

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Tennyson and Hopkins scholarship is dominated by a focus on antithetical dichotomies. Tennyson’s speakers are fractured selves focused on the gap between matter and spirit, faith and reason, solitude and community. Likewise, Hopkins’ doubled vocation as priest and poet is presented as a contradiction to the point that the transition from his early nature sonnets to his later terrible sonnets is seen as analogous of that conflict. However, both poets tend to represent contraries through the figure of *synoeciosis* rather than antithesis. *Synoeciosis* is the coupling of two contraries without the intention to oppose them. Rather than being a contradiction for its own sake, *synoeciosis* serves to illuminate a hidden truth, much like its parent figure, paradox. In this thesis, the poetry of Tennyson and Hopkins are read through the hermeneutic of *synoeciosis*, with the purpose of moving beyond dialectical thinking. Following Hopkins’ writings on mystery and Giorgio Agamben’s presentation of the influence of Messianic time on poetry, this thesis proposes that the Incarnation, as the coupling of the divine and human natures of Christ, is the pattern that influences all forms of doubling for these poets.

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“Sorrow’s Springs are the Same”: Synoeciosis in the Poetry of Alfred Tennyson and
Gerard Manley Hopkins

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Christopher Adamson, Author

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Sorrow's Springs are the Same: Synoeciosis in the Poetry of Alfred Tennyson and
Gerard Manley Hopkins

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world*

In William Butler Yeats' "The Second Coming," the falcon goes up in in a helical movement that keeps getting wider, increasing the interstitial space between falcon and falconer. There is less meaning. There is less understanding. There is less communication. The opposites of heaven and earth find no meaningful connection. Being opposites, they seem to lack the ability to understand one another. The falcon is too far away and cannot hear the falconer. They are only brought back together by the grotesque abomination of the sphinx lumbering out of its ancient lethargy: an anti-incarnation.

Yeats' widening gyre is an excellent image for how we now read poetry and how we have read Gerard Manley Hopkins. He is either a hybrid of the falcon and falconer, spread between contrary inclinations and vocations, or the falcon to our falconer, whose "countless cries" become less intelligible as he rises in his ecstasy to that bright sun. We do not understand how the sensual falcon can find its way back to the celibate falconer. We do not understand how the same crushed, desiccated soul of the terrible sonnets can end with the final coda, "I am happy, so happy" (Martin, 413). We do not understand because we are looking for a confused, tamed falcon in a wild windhover. The falcon may not hear the falconer, but we can see where wings, wind and even the very boundaries of that gyre buckle and "Fall, gall themselves, and

gash gold-vermillion.” Whether clasping all things together or bursting apart into a fire a “billion / Times told lovelier, more dangerous,” the bird shows itself and stirs the falconer’s heart. Whereas the imagery employed by Yeats suggests that there is only emptiness between two contraries, the soundless air, the imagery of Hopkins suggests that meaning is found in that same space, which is not empty, but filled with an underlying hypostasis symbolized by fire. Hopkins’ poetry suggests that contraries are a method for communicating meaning, rather than inhibiting understanding,

As with Hopkins, we have read Alfred Tennyson through the hermeneutic of the widening gyre. The more he looks into the paradox of a nature that is “red in tooth and claw” or a faith that suggests we believe what “we cannot prove,” the further the falcon gets from the falconer. We are drawn in when he unabashedly rejoices in the dark joys of mourning, but turn away when his attempts at dialectics offers us a tacked-on and flattened-out epithalamion after canto after canto of raw elegy (Shaw 4).¹ The antithetical nature of the widening gyre is encoded even into his speakers, who are largely seen as fractured selves focused on the gap between matter and spirit, faith and reason, solitude and community. However, above the cyclical sorrows of the speaker of *In Memoriam*, the morning star and the evening star are only names that signify the same celestial body, daily reminding us that Tennyson mimics Dante’s hope that everything is moved by:

That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves. (*In Memoriam*, Epilogue: Lines 144-147)

Whereas Yeats' poem exemplifies the painful relationship of two irreconcilable contraries, Hopkins' entire oeuvre is marked by complementarity, as he celebrates the unity of "all things counter, original, spare, strange" (133). Tennyson may seem a marked contrast to Hopkins, in some respects the epitome of a poet of the widening gyre, but when we read Tennyson through Hopkins, we notice the same pattern of doubling. This is a poetics not of antithesis but *synoeciosis*, where the priest-poet and the Laureate both proclaim harmony rather than rupture. As the OED defines it, *synoeciosis* is "a figure by which contrasted or heterogeneous things are associated or coupled, e.g. contrary qualities attributed to the same subject." A linked compound itself of the Greek words for *with* and *one's own*, *synoeciosis* is the coupling of two contraries without the intention to oppose them (Burton). Like *economy*, it has its roots in *oikos*, the word for a household, and was used to describe the joining together of *demos* and *polis* to form the early city-states (Agamben). In botany, the same roots form *syneocism*, denoting plants that have both sperm and eggs on the same gametophyte. Following that, *synoeciosis* can be the inclusion of two contraries in one subject. Rather than being a contradiction for its own sake, *synoeciosis* serves to illuminate a hidden truth, much like its parent figure, paradox. In *The Lives of the Poets*, Samuel Johnson refers to this figure as *discordia concors* and defines it as "a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike" (200). In their poetry, Hopkins and Tennyson link contraries to make a shared space where heaven and earth can meet.²

There is a kinship between *synoeciosis* and other ways of interpreting coupled contraries, particularly dialectics and deconstruction. The dialectical method is able to take the two contraries of the thesis and antithesis and further define their relationship. Which proposition is able to sublimate the other and result in a synthesis that the human mind can readily understand? What is the nature of that synthesis? The power of dialectics is that it can take us to the edge of the aporia, the point where the paradox becomes impassible. Here, deconstruction proposes that we move further, because “thinking the ‘unthinkable itself’ involves thinking through and beyond dialectic” (Salusinszky, 10).

Hegel’s dialectic is discursive. I, the philosopher, take the thesis and the antithesis presented in nature and actively subsume one in the other to produce the synthesis. Conversely, deconstruction notes “how the terms of apparently opposite poles participate in each other” (Meyer and Deshen, 15). *Synoeciosis* fully accepts the mutual participation of opposite poles and is a figure of receptivity. When the poet or rhetorician uses it, he or she is recognizing a harmonious tension that is pre-existing and has agency in and of itself. Like Pater’s diaphanous personality, the figure is a transparent sheet that shows the light of reality. Tennyson’s Epilogue feels most dissatisfying when he earnestly engages in dialectics, grappling with contraries followed by an affected synthesis that feels unnatural. Likewise, Hopkins passes through synthesis to aporia in his own anthropological outlook, finally resting in the *synoeciosis* of the human person as animal and spirit.

Though I will follow a spirit of deconstruction and accept Derrida's critique of dialectics, *synoeciosis* is not completely consistent with deconstruction. Whereas in deconstruction contraries "share the deficiencies they purport to correct," I propose that meaning is found precisely in the tension between two presented poles that may point to a third underlying reality, or hypostasis (Meyer and Deshen, 16). When understood through *synoeciosis*, contraries say what language can do, what we can understand, how we can enter into relationship as opposed to "what language cannot do, how desire is never fulfilled" (16). Rather than negating meaning through multiplicity, the very presence of multiplicity is a vehicle for meaning. For the lyrical "I" of Hopkins' poetry, the inability to have an unmediated connection to the thing itself is not a philosophical problem, but an aesthetic reality that prompts delight and joy. The aporia for the priest-poet is not a darkness to shy away from, but an invitation to seek truth. As he proposed to Robert Bridges in an 1883 letter concerning mystery, "at bottom the source of interest is the same in both cases, in your mind and in ours; it is the unknown, the reserve of truth beyond what the mind reaches and still feels to be behind" (187). Hopkins' poetry is not directed toward seeking an abstract neo-platonic *logos*, but an incarnate *logos*: a fully mediated, temporally situated, presence.

Along with Kinereth Meyer and Rachel Deshen, I want to propose that "polysemy is thus a normal state of affairs; divine truth, as available to human beings, is regarded as multiple by necessity" (16). Consistent with deconstruction, I maintain that the tension must remain and not be reduced to a synthesis where thesis and

antithesis lose their integrity and disappear. Like *aporia*, *synoeciosis* is also "not a problem which can be solved and sublated" (Bielik-Robson 192).

Synoeciosis, though sharing much with deconstruction, must necessarily diverge due to the two major examples of it within Western thought: the Incarnation and the two-fold nature of time. The Incarnation is the epitome of *synoeciosis*. The Hellenistic concept of eternal meaning, being separated from chronological time, is coupled with the Hebraic concept of the creative word of God through the work of Philo of Alexandria and the writings of John the Apostle.³ This *synoeciosis* of *logos* and *davhar* (Hebrew: "word") is then united with *homo*, a human nature. A divine, or spiritual, nature is united with an earthly, human nature. Heaven and earth not only meet, but are also mutually present to one another. This constitutes and reveals the divine person, Christ. When looked at through *synoeciosis*, it is important to consider that the Incarnation, understood this way, does not privilege thesis or antithesis, but shows how both are necessary to cross beyond the *aporia* that blinds us to the divine personhood.

Like the Incarnation, the understanding of time as a *chronos-kairos* dichotomy that leads to the *aeon* is a form of *synoeciosis* embedded in Western thought. *Chronos*, as counted time, moves in a monotonous and linear motion and can be used to describe everyday life. *Kairos*, however, is the supreme moment of indeterminate time, nearly eternal but not fully present. It is both the heroic moment of Homeric poetry and the temporal setting of Christian liturgies. Monastic communities, and to a different degree Jesuit communities like Hopkins', value slow-paced lifestyles

centered around contemplation so that *kairos* can envelope *chronos*, and the Byzantine liturgy uses the word *kairos* to denote time. It would be easy to understand *kairos* as eternity or atemporality and *chronos* as our more colloquial understanding of time, but *kairos* is more a precursor of eternity, present in liturgies and the craftsmanship of divine beings, such as Achilles' shield in the *Iliad*. This is why the *Corpus Hippocraticum*, defines the two forms of time as completely interwoven: "the *chronos* is where we have *kairos* and the *kairos* is where we have a little *chronos*" ("The Time that is Left"). *Kairos* includes *chronos*, but both aspects of time are still immanent. The transcendent quality of time, on the other hand, is represented in the concept of *aeon*, eternal time beyond human experience that is synonymous with the eschaton, the future recapitulation of all that is good by a divine being.

When coupled, these two examples of *synoeciosis*, the Incarnation and the *chronos-kairos* dichotomy, change the formal pattern of poetry. In "The Time that is Left," Giorgio Agamben proposes that the messianic time inaugurated by the Incarnation and fulfilled by a future eschaton changes the artistic representation of time:

With the messianic event, time contracts itself and begins to finish, and this shrinking time, which Paul calls *ho nyn kairos*, goes on up to the parousia, the full presence of the messiah, which concludes with the end of time. Here time explodes—or rather implodes into the other *aeon*, into eternity. (2)

After the advent of Christianity, Agamben proposes, this explosion of time is expressed through rhyme, since “the retrieval of rhyming end words...transforms chronological time into messianic time” (*The Time that Remains*, 82). This seems all the more significant when we consider that rhyme was rare in pre-Christian poetry, which instead suggested unity through different forms of repetition, such as parallelism in Hebrew poetry and alliteration in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Agamben notes that rhyme begins in Latin Christian poetry around the fourth century and is then inherited by the romance languages. He uses the sestina as an example, pointing out that the rhyme scheme reverses on itself between stanzas. With each stanza consisting of six lines for each day of creation, the reversal of the rhyme scheme is a reversal and renewal of time itself:

Through this complicated to-and-fro directed both forward and backward, the chronological sequence of linear homogenous time is completely transformed into rhythmic constellations themselves in movement. (82)

Agamben further suggests that these reversals may find their origin in the paradoxical language of Paul, such as when he alternates between *those* and *as not*: “those weeping as not weeping, those rejoicing as not rejoicing, those buying as not possessing” (1 Corinthians 7).⁴ Rhyme, temporality, and the coupling of contraries are linked from the very beginning of Christian religious literature. The intense interior rhyming of Hopkins’ poems, where words chime off one another, may then be representative of the unique way the Incarnation has been expressed in Western

poetry. *Aeon* (eternity) does not emerge from a synthesis of *chronos* (counted time) and *kairos* (subjective expansive time), completing wiping out the dichotomy, but rather *aeon* is the continual *synoeciosis* of *chronos* and *kairos*.

Since these two concepts, the Incarnation and the *chronos-kairos* relationship, are so essential to the hermeneutic of *synoeciosis*, I cannot completely follow Derrida's concern with logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence. Through the figure of *synoeciosis*, both Hopkins' and Tennyson's poetry are built upon the presence of the signified. This is not merely metaphysical wish-fulfillment, but a source of suffering for the narrator that each constructs in his poetry. For Hopkins, the ultimate sign is present in all signifiers, but is silent to his own pain.⁵ For Tennyson, absence is magnified and made nearly concrete. Through *In Memoriam*, Tennyson mourns the death of his friend Arthur Hallam, dwelling on the absence of his dead friend in a way that paradoxically makes their past life together and the future eschaton promised in the Epilogue equally present. Whether spoken to Christ playing in the faces of men or the "Strong Son of God, immortal love," these poems present themselves as *chronos* mingling with *kairos* in the *aeon*, all equally present, none completely subsumed to make room for the other.

