

RSV

RIVISTA
DI STUDI
VITTORIANI


DIRETTA DA
FRANCESCO MARRONI

Pubblicazione del Dipartimento
di Scienze Linguistiche e Letterarie

Università degli Studi
"G. d'Annunzio" Pescara

5

Edizioni Tracce



*Volume stampato con il contributo del Dipartimento di Scienze Linguistiche
e Letterarie dell'Università degli Studi "G. d'Annunzio" di Chieti*

Finito di stampare
nel mese di Gennaio 1998
dalla *Litografia Brandolini snc* - Sambuceto (CH)
per le EDIZIONI TRACCE
Via Vittorio Veneto, 47
65123 Pescara
Tel. 085/76658

ISBN 88-86676-21-2

Direttore Responsabile: Domenico Cara
Supplemento a:
"Tracce - trimestrale di scrittura e
ricerca letteraria"
Edizioni Tracce
Via Vittorio Veneto
65100 PESCARA

RSV
Rivista di Studi Vittoriani

Anno III

Gennaio 1998

Fascicolo 5

Direttore

Francesco Marroni

Comitato di Redazione

Andrea Mariani, Gabriella Micks
Leo Marchetti, Nick De Marco, Clara Mucci

Comitato Scientifico

Ian Campbell (University of Edinburgh)
J.A.V. Chapple (University of Hull)
Pierre Coustillas (Université de Lille)
Cristina Giorcelli (Università di Roma III)
Jacob Korg (University of Washington)
Franco Marucci (Università di Venezia)
Rosemarie Morgan (Yale University)
Norman Page (University of Nottingham)
Carlo Pagetti (Università di Torino)
Alan Shelston (University of Manchester)

Segreteria di Redazione

Emanuela Ettore, Anna Enrichetta Soccio

*Con la collaborazione scientifica del C.U.S.V.E.
(Centro Universitario di Studi Vittoriani e Edoardiani - Pescara)*

SOMMARIO

SAGGI

- Patsy Stoneman** — The Brontë Legacy: *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* as Romance Archetypes Pag. 5
- Lionel Kelly** — *Wuthering Heights*, Writing, and Representation " 25
- Clara Mucci** — *Jane Eyre* or Figurations of Femininity in the Victorian Novel " 39
- J. B. Bullen** — The Strange Fruit of Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* " 77

CONTRIBUTI

- Cristina Ossato** — *Sartor Resartus*, or Re-tailoring Plato's Myth of the Cave " 89
- Mary Patricia Kane** — Unmasking *Little Women*: the Theme of the Writer's Identity in Louisa May Alcott's *A Modern Mephistopheles* " 109
- Renzo D'Agnillo** — Submission and Resistance: The Poetics of a Spiritual Dilemma in G. M. Hopkins' "Terrible Sonnets" " 119
- Alessandra Calanchi** — "Others will follow": lo strano caso di Jekyll, Hyde e Sherlock Holmes " 133

Recensioni e schede di Francesco Marroni, Mirella Billi, Jacob Korg, Mariaconcetta Costantini, Maurizio Ascari, Laura Braconi, Saverio Tomaiuolo, Vincenzo Maggitti, Giulia Verderosa Maielli, Francesca Saggini, Vincenza Annese.

Renzo D'Agnillo

Submission and Resistance: The Poetics of a Spiritual Dilemma in G. M. Hopkins' "Terrible Sonnets"

The group of sonnets Gerard Manley Hopkins composed during his five year teaching period at University College Dublin, usually known as the "Terrible Sonnets"¹, are undoubtedly the most soul-probing and poignant of all his poems. The desperation behind them, caused not only by his increasingly bad health coupled with the gruelling work he was subjected to at the university, but also his sense of being exiled, is reflected in his letters and private notebooks of the time. An immediate consequence is that God, who is otherwise always the prime and fundamental source of inspiration and celebration of Hopkins' verse, either becomes transformed into a monstrous destructive being, or is almost entirely absent, leaving the poet to strive alone in despair for a language that "must carry out the act of creating an interior landscape"². This despair can be glimpsed in a telling phrase Hopkins wrote in a letter to his friend Robert Bridges:

