Love, Spirit, Breath, Fire

For now we see through a glass darkly,but then face to face

…Now abideth faith,hope,charity,but the greatest of these is charity

(1 Cor 13.12**–**13)

Many of the themes of Hopkins’s *The Wreck of the Deutschland* can be seen to recur in the 1877 poems written in its aftermath. A mystical understanding of the sacraments, an emphasis on the doctrine of the mystical body, the deification of the soul, the indwelling of the Spirit and the soul’s contemplative ascent to divine vision – these are some of the themes continued in poems that follow *The* *Wreck.* Several of these poems similarly employ emblematic and typological methods. It becomes possible to speak of a number of ‘agglomerations’ that are central to understanding Hopkins’s heart-mysticism.[[1]](#endnote-1) This imagery, heavily influenced by baroque emblem tradition, becomes inextricably linked with the soul’s ascent. In Hopkins’s poetry, what is at stake is not merely a visual and poetic vocabulary of the heart, but a deeply inscribed imagining of a personal union with the divine, achieved in and by the spirit.

Hopkins’s nature sonnets of 1877 express an exuberant recognition of the divine in nature. Written during his final year at St Beuno’s, these are some of Hopkins’s best-known poems: ‘God’s Grandeur’, ‘The Starlight Night’, ‘Spring’, ‘In the Valley of the Elwy’, ‘The Sea and the Skylark’, ‘The Windhover’, ‘Pied Beauty’, ‘Hurrahing in Harvest’, ‘The Caged Skylark’. Perhaps the most famous is ‘The Windhover’, describing the flight of a falcon at dawn. The subtitle of the poem ‘*To Christ our Lord*’ prompts questions about the falcon as a symbol of Christ and the poem seems to suggest a moment of contemplative apprehension. One reading of ‘The Windhover’ is that the poem is developed through visual metaphors deriving from the ‘School of the Heart’ emblem tradition. The poem’s conception is itself perhaps emblematic: the falcon is the heart-bird of emblematic discourse. This is the central metaphor of the sonnet and one that is easily related to Christopher Harvey’s *Schola Cordis.* As we have seen, Harvey’s anonymously published engravings were regularly assigned to Quarles and printed together with Quarles’s *Emblems*, which appeared in at least thirty nineteenth-century editions.[[2]](#endnote-2) Chapter 8 looked closely Hopkins’s emblematic inheritance, and his general acquaintance with Quarles and the emblem-literature of ‘Herbert’s school’.[[3]](#endnote-3) Interestingly, the 1844 edition of Herbert’s *The Temple* includes Harvey’s ‘The Synagogue’ and suggests Harvey as the probable author of the *Schola Cordis*.[[4]](#endnote-4) Whether or not Hopkins knew of the true authorship of the *Schola Cordis,* he was clearly aware of the relation between emblematic tradition and Herbert’s poetry. The emblematic and Continental heart-imagery of ‘The Windhover’ shows some parallels with the ways in which Herbert himself drew on and influenced emblematic imagery of the seventeenth century.[[5]](#endnote-5)

Critics writing on ‘The Windhover’ have heard in the penultimate line of the poem an echo of Herbert’s ‘Love’ (III).[[6]](#endnote-6) Yet Herbert’s influence on the poem has not so far been connected with baroque emblem literature. The dovewinged heart of *The Wreck of the Deutschland* shows striking similarities to Emblem 38 of the ‘School of the Heart’: ‘The Flying of the Heart.’[[7]](#endnote-7) ‘The Windhover’ suggests the continued influence of this heart-bird emblem on Hopkins’s poetic imagination, and further suggests a knowledge of the emblem as it relates to Herbert. In the *Schola Cordis*, the emblem of the winged heart is accompanied by an ode that draws on Herbert’s ‘Easter Wings’. As in Herbert’s poem, the lines of verse are shaped as wings, and Harvey points this out to his readers.

This one desire

methinks hath imp’d it so,

That it already flies like fire

And ev’n my verses into wings doe grow.[[8]](#endnote-8)

Harvey alludes here to the closing lines of Herbert’s ‘Easter Wings’: ‘For, if I imp my wing on thine, / Affliction shall advance the flight in me.’ The theme of Herbert’s ‘Easter Wings’ is that of death and resurrection: only by ‘imping’ its wings to those of the saviour can the creature leave behind the earth; this is the soul’s engrafting into Christ. Harvey’s engraving, with its accompanying text, effectively links the emblematic image of the heart-bird with Herbert’s famous portrayal of the soul’s winged flight. Harvey’s emblem and Herbert’s verse may be seen to form an abiding imaginative amalgam in Hopkins’s mind, from which springs ‘The Windhover’.