Primarily, these are poems about the human person, which is difficult to reconcile with the anti-humanist tendencies of deconstruction.⁶ In Hopkins' poem, "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire," the natural world may be, on one level, an impersonal cosmological wind, but there is a two-fold importance to this statement outside of nature itself. First, it is a changing fire that will be recapitulated in a

person: Christ. Second, nature is exclusively perceived by a human speaker in the lyrical poetry of Hopkins who then both mourns and praises it. Granted both these acts ascribe dignity and importance to the natural world, but extra significance is directed toward the human ability to ascribe. In “Spring and Fall: to a Young Child,” it is the eponymous child, Margaret, who mourns for the trees and finally for herself. In “As Kingfishers Catch Fire,” all animals may self-disclose their nature through the act of existing, but the “just man” discloses himself by recognizing their beauty. Ultimately, the just man discloses more as the image of Christ: “I say more, I say Christ.” Tennyson's poems are also about human perception as everything natural is changed by the emotional state of the speaker, such as the yew tree, an evergreen in reality, is barren in *In Memoriam* (Gatty).

In this thesis, I will further develop the hermeneutic of *synoeciosis* first through close readings of Hopkins' poetry. This figure of doubling is so prevalent in his writing that a pattern will form. Following the Derridean principle of iterability, we can see that for any word to be comprehensible, it must also be repeatable, and that signs must be able to be iterated in different contexts (Derrida, 7). At the same time “iterability alters,” so divergent meanings will arise from the competition, similar and yet contrary to the original (Derrida, 62). Accepting the tension that arises from iterability, the second chapter will read *In Memoriam* through the hermeneutic of *synoeciosis*, suggesting that the same pattern that runs throughout Hopkins' poetry is actively holding the great elegy together since his own poetic project to use words as an opiate (*In Memoriam*, Canto 5) is superseded by the active linking of contraries.

Following that, I will offer the dramatic monologue, “St. Simeon Stylites,” as a possible countersign to *synoeciosis*. Tennyson’s grave hermit addresses the contrary communities of heaven and earth through the rhetoric of antithesis, but this may only serve to obscure another form of coupling that is outside the reach of his will. Once I have analyzed “St. Simeon Stylites” through the hermeneutic of antithesis, I will propose the point of divergence when the speaker himself transitions from a rhetoric of antithesis to a rhetoric of *synoeciosis* by actively inviting a priest to climb the pillar and deliver the supreme coupling of heaven and earth, the Eucharist. After examining the works of these two poets, I will propose that the figure of *synoeciosis* is analogous to the act of reading.

Chapter One

Ghost Guessed: Reading Hopkins through the Hermeneutic of Synoeciosis

Hopkins' his poetry characteristically delights in doubling. Every example of doubling can be read through a hermeneutic of antithesis where wild contraries are linked only to fall and gall themselves and nothing more, but that doesn't seem to satisfy the consistent theme of complementarity in diversity. Perhaps, instead, every poetic dichotomy in Hopkins' poetry, whether structural, linguistic, or thematic, forms a synergistic unity in keeping with the Pseudo-Dionysian principle that "visible things are images of invisible things" and that "phenomenal beauties become images of invisible beauty," (*Epistle X; Celestial Hierarchy III*).⁷ In a way, this principle provides the mechanism for *synoeciosis*. The two contraries are able to direct the reader beyond the aporia because they are images of the very hypostasis that they trace.

In the following, I will propose that if we adopt a hermeneutic of *synoeciosis*, then all the various forms of doubling within Hopkins' poetry have a cohesive aesthetic and thematic *telos*. Rather than being vain attempts of clustering contraries around an empty and meaningless core, they are linguistic images of the hypostatic union, which is itself the *synoeciosis* of humanity and divinity.

1.1 "*Spring and Fall*"

In the poem, "Spring and Fall: To a Young Child," the speaker seems to chide a young girl, named Margaret, for prizing natural things, such as leaves, above human frailty. It can be natural for the reader to become uncomfortable with the idea of an

older man, presuming that the speaker is similar in age to the author, reproaching a child for responding to the changing of seasons with sadness. Perhaps, the way the speaker then ends the poem by telling Margaret that she has even more to sorrow over, her own death, shows how little compassion he has. However, this is reading “Spring and Fall” through the hermeneutic of anthithesis, assuming that the speaker and the child are completely contrasted and locked in a power struggle. When read through the hermeneutic of *synoeciosis*, this poem suggests that Margaret is the one who has the insight, while the speaker is the recipient of her wisdom.

In reading the poem primarily through a lens of complementarity, I will propose that Margaret intuitively understands what only the speaker can fully articulate, that “sorrow’s springs are the same.” The various thematic and rhythmic revolutions of springing and falling throughout the poem prepare Margaret and the reader to divine the hidden meaning of the ambiguous pronoun of the final line: “It is the blight man was born for.”

“Spring and Fall” is filled with figures of doubling, ranging from the playful and childlike puns to a more serious study of human knowledge and mortality. The title itself contains meanings from each tonal registry. At first glance *spring* and *fall* denote the seasons, contrasting new growth and natural decay. On another level, *spring* can be a light upward motion, while *fall* a downward motion. When understood this way, these two words take on a more childish aspect, as they can now be associated with the playful movement of children’s games and with the singsong rhythm of a nursery rhyme, which seems to be embedded in the simple and

symmetrical rhyming couplets: AA-BB-CC-DDD-EE-FF-GG. When associated with the final couplet, “it is the blight man was born for, / It is Margaret you mourn for,” *spring* and *fall* have more theological connotations with the original spring of Genesis and the Fall of humanity, suggesting that the unclear pronoun, *it*, is the punishment of death.

Other puns are hidden in the poem. “Goldengrove unleaving” can mean that the trees are losing their leaves, but it can also mean that Goldengrove is not leaving. The one time the word *spring* is used again in the poem contains the same double meaning as the title, “Sorrow’s springs are the same,” but that in itself is an upward motion of hope, offering a mixed connotation. It’s a spring, source of life and water, but it belongs to sorrow. As with the linguistic and sonic doubling, the poem is filled with coupled contraries. As with the central dichotomy of spring and fall, Margaret’s “fresh thoughts” will fade “as the heart grows older.” The corporeal heart and mouth are respectively linked to the incorporeal mind and ghost through alliteration, and living leaves are paired with inanimate “*things* of man,” which in turn links living persons with the dead leaves of line eight. All of this is rhythmically represented with the rising and falling of “by and by,” as this is a poem of doubles linked by a common core.

The combination of playful and grave registers, the doubled wording through puns and coupling of contraries, and the sprung rhythm itself hollow out a space where the implied reader meets the speaker and Margaret. Though akin to the dramatic monologues of Hopkins’ forbearers, Browning and Tennyson, this poem has

qualities more suggestive of a dialogue. For instance, the speaker is not in love with his own voice, like the narrators of Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess" and Tennyson's "St. Simeon Stylites"; rather, he is willing to enter into the language of play, speaking to the child in gentle singsong couplets that rhyme "man" with "can." In the principal dramatic monologues of the Victorians, the reader has to enter into the neurotic babbling of the speaker and parse truth from delusion. They are poems of "I" with the "you" of other characters, the implied reader relegated to secondary concern.

"Spring and Fall," however, is a poem of "you." The second person pronoun dominates the poem while the first person pronoun is completely absent. Although it is still technically an "I" poem, like Tennyson's "St. Simeon Stylites," the personality of the speaker recedes to the background and is almost conflated with the poet in the way a lyrical poem might be. In this way, it might be an example of what Ralph Rader calls a masked lyric. Whereas in a dramatic monologue, the speaker is a distinct character from the implied author, in a dramatic lyric the "reader, following the poet, is imaginatively conflated with the speaker's represented subjective act, as for the moment he dwells in the image of the poet's spirit" (Rader, 104).

Consequently, "the dramatic lyric speakers have no name or specified identity, unlike dramatic monologue speakers who do have names and specified personal identities" (105). By letting the personality of the speaker diminish, Hopkins allows Margaret to take central stage. Hopkins is still there, but he allows his poetic "I" to act as the *synoeciosis* that links the subject, Margaret, to the implied reader. Since the implied

reader “dwells in the image of the poet’s spirit,” he or she is invited to speak the poem along with Hopkins, from the opening line, “Margaret, are you grieving” (Rader, 104).

The otherness of Margaret is so essential to the poem that it supplants the rhyme scheme as the second couplet ends in repetition instead: “you / With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?” Through such an emphasis, the reader can follow the gaze of the speaker from the child, to the falling leaves, back to the child. There is a sense in other dramatic monologues that the speaker would continue with or without an audience, but the speaker of “Spring and Fall” constantly reminds us that he would have nothing to say if Margaret had not somehow begun the dialogue. She grieved, and she was noticed in turn by the speaker. Perhaps because he suggests that she will not “spare a sigh” once she is older, we can then assume that she elicited his attention by heaving a sigh. In that one sigh, the speaker understands her intuitive response to the changing season and articulates it for her. That one sigh, heard before the first line of the poem, contains the entire poem within it.

Whole worlds are contained within Margaret, who is the child and the old woman, a community of mind, mouth, heart, and ghost, and this entire hidden life is contained in one sigh. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that her name means pearl, something small and of more value than its size suggests. All of the rhythmic and conceptual doubling of the poem draws us to the interiority of Margaret, who is influenced by the external change of season. Through *synoeciosis*, all of this serves to reveal Margaret’s hidden insight into the frailty of human nature. Her mental faculties

are doubled between the active and the receptive, the discursive and the diaphanous. In a way reminiscent of the traditional understanding of reason as both *ratio* and *intellectus*, she has the active mouth and mind on one end and the receptive heart and ghost on the other.⁸ Her mouth is dumb and her mind is stilled before the mystery of falling leaves: “Nor mouth had, no nor mind expressed.” But her spirit can intuit the analogy of ephemeral nature to her own mortality: “What heart heard of ghost guessed.” She may not be able to articulate this intuition in the way that the speaker is able to, but later she “will weep and know why.” Her intuition, originating in the *intellectus*, is transmitted to the heart, allowing her to know it eventually by her *ratio*.

When writing to Bridges, Hopkins noted that “mystery means an incomprehensible certainty: without certainty, without formulation there is no interest ... the clearer the formulation the greater the interest.” (187). Margaret does not have direct access to the mystery through her *ratio* because it is incomprehensible, but her *intellectus* can grasp it because it is certain. Because formulation is essential when probing a mystery, the way the speaker articulates what Margaret intuits, especially in the harsh clarity of the penultimate line, “It is the blight man was born for,” does not diminish interest, but rather increases it.

In the mystery of human frailty, fresh thoughts spring from the mind only to fall down to an aging heart, but their shared sorrow originates in the same spring. All change is wrapped around one constant: “Sorrow’s springs are the same.” The speaker advises that Margaret not concern herself with the name of this sorrow because it is something that can be doubled and expressed in multiple names for the

very reason that one name does not fully describe it. Leaves and the things of man are contraries revolving around one shared fate “the blight man was born for.”

Margaret’s inner world is mirrored by the poem’s structural doubling. The fifteen lines of the poem contain two septets balancing on the middle line. The first septet is characterized by confusion. The speaker is asking Margaret if she is grieving and if she can care for leaves “like the things of man,” suggesting that she may not understand why she grieves. Conversely, the second septet is characterized by gradual understanding. The heart has heard what the ghost has guessed: “It is Margaret you mourn for.” Like a traditional sonnet, the first septet presents a problem that is at least partially resolved by the second septet. In this way, the eighth line is like the volta, where the poem turns from problem to resolution. But rather than operating like a normal turn, which may be hidden in an enjambment, this one stops us with a full line: “Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie.” Moreover, it is followed by *and* rather than *but*, suggesting that the second septet doesn’t resolve the first but exists in tension with it: “And yet you will weep and know why.” Each septet is like a pole revolving around the single interior line: “Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie.”

The tone could at first appear flippant, suggesting that Margaret is naïve for crying over trees, and that once she has “come to such sights colder” she will not “spare a sigh.” However, this line is too structurally important to be thrown away like that. Not only does it hold both ends of the poem together, but it announces its own importance: the w’s and vowels slow the reader and the alliteration suggests inner unity. Leaves are important because the things of man are important. A hard denial of

the importance of living things like trees would not seem to be consistent with what we know of Hopkins. Assuming a sharp divergence between the Hopkins who loves nature and the Hopkins who struggles with human frailty follows from the hermeneutic of antithesis. This is the same reasoning that presents Hopkins' doubled vocation as priest and poet and the transition from his early nature sonnets to his later terrible sonnets as a contradiction (Raiger 64). As Robert Martin points out in his biography of Hopkins, "His sorrow at the destruction of trees was to remain as fresh at the end of his life as it was when he was an undergraduate" (56). When read through the hermeneutic of *synoeciosis*, the implied reader is prompted to ask different questions. If she no longer spares a sigh for "Goldengrove unleaving" or "worlds of wanwood leafmeal," will she continue to sigh for Margaret? If she didn't care for leaves, would she care for the things of man? Here, *syneociosis* can be understood as the use of two contraries, the natural world and humanity, to unveil a hidden reality: the shared "blight" of death.