- ¹ This is one of three titles that critics have used, the other two being "Dark Sonnets" and "Sonnets of Desolation". My choice for the "Terrible Sonnets" is not an arbitrary one, if anything it is more commonly used than the other two, also the adjective "terrible" is appropriate to their powerful and naked emotional tone.
- ² Rachel Salmon, "Prayers of Praise and Prayers of Petition: Simultaneity in the Sonnet World of Gerard Manley Hopkins", *Victorian Poetry*, 22, 4, (Winter 1984), p. 398.

"I shall shortly have some sonnets to send you, five or more. Four of these came like inspirations unbidden and against my will"³.

The key phrase "unbidden and against my will" reveals that far from the joyful and confident inspiration that characterises his other works, (the celebratory poems written in Wales are an immediate example), Hopkins composed these sonnets not in spite of but as a result of his tormented self⁴. Inspiration and pain, therefore, become intrinsically linked. However, whilst recognising that nowhere else in Hopkins does biography brush shoulders so painfully with the poetry and whilst not wishing to underestimate the importance his experiences in Dublin had for the composition of the sonnets, my purpose here is to illustrate how "Carrion Comfort", "No worst", "I wake and feel" "Too seem the stranger" "Patience, hard thing" and "My own heart"⁵ dramatically interrelate with one another through a close consideration of their intratextual features.

These were not the only poems, or indeed the only sonnets Hopkins wrote while he was in Dublin of course, and there has been a sort of tacit agreement on the part of critics in grouping these particular ones together⁶. However, no real agreement has been reached regarding a possible sequence or order to them. It is possible to detect a progression commencing from the despair of "No worst", "I wake and feel" and "To seem the

³ C. C. Abbot (ed.), *The Letters of G. M. Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1935, p. 221.

⁴ Joseph J. Feeney, S. J., "I Do Otherwise", *Studies*, 86, 1997, pp. 116-125, for an interesting exploration of Hopkins' notions on creativity.

⁵ Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, W. H. Gardner and N. H. MacKenzie, (eds.), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970, pp. 99-103. Line numbers will be given in the text.

⁶ Other poems Hopkins wrote during this period, including "Spelt from Sibyl's leaves", "To What serves Mortal Beauty?", ("The Soldier"), "Tom's Garland", "Harry Ploughman" and "Thou art indeed just, Lord", are either not sonnets or share little with the language, structure and tone of the six sonnets grouped together here.

stranger", leading to the struggle against this despair and the hope for release in "Carrion Comfort", "Patience, hard thing" and "My own heart". Likewise, one could re-group them in reverse order in terms of a regression⁷. But we are left with the fact of being almost completely in the dark about their exact order of composition⁸ as well as the obvious fact that human suffering is not something one can easily plot diachronically. Therefore, there seems no pertinent reason why one should seek to impose a diachronic order on the sonnets, which, if anything, can be seen to gain all the more when considered in synchronic terms. Indeed, their efficacy as a group lies in the fact that, in whatever order they are read, their intratextuality reinforces each time a powerful and dramatic reading experience which one conditioned by a diachronic order would only mitigate. I would suggest that a great deal of the dramatic power behind the sonnets derives from their being divisible into two groups which, for the sake of mere convenience, I will call group 1 and group 2. Group 1 (G1) is comprised of "To seem the stranger", "No worst" and "I wake and feel", and group 2 (G2) "Carrion Comfort", "Patience, hard thing" and "My own heart". As will be seen, these two groups respectively revolve around and generate the mutually exclusive paradigms of submission and passivity on the one hand and reaction and resistance on the other. These paradigms form the basis of the poet's continually contrasting and contradictory states. What follows is a consideration of how these paradigms are presented in the linguistic, rhetorical and prosodical strategies at work in the sonnets.

