

# Gerard Manley Hopkins

## "What I Do Is Me"



A reading of his less famous poems

by **Lance Pierson**

## *Gerard Manley Hopkins' Life and Poems*

2

1844	Born in Stratford, Essex (now East London)
1874-7	Theological studies at St Beuno's, North Wales
1876	<i>Penmaen Pool</i>
1877	<i>In the Valley of the Elwy</i>
1877-8	Parish assistant and teacher at Mount St Mary's College, Chesterfield <i>The Loss of the Eurydice</i>
1878	Teacher at Stonyhurst College, Lancs <i>The May Magnificat</i> Curate at Farm Street, London
1878-9	Curate at St Aloysius', Oxford
1879	<i>Binsey Poplars, Henry Purcell, Peace</i> Curate at St Joseph's, Bedford Leigh, Lancs
1880-1	Select Preacher at St Francis Xavier's, Liverpool
1880	<i>Spring and Fall</i>
1881-2	Curate at St Joseph's, Glasgow. Then long study retreat at Roehampton. <i>?? 'As kingfishers catch fire' (Date unknown)</i>
1882-4	Teacher at Stonyhurst College, Lancs <i>Ribblesdale, The Leaden Echo and The Golden Echo, St Winefred's Well Fragment C</i>
1884-9	Professor of Greek and Latin literature at University College, Dublin
1884-6	<i>Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves, St Winefred's Well</i> <i>Fragment B</i>
1885	<i>?? 'Carrion Comfort', 'My own heart let me more have pity on' (Date uncertain)</i>
1888	<i>Epithalamion</i>
1889	<i>To R.B.</i>
1889	Died of typhoid in Dublin, aged 44

Contact Lance: 48 Peterborough Road, London SW6 3EB;  
020 7731 6544; shows@lancepierson.org; www.lancepierson.org

Who<sup>1</sup> long for rest, who look for pleasure  
Away from counter<sup>2</sup>, court, or school  
O where live well your lease of leisure<sup>3</sup>  
But here at, here at Penmaen Pool?

You'll dare the Alp<sup>4</sup>? you'll dart the skiff<sup>5</sup>?  
Each sport has here its tackle and tool:  
Come, plant the staff by Cadair<sup>6</sup> cliff;  
Come, swing the sculls on Penmaen Pool.

What's yonder? Grizzled Dyphwys<sup>7</sup> dim:  
The triple-hummocked Giant's Stool<sup>8</sup>,  
Hoar messmate, hobs and nobs<sup>9</sup> with him  
To halve the bowl of Penmaen Pool.

And all the landscape under survey,  
At tranquil turns, by nature's rule,  
Rides repeated topsyturvy  
In frank<sup>10</sup>, in fairy Penmaen Pool.

And Charles's Wain<sup>11</sup>, the wondrous seven,  
And sheep-flock clouds like worlds of wool,  
For all they shine so, high in heaven,  
Shew brighter shaken in Penmaen Pool.

---

<sup>1</sup> Who: whoever

<sup>2</sup> counter: the sale-point in a shop

<sup>3</sup> lease of leisure: holiday time

<sup>4</sup> Alp: any mountain; here obviously next to the pool

<sup>5</sup> dart the skiff: manoeuvre the rowing boat

<sup>6</sup> Cadair: Cadair Idris is the prominent mountain near Penmaen, at the southern end of the Snowdonia National Park

<sup>7</sup> Dyphwys: usually spelt Diffwys today; another mountain, to the north of Cadair Idris

<sup>8</sup> Giant's Stool: another name for Cadair Idris

<sup>9</sup> hobs and nobs: 'hobnob' originally meant to drink together; the two mountains sup up the lake.

<sup>10</sup> frank: clear, open. The scene is reflected in rippling sections, over and over, on the pool's surface.

<sup>11</sup> Charles's Wain: an English name for the seven-star constellation the Plough or Ursa Major

The Mawddach<sup>1</sup>, how she trips! though throttled  
If floodtide teeming thrills her full,  
And mazy sands all water-wattled  
Waylay her at ebb, past Penmaen Pool.

But what's to see in stormy weather,  
When grey showers gather and gusts are cool? -  
Why, raindrop-roundels looped together  
That lace the face of Penmaen Pool.

Then even in weariest wintry hour  
Of New Year's month or surly Yule<sup>2</sup>  
Furred snows, charged<sup>3</sup> tuft above tuft, tower  
From darksome<sup>4</sup> darksome Penmaen Pool.

And ever, if bound here hardest home<sup>5</sup>,  
You've parlour-pastime left<sup>6</sup> and (who'll  
Not honour it?) ale like goldy foam  
That frocks<sup>7</sup> an oar in Penmaen Pool.

Then come who pine for peace or pleasure  
Away from counter, court, or school,  
Spend here your measure of time and treasure  
And taste the treats of Penmaen Pool.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mawddach: the main river of the area; Penmaenpool is a village on its estuary.

<sup>2</sup> Yule: Christmas

<sup>3</sup> charged: packed tight

<sup>4</sup> darksome: archaic poetic word for 'dark'

<sup>5</sup> bound here hardest home: uncertain; perhaps 'forced to stay here because it is too hard to get home'

<sup>6</sup> left: perhaps 'to spare', left over

<sup>7</sup> frocks: covers as with a frock or coat

*In the Valley of the Elwy*

5

I remember a house where all were good  
To me, God knows, deserving no such thing:  
Comforting smell breathed at very entering,  
Fetched fresh, as I suppose, off<sup>1</sup> some sweet wood.  
That cordial<sup>2</sup> air<sup>3</sup> made those kind people a hood  
All over<sup>4</sup>, as a bevy of eggs the mothering wing  
Will, or mild nights the new morsels of Spring:  
Why, it seemed of course<sup>5</sup>; seemed of right it should<sup>6</sup>.

Lovely the woods, waters, meadows, combes<sup>7</sup>, vales,  
All the air things wear that build this world of Wales;  
Only the inmate<sup>8</sup> does not correspond<sup>9</sup>: 10

God, lover of souls, swaying considerate scales<sup>10</sup>,  
Complete thy creature dear O where it fails<sup>11</sup>,  
Being mighty a master, being a father and fond<sup>12</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> off: from. The comforting smell came from a vase of fresh-picked wild flowers.

<sup>2</sup> cordial: in both the literal sense of health-giving and the metaphorical sense of warmly welcoming

<sup>3</sup> air: both literally in the atmosphere and metaphorically in their spirit

<sup>4</sup> a hood All over: a protecting shelter like (literally) a mother-bird's wing, or (metaphorically) mild Spring weather

<sup>5</sup> of course: natural, in the natural course of things

<sup>6</sup> seemed of right it should: felt right and fitting, as it ought to be

<sup>7</sup> combes: (old spelling of coombs) valleys, probably here hollow dips in the side of hills, to distinguish from the next word, 'vales'

<sup>8</sup> inmate: human inhabitant

<sup>9</sup> correspond: match, agree (in the mathematical sense)

<sup>10</sup> swaying considerate scales: being understanding as you weigh and judge people

<sup>11</sup> Complete thy creature ... where it fails: make people whole from their deficiencies, help them match the lovely natural world

<sup>12</sup> Being a ... fond: since you are both a mighty master and a fond, loving father

*The Loss of the Eurydice*

6

*Founded March 24, 1878*

Stanzas 4-11

She had come from a cruise, training seamen -  
Men, boldboys soon to be men:  
Must it, worst weather,  
Blast bole and bloom<sup>1</sup> together?

No Atlantic squall overwrought her  
Or rearing billow of the Biscay water:  
Home was hard at hand  
And the blow bore from land. 20

And you were a liar<sup>2</sup>, O blue March day.  
Bright sun lanced fire in the heavenly bay;  
But what black Boreas<sup>3</sup> wrecked her? he  
Came equipped, deadly-electric,

A beetling baldbright<sup>4</sup> cloud thorough England  
Riding: there did storms not mingle? and  
Hailropes hustle and grind their  
Heavengravel? wolfsnow<sup>5</sup>, worlds of it, wind there?

Now Carisbrook keep goes under in gloom;  
Now it overvaults Appledurcombe; 30  
Now near by Ventnor town  
It hurls, hurls off Boniface Down<sup>6</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> bole: experienced, hardened, oak-like sailors; bloom: handsome young trainees

<sup>2</sup> liar: for giving the impression it was fair weather

<sup>3</sup> Boreas: the north wind, blowing a storm from the English coast

<sup>4</sup> This verse has 4 GMH coinages created by putting two words together.

<sup>5</sup> Heavengravel: great description of hailstones! wolfsnow: the dangerous variety, not like a Christmas card!

<sup>6</sup> The verse follows the storm's progress across the Isle of Wight towards the ship.