Containing worlds within the liminal space created by the poem may be characteristic of Hopkins. In his English paraphrase of *Adoro Te Devote*, a rising to heaven is counterbalanced by a descent to earth, creating a space in between that the poet inhabits. The Godhead is hiding, the low heart is lost in God, and "Truth himself speaks truly or there's nothing true." At the heart of the matter: "Blood whereof a single drop has power to win / All the world forgiveness of its world of sin." All of the pain of the world can be washed in one drop, just as Margaret's one sigh expresses her entire person. The divine/human blood encloses the world, just as

“Spring and Fall” encloses “worlds of wanwood leafmeal.” From duality to centrality, there is an aesthetic of unity from paradox, an aesthetic of the Incarnation. The dichotomous inward/outward movement of the soul and body resonates with the upward/downward movement of heaven condescending to earth and the Incarnation lifting humanity to heaven. It should be no wonder that Hopkins, who confided in Coleridge’s grandson “that the trivialness of life is, and personally to each one, ought to be seen to be, done away with by the Incarnation,” would include everything from leaves and “the things of man” within an Incarnational figure like *synoeciosis* (*Further Letters*, 19). The Incarnation itself, along with other related concepts such as the Eucharist, offers a pattern of *synoeciosis* since the person, Christ, is considered equally God and Man in the tension of the hypostatic union, rather than a synthesis that results in a divinized man or a humanized divinity.

Granted, this has its roots in Greek poetry and rhetoric. As Gardner notes, Hopkins was influenced by the traditional relationship between interiority and exteriority:

We have seen how, for Hopkins, Greek lyric poetry provided a definite criterion of perfection in matters of rhythm and texture, form and rhetoric—aspects of poetry in the fusion of which are united the inwardness of thought and emotion and the outwardness of movement and expression. (131)

But just as the *logos* carries over from Hellenism to Christianity, so, too, do the rhythmic movements of Greek verse line up with these theological poems. Rather

than choosing between one septet or another, spring or fall, or even one meaning over another, Hopkins invites us to join him saying, “Both are my confession, both are my belief” (“S. Thomae Aquinatis Rhythmus ad SS. Sacramentum”).

1.2 “*The Windhover*”

Whereas “Spring and Fall” draws us to the inner world, all the while crafting the boundaries of a liminal space around us, “The Windhover” unleashes that hidden world as though it were fire. Though any doubling could merely be an example of that linguistic play that is common in poetry, it is given a teleological edge in Hopkins’ poetry. Words have double meanings and chime with one another not only to celebrate the capaciousness of language but to hint at truth beyond the outer edge of the aporia. Both poles are necessary because they trace the outline of the hypostasis; each word includes multiple denotations and even more connotations because no single one can sufficiently convey meaning on its own. A bird is a knight and a thing all at once because it points to Christ, and the speaker experiences not only the inscape of an animal, but also analogously experiences the Incarnation:

My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of; the mastery of the thing!

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

In this section, I’ll explore how *synoeciosis* reveals the hypostasis, while in the following section, I’ll examine what that hypostasis is.

Much like one gametophyte can produce both male and female gametes, Hopkins combines multiple lexical meanings in single words.⁹ Scholarship on “The Windhover” emphasizes the peculiar nature of the word *buckle* in the poem. It may at first seem to denote convergence since the previous line is presenting a litany of things that all converge in the falcon, such as the beauty, pride, and plumage:

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

However, *buckle* is a contronym, so it can also mean to crumple. Instead of all those anthropomorphic values being held fast together by the falcon, they could instead be breaking open at the moment of its dive. This reading would be supported by the fire that breaks out directly following the dive and the image of embers breaking open after a fall. Moreover, if *buckle* were understood as crumpling, then it would resonate with the wimpling motion of the bird’s wing. However, all of the linguistic elements point to an increasing union between the speaker and the bird.

Following his overarching theory that Hopkins’ poetry is an interplay of particle and wave theory, Lawler proposes that:

“buckle” meaning “to clasp,” “to join together,” seems to be the preferable reading. “Left hand” there is brute beauty and valor and act—all lexically synonymous with the instantaneous and the particulate; “right,” air, pride, and plume, all synonymous with the tremulously undular and sigmoid. Air and pride are here parallel, since pride is to be read primarily as *superbia*, loftiness—and plumes, if they do anything at all, “wave.” (180)

By capitalizing “AND” in the first tercet, Hopkins signals a transition of *synoeciosis* rather than antithesis and may be suggesting that *buckle* be interpreted as a convergence rather than a crumpling. At the same time, the completely capitalized conjunction is then as explosive as the fire that breaks from the bird or the “gold-vermillion” innards of the broken ember. In that way, the conjunction that would normally be quietly pointing toward similarity between thoughts is almost violently asserting itself through a disruptive shout. Perhaps just as a single grove contains “worlds of wanwood leafmeal,” *buckle* can be capacious enough to be its own antonym.

The word *brute* is further suggestive of cross coupling. At first, it seems to obviously denote an animal and connote savagery or natural and unrefined power. This understanding of the word is Latin in origin, as *brutus* means heavy and came into English via the French word *brut* (brute, adj). In this way, the “brute beauty” of the bird’s natural ability to fly is represented by other words that have natural connotations, such as *act*, *air*, and *plume*, which are in turn all buckled with the more abstract and anthropomorphic words, *valour* and *pride*. On another level the word *act* can connote the human will as much as *valour* and *pride*, and the word *plume* can refer to knightly regalia as easily as the physical livery of the falcon. Considering how capacious this line is, as well as its relative importance in that it begins the sestet and leads up to the central image of buckling, perhaps *brute* can have as varied a denotation as the other words do connotations.

James Brophy proposes that *brute* could also be read according to its Celtic origins (Brophy 1). In Middle English texts, *brut/brute* can refer to a Briton in a way that alludes to the mythic founding by Brutus (Brophy 2). “Brute beauty” then is not only a wild beauty, which would appeal to the narrator in many of Hopkins’ poems, but it is also a particularly British beauty. This understanding of *brute* is not Germanic and Anglo-Saxon, but a Celtic rendering of a Latin original. However, this is not the bottom of etymological possibility. Following its association with Caesar’s trusted Brutus, *brute* was synonymous with *knight* in Middle English texts (2). In Layamon’s *Brut*, the word is used to mean both the land of Britons and knights: “In Brutland þer wes moni gōd Brut” (2). If the first tercet is read with this understanding, then it becomes a place where knightly beauty, valour, air, pride, and plume all buckle. The appearance of *chevalier* is not then merely the most visible manifestation of the implicit equestrian imagery, but also a concentrated exclamation of knighthood balanced with its synonym at the beginning of the tercet. In this way, the first tercet is bookended by variations of *knight* that chiastically point inward toward both the word *buckle* and the buckling conjunction, “AND.” Brophy unites these layers of meaning, proposing:

The beauty of Hopkins’ falcon, then, if the linguistically erudite poet did intend this medieval nuance, is not simply wild or savage but also princely. The conception of “Brute beauty” as a kind of kenning for knightly British beauty seems particularly fitting to Hopkins’ medieval scene of “kingdom,” “chevalier,” “minion,” “pride,” and “plume.” (2)

If the poem does provide a multivalent understanding of *brute*, then not only are wild and courtly beauty pointing inward to that fire that is “a billion / Times told lovelier,” but so are the chivalric traditions of Britain and France.

Even subtle references to gender hidden within the francophone language seem to suggest the theme of complementarity. Grammatically, the French loan words would be gendered in their original context. In French, the masculine word that refers to an unreasonable animal nature is *brut*, while the feminine word is *brute*, which is the spelling that was incorporated into the English word (brute, adj). *Falcon* is grammatically neutered as it can be either masculine or feminine, but Lawler proposes that it is etymologically feminine (Lawler 182). The word *falcon* can be seen as feminine because there was a specific word for the male hawk, which was *tiercel* or *tercel*, meaning third born (182). The birth-order reference was meant to allude to the small size of the male hawk, suggesting that it was not fit for hunting (182). The female hawk, on the other hand, would be suitable for falconry and the majestic equestrian and chivalric imagery. Like the speaker’s heart, words that are grammatically and etymologically feminine are hidden along with the masculine words, *chevalier* and *dauphin*. Nature and court, English and French, and male and female here buckle in a sonnet dedicated to Christ, perhaps suggesting the tension held within an incarnate divinity. Each contrary is necessary to the poem’s theme of complementarity. Without the mixture of an English and French lexicon and the union of the natural world and the socially constructed royal court, the reader would not be directed to the deeper complementarity of the masculine and the feminine.

Likewise, if we emphasize the divinity of Christ and exclude the humanity, or prefer the humanity of Christ over the divinity, we have a concept different than the personhood of an incarnate *logos*.

Even the poetic structures of the represented traditions are indissolubly linked.

Stylistically, “The Windhover” is a *synoeciosis* of continental and English poetics.

From the Anglo-Saxon tradition, the poem is filled with alliteration. Perhaps reinforcing the theme of complementarity, the alliteration links the two language groups with an Anglo-Saxon word closely linked to or modifying a corresponding Anglo-Norman word respectively: morning/minion, daylight/dauphin, brute/beauty, break/buckle. To the alliteration is added the kenning of *windhover*, *bow-bend*, and *gold-vermillion*. As an influence from across the Channel, we have a sonnet. Instead of being a Spenserian sonnet, this is a Petrarchan one with an octet and a sestet. Like a Petrarchan sonnet, the octet follows a rhyme scheme of ABBAABBA but subverts that structure slightly as every A rhyme is a slant rhyme with every B rhyme: king/riding. Another layer of slant rhyme is then added onto the traditional rhyme scheme in a Petrarchan sonnet. Consequently, one set of rhyming words “chimes” with the other set of rhyming words, wrapping the continental style within the Welsh style.

1.3 Heraclitean Fire

Hopkins has used contraries to reveal an inner world that is both capacious and hidden. “Spring and Fall,” with its hidden water, “sorrow’s springs,” and “The Windhover,” with its hidden fire that “breaks” for the “a billion / Times told lovelier,”

may in turn be another linking of contraries that seems to be a contradiction. In one, every dichotomy is coiled around “sorrow’s springs,” while in the other feather, motion, and air *buckle* around the loveliest and most dangerous of fires. Applying the hermeneutic of *synoeciosis*, we can see how water and fire could then be an encompassing set of contraries pointing to a deeper foundation: the hypostasis that Heraclitus proposed was fire.

In the biography, *A Very Private Life*, Robert Martin proposes that Hopkins’ fascination with water may have a pre-Socratic influence:

Hopkins’s poetry is the plain record of the atavistic appeal he felt in rivers like the Cherwell, in pools, wells, or the sea itself: water, preferably moving, became, as much as for Heraclitus, the symbol of mutable beauty masquerading as permanence, and, conversely, of form transcending decay. (30)

For Heraclitus, the underlying foundation, or hypostasis, of reality was fire, meaning that change was constant (Graham). This ontological flux arises from the union of opposites, as objects are the same and not the same when considered temporally. Rather than as flames, fire as hypostasis should be understood as a hot cosmological wind. In Hopkins’ poetry, the unique fire of personhood and thisness is linked with the breath of the Holy Spirit to show where change and multiplicity give way to eternal unity, a cosmological *synoeciosis* (Graham).

“God’s Grandeur” begins with the unity of God by exclaiming that “the world is charged with the grandeur of God,” and then moves right away to imagery of

physical abundance with “flaming out...shining...oozing.” The positive associations of abundance are then replaced by language suggesting scarcity, since generations of men are all affected by trades and industry:

And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

However the previous abundance is so vast that nature is never spent. But why?

“There lives the dearest freshness deep down things...Because the Holy Ghost over the bent / World broods with warm breast and with ah! Bright wings.” Heraclitus imagined an impersonal warm wind at the center of the cosmos, but Hopkins sees a personal divinity. The human response to this hypostasis is suggested in “Pied Beauty.” The poem moves from the glory of God to dappled things, the union of contrasts like the “skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow,” because even though they are “counter, original, spare, strange,” they are fathered by he “whose beauty is past change,” and so all these things must do one thing, the one thing necessary:

“Praise him.” Praise is demanded from persons and irrational creature because

Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves—goes its self; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.* (“As Kingfishers Catch Fire”)

For this reason, the sensible qualities of the windhover all coalesce around it in order to break out in the Heraclitean fire. However persons say more, we say Christ, “For Christ plays in ten thousand places, / Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his / To the Father through the features of men’s faces.” The center of every contrary in Hopkins’ use of *synoeciosis* is Christ because for him the framework for coupling two

contraries is the Incarnation. For this reason, the tension between life and death as beautifully represented in the terrible sonnets is resolved by the comfort of the resurrection. The body may die and crumble to ash but, “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.” It is not enough to be a type of Christ, or analogous to the Incarnation through being a composite of soul and body, but the speaker of this poem must be nothing but Christ. Rather than removing all tension, though, this assumption into the divine life retains all contraries completely because the Incarnation is the ultimate *synoeciosis*.

1.4 The Continual Synoeciosis of Chronos and Kairos

Time is doubled in the poetry of Hopkins to suggest the nature of eternity. Following the ancient Greek dichotomy that made its way into the patristic understanding of messianic time, the counted time of *chronos* is subsumed by the supreme moment of *kairos* in Hopkins’ poetry in order to suggest, in outline, the coming *aeon*. The terrible sonnets especially feel the monotonous oppression of *chronos* as the anguished speaker feels “the fell of dark, not day” and laments “What hours, O what black hours we have spent... Yet longer light’s delay.”

