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Stem and Skein: Order and Evolution in Hopkins

DANIEL WILLIAMS

Under a roof in a country villa, a man lies awake; his friends sleep nearby.¹ As he reflects, the sound of water coursing through the channel behind the baths strikes him as out of place: “it seemed very strange that the sound of the same running water was at one time quite clear, and again less audible.”² He ponders the cause until one of his students reveals that he too is awake and can provide an answer: “What do you think . . . but that leaves of some kind, which continue to fall in abundance in the autumn, block the narrowness of the channel by their volume; and that at times they are dislodged and yield to the pressure of the current, and again they accumulate to stem the flow?” (Augustine, *De Ordine*, pp. 17, 19). Accepting this answer, Augustine presses his student (the poet Licentius) for philosophical reflections: what is the origin of his own *admiratio*? the *causa* of this disorder? the nature of *ordo* as such? The answer becomes the touchstone for what follows. The sound has a cause beyond the evident order of things (“*praeter manifestum . . . ordinem*”), but this is no mystery: “nothing is done apart from order” (pp. 18, 19).

This charming scene, performing the deviation from *ordo* that the subsequent dialogue tries to explain, begins Augustine’s short treatise on providence, design, and the problem of evil, *De Ordine*. The first work he composed after conversion, the dialogue was the outcome, to channel the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins, of hour upon hour of “extreme enthusiasm” during the summer before his baptism in 386.³ Hosted by his friend Verecundus in the countryside outside Milan, Augustine and his friends met daily, read Virgil, and discussed philosophical and theological questions. *De Ordine* starts from variation and disorder in nature and attempts to explain the “integral fittingness” latent in the world’s structure (p. 9). The inquiry echoes Augustine’s abiding concerns and patterns of argument—that there is no variation that does not form part of a larger order; that there is no word or sign whose meaning cannot be known through *amor*, a passionate will to know, operating under the guidance of God’s light.⁴ “Order is that which will lead us to God, if we hold to it during life; and unless we do hold to it during life, we shall not come to God” (Augustine, *De Ordine*, p. 53; emphases deleted).

Hopkins, in the summer before his ordination in 1877, composed many of his nature sonnets, reflections in their way on the structure to be found by contemplating nature's piedness, variation, and hidden potential—the order to be gleaned from such phenomena as “wilder, wilful-wávier/Méal-drift” (clouds) and “shining from shook foil” (lightning) (“Hurrahing in Harvest,” no. 124, ll. 3–4; “God’s Grandeur,” no. 111, l. 2). Hopkins had his own version of the phenomenon that puzzled Augustine, in “Winter with the Gulf Stream” (no. 7): “hoarse leaves” that “crawl on hissing ground” and a “clogg’d brook” that “runs with choking sound,” “Kneading the mounded mire that stops/His channel under clammy coats/Of foliage fallen in the copse” (ll. 5, 9, 10–12).⁵ In moments that amount to cognitive and spiritual ignition, Hopkins puts forward, in minutely noticed phenomena, the thought “that all things are upheld by instress.”⁶ This is his version of order, the subjective apprehension of a structure latent in any inscape (or occurring form). Through the discerning of a beholder, this vision of *ordo* binds and weaves, and nothing obtains apart from it.

In reflections scattered throughout Hopkins’s journals, sermons, and letters, he probes his conception of order in ways that parallel scientific and philosophical debates in the Victorian period, articulating a *via media* between overly materialist factions of the scientific establishment and unduly exacting arguments in the tradition of natural theology and design. Scholars including Tom Zaniello, Gillian Beer, Jude V. Nixon, Daniel Brown, and Marie Banfield have amply catalogued these connections.⁷ “All the world is full of inscape,” Hopkins notes, “and chance left free to act falls into an order as well as purpose: looking out of my window I caught it in the random clods and broken heaps of snow made by the cast of a broom” (*Journals*, p. 230). The pattern of this observation, as Zaniello notes, falls cleanly into two halves, one intimating terms for prevailing skeptical or materialist trends in philosophy and biology (“chance,” “random”: atomism, natural selection), the other terms for providential design (“order,” “purpose”) (*Hopkins*, p. 3).⁸ But if Hopkins would often appear to deploy yet keep his distance from evolutionary and aleatory terms, he also sets himself apart from natural theology accounts that would likewise infer, from instances of apparent design in the world, the presence of a contriving hand. Design arguments found renewed vigor in the nineteenth century in William Paley’s *Natural Theology* (1802), the Bridgewater Treatises, and related versions of what has been called “theistic evolutionism.”⁹ We find corollary statements in the writings of Hopkins’s contemporaries, most visibly in John Ruskin’s *Modern Painters* (1843–1860). What Ruskin terms “Nature-scripture”—those “natural ordinances” that “seem intended to teach us the

great truths which are the basis of all political science"—both invokes the received argument from design and points beyond it to the designing intuition of the artist.¹⁰ In Hopkins's insistence on the dynamic of instress—the subjective capture of an inscape, an intuitive cognition or apprehension—he envisions a model of order, structure, and purpose that sets him between evolutionary views and natural theology or design accounts. Subordinating the harmonies of natural form to the action of a beholder—as he puts it, "His mystery must be instréssed, stressed" (*The Wreck of the Deutschland*, no. 101, l. 39)—Hopkins implores us to envision the accidental arrangements of nature in the company of an active onlooker, a subject whose participatory act of beholding discloses instress as a divine structure undergirding any inscape. Instress is the "bridge" or "stem of stress between us and things" (*Journals*, p. 127).¹¹ Whatever invisible hands have given rise to the shapes in the world—whether random processes of selection or canny contrivances of design—matters little when compared to the rapturous moment when instress infers a subjective lattice beneath, the structure to which Hopkins refers when he says that "all my world is scaffolding."¹²

Departing in some measure from critical views that invoke similar contextual materials, this essay argues for a reevaluation of Hopkins's debt to scientific thinking in his poetry and poetics. Hovering between competing conceptions of nature's structure and purpose—evolutionary theory, energy physics, natural theology—Hopkins develops a poetics of order that emphasizes the subjective capture of patterned experience, what, following Augustine, could be seen as the *ordo* behind surface disarray. Registering at different felt and formal levels, this phenomenology of order reveals Hopkins mining opposing views and traditions, framing ideas drawn from the ambient scientific discourse with kindred notions in a longer literary and philosophical purview, and freighting natural theology arguments with images that have the novel feel of scientific thinking. If the "urgency of his writing is coiled upon contesting forces" (Beer, "Helmholtz," p. 119) and expresses a "polarity" of response (Banfield, p. 175), Hopkins's way of accounting for purpose and pattern can define itself against scientific accounts of the world and also against their counterweight in natural theology, since his conception of *ordo* exhibits its greatest force as an aesthetic catalyst.¹³ "These things, these things were here," contextual accounts say, to which Hopkins's aesthetic innovations add, "and but the beholder/Wánting" ("Hurrahing in Harvest," ll. 11–12).

After reframing several contexts in recent scholarship on Hopkins, I develop the conceit of *ordo* in two kindred poems from the 1870s that I see as representative of his nature sonnets of that decade, canvassing less familiar

source materials and linking contemporary thoughts about the formation of species to theological and philosophical notions of order. In reviewing "The Caged Skylark" (no. 122) and "The Sea and the Skylark" (no. 118), I focus my discussion of order on the problem of the body, natural and resurrected, one locus of theological resistance to Darwin and to the materialism underscoring evolutionary theory. I then turn to "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection" (no. 174), Hopkins's late apocalyptic poem that mobilizes *ordo* in a more condensed fashion. Treating the later poem as though it formed the allegorical conclusion (or sestet) of an aggregated set of sensory and inscaped impressions (or octaves) recalled from the nature sonnets a decade earlier, I show Hopkins moving beyond both the formal and conceptual compromises of those poems and the contexts adduced to read them.

Finessing the scholarship on Hopkins and science, this essay redesigns our sense of the poetic uptake of intellectual materials. I qualify the contextual emphasis on Darwin and his small circle of scientific supporters to the exclusion of ancillary counterstrains of evolutionary thought. I see in the vision of order that Hopkins extracts from the biological and physical sciences, in their commitment to random flux and chance process, not a doctrinal dismissal but a sophisticated comment on the dialectic of order and disorder. Finally, I deploy these materials less to winnow intellectual and cultural contexts than to showcase, in the poetry, what has been seen as Hopkins's "new affirmation of form that acknowledges and is able to incorporate the fluidity of nature" despite the "Darwinian assault upon essentialism" (Brown, p. 24). In light of recent work on the popularization of science in the Victorian period, it remains crucial to see how Hopkins's understanding of scientific advances was mediated by cultural elision or skewed presentation, in the lectures and periodicals that formed his mode of access to the outside debates.¹⁴ Still, aesthetic concerns should retain prominence. An amateur naturalist who carried his stunning apprehension of natural detail into poetry, Hopkins found in science principally a storehouse of material competing in vivacity with the theological doctrines often attested in readings of his poetry. Refracting these borrowings through conceptual and philological filters, Hopkins produces syncretic, contradictory fusions that find their real coherence in formal manifestations.

I

Although Hopkins was an undergraduate at Oxford in a period (1863–1867) when philosophical materialism consorted with the rising influence of scien-

tific inquiry against the classical program of *Literae Humaniores*, it can be difficult to trace, from his student essays, lecture notes, and standard intellectual requirements and resources, the precise nature of his engagement with scientific views.¹⁵ The relationship between Hopkins and the prevailing intellectual milieu is an orthogonal one and can only at some stretch be called a context. Later, as a Jesuit, Hopkins would not have routinely owned or purchased books, so we are left with conjectures about lectures and discussion groups within the Society and about his regular periodical fare.¹⁶ If the connections drawn in the following pages retain an element of speculation, they nonetheless aid us in revealing aspects of Hopkins's poetry and poetics that are otherwise out of sight. They are broadly intended as reflections that supplement existing discussions in the scholarship on Hopkins's intellectual commitments and aesthetic craft, and they make visible how any given contextual possibility can bear out heterogeneous claims for poetic form.