Too proud<sup>1</sup>, too proud, what a press<sup>2</sup> she bore!  
 Royal, and all her royals<sup>3</sup> wore.  
     Sharp with her, shorten sail!  
 Too late; lost; gone with the gale.

This was that fell<sup>4</sup> capsize,  
 As half she had righted and hoped to rise  
     Death teeming in by her portholes  
 Raced down decks, round messes<sup>5</sup> of mortals.      40

Then a lurch forward, frigate and men;  
 'All hands for themselves' the cry ran then;  
     But she who had housed them thither  
 Was around them, bound them or wound them with her.

May is Mary's month, and I  
 Muse at that and wonder why:  
     Her feasts follow reason,  
     Dated due to season<sup>1</sup>—

Candlemas, Lady Day<sup>2</sup>;  
 But the Lady Month, May,  
     Why fasten that upon her,  
     With a feasting in her honour?

Is it only its being brighter  
 Than the most are must delight her?      10  
     Is it opportunist  
     And flowers finds soonest?<sup>3</sup>

Ask of her, the mighty mother:  
 Her reply puts this other  
     Question: What is Spring?  
     Growth in everything—

Flesh and fleece, fur and feather,  
 Grass and greenworld all together;  
     Star-eyed strawberry-breasted  
     Throstle<sup>4</sup> above her nested<sup>5</sup>      20

Cluster of bugle<sup>6</sup> blue eggs thin  
 Forms and warms the life within;  
     And bird and blossom swell  
     In sod or sheath or shell.

<sup>1</sup> proud: both self-confident and standing out, vulnerably

<sup>2</sup> press: pressure

<sup>3</sup> The 'Eurydice' belonged to the Royal Navy, and displayed royal flags and masts.

<sup>4</sup> fell: falling over and deadly

<sup>5</sup> messes: both people in panic and confusion; and, in the armed forces, groups of servicemen who have their meals together

<sup>1</sup> Her feasts ... season: The church festivals that celebrate her usually have a logical connection with the time of year.

<sup>2</sup> Candlemas: Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>, commemorating Mary's ritual purification 40 days after Jesus' birth. Lady Day: March 25<sup>th</sup>, commemorating the Annunciation, 9 months before Christmas.

<sup>3</sup> Is it opportunist ... soonest?: Is it the best moment for finding flowers for the celebration?

<sup>4</sup> strawberry-breasted Throstle: the thrush with brown spots on its breast looking like the brown seeds on a strawberry

<sup>5</sup> nested: adjective, in her nest

<sup>6</sup> bugle: a plant with blue flowers that blossoms in May

All things rising, all things sizing<sup>7</sup>  
 Mary sees, sympathising  
 With that world of good,  
 Nature's motherhood.

Their magnifying of each its kind  
 With delight calls to mind 30  
 How she did in her stored  
 Magnify<sup>8</sup> the Lord.

Well but there was more than this:  
 Spring's universal bliss  
 Much, had much to say  
 To offering Mary May.

When drop-of-blood-and-foam-dapple<sup>9</sup>  
 Bloom lights the orchard-apple  
 And thicket and thorp<sup>10</sup> are merry  
 With silver-surfèd<sup>11</sup> cherry 40

And azuring-over greybell<sup>12</sup> makes  
 Wood banks and brakes<sup>13</sup> wash wet like lakes<sup>14</sup>  
 And magic cuckoocall  
 Caps, clears, and clinches all—

This ecstasy all through mothering earth  
 Tells Mary her mirth till Christ's birth<sup>15</sup>  
 To remember and exultation<sup>16</sup>  
 In God who was her salvation.

<sup>7</sup> sizing: growing in size

<sup>8</sup> Magnify: a pun on the double meaning of 'glorify' (as in 'Magnificat') and 'allow him to grow larger' in her womb

<sup>9</sup> drop-of-blood-and-foam-dapple: an ultimate example of GMH joining words in unusual combinations to describe the colours he sees on the ripening apples

<sup>10</sup> thorp: small village or agricultural estate

<sup>11</sup> silver-surfèd: the cherry blossom looks like the foam of waves breaking on the sea-shore

<sup>12</sup> azuring-over greybell: bluebell buds look grey, but gradually turn blue as they ripen

<sup>13</sup> brakes: thickets of brushwood

<sup>14</sup> wash wet like lakes: they look like light on moving water as they sway in the breeze

<sup>15</sup> her mirth till Christ's birth: her joy during pregnancy

<sup>16</sup> exultation: the noun treated as a verb, exult, rejoice

My aspens<sup>1</sup> dear, whose airy cages quelled,  
 Quelled or quenched in leaves the leaping sun<sup>2</sup>,  
 All felled, felled, are all felled;  
 Of a fresh and following folded rank<sup>3</sup>  
 Not spared, not one  
 That dandled a sandalled  
 Shadow that swam or sank<sup>4</sup>  
 On meadow and river and wind-wandering weed-winding bank<sup>5</sup>.

O if we but knew what we do  
 When we delve or hew – 10  
 Hack and rack the growing green!  
 Since country<sup>6</sup> is so tender  
 To touch, her being só slender,  
 That, like this sleek and seeing ball<sup>7</sup>  
 But a prick will make no eye at all,  
 Where we, even where we mean  
 To mend her we end her,  
 When we hew or delve:

After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.<sup>8</sup>  
 Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve 20  
 Strokes of havoc únselve<sup>9</sup>  
 The sweet especial<sup>10</sup> scene,  
 Rural scene, a rural scene,  
 Sweet especial rural scene.

<sup>1</sup> aspens: another name for poplars

<sup>2</sup> airy cages ... leaping sun: a description of how their branches gave shade

<sup>3</sup> The trees were like a row of well ordered soldiers on the march.

<sup>4</sup> They were like a mother dandling her baby, but in their ease they nurtured a light-footed shadow that rested on the surface of the river, or even stretched below.

<sup>5</sup> Wind-wandering weed-winding bank: the bank is entwined with river-weeds which shake in the wind.

<sup>6</sup> country: the countryside, nature

<sup>7</sup> ball: the eyeball

<sup>8</sup> People who come now can't image the beauty that used to be here.

<sup>9</sup> unselve: remove the special 'self' or personality

<sup>10</sup> especial: uniquely distinctive

The poet wishes well to the divine genius of Purcell and praises him that, whereas other musicians have given utterance to the moods of man's mind, he has, beyond that, uttered in notes the very make and species of man<sup>1</sup> as created both in him and in all men generally.

Have fair fallen<sup>2</sup>, O fair, fair have fallen, so dear  
To me, so arch-especial<sup>3</sup> a spirit as heaves<sup>4</sup> in Henry Purcell,  
An age is now since passed<sup>5</sup>, since parted<sup>6</sup>; with the reversal  
Of the outward sentence low lays him<sup>7</sup>, listed to a heresy, here<sup>8</sup>.

Not mood in him nor meaning, proud fire or sacred fear<sup>9</sup>,  
Or love, or pity, or all that sweet notes not his<sup>10</sup> might nurse<sup>11</sup>:  
It is the forgèd<sup>12</sup> feature<sup>13</sup> finds<sup>14</sup> me; it is the rehearsal<sup>15</sup>  
Of own, of abrupt self<sup>16</sup> there so thrusts on, so throngs<sup>17</sup> the ear.

Let him oh! with his air of angels<sup>18</sup> then lift me, lay me<sup>19</sup>! only I'll  
Have an eye to<sup>20</sup> the sakes<sup>21</sup> of him, quaint moonmarks<sup>22</sup>, to his pelted<sup>23</sup>  
plumage under  
Wings: so some great stormfowl<sup>24</sup>, whenever he has walked his while  
The thunder-purple seabeach, plumèd purple-of-thunder,<sup>25</sup>  
If a wuthering<sup>26</sup> of his palmy snow-pinions<sup>27</sup> scatter a colossal smile  
Off him<sup>28</sup>, but meaning motion<sup>29</sup> fans fresh our wits with wonder.