…how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing

In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,

As a skate’s heel s weeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding

Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding

Stirred for a bird, - the achieve of, the mastery of the thing![[9]](#endnote-9)

Hopkins’s description of ‘a wimpling wing’ echoes, through half-rhyme, the imping of wing to wing described by Herbert. The direct meaning of ‘wimple’ as a nun’s habit perhaps has some visual bearing on the poem. But the semantic interpretation of the line perhaps lies in a play of sound. Though such a reading may seem fanciful, ‘imp’ is in fact entirely appropriate to the subject of Hopkins’s sonnet. ‘Imp’, as a noun means ‘graft;’ as a transitive verb, 1: to graft or repair (a wing, tail, or feather) with a feather to improve a falcon’s flying capacity 2: to equip with wings. The founding metaphor of *The Temple* is God’s spiritual abode in the soul, and Herbert’s ‘Easter Wings’ is implicitly linked with the religious and poetic trope of the heart. In the *Schola Cordis,* this link is made explicit in Harvey’s emblematic application of the poem. I am suggesting that for Hopkins the emblematic image of the bird-heart becomes inextricably linked with a particular religious theme: the ‘imping’ of human and divine, figured by and in the heart. This is the ‘ecstasy’ Hopkins describes in the first stanza of ‘The Windhover’: the ecstasy of divine union. A later poem perhaps provides proof of the persistence of this Hebertian imagery in Hopkins’s imagination. In ‘Brothers’, a little-known poem, Hopkins describes the relationship between two siblings; the poem opens with the exclamation ‘How lovely the elder brother’s / Life all laced in the other’s, / Love-laced!’ Hopkins goes on to describe this elder who

…Smiled, blushed, and bit his lip;

Or drove, with a diver’s dip,

Clutched hands through clasped knees;

And many a mark like these,

Told tales with what heart’s stress

He hung on the imp’s success…[[10]](#endnote-10)

The ‘imp’s success’ here is the success of the younger brother. But this imagery perhaps also draws on that of ‘The Windhover’. As in Hopkins’s earlier poem, bird and heart appear in conjunction, and the ‘diver’s dip’ echoes the plummeting falcon of the earlier sonnet. Once again, Hopkins’s use of the word ‘imp’ calls up the imagery of heart enjoined with heart: ‘Love-laced!’

As in *The Wreck*, Hopkins’s theme of divine union in ‘The Windhover’ is developed in conjunction with the metaphor of the mystical body. If the hidden image of the imping of wing with wing suggests the soul’s engrafting into Christ, this theme is reiterated in an etymological play of word. Justus Lawler’s reading of ‘The Windhover’ discusses the poem’s surprisingly Francophonic diction, visibly seen in the vocabulary of ‘dauphin’, ‘chevalier’, ‘minion’ and ‘silion’. Analysing Hopkins’s use of the word ‘achieve’ Lawler writes:

Its most obvious cognate is another French word, *chef*… which immediately evokes, first, various New Testament images for Christ, for example, this conflation of English and French from Colossians 1:18: “And he is the head of the body the church, *le* chef…”[[11]](#endnote-11)

As we have seen, Hopkins’s title of ‘Head’ in *The* *Wreck* may be read with reference to Colossians 1.18. The title appears at that very juncture of the poem (stanza 28) where Hopkins suggests union through the mystical body of Christ, a foreshadowing of the perfect eschatological union of the soul with the divine. Here too, in Hopkins’s most famous sonnet, it is this incorporation into Christ that is the subtext of the poem. The word ‘achieve’ relates ‘The Windhover’ to the religious and mystical paradigms central to *The* *Wreck.* ‘Achieve’ derives etymologically from the Anglo-French *achever*: ‘to finish, from *a*-(from Latin ad-) + *chef* end, head; (to) reach’. By equating achieve(ment) and ‘mastery’ Hopkins evokes precisely such a finishing or perfecting; an end that is ‘reached’. Again, this configuration is prefigured in stanza 28 of *The* *Wreck*. Hopkins’s question, ‘How shall I…reach me a place there’ is answered by the naming of Christ as ‘Head’: the ‘place’ that is the mystical body in heaven, the perfection of the soul’s ascent.

In *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, Hopkins’s culminating apprehension of God is reached through an effort of the poet’s own heart. It is, simultaneously, a recognition of the mind or heart as the place or habitation of divinity. In ‘The Windhover’, the ‘imping’ of soul with Christ, of heart with heart, is reiterated in a seemingly odd word – the ‘thing’ that is achieved or mastered. This deliberately odd word recalls the ‘thing’ seen in stanza 28 of *The Wreck*. In both cases this is the subject and object of heightened vision – it is the heart whose spiritual vision is the soul’s union with the divine. In this contemplative apprehension, the heart is transformed into the very image of God; it becomes the thing itself.[[12]](#endnote-12) As in *The Wreck,* divine union is specifically the achievement of the mind or heart. The ‘mastery of the thing’ is that fullest action of the mind described by Hopkins in his spiritual notes. It is a contemplative experience, the vision or knowledge of Christ and the Spirit in the heart. The divine apprehension described here uses the very language and metaphors of Hopkins’s mystical vision in *The* *Wreck.* The flight of the windhover echoes the flight of Hopkins’s dovewinged heart; what is seen or experienced is the majesty or glory that is the divine working in world and soul, bird and heart. Hopkins continues:

…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![[13]](#endnote-13)

Hopkins draws out his meaning of union with or engrafting into Christ through a further play of word. If both ‘wimpling’ (which hides the word ‘imp’) and ‘achieve’ carry an interior sense of incorporation into Christ, this underlying meaning is continued in Hopkins’s use of the word ‘buckle’. Perhaps the most analysed word in Hopkins scholarship, ‘buckle’, in its obvious meaning of enjoining, suggests too the mystical body of Christ into which the believer is engrafted. ‘Buckle! AND…’ emphasises this very sense of conjunction, the divine union of the soul with God, at once its end and beginning. The ‘fire that breaks from thee’ is the heart aflame with the love of God, and both ‘thee’ and ‘chevalier’ may be read as the heart now joined with God.[[14]](#endnote-14) This is the bold and splendid vision of ‘The Windhover’. The lesson learned from a bird in flight is that only a grafting or buckling of wing to wing, heart to heart, releases that breaking fire, which is ‘a billion times told lovelier’. This is the ‘ecstasy’ of divine union and resurrection.

