1946

Gerard Manley Hopkins and His Critics

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GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS AND HIS CRITICS

By
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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Loyola University

June
1946
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CHAPTER I

THE VICTORIAN REACTION: HOPKINS' FIRST CRITICS

The amazing originality of Gerard Manley Hopkins' genius and the accidents of his late publication sometimes have made difficult the realization that he was contemporary of Tennyson, Swinburne, and Matthew Arnold. It was certainly as some strange new planet that he appeared in the literary firmament in 1918, some twenty-nine years after his death. Nothing about his poetry impressed the reader as Victorian, neither his idiom, his imagery or his intensity of utterance, and least of all, the "sprung rhythm" which he claimed to have discovered. Within ten years of publication he had acquired an aura of fame as the most revolutionary of the moderns and the originator of nearly all the new techniques which young poets were practicing. Recent criticism, assisted by the publication of his Letters and Notebooks, has discovered more characteristics of his own age in him, more traditional elements in his poetry, than they suspected who hailed him as a companion revolutionary, and who, for better or for worse, set themselves to copy his technique and the devices of his invention.

It has been hazarded more than once that if Hopkins' poems had been published during his lifetime English poetry would
have profited much sooner, that "the influence of this most individual of poets would not only have led aesthetics through a different traditive path but also would have engendered latent power in minor poets." But this must remain doubtful. Hopkins' idiom was completely alien to that of his generation; those contemporaries familiar with his poems were disturbed by the intensity of thought and feeling which in the stress and struggle of creation made him condense grammar and image, twist syntax, and hammer language and rhythms into patterns to express it. Forty years after his death he was called the "most obscure of English poets." It is not difficult to guess what would have been the reaction of readers subscribing to the dictum of a respected contemporary of Hopkins, Doctor Hake, who wrote: "Poetry that is perfect poetry ought not to subject any tolerable intellect to the necessity of searching for its meaning." In a letter to Robert Bridges, Hopkins accounted for his "obscurity" in a way that sounds peculiarly modern, and reminds one of T. S. Eliot's pronouncements upon the "difficulty" of modern poetry:


Plainly if it is possible to express a subtle and recondite thought in a subtle and recondite way and with great felicity and perfection, in the end, something must be sacrificed...and this may be the being at once, may perhaps the being without explanation at all, intelligible.3

Although he admired the poetical insight, and the flow and richness of diction in the poetry of his contemporaries, Hopkins deplored the frequent lack of thought and sometimes lack of character manifested therein. He once decried to Patmore "the poetical cant of the age and all the wilderness of words." The language and style of Victorian poetry was considered by Hopkins to be "Parnassian"; that is, "a language and style mastered and at command but employed without any fresh in inspiration."5

It is no doubt making too great a simplification to say that it is the difference between a poetry that put language first and one that put the poetic experience first. Yet there is a core of truth in the contrast. It is the distinction that Coleridge made early in the nineteenth century between mechanic and organic form in art:


The form is mechanic when on a given material we impress a pre-determined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material... The organic form, on the other hand, is innate; it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fulness of its development is one and the same with...its outward form.

Certainly there are resemblances between this conception of organic form and the design, "inscape," or inner principle of beauty and unity in things and experiences which Hopkins strove to embody in words whose pattern should correspond to it. The reality of his experience must take a form, a movement and a pattern in words that would convey the actuality, the uniqueness of that experience. His poetry was not a triumph of language but, as someone has expressed it, a triumph over language.

Another difference between Hopkins and his contemporaries lay in his conception of the subject—matter of poetry. For him there was no "poetic" subject; any subject was suitable. What was important was that the poet was "in earnest." Sincerity is one of the qualities most quickly discerned in his poetry. The greater portion of Hopkins' themes, it is true, arose from his experience as a priest, another factor which individualized his poetry. The differences between Hopkins and his contemporaries could be discussed at greater length, but suffice it to say at this point, that there are no parallels

6 Lectures (1818).
7 Letters I, p.
to his unique conception and achievement found in the nineteenth century or earlier. Certain resemblances to several poets have been pointed out by critics—resemblances to Milton, Shakespeare, Donne; and his rhythms and alliterations have been compared to those of pre-Chaucerian poetry. 8

Most of the Victorian attitudes toward poetry are exemplified in the reaction of the few contemporaries to whom Hopkins showed his poems. It might be objected that Bridges, Dixon, and Patmore comprise a small and not very representative group by which to judge a generation. It is significant, however, that all three were poets, deeply interested in their art, and, with the possible exception of Dixon, interested in the more technical problems of craftsmanship. This audience also had the advantage of familiarity with Hopkins' theory of poetry, of his explanations, of his experiments. Yet all three in varying degrees failed to recognize the importance of his innovations, although they recognized and felt the impact of his peculiar genius. A critic remarked not long ago of Hopkins, "Fifty years behind in time, he is probably at least fifty more ahead of the present in both spirit and achievement." 9

8 A significant study of the relation of Hopkins' meters to those of Old English poetry appears in "Hopkins Sprung Rhythm and the Life of English Poetry," by Walter J. Ong, S.J., an essay included in Immortal Diamond, a group of studies on Hopkins by American Jesuits, soon to be published.

Hopkins' contemporaries were of their time; rarely does custom allow the appreciation of what is new.

The poet, Lawrence Binyon describes this conservative attitude as it existed at Oxford in 1890, the year after Hopkins' death.

The younger generation today can, I think have no conception of the angry passions and resentment caused among critics of that day by any liberties taken with traditional metre. The Tennysonian tune had got into their heads and nothing could drive it out. A reversed accent in an iambic line—though common enough in Milton—raised storms which raged even in the columns of an evening newspaper, and actually appeared on a poster, as I well remember. Hopkins' poems, if not wholly ignored would have been thought a deliberate outrage, and simply execrated. 10

There were reactions against Victorian English, as the foundation of the Early English Texts Society, and the poetry of William Barnes and Charles M. Doughty evidenced, but in general there existed a feeling that in regard to poetic form perfection had been reached. This is the attitude behind Hall Caine's rejection in 1889, of certain of Hopkins' sonnets from his anthology, Sonnets of Three Centuries. Dixon had submitted two of the sonnets and persuaded Hopkins to submit three more to Caine. Included in the five were "The Starlight Night," "The Skylark," and "Andromeda," the last named of which Hopkins considered nearer to the conventional and likelier to win

approval. The poems were rejected because, as Hopkins wrote to Bridges, "the purpose of his book...is to demonstrate the impossibility of improving upon the acknowledged structure whether as to rhyme-scheme or measure." To support his own judgment, Hall Caine had called upon "a critic of utmost eminence" who agreed with him. 11

This rejection was the second Hopkins had met in his somewhat feeble attempts to place his poems in print. In 1877 he had sent "The Wreck of the Deutschland" to the Jesuit periodical, The Month. Father Coleridge, the Editor, evidently recognized its value for he accepted it at first; but in the end its unconventional qualities made him fear for its reception and, in Hopkins' words, "he dared not print it." 12 The "Eurydice," sent to the same periodical a few months later met the same fate. Several times, impelled by his admiration for Hopkins' poetry, Dixon strove to obtain a public for it. First he offered to refer to the poems in an "abrupt footnote" to the discussion of the foundation of the Jesuits in his forthcoming Church History. This naive device Hopkins rejected, saying that the suggestion to publish should come from authorities in the Society. When Dixon wished to send the "Wreck of the


12 Letters II, p. 15.
Eurydice" to one of the Carlisle newspapers, Hopkins again thwarted him. In 1886, however, Dixon had a small triumph when he succeeded in including several of the poems in a *Bible Birthday Book*. From the *Letters* we know one of these was "Morning, Midday and Evening Sacrifice." 12

Of the three friends to whom Hopkins explained his poetry, Dixon responded with the most complete appreciation. His encouragement was as constant as was his fear that Hopkins might forsake poetry altogether, although he admired the spiritual ideals and the devotion to his vocation which might urge Hopkins to such a renunciation. Dixon had been a master at Highgate school when Hopkins attended. He was the author of two volumes of poetry, *Christ’s Company* (1861), and *Historical Odes* (1864). With these Hopkins had become acquainted at Oxford, and when he entered the Jesuit novitiate he had copied his favorite stanzas into a notebook to take with him. It was to tell Dixon of his appreciation of his poetry that Hopkins, in 1878, initiated a correspondence which lasted until his death. During this period the two friends met but once when Hopkins visited Dixon in his home at Hayton, Cumberland. Their correspondence, however, was a source of consolation and encouragement to both poets. When Hopkins sent him, at his

12 *Letters* II, p. 15.
request, a group of his poems, Dixon recognized immediately with the insight of a true poet, that they possessed the characteristics of genius. His reaction was an intuitive and emotional one of "delight, astonishment and admiration." He was greatly moved by the power and strangeness of the verse, and in a passage which has become celebrated for its critical penetration, he isolated its unique quality as "rare charm,"

something I cannot describe, but I know to myself as the inadequate word terrible pathos—something of which you call temper in poetry; a right temper which goes to the point of the terrible; the terrible crystal.\textsuperscript{13}

Dixon found the only parallel to this quality in Milton and then in a lesser way, arising from "indignation and injured majesty."\textsuperscript{14} He ascribed it as arising in Hopkins' work as a result of his "present position, seclusion, and exercises."

He seems also to have recognized its organic unity, the single impact of form, feeling and thought, the quality (if this is a correct interpretation of his not too clear expression)

of admiration (or in you other emotions also)
which reaches its fulness and completeness
in giving the exact aspect of the thing it takes, so that a peculiar contentation is felt.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 80.
\textsuperscript{14} Loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 100.
Dixon perceived also Hopkins' particular quality as a nature poet, his inseeing of "inscape," the "power of forcibly and delicately giving the essence of things in nature." Dixon's was "a deep and intense admiration" which has been regarded by some commentators as exhibiting a kind of pre-critical innocence. Claude Abbot, the Editor of Hopkins' Letters, calis his response admiration rather than criticism.18 But another admirer, W. H. Gardner observes that in "the Popean acts of surveying the Whole before seeking slight faults to find, and of judging with the same spirit that his author writ, Dixon was a more astute critic than Bridges."19

Bridges' attitude towards Hopkins' poetry and his tardiness in giving it to the public have met with somewhat the same mixture of praise and blame that appeared in his introduction to the Poems in 1918. One cannot doubt, however, the essential integrity of this oldest friend of Hopkins. That frequently he should apply a scale of values that was not Hopkins' was inevitable. Its cause lay, not so much in a "prim donnish conventionality" to which one critic ascribes it,20 as in a deep

16 Ibid., p. 32.
17 Loc. cit.
instinctive reaction against Hopkins' whole philosophy of life, especially his religious ideal and its embodiment in his poetry.

This attitude is evident in Bridges' criticisms of Hopkins' poems during his lifetime as well as those he later published. "The Wreck of the Deutschland," for instance, presumably impressed him as unfavorably the first time he read it as it did thirty years later. It is unfortunate that Bridges' letters to Hopkins are not extant, but it is not difficult to judge the tenor of the criticism from the nature of Hopkins' response, which is a plea for greater tolerance and an indictment of a criticism based on prejudice. Bridges evidently had censured the obscurity. Hopkins pleads with him to

pay attention to the best and most intelligible stanzas...If you had done this before you would have liked it better and sent me some serviceable criticisms, but now your criticism is of no use, being only a protest memorializing me against my whole policy and proceedings."

Bridges' attitude is clear in his expression that he "would not for any money" read the poem a second time; how long he retained this attitude we do not know, but we find Hopkins, some months later, expressing regret that he had not read it again. Hopkins also had to defend himself against the accusation of "affectation"; this he did with vigor:

21 Letters I, pp. 46-46.

22 Loc. cit.
...as long as mere novelty and boldness
strike you as affectation your criticism
strikes me as—as water of the lower Isis.23

Bridges seems not to have fully understood the rule-abiding
nature of Hopkins' sprung rhythm and the restrictions he placed
upon its freedom. As Hopkins wrote to Dixon, "Bridges treats
it in Theory and practice as something informal and variable
without any limit but ear and taste, but this is not how I look
at it."24 It is not surprising then, that Bridges found a
similarity to the poetry of Walt Whitman in "The Leaden Echo
and the Golden Echo." Hopkins did not like the imputation.

I believe that you are quite mistaken about
this piece and that on second thoughts you
will find the fancied resemblance diminish
and the irritation disappear.25  The
long lines are not rhythm run to seed:
everything is weighed and timed in them.
Wait till they have taken hold of your ear
and you will find it so.26

The above was written 1882. Bridges apparently continued to see
resemblances, for three years later Hopkins sent him "Harry
Ploughman" with the suggestion: "When you read it let me know
if there is anything like it in Walt Whitman, as perhaps there

23 Ibid., p. 54.
26 Ibid., p. 157.
may be, and I should be sorry for that. 27

That Bridges' judgments had their basis in his conception of "taste," as he indicated in the 'Preface' of 1918, is evident also in the Letters. At one time he attributed Hopkins' "taste" to a lack of reading. Hopkins acknowledged that the loss from not reading was great, but he added, "If I did read I do not think the effect of it would be what you seem to expect, on either my compositions or my judgments." 28 The oddities and mannerisms which Bridges criticized in his poetry, Hopkins was able to defend. As to Bridges' attitude toward his poetic ideals—"you disapprove of my whole yevos as vicious"—he discovered a somewhat similar attitude in himself:

I always think that your mind towards my verse is like mine towards Browning's: I greatly admire the touches and the details, but the general effect, the whole, offends me, I think it repulsive. 29

Aside from matters of taste many of Hopkins poems had a great attraction for Bridges and probably more often than is recorded he expressed that approval and praise which gave such "great comfort" to his friend. Patmore witnesses to the "sincerest admiration and love" which Bridges expressed for Hopkins' poems, and a higher tribute could not be given to any

27 Ibid., p. 262.
28 Ibid., p. 290.
29 Ibid., p. 152.
poet than that recorded by Dixon: "Bridges struck the truth long ago when he said to me that your poems more carried him out of himself than those of anyone."\textsuperscript{30}

The third friend to whom Hopkins submitted his poems, Coventry Patmore, unlike Bridges and Dixon, was an established poet. He also favored experiment and innovation in prosody, having introduced a new rhythm in the Odes of his \textit{Unknown Eros} published in 1877. Moreover, he was, like Hopkins, a convert to the Catholic Church. These factors might lead us to expect from him a sympathetic understanding of Hopkins' intentions. If Hopkins cherished any such expectation it was disappointed. For, of his three critics, Patmore was the one who failed most completely to appreciate his achievement, although he felt towards Hopkins the priest, as he later wrote to Bridges, a "reverence and affection the like of which I have never felt for any other man but one."\textsuperscript{31}

Patmore had become acquainted with Hopkins while visiting Stonyhurst College in 1883. Once, after their meeting, Hopkins spent a week with Patmore in his home but otherwise their friendship was maintained by correspondence during the next six years. It was through Hopkins that Patmore became acquainted

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Letters} II, p. 100.

\textsuperscript{31} Quoted in Basil Champney's \textit{Memoir of Patmore}, Vol. II, p. 55.
with Bridges and Dixon; learning from Bridges that Hopkins was a poet he asked to read his poems. His immediate reaction was one of bewilderment, especially at the "novelty of mode" in which Hopkins presented his thought. The thought and feeling by themselves were enough to "require the whole attention to apprehend and digest them." To this initial difficulty, he wrote to Hopkins,

...you seem to have added the difficulty of following several entirely novel and simultaneous experiments in versification and construction, together with an altogether unprecedented system of alliteration and compound words; any one of which novelties would be startling and productive of distraction from the poetic matter to be expressed.

Not that Patmore failed to recognize Hopkins' genius. That, he told Bridges, was unmistakable, "lovely and unique in its effects whenever he approximates to the ordinary rules of composition." The strange rhythms, the unprecedented alliteration and compounds seemed a denial of Patmore's conception of poetry as "thoughts that involuntary move harmonious numbers"; he could not understand how they could be the "spontaneous expression of the poet's feelings."

32 Letters III, p. 204.
33 Loc. cit.
35 Letters III, p. 207.
"Unprecedented system," "ordinary rules of composition," "difficulty," "novelties"; these are the key words in the criterion against which Patmore set up Hopkins' poems. It is a Victorian as well as a personal standard. That is why Patmore saw that the poems could never have a popular appeal and why he was "absolutely sure" they would not meet approval from the critics of The Nineteenth Century or The Fornightly Review. That is why he could not understand Bridges' admiration. He tried to soften the impact of his criticism by referring to the "limitation of my appreciation of art,"36 by remarking that his judgment might be different if he could hear Hopkins read his poems aloud,37 but the fact is clear that he did not believe they would have an appeal anywhere or any time.

Patmore, and the same is true of Dixon and Bridges, had a high opinion of Hopkins' critical acumen. He sent to him for criticism a forthcoming revision of his poetical works to which Hopkins gave careful reading and consideration, marking inaccuracies, unpoetical passages, infelicities of diction, and giving suggestions for improvement. Patmore expressed his appreciation of these "notes and suggestions, with nearly all

36 Loc. cit.
37 Loc. cit.
of which I agree and nearly all of which I shall endeavor to adopt." He acted upon two thirds of Hopkins' hints and "only not acted on the other third because they involved an amount of rewriting" of which he did not feel himself capable.

Critics have thought it strange that Patmore did not recognize the similarity between his own metrical theories and those of Hopkins, for in his Essay on English Metrical Law there are several parallels. Patmore advocated the use of musical symbols instead of the Greek and Latin system of measuring by "feet." Like Hopkins, perhaps more consciously than Hopkins, he recognized that a poetical line was marked off by a series of eventime units. The function of accent in English verse, he said, was the "marking by whatever means, certain isochronous intervals." Thus the basic measure of English verse was a "dipode" of four syllables, each section containing a major and a minor accent. "Every verse proper," then, "contains two or three or four of these 'metres' or 'sections'." In one of his letters Hopkins appears to be skilled in Patmore's

38 Ibid., p. 163.
39 Ibid., p. 221.


41 Ibid., p. 242. (Cf. the discussion by Harold Whitehall of the parallels between Hopkins' and Patmore's theory, Chapter VI, below.)
theory:

The principle whether necessary or not, which is at the bottom of both musical and metrical time is that everything should be by twos and, where you want to be very strict and effective, even by fours.42

In summary, then, we may say that Hopkins received, after all, from his three friends, something that all men do not receive in abundance; admiration, encouragement, appreciation, sincere criticism. If to Bridges Hopkins' spiritual dedicated life was a mystery which he could not fathom, his poetry was something worth serious attention and criticism, and Hopkins realized this. Dixon, presumably was unable to give the technical understanding that came from Bridges but his is "the single tribute to achieve the penetration and accuracy of true insight."43 Furthermore, he was in a better position to appreciate Hopkins' lofty religious ideals. Patmore, although he faced the poetry with almost complete misunderstanding, had a great personal admiration for the man and priest whose authority counted for so much with him.

W. H. Gardner, the author of a recent excellent critique of Hopkins has grouped his later critics according to their approximation to the attitudes of his first three critics:

42 Letters I, p. 119.

...readers of Hopkins may be fairly divided into three main groups: first, the 'school of Dixon,'—those who, so to speak, swallow Hopkins whole (or very nearly whole) and relish the unusual flavour; second, the 'school of Bridges'—those who, accepting the style as authentic experiment but deploiring the blemishes, follow the lead of the Editor by assiduously cultivating "tolerance" and searching for the rare beauties; third, the 'school of Patmore'—those who feel the underlying poetic power and even sense the beauty but reject the whole manner and style on a priori grounds.44

This is a convenient division and, especially when applied in the years immediately following the publication of Hopkins' Poems, a just one. It does not supply, however, a category for certain critics who, like Gardner himself, in their unstinted admiration for Hopkins, might be labelled the "School of Dixon," but whose critical acumen and technical equipment relate them to Bridges. At the risk of over-categorization and with the realization that there will always be those who fit into no preconceived pigeonhole, we would add a fourth division: those who, as Dixon, admire intuitively, often perhaps because of a sympathy with Hopkins' religious ideals, and who at the same time recognize Hopkins' style as authentic experiment without any need of Bridges' "tolerance." This group we will venture to call the "School of Gardner."