<sup>1</sup> make and species of man: essence of human nature

<sup>2</sup> Have fair fallen: may it have turned out well

<sup>3</sup> arch-especial: exceptionally and uniquely distinctive

<sup>4</sup> heaves: breathes

<sup>5</sup> An age is now since passed: it is 200 years since Purcell's time (1659-95)

<sup>6</sup> since parted: since he died

<sup>7</sup> with the reversal ... low lays him: the prayer of l.1 continues: may he have been forgiven with the overturning of the automatic Catholic excommunication ('outward sentence') that condemns him ('lays him low')

<sup>8</sup> listed to a heresy, here: enrolled as a heretic Protestant while on earth

<sup>9</sup> proud fire or sacred fear: music for patriotic anthems or religious services

<sup>10</sup> notes not his: what others composers might write

<sup>11</sup> nurse: nourish, foster

<sup>12</sup> forgèd: hard-working

<sup>13</sup> feature: personality of the composer himself

<sup>14</sup> finds me: gets through to me and takes hold of me

<sup>15</sup> rehearsal: performance, going through

<sup>16</sup> Of own, of abrupt self: of Purcell's own, direct personal ability

<sup>17</sup> so thrusts on, so throngs: so captures and fills

<sup>18</sup> air: a rich Hopkins choice of word, suggesting music, atmosphere and manner – all angelic

<sup>19</sup> lift me, lay me: both inspire and rest me with its ups and downs

<sup>20</sup> only I'll Have an eye to: but my main focus will be on

<sup>21</sup> sakes: a favourite Hopkins word for the core of his genius

<sup>22</sup> moonmarks: Hopkins is already thinking of the bird's quill feathers which are moon-shaped

<sup>23</sup> pelted: perhaps like the skin or pelt of a mammal; or packed tightly as if rain had pelted on it

<sup>24</sup> stormfowl: seabird regularly exposed to the buffetings of stormy winds

<sup>25</sup> The thunder-purple ... purple-of-thunder: both the beach and the bird's white feathers are reflecting the dark stormy sky

<sup>26</sup> wuthering: 'a north country word for the noise and rush of the wind' – GMH. As in 'Wuthering Heights'.

<sup>27</sup> palmy snow-pinions: white wings large and triumphant like palm-leaves

<sup>28</sup> scatter a colossal smile Off him: as he takes to the air he resembles and causes a huge smile

<sup>29</sup> but meaning motion: refers back to the stormfowl (l.1.1), all he is thinking about is preparing for flight

## Peace

When will you ever, Peace, wild wooddove<sup>1</sup>, shy wings shut,  
Your round me roaming end, and under be my boughs?  
When, when, Peace, will you, Peace? I'll not play hypocrite<sup>2</sup>  
To own my heart: I yield<sup>3</sup> you do come sometimes; but  
That piecemeal peace is poor peace. What pure peace allows  
Alarms of wars, the daunting wars, the death of it?

O surely, reaving<sup>4</sup> Peace, my Lord should leave in lieu  
Some good! And so he does leave Patience exquisite,  
That plumes<sup>5</sup> to Peace thereafter. And when Peace here does house<sup>6</sup>  
He comes with work to do, he does not come to coo,  
He comes to brood and sit<sup>7</sup>.

10

<sup>1</sup> wooddove: poetic name for the wood pigeon, with the obvious symbolism of the dove representing peace

<sup>2</sup> play hypocrite: over-dramatize, exaggerate my complaint

<sup>3</sup> yield: accept, admit

<sup>4</sup> reaving: when God takes peace away

<sup>5</sup> plumes: grows, becomes fully-fledged. He thinks of Patience as a newly-hatched chick that will grow into the adult wood-dove, Peace.

<sup>6</sup> house: verb, settle and take up residence in me

<sup>7</sup> brood and sit: be fruitful and productive, like the mother-bird on the nest

**Spring and Fall:**  
to a young child

Márgarét<sup>1</sup>, áre you gríeving  
Over Goldengrove<sup>2</sup> unleaving<sup>3</sup>?  
Leáves like the things of man, you  
With your fresh<sup>4</sup> thoughts care for, can you?  
Ah! ás the heart grows older  
It will come to such sights colder  
By and by, nor spare a sigh  
Though worlds of wanwood<sup>5</sup> leafmeal<sup>6</sup> lie;  
And yet you wíll weep and know why<sup>7</sup>.  
Now no matter, child, the name: 10  
Sórror's spríngs áre the same<sup>8</sup>.  
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed  
What heart heard of, ghost guessed<sup>9</sup>:  
It ís the blight man was born for,  
It is Margaret you mourn for.

<sup>1</sup> Márgarét: By putting a stress-mark on the 'e' of Margaret, GMH shows it should be pronounced 'Margarette', as if a diminutive form of the name.

<sup>2</sup> Goldengrove: There was an estate with this name nearby; but GMH may be using it for its imaginative suggestion of an Eden-like paradise.

<sup>3</sup> unleaving: losing its leaves in autumn

<sup>4</sup> fresh: young, childlike

<sup>5</sup> wanwood: GMH's own coinage, suggesting dead trees in autumn

<sup>6</sup> leafmeal: another GMH coinage, suggesting that the leaves have fallen one by one (like 'piecemeal'), and then formed a rotting leafy slush looking like animal feed (meal)

<sup>7</sup> And yet you will weep .... This may suggest that the child is not consoled and demands an explanation; or simply the adult's knowledge that the child will feel the sadness of mortality all the more in future.

<sup>8</sup> Sorrow's springs are the same: all sorrows have one and the same source.

<sup>9</sup> ghost guessed: the human spirit intuited

**As kingfishers catch fire**

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies dráw fláme<sup>1</sup>;  
As tumbled over rim in roundy<sup>2</sup> wells  
Stones ring; like each tucked<sup>3</sup> string tells, each hung bell's  
Bow swung finds tongue<sup>4</sup> to fling out broad its name<sup>5</sup>;  
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:  
Deals<sup>6</sup> out that being indoors<sup>7</sup> each one dwells;  
Selves<sup>8</sup>—goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,  
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*

Í say móre: the just man justices<sup>9</sup>;  
Kéeps gráce<sup>10</sup>: thát keeps all his goings<sup>11</sup> graces; 10  
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—  
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.

<sup>1</sup> kingfishers catch fire .... note the alliteration of nouns and verbs in this line, k-f c-f, dr-fl dr-fl.

<sup>2</sup> roundy: dialect for 'rounded'

<sup>3</sup> tucked: plucked string of an instrument

<sup>4</sup> bow: thickened side of the bell; tongue: clapper

<sup>5</sup> name: its own particular sound

<sup>6</sup> Deals: gives / distributes

<sup>7</sup> that being indoors: inner being, hidden on the inside

<sup>8</sup> Selves: reveals and realizes itself

<sup>9</sup> justices: is just and does what is right

<sup>10</sup> Keeps grace: is the repository and channel of God's grace

<sup>11</sup> goings: actions

## Ribblesdale

Éarth, sweet Éarth, sweet lándscape, with léavès thróng<sup>1</sup>  
 And louchèd<sup>2</sup> lów grass, héaven that dóst appéal  
 To, wíth no tóngue to pléad, no héart to féel;  
 That cánst but ónly bé, but dóst that lóng—

Thou cánst but bé, but thát thou wéll dost; stróng  
 Thy pléa with hím<sup>3</sup> who déalt, nay dóes now déal,  
 Thy lóvely dále down<sup>4</sup> thús and thus bids réel  
 Thy ríver, and ó'er gives áll to ráck<sup>5</sup> or wróng.

And whát is Earth's éye, tóngue, or héart else, whére  
 Élse, but in déar and dógged man?—Áh, the héir<sup>6</sup>  
 To his ówn selfbént<sup>7</sup> so bóund, so tíed to his túrn<sup>8</sup>,

10

To<sup>9</sup> thríftless<sup>10</sup> réave<sup>11</sup> both our rích róund world báre  
 And nóne réck of world áfter<sup>12</sup>, thís bids wéar  
 Earth bróws of súch care, cáre and déar<sup>13</sup> concérn.

<sup>1</sup> throng: an adjective in colloquial Lancashire speech: thronged, massed together

<sup>2</sup> louchèd: 'a coinage of mine...to mean...slouched, slouching' - GMH

<sup>3</sup> him: the man who is polluting the dale with a factory pouring its waste into the river

<sup>4</sup> down: connected with 'deal'. The factory is doing the valley down and laying it low.

<sup>5</sup> rack: as in 'rack and ruin', a variant of 'wreck', meaning destruction

<sup>6</sup> heir: of God

<sup>7</sup> selfbent: selfish inclination

<sup>8</sup> turn: chosen direction; perhaps also with hints of 'own advantage' or 'blinkered daily round'?

<sup>9</sup> To: read '...as to'

<sup>10</sup> thriftless: adjective used as adverb

<sup>11</sup> reave: strip, plunder

<sup>12</sup> none reck of world after: not caring about the afterlife

<sup>13</sup> dear: both caring and costly

## The Leaden Echo and The Golden Echo

(Maiden's song from St Winefred's Well)

### THE LEADEN ECHO

How to kéeep — is there ány any, is there none such, nowhere known some,  
 bow or brooch or braid or brace, láce, latch or catch or key to keep  
 Back beauty, keep it, beauty, beauty, . . .<sup>1</sup> from vanishing away?  
 Ó is there no frowning of these wrinkles, rankèd<sup>2</sup> wrinkles deep,  
 Dówn<sup>3</sup>? no waving off of these most mournful messengers, still  
 messengers, sad and stealing messengers of grey?  
 No there's none, there's none, O no there's none,  
 Nor can you long be, what you now are, called fair,  
 Do what you may do, what, do what you may,  
 And wisdom is early to despair:  
 Be beginning; since, no, nothing can be done  
 To keep at bay  
 Age and age's evils, hoar hair,  
 Ruck<sup>4</sup> and wrinkle, drooping, dying, death's worst, winding sheets, tombs  
 and worms and tumbling to decay;  
 So be beginning, be beginning to despair.  
 O there's none; no no no there's none:  
 Be beginning to despair, to despair,  
 Despair, despair, despair, despair.