Hopkins’s imagination moves easily from the heart-bird of emblematic literature to the heart aflame with love – an image common in baroque emblem books and in the spiritual literature of the sacred heart.[[15]](#endnote-15) The buckling of the heart is that divine fusion by which it is set alight. The word suggests also the action of collapse or crumpling, intimating perhaps the wound of divine love. By this wound is the heart made ‘lovelier’. Etymologically, ‘buckle’ derives from the Anglo French *bocle*, ‘boss of a shield’, related to the English word ‘buckler’, denoting a small shield. Given Hopkins’s penchant for multiple meanings, ‘buckle’ may correspondingly be read in relation to the image of Christ as ‘chevalier’. This pattern of imagery also relates to the final line of *The* *Wreck* where Hopkins writes – ‘Our hearts’ charity’s hearth’s fire, our thoughts’ chivalry’s throng’s Lord’. The conclusion of Hopkins’s ode evokes Christ as a chivalrous knight who shoots through the heart with fiery arrows. ‘Chevalier’, as used in ‘The Windhover’ is a cognate of ‘chivalry’, and the second stanza of the sonnet suggests the very image which closes *The* *Wreck*: the heart wounded and set alight by divine love.[[16]](#endnote-16) In ‘The Windhover’, Hopkins’s exclamation ‘O my chevalier!’ similarly evokes Christ as cavalier, who wounds the heart with his love. Interestingly, Lawler too relates the imagery of ‘The Windhover’ to *The* *Wreck*, suggesting that the bird’s flight towards the eastern dawn relates to the final stanza of Hopkins’s ode and the prayer that Christ will ‘easter in us’ in the ‘crimson-cresseted east’.[[17]](#endnote-17) What is at stake, as Lawler suggests, is a resurrection of sorts. But this is one specifically conceived through the action of Christ within and upon the heart. The next stanza continues:

…No wonder of it: sheer plod makes plough down sillion

Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,

Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.[[18]](#endnote-18)

If the second stanza of ‘The Windhover’ conveys the heart set alight by divine love, the third stanza, as Alan Heuser suggests, evokes the emblematic cross-plough in the field of the heart. As Heuser writes in the endnotes to his essay, *The Shaping Vision of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ‘The inscape in the outspread bird is the cross. The plough is the cross acting in the field of the heart. The cross-plough is familiar in emblem-literature…’[[19]](#endnote-19) In other words, like the figure of the chevalier, the plough becomes the instrument or agent for the instressing of God in the heart. As noted, the words ‘ah my dear’ are generally interpreted as an allusion to Herbert’s familiar reference to Christ in ‘Love’ (III). Lawler contests this, suggesting that the words refer to ‘Hopkins/heart’, and not to Christ. The parallel, Lawler argues, is between ‘ah my dear’ and ‘O my chevalier’ – both exclamations evoking the heart.[[20]](#endnote-20) Both readings, however, are valid. The two readings converge, and their convergence is the very subject of the poem. Hopkins evokes in emblematic images the action of Christ within and upon the heart; the central metaphor of ‘The Windhover’ is the heart or soul conjoined with God. Turning to Herbert’s ‘Love’ (III), we see that this in fact is the central conceit of the poem. Herbert’s words ‘ah my dear’ despairingly address Christ, but the response received is an affirmation of God in the soul – ‘Who made the eyes but I?’ In the manner of Herbert’s ‘Love’ (III), the visual act by which Hopkins perceives the windhover becomes itself a contemplative recognition of the inner presence of the divine.

Yet another emblematic trope employed in ‘The Windhover’ to portray divine action in the heart is the ‘sounding’ of the heart as a musical instrument. We considered earlier that the heart ‘wrung’ (or rung) in stanza 9 of *The* *Wreck of the Deutschland* derives from emblematic imagery of the heart as musical instrument.[[21]](#endnote-21) Here, once again, Hopkins employs this emblematic metaphor in his description of the heart-bird that is ‘*rung* upon the rein of a wimpling wing [my italics].’ The phrase suggests both musical sound and string, especially when read against the preceding description of the windhover sweeping on a ‘bow-bend’. The implied imagery of ‘rein’ and ‘bow’ links these two lines of the sonnet; at one level, what is heard is the ringing out of music played upon the ‘bow’ of an instrument. A further play of sound continues this meaning, for the phrase ‘bow-bend’ perhaps plays at the famous ‘Bow bells’, the bells of the Church of St. Mary-le-Bow in London. This sound play recurs further in the poem, when Hopkins describes the ‘fire that breaks from thee then, a billion / Times told lovelier…’ The poet’s use of the word ‘told’ as a play on ‘tolled’ is suggested by Gardner, who nevertheless advises caution in the searching out of puns and echoes in Hopkins’s poetry.[[22]](#endnote-22) Yet there is a case to be made in ‘The Windhover’ for Hopkins’s synaesthetic account of the flight of the heart-bird as divine music in the soul. The peculiar conjunction of musical metaphor is also echoed in another poem of 1877, ‘As kingfishers catch fire…’ In this well-known poem, Hopkins similarly describes the flight of a kingfisher as it catches the light of the sun, setting these tremors of light against the auditory ringing of stones. Hopkins writes, ‘Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell’s / Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name’. Here, the ringing of sound and the imagery of ‘string’, ‘bell’ and ‘bow’ repeat the metaphors of ‘The Windhover’, as do the accompanying images of fire and flame. What Hopkins describes in the ‘Kingfishers’ sonnet is the ‘dealing out’ of the inner self, housed in the heart. Similarly, in an unfinished poem fragment, Hopkins writes even more explicitly of ‘these heart-song powerful peals’ (Fragments, 141). In ‘The Windhover’, the central trope of the heart-bird works in Hopkins’s imagination to generate further emblematic images; the heart set alight bursts also into sound. This conflagration of images is symptomatic of the emblematic imagination that underwrites many poems of the period; as in *The Wreck*, ‘The Windhover’ repeats the ascent of the heart conceived in emblematic figures.