From a macrostructural point of view, the sonnets give little

⁷ Norman MacKenzie considers such a task as "inconclusive a pastime as the renumbering of Shakespeare sonnets". Norman MacKenzie, *A Reader's Guide to Gerard Manley Hopkins*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1981, p. 170.

⁸ W. H. Gardner assigns them all to the year 1885, see W. H. Gardner and N. H. MacKenzie, *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970, pp. 287-8.

indication of belonging to two separate groups. They all follow the conventions of the Petrarchan form, the rhyme schemes being abba for the first two quatrains and cdcdcd or ccdccd for the sestet and they all have the asymmetric 8-6 form (octave+sestet), reflecting a development and progression of thought or theme. Metrically, they all deviate from the expectations of the iambic pentameter, since the scansion of Hopkins' sprung rhythm is in terms of stresses rather than feet⁹. This means that although there is a generally regular pattern of five stresses, or feet, to a line, these in no way follow the pattern of an iambic beat, and consequently various lines are stretched beyond a ten-syllable count. The two most interesting cases are "Carrion Comfort" and "No worst". "Carrion Comfort" is the only non-pentameter sonnet and is cast in hexameter lines, but the fixed regularity of its six-stress structure clashes with an almost erratic syllable count where barely two lines have the same number varying from a minimum of twelve to a maximum of eighteen. The effect of this clash on a structural level is to blur the sonnet form from something apparently solid to something fluid and uncontrollable, thus effectively dramatising on a structural level the continual threat of breakdown that is a preoccupation running through all the sonnets. A similar effect is achieved in "No worst", through the frequent use of enjambments: "[...] a chief-/woe [...]" (5-6) "[...] no ling-/ering! [...]" (7-8) "[...] cliffs of fall/Frightful [...]" (9-10) "[...] our small/Durance [...]" (11-12) "[...] Here! creep/wretch [...]"

⁹ C. C. Abbott, ed., *The Correspondence of G. M. Hopkins and R. W. Dixon*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1935, p. 14: "To speak shortly, it (sprung rhythm) consists in scanning by accents or stresses alone, without any account of the syllables, so that a foot may be one long syllable or it may be many light and one strong". Debate on sprung rhythm has been profuse and it is not my intention here to question its originality as a metrical form. We may recall Hopkins' own recognition that it was not his invention and that, rather than being an attempt at imposing a complicated but rigid structural principle, sprung rhythm ultimately depends on an often problematic interaction between stress and meaning where the ultimate task of 'fetching out' meaning relies heavily on an oral performance.

(12-13) "[...] all/Life death does end [...]" (13-14) which creates a two-way pull between syntax and the metrical line emerging at the beginning of the second quatrain to dominate the remaining ten lines of the poem, and, in a sense, superimposing a 4-10 structure upon that of its basic 8-6 structure. It is also interesting to consider these two poems in terms of their layout. "Carrion Comfort" literally sprawls across the page with various of its lines spilling over into one another. The effect is of a pressure being released, an energy breaking out into liberty. Contrariwise, the lay-out of "No worst" in a single fourteen-line block with no spaces in-between, (incidentally making it the only one of the sonnets void of blank spaces) suggests a sense of enclosure and imprisonment. It stands hard and severe on the page. At the same time its enjambments suggest an obsessive outburst sustaining the dark despair that pushes the poet's self-control and rationality beyond the limits of sanity.

Both groups, therefore, contain a representative sonnet that is structurally distinguishable from its others and which attempt to convey, through the deviancies of rhythmic and structural features, the two opposite extremes of struggle and reaction on the one hand and dejection and apathy on the other. One a loose structure breaking out towards a state of euphoria, the other a self-enclosed structure revealing the circularity of an obsessive despair.