Apart from passing remarks, there are two principal locations for Hopkins's views on Darwin in his correspondence. The first is quite personal: a response penned to his mother in which the poet comments on John Tyndall's recently delivered "Belfast Address" (1874), the explosive affair that, many people thought, dismantled long-standing arguments from design by way of Darwin and a version of atomism.¹⁷ Hopkins writes of Tyndall (whom he had met in the Alps in 1868),

It is not only that he looks back . . . to an obscure origin, he looks forward with the same content to an obscure future—to be lost "in the infinite azure of the past" (fine phrase by the by). I do not think, do you know, that Darwinism implies necessarily that man is descended from any ape or ascidian or maggot or what not but only from the common ancestor of apes, the common ancestors of ascidians, the common ancestor of maggots, and so on: these common ancestors, if lower animals, need not have been repulsive animals. What Darwin himself says about this I do not know. You should read St. George Mivart's *Genesis of Species*: he is an Evolutionist though he combats downright Darwinism and is very orthodox.¹⁸

A striking concession to evolutionism in general, Hopkins's formulation reveals his straining against the uncomfortable implications of descent from what was often derided by Victorians as the "brute creation" (without, he admits, having read Darwin's *The Descent of Man* [1871]).

Hopkins's invocation of a theory of common ancestors, perhaps recovering an idea of Edenic archetypes, leads into his recommendation of St. George

Jackson Mivart's riposte to Darwin, *On the Genesis of Species* (1871). He relies on Mivart's comments about homology, the "genetic relationship and affinity" that holds across organisms as "modified descendants of some ancient form—their common ancestor" (*Genesis*, p. 9).¹⁹ A biologist and comparative anatomist who earned the respect and prompted the unease of Darwin himself, Mivart was also a fellow convert to Catholicism.²⁰ *On the Genesis of Species* argues against natural selection as the sole mechanism of evolutionary change and for an orientation that has been termed "providential evolutionism."²¹ If natural selection can be seen "to lead men to consider the present organic world to be formed, so to speak, *accidentally*, beautiful and wonderful as is confessedly the haphazard result," Mivart's view "exhibits the whole organic world as arising and going forward in one harmonious development" (*Genesis*, p. 23). Positioning himself as a moderate, Mivart criticized the narrow views of both orthodox opponents and heterodox supporters of Darwin and refused to see creation as opposed to an evolutionism whose doctrines might take "their place in the system [of Christian thought] without even disturbing its order or marring its harmony" (*Genesis*, p. 21).²² Yet his work (and its provocative title) drew the ire of Darwin's supporters, Thomas Huxley chief among them.²³

That Hopkins encountered this work suggests some level of fluency with the debates, both academic and cultural, that were being waged by supporters of Darwin such as Huxley and Tyndall. He probably came across the digests and reviews—some critical, others measured—in Catholic organs such as the *Tablet* and the *Month*, where Mivart's work initially appeared, anonymously and in contracted form.²⁴ Hopkins was also a reader of (and later contributor to) *Nature*, the weekly periodical that would have reflected discussions abroad in the scientific community. On the back page of one issue bearing a letter from Hopkins, in 1882, we find an advertisement for Huxley's *Memorial Notices* for Darwin, with a blurb from the *Academy* to the effect that the book "ought to be read by everyone who honours the name of the foremost Englishman of this century."²⁵ Hopkins's letter had been drafted in response to others in earlier issues,²⁶ the first of which leads with a favorable review of *Permanence and Evolution* (1882), a book by an author whose name Hopkins would have recognized, S. E. B. Bouverie-Pusey being the nephew of Edward Bouverie Pusey, a central figure in the Oxford Movement and the poet's sometime confessor. This work, like Mivart's, held open the possibility of evolutionary explanations while asserting the improbability of "Darwinism proper" and the absurdity of natural selection.²⁷

By the 1880s, Hopkins's more significant contact with the scientific community—in his reading, his letters to *Nature*, and his early engagement with a

remarkable group of scientific individuals at Stonyhurst (1870–1873)—brought him to a solid understanding of the issues at stake.²⁸ More specifically, his acquaintance with moderate arguments that would reconcile aspects of the new scientific views with doctrine and belief can be discerned in his letters. In 1888, he begins a missive to Robert Bridges saying, almost impatiently, “I agree . . . that ‘everything is Darwinism.’” Yet in referring to Darwin’s discussion of instinct in relation to the cell constructions of bees, Hopkins shows how his curious take on evolutionary logic has matured over the years. The “honeycomb is not quite so plain a matter as you think,” he chides, for its symmetry

implies something more than mechanical to begin with. Otherwise the hexagonal . . . cell wd. be the type *tended to* only and . . . seldom or never arrived at; the comb wd. be like the irregular figures of bubbles in the froth of beer or in soapsuds. Wild bees do, I believe, build something like that. But grant in the honey bee some principle of symmetry and uniformity and you have passed beyond mechanical necessity; and it is not clear that there may not be some special instinct determined to that shape of cell after all and ^which has^ at the present stage of the bee’s condition, nothing to do with mechanics . . . but ^is^ like the specific songs of cuckoos and thrush.²⁹

The underlying “principle” that guarantees symmetric patterning and the *ordo* that Hopkins seems to imply (gesturing at the *species* of medieval Scholastics) in the term “special instinct” are congruent with one of Mivart’s more curious claims. Drawing an analogy between development in inorganic matter (crystals) and organic beings, Mivart insists on an internal power that has a role in shaping external forms. In a vocabulary that Hopkins echoes, Mivart observes the “special powers and tendencies existing in each organism” as “analogous to the innate power and tendency possessed by crystals similarly to build up certain peculiar and very definite forms,” thereby presenting a more elaborate design argument about “the action of an intelligence resulting . . . in order, harmony, and beauty,” which sees a new species as “a fresh chord in the harmony of nature” (*Genesis*, pp. 23, 198, 273, 263).³⁰ Hopkins’s late reflections thus present figures for instress as the “stem” or “scaffolding” beneath things in terms that, on one level, build out from an earlier logic of evolutionary change that connects living creatures to inanimate matter (crystals, bubbles).³¹

In these remarks, Hopkins also extended observations that he had detailed with sophistication in his undergraduate work at Oxford, where his essays often turned on philosophical questions of order. In “The Probable Future of Metaphysics” (1867), he considers the idea of fixed order, the diatonic instress

beneath the chromatic inscape that it guarantees. "It will always be possible," he writes, "to shew how science is atomic, not to be grasped and held together, 'scopeless,' without metaphysics: this alone gives meaning to laws and sequences and causes and developments" (*Oxford Essays*, p. 288).³² For "metaphysics," one might substitute "instress," that which is beyond mechanics and guarantees the "scope" or "scape" of natural forms.³³ Hopkins mentions in passing the atomistic and evolutionary accounts that mire themselves in contradiction, "the ideas so rife now of a continuity without fixed points, not to say *saltus* or breaks, of development in one chain of necessity, of species having no absolute types" (*Oxford Essays*, p. 289).³⁴ Against such a view of nature as "a string all the differences in which are really chromatic," Hopkins predicts a new account of the fixity of species or types, which would purport to explain why "there are certain ~~designs~~ forms wh. have a great hold on the mind and are always reappearing and seem imperishable" (*Oxford Essays*, pp. 289, 290).³⁵ Those things that strike us "with a conception of unity wh. is never dislodged," thereby attaining a necessity, an "absolute existence" whose explanation is nevertheless opaque—such are the particular inscapes that, despite their formal variety, intimate the deeper order that gives them their being (*Oxford Essays*, p. 290). Hopkins thinks of this countering of random flux as a recrudescence of "Platonism" or "Realism," and his essay is redolent of natural theology. Yet his subjective descriptions belie the essay's metaphysical idealism. Hopkins may envision unchanging "forms," but it is crucially the instressing of such forms—their "great hold on the mind"—that provides a particular guarantee of their absolute status. In similar fashion, his unfinished "On the Origin of Beauty: A Platonic Dialogue" (1865) mounts a case for beauty as less intrinsic than relational. Resting in part on the same distinction between diatonic and chromatic, the dialogue sees our apprehension of beauty as dialectical, registering "a mixture of likeness and difference . . . or consistency and variety or symmetry and change" (*Oxford Essays*, p. 141).³⁶ These are early statements of the sensibility that intuitively finds in flux a "beauty . . . pást chángé" ("Pied Beauty," no. 121, l. 10).

In a related position, Hopkins's own views on providential design run in tandem with his thought that inscapes, in their haphazard and maculate disarray—their "once skéined stained véined varíety" ("Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves," no. 167, l. 11)—may be calcified into order and purpose by the instressing of the beholder. In a sermon delivered in Liverpool in 1880, Hopkins writes of providence as "a million-million fold contrivance . . . planned for our use and patterned for our admiration" but still, nevertheless, "plainly imperfect"—and the imperfection is *us*: "Only the inmate does not correspond"

("In the Valley of the Elwy," no. 119, l. 11).³⁷ Although the term "contrivance" is a key synonym for "design" or "purpose," terms that were at issue in the period for their implication of a creator (or contriver, designer, artificer), Hopkins is not after a theodicy here.³⁸ The way in which the providential *ordo* of God has been disaggregated into "a shattered frame and a broken web" (Hopkins, *Sermons*, p. 90) holds out, for Hopkins, the possibility of a reconciliation or consummation that comes piecemeal in acts of instress: "Complete thy creature dear O where it fails" ("In the Valley of the Elwy," l. 13). Lamenting that "everything is full of fault, flaw, imperfection, shortcoming" (*Sermons*, p. 90), he still enjoins his congregation to such acts of beholding God's *ordo*. This careful balancing allows his view to adopt the chromatic miscellany produced by the forces of natural selection while holding to a diatonic order that intimates an underlying design and hoping for a day when human beings will hew to that *ordo*.