CHAPTER II

Before 1918: Preparation

It is generally believed that most of the appearances of Hopkins' poems in anthologies prior to 1918 are traceable to Robert Bridges' influence, and that they were a kind of literary 'conditioning' of the public. These appearances were few in number and the critical notice taken of them commensurate. English readers at large were given their first opportunity to appreciate Hopkins when eight of his poems were included in The Poets and Poetry of the Century, a voluminous anthology edited by Alfred Miles in 1894. The selection is interesting as an example of that part of Hopkins' work Bridges thought might have an appeal for the readers of the time. Although perhaps not very representative of Hopkins' highest inspiration, it was perhaps a judicious selection. His earlier vein is represented by a few lines from "The Vision of the Mermaids," beginning with

Soon—as when Summer of his sister Spring—
and by "The Habit of Perfection," both notable for their

1 Gerard Manley Hopkins' poems appeared in Vol. VIII.
Keatsian qualities. Three sonnets in Hopkins' more individual style followed, "The Starlight Night," "Spring," and "The Candle Indoors." The three poems which completed the group were "Spring and Fall," "Inversnaid," and the last sonnet to Bridges.

The whole was prefixed by a short biographical and critical memoir contributed by Bridges, in which the poems were presented somewhat as a literary curiosity. They would never be popular, Bridges stated, because they were so far removed from the ordinary simplicity of grammar and meter; nevertheless, they will interest poets; and they may perhaps prove welcome to the critic, for they have the plain fault, that, aiming at an unattainable perfection of language... they not only sacrifice simplicity, but very often, among verses of the rarest beauty, show a neglect of those canons of taste which seem common to all poetry.²

This lack of simplicity Bridges attributed to Hopkins' "natural eccentricity" and "love for subtlety and uncommonness," qualities which he said had a hampering effect not only upon his poetry but upon his life. Singling out for praise Hopkins' later "very different" style, Bridges characterized it correctly as "a unique effort in English literature." Hopkins' method in attempting to reach his unattainable perfection was

described as being somewhat similar to that of a worker in Mosaics:

...as if words—each with its twofold value in sense and sound—could be arranged like so many separate gems to compose a whole expression of thought, to which the force of grammar and the beauty of rhythm absolutely correspond.3

Here is a poet who wrote some verses of the rarest beauty which are overshadowed by two great faults—lack of simplicity and a neglect of the canons of taste: this is the impression left by Bridges' comment. The similarity, particularly with reference to "errors of taste" and "affectation in metaphor," to the judgment to be expressed twenty-four years later is notable. It is not out of place to note in passing the judgment of later years upon the passages just quoted:

In defining a "plain fault," Bridges here enunciates both the aim and the specific achievement of Hopkins. Certainly, recent criticism has gone far toward establishing the fact that Hopkins attained his desired "perfection of language" more often than he neglected real and universal canons of taste.4

Bridges' notice could hardly result in a popularization of Hopkins' poems; yet it served as an introduction, and the appearance of his work in Miles, we may believe, led to its

3 Loc. cit.

inclusion in a few other somewhat obscure collections of verse in the years following. In 1895 the Reverend H. C. Beeching edited a small volume entitled *Lyra Sacra: A Book of Religious Verse*, in which four new poems of Hopkins appeared, "Barnfloor and Winepress," "God's Grandeur," "Heaven-Haven," and "Morning Midday and Evening Sacrifice." In the same year "The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air We Breathe" appeared in Beeching's *Book of Christmas Verse*. The latter was included, after the turn of the century in Orby Shipley's *Carmina Mariana*, together with "Rosa Mystica."

Hopkins' name and poetry were shrouded in silence again until January 1909, when on the other side of the ocean, the first of a long series of magazine articles treating his poetry appeared in the *Catholic World*. Written by Katherine Brégy, it was the first enthusiastic appreciation of Hopkins from a fellow Catholic. Miss Bregy showed herself familiar with the

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5 I have been unable to consult this book and am indebted to Claude C. Abbot's Introduction to the *Letters*, Vol. I for the list of poems included.

6 In February, 1894, a poem entitled "Ad Mariam" was printed in the *Stoneyhurst Magazine* under the initials O.S.J., and attributed to Hopkins' authorship. "Rosa Mystica" made its first appearance in 1898 in *The Irish Monthly*.

hymn beginning "Thee God I come from," and the two sonnets, "To seem the stranger lies my lot," and "Thou art indeed just, Lord." Like Bridges, Miss Brégy took notice of

...that eccentricity and occasional ambiguity which point forward to Father Hopkins' eventual excesses. Lucidity was the chief grace he sacrificed as years wore on; and his fondness for uncommon words—at one moment academic and literate, at another provincial—did not help matters.8

The "Anglo-Saxon and other archaic undergrowth" disturbed this critic's predilection for Victorian smoothness. The line, "To know the dusk depths of the ponderous sea," from Hopkins' early "Vision of the Mermaids" was the preferred to "wiry heathpacks, flitches of fern" and "the groins of the braes that the brook treads through" in "Inversmaid." Describing him as "essentially a minor poet" because of his narrow range, she placed him in the tradition of Crashaw and the devotional poets. Like Crashaw, too, he possessed for her an "exuberant fancy, ever bursting into curious and striking analogies...the intimate and childlike tenderness the metrical cunning and the almost impeccable ear for lyric music."9 Miss Brégy was the first to describe Hopkins' poetry as "emphatically Ignatian...in his own very personal way;" this quality was especially predicated of his attitude toward

8 Ibid., p. 438.
9 Ibid., p. 441.
nature as "the garment of God." Noticeable too, Miss Brégy's interpretation was the inclination to regard Hopkins' complexity, the involved and elliptical expression "which mars more than one poem of rare and vital imagining," as a mark of the times:

We are not born original in these latter days of literature; we must achieve originality and often at the cost of so much complexity.

Ending her critique with a recognition of Hopkins' originality, individuality, and passionate sincerity, Miss Brégy predicted that "in the final count his chances of survival are excellent, and pointed to an influence upon "one or two Catholic songsters of today." 

In the meantime Hopkins' Jesuit confrères were not unmindful of him. In the course of the same year three articles treating his life and personality appeared in The Month, the periodical to which Hopkins had submitted the "Deutschland." Father J. Keating, S. J., described Hopkins as

Loved by all who knew him as a man of tender, self-devoted, sympathetic character, oversensitive and delicate perhaps, to face without much suffering, the rough work of the world.

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10 Ibid., p. 437.
11 Ibid., p. 439.
12 Ibid., p. 447.
14 Ibid., p. 59.
Keating's study presented the first examples of Hopkins' correspondence to be published, including excerpts from the letters of Liddon, Pusey, Newman, Dixon, and Patmore. Father Keating witnessed to a slowly growing interest in Hopkins' poetry, remarking that since his death, Father Hopkins' literary claims have gradually become more and more recognized. It would seem that the time has now come for his poems to appear in a collected form as a distinct and valuable addition to the literary heritage of the Catholic Church.

This suggests that an appreciative public would not have been lacking as early as 1909.

The next recognition of Hopkins, which appeared in the third volume of George Saintsbury's *History of English Prosody*, was very brief and casual, hardly more than a passing reference. It was the first time Hopkins' name was connected with poetic theory. Saintsbury emphasizes the experimental aspect of his poetry, but his remarks do not indicate any real familiarity with it.

Much more notice might be given to...

Father Gerard Hopkins, if it were not that... he never got his notions into thorough writing order. They belonged to the anti-foot and pro-stress division. But, even if it were not for old things and old days, it would be unfair to criticize lines like

I want the one rapture of an inspiration —which you can, of course, scan, but where 'one' seems to be thrust in out of pure

15 Ibid., pp. 59-60.
mischief—or many others. He never published any; and it seems quite clear that they are all experiments.

As Harold Boner has observed, this passage "has all the air of an unwilling man doing a favor for a friend, and doing it as vaguely as possible." If Boner's theory is correct, the friend was very likely Bridges.

In 1912 one more small step was taken toward recognition when "The Starlight Night" obtained a place in Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's *Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*. In the same year Katherine Brégy's articles was given a wider circulation when it was reprinted in her *Poet's Chantry*.

More significant of Hopkins' future reputation was the article by Joyce Kilmer which introduced him to a new set of readers, those connected with the young movement striving to establish an authentic poetic tradition in this country. Poetry in 1914 was two years old; already it was a conscious center of a new spirit, and the inclusion of a piece on Hopkins in its pages was calculated to lift him out of the Victorian tradition, and associate him with the twentieth century. Kilmer, emphasizing his originality, presented him as offering something new and of value to the modern poet:

One may search his writings in vain for a figure that is not novel and true. He took from his own experience those comparisions

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that are the material of poetry, and rejected, it seems, such of them as already bore marks of use.18

In thus referring to the reality and freshness of Hopkins' images, Kilmer was stressing the element most likely to recommend him to readers just then becoming aware of the "new" approach to poetry in the poems of the Imagists. With the enthusiasm of a discoverer Kilmer pointed the contrast between the newness and surprise in Hopkins and the conventional, hackneyed figures of his contemporaries:

For him the grandeur of God flames out from the world not like light from stars, but like "shining from shook foil." He writes not of soft hands, not of velvety hands, but of "feel-of-primrose hands." He writes not that thrush's eggs are blue as the sky, but that they look little low heavens." The starry skies...are "The dim woods quick with diamond wells..."19

Hopkins is contrasted also with "the economical verse-writers of our own day," who could make such images "each one an excuse for a poem." In Hopkins they come in "bewildering profusion," and his poems "are successions of lovely images, each a poem in itself."20

Kilmer emphasized also Hopkins' status as a priest and Jesuit, remarking that "his faith was the source of his poetry

19 Ibid., pp. 242-43.
20 Ibid., p. 243.
...for him to write a poem on a secular subject was difficult, almost impossible. 21 Implying that Bridges was one of those "who do not understand his mental and spiritual outlook, he defended Hopkins' subject-matter and method against his strictures: "his theme being God, and his writing being an act of adoration, it is profitless to criticize him as Mr. Robert Bridges has done, for 'sacrificing simplicity, and violating those mysterious things, the 'canons of taste.'" 22

Just how much Kilmer's article contributed to the growing knowledge of Hopkins it would be impossible to estimate. Since it introduced his name into a milieu sympathetic towards poetic experiment and originality, and looking for the uncommon, it may be hazarded that it was an influential effort in preparing an atmosphere for his Poems when they appeared four years afterward.

The next two years saw three more reminders of Hopkins' claims as an English poet. The first was in Robert Bridges' The Spirit of Man, an anthology of selections in English and French from the philosophers and poets. 23

Six of Hopkins'

21 Ibid., p. 242.

22 Ibid., p. 244.

The first appearance of the "Deutschland" was in an unaccustomed dress:

God mastering me;
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,
fasten'd me flesh,
And after at times almost unmade me with dread,
Thy doing; and dost Thou touch me afresh?
Over again I feel thy finger and find Thee...

At about the same time "The Habit of Perfection," "God's Grandeur," and "The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air We Breathe" were included in The Oxford Book of Mystical Verse. The third notice, from the pen of Saintsbury, gave Hopkins a place, if only in a footnote, in The Cambridge History of English Literature. The note, while repeating Bridges' charge of eccentricity, indicated nevertheless, a slight change of attitude since Saintsbury's earlier comment:

A few lines must be given to a contemporary of Lang at Oxford who was, to a greater extent than is usual, a poetical might-have-been. Gerard Hopkins was not only much let and hindered in writing poetry, but never published any, and all consists

24 These were "Spring and Fall," "The Candle Indoors," "The Handsome Heart," the first two stanzas of "The Habit of Perfection," the first stanza of "The Wreck of the Deutschland," and "In the Valley of the Elwy." It is interesting to note W. H. Auden's remark in an article in the Criterion (XII, 1934, pp. 497-500); "I myself became interested in Hopkins through reading 'Spring and Fall' in The Spirit of Man."


of fragments issued as specimens from mss. But these specimens show that he not merely might have been but was, a poet. Unfortunately, an ingrained eccentricity which affected his whole life, first as an undergraduate and then as a Jesuit priest, helped these accidents. He developed partially acute but not generally sound, notions of metre; and though, quite recently, broken-backed rhythms like this have been attempted, the results have scarcely been delightful. In his own case, though the process of appreciation is almost like the proverbial reconstruction of a fossil beast from a few odd bones, it shows that they belonged to a poet.

The last reference to Hopkins to appear before the 1918 edition of his Poems turned out to be, appropriately, a summary of the opinions already expressed concerning him. The writer of the article,27 J. M. Hone, showed a familiarity with The Spirit of Man, Miles' and Beeching's anthologies, and with the articles by Father Keating and Katherine Brégy. He presented Hopkins as a subject calculated to appeal to the Georgian poet in that he had been "in reaction against most of the literary influences of the nineteenth century."28 A championship of the "new" in Hopkins' poetry, and a rebuke to the older generation was implicit in the following reference to Hall Caine's rejection of Hopkins' sonnets: "It was thought well to approach Mr. Hall Caine with an ordinary rhythm or at most a counterpointed one."29 This resulted in an indignant rejoinder from

28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
...as the inference intended to be drawn by your readers is that I did not know a good sonnet when I saw one, I feel justified in replying that my "rejection" of Hopkins' sonnets (which, whatever their other merits, were certainly not in "ordinary rhythm") was on the advice of one whose judgment in sonnet literature could only be called in question by a critic who wished to write himself down as a fool—Dante Gabriel Rossetti.30

The opinions of Bridges and Miss Brégy were invoked in Hone's description of Hopkins' "striving after an impossible subtlety of expression," his "fondness for uncommon words and hyphenated expressions which was often his bane."31 Readers were advised to attack poems like "Inversnaid" with a dictionary of archaic words as a guide.

In general, the impression of Hopkins given by Hone was one of a personality and artistic expression worth careful consideration: a personality in which simplicity ("in all that he thought and said that was not in verse,") was the supreme quality, an art in which "formalism and ideal abstraction" were the governing principles. Appearing as it did in a popular weekly review and summarizing earlier opinions, the article carried the suggestion that knowledge and discussion of Hopkins' poetry was becoming more widespread, and pointed, however indistinctly, to the necessity of a more complete version of his work.

30 New Statesman, June 23, 1917.
Few pronouncements upon a criticism which has only incomplete evidence on which to base its judgments can be fair to the critics concerned. This we must remark of the opinions discussed above. However, besides the limitation proceeding from insufficient knowledge, there are already evident two general tendencies in these opinions. The first is associated with a conservatism which is inclined to look somewhat suspiciously upon departures from convention, to stress the eccentricities, "plain faults," and "broken-backed" rhythms. This is the characteristic of Bridges' comments and Miss Brégys where she follows him. It is noticeable in Saintsbury. It is absent in Kilmer who represents the second tendency, a tendency towards emphasis upon the achievement more than upon the experiment, and is inclined to see a correspondence between the thing expressed and the manner and method of expression. Kilmer's is a Dixonian acceptance with a foundation composed of about equal parts of religious and literary zeal.
CHAPTER III

THE POEMS AND AFTER: 1918–1930

The English literary world of 1918 seemed to be ready for the entrance of a new poetry. Robert Bridges had good grounds for expecting that Hopkins' unconventionalities would prove less strange than they would have a quarter of a century earlier. The dissatisfaction with the Victorian tradition in poetry as it was carried on by the Georgian poets had grown more and more acute since about the middle of the decade. The war had sharpened and emphasized this dissatisfaction, which had already been registered in the rise and decline of several poetic movements, particularly those of the Imagists and the Wheels group. Both turned to outside tradition, mainly French and Oriental in search of a remedy for the prevailing weaknesses of poetic expression. The first sought it in technical discipline. Under the influence of T. E. Hulme's classicism, it reacted against the vagueness and 'poeticism' of Victorian imagery by refining the image. The Imagists insisted upon absolute precision and clarity in its use; upon a concentrated objectivity. Exactness, of word and visual suggestion; such was the criterion of Imagism and its limitation. Although it brought a discipline into English poetic practice which was
beneficial, it was inadequate to express the larger themes of poetry. It repudiated, at least by implication, as David Daiches has observed, "all concepts of significance in subject matter or ideas, all aspects of poetic structure except the simple one of relation between images."¹

A more violent reaction against Georgianism and against the Imagists themselves appeared in the anthology Wheels, edited annually by Edith Sitwell in the years 1916–1921. Using techniques and ideas suggested by the French Symbolists, baroque and modern art, oriental painting and poetry, and other traditions, the Sitwells, who were the main contributors, revolted against a world of dissolving values by expressing a sophisticated boredom, in bizarre and artificial poems. By a glittering and decorative, fantastic and exotic surface they covered up a grimly pessimistic criticism of the age.

Another instance of the rejection of the nineteenth century and a more fundamental one was manifested in the revival of interest in the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century, inaugurated by Herbert Grierson's edition of John Donne in 1912. This revival which was to produce its greatest influence later, suggested a better medium to poets who, like T. S. Eliot, attempted to express the mood of their generation.

¹ Poetry and the Modern World (University of Chicago, 1940), p. 35.
The general effect of these currents, together with the influence of independents poets from Whitman to Gertrude Stein, who wrote outside the tradition, was to put an emphasis upon originality and legitimize experiment and innovation in matter and form.

If Bridges believed that the poetry he was launching forth was likely to appeal to readers, that opinion is not very evident in the "Preface" which he attached to the Poems. His attitude had undergone but little change in the thirty years he had had the poems in his possession. In tenor his remarks resemble those views he had expressed during Hopkins' lifetime. The chief difference is that he became at last explicit in regard to what constituted the "faults of taste" alluded to in the Miles anthology:

...if these poems are to be arranged for errors of what may be called taste, they might be convicted of occasional affectation in metaphor, as where the hills are "as a stallion stalwart, very violet-sweet," or of some perversion of human feeling, as for instance, the nostrils' relish of incense "along the sanctuary side," or "the Holy Ghost with ah! bright wings," these and a few such examples are mostly efforts to force emotion into theological or sectarian channels, as in "the comfortless unconfessed" and the unpoetic line "His mystery must be instressed stressed," or again the exaggerated Marianism of some pieces, or the naked encounter of sensuality and asceticism which hurts the
These particular faults, Bridges admitted, were few; yet they exercised a disproportionate influence upon him: "they affect my liking and more repel my sympathy, than do all the rude shocks of his purely artistic wantonness." In reality, however, the examples Bridges cites, are not isolated phenomena, but are of a kind which belong to the very sinew and bone of Hopkins' inspiration. To censure them is to censure his central idea; it is, as Herbert Read has observed, applying "a code which was not that of the indicted. The lack of sympathy is shown precisely in this fact." 

Apart from errors of taste there were faults of style to be considered. Bridges approached these from a grammarian's view--

2 Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins (2nd Edition, Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 96. In his criticism of this passage W. H. Gardner remarks: "To examine the above objections, the last, an unfairly distorted version of the closing lines of God's Grandeur, seems to us fruitless. What is amiss—the Biblical incarnation of the Spirit as a dove, or the tellurian magnitude of the bird, or the interjected "ah!"? Again, the objection to the nostrils' relish of incense in The Habit of Perfection is anti-Catholic sentiment rather than literary criticism. For centuries and for millions of people, incense has been a symbol of purification, of devotion to a transcendent ideal. It is so used in the poem, where the underlying meaning is: 'I must renounce what I have enjoyed—the sensual gratifications of the worldly life; but how much sweeter is that spiritual perfection, which I now seek!' To take this 'relish' as a mere olfactory whim is like criticizing Keats for preferring, in the Nightingale French wine to Scotch whiskey." (Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 209.)

3 Loc. cit.

They were "of such quality and magnitude as to deny him even a hearing from those who love a continous literary decorum,
and resulted in two undesirable traits, Oddity and Obscurity. Of the first Bridges shows that Hopkins was aware and quotes his remark, "No doubt my poetry errs on the side of oddness. I hope in time to have a more balanced and Miltonic style." As to the Obscurity, Bridges felt that Hopkins had not realized its extent. Its chief cause was "the habitual omission of the relative pronoun." Writers, Bridges went on to remark, somewhat aggrievedly,

who carelessly rely on their elliptical speech forms to govern the elaborate sentences of their literary compositions little know what a conscious effort of interpretation they often impose on their readers.

Hopkins, however, did not banish constructional syllables from his verse through carelessness but only because they took up room which he thought he could not afford them: he needed in his scheme all the space for his poetical words, and he wished those to crowd out every merely grammatical or toneless element.

An extreme example of this omission and the resulting ambiguity is in the line in "The Bugler's First Communion":

Squander the hell-rock ranks sally to molest him.

5 Poems, loc. cit.
6 Ibid., p. 97.
7 Loc. cit.
8 Loc. cit.
the criticism of which is just. Without a "that" before "sally" the second verb appears as an imperative, or "ranks" is liable to be thought a genitive and "sally" a substantiv. It is true that once one becomes familiar with Hopkins' manner such lines offer little difficulty, and this omission of the relative is one of Hopkins' practices adopted by contemporary poets. It is an adoption which Bridges probably would have predicted had he anticipated a Hopkins influence, as is evident in the following passage from another context, which is at the same time a vindication of his criticism of Hopkins:

If my criticism should seem sometimes harsh, that is, I believe, due to its being given in plain terms, a manner which I prefer, because by obliging the writer to say definitely what he means, it makes his mistakes easy to point out, and in this way the true business of criticism may be advanced; nor do I know that, in work of this sort, criticism has any better function than to discriminate between the faults and merits of the best art: for it commonly happens, when any great artist comes to be generally admired, that his faults, being graced by his excellences, are confounded with them in the popular judgment, and being easy of imitation, are the points of his work which are most liable to be copied.9

In the case of Hopkins the discrimination of faults seems to have overbalanced the discrimination of merits.