In “Thou art Indeed Just, Lord” temporal words associated with *chronos*, such as *hours*, expand from a chronological register into the more indeterminate time of *kairos*. According to the speaker, others “do in spare hours more thrive” than he who is “Time’s eunuch.” The “sots and thralls of lust” spend only “spare hours” and they are the ones who “thrive,” but Hopkins, who spends his “life upon thy [God’s]

cause,” sees himself and his works as essentially sterile. Chronistic hours expand to the kaironistic moment as the speaker clarifies in “I Wake to Feel the Fell of Dark, not Day” that by “Hours I mean years, mean life.” In “No Worst There is None,” Hopkins uses the Thanatos/Hypnos relationship, writing, “all / Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.” The anastrophe points inward, with *life* and *sleep* enveloping *death* and *dies*, suggesting that *chronos* is enveloped by *kairos*. Like *chronos*, death is a discrete moment toward which all counted time moves. Life, however, is an uncountable, all-inclusive state like *kairos*, while the act of sleeping is the further interpenetration of timelessness that punctuates our experience of *chronos*.

This movement from hour to life might be the key to the last line of “Thou art Indeed Just, Lord.” Hopkins may “not breed one work that wakes,” but he has given his life to the Lord of life, and it is that same Lord who he asks for rain: “O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.” This is a sonnet and yet it ends with a further problem, rather than a resolution. With that last plea, the reader falls off the edge of the poem and the edge of the page into the eternity of a silent God, a lord of life. As the last catching syllable of the poem is breathed, it leads the reader to the same eternal moment that it has been presenting, where one waits for the divine answer. The reader is again invited to follow the speaker’s gaze, jointly hoping that the roots below will be watered. Even more fitting, the distinctive, countable syllables of the line fade to undividable silence.

Keeping in mind how the figure of *synoeciosis* points to a third, hidden hypostasis through the coupling of contraries, this moment of silence suggests that the

final integration of the *chronos/kairos* binary will not merely result in a synthesis that can be experienced in the present moment. Even *kairos* falls short of the fullness of time, and *chronos* still remains because the end of the poem is characterized by hope rather than fulfillment. Here, the reader and the speaker have reached the end of *kairos* and *chronos* is still present since the plea, “send my roots rain,” suggests that counted time is still moving toward eternity. We are at the aporia of time itself. It seems as though there is no atemporal or eternal being to respond, that the Hellenistic world was wrong to ever differentiate being from time, but the sense of hope persists. Not only will the poet’s roots be watered, but they are currently being watered through the poetic act. We fall off the page with the speaker only to realize that the request was a sign of its fulfillment. Through lamenting in verse that he has made no work that will last, the poet does just that. Unlike *chronos* and *kairos*, which can both be subjectively experienced, *aeon* can only be hinted at. All throughout the poem, the lord of life is working from outside of *chronos* and *kairos*.

1.5 Give Beauty Back

The call to praise God and to let Christ play in our limbs and faces now and in the future eschaton has a pious appeal, but it still leaves us with Margaret’s primal sorrow at her own mortality. Granted, this is essentially answered in the promise of eternity just discussed, but humans are still locked into temporality; the heart will still grow older. Even with the promise of a new body, or the assurance that a personal God eternally broods over the cosmos, the human person is daily assaulted by “such sights colder.”

We do not know how “To keep at bay / Age and age’s evils, hoar hair, / Ruck and wrinkle, drooping, dying, death’s worst, winding sheets, tombs and worms and tumbling to decay,” so the echo begins in our hearts, “Despair, despair, despair, despair.” “The Leaden Echo” takes up Margaret’s vast sigh as it rebounds against the cool, impassive stone sides of a well. It offers the natural wisdom that is so readily available to *ratio*, that when it comes to the desire to keep beauty back, there is nothing that can be done. The insight of “Spring and Fall” isn’t enough to repel this echo, so the same falcon that revealed itself in fire is now truly moving farther away to the point that it can no longer hear the falconer: “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world” (Yeats).

“The Golden Echo” then takes all of this and responds with only one airy aspiration, which perhaps mirrors Margaret’s original sigh: “Spare!” Rather than having a different word violently stop the repetition of “despair,” part of the word, the accented part, in a way the stressed part, is taken up and reappropriated to express its opposing virtue, “Spare!” The counter poem is then gentle, never attacking the previous echo or saying its concerns are merely vain, but taking all those concerns and wrapping them in an eternal beauty. “The Golden Echo” does not suggest that “The Leaden Echo” is completely depraved, but rather points out the seed of what is good in it.

James Hanvey interprets this transition through Hegelian dialectics:

The transcendence of 'The Golden Echo' never abandons the leaden one. Its echoes do not fade away as one might expect them to in the

natural order and as the 'falling feet' of the repeated 'despair' suggest in the first movement. It is precisely in the ball of 'despair' that 'The Golden Echo' is caught--'Spare'—and 'pitched' at a new level. Transformed to a 'rising foot' it expands throughout the whole of the second movement sending its ripples in ever wider, intense and passionate circles to create an ascending fugue of life and grace. (55)

“The Golden Echo” is then the answer to Margaret and every plea of the terrible sonnets not because it is a reversal but because it is, in Hopkinsian terms, the self that “The Leaden Echo” should be selving.¹⁰ Using Hegelian terminology, Hanvey further represents the relationship between the two echo poems as one of synthesis: “In this way, through its own form and movement 'The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo' exemplifies the *Aufhebung* from nature through grace to glory” (55). Human nature, with its material frailty and temporal finitude, is sublated (*aufhebung*) into the divine glory, where “The flower of beauty” is “fastened with the tenderest truth / To its own best being and its loveliness of youth.” But how is it that nature can transcend itself and transform into glory? Such a statement is even more difficult to accept after just having read the dark litany of aging found in “The Leaden Echo.” We are told that grace is the mechanism by which nature is transformed to glory, but what does that mean? Hanvey continues:

However, the possibility of this transformation, the “key” to it, lies in the mystery of the way in which “Spare” can be brought out of “despair”. In it is contained Hopkins's vision of God's *immanent*

transcendence upon which his own aesthetic is built; it is the dynamic architecture of presence, “to flash from the flame to the flame, then tower from the grace to the grace.” (55)

That final quote is aptly taken from the third stanza of *The Wreck of the Deutschland*. It is during the moment when the speaker, overcome with spiritual anguish and doubt, has run to the “heart of the Host.” Similar to the speaker in the Prologue of *In Memoriam*, the speaker here is confounded by how the same God who is “giver of breath and bread” is also the God whose frown is associated with “the hurtle of hell.” In seeking solace from the Eucharist, the speaker is confronted by another set of coupled contraries. The power of the host is in its lightness, that it is “dovewinged” and “carrier-witted,” and as such it can “flash from the flame to the flame, then tower from the grace to the grace.” For Hopkins (and later we will see for Tennyson as well), the answer to a God who is “Lord of living and dead” is Christ. Specifically, it is the *synoeciosis* of an incarnate *logos*, following John the Apostle’s association of Christ with the Hellenistic concept of the eternal word in the Prologue of his Gospel. As *logos*, he is necessarily eternal and uncontainable, but once incarnate, he is paradoxically contained. As Philo of Alexandria notes, the divine *logos* is necessarily efficacious, but Hopkins’ host is silent (*The Sacrament of Language*, 33). The “giver of breath and bread,” who is also “beauty’s self and beauty’s giver” takes on the same nature that is prone to “Age and age’s evils.”

Perhaps it is not happenstance that Hanvey uses *presence* in his explanation, alluding to the concept of the real presence of the Eucharist that Hopkins describes in

his paraphrase of *Adoro Te* as “Godhead here in hiding.” At the height of despair, Hopkins turns to the one who Tennyson hails as “Strong son of God, immortal love,” knowing that he who is “an all youth” once died and gave away his own breath. The personal promise of resurrection, explored in the Heraclitean poem, is anchored in the double natures of Christ (one ephemeral taken up in one that is eternal) and dramatized by the transition from one echo to the other. Following these same lines from the *Wreck*, David Miller links the divine presence with all of its creative implications to the formal aspects of poetry, which “enacts in its rhythm, rhyme, and meter, the ‘sway’ of the divine source and then becomes equal with, rather [than] merely an expression of, the sacred force of God’s presence in the world” (78). A simple, monosyllabic aspiration, *spare*, is a microcosm of the Resurrection, and its heavier counterpart, *despair*, is the body that can no longer be left behind after the Incarnation.

However, the gap between *spare* and *despair* may still be too vast. One may ask, what is it that Margaret can do as the leaves fall, or how can “Time’s eunuch” make at least one work that lasts? Yes, *chronos* will bleed into eternity, and yes, in that eternity, poor Jack who “voids with shame” now will be “immortal diamond,” but what can he do now? St. Winifred’s maiden chorus has the answer: “Give beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty, back to God, beauty’s self and beauty’s giver.” The simple, immutable divinity is doubled again as in the Incarnation; it is both the desired object and the giver of that object. All *synoeciosis* in Hopkins’ poetry finds its origin in this: God in self-giving through beauty and the Incarnation is an eternal and

unresolvable tension that serves as the type for the harmonious coupling of all other contraries. Whole worlds are found in the beautiful because beauty's self is the divine Godhead.

If beauty is God and God is beauty, then perhaps beauty shares in the *synoeciosis* of an active and passive divinity. In the terrible sonnets, God is silent and apparently passive, but the plea itself projects us toward the eventual activity of God. Later, we will see how Tennyson engages a similar paradox by presenting the Epilogue of *In Memoriam* as a divine answer to the plea of the Prologue. In the echo poems, beauty is a passive and temporal thing that will not last, but, more importantly, it is also the grace through which we pass to glory, the mechanism that changes *despair* to *spare*. Consider again the conflation of poetry and the divine presence: “[Poetry enacts] the ‘sway’ of the divine source and then becomes equal with, rather [than] merely an expression of, the sacred force of God’s presence in the world” (Miller 78).

So far, “despair” has been sublated by “spare,” earthly beauty has been taken up in heavenly beauty, eternal youth has swallowed the wrinkles of age. This speculative dialectic, however, only brings us to the aporia. The synthesis we are left with is only a spiritualized beauty, leaving the thesis of earthly youth to still lose its integrity and dissolve into the stronger antithesis. Keeping in mind the sacred force of divine presence as a hypostasis, let’s invert the privilege of eternal beauty with earthly beauty. With *synoeciosis*, both polls retain their integrity and stress. In this way, we can reinterpret “Give beauty back” as not only a kenotic self-emptying, but

also as a statement of divine activity in the *aeon*, beyond the aporia. God is beauty's giver first through creation, and ultimately through the promised resurrection, but through the Incarnation, he recapitulates earthly beauty. "Spare" chimes with "despair" because we cannot escape earthly frailty through synthesis. Instead, both echoes must be held together in a continual *synoeciosis*.

In writing his later poems, Hopkins seems to have reached this same aporia and recognized that part of giving beauty back to God includes recognizing the beauty in our weak human nature rather than in spite of it. Robert Boyle proposes that:

This late reaction suggests beneath *The Wreck* a human honesty that will realize fully one day that faith is not a flight from, not a negation of human animality, an illusion that young Hopkins, like the young Stephen Dedalus at least approached. (112)

In "The Shepherd's Brow," Hopkins seems to come to his most explicit realization that his animality is something that ought to be accepted and not smoothed over: "And I that die these deaths that feed this flame, / That...in smooth spoons spy life's masque mirrored: tame / My tempests there, my fire and fever fussy." That same Heraclitean fire from before is now being fed by his consumptive lungs, and a spoon acts as a mechanism for *synoeciosis* as it mirrors his own feverish humanity back at him. Finally, in "To RB," a poignant look at his own dry years that is, paradoxically, presented through a beautiful mastery of verse:

The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation,
My winter world, that scarcely breathes that bliss

Now, yields you, with some sighs, our explanation.

The same sigh that prompted the speaker of “Spring and Fall” to chide, counsel, and console Margaret, that rang defiantly against the leaden echo of despair, now yields an explanation. Margaret’s original mourning was taken up and sublimated by “The Golden Echo,” but her breath didn’t neatly end there. Rather, it was breathed back into the poet’s “winter world.” Yes, Margaret, “It is the blight man was born for,” but this same life is marked by “The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation.” Gerard Manley Hopkins is a poet of joy, as Gardner noted, but that joy comes through and returns to his own human frailty (33). In his doubts and plaguing sense of artistic sterility, he gave beauty back to God in that very last moment when he said: “I am happy, so happy.”

