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UMCS

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Gerard Manley Hopkins: Towards the Light.
A Study of Two Dublin Poems

Gerard Manley Hopkins: dążąc ku światłu.
Studium dwóch dublińskich poematów

The times are nightfall, look, their light grows less;
The times are winter, watch, a world undone:
They waste, they wither worse; they as they run
Or bring more or more blazon man's distress.
And I not help. Nor word now of success:
All is from wreck, here, there, to rescue one —
Work which to see scarce so much as begun
Makes welcome death, does dear forgetfulness.
(186)¹

So wrote Gerard Manley Hopkins from the depths of his Irish night, from the "third remove" of Dublin where he was elected Fellow of the Royal University in the department of classics². When, having fought a sense of being unfit for, and generally unworthy of the post, Hopkins finally took up the challenge, he felt honoured that, after all, he would be following in the tracks of his beloved mentor Cardinal John Henry Newman³. Though,

¹ See *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, fourth edition, revised and enlarged by W. H. Gardner and H. N. MacKenzie, OUP, Oxford 1970, all quotations of Hopkins's poems come from this edition.

² See Hopkins's letter to Bridges from March 7th, 1884 in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Selected Letters*, ed. by C. Philips, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1991, p. 197.

³ See R. B. Martin, *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life*, Harper Collins, London 1991, p. 365.

as Hopkins expected, leaving England would not be easy, it surely was to have its compensations: life in what he considered the most charming and most musical city of the British Isles, more time to pursue his own studies, and the hope that with luck, like Newman before him, he might succeed in making the College a prestigious institution once again.

However, even this initial enthusiasm wore off all too soon, leaving Hopkins disappointed and frustrated not only by the drudgery of his work but also by the joylessness of Dublin, the city which, with time, came to represent to him his complete failure as priest, teacher and artist. The spirit of desolation worked its way into Hopkins's Dublin works as early as October 1884, when the poet began his "dark" oracle *Spelt*, as its title would have it, *from Sibil's Leaves* (henceforth *Spelt*). The "tale" of the evening which advances in order to bring mankind to its final judgment, unfolds also to expose the darkness of the poet's heart, the drama of a man who, feeling deserted by God, tries to reunite himself with his Master. Whispering of numerous trials, Sibil's leaves finally arrange themselves into a vision of "a rack/ Where, selfwring, selfstrung, sheathe-shelterless, thoughts against thoughts in groans grind": a vision of 'self-hell' made all the more frightening for the total darkness in which the torment goes on. Later, Hopkins's 'terrible sonnets' would become a record of that vision fulfilled in the poet's life, the chronicle of the times when light and God's smile, so desperately striven for, could only be imagined. And it was not before 1888 that he was able to really see and enjoy the Light again, the experience of which was described in *That Nature Is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection* (henceforth *That Nature*). There his "heart's clarion" announced the triumphant victory of Christ, resurrected also in his soul, and the "sudden flash", restoring to the man his life and hope, dispersed autumnal and spiritual darkness.

Concerned first and foremost with Hopkins's *Spelt* (1885) and *That Nature* (1888), the two works which respectively open and close the cycle of the terrible sonnets, this study aims at discussing the significance of light and darkness for the rendering of the poet's profound religious experience, the experience uniquely and complexly related to the cosmic vision of the world and mankind at its end.

Viewed as an 'introduction' to the sonnets of desolation, *Spelt* too, however indirectly, communicates the sense of God's absence. Hence the almost complete abandonment of nature⁴, and the intense loneliness of the

⁴ D. A. Harris, *Inspirations Unbidden. The Terrible Sonnets of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1982, p. 21.

man — the sole inhabitant of the earth awaiting the Last Judgment. Hence also the apocalyptic darkness which, driving away the world's fading light, transforms creation into non-being. The unique experience of the man who becomes a witness to the birth of perhaps a new god is related by the Aeneas-like poet, brave enough to watch, read through and interpret the oracle of this last evening. His tale opens with the crescendo of adjectives which, one by one, undo the miracles of creation, reverse its laws and return it to its primeval chaos:

Earnest, earthless, equal, attuneable, vaulty, voluminous,
 . . . stupendous
 Evening strains to be time's vast, womb-of-all, home-of-all,
 hearse-of-all night.
 Her fond yellow hornlight wound to the west, her wild
 hollow hoarlight hung to the height
 Waste; her earlier stars, earlstar, stars principal, overbend
 us,
 Fire-featuring heaven. [97]