Another source of obscurity lay in Hopkins' grammatically

ambiguous words. The homophone "should never be so placed as to allow of any doubt as to what part of speech it is to be used for." Hopkins not only disregarded this essential propriety, but appeared even "to welcome and seek artistic effect in the consequent confusion."10

Hopkins' rhymes also were swept into Bridges' indictment:

...the rhymes where they are peculiar are often repellent, and so far from adding charm to the verse that they appear as obstacles. This must not blind one from recognizing that Gerard Hopkins, where he is simple and straightforward in his rhyme is a master of it—there are many instances—but when he indulges in freaks, his childishness is incredible....The rhyme to communion in "The Bugler" is hideous, and the suspicion that the poet thought it ingenious is appalling; eternal in "The Eurydice," does not correspond with burn all, and in "Felix Randal" and some and handsome is as truly an eye-rhyme as the love and prove which he despised and abjured.11

The remainder of Bridges' "Preface" is a plea for tolerance of the "bad faults," and at times that plea really amounts to a self-contradiction, as when he remarks that they "have a real relation to the means whereby the very forcible and original effects of beauty are produced."12 Finally, Hopkins' poems should be of interest to "those who study style in itself....such interest will promote tolerance."13 Bridges ends his

10 Poems, p. 98.
11 Ibid., pp. 98-99.
12 Ibid., p. 99.
13 Loc. cit.
introduction with an expression of regret that Hopkins' death came just when he was beginning to concentrate all the force of his luxurious experiments in rhythm and diction, and castigate his art into a more reserved style.14

One might question this last statement, recalling "Tom's Garland" and "Harry Ploughman," both written in 1887, "Harakitean Fire" and "Epithalamion" which belong to 1888.

In summary, the characteristics of Bridges' criticism can be catalogued as issuing from (1) a certain prejudice against Hopkins' religious ideas and a consequent lack of sympathy with his poetic ideals, reflected in his stricture on "taste,"15 (2) a Victorian love of literary decorum, and (3) a certain pedantry of the grammarian and phonetician. One feels that these sentiments were in conflict with his real poet's admiration and love of the poetry shown in the preservation, the careful preparation and the editing of the poems, and given expression in the sonnet with which he introduced them.

Our generation already is overpast,
And thy lov'd legacy, Gerard, hath lain

14 Loc. cit.

15 It is reflected again in his note to the "Deutschland" which he describes as a "great dragon" guarding the poems. "This editor advises the reader to circumvent him and attack him later in the rear; for he was himself shamefully worsted in a brave frontal assault, the more easily perhaps because both subject and treatment were distasteful to him." (Poems, p. 104) Here we have the explanation of his words to Hopkins: "Nothing could induce me to read it again."
Coy in my home; as once thy heart was fain
Of shelter, when God's terror held thee fast
In life's wild wood at Beauty and Sorrow
aghast;
Thy sainted sense travailled in ghostly pain,
They rare ill-broker'd talent in disdain:
Yet love of Christ will win man's love at
last.

Hell wars without; but, dear, the while
my hands
Gather'd thy book, I heard, this wintry day,
Thy spirit thank me, in his young delight
Stepping again upon the yellow sands.
Go forth: amidst our chaffinch flock
display
Thy plumage of far wonder and heavenward
flight!

One wonders what course the first critical receptions of
Hopkins' poetry would have taken had Bridges launched the Poems
without the Preface. His influence is almost everywhere in
evidence in the criterions by which the first reviewers judged
Hopkins' achievement. Some of them went far beyond Bridges; the
reviewer in the New Statesman expresses a Patmorean incomprehen-
sion. After quoting Bridges' strictures on obscurity and oddity,
he goes on to warn readers not to expect that only an effort to
master Hopkins' unusual metrical system is needed in order to
discover the beauties of his work:

...this is not the case. Hopkins' rhythmical
peculiarity was only one expression of a
general and pervading eccentricity....Will
English readers, as Mr. Bridges hopes,
surmount the difficulties which Hopkins
opposes to them?...This too seems improbable.
The beauties are not a sweet kernel in a
rough husk. They are scattered and they
are never far from extravagant uglinesses.
A perfect line is exceedingly rare; and a poem which is good as a whole, even in spite of faults, is hard to discover.  

The last lines of "Binsey Poplars" reminded this reviewer of the choruses of a musical comedy. Hopkins' adjectives, even at tenth or twentieth reading, distracted him from the meaning in the poetry:

Silk-sack clouds, azurous hung hills, majestic as a stallion stalwart very-violet-sweet, mild night's blear-all black and the like are traps for the attention, not aids to visualization.

The short paragraph devoted to Hopkins among other reviews in The Spectator was in the same vein. The poems were disappointing:

They are too often needlessly obscure, harsh and perverse. The metrical effects...do not seem to us to be worth the pains bestowed on them; many of his verses have to be elaborately accented in order to give the reader the clue to the rhythm, and lyrics which do not sing themselves would, in our opinion at least, be better in prose.

A transatlantic reviewer was the first to relate Hopkins' roughness and obscurity to that of Browning and Meredith. His, too, was a baffled and irritated reaction against the difficulties. With Bridges he traced these to "unwise condensation and the omission of relative pronouns."

17 Loc. cit.
The chief interest in these posthumous poems lies in their metrical eccentricities. The subject matter is too prevailingly theological to gain a wide reading. His style possesses a teasing quaintness, an antique tone oddly incongruous with the time of publication.19

The last remark is interesting, written almost on the eve of Hopkins' acceptance as a particularly "modern" poet.

A more favorable response appeared in the Times Literary Supplement. Although remarking that the "defects are obvious," the writer compared the poems to their advantage with the newest English poetry, the defect of which was that "it says too little." He applied Hopkins' own measure and found the verse equal to it:

The verse survives the great test of verse; it is best read aloud; then the very sense becomes clearer and anyone with an ear can hear that the method is not affectation but eagerness to find expression for the depths of the mind, for things hardly yet consciously thought or felt.20

The understanding of the organic function of Hopkins' inner rhymes and alliterations was to come slowly. This reviewer associated them with the "main fault" of the poems, "that of passing from one word to another...merely because they are alike in sound." He hazarded that Hopkins "perhaps sought words that way, took shots at them, so to speak, and enjoyed the process." But he easily forgave what he considered the faults in favor of

19 The Dial, May 31, 1919, p. 572.
20 January 9, 1919, p. 19.
the beauty everywhere without luxury, the beauty that seems to come from painful intense watching, the utter disinterested delight of one who sees another world, not through but in this one.21

The most appreciative and penetrating of all of the first reviews was that which appeared in The Tablet. The critic began by defending both the obscurity and the oddity reprehended by Bridges. The obscurity was "usually resolvable" with a little patience and study of the author's style; moreover some obscurity at times must be expected from poetry which attempted to express the deepest thoughts of the soul. The oddity was associated with the newness of the poetry:

It is new in this that it attempts to do continuously what other poets have been content to achieve by rare moments...I mean the entire "wedding of the term to its import," not only by way of the term's notation and connotation in meaning, but also by way of its very sound and cadence.22

There was an implied criticism of Bridges' statement that Hopkins' prosodical theory "seems to be used only as a basis for unexampled liberty,"23 in the following remark:

Father Gerard Hopkins does not allow the non-stressed syllables "to take care of themselves." Rather he marshalls them with most meticulous art to endow his line

21 Loc. cit.
22 April 5, 1919, p. 420.
with emphasis or speed, or hesitation, or airiness, or clamour.24

To prove that Hopkins' alliteration was "of the very texture of his verse," the reviewer cited the lines from the "Eurydice,"

And flockbells off the aerial Downs' forefalls beat to the burial.

remarking he "hardly knew anything in English literature more haunting to the ear," and analyzing the alliteration as a "series of 'o' and 'e' (struck sharp at the beginning and varied thereafter) with another, strictly subordinate, of dentallabials."25

He called attention to the skilful way in which the "n's" are led from the outset to a crescendo at the close in the "tinkle" of

When the air was sweet-and-sour of the flown fineflower of
Those goldnails and their gaylinks that hang along a lime. (No. 61)

In contrast to the critic who found a curiously "antique tone" in Hopkins' poetry, Louise Imogen Guiney described him as an "acutely conscious modern mind." She was prophetic in her statement that the poems "will breed debate."

Not since Francis Thompson have we had so disturbing, debatable and compelling a poet. Let there be no doubt about the worth of Father Hopkins' literary work. It has winged daring, durable texture, and the priceless excellence of fixing

24 Tablet, Loc. cit.
25 Ibid., p. 422.
itself in the reader's mind.26

Miss Guiney was the first to point out the resemblance between Hopkins and John Donne. Donne also "roves and revels and radiates in Sprung Rhythm." 27 As an example she cited from the Third Satire, the passage,

On a huge hill
Cragged and steep truth stands; and he
that will
Reach her, about must and about must go,
And what the hill's suddenness resists,
win so;
Yet strive so that before age (death's
twilight)
Thy soul rest: for none can work in that
night. (ll 79-84)

It is very true that many lines in Hopkins, with their packed thought, abruptness of movement, and strength of diction remind one of Donne. There is certainly a resemblance between Hopkins last sonnets and the Divine Poems of the latter, for example that beginning

Batter my heart, three person'd God;
for, you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and
seeke to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow
mee, and bend
Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and
make me new.

We even find the interjected "O."

I, like an usurped town, to 'another due,
Labour to admit you, but Oh, to no end.

27 Ibid., p. 208.
Miss Guiney also commended Hopkins' almost purely Anglo-Saxon vocabulary against that of the "Latinate Englishman"; she recognized the fact that he aimed at "inscape," "deliberately at getting his pattern recognized," and that his ideal was " declamation to the harp."28 Her enthusiasm was checked, however, by the difficulty certain of the poems presented, and we can perceive here an echo of Bridges' opinion of the "great dragon." The whole first section of "The Wreck of the Deutschland" as well as "Spelt from Sybil's Leaves" remained "the darkest of riddles"; "Tom's Garland" and "Harry Ploughman," presented "little beyond terrific expanses of barbed wire."29 In spite of these "nonconductors of a live volume," however, this critic prophecied for the poems "certain immortality," recognizing in them an original vitality in which "nothing is derivation; neither subject, treatment, means nor ends."

Another critic, a Professor of English at University College, Dublin, where Hopkins spent his last years, connected Hopkins' originality with tendencies appearing in contemporary poetry:

...beyond question his audacities made him a true pioneer. In his passion for Teutonic monosyllables, in his hatred of convention or meretricious ornament, in the free swing of his rhythms and the running over of his lines, in the restless novelty of his forms, of his

28 Ibid., p. 209.
29 Ibid., p. 207.
rhymes following all manner of schemes or no-schemes... he was quite ahead of his own generation.... Many a poem of Walter de la Mare, of Sandburg, Untermeier, Wilfred Wilson Gibson, James Stephens, Joseph Campbell could be fitted without any incongruity into the slender volume. 30

O'Neill echoed Bridges in his comments upon the "wilful oddities of Father Hopkins' grammatical constructions," and quotes Patmore's criticism also in the following passage wherein he describes his difficulty in reconciling Hopkins' literary ability and his "faults":

Gerard Hopkins had an exquisitely refined literary sense, but it permitted him to lapse into nearly every literary fault. He was a cultured scholar, but this did not stay him from fantastic use of the English language. Most delicate perceptions were associated in him with a most untrustworthy sense of fitness and proportion. His metrical notions... are a mixture of simplicities, unintelligibilities and one or two illuminating suggestions. His poetry in general has... "the effect of veins of pure gold imbedded in masses of impracticable quartz"; and there is evidence enough that he misjudged the golden and the quartzian elements and their mixtures. 31

Hopkins' obscurity, diction, syntax, rhythm, and alliterations were anathematized the attack on

long passages or entire poems in which


31 Ibid., p. 117.
meaning which we fain would gather is hidden beneath a cloud-mirage of far-fetched phrases and queerly assorted vocables, or tangled up in a hard-knotted and quite insoluble syntax. Euphonious verse beguiles us over some difficult passages, but too often we are bumped over stylistic ruggedness without the relief of any perceptible rhythm. Sometimes, too, the author's passion for verbal assonances, echoes and jingles of all kinds leads him off into oblivion of both sense and time.32

Hopkins was too much of "pioneer" to be completely acceptable to one whose conceptions of poetic art were based upon an older tradition. It is not surprising that his should appear to be a "fantastic use of the English language" to one who considered Aubrey de Vere "altissimo poeta" and the May Carols "one of the greatest poems of the nineteenth century."33

Very different was the Dixonian appreciation of another reviewer who was moved by the power of inspiration pulsing beneath the "thorns and briars" of an unusual meter. "In what pertains to the sheer command of the science of his art," wrote Henry Lappin, "Hopkins is surpassed by no poet in English save only Milton."34 Hopkins' fame was destined to "go on and increase." Lappin censured Bridges' "amazing provincialism of outlook" which prevented him from appreciating Hopkins' religious inspiration, "the source and goal of his illumination," and

32 Ibid., pp. 130-131.
33 Ibid., p. 63,68.
from assessing correctly the enrichment of his art resulting from his conversion, religious life and priesthood.35

One more reviewer in the Month, signing himself C. B., who had known Hopkins in his lifetime, reflected Bridges' charges of obscurity: "the more he labored at his subject the more obscure he became." Underrating Hopkins' achievement he looked upon the poems as merely experiments and incomplete, full of tremendous power, yet rough and often rudely grotesque, mere suggestions of perfect thoughts and striking turns of expression, which should have been worked up and finished off at leisure in the studio.

One more review during the first year after the publication of Hopkins' Poems deserves mention. The well-known critic, John Middleton Murry, effected a somewhat startling simplification by relating Hopkins' poetic purpose to Verlaine's "de la musique avant toute chose." Hopkins' "avant toute chose," the "most concise expression of his intention," was embodied, according to Murry, in the line from the sonnet to Bridges,

The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation

The poem which could be most closely related to this definition was Shelley's "Skylark," and

35 Louise Guiney also remarked Bridges' insufficiency in treating religious elements of Hopkins' verse. "Dr. Bridges' annotation goes all awry there; little mists and breezes of complete misunderstanding flicker then between him and the text." (Op. cit., p. 206.)
A technical progression onwards from the "Skylark" is the main line of Hopkins' poetical evolution. There are other stranger threads interwoven but this is the chief.36

An example of Hopkins' achievement in the main line of Shelleian inspiration is his "May Magnificat." Here is discovered the "primary element manifested in one of its simplest, most recognizable and, some may feel, most beautiful forms." There does exist, it is true, a Shelleian swiftness and delight in the procession of fresh images in the "May Magnificat"; there is also a Keatsian richness in the stanzas:

When drop-of-blood-and-foam-dapple
Bloom lights the orchard apple
   And thicket and thorpe are merry
With silver-surfed cherry

And azuring-over greybell makes
Woods banks and braes wash wet like lakes
   And magic cuckoocall
Caps, clears, and clinches all—

Murry was correct in saying that "inscape" was Hopkins' "avant toute chose," in poetry but his interpretation of its significance and meaning fell far short of the reality; it was merely "the roll, the rise, the carol, the creation" existing "at a higher level of elaboration."

"Inscape" is still, in spite of the apparent differentiation, musical; but a quality of formalism seems to have entered with the specific designation. With formalism comes rigidity;

and in this case the rigidity is bound to overwhelm the sense.37

Murry's analysis misses completeness since he based it on the more obviously "musical" composition of Hopkins, as the "Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo" (which he thought was too musical), completely ignoring the poem in which Hopkins first elaborated his theories, "The wreck of the Deutschland." It is on this count that F. R. Leavis calls his judgment "immediately absurd."38 Although Murry recognized elements of Keats in expressions like "whorled ear" and "lark charmed," and "an aspiration after Milton's architectonics" in the sonnets, the "Skylark" remained, in his view, the "central point of departure."

Few critics would agree today that "Hopkins' mind was irresolute concerning the quality of his own poetical ideal." Hopkins' letters have made it manifest how resolutely he followed and how clearly he conceived that ideal. The shyness of Hopkins' earliest critics in dealing with the thought-content of his poems was reflected in Murry's statement that "the communication of thought was seldom the dominant impulse of his creative moment.39


It is true that Hopkins defined poetry as

speech framed for contemplation of the mind by the way of hearing or speech framed to be heard for its own sake even over and above its interest of meaning.40

His whole endeavor, however, was to embody thought in its most appropriate and most complete expression. The meaning must be clear, either "at once without effort as fast as one reads or else, if dark at first reading, when once made out to explode."41

Ending his criticism upon a note which was later to become a familiar one in Hopkins criticism, Murry postulated the theory that Hopkins' vocation thwarted his genius. Critics, he stated, will speculate whether the failure of his whole achievement was due to the starvation of experience which his vocation imposed upon him, or to a fundamental vice in his poetical endeavor. For ourselves we believe that the former was the true cause. His "avant toute chose," whirling dizzily in a spiritual vacuum, met with no salutary resistance to modify, inform, and strengthen it.42

It was not until two years later that a voice spoke out with authority and without qualification in regard to Hopkins' status as a poet. Hopkins had been long in coming to his own, Edward Sapir wrote,

41 Letters I, p. 90.
but it is not too much to say that his own will be secure, among the few that know, if not among the crowd, when many a Georgian name that completely overshadows his for the moment shall have become food for the curious....Hopkins' voice is easily one of the half-dozen most individual voices in the whole course of English nineteenth century poetry. One may be repelled by his mannerisms but he cannot be denied that overwhelming authenticity, that almost terrible immediacy of utterance, that distinguishes the genius from the man of talent.43

Sapir's short analysis of Hopkins' style showed the existence of a new canon of criticism which disposed of some of the difficulty or legitimately related it to Hopkins' intention. Bridges' hint that Hopkins' peculiarities of rhythm and syntax had a real relation to the effects of beauty in his poems was amplified by Sapir and Hopkins' practice was compared with that of "modern" poets:

There is, however, no blind groping in this irregular movement. It is nicely adjusted to the constantly shifting speed of the verse. Hopkins' effects, with a few exceptions, are in the highest degree successful....It is doubtful if the freest verse of our day is more sensitive in its rhythmic pulsations than the "sprung verse" of Hopkins.44

Singling out the "Leaden Echo," the poem which J. M. Murry had considered "too musical," as an example of Hopkins' sensitive and sure handling of rhythms, Sapir praised its unity in variety:


44 Ibid., p. 333.
"free as it can be with its irregular line lengths, and its extreme changes of tempo, yet at no point is there hesitation as the curve of the poem rounds out to definite form." Comparing him to two contemporary practitioners of free verse, Sapir added that such "long-breathed, impetuous rhythms, wind-like and sea like," had "nothing to learn from the best of Carl Sandburg." And if Hopkins' rhythms should be set beside those of D. H. Lawrence it would be found that Hopkins possessed a "far greater sensitiveness to the music of words, to the rhythms of ever changing speeds of syllables."

In the qualities which differentiated Hopkins from Lawrence or Sandburg, Sapir recognized the discipline which controlled Hopkins' freedom. This freedom was not merely "unexampled liberty," as Bridges had insinuated; while it brought to poetry "an entirely new vigor and lightness," at the same time the traditional limits of stanzaic form as employed by Hopkins, imparted "a powerful compactness and drive." Sapir noted also the significance of Hopkins' innovations in the sonnet, "How unexpectedly he had enlarged its possibilities."

As for the perennial problem of Hopkins' obscurity—while he loved obscurity to a certain extent for its own sake, finding

46 Ibid., p. 333.
47 Loc. cit.
in it, perhaps, "a symbolic reflection of the tumult that raged in his soul," the attendant difficulties had been exaggerated. "They yield," Sapir observed, "with unexpected ease to the modicum of good will that Hopkins has a right to expect of us." 48

Here was a critic placing Hopkins in the main stream of modern verse, implying that his work was a criterion by which contemporary achievements could be gauged, and rebuking Bridges' judgment of his obscurity. Neither mannerisms of diction and style nor prosody could "define the essential Hopkins."