The heart-imagery of Hopkins’s 1876 ode is continued in another 1877 poem, ‘Hurrahing in Harvest’. The poem begins with a description of harvest fields at the end of summer. What is described as an experience of natural beauty is progressively revealed as mystical experience, and the soul’s ascent is once again a recognition of Christ in the heart.

Summer ends now; now, barbarous in beauty, the stooks rise

Around; up above, what wind-walks! What lovely

Behaviour

Of silk-sack clouds! Has wilder, wilful-wavier

Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,

Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour;

And, eyes, heart, what looks, what lips yet gave you a

Rapturous love’s greeting of realer, of rounder replies?…[[23]](#endnote-23)

In the eucharistic grain of the harvest fields and ‘meal-drift’ of clouds, Hopkins sees an image of Christ.[[24]](#endnote-24) In order to do so, to ‘glean’ the Saviour, Hopkins must lift up heart and eyes. Then, inverting this order, he addresses eyes and heart, in an attempt to understand a response that is glimpsed and heard. Hopkins asks: ‘what looks, what lips yet gave you a / rapturous love’s greeting of realer, of rounder replies?’ Hopkins’s wording here at the end of the second stanza is deliberately and irreducibly ambiguous. This ambiguity is central to the meaning of the poem: ‘love’s greeting’ is both the rapture of Hopkins’s own heart in its knowledge of Christ and the image of Christ that greets Hopkins from within the landscape he sees. Lawler notes that these ‘realer, rounder replies’ suggest the circular imagery that is the classic mystical and poetic imagery of fulfilment.[[25]](#endnote-25) The word ‘reply’ is etymologically linked with the Latin *replicare,* ‘to fold back’, ‘to make a legal replication’; this idea of ‘replication’ is at the core of Hopkins’s meaning. Hopkins’s important inversion of ‘heart, eyes’ / ‘eyes, heart’ presents a mirror image, suggesting the eyes, heart or soul as a mirror to and reflection of Christ. This inversion is also a circularity of exchange: no longer does Hopkins look *on* a landscape; rather, the recognition of Christ in the landscape turns the vision around so that it is Christ who looks out at Hopkins, from within the world, and more importantly, from within himself. It is this realisation that emboldens the heart –

And the azurous hills are his world-wielding shoulder

Majestic–as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet!–

These things, these things were here and but the beholder

Wanting; which two when they once meet,

The heart rears wings bold and bolder

And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him off under his

feet.

‘Behold’ etymologically derives from the Middle English ‘to keep’ and from the Old English *behealdan*, from ‘be-’ + *healdan* ‘to hold’. The soul does not only recognise Christ, but also will ‘hold’ him within itself. Hopkins’s now-familiar imagery of the winged heart suggests more than the soul rearing Plato’s spiritual wings in response to beauty;[[26]](#endnote-26) the image is again consciously or subconsciously linked with the imping of the heart to Christ. This is the rapturous meeting Hopkins describes. A further cue to this reading lies in the use of the word ‘O’, which suggests that circularity of fulfilment seen in the first part of the poem. This circularity is now specifically conjoined with the heart. ‘O half hurls’ describes the heart’s momentum as it meets its maker, much as in ‘The Windhover’ the words ‘O my chevalier’ evoke Christ-in-the-heart. This is the heart’s mystic exaltation; and the twice repeated ‘hurl’, describing the motion of the winged heart, repeats the heart’s ascending prayer in *The Wreck of the Deutschland*.[[27]](#endnote-27) As we have seen, the word ‘hurl’ may be linked with the Latin *ejaculari* and Augustine’s conception of ejaculatory prayer. Here in ‘Hurrahing in Harvest’, as in Hopkins’s other poetry, the exclamations of ‘O,’ ‘Oh’ and ‘Ah’ become the expression of ejaculatory prayer – the mystical prayer of the heart. These are the silent sighs of the spirit, the ‘unspeakable groanings’ described in Romans 8.26 (AV, ‘groanings which cannot be uttered’). This is a key text in Augustine’s formulation of ejaculatory prayer, and one that underwrites Hopkins’s heart-centred mysticism. Hopkins’s interpretation of Romans 8.26 emphasises the circularity of God and man, and the activity or energy of the spirit in the soul.