Chapter Two

Things Fall Apart and Gash Gold-Vermillion: Reading Tennyson through Hopkins

With Hopkins' last words fading, we come to Alfred Tennyson and wonder if a hermeneutic suggested by the contraries of a priest-poet will address the grave dialectic of the Laureate. In many ways, Tennyson is the poet of the widening gyre. Things are falling apart only to reveal emptiness within, just as the falcon's further separation from the falconer reveals that there is nothing more between them than empty air. *In Memoriam*, Tennyson's great elegy, perhaps best represents this dynamic. The poem mourns Arthur H. Hallam, a close friend of Tennyson and a poet himself, who died of a hemorrhage while away on the continent in 1833. After Hallam's death, Tennyson takes upon himself the poetic project of absence. The focus is not so much to glorify the deceased or to remember the good, but to numb the pain of loss and wrap words around the absence like mourning clothing (Canto 5). Hallam is gone now, there is only the body, and Tennyson must "be beginning to despair." The speaker's own empty sentiments are transferred to Nature as it is a "hollow echo" of his own "hollow echoes" (Armstrong, 137; Canto III). Words themselves lack meaning and the ability to facilitate communication for they, "like Nature, half reveal / And half conceal the Soul within" (Canto 5).

Even the envelope rhyme of the *In Memoriam* stanza itself can seem to be a vain attempt to hold back nothingness as the *a* rhyme holds in the *b* rhyme in canto after canto consumed by loss:

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,

By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
 Believing where we cannot prove. (Prologue: Lines 1-4)

Edward Morton notes that the nature of the *In Memoriam* stanza tends towards similar line lengths and rhythms (229). Caught within this monotonous meter and rhyme scheme, multiple tonal registries are exhausted as the speaker moves from serenity to despair to a wild, jubilant grief, all suggesting the empty and ephemeral emotions revealed by death and broken relationships. Throughout his elegies, Tennyson focuses on the paradox of elation in grief (Shaw, 6). Through this, he “makes us feel the truth of deprivation, the paradox of majesty in grief, the somber elations of the elegist who has brooded on ruin,” and the proper response to that ruin is defiance (Shaw 4, 6).

Tennyson’s elegies then dramatize a crisis of self. From the very beginning of *In Memoriam*, the self is an existential plurality of stages:

I held it truth, with him who sings
 To one clear harp in divers tones,
 That men may rise on stepping-stones
 Of their dead selves to higher things.

We cannot point to a specific passage in Goethe’s writing that this stanza references, but according to Alfred Gatty’s commentary on *In Memoriam*, which was read and commented on by Tennyson, “It is Goethe’s creed.” Like the stepping stones from the Goethe allusion in the first canto, “Each isolated lyric is a precarious stepping-stone which might not lead to another when language breaks down” (Armstrong, 139). His dramatic monologue, “St. Simeon Styltes,” prototypical of the genre, further accentuates the crisis of self. As Herbert Tucker puts it:

Not a who to himself but a what, as God is his “witness” Simeon stands in a prolonged crisis of identity—between earth and heaven, between the silly crowd below and the holy judge above, between the rigidity of his physical stance and spiritual anxiety over the indeterminacy of his fate, between debasement and exaltation of soul and body, between others’ words and a word of his own, between “I, Simeon,” the man, and “Stylites, among men,” the public show.

(Tucker 130)

All of this suggests that Tennyson is a poet of a faulty dialectics where every thesis is met with an antithesis in order to either be numbed into a synthesis or to fall apart only to reveal nothingness.

However, amongst the expected Tennysonian dichotomies, there is a distinct kind of doubling. The morning star and evening star are both presented individually only to be revealed as different positions of the same celestial body, Christ is addressed as both God and man in the Prologue, and this collection of cantos is both an opiate and a real vehicle of healing. In this way, I propose that Tennyson’s attempt to manifest absence in his poetry was successful. Through linking contraries with the figure of *synoeciosis*, he reveals the hidden unity that could not be expressed on its own. From the loss of Hallam to the silence of God, Tennyson paradoxically reveals healing and unity through absence. In the following, I will read Tennyson through the same hermeneutic of *synoeciosis* that I developed from the characteristic complementarity of Hopkins’ poetry. Like Hopkins, Tennyson struggles with a God

who is both beautiful and terrible and the frail human nature that reveals that “Sorrow’s springs are the same.” In so doing, I will recover the Prologue and Epilogue as relevant framing for the other cantos and consider whether “St. Simeon Stylites” requires that we return to the hermeneutic of antithesis.

2.1 Now No Matter Child the Double Name

In his poetry, Tennyson will unite two signifiers to better point to an inarticulable signified. Particularly, the Hesper/Phosphor dichotomy is representative of the way doubling leads to an underlying unity in Tennyson’s poetry. By uniting the two natures of Hesper and Phosphor into one celestial body, Tennyson sets the pattern for how the speaker of *In Memoriam* understands himself as a single person with contrary emotional inclinations. In this section, I will present the Hesper/Phosphor dichotomy as a typical example of how Tennyson uses the figure of *synoeciosis*, setting up for his further work in harmonizing the Prologue and Epilogue with the rest of the elegy.

For the ancients, the morning star and evening star were phenomenologically interpreted to be distinct astronomical bodies with their own tonal registries associated with the time of day. Both stars were linked with Aurora, the goddess of the dawn since they orbited so close to the sun when it was on the horizon. Later, the two stars were recognized as one body, Venus, in transit. Tennyson conflates both understandings of the planet Venus, allowing two names to revolve around one celestial core. Each star is mentioned separately throughout *In Memoriam*, but it is in Canto 121 where they are linked. First “Sad Hesper” is mourning the dying sun,

watching “all things ever dim / And dimmer, and a glory done.” By the next dawn, the forlorn mourner becomes “Bright Phosphor,” who is, most importantly “fresher for the night.” At the end of the canto, both stars are brought together conceptually and visually by a hyphen: “Sweet Hesper-Phosphor, double name.” The Evening star, symbolic of loss and separation, is the same as the Morningstar, which is associated with healing and renewal. The only difference is the single planet’s location and reference to the sun. The speaker then associates himself analogously with the double star:

For what is one, the first, the last,
Thou, like my present and my past,
Thy place is changed; thou art the same.

The speaker’s emotional setting may change throughout the poem, but he is the same person. Each Christmas brings him further from the days living with Hallam and closer to the moment when he will meet the Shadow himself, but he is still the same.

Other forms of doubling in the elegy follow this pattern. Tennyson is linked to Hallam in a visceral way through sleep:

When in the down I sink my head,
Sleep, Death’s twin-brother, times my breath;
Sleep, Death’s twin-brother, knows not Death,
Nor can I dream of thee as dead.

The gap between death and life is bridged by the act of sleeping. Through sleeping, Tennyson is able to be a brother to Hallam again through the analogy of the divine brothers, Hypnos, sleep, and Thanatos, death. Later, that same brotherhood transcended mere physical likeness as “Whereof the man, that with me trod” is now “That friend of mine who lives in God” (Epilogue, Lines 137,140). Most importantly,

this example is suggestive of the possibility of healing. If “Sad Hesper” can become “Bright Phosphor,” then the speaker himself can also change. As Dennis Welch notes, the movement and temporality of the poem throughout the cantos is directed toward this purpose:

I believe that Tennyson develops a logic of feelings and spatial images to reveal solace in the separation from Hallam. He does so by changing the focus of the poem from a futile preoccupation with the far-off past to a hopeful concern with the distant future. (170)

If taken as typical of *synoeciosis* within *In Memoriam*, then just as Hesper can rise again as Phosphor, the despondent speaker of the early cantos can become the joyful brother of the Epilogue.

The nature of sorrow itself in the elegy makes this doubling possible. In Canto 16 he is puzzled by his own mercurial emotions:

What words are these have falle'n from me?
Can calm despair and wild unrest
Be tenants of a single breast,
Or sorrow such a changeling be? (Canto 16: Lines 1-4)

He has railed at the loss of Hallam in previous cantos, then moved to cantos where his friends virtues are elevated like a traditional elegy, and once the second Christmas of the poem comes, his sorrow has lessened and become more manageable. Again the speaker is puzzled by his emotions:

Who showed a token of distress?
No single tear, no mark of pain:
O sorrow, then can sorrow wane?
O grief, can grief be changed to less? (Canto 78: Lines 13-16)

But this time, he has an answer:

O last regret, regret can die!
 No—mixed with all this mystic frame,
 Her deep relations are the same,
 But with long use her tears are dry. (Canto 78: Lines 17-20)

Sorrow's relations are the same, whether in physical grief or the calm measured stanzas of an elegy. Though written thirty years before "Spring and Fall," Tennyson's *In Memoriam* expresses the same central theme: "Sorrow's springs are the same." Just as Margaret can weep over leaves like "the things of man," Tennyson can hold calm and despair within one breast and one elegy can hold the various tonal registers of 131 cantos between an epilogue and prologue written years later.

2.2 *Give My Roots Rain*

"Sorrows springs are the same," writes Hopkins, and this unity allows various human responses. Through the hermeneutic of *synoeciosis*, we are able to see how contrasting responses are not mere contradictions but signs pointing toward an underlying hypostasis. Following my interpretation of the terrible sonnets, specifically "Thou Art Indeed Just, Lord," I will propose that a similar dynamic is at play between the Prologue and Epilogue of *In Memoriam*. Just as Hopkins paradoxically realizes his own plea in the act of writing, suggesting the interpenetration of *aeon* in the coupling of *chronos* and *kairos*, so too does the Tennyson anticipate in the Prologue what is more fully realized in the Epilogue.

The framing of *In Memoriam* itself is doubled around this one sorrow that can yield a multitude of responses. The Prologue is filled with a contrite tone, signaling to

the reader that the poet may ultimately regret the following cantos. Conversely, the Epilogue contains a pristine joy that seems unearned precisely because it is untouched by the solemn grief that we have shared with the speaker for over a hundred cantos. Together, they feel tacked on and unsatisfying, and this suspicion seems to be validated by the dates following each, so long after Hallam's death. When considered opposite the body of the poem, they seem to do exactly what the fifth canto suggests the entire project of the poem is: "A use in measured language lies / The sad mechanic exercise, / Like dull narcotics, numbing pain."

However, this may be the result of unduly separating the gritty cantos from the more serene framing. Rather than seeing the prologue and epilogue in opposition with the rest of the poem, perhaps we can see them as a dialogue, the Tennyson of 1849 and the Tennyson of 1850 speaking to those past dead selves that were stepping stones to "higher things" (Canto 1). In a real way, the prologue is both an apology and a denial of guilt. The speaker asks to be forgiven "these wild and wandering cries," but forgiven precisely because they are the "Confusions of a wasted youth" (Prologue: Lines 49-50). Surrounding the contrition are little rote catechetical responses that seem even more empty as they are propelled by the monotonous rhythm and rhyme scheme: e.g., "Thou art just" and "Thou seemest human and divine...Our wills are ours to make them Thine" (Prologue: Lines 12, 13, 15). However, amidst the posturing way that Tennyson tries to conform his grief to conventional theology, there is an earnest plea directed at heaven. Granted, this part of the elegy is traditionally a plea to the muse for inspiration or grace, which in this

particular elegy is supplanted by the “Strong Son of God,” but that leads to another plea:

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before, (Prologue: Lines 25-28)

At first, this may seem as pedantic as the rest of the prologue, since the speaker is distancing himself from the majesty in grief that Shaw noticed while at the same time affecting that same “reverence” through tone and antithesis. As humans we have “Our little systems,” but “They are but broken lights of” God (Prologue: Lines 17, 19-20). Particularly, the speaker is a sinner whose cries “fail in truth” and who needs to be made wise by the divine wisdom (41, 43-44). The end of the plea is more genuine, though: “That mind and soul, according well, / May make one music as before.” The speaker is broken, and one voice has been silenced in a harmonious duet between the speaker and Hallam. Two simple words that conclude the plea after the speaker and reader cross the empty chasm of the enjambment between lines 28 and 29 transform everything in the poem: “But vaster.” In Hopkinsian fashion, this could be rendered as, “Yes to rote catechism, but I say more, I say Christ.” In the place of the traditional supplication to the muse, Tennyson begins by addressing the incarnate *logos* in a way that emphasizes his vast contraries: “Strong Son of God, immortal Love.” Christ is “strong” and “God,” yet he is only the “Son.” He is “immortal,” but that very immortality is expressed through the transitory human experience of “Love.” Moreover, the very filial nature of Christ and his “Love” leads him to relinquish immortality in a sacrificial death, perhaps mirroring the death of Hallam.

Christ is then strong, because he is Love, and that love is immortal because it is the love of the Son of God. The prologue is not a repudiation of all the painful grief, including wild dancing on graves and stilled pensive moments all wrapped around one barren yew tree, but rather retains everything as the stepping stones by which the speaker transitions to the epilogue. The speaker's mind and soul will eventually make one music, but that one music contains a threnody that, rather than detracting from, adds to the fullness of his melody.

The plea for unity and music is answered directly in the Epilogue. As an epithalamium, the Epilogue is a song in itself, a song that celebrates unity. The previous cantos were dealing with the pain of separation, whether in birthdays and Christmases where Hallam was absent, or in the fair ship sequence, when the speaker waited as the body made its long trip home over sea. The Epilogue, however, is completely focused on new unity. The speaker's younger sister is entering into sacramental union. Interestingly, this is a different sister than the one who was to marry Hallam, which makes each union, one ended by death before it could be solidified by vows and the other happily fulfilled, a chiasmic doubling of the other. It is also fitting that a marriage ends the grief, since the speaker was analogously related to a widow throughout the cantos. Before, Tennyson's relationship with Hallam was doubled with the abruptly ended engagement with his sister, but now a marriage has replaced his friendship as a more similar contrary to be linked with the previous engagement. Just as Hesper and Phosphor are the same planet at different positions, the grave is the same, but in a sense its position has changed:

O Happy hour, behold the bride
With him to whom her hand I gave.
They leave the porch, they pass the grave
That has today its sunny side.