Taking a hint, perhaps, from Bridges' remark on the "naked encounter of sensualism and asceticism," in "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo," Sapir presumed the existence of a "conflict" in Hopkins' personality between the poet and the priest. In his definition of the "real Hopkins," he was the first to introduce the principles of Freudian psychoanalysis into the discussion of the poet's personality:

The consuming mysticism, the intense religious faith are unreconcilable with a basic sensuality that leaves the poet no peace. He is longing to give up the loveliness of the world for the greater loveliness of the spirit....but he is too poignantly aware of all sensuous beauty, too irresistibly haunted by the allurements of the flesh. A Freudian psychologist might call him an imperfectly sublimated sex-mystic. 49

48 Ibid., p. 332.
49 Ibid., p. 334.
Something of the view just expressed appears in the opinion delivered by a Catholic editor and critic, who speaking of the renunciation which is the theme of Hopkins' early "Habit of Perfection," remarks that "repression in the end precluded expression; having bound himself hand and foot against nature, Hopkins threw his body amid the thorns of Greek prosody." Shuster realized Hopkins' appeal to the "modern" and called him a "futurist" poet, practicing a theory "interesting but impossible," and a verse "seldom graceful," what power it was gifted with generally lying "beyond the boundaries of song." The main characteristics of Hopkins' poetry were set down as

immediate reaction to the surge of nature and the resolution to set that down in words regardless of environment and continuity. He was a child enchanted with a sunbeam and oblivious to the light which floods the world; he was a master of the phrase but a mere tinker at composition.

Obliviousness to the light that floods the world was rather a strange characteristic to predicate of the poet of "The Wreck of the Deutschland," "Hurrahing in Harvest," and lines like "The world is charged with the grandeur of God," and there is not much to say to one who could call Hopkins a tinker at composition.


51 Ibid., pp. 118-19.
Shuster detected the same "futuristic" qualities in Hopkins' prose, for the counterpart of which he went to the "strabismic art displays of modern painters." There is an effect, if not strabismic, at least reminiscent of the handling a painter gives to his theme in the passage from Hopkins' Journal which Shuster draws upon to support his description. 52

Edward Sapir had taken the first important step in interpreting Hopkins' technique in the light of his poetic purpose. Five years later a more important and influential step was taken by I. A. Richards, who not only defended Hopkins' difficulty but presented it as a virtue, thus directly opposing the stand taken by Bridges. Although Hopkins remained still "the most obscure of English verse writers," there were arguments for obscurity in its own right. A poet who could compel a slow reading had an initial advantage: the effort which the reader had to make was a bracing intellectual experience calculated to "awaken other mental activities more essential to

52 Hopkins' description runs as follows: "First saw the Northern Lights. My eye was caught by beams of light and dark very like the horny rays the sun makes behind a cloud. At first I thought of silvery cloud until I saw that these were more luminous and did not dim the clearness of the stars in the Bear. They rose slightly radiating and thrown out from the earthline. Then I saw soft pulses of light one after another rise and pass upwards arched in shape but waveringly and with the arch broken. They seemed to float, not following the work of the sphere as falling stars look to do but free though concentrical with it. Note-books, pp. 134-35. (The first extracts from Hopkins' Journal had appeared in 1920 in the articles by Page and "Flures" on Hopkins' life and character in The Dublin Review, CLXVII (1919) pp. 40-66.
The state of intellectual inquiry, the construing, interpretative frame of mind, so much condemned by some critics...passes away once its task is completed, and the reader is likely to be left with a far securer grasp of the whole poem, including its passional structure than if no resistance had been encountered.\textsuperscript{53}

This was a direct rationale for a "difficult" poetry, for that poetry which, tutored by the criticism and poetic practice of T. S. Eliot, was assuming a place in the foreground during the nineteen-twenties. Thus Richards could say

The more the poems are studied, the clearer it becomes that their oddities are always deliberate. They may be aberrations, they are not blemishes. It is easier to see this today since some of his most daring innovations have been, in part, attempted independently by later poets.\textsuperscript{54}

Richards presented the first painstaking analysis of any of Hopkins' poems in a study of the "Windhover's" meaning which was to have not a little influence upon other critics. First of all he set the precedent for considering it as more than usually cryptic and esoteric; only "after many readings and several days of reflection" did it become "perfectly clear and explicit.

\textsuperscript{53} "Gerard Hopkins," \textit{The Dial}, LXXXI (1926), p. 195. In "The Three Languages of Poetry," (Immortal Diamond) William T. Noon, S.J., corroborates Richards' statement and, in an interpretation of the fourth stanza of the "Deutschland," shows how the "construing, interpretive" approach is rewarded. "...the initial effort is not easy, but once this effort is made, the meaning is unlocked for us for good; and we come back again and again, not to read poetry that palls from repetition, but to delight in a permanent possession, a golden gift, whose value grows with time."

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p. 196.
Next, he carried further the theory of the conflict in Hopkins' nature which Murry and Sapir had introduced, associating it with a "belief problem" which Hopkins was not able to solve satisfactorily:

He solved it emotionally, at a cost which amounted to martyrdom; intellectually, he was too stiff, too "cogged and cumbered" with beliefs, those bundles of invested emotional capital, to escape except through appalling tension.... His status as a poet will not be recognized until the importance of the Belief problem from which his poetry sprang has been noticed. He did not need other beliefs from those he held. Like the rest of us, whatever our beliefs, he needed a change in belief, the mental attitude itself.56

Hopkins' conflict was temporarily resolved once in a while by a stoical asceticism, "which fails to reach ecstasy and accepts the failure." All Hopkins' poems, thus, in one sense, are "poems of defeat."

The explanation which Richards gives of the "Windhover's" import centers round his interpretation of the phrase, "My heart is hiding," at the end of the octet, from which he wrests an undue meaning.

I caught this morning morning's minion, kingdom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding

55 Ibid., p. 196.
56 Ibid., p. 203.
into an unappeased discontent. 57

The concluding lines of "Spelt from Sybil's Leaves" are a confirmation of this unappeased discontent, of the realization on the poet's part that his renunciation "brought no gain. It was all loss." 58

Richards also noted in Hopkins' poetry that quality which has come to be particularly predicated of the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century as well as of certain modern poets, the power of rendering self-consciousness, a power peculiarly felt in the following passage and others like it:

Only what word
Wisest my heart breeds dark heaven's baffling ban
Bars or hell's spell thwarts. This is to hoard unheard,
Heard unheeded, leaves me a lonely began.
(No. 44)

It is this rendering of self-consciousness which, according to the two poet-authors makes Hopkins "one of the first

57 Ibid., pp. 198-99. For a very different interpretation from the above and its kindred (those of Empson, Leavis, Phare, et. al.), see the essay by Raymond V. Schoder, "What Does The Windhover Mean?" (Immortal Diamond). The essayist submits the text to a full analysis "in the twofold light of the dynamically Jesuit cast of Hopkins' mind and of the basic critical principle--stemming from Plato--that any fine work of art is like a living organism: unified throughout its diversified parts by a single dominant principle or soul, with each part contributing its special function to the whole and subordinated to it, while being harmoniously suited to all the other members."

modernist poets; modernist because he felt the necessity of
a clearness and accuracy in feelings and
their expression so minute, so more than
scientific, as to make poetry a higher sort
of psychology... We call him a modernist in
virtue of his extraordinary strictness in
the use of words and the unconventional
notation he used in setting them down so
that they had to be understood as he meant
them to be, or understood not at all (this
is the crux of the whole question of the
intelligibility of "difficult" poetry.59

The apologia for the unconventional departures in language in
modern verse presented by these two critics in reminiscent of
Hopkins' pronouncements against a "Parnassian" convention which
stereotypes meaning. When language grows thus stereotyped and
loses its meaning it becomes the place of the poet to bring back
the conception of what language really means: "he must use
language in a fresh way or even, if the poetical language has
grown too stale and there are few pioneers before him, invent
new language."60 Such a practice, it follows, will offend those
who "have a proprietary feeling for the old language." That this
was the feeling underlying Bridges' objection to the description
of the hills as "a stallion stalwart very-violet-sweet
("Hurrahing in Harvest") is suggested in the following comment:
why cannot what Dr. Bridges calls a fault

59 Laura Riding and Robert Graves, A Survey of Modernist

60 Ibid., pp. 94-95. Cf. also Noon, Op. cit. on Hopkins' conception of "Parnassian."
of taste... be, with the proper sympathy for Hopkins' enthusiasm, appreciated as a phrase reconciling the two seemingly opposed qualities of mountains, their make, animal-like roughness and strength and at the same time their ethereal quality under soft light for which the violet in the gentle eye of the horse makes exactly the proper association?61

Another word which Bridges called a homophonic absurdity,62 "betweenpie" occurring in the line which concludes one of Hopkins' sonnets,

Betweenpie mountains—lights a lovely mile.
(No. 47)

is defended as describing very accurately "how sky seems pressed between two mountains... it is also the neatest possible way of combining the patching effect of light—as in the word 'pied' or in 'magpie'—with the way this light is introduced between the mountains."63 Very discerning likewise is the appreciation of the singular accuracy and appropriatiness of the word "Jackself" by which Hopkins, in the same sonnet, addresses his soul. The central meaning of "Jack" becomes clear from a rehearsal of its uses in other combinations: jack-screw, jackass, jack-knife, Jack Tar, Jack Frost, Jack of all trades, lumber-jack, etc. "It represents a person or thing that is honest, patient,

61 Ibid., p. 93.
62 Poems, p. 117.
cheerful, hard-working, undistinguished—but the fellow that makes things happen," Hopkins "workaday self which he advises to knock off work for a while."64

A further step in making Hopkins' irregularities, especially his grammatical irregularities, acceptable was taken when his technique was related to the psychological theory of the association of ideas. Maintaining that the rapid advance of psychology was opening up the possibility of a "complete and final poetics," Alec Brown indicated one of the tenets of that poetics: "we may understand a poem without any real reference to its grammatical structure." It is not necessary that poetry be logically and syntactically coherent since its object is different from that of prose. The object of prose is to communicate fact; it presents a complex image in "words which are organized by the ordinary formal grammatical structure of speech." Poetry, which communicates not only fact but meaning and feeling also, presents its complex image in "words which may or may not be organized as they are in speech or verse, but in any case are at the same time provided with another formal order transcendental to the grammatical order; possibly, not necessarily, transcendental to the semantic content."65

64 Ibid., pp. 91-92.

This latter order Brown called "Associative Form." A poem at first appearance recondite and not conveying meaning, judged by this criterion, may turn out to be 'a most translucent thing.' Allow the words, without analysis, 'to drip on the ear,' and they will supply 'a cogent picture accompanied by rich suggestive comment.' Considering, for example, the first stanza of "Binsey Poplars:"

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 and river and wind-wandering weed-winding bank.

we find that Hopkins disregards grammatical structure for associative form. The separate lines form, not logical but sense-units. "Separate images fall on our minds which we strip of all mechanism to connect and explain." The whole effect is one of a great poignancy which comes from a succession of words calling up varied associations, exciting both a series of states, and a cumulative, affective state in us. This is the ultimate structure of poetry, which I call that of cumulative association.

The effects of this associational process are traced in several other poems, notably "Spelt from Sybil's Leaves," "Peace," "The Leaden Echo," and "Tom's Garland." An example of pure sound

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66 Ibid., pp. 9-10
association is given in the "too obvious, blatant, and precious."

Evening strains to be time's vast, womb-of-all home-of-all, hearse-of-all night.

However, very skilful is the handling by which the dramatic "hearse-of-all" was prepared for by "'Earnest,' earthless' shifting down through 'equal' and 'attuneable' to 'vaulty' and 'voluminous' toward the 'womb-of-all' from which it is emerge."

Brown does not think Hopkins worked according to any such theory as outlined above. In fact he implies that, because he was striving after grammatical coherence when he did not need to, he often failed to achieve effectiveness, as in the last stanza of "Binsey Poplars." The "palimpsest meaning" of his poems, that which is revealed by a non-grammatical reading, states Brown, would probably surprise Hopkins.67 We can hardly agree with this. All Hopkins' care in working out the alliterations, assonances, rhymes and half-rhymes in his lines was directed toward the enforcement and embodiment of a "palimpsest meaning" which would "inscape" his thought. In his definition of poetry he speaks of an averthought," the obvious meaning, and an "underthought" which was "conveyed chiefly in the choice of metaphors etc. used and often only half-realized by the poet himself, not necessarily having any connection with the subject in hand but usually having a connection and suggested by some circumstance of the scene or of the story."68

67 Cf. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
68 Letters III, pp. 105-6.
It is clear that the history of the first decade of Hopkins criticism is hardly that of a great literary success. Of the 750 copies of the Poems printed in 1918, the last four were sold in 1928. In 1927, a critic expressed the opinion that it was "scarcely probable that the popular demand for Hopkins' poetry will render a new edition of his work important for many years." The first bewildered and annoyed reactions to Bridges' edition, if Hopkins could have seen them, would have confirmed his opinion, expressed to Dixon, that "people cannot, or they will not, take in anything however plain, that departs from what they have been taught." This instinctive response, given support by Bridges' reserved commendation, as we have seen, obtained for some time. However, during the nineteen-twenties, as more poets flouted the popular expectations regarding poetry, and cultivated "eccentricities" as strange as anything in Hopkins, his practice gradually became more acceptable. "The extravagances are and will remain what they are," Bridges had stated. Of this statement Richards remarked:

But too many experiments have been made recently, especially in the last eight years, for this lofty tone and confident


70 Letters II, p. 31.
assumption to be maintained....some of the most daring innovations of Hopkins have been, in part, attempted independently by later poets.\textsuperscript{71}

The majority of those who "discovered" Hopkins during the twenties, stressed those elements which set him apart from the past. This was of course natural in an age in reaction against tradition. But it tended to exaggerate the experimental quality while completely disregarding what was traditional. Sprung rhythm was discussed with scarcely any reference to Hopkins' explanation of it which Bridges had printed as the "Author's Preface" to the Poems. T. S. Omond, who did refer to it, spoke of "the author's teaching about 'Sprung Rhythm' and other mysteries."\textsuperscript{72} I. A. Richards considered it merely as a system by which Hopkins disguised his complete rhythmical freedom. No attempt was made to scan it by those who, like Sapir, found its effects highly successful. It was his new rhythm, however, and his "clearness and accuracy in feelings and their expression," which appealed to the poets of the twenties, who had divorced themselves from tradition and were looking for a medium which would express that particular, complex self consciousness operating on several levels at once, which was the subject of

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Op. cit.}, p. 196.

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{English Metrists} (1921), "Postscript," p. 263. The remainder of Omond's short paragraph with the "simply atrocious" double rhymes in the "Eurydice," and ended with the sentence: I cannot believe that these poems deserve or will receive attention from the most determined seeker after novelties."
their communication. Hopkins' technique, the method, in contradistinction to the substance or thought of his poetry was the concern of these poets. By 1930 the Poems were exercising, as Malcolm Cowley witnessed, a significant "underground" influence. Copies now "commanded fantastic prices among London book-sellers; they were mimeographed and circulated among poets all over the world."73 An indication of the enthusiasm aroused by the poems also appears in a recent statement by another poet, Richard Eberhart:

I cannot write...about Hopkins without recalling my introduction to him in Cambridge in 1927 or 1928. Now, in our world of war, as then, even before the "crash" of 1929, it would be difficult to describe the excitement of that discovery. In a world at war, one cannot imagine such a joy.74


CHAPTER IV

THE EARLY NINETEEN THIRTIES: HOPKINS BECOMES A MODERN

The discovery of Hopkins by poets and critics became more frequent and enthusiastic during the nineteen-thirties, as interest in poetic technique became more acute, and interaction of critic upon critic more noticeable. Many diverse preoccupations and attitudes are apparent in the studies which now began to multiply, and it is sometimes difficult to separate their various strands. One thing can be said, however: Hopkins emerges, particularly during the first part of the decade as a thoroughly "modern" poet. He is the revolutionary who threw overboard all the traditional ballast, lock, stock and barrel, in order to achieve freedom. His "difficulty" was taken for granted as a sign of his contemporaneity. For that matter, in some quarters it had become almost a poetic heresy to be easily understood. Eliot had pointed the way for the poet in his essay, on "The Metaphysical Poets":

We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be difficult. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results.  

The revival of interest in the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century had helped to make Hopkins' practice appear less strange and difficult. Several of the young poets who had grown up in the twenties also began to look to his theory as a rationale for their practice. Side by side with the vociferous enthusiasms of coterie there went on a steady, serious interpretation and analysis of his poetry, as well as an attempt to assess his fundamental contribution to English literature, to relate it to the modern trends and to the main streams of the past. Hopkins' achievement was making him appeal to poets as disparate as W. H. Auden and Edith Sitwell, and nearly every prominent literary critic found something to say of the poetry or of the man.

The year 1930 was marked by two important indications of Hopkins' increasing prestige—the Second Edition of his Poems and the first single work of biography and criticism. A third indication was seen in a volume of poems by a young poet, W. H. Auden, which showed the influence of Hopkins.

The introduction to the Second Edition, written by Charles Williams was very significant of the change which had taken place in the twelve years since Bridges' edition. Williams, also a poet, proved more sensitive to the beauty in the whole effect of the poetry, and less inclined to concentrate on details. The "oddness and obscurity" were dismissed by him as the "accidents of genius seriously engaged upon its own
The greater part of his short introduction was devoted to an analysis of the function of alliteration in the poems. Its function in Hopkins was brought out in a penetrating contrast with Swinburne's usage. Hopkins' alliteration was organic; when it appeared organic in Swinburne, it was usually by chance merely; and "the astonishing thing about Swinburne is not its presence but its uselessness, as the admirable thing about Hopkins is not its presence but its use." In Hopkins it flowed directly from "the intense apprehension of the subject" which "provides two or more necessary words almost at the same time." 3

In the alliteration appearing in such a line as

Thou hast bound bones and veins in me,
fastened me flesh,

It is as if the imagination seeking for expression, had found both verb and substantive at once, and had separated them only because the intellect had reduced the original unity into divided but related sounds. 4

In such a process the work of the intellect was to "sound the full scope of the imaginative apprehension, yet all the while to keep as close to it as possible," thus creating a perfect fusion of thought and expression.

2 Poems, p. xiii.
3 Ibid., p. x.
4 Ibid., p. xi.
Passion was the element which unified all Hopkins' expression. To the passionate emotion and passionate intellect was united a passionate awareness of the world without and within, a "passionate consciousness of all kinds of experience". It was the source of his poetic energy and it was in his poetic energy he differed from the Victorians. It might be expected that his passionate consciousness of all kinds of experience would relate him to the metaphysicals, but it is to Milton that Williams relates him, picking up the thread which Dixon left fall.

The simultaneous consciousness of a controlled universe, and yet of division, conflict, and crises in that universe, is hardly so poignantly expressed in any other English poets than those two. ... Both their imaginations felt the universe as divided both within them and without them; both realized single control in the universe and both of them fashioned demands upon themselves and upon others out of what they held to be the nature of that control.5

Bridges had recommended Hopkins to those who "study style in itself." Williams recommended him to poets, as to a vivifying fountain, believing that as time went on they must come to him "as to a source, not a channel of poetry."6

Father G. F. Lahey's brief biography and delicate appreciation of Hopkins the artist appeared almost simultaneously with the Second Edition. The author included in his biographical

5 Ibid., p. 14.
6 Ibid., p. 16.
7 Gerard Manley Hopkins (Oxford University Press, 1930).
sketch a greater number of selections from Hopkins' prose—from his letters and diary—than had hitherto been published, thus contributing, as he hoped to the "apperceptive approach which is indispensable for a complete understanding of Hopkins' ideals."

In his chapters entitled "The Craftsman" and "The Artist," Father Lahey analyzed those qualities which made for Hopkins peculiar greatness as well as the causes of the attendant obscurity. His power arose out of a perfect fusion of those elements which Williams had discerned to be the source of his poetic energy:

the amazing union of intellectual profundity with great emotional intensity and imaginative power, under the control of a highly developed faculty of expression and structural perfection.8

As for Hopkins' obscurity—"Every poetic distinctiveness has at first a certain obscurity." In Hopkins it sprang from two causes: "The one from the difficulty in attaining the almost unattainable ideal of craftsmanship, the other, as in Donne, from the nature of his thought."9 Hopkins' thought, as other critics also began now to realize, was no "simple thought" hiding under the obscurity of the language, as J. M. Murry had described it. He was "a poet of intellectual inquiry into man and matter"10 and while it was true that the thought might be

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8 Ibid., p. 88.
9 Ibid., p. 107.
hidden under surface beauty, "it is very real there... in its variety and strength."  

Although the difficulty and obscurity at first reminds one of Browning, it has not the same inception; in Hopkins it rose from depth of thought, in Browning, from a "tortuous and often misty sequence."  

