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## Sensory imagery and aesthetic affect in the poetry of Keats, Hopkins, and Eliot

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SENSORY IMAGERY AND AESTHETIC AFFECT IN THE POETRY OF  
KEATS, HOPKINS, AND ELIOT

by

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Bachelor of Arts  
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ABSTRACT

**Sensory Imagery and Aesthetic Affect in the Poetry of  
Keats, Hopkins, and Eliot**

by

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This dissertation focuses on applying a new method of analysis to selected works by three major poets, John Keats, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and T. S. Eliot. The project considers their work in light of recent scholarship by Charles Altieri on the affects, such as emotion, feelings, passion, and mood; how these affects operate in artistic works; and, specifically, examines how these authors employ the affects in their poetry to express their own emotions and, in the creation of lyric poems, turn these emotions into works of art. In addition, the project strengthens the aesthetic readings with a study of the ways in which these poets employ sensory images to achieve a desired affect. Through sensory imagery, the poet avoids direct representation of affect in his poetry, thus making the work subtler and nuances. By merging a reading for affects with a reading for sensory imagery and sensations, I am able to describe the dominant affective modes of example poems, and to elucidate the poetic language of the senses achieves that affect.

The introduction presents the concepts of the various affects, as explained by literary critic, Charles Altieri. It argues that this framework of the affects can be valuable in poetic analysis, and is expandable to include other affects, and subcategories of the affects, as close reading of the poetry identifies new emotional vistas. I begin with the poetry and critical writing (mainly letters) of John Keats, whose philosophy of poetry was

a harbinger of later writers including Eliot. Like Keats, Eliot will accentuate the detachment of the poet, and the difference between feelings and emotions. Like Keats, Hopkins will express a type of detachment – his, slightly different, as it is a separation from the worldly and an escape to the supernatural. Like Hopkins, Eliot will present poetry that is deeply religious, but will add an element of political comment not present in the earlier writers. By selecting poets from the three major literary periods of the long nineteenth century, I provide ample spectrum for the demonstration of my method.

Chapters on Gerard Manley Hopkins and T. S. Eliot follow the chapter on Keats, and in them I apply the methodology of sensory imagery and affect to poets of differing backgrounds. Each chapter will include a philosophical analysis followed by close reading of selected works. In Keats, I will locate a tension between the key concepts of fancy and imagination, remarking on Keats’s separation from the wisdom of his contemporary, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, on these interpretations of the two major processes of poetic creativity. The Keats works analyzed include “Sleep and Poetry,” *Endymion*, and “Ode to a Nightingale.” In explicating the works of Gerard Manley Hopkins, I will establish how his conversion to Catholicism, and subsequent ordination as a Jesuit, affected his poetic style, in turn creating for him a new affective space, which I call religious fervor. The Hopkins poetry analyzed includes “God’s Grandeur,” “The Windhover,” and “Spelt from Sibyl’s Leaves.” I will argue that, even in the so-called “desolate sonnets” of 1885, Hopkins remained a poet of religious fervor, not doubt. Reference will be made to J. Hillis Miller’s synoptic survey of the place of religion in nineteenth century artistic works, *The Disappearance of God*. The poetry of T. S. Eliot will be analyzed in an in-depth consideration of the very late poem, “Little Gidding,” the

final of the *Four Quartets*. The dominant affect of that poem, composed during the Second World War, is mood, the least subjective and the most passive of the affects, as adumbrated by Altieri. The passivity of “Little Gidding” is the key to understanding the affective plight of noncombatants in World War II; it is also the key to the poem’s success.

In all of the chapters, attention will be given to the use of sensory imagery. This work began as an interest in synaesthesia, especially in the work of Keats, but has been expanded to include the perspective of recent scholarship by Susan Stewart (*Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*), and Rei Terada (*Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the “Death of the Subject”*). The interaction between the way sensory perception is presented and the affective stance of the poetry varies from poet to poet. Keats, for example, often uses a negation of the senses to establish emotional distance, yet stresses the intensity of natural and artistic feelings. Hopkins, reflecting the religious practice of the Jesuits set forth by St. Ignatius Loyola, often sacrifices the senses as worldly and seeks a loftier supernatural affective stance in “The Habit of Perfection,” in which each of the senses is subjugated to only spiritual, not sensory, input. Eliot, while seemingly focused on a specific place (Little Gidding, a historical religious enclave from the seventeenth century), and time (World War II), employs vague images which give the poem a moodlike affect, one easily relevant to other places and other times. Eliot’s emphasis of the helplessness of the plight of England in World War II adds a political perspective to an otherwise deeply reflective and philosophical poem.

My conclusion highlights the ways in which these poets each construct a complex of thoughts and affects to successfully express truths that were relevant at the time of

writing, and add to the historical writing available to the next generation. Their successful employment of sensory imagery makes their work suitable for analysis via the aesthetics of the affects. Reading for sensory imagery and sensation combined with reading for the affects is a powerful new way of interpreting poetry, and one which should prove helpful in explication poetry of other poets and other eras as well.

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## INTRODUCTION

In this study of three major English poets, I will analyze their exploitation of affective modes and sensory imagery to evoke a certain response in readers. Affective imagery is that category of artistic effort which expresses emotions, feelings, moods, and passions. There are subcategories of affects, too, such as anxiety (a type of mood), and fear (a type of passion or feeling, depending on specific elements). The expression of affects in art relies on the coherence of the artist's experience with those of his audience. Sensory imagery and the description of sensations are used to make the affective statement or representation relevant to viewers and readers dislocated in time and space.

The three poets I have chosen to study are John Keats, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and T. S. Eliot. I chose these three poets because they are iconic representatives of the Romantic, Victorian, and Modern periods, respectively. Their work seems to span the spectrum of imagery from lushness to scientific precision to intellectual abstraction. They were chosen for this study because their poetic methods, all revolutionary in a way, illustrate a spectrum of how poets exploit sense and sensation to achieve affective results. Keats is important also for his elevation of the fancy through lush descriptions of nature which are more expressions of sensation than of basic sensory perceptions. Hopkins is interesting for his innovative word choice and surprising juxtapositions to express deep religious convictions as well as anxiety about death. Eliot is significant for his level of removal from overt sensory images by the use of echoes, reflections, and ghosts.

These poets vary greatly biographically. In his lifetime, Keats was described as a "cockney poet" by *Blackwoods*, and his fame was only achieved after his death. Hopkins who described himself as "time's eunuch," was unhappy and unrealized in his poetic

endeavors, and the first volume of his poetry appeared thirty years after his death. Eliot is an exception, having considerable recognition in his lifetime, including the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1948. Counter this, Eliot was apparently the most psychologically traumatized by his times, suffering several nervous breakdowns (see Lyndall Gordon 170; 172; 185; and Carole Seymour Jones 149; 286-88; 296-99; 417-18). Yet, for all these apparent differences, all three shared a concern with spirituality in the broadest sense: Keats with nature and mythology, Hopkins with the Holy Trinity seen through the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, and Eliot through an Anglo-Catholicism which embraces traditional beliefs which sometimes seem to contradict the poet's individual talent.

I will avail myself of clues in the biographies of these poets as to what they were reading prior to or at the time of composition. Often, the biographies provide a potential, rather than definitive, reading list. In unusual cases, very specific knowledge is available, as in the case of Keats's assigned reading for, and reproduced notebook from, his surgical training at Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospitals (1815-16). In the notebook, Keats refers to the simplified model of sensory perception then held.<sup>1</sup> Hopkins, in his highly contemplative journal, makes frequent observations about the perception of images and their likely scientific basis.<sup>2</sup> More importantly, Hopkins reflects on the nature of man's interaction with the rest of the world, identifying affective will as distinct from elective will. In "God's Grandeur," nature "wears man's smudge," in an early environmental

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<sup>1</sup> He notes, from Lecture 10, "Physiology of the nervous system," that "The first office is that of sensation – it is an impression made on the extremities of the nerves conveyed to the brain" (*Notebook* 55). Note the similarity between Keats's use of "sensation" and what we would currently call sensory response to external stimuli.

<sup>2</sup> In considering bubbles, for example, Hopkins muses over his "Lenten chocolate": "It seems as if the heat by *aestus*, throes/ one after another threw films of vapour off as boiling water throws off steam under films of water, that is bubbles" (*Journals* 203-04).

insight. Eliot's criticism, and even his dissertation on F. H. Bradley, will be mined for likely background attitudes relative to sensory perception.

I will analyze selected works of Keats, Hopkins, and Eliot, concentrating on how they use sensory images to illustrate affects, such as mood, emotion, passion, and feelings (as described by Charles Altieri, in *The Particulars of Rapture: An Aesthetics of the Affects* (2003) and expanded here to include religious fervor, the dominant affect I see in Hopkins's poetry. Altieri expresses his dissatisfaction with earlier critical methods which seem "to overread for 'meaning' while underreading for the specific modes specific modes of affective engagement presented by works of art" (*The Particulars of Rapture: An Aesthetics of the Affects* (hereafter *Particulars*) 2). To aid in the reading of poetry for affects, Altieri establishes a taxonomy of the four basic affects: emotions, passions, moods, and feelings. The various deployments of the various affective modes comprise new ways of analyzing poetry for its power to evoke strong reactions in readers, who may be distant in time, space, and culture from the poet. Analyzing art for "affective engagement," in Altieri's words provides a "context by engaging philosophical discourses on the nature and significance of various affective dimensions of experience" (*Particulars* 2).

In addition to the classifications adumbrated by Altieri, I will reinforce my readings of the poets with individual struggles which they were dealing with at the time of writing. For example, I illustrate how the rather humanistic use of fancy, with its implications for sensations, over the religiously-inspired "imagination" has made Keats's work, especially the later fancy-laden poems, more influential for later writers, and more adaptable to the poetics of Modernism than Samuel Taylor Coleridge's high-church "imagination."

Keats, while trained as a surgeon, is a poet of rich descriptions of nature coupled with esteem for the fancy, a concept he elevated from the established definition presented by Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria*. While Coleridge had set up a hierarchy in which fancy was merely displaced memory, and imagination was an imitation of the Creation, Keats develops his own poetic style, changing over a relatively brief period from the Coleridgian hierarchy to an inversion of it, in which fancy allows poetry entry into the deepest of human sensations – and thought.

Hopkins, trained as a classicist and later as a theologian, describes the natural world in painstaking, often scientific, detail, especially in his journals; and, he elaborates the apparent specificity of science with a new metrical device (sprung rhythm), new word coinages and combinations (“shivelights and shadowtackle,” “the fell of dark,” “thy wring-world right foot rock”), and a new dimension of affect, religious fervor, which goes beyond the devotional verse of early religious poets like George Herbert.

Eliot, trained as a philosopher, describes modern man’s situation in an overly sophisticated, yet cruel, world. In the poem, “Little Gidding,” Eliot deals with these modern phenomena in a concentrated form as a poet writing during the Second World War. He provides templates for reading his poetry in his numerous critical essays.

These poets seem to me to express the way signals received through the five senses (sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste) impact the mind, memory, and consciousness. They also exploit the familiarity of sensory perception in their work, thus tapping a deeper, universal source of human affects. In their observation and description of sensory images, they use terminology and style in such a way as to awaken or reanimate similar perceptive experiences in their readers.

Due to the poets' shared facility with expressing emotion and mood via sensory images, I will sometimes consider current philosophical understanding of sensory perception, to help me compare the three poets and to frame my analysis in a context that is valid today. My sources for this work are numerous, including the early background in sensory perception and sensation by John Locke (in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1666)), Thomas Reid (*An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764)), Giambattista Vico (*On the Study Methods of our Time* (1708-09)), and texts which provided me with a history of the understanding of each of the five senses.<sup>3</sup> In addition, numerous more recent studies have established a background for the consideration of the role of the sciences, the philosophy of sensory perception, and related subjects in the interpretation of poetry.<sup>4</sup>

Perception is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "the process of becoming aware of physical objects, phenomena, etc., through the senses" (hereafter *OED*). Sensation is often defined (P. M. S. Hacker; *OED*) as "a physical 'feeling' considered apart from the resulting 'perception' of an object." Thus, an itch, a tickle or a pain are sensations, and seeing colors, hearing sounds, and smelling odors are perceptions. Since Descartes, colors, sounds, tastes, smells, and tactile experiences are considered secondary

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<sup>3</sup> Wade, Nicholas J. *A Natural History of Vision*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998; *E. H. Weber on the Tactile Senses (1834)*. Ed. and Trans. Helen E. Ross and David J. Murray. East Sussex, UK: Erlbaum (UK) Taylor & Francis, 1996; Classen, Constance, David Howes, and Anthony Synnott. *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*. London: Routledge, 1994; *Cultures of Taste/ Theories of Appetite: Eating Romanticism*. Ed. Timothy Morton. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004. Tsur, Reuven. *What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive: The Poetic Mode of Speech Perception*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1992. Ackerman, Diane. *Natural History of the Senses*. New York: Random House, 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Examples include, but are not limited to, Hermione de Almeida's *Romantic Medicine and John Keats*, Gillian Beer's *Open Fields: Science in Cultural Encounter*, Noel Jackson's *Science and Sensation in Romantic Poetry*, Thomas Zaniello's "The Spectacular English Sunsets of the 1880s," and Marie Banfield's "Darwinism, Doxology, and Energy Physics: The New Sciences, the Poetry and Poetics of Gerard Manley Hopkins."

qualities; shape, size and movement are considered primary.<sup>5</sup> Sensation is the function of the sense organs (and more particularly, of internal sensations of pain, itch, etc. which have no public criteria), and awareness of stimuli through the senses; perception is the faculty of apprehending by means of the senses and the mind. A confusion in the terminology surrounding sensations and perceptions began early in the philosophical speculations about them. Thomas Reid, writing at the end of the eighteenth century, considered that “a sensation, a smell for instance, may be presented to the mind in three different ways: it may be smelled, it may be remembered, it may be imagined” (Reid 27). More accurately, however, memories and imaginations are conscious acts which, unlike smelling, do not rely on a sense organ for input. In my dissertation, I will use the expression “sensory perception” to refer to the awareness of a secondary quality processed through the sense organ and interpreted in the mind. I will consider fancy to be a passive inspiration which draws on remembered sensory experiences (or, in Coleridge’s terms, “memory emancipated from the order of time and space,” *Major Works* 313) whereas imagination will be considered an active and intellectual pursuit of mimicked sensory experience or sensation (or, as Coleridge states, “It [imagination] dissolves, diffuses dissipates, in order to re-create” (313). Affect will be used here, as in Altieri’s work, to describe the emotions generally, and specifically to note the relationship between the senses, the conscious mind, and the depths and kinds of feeling. All other uses of similar terminology will be clearly introduced later in this dissertation.

The nineteenth century witnessed an evolution in scientific understanding of how the senses worked physically, physiologically, and psychologically. I will align my

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<sup>5</sup> The distinction is supported by Descartes in three ways: primary qualities can be detected by more than one sense, they can be distinctly imagined by us, and quantifiable entities are somehow superior to sensory perceptions.

argument with that of Susan Stewart's in *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (2002), in respect to emphasizing "common human experiences of the senses" as used by the three poets in the study, though my argument will extend to uncommon experiences, as well (such as, poetical, artistic, and religious inspiration). Stewart, for example, says of the senses that "through them, we engage in an epistemology of process that is specific to parts of the body and yet evidently endlessly synaesthetic and generalizable" (18).<sup>6</sup> In her discussion of the senses' role in art, she notes that "they are of great significance in the history of art ... because of their role in the creation of intersubjective experience and meaning" (3). I will continue to explore and build on Charles Altieri's model of the four affects, arguing that the subject poets are particularly adept at eliciting affects through sensory imagery.

According to the *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, "In literary usage, imagery refers to images produced in the mind by language, whose words may refer either to experiences which could produce physical perceptions were the reader actually to have those experiences, or to the sense-impressions themselves" (hereafter *Princeton Encyclopedia*, 560). I will focus on the sense impressions themselves, as used by the subject poets, to express and evoke affects. In interpreting the poetry of Keats, Hopkins, and Eliot, I will suggest that they use poetic imagery to share real or imagined experiences of sensory perception, specifically of images directly or indirectly related to

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<sup>6</sup> The use of synaesthesia as a poetic metaphor will be examined in their selected works, especially in those of Keats. Synaesthesia, the merging or confusion of two or more senses, is particularly interesting in observing how descriptions of sensory perceptions can work to achieve an affect. In one way, because synaesthesia is unnatural to most of us, it works to confuse and dilute an affect. For example, if one describes a flower as "loud," a synaesthetic effect occurs. The reader or listener has not "heard" flowers and is more accustomed to them being described in terms of smell or sight. On the other hand, the unexpected description, outside the usual register of the senses, alerts the reader that perhaps a more complex affect is represented. Maybe, by attributing loudness to the flower, the poet snaps the reader out of clichés of flower imagery into a new identification of flowers, one constructed in the imagination.



the five senses, or to sensations. I will investigate the likely philosophical beliefs which seem to influence the value they place on the senses. On the one hand, I note the differences between their works; on the other, I note the surprising similarity rather than the difference in the works of these poets whose work spans more than a century. I now see them all as writers whose sensitive use of imagery leads to their continued resonance with multiple and diverse readers. Keats values fancy over imagination, especially in his later work. Hopkins's deep religious faith and even deeper religious anxiety influences his experimental rhythms and sounds. Eliot oscillates between tradition (Anglo-Catholicism) and his own talent. I will provide examples which accentuate the similarity of approach between the three poets.

Each of the three poets will be considered in a separate chapter and selected poems will be interpreted in light of sensory perception, either literally stated or figuratively implied. In addition, instances of synaesthesia and anesthesia will be noted in the poetry. I will focus on three major works by Keats: "Sleep and Poetry" (1817), *Endymion* (1818), and "Ode to a Nightingale" (1819), as well as his letters; Hopkins's "God's Grandeur" (1877) "The Windhover" (1877), "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" (1884-86), his journal, letters, and sermons; and Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1936-42) especially the final poem in that series, "Little Gidding" (1942), and his criticism. I will refer to the poets' biographies and to historical contexts when those sources of information assist in explicating the poetry. The concluding chapter will provide a comparison between the subject poets to reinforce the thesis that each of the three, guided by a different philosophy, exploited sensory images and sensations similarly, to express and evoke different affective modes in their work.

Considerable critical attention has been given to the way in which poets use sensory language, and even the language of sensation itself. Susan Stewart explores the relation and hierarchy of the senses, as well as each sense in particular, from historical, philosophical, and psychological perspectives. Charles Altieri considers how poetry engages the four affects, defined by him as feelings, moods, emotions, and passions (in *Particulars*). When the poet “presents” a sensory perception in a poem, is it with a consciousness that this image will elicit a specific response, or is it rather with a need to express an affective state in the poet? Are these necessarily different things? How does poetry cause us to have feelings, moods, etc., and how are those emotion-provokers described in the language of the senses? In his article, “Strange Affinities: A Partial Return to Wordsworthian Poetics after Modernism,” Altieri continues the investigation with the analysis of three poetic works (by Matthew Arnold, William Carlos Williams, and a joint work by Lyn Hejinian and Leslie Scalapino), illustrating how “Wordsworth’s egotistical sublime,” has echoed through the work of otherwise dissimilar poets through two centuries. Altieri states that “The crucial fact is not what the poets thought but how their thinking made possible certain ways that language could be charged with affective intensity” (“Strange Affinities” 2).

I intend to analyze these poets by following how that affective charge resulted in the use of images of sensory perception and sensations, their innovations as well as their reliance on tradition. Structurally, the Altieri taxonomy of the affects will be useful, applied here with a focus on three poets from different periods, and studying the similarities and differences in their use of sensory imagery to express and evoke an affect. According to Altieri, precedence should be given Wordsworth, both as the father

of the egotistical sublime, and as an influence on his contemporaries and post-modern followers. “Wordsworth,” says Altieri, “can directly speak to contemporary imaginations because he so tightly weaves the ego into elaborate textures of sensation, then treats language as itself so affectively charged that it simply continues sensation by other means” (“Strange Affinities” 5). This affectively charged language will be noted in the close readings which follow. Altieri continues, “Wordsworth also made it possible to imagine at the other end of the ego, in effect, how poetry might move beyond the individual subject to the direct modeling of interpersonal subjective states” (“Strange Affinities” 5). Just as Wordsworth is foundational to the poetics of ego, Keats, I will argue, is fundamental to the poetics of fancy. I will argue that Keats is distinct from the first-generation Romantics in his valuation of fancy over imagination.

Susan Stewart notes that “In Vico’s thought, poetry serves human ends in the expression of the corporeal senses, in the imaginative reconfiguration of nature through such devices as onomatopoeia, personification, and other modes of projection” (14). The concept of “projection” is of interest in the aesthetics of the affects. According to Altieri, affect theory is preferable to “response theories” in that it allows one to “focus on the links works of art make articulate between how representative agents are moved and how that being moved positions consciousness to make ... observations and investments” (*Particulars* 26). This projecting of the sensory impressions from artist to observer (himself a natural entity) is instrumental in allowing the artist to achieve an aesthetic goal. Both Stewart and Altieri provide a theoretical basis for what seems to be a natural reading of poetry – one founded on the physical (sensory) and psychological (affective). This powerful conjunction differentiates my readings, which move beyond the New

Criticism and Reader-Response theory, for example. The New Critics of mid-twentieth-century United States argued that poems should not be considered as historical works, and that their interpretation should not be concerned with the “intentions and circumstances of their authors” (Culler, *Literary Theory* 122). My readings allow me to consider the historical and biographical facts as well as to speculate about authorial intention, especially as that intention results in affects which are fundamental to the poem itself. Reader-Response theory, a form of phenomenology, argues that “For the reader [. . .] the work is not something objective [. . .] but is the experience of the reader” (Culler *Literary Theory* 123). Reader-Response theorists would expect the reader to sense what was most relevant to him. In my combined reading of sensory imagery and affective mode, I will consider the poet’s biography and historical period to be relevant in his choice of words as well as his affective position. For example, to disregard the fact that “Little Gidding” is a poem of the Second World War would be to miss the clear references to German bombers. To dismiss Eliot’s biography would be to miss the personal references to his work as an air raid warden. I believe that these sources of information do not cloud our vision as we interpret the poem, but rather clarify it.

Vico notes that bodily impulses, especially the senses, inspire the imagination to assign human motives and feelings to nature (what the New Critics would later label “pathetic fallacy”), and this process will eventually result in a division between science and poetry, as well as between modern writers and their early predecessors. According to Stewart, “Vico explains that the imagination stems from the bodily or ‘corporeal’ senses and is moved to represent itself by anthropomorphizing nature and by giving being to inanimate things. [. . .], and as the coordination of various modes of temporal experience

necessarily *preceding* any narrative forms” (14). In his own introduction to his *The New Science* Vico states: “The principle of these origins both of languages and of letters lies in the fact that the early gentile peoples, by a demonstrated necessity of nature, were poets who spoke in poetic characters”(quoted in Stewart 14).<sup>7</sup> According to Stewart, for Vico, “the speaking subject as the recipient of the recognition of others is not prior to language: language is the forum within which such a speaking subject emerges. Only when poetic metaphors make available to others the experience of the corporeal senses can the corporeal senses truly appear as integral experiences” (in Stewart 14-15). With Altieri and Stewart, it is possible to move beyond that rather simple paradigm established by Vico.

#### Demonstration of Reading for Affect

To illustrate how close-reading poetry for the affects is accomplished and how I draw upon my theoretical sources to do so, I chose three short works, one by each of the subject poets. John Keats wrote the little-discussed sonnet, “Oh Chatterton! How very sad thy fate” in 1815, at the age of nineteen. It is produced here as it appears in *The Poems of John Keats* (ed. Jack Stillinger; hereafter *Poems*, 32).

Oh Chatterton! How very sad thy fate!  
Dear child of sorrow! Son of misery!  
How soon the film of death obscur'd that eye,  
Whence genius wildly flash'd, and high debate!  
How soon that voice, majestic and elate,

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<sup>7</sup> Note that this speaking “in poetic characters” is what T. S. Eliot will define centuries later as the third voice of poetry in his essay, “The Three Voices of Poetry” (1953) (In *On Poetry and Poets* 96-112).

Melted in dying murmurs! O how nigh  
Was night to thy fair morning! Thou didst die  
A half-blown flower, which cold blasts amate.\*  
But this is past. Thou art among the stars  
Of highest heaven; to the rolling spheres  
Thou sweetly singest—nought thy hymning mars  
Above the ingrate world and human fears.  
On earth the good man base detraction bars  
From thy fair name, and waters it with tears!

\* Affright—Spenser (note in Keats’s publication)

Altieri notes the active role of the subject in three of the four affects: passion, emotion, and feelings. Only mood is passive. If exclamation points express highly attenuated emotions and an active response, their preponderance here may be significant of one of the more active affects. Though occasionally exclamation points suggest the use of apostrophe (as in “Oh Chatterton!”), other times in this poem they are expressive of highly-felt sympathies. When momentary sensations are elicited, the affective mode is likely to be feeling. When the response is produced by a specific memory or situation, the affective mode is emotion, for it “provides a means of presenting one’s situation and establishing values in relation to future actions” (*Particulars 2*). When the affective mode is very absorbing and becomes “a primary aspect of one’s identity,” it is a passion. (*Particulars 2*).

Sensation is the mark of feelings, the affect “characterized by an imaginative engagement in the immediate process of sensation” (Altieri *Particulars* 2). Sensations are those bodily responses indirectly associated with sensory perception, and directly associated with physiological response. They include frissons, itches, quivers, chills, etc. This poem has only one passage in which I detect a sensation: “genius wildly flash’d.” Genius wildly flashing reminds one of the cliché “brain-storm,” which links a physical sensation with an imaginative result. That sensation-like term, “flash’d,” is mitigated in its strength however by the past tense. It is one thing to experience a wild flash, and another to recall it; recalled, it loses the required immediacy stated as a criterion by Altieri. The flash is further removed from the realm of sensation, as it belonged to a person now dead, not to the speaking poet, whom I will assume to be Keats. Thus, having ruled out mood and feelings as the dominant affects of the poem, I will consider the remaining two: emotions and passions.

At this stage, it is good to bring in other sources of insight into the poem. I note the prophecy of lines Shelley would later use in *Adonais*:<sup>8</sup> “Thou are among the stars” of line 9 becomes “The soul of Adonais, like a star, / Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are,” the last two lines of Shelley’s elegy to Keats. “The good man base detraction bars” of line 13 appears refashioned as “All stood aloof, and at his partial

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<sup>8</sup> See Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Adonais* (in *Romanticism: An Anthology*. Ed. Duncan Wu. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998, 956-73). Note that the “ingrate world” of Chatterton lore becomes the critics who killed Keats in Keats lore. The similarity of “Oh Chatterton” to *Adonais* is remarkable, especially because the former was not published in Keats’s or Shelley’s lifetime. The Romantic tendency to see a vague afterlife in celestial space can be seen in *Adonais*, for example, where “The One remains, the many change and pass; / Heaven’s light forever shines, Earth’s shadows fly” (460-61). Instances can also be found in John Clare’s “A Vision” (*Romanticism: An Anthology* 986-87). In Keats’s poem, the tendency to see a heavenly afterlife is expressed in the sestet as “among the stars,” “rolling spheres,” and “above the ingrate world.” The affect thus moves beyond earthly sympathetic identification to a kind of wishful belief in surpassing the contempt met with in this life.

moan / Smiled through their tears; well knew that gentle band / Who in another's fate now wept his own" (298-300). As curious as this prophecy is, it serves mainly to suggest two vantage points in the poem of interest: that of the sympathetic writer, and the imagined "emotions" of the dead Chatterton. I believe this to be a poem of emotion and passion in the Altieri sense. From the perspective of the speaker (Keats), it is a poem of emotion, in which it "stage[s] the sadness as produced by a particular memory or situation." From the point of view of Chatterton-memorialized by Keats, however, it is a poem of passion, in which the situation described is "a primary aspect of one's identity" (*Particulars* 2). Recall that Altieri posits affect theory as superior to "response theories" for precisely the reason that point of view is so crucial to understanding poetry. In Reader-Response theory, a critic would consider Chatterton's relevance to the current reader, side-stepping his relevance to Keats. This obviates the source of the affect in the poem, and I avoid this in reading for the affects. Chatterton is memorialized in a moment of passion, as a "child of sorrow," a "son of misery." In fact, his position is similar to the later figures on the Grecian urn, who themselves are dead to earthly joys, yet frozen in an ideal and immortal moment from the point of view of the poet. Chatterton's senses are divided along these lines: though the moment of death obscures his eye, and his voice is reduced to murmurs, he "sweetly singest" in the projected afterlife.

I note another prophetic use, this time within Keats's own works: "Thou sweetly singest" becomes "Singest of summer in full-throated ease" in "Ode to a Nightingale." Later, when I analyze "Nightingale," I will find it to be a poem of feelings. Yet, I suggest that as Keats matured, he moved from poetry of passion, highly characteristic of adolescence, to poetry of feelings, which affect is more closely aligned with his mature



dedication to fancy over imagination, and sensations over literal sensory experiences, as we shall see.

My next step is to assess word choice, noting their relevance to one or another of the affects. For example, in the octave, Keats stresses the mortal and tragic with words like “very sad,” “sorrow,” “misery,” “film of death,” “dying murmurs,” “how nigh / Was night,” “die,” and “cold blasts amate.” In the sestet, however, the tragedy “is past,” and the poet becomes immortal. That immortality is expressed in common enough terms of heavenly heights: “among the stars,” “highest heaven,” “rolling spheres,” and “Above the ingrate world.” Even when tragic terms appear, they are cancelled immediately prior to or after their usage: “nought ... mars,” “base detraction bars,” and “waters it with tears,” the last image eerily prophetic of Keats’s own desire that his tombstone carry the motto, “Here lies one whose name was writ in water.”

I would conclude that the young Keats, carried away by the glamour of young Chatterton’s death (Chatterton died at seventeen; Keats was nineteen when he wrote this sonnet), expressed his own emotion strongly in terms such as “dear child of sorrow,” in which his empathy with the dead poet is clearly seen.<sup>9</sup> The emotions “establish a particular cause and so situate the agent within a narrative and generate ... identification” (Altieri *Particulars* 2). In the poetic presentation of the emotions seen by Keats as most suitable or likely for the dead Chatterton himself, however, I believe the dominant affect to be passion. Passion is differentiated from emotion by Altieri in that passion, in the case of sadness, “seems especially absorbing, as if one were compelled to make it a primary aspect of one’s identity” (*Particulars* 2). While Keats can identify with

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<sup>9</sup> In fact, the concept of a young poet cut off before his prime, is a frequent subject in Keats’s work. See “When I have fears that I may cease to be,” “I had a dove, and the sweet dove died,” and “This living hand, now warm and capable,” in addition to numerous lines in the odes of 1819.

Chatterton in the sense of being a young English poet, he cannot, of course, be dead, and so his presentation of the dead poet as a “son of misery” and a “half-blown flower” seems to the reader rather cliché. The underlying emotion in the poem rings true, but the secondary passion is less impressive. Thus, in reading an early sonnet by Keats, I am able to identify two affects which aid in a close reading of the poem, and which are reinforced by comparisons with other poems by Keats.

I will next consider another model. In the work of Gerard Manley Hopkins, I find a sonnet, “Spring,” which I believe is quite suitable as an exemplar for the process of analysis in terms of the affects. The poem was written in 1877, when Hopkins was thirty-three. He had been in the Jesuit seminary since 1868, and was to be ordained a priest merely three months after writing this poem. Again, the entire text is provided below:

Nothing is so beautiful as Spring—  
When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;  
Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush  
Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring  
The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing;  
The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush  
The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush  
With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.

What is all this juice and all this joy?

A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning

In Eden garden.—Have, get, before it cloy,  
  
Before it cloud, Christ, lord, and sour with sinning,  
  
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,  
  
Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy thy winning.

How do the words he chooses reinforce an affect? The word “sinning” is more active than the noun, “sin.” It is also suggestive of an ongoing process, rather than of an accomplished fact; the *imparfait* versus the *passé composé*. Other passages in the poem suggest ongoing action: “is,” “strikes,” “they brush,” “in a rush,” “racing,” “what is,” and “sweet being.” I would also point to the imperative mood in “Have, get, before it cloy, / Before it cloud,” which suggests an urgency requiring action on the part of the reader. In many ways, Hopkins's poems are like sermons, spoken to the reader.

Also, unlike Keats's sonnet, here there are no exclamation points, merely one question mark – and it is a rhetorical question which the poet will immediately answer. The affect is active in a different way here from in Keats's work. Keats's indignation at the unfairness meted out to Chatterton was mitigated in the sestet by a rather commonplace speculation about eternal life in heaven; here, throughout the poem, the heavenly is shone in earthly manifestations: “Spring,” “weeds, in wheels,” “Thrush's eggs,” “echoing timber,” “hear him sing,” “glassy peartree leaves and blooms,” “racing lambs,” and, after the turn in human nature as, “Innocent minds,” and “girl and boy.” It is fitting that a man on the brink of taking Holy Orders be preoccupied with the heavenly. But how is that preoccupation expressed affectively in the poem?

Again, I would rule out the affect of mood, due to its passive nature. Here the affect is active and is tied to an identity. The action is seen in the “weeds” which “shoot long and lovely and lush,” do not just “look long and lovely.” “Shoot,” “strikes,” “descending blue,” “racing lambs,” and “their fling” all suggest willful action on the part of nature. Yet, the identity stressed is not one of an individual, certainly not of an individual human. The affected and affecting entities are the season of spring, “weeds,” “eggs,” “thrush,” “the glassy peartree,” “the descending blue,” and “earth’s sweet being.” The innocent “girl and boy” are representative of all young people. So the identity is again split, as it was in Keats’s sonnet, between the point of view of the observing poet and the the projected point of view of the active natural entities. For the poet, I believe the dominant affect is admiration, expressed as an elevated emotion. Hopkins admired the season of spring and all its natural manifestations, thus constructing for himself an attitude of the “particular cause” of worship, and situating himself, by implication, as an extension of the human entities described in the sestet. For the subjects – the weeds and thrush and lambs – the dominant affect seems to me feelings, expressing immediate sensations such as having the ear “struck” as if by lightning (rather than just sounding), weeds “shooting” in wheels (rather than just forming a botanical background), and earth’s “sweet” being as available in either sweet juice or cloying and clouded (not simply atmospheric). Cloying is a word of sensation related to the sense of taste, just as sweet and sour are categorical, not specific, gustatory words. Further, the concept of the song of the thrush, “through the echoing timber,” affecting the poet as it strikes his ear “like lightning” is an accentuated form of the sense of sound. The unusual use of “rinse and wring” for an auditory experience is significant for bringing a quasi-synaesthetic metaphor into play. Rinse and

wring are words of the laundry room and connote wetness, qualities typically related to the sense of touch rather than sound.

What result does the poet achieve by using active words and unusual descriptions in this poem? Hopkins describes the use to which words must be put in his journals:

The inscape of words had to be emphasized over and above matter and meaning; “the inscape must be dwelt on.” To ensure that the inscape would be understood, “repetition, oftning, over-and-overing, aftering of the inscape must take place in order to detach it to the mind. (*Journals* 289-90)

I see the octave of his poem, “Spring,” as a driving statement of the irresistibility of spring’s force. All of nature responds forcefully. Then, in the sestet, the poet poses and answers the question, “What is [behind] all this juice and all this joy?” We are, of course, prepared for the answer “God,” as we know that Hopkins is writing as a soon-to-be-ordained priest. Yet, here he surprises us again, answering that the source is the God-instress, which will be considered more fully in the chapter on Hopkins. It is that throbbing, pulsing “dearest freshness deep down things” described in “God’s Grandeur,” the beauty “past change” of “Pied Beauty,” “God, beauty’s self and beauty’s giver” of “The Golden Echo,” and the “beacon, an eternal flame” of “That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection.” I believe, and will demonstrate in the chapter on Hopkins, that his religious fervor can be profitably considered as a fifth affective mode in his poetry. It is more than passion, in that it is a different perspective and a different intensity from “love and civic pride” which Altieri considers typical passions. By extending the affective boundary into the language and philosophy of

belief, not experience, Hopkins has accomplished a difference in type, not just degree, in the affective register.

The third poet under consideration here is T. S. Eliot, and in his early poem “Preludes,” especially part I, he provides at once an interesting challenge in analysis by the affects and a demonstration of his own later theory of the objective correlative. The poem was written in 1911, when Eliot was twenty-two.<sup>10</sup>

The winter evening settles down  
With smell of steaks in passageways.  
Six o'clock.  
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.  
And now a gusty shower wraps  
The grimy scraps  
Of withered leaves about your feet  
And newspapers from vacant lots;  
The showers beat  
On broken blinds and chimney-pots,  
And at the corner of the street  
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.  
And then the lighting of the lamps.

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<sup>10</sup> This is the first of four preludes: I on evening; II on morning; III on a woman at night; and IV on a man in the afternoon.

Why is “Six o’clock” so important here? It establishes a false specificity in an otherwise generally applicable poem. Spatially, this winter evening in a city is like countless others. These showers, and scraps, and blinds, and chimney-pots could be found anywhere. Temporally a near-equivalent, “Seven o’clock” would at least match the other short lines syllabically. I suggest that working men eat earlier than wealthy men, and that “six o’clock” is important because it, along with the shared passageway where cooking dinners smell, specifies a type of city dweller, a working man’s city -- not Mayfair, but the Tottenham Court Road.<sup>11</sup>

I would like to move now to Eliot’s critical essay, “Hamlet and His Problems” (1920), in which Eliot defines the objective correlative:

The only way of expressing *emotion* in the form of art is by finding an ‘objective correlative’; ... a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula for that particular emotion; such that, when the external facts, which must terminate in *sensory experience*, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.

(in *The Sacred Wood* 68; emphasis added )

The formula for the emotion in “Preludes I” is the representative elements of a winter evening, put forth in the poem without the more obvious words which express emotion – or, indeed, any of the affects. This is not a poem of mood, though an atmosphere seems to be provided. There is little to no action. The identity of the poet, the observer, even the reader, becomes secondary to the “apparent” prerequisites of a winter evening, as they are listed “seemingly” without pathos. I have put the words apparent and seemingly in quotes in the previous sentence, as I will now proceed to show how the apparent

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<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of changing dinner times and the relation to economic class, see Sherrie MacMillan’s “What Time Is Dinner?” (2001).

requirements for a winter evening are not necessary at all, and how, by reading for affects, we can follow the breadcrumbs of the objective correlative entries to the germ of the poem's emotion.

This poem is more complex than the Keats and Hopkins selections. The affect must be disentangled from the apparent factual list. What is there, I would ask, about the smell of steaks, for example, that produces an affective response? Smelling cooking food in a passageway is highly indicative of multiple family urban dwellings, an additional tie-in with the blue-collar dining hour of "six o'clock." "Smoky days" reinforces this scenario, adding the element of pollution to that of homey mealtimes. Days, furthermore, are smokier when there are more fires burning, a situation likely to occur in winter. "Withered leaves" are the dead foliage left after autumn's change, and further, in Eliot's poetics, prophecy the "metal leaves / before the urban dawn" in "Little Gidding," where the lifeless leaves mimic the encounter with the familiar compound ghost. In this poem, I am reminded of Hopkins's passage in "God's Grandeur," "All is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil; / And wears man's smudge," in the sense of assigning anthropogenic responsibility to a landscape. Even in the first line, where the winter evening "settles down," one is reminded of a man relaxing after a day's work. "Grimy scraps" are generated by man's industry, just as "broken blinds and chimney pots" are accoutrements of his ultimately ineffective effort to make life comfortable. The lonely cab-horse has been domesticated to serve man's needs. Finally, lamps are lit to help adjust natural diurnal changes, like darkness, to suit man's life. All of these environmental factors are described in a negative way: the end of the day is "burnt-out"; the shower is not peaceful, but "gusty"; the scraps are "grimy"; the leaves are "withered";



the lots are “vacant”; the blinds are “broken”; and, the cab-horse is “lonely.” The affect of these descriptions is one of emotion. The emotion is one of urban alienation and the specific situation of poverty, and these emotions “provide[] a means of presenting one’s situation and establishing values in relation to future actions” (*Particulars 2*). In fact, just as man has no control over the forces of nature which cause the wind to be gusty, and leaves to wither, so also he has no perceivable escape from the Dickensian bleakness of urban poverty. It accosts his senses as the smell of another man’s dinner, the environmental air pollution, the unfriendly climate of rain beating down. The gustiness, vacancy, brokenness, and loneliness are negative aspects of city life, which evoke an emotion as they “situate the agent within a narrative and generate some kind of ... identification” (*Particulars 2*). The agents in this poem are different from those in the two previous examples. In Keats’s sonnet on Chatterton, there is an implied agent, Chatterton, seen as the “you-understood” of apostrophes such as “Dear child of Sorrow!” as well as “thou” used twice in the sestet. Other expressions of agency are descriptors of Chatterton, “death,” “genius,” “voice.” And, in the last lines, Keats expands the agency to include “the good man.” Hopkins is fairly consistent in the agents in “Spring.” Spring itself, as well as obvious aspects of spring (weeds, eggs, leaves, blue, lambs) are the agents in the octave. The sestet turns toward a religious agent – Christ. Here, in Eliot’s *Prelude I*, the agents are not typical active subjects. Instead the meager agents in this poem are “winter evening,” “shower,” and “cab-horse.” The dreariness of these agents without agency, so to speak, reinforces the affective mode of emotional alienation in the poem.

The poet expresses an attitude which places the typical aspects of an urban winter evening under a critical microscope, generating an identification which resonates with city dwellers. Yes, we say, winter is gloomy, especially at night. Yes, in this situation, nature is dead or miserable (“withered leaves,” “lonely cab-horse”). There is an underlying cycle in the first line’s “evening settles down,” the fourth line’s “now a gusty shower,” and the last line’s “then the lighting.” These stages of implied diurnal progress (now, then) begin and end, significantly, with evening. The season and time of day establish a negative, or at least sullen, emotion. The constant reminders of the modern urban condition for the poor are present in almost every line, and the reader is left to his own associations to determine the emotional value of “the smell of steaks,” for example.

Another hint of the emotion of helpless urban poverty is given in the passage (lines 5-7) where two natural elements combine to thwart a man’s progress. The gusty shower blows grimy scraps of dead leaves about “your” feet, entangling “you.” Who is the “you” (or agent) in this line? The second-person pronoun can be used rhetorically, as in expressions like “wouldn’t you know it?” It can also be an audience-embracing extension of the first person. Had Eliot used “my feet” rather than “your feet,” the poem would take on a different meaning and, I argue, would have skewed the dominant affect from emotion to passion, for it would establish significant stakes for the identity of the narrator. In this example, the change of one word would alter the affective mode of the poem. In the other preludes, Eliot is consistent in several details. The word “feet” appears in each of the four poems. In the second poem, “The morning comes to consciousness” “With all the muddy feet that press” onward for coffee, much as later, Eliot would see the foot-march of the dead or death-like commuters across London

Bridge in *The Waste Land*. In the third prelude, an undisclosed “you” – probably a woman – sits on a bed and “clasped the soles of feet,” possibly with an effort at comforting the feet of herself or a worker. In the fourth prelude, three pronouns – his, I and your -- are amalgamated into any city dweller. The close reading of a poem for affects can be painstakingly detailed.

In the following chapters, I will discuss some philosophical, historical, and even biographical influences on the subject poets, but will always return to a reading based on the affects. I will provide close reading of some of their important works, delineating the dominant affects and the way the senses and sensations are related, and analyzing how the sensory images work with the affective position to generate poetry of deep and lasting beauty.

In the chapter on Keats, I will argue that he generally moves from the affective mode of passion to that of feelings, a movement that parallels his abandonment of the Coleridgian models of imagination and fancy for his own elevation of fancy. By joining the concepts of fancy and feeling, I am able to reinforce the readings of Keats’s poems. The poems selected for close reading are, I believe, representative of three perspectives in Keats’s life. The first poem, “Sleep and Poetry” (1816), is a very early example which focuses overtly on sleep and on poetry, but covertly suggests a subtle distinction between imagination and fancy, a distinction which will become biased in favor of fancy in his later work. From the affective perspective this poem is one of passion, specifically the passion of yearning which identifies the young poet. The second poem I will analyze is the 1818 long poem *Endymion*, in which Keats uses the terms fancy and imagination in approximately equal instances, but in which imagination tends to be aligned with

negative creative experiences, and fancy with positive ones. The affective mode of *Endymion* is one of emotion, the affective mode which places the agent within a larger narrative context, here the mythological story of a youth beloved of the moon. The last poem, "Ode to a Nightingale" (1819), is one of the famous odes of Keats's *annus mirabilis*. In this poem, the fancy emerges as the preferred creative vehicle, even with its inability to "cheat so well as she was fam'd to do." The dominant affective mode of this ode is that of feelings, the affect associated with immediate sensation. Here, at last, Keats has arrived at a poetics which justifies his natural tendency toward the elevation of natural beauty.

In the chapter on Gerard Manley Hopkins, I will argue that his poetry can best be seen as exemplifying a fifth affect, that of religious fervor. Hopkins, a convert to Roman Catholicism and a Jesuit priest, was deeply invested in his religious belief. His affective stance did not vary much among his poems because his faith did not waver. Even in the desolate sonnets of 1885, he remains strong in the tenets of his religion, while puzzled by the way in which salvation might be achieved. Like Keats, Hopkins frequently wrote about nature, but unlike his Romantic predecessor, he always elevated man as the epitome of creation: "these things were here and but the beholder / Wanting" ("Hurrahing in Harvest" 11-12); "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" ("As Kingfishers Catch Fire" 12-14); "Fonder a care kept than we could have kept it" ("The Golden Echo" 27); "Men here may draw like breath / More Christ and baffle death" ("The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air we Breathe" 66-67). I will consider how

Hopkins's understanding of the classics as well as his theological training reinforces his expression of religious fervor.

In the chapter on T. S. Eliot, I will focus on a late poem, "Four Quartets," especially the fourth poem in the series, "Little Gidding." I will argue that Eliot's use of the affective mode of anxiety, a mood, in "Little Gidding" is a response to the historical situation, London during the Second World War, as well as a poetic expression of Eliot's preference for detachment over attachment and indifference. I will also consider several of Eliot's critical writings, especially "The Three Voices of Poetry," in light of the speaker and the assumed audience or readership of the poem.

In the concluding chapter, I will compare and contrast the way the three poets used affective language and sensory images to evoke a response in readers. I will point out the surprising similarities between these poets' works.

## CHAPTER 1

### KEATS: FANCY, FEELINGS, AND IMAGINATION

In his early sonnets, his major odes of 1819, his letters, and his medical-school notebook, Keats presents a rich diversity of sensory images employed ostensibly for description, but serving as agents of the affects. Keats is famous for his lush and profuse imagery. Imagery may be conceived as applied imagination. According to the *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (hereafter *Princeton Encyclopedia*), “Both the root meanings and broad implications of this term [imagery] are akin to the word ‘imitate,’ and hence refer to a likeness, reproduction, reflection, copy, resemblance, or similitude” (559). This “copy,” in art, means the reproduction of a mental image, or process, in words, paint, music, etc.; it is the imagination’s creative production. The word imagination is from the Latin, *imaginatio*, which was a later version of the Greek original, *phantasia*. Later, in English usage, Fancy came to mean free-playing mental creativity, often indicating a lack of intellection or structure. The empirical philosophers of the Enlightenment preferred imagination to fancy for it was related to concrete and measurable images. Those specific thought patterns associated with external images, and processed through the sense organs is now termed sense data.<sup>12</sup> Hobbes was one English writer who retained some preference for the imaginative and valid range of the fancy. Generally, “imagination is accepted as a major theme of romantic poetry and philosophy.”

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<sup>12</sup> According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, “The term ‘sense-data’...was introduced by early twentieth century philosophers [including] Bertrand Russell, with the stipulation that it should refer to that which we are directly aware of in perception. [. . .] The term has come, in contemporary philosophy, to include an assumption of mind-dependence” (1).

Yet, in Keats's 1820 volume, containing both "Lamia" and all the great odes,<sup>13</sup> Keats uses the word imagination only once, compared with fancy, which occurs twenty times. We know that Keats recognizes the difference in the terms, for he makes corrections in the margins, changing from one word to another (e.g. in *Endymion*, Book IV, he changes a line from the original manuscript "My own *imaginations* of sweet life" to "With my own *fancies* garlands of sweet life" (line 750;<sup>14</sup> 214; emphasis added)).

To understand Keats's use of sensory images, it is important to recognize how he agrees with, disagrees with, or elaborates upon contemporaneous thinking about poetic imagination and poetic fancy. Keats's perspective on the fancy is related to his changing understanding of poetic affect, as will be shown. Certainly, three major writers of his period influenced his thought on aesthetics, poetry, and philosophy, at least to the extent of providing a basis from which Keats could develop his own refinements. The three contemporary influences were Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), William Wordsworth (1770-1850), and William Hazlitt (1778-1830). I will be concerned particularly with Keats's indebtedness to Coleridge's thoughts, especially as that relationship sheds light on Keats's development as a poet of the affective register. I would argue that Keats's affective dreams, his fancy, are complex and intelligent, that they are, in fact, embodied intelligence. Dream sequences, waking dreams, sleep itself figure prominently in Keats's poetry.

The terms "fancy" and "imagination" were frequently used interchangeably in the early nineteenth century. Coleridge took exception to the carelessness of this assumed

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<sup>13</sup> The great odes of Keats's *annus mirabilis* are: "Ode to Psyche," "Ode on Indolence," "Ode to a Nightingale," "Ode on a Grecian Urn," "Ode on Melancholy," and "To Autumn." All were written between April and September 1819 (see W. Jackson Bate's biography, *John Keats* 484; 582).

<sup>14</sup> All references to Keats's poetry, unless otherwise noted, are from *The Poems of John Keats*. Ed. Jack Stillinger. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Belknap Press, 1978 (hereafter *Poems*).

synonymy. In his 1817 publication, *Biographia Literaria*, he distinguishes between the two terms on the bases of intellect, primacy, role in the creative process, and as a mark of differentiation between him and his erstwhile friend, Wordsworth. Because Coleridge and Wordsworth were near-contemporaries of Keats, it a matter of critical interest to trace Keats's use of the terms, especially in light of some scholarship (for example, Leon Waldoff's *Keats and the Silent Work of the Imagination*), which maintains, incorrectly I think, that Keats uses the terms interchangeably.

The *Princeton Encyclopedia* defines the changing definitions of the terms fancy and imagination, and the values placed on them, in the period prior to and during the Romantic period, as an elevation of imagination over fancy, noting that Keats uses the word "imagination" often in his letters. According to the *Princeton Encyclopedia*, there is a tendency to equate the terms in "Ode to a Nightingale" (402).

I believe that this argument is limited, though. While Keats does use the term imagination in his letters, in his later poetry, he favors fancy significantly. Further, his use in "Ode to a Nightingale" does not equate fancy with imagination, but rather an evolution towards his own definition of fancy, an elevation of fancy over imagination for precisely the same reasons that Coleridge had denigrated it: its association with the senses and sensation. The transition in *Endymion* is a partial step in the evolution of Keats's poetics. The full importance of his growth will be seen in the great odes, where the affect of feeling compliments the philosophy of the fancy, and the poet no longer requires a narrative context for self-expression. The project of this chapter will be to illustrate the often subtle shift in Keats's appreciation of the terms fancy and imagination,



as well as how that shift in emphasis is expressed in the dominant affective modes of his poetry.

Leon Waldoff notably exempts “fancy” from the index of his book on Keatsian imagination. He refers to it only in a parenthetical remark: “In the poem ‘Fancy’ (Keats makes no distinction between fancy and imagination), we are urged to ‘Break the mesh / Of the Fancy’s silken leash. . . . Let the winged Fancy roam, / Pleasure never is at home’ (lines 89-94)” (Waldoff 13). I believe that Waldoff is too quick to dismiss the fancy from his discussion. It is a fact that Keats uses the word more than twice as often as he uses the word imagination throughout his poetry.<sup>15</sup>

Keats’s elevation of fancy runs parallel to his passion for sensory images and sensation, and that passion is not always expressed in straightforward and luxuriously descriptive ways. Passions, according to Charles Altieri, in *The Particulars of Rapture: An Aesthetics of the Affects* (hereafter *Particulars*) are “emotions within which we project significant stakes for the identity that they make possible” (2). I will argue that, in the early poem, “Sleep and Poetry,” the dominant affective mode is passion, just as the driving creative force is imagination. The specific passion in this poem is a longing for completion of his poetic vocation, striking an anxious balance between envisioned fulfillment and realized lack of fulfillment (“O Poesy! For thee I hold my pen / That am not yet a glorious denizen / Of thy wide heaven” (53-55)). This passionate theme of longing for poetic accomplishment is frequent in Keats (see, for example, the sonnet “When I have fears that I may cease to be”). In his later poem, the book-length *Endymion*, I see a partial shift from imagination to fancy, and a concomitant shift from passion to the more general affect of emotion. Emotions are defined by Altieri as “affects

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. *A Concordance to the Poems of John Keats* (hereafter *Concordance*).

involving the construction of attitudes that typically establish a particular cause and so situate the agent within a narrative and generate some kind of action or identification” (*Particulars 2*). The more ambitious poetic task of emotion, its expression, and its evocation, is appropriate to the project of a long poem. Finally, in “Ode to a Nightingale,” I see Keats’s development of affective and creative processes to be complete, with the shift from imagination to fancy, and the aligning of sensations and thought under what Altieri calls the affective category of feelings: “elemental affective states characterized by an imaginative engagement in the immediate processes of sensation” (*Particulars 2*).

Helen Vendler suggests, in *The Odes of John Keats* (hereafter *Odes*) that “Keats’s search for ‘intensity’ led him as much to a deliberate limiting of sense-variety as to a broadening of sensation, and led him as well to a search for the ‘intensity’ of intellect that would rival the intensity of sense” (*Odes 46*). First, I will consider the poem, “Fancy,” as it is published with the odes in 1820. While I agree that Keats was interested in the “broadening of sensation” to include states like somnolence, I disagree with Vendler’s conclusion that Keats “search[ed] for the ‘intensity’ of intellect.” His poetry is less explorative of intellectual matters than affective ones. It is also less tied to intellectual causes than is the work of other leading Romantic poets.

The poem, “Fancy,” written shortly before the odes, presents the quality of fancy as an impish trickster. Keats uses several images that are prophetic of the odes, especially “Ode to a Nightingale” (hereafter “Nightingale”) and “To Autumn.” One image is that of fading: The passage in “Fancy,” “And the enjoying of the spring / *Fades* as does its blossoming” (11-12; emphasis added) is suggestive of the same trope in “Nightingale”:

“That I might drink, and leave the world unseen, / And with thee *fade away* into the forest dim” (19-20; emphasis added). The fading of spring’s blossoms is a rather simple, even trite, image. Note the more complex, and multisensory use in “Nightingale”: in the two lines shown, the sense of taste (“drink”) is used as an ameliorative to the sense of sight; that is, in drinking, the poet will become able to “die” to this world, and leave it “unseen,” – or fade. The poet wishes to lose visibility further as he fades with the bird into a forest, not dark, as we might expect, but dim. Vendler argues that Keats’s estimation of fancy decreased over time:

Keats had been, in *Endymion*, a visual poet, imagining scenes of encounter, stationing figures in processions, and giving his gardener Fancy free rein to produce a sumptuous and varied landscape. The imaginative scheme for Nightingale forbade...that central visual exercise of his powers. (*Odes* 96)

The “gardener Fancy” mentioned comes from the lines in “Ode to Psyche,” “With all the gardener Fancy e’er could feign, / Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same” (62-3). I would argue, however, that Keats’s new respect for fancy had elevated that power to the rank previously enjoyed by imagination, expressed, for example, in Keats’s famous letter to Bailey, in which he states, “I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart’s affections and the truth of the Imagination” (*Letters*, I, 184).<sup>16</sup> However, this letter was written 22 November 1817, a year and a half before the period of the great odes. By his increased use of the word “imagination” in *Endymion*, and his significant switch to “fancy” in the 1820 volume, I believe that Keats was refining his philosophical outlook. Coleridge and other contemporary influences may have swayed the twenty-two

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<sup>16</sup> All citations of Keats’s letters refer to *The Letters of John Keats: 1814-1821, Volumes I and II*. Ed. Hyder E. Rollins. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1958. (Hereafter *Letters* I and II).

year old Keats but, by twenty-five, his own schema for sensation, sensory imagery, and affective expression was further evolved. In Keats study, recall that we are dealing with a productive time span of, approximately, five years.<sup>17</sup>

To trace Keats's philosophical understanding of the terms fancy and imagination, it is useful to compare the number and kind of their uses in his poetic works and his letters. By employing the dual methodology of using a concordance to Keats's poems for quantitative data and close reading of key poems as a means of qualitatively translating that data into information, I have found that Keats's use developed and changed over time, and that the understanding of these terms, especially of "fancy," parallels his overall poetic development.<sup>18</sup>

Quantitatively, there are significantly fewer uses of "fancy" than of "imagination" in the book-length *Endymion* as a percent of total usages. But, there are significantly more uses in the 1820 publication. The approximate doubling of the uses of "fancy" in the 1817 volume and in the unpublished work is consistent with the slightly more than doubled usages overall, and, therefore are self-canceling, at least in the quantitative sense.