Today the grave is bright for me,
For them the light of life increased,
Who stay to share the morning feast,
Who rest tonight beside the sea. (Epilogue: Lines 72-79)

Whereas in previous cantos the speaker and the grave were united by the same moonlight, they are now united by the metaphorical light that comes from the joy of bride and bridegroom.

The Epilogue may feel tacked on because we read it last when it must be read through the Prologue in union with all cantos that are in between. In *synoecism*, the one gametophyte is not complete without the sperm and the egg; in the same way, the Epilogue cannot be understood in isolation. The important key to the epilogue are those two expansive words from the Prologue: “But vaster.” Yes, the speaker is “No longer caring to embalm / In dying songs a dead regret,” and yes, that “Regret is dead,” but only because “love is more” and the speaker himself has “grown / To something greater than before” (Epilogue: Lines 13-14, 17, 19-20). Though the cantos may now seem as “echoes out of weaker times,” the serenity of the Epilogue is the direct fruit of the work done in them (Line 22). The glory of “The Golden Echo” is dependent on the fact that it is the best response to “The Leaden Echo.”

Throughout all of the cantos, God is silent, suggesting that the plea of the Prologue was made in vain, but the Epilogue might be his response. In “Thou Art Indeed Just, Lord” Hopkins redirects the reader from the page to the eternal silence of

God. Tennyson did something similar as he crossed the enjambment of the prologue with us. That enjambment was a catch in the plea, a jump from the easy request for peace, to the harder request for that peace to be so vast that it can contain what the reader is about to experience in the following cantos. Every canto is then a way of practicing that jump over and over again, until we hear more of the divine voice in the Epilogue. Ultimately, we fall again off the page as we await the “one far-off divine event.”

Whereas with Hopkins, *synoeciosis* finds its fulfillment in the incarnate *logos*, Tennyson may seem to only offer a material *logos*. Words are “weeds,” mourning clothing, that “half reveal / And half conceal,” and their purpose is to dull the emotive and rational faculties of the mind. However, the final line of the Epilogue, that awaited “divine event,” alludes to the fulfillment of the Incarnation, the recapitulation of all things in Christ. From the opening address to the “Strong Son of God, immortal love,” to the final stanza of the Epilogue, Tennyson has been moving us toward the Parousia, which Agamben defines as “the full presence of the messiah, which concludes with the end of time” (“The Time that is Left” 2). The elegy ends as it had begun, awaiting a final divinely realized harmony.

2.3 *The Perfect Flower of Human Time*

Through a dialectical method, we can come to the aporia of the paradox of time. *Kairos* is greater than *chronos* and can subsume it. However, with *synoeciosis*, we recognize that *chronos* retains its integrity and stress even after *kairos* subsumes it. This understanding of time follows from the definition offered by the Corpus

Hippocraticum, which Agamben proposes is the best definition of the *chronos/kairos* dichotomy: “the chronos is where we have kairos and the kairos is where we have a little chronos” (“The Time that is Left”). In this section, I will show how Tennyson synthesizes the thesis of *chronos* with the antithesis of *kairos* only to promise the final resolution of each through the *synoeciosis* that reveals the presence of *aeon*.

The range of temporal, rhetorical, and thematic shifts within *In Memoriam* prepares us to finally fall off the page with the speaker as in “Thou Art Indeed Just, Lord.” Though time continues through the pendulous recurrence of day and night, the speaker is centered on one all-inclusive moment, the death of Hallam. Counted time, seasonal change, and liturgical cycles seem to give matter to or embody the emotional frenzy signified by the rapid changes between thesis and antithesis or lyric and narrative cantos. The speaker is passing through *chronos* like everyone else, but his mind is set on the *kairos* of both Hallam’s death and the birth of Christ. Even his progress through the stages of grief, a *chronos*-related activity, is filled with the presence of *kairos* through reemerging images such as the yew tree in cantos 1 and 76, suggesting both concepts of time are essential elements of grief.

Just as Hopkins would move from hours, to years, and finally to life, Tennyson subsumes *chronos* in *kairos*. Addressing Hallam directly, the speaker asks that he be near at the end of his life “And on the low dark verge of life / The twilight of eternal day” (Canto 50). There is something of *chronos* still present as the time is a discreet boundary, a “verge,” the evening twilight of Hesper, but by the very fact that it is a boundary, it is moving toward something, “eternal day.” In Canto 61, the theme

of eternity is taken up again as Hallam's "second state sublime" in heaven is described as "The perfect flower of human time." It is important that years lead to life for Hopkins and that Tennyson's heaven has flowered from "human time." *Kairos* is vaster, containing all of *chronos* within it. In this sense, the Epilogue is a microcosm of "The perfect flower of human time." The speaker has undergone the pain of all those last moments vicariously through mourning Hallam and now enters into his joy, but that joy is a flowering of the previous cantos as dependent as "spare" is on "despair."

Canto 76 further suggests the relationship between experienced time and eternity through Ascension-esque language. There is an upward and downward movement as the day begins with matins, a prayer associated with rising both through its position at the beginning of the day and its connection to rising praise. This is further linked to words like "woke," "before," and "ere." The connection between rising and beginnings gives way to a connection between rising and endings as the speaker speaks of ascending to "Where all the starry heavens of space / Are sharpened to a needle's end." Though the rhythm is still monotonous, the diction is pointing to the possibility of finality. The speaker can eventually break out of the pendulous motion of wild grief and calm despair.

Likewise, the use of liturgy as a framing device suggests *kairos* not only as a powerful and important moment, but also as both the fullness of time, when the *chronos*-bound individual enters into eternity, and as the importance of an event penetrating and expanding *chronos*. With the refrain-like repetition of "time draws

near the birth of Christ,” the speaker puts his grief within the context of a celebration that is by its nature more akin to the image of a spiral than a circle (canto 104, line 1). A circular event would be a mere recurrence where the individual experiencing it is left unchanged, while a helical event draws the individual nearer to its core meaning with each passing. This liturgical dynamic is carried over into the remembrance of Hallam’s death: “I think once more he seems to die” (Canto 100, line 20). As the Nativity is re-presented through the Christmas liturgy and paraliturgical festivities, so too is Hallam’s absence made manifest to the speaker at the anniversary of his death. Moreover, each recurrence of the anniversary finds the speaker having progressed in his grief. The cycle is even broken, after the Christmas of canto 104, the speaker doesn’t return to Hallam’s death but rather to his birth. Granted, each remembrance of death leads to a dark canto, and even Canto 107 begins darkly with “a bitter day that early sank,” but each fits into the overall progression of tone throughout the elegy.

This underlying relationship of *chronos* and *kairos* throughout the cantos suggests the gradual purgation of the speaker through *synoeciosis*. This motion culminates in the final canto with an utter expression of unity in God and the “one far-off divine event.” The event is still far-off because even *kairos* is not sufficient. Together, *chronos* and *kairos* point further outward, to the parousia. Here, in this movement from dialectic to *synoeciosis*, we have a new interpenetration of *aeon* into *chronos* and *kairos*, the only one that could completely heal the death of Hallam. Tennyson’s cantos could be read back from the epilogue as the purgative movement

toward the final embrace of *chronos* within *kairos*, brought about all the while by the temporal hypostasis: *aeon*. Conversely, it is important to note that this final event is outside of Tennyson and only promised; it is a hoped for resolution that is not actually contained within the text of the poem.

2.4 *Neither Heaven nor Haven*

With Hopkins, we explored how the revelation of inner worlds through the coupling of contraries was an overarching theme in his poetry. For the figure of *synoeciosis* to be a more powerful interpretive tool for Tennyson's work, it should be applicable outside of *In Memoriam*. We do not have to go far to find a poem that seems to reject the interpretation I've proposed. "St. Simeon Stylites," a poem that Herbert Tucker suggests is prototypical of the genre of the dramatic monologue, presents a speaker who forcibly imposes a hermeneutic of antithesis over and against a hermeneutic of *synoeciosis*. Alone on his pillar, Simeon judges both the pious supplicants below and the feasting citizens of heaven above. All the while, his rhetoric emphasizes that he is different from the comforts of heaven and earth:

But yet
 Bethink thee, Lord, while thou and all the saints
 Enjoy themselves in Heaven, and men on earth
 House in the shade of comfortable roofs,
 Sit with their wives by fires, eat wholesome food,
 And wear warm clothes, and even beasts have stalls,
 I, 'tween the spring and downfall of the light,
 Bow down one thousand and two hundred times,
 To Christ, the Virgin Mother, and the Saints. (Lines 105-113)

Perhaps most damning for this hermeneutic is how much Hopkins enjoyed “St. Simeon Stylites.” He called it “indeed magnificent” (Nixon, 63-64). In a letter to Coleridge’s grandson, Ernest Hartley Coleridge, he responded saying, “Admire! Ha! Of course I do” (64). This is especially fascinating considering that Hopkins had, according to Martin and Nixon, engaged in an inordinate level of mortification at Balliol, even to the point of turning his tongue black due to lack of water. In keeping with his sense of humor, Hopkins later included a sketch of the saint in a letter to Baillie, possibly suggesting that he didn’t take the ironies presented by Tennyson too seriously (65).¹¹

The hermit himself is a bundling of contraries brought together to emphasize their contrast. The very form of a dramatic monologue suggests a fractured personality presented as a self-referential contrary. In analyzing Tennyson’s Stylites poem, Tucker defines the dramatic monologue as a crisis of identity at its core. Rather than a “monological entity,” Simeon is instead an “inherently unstable” character (Tucker 128). Tucker further suggests that Simeon’s dialectic not only serves to tear him apart, but that it is also the method through which Tennyson produces the illusion of self. Simeon is presenting himself as a saint, a pattern of virtue for the people below to follow, but there is an underlying doubt about not only who he is but what he is. Is he a person or a thing? If he is a person, then is he a crowned saint or chief among sinners? If he is a thing, then is he an “example, [and] pattern” or is he a “vessel full of sin” and nothing more?

Such interior uncertainty manifests itself through deeply related desire and doubt. As Simeon both desires sainthood and the ensuing cult of veneration, so too does he doubt that he can be saved. In an ever insistent refrain, he pleads, “Have mercy, Lord, and take away my sin.” Doubt is not his only motivation as his pride factors in more strongly as the poem continues. Due to the confluence of doubt and unmanageable pride, he goes about convincing both God and man that he is worthy of veneration, but then continues to deride the people below for venerating too soon. The contradictions prove to be too much for Simeon, and consequently the pillar becomes an obstacle between himself and all others when he intended to use it as a means of union with the divine.

The crisis of the speaker is also a crisis of communion. It is no wonder that Tennyson chose Simeon as a subject, since the changing relationships between both solitude and community and the city and the desert are core themes of desert father literature. As Tucker notes, “Tennyson had repeatedly assailed the viability of the self’s retreat into privacy and had begun to test such embowered stasis with the dialectics of encounter” (133), such as in the poem “The Lady of Shalott” where seeking human contact means death and life is only a woven image. Tennyson’s Simeon claims that he retreated to the pillar that he “might be more alone with” God, but that very pillar is also the perfect vantage point to display his mortification even though he “spake not of it to a single soul.” He goes so far as to prescribe the manner of veneration he wants to the people below his pillar he had sneered at earlier:

I say, that time is at the doors
When you may worship me without reproach;

For I will leave my relics in your land,
 And you may carve a shrine about my dust,
 And burn a fragrant lamp before my bones,
 When I am gather'd to the glorious saints. (Lines 193-198)

The “silly people” at the base of the pillar have a crisis, then, that mirrors Simeon’s. As he both cannot reach heaven till death and cannot be sure of reaching heaven even after death, they cannot reach him while he is on the pillar, and he will not come down from the pillar until he is dead. While alive and on the pillar, he is unreachable both due to spatial distance and religious doctrine that withholds veneration for the dead and canonized. Once he is dead, they will be free to lay their hands on him and worship him without reproach but with one specific caveat. They will only have the material aspect of his nature, his bones and dust. The interior aspect of him that draws them to the pillar will be “gather’d to the glorious saints.”

Whereas *kairos* subsumes *chronos* in *In Memoriam*, the oppressive temporality of “St. Simeon Stylites” is one where *chronos* resists *kairos*. The hermit is speaking to both God and the people in the *now* of the poem’s world. The listeners, and by extension the implied reader, know his physical setting, that he is “proclaiming” from atop his “high nest.” He is also situated temporally since all of his litanies of suffering are referring to the past while his admonition to the worshipers is happening now and his death will happen in the future of “to-night.” Even the supposed locution suggests a temporal immediacy: “For by the warning of the Holy Ghost, / I prophesy that I shall die to-night, / A quarter before twelve” (Lines 220-222). The Holy Ghost, in a sense the Person of the Trinity who most connotes immanence, is speaking to Simeon now about what will happen, suggesting that time

is as inescapable as materiality. Simeon desires eternity but all he can grasp is the current temporal stream.

