

## Pied Beauty by Gerard Manley Hopkins

Glory be to God for dappled things -  
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;  
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;  
Landscape plotted and pieced -  
fold, fallow, and plough;  
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.  
All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him.

### Glossary

Pied: having two or more different colours

dappled: marked with spots or rounded patches

brindled: an older form of the word 'brindled', having a streaky or patchy pattern, usually grey or brown in colour; used especially to describe the skin or fur of animals.

rose-moles: red spots resembling roses

stipple: marked with numerous small spots or specks

Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls: fallen chestnuts that are as bright as hot coal

fold: sheep pen

fallow: land left unused for a time

tackle: implements

trim: additional decoration along the edges of something

fickle: changeable

fathers-forth: brings forth or creates



## Notes

This poem is one of Hopkins' curtailed or shortened sonnets. He invented the form and called it a 'curtal sonnet'. ('Curtal' is an archaic form of 'curtailed'.) It follows the basic pattern of a Petrarchan sonnet but the octave becomes a sestet and the sestet becomes a quatrain with an extra tail piece attached.

'Pied Beauty' is written in sprung rhythm, a type of rhythm Hopkins developed based on the patterns of British folk songs and poetry. It consists of a stressed syllable followed by varied groups of stressed and unstressed syllables.

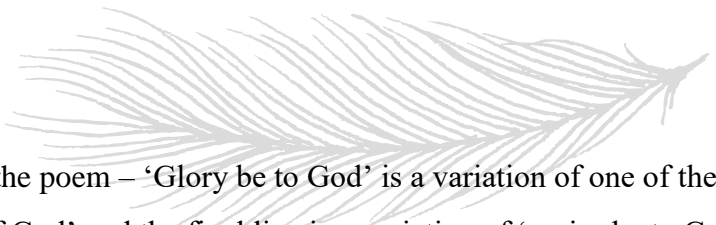
The tone is one of wonder, delight and devotion.

The poem opens with a prayerful offering: 'Glory be to God for dappled things'. The following lines give examples of all the 'dappled things' Hopkins admires so much. First there is the blue sky dappled with white clouds, much like the 'brinded' or streaked pattern of a cow's hide. The pattern of colour on a trout's scales is 'rose-moles all in a stipple'.

The image of the fallen, opened chestnuts being dark and dull on the outside but bright and shining inside can be seen as a moral reflection: perhaps as representing goodness or the purity of a shining soul underneath a hard or unprepossessing exterior.

If we see the chestnuts as being a link between man and nature, then lines five and six – which explore man's connection with the land – follow naturally. The fields reflect man's work as they are 'plotted and pieced', ploughed, left idle for a time or turned into enclosures for animals. All of man's 'trades' and the equipment that goes with each of them are – like the list of natural wonders – part of God's work and they glorify or 'Praise Him'.

The final five lines of the poem focus on morality and show Hopkins' great devotion to God. Even if things may appear unusual, unconventional or 'strange', they are all part of the diversity and wonder of God's creation and each one in their own way praises God. If we take the time to appreciate these things, then we can appreciate God's greatness and will be inspired to 'Praise Him' too.



This beginning of the poem – ‘Glory be to God’ is a variation of one of the Jesuit mottoes: ‘to the greater glory of God’ and the final line is a variation of ‘praise be to God always’, another Jesuit motto. (Hopkins was a Jesuit priest.) The sestet opens with praise of God and there follows praise of the beauty of his creations. The final five lines of the poem are a reversal of this order: the wonder and strangeness of nature is listed first and then linked back to God. Hopkins was writing in the Victorian era: a time in which man-made uniformity and order was valued far more highly than was variety and diversity, but he deliberately extols the virtues of ‘All things counter, original, spare, strange’, and all that is ‘fickle’. Hopkins himself was an unusual and often contrary character, so this poem may be seen as a protest against the age in which he lived and a defiant statement to the effect that God is in all things.