10

<sup>1</sup> The dots signify a pause, as in music.

<sup>2</sup> rankèd: probably hints at both senses: arranged in rows, and flagrantly excessive

<sup>3</sup> frowning ... Down: ironing the wrinkles out by frowning extra hard

<sup>4</sup> Ruck: crease

Spare!<sup>1</sup>  
 There is one, yes I have one (Hush there!<sup>2</sup>),  
 Only not within seeing of the sun<sup>3</sup>,  
 Not within the singeing of the strong sun,  
 Tall<sup>4</sup> sun's tingeing, or treacherous the tainting of the earth's air,  
 Somewhere elsewhere there is ah well where! one,  
 Óne. Yes I can tell such a key, I do know such a place,  
 Where whatever's prized and passes<sup>5</sup> of us, everything that's fresh and fast  
 flying of us, seems to us sweet of us and swiftly away with, done away  
 with, undone,  
 Undone, done with, soon done with, and yet dearly and dangerously sweet  
 Of us, the wimpled<sup>6</sup>-water-dimpled, not-by-morning-matched face, 10  
 The flower of beauty, fleece<sup>7</sup> of beauty, too too apt to, ah! to fleet<sup>8</sup>,  
 Never fleets móre, fastened with the tenderest truth  
 To its own best being<sup>9</sup> and its loveliness of youth: it is an everlastingness of,  
 O it is an all youth!  
 Come then, your ways and airs and looks, locks, maidengear, gallantry and  
 gaiety and grace,  
 Winning ways, airs innocent, maiden manners, sweet looks, loose locks,  
 long locks, lovelocks, gaygear, going gallant, girlgrace —  
 Resign them, sign them, seal them, send them, motion them with breath<sup>10</sup>,  
 And with sighs soaring, soaring síghs, deliver  
 Them; beauty-in-the-ghost<sup>11</sup>, deliver it, early now, long before death  
 Give beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty, back to God, beauty's self and  
 beauty's giver.

<sup>1</sup> Spare!: Hold, forbear! The word deliberately echoes but changes the second syllable of 'despair'.

<sup>2</sup> Hush there!: talking to the maidens who are weeping or refusing to believe

<sup>3</sup> within seeing of the sun: visible on earth

<sup>4</sup> Tall: both high and handsome (as in 'walk tall')

<sup>5</sup> prized and passes: something we value but soon passes away, is fleeting, doesn't last

<sup>6</sup> wimpled: referring to water or the face, smoothly rippled like a nun's head-dress.

<sup>7</sup> fleece: our flesh and hair

<sup>8</sup> fleet: pass quickly away (as in a 'fleeting moment')

<sup>9</sup> its own best being: the resurrected body will reassume its most beautiful form

<sup>10</sup> motion them with breath: send or release them (to God), blowing them with a kiss or sigh

<sup>11</sup> beauty-in-the-ghost: beauty of character, spiritual beauty

See; not a hair is, not an eyelash, not the least lash lost; every hair 20  
 is, hair of the head, numbered<sup>12</sup>.  
 Nay, what we had lighthanded left in surly the mere mould<sup>13</sup>  
 Will have waked and have waxed and have walked with the wind what while  
 we slept,  
 This side, that side hurling a heavyheaded hundredfold<sup>14</sup>  
 What while we, while we slumbered<sup>15</sup>.  
 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<sup>16</sup>, so cogged<sup>17</sup>, so cumbered,  
 When the thing we freely forfeit<sup>18</sup> is kept with fonder a care,  
 Fonder a care kept 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. — 30  
 Yonder. — What high as that! We follow, now we follow. — Yonder, yes  
 yonder, yonder,  
 Yonder.

<sup>12</sup> 'Even the hairs of your head have been counted' — Jesus in Matthew 10:30.

<sup>13</sup> what we had lighthanded left in surly the mere mould: our physical features which, as we died, we let drop in their natural frowning form

<sup>14</sup> hurling a heavyheaded hundredfold: casting off a hundred times over the physical ravages which sin and worry have made on our heads

<sup>15</sup> While we 'sleep' in death, our bodies will reach their full perfection.

<sup>16</sup> fashed: Scottish dialect for troubled, worried

<sup>17</sup> cogged: archaic for loaded, burdened

<sup>18</sup> The thing we freely forfeit: the beauty we surrender to God

## St Winefred's Well – Fragment C

*After Winefred's raising from the dead and the breaking out of the fountain.*

BEUNO.

O now while skies are blue, now while seas are salt,  
 While rushy<sup>1</sup> rains shall fall or brooks shall fleet<sup>2</sup> from fountains<sup>3</sup>,  
 While sick men shall cast sighs, of sweet health all despairing,  
 While blind men's eyes shall thirst after daylight, draughts<sup>4</sup> of daylight,  
 Or deaf ears shall desire that lípmusic<sup>5</sup> that's lóst upon them,  
 While cripples are, while lepers, dancers in dismal limb-dance,  
 Fallers in dreadful frothpits, waterfearers wild<sup>6</sup>,  
 Stone<sup>7</sup>, palsy<sup>8</sup>, cancer, cough, lung-wasting, womb-not-bearing,  
 Rupture<sup>9</sup>, running sores, what more? in brief, in burden<sup>10</sup>,  
 As long as men are mortal and God merciful, 10  
 So long to this sweet spot, this leafy lean-over,  
 This Dry Dene, nów no longer dry nor dumb, but moist and musical  
 With the uproll and the downcarol<sup>11</sup> of day and night delivering

<sup>1</sup> rushy: the word 'rushy' can mean 'producing rushes in marshland' (the probable meaning here); or 'looking like rushes' (*just* possible, as in 'raining stair-rods'). But it is hard to avoid a suggestion also of the etymologically quite different 'rushing'.

<sup>2</sup> fleet: the archaic verb to move swiftly, glide away; it survives in 'a fleeting moment'.

<sup>3</sup> fountains: forget images of ornamental or drinking fountains; the words here means the brooks' sources or springs.

<sup>4</sup> thirst ... draughts: in this dedication of the well, light is described in liquid terms.

<sup>5</sup> lipmusic: any form of speech, not only song, would be music to their ears. Inspired by his theme, GMH creates several other unhyphenated word-pairs in this passage: 'frothpits', 'waterfearers', 'downcarol'.

<sup>6</sup> dancers ... Fallers ... waterfearers: three parallel descriptions of the cripples and lepers of I.6.

<sup>7</sup> stone: gall- or kidney-stones. GMH moves from his vision of disabled cripples to a catalogue of the wasting diseases that affect them.

<sup>8</sup> palsy: paralysis, especially with tremors.

<sup>9</sup> Rupture: abdominal hernia.

<sup>10</sup> burden: a cleverly chosen word: it means *both* the chief theme of a poem or passage (continuing the thought of 'in brief'); *and* a heavy load to bear.

<sup>11</sup> the uproll and the downcarol: compare *To R.B.* I.12 about GMH's poetry: 'The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation'.

Water, which keeps thy name<sup>1</sup>, (for not in róck wríten,  
 But in pale water, fráil water, wild rash<sup>2</sup> and reeling water,  
 That will not wear a print, that will not stain a pen<sup>3</sup>,  
 Thy venerable record, virgin, is recorded).

Here to this holy well shall pilgrimages be,  
 And not from purple Wales only nor from elmy England,  
 But from beyond seas, Erin<sup>4</sup>, France and Flanders<sup>5</sup>, everywhere, 20  
 Pilgrims, still pilgrims, móre pilgrims, still more poor pilgrims.

. . . . .  
 What sights shall be when some that swung, wretches, on crutches  
 Their crutches shall cast from them, on heels of air departing<sup>6</sup>,  
 Or they go rich as roseleaves hence that loathsome cáme hither!  
 Not now to náme even  
 Those dearer, more divine boons whose haven the heart is.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> thy name: the whole speech is addressed to Winefred, whose fidelity and chastity the well commemorates. See also I.14 and the unfinished I.30.

<sup>2</sup> rash: impetuous and hasty; the lack of a comma in 'wild rash and reeling' adds to the feeling of uncontrolled speed.