Browning did not possess Hopkins' sensitivity or intelligence. Nor was Hopkins' obscurity like that of the moderns who communicate more often by implicit, oblique suggestion, a procedure which often produces a purely "private" poetry. As Lahey says,

A certain preternatural elusiveness in him is far from what Mr. Richards has called a "music of ideas" in the poetry of T. S. Eliot. Hopkins wrote the "Deutschland" from an intuition of will and intellect, but Mr. Eliot wrote "The Waste Land" from an intuition of emotions and impressions which eschew the logic of ideas. Hopkins will also differ from the poets of today who have attempted a sensuous intuition only.

However, there are resemblances in Hopkins to poets both of the past and the present. Modern poets, also load and pack their lines so that no word is inactive. But Hopkins employs words with more exactness, and creates nearly always both an emotional mood and a philosophical concept. In the "Deutschland" are many reminders of nineteenth century and seventeenth century poets:


12 Lahey, Op. cit., p. 107. (F. R. Leavis also makes the point in New Bearings in English Poetry.)

13 Ibid., p. 108.
of Tennyson in

Thy unchannelling 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.

of Browning,

Is out with it! Oh,
We lash with the best or worst
Word last!
But how shall I...make me room there...

of Morris,

Away in the loveable west,
On a pastoral forehead of Wales.

of Milton,

...the jay-blue heavens appearing
of pied and peeled May!

And Donne in the "I am soft sift" conceit of stanza 4. Other
seventeenth century affinities are discoverable in Marvell and
Vaughan—the second half of "Binsey Poplars" might creep almost
unobserved into some of their lines. Crashaw, too, in his
"Shepherds' Hymn" or "Saint Teresa" can be compared to Hopkins'
more exalted imagery.14

Both Williams and Lahey remark (as did Bridges) a progress
towards simplicity in Hopkins' poetry. Williams implies that
Hopkins was abandoning his theories at the end:

His poetic tricks, his mannerisms, his
explorations in the technique of verse,
are not in the earlier poems and they are

14 Ibid., p. 108ff; 119ff.
disappearing from the later. Had he lived, those tricks might have seemed to us no more than the incidental excitements of a developing genius. 15

While we might deplore Williams' use of the word "tricks" here in referring to Hopkins' serious preoccupation with technique, we must admit that a number of his poems, notably, the so-called "terrible" sonnets are cast in a more reserved style. These, Hopkins said, "came like inspirations, unbidden and against my will." Other poems of the last four years of Hopkins' life indicate that he was still profoundly concerned with "explorations in the technique of verse." "Epithalamion" and "Heraclitean Fire," are cases in point. Certain of his "poetic tricks" appear also in the sonnets; his omission of words, for instance

This to hoard unheard,

Heard unheeded leaves me a lonely began. 

(44)

I cast for comfort I can no more get
By groping round my comfortless, than blind
Eyes in their dark can day... 

(47)

his separation of syllables and transposition of word order:

I wear—

y of idle a being but by where wars are life.

(No. 44)

and his individual compounding

— as skies
Betweenpie mountains—lights a lovely mile.

(No. 47)

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Lahey's distinction between the "guileless artistry" and the "highly-wrought artistry" in two somewhat similar poems, "The Habit of Perfection" and "Thee, God, I come from," (No. 73) is a discerning one. In comparing the first stanzas of the two, we note that "The first is merely beautiful, the second (written nearly twenty years later) is strong, poised, final." Lahey discovers this simplification at work in "The Windhover" which is "more direct than most critics have allowed, for it seems that they have woven into it complexities which were foreign to the author's intention." His brief elucidation in its simplicity is in contrast to that of Richards.

It is a poem which hangs a pendant from one word, the verb "buckle." The octet is a statement of fact, a striking picture of the achievement and mastery of a windhover in a 'big wind'. The sestet is a reflection on the buckling of brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, in the bird, which breaks into a fiery beauty 'a billion times told lovelier' than before. Then he adds the reason, that the potential beauty hiding beneath all things breaks forth a 'billion times told lovelier' when it is stirred into action.

Simple in meaning (but, it must be added, profound in its implications) the "Windhover" is. But considered from the point of view of its prosody, it is Hopkins' greatest metrical.

17 Ibid., pp. 117-18
achievement; 'in it he seems to have reached the final boundaries of rhythmic possibility—any further would result in a sheer cleavage of rhythm and meaning.'\textsuperscript{18}

In his chapter on "The Craftsman," Lahey presented one of the first detailed analyses of sprung rhythm as enunciated by Hopkins, defending it as "a magnificent contribution to the more scholarly phase of English Literature," against those "who would relegate it to an esoteric few as impracticable."\textsuperscript{19} A collation of Hopkins' manuscripts has since allowed a closer approach to the understanding of his own intention in the scansion of the "Windhover" than Lahey achieved in presenting the "rhythmical skeleton" of the poem.\textsuperscript{20} He very aptly describes the effect of "hangers" or "outriders" as giving "hesitancy or swiftness, or airiness, or heaviness," to the lines. He offers the second line of the "Windhover,"

\begin{quote}
\textit{dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn}
\textit{Falcon, in his riding}
\end{quote}

as an admirable example.\textsuperscript{21} In his scansion of the line, however, he represents it as First Paeanic.

\begin{quote}
- - - - - \text{-} \text{-} \text{-} | \text{-} \text{-} \text{-} | \text{-} \text{-}
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 102.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 95.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Cf. pp. 103-4.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 94.
\end{itemize}
and without any indication of his underlined outrides.

Another critic, with reference to his manuscripts, declares Hopkins indicated an outride upon the second syllable of "dauphin." It was Hopkins' practice to give an extra heavy stress to the syllable immediately preceding the outride. This seemingly, would give the following scansion:

\[ \frac{O}{O} | \frac{O}{O} | \frac{(O)}{O} | \frac{O}{O} | \frac{O}{O} \]

A mistaken idea of Hopkins' "rove-over" lines appears also in Lahey's description of the following quatrain as "rove-over," wherein he says that "Sire-he-shares' should be read quickly to harmonize with its counterpart, 'Irish'."\(^\text{23}\)

A Bugler boy from barrack (it is over the Hill there) — boy bugler, born he tells me, of Irish Mother to an English sire (he Shares their best gifts surely, fall how things will)

Hopkins, in the "Author's Preface" related "rove-overs" to scansion only:

Remark also that it is natural in Sprung

\[ 22 \text{C. K. Ogden, Editorial to } \text{Psyche, XVI (1936), p. 34.} \]

(W. H. Gardner remarks that Lahey's scansion of this sonnet is "not an accurate guide to Hopkins' intention." His scansion, based on a collation of the manuscripts, for the line is as follows: he inserts two outrides, the second one on the second syllable of Falcon:

\[ \text{dōm of daylight's dauphin, dapp\-le-\-dawn-} \]
\[ \text{drawn | F\-ál\-c\-\-n in his | riding} \]


\[ 23 \text{Op. cit., p. 98.} \]
Rhythm for the lines to be rove over, that is for the scanning of each line to take up that of the one before, so that if the first has one or more syllables at its end the other must have so many the less at its beginning; and in fact the scanning runs on without a break from all the stanza is one long strain, though written in lines asunder.24

II

The change of attitude manifest in Williams' Introduction was emphasized in the reviews following upon its publication, articles in which Hopkins' "greatness" was the keynote. He was acclaimed as "one of the major poets of the second half of the nineteenth century,"25 the "most original of the whole century,"26 the only one likely to exert an influence upon contemporary poets, because, although other nineteenth century poets contributed significantly to literature, no poet writing today feels that he can learn technical secrets from these poets, whereas Hopkins is full of strange powers (and an unexhausted technical prowess) which he feels he must assimilate and possess.27

24 Poems, p. 4.
26 Ibid., Dec. 25, 1930.
27 Ibid.
The antithesis of Bridges' judgments was expressed by a reviewer who stated that Hopkins' experiments in internal rhyme, counter-pointed rhythm and word transposition were always justified, and added that "no other poet in the entire range of English literature has brought sense and sound into so perfect and beautiful a unity."28 His "verbal indulgences" were regarded by another as less faults than a curious, purposive colliding and jamming, and overlapping and telescoping of images and words in an effort toward sustained music and sense. Extravagance of a kind is the inevitable result, but extravagance so integrated, so disciplined to intention, that the accomplishment never sinks to mere lavishness.29

Still a third reviewer modified Alec Brown's theory of Associative Form in her analysis of the musical qualities of Hopkins' rhythm and diction. In his most successful poems, she found, a new richness of sound, an orchestration of vowels and consonants and varying feet that makes one wonder if Hopkins' genius, given a freer rein, was not of a weight and originality at least equal to any in the nineteenth century. ...He has found combinations of sound which apart from their meaning create the emotion he is trying to produce...He tries to make a grammatical statement that is at the same time an image of the kind that doesn't need grammar.30

28 Nation, Jan. 28, 1931, p. 105.
"Even Homer nods," seemed to be the prevalent attitude of others in regard to what Bridges described as Hopkins' Oddity and Obscurity.

In general it was Hopkins' contribution to rhythm which, in the opinion of the reviewers, was his main claim for greatness:

Regular rhythm has its appropriate uses, but in most cases the "new rhythm" is preferable, for it is the rhythm of music, the rhythm of rhythmic prose, the perfectly elastic means for making sound reinforce and interpret sense, a requisite for all great poetry.... Here at last modern poetry can find the rationale, the convention, of the freedom it has been seeking.31

Another reviewer, remarking that, "it will be the testimony of future generations that his 'modernity' is as long as his genius was deep," disposed easily of the "problem" of sprung rhythm. About its technicalities no one need "bother his head at all,"

...his line is essentially a time-unit rather than an aggregate of metrical feet and persons with an average musical sense and a fairly good ear will find new delights in the poet's rare sensitiveness to the rhetorical plasticity of the English speech.32

One critic who evidently thought Hopkins sometimes did "sink to mere lavishness" was the poet T. Sturge Moore, who rewrote "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo" according to his

31 H. L. Binsse, "Gerard Manley Hopkins," Saturday Review of Literature, Aug. 9, 1930, p. 34.
classical ideal of word-economy, that "the content should precisely fill the container." His revision cut down Hopkins' 547 words to 204. His version of the "Leaden Echo" follows:

How keep beauty? is there any way?  
Is there nowhere any means to have it stay?  
Will no bow or brooch or braid,  
Brace or lace  
Latch or catch  
Or key to lock the door lend aid  
Before beauty vanishes away?  
No, no there's none,  
Nor can you long be fair;  
Soon your best is done,  
Wisdom must be early to despair:  
Look now for age, hoar hair,  
Winding sheets and tumbling to decay,  
Even now today  
Be beginning to despair  
Despair, despair.

The above lines it is claimed, have eschewed all the "ludicrous redundancies" of

How to keep—is there any any, is there none such,  
nowhere known some, bow or brooch or braid or brace, lâce, latch, or catch or key to keep  
Back beauty, keep it, beauty, beauty, beauty,... from vanishing away  
Ó is there no frowning of these wrinkles, rankèd wrinkles deep,  
Down? no waving off of these most mournful messengers, still messengers, sad and stealing messengers of grey?

and "achieved an inherent music which reads itself without the aid of marks and so asks for less indulgence." And, it may be added, the frugal revision has discarded Hopkins' intention,

34 Ibid., pp. 599-600.
everything implied in the title, together with the suggestion of "mundus muliebris" which Hopkins desired, and all the emotional and passional content expressed in the musical flow and ebb; it has discarded, in the words of F. R. Leavis, "all the action and substance" in Hopkins' poem.

The nature of Hopkins' contribution and its relation to other modern movements in poetry was more precisely pointed out by Morton D. Zabel, who declared his work to be a gauge of modern achievement:

at once both the measure of his own genius and of the worth of the reforms and innovations which, for better or for worse, have occupied the poets of two generations.35

Hopkins undertook three modes of experiment, symbolic, prosodic, and verbal, in each of which modes he surpassed modern poets in the conviction and sureness of their use. Noting, as Williams had, the unity of Hopkins' achievement, the organic nature of his innovations in imagery, meter, and diction, Zabel related his theories of art and poetry to those of his famous contemporaries, Baudelaire and Rimbaud. Like theirs, his conception of poetry was "dynamic." Abandoning the old classical methods of discursive expression as inadequate to convey the complex experience of the poet in the modern world, these later generation poets sought a more flexible prosody; one better

suited to the expression of the libertarian moods of the analytical processes fostered by social and psychological research which they undertook to express. The Symbolists had attempted to present by means of oblique image and implicit suggestion, this new quality of experience, the Imagists by sharp visual image, economically pared of everything except the presentation of the object itself. In a step with the reform, movements resembling that of "free" verse, and the exploration of the possibilities of word-juxtapositions, word-combinations and word coinages. Comparing Hopkins' experiments with those of other practitioners in these three modes, Zabel discovered that his achievement better withstood the test of actuality:

The value of a symbology, as of a meter, lies in its durability as a poetic index long after the special experiences of its inventors, and the detailed exegesis they provide, are defunct. For unless a new generation of readers and poets feels a symbol as reality, or a rhythm as emotion, or a recreated word as indispensible and unparaphrasable meaning, that symbol, rhythm, or word will be discarded.36

But the symbolism of Mallarmé and his descendants, comprehensible though it was to a small group of initiates, is often too "private," too dependent upon arbitrary relationships to stand the test of actuality. This may be said likewise of much that was written by the more careless advocates of free verse which, unless the modulations of thought and feeling exactly correspond to the modulations of rhythm and cadence

36 Ibid., p. 156.
tends to become "a slovenly garment for unpoetic material." Verbal experiment, too, unless it is securely based on linguistic principles, also leads, as with Joyce, to unjustified obscurity. Because they are so based Hopkins' verbal innovations withstand the test.

Approached thus, Hopkins' obscurity almost vanishes:

His ineluctability diminishes as one defines the sources of his allusions in minute observation, of his comparisons in exact and logical translation of physical or theological ideas, and of his rhythms in modulations of thought and feeling which always derive immediately from the subject matter and tone of the poem.37

There is a finality and inevitability in such a poetry as that described above, not, as Zabel makes clear, the finality which obviates "clues to infinite extension," but "a finality of unflinching honesty in craftamanship, and of courage and vision in motive...in the strength of every symbol, rhythm and word as an aesthetic reality and in the synthesis of these to an irreducible poetic substance."38

III

With the appearance of the Second Edition and the accompanying increase in interest, the discussion of Hopkins' poetry began to find space in the more general treatments of the

37 Ibid., p. 158.
38 Ibid., p. 161.
nature and scope of modern poetry. Early in the nineteen
thirties it drew the attention of psychological critics
William Empson and Herbert Read. In a short passage in his
Seven Types of Ambiguity, Empson treats the "Windhover" as an
example of the seventh type of ambiguity in literature. The
ambiguity which Bridges had complained of is made, in this poem
to appear the basis of the poet's inspiration. The poem be-
comes an "evident example of the use of poetry to convey an
indecision, and its reverberation in the mind."39 The in-
decision is apparent in the sestet of the sonnet, in the am-
biguity of the words "here," "buckle," "then," and "chevalier":

Here may mean "in the case of the bird," or
"in the case of the Jesuit," when you have
become like the bird," or "when you have
become like the Jesuit." Chevalier personi-
fies either physical or spiritual activity:
Christ riding to Jerusalem, or the cavalry-
man ready for the charge; Pegasus, or the
Windhover.40

The pertinence of Lahey's remark that critics sometimes wove
into this poem "complexities which were foreign to the author's
intention," is evident here. A straightforward reading of the
poem removes much of the ambiguity in the words Empson cites.
The word "buckle" has more than one meaning in the language,
and may, in that sense be said to be ambiguous. ("buckle, like

39 Seven Types of Ambiguity (London: Chatto and Windus,

40 Loc. cit.)
a military belt, for the discipline of heroic action, and buckle like a bicycle wheel, 'make useless, distorted, and incapable of natural motion'.” Following I. A. Richards, Empson postulates a “conflict” in Hopkins’ personality and then attributes the indecision in the poems to that factor, basing his interpretation upon a well-known Freudian doctrine:

Thus in the first three lines of the sestet we seem to have a clear case of the Freudian use of opposites, where two things thought of as incompatible, but desired intensely by different systems of judgments, are spoken of simultaneously by words applying to both; both desires are thus given a transient and exhausting satisfaction, and the two systems of judgment are forced into open conflict before the reader.41

This is a direct contradiction to the statement made by Riding and Graves that Hopkins' words "had to be understood as he meant them to be, or understood not at all." Everything in the explanations that Hopkins has given of his poems indicates that he would avoid this kind of ambiguity. In fact, the effort to avoid it underlies much of the "Hopkins idiom," which "combines words, breaks them, transposes the parts of speech, forges them anew so that the meaning of it if it is to be understood at all, will be understood his way."42 Frequently the Metaphysical poets and their modern imitators have essayed

41 Loc. cit.

a poetry of "wit" in which the effects of irony and ambivalence are intended in order to express the different levels of communication. But as R. V. Schoder has observed ("What Does the Windhover Mean?"), "one should not force other types into this mould....to say that words mean both this thing and that, its opposite or even contradictory, is to confess ignorance of the real meaning, and weaken the concentrated vigor and directness of the poet's thought." Such advice is more to be insisted upon in regard to Hopkins, who always "has something very precise in mind," so much so that an interpretation of one of his poems "that ends up in confusion or counter-balanced alternatives simply has not yet found the clue to its meaning."

A criticism like Empson's is based, at least implicitly, on the assumption that the life embraced by Hopkins could not be compatible with the nature of the artist, in fact, with human nature. With such a premise it is easy enough to read into the poems evidences of division and rationalization. It is not impossible, it is true, that Hopkins was comparing his "sheer plod" with the ecstasy symbolized in the smooth flight of the bird. If he was, if the sonnet is more than praise of beauty in action, the words themselves seem to point rather clearly to the phase of action more to be admired, the one "a billion times told lovelier."

The "Windhover" is clear enough for a direct interpretation such as Lahey offered. Another critic, condemning "ingenious interpretations that are based not on the poems themselves, but
on hypothetical complications of the dead poet's mind, "
presents a similar reading. The emphatic position given to the
word "buckle," he remarks, points to it as the crux of the poem.
The inherent beauty in all things is brought out in the act of
"buckling" or struggling against forces:

It is then, at the time of buckling that all
things become more beautiful. The plough
shines only because of its sheer plodding down
the furrows; the embers of the burning log are
most beautiful when the log breaks and falls,
causing the embers to "gall themselves and
gash gold-vermilion." The kestrel is beauti-
ful when it hovers in the eastern sky at dawn;
but when, after it has swept swiftly with the
wind, it turns to buckle against the wind's
forces, the bird becomes lovelier in its
dangers, as its reeling body and fighting wings
break the still sunlight and push it into
action.

As will be pointed out later, deeper implications, "clues to
infinite extension," for Hopkins' own life and for the spiritual
life in general can be drawn from the "Windhover," implications
not found in the ambiguity of Hopkins' use of words, but rather
in the philosophy underneath and guiding all his endeavor.

Similar in its conclusions and in its influence to Empson's
criticism, although based upon another premise, was that of
Herbert Read. His poetic dogma: "True originality is due to a
conflict between sensibility and belief," formed the found-

43 Harris Downey, "A Poem Not Understood," *Virginia

44 *Collected Essays*, p. 338.
ation for the statement that Hopkins' greatest poems were poems of doubt. His faith was always held "in opposition to his obstinate reasoning."\(^{45}\) The conflict appears in the "Windhover" in a more direct way than to Empson:

"The Windhover" is completely objective in its senseful catalogues...but Hopkins gets over his scruples by dedicating the poem "to Christ our Lord." But this is a patent deception. It does not alter the marked sensualism of the poem.\(^{46}\)

Aside from the exaggeration in the word "sensualism" here (an echo of Bridges), we can detect a suggestion that there is something inordinate (or that Hopkins thought there was something inordinate) in the sheer delight found in beholding the movement of the bird, in the morning freshness and the rhythm and rapture of flight. It is a judgment having a tinge of Puritanism about it. Another way by which Hopkins "sublimated his poetic powers" is evident also in "Pied Beauty," a "catalogue of dappled things...which Hopkins concludes by a neat inversion—an invocation to God who, fathering forth such things, is Himself changeless."\(^{47}\)

Read comes much closer to the truth in the following assertion: They, the "windhover," "Pied Beauty," "Hurrahing in Harvest," etc. are tributes to God's glory, as all poetry must be; and a right conception of God and religion

\(^{45}\) Ibid., p. 332.
\(^{46}\) Ibid., p. 335.
\(^{47}\) Ibid.
is not hurt by such tributes." Bridges found "The Golden Echo" hurt by "the naked encounter of sensualism and asceticism." Read comments,—"while I appreciate the magnificent sensualism of this poem, I fail to detect the asceticism." Bernard Kelly, notes in this connection the "flat contradiction in the use of the word, asceticism."