Watching how the earth becomes "less" ("earthless"), the poet, unconsciously perhaps, sets his hand (word, rather) to the world's undoing. His transcript of the onset of darkness not only intensifies its already powerful forces, but actually illustrates how specific, previously individualized, objects merge with one another. Thus dismembered, deprived of their precious, distinctive scapes, they simply disappear into blackness. Pressing itself upon these 'out-scaped' corpses, darkness strives to close over them permanently, and to quote Prof. Gardner's words, "to replace the whole mystery of being"⁵. This progression is rendered not only through the adjectives of the opening line, or the consecutive scapes of the evening such as sunset, twilight and dusk⁶, but also by the responses of the speaker, who, as the darkness around him thickens, becomes more and more conscious of its ominous presence.

Earth can no longer be protected by the day, already worn away and taking its leave but for the last few 'horn-like' rays of the setting sun: yet even this pale, hollow, wasting "hoarlight" is obscured by the trees, and forced out by the stars that gradually come into view. The night can then present itself in its twinkling crown: the ancient majesty of the "Fire-featuring heaven" so overwhelming in its splendour and richness that it can easily "overbend",

⁵ W. H. Gardner, *Gerard Manley Hopkins (1884-1889): A Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition*, OUP, London 1948, vol. 2, p. 313.

⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 312.

crush us into “no-thingness”⁷. The power of the stars accumulates as they appear: first “earliest stars”, then “earl-stars” and finally “stars principal”, so numerous they almost set the sky on fire, manifesting thus their readiness to support the night in the “undappling” of the earth.

For earth her being has unbound, her
dapple is at an end, as-
tray or aswarm, all throughter, in throngs; self in self
steeped and pashed-quite
Disremembering, dismembering all now. Heart, you round
me right
With: Our evening is over us; our night whelms, whelms,
and will end us. [97]

For the speaker who is the only conscious self in the ending world⁸, his awareness of the destructiveness of darkness becomes, as the night unfolds, the only kind of light to go by. For a brief moment when his existence is reaffirmed, the man wins, managing once more to leave the ‘manmark’ of personal or possessive pronoun through which he can easily be spotted. Apart from these occasional ‘flickers’ of struggle, however, the speaker’s presentation, truthful to the oracle he reads, contains also the proofs of his being “undone”. After all he has already lost his “I”, addressing the reader as a collective voice, some “we”, still recognizable through “our” and “us”, yet merged, somewhat indistinctive, and capable of destroying other inscapes.

Manifested mainly through the speaker’s language, his decreation tendencies are traceable in a deliberate breaking of the line’s final word (i.e. “as- / tray”), in depriving a word of a prefix (“whelms” instead of overwhelms), or else in reducing a word cluster to but one element, combining within itself some crucial parts of the phrase, as is the case with “throughter” standing for ‘going through each other’⁹. These dismembering transformations make the speaker aware of his own vulnerability, the more so that he begins to perceive his heart as the poem’s independent speaker. In view of this ‘split’ the speaker’s inner glow, the light of his resistance against darkness, turns out as misleading as the light of the stars which merely intensify the night, making all creation — the speaker included — “pashed” and “steeped” in everything else.

⁷ See D. A. Downes, *The Final Act. Hopkins’s Last Sonnets* [in:] *Gerard Manley Hopkins. New Essays, On His Life, Writing and Place in English Literature*, vol. 1, ed. by Allsopp and Sundermeier, The Edwin Helen Press, Lewiston, Lampeter 1989, p. 245.

⁸ See J. B. Loomis, *Dayspring in Darkness. Sacrament in Hopkins*, Bucknell University Press, London and Toronto Associated University Presses, Lewisburg 1988, p. 130.

⁹ D. Mac Chesney, *A Hopkins’s Commentary. An Explanatory Commentary on the Main Poems 1876–86*, University of London Press, New York 1968, p. 136.

Apart from the sheer physical impact resulting in the change of shapes and the domination of “throngs” or “swarms” over individuals, darkness influences the course of creation which now can only be lead “astray”. However, the most dangerous of the night’s practices is “disremembering”, which, by targeting human and also nature’s memory, softly, and painlessly destroys the hope for the world’s restoration.