<sup>3</sup> that will not stain a pen: a phrase whose meaning is clear, even if its syntax is loose. Water is colourless, so that a pen can't make marks with it; but in the context of the whole sentence and its parallel phrase 'that will not wear a print', the meaning is almost passive – 'that will not allow a pen to stain it'.

<sup>4</sup> Erin: the ancient name for Ireland, related to 'Eire'.

<sup>5</sup> Flanders: today the northern, Dutch-speaking region of Belgium; historically a wider area taking in parts of France and Holland as well, one of the richest and most urbanized parts of Europe in the Middle Ages. Ireland, France and Flanders are the circle of overseas countries nearest to Wales; GMH names them before looking beyond to 'everywhere'.

<sup>6</sup> on heels of air departing: a wonderful description of people who had arrived unable even to walk, now running, jumping and dancing.

<sup>7</sup> Not now to name ... the heart is: Not to mention the more spiritual and emotional blessings than mere physical healing.

Earnest, earthless<sup>3</sup>, equal, attuneable<sup>4</sup>, | vaulty, voluminous<sup>5</sup>, . . .  
 stupendous  
 Evening strains to be tíme's vást, | womb-of-all, home-of-all, hearse-of-all  
 night.  
 Her fond yellow hornlight<sup>6</sup> wound to the west, | her wild hollow hoarlight<sup>7</sup>  
 hung to the height  
 Waste<sup>8</sup>; her earliest stars, earlstars<sup>9</sup>, | stárs principal, overbend us,  
 Fíre-féaturing heaven<sup>10</sup>. For earth | her being has unbound<sup>11</sup>; her dapple<sup>12</sup>  
 is at an end, as-  
 tray or aswarm<sup>13</sup>, all throughther<sup>14</sup>, in throngs; | self ín self steepèd and  
 páshed<sup>15</sup> – quíte

<sup>1</sup> Spelt: almost certainly a GMH pun: the poem *spells out* the message foretold in the Sibyl's leaves; but *spelt* is also a kind of wheat, the harvest from her leaves.

<sup>2</sup> Sibyl's Leaves: The Sibyl was a propheticess in classical legend. One of the ways she divined the future was by 'reading' leaves.

<sup>3</sup> earthless: the eerie, unworldly darkness of evening becomes increasingly immaterial or spiritual as the poem goes on.

<sup>4</sup> equal, attuneable: the darkness gives everything a common, subdued appearance.

<sup>5</sup> voluminous: another GMH pun: in his day the word meant coiled and twisting as well as large.

<sup>6</sup> hornlight: mellow horn-coloured light as the sun sets and daylight drains away

<sup>7</sup> hoarlight: chill grey-white light as the moon rises

<sup>8</sup> Waste: primarily the adjective meaning empty (as in waste ground) and, in this context, large; but by receiving the emphasis of first word in the line, it suggests also the participle 'wasted', exhausted or deteriorating, which later lines will reinforce.

<sup>9</sup> earlstars: GMH's coinage, the word suggests stars that are first in both appearance and magnitude, thus linking the words that come before and after it.

<sup>10</sup> Fire-featuring heaven: creating the appearance of fires in the night sky

<sup>11</sup> unbound: disintegrated

<sup>12</sup> dapple: daytime variety of sights and colours

<sup>13</sup> aswarm: scattered, like a swarm of bees

<sup>14</sup> throughther: Scottish dialect for 'through one another', i.e. merged together and indistinct

<sup>15</sup> self in self steeped and pashed: each separate thing in view looks mixed and pushed into all the others

Disremembering<sup>1</sup>, dísmémbering | áll<sup>2</sup> now. Heart, you round<sup>3</sup> me right  
 With<sup>4</sup>: Óur évening is over us; óur night | whélms, whélms<sup>5</sup>, ánd will end us.  
 Only the beakleaved boughs dragonish<sup>6</sup> | damask<sup>7</sup> the tool-smooth bleak  
 light; black,  
 Ever so black on it. Óur tale, O óur oracle!<sup>8</sup> | Lét life, wáned<sup>9</sup>, ah lét life  
 wind

10

Off hér once skéined stained véined varíety | upon, áll on twó spools<sup>10</sup>;  
 párt, pen, páck<sup>11</sup>  
 Now her áll in twó flocks, twó folds – black, white; | right, wrong; reckon  
 but, reck but, mind  
 But<sup>12</sup> thése two; wáre of<sup>13</sup> a wórlð where bút these | twó tell, each off the  
 óther; of a rack  
 Where, selfwring, selfstrung<sup>14</sup>, sheathe- and shelterless<sup>15</sup>, | thóughts  
 agáinst thóughts ín groans grínd.

<sup>1</sup> Disremembering: Irish dialect for forgetting

<sup>2</sup> dismembering all: deconstructing the world around us as we know it

<sup>3</sup> round: warn by whispering

<sup>4</sup> Heart ... With: GMH agrees with his heart's foreboding; the rest of line 8 is what his heart tells him: nightfall is a picture of the eternal night that is coming to us.

<sup>5</sup> whelms: the old form of 'overwhelms'

<sup>6</sup> beakleaved ... dragonish: the outlines of the trees look like the beaks of sinister birds and dragons; for GMH, as for the New Testament, the dragon is a symbol of the devil.

<sup>7</sup> damask: (verb) make patterns, like the decorations on the damascene steel of a sword-blade

<sup>8</sup> Our ... oracle: As hinted earlier, this is a parable and prophecy about us!

<sup>9</sup> waned: at its end

<sup>10</sup> life ... spools: life's 'rich tapestry' will unravel down to just the two threads, good and bad, sheep and goats.

<sup>11</sup> part ... pack: imperatives: separate the sheep from the goats into two pens.

<sup>12</sup> reckon ... but: think about this – and nothing else!

<sup>13</sup> ware of: be aware of and beware!

<sup>14</sup> rack ... selfstrung: GMH's vision of hell is a rack where our thoughts torture us, tightening the wires as they accuse us of our wrongdoing.

<sup>15</sup> sheathe- and shelterless: there will be no cover or protection.

Scene, a wood ending in a steep bank over a dry dene<sup>1</sup>. Winefred having been murdered within, re-enter Caradoc with a bloody sword.

CARADOC.

My héart, where have we been? What have we séen, my mind?  
 What stroke has Carádóc's right arm dealt? what done? Head of a rebel<sup>2</sup>  
 Struck óff it has; written upon lovely limbs,  
 In bloody letters, lessons of earnest<sup>3</sup>, of revenge;  
 Monuments of my earnest, records of my revenge,  
 On one that went against me whéreas I had warned her -  
 Warned her! well she knew I warned her of this work<sup>4</sup>.  
 What work? what harm's done? There is no harm done, none yet;  
 Perhaps we struck no blow, Gwenvrewi<sup>5</sup> lives perhaps;  
 To make believe my mood was - mock.<sup>6</sup> O I might think so 10  
 But here, here is a workman from his day's task sweats<sup>7</sup>.  
 Wiped I am sure this was; it seems, not well; for still,  
 Still the scarlet swings and dances<sup>8</sup> on the blade.  
 So be it. Thou steel, thou butcher,  
 I cán scour thee, fresh burnish thee, sheathe thee in thy dark lair; these  
 drops  
 Never, never, never in their blue banks<sup>9</sup> again.  
 The woeful, Cradock<sup>10</sup>, O the woeful word<sup>11</sup>! Then what,  
 What have we seen? Her head, sheared from her shoulders, fall,  
 And lapped<sup>12</sup> in shining hair<sup>13</sup>, roll to the bank's edge; then  
 Down the beetling banks, like water in waterfalls, 20  
 It stooped and flashed and fell and ran like water<sup>14</sup> away.

<sup>1</sup> dene (can also be spelt 'dean'): a narrow wooded valley

<sup>2</sup> Caradoc's self-justifying reaction sees Winefred as a rebel against him for avoiding his attempt to rape her.

<sup>3</sup> earnest: here a noun meaning earnestness, seriousness. By the next line it virtually means 'intent(ion)'.  
<sup>4</sup> this work: this deed of executing her; I warned her that this is what I would do.

<sup>5</sup> Gwenvrewi: the Welsh form of Winefred. The name means *gwen* – 'white, fair, blessed'; *frewi* – 'reconciliation, peace'. The Welsh name for St Winefred's Well is Ffynnon Gwenvrewi.

<sup>6</sup> To make believe ... mock: I was only pretending

<sup>7</sup> workman ... sweats: his sword dripping blood. GMH typically omits the relative pronoun 'who' or 'which'.

<sup>8</sup> the scarlet swings and dances: the attempt at a nonchalant description of the blood makes it all the more horrific.