II

Composed within a few months of one another in 1877, "The Caged Skylark" and "The Sea and the Skylark" provide an initial axis for a consideration of the order reached through inscapes of variety and disorder. Both emphasize, through analogies that accrue levels of complexity, the particular "piedness"—reflected in figures, epithets, and conceits—held together by a moment of instressing.

The sublimation of the natural, organic body into the blessed, resurrected body emerges as the doctrinal telos of "The Caged Skylark," but Hopkins begins by positing (or, more accurately, recalling) the analogy between the human spirit enclosed in the body and a bird confined to a cage:

As a dare-gale skylark scanted in a dúll cáge,
 Man's mounting spirit in his bone-house, mean house, dwells—
 That bird beyond the remembering his free fells,
 This in drudgery, day-labouring-out life's age. (ll. 1–4)

The figure of the body as a "bone-house," a formation drawing on the Anglo-Saxon *ban-hus*,³⁹ is an insistent one for Hopkins, often used to launch self-reflexive examinations that modulate into doctrinal arguments. We find the image at the beginning of *The Wreck*, for instance—"Thou has bóund bónes and véins in me, fástened me flésh"—and Hopkins repeats it in the self-reproach, "Ah, touched in your bower of bone,/Are you!" (ll. 5, 137–138). Adopting a more dejected, generalizing tone, we also find this figure in the later sonnet "The shepherd's brow" (no. 178):

But man—we, scaffold of score brittle bones;
 Who breathe, from groundlong babyhood to hoary
 Age gasp; whose breath is our *memento mori*—
 What bass is *our* viol for tragic tones? (ll. 5–8)

Here the hiatus interposed by the punctuation and line break before “Who breathe” performs, as it were, the *memento mori* that Hopkins locates in the very rhythm of breath. The figure of the “bone-house” allows Hopkins to suggest that the ultimate inscape—the “Manshape” (“That Nature,” l. 13), the form of our species—bears from the outset the designing marks of an external power. If God has fastened this “scaffold,” fashioned this “bower,” the material substrate of the body is undergirded by a “stem of stress” that is at once the gift of God and the substrate we share with him in Christ. This is what Mivart describes as the “compound” or “double” nature of man, at once body and soul, animal and rational, material and immaterial, “a structure of harmony and beauty standing alone in the organic world of nature” (*Genesis*, pp. 326–327). Yet Hopkins calls forth, in the same figure, the temporal locations where the body is consigned after death,⁴⁰ “bone-house” also designating a mortuary chapel or charnel house, with its sepulchral accoutrement and macabre associations. He thus points to our divine understructure while tacitly bemoaning the degradation of human bodies and their remains in industrial times. He might have agreed with a sentiment of Ruskin’s, delivered in a lecture in the same year as “The Caged Skylark” and eerily apposite in light of the sonnet’s woods and cage motifs: “And this is what *you* do, to thwart alike your child’s angel, and his God,—you take him out of the woods into the town,—you send him from modest labour to competitive schooling,—you force him out of the fresh air into the dusty bone-house.”⁴¹

In contrast to the rich appropriation of this first motif, the topos of the bird in a cage seems rather drab. Classical and literary loci from John Webster to William Wordsworth readily present themselves.⁴² There was also, apparently, a thriving industry of bird trapping in the nineteenth century, exemplified by the popularity of a book like Johann Mattheus Bechstein’s *Chamber and Cage Birds* (1835), which Darwin owned.⁴³ Yet the philosophical character of this analogy also had an importance for scientific debates. Paley had noted that “[o]f young birds taken in their nests, a few species breed, when kept in cages; and they which do so, build their nests nearly in the same manner as in the wild state, and sit upon their eggs,” evidence he took as “sufficient to prove an instinct.”⁴⁴ Scientists in Darwin’s circle would question the designed

character of the “instinct” so argued. Charles Lyell offers this reflection: “A bird which we breed in a cage cannot, when restored to liberty, fly like others of the same species which have been always free. This small alteration of circumstances, however, has only diminished the power of flight, without modifying the form of any part of the wings. But when individuals of the same race are retained in captivity during a considerable length of time, the form even of their parts is gradually made to differ, especially if climate, nourishment, and other circumstances, be also altered.”⁴⁵ It matters that the skylark in Hopkins’s poem is a “dare-gale” bird brought down, “scanted” into confinement. The creature has experienced flight, not simply as a Platonic memory or an instinct withering in dormancy. The scientific angle on the problem, latent in classical and literary versions of the topos, comes to inform an analogy that Hopkins puts to largely doctrinal uses in the sestet. The theological position implied by the analogy—the inseparably “flesh-bound” status of the resurrection—accrues force from Paley, Lyell, and Darwin in a way it could not have done from Hopkins’s usual register of classical allusion.

The sestet begins with a subordinate qualification (“Not that . . .”) that would preclude some imagined objection (do not wild birds need a “perch?”). The analogy proffered by the octave has somehow been pressed too far:

Not that the sweet-fowl, song-fowl, needs no rest—
 Why, hear him, hear him babble and drop down to his nest,
 But his ówn nést, wíld nést, no prison. (“The Caged Skylark,”
 ll. 9–11).

The looping imperatives to “hear him,” both bearing stress, fall away in the meter of the line as we listen to the bird, the stress and outride on “babble and” allowing the ear and eye to follow the line mimetically—to “drop down to his nest.” This is a resting place in the order of nature, as the stresses on “his ówn nést, wíld nést” indicate. It is proposed to allow a more direct, though unstated, parallel with the natural resting place of the spirit.

The grammar of the closing tercet shifts from subordination and objection to a simple future tense, returning the form and tone of objection in “But . . .” while keeping to a quite simple avowal (“is nót . . .”) in the final clause:

Man’s spirit will be flesh-bound when found at best,
 But úncúmberèd: meadow-dówn is nót distréssed
 For a ráinbow fóoting it nor hé for his bónes rísen. (ll. 12–14)

"Man's spirit," as Hopkins considers it in a resurrected state, has been simplified down from the earlier "mounting spirit" (l. 2): it has been brought down to "meadow-dówn," a delicate and diminutive image that seems to have no further need for the analogy with the skylark. Playing on what W. H. Gardner has called the "ontological precariousness" of this analogy (1: 190), the final line forges an identity between spirit and self, the "hé" that is, like the tiny layer of down on a field, entirely untroubled by the insubstantial rainbow—"his bónes risen"—that treads on it, ever so gently, with only one foot (or segment of the bow). Yet for all this downy lightness, the lines bear the interlocking heft of plosive alliteration and end-consonant rhyme (familiar to Hopkins as the Icelandic poetic device of *skothending*): the *f* and *b* of "flesh-bound when found at best" (a chiastic rhyme pattern); the *d* of "meadow-dówn is nót distréssed"; the lengthening rhymes from "rest," "nest," and "best" to "distréssed."⁴⁶ This relative weight works against the sense and against the outrides on "úncúm[berèd]" "fóot[ing it]" that are meant to mimic the softness underneath their figures. At a purely sonic level, these lines belie the second half of the parallel argument that Hopkins designs in the sestet. They provoke a quiet sense of dissonance, as though the instress has not been fully achieved, the enabling inscape not fully realized.

One minutely observed image (thistledown) joins another on a different scale (rainbow) in manner that recalls other locations in the 1877 sonnets: "skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow," an image set on a large scale, yoked to the more diminutive "rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;/Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings" ("Pied Beauty," ll. 2–4). This hovering among different scales could be seen as an expression of the difficulty in harmonizing the sensuous to the ethical and doctrinal. Hopkins moves from the bounded, fleshed body to a matching figure, the physiology of the blessed body. Yet a lingering sense of fret and constraint persists from the octave into this tercet, where it can be traced acoustically. It would not be out of place to detect some anxiety in the presentation of this doctrine, for scholastic debates on the precise nature and quality of the resurrected body engulfed Christendom for well over a millennium. Hopkins appears to take his cue from the apex of this debate, namely, the resolution of "formal unity," a position articulated by Aquinas and others in the thirteenth century to deflect the thorny question of the integrity of the resurrected body: "If the soul is the one form of the body (*unica forma corporis*) and bears the name of *homo* (including, as it must, the nature of bodiliness, because it is man's only form), then soul guarantees self. What self is (including what body is) will be packed into soul; body will be the expression of that soul in matter. As Aquinas said: 'It is more

correct to say that soul contains body [*continet corpus*] and makes it to be one, than the converse.”⁴⁷ The soul *contains* the body, holding it together. It is the “bone-house” of the body, a scaffold confected of more ethereal strands. Yet in the movement of the sonnet, this opaque inversion of doctrine pulls against the matter-of-fact analogy with which the poem begins. There is a torque pulling between the gossamer delicacy of “meadow-dówn” and the heavier sounds that insist on the “úncumberèd” soul. Here is the real instressing of the sonnet, less in raising up the “bone-house” to the gauziness of the “mounting spirit” it putatively encloses than in retaining the body’s heft and *haecceitas* in resurrection.