It is against such a scheme that the heart — the darkness-born speaker — warns the poet, unfolding its dark prophecy. The approaching ‘finale’ is no longer guessed at from the ominous darkness, but, for once, almost brutally, formulated and phrased in the unescapable death sentence of “our night whelms, whelms, / and will end us”. The gloomy certainty soon becomes translated into specific, concrete images confirming the predatory, invasive character of darkness, almost boasting of its armies:

Only the beakleaved boughs dragonish damask the tool-
smooth bleak light; black
Ever so black on it. [98]

The eerie warriors: dragons and monster-birds are in truth the branches and leaves of the tree tops whose trunks have already been obliterated by darkness. Thus hanging, or occasionally floating in the air, the leafy boughs form their magic design, an intricate net entrapping the light no longer allowed to penetrate earth’s dimness.

High up, the leaves incised against the pale sky¹⁰ “black, / Ever so black on it” send their s.o.s., the prophecy of the end of all light. However, while interpreting this oracle, (spelt actually from so much more than just Sibil’s leaves), the speaker cannot help but realize certain beneficial aspects of darkness. After all, it is the simplification of perception night brings about that leads to the discovery of the core of all life, the existence of two spools — “black, white” — off which the thread of life unwinds. Having unveiled also this secret of the night, as well as the moral significance of the colours which have their respective counterparts in wrong and right, the speaker demonstrates the fate of those who have decided to follow the path of sin. The prophecy takes him underground, to hell, where the conspicuous absence of fire becomes a measure of the speaker’s ‘disremembrance’ of light. Enveloped in blackness, he remains incapable of communicating anything but the groan of “sheath-and shelterless thoughts” whose torment — invariably “selfwring” and “selfstrung” — is heard, yet can never be seen.

¹⁰ J. F. Cotter, *Inscape. The Christology of Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Henry M. Snyder Co. Inc., London 1972, p. 217.

Darkness has proved stronger than light, blocking not only the presence of the Divine (significantly, God is not even mentioned or alluded to), but also the sight of heaven, effectively barred by the image of the hellish “rack” closing the poem. Hence, despite the choice between black and white, man, like Hopkins’s speaker, can but descend into the night, and, following the oracle head towards destruction. On the threshold of hell, he is shown what, doubtless, he will later recognize as his very personal experience: the torture of man separated from God as well as the horror of existence without love, mercy and grace.

Thus the pagan warning *Spelt from Sibil’s Leaves* can actually be treated as Hopkins’s veiled confession of his spiritual crisis and an anticipation, in his later life, of many other “terrible” encounters with darkness. And yet, when this night of the soul materialized, so pregnant with Hopkins’s ‘dark sonnets’, it neither crushed nor “ended” him. God-sent, it was to make him see and appreciate the Light, to be the test of faith whose victory, after the years of struggle, he celebrated in *That Nature*, a poem about reconciliation of God, man and nature.

Although the sonnet demonstrates a triumph of light, it also shows that destruction does not end with the return of day. After all, as the world’s wildfire¹¹ burns on, death, also through the principle of transformation and flux, is still depicted as the main lesson in nature. Built around the concepts of “undappling” and Resurrection, this lesson is preached by the philosopher-speaker exploring the symbol of fire. As the material manifestation of the ever-living energy of being, fire allows him to trace the cycle of perpetual flux — this ungraspable inscape of the universe. It is in the course of this continual transformation that all things become an exchange for fire and fire for all things¹². Concerned with this “constant interchange of energy”¹³, the *panta rei* enacted by the sunlight, wind, clouds, rain, and earth of the poem’s scene¹⁴, Hopkins looks for its deeper significance, discovering in the Resurrection of Christ the more satisfactory principle of universal transformation. Only Christ, perceived as inscape and instress of all change which is at the same time new creation, allows selfhood — regardless of the extent of “undappling” or merging life undergoes — to retain its specificity — fully exposed, fully preserved, and made even more valuable after the

¹¹ Loomis, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

¹² B. Russel, *History of Western Philosophy*, Unwin University Books, London 1961, p. 62.

¹³ J. Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God. Five Nineteenth-Century Writers*, the Bellknap Press of Harvard University, Cambridge (Mass.) 1975, p. 326.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

transformation has been completed. Only Christ's Resurrection offers a possibility of transformation which, despite its apparent destructiveness, brings about unification of all life; and which, despite occasional dark moments or night, opens the road for light: no longer the fire in which things are lost and disappear without trace, but the light that saves, that allows to see all creation at its most "dappled" glory.

Before this discovery takes place, however, together with a bystander traveller¹⁵ — the poem's speaker — we watch the beauty of the sky against which carefree clouds dance the dance of their own undoing.

