

The Cheer and Charm of Earth's Past Prime: Experiencing the Natural World in the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins

Tomáš Jajtner

University of South Bohemia, České Budějovice

Abstract

The article is a re-reading of the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins from the perspective of Heideggerian ecophilosophy. It presents Hopkins's dynamic concept of reality, key principles of his sacramental poetics and his concern for the gradual destruction of the environment. The Hopkinsean concept of the sacred core of reality is discussed and interpreted in the context of Heideggerian environmental criticism. The conclusion sums up the main tenets of Hopkins's vision of the natural world and attempts to show how this vision may inform our environmental awareness even in a non-religious or multi-religious age.

Keywords: Gerard Manley Hopkins, English poetry, Victorian poetry, sacramental poetics, environmental criticism, Martin Heidegger, environmental awareness

1. Introduction

The genius of Gerard Manley Hopkins's (1844-1889) poetry has traditionally been related to his use of sprung rhythm, his linguistic purism, his rediscovery of forgotten English words, his fascination with music and, last but not least, also to his sacramental poetics. Although his poetry is clearly rooted in the Catholic "worldview" apprehending things of this world as immersed in God, it also offers a remarkable vision of the natural world, celebrating its primeval freshness and boisterous vitality. This vision may acquire a new significance in an age of heated debates about environmentalism and about the role of our

organic and intuitive relationship with the natural world, marred by purely scientific or technological reasoning.

This article aims at presenting the basic tenets of Hopkins's vision of the natural world in relation to Heideggerian ecophilosophy and offers a new reading of his poetry which could form and in-form our contemporary environmental awareness even in a non-religious or multi-religious world.

2. *The world charged with God: adoring "life, not stone"*

Unlike many other religious poets, Hopkins's concept of reality is not primarily symbolic or metaphysical. In "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection", Hopkins presents a dynamic vision of the world in a state of constant change. However, this change is understood as a vital transformation, not as a moment of degeneration. Fire is thus not a means of destruction, but a process that "consumes everything, but somehow recycles and restores what is consumed" (Ellsberg 58). For Hopkins, embracing change means relating it to the Christian concept of the Resurrection. In the poem, all reality is "drowned" in "an enormous dark": however, the amorphous processes find their shape in the *forma Christi*. "Immortality" is thus not a state "beyond" death; it is the ultimate living, processual consummation, i.e. its transformation of a life "lived" unto its full potential, whereby everything is consumed and thus "given away", i.e. sacrificed:

... Million-fuelèd, | nature's bonfire burns on.
But quench her bonniest, dearest | to her, her clearest-selvèd spark
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 indig | nation! Manshape, that shone
Sheer off, disseveral, a star, | death blots black out; nor mark
Is any of him at all so stark
But vastness blurs and time | beats level. Enough! the Resurrection,
A heart's-clarion! Away grief's gasping, | joyless days, dejection.
Across my foundering deck shone
A beacon, an eternal beam. | Flesh fade, and mortal trash
Fall to the residuary worm; | world's wildfire, leave but ash:
In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is, | since he was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, | patch, matchwood, immortal diamond,
Is immortal diamond. (Hopkins 56)¹

The consuming (and consummating) Heraclitean fire finds "comfort in the Resurrection", because things need to change in order to be transformed and to find their unique, final and incorruptible identity. The sheer given-ness of the "created" state of things is thus being transformed into a gift that cannot be taken back. In that sense, it becomes an "immortal diamond".

For Hopkins, this "unfathomable" gift of "life" radiates natural beauty. "Man's" destiny is to express the beauty of "Creation" and communicate the driving principle of its being while not falling into the trap of being fixed to it, i.e. possessing it. In other words, "Man"

does not “worship ‘block or barren stone’”, but “grace”, the process through which reality keeps its original “given-ness”:

To man, that needs would worship ' block or barren stone,
 Our law says: Love what are ' love's worthiest, were all known;
 World's loveliest—men's selves. Self ' flashes off frame and face.
 What do then? how meet beauty? ' Merely meet it; own,
 Home at heart, heaven's sweet gift; ' then leave, let that alone.
 Yea, wish that though, wish all, ' God's better beauty, grace.
 (“To What Serves Mortal Beauty”, Hopkins 58)

In fact, the tension between the boisterous, dynamic reality of nature unstained with sin (“there lives the dearest freshness deep down things”²) and the precariousness of the human situation is very much at the core of Hopkins’s imagination. Moreover, “man’s” predicament is “his” consciousness, which makes him aware of his exceptional position in the context of all reality: he is there to articulate the inarticulate longing of the subhuman world, a longing to be consummated in the fullest sense of the word.