Whereas “The Caged Skylark” takes two orders—natural body, blessed body—and considers how they are woven together in visual and tactile figures, “The Sea and the Skylark” sees the bird not as a considered, corporeal entity or as an analogy for the spirit or soul but first as the leading point of song:

On ear and ear two noises too old to end
 Trench—ríght, the tide that rámps against the shore;
 With a flood or a fall, low lull-off or áll róar,
 Frequenting there while moon shall wear and wend.
 Left hand, off land, I hear the lark ascend,
 His rash-fresh re-winded new-skeinèd score
 In crisps of curl off wild winch whirl, and pour
 And pelt músic, till none’s to spill nor spend. (ll. 1–8)

The sonic aggregation in the octave offers a tension between two models of rhythm. First is the regularity of a pulse expressed in twinned figures, alliterations, and consonant chimes: “ear and ear”; “Trench—ríght, the tide that rámps”; “a flood or a fall.” Second, and intercalated with the “two noises,” is a polyphonic variety in the various Welsh chimes: “two . . . too . . . to”; “Left hand, off land, I hear the lark ascend” (emphasis added). These patterns function as a covert recapitulation of instress as a diatonic structure underlying the chromatic, a fixed quantum of variation—of crisping or skeining—in the otherwise straight string of being. In a journal entry that both recalls Hopkins’s qualified emendation of evolutionary mechanism and provides a visual instance for what, in this sonnet, occurs as the pulse between “low lull-off” and “áll róar,” he notes, “The laps of running foam striking the sea-wall double on themselves and return in nearly the same order and shape in which they came. This is mechanical reflection and is the same as optical: indeed all nature is mechanical, but then it is not seen that mechanics contain that which is

beyond mechanics" (*Journals*, p. 252). The sounds and movements of the sea contain a rhythmic regularity ("double on themselves") and a chromatic deviation ("nearly the same order and shape").⁴⁸ Likewise, the "score" dropping away beneath the skylark, which each flight unwinds in a "new-skeinèd" form, condenses the stable back-and-forth of an eternal rhythm and the variation implied by "crisps" in the score. Gardner likens the image to a metaphysical conceit (l. 189), and it was probably drawn from earlier fragments in which Hopkins imagines the "daring rises/Of the flown skylark, and his traverse flight," a movement upward that cascades into a falling harmony, as if "the concording stars/Had let such music down, without impediment/Falling along the breakless pool of air" ("O what a silence is this wilderness!," no. 65, ll. 2–3, 7–9).⁴⁹ The later image has strikingly transfused the static harmony of "concording" and "breakless" into the piedness of a "new-skeinèd score/In crisps of curl." The sound of the sea and the song of the skylark seem akin to the "imperishable" forms described by Hopkins in "The Probable Future of Metaphysics," sounding what he elsewhere calls a "changeless note" ("Let me be to Thee as the circling bird," no. 70, l. 4). The variation evidenced by their sounds issues from a diatonic, fixed pattern, a form "pást chángé" that guarantees their "piedness": the sea "rám্পs against the shore" from age to age; the skylark's circling pattern is fixed at its nest or "winch."

Humanity, by contrast, has become radically unmoored from the *ordo* designed by God for its perceptual delight. We have drastically fallen from a special, elected status as "life's pride and cared-for crown" ("The Sea and the Skylark," l. 11), an apex often visualized in Hopkins by *ne plus ultra* figures. Man is "love's worthiest" and "World's loveliest—men's selves"; he is nature's "bonniest, dearest," "her clearest-selvèd spark" ("To what serves Mortal Beauty?," no. 158, ll. 10, 11; "That Nature," l. 10). God's "creature dear," "dear and dogged man," is "Earth's eye, tongue, or heart," and how otherwise could it be? Hopkins queries across a line break: "where/Else" could the pinnacle be but in us? ("In the Valley of the Elwy," l. 13; "Ribblesdale," no. 149, ll. 9–10).⁵⁰ Yet in "The Sea and the Skylark" we

Have lost that cheer and charm of earth's past prime:
Our make and making break, are breaking, down
To man's last dust, drain fast towards man's first slime. (ll. 12–14)

The movement of the last line is entropic. It intimates a deviation or denaturing of order caused by sin, a corruption of the normal lapping away of time that Hopkins used, in a sermon, to press his listeners into right action: "life

and time are always losing, always spending, always running down and running out, therefore every hour that strikes is a warning of our end and the world's end" (*Sermons*, p. 41).⁵¹ The end of this sonnet, though, is also an intimation of a new start, albeit couched in a strange tone. Although I will put pressure on the sonnet's last word shortly, it is valuable to remember that what remains key in Hopkins's disappointment about the "fragility and vacuity of congregated man" is the "extremeness of the choice between 'slime' and 'crown'" (Robinson, p. 94). Despite the covert shadings of Genesis, the sestet has something of a sermonizing feel to it. It could be seen as a shaming speech act that might galvanize us to change our actions, to instress that *ordo* from which we have so lamentably slid away.

The closing image is a condensate of allusions. As MacKenzie and others note, "slime" recalls the Douay-Rheims rendering of the divine creation of man in Genesis 2:7, as fashioned "of the slime of the earth," in contrast to King James's "of the dust of the ground."⁵² Hopkins may have fused this image with an idea from Parmenides, who thought that men, as the poet himself noted, "had sprung from slime" (*Oxford Essays*, p. 317). There may also be a reference to Ruskin's account of the young J. M. W. Turner considering war's aftermath in his homeland, a depiction that unexpectedly repeats the image of a skylark above the mire: "No gentle processions to churchyards among the fields, the bronze crests bossed deep on the memorial tablets, and the skylark singing above them from among the corn. But the life trampled out in the slime of the street, crushed to dust amidst the roaring of the wheel" (*Modern Painters*, 7: 387). Finally, Gardner's surmise that there is a "glance at Darwin" (1: 158) here might more properly apply to the work of the latter's opponents.⁵³ In defending *On the Origin of Species* against the criticisms of Richard Owen, who favored the Lamarckian idea of "heterogeny" or spontaneous generation from a "vitality acting slime," Darwin suggested that "the nature of life will not be seized on by assuming that Foraminifera [aquatic microorganisms] are periodically generated from slime or ooze."⁵⁴ Hopkins thus makes this image do a good deal of allusive work, whether by registering the scriptural terms for divine creation, remembering those of a cognate metaphysics, pointing to the negative associations of industrial mire, or adapting the lexicon of scientific debates about origins and spontaneous generation.

A philological concern remains unsatisfied by all these contextual possibilities, however. Consider the Latin Vulgate version of Genesis 2:7, which brings humanity into being "*de limo terrae*." The word *limus* has a range of meanings (mud, mire, slime, or silt; in transferred senses, the dregs of wine or any encrustation). It is cognate with English "slime" but also with

"loam." Another *limus*, distinct in its etymological pathway, can take adjectival or adverbial senses (*limus* or *limo*: oblique, transverse, aslant) and is at the root of an important compound form, *sub-limis* (high, elevated, lofty).⁵⁵ Hopkins projects mankind at the end of this poem in a downward progression toward "slime," a state that subtracts two letters from the "sublime" and fresh vision of the skylark, whose slanted vertical contrasts our oblique and declining horizontal. In the end, it is not by way of "slime" in scientific, philosophical, or sonic registers but only by a conceit of philological *ordo* that this weary, dejected line can be seen to augur some loftier telos.⁵⁶ Whereas in "The Caged Skylark" the movement upward, the "mounting spirit," seems compromised by the aesthetic properties of the sonnet's final image, here the same is true in reverse. The "dust" and "slime" look up at a visualization of sublime song, but the possibility of reversing mankind's entropy finds itself mired in scientific and philological registers that cannot match the fresh sensuousness of the octave.

The figures of these two sonnets have a possible point of connection in a section of Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Although Boethius's text is by no means an established source for Hopkins (however canonical its status in philosophical and theological tradition), this excursus will clarify the poetic sense that patterns order variously as structure, beginning, and cycle.⁵⁷ These likenesses may be no more than coincidental, but they appear illustrative nonetheless. The poem that ends one section of the *Consolation* begins with a reflection on the order of nature, in a Latin whose strange density anticipates the compactions of Hopkins's English:

Quantas rerum flectat habenas	What great reins of things
Natura potens, quibus immensum	Potent nature twists, with what laws
Legibus orbem prouida seruet	She, provident, guards the boundless world,
Stringatque ligans inresoluto	And tightens, binding with unslacking
Singula nexu . . .	Weave, all things . . . (ll. 1–5)

Boethius gives three figures for how nature twists or returns to her proper order: lions chained, roused to their natural ferocity by a chance taste of blood; a caged bird, reminded of its natural habitat, singing for the wild in fret and distress; and a sapling, bent double and springing back to its true line. The image of the caged bird is an arresting depiction of the locus classicus:

Quae canit altis garrula ramis	What the chattering bird from high branches
Ales caueae clauditur antro;	Sings, is locked within the cavern of a cage;
Huic licet inlita pocula melle Largasque dapes dulci studio	Although for her honey-smeared cups And lavish banquets, with sweet concern,
Ludens hominum cura ministret,	Are furnished by the playing care of men,
Si tamen arto saliens texto	If however hopping in her narrow web
Nemorum gratas uiderit umbras,	She should observe the grateful forest shades,
Sparsas pedibus proterit escas,	She stamps with feet her scattered food,
Siluas tantum maesta requirit,	Woods, she seeks with utter sorrow,
Siluas dulci uoce susurrat.	Woods, she whispers with sweet voice. (ll. 17–26)

The concluding lines of this poem compactly perform the natural confluence of order (*ordo*), origin (*ortum*), and orb (*orbem*) that Boethius has modeled out of deviations from nature's *ordo*:

Repetunt proprios quaeque recursus	And all of them repeat their own returns
Redituque suo singula gaudent	And in their own returning all rejoice
Nec manet ulli traditus ordo,	And there is no order set to any one of them,
Nisi quod fini iunxerit ortum	Except that each will add its rising to its end
Stabilemque sui fecerit orbem.	And stable make its world. (ll. 34–38)

The image of the boundless world laced together by stays and ropes returns at the end, as Boethius intimates that the only *ordo* existing or handed down (*traditus*) over time is the order that beings have insofar as they join their rising or origin (*ortum*) to their setting or end. In a chiastic structure in which two implied terms are omitted—end (setting), rising (beginning)—the poem manifests its own rules for *ordo*, makes of itself an orb, a stable world. Forging

a link between *orior* (to rise, appear above the horizon) and *ordo* (row, line, rank, series, pattern), Boethius hints at the speculative etymology that would trace *ordo* to *ordior* (to lay the warp of a web and, hence, to *begin*).⁵⁸ In "earth's past prime," we could imagine Hopkins glossing this set of puns and patterns, the *prim-ordial* structure of the world is a text, a manner of weaving.