A brief consideration of the verb forms used in the sonnets will reveal that they contribute in no small way to the contrasting paradigms represented by each group. Significantly, G1 displays a striking absence of dynamic verbs, and this underlines the sense of passivity and the lack of hope for salvation that dominates them all. In "To seem the stranger", for example, there are no active or dynamic words of any significance apart from 'creating' which functions as an adjective in "my creating thought" (6) and 'breeds', which refers to the words of love springing from the poet's heart (12). Appropriately, the remaining verbs of this sonnet; "parting" (4), "bars", "thwarts" and "hoard" (13) denote either obstruction or enclosure. "No

worst" has "pitched" (1), which is a participle functioning as a noun and the passive form "schooled" (2) in connection with "pangs" in the same line. Of the remaining verbs, "wring" (2), "heave", "huddle" (5), and "wince" and "sing" (6) "heave" is the most forceful, but it indicates again sheer difficulty as in lifting a very heavy weight and followed as it is by a prepositional phrase in: "My cries heave herds long [...]" (5) only emphasises the extent of the poet's despair. In turn, the poet's cries which "huddle" seems to point to a final sense of enclosure similar to a state of imprisonment, a state the poem already embodies on a structural level as mentioned above. In "I wake and feel" the verbs in the title are connected with a past action, which alludes to a state of suffering that is still not over, as emphasised in the present perfect tense of "we have spent", in the second line. The sense of immobility rendered in the past passive tenses of "dead letters sent" (7), "bones built" and "flesh filled" (11), also convey the idea of the body as a prison. The grammatically deviant "brimmed" in "[...] blood brimmed the curse [...]" (11) furthermore reinforces a sense of weight and oppression that characterises a passive and dejected state.

On the other hand, dynamic verbs play a prominent part in the sonnets of G2. In "Carrion Comfort" a variety of verbs expressing resistance: "untwist" (2), "kissed" (10), "lapped", "stole", "laugh" and "cheer" (11), "fought" (13) and "wrestling" (14) are made to contrast with verbs indicating submission and defeat: "[...] lay a lionlimb [...]" (6), "avoid" and "flee" (8), "flung", and "foot trod" (12), creating an effective interplay that contributes significantly to the dramatic tension of the sonnet. In "Patience, hard thing" the frequent infinitive clauses "to pray" (1), "to bid for" (2), "To do without, take tosses and obey" (4), "To bruise" (10), and "[...] we do bid God bend [...]" (11), attempt to establish permanent truths that act as a stronghold for the poet. In spite of the negative connotations of several of these words, such as "grate" and "kills" (9), they serve to underline the necessary actions and attitudes characterised by the virtue of patience which is made to represent such an important means for reaching God who "is patient"

(13). This notion of patience as a saving grace is further reinforced by the positively connoted verbs "roots" (5) "masks" (7), "distills" (12) and "fills" (13). Finally, "My own heart" is full of verbs encouraging a positive reaction "have pity on" (1), "let me live" (1-2), "I cast for comfort", (5), "come" (9), "let be" and "[...] call off thoughts [...]" (10), and "[...] leave comfort root-room [...]" (11), the grammatically deviant and striking "size" (11), the extraordinarily original "betweenpie" and the positively charged "lights" (14) numerically overwhelm the only two negatively charged verbs "tormenting" (4) and "groping" (6), so that the poem offers a tangible possibility of salvation.

In the self-enclosed, self-reflexive world of the terrible sonnets the subject of meditation is naturally the I-Poet. The communicative situation between poet and God, which elsewhere in Hopkins is characterised by the confidence of being heard, here breaks down to a unilateral one as a result of being "unheard", as the poet struggles to give voice to a "personal interior drama"¹⁰. It is interesting to note that the appellatives the poet uses in addressing himself in the sonnets range from the pejorative "wretch" and "jaded" (a recurrent word in Hopkins) and "jackself", to the neutral "soul" and "self", and finally the endearing "heart", reflecting an ambivalency in the speaker's attitude to himself which is the result of the constantly shifting moods of a complex identity in the throes of self-turmoil.

The desperate search for a communicative contact can be seen in the following list of lamentations and interrogations that recur in all of the sonnets:

"Comforter, where, where is your comforting?" ("No worst, there is none" - 3)

"[...] cries like dead letters sent to dearest him that lives alas! away" ("I wake and feel" - 7-8)

¹⁰ Robert V. Caro, SJ "Hopkins' Breviary Poems", *Studies*, 86, (Summer 1997), p. 113.