The major sign of this dynamic materiality of life in Hopkins’s poetry is its capacity for *in-scape*: realities are not mere “copies” or even “products” in the sense in which we tend to produce and re-produce various objects and commodities of our everyday (late capitalist) life: they are entities radiating their own “haecceitas”, i.e. their inalienable and unique “thisness”.³

Arguably, the best instance of this poetic insight can be found in his poem “As Kingfishers Catch Fire”:

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
 As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
 Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell’s
 Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
 Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
 Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
 Selves — goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,
 Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*

The various objects addressed in the poem are struggling to reveal *what* they are; their life is *crying* to spell out “for what (they) came.” This inner drive discloses their inner self and exposes their unique meaningfulness. Moreover, the physical reality described in the poem seems to follow a paradoxical double movement: a movement *out of itself* as an *ex-sistence*, and a movement *inside itself* as it happens in *in-scape*. Both movements, however, express a singular identity: this is how things “selve”: “myself it speaks and spells,/ Crying *What I do is me: for that I came*”.⁴ The climax of the poem thematises the mission of “speaking”: in that way, it moves back from the subhuman world – a pre-linguistic state – into the human world in which this “selving” uniqueness can be celebrated in an act of poetry.

A similar moment can be found in “To What Serves Mortal Beauty”: humans see real-

ity as a process which they are obliged to emulate: “the just man” is the one who strives to become who he/she is. The centre is the reality of the Incarnation, in which – according to the Christian doctrine – the human and the divine element (co)in-form each other, since the ultimate source of his/her “inalienable” individuality is to be found in the sacramental personhood of Christ:

I say móre: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: thát 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. (Hopkins 51)

In “God’s Grandeur”, the in-scaping of reality finds its limit in the directness of the human response: the soil “charged” with “God’s grandeur” is “bare”; and “man” fails to “feel” what reality is, since the directness of the contact has been broken:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not 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. (Hopkins 27)

However, in the climax of the poem, Hopkins’s God guarantees the “freshness deep down things”:

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings. (Hopkins 27)

This inner energy of nature can, however, become stuck and fixed in an idolatrous, dead form of *non-being*: it can fail to show its open-ended inner truth, its *in-scape*, by *es-caping* from itself “off” the realm of “life.” This brings us to the issue of Hopkins’s sacramental language.

3. Freshness of fresh words: the sacrament of language

In her study of Hopkins’s use of language, Margaret R. Elsbeg refers to two major theories of language dominating scholarly discourse in the 19th century, namely the difference between the “Cartesian” or “Benthamite” empirical idea of language “based on rationalist

epistemology, emphasizing that only clear, fixed, defined, and distinct perceptions could be true" (Elsberg 46), and the "fiduciary" concept of language,⁵ in which the audience must "trust" in the "analogical, symbolical, or metaphoric expressions" beyond the simple dictionary definition of the word (Cf. Elsberg 47). This second type was indeed associated with poetry.

Hopkins's poetry, on the other hand, is deeply rooted in the Roman Catholic belief in the transubstantiation, i.e. in the real presence of the divine, not just an analogical presence as viewed by the Reformers. His view of Creation is thus *sacramental* in putting forward a poetics in which a certain word and a particular entity are joined together. In that sense, he reiterates the criticism voiced by his teacher Walter Pater, who complained about the "aesthetic poetry" of the High Victorians and the Pre-Raphaelites.⁶ Ultimately, the question at stake is the core of "reality" itself: it is either "real", i.e. "present" and tangible in the things of this world, or it is just a form of Platonic "deception" which can be overcome by various forms of aesthetic "escapes". Hopkins's concept of "in-scape" is intended to be a completely opposite movement to the symbolism of the High Victorians: it celebrates reality by unfolding this dynamic presence of the divine element, i.e. grace.