This strange allegory might be seen as a way of joining together Hopkins's two sonnets and illuminating the operative conceits they share. In the first analogy (the caged bird as spirit), a perceived aberration in the natural order is made to express man's cleaving to that order and his more-than-natural surge away from it. In the second, the soaring spirit becomes a cyclical embodiment of song, set against man's aberration and decline, his spiritual lurch slime-ward. Yet in "The Caged Skylark," the ethereal body that will express man's being "at best" is predicated on an inscape of constraint and limitation, the "bone-house." Likewise in "The Sea and the Skylark," an image of mankind's cramped, enervated decline mars the pure, rash rapture of the lark's song, as though wresting down its cyclical skeins to entropic slime. In both sonnets, an element of disorder or curtailment—figurative, tonal, acoustic—consorts with the order that Hopkins tries to uphold. These sonnets finally do not exemplify the stable orb of Boethius but exhibit instead a formal version of what Seamus Heaney calls the "broken arch," the disruption to Hopkins's sonnets sometimes wrought by doctrinal importations in the sestets.⁵⁹

III

In a letter to Bridges, Hopkins comments on the notion of what he terms a being's "*Sake*" and relates it to the German *Sache* (matter, cause, purpose: one of that language's two distinct words for "thing"), declaring "*sake*" as "the being a thing has outside itself, as a voice by its echo, a face by its reflection, a body by its shadow, a man by his name, fame, or . . . memory, *and also* that in the thing by virtue of which especially it has this being abroad, . . . ^and^ that is something distinctive, marked, specific^ally^ or individually speaking, as for a voice . . . and echo clearness; for a . . . reflected image light, brightness; for a shadow-casting body bulk; for a man genius, great achievements, amiability, and so on."⁶⁰ Hopkins is commenting on the alexandrine sonnet "Henry Purcell" (no. 131), in the epigraph of which he avers that the composer "*uttered in notes the very make and species of man as created both in him and in all men generally.*" In "The Caged Skylark," what he elsewhere terms "that being indoors each one dwells" ("As kingfishers catch fire," no. 115, l. 6.) becomes, to adopt this formulation, precisely the "sake" or "self" by which we can detect a

"being abroad." Man's "sake" is inseparably his spirit as a kind of mirage or atmosphere cast by the body but trying to escape it and the heft or "bulk" of the body itself.⁶¹ Similarly, in "The Sea and the Skylark," the *thisness* or "sake" of the bird is the echo of its song, which goes abroad in the moment of utterance, its temporal externality figured by a form that drops away from it in space.

If "sake" forms an abstract construct for Hopkins's nature sonnets of the 1870s—the "stem" or "scaffold" of being—then this quality finds its most composite aesthetic articulation in "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire" (1888), a late poem composed several years after the death of Darwin. The "busy preoccupation of nature" (Robinson, p. 125) in the sonnets is here modulated into a global, endlessly recurrent system that has been productively read in light of Hopkins's debts to Parmenides's ontology and contemporaneous developments in energy physics.⁶² Yet if this poem engulfs humanity in a vaster system, physical or metaphysical, it nonetheless retains human "marks" in formal and metrical patterns of *ordo* that raise up their originating philosophical and scientific models.

Whereas in Hopkins's earlier inscapes, human agency was in some measure implied or indexed—in the "ooze of oil/Crushed" or the "the stóoks" that "rise/Around" ("God's Grandeur," ll. 3–4; "Hurrahing in Harvest," ll. 1–2)—now the natural flux, apart from human activity, sets the figurative register. The "Shivelights and shadowtackle" patterns, cast as shadows "wherever an elm arches," make natural phenomena (light, shadow) prior to human artifacts (splinters from worked wood, nets and fishing tackle), with which they join forces as epithets ("That Nature," ll. 3–4). The walls of "roughcast" and "dazzling whitewash" (l. 3) are clearly traces or "manmarks" of a kind (l. 8), but in their blaze of reflection, they prefigure the effacement of all such marking and fretting. In a similar way, the "beakleaved boughs" in "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" are said, in a figure drawn from material working and embroidery, to "damask the tool-smooth bleak light; black,/Ever so black on it," the mark of human distinctiveness prophesying the collapse of all such featuring and selving into "bláck, white; | ríght, wrong" (ll. 9–10, 12).

When "manmarks" first appear on the scene in "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire," their "treadmire toil there/Fóotfretted in it" (ll. 8–9) appears under the sign of mutability, merely a different kind of tracery subject to change by the actions of "the bright wind" that is "Squandering ooze to squeezed / dough, crúst, dust" (ll. 5, 7). Hopkins seems to have foregone his earlier concern, in the 1877 sonnets and elsewhere, regarding the specifically industrial muck and mire in which "Généérations have trod, have trod, have trod" ("God's Grandeur," l. 5). He prepares the vision of an ultimate apotheosis from mere

“dust” and “slime”: human agency makes itself radiant for just a moment before being swallowed up in the darkness:

Mán, how fást his firedint, | his mark on mind, is gone!
 Bóth are in an únfathomable, áll is in an enórmous dárk
 Drowned. ("That Nature," ll. 11–13)

“Bóth are in an únfáthomable” leaves the adjective hanging mimetically in the “dárk” at which it has not yet arrived, unable to find its bearings, to alight on its noun. The slurring elisions of this line, one of only two without a marked caesura, submerge almost every unstressed syllable into an acoustic mélange. This engulfment of man in a darkness without spatial, temporal, or perceptual moorings continues and bleeds over the strict, numerical close of the sonnet at line 14:

Manshape, that shone
Sheer off, disseveral, a star, | death blots black out; nor mark
Is ány of him at áll so stárk
But vastness blurs and time | beats level. (ll. 13–16)

The “mark” that would close the sonnet’s movement cannot even find a grammatical closure, as the second clause finds itself pulled over the line break into “vastness.” This loss of direction, however, suddenly finds a new guide in the first coda:

Across my foundering deck shone
A beacon, an eternal beam. (ll. 18–19)

The image passes quickly, but its implied register is that the self, about to move from one “flesh-bound” state to its sublime version, rises up as a ship breasting the waves, an ark of its own on the fiery and watery flux. Hopkins is no longer, as in his shipwreck poems, a spectator elsewhere with “they the prey of the gales” but is himself foundering in an “all of water” (*The Wreck*, ll. 188, 258), far removed from his “Fast foundering own generation” (“The Loss of the Eurydice,” no. 125, l. 88).

Although the topos of the body as a ship is as familiar as the caged bird of the spirit, one important example joins the figure of the self as buffeted ship to another figurative register in Hopkins's poem, the "poor pótsherd," the "matchwood" at the close of "That Nature" (l. 23). In the fifth of Francis

either side of a branch are seen from certain angles lying “across one another all in chequers and X’s” (*Journals*, p. 192). Hopkins seems to make the X that is one sign of Christ the organizing structure of the closing lines. Here is truly a *deus absconditus*, a God that “héeds but hídés, bódes but abídes” (*The Wreck*, l. 256), recuperating all the shattered, bleared inscapes of his earlier nature poems in an all-consuming “wildfire”: hewn trees, dust and slime, the constraints that come with being “flesh-bound.”

If Hopkins could not be fully aware of the chemical structure of diamond (clearly established by X-ray spectrometry only in the early twentieth century), it is nonetheless uncanny that X could also serve to model the tetrahedral structure of carbon, beginning to be detailed in the 1870s.⁶⁶ An atomic filament thus runs through the poem’s closing structure, a fusion of organic and inorganic registers similar to Mivart’s analogies between crystalline and creaturely evolution. The natural form that gives off what Ruskin called the “vividest blaze” (*Modern Painters*, 7: 208) also shares the elemental substrate of organic life in carbon.⁶⁷ The “bone-house” of the earlier sonnet goes up in flames yet “preserves both the being and the thought of man” in the resurrection (Brown, p. 277), leaving what Hopkins elsewhere calls the “Ground of being, and granite of it: pást áll/Grásp Gód” (*The Wreck*, ll. 254–255).⁶⁸

The coda’s final solidity, for all the doctrinal and scientific discourse one might marshal in its favor, becomes a concrete achievement only through metrical emphasis.⁶⁹ The tautological transformation, in stressing the four beats of the repeated “immortal diamond,” draws them in around a single, ringing beat: “Is.”⁷⁰ MacKenzie gives the scriptural locus for the doctrine alluded to in “comfort of the Resurrection” (Hopkins, *Poetical Works*, p. 496n): “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:52–54; Authorized [King James] Version). That diminutive “twinkling of an eye” (identical in Douay-Rheims) obscures the significance of the Vulgate text, where this access of sound takes place “*in momento in ictu oculi*”—in the beat, stroke, or “stress” of an eye. In Hopkins’s notes on rhetoric, he offers a definition that makes clear his familiarity with the notion: “Beat, Latin *ictus*, is metrical accent, *the* beat, that is the strong beat, as *the* accent is the strongest accent, is the strongest beat of a foot” (*Journals*, p. 271).⁷¹ The composite of *ordo*—weaving, lining up, and beginning—thus appears most evidently, like the

chiastic X, in an almost invisible structure. The *ictus* that flashes between two identical cuts of “immortal diamond” represents the final transformation of the sonic, scientific, and philological encumbrances that kept the instress of “The Caged Skylark” and “The Sea and the Skylark” away from a full vision of the resurrection.