Weather represents Simeon's struggle with the transition from *chronos* to *kairos*. Early in his litany of self-mortification, he portrays the weather as both a source of his suffering and a sign of his virtue. Natural weather is so prominent that Simeon may be more weather than flesh: "all my beard / Was tagg'd with icy fringes in the moon...And both my thighs are rotted with the dew" (Lines 31-32, 41). In conflating his suffering and personal sense of virtue through the weather as a linking construct, Simeon suggests that he is more than a suffering man, but a Man of Sorrows. He isn't bedewed, but rather he is dew. His beard is not frosted, but clothed in frost like the silver of an icon under the bright halo of the moon. As in "Spring and Fall" aspects of the weather such as falling leaves are conflated with "the things of man." Simeon will not let the interlocutor, especially not the Divine Interlocutor, forget that he is supposedly conquering spiritually through being conquered by the elements.

Simeon's crisis is further aggravated by the overlaying of paradox upon paradox. Working through one apparent contradiction to reach a higher truth is enough to astound anyone with mixed moments of lucidity and mystery, but for Simeon, each side of the apparent contradiction contains a paradox in itself. First he wonders how so great a sinner can possibly be saved, but after naming his various mortifications, he declares, "O Jesus, if thou wilt not save my soul. / Who may be saved? who is it may be saved? / Who may be made a saint, if I fail here?" He is well

versed with the spiritual paradoxes of life in death, strength in weakness, and glory in humble service. Weakened by the elements, he should be strong in the theological virtues. Through offering himself as a pattern, he should be crowned with sanctity. However, in seeking the spiritual through a denial of the material, he is only more deeply reminded of the material. The very mortification that should bring peace and detached love instead further binds Simeon to his body in “a life of death.” The final irony holding this great tension of paradoxes together is that this prototypical saint of a long-vanished eremitical vocation, who is venerated in the East and the West, is monstrously prideful in his own monologue. Coming across a poem called St. Simeon rather than just Simeon, a reader might expect something more pious, not the maniacal ravings of a man whose greatest virtue is that he set himself safely away atop a pillar. Perhaps this overarching irony prepares the reader for the depth of paradox within: in “St. Simeon Stylites,” Tennyson gives us a saint who is from the very beginning “the basest of mankind.”

When emphasizing antithesis and negation, we see the speaker of “St. Simeon Stylites,” separated from the saints in heaven and the supplicants below. Such a reading is valid, but in its precise focus on opposition, it overlooks the two most obvious contraries. When read through the lens of *synoeciosis*, the poem becomes a yoking of heaven and earth, not a rupture between Simeon and all things. By continually pointing out how he is not like either, the hermit more effectively links the two contraries. Simeon may hunger, but the saints drink mead and “Enjoy themselves in Heaven,” while “men on earth / House in the shade of comfortable

roofs, / Sit with their wives by fires, eat wholesome food” (Lines 107-109). The image of the pillar, which would seem to visually emphasize the distance between heaven and earth, only succeeds in separating Simeon from a humanized heaven and a divinized earth. In his pride he may not know it, but perhaps the truest thing he spoke was that he is “Unfit for earth, unfit for heaven” (Line 3). This is not so much to denigrate the speaker, but to point out that in this poem to be unfit for the natural comforts of earth is to ultimately be unfit for the transcendent comforts of heaven.

Just as Hopkins retrieves “spare!” from “despair,” Tennyson redirects Simeon from his own hermeneutic of antithesis. The tone and temporal register of the poem changes dramatically at the end when the very materiality that separates Simeon from the metaphysical reality he desires breaks into his monologue and he feels pain:

While I spake then, a sting of shrewdest pain
 Ran shriveling tho’ me, and a cloudlike change,
 In passing, with a grosser film made thick
 These heavy, horny eyes. The end! the end! (Lines 199-202)

All throughout, he has been speaking to characters within the confines of the scene, either himself, God, or the people below. For the most part, his monologue has consisted of past events, such as his own mortifications, or predicted events, such as the future devotion to his relics. However, at this point, the speaker seems to turn to the implied reader as an aside and comments on his own monologue.

Contemporaneous with his speech directed at the crowd, he is touched by his own mortality. Rather than ratcheting up his neurotic need for recognition and penchant for false humility, he frantically verbalizes his own coming death.

Once pain enters directly with its own weight and force, rather than merely being a concept he discusses, the style of Simeon's monologue changes. The sentences are shorter, some monosyllabic, crowding together into a single line. What once was a steady, bland, and methodic account of mortification without any delightful linguistic play is now filled with alliteration, assonance, and near rhymes. The language is now more Hopkinsian, almost chiming: *clean, meet, heaven, speak, priest*. These chimed words are relational and positive, and completely lacking in any reference to mortification. Finally, Simeon addresses the crowd directly in a far less haughty way than before, requesting a priest. He, who went in so much effort to contrast himself with the feasting saints of heaven and earth, now asks to be invited to that same feast by "a priest, a man of God" who is to

Approach, and lean a ladder on the shaft,
And climbing up into my airy home,
Deliver me the blessed sacrament

In a way, Simeon rejects his antithetical railings and invites a symbol of *synoeciosis*, the "man of God," who mirrors the ultimate *synoeciosis*, the "Strong Son God," to bring to him what Hopkins reverently referred to as the "Godhead here in hiding."

If we take heaven and earth, along with the respective denizens of each, as the two contraries that this poem is linking, then the change here is that Simeon stops resisting *synoeciosis* and enters into that relationship. This section begins with his narration of a heavenly visitation. First, a more remote aspect of the heavenly court, a divine being, the Holy Spirit promises to come to Simeon. Following that, a heavenly being who is more akin to the earthbound supplicants, an anthropomorphic angel,

appears directly to Simeon. Were the Stylite to continue in his antithetical rant, then why does he not reject the crown the angel offers? Rather than reject, he invites the angel, saying “Come, blessed brother, come.” This line, with its concentric rings of alliteration, looks and sounds almost as if it had been written by Hopkins rather than Tennyson. Simeon then uses similar wording as he beckons the priest to “approach.” Since everything is closing in on Simeon, physically as he is going deaf, and spiritually as his death approaches, then perhaps the doubling of the word, *come*, not only suggests the heightened anxiety of the moment, but also the doubled meeting. Perhaps Simeon is saying “Come, blessed brother, come” to the angel bearing the crown *and* the priest bearing the sacrament. Ultimately, he is saying, “Come, blessed brother, come,” to the host itself. Even in one of the most troubled and neurotic of Tennyson’s monologues, the speaker says more, he says Christ.

By interpreting this poem primarily through antithesis, we are not discerning its meaning, but rather we are being taken in by Simeon’s prideful representation of those below and those above. All of the paradox weighs so heavily on Simeon, adding extra suffering to his already excessive mortification, precisely because he thinks antithetically. Regardless of our interpretive lens, it still seems clear that the poem thematically opposes what Herbert Tucker refers to as the “monomania” of Simeon. Though we may relate to it on some level, his crisis of self is not something to be desired. If our primary hermeneutic is one of *synoeciosis*, then the thematic withdrawal from Simeon’s perspective is even more apparent. Rather than Simeon being “A” and all other things collectively being not “A,” through which we better

understand who he is, heaven is one contrary, while earth is the other and through their harmonious tension, the hypostasis is revealed. Not only is Simeon a prideful monomaniac, but *I*, the reader, am a monomaniac because I have so readily taken on his perspective. Even though I may reject his pride, I mirror it by seeing all things in the poem in opposition. I am “A” because I am not “A”; by being so assured that I am not Simeon, I have become the antithetically-obsessed Simeon.

When understood this way, Simeon’s final prayer is strangely answered. He asked that God “aid all this foolish people; let them take / Example, pattern: lead them to thy light.” Simeon is a pattern, but one that should not be followed. Even if we spurn his pride but embrace his subtle hermeneutic, then we have become complicit in his worldview. Paradoxically, by recognizing that Simeon is the antitype not only in how a hermit should live but in also how a reader interprets contraries, the reader is led to light. While Hopkins links heaven to earth through the rhythmic and thematic rising and falling in his poetry, Tennyson shows that even something as negative as a religious hypocrisy can serve the same purpose.

2.5 Come, Blessed Brother, Come: Participative Synoeciosis

The figure of *synoeciosis* should not be used to smooth over the range of contraries presented in Tennyson’s great elegy, however. There is something ugly in despair, especially in its fulfillment in suicide. There is, on the natural level, something ugly in death as only a body is left. Even the early stage of grief that Tennyson represents shows something ugly, yet alluring in the raving moments of abandon. Things have fallen apart. Hallam’s body is broken, their relationship is

severed, and the only thing left is the denuded yew tree amidst “worlds of wanwood leafmeal.” This may be the underlying reason why the Epilogue can still feel so unsatisfying, even after the analysis we’ve gone through. Just as telling a little girl sighing over falling leaves that that is “the blight man was born for,” is not the best response, so too does saying one’s “Regret is dead” sound hollow. Are we then still left with a monotonous opiate that can only numb the pain?

No, upon learning of Hallam’s death, the speaker’s emotions “fall gall themselves and gash gold-vermillion.” The mourner has become the poet and Hallam’s death has become *In Memoriam*. Rather than absence, Tennyson has shown himself and the “immortal Love” whose face we have not seen (Prologue: Lines 1-2). Rather than concluding with the heavily accented final syllable of “Despair, despair, despair, despair,” he has given beauty back. What could have been a solitary pain only expressed in “Tears of the widower, when he sees... Her place is empty,” becomes a vaster music than before (Canto 13: Lines 1 and 4).

In order to hear that vaster music, however, we must move past the aporia, represented by the enjambment of the Prologue. Hegelian dialectics takes us to that point; faced with the thesis of a strong and loving God and the antithesis of an impotent and cruel reality that leads to Hallam’s premature death, the speaker is left only with the synthesis of catechetical opiates. Those fail to console, and leave purposeful numbness as the only option. Amidst the chasm between stanzas, where the plea for a vaster music catches and is nearly abandoned, resides the perpetual activity of *synoeciosis*. The darkness of the aporia is where we can catch a glimpse of

the hypostasis. Rather than a future synthesis, the hypostasis is inclusive of and separate from time, linked with *aeon*. It is through the seemingly finality of death, the darkness of absence, that we can conceptualize a solution that is partially, but not fully, present. Like the God of Moses, Hallam's glory is unveiled through "the darkness and the cloud" (Canto 96: Line 21). Just as God is revealed by a cloud, which should obscure, so Hallam in Canto 96 is revealed because of his premature death. The glory of God is darkness, and can only be glimpsed through *synoeciosis*, in contrast to the golden idol built by synthesis.

With Hopkins, the incarnate *logos* is at the center of *synoeciosis*: "For Christ plays in ten thousand places, / Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his / To the Father through the features of men's faces." It is not sufficient for the Christ, the ultimate coupling of contraries, to merely *be*, the poet must participate in the *synoeciosis*, add his own voice to the merging of the two natures and "say Christ." Tennyson mirrors this in the Prologue and Epilogue. He must not only cry out for a vaster music, but he must participate in that vaster music through his cantos. Finally, he must offer an example of that vaster music, seminally present in the Prologue, through the Epilogue, which is a nuptial song.

Even speaking Christ, taking one's part in the vaster song, may not be sufficient. The signifier is still less than the signified. *Christ* is merely a transliteration, a graphic sign, some ink. The vaster song, the Epilogue, *In Memoriam*, "The Golden Echo," these are all less than the "one far-off, divine event," and even that is less than the love that moves us toward it. This necessitates an active

synoeciosis, a microcosm of the *parousia*, *aeon* interpenetrating the union of *chronos* and *kairos*. The troubled speaker of *The Wreck* and broken Simeon both run to the “heart of the Host,” crying, “Come, blessed brother, come.” The same presence that seems so absent in the death of Hallam and the Franciscan nuns is sought in the Eucharist.

The answer to absence, to pain, to drinking deeply from sorrow’s springs, is not numbness or despair, but rather it is nested levels of *synoeciosis*. The *synoeciosis* of God and man, the incarnate *logos*, penetrates the pairing of bread and wine. This *synoeciosis* of *synoeciosis* is then received by another *synoeciosis*, the human person. Perhaps suggestive of these nested levels, communion rites are filled with the figure of *synoeciosis*. In the Anglican liturgy, the shared tradition of both Hopkins and Tennyson, reception of communion is preceded by the prayer of humble access, included in the Book of Common Prayer since 1549:

We do not presume to come to your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own goodness, but in your all-embracing love and mercy. We are not worthy even to gather up the crumbs under your table, but it is your nature always to have mercy. So feed us with the body and blood of Jesus Christ, your Son, that we may forever live in him and he in us.
Amen.¹²

Like “Spring and Fall,” the movement in this prayer is a reciprocal falling and rising. The communicants look up from amidst the crumbs under the table, which is even above their station, and the “merciful Lord” looks down upon them. In a coupling of

registers, they acknowledge their own baseness in the same breath that they confidently describe the divine nature, which is “always to have mercy.” Finally, mirroring Agamben’s definition of *chronos* and *kairos*, Christ and the communicant are both mutually present to one another: “that we may forever live in him and he in us.” Most significantly, every single contrary in this relationship retains its integrity and stress. The pain of absence, human frailty, and all the darkness of the aporia are still present, but they are held in tension with Christ, who lives with the communicant.