For prayer is the expression of a wish to God and, since God searches the heart, the conceiving even of the wish is prayer in God’s eyes (see Rom. viii. 26, 27)… correspondence itself is on man’s side not so much corresponding as the wish to correspond, and this least sigh of desire, this one aspiration, is the life and spirit of man… …And even the sigh or aspiration itself is in answer to an inspiration of God’s spirit and is followed by the continuance and expiration of that same breath which lifts it, through the gulf and void…to do or be what God wishes his creature to do or be.

(30 December, 1881)[[28]](#endnote-28)

Hopkins traces the cycle of inspiration and aspiration, the sighing of desire or love that brings the soul to union with the divine. What the Greek Fathers understand through the doctrine of the energies is echoed in Augustine’s prayer of the heart. Hopkins similarly describes the inspiration of God’s spirit as the beginning of the soul’s future perfection. The operation of the Holy Spirit in the soul enables its participation in divinity. For Hopkins, like Augustine, the unutterable groans of the spirit are heard above all in the heart; the words ‘O’, ‘Oh’ and ‘Ah’ are for Hopkins the heart’s sighs of desire, the aspirations by which the soul is raised up to the divine and itself deified. This is the rapture described in ‘Hurrahing in Harvest’; the winged heart, which ‘O half hurls’, is the heart raised up to God in contemplative celebration. Hopkins’s ‘Os’, ‘Ohs’ and ‘Ahs’ signify the heart’s ascending prayer; man’s ‘reply’ to God’s inspiration is the word/Word spoken in the heart. In another poem of the period, ‘The Valley of the Elwy’, Hopkins similarly employs an emblematic and mystical vocabulary to suggest the heart as the place of the creature’s ‘completion’ in God. Hopkins writes:

Lovely the woods, waters, meadows, combes, vales,

All the air things wear that build this world of Wales;

Only the inmate does not correspond:

God, lover of souls, swaying considerate scales,

Complete thy creature dear O where it fails,

Being mighty a master, being a father and fond.[[29]](#endnote-29)

Describing God as a ‘lover of souls’, Hopkins reflects on his compassionate judgements and on the divine compensation of human failing. The completion of the creature is in the hands of God and Hopkins’s image of swaying scales recalls emblematic engravings. In the *Schola Cordis,* Harvey’s engraving entitled ‘The Weighing of the Heart’ shows the human heart being weighed in a set of scales, with the accompanying proverb ‘The Lord pondereth the heart’ (Prov. 21.2).[[30]](#endnote-30) Hopkins again suggests the heart as the place and purchase of divine grace, using an increasingly familiar vocabulary. In ‘The Windhover’, Hopkins’s words ‘ah my dear’ evoke the self or heart as joined with God. Here too, Hopkins’s invocation to God to ‘complete thy creature dear O where it fails’ hints at the heart as the place of this completion. The word ‘dear’ is itself implicitly linked with Hopkins’s imagination of the heart, and functions as an index of the heart itself. At the same time, Hopkins’s ‘O’ portrays again the heart’s ‘sighs’ of desire (cf. Rom. 8.26), in its yearning for divine union. Scripture teaches that the spirit completes the creature where it fails: ‘for we know not what we should pray for as we ought’ (Rom. 8.26), but the spirit intercedes on behalf of humankind, reconciling souls to God. God works in the heart through the operation of the spirit, perfecting the creature and raising souls to himself. Hopkins’s emblematic inscapes reinforce this idea of God as saviour of souls and restorer of hearts. Such an inscape is perhaps behind the deliberately alliterative, emphatic ending of the poem, which draws the attention of the reader to the closing word ‘fond’. Etymologically, the word derives from the Old French *fons,* or *font* and Hopkins’s closing image subtly recalls emblematic engravings of the divine spring in the heart, the living waters of the soul.[[31]](#endnote-31) A similar configuration of metaphor and imagery may be seen in ‘Ribblesdale’, a poem that Hopkins explicitly connects with Romans 8 by attaching the scriptural quotation, ‘For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God’ (Rom. 8.19 AV)*.* Here, it is the whole of creation Hopkins speaks for.

Earth, sweet Earth, sweet landscape, with leaves throng

And louched low grass, heaven that dost appeal

To, with no tongue to plead, no heart to feel;

Thou canst but only be, but dost that long –

Thou canst but be, but that thou well dost; strong

Thy plea with him who dealt…

…And what is Earth’s eye, tongue, or heart else, where

Else, but in dear and dogged man? –Ah, the heir

To his own selfbent so bound, so tied to his turn,

To thriftless reave both our rich round world bare

And none reck of world after, this bids wear

Earth brows of such care, care and dear concern.[[32]](#endnote-32)

Lawler argues that the poem shows nature as replacing man in giving God glory. Noting that the ‘creation’ of Romans 8.19 is understood by all commentators as ‘nature’, Lawler suggests that Hopkins’s use of the word ‘long’ is a pun on ‘the creature *longing* for the manifestation of the sons of God’.[[33]](#endnote-33) But while at one level the poem contrasts earth’s ‘strong…plea’ with man’s ‘selfbent’ and ‘thriftless’ spoiling, the undergirding imagery of the text yet suggests a belief in humankind as nature’s ‘dearest…clearest selved spark’.[[34]](#endnote-34) Hopkins’s hidden allusions and etymological wordplay move against the surface meaning of the poem, instead expressing a vision of creation ultimately reconciled to God through the human heart. Earth’s ‘eye, tongue, or heart’ is found only in ‘dear and dogged man’: the ‘heir’. Against Hopkins’s explicit reference to Romans 8, the word ‘heir’ may be linked with Romans 8.16–17:

For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are sons of God. And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ…that we may be also glorified with him.