At the beginning of 1888, Hopkins had complained that it was “now years” that he had had “no inspiration of longer jet than makes a sonnet.”⁷² This “sonnet,” if such it can be called, represents a colossal reflux of energy into Hopkins’s poetics, colliding the cyclical “jet” of the octave, surely the most astounding description of the water cycle ever imagined, with another crucial figure of instress—fire, the “blowpipe flame” (“To R. B.,” no. 179, l. 2). Yet Hopkins’s efforts at once to extend and to collapse the sensuous cycles of the sonnet into the all-consuming “Enough!” (“That Nature,” l. 16) take a decidedly metrical view of the “stem” or “skein” of instress that, in undergirding everything, ends by consuming all that exists. The poem thus offers a conceit of *ordo* that transforms Hopkins’s earlier, sensuous designs and presents as sublime that “Jack, jóke, poor pótsherd” that evolutionary accounts of life would proffer as our origin. In turning the “evanescent flare of readily consumed matchwood, the friability of the pot even when it has been through the kiln” (Beer, “Helmholtz,” p. 133) not merely into a more durable arrangement of elemental carbon but into an irreducibly metrical *punctum*, the poem sheds all inscapes of “slime” and “dust” and leaves only instress—the skein of being. “That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire” takes all life evolved out of carbon, “matchwood,” and beats or flattens it against the X of instress that, for Hopkins, it has always been and yet suddenly and intuitively “Is.”

Hopkins’s energetic vision of order, I have argued, draws as much from counter-Darwinian materials and a broad genealogy of literary and philosophical thought as from contemporaneous developments in the biological and physical sciences. His conception of instress as a style of *ordo* gives a different cast to his last word in worked language, not coincidentally a key term in scientific inquiry from his day to ours:

O then if in my lagging lines you miss
The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation,
My winter world, that scarcely breathes that bliss
Now, yields you, with some sighs, our explanation. (“To R. B.,” ll. 11–14).

In concluding a poem dedicated to his friend Robert Bridges by calling the performance an “explanation”—from Latin *ex-planare*, to flatten, smooth, or

spread out—Hopkins gives a capsule account of his life that foregrounds one version of its creative power: the virtuosity with which a patchwork of lived intellectual contexts finds an amalgam less in the coherent presentation of concepts than in the pied patterning of beats.

Notes

With gratitude to Helen Vendler and Elaine Scarry.

- 1 References to Hopkins's poetry are drawn from *The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Norman H. MacKenzie, 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990); the number of each poem is given in parentheses. I reproduce Hopkins's diacritical marks for stress but omit other metrical and quasi-musical marks.
- 2 Augustine, *Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil: A Translation of St. Augustine's De Ordine*, trans. Robert P. Russell (New York: Cosmopolitan Science and Art Service, 1942), p. 17.
- 3 I allude to Hopkins's statement about the 1877 composition of "Hurrahing in Harvest": "the . . . outcome of . . . half an hour of extreme enthusiasm as I walked home alone one day from fishing in the Elwy"; Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges, July 16, 1878, in *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, vols. 1–2, *Correspondence*, ed. R. K. R. Thornton and Catherine Phillips (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), 1: 308. Hopkins alludes to Augustine's conversion in *The Wreck of the Deutschland* (l. 78). See James Finn Cotter, "Augustine's Confessions and *The Wreck of the Deutschland*," in *Saving Beauty: Further Studies in Hopkins*, ed. Michael E. Allsopp and David Anthony Downes (New York: Garland, 1994), pp. 313–325; and Cotter, "Hopkins and Augustine," *VP* 39, no. 1 (2001): 69–82.
- 4 Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Stephen McKenna (Washington, DC: Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1970), pp. 292–293.
- 5 The poem was composed and published in 1863; I quote the revised version of 1871. In another early (1866) poem, "The Nightingale" (no. 76), a woman lies awake wondering about her lover at sea, while the bird's song interrupts the sound of water: "He might have strung/A row of ripples in the brooks,/So forcibly he sung" (ll. 30–32), but "as he changed his mighty stops/Between I heard the water still / All down the stair-way of the copse/And churning in the mill" (ll. 43–46). An analogue to the Augustinian scene appears in Hopkins's undergraduate essay "Causation," referring to G. H. Lewes's *A Biographical History of Philosophy* (1845–1846) and the "friend who did not see that every thing must have a cause"; Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Oxford Essays and Notes*, vol. 4 of *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Lesley Higgins (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006), p. 202.
- 6 Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Humphrey House and Graham Storey (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959), p. 127.
- 7 See Tom Zaniello, *Hopkins in the Age of Darwin* (Iowa City: Univ. of Iowa Press, 1988); Zaniello, "Hopkins' Scientific Interests: 'Face to Face with a Sphinx,'"

- Thought* 65, no. 259 (1990): 510–521; Gillian Beer, “Helmholtz, Tyndall, Gerard Manley Hopkins: Leaps of the Prepared Imagination,” in *Comparative Criticism*, vol. 13, *Literature and Science*, ed. Elinor S. Shaffer (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), pp. 117–145; Jude V. Nixon, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and His Contemporaries: Liddon, Newman, Darwin, and Pater* (New York: Garland, 1994); Nixon, “‘Death blots black out’: Thermodynamics and the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins,” *VP* 40, no. 2 (2002): 131–155; Nixon, “‘Read the Unshapeable Shock Night’: Information Theory, Chaos Systems, and the Welsh Landscape of Hopkins’s *The Wreck of the Deutschland*,” *Merope* 14, nos. 35–36 (2002): 111–149; Daniel Brown, *Hopkins’ Idealism: Philosophy, Physics, Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997); and Marie Banfield, “Darwinism, Doxology, and Energy Physics: The New Sciences, the Poetry and the Poetics of Gerard Manley Hopkins,” *VP* 45, no. 2 (2007): 175–194.
- 8 Compare Jude V. Nixon, “‘From Pap to Poison’: Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Poetics of Darwinism,” in *Gerard Manley Hopkins and Critical Discourse*, ed. Eugene Hollahan (New York: AMS, 1993), pp. 106–107 (arguing Hopkins’s embrace of the argument from design); and Nixon, “Death blots black out,” pp. 139–140.
 - 9 See Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1984), pp. 134–141, 209–216; Bowler, *The Eclipse of Darwinism: Anti-Darwinian Evolution Theories in the Decades around 1900* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 44–54; and Bowler, “Darwinism and the Argument from Design: Suggestions for a Reevaluation,” *Journal of the History of Biology* 10, no. 1 (1977): 29–43. Bernard Lightman notes that the Bridgewater Treatises espoused what John Brooke has called a “theology of nature” less rigorous than “natural theology”; Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science: Designing Nature for New Audiences* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 23–24.
 - 10 John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, in *The Works of John Ruskin*, 39 vols., ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1903–1912), 5: 191, 6: 132. Hopkins beautifully invokes what Ruskin calls “the ordinances of the hills” (6: 117) in “Hurrahing in Harvest,” where “the azurous hung hills” are seen as Christ’s “wórlð-wíelding shoulder/Majestic” (ll. 9–10). For Ruskin’s influence, see Alison G. Sulloway, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Victorian Temper* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 64–114; and Philip Ballinger, “Ruskin: Hopkins’ ‘Silent Don,’” *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 85, no. 338 (1996): 116–124.
 - 11 This appears to be the primary meaning of “instress” for Hopkins (as the OED takes it, for instance, s.v. “instress, n.”), but he also intends transitive and intransitive verbal senses. See Brown, *Hopkins’ Idealism*, pp. 180–182, 197–201, 219–220, 226–237.
 - 12 Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges, October 2–4, 1886, in Hopkins, *Correspondence*, 2: 805. Hopkins’s characterization of the beholder transcends a view of aesthetic appreciation as itself evolved: in Richard Owen’s claim that “the ultimate forthcoming of a being susceptible of appreciating such beauty” yields “evidence of the pre-ordaining of such relation of power to the appreciation”; Owen, *Anatomy of Vertebrates*, vol. 3 (1868), quoted in St. George Jackson Mivart, *On the Genesis of Species*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1871), p. 274.

- 13 I differ from John Holmes's claim that Hopkins's relation to Darwin "was more one of denial than engagement"; Holmes, *Darwin's Bards: British and American Poetry in the Age of Evolution* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2009), p. 23. Walter J. Ong is more on point, noting that Hopkins was "singularly free of hostility or even uneasiness regarding Darwin's or other new discoveries"; Ong, *Hopkins, the Self, and God* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1986), p. 158.
- 14 See Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers*, pp. 1–38, for an account of the variety of popularizers in the period and pp. 39–94 for Anglican theologies of nature after Darwin.
- 15 On the intellectual character of Oxford in the 1860s, see Zaniello, *Hopkins*, pp. 1–3, 11–34, mentioning the unorthodox character of Hopkins's tutors (Benjamin Jowett, Walter Pater, T. H. Green); Michael Allsopp, "Hopkins at Oxford, 1863–1867: His Formal Studies," *Hopkins Quarterly* 4 (Fall–Winter 1977–1978): 161–176; Brown, *Hopkins' Idealism*, pp. 1–42; and Lesley Higgins, introduction to Hopkins, *Oxford Essays*, pp. 1–87.
- 16 This fare may have included *Nature*, the *Academy*, the *Times*, the *Month*, the *Tablet*, *Fraser's Magazine*, the *Nineteenth Century*, the *Athenæum*, the *Cornhill Magazine*, and the *Contemporary Review* (Zaniello, *Hopkins*, pp. 134–135, Nixon, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, p. 112).
- 17 The address was printed under the heading "Science," in *Academy* 120 (22 August, 1874): 209–217, where Hopkins encountered it; he may also have seen Joseph Rickaby's "Tyndall's Inaugural Address," in *Month and Catholic Review* 3 (October 1874): 212–223. On Tyndall's address and its reception by Hopkins and his philosophical colleagues at Stonyhurst, see Zaniello, *Hopkins*, pp. 98–101, 112–115.
- 18 Gerard Manley Hopkins to his mother from St. Beuno's, September 20–21, 1874, in Hopkins, *Correspondence*, 1: 237. In citing Hopkins's letters, I follow the editorial principles given in *Correspondence*, 1: ci–ciii: strikethroughs record deletions; square brackets enclose editorial insertions; and carat marks denote Hopkins's insertions. For further commentary on this letter, see Nixon, "From Pap to Poison," pp. 98–99; Beer, "Helmholtz," p. 123, mentioning Mivart and the possible reconciliation of evolutionary theory with Catholicism; Jill Muller, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and Victorian Catholicism: A Heart in Hiding* (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 83–85, 91–92; and John Parham, *Green Man Hopkins: Poetry and the Victorian Ecological Imagination* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), pp. 111–112, arguing that Mivart's work drew Hopkins to ecological thinking.
- 19 See Mivart, *On the Genesis of Species*, pp. 175–210, for his argument about homologies, rejecting natural selection as a sufficient explanation in certain cases.
- 20 See Zaniello, *Hopkins*, pp. 48–49.
- 21 Bernard Lightman, "Scientists as Materialists in the Periodical Press: Tyndall's Belfast Address," in *Science Serialized: Representations of the Sciences in Nineteenth-Century Periodicals*, ed. Geoffrey Cantor and Sally Shuttleworth (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), p. 206.
- 22 For Mivart's reflections on evolution, theology, and the doctrines of creation, see *On the Genesis of Species*, pp. 273–333. He appeals to classical authorities, from