<sup>9</sup> blue banks: Winefred's veins. In his agitation Caradoc omits a verb such as 'will be' after 'never'.

<sup>10</sup> Cradock: anglicized version of Caradoc – the Latin form is Caratacus.

<sup>11</sup> the woeful word: presumably the thrice repeated 'never' in the previous line.

<sup>12</sup> lapped: wrapped, enfolded

<sup>13</sup> shining hair: looks forward to *The Golden Echo*, ll.14-21.

<sup>14</sup> like water ...: dramatic irony: Caradoc doesn't know (though we do) that a fountain will spring from where her head fell. The image continues in 'Foamfalling' (l.24).

Her eyes, oh and her eyes!

In all her beauty, and sunlight tó<sup>1</sup> it is a pit, den, darkness,  
 Foamfalling is not fresh to it, rainbow by<sup>2</sup> it not beaming,  
 In all her body, I say, no place was like her eyes,  
 No piece matched those eyes kept most part much cast down  
 But, being lifted, ímmortal, of ímmórtal brightness.  
 Several times I saw them, thrice or four times turning;  
 Round and round they came and flashed towards heaven: O there,  
 There they did appeal. Therefore airy vengeances 30  
 Are afoot<sup>3</sup>; heaven-vault fast purpling portends<sup>4</sup>, and what first lightning<sup>5</sup>  
 Any instant falls means me<sup>6</sup>. And I do not repent;  
 I do not and I will not repent, not repent.  
 The blame bear who aroused me.<sup>7</sup> What I have done violent<sup>8</sup>  
 I have líke a líon dóne, líonlíke dóne,  
 Honouring an uncontrolled royal wrathful nature,  
 Mantling passion in a grandeur, crimson grandeur<sup>9</sup>.  
 Now be my pride then perfect, all one piece. Henceforth  
 In a wide world of defiance Caradoc lives alone,  
 Loyal to his own soul, laying his ówn law down, no law nor 40  
 Lord now curb him for ever. O daring! O deep insight!  
 What is virtue? Valour; only the heart valiant.  
 And right? Only resolution; will, his will unwavering  
 Who, like me, knowing his nature to the heart home<sup>10</sup>, nature's business,<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> to (and in the next line): compared to

<sup>2</sup> by: beside, laid alongside in comparison

<sup>3</sup> airy vengeances Are afoot: 'heaven' (i.e. God) shows his approaching punishment in the sky and atmosphere.

<sup>4</sup> portends: usually a transitive verb, here intransitive; 'threatens, gives warning'.

<sup>5</sup> lightning: probably the noun, 'a deadly lightning flash'; but in this very evocative phrase, it could also be the adjective 'with the speed of light'.

<sup>6</sup> what first ... means me: whatever thunderbolt from heaven falls in the next few moments is aimed at me.

<sup>7</sup> The blame bear ...: It's the fault of whoever tempted and stirred me.

<sup>8</sup> violent: by its position after the verb, the word acts as both adjective and adverb.

<sup>9</sup> mantling: the images in the sentence transpose this verb from its usual figurative sense of 'covering, enveloping as *if* in a mantle' to an almost literal vision of his passion as a crimson robe.

<sup>10</sup> home: primarily the adverb, 'fully'; perhaps secondarily the noun, the heart being one's 'home', the core of one's being. Either way, Caradoc claims he has reached total self-knowledge.

<sup>11</sup> nature's business: the comma at the end of the line helps this phrase point both forward and back. It starts in apposition to 'nature' earlier in the line: he thoroughly knows his nature and *what it is about*. But then it becomes the object of the next verb: what he despatches unflinchingly are the deeds his nature demands.

Despatches with no flinching. But will flesh<sup>12</sup>, O can flésh  
 Second this fiery strain<sup>13</sup>? | Not always; O no no!  
 We cannot live this life out<sup>14</sup>; | sometimes we must weary  
 And in this darksome world what comfort can I find?  
 Down this darksome world | cómfort whére can I find  
 When 'ts light I quenched; its rose, | time's one rich rose, my hand, 50  
 By<sup>15</sup> her bloom, fast by | her fresh, her fleecèd bloom,  
 Hideous dáshed dówn, leaving | earth a winter withering<sup>16</sup>  
 With no now, no Gwenvrewi. | I must miss her most  
 That might have spared her were it | but for passion-sake<sup>17</sup>. Yes,  
 To hunger and not have, yét | hope ón for, to storm and strive and  
 Be at every assault fresh foiled, | worse flung, deeper disappointed,  
 The turmoil and the torment, | it has, I swear, a sweetness,  
 Keeps a kind of joy in it, | a zest, an edge, an ecstasy,  
 Next after sweet success.<sup>18</sup> | I am not left even this;  
 I all my being have hacked | in half with hér neck: one part, 60  
 Reason, selfdisposal<sup>19</sup>, | choice of better or worse way,  
 Is corpse now<sup>20</sup>, cannot change; | my other self, this soul,

<sup>12</sup> flesh: as in 'the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak'; not just the physical body, but his whole being apart from his will

<sup>13</sup> Second this fiery strain: support the burning stress that such a defiant act of will places on it

<sup>14</sup> live this life out: there are two layers of meaning: 1) our flesh cannot live out what our will intends; 2) when we have this kind of inner conflict, we cannot stay alive for our full life-span.

<sup>15</sup> By: as in 'I took her by the neck'

<sup>16</sup> winter withering: which is the noun and which the adjective? It hardly matters.

<sup>17</sup> passion-sake: he killed her in 'passion', a blend of anger and frustrated lust.

<sup>18</sup> To hunger and not have ... Next after sweet success: Caradoc found excitement in the chase, even though Winefred resisted him. It was a joy, an ecstasy that he has killed by killing her. It is one of the deepest insights in the speech, which GMH discovered through his own failure to write poems, and especially this one, during his dark night of the soul.

<sup>19</sup> selfdisposal: a characteristic GMH coinage with no hyphen. It is defined by the other words in the line: 'Reason ... choice of better or worse way'; it is his rational will, the power to decide what to do, how to behave himself. It is contrasted with 'my other self, this soul ... self-feeling' (ll.62-3).

<sup>20</sup> corpse now: in killing Winefred he has killed his own chance to choose a better way

Life's quick<sup>1</sup>, this kínd<sup>2</sup>, this kéen<sup>3</sup> self-feeling,  
 With dreadful distillation | of thoughts sour as blood,  
 Must all day long taste murder<sup>4</sup>. | What do nów then? Do? Nay,  
 Déed-bound<sup>5</sup> I am; óne deed<sup>6</sup> tréads all dówn here | cramps<sup>7</sup> all doing.  
 What do? Not yield,  
 Not hope, not pray; despair; | ay, that: brazen despair out,  
 Brave all, and take what comes - | as here this rabble<sup>8</sup> is come,  
 Whose bloods<sup>9</sup> I reck<sup>10</sup> no more of, | no more rank with hers  
 Than sewers with sacred oils<sup>11</sup>. | Mankind, that mob, comes. Come! 70

*Enter a crowd, among them Teryth, Gwenlo, Beuno<sup>12</sup>.*

<sup>1</sup> quick: noun, as in 'cut to the quick'; it means the seat of feeling and emotion, in apposition to 'self-feeling' later in the line.

<sup>2</sup> kind: in its original and archaic sense of 'natural, human' (as in man/humankind); the more modern sense of 'friendly, generous' is hard for a 21<sup>st</sup> century reader to banish, but is clearly inappropriate for Caradoc's deed and state of mind.

<sup>3</sup> keen: the surface meaning is of course the sense of 'sharp, biting, bitter'; but as GMH is writing in Ireland, is there an undertone of the Irish word 'keen', wailing a funeral dirge?

<sup>4</sup> With dreadful distillation ... taste murder: his dreadful deed has poisoned every aspect of his being.

Compare 'God's most deep decree | Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me' in GMH's *I wake and feel the fell of dark sonnet*.

<sup>5</sup> Deed-bound: paralysed from taking any action

<sup>6</sup> one deed: his all-shattering action in killing Winefred

<sup>7</sup> here cramps: the lack of a comma after 'here' adds to the impression of total, paralysed disarray.

<sup>8</sup> rabble: the approaching crowd is in sight. They will presumably arrest him when they discover what he has done. His contempt for all 'Mankind, that mob' (l.70) in comparison with Winefred is already apparent in the word 'rabble'.

<sup>9</sup> bloods: a remarkably powerful choice of word: the primary reference is to their families or lineage ('of noble blood', etc), shading into the fact that Teryth, Gwenlo and Beuno are 'blood-relatives' of Winefred, her own flesh and blood; i.e. 'I don't care who they are'. But inevitably in this context there is a secondary reference to bloodshed: once they see 'these drops' of her blood (l.15), their blood will be up; they will be out for his blood.