Conclusion Eternal Processes Moving On

“I think that deconstruction is affirmative rather than questioning; this affirmation goes *through* some radical questioning, but is not questioning in the final analysis” - Jacques Derrida (Salusinszky, 9)

Synoeciosis is a figure and a hermeneutic of affirmation. It can be seen as a negation of negation, but ultimately it says yes to synthesis and yes to deconstruction, but then encourages us as implied reader and implied author to collaboratively say more. The dialectical man synthesizes, the Derridean man deconstructs, but we say more, we say *synoeciosis*. Etymologically, *synthesis* can be seen as putting propositions together, leaving it with constructs of pure reason. Conversely, *synoeciosis* can be seen as bringing communities together, coming from *oikos*, the household. With *synoeciosis*, we enter into kinship not only through the reader-author relationship, but also through uniting the *polis* of words with the inner *oikos* of meaning. There is still an aporetic veil between meaning and its accompanying signs, everything is still mediated, but it is through that very mediation that we catch a glimpse of the hypostasis.

This does not mean that we should be reactionaries and return to a time before the insights of deconstruction. Along with Geoffrey Hartman, a reader of *synoeciosis* can still say, “Everything we thought of as a spirit, or meaning separable from the letter of the text, remains within an ‘intertextual’ sphere” (viii). The point of the figure is to suggest that neither pole can be separated from or completely sublated by the other. Sublation and synthesis still leave us at the aporia, hovering over Tennyson’s enjambment, as “despair” echoes behind us. Spirit and matter, text and

meaning, are still not separable. To do so would be to stop the continual *synoeciosis* that slowly lifts the veil covering the point where eternal meaning, the *logos*, is incarnated. Deconstruction is good, but deconstructionism leads us back to the same problem of privilege, our preferences have only been flipped; not flattened out. It is true that there was a privileging of the spiritual over the material in literal and analogous ways, but to allow the poles to remain static after the first reversal only results in privileging the material over the spiritual. With *synoeciosis*, we can hold both poles in equal tension until that very tension reveals the hypostasis.

This way of reading is emblematic of Hopkins' entire oeuvre. The inscape of others impacts him: whether it be a bird, an ember, or a candle out of doors, Hopkins sings what he sees. Conversely, Tennyson is engaged in a dialectic, but it is a failed dialectic. It is in moments that he turns to *synoeciosis* that his poetry has more power. His epilogue feels tacked on when we read it as a synthesis from the dialectic began in the prologue rather than through the hermeneutic of *synoeciosis* where prologue and epilogue are mutually joined to show the activity of divine silence present in each. Rather than the signifier being completely unable to approach meaning, the signifier points to the signified.

The heart of *synoeciosis* is the idea that a human nature and a divine nature can be linked in such a way as to reveal a divine person. That is the pattern that all other forms of the figure follow. Such an emphasis on the *logos* may seem completely antithetical to deconstruction with its denial of the Western tradition of logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence, but the central position of deconstruction is to think

on the impossible. Humans may not be able to approach justice or to engage in gift giving rather than exchange, further suggesting that meaning is extant but unreachable. The logic of the Incarnation does not deny that, but rather emphasizes its truth. Perhaps we cannot seek meaning, and are lost in the aporia, but that is where, at the moment our minds are swinging, “poised, but on the quiver,” we reverse the privileged with the unprivileged pole. Meaning is beyond our reach, but we are not beyond its reach. The *logos* can descend to us. This incarnational view of meaning is an essential premise in the poetry of Hopkins. In his 1883 letter to Bridges, he elaborated on the nature of mystery via the Incarnation:

So too of the Incarnation, a mystery less incomprehensible [than the Trinity], it is true: to you it comes to: Christ is in some sense God, in some sense he is not God--and your interest is in the uncertainty.

Here Bridges is characterized as viewing the Incarnation along the lines of Tennyson in the Prologue of *In Memoriam* where Christ only “*seemest* human and divine” (emphasis added).¹³ But for Hopkins:

Christ is in every sense God and in every sense man, and the interest is in the locked and inseparable combination, or rather it is in the person in whom the combination has its place. (Letters, 188)

Meaning inhabits all its intermediaries and explodes before us. This is why “The Windhover” is addressed to Christ. This is why the muse addressed in the beginning of *In Memoriam* is Christ.

The divine person resides in the aporia, the shadow, and the cloud. The two natures of Christ are not a dialectic. We do not come to the Fathers and say “Ah! He is man here and god there, *logos* here and *homo* there; therefore Incarnation.” No, for Hopkins and Tennyson, the Incarnation is an assumption held in the opening lines as *logos* and *homo* are simultaneously emblazoned by one another. The Incarnation itself has the agency, not the witness. The poet receives the secret fire from the windhover and the gashed ember and the sunlit grave.

The Incarnation rejects antithesis, rejects an epistemology of negation. Perhaps we know an orange because it is not an apple or a pineapple, but it would be reductive to conceptualize the Incarnation that way. We cannot say it is *logos* and *~logos* or *homo* and *~homo*; rather, it is known because it is A and B. *Logos* is not in an inverse tautological relationship with *homo*.

Synoeciosis is an Incarnational figure, a way to make the relationship between contraries concrete.

It is true that we will miss themes and ideas from Hopkins if we completely privilege our understanding of what his religious beliefs may have been. Likewise, with Tennyson, we can never be sure where his synthesis of faith and doubt will end. However, the Incarnation is still an important conceptual framework that inspires and informs their poetry.

Synoeciosis as an Act of Reading

Throughout this thesis, I have tried to model *synoeciosis* as a way to read literature. When faced with doubling that cannot be explained by the figure of

antithesis, we can apply the hermeneutic of *synoeciosis*, simultaneously tracing the outline of what is hidden behind the aporia and the genealogy of the figure back through the *chronos/kairos* distinction and its messianic implications.¹⁴ This same framework can be extended to not only explain tropes and suggest interpretations, but to also model what happens in the act of reading as reader and writer enjoy a shared relationship mediated by the text.

In Hopkins' letter to Bridges, he describes the Incarnation as "the person in whom the combination has its place" (188). Here the privilege given to the coupled contraries because they are encountered epistemically first in our experience is reversed. Rather than the combination leading to the hypostasis, the hypostasis gives meaning to the combination. We still attempt to glimpse beyond the aporia by interpreting the contraries through *synoeciosis*, but ultimately the *aeon* is always present because it is where *chronos* and *kairos* have their place. It is the same with the relationship between the reader and the writer. We identify them separately as persons and then note the relationship mediated by the text, but that mediated relationship is where "the combination has its place."

Agamben notes that for Lycurgus and Hierocles, the word "does not bring anything into being, but keeps united [*synecho*]...what something else...has brought into being" (3).¹⁵ *Synoeciosis* operates relationally, and like its etymological counterpart, *synecho*, it forms communities. The author does not create the reader, though he or she may envision an idealized implied reader, and the reader does not create the author. Instead, each participates in the text and is bound together

[*synecho*] by it. As Northrop Frye put it, “Literary critics do not judge the writer, except incidentally: they work with the writer in judging the human condition” (196).

Analogously, *synoeciosis* as an act of reading is the same movement made from a traditional Victorian dramatic monologue, such as “St. Simeon Stylites,” to an other-oriented masked lyric like “Spring and Fall.” In the former, priority is given to the “I” of the I/Thou relationship. Simeon and his suffering is what matters, and we must listen. When reading “Spring and Fall,” we flip the privilege given to the “I” so that the “Thou” can then be emphasized. With *synoeciosis*, the reversal does not need to remain static once it is accomplished, but can be continually in motion. Rather than saying that priority be given to the author as “I” and meaning is inherently laden in the text, and then reversing that to propose instead that priority ought to be ascribed to the reader as “Thou,” who then creates meaning from the text, we can say more. The writer approaches the text as the “I,” thinking of the “Thou,” the reader, dare I say loving the reader. Likewise, the reader approaches the text as the “I,” responding to the “Thou,” the writer, completing the circle of *synoeciosis*. Meaning is then neither merely authorial nor interpreted, but relational.

In *How to Read a Poem*, Edward Hirsch proposes a way past logocentrism to the relationship at the heart of the act of reading.

Many poets have embraced the New Testament idea that “In the beginning was the Word,” but I prefer Martin Buber’s notion in *I and Thou* that “In the beginning is the relation.” The relation precedes the Word because it is authored by the human. The lyric poem may seek

the divine but it does so through the medium of a certain kind of human interaction. The secular can be made sacred through the body of the poem. I understand the relationship between the poet, the poem, and the reader not as a static entity but as a dynamic unfolding. An emerging sacramental event. A relation between an I and a You. A relational process.

Although the transition from “Word” to “relation” may be the most striking, the most important difference between the two views of reading is the transition from “was” to “is.” Poetry is “a relational *process*.” In the *kairos* of the “emerging sacramental event” we can read Tennyson through Hopkins and reclaim the beauty of the entire work of *In Memoriam*. We can engage the personal *logos* through the very methodology that recognized the pitfalls of logocentrism without diminishing the stress of either one. In the *kairos* of the “emerging sacramental event,” perhaps what Agamben would call the parousia, the reader meets the author.

However, we still haven’t reached Paul’s parousia, Agamben’s messianic event, or even a genuine gift that would satisfy Derrida. We glimpse them beyond the aporia as faint outlines, traced by the very boundaries of Yeats’ gyre, but they are not yet fully realized. We can only continue the cycle of reading with our minds “poised, but on the quiver.”

Notes

¹ That the Prologue and Epilogue seem out of place with the rest of the elegy is suggested not only by the dates they were written but also that Alfred Gatty put each at the end of his commentary.

² Perhaps Hopkins and Tennyson are following the literary tradition of the Hebrew Tanakh where the relationship between heaven and earth are presented in nuptial terms: “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.” (Psalm 85:10-11), and “Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it.” (Isaiah 45:8). I use the Authorized (King James) Version here due to its influence on English literature and place in the shared Anglican tradition of the poets. As a member of a religious order, Hopkins was likely to have meditated on these verses, especially during Advent in preparation for the Rorate Caeli liturgy, which takes its name from the first two words of the Isaiah verse.

³ According to Agamben, In *Legum Allegoriae*, Philo “puts the oath in a constitutive relationship with the language of God” because for him “the oath is a *logos* that is necessarily accomplished and this is precisely the *logos* of God” (*The Sacrament of Language*, 20, 33). John’s most preeminent use of the Hellenistic concept of the *logos* is the prologue to his Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

⁴ This is Patricia Dailey’s English translation of Agamben’s Italian translation of Paul’s letters.

⁵ This will be taken up in the later reading of the terrible sonnets in section 1.4.

⁶ Pierre Schlag and J. M. Balkin argue that placing meaning beyond the apprehension or control of the subject, who is in turn socially constructed, is an anti-humanist assumption. They are coming from the perspective of critical legal theory, and so are working with the tension between the humanist nature of legal systems and the act of deconstructing laws. In applying deconstruction to Hopkins and Tennyson, I have to work with the same tension since apprehension is just beyond the aporia and not easily synthesized, and yet the human subject is still of central concern.

⁷ These particular translations are quoted in Tatarkiewicz’s *History of Aesthetics*.

⁸ *Ratio* is the aspect of the human faculty of reason that is discursive and makes use of the powers of logical thought, while *intellectus* is the more intuitive understanding of truth through a contemplative rather than an analytical framework. This distinction is analogous to the classical concept of time, with *ratio* being akin to *chronos* and *intellectus* being akin to *kairos*. Both *ratio* and *intellectus* comprise reason like how both *chronos* and *kairos* outline the coming *aeon*. In modern usage, reason would usually be restricted to *ratio* with *intellectus* reinterpreted as an emotive understanding following less intellectual rigor. Through *synoeciosis*, reason is reconstituted as both *ratio* and *intellectus*.

⁹ *Synoecism* is synonymous with monoicous, or hermaphroditic, plant morphology.

¹⁰ The neologism, selving, originates from Hopkins poem, “As Kingfishers Catch Fire,” where he articulates the thisness of a thing, animal, or person as self-disclosure through existing: “Each mortal thing does one thing and the same: / Deals out that being indoors each

one dwells; / Selves—goes its self; *myself* it speaks and spells, / Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*”

¹¹ “The sketch depicts a skeletal saint perched on the highest column of uneven mountain pillars. He is encircled by three stars...holds a crescent moon in his left hand and in his right a manuscript of four essays: ‘High Churchman,’ ‘Pillar of Orthodoxy,’ ‘Wickedness in High Places,’ and ‘Christian Breadbasket,’ the latter of which currently occupies his attention.” (Nixon, 66). The punning here, along with the self-parodying, is emblematic of Hopkins.

¹² This is the current prayer. The older form from 1549 and published by Cambridge during both poet’s lifetimes reads as: “We do not presume to come to this thy table (O merciful Lord) trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies: we be not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table: but thou art the same Lord, whose property is always, to have mercy: grant us therefore gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, in these holy Mysteries, that we may continually dwell in him, and he in us, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood. Amen” (Ketley, 9)

¹³ See Robert Pattison’s *Tennyson and Tradition*, pgs. 125-127 for an excellent explanation of how Tennyson diverges from the traditional interpretation of the Incarnation.

¹⁴ Not entirely synonymous with theological usage, but used in relation to Agamen’s interpretation, following the turn toward Paul among theorists like Benjamin and Žižek.

¹⁵ Specifically the oath, but I think Agamben’s overall work in *The Sacrament of Language*, especially the way he engages Philo and Maimonides, lets us expand this to the *logos*.

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