The word ‘heir’ suggests again the working of the spirit, by whom men and women are made children of God. Hopkins’s interjection of ‘Ah’ suggests again the ascending sighs of the spirit in the heart. A series of synonymous words at the poem’s conclusion continues this inscape of meaning. Hopkins’s twice repeated ‘care’ is reiterated in the words ‘reck’ and ‘concern’, and his deliberate conjunction of ‘care’ and ‘dear’ is a cue to readers. Although there is no firm etymological link between the two words, Hopkins, by a simple chiming, uses ‘care’ to evoke ‘*caritas*’ or ‘charity’. This is the charity of God poured forth in the heart by the Holy Ghost, the charity by which human souls are adopted into divine sonship (cf. Rom. 5.5). The Latin ‘*caritas*’ suggests dearness, deriving from ‘*carus*’: dear, beloved, highly priced, costly. Hopkins’s concluding words ‘care and dear concern’ gesture towards this inner meaning of ‘caritas’ as dearness or costliness. The final two stanzas of ‘Ribblesdale’ contain a number of words that emphasise this idea; ‘heir’, ‘rich’, ‘bid’, ‘thrift’, ‘reave’ and of course ‘dear’ may all be connected with the idea of cost. It is, Hopkins tells us, ‘dear and dogged man’ who is ‘heir’. Hopkins’s use of the word ‘dear’ as an index of the heart is perhaps made clearer in ‘Ribblesdale’, for the heart houses the gift of God’s love, the ‘dear’ and precious gift of caritas. As Hopkins suggests in his reflections on Romans 8.26, all of creation aspires to God through the sighs of the Spirit in the human creature. This too is the hidden conclusion of ‘Ribblesdale’. Hopkins’s odd usage of the word ‘brows’ in the poem suggests a reading of ‘expression’.[[35]](#endnote-35) ‘Earth brows of such care’ because the human being is Earth’s expression – her ‘eye, tongue and heart’. Creation is reconciled to God through humankind; for although the man of ‘Ribblesdale’ is ‘selfbent’ and ‘thriftless’, he is yet the ‘heir’ to divine love. As Hopkins writes elsewhere, it only man who can knowingly give God glory.[[36]](#endnote-36) Earth’s ‘longing’ for revelation can in truth only be felt in the human heart, through the *caritas* which is the heart’s longing.

In ‘The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo’*,* Hopkins continues this theme of the divine operation in the human soul. What we see once again is the persistence of a poetic vocabulary and imagery symptomatic of Hopkins’s mystical imagining of the heart.

Somewhere elsewhere there is ah well where! One,

One. Yes I can tell such a key, I do know such a place,

Where whatever’s prized and passes of us…

…dearly and dangerously sweet

Of us…

…fastened with the tenderest truth

To its own best being and its loveliness of youth: it is an ever

lastingness of, O it is an all youth!…[[37]](#endnote-37)

The ‘place’ Hopkins describes is one that is ‘prized’, ‘dearly’ sweet, fastened to its own ‘best being’. It is the very place sought and found in *The* *Wreck*: the heart that is the dwelling place of divinity. ‘Where, where, where was a place?’ Hopkins asks in *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, and the answer is found in the flight of the heart to the heart of Christ. Now once again, Hopkins’s vision of the heart is described through an abundance of metaphor that recalls Hopkins’s earlier ode. The heart is a key, a place, an eternal youth; Hopkins’s description of ‘an everlastingness’ suggests again the waters of the heart springing up to life everlasting (cf. Jn. 4.14). As Hopkins writes in ‘God’s Grandeur’, this is the ‘dearest freshness deep down things’. It is the divine spirit sighing at the heart of creation and in human hearts, bringing the world to God. This is the working of the divine energies. Breath, fire and water, all convey the motion and movement of being – being as *energeia,* participating in that best being that is Christ. Hopkins’s exclamations are the heart’s sighs as it reaches up to the divine: ‘*ah* well where!’; ‘*O* it is an all youth! [my italics]’. That these sighs are the soul aspiring to God is made clearer as Hopkins urges the man or woman to forsake outwards forms and turn to beauty’s ‘best being’. This is the inner beauty of the soul in its cooperation with the divine spirit.

Resign them, sign them, seal them, send them, motion them

with breath,

And with sighs soaring, soaring sighs, deliver

Them; beauty-in-the-ghost, deliver it, early now, long before

death…

…Give beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty, back to God,

beauty’s self and beauty’s giver.