<sup>10</sup> reck: care about, pay attention to; the parallel 'no more' with 'rank' (i.e. rate, value) suggests that GMH includes a hint of 'reckon' (i.e. calculate the value of) in 'reck'.

<sup>11</sup> sewers with sacred oils: his comparison of the rabble with Winefred again foreshadows *The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo* (see l.19 and note 12 above).

<sup>12</sup> Teryth is Winefred's father, Gwenlo her mother, Beuno her uncle.

Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee;  
Not untwist — slack they may be — these last strands of man<sup>1</sup>  
In me ór, most weary, cry *I can no more*. I can;  
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.

But ah, but O thou terrible<sup>2</sup>, why wouldst thou rude<sup>3</sup> on me  
Thy wring-world right foot<sup>4</sup> rock<sup>5</sup>? lay a lionlimb against me? scan  
With darksome<sup>6</sup> devouring eyes my bruised bones? and fan,  
O in turns<sup>7</sup> of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic to avoid thee and  
flee?

Why?<sup>8</sup> That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear.  
Nay in all that toil, that coil<sup>9</sup>, since (seems) I kissed the rod<sup>10</sup>, 10  
Hand rather<sup>11</sup>, my heart lo! lapped<sup>12</sup> strength, stole joy, would laugh,  
chéer.  
Cheer whom though?<sup>13</sup> The hero<sup>14</sup> whose heaven-handling flung me,  
fóot tród  
Me? or me that fought him? O which one? is it each one? That night,  
that year<sup>15</sup>  
Of now done<sup>16</sup> darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!<sup>17</sup>) my God.

<sup>1</sup> these last strands of man: the few remaining threads that hold him to life and sanity. The image is close to the end of *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*.

<sup>2</sup> O thou terrible: GMH turns from addressing Despair to God / Christ, seen as the terrifying Creator, Lion of Judah and winnowing storm.

<sup>3</sup> rude: adjective used as adverb: roughly, barbarously

<sup>4</sup> wring-world right foot: God's power is such that his foot can squeeze and squash the world he made.

<sup>5</sup> rock: the verb from 'why wouldst thou' in the previous line. God is playing with him, toe-ing him as if preparing to stamp on him and crush him.

<sup>6</sup> darksome: archaic poetic word for 'dark', 'grim'

<sup>7</sup> turns: repeated squalls that will turn me over and over

<sup>8</sup> Why?: repeats and summarizes the questions of the last 4 lines.

<sup>9</sup> coil: fuss, turmoil

<sup>10</sup> kissed the rod: his experience seemed like the cruel and humiliating custom of making a young boy, as a sign of submission, kiss the cane before or after he was beaten with it.

<sup>11</sup> Hand rather: but it turned out that he was kissing God's hand as a courtier kisses the monarch's. What felt randomly cruel turned out to be purposeful and loving.

<sup>12</sup> lapped: in either sense (or both?) of 'drank in, sucked up' or 'wrapped itself round with'

<sup>13</sup> Cheer whom though?: his hard-won happier mood is immediately punctured by questioning his motives: is he merely praising himself and falling back into pride?

<sup>14</sup> The hero: God / Christ

<sup>15</sup> That night, that year: that period of desolation which, even though relatively short, felt as if it lasted a year

<sup>16</sup> now done: finished, over and done with, in the past

<sup>17</sup> (my God!): horrified realization of what he has done: not just the passive victim, he fought back!

My own heart let me more have pity on<sup>1</sup>; let  
Me live to my sad self hereafter kind,  
Charitable; not live<sup>2</sup> this tormented mind  
With this tormented mind tormenting yet.

I cast<sup>3</sup> for comfort I can no more get  
By groping round my comfortless, than blind  
Eyes in their dark<sup>4</sup> can day or thirst<sup>5</sup> can find  
Thirst's all-in-all<sup>6</sup> in all<sup>7</sup> a world of wet<sup>8</sup>.

Soul, self; come, poor Jackself<sup>9</sup>, I do advise  
You, jaded<sup>10</sup>, let be<sup>11</sup>; call off thoughts awhile 10  
Elsewhere; leave comfort root-room<sup>12</sup>; let joy size<sup>13</sup>

At God knows when to God knows what<sup>14</sup>; whose smile<sup>15</sup>  
's<sup>16</sup> not wrung<sup>17</sup>, see you<sup>18</sup>; unforeseen times<sup>19</sup> rather - as skies  
Betweenpie<sup>20</sup> mountains - lights a lovely mile<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> My own heart let me more have pity on: wonderfully playful word-order: it sounds at first as if he is addressing his heart, but it then turns out to be the object of his pity. 'more have pity' doesn't mean 'have more pity', but have it more often and more intensely.

<sup>2</sup> live: live through, endure

<sup>3</sup> cast: both transitive, 'direct my eyes (understood) in searching'; and intransitive, 'throw myself about in groping'

<sup>4</sup> comfortless, dark: both adjectives imply a noun understood, such as 'self', 'state', 'condition', 'world'

<sup>5</sup> thirst: a thirsty person

<sup>6</sup> Thirst's all-in-all: what you most urgently need when you are dying of thirst, i.e. drinking water

<sup>7</sup> all-in-all in all: brilliant word-play to suggest complete futility and frustration

<sup>8</sup> a world of wet: the predicament of the ship-wrecked sailor surrounded by the salt-water ocean stretching as far as the eye can see. Compare Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*. 'water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink'.

<sup>9</sup> Jackself: his ordinary, unpretentious, workaday self; using the name implies tender, slightly amused sympathy.

<sup>10</sup> jaded: more than just tired or faded, it means worn out or knackered like a jade, i.e. a horse at the end of its useful life.

<sup>11</sup> let be: give over, relax, let things take their course

<sup>12</sup> leave comfort root-room: give God space and a chance to comfort you

<sup>13</sup> size: grow

<sup>14</sup> At God knows when to God knows what: in God's time and way. The colloquial semi-swearing continues the gentle and perhaps slightly exasperated tone of the sestet. His exhortation to himself perhaps echoes what others have said to him.

<sup>15</sup> smile: God's loving kindness

<sup>16</sup> 's: abbreviation for 'is'

<sup>17</sup> wrung: forced or dragged unwillingly out of him

<sup>18</sup> see you: you see, colloquialism like the Welsh 'look you'. The Welsh intonation triggers happy memories of St Beuno's in the landscape and lighter mood of the last two lines.

<sup>19</sup> unforeseen times: unexpectedly and unbidden, when God chooses

<sup>20</sup> Betweenpie: GMH's own extraordinary invention: 'pie' is a verb, derived from the participle 'pied', meaning to create a bright space between dark shapes; here, the sky between dark mountains is brightly dappled.

<sup>21</sup> lights a lovely mile: GMH finishes on a note of realistic optimism: there probably will be another dark mountain to encounter, but God offers a lovely *mile* (not a measly inch or two) meanwhile.

Hark, hearer, hear what I do; lend a thought now, make believe  
 We are leafwhelmed<sup>1</sup> somewhere with the hood  
 Of some branchy bunchy bushybowered wood,  
 Southern dean or Lancashire clough or Devon cleave<sup>2</sup>,  
 That leans along the loins of hills, where a candycoloured, where a  
 gluegold<sup>3</sup>- brown  
 Marbled river, boisterously beautiful, between  
 Roots and rocks is danced and dandled, all in froth and waterblowballs,  
 down.  
 We are there, when we hear a shout  
 That the hanging honeysuck, the dogeared<sup>4</sup> hazels in the cover  
 Makes dither, makes hover 10  
 And the riot of a rout  
 Of, it must be, boys from the town  
 Bathing: it is summer's sovereign good.

By there comes<sup>5</sup> a listless stranger: beckoned by the noise  
 He drops towards the river: unseen  
 Sees the bevy<sup>6</sup> of them, how the boys  
 With dare and with downdolfinry<sup>7</sup> and bellbright bodies huddling out,  
 Are earthworld, airworld, waterworld thorough<sup>8</sup> hurled, all by turn and  
 turn about<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> leafwhelmed: In his happy creative mood, GMH fills the poem with compound words, usually without hyphens, that he has invented. The meaning of most of them is clear. This one suggests hiding in a tree with thick foliage.

<sup>2</sup> dean: (also spelt dene), dell, valley; clough: ravine; cleave: cleft, fissure

<sup>3</sup> gluegold: glue was originally a brownish cement made by boiling animal hooves in water.

<sup>4</sup> dogeared: typical of GMH's first-hand observation. 'Dog-eared' has become a cliché for creased paper, remote from the original image; but in his hands it is a fresh description of the way that hazel catkins hang floppily like a spaniel's ears.