Renzo D'Agnillo

"[...] would neither hear me were I pleading [...]"
"[...] This to hoard unheard,/Heard unheeded [...]"
("To seem the stranger" - 6-7, 13-14)

"And where is he who more and more distills/Delicious
kindness?" ("Patience, hard thing" - 12-13)

"I cast for comfort I can no more get [...]" ("My own
heart" - 5)

"Cheer whom though? [...]" ("Carrion Comfort" - 12)

There is, of course, no question about the existence of God in these outbursts. The poet's despair, rather, derives from his sense of being abandoned by him. But it will also be noticed that God is not the only missing interlocutor, for the third quotation refers to England, from which he is both physically and spiritually cut off, and the final line of that sonnet with its implicit "supplication for hearing"¹¹ emphasises quite finally both the absence and indifference on the part of the poet's interlocutor(s).

The sonnets also abound in references to distance which serve to emphasise the poet's spiritual loneliness and desolation. In "Too seem the stranger" the very interrelation of the lexemes "stranger" and "strangers" at the beginning of the sonnet posits a problematic communicative situation which is only further underlined by the fact that the poet's family is also "[...] in Christ not near [...]" (3) as well as of his own self being "[...] at a third remove [...]" (9-10), in which "remove" as a noun simultaneously recalls its use as a verb and which indicates an enforced separation. The figure of Christ in this poem becomes a cause of the poet's separation from others, for he is not only "my peace", but also "my parting" (4). In "I wake and feel" distance is evoked in the image of the poet's countless cries

¹¹ Eric Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989, p. 313.

being sent "[...] like dead letters [...]" to God who is absent and "lives alas! away" (7-8), where the preposition "away" is all the more enforced by the exclamation mark coming after the interjection "alas!" (an extremely rare interjection for Hopkins). In a similarly emotional outburst in "My own heart", distance is evoked on a phonetic level in the slow drawl of "Thirst's all-in-all in all a world of wet" (8) created by the empty repetition of the long vowel | ɔ: | and the slow plodding of its syllabic stress. In "No worst" distance is firstly connected with the poet's suffering in "My cries heave herds long" (5) as well as being equated with falling (with an obvious reference to the figurative connotation with the fallen state of the soul) in "[...] cliffs of fall/Frightful — sheer, no man fathomed [...]" (9-10). "Fathomed" also contains the denotative meaning of a distance (significantly that of the length of outstretched arms which recalls the crucifixion) as well as to penetrate or understand. The lexeme "sheer" is echoed in "Carrion Comfort" in "[...] That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear" (9). But in this case distance is set up as a means of salvation, evident in the poet's "chaff" which, although it is scattered by the tempest provoked by the horrendous creature representing God, brings forth an expanse of grain, and it is this image that introduces the more positive turn of the sestet, in spite of the poet's lingering bewilderment. Finally, in "My own heart", apart from the obviously positive phrase of the concluding line "[...] lights a lovely mile [...]" there is the deviant use of the noun "size" as a verb in "[...] let joy size at God knows when to God knows what [...]" (11-12), where the distance represented in the consoling image of the creator's "smile" becomes incalculable both in temporal ("from God knows when") and in spatial ("to God knows what") terms.

The universe of the "Terrible Sonnets" is rife with images of darkness and destruction. Neither Heaven nor Earth escape this condition since not only is the poet himself in a state of darkness and blindness as a result of his self-inflicted torments, but in "Carrion Comfort" his creator is also described negatively as having "[...] darksome devouring eyes [...]" (7) and "To

seem the stranger" similarly refers to heaven as a place of prohibition and obstruction in "... dark heaven's baffling ban [...]" (12). But even more significant are the numerous references to struggle, rebellion and warfare that recur throughout the sonnets.