Cloud-Puffball, torn tufts, tossed pillows flaunt forth, then
 chevy on air-
 built thoroughfare: heaven-roysterers, in gay-gangs they
 throng; they glitter in marches.
 Down roughcast, down dazzling whitewash, whatever an
 elm arches,
 Shivelights and shadowtackle in long lashes lace, lance, and
 pair.
 Delightfully the bright wind boisterous ropes, wrestles, beats
 earth bare
 Of yestertempests's creases; in pool and rutpeel parches
 Squandering ooze to squeezed dough, crust, dust; stanches,
 starches
 Squadroned masks and manmarks treadmire toil there
 Footfretted in it... [105]

Taking place in broad daylight, the ever-changing patterns of clouds mark the progress of this heavenly holocaust in which the merry travellers seem only too willing to participate. Some "flaunt forth", glittering as they march, but most of them, like schoolchildren thrilled with the chase against the wind, get carried away — to nothingness (or perhaps something elsiness?) — by their "gay-gang" competition in shape changing.

Tossed and driven across the sky, they are finally blown away. Below, their soft glitter is transformed into and thus reflected in the "dazzling whitewash" of the arching elm. However, in spite of the change of 'stage', located now somewhere between earth and heaven, nature's drama goes on, enacted by trees, shadows, and sunlight. Even words seem to contribute to this dance, parading proudly in such hyphenated "pairs" as "Cloud-Puffball", "Gay-gangs", "heaven-roysterers", or more intimately merged as "shivelights" or "shadowtackle". The meanings whirl, expand into new

¹⁵ J. F. Cotter, *Apocalyptic Imagery in Hopkins's 'That Nature Is A Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection'* [in:] *Victorian Poetry* (24/V/1986), p. 261.

possibilities and directions, losing in the process not only their old selves but also their semantic independence.

The closer the earth, the more violent the dancing partners become, and, consequently, more bent on destruction. The light, though as soft as lace, can easily pierce “earth bare”, whips it, and enslaves things which, brought together through “roping”, turn to dust so much faster. Smoothing earth’s ‘wrinkles’ of ruts and creases, wind and light collaborate in sucking up water, which must eventually result in driving man away from his kingdom. Already insignificant, traceable only through a myriad of bootprints to which his existence has been reduced, man becomes a victim of nature’s dance. Like the cloud scapes described before, “manmarks”, even those that have taken centuries to make, are effortlessly swept away, “disremembered”, and not by darkness (*Spelt*) but by the fiery energy of being¹⁶.

And yet, as if not aware of the significance of the spectacle he watches, the speaker expresses his delight with the frolics of the light and wind which, when stripped of their apparent innocence, emerge as methodical and efficient destroyers as darkness itself. Turned into a crucible of all life, the irony of its ‘recycling strategies’ best exemplified by the fate of man: this most precious “spark” of nature is simply “gone”, fast and swiftly, irrevocably lost in a million-fuellèd bonfire.

Million-fuellèd, nature’s bonfire burns on.
But quench her bonniest, dearest to her, her clearest-selved
spark
Man, how fast his firedint, his mark on mind, is gone!
Both are in an unfathomable, all is an enormous dark
Drowned. O pity and indignation! Manshape, that shone
Sheer off, disseveral, a star, death blots black out; nor mark
Is any of him at all so stark
But vastness blurs and time beats level. [105]

Unlike nature, man does not go through the cycle of seasonal rebirth. Hence, even though both he and his existence are defined in terms of light — “clearest spark” and “firedint” — in the end man gets drowned “in an enormous dark”. Surrounded by this Heraclitean bonfire, generous only in its destructiveness, man’s life suddenly presents itself as an endless process of dying. In the short space of five lines ascribed to the impact of flux on man, he dies many deaths, rendered ever so often by such ‘destructive’ signifiers as “quench”, “firedint”, “gone”, “drowned”, or else “death blots black out”, and “severed”. The horror of such fate, undone so completely that no memory — no “manmark” nor even a single footprint — remains,

¹⁶ J. Hillis Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

makes the speaker become aware of how brutal this 'religion' of change is and how bleak the life which cannot hope to be saved in its uniqueness and fullness.

Recognizing that the "world's wildfire" is but a different form of darkness, the poet finally turns away from the cult of death with which he has been so impressed. And then, in an almost mystical experience, Hopkins finds that which has, for so long, been absent from all his dark and many other sonnets, the sense of peace, of joy, and of certainty that all the beauty and selfhood he has watched being "undappled" will again be restored through the Resurrection of Christ: God of life, of light and of reconciliation of all in all.