For Herbert Read understands by it a harsh and sour austerity, Dr. Bridges (apparently) an offering of the physical senses to God. Dr. Bridges dislikes it in the present poem because it is not here in external character what Herbert Read misunderstands all asceticism essentially to be, that is, harsh and sour. 

An essay influential in establishing Hopkins as a modern mind was that which appeared in F. R. Leavis' study of post-war poetry, New Bearings in English Poetry. Leavis included Hopkins as one of the three main influences contributing to the regeneration of poetry in the twentieth century; the other two poets Leavis treated were Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot. The essay was a pertinent summary of current critical attitudes towards Hopkins, as well as of current conceptions of the nature of poetry. Leavis describes the Georgian attempt to modernize poetry and bring it closer to life as a failure because it did not express the experience of the poet "fully alive in his own age." The "new start" which came with Eliot's "Prufrock" would have come sooner, Leavis felt, had Hopkins' poems been current

48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
earlier. He takes issue with Bridges' criticism of the "faults": "What Dr. Bridges calls 'blemishes' are essential to Hopkins' aim." Bridges errs in assuming that poetry should be immediately comprehensible. This is not possible nor would it be desirable in modern poetry, so much concerned with "personal urgency" and "inner debate." To find a technique to express this inner drama is difficult, and it will be a difficult technique. Hopkins, far from expecting to be immediately comprehensible,

must deliberately have contemplated leaving the reader in more than momentary uncertainty: he had positive uses for ambiguity, and he presumed to expect from the reader prolonged and repeated intellectual effort. 52

The above statement is just; however, it must be emphasized that Hopkins did not cherish ambiguity for its own sake, as is hinted, and as some modern poets (apparently) do. Hopkins' immediate aim was to express perfectly and in its smallest details his pattern, design or inscape. This he realized might not be immediately comprehensible. "Obscurity I do and will try to avoid so far as is consistent with excellences higher than clearness at a first reading." 53 That he wished to be finally understood is manifested in the resolve he made at one

52 Ibid., p. 164
53 Letters I, p. 54.
time to prefix short prose explanations to his poems.54

Hopkins' contribution to English poetry, according to Leavis, was twofold: in giving to each word the full weight of all its meaning, he revivified language, restoring its original force and symbolic power; and he brought poetry closer to living speech. In his use of language Hopkins differed both from the Victorians and from Milton, and he may be compared to Shakespere. He is like the great dramatist in his "imagery, and his way of using the body and movement of the language" which becomes "a rendering of the very movement of consciousness."55 This was absent in Milton as well as in the poets of the nineteenth century:

I have in mind Milton's habit of exploiting language as a kind of musical medium outside himself as it were. There is no pressure in his verse of any complex or varying current of feeling and sensation; the words have little substance or muscular quality. Milton is using only a small part of the resources of the English language.56

To illustrate his contention Leavis compares the two following passages:

My thought whose murder yet is but fantastical,
Shakes so my single state of man, that function
Is smothered in surmise, and nothing is,
But what is not,

(Macbeth, I, iii.)

Only what word
Wisest my heart breeds dark heaven's baffling ban

56 *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82
Bars or hell's spell thwarts. This to hoard unheard,
Heard unheeded, leaves me a lonely began.

(No. 62.)

The first critic to make a frontal attack on Bridges' "Dragon," Leavis finds in it also the Shakespearian qualities analyzed above: "the association of inner, spiritual, emotional stress with physical reverberation, nervous and muscular tensions that characterizes he best verse is here explicitly elaborated in an account of the storm which is at the same time an account of an inner drama."57 He submits the first careful analysis of the much discussed fourth and eighth stanzas. Of the former he asserts: "Nothing approaching this imagery in subtlety and strength can be found in any other poet of the nineteenth century."58 Of the latter:

The conceit is metaphysical, but the technique is pure Hopkins. It would be difficult to produce a more elaborate pattern of alliteration, assonance and internal rhyme, but we do not feel of any element (except perhaps, "lush-kept plush-capped") that it is there for the sake of pattern. Even of "lush-kept plush-capped" it might be said that by a kind of verbal suggestion (two different expressions sounding so like) it contributes to the sense of mystical identification that the passage is concerned to evoke—identification of the "stress felt" with the Passion; helps also the metaphorical identification with the bursting of the sloe.59

57 Ibid., pp. 175-76.
58 Ibid., p. 180.
59 Ibid., p. 177.
Leavis concludes a very skilful and sensitive appreciation of "Spelt from Sybil's Leaves" with a remark which indicates the influence of I. A. Richards' interpretation of it. Commenting on the order of words in

black, white; right wrong

he notes that Hopkins' first draft had "wrong, right"; but Hopkins "deliberately, and significantly, reversed the order." This reversal indicates that "his absolutes waver and change places, and he is left in terrible doubt." 69

It was not surprising that Hopkins' remarkable ability to realize sound and color expressionistically should attract the attention of Edith Sitwell. The characteristic problem with which she is concerned both as poet and critic stands out in her essay on Hopkins. The passing from modern poetry of the visual and tactile sense is a recurrent theme in Aspects of Modern Poetry. In a criticism primarily concerned with texture she contrasts Hopkins with modern poets, in whose work, for the most part, "the visual sense in almost as non-existent as in the machines which inhabit their world," and there is "no tactile sense whatever." 61 Much of Hopkins' strangeness, in fact, is due to his acute visual sense

which pierces down to the essence of the thing seen, and which, heightening the truth of it, by endowing it with attributes which at first

60 Ibid., pp. 185-86.
seem alien, with colors that are sharper, clearer, more piercing than those that are seen by the common eye, succeeds in producing its inherent spirit.62

Words, to Miss Sitwell, are entities, "rather as birds and beasts are entities, having each their own natural plumage, fur, or hair, of varying thickness and varying color, of varying surface, softness or roughness."63 Her examination of Hopkins' poems is, consequently, an analysis of the effects of assonances, consonances, dissonances and rhymes which contribute to the movement and energy of the verse. The nature of her criticism will be conveyed by the following analysis of the first three lines of "The Wreck of the Deutschland," of which full quotation is necessary:

In the slow and majestic first line, the long and strongly-swelling vowels, and the alliterative M's produce the sensation of an immense wave gathering itself up, rising slowly, ever increasing in its huge power, till we come to the pause that follows the long vowel of "me." Then the wave falls, only to rush forward again.

After this majestic line comes the heaving line

God-giver of breath and bread

ending with the ship poised on the top of the wave. This last effect is caused by the assonances of "breath and bread." The sound of breath is slightly longer, has slightly more of a swell beneath the surface than "bread" because of the "th." This pause on the top of the wave is followed by the gigantic straining

62 Ibid., p. 56.
63 Ibid., p. 230.
forward of the waves in the line

World's strand, sway of the sea
an effect that has been produced by the strong alliterative S's reinforced by the internal R's of "World's strand," followed by the internal W of "sway." This line, after the huge tossing up and down from the dulled A of "strand" to the higher dissonantal A of "sway" ends by sweeping forward still further with the long vowel sound of "sway," a sound that is more peaceful than that of "strand" and "sway" because of the absence of consonants. 64

The analysis of the rest of the poem proceeds on similar lines. The effect of the internal rhymes and assonances of stanza twenty-six is compared to that of "a bird flying through the holy and peaceful light." 65 The analysis of the subtle shifting of the vowels, "hardly perceptible variations of the O and U sounds," in the sonnet "Peace" is sensitive and appreciative. "In this beautiful poem," Miss Sitwell concludes, "the form, the texture and the subject form one miraculous whole." 66

A criticism such as the above can be an illuminating appreciation of the art involved in effective expression. Miss Sitwell's is undoubtedly valuable in revealing felicities of diction and undertones of melody. In her hands the type tends to become too subjective and sometimes exaggerated, and there are always the limitations concomitant with the confining of

64 Ibid., pp. 59-60.
65 Ibid., pp. 64.
66 Loc. cit.
criticism to one aspect of the subject.

That Hopkins' technique was so much concerned with inner divisions, friction, and psychological complexities in general, was one of the reasons advanced by Leavis for the modern poet's interest in him. The modern poet's contraction of interest to the personal problem was often related to the personal note in Hopkins' poetry, especially in his later sonnets. Because he bore the "indelible imprint of the exile," he appealed more strongly to modern poets even than T. S. Eliot. This was the opinion expressed by a member of one of the most recent "schools" of modern poetry, C. Day Lewis:

For whereas Eliot's work is not so much something rootless as something uprooted, Hopkins suffered the more terrible exile of a man born out of his time...His, in a slightly lesser degree, is the predicament of the twentieth century poet—the consciousness of being cut off from the mass of his fellows, a current insulated.

In A Hope for Poetry, a study of the problems confronting a certain section of post-war poets, those who might loosely be described as the "New Signatures" group, Day Lewis makes the statement: "Post-war poetry was born amongst the ruins. Its immediate ancestors are Hopkins, Owen, and Eliot." In each of these as in the modern poet there existed a "conflict between

the poetic self and the rest of the man." In Hopkins' conflict the "poetic agent" was spiritual doubt. The contemporary poet, "acutely conscious of individuality," and at the same time "acutely conscious of the present isolation of the individual," is faced with a dilemma: Whether to turn to the extreme individualism of a D. H. Lawrence or to Communism. 70

Technically, "in his ordering of words," Hopkins is "the first 'modern' poet, and a most evident link between them and Donne." 71 Day Lewis agrees with Leavis in assigning to Hopkins a Shakespearian quality, noted in his "re-creation of word and image"; the "feel of Shakespeare" is in

As a dare-gale skylark scanted in a dull cage...  
(No. 15)

are you that liar  
And, cast by conscience out, spendsavour salt?  
(No. 26)

Another characteristic of Hopkins' diction Lewis notes is its "incantatory" quality: "by him the language of poetry was removed almost as far as possible from ordinary language." 72 He desired to bring poetry nearer to common speech not by a change in the use of words, as did Wordsworth, but by a change in its rhythm.

"Almost as far as possible from ordinary language," should not be exaggerated. While Hopkins did not agree with

70 Ibid., cf. p. 217ff; 226f.
71 Ibid., p. 237.
72 Ibid., p. 171.
Wordsworth that the best language of poetry is no more than the language of prose when it is well written, he held nevertheless, that "the poetic language of an age should be the current language heightened, to any degree heightened and unlike itself, but not an obsolete one." As Leavis observed, Hopkins "departs very widely from current idioms (as Shakespeare did) but nevertheless current idiom is...the presiding spirit in his dialect." While considering sprung rhythm as offering a much greater freedom for rhythmical effects than is afforded by common rhythm with all its possible licenses, Day Lewis advances two objections to its use. The first springs from the fact that its metrical foundation is so shifting and elastic that its use almost invariably does away with one of the most desirable of rhythmical effects, namely, "the counterpoint of the words working in contrast to the strict beat of the meter." This effect, we might point out, is one Hopkins sought to achieve by his use of hangers or outrides and he himself answers Lewis's objection in one of his letters:

However by means of the "outrides" or looped half-feet you will find in some of my sonnets and elsewhere I secure a strong effect of double rhythm of a second movement in the verse

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73 Letters I, p. 89.
74 New Bearings in English Poetry, p. 171.
75 Ibid., p. 172.
besides the primary and essential one, and this comes to the same thing or serves the same purpose as counterpointing by reversed accents in Milton.76

The second objection is that, as used by Hopkins, sprung rhythm does not conform closely enough to speech rhythm: "we find ourselves compelled to run over a number of heavy syllables, which would certainly be stressed in ordinary speech, before we come to the intended stress. The intended stress, indeed, is often difficult to find." While he does not give an example to support his objection, he cites the first stanza of "The Wreck of the Deutschland" as one of the few that "speak themselves easily," pointing it as follows: (and, as C. K. Ogden has observed, punctuating, pointing, and aligning it incorrectly)77

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.
And after it almost unmade, what with dread
Thy doing: and dost thou touch me afresh?
Over again I feel thy finger and find thee.

It is true that it is often difficult to say with certainty which particular syllables receive the stress in some of Hopkins' lines. The most frequent cause of this, as W. H. Gardner notes in his discussion of the stresses in the "Deutschland," is "the

76 Letters II, p. 41.
juxta-position of two long or strong syllables which seem at first to be equally important." He cites from stanza 12—

Yet did the dark side of the bay of thy blessing an example in "dark side." Here "both the meaning and the alliteration award the stress to 'dark,' while 'side' has the strength of a secondary stress ('dark side')." The effect of this "is to give weight and solemnity, like the classical spondee," and Gardner counts twenty-five other examples in the poem.78 Here is Gardner's pointing of the above stanza, which, he says, is not easy to scan. The first line is "rove over":

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,
And after it almost unmade, what with dread,
Thy doing: and dost thou touch me afresh?
Over again I feel thy finger and find thee.

Hopkins received briefer mention in three other general treatments of English poetry during the early thirties. These were indicative of the increasing realization of his importance rather than important in themselves. They did little more than record other current opinions. B. I. Evans noted with Edith Sitwell Hopkins' "capacity for looking at ordinary objects as if they had never been seen before and certainly as if no one

78 Op. cit., p. 45. Gardner remarks in another place (p. 282) that "there is more than one way of reading Hopkins, as there is more than one way of playing a great sonata."

79 Ogden stresses this line "Thou mastering me."
had built up a conventional vocabulary in which to describe them." He attributed his elliptical use of grammar, his removal of ordinary links and transitions, to his constant striving for "that unity of impression which a painting or a piece of music possesses." His particular achievement lay in his having "gained new values for words, new impacts between the mind and experience."80

To F. W. Bateson, Hopkins' revolt against the pre-Raphaelite tradition was abortive. "The language had not increased sufficiently in precision by then [1876] for the massive concrete poetry of Hopkins to be possible at all without very special precautions." In comment upon this statement one can but point not only to the possibility but to the actuality of Hopkins' poetry. Certainly Hopkins, as he used it, increased the precision of the language, and Bateson's next statement amounts to an admission of the fact. "The clumsy, and as one feels now, unnecessary concentration of his style was in fact necessary in 1876. Without the restriction it imposed, the tendencies of the language would have carried him away into the vagueness and diffuseness that he was in revolt against." Moreover, Bateson associates Hopkins, together with Housman, Hardy and Bridges, with the initiation of "a process that has

culminated in the one indisputable achievement of post-war poetry—its catholicity of diction."81

Geoffrey Bullough described Hopkins "as the most original poet of his time, and the most intense," adding that "his range was narrow, and he himself saw that some of his mannerisms would be well away."82

One of the few dissenting voices to make itself heard regarding Hopkins' modernism was that of T. S. Eliot: "He is not nearly so much a poet of our time as the accidents of his publication and the invention of his metric have led us to suppose." Eliot could not place him on a level with Yeats or Pound, for his innovations,

like the mind of their author operate only within a narrow range, and are not easily adaptable for many purposes: furthermore they sometimes strike me as lacking inevitability, that is to say, they sometimes come near to being purely verbal, in that a whole poem will give us more of the same thing, an accumulation, rather than a real development of thought and feeling.83

This criticism has in turn been criticized by W. H. Gardner who observes a more palpable development of thought and feeling in Hopkins' poems than in Eliot's "accumulations of powerful and skilfully juxtaposed images." The method Eliot and other modern

81 English Poetry and the English Language (Oxford, 1934), pp. 117-18; p. 120.
poets use, which involves "free association and the eschewing of a logically linked progression of ideas is a method which lends itself to accumulation and repetition." Hopkins' "definiteness" on the other hand is conducive to development.84

While in a very patent way Hopkins' poetry might be said to be narrow in range, the statement demands some qualification. It certainly does not embody that eclectic range of reference to many disparate and disconnected fields of knowledge which appears in Eliot's poetry. Nor does it express all the classes and levels of experience in Shakespeare's or the depths of human depravity in Baudelaire with whom, as a religious poet Hopkins is unfavorably contrasted by Eliot. "To be a devotional poet," Eliot states, "is a limitation." But it may be questioned whether a poet who concerns himself so intimately with the relations between God, man, and nature and with so many essentially human problems is not "a religious poet in the more important sense." Hopkins' poetry, it may be observed, concentrates a wide knowledge of human nature with its strength and its weaknesses. It is universal in a sense not immediately apparent. Hopkins knew man, "unteachably after evil but uttering truth," in his true nature. He had as much insight into the peculiar charm of childhood as Wordsworth. It is no shallow experience of human nature that can express so powerfully the awareness of the times in such lines as

"We, life's pride and cared-for crown,

Have lost that cheer and charm of earth's past prime: 
Our make and breaking, down
To man's last dust, drain fast towards man's first slime. (No. 11)

Hopkins' poetry indicates not so much limitation of range as a directing of energies. It possesses "clues to infinite extension." As one critic has expressed it, Hopkins "represents a perennial mood of the spirit, and for this reason transcends distinctions based on schools, movements or periods. He is the poet of the vicissitudes of the inner life, and his affinities are with the masters of the spiritual life of all times and countries."85

Hopkins' quality as a religious poet affected the reactions of the first writer to the present a full length critical study of the poetry. It is possible to trace the influence of the psychological critics in Elizabeth Phare's study, published in 1933. Miss Phare claimed to express a "perennial mood" in the remark that: "The majority of readers, of English readers, at any rate, are apt to distrust poetry dealing with intimate religious experience."86 Although Hopkins' poetry "benefits a great deal" by his preoccupation with religion, in many instances his "craving for violent sensational effects" mars the poems.


"The Wreck of the Deutschland" is one poem thus marred. It is "artificial in the bad sense," shallow and febrile. Hopkins has tried to make himself believe that his feelings on the subject under consideration are more intense than was actually the case...
The poem savors too much of St. Ignatius's method of meditation, in which the will excites the emotions.87

The same forcing of emotion can be felt between the lines of "Felix Randal": the poet "is working himself up to a pitch of grief which normally he would not reach."88 "The Bugler's first Communion," also is "somehow false" and leaves the critic feeling "very uncomfortable."89 In the latter, the "apparently unconscious sensuousness" of

Limber liquid youth that to all I teach
Yields tender as a pushed peach

conflicts with the praise of chastity.90 Miss Phare accounts, a little apologetically, for her "peeviousness": "It seems that the notion of accepting or rejecting a poem comes from the very quick of the will; it is rarely possible to give a wholly satisfactory account of one's reasons for doing one or the other."91 This is an honest admission although it subtracts from the value of the critic's comments as a literary critic.

Hopkins' importance as a poet, however, was recognized by

87 Ibid., p. 17; 108-9.
88 Ibid., p. 53.
89 Ibid., p. 52.
90 Ibid., p. 50.
91 Ibid., p. 53.
Miss Phare: "he has done posterity a signal service... he has broken down several barriers which no longer served any purpose. Nor does his best poetry suffer "by comparison with the best in Shakespeare and Dante." Emphasizing her statement that Hopkins was not outside the main current of English literature, Phare compared his contribution to that of other English poets. Like Milton, although in a different direction, he modified the language; in the use of the conceit he resembles Crashaw and his devotional poetry also links him to metaphysicals. There is a reminder of Browning in his use of vocabulary and syntax, of Keats in his tactile, visual, and audile imagery, of Shelley in his motile imagery.

In a long comparison of Hopkins' poetry with that of Wordsworth, Miss Phare notes several affinities, and several differences. As poets of nature both shared the belief that it was possible to come to a strong sense of the presence of God in the universe through those aspects of nature which present themselves to eye and ear. Wordsworth's sense of this presence, however, was of a Deity omnipresent but vague, so to speak, while Hopkins' was a sense of the presence of one or other of the persons of the Trinity.