The relinquishing of visible beauty becomes, conversely, the recognition of true beauty. By returning beauty to God, its external forms are collapsed into the invisible ‘self’ of beauty that is the divine gift of the spirit. Nearly each word in this section of the poem is connected with the operation of the spirit: (re)sign, sign, seal, motion, breath, sighs. The ‘beauty-in-the-ghost’ is the Holy Ghost in the heart; through the ‘soaring sighs’ of the heart’s ascent is beauty’s self, the divine spirit, ‘delivered’ back to God. This is the ascent of man through the charity of God’s love. This is ‘God’s better beauty, grace’.[[38]](#endnote-38) Hopkins continues:

…what we had lighthanded left in surly the mere mould

Will have waked and have waxed and have walked with the

wind what while we slept,

This side, that side hurling a heavyheaded hundredfold

What while we, while we slumbered…

Hopkins contrasts what is ‘lighthanded left’ with what ‘hurls a heavyheaded hundredfold’. The ways of men, on ‘this side’, are opposed to the ways of God. Hopkins perhaps implicitly draws on the metaphor of the mystical body, contrasting the members of this earthly body with Christ who is head – at once in heaven and on earth, and in the hearts of men. ‘Hurls’ is Hopkins’s characteristic description of the heart ascending to God (the word is used in this context in *The* *Wreck*, ‘The Windhover’ and ‘Hurrahing in Harvest’). Here, Hopkins’s use of the verb is again linked with the heart as the place of the divine indwelling – a meaning also suggested in Hopkins’s description of the ‘mere mould’. ‘Mere’ derives from the Latin *merus,* having no admixture, pure. This purest mould of man, his ‘best being’ or type is Christ in the heart; the divine element of the soul. What men and women lightly leave behind ‘in surly the mere mould’ wakes, waxes and walks with the wind. This divine part of the soul sleeps in the creature yet ‘wakes’ in God; held ‘lightly’ by men it weighs heavy with God, ‘hurling a heavyheaded hundredfold’. Hopkins’s words perhaps echo the description of the heart’s beauty in ‘The Windhover’ – not a ‘hundredfold’ but ‘a billion times told lovelier’. As in the earlier poem, Hopkins suggests again the beauty of the heart raised up to God; beauty returned and restored to its true self. Interestingly, what is described as ‘dearly and dangerously sweet / Of us…’ can also be connected with ‘The Windhover’s description of the heart’s ‘dangerous’ and ‘lovelier’ fire. In both poems, ‘dangerous’ perhaps suggests the now obsolete meaning of ‘danger’ as ‘reach’ or ‘range’ – the heart’s mystical journey of ascent, through the divine energies of the spirit. So, Hopkins asks:

O then, weary then why should we tread? O why are we so

haggard at the heart, so care-coiled, care-killed, so fagged,

so fashed, so cogged, so cumbered,

When the thing we freely forfeit is kept with fonder a care,

Fonder a care than we could have kept it, kept

Far with fonder a care (and we, we should have lost it) finer,

fonder

A care kept. – Where kept? Do but tell us where kept, where. –

Yonder. – What high as that! We follow, now we follow. –

Yonder, yes yonder, yonder,

Yonder.

Once again, Hopkins contrasts the ways of men with the ways of God; what men and women ‘freely forfeit’ is kept with ‘far with fonder a care’. The word ‘heart’, seen only once in the poem, appears here at the poem’s conclusion in close conjunction with the word ‘care’. Hopkins perhaps again uses both ‘heart’ and ‘care’ to suggest *caritas*: the heart as the seat of God’s charity. The word ‘care’ occurs six times at the poem’s close, and in four instances, Hopkins uses the phrase ‘fonder a care’. The word ‘fond’ in its normative sense is synonymous with that other of Hopkins’s indices of the heart: ‘dear’. But the word evokes too a sacramental and emblematic imagery of the heart. In ‘The Valley of the Elwy’ Hopkins suggests the word ‘fond’ in its etymological context of ‘*fons’* or ‘*font’*. Charity is the gift given in baptism, and Hopkins’s repeated conjunction of ‘fonder’ and ‘care’ suggests through semantic chiming and etymological play the *caritas* that is the inner fountain of divine spirit. This is the ‘best being’ described earlier in the poem, the gift of ‘everlastingness’ and ‘all youth’. As the divine operation in the human creature, charity brings the soul to God. Both *from* and *of* God, charity is the means by which the heart ascends. As Hopkins tells us, what is ‘kept with fonder a care’ is ‘kept far’, ‘high as that’ – ‘yonder’. This ‘thing’ is the heart seen in *The* *Wreck* and in ‘The Windhover’. It is the heart in its vision and knowledge of the divine: ‘finer, fonder’. Etymologically, ‘finer’ is connected with the Middle English *fin*, from Anglo-French, from Latin *finis* ‘end, limit’. Hopkins suggests that man’s best self is God’s self in him; to this divine end the human creature aspires, ascending through the working of the spirit in the heart. This is the end of the soul’s journey into God.

