

HOPKINS' PIED BEAUTY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract: Gerard Manley Hopkins, an English poet and Jesuit priest is one of the most individual of Victorian writers. He is regarded as one of the Victorian era's greatest poets. Hopkins is a sensuous poet and a Roman Catholic priest. His poetry bears the unmistakable stamp of his poetic sensibility and devotional fervour. Hopkins completed "Pied Beauty" in 1877. The London firm of Humphrey S. Milford published it in 1918 in *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. The poem moves from nominal to clausal syntax, from simple to complex modification, and invents a device to create sets of higher cardinality.

Key- Words: Hopkins, Pied Beauty, Poetic Concentration.

Introduction: Gerard Manley Hopkins, 19th century poet and priest is admired for the highly original use of rhythm in his poetry. He was an ardent believer in God and in the divinity of Christ. "Pied Beauty" is a lyric poem praising God for his variegated creation. Nature in its variety--including streaked, spotted, and multicolored skies, fields, nuts, fish, birds, and other animals--is a gift of God for which we all should be thankful. One may interpret this theme to include human beings, with their many personalities, moods, idiosyncrasies, occupations, cultures, languages, political systems, skin colors and other physical attributes, and so on.

Pied Beauty: Theme: "Pied Beauty" points to Hopkins' power of sensuous appreciation of the beauty of the things around, his poetic concentration, compassion and above all, his unquestioning faith in God. He believes that the created beauty is the reflections of God's spirit. The Christian concept of God as love and protector is vividly expressed in the last two lines;

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

The very expression "Pied Beauty" means multi-coloured beauty of things. The multi-coloured beauty of things with their ever changing (shifting) colour and forms is very much pleasing to the poet. But the realization that they all

are the manifestations of the beauty and grace of the supreme creator feels his heart with wonder and admiration.

The sky of couple colour brings the association spotted cows. The trouts that swim have on them rose-spot on dots beautifully distributed. The chest nuts that falling from the trees is bright red in colour like glowing coal in a fire. The landscapes and sky-scapes are ever alike; the lands being in plots and pieces and the sky ever changing its colour.

Though God has created this ever changing and constantly shifting panorama around us he himself is past change. He who with paternal affection and crashing tenderness has created things of bewildering diversity is himself subject to no change. He has created some contrasting things such as – swiftness and slowness, sweetness and sourness, dazzle and dimness.

Thus the poet concludes his poem with an invitation to all, to praise the glory and grace of God.

The Title of the Poem: According to Hopkins's theory of inscape, all living things have a constantly shifting design or pattern that gives each object a unique identity. Hopkins frequently uses colour to describe these inscapes. "Pied Beauty" praises God for giving every object a distinct visual pattern, from sunlight as multicoloured as a cow, to the beauty of birds' wings and freshly ploughed fields. Indeed, the word *pied* means "having splotches of two or more colours."

The word "pied" in the title means spotted (or, if you prefer, dappled). This entire poem is in praise of things with spots, from trout to cows to the way the skies have spots of cloud or the fields, which are compared to a quilt: "Landscape plotted and pieced — fold, fallow and plough".

The first six lines give examples of the pied things for which Hopkins is offering thanks; the second stanza (of four and one half lines) expands to thank the Lord for all of the things that might fit within this category. The second stanza is ambiguous : is Hopkins telling all those things that are freckled, fickle, etc. to praise God, or is he praising God for having made them?

Structure of "Pied Beauty":

Hopkins, called the poem a curtal sonnet, meaning a shortened or contracted sonnet. A curtal sonnet consists of eleven lines instead of the usual fourteen for the standard Shakespearean or Petrarchan Sonnet. Besides, "Pied

Beauty" may also be classified as catalogue verse because it presents a thesis followed by a list of examples (catalogue) that support the thesis.

Hopkins begins and ends the poem with a call to praise God for the gifts He has given us. Between these calls, he presents two short lists and a comment about the beauty of God. The first list uses concrete and specific language (skies, the cow, trout, chestnuts, finches, and farm fields); the second list, abstract and general language (things counter, original, spare, strange, fickle, etc.). The comment notes that the beauty of God, unlike the beauty of creation, does not change. Thus, Hopkins structures the poem as follows:

1. A call to praise God for his gifts.
2. A list of gifts in specific language.
3. A list of gifts in abstract language.
4. A comment about the immutable beauty of God.
5. A call to praise God.

Meter of "Pied Beauty": Sprung Rhythm:

The meter of "Pied Beauty" is sprung rhythm, a term coined by Hopkins to describe a metric format that permits an unlimited number of unstressed syllables in each line to accompany stressed syllables. A metric foot in sprung rhythm usually contains one to four syllables. Hopkins intended sprung rhythm to mimic the stresses occurring in ordinary English speech.

Hopkins has achieved the inscape through sound-sculpting with devices such as alliteration, assonance – *"With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle dim"* and through his sprung rhythm. This Sprung rhythm has been Hopkins' special contribution to Modern Poetry. This rhythm approximated the natural rhythm of speech through rolling stresses, without sacrificing poetic rhythmicity; making it a fusion of what Hopkins called "markedness of rhythm and naturalness of expression". In this rhythm the focus is on accents or stresses without much care about the number of syllables. A foot may have one strong syllable which could be accompanied by many light ones. For example, in the line – *"For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim"*, there is stress falling only on 'rose', 'all' and 'trout' such that it cannot be scanned conventionally.

Rhyme of "Pied Beauty":

The rhyme scheme of the poem is as follows:

Lines 1-6: **ABCABC**

Lines 7-10: **DBDC**

Line 11: **C**

Tone of "Pied Beauty":

The tone is exuberant and spirited. The poem is a song of joy.

Figures of Speech:

Following are examples of figures of speech in the poem.

Alliteration:

- Line 1: **G**lory be to **G**od
- Line 2: **s**kies of **c**ouple-**c**olour as a brinded **c**ow
- Line 4: **F**resh-**f**irecoal chestnut-**f**alls; **f**inches
- Line 5: **L**andscape **p**lotted and **p**ieced
- Line 6: **t**rádes, their gear and **t**ackle and **t**rim
- Line 7: **s**pare, **s**trange
- Line 9: **s**wift, **s**low; **s**weet, **s**our; **a**dazzle, **d**im
- Line 10: **H**e fathers-forth **w**hose

Anaphora:

- Lines 2 and 3: **For** skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;

Paradox:

- Line 9: things that are swift and slow
.....things that are sweet and sour
.....things that are dazzling and dim

Simile:

- Lines 2: skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow

Comparison of skies to a cow

Metaphor:

- Line 3: rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim
Comparison of the spots on a speckled trout to moles
- Line 4: Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls
Comparison of chestnut kernels to burning coals
- Line 10: suckled in a creed outworn
Comparison of *creed* to a mother nursing her child

Conclusions: For Hopkins, God is the careful painter mixing and matching, putting all into a whole. Though individual details are striking, unusual, unique, or even initially ugly, the overall effect is one of massive pattern, reiterated by the echo of the word “all” at the end of one stanza and beginning of the next. God’s Creation is beautiful as there is variety and contrast. As a religious man, Hopkins turns his attention to the specific qualities of nature. He wants the reader to see things as they really are and to praise them because they are God’s creation.

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