- Aristotle to Augustine, Aquinas, and Suárez, as precursors to evolutionary thinking (pp. 332, 302–305).
- 23 See Thomas Huxley, “Mr. Darwin’s Critics,” *Contemporary Review* 18 (1871): 443–476, a review of Alfred Russel Wallace’s *Contributions to the Theory of Natural Selection* (1870), along with Darwin and Mivart, which deflects the latter (referring to the same classical authorities) in what has been seen as a battle for scientific authority. See Frank M. Turner, *Contesting Cultural Authority: Essays in Victorian Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), pp. 190–192, 83–84 (on the anti-Catholic aspects of scientific naturalism); James R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwinism in Britain and America, 1870–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 62–64, 117–122, 222–223; Jacob W. Gruber, *A Conscience in Conflict: The Life of St. George Jackson Mivart* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1960); and David L. Hull, *Darwin and His Critics: The Reception of Darwin’s Theory by the Scientific Community* (1973; repr., Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 351–415.
- 24 The digest of Mivart’s book appeared in three parts as “Difficulties of the Theory of Natural Selection,” in the *Month* 11 (July, August, September 1869): 35–53, 134–153, 274–289. Other key Catholic periodicals included the *Dublin Review* and the *Rambler*, later the *Home and Foreign Review*, and all carried articles on evolutionary topics. Some measured statements by an acquaintance of Hopkins, John Rickaby, are found in “Evolution and Involution,” *Month and Catholic Review* 10 (March 1877): 269–285, and “Some Remarks on the Argument from Design,” *Month and Catholic Review* 13 (April 1878): 404–419 and 14 (May 1878): 28–46. See Alvar Ellegård, *Darwin and the General Reader: The Reception of Darwin’s Theory of Evolution in the British Periodical Press, 1859–1872* (1958; repr., Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 368–384.
- 25 *Nature* 27 (November 16, 1882): xxiii.
- 26 *Nature* 26 (July 20, 1882): 268; *Nature* 26 (July 27, 1882): 293; *Nature* 27 (November 9, 1882): 30–31. See Zaniello, *Hopkins*, pp. 79–84.
- 27 S. E. B. Bouverie-Pusey, *Permanence and Evolution: An Inquiry into the Supposed Mutability of Animal Types* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1882), p. vii. The review is in *Nature* 26 (July 20, 1882): 265–266. On Hopkins and the elder Pusey, see Higgins, introduction to Hopkins, *Oxford Essays*, pp. 11–14.
- 28 The Stonyhurst group included Richard F. Clarke, Herbert Lucas, and the brothers John and Joseph Rickaby. See Zaniello, *Hopkins*, pp. 85–117; and Muller, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, pp. 89–94.
- 29 Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges, August 18–19, 1888, in Hopkins, *Correspondence*, 2: 948.
- 30 See further Mivart, *On the Genesis of Species*, pp. 106–108, 127–129, 143, 162, 176, 259–263, 270, 306. Mivart appeals to other scientific writers, among them Herbert Spencer, who draw similar inferences from crystalline and organic symmetry (pp. 207–210).

- 31 Zaniello suggests that "principle" and "special instinct" are synonyms for "instress" ("Scientific Interests," p. 516), drawing on his discussion in *Hopkins*, pp. 115–116; compare Nixon, "From Pap to Poison," pp. 99–100. The phrase "special instinct" works against Darwin's argument for "simple instincts," in his account of how this phenomenon "can be explained by natural selection having taken advantage of numerous, successive, slight modifications of simpler instincts"; Darwin, *On the Origin of Species: A Facsimile of the First Edition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1964), p. 235. Darwin's discussion is extensive (pp. 224–235).
- 32 I silently occlude the cancellations and revisions preserved by Higgins in this edition, for ease of reading, except where they seem significant.
- 33 Zaniello suggests that "scope" and "scape" are cognate and points out how Hopkins would later argue with the linguist W. W. Skeat about their etymology (*Hopkins*, pp. 56–57). For comments on this essay, see Zaniello, *Hopkins*, pp. 70–72, Brown, *Hopkins' Idealism*, pp. 6–7, 24, 41–42, 56, 87–91; and Nixon, "Death blots black out," pp. 150–151n8.
- 34 John Kerrigan sees "type" and "species" as synonymous with "form"; Kerrigan, "Writing Numbers: Keats, Hopkins, and the History of Chance," in *Keats and History*, ed. Nicholas Roe (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), p. 300. For comparison of this "philosophy of flux" to Darwinism, see Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009), p. 18; Beer, "Helmholtz," pp. 125–126; Brown, *Hopkins' Idealism*, pp. 7, 19–20; Nixon, "From Pap to Poison," pp. 104–105 (commenting on "chromatic" and "diatonic" as concepts that map Darwinian flux and Platonic fixity); Muller, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, p. 73; and Holmes, *Darwin's Bards*, p. 134.
- 35 In other lecture notes, Hopkins questions both poles of this debate: "Try mod[ern] difficulty of origin of species. It is very much the same as Plato's. It is said it wd. be solved if we cd. find or construct types for each species, but what wd. distinguish these types? What wd. prevent their shading into one another just as the concrete species do?" (*Oxford Essays*, pp. 238–239).
- 36 See Hopkins, *Oxford Essays*, pp. 136–168, and pp. 157–159 on the diatonic/chromatic distinction.
- 37 Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Sermons and Devotional Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Christopher Devlin (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959), p. 90. Hopkins also mentions providence in his letters: "When a man has given himself to God's service, when he has denied himself and followed Christ, he has fitted himself to receive and does receive ^from God^ a more special guidance, a more particular providence," one "partly" intimated by "direct lights and inspirations"; Gerard Manley Hopkins to Richard Watson Dixon, December 1–16, 1881, in Hopkins, *Correspondence*, 1: 502.
- 38 The word "contrivance" is occasionally used in *On the Origin of Species* in the context of plants and flowers (e.g., p. 98) and is widespread in Darwin's *On the Various Contrivances by Which British and Foreign Orchids Are Fertilised by Insects* (London: John Murray, 1862). Mivart points out that words like "contrivance," "design," and

- "purpose" are figurative in Darwin (*On the Genesis of Species*, p. 17, "Difficulties of the Theory of Natural Selection," p. 39).
- 39 W. H. Gardner, *Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889): A Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition*, 2 vols. (London: Secker and Warburg, 1944–1949), 1: 114. Gardner also sees the body cumbering the spirit as an Augustinian topos (1: 35n5). Compare a journal entry for 1866, in which Hopkins notes the image of "bones sleeved in flesh" and holds his hand up to candlelight: "Vermilion look of the hand held against a candle with the darker parts as the middles of the fingers and especially the knuckles covered with ash" (*Journals*, p. 72).
- 40 See OED, s.vv. "charnel, n. and adj.," def. 1.b, and "bone, n.," def. C.3.
- 41 John Ruskin, "Yewdale and Its Streamlets," delivered in 1877, in *Deucalion*, in *Works*, 26: 265.
- 42 See John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. Leah S. Marcus (London: Methuen, 2009), act 4, scene 2, ll. 125–129; and Wordsworth's late poem "Liberty": "Who can divine what impulses from God/Reach the caged Lark, within a town-abode, / From his poor inch or two of daisied sod?/O yield him back his privilege! No sea / Swells like the bosom of a man set free;/A wilderness is rich with liberty"; William Wordsworth, "Liberty," in *Last Poems, 1821–1850*, ed. Jared Curtis, with Apryl Lea Denny-Ferris and Jillian Heydt-Stevenson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1999), ll. 27–32. Gardner sees a parallel in the *Emblems* (1643) of Francis Quarles: "My soul is like a bird, my flesh the cage/Wherein she wears her weary pilgrimage/Of hours" (*Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 1: 170n2).
- 43 Norman H. MacKenzie, *A Reader's Guide to Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's Univ. Press, 2008), pp. 81–82. Darwin notes that the "common lark is drawn down from the sky, and is caught in large numbers, by a small mirror made to move and glitter in the sun"; Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1871), 2: 112. His comment occurs in a discussion of sexual selection, a topic about which Hopkins had his doubts. Commenting on Vernon Lee's "Impersonality and Evolution in Music," a review of Edmund Gurney's *The Power of Sound* (1880), Hopkins dismisses the notion of an evolved aesthetic sense, mocking the thought "that we enjoy music because our apish ancestors serenaded their Juliet-apes of the period in rudimentary recitatives and our emotions are a ^the^ survival—that sexual business will ^in short^ be found by roking [sic] the pot." Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges, January 4–5, 1883, in *Correspondence*, 2: 561. See Nixon, "From Pap to Poison," p. 99.
- 44 William Paley, *Natural Theology; or, Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity*, 12th ed. (London: J. Faulder, 1809), p. 304.
- 45 Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology, Being an Attempt to Explain the Former Changes of the Earth's Surface, by Reference to Causes Now in Operation*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1830), 2: 6–7.
- 46 Hopkins discusses *skothending* as end-consonant rhyme or "half-rhyme" in his notes on verse (*Journals*, p. 284). For discussion of this and similar techniques, see James

