“Epithalamion” by Gerard Manley Hopkins

_H Jonathon Penny_

_Harkin, hearer, hear what I do; lend a thought now, make believe_  
We are leafwhelmed somewhere with the hood  
Of some branchy bunched bushybowered wood,  
Southern dene or Lancashire clough or Devon clave,  
That leans along the loins of hills, where a candycoloured, where  
a gluegold-brown  
Marbled river, boisterously beautiful, between  
Roots and rocks is danced and dandled, all in froth and  
waterblowbals, down.  
We are there, when we hear a shout  
That the hanging honeysuck, the dogeared hazels in the cover  
Makes dither, makes hover  
And the riot of a rout  
Of, it must be, boys from the town  
Bathing: it is summer’s sovereign good.

By there comes a listless stranger: beckoned by the noise  
He drops towards the river: unseen  
Sees the bevy of them, how the boys  
With dare and with downdolphinry and bellbright bodies  
huddling out,  
Are earthworld, airworld, waterworld thorough hurled, all by  
turn and turn about.
This garland of their gambols flashes in his breast
Into such a sudden zest
Of summertime joys
That he hies to a pool neighbouring; sees it is the best
There; sweetest, freshest, shadowiest;
Fairyland; silk-beech, scrolled ash, packed sycamore, wild wychelm, hornbeam pretty overstood
By. Rafts and rafts of flake-leaves light, dealt so, painted on the air,
Hang as still as hawk or hawkmoth, as the stars or as the angels there,
Like the thing that never knew the earth, never off roots
Rose. Here he feasts: lovely all is! No more: off with—down he dings
His bleachèd both and woolwoven wear:
Careless these in coloured wisp
All lie tumbled-to; then with loop-locks
Forward falling, forehead frowning, lips crisp
Over finger-teasing task, his twiny boots
Fast he opens, last he offwrings
Till walk the world he can with bare his feet
And come where lies a coffer, burly all of blocks
Built of chancequarrièd, selfquainèd rocks
And the water warbles over into, filleted with glassy grassy quicksilvery shivès and shoots
And with heavenfallen freshness down from moorland still brims,
Dark or daylight on and on. Here he will then, here he will the fleet
Flinty kindcold element let break across his limbs
Long. Where we leave him, froliclavish, while he looks about him, laughs, swims.

Enough now; since the sacred matter that I mean I should be wronging longer leaving it to float
Upon this only gambolling and echoing-of-earth note—
What is . . . the delightful dene?

Wedlock. What the water? Spousal love.

Who the gamboled groom? Kingfish Christ-our-Saviour
Or his son. Who the gangway, brindled, bridling bride to shear the very sheep of him?

Church and churchgoing churchcoming churchliving churchloving Christkeeping. Who, indeed, the latecome, lightshorn, grinning,
gaming guests?

We. Us. Poor. Oh!

Father, mother, brothers, sisters, friends
Into fairy trees, wild flowers, wood ferns
Rankèd round the bower leap! assemble! and withdraw the veiling world

And witness there the sunblonde, brightburned waking
And the wedding of the Word wellspoken, wild, child, grown
Aggrieved, grieved, and greeted
Gastly, good.