One particularly recurrent image connected with the above is that of a raging tempest. The most outstanding instance comes in "Carrion Comfort" where God himself provokes "[...] turns of tempest [...]" (8) as a result of his violence on the poet and where also a possible denotative meaning of "rude", in "[...] why wouldst thou rude on me/Thy wring-world right foot rock? [...]" (5-6) is that of a turbulent sea. A similar tempest occurs at the end of "No worst" where the battered soul ironically seeks comfort "[...] in a whirlwind [...]" (13). Likewise, the noun "tosses" in "[...] take tosses and obey [...]" (4) in "Patience, hard thing", suggests submitting to the forces of a tempest, an image of surrender which, as will be seen, leads to a positive resolution that characterises the sonnets of G2.

"Carrion Comfort" undoubtedly describes in the most dramatic way the sense of struggle between the poet and God. God is here presented as a fearful, violent creature, mercilessly pinning down the poet with his powerful limbs and feet. In "Thy wring-world right foot rock" (6) "wring" — apart from its homophonous relationship with "ring" recalling the global shape of the Earth — also means to clasp and twist as in wrestling. This links up to the final image which depicts a wrestling bout between the poet and God: "[...] I wretch lay wrestling with (my god!) my God" (14). It seems no accident that Hopkins picks up on the verb "wring" again in "My own heart", but this time in a more reassuring image of the creator's smile being "not wrung" (13). The negative particle "not" seems to directly echo the "wring world" of "Carrion Comfort", as if to set up an alternative, antithetic image. But struggle is also reduced to a self struggle as in "We hear our hearts grate on themselves: it kills to bruise them dearer" (9) in "Patience, hard thing" and in the self generated "pangs" of pain that are "[...] schooled at forepangs [...]" (2) in "No worst".

The recurrent depiction of the poet as a battered, dejected and "jaded" soul is often evoked through images of bodily decay and decomposition. "Carrion Comfort" refers to "[...] these last strands of man [...]" (2-3) to which the poet has been reduced, even if there is an attempt to mitigate this with his determination to hold on to them however "... slack they may be [...]" (2). In the same sonnet, there is the image of the poet's bruised bones as well as of him lying in a "heap". But "Carrion Comfort", in spite of the violence of its imagery, is not ultimately a poem characterised by despair. It is in "I wake and feel", a sonnet from G1, that references to the body take on a really sinister aspect, for the poet announces "I am gall, I am heartburn [...]" (9), thus assuming the very identity of disease. Apart from indicating the secretion of bile in the liver¹², "gall" also has the denotative meanings of bitterness of spirit and filth and impurity. There may well be behind these definitions the figurative phrase "to dip one's pen in gall" meaning to write with virulence and rancour, and which derives its pun from oak-gall, a substance used in the manufacture of ink. In this way the poet intricately links his bitterness and suffering with the process of poetic composition, for he expresses in his language the corruption and disease he 'is'. In the following lines creation is given an anti-euphoric twist, all the more so through being decreed by God, through the lexemes "bitter" and "curse":

"[...] God's most deep decree
Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me;
Bones built in me, fleshed filled, blood brimmed the curse" (9-11)

The heart and the mind are central loci of the "Terrible Sonnets" and through them is enacted the ambivalent states of a soul in conflict. Whilst on the one hand the heart expresses love and joyful energy: "[...] my heart woos [...]" (5 - "To seem the

¹² For a medical description of the images discussed here see N. MacKenzie, *op. cit.*, pp. 182-3.

stranger"); "my heart lo! lapped strength, stole joy, would laugh, cheer" (11 - "Carrion Comfort") it is also connotative of pain and sorrow: "[...] what sights you, heart, saw [...] I am heartburn" (3, 9 - "I wake and feel"); "[...] our hearts grate on themselves [...]" (9). Likewise, there is the positive aspect of the mind's "creating thought" (6 - "To seem the stranger"), but at the same time the mind is "tormented" (4 - "My own heart") and "has mountains" (9 - "Carrion Comfort"), which ambivalently refer to the precipices of the ecstatic heights the mind is capable of reaching, but which can simultaneously cause its downfall.