Another similarity of theme in the two poets springs from

92 Ibid., p. 7.
93 Ibid., pp. 149-50.
their ability to enter sympathetically into the lives of other human beings, to trace the primary laws of human nature working in incidents chosen from everyday experience. They differ again, however, in that Wordsworth seldom gives the impression of being conscious of any unusual degree of physical existence. His is primarily "the power of etherealizing man and his experience." As a general result, "his poetry is more limited, and so to speak more vulnerable than Hopkins's....The way of living and facing life suggested by Hopkins's poetry seems likely to be satisfactory under more different sets of condition than Wordsworth's."94

As for Hopkins' obscurity, Miss Phare agreed with Richards and others that it was almost dismissible. It more often proceeded from the attitude of the reader than from the poetry itself. Hopkins' poetry was never a "private" poetry like that of Eliot with his fondness for allusions, or that of Auden with his purely personal symbols. It is obscure only to the reader who thinks that "a single reading will take him as far as he needs to go." Hopkins demands, it is true, some labor. In general Miss Phare's criticism and appreciation gave the impression that the reward was worth the labor, even that Hopkins "merits the extreme of popularity which he himself, a critic as just as modest, thought his due."95

94 Ibid., p. 79.
95 Ibid., p. 150.
A conception of the religious element in Hopkins' poems very different from Miss Phare's animated the study written by Bernard Kelly, who attempted to demonstrate, in his brief monograph, *The Mind and Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, that Hopkins' priesthood was a principle of unity rather than an agent of division in his poetry. Kelly also discussed briefly the philosophical and aesthetic principles implied in "The Windhover" and "The Wreck of the Deutschland." Affirming that psychological actuality was one of the primary characteristics of the poems, Kelly demonstrated this by a comparison of a similar theme in Francis Thompson and in Hopkins. If we place the first few lines of "The Hound of Heaven"

I fled Him down the nights and down the days,
I fled Him down the arches of the years,
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind, and in a mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.

side by side with

I wake and feel the fall of dark, not day.
What hours, 0 what black hours we have spent
This night! what sights you, heart, saw, ways you went!
And more must, in yet longer light's delay
(No. 45)

we feel the difference. Thompson's metaphors here—arches, labyrinth, mist—convey the suggestion of "theatrical properties for the masque of physical flight," Kelly observes, "a masque which removes and does not bring nearer, the reality of spiritual flight." Whereas Hopkins, on the other hand,
walks in deeps on which this superstructure of imagery has been built; and his cry is exactly of that spiritual pain which Thompson has softened, and did habitually crowd out of his mind, by imagery. Thompson names tears; Hopkins never had needed to name them.96

It is important to realize the creative excitement which animated each of Hopkins' metrical innovations. It is evident in the very names he gives them.

The donnish metrician does not call a handful of syllables flung against the meter of a line to give pause and echo to its movement Outrides; and Paeans, accepted from the Greek, is a loud and lovely word. A dead measure was of no use to Hopkins. His scansion was alive with values in movement.97

That Hopkins' method was a "subterfuge" by which he reconciled himself to his originality, or a disguise for his complete rhythmical freedom, as Richards and Leavis would have it, is here implicitly denied. It is the instrument of the informing disciplinary principles to which his poetry was subject.

It is very important also, in Kelly's estimation, for the reader of Hopkins to realize the driving intellectual force which gives life to his use of the senses by sound and image. It is the "intense thought alive and aloud in words "that makes for the difficulty of the "Windhover," and Kelly's explanation of that poem is an explanation of the act of the intelligence in knowing. The poem opens with the poet in the act of seeing the Windhover, of seizing it in the act of sensation, himself unseen.

97 Ibid.
until at the end of the octet he grasps the beauty of the bird in his mind and exclaims at "the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!"

"Here," then, is in the poet's mind...now he commands, "Brute beauty...here Buckle!"

...It is the bird now, present in the senses, who is commanded to lock in the embrace of the mind; the bird itself in its own power and act present in the image of it.98

Here in this poem, says Kelly, it is the theologian in the poet who is speaking and he is explaining what St. Thomas might have explained, that the intelligibility of things is in their act:

It is from the act of ploughing that we know the plough. Embers blue-bleak, things dead, things bleak for lack of life, fall shining into the mind, gall themselves, expending a splendour in the act of change (act in which the world, perpetually losing its beauty shines to the mind in dying) that, lost now to the thing, lives in the beholder's mind forever.99

As for "The Wreck of the Deutschland," it is discussed here almost as an act of religion, not to be entered upon without preparation. "Meditate first for a fortnight on the Passion," is the advice given. Kelly treats as separate two movements in the poem which, he says, are merely two aspects of the same movement: the main act by which is meant not only the shipwreck, "but a more profound spiritual act to which the shipwreck is material or fuel only, and of which the poem is utterance"; and the first part of ten stanzas which is the beginning

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.
of the movement which overtakesthe shipwreck and carries it forward with itself. The theme of the poem is "Christianity integral and absolute."

In this comment upon stanzas 5-8 of the poem, in which "the intimacy of Christ's appealing in the beauty of this world is vitally apprehended by the mind," Kelly advances an aesthetic theory to which he believes Hopkins' poetry conforms. The apprehension of the tangible beauty of the world produces in the mind a simultaneous delight of the senses and the intellect, one delight "in which the senses and the mind are integral in one act." It is this delight which Hopkins' poetry is always trying to express, and this is why the emotional and sensible qualities of beauty in his poetry are "more vitally themselves, than any poetry which rests in the emotion and the senses alone."

He tends to a fusion of all that words can utter; of their intelligibility, of their sound, of the power they have on emotion, of the meaning they have to desire. And this fusion is living and intimate, a fusion made in the pain of poetic creation, lit by the clarity of a rare mind. He is not content to rest delightfully in the objects of poetic experience. The whole force of his mind and of his nature drives him further.

Looking back over the criticism of the first few years following the appearance of the Second Edition of Hopkins' poems, we can perceive a marked change from the strained reception of the first edition. While Hopkins' oddities, especially in their

100 Ibid.
revolutionary aspect as setting him off as a rebel against Victorian tradition, continued to draw much attention, and were still found confusing, they were, for most, as E. E. Phare observed, "of a kind that can be modified by time."101 The preoccupation with originality was natural in the discussion of so original a poet; moreover, it is an ordinary phenomenon in the appraisal of a literary figure, according to the observation of T. S. Eliot, who notes

our tendency to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles anyone else. In these aspects...we pretend to find what is individual, what is the peculiar essence of the man. We dwell with satisfaction upon the poet's difference from his predecessors, especially his immediate predecessors; we endeavor to find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed.102

One extreme of the acceptance of Hopkins as a "modern" and one "out of his time" is represented in a statement made by Raymond Larsson: "to call him Victorian is simply to indicate the period in which he belonged, not a group of ideas and sentiments by which he was bound. As his audience increases, his influence increases, he becomes less identified with his own time, more identified with ours."103 In opposition there were those who maintained that "he was a Victorian in style, outlook

and feeling."104 We have seen that certain poets felt an affinity with Hopkins because they regarded him as an "exile" born ahead of his time. Others, misconstruing the "desolation" of the last sonnets, detected a similarity to their own religious insecurity. As one critic and poet described them:

...their skepticism is not merely intellectual uncertainty; it is a desperate insecurity—how can we prove that anything at all is valuable? they ask. It is natural that such poets should regard the work of Gerard Manley Hopkins and T. S. Eliot as a starting point.105

The perception of a fundamental Shakespearean quality and movement of thought in Hopkins' poetry was also a recognition of his contemporaneity. It was consonant with the revived interest in the late Elizabethan and Jacobean poets whose style exercised a potent influence upon post-Eliot poets, offering a better medium for the subtle, analytical problems, psychological and social, which concerned them, than the freer rhythms of a few years earlier. These, while exercising a salutary effect in permitting the entrance into poetry of new materials, did not convey the complexity of experience which the more self-conscious modern poet was trying to communicate. In the speech rhythms (often the rhythm of argumentative, close reasoning


thought), the vigor of metaphor, and the incorporation of the
difficult and un-"poetic" in the poetry of the metaphysicals he
found what he needed for the expression of his often contrad-
ictory experience. These same qualities, more or less emphasized
also appeared in Hopkins, together with his unique individuality.

A broader view which proceeded to analyze more carefully
Hopkins' position in relation to contemporary movements or to
place him in a truer perspective with regard to the main stream
of English literature is apparent in the studies of Lahey, Zabel,
Phare and a few others. Eliot placed him with the nature poets
and the devotional poets. Bernard Kelly related his poems to
a theory of knowledge and a theory of beauty and pointed to the
influence of Duns Scotus. W. G. Stonier's remark, of 1932, was
becoming less true:

The "difficulty" of his work lies in the
inaccessibility of critics to the range of
his artistic feeling. By some process of
critical winking they ignored his religion,
his worship of God in nearly everything he
wrote.106

and with the publication of his Letters would become less

possible.

106 Review of Poems, New Statesman and Nation, June 25, 1932,
p. 836.
CHAPTER V

RECEPTION OF THE LETTERS

In 1935 the influence of Hopkins' poems was fortified by the publication of the first two volumes of the Letters, those to Bridges and Dixon. The direct discussion of his practice and principle which was contained in them, and the revelation of his admiralions and aversions, of his judgments of poets and schools of poets, directed an illuminating ray upon his poetry. In his general remarks and particular elucidations, his critical soundness and consistency were manifest. Too, his absorption with so many matters, from Greek prosody and Welsh consonant chime to painting, music, and Anglosaxon roots revealed forces playing against each other in his own art. The letters, altogether, would prove to be "an indispensable source of intelligence for poets and readers of poets," especially for readers of Hopkins. They would rectify or modify certain conceptions held of his innovations, of the idea, for instance, that his "inventions were matters of creative audacity." On the contrary,

they were evidences "of a humility before his themes and his language that is harder to practice, and much harder to understand, than the patience of Bridges with the duties of a formal inheritance." Critics emphasized the importance of the Letters not only as literary documents but as a revelation of the unique personality of the poet: "...greatness is unmistakably there. A classic is added to the language; and it is indeed a matter for rejoicing, especially in times like these, to be admitted to intimacy with a spirit so pure, courageous and humane." 3

The Letters, together with Hopkins' Notebooks and Papers, to be published three years later, were to have as one of their effects, the drawing of critical attention more to the positive influence upon Hopkins' poetry of his life as a Jesuit priest. The "problem" of Hopkins would not be immediately solved, however. It was rather emphasized in the Introduction which Claude Colleer Abbot, the Editor, prefixed to the first volume of the Letters. Abbot recognized that the poems were "written to the glory of God by a man who is looking on the world as charged with His grandeur," but he felt nevertheless that there was something "not altogether subdued to the Christian spirit" in them.

2 Ibid., p. 214.

always as I read them I feel that the poet is primarily seized by the beauty of earth, and though a man of exquisitely tempered and religious mind, his senses, not his religion, are in the ascendant. ...The yeast of the religious spirit has not worked through them. The fusion of earthly beauty and exemplum is often so incomplete that the second is merely the addendum of a poet captive in the first place to the beauty besieging his senses.4

The assumption here is the same as that in earlier comments by Richards, Read and others: that there is something incompatible between religion and a sensuous perception of beauty. Abbot implies that the cause of the dichotomy he perceives lies in the fact that "despite his determination to surrender all, the strife between poet and priest remained unsolved."5 In Abbot, as in Bridges, the judgment was linked with a certain anti-Catholic or anti-Jesuit prejudice evident particularly in his comment on the relations between Bridges and Hopkins: "To Bridges the priesthood raised an insuperable barrier: he had and rightly, a profound distrust of the Society of Jesus."6

A similar bias is noticeable in a lengthy article by John Gould Fletcher who maintained that Hopkins' choice of a vocation was made at the sacrifice of his poetic talent and made of him a "tragic failure." Fletcher's opinion was based on the

4 Letters I, xxvii ff.
5 Ibid., p. xl.
6 Ibid., p. xlv.
premise that to an artist of Hopkins' sort, "dogmatic orthodoxy, though it may be of assistance in first orientating and disciplining the mind, always ends by finally destroying it."7 Fletcher particularly regrets the narrowing of theme and treatment which was the result of Hopkins' religious preoccupations; a constriction which made him "incapable, after the first beginnings, of creating major works of all." The last sonnets are examples of this narrowing, being "like compressed dramas, demanding but not achieving the freer spaces of a larger and more comprehensive canvas."8

As to the effect of Hopkins' mode of life upon his poetry, aside from the effect upon his personality, (if they can be separated) several critics can be found to disagree with Fletcher. If Hopkins had not been a Jesuit priest he would perhaps have written more poetry. But, as Herbert Read has observed,

...he would not necessarily have been a better poet, and, as it is, his small harvest is so rich and golden, that we would not exchange it for all the pallid stacks of verse piled up by his contemporaries.9

8 Ibid., p. 346.

It is to the point to note here in passing, a remark of Read's in a letter to W. H. Gardner, dated Sept. 18, 1935: "In so far as I have, in my essay on Hopkins, implied that there was an open conflict between the poetic impulse and the theological faith in Hopkins, I confess I was wrong." quoted by Gardner, Op. cit., p. 292, n.
The limitation of the field of Hopkins' experience regretted by some of his earlier admirers has been regarded by others as a concentrating force which imparted to his poetry its peculiar intensity and passion. It enabled him, as one of the first reviewers of the Letters noted, "to exploit to the fullest what experience he had and 'working in a concentrated vein,' to produce his finest poetry." The same critic observes also that it made him a more acute critic because it "saved him from the emotional, social, and political muddle which vitiated the writing of so many great Victorians." The importance of Hopkins' spiritual discipline in supplying a protecting and nourishing influence upon his talents was noted also by M. D. Zabel.

The impression received by some of the first reviewers of the Letters—one that exercised a certain amount of influence upon a number of young "leftist" poets—that Hopkins manifested a "strong Communistic bias," calls for only a passing reference here. It was based on a passage in a letter to Bridges in which Hopkins remarked:

"Horrible to say in a manner I am a Communist. Their ideal bating some things is nobler than that professed by any secular

statesman I know of (I must own I live in bat-light and shoot at a venture). Besides it is just, --I do not mean that the means of getting it are. But it is a dreadful thing for the greatest and most necessary part of a very rich nation to live a hard life... in the midst of plenty—which plenty they make... 13

It was probably this passage which Fletcher had in mind in suggesting that Hopkins, if recalled from the dead, might prefer to all other of his critics, "those young poets of the present day who have rejected his Catholicism but borrowed turns of phrase and sound of his rich repertory to illuminate their... lyrical Communism." 14

The passage which Osbert Burdett cites to show that Hopkins was "drawn in several directions that he found it not easy to reconcile with" 15 his vocation, can also appropriately be summoned to describe a state of spiritual desolation often referred to in the Spiritual Exercise of St. Ignatius:

Feeling, love in particular, is the great moving power and spring of verse and the only person I am in love with seldom, especially now, stirs my heart sensibly and when he does I cannot always "make capital" of it, it wd. be sacrilege to do so. 16

This passage points to what, in Hopkins' own estimation was the source of his inspiration—his love for God, his religious life.

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16 Ibid., p. 66.
It is very true he felt deeply and sadly the failure of poetic inspiration: "It kills me to be time's eunuch and never beget." Hopkins manifested a greater resignation and understanding of this condition than some of his critics. "Nothing comes: I am a eunuch—but it is for the kingdom of heaven's sake." He wrote to Dixon: "I see no grounded prospect of my ever doing much, not only in poetry but in anything at all. At times I feel this sadly and bitterly, but it is God's will."19

Hopkins' physical state of weakness from 1874 onwards must be taken into account in any attempt to explain the condition of depression he refers to in his letters. Statements similar to the following are frequent: "Since our holidays began I have been in a wretched state of weakness and weariness, I can't tell why, always drowsy and incapable of reading or thinking to any effect."20

A careful reading of the correspondence of Hopkins' last years shows, indeed, more than this. It gives evidence of a singular state of mind induced by a complex of conditions in which ill-health, the failure of poetic inspiration, the burden of work and a state of spiritual desolation all combined

17 Ibid., pp. 221-22.
18 Ibid., p. 270.
to cause severe mental suffering. Hopkins' nature, as one of his earliest Jesuit critics, already quoted, pointed out, was too "over-sensitive and delicate perhaps, to face without much suffering, the rough work of the world."21 Hopkins' reaction to "the sordid, turbid time," is expressed in his letters: "But I never could write; time and spirit were wanting; one is so fagged, so harried and gallied up and down. And the drunkards go on drinking, the filthy, as the scripture says, are filthy still."22 Hopkins' state can be exaggerated. The same critic just quoted took exception to certain statements of Bridges in his Memoir of Hopkins in Miles:

Mr. Bridges...implies that the poet was always depressed and unhappy in Dublin, so affected by the moral contagion of his surroundings that he had not the heart to fight against "one of the material contagions" of the city, which eventually carried him off. This, I have good grounds to know, gives a quite misleading impression of Father Hopkins' Dublin career.23

Others of Hopkins' Jesuit confrères have offered explanations of his sufferings. One of its contributing causes, according to Father Martin D'Arcy was that "literal mindedness" characteristic of many converts, which refuses "to distinguish


22 Letters I, p. 110.

23 Month, CXXI (1913), p. 644.
between the serious and the light or fantastic, duty and that happy love which enables the children of God to act in full liberty of spirit."24 Not that this was the whole explanation. For that we must begin D'Arcy adds, with "the natural wholesomeness of the man" with his "passion for fairness and truth," because he never lost a certain delicacy and innocence that belongs to childhood it was difficult for him to adapt himself to conditions around him, "to build up defenses and be worldlywise." Left unprotected he grew more and more singular despite a hatred of singularity. As a consequence of his over-conscientiousness and isolation, his moral and spiritual conscience did not escape suffering, becoming over-delicate and "almost scrupulous."

Hopkins suffered, therefore, because of the very quality of his mind and soul, and we cannot easily separate his triumphs from his sufferings. But I doubt whether spiritually or practically he would have been so haunted by failure had it not been for the exhaustion and collapse of his body.25

Hopkins' bodily exhaustion was a frequent topic in his Letters, especially those to Bridges, which show that it was an important contributing factor to his mental and spiritual suffering. He was "always tired, always jaded," so much so that the ordinary circumstances of his life, the long hours in


25 Ibid., pp. 363ff.
the confessional, lecturing, examinations, wore him down. This condition was existent not only in his later life. From recollections of those who knew him he appears to have been a somewhat delicate child and youth. While he was teaching at the Oratory School he wrote to his friend, Baillie that he had almost no energy and that teaching exhausted him.

This over-conscientiousness Father D'Arcy mentions was remarked by one of Hopkins' intimate friends at Catholic University College, whose recollections are recorded in Father Lahey's memoir. Hopkins was examiner in classics, a post which carried with it the labor and responsibility of preparing and marking examination papers and "in his scrupulous anxiety to be just and fair, he was accustomed to give to these tasks a far greater amount of care and time than most conscientious examiners would have considered necessary." This conscientiousness is manifested also in the incident of his purchase of a small bottle or cruet for Bridges, in 1866. His exactness and concern in carrying out what seems to have been a comparatively small commission, appear in four of his letters. "I am rather puzzled," he writes, "about the bottle and can take no further step until I have heard from you." He had been to

27 Ibid., p. 84.
the dealers and "they have only three shapes, which are in fact three sizes and to my mind only the biggest is at all nice." He goes into minute detail describing cruet and stopper, his dissatisfaction with them, and his plans for improving the design. It was not until he had drawn his own design, and taken it to the dealer to be executed that he was satisfied, and he continued to express fear lest Bridges be dissatisfied. More than two months later he excuses himself to Bridges for not having visited a mutual friend: "I cd. not bring myself to do so till the cruet was off my mind."

Christopher Devlin, S.J., also detected in Hopkins a "sort of absorption with pain, combined with scrupulosity, a struggling with God as in a sick room with blinds down, which is reminiscent of Kierkegaard." This critic, however, called attention to the fact that it was only toward the end of his life that any great sadness appeared in the poems: "poem upon poem, from the beginning to the end of his published works," from "God's Grandeur" to "Heraclitean Fire," show "that if there was a strain of scrupulosity in Hopkins, it certainly is not the dominant one." 30

Devlin and other Jesuits who may safely be expected to speak with authority on the matter, denied that the Spiritual


Exercises of St. Ignatius would tend to foster a condition of scrupulosity, as were contended by two of Hopkins' critics. "Even as an under-graduate and as an Anglican he was in morals over-scrupulous," Humphry House stated, "and this scrupulosity must have been accentuated by the practice of the particular examen." He was echoed by G. M. Turnell for whom Hopkins exemplified "one particularly well defined tendency in post-Tridentine Catholicism."...

Man's preoccupation is no longer directly with God, but with himself, with preparing the human vessel for the coming of grace. It is to this endless and inordinate self-scrutiny introduced at the Counter-Reformation by the Exercises that we owe the minute and elaborate analysis of sin...32

S. H. Crehan, S.J., denies that Hopkins' nature tended towards excessive scrupulosity as House averred, finding no evidence of it in his early pre-Jesuit writings, early poems and letters to Bridges. Neither are there references to it in the recollections of Dixon and others regarding Hopkins' youth. It does not manifest itself when it surely would be expected to, at the time of Hopkins' conversion. The "entire change of mental outlook involved in joining the Church brought with it apparently not a trace of scruple, no indication of an inability to come...


to or accept any definite or unwavering conclusions." 33 In a letter to Bridges at the time Hopkins remarked, "Newman made sure I was acting deliberately." 34 Deliberate action is the one thing impossible to a scrupulous mind.