<sup>5</sup> By there comes: the inverted word-order mimics the slow, hesitant movement of the listless stranger.

<sup>6</sup> bevy: originally a flock of quails or larks; apt here for the boys chirping and larking about

<sup>7</sup> downdolfinry: a wonderful image and word-coinage: as the boys dive down into the water, they look like a pod or school (fortuitous collective noun!) of dolphins. The spelling 'dolfin' is an old anglicization of the Latin root, *delphinus*.

<sup>8</sup> thorough: probably both an abbreviation of 'thoroughly', and the old spelling of 'through', catching the motion as the boys hurl themselves into worlds of earth and air and water.

<sup>9</sup> earthworld ... turn about: a magical line that works both as a whole impression of riotous, all-encompassing movement involving the fundamental elements (earth, air, water); and as a detailed description of the boys queuing for their turn to leap off the earth bank, somersaulting through the air to splash into the river.

This garland of their gambols flashes in his breast  
 Into such a sudden zest 20  
 Of summertime joys  
 That he hies<sup>1</sup> to a pool neighbouring; sees it is the best  
 There; sweetest, freshest, shadowiest;  
 Fairyland<sup>2</sup>; silk-beech, scrolled ash, packed sycamore, wild wychelm,  
 hornbeam fretty overstood  
 By<sup>3</sup>. Rafts and rafts<sup>4</sup> of flake leaves light, dealt so, painted on the air<sup>5</sup>,  
 Hang as still as hawk or hawkmoth, as the stars or as the angels there,  
 Like the thing that never knew the earth, never off roots  
 Rose<sup>6</sup>. Here he feasts: lovely all is! No more: off with—down he dings<sup>7</sup>  
 His bleachèd both and woolwoven wear:  
 Careless these in coloured wisp<sup>8</sup> 30  
 All lie tumbled-to; then with loop-locks<sup>9</sup>  
 Forward falling, forehead frowning, lips crisp<sup>10</sup>  
 Over finger-teasing task, his twiny boots<sup>11</sup>  
 Fast<sup>12</sup> he opens, last he off wrings<sup>13</sup>  
 Till walk the world he can with bare his feet  
 And come where lies a coffer<sup>14</sup>, burly<sup>15</sup> all of blocks

<sup>1</sup> hies: goes quickly

<sup>2</sup> Fairyland: GMH twice used this word in his letters to describe 'Paradise', the Stonyhurst College swimming area.

<sup>3</sup> silk-beech ... overstood By: the pool is covered with this profusion of wild trees. Each has an accompanying adjective: beech buds are silk-coloured, and ash buds tightly clamped as if wrapped like a scroll, suggesting that GMH is picturing the scene in early spring, probably the time of writing; hornbeam leaves are diagonally scored, as if in fretwork.

<sup>4</sup> rafts: crowds, large collections

<sup>5</sup> dealt so ... air: an elusive phrase, seeming to mean that as Everard looks up at the leaves, they are arranged so that they look as if they are painted in mid-air

<sup>6</sup> the thing ... Rose: something that never grew out of the earth but appeared in the sky / from heaven

<sup>7</sup> down he dings: flings down, tears off (his clothes)

<sup>8</sup> wisp: small bundle

<sup>9</sup> loop-locks: wavy, curly hair

<sup>10</sup> crisp: firmly pursed together as he concentrates on the fiddly job of untying the laces

<sup>11</sup> twiny: laced up. It seems funny (in both senses) that he has got all his other clothes off before his boots; GMH doesn't usually make elementary mistakes. He may be picturing Everard in unusual walking outfit; or (more likely) this is the extempore first draft of the poem unedited.

<sup>12</sup> Fast: by its position between 'boots' and 'he opens', the word does double duty: they are stiff and stuck fast, but he undoes them as quickly as he can.

<sup>13</sup> wrings: forcibly twists

<sup>14</sup> coffer: box-like basin, still used in this sense in 'coffer-dam'

<sup>15</sup> burly: strong and secure

Built of chancequarrièd, selfquainèd, hoar-huskèd rocks<sup>1</sup>  
 And the water warbles over into, filleted<sup>2</sup> | with glassy grassy quicksilvery  
 shivès<sup>3</sup> and shoots  
 And with heavenfallen freshness down from moorland still brims,  
 Dark or daylight on and on. Here he will then, here he will the fleet 40  
 Flinty kindcold element<sup>4</sup> let break across his limbs  
 Long. Where we leave him, froliclavish while he looks about him, laughs,  
 swims.

Enough now; since the sacred matter that I mean  
 I should be wronging longer leaving it to float  
 Upon this only gambolling and echoing-of-earth note<sup>5</sup>—

What is<sup>6</sup> ... the delightful dean?  
 Wedlock. What the water? Spousal love.

<sup>1</sup> chancequarrièd ... rocks: the blocks of stone that surround the basin have come to the surface by chance, have rubbed their corners smooth, and their surfaces (husks) are greyish-white from age and exposure

<sup>2</sup> filleted ... shoots: as the water flows into the basin, the rocks and tree-roots comb it into separate streams

<sup>3</sup> shivès: slices, slivers, splinters

<sup>4</sup> element: the water of the river

<sup>5</sup> this only ... note: this merely playful and earthbound scene, which is an allegory of something more profound and spiritual

<sup>6</sup> What is ...: The 'fairyländ' paradise is a picture of the marriage relationship and love.

<sup>7</sup>The fine delight that fathers thought<sup>8</sup>; the strong  
<sup>9</sup>Spur, live and lancing<sup>10</sup> like the blowpipe flame,  
 Breathes once and, quenched faster than it came,  
 Leaves yet the mind a mother<sup>11</sup> of immortal song<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>13</sup>Nine months she then, nay years, nine years she long  
 Within her wears, bears, cares and combs<sup>14</sup> the same:  
 The widow of an insight lost<sup>15</sup> she lives, with aim  
 Now known and hand at work now never wrong.

Sweet fire the sire of muse<sup>16</sup>, my soul needs this;

<sup>17</sup>I want the one<sup>18</sup> rapture<sup>19</sup> of an inspiration.

10

O then if in my lagging lines you miss

<sup>20</sup>The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation,

My winter world<sup>21</sup>, that scarcely breathes that bliss

<sup>22</sup>Now<sup>23</sup>, yields you, with some sighs, our<sup>24</sup> explanation.

<sup>7</sup> The first two quatrains (ll. 1-4 and 5-8) are each a single sentence. This is simpler than in most GMH sonnets!

<sup>8</sup> The fine delight ... thought: the moment of inspiration when the idea for a poem is conceived

<sup>9</sup> L. 2 is a good example of GMH's 'sprung' or spoken rhythm, much more varied than the regular beat of most English verse before him. Here 3 accented syllables close together (spur, live, lanc-) are followed by 3 unaccented syllables in succession (-ing like the).

<sup>10</sup> live and lancing: the moment of inspiration is an impulse full of vitality and clearly focused, like a blowpipe flame.

<sup>11</sup> quenched ... mother: however quickly the moment of inspiration passes, the mind retains the seed like a pregnant mother

<sup>12</sup> immortal song: a poetic masterpiece

<sup>13</sup> GMH slows the pace of ll. 5-6 by making 18 of the 19 words monosyllables, to add to the sense that the poem's gestation takes a long time.

<sup>14</sup> combs: perhaps in 2 senses: 1) certainly, sifts and smooths as in combing the hair; 2) possibly, stores and matures, as bees do in a honeycomb

<sup>15</sup> lost: the glowing moment of the insight is lost with the departure of the 'fathering' creative impulse, which leaves her a widow; but the idea itself is not lost, as her direction (aim) and composition (work) remain clear. That is the poet's task *now* (word repeated). But alas, not for GMH, as he laments in ll. 9-14: he lacks even the creative impulse.

<sup>16</sup> Sweet fire ... muse: the thought-fathering moment of inspiration of l. 1, which GMH lacks

<sup>17</sup> Another line with clear sprung rhythm: the accented syllables are 'I WANT the ONE RAPture of an INSPiration'.

<sup>18</sup> want the one: all I need is one, just once!

<sup>19</sup> rapture: continues the sexual imagery of the moment of conception.

<sup>20</sup> A brilliant line, which some have compared to a drumroll, describing GMH's poetry at its best; there are two sets of alliteration, with 'carol' in the second set related to 'roll' in the first.

<sup>21</sup> winter world: another alliteration to describe his unhappy, unproductive life in Ireland

<sup>22</sup> Another brilliant line that virtually judders to a halt, with the commas expressing the 'some sighs'.

<sup>23</sup> Now: GMH's despairing 'now' contrasts with the busy, fertile 'now' of successful poetic creation in l. 8.

<sup>24</sup> our: my soul's (l. 9) and my (ll. 10-13)