As in *Spelt* before, Hopkins looks at nature with the eyes of ancient men, yet his Christian experience, coloured by the sense of the loss of God's proximity, of God who is Love, makes him see their world as mechanical, destructive and limited only to the realm of the visible. This understanding of the shallowness of their 'natural flux' religion, which to a man in crisis, like himself, could offer only a chaos of a wildfire, makes the poet renounce his fascination with Heraclitus whose 'fiery' doctrine proved impotent to warm up a lonely, miserable human heart. The sudden recollection of Christian God, God loving to the end, restores the speaker's hope and instantly, the great promise of the Resurrection makes its comfort felt through the triumphant vision of man transformed into "immortal diamond".

Enough! the Resur-
 rection,
 A heart's clarion! Away grief's gasping, joyless days, de-
 jection.

Across my foundering deck shone
 A beacon, an eternal beam. Flesh fade, and mortal trash
 Fall to residuary worm; world's wildfire, leave but ash:

In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
 I am all at once what Christ is, since he was what I am, and
 This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood, immortal diamond,
 Is immortal diamond. [105-6]

In Christ, in this new universe of hope which the speaker discovers through the thought of the Resurrection, transformation becomes a condition of development towards a better and fuller existence. Such, at least, is the kind of life granted to the poem's speaker whom this indirect encounter with risen Christ saves from drowning in the flux.

His crisis ended, he undergoes a metamorphosis from a partly dissolved, depersonalized self into one that can still preserve its identity and independence. As never before in the poem, he becomes capable of speaking in the

voice he finally learns to hear and accept as his own. Consequently, not having to reduce his presence to mere implication, he can now almost boast of the straightforward and direct “I”, the pillar of his newly gained personality. Even his heart becomes more alive, again creative, producing the clarion music of joy, a sign that he has managed to escape dissolution and dejection. Before, distanced from the reality he depicted, he could merely reflect, now his spontaneous reactions are back, allowing for greater emotional honesty in his assessment of the situation. Last, but not least, no longer an insignificant part of nature, passively waiting to be absorbed by it, he begins to monopolize the scene, and finally aware of his precious uniqueness, comes up with a new, Resurrection-based definition of man as “immortal diamond”.

Transformed into light and thus finding the root of his true origin, man, previously perceived as exclusively nature’s spark, now rediscovers his divine (“I am... what Christ is”) status. The eternal beam he sees shining across his foundering deck is the “lifebelt of God’s will”, allowing man to transcend his own brokenness and mortality. Reaching deep down, into the most “trashy” recesses of man’s selfhood, the flame of Christ’s preserving light consumes the ugly, contemptible, and worthless shards of the human clay, producing a unique design of indestructible beauty. The many disconnected, substance-lacking particles become one, solidified into the hardness of a diamond stone which stands in perfect opposition to what they used to represent. Hence, both “patch” and “matchwood”, even “joke” and “potsherd” reveal their hidden importance: no longer anybody’s laughingstock, they are transformed into a unique crystal, a highly desirable, precious and, most importantly, imperishable gem whose light reflects that of the beacon.

Inherent in all creation, man and nature alike, the rare treasure of divine presence is hardly traceable from under the trash that covers and hides the gem, or changes it beyond recognition. However, when reached by God’s light, the eternal beam, this dormant, almost extinguished spark — the remnant of the bond of light — explodes into and with new life. Thus, with its beginning and end in Christ, the spiritual flame no longer threatens to destroy life; to the contrary, activating the deepest energies of fire and liberating light from its trashy abode, the Resurrection — both metaphorically and literally — allows the diamond to emerge and shine with its full glory.

Embracing even the Heraclitean flux, which thus acquires transcendental dimension, Christ’s ultimate transformation saves millions of human as well as natural scapes, no longer endangered by extinction in the holocaust of fire. An emblem of this covenant is a dazzling diamond, crystal fashioned from

clay and ash, the gem of the alchemy of love which, so much more powerful than death, triumphs over darkness. The Resurrection has demonstrated its power to create a spiritual reality in which the divine, the human and the natural meet as light: transformed, yet at the same time transforming, another eternal beacon waits for its turn to be seen and to shine; a blessing, for those who struggle not to get drowned in the sea of life without hope.

Thus comforted, also by the music of his heart, the man manages to tear himself away from the spell of dejection, and determined to follow the call of the clarion, he turns towards the light. The diamond he rediscovers in himself, and becomes in the process, restores the long-lost sense of Christ's closeness, confirming the indissolubility of the Covenant between God and man. Despite the many tests of darkness (*Spelt*) and fire (*That Nature*) the alliance still holds, resisting the wavering of human faith, desolation and despair, immune even to the night of the soul, which is itself redeemed by the "eternal beacon".