- Milroy, *The Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Deutsch, 1977), pp. 132–153.
- 47 Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1995), p. 259. Hopkins may have followed the revision of “formal identity” by Duns Scotus, who argued that a “form of bodiliness was necessary to explain resurrection and glorification” (Bynum, *Resurrection*, p. 261). On Hopkins’s preference for Scotus against the more usual Jesuit sources, see Alfred Thomas, *Hopkins the Jesuit: The Years of Training* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 99, 182–183; and Muller, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, pp. 69–100.
- 48 Kerrigan writes of a “stereophony which disperses . . . into sub-verbal, alliterative ringing” (“Writing Numbers,” p. 302) and notes that the chiming mimics what Hopkins called the “*oftening, over-and-overing, aftering* of the inscape” (p. 303, quoting *Journals*, p. 289). On Hopkins’s “mechanistic ontology” of stress and in-stress, see Brown, *Hopkins’ Idealism*, pp. 187–207. Brown points to the physics of sound waves implied in the lark’s “liquid onslaught” (p. 243).
- 49 John Robinson, in *In Extremity: A Study of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978), notes this source in discussing Hopkins’s use of early fragments (p. 19).
- 50 Gardner suggests that there is a gradient for Hopkins’s lack of respect for fallen man—part of the Victorian topos of harking back to a lost, pristine period—and considers that this poem marks a low point in comparison to “Ribblesdale” (no. 149) and others (*Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 2: 248).
- 51 On entropy in Hopkins, see Beer, “Helmholtz,” pp. 126–127, 131–133, 139–140; and Nixon, “Death blots black out,” pp. 137–148.
- 52 Hopkins, *Poetical Works*, p. 375n. On Hopkins’s biblical citation, see Martin Du-bois, “Styles of Translation: Hopkins’ Bibles,” *VP* 50, no. 3 (2012): 279–296.
- 53 Nixon suggests that “Darwin’s primordial germ” is implied here, but I resist his claim that Hopkins’s “incessant appeal to the act of creation in his nature poems serves as an alternative to and a polemic against Darwinism” (“From Pap to Poison,” pp. 109, 107). In “*Nondum*” (no. 78), for example, Hopkins writes of “life’s first germs” (l. 24) in the context of God’s creation.
- 54 Charles Darwin, “The Doctrine of Heterogeny and Modification of Species,” *Athenæum* 1852 (April 25, 1863): 555. See Bowler, *Evolution*, pp. 66–72, 76–84; and Bowler, *Darwinism* (New York: Twayne, 1993), pp. 17–21. On “spontaneous generation,” see James E. Strick, *Sparks of Life: Darwinism and the Victorian Debates over Spontaneous Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2000).
- 55 *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P. G. W. Glare (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), s.vv. “*limus*, -i, m.” and “*limus*, -a, -um, a.”; Michiel de Vaan, *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and Other Languages* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2008), s.vv. “*limus* 1” and “*limus* 2.”
- 56 This height is recognized even in the English common noun designation for these birds: “an exaltation of larks” (*OED*, s.v. “exaltation, n.” def. 1.c).

- 57 There is no mention of Boethius in Hopkins's work. MacKenzie mentions the *Consolation* as a possible allusion in the ending of "Pied Beauty" (Hopkins, *Poetical Works*, p. 386n). I am grateful to Shane Bobrycki for furnishing these more literal translations of Boethius; the corresponding Latin appears in Boethius, *The Theological Tractates and the Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. H. F. Steward, E. K. Rand, and S. J. Tester (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1973).
- 58 Vaan, *Etymological Dictionary*, s.vv. "ordo," "orior, -iri," "ordior, -iri."
- 59 Seamus Heaney, *The Fire i' the Flint: Reflections on the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), p. 18.
- 60 Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges, May 26–31, 1879, in Hopkins, *Correspondence*, 1: 359.
- 61 In making the body prior to the spirit, this expression cleaves to Hopkins's Scotist position on the Incarnation as a phenomenon prior to the creation of mankind (Zaniello, *Hopkins*, p. 92, drawing on Hopkins's 1881 notes on the Spiritual Exercises, *Sermons*, pp. 169–173). "Sake" may relate to the Scotist notion of *haecceitas* or "thisness," which has been thought to explain inscape and instress. Muller reads the nature sonnets against the Scholastic debate on the relationship between man and nature resumed by nineteenth-century Anglo-Catholic institutions, emphasizing Hopkins's attraction to *haecceitas* as reconciling religion and evolution (*Gerard Manley Hopkins*, pp. 69–100).
- 62 See Brown, *Hopkins' Idealism*, pp. 179–180, 304; Nixon, "Death blots black out," pp. 138, 148; and Banfield, "Darwinism, Doxology, and Energy Physics," pp. 184–185, 190–191.
- 63 Francis Bacon, *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall*, ed. Michael Kiernan (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), p. 18. "Bacon's essays" heads Hopkins's 1865 list of "Books to be read" (*Journals*, p. 56), but he had an earlier acquaintance with Bacon (Higgins, introduction to *Oxford Essays*, p. 17n55). Hopkins even parodied the style of the *Essayes* in a letter (Gerard Manley Hopkins to Alexander William Mowbray Baillie, March 1864, in Hopkins, *Correspondence*, 1: 58–59).
- 64 James Finn Cotter, "Apocalyptic Imagery in Hopkins: 'That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection,'" *VP* 24, no. 3 (1986): 272–273. Cotter gives a catalogue of details on this image in "'Immortal Diamond': An Image in Hopkins," *Thought* 65, no. 259 (1990): 563–571. See also D. C. Hagg, "Hopkins' 'immortal diamond': A Poetic Use of Science," *Hopkins Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (1980): 91–96; and MacKenzie's note in Hopkins, *Poetical Works*, pp. 496–497n.
- 65 As far as I can tell, this all-but-one pattern is unusual. Hopkins's shorter poems typically lack more than one lower-frequency English letter; only longer poems like *The Wreck*, "The Loss of the Eurydice," and "The Blessed Virgin" routinely involve the entire alphabet.
- 66 J. H. van't Hoff and J. A. Le Bel independently described tetrahedral carbon in 1874. From Antoine Lavoisier to Humphry Davy, similarities in the chemical composition of carbon forms (charcoal, graphite, diamond) were hypothesized on account of their similar product of combustion (CO₂). In this sense, Hopkins is

- unaware of the chemical fact that diamonds are hardly forever. See J. R. Partington, *A History of Chemistry*, 4 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1961–1970), 3: 381–384, 3: 704, 4: 60–61, 4: 755–756; and Mary Jo Nye, *Before Big Science: The Pursuit of Modern Chemistry and Physics, 1800–1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1999), pp. 137–138.
- 67 Hopkins's earlier view of diamonds is less elemental: "Diamonds are better cut; who pare, repair" runs an untitled fragment (no. 48, l. 5). William D. Foltz, in "Hopkins' Greek Fire," *VP* 18, no. 1 (1980): 23–34, notes the connection between carbon and diamond (p. 33).
- 68 A parallel in Ruskin's allegory of "help" against "separation" prefigures Hopkins's fusion of natural, scientific, and mythical motifs. Ruskin sees an "absolute type of impurity" in "the mud or slime of a damp, over-trodden path, in the outskirts of a manufacturing town"; from that "ounce of slime which we had by political economy of competition," the "co-operation" of soot transforms it into diamond (*Modern Painters*, 7: 207–208).
- 69 For Nixon, the poem offers a "religious resolution" ("From Pap to Poison," p. 107). See also Gardner, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 1: 161–165; Foltz, "Hopkins' Greek Fire," p. 31; and Parham, *Green Man Hopkins*, pp. 261–262.
- 70 Foltz notes that "Is" often begins lines in Hopkins, but only here and in "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo" (no. 148) does it bear stress ("Hopkins' Greek Fire," p. 32). Hopkins's interest in the heft of the verb *to be* is on offer in a journal entry: "The truth in thought is Being, stress, and each word is one way of acknowledging Being and each sentence by its copula *is* (or its equivalent) the utterance and assertion of it" (*Journals*, p. 129); see Meredith Martin's discussion in *The Rise and Fall of Meter: Poetry and English National Culture, 1860–1930* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2012), p. 55. My comments on metrical force relate to physiological accounts of Hopkins's poetics: Martin, *Rise and Fall of Meter*, pp. 48–78, Joshua King, "Hopkins' Affective Rhythm: Grace and Intention in Tension," *VP* 45, no. 3 (2007): 209–237; Susan Chambers, "Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Kinesthetics of Conviction," *Victorian Studies* 51, no. 1 (2008): 7–35; Erin M. Goss, "'Almost unmade': Hopkins and the Body Apocalyptic," *VP* 49, no. 1 (2011): 83–103.
- 71 Hopkins worried about the conflation of *stress* and *accent* implicit in the Latin *ictus* and its simplification of the metrical quantities of the Greek terms *arsis* and *thesis*, discussing the matter with Bridges and Coventry Patmore. See Martin, *Rise and Fall of Meter*, pp. 67–78, 217–218n43.
- 72 Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges, January 12–13, 1888, in Hopkins, *Correspondence*, 2: 914.