the book contains an inaccurate and unreliable bibliography). Discussion and examination of Hopkins' use of language will be found in just about every study of his work.

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VITA

Frank Thomas Hanenkrat was born in Appomattox, Virginia, in 1939. He was graduated from Appomattox High School in 1957 and from the University of Richmond in 1961. In the fall of 1961 he began a year of study in the graduate writing program at the University of Washington, which was followed by two years in the Army, a year of advertising copy-writing and free-lancing for magazines, and two years of teaching school. He plans to pursue a doctorate in the near future.