As an externalization as well as projection of Hopkins's spiritual crisis, darkness in *Spelt* "undapples" his clarity of vision indispensable to a proper assessment of his relationship with God. Yet, even in the apocalyptic vision this brings about, the poet is never enveloped by complete darkness. After all, he can still see the few rays of the setting sun and then watch the emergence of a multitude of stars. All this light, symbolic of the disintegration of the world (stars become "less", too), is an oppressive presence, indicative of the existence of a force more powerful than God who, overruled by the pagan oracle is made to disappear, "disremembered", and thus eliminated from the consciousness of the speaker — the last man, perhaps the modern St. John, watching the end of creation.

This 'godlessness' of the surrounding world continues in the broad daylight of *That Nature*, where though "unfathomable" and "enormous", darkness may be seen as an attractive, if not a welcome aftermath of the bonfire, the bonfire which, paradoxically, leads to man's drowning in the dark. Once more, as in *Spelt*, the spiritual night triumphs, demonstrating — and for a good many lines at that — how powerful it is and how capable of "undappling" and "ending" not only man, but even fire.

However, this fire-bound force of doom is in itself "undone" by light of the Resurrection, the "flash" which, despite its destructive potential, is primarily concerned with saving and preserving life. Having stormed its way into the perception of the poet, the light of life reorganizes the whole world, investing it with a new, spiritual dimension. This blessed interference not only liberates man from the tyranny of the god of change known for its cruelty, but simultaneously, offers man hope of eternal life. Such is the secret

of the explosive, transforming power of the Resurrection, forever binding the insignificance of man — this most “clearest-selved” of nature’s sparks — to the multi-faceted structure of the diamond, the symbol of purity and power, of beauty and permanence.

As the speaker, directly approached by Christ’s beacon, can finally see it, the eternal beam — also of the Cross — rescues him from the foundering deck so that he could be reborn. Only when eventually turned into diamond can man recognize the preciousness of the gem, the symbol of unity in multiplicity, the very “dapple” of creation no longer threatened with the fear of death, either by darkness or by fire. Only then, experiencing the sense of oneness with Christ, can man divine the eternal harmony of specificities, the harmony he could not have even known would exist had he not been rescued from the vortex of the night.

In this sense *That Nature* which ends the poetic rendering of Hopkins’s crisis is truly a triumph of light, revealing besides Christ’s beacon, the resurrected self of creation. Darkness recedes, “done”, the very moment the “flash” shoots through the soul of the despairing man. The man, who, instantly reborn, can rise from the ashes of his withered faith, can follow, and finally turn into, Light.

STRESZCZENIE

Głęboko religijna poezja G. M. Hopkinsa (1844–1889) jest odbiciem duchowej drogi poety, który u jej początków raduje się bliskością Boga, ale w miarę upływu czasu traci poczucie obecności Stwórcy, odnajdując je dopiero na rok przed śmiercią. Eksponując niezwykle istotną w twórczości Hopkinsa dychotomię światła i ciemności, autorka bada znaczenie tej opozycji w dwóch sonetach dublińskich, z których *Spelt* (1885) stanowi wprowadzenie w historię kryzysu wiary, zaś *That Nature* (1888) dokumentuje moment jej odzyskania. Pierwszy z nich przedstawia apokaliptyczny obraz świata zapadającego w ciemność swej ostatniej nocy. Jest ona metaforą duchowej ciemności poety, ciemności prowadzącej do unicestwienia życia, i skazującej człowieka na wieczne potępienie. Rzutkiem dlań może być jedynie światło zmartwychwstania, które pojawiając się w *That Nature* nie tylko rozprasza ciemność, ale demaskuje też światło złe — “wildfire”, heraklijski ogień niszczenia. Poprzez to Światło Bożej łaski dokonuje się duchowa transformacja człowieka i uświęcenie wszelkiego życia, które Chrystusowa ofiara przemienia w “światliasty dyament, wiekuistego zwycięstwa zaranie”. Ten naczelny także i dla Hopkinsa symbol staje się nowym znakiem przymierza człowieka z Bogiem: “nieśmiertelny diament”, który zamyka w sobie ciemność węgla i niszczącą moc ognia zmienia wszystko to, co niskie, marne i złe w to, co najwartościowsze, najcenniejsze i najpiękniejsze.