In "The Sea and the Skylark", Hopkins contrasts the purity of the two protagonists of the poem with the "shallow and frail town" near the sea. The sea and the skylark "shame" human dwellings for being unable to re-present "the cheer and charm of earth's past prime":

On ear and ear two noises too old to end
Trench—right, the tide that ramps against the shore;
With a flood or a fall, low lull-off or all roar,
Frequenting there while moon shall wear and wend.

Left hand, off land, I hear the lark ascend,
His rash-fresh re-winded new-skeinèd score
In crisps of curl off wild winch whirl, and pour
And pelt music, till none 's to spill nor spend.

How these two shame this shallow and frail town!
How ring right out our sordid turbid time,
Being pure! We, life's pride and cared-for crown,

Have lost that cheer and charm of earth's past prime:
Our make and making break, are breaking, down
To man's last dust, drain fast towards man's first slime. (Hopkins 29)

The industrial "man-made" world lacks something central, i.e. the revelation of the "original", "real presence", the sacramental in-dwelling of the divine in the universe. "The sea and the skylark embody nature's and God's moral challenge: they 'ring right out' the diminished, man-made present, 'right' now coming back adverbially to contain both 'fully' and 'correctively'. Dust and slime represent spiritual degeneration; no doubt they were also the visible by-products of the construction-work [...] Even earlier in the sonnet,

in words like ‘trench’ and ‘roar’, these human efforts at creation are subliminally present” (Rumens). This “man-made present” thus conceals the in-dwelling of the divine creative force in our lives and deprives us of the experience that all reality is sacred.

In “Binsey Poplars” the poet regrets the loss of a beautiful line of trees, and the “destructive encroachment upon nature”.⁷ The “fresh” presence of the felled poplars/aspens is contrasted with their absence. In fact, the poetic power of this poem rests in the “real presence” of the trees:

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

O if we but knew what we do
 When we delve or hew —
Hack and rack the growing green!
 Since country is so tender
To touch, her being só slender,
That, like this sleek and seeing ball
But a prick will make no eye at all,
Where we, even where we mean
 To mend her we end her,
 When we hew or delve:
After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.
 Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve
Strokes of havoc unselve
 The sweet especial scene,
 Rural scene, a rural scene,
 Sweet especial rural scene. (Hopkins 39–40)

Indeed, the “presence” of the trees is fragile; it can easily be destroyed and thus deprive us of the “tender” in-scaping of the original, “given” reality beyond the boundaries of a fabricated universe. It is interesting how Hopkins compares the absence to the loss of sight: such a loss “unselves”, i.e. creates a dismal, empty caricature of the original “rural scene”.

The sacramental principle is of the highest importance here because of the relation between the sacramental doctrine and the validity of the poetic symbol: “A denial of the Real Presence and real sacrifice [...] is therefore a repudiation of the sanctification of natural things, therefore, too, an assault on the analogical validity of the poetic symbol” (Ross).⁸

The analogical validity of the poetic symbol in “The Sky and the Skylark” or “Binsey Poplars” is the intimate connection between the “reality” of the referent and the dynamism of meaning, seen sacramentally as the unity between the *sign* and *the reality* (*res et sacra-*

mentum, significatur et significat).⁹ In that sense, the poetic technique of Hopkins's poetry focuses on "letting reality be", on the real presence of things that are *given*, not "*made*". In this sense, language becomes the conscious inscape of reality because it lets things "dwell" in our world.

4. *What would the world be, once bereft/of all wet and wilderness?: poetry and our environmental consciousness*

The consciousness of the "presence" in Hopkins's vision of the natural world can also be understood as a consciousness of the impossibility of reducing and narrowing our conception of natural phenomena. Hopkins's experience of the sheer joy of nature with its sacred, given origin opens up a perspective in which we may rethink the role of imagination in our environmental consciousness.