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<sup>17</sup> The first poem in the Stillinger collection, and mentioned as the first surviving work by Bate in the biography, is 1814's "Imitations of Spenser." According to Bate, "After this first poem, at least five others survive that were written before the end of 1814, and, like "Imitation of Spenser," all are essentially exercises in conventional late eighteenth-century forms" (36). Also: "What we generally think of as Keats's early poetry—[is] poetry that actually begins in the winter of 1815-16 and continues another two years" (36). Keats's last poem is thought to be an early 1820 little known work, "In after time a sage of mickle lore" (Stillinger 535; 680-81). A productive span of about five years seems the best estimate. Bate, in *The Stylistic Development of Keats* (1962), provides a background on Keats's early work, his maturation, influences, both historical (Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser) and contemporary (Hunt, Coleridge, Tighe, Wordsworth).

<sup>18</sup> Richard Turley (in *Keats's Boyish Imagination*) warns against looking for germs of the later work in Keats's early poetry, but I believe that by tracing key concepts such as fancy and imagination, we can see significant changes in Keats's poetic development. Turley is concerned that Keats's "boyish counter-aesthetic is not merely the precondition for an evolved political awareness, but is already the calculated manifestation of such an awareness" (Turley 77). This is the equivalent of saying that a child's first step is necessary for its later development as an ambulatory individual, and that in that first step all later hikes are prefigured. I strongly disagree with this simplification. The first step is merely that; expertise in hiking is a significant difference in degree, if not in kind.

The fewer uses of “fancy” in *Endymion* would be significant if it indicated that Keats believed this poem to be one of imagination rather than fancy. It is more likely that, at this middle stage of his poetic development, he was formulating meanings of his own for these terms. According to the concordance to Keats’s poems, he uses the word imagine and its various forms (imaginings, imagined, etc.) twenty-one times. He uses the word fancy and its various forms (fancied, fanciful, etc.) forty-nine times. The fewest uses (1) of imagin\* occur in his last volume, which also contains the most uses of fanc\* (20).

While the volumes may differ in length and subject matter, the trend is clearly away from imagination and toward fancy. The word fancy or its derivatives appears in twenty poems by Keats.<sup>19</sup> The word imagination or its derivatives appear in eight poems.<sup>20</sup> I consider it significant that the word fancy appears in more than twice the number of poems as does imagination. It is interesting, too, that imagination does not appear in any of the great odes (except if we consider “Hyperion” to be one of the odes, as does Vendler). It is also critical to note that fancy appears in more of the later and widely-respected poems, whereas numerous uses of “imagination” occur in less-acclaimed works (e.g. the verse epistle, “Dear Reynolds,” and the unfinished poem “The Jealousies,” (also known as “Cap and Bells”).

Yet, this quantitative summary is only relevant if several underlying assumptions are made: that the volumes are of equal length; that the usages are equally significant; and,

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<sup>19</sup> They are: “Fill for me a brimming bowl,” “To Hope,” “Woman! When I behold thee flippant, vain,” “Hadst thou liv’d in days of old,” “To Charles Cowden Clarke,” “How many bards gild the lapses of time,” “Sleep and Poetry,” “I stood tip-toe upon a little hill,” “Unfelt, unheard, unseen,” *Endymion*, “To the Nile,” “Four seasons fill the measure of the year,” “This mortal body of a thousand days,” “Fancy,” “The Eve of St. Agnes,” “Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell,” “Ode to Psyche,” “Ode to a Nightingale,” “Otho the Great: A Tragedy in Five Acts,” and “Lamia.”

<sup>20</sup> They are: “Sleep and Poetry,” “On Seeing the Elgin Marbles,” *Endymion*, “Dear Reynolds, as last night I lay in bed,” “On Visiting the Tomb of Burns,” “Hyperion,” “The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream,” and “The Jealousies.”

that other reasons (such as meter) do not influence the word choice. By considering a longer early poem, "Sleep and Poetry," the mid-career *Endymion*, and the later, briefer "Ode to a Nightingale," I will argue from a qualitative as well as quantitative position, that Keats developed his own poetics of the imaginative, and especially the fanciful, processes during his few productive years, and that the change towards his poetics of fancy parallels a gradual maturation of his dominant poetic affective mode, from passions through emotions, to feelings. Passions, like personally absorbing, self-centered aspects of the poet's identity result in poetry in which specific actions are brought to bear on the poet's own life. By contrast, feelings are very basic, almost physiological stakes which are closely aligned with responses such as sensations. Poetry of feelings lead to metaphor. Altieri says, "Metaphor promises to honor both how consciousness finds itself embodied and how it has the power to elaborate upon what sensation provides" (*Particulars* 49). Thus, Keats's "Lines on the Mermaid Tavern," is a poem of passion, positing an Elysium for the souls of dead poets. As a poet himself, Keats hopes to identify with this collegial hereafter. By contrast, I consider "Ode on Melancholy" to be a poem of feelings, of sensation. The sensations, as so often with Keats, are both positive and negative in the same work. The "poisonous wine" of "wolf's-bane" is cautioned against, and yet an alternative escape is give in the second stanza ("Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose" (15)).

If we acknowledge that there are two major sources of human understanding, the senses and reason, it is clear that Keats approaches reasonable understanding via the senses, whereas Coleridge approaches sensory understanding via reason.<sup>21</sup> Vendler

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<sup>21</sup> Coleridge wrote in his *Lectures on Shakespeare*, that understanding requires an effort "to reconcile opposites and qualify contradictions [. . .] The grandest efforts of poetry are where the imaginariion is called

suggests that Keats, by the time he writes “To Autumn,” “has decided that the untrammelled power to invent ever new flowers ... with which he endowed his gardener Fancy is really unnecessary: the earth is beautiful enough in itself” (*Odes* 241). I believe that Keats sees that the alternate route to understanding is through primary sensory perception and its expression in poetic imagery. This approach to understanding is Fancy, as described by Coleridge. James Caldwell points out that “[Keats] was surely no man for terminologies, those flat conventions pointing toward the cool general, and away from the glow of particular events” (69). We see this in Keats’s assessment of the Augustan poets, especially Pope, and in his description of the “poetical character” itself, which he says, “has no self—it is every thing and nothing—it has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto be it foul or fair. [. . .] What shocks the virtuous philosop[h]er, delights the camelion Poet” (*Letters* I 387). Caldwell suggests that Keats’s ideas on fancy were informed by the Scottish aesthetician, Archibald Alison.<sup>22</sup> Alison’s position is in direct contrast with William Hazlitt’s, however, and I think there are numerous reasons to believe that Keats accepted Hazlitt’s view of “gusto,” an inherent characteristic of objects.

Hazlitt was a friend and correspondent of Keats’s, a member of his circle. Hazlitt’s “On Gusto” (1817), was certainly an influence on Keats, who even adopted the term “gusto” and used it in conversation and letters for a period of time. In this article published in Leigh Hunt’s magazine, *The Examiner*, May 26, 1817, Hazlitt describes

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forth ... The result being ... the substitution of a sublime feeling of the unimaginable for a mere image” (in *Major Works* 648).

<sup>22</sup> Caldwell summarizes Alison’s *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790; sixth edition 1825): “The bulk of its pages comprise illustrations of the truth that what we call the sublimity or beauty of any object in nature is never intrinsic to the object itself” but relies upon the human observer’s mental construction of this truth (65). Though Alison’s writings are contemporaneous with Keats’s, there is no suggestion that he read them in any of the major biographies (Lowell, Bate, Aileen Ward, and Andrew Motion).

gusto in art as “power or passion defining any subject. [. . .] There is hardly any object entirely devoid of expression, without some character of power belonging to it, some precise association with pleasure or pain” (1). Note the similarity of expression: the chameleon poet, according to Keats, “lives in gusto be it foul or fair,” in a letter written one and a half years after Hazlitt pointed out that gusto is a “defining passion,” associated with “pleasure or pain.” In fact, Keats’s concept of the poet without an ego, derives at least in part from Hazlitt’s *Lectures on the English Poets* (January 13 – March 3, 1817) which Keats “told Bailey he planned to attend,” and in which Hazlitt calls Shakespeare “the least of an egotist that it was possible to be. He was nothing in himself; but he was all that others were” (see Bate *John Keats* 259). In his essay “On Gusto,” Hazlitt even suggests synaesthesia, saying, “[G]usto in painting is where the impression made on one sense excites by affinity with those of another” (2). If Keats read this article, as he surely did, being a friend of Hazlitt’s and Hunt’s, as well as being himself a contributor to *The Examiner*, he was certainly influenced by Hazlitt’s emphasis on sensory imagery in painting, and was able to apply this aesthetic approach in his poetry. Though Keats used Hazlitt’s word “gusto” for a period of time, “he later returns to the word ‘intensity’” (Bate *John Keats* 245). Hazlitt calls poetry “the high-wrought enthusiasm of fancy and feeling,” another indication of the popularity of these terms in Keats’s circle (Hazlitt *Lectures* 5). Note also the extension from the process (fancy or imagination) to the terms of affect (“feeling”).

Keats built his own understanding of these terms from what he had read, his discussions with his circle of friends, and maintained similar definitions to theirs, but sometimes shifted his values. Coleridge, a major influence, defined imagination as a



modifying power, whereas he considered fancy to be “no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space. [ . . . ] [I]t must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association” (*Biographia* 313).<sup>23</sup>

Coleridge provides a recipe for the best poetry:

Frame a numeration table of the primary faculties of Man, as Reason unified by Ideas, Mother of Laws, mother of amenability, Judgment, the discriminative[;] Fancy, the aggregative; Imagination, the modifying and *fusive*, the Senses & Sensations—and from these the different Derivatives of the Agreeable from the Senses, the Beautiful, the Sublime / the Like and the Different – the spontaneous and the receptive – the Free and the Necessary – And whatever calls into consciousness the greatest number of these in due proportion & perfect harmony with each other, is the noblest Poem. (“Table Talk” in *Major Works* 554)<sup>24</sup>

Keats feels differently about the creative process than this prescriptive method preached by Coleridge. He hates poetry that “has a palpable design... Poetry should be great & unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one’s soul and does not startle it or amaze it” (*Letters* I 224). In his philosophy of negative capability, Keats criticizes Coleridge: “Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetrarium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge” (*Letters* I 193-94). Imagination is creativity with a fully-engaged mind; fancy is the creativity of “half-knowledge.”

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<sup>23</sup> The law of association was derived from Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), by way of Hobbes, who added an anti-natural perspective. According to the *Princeton Encyclopedia*, the philosophy of Hobbes, and Locke’s “associationist psychology” provides an alternative way of understanding the image in poetry. It became the “connecting link” between object and subject. Image was defined as “the reproduction in the mind of sensation produced in perception” (559).

<sup>24</sup> Unless otherwise noted, citations of Coleridge’s works refer to *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Major Works*. Ed. H. J. Jackson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000, (hereafter *Major Works*).

Coleridge, therefore, does not demand that a poet choose between an imaginative poem and a fanciful one. He considers the imagination a modifying power, and fancy an aggregative one. If by aggregative, he means that it apes remembered experience, then it is clear that Keats has a different working understanding of those terms.<sup>25</sup> The word “imagination” is used differently in *Endymion* from how it is used in “Sleep and Poetry,” and, by the time Keats writes “Ode to a Nightingale,” the words “imagination” and “fancy” have a reversed emphasis in Keats’s poetics. Already, by the time *Endymion* was composed, there are indications of a refinement of approach. Referring back to the Coleridgian concept of imagination as “modifying power,” and “fancy” as an aggregative one, Keats can hardly mean that the epic story of a young man beloved by the moon is a remembered experience. It may be remembered as a myth that was brokored in his day, and with which he was familiar, but it is certainly modified by Keats from its mythological basis. This modification is the work of the imagination according to Coleridge, and Keats agrees in the sense of using the word imagination and its various forms eleven times in the work. When we consider his almost complete abandonment of the term “imagination” in the 1820 publication, it is clear that Keats’s preferences, or his definitions, have changed

Regarding the use of senses, as distinct from sensations, there is recent scholarship, both literary and philosophical, which associates sensory images with a variety of affects. First, consider the differences in the definitions of the terms. Sense is defined as “each of the special faculties, connected with a bodily organ, by which man...perceive[s] external objects, and changes in the condition of [his] own bod[y]” (*OED*). Sensation is more

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<sup>25</sup> Yet, according to G. N. G. Orsini, “Coleridge added to his other gifts a deep interest in philosophy in its most abstruse and technical forms [. . .] which produced one of the most sinuous prose styles in modern English” (7). By contrast, Keats’s prose style, remarkable in his letters, is straightforward and entertaining.

closely related to the mind, and, though “an operation of any of the senses,” (the word is used by Coleridge (in “Friend”) as “a mental feeling, an emotion” (see *OED*, definitions 1.a. and 2.a.) Sensation is defined as “a feeling considered apart from the resulting ‘perception’ of an object” (*OED*). Sensations are incorporated into the hierarchy of awareness by Altieri, in *The Particulars of Rapture*, where he suggests that

we can use the term ‘affect’ as our umbrella term. This term provides a means of referring to the entire range of states that are bounded on one side by pure sensation and on the other by thoughts that have no visible or tangible impact on our bodies. Affects are immediate modes of sensual responsiveness to the world characterized by an accompanying imaginative dimension. (*Particulars 2*)

The *OED* defines affect as “The way in which one is ... disposed; mental state, mood, feeling, desire, intention.” Indeed, Altieri follows the twentieth-century usage, “imagination,” but we may well substitute Keatsian “fancy” here, I think.

While Keats’s sensory images are often lush and beautiful, they are also often contrasted with human life, which seems the antithesis of these uplifting natural glimpses. The nightingale’s song is joyous (“thy happy lot,” “thine happiness,” “light-winged,” and “full-throated ease” describe its state in just the first stanza of the ode). The poet narrator in that same stanza “aches,” is “drowsy” with a “numbness” which “pains his sense,” compares his situation with a drug-induced stupor, and suggests that he is “too happy.” How can numbness pain? How can one be too happy?<sup>26</sup> Numbness is a sensation, as well as the inability to perceive by touch. It is the distinct feeling of “pins and needles” as well as the lowering of sensitivity to external sensory input, especially touch.

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<sup>26</sup> In the 1817 poem, “In drear-nighted December,” Keats said “Too happy, happy tree, / Thy branches ne’er remember / Their green felicity” (2-4). In this case, happiness means “fortunate” and the fortune is not present, but past—and, not only past, but forgotten.

Happiness implies contentment, and an excess of contentment is not happiness at all, but rather delirium or satiety. Here, Keats seems to mock the preacherly Coleridge's demand for an exact measuring of "due proportion" and "perfect harmony." Keats's poetry is less mathematical, more representative of natural variation and outliers. Nature is not proportioned and harmonious from any nearby perspective. There are overabundances (see "To Autumn") which will be cancelled to near nothingness in winter, then the different plentitude of spring's promise, and so on in the annual cycle. Individual lives, as that of the specific nightingale, will be lost, though the species will endure. There is less immediate comfort in Keats's poetry than is called for in Coleridge's recipe.

Coleridge presents the problem of creativity as one in which the artist is limited by his senses. I suggest that Keats felt differently, and that his lush descriptions are a merging of intellectual imagination, so to speak, and physical fancy, complicated by a pessimistic, even ironic, view of the human predicament. Coleridge had said

The whole tremendous difficulty of a Creation *ex nihilo* [. . .] arises wholly out of the Slavery of the Mind to the Eye and the visual Imagination (or Fancy), under the influence of which the Reasoner must have a *picture* and mistakes the surface for substance – Such men [. . .] *demand Matter as a Datum* (Given fact)."

("Marginalia" 572-3; emphasis original)

Here, Coleridge uses fancy and visual imagination both as obstacles to deeply creative thought. While we may imagine (or fancy) an *unlikely* or even *preposterous* thought-image, such as a green horse or a microbe-sized man, those thought-images are dependent upon our conceptions of greenness, horseness, smallness, and man. Creation *ex nihilo* requires us to "envision" something not ever visioned. In Keats's work, I see

his response to this conundrum in his trend toward an increased reliance on “fancy” and a decreased use of “imagination. The attributes of each will be analyzed in “Sleep and Poetry,” (1817), *Endymion* (1818), and “Ode to a Nightingale (1819). The shift in Keats’s emphasis will be shown as parallel to a trend from passion to feelings in the affective register.

### “Sleep and Poetry”

I will analyze three poems by Keats where the words “fancy” and “imagination” are used in a manner which suggests his aesthetic beliefs, and how they evolved over a rather brief period of his writing life. I will begin with his longest poem to that date, “Sleep and Poetry” (written in late 1816; published in *Poems*, his 1817 collection), in which he is “beginning to grope toward a general premise that becomes prominent in the final year of his writing: the Januslike character of the human imagination, turned as it is to the inner life, on one hand, and the concrete objective world, on the other” (Bate *John Keats* 125). Yet, is not this dualism of the imagination just another way of saying imagination and its counterpart, fancy? The human imagination turned to the inner life is contemplative, intellectual; turned toward the concrete world, it is fancy. In fact, Keats’s trend in his last year of writing, was away from “imagination” and towards “fancy,” as I shall illustrate. When he wrote “Sleep and Poetry,” I suggest that Keats was already aware of some aesthetic distinction between the two terms, as he writes that the attributes of sleep (and poetry) vary in intensity and suddenness:

The thought thereof<sup>27</sup> is awful, sweet and holy,

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<sup>27</sup> The thought of poetry, that is, which is described in numerous tropes in stanzas 2 and 3: “higher beyond thought,” “fresher than berries,” “strange,” “beautiful,” “smooth,” “regal,” “awful,” “sweet,” “holy,”

Chacing away all worldliness and folly;  
Coming sometimes like fearful claps of thunder,  
Or the low rumblings earth's regions under;  
And sometimes like a gentle whispering (25-29)

The first line, above, suggests the awe felt about the contemplative imagination, the second is descriptive of the fancy, and the third is a combination of the two. "Fearful claps of thunder" suggests passion in the affective analysis; "gentle whispering" is more emotional, possibly moodlike.

"Sleep and Poetry" begins by asking the rhetorical question, "What is more comforting than sleep?" and answers, in the fourth stanza, "Poesy!" Keats immediately recognizes his novice standing: "O Poesy! For thee I hold my pen / That I am *not yet* a glorious denizen / Of thy wide heaven" (46-48; emphasis added). In these words, I note passionate yearning, as the poet suggests "significant stakes for the identity," that is, the desire to be among the great English poets. I chose this poem for several reasons: it is the longest work in the 1817 volume, and may be expected to provide ample usages of the terms of interest; it does contain numerous uses of fancy and imagination; it achieves its affective mode (categorically, passion; specifically, yearning) successfully; and, it provides various early examples of imagery which will figure prominently in the odes.<sup>28</sup>

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"Coming like ...thunder," "sometimes like a gentle whispering," "the laurel wreath... that is to crown our name," "gives a glory to the voice," and "Sounds which will reach the Framer of all things" (19-40). This last is one of the rare suggestions of a deity in Keats's work. I would note how general that "Framer" is, as it will be a significant contrast between Keats and the other two poets studied here, Gerard Manley Hopkins and T. S. Eliot.

<sup>28</sup> For example, "that I may die a death / Of luxury" (58-59) is predictive of two passages in "Nightingale": "Darkling I listen; and for many a time / I have been half in love with easeful Death" (51), and "Now more than ever seems it rich to die" (55). The poet extols the virtues of Poesy in traditional poetic terms ("a bowery nook / Will be Elysium – an eternal book whence I may copy many a lovely saying" (64-65). The "bowery nook" is suggestive of the influence of Spenser in Keats's early work, an influence recognized by Bate (*Stylistic Development* 33; 131), and backed up by biographical details (see Lowell I 52; 87; 124).

If we consider the imagination of inner life to be Coleridge's "imagination," and the imagination of the "objective world" to be fancy, note how these lines show poetry in a parallel manner. Poetry is inspired in three ways: sudden and loud like thunder (aggressive; fanciful); insightful and intellectual (imaginative); and, quiet, like whispering (a combination of the two).

According to Gerald McNiece, Coleridge's concept of human understanding was built on Kant's philosophy expressed in *The Critique of Pure Reason*,<sup>29</sup> in which Coleridge said that he explained "synthetic reasoning" and moved beyond the philosophy of reasoning and understanding previously held by the skeptics, Hume and Berkeley (20). Yet, Coleridge himself went beyond Kant in insisting on a religious basis for free will, a mere extension of reason for Kant, but, for Coleridge, a concept which demanded a belief in the supernatural, which he felt that Kant "was too cowardly to deny ... and too reluctant to admit" (see McNiece 21). McNiece also comments on Coleridge's distinctions in the definitions and valuation of the faculties: "Coleridge and the German philosophers were fond of drawing up hierarchical charts of the mental faculties. Coleridge... insisted ... on distinctions of kind rather than degree...between imagination and fancy" (55). Fancy, according to Coleridge, is "the pleasure produced by an image

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The, Keats moves on to criticize some eighteenth-century poets who were asleep to beauty: "beauty was awake! / Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead / To things ye knew not of" (192-94), and "A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask / Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race" (200-01). Another image which will be further developed in "Nightingale" is that of music's crescendo and diminuendo presented in "Sleep and Poetry" as "heard / In many places" and "sounds are floating wild / About the earth" (223-24; 228-29). In "Nightingale" the "plaintive anthem fades / Past the near meadows, over the still stream, / Up the hill-side" (75-77). In "Sleep and Poetry," Keats acknowledges his youthfulness ("What though I am not wealthy in the dower / Of spanning wisdom" (284-85), then he proceeds more confidently to assert "Yet sure there ever rolls / A vast idea before me, and I glean / Therefrom my liberty" (290-92). In the last stanzas, Keats returns to the concept of sleep, but this time with rich synaesthetic images: "As sweet a silence," "cold and sacred busts / Smiled at each other," and "Thrilling liquidity of dewy piping" (351-52; 357-58; 371). In the last line, Keats bequeaths his words as a mature poet: "I leave them as a father does his son" (404).

<sup>29</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965.

which remains with us” (*Lectures in Major Works* 45). For Keats, this is precisely where fancy becomes critical.

Returning to the hierarchy above, Coleridge adds, “Fancy and Imagination are oscillations, *this* connecting R[eason] and U[nderstanding]; *that* connecting Sense and Understanding” (Coleridge *Marginalia in Major Works* 590). That is to say, fancy is the connection between the senses and understanding; imagination connects reason and understanding. If we allow that the central role of understanding is important, yet self-cancels because it is applied to both sides of the equation, so to speak, we see that fancy is the organ of sense, imagination the organ of reason. In this light, it will be useful to consider several of Keats’s uses of the terms, from his early, middle, and latest publications, for his dedication to the imagination changes in this brief period. In Keats’s “Sleep and Poetry,” for example, there are several additional uses of both terms. In lines 71-74, we find:

...Also imaginings will hover  
Round my fireside, and haply there discover  
Vistas of solemn beauty, where I’d wander  
In happy silence...

This passage is significant because it shows “imaginings” as qualities with wills (or agencies), which allow them to “hover” and “discover,” and even do so “haply.” There is a secondary significance, too: imaginings act as intermediaries of exploration for the poet. The poet receives from free-roaming imaginings a mental adventure, even in his “happy silence.” Coleridge’s characterization of imagination as the bridge between reason and understanding does not seem pertinent here. The acts of reasoning and



understanding are significant only at the literal level of “understanding” what imaginings’ roles are, and “reasoning” only as attempting to explain the processes of “imaginings.”

But if fancy is, as Coleridge believes, the connection between “Sense and Understanding,” we must ask, what senses and what understandings are being discussed here. The sensory terms are “vistas” and “silence,” the first an expansive expression for what is encompassed by the sense of sight, the second a description of the absence of sound, yet is used with the apologetic adjective “happy.” Sensory images, then, are represented in this passage both in an elevated presence, and a clear absence, vision raised to an aesthetic “beauty,” and “sound” reduced to silence. This passage would be Coleridgian “fancy,” in that it bridges the gap between the senses (vision, silence) and understanding (discover). But Keats terms the process “imaginings.” My argument is not, however, that Keats and Coleridge use the terms in opposing ways, but rather that Keats tends to treat fancy and imagination *as words* more or less interchangeably, at this stage of his poetic development, while reserving a slight distinction, which is sometimes apparent only indirectly in passages where neither word occurs. Later in “Sleep and Poetry” we find another example:

...First the realm I’ll pass  
Of Flora, and old Pan: sleep in the grass,  
Feed upon apples red, and strawberries,  
And choose each pleasure that my fancy sees... (101-104)

Here, we have Keats using fancy in the Coleridgian sense, just as he had used imaginings two stanzas earlier. Here, fancy “sees,” and is the mode by which the poet accesses red apples and strawberries, objects of sight and taste, and, by implication, smell. On the one

hand, fancy is the bridge between the senses and understanding, the latter indicated by the word “choose.” Choice is a mental exercise of understanding. To understand, one reaches back to remembered sensory data, and constructs a logical and sensory-defensible explanation. For example, on seeing red and yellow leaves on a tree, we recall that this visual image is consistent with past predictors of autumn. On the other hand, the “red apples” and “strawberries” are fruits of the imagination, so to speak. Their existence is in Keats’s mind’s eye. It could be argued, too, that to choose is to reason and that Keats’s use here is, therefore, exactly antithetical to Coleridge’s descriptions. While “fancy” here may be seen as the equivalent of “desire,” as in “I fancy a cup of tea,” it would be a desire *within* a mental process of conjuring up. That is, to be in the realm of Flora and Pan, is necessarily to be in state of imaginative thought using some mythological referents, and any desires presenting there must be desires of the mind.

A few stanzas later, however, Keats, in what I consider a significant passage in his early work, says

...Is there so small a range  
In the present strength of manhood, that the high  
Imagination cannot freely fly  
As she was wont of old? ... (162-65)

Here, Keats clearly poses a rhetorical question demanding a negative answer: “No there is no such limit on the imagination at the present time” (or, at least, there should not be). By “present” Keats means present and recent. He follows this question with a harsh criticism of the weaknesses of eighteenth-century poetry, a criticism which would earn

him harsh words from Byron, an admirer of Pope.<sup>30</sup> In a later passage in the same stanza, Keats calls eighteenth-century poets to task, saying

...beauty was awake!  
Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead  
To things ye knew not of, --were closely wed  
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule  
And compass vile... (192-96)<sup>31</sup>

Keats seems anxious to believe at this early stage of his writing that there are no mundane boundaries beyond which the imagination cannot fly. Yet, doubt exists. Later, in “Nightingale,” he will have similar doubts about the unlimited power of Fancy: “The fancy cannot cheat so well / As she is fam’d to do, deceiving elf”<sup>32</sup> (73-4). The imagination of “Sleep and Poetry” has agency with no clear limits; the fancy of “Nightingale” has agency too, but is obviously oversold by fame, and might be deceptive. It is clearly a limitation to not be able to “freely fly,” but the inability to “cheat so well” is

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<sup>30</sup> The tradition of Keats as weak and hypersensitive contributed to the sarcastic treatment Keats received from Byron. Willing to consider poetry to be legitimately written only by noblemen, and resentful of Keats’s slighting treatment of the work of Pope, Byron was ready to condemn Keats in letters. For example, in an April 1821 letter to John Murray, Byron says, “Is it true--what Shelley writes me that poor John Keats died at Rome of the Quarterly Review? I am sorry for it—though I think he took the wrong line as a poet—and was spoiled by Cockneyfying.” Later, to the same, he writes, “You know very well that I did not approve of Keats’s poetry or principles of poetry—his abuse of Pope—but as he is dead—omit *all* that is said *about him* in any MSS of mine” (Byron’s *Letters*, July 31, 1821). In the very next week, to the same correspondent, Byron continues, “The Reviewer allows him [Keats] a ‘degree of talent which deserves to be put in the right way’ ‘rays of fancy’ ‘gleams of genius’ and ‘powers of language’—It is harder on L. Hunt than upon Keats & professes fairly to review only one book of his poems—Altogether—though very provoking it was hardly so bitter as to kill—unless there was a morbid feeling previously in his system” (Byron’s *Letters*, August 7, 1821).

<sup>31</sup> Keats, in a letter of 10-11 May 1817, to his friend Haydon, mentions that when he hears his brother Tom reading “some of Pope’s Homer...they [the lines] seem like Mice to mine” (*Letters* I 141). Keats also implies his rejection of Pope in celebrating the earlier English translation of Homer by George Chapman in his early sonnet “On first looking into Chapman’s Homer” (1816). In the sonnet, Keats says “Yet did I never breathe its pure serene / Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold” (7-8). Pope’s translation of Homer (1725) won him acclaim in the eighteenth century. Yet, Keats prefers the older Renaissance translation by Chapman (1616).

<sup>32</sup> In the manuscript “deceiving elf” was written “deceitful elf” and the change was made by Keats (see Gittings 42).

not nearly so clear a failure; it is the failure in a negative thing. To “cheat” at what, the reader may well ask. Unlike the imagination, which is based on reason and can therefore be understood as asymptotically approaching truth, the fancy is flexible enough to present negative sensations and luxuriate in its own deception. To cheat at all is a negative action from the moral perspective. The flexibility of the fancy to encompass this deception, even to a limited extent, is important to Keats, who frequently charges otherwise positive images with negative characteristics. The “fading” image of the nightingale’s song, for example, contrasts with its seductive beauty. Imagination, anchored to reason, cannot “cheat” at all, except in error. Fancy, however, pliant as sensations themselves, can trick and deceive, albeit not “so well” as to alter reality significantly for the agent.

The narrator of “Nightingale” has, in the two preceding lines (71-2), just been recalled to his conscious self by his own word, “Forlorn!” He then bids “adieu” to the nightingale, which is flying away, and the confusion of this waking moment causes him to ask, “Do I wake or sleep?” in the poem’s last words. The mention of sleep in “Nightingale” suggests, in fact, numerous other shared images with “Sleep and Poetry.” For example, there are several passages which suggest the desirability of death in both poems. In “Sleep,” the passage

...that I may die a death  
Of luxury, and my young spirit follow  
The morning sun-beams to the great Apollo  
Like a fresh sacrifice... (58-61)

seems to anticipate the desire of the “Nightingale” poet to

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget

What thou among the leaves hast never known,  
The weariness, the fever, and the fret... (21-23).

The diminishing visibility of the nightingale as its “plaintive anthem fades / Past the near meadows, over the still stream, / Up the hill-side” (75-77) recalls us to a passage in “Sleep” where an envisioned, imagined, or fancied “charioteer” and the steeds which pull his car, are “now” seen “on a green-hill’s side” (134), then “Passing along before a dusky space / Made by some mighty oaks: as they would chase / Some ever-fleeting music” (139-141). In both poems, the image is one of a fleeing entity, seen once, then disappearing gradually.

This contrast between the early “Sleep and Poetry” and the later “Ode to a Nightingale” may seem to indicate that Keats places a higher value upon the imagination. If the imagination cannot fly, it is therefore limited, in contrast with what its presumed powers were “of old.” The fancy is oversold, even as a cheat. The inability to fly freely as it had before, fetters the imagination in both a temporal and spatial sense. This change indicates that Keats’s attitude changed between 1817 and 1819, when “Nightingale” was written, with his preference trending toward “fancy,” just as his affective stance progressed, as will be shown, from passion to emotion to feeling.

Ascribing motive to these usages is difficult for a number of reasons, but my thesis is that Keats’s word choice is correlated with his philosophical understanding of fancy and imagination. This is most true when the words have an intellectual or counter-intellectual connotation, as do imagination and fancy. This presents some problems in explication. First, Keats was not very consistent in his use of either term. Secondly, proposing that Keats’s attitude changes in a sense of trending from A to B is difficult because of the

short period of his productive life. One way to understand Keats's use of these terms is to seek examples from the same poem or from poems written at very nearly the same time. Yet even in poems separated by two years, numerous similarities occur, such as: pastoral locations, "meadows," "stream," and "hill-side" in "Nightingale"; and "dusky space," "mighty oaks," and "green-hill's side" in "Sleep," for example. The similarity of themes like these is striking in comparing Keats's early and later work. In his late 1819 "Nightingale," the usage indicates that, even if he had read Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817), he was not significantly affected by it. We have a further insight into Keats's appreciation of Coleridge from his journal-length letter to his brother, dated 14 February – 3 May 1819. Keats describes an accidental meeting with Coleridge and describes Coleridge's voice as he would later describe the progressive movement of the nightingale's song: "I heard his voice as he came towards me—I heard it as he moved away—I had heard it all the interval" (*Letters* II, 88-89).

This description shows the garrulous Coleridge at his most preacherly, holding forth on a range of topics to a rapt audience. Keats does not criticize, nor does he fawn, and he certainly does not mention the words fancy or imagination in a list so wide-ranging as to include "mermaids."<sup>33</sup> Leon Waldoff points out that, "In Keats's poetry the imagination is frequently depicted as driven by winged steeds" (175). Waldoff continues

In 'Sleep and Poetry,' for example, the longest poem in Keats's first volume,

*Poems* (1817), and typical of the early verse in characterizing the imagination as

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<sup>33</sup> Coleridge recalls the meeting differently (and in 1832, thirteen years after the meeting took place): "A loose, not well-dressed youth, met Mr. Green and me in Mansfield Lane. Green knew him and spoke. It was Keats. He was introduced to me, and stayed a minute or so. After he had gone a little, he came back and said, 'Let me carry away the memory, Coleridge, of having pressed your hand.' There was death in his hand, I said to Green, when he was gone. Yet this was before the consumption showed itself" (*Romanticism: An Anthology*, 549). Note how Coleridge credits himself with winning the admiration of Keats, and of prophesying his death.

manly<sup>34</sup> and vigorous, the imagination is depicted as a charioteer crossing the skies, driven by ‘steeds with steamy manes.’ (11)

Yet, there are other characterizations of the imagination that are equally, if not more, revealing. Later in “Sleep and Poetry,” for example, we find “imagination” beautifully described, and as a female, in lines 264-69:

...All hail delightful hopes!  
As she was wont, th’imagination  
Into most lovely labyrinths will be gone,  
And they shall be accounted poet kings  
Who simply tell the most heart-easing things.  
O may these joys be ripe before I die.

If Keats, as I suggest, uses “fancy” and “imagination” interchangeably at this stage of his development, then is the imagination, as described here, as fickle as the fancy in “Nightingale”? The imagination is described as “gone,” whether pursued successfully or not by the poet, we must decide. As “she” slips down a labyrinth, obscuring her path, she seems more like fancy, the “deceiving elf,” and certainly not the “manly and vigorous” image mentioned by Waldoff. Next, I note that “heart-easing things” are not exactly the same as happy or joyful things. “Heart-easing,” in fact, implies a need for the heart to be restored from dis-ease<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> There is not much consistency in gendering in Keats’s poetry, however. In “Ode to a Nightingale,” “death” is male (“I have been half in love with easeful Death, / Call’d him soft names in many a mused rhyme” (52-53)). It is true that Keats genders “fancy” and sometimes “imagination” as female (“O sweet Fancy! Let her loose” (“Fancy” 9)), and “Imagination cannot freely fly / As she was wont of old” (“Sleep and Poetry” 164-65)). Death is clearly a powerful influence. While imagination may not be sought, and fancy may be ignored, death is inevitable. Fancy is always female, but (pace Waldoff) imagination is represented as male or female in different poems.

<sup>35</sup> In this sense, Keats’s use very much anticipates Arnold’s prescription for a poetry “from which men can derive enjoyment,” which suggests that men are in need of a palliative against the negative opposing forces,

Keats's early work was highly influenced by Spenser and standard mythology texts<sup>36</sup> he had read at Enfield School. The image of a charioteer borne by steamy-maned steeds of "Sleep and Poetry" is more of a youthful daydream, and adolescent<sup>37</sup> image, than an intellectual musing on the imagination and its subtle distinction from the fancy. As Keats begins to emphasize the affective mode of feelings, the poetry, such as the great odes, reflects a more complete array of felt experience.

Instances of chariots do appear in Keats's later poetry, for example, in "Nightingale" where the narrator wishes to escape "not charioted by Bacchus and his pards, / But on the viewless wings of Poesy" (32-33). "Bacchus and his pards," while mythological and symbolic, are familiarly taken as a hearty man in a chariot drawn by large animals. Here, however, Keats mentions the chariot only to reject it as a less suitable means of escape than poetry. We have shown how this early depiction of imagination is highly predictive of Keats's later description of the nightingale in the eponymous ode. Next I will consider

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called by Arnold in the same essay, "painful, not tragic" (*Norton Anthology of English Literature Volume E* (hereafter *Norton A-F*, 1376), in a distinction of considerable interest to Keats scholars. In tragedy, there is an opportunity for contrasting joy: "the more tragic the situation, the deeper becomes the enjoyment" (1375). This, of course, echoes Keats's poetic chiaroscuro, as expressed in "Ode on Melancholy":

Ay, in the very temple of Delight  
 Veil'd Melancholy has her Sovran shrine,  
 Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue  
 Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;  
 His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,  
 And be among her cloudy trophies hung. (25-30)

The enjoyment-enabling tragedy is Keats's aim, of course, yet melancholia seems to be a personal experience, rather than a general one, like Matthew Arnold calls for, that is "an excellent action," "powerfully appeal[ing] to the great primary human affections," and "eternally interesting" (*Norton E* 1376).

<sup>36</sup> According to two of Keats's major biographers, Amy Lowell (I, 40) and W. Jackson Bate (26), Keats was an avid reader of John Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary* an interest recollecting by Keats's schoolmate, Charles Cowden Clarke. Another biographer, Aileen Ward (417, n20), however, finds this to be a possible false memory of the seventy-three year old Clarke, who was anxious to recall childhood activities of Keats for an 1861 article.

<sup>37</sup> The word adolescent was first used by John Lydgate ca. 1430, according to the *OED*. It was later used famously by Laurence Sterne in *Tristram Shandy* (1759). Keats uses instead a complex metaphor: human life is "a large Mansion of Many Apartments [. . .] the infant or thoughtless Chamber [. . .] [then] the Chamber of Maiden-Thought. [. . .] This Chamber of Maiden-Thought becomes gradually darken'd and at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open... We are in a Mist" (*Letters* I 281).



*Endymion*, published in 1818, midway between the 1817 *Poems* and the 1820 collection that contains the odes.<sup>38</sup>

### *Endymion*

Keats adds a preface to the book length *Endymion* (1818), containing a rather apologetic regret—regret that “every error denot[es] a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished,” and that the poem’s “foundations are too sandy.” The full title of the work is *Endymion: A Poetic Romance* and it has an epigram, “Inscribed to the Memory of Thomas Chatterton.”<sup>39</sup> In the preface, Keats attributes the “thousand bitters” that the reader will find in the work to the “space of life between [boyhood and manhood] in which the soul is in a ferment” (*Poems* 102). The transitional position of *Endymion* is apparent in its equivocal attitude towards the contrast between fancy and imagination, as well as its movement from the passion of “Sleep and Poetry” to the dominant affect of emotion, here a midway compromise before the eventual affect of feeling in the odes.

Keats chose to write on the fable of Endymion, the young shepherd beloved of the moon, believing that the wide mythological scope was suitable for an expression of the major concepts of love, mortality, and “the growth of the imagination” (Bate 152). Keats set himself, as was his habit, a time-frame in which to complete the *Endymion* project.

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<sup>38</sup> The 1820 volume was titled *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems*, and it appeared in the summer. Bate calls it “in many ways, perhaps, the most remarkable single volume to be published by any poet during the past century and a half” (*John Keats* 650).

<sup>39</sup> Chatterton (1752-1770) was a figure of interest to many of the Romantic poets. A suicide at seventeen, he had successfully mimicked a medieval style. He adopted the pseudonym Thomas Rowley, supposedly a fifteenth-century monk whose work Chatterton submitted for review to, among others, Horace Walpole. Numerous people were taken in by Chatterton who, by the time Keats wrote *Endymion* was a romantic figure, a starving young poet dying in a garret room. Keats’s fascination with the story of Chatterton at this stage speaks to his naivety as well as his sensitivity.

He aimed for four thousand lines in six months. In an October letter to his friend Benjamin Bailey, written during the period of composition of *Endymion*, Keats reflects:

I have no right to talk [about “poetical fame”] until *Endymion* is finished—it will be a test, a trial of my Powers of Imagination and chiefly of my invention which is a rare thing indeed—by which I must make 4000 Lines of one bare circumstance and fill them with Poetry. [. . .] A long poem is a test of Invention which I take to be the Polar Star of Poetry, as Fancy is the Sails, and Imagination the Rudder. (*Letters I*, 169-70)

Clearly, here Keats distinguished between fancy and imagination. The sails of a ship are responsive to wind, a power beyond the crafting abilities of the sailor. If this is Keats’s metaphor for the fancy in poetry, it seems that he placed its value very high in the creative scheme because it is driven by destiny. Keats uses the word “wind” thirteen times in *Endymion*. The wind is also a popular metaphor for creative inspiration among the Romantic poets.<sup>40</sup> I will analyze these uses of “wind” for insights into his thoughts about the role of fancy. Allowing “wind” to be a synonym for “fancy” in the cases where it is clearly a metaphorical use, will level the respective number of usages of “fancy” versus “imagination” in this, his middle work. The sails, in their utter reliance upon the wind for their ability to take the vessel forward, to begin or continue a voyage, can be seen as metonyms for the wind.

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<sup>40</sup> For example, in the image of the Aeolian harp, in Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind,” and in this excerpt from Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* (1850 edition):

For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven  
Was blowing on my body, felt within  
A corresponding breeze, that gently moved  
With quickening virtue, but is now become  
A tempest... (33-37).

The relation between the sails and rudder, here, may be compared with the distinction Coleridge makes between the fancy and the imagination. The rudder determines the direction the vessel takes, the sails, relying on the wind, determine whether or not the vessel moves forward. Coleridge calls the secondary imagination a power which “coexist[s] with the conscious will [. . .] It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create” (*Biographia* 313). It is also “an echo” of primary imagination, defined by Coleridge as “the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM” (313).<sup>41</sup> So, if the rudder is a steering mechanism for a small craft which is controlled by the sailor, and the sails are fabric wind-collectors which can be manipulated to a certain extent by the sailor, we might extend the metaphor to the sailor himself, here the poet. His control is demonstrated in the optimization of whatever wind is available to steer his craft in a given direction by manipulating the rudder and adjusting the sails. If the fancy is the sails, as Keats states, he believes, like Coleridge, that it “has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites,” that is, the wind either blows and the vessel moves (work of art proceeds), or one is grounded for lack of windpower (no inspiration). He believes, as does Coleridge, that the imagination (like the rudder) “dissolves, diffuses, dissipates” in the sense of harnessing the wind energy (inspiration, a powerful Romantic trope) for guidance (toward one end product as distinct from another). The difference between the two men is in their relative valuation of the two powers: where Coleridge

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<sup>41</sup> As W. P. Albrecht points out, Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s concepts of the sublime have a religious edge, while those concepts in Keats and Hazlitt do not (188). This is suggestive that the religious overtones seen in Coleridge’s definition of the imagination may be a point of departure for Keats for whom nature and human thought reign (see the early sonnet, “O Solitude! If I must with thee dwell,” where “...and it sure must be / Almost the highest bliss of human-kind, / When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee” (12-14)). For Coleridge, the highest bliss would be communion with God, not with a kindred human spirit.

values imagination over fancy, Keats will come to value fancy more. In *Endymion*, I argue that Keats is refining his poetic valuation of fancy and imagination.

*Endymion* may be considered a transition for Keats, from his early work, mostly shorter poems on a specific theme, to his more mature works, relatively longer poems with complexities of meaning that have challenged critics for more than one hundred years. However, his early use of fancy seems to be consistent with later use, after the apparent confusion of the terms in *Endymion*.<sup>42</sup> There are several indications that support this argument. First, Keats carries over an early influence of Spenser in this transitional poem. The numerous uses of words like “bower,” and “grot” remind us that Spenser was key influence in Keats’s early work.<sup>43</sup> Though Keats had published his first volume of poetry, with only one overt Spenserian poem, there were other early works, such as the “tale of chivalry” entitled “Calidore,” and “Specimen of an Induction to a Poem” (both early 1815) which are reminiscent of Spenser. He also wrote a sonnet to Spenser (“Spenser, a jealous honorer of thine”, 1818).<sup>44</sup> In the last mentioned sonnet, Keats says, “The flower must drink the nature of the soil / Before it can put forth its blossoming” (11-12) in a reference to later poets’ reliance on the rich heritage of their predecessors, but metaphorically the lines may also be taken as referring to the aggregating power of fancy as described by Coleridge. By the 1820 volume, Keats has moved beyond his early indebtedness to Elizabethan era terms, and has developed a new, highly sensory, realistic

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<sup>42</sup> This return to fancy suggests that Keats, in his later work, becomes confident enough in his early estimation of fancy to move beyond the distinction and hierarchy established by Coleridge.

<sup>43</sup> His first poem is entitled “Imitation of Spenser” (1814; published in the 1817 *Poems*), and it is written in the stanzaic form of *The Faerie Queene*, used again by Keats only in “The Eve of St. Agnes,” written in early 1819.

<sup>44</sup> In addition to Keats’s indebtedness to Spenser for the cave and grot images in *Endymion*, Amy Lowell argues convincingly that Keats was greatly influenced by an early poem by Michael Drayton, *Endymion and Phoebe* (1594) (Lowell I, 321-339). Before Lowell, scholars did not believe Keats could have seen this rather rare work, but Lowell shows numerous instances of very similar usages, e.g. in the description of Mount Latmos, and suggests various ways Keats might have become acquainted with the work.

vocabulary and imagery. He has been influenced by Coleridge, Hazlitt, and Wordsworth. In that time, too, his refinement of the suitability of the fancy as the agent of poetic creativity evolves into a poetics, which ironically fuses the Coleridgian terms of fancy and imagination, but only for the brief intermediary period of *Endymion*. The significance of Keats's departure from the Coleridgian definitions will be fully realized in the 1820 volume. Secondly, in *Endymion*, there is a shift in affective stance, from passions to emotions. Passions can be seen as youthful affects and, according to Altieri, are "particular orientation[s] of emotion" (*Particulars* 48). The difference between emotions and passions is that the former places the agent within a larger narrative, and constructs an attitude, both of which characteristics may be seen as longer term engagements of the affect. Passions are self-realizing, future-oriented. They project an identity and then invest it with importance, a youthful affective characteristic. In "Lines on the Mermaid Tavern," for example, the poet passionately yearns to eventually be among the "souls of poets dead and gone," enjoying an as-yet unknown Elysium.

Again, I note that the transition in *Endymion* is a partial step in the evolution of Keats's poetics. The full importance of his growth will be seen in the great odes, where the affect of feeling compliments the philosophy of the fancy, and the poet no longer requires a narrative context for self-expression.

Finally, Keats continues to refine his sleep and dream images from the early "Sleep and Poetry," which extolled only poetry as being "higher beyond thought" than sleep, to a mature view in which the barrier between "visions" and "waking dreams" is not clearly drawn. According to Amy Lowell, some of the "sleepy images of Spenser's bed of Morpheus [from] the *Fairie Queene*" can be seen but, "Keats's [images] are at once

splendid, confused visions such as come on the verge of sleep, and auditory hallucinations of soothing sounds” (Lowell I, 350). Keats maintains this confusion of the moments between sleep and wakefulness most famously in “Ode to a Nightingale”: “Was it a vision or a waking dream?” (79). This building, or aggregating, of images is “fanciful,” to use the term as defined by Coleridge and refined by Keats. Why, then, does Keats use “imagination” and its forms more often than “fancy” in *Endymion*? I suggest that it is because this work was too important a publication for him to use a word which may have been depreciated by the authoritative Coleridge. In his letter to the George Keatses (16 April 1819), when Keats describes his meeting with Coleridge, he says that, among other subjects discussed, was that of “Poetical Sensation” (*Letters* II 89). It would be interesting to know what Coleridge said on that occasion about “Poetical Sensation.”<sup>45</sup>

In Book I of *Endymion*, there are three uses each of the words fancy and imagination, some more pertinent than others. An interesting passage occurs in the first stanza of the poem, where Keats sets up the philosophical context for the poem even before Endymion himself is mentioned. After beginning the poem with the now-familiar first line, “A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,” Keats again praises beauty, saying “Some shape of beauty

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<sup>45</sup> In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge speaks of the poet’s work in contrast with the painter’s: “[W]ith more than the power of the painter, the poet gives us the liveliest image of *succession with the feeling of simultaneousness*” (324, italics mine). The suggestion is that painting shows a slice of life captured at one instant; it is a plastic art. Keats will deal with this concept poetically in “Ode on a Grecian Urn.” Poetry, unlike painting, can follow a succession of events, describe changes, provide a retrospective analysis, or gaze into a constructed future – in short, create a narrative. Coleridge acknowledges the importance of fancy, as he defined it (“a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space”). When succession has “the feeling of simultaneousness,” the boundaries of time and space are broken. And, in an 1802 letter to William Sotheby, Coleridge states that “a great Poet must be, implicitly and explicitly, a profound Metaphysician. [. . .] He must have the *ear* of a wild Arab...the *eye* of a North American Indian...the *Touch* of a Blind Man feeling the face of a darling child” (*Major Works* 511; emphases original). So, Coleridge does acknowledge the importance of sensory acuity. Yet just a few lines later in the letter, he remarks, “I have read no French or German writer who appears to me to have had a *heart* sufficiently pure & simple to be capable of this or anything like it” (511). This is a rather backhanded compliment to those “pure & simple” writers who are able to metaphysically apply their keen sensory perceptions in their work. It is by way of saying, “If only sophisticated European writers were as simple and untroubled as you...” By the 1820 volume, we will see Keats, fully confident, calling a fancy a fancy.

moves away the pall / From our dark spirits” (12-13). Then, he compares earthly beauty with that projected beauty imagined by us for an afterlife:

And such too is the grandeur of the dooms  
We have imagined for the mighty dead;  
All lovely tales that we have heard or read:  
An endless fountain of immortal drink,  
Pouring unto us from the heaven’s brink.  
Nor do we merely feel these essences  
For one short hour; (20-26)

In this use, Keats provides imagination with a predictive and supernatural power; it is our lasting comfort in facing the fate of the “mighty dead.” Here, the use is neither fancy nor imagination in the Coleridge sense; it is not a bridge between reason and understanding or between the senses and understanding. Rather, it is an extrapolative method for addressing those unanswerable questions, without sensory input and beyond reasoning. It is approaching the simple vernacular use of “imagination” today, to mean the mental ability to construct images of those unlike anything encountered in ordinary life.

The next instance of one of the words of interest in Book I occurs in the Hymn to Pan, sung by a chorus of shepherds. It follows another presage to the “wake or sleep” motif of the odes, “The squatted hare while in half sleeping fit,” (265) -- a usage which extends the twilight confusion of partial sleep beyond humans to the animal kingdom. Then, six lines later, still within the Hymn, we find the expression “And gather up all fancifullest shells” (271). The word, fancifullest, is highly interesting, connoting either those shells which are most obviously produced by mental processes alone (as opposed to

the sea-work), or the shells fullest of fancy and containing a pearl, as it were, of pure creativity. It could also be an adaptation of fanciest, or most ornate, in which case it is of considerably less interest to us in our study of fancy, as distinguished from imagination. In considering the context of the passage, the “Hymn to Pan” section of *Endymion*, Book I, it is clear that the emphasis is on the shells which are most associated with pleasure-producing human mental processes. This is the third of the five stanzas in the “Hymn to Pan,” and, in it, the chorus calls Pan “Thou, to whom every faun and satyr flies,” an entity which receives the “services” of these beings, including “surprise,” “saving,” “mysterious enticements,” “bewilderment” of shepherds, “breathless treading” and the “gathering up all fancifullest shells” (I. 263-271). If the satyrs and fauns serve Pan, god of shepherds and named by Bacchus,<sup>46</sup> and wish to please him with “mysterious enchantments” and “fancifullest shells” (which he, in turn, will “tumble into Naiads’ cells”), those shells must be more than merely ornate or Keats would not emphasize their importance in the mythological context. More than carrying an inherent fanciness, they are rather more magical, “hidden,” and “fantastic.” They are the shells which result from godlike creative thought. Here we see Keats’s use of fancy approaching Coleridge’s definition in *Biographia Literaria* of the primary imagination. That is, it is “a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of the creation” (*Major Works* 313).

Following the chorus to Pan, *Endymion* ignores the “imagination” of the other shepherds, who are speculating on immortality while they wander in an expectation of

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<sup>46</sup> According to Lemprière’s *Classical Dictionary*, Keats’s first and strongest source for mythological facts, “The worship of Pan [god of shepherds] was well established, particularly in Arcadia, where he gave oracles on Mount Lycæus” (477). In an 1885 essay, “The Critic as Artist,” Oscar Wilde recognizes Keats’s use of Lemprière: “I feel that the use Keats made of Lemprière’s Dictionary is of far more value to us than Professor Max Müller’s treatment of the same mythology as a disease of language” (419).



Elysium. The passage is, I believe, significant in the sense of affect as well as in the use of imagination:

...Thus all out-told  
Their fond imaginations,--saving him  
Whose eyelids curtain'd up their jewels dim,  
Endymion: yet hourly had he striven  
To hide the cankering venom, that had riven  
His fainting recollections. Now indeed  
His senses had swoon'd off: he did not heed  
The sudden silence, or the whispers low (392-399).

The “fainting recollections” and the state of swooning off are the stuff of fancy, and the “fond imaginations” that of active thought. The other shepherds had spoken of their dreams for Elysium—that they would meet with long-dead loved ones, etc., but Endymion with eyes shut, swoons, and his senses fail him to such an extent that he hears no whispers and so is not aware of the silence between whispers. Again, we find Keats contrasting sound and silence, only to repackage them, so to speak, as two facets of the same perception, sound and un-sound. What, then, is the difference between the “imagination” of the other shepherds, and this swooning and fainting of Endymion? Are “fond imaginations” the same as “wishful thinking”? The meaning seems near to that. While Keats may have meant “wished imaginations,” in fact, he did not say so. The difference between Endymion’s “swooning” and the “fond imaginations” of the other shepherds seems to lie in consciousness. When we fondly imagine, we have agency; in

swoon, we are passive recipients of an unconsidered desire. The difference is important in understanding Keats's evolving poetics.

In swooning, fainting, or sleeping, in altered states of consciousness and in unconsciousness, both the reason-to-understanding link of the Coleridgian imagination and the senses-to-understanding link of fancy are inoperative. In the unconscious state, active agency is removed. In Altieri's sense, swooning would be more like mood, an affect defined as a type of feeling in which subjectivity becomes an element of the environment. Subjectivity is certainly diffuse, if not absent, in a state of swoon. This state is a less natural version of the peaceful sleep of "Sleep and Poetry" (where the poet asks what is "more full of visions" than Sleep, and answers, "Poesy" (10; 47)). Here, Endymion's trance is cause for concern among his friends: he is described later in the stanza as one "who on the earth had never slept," "dead-still as a marble man," and "frozen." This passivity is a feminine characteristic. His sister, Peona, is so concerned for his welfare that she guides him to another Spenserian grotto to recover.<sup>47</sup> It is in this bower, that Endymion tells Peona of the spell cast over him previously to keep him in a trance.

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<sup>47</sup> This is similar to an earlier scene in *Endymion* which presages a later work, the ode "To Autumn":

In tender pressure. And as a willow *keeps*  
A *patient watch* over the stream that creeps  
Windingly by it, so the quiet maid  
Held her in peace; so that the whispering blade  
Of grass, a *wailful gnat*, a *bee* bustling  
Down in the bluebells, or a wren light rustling  
Among sere leaves and twigs, might all be heard (I. 447-52).

I have highlighted the prophetic usages. There are more, which do not involve exact word usage, but are suggestive nonetheless. "To Autumn" features a "wailful choir" of "gnats"; a gleaner that "keeps" her head "across a brook" (as see "stream" here); and "gathering swallows" for a rustling wren; and the larger image of a watchful woman (in "To Autumn," the season personified; in *Endymion*, the concerned sister). This is not to mention that Keats subtly places Endymion in the season of autumn, when the leaves are sere. There are significant differences, too. The active entity in "To Autumn" is the symbol of the season, and her activity must be contrasted with Endymion's passivity. He swoons, has "fainting recollections"; she conspires, loads, blesses, swells, sits, gleans, and watches.

Keats speaks of conscious and unconscious states in numerous works. In the very early (1816) epistle “To Charles Cowden Clarke,” Keats suggests that he composes verse in a sort of suspended animation: “Just like that bird am I in loss of time, / Whene’er I venture on the stream of rhyme,” and resumes, “I slowly sail, scarce knowing my intent” (15-16; 18). In the first stanza of *Endymion*, sleep is one of the refuges of art:

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:  
Its loveliness increases; it will never  
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep  
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep  
Full of sweet dreams... (1-4)

Sleep here suggests escape, yet the intimation of dreams (and the recollection of the realism of a world awake) provides the opening for a typical Keatsian contrast. By line 8, and through line 13, we find negative waking images: “despondence,” “inhuman dearth / Of noble natures,” “gloomy days,” “unhealthy and o’er-darken’d ways,” and “our dark spirits.”

The previous “trance” appears to have been drug-induced by a powerful supernatural entity. In describing the trance, Endymion speaks of “poppies,” “a magic bed of sacred ditamy,”<sup>48</sup> and the intervention of the god “Morpheus” (555; 559). He describes the “enchantment that afterwards befell” him as “but a dream; yet such a dream” that its like had never been explained. Then, we arrive at another use of “imaginary,” though one which I consider minor. Endymion sees himself “spreading imaginary pinions wide”

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<sup>48</sup> Hermione de Almeida, in *Romantic Medicine and John Keats* (1990), finds, “Ditamy retained its place in the folk pharmacopoeia for a variety of purposes: both white and bastard ditamy grow wild in Britain and in Keats’s time the plant was used as an antidote for animal venom and as a remedy for plague. But ditamy was also sacred to the moon goddess, Diana” (165).

(586) as he dreams he is flying and is afraid to look down. This adjective merely denotes the tertiary lack of reality in the situation. First, he is relating a dream, not living an adventure. Secondly, the dream is one of an impossible human activity—flight. Thirdly, within the relating of this dream, Endymion realizes that the wings are not real but merely “imaginary.” This removal from reality is necessary to the poem, however, as Endymion proceeds soon after to describe his meeting with the moon goddess.

It is in this recollection of the encounter the word “fancy” is used: “That, when I think thereon, my spirit clings / And plays about its fancy, till the stings / Of human neighborhood envenom all” (620-22). Here, we see Keats aligning himself with fancy, and using it as a refuge against the poison of “human neighborhood.” This is oddly prophetic of T. S. Eliot in *Prufrock*’s last line: “Till human voices wake us, and we drown.” It is an early glimpse of Keats as a harbinger of Modernism. It adds an element of Keatsian adolescence as experienced, to *Prufrock*’s adolescence as expressed. Additionally, for our purposes here, it extends a fanciful experience in time.<sup>49</sup>

Fancy takes a different meaning for Endymion in its next usage in Book I, continuing the impression of affective transition. He has told his sister about his dream-state adventures with the moon goddess, only to have her criticize his dream and rebuke him,

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<sup>49</sup> A fancy need not be, as Coleridge suggests, “passive,” and associated with “mechanical memory” (*Major Works* 212). Here, Keats seeks fancy as a “bower,” a shelter from those human qualities (memory, sensory perception) which Coleridge considers basic to fancy. Yet, Keats never fully realizes the escapism suggested by the word “bower.” I would point out the contrast between the two poets’ approaches to the concept of a bower. For Keats, as in the opening stanza of *Endymion*, the bower is “quiet for us” only until the intrusion of worldly worries such as “despondence,” “dearth,” and “dark spirits.” For Coleridge, in “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison” (1797), the poet is incapacitated and yet is able to accompany his friends on a walk by his mental tracing of their steps past the “springy heath,” to a “roaring dell,” even mentally recalling “that walnut tree,” “the ancient ivy,” and “those fronting elms” (*Romanticism: An Anthology* (hereafter *Romanticism*) 551-52). In this poem, incidentally, Coleridge makes use of “memory emancipated from time and space”—his definition of the lower faculty of fancy—to achieve what he would consider a work of the imagination, for its reasonable evocation of the pleasure Charles (Lamb) and the others would be taking in a physical trapeze of which his fanciful bower-bound fantasy was merely a shadow.

saying that it is a shame he could “achieve / No higher bard than simple maidenhood” (725-6). She observes, “how light / Must dreams themselves be; seeing they’re more slight / than the mere nothing that engenders them!” (754-56), in a diminution of the faculty of *creation ex nihilo*. Endymion responds by saying that his dream was “No merely slumberous phantasm” (771). He distinguishes between mere dream fantasies and the sterner stuff of a creative dream-like experience. He goes on to say that his dream fancies:

...are true,  
And never can be born of atomies  
That buzz about our slumbers, like brain-flies,  
Leaving us fancy-sick. (850-853)

So, in arguing with Peona about the validity of dream-states, Endymion defends them, saying that they are not merely atomies (from Shakespeare’s use, either motes or skeletons)<sup>50</sup> which leave one mentally feverish. While being made fancy-sick, is *not* desirable, that is *not* the type of fancy recalled by Endymion in his dream. It is predictive of his “Adieu, the fancy cannot cheat so well / As she is famed to do, deceiving elf” passage in “Nightingale” (73-4), in the sense of relating failure in a negative mission. Dream fancies never leave one sick, just as fancy does not cheat.

The care-worn human condition is described in *Endymion* too. The possessive form of the word imagination is used in a strong prophecy of the nightingale ode in this passage from Book II:

But this is human life: the war, the deeds,

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<sup>50</sup> See *Henry IV, Part 2*, V.iv.28. (*The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. Ed. David Bevington. New York: Longman, 1997).

The disappointment, the anxiety,  
Imagination's struggles, far and nigh,  
All human: [. . .]  
To make us feel existence, and to shew  
How quiet death is. (153-159).

Compare this passage about human travails with "The weariness, the fever, and the fret/ Here, where men sit and hear each other groan" ("Nightingale" 23-24). The contrast of a troubled life with a "quiet death" is also echoed strongly in "Nightingale": "Now more than ever seems it rich to die, / To cease upon the midnight with no pain" (55-56), as well as the "easeful death" of line 52. The following lines of *Endymion*, too, contain prophetic images which will be elaborated on further and more richly in "Nightingale." For example, "I can see nought earthly worth my compassing" (*Endymion* II. 161-62), suggests Nightingale's "I cannot see what flowers are at my feet" (41). Further, the allusion to "the Orphean lute" in line 64 of *Endymion* may be seen as a basis for the expansion of the musical theme in Nightingale. The plentitude of these recurring images and constructions suggests, I believe, Keats's growing maturity in his transitional poem. There is no parallel reflection back to "Sleep and Poetry." He has left behind the adolescent optimism of that poem: "If I can bear / The overwhelming sweets, 'twill bring me to the fair / Visions of all places: a bowery nook" (61-63). In *Endymion*, "The Olympian eagle's vision, is dark, / Dark as the parentage of chaos" (Book II 911).

Another important double usage follows in Book II. Endymion has followed a butterfly-nymph to a body of water where:

...The wanderer,

Holding his forehead, to keep off the burr  
Of smoldering fancies, patiently sat down;  
And, while beneath the evening's sleepy frown  
Glow-worms began to trim their starry lamps,  
Thus breath'd he to himself: Whoso encamps  
To take a fancied city of delight,  
O what a wretch is he! (137-44).

Collapsed at the water's edge, Endymion cools his temples to ward off overwhelming, feverish mental activity. In this case, mental activity is a rather distracting fancy, which aligns with fancy as an intruding power on a passive individual. He then observes that when a dreamer sets out to find a satisfying, delightful image, he is destined to disappointment partly because the fancied city is an illusion. This passage allows Keats to take a philosophical stance that is already hinted at in his early writing. In the sonnet "To one who has been long in city pent," for example, Keats recommends nature, and relaxation in a natural setting, to the nervous, fatigued city dweller. This sentiment comes to full expression in "Nightingale," with the contrast between natural restfulness of the bird's song with the restiveness of humans and their endeavors.

Endymion ends his speech to the moon goddess, Cynthia, and is, in turn addressed by a disembodied voice that tells him to descend into the underworld to achieve immortality.

This descent is described by the poet-narrator:

...Now, far in the deep abyss,  
It seems an angry lightning, and doth hiss  
Fancy into belief: anon it leads

Though winding passages (II. 232-35).

The negative images of “abyss,” “angry lightning,” and “hiss” set the tone for a dark implication for “fancy” here. If the serpentine hiss is what coaxes Endymion to believe what was only fancied before, we have an urge to warn him from the brink of the abyss: “Don’t listen!” Much hinges on the term “belief.” Is it, in Keats’s mind, dangerous to be lured into believing in a fancy? This is still the 1818 publication, where Keats was developing his distinction between fancy and imagination, and moving from an affect of passion (“All hail delightful hopes!” (“Sleep and Poetry” 264)) through one of a more considered emotional investment in identity (“What merest whim, / Seems all this poor endeavour after fame” (*Endymion* I 846-47)), to a realignment of nature and sensation in the affect of the feelings (“My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains / My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk” (10-2)). It is somewhat baffling that Keats uses “imagination” more often than “fancy” in “Sleep and Poetry.” Had he used “imagination” here, we would be justified in referring to his roughly-contemporaneous letter which describes the “holiness of the heart’s affection and the truth of the imagination” (November 1817). Here, though, I see Keats as a poet in transition, and the confusion in terms is a facet of his changing perspective on creative and aesthetic processes.

In Book III of *Endymion*, we find the passionate shepherd roaming in search of Cynthia. She finds him and comforts him, and the narrator fills in the reader about the ordeal Endymion has survived:

...Far had he roam’d,

With nothing save the hollow vast, that foam’d



Above, around, and at his feet; save things

More dead than Morpheus' imaginings:

Old rusted anchors, helmets, breast-plates large. (III. 119-123)

These medieval objects are “more dead” because they were never alive, they are tools forged by humans from inorganic metals. The imaginings of Morpheus, on the other hand, are constructed by human thought, and their validity is proportional to the mental capacity of the one who, in turn, imagines them. Note that our imaginings of the imaginings of Morpheus suggests the secondary imagination of Coleridge. Here we find a negative use of “imaginings,” to offset the negative “fancy” of the previous passage. Deader than sleep's thoughts, says the narrator, are the objects Endymion was able to turn to in his lengthy sojourn, and while they are more alive than anchors and helmets, they are distinct from living, breathing, sensing humans or their dreams. The image does not quite ring true, however, because, helmets, etc., while hardly comforting or living, are physically real, measurable. They have primary qualities in addition to secondary qualities such as colors, temperature, and odors.<sup>51</sup>

Near the end of Book III, Endymion meets a series of gods in a dream: Neptune, Cytherea, Amphitrite, and Thetis.<sup>52</sup> The experience overwhelms Endymion: “He could not bear it—shut his eyes in vain; / Imagination gave a dizzier pain” (1005-09). On the one hand, by shutting his eyes against the awful visions, Endymion may be seen to exclude the senses, thus excluding fancy in the Coleridgian sense. On the other, he shuts them “in vain”—another Keatsian expression of failure, thus suggesting that the senses

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<sup>51</sup> The distinction between primary and secondary qualities is explored masterfully in P. M. S. Hacker's *Appearance and Reality* (1987), and argumentatively in Daniel C. Dennett's *Consciousness Explained* (1991). Generally, primary qualities are measurable features like extension (physical dimensions) and motion, while sensory input and the qualia are secondary.

<sup>52</sup> For the sources of these mythological allusions, see John Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary*.

are not so easily excluded, and that their power for Keats (here the imaginative power) is able to cause dizzying pain though the physical eyes are shut. The pain that is present without sensation, or even sensory input, is psychological pain. Following this passage, we find Endymion sinking to Neptune's feet, crying for his "lovely mistress," and hearing "her voice," indicating his senses are active in the dream state. A "pitying crowd" of Nereids surrounds Endymion, and Cynthia's voice speaks to his "inward senses" while he sleeps. What are "inward senses"? I suggests that here Keats anticipates the concept of the unconscious mind.<sup>53</sup>

Late in Book IV, there occur several uses of the terms of interest. Two are very suggestive uses and, after one rather trivial use of "fancies," there is a dual use of the terms "fancies" and "imagin'd" in succeeding lines. Endymion is returned to earth, to Mount Latmos, by a phalanx of whispering fairies who remark upon celestial bodies as they pass.

At this point in the story, Endymion has just realized his error in dabbling with the supernatural, saying, "There never liv'd a mortal man, who bent / His appetite beyond his natural sphere, / But starv'd and died" (646-48). Here Keats seems to be wary of any suggestion of belief, especially in the supernatural. The first use is a warning: "The mountaineer / Thus strove by fancies vain and crude to clear / his briar'd path to some tranquility" (722-24). Here fancies are in vain as was the shutting of the eyes in Book III. This occurrence seems to treat fancies synonymously with "tricks." It is vaguely prophetic of the use in "Nightingale": "The fancy cannot cheat so well," in the sense of an implied failure in distracting the subject from undesired issues: here, an obstructed

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<sup>53</sup> In Romantic poetry, there is a wide tradition of creative inspiration occurring during sleep or a drugged state. Coleridge said that he composed "Kubla Khan" "in a reverie brought on by two grains of opium" (*Romanticism* 462).

path; in “Nightingale,” the ability to escape from oneself. The next clustered use is of considerable interest. The lines are spoken by Cynthia to Endymion, and tell of her obsession with him, as well as her difficulty in bridging the mortal/immortal gap.

When yet a child, I heard that kisses drew  
Favor from thee, and so I kisses gave  
To the void air, bidding them find out love:  
But when I came to feel how far above  
All fancy, pride, and fickle maidenhood,  
All earthly pleasure, all imagin'd good,  
Was the warm tremble of a devout kiss, -- (738-44)

Here, fancy and imagination seem to be in the same predicament – being lower than the physical experience, one might say sensation, “tremble” of a kiss. In the series of experiences which are lower than a “devout kiss,” we note an apparent chronology. Fancy, based on the senses, is earliest, then pride and the “fickle maidenhood” of youth. “Earthly pleasure” suggests adulthood, and “imagined good” a more mature experience. “Pride” is one of the deadly sins, and we might ask, does Keats place “fancy” and “imagin'd good” in the same listing with any deeper purpose in mind. Pride is a failure of the conscious individual in its dealings with others. Fancy and imagination, however, are creative exercises of the mind; they only become a subject for others when they assume a role in art.

Cynthia continues to address Endymion later in the same stanza, in the last occurrence of the words of interest in the poem:

...Believe, believe

Me, dear Endymion, were I to weave  
With my own fancies garlands of sweet life,  
Thou shouldst be one of all. Ah, bitter strife! (748-51)

By saying that Endymion “shouldst be one of all,” Cynthia recognizes that what should be cannot be. The barrier between man and goddess is impassible. She goes on to say, “I am forbidden - / Indeed I am – thwarted, affrighted, chidden, / By things I trembled at, and gorgon wrath” (752-54). The above passage echoes the use of hissing “fancy into belief” of Book II, line 234. “To weave” with one’s “own fancies garlands of sweet life” implies a creation more similar to Coleridge’s definition of “primary imagination,” that is “the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM” (*Biographia Literaria* 313).<sup>54</sup>

A note in the Stillinger collection alerts us that this last usage carries another implication. The original manuscript had “My own imaginations to sweet life” for line 750. One explanation for the editorial change may be simply metrical. By using the shorter word, Keats gives himself syllabic room, so to speak, to insert “garland” and the leading word “with,” which carries the meaning from the preceding line. On the other hand, if I am correct in positing that Keats was developing a new significance for the word fancy, I can see other ramifications. The possibility of the goddess being able, by means of fancy, to weave garlands of “sweet life” is resonant with Keats’s concept of

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<sup>54</sup> The primary and secondary imagination for Coleridge “differ only in degree” (313). Both have a religious significance. But, for Keats, there was no religious theme, except in his devotion to poetry. Bate indicates that the matter of Keats’s lack of religious belief, which he describes as “Agnosticism” was long left undiscussed, and “one senses uneasiness among some of the Victorians” in the absence of religious references and themes in Keats’s work (Bate 133). Just a month or so before he died, Keats said to his friend, Joseph Severn, “I think a malignant being must have power over us—over whom the Almighty has little or no influence” (Bate 689). Even *in extremis*, Keats only had the solace of an impotent god, one who “could not cheat so well as *he* is fam’d to do.”

“the truth of the imagination.” It is a psychological creation *ex nihilo*, producing a reality through a mental action. By making room for the concrete image of “garlands,” the published line completes what the manuscript line merely attempted. This appears to be Keats’s elevation of fancy to the role Coleridge had reserved for the secondary imagination. It is the same elevation of fancy which will characterize the odes.

I will close my argument with a comparison of Coleridge’s definition of the imagination, both primary and secondary, and a suggestion of how Keats’s definition of fancy is the agnostic’s answer to them. Then, I will consider “Ode to a Nightingale” from the last book of poetry Keats published, and illustrate how his alliance with the fancy is completed as his poetics has evolved. I will go on to show how the rather humanistic use of fancy, with its implications for sensations, over the religiously-inspired “imagination” has made Keats’s work, especially the later fancy-laden poems, more influential for later writers, and more adaptable to the poetics of Modernism than Coleridge’s high-church “imagination.”

In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge famously distinguishes between two forms of imagination:

The imagination then I consider either as primary or secondary. The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, coexisting with the conscious will, yet still as identical as with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is

rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

*(Major Works 313)*

Note the frequent allusions to a deity (e.g. “living power,” “prime agent,” “eternal act of creation,” “the infinite I AM”). These attributes are not exclusively assigned to primary imagination, but carry their complements in the description of secondary imagination (“echo of the former,” “differing only in degree,” “re-create,” “to idealize and unify,” “essentially vital” – the last as distinct from “fixed and dead” physical objects). Keats has no such contempt for physical objects, and no such religious context. Even in some of his least realistic poetry like “Sleep and Poetry” where he studies the abstract state of sleep (still in Keats’s time a mysterious coma, not yet enlightened by Freud and following psychologists decades later) in terms of real objects: bees, musk-roses, flowers, islands, leafiness, eyes, poppies, willows, tresses, and sunrise (all in the first stanza). When he compares sleep with the loftier enterprise of writing poetry, he again uses the language of objects: countries, fountains, grass, apples, strawberries, shoulders, lips, doves, robes, flowers, trees, almond blossoms, cinnamon, gems, and shells. He does not merely “re-create,” but associates natural objects with complex psychological and aesthetic matters. For example, he says, “Life is the rose’s hope while yet unblown” and “in truth we’ve had / Strange thunders from the potency of song” (“Sleep and Poetry” 90; 230-31). In this sense, he is using Coleridgean fancy, the bridge between the senses and understanding, to inductively explain psychological processes, and is doing so considerably in advance of the psychological revolution of the early twentieth century.

The transition from imagination to fancy as a dominant poetic device in Keats will be completed in the 1820 volume, which includes the great odes of 1819. In the later poems, Keats moves from an aesthetics of passion and emotion to one of feelings. I will analyze “Nightingale” next and place it in the context of fancy and feelings.

### “Ode to a Nightingale”

I will focus on one of the “great odes,” written in 1819, and published in 1820, in the volume entitled *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems*. At this stage, I argue that Keats has nearly completed the transition from the appeal of the imagination to the charm of fancy. He is also completing the affective movement from passions, through emotions, to a stance best considered as asymptotically approaching the feelings. The affects of emotions and feelings are both present in “Ode to a Nightingale,” and the other odes, and feelings are ascendant. In the 1820 volume, he uses fancy in all its forms twenty times, as against a single mention of imagination (in “Hyperion”). Keats, by this time, has no doubt of his talent, yet he has “very low hopes” for the commercial success of the volume and, despite symptoms of the consumption of which he would die the following year, told Charles Brown, “This shall be my last trial; not succeeding, I shall try what I can do in the Apothecary line” (*Letters* II, 298). I think it is significant that he had a practical plan as an alternative to poetry. It is indicative of his intellectual maturity that he recognized that a life of poetry may not be possible for him. At the time he wrote *Endymion*, he had set up a metaphor for the creative processes wherein “Fancy is the Sails, and Imagination the Rudder” (*Letters* I, 169-70). Now, only a year later, the vessel needs no rudder, the direction is clear, the Fancy can serve all navigational needs, even

when “she” cheats. I have chosen “Ode to a Nightingale”<sup>55</sup> for several reasons: while it seems to put fancy in a questionable position, it actually strongly favors fanciful images; it contrasts man with nature, to the advantage of the latter, in a clear statement typical of second-generation Romanticism as opposed to the older Romantic, Coleridge; and, it uses synaesthetic metaphor in an aggrandizement of sensory, sensational, and fanciful imagery.

From the perspective of the aesthetics of the affects, the poem presents a complex of the emotions and the feelings. Emotions are, according to Altieri, “affects involving the constructions of attitudes that ... establish a particular cause and so situate the agent within a narrative and generate some kind of action or identification” (*Particulars 2*). “Feelings,” however, “are elemental affective states characterized by an imaginative engagement in the immediate processes of sensation” (*Particulars 2*). The discriminators, then, between emotions and feelings are that the former have more purposeful design (they construct attitudes, establish causes, situate agents, and generate action) whereas the latter are more experiential (they are elemental, immediate, and engage sensations). In “Ode to a Nightingale,” the feelings expressed are a longing for immortality, especially through fame as a poet. It is a yearning that his own song be similar to the bird’s, in that it is able to avoid the “weariness the fever, and the fret” of human existence. Had this been a poem in which the dominant affective mode was emotion, that contrast between birdsong and poet’s song would have been presented as one of identification and propose action: “Let us be, then, like the bird; singing in joy

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<sup>55</sup> The manuscript of this ode, as well as the poem as it was printed in *Annals of the Fine Arts* (July 1819), gives the title as “Ode to *the* Nightingale.” According to Gittings, “It is likely that the substitution of ‘a’ for ‘the’ in the 1820 printing was made by the publishers” (66). Other manuscript-publication anomalies will be cited as they occur.



without end.” As the poem is written, all attempts to escape man’s destiny are denied as soon as they are considered. I could use opiates, but I won’t. I could get drunk (“might drink”), but I’ll not go with Bacchus. I could get lost in poetry itself, but on earth “there is no light.” I could die (“leave the world unseen”), but then, to all music I would “become a sod.” So all active paths of escape are blocked; only the temporary thrills of sensation remain, some enjoyable, some not (“aches,” “numbness,” “pains,” “light-winged,” fading, pining, “pouring forth,” “ecstasy,” “forlorn,” “plaintive”).

Keats has given his view of the poet in letters, saying that he hates poetry that “has a palpable design... Poetry should be great & unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one’s soul and does not startle it or amaze it” (*Letters* I 224). Emotions seem to indicate a palpable design, but are affective designs based on reader response, or are they designs which are consistent with the natural care taken in writing a poem, creating a work of art? I argue for the later, and for Keats’s maturity. He was far from the naïve belief that poetry should “just happen.” In the later poems, as he moves from imaginative creation to fanciful sensations and from passionate exuberance to emotional and felt experience and expression, he seems to focus strongly on sensory experience, the sensations, and heightened sensitivity. “Nightingale,” I argue, is a poem of the emotions merged with feelings.

As a poem of emotions, the attitude constructed is one of observing the human condition, especially that of the mortal artist, in contrast with that of the natural and immortal musician, the bird. According to Vendler, “In choosing music as [this poem’s] artifact, the ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ decides for beauty alone, without truth content” (*Odes* 78). Music without words is not subject to a belief system. The particular cause in

“Nightingale” is an emotional attachment to the bird, even though “the dull brain perplexes and retards.” Thus, the organ of imagination, the brain, gives way in this poem to the emotional investments of the heart (“My heart aches,” “drowsy numbness pains,” “envy,” “being too happy”), and the sad references to the human condition in the third stanza: “I have been half in love with easeful Death,” “In such an ecstasy!” “the sad heart of Ruth,” “she stood in tears,” and “thy plaintive anthem.” This cause of wistful comparison with the bird situates the agent within a narrative: a man, observing the apparent inequities of the joys of natural artists versus human ones. Finally, in completion of the Altieri requisites for the emotions, the identification is, of course, self-recognition via identification with the bird. After a fanciful desire to join the bird (“I will fly to thee, / [ . . . ] on the viewless wings of Poesy”), the poet becomes resigned to the inevitability of human destiny (“Toll me back from thee to my sole self!”).

As a poem of feelings, the imaginative engagements (here fanciful, a la Keats) are passages which feature a projection of environment for the bird or for the poet (“Lethwards had sunk,” “in some melodious plot,” “draught of vintage! that hath been / Cool’d a long age in the deep-delved earth,” “country green, / Dance, and Provençal song,” “the warm South,” and “the forest dim,” for example). Altieri calls feelings “elemental affective states,” however, and I would define elemental as sensory, or near-sensory, not as basic or simple. In the examples given, I would note the senses, respectively, as kinesthetic (“sunk”), auditory (“melodious”), gustatory (“wine”), synaesthetic (visual – color, kinesthetic – dance, and auditory – song), tactile (“warm”), and visual (“dim”). The Altieri definition calls for “an engagement in the immediate processes of sensation,” as well. This aspect of feelings is presented in “Nightingale” in passages such as, “My

heart aches,” “drowsy numbness,” and in the numerous suggestions of a drugged or drunken state (“as though of hemlock I had drunk,” “Emptied some dull opiate to the drains,” “for a draught of vintage,” “purple-stained mouth,” “leave the world unseen,” “embalmed darkness,” “half in love with easeful Death,” and “seems it rich to die”).

Some of the passages that express feelings can also be taken to express emotions. In fact, these affects are more similar than different in some aspects. Altieri points out the efforts of modernist poets to “set the feelings against the emotions,” and notes that “feeling activates ... the objects of sensation and ... elicits a momentary intentionality concerned less with interpreting itself than with expanding ... its possibilities” (*Particulars* 50). Consider the passage “My heart aches,” the first three words of “Nightingale,” and words, I suggest, are common to both the categories of emotion and feeling. The emotional interpretation of the passage is one of contemplated suffering and sorrow; from the viewpoint of the feelings, it is one of unanalyzed physical pain. This distinction is one of imagination versus fancy, as well as emotion versus feelings.

In my analysis of “Nightingale,” I will not follow the stanzas, in order, first through last, taking to heart Vendler’s comment that “Stanza one may indeed be the first written, but may have been the last conceived” (“Experiential” 591). This stanza-by-stanza analysis was appropriate for *Endymion* because there is a clear biographical record of the orderly composition of that poem, and because Keats conceived of that work as a whole prior to the book-by-book composition (see *Letters* I, 134, 142, 149, and 166). In fact, the concept of a mixed chronology of stanzas is a reflection in small of Coleridgian fancy, “emancipated from the order of time and space.” Harold Bloom tends to read “Nightingale” from first line to last, crediting the first line as a harbinger of what is to

come: “[Nightingale] opens with the hammer beats of three heavily accented syllables...signaling the sudden advent of a state of consciousness” (407). As against this interpretation, I would argue that all indications of consciousness are obviated by intimations of an unconscious or uncertain state. For example, the consciousness of “my heart aches” is immediately countered by “a drowsy numbness,” suggestive of less conscious and more experiential awareness. Other instances of a semiconscious or unconscious state, or the desire for them, states which are not the narrative in which typical agents desire to find themselves are numerous: “As though of hemlock I had drunk,” “emptied some dull opiate to the drains,” “lethe-wards had sunk,” “That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,” “Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget,” “Away! Away!” “I cannot see,” “in embalmed darkness,” “half in love with easeful Death,” “no pain,” “have ears in vain,” and “Do I wake or sleep?” Bloom completes the frame of his stanza-by-stanza analysis, by summarizing the last stanza as “a final presage of the loss that is to come” (412). But, the entire poem to me is not a progression from past through present to future, but a *tranche de vie* as the poet considers natural versus contrived human art. In the chronological interpretation, though, Bloom allows the poem to continue beyond its last word, making a bridge from the text to the world beyond it, thus hinting at the reverberation of affect from the poet via the poem to readers. Later, in Vendler’s reading of the “experiential beginnings” of “Nightingale,” she posits that “It is important...to see Keats’s first response to the nightingale (“I will share your happiness, I too will be warm and sunburnt”) as a struggle against avowing his true psychological state, a state of despair and desire for death” (“Experiential” 594).

Thus, the early desire for escape through wine, opiates, dance, and song, are merely expressions of half-hearted attempts to escape the awareness of the inevitability of death. They are put forth at the beginning of the ode, only to be denied later (“Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards, / But on the viewless wings of poesy” (32-33)). According to Vendler, the core of the poem is found in the opening of stanza six, with “Darkling I listen; and for many a time / I have been half in love with easeful Death” (51-52).<sup>56</sup> I find the emotional core of this poem to be the stanza beginning “Away! Away! For I will fly to thee.” This stanza shows the construction of attitude (the human artist finding a fanciful way to join the bird through his music or the vocal charts of poetry), the particular cause (of attachment to the bird as an entity which can fly and sing simultaneously, and without wine or even poetry), and the establishment of an identity (as a creative artist, an entity which can achieve some birdlike experiences).

For a closer reading of the affective mode of feelings, I found John Jones’s work interesting, as he seems to anticipate the accent on affects, at least from the poet’s point of view. Jones discusses Keats’s special uses of the words “feel” and “feeling” in *John Keats’s Dream of Truth*. Jones uses a string of words from a letter Keats wrote (*Letters I*, 264) as a guide for his interpretation, taking the letter’s key subjects for chapter titles. A significant point in the letter, as well as in other writings, is that Keats uses “feel” as a

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<sup>56</sup> The desire for “easeful death” was expressed in Keats’s early poem, “Sleep and Poetry.” There, he longs to be

Smoothed for intoxication by the breath  
Of flowering bays, that I may die a death  
Of luxury, and my young spirit follow  
The morning sunbeams to the great Apollo. (57-60)

This early use seems to bypass the biographical history frequently associated with “Nightingale”—namely, that it was the poetic expression of Keats’s depression after the death of his young brother, Tom, in December 1818. While Tom did “grow pale, and spectre-thin, and die[d],” he was in good health when Keats wrote “Sleep and Poetry.” A psychological explanation rather than a biographical one is indicated. The use of Apollo is interesting, too, as that god was highlighted in Lemprière’s *Dictionary* as “god of all the fine arts, of medicine, music, poetry and eloquence,” touching on areas of keen interest to Keats.

noun where his contemporaries would expect the word “feeling.” For example, in the letter he says “the feel I have of Anthony and Cleopatra,” where common usage would be “the feeling I have” or “the sense I have.” According to Jones:

‘Feel,’ we shall see, is Keats’s word. ‘Feeling’ is a Romantic word. Indeed I call feeling with its cognate verb *the* Romantic word, but a word which has become so dulled and degraded that we need all the historical imagination we can muster in order to appreciate the fresh and challenging aspect it once had, and its sharp cutting edge in those battles of ideas which raged across Europe from the middle of the eighteenth century. (4)

It is important to note that “feeling” as used here is not the same as “feelings” as defined and described by Altieri. Here the word is used more generally as part of a continuing feelings-versus-thoughts paradigm as discussed since the Enlightenment. This shift from feeling to feel is important in that it demonstrates Keats’s confidence is redefining a popular term for his own poetic use. The word “feeling” had been used by Coleridge to examine human knowledge, as he believed himself to be a “mediator, able to do justice to both the sense of fact and the claims of the mind” (McNiece 5). Edmund Burke had said that clear expressions appealed to understanding, and “strong and obscure ones to the emotions” (McNiece 8). Coleridge took this “connection of feeling and obscurity” into the religious realm. Whereas Keats’s views on feeling and his preference for the less popular noun form “feel” were derived from experience, Coleridge’s views were influenced by the German philosophers, including Fichte. Coleridge differs from Fichte in the religious application of Fichte’s philosophy, which Coleridge considered a “potentially pantheistic reduction” of nature’s unity (see McNiece 29). For Keats, the

noun *feel* is more interestingly used, as Jones points out.<sup>57</sup> The earlier Coleridge may have been comfortable with the German tradition that “our system of feelings...binds us to the merely natural,” but Keats was not (McNiece 28).<sup>58</sup>

Keats’s usage is more than idiosyncratic though. It is indicative of a mood seen frequently in his work: that a depressive reality is offset only by a fanciful appeal to a fanciful state beyond the worldly. Jones’s analysis continues:

Her [the Nightingale’s] song of summer expresses her embalmed and (in the special Keatsian sense) mindless feel. [. . .] Unlike the poet, the Nightingale is invulnerably wrapped within the summer night which brought them together. She was ‘not born for death’ but he was. [. . .] [H]is house is at once the work of true imagination and feigning fancy. (219)

The “mindless feel” is suggestive of Keats’s construction, “unreflecting love,” in the sonnet “When I have fears that I may cease to be,” written in early 1818. In both cases the nouns are words of emotion or feelings, and the modifiers are denials of active intellection. This surprising phrase construction is frequently seen in Keats’s poetry. Another example is the use in “Sleep and Poetry”: “that I may die a death of luxury,” an unlikely juxtaposition of pain and pleasure. While agreeing in the main with Jones’s insights, I would disagree with the analysis that “his house is at once the work of true imagination and feigning fancy.” Rather, I believe that, as Keats says, “the fancy *cannot* cheat so well as she is fam’d to do,” and that far from belittling “feigning fancy,” Keats

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<sup>57</sup> It would be tempting to ascribe this idiosyncratic use by Keats to Scottish influence, but his letter of April 1818 was written before his trip to Scotland the following summer. *OED* gives a Scottish and northern definition of “feel” as “consciousness, sensation.”

<sup>58</sup> According to McNiece, “Fichte’s intellectual intuition and wavering imagination became models for Schelling and the early Romantics” (54). Keats’s thought is more like that of A. W. Schlegel, who claimed that “fantastie is the basic power of the human spirit” (McNiece 54).

elevates fancy *because* of its transitory nature. Transience is, after all, the most natural and universal of processes. In the last ode, “To Autumn,” he will make clearer his allegiance to natural cycles and the bounty of a dying state. There, too, is an instance of a contrastive phrase, as above: “wailful choir.”

Keats begins “Nightingale” with what we now recognize as a process of Coleridgean fancy: “A mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space” (*Biographia Literaria* 313). Keats puts forth a set of easy escapes, which he will later reject for a truer escape, “the viewless wings of Poesy.” According to John Minahan, “In its opening lines, ‘Nightingale’ locates art in the past,” and cites the present tense “aches” and “pains” against the past tenses immediately following: “had drunk, “one minute past,” and “had sunk” (172). Minahan points out that “figurative language, like an urn, is a made thing.” Recall that Coleridge had called fancy the “aggregative and associative power” (*Biographia* 306). Here, Minahan, speaking for Keats, attributes to him facets which Minahan associates with poetic endeavor: combining, assembling dissimilar elements, and making a point of fact. Then, still speaking for Keats, he says that he leaves those endeavors behind. I suggest that Keats does not wish to leave behind all of those aspects of poetry-writing when he fades “away into the forest dim,” but rather just the last one, the need to “concretize a point.” “Made” music does not, nor does the song of the nightingale, concretize a point of fact. P. N. Furbank, warns against confusing “‘abstract’ with ‘general’ and ‘concrete’ with ‘specific’ (*Princeton Encyclopedia* 563). Yet, Minahan seems to do just that: “concretize a point” is used in the sense of nailing down a specific meaning. I suggest that “made music” combines notes or fragments of song, chords, etc. into a form which will be differently identified and felt by various



listeners. Thus, later in the poem, when Keats says that nightingales were heard “in ancient days by emperor and clown,” he does not say that the song sounded the same to them as to him. This “memory emancipated from the order of time and space” serves Keats well here, far better than an imaginative bridge from reasoning to understanding. He indicates, in fact, that the song was different for him than for earlier auditors.

Perhaps the self-same song<sup>59</sup> that found a path  
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
The same that oft-times hath  
Charm'd magic casements,<sup>60</sup> opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas,<sup>61</sup> in faery lands forlorn. (65-70)

Ruth's sadness differs from the sadness of the melancholy poet. She is, according to the biblical story, far from melancholy. When her husband dies, she returns to her mother-in-law's homeland, to keep her company. There, she follows the reapers, salvaging leftover grain<sup>62</sup> (the crop, incidentally, is stated to be not corn, but barley):

“They arrived in Bethlehem just as the barley harvest was beginning” (Ruth 1: 22; *Oxford Study Bible*, 273). The biblical Ruth became the great-grandmother of David, the

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<sup>59</sup> “Song” was originally “voice” in the manuscript, and was changed by Keats (see Gittings 38). Note that voice carries a verbal connotation, though song does not, except in the traditional sense of a poet “singing.” It differentiates between birdsong and human lyrics, between music and poetry, in the literal sense.

<sup>60</sup> “Charm'd magic casements” was originally “Cha[r]m'd the wide casements,” and was changed by Keats (see Gittings 40).

<sup>61</sup> “Perilous seas” was originally “‘kuthless’[apparently for ‘ruthless’?] seas” and was changed by Keats (see Gittings 40).

<sup>62</sup> The concept of reaping and gleaning is a frequent image in Keats's poetry. In the sonnet, “When I have fears that I may cease to be,” (early 1818, in the same period as *Endymion*) Keats posits anxiety about early death in the words, “Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain” (2), and further suggests that the ideal would be a plentiful harvest of writing, “high piled books” “like rich garners” of “full ripen'd grain” (3-4). A more familiar image of bountiful harvest is seen in “To Autumn,” (September 1819) where the figure of poetry is familiar to us as a gleaner in a bountiful harvest of writing: “Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store? / Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find / Thee sitting careless on a granary floor” (12-14). The anxiety of “When I have fears” is now assuaged with the confidence of the later Keats.

traditionally-recognized author of the psalms. “Faery lands forlorn” harkens back to Keats’s early reliance, now outgrown, on Spenserian images. The lands are forlorn, for Keats has moved beyond them, precisely like the nightingale whose “anthem fades / Past the near meadows,” and is “buried deep / in the next valley-glades” (75-77). This movement for Keats may be seen as the progress from one form of imagery to another. According to Ned Block in *Imagery*, “There are two kinds of imagery, one which represents perception in roughly the same way pictures do, and the other which represents as language does, i.e. conceptually.”<sup>63</sup> Block’s distinction relates to my argument that, for Keats, fancy is a valuable description of how sensory perception can explain a conceptual process, as well as an instantaneous observation. For Keats, the process of life and death can be fancied by keen observation of natural cycles of the seasons, for example. Keats realizes that his position is solitary: “forlorn,” “my sole self.” He has a confused comfort in that state of solitude: “Already with thee! Tender is the night.” Yet, the music is gone (“Fled is that music”), and the eager listener is unsure of his conscious status (“Was it a vision or a waking dream?” “Do I wake or sleep?”) (79-80).

What Minahan fails to appreciate is that, for the Keats of the odes, putting “dissimilar things together” is a sensual commingling, a synaesthetic metaphor. In “Nightingale,” for example, there are numerous instances of the merging of senses. This usage can be seen as either “cognitive”<sup>64</sup>, “physiological”<sup>65</sup> or a poetic trope.<sup>66</sup> In all cases, synaesthesia is an augmentation of sensory images, literally perceived or literarily constructed. While Vilayanur Ramachandran’s article provides a medical basis for the physiological

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<sup>63</sup> See *Imagery*, ed. N. Block (1981).

<sup>64</sup> See Reuven Tsur’s article, “Literary Synaesthesia: A Cognitive Approach” (1990).

<sup>65</sup> See Ramachandran and Hubbard’s 2003 article, “Hearing Colors, Tasting Shapes” (2003).

<sup>66</sup> See Olshansky’s article, “A Comparative Analysis of Sensation and Reflection within John Keats’s ‘Ode to a Nightingale’” (2003).

condition of synaesthesia, the Olshansky article is a specific application of the phenomenon as it relates to “Nightingale.” Because synaesthesia is a critical concept in Keats’s work, I will consider all three perspectives.

The article on the physiological aspects of synaesthesia highlights the relatively rare occurrence of the trait of synaesthesia, wherein patients “see” odors, or “smell” sounds. While this was clearly not Keats’s neurological state, the article is still enlightening for a few observations which may be relevant. The authors associate synaesthesia with “childhood memories and associations” (Ramachandran 1), and go on to state “The condition is seven times as common in creative people as in the general population,” which frequency is indicative of a predisposition associated with intelligence (5). Ramachandran also draws the parallel between synaesthesia and metaphor: “Just as synaesthesia involves making *arbitrary* links between seemingly unrelated perceptual entities such as colors and numbers, metaphor involves making links between seemingly unrelated conceptual realms” (Ramachandran 5; emphasis added).<sup>67</sup> In this respect, synaesthetic metaphor is doubly reinforced in its aims. The merged-senses metaphor makes links on the levels of sensory images and, like Coleridgian fancy, constructs a bridge to understanding in a novel way, through the use of two or more senses leading to a stronger understanding.

Reuven Tsur provides a cognitive background, and states that “Literary synaesthesia is the exploitation of verbal synaesthesia for literary effects” (*Cognitive* 28). This

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<sup>67</sup> The purposeful, rather than the arbitrary, nature of synaesthetic metaphor seems more reasonable to me in the context of Keats’s demonstrated attention to detail. For example, I note his close editing of the odes, where he frequently changes one form of a word for another (“Cool’d for a long age” was originally “Cooling an age” in the manuscript (see Gittings 36)). Note the similarity of favoring “cool’d” over “cooling” to Keats’s preference for “feel” over “feeling,” as noted above in the discussion from Jones’s book (4 passim).

suggests that verbal synaesthesia is more immediate, primary, and that literary synaesthesia is derivative, secondary. By mentioning this level of removal, even within the context of the confusion inherent in any merging of the senses, the author implies a certain contrived artistry in the use of literary synaesthesia, above and beyond the “contrivance” of writing at all. He further reinforces this opinion in his historical attribution: “In Romantic Poetry ... Literary Synaesthesia typically contributes to some undifferentiated emotional quality, some vague, dreamy or uncanny hallucinatory moods, or some strange magical experience or heightened mystery” (Tsur 28). The qualities of “undifferentiation,” “vagueness,” “dreaminess,” and “mood” were widely deprecated by the New Critics. The suggestion of “uncanny hallucinatory moods” recalls another of the affects described by Altieri, that of mood, which is defined as a “mode[] of feeling where the sense of subjectivity becomes diffuse and sensation merges with something close to atmosphere (*Particulars* 2). What Tsur calls “undifferentiated emotional quality” seems close to what Altieri calls “mood.” Yet, in Keats’s poetry, I find mood arguably to be the least exploited of the affects adumbrated by Altieri. An instance of synaesthetic metaphor in “Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil” provides an example. At the point when Isabella realizes that her brothers have murdered her lover, the poet asks the reader to step aside and reconsider the poignancy of the tale itself:

Fair reader, at the old tale take a glance,  
For here, in truth, it doth not well belong  
To speak: -- O turn thee to the very tale,  
And *taste* the *music* of that *vision pale*. (389-92; emphases added)

This is artistic legerdemain, of course, for one's deeper consideration of the "very tale" is merely a closer reading of Keats, an intensified affective reading which is beyond speech ("doth not well belong / To speak"). The affective experience is intensified by the triple synaesthetic metaphor in line 392: taste – music – vision. Far from moodlike, the obvious affect is one of keen awareness and empathy for the pale Isabella. Yet, the reader is told that her story is an "old tale" and is asked to consider it from a distance of time and space. The more subtle interpretation may be that this passage is a purposeful concentration of the senses in an impossible attempt to bring Isabella into focus.

Does the use of synaesthetic metaphor imply "undifferentiated emotional quality" or does it pre-enforce that affective response by doubling the strength of the sensory footings, so that the construction of the bridge to understanding is more reliable? I suggest that, far from confusing the matter with two senses, and even farther from implying any "strange magical experience," Keats brings into play all reasonable sensory images to produce an affect, or an affective suite, that is only barely possible with a single, consistent image. His emotions, his feelings are complex, and so must be his sensory imagery and his affective language. For example, consider the beginning of the second stanza of "Nightingale":

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been  
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country green,  
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth! (11-14)

The sensory images are complex here, yet what reasonable reader would question the straightforwardness of the expressed desire for a drink of good wine! Certainly, we do

not regularly think in terms of “tasting...green” (or tasting dance, or song or mirth). We do not normally consider mirth to be sunburnt or pale. We do not often speak so poetically. Yet, here we can imagine (or fancy) a sort of earthly and robust quality that would add to the taste of the wine as described. Further, this wish for a pleasant intoxication is a reasonable, not unexpected extension of the desire for “hemlock” or “some dull opiate” in the staged, then rejected, system of escapes given in the first stanza. In the lines cited above there are numerous words that indicate sensory perception in either a primary or secondary manner. “Draught” is not merely suggestive of drink, hence taste, but is synonymous with it. “Vintage” here is synonymous with wine in general. Note the context, “O, for a draught of vintage” and its evocation of “I need a drink!” Keats goes on to specify the qualities of the longed-for ideal vintage (long-cool’d in deep earth, tasting thus and so) but does not at all suggest a specific wine. The general descriptions allow the reader to access her own remembered wine experiences, thus they fulfill one element of Coleridge’s definition of fancy. From the sensory perspective, vintage expands here to include taste, and to a certain extent, smell. Those whose sense of smell is impeded experience a parallel diminution in the sense of taste; these senses are more closely related than others. At wine tastings, for example, the vocabulary of smell is employed: “bouquet,” “aroma,” “woody,” etc. The next sensory term in the subject lines is the primary use --“tasting.” But, it is immediately followed by a type of tasting that is not a clear and remembered image, “tasting of Flora and the country green.” Keats uses “Flora” to signify the goddess of flowers from Latin mythology in numerous poems (including “Sleep and Poetry,” *Endymion*, and a few sonnets). By extension, according to *OED*, flora comes to represent “the personification of nature’s power in producing

flowers.” Keats adds the flowers to the preceding “earth” and the following “country green” and “sunburnt mirth,” to achieve an impression of earthy, robust, hearty flavor.

David Olshansky provides a close consideration of synaesthesia in Keats’s “Nightingale.” He suggests that “Keats uses the seamless union of senses to draw a mystical world opposing reality” (27). He considers sensation and reflection in Keats’s work to be a Lockean legacy. Locke, in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, had defined sensation as only “includ[ing] direct images and perceptions imported into the mind immediately after contact with the object [sensed]” (33). But, reflection is, according to Locke, “the perception of the operations of our own mind . . . as it is employed about [its] ideas; which operations, when the soul comes to reflect on and consider, do furnish the understanding with another set of ideas, which could not be had from things without” (34). Note that Locke’s “reflection” is more like Coleridge’s concept of imagination, in the sense that it is an active creative process, whereas fancy is passive, intuitive. Ironically, Coleridge claimed that his philosophic opinions were “blended with, or deduced from” his feelings, suggesting a closer union between fancy and the imagination than his definitions in *Biographia Literaria* imply (*Collected Letters* I 279).

At first reading, the Locke passage would seem to say that when we think about mental exercises, we get a deeper understanding of them, and are led to a new set of ideas that would not otherwise be accessible to us. However, take an example. When we believe a fact to be so, and consider it in “greater depth,” do we necessarily arrive at a deeper truth? Or do we merely luxuriate, so to speak, in our own convictions? Are we led to new ideas or to a tighter grasp on the old? And, of more relevance here, is not

Lockean “reflection” so described, a close parallel to Coleridgian “imagination”?

Locke’s “the perceptions of our own mind...do furnish understanding” is parallel to the bridge from reason to understanding defined and illustrated by Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria*. Yet, if, as Olshansky claims, “Only ideas that have been processed by the mind from the senses and former ideas are included within reflection,” the inclusion of the senses and “former ideas” takes us into the area defined by Coleridge as fancy (Olshansky 28). If this is the case, the reflective process would be fanciful in Coleridge’s dichotomy. As a further confusion, Olshansky posits that “Synaesthesia is employed in the [nightingale ode] to demonstrate the power of the imagination, especially when it combines a variety of senses into an amalgam of sensual imagery” (28). However, Olshansky’s work does not take into account the changing distinction between imagination and fancy that I have posited in this chapter. It is therefore rather confusing because it attributes to “imagination” what, in Keats, at this stage, should rightfully be called, and is called in the final stanza of the poem, “fancy.”

Vendler provides some insight into Keats’s development of the concepts of fancy and imagination, but suggests that the “gardener Fancy” of the “Ode to Psyche” is merely a worker in the field created by the imagination, a higher power:

the rosy sanctuary finally seems to lie within a cultivated garden, ‘with buds, and bells, and stars without a name, / With all the gardener Fancy could feign.’ It is not, however the ‘gardener’ Fancy who created the wild-ridged mountains and the dark-clustered trees: they are the creations rather of an unconfined imagination, and they represent the sublime, as the garden represents the beautiful. (*Odes* 59)



I suggest, however, that to Keats the beauty (and truth) of the fancied creation included not only flowers and stars, but also mountains and trees. Further, I believe that Keats's grouping of stars with buds and bells is doubly suggestive, as the group represents several levels of creation: the inorganic and distant, the organic and familiar, and the manmade. In addition, buds, bells, and stars can be metaphorical descriptions of flowers. Keats makes no Wordsworthian distinction between the sublime nature and the humbler nature. In fact, in the passage from "Ode to Psyche," the unnamed stars are part of the jurisdiction of the fancy. Stars are sublime in the sense of the definition in the *Princeton Encyclopedia*, which says that during Keats's time, the sublime represented "the wild and desolate natural scene" which "dwarfed the individual human figure" (1231).

What, we may ask, contra Vendler, is more wild and desolate than an "unnamed star"? Keats speaks of such a star in his sonnet, "Bright Star" (1819), apparently written within a few months of "Ode to a Nightingale."<sup>68</sup> In fact, Keats attributes sublime characteristics to the star in this sonnet, before pointing out his desired distinction from that aloofness. "Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art-- / Not in lone splendor hung aloft the night" (1-2), first suggests the desirability of steadfastness, then immediately retracts the wish for the attribute of "lone splendor," a seemingly *sine qua non* of star-ness, so to speak. In one sense, a star has "lone splendor" in its distance from the earth; in another, far from lone, it is part of the panoply of stars. This sonnet is of interest from the standpoint of sensory images, too. In the octave, there are five sensory images, all visual; in the sestet, there are no visual images, merely one tactile and one

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<sup>68</sup> The exact date of "Bright Star" has been disputed, with some alleging an earlier date (1818) because of the recurrence of the words "steadfast" and "lids" in a letter of late 1818 as well as in the sonnet (see *Letters I*, 299). As against this, Bate suggests that "As we have repeatedly seen, the recurrence of images and phrases from the letters generally, from 1817 on, is commonplace" in the poetry (Bate, *John Keats*, 359f).

aural image. After the turn of the sonnet, Keats substitutes the natural comfort of his “fair love’s ripening breast” for the colder, remote “lone splendour” of the distant star. This choice is significant in the affective realm, in that it suggests a mature and creative application of the feelings. Altieri notes the difficulty of even discussing the feelings because of their close tie to the sensations: “Sensation as an alternative to the semantic register makes it difficult ... to give any extended interpretation of how this complex takes on force in particular words” (*Particulars* 237). In his treatment of feelings, Altieri gives examples from painting rather than poetry (see the discussion in *Particulars* 47-53). Yet, returning to the basic elements of feelings, “imaginative engagement with the immediate processes of sensation,” we note that the difficulty must be in the “immediate processes,” for “imaginative engagement” is certainly no obstacle to poetic interpretation (Altieri 2). It is in this difficulty that the fancy, in fact, *can* cheat so well as she is famed to do. Putting intellection to one side, and allowing fancy to range through the senses, absorbing and expressing impressions is exactly Keats’s technique in “Nightingale.”

In “Nightingale,” and in the other odes, Keats achieves a new level of poetic sophistication, trusting his fancy, presenting sensory perceptions in overt and covert ways, and suggesting a philosophy of limited comfort for the individual, but great promise for the race. By now, he has fully understood the distinction between fancy and imagination and has chosen fancy as his poetic device. I see this in the quantitative switch discussed above, as well as in the additional qualitative clues discussed next. In addition, Keats has matured from the passionate poetry of his early works to the play of emotions and feelings that is characteristic of the great odes.

The first lines of “Nightingale” show Keats engaged in a staged inner debate about issues of the senses, sensations, and consciousness and escape from them:

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains

My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,

Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains

One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk;           (1-4)

The debate is “staged” because, by the poem’s end, he will have rejected these unsatisfactory escapes, almost teaching the reader, by this exemplary process, to accept mutability and death. According to John Jones, the poem’s trajectory is “labyrinthine,” taking the reader from being “half in love with easeful Death” to the “privation of sight” (“I cannot see what flowers are at my feet”) to the surprising emergence of keen sensual joy (“I have been half in love with easeful Death”) (Jones 215). Rather than labyrinthine, I consider this progress to be more readily understood as a part of Keats’s tendency to use contrastive elements to accentuate his points. That is, “cannot see” and “easeful Death,” while going against one’s natural attitudes, place one in a fanciful situation where the feelings reign and sensation is heightened. In a recent study, Noel Jackson suggests that Keats “posit[s] a restitution of feeling from a condition of its apparent negation” (195). I agree with this interpretation, and add that Keats manages this seeming contradiction not by an imaginative effort, but by recourse to the fancy.

In the first lines, however, we have an aching heart, an oxymoron of painful numbness, a suggestive use of the word “sense,” and a slight reference to the sense of taste via “drunk,” “emptied,” which turns semi-biological with “emptied...to the drains,” pharmacological with “hemlock” and “dull opiate,” and mythological with the mention of

Lethe. Keats means “sense” here as awareness or consciousness. It is his awareness that is pained by “drowsy numbness.” The reader deduces that the physical senses will follow, yet the sense organs are not active in the drugged state to which he refers. Interestingly, though, sensation is intact, and the affects are not inhibited. If anything, the affects, both from the point of view of the poet and the reader, are enhanced in the absence of distracting sensory input. We may not see, hear, or taste in a drugged state, but we can feel pain and other sensations, such as “aches” and drowsiness, and our dreams may be affected by our psychological state.

In a letter to Reynolds (13 July 1818), Keats wrote “Fancy is indeed less than a present palpable reality, but it is greater than a remembrance” (*Letters* I 325). By “palpable reality” Keats means that which is perceivable. Here he has become comfortable with fancy, no longer striving for reason-driven understanding, but willing to rely on a sensory understanding, even though it is “less than a present palpable reality.” He expresses this in the slightly earlier letter on negative capability, defining that faculty as: “When man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason,” and he singles out Coleridge as “being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge” (*Letters* I 193-94).

As Clarence Thorpe notes in *The Mind of John Keats* (1926), “By sensations [in the above letter], Keats meant *feelings or intuitions*, the pure activity of the imagination” (64, italics mine). Yet, later, Bate, in *John Keats* (1963), notes “Hazlitt’s constant use of the word ‘sensations’ in the traditional empirical sense—as virtually *equivalent to concrete experience*—added a new term to Keats’s own habitual vocabulary” (240, italics mine). It seems that, when Keats famously wrote in his letter to Bailey, 22 November 1817, “O

for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts!” he combined the “feelings” suggested by Thorpe with the “concrete experience” that Hazlitt favors (*Letters* I, 185). He does so eventually by acknowledging fancy as defined by Coleridge, and giving it precedence over the imagination. More recently, Jackson suggests that the line from the 1817 letter is ironic, in that “Keats writes principally from the standpoint of ‘Thoughts’ and not ‘Sensations’” (165). Of course, the process of writing is one of thought, but the sensations cannot be marginalized in any interpretation of Keats’s poetry. The sensations are evident in passages like “ache,” numbness,” “pains,” “fade far away, dissolve,” “perplexes and retards,” and “pouring forth thy soul”(all from “Nightingale”).

Disinterested, chameleon, capable of being in uncertainties. These attributes which Keats takes to be essential to the poetic nature (see *Letters* I 193, 387, and II 79), seem to contrast with societal expectations of the artist as a passionate spokesperson for the deeper and more elevated of human desires. Keats is aware that “disinterestedness,” while a noble ideal in theory, is difficult to achieve. As Bate points out, “the human heart [is] so much more capricious and obdurate than [Keats] had suspected” (Bate *John Keats* 473).<sup>69</sup> Poems affect readers by presenting imagery which is not only recognizable, but personally identifiable, to a spectrum of readers. Wordsworth, in Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, famously wrote that

[P]oetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful *feelings*; it takes its origin from *emotion* recollected in tranquility. The *emotion* is contemplated till...an *emotion* kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation is gradually produced. [. . .] In this *mood* successful composition generally begins [. . .] But

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<sup>69</sup> In my chapter on T. S. Eliot, I will discuss the parallel concept of “detachment,” highlighted by Eliot as idealistically superior to “attachment” or “indifference,” in *Four Quartets*.

the *emotion*...from various causes is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any *passions* whatsoever...the mind will be...in a state of enjoyment.

(*Romanticism* 361; emphases added)

The italicized words in this quotation are significant in that they directly express the four affects, as discussed by Altieri (*Particulars* 2, *passim*) and Rei Terada (4-5), while neither of these critics criticize this passage. Note how, in “Nightingale,” Keats is affected in that emotional area between “sensation” and “bodily states,” as described by Altieri (“Strange Affinities” 8). In the penultimate line of the ode, in the question, “Was it a vision or a waking dream?” Keats is unsure of the “simple awareness of bodily states,” and leads the reader, by extension, to question her experience of the poem. “States of the body experienced as inseparable from the presence of imaginary projection,” Altieri’s definition of sensation, is a close parallel to Coleridge’s definition of fancy, and the reason Coleridge denigrated fancy in favor of the loftier, more cerebral imagination. It is also, I suggest, the reason Keats, especially the Keats of the odes, adopts the Coleridgian definition but inverts the hierarchy.

The embodied imagination, and imaginary projection, is an integral part of “Nightingale.” The first line of the ode suggests a sensation (“My heart aches”) and then presents a complex image (“a drowsy numbness pains”), taking the reader with the narrator into a liminal area where response is not always expected: one expects “aches and pains,” that expression is even a cliché in modern usage, but one does not expect pain from numbness, a condition which seems to obviate both pain and pleasure. Altieri says “Pain is usually a sensation; the assertion that someone else is in pain constitutes a proposition. But pain becomes an affect when it takes on a tinge of irritation with some

particular sensation that one wants to be otherwise” (*Particulars* 2). Later, in “Nightingale,” Keats indulges in some self-pity for the human estate, when, in the third stanza, he uses pathetic human sensations to evoke an affective state, probably a melancholy emotion generally felt by him, and underlying the frequent humor in his letters and bravery in his personal life. The world of the nightingale is contrasted with the human world: “The weariness, the fever, and the fret / Here where men sit and hear each other groan” (24-25). Altieri appreciates Keats’s insight into the importance of “manner” and its centrality in understanding “what people do in relation to being moved” (*Particulars* 110), that is the active versus passive participant in the affective theater. To begin his chapter, Altieri cites a passage from a letter Keats wrote to his brother in which he touches on the topic of manner, especially as a memory aid to recalling the attitudes and attributes of a loved one. Yet, Keats is aware of the manner of beings other than humans, even nightingales: their characteristic “pouring forth” of soul in their song, their suggested immortality (as a species), and the fading of their “anthem.” These are, in fact, what Hazlitt would call the “gusto” of the nightingale when successfully rendered in art. In fact, they comprise what Eliot will call the objective correlative.

Keats’s ability to draw on several myths for his presentation of the nightingale gives his poem what he called “full-throated ease.” The poem itself is “full-throated” because its structure and theme fulfill a historical precedent: the ode form, the myth of Philomela; its “ease” is in its successful use of meter, rhyme, and diction. According to Elizabeth Lawrence, “The nightingale is associated with sadness in legends that link the lovelorn bird to the rose and attribute the plaintive character of its song to the bird’s passion for the rose” (23). Lawrence reiterates the probably apocryphal story told by Charles Brown,

that Keats was so moved by a real nightingale in the yard, that he moved a chair outside to listen, and returned “with some scraps of paper in his hand” – the ode (see Bate *John Keats* 501; Lawrence 22). This history seems to me of a piece with Coleridge’s attribution of “Kubla Khan” to an opium-induced state.

In summary, Keats, in the value he placed on fancy, acknowledged the importance not only of nature, but also of the human faculties of sensory perception. The mental information gleaned by the senses builds up a storehouse of natural intelligence in the poet’s mind. This storehouse is the basis for fanciful thoughts and inspirations which jar the otherwise passive poet into action. In the close representation of these sensory experiences, the poet expresses his affective state, and is able to evoke that state in the careful reader. The affective dimensions of Keats’s poetry are gleaned by the mind in response to external stimuli and internal sensation, and are presented in poetic imagery. The reader benefits from tracing this progress in analyzing the works.



## CHAPTER 2

### HOPKINS: BEING AND RELIGIOUS AFFECT

The language and thought in Hopkins's poetry, journals, and sermons suggests his deep convictions and painful questions regarding religious belief. This stage of thought is intermediary between rationality and passionate affect. I will call the dominant affect in Hopkins's poetry religious fervor, because it seems to present a categorical variance from the four affects posited by Altieri. Hopkins's belief encompassed more than just the Christian God, and at times considered the human being to be the most excellent of the natural entities. As a Catholic, Hopkins was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the communion of saints, and a hierarchy of angelic forms. As a Jesuit, he followed the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*,<sup>70</sup> which dictated much of the spiritual thought and even many routine details of his life. Hopkins's relationship with Heidegger is suggestive because it merges the theological with the philosophical, and is represented in a specific way in Hopkins's poetry. The structured aspect of Hopkins's religious life – he was a Jesuit priest – sets him apart from the agnostic Keats. Further, his deep religious fervor is intoned in his poetry in sudden, even violent, expressions which are deeply affective. While critical scholarship on Hopkins has considered other philosophers and their relevance to understanding his work, so far no one has considered the aptness of the affective modes as described by the literary critic, Altieri. I will refer to Heidegger later to assist in the analysis of Hopkins's poetry as works of religious fervor.

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<sup>70</sup> *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola* (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1923, ed. Joseph Rickaby).

In *The Particulars of Rapture: An Aesthetics of the Affects*, Charles Altieri has “establish[ed] context by engaging philosophical discourses on the nature and significance of various affective dimensions of experience” (*Particulars of Rapture 2*; hereafter, *Particulars*). In the application of the aesthetics of affect to Keats’s work, I showed a shift in affective stance from one poem to another. In Hopkins, due to his life as a religious man, one affect will dominate all his mature poetry. Altieri states that “[Affect] provides a means of referring to the entire range of states that are bounded on one side by pure sensation and on the other by thoughts that have no visible or tangible impact on our bodies” (*Particulars 2*). Thus, “Affects are immediate modes of sensual responsiveness to the world characterized by an accompanying imaginative dimension” (*Particulars 2*). This understanding of the relationship between sensation and thought, as extremes of affect, and the concept that our “sensual responsiveness” to nature is, in affective aesthetics, accompanied by an “imaginative dimension” provides at once a template for understanding religious poetry, and a basis for considering religious fervor as a fifth affect.<sup>71</sup>

One might ask, pursuant to this, what is the place of the religious in art? What is the utilitarian nature of religion? The answer depends on one’s point of view. For some, it is a method of keeping people from violating societal standards due to the “fear that something after death puzzles the will.” By allowing it a high standing in art, we, as a

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<sup>71</sup> Hopkins was influenced by the aesthetic writings of John Ruskin. Ruskin, in a section entitled “A Definition of Greatness in Art,” in *Modern Painters* (1856), says that “art is greatest which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas; and the idea is great in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind.” Hopkins had read Ruskin and admired him. For example, he mentions in his journals that he agrees with Ruskin’s opinion in a specific criticism of a painting: “It is so true what Ruskin says of taking the carriage in Turner’s “Pass of Faido” – that what he could not forget was that ‘he had come by the road’” (*The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins* 215; hereafter *Journals*). The 1845 watercolor by J. W. Turner depicts a steep mountain pass and a carriage, with patches of snow, but with a definite road-like quality through the mountains, which gave Ruskin the impression of entrance into the pass by a utilitarian means.

society, subscribe not so much to the specifics of the rituals of each religion as to the underlying comfort in the promise of eternity and, certainly in Christianity, the reinforcement of the scapegoat concept by an allegedly higher power. To others it is a deeply-held belief, one which a person, if called, would be privileged to serve, despite the inconveniences to himself. Hopkins, in dedicating himself as a Jesuit, seems to relinquish much of his elective will, but his affective will is expressed in his poetry. Joshua King notes the presence of grace in what he calls “Hopkins’s affective rhythm,” saying, “Sprung rhythm is more than a metrical novelty: in it Hopkins finds a means for apprehending and recommending to a reader kinds of affective and cognitive experience” (King 209). This agrees with Hopkins’s expressed sadness that the “beauty of inscape was unknown and buried away from simple people yet how near at hand it was if they had eyes to see it” (*Journals* 221). Compounded with his role as a teacher, and as a sermon-writing priest, it seems likely that Hopkins would try to elevate his students and congregants, and the potential readers of his poetry, by instructing them on inscape, instress, and God’s presence in nature. He would probably do so in as many ways as possible. If, as King suggests, sprung rhythm is yet another way in which “he connects its [his poetry’s] performance with an experience of grace, it is in keeping with Hopkins’s theological training to do so (King 209). Yet King’s cognitivist reading is limited, and according to Altieri, “Cognitive stances [. . .] toward the affects are problematic. [. . .] By being content with standard emotions and simple paradigm scenarios, they trivialize the lives that become possible if we concern ourselves with the intricacies of affective states” (*Particulars* 25).

## Hopkins Criticism

First, a brief summary of the history of Hopkins scholarship is appropriate, especially since it did not follow the typical trajectory of a gradual accumulation of readers beginning during his lifetime. With the exception of a few occasional poems published in a very limited circulation, Hopkins's work was known to very few during his lifetime. After his death in 1889 (the year Heidegger was born, coincidentally), Hopkins's writings were left with Robert Bridges, his literary executor, for disposal or publication. Bridges did not publish the works until 1918 (and, then, only selections). There was limited interest at first; then, in the late 1920s, critics (beginning with I. A. Richards and William Empson)<sup>72</sup> began to focus on Hopkins. I consider Hopkins to be a harbinger of Modernism, who is also a relic of Victorianism. Hopkins was not a success as a poet or a priest in his lifetime. He referred to himself as "fortune's football,"<sup>73</sup> noting how his Jesuit superiors had never assigned him to any post for more than one year – at least, not until his final, and most miserable assignment in Dublin, which would last five years (until his death).

Scholarship on Hopkins has diversified after the early work by Empson, Richards, and Yvor Winters. In the 1950s and 1960s, in addition to two new biographies, at least four books about Hopkins as a priest and the religious implications of his work were written. Other work from this period of the New Criticism included Hopkins's place in poetic tradition, and in Victorian studies. The critical reception of his work was also

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<sup>72</sup> Richards, I. A. "Gerard Hopkins." *The Dial* LXXXI (September 1926), 198-99; Empson, William. *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. New York: New Directions, 1947.

<sup>73</sup> In a letter to Bridges, 26 July 1883, Hopkins contemplates his situation: "Our year begins with autumn and the appointment for this college will be made public [. . .] It seems likely that I shall be removed; where I have no notion. But I have long been Fortune's football and am blowing up the bladder of resolution big and buxom for another kick" (*The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges* (hereafter *Letters I*) 183).

detailed in the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s, even more specific aspects were addressed, including Hopkins's response to Darwinism, his use of literary architecture, and two new critical collections were published. In the 1990s to present, the "terrible sonnets" have been written about in numerous collections and in a dedicated volume, as has the long poem, "The Wreck of the Deutschland." There have been studies of inscape and its philosophical bases, of sprung rhythm and its relation to meaning, and of medievalism as an influence on Hopkins's work. There are articles and books about homoeroticism in Hopkins, especially investigating his comments on Walt Whitman.<sup>74</sup> Very recently Norman White published a new and specific biography of Hopkins's Dublin years, *Hopkins in Ireland* (2002).

It is not surprising that a considerable amount of Hopkins scholarship has focused on his religious beliefs, his life as a priest, his "crisis of faith" as expressed in the desolate sonnets of 1885, and on the Catholic theologians who influenced him. More specifically, recent work has traced Old English religious texts as sources for some of Hopkins's poems,<sup>75</sup> and Biblical sources for other observations.<sup>76</sup>

To understand Hopkins's poetic expression of religious fervor in light of Altieri's work, I will consider three poems, which seem to me to jointly elucidate his theology, his

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<sup>74</sup> He admired Whitman tremendously, yet felt guilty for so doing: "I always knew in my heart Walt Whitman's mind to be more like my own than any other man's living. As he is a very great scoundrel this is not a pleasant confession. And this also makes me the more desirous to read him and the more determined that I will not" (*Letters I* 155). See the recent article by Eldrid Herrington "Hopkins and Whitman" in *EIC* 55.1 (January 2005), 39-57, in which he cites the nurturing qualities of both men (Whitman had been a wartime medic; Hopkins was a priest), and their shared bird images, and what Herrington calls a "gallicizing" style. Herrington notes the similarity between elements of Whitman's 1876 poem, "The Man-of-War Bird," and Hopkins' 1876 long poem, "The Wreck of the Deutschland." In both poems, God is imaged as a bird.

<sup>75</sup> See, for example, James Finn Cotter's "Hopkins and Cynewulf: 'The Wreck of the Deutschland,' 'The Windhover,' 'The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air we Breathe,' and the *Christ*" (*Victorian Poetry* 43.1 (Spring 2005), 19-32).

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, Thomas Rand's "'Time's Eunuch' Reconsidered" (*Hopkins Quarterly* 32.1-2 (Winter 2005), 5-7).

passion, and his poetics. In addition to “God’s Grandeur,” I will analyze “The Windhover,” (Hopkins’s stated favorite, 1877), and the first-written of the desolate sonnets, “Spelt from Sibyl’s Leaves” (1884). In this chronological progression we may follow Hopkins’s movement from an enthusiastic theology student to a teaching priest to a disheartened religious who wondered at the finality of death. We see him, jubilant, contemplative, and despairing.

Altieri states, “where there is time there will be a range of qualities of movement that also can take on charged significance within works of art. [. . .] The lyric modulates pace and intensity and urgency . . .; narrative arts control time by stretching scenes or making them compact” (*Particulars* 236). Because lyric poetry is shorter than narrative verse, and much shorter than novels, the modulation of movement often occurs on one page. While the lyric poem presents a convenient and economic vehicle for a clear switch in affective mode, it may present challenges for the poet, too, in constructing such an intense affective stage. In a sonnet, for example, the octave sets up a proposition, and in the turn of the sestet, a resolution is proposed. Thus, Altieri suggests a trend in affective intensity which seems to align with poetic form. I suggest that in many of Hopkins’s sonnets, especially the desolate sonnets, there exists as complex an affective mode as can ever be achieved in narrative.

The literature of religious fervor is moodlike in Altieri’s sense, in that it, in a religious poet, becomes “diffuse, and sensation merges into something close to atmosphere” (*Particulars* 2). The routine of a religious life may well instill an atmosphere of devotion.<sup>77</sup> Religious fervor may also be passionate in that it projects “significant stakes

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<sup>77</sup> This was certainly the belief of St. Ignatius Loyola who, in his *Spiritual Exercises*, left nothing to chance. Topics for meditation, including a grueling step-by-step process for imagining Hell by concentration on the

for the identity” (2). What greater stakes than eternal damnation versus eternal reward? Further, the stakes are significantly increased when one is so invested in religion that he dedicates his life to God. It is rather like feelings in Altieri’s sense, as it is “characterized by an imaginative engagement in the immediate process of sensation” (2). According to Paul Mariani, Hopkins “feels from time to time something like a deep joy flooding in on him and overwhelming all his doubts and fears” (“Poetics of Unself-Consciousness”<sup>54</sup>).

The negative interpretation of the “imaginative” status of religion may be unclear to a believer, but clear to a doubter. In the Coleridgean sense, though, the primary imagination was seen as “the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM” (*Biographia Literaria* 313). It is certain that the intensity of the affect of religious fervor is not easily shared. Hopkins tries to share it, though, at least with his reading self (as well as with Bridges whom he “hoped to convert”). Finally, religious fervor shares some characteristics of emotion as posited by Altieri, in “establish[ing] a particular cause and so situat[ing] the agent within a narrative and generat[ing] some kind of action or identification” (2). Clearly Hopkins was working within the narrative of Jesuit life, acting as and identifiable as a priest, with his Roman collar, his rectory home, his name of Father Gerard Manley Hopkins, S. J. But it is more. The stakes are vastly different from the typical stakes of affect. Those stakes would involve results in this world, would temper the affect to the level of expectation. The typical result of being “affected” by a work of art would range from revulsion to awe, for example. At no point would it impinge upon belief. In religious poetry, the level of expected affect may be considered,

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torment to each of the senses in turn, is accompanied by instructions on when to wake up (5:30 a.m.), when to attend Mass (7:30 a.m.), and when to eat lunch (1:00 p.m.).

and were considered by Hopkins, to be infinite, eternal. In his work, the stakes are higher, at least for him. An emotional response ideally would be accompanied by a change in the affective will, in desire. Hopkins saw this even before his conversion, as early as 1865.

The difference between being and beings, is Aristotelian. Aristotle had acknowledged different types of being, but with much in common. Heidegger agrees with Aristotle that there are “what-being,” “that-being,” and “how-being.” (For example, the fact that a bug exists is its “what-being”; those qualities which distinguishes it from other bugs is its “that-being”; and, its “how being” is its existence as a substance as opposed to a concept, say.) Heidegger differs from Aristotle in focusing on “how-being,” insisting contra-Aristotle, that the being of a tool is essentially different from the being of a flower, for example. For Hopkins, “how-being” is “doing.” Though both can be measured and variously sensed, the tool has its significance in its use. Inscap is “that-being.” Duns Scotus’ *haecceitas* is this-ness, or what-being. Peter Milward in his chapter on Hopkins in the collection of essays on Hopkins centenary (*The Fine Delight*, Ed. Francis Fennell) argues that “the emphasis of Hopkins moves from the ‘thisness’ which is in all things to the selfhood which is most marked in man.” I suggest that by keeping the terms inscape and *haeccitas* separate, Hopkins clearly meant a distinction, though subtle, and not a change of mind. Milward points to the dual nature of man: as God’s creation, and as merely a creature (in *The Fine Delight* 131).

Philosophically, Hopkins considers two wills in man: affective and elective will. Christopher Devlin, in his introductory notes to *Sermons*, explains the distinction: “Hopkins distinguishes in a special way between three faculties of the mind: memory,



understanding, and will. Will in this context is affective volition, ‘the faculty of fruition, by which we enjoy or dislike’” (*Sermons* 174). According to J. Hillis Miller in *The Disappearance of God*:

The affective will moves toward a thing or repulses it after it has first been comprehended by the understanding. The understanding ‘applies to words; it is the faculty for grasping not the fact but the meaning of a thing. ...This faculty not identifies but verifies; takes the measure of things, brings words of them; is called...reason’. Before we can understand a thing we must apprehend it with our senses, and this first act of the mind is called ‘Memory’. Memory, for Hopkins as for Scotus, applies to present and future as well as to past. Toward past things it is ‘Memory proper’. Toward ‘things future or things unknown or imaginary’ it is ‘Imagination’. Toward present things memory is ‘Simple Apprehension’, the ‘faculty of Identification’” (*Disappearance* 320; internal references are to Devlin in *Sermons*).

So, for Hopkins, there are several layers of knowledge-getting: simple sensory comprehension, identification (presumably based on remembered models), a verification of the truth of the identification, a positive or negative affect related to the item or situation so verified, a verbal expression of this complete seen-recalled-confirmed-felt entity, and a reasoning based on the whole package. Let’s work out an example: I see something moving on the ground (sensory input), I identify it as a worm (based on having seen worms before), I touch the being and it is slimy and worm-like (verification, in this case by a second sense), I register the negative “yuck, a worm” response with its attendant feelings of repulsion, I express my observations and feelings verbally, as “Bob,

there's a disgusting worm on the floor. Eek," and finally I apply some reasoning to the situation, as "Well, one does see worms in the spring, and they cause no real harm." But what about this idea of memory of future things being the imagination? Since the whole process is sense-based – after all, I saw and felt the worm – it is more akin to Keatsian and Coleridgian fancy. That is, even everyday encounters are fanciful in a limited way. I suggest that, as affective intensity increases, fancy increases too. Thus, one responding to a sensory stimulus with an intense feeling, as described by Altieri, is very likely a subject in whom the Coleridgian extrapolation of "memory emancipated from the order of time and space" is likely to occur.

Hillis Miller continues, "Apprehending that there is something before it, the mind comprehends that thing with the reason, and then moves toward it or away from it, driven by the liking or disliking of the affective will" (*Disappearance* 320). This "liking or disliking of the affective will" is related to desire. Some images are negative to us for a host of reasons, one could call them multiply reinforced, and certainly undesirable. I think here of someone pointing a gun at me. I would not choose among a host of affects, but would immediately resort to fear and terror mode, a mode never evoked by, say, a bunch of flowers. Other images are desirable on several levels, with the intensity of feeling related to the situation, individual preference, and background. Religious fervor represents a high-stakes situation, leading to intense affective expression. It is clearly related to individual preference and background.

When we consider the four affective modes delineated by Altieri, plus my suggestion of a fifth affect of religious fervor, we may arrange them in ascending order in a spectrum ranging from pure sensation to pure thought. Feelings are nearest pure sensation, as they

are “characterized by an imaginative engagement in the immediate processes of sensation” (*Particulars 2*). Next comes mood, where “sensation merges into ... atmosphere,” followed by emotion in which intellectual states such as “attitudes,” and “particular cause,” “situate the agent within a *narrative*” (*Particulars 2*). Finally, in placing the original four Altieri affects, we have passions, which, though not associated with thought in everyday language, are here defined as “project[ing] significant stakes for the identity” (*Particulars 2*). Note that as we move up the register from least to most thoughtful, the word “sensation” gives way to words of intellection and agency, such as attitude, cause, and identity. Most interesting is the suggestion of “narrative” in the description of emotions. This “narrative,” I suggest is not the narrative of narrative poetry, but rather an indication that a longer story is involved than is typically associated with a feeling of sensation. The dominant affect of Keats’s book-length *Endymion*, for example, was emotion.

Altieri suggests a connection between several topics in the artistic realm in the following passage. He posits that sensation can be defined in the context of will:

*The sensations are charged with possibility and with a kind of purpose. Yet at the same time they constitute a triumph over our standard desires for treating expressions of will as signs that are to be interpreted in the expressive register we adapt for dealing with human actions. Therefore, if we can make the adjustments that the artists ask, we put ourselves in a position to pursue two basic rewards.*

We develop an expanded sense of how rich the concrete world can become. And we develop *a feel* for how these sensed features of the world can carry expressive energies. (*Particulars 237*; emphasis added)

When Altieri speaks of “how rich the concrete world can become,” he introduces an imaginative future, a fancy. Note too that his use of the noun “feel” follows the eccentric usage coined by Keats. Altieri’s “The sensations are charged with” is the same construction as the first line of Hopkins’s “God’s Grandeur” – “The world is charged with the grandeur of God.” The electrical usage is natural in the Altieri case because the sensations *are* like electricity. A pain, a twinge, an instant of frisson are easily compared with lightning, shock. Further, Altieri considers that “sensations are charged with possibility,” echoing the developing ego as opposed to the inborn self mentioned earlier. Hopkins’s use is rather stranger. He refers to the planet Earth as being “charged,” not with lightning or sudden electrical feeling, but with the ongoing, not to say eternal, presence of God. I will consider the electrical nature of Hopkins’s descriptions of God’s instress in greater detail in the section on “God’s Grandeur.” This concept is one which is fundamental to the poetry of Hopkins (“It will flame out like shining from shook foil”).

Yet Altieri puts sensation in an alternate staging area. He considers it to be “an alternative to the semantic register,” meaning that sensation, like the affects themselves, transcends genre and rhetoric, dealing as it does with physiological responses rather than constructed images. Altieri recognizes the various ways that arts engage the affects. In *Particulars of Rapture*, he deals with paintings as well as poems, considering religious paintings, such as Giorgione’s *The Holy Family* (*Particulars* 124), in a chapter which begins with a quote from a letter of John Keats, and mentions Van Gogh in the same paragraph as Shakespeare. I would suggest that painting is the equivalent of a very short lyric poem, in the sense of varying from a lengthy narrative. In narrative works, the writer has the temporal room to describe the evolution of one affect into another, and to

provide “white space” in which the absence of affective states is used to forward the external action.

Hopkins’s works are relatively short; aside from “The Wreck of the *Deutschland*,” most can be printed on one page, and many of the most widely criticized poems are sonnets. In shorter lyrics, the spectrum of affects must be limited to one or two, because there is not the poetic time in which to move from mood to feeling to passion to emotion. Altieri considers passions to be “a particular orientation of emotion” (*Particulars* 48). In fact, of the affective modes, Altieri suggests that feelings and moods are not concerned with belief, must be “interpreted in terms of the sensations that they inhabit,” and are instrumental in merging the “modalities of sense” with psychology (*Particulars* 54). For these reasons, it is likely that the affective modes of feelings and mood are the most suitable to lyric poetry. In the case of Hopkins’s poetry, this is precisely where the fifth affect, religious fervor, steps in. It is both the subject matter and the sensation which, beginning as private matters, are expressed in his poetry. All of the other affects are represented in his poetry because they all are for him under the rubric of religious fervor.

Susan Stewart, in *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, establishes sensation as a private experience gone public in poetry:

As poetry establishes rhythms into measures, as it forms the coincidence of rhymes into patterns of expectation and surprise, sensations internal to individual persons are carried over into context-independent forms of tension and release.

This is not simply a making public of private sensations: it also gives form to the chaos, and even pain, of such private sensations for those persons who bear them.

(Stewart 152)

Stewart recognizes the ameliorative effect of poetic expression as it “gives form to the chaos, even pain, of ... private sensations.” The chaos and pain of life are elements of what Hopkins calls “how-being.”

Poetically, Hopkins expresses the “how-being” as doing, for example in the sonnet, “As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame”:

Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:  
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;  
Selves—goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,  
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.* (Poems 90, emphases in original)<sup>78</sup>

“That being indoors each one dwells” is the instress of God or Christ, as we shall soon see. Heidegger calls our immediate world “the workplace” and the wider space beyond it simply “the world.” He believes that “virtually everything *Dasein* does or is cries out for others...as hearers or as readers [‘Crying: What I do is me’], and that *Dasein*’s world is essentially a public world” (Inwood 40). Heidegger differs from the phenomenologist, Edmund Husserl who says that we experience seeing a table by assimilating features of tableness and synthesizing them into a particular: say, a round, black, varnished top on four iron legs, for example. Heidegger, on the other hand, brings human function into the picture and says what we “see is not just *a* table, but *the* table, the table in *this* room,” and that the table’s relevance for us is inextricably tied to its function, its history, its position in time (Inwood 33, emphasis in original). We may then recall memories associated with the particular table. “Heidegger does not view the table as an entity, with certain

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<sup>78</sup> All citations of Hopkins’s poetry refer to *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Ed. W. H. Gardner and Norman H. MacKenzie. London: Oxford UP, 1967: hereafter, *Poems*.

geometrical and physical properties [. . .] The table is for eating or writing” (Inwood 33).  
For that it came.

Heidegger anticipates Altieri in a brief discussion of mood and emotion. Altieri discusses Heidegger’s thoughts on mood, saying “Heidegger [. . .] explains how troubling mood can be for certain kinds of ethical consciousness” (*Particulars* 56). Yet, Inwood claims that “For Heidegger, moods are ways of seeing the world, and “differ from emotions. Emotions concern particular entities” (Inwood 41). Moods are mostly beyond our control, whereas emotions can be controlled. Heidegger sees moods, as does Altieri, as coming and going as they please outside, yet affecting the subject as merely a recipient, or a victim. Moods are psychological floaters, so to speak, which seem to take control of an individual, resulting in a diminution of agency, autonomy.

Neither Heidegger nor Altieri discuss religious fervor. I suggest that in Hopkins’s deep religious convictions he is in an elevated, sensitive mood, that is a highly wrought and deeply sensitive state, an adjunct of what he would call the state of grace. He expresses this sensitivity and fervor with words of sensation and violence.

### Inscape and Instress

Before proceeding to the specific poems, I will define the terms “inscape” and “instress” for their use here. There are three strands of meaning of interest here: the rather vague definitions provided by Hopkins, the basic summary of critical opinions as presented in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, and finally the refinement of those definitions by Susan Stewart in *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*. From these

and other critical perspectives, I will derive definitions for these terms in my own reading of Hopkins as a poet of religious fervor.

Hopkins derived his concepts of inscape and instress from the Greek philosopher Parmenides and the medieval Oxford scholar, Duns Scotus. Parmenides had visited Athens with Zeno, and was known to Plato. As a Greek scholar at Oxford, and later Fellow of the Royal University of Ireland, Department of Classics, Hopkins was familiar with this early Greek philosopher. In his journal from 1868, Hopkins notes that Parmenides differentiates between being and non-being, a distinction which Hopkins extends to mean that “all things are upheld by instress and are meaningless without it. [. . .] [Parmenides’] feeling for instress, for the flush and foredrawn, and for inscape / is most striking and from this one can understand Plato’s reverence for him as the great father of Realism” (*Journals* 127).<sup>79</sup> Hopkins identifies with Parmenides as a kindred spirit, saying that he too has “often felt when I have been in this mood and felt the depth of an instress or how fast an inscape holds a thing, that nothing is so pregnant and straightforward to the truth as simple *yes* and *is*” (*Journals* 127). Here, Hopkins’s suggestion that inscape “holds a thing” seems to be closer to the meaning of instress suggested by his critics.<sup>80</sup> Hopkins’s notes on Parmenides go on to say, “To be and to know or Being and thought are the same. The truth in thought is Being, stress, and each word is one way of acknowledging Being. [. . .] The way men judge in particular is determined for each by his own inscape” (*Journals* 129). Thus, human inscape determines men’s judgment, or method of judging. Those definitions of inscape which

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<sup>79</sup> The slanted line is an idiosyncratic punctuation in Hopkins’ journal, not an indication of a line break in poetry.

<sup>80</sup> Note Stewart, above, “Instress is . . . a force binding something . . . into a unit,” and Princeton Encyclopedia (332): instress is “that energy which holds the ‘inscape’ together.”



seem to relegate it to the physically observable, then, are not strictly compliant with Hopkins's thought. I would note, too, that by evaluating "knowing" and "being," Hopkins rearranges the Coleridgian dichotomy between sense and reason as different approaches to understanding (see Coleridge, *Major Works* 590).

According to the *Princeton Encyclopedia*, "Inscap is Gerard Manley Hopkins's term for the pattern of attributes in a physical object that gives it at once both its individuality and its unity" (*Princeton* 332). *Princeton* then cites several sources to support this definition.<sup>81</sup> *Princeton* further notes, "Hopkins later found confirmation of his conception of inscape in the Scotist notion of *haecceitas* or 'thisness,' namely that which uniquely differentiates each thing from all other things" (*Princeton* 332). *Princeton* defines instress (quoting W. H. Gardner's introduction to *Poems*, as "that energy or stress of being which holds the "inscape" together") (*Princeton* 332; *Poems* xxi). For my purposes in this chapter, I will need to expand on this definition. While inscape is a pattern suggestive of individuality, it is also a wellspring of affect, not merely the uniqueness of, say, a molecular structure.

Hopkins "usually implies by inscape the characteristic shape or pattern of a phenomenon" says Susan Stewart" (91). She provides a more detailed definition of instress:

Instress is the identifying impression a thing can communicate and is associated with emotion; as a 'stress within,' it is a force binding something or a person into a unit. Being and not-being, the one and the many, the constantly changing aspect

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<sup>81</sup> Peters, W. A. M., for example, defines inscape as "the outward reflection of the inner nature of a thing, or a sensible copy or representation of its individual essence" (*Princeton Encyclopedia* 609).

of things—‘the brink, limbus, lapping, run-and-mingle,’ which induces in the perceiver an emotional response. (Stewart 91)

According to Stewart, then, inscape is observable pattern, and instress is the internal energy which results in a unified “identifying impression” on the observer. Inscapable is the observable spectrum characteristic of the individual, and instress is the energy or essence that produces that individuality. Instress is also that connection between the internal nature of a being and its observer – in the case of poetry, between the poet and the reader, as the latter perceives the former through the vehicle of the poem.

Hopkins, according to Devlin, “accept[s] Scotus’s distinction [. . .] between the nature of a man and his individuality. Hopkins identifies ‘inscape’ with nature as opposed to ‘pitch,’ which is identified with *haecceitas*” (*Sermons* 283n). *Haecceitas* is Duns Scotus’s term for “thisness,” an early harbinger of Heidegger’s “what-being.” It can best be understood here as a background upon which Hopkins built his concepts of inscapable and instress. In 1872, before he resumed writing poetry, Hopkins writes that “when I took in any inscapable of the sky or sea I thought of Scotus” (*Journals* 221). Hopkins’s allegiance to Scotus was a type of minor religious rebellion. Scotus was a Catholic theologian, a Franciscan monk, and an Oxford scholar, yet in Hopkins’s time, a more recent theologian was the established philosopher for Catholic religious life – Thomas Aquinas. According to Norman White, “One of the features which distinguished Scotism from Thomism was its emphasis on the importance of being, rather than essence, and on Man’s ability to know a particular object by intuition rather than ratiocination” (White *Biography* 275).<sup>82</sup> In the sonnet, “As kingfishers catch fire,” Hopkins asserts not only

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<sup>82</sup> According to some classmates in the Jesuit theologate, quoted by White, Hopkins was denied the fourth year of studies in 1877, “because he was too Scotist for his examiners” (*Biography* 284). Note, too, that

that “What I do is me,” but goes on to “make a more personal plea for the sanctification of human beauty” (White *Biography* 276):

. . . 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. (12-14)

Thus, to Hopkins, there is an instress of Christ in the faces, limbs, and eyes of his human creations. The inscape is the outward presentation of Christ’s instress.<sup>83</sup>

Instress I take to be that throbbing, energetic, inner quality originating in and propagated by God. At least, this is the way I believe it can be seen as an aid to understanding idiosyncratic word use and formal structure in Hopkins’s poetry. Pace White, I would disagree that there was any attempt to free the onlooker from responsibility in Hopkins’s poetry. The guilt, in fact is confronted on two levels: personal and humanistic. Generally, the personal guilt is seen in the later, especially the desolate, sonnets, and the societal guilt in the early works. For example, even in the generally joyful sonnet, “God’s Grandeur,” men do “now not reck his rod,” they “have trod, have trod, have trod,” “all is seared . . . bleared, smeared with toil,” all “wear’s man’s smudge and shares man’s smell,” and man’s industry has rendered him insensitive

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Scotus’s “emphasis on the importance of being” is an early harbinger of the Heideggerian philosophy of *Dasein*.

<sup>83</sup> White suggests that

behind the terms ‘inscape’ and ‘instress’ lay not just a student’s desire for explanatory laws, but a personal hesitation and guilt at acknowledging perceptions unless they were validated by objective standards. ‘Inscape’ made the qualities he described originate with the object, rather than in his reactions, and ‘instress’ transferred the onlooker’s feelings to the object, freeing the onlooker from responsibility. (*Biography* 200)

I disagree with this interpretation. I believe that inscape is what is observable by the senses for further processing, e.g. memory, contemplation, even word play. Though inscape may be observable in the outer appearance, sound, etc., there is an inner-scape that may be described as personality or character. In his private journals, Hopkins had no hesitation or guilt; those aspects of his personality are expressed in his poetry, not his poetics.

to nature, as his feet cannot “feel, being shod.” Later, in the desolate sonnet, “I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day,” Hopkins says his “lament / Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent / to dearest him that lives alas! away.” He continues in his painful and personal guilt, “I am gall, I am heartburn. God’s most deep decree / Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me.” God’s instress, here, is spoiled by the guilt of an individual stress, lack of sufficient grace.

Gardner considers instress an “energy or stress of being which *holds the inscape together*,” (emphasis added), and, as a projective force which “carries it whole into the mind of the receiver,” being “intimately the stress of God’s Will in and through all things” (Gardner, Introduction to *Poems*, xxi). This definition I believe to be more substantiated in Hopkins’s poetry. A Jesuit critic, Peter Milward, says (in *A Fine Delight*):

Hopkins seems rather to associate the thought of Parmenides with the perception of instress in things, as it were a perception of the divine energy at work in the world. For the Creator, according to the Christian faith, remains active in all his creatures; and the creation is not altogether a separation, but that God remains in things by his essence, presence and power, as the inmost being of things. (136)

In both cases, these critics see instress as energy. I would argue that it is the kinetic energy of a single bond; we can see it as the bond between Hopkins and Christ, for example--“the divine energy at work.” Hopkins’s use of terms such as “charged,” “flame out,” “springs,” “hurl and gliding,” “stirred,” “fire that breaks from thee,” “strains,” “fire-

featuring,” and “unbound” is suggestive of intramolecular energy, for Hopkins an internal presence of the spirit of God.<sup>84</sup>

Milward, however, goes on to say

H[opkins] seems to see the ‘inscape’ of a thing as that which *holds its many parts together* as one, arising as it were from the depths of its inmost being or ‘instress’ and this may be compared with his later definition of pitch, in his spiritual writings, as ‘that by which being differs from and is more than nothing and not being,’ which he adds, ‘is with precision expressed by the English ‘do.’” (136; emphasis added)

Here Milward seems to attribute to inscape the qualities Gardner associates with instress, and this suggests two levels of interior stress – that arising from “the depths of its inmost being,” and that which “holds its many parts together as one.” This recalls the opposing definitions of the two terms in Stewart and *Princeton* versus the original words of Hopkins. The contradiction is significant for it illustrates that confusion of these terms is profound in Hopkins criticism.

Yet Hopkins himself is little help. He first uses the terms in an 1868 notebook essay on Parmenides, quoted above (*Journals* 127). Hopkins, in this early use, has the inscape “holding the thing together,” more aligning with Milward than with Gardner. He says that instress upholds *all things* and that inscape holds *a thing* “fastly,” that is to say in a tight grip, or centripetally. The instress, then, is that energy which presents things outwardly, centrifugal force. Inscape is an individual internal energy, centripetal force.

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<sup>84</sup> The words in quotes are from “God’s Grandeur,” “The Windhover,” and “Spelt from Sibyl’s Leaves.”

Later in the same essay (an oft-cited passage, and one analyzed by Stewart),<sup>85</sup> Hopkins attributes a complex ratio of meanings to inscape, saying:

For the phenomenal world...is the brink, limbus, lapping, run-and-mingle / of two principles which meet in the scape of everything—probably Being, under its modification or siding of particular oneness or Being, and Not-being, under its siding of the Many. The two may be called two degrees of siding in the scale of being. Foreshortening and equivalency will explain all possible difference. The inscape will be the proportion of the mixture. (*Journals* 130)

The first difficulty with this passage is that it is unclear whether “scape” and “inscape” are synonymous, but I will assume that they are for two reasons: Hopkins never discusses “scape” as a separate attribute of being, and “inscape” may be substituted for “scape” in the above quotation without any contradiction in meaning. The second difficulty presented here, is the use of the word “siding.” This is a frequent usage in Hopkins, and describes gradations of inscape which occur naturally, as in maturation, for example: “A beautiful instance of inscape sided on the slide, that is, successive sidings of one inscape, is seen in the behavior of the flag flower from the shut bud to the full blowing” (*Journals* 211), is suggestive of the modern process of time-lapse photography. Our next difficulty comes in the use of “foreshortening,” which we take to mean an angle or point-of-view, and is probably a use influenced by Ruskin, whose *Modern Painters* was read by Hopkins about this time.<sup>86</sup> According to the *OED*, “point-of-view” also has a temporal

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<sup>85</sup> See Stewart, Susan. *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*.

<sup>86</sup> Norman White notes that *Modern Painters* “appears in a list of books [Hopkins] drew up in February 1865 of books that he should read. He refers to Ruskin often in his letters, even commenting specifically, in 1885, that “Ruskin is publishing a sort of penitential edition of *Modern Painters*. He should take the opportunity of repenting about Whistler” (*The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon* (hereafter *Letters* II) 131). This indicates his familiarity with Ruskin’s work was of considerable depth.

sense: they give an example from Hawthorne. Yet, what is the foreshortening and equivalency of being? It is likely that Hopkins means that, though an object viewed as foreshortened, strictly speaking, appears to be different from the same object viewed whole, with each part proportional, they are in fact the same object. This reminds one of the passage in Husserl in which he describes walking around a table, visually absorbing various features, and finally identifying the object, given a number of similarities with a mental image of “tableness,” as a table. Recall, though, that Heidegger added to the Aristotelian “what”-being and “that”-being, a “how”-being, a human history and potential of use.

According to Hillis Miller, in *The Disappearance of God*:

Against the floating species of evolutionism Hopkins proposes the existence of inalterable types at definite intervals, intervals which have a mathematical relation providing for a grand system of harmony. Hopkins’s later doctrine of inscape, his feeling for pattern, is implicit in this early description of a world of imperishable forms at fixed distances from one another in the scale of being. (*Disappearance* 279, see *Journals* 120)

The “inalterable types at definite intervals” I take to be “sidings in the scale of being.”

From the religious point of view, the fact that these sidings are said by Hopkins to “slide,” one senses an indication that his faith would change over time. Indeed, it did.

He converted from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism, and he went into and came out of a period of religious anguish in 1885, the year of the desolate sonnets.

I have decided to adapt the definitions used by Hillis Miller in *The Disappearance of God* for two reasons: he approaches Hopkins in the framework of religious fervor, and he

deals with the concepts of energy. Hillis Miller defines inscape, in brief, as “the individual pattern of a thing,” and instress as “the inner energy which upholds that pattern” (*Disappearance* 278). This is a neat and workable definition against which I will test my statements related to religious fervor. The inner energy, which may be perceived as a type of bonding or even pulse, may to a religious poet be the presence of God in nature, and in secondary works of nature, that is art. Thus, one’s face and its expression together comprise inscape, one’s pulse and personality comprise instress.

Humans continue the work of nature, but in their attempts to replicate symmetry, order, beauty, they often destroy. Men plow fields in parallel lines, arrange flowers in certain patterns, and create paintings which either replicate or challenge the patterns seen in nature. They also “blear, smear with toil.” Patterns are seen in various ways in poetry: alliteration, consonance, assonance, rhythm, rhyme. This creative patterning of physical or poetic work is analogous to the work of the secondary imagination which Coleridge said, “dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create” (*Biographia Literaria* 313). Coleridge had noted that fancy, acting through memory, is subject to the “law of association,” which he attributes to Descartes. In his “De Methodo,” Descartes said that images and sensations “recall each other mechanically” and that “human language [is] one continued process of association” (quoted in *Biographia Literaria* 208-09).

In adopting the definition of instress as the “inner energy” which holds a pattern together, we can see an opening for an agent behind this energy. Hillis Miller says, “Instress is a creative energy sweeping through the universe and manifesting itself in the inscapes of things” (*Disappearance* 291). This creative energy in the universe would be God to Hopkins. By holding things together, as instress, and being observable in their



inscapes, God is present in his creation. As Hopkins says in a prose writing, “God is so deeply present to everything [. . .] It would be impossible for him (but for his infinity) not to be identified with them . . . to be present to them” (*Sermons* 128). It is a characteristic of God to be present and observable in his creation.

We can learn something of Hopkins’s meaning by his own applied use of the terms inscape and instress. Hopkins indicates a difference between sound and speech, saying, “verse is [...] inscape of spoken sound, not spoken words or speech employed to carry the inscape of the spoken sound” (*Journals* 289). He highlights the difference between poetic voice and verbal expression. The poetic voice is more natural than speech in the sense that it emulates natural sounds, is more musical. This is congruous with his belief in at least a limited onomatopoeics. Hillis Miller says, further, that

the basic method of poetry as of music is repetition, the repetition of different forms of the same inscape. [. . .] The term ‘inscape,’ at least as Hopkins uses it in his theory of poetry [. . .] means that which a number of particulars have in common rather than that which one particular shares with no others.

(*Disappearance* 282)

Thus, Hopkins’s inscape is the opposite of Duns Scotus’ haecceitas, which means “thisness,” a quality which Gardner, calls “the final perfection of any creature” (*Poems* xxi). This further seems to contradict Hillis Miller’s own definition of inscape as “the individual pattern of a thing.” Yet, if inscape were entirely individualistic, and poetry attempted to express that individuality, it would require a new alphabet for each description, and would deny the logical and categorical sameness of things. This sameness is the background against which individuality is built. We see a man’s face and

begin a categorization of its elements, “brown hair, blue eyes, smiling,” etc. There are many men with brown hair, blue eyes, etc. But, if we know the man and recognize him, we shortcut this process to “Harry.”

Hopkins notes a ‘stem of stress between us and things to bear us out and carry the mind over’ (*Journals* 127). Hillis Miller contends that, for Hopkins, ‘this stem of stress is words’ (*Disappearance* 284). The stem of stress is more intuitive and affective than rational and didactic, indicating again the appropriateness of using Altieri’s criticism as a basis for the interpretation of Hopkins’s work. Hopkins himself preferred the individuality of Duns Scotus’ haecceitas to the Thomist doctrine of human intellect and religious rigor. By siding with Scotus over Aquinas, by elaborating on haecceitas as inscape and instress, Hopkins provides a guide for interpreting his poetry.

The God-instress is the throbbing, pulsating “freshness deep down things,” and is manifest in each being’s individual inscape. With God at the heart of all beings, the affective mood is more than just an external atmosphere. It becomes a religious fervor, more clearly represented by sensation than by sensory images, by kinesthetics than by stasis.

#### “God’s Grandeur”

As in the study of Keats, I will select three poems that seem to me particularly appropriate for the study of Hopkins’s work in light of the relevant philosophies. For situating Hopkins’s poetry and religious fervor in the contexts of Heidegger’s philosophy and Altieri’s criticism, I believe that three sonnets are of particular interest: “God’s Grandeur,” “The Windhover,” and “Spelt from Sibyl’s Leaves.” The first is a complex

study of the resilience of the natural world against a backdrop of man's poor stewardship. The second, Hopkins's own favorite and the subject of considerable critical attention, sees God's instress in nature's inscape. The last, the first-written of the "desolate sonnets" is important because it shows that, even in a dark or depressed state, Hopkins's religious fervor remains the dominant affect in his poetry.

As Hillis Miller points out, in Hopkins's poetry, "there is more emphasis on the lines of energy joining things, as molecules are bound together in a magnetic field, than on the patterns of the isolated molecules themselves" (*Disappearance* 292). So, where I have earlier compared instress with intramolecular (single) bonds to illustrate the flexibility in some patterns, I see another perspective in which intermolecular bonds, while resulting in specific compounds, can have isomeric variations. This energy is instress, and I believe it is more fundamental to Hopkins's work than is inscape, especially because it allows us to understand his religious fervor. Where inscape, say the appearance of a tree, a cloud, or an ocean wave, may be the immediate inspiration for a poem, the deeper contemplation which leads to an excellent poem uncovers the "freshness deep down things," the instress, God's presence.

"God's Grandeur" was written in the spring of 1877, about one year after Hopkins had resumed writing poetry following his self-imposed sacrificial hiatus.<sup>87</sup> An initial scansion shows that Hopkins was perhaps less experimental in this poem than in his inaugural "The Wreck of the Deutschland" (1875), in which he had boldly employed

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<sup>87</sup> According to White, Hopkins made an attempt to destroy all his early poetry shortly after converting to Catholicism: "He made a bonfire of his verses, 'slaughter of the innocents' he called it in his journal" (160). He had made copies earlier however and they were safely with Bridges: "There were signs that Hopkins' literary holocaust was a romantic indulgence" (White *Biography* 161).

“sprung rhythm,” his new line in which only the stressed syllables are counted.<sup>88</sup> The poem is reproduced in full below:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;  
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?  
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;  
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;  
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil  
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;  
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;  
And though the last lights off the black West went  
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—  
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

“God’s Grandeur” has only one line in which there are more than ten syllables: “It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil” (3). This makes line 3 interesting to the reader, who asks why Hopkins didn’t merely leave out the articles, “a,” and “the,”

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<sup>88</sup> Recent scholarship has considered alliteration and sprung rhythm in the context of semiotic effect. James I. Wimsatt, states that “[Hopkins] associates the sound figures of verse with his Scotist concept of ‘inscape.’ Through repetition the figures bring out both their haecceitas, or ‘thisness’ and the ‘formalities’ that associate them with the other figures” (“Alliteration and Hopkins’s Sprung Rhythm,” *Poetics Today* 19:4, 532-33). Note that individual inscape features, such as blue eyes, may be shared by many individuals in an instressed class. This repetition of features is accomplished metrically and alliteratively in poetry.

resulting in a more abrupt, less leisurely line, while maintaining the pentameter. An abrupt line, without these articles would be more characteristic of Hopkins, who says, for example, “nor can foot feel, being shod” in line 8, omitting the more natural “a” or even “his” before “foot.” I mention this as further illustration of Hopkins’s sensitivity to the conjunction of meter and meaning, which is expressed in his sprung rhythm. In the first case, gathering to “a greatness” may suggest one kind of greatness, as opposed to “the greatness” which is in God himself. In the second instance, there is a more grammatical basis for adding the article, I believe. “The ooze of oil” differs from “ooze of oil” in stipulating a certain ooze of oil, so to speak, which will be necessary for the carryover into the next line of the word, “Crushed.” For the word “crushed” to, at once, end a sentence and begin a line, is a strategic positioning.

Additionally, the scansion tells us that Hopkins either considers “oil,” “foil,” and “soil,” to be monosyllables, or he violates the pentameter by just that extra length, which is something less than a syllable, yet more than nothing. They are somewhat longer than diphthongs in pronunciation and, given Hopkins’s stress on his works being written for spoken, as opposed to read, appreciation, it seem significant. For English speakers, the word grandeur, offers a clear diphthong, with the second syllable generally pronounced as “j(h)ur.” Oil, foil, soil, toil, however, are different. There is a certain quality of slowness to “oil,” reinforced by the word “ooze,” which could be said to be onomatopoeic, as Hopkins suggests that so many words are.<sup>89</sup> Instances of onomatopoeic uses abound in this poem, in fact, I note the following: “grandeur,”

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<sup>89</sup> For example, in his *Journals*, Hopkins remarks, “Cr. *Crack, creak, croak, crake, graculus, crackle*. These must be onomatopoeic” (5). He also notes in *Journals*, the more-than-coincidental overlap in sound between words in Irish, Welsh and English vernacular: “Wells calls a grindstone a grindstone [. . .] *Geet* [is] northcountry preterite of *get*” (191; all emphases in original).

“flame,” “shook,” “ooze,” “oil,” “crushed,” “reck,” “rod,” “trod,” “seared,” “bleared,” “smeared,” “smudge,” “bare,” “shod,” “freshness,” “deep,” “black,” “oh,” “brink,” “springs,” “Holy,” “Ghost,” “broods,” “warm,” “breast,” “ah,” and “wings.” While not all of these words are onomatopoeic in the strictest sense, they all conform to Hopkins’s wider connotation of the term in his journals. Hopkins shows a contrast between the godlike aspects of the world, and those which are manlike. Take, for example, the rhyming pair, “rod” and “shod.” The first refers to God’s power and his unwavering quality. Rods do not bend, unlike the “bent / World” of the sestet. “Shod” however, introduces man’s shod-dy and slip-shod attempt to separate himself from natural soil by the interposition of flexible shoes. These opposites reflect God’s immortality, and man’s mortality.

In “God’s Grandeur,” Hopkins introduces several key components of his later poetry: energy, sensation, and, stylistically, enjambment, building toward a climactic ending. The aspects of the God-qualities, then, are energy and abundance (“charged,” “greatness”), grandeur, lightning-like fire (“shining from shook foil”), suddenness (“flame out”), and increasing strength (“gathers to a greatness”). This assumes that the word “it” in lines 2 and 3 refers to the “grandeur of God,” the God-qualities, and not to “the world” alone. I consider this to be evident by the context and the expectations: the world does not appear to be gathering to a greatness and, later in the poem, we will see that Hopkins has grave concerns about man’s abuse of the planet; further, the world does not seem to be on the verge of flaming out, though this attribute is a clearly Hopkinsian way of viewing God’s activity. For example, in the 1865 poem “Barnfloor and Winepress,” written while he was at Oxford, he says, “Where the upper mill-stone roof’d

His head, / At morn we found the heavenly bread,” attributing sudden shape-change to the risen Christ.<sup>90</sup> Then, in the same period, in “Easter Communion,” he writes, “God shall o’er-brim the measures you have spent,” pointing to the multiplicative nature of God (e.g. Christ and the loaves and fishes, not to mention the Trinity itself). Then, later, in a poem of his middle period, “Hurrahing in Harvest,” he attributes the strength of nature to God: “And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding shoulder / Majestic—as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet!” Even during 1885, the year of the desolate sonnets, he writes, in “The Soldier,” “Mark Christ our King. He knows war, served this soldiering through; / He of all can reeve a rope best. There he hides in bliss.” In these examples, spanning twenty years of Hopkins’ brief creative life, we see God or Christ as bountiful, majestic, omnipresent, strong, sweet, and warlike. In “God’s Grandeur,” Hopkins seems to present a traditional God, inspiring life and beauty in His beleaguered planet. Yet, there are aspects, even in the first line, which arrest our attention, and indicate something more intense than a simple paean to God’s beauty. The strength of God’s instress in nature is, for Hopkins, highly affective, an inspiration and a reinforcement of the religious fervor which led him to become a priest over the expressed protests of his family, and the implied protests of his university and his country.

Hopkins, of course, sees the world’s instress as imbued by God. Further, rather than simply stating that the earth is “alive with” or “held by” or “full of” the grandeur of God, Hopkins uses “charged with,” a phrase which reminds us of electricity. Being “charged

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<sup>90</sup> This excerpt also gives an insight into Hopkins’s early Catholic leanings. White points out that, “he became doubtful of the efficacy of Anglican Holy Communion” (*Biography* 126). He converted to Catholicism, fully believing in the transubstantiation of the Eucharist into the body of Christ. This early dedication to a change of instress, so to speak, is illustrative of Hopkins’s ability to accept on faith what is certainly reticent to the senses. Thus, his affective will is clearly ascendant over the elective will in matters of religion.

with” an instress or a passion is a far different thing from being “held by” one. In terms of affectivity, “charged” is far more active than the affective mode called mood. It is less like emotion than it is like feelings because it is almost instantaneous, and can be identified readily with a sensation (a shock, or tingle). The affective mode of emotion, and its special application, passion, involve a longer-term construction of characteristic identity. Being “charged with” a concept is a feeling, a sensation. Electrical charges, like human pulses, have a certain and regular frequency (for electricity, 60 cycles per second in the US; for pulse rate, typically 60 beats per minute). This frequency of oscillations implies a pulsating rhythm. This image of pulsing, living instress will be reinforced in line 10: “There lives the dearest freshness deep down things.”

The world being charged with God’s grandeur is an example of the Creator-creation relationship so apparent in Hopkins’s work. In addition to electricity-related definitions, the word “charged,” is defined by *OED* to refer to abundance, a meaning carried over consistently from the fifteenth century: “To fill (any substance) *with* other matter, diffused or distributed throughout it (*e.g.* the air *with* vapour, etc.). Usually in pa[st] participle: charged with: containing or full of (the matter specified) in a state of diffusion or solution.”

The earth (the name of the planet; independent of man) of Keats’s sonnet (“The poetry of earth is never dead”),<sup>91</sup> gives way to the world (earth plus all the man-made features; dependent upon God) of Hopkins’s work. In this line, too, we may ask why Hopkins chose the word “grandeur.” By “God’s grandeur,” we typically may think of a heavenly body complete with flowing gown, etc., yet, that grandeur is not evident in worldly things. Even in natural beauty, it would seem far-fetched to attribute Godly

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<sup>91</sup> “The Grasshopper and Cricket,” John Keats *Poems* 88.



grandeur to, say, a rose's redness. Here, I think, is where it is important to recognize Hopkins's representation as one of sensation rather than of sensory imagery or description. Heidegger, too, differentiates between earth and world. In his 1935 lecture, "The Origin of the Work of Art," he says, "to be a work means to set up a world" (Heidegger *Writings* 170). He is discussing artwork as a means of constructing a world that "is not the mere collection of the countable or uncountable" (170). And, even more pointedly, he adds, "The work lets the earth be an earth" (172).

The closest we come to mentally imaging God, is probably a group of randomly-accessed common definitions, artistic exempla, etc. Hopkins, as a priest, was perhaps better able to "picture" God than an average man, or at least spent much of his life contemplating just this sort of phenomenon. It was not that he had a particular insight, so much as he had unwavering belief in the existence. Therefore, his appreciation of God's qualities was never mitigated by any doubt that He was there. The "grandeur" is a facet of the translation, so to speak, of Godly qualities into earthly ones. The unknowable Creator becomes knowable in his creation.

In writing poetry of religious fervor, he needed to consider his audiences: God, himself, Bridges and other immediate associates, and the possibility of later unknown readers. In this sense, I believe he was remarkably farsighted. He had no reason to suspect that his poetry would survive him, yet he wrote poetry which delicately balanced the subjective and the objective, poetry of thought and poetry of affect. The reader who does not share his religious fervor is still susceptible to his subtlety of sound, meter, word choice, and coinages. Hopkins, in looking for a word to represent God's quality, looked for aspects of godliness which were large, transferable, and open to a variety of

meanings. “Grandeur” has several advantages: stylistically, it is alliterative with “God”; rhetorically, it is somewhat grander than “grand” and carries a slightly exotic foreign tone; theologically, it is an aspect of godliness which can be seen (at least in the imagination) reverberating through creation; and, grammatically, it is majestic, yet passive, in the sense that “conquering” is not. Hopkins speaks of God in the Scotist, not Thomist sense, that is:

For the Thomists the infinity of God is a corollary. For Scotus it is the actual proof: the existence of finite being postulates the existence of infinite being. From the existence of God all other knowable conclusions about him flow.  
(Devlin, notes on *Sermons*, 286)

The Thomists believe that we know that God is infinite as we know that he is good, omniscient, etc. – because those are attributes which “a god” would be likely to have. For Scotists, however, God’s infinity proves his deity, for everything else is finite. Thus, the difference between the Scotists and the Thomists is analogous to the difference between primary and secondary qualities, respectively. By linking God’s grandeur with the instress of the world, Hopkins is on firm theological ground à la Scotus. There are numerous similar contemplations in Hopkins’s spiritual writing and letters.<sup>92</sup> In his journal, Hopkins gives a hint at the “charged” quality of the world in an early (1870) entry about observing clouds,

They rose slightly *radiating* thrown out from the earthline. Then I saw soft *pulses of light* one after another rise and pass upwards arched in shape but *waveringly*. [.

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<sup>92</sup> For an examination of Hopkins and Scotus on Christ in nature, see Devlin’s notes on *Sermons* 110; 120. Devlin suggests that Hopkins “exaggerated Scotus’s distinction between nature and individuality; he assigned all his love of beauty to the *voluntas ut natura* [affective will] and all his desire for holiness to the naked *arbitrium* [elective will]” (120).

. .] This busy working of nature wholly independent of the earth and seeming to go on in a strain of time not reckoned by our reckoning of days [. . .] filled me with delightful fear. (*Journals* 200; emphases added)

Thus, in a sense, two natural worlds exist: one “reckoned by our reckoning of days,” e.g. sunrise and sunset, spring and fall; the other inspired by “pulses of light” is “independent of the earth.” These variations of nature vis-à-vis time are represented in the first four lines of “God’s Grandeur” by a rapid-fire change of tenses: “is charged,” (present) but “will flame out” (future); “gathers,” (present) but “Crushed” (past participle). How does this switch of tenses reflect Hopkins’s religious fervor? For him, I suggest, the past is still existing in the sense of the afterlife and in the ongoing power of the influence of Christ’s life and those of the saints, the present is “being” in the Heideggerian sense, and the future is not merely that death toward which *Dasein* tends, but eternal reward or punishment, closer to that pictured in *The Divine Comedy*. To express the affect of God’s instress in nature, Hopkins uses words of sensation. Even in the early entry on clouds, above, he uses “strain” (not mere passage), and is filled with “delightful fear” (not intellectual bafflement). According to Altieri, the sublime presented a problem for Victorian poets who “could not be content unless their speakers could take on personal stances dignified by Wordsworthian high eloquence. But they could no longer marry that eloquence to processes of sensation” (Altieri “Strange Affinities”<sup>1</sup>). This seemed to not be a problem for Hopkins whose “personal stance” is one of religious devotion rather than self-conscious style-making. Altieri continues with an analysis of “self-projection” as the “affective basis” for Victorian poetry, saying it “came increasingly to have little

but the poet's imaginary identification with the role of poet as sustenance for lyric eloquence" ("Strange Affinities" 2).

How does God's grandeur flame out? It is suddenly visible in an inscape, but perhaps only to one person. Hopkins remarks in his journal in 1872, "how sadly beauty of inscape was unknown and buried away from simple people yet how near at hand it was if they had eyes to see it" (*Journals* 221). This statement seems to me an important element of Hopkins's aesthetic. He frequently mentions the lofty position of art in his experience both of nature (God's art) and manmade secondary art. In this, Hopkins's aesthetic is similar to that of Coleridge's distinction between primary and secondary imagination. Hopkins is interested in aspects of man's creation other than art proper. In several poems and journal entries he shows a particular interest in everyday equipment, tools, patterns of plowed fields, etc. For example, in "Pied Beauty," a poem which praises God, he significantly mentions such human artifacts as "fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls," "landscape plotted and pieced," and "all trades, their gear and tackle and trim" (4-6). These constructed elements are refinements of created nature, yet fall short of what we consider to be art. In elevating them to a position of beauty in this poem, Hopkins aligns with the Wordsworthian principle of the language of the lowly rustic. In fact, Hopkins shows a deep appreciation of Wordsworth whose poetry has "a subtle complexity of emotion at the bottom, not simplicity, which is the secret of their beauty" (*Journals* 112).

"God's Grandeur," then, is presented as the instressed quality of nature. It is not stationary, but dynamic and heated (it will "flame out"). Having imbued nature with its life and heat, it remains there, throbbing and pulsing, and presenting an inscape to the

observer. This inscape can be complex, presenting layers of life to the onlooker. In his journals, Hopkins records his impression of the sea, viewed on a walking tour:

I had many beautiful sights of it, sometimes to the foot of the cliff, where it was of a *strong smoldering* green over the sunken rocks—these rocks, which are coated with small limpets, discolor the coast...and make themselves *felt* where the smooth black ones would not shew--, but farther out blue shadowed with gusts from the shore; at other times with the brinks hidden by the fall of the hill.

(*Journals* 222; emphases added)

Hopkins recognizes the importance of perspective in observing inscape. Recall that he said “Being, and Not-being [. . .] The two may be called two degrees of siding in the scale of being. Foreshortening and equivalency will explain all possible difference. The inscape will be the proportion of the mixture” (*Journals* 130). Hopkins recognizes that more than one “siding” may be valid, in fact, must be, when we consider the essential changing of nature itself, as well as its placement and timing vis à vis the station and time of the perceiver.

The next image to consider in “God’s Grandeur,” is the choice of the simile “like shining from shook foil.” Hopkins elaborates that God’s grandeur will flame out “like shining from shook foil,” an unusual image and one fraught with the suggestion of static electricity, thence electricity proper, and recalling us to the fact that Hopkins lived in a time when electricity was just being elucidated by scientists (Helmholtz; in a Kuhnian paradigm shift), and was soon to become applied in daily life (Clerk Maxwell; à la Kuhnian “normal science”).<sup>93</sup> Why not a more “natural” image; “like thunder soon to roil,” for example? Shaking foil involves the action of a human upon a manmade

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<sup>93</sup> See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

substance. Is this how God is seen by Hopkins? In the next few lines he describes man's interventions in nature: They do not "reck his rod," they blear, smear, sear, etc. "Shining from shook foil" advances the mystery of the suddenness of God's presence in nature, and Hopkins defends the image in a letter to Bridges:

I mean foil in its sense of leaf or tinsel, and no other word whatever will give the effect I want. Shaken goldfoil gives off broad glares like sheet lightning and also, ... owing to its zigzag dints and creasings and network of small many cornered facets, a sort of forking lightning too. (*Letters I 169*)

Hopkins felt this was the only possible image for his desired effect. Is the image consistent with his affect? This attention to visual detail is not inconsistent with Hopkins's emphasis on the importance of sound in his poetry. His descriptions of visual, and other sensory, images are related via sound in the metrical arrangement of his poems. It is rather like two levels of meaning – the message, and the method of delivery. The message is the way that Hopkins sees God's grandeur expressed in nature. The method of delivery is the expression of Hopkins's viewpoint in an English sonnet with a certain meter and rhyme. Hopkins is devoutly religious and his fervor is manifest in most of his poetry, all of his adult poetry. Sudden light is the very essence of Christian religious belief, from "Let there be light" of the Old Testament to the tongues of fire of the Paraclete in the New Testament.

The following image shows God's grandeur differently: "It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil / Crushed." This line is the only line in the poem to exceed ten syllables, and its twelve syllable length, the alexandrine, is in keeping with its message of

slowness and gradual increase.<sup>94</sup> Unlike the sudden lightning imagery of the previous line, we here see an inevitable buildup. How is that image true of God's grandeur? We think of the various inscapes possible in a living thing, the sidings on the side. The inscape of a child is different from that of a man, though it is the same individual. There are second-by-second variations as well. But God's being does not tend toward death as does *Dasein*. His grandeur, His greatness continues to build. Oil has several facets which make it, though it at first seems unlikely, a suitable metaphor for God. It, in normal settings, does not evaporate. It does not mix easily with water-based compounds. Thus God is immortal, separate from man. The separation is further reinforced by moving "Crushed" to a separate line. Oil, however, is made by a process of crushing (as an olive). What godly traits are produced by man's rather violent intervention? The crucifixion, with its culmination in the Resurrection. Thus, where the first two lines introduced the first person of the Holy Trinity, God the Father, who charged creation with light and life, the third line (plus "Crushed") introduces God the Son, Christ. At the end of the poem, we will find the third person, the Holy Ghost.

The rest of the octave rues man's disobedience ("not reck his rod"), ordinariness ("generations have trod"), greed ("seared with trade"), poor stewardship ("man's smudge"), and insensitivity ("nor can foot feel"). There is nothing new in man's behavior; it started in Eden. Thus, Hopkins asks, "Why do men *then now* not reck his rod?" Then and now are blended together for a continuum of disobedience. In "generations have trod, have trod, have trod," we find, not only an allusion to Keats's "No hungry generations tred thee down," differentiating bird from man in "Nightingale,"

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<sup>94</sup> This understanding of the alexandrine is suggested in the *Princeton Encyclopedia*: "its syntactic integrity suited the alexandrine for periodic and oratorical utterance in the grand manner" (30).

but also a harbinger of Eliot's "A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, / I had not thought death had undone so many," in *The Waste Land* (62-63), which extends the generational parade into the afterlife. In lines 5-8, Hopkins seems to anticipate an environmentalism which would only be organized into national and local agencies a century later.<sup>95</sup> Far from the Protestant work ethic, the Catholic Hopkins asks about the value of "man's smudge," the worth of trade and all it implies. He notes the cost to man of his own inventions. We make shoes to protect our feet yet, in wearing them, we separate ourselves from nature. Hopkins's environmental advocacy is also seen in "Binsey Poplars" (1879), where the title trees "are all felled" and "not spared, not one." Further, in that poem, he acknowledges man's role in endangering nature: "O if we but knew what we do / When we delve or hew-- / Hack and rack the growing green" (10-12). Earlier, in the 1877 sonnet, "The Caged Skylark," Hopkins equates man and bird, "both droop deadly," and exist "in drudgery, day-labouring-out life's age." In the later poem, "Inversnaid" (1881), Hopkins resurrects an image of a vanishing wilderness, as he tells Bridges: "O where is it, the wilderness / The wildness of the wilderness?" (*Letters I* 73). In "Inversnaid," the sentiment enlarges from concern about the wilderness to an uncertainty about the impact of its disappearance on the world: "What would the world be, once bereft / Of wet and of wildness?" (13-14).

The sestet of "God's Grandeur" returns first to the theme of the poem: "And for all this, nature is never spent," because, we may say, "The world is charged with the grandeur of God," and for all our human exploitation, there is no exhausting the infinite, at least that was the perspective prior to twentieth-century development of nuclear

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<sup>95</sup> The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, for example, was established in 1970, though concern for the environment was expressed by other earlier writers, notable Henry David Thoreau.



weapons, animal growth hormones, and persistent organic pesticides which degrade extremely slowly. In fact, says Hopkins, describing the instress of the world: “There lives the dearest freshness deep down things.” This renewable source of energy, so to speak, is God’s love. It is dearest in the sense of being most loved, not in the sense of being the most expensive. Yet the second interpretation, too, may work if we allow expense to be measured in terms of care (also, though, from *caro*, the Spanish adjective for expensive) and devotion. When we see nightfall, and are discouraged, we should know that daylight is soon to follow, Hopkins says in the next lines. He comforts the reader and himself that the third person of the Trinity is always preparing for a new start, a new day, a new generation:

Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward springs—

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent

World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings. (12-14)

The dawn seems to be filtered through the brownness of forests and cities alike. Morning springs in a neat coalescence of diurnal and seasonal renewal. The Holy Ghost is pictured here as a nurturing source of warmth and light, He “broods with warm breast” and “bright wings.” By interjecting a sigh-like exclamation, “ah!,” Hopkins uses the language of affect to express an intimation of relief. The Holy Ghost – not merely warm, but also bright – is appreciated by the poet in a moment of religious fervor -- “Ah!” The interruptive “ohs” and “ahs” are frequent in Hopkins’s poetry, and I will highlight another in the next poem, “The Windhover.”

## “The Windhover”

The presence of religious fervor in, or even the validity of a religious interpretation of, “The Windhover” (1877) has been debated since the late 1920s, when critics began to study Hopkins’s work. The poem carried a subtitle, “To Christ Our Lord,” added by Hopkins in 1883. The subtitle has led some critics to believe that the windhover is a symbol for Christ. Others, remarking on the delay between composition and dedication, join early critic, I. A. Richards, in seeing the poem as referring to the poet himself, adding that the dedication is that of the entire work to Christ, not a clue regarding the subject.<sup>96</sup> The subtitle may be a variation, in fact, of the Jesuit practice of writing an abbreviation for the Society’s motto “A.M.D.G.” (Latin, “Ad majorem Dei gloriam”; “for the greater glory of God”) at the beginning of any work.<sup>97</sup> William Empson, in *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, agrees with Richards in the insignificance of the dedication, but goes on to point out several instances of the seventh ambiguity, that of opposites. In this case, the opposition is between the action of the windhover and the meditative life of Hopkins. Specifically there seems to be an inconsistency in the sestet, which will be taken up later in this section. Other critics insist that the dedication is significant and that the sonnet does refer to Christ, instressed in the windhover, and appealed to by the poet in such phrases as “O my chevalier,” and “ah my dear.”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> In *The Dial*, LXXXI (September 1926) 198-99. This and some other critical work on “The Windhover” is collected in a valuable book, edited by John Pick, and entitled *Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Windhover* (Columbus, OH: Bell and Howell, 1969, 146 pp.)

<sup>97</sup> This is my own supposition. A similar observation related to “Pied Beauty” was made by White. “[‘Pied Beauty’] like all pieces of work done in Jesuit ... colleges [was framed] by A. M. D. G. at its head, and L. D. S. at its finish” (285). A. M. D. G. are the Latin initials for “For the greater glory of God,” and L. D. S. for “Praise God Always.”

<sup>98</sup> See Carl Woodring, for example, in *Western Review* XV (Autumn 1950) 61-64: “The windhover does not remain a clear symbol out of nature like...Keats’s nightingale. Hopkins’s spiritual quickening [is] excited by this coalescence of pride and valor and act in one of God’s creatures” (64).

The critical history of “The Windhover” is further complicated by several disagreements about key passages, especially the words, “here / Buckle,” the meaning of “my heart in hiding,” and the significance of the all capitalized word, “AND.” These will be discussed in order of appearance in the poem. Ecstasy is an affect akin to feelings, and in our example, to religious fervor. Feelings, says Altieri, “take on significance because they bring attention to bear on qualities that can be attributed directly to how sensations occur” (*Particulars* 235). He gives the examples of “color tones or [ . . . ] or rhythmic shifts . . . that become part of the sense of presence we attribute to the artists or to a figure within a work” (235). To condemn Hopkins for expressing his affective state vis à vis the falcon, and to refuse to consider the falcon as a potential symbol for Christ is a very narrow approach to “The Windhover.” I feel that to refuse to see Christ, or any religious significance, in the windhover is to turn a blind eye, not only to Hopkins’s special situation as a Jesuit, but also to a long-established metaphor of birds as spiritual symbols. The Holy Ghost, in “God’s Grandeur,” recall, “over the bent / World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.” The Holy Ghost (today more commonly referred to as the Holy Spirit) is commonly pictured as a dove. The importance of the Holy Spirit in Hopkins’s work has been recently noted by Timothy Jackson, who says, that “God’s Grandeur” “is a poem most easily recognized as showing forth the Holy Spirit” and, in it, the concept of the Holy Spirit re-creating the world “calls to mind [John Henry] Newman’s sense of the regenerating Holy Spirit” (115). In “The Windhover” the bird image is an instressing of the second person of the Trinity, Christ.

The poem begins with what might be a mere recording of a visual event--seeing a bird of prey in his graceful flight--but it soon becomes clear that more is meant.

According to Hopkins's journals and spiritual writings, numerous descriptions of God in nature form the intellectual, prose basis for this poetic effort.<sup>99</sup> The first lines continue the emphasis on sensation noted in "God's Grandeur," and add sprung rhythm, and numerous hyphenated constructions, repeated words, idiosyncratic usages and comparisons.

Consider the octave:

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-  
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding  
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding  
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing  
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,  
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend; the hurl and gliding  
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding  
Stirred for a bird,--the achieve of, the mastery of the thing. (1-8)

The word "caught" for "caught sight of" is a word of sensation and motion as opposed to the more regular use "saw." To catch involves considerable action on the part of the viewer, whereas seeing can be practically passive. In expressing his visual experience of the windhover in terms of movement, Hopkins himself enters the picture more forcibly than he could with words like, saw, viewed, or even the complete phrase "caught sight of." What he catches is, in fact, something less likely to be otherwise physically caught than most things we view, that is, it is a soaring bird.

In the octave, I note several words indicating royalty: "minion," "king-Dom," "dauphin," "mastery." How is the windhover related to royalty, and just what royalty is

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<sup>99</sup> See, for example, *Journals*: (beauty synonymous with finding order, 139), and (knowing the beauty of our Lord by looking at bluebells, 199). See, also, *Sermons*: (God necessarily present in all things, with His differentiating characteristic being immortality, 128), and ("there is an infinity of possible worlds," 151).

Hopkins speaking of here? A clue is given in line 2, with the capitalization of the first letter of Falcon. It is Catholic tradition to capitalize the names of saints and holy entities. This extends to the capitalization of pronouns which stand for these beings. That is, Michael the Archangel, and later, "He." Though Hopkins is not consistent in this application, I believe that his capitalization of Falcon indicates that he considered the bird to be alive with the instress of Christ. The windhover here is a minion, or favorite, of a prince, just as Christ was, during his time on earth, a minion of God the Father. The prince in this poem is the Son of God, Christ. How does Christ favor his minion? The way he favors all of nature, by instress. The instress is manifest in the inscape of the bird, its apparent grace, its "riding," "striding," its handling of the reins, its sweeping, hurling and gliding, its "brute beauty and valor and act" – in short, its "achieve of," its "mastery."

In line 2, we encounter one of Hopkins's favorite terms, "dapple," here seen in a complex hyphenated construction: "dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon." Hopkins's subtle appreciation for nature left him more pleased with the complicated mixtures in nature than with the more obvious and flamboyant single images. By the end of the poem, we will find him appreciative of "gold-vermillion," but only when it has been earned, so to speak, by sacrifice.<sup>100</sup> In "dapple-dawn-drawn," Hopkins suggests that the bird was drawn (out) into the sky by the dappled dawn, that is, one with various levels and intensities of clouds in the sky. The dappled dawn drew the falcon, where a clear day may not have done. In his next poem, "Pied Beauty," written in July 1877, two months after "The Windhover," Hopkins begins with the translation and expansion of A. M. D.

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<sup>100</sup> We will encounter "dapple" differently in "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves," when earth's "dapple is at an end."

G. into English: “Glory be to God for dappled things.”<sup>101</sup> “[D]aylight’s dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn” is a long alliterative string describing the falcon. As the favored son (dauphin) of daylight, he is drawn by the dappled dawn. What characteristics of Christ are seen in the falcon? Like Christ, he is the favored son. Christ was drawn out by dawn in the Resurrection.

To return to the metrical analysis of the poem, I note that line 2 has sixteen syllables and is an excellent example of sprung rhythm. The accented syllables are “day,” “dau-,” “dapp-,” “Fal-,” and “ri-.” All the others are unstressed due to position in word (“dom,” the second syllable of the previous line’s “king”), triviality associated with their parts of speech (“of,” “in,” “his”), or because they are what Vendler, in *Breaking of Style*, calls “unimportant swallowed sounds” (“light’s,” “-phin,” “-le,” “dawn,” “-con,” “-ding”).<sup>102</sup> Hopkins presented the reader with a problem of performance, as the reading aloud that he recommends for all his poetry, is difficult to achieve without a sing-song quality.

According to White, Hopkins believed

the inscape of words had to be emphasized over and above matter and meaning; “the inscape must be dwelt on.” To ensure that the inscape would be understood, “repetition, oftning, over-and-overing, aftering of the inscape must take place in order to detach it to the mind.” (*Biography* 249)

He must have intended this, if he considered this poem to be his finest effort. The sing-song quality of the description of the bird is onomatopoeic, in the special Hopkinsian sense, as it mimics in words the sing-song nature of flight, of gliding. It seems effortless, yet, in describing it, Hopkins uses images such as “striding,” “rung upon the rein,” “as a

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<sup>101</sup> According to White, “[“Pied Beauty”] is an organized, summarized version of the Ruskinian description of contrast patterns in nature” (*Biography* 285).

<sup>102</sup> See *Breaking of Style*, 17.

skate's heel sweeps smooth," and "rebuffed the big wind." These words suggest control (not strolling, striding), grace with tools (not untrained, but using skates masterfully), and struggle (not working with, but rebuffing).

The efforts of a falcon are aimed at hunting food, and this part of the image is confusing if we insist on the presence of Christ in the instress of the windhover. Does Christ plunge to earth to destroy his creatures? I believe that Hopkins felt that his vocation was a sort of sacrifice made to the swooping Christ. W. H. Gardner says

The reconciliation [in 'The Windhover'] is between the claims of this life and the claims of the next; between the value and the danger of 'mortal beauty'; between the desire for freedom of expression—the natural function 'wild and self-instressed'—and the will to suffer, to subject oneself to the ascetic rule, to dedicate all one's powers to Christ's employment. (Gardner *Idiosyncrasy* 181)

I agree with Gardner that the conflict between free-wheeling falcon and rule-bound priest is fundamental to the understanding of the poem. However, I disagree with his thinking that the falcon is "self-instressed," believing instead that it is Christ's instress in the bird which captures Hopkins's imagination, just as the sight of the moving bird "caught" his eye. The sacrifice of the life of a mouse to a falcon lacks the elective will of the sacrifice of a man to a religious order, and its vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, but it is a suitable metaphor, one regularly used in expressions like "giving his life to God."

There are numerous words of sensation in the octave: "caught," "drawn," "my heart...stirred." But, even deeper than these individual usages is the underlying sensation of the bird's experience of flying, and of the observer's secondary sensation of observing the flight. Hopkins tries to align these two sensations. Our interest is drawn by the flying

falcon, much as the bird's instinct to fly is drawn by the dappled dawn. We catch the experience of breath-taking awe that the poet felt when he "caught" the image. We share in the stirring "ecstasy" and ourselves, finish the poem and are "off, off forth," we are changed. In this, Hopkins is successful in transferring his affective state to the reader. Altieri states that "affects are ways of being moved that supplement sensation with at least a minimal degree of imaginative projection" (*Particulars* 47). What Hopkins projects imaginatively is religious fervor; what we "receive" is affect. Our response may be general, and not coincide with his literal commitment to Christ, or even his belief in God. What we do not share, but at least can understand, is the poet's religious fervor. We are not Jesuits, yet other rules guide us, restrict us, make *us* less free than the windhover.

Raymond Schoder, a Jesuit reviewer, sees Christian imagery throughout the poem, in his chapter, "What Does 'The Windhover' Mean?"<sup>103</sup> Religious significance in the poem includes: "the sudden vision of a hawk pluckily and joyfully battling with the elements [. . .] becoming a symbol of the Christian knight valiantly warring against evil," and "the falcon, not only a vividly real natural object, . . . becomes on meditation a symbol, a revelation of Christ" (Schoder 30; 33). For Schoder, whom I believe to be in religious sympathy with Hopkins, "The pivotal line of the poem"<sup>104</sup> is the statement ending line 7 and through line 8: "My heart in hiding / Stirred for a bird,--the achieve of, the mastery of the thing." Schoder reads this hiding heart as "'in hiding' from something it fears, from the bitter implications of life and from Christ's insistent challenge to a more heroic plane of activity" (36). Yet, I believe that this interpretation presents more problems than it

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<sup>103</sup> In *Immortal Diamond: Studies in Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Ed. Norman Weyand. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1949.

<sup>104</sup> Schoder, 36.



solves. If the falcon is a symbol of Christ, how can it present the priest with “bitter implications”? Some of this rather masochistic line of thought can be found in the *Spiritual Exercises*, the Jesuit rulebook, unchanged since 1581, and certainly a common bond between Hopkins and his Jesuit critics. But, if the “mastery of the thing” is the flying capability of the bird, the bird only has that capability in its Christ-in-stress. Hopkins says in “As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame,” that

Each mortal thing does one thing and the same;  
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;  
Selves—goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,  
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.* (5-8)

This individuation and specialization hardly seems to me to indicate conflict, rivalry or jealousy. A priest priests, a bird flies. I believe that the better interpretation is that the priest, while realizing his physical limits, also recognizes the spiritual advantage that *Dasein* has over other creatures. There is considerable support for this in Hopkins’s spiritual writing.<sup>105</sup>

In what sense, then, is the poet’s “heart in hiding”? In addition to Schoder’s interpretation, the phrase has been cited by Empson as an example of the seventh ambiguity, that of opposing meanings: “*My heart in hiding* would seem to imply that the *more dangerous* life is that of the Windhover, but the last three lines insist it is *no wonder* that the life of renunciation should be the more lovely” (225; emphases in original). The phrase has been interpreted by Francis Doyle to be a mere description of the poet’s

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<sup>105</sup> “Man was created...like the rest then to praise, reverence and serve God; to give him glory. He does so, even by his being, beyond all visible creatures” (*Sermons* 239). “For human nature, being more highly pitched, selved, and distinctive than anything in the world, can have been developed...only by one of finer or higher pitch” (*Sermons* 122-23).

passive observation: “The sight of the bird in flight caused him to feel within himself, as he watched, a great admiration, which did not show itself in any external reaction” (88). I believe that Empson’s interpretation is closer to the truth. It is clearly significant to describe one’s heart as being in hiding. It connotes cowardice, guilt, or, at least, inability to suitably react. Hopkins recognizes that the contemplative life put him in a less active, less effective role than that of the falcon, yet he defends the life of prayer in the last three lines, saying that there is “no wonder of it,” with “it” referring to the observation that follows, that “sheer plod makes plough down sillion shine,” implying that the contemplative life has its moments of loveliness and danger, too. All elements combine and are “a billion times told lovelier”<sup>106</sup> in the buckling of the flight of the falcon, yet the retired life of prayer has its rewards, too, though less flamboyant than the falcon’s whirlwind adventure:<sup>107</sup>

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here  
 Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion  
 Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!  
 No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion  
 Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,  
 Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermillion. (9-14)

The key to understanding the sestet lies in the meaning of “here / Buckle!” Where? In “the achieve of, the mastery of the thing,” that is in the falcon’s grace? Or, in the hiding heart’s appreciation for the instress of Christ in the bird? I believe the second

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<sup>106</sup> Note that this statement is even stronger for Hopkins than for his U.S. readers. According to the OED, a billion is a million millions in the U. K., whereas in the U. S. it is a thousand millions.

<sup>107</sup> This is only part of the ambiguity, however. If we see the Falcon as a symbol for Christ, our defense of the retiring poet’s loveliness as exceeding His becomes blasphemy. To reconcile these ambiguous readings we must allow for a dichotomy: Christ in nature coexisting with Christ qua God.

interpretation is closer to the truth. My position is that the word, “stirred,” is important. When the heart stirs it is a feeling of sensation. When, as frequently in his poetry, Hopkins employs words of sensation, he indicates a fervor that is deeper than a mere sensory image or description. Another turn in this part of the poem is from the observational first person to the devotional and apostrophic second person, in “O my chevalier!” In the loveliness and danger of the falcon’s mid-flight buckling, Hopkins sees Christ and immediately addresses him in a prayerful exclamation.

Why does Hopkins use the lowly images of the plough and the ember in the last three lines? I believe that this too has its roots in his religious fervor, and even in his Jesuit practice. It is a significant statement about the heavenly and the earthly, the flight versus the vocation.

Hopkins’s selection of the Jesuit life illustrates his commitment to the hereafter. For him, there is no doubt that the strict life of the religious will be rewarded in heaven, as in his letter about his vocation: “though it is hard, [it] is God’s will for me ... which is more than violets knee-deep” (*Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins* 88; hereafter Letters III).

In poetry with religious fervor, there is always a third man present: the poet, the reader, and God. By adding the dedication to “The Windhover,” Hopkins reminds us that this belief was fundamental to his poetry. His context is religious fervor.

#### “Spelt from Sibyl’s Leaves”

“Spelt from Sibyl’s Leaves” is the first written of the so-called sonnets of desolation, and was composed over a longer period of time than the others. It was begun late in 1884

and completed two years later (according to White, *Biography* 379). It is essentially a prayer of agony, as opposed to “God’s Grandeur” and “The Windhover,” which are, in varying degrees, prayers of praise. It may be helpful to consider the poems studied here as various levels of prayerful address. “God’s Grandeur” is a hymn, defined by *The Princeton Encyclopedia* as “a song, poem, or speech which praises gods” (542). “God’s Grandeur” expressly does so, attributing the world’s beauty to God in the first line. In “The Windhover,” a different type of prayerful address is used – one of displaced deity, the manifestation of “God’s grandeur” not in the whole world, but in an unlikely Christ-symbol, a hunting falcon. It is ironic that prayer should be considered as an entrée towards understanding the desolate sonnets. Yet, prayer, as an expression of grief is frequent in Catholic practice (requiem, prayers for the dead), and is even more specific and intense in Jesuit training (Ignatius’ Fifth *Spiritual Exercise*, for example, is a meditation on hell—an instance of spiritual expression as a suitable language for contemplation of the ultimate evil). The Christian exemplar of prayer of desolation is Christ’s own words, “Oh, Lord, why hast thou forsaken me?” Prayer utterances in poetry are not traditionally performative, because we have no way of judging the efficacy of prayer, and because a prayer is a one-way communication. Unlike the typical example of a performative speech act, the wedding vow, no verbal contract is formed, no resulting status-change is effected, and there is no requirement that both parties respond appropriately. Yet, Miller says, prayers and questions do have “performative aspects [. . .] [For example] to ask a question is to demand an answer [and] even the refusal to answer is an answer” (*Naming* 176). Jonathan Culler notes that apostrophes “serve as intensifiers, as images of invested passion” (*Pursuit of Signs* 138). The demand for an

answer is true in communication between humans, but is it true of prayer? If we pray and do not get an “answer,” is that non-response a type of response, or is it a dead letter, so to speak? If we say that the non-response to our prayer is a type of answer, doesn’t that have to hold true for non-responses to the prayers of the ancients to, say, Zeus? If so, does it not mean that the “answer” is in the imagination of the pray-er rather than existing in the normal sense of valid communication between two entities. Hopkins, in “wrestling with (my God!) my God,” would in that case be no closer to an objective God than any other religious or superstitious person, past or present. The failure in approaching a true God is justification for the distance Hopkins elucidates and bemoans in the desolate sonnets.

Regarding materialism, Hopkins defends metaphysics against those who fear its demise in the advent of physiology and psychology. He says, “It will always be possible to shew how science is atomic [. . .] ‘scopeless’ without metaphysics” (*Journals* 118). He says that metaphysics will proceed in one of three ways: following “Plato, Aristotle, and the Schoolmen” and dealing with “form and matter”; following Bacon and Positivists, and dealing with “Facts and Law”; and following “Hegel and the philosophy of development in time,” and thus dealing with “ideas of Historical Development, of things both in thought and in fact detaching and differencing and individualizing and expressing themselves” (*Journals* 119). This last option, Hopkins says, poses “a dilemma that it must contradict itself whether it claims to be final or not” (*Journals* 119). Why is historical development burdened with an internal contradiction? Because, to Hopkins, an historical development without end would presuppose an immortality of man, and an historical development with an end would suggest the mortality of God’s

creation. It is, in fact, this dilemma which confounds him in the sonnets of desolation, especially, as is clear in the analysis of “Spelt from Sibyl’s Leaves.”

Joshua King speaks of the “graceless rhythmic performance in painful correspondence with the inner grating of the speaker’s opposed intentions” in “Sibyl’s Leaves” (King 232). King’s analysis is reinforced by what we know of Hopkins’s mental state at the time. He was able to believe one thing and that very closely – following the rules of St. Ignatius – and yet have counterthoughts which pained him deeply. The use of sprung rhythm, extremely long lines, and difficult passages for performance convey Hopkins’s endangered affect to his reader. While he does not lose his faith in God in the desolate sonnets, he expresses grave reservations about the specifics of eternity.

“Sibyl’s Leaves” reflects a different aspect of twilight poems, of which Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*, and the popular “Watchman, what of the night?” by C. Lloyd Stafford, provide more traditional exempla. Tennyson had made a personified Sorrow speak thus in section III of *In Memoriam*:

‘The stars,’ she whispers, ‘blindly run;

A web is wov’n across the sky;

From out waste places comes a cry,

And murmurs from the dying sun:

‘And all the phantom, Nature, stands –

With all the music in her tone,

A hollow echo of my own, --

A hollow form with empty hands.’ (*In Memoriam* III 81-88)<sup>108</sup>

He sees chaos in the evening (“dying sun”), where the stars “blindly run.” Yet, if the concern of Nature with the “murmurs from the dying sun” is a comfort, we will not see it in Hopkins’s twilight sonnet. In fact, far from being a typical twilight poem with “predictions of the glorious dawn when night should be no more,” Hopkins concentrates on the exact mechanism of the ultimate harvest. He brings all of his powers of wordplay, new coinages, sprung rhythm, and a strong ability to feel the instress as well as to sense the inscape, to produce a poem of pain which retains the element of religious fervor which I believe informs most of his adult poetry.

According to Helen Vendler, “a good deal of Hopkins’s work sprang from [the] premise that one should get rid of unnecessary words in a line” yet notes that, in the desolate sonnets, he sometimes violates this rule, because “in the tragic aggregation of experience, a poetics of pruning and paring will not suffice” (*Breaking of Style* 32). In the extremely long lines of “Sibyl’s Leaves,” Hopkins strains to tell us elements of his desolation, just as the evening strains to be the abiding place of all time. He needs room in these lines to allow for numerous lengthy word clusters which are reminiscent of his early journals with their lists of like-sounding words. He had explored onomatopoeics in the journals, noting that the similarity between word groups like “grind, gride, gird, grit, groat, grate, greet,” was related to the “*Gr* common to them all [which] represent[s] a particular sound” (*Journals* 5). A similar, yet jarring string of words appears in the first line of “Sibyl’s Leaves”:

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<sup>108</sup> From *The Victorians: An Anthology of Poetry & Poetics*. Ed. Valentine Cunningham. Oxford: Blackwell, 200, 219-52. Interestingly, Eliot will refer to *In Memoriam* as “a great poem of religious doubt, not faith” (see Craig Raine 30).

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 earliest stars, earlstars, | stars principal, overbend us,  
Fire-featuring heaven. (1-5)

What then is the similarity between “earnest,” “earthless,” and “equal” as modifiers of evening? In what sense is the evening sky “earnest”? Though all the words begin with the same letter as “evening,” the soft “e” of the diphthong in the word “earnest” and “earthless” is different from the long “e” of “equal” and “evening.” The parade of “e”s makes a visual alliteration, but a less than obvious one in oral performance, the way Hopkins suggests that his poems should be read. Further, their onomatopoeic potential is not at all clear. To be earnest and to be earthless are unrelated, the former indicating a positive attitude, the latter an almost impossible situation. If the evening is “earthless,” why do we discuss it in an earthly language? It is, in fact, strongly earth-based, in the sense that sunrise and sunset describe a relationship between the planet Earth, the sun and moon, and is defined exclusively from the point of view of Earth. We recall our discussion of the distinction between earth and world, the former being the natural planet, the latter including the planet plus all anthropogenic materials. The world may be earnest, that is, *Dasein* may have qualities like earnestness, but can the man-defined part of the day, evening, have them? The position that evening has qualities normally associated with humans may at first seem to be personification. But, as the line



continues, we are less sure of the grammatical basis for even this reading. The evening is also “equal” – to what, we ask? It is “attuneable,” but to what? Its equality is not qualified by a second member of the pair, so we assume that it is an interior equality that is meant. That is, the evening earth is the same earth as that of morning or night; the aging planet unchanged since ancient times. This tautology is further reinforced in the personified elective will of the evening as it “strains to be time’s | womb-of-all, home-of-all, hearse-of-all night” (2). The earnestness of evening is reinforced, too, as evening sets its mission of defying sequential time. It strains to be all stages of time at once: past, present, and future.

Hopkins had called the poem the “longest sonnet ever made” in a letter to Robert Bridges (*Letters I*, 246). Why is the line length, the sheer vocal difficulty in reading the poem, important to Hopkins’s expression here? If he needed more room, why not extend the poem to twenty-eight lines, rather than fourteen, eliminating the midline break? I believe it is part of Hopkins’s message; that all the complexity we see in the manmade world and natural earth, though they seem insurmountable, can be felled like a Binsey Poplar at the final Judgment. A further refinement of this complexity is Hopkins’s adherence to poetic form. Just as the grand complexity of nature must wait until the final Judgment to be erased, in a secondary sense poetic form, here a sonnet, is the natural and proper length for Hopkins’s poem. It is a propitious form, for its intricacy substantiates Hopkins’s message. Referring back to Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*, the easy hexameter is comforting, even mantra-like. For Hopkins, questioning the final disposition of man and all of nature, no easy comfort is to be had. He must face the “disremembering, dismembering” as well as, or even in place of, the traditional thoughts of Tennyson:

That nothing walks with aimless feet;  
Than not one life shall be destroy'd,  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;  
That not a moth with vain desire  
Is shrivel'd in a fruitless fire,

Or but subserves another's gain.     (*In Memoriam* LIII, 1025-32)

Hopkins had made the same point in "The Golden Echo," saying "See; not a hair is, not an eyelash, not the least last lost" (20). But here, rather than sentimentally asserting that even worm-life or eyelash has its eternal importance, Hopkins questions the destruction which must happen before a final reckoning is made, and whether that destruction will result in a mixing of wheat with chaff, man with worm, right with wrong:

Fire-featuring heaven. For earth | her being has unbound; her dapple is at  
an end, as-

Tray or aswarm, all thoughter, 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.     (5-8)

Yet, in the desolate sonnets, Hopkins is not experiencing a crisis of faith in which he has doubts about the existence of God. According to Hillis Miller, Hopkins never

doubted his religion or his vocation. Rather, “the experience recorded in the ‘terrible’ sonnets [. . .] is a striking example of the way the nineteenth century was, for many writers, a time of the no longer and the not yet, a time of the absence of God” (*Disappearance* 352). In “Sibyl’s Leaves,” the “no longer and the not yet” are symbolized as the evening becoming the night. Evening is a double negation – not day, not night. The symbol is easily extended to the living as they approach death. But, what is the implication of approaching death for a man of religious fervor? It is not merely the angst of ceasing to be. Nowhere does man’s singularity assert itself so strongly as in his attitude toward death. For religious people, the strong potential of an afterlife “makes us rather bear those ills we have than fly to others we know not of.” Even one under religious vows must question that cruel final bifurcation where, as in “Sibyl’s Leaves,” all is “black, white; | right, wrong.” Even in the ordering of these pairs, Hopkins indicates his confusion about how exactly “the just man justices” (“That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection”). Assuming God to be the final arbiter of justice, can we expect from him a more nuanced judgment than “black, white; right, wrong”? *Dasein* is contra-Aristotle because it is not a substance with an essential nature and because “its possibility is prior to its actuality” (Inwood 23). Man can choose to die, but not to be born. The decision of *Dasein* is not whether to be, but how to be. Yet, circumstances restrict what *Dasein* can become, how he can proceed. Those circumstances restricting Hopkins were among the strictest in the Victorian experience. He was bound by his own vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. This final obligation ultimately landed him in Dublin, where he confronted the conflicting emotions of an Englishman in an Ireland which was ready for home rule. This inner conflict, along with

his feelings of religious distance, combine to separate Hopkins's possibility from his actuality, and that inner distance makes the terrible sonnets, all written in Dublin, not only possible, but inevitable.

According to Hillis Miller, "Cut off from its own inscape, the self no longer shares in the pied beauty of the inscapes of nature. In Hopkins's last poems natural images appear only as indirect metaphors for an experience which is transnatural" (*Disappearance* 353). In line 5 of "Sibyl's Leaves," Hopkins's cherished "dapple" of nature is disappearing: "her dapple is at an end." In an earlier sonnet this may have been interpreted as "no longer visible because it is dark," but the desolation of the sonnets of 1885 seems to demand a sinister reading. If the dapple of nature is merely invisible because of the lack of light, does it mean that it is not there? Surely clouds have various layers of thickness and puffiness even when there's no one there to see them. How did Hopkins feel about the absoluteness of measurable qualities of nature? Hopkins's journals offer insight into his thoughts on metaphysics and the absolute qualities of nature. He responds to those who say that metaphysics will be ushered out in the advent of psychology and physiology saying, "There is a particular refinement, pitch, of thought, which catches all the most subtle and true influences the world has to give" (*Journals* 118-19). In this same entry (an Oxford essay), Hopkins traces three "seasons" in philosophy: Plato, Aristotle and the Schoolmen, who claim a finality for their beliefs; Bacon, physical science, and Positivism, who claim truth in results; and finally, Hegel and adherents of "the philosophy of development in time," who recognize a dilemma in the contradiction inherent in "Historical Development, of things both in thought and fact differentiating and individualizing and expressing themselves" (*Journals* 119).

The end of nature's dapple must mean that the Day of Judgment is approaching, flattening the subtle differences between natural objects in its approach. Hopkins would view such an earthly loss and spiritual gain with a man's dread, and a religious man's joy.<sup>109</sup> How Hopkins feels about the end of nature's dapple is, as he realizes in the desolate sonnets, immaterial. His "thoughts against thoughts in groans grind," the heaviness of the sound of these words making their meaning manifest: there is a woeful and inarticulate merging of all thoughts, sensible and insensible, as they blend at the end of the world.

The joy in this poem is difficult to see, and though words like "earnest" and "fond" appear, their positive definitions are more than canceled by their connotations. In the first case, the earnestness is merely one of the dubious attributes of a passing evening which seeks, but clearly fails, to become eternal. In the second, the "fond yellow hornlight wound to the west" is sunset.<sup>110</sup> The "wild hollow hoarlight hung to the height" I believe to be the risen moon. I disagree with Leavis (see footnote) because, as evening becomes night, the sun sets in the west and the moon ascends to its height. Even so, the loneliness of these heavenly bodies, abstracted from earth, is reminiscent of the distance from God Hopkins feels and expresses so poignantly in the sonnets of desolation.

What does Hillis Miller mean by the natural images appearing as "indirect metaphors for an experience that is transnatural" (*Disappearance* 353). Indirect sensation, as of an echo, an image in a mirror, calls for subtle wording. It is a secondary experience, not of

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<sup>109</sup> Hopkins's last words, according to G. F. Lahey, were, "I am so happy, I am so happy," repeated several times (according to White *Biography* 455). This seemingly unnatural attitude toward death is the essence of religious fervor, belief made real. At the 2009 Conference, "Gerard Manley Hopkins, S. J." (Denver, March 27-29), there was considerable discussion of this point, with many arguing that the words were repeated a few times over a period of several days, not in rapid-fire, mantra-like timing.

<sup>110</sup> F. R. Leavis noted that the "'yellow hornlight' is, of course, the setting moon [. . .] The 'hoarlight' is the cold, hard starlight" (*New Bearings in English Poetry: A Study of the Contemporary Situation*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1932, 184).

the senses, but of the mind as it struggles with conflicting input. The contrast with happier works, such as “God’s Grandeur” and “The Windhover” is dramatic. Hillis Miller says “The basis of these last poems [the desolate sonnets] is no longer an experience of nature, as in ‘The Windhover,’ but an experience taking place in the *ultima solitudo* of the self” (*Disappearance* 353). Vendler also mentions the change in “Spelt from Sibyl’s Leaves,” where “the speaker faces squarely an ethical realm harshly denuded of the beautiful” (*Breaking* 35-36). I believe that Hillis Miller’s observation provides further support for the concept of a fifth affect, religious fervor. The lone experience of the “self,” is, in Hopkins’s poetry, very frequently concentrated on a special loneliness. The individual priest who “caught” the view of the windhover, becomes, in the desolate sonnets, an observer of a crushing distance between himself and God. While that desolation may be expressed in narrative as an experience of emotion, and in belief scenarios as an emotion or feeling, in Hopkins’s poetry there is a special application – that of a life dedicated to a world which is undeniably moving in entropy towards nothingness. This entropic movement is the symbol on a universal scale of the inexorable movement of *Dasein* from his birth to his death. The intensity of the emotions is discussed usefully by Aaron Ben-Ze’ev in *The Subtlety of Emotions*, yet his definition of the emotions includes the feelings in Altieri’s sense. Ben-Ze’ev describes the three factors that are critical to the understanding of religion vis-à-vis emotional intensity: meaningfulness of events, deservingness, and controllability (Ben-Ze’ev 154-56).

The meaningfulness of events takes on a different aspect for religious believers in the sense that they are able to explain both positive and negative events as having meaning, even if it is one not readily understood by mortals. Yet, Hopkins cries out against this

blanket belief in the desolate sonnets, saying, for example, “Comforter, where, where is your comforting” (“No worst, there is none” 3), and “”And my lament / Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent” (“I wake and feel the fell of dark” 6-7)). These same poems provide examples that are relevant to Ben-Ze’ev’s second point, deservingness, for Hopkins remarks upon the needless suffering of the good: “all / Life death does end” (“No worst” 14) and “God’s most deep decree / Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me” (“I wake” 9-10). The third element in emotional religiosity is controllability, according to Ben-Ze’ev, who explains it as a feeling of lack of control in believers, who are more likely to relegate control to the supernatural power. Yet, this reduction in control seems to correlate with less emotional intensity in Ben-Ze’ev’s analysis. While I agree that Hopkins was compliant with Catholic belief in the power of God, and the relative weakness of man, I would argue that this state leads towards a deeper intensity of feeling. The anxiety between the clear insignificance of most events and the religious imputation that all events have significance, is a condition which deepens the affective mode of religious fervor.

For Hopkins, the only comfort against encroaching doom is not only religious belief, but religious fervor. While Hopkins’s crisis of death and entropy is experienced in an individual realm, as noted by Hillis Miller, the poetry which results has affective significance for his readers, whether they share his specific beliefs or not.

According to Hillis Miller, “Hopkins’s time of desolation is elastic, and a brief span of it can spread out toward infinite length. [. . .] This experience of the infinity of finite human time is matched by an experience of the infinity of space” (*Disappearance* 354). The “infinity of space” leads to an experience of distance. For one whose spiritual and

intellectual life is spent approaching nearer to God through sacrifice and prayer, distance is an asymptotic and devastating approach toward disappearance. Distance is the desolation in the desolate sonnets. In the desolate sonnets, Hopkins's religious fervor is in jeopardy. His feeling is still belief-based, like emotion in Altieri. Altieri considers a spectrum of the four affects vis-à-vis belief, with feeling not "necessarily turning to beliefs. [. . .] [H]ow we feel is often shaped less by belief per se than by how we experience the fit of various elements. Here works of art are instructive because so much depends on their internal dynamics" (*Particulars* 10).

Hopkins's belief, however, is integral to his understanding of nature, his own mind, and the relation between them. In a sermon at Bedford Leigh (1879), Hopkins describes faith: "Faith / to believe without doubting all that God reveals, hear him whenever he speaks to you [. . .] We have not the faith and believe he has spoken and can say what [. . .] and believe that" (*Sermons* 28).<sup>111</sup> Thus, "the kind of attention" Hopkins paid to the world and himself was influenced by an abiding belief, not in a vague concept of God, but in a specific church's interpretation of that belief. A month later, in a sermon, he cites Christ's crediting faith: "When he worked a miracle he would grace it with / Thy faith hath saved thee, that it might almost seem the receiver's work, not his" (*Sermons* 38).

Hillis Miller sees another type of anguish in the infinite time and space, "the breakdown of language."

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<sup>111</sup> Immediately following this sentence, Hopkins delivers a pointed and didactic statement on the position of the Catholic Church: "Now only the Catholic can truly tell you what and where God has spoken, viz. in the Catholic Church" (*Sermons* 28).



Words are the meeting-place of self, nature and God the Word. These three have split apart, and as a result language loses its efficacy. [. . .] Thwarted by some mysterious decree of heaven or hell, words become the opaque walls of the poet's interior prison. His speech becomes a stuttering staccato of alliterative monosyllables, each word thrown out despairingly in a brief spasm of energy.

(*Disappearance* 354)

Though Hopkins had not lost his faith in God nor his dedication to his vocation, he was haunted by a distant God, very different from the active instresser who had “charged the world” with his “grandeur,” and who would not let an eyelash be lost. Hopkins's thoughts about the final judgment take into full account the devastation which he believes must precede the final culling into the realms of heaven and hell. In the destruction, annihilation of the entire world and its creatures, God's presence is felt in a different way from “the dearest freshness deep down things.” It is “pashed,” not “crushed” as the olive to make the oozing oil in “God's Grandeur.” “Pashed”<sup>112</sup> with its resonance at once of “passion” and of “smashed” seems ready-made for a Hopkinsian sequence – pashed, smashed, crashed, mashed, passion. God's role in the final judgment is an active, and as Christians hope, a forgiving one, but the pre-judgment homogenization suggested in “Sibyl's Leaves” seems to argue against an individual day of reckoning:

Abandoned by God, Hopkins cries out for grace, but his words have lost their virtue and cannot reach their destination. [. . .] The consequences of the failure of grace are not only evident in a few poems, those sonnets which were ‘written in blood’ (*Letters* I 219). Spiritual dryness is Hopkins's *almost* constant state during

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<sup>112</sup> “Pashed” is listed in the OED as originating in English in 1581, and with a later Elizabethan use by Shakespeare in *Troilus and Cressida*, V.v.10.

his last years. So cruel has been his elective will to his affective nature that it has been *almost* able to destroy it. (*Disappearance* 354-55; emphases added)

I believe that the word “almost” is critical in understanding the relationship between Hopkins’s elective will and affective nature, and thence the state of his religious fervor. Hopkins goes into great detail about the elective and affective wills, and cites the views of his major religious influences, Duns Scotus and St. Ignatius, as discussed earlier. Both Ignatius and Scotus saw the two sides of man’s will as degrees of supernatural suggestion. Scotus “distinguishes between desire and choice [. . .], yet never thinks of them as *opposed* to each other” (Devlin *Sermons* 116; emphasis in original). Still, Scotus believed that “although the force of rational love is irresistible, the power of choice is not swamped by it” (Devlin *Sermons* 116). Hopkins, however, considers affective nature to be more controlling, beyond man’s individual choice, informed by grace from God. In his spiritual writings, Hopkins says “The arbitrium [elective will] in itself is man’s personality or individuality and places him on a level of individuality in some sense with God” (*Sermons* 138-39). It is fundamental to the power of the desolate sonnets that Hopkins could have felt his affective nature in peril, for it implies a negation of his individuality. Negation of individuality is exactly what is most feared in “Sybil’s Leaves.” In “Sybil’s Leaves,” Hopkins dreads the homogenizing “self in self steeped and pashed—quite / Disremembering, dismembering” (6-7). His religious vocation was, to him, a merging of the affective and elective wills – he *desired* grace and *chose* to do everything possible to remain in a state of grace. Yet Hopkins survives this spiritual test to see a possible outcome on an acceptable spiritual and individual plane. In “That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection,” he writes, “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” (19-21).

In “Sibyl’s Leaves,” the hierarchy of heavenly bodies and earthly states envisioned by Hopkins -- the earth, the evening, and life all are personified as feminine (“womb-of-all,” “her being has unbound,” “her fond yellow hornlight,” “her wild hollow hoarlight,” “her dapple is at an end,” “her once skeined stained veined variety,” and “her all in two flocks”). He imagines with dread that, at judgment, all man’s actions will be bifurcated into two groups – “all on two spools”—the good and the evil, and all our human attempts at nuanced “variety” will be parted into “two flocks, two folds—black, white; | right, wrong.” In the ordering of these two pairs, Hopkins made what I consider a telling change from his first draft. The line originally read “black, white; | wrong, right” – an order in which the first member of each pair is negative, the second member positive. I believe that in switching the order, and changing the internal rhyme from alternating to chiasmic, Hopkins betrays a concern about the confusion of the final separation of good from evil. What if, in the immense Heraclitean fire, the Jesuit and the sinner merge or are confused with each other?

Only the beakleaved boughs dragonish | damask the toolsmooth

bleaklight; black,

Ever so black on it. Our tale, O our oracle! | Let life, waned, ah let life

wind

Off her once skeined stained veined variety | upon, all on two spools; part,

pen, pack

Now her all in two flocks, two folds—black, white; | right, wrong; reckon  
but, reck but, mind

But these two; ware of a world where but these | two tell, each off the  
other; of a rack

Where, selfwring, selfstrung, sheathe- and shelterless, | thoughts against  
thoughts in groans grind. (9-14)

Hopkins expresses his concerns about the harshness of fate in the final allusion to “a rack / Where, selfwring, selfstrung, sheathe- and shelterless, | thoughts against thoughts in groans grind.” I see two interpretations of this passage. First, a concern that in the devastation of the world prior to the final judgment selves will become unidentifiable (“sheath- and shelterless” here meaning without those identifying characteristics of clothing—a Jesuit habit?—and home—house, city, country) and that concern makes a mockery of the life of sacrifice led by religious men. This is further supported in “thoughts against thoughts in groans grind,” as indicating that all intellection, beliefs, wonders, and sensations will be painfully blended together. Where black and white, wrong and right were opposites, thoughts and thoughts are identical. They reinforce the identity principle ( $X=X$ , for all  $X$ s), whereas the opposite pairs had illustrated the associative principle ( $X*Y=Y*X$ , for all  $X$ s and  $Y$ s). Therefore, I can see an internal reading where one man’s self is now fully exposed (“sheathe- and shelterless”) and his own highest and lowest thoughts are ground together into a damning or exalting average. This would have even more devastating effects for Hopkins’s soul. His own loftiest thoughts and his basest would be forever indistinguishable in a final reckoning.

Homogenization did not seem such a bad thing in “God’s Grandeur,” where that grandeur “gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil / Crushed” (3-4). Here, however, “pashed,” a synonym for “crushed,” refers to the self, to individual being, *Dasein*. “Self in self steeped and pashed—quite / Disremembering, dismembering | all now” (6-7) expresses the threat to individuality that may accompany, precede the final judgment. When that homogenization takes place, whether it is a reflection of God’s grandeur or not, there is a loss of identity for the pashed souls. This pashing results in a humanity that is “selfwring, selfstrung, sheathe- and shelterless”; it is stripped of its physical identity and individuality. Its “thoughts against thoughts in groans grind,” leaving it without an emotional or intellectual identity. The semi-coinages of selfwring and selfstrung are telling; they combine two common nouns for a painful composite word. There is no protection for the individual here—no Roman collar, no national identity—for he is sheatheless and shelterless. The insurance of a virtuous life, even one of religious fervor, is unlikely to save the individual, who will ultimately be judged as “black, white; | right, wrong.” What remains of individual virtue and sacrifice, we may ask, if the homogenization is so complete that life’s “once skeined stained veined variety” is lost forever?

### Conclusion

In suggesting that religious fervor be considered a fifth affect in the Altieri model, I realize several complications. To defend the position that religious fervor is an affect, I will cite, in addition to its relevancy in literature, its distinctness from the other four affects as posited by Altieri, and its particular relevance to understanding the poetry of

Hopkins. The relevance of religious poetry was known to Hopkins, and due to his own convictions he was likely to use these traditions. Religious themes are more readily presented in an affective manner than in, say, a factual or literal discussion. The crucifixion is called Christ's "passion," not merely his history, or sacrifice.

I consider that religious affect is distinct in kind, not merely degree, from the four affective modes discussed by Altieri. Altieri considers "intensity," "involvedness," and "plasticity" to be the "three basic aspects of affective states" (*Particulars* 186 ff).

Without question, the intensity of Hopkins's poetic expression is manifested in his style, word choice, and metaphor. When he uses sprung rhythm, he suggests that mere iambic pentameter is insufficient for his needs. By coining words, or using unusual combinations, he suggests that the available vocabulary is somehow lacking. In applying metaphors like God's grandeur "flaming out, like shining from shook foil," he ignores the cliché of a more likely expression, like "brilliance of the stars." In his journals, letters and spiritual writing, too, Hopkins displays a marked reaching for intensity. His "involvedness" is clear in his vocation and in his spiritual writings, including poetry. The "plasticity" of his religious fervor is seen in its transition from praise to desolation. But, by far, the most relevant aspect of the affective state in Hopkins's poetry is intensity.

Altieri says, "We take satisfaction in intensity because it makes available a sense of our own vitality in relation to the present tense that we rarely experience any other way" (*Particulars* 187). The peculiar intensity of Hopkins's poetry is different in its religious fervor than in the other affects because "our own vitality" becomes confused with the knowledge of our mortality, coupled with our immortal destiny. It is different because "the present tense" is always lurching toward the future, *Dasein's* death, as Hopkins

would have prayed every day, “Now and at the hour of our death. Amen.” Intensity in the poetry of religious fervor is shown in praise, prayer, and petition. Hopkins’s poetry fulfills two major aspects of intensity, defined by Ben-Ze’ev: “peak intensity” and “duration” (118).

Hopkins’s poetry presents praise, prayer, and petition in different ways, more often intense than long-lived. Praise is particularly appreciable in the early works, such as “God’s Grandeur,” “Pied Beauty,” and “Spring.” In these, Hopkins praises God for “the dearest freshness deep down things,” for “dappled things,” and “Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,” respectively. Prayer is shown indirectly in poems like “The Wreck of the Deutschland,” where the prayer of the tall nun can be seen as reflecting Hopkins’s own thoughts. As the ship is sinking, she “was calling, ‘O Christ, Christ, come quickly’” (stanza 24, line 7). Hopkins’s own longing for eternal life is seen in “The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo,” where the Golden Echo says, “Give beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty, back to God, beauty’s self and beauty’s giver” (19). Not only is there longing in this passage, but there is an implied faith in God’s control.

I will revisit the poems I have analyzed in this chapter, to consider their peculiar intensity, and test how it is best described as the suggested affective mode of religious fervor. In “God’s Grandeur,” four types of temporal intensity are presented: the future (“will flame out”) predicts an almost violent action rather than merely a static and benign presence; the present (“is charged,” “gathers” “is seared ... bleared, smeared,” “lives”) unites the inevitable richness of God’s influence with the contrastive waywardness of man; the past (“have trod,” “last lights off the black West went”) shows man’s progress in the iterative mode of diurnal cycles – just as morning follows the “last lights,” eternal

life will follow for the generations who have trod; and a fourth temporal suggestion of an eternity beyond time in the last lines, where “The Holy Ghost over the bent / Work broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.” The intensity of Hopkins’s religious fervor is seen in the struggle between the tenses, as well as in his poetic diction, which is surprisingly compact in places (“the ooze of oil / Crushed”) and rather drawn-out elsewhere (“There lives the dearest freshness deep down things”).

In “The Windhover,” I would point to intensity in two phrases: “the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!” in which the falcon is admired in exclamatory voice for its accomplishments; and the apostrophe “O my chevalier!” another exclamation, this time assigning the human traits of possession (“my”) and occupation (“chevalier”) to God and his interaction with man. The former is an example of what Ben-Ze’ev calls “controllability” and “deservingness,” as both are examples of mastery, and mastery is occupation raised to a higher level of intensity. The latter is an expression of closeness, defined by Ben-Ze’ev as “a crucial element in determining emotional relevance” (132). The reader appreciates Hopkins’s awe of his maker, yet the reality of the vent varies for different readers. In all cases, when the poet states that his “heart in hiding / Stirred for a bird,” it is clear that a specific intensity is meant. Though this intensity is characteristic of passion, it is longer lasting; though, like feelings, it may be called an imaginative engagement in sensation, here of an awe-striking visual sensation, it is more than that mystification. Though emotional, in the sense of constructing an attitude that is typical (here, of faith), it is more than merely reinforcing priestly belief.

Finally, in “Spelt from Sibyl’s Leaves,” an intensity of affect is seen as the struggle between two types of belief, expressed neatly as “Our tale, O our oracle!” where the



former way of considering religious powers in the context of myths (tales) is an appreciation for the universal need for narrative. The latter is Hopkins's specific need for an oracular reliability, a hedge against an eternity where "thoughts against thoughts in groans grind."

I believe that Hopkins's work benefits from the analysis of affective modes, but is not readily subsumed under one of the four affects presented by Altieri. Instead, I think that religious fervor, and the rich poetry of that tradition, notably that of Hopkins, can be more deeply understood as a separate affect.

## CHAPTER 3

### ELIOT: THE AFFECTIVE STANCE OF “FOUR QUARTETS”

In the poetry of Keats and Hopkins, I considered how sensory imagery and the language of sensation were deployed to make statements of affective significance to both the poet and the reader. In Keats’s work, fancy was the method by which Keats accessed an accentuated form of nature. He then fashioned an improved and more acute imagery, thus extending his lush and penetrating observations of natural phenomena. In Hopkins’s poetry, a different technique, rationale and purpose led the religious poet to deploy novel metrical and verbal skills to express a deep religious fervor, a fervor which I have suggested is itself an affect. Eliot’s voice in “Four Quartets” is one of an elder speaking words of comfort, yet telling the truth, to a select audience. While Hopkins’s voice may be seen as that of the poet talking to himself, as Eliot defines the first “voice of poetry,” he also had a limited readership in mind – notably Robert Bridges, whom he “hope[d] to convert.” Keats’s poetic voice is generally that of a poet overheard. All the voices of poetry can be applied to various readers and types of readers, but first-voice poetry engages the reader differently – as an intimate of the poet, rather than a viewer, with others, of a production.

I come now to T. S. Eliot, iconic poet of the twentieth century modernist period. His poetry is more intellectual, more philosophic, and more religious than Keats’s, and less focused on immediate sensory input. He uses images for abstract concepts, rather than for concrete ones; more literary allusions (such as to Dante, St. John of the Cross, and Dame Julian of Norwich), and fewer natural images. I would compare, for example,

Keats's nightingale and Hopkins's windhover with Eliot's dove in the fourth quartet, "Little Gidding." While Keats's nightingale is seen to represent music, and Hopkins's falcon to represent Christ-personified in a living creature, Eliot's dove is strictly in line with the accepted Christian understanding of the Pentecost. His poetry, especially the last major poem, "Four Quartets," while sharing a religious theme with much of Hopkins's work, differs from that Victorian Jesuit and harbinger of modernism. In Eliot, I see the Anglican compromise in a religious motif which, while devout, lacks the intense fervor of Hopkins. Whereas Hopkins's Catholicism was almost mystical in the apprehension of the falcon, Eliot's is almost practical in the recognition of a traditional image for a specific belief.

Eliot is a poet who, unlike my previous subjects, became famous in his lifetime, and whose numerous essays were published, read, and studied. Thus, he spoke, by the time of "Four Quartets," (published 1936-1942 separately; as a whole in May 1943) with considerable authority in the literary and intellectual community. Yet, this authority is not without disagreement in Eliot's peer community. For example, according to Lyndall Gordon, he had alienated many of his friends and readers by his 1927 conversion to Anglicanism (223). His religious views are apparent, even predominant in "Ash Wednesday," and in "Four Quartets." Early reviews of some of the "Four Quartets" series were negative due to their perceived preacherly quality: the September 14, 1940 *Times Literary Supplement*, for example, compares "East Coker," the second Quartet, unfavorably with "the humility of the English religious" poetry, adding that "there is a lack of ...ecstasy in 'East Coker'" (*T. S. Eliot Four Quartets: Casebook Series* (hereafter *Casebook*) 35). George Orwell, in a biting review in *Poetry* (1942), says, "there is very

little in Eliot's later work that makes any deep impression on me," yet goes on at length to describe how Eliot's early poems had described a "glowing despair" while the later ones "express a melancholy faith" (*Casebook* 81; 83). Yet, both Helen Gardner and Gordon stress the popularity of "East Coker," published in March 1940 in *The New English Weekly*, and reprinted in May and June, with 12,000 copies sold within a year (Gardner in *The Composition of Four Quartets* 9 (hereafter *Composition*); Gordon 353). What interests me is not Eliot's stature as a public figure, so much as his ability to express his own mood and the mood of contemporary England. I argue that Eliot's poem, "Four Quartets," can be seen as a masterful use of mood, as defined by Charles Altieri (*Particulars* 2). The poem reflects the atmospheric quality of war, especially as it is experienced by non-combatants. Further, I suggest that there is a parallel spiritual dimension to the poem – one of religious consolation, which is also treated as a mood by Eliot.

Each of the Quartets is named for a specific location, and each location had been visited by Eliot. Eliot visited the old gardens of the country manor of Burnt Norton in 1934 with his beloved Emily Hale. In 1935, he composed the poem of that title, and it was included as the last entry in *Collected Poems*, published in 1936. In 1940, his friend and editor, John Hayward, writes that Eliot "is making a little progress with a new poem in succession to 'Burnt Norton'" (Gardner *Composition* 16). That poem became the second of the quartets, "East Coker." Eliot visited the Somerset village of East Coker twice, in June 1936 and August 1937. Eliot's recollections of America are seen in the third quartet, "The Dry Salvages," where the Mississippi River from his boyhood in St. Louis, and the Atlantic Ocean from his summers in New England form the geographic

bases for the varying menaces of river and sea. Eliot had visited the countryside refuge of Little Gidding in 1936, and began to compose the eponymous final quartet in 1941, when “the rest of Europe had fallen to Hitler” and “3000 civilians [in England] were killed or injured in one air raid” (Gordon 372). The seeming peace of the tiny chapel at Little Gidding belied its history of violence, in which “Cromwell’s soldiers ransacked the church in the winter of 1646” and where various sacred icons were thrown into a nearby pond by soldiers (Gordon 372).

Though, at the time of composition of “Burnt Norton,” World War II was in the future, we are told in the poem that “time future” is “contained in time past” (BN I).<sup>113</sup> The events of the 1930s led inexorably to the war of 1939-1945. The second of the quartets, “East Coker,” was not published until 1940. It and the subsequent poems in the series are written in wartime, and Gardner quotes Eliot as saying “The form of the *Quartets* fitted in very nicely to the conditions under which I was writing, or could write at all. I could write them in sections [. . .] it didn’t matter if a day or two elapsed . . . while I did war jobs” (*Composition* 15). The war is evident in the language of the last three quartets. In “East Coker,” he says that “Houses rise and fall, crumble and are extended, / Are removed, destroyed, restored,” lines which easily can be interpreted as describing the fleeting quality of earthly, especially political, “houses” of power (EC I).

Of all the affects discussed by Altieri, it is mood which provides the best compromise between fog and flight, between standing inside and outside a situation, at once creating

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<sup>113</sup> For this chapter, I will use abbreviations in parenthetical citations, when referring to passages from the poems. BN, EC, DS, and LG to refer to “Burnt Norton,” “East Coker,” “The Dry Salvages,” and “Little Gidding,” respectively. The five movements of each poem will be indicated by a Roman numeral, as EC IV for “East Coker,” fourth movement when it is not otherwise clear which movement is being discussed. Unless otherwise noted, all citations of “Four Quartets” refer to *The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909-1950* (hereafter CP).

and doubting it. It is a mood which pervades the passive antagonists as well as the displaced artists and bureaucrats of the time. And mood will provide a psychological platform for escape from temporal woes, by concentrating on and succumbing to the *via negativa* as a route to paradise.<sup>114</sup>

The refining fire of the fourth Quartet, “Little Gidding,” is a merging of the Pentecostal fire of Christendom with the Heraclitean fire that so troubled Hopkins, as well as the purgatorial and infernal fires traditional in Anglo-Catholic belief. When any of those fires descends, the individual is limited to being passively consumed. It is not a “generat[ion] of some kind of action or identification” in Altieri’s sense of emotion, but a “merg[ing] into something close to atmosphere ... that seems to pervade an entire scene” (*Particulars* 2). It is this “merging” which so troubled Hopkins when he wrote in “Spelt from Sibyl’s Leaves,” “Fire-featuring heaven. For earth | her being has unbound; her dapple is at an end,” and which he seemed to resolve with fire in “That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire,” saying “In a flash, at a trumpet crash, / I am all at once what Christ is, | since he is what I am, and / This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, | patch, matchwood, immortal diamond, / Is immortal diamond” (Hopkins *Poems* 97; 106). I would point out that the tautology is a stylistic similarity between Hopkins and Eliot, though employed for different reasons. Where Hopkins says “immortal diamond, / Is immortal diamond” after the refining Heraclitean fire, he wishes to concentrate the image, and amaze the reader with its repetition. Where Eliot says “To be redeemed from fire by fire” and “Consumed by either fire or fire” in “Little Gidding” (206; 213), he challenges the reader to

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<sup>114</sup> The *via negativa* is the route to eternal salvation which requires sacrifice in this life. It is the theological belief of Catholic teachers such as St. John of the Cross and St. Ignatius Loyola. The *via negativa* frequently involves a negation of the senses (cf. Hopkins’s poem, “The Habit of Perfection,” and (re Eliot) Gordon 351).

differentiate the two types of infernos, to choose one, or to recognize that they are ultimately the same. Both poets seem to conclude that the final blending of the groaning “thoughts against thoughts” (“Sibyl’s Leaves”) may be resolved in a peaceful “symbol perfected in death” (LG 195). This perfected symbol will later be named by Eliot as the rose as it becomes one with the consuming fire in the fifth movement of “Little Gidding.”

### The Affects

The affective stance of a poem will certainly evoke different responses in readers, and the mood of the poem may have different significance for them. Charles Altieri makes the point that, “Sensations can be rendered so as to be shared, and if language is woven into the sensations, then the affects ... become available for anyone who can assume the role of speaker” (Altieri “Affinities” 2). The suggestion is that the availability of sensation through art is only limited by the imagination of the reader (or observer). This suggests to me an important interplay between the voice of a poem and the readiness of a reader to apprehend that voice, and between the style of address and the type of audience. It is in this light that I consider John Cooper’s work, *T. S. Eliot and the Ideology of “Four Quartets”* important: he argues that “Four Quartets” has a “political and social function ... to point out one of the ways a vulnerable mandarin might survive the compulsions of history” (123). His argument is that Eliot’s last poetic work was the culmination in the process of a movement towards “new personal and social allegiances” (8). By accentuating Eliot’s “commanding” status “in the period between 1939 and 1950” Cooper opens a discussion about poetic voice (100). Though Eliot’s biographical voice was “commanding,” I argue that, in “Four Quartets,” the affects,

notably mood, are suggested to the reader in a subtle and ameliorative manner. Mood is one of the four affects defined by Charles Altieri in *The Particulars of Rapture: An Aesthetics of the Affects*.<sup>115</sup> Moods are defined as “modes of feeling where the sense of subjectivity becomes diffuse and sensation merges into something close to atmosphere, something that seems to pervade an entire scene or situation” (*Particulars* 2).

I note that Altieri ends his discussion of Eliot’s poetry with *Ash Wednesday*, written in 1930, five years prior to the first of the “Quartets.” Altieri takes issue with critics who, like Maud Ellmann, “dwell on what Eliot exhibits or reveals about desire rather than how he understands and deploys it self-consciously” (in *Gender, Desire and Sexuality in T. S. Eliot* 171; hereafter *Gender*). He warns against totally subscribing to the poetics of impersonality, saying “this ... approach is bound to the fundamentally passive conditions in being caught up in imaginary structures” (*Gender* 171).<sup>116</sup> Thus, Altieri warns against placing too great an emphasis on impersonality as an insight into Eliot’s poetics. Rather, he says, it should be one of several vantages from which one can observe Eliot’s poetic process. In my analysis of “Four Quartets,” I will heed this warning, recognizing that Eliot was, by his own definition, an active participant in the production of poetry. In “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” he presents the famous analogy between a poet and a catalyst in a chemical reaction. Though the catalyst causes the reaction to proceed apace, it is itself unchanged at the end of the chemical process. This is not to say, however, that the catalyst is passive during the reaction; in fact, just the opposite is true.

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<sup>115</sup> The other affects are: emotion (affects that involve “the construction of attitudes that typically establish a particular cause and so situate the agent within a narrative and generate some kind of action or identification”); feelings (“elemental affective states characterized by an imaginative engagement in the immediate processes of sensation”); and, passions (“emotions within which we project significant stakes for the identity that they make possible”) (Altieri *Particulars* 2).

<sup>116</sup> The concept of impersonality has roots in Keats’s concept of the “cameleon poet” and in Oscar Wilde’s warning to a critic that “An artist, sir, has no ethical sympathies at all” and that “One stands remote from one’s subject matter” (Keats *Letters I* 387; Wilde 248).



The extent of Eliot's involvement in the lengthy "reaction" of the Second World War can be seen variously as his identification with a traditional pre-war England, his participation as an air raid warden, and his sensitivity to the psychological implications of the war, a sensitivity which was expressed in "Four Quartets" as a mood.

In the diffuse atmosphere of mood is something of Eliot's "impersonality" and "detachment," the latter of which will figure as a metaphor for mood, as I will argue in the close reading of "Little Gidding." While other affects may have their place in war, just as they do in everyday life, mood seems to me the most relevant to the particular voices of "Four Quartets," a poem in which we overhear rather than hear, see spectres rather than humans, and are trapped in a nonlinear history, a fine haze around a "still point." Mood is the affect most associated with noncombatants like the displaced mandarinates of World War II described by Cooper. Eliot, speaking to the mandarinates, spoke also to himself in the sense that he, by the time "Four Quartets" was written, was an influential man of letters, one of the categories comprising the mandarinates for Cooper. Soldiers may feel passion and emotions, as they slay the enemy or bury their own comrades, but back home "Now and in England" the mood is one of confusion, vague fear, and worry. The affective stance, so to speak, is not immediate, but rather speculative and anxious, expressed as "What would happen if?" as opposed to "What must I do now?"

Bearing in mind Altieri's "aesthetics of the affects," I now consider the use of affective words and images in "Four Quartets." At first, the poem seems to stand down from expressing an affective stance. By affective stance, I mean a certain attitude which is more readily classified as one of the affects, rather than a concatenation of several.

Eliot's other poetry sometimes combines affects, as in *The Waste Land*, where the passionate narrator calls April the "cruellest month," recalls being "frightened," and assesses the landscape as "stony rubbish," "a heap of broken images," a "dead tree," and offers the to the observer a presentation of "fear in a handful of dust" (*TWL* "The Burial of the Dead" 5-7). The extremely negative feeling of "Burial of the Dead" is not moodlike, but passionate, with an identification which has considerable importance for the subject. In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," the affective dimensions, I believe, are two: emotion and feelings. Specifically, the poem describes Prufrock's emotional engagement with, and anxiety about, the aging process. The anxiety expressed in "Prufrock" is not moodlike, for it establishes specific aspects of dread – "They will say: 'How his hair is growing thin!'" Mood is less specific, more atmospheric, and environmental. Emotion "involves the construction of attitudes that typically establish a particular cause" – in this case, growing old. Feelings "are elemental affective states characterized by an imaginative engagement with the immediate processes of sensation ("the yellow fog that rubs its back," "with a bald spot in the middle of my hair," "measured out my life with coffee spoons," "arms that are braceleted and white and bare / [But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!]" (*The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950*, 4-5; hereafter *CPP*). "Four Quartets" starts with a didactic message about the simultaneity of time. I suggest that this seeming reluctance to engage on an active level is due to the fact that the primary mode of affect of "Four Quartets" is mood. "Mood," Altieri states, "composes enigmatic states where the subject is not in control of what seems most intensely subjective about a situation" (*Particulars* 56). The progress of, or simultaneity of, time is beyond intervention by the subject. It is not without importance

in the human experience, however. Briefly, Altieri calls moods “so pervasive they elicit a mode of intentionality in which the subjectivity of the individual subject is not very important” (*Particulars* 54). In this aspect, moods differ from the other affects: in mood “subjectivity floats, modulating between a sense of one’s own participation and a sense of being taken up into states of mind that any subject might enter” (*Particulars* 54). What affect could be more fitting than that of mood to express the abysmal confusion and lack of control in war, which, like mood itself, has “power over subjects stronger even than the power of ideas” (*Particulars* 56)?

The poem says that “there is only the fight to recover what has been lost / And found and lost again and again” (EC V). Eliot first wrote about the poetics of impersonality in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919), saying that, as a poet “develop[s] or procure[s] the consciousness of the past [. . .] what happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something more valuable” (*Selected Essays* 6-7). This fluctuation between the lost self and the found self forms a static noise around the true self. This cloud of identity within certain limiting parameters can be thought of as an individual’s self-categorization. Eliot follows this hint at depersonalization with a caution to critics that “Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation are directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry” (*Selected Essays* 7). I would say that neither of these statements, however, encourages insensitivity in the poet to the affects which are surely the driving mental states of the writing of poetry. For, even later in the same essay, he describes the difference between the younger and the mature poet, saying that the mature poet is “a more finely perfected medium in which special, or very varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations” (*Selected Essays* 7). Just what are these special

and varied feelings, if not expressions of personality, at least in the vernacular use?

“Personality,” for Eliot, though, has a different definition, and is used in the sense of a performing personality, an attention-grabber. In “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” he says that poetry “is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality” (*Sacred Wood* 33). The self-staging of poetry is nearer to the Altieri sense given in the definition of emotions, that is, the affects that are “dependent on self-staging plots.” As “varied feelings,” they are concerned with sensations (or, in F. H. Bradley’s terms, “immediate experience”). The way personality is expressed as a mood is different from its expression as an emotion or feeling, exactly because of the nonsubjective nature of mood.

Maud Ellmann recognizes the dual nature of impersonality, stating, “Eliot concedes [in ‘Little Gidding’] that every poem is an ‘epitaph,’ an obituary to the consciousness in which it was conceived” (Ellmann 9). Thus, “The very instrument of self-discovery turns out to be the wedge that severs self from self” (Ellmann 9). The argument is that, by the very act of expressing that which is most personal in poetry, the personality ceases to exist (Eliot says it is “an escape from emotion, [. . .] from personality”), and that the expressed personality becomes part of a Bergsonian “continuity of personality” in history (Ellmann 10; *Selected Essays* 10). It is by the very act of successfully projecting affects in poetry that the poet is able to relinquish the burden of personality in that particular, narrow, yet expressive aspect of his life – artistic creation. Thus, for Eliot, the anxious mood in “Four Quartets” relieves him of the direct responsibility for that particular mood. Ellmann notes that, in “‘Four Quartets,’ Eliot attempts to rescue history, and to restore the self through the circumnavigation of memory” (86). I see this attempt in his

recognition of his present state “So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years- / Twenty years largely wasted, the years *l’entre deux guerres*” (EC V 174-75). By positioning his biographical present in middle age, and bracketed by two wars, he establishes a context for his mood – anxiety at the brink of beginning a new stage of life in the physical turmoil of war.

In his chapter “The Theory of Emotions in Eliot’s Poetry and Poetics,” Altieri states that “much of Eliot’s poetry from ‘The Love Song of St. Sebastian’ through *Ash Wednesday* makes available ... transformations in dealing with lyric emotion” (in *Gender* 151). Altieri proceeds to discuss Eliot’s own distinction between the feelings and the emotions, two of the four affects described in *The Particulars of Rapture*. Eliot had famously called the poet’s emotion as he writes “a very complex thing, but not with the complexity of the emotions of people who have very complex or unusual emotions in life” (*Sacred Wood* 32). Feelings, Eliot suggests, are independent and fleeting, and “are not in actual emotions at all” (*Sacred Wood* 33). Mood is an all-encompassing affect, one which, while diffuse, is also inescapable. Mood is passive. This passivity was recognized by Altieri as one of the four ways in which Eliot’s earlier poetry deals with affective dimensions: “For [Eliot] passivity was not an end in itself; it was a means for attuning to whatever spiritual forces one could locate within a world of suffering” (*Gender* 161-166; 164). By recognizing the distinction between feeling and emotion, Eliot shows himself to be concerned with the subtleties of affect. This concern supports my reading of “Four Quartets” in light of the aesthetics of affect, especially mood. Altieri does not write about “Four Quartets,” nor does he consider the affect of mood in Eliot’s poetry.

Altieri describes passions as “emotions within which we project significant stakes for the identity that they make possible” and, treats them as a “particular orientation of emotion” (*Particulars* 48). It is because feelings are so intimately involved with sensation, and because emotions lead to action, that neither of these affects is characteristic of Eliot’s later poetry of grim salvation. Rather, mood, with its evocation of a pervading atmosphere, beyond the control of the subject, is the most appropriate affect for war-threatened and war-torn England. The mood of “Little Gidding” is anxiety.

The poem seems to describe a specific situation, people at or near the time of war, clinging to a spiritual quest, and extending “time present” backward to the times of Sir Andrew Elyot, Dame Julian of Norwich, St. John of the Cross, and Krishna. Some of these times are historical, some mythological. Time present is also extended forward into eternity, where “the fire and the rose are one” (LG V). This makes it tempting to see emotion as the affective quality most fitting to a reading of the poem; yet, as I have suggested, the message reaches beyond the immediate readership to the unknown foreign or future reader. Like the mandarin, we are confused about earthly turmoil and spiritual redemption. Mood blurs the specificity of the overt subject, making the poem continually relevant to readers in other situations. Emotions, as described by Altieri, “involv[e] the construction of attitudes that typically establish a particular cause and so situate the agent within a narrative and generate some kind of action or identification” (*Particulars* 2). The generation of action is avoided quite obviously in “Four Quartets.” Time sequences are represented in “Four Quartets,” for example, the dancing peasants of the old English village of “East Coker” keep time, and keep “the rhythm in their dancing

/ As in their living in the living season / The time of the seasons and the constellations” (EC I 41-43). Yet, the underlying theme of “East Coker” is not time as a sequence, but time as reversible, as shown in the first and last lines of the poem: “In my beginning is my end” and “In my end is my beginning.” The narrative qualities of “Four Quartets” are compromised by the interruptive musings on time, and the self-conscious literary reflections which characterize the fifth movement of each of the quartets.

### Eliot’s Critical Writings on Voice and Audience

I will consider “Four Quartets,” especially the fourth poem, “Little Gidding,” in an attempt to identify Eliot’s method of presenting an ideological and religious treatise in poetic voice. I will closely read the poem for instances of Eliot’s manipulation of what I call quasi-sensory images to evoke one specific affect—mood—in the reader. Here again, I would distinguish Eliot from Keats and Hopkins. Keats’s odes, for example, were written in what Eliot describes as the first voice. Hopkins, while somewhat preacherly in his prose style, wrote deeply personal poetry of religious experience which seems to place the reader in the position of confessor. “Four Quartets,” though, is a lyric poem with dramatic moments, notably the encounter with the “familiar compound ghost” in “Little Gidding.” Eliot says in his essay, “The Three Voices of Poetry,” that “dramatic monologue ... is surely the second voice, the voice of the poet talking to other people,” noting that in Robert Browning’s famous poems of this kind “we cannot suppose that we are listening to any other voice than that of Browning himself” (*OPP* 104). The change in audience can influence the reading of a poem, of course, and just as it was always Browning’s voice, it is always Eliot’s voice, in his works, and not merely some

ephemeral personality, but even in characteristic phrasing, images and usages. For example, Eliot uses geographical referents in his works, mentioning noted English locales by name (“Cannon Street Hotel,” “Lower Thames Street,” “the walls / Of Magnus Martyr,” “Down Greenwich reach,” and “Margate Sands,” all in “The Fire Sermon,” for example). In “Four Quartets, three are named for locations in England which Eliot had visited. In this sense, one aspect of his style is suggestive of the man. But, in the sense that these places have varying values for readers over time and from different places, his “style” is differently perceived. Eliot’s locations are urban, as opposed to the emphatic pastoral of Romanticism. His locations also differ from the early environmentalist positions so often seen in Hopkins’s work (“Binsey Poplars,” “Inversnaid”).

The observation that emotions are reliant on “self-staging plots” and feelings are “closely woven into the rendering of sensations” seems to align with Eliot’s own description of two of the three voices of poetry in the eponymous essay (*OPP* 96ff). Lyric poetry is most like the first voice and, in this respect, closest to the unbound “intensities and attachments” which may interfere with direct expression in, say, the dramatic monologue, or drama itself. In narrative poetry, as in drama, the poet has considerable control over the expressed affects of the *dramatis personae*, whereas, in lyric, the affects presented are assumed to be those of the poet or his narrative persona. For example, when Eliot writes, in “Four Quartets,” that “My words echo / Thus in your mind” (BN 14-15), he is speaking directly to the reader, in the rhetoric of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Later, he says, “So I assumed a double part, and cried / And heard another’s voice cry: ‘What! Are *you* here’” (LG 99-100; emphasis original). In this instance, he is setting up a drama in which two phases of the poet are presented as separate entities, for



the better expression of poetry's requirement – that there be “more than one voice to be heard” (*OPP* 109). Yet, there is no presentation of overt emotions here; rather, Eliot obeys his early rule that “Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion” (*Selected Essays* 10).

Another insight into Eliot's understanding of the appropriate role of affect in poetry as well as religious thinking can be noted in his evaluation of minor poetry and his views on classicism. In his 1944 lecture, “What Is Minor Poetry?” Eliot refuses to provide a definition, yet suggests that Robert Herrick is a secondary poet, because, unlike George Herbert, a major poet, “there is no such conscious purpose about Herrick's poems [. . .] and . . .the personality expressed in them is less unusual” (*OPP* 43). Eliot's ideas on personality come through. It is not so much that he advocates impersonality, as that he values detachment, and the use of interesting, novel, and eccentric expression of personality in poetry. In this, the personality of poetry extends to the language at large, and is analogous to classicism: “The classic must . . . express the maximum possible of the whole range of feeling which represents the people who speak that language” (“What Is a Classic?” *OPP* 69). Certainly, he would have been loathe to call his late work a “classic” as that would be to establish it as the culmination of all English writing, contrary to the comments about writing in “Four Quartets,” in which “words strain, / Crack and sometimes break,” and “the word [is] neither diffident nor ostentatious” (BN V; LG V). Yet, according to Steve Ellis, “in the Quartets [. . .] [Eliot uses] a strategy of ‘classic’ form and diction that acknowledges but overcomes national constraint” (12). Poets writing after a classical master (Eliot's example is Virgil) are destined either to ignore or make inconsequential refinements of the master. In this respect, following in

the wake of a classic writer is fulfilling the role of what Eliot describes as a “minor poet,” one whose works are suitably represented in anthologies, and whose work is less likely to form a “significant unity” (“What is Minor Poetry?” *OPP* 47).

Classic art’s “superiority to any other theory of art lies in ... [its] capacity to penetrate to the emotional core of existence, yet to maintain an exemplary poise that saves us from the feckless wallow of an undisciplined emotionalism” (Cooper 144). Eliot was well aware of the rigors of classicism, through the work of T. E. Hulme (1883-1917), specifically “Romanticism and Classicism,” an essay in *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art* (collected and edited by Herbert Read, 1924). In that essay, Hulme predicted that “a classical revival is coming, and secondly, for its particular purposes, fancy will be superior to imagination” (113). Thus, classicism in art is related to individual taste, just as Eliot says the categorization of “major” versus “minor” is. In “What Is a Classic?” Eliot admits that “the word ‘classical’ implies either the highest praise or the most contemptuous abuse, according to the party to which one belongs” (*OPP* 53). Hulme had supported this distinction in his description of the position of the mandarin: “The privileged class is beaten down only when it has lost faith in itself” (115). This loss of faith was experienced in England in the war years, when, according to Gordon, “London ... was partially destroyed, its continued existence more threatened than at any time in its history” (368). This loss of faith in the structure of class would lead to the loss of respect for classicism, I suggest. There was individual loss of faith, too, and Eliot was aware of religious crises both as a sufferer and an observer. For his play, *Murder in the Cathedral*, (1935; and providing some passages for “Burnt Norton” which was written just months later), Eliot chose a protagonist who was

destined to be a martyr, and antagonists as the tempters who try and change the course of destiny, and the knights who accuse him of being a traitor and kill him.<sup>117</sup>

The classic removal from “undisciplined emotionalism” does not, however, mean that it avoids all affect. In Eliot’s essay, he recognizes two polarized definitions of “classicism” in common use: “either the perfection of form, or the absolute zero of frigidity” (*OPP* 53). Altieri analyzes Eliot’s distinction between emotion and feelings:

the former [are] dependent upon self-staging plots while the latter are closely woven into the rendering of sensations. Because of that closeness to sensation, he thought feelings afforded intensities and attachments much less bound than emotions to the illusory project of constructing individual egos. (*Particulars* 272)

In “Four Quartets,” though, Eliot juxtaposes feeling and emotion, while assigning to each a diffuseness easily subsumed by an overarching mood: “In the general mess of imprecision of feeling / Undisciplined squads of emotion” are at work, and the contrast is felt in the mood of anxiety (EC V). The “imprecision” and “undisciplined” nature of feeling and emotion are presented in a derogatory sense – “the general mess.” In his early essays, Eliot singled out emotions for deprecation: “when we do not know enough, we tend always to substitute emotions for thoughts”; “the pernicious effect of emotion”; “bad criticism ... is that which is nothing but an expression of emotion”; “great poetry may be made without the direct use of any emotion whatever: composed out of feelings

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<sup>117</sup> Eliot had found in Becket “a model that was not that different from Eliot himself” (Gordon 271). Like Becket, Eliot “had moved from worldly success to spiritual danger” (Gordon 271). Further, *Murder in the Cathedral* “had its biographic impact on Eliot in shifting the balance of the new life from the shared course of love to the lone course of religious zeal” (Gordon 271). This shift is important to understanding “Four Quartets” as a different type of poem from Eliot’s earlier works. According to Kenneth Kramer, though, like “Ash Wednesday,” it is a confessional poem, “Four Quartets” adds to this meditative style, “the interaction between mystical substance and ... musical form” (Kramer 15). Though the five-movement pattern of “Four Quartets” is clearly similar to the structure of *The Waste Land*, here the language is simpler, somehow more urgently reaching out to the reader with no room for misunderstanding.

solely”; “It is not in his personal emotions . . . that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting”; and, “Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion” (from “The Perfect Critic” (1920) and “Tradition and the Individual Talent (1919), in *Sacred Wood* 6; 7; 9; 31; 32; 33). In “Four Quartets,” Eliot seems to adopt a more subtle distinction – feelings are messy and imprecise, while emotions are squads. Note the formless nature of messy imprecision versus the personified emotions which now appear as “undisciplined squads,” a usage both suggestive of narrative, and yet retaining the uncontrollable aspect of messiness.

It is helpful to know what Eliot considered to be poetic voice. In his essay “The Three Voices of Poetry,” (*OPP*), Eliot defines these voices of poetry as 1) the poet talking to himself, 2) the poet speaking to an audience or readership, and 3) the poet talking to a wide audience through adopting a persona and speaking as that character. While he does not specifically limit each voice to a particular type of poetry, he indicates that the first voice is most often seen in lyric poetry, the second in dramatic monologue, and the third in drama. Eliot’s discussion of voice concerns the mode of address chosen by the poet as an expression of thought and imagination; Cooper’s voices relate to a specific sociological audience. A recent article on lyric poetry by Jonathan Culler suggests that, in a reaction against Romanticism, the New Critics encouraged a movement from lyric to drama, but that “this approach has trouble dealing with . . . those elements that do not make much sense in an empirical frame” (*Lyric* 203). Eliot’s “voices” are based on the difference between dramatic and poetic voice, the difference between “the poet speaking to himself,” the poet speaking to an audience, and the dramatic “speech in which imaginary characters address each other” (*OPP* 96). As we

progress through the quartets, Eliot seems to move from a self-conscious, lecturing voice toward a contemplative, reflective one. In this, we see another Modern modality of didactic poetry—shifting in tone as well as in message. The teacherly tone of “What might have been is an abstraction” (BN I) gives way to the speculative “What we call the beginning is often the end,” (LG V), where the word “often” provides room for doubt or later refinement.<sup>118</sup>

It is important to note the difference between poetic voice and tone. Tone is generally “an intangible quality which [. . .] [is] felt to pervade . . . the whole” (1293). Further, tone is “specifically . . . tone of voice . . . given to words by speakers in normal discourse and heard by auditors” (*Princeton Encyclopedia* 1293). Thus, tone is one aspect of voice, and all voices have tone. Poetic voice is more than merely tone, of course. What voice has that is absent in tone is an implied communication between the author and the reader, and, for Culler, an implicit addressee, the assumption of which defines and justifies the speaker’s speech. This communication can be traced by following the pronouns, especially “you.” The intimate you addressed in “Burnt Norton,” (My words echo / Thus, in your mind,” (14-15), and the implied you in the command “Descend lower” (BN III 117), give way, in “East Coker” to a distancing between the speaker and the addressed: “If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close” (EC I 25), you will be able to glimpse the history of England, as Eliot imagines it to be in the juxtaposing of clumsy, rustic folk (“Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes”) with Biblical

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<sup>118</sup> This is at odds with an insight Eliot gives in “The Three Voices of Poetry”: “It was in 1938 . . . that the third voice began to force itself upon my ear” (*OPP* 99). The wartime quartets were written after 1938, yet in many instances, in these three poems, Eliot seems to me contemplative, didactic, but seldom dramatic. This is explained by the fact that Eliot had begun writing plays by 1939, and therefore had a more natural outlet for his dramatic voice. A notable dramatic exception is the encounter with the “familiar compound ghost” in “Little Gidding” which will be discussed in detail in the close reading of that poem.

images (“the time of harvest,” (EC I 37; 44). In “The Dry Salvages,” the you is denied identity and action numerously: “You cannot face,” “You are not the same people,” “You shall not think,” “You who think that you are voyaging, / You are not those who saw the harbor,” “At the moment which is not of action or inaction / You can receive this,” and “You who came to port... / Will suffer the trial and judgment of the sea” (DS III 130; 139; 144; 148-49; 154-55; 163-64). The you of “Little Gidding” is welcomed to follow the *via negativa*, after multiple iterations of the form “if you X ...It would be the same,” where X is ways and times of coming to a certain point. The comfort suggested by the irrelevance of the approaches of the you meets a quick and final correction: “It would always be the same: you would have to put off / Sense and notion. You are not here to verify, / Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity” (LG I 44-46). No matter what approach or when, once at this stage, there is no comfort in experience (sense) or thought (notion). Rather, “You are here to kneel / Where prayer has been valid” (LG I 47-48). In “Little Gidding” movement two, the meeting with the “familiar compound ghost” presents another dimension of you. The poet addresses the ghost, saying “What! are *you* here?” So, you becomes the variously interpreted ghost – Dante, Brunetto Latini, Milton, Swift, Yeats, or Eliot himself as an alter-ego. The ghostly “you” gives the addressee much to contemplate: after saying that his “thoughts and theories” have been forgotten, he says “So with your own,” welcoming the worldly “you” into the anonymity of the dead; he predicts a Hamlet-like desperation of the fruits of “your lifetime’s effort” – “expiring sense,” “no promise,” “bitter tastelessness,” and the pointed instruction that “You must move in measure, like a dancer” (LG II 132; 133; 134; 135; 147).

Not only is the change of voice obvious interpoem, but also intrapoem, as we move from the statement of contrasting ideas (“Burnt Norton”: past and present; “East Coker”: beginning and end; “The Dry Salvages”: river and sea; “Little Gidding”: destructive fire versus Pentecostal fire. We next find an attempt to reconcile these contrasting ideas in the fifth movements (in “Burnt Norton” by suggesting unmoving Love; in “East Coker” by inverting end and beginning; in “The Dry Salvages” by contentment in “significant soil”; and in “Little Gidding” by “this Love” and “this Calling”). Eliot shared his own spiritual quest through this series of poems in which, time after time, he recognizes conflicting views: past and future, beginning and end, attachment and detachment, Christ and Krishna, and winter and spring. The quest itself serves audiences differently: for the mandarin, it provides a spiritual alternative to the (possibly unachievable) quest of winning the war and emerging in a similar position as in pre-war years; for some, the spiritual quest suggests that, in poetry at least, we may arrive at the insight of “know[ing] the place for the first time” (LG V 242). The war was, for those living through it, both a public and private event, in the sense that they experienced both a newsreel perspective as well as a personal perspective of it. Eliot points out different audiences in his 1945 essay, “The Social Function of Poetry,” saying “people do not only experience the world differently in different places, they experience it differently at different times” (*OPP* 10). I believe that Cooper’s failure is in not recognizing the contrasts in the poem, and his narrow focus on the poem as an ameliorative for the mandarin in pre-war and Second World War England. In my close reading of “Little Gidding” I will consider the complexity of even so apparently obvious a line as “Now and in England” (LG I 40).

## Mood, Mandarins, and Social Context

“Four Quartets” attempted its deliverance of a middle-class mandarin that had had its fill of the shadow world of politics by the late 1930s. Eliot spoke to this group as a fellow member. Eliot had said, in *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939), that the 1938 Munich crisis<sup>119</sup> had a pervasive effect upon the consciousness of the English people, causing “a feeling of humiliation, which seemed to demand an act of personal contrition, of humility, repentance and amendment; what had happened was something in which one was deeply implicated and responsible” (*Idea* 64). Steve Ellis points out that “when a nation’s self-projection takes place in a climate of war ... the tendency arises to ... unite the nation via some easily assimilable ... emblem, like the English village” (89). By showing that there was guilt, and humility, as well as comfort to be shared, Eliot provided a wider affective dimension to the mood he projects in “Four Quartets.”<sup>120</sup> To me, Eliot’s prose writing about “what had happened” being something for which individuals “felt “implicated and responsible,” is prophetic of his poetic utterance in “Little Gidding” about the bitter gifts of old age: “the conscious impotence of rage / At human folly” and “the shame / Of things ill done and done to others’ harm” (LG II 136-37; 140-41). Note the personal take on what had been national guilt. The anxiety is expressed as “impotence of rage,” and the mood of regret is evident, too.

In an early essay entitled “A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry” (1928), Eliot points out that Shakespeare’s “finest poetry [is] in his most dramatic scenes” (*Selected Essays* 39).

I will distinguish two readerships of “Four Quartets” – one the direct, contemporary

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<sup>119</sup> The 1938 Munich meeting was called in response to Hitler’s demands for German possession of that part of Czechoslovakia where Germans lived, the Sudetenland. This capitulation to Hitler would lead to further aggressive moves by him.

<sup>120</sup> The guilt may be attributable to Eliot’s treatment of his first wife, Vivienne. See Seymour-Jones *passim*.



readers, and the other a more remote reader, for whom the realities of the war are familiar in a historical sense, but are removed by several decades. Cooper in his thoroughgoing attempt to cast Eliot as a successful businessman who applies his skills to the composition of poetry, says that Eliot, as a publisher, had “develop[ed] that intuitive sixth sense about what a group of readers might buy” (145). Cooper suggests that Eliot’s business savvy coupled with his literary taste ensured, not only his success as a publisher, but also his ability to target the mandarinat whose position in the 1940s was that of an isolated, dislocated intelligentsia. These readers were intelligent, cynical, and suspicious of the “rhetorical debauch of the 1930s” (such as Nazi and fascist propaganda) and “all ulterior motives” (especially the political ones) (Cooper 146). The mandarins of the 1930s had less “intrepid dignity” than those of whom Eliot wrote in 1910, in his early poems, entitled “Mandarins.”<sup>121</sup> The situation of war demanded that they be “graceful, not too gay”<sup>122</sup> Oddly, Cooper, in writing about the mandarins of the 1940s does not mention the poems of the same name written by Eliot in the Prufrock era. Cooper defines the mandarinat as a “sizeable cadre of intellectuals, academics, artists, the more culturally attentive Oxbridgians from the professions, the civil service and journalism” (31). This definition derives from Paul Valéry’s definition of the intellectual society of the mid-1920s: “la caste des letters,” which included “Mandarins, clerics, docteurs, licenciés” (qtd., by Cooper 31; Paul Valéry, ‘Propos sur l’Intelligence’ (1956)). Cooper provides a survey of Eliot’s audience, and its development from the puzzlement of the early poems through the immediate general critical success of *The Waste Land* (Virginia Woolf said it had “great beauty & force of phrase”; *Times Literary Supplement* said,

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<sup>121</sup> “Mandarins: 1” in *T. S. Eliot: Inventions of the March Hare*, Ed. Christopher Ricks, 19.

<sup>122</sup> “Mandarins: 4” in *T. S. Eliot: Inventions of the March Hare*, Ed. Christopher Ricks, 22.

“Here we have range, depth, and beautiful expression”; and, Conrad Aiken called the poem “unquestionably important, unquestionably brilliant”).<sup>123</sup>

Cooper notes that Eliot’s “audience was constituted principally of sections of the literary, academic and professional servants of power in the North Atlantic World” (32). Cooper goes on to state that he uses the terms “mandarin” and “mandarinate” “primarily in a sociological sense, to identify Eliot’s primary readership as a loosely organized social group,” citing John Hayward, editor of the “Four Quartets” and Eliot’s roommate for eleven years, who had called mandarins people who believed they had a “civilizing mission among the masses” (33). By the outbreak of World War II, Eliot had established himself as an important figure in this artistically and sociologically influential group. I see no reason to disagree that such a group did exist and that Eliot, by the time of the publication of “Four Quartets” was an important member.

Addressing a World War II readership in his essay “What Is a Classic?” Eliot “reveals to his listeners and readers ... his capacity for seeing past the heartless grandeur of a great public work [specifically the classics]—what he calls its ‘absolute zero of frigidity’—to the unexpected intimacies of the heart” (Cooper 144; TSE quote from *OPP* 53). I agree with Cooper in this assessment. These “unexpected intimacies” are complex in wartime, and Eliot knows that fear and confusion will underlie the more obvious concrete concerns, such as air raids and immediate threat, especially for the mandarinate. By addressing these deeper “intimacies of the heart” in a moodlike first voice, Eliot also extends the relevance of his work to other times. Recall that the first voice of poetry, according to Eliot in his essay on the voices of poetry, is “the voice of the poet talking to

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<sup>123</sup> See “Reviews and First Reactions” in *The Waste Land*. Ed. Michael North. New York: W W Norton, 2001, pp 137-66.

himself or to *nobody*” (*OPP* 96; emphasis added). I suggest that the lyric “nobody” is the vague readership of the future, an audience which, by circa 1940, Eliot knew would be his. Unlike contemporary readers who are familiar, at least in type, to the writer, future readers have “no bodies” and their vagueness masks their importance to the writer. His works will live or die by their critical estimations.

To speak to the mandarin, to preach, in a sense, about a way of coping with the world heading toward, or at, war, Eliot needed a certain position, a credibility in this community. He believed that this community, his community, was significant. In that sense, his addresses to the mandarin in his poetry, his messages of hope through wartime anxiety, are forms of soliloquy. His success as a poet, publisher, and critic established his bona fides as a mandarin. In addition, his success as a City man, knowledgeable in the business community and influential in the publishing world, made him an invaluable contact for the younger Modernists like W. H. Auden and Stephen Spender. Eliot’s social circle included others who were influential in the community, including Geoffrey Faber, Sir Herbert Read (editor of T. E. Hulme’s book, *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art* (1924)), Lady Ottoline Morrell, a social figure of the time, and Bertrand Russell (though, by the 1930s, on a less affectionate level than that of their early mentor-student relationship).

The prospect of Eliot as a successful businessman whose poetic authority is closely related to his banking and publishing success has several flaws, however. Business acumen does not ensure poetic authority yet, in Eliot’s case, his critical ability was almost a guarantee of success in both realms. There are two arguments against the absolute relation between Eliot’s successes in business and in writing. First, Eliot’s early poetry,

particularly “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and “Rhapsody on a Windy Night” indicate his poetic promise before he was engaged in a practical career. Written in his student days, when the most likely career that lay before him was that of a professor of philosophy, these poems are proved successful in the sense that they attracted to the young Eliot an enthusiastic supporter in Ezra Pound, who heard about him through Conrad Aiken. With the support of Virginia and Leonard Woolf, his first volume of poetry, *Prufrock and Other Observations*, was published by *Egoist Press* in 1917.

Secondly, Eliot’s pragmatic career was a veil for a deeply troubled personality, as the quasi-biographies indicate. *The Waste Land* was completed while Eliot was hospitalized for a nervous breakdown. At several points in his apparently button-down career as banker and publisher he was driven from London by anxiety and depression, sought cures at the recommendations of friends, and returned to his complex and problematic marriage to Vivienne.<sup>124</sup> Thus, his authority, which seems evident to us now, may have been less clear to Eliot himself as he wrote, especially prior to his 1927 conversion to the Anglican Church. Later, he had established himself as a leading literary voice with the success of *The Waste Land*, and the editorship of *The Criterion*, which he would continue until 1939. The Eliot of 1935, when “Burnt Norton” was composed was successfully pursuing his career at Faber and Gwynn, was preparing a volume of poetry for publication (in which “Burnt Norton” would be the last entry), and had completed a lecture tour of the United States.

What were the affects which would most intimately and most effectively impact the mandarin? If we consider feelings, like Altieri does, to be “an imaginative

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<sup>124</sup> For a recent description of Eliot’s marriage to Vivienne, complete with insights into his character, his mental illness, and his complicated sex life, see Carole Seymour-Jones’s *Painted Shadow* (2002).

engagement in the immediate processes of sensation,” we must ask what those “processes of sensation” were for the contemporary reader. Were they pains, chills, and the physiological symptoms of the anxiety of war? Anxiety itself is not a sensation so much as an accentuated mental process, a keener sense of danger, hyper-vigilance, for example. This may be at a higher level than is seen in peacetime. One is reminded of current alert levels issued by the U. S. Department of Homeland Security, and their color-coding based on threat level. The impact on an average citizen is an increase in nervousness, without a concomitant taking up of arms. For noncombatants, I suggest that the “sensations” of war were not as focused as we suppose. This is not to say that noncombatants were unaware of the war. Joshua Levine notes that, “From September 7 [1940], the capital [London] was attacked on fifty-seven consecutive nights” (306). There was immediate fear when the attacks occurred but the general situation was one of a lack of sensations qua sensations, a fear of thinking, and thoughts of “imprecise” fear. This is just the affective situation for which the mood of anxiety is the most suitable expression. Returning to the quote about feelings and emotions from “East Coker,” we see that the poet was distrustful of the “mess” and “imprecision” of feeling, as well as the “undisciplined” nature of “squads of emotion.” He seems to be more concerned about the haziness of the feelings and emotions than about their type. He recognizes in the messy, general imprecision, a new mood – one of repeating a historical pattern, as expressed a few lines later, when the continuing cycle of losing and finding is done “now, under conditions / That seem unpropitious” (EC V). To label the situation of 1939 Europe “unpropitious” is an understatement. England was at war with Hitler’s Germany. “East Coker” was first referred to in February 1940 (Gardner *Composition* 16). By that

time, the Nazis had invaded Poland. Belgium was invaded in May 1940. The failure of the French to reinforce the Maginot Line in 1936 led to the easy capitulation of the Rhineland (Shirer 293-95). The mandarin “came to an internal crisis of its own in the late 1930s and the period of the Second World War, when its meliorist faith in humanity was shaken by the despair of total war” (Cooper 41). The early preparation for war, however, began with Hitler’s assuming power in 1933, and I believe that all of the poems in the series may be considered as informed by the spirit of Hitler’s Germany as threatening European peace.

“Four Quartets,” especially “Little Gidding,” provided an alternative retreat for intellectuals in wartime. In it, the war is mentioned in a foglike, dreamlike passage where, the narrator meets “a familiar compound ghost” (LG II), yet the image is oddly and simultaneously “intimate” and vague. The religious message of the poem was lost on many of Eliot’s contemporary readers (for example, *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 September 1940 says, “There is a grandeur in the humility of the English religious poets, but there is a lack of their ecstasy in ‘East Coker’” (see “Four Quartets: Casebook, 35). The religious messages in the poem are key to an appreciation of the deployment of mood, and from the viewpoint of affective aesthetics.<sup>125</sup> It is important here to recognize the active constituents of mood. While mood seems to be a passive, foglike, and inexplicable, from within that mood, it may be possible for the subject to administer a tonic for those suffering a similar ennui. It is analogous to the fact that a surgeon with a

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<sup>125</sup> For a negative reading of “Four Quartets” – especially its religious message, see George Orwell’s article in *T. S. Eliot: Four Quartets (Casebook Series)* 81-87. Orwell calls this work “a deterioration in Mr. Eliot’s subject matter” (81). He notes that “Eliot’s escape from individualism was into the Church,” noting that though “it is still possible to be an orthodox religious believer without being intellectually crippled in the process ... it is far from easy” (85). What Orwell fails to appreciate is that the anxious mood of “Four Quartets” is similar to the religious concept of grace. It is atmospheric, and does not obey the subjects’ desire to have it or to avoid it.

tumor is still able to remove a tumor from a patient; yet, a drugged man may be too affected to administer a drug. I consider Eliot to be in control of his poetic faculties; more like the surgeon than the drugged man. In fact, Cooper sees this ability to act within the debilitating condition of war as “an affective verisimilitude that is as remarkable as a laying bare of the poet’s subjective states” (116).

In “East Coker,” Eliot says “to be restored, our sickness must grow worse” (EC 159). In the use of the first person plural, Eliot seems to draw in the audience, leading us to believe that the prolonged medical metaphor in the fourth (lyrical) movement of “East Coker” is written in what Eliot described as the second voice of poetry, “the poet addressing an audience, whether large or small” (*OPP* 96). Yet, I believe that, despite the suggestive inclusiveness of expressions like “to remind us of our, and Adam’s curse” (EC 157) and “The whole earth is our hospital” (EC 159), Eliot was here ruminating on his own situation. He ends the movement with a statement of a Eucharistic dilemma, which would resonate only with Roman and Anglo-Catholics. “The dripping blood our only drink, / The bloody flesh our only food,” he says in ll. 169-170, yet remarks that even with this eerie spiritual sustenance we inherit a tradition of calling “this Friday good,” (173).<sup>126</sup> Using the first person plural pronouns establishes Eliot as one with his audience of mandarins. What Eliot offers in “East Coker” is a compromise – between the sacramental rigors of Roman Catholicism and the nearest model in the Anglican Church, “Now and in England” (LG l. 40). He also provides a compromise between the anxiety

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<sup>126</sup> This suggests the same religious situation in which Hopkins found himself, as he left the Anglican Church for the Roman Catholic Church. Hopkins “became doubtful of the efficacy of Anglican Holy Communion” (White 126). He converted to Catholicism, fully believing in the transubstantiation of the Eucharist into the body of Christ. In this, Hopkins’s religious fervor is even deeper and more mystical than Eliot’s, reflecting the need to believe in literal shape-changing, rather than a more liberal interpretation of communion as symbolic.

caused by war (“when the past is all deception, / The future futureless, before the morning watch / When time stops” (DS ll. 43-45) and the traditional comfort of religion (“Repeat a prayer also on behalf of / Women who have seen their sons or husbands / Setting forth, and not returning” (DS 175-77)).

“Four Quartets” offers a middle way, a path of art. It approaches meaning by way of abstraction: in “Burnt Norton,” for example, “abstract speculation” (about the simultaneity of time) plus “an experience in a garden” leads to a “meditation on consciousness” (Gardner *Art* 38). This is a progress which Eliot’s contemporary readership would have found acceptable, even consoling, in a time leading up to war. Though many of his readers would not accept his religious beliefs, they might be ready to accept an aesthetic view of “the poem-as-superlative-artifact [which] steps back from itself, simply and unpretentiously, and asserts the need to recognize the limits of power” (Cooper 136). In this, I agree with Cooper. This removal from the overtly religious is expressed poetically in “Little Gidding” as “what you thought you came for / Is only a shell, a husk of meaning,” and “You are here to kneel / Where prayer has been valid” (LG I). The poem does not say that prayer will always be valid at this site, if the validity of prayer is desirable, or even definable. For prayer to be valid may mean something as general and subject-based as the statement, “It does a man good to pray,” or it may mean that, sociologically, a prayerful group self-validates as a group unlikely to commit crimes (as sins), as well as a more orthodox interpretation that the validity of prayer is measured in the response to the prayed-for outcome.

In the second movement, the limit of power is seen as “the death of hope and despair,” and in “the conscious impotence of rage” (LG II). In the third movement, the



limitation of earthly power is expressed in the person of one who “comes to find that action of little importance” (LG III). The fourth movement takes up the theme more lyrically: “Which human power cannot remove. / We only live, only suspire / Consumed by either fire or fire” (LG IV). And, finally, in the fifth movement, the poet tries to reconcile the seemingly contrasting images of impotence in the face of the pattern of history, brought up again here as an echo from “Burnt Norton” where we and they move “in a formal pattern” (BN I), and the supernatural assurance that “all shall be well” – a mantra-like affirmation. Here the human condition is recognized as destiny (“We shall not cease from exploration”) and the highest achievement is “complete simplicity / (Costing not less than everything)” (LG V). I would note that the last line of the poem, “And the fire and the rose are one” is a positive view of the predicament imagined with horror by Hopkins in “Spelt from Sybil’s Leaves,” that last all-consuming fire in which “thoughts against thoughts in groans grind” (Hopkins’s *Poems*). Thus, Eliot seems to combine the dread of “Sibyl’s Leaves” with the welcoming of Heraclitean flux in “That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection” (Hopkins’s *Poems*). On the other hand, the image can be seen as one in which the rose is consumed by the fire and all that is left is “ash on an old man’s sleeve” (LG II).

### The Deployment of Mood

The four quartets are related to the four Heraclitean elements of air (“Burnt Norton”), earth (“East Coker”), water (“The Dry Salvages”), and fire (“Little Gidding”), as pointed out by Gardner (*Art* 160ff; and, Thomas Howard 19). All of these elements are “givens,” that is, they are atmospheric, and thus moodlike. These images are moodlike in the sense

of being the environment or atmosphere in which we live. Unlike typical moods, such as depression or gaiety, they have physical presence, and are not fleeting. In that they are essential to earthly life, they provide an inescapable backdrop – much like a perpetual mood. They do not in any sense resemble other affects, such as emotions, feelings, passions, or religious fervor.

According to Louis Menand in *Discovering Modernism: T. S. Eliot and His Context*, Bergson “proposed to disprove the mechanistic conclusions of traditional epistemology ... by elevating the subject [. . .] to an equal status in the definition of reality with the world” (Menand 32). As Lyndall Gordon has argued, the first lines of “Burnt Norton” are Bergsonian, in that they challenge clock-time, and recognize the cumulative incursions of the past” (Gordon 55). In the poem, time present and past are projected (tentatively, by the word “perhaps”) into a future, itself “contained in time past” (BN I). This encapsulation of nested “times” does not come without a price, for “If all time is eternally present / All time is unredeemable” (BN I). I would describe the mood of the poem as one of compromise between the human (reactive, anxiety-ridden, technology-driven, yet progressing spiritually) and the divine (apathetic, distant, yet omniscient). In presenting these contrastive elements, Eliot recognizes both internal and interrelational haziness – a symptom best represented poetically and affectively in terms of mood. The contrast between human and divine, as well as the devilish details in bridging the gap, are elements of stress, anxiety. The internal haziness is the lack of precision in any discussion of something so broad as human nature, or divine nature. I have chosen the word “haziness” over its near-synonym, “vagueness,” because I felt that the latter implied a lapse in poetic diction, a criticism far from my point. In “Four Quartets,” human nature

is variously represented as our highest achievements: words (BN V;<sup>127</sup> more specifically (and interactively) as prayers (LG I), and even as stillness (BN II, V; LG V). The divine is represented as God (EC III), gods (about whom the poet claims to not know much in DS I), Krishna (DS III), the Blessed Virgin (DS IV) and “this Love and the voice of this Calling” (LG V).

The mood of “Four Quartets” is the anxiety typical of modern warfare. The atmosphere of wars present and past is shown in the reference to the “dove ... with flame of incandescent terror,” which can be interpreted as a modern German bomber in the Blitz, the Holy Ghost in the Pentecost, any airplane, any fire sent from above. Concern for the future is a reflective mood, or anxiety. Anxiety differs from fear in the sense that actual catalysts for reasonable fear need not be present with anxiety. If one is approached by a masked robber, fear is the natural response; if one is visited with a vague uneasiness for no apparent reason, one experiences anxiety. Note that fear is an active response which might be acted upon with a concomitant physical action. Anxiety is moodlike, in that it is visited upon the subject without his volition, and has no appropriate physical action which will alleviate it. Heidegger, too, wrote about the psychological plight of the intellectual in wartime.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Later, in “Burnt Norton” V, Eliot says, “The Word in the desert / Is most attacked by voices of temptation.” In this passage “the Word” combines elements of the human and the divine through the Incarnation and the temptation in the desert.

<sup>128</sup> Cooper notes the parallel between Eliot’s “Four Quartets” and Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, saying, both “disclosed by implication the path by which alienated intellectuals and mandarins could come to accept [ . . . ] society’s protection and even its esteem, while simultaneously holding to a severe inward renunciation of and contempt for the social world” (123). But, though “Heidegger’s work “console[d] the German intelligentsia” in the 1920s (Cooper 122), it is not generally clear that the consolation of poetry, so to speak, performs a parallel function, and especially not in the mechanistic war of the late 1930s to 1945, and it is not clear specifically that English readers, even the mandarin, were similarly consoled by Eliot’s writing in the 1930s and 1940s. George Steiner, in exploring Heidegger’s relative “creative silence” from 1916-1927, says that “There is a distinct sense in which [*Being and Time*] ... does belong to the same climate of catastrophe and the same quest for alternative vision as do[es] T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*” (Steiner 76). While Heidegger spent years “mastering the mental discipline and vocabulary of

The very essence of modern, industrial, technological, impersonal war is moodlike, with highly active points, such as the Blitzkrieg, interrupted by lengthy periods of tedious “rehearsals” for air-raids, collections of staples, reduced night-time activity, and even rationed food supplies. The Blitzkrieg itself was somehow arbitrary and impersonal, for though London was targeted, individuals were not.<sup>129</sup> The action of war is most seen on the front lines, by soldiers. Those at home, like the mandarin, may well feel bored, passive, and certainly guilty and humble in the face of the greater sacrifices made by the combatants.

In the first three quartets there are veiled references to the war and warlike state which could be divided into three categories with respect to time: present-explicit, past-explicit, and abstract-implicit (or timeless) observations. I developed this categorization as merely a non-ordinal way of dividing a continuum of historical experiences. Of course, specific references to historical events, such as Nicolas Ferrar’s experiences at Little Gidding, carry an inherent implication of the past, while the conversation between the air warden and the ghost are clearly occurring in the present. The tripartite taxonomy is important, not so much for distinguishing between time present and time past, as for

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phenomenology,” Eliot spent the years between the wars writing poetry which presents a “quest for alternative vision” (Steiner 73; 76). Yet, by the time he wrote “Four Quartets” Eliot had moved from pessimistic alienation to a religious attitude of gradual beatification. It is that journey toward beatification, toward a perfect life (and death) which Eliot describes in “Four Quartets.” The significance of anxiety in this journey is that it indicates a doubt in the early part of the poem, which is ameliorated later in “Little Gidding.” Interestingly, though Heidegger wrote about poetry, he did not write about Eliot.

While poetry has some advantages over philosophy in amelioration of psychic pain (rhythm, meter, rhyme, voice, and wordplay), philosophy seems to have the intellectual advantage. Consider the difference between Eliot’s ameliorative utterance in “Four Quartets” “All shall be well, and / And all manner of thing shall be well” (LG III), and Heidegger’s assessment that “Every being, as a being, is in the will. It *is* as something willed” (Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* 98). The role of will in the mood of war is even less clear than its role in spiritual salvation. No matter how depressing and confusing the situation of war, there is no “willful” way to change its progress. That exercise of will is limited to the role of combatants, and even their ability to effect change is not only limited but capricious.

<sup>129</sup> For details of the Blitz, see Joshua Levine’s *Forgotten Voices of the Blitz and the Battle for Britain* (2007).

highlighting their similarities. It is an attempt to impose a discrete division upon a function of real and continuous data. The present-explicit is seen in the images of the “dark dove with the flickering tongue” (LG 82) which suggests the nightly bombers of the Blitzkrieg (but, which could equally be any aerial attack, including the benevolent “attack” of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost). The past-explicit is shown in the image of “a king at nightfall” (LG 175) which refers to Charles I who was given refuge at Little Gidding when “Cromwell’s soldiers ransacked the church in the winter of 1646” (Gordon 372), (but which could equally represent the downfall of any figure of temporal authority, even the wished-for defeat of Hitler). Abstract-implicit observations about war include “interminable night,” “a dead patrol,” and “blowing of the horn” (LG 80; 108; 149). As moods of anxiety in times of war, these images are universal. Yet, all of these images, in the context of the Second World War assume a more specific interpretation. Mood is the affect in which we experience our own detached reading of history itself. Unable to empathize with past or distant events in an active affect like passion, we experience history in a diffuse, secondary way. What is important is that Eliot abstracted historical events, both past and present, for an affective posture towards repeating situations and concepts such as war, devotion, and myth.

Additionally, we refer to historical epochs or eras, rather than instants or moments – thus separating the characteristic affects from the immediacy which they doubtless carried at the time. We refer to the Great Depression or World War II as periods spanning years, and, from this perspective, characterize them as moods – solemn, horrendous, anxious, violent. Lost forever are the particular affects felt by those

experiencing the unfolding events.<sup>130</sup> Usually there is a combination of two of these categories. For example, a present-explicit reference combines with an abstract observation and a glimpse of historical precedent in the last lines of “Burnt Norton”: “Ridiculous the waste sad time / Stretching before and after,” (176-77) where war is seen as a “sad waste” placed in the span between past and future (“before and after”) in the poem which indicated that “all time is eternally present” (4). The war had not started in 1935, though Hitler had come to power in 1933, and references to war in “Burnt Norton” are either ephemeral, coincidental, prophetic, or general observations. Yet, in that poem, Eliot uses a past-explicit comment in the second movement: “Appeasing long forgotten wars” (53) to suggest the amelioration of wounds that is provided by the sensation of “The thrilling wire in the blood / [Which] Sings below inveterate scars” (51-52); and later in the same movement he refers to “both a new world / And the old made explicit, understood / In the completion of its partial ecstasy / The resolution of its partial horror” (77-80). Here, and in suggestive use of words which signify war (“conquered” (92), “metalled ways” (128), “attacked” (158)), Eliot creates a dual mood in “Burnt Norton,” one in which the lazy “world of speculation” (8), “dust on a bowl of rose-leaves” (17), and “tumid apathy” (106) meets the anxious affective world of “neither arrest nor movement” (66) and “Inoperancy of the world of spirit” (124). By establishing a dual mood, Eliot is able, throughout the poem, to present both sides of the climate of war. In the first level of mood, the subject is passive (apathy). In the second, he reacts to that mood with a responding, usually psychological, mood (anxiety).

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<sup>130</sup> Eliot anticipates the temporal difference between audiences when, in “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” he says “This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional” (*Selected Essays* 4). I would suggest that the “temporal” is the present-explicit, the “the timeless” is the historical (which has entered into the memory of the race), and both “together” is the category I have called “abstract-implicit” above.

This dual mood is more pronounced in the three later poems, written in 1939, 1940, and 1942, when the war was the dominating activity and state of mind for Europe, even the world. In “East Coker,” Eliot begins with a historical-explicit reference to war which is also an abstract-implicit reflection on the circularity of time: “In succession / Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended, / Are removed, destroyed, restored” (1-3). Gardner calls “East Coker” “the most tragic in mood and the most personal of the Quartets” (*Art* 7).

Of all the moods possible in a poem, from unexplained joy to melancholy, I believe the most relevant mood in “Four Quartets” is anxiety. There are several levels of anxiety as mood presented in “Four Quartets.” The anxiety of the war is perhaps the most obvious. More critical for Eliot himself was the anxiety of Christian belief, which, in these years, was so strongly felt by him that his practice frequently mirrored the self-flagellation of Hopkins.<sup>131</sup> Global and personal anxiety are joined by the anxiety of and for a specific group, in this case, the mandarin. Here, I believe, is the true insight of Cooper, though it extends beyond the ameliorating message to them in “Four Quartets.” The message is not so much that through spiritual practices, one can overcome the anxiety of irrelevance in changing times, but that the poet does and always has shared this anxiety.<sup>132</sup> According to Altieri

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<sup>131</sup> Eliot “acknowledged that his early training in self-denial [learned from his Puritan mother particularly] left him with an inability to enjoy even harmless pleasures” (Gordon 14). In “The Fire Sermon,” “the Buddha directs his followers to the holy life through the cultivation of aversion for all the impressions of the senses” (Gordon 163). This recalls the *via negativa* of St. John of the Cross, as well as Ignatian (Jesuit) practice, described poetically by Hopkins in “The Habit of Perfection,” in which each of the five senses is subdued so that the ascetic may have a heightened appreciation for the divine.

<sup>132</sup> As early as “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” Eliot had expressed anxiety about growing old, about “formulated phrases,” about whether it is “worth it,” about being able to say what one means, and “the eternal Footman” calling his name (*Poems* 3-7).

anxiety is like fear in its shaking of the subject's initial sense of security. [. . .]

Anxiety dramatizes the emptiness that each subject must take into itself as the challenge to give meaning to its own mortality [and] reveals a power of spirit that can find positive uses for this lack of groundedness. (*Particulars* 57)

Altieri treats anxiety as a mood (see *Particulars* 53-57), and indeed it meets the basic requirements for mood: floating subjectivity, an environmental condition not sought by the individual whom it visits, and a diffuseness which shadows all activity within its range.

The anxiety in "Four Quartets" is imaged as contrast in the first movement of each poem, where, in "Burnt Norton," the definiteness of "All time is irredeemable" coexists with the doubtful "human kind" which "Cannot bear very much reality." In "East Coker," the life images of "Eating and drinking" and "Keeping the rhythm in their dancing" are contrasted with images of death and decomposition, "Nourishing the corn" and "Dung and death." "The Dry Salvages" contrasts the "sullen" and "waiting and watching" river with the sea which "has many voices," and "offers to our curiosity" vestiges of ancient life forms as well as "gear of foreign dead men." "Foreign dead men" are found in the sea, that aquatic melting pot of doomed sailors, as well as in rivers, where, in the Mississippi of Eliot's youth, "black bodies were brought down" past St. Louis, in times of flood (Gordon 374). Finally, we come to "Little Gidding," the last of the quartets, and one which seeks to resolve the diverse and worrisome images of the previous poems, just as the last movements in each poem seek to resolve the issues raised in (especially) the first three movements.. The contrast in the first movement of "Little Gidding" is between "other places / Which also are the world's end" and the seemingly



specific “Now and in England.” It is a contrast between abstraction and the concrete, between mood and the sharper affects.

The image of the familiar compound ghost (LG 87-146) is one moodlike aspect in “Little Gidding,” and the ghost’s identification so difficult and various, that I find its deployment a metaphor for mood. The scene itself, of course, is laden with moodlike images: temporal uncertainty (“uncertain hour,” “interminable night,” “recurrent end of the unending,” “loitering and hurried”) and spatial uncertainty (“between three districts,” “between two worlds,” “compliant to the common wind”). The subject itself is passive in this scene, as the ghost is “blown towards me like the metal leaves / Before the urban dawn wind unresisting” (LG II 88-89). The subject’s sense of its own subjectivity has become diffuse and it pervades the entire scene. While there is the statement that the ghost is “some dead master” and is “forgotten, half-recalled,” there is the contrasting perception of the ghost as “intimate and unidentifiable,” the former easily applied to the self, the latter an interesting way of saying, “I hardly knew myself.” Knowing oneself is understandable in two senses: that of understanding one’s own mind and personality, etc., and that of “I, myself, understand X,” i.e. reflexively.

The anxiety of the interaction with the compound ghost is due, in part, to various aspects of the encounter. What distinguishes anxiety from fear, according to Sigmund Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), is that “fear requires a definite object of which to be afraid,” whereas “anxiety describes a particular state of expecting the danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one” (11). Donald Childs considers Eliot’s view of anxiety as having roots in his early work, notably “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” According to Childs, “Like Prufrock, Eliot implies that

etherization would involve much less pain than consciousness and social interaction: to be woken by human voices is to drown” (130). Childs argues that the philosophical studies Eliot pursued “belies the anxiety that these demystifications caused [him]— anxiety born of the impulse both to continue the work of demystification and yet somehow remain mystified” (130). The struggle between confusion and resolution (mystification and demystification to Childs) is not resolved logically or passionately. It can, however, be expressed as an anxious and turbulent mood.

#### “Four Quartets” and the Attitude towards Action

Mood is notable among the affects as the one which is least caused by, as well as least resolved by, action of any kind. Just as an atmosphere of gloom or melancholy is not occasioned by a specific action, neither is it ameliorated by one. While writing “Four Quartets” Eliot was concerned with the anxious position of responsibility of mandarines like himself and the conflicting inability, yet need to act which seemed to be occasioned by the Second World War. The need for action, such as a taking up of arms was juxtaposed with alienation and the desire to withdraw. In mood, the subject becomes the object of an unexplained and rather general malaise (or, for that matter, joy). The ambiguous attitude towards action which is appropriate to anxiety is manifest in “Four Quartets.” Once again, we may turn to Freud for an explanation. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud describes the child’s game of fort-da, meaning gone-there, (a sequence of hiding and “finding” an object, used to come to grips with the unexplained absence of its mother (13-17)). But, Eliot descried the masking game strategy of the child, described by Freud, saying, such routines lead to a character with “all the defects of the synthetic

substitute; its actions are tediously predictable; it is always unconvincing” (qtd., in Gordon 364). Thus, he recognizes the futility of action for its own sake. With meaningful action, such as becoming a soldier, forbidden to him, and with an intellectual awareness of the meaninglessness of repetitive action, he incorporated this anxiety of suspended animation, so to speak, into his poem.<sup>133</sup>

I would note that all perspectives on “action,” whether avoiding it, motivating it, or thinking about it and its results, are considered in “Four Quartets.” In this sense, action is related, sometimes inversely, to the affects. In mood, for example, since the “sense of subjectivity becomes diffuse,” the actions of the individual are blurred, ineffectual, unclear. Other affects lead to action; emotion, for example, “generates some kind of action” (*Particulars 2*).

In anxiety, as is typical of mood in general, there is a suspension between needing to act, yet being acted upon, in which the subject in a sense becomes the object of the actions of others or even of his own psychology. Meaningful action is therefore impossible, and the subject is driven to an adult version of fort-da, for example, a reiteration of helplessness. There are several overt perspectives on “action” in the Quartets, as well as implications of action in “Little Gidding.” All of them shy away from action, even suggesting a moodlike atmosphere, rather than a program of planned action. I will consider these in order to evaluate their power in “generating some kind of action.”

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<sup>133</sup> Eliot had tried to enlist, though halfheartedly, in the army in 1917. He was turned down for medical reasons (tachycardia, hernia). In the 1918 poem, “Gerontion” there is a first-person account: “I was neither at the hot gates / Nor fought in the warm rain / Nor knee deep in the salt marsh” (3-5). By the Second World War, he was over fifty. He spent the years “l’entre deux guerres-- / Trying to learn to use words” (EC V).

One mention, in “Burnt Norton,” occurs in the second movement’s section on the “still point of the turning world” (64): “The release from action and suffering, release from the inner / and the outer compulsion” (BN 73-74). Here the desire is not for action, but “release from action” as well as all other intellectual movement (“freedom from the practical desire”), psychological activity (“inner” and “outer compulsion”) and physical motion (“Except for the point, the still point, / There would be no dance” (BN 68-69).

Action is considered negatively again in “East Coker,” as the listed citizens “all go into the dark”: “The statesmen and the rulers, / ... chairmen of many committees / ... all go into the dark / ... And cold the sense and lost the motive of action” (EC 105-110). As citizens as lofty as “industrial lords” and as lowly as “petty contractors” lose even the motive of action, and Eliot incorporates a wider audience into his address, we are reminded of the lines in *Hamlet*, “And enterprises of great pitch and moment / With this regard their currents turn awry / And lose the name of action” (*Hamlet* 3.1 87-89).<sup>134</sup> In Eliot’s criticism of Hamlet as a character, he says, “In the character Hamlet it is the buffoonery of an emotion which can find no outlet in action” (*Selected Essays* 126).<sup>135</sup> The criticism seems to be that the character fails to discipline the “undisciplined squads of emotion” mentioned later in “East Coker” V. The crowds of characters listed as two-dimensional hordes entering the “dark, dark, dark” in “East Coker” have not only no action, but have even lost the “motive of action.”

In “The Dry Salvages,” Eliot, in a narrative aside in the second movement (lines 85-123), suggests that past experience “revived in the meaning / Is not the experience of one

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<sup>134</sup> See *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. Ed. David Bevington. New York: Longman, 1997.

<sup>135</sup> The essay, “Hamlet and His Problems,” was written in 1919. It is unlikely that the mature Eliot of “Four Quartets” would create the same problems which he criticized in Shakespeare. More likely, he felt that the typical contemporaries listed in “East Coker” had no suitable action to follow. They were in the suspended animation affect of mood.

life only / But of many generations” (97-99).<sup>136</sup> Eliot had remarked on the amazing march of generations in *The Waste Land*, “The Burial of the Dead,” saying, “A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, / I had not thought death had undone so many” (62-3). The crowd could be seen literally as daily commuters or figuratively as a procession of the dead or dying. The robotic movement, I think, suggests a more significant reading than that of a traffic jam. Yet the historical context of an individual’s experience posed in “The Dry Salvages” does not result in a furtherance of “identification” of the self. Rather, Eliot continues, “Our own past is covered by the currents of action, / But the torment of others remains an experience / Unqualified” (111-113). First I would point out the second allusion to Hamlet in the word “currents,” in both cases meaning futile actions which, like the tides, only “when taken at their flood, lead on to fortune.” The implication is that we are too close (and too actively involved) to fully appreciate the experiences in our own lives, making the lives of others more emotionally available to us. Yet, our own admission of this counter-intuitive situation can result in nothing more than an affective stalemate: I feel your pain more than I feel my own, yet “my own” must be closer to me. This stalemate status, in turn, is most readily and reasonably expressed as mood. It is an atmosphere, and one in which “the subject is not in control of what seems most intensely subjective” (Altieri *Particulars* 56). In “The Dry Salvages,” movement three, Eliot again mentions action, only to warn against considering its consequences: “And do not think of the fruit of action. / Fare forward” (160-61). Thus, action itself is threatened by the thought of action, just as we

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<sup>136</sup> I would point out the approach to previous and subsequent generations here in the context of my other two subject poets. Keats had said of the nightingale, that unlike humans, “No hungry generations tread thee down” (Keats *Poems* 371; l. 62). He sees the march of generations as menacing, relentless, inexorable. Hopkins, in “God’s Grandeur,” sees past generations as depleting the earth’s abundance but for the grace of God: “Generations have trod, have trod, have trod” (Hopkins *Poems* 66; l. 5).

saw with Hamlet. A few lines later, Eliot says, “And right action is freedom / From past and future also. / For most of us, this is the aim / Never to be realized” (224-27). That is, being free from the past and the future is not achievable in this life, where eventually we and our descendants will cross London Bridge. This distinction between an object which has been moved and a subject which can move is at the core of understanding the suspension in which “Four Quartets” was written, and the reason why only mood is appropriate to its reading. In “The Dry Salvages,” movement five, there is an explicit consideration of movement and action:

Where action were otherwise movement  
Of that which is only moved  
And has in it no source of movement—  
Driven by daemonic, chthonic  
Powers. And right action is freedom  
From past and future also.  
For most of us this is the aim  
Never here to be realized; (DS V 220-27)

Agency and subjectivity become important and are expressed strongly in this passage. The distinction between action and movement is one of agency. Inanimate objects may be moved, but are passive in their own movement. Living things, especially higher animals and humans, are able to free themselves through “right action,” yet the aim of freeing themselves “from past and future” is not realizable in this life. Kramer sees the distinction between “most of us” and the saints, as “suggest[ing] a difference between those whose communion with the divine arises from austere practices ... and those whose

experience of the divine comes primarily through devotional practices infused with grace” (133). Ironically inherent in Kramer’s devoutly Christian reading, is a darker view of agency: divine intervention (the dispensing of grace) makes the human an inanimate object, waiting to be “moved”; the *via negativa*, however, is an action of the human which seeks a spiritual resolution. The path of grace is the easiest for the would-be saint – just waiting. The *via negativa* requires sacrificial actions of so great a nature that, practically speaking, it is “never here to be realized” outside the monastery. To be moved has another connotation, one related to the affects, especially mood. If we are moved by an external event or an unexplained atmosphere, we react in a certain way. The mood may be as nebulous as a general depression or elation, unexplained by actual events, or as specific, yet widespread as the mood of war, in which people, as a nation, react in similar, though not identical ways. Note, too, that “that which is *only* moved” (that which has in itself no source of movement) is in a similar position to that of indifference, later to be discussed as a negative stance in “Little Gidding.”

In “Little Gidding,” action is named in the third movement, in the stanza which describes the “three conditions which often look alike” – attachment, detachment, and indifference. Indifference is said to “resemble the others as death resembles life. Then, referring to specific action, Eliot says, “Thus, love of a country / Begins as an attachment to our own field of action / And comes to find that action of little importance / Though never indifferent” (LG III 159-63). So, passionate patriotism amounts to little, and the emotion of love for one’s country is selfishly tied in to an individual’s range of interest, soon devolving into a minor activity, yet never indifferent. For Eliot, indifference is a kind of spiritual death-in-life. He sees detachment as the operative form of the *via*

*negativa*, a path to spirituality available outside the monastery, yet fulfilling the requisite action for sainthood. In the second movement of “Little Gidding” a form of quasi-action is implied in the lines “From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit / Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire / Where you must move in measure, like a dancer” (LG II 144-46). Moving like a dancer is a clear image of moving, yet not of advancement toward a goal. Consider the passage in “East Coker” describing the English village dancers of Sir Andrew Elyot’s time: they leap (presumably up, and then immediately return to earth); they hold each other (restraining action to some degree); they keep time (are not at all free from it); and, their feet rise *and fall*. This is action without forward, backward, or upward movement of any significant degree.

#### “Little Gidding”

I have selected the final poem of “Four Quartets,” for close reading for several reasons. First, because, I believe that it offers a blending of the various affects, but is especially a poem of mood, specifically anxiety. While all of the Quartets have features of mood, it is in the culminating poem, I believe, that poetic mood is most clearly seen. The various moods of “Little Gidding” are: confusion (expressed as unlikely comparisons and contrasts); anxiety (expressed as indeterminacy); and fear (expressed as fear of death). The overarching mood, however, is anxiety, in the sense that confusion and fear are themselves under the rubric of anxiety. The balm for these negative moods is one of general piety, itself moodlike, and expressed as love and timelessness. Secondly, in so doing, I can refer back to passages in the earlier poems and trace their culmination in the last poem more gracefully. Thirdly, because it merges the spiritual quest for salvation



with the quotidian business of, say, war-rationing, it seems to envelop a complex and challenging theme, which the use of mood can satisfactorily answer. Gardner says, that in “Little Gidding,” “Eliot deliberately gathered up themes and images from his earlier meditations on Time’s losses and Time’s gains, to make the poem [. . .] the crown and completion of the exploration of man in Time” (*Composition* 71).

By detaching itself from the everyday and removing itself to the mystical, the poem must encompass a wide range of vague beliefs to be relevant to many readers. This presentation of possible religious resolutions, from Pentecost to Heraclitean flux, is best expressed by moodlike words and images. Finally, the poem seems to me to offer a complexity different from the previous poems in the series.<sup>137</sup> That is, it engages the poet on several levels: the historical context of the place itself; the religious significance of that history; the complexity of the fire image as either Pentecostal or destructive; and, the insight it provides into Eliot’s concept of prayer. While I argued for a fifth affect, that of religious fervor, in the poetry of Hopkins, in the case of “Four Quartets,” I believe the most influential affect in “Little Gidding” is that of mood. “Little Gidding” offers numerous instances that differentiate Eliot’s use of sensory images from those of Keats and Hopkins. In its use of abstractions and intellectual observations and contrasts, the poem seems nearer to Hopkins than to Keats. Yet, in Keats, too, we see contrasting treatment of the senses. In “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” Keats says, “Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter” (*Poems* 372), just as Eliot, in “Little Gidding,” says that the voices of the hidden waterfall and hidden children are “Not known, because

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<sup>137</sup> Helen Gardner says that “Eliot is moving towards meaning, not starting from it, [as] is shown by the comparative simplicity of ‘Little Gidding’ when placed beside ‘Burnt Norton’” (Gardner *Art* 57). Apparently Gardner was referring to the relative individual nature of the poem, for she says soon after that “‘Little Gidding’ can be understood by itself” (Gardner *Art* 58). Eliot considered “Burnt Norton” to stand by itself, however, for he did not add “East Coker” until 1939, and did not complete the series until 1942.

not looked for / But heard, half-heard, in the stillness” –a trend from hearing through half-hearing, to silence (LG V 249-50). Note the use of the negative, as the sensory images undergo a diminution very like that described by Hopkins in his poem of religious sacrifice, “The Habit of Perfection”: “Elected silence sing to me” (*Poems* 31).

Just as the sensory imagery in “Little Gidding” is informed by English poetic tradition of the nineteenth century, the religious motif derives from rich references to Catholic, Anglican, and mystical thought. Ignatius Loyola, St. John of the Cross, Dame Julian of Norwich, Nicholas Ferrar, George Herbert, and the anonymous author of the fourteenth century text *The Cloud of Unknowing* each influence the Christian progress toward fire in “Little Gidding.” Several influences merge and the expression of their mysticism is moodlike. It is pervasive, yet diffuse, and in the whole of “Four Quartets” is linked with the poet’s reluctance to engage in “action.”

Like the other poems, “Little Gidding” is divided into five movements, variously interpreted by critics as music (Gardner *Art* 36-56), stages of contemplation (Kramer 18-20), and steps in a personal spiritual pilgrimage (Schuchard 185-95). I would prefer to consider the entire poem as an attempt to balance the insights into time, human purpose, death, and spiritual values which were posited, though only tentatively resolved in the previous poems. I will read the poem closely for affects, for elements of sensation, and for illustrations of impersonality and detachment. I will relate these qualities to Eliot’s understanding of the poems’ purpose and audiences.

To position “Little Gidding” properly in the Quartets series, I would point out the diverse reception of the preceding poems. Some early reviewers of “Four Quartets,”

notably George Orwell, accused Eliot of a fascist tendency.<sup>138</sup> Others, like F. R. Leavis, defended him as “the greatest living English poet” (Cooper 110), a tribute of the same caliber that Eliot had paid to W. B. Yeats. I do not find that the poem’s political message interferes with its universally religious message, as it retracts from a stance of hopelessness, just when it seems on the verge of succumbing. In fact, the universal religious message is less political than would be a specifically Anglican theme. At that “still point,” caught between “arrest” of action and useful “movement,” the poet applies a verbal balm.

The consolation in the poem offsets the major and negative affect of anxiety. The consoling mood of the poems is seen variously. First, as organic and inorganic nature (“garlic and sapphires” BN II). Secondly, as the hidden promise of future generations (“The leaves were full of children” (BN I); and “the hidden laughter of children in the foliage” (BN V). Thirdly, as the comfort of repeating a joyful sequence (in the interposition of the lyric fourth movement in each poem, as well as, “there is only the dance” (BN II), “In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie / A dignified and commodious sacrament” (EC I), and “not the experience of one life only / But of many generations” (DS II). Finally, there is consolation in the religious salvation of various traditions (“Love is itself unmoving” (BN V), “The wisdom of humility” (EC II), “The dripping blood our only drink” (EC III), “Prayer of the one Annunciation” (DS II), “What you thought you came for is only a shell” (LG I), and “With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling” (LG V). Note in the examples describing salvation, that the

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<sup>138</sup> See *T. S. Eliot: Four Quartets: Casebook Series*. Ed. Bernard Bergonzi. Nashville: Aurora, 1969. Orwell comments, pp. 81-87.

spectrum from strict, even Anglo-Catholic, Christianity to a general deism, even yogic tradition, is covered.

In the first stanza of “Little Gidding,” there is a contrast between seasons and meteorological events, all in line with the questioning of time that has pervaded the poem since the very first line of “Burnt Norton.” Eliot, according to Gardner, “had come to see the seasons and the four elements as an organizing element in the sequence” of “Four Quartets” (*Composition* 157). Yet, seasons are just one example of the way we attempt to fragment and characterize time.<sup>139</sup> Thus, in the first movement of “Little Gidding,” it is of interest to note that the first stanza is riddled with a confusion of seasonal, meteorological, and even diurnal words. The stanza begins, “Midwinter spring is its own season / Sempiternal though sodden towards sundown” (LG 1-2), The oxymoron of a midwinter spring is analogous to other instances where typical weather is interrupted by a wayward hint from another time of the year, such as Indian summer, when autumn halts its progress to allow just one more bit of summer. In this stanza, summer is missing, though mentioned: “Where is the summer, the unimaginable / Zero summer?” (LG 19-20). This questioning of the seasons recalls Keats who, in “To Autumn” famously asked, “Where are the songs of spring?” (Keats *Poems* 477). While we can accept an intervention from a near season (summer into autumn, for example), we cannot imagine a

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<sup>139</sup> Henri Bergson, whom Eliot had studied, had presented a fluid model of time which could be relative or absolute, an interpretation clearly in line with Einsteinian physics. Bergson had also resolved the paradox of Zeno, in which movement is halved and halved again until it seems that movement is impossible. According to Bergson, the mistake inherent in the paradox is the assumption that a physical entity must be at one point at any given time. Note how this thinking informs the concept of “Time present and time past” both being contained in “time future” (BN I). Taking time from its linear (absolute) dimension, and allowing relativity, is both scientifically correct and poetically suggestive. (See discussion in Stephen Kern’s *The Culture of Time and Space: 1880-1918*; 24-25).

double leap from, say, zero summer to midwinter. Gardner records that John Hayward<sup>140</sup> asked Eliot, regarding “Zero summer,” “Is this an allusive reference to the Absolute Zero of physics?” but Eliot did not reply. I believe that Eliot’s meaning lies in the ultimate contrast of cold and summer, rather than in a literal reference to  $-273^{\circ}$  ( $0^{\circ}$  Kelvin) for two reasons: first, the specificity of the physical chemistry reference is out of keeping with the mood of the entire poem, especially “Little Gidding,” which asks and answers spiritual questions; secondly, there is no reason why absolute zero in physics is “unimaginable” – it is, in fact, not only imaginable, but measurable and empirical. The contrast, however, of using such scientific terms in a poem of spiritual, even mystical, imagination contributes to the poem’s mood of confusion within a desperate spiritual quest.

Here, I note again the relationship between the voice of poetry and the affect. The anxiety represented in “Little Gidding” is both intimate and shared. We think of an anxious mood as being completely individual and unique to the subject, yet anxiety, like other common moods like melancholy or joy, have shared dimensions which are common to groups of people. The anxiety in “Little Gidding” is not so narrow as to be unique to the T. S. Eliot of 1942, nor so wide as to be completely shared with all humans. Rather, it is a moderately shared affect, with differing levels of relevance to groups such as the mandarin, all people experiencing war, and all thoughtful people. This siding of scale, as Hopkins would call it, can be a difference in the subject over time (as when one recalls an anxiety of the past), a difference in the absolute subject (as when one empathizes with

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<sup>140</sup> John Hayward (1905-1965) was the main editor and advisor to Eliot in the composition of “Four Quartets.” Eliot lived with Hayward 1946-1956, an arrangement brought to an abrupt halt with Eliot’s second marriage, of which Hayward only learned after the fact. Another critical reader during the development of the poem was Geoffrey Faber, Eliot’s friend, employer, and confidant.

the anxiety of others), or a difference in absolute time (as when one recalls, versus lives, the anxiety of a specific war). When Eliot moves from the soliloquizing meditation of the first stanza to the encompassing predictions of the second, he is careful not to go too far into a general mood. Rather, he takes his situation (“No and in England”) as an exemplar for “other places / Which also are the world’s end” (35-6).

There are grammatical signs that the approach has changed. In the second stanza of the first movement, the poetic voice changes from that of the first, and the address is now to an audience or readership. The second person pronoun abounds, used twelve times in twenty lines. I note several repetitions in this stanza which serve to reinforce a mood of uncertainty and anxiety: “If you came this way” (21), “If you came this way” (24), “If you came at night” (27), “If you came by day” (28). All of these uncertainties are artificially resolved in the repeated lines, “It would be the same” (26; 29). I say “artificially” for two reasons: first, because the sameness is only achieved in absolute time, whereas the coming is only possible in relative time; secondly, because the sameness of journey’s end, death, is scarcely a comforting resolution for anyone, especially for the mandarin audience supposedly addressed by Eliot. The thought that, regardless of one’s life, one’s afterlife is the same as everyone else’s is hardly a message of redemption for the immediate audience, nor one of spiritual guidance for subsequent readers. Later, in the third movement, Eliot remembers “people, not wholly commendable, / Of not immediate kin or kindness, / But of some peculiar genius, / All touched by a common genius” (LG III 170-73). In the first movement, though staged at a specific retreat “where prayer has been valid,” Eliot is careful not to limit the spiritual journey to Little Gidding, or England, or even Christianity. He says, “starting from

anywhere, / At any time or at any season, / It would always be the same” (LG I 41-43). He does, however, limit the spiritual experience to the *via negativa* (“You would have to put off / Sense and notion” (43-45)). By the sacrifice of sensory indulgence and even conscious thought, he suggests that only the penitent is prepared, on both an intellectual and sensual level, for what the dead can tell them. At this level of inspiration, the Pentecostal flame is available in “England and nowhere. Never and always” (LG I 54). The uncertainty of the time and place and the anxiety of universal unconsciousness are moods which reinforce the contrasts of the poem. If we end at the same place, presumably death, does it matter if we lead scholarly lives, slovenly lives, if we believe Christian tenets or deny them? Eliot surely does not intend to dismiss readers from their responsibilities, social and spiritual. Their place and time and history (their particular genius) dictates Christian prayer, the turmoil of war, and even their language. Thus, for contemporary readers, literally, Little Gidding is a place “Where prayer has been valid” (47). The moodlike consolation is the intimation that prayer has been, is, and will be valid elsewhere. His amelioration for his readers is more in the fact that prayer can be valid, and that it confirms a life after death where “the dead” “can tell you, being dead” what is “beyond the language of the living” (LG I 50-52).

Recall that each of the Quartets takes the name of a real place, each with significance in Eliot’s life. Eliot had visited Little Gidding in May 1936, but was not committed to the location as a focal point for his poem until he read a play written by his friend, George Every, an Anglican priest (see Seymour-Jones 532). In 1941, then, when the Germans were bombing London, Eliot, influenced by the recent submission by Every, and “admit[ing] [that] any number of holy places” would suit his purpose, probably chose

Little Gidding because it “was simply the most convenient, ‘Now and in England’” (Gordon 371).<sup>141</sup> Yet, Eliot backs away from the absolute time and space of “Now and in England” in the last lines of the first movement: “Here, the intersection of the timeless moment / Is England and nowhere, Never and always” (53-54). In diluting and perverting the exactness of location and duration, Eliot allows a more generalized readership to infer their own meanings from the poem. Schuchard says that “by the time of his baptism and confirmation [1927] ... Eliot already saw Little Gidding as a distant paradigm of the contemplative life” (175). Contemplative life may be Buddhist, Jain Hindu, or even scholarly.

Little Gidding was a religious community established by Nicholas Ferrar in 1625 and became almost immediately a destination for spiritual pilgrims. It was dismantled after Cromwell’s victory in 1647. More than a remote colony of cultish believers, it became a center for political, artistic, and literary retreats by such figures as Charles I, Bishop Laud, and George Herbert. There were about thirty member of this lay community, and “the members led lives of ritualized worship” centered on the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* (Kramer 136-37). Its literary significance for Eliot would include the fact that it had drawn “the earlier metaphysical poets Richard Crashaw, John Donne, and George Herbert, whom Eliot rediscovered in the 1930s and in whom Eliot found the highest expression of the English mystical tradition” (Kramer 136). Schuchard points out Eliot’s discovery of Herbert’s greatness and of “a complexity in the poet which had begun to intrigue him” circa 1930 (177). In the early 1930s, Schuchard says that Eliot’s

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<sup>141</sup> Both Seymour-Jones and Gordon provide histories of the Little Gidding community, founded in 1625 by the Ferrar brothers and sister, and continuing as a religious commune until 1657 when the last member died. In addition, George Herbert was a follower of Ferrar, and a visitor to Little Gidding. Charles I had visited the compound. (Cf. Seymour-Jones 534; Gordon 372.) Gardner touches on the “historic not personal associations” of the location in *Art* (159).



“immersion in Herbert’s verse led to a dramatic transformation” from his earlier view of Herbert as devotional poet of minor interest compared with Donne (177). Herbert, according to Schuchard, “displaced Donne at the center of Eliot’s consciousness” in the years between his conversion and the composition of “Four Quartets” (178). The ascendancy of Herbert is detailed in Eliot’s essay “George Herbert,”<sup>142</sup> in 1932, where he presses readers not to stop with anthologized excerpts of Herbert’s poetry, but to study the whole of *The Temple* (1633), which is the only surviving work by Herbert and comprises more than a hundred lyrics on moral and religious themes. In 1949, Eliot appends a footnote to his comment in *Selected Essays* that “I do not pretend to offer Vaughn, or Southwell, or George Herbert, or Hopkins as major poets,” saying “I note that in an address ... some years later ... ‘What Is Minor Poetry?’ [1944] ... I stated with some emphasis my opinion that Herbert is a major, not a minor poet. I agree with my later opinion” (346). “What Is Minor Poetry?” is published in *On Poetry and Poets*, 34-51. The addition of Herbert to the host of influences in “Four Quartets” is important because it provides a strictly English and Anglican background, just as the setting of Little Gidding provides a compromise between Eliot’s latent Puritanism and his manifest Anglo-Catholicism.

I return to the first movement of “Little Gidding,” alert for the two major connotations of fire, purgatorial/Heraclitean, and Pentecostal. I suggest that several moodlike images in the first stanza suggest purgatorial fire – one that is not eternal, that

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<sup>142</sup> Printed in *Spectator* 148 (12 March 1932), 360, and quoted by Schuchard 177;250. In 1949, Eliot appends a footnote to his comment in *Selected Essays* that “I do not pretend to offer Vaughn, or Southwell, or George Herbert, or Hopkins as major poets,” saying “I note that in an address ... some years later ... ‘What Is Minor Poetry?’ [1944] ... I stated with some emphasis my opinion that Herbert is a major, not a minor poet. I agree with my later opinion” (346). “What Is Minor Poetry?” is published in *On Poetry and Poets*, 34-51.

is less infernal than hell, yet not of this life (“not in time’s covenant”). The moods of the first movement of “Little Gidding” are expressions of confusion, timelessness, and helplessness. Helplessness describes the inaction characteristic of anxiety. The seasons are confused, with spring occurring in winter, and snow, not flowers, blooming. The moodlike season of winter-spring is “Suspended in time” (LG I 3), and “between melting and freezing / The soul’s sap quivers” (12), expending the suspension from the external world to the internal spirit, and adding another dimension of mood – the sensation of quivering.

The timelessness of the first movement is indicated in passages that are either uncertain about matters on which one is usually certain, or negative in matters which are usually expressed positively. For example, uncertainty and negativity is seen in the use of contradictions like “midwinter spring,” “between pole and tropic,” “frost and fire,” “windless cold that is the heart’s heat,” “not in time’s covenant,” “neither budding nor fading,” and “not in the scheme of generation.” The poet, after all, introduces the motif of the seasons, only to deny the most common perceptions about them – that they are true to an expected temperature profile, that they proceed in an orderly fashion, that they do either bud or fade, and that they are the essence of the scheme of generation. The mood of helplessness is clear in the second and third stanzas. The agency, the control is stripped away, because no matter what way you come to this place, “it would be the same at the end of the journey” (26). Not only is this true for the retreat at Little Gidding, it is also true for purgatory, where, condemned for theft or condemned for blasphemy, one is equally in a transitory and cleansing place of fire; in Heraclitean terms, one joins the morass of entities in the fiery flux where, as Hopkins put it, “thoughts against thoughts in

groans grind” (GMH *Poems* 98). Not only is the approach irrelevant, so is the time: “At any time or at any season, / It would always be the same” (42-43). “Now and in England” seems to specify a time and place, yet, if “now” (time present) is contained in time future, as is “time past,” when exactly is “now”? Given that the war is threatening the identifiable architecture of London and the characteristic English villages, where is the familiar England?

In the poem’s first stanza, I find “Sempiternal,” “Suspended in time,” “transitory” “neither budding nor fading,” all to be intimations of purgatorial fire, for though sempiternal means continual, or enduring in time, it is the state or place (purgatory) which endures; any individual soul is there only for a fixed period of time in Catholic belief. In the second stanza, I find “leave the rough road / And turn behind the pig-sty to the dull façade / And the tombstone” to imply a less than glorious death which would be followed by a suspension of grace while the penitent soul was lost in purgatory and the body is consumed in the Heraclitean fire. Further, “a shell, a husk of meaning” would seem to present the confusion appropriate to souls in purgatory. In the third stanza, I see “to put off / Sense and notion” as sacrificial offerings of the body and the mind, highly recollective of Hopkins’s poem, “The Habit of Perfection,” which describes the Ignatian process of subsuming the senses, one by one, in order to achieve a higher spiritual closeness to God (GMH *Poems* 31-32). Eliot was indebted to St. Ignatius and to St. John of the Cross, yet with some reservations about their Roman Catholic stance: “Eliot noted the dangers and maladies of the religious life and ... its ... cures to be found in *Spiritual Exercises* by St. Ignatius Loyola and in *Dark Night of the Soul* by St. John of the Cross” (Gordon 89). Schuchard notes the spiritual debt to Dame Julian of Norwich, “fourteenth

century English mystic,” especially as a counterpoint to the influence of the recently rediscovered and appreciated poet, George Herbert (Schuchard 182). It is important to recall that, after his conversion, Eliot became deeply religious, and was “for a period after separating from his wife, a kind of lay monk, feeling at times like a hermit without a hermitage” (Kramer 11). He even spent short visits with the Anglican community at Kelham, in “an attempt to get in touch with the ‘monk’ within himself and to express it concretely in the world” (Kramer 11).

Considering the second movement of “Little Gidding,” I identify two sub-movements, the first the highly lyrical and rhyming first three stanzas, the second the lengthy passage in *terza rima* which narrates the encounter with the “familiar compound ghost.” The first three stanzas provide closure to the elemental strata presented in the first three poems of the series, and anticipate a like closure for the fourth element, fire. In the closing lines of these stanzas, death visits air, earth, water, and fire, the last leading to the echoing fourth movement of “Little Gidding” in which the seemingly tautological choices of “pyre or pyre” and “fire or fire” are resolved by the Heideggerian Dasein: “We only live, only suspire / Consumed by either fire or fire” (212). In human beings’ inexorable march to death, the choices are few. Eventually, we choose between two fires – purgatorial/ Heraclitean, or Pentecostal. These fires are, to the Christian reader, extreme poles of spiritual destiny, yet scarcely comforting here and now.

But, in the second movement, resolution, even by death, is not quite established. Human concerns remain, such as “the uncertain hour,” “interminable night,” and the German bombers over Kensington in 1941, here described as “the dark dove with the flickering tongue” (82). By aligning the traditional images of the dove and tongue of

Pentecost with the horrific image of enemy planes, Eliot sets up the resolution to follow.

Past and present are joined in the “familiar compound ghost” introduced in line 96.

When the poet-on-patrol encounters the ghost he “caught the sudden look of some dead master / Whom I had known, forgotten, half-recalled / Both one and many” an allusion variously interpreted as referring to Yeats,<sup>143</sup> Jonathan Swift,<sup>144</sup> the character of Brunetto Latini encountered by Dante in the *Inferno* 15,<sup>145</sup> and even a general grouping, such as all literary influences on Eliot. The parallel to Dante’s encounter with Brunetto Latini was originally explicit: rather than reading “What are *you* here?” the line first read, “Are you here, Ser Brunetto?” (Gardner *Composition* 174).<sup>146</sup> Eliot answers Hayward’s question about the disappearance of Brunetto in the next draft, saying, “The visionary figure has now become somewhat more definite and will no doubt be identified by some readers with Yeats” and “I do not wish to take the responsibility of putting Yeats or anybody else into Hell” (*Composition* 176).

The reading of the ghost in “Little Gidding” as an alternative Eliot is strengthened by earlier Eliot usage, specifically, in “The Burial of the Dead,” where he borrows from Baudelaire, the intriguing “You! Hypocrite lecteur! – mon semblance – mon frère!” (*The Waste Land* 76). The line is from Baudelaire’s “To the Reader,” which ends, “—

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<sup>143</sup> Smidt, Kristian. “T. S. Eliot and W. B. Yeats.” In *The Importance of Recognition: Six Chapters on T. S. Eliot*. Tromsø: Norbye, 1973.

<sup>144</sup> Johnson, Maurice. “The Ghost of Swift in ‘Four Quartets.’” *Modern Language Notes* 64 (April 1949), 273.

<sup>145</sup> See Schuchard 189. Schuchard himself, however, subscribes to the Yeats interpretation, as he declares “the compound ghost of masterful writers—the central figure of whom we know to be Yeats” (189).

<sup>146</sup> The Brunetto Latini interpretation is further supported by the description of the ghost’s “brown baked features” which recall the Italian word for brown (brunetto) (see Grover Smith. *T. S. Eliot’s Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning*. Chicago: U Chicago P, 1971 (p. 290)). In addition, Eliot anticipates the Brunetto passage in the context of the affects in “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” saying that “great poetry may be made without the direct use of any emotion whatever: composed out of feelings solely” and cites the Brunetto Latini passage as one where “the effect ... is obtained by considerable complexity of detail. [ . . . ] an image, a feeling attaching to an image” (*Sacred Wood* 31).

Hypocrite reader, you! – my double! My brother!” (trans. Stanley Kunitz).<sup>147</sup> In the Baudelaire poem, as in *The Waste Land*, there is an identification of the poet with the reader and, just as the identities are confused, compounded in “Four Quartets,” so are they also in *The Waste Land*, by way of Baudelaire. It is important to an understanding of the passage that no specific identity be established for the ghost, who is, after all, “compound.” In the sense of diffuse identification of the subject and of the relationship between poet and reader, there is an implication that true, literal identity does not matter, another implication of mood, in which the subject floats. “All shall be well,” and “the fire and the rose are one.”

The next support for the alternate-Eliot interpretation as one of the compounded identities of the ghost is seen in the change from the first draft to the manuscript version of the lines just after the introduction of the ghost. The first draft (D1)<sup>148</sup> reads “The very near and wholly inaccessible. / And I, becoming other and many, cried / And heard my voice” (Gardner *Composition* 174). The manuscript (M), however, says, “Both intimate and unidentifiable. / So I assumed a double part, and cried / And heard another’s voice cry” (96-98). Why did Eliot change these lines? The self could scarcely be both “very near and wholly inaccessible,” except in a mood of complete distraction. A mood could, however, be described as “both intimate and unidentifiable,” even in a conscious being. We know ourselves well but find our moods unrecognizable, untraceable. In the case of the encounter, all identities are on hold. There is a suspension in self-knowledge.

Eliot made numerous changes to the line regarding the voice that cries, “What are *you* here?” moving from “And heard my voice” (D1) to “And heard my altered voice” (M7)

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<sup>147</sup> See *The Waste Land*. Ed. Michael North, 43.

<sup>148</sup> D# and M# refer to drafts and manuscripts as detailed in Gardner *Composition* (174-75).

to “Hearing another’s voice” (M8) to “And heard another’s voice” (final). The progression, then, is from “me” to “altered me” to “another.” I believe that in this case “another” can encompass “altered me,” or equally any compound-other, such as the literary precedents often identified by critics. That is why Eliot left the otherwise confused construction, “So I assumed a double part.” Why all this role playing, we may ask. By assuming a persona, even an alter-ego, the poet allows simultaneous action and inaction. The ambiguity is appropriate for an episode dominated by mood, the affect which has the least subjective identity. The poet and the ghost “trod the pavement in a dead patrol,” where walking is action, but is mitigated by “dead,” suggesting the ultimate inaction. The spirit is “unappeased and peregrine,” the former suggesting anxious stasis, the latter movement. I believe that it is an expression of Eliot’s response to the war around him. He wanted to escape, as shown in the successive distancing in me, to altered me, to another. This is taken up with the distancing immediately after the cry of “What are you here?” when it is remarked that “Although we were not” in fact there. Yet, the poet “was still the same” (intimate), yet “Knowing myself yet being someone other” (unidentifiable). Again, we see a retreat from the stark reality of the “dark dove with the flickering tongue” of line 82.

This passage is intriguing for the complexity it presents in attending to the voices of poetry. No longer is the poet speaking to a narrow audience of mandarin readers of the war era. He is presenting a dialogue with all readers, yet doing so in the style of a play within a play. The characters of the poet and the ghost entertain us as in the third voice of poetry -- that is, we overhear their dramatic conversation. If we follow the pronouns, we note that he moves from an impersonal presentation of the scene in lines

55-80 to the incorporation of the first person singular pronoun in lines 87-88 (“I met one walking, loitering and hurried, / As if blown towards me like the metal leaves”), and then to numerous referrals to singleness merged with multiplicity: “Both one and many,” “familiar compound ghost,” “double part,” “Knowing myself yet being someone other,” “a face still forming” (95-101). The conversation begins then, but it is limited and one-sided. The narrator asks the ghost to speak, though cautioning that “I may not comprehend, may not remember” (111). The ghost then begins a sermon which essentially recapitulates the golden rule (“So with your own, and pray they be forgiven / By others, as I pray you to forgive / Both bad and good” (115-17)); he follows with a contemplation on the fleeting nature of literary fame, as well as a reflection on the responsibility of writers to maintain the health of a language (“For last year’s words belong to last year’s language / And next year’s words await another voice” (119-20)); and, finishes with a dismal projection of the fruits of old age (“the cold friction of expiring sense,” “the conscious impotence of rage / At human folly,” and “the rending pain of re-enactment / Of all that you have done” (LG II 132; 136-37; 139-40)).

This seems to be rather didactic, even disappointing mystical insight provided in poetic cliché in the sense that no new affects are suggested or evoked. As Cooper remarked (in a reference to “Burnt Norton”), “a new modality of feeling and a new discursive procedure emerges” (151). We have the feeling of one who has looked beyond the curtain, only to see the confidence man, the Wizard of Oz. Why does Eliot suggest that the ghost communicates such apparently trite contemplations as “Forgive others” and “old age is hell”? There is an ironic tone in the ghost’s messages about old age: he describes “the gifts reserved for age / To set a crown upon your lifetime’s effort”



(130-31), yet these gifts, this crown are frightening, despicable. The “gifts” are “expiring sense / Without enchantment,” “bitter tastelessness,” “the conscious impotence of rage,” “the laceration / Of laughter at what ceases to amuse,” and “the rending pain of re-enactment / Of all that you have done, and been; the shame / Of things ill done and done to others’ harm” (132-33; 134; 136; 137-38; 139-41). The destiny of the aged seems to be a parallel to the myth of Sisyphus, bitter, impotent, and destined to painful re-enactment.

If the concept of a ghost communicates anything, it is surely the past, the dead. Yet, to the physically dead, it adds the dimension of spiritual life, thus becoming a metaphor for the traditions of the past as they live on in the present and will survive into the future. This ever-present past is clearly stated in the first lines of “Burnt Norton.” Earlier, in the first movement of “Little Gidding,” I find intimations of the significance of ghostly messages: “the communication / Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.” To me, the clichés suggest that the “compound familiar ghost” is not a dead soul communicating with the living, but rather an alter-Eliot displaying to us how, even if we “do the police in different voices,” our insight into the important matters of life and death are limited by our “having no speech for” that which is unknowable in this life. The “bitter tastelessness” and “rending pain of re-enactment” are states of anxiety, or helpless fear in which the subject-as-victim has no active input. The aging individual is increasingly subjected to anxious states, as his physical condition deteriorates, at once making anxiety seem justified, and prohibiting the physical activity which would once have served as a distraction to these worries.

There is only one escape from this life, and the ghost warns that “From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit / Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire / Where you must move in measure like a dancer” (144-46). This passage unites the image of the dancers from “East Coker” with the twin fires of destruction and redemption which will figure in the last three movements of “Little Gidding.” The apparently trite communications of the ghost, therefore, take on a spiritual as well as poetic significance. In spiritual terms, the significance is the promise of being “restored by that refining fire.” In poetic terms, the observation that “last year’s words belong to last year’s language / And next year’s words await another voice,” places Eliot in the present, and provides a timeline of succession, rather than simultaneity, which fits well with his citations of other poets and saints. Finally, Eliot concludes the interaction with the ghost by announcing daybreak, and the ghost’s departure. Here, of course, he addresses the reader in the second voice of poetry, snapped back from the dramatic passage written in the third voice which had characterized the interlude with the ghost.

In the third movement there is a juxtaposition of didacticism and mysticism, in the preacherly delineation of the “three conditions which often look alike,” and the mantra-like quote from Dame Julian of Norwich: “Sin is Behovely, but / All shall be well, and / All manner of thing shall be well” (150; 166-68), respectively. On close reading, we are struck by the word “often,” a mitigating factor in an otherwise clear statement, and one which echoes the mitigating words in “Burnt Norton” – “Time present and time past / Are both *perhaps* present in time future, / ... / *If* all time is eternally present” (BN I 1-2; 4; emphasis added). In this reluctance to make absolute statements, there is a verbal

mood established, one which allows the widest interpretation of the words, a diffuseness of definition.

The third movement's three conditions of attachment, detachment, and indifference are derived from Krishna, especially "Krishna's emphasis on detachment" (Kramer 159). A parallel may well be drawn between these "three conditions" and their artistic complements of personality (attachment), impersonality (detachment) and that separation (indifference) which results "in the course of time [with] a poet ... becom[ing] merely a reader in respect to his own works" (Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* 130). Indifference is "psychological death [and] is most to be avoided" (Kramer 192). The poetic Eliot eschews indifference as resembling "the others as death resembles life." When he speaks of nationalism (an attachment), he finds its efforts "of little importance / Though never indifferent" (161-62). Yet, it is this unimportant "action" which allows the poet to continue the thought, observing that while "History may be servitude, / History may be freedom," it matters little for "the faces and places" vanish, "become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern" (162-63; 165). That is, the places and faces we become attached to, as well as all like relationships in the past, are destined to change, take new shapes via the Heraclitean fire, and be reincarnated in the future via Pentecost. This is consistent with the analysis of time in "Burnt Norton," where "time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future" (BN 1-2). In the reflection that history and "our own field of action" vanish and are renewed in the future, the poet stages the deific "field of action" in the future where it must, of course, be. It also explains and completes the thought of the following lines in "Burnt Norton," that "If all time is eternally present / All time is unredeemable." Here, in "Little Gidding," where, as we have just learned

“prayer has been valid,” we, as people with history, will be “redeemed from time, for history is a pattern / Of timeless moments” (LG V 234-35). The difference is between history as a progressive and equally-divided timeline, and history as an overlaying of experiences in which “The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree / Are of equal duration” (LG V 232-33).<sup>149</sup>

Yet, this procession in time seems to belie the sentiment just expressed that “History may be servitude, / History may be freedom. See, now they vanish, / The faces and places” (162-64). If the mystics and religious writers of the past had vanished, how are they so available to Eliot? Recall that he follows the vanishing with a reincarnation theme: “To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern” (165). Thus, the words of the historical mystics are reconfigured by Eliot, here and now, to address a “transfigured” England, one changed by technology, but merely shifted, the Civil War yielding to the Second World War, Dame Julian and George Herbert yielding to Eliot and Yeats. This is another aspect of the poem which I believe to be moodlike. Rather than the keen and intense action related to the affects which engage active subjects, especially emotions which “situate the agent within a narrative and generate some kind of action” (Altieri

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<sup>149</sup> Just after line 165, the poem turns, as on a “still point,” and Eliot quotes and then expands upon the words of the fourteenth-century English mystic, Dame Julian of Norwich. Eliot abruptly changes tone from didactic prophet describing the relative merits of the three conditions, to the tone of religious scholar meditating on a mantra which, itself, addresses past and present problems in terms of future redemption. “Sin is Behovely, but / All shall be well, and All manner of thing shall be well” (166-68) is an adaptation of a quote from Dame Julian. According to F. O. Matthiessen, Eliot explains his recourse to Dame Julian as necessary “to escape any suggestion of historical sentimentality about the seventeenth century [. . .] and therefore to get more bearing on the present than would be possible if the relationship was merely between the present and one particular period of the past” (195). Helen Gardner warns, however, against too much industry in trying to establish literal referents for every image in the poem: “We do not gain any particular help in the understanding of ‘Little Gidding’ from knowing that the sentence comes from Julian of Norwich” (*Art* 55). I believe that the significance is rather in the fact that Eliot indicates awareness of accusations of influence, and sets up a careful triangulation between three periods of English mysticism. The need to do this is partly explained by his mystical allusions to Dante and the ghost of the previous movement. To see that passage in the light of mystics like Julian, St. John of the Cross, Nicholas Ferrar, and George Herbert, is to establish it as consistent with Anglican poetic tradition over several centuries.

*Particulars 2*), moods seem to settle over an individual or a situation and the particular individual does not matter. Throughout “Four Quartets,” Eliot’s attitude toward “action” has been equivocal. This attitude will change to denouncement of action in the fifth movement of “Little Gidding.”

Eliot proceeds, in the third movement of “Little Gidding” to provide historical contexts which can be variously interpreted in the moods attendant upon history. These moods are a confusion between the active fear of violence and the implied refuge of a sanctuary like Little Gidding; the historical mood is also a confusion between the past order (kings at nightfall, for example, in contrast to the “few who died forgotten”). He says, “I think of a king at nightfall, / Of three men, and more, on the scaffold / [ . . . ] / And of one who died blind and quiet” (175-76; 179). The “king at nightfall” has been seen as Charles I, who “sought refuge in the dark of night [at Little Gidding] after the Battle of Naseby” (Schuchard 181). I believe that a reading which recognizes the English Civil War history can merge with the reading of the king at nightfall being Christ, buried, before the resurrection. The “three men . . . on the scaffold” become, then, Christ-crucified with the two criminals described in John 19: 18 (“there they crucified him with two others, one on either side, with Jesus in between”).<sup>150</sup> This reading seems to me in keeping with Eliot’s purpose of not being confined to one period of time. Again, the diffuse reading is consistent with mood, the central affect of the poem. “Little Gidding” is also religious in a primary way, where Charles I is a secondary religious figure, notable in the poem merely for seeking refuge at a religious community where prayer had been valid. There seems to be little doubt that the “one who died blind and quiet” is Milton, a religious poet in the Anglican tradition.

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<sup>150</sup> Luke 23:39-42 (*Oxford Study Bible* 1362).

After the allusion to Milton, Eliot poses and answers a complex question: “Why should we celebrate / These dead men more than the dying?” (180-81). It is not an attempt to negate time and history (“to ring the bell backward”) but to recognize the communion of death (“These men” “Accept the constitution of silence / And are folded in a single party” (190-91)). Note the negation of the senses again, the mood of resignation, which seem to be the “habit of perfection” of the dead. Regardless of our specific beliefs in the afterlife, we acknowledge the inability of the dead to partake of and recognize sensory input. Yet, earlier, Eliot had said that “The communication / Of the dead is tongued with fire” (LG I 51-52). But, here the “communication” is not outside the “constitution of silence” because it introduces a new and different communication device, based on the differently consuming fires of Heraclitus and the Pentecost. Eliot has told us earlier in the poem that “If you came this way” “you would have to put off / Sense and notion” because this is a place “Where prayer had been valid” (40; 43-44; 47). All intellectual bets are off, all reliance on sensory input are invalid; the soul enters a new realm of fire, one in which contrasts are acceptable “Never and always” and “See, now they vanish” and we are left with “A symbol perfected in death” (LG I 54; LG III 163; 195). We leave the third movement of “Little Gidding” with more comfort than we had before. We have an acknowledged mystic authorizing the mantra “All shall be well,” and we have Eliot’s word that “the reality and necessity of sin are made well by the reality and necessity of prayer” (Schuchard 193).

It is useful to compare the fourth movement of “Little Gidding” with its lyrical counterpart in “Burnt Norton.” Recall that the “instrument” of “Burnt Norton” was air, where the “instrument” of “Little Gidding is fire. The “black cloud,” the intimation of

perverted phototropism (“Will the sunflower turn to us” now that the sun is carried away?), “chill,” “light,” silent,” and “still point” are all indicators of airiness in “Burnt Norton” IV. In “Little Gidding,” we find strong suggestions of fire: “flame,” “incandescent,” “pyre,” and “fire” itself. The question is: are the fires and pyres presented in “Little Gidding” IV of a Heraclitean nature (that is, an eternal but natural flux) or of a religious nature (that is, of Pentecost and of Purgatory). I believe the answer lies in considering Purgatorial and Heraclitean fires as spiritual and physical manifestations of the same process. Whereas the lyrical fourth movement of “Burnt Norton” expresses uncertainty in the two questions posed: “Will the sunflower turn to us, will the clematis / Stray down, bend to us; tendril and spray / Clutch and Cling?” (132-34) and “Chill / Fingers of yew be curled / Down on us?” (135-37), the question posed in “Little Gidding” is rhetorical, and is answered immediately with the assurance of deep faith: “Who then devised the torment? Love” (207). The posing of this question shows Eliot’s sympathy with the human condition; it asks, “Why me, Lord?” in multiple ways. By answering that “Love,” with a capital “L” is “behind the hands that wove / The intolerable shirt of flame” he provides a theological dignity to the sufferings not only of martyrs, like St. Narcissus and St. Sebastian who figured in his early poetry,<sup>151</sup> but of all the soldiers, civilians, poets and Prufrocks in the world. What does Eliot mean by “The only hope, or else despair / Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre - / To be redeemed from fire by fire” (204-6)? He is posing two pyres, two fires – one the “incandescent” fire of the Pentecostal “tongues,” the other the fire of hell. In the background is the Heraclitean fire, the fire concerned with the flux of material things and, by extension, the Purgatorial fire

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<sup>151</sup> “The Love Song of St. Sebastian” (1914) and “The Death of St. Narcissus” (early 1915) provide an early linkage of love and death, martyrdom and glory, and suffering and joy, which is the theme of the fourth movement of “Little Gidding.”

which “purges” sin from the soul. The choice is ours, yet the poem reminds us that the choice is unimportant: “Taking any route, starting from anywhere, / At any time or at any season, / It would always be the same” (LG I 41-43).

How, then, is the mood of “Little Gidding” expressed in the fourth movement. I suggest that the telling lines are “We only live, only suspire / Consumed by either fire or fire” (212-13), in which human agency is reduced to a very narrow choice, but one which makes an eternal difference. In using “supsire” rather than, say, “respire,” Eliot insists on the meaning of “sigh,” with the definition of “breathe” the third listed in *OED*. I consider the sigh to be expressive of no affect more than that of anxiety. While emotion, passion, and feeling may be suitably expressed in shouts or cries, mood, with its intimation that the “subjectivity of the individual subject is not very important” and that “subjectivity floats” may well result in a sigh of near helplessness (Altieri *Particulars* 54). Yet, it is in this near helpless state that we find an opportunity to make that choice between fire and fire which will be “our only hope at this calamitous point” (Howard 142).

The fourth movement of “Little Gidding” sets the stage for the denouement of the entire poem in the next and final movement. The difference between fire and fire, pyre and pyre, leads in the last movement to a delineation between poetic word and words of prayer, the lifetime of a rose and a yew-tree, and a recurrence with resolution of the images of the fire and the rose.

In many ways, the fifth movement, gathers images from the previous poems and puts them in the context of eternal life. Here, the unseen children in the trees of “Burnt Norton” I, the beginning and the end of “East Coker” I, the river and the sea of “The Dry Salvages” I, and even the “never and always” of “Little Gidding” are reconciled in the



validity of that which is “half-heard,” in history as “a pattern / Of timeless moments,” in a resolved contest between “the longest river” and “the stillness / Between two waves of the sea,” and in knowing “the place for the first time.” Eliot uses his references to the fourteenth and seventeenth century mystics again, illustrating that he believes these acknowledgements to be “valid.” Again, we hear the mantra of Julian of Norwich: “And all shall be well and / All manner of thing shall be well,” (255-56), here amended by Eliot’s Pentecostal insight of the previous movement, “When the tongues of flame are in-folded / Into the crowned knot of fire” (257-58).

As in the fifth movements of the other quartets, Eliot discusses poetry, especially the efficacy of words to bridge living time (history, here, now, England) with the still point (“neither flesh nor fleshless,” “not to be in time,” “through time time is conquered”). In “Burnt Norton” V, he questions the power of words to facilitate a spiritual quest “Can words or music reach / The stillness[?]” (144-45). In “East Coker” V, he recognizes the futility of the attempt to conquer through words: “every attempt / is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure / Because one has only learnt to get the better of words”; and, “each venture / Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate” (176-78; 180-81). In “The Dry Salvages” V, he recognizes alternative ways “To communicate with Mars, converse with spirits” (185), and finds them wanting too. Reading tea leaves, horoscopes, and “fiddl[ing] with pentagrams” are common as “Men’s curiosity searches past and future,” but “to apprehend / The point of intersection of the timeless / With time, is an occupation for the saint” (192; 199; 200-02). Where words and other forms of communication fail, detachment succeeds, and detachment is a response more typical of

mood than of the other, more participatory affects. Attachment may be expressed by emotions or passions; indifference is death-in-life.

At last, in “Little Gidding” there is a partial resolution of the conflict between time and timelessness, eternity and “now and England.” The reconsideration of the theme of beginning and end, first introduced in “East Coker,” begins the poem’s denouement. Here, “any action / Is a step to the block,” yet “We die with the dying” and “are born with the dead” (225-26; 228; 230). Howard reads this as meaning that “At the Still Point, the long line of time is compressed into this infinitesimal dot. He believes that “duration is inoperative here” (145), but I suggest that “duration” is very operative *here* (now and in England, and for all of us). I believe that the lines say that, though the life of a rose (flower) is measured in days, and a yew-tree’s in scores of years, that for each of these individuals, so to speak, that duration is an entire lifetime. All people, in the language of LG III, “Accept the constitution of silence / And are folded in a single party” (190-91). In the rough draft of the fifth movement, Eliot had written, “The moment of the rose / And the moment of the yew tree are equally moments / And so must vanish to become eternal” (Gardner *Composition* 219). By abbreviating this sentiment in the manuscript, Eliot leaves the passage open to expanded interpretation. A Bergsonian interpretation is that “time consciousness ... does more than express the experience ... of discontinuity in everyday life. [. . .] The new value placed on the transitory ... discloses a longing for a stable present.”<sup>152</sup> Philip Le Brun suggests parallels between Bergson’s view that “each new development ‘alters the nature...of the whole’” and Eliot’s statement in “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” that “what happens when a new work of art is created is

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<sup>152</sup> See Jürgen Habermas’s “Modernity – An Incomplete Project” in *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 1750.

something that happens simultaneously to all works of art which preceded it” (Le Brun 155; *Sacred Wood* 28).

For humanity, at least in Eliot’s Anglo-Catholic view, the “beginning” was Eden, and it became the “end” with man’s sin and exile. Eden is “where we started” and he maintains that, on our return to that beginning, with our individual end, we will “know the place for the first time” (242). That message is sandwiched between two allusions to the mystics whose words have provided a wider historical and theological context for the whole poem, the anonymous author of the seventeenth century treatise, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and Dame Julian of Norwich. A near quote from *The Cloud of Unknowing*,<sup>153</sup> “With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling” stands alone at line 238, appears without punctuation, and leads into the summary last stanza. The quote forms a bridge between the pedestrian line, “History is now and England” and the encouraging sermon-like line “We shall not cease from exploration,” which echoes the “Fare forward” spirit of “The Dry Salvages” III and extends it into life after death. The penultimate lines of the poem is the now familiar mantra of Julian of Norwich : “And all shall be well and / All manner of thing shall be well” (255-56). Thus bracketing his own words with words from the early mystics, Eliot makes his last attempt at revealing just exactly how the end and the beginning are alike, and in this time of disquiet and war, we can be assured that “all shall be well.”

The concluding lines of the poem tell us when and how “all shall be well”: “When the tongues of flames are in-folded / Into the crowned knot of fire / And the fire and the rose are one” (257-59). The crowned knot is an image from the *Paradiso*, and represents the

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<sup>153</sup> The complete text is available electronically at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/anonymous2/cloud.html>.

Trinity.<sup>154</sup> “Tongues of flame” merges the martyr with the grace of Pentecost as he is rescued from the punishing flames of Purgatory and the Heraclitean fire. As these flames turn inward, they form a knot, symbolic, as in Dante, of the Holy Trinity. It is that still point, that beatific vision, which encompasses fire and rose, and makes sense of suffering and death. Each individual experience of suffering adds to and alters the organization of the whole, as the building of an ever-increasing present eternity (still point) shifts in time and quality to accommodate the march of generations.

### Conclusion

I believe “Little Gidding” to be a poem which successfully uses the affective mode of mood, specifically the mood of anxiety. According to Altieri, in his chapter “The Theory of Emotions in Eliot’s Poetics,” Eliot uses the affects, but in a different way from established or expected ways: he has “differences from the dominant lines of thinking while [he provides] a background for making comparisons with how other poets evoke and interpret affective intensities” (in *Gender* 152). Eliot makes “differences in our present attitudes toward the nature of emotional life,” which offer a positive reading of his poetry, which has been much maligned in recent years due to Eliot’s conservative, even racist and sexist stances (*Gender* 151). Altieri does not provide a reading of “Little Gidding,” but he provides a useful critical template for evaluating the poem.

Though Eliot seems to eschew feelings and emotions in “East Coker,” (the inevitable fall of houses, buildings and beings in the first movement; the darkness of the third movement; “the general mess of feeling, / Undisciplined squads of emotion” in the fifth movement), he ends the poem with hints of promise (“another intensity”; “a further

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<sup>154</sup> See Gardner, *Composition*, 224.

union”; “a deeper communion”; and “In my end is my beginning,” itself an inversion of the deterministic first line of the poem).

Had Eliot focused a passionate poem with specific war imagery, he may have garnered a wider, more appreciative readership in the early 1940s, but “Four Quartets” would become a period piece, much as Yeats’s “Easter 1916,” which the reader necessarily embellishes with historical data. He chose to deploy the affective mode of an anxious mood, rather than, say, that of an overt and emotional call for national unity. While I agree that the specific and public “difficulties” facing the intelligentsia in World War II are urgent and concrete, I believe that “Four Quartets” addresses an underlying disquiet as a mood, and tries to solve an abstract spiritual sense of hopelessness, despair, confusion – personal “difficulties” which are solvable, if at all, on the level of the affects rather than of reason. The timelessness of “Four Quartets” removes the onus of acting and reacting from the troubled combatants and citizens of England equally. In “Four Quartets” Eliot presents a time out of mind, and a potential for a mind outside of time.

The anxiety of “Little Gidding” is presented in the way sensations are shown, the way voices shift, in the intimations of confusion, and in the suggestion of futility. In different ways, these perspectives all evoke anxiety. Sensations, such as “The soul’s sap quivers” in the first stanza, evoke an unspecified fear. Later in the poem, “the cold friction of expiring sense” uses a complex, and seemingly contradictory, indicator of anxiety; for if the senses are expiring, the experience of cold is necessarily diminishing. Finally, the poem finds comfort in anxiety itself, as “The voice of the hidden waterfall / And the children in the apple-tree / Not known because not looked for” at last emerge “half-heard in the stillness” (247-49; 250). The movement in the poem is from the sensation of

quivering through that of loss of sensory keenness, to a resolution in the acuity only possible in the stillness. The voice shifts in “Little Gidding,” from meditative to instructional, serve the purpose of heightening the anxiety, too. Sudden shifts in voice result in a confusion, representative of anxiety itself, a fear of an unspecified unknown. In the encounter with the ghost, this build-up is particularly clear. First, there is a general setting – “That pointed scrutiny with which we challenge / The first-met stranger in the waning dusk” (91-2). “Pointed scrutiny” places us in a psychological space of hypervigilance, where the senses are keenly trying to establish a footing. “Stranger” adds to the feelings of anxiety, where “villain” would add to, say, fear, and “loved one” would elicit comfort. The stranger is one to be challenged, not merely nodded at, showing that action is expected, yet the specific action is unclear. Throughout the encounter, the subject is the object of the ghost’s words, the one learning from “some dead master,” one “compliant to the common wind.” Confusion is suggested in various ways in “Little Gidding,” from the first stanza’s seasonal juxtaposition of spring and midwinter, through the suggestion that you came “not knowing what you came for,” through the numerous identities possible for the compound ghost, to the seeming contradiction that Love “devised the torment,” and the “end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time.” In the last example, the alleviation of anxiety is neatly postponed to some vague future point, possibly after death.

Futility also exacerbates the mood of anxiety in “Little Gidding” in several passages. First, we are told we are “not in time’s covenant,” placing all human endeavor in abeyance and making both knowledge and experience irrelevant. Next, we are repeatedly told that regardless of where we are from, how we arrive, “It would be the same at the end

of the journey.” Futility expands beyond the personal to the universal in the first two stanzas of the second movement, where a sing-song meter and rhyme inform the reader that all is subsumed in death, ash, dust, and the Heraclitean flux of earth, air, fire, and water. The futility continues relentlessly with the ironic presentation of the “gifts” of old age. In the third movement, we see history vanishing, regardless of its manifestation as servitude or freedom. Another indication of futility in the third movement is that all people die – “Accept the constitution of silence / And are folded in a single party” (190-91). In the brief lyric stanzas of the fourth movement, we are told outright that “human power cannot remove” “The intolerable shirt of flame” (210-11). Futility is shown in the last movement, to exist even in spiritual processes, for whether one follows the *via negativa* (“A condition of complete simplicity”) or an ancient mystic (“And all shall be well”), the end will be the same, with the fire and the rose becoming one. The poem attempts to assuage the pain that this futility must bring by engaging the universal nature of the experience. While those who experienced the Second World War were helpless to resolve it, they could take comfort in the fact that the shirt of flame was woven by none other than the hand of Love.

## CONCLUSION

In my close reading of the poetry of three major British writers whose work spans more than one hundred years, several issues have become apparent. While J. Hillis Miller characterizes the nineteenth century as one of “the disappearance of God” in his eponymous book, in the selections from the three poets studied here, I note a paradoxical increase in the significance of religious belief in these particular poets. This is testimonial evidence, of course, yet it occasionally informs my study of the use of sensory images to achieve a particular affective mode, especially in the case of Hopkins. All of the poets considered in this study rely on a balance between the overtly sensory and the hidden and individual physical response, or sensation. In Hopkins, for example, the intersection of religious belief and sensory imagery is exemplified in the ability to accept the reality of that which is unknowable by the senses, that is, the panoply of deific entities and the ritual practices recognized by the Roman Catholic Church.

These poets manifest different levels of engagement with sensation – Keats to a great extent, Hopkins and Eliot to a moderate extent. The expression of belief tends toward the more active affective modes, especially feelings, when the belief is felt as a physiological change, a sensation (as in the later Keats), or as an emotion when the identity of the agent is reinforced by a thought-intensity not typically associated with learned or acquired knowledge (as in Keats’s earlier work). Eliot recognizes the relationship between thought and sensation, writing that “poetry can be penetrated by a philosophical idea, it can deal with this idea when it has reached the point of immediate acceptance, when it has become *almost a physical modification*” (*Sacred Wood* 95; emphasis added). The “physical modification” is Eliot’s version of Keatsian sensation and its affect. I compare



Eliot's statement with the speculation in Keats's letter, "Can it be that even the greatest Philosopher ever arrived at his goal without putting aside numerous objections— However it may be, O for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts!" (*Letters* I 185). As a philosopher, Eliot found it more difficult to dismiss philosophic thought, even from poetry. Yet, he too recognizes the power of an experiential "immediate acceptance" to catalyze a physical change.

Susan Stewart, in *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, points out the gradation of sensory impressions in Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," which begins, "not with sense impression from which inference is then drawn but with the aching and drowsy poet's response to the nightingale's song" (282). Rather, Keats introduces the direct sensory perception of the bird's song ("singing of summer in full-throated ease") only in the last line of the first stanza. Stewart says that Keats "skillfully emphasizes that he *cannot see* and so from the 'embalmed darkness' will guess each 'sweet': grass, thicket, fruit tree wild, white hawthorn and the pastoral eglantine, fast-fading violets and the coming musk-rose, the 'murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves'" (282). In this sense, Keats introduces a poetic motif taken up by both Hopkins and Eliot – that of denial of the senses to achieve a paradoxically rich sensory image. In Keats's work, however, that denial serves as an accentuating contrast (for example, "I cannot see what flowers are at my feet" is a line which, while denying a sensory acuteness, manages to convey an image nonetheless.) The denial of sensory impressions in Hopkins, however, is pointedly part of a religious fervor which involves strict adherence to the Jesuit practice. His sensory denial is done with a specific aim -- that this temporary earthly denial will lead to eternal

reward.<sup>155</sup> In Eliot's later work, especially "Four Quartets," he mitigates the senses so that the intellectual and mystical can have greater prominence. Perhaps the most important example in "Little Gidding" is the passage in the fifth movement where "the voice of the hidden waterfall" acknowledges sound, but denies vision, and the passage immediately following in which "the children in the apple-tree" are "not looked for / But heard, half-heard, in the stillness," where there is a gradual denouement of sensory acuteness from heard, to half-heard, to stillness.

Keats, who had no formal religious beliefs but who could certainly be called a Christian merely by English tradition, employed rich, earthy, lush, descriptions based on sensory images and sensation to express his enjoyment of, and contrasting fear of losing, this world and its beauty. In poems like "When I have fears that I may cease to be" and the very late poem "This living hand, now warm and capable," Keats tells us that this life is all there is for him. Keats's concept of eternity was the nightingale as "immortal bird" – not as an enduring individual, but as a class.

In my consideration of Hopkins, I encountered a poet whose belief was unwavering, but whose concern about the exact implications of immortality was beautifully, if frighteningly, expressed often as a form of intellectualizing rather than experiencing sensation, especially in the so-called desolate sonnets. Eliot, too, was a believer who, like Hopkins, risks alienation from his friends and family when he converts to a religious tradition more conservative and ritualistic than the one in which he was raised. In Eliot's poetry, the sensory images of Keats, and the expression of sensations used by Hopkins, give way to reflective and intellectual musings, and later to mystical adherence to a belief

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<sup>155</sup> See especially his sacrificial poem, based on the Ignatian exercises, "The Habit of Perfection," in which each sensory organ in turn is denied.

characterized by inevitability. No matter where you start from, or how you travel, it is all the same. "If you come this way," he says in "Little Gidding," "you would have to put off / Sense and notion" (LG I 40; 43-44). Unlike Keats, Eliot believed in a place "where prayer has been valid." For Keats, this was a vague belief in the ongoing substitution of one god for many, religion for mythology, and even (in "Ode to Psyche") the Olympian gods for the Titans. Unlike Hopkins, Keats and Eliot believed that this place could be other than a place sanctified by the Roman Catholic Church.

Keats wrote, "I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of the Imagination--What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth whether it existed before or not" (*Letters* I 184). To the casual reader, this may seem to endorse a certain mystical view, yet, to Keats, it expressed his deep belief in the beauty of nature as appreciated by humans, and amplified by their imagination, or what he would later elevate as "fancy." He continues, as noted above, "O for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts!" (*Letters* I, 185). That statement, interpreted literally, subsumes science to imagination, and intellectual imagination to fancy. It does not recognize a divinity higher than the "heart's affections" and the "truth of the imagination." Yet, all divinities imagined or believed in by humans may be considered as truths only in the sense of being real for their specific adherents. In all of Keats's poetry, we find an exaltation of natural beauty, typical of the Romantic poets, and extended to belief systems and to works of art: "The poetry of earth is never dead," he writes in the early poem, "On the Grasshopper and Cricket"; "Stop and consider! Life is but a day" he states in "Sleep and Poetry." He maintains the strength of art as man's sole relic in "Ode on a Grecian Urn," saying, "Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe / Than ours, a friend to

man,” assigning the role of comfort, as well as immortality, not to man but to a manmade work.

The consolation across the generations was seen by Hopkins to lie in man’s redemption, as expressed in the final lines of “That Nature Is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection”: “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,” using the final tautology as a reinforcement of the wonder of eternal life. Hopkins, as a Jesuit, followed the rule of St. Ignatius. According to White, Ignatian exercises called for a physical and mental ordeal in which mortification of the five senses, each in turn, played a dominant role (*Biography*). So, while the scholarly Hopkins was observing the fine vein-structure in a leaf, for example, or coining words in a poem of sound and vision like “Pied Beauty,” the mystical, religious Hopkins was following daily ritualistic practices proscribed by the church.

Eliot, a convert to the Church of England, seems to carry a residual belief in Bergson’s “life force,” as well as the influence of Asian philosophers, especially from the Indic tradition. A parallel example to these conflicting philosophies is expressed in conflicting sensory images in his poetry: “A glare that is blindness,” and “bitter tastelessness,” and “heard, half-heard, in the stillness” (*Little Gidding*). This confusion of sensory images was also seen in the pre-conversion work, “Mr. Apollinax”: “Where worried bodies of drowned men drift down in the green silence, / Dropping from fingers of surf” (*Poems* 18). Like Hopkins, Eliot lived a life of quiet sacrifice. The literary biographer, Lyndall Gordon, points out that “Eliot was homeless from 1914, with the

exception of interludes in the thirties when he had felt ‘at home’ in Chipping Campden [where he visited Emily Hale on her annual trips to England]” (455). In some ways, Eliot was as monastic as Hopkins, though without the official commitment of sacred vows. Even prior to that, however, Eliot took the extreme measure of making a vow of celibacy, surely an unusual decision for one not under holy orders.

Eliot presents in his mature work a poetics which can be considered as an intellectual variant of the fancy seen in Keats, and an Anglican compromise to the religious fervor seen in Hopkins. In “Four Quartets” Eliot combines fanciful elements with historical religious imagery to investigate human life, faith, and fate. Combining fancy with religious fervor is a difficult project for a poet: too far in the fanciful direction, and the fervor can seem delusional; too far in the fervent direction, and the fancy may be stifled by denominational didacticism. In “Four Quartets,” Eliot manages to adorn a subdued religiosity with fanciful images, such as unseen children in the apple tree, and the characteristic and synaesthetic Keatsian image of “unheard music hidden in the shrubbery” of “Burnt Norton.”<sup>156</sup> In addition to being synaesthetic (music is aural, hidden is related to the visual), this image is typical of the first quartet and of the first movement in each quartet in representing paradoxes (“unheard music”). It recalls Keats’s lyrical observation in “Ode on a Grecian Urn,”: “Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter” (11-12).

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<sup>156</sup> It is important to recall that Eliot published “Burnt Norton” as an independent poem, the last entry in *Collected Poems* (1936). It was not until 1940 that “East Coker,” the second of the quartets, was published. Hugh Kenner points out that “Burnt Norton” is the “exact structural counterpart of *The Waste Land*” (quoted in *T. S. Eliot: Four Quartets (Casebook)* 182). In addition to the structural similarity, there are recurrent images of death, drought, and Eastern mysticism (the Upanishads in *The Waste Land*, and Mahayan Buddhist tradition in “Four Quartets”). Eliot chose to remain in that structural framework for the subsequent poems, making “Quartets” an intriguing poem to analyze from the formal as well as the intellectual point of view. By contrast, Keats’s odes, while written nearer to each other in time than were the “Quartets” vary in format and no one structural framework, beyond the general form of the ode, is used.

I have considered the selected poems in affective and sensory frameworks. The aesthetics of the affects has opened a field of poetic analysis that goes beyond the “schools” of literary criticism. Affects as described and applied by Altieri form an example for future readings in this realm, readings which may expand the affective sphere in directions not originally contemplated, such as my suggestion that religious fervor is a separate affective mode in Hopkins. My work here demonstrates the usefulness and scope of coupling a reading for the affects with one centered on sensory imagery. Other merged readings are possible, and are likely to generate new understandings of even hypercanonical works.

#### Deployment of the Affects

How does Eliot’s imagery and his use of affective mode, differ from that of Keats and Hopkins? The subject matter of Keats’s odes is not burdened with religious or philosophical considerations. Rather, the odes observe natural beauty (nightingale, autumn), human psychology (melancholy, indolence), and manmade art (the urn, the myth of Psyche). Even without a background in the critical analysis of Keats’s poetry, we are able to understand the sentences, if not the aesthetic implications, in his poetry. Contrastingly, when *The Waste Land* was published, readers required notes. The comparison among the subject poets points to different deployment of the affective modes, as well as the choice of the specific dominant affects. Keats’s poetry employs various affective modes, ranging from passions and emotions to feelings, but mood is not at all characteristic of his work. Thus, the affective result for the reader is one of

recognition of intense feeling. Yes, we say, I too have felt a thrill at natural beauty, just as the poet is made “too happy” in the happiness of the nightingale.

These fundamental differences between Keats and Eliot, I suggest, accentuate how feeling is employed by Keats in his later poetry, and arguably the direction his poetics was taking when he became ill and stopped writing in 1820. We recall that Altieri says, “Many feelings take on significance because they bring attention to bear on qualities that can be attributed directly to how specific sensations occur” (*Particulars* 235). Keats even tells us that he is dedicated to sensations, over intellection, in his letter saying “O for a life of Sensations rather than of thought.” A notable recognition of this theoretical concept is found in Keats’s poem, “In drear nighted December,” written shortly after *Endymion*. He says that “The feel of not to feel it, / When there is none to heal it,” “Was never said in rhyme” (21-22; 24). He recognizes the difficulty of expressing the feeling of the antithesis of feeling itself.

In “Nightingale,” as in the other odes, sensation is deeply involved with sensory perception: we hear a nightingale’s song and are emotionally moved by it; we observe a work of art and experience feelings relative to it; we fall to melancholy and are suspended between sadness and joy. These affective reactions or, at least, recognitions are typical ways of responding to Keats’s poetry. Keats thought he knew what made a poem popular, and said so in a late letter. In September 1819, the month in which he wrote “To Autumn,” he says that sensations are what people want to read in poetry, noting that his recent poem, “Lamia,” has a “sort of fire in it which must take hold of people in some way—give them either pleasant or unpleasant sensation. What they want is a sensation of some sort” (*Letters II* 189). More importantly, I believe, sensations are

what Keats himself wanted to write about. His admission of unpleasant as well as pleasant sensations seems to be the observation of an older, more cynical man. Yet, at twenty-four, Keats had endured more than his share of unpleasantness. In addition, nature itself is pleasant and unpleasant by turns, with the flower opening beautifully then wilting, with the birdsong clear and then fading, and with robust youth growing spectre-thin and dying. Even the seasons point to a cycle of life and death, though Keats rescues poetically for autumn a richness that surpasses that of spring, and assigns to the exemplum nightingale an immortality not literally associated with birds..

In “Nightingale,” the unpleasant sensations are numerous and intense: “aches,” “numbness,” “pains,” “dull opiate,” and “sunk” in the first stanza alone. The affective mode is feelings, as described above, yet the intensity of the feelings differs even within that stanza. Aches and pains are clear and negative physical experiences. We know when we have pain, and are able to describe it semiquantitatively as well as qualitatively (“on a scale of 1-10, my pain is 6”; “it is a dull throbbing, not a sharp twinge”). Numbness is more complicated affectively; while it seems to be less potent, it is also more confusing to the subject. When we are in pain, we know where and how much it hurts; when we are numb, we are uncertain. There are pleasant images in the first stanza of “Nightingale,” as well, but they are mitigated as soon as they are expressed, much as if the poet were denying himself any relief. “Not through envy” seems to be a positive emotion (though expressed in negative terms), but the next line clarifies that the poet is “too happy in thine happiness,” a sort of psychological satiety. While drowsiness may be a pleasant sensation, it is here presented as “a drowsy numbness,” which “pains,” and thus is hardly uttered before adopting a mantle of negativity. Other feelings are



expressed as a complex of positive and negative sensations. For example, in the fifth stanza, the negative sensory predicament of blindness (“I cannot see”) is compensated by the alternative sense of smell (“guess each sweet” emanating from the “soft incense”). The violets of the fifth stanza are “fast fading,” and the “musk-rose” is plagued by the “murmurous haunt of flies.” All of these instances are closer to physical sensation than to intellection; they are fanciful, rather than imaginative expressions.

It is interesting to note the similarity of Eliot’s view with that of Keats. In Keats’s description of the “cameleon poet,” as having no self, he provides a parallel to Eliot’s later elevation of detachment in “Little Gidding.” In his letter describing the various stages of human life, Keats uses the metaphor of life being a “Mansion of Many Apartments” in which, as a person leaves one “apartment,” the doors shut as he moves to the next room. Eliot, in a passage from “East Coker,” is leaving behind the twenty years between the wars, as he had earlier left World War I as a young man, and moves, in a Keatsian sense, to the “apartment” of World War II and of mature, settled adulthood. Yet, the intensity of emotion and feeling in Keats’s poetry is far from the moods set, as if staged, by Eliot in “Preludes,” for example, and the later specific mood of wartime anxiety in “Little Gidding.”

In “Four Quartets” each movement title comprises an adjective-noun sequence and is a labeling of a place. Eliot seems determined to ground himself in a physical location with historical attributes before exploring the affective dimension of the place as a space no longer bounded by traditional thoughts of time and space. “Burnt Norton” is the name of a place, as are “East Coker,” “The Dry Salvages,” and “Little Gidding,” yet each place name carries a descriptor in its title – directional (East), qualitative (Burnt, Dry), or

quantitative (Little). The titles for the five sections of *The Waste Land* are less clearly related to the content of the sections, and follow a less stringent form. The qualities of spatial location are subtly instrumental in the deployment of the affective mode of mood. They are certainly atmospheric in that they describe a place as a background, a passive environment. Keats seldom used place names in his poetry, and it is likely that feelings and emotions are more portable than moods. The active affects are grounded in the individual experience; mood is environmental and situational. I may be able to construct my identity as an American woman anywhere and at any time, but the atmospheres of grief that shrouded previous and distant events are still associated only with those times and places.

Keats's work is more obviously and luxuriously sensory. According to Susan Stewart, "Lyric timelessness may be promised by sight and hearing as those senses most capable of being mobilized in a project of overcoming *distance*. But as the media of poetry, sight and hearing also *define* distance" (252; emphasis original). Overcoming distance is the work of the more active affective modes, yet the intensity of sound and the clarity of sight are associated with physical proximity. We have seen this contrast of distances used metaphorically in Keats's "unheard melodies," in Hopkins's "Elected Silence, sing to me," and in Eliot's "the cold friction of expiring sense." Keats uses the sense of hearing notably in the gradual diminuendo of the nightingale's song as it fades from "such an ecstasy" in the sixth stanza, to its near-disappearance in the last, when the "plaintive anthem fades / Past the near meadows, over the still stream, / Up the hill-side," and at last "'tis buried deep / in the next valley-glades." As the distance of the receding bird increases, the volume of the song fades, joining the other images of fading in the

poem: where the poet wishes to metaphorically “fade away into the forest dim”; where the desire is to leave the world “where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies,” yet retain the option to “cease upon the midnight with no pain, / While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad”; on the other hand, where the poet realizes that in death, he would “have ears in vain-- / To thy high requiem become a sod.” The affective mode of feeling here is expressed in words and passages of sensation: in addition to the already noted, “drowsy numbness” which pains his sense, the poet employs the passage, “Lethe-wards had sunk,” to express the ultimate sinking feeling -- the drop into the netherworld. In “Nightingale” the specific feelings are pleasure in pain (“too happy in thine happiness”), confusion of the senses (“I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,” “in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet,” “Was it a vision or a waking dream?”), and a sort of musical trance (“melodious plot,” “full-throated ease,” “murmurous haunt of flies,” “toll me back from thee”).

In Hopkins’s poetry, I see a different deployment of the affective mode, as well as a different mode altogether. Keats, in “Nightingale,” uses a poignant perspective on what we know to be an ambivalent nature (i.e. the nightingale is not aware of its happy lot, sings regardless of the poet’s keen ear or envy, and, like fancy itself, which cannot cheat all that well, seems to fly away in a serendipitous manner). But, I consider Hopkins’s employment of religious fervor as an affective mode to be more consistent, less based on the five senses, and clearly more rooted in his belief. That is to say that Keats’s intensity is tied up in the senses, and in bodily sensations, whereas Hopkins extends that intensity to include his deep beliefs. These beliefs are expressed through earthly symbols, as in “The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air we breathe,” in which the most ubiquitous

atmosphere, air, takes on a spiritual significance: “I say that we are wound / With mercy round and round / As if with air” (34-36).

Fading is an image used by Hopkins as well as Keats, but with a slightly different affective nuance. Keats’s nightingale’s song fades as the bird flies away, and eventually must be “unheard” altogether; Hopkins, in “God’s Grandeur,” features sunset as “the last lights off the black West went,” but in cyclical fashion, has sunrise following: “Morning as the brown brink eastward, springs,” adding a diurnal reiteration which hints at a larger cycle – one which alleviates fading with faith, death with resurrection. Where Keats’s fading image is one of feelings, in which the sensation of a sound becoming fainter is identified, even luxuriated in, Hopkins’s religious fervor sees a return of light, guided by the “Holy Ghost.” I note here that fading is an aspect of changing sensory intensity, yet may be used that way to achieve an affective result. Fading is associated with a change in physical distance, and is near Hopkins’s meaning in his concept of the siding of scale.

Keats’s poetry is intense in its use of adjectives and adverbs. What kind of lot? Happy lot; What kind of dream? Waking dream; What kind of bird? Light-winged dryad. His sensations themselves are defined adverbially in passages like “have ears in vain” which employs an adverbial prepositional phrase, as opposed to the more active adverb, “vainly.” Hopkins employs unexpected descriptors, such as “world-mothering air,” “fond yellow hornlight,” and “air- / built thoroughfare” (“Blessed Virgin” 1; “Spelt” 3; “Heraclitean Fire” 1-2). Eliot’s descriptors seem mundane by comparison: “grimy scraps,” “hollow men,” and “the soft moor / And the soft sky” (“Preludes I” 6; “The Hollow Men I” 1; “Landscapes IV” 2-3).

It is telling to note the similarity in the usage of key terms in Hopkins and Eliot. Consider Eliot's use of "ash" and "time" in "Little Gidding" compared with Hopkins's use of the same words in "Heraclitean Fire." Eliot says, in the second movement, that "Ash on an old man's sleeve / Is all the ash the burnt roses leave" (55-56), relegating ash to the mortal residue of life and beauty. Hopkins, too, uses this image, saying, "Flesh fade, and mortal trash / Fall to the residuary worm; | world's wildfire, leave but ash" (17-18). This passage in "Heraclitean Fire" comes just prior to the "comfort of the Resurrection" promised in the following lines, in which the poet declares his belief in eternal life ("immortal diamond"). So, too, Eliot rebounds, but gradually, from the death images in the first three stanzas of movement two of "Little Gidding" (there are six instances of "death" and "dead" in twenty-four lines), to a suggestion at the end of the movement that if one is "restored by that refining fire" the progress toward death can be avoided. Yet, the strictness of practice within "the refining fire" requires repetitive ritual, that one "move in measure, like a dancer," neither advancing nor retreating, just re-treading. The difference between Eliot's understanding of "ash" and that of Hopkins's is in the suddenness of the realization of immortality expressed in these poems. Hopkins's awareness is instantaneous: "In a flash, at a trumpet's crash" ("Heraclitean Fire" 18)

Altieri warns that is precisely where the "adjectival model gets in trouble" (*Particulars* 11). I will return now to Hopkins's poem, "God's Grandeur," noting adverbial phrases which describe divine actions: "like shining from shook foil" elaborates how God's grandeur will flame out; "like the ooze of oil / Crushed" specifies how that grandeur builds in intensity ("gathers to a greatness"). Both phrases create an earthly simile to present divine nature. Hopkins's poetry is closer to the adverbial perspective on

the affects, in that it is able to treat complex beliefs with the depth they deserve. Altieri says that the adjectival treatments of belief, that is metaphors, lead us “to treat the emotions as if they were fixed objective states” (*Particulars* 10). Hopkins avoids this pitfall in two ways: by adding adverbial phrases, he adds movement to create a dynamic deity – not just flaming out, but doing so like that particular “shining” (not “shine”) more usually associated with “shook foil”; and, in the second example, he tempers the movement to be as slow as the “ooze of oil” after the olive is “crushed.”

Consider the understanding of “time,” another key word which is common to these poets. Eliot deals with time as a twentieth century writer would, in the context of new scientific attitudes. In his 1905 special theory of relativity, and his work leading up to it, Einstein “argue[d] that the dilation of time was only a perspectival effect created by relative motion” and “was not inherent in an object but merely the consequence of the act of measuring” (Kern 18-19). Counter that, in Eliot’s life, there was a new and international measurement of time, Greenwich Mean Time, established in 1913, which seemed to harness time to the devices of measurement. But, Hopkins lived before this change. It is, therefore, interesting to note his contrast of time with timelessness: “But vastness blurs and time | beats level” (“Heraclitean Fire” 15). Thus, envisioning the infinite vastness as contrasted with the metronomic counting out of time, Hopkins resembles Eliot when he establishes a “spring time / But not in time’s covenant” (LG I 13-14). The most audacious use of “time” in “Four Quartets,” of course, is the memorable beginning of “Burnt Norton,” which sets the stage for a variation between earthly and immeasurable time – an irresolvable contrast which envelops the reader like a mood, in its capacity to render the reader a passive prey to an anxious atmosphere: “Time

present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future, / And time future contained in time past” (BN I 1-3). Here he establishes the mood of “Four Quartets” as one of confusion and anxiety, which will gradually lead to the offer of the comfort of the Pentecost in the final poem of the series.

Hopkins and Eliot both appreciate air as a medium, that is as an entity which contributes to movement and has significance as more than a background. Hopkins, again in “Heraclitean Fire,” says that clouds “chevy on an air- / built thoroughfare.” In “The Windhover,” he situates air in a presentation of positive attributes, “Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here / Buckle” (9-10), though the use here may more resemble that of “putting on airs,” for with pride and plume, it “buckles,” changing direction abruptly. Hopkins uses “air” famously in the poem, “The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air we Breathe” (1883), setting forth the unlikely comparison of a sacred personage with “Wild air, world-mothering air.” We may compare these uses with Helen Gardner’s analysis that “Burnt Norton” is “a poem about air, on which whispers are borne, intangible itself, but the medium of communication” (*Art* 44-45). Kramer calls this the “mythic First World of original innocence, whispered through the medium of air” (xii). Like the other elements in “Little Gidding” air must die a natural death to be able to move on to eternity: “The death of hope and despair, / This is the death of air” (LG II 61-62). The air is resurrected later in “Little Gidding” as integral to the movement of the Holy Spirit: “The dove descending breaks the air / With flame of incandescent terror” (LG IV 200-01). In this choice of holy fire over destructive fire is the defining comfort, as well as the final promise, of the “Four Quartets.”

## Summary

I have shown the usefulness of a merged poetic analysis which combines a reading for the affects with a reading for sensory imagery. The poets considered here represent the three major literary periods of the long nineteenth century. These poets in their works studied here offer different approaches to the deployment of various affective modes. Keats, bound to natural beauty and humankind's equivocal position within it, deploys the affective modes of passions, emotions and feelings variously to suggest intensity in physical sensations and in the contrastive struggles between man and nature, nature and art. Hopkins, dedicated to God in a particular religious order, builds an affective mode of religious fervor, which more closely approaches Altieri's ideal model of adverbial perspective. Where Keats describes what, Hopkins questions and exclaims about how. Finally, Eliot, with descriptive language that sets an intellectual stage, employs mood in both the early poem, "Preludes" and the late work, "Little Gidding." Like Keats, he employs affective language to describe a scene, but his scenes are less lush than Keats's, less glorifying than the early Hopkins, and less despairing than the Hopkins of the desolate sonnets. Intensity is lightly applied in Eliot, and does not seem intense at all. It is analogous to a thin layer of a dark paint versus a thick coat of a light paint, rather than the reverse. I would align Eliot's poetry with the former; Keats's with the latter. For example, Eliot's description, or staging, of an urban evening in "Preludes" applies a light coat of heavy images: "burnt out end," "smoky days," "gusty shower," "grimy scraps," "broken blinds." In Keats's early work, "Sleep and Poetry," we see a lavish hand dispensing complex layers of descriptive images ("more tranquil than a musk-rose



blowing / In a green island,” and “More strange, more beautiful, more smooth,” “more regal, / Than wings of swans, than doves, than dim-seen eagle” 5-6; 21-22).

Eliot presents inaction as a type of action, thus describing modern angst (“Leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle / With words and meanings” (EC II 20-21); “withered leaves about your feet” (“Preludes” I 7); and “to what purpose / disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves / I do not know” (BN I 16-17). Hopkins rarely presents human actions at all, confining himself to an introspective analysis (“I wake and feel the fell of dark not day”), or using his imagination to present God’s actions as instrumental in the creation and maintenance of all earth’s beauty (“God’s Grandeur”). For Hopkins, God is approachable in various forms such as the windhover, and Christ who “plays in ten thousand places, / Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his” (“As Kingfishers Catch Fire”), and “Sweet fire the sire of muse” (“To R. B.”).

Reading poetry for the various deployments of these affective modes comprises a new way of analyzing poetry for its power to evoke strong reactions in readers, who may be distant in time, space, and culture from the poet. Analyzing art for how it was felt and how it makes us feel saves the critic from pedantic studies. This analysis for affective engagement, when coupled with a close reading for sensory imagery, provides a strong method for arriving at the various meanings possible within a poem, and allows the reader to triangulate between the poet’s thoughts and feelings and her own.

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