In answer to the second contention, Turnell's, Devlin points to the nature of the Examination of Conscience as "only a slightly more methodical form of an elementary piece of common sense...used by Christians from the earliest times as well as by such extravert Deists as Benjamin Franklin." 35

Father Keating supports this opinion with the reminder that the Exercises are primarily intended as a guide to teachers and are apt to be misunderstood by inexperienced pupils. They are not completely self-explanatory. And he adds further that it would be "impossible to experience a complete Ignatian retreat, and then speak of even one effect of it as inducing an endless and inordinate self-scrutiny' and a preoccupation with the study of sin." 36 It is true that St. Ignatius demands the profoundest self-knowledge as a basis of that humility of soul which disposes man to receive God's greatest graces. To Hopkins' Colleagues the result of his having often experienced

34 Letters I, p. 5.
the Spiritual Exercises "can only have been to give him a profounder understanding of God, man and nature and to provide for whatever defects of character and temperament he was liable to, the most sound and effective remedies." 37

The subjectivist trend which Turnell finds in Hopkins as in Baudelaire, Proust and Eliot, Devlin connects with post-Cartesian rather than post-Tridentine thought. He too observes that "the whole scheme of the Exercises militates against sadness, self-scrutiny and subjectivism," and believes that for Hopkins they "were circumstances that channelized the poet's working, just as other sets of circumstances, poverty, blindness, war, etc., have done to other poets." 38 As an example he points to the connection he sees between the "Wreck of the Deutschland" and the Spiritual Exercises, affirming that the poem "springs primarily and spontaneously from the intimate experience of the first week and the first half of the second week; with special stress upon the twin mysteries of Creation and Incarnation." 39

The various attempts to define the nature and causes of Hopkins' conflict are an index to the difficulty of the problem. All the elements discussed above are no doubt contributing factors in his complex mental state. It is very

37 Ibid., p. 270.
seldom that such a state can be ascribed to one factor alone, and it is well known that what sometimes seem to be the most obvious causes of strain are only manifestations of more hidden causes. Ultimately the source of Hopkins' state of mental anxiety and nervous prostration which incapacitated him for effort which he felt necessary, lay in his own natural temperament. The "intense concentration of awareness" native to him and sharpened by education and training, which made him, in the expression of a critic, "taut all the time to the fresh unstaled experience of what things are in their individual selfhoods," was also the cause of his suffering. It would be imprudent to minimize the constant, ever-recurring necessity to subdue that nature to the demands of the vocation which he had embraced. His was a temperament which would naturally take an extreme view of the relation of his art to his priesthood, the view manifested in his burning of his manuscripts when he entered the noviciate of the Society of Jesus, to begin his religious life. The evidence, as far as it can be judged, points to a continual struggle to shape his many-sided nature and genius to the ideal (than which he said there was none higher) to which he had consecrated himself. That the struggle to keep his religious ideals in the ascendant in the expression of his poetic and artistic ideals was not easy, that

he seemed to feel that there was something incompatible be-
tween his vocation and a poetic career (a circumstance pain-
ful to a genius of his peculiar kind) is perhaps justly to be
deduced from the evidence. His physical weakness without doubt
contributed to his state, and in turn his anxiety aggravated
the condition of physical weakness thus forming a vicious circle.

Whether they believe that the Jesuit discipline placed a
serious restriction upon Hopkins as a poet, or that it provided
precisely the stimulants his poetic turn of genius needed, all
Hopkins' critics are at one in admitting that it made of him a
different kind of poet than he was before. "When he wrote
poetry again, it was as an entirely other, and novel poet."

The study of the various elements synthesized in this en-
tirely novel poetry was naturally given impetus by the infor-
mation which the Letters revealed in regard to influences,
sources, and inspirations affecting Hopkins' artistic life.
The more detailed explanations which he gave of sprung rhythm,
for instance, the references to his varied interests—in music,
Welsh "cynganedd," Anglo-Saxon, Greek prosody, and many other
preoccupations—all helped to widen the approaches to his
poetry. One realization which most critics took away with them
from a reading of the Letters was that of the profound know-

ledge of prosody underlying Hopkins' craftsmanship, of his seriousness and the exquisite care expended upon his work. Any ideas of his "taking shots" at words, and "enjoying the process," or of his not sufficiently understanding his own theories began to lose ground. One critic calls Hopkins' craftsmanship and prosody "one of the most significant contributions in history to the English literary tradition."

C. K. Ogden rebukes opinions like that expressed by Leavis and others, implying that Hopkins "could not be reconciled to his originality without subterfuge." "The ineptitudes of prosodists," as Ogden states, "have made it impossible for most contemporary writers on verse to regard Hopkins' specific contribution to the subject as more than an aberration of genius."

Despite the Letters, Hopkins' theory remained an aberration of genius to G. M. Young. While professing great admiration for Hopkins as a poet, he averred that his theories on meter seem to be as demonstrably wrong as those of any speculator who has led a multitude into the wilderness to perish. Unfortunately they have been used as justification for the cacophonies which naturally result when the metrically deaf write verse.

It must be admitted there is some truth in Young's last sentence. Certain of Hopkins' imitators, as Edith Sitwell has pointed out,

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45 "Forty Years of Verse," London Mercury, XXXV (1935–37), p. 120.
misunderstanding his example, have produced poems characterized by "a complete loss of melody, arising from falsified, clumsy, of too-thick vowel-schemes, clumsy and huddled-up assonance patterns, useless alliterations..." Miss Sitwell cites William Empson's "Legal Fiction," with its "Law makes long spokes of the short stakes of men," as an example; Charles Madge's "Apprehending,"

Master to me: fly turning clouds to walls approaches steep to life if that is square. The hold on me of the held-onto hand shows where bones lie, and if I ever knew the touched quick once, big now is here instead...

contains "all Hopkins' difficulty and obscurity, but none of his strength, of his vitality, of his acute visual sense." However, only a complete refusal to recognize the evidence can account for the attitude of Young when he ascribes Hopkins' "errors" to an "ignorance of his subject so profound that he was not aware that there was anything to know." The difference between Hopkins and some of his imitators arises at times from "metrical deafness." It arises also from a lack of that technical knowledge which Hopkins possessed. That "Hopkins understood the technique of poetry as no poet since Dryden understood it," more than one critic certifies.

47 Ibid., p. 69.
48 Loc. cit.
Young's criticism is founded on a theory of metric which would preclude sprung rhythm altogether:

...the least impeded way of uttering English is so to arrange the sounds that we are not called upon to make two successive discharges of vocal energy, or to inhibit that energy over too long a sequence of unstressed syllables.50

As for Young's first objection, C. K. Ogden has reminded us that in

Down, down, down,
Down to the depths of the sea,

the "smoothest of the Victorians" made four successive discharges of vocal energy.51 Lines similar to Arnold's can be cited in all the moderns, "successive discharges" as appear in Eliot's "Cape Ann," for example:

O quick quick quick quick quick hear the song sparrow.

Eliot's rhythms, like Hopkins' are imitative, and the question of their use is not one of propriety so much as of success.

The question arises, when does a sequence of unaccented syllables become too long. In his description of the Anglo-Saxon alliterative measure, Coventry Patmore tells us that "three syllables without accent" are "as large a number as can be articulated without destroying the approximate equality of

50 Loc. cit.
time between accent and accent."

In his Preface, Hopkins defines the basic foot of sprung rhythm to be "of from one to four syllables regularly, any two stresses may either follow one another running, or be divided by one, two, or three slack syllables." Here he conforms to Patmore's norm, adding however, the qualification that "for particular effects any number of weak or slack syllables may be used." Hopkins' "any number" in a few instances exceeds five, as in the last line of "Bugler's First Communion":

"Forward-like but however, and like favorable heaven heard these.

wherein the loops under syllables outride. The longest sequence of unstressed syllables in the "Deutschland" is five:

\[ \text{Woke thee with a we are perishing in the weather of Gennesareth.} \]

(Stanza 25)

\[ \text{Let him easter in us, be a dayspring to the dimness of us, be a crimson-cresseted east.} \]

(Stanza 35)

we cannot read these lines, or indeed any lines of poetry abstracting their metrical aspect only. Read in their context they impress us as achieving the poet's "particular effects"

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52 Essay on English Metrical Law, p. 249.

53 Poems, pp. 3-4.

consonant with the spirit and tenor of the whole poem. Hopkins has an illuminating note prefixed to the "Deutschland" in MS. "A" in which he explains his intention in regard to the stressing of syllables. In a foot of several syllables, if the syllable carrying the beat is by nature long, the stress given to it must be stronger, the greater the number of syllables belonging to it, "the voice treading and dwelling:

but if on the contrary it is by nature light, then the greater the number of syllables belonging to it the less is the stress to be laid on it, the voice passing flyingly over all the syllables of the foot and in some manner distributing among them all the stress of the one beat."55

As an example he gives the line:

Fingerprint of a tender foot, O of a feathered delicacy, the breast of the

Maiden could obey so...

Here, he says,

The first two beats are very strong and the more the voice dwells on them the more it fetches out the strength of the syllables they rest upon; the next two beats are very light and escaping, and the last as well as those which follow in the next line, are of a mean strength such as suits narrative.56

Hopkins' rhythm, like the oldest English poetic rhythm, is a speech rhythm, "the rhythm of common speech and of written prose when rhythm is perceived in them."57 Even the most

55 Quoted by Gardner, Ibid., pp. 46-47.
57 Hopkins' Preface, Poems, p. 5.
rhythmic prose allows long sequences of unaccented syllables. In normal English prose we frequently insert more than twice as many syllables as Hopkins normally used between two beats, at the same tempo as those in the "Deutschland." 58

While Hopkins' own explanations of sprung rhythm in his "Preface" and in his letters, probably remain the best statements of his intentions, attempts have been made to simplify them, to deduce, so to speak, the law behind the law which governed Hopkins' practice. In an article by Geoffrey Bliss, S.J., which contains a rearrangement of Hopkins' unfinished "Woodlark," the writer maintains that this poem illustrates the single rule to which Hopkins reduced the laws of English prosody. This rule Bliss states to be: "Every verse contains a predetermined number of accented syllables." It has one scholion: "In polysyllables the accent is fixed by the dictionary; on all monosyllables by the poet, at his own risk." 59

This rule marks Hopkins as a firm traditionalist, for it is the only rule of English prosody to which no exceptions had been admitted. Hopkins' chief distinction lay in the fact that "he admitted exceptions to all the other rules more freely than most poets. He also admitted exceptions cautiously, to the one


Hopkins ignored this one rule only twice; in the "Echoes" and the "Epithalamion," with results "extremely interesting but extremely dangerous as a precedent." In the "Woodlark" he observes it faithfully:

The poem is in four-beat with a possible three-beat in one stanza (predetermination does not, of course, exclude ordered novelty of the verse-lengths.) The union of rigidity with infinite variety which the one-rule prosody provides makes a good basis, in this poem, for a music of lark-song type: monotonous yet perpetually changing. While the four accents persist, the number of syllables varies from four in "Flame-rash rudred," to twelve in "Tatter-tassel-tangled and dingle-a-dangled."61

Bliss lists five exceptions to Hopkins' one rule or to its scholion: (a) accent on a pause (or pause counted for accent), (b) accent on a run of unaccented syllables (metrical pause), (c) accent on the secondary accent in a polysyllable, (d) accent on a single unaccented syllable at the end of a verse when this is rhymed with an accented syllable, and (e) the equal division of an accent between two syllables.62 These exceptions are exemplified in the stanza,

60 Ibid., pp. 533-34. Cf. the appendix to this Chapter for Bliss's rearrangement of "The Woodlark."

61 Loc. cit.

62 Ibid., p. 534.
And down the furrow dry
Sunspurge and oxeye
And lace-leaved lovely
Foam-tuft fumitory.

with "Tatter-tassel-tangled and dingle-a-dangled."

It will quickly be seen, as Bliss observes, that the following of this rule, except in the hands of a "subtle conscientious craftsman," involves many dangers. But if it is held to, "with good reason for all exceptions," and if these exceptions "do not destroy the predetermined beat-count,"

then you have a prosody which differs from the English tradition only by going a little further in the direction in which it has always tended. They are some of our greatest poets who have冒险ed furthest with success in that direction: Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, Crashaw and Coleridge.63

Walter J. Ong, S.J., brings forth further evidence to prove to what extent Hopkins' rhythm is a revival and continuation of a traditional rhythmic principle.64 When he opened a place again for the sense-stress as against the running rhythm imposed by the Spenserian tradition, his "achievement was not quite alone." This dramatic "talk" rhythm, of course, existed everywhere in the Elizabethan dramatists and the poets of wit following them and then it went underground. However, between Shakespeare's

If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly.

and Hopkins' "heart's charity's hearth's fire," or "And the sea flint-flake, black backed in the regular blow," other examples of stress rhythm appear (besides those in Milton): Burns's "To a Louse,"

Hallo, whare ye gaun, ye crowlin' ferlie!
O for some rank, mercurial rozet,
Or fell, red, amedduum.

and Blake's "rhymeless pindarics" and "The Fairy," with its skeltonics,

Sō a Fairy sung
From the leaves I sprung;
Hē leaped from the spray
To flee away...
But in my hat caught
Hē soon shall be taught.

Shelley's Queen Mab and Southey's Thalaba contain other examples. Lines in Keats's Ode on Melancholy can be divided to show the Old English pattern:

No, nó go nót to Léthe
Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted
Neither twist for its poisonous wine;

or

And feed deep, deep
Upon her peerless eyes.

Ong's whole Essay goes far to show how deeply the foundation of Hopkins' rhythms lie in the nature of the English language.

Another criticism which illustrated the tendency, increased by the Letters, to relate Hopkins with tradition, was that of Egerton Clarke, who emphasized his connection with the "main
stream of English poetic structure from Langland to Blake. His rhythms merely carried the earliest tendencies to their logical completion. They were embryonic in Piers Plowman and almost mature in Donne's lyrics. Shakespeare, Keats, and the Romantics, the pre-Raphaelites, the later Victorians, and our own modern Georgians belong to a different though not unrelated lineage born of the Graeco-Latinism of the Renaissance.65

Hopkins' great love of music had been instanced in several of his poems and remarked by his earlier biographers (e.g., Lahey, Op. cit., p. 2). But the extent and intensity of his interest was not fully revealed until the publication of the Letters. During the last ten years of his life music played a role almost equal to, if not surpassing, that of poetry. As Abbot observed, it looked almost as if the former art had become his "predominant passion." Hopkins had confidence in the value of his musical compositions. As in the case of his poetry he felt he had come upon something new. Of the music to which he set Collins' "Ode to Evening," for instance, he gave this description to Bridges: "What came out was very wild and very strange and (I thought) very good... as near a new world of musical enjoyment as in this old world we could hope to have."66

Sir Robert Stewart, to whom he submitted his compositions, saw no great merit in them but rather the signs of the un­schooled amateur. 67 But a more recent criticism offers the theory that had Hopkins lived, "something interesting might have come of" his experimenting. He built his compositions upon plain-chant, with which he was well-aquainted; however, "he also found his way into the very problematical world of archaic Greek music and modes." 68

And, indeed, all the evidence seems to suggest that...he would have appeared as a composer in the little-tried art of the unaccompanied solo song. ...Might he, perhaps, granted a longer life, have turned consistently to his own verse and become a neo-Greek poet-musician, creating simultaneously with the words a barless, un­accompanied, enharmonic music? 69

The above speculation is provocative, but the more immediate subject which presents itself to critics is that of the influence of his musical interests upon his poetry. Negatively, it appears that he would have spent more time upon his poetry had he spent less upon music. Bridges thought so, and took Hopkins to task for it. 70 However, Hopkins seems to have turned to music when poetical inspiration failed him. "Every

69 Ibid., p. 235.
70 Letters I, p. 277.
impulse and spring of art," he wrote Bridges, "seems to have
died in me, except for music, and that I pursue under almost an
impossibility of getting on."71

The influence of music is immediately felt in poems like
"Binsey Poplars," "The Woodlark," and the "Echoes" (of the last
Hopkins said, "I never did anything more musical"). In all
the explanations of his poems Hopkins lays emphasis upon their
sound. Bridges in regard to the "Eurydice" is to "take breath
and read it with the ears, as I always wish to read, and my
verse becomes all right."72 "Harry Ploughman," likewise," is
for recital, not for perusal (as by nature all verse should
be),73 and "Spelt from Sybil's Leaves" "should be almost sung:
it is most carefully timed in tempo rubato."74

It is just this musical quality which, according to
Egerton Clarke, gives Hopkins his singular position among
English poets:

Monosyllabic Saxon is at the root of Hopkins' architectural method. But he was also a
musician, and it is not difficult to detect a mechanized musical notation tapping like a little
hammer along his lines. In this—and in this

71 Ibid., p. 252.
72 Ibid., p. 79.
73 Ibid., p. 263.
74 Ibid., p. 246.
alone—is he unique among the poets...he en-
riched the whole tradition of English verse by
embroidering into it the conceits of the violin
and the piano without in any way destroying the
fundamental simplicity.75

The analogy between music and sprung rhythm as Hopkins conceived
it need scarcely be given emphasis. As in music one whole note
may fill a measure, and the next measure be composed of
equivalent in half-notes, eighths or sixteenths, so in Hopkins'
melodic phrases, a foot may consist of one to four syllables,
the time elements supplied if necessary by emphasis, ("dwell")
or pauses. Hopkins refers more than once to the process "by
which syllables are lengthened so that three fill a bar or so
that the last of one becomes the first of the next,"76 and to
similar devices.

It is notable that the markw Hopkins used to clarify his
intention were in part taken from musical symbols: "slurs, that
is loops over syllables, to tie them together into the time of
one....what in music are called pauses •, to show that syll-
ables should be dwelt on." Clearly, Hopkins' intentions are
not always discernible without these and other markings, which,
no doubt with wisdom, Bridges omitted from the printed text.
As Ogden's study has shown, recourse to the original manuscripts
shows that, in the sense of rightly inferring Hopkins' intent-
ions, critics' guesses in many doubtful cases are not likely to

76 Letters I, pp. 233-34.
be correct. Although a complete knowledge of an author's purpose is not absolutely necessary to appreciation and understanding of his work, nevertheless "there is at least a certain historical interest in discovering the poet's intention before indulging the creative impulse at his expense." 77

A study from the manuscripts of Hopkins' employment of the "outride" shows that (as Hopkins himself stated) its function may be compared to that of counterpoint in running rhythm. 78 Its purpose would also appear to be to ensure a necessary break after certain slack syllables, in order to avoid monotony. In discussing with Bridges certain of his alexandrine lines, Hopkins remarked that "that meter unless much broken, as I do by outrides, is very tedious." 79 Ogden found that in 104 outrides, in fifteen poems, 80 "more than half were immediately followed by some sort of punctuation which would at least ensure the requisite break." In seven other cases punctuation would be expected in normal usage, as in the third line of the "Windhover"

Of the rolling level underneath him steady air,
and striding

Although the constitution of the foot in which the outride

79 Letters I, p. 80. The poems were Nos. 7, 12, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 23, 29, 40, 43, 53, 61, 62, 63.
appears is not always certain, Ogden finds in 94 out of the
total 104 "little room for doubt," and classifies them as
follows:

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This leaves ten "doubtful examples," a few of which may be cited
here:

It gathers to a greatness like the ooze of oil81
(No. 7)
in which, Ogden observes, "the marking of two outrides in a
paemonic foot is peculiar."

Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!
"where the possibility that the stressed syllable in the fourth
foot may be my, thus pulling O in the third foot, cannot be
excluded—if, for example, the chevalier were "Christ our Lord."

This in drudgery, day-laboring-out life's age.
(No. 15)
"where it is conceivable that the third stress might be on
day."82

Ogden's was the first penetrating study of sprung rhythm
which correlated Hopkins' principles with his practice in the

81 Gardner (Op. cit., p. 98.) defines this as "an entirely
anomalous double hanger (or, more probably, an oversight)."

82 Gardner (Op. cit., p. 285) resolves the problem by
stressing this line: This in drudgery, day-laboring-out life's
age. Hopkins' device, over two syllables indicates that "though
one has and the other has not the metrical stress, in the re-
citation-stress they are to be about equal." (Letters II, p. 129)
manuscripts, and it was a valuable contribution towards the realization of the fundamental consistency between theory and practice. It went far towards remedying the "ineptitudes of prosodists," and disposing of the idea of the irrelevancy of Hopkins' theory. His attention to the "Deutschland" did not a little towards establishing the "regularity" of that poem. Hitherto many critics had read it "as if the meter were irregular, disregarding the carefully studied stresses (on an even beat) and pausing for breath or emotion where they felt inclined." Ogden was the first to mention the fact that Part II of the "Deutschland" has one more stress in the first line than Part I, and that the number of stresses in lines two to eight of every verse in both parts is 3-4-3-5-5-4-6. Expressing surprise that Bridges had nowhere