In the "Terrible Sonnets" there is a two-fold struggle between the soul with itself and with God. In the sonnets of G1 the struggle gives way to despair and dejection. It has already been noted that the sonnets of this group are characterised by the paradigm of submission and passivity and indeed none of them suggest a resistance to the dark overwhelming sense of despair that permeates them. In "No worst" the certainty of pain is rendered final in the auxiliary "will" in "More pangs will [...] wilder ring" (2) and the thrice repeated "where", in "Comforter, where, where is your comforting? / Mary, mother of us where is your relief?" (3-4) only echoes the poet's impotence. Also, in "I wake and feel", any chance of the spirit's rising towards perfection is thwarted in the image of the "Selfyeast of spirit [...]" in which "a dull dough sours. [...]" (12) — a bitterness that is self-generated and that only turns back upon itself. Finally, "To seem the stranger" is a statement on the condition of exile in which the poet is literally shut out by "[...] dark heaven's baffling ban [...]" (12). Thus the final lines of all three sonnets in G1 appropriately confirm the notion of dejection:

"[...] all
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep".
("No worst")

"[...] This to hoard unheard,
Heard unheeded leaves me a lonely began".
("To seem the stranger")

"As I am mine, their sweating selves, but worse".
("I wake and feel")

The sonnets of G2 offer consoling images of the poet's reconciliation with God as a result of his resistance to despair. But this is not obtained without a paradox. The paradox yielded is that resistance can only ultimately lead to submission because it is through resisting that the poet becomes aware of his limitations and in becoming aware of his limitations he consequently succumbs to a higher power or force. In "My own heart" the struggles evident in "Carrion Comfort", and to a certain extent in "Patience, hard thing", lead in full circle back to this state of submission through which the self-inflictions and self-torments that are so evident in G1 come to cease. But the poet realises in the same poem that he cannot do this without altering his attitude towards himself. Therefore, he evokes the virtues of pity, kindness and charity to help him reach the comfort he is seeking. For this, of course, he also needs patience, that is evoked in "Patience, hard thing". Patience has to endure war and wounds, it has "To do without, take tosses and obey" (4). Far from an idealisation of the virtue, Hopkins shows the grim determination that characterises it as well as indicating that it cannot be acquired without self-sacrifice:

"We hear our hearts grate on themselves: it kills
To bruise them dearer. Yet the rebellious wills
Of us we do bid God bend to him even so". (9-11)

The battle between antagonistic forces has to be placed to the trust of God who "is patient", if it is to help the individual soul to rise above the "ruins of wrecked past purpose" that they have produced. The concluding lines have a solidity about them brought home by the heavily stressed monosyllables that suggest a confident expectancy:

Renzo D'Agnillo

"he is pátient. Pátience fills
His crísp cómb, and that cómes those wáys we knów". (13-14)

Undoubtedly, the most comforting image in the whole sonnet sequence is that of God's smile illuminating the soul on its journey towards him in "My own heart". Although the journey is long ("At God knows when to God knows what [...]"-12) the distance is qualified by one of the most positive adjectives in the whole sequence and one that concludes this sonnet: "[...] lights a lovely mile [...]". The insistent stresses in "Soul, self; come, poor jacksel, I do advise you, Jaded, let be [...]" (9-10) together with the variety of forms with which the poet addresses himself prod him further on to "[...] call off thought awhile [...]" (10) and have pity on himself. But at the same time this final image is placed in juxtaposition with "[...] this tormented mind tormenting yet" (4) in which the demonstrative "this" reminds us that the torments are an eternally present alternative to God's smile; it is up to the poet to decide which to succumb to. Therefore, although the sonnets of G2 provide a solution to the poet's spiritual dilemmas, it adds to the dramatic intensity of all the sonnets if they are viewed as powerfully interrelating in terms of two distinct groups, in which succumbing to despair or succumbing to God's will remain open alternatives.