

**APPROACHING THE DIVINE: PERSPECTIVES ON
NATURE AND HUMANITY IN THE POETRY OF WALT
WHITMAN AND GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS**

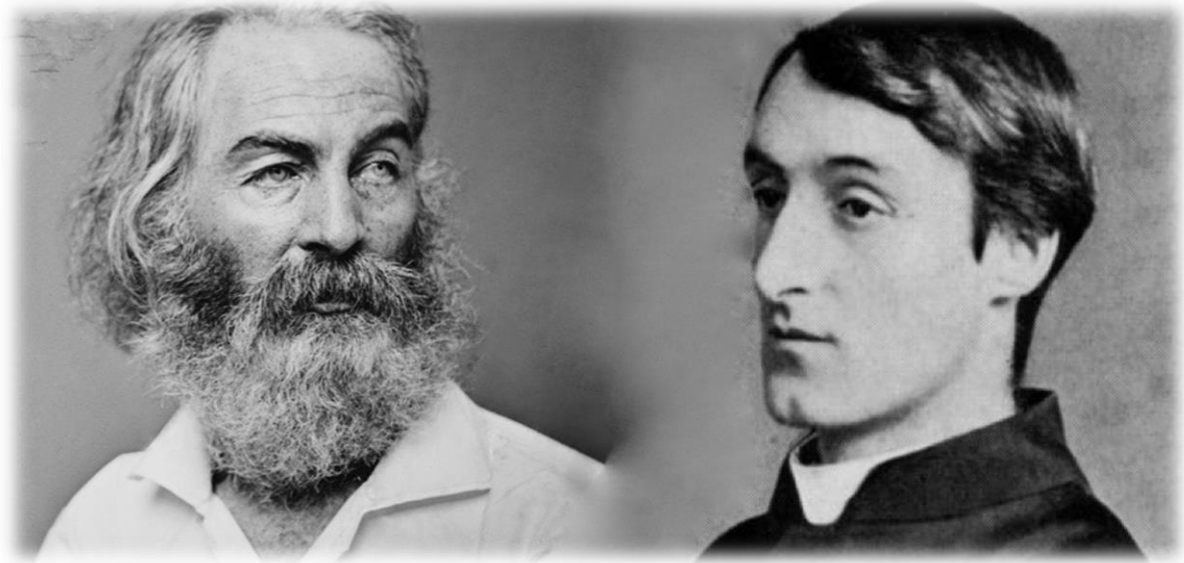
by

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A dissertation submitted for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

University of the Witwatersrand



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February 2020

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Vorster'.

11 February 2020

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Victor Houliston, for his constant support, encouragement and guidance on this project. His knowledge and insights were stimulating, enriching and invaluable, and I am deeply appreciative of having had the privilege of working with him.

I am profoundly grateful to my husband, Edward, for motivating me to take on this project and for showing constant interest, enthusiasm and involvement. My thanks also go to my children, Luke, Adam and Skye, and my daughter-in-law, Amy. The exploration of Whitman and Hopkins has become a family interest, and I could not have done this study without my family's engagement on the topic and their unwavering encouragement and loving support.

Further thanks go to Stefan Lörwald for his invaluable advice on formatting and styling.

Thanks also need to go to Mrs Jacqui Worster for introducing me to Dr Nicholas Bell, College Librarian of the Wren Library, Trinity College, Cambridge, and to Professor Grae Worster, the Vice-Master of Trinity College, and Dr Bell for enabling me to have access to the original 1855 edition of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*.

Abstract

This study, through an analysis of Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself* and selected poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, engages in a comparison between the two poets focusing on their expression of a sense of the divine in their poetry, particularly with regard to nature and humankind. The study explores differences and similarities in their celebration of nature, their expressions of spirituality and God's presence in the world and in their poetic language and style.

Hopkins' spirituality is focused and devotional, emerging out of the context of the structure of the Roman Catholic Church and his Jesuit life; Whitman's is diffuse and indeterminate, based on transcendental and pantheistic beliefs. Whitman's voice is that of a prophet and he establishes himself as a visionary, a speaker for all humankind. His creed is rooted in diverse principles of faith and belief, in which for him, God is primarily the divine force or energy in the universe. Hopkins is first and foremost a priest. He sees his poetry as a means to praise and revere God, and his contemplation of beauty, of the world is a wholly religious experience. My focus is on the distinction between the roles of prophet and priest in order to explore a variety of contrasts. I have mentioned Whitman's ecumenism and heterodoxy as opposed to Hopkins's Catholicism and orthodoxy. In looking at the spirituality inherent in their poetry, I will largely be considering how their differing convictions and beliefs about divinity impact on their views on nature and humanity. Whitman and Hopkins share a love of nature, celebrating the beauties of the universe in their poetry. Whitman's expression of his love for nature is erotic and pantheistic while Hopkins has a sacramental view of nature. Whitman focuses on divine humanity, Hopkins on sinful humanity and redemption.

In addition to comparative analysis, I will be looking at the influences that played a role in the development of their poetic minds. Both poets were, to some extent, inheritors of the Romantic tradition, and Whitman was inspired by Ralph Waldo Emerson and transcendental philosophy. Hopkins was influenced by the High Church Tractarian Movement in Oxford and John Henry Newman, by the teachings of John Duns Scotus and by Ignatian spirituality. The focus in this dissertation on the distinctions between prophet and priest as underlying a variety of contrasts provides a lens into the spirituality of these two poets who, according to John Pick, are 'so like and yet so unlike'.

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Preface

The Greek lyric poet, Simonides of Ceos, said that, ‘Dancing is silent poetry’. I have been a dancer my whole life, expressing emotion and imagery through movement. In Gerard Manley Hopkins’s poetry, I found the perfect vehicle for merging poetry and dance and I choreographed pieces to two of his poems; one a solo to ‘The Windhover’ and one for two dancers to ‘God’s Grandeur’. The poems, with the richness of their image clusters, striking rhythmic patterns and use of sound devices, proved perfect mediums for dance while allowing for the beauty and intensity of Hopkins’s verse to be heard aloud. Hopkins himself in his *Letters* (I) said ‘... remember what applies to all my verse, that it is, as living art should be, made for performance and that its performance is not reading with the eye but loud, leisurely, poetical (not rhetorical) recitation with long rests, long dwells on the rhyme and other marked syllables, and so on’ (Pollard 1970, 330). In my reading on Walt Whitman, I discovered there was a connection with the dancer, Isadora Duncan, who attributed the artistic development of her free-flowing expression in movement, as opposed to the strictures of ballet, to the influence of Walt Whitman (Marovich 2009, 365–366). For me, on a personal level, the connection I made in these two instances between dance and poetry affirmed and fuelled my desire to examine Whitman and Hopkins further, in a comparative study. However, although my lifelong involvement with dance provided the inspiration for this dissertation on Whitman and Hopkins, the area of the performative quality of poetry is not one that I am interrogating in any way. While the link between form, rhythm and movement attracted me as a dancer to these two poets, it was their differing concepts and expression of spirituality that ultimately drew me to explore the synergies between them.

Whitman and Hopkins have long been two of my favourite poets. I have always been captivated by the innate spirituality of Hopkins’s verse, which resonates with my own, and been fascinated by the visceral nature of Whitman’s writing, sensing a deep underlying spirituality there, too. While there are numerous critical studies comparing each of these poets with other poets, there seems to be relatively little work comparing the poetry of Whitman and Hopkins, particularly from the perspective of spirituality. Despite the fact that there are very obvious differences between the bohemian (Whitman) and the priest (Hopkins), many critics have noted Hopkins’s comment, in a letter to Robert Bridges, that Whitman’s mind is ‘more like my own than any other man’s living’ although few have explored this aspect in relation to spirituality in any depth. I feel that an exploration of their

spiritual convictions and creeds, particularly with regard to divinity, and nature and humanity, makes for a fascinating study.

Leaves of Grass, in which *Song of Myself* is the opening poem, is one of the most original, individual and personal books in American literature. May 31st 2019 marked the bicentenary of Whitman's birth and his continuing literary rank and significance is evident in the many exhibitions that were held in honour of his life and work. The original 1855 edition of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* was exhibited as part of the Crewe Collection at the Wren Library, Trinity College, Cambridge, as well as original cuttings of reviews from newspapers and journals of the time. I had the privilege of being given access to this material, which added personal significance to my study. The following statement by Whitman from his preface to the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* adds impact to the reality of his ongoing validity and import across the years: 'Past and present and future are not disjoined but joined. The greatest poet forms consistence of what is to be from what has been and is ... The greatest poet places himself where the future becomes present'. In 1975, a plaque commemorating Hopkins – the first Roman Catholic priest to be so memorialised – was placed in Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey between those of T.S. Eliot and W.H. Auden. In 2018, it was the centenary of the publication of Hopkins's poems. Time has proved that both Whitman and Hopkins, with their entirely different oeuvres and through their contrasting voices as prophet and priest, have transcended the boundaries of their times and context.

Note on the Text

The version of *Song of Myself* that is referenced throughout this dissertation comes from the final 1892 edition of *Leaves of Grass* published by Collins Classics, although this is in conjunction with a 1921 publication by The Modern Library, edited by Carl Sandburg, since the former does not have numbered sections for easy referencing. Hopkins's poems are all to be found in the 1978 Penguin Books publication edited by W. H. Gardner, *Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. There are biblical references throughout the dissertation, all of which come from the King James version of the Bible. God is referred to in masculine terms since this is consistent with Hopkins's outlook and expression. In a few instances, the word 'man' has been used with its corresponding pronouns in keeping with Hopkins's designations.

Chapter One: Introduction: Whitman and Hopkins

Walt Whitman and Gerard Manley Hopkins are considered to be two of the greatest poets of the nineteenth century. On many levels their poetry is very different coming as they do from very different backgrounds and from two very different world views – prophet and priest. One is outwardly secular; the other intrinsically religious. Whitman, a mystic and a humanist, extols the divinity of nature and humankind, his worldview often approaching the heretical. Hopkins, a Jesuit priest, gives voice to his religious faith in poetic expression. The thrust of this dissertation is to examine the ways in which Whitman and Hopkins diverge in their perspectives, influences and expression while both displaying a deep sense of spirituality in their poetry.

In trying to understand their poetry, there are other poets who bear clearer points of comparison. Whitman could more obviously be served by a direct comparison with Ralph Waldo Emerson and his transcendental poetry while an interesting study could be made by juxtaposing Whitman with the later generation of Beat poets such as Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac who were influenced by him. Much of Hopkins's work bears thematic resemblances to the religious poetry of Christina Rossetti who was also an adherent of the Tractarian movement. Both Hopkins and Rossetti placed more value on religious than on artistic inspiration, with Hopkins moving away from a Keatsian voice in his earlier poetry to a sacramentalism influenced by the thirteenth-century theologian, John Duns Scotus, and the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* (Pick 1978, 51). There is a long tradition of religious poets – such as George Herbert and Henry Vaughan – many of whom would make for an effective comparative study with Hopkins. Whitman and Hopkins have often been compared with one another but seldom through a religious or spiritual lens and it is both the divergence in Whitman and Hopkins's religious beliefs and their shared spiritual intensity that intrigues me.

Whitman and Hopkins both came from large families, but their lives and circumstances were very different. Whitman was born on 31 May 1819 on Long Island near Huntington, New York. His family moved to Brooklyn, then a country village, four years later and his childhood years were occupied by explorations of the Atlantic shore and the adjacent countryside and in summers spent on Long Island, which nurtured his receptiveness and sensitivity to nature. However, he referred to his childhood as an unhappy one because of his family's difficult economic situation. At the age of ten, Whitman heard a lecture by the radical Quaker preacher, Elias Hicks, whose blend of religious spiritualism and revolutionary enlightenment was to become fundamental to the poet's thinking (Meltzer 2002, 12).

Whitman left school at the age of eleven, thus ending his formal education, and entered into trade. He was a staunch Jacksonian Democrat and, although not a declared abolitionist, he was opposed to the institution of slavery. When America was ravaged by the effects of a depression in 1837, Whitman felt that it was as a result of the war between capital and democracy. As a Democrat, he saw Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine as the ideals of democracy with the Declaration of Independence serving to offer political regeneration (Meltzer 2002, 38). The issue of democracy was one which Whitman continually addressed in parts of *Leaves of Grass*, although barely at all in *Song of Myself*. Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* was first published in 1855, the year of Abraham Lincoln's 'Lost Speech' in which he spoke of the social and political upheaval caused by the secessionist and slavery issues, which ultimately led to the American Civil War of 1861 (Sandburg in Whitman 1921, ix). The Civil War changed the course of American history with political and economic corruption rife in the years following the war and democracy remaining more of an ideal rather than a reality (Allen 1975, 173). Although Whitman in his lifetime was a clerk, typesetter, printer, teacher, reporter and nurse, he spent all his years as a poet adding to, revising and rewriting his collection of poems – there were seven editions of *Leaves of Grass* in his lifetime with the seventh being published in 1892, the year of his death.

Hopkins's course of life was very different to Whitman's, being nurtured by his family from his early years in literature, religion and the creative arts, and studying classics at Balliol College, Oxford, before becoming a Jesuit priest. He was born at Stratford, Essex on 28 July 1844 and attended Highgate School from the age of eight, excelling academically and winning many prizes including the Poetry Prize in 1860. Hopkins's love of the visual arts prompted his initial ambition to be a painter and although his artistic focus turned to poetry, his verbal expression – in his use of vivid, imaginative imagery and intensity of language – reveals the lifelong appeal that pictorial art had for him. In 1863, Hopkins went to Balliol College where he began a friendship with Robert Bridges that was to last a lifetime. Oxford in the 1860s 'was still resonant with the echoes of the Tractarians' with Dr E.B. Pusey heading the Anglo-Catholic faction of the Anglican church (Gardner in Hopkins 1978, xviii). Hopkins was an ardent Puseyite and Ritualist but in 1866 he was received by Dr John Henry Newman into the Roman Catholic Church, an act that changed the spiritual and personal course of his life. In the following year, Hopkins graduated from Balliol with a first-class degree and in 1868 he joined the Society of Jesus, to the distress of his family. His ordination as a priest in 1877 followed nine years of training and thereafter he served – often unhappily – as a select preacher, missionary or parish priest in various cities, as a teacher of Latin and

Greek at Stonyhurst College, near Blackburn and as Professor of Greek at University College, Dublin where he died in 1889 at the age of 44.

In my comparative exploration of the poetry of Whitman and Hopkins, my focus is on how spirituality is manifested in thematic content and thought. This is, in particular, with regard to their views on divinity in the natural and human worlds and the relation between these worlds. There are both parallels and dissimilarities regarding themes, language, technique and style, some of which are explored by various commentators and critics. The main approach of this thesis is to examine these aspects of Hopkins and Whitman's poetry through textual analysis, which requires close reading of the primary texts. These include Whitman's most notable poem, *Song of Myself*, and selected poems of Hopkins from 1877–1883, mostly his nature poems and poems which particularly convey his priestly spirit, and some of his last poems written between 1884 and 1889. These poems have been selected for their representation of Hopkins's major concerns and perceptions and for what they reveal of the development of his poetic mind and aesthetic.

My examination and analysis of the primary texts are supported by research into secondary sources, which both contextualise the two poets and interpret the texts from various angles. My critical approach to this study encompasses comparison, evaluation and analysis of the poetry, and integrates personal interpretation with insights obtained from other sources through research. These sources, both primary and secondary, include other writings by the poets themselves such as Hopkins's letters and sermons and Whitman's preface to the original publication of *Leaves of Grass*; full-length studies of Hopkins and Whitman; more general critical and analytical works; a PhD thesis and articles in scholarly journals. My secondary reading is closely linked to my own interpretation of the texts in relation to my focal exploration of the perspectives on divinity and spirituality of Whitman and Hopkins in their poetry.

W. H. Gardner's introduction to his edition, *The Poetry and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, furnishes a helpful outline of Hopkins's background and career as a priest and poet while Robert Bernard Martin's *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life* explores in depth all aspects of Hopkins's life. Extensive information can be found on Whitman's early years and his subsequent emergence as a poet in Milton Meltzer's *Walt Whitman: A Biography* with further biographical and literary critical context provided by *The New Walt Whitman Handbook* by Gay Wilson Allen. Allen also examines different perspectives and approaches by various biographers in the development of a Whitman biography. Martin and

Meltzer explore the historical background and circumstances that shaped the lives and output of these two poets, touching on the social, political and religious matters of the times.

Critical accounts of the spirituality in the work of the two poets, as it relates to themes of nature and humankind, encompass an exploration of expressions of mysticism, religion and the divine. Whitman's, at times, completely sensuous immersion in nature reveals him not only as a nature poet, but as a mystical poet, a poet concerned with the soul, the transcendental, and the unity between God, nature and humans. Michael Sowder in *Whitman's Ecstatic Union: Conversion and Ideology in 'Leaves of Grass'* writes of how he has drawn from the work of scholars from the 1960s, such as Malcolm Cowley, to interpret the religious character of Whitman's poetry as an expression of mysticism (2005, 4). Dennis Sobolev's journal article, 'Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Language of Mysticism' and Aakanksha Virkar Yates's book, *The Philosophical Mysticism of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, both give interesting insights into Hopkins's often overlooked mystical and contemplative expression. Suzanne Stewart's 'Gerard Manley Hopkins: Sensuality and Spirituality in the Diaries and Journals' focuses on the mysticism that is apparent in Hopkins's poetry, elucidating the meaning and significance of what she sees as his mystical expression. Stewart highlights that Hopkins writes with a sensuousness in conveying his intense perception of nature through which he discovers the sacramental presence of God. William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* delineates some core features of mystical experience common to various religious traditions, providing a philosophical basis for understanding the overlap between the two poets despite their divergent theological positions. Bernard McGinn's *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism (1350–1550)*, while featuring medieval Christian mysticism, is of interest in that it describes common themes of mysticism many of which are present in Whitman's *Song of Myself* and some of Hopkins's writing.

Romanticism and ecological criticism are a factor in the study of Whitman and Hopkins since both poets can be considered to be nature poets, although in a different way to the Romantics. The influence of the Romantic tradition on their writing can most distinctly be seen in their experiences of nature and beauty and the celebration in their poetry of the glories of nature. Indeed, in 'Democratic Vistas' (1871), Whitman calls nature 'the only complete, actual poem'. In his poetry can be seen the Romantic preoccupation with the individual and with the poet as an inspired prophet. An ecological approach to the exploration of Whitman's poetry can be found in Donald P. St. John's 'Whitman's Ecological

Spirituality' in which he discusses how ecological significance can be imparted to Whitman's encounters with nature. John Parham, in *Green Man Hopkins: Poetry and the Victorian Ecological Imagination*, offers an interpretation of Hopkins's poems from an ecological perspective, viewing them as presenting the intrinsic value of nature to human life.

Whitman's ecological consciousness transmits through his embracing of landscapes and space, of all animal and plant life; Hopkins displays his ecological conscience in poems such as 'God's Grandeur' and 'Inversnaid'.

Maria Lichtman, in *The Contemplative Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, explores Hopkins's position as one of the so-called nature poets following poets such as the American, Henry David Thoreau, and Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth and John Keats. Jonathan Bate, in his book, *The Song of the Earth*, provides a useful backdrop to ecological themes in English poetry, highlighting the Romantic writers' love of nature and ardent individualism. The book helps to contextualise Whitman and Hopkins, with their fervent celebration of nature – and certainly in the case of Whitman in his political radicalism – with relation to their literary progenitors such as Wordsworth and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. A further resource used in gaining insight into thematic background was Nicholas Roe's *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide*.

Whitman takes the concerns of Romanticism a step further, imbuing them with new meaning, and he was largely inspired and influenced by the American literary, political and philosophical movement of transcendentalism, which began in the early nineteenth century. The movement, which was centred around Ralph Waldo Emerson, was triggered by English and German Romanticism. Russell Goodman in his article, 'Transcendentalism', provides background information on the beginnings of transcendental philosophy and its expression in writing, which gives a framework for understanding Whitman's credo, particularly as exhibited in *Song of Myself*. Joel Myerson's book, *Transcendentalism: A Reader*, notes that poets linked with transcendentalism emphasised the importance of inspiration over form. Meaning and intent were valued more highly than structure and technique, with Emerson proclaiming poets as 'liberating gods' (Myerson 2000, 491). The core values of transcendentalism, evident in *Song of Myself*, are individualism, idealism and the divinity of nature. In this poem, Whitman lays bare his body and soul, confessing with impassioned force his own transcendental doctrine. His vision is one of union with the divine by the act of the creative imagination and he affirms this mystic union and communion with nature and the divine in nature, in his poetry. This affirmation is explored by Hyatt H. Waggoner in *American Poets from the Puritans to the Present*. Both Tiffany Wayne's *Encyclopaedia of*

Transcendentalism and *The Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism* edited by Joel Myerson, Sandra Harbert Petrulionis and Laura Dassow Walls offer insight into Emerson's poetic aesthetics and his influence on Whitman with regard to the inspiration and creation of poetry. *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Selected Essays, Lectures, and Poems*, edited by Robert D. Richardson Jr., was a helpful primary source in shedding light on the similarity and influence of Emerson's ideas on Whitman.

With his beliefs in the spiritual potential and the individuality of every man, Emerson served as a catalyst for Whitman and other emerging writers such as Emily Dickinson. Emerson's statement in his essay, 'Nature', 'I become a transparent eyeball. I am nothing; I see all; The currents of the universal being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God' (Emerson 2007, 18) strongly suggests how much he influenced Whitman's poetic vision which was so absorbed in the expression of self. With Emerson's proclamation of poets as 'liberating gods' (2009, 30), his impact on Whitman's ideas and poetic aesthetic can clearly be seen. Malcolm Cowley, in his introduction to *Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass*, describing Whitman's mystical experiences and beliefs, states that what is important with regard to a study of Whitman is the recognition that the nature of *Song of Myself* should be interpreted, not only by its sources in contemporary culture and writing but in relation to other works, some of which express Eastern ideas. These include the Sanskrit scripture, the *Bhagavad-Gita*; the Sanskrit philosophical text, the *Upanishads*; Christopher Smart's religious poem, *Jubilate Agno*; William Blake's prophetic books and Arthur Rimbaud's *Illuminations*, for example. Cowley, interestingly, notes that, although there is a similarity of concept, thought and vision with these works, Whitman was unlikely to, or could not have read them before 1855. The point he is making, however, is that Whitman's *Song of Myself* should be judged as one of the great inspired prophetic works (Cowley in Whitman 1960, xi).

Whitman was often perceived as a prophet, particularly as presented by Thomas Carlyle; Cynthia Scheinberg, with regard to Carlyle's views, shows how an understanding of the prophetic nature of the poet is grounded in the diversity of nineteenth-century poetic and religious thought (Bristow 2002, 159–160). Whitman – as with Carlyle and influenced by transcendental philosophy and Emerson's view of the poet as the 'interpreter of nature and humanity' – believed that the poet's role was that of a prophet and visionary (Wayne 2006, 222). His presentation of his perspective on divinity in *Song of Myself* reveals his belief in God's immanence in the universe, in a pantheist God, particularly in relation to his exaltation of the self within the universe. Whitman recognises the divine in everything, in himself and in all nature. Harold Bloom, the editor of *Walt Whitman: Comprehensive Research and Study*

Guide, writes in his introduction of the religious and prophetic nature of Whitman's poetry, referring to Whitman's notebook for the origin in *Song of Myself* which contains some of his spiritual, although frequently heretical proclamations. Bloom includes a thematic analysis of *Song of Myself* as well as differing critical views. In an edition of Whitman's poetry, *Walt Whitman: With a Complete Commentary*, Ed Folsom and Christopher Merrill supply a critical commentary of *Song of Myself*, examining closely, in particular, the language. Whitman's freer idiom and more conversational tone allow him to attain a distinct and universal voice. As Folsom states, he achieves a striking combination of 'oratory, journalism and the Bible – haranguing, mundane, and prophetic' (Folsom and Merrill 2016, 2). Sowder, mentioned above, gives a useful description of how Whitman's preface, in conjunction with *Song of Myself*, takes on a biblical pattern of prophecy and fulfilment and how Whitman reflects many cultural and linguistic aspects of Christianity in his work. Yosefa Raz, too, in 'Untuning Walt Whitman's Prophetic Voice', emphasises the prophetic nature of *Song of Myself*.

John Addington Symonds in *Walt Whitman: A Study* looks at Whitman's presentation of his perspective on divinity in *Song of Myself*, exploring how his poetic expression reveals his belief in God's immanence in the universe. Whitman recognises the divine in everything, in himself and in all nature. In corroboration with Symonds, Jorge Luis Borges propounds Whitman's belief in a pantheist God, particularly in relation to his exaltation of the self within the universe (in *Literary Philosophers: Borges, Calvino, Eco*, edited by Jorge J.E. Gracia, Carolyn Korsmeyer and Rodolphe Gasché). Whitman's tendency towards pantheism, which appears in much of the writings of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poets such as the Romantics as well as his contemporary, Emerson, forms a strong element in much of *Song of Myself*. Paul Harrison in *Elements of Pantheism* provides information about the theory and practice of pantheism and its relation to poetry, particularly of that time.

Whitman was also an exponent of the forces of nationalism and democracy, which he exhibits in his poetry in a recognition of the masses, of the common man. His work, *Leaves of Grass* is largely autobiographical, with himself epitomising this 'common man'. The celebration of the individual and the relationship between the soul and the surrounding world are key concepts in Whitman's work, expressive of his transcendental views of the divinity in humankind and nature.

While Whitman was, to a great degree, influenced by the ideas of transcendentalism and pantheism, Hopkins's poetry shows how he was affected by the writings of the thirteenth-century theologian, John Duns Scotus, and the teachings of St Ignatius,

specifically, the *Spiritual Exercises*. Hopkins, as a Jesuit priest, portrays a religious consciousness in all his poetry. His work is deeply Ignatian, reflecting aspects of Ignatian spirituality such as finding God in all things and serving God to his greater glory. His thinking and outlook were also shaped by the medievalism of the Pre-Raphaelites and by his own father's teachings and poetry, which cultivated a contemplation of God in nature. Hopkins, thus, found poetic expression not only in a Romantic consideration of nature but also in a wholly sacramental view of nature. Philip Ballinger's *The Poem as Sacrament: The Theological Aesthetic of Gerard Manley Hopkins* offers insight into Hopkins's sacramentalism, particularly with regard to nature.

As a student at Oxford University from 1863 to 1867, Hopkins was greatly influenced by the Tractarians (often called Puseyites after Dr E.B. Pusey, a leader of the Oxford Movement). The Tractarian Movement or Oxford Movement began in 1833 and was an 'effort to establish the Authority and Catholicity of the English Church and to infuse into it something of the medieval spirit of intellectual and practical piety' (Gardner in Hopkins 1978, xvii). Both W. H. Gardner in his introduction to his edition, *The Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, and Norman H. Mackenzie in his essay, 'Hopkins', describe the impact of Tractarianism on Hopkins and these two sources put into context Hopkins's move towards the ritualism of the High Anglican Church through Tractarianism and then his decision to enter the Church of Rome in 1866.

A significant impact on Hopkins's thinking and writing was John Henry Newman who himself became a Roman Catholic in 1845 (and was canonised in 2019). Newman published his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, his spiritual autobiography, in 1864, a work which was hugely instrumental in leading many students, including Hopkins, into the High Church Tractarian Movement and, ultimately, into Catholicism. Newman played a significant role in the Tractarian Movement, publishing or editing or contributing to a number of the *Tracts*. Sheridan Gilley's essay, 'Life and Writings' in *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*, delineates Newman's spiritual journey, teachings and doctrines, which are relevant to Hopkins's own religious experience. Maria Lichtmann in her book, *The Contemplative Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, addresses the influence Newman had on Hopkins's poetry, particularly with regard to the mysticism of poetry and the concept of contemplation no longer existing just within the sphere of spirituality but within poetry. Lichtmann makes the point that Hopkins, while being a Tractarian in religion, was not a Tractarian poet. According to her, the Tractarians, including Newman, espoused the Romantic conception of poetry while Hopkins was critical of the Romantic poets (1989, 160).

Hopkins was ordained as a Jesuit priest in 1877, and the principles contained within the spiritual practices as developed by St Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, provided the impetus for, or thematic significance of, many of his poems. The *Spiritual Exercises* by Ignatius provide a first-hand account of these principles while explanations of some of them can be found on the Ignatian spirituality and Jesuit webpages. The first Principle and Foundation of the *Spiritual Exercises* is that ‘man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means, to save his soul’ (Ignatius of Loyola 1951, 12). The Society of Jesus was founded for ministry and the service of humankind with its adherents taking vows of chastity, poverty and obedience and devoting their lives and actions to the service of Christ and the greater glory of God. Hopkins displays in much of his poetry manifestations of the teachings of the Jesuits, a spiritual awareness that found both aesthetic and religious expression in his writing.

In his artistic expression, Hopkins fully embraces the beauties of the world as a means to praise God. The beauty of the world leads him to God – his experience of nature is, for him, a religious experience. David Coghlan in his essay, ‘Seeking God in all Things’ (2004), highlights the Ignatian principle that God is a divine being who is active in the world, at work everywhere, and this belief in the presence of God in all things, in all human experience, motivates the Jesuits’ active participation in spheres such as the arts, the sciences and literature. Importantly however for the Jesuits, literature – as with other spheres of activity – is of value only as it contributes to the furtherance of faith. It is interesting to note that Hopkins burned all the poetry he had written on deciding on his vocation as a Jesuit priest and only began writing again in 1875 at the request of his superior (Gardner in Hopkins 1978, xxv).

Gardner discusses the requirements of Jesuit devotion and the impact of the discipline on many of Hopkins’s poems. Martin Dubois, in *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Poetry of Religious Experience*, explores the religious themes that appear in Hopkins’s poetry and puts into context the spiritual exercises that informed his daily life as a Jesuit priest and influenced his writing. *The Jesuits: A History from Ignatius to the Present* by John W. O’Malley elaborates on Jesuit thinking and the communication of their credo in their activities.

There were other poetic and theological influences that played a part in the formation of Hopkins as a poet. A number of Hopkins’s poems such as ‘God’s Grandeur’, ‘The Starlight Night’, ‘The Windhover’ and ‘Hurrahing in Harvest’ share the theories of the individuality and particularity of form in beauty that are present in the writings of Duns Scotus. John Pick in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Priest and Poet*, the most important secondary

source for my purposes, expounds on this relationship between the thoughts and work of Hopkins and Scotus, also highlighting Hopkins's ardent support for Scotus's views on the significance of the incarnation and redemption. Hopkins belongs to a tradition of English religious poetry from *The Dream of the Rood* of around the eighth century to, for example, the poetry of George Herbert, Henry Vaughan and Alfred, Lord Tennyson, all of which conveys a deep consciousness of and devotion to God. Sultana Jahan in 'George Herbert and Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Comparative Reading of their Religious Experience' explores the work of Herbert and Hopkins and interrogates how for both of them as priest-poets, their similar spiritual crises were manifested in their poetry.

The critical analysis of the chosen works of Whitman and Hopkins, particularly in relation to their personal and spiritual convictions and tenets as manifested in their perspectives on and celebration of nature, encompasses a close examination of the differing preoccupations of both poets as well as their common concerns. Carol T. Christ in *The Finer Optic: The Aesthetic of Particularity in Victorian Poetry* looks at a number of Hopkins's poems contextually, analytically and linguistically. She frames both Hopkins and his work within the prevailing Victorian expression in poetry of the significance of the particularity and individuality in nature over its universality and shows how Hopkins uses bizarre images, figurative language and unconventional syntax to transform 'an intense vision of particulars into an epiphany that reveals the reality of Christ' (1975, 127). Christ also expounds the meaning and significance of inscape and instress in Hopkins's poetry and highlights the importance he placed on the imaginative perception of natural details that brings about connection with God, the creator. Kumiko Tanabe adds to the critical understanding of Hopkins and his perception of particularities as embodying the wholeness of Christ in *Gerard Manley Hopkins and his Poetics of Fancy*.

The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry edited by Joseph Bristow contains two studies that feature Hopkins and selected poems ranging from his nature poetry to his 'terrible sonnets'. The first, 'Victorian Poetry and Science' by Daniel Brown, looks at common principles of 'physical dynamism', which inform much of Hopkins's imagery in his nature poetry with God being the ultimate power and source of energy. The second, 'Victorian Poetry and Religious Diversity' by Scheinberg, examines the link between poetry and religious concerns in the works of Victorian poets and how Hopkins manifests the interconnection of his creative process with his religious allegiance in his poetry. Scheinberg also refers to notions of the poet as prophet, as presented by Thomas Carlyle and explains

how the understanding of the prophetic nature of the poet was grounded in the diversity of Victorian poetic and religious thought.

Hopkins's poetry emerges from his religious perspective as a Roman Catholic with his personal and spiritual experience informing his language, his imagery and his poetic structure. His Catholicism was central to his life and poetry and Jill Muller's *Gerard Manley Hopkins and Victorian Catholicism: A Heart in Hiding* is an insightful exploration of how Hopkins gives expression to the central tenets of his faith. Hopkins's religious beliefs and views on divinity are reviewed by Isobel Armstrong in *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics*. Armstrong analyses Hopkins's dedication to and praise of God in his poetry as exhibited through his language, use of grammar and poetic structure. Norman H. Mackenzie, in his essay on Hopkins in *The Victorians* edited by Arthur Pollard, not only looks at some of Hopkins's poems in their biographical context but examines features such as his prosodic experiments and his unconventional use of vocabulary, which give his poetry a complexity of structure and meaning. An analysis of Hopkins's body of work is given by Norman H. Mackenzie in his book, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, detailing the poet's style, themes and lexicon.

Pick, mentioned earlier, explores Hopkins's poems chronologically and contextually, examining the development of his poetic expression and technique. He asserts that no significant study of Hopkins's poetry can be undertaken without an understanding of his religious and spiritual views and progress. Of the utmost significance in studying Hopkins and his individualistic creativity is the recognition that his religious experience and his poetic experience cannot be separated. Hopkins, the Jesuit, the priest, is what makes Hopkins, the poet. Pick also makes clear through an analysis the distinctions between Hopkins's poems of 1877–1878, revealing a sacramental consciousness of nature; those of 1879–1883 where the poet, as priest, shows a concern with humankind; and some of his last poems of 1884–1889 in which he expresses a spiritual desolation.

Whitman and Hopkins's celebration of nature in their poetry converges as they glorify creation through explorations of the divine. Norman Foerster's 'Whitman as a Poet of Nature' stresses the intimacy Whitman feels with nature, a vital awareness of 'the voices of nature' as Foerster puts it (1916, 736). Foerster elaborates on Whitman's expression as a mystical poet of nature and his sensuous receptivity to nature. Whitman, in *Song of Myself*, celebrates the prairies and the mountains, the miracle of a leaf of grass or an ant as much as the marvel of the stars; he names birds and animals and plants, he expresses the unity of the

universe, of all created things. As a mystical poet of nature, it is clear that Whitman's whole being attains an affinity with nature. In *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopaedia*, Martin K. Doudna and David Kuebrich discuss the significance of nature and religion respectively in Whitman's poetry. Doudna writes of the central focus of nature to Whitman, delineating the sexual force behind the process of nature in Whitman's thought. Whitman's sensuality of expression arises out of the eroticism that threads through his work. Kuebrich correlates the spiritual dimension of nature and religion with relation to Whitman, describing the symbolic potential in nature in which religious meaning can be invested. According to Kuebrich, religion for Whitman is the core of other aspects and themes such as sexuality and nature.

Hopkins, as both a priest and a poet, was unable to dissociate his work from religion and yet he was fully alive to nature in all its manifestations. In his poetry, particularly in the sonnets he wrote in 1877 before his ordination as a Jesuit priest, he is a celebrant of the glories of the earth, revealing a sensitivity to the sensuous beauty of the world through an intensity of feeling and perceptiveness. An important element to understand in Hopkins's poetry is his use of *inscape* and *instress* in describing the principle of beauty, and the importance he placed on the imaginative perception of natural details that brings about connection with God, the creator. Pick, once again, offers insight into Hopkins's 'religious experience of beauty' and the way in which the poet describes the principle of beauty, the essential distinctiveness – *inscape* – in all things in nature. Whitman and Hopkins not only share a love of nature but, in their different ways, show a sensitivity and receptiveness in their poetry to all aspects of nature.

Hopkins, in a letter to Robert Bridges dated 18 October 1882, wrote, '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' (1955, 155). Many critics are of the view that this is an admission by Hopkins of his homosexuality and this viewpoint is supported in writings such as Eldrid Herrington's article, 'Hopkins and Whitman'. A discussion of Hopkins's sexuality deviates from the stated focus of this study on the diverging and converging perspectives on and experiences of spirituality in the poetry of Whitman and Hopkins, but the viewpoint does further reinforce the connection between the two poets. The letter reveals Hopkins's interest in Whitman's poetry (such as he read) and he, himself, while describing the 'savagery' of Whitman's art, admits to a degree of resemblance between his style and Whitman's in certain poems (Allen 1975, 278). Stephen J. Simkin's 'Gerard Manley Hopkins: Critical Perceptions of his Relation to Poetic Tradition to 1970', while recognising some connection between their minds as mentioned by Hopkins, notably

their mutual rejoicing in nature, points to their differences not only in their views on self and on humanity in relation to God and nature but in technique as well. Christopher Clausen, on the other hand, writes in 'Whitman, Hopkins and the World's Splendor' of the way in which both Whitman and Hopkins revitalised the form and art of nineteenth-century poetry through technical innovation. Both Whitman and Hopkins can be regarded as innovators, with Whitman's work being received with much controversy particularly because of what was considered the overt sexuality of his poetry. W.H. Auden and Norman Holmes Pearson, in their edition of *Victorian and Edwardian poets: Tennyson to Yeats*, discuss how the works of nineteenth century poets, including Whitman and Hopkins, extended the poetic techniques of the Romantic writers. However, both Whitman and Hopkins broke away completely in terms of style and expression. Whitman has been called not only the father of free verse but also, by D.H. Lawrence, the poet causing a revolution in sensibility, 'the one man breaking a way ahead ... the one pioneer' (Auden and Pearson 1977, xvi). Norman H. Mackenzie in his essay, 'Hopkins', states that Hopkins as a poet is unique, 'without obvious predecessors or followers' (Pollard 1970, 313).

In embarking on this study, the aim was to be critically sensitive, building on the contributions made by the scholarly tradition, and historically informed. In order fully to understand Hopkins and Whitman's development of their poetic minds and expression, it is necessary to look at the philosophies, literary and intellectual movements, and the spiritual thought of the times that influenced them. Research into these influences, as well as each poet's biographical background thus assists in providing a theoretical framework to underpin the textual analysis.

While there is an abundance of separate studies on different aspects of the poetry of Whitman and Hopkins including their spirituality, as well as some comparative reviews of the two poets, my focus is on a comparison of the quality and significance of the spirituality prevalent in their writing. With reference to, and building on, the critical tradition surrounding Whitman and Hopkins, the key angle is the exploration of the ways – both converging and diverging – in which their perspective of the divine is manifested in their poetry. In these respects, this study develops and differs from the critical material outlined in this chapter. Other scholarship will be mentioned as it arises and is relevant in the main study to follow.

Each chapter of this study deals with a different facet of the two poets' expression of the divine, particularly with regard to nature and humankind. This progresses from the introduction in chapter one which presents the biographical backgrounds of Whitman and

Hopkins and the literary and historical contexts in which they were writing. The introduction contextualises the influences that played a role in the development of their poetic minds and provides a literature review. Chapter two examines the contrasts between Whitman and Hopkins as exemplified in their roles, respectively, as prophet and priest and how their spirituality is manifested in their poetry. Chapter three looks at the poets' expression of nature and divinity with their differing sexual and sacramental approaches in their poetry to nature, while chapter four focuses on egocentric and theocentric expressions of spirituality in relation to their views on humankind and divinity. The concluding chapter presents the differences and similarities with regard to the two poets' experience and expressions of spirituality, as revealed in aspects of their work discussed in the previous chapters.

Whitman's collection of poems, *Leaves of Grass*, was not particularly successful in his lifetime while Hopkins's poetry was only published in 1918, some 29 years after his death. Nevertheless, these two poets both became known for their literary accomplishments with Hopkins being hailed as one of the greatest poets of the Victorian era and Whitman being regarded as one of America's most important and influential poets. Through their celebration of nature in their poetry as they glorify creation in differing expressions of the divine, the bohemian and the priest, opposites in lifestyle and convictions, yet find a meeting point in artistic and thematic expression.

Chapter Two: Prophet and Priest: Manifestations of Spirituality

Whitman and Hopkins both display a deep sense of spirituality in their poetry although they diverge in their perspectives, influences and expression. Whitman takes on the role of prophet, establishing himself as a visionary, a speaker for all humankind, his creed rooted in diverse principles of faith and belief, in which for him God is, primarily, the divine force or energy in the universe. On the other hand, Hopkins is first and foremost a priest and his creative expression is grounded vocationally. Hopkins saw his poetry as a means to praise and revere God, and his contemplation of beauty, of the world, is a wholly religious experience. Whitman, while displaying a spiritual consciousness throughout *Song of Myself*, does not invoke a religious dimension across his writing, as does Hopkins. Whitman's influences are many; the first part of this chapter traces the strands of thought and expression that are woven into his spiritual perceptions. He has been variously described as a humanist, a pantheist, an animist, a transcendentalist and a Christian heretic. These terms are interconnected in some way and together, they are indicative of the sense of spirituality that pervades *Song of Myself*.

While related, there is a distinct difference between religion and spirituality. It is difficult to apply a universal notion or definition of religion as such but, in essence, it includes the emotions, actions, experiences and devotional observances of people within a faith community. Religion constitutes a system of faith and practice as defined by a particular framework, commonly entailing participation in various activities such as rituals, rites, festivals and attending services. In the context of understanding Christianity as a religion, its system of faith and practice centres around the belief in salvation offered to humankind by God, through Jesus Christ (McGrath 1997, 532). With regard to this study, it is Christianity that serves largely as a point of comparison since it brings into focus the opposites of a heterodox perspective and a Christian, specifically Catholic, faith. In addition, most transcendentalists believed in the superiority of Christianity, in its ideal form, to other religions, although, as Whitman exhibits throughout *Song of Myself*, they displayed an openness to the influence of other religious texts in their thinking and writing (Myerson, Petrulionis and Walls 2010, 57–58).

Spirituality is more abstract than religion, involving a quality of being. Notions of spirituality became concretised during the nineteenth century in a blend of Christian concepts, Western esoteric traditions and aspects of Eastern, particularly Indian, religions, divorced, to a large extent, from established, orthodox religious organisations and institutions

(Myerson, Petrulionis and Walls 2010, 34). Ralph Waldo Emerson, as a transcendentalist who promulgated a religious approach based on intuition and experience, was a leader in presenting the idea of spirituality as a distinct field (Goodman 2019). Spirituality, however, is also a defining aspect of the personal relationship with God, which is part of the Christian faith. Both Hopkins and Whitman are spiritual poets.

Whitman is not a religious poet in the sense that George Herbert or John Donne is, for example, or, for that matter, Dante, John Milton or T.S. Eliot. Indeed, he says in section 46, 'I have no chair, no church, no philosophy' and throughout *Song of Myself* he declares his lack of affiliation with any one religion. He exalts the self 'more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds' (section 24), in his uniqueness attaining a universal symbolism. His work is imbued with a passionate sensuality and eroticism in which the self is both idealised and recognised for its baser, corporeal qualities. And yet, in a broad sense, Whitman can be said to be a poet of religion although not conforming to any one particular system of faith. In the first complete biography on Whitman, published in 1883, Dr Richard Maurice Bucke, a friend of Whitman's, wrote that 'he lived in an upper spiritual stratum' (Allen 1975, 9). In an article written to celebrate Whitman's bicentenary in May 2019, Michael Robertson wrote of Whitman's own words in 1872 that the deep purpose underlying the plan of *Song of Myself* was the religious purpose ('Church Times'). Vernon Lushington, a leading positivist and follower of Auguste Comte's Religion of Humanity, assuming that Whitman knew nothing about positivism, saw the poet as a spontaneous testimony to the ideas of Comte and his universal Religion of Humanity (Taylor 2010, 256). This secular religion presents the progress of humankind in three stages – from theological to metaphysical to positivist – and advocates the worship of humanity rather than of God, as well as promoting altruism and the notion of immortality through memory (Taylor 2010, 154/158). Although Whitman cannot be considered a poet of positivism, his ideas do correspond, in part, to Comte's Religion of Humanity. Interestingly, Lushington describes Whitman as offering 'a renovated humanity' and sees him as a moralist and a prophet (Taylor 2010, 258).

What Whitman calls religion is of the utmost significance to him in its recognition of universal life, of the divinity in all things (Symonds 2002, 19). This is made clear in the following lines from his poem, 'Starting from Paumonok':

Each is not for its own sake,
I say the whole earth and all the stars in the sky are
for religion's sake.

Song of Myself contains numerous references to, and declarations of, faiths, creeds, religious experiences and worship systems in which the poet achieves a universality of religious expression:

My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths,
Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between
ancient and modern

(Section 43)

Whitman's position is heterodox and all-embracing, inclusive of all religions, in complete contrast to the devotional orthodoxy of Hopkins. Whitman embraces 'the Gospels, accepting him that was crucified' (section 43), but he also reveres mythological gods such as Kronos and Osiris, and Eastern gods or sages such as Brahma and Buddha (section 41). The poet is prophet and seer – as a visionary, he assumes a central role in *Song of Myself*, ardently declaring, 'I am afoot with my vision' (section 33). In his universality and self-idealisation, he imbues his poem with a philosophical and spiritual quality. His experiences are ecstatic ones, inducing a state of illumination (Cowley in Whitman 1960, xv). Whitman manifests his spirituality through his religious and mystic utterances and experiences.

William James, in writing about different religious experiences, distinguishes between institutional and personal religion. Institutional religion incorporates worship, theology, ceremony, ecclesiastical organisation, sacraments and ritual acts. Personal religion centres on the inner workings of man's heart and the relationship 'soul to soul, between man and his maker' (2002, 28). Whitman asks the question in *Song of Myself*, 'Why should I pray? why should I venerate and be ceremonious?' (section 20), making clear his distance from institutionalised religion. He claims a personal relationship with God, not only in the present but, in his imaginative consciousness, putting himself into the ancient past:

Walking the old hills of Judaea with the beautiful gentle God
by my side

(Section 33)

Whitman, here, establishes an affinity with God that he later expands to become more than mere companionship. It is a relationship of intimacy between himself and God, at least spiritually: 'Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah' (section 41). Here, again, it is the Hebrew God, the God of Israel that Whitman refers to, bringing the past into the reality of the present.

During the years before 1855 when Whitman was envisioning *Leaves of Grass*, his poetic identity was moulded by the conceptualisation of the poet as prophet in the writings of Thomas Carlyle and Emerson (Kuebrich 1998). In his lecture, 'The Hero as Poet', Carlyle writes, '... indeed at all times, Prophet and Poet, well understood, have much kindred of meaning. Fundamentally indeed they are still the same; in this most important respect especially, that they have penetrated both of them into the sacred mystery of the Universe' (1904, 92). Emerson, in writings such as 'Nature', 'The Divinity School Address' and 'The Poet' calls for an ideal poet, one who interprets nature and humanity and, as a prophet, 'must know the muse only' in order to be receptive to its message (2009, 38). According to David Kuebrich, Emerson defines the poet as a religious prophet (1998). In his 1855 preface to *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman declares that the work of priests is done, that the day of the preacher is past, statements that according to Michael Sowder place him, not as an atheist, but as a poet-prophet taking on the role of priest and preacher (1999, 202). While Whitman asserts that he is writing a 'new Bible', much of his theology, nevertheless, incorporates aspects of Christianity and evangelism (Sowder 1999, 202). This is particularly seen in his desire, like the evangelists, to effect 'conversions' and, thus, act as redeemer, in his case, of the American people (Sowder 1999, 202). Despite his creed, with its focus on the body, sexuality, democracy and equality, being contrary to orthodox beliefs, his rhetoric and distinctly spiritual worldview serve a religious purpose.

Whitman's 1855 preface highlights the influence and impact of the poet-prophet. He writes that 'Past and present and future are not disjoined but joined. The greatest poet forms the consistence of what is to be from what has been and is. He drags the dead out of their coffins and stands them again on their feet ... he says to the past, Rise and walk before me that I may realize you. He learns the lesson ... he places himself where the future becomes present' (Whitman 1960, 12). Whitman, thus, locates himself within the biblical tradition where the poet is a prophet, since he establishes himself 'where the future becomes present' (Raz 2018, 6–7). For him, time and space are transcended:

The past and present wilt—I have fill'd them, emptied
them.

And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.

(Section 51)

With the fusion of the past, present and future, the poet stands ready to fulfil his place as prophet. Sowder points out that the relationship of Whitman's 1855 preface to *Song of Myself*

as a whole resembles the biblical structure of prophecy and fulfilment (1999, 206). Whitman, in his preface, writes of the coming of the ‘greatest poet’ who, prophet-like, will show humanity ‘the path between reality and their souls’ (1960, 9–10). Whitman’s view of himself as a prophet, thus, parallels that of the biblical idea of a prophet who speaks the mind of God rather than one who predicts the future – the ‘afflatus’ surges through him, ‘I speak the password primeval’ (section 24). In the Bible, the author of Chronicles, for example, writes of the prophet, Micaiah, speaking God’s truth, ‘And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak’ (2 Chronicles 18:13). In keeping with most prophecy announcing the advent of someone of significance, Whitman writes of this poet-prophet in the third person, which shifts in the opening statement of *Song of Myself* into the first person as he affirms the fulfilment of his prophecy: ‘I celebrate myself’ (Sowder 1999, 207). This voice in the first person extols the self and the universe as they are materially existent now. Within this present, ‘a spear of summer grass’ becomes the focus of contemplation and the ‘symbolic centre’ of a poem of epic and mystic significance (Sowder 1999, 207).

Whitman links his major themes of love, death and transcendence in symbols that are often both complex and esoteric. His esotericism manifests in enigmatic imagery – the grass emerging ‘from under the faint red roofs of mouths’ in section six, for example – achieving mystic dimensions which find expression in a prophetic voice. This connection between the prophetic, in the sense of revelatory, and the use of mystical symbolism such as the stars which ‘sent influences to look after what was to hold me’ (section 41) lends a sense of spiritual mystery that goes beyond the intellect in its pointing to Whitman’s visionary perspective:

Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,
 Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I was even there

(Section 44)

From his position in the present, Whitman looks back to the beginning of time, to the ‘huge first Nothing’ of pre-creation. But he does not merely look back. In his poetic imagination, he places himself there. Whitman, himself, in his introduction to the first (1855) edition of *Leaves of Grass* states that the poet enters ‘the essences of the real things and past and present events’ (1960, 7). The past becomes, in effect, a reality of Whitman’s present. It is a drawing together of the fabric of Time, which operates on two levels; of the poet as a universal symbol and the imparting of a sense of eternal, cosmic mystery. In this universal symbolism, time and space are irrelevant; the poet becomes ‘immortal and fathomless’

(section 7). Whitman, thus, imbues his work with a quality of esotericism, of the inexplicable – he is a ‘mystery of incarnation’ (Waggoner 1968, 163). One of Whitman’s close friends, William Douglas O’Connor, wrote a pamphlet in 1865 entitled ‘The Good Gray Poet’ in which he referred to Whitman as a modern prophet, an interpretation supported by Bucke in his biography of Whitman in which he writes about the religious nature of *Leaves of Grass*, referring to it as ‘a revealer and herald’ (Allen 1975, 9).

Emerson in his essay, ‘The Poet’, refers to poets as ‘liberating gods’, communicating to his readers the transcendent nature of the world (2009, 30). The poet is a prophet, articulating and interpreting the link between nature, humankind and spiritual truth in a divine unity (Wayne 2006, 222). James explores how transcendental idealism, as epitomised by Emerson, is manifested in an abstract ideality of God, in ‘the immanent divinity in things’ (2002, 30). According to James, the core of transcendent belief is the ‘essentially spiritual structure of the universe’, a belief that both Emerson and then Whitman subscribed to (2002, 30). Emerson’s influence on Whitman is made clear by Whitman himself. ‘I was simmering, simmering, simmering. Emerson brought me to a boil,’ he stated after having come across Emerson’s work in the early 1850s (Trowbridge 1920, 166). Emerson gives voice to his transcendental conception of the relationship between the universe and humankind, particularly with regard to his role as a poet. His receptivity towards nature and his relation to the world find expression in mystic experience: ‘The currents of the universal being circulate through me’ (Emerson 2007, 18). Likewise, Whitman states, ‘To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow’ (section 20). For both of them, their position of centrality in the cosmos is evident. In his essay, ‘The Poet’, Emerson makes a distinction between the poet and the mystic – the poet can touch the divine in intense mystic experiences, but does not codify or solidify the meaning, as mystics are prone to do (2009, 32). While Whitman as a mystical poet connects with the divine, he frequently conveys the deeper mysteries of life and humankind without providing answers:

You are also asking me questions and I hear you,

I answer that I cannot answer, you must find out for yourself.

(Section 46)

Yet, as ‘the divinely inspired poet’, in section 20 he clearly indicates that he is the interpreter of the world and all that is in it (Bloom 1999, 16):

To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow,
All are written to me, and I must get what the writing means.

In his prophetic role, the poet places himself at the centre of existence with the repeated phrase 'to me' with its identifying preposition in relation to the personal pronoun. It is he who illuminates the 'writing' of the universe. Whitman's mood is one of supreme self-acceptance, recognising himself as the confluence of all cosmic truth and mystery:

Through me the afflatus surging and surging, through me the
current and index.

(Section 24)

The use of the word 'afflatus' is significant, referring as it does to a divine creative impulse and, thus, contextualising Whitman within the tradition of prophets associated most usually with Judaism and Christianity but also with other world religions. The repetition of 'surging' accentuates the power of divine inspiration in him, which is further emphasised by the use of the word 'current' evoking a flow of energy or a charge. In the context of the meaning of 'afflatus', the 'index' takes on a religious sense of sign or guide, that is, from God.

Whitman's prophetic utterances are infused with mystical overtones:

I hear you whispering there O stars of heaven,
O suns—O grass of graves—O perpetual transfers and
promotions

(Section 49)

He is a mystical poet, a poet concerned with the soul, the transcendental, the unity between God, nature and humans. His immersion in and celebration of nature is a mystical experience in which he communicates directly with God. He imparts a spiritual significance to everyone and everything: 'And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of/ infidels' (section 31). Many critics have explored Whitman's declarations surrounding what they see as his mystic experience, an ecstasy of emotion that consists of 'a rapt feeling of union or identity with God (or the Soul, or Mankind, or the Cosmos), a sense of ineffable joy, leading to the conviction that the seer has been released from the limitations of space and time and has been granted a direct vision of truths impossible to express' (Cowley in Whitman 1960, xii–xiii). This sense of rapture, or moment of epiphany, is very evident in the following lines:

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge
that pass all the argument of the earth,
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the
women my sisters and lovers,
And that a kelson of the creation is love

(Section 5)

James calls such emotional experiences, in which the poet describes himself as communing directly with a supernatural energy or force, ‘mystical states of consciousness’. It is in this mystical state that James believes that personal religious experience is rooted and centred (James 2016). Whitman’s mysticism in *Song of Myself* bears some relation to elements of medieval Christian mysticism. Bernard McGinn, in exploring the history of Western Christian mysticism from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, describes key characteristic themes. The essential acts of loving and knowing are vital to accomplish union with God (McGinn 2012, 47). In the above passage, Whitman shows how he achieves a mystical oneness with God through knowledge and love – the foundation, ‘kelson’ of all life in the universe is love. The word, ‘kelson’, refers to the centreline structure of a ship, acting to strengthen and support its framework, thus, in the context above, love is an underlying core of all life. The passage has biblical undertones, particularly the line,

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge
that pass all the argument of the earth,

which is reminiscent of the promise in Philippians 4:7, ‘And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus’. McGinn goes on to discuss another important theme in Christian mysticism, that of the relation of the spiritual senses (the inner person) with the exterior senses of the body (2012, 51). This is a frequent thread running through *Song of Myself* but perhaps the clearest example can be seen in one of the most erotic passages in the poem where Whitman describes the sexual joining of his ‘I’ with the ‘you’:

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morning,
How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn’d
over upon me,

And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your
tongue to my bare-stript heart,
And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you held
my feet.

(Section 5)

Here, Whitman portrays the union of the soul and the body in a rapt embrace, and it is through this coupling that Whitman – and, indeed, humankind – achieves divine status (Bloom 1999, 15). The poet introduces the spiritual dimension of sex, which is further developed through imagery of the sacredness of sexuality and the human body. The suggestive carnality of phrases such as ‘settled your head athwart my hips’ and ‘plunged your tongue to my bare-stript heart’ evokes the erotic dimension of Whitman’s mysticism.

The attainment of divinity relates to another theme of Christian mysticism – that of deification, the process of becoming ‘Godlike’ through deep union with God (McGinn 2012, 58). Whitman declares his own deification emphatically:

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch
or am touch'd from

(Section 24)

Not only does Whitman see himself as divine, but he deifies all people as well: ‘In the faces of men and women I see God’ (section 48) and:

I am the mate and companion of people, all just as immortal
and fathomless as myself

(Section 7)

Orthodox Christian mysticism, however, makes clear the difference that is always apparent between God and his creatures even within the deepest union with God (McGinn 2012, 58). An important aspect of *Song of Myself*, particularly in terms of its mysticism, is Whitman’s emphasis on his ‘unique individuality in contemplation of the Godhead or the realm of the spirit’ (Allen 1975, 195). The poet expresses this individuality in the first line of the poem where he declares, ‘I celebrate myself, and sing myself’. In Whitman’s emphasis on the self, it seems that his egoistic personality subsumes God.

Song of Myself is a mystical poem in the sense that it deals with spiritual potentialities arising out of the poet’s transcendental beliefs. Whitman begins section 21 with the lines:

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell are with me.

These two lines contribute to the quality of mysticism that runs through *Song of Myself*, with Whitman presenting the Christian notions of heaven and hell. Unlike Hopkins, who saw his poetry as a means to praise and revere God, Whitman, as influenced by transcendentalist thought, equated writing poetry with writing scripture, both of them emanating from divine inspiration. Hopkins puts himself in a subordinate position in his servant relation to God while Whitman views the relationship as equal.

Not only does Whitman claim that he is divinely inspired, but he takes on the persona of Christ himself. In his spiritual role he alludes to himself as the healer and the saviour: 'I am he bringing help for the sick as they pant on their backs' (section 41). His identification with Christ is complete: 'I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there' (section 33). Whitman announces his divinity frequently in *Song of Myself*, but it is in his assumption of the identity of both the crucified and the resurrected Christ that he is most often criticised for heresy:

That I could forget the mockers and insults!
That I could forget the trickling tears and the blows of the
bludgeons and hammers!
That I could look with a separate look on my own crucifixion
and bloody crowning.

(Section 38)

He states his acceptance of the Gospels and of Christ, heretically from a Christian perspective, in his declaration of his oneness with Jesus. His assertion of the value of different creeds with their different gods is, in itself, a denial of Christianity's claim to exclusivity or theological supremacy, which, however, does not undermine the spirituality that runs through *Song of Myself*. Cowley asserts that Whitman cannot be termed a Christian heretic since he was never a Christian at any stage (Whitman 1960, xiv). His belief system is clearly heterodox from a Christian point of view – which is the received belief system of the nation.

Nonetheless, there are many other biblical allusions in *Song of Myself*. In section one, Whitman makes reference to the Christian creation narrative:

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil,
this air.

In the creation story, Adam was formed from the dust, ‘this soil’, and then given the breath of life by God (Genesis 2:7). In this identification with Adam, Whitman points, once more, both to his role as universal man, as a cosmic ‘I’ and to his merging with creation. The following lines are again reminiscent of the Judeo/Christian creation story where ‘God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good’ (Genesis 1:31):

The earth good and the stars good and their adjuncts all
good

(Section 7)

In the final section of the poem, Whitman parallels the imagery in section one – ‘I depart as air,’ and ‘I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love’ (section 52). This is Whitman’s farewell, having come full circle, looking to his next incarnation or ‘fold of the future’ (section 51) (Cowley in Whitman 1960, xx). The imagery encompasses both the material and the nonmaterial, reflecting the inseparability in *Song of Myself* of body and soul, of corporeality and spirituality, with both these states co-existing.

Not only did Whitman make use of biblical references and imagery, but he was also influenced by the syntactical structure and prosodic style of the King James Bible. Gay Wilson Allen writes that the rhythmical style of *Leaves of Grass* matches the parallelism of biblical verse and Hebrew poetry where thoughts are balanced alongside each other, usually in synonymous, cumulative and climactic form (1975, 216/220–221). For example, the following lines from Joshua 10:12 are written in synonymous form:

Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon;
And thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.

Whitman’s use of parallelism serves three functions: it provides the basic structure, with each line usually making an independent statement; the repetition of thought creates a chanting or rhapsodic style; and the parallelism gives the lines a unity similar to the stanza of conventional poetry (Allen 1975, 221). In parallelism, as is evident in biblical rhythm, the single line forms the stylistic unit (Allen 1975, 218). In his poetry, Whitman wrote in lines not sentences. This can be seen in the following lines from section one, which reveal a synonymous parallelism of thought with a cumulative effect:

I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

Whitman's references in his poetry to the Bible are linked to his notion that, in his epic work, *Leaves of Grass*, he is formulating a new Bible (Raz 2018, 3). The many prophetic resonances in *Song of Myself* add profundity to what he sees as his calling emanating from 'an experience of mystical communion' (Raz 2018, 4). His language brings together nuances of mysticism and prophecy; in esoteric terms he describes 'orchards of spheres' producing 'quintillions'; he speeds through the heavens (section 33); he questions his spirit about the time when '*we become the enfolders of those orbs*' in the heavens, and his spirit replies that '*we but level that lift to pass and continue beyond*' (section 46). The relationship of mysticism to prophecy manifests in the link between contemplation and proclamation. Through his prophetic calling, Whitman takes on the mantle of spokesperson, interpreter, visionary for all humanity. As a poet, and particularly as a poet-prophet, he is, in Emerson's words, 'representative' of the people (2009, 6).

Whitman's unity with humanity extends to the universe as well. The poet very clearly communicates his conception of spirituality through his evocation of cosmic oneness:

I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and
each moment then
[...]
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is
sign'd by God's name

(Section 48)

According to Cowley, the concept of an 'all-enfolding Consciousness', of the presence of God or a divine energy manifesting in all life, is one that Whitman had in common with Indian philosophers (Allen 1975, 262). He seems to derive inspiration from the many different foundations of belief, declaring his affinity for all humanity, his acceptance of all creeds and faiths by his assumption of the role of 'common man': 'Of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and religion' (section 16). Thus, while Whitman always adopts a central role as seer and prophet, as a visionary poet illuminating mystic truths to humankind, he is also universal man, identifying and sharing experiences with people from all states, of all ages and types and occupations – a Southerner, a Northerner, a Kentuckian, a Louisianian (section 16):

A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentleman, sailor, quaker,
Prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician, priest.

(Section 16)

Whitman both participates in their lives and tells their stories – his poetic voice is primary, for his own self as he ‘celebrate[s]’ and ‘sing[s]’ himself, extolling his uniqueness and individuality, and as he speaks for and identifies with other people.

Whitman, in omnist fashion, declares that he is ‘of every rank and religion’. He displays influences of Oriental literature, religions and philosophies in his writings (Allen 1975, 260) and in the following lines, he not only pays homage to Eastern gods and teachers, ‘Admitting they were alive and did the work of their days’ (section 41) but includes, in a bizarre combination, the gods of Greek, Egyptian, Babylonian and Norse mythology, the war priest of the Aztecs and the nature deity of the Algonquian Indians. The Christian crucifix and the Islamic God are mentioned alongside ‘every idol and image’:

Lithographing Kronos, Zeus his son, and Hercules his
grandson,
buying drafts of Osiris, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha,
In my portfolio placing Manito loose, Allah on a leaf, the
crucifix engraved,
With Odin and the hideous-faced Mexitli and every idol and
image

(Section 41)

Whitman looks to oracles, honours the gods, salutes the sun. He is at the side of the llama or brahmin trimming the lamps of the idols; he is a gymnosophist contemplating in the woods. He reveres the ancient religious texts of the Vedas and the incarnations of the Shastas and is regardful of the Koran (section 43). Like Emerson and other transcendentalists, Whitman was very receptive to Asian religions and his ‘pantheistic poetic vision at times exhibits striking parallels to Indian religious systems such as Vedanta and tantra’ (Myerson, Petrulionis and Walls 2010, 34). These parallels are clarified by Allen who highlights the similarity of Whitman’s ideas and Vedantic teaching, particularly with regard to the doctrine of the spirituality rather than the materiality of the self, and the immortality of what Whitman calls ‘Me, Myself’ in *Song of Myself* (1975, 261). His views on immortality and the self will be explored further in chapter four.

Whitman was influenced by Emerson’s pantheistic view of the world and the eternal presence of divinity. In Emerson’s speech to the graduating class at Harvard Divinity College in 1838, he stated, ‘The religious sentiment ... It is a mountain air ... It makes the sky and the hills sublime ... It is the beatitude of man. It makes him illimitable’ (1983, 78). Pantheism

refers to the immanent rather than the transcendent nature of the divine underlying the universe. In pantheistic doctrine, divine unity and immanence are core precepts and it is because of belief in a divine unity that God is considered immanent in the world (Levine 1994).

Whitman's spirituality has a pantheistic cast, discovering God in nature rather than God's power and splendour through nature. This can be seen in the line, 'I hear and behold God in every object' (section 48). The poet is in communication with God –

I find letters from God drop't in the street, and every one is
sign'd by God's name

(Section 48)

– but, in this particular instance, this is an interaction with God rather than a mystical union with the divine (Myerson, Petrulionis and Walls 2010, 41). While Whitman expresses the view that God is immanent in the universe, his is not an adoration of God through his communion with nature and the world (Symonds 2002, 16). There are numerous instances throughout *Song of Myself* of the poet's contact with God. As a sharer in universal life, he claims a relationship with God that, at times, achieves mystic union or, at the very least, correlates on some level with the 'universal spirit of the pantheist God' (Gracia, Korsmeyer and Gasche 2002, 71) Whitman's perception of divinity in everything, including himself, bestows on him a certain importance:

My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,
The Lord will be there and wait till I come on perfect terms,
The great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine will be there

(Section 45)

In these lines, Whitman declares the closeness of his relationship with God, his companion and 'lover', not all that different here to the Lord God that Hopkins serves and reveres – the friend and beloved in orthodox Christianity. This is a personal God that Whitman invokes; however, in much of *Song of Myself* and, particularly in the earliest edition in accordance with Emersonian principles, God is 'an abstract principle of energy' (Cowley in Whitman 1960, xiv).

Jorge Luis Borges underlines Whitman's belief in a pantheist God, particularly in relation to his exaltation of the self within the universe. Borges points out the predilection of

pantheist texts to catalogue or list miscellaneous things (Gracia, Korsmeyer and Gasche 2002, 70), a tendency seen frequently in *Song of Myself*:

The pure contralto sings in the organ loft,
The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of his foreplane
 whistles its wild ascending lisp,
The married and unmarried children ride home to their
 Thanksgiving dinner,
The pilot seizes the kingpin, he heaves down with a strong
 arm,
The mate stands braced in the whale-boat, lance and harpoon
 are ready,
The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches,
The deacons are ordain'd with cross'd hands at the altar

(Section 15)

This particular section catalogues the everyday activities of a range of people, from convert to prostitute, from conductor to peddler. Whitman's custom of cataloguing serves to convey his identification with all types and classes of people, reinforcing his theme of universality and spiritual unity:

And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them,
And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,
And of these one and all I weave the song of myself

(Section 15)

For Whitman, God cannot be separated from the material world – he exists in all things and within all people. We are God and God is us; he is the universe. The poet's position is one of unconfined faith, free to believe in the immanent spirit without conformity to the doctrines of orthodox science or religion: 'Logic and sermons never convince' (section 30). Whitman's creed or religion lies in his recognition of, and belief in, the presence of Spirit within all material manifestations, transitions and occurrences (Symonds 2002, 19). However, it is interesting that within his viewpoint of divinity, and in line with Christian theology, Whitman includes the existence of evil in the world, implying the presence of Satan (Symonds 2002, 22). In section 21 he talks about 'the pains of hell' and as a prophet-poet, a voice for all humanity, he proclaims:

I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be the
poet of wickedness also

(Section 22)

However, Whitman, according to William James in his lectures xvi and xvii on 'Mysticism', had an inability to feel evil, despite his acknowledgment of it. The sentiments that he expresses in the first person in *Song of Myself* are all expansive, sanguine and passionate, 'persuading the reader that men and women, life and death, and all things are divinely good' (James 1902). Whitman's apparent pagan tendencies have often been noted but James argues that Whitman is not unaware of sin as 'natural animal man', simply indifferent to it. His indifference to sin and pride in his freedom from doctrine, and religious obligation and emotion, are displayed in section 32 (James 1902):

I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid
and self-contain'd,
I stand and look at them long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of
owning things,
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived
thousands of years ago,
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.

Whitman, here, is commenting on the way people obsess about sin and religion, in contrast to animals which are 'placid' and 'self-contain'd'. The juxtaposition of 'respectable' and 'unhappy' is an interesting one, with the implication being that respectability and unhappiness go together and the reverse that disreputableness brings happiness. Whitman's indifference to sin and, in fact, his lack of belief in man's sinful nature is highlighted by the contrasting references to animals and to humankind. There is evidence of deism in this passage, a belief system which the young Whitman subscribed to, apparent particularly in the lines,

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,

They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,

although his views were moulded by the Quaker, Elias Hicks's teachings of a universal church and an inner guidance rather than conformity to creeds, scriptural writings or conventionalities (Allen 1975, 162).

Whitman, in his refusal to be regardful of the sorrows, ills and mortality of the world, proclaims in his poem, 'To Think of Time', that 'What is called good is perfect and what is called bad is just as perfect' (James 1902). Here Whitman, as he does in *Song of Myself*, affirms his heterodox creed, equalising good and evil. In the focus on good as the 'universal aspect of being', evil cannot gain reality (James 1902). In his preface to the 1855 publication of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman reiterates that 'Nothing out of its place is good and nothing in its place is bad' (1960, 8). He looks to 'a new order' – what has been seen by some people as a new religion – with optimism and buoyant acceptance, feeling no need to dwell on 'immortality or God or the perfection of things or liberty or the exquisite beauty and reality of the soul' (Whitman 1960, 22). As equally, Whitman is unconcerned with the finite, the vices and imperfections of humankind, the decline and regrowth of nature, drawing all together – man and woman, nature and the cosmos, life and death, good and evil – into his vision of transcendent possibility:

Do you see O my brothers and sisters?
It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is eternal
Life—it is Happiness.

(Section 50)

In section 41, he is clearly the prophet of a new religion, 'outbidding the old cautious hucksters' and assuming the divinity of the God of different belief systems. And, as much as he waits 'my time to be one of the supremes', he bestows deity 'freely on each man and woman I see'.

In section one Whitman says, 'I loafe and invite my soul', establishing the significant theme of the relationship between matter and spirit. This theme emerges in imagery throughout *Song of Myself* with the poet connecting body and spirit in order to reveal his conception of spirituality. While the belief of the connection between body and soul is one held in Christian orthodoxy, as well as in other religions and philosophies such as Islam, Whitman's notions of the body, his own body – 'hankering, gross', 'fleshy, sensual' – and his

imagery of the soul – ‘plunged your tongue to my bare-stript heart’ – point to his heterodoxy. However, there is a correlation between biblical assertions about the body and Whitman’s viewpoint that ‘each part and tag of me is a miracle’ (section 24). The Bible states in Psalm 139:14 that ‘I am fearfully and wonderfully made’ and Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:19 that ‘Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost’. In the relationship between body and soul, the body is to be honoured. For Whitman, the co-equal and co-related worlds of matter and spirit are grounded in a sensual, physical reality (Allen 1975, 205) but sexuality and the human body are, nevertheless, invested with a sacredness. This theme is developed further in chapter four. The poet sees spirit and matter as forming a cosmic unity that is the only real existence. He declares that, ‘I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul’ (section 21). For Whitman, body and soul are equal:

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul

(Section 48)

Roger Asselineau stresses the importance of understanding that Whitman’s sensuality does not remain solely carnal – although his ecstatic poetry ‘begins in sensual delight, it leads to spiritual insight’ (Allen 1975, 195). In making the point about the connection between sexual experience and spiritual experience as portrayed by Whitman, it is worth touching briefly on the place of *eros* in a few religious texts, particularly those of Saint Teresa of Avila. The Song of Songs from the Bible describes the sexual relationship between two lovers in explicitly sensual imagery, frequently within the metaphorical context of nature. Symbolically, the imagery can be interpreted to convey the desire of the soul for God. The Christian theologian and philosopher of the late 5th to early 6th centuries, known as Pseudo-Dionysius, spoke of the erotic desire for God. In the writings of the sixteenth-century Spanish mystic, Teresa of Avila, she makes it clear that her understanding of the search to unite with God, the creator, is based on the experience of *eros* (Tyler and Edwards 2016). Her vision of her visitation by an angel piercing her heart with a golden spear has been visualised in Gian Lorenzo Bernini’s famous sculpture, *The Ecstasy of Teresa*, a visualisation of her own description of her spiritual ecstasy. The imagery that Teresa uses is erotic and visceral, illustrating the conjunction of spiritual and physical ecstasy. Teresa’s context in the description of her mystic vision is that of the workings of the heart, despite the sexual connotations (Tyler and Edwards 2016). Yet, her thinking and writing have their roots in a long tradition of Christian theology in which erotic love and agape love (a pure,

unconditional love) come together in expressing the desire and yearning of the soul for union with God. The portrayal of erotic love to represent a passion for God provides a framework for Whitman's understanding and depiction of the connection between religious and sexual ecstasy. For Whitman, the physical act of sexual ecstasy leads to spiritual awakening.

Whitman's vocabulary is a religious one – he makes frequent references to the soul, to God in various forms, to worship and faiths, to love and knowledge in the context of spiritual meaning. For both poet and reader, the exploration of the mystic truths of life and the universe is a journey. Whitman says, 'I tramp a perpetual journey' (section 46). In this journey, all need to put 'Creeds and schools in abeyance' (section 1) and discover the 'original energy', the divine force in unchecked nature (Folsom and Merrill 2016, 9). Everything is imbued with religious meaning – the stars, the earth, the seas. In *Song of Myself* in particular, the grass takes on symbolic significance; it is miraculous:

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey work of
the stars

(Section 31)

Significantly, it is through contemplation of the grass that the poet arrives at his prophetic and mystical truths:

Space and Time! now I see it is true, what I guess'd at,
What I guess'd when I loaf'd on the grass

(Section 33)

Space and time, past and present, nature and humankind and divinity are all one in a cosmic unity and eternity. Whitman's vision as a whole cannot be separated from the spiritual significance and meaning of his poetry.

However, not all critics recognise the religious character of the themes in Whitman's work. Richard Rorty argues that Whitman is representative of a new American secularism in which humankind would move away from notions of obligations to the divine, immortality and sin as taught by the Christian scriptures (Marovich 2009, 351). Beatrice Marovich, herself, contends that Whitman's vision did not include the myth of creation by a transcendent and sovereign power despite Whitman alluding to the creation story in *Song of Myself* (2009, 351). While Whitman's work is imbued with religious symbols and references, Marovich states that, ultimately, the aims of his vision are political (2009, 365). In contrast to

this, Horace Traubel, Whitman's companion in his final years, states that *Leaves of Grass* is 'the most religious book among books: crammed full of faith' (Kuebrich 1998).

Gerard Manley Hopkins was a priest from 1877 until his death in 1889, during which time the primary focus of his poetry and writings was the expression of his faith. While both Hopkins and Whitman's work is imbued with a sense of spirituality, the poetic realisation of Hopkins's faith diverges in crucial matters such as monotheistic belief, salvation and redemption, service to and reverence of God, and devotion as a religious in all practices. His poetry is underpinned with theological orthodoxy and precision. One of the most significant dates in Hopkins's life was his reception into the Roman Catholic Church in 1866, followed by his decision to join the Jesuit order in 1868 and train for the priesthood. His poetry emerges from his religious perspective as a Roman Catholic and as a priest with his personal and spiritual experience informing his poetic expression. Indeed, the canon of Hopkins's criticism has, from the beginning, been in agreement that his poetry was a form of self-expression of his religious faith (Dubois 2017, 52). Pick emphasises the unity between the poet, the priest and the Jesuit, stating that no study of Hopkins's poetry can be separated from an understanding of his religious and spiritual views and progress (1978, 1). According to Cynthia Scheinberg, poetic and religious identities in Victorian England, with their diversity of religious perspectives, were linked (Bristow 2000, 164).

Hopkins's first religious poem, 'Barnfloor and Winepress', printed in 1865 in a High Church journal, establishes him within a long tradition of English religious poetry, all of which conveys a deep consciousness of and devotion to God. Many of these poems, of which one of the earliest is 'The Dream of the Rood' of around the eighth century, are concerned with the centrality of the crucifixion in Christian experience. Poets such as John Donne, George Herbert and Richard Crashaw demonstrably show the influence of the Ignatian system of meditation and evocation of the Passion (Bennett 2004, 145). Hopkins in his 'Barnfloor and Winepress' weaves together complex biblical images of the Passion:

For us the Vine was fenced with thorn,
Five ways the precious branches torn;
Terrible fruit was on the tree
In the acre of Gethsemane;
For us by Calvary's distress
The wine was racked from the press;
Now in our altar-vessels stored

Is the sweet Vintage of our Lord.

The reference to the winepress is linked to the eucharist, as is the 'heavenly Bread' in the first verse. Images of the barn floor, or in the first verse of the poem, the threshing-floor', and the winepress, which also appear in the epigraph from 2 Kings 6:27, are found throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament, Numbers 18: 26–7 reads: 'And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshing-floor, and as the fulness of the winepress'. These linked images, reflected in Hopkins's poem, are reminiscent of bread and wine, presaging the eucharist which, according to Catholic teaching, is transubstantiated into the body and blood of Jesus Christ in his sacrifice on the cross. Hopkins also alludes to the Five Holy Wounds suffered by Jesus on the cross in Christian tradition in the line, 'Five ways the precious branches torn'. Hopkins's use of typological allusion follows, in similar fashion, that of previous religious poets, particularly concerning poetry of the Passion. In the closing couplet of Herbert's poem, 'The Agonie', the poet also feels a sense of encounter with the sacrificial Christ through the eucharist, thus amalgamating, as does Hopkins, poetic expression with Christian symbology:

Love is that liquor sweet and most divine,
Which my God feels as bloud; but I as wine

Herbert not only makes use of Christian symbolism, but employs the hieroglyph, either as a central image or visually in a pattern poem, which relates to both content and structure (Westerweel 1984, 34). Notably, the emblematic tradition which influenced Herbert – although he was an Anglican priest – was part of Roman Catholic and, particularly, Jesuit didacticism (Westerweel 1984, 47). In Herbert's work, the use of the hieroglyph frequently serves a pastoral and devotional purpose, a purpose which infuses Hopkins's poetry.

Hopkins and Herbert were both priests who used their poetic voices to show their commitment to and praise of God. Hopkins was much influenced by the earlier poet and a brief look at some of Herbert's themes shows a correlation between the two poets, which sheds light on the spirituality that emerges in Hopkins's poetry. While Hopkins is more concerned with God as the creator, the source of mystical joy, Herbert's poetry focuses on the theme of love of God (Jahan 2013, 124). However, both Herbert and Hopkins experienced a spiritual struggle which led to a barrenness of the soul. Herbert's spiritual struggle was brought about by his frustration at the restraints of priestly life and is articulated in his poem, 'The Collar':

I struck the board and cried: No more
I will abroad
What? Shall I ever sigh and pine?

Hopkins's struggle, although somewhat different in terms of source, causes no less suffering than Herbert's. In 'No Worst There is None', which is similar in tone to Herbert's poem, he calls out in anguished despair:

Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?
My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief-
Woe, world-sorrow

Hopkins, too, suffers with the struggle of self-renunciation but his is a deep questioning of his own endeavours as a priest (Jahan 2013, 126). Both poets come to an acceptance of the mystery and authority of God. Herbert, after the struggle with the self in 'The Collar', answers God with quiet submission:

But as I rav'd and grew more fierce and wilde
At every word,
Me thoughts I heard one calling, *Child!*
And I reply'd, *My Lord.*

Hopkins refuses to give in to despair despite his anguish of soul, declaring 'Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee' in '(Carrion Comfort)'. In his anguish of soul, the poet can identify with Christ's suffering but inherent within this identification is the promise of the resurrection. The life and hope that is granted through the resurrection – following the self-abnegation of the crucifixion – is affirmed in Herbert's 'Affliction (IV)' with the glorious promise of final union with Christ: 'Till I reach heav'n, and much more, thee'.

The character of Hopkins's devotional life has a strong Christological focus, which is particularly Ignatian – the notion of Christ's crucifixion as a sacrifice is addressed frequently in Hopkins's sermons, letters and poetry (Downes 1959, 42). However, this Christological focus emerges also in the theme of Christ as hero. Christ is seen as having a divine heroism – in his descent to earth to live as a man, his refusal to exert his supreme divine power to overcome temptation, his acceptance of death for the salvation of humankind – a heroism that inspired Ignatius and became a primary Christian ideal for Hopkins (Downes 1959, 42). Hopkins repeatedly represents the crucified Christ as the hero, the chevalier (Bennett 1984,

186). In 'The Windhover', the line, 'O my chevalier!' evokes the qualities of courage, honour and justice associated with the ideal knight, dedicated to service and sacrifice. Hopkins, in his December 1879 Advent sermon says, 'Love for Christ is enthusiasm for a leader, a hero, love for a bosom friend, love for a lover' (1959, 48). In 'The Wreck of the Deutschland', he refers to the 'hero of Calvary' (stanza 8) and the 'adored King' (stanza 10). Hopkins makes his relationship to God evident in his panegyric terminology. God is ruler, friend and lover, conveying a relationship in which the poet can realise the primary goal of the *Spiritual Exercises* to attain union with God through love (Pick 1978, 29). The juxtaposition of the terms, 'hero' and 'lover' in Hopkins's sermon is an interesting one. The word 'lover' denotes intimacy while the concept of hero invites adulation and acclaim, thus, the juxtaposition speaks to both the humanity and the glory of Christ.

Much of Hopkins's poetry refers directly or indirectly to God, using various appellations of the Trinity – the dedication to 'Christ our Lord' and the designation 'the chevalier' in 'the Windhover', the Holy Ghost in 'God's Grandeur', Christ in 'The Starlight Night' and 'Spring', and 'our Saviour' in 'Hurrahing in Harvest', to name a few. He writes about God – 'Glory be to God for dappled things' ('Pied Beauty') – or to God – 'Thou art indeed just, Lord' – revealing the God of beauty, love and mercy, whom he reveres. Ignatian spirituality is centred around the greater glory of God and the salvation of the soul. The *Spiritual Exercises* are of untold significance in the life of a Jesuit: in the words of Father LaFarge, 'The personal practice of the *Spiritual Exercises* is especially a perpetual means of regeneration' (Pick 1978, 25). The *Spiritual Exercises* are designed to take place across four weeks although this division refers more to the four parts into which they are divided rather than to a specific assignment of time. In Ignatius's own words, the exercises include 'every method of examination of conscience, of meditation, of contemplation, of vocal and mental prayer, and of other spiritual activities' such as penance in order to find the will of God (1951, 1). For all the years of his life as a priest, from his novitiate to his death, Hopkins studied, meditated on, was influenced by and gave expression to the *Spiritual Exercises* in his attitudes and perspectives, his sermons and his poetry (Pick 1978, 25). In all his practices and writings, Hopkins was, first and foremost, a priest holding 'a strictly theological account of the logos, the authority of the Word made flesh through the incarnation of Christ' (Armstrong 1993, 420). The *Spiritual Exercises* affirm the ministries of the Jesuits as spiritual with the purpose of guiding people on a personal journey towards God, 'beyond routine of rite and ritual' (O'Malley 2014, 10). This does not deny the significance of doctrinal observances but places a priority on an individual connection with God. Hopkins's personal commitment to

and communion with God is indisputable, but his poetry also abounds with references to sacramental practices and symbolic allusions – the eucharist in ‘Barnfloor and Winepress’; ‘Prayer, patience, alms, vows’ in ‘The Starlight Night’; and in ‘Hurrahing in Harvest’, the metaphorical use of the harvest which appears throughout the Bible in parables such as that of the sower, as a figure of speech for spiritual growth and a symbol for the thanksgiving of bounty, and as a trope for Christ, the ‘Bread of Life’ (John 6:35).

Bernadette Waterman Ward writes of how a particularly Roman Catholic sacramental vision pervades Hopkins’s poetic themes (2002, 131) in relation to his priestly function and the presence of priestly action in his poems. This includes not only a religious sensibility, but references to liturgical and sacramental practices in the Catholic church. Here, it is worth noting the similarity with Herbert, whose whole collection, *The Temple*, portrays the Christian life cycle until the Christian reaches heaven in ‘Love III’, as well as the cycle of the church year. Herbert’s collection offers a kind of devotional handbook; Hopkins relates various experiences to liturgy and the sacraments without, however, doing so in a systematic way. Hopkins in his poetry evokes the sacraments – such as oil, bread, wine – as symbols used in religious practices that are understood by the senses. In Catholic theology, these physical symbols declare the presence of God among his people (Ward 2002, 142). As a priest, Hopkins would have administered the sacraments to his people, expressed poetically in his writing such as ‘Felix Randal’ and ‘The Bugler’s First Communion’, for example, both poems which will be discussed in chapter four. In Hopkins’s poem, ‘At the Wedding March’, he celebrates the sacrament of matrimony, commemorating a wedding at which he assisted (Mackenzie 1981, 134). The poet implies the spiritual blessing that God bestows on a marriage then looks, through the three verses, at the three elements of Catholic marriage – procreation, exclusivity and the lifelong nature of the marital bond. In the first verse, Ward points out the significance of Hopkins’s use of alliteration to emphasise the sacramental theology in the poem:

God with honour hang your head,
Groom, and grace you, bride, your bed
With lissome scions, sweet scions,
Out of hallowed bodies bred.

The alliteration connects God, the groom and grace; it connects ‘hang your head’ with ‘honour’ and ‘hallowed’; and it connects the bride, the bed and ‘bodies bred’ (Ward, 2002, 137). In the second verse, the alliteration emphasises the sacramental nature of marriage:

Deep, deeper than divined,
Divine charity, dear charity

Here, the juxtaposition of the verb, 'divined' with its ambiguity of meaning, with the adjective, 'divine', invests these lines with a profound sense of sacredness. In Ephesians 5:29 Paul writes of the body that man 'nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church'. The sacrament of matrimony is a covenant that expresses the unbreakable relationship of love between Christ and the Church, his people:

Who to wedlock, his wonder wedlock,
Deals triumph and immortal years.

Hopkins introduces a personal note with the line, 'I to him turn with tears'. Here, his priesthood is fully manifested as he tearfully prays for the marriage, a marriage which, in 'wonder wedlock', parallels the union of Christ and his Church.

Hopkins's sacramental vision is realised throughout his poetry not only in his thematic content and thought but, often, in the preciseness of his imagery. In 'The Wreck of the Deutschland', his reference to 'a vein/ Of the gospel proffer, a pressure, a principle, Christ's gift' (stanza four), points to Christ's blood which, to a Catholic, is the actual redeeming force. In the first five stanzas of the poem, his sacramental vision is clearly Christocentric (Ballinger 2000, 83). The mention of the eucharist draws together the poet and the world in unity with the life of God, with Christ:

I whirled out wings that spell
And fled with a fling of the heart to the heart of the Host.

(Stanza 3)

It is not only the 'Host', the sacrament of Holy Communion – which Hopkins refers to so frequently in his sermons and devotional writings – that plays a role as one of the sacraments in his poetry but also, for Hopkins, that humanity and nature are sacramental (Ballinger 2000, 83). According to Robert Barth, because of the incarnation, humankind is both human and a sharer in the divine nature and, thus, 'a sacrament of God's presence to the world' (Ballinger 2000, 83). In accordance with Hopkins's sacramental vision of nature, creation is, in itself, a sacrament. God's glory is in the thunder, his beauty is in the starlight:

Since, tho' he is under the world's splendour and wonder,
His mystery must be instressed, stressed;
For I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when I understand.

For Hopkins, God is in all things. His sacramental vision of life becomes particularly apparent in the lines,

Christ – for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his

from his poem, 'As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame' where this vision is so clearly interlinked with the incarnation. God is both immanent and transcendent. In his transcendence, he is separate, holy, exalted above all creation; in his immanence, God is wholly present in his creation – testified to by the incarnation (Rasmussen, Wolfe and Zachhuber 2017, 111). Deuteronomy 4:39 makes these two doctrines clear: 'Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else'.

Thus, an important facet of Ignatian spirituality is the conviction that God is active in the world 'with the whole reality of human existence [becoming] the setting where God's action reveals itself' (Coghlan 2004, 100). God's presence in everyday life and in the world allows for a closer communion with him. The belief in God's omnipresence is portrayed in Hopkins's poem, 'God's Grandeur' where the opening line, 'The world is charged with the grandeur of God', carries the image not only of immanence but of vigorous activity and force. In the poem, the image of fire in 'flame out' is associated with vitality as well as renewal. Hopkins introduces further religious associations with the simile 'like the ooze of oil/Crushed' in lines three and four. With the image of the oil, he brings to mind sacramental observances of Catholic doctrine since oil has been used from the time of the early Church for the anointing of priests and bishops and for the extreme unction to the dying (Mackenzie 1981, 64). The use of this simile affirms Hopkins as priest. In the last three lines of the sonnet, the poet again expresses God's active presence in the world through the comfort and hope offered to the world by the Holy Ghost of the triune God:

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.

The maternal image inherent in the last line encompasses the tender love associated with Mary, the mother of Jesus who, according to Catholic belief, is the embodiment of faith and devotion.

Hopkins's conversion to Roman Catholicism and his life as a Jesuit priest impresses on his poetry not only religious experience but Catholic principles and persuasions. Roman Catholic theology centres around its doctrine on faith and the infallibility of the Scriptures. Catholic creeds were reformulated in the mid-sixteenth century at the Council of Trent by the Church fathers and medieval doctors. From the Middle Ages onwards, Mary came to play a significant role in Catholic doctrine, largely due to the influence of Duns Scotus who emphasised the area of Mariology (McGrath 1997, 51). The veneration of Mary in Catholicism comes from Luke 1:28 where the angel said to her, 'Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women'. Hopkins wrote a few poems in praise of Mary, among them being 'The May Magnificat', 'Rosa Mystica' and 'The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air we Breathe'. Marian piety is centred around petition and intercession and in 'The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air we Breathe', Mary is one of the ways through which God can reveal his glory (Mackenzie 1981, 158):

Let all God's glory through,
 God's glory which would go
 Through her and from her flow
 Off, and no way but so.

The poem, which can be seen partly to constitute a prayer ends, too, with a petition: 'Fold home, fast fold thy child'. 'The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air we Breathe' consists of an extended metaphor – the air, which is essential for all natural life, is an analogy for Mary, mother and sustainer (Pick 1978, 103). The opening image, 'Wild air, world-mothering air', is repeated throughout the poem underlining the concept of grace and sustenance through Mary:

Be thou then, O thou dear
 Mother, my atmosphere.

The poet enjoins Mary to:

Stir in my ears, speak there
 Of God's love, O live air,
 Of patience, penance, prayer.

The words, 'Of patience, penance, prayer' call to mind Hopkins's earlier poem, 'The Starlight Night' with the line, 'Prayer, patience, alms, vows' (Dubois 2017, 57). While prayer is the cornerstone of all Christian life, these acts of devotion are particularly relevant to the

Catholic church. The Marian dimension in Hopkins's poetry adds a specifically Catholic flavour to his spiritual expression.

As a priest, Hopkins gave his life in service to God and to humanity: teaching, preaching and caretaking his congregation wherever he was placed by the Jesuit order. The theme of sacrifice, which is so prominent in the Ignatian discipline, and which is connected with his own sacrificial life as a priest, emerges powerfully in Hopkins's poem, 'The Windhover' (Gardner 1978, xxv). This is a poem to Christ, made clear by the dedication – 'to Christ our Lord' – but also by the complex visual language in which 'the achieve of, the mastery of' the element of air by the bird becomes a representation of Christ. The poem portrays the beauty of Christ's sacrifice in the intricacy, power and glory of the windhover in flight. The beauty and haecceity – a word coined by Duns Scotus to describe his concept of uniqueness or 'thisness' – of the windhover in flight bring to the fore the splendour of Christ, the 'chevalier', who is 'a billion / Times told lovelier, more dangerous'. Once again, the image of fire is used – 'And the fire that breaks from thee then' – with its brilliance and danger relating to Christ who demands our obedience and love (Mackenzie 1981, 81). The words 'blue-bleak embers', associated with the coldness of a dying fire, highlight the image of sacrifice since fire burns to its own destruction. However, like Christ's crucifixion, the supreme example of sacrifice and thus selfless love, a burning fire gives out light and warmth. This is the ultimate lesson of 'life-giving abnegation' (Mackenzie 1981, 84):

No wonder of it: sheer plod makes plough down sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash-gold-vermilion.

The imagery of the windhover, the fire and the Christ of the Passion come together in a powerful embodiment of beauty and glory that is articulated with emotional intensity:

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!

According to Carol Christ, Hopkins's poems such as 'The Windhover' are frequently shaped around a sensuous understanding and appreciation of a natural creature or object which leads to a recognition of the reality of God (1975, 146). This sensuous appreciation is allied to an intensity of experience to which the poet gives voice through a richness and complexity of

imagery. In 'The Windhover', the poem moves from a sensory evocation of the bird to a depiction of sacrifice, a term frequently embedded in theological discourse.

The lines from the following fragment, probably dated around 1885, some four years before Hopkins's death, encapsulate his religious identity and commitment:

Thee, God, I come from, to thee go,
All day long I like fountain flow
From thy hand out, swayed about
Mote-like in thy mighty glow.

The poet goes on to say:

I have life before me still
And thy purpose to fulfil;
Yea a debt to pay thee yet;
Help me, sir, and so I will.

Here again, the theme of sacrifice comes to the fore in the connection of dedication and service to and for God: 'And thy purpose to fulfil'. Hopkins makes his spiritual position and his relationship to God clear; all things begin and end with God and it is through God and his own spiritual consciousness that he fulfils his purpose in life, that of his role as priest. The poet is but a 'mote' in the spectrum of God's grandeur and glory, God's 'mighty glow', an image of light and energy which appears in other poems such as 'God's Grandeur' –

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out like shining from shook foil;

– 'the fire that breaks from thee then,' from 'The Windhover'. The poet's commitment to serving God, his commitment to the priesthood apparent in the fragment, his 'purpose' and 'debt', reflects the core tenets of Jesuit teaching.

In his poetry, Hopkins draws attention to religious ideals and acts, as part of spiritual observance. Part of his role as a Jesuit priest and his religious discipline was preaching the word of God, with his evangelical message emerging in his sermons and devotional writings as well as his poetry. Hopkins offers glory and worship directly to God, acknowledging him as the creator of beauty, seen here in 'Pied Beauty':

He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

He delineates the existence of a Jesuit priest – sworn to a life of poverty, chastity, obedience, prayer and contemplation – and also the spiritual commitment demanded of a Christian in ‘The Starlight Night’: ‘Buy then! bid then! – What! Prayer, patience, alms, vows’. Again, it is the intensity of the sensuous perception of natural beauty, as in ‘The Windhover’, that leads to the understanding of the reality of God (Christ 1975, 146). In ‘The Starlight Night’, the exclamatory images of the octet paint an evocative and fanciful picture of the stars at night which, in their beauty, point to the higher beauty of God. ‘Christ and his mother and all his hallows’ are harboured within the rim of the starry heavens, ‘The bright boroughs, the circle-citadels there!’ The sestet develops the imaginative portrayal of a landscape at night but, significantly, in the tercet, the poet makes reference to biblical symbolism to convey spiritual harvest as Christ and the saints feast in a barn:

These are indeed the barn; withindoors house
The shocks. This piece-bright paling shuts the spouse
Christ home, Christ and his mother and all his hallows.

The use of the word ‘spouse’ calls attention to Christ as the bridegroom, an image used repeatedly in the Bible to express the relationship between Christ and his ‘bride’ – the Church or body of believers. Inherent in this marital imagery is the answer to the mystery of understanding the dedication, love and commitment that Jesus offers his followers, the sacramental relationship that is essential to Christian life.

The stars in Hopkins’s ‘The Starlight Night’ are prefigured by these words from stanza five of ‘The Wreck of the Deutschland’:

I kiss my hand
To the stars, lovely-asunder
Starlight, wafting him out of it; and
Glow, glory in thunder

Hopkins, consistently in his poetry, shows an intense consciousness of the beauties of the world around him although his focus is always on religious expression and an almost mystical drawing closer to God through the glories of nature. Pick notes the qualities of mysticism, describing the journey of the soul towards the mystical experience of union with God (1978, 129). In Pick’s words, ‘The essence of mysticism, of “infused contemplation” (to speak of it in theologically accurate terms), is [...] the felt contact, immediate and experimental [...] of God’s presence’ (1978, 130). It is within the immediacy of God’s

presence that there is mystical contemplation. However, Pick, while not denying that Hopkins may have been a mystic, controverts the idea that he was a mystical writer (1978, 131). Dennis Sobolev states that, while most contemporary critics repudiate the presence of mysticism in Hopkins's poetry, it was the apparently mystical aspect of Hopkins's writing that was appealing to readers when his poems were first published in 1918 (2004, 455). Suzanne Stewart, in contrast to Pick, describes Hopkins's spiritually inspired perceptions and mystical experience as finding expression in his writing (2016). His mystical consciousness is exhibited in his sensory relationship to nature and the world through his ideas of inscape and instress, which will be discussed in chapter three. This sensory awareness is an important feature in Ignatian prayer and contemplation.

Joseph Munitiz draws attention to the fact that there are two Ignatian texts, as well as the *Spiritual Exercises*, which point to the mystical dimension of Ignatian sensibility (Ignatius of Loyola 2004). One of these is Ignatius's Spiritual Diary recording his mystical revelations across six weeks in 1544 during which time he was trying to discern God's will for the Jesuits relating to a life of poverty (Munitiz 1972, 101). The other is what is called his Reminiscences or Autobiography, a dictated work that covers the years from his conversion in 1521 to 1538, and which emphasises a direct, intimate relationship with God (Ignatius of Loyola 2001). In Ignatius's efforts to lead a balanced spiritual life, he describes visions of God creating the world and of the Trinity, regular visions of the humanity of Christ and of his mother, Mary, and a reality that is transformed to give insight into his understanding of the nature of God, self and reality. In his Reminiscences, Ignatius speaks of seeing with 'interior eyes' (Ignatius of Loyola 2004). These words correspond to the mystical phraseology of his time and indicate a change from solely outer spiritual observances to inward experience. In both these texts, as well as in the *Spiritual Exercises*, the emphasis is on a direct experience of God that occurs in the heart rather than engendered by study and Church practice. According to Philip Sheldrake, this sense of mystical inwardness is present even within the *Spiritual Exercises* where the attention is on a practical, mission-oriented message (2019, 59). Walter Ong comments on the deep influence that the *Spiritual Exercises* with their contemplative orientation had on Hopkins. For St Ignatius, sensory awareness is spiritually significant – a personal relationship with God entails full consciousness and perception of him and 'the world's particularities' (Stewart 2016).

In his October 1886 letter to Richard Watson Dixon, Hopkins wrote, 'There have been in all history, a very few men, whom common repute, even where it did not trust them, has treated as having had something happen to them that does not happen to other men, as

having *seen something*, whatever that really was. Plato is the most famous of these' (1955, 147). Neo-Platonism is a strand in Christian mysticism, and this will be dealt with more broadly in chapter three. Hopkins himself is one of those who has 'seen something' and his poem, 'The Wreck of the Deutschland', testifies to this vision. The opening stanza of the poem reveals the poet's personal experience of the divine presence. Hopkins conveys the mystical action of grace that brings the soul into union with God: 'Over again I feel thy finger and find thee' (stanza 1). The portrayal in the poem of the divine activity of love at work in creation – through evoking God's 'finger' – establishes the reality for Hopkins of the communication of the human and the divine (Yates 2018).

John Duns Scotus, the thirteenth-century theologian, philosopher and Franciscan, with his sacramental view of the world in which he propounds a mystical interpretation of the theology of union with God through love, was of particular influence on Hopkins (Pick 1978, 131). Hopkins became an admirer of Scotus's philosophical and theological writings after coming across a copy of one of Scotus's commentaries in the library at Stonyhurst in 1872 (Dubois 2017, 20), writing about him as he 'who of all men most sways my spirits to peace' in 'Duns Scotus's Oxford'. Scotus is considered one of the finest minds of the Middle Ages, teaching at Cambridge, Oxford and Paris and making significant contributions to Christian theological thought (McGrath 1997, 45). He contends that all knowledge originates in the senses, proposing a theory of knowledge in which sense and intellect combine together simultaneously to experience both the particularised form within and the outer manifestation of that inner form (Pick 1978, 158). Scotus asserts that God's created world serves as a link for humankind between the finite and the infinite. This principle of belief is closely associated with the call to contemplate God who dwells in and gives life to all creatures, conferring blessings and gifts as stated in the 'Contemplation to Attain the Love of God' from the last section of the *Spiritual Exercises* (Ignatius of Loyola 1951, 102).

Hopkins's untitled sonnet beginning with the line, 'As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame,' shows the influence of Duns Scotus in its representation of the created world as part of God (Martin 1991, 208). In this poem, the inscape of each object and creature on earth reveals its particularity in the same way that man's nature is an indication of his uniqueness in Christ (Martin 1991, 208). The meaning and use of inscape will be discussed in a fuller examination of Hopkins's nature poems in chapter three. The Scotist aspect imparts a quality of mysticism, at times, to Hopkins's poetry for in his experience of haecceitas or individuation he feels the immediate presence of God. Hopkins's poetry narrates the relationship of his soul to God; his poems, according to Pick, are love poems

(1978, 129). For Hopkins, the glories of the earth are always important, revealing glimpses of God, the creator, through the particularity of each creature and natural object (Mackenzie 1981, 149). Artistic expression is amalgamated with religious expression so that this sonnet becomes a paean of praise to God and an acknowledgment of his goodness and splendour. In the octet, the imagery reinforces the idea of the beauty of sound, light and colour of natural and man-made things representing facets of God's ultimate perfection (Mackenzie 1981, 149). Hopkins, as he so frequently does, makes use in the opening line of the evocative trope of fire to emphasise the haecceity of the kingfisher and the dragonfly and also to underscore the spiritual purpose of all created things. The image of fire plays a significant role in scripture, both in the Old and the New Testaments. Malachi in 3:2 writes of the coming Messiah as the 'refiner's fire', which elucidates Hopkins's perception of Christ's resurrection as transformative in 'That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection'. In Psalm 29:7 David says, 'The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire' while Luke 3:16, referring to Jesus says, 'he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire'. The association of the Holy Ghost with fire appears repeatedly, with the Holy Ghost, the comforter and enabler that Christ leaves behind, manifesting as tongues of flame or fire on the disciples' heads.

The octet in this poem moves from the complexity of description of the inscape of particular things to the sestet where the position of man and the purpose of his self-expression are depicted:

I say more: the just man justices;
Keeps grace; that keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is –
Christ – for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

Humankind was made in the image of God and, thus, should reflect Christ since Christ is God made man (Mackenzie 1981, 150). In the *Spiritual Exercises*, St Ignatius affirms that a person's 'limited power comes from the supreme and infinite power above, and so, too, justice, goodness, mercy' (1951, 103). The octet makes clear that the person whose sins have been forgiven through the grace of Christ –

[...] the just man justices;
Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;

Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is –

is able to act with 'Christlike justice or goodness' (Mackenzie 1981, 150). The sonnet as a whole, with its emphasis on self-expression through one's God-given nature, points to the particularity and significance of purpose, captured in the line, 'Crying *What I do is me: for that I came*'. For Hopkins, this is the priesthood.

The conviction that man reflects the Christ who himself became man occurs very strongly in 'That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection': 'I am all at once what Christ is, since he was what I am'. The dimension of mysticism in Hopkins's poetry is evident in his notions of humanity's reflection of Christ and transformation in the resurrection. Images of fire and light dominate as befits a poem where the resurrection is shown to be transformative: 'This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood' into 'immortal diamond'. The opposites of darkness and light, death and resurrection come together in the purity and immortality of the diamond mined from the darkness (Lichtmann 1989, 171). The metaphorical comparison of nature to a Heraclitean fire, coupled with other references or allusions to fire – 'Million-fuelled, nature's bonfire burns on', 'spark', 'world's wildfire' – strengthens the theme of change and transmutation. Heraclitus theorised that fire forms the basic principle of a unified universe and that constant change – and exchange of state – forms the essence of the elements (Mackenzie 1981, 196). The description of the clouds, the rays of light, the 'bright wind', the 'dough, crust, dust' of the earth illustrates the downward and upward movement of Heraclitus's theory of the perpetual recreation of nature through fire. Hopkins moves from the lines, 'all is in an enormous dark/ Drowned' and 'death blots black out' to the hope and light of the resurrection in 'A beacon, an eternal beam'. In the closing lines, Hopkins represents humanity in all its wretchedness and sin, using the analogy of the diamond being revealed from the darkness to convey spiritual metamorphosis:

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.

These lines allude to 1 Corinthians 15 and are also reminiscent of the scriptural teaching of the transformation of man in Christ: 'Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new' (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Hopkins's imagery also points to the Day of Judgment of the Bible where people's bodies will be transformed, and judgment will be passed on the inhabitants of the earth (Mackenzie

1981, 197). The line, 'In a flash, at a trumpet crash', makes reference to 1 Corinthians 15:52 – 'In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed'. The imagery of fire, within the theme of transformation through resurrection in the poem, can be seen to resonate with Revelation (20:14–15) in the 'lake of fire' of judgment.

'That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire' was written in 1888 in the last year of Hopkins's life and after the 'sonnets of desolation' of around 1884–5. It is significant that even in these sonnets with their expression of spiritual desolation, Hopkins's devotion to God never wavers. His desolation arises not from a doubting of God or, indeed, of his own faith but a self-doubt about his own worthiness. Maria Lichtmann, in looking at both the poems of Hopkins's middle period and his 'sonnets of desolation', describes how contemplation becomes illumination, revealing the true meaning and significance of every detail in nature as it is transformed by and into Christ (1989, 171). Even the 'sonnets of desolation' of Hopkins's bleak years in Dublin, in all their darkness, can be termed contemplative, since the intellectual and spiritual darkening gives way to 'the luminosity of deeper faith' (Lichtmann 1989, 171). Hopkins, throughout his poetry and particularly in the 'sonnets of desolation' given their thematic content, never submits to his anguished isolation and sense of desolation or loses faith in God. In the midst of darkness, his own or that of the world, he always turns towards the light (Mackenzie 1981, 173). Thus, in 'God's Grandeur' the sunrise brings hope as the 'morning, at the brown brink eastwards, springs' even though 'the last lights off the black West went' and in 'My own heart let me more have pity on' the poet is able to recognise God's smile:

[...] as skies
Betweenpie mountains – lights a lovely mile.

Hopkins's affirmation of God remains: 'Thou art indeed, just, Lord'. 'That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection' which follows the 'sonnets of desolation' bursts out triumphantly in a recognition that 'this life is a refining fire of purgation and man will be snatched from the conflagration and emerge, all conflicts resolved, a new being' (Pick 1978, 155):

Enough! the Resurrection,
A heart's clarion! Away grief's gasping, joyless days, dejection.

This is, ultimately, Hopkins's poetic presentation of the religious devotion and creed that informs his life and work as a priest, the joy and gladness in the glory of Christ at his resurrection (Pick 1978, 155). St Ignatius encourages exercitants in the Fourth Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* to 'ask for the grace to be glad and rejoice intensely because of the great joy and the glory of Christ our Lord' (1951, 95). Everything is renewed in an offering back to God, the source and creator; all praise is due to him. In 'Pied Beauty', Hopkins ends with two words standing alone, an emphatic summation of the purpose of all on earth: 'Praise him'.

Hopkins's spirituality is exhibited in his lifelong commitment to and faith in God. In various terms, critics share the view of Hopkins's poetical mind developing within the framework of his spiritual personality. Pick refers to him as a 'saintly man' (1978, 131) while Gardner describes him as 'a man of unusual integrity, both intellectual and moral' (Hopkins 1978, xiv). Sobolev calls him 'a poet of radical and self-conscious faith' (2004, 455). A fuller description about Hopkins's poetry in the foreword to Pick's *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Priest and Poet* by M.C. D'Arcy, the Jesuit intellectual, reads, 'Hopkins's poetry is a loving regard of God and His creatures in the light of the Exercises of St Ignatius and the sacramental doctrine of the Church' (Pick 1978, ix). Perhaps Hopkins's clearest expression of his religious conviction can be seen in his unfinished poem, 'On the Portrait of Two Beautiful Young People' where humanity is directed towards the highest righteousness in spiritual life, which is Christ: 'There's none but truth can stead you. Christ is truth'.

Hopkins's poetry is defined by his way of thinking as a Christian and, more particularly, as a Catholic, with most of his imagery and thematic content underpinned by theological teachings. On no account, can Whitman be viewed as Christian, or even, in some respects, religious. Nevertheless, these two poets certainly converge in certain aspects and manifestations of spirituality in their work whilst differing in others. Hopkins clearly reveals his relationship to God, with his poems communicating in various forms with the God who is at the centre of his Christian faith. Whitman, on the other hand, refrains from ever addressing God directly. He mentions God many times in *Song of Myself* but also never refers to Jesus by name, rather applying a wholly subjective perspective to Christ's experience. Thus, particularly with regard to the Passion, he makes use of personal pronouns – 'I suffer'd' (section 33) and 'my own crucifixion' (section 38). Whitman uses the word 'Lord' twice in the poem, a name which indicates a person or being of power and authority in many

religions. Contrary to Hopkins, Whitman makes it clear in *Song of Myself* that his pantheistic outlook is accepting of all gods rather than subscribing to any one religion: ‘I have no chair, no church, no philosophy’ (section 46). However, a comparison of their expressions of their connection to God shows a similarity of thought and interpretation of this spiritual relationship. Hopkins seeks to attain union with God through love. God is the ‘adored among men’ (‘The Wreck of the Deutschland’, stanza 9), Christ is the ‘lover’ of the tall nun of ‘The Wreck of the Deutschland’ who is her being, her breath (stanza 25). Similarly, Whitman designates God as friend or companion, and lover:

The Lord will be there and wait till I come on perfect terms,
The great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine will be
there.

(Section 45)

The terms of intimacy which both poets use suggest a personal relationship with God that is certainly consistent with Hopkins’s spiritual devotion and Whitman’s transcendental leanings.

The Jesuit commitment, in which service, reverence and praise play a significant role in maintaining a relationship with God, is always central to spiritual ministry. O’Malley points out that, at one time, critics of Ignatian spirituality saw the importance that Jesuits placed on the individual’s personal communication with God over the sacraments and practices of the church as displaying unorthodoxy (2014, 10). In this prioritising of God’s direct communication with the individual, there is an interesting parallel with Whitman. Whitman, while proclaiming his affinity with God, questions the need for religious ceremony and tradition: ‘Why should I pray and be ceremonious?’ (section 20), although his is a complete distancing from institutionalised religion, and the Jesuit intention is the achievement of a deeper faith and relationship with God that surpasses pious duty.

Hopkins’s poems are evangelical in nature with his poetic aesthetic often underpinned by the content of his sermons. In his sermon of 23 November 1879, he describes Jesus as ‘our hero, a hero that all the world wants’, the hero ‘of the divine Gospels’, a ‘warrior and a conqueror’ and a ‘king’ (1959, 34). These panegyrics find expression poetically in Hopkins’s writing – the chevalier of ‘The Windhover’, the ‘adored King’ and ‘hero of Calvary’ of ‘The Wreck of the Deutschland’. Hopkins goes on to describe Christ as a thinker, an orator and a poet, designations which make an interesting juxtaposition to Whitman’s like view of himself in *Song of Myself*. Hopkins’s evangelical message in his poetry and his sermons is contrary to

the creed of Whitman, for whom ‘sermons never convince’ (section 30). Whitman grants a spiritual value to the human body in all its coarser qualities over significant religious acts and effects:

The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer,
This head more than churches, bibles and all the creeds.

(Section 24)

Whitman’s prophetic voice and his heterodoxy, in his rejection of theology, doctrine and religious observances, are very different from Hopkins’s priestly identity and his orthodoxy, particularly his evocation of specifically Roman Catholic practices. Nevertheless, there is a convergence between them. Whitman’s belief in the immanence of God in the world is indicative of his perspective and manifestation of spirituality. In many instances, his expression of God’s presence in all things is very close to Hopkins’s and, in fact, as Pick points out, Hopkins’s poetic representation of sacramentalism, particularly with regard to the beauties and glories of nature, is in similar vein to pantheistic language (Pick 1978, 63). Whitman’s pantheistic mysticism has much in common with Hopkins’s Ignatian spirituality in which God exists in all things and is present in everyday life. However, while for Hopkins, creation is a manifestation of the incarnate Christ and he recognises God’s immanence in the world, his is not a veneration or deification of the world (Ward 2002, 132). God is the ‘giver of breath and bread/ World’s strand, sway of the sea.’ As creator, he is praised and revered: ‘His mystery must be instressed, stressed’ (‘The Wreck of the Deutschland’). In antithesis to Hopkins’s portrayal of the God of scripture whose ‘work is perfect’ (Deuteronomy 32:4), Whitman writes of the ‘formless wild’ creation of an indeterminate spirit (Sagar 2012, 20):

Spirit that form’d this scene,
These tumbled rock-piles grim and red,
These gorges, turbulent-clear streams, this naked freshness,
These formless wild arrays, for reasons of their own;
I know thee, savage spirit—we have communed together,
Mine too such wild arrays, for reasons of their own

(‘Spirit that Form’d this Scene’)

There is a resemblance in the imagery between this poem and Hopkins’s ‘Inversnaid’ with its ‘darksome burn’ and ‘rollrock highroad roaring down’. However, the difference between the two poets is explicit in Whitman’s phrase ‘for reasons of their own’, which goes against

Hopkins's theology of creation, in its particularity fulfilling God's purpose: 'Crying *What I do is me: for that I came*' ('As kingfishers catch fire') (Sagar 2012, 20). Hopkins knew of Whitman's poem, having read it in *The Academy* (1881). In his October 1882 letter to Robert Bridges, in writing of Whitman he expresses that 'extremes meet', admitting that Whitman's 'savagery of his art, this rhythm in its last ruggedness and decomposition into common prose' is not unlike his (1955, 157). It is without question that, stylistically, Hopkins and Whitman show a similarity. In reading a few of Whitman's poems, Hopkins noted that they gave 'a strong impression of his marked and original manner and way of thought and in particular of his rhythm' (1955, 154), all of which would contribute to Hopkins's identification with Whitman. However, Whitman's 'way of thought' tends towards pantheistic sensuality through which his prophetic voice emerges, his 'savagery' projecting as a 'barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world' (section 52) while Hopkins, with his aesthetic and sacramental outlook, ever remains the ascetic, dedicated priest (Sagar 2012, 18).

Hopkins approaches God through prayer, meditation, the practice of the *Spiritual Exercises* and the contemplation of beauty. For Whitman, his experience of intimacy with the divine in *Song of Myself* comes through the unstructured 'mystical states of consciousness' that James refers to (2016). Pick defines this mysticism as 'the immediate awareness of God's presence in the soul' (1978, 131). For both Hopkins and Whitman, the presence of God's mystery is inherent within creation; however, contrary to Whitman, Hopkins presents mystical images of Christ in nature in order to draw closer to the divine presence. His personal and spiritual experience in his commitment to Roman Catholicism and his life as a Jesuit priest provides the impetus for his poetry. Hopkins, the poet, cannot be separated from the priest in his voicing of his experience of beauty and his self-expression; his religious faith is integral to his artistic articulation. In everything, he cultivates and communicates his awareness of God's presence in his life. Whitman's self-expression manifests from the beginning of *Song of Myself* as he opens with his personal declaration, 'I celebrate myself'. Throughout his poem, the words 'I', 'Me', 'Myself' have ambiguous connotations, containing autobiographical meaning but also representing a microcosm of all humanity. Whitman's is a representative voice in line with the biblical prophets; he is a poet-prophet who asserts his autonomy and individuality as bestowed by divine authority (Raz 2018, 5). James writes of Whitman as being of 'the genuine lineage of the prophets' (1902). For both Whitman and Hopkins, the religious lexicon that they use adds a spiritual dimension to their poetry. However, Hopkins's spirituality is focused, devotional and orthodox, impacted by his

life as a priest; Whitman's is diffuse, indeterminate and heterodox, establishing himself in *Song of Myself* as a prophet.

Chapter Three: Nature and Divinity: Sexual and Sacramental Approaches to Spirituality

This chapter explores the polarities of Whitman and Hopkins's individual experiences of the natural world and the aesthetic underpinning the expression of nature in their poetry. Both are attracted by the sensuous beauty of the world but for Hopkins it is a religious experience of beauty while Whitman writes about an immersion in nature that has a distinctly erotic quality. However, it is important to recognise that, for Whitman, the sensuality of his imagery, as well as his perception of both nature and the self, conveys a corresponding spirituality. As mentioned in chapter two, for Whitman, sex and physicality are sacred. Whitman's view of the world is influenced by a pantheistic vision; for him, God is immanent in the world and he sees in nature manifestations of God. On the other hand, for Hopkins, nature and beauty draw humankind to a God who is both immanent and transcendent – his is a sacramental view of the world. These two differing yet comparable perspectives on nature and divinity will form the core of the chapter, but the influence of the Romantic tradition of nature writing on these poets' work cannot be overlooked.

Romanticism encompasses several characteristics: an emphasis on imagination and intuition; an importance given to emotion and personal feeling and a focus on individualism; a deep expression of the spiritual side of man and a rapturous, almost religious response to nature (Schneider 2007, xiii). This response to nature is equally discernible in the poetry of both Whitman and Hopkins. Romantic poetry expresses a unity of mind and world, subject and object, with its core being captured in William Wordsworth's words from his preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* that poetry is the 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' (Armstrong 1993, 340). The Romantic aesthetic, as an ongoing literary phenomenon, cannot be narrowly restricted historically – according to Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling, it extends back to the Romantic prophetic poetry of Ezekiel, encompasses Emerson, Whitman and other American transcendentalists and includes poets such as Alfred, Lord Tennyson and even later, D.H. Lawrence, who fall within the Romantic tradition but outside of the boundaries of the historical phase of Romanticism (1973, 5).

In her study of forms of perception in nineteenth-century poetry, Carol Christ argues that major Romantic poets such as Wordsworth, John Keats and Samuel Taylor Coleridge are concerned with expressing the correlation between the spheres of human experience and nature (1975, 43). The emotions of humankind are shown to be integrated with the beauty of nature but it is significant that, in their evocation of nature and all its forms in their poetry, it

is the ‘interaction between nature and the perceiver’ that is the focus (Christ 1975, 11). A key element of the Romantic tradition is the growing importance given to the particular, and this sense of the particularity of experience and sensitivity to detail informs Victorian writing. However, unlike the Romantics, Victorian poets did not invest their use of the particular in conveying a moment of individual consciousness with universal meaning. For Wordsworth, poetry ‘takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity’ (Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*) –

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye,
Which is the bliss of solitude

(‘The Daffodils’)

– and his subjective experience of the daffodils takes on a universality (Christ 1975, 14). The particular, the infinitesimal, the ordinary lead him to elevated and significant meaning. The Victorians are more fervent even than the Romantics in their detailed observation and expression of nature in their writing; in fact, Hopkins expresses criticism of Romanticism, describing the Lake poets as ‘faithful but not rich observers of nature’ (Lichtmann 1989, 160). The richness that Hopkins sees as lacking is associated with his expression of particularity, his views of inscape and instress – looked at later in this chapter – which impart a realism and intensity to his work. For Hopkins, the particularity of experience leads him to a consciousness of the truth of Christ or God. Although his appreciation of beauty is profound, for him its principal value is as an interpretation of Christ (Culwick 1992, 56). He writes in his journal about his perception of a bluebell inspiring a realisation of the beauty of Christ: ‘I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it’ (1959, 199). Hopkins goes on to give a finely detailed description of the bluebell, noting each particular feature and revealing a sensitivity to detail and intensity of experience, both emotional and spiritual, that is shared by Whitman. Wordsworth’s ‘spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’ can particularly be applied to the tradition of nature poetry where the poet expresses in his writing his emotions and observations of the natural world around him. The transcendentalists, with their roots in the ideals of Romanticism, see nature as an embodiment of the divine (Allen 1975, 255). Thus, transcendental writers such as Emerson in ‘Nature’, Henry David Thoreau in *Walden* and Whitman in *Leaves of Grass* impart a sense of spirituality and an affective quality to their

experiences with nature. The conjunction of the spiritual or religious with nature in writing reaches centuries back. In the Song of Solomon (2:3) in the Bible, imagery from nature is used to convey a story of love: 'As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste'.

The long tradition of nature poetry has engendered the field of study of ecocriticism, a field that examines the relationship between literature and the natural world (Glottfelty and Fromm 1996, xviii). Given its agenda, the scope of ecocriticism includes the portrayal of nature and ecological themes in literature across various styles and movements. While ecocriticism only became a field of study in the late twentieth century, environmental concerns appear in Victorian poetry with its spiritualising of nature. Jonathan Bate in *The Song of the Earth* describes ecological poetry as that which, in the words of Wordsworth, 'sees into the life of things' (2000). Whitman's pantheistic sentiments and his very personal expression of the particular essence of nature, and Hopkins's praise of God through the haecceity in nature bear the influence of the Romantics' portrayal of imaginative and emotional experience. Common to all, is the fervent celebration of nature. However, in terms of style, technique and originality of thought, both Whitman and Hopkins develop or break away from the Romantic tradition discerned in three specific strands of departure: richness of particularity, the intensity of response and a sense of ecological protectiveness. These strands will be explored passim.

In *Song of Myself*, Whitman makes it clear that his whole essence as a man is fused with that of nature. From the beginning, in section one, he conveys an organic connection to nature: 'My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil'. In his 1855 preface to *Leaves of Grass*, he writes that a poet of America 'incarnates its geography and natural life and rivers and lakes' (1960, 7). With these words, Whitman demonstrates intimations of an eco-geographical consciousness, which are supported by numerous passages describing his love of nature in his detailed cataloguing of the land, the plants and the animals, for example, in *Song of Myself*. Whitman's emphasis on humanity's – and particularly his own – intimate connection with nature points to the importance of environmentalism: 'Love the earth and sun and the animals ... and your very flesh shall be a great poem' (1960, 10–11). In 'Song of the Rolling Earth', Whitman affirms that it is nature and the earth that express meaning and purpose:

... the substantial words are in
the ground and sea,
They are in the air, they are in you.

This is corroborated in section 13 in *Song of Myself*:

Oxen that rattle the yoke and chain or halt in the leafy shade,
what is that you express in your eyes?
It seems to me more than all the print I have read in my life.

Whitman's encounters with nature reveal to him the particular function of each being on earth, part of a larger ecosystem (St. John 1992). Watching the wood-drake and wood-duck rise together he 'believe[s] in those wing'd purposes'. He does not 'call the tortoise unworthy because she is not something else'; listening closely to the pert he finds 'its purpose and place up there toward the wintry sky' (section 13). Whitman draws into himself all that the earth has to offer, 'owing his poetry to the deeper poetry of the earth' (St. John 1992): 'Absorbing all to myself and for this song' (section 13). It is the role of the poet to listen to the words of the earth and interpret their meaning: 'All are written to me, and I must get what the writing means' (section 20).

Throughout his poem, Whitman affirms the individual and nature as the 'repositories of true values' and reveals a closeness with nature that is the very germ of his being (Waggoner 1968, 160). His descriptions of nature and those of his biological make-up are inextricably bound up with amatory images:

My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the
passing of blood and air through my lungs,
The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore
and dark-color'd sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn,
The sound of the belch'd words of my voice loosed to the
eddies of the wind,
A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around of arms

(Section 2)

Whitman is always conscious of the physicality of his body and the portrayal of his affinity with nature is imbued with sexual connotations. Although proclaiming the miracle of nature in lines such as, 'I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey work of the stars' (section

31), which expresses Whitman's creed of the universality of all life on earth and in the heavens, he also conveys nature in its earthy sensualism:

Echoes, ripples, buzz'd whispers, love-root, silk-thread, crotch
and vine

(Section 2)

In section 21, Whitman addresses the earth directly: 'Smile O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth!' This image endows nature, or more specifically here, the earth, with human qualities, which enable him to approach her, not as a cosmic element, but as a lover. The introduction of the word 'voluptuous' sounds a note of sensuality, which emerges fully in the lines:

Smile for your lover comes.
Prodigal, you have given me love—therefore I to you give love!
O unspeakable passionate love

(Section 21)

These images combine to form a richly sensuous tapestry evoking the major theme of love – a love that transcends ordinary experience. In this respect, these lines contain an important element of the poem as a whole – that nature becomes the symbol of love, both the giver and recipient of love with all its physical and sexual aspects. Communion with nature is a significant element of Romantic poetry, but it is largely a spiritual communion – man's spirit identifying with the essence of Nature. Whitman, although infusing his work with a mystic spirituality, takes this relationship a step further, rooting his communion with nature in strongly physical and sexual terms. Perhaps the burst of emotion in the above lines can be seen as one of the clearest expressions of Whitman's creed, with the poet passionately affirming the truths of Life and Love, the truth that it is love that is the intrinsic element of all life unifying the human, the divine and the natural. The theme of love underlies his cosmic vision: 'And that a kelson of the creation is love' (section 5).

Whitman's eroticism emerges most clearly in section five where he evokes the sexual joining of his body and soul:

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morning,
How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd
over upon me,
And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your
tongue to my bare-stript heart,

And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you held
my feet.

In response to this sexual union, the poet experiences 'peace and knowledge' – a knowledge that his body and soul are part of God: 'And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own'. All comes together in a mystical unity with both God and the humblest of all creatures and objects, with all men and women, with the unique and with the ordinary, through the acts of love and acceptance (Folsom and Merrill 2016, 21–2). Importantly, the poet's mystical awakening is seen in sexual terms. Despite its length, it is worth quoting the remainder of the above-quoted lines from section five in full since altogether, they speak to the concept of the unity of sexuality and spirituality and express the core of Whitman's thinking:

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge
that pass all the argument of the earth,
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the
women my sisters and lovers,
And that a kelson of the creation is love,
And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,
And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones,
elder, mullein and poke-weed.

(Section 5)

With his awakened mystical consciousness, the poet becomes aware that even within the lowliest of natural objects exists the infinite universe (Cowley in Whitman 1960, xvii). Whitman makes his point of the inclusivity of the union of love across all creation, moving from the loftiness of 'the spirit of God' to a mundanity evoked by the images, 'mossy scabs', 'worm fence' and 'poke-weed'.

Whitman's mysticism is often grounded in an eroticism which is evident in countless instances of passionate sensuality throughout the poem. In section 21, he refers to the night, the earth, the sea in both mystic and physical terms:

Press close bare-bosom'd night—press close magnetic-
nourishing night!

[...]

Still nodding night—mad naked summer night.

With the line 'Smile O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth!' (section 21), Whitman begins a passage of sensuous and evocative loveliness in which he sings amatory praises of the earth's bounty. He conveys a sense of elusive, lyrical beauty, which contributes to the overall mysticism and sense of mystery pervading the poem:

Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!
Earth of departed sunset—earth of the mountains misty-topt!
Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just tinged with blue!
Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river!
Earth of the limpid gray of clouds brighter and clearer for my sake!
Far-swooping elbow'd earth—rich apple-blossom'd earth!

(Section 21)

The tone is exclamatory and passionate as Whitman extols the beauties of the earth, with the word repeated to give full force to his rapturous experience. From his declaration of 'unspeakable passionate love' to the earth, Whitman reiterates his complete physical and spiritual immersion in nature through his connection with the sea:

You sea! I resign myself to you also [...]
We must have a turn together, I undress, hurry me out of
sight of the land,
Cushion me soft, rock me in billowy drowse,
Dash me with amorous wet, I can repay you.

He frequently uses images of nakedness in conjunction with nature or his contact with nature, which emphasise the sense of intimacy. In his bonding with nature, he becomes 'undisguised and naked' (section 2), truly himself.

Whitman expresses a freedom, a letting go of body and mind through imagery that intricately interweaves to convey the connection between the essence of life – breathing – and artistic inspiration; between the biological functions and parts of the body, and the fecundity of nature. It is through an all-absorbing contact and exchange with nature that the poet can be in touch with his deepest self:

I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised
and naked,
I am mad for it to be in contact with me.
The smoke of my own breath,
Echoes, ripples, buzz'd whispers, love-root, silk-thread, crotch
and vine,
My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the
passing of blood and air through my lungs

(Section 2)

The poet's longing for every part of the world to become absorbed into his body arises out of his mystical understanding of the unity between humanity and nature and their integration with God (Foerster 1916, 756). Experiences and aspects of nature often awaken mystical feelings in which there is a sudden consciousness of God's immanence, of unity with all of creation and of the joy of existence (James 2016). Whitman conveys his awareness of the natural world through the engagement of all of his senses. In sections 28 and 29, he evokes the sense of touch, finding himself experiencing the ecstasy of sexual union (Cowley in Whitman 1960, xviii). He again integrates images of natural elements with the physical to create a passage that is both carnal and mystic:

Is this then a touch? quivering me to a new identity,
Flames and ether making a rush for my veins,
Treachorous tip of me reaching and crowding to help them,
My flesh and blood playing out lightning to strike what is
hardly different from myself,
On all sides prurient provokers stiffening my limbs,
Straining the udder of my heart for its withheld drip,
Behaving licentious toward me, taking no denial

(Section 28)

The juxtaposition of the images in 'the udder of my heart' merges emotional connotations with a sense of animal fecundity. Whitman's frankness about sex is highlighted by the use of the words, 'prurient' and 'licentious' denoting sexual curiosity and lasciviousness. The very promiscuity which is frequently suggested – the reference to lovers in the plural in section 45, for example – contributes to the quality of lushness and fruitfulness, and the theme of

complete connection with all aspects of humanity, nature and the universe that pervades *Song of Myself*. Whitman continues his passionate evocation of feeling and being with earthy vigour in the following passage which is richly expressive of the conceptual fusion of natural elements, birth, germination, fertility and virility:

Blind loving wrestling touch, sheath'd hooded sharp-tooth'd
touch!

Did it make you ache so, leaving me?

Parting track'd by arriving, perpetual payment of perpetual loan,

Rich showering rain, and recompense richer afterward.

Sprouts take and accumulate, stand by the curb prolific and
vital,

Landscapes projected masculine, full-sized and golden.

(Section 29)

The oxymoronic image of 'loving wrestling touch' evokes both the intimacy, and the intensity and ferocity of the poet's sexual union. Whitman always conveys the physicality of life, with sex being as significant and essential as birth and death. His poetic vision is expressed in a 'profound spirituality mingled with an exuberant animality' (Allen 1975, 9). This energy and vigour, the pervading sense of carnality alongside the spiritual can be seen both in Whitman's portrayal of the self and in his perception of and connection with nature.

So complete is his integration with nature that the roots and vines of section two are 'experienced as a part of the same erotic flow that he feels in his own naked body' (Folsom and Merrill 2016, 11). He claims a kinship with nature in an impassioned statement, which exalts the self and places the poet in a position of centrality within the universal order of things:

Earth of the limpid grey of clouds, brighter and clearer for my
sake!

(Section 21)

It is interesting to note that Whitman addresses the earth in lover's terms:

Prodigal, you have given me love—therefore I to you give love!

O unspeakable passionate love.

(Section 21)

In section 45, he refers to God as his ‘lover true’ assigning, in the context of the union between himself, nature and God, a meaning laden with a sense of physical intimacy. Whitman’s spirituality is allied with sex for within this is the underlying unity of existence. In section three he says:

Urge and urge and urge,
Always the procreant urge of the world.

These lines point both to physical desire, with the repeated use of the word ‘urge’, and to reproduction, God’s mandate to humankind to ‘Be fruitful and multiply’ (Genesis 1:28). For Whitman there is ‘always sex/ Always a knit of identity’ (section 3) – a unity of the self and the other, which is achieved in mystic declaration: ‘I and this mystery here we stand’. Whitman goes on to describe the ‘hugging and loving bed-fellow’ who sleeps at his side through the night to leave at dawn – a lover who, in leaving, blesses him with abundance. Thus, the state of physical closeness is seen to invite blessing. It is noteworthy that in the original (1855) version of *Song of Myself*, the ‘bed-fellow’ is identified as God (Folsom and Merrill 2016, 15).

Whitman’s frank expression of matters relating to sex and sexuality is prompted by an emotional and physical awareness which come from his heightened sensuous responsiveness to nature. He merges images of the natural world with carnal and corporeal terminology to create a description of complex eroticism:

Root of wash’d sweet-flag! timorous pond-snipe! nest of guarded
duplicate eggs! it shall be you!
Mix’d tussled hay of head, beard, brawn, it shall be you!
Trickling sap of maple, fibre of manly wheat, it shall be you!
Sun so generous it shall be you!
Vapors lighting and shading my face it shall be you!
You sweaty brooks and dews it shall be you!
Winds whose soft-tickling genitals rub against me it shall be you!
Broad muscular fields, branches of live oak, loving lounge in
my winding paths, it shall be you!
Hands I have taken, face I have kiss’d, mortal I have ever
touch’d, it shall be you.

(Section 24)

Whitman's themes of love and acceptance become suggestive of sexual unity; his interactions with nature all have a sensuous basis. His emphatic, passionate declarations and the reiterated 'it shall be you!' reveal the depth of his ardour and, again, his complete absorption with nature. Nature is attributed with qualities of virility – beard, brawn, manly, sweaty, muscular – and these, alongside the loaded image, 'sap', and the physical suggestiveness of 'soft-tickling genitals', create a picture of sensual love. Significantly for Whitman, God is love and the love of God is indwelling in nature. Sexuality, thus, is invested with sacredness.

Considering the masculinity of all the images in the lines above, this is a particularly homoerotic passage. According to Gay Wilson Allen, Asselineau was one of the first biographers of Whitman to explore the topic of his psyche more deeply (1975, 55). Both Allen and Asselineau agree that, while there is no clear evidence for a homosexual life, Whitman was more erotically attracted to men than to women (1975, 57). In the above passage, as well as in other lines such as 'Something I cannot see puts upwards libidinous prongs' (section 24) and 'Blind loving wrestling touch, sheath'd hooded sharp-tooth'd touch!' (section 28), the poet clearly expresses the sexuality in nature and his erotic connection with it in masculine imagery.

The theme of love, humanity and nature is maintained in other passages, such as the one below from section 45, where the plurality of lovers suggests abundance and rampancy, both in physical and in natural terms:

My lovers suffocate me,
Crowding my lips, thick in the pores of my skin,
Jostling me through streets and public halls, coming naked
to me at night,
[...]
Calling my name from flower-beds, vines, tangled underbrush

Whitman frequently uses images of robustness and masculinity, of the ordinary and the coarse either to contrast the physical with the spiritual or to correlate the two. In the passage above, the use of strong verbs and adjectives – suffocate, crowding, jostling, tangled – emphasise sexual activity that is fully absorbing and visceral.

Whitman's spirituality embraces physicality and sexuality, going hand in hand with a celebration of life, nature and the universe. He sees nature as being defined by certain characteristics – in Martin Doudna's terms, these are 'process, purpose, sexuality, unity, divinity, and beneficence' (1998). Except for the aspect of sexuality, which was seen by his

contemporaries as particular to Whitman's poetry as well as controversial, this is a view of nature typically held by other transcendentalists such as Emerson and Thoreau (Doudna 1998). For Whitman, sexuality is an intrinsic part of nature and, since God or the divine is present in nature, sex is sacred. The religious dimension in Whitman's poetry emerges from and is allied with his complete poetic vision in which themes of sexuality, universality, divinity and nature unite. Everything is infused with religious meaning (Kuebrich 1998). Symonds, too, sees a clear emergence of Whitman's thematic expression of religion and the unity of the universe, the sense of self and sex, love and nature (2002, 12).

Whitman was much influenced by Emerson's ideas – of the unity of nature and the immanence of God. In Whitman's thought, God is present in every aspect of the living world: 'I hear and behold God in every object' (section 48). This pantheistic view is evident throughout *Song of Myself* in Whitman's focal expression – God exists in all things and within all people; everything is in God and God is in everything (Levine 1994):

I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and
each moment then,

[...]

I find letters from God dropt in the street, and everyone is
sign'd by God's name

(Section 48)

Again, everything constitutes a unity and in this is found divinity. Humanity, nature and God all become one. Perhaps this can best be seen in section six where Whitman explores the symbolic potential of nature, in this instance, the grass. In response to the child's question 'What is the grass?', the poet gives diverse answers in which he unites images of the self, life, death and nature with God:

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt.

The grass is the central image of the poem, symbolising the miracle of ordinary objects and the divinity in both nature and humanity (Cowley in Whitman 1960, xvii–iii). Whitman portrays himself as the divinely inspired poet, interpreting the meanings and significance of nature. This can be seen throughout the passage in section six in his interpretive responses about the grass:

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful

green stuff woven.

[...]

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of
the vegetation.

Whitman's interpretation of the meaning of nature is 'a mystical one, a direct communication with God' (Bloom 1999, 17). The poet assigns symbolic value to natural elements or objects that hold importance in various religious faiths such as the stars, the waters and the earth (Kuebrich 1998). This has already been seen in his exploration of the significance of the grass in section six. However, Whitman imparts mystical meaning to the grass in the broader context of the poem. His invitation to his soul to laze with him on the grass in section one –

I loafe and invite my soul,

I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass

– is expanded into his sexual union with his soul in section five:

I believe in you my soul ...

[...]

Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat

The significance of Whitman's mystical experience here is tied up with the symbolic meanings of grass. In section 33, he reflects on the infinity of space and time, knowing that 'What I guess'd when I loaf'd on the grass' are cosmic truths. His sense of self, his union with his soul and his understanding of his mystic vision relate to his connection with the grass. In each instance quoted above, he uses the word 'loafe' in relation to the grass, giving to the context a sense of languorous ease and sensuality, in keeping with the expression of indulgent pleasure that is sometimes apparent in the poem. In the final section of *Song of Myself*, the poet has come to a supreme acceptance of the truths of life and death and, once again, the image of grass is central as he looks to a complete absorption of himself into nature: 'I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love' (section 52).

Whitman's sea, too, is of metaphorical importance. It is a giver of life, symbolising the divine source of humanity and all of creation: 'Sea of the brine of life' (section 22). It is significant that this passage in which Whitman submerges himself in the sea – asking the sea to 'dash me with amorous wet' – is followed by his explicit eulogising of the sanctity of his body and sexuality in section 24:

I believe in the flesh and the appetites,
Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and each part and tag
of me is a miracle.
Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch
or am touch'd from.

For Whitman, as for Emerson, the realities and facts of nature and the universe possess an innate spirituality (Doudna 1998). Whitman does not separate God from the cosmos, from his creation. In attaining an intimacy with nature, the poet attains an intimacy with God. He conveys this intimacy not only in rhapsodic terms but also in his references to the particular, rather than to the general, in his long lists of different species in nature. He mentions the buzzard, the alligator, the elk, the 'razor-bill'd auk'; he describes:

Where the black bear is searching for roots or honey, where
the beaver pats the mud with his paddle-shaped tail;
Over the growing sugar, over the yellow-flower'd cotton plant,
over the rice in its low moist field

(Section 33)

In his inclusive cataloguing of nature, he ranges from 'the journey work of the stars' in the heavens (section 31) to 'brown ants', 'poke-weed' (section 5) and 'beetles rolling balls of dung' (section 24) (Doudna 1998). The intimacy that this conveys is invested with a sense of spirituality, a sense of God within the universe embodying a cosmic unity:

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey work of
the stars,
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and
the egg of the wren,
And the tree-toad is a chef-d'oeuvre for the highest,
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of
heaven,
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all
machinery,
And the cow crunching with depress'd head surpasses any
statue,

And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of
infidels.

(Section 31)

The correlation of the everyday with the divine is again evident in section 41 where Whitman draws together a diversity of faiths and beliefs, showing his acceptance of all religions. He juxtaposes images and symbols of different deities alongside the 'framer' with his 'roll'd-up sleeves' or the 'lads ahold of fire-engines' or

The mechanic's wife with her babe at her nipple interceding
for every person born,

which, interestingly, suggests Mary with her baby, Jesus, who became the intercessor between humanity and God. Whitman's work is frequently filled with Christian resonances. The passage continues:

Three scythes at harvest whizzing in a row from three lusty
angels with shirts bagg'd out at their waists.

The imagery of the harvest and the angels, in strongly physical terms, merges the natural and the spiritual. The description of the angels as 'lusty' introduces a striking contrast, between the sturdiness and muscularity of the earthly, and the unearthly, suggesting divinity being both in the world and of the heavens. The harvest, always an image of bounty, connotes here in Whitman's terms, a sense of ripeness, of maturity, which is in keeping with the sensuality of his expression. The lines seem to relate strongly to Revelation 14:15 from the Bible, adding to the religious dimension: 'And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe'.

The fact that Whitman describes three scythes and three angels is also significant since the number three is sacred in many religions, beliefs and rituals. In Christianity, the number is invested with spiritual meaning, particularly with regard to the Holy Trinity – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – just as the number carries particular meaning in Taoism, Hinduism and Buddhism, for example. Such intertextuality in terms of symbolic religious significance is effective in conveying Whitman's broad recognition and acceptance of all religions and his universal spirituality. Whitman frequently mentions heaven, a term, particularly within the context of *Song of Myself*, with religious connotations.

However, although the term is used in a mystic sense, suggestive of the oneness of humanity and divinity –

This day before dawn I ascended a hill and look'd at the
crowded heaven

(Section 46)

– Whitman also imbues it elsewhere with erotic imagery:

Something I cannot see puts upwards libidinous prongs,
Seas of bright juice suffuse heaven.

(Section 24)

It is interesting that, in the first quote above, Whitman, in the light of his previous references to the crucifixion, particularly with regard to the poet's assumption of Christ's identity, calls to mind the ascension of Jesus into heaven but, typically, as a personal experience.

While there are many Christian intimations in Whitman's response to nature, this response can be seen to be largely ecumenical in his intersection with various religious traditions. This is particularly evident in Whitman's mystic experiences of unity with nature and with God. In his book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, James writes that the 'overcoming of all the usual barriers between the individual and the Absolute is the great mystic achievement. In mystic states we both become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness. This is the everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition, hardly altered by differences of clime or creed. In Hinduism, in neo-Platonism, in Sufism, in Christian mysticism, in Whitmanism, we find the same recurring note, so that there is about mystical utterances an eternal unanimity' (2016). James's concept of common core mysticism conveys the notion that there is a mystical unanimity underlying creation, with mystics holding to a common comprehension of the divine regardless of their faith. This common core does not, according to James, deny the diversity of the expression of mysticism or the validity of the different belief systems in which it is expressed. Whitman's mysticism is grounded in a cosmic consciousness, which is readily apparent in *Song of Myself*. Michael Sowder writes about Whitman, in the correlation of his poetry to the core of mystical experience common to all religions, as being the perfect mystic of Western culture (2005, 18).

For both Whitman and Hopkins, their spiritual expression frequently emerges out of their experience of created beauty, but Whitman's credo is rooted in heterodoxy and, in his

acceptance of all religions, in an omnism while Hopkins's poetry is grounded in orthodoxy and Catholicism. The experience of nature leads to love which, certainly in the case of Hopkins, is divine love. Hopkins, as a Jesuit priest, interprets much of Ignatian teaching in his poetry, striving for the goal of union with God through love (Pick 1978, 16). In the lines from 'Hurrahing in Harvest',

The heart rears wings bold and bolder

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

Hopkins conveys the image of man's heart – through an experience of earthly beauty – flying to heaven in joyous response to the Saviour (Pick 1978, 59). Ignatius made his desire for an intimate association with Christ clear in his worldview in which he saw all things as created by God and making their way back to God (Ganss in Ignatius of Loyola 1991,11), the exitus-reditus theme of Thomas Aquinas, which is described later in the chapter. For Ignatius, praise of God was enacted through knowing, loving and serving God on earth, actions by which humankind is drawn into his divine vision (Ganss in Ignatius of Loyola 1991,11). Ignatius's theological thought centred around God's plan of creation, redemption through Christ and spiritual growth and he saw his endeavours to advance the reign of God as part of the history of salvation (Ganss in Ignatius of Loyola 1991, 11). His desired intent for his activities, and those of all members of the Society of Jesus, was for them always to be to the greater glory of God.

It is significant, thus, that for Hopkins, his poetry always serves his commitment as a Christian and a priest while other Christian poets such as John Donne and T.S. Eliot were poets before they were Christians (Spurr 2008, 38). Hopkins's writing is rooted in the particular creed and the aspects of faith to which he adhered and his persuasion towards sacramentalism in nature finds expression both vocationally and poetically. Hopkins's Catholicism plays a significant role in contextualising and understanding his poetic output since Victorian England at the time was predominantly Protestant and historically anti-Catholic (Muller 2003). According to Muller, entering the Church of Rome was a turning away from the dominant religious and national identity to submit to the authority of an international institution with its doctrines of infallibility and revelations of God (2003). Hopkins, along with other converts such as John Henry Newman and Cardinal Manning, wanted a part in the restoration of England to Catholicism. In this, he followed Ignatius in their common desire to play a salvific role in God's work on earth. Newman and Manning both encouraged the creation of a Victorian Catholic literature. Hopkins's poetry, imbued

with a religious sensibility and communicating a Catholic message, is an answer to their call (Muller 2003).

For Hopkins, always, his poetic voice is used in the service of his religion. It is out of the correlation of Hopkins's religious vocation and his poetic perspective that his celebratory poems of 1877–1881 – his great nature poems, which will be discussed in this chapter – emerge. In Hopkins's spiritual development, his experience of earthly beauty comes to co-exist more and more with religious experience, with a sacramental outlook becoming the focal theme of his poetry. His poems during his years in Wales are descriptive of a sacramental landscape that is Catholic at its source (Muller 2003). This sacramentalism is deeply associated with the teachings of Scotus in whose ideas Hopkins found justification for his own interpretation of beauty (Pick 1978, 33). Scotus explores the concepts of the universal and the singular arguing that the universal is comprehended through intellectual knowledge while the singular is perceived through sense-experience (Copleston 1950, 492). Thus, the 'object of sense is the individual thing and the object of intellect the universal' (Copleston 1950, 493). For Scotus, it is the haecceity – the singularities or characteristics of a thing that make it particular and distinctive – that is significant. The inclusivity that underpins the diverse and the individual in nature is indicative of the universal love of God. It is in individuality that universality is achieved.

Scotus's focus on the oneness of God that is revealed in the diversity of creation places emphasis on the individuality of the beauty and form of each object, not only superficially, but in its intrinsic form as a whole exhibiting its unique outward characteristics – which Hopkins called inscape – and in the inner energy or power from an object giving it its particularity – instress (Spurr 2008, 44). Hopkins's poetic theories of inscape and instress are key to an understanding of his poetry, underpinning as they do the unity of his sensuous and religious experience of nature and the world. For Hopkins, inscape designates the individually distinctive essence of an object perceived intuitively while instress is the sensation of inscape, an almost mystical recognition of the intrinsic pattern and unity that give objects meaning (Gardner in Hopkins 1978, xxi). In Scotian theory, humanity experiences the beauties of nature, its inscape, as a link to the infinite, the divine. Encounters of the splendours of the world lead to God, the ultimate Beauty (Pick 1978, 36). Hopkins echoes the sentiments and words of the psalmist: 'And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory ...' (Psalm 72:19). In 'God's Grandeur' he

writes, 'The world is charged with the grandeur of God' and in 'Pied Beauty' he begins the poem with the words, 'Glory be to God for dappled things' and ends with the lines:

He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

Hopkins moves from expressing the transient diversity of creation to the unchanging unity of God, the Father.

Hopkins's love of nature is a unifying element in his poetry, a means by which to praise God, the Creator. He sees all nature as revealing God in a particular, individual way. There is a unity in sense and spirit. Some critics have expressed the view that Hopkins's perception of nature is close to pantheism, even paganism, as Philip Henderson contends (Pick 1978, 55). While Hopkins's sacramental expression often appears almost to be pantheistic, particularly in lines such as 'The world is charged with the grandeur of God' from 'God's Grandeur', his writings on the immanence and transcendence of God are theologically grounded. In his commentary on the *Spiritual Exercises* in his notebooks, dated 20 August 1880, he writes: 'God is so deeply present to everything that it would be impossible for him but for his infinity not to be identified with them or, from the other side, impossible but for his infinity so to be present to them' (1937, 316). Hopkins is of like mind with St. Augustine, who in Book I of his *Confessions*, expresses the paradoxical mystery of God, in which the transcendent and the immanent unite: 'Who then are you, my God? ... Most high, utterly good, utterly powerful, most omnipotent, most merciful and most just, deeply hidden yet most intimately present' (Stewart 2016).

Hopkins's understanding of the sacramental and God's immanence and transcendence would initially have come from the principle of analogy of Thomas Aquinas. This principle gives a theological basis for knowledge of God through creation – the unity in diversity – and provides an understanding of how 'God can be above our world, and yet simultaneously be revealed in and through that world' (McGrath 1997, 44/165). McGrath explains that in Aquinas's principle of analogy, scriptural images and analogies build up to provide and illuminate a greater understanding of aspects of God and salvation (1997, 164). These analogies for better comprehending God also give a foundation to Hopkins's sacramental view of nature. There has been much controversy over the centuries over the exact meaning of the word 'sacrament' with Roman Catholic theology characterised by the seven sacraments (McGrath 1997, 496–500). For the purposes of this study and an exploration of Hopkins's sacramental perspective of nature, a few points only, relative to his

sacramentalism, need to be understood. A sacrament is a sign, representing what is signified; it is a sign of the grace of God or of a spiritual reality; its purpose is not just to signify but to sanctify (McGrath 1997, 498–9). Thus, Hopkins not only sees the beauty of nature as a sign from God of his glory and creativity but is blessed by it. Importantly, after 1872, Hopkins shows the greater influence of Duns Scotus and his concept of individuation and the univocity of being in which each thing stands for the whole nature of God rather than a particular aspect as in Aquinas’s principle of analogy (Tanabe 2015, 147–8). For Hopkins, his sacramental vision is focused on seeing and portraying inscapes as impressions of the whole nature of Christ (Tanabe 2015, 148).

Critics such as Frances Winwar and Herbert Read aver that some of Hopkins’s work displays less of a Christian and more of an objective intent, that is, a theological neutrality in his receptivity to nature (Pick 1978, 55). They see in the intensity and appreciation with which Hopkins communicates the beauty of God’s creation a deviation from his ascetism and Christian purpose (Pick 1978, 55). However, these views are, I believe, a misinterpretation of his sacramentalism. Pick, in his exploration of Hopkins’s religious purpose and conviction through artistic expression, argues that all of Hopkins’s poetry and particularly nature poems such as ‘Pied Beauty’, ‘God’s Grandeur’, ‘The Starlight Night’ and ‘Hurrahing in Harvest’ serve in praise of the creator. Pick quotes the words of an unnamed priest: ‘Art has as its ultimate object the playing of a priestly role, to sanctify nature, and lead it back to God’ (1978, 55). Hopkins’s approach to beauty is always sacramental, founded in theological conviction as evidenced in lines such as ‘He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change’ (‘Pied Beauty’) and ‘The world is charged with the grandeur of God’ (‘God’s Grandeur’).

For Hopkins, nature has a spiritual effect comparable to that of a sacrament (Pick 1978, 35). In his eucharistic poem ‘Barnfloor and Winepress’, Hopkins uses imagery from harvest,

Behold we have the joy in harvest:

For us was gather’d the first fruits,

to convey the sacrament of Holy Communion, referring to Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection:

At morn we found the heavenly Bread

[...]

Now in our altar-vessels stored

Is the sweet Vintage of our Lord.

The particularity of time and object characterising this poem emphasises Hopkins's sacramental view, bringing together God's action of grace through the incarnation of his son. The eucharist is contextualised within a time frame, 'morn', which parallels the morning when Jesus rose from the dead: 'And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun' (Mark 16:2).

Carol Christ explains Hopkins's sacramentalism in his poetry in a different way: 'He sanctifies the good moment so that it becomes a sacrament, a physical tasting and drinking of the being of Christ' (1975, 147). The 'good moment', according to Christ, is an experience in which a transcendent reality is revealed to humanity through the particular, an experience of *instress*, an experience portrayed by Hopkins in his poetry as well as poets such as Robert Browning (1975, 105). Browning gives the moment a singular intensity through images of particularity and preciseness in his poetry (Christ 1975, 114). In his poem, 'Two in the Campagna', the defining quotation 'Then the good minute goes' focuses on the concept of living in the moment as the poet passionately addresses his beloved, noting with singular detail their surroundings: the 'yellowing fennel', the 'five beetles' in the 'small orange cup', the 'feathery grasses'. Browning's perspective is that it is through intensity that moral revelations are proffered by life since intensity of commitment to life receives a revelation from God in response (Christ 1975, 125). Hopkins, too, shows an intense perceptiveness of the particularity of the world and his recognition and appreciation of the *haecceity*, the *inscape*, of each creature, each object emerges in a distinctive intensity in his poems. According to Christ, Hopkins's poetry makes Browning's good moment sacred, transforming as it does an intensity of particulars into a revelatory vision of the reality of Christ (1975, 127). The moral vitalism of Browning becomes sacred presence in Hopkins. The intensity and 'heightened consciousness of particulars' is expressed as an act of love both for God's creation and for God in all his beauty, majesty and grace (Christ 1975, 147).

In many of Hopkins's poems, his sacramentalism achieves a vigour and force of expression through an enumeration of qualities and details which draws attention to the diversity and glory of creation and, thus, to the creator (Spurr 2008, 44):

Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim

(*'Pied Beauty'*)

Hopkins places emphasis on the sense of energy and vitality that is the essence of all God's creation, a distinctly Scotist principle. Stylistically, this is achieved through his innovative

use of sprung rhythm, his textural richness and the virtuosity and originality of his poetic technique (Mackenzie in Pollard 1970, 331). He gives an immediacy to his concept of the particularity and uniqueness of objects through a verbal impetus, often at the beginning of his poems: 'I caught this morning morning's minion' from 'The Windhover' and 'Look at the stars! Look, look up at the skies' from 'The Starlight Night', for example. Hopkins injects a liveliness into poems such as these by using short phrasal clusters, compound words and alliteration, giving the poems a thrust of energy and momentum:

Cloud-puffball, torn tufts, tossed pillows flaunt forth, then
 chevy on an air-
 built thoroughfare: heaven-roosterers, in gay-gangs they throng;
 they glitter in marches.

Down roughcast, down dazzling whitewash, wherever an elm
 arches,

Shivelights and shadowtackle in long lashes lace, lance, and pair.

(‘That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire’)

Nature is energised, constantly in a state of semi-Heraclitean change, which is seen as the fundamental essence of the universe (Spurr 2008, 48).

According to W. H. Gardner, ‘As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame’ is a particularly Scotist sonnet with its descriptive celebration of the beauty of individuality in nature. Importantly, Gardner argues that the influence of Scotus seemed to liberate Hopkins to express individuality – both his own and that of everything on earth – and his love for the natural world (Hopkins 1978, xxiv–xxv). Within the universal, Hopkins emphasises the significance of the singularity and uniqueness of each earthly object in its self-expression (Gardner in Hopkins 1978, xxv): ‘Selves – goes itself; myself it speaks and spells’. Each object and creature crying, ‘*What I do is me: for that I came*’ affirms both its own selfhood and its identity as part of God (Martin 1991, 208). Hopkins’s universe, made up of distinctive particulars, is underpinned by the concept of dynamism. In ‘As kingfishers catch fire’, elements of the phenomenal world are invested with this dynamic principle through the verbal energy of phrases such as ‘catch fire’, ‘draw flame’, ‘stones ring’ and the line, ‘Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name’. In the octet, it is the radiance of colour – in the iridescence of the kingfisher and the dragonfly and the way in which they ‘catch fire’ and ‘draw flame’ in reflection of the light – and the musical tones of the stones, string and bell that express the source of all energy: God. Hopkins enriches his imagery further through

semantic complexity to convey the dynamism of being, of activity in the natural world, for example, the ‘stones’ that ‘ring’ connote both the visual image on the surface of water and the audibility in the air (Brown in Bristow 2002, 154).

There is a strong tradition of religious and philosophical thought rooted in the conviction that each thing on earth was created by God to form a distinctive element of the whole of creation, each revealing a facet of God’s ultimate and indivisible perfection. Saint Thomas Aquinas stresses the significance of God’s creation expressing itself through variety and diversity as do medieval Catholic philosophers and then seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophers, but the concept can be traced back to Plato’s *Timaeus*, in which he speculates on the nature of the physical world and humanity (Mackenzie 1981, 149). So, too, the school of Chartres in the 12th century was a school of Platonism and naturalism, studying and revering nature and interpreting the *Timaeus* in the light of the Christian faith (Wetherbee 1972, 3). The principle of plenitude, which is traced back to the writings of Plato, describes the fullness and diversity of the universe, asserting that within it are all possible varieties of existence (Lovejoy 1964). In the same way as this tradition of thought of God’s creation expressing itself through diversity, Hopkins emphasises the multiplicity and fullness of nature. In ‘As kingfishers catch fire’ particularly, he illustrates the beauty of the world ‘united in the very multiplicity of its individual energies’ (Christ 1975, 66). The movement of the poem from the fire of the kingfisher to the loveliness of Christ and the Father illustrates, through the analogy of light and sound, Hopkins’s sense of inscape. The sestet focuses on man, part of God’s creation yet required to express more than self in his existence on earth since, being made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26), he ‘ought to reflect back to God the image of Christ, Who is God made man’ (Mackenzie 1981, 150):

Acts in God’s eye what in God’s eye he is –
Christ. For Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men’s faces.

Hopkins stresses, in the sestet, the importance of humankind behaving with justice towards others. The ‘just man’ is forgiven his sins by the grace of God and ‘keeps all his goings graces’. In other words, he is able, through the act of forgiveness by God, to conduct himself with Christlike justice and goodness (Mackenzie 1981, 150). Mankind achieves his highest form of self-expression when he reflects Christ through grace, with all his actions and endeavours – free of sin – becoming pleasing to God (Mackenzie 1981, 150). The last line

acts, to a degree, as a counterpoint to the ‘he fathers-forth’ of ‘Pied Beauty’ where the emphasis is more on the contrast between God and his creation. In ‘As kingfishers catch fire’, humankind is diversified as God ‘fathers-forth’ but returns God’s reflection in a way that reunifies humanity and God.

Similarly to the sonnet above, ‘Pied Beauty’ is not simply a nature poem but the expression of a theological belief held by both Catholic and Protestant philosophers that God’s perfection is made visible through the infinite variety of the world (Mackenzie 1981, 84). The poem reads as a paean of praise to God, opening and closing with an affirmation, in the form of imperatives, of his greatness. Martin Dubois draws attention to the similarity of these imperatives, ‘Glory be to God for dappled things’ and ‘Praise him’ to the two Jesuit mottoes – ‘For the greater glory of God’ (*ad maiorem dei gloriam*) and ‘Praise always to God’ (*laus deo semper*) – which appear as a Jesuit convention of writing, indicating that the work is being committed to God (2017, 59). However, Hopkins’s two imperatives in ‘Pied Beauty’ appear within the substance of the poem, giving it the quality of a prayer with the opening line corresponding to the traditional invocation of a prayer and the final ‘Praise him’ to the closing ‘amen’ (Dubois 2017, 59–60). The poem conveys with profound feeling a joy in the variety of nature. In expressing the inscape of things, Hopkins reveals the uniqueness and beauty of the world that come from God. Isobel Armstrong offers an interesting interpretation of the copula, the verb ‘to be’, in ‘Glory be to God for dappled things’ around which the poem is centred. The verb ‘be’ is a lens through which to look at the complexity of God’s being. It simultaneously conveys the idea that God is to be glorified and is the personification of glory himself. As Armstrong explains, glory is both an act of worship to God and something God is (1993, 424). This line and the closing imperative, ‘Praise him’, operate as both an urging to praise God and acts of praise within themselves (Dubois 2017, 60). The word, ‘to’ implies motion, but its performative function (‘glory be to God’) can become integrated into its obvious conclusion (God is glorious) if God is taken to be the source of all glory. God’s image, ‘To the Father through the features of men’s faces’ from ‘As kingfishers catch fire’ is, thus, analogous because the multiple image is assimilated back into God’s unity. Hopkins’s line of thought can be compared with the theology of Thomas Aquinas, particularly his theme of *exitus-reditus* which states that all things come from God and, in different ways, return to him (Wawrykow 2005, 54). Of relevance to much of Hopkins’s poetry, but particularly ‘Pied Beauty’ is the Gloria of the Catholic mass: ‘Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te, gratias agimus tibi propter

magnam gloriam tuam, Domine Deus, Rex caelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens' ('We praise thee, we bless thee, we adore thee, we glorify thee, we give thee thanks for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty') which enacts the move from glorifying to recognising glory.

In its Scotist celebration of the variety and singularity of the universe, 'Pied Beauty' moves from the particular, such as in the lines,

For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;

For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;

to general description: 'All things counter, original, spare, strange'. Hopkins shows in this poem how, within the uniqueness of each object, they share qualities and characteristics – 'swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim' – and yet, it is still, ultimately, the world's multiplicity that attests to God's creative power and infinite potentiality (Christ 1975, 103). It is through a full appreciation of the diversity of the universe that humanity comes closest to an understanding of its unity in God. Significantly, in the second verse the subject of the poem, 'He', only appears in the second last line: 'He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change', placing emphasis on God who is both ultimate beauty himself and the creator of beauty, and leading to the hymnic close, 'Praise him'.

Hopkins's sonnet, 'Hurrahing in Harvest', is one of his most exuberant poems, expressing a rapturous experience of beauty. The poet speaks with passionate intensity, his lines charged with wonder and elation. In a joyous appreciation of nature, which draws him to God, Hopkins's use of repetition, alliteration, unusual compound words and unconventional punctuation in the middle of lines contributes to the richness of imagery and texture of the sonnet:

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

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

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

Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?

The inclusion of words such as 'barbarous', 'wilder' and 'wilful' inject a quality of roughness and strength into the lines as the poet describes the stooks and the clouds in the wind. As Hopkins walks and 'lift[s] up heart, eyes' in worship of his Saviour, he infuses his experience of nature with religious metaphor. The harvest is used metaphorically throughout the Bible – in parables such as that of the sower, as a figure of speech for spiritual growth and as a

symbol of bounty. Importantly, it appears as a metaphor for the end times and the final harvest – who will enter the kingdom of heaven – in Revelation 14:15: ‘Thrust in thy sickle and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe’. This association injects both an evangelical and a salvific element into the poem in reference to the harvesting of souls. Christ, too, said, ‘I am the Bread of Life’ (John 6:35). Hopkins’s use of harvest as a theme and in evocative imagery – ‘silk-sack’, ‘meal-drift’, ‘stooks’, ‘glean’ – points both to an exuberant celebration of nature and of his relationship with his Saviour. The poem is an affirmation of God and the glory of his created world:

And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding shoulder
Majestic – as a stallion stalwart, very violet-sweet!

Christ’s shoulder, carrying the weight of the world, is likened to the ‘azurous hung hills’, containing within himself both the strength of the stallion and the gentleness of the violet. The use of the word ‘hurls’ in the last line – used also in ‘The Windhover’ (‘hurl’) to describe the magnificence of the bird’s flight – conveys the force of the poet’s emotions and his expression of his response to Christ. In these lines, as in the first four lines of the octet, the imagery is complex with an arresting, lyrical beauty that serves to enhance theme, meaning and mood.

The poem, like all of Hopkins’s nature poems, is infused with his sacramental view of nature; earthly beauty leads him into spiritual joy, drawing him closer to God. The second quatrain of the octet reveals an almost ecstatic response on the part of the poet to his Saviour through his experience of nature:

I walk, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour;
And, eyes, heart, what looks, what lips yet gave you a
Rapturous love’s greeting of realer, of rounder replies?

These lines are reminiscent of verses one and two of Psalm 21 – ‘I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth’. Hopkins, in this sonnet, not only gives voice to his appreciation of natural seasonal beauty but marries this with religious experience. Like David, he looks upwards to the hills – in ‘Hurrahing in Harvest’, the ‘azurous hung hills’ – to feel the presence of God. The repetition of ‘heart’ and ‘eyes’ suggests both a sensory and an emotional response to the presence of the Saviour.

The Book of Psalms is a source and an inspiration for much of religious nature poetry with poets drawing from the traditional genre of the hymn of creation such as from Psalm 104: 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, O Lord my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty ... O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches'. In two of his other nature poems, 'The Starlight Night' and 'Spring', Hopkins draws attention to the beauty and vitality of creation, moving from rich description to convey sensory experience in the octets to sacramentally-based imagery in the sestet – Christ and the saints feasting in a barn in 'The Starlight Night' and the references to the innocence of Eden and Christ, Mary's child, in 'Spring'. In 'The Starlight Night', Hopkins begins by describing the stars with fanciful whimsy: 'O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!', 'the elves'-eyes!' and 'quickgold'. However, an appreciation of all the wonders of nature is a 'purchase', a 'prize'. It is a reward through 'Prayer, patience, alms, vows' for righteous and devout living (Mackenzie 1981, 69). This line at the start of the sestet imbues humanity's experience of nature with sacred significance. The repeated word, 'look' both before and afterwards, becomes an injunction to open one's eyes wide to the beauties of the universe, for in doing so, humankind is drawn closer to God.

Like the autumnal celebration in 'Hurrahing in Harvest', Hopkins's sonnet 'Spring' is another expression of seasonal joy, particularly in the octet. Again, the imagery is rich and complex through the stylistic use of alliteration and unusual metaphor conveying movement, colour and sound. The beauty and freshness of spring, with nature being symbolic of innocence, brings to mind the original, sinless world where everything on earth existed within natural and spiritual harmony in the biblical earthly paradise of the Garden of Eden (Pick 1978, 68):

What is all this juice and all this joy?
 A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning
 In Eden garden.

Here, as in 'The Starlight Night', the imagery speaks of the 'juice' and 'joy' of creation – the 'May-mess' and 'March-bloom' of 'The Starlight Night', the leaves and blooms of the 'glassy peartree' and the blue of the heavens that 'is all in a rush' in 'Spring'. The poet unifies heaven and earth:

The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush
 The descending blue ...

The abundance and fertility of spring gain sacramental implications in the juxtaposition with heaven – connoting the divine and being in the presence of God – with the branches of the pear tree joining the earth to the sky (Mackenzie 1981, 70). The line,

The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush
With richness;

not only describes the heavenly realm but also refers to the Virgin Mary, the ‘maid’ in the poem with whom the colour blue has been most commonly associated in Christian art across thousands of years. The colour also has deep biblical roots in the Old Testament, particularly with reference to the people of Israel and their devotional clothing and rituals and is often seen as the colour of divinity. The image, ‘racing lambs’, too, is indicative not only of spring and new growth but also of Jesus as the Lamb of God. In ‘Spring’, the significance of these images in the octet gives the poem a greater depth than merely being a celebration of nature – it leads to the Christocentric focus in the sestet. It is the poet’s prayer that ‘the ‘innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy’ be won over to Christ before they ‘sour with sinning’. Jesus is referred to as the Lamb of God to describe his ultimate purpose on earth as a sacrifice for the sins of humankind: ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29). The crux of the poem becomes the contrast between nature symbolising innocence and humankind’s tendency to sin (Pick 1978, 68). Just as spring epitomises new promise and a sacramental connection with God through its beauty, so Christ, the earthly embodiment of God, comes to offer a life of freedom from sin.

The theme of innocence being lost through sin appears again in ‘God’s Grandeur’ where Hopkins equates a decline in moral and righteous living with the onset of the grime of industry:

... Why do men then now not reckon 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.

Despite the despoiling of the world, however, nature remains a revelation of God’s glory; like the ‘earth’s sweet being’ in Hopkins’s sonnet, ‘Spring’, in ‘God’s Grandeur’ ‘There lives the dearest freshness deep down things’. The image of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter and Helper

of the Trinity (John 14:16–17), as a bird with spread wings over the world, evokes the presence of God offering through the dawn, a new hope and spiritual rebirth:

And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs

God never abandons his world and much in Hopkins's poetry can be seen as prayer – as a quality rather than as a particular poem or utterance – or exhortation to know the beauty and glory of God, the creator, by the infinitude of the beauties of the universe. The second point of the contemplation to attain love in the *Spiritual Exercises* reads: 'I will consider how God dwells in creatures; in the elements, giving them existence; in the plants, giving them life; in the animals, giving them sensation; in human beings, giving them intelligence'. The third point goes on to say that 'he is working in the heavens, elements, plants, fruits, cattle, and all the rest – giving them their existence, conserving them, concurring with their vegetative and sensitive activities, and so forth' (Ignatius of Loyola in Donnelly 2006, 14–15). The exhortation of Scotus of the affirmation of beauty in God, thus, also finds expression in Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* which posit a sacramental view of the world (Pick 1978, 37). The opening line of 'God's Grandeur' asserts that the world is 'charged with the grandeur of God'. Humanity is not only to advance in its knowledge of and closeness with God through a sacramental appreciation of nature but also to be conscious of the need to conserve nature.

Hopkins's poem, 'Inversnaid', although as richly descriptive, is one of the few nature poems in which the poet evokes the inscape of an aspect of nature – in this case, a wild Scottish burn – not as a means to reveal to humankind the glories of God's world, but to emphasise the importance of the preservation 'of wet and of wilderness'. Despite the lyricism and musicality of the poem, much of the imagery is dark and powerful – the burn is 'darksome', 'roaring down'; the pool 'pitchblack, fell-frowning' and 'It rounds and rounds Despair to drowning' – which points to the line in the last stanza of the bereavement of the world if the 'wildness and wet' were to be lost. The poet's plea gains in poignancy and emphasis in the repeated,

... Let them be left,
O let them be left ...

The poem is ultimately a celebration of nature in all its wildness and untamed beauty, as created by God: 'Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet'. It serves to establish the principle of responsibility towards the world which is implicit in Ignatian spirituality

(Ignatius of Loyola 1951, 103). 'Inversnaid', along with several other of Hopkins's poems such as 'Spring' and 'God's Grandeur', represents a sacramental Christianity that correlates with an ecological consciousness. However, ultimately, Hopkins's focus is not on the connections within nature but on nature's connection with God and on the primary purpose of all things to magnify God's glory by praise.

Most of the poems discussed in this chapter, among them his most lyrical, were written while Hopkins was studying theology at St Beuno's College in Wales during 1877. Of them, 'The Windhover' is one of the more famous, powerful in its imagery and impact, and attracting numerous interpretations through its complexity of meaning and ambiguity (Mackenzie in Pollard 1970, 325). Robert Bernard Martin asserts that in studying 'The Windhover' the point is not to argue about the meaning of the poem but to recognise its ultimate significance. This is in the context of the tenor or interpretation of the poem as opposed to its value – the achievement of the poet in progressing from the physically celebratory to the spiritual within the poem itself (1991, 264). The transition can be seen as a sacramental movement with both the poetical progression and the thematic connotations of Christ, the bird, the Passion, carrying implications of the sacramental – the way in which spiritual forces become incarnate in the natural world. 'The Windhover' is about transformation, about eternal beauty emerging from earthly beauty but it is transformation achieved by destruction. Christ's glory was revealed through his physical death and Hopkins evokes the beauty of that sacrifice in the flight of the bird (Christ 1975, 146). As in his other poems, Hopkins draws on the haecceity, the physical distinctiveness of the windhover in flight to convey the presence of Christ. The imagery in the last line of the poem – 'Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion' – homes in on the crucified Christ, the son of God become man, bringing together the spiritual and the physical. The poem is testimony to Hopkins's unquestioning faith at that point in his life; it affirms his conviction of the connection between God and nature. The windhover, in its conquest of the air, its 'achieve' and 'mastery' is suggestive of Christ. Ultimately though, the sonnet is a poem to Christ, a powerful declaration through artistic expression of Hopkins's commitment to his God.

Hopkins not only writes about nature in passionate and figurative terms but, in many of his poems, draws on imagery from nature particularly in his portraits of Christ. Fire is frequently associated with Christ as can be seen in stanzas 2, 9 and 34 in 'The Wreck of the Deutschland', in 'The Windhover' and with Christ's judgment in 'That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire' (Culwick 1992, 47). Christ is linked to a bird of prey in 'The Windhover' and to a lion in '(Carrion Comfort)'. Again, in 'The Wreck of the Deutschland', lightning and

storms, as well as starlight and twilight, feature in conveying Christ's being. According to Culwick, in instances such as these, Hopkins makes use of biblical imagery and traditional religious connotations and symbols used by eighteenth century writers to express the power and majesty of Christ (1992, 47). Culwick points out that Christ is often conveyed in hyperbolic and paradoxical terms; he is depicted as being formidable:

The swoon of a heart that the sweep and the hurl of thee trod
Hard down with a horror of height

('The Wreck of the Deutschland')

He is 'maker and destroyer: terrible and merciful, lovely and dangerous' (1992, 43); he is 'lightning and love', 'a winter and warm' ('The Wreck of the Deutschland'); he is 'a billion times told lovelier, more dangerous' ('The Windhover').

The notions about nature – haecceity, diversity, the experience of the good moment, the abundance of creation, the reactive impulse of prayer or praise – in conjunction with the verbal strategies Hopkins uses to convey these ideas, draw together to create an understanding of Hopkins's sacramental approach to nature. Both Whitman and Hopkins reveal a passionate appreciation of the natural beauties of the world and invest this world with a spiritual significance. Whitman makes no separation between the beauty and worth of the lowest object on earth and the divine being. For him, the sacred and the temporal co-exist (Clausen 1997, 180):

I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God
not in the least

(Section 48)

In this line, there is a crux between pantheism and transcendence. Whitman's pantheistic cast portrays everything in the universe as a manifestation of God; his assertion of his incomprehension of God speaks to God's mystery, his transcendence. Whitman resolves the crux by refusing any curiosity and placing the focus on himself: 'And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is' (section 48). For Hopkins, nature 'mirrors the divine purpose of salvation' (Clausen 1997, 181). It serves as a revelation of divine beauty, drawing humanity closer to God. Certainly, in his nature poems, Hopkins writes with a celebratory intensity that, according to Christopher Clausen, is uncommon in Victorian poets or most Christian poets (1997, 181). Despite the fact that Hopkins expresses his theological conviction in these poems, Clausen avers that at many times Hopkins 'sounds more like

Whitman than like other nineteenth-century Christians' (1997, 182). In relation to this, some degree of a common pantheism or perhaps, more accurately, a quasi-pantheism in Hopkins's case, can be noted between the two poets with Hopkins following Scotus's view of the univocity of being. Clausen cites, as an example of Hopkins's similarity to Whitman, a stanza from 'The Wreck of the Deutschland':

I kiss my hand
 To the stars, lovely-asunder
 Starlight, wafting him out of it; and
 Glow, glory in thunder;
 Kiss my hand to the dappled-with-damson west;
 Since, tho' he is under the world's splendour and wonder,
 His mystery must be instressed, stressed;
 For I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when I understand.

Hopkins's line, 'For I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when I understand' and Whitman's line above, 'I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God/ not in the least', make for an interesting comparison. Whitman is aware of, even encounters, God in everything and yet is unconcerned about understanding God. Hopkins, on the other hand, while seeing nature as a revelation of God, is not always brought to an encounter with or understanding of God and is blessed when he is. Whitman approaches God with self-affirmation, Hopkins, with humility. In the above stanza, Hopkins portrays the mystery of God in nature; humanity is brought into contact with the divine through both nature's force and beauty. Clausen suggests that there is a 'Whitmanesque' exuberance in the stanza, a similarity in style and theme (1997, 182). In the following lines, Whitman writes lyrically and passionately about nature and his relation to it:

I smell the white roses scented and growing,
 I reach to the leafy lips, I reach to the polish'd breasts of
 melons.
 [...]
 I hear you whispering there O stars of heaven.
 [...]
 I ascend from the moon, I ascend from the night

(Section 49)

Neither Whitman nor Hopkins highlights any distinction between the natural and supernatural realms since God and nature are in harmony (Clausen 1997, 183). Hopkins gives praise to the wonders of nature underlining the concept of spiritual unity but, in kissing his hand to the stars and the sun, there is a suggestion of worship of heavenly bodies. It is interesting to note that such worship is an ancient idolatrous rite. There are many allusions to a pagan celebration of nature in the Scriptures as discussed by Freeman (2012) who gives an example from Job 31:26–28 where the heart has been ‘enticed’ by and the hand kissed to the sun or the moon, ‘This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above’. However, Hopkins stresses that it is natural beauty that can bring humanity to the higher beauty that is God and for him all creation is seen sacramentally. The very glories of the world – the stars, the thunder, the sunset – are celebrated through the process of instress, the emotions and insight brought about by their perception as part of the majesty of God’s creation.

While Whitman in *Song of Myself* frequently expresses mystical or spiritual awareness in sexual terms, he parallels Hopkins in his concept of nature as a revelation of God, conveying here a similar sacramental quality:

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,
Bearing the owner’s name someway in the corners, that we
may see and remark, and say *Whose?*

(Section 6)

Likewise, according to Clarence Glacken, Hopkins makes it clear that nature, as part of the creation of God, is ‘evidence and proof of his creative activity’ (1992, 106). Glacken, in his article, ‘Reflections on the History of Western Attitudes to Nature’, writes about natural theology and the idea – expressed from the early church fathers onwards and frequently by writers of the pre-Romantic and Romantic periods – that nature is a teacher (1992, 106). Nature is a book to be read and interpreted in order to gain knowledge of God’s wisdom and creativity (Glacken 1992, 106). Glacken defines natural theology as being concerned with realising the existence of God and his divine purpose through the evidence of the order and beauty of creation. In Christian thought, this is clearly seen in the Bible: ‘For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead’ (Romans 1:20). This, according to Glacken, emphasises God’s transcendence; nature is proof of God’s creative activity but not God itself.

Nature is not holy (1992, 106). Both Whitman and Hopkins recognise God's creative activity in the world; the difference lies in the expression of their creeds – between worshipping creation and worshipping the creator. In 'God's Grandeur' Hopkins states that 'The world is charged with the grandeur of God' and in 'As kingfishers catch fire' he writes 'Christ – for Christ plays in ten thousand places'. The similarity of theme in terms of a celebration of the beauty in nature between Whitman and Hopkins notwithstanding, Hopkins's focus in his poetry is always on God and on God's glory in nature – there is always a theological edge or dimension – whereas Whitman's *Song of Myself* shows an egocentrism and a pantheistic view of God in nature. His poem begins with the words, 'I celebrate myself, and sing myself' and he declares that the earth is 'brighter and clearer for my sake!' (section 21).

The value of the individuality and particularity of each being and object on earth is equally important as a concept to both Whitman and Hopkins. Whitman, with his conviction of the singular intention of everything on earth, believes in the 'wing'd purposes' of the birds and does not 'call the tortoise unworthy because she is not something else' (section 13). Hopkins, through the theory of individuation as held by Scotus, experiences beauty as inscape, stressing the inherent uniqueness of all in creation:

Selves – goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*

('As kingfishers catch fire')

Hopkins, in his sensuous apprehension of beauty, notes the smallest detail. In 'Spring' his eye alights on the weeds, 'long and lovely and lush', the 'little low heavens' of the thrush's eggs, the 'glassy peartree leaves' and the 'racing lambs' (Simkin 1992, 176). Whitman shows the same awareness of the detail of creation:

And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,
And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder,
mullein and poke-weed.

(Section 5)

His celebration of each unique part of life is manifested in his, often lengthy, lists featuring animals, birds and plant life. In 'Pied Beauty' Hopkins, too, presents the uniqueness of everything in creation, of 'dappled things' in a laudatory catalogue. He celebrates 'All things counter, original, spare, strange'. For Hopkins as much as for Whitman, the small and

insignificant are as important as the great, the pastoralism of nature as beautiful as its wildness.

The two poets show an evocativeness and lyricism of imagery with an intensity of passion exhibited in the exclamatory tone in Hopkins's 'Hurrahing in Harvest' and the following extract from Whitman's *Song of Myself*:

Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!
Earth of departed sunset—earth of the mountains misty-topt!
Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just tinged with blue!
Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river!
Earth of the limpid gray of clouds brighter and clearer for my sake!
Far-swooping elbow'd earth—rich apple-blossom'd earth!

(Section 21)

Whitman's lyricism here in phrases such as 'slumbering and liquid trees' and 'rich apple-blossom'd earth' contributes to the overall sense of mysticism in the poem, while his 'mountains misty-topt' and 'limpid gray of clouds' are resonant with Hopkins's 'azurous hung hills' and 'silk-sack clouds'. Another interesting point of comparison is Whitman's 'Far-swooping elbow'd earth' with Hopkins's image of the 'azurous hung hills' being God's 'world-wielding shoulder' in 'Hurrahing in Harvest' (Simkin 1992, 162). These images convey a sense of power and boundlessness and both use corporeal metaphors, but Whitman's is grounded in temporality within the context while Hopkins's conception of the magnitude of the universe is manifested in religious expression.

Whitman's belief in the immanence of God in all creation conveys a spiritual, emotional and physical unity. He glorifies nature in erotic terms. The night is 'bare-bosom'd', the wind's 'soft-tickling genitals' rub against him. The connection between God, nature and humankind is a sensual one. Whitman hails nature in an intimate bidding:

I call to the earth and sea half-held by the night,
Press close bare-bosom'd night—press close magnetic-
nourishing night!

(Section 21)

It is nature in all her seductive beauty that the poet wishes to immerse himself in but Whitman himself, in all his rejoicing of the self, is always central. It is he who calls the night to 'Press close' (Simkin 1992, 175–6). For Hopkins, the thrust is outward – his 'heart rears

wings bold and bolder’ and ‘half hurls earth’ in its flight to meet ‘that glory in the heavens’, to come into the presence of his Saviour (Simkin 1992, 175–6). There is an intense sense of mysticism and spirituality pervading *Song of Myself* with Whitman

Walking the old hills of Judaea with the beautiful gentle God
by my side

(Section 33)

He ‘hear[s] and behold[s] God in every object’ (section 48), and yet his sense of spirituality is most frequently couched in sexual terms – he feels the ‘hand of God’ as the ‘promise’ of his own in terms of an erotic mystical awakening (section 5) – and is embedded within a celebration of the self:

Alone far in the wilds and mountains I hunt,
Wandering amazed at my own lightness and glee

(Section 10)

This assertion contrasts strongly with Hopkins’s reverential praise of God:

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour

(‘Hurrahing in Harvest’)

Both poets acknowledge the glory that is nature, but Hopkins’s sacramental perceptions of the world take him into a religious experience where the spiritual and the artistic meet.

Chapter Four: Humankind and Divinity: Egocentric and Theocentric Expressions of Spirituality

Walt Whitman and Gerard Manley Hopkins bring their conceptions and expressions of spirituality to bear on a significant focus of their poetry – humankind’s relation to God. For each of them, divinity is an important theme and this chapter will explore not only the perceptions of each poet of the connection between God and humanity but the converging points between them on this theme and their differences in poetic inspiration and expression. The aspect of humanity that is principally explored in this chapter is the self. Whitman and Hopkins, within the framework of spirituality underpinning their work, depict two opposing concepts – the view of autonomous human divinity by Whitman; and the theocentric perspective that humankind is created by God and shaped by the Fall as expressed by Hopkins.

The theocentric approach can be inferred from Jesus’s summary of the law:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

(Matthew 22:37–39)

For Christians, the theocentric focus is clear. God must be first and foremost for humankind. There is no room for ego; and the dictum to love ‘as thyself’ one’s neighbours reinforces the supplanting of self by the needs of others, although many would argue that this verse supports love of self in order to love others. Indeed, Jesuit thought emphasises self-love, claiming it as both natural and right since we are commanded ‘to love ourselves no less than our neighbour’ (Höpfl 2006, 216). The commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves, as given by Jesus, encapsulates, along with the commandment to love God, the law and the prophets (Matthew 22:40). While the focus is not on any glorification of the self, the Bible does, however, make clear the high station of humankind within God’s creation. The Christian tradition rooted in the creation account in Genesis, maintains that humanity is the acme of God’s creation (McGrath 1997, 423). In Psalm 8:4, the psalmist asks God, ‘What is man that thou art mindful of him?’ then adds in verse five, ‘For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and crowned him with glory and honour’, and ‘Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands’ (Glacken 1992, 105). The question that the

psalmist asks God concerns both the nature of humanity and the relative importance of humankind within God's creation (Crisp and Sanders 2018, 15). Theological anthropology, or the doctrine of humanity, considers questions relating to humankind, particularly as answered by the Bible itself, thus, human beings were created in the image of God, both male and female (Genesis 1:27) and given life by the divine breath (Genesis 2:7). Biblical anthropology also asserts that humankind is a fallen creature (Romans 5:12); it is through the disobedience of Adam and Eve that sin entered the world (Genesis 3). The assertions that are expressed in Hebrews – that Christ was made 'like unto his brethren' (2:17), that we 'are all of one' (2:11), that Jesus, in his humanity, was 'yet without sin' (4:15) – provide a Christological basis for understanding what it means to be human (Crisp and Sanders 2018, 21). According to Marc Cortez's essay on Irenaeus, the second-century Greek theologian and bishop, theological anthropology must be grounded in the embodied humanity of Christ (Crisp and Sanders 2018, 23).

Roman Catholic anthropology is clearly expressed in the *Principle and Foundation* of the *Spiritual Exercises*: 'Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God Our Lord, and by this means, to save his soul' (Ignatius of Loyola 1951, 12). Salvation is attained by the grace of God and the intercession of Jesus – chiefly conveyed through the sacramental life of the church – and through baptism humanity can be regenerate. In the Christian view, there is a universal human need for salvation from sin and reconciliation with God, which comes uniquely through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (McGrath 1997, 324). In line with Christian thinking, Hopkins conveys a sense of human dependence on God – unlike Whitman's view of human autonomy – and, along with illuminating the Christological implications of being made in the image of God, expresses the reality of humanity's fallen state.

Transcendentalism, as articulated by Whitman, focuses on the supremacy of humankind through an affirmation of the individual and personal responsibility for salvation rather than salvation through the grace of God (Myerson, Petrulionis and Wallis 2010, xxv). While transcendental belief is based principally in philosophical rather than in religious thought, it propounds that there is a divine unity in all nature and humanity. God is believed to be immanent in the world and God, nature and humans are all connected. Transcendentalists in the nineteenth century, as idealists, believed in the innate goodness of humanity but denied the transcendent authority of the Bible and of Jesus (Myerson, Petrulionis and Wallis 2010, 55). The concept of God or a Universal Being as a unifying

force in the universe underpins transcendental writings, imparting a divinity to humankind which is borne out in Whitman's words:

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch
or am touch'd from

(Section 24)

But inasmuch as Whitman proclaims his divinity, he also epitomises the common man. As an exponent of the forces of nationalism and democracy, he exhibits in his poetry a recognition of the masses, of this 'common man'. His poetry is earthy and direct, resonating with the common man. His poem, *Song of Myself*, is largely autobiographical, focusing on the 'I', the 'Me, myself' (section 4). The celebration of the individual and the relationship between the soul and the surrounding world are key concepts in Whitman's work, expressive of his transcendental views of the divinity in humankind and nature.

The transcendentalist belief in the autonomous divinity of man calls into question the necessity for the salvation and atonement of Christian conviction while still accepting the presence of God in the world. The pantheistic approach, which is a feature in Whitman's work, sees God's immanence in all of creation, in all human beings regardless of 'hue and caste' (section 16) or status and in all life from leaves of grass to the mastodon. Pantheism – and Whitman – rejects any notion of God as being separate from his creation. Thus, the concept of sin occupies a difficult place in pantheistic thought, since humanity is not subject to any externally imposed moral code. The possibility of evil is thus negated. This aspect will be explored further in this chapter in relation to sections of *Song of Myself*.

Whitman and Hopkins both see a unity among God, humanity and nature but from differing theological perspectives. In Hopkins's poems, the three persons of the Trinity appear distinctly. For Whitman, the divine is to be found in human individuality and in the natural world rather than in a transcendent other. Whitman's notion of humanity as divine, and his celebration of the self, manifest in an egocentrism: 'And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is' (section 48). While this egocentrism forms part of the thematic focus of the poem, the semantic understanding of the term 'self' can be broadened to encompass not only Whitman's celebration of the self but also his heightened self-awareness and his sense of utter confidence and self-esteem. *Song of Myself* is an expression of self and an elevation and exaltation of the self – the earth is 'brighter and clearer for my sake!' (section 21). The poem can be categorised within the contexts of autobiography and epic poetry, in which the bard narrates significant events and deeds usually featuring a hero

(Bloom 1999, 15). In *Song of Myself*, Whitman is the hero of his poem, declaring in his opening line, 'I celebrate myself, and sing myself'. He never loses his awareness of his own distinctive individuality in his reflection on God or the spiritual world, or in his identification with all people (Allen 1975, 195).

Whitman is the major symbol in his own poems, somehow immortal and yet cognisant of death, assuming a position of centrality within the world (Waggoner 1968, 163). The poet declares in triumphant self-acknowledgement: 'I and this mystery here we stand' (section 3). This statement follows Whitman's description of himself as 'Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical', grounding himself within reality but also, with the mystical overtones of the following sentence, imparting to himself transcendental status. Such mystical intimations convey Whitman's spiritual reality throughout *Song of Myself* in his evocation of spiritual completeness. Whitman venerates his self, all of his being, with the words:

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is
not my soul

(Section 3)

Whitman refers to his body and soul, the 'mystery', as distinct entities as well as expressing their oneness. For Whitman, the union of the body and soul is what constitutes the identity of the self (Allen 1975, 190). Body and soul fuse together in a necessary expression of selfhood: 'Lack one lacks both' (section 3). As discussed in both chapters two and three, in section five, he describes the union of the body and the soul in terms of sexual experience:

I believe in you my soul ...
[...]
I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morning,
How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd
over upon me

(Section 5)

Whitman exhibits his egocentrism through an autoerotic approach (Bloom 1999, 9). In the extract above, this is no disembodied soul but one that is concretised in its unity with the flesh. The ecstatic sexual union of the poet and his soul, although described figuratively, can also be interpreted as an act of onanism, adding weight to an understanding of Whitman's narcissistic stance. With the poet's union with the soul comes divinity since, in the mystic act

of love, the 'hand of God' and the 'spirit of God' become part of his self. Whitman experiences oneness with God, with all men and women, with the ants and the elder tree (Folsom and Merrill 2016, 21–22). He frequently employs parallelism, with the use of the coordinating conjunction 'and', to give equal weight to and to unify two thoughts or concepts. Thus, he states:

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell
are with me

(Section 21)

Assertions such as these give voice to the thematic focus on physicality and spirituality. The belief in the soul's immortality is common to most religions but Whitman's belief 'in the flesh and the appetites', particularly in the context of proclaiming his divinity 'inside and out' (section 24), is not generally shared (Allen 1975, 190). Whitman celebrates the body, making it indistinguishable in importance from the soul:

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul

(Section 48)

As Asselineau highlights, he always refers to the soul within the context of the corporeal and he places as much significance on the sensuality and sexuality of the body as he does on the mystery of the soul (1998).

Whitman expresses his divinity explicitly:

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch
or am touch'd from

(Section 24)

However, his celebration of the divinity in himself is couched in passionate and visceral terms which bring his heightened self-awareness to the fore:

The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer,
This head more than churches, bibles and all the creeds

(Section 24)

Whitman idealises and exalts the self by describing the physical within the context of religious references. An important aspect of his creed, which emerges throughout *Song of Myself*, is his controversial elevation of the human body itself:

I believe in the flesh and the appetites,
Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and each part and tag
of me is a miracle

(Section 24)

Not only does Whitman exalt the human body, but he exalts sex in a sensuality of language and imagery that is contrary to the writings of transcendentalists like Emerson and Thoreau (Doudna 1998). He is the conduit of the ‘voices of sexes and lusts’ (section 24), the ‘caresser of life’ (section 13). In his self-idealisation, Whitman does not exclude a recognition of his baser, more down-to-earth qualities. The poet is

Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan, the son,
Turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking and breeding

(Section 24)

He emphasises his materiality, locating himself geographically and enumerating his physical, more animalistic qualities and actions in reductionist fashion. However, his use of the word ‘kosmos’ is significant, bestowing on himself a cosmic importance in which he is a harmonious and eternal part of the whole of the universe. Earlier in section 20, he describes himself as ‘hankering, gross, mystical, nude’ where, once again, he conjoins within himself coarse physicality and spiritual mystery.

Whitman finds holiness in the body itself as he celebrates all the physical aspects of the flesh:

If I worship one thing more than another it shall be the
spread of my own body, or any part of it

(Section 24)

His celebration of the self encompasses a veneration of the whole of him, his flesh and his soul, the good and the evil, the spiritual and the carnal, and he conveys this veneration in sensual terms – ‘I dote on myself, there is that lot of me and all so luscious’ (section 24). His assertions of divinity and his worship of the body become expressions of self-aggrandisement and egocentrism. Indeed, in section 42, he says of himself, ‘I know perfectly well my own

egotism'. According to Malcolm Cowley, in the years before the start of the American Civil War in 1861 when Whitman was writing and publishing *Leaves of Grass*, he was beset by megalomania which certainly manifests in mood and concept in *Song of Myself* (Whitman 1960, xxviii). Cowley advances, as evidence, Whitman's dream of founding a new religion with *Leaves of Grass*, consisting of 365 chapters, functioning as a holy testament; his lack of distinction between his external self and his deeper Self that he celebrates in *Song of Myself*; and the assumption that everything he professes is right and inspired (Whitman 1960, xxviii). While agreeing that Whitman's poem is invested with a megalomania, Roger Kimball contends that the poet, through the ebullience of his voice, transforms this megalomania into poetry that is not merely dominated by the personal but coheres with a mystic understanding of nature (2000, 52). In nature, Whitman experiences the presence of God and it is in nature, as unified with God and humanity, that he seeks for the wisdom and truth that is at the heart of mysticism (Stewart 2016):

We also ascend dazzling and tremendous as the sun,
We found our own O my soul in the calm and cool of the
daybreak.

My voice goes after what my eyes cannot reach,
With the twirl of my tongue I encompass worlds and volumes
of worlds.

(Section 25)

For Whitman, all humanity is divine, ‘all just as immortal and fathomless as myself’ (section 7). He sees divinity in the faces of everyone – strangers, lovers, criminals and prostitutes – and describes his ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’ as coexisting, along with himself, with God (Marovich 2009, 351):

In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own
face in the glass

(Section 48)

In his assumption of divinity for himself, Whitman bestows it on all since his creed is one of unity and shared consciousness. In Whitman's naming of a diversity of Americans from different states, in different occupations and leading different lives, he pays tribute to them, granting them the same divine status as himself through the unity of body and soul (Bloom 1999, 15). Since divinity is present in all humanity, each man and woman has access to the

truths of the universe – its infinity and its miracles, even in the commonest things (Cowley in Whitman 1960, xxi). Thus, ‘a leaf of grass is no less than the journey work of the stars’, and ‘a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels’ (section 31). A consciousness of love and an equality and immortality are implicit in the divinity of all people (Cowley in Whitman 1960, xxi). Although Whitman addresses death and the ‘bitter hug of mortality’, he declares that ‘it is idle to try to alarm me’ (section 49). He states with confidence:

Has any one supposed it lucky to be born?
I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die, and I
know it

(Section 7)

Whitman constantly affirms the immortality of himself and others, particularly in his frequent expressions of infinity:

We have thus far exhausted trillions of winters and summers,
There are trillions ahead, and trillions ahead of them

(Section 44)

Section six, containing the central image of the grass, addresses the themes of divinity and immortality through a complex interweaving of notions of birth, life, death, regeneration. The grass ‘is itself a child’; it is the ‘beautiful uncut hair of graves’; it transpires ‘from the breasts of young men’; it is at once the offspring taken from their mothers’ laps and the mothers’ laps themselves. The grass symbolises both the miracle of ordinary things and the divinity of ordinary people (Cowley in Hopkins 1960, xvii–xviii). In his 1855 preface, Whitman writes that ‘every motion and every spear of grass and the frames and spirits of men and women and all that concerns them are unspeakably perfect miracles’ (1960, 15). The grass is endowed with a divine quality – ‘I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord’ – but Whitman’s repeated ‘I guess’ opens it to other potentialities of meaning and significance. As always, Whitman draws everybody together – man, woman, old, young, black, white – into his symbolic perception of the grass as he offers his interpretation of the divinity of humankind. His creed of divinity, particularly in this section, is linked to notions of regeneration, of germination encapsulated in his use of the words ‘sprout’ and ‘sprouting’. The connection he makes between people – ‘young and old men’ and ‘women and children’ – and sprout, implying burgeoning life, highlights his ideas of immortality:

They are alive and well somewhere,
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death.

The immortality of all, which is implicit in Whitman's creed of divinity, takes the form of metempsychosis, an ongoing cyclical process of life:

The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait
at the end to arrest it,
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

Whitman constantly celebrates his own selfhood but, in his assertion that all people are 'just as immortal and fathomless as myself' (section 7), he assumes a poetic identity that represents universal humankind. He identifies himself with all:

I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise,
Regardless of others, ever regardful of others,
Maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man

(Section 16)

Cowley points out that, in the earlier sections of *Song of Myself* (8–15), the essence of Whitman's role is that of an observer (Whitman 1960, xix). He looks a long time at the baby asleep in its cradle, he witnesses the sprawling corpse of the suicide, he sees the marriage of the trapper and his bride, his 'eyes settle the land' (section 10). In sections 33–38, however, Whitman no longer merely observes but experiences. His is the power of identification: 'I am a free companion', 'My voice is the wife's voice'. He is massacred in Texas and fights in an 'old-time sea-fight' and on a great battlefield; he is the 'old artilleryman', the condemned witch, the hounded slave; 'All these I feel or am' (section 33). 'Since everything emanates from the universal soul, and since his own soul is of the same essence, he can identify himself with every object and with every person living or dead, heroic or criminal' (Cowley in Whitman 1960, xix). Throughout the poem, Whitman's voice as the sharer in all life, 'the mate and champion of people' (section 7) is pre-eminent. His identification with people of every 'hue and caste' and 'every rank and religion' and his descriptions and cataloguing of people ranging across occupations, religions, geographic locations and colour (section 16) emphasise his centrality in relation to all humankind. His celebration of the self embraces all people regardless of race, identity or place in society (Folsom and Merrill 2016, 37). He declares, 'I am large, I contain multitudes' (section 51).

Whitman's mood of supreme self-acceptance is constantly present in the affirmation of the connection between himself and others. The three separate statements he makes in section 20 are a triumphant self-acknowledgment, an assertion of his self-knowledge:

I know I am solid and sound
I know I am deathless
I know I am august

In Whitman's place of centrality representing universal humankind, he also interprets the truths of the universe:

To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow,
All are written to me, and I must get what the writing means

(Section 20)

The poet expresses his vision, born out of mystical experience and articulated, according to Cowley, in the form of a sermon (Whitman 1960, xx):

Do you see O my brothers and sisters?
It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is eternal
life—it is Happiness

(Section 50)

In his poetic imagination, Whitman locates himself in history; the past becomes, in effect, a reality of his present. He looks into space and time; 'afoot with my vision' and, released into transcendental experience, he traverses "sierras" and 'continents' and hurtles through heaven (Cowley in Whitman 1960, xix). In section 33, Whitman describes himself 'speeding amid the seven satellites' and 'with tail'd meteors', his doctrine achieving mystic dimensions with the richness of his cosmological imagery. He draws time together, past and present, to operate on two levels: the portrayal of the poet as a universal symbol and the imparting of a sense of eternal, cosmic mystery. In his vision, he is 'not contain'd between my hat and boots' as he says earlier in section seven. Although he describes himself as

Storming, enjoying, planning, loving, cautioning
Backing and filling, appearing and disappearing,
I tread day and night such roads

he writes of his visionary journeyings in the context of the divine cosmos, and alongside God:

Walking the old hills of Judaea with the beautiful gentle God
by my side

(Section 33)

Whitman's references to God or the divine or religion are manifold, with God often being portrayed simply as a Divine Being manifest in the universe. Although he clearly alludes to Christ as a parallel to or an identification with himself, he never mentions Christ directly by name. According to Bloom, he proclaims himself as the American Christ, both in the form of the crucified Christ and the resurrected Christ (1999, 9). Whitman is the servant Christ who, like him washing his disciples' feet (John 13:4–15), cares for the runaway slave:

And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated body and
bruise'd feet

(Section 10)

He is also the miraculous healer: 'I am he bringing help for the sick as they pant on their backs' (section 41). He takes on the role of Christ as Saviour on the cross suffering for the sake of humanity: 'I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there' (section 33), with the implication that salvation for humanity, as ordained by God through the death of his son, is realised by Whitman himself. He refers even more clearly to his personal experience of the Passion of Jesus in section 38 where he passionately makes an appeal to forget his suffering:

That I could forget the mockers and insults!
That I could forget the trickling tears and the blows of the
bludgeons and hammers!
That I could look with a separate look on my own crucifixion
and bloody crowning

In the same section, Whitman becomes the Christ of the resurrection:

I remember now,
I resume the overstaid fraction,
The grave of rock multiplies what has been confided to it, or
to any graves,
Corpses rise, gashes heal, fastenings roll from me

Here, there is also a reference in the plural phrase 'corpses rise' to the biblical resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:52) where the dead will rise in the last days and be transformed. In

his wanderings – ‘I tramp a perpetual journey’ (section 46) – meeting people from all walks of life from the carpenter and the farmer, the criminals and the deacons to the immigrants, the Northerners and the Southerners, Whitman embodies Christ as he walked and ministered prior to his ascension (Bloom 1999, 9). The glory of Christ’s ascent into heaven is expressed as Whitman again signifies his incarnation of the identity of Christ:

This day before dawn I ascended a hill and look’d at the
crowded heaven

(Section 46)

In Whitman’s identification with Christ and his visionary outlook, it is possible to ascribe to him elements of a Messiah complex. His proclamation of ‘a new order’ as described in his prefatory essay places him in a position of leadership, a liberator and saviour of humanity, a voice calling out to the people, which is borne out in section 42 of *Song of Myself*:

A call in the midst of the crowd,
My own voice, orotund sweeping and final.

It is he who must reveal the ‘word unsaid/ It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol’ (section 50) just as Christ came to earth as the personification of God’s revelation: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God’ (John 1:1). Here, there are Shelleyan elements. Percy Bysshe Shelley in his poem, ‘Ode to the West Wind’, bestows on himself, the poet, the role of interpreter and herald of messages of life and regeneration, which parallels Whitman’s line of thinking:

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy!

(‘Ode to the West Wind’)

Shelley, like Whitman, has a strong sense of his radical prophetic vocation, describing the worth of poets and poetry as divine in *A Defence of Poetry* and stating that 'A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one' (1948, 14).

Christ's mission on earth as the Son of God was to offer eternal life to whoever believed in him. Christ asserts that he is 'the way, the truth and the life' (John 14:6) but he also says, 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart' (Matthew 11:29). Jesus Christ makes a number of statements about himself – 'I am the good shepherd' (John 10:11), 'I am the light of the world' (John 8:12) and 'I am the resurrection and the life' (John 11:25), for example – which express profound truths and serve to convey and illuminate his character metaphorically. In the Old Testament, God says of himself, 'I am that I am' (Exodus 3:14), conveying the glory and power of his existence. Whitman's expression of his role and identity are always expressed in grandiose terms. His 'I am' statements insert himself at the centre of life and humanity, as he leads each man and woman 'upon a knoll' and points the way to 'landscapes of continents and the public road' (section 46). He declares confidently, 'I am an acme of things accomplish'd' (section 44) and 'I know I am august' (section 20), seeing himself as venerable and exalted. Christ's statements about himself always point to his role through which salvation and grace can be achieved by humanity; Whitman's usually focus on what he is and what he has done. His proclamation of himself as a saviour, as playing the role of an American Christ, are manifested as part of his glorification of the self:

Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than
myself

(Section 48)

His identification with all people, however, not only underlines an egocentric stance but manifests as a Christ-like love for humanity. In his personal life, Whitman was altruistic, leaving his home to nurse his brother, George, in a Washington hospital after he had been wounded in 1862 in the Civil War and then remaining as a hospital volunteer, nursing other wounded soldiers until the end of the war (Allen 1975, xiii). Whitman takes the pain of the wounded on himself, just as the suffering Christ did:

Agonies are one of my changes of garments,
I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I myself become

the wounded person

(Section 33)

His prophetic stance, his championing of all humanity – ‘I am the mate and champion of all people’ (section 7) – and his identification with Christ emerge out of his poetic consciousness rather than as symptoms of a disorder although his attribution of a saviour status to himself does bear similarity to the psychological understanding of what a Messiah complex is.

Whitman’s image of Christ has little foundation in Christian orthodoxy. He believes neither in fallen humanity nor, therefore, in the necessity for atonement (Allen 1975, 174). The poet glories in the physicality of life, extolling the delights of the body in which he recognises no sin or corruption (Marovich 2009, 363-4). Thus, his identification with Christ forms a contrast to Christ as a redeemer from sin. Whitman does not deny the existence of evil or even of Satan in the world: ‘The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell are with me’ (section 21). Good and evil seem to exist side by side in the world – a world in which God is immanent – and in people with whom Whitman makes no differentiation from himself: ‘And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them’ (section 20). Since God made all things, evil and Satan are included in his conception of divinity (Symonds 2002, 22). However, Whitman makes no explicit mention of Satan as a personal being. Symonds writes about ‘the position of unrestricted faith and imperturbable optimism’ that Whitman embraces in the face of orthodox theology (2002, 21) He adopts an attitude of unquestioning acceptance towards both good and evil:

I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be the
poet of wickedness also.

What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?

Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I stand
indifferent

(Section 22)

Sin does not concern him. In his indifference, the poet simply accepts and affirms what he sees ‘of God each hour of the twenty-four’ (section 48). The contradictions of good and evil, love and strife come together within the unity of the universe existing as a necessary part of the spiritual world (Symonds 2002, 25). Whitman declares:

And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,
For I who am curious about each am not curious about God,

(No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about
God and about death.)

Whitman rejects divisions between the best and the worst and, 'knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things' he chooses simply – with typical Whitman egotism – to 'go bathe and admire myself' (section 3) (Folsom and Merrill 2016, 15).

The emphasis on the individual self is of key importance in *Song of Myself*, but this is in conjunction with Whitman's concept of the universal human self. Through an exploration of his writing, the notion that the individual self is not a singular entity but rather contains multiple selves can be understood. The self encompasses also a messianic self, as was discussed earlier, and a trinitarian self. Whitman's recurrent use of the word 'myself' emphasises the importance of himself, the poet, as Walt Whitman, a son of Manhattan and in section four, he describes this self, 'what I am':

Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary,
Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an impalpable certain
rest,
Looking with side-curved head curious what will come next,
Both in and out of the game and watching and wondering at it

The frequent juxtaposition of the pronouns 'I', 'me' and 'you' sometimes carry ambiguous connotations and are open to different interpretations. Whitman's *Song of Myself* begins with the word 'I' and ends with the word 'you':

Missing me one place search another,
I stop somewhere waiting for you

(Section 52)

In one sense, this embraces the universality and inclusiveness of the poem as Whitman moves from individuality and celebration of the self to a consciousness of all people. The poet says farewell and gets ready to depart, to step into the 'next fold of the future' (section 51), inviting others, the 'you', to follow (Cowley in Whitman 1960, xx). However, the word 'you' here also refers to Whitman's other self or selves, identified as the soul as he does earlier in section five in his description of the sexual union of the soul and the body:

I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself
to you
And you must not be abased to the other

Whitman's 'I' at the end waiting for his self, or soul, thus portrays his spiritual identity since the poet has bequeathed his physical body 'to the dirt to grow from the grass I love' (section 52). Various critics view the role and meaning of the pronouns Whitman uses differently. Borges states that Whitman's narrator is not the individual himself, but a universal representative named Walt Whitman and combining Whitman, the epic poet and visionary of *Song of Myself*, and Whitman, the man. The double Whitman merges with the reader, the 'you', becoming 'a triple Whitman, the hero of his epic'. This triple Walt Whitman connotes infinity, not as an abstraction but in 'all his disjunctive and contradictory parts' (Gracia, Korsmeyer and Gasché 2002, 71). Bloom, too, argues that the poetic 'I' does not designate the poet's ordinary voice. Rather, Whitman sees the 'I', the 'me' as a divided self, combining esoterically into three – the poet's actual self, his soul, and the 'Me myself' (1999, 16). The words 'Me myself' from section four refer to the deeper self which Whitman seeks and which he presents as a trinity of identity. According to Allen, the use of the words, 'I', 'Me' or 'myself' are used interchangeably with his 'soul' but they are all synonyms for this deeper self (1975, 198). Whitman's 'Me myself' is immortal, and through his cosmic 'I' he merges with all creation, feeling himself to be at one with the spirit of the universe (Allen 1975, 261).

Transcendental doctrine believes in the absolute unity of God, not the Trinity, imparting a spiritual or divine essence to everything in the world (Asselineau, 1998). Yet Whitman identifies himself with a God who is, according to the Bible, triune in nature corresponding to the triune parts of his own being, the 'I', 'Me' and 'myself'. I see this parallel as providing a lens into the spiritual implications of Whitman's creed – that man or woman, and God exist as three-in-one, as a unity within themselves and with each other. As Marovich says, 'Whitman's poetics placed God on the same democratic plane as the body' (2009, 353). Whitman says, 'And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is' (section 48), perhaps one of his most audacious pronouncements particularly for the time his work was published and considering the prophetic, mystical and spiritual dimensions of his artistic expression.

Such pronouncements and declamations continue to place Whitman in a position of primacy in *Song of Myself*. Yet, his frequently declamatory tone in exclamations such as 'O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues' (section 6) moves him away from his self-idealisation and brings a sense of mysticism to the fore, amplifying the religious elements in the poem, with both biblical rhetoric and imagery imparting spiritual significance. The exclamation, as with others, encapsulates a sense of the mystery of God, a consciousness of the esoteric. The line has associations with verses in the New Testament where the disciples

begin talking in tongues as a spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit: ‘And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance’ (Acts 2:4). In the Bible, as in this context with Whitman, the gift of speaking in tongues is seen to edify and unify. Here, he emerges as poet-prophet, as the ‘divine literatus’ as he says himself in his 1855 preface (Sowder 1999, 202).

In writing his vision, Whitman describes a new religion, proclaiming in his prefatory essay to the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, ‘A new order shall arise and they shall be the priests of man, and every man shall be his own priest... Through the divinity of themselves shall the kosmos and the new breed of poets be interpreters of men and women and of all events and things’ (Whitman 1960, 22). As mentioned earlier, Whitman, in his notebooks, declares his intention to ‘inaugurate a religion’ and write ‘the new Bible’ (Sowder 1999, 202). As seer, visionary, prophet, healer and teacher he is not just an appointed representative of God on earth, as a preacher in the Christian tradition is recognised to be, but divine in himself. In his inclusive narration of the activities and lives of diverse people, he assumes a national identity. He takes on the role of ‘a public spokesman and a social healer, an orator whose public voice would enable him to assume the dual role of poet and caretaker’ (Bloom 1999, 12). In his essay, ‘The Poet’, Emerson states that ‘The poet is representative’, speaking of and for all people (2009, 7). He further describes a poet as one who ‘announces that which no man foretold; he knows and tells; he is the only teller of news, for he was present and privy to the appearance which he describes. He is a beholder of ideas, and an utterer of the necessary and causal’ (2009, 9–10). Emerson also declares in ‘The Poet’, which was written in 1844, eleven years before the publication of *Leaves of Grass*, ‘I look in vain for the poet whom I describe’ (2009, 34). It was the concept of a representative American poet as described by Emerson that prompted Whitman to believe that he was such a poet, the embodiment of Emerson’s ideal (Wayne 2006, 222). Indeed, Whitman proclaimed himself as ‘An American bard at last!’ in a self-review of the 1855 publication of *Leaves of Grass*, which was published in the *United States Review* at the time. In his prefatory essay, he describes a bard as being ‘commensurate with a people’ (Whitman 1960, 6). Whitman’s stance of being a poet representative of the people echoes Shelley’s view that ‘poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world’, not in any legal sense but as a voice of the people (Shelley 1948, 54).

The view that poets are the inspired representatives of the people is a commonly held one, but it does carry suggestions of egotism. Whitman’s focus is very much on the self and it is through this focus that his spirituality is channelled. Hopkins’s view is a theocentric one,

which is very firmly grounded in the Trinity – God, the Father; God, the Son; and God, the Holy Spirit. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, the contemplation on the incarnation consists of meditating on the ‘Three Divine Persons’ who work for the redemption of man through the incarnation (Ignatius of Loyola 1951, 49–50). Hopkins’s theology is made clear in a letter he wrote to Robert Bridges in October 1883 (1955, 187):

There are three persons, each God and each the same, the one, the only God: to some people this is a ‘dogma’, a word they almost chew, that is an equation in theology, the dull algebra of schoolmen; to others it is news of their dearest friend or friends ...

In reference to the incarnation, Hopkins writes that, to the Catholic, the mystery is that ‘Christ is in every sense God and in every sense man, and the interest is in the locked and inseparable combination ...’ (1955, 188). Hopkins’s expression of his theology in his poems is as a result of his ‘ecstasy of interest’ in his ‘three heavenly friends’, which gives his thought and work a strength and vitality (Pick 1978, 85) evident in lines such as these from ‘The Wreck of the Deutschland’:

Miracle-in-Mary-of-flame,
Mid-numberèd He in three of the thunder-throne!

(Stanza 34)

The Trinity is essential to the Christian faith since at its core is the incarnation, which perfects the relationship between humanity and God. Because Christ came to earth as a man and died on the cross, humanity as sinners can receive redemption. It is the very mystery of the concept of three-in-one that allows humanity to draw close to God and receive his divine revelation. Hopkins regards the Holy Trinity as ‘incomprehensible’, a mystery not easily described in language either literal or metaphorical although he conveys its presence through the effective use of figures of speech and sound devices (Kaczyński 2018, 72–3).

In ‘The Wreck of the Deutschland’, Hopkins concludes ‘Part the First’ with a prayer of praise to the Trinity (Feeney 2008, 83):

Be adored among men,
God, three-numberèd form

(Stanza 9)

In this stanza, the poet reveals the paradox and the mystery of the triune God in his relationship with humanity. He brings ‘wrecking and storm’ and yet is ‘beyond saying sweet’; he is both ‘lightning and love’ and ‘winter and warm’. The God of the Trinity, unfathomably, ‘Hast thy dark descending and most art merciful then’ (Feeney 2008, 83). The frequent alliteration in the last two stanzas of ‘Part the First’ adds impact to the expression of the apparent incongruity of God’s triune nature: ‘lightning and love’, ‘winter and warm’, ‘Father and fondler of heart’. God, in the fullness and wholeness of his nature unites divergent aspects, with the alliterative images bringing together the energy and power (the ‘lightning’), the love, the sternness and authority (‘winter’ and ‘Father’), and the tenderness that he displays. The final lines again pay obeisance to the merciful God, the ‘King’, an appellation usually applied to Christ:

Make mercy in all of us, out of us all
Mastery, but be adored, but be adored King

(Stanza 10)

The word ‘mastery’ refers back to the opening lines of the poem where the poet invokes God as master of life and death, earth and sea – with God, the master of humanity, linked metaphorically to the captain of the *Deutschland*:

Thou mastering me
God! Giver of breath and bread;
World’s strand, sway of the sea;
Lord of living and dead;
Thou hast bound bones and veins in me, fastened me flesh

(Stanza 1)

According to Paul Culwick, Hopkins illuminates his theological perspective regarding humanity’s place in relation to creation and to God, a perspective which expresses both humanity’s insignificance in the face of the greatness of God and ‘his true destiny in eternity in relation to God’ (1992, 63). In these lines above, Hopkins’s apprehension of humanity’s relationship with God is expressed vividly (Culwick 1992, 64).

In the context of the storm in ‘The Wreck of the *Deutschland*’, which also conveys the ‘lightning and lashed rod’ of God’s wrath, the poet’s resistance until he bows to God’s authority is emphasised: ‘I did say yes’ (stanza 2). The word ‘master’ appears once again in stanza ten, this time describing the submission of Paul and St Augustine to God, ‘at once, as

once at a crash' or with 'a lingering-out sweet skill' respectively. In submission, whether through lightning or love, humanity's relationship with God results in a sweetness 'beyond saying' (stanza 9), a perception of God which is evoked by the connotations of the word 'mercy'. The repetitive 'be adored' – interestingly, appearing three times in the prayer to the Trinity in stanzas nine and ten – highlights both Hopkins's personal devotion to and exaltation of his God and the Ignatian principle that humanity was 'created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul' (Ignatius of Loyola 1951, 12).

Towards the end of 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' in stanza 32, Hopkins addresses Jesus again as the master, 'I admire thee, master of the tides', acknowledging his 'sovereignty that heeds but hides, bodes but abides'. Hopkins makes it very clear that in God's relationship with humanity, he is the master, the authority, thus establishing a strongly theological perspective in his poetry. In 'The Windhover', Hopkins once more uses the word 'mastery' –

My heart in hiding

Stirred for a bird, – the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

– with the windhover's mastery of the air symbolising the supreme power of Christ the Lord. 'The Windhover', rich in metaphorical texture, is also rich in alliteration with three word-clusters which, together with the dedication 'To Christ our Lord', connote Christ as one of the persons of the Holy Trinity. These three alliterative clusters – 'this morning morning's minion', 'king-/dom of daylight's dauphin' and 'dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon' – with their central stressed nouns, namely morning, daylight and dawn, not only suggest Christ's Godlike position as part of the Trinity but also point to Christ as being the divine light (Kaczyński 2018, 71). Christ, 'the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world' (John 1: 9) is, in Hopkins's poem, the morning, the daylight, the dawn.

The Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*, which exhort followers to offer God praise, reverence and service, are a predominant force in Hopkins's poetry (Pick 1978, 60). The First Principle and Foundation, in elucidating the role of humanity in relation to the natural world, goes on to say, 'The other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him in attaining the end for which he is created' (Ignatius of Loyola 1951, 12). The teachings of the Jesuits and Duns Scotus have a strong anthropocentric core, centring as they do around the belief that human beings are the most significant entity in the universe. The humanist inclination of the Jesuits with its focus on human nature and needs emerges in Hopkins in a

unique sense of self-ness. The selfhood of other creatures, other people and most particularly ourselves, is a revelation of God. In 'To What Serves Mortal Beauty', Hopkins writes:

Our law says: Love what are love's worthiest, were all known;
World's loveliest – men's selves. Self flashes off frame and face.

Everything in the natural world fulfils its purpose of expressing and praising God through its very being, its instress. This is most clearly seen in Hopkins's sonnet, 'As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame', where each thing praises God through an expression of its individuality:

Selves – goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came*

Hopkins's stress on the particularity of all things underpins his theological creed that it is through the expression of its God-given nature that each created being attains oneness with God: 'Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is'. The Psalmist makes the position of humankind in the universe as 'a little lower than the angels', with dominion over the works of God's hands, very clear (Psalm 8:4–5). For people to fulfil their purpose on earth, they need to use nature sacramentally, allowing created beauty to raise them to a higher Beauty in God (Pick 1978, 61).

Hopkins's nature poems written in 1877 revolve around a celebration of created beauty in which all praise is given to God. However, poems such as 'God's Grandeur' and 'Spring', although evoking the grandeur and loveliness of God's creation, introduce a note of bleakness at the poet's awareness of humanity's degradation of the earth:

[...] Why do men 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

(*'God's Grandeur'*)

The connection between humanity's relationship with God and with nature is significant in Hopkins's thought where sinning, or alienation from God, equates with an abuse of nature. This conviction is affirmed by biblical and Ignatian teachings and appears in the writing of T.S. Eliot in *The Idea of a Christian Society*: 'A wrong attitude towards nature implies,

somewhere, a wrong attitude towards God' (1939, 62). In 'Spring', Hopkins refers back to the innocence of the Garden of Eden, describing the beauty of spring as 'a strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning'. However, again, the poet's consciousness of the sinfulness of humanity comes through:

Have, get, before it cloy,
Before it cloud, Christ, lord, and sour with sinning

The contrast between nature instinctively expressing and praising God and humanity turning away from God and giving way to sin is pivotal in several of Hopkins's poems written in 1877–8 (Pick 1978, 62). People are perverse and sinful and, in their failure to use nature sacramentally, both they and the earth come to be impoverished, as can be seen in 'God's Grandeur' (Pick 1978, 62). However, significantly, God never abandons his creation, neither humanity nor the earth – 'Because the Holy Ghost over the bent/ World broods' – an aspect of Hopkins's writings which I believe plays an important part in the poet's later 'terrible sonnets' to be discussed further on in this chapter.

The poem, 'The Sea and the Skylark', although written in 1877 among Hopkins's celebratory nature poems, even more explicitly expresses the divergence of nature and humanity and the despoiling of the earth in 'our sordid turbid time'. The sound of the sea, 'low lull-off or all roar' and the skylark, 'his rash-fresh re-winded new-skeinèd score', ring out above 'this shallow and frail town' in their purity. Humanity, once 'life's pride', has lost 'that cheer and charm of earth's past prime', the absence of sin in the Garden of Eden. The final two lines of the poem reinforce the idea of the deterioration of humankind and, thus, of the earth, in its loss of purity:

Our make and making break, are breaking, down
To man's last dust, drain fast towards man's first slime

There is an interesting ambiguity in the last line with the juxtaposition of the words, 'dust' and 'slime'. Man was created by God out of dust (Genesis 2:7) thus, it is a life-giving image. However, the words for the Catholic burial service, as with other denominations, are also taken from Genesis (3:19): 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return'. The modifying word 'last dust', thus, also implies death, while 'man's first slime' connotes the original sin in the Garden of Eden. In the inversion of these two phrases, the concept of sin and death being linked is implicit. According to Carol Christ, 'slime' is Hopkins's

‘symbol for the lack of particularity, the opposite of inscape’. Humanity reduces everything to slime, destroying the beauty in particularity that characterises God’s creation (1975, 98). The concept of humankind as sinners, as having given way to corruption, is clearly linked to their degradation of nature. In line with this concept, Pick’s view is that humanity’s waywardness and neglect of being aware of nature sacramentally are interrelated (1978: 62).

The theme of the contrast between nature and fallen humanity is reiterated in ‘In the Valley of the Elwy’ in which the loveliness of ‘the woods, waters, meadows, combs, vales’ is set against the ‘inmate’ who ‘does not correspond’. Humankind was created to give praise, reverence and service to God, just as all creation was, but fails to respond to the call of God through the experience of natural beauty. In the final three lines of the poem, Hopkins makes a plea to God to bring about his work of completion so that humanity may regain a sense of reverence and worship towards him:

God, lover of souls, swaying considerable scales,
Complete thy creature dear O where it fails,
Being mighty a master, being a father and fond

‘Ribblesdale’, like the three previous poems, distinguishes between nature instinctively praising God simply through its being – ‘Thou canst but be, but that thou well dost’ – and humankind who ‘gives all to rack or wrong’. Hopkins’s view is that neglect of nature is often closely associated with neglect of the spiritual (Mackenzie 1981, 153). The capitalisation and repetition of ‘Earth’ in the poem attests to the importance of humanity’s responsibility as having dominion over all God’s creation and thus, to the neglect of the earth as being part of their spiritual erosion:

And none reck of world after, this bids wear
Earth brows of such care, care and dear concern

The personification of earth showing ‘such care, care and dear concern’, by contrast underlines the lack of humanity’s care, both environmentally and spiritually. While Hopkins’s articulation of humanity’s sinfulness is integrally connected with an abuse of nature, it is centred on humanity’s loss of focus on God, on leading lives that, rather than being theocentric, have become egocentric:

[...] – Ah, the heir
To his own selfbent so bound, so tied to his turn,
To thriftless reave both our rich round world bare

And none reck of world after, this bids wear
Earth brows of such care, care and dear concern.

(‘Ribblesdale’)

Although all these poems – ‘God’s Grandeur’, ‘The Sea and the Skylark’, ‘In the Valley of the Elwy’ and ‘Ribblesdale’ – convey the sacramental beauty of the world, the beauty of nature as revelations of God, they all move to a final verse where the stress is on humanity who is not in accord (Pick 1978, 102).

Hopkins’s artistic inspiration and expression come to fruition in religious expression and always, his poetry is subordinated to religion. His *raison d’être* comes through the unity of priest and poet and, as a Jesuit, his emphasis is on the salvation of souls. Hopkins’s poems of 1879–1883 move away from his celebration of God’s creation, reflecting his role as priest, mediator and confessor as he expresses his concern for his people. His view of human need, frailty and sinfulness is a priestly one. In line with Ignatian teaching, Hopkins uses his poetry in the service of God, his theology and faith, his theocentric approach directing the themes and imagery of most of his poems. He entreats humanity in ‘Morning, Midday and Evening Sacrifice’ to serve God, just as he does himself:

Take as for tool, not toy meant
And hold at Christ’s employment

The poem that perhaps most clearly shows Hopkins’s role as priest and comforter bringing succour and consolation through God’s grace to the sinner is ‘Felix Randal’. Hopkins, the priest, offers Christ’s ‘sweet reprieve and ransom’ – the sacrament of Holy Communion – to Felix Randal and grants the dying man a benediction and absolution: ‘Ah well, God rest him all road ever he offended’. In ‘Felix Randal’, as with other poems of this period, it is the duties and solicitude of the priesthood that come to the fore, with this particular poem portraying the ministrations of the priest as well as the gratification he receives in tending to his people (Pick 1978, 88):

This seeing the sick endears them to us, us too it endears.
My tongue had taught thee comfort, touch had quenched thy
tears,
Thy tears that touched my heart, child, Felix, poor Felix Randal

Significantly, through the action of ‘being anointed’ – a reference to the Anointing of the Sick, a sacrament in the Catholic church – Felix Randal receives God’s grace and forgiveness

of his sins, leading to a 'heavenlier heart'. The word 'broke' at the beginning of line five leads to its antithesis, 'mended' at the end, showing the farrier's progression from a physical loss to a spiritual gain (Mackenzie 1981, 137). The structure of the poem, moving from Hopkins's lament for the farrier's death to the poet's affirmation of his life, reflects the process from the deterioration of the body to the awakening of the soul (Mackenzie, 1981,139). Thus, the poem ends with the image of Felix Randal, 'powerful amidst peers' shoeing the 'great gray drayhorse' – with its assonance underlining the force and strength of the farrier's trade – in contrast to the opening quatrain describing his life ebbing away and the poet's emotional cry, 'O is he dead then? my duty all ended'.

Many of Hopkins's poems written between 1879 and 1883 are grounded in his pastoral experience and are particularised in their portraits of people (Pick 1978, 88). Like 'Felix Randal', 'The Bugler's First Communion' is a reflection of Hopkins's commitment and service as a priest. The poem hinges on the redemption of humanity through the grace of Christ as centred on the theological significance of the sacrament of Holy Communion:

There! and your sweetest sendings, ah divine,
By it, heavens, befall him!

Through the sacraments of the Catholic church, humanity can draw closer to the presence of God and receive his grace and love; thus, Hopkins prays for the bugler that 'O now well work that sealing sacred ointment', the holy chrism used for anointing in various religious rites such as confirmation (Mackenzie 1981, 124). Just as in 'Felix Randal' with the farrier 'being anointed', the sacraments are central to a 'heavenlier heart'. The poet's tenderness towards and concern for the bugler is revealed in the prayers he offers for the boy's protection from evil (Pick 1978, 89). Deeply conscious of humankind's mortality and sinful state – 'framed in fault' ('Brothers') because of original sin – Hopkins feels the urgency to 'put my lips on pleas' against the evil and corruption that is in the world:

Frowning and forefending angel-warder
Squander the hell-rook ranks sally to molest him

The triple association of hell, the black crows and ranks of soldiers, with its ambiguous connotations, forms a complex and vivid image of the corrupting and tormenting power of sin. Thus, the poet asks:

... but may he not rankle and roam
In backwheels though bound home? –

That left to the Lord of the Eucharist, I here lie by

Redemption through Christ's crucifixion and resurrection is brought into focus again with Hopkins's reference to 'the Lord of the Eucharist', expressing his core belief in the triune God. Every eucharistic prayer is trinitarian, including the epiclesis, with the invocation to the Holy Spirit by the priest to consecrate the elements. The 1992 Catechism of the Catholic Church has made the connection between the eucharist and the Trinity even more explicit. Number 1357 states, 'We carry out this command of the Lord by celebrating the memorial of his sacrifice. In so doing, we offer to the Father what he has himself given us: the gifts of his creation, bread and wine which, by the power of the Holy Spirit and by the words of Christ, have become the body and blood of Christ. Christ is thus really and mysteriously made present'. In number 1358 the eucharist is described as, 'Thanksgiving and praise to the Father; the sacrificial memorial of Christ and his Body; the presence of Christ by the power of his word and of his Spirit'. Hopkins's conviction of the effectiveness of the sacraments of the Catholic church underpins his hope in 'The Bugler's First Communion' for the bugler to be 'dauntless', with 'tongue true' and 'as a heart Christ's darling'.

Despite Hopkins's priestly concern with humankind as sinners, his focus in his writings is on the incarnation and redemption (Pick 1978, 83). Hopkins's poetic expression corresponds to the biblical text of 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, on which one of Handel's choruses for his 'Messiah' is also based: 'Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive'. God's message is one of love, welcoming all who turn to him. He is 'a father and fond' ('In the Valley of the Elwy'); he is 'beyond saying sweet' ('The Wreck of the Deutschland'); his divine beauty and love are manifested in nature, drawing humankind to himself. In his sermon of 25 October 1880, Hopkins preached that 'God heeds all things at once' and 'cares about all things', that 'the hairs of our heads are numbered before him' (Hopkins 1959, 89). In 'The Bugler's First Communion', therefore, he offers his prayers for the bugler in the confident hope that they will be heard by God: 'Forward-like, but however, and like favourable heaven heard these'.

Hopkins, as priest and preacher, reached out to achieve the salvation of souls, taking on the servant role of Jesus. His appointments to parishes in Leigh, Liverpool and Glasgow, which were depressing in their sordidness, yet gave him comfort and hope in his ministry to his parishioners (Pick 1978, 75). In his discourse 'On Death' (undated), he says about the dying sinner, 'Alas, brethren, to what filthy places have I not myself carried the Lord of

Glory! And worse than filthy places, dens of shame' (Hopkins 1959, 249). Just as Jesus made no distinction between the Pharisees or prostitutes and criminals, Hopkins's commitment was to induce in the sinner a 'humble penitent desirous heart'. His sermon of 30 November 1879 to the congregation at Leigh was an address on the evils that abound: 'Now more than ever is there riotous company, drunkenness, lewdness, strife, brawling, even bloodshed' (Hopkins 1959, 41). As he says in 'The Wreck of the Deutschland', the hearts of people are 'unteachably after evil' (stanza 18). The core of many of his poems and of his sermons between 1877 and 1881 is the concern of the priest for the salvation of humankind. Importantly, though, while his theological belief underscores how sin is accountable for the corruption in the universe, it also 'shows him by contrast what man should be' (Pick 1978, 74–5).

Hopkins's unfinished poem, 'The times are nightfall, look, their light grows less', probably dated around 1886, paints a picture of desolation which, again, corresponds to the sinfulness of humanity. The images of the world are ones of 'nightfall', 'winter', 'waste' 'wreck'; it is 'a world undone'. The alliteration in the second and third lines accentuates a sense of numbing bleakness:

The times are winter, watch, a world undone:
They waste, they wither worse

Nevertheless, the poet entreats:

Or what is else? There is your world within.
There rid the dragons, root out there the sin.
Your will is law in that small commonweal ...

The equation of dragons with sin adds symbolic emphasis since in Western mythology dragons are seen as malevolent, the enemy of humanity, as well as, for Christianity, carrying connotations of evil through their serpent-like depiction. Thus, sin is represented as a malign power, which needs to be overcome by force and strength, just as saints or Christian knights in medieval literature and legend had to slay dragons, the embodiment of evil. Rooting out sin in the 'world within' – the hearts of people – is a major theme in Hopkins's poetry, but it becomes the central concern in most of the poems of his final years.

Hopkins's poem, 'Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves' can be seen to introduce his sonnets of 1884–5. It articulates the poet's acknowledgment of the necessity for eradicating every extremity or unwarranted affection – what Ignatius calls inordinate attachments – from his

life as he journeys to achieve spiritual perfection (Pick 1978, 141). These inordinate attachments, referring not just to excessive but to disordered and uncontrolled feeling, create disorder in the soul, impeding the understanding of God's will for one's life (Worcester 2017). Ignatius describes the *Spiritual Exercises* as 'every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all inordinate attachments, and after their removal, of seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul' (1951, 1). The *Spiritual Exercises* aim to check and regulate passions to be used in the service of God (Höpfl 2006, 31). Ignatius's understanding of the human psyche does not exclude a place for passion or the self-love that is part of Jesuit thinking but eschews undisciplined and misdirected feelings, sensuality and self-love (Höpfl 2006, 31).

Such was Hopkins's extremity of feeling in the years from around 1884 that he wrote in his retreat notes in 1888 of that 'course of loathing and hopelessness which I have so often felt before, which made me fear madness' (Hopkins 1959, 262). 'Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves' reveals Hopkins's growing feelings of distress, alienation and self-recrimination. In his desolation and introspection, he blames his feelings of abandonment on his own unworthiness (Pick 1978, 141). While the emphasis is on the personal, the intimacy of his feelings in 'Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves', there is none of the self-assurance, or indeed of the complacency of the ego. Rather, the poet is in a world of chronic suffering:

Where, selfwrung, selfstrung, sheathe-and shelterless, thoughts
against thoughts in groans grind

These lines reveal Hopkins's intense sense of self-criticism and self-examination, leading to spiritual affliction during a period of hardship in his priesthood (Pick 1978, 143). His very human experience of desolation is intensified by the force of the effect of the compound rhyming words, 'selfwrung, selfstrung', the connecting hyphen in the descriptive phrase, 'sheathe-and shelterless' and the two sets of alliteration.

The difficulties and desolation of Hopkins's time in Dublin from 1884 to 1889 engendered his 'terrible sonnets' or 'sonnets of desolation'. These years gave rise to the oppression of his work, his sense of exile and his 'serious depression in health and spirits' (Mackenzie 1981, 17). While Hopkins's poetry always reveals the theocentricity of his doctrine, his poems prior to 1884 generally arise from the certainty of his religious belief. These sonnets, however, express a profound doubt, not in God's existence, but in the extension of God's mercy to himself or in God's care for the fate of the individual (Martin 1991, 382). Most of Hopkins's final poems revolve around the religious torpor he was

experiencing, which he himself named as *acedia*, the fourth deadly sin of spiritual sloth or desolation of Catholic teachings (Hopkins 2014, 50). In his letter to Robert Bridges dated 12 January 1888, he expresses his sense of sterility: ‘All impulse fails me ... Nothing comes: I am a eunuch – but it is for the kingdom of heaven’s sake’ (Hopkins 1955, 270). These words imply that his barrenness is a trial inflicted on him by God (Pick 1978, 129) but show, significantly, that his religious commitment and acceptance of God’s will remain unchanged. This is important since it marks the distinction between Hopkins’s yielding to desolation – called ‘the enemy’ by Ignatius – through his spiritual enervation and his actual committing of the sin, with all its mental, spiritual, emotional and physical ramifications. Ignatius, in his *Spiritual Exercises*, clarifies the two states of consolation and desolation. Consolation is ‘every increase of faith, hope, and love, and all interior joy that invites and attracts to what is heavenly and to the salvation of one’s soul by filling it with peace and quiet in its Creator and Lord’; in desolation the ‘soul is wholly slothful, tepid, sad and separated, as it were, from its Creator and Lord’, leading to ‘want of faith, want of hope, want of love’ (Ignatius of Loyola 1951, 142). Hopkins’s letter to Robert Bridges of April 1885 describes exactly this: ‘... that coffin of weakness and dejection in which I live, without even the hope of change’ (Hopkins 1955, 214–5). Without the gifts of spiritual consolation, of God’s overflowing love and favour, one can only persevere in prayer, meditation and penance according to God’s grace, until the return of consolation (Ignatius of Loyola 1951, 143).

According to Pick, it is generally understood in theological writing that the purpose of spiritual aridity is to separate the soul from earthly things as well as from the joy of devotional practice so that the soul may focus on God, simply for his own sake (1978, 134). In the sonnet ‘No worst, there is none’, the poet describes with intensity the landscape of spiritual desolation which he is inhabiting. There is a separation between the soul and its creator, with the inner life of the individual being threatened:

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
 Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
 May who ne’er hung there. Nor does long our small
 Durance deal with that steep or deep

The poem begins with an intense and emphatic statement, ‘No worst, there is none’, followed by lines of emotional pain:

Pitched past pitch of grief,
 More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring

These lines are a reflection of the poet's inner state of confusion and darkness with the alliteration, the repetition of emotive words – 'pitched' and 'pitch'; 'pangs' and 'forepangs' – and the short, anguished phrases adding to the dramatic intensity. According to Dubois, this sentence is a 'grammatical knot' which, together with the opening cry, gives no clue as to the poem's context, simply weaving in on itself (2017, 67). This quality of inwardness emphasises, again, the poet's emotional turmoil. Hopkins's questioning cry to the Holy Spirit as the Comforter – with its repeated 'where' – reflects his anguish and frustration: 'Comforter, where, where is your comforting?' An important feature of *acedia* is the 'world sorrow' that appears in the poem. This, Hopkins calls 'a main, a chief woe' and in the progression of the sonnet becomes – from the 'heave, herds-long; huddle' of the emotion of personal suffering in the octet – representative of universal experience in the sestet.

Acedia also includes a sense of the withdrawal of God, manifest in the lines from 'I wake and feel the fell of dark':

And my lament
Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent
To dearest him that lives alas! away

These lines illustrate and emphasise both Hopkins's separation from God and his, nevertheless, enduring profound love for the 'dearest him'. This feeling of separation is also made explicit in the sonnet, 'To seem the stranger lies my lot', where the poet suffers from 'dark heaven's baffling ban'. The absence of spiritual consolation is conveyed in imagery of darkness in 'I wake and feel the fell of dark' with the 'black hours' magnified into years, a lifetime: 'But where I say/ Hours I mean years, mean life'. In the sestet, Hopkins's reference to bodily ills, 'I am gall, I am heartburn', as well as the use of physical images of bones, flesh, blood, intensify the immediacy of the poet's experience. The last four lines carry connotations of Christ's Passion as well as implying the eucharist:

Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.
Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see
The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.

The 'scourge' points to Christ's suffering as well as to that of 'the lost' whose suffering is so much worse than Hopkins's, being unredeemed. As with 'No worst there is none', this sonnet offers no consolation; the 'fell of dark' remains unalleviated (Mackenzie 1981, 184).

Hopkins's 'sonnets of desolation' are personal and introspective, with an immediacy and intimacy of feeling that arises from the intensity of his faith and of his spiritual agony. The use of the first person in several of these poems, points to his communications – even prayers – to God being personal and actual rather than representational (Dubois 2017, 66). Thus, his distressed cry, 'I am gall, I am heartburn' in 'I wake and feel the fell of dark' and 'I cast for comfort I can no more get' in 'My own heart let me more have pity on' indicate the extent of his self-torment. Hopkins acknowledges God as a just God, 'the lord of life' in 'Thou art indeed just, Lord' but expresses his confusion and bitterness at God's apparent withdrawal from his life even though he spends his 'life upon thy cause':

Why do sinners' ways prosper? and why must
Disappointment all I endeavour end?

As Mackenzie points out, the sonnet is thematically based on the Latin epigraph from Jeremiah 12:1 – 'Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal with thee treacherously?' – which sets the tone and imagery for the poem (1981, 201). The poet questions why God would 'defeat, thwart me', making a plea in the last lines for God to end his spiritual and artistic aridity:

... birds build – but not I build: no, but strain,
Time's eunuch, and not breed one work that wakes.
Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.

It is of note that Hopkins's use of the word 'eunuch' here, echoes the words in his 1888 letter to Robert Bridges, 'Nothing comes: I am a eunuch', stressing the poet's feelings of ineffectiveness as priest, preacher and poet.

The temptation to fall into despair as a result of the darkness ensuing from God's withdrawal features in Hopkins's poem named ('Carrion Comfort') by Robert Bridges. The poet's trials and suffering are heightened by the use of powerful imagery as he evokes a Christ of terrifying strength and stature (Culwick 1992, 53):

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

The poet is determined in the opening line not to give in to despair addressed in apostrophe form to magnify its power and mastery: 'Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee'. The oxymoronic image, 'carrion comfort' carries associations with decay in keeping with the disintegrating effects of despair. However, from his 'cry I can no more', Hopkins, using all resolve and every effort of his will pleads 'I can;/ Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be'. He recognises that it is the complete submission to the divine will, to 'the rod', and the abandonment of all self-will that results in the purgation of the soul through suffering (Pick 1978, 147). In the final line, Hopkins expresses some hope as he engages with his God for freedom from his torment: 'Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God'. Similarly, in 'My own heart let me more have pity on', the poet realises that spiritual consolation can only come through the grace of God. He is subject to God's will, required to practise patience and trust:

... let joy size

At God knows when to God knows what;

Hopkins has to accept his own fallibility and his inability to 'be comforted without God, whose radiance comes not at our bidding but at his own chosen moment of revelation' (Martin 1991, 387). Self-deprecatingly, he applies the appellation 'poor Jackself' to himself in this sonnet just as he refers to himself as 'I wretch' in '(Carrion Comfort)'. However, there is also a note of hope and light in the closing lines as Hopkins compares God's smile to 'skies/ Betweenpie mountains – lights a lovely mile'.

The 'sonnets of desolation' are revelatory of both Hopkins's period of suffering and of his theological stand. Importantly, they are not without their positive aspects for they emphasise that the meaning of suffering lies in its spiritual value. As he says in stanza eight of 'The Wreck of the Deutschland', trials and distress bring the soul 'to hero of Calvary, Christ's feet' (Pick 1978, 136). For Hopkins, his agony brings him into closer union with Christ. Thus, according to Pick, his life 'becomes heroic rather than tragic, for his is the life of Christ' (Pick 1978, 137). As in 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' written some ten years earlier than the 'sonnets of desolation', Hopkins's realisation of the necessity of submission to God's will brings acceptance of his religious adherence:

Surf, snow, river and earth

Gnashed: but thou art above, thou Orion of light;

Thy unchallenging poisoning palms were weighing the worth,

Thou martyr-master: in thy sight

Storm flakes were scroll-leaved flowers, lily showers – sweet heaven
was astrew in them

‘That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection’, written in the last year of Hopkins’s life, sounds a different note to the darkness of the ‘sonnets of desolation’. The poem deals with the transience of both humanity and nature and the cycle of destruction of Heraclitean flux in the world, describing the reality of life ‘from fire to earth, earth to fire, from dust to flesh, and flesh to dust’ (Pick 1978, 154):

Man, how fast his firedint, his mark on mind, is gone!
Both are in an unfathomable, all is in an enormous dark
Drowned. O pity and indignation!

Hopkins’s realisation and acknowledgment of God’s presence and saving grace are expressed in words of joy and triumph:

[...] Enough! the Resurrection,
A heart’s-clarion! Away grief’s gasping, joyless days, dejection.
Across my foundering deck shone
A beacon, an eternal beam

The words of the Bible can be seen to underpin both Hopkins’s personal conviction and his theological focus which manifest in his poetry: ‘For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive’ (1 Corinthians 15:22). The poet, in his sinful state of mortality disparages himself as ‘this Jack, joke, poor potsherd’ but at the Day of Judgment ‘in a flash, at a trumpet crash’, he will become an ‘immortal diamond’, ‘all at once what Christ is’. Hopkins’s question ‘Comforter, where, where is your comforting?’ in ‘No worst, there is none’ is answered in the title of this poem, ‘That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection’. After all the suffering, Hopkins is able to find the hope and joy that are a feature of the Fourth Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* (Third Prelude): ‘Here it will be to ask for the grace to be glad and rejoice intensely because of the great joy and the glory of Christ our Lord’ (Ignatius of Loyola 1951, 95).

As can be seen in the discussion of his relationship with God and with humankind, the *Spiritual Exercises* framed Hopkins’s spirituality as a Jesuit. Ignatius emphasised direct communication with God, leading to mystical possibilities and in Hopkins’s poetry this emerges in the portrayal of divine grace (Dubois 2017, 74). Ignatian spirituality is reflected in an emphasis on the concrete, in an affirmation and inclusion of the world through active

service and, for Hopkins, this emphasis was congruent with his own inclinations. Hopkins's poetry reflects Ignatian spirituality and there is a strong connection between his writing and Ignatian meditation. Dubois points out that one of the key features of the *Spiritual Exercises* is the 'colloquy with God' – in the sense of a conversation – which is characterised by a sense of intimacy (2017, 51). This can particularly be seen in the 'sonnets of desolation'. Hopkins's addresses to God reveal the poet's inner state but, despite the despair and despondency that overwhelm him, he can yet experience the glory of Christ. His sense of joy out of his darkness is reflected in his repeated words on his deathbed, 'I am so happy' (Pick 1978, 155).

It is significant that in one of Hopkins's last poems, 'That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection', he affirms that only in death and the transforming power of Christ's resurrection can humankind achieve perfection and become 'immortal diamond'. Although Whitman does not deny the existence of death, his conviction of his divinity grants him immortal and transcendental experience. Here, the two poets' perceptions, while being expressed through the personal, the consciousness of the self, are manifested differently – Whitman's from an egocentric perspective and Hopkins from his emphasis on the theological. From the analyses of the two poets above, differences and similarities within common themes between Whitman and Hopkins become apparent. Their strands of thought, their credos, their spiritual or religious consciousness are reflected in the intensity of their expression and the distinctive use of style and rhythm. The common themes, which have been explored in this chapter – the expression of self, the relationship of soul and body, the relationship of humanity to nature and the concept of sin, and the relationship of humanity to God – serve to ground a comparison of the nature of the poetry of Whitman and Hopkins.

For both poets, self-expression, the particularity of self is a core tenet. Hopkins's vision of creation is theocentric and since the world came into being through God's utterance and was realised in the person of Christ, 'each being is a self-expression of Christ as well' (Ballinger 2000, 76). The first five stanzas of 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' reveal Hopkins's clearly Christocentric sacramental vision. All – humanity and nature – is instressed with the life of God, of Christ (Ballinger 2000, 83). David Anthony Downes emphasises that, to Hopkins, God manifests his divine being most distinctively in what the poet calls, in 'As kingfishers catch fire', a 'served' presence – the union of divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ. Since the life of God, the Father and creator, exists in each person, the expression of self enacts the very being of Christ, the Son (Ballinger 2000, 76). An important distinction

between Hopkins and Whitman is that imitation of Christ in Ignatian teaching becomes self-identification in Whitman.

Hopkins, in his writings on the First Principle and Foundation of the *Spiritual Exercises*, intimates that human nature being more selfed and distinctive than anything else in creation, can only have been developed by ‘one of finer or higher pitch and determination’ and all expressions of human identity, ‘my selfbeing, my consciousness and feeling of myself’ are expressions of Christ (1959, 122–3). Hopkins describes his intense sense of self, ‘my selfbeing, my consciousness and feeling of myself, that taste of myself, of *I* and *me* above and in all things’ in terms remarkably similar to Whitman’s language. Continuing, Hopkins says, ‘Searching nature I taste *self* but at one tankard, that of my own being’ (1959, 123). The sense of self in Hopkins’s writings, as in the teachings of Ignatius and Duns Scotus is a divine one; knowing God fully in oneself (Sagar 2012, 23). The recognition of the place of the self in connection to God and the world in the doctrine of humanity is similar to Whitman’s anthropocentric views and his sense of self. However, Whitman’s consciousness of the self, his emphasis on the ‘I’, ‘Me’, ‘myself’, comes largely from an egocentric view of the world and his place in it. He sees himself as boundless, of cosmic dimensions, unlimited by the physical, the conventional:

I know I have the best of time and space, and was never
measured and never will be measured.

(Section 46)

Hopkins’s poem, ‘The Caged Skylark’, provides a description of the nature of humankind and the relationship between the body and soul that is quite different to Whitman’s erotic portrayal of this union. Hopkins likens the cage of the human body limiting the spirit to the cage that imprisons a skylark. In conveying the union between the body and the spirit, the poet describes the difficulties facing the religious man, ‘flesh-bound’, with his ‘mounting spirit’ ‘day-labouring-out life’s age’. However, Hopkins’s views on the relationship between the body and soul are inseparable from the doctrines of the incarnation and resurrection – through the resurrected body, the soul can achieve perfect freedom (Mackenzie 1981, 92). By contrast, Whitman affirms, in terms of body, soul, time, the universe, that there ‘will never be any more perfection than there is now’ (section 3). This point has bearing on the common stances of Whitman and Hopkins on the sanctity of the body, in line with much religious teaching. The Jewish tradition, for example, emphasises the miraculous quality of all things (Mackler 2007, 1252). Likewise, Whitman writes that

‘seeing, hearing, feeling are miracles, and each part and tag/ of me is a miracle’ (section 24) just as Ignatian doctrine teaches its followers to find God in all things (Coghlan 2004, 100). For Whitman and Hopkins, their stances are interwoven with a different relational conviction. Hopkins’s poetry, while attesting to the sacredness of both the body and the senses through the importance of the doctrine of the incarnation, nevertheless highlights original sin and humankind as sinners. Even with his sense of carnality and affirmation of physicality, Whitman holds the body sacred because of the divinity he sees inherent in it.

A fundamental distinction between Whitman and Hopkins with regard to their views on humanity and God lies in their approach to the concept of sin. Whitman, in dismissing the idea of original sin, accepts both good and evil, the sacred and the profane (Clausen 1997, 179–180), thus subverting conventional notions and fears of death. He places death on the same level as birth since, for him, the cycle of life encompasses immortality and infinity. Whitman is unconcerned with moral absolutes, declaring ‘I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be the poet of wickedness also’ (section 22). His perception of values manifests in expressions of amorality in which everything is granted a universality, everything is of equal significance (Clausen 1997, 179):

What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?
 Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I stand indifferent
(Section 22)

While the two poets share in a celebration of the world and all its beauty, Hopkins views nature as being part of the fall of humankind. Particularly in the ‘sonnets of desolation’, the degradation of natural beauty is equated with spiritual desolation and the poet metaphorically evokes his psychological condition through a description of nature (Clausen 1997, 185):

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
 Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed
(‘No worst, there is none’)

Hopkins’s tone of grief in his later poems is the antithesis of Whitman’s consistently self-assured mood throughout *Song of Myself* and of Whitman’s unchanging, affirmatory position on the relationship between himself, humanity, nature and God. His whole focus is on the self and he declares that ‘nothing, not God, is greater to one than one’s self is’ (section 48). His poem is largely unmarked by the personal shadows that become a feature in Hopkins’s

poetry, and he is able to pronounce in section 44 that ‘all has been gentle with me, I keep no account with lamentation’ (Simkin 1992, 181). Hopkins’s awareness of his own inadequacy leads him to cry out in ‘I wake and feel the fell of dark’, ‘I am gall, I am heartburn’, but Whitman makes clear his conviction that there is nothing in the world more wonderful than himself (section 48). The narcissistic tenor of *Song of Myself* is exhibited in Whitman’s bold assertions of divine union with God and his adulation of the physical body, an approach that is very different to Hopkins’s Christ-centred focus and his recognition that humankind is flawed. Hopkins, in acknowledgment of his own imperfection, looks to God, dedicating his poetic expression to ‘Christ our Lord’ (‘The Windhover’) ‘in ‘an act symbolic of his life’ (Simkin 1992, 181). Hopkins stresses in the conclusion to ‘That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection’ that it is only through Christ’s resurrection that humanity can be transformed:

This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood,
immortal diamond,
Is immortal diamond

For Hopkins, the actualisation of self can only come through Christ’s incarnation and renunciation, with a reciprocal renunciation from humankind; for Whitman, his pivotal theme as evidenced in the title of his poem, *Song of Myself*, is self-affirmation. And yet, there is a common concern for people that is revealed in different expressions of regard for humankind in the poetry of both. In the Bible, Jesus says in Matthew 22:39, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself’. Both Whitman and Hopkins manifest a sense of humanity that is grounded in their differing understandings of human nature and perspectives on spirituality. Hopkins, the Jesuit priest, takes on the role of servanthood, his ministry and his care for his congregation and humankind in general being reflected in poems such as ‘Felix Randal’ and his religious convictions in the evangelical character of poems such as ‘The Starlight Night’ and ‘Spring’ in which he urges humankind to a closer consciousness of God. Whitman in *Song of Myself*, while displaying his heterodoxy, enacts the precepts of Christian values, at times ministering to those in need – the runaway slave with his ‘sweated body’ and ‘bruised feet’ (section 10), the ‘feverish patient’ in the hospital (section 33) – at other times empathetically identifying with the circumstances and experiences of others: ‘I myself become the wounded person’ (section 33). Just as Jesus mingled with the prostitutes and criminals so, too, does Whitman.

Whitman's humanistic approach elevates humankind, and his audacity prompts him to boast, 'I am large, I contain multitudes' (section 51). Hopkins's poetic expression emerges from a theological context in which the core action is 'God to aggrandise, God to glorify' ('The Candle Indoors'). His poetry is grounded in his Catholic convictions and doctrines in which God fulfils his divine purpose of salvation for sinful humankind through Christ; Whitman uses his frequent biblical allusions to express a more pantheistic spirituality where he himself adopts the identity of Christ. While both poets convey the presence of God as the Divine, the creator in their work, Whitman places himself as universal man at the centre of his creed, with Hopkins finding joy and comfort in his submission to God.

Conclusion: 'Extremes Meet'

Hopkins penned the words, 'Extremes Meet', in his letter to Robert Bridges in October 1882 about Whitman and himself (Hopkins 1955, 157). In the letter, it is apparent that Hopkins, as much as he knew that his worldview was very different to that of Whitman's, recognised that there was a striking resemblance in the essence of their poetry. In looking at the key concepts and beliefs that played a part in Whitman and Hopkins's poetic inspiration and expression, differences and similarities become apparent. However, it is their awareness of the divine as relating to nature and humanity in their poetry – although evoked differently – that is their most distinctive commonality. While Whitman and Hopkins are both lauded for their unique styles and expression, recognised today as great poetic voices, Whitman's poetry was initially received with disapproval and controversy and Hopkins's was only published after his death.

As mentioned in the preface, in May 2019 the original 1855 edition of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* went on display at the Wren Library, Trinity College, Cambridge. Included in the display, were cuttings of reviews from newspapers and journals of the time. From *Putnam's Magazine* (September 1855) came the judgment that the book was 'a curious and lawless collection of poems' while the *Criterion* (10 November 1855) published a review that stated that while believing 'this book does express the bolder results of a certain transcendental kind of thinking which some may have styled philosophy' it is, nevertheless, 'a mass of stupid filth'. The review went on to say that the poet 'has a certain vagrant wildness,' which 'serves to show the energy which natural imbecility is occasionally capable of under strong excitement'. It is probable that Whitman, himself, with his bohemian spirit, universality and freedom of creed, and his indifference to sin and respectability – 'No one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth' (section 32) – would have approved of such a description of himself as having a 'vagrant wildness'. Two comments in the *United States Review* were 'An American bard at last!' and 'He is the true spiritualist', both of which were discovered to have been written by Whitman himself. The comment from the *Brooklyn Daily Times* about *Leaves of Grass* is perhaps the most interesting – 'Very devilish to some and very divine to some'. Both these aspects are equally important, more or less summing up the essence of Whitman's expression of his creed. Very few copies of Whitman's first edition were sold, and his work was subject to censure for at least the next decade (Cowley in Whitman 1960, ix).

Hopkins wrote 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' in 1875, seven years after he had burned all his youthful verses on entering the Jesuit novitiate in 1868. The poem was rejected

by the Jesuit magazine, *The Month*. Although he continued to write poetry, it was read only in manuscript form by his friends and fellow poets, Robert Bridges, Coventry Patmore and Richard Watson Dixon. Neither 'The Loss of the Eurydice' nor 'May Magnificat' were approved by the Jesuits, and Coventry Patmore described the poems as being 'of a kind to appeal only to the few' (Mackenzie in Pollard 1970, 312). However, Hopkins's growing correspondence with Bridges became a sustaining influence on his poetic expression and as early as 1879, Bridges began to preserve Hopkins's manuscripts. Bridges became the first editor for the publication of his friend's poems in 1918 but this first edition was met with general lack of enthusiasm and was slow to sell (Mackenzie in Pollard 1970, 320).

W. H. Gardner, the editor of *Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (1978), and Carl Sandburg and Malcolm Cowley, editors of two different editions of *Leaves of Grass* (1921 and 1960 respectively), however, attest to the achievement of Hopkins and Whitman (although there are countless others who also do) within their different poetic and personal contexts. Hopkins's growth of reputation and value as a writer is as a result of the profundity, the intensity and the originality of his thought and expression. His religion and faith, particularly his commitment as a Jesuit priest, inform and shape his poetry, making him one of the most compelling and perceptive of religious poets. Hopkins's rich interpretation of the beauties of nature places him in the tradition of the great nature poets such as William Wordsworth and John Keats. With his innovative poetic language and rhythm – his coining of words and use of compound and dialect words, his use of sprung rhythm, alliteration and unusual, often bizarre metaphors, for example – he establishes the adroitness of his original style and quality of expression. As well as Hopkins's poetry, his notebooks, letters, journals, sermons and devotional writings give insight into what has come to be recognised as a unique artistic and religious personality.

Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* is, according to Sandburg, 'the most highly praised and the most deeply damned book' of any American writer printed in America. Sandburg also ranks it as one of the most original, intensely personal and individual books in American literature (Whitman 1921, v). Although Sandburg's edition was published in 1921, this view is echoed by many later critics and writers, including Gay Wilson Allen (1975), and Ed Folsom and Christopher Merrill (2016). As Allen notes, Whitman was the first American poet to achieve world recognition and remains one of the most known of American authors in most countries, with translations of his work in many different languages (1975, 249). In July 1855, Emerson, who had recently received a copy of *Leaves of Grass*, wrote in a letter to Whitman: 'I give you joy of your free & brave thought. I have great joy in it. I find

incomparable things said incomparably well, as they must be' (Whitman 1960, ix). Cowley, the editor for a publication of the first edition (1960), contends that *Song of Myself* is Whitman's greatest, most fully realised work and one of the great poems of modern times (Whitman 1960, x).

Given the standing of these two poets, they are the subjects of much literary criticism in the form of reviews, essays, dissertations or theses, biographies and analytical texts. While many aspects of each poet are explored in these writings, my study has focused on spirituality, particularly as exemplified in the concepts of prophet and priest. Both these terms can be said to be rooted in religious semantics – a prophet is associated with inspired or visionary proclamation, particularly relating to God, and a priest, having been ordained, performs and administers certain religious ceremonies and sacraments in service to God and the body of the Church. A prophet especially as indicated by Whitman in *Song of Myself*, as well as in a number of the literary critical texts mentioned in the previous chapters, is often seen, in Whitman's own description of himself, as 'august' (section 20). A priest such as Hopkins was, is devoted to the ideals of humility, faith, obedience and dedication to God. Despite the fact, however, that the meaning, concept and roles of prophet and priest underlie a variety of contrasts, they point to a common essential spirituality that infuses the work of both Whitman and Hopkins.

My discussion has shown how the two poets' different theological persuasions (discussed in chapter two) shape their poems in important ways. We saw how Whitman's belief system is ecumenical and heterodox while Hopkins's creed is rooted in Catholicism and orthodoxy. This is substantiated in Hopkins's words from stanza 28 of 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' –

... the Master,
Ipsē, the only one, Christ, King, Head

– in contrast to Whitman's identification with 'every rank and religion' (section 16).

Whitman exhorted in his 1855 preface: 'This is what you shall do: Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God ...' (1960, 10). In these words, Whitman displays an eclectic blend of his own credo based on Quaker and Deist thinking, and his social philosophy, which are, however, remarkably similar in sentiment and expression to the beatitudes of Christ. In *Song of Myself*, Whitman

affirms the notion that all faiths and religions might be seen as existing on the same level of truth (Marovich 2009, 351):

Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah,
Lithographing Kronos, Zeus his son, and Hercules his
grandson,
Buying drafts of Osiris, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha,
In my portfolio placing Manito loose, Allah on a leaf, the
crucifix engraved,
With Odin and the hideous-faced Mexitli and every idol and
image,
Taking them all for what they are worth and not a cent more,
Admitting they were alive and did the work of their days

(Section 41)

Whitman's faith is an unrestricted one:

My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths,
Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between
ancient and modern,

(Section 43)

In no way can he be judged as Christian (in the strict, theological sense of the word) any more than he can be seen as Muslim or Buddhist. His religion is characterised by a sense of cosmic unity and progression, which disregards orthodox notions of doctrine and dogma, salvation and damnation, heaven and hell (Symonds 2002, 31). For him, everything participates in the universe and shares in its progression:

There is no stoppage and never can be stoppage,
If I, you, and the worlds, and all beneath or upon their surfaces,
were this moment reduced back to a pallid float, it would
not avail the long run,
We should surely bring up again where we now stand,
And surely go as much farther, and then farther and farther

(Section 45)

Whitman's theology is not of the church while Hopkins's is very much rooted in the church, and the practices and traditions of the church. *Song of Myself* shows Whitman's anti-ecclesiastical leanings, his disdain for sermons, prayers, texts and scriptures: '... sermons never convince' (section 30). Whitman is not opposed to the church – 'I do not despise you priests' (section 43) – but within his context of belief, he finds it too limiting. As Marovich, says, his is a 'freeform theology' (2009, 352).

It can be seen from the discussion in this study (chapter two) that as much as Whitman expresses that sacred traditions and conventions are restricting, Hopkins is grounded in them personally and vocationally. Whitman's more freeform belief is substantiated in his somewhat insouciant questions, 'Why should I pray? why should I venerate and be ceremonious?' (section 20) discussed on page 19 of this study. For Hopkins, always, his artistic voice finds inspiration and expression through his theological spirit. Hopkins's poetry exhibits his ascetism, his Catholic sensibility, his priestly concern for humanity, but above all, it reflects his unwavering dedication to and praise of God as seen on page 52:

Be adored among men,
God, three-numberèd form

('The Wreck of the Deutschland')

All the influences which come into play in Hopkins's writing stem from core exponents, writings and doctrinal systems of the Christian faith such as Tractarianism, John Henry Newman, John Duns Scotus and the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*, traces of which we found frequently in his poems. The Scotist influence can particularly be seen in poems such as 'As kingfishers catch fire' and 'The Starlight Night', for example, while the impact upon him of Ignatian discipline is evident in 'The Windhover'. Whereas Whitman protests against institutionalised religion and ecclesiastical hierarchies and practices in *Song of Myself*, Hopkins finds and creates his poetic expression from those very church-based tenets and sacraments. His role as a priest emerges most clearly in his poems concerning the welfare of humanity. Two of the sacraments of the church, communion and confirmation, are mentioned in 'The Bugler's First Communion' as imparting blessing and protection. In the celebration of the eucharist, sacred gifts from heaven – truth and courage – are bestowed:

There! and your sweetest sendings, ah divine,
By it, heavens, befall him! As a heart Christ's darling, dauntless;

Tongue true, vaunt- and tauntless

Even in the midst of his despair, when he is entreating God to ‘send my roots rain’, Hopkins continues to acknowledge God as ‘just’, as ‘thou lord of life’ (‘Thou art indeed just, Lord’). Many of Hopkins’s poems are prayers to God; Whitman, on the other hand, asks, ‘Why should I pray?’ (section 20).

In determining Whitman and Hopkins’s roles as prophet and priest, I found it helpful to explore their respective beliefs in divine humanity as opposed to sinful humanity and to analyse how these differences were reflected in various poems. The word ‘soul’ occurs frequently in *Song of Myself* in a variety of contexts, and often in erotic terms, but it is always given the quality of immortality. Whitman, in his rejection of the concept of original sin, makes no reference to a Day of Judgment, or to the Christian atonement (Allen 1975, 174). For Whitman, people are ‘all just as immortal and fathomless as myself’ (section 7); nobody is better or worse than another – there is no judgment: ‘And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them’ (section 20). He sees divinity in everyone – in strangers, lovers, prostitutes – and God is represented as being coexistent with all humanity. All are connected with one another and with God and according to this precept, sin does not constitute a reality, although the poet writes of being not only ‘the poet of goodness’ but also ‘the poet of wickedness’ (section 22).

In contrast to Whitman’s view, in many of Hopkins’s poems, such as ‘The Sea and the Skylark’ and ‘God’s Grandeur’, he expresses his concern that in turning away from God – and in misusing God’s creation – humanity has sinned. Thus, he reveals as he ministers as a priest, the need for humankind to repent of their sins. Felix Randal is ‘mended being anointed’ and Hopkins, the priest, is able to express, ‘Ah well, God rest him all road ever he offended!’ His references to the self, the soul, are significant: ‘Soul, self; come, poor Jackself’ in ‘My own heart let me more have pity on’ and in ‘That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire’, ‘This Jack, joke, poor potsherd’. Hopkins, in accordance with church teachings grounded in the Bible, looks to Christ as offering redemption and salvation to sinning humanity. In ‘That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire’ again, Hopkins refers to the Day of Judgment when, according to the Bible, all who are in Christ shall be transformed:

In a flash, at a trumpet crash,

I am all at once what Christ is, since he was what I am

Hopkins’s creed centres around the theological tenets of incarnation, redemption, crucifixion and resurrection, which emerge in his poetry in a strong expression of his faith. The themes

of crucifixion and resurrection appear throughout his poetry in poems such as ‘The Wreck of the Deutschland’, ‘The Windhover’ and ‘That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire’, for example. Whitman, too, refers to both the crucifixion and resurrection but he most often uses the idea of resurrection as an analogy for the life cycle and progression in and of the universe, from birth and growth to death and rebirth. It is, thus, linked to his notions of infinity and immortality providing, according to Allen, an insight into his philosophy of humanity and nature (1975, 175).

It is common cause among critics that Hopkins and Whitman share the same joy and responsiveness to nature; a careful study of their poems (in chapter three) and their relationship to creation has revealed nuances to this affective quality in highlighting the pervading sense of spirituality of each poet as they celebrate nature. However, Hopkins’s sacramentalism is in contrast to Whitman’s erotic perspective on nature. Hopkins’s commitment to God and to his faith are expressed through his sacramental view of nature – he sees all creation as a visible sign of God’s invisible presence (Stewart 2016). God is the source of all created beauty in the universe and this beauty in nature serves to draw humanity, and particularly Hopkins himself, into a closer relationship with him. Through his concepts of inscape and instress, and his use of richly sensory and figurative language in his celebratory nature poems, he describes his perception of the presence of God within the beauties of the physical world, giving glory to God:

He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:

Praise him

(‘Pied Beauty’)

Importantly, Hopkins’s appreciation and reverence for all the things of creation do not signify an attachment to them – as is the case with Whitman in his complete physical absorption in nature – but rather point to his intense awareness of the particularity of each thing, manifesting as an aspect of Christ.

While Whitman may be the sensualist and Hopkins the ascetic – although Hopkins’s poetry is infused with a sensuous aesthetic in its intensity of description – there is certainly a meeting point in the expressive use of language and the spiritual quality of their poetry. The work of the two poets is emotive and richly complex in imagery, symbology and religious references, although Sagar contrasts Hopkins’s ‘highly-wrought poems’ with Whitman’s ‘barbaric yawp’ (section 52) (1998, 18). Nevertheless, there are numerous parallels that can particularly be seen in the lyricism and religious sensibility of their prose, which often form

the basis of the thought, intent and descriptive content in their poetry. In his journal on 18 May 1870, Hopkins expressed his intuitive realisation of the reality and beauty of Christ as he perceived the loveliness of a bluebell: 'I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it. Its inscape is mixed of strength and grace, like an ash tree' (1959, 199). On 14 July 1878, Whitman recorded in his diary:

My two kingfishers still haunt the pond. For nearly an hour
I indolently look and join them while they dart and turn and
take their airy gambols, sometimes far up the creek disappearing
for a few moments, and then surely returning again, and performing
most of their flight within sight of me, as if they knew I appreciated
and absorb'd their vitality, spirituality, faithfulness, and the rapid,
vanishing, delicate lines of moving yet quiet electricity they draw for
me across the spread of the grass, the trees, and the blue sky.

(1963, 164–165)

In these two excerpts by Hopkins and Whitman, the poets evoke particular qualities in things of beauty in creation – the strength and grace of the bluebell, the vitality and spirituality of the kingfishers – providing insight into their spiritual appreciation of nature. Later in July of the same year, Whitman wrote, 'Now, indeed, if never before, the heavens declared the glory of God. It was to the full sky of the Bible, of Arabia, of the prophets, and of the oldest poems ... The spirit's hour, religion's hour – the visible suggestion of God in space and time ...' (1963, 174). In his poetry, Whitman makes references to the glories of creation in a mystic sense, expressive of his spiritual completeness. While he acknowledges and celebrates the miracles of the universe, portraying God's immanence in the world, his language has none of the sacramentalism, or indeed the theological significance, of Hopkins. His frequent use of the word 'heaven', for example, is usually within a visionary context and refers to the realm of the stars and planets:

Speeding through space, speeding through heaven and the
stars,
Speeding amid the seven satellites and the broad ring, and the
diameter of eighty thousand miles

(Section 33)

In contrast, for Hopkins, heaven carries the religious meaning of being the spirit realm, the dwelling place of God: 'Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour' ('Hurrahing in Harvest'). While Whitman and Hopkins share a common love for nature and celebrate the beauties of the earth with fervency, Hopkins's poems are infused with a religious quality and significance and Whitman's with a sensuality which, nevertheless, underpins his spiritual sensibility.

The erotic quality that Whitman imparts to nature also emerges in the poet's personal relationship to nature and, with this, his sensual celebration of the body. *Song of Myself* abounds in erotic passages and allusions, particularly with regard to his relationship with nature and his sexual union with his soul. His exaltation of the self, in strongly physical terms, is an important theme in *Song of Myself*, underlining as it does his individuality and his expression of his personal creed. Whitman was writing poetry at a time when great changes were occurring in religious thought and he responded to the reactionary standpoint of many evangelicals against what was seen as the inflexibility of institutionalised forms of Christianity (Marovich 2009, 352). According to Marovich, Whitman's glorification of the body was a reaction against the narrowness of the New England Puritanism around him (2009, 352). Whitman's God was an immanent one, personal, and present in everything, not the remote Puritan God (Marovich 2009, 353). His rejection of the idea of sin (and with it, the idea of a judging, transcendent God) is not so much a worked-out theological position, despite his embracing of all faiths, as it is a reaction against Puritanism with its emphasis on guilt and punishment.

Whitman's is a unique, highly individual voice, proclaiming his unorthodox creed in *Song of Myself*. In no way, does he share Hopkins's Catholic theology – the teachings and doctrines of the church such as the sacraments, atonement and salvation – and yet, not only is his work infused with a spirituality, but he fully shares in the spirit of Christianity, as exemplified in Christ. In *Song of Myself*, he himself reflects Christ's brotherhood, his religion of love, the sacredness of his mission (Symonds 2002, 29). Whitman's relationship with God is one of loving companionship:

Walking the old hills of Judaea with the beautiful gentle God
by my side

(Section 33)

He suffers for humanity as Christ did: 'Whoever degrades another degrades me' (section 24). He takes on the suffering of the 'wounded slave', wincing at the bite of the dogs (section 33).

William Douglas O' Connor, one of Whitman's devoted friends, wrote of Whitman in a pamphlet called *The Good Gray Poet*, (1865) that, like Christ, 'he has been a visitor of prisons; a protector of fugitive slaves; a constant voluntary nurse, night and day, at the hospitals, from the beginning of the war to the present time; a brother and friend through life to the neglected and the forgotten, the poor, the degraded, the criminal, the outcast; turning away from no man for his guilt, nor woman for her vileness' (Allen 1975, 4). Whitman's words in *Song of Myself* could have been said by Christ – who came to offer salvation to all – himself:

This is the meal equally set, this the meat for natural
hunger
It is for the wicked just same as the righteous, I make
appointments with all,
I will not have a single person slighted or left away,
The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited;
There shall be no difference between them and the rest.

(Section 19)

As a follower of St Ignatius, Hopkins's foremost consideration is for the souls of humankind and for their salvation. Always, he shows concern for his flock and receives comfort and hope from their devotion (Pick 1978, 75). In 'The Valley of the Elwy' he prays, 'Complete thy creature dear O where it fails'. His priestly spirit appears clearly in his poems of 1879–1883 such as 'Felix Randal', 'The Bugler's First Communion' and 'The Handsome Heart', for example, in which he displays empathy, care, concern and compassion in his poems as he tends to his people (Pick 1978, 87). One of his Jesuit contemporaries wrote of him: 'I think the characteristics in him that most struck and edified all of us who knew him were, first, what I should call his priestly spirit; this showed itself not only in the reverential way he performed his sacred duties, and spoke on sacred subjects, but his whole conduct and conversation; and secondly, his devotion and loyalty to the Society of Jesus' (Pick 1978, 87). Another Jesuit contemporary recalled 'his gentleness, tender-heartedness, and his loving compassion for the young, the weak, the poor, and for all who were in any trouble or distress' (Pick 1978, 90).

For both Whitman and Hopkins, spirituality manifests in a Christ-like love for humankind. Their celebration of nature is connected to an awareness and understanding of the divine purpose of God since God is immanent in his creation, although for Hopkins,

doctrinally, God is also a transcendent God while for Whitman, God's presence on earth indicates a coexistence with humanity. For both, however, there is an interconnectedness with God. Their passion and intensity of expression reveal a corresponding intensity and fervour of conviction, albeit from different religious perspectives. For Hopkins, intense awareness leads to spirituality and, in his articulation of his perceptions, he reveals the Jesuit practice in the *Spiritual Exercises* of perceptual particularism – the application of the senses in contemplation and prayer (Stewart 2016). Whitman, too, displays an ardour of feeling in his consciousness of all that is around him, which is expressed in evocative language in *Song of Myself*.

Despite the obvious distinctions between them – the bohemian prophet and the dedicated priest; the omnist accepting of all creeds and faiths and the orthodox trinitarian; the egoist celebrating the self and the Jesuit in service to God; the sensualist and the ascetic – Whitman and Hopkins share a consciousness of divinity as part of created beauty in the world and of God himself. While the spirituality evident in their poetry differs in nature and function – Hopkins's being rooted in Catholic practices and doctrines, and Whitman's displaying a pantheistic and sensual sensibility – the work of these two poets can be defined by a common inherent theology, in the general sense of the word. As extreme and diverse as they may be in their unique artistic voices, their poetic influences and contexts, their themes and their religious creeds, ultimately, in their evocation of the divine in their poetry, born out of like perceptions of God's presence in the world, Walt Whitman and Gerard Manley Hopkins demonstrate their mutual spiritual consciousness.

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