1. The term is proposed by Walter J. Ong, as quoted by Lawler, *Hopkins Re-Constructed,* 209. Lawler explicates Ong’s term as ‘a common family…of images drawn from desultory readings, conversations, retreat sermons…to which Hopkins would have been exposed during the whole of his Jesuit life’ (ibid.). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Bath, *Speaking Pictures,* 271. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. See Chapter 7, n 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. George Herbert, *The Temple: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations* (London: Pickering: 1844), 262. The ‘Advertisement to The Synagogue’ lays out over five pages the grounds for ascribing to Christopher Harvey the authorship of the ‘Synagogue’ (1640), and further suggests Harvey as the likely author of the *Schola Cordis*:‘Another work, probably by Ch. Harvie, is entitled “*Schola Cordis;* or the Heart of itself gone away from God; brought back again to him; and instructed by him, in 47 emblems, London, printed for H. Blunden, at the Castle in Cornhill, 1647,” 12 mo. pp. 196. In the edition of 1675 it is stated, that they were “written by the Author of the ‘Synagogue’ annexed to Herbert’s Poems;” if so, this volume must be also ascribed to Christopher Harvey; it should, however, be observed, that it has been reprinted two or three times, within the last half century, and ascribed to Francis Quarles, but erroneously.’ The Advertisement also notes that Harvey’s emblems are taken from the earlier work of Benedictus Haeftenus published in Antwerp in 1635. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Herbert’s connections to the emblem tradition are discussed in detail by Rosemary Freeman in *English Emblem Books*. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. White, *Hopkins: A Literary Biography*, 283. White suggests that the immediacy of Hopkins’s first-person singular opening echoes Herbert’s conversational tone, and that Hopkins’s fond address at the close of the poem – ‘ah my dear’ –is borrowed from his ‘favourite’ Herbert. Gardner, in his notes to an early poem of Hopkins, ‘New Readings’, notes that an Oxford friend (W. E. Addis) once said of Hopkins that ‘George Herbert was his strongest tie to the English church,’ *Poems,* 248, n 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. See Chapter 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Quarles, 353. In order to retain clarity with regard to textual sources, I will continue to reference Harvey’s emblems under the name of Quarles, as they appear in the 1866 edition of Quarles’s *Emblems.* In Ode 38, which accompanies the emblem of the flying heart, the pattern of wings becomes visible when the six stanzas of the ode are seen together. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Hopkins, *Poems,* 69. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid.,87–88. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Lawler, *Hopkins Re-constructed,* 189. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid. Lawler too reads the ‘thing’ with reference to the heart and similarly suggests that Hopkins’s heart achieves, like the Windhover, the transcendence of dualities; Lawler’s emphasis however is on the balancing of the contemplative and active life by which the Christian chivalrous mission is fulfilled, 190–91. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Hopkins, *Poems,* 69. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Lawler, *Hopkins Re-constructed,* 191. Lawler too interprets ‘thee’ and ‘chevalier’ with reference to the heart, but does not relate this reading to the trope of the mystical body. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. See Quarles, *Emblems,* 345. In ‘The Inflaming of the Heart,’ the final stanza of Harvey’s ode petitions God to ‘let then thy fire inflame / My cold heart so thoroughly…That I may / Ev’ry day…attending / All occasions of ascending, / Heaven upon earth begin.’ (ibid., 347). [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Lawler’s reading of ‘The Windhover’ also draws attention to Hopkins’s Franco-Latinate heart imagery, though he finds this imagery ‘atypical’ in Hopkins’s poetry, *Hopkins Re-constructed,* 206. Lawler argues that the heart, which Hopkins generally evokes in his poems, has little in common – other than the red-yellow colours – with the Sacred Heart of traditional iconography or spiritual literature (ibid., 205) ‘The Windhover’, Lawler suggests, is an exception, and he imaginatively relates its heart-imagery to two people or events: the bloody martyrdom of the Jesuit Jean de Brebeuf in Canada in the seventeenth century and the figure of Joan of Arc, whom he believes broadly ‘hovers over the entire poem’ (ibid., 215). [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid., 184. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Hopkins, *Poems,* 69. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Alan Heuser, *The Shaping Vision of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Hamden, CN: Archon Books, 1968), 111. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Lawler, *Hopkins Re-constructed,* 201. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Chapters 7 and 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Gardner, ‘Introduction to the Fourth Edition,’ in *Poems* by Hopkins, xxxii. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Hopkins, *Poems,* 70. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Heuser, *Shaping Vision,* 52. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Lawler, *Hopkins Re-constructed,* 181. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Cf. Heuser, *Shaping Vision,* 52. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. See Chapter 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Hopkins, *Sermons* *and Devotional Writings,* 154–56. Cf. Lawler’s discussion of Hopkins’s interpretation of Rom. 8.26, *Hopkins Re-constructed,* 126. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Hopkins, *Poems,* 68. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Quarles, *Emblems,* 297. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Ibid., 324, ‘The Watering of the Heart.’ [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Hopkins, *Poems,* 90–91. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Lawler, *Hopkins Re-constructed,* 129. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Hopkins, *Poems,* ‘That nature is a Heraclitean Fire,’ 105. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Perhaps this idea of Earth’s ‘expression’ may also be linked with Hopkins’s portrayal of Christ’s features that emerge from the landscape described in ‘Hurrahing in Harvest’. This image or reflection of Christ would above all be found in the heart stamped with the likeness of God. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Hopkins, *Sermons and Devotional Writings,* 239. Reflecting on the Principle or Foundation of the *Exercises,* Hopkins writes of the created world and its creatures, ‘they make [God] known, they tell of him, they give him glory, but they do not know they do, they do not know him…This then is poor praise, faint reverence, slight service, dull glory. Nevertheless what they can *they always do*.’ (ibid.) Hopkins’s words, ‘*they always do*,’ echo at one level his punning description of nature that ‘dost that long – ’; nature, whose hope of God is, without man, unchanging and unending. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Hopkins, *Poems,* ‘The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo,’ 91–93. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Ibid.,‘To What Serves Mortal Beauty,’ 98. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)