Martin Heidegger's idea of "Man" as the "shepherd of Being" is in fact deeply connected to the consciousness of his being neither the master, nor the possessor of nature and the environment. "Man is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of Being."¹⁰ Heidegger's concern is the gross reduction of nature as *Bestand*, a simple "standing reserve":

Assuming an anthropocentric outlook (which Heidegger labels "enframing"¹¹), the subject takes a myopic view of the environment, seeing a field in terms of soil quality, rivers as sources of hydroelectric power, and reducing forests "to the orderability of cellulose."¹²

In Heidegger's late philosophy ("*nach der Kehre*"), the central insight is the irreplaceable importance of poetry in disclosing the central mystery of existence, the "Being" (*das Sein*). Poetry is not just a language like any other, it is the "house of Being in which man ek-sists by dwelling."¹³ Indeed, because of this central role of poetry and imagination¹⁴ in disclosing Being, Heidegger has been a focus for environmental critics.¹⁵ Ultimately, it is not just science and its findings that informs our environmental consciousness, it is also the intuitive relationship enhanced by our experience of the poetic.

Heidegger's approach to language interestingly corresponds to Hopkins's own concept of the language of poetry as "the current language heightened"¹⁶: for Heidegger, the language disclosing the mystery of Being must be in some way distant from mere everyday language, since it must be a language focused solely on the act of speaking. In that sense, the mission of language is to speak (*die Sprache spricht*), not to represent the instrumental reason of technological society¹⁷ or the transient nature of mere chatter. Moreover, Hopkins' idea of the energy of life – to which we alluded earlier – seems to overlap with the Heideggerean concept of "unconcealment" ("Unverborgenheit") based on Heidegger's etymologizing of the Greek word *ἀλήθεια*. Things need to be open to the "clearing" ("die *Lichtung des Daseins*") to let meaning go through the text.

In "What Are Poets For?", Heidegger analyses the various concepts of *natura* in philosophical discourse. The crucial idea is that the recognition of "nature" (which only humans are capable of) is the recognition of the fundamental relation to the "ground of beings":

A comparison places different things in an identical setting to make the difference visible. The different things, plant and beast on the one hand and man on the other, are identical in that they come to unite within the same. This same is the relation which they have, as beings, to their ground. The ground of beings is Nature.¹⁸

Indeed, for Hopkins the ground of being is God. Nevertheless, his God is not just an ideological construct, but an ultimate mystery which needs to be *experienced* and *disclosed* in the “grandeur” of “Nature”. Hopkins’s God does not rest in a supernatural world “beyond”; He is to be unfolded here and now, in the actual, vital space for a truly human development.

Hopkins’s contrast between the intuition of the given-ness of nature and the revelatory aspect of the environment clashes with the arrogant attempts of modern civilization to encroach on this vital space. In his poem “Inversnaid”, reflecting on the waterfalls on the bank of Loch Lomond in Scotland, he meditates on the majestic beauty of the place:

THIS darksome burn, horseback brown,
His rollrock highroad roaring down,
In coop and in comb the fleece of his foam
Flutes and low to the lake falls home.

A windpuff-bonnet of fawn-froth
Turns and twindles over the broth
Of a pool so pitchblack, fell-frowning,
It rounds and rounds Despair to drowning.

Degged with dew, dappled with dew,
Are the groins of the braes that the brook treads through,
Wiry heathpacks, fitches of fern,
And the beadbonny ash that sits over the burn.

What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and wildness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet. (Hopkins 50–51)

The waterfall is rendered in the “heightened language” of the poetry that discloses and reveals the meaning created from the sounds, rhythms and the overall vitality of the place. In fact, the “wonder” of the poem is the “speaking” transformation of the mute reality by the act of poetry itself. The “reality” is lifted up to the level of meaning (or – in the analogy with sacramental theology – the “real presence”) which – at the same time – guarantees and affirms its intrinsic value. The agitated final question “What would the world be, once bereft/Of wet and wildness” contrasts the beautiful, harmonious scene with the fragility of the environment in modern society, because it does not belong to the “world of disposable stuff”.¹⁹ The emotional appeal of literary discourse targets the fundamental relationship we build towards nature, i.e. the intuitive certainty about its irreplaceable significance for

creating a truly human form of dwelling. In that sense, imagination makes us conscious of the moral imperative to save “the weeds and the wilderness.”

Heidegger’s analysis of the subjugation of the environment in a technological society also refers to the danger of the purely objectifying scientific language which sees it primarily as something to be subjugated by the powers of technology.²⁰ Such enslavement of the environment results in its failure to reveal and disclose:

In place of all the world-content of things that was formerly perceived and used to grant freely of itself, the object-character of technological dominion spreads itself over the earth ever more quickly, ruthlessly, and completely. Not only does it establish all things as producible in the process of production; it also delivers the products of production by means of the market. In self-assertive production, the humanness of man and the thingness of things dissolve into the calculated market value of a market which not only spans the whole earth as a world market, but also, as the will to will, trades in the nature of Being and thus subjects all beings to the trade of a calculation that dominates most tenaciously in those areas where there is no need of numbers. (Heidegger, *Poetry* 11)

Scientific language brings evidence of the reality, but does not replace the intuitive primeval relation. The Hopkinsean attitude of awe celebrating the sacred given-ness of the world of nature filled with the mystery of the divine can bring us back to the human task of being the “shepherds of Being”, being guardians to the complexities of meaning that need to be discovered, not made or fabricated. Hofstadter’s commentary on Heidegger’s thought aptly expresses both the thought of the great German philosopher and the central tenor of G. M. Hopkins’s poetry:

So poetry – together with the language and thinking that belong to it and are identical with it as essential poetry – has for Heidegger an indispensable function for human life: it is the creative source of the humanness of the dwelling life of man. Without the poetic element in our own being, and without our poets and their great poetry, we would be brutes, or what is worse and what we are most like today: vicious automata of self-will. (Hofstadter)²¹

In that sense, poetry is a guardian of a truly human experience of the world, an experience that can never degrade into a mere “automaton”: it is aware of the fundamental uncertainty of human life which makes the idea of a technological mastery of the world completely nonsensical: “the poetic reminds us of the limits of our interpretative mastery of the world and of the essential importance of dwelling in uncertainty [...] If poetry can return us to an awed appreciation of the mystery of *phusis*, then it has place in a project whose task is the preservation of being” (Norris 124, 125). Indeed, this task knows no ideological or religious barriers.

5. Conclusion

We have discussed the main tenets of Hopkins’s nature poetry: his focus on the dynamism of life as revelation of the mystery of being; his sacramental poetics viewing nature as “actually” communicating messages, i.e. not just symbolically and arbitrarily “carrying”

meaning, and finally his concern for the destruction of the environment. His nature poetry is driven by a deep intuitive identification with the dynamism of life: in this sense, the wonder of life is presented as a gift radiating both joy and awe. Hopkins delights in the spectacular variety of living forms and their unique “this-ness”, i.e. their irreplaceability by anything else. It is because of this focus that motifs of environmental destruction acquire such a special significance: this manifold, variegated beauty is a fragile phenomenon in a technological society where everything tends to become “disposable stuff” or – to use Heideggerian language – just *Bestand*, i.e. mere “standing reserve.”

Cultivating this intuitive faculty is a unique mission of poetry that in-forms our environmental consciousness. Poetic “dwelling” is thus a process of “in-scaping” into the core of reality. This transformative experience makes us even more aware of our indispensable responsibility for the unconscious, subhuman forms of life.

Notes

¹ All quotations are based on the Penguin edition of Hopkins’s poems: Hopkins, Gerard Manley. *Poems and Prose* (London: Penguin, 1985).

² Cf. *God’s Grandeur* (Hopkins 27).

³ In this sense, Hopkins extrapolates the philosophical insight of Duns Scotus. “St. Thomas held that the form determines the species of a thing, while the matter determines its individuality within the species. For him the form determined the ‘whatness’ of a being, while the matter determined the ‘thisness’. Together they make up the individual thing. Thus the Thomistic ‘principium individuationis’ is a spatially determinant matter, ‘materia signata’. Now, as frequently interpreted (or, rather, misinterpreted), St. Thomas would seem to sacrifice individuality in favour of the specific.

Scotus, on the other hand, as Etienne Gilson points out, almost destroys the unity of the species in order to safeguard the particularity of the individual, for he places the principle of individuation within the form itself. He distinguishes two things within the form: the universal nature common to all individuals of the same species, and the ‘haecceitas’ or ‘thisness’, which he calls the ‘entitas singularis’ and which constitutes the individuality of the form.” See John Pick. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Priest and Poet*. 2nd Edition, reprint of the 1966 Oxford edition. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978), 156.

⁴ The OED records the word as a Hopkins’s own invention. For this reference I am indebted to A. Jenkins, cf. *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Sourcebook*, ed. by A. Jenkins. (Oxford: Routledge, 2006), 133.

⁵ The term was coined by John Coulson in his *Newman and the Common Tradition: A Study in the Language of Church and Society* (Oxford: London 1970), 3–4.

⁶ John Hillis Miller summarizes Pater’s argument as follows: it is “a desire for escape from any actual form of life into some artificial realm of “earthly paradise.” Cf. *The Linguistic Moment* (New Jersey, Princeton, 1985), 246. The reference is also quoted by Ellsberg (53).

⁷ This definition comes from Angus Easson, cf. his *Gerard Manley Hopkins*. (Oxford: Routledge, 2011), 96.

⁸ Malcolm M. Ross, *Poetry and Dogma: The Transformation of the Eucharistic Symbols in Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*. (New York: Octagon Books, 1954), 56. The text is also quoted by Ellsberg, 56.

⁹ Further on sacramental theology Hans Boersma, Matthew Levering (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 2015).

¹⁰ “Der Mensch ist nicht der Herr des Seienden. Der Mensch ist der Hirte des Seins.” Martin Heidegger. *Brief über den “Humanismus”*, 1946. In: *Gesamtausgabe, Band 9 “Wegmarken”*, 1. Aufl. (Frankfurt am M.: Verlag Vittorio Klostermann 1976), 342; English translation quoted from Martin Heidegger. *Basic Writings*. Ed. D.F. Krell, London: Routledge, 1993, 245. The text is also referred to in Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 31.

¹¹ Heidegger’s original term is *Ge-stell*.

¹² Todd A. Borlik, *Ecocriticism and Early Modern English Literature: Green Pastures*. (London: Routledge, 2011). 83–84.

¹³ Heidegger, Martin. *Basic Writings*, ed. D.F. Krell, (London: Routledge, 1993), 237. This text was translated by Frank A. Capuzzi.

¹⁴ We may also refer to his essay “On the Origin of the Work of Art” (Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerks) where he famously analyses one of Van Gogh’s paintings. Cf. Martin Heidegger. *Basic Writings* (139-212), transl. by Albert Hofstadter.

¹⁵ “[...] the essential function of poetic language is that it returns our attention to nature as phusis, and counters a deadened approach to our environment.” Trevor Norris. “Heidegger, Lawrence, and Attention to Being” in *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches*. Eds. A. Goodbody and K. Rigby (University of Virginia Press: Charlottesville and London, 2011), 116.

¹⁶ I am quoting from Cary H. Plotkin’s study of Hopkins’s poetry *The Tenth Muse: Victorian Philology and the Genesis of the Poetic Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1989), 86.

¹⁷ Cf. his famous lecture “Die Sprache” which he delivered in 1950 at Bühlerhöhe Castle. The text was first translated into English by Albert Hofstadter and published in 1971 as *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper Collins, 1971), 185–208.

¹⁸ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 98.

¹⁹ I borrowed this term from Greg Garrard (*Ecocriticism*, 31).

²⁰ In fact, Heidegger sees the core of the trouble already in the Platonic concept of the *eidos*: “Being is appearance in the sense of presence. It is what is present to us, what is enduring and lasting. But being is also what becomes, what comes to presence, and what ceases to be. Beings remain the same. Beings change. Beings emerge into being. Beings cease to be. Plants, human beings, animals, and the processes of nature are of the order of being that Heidegger describes as phusis. In Heidegger’s terms, being as *phusis* contains as its essential nature both coming to presence and absencing or ceasing to be.

The wrong turn that Heidegger attributes to Platonism and to the subsequent history of Western metaphysics is the misconception of what appears, what comes into presence, as the expression of an *eidos*, an independent essence common to and present in all beings that have appearance. It is therefore something that endures ideally once any given being has ceased to be. Through this misinterpretation, the singularity of beings is displaced into the mode of a derivative, secondary, and degraded appearance” (Norris 123).

²¹ Hofstadter’s preface to Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, xv.

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Address:

*University of South Bohemia
Department of English
Branišovská 31a
370 05 České Budějovice
Czech Republic
tjajtner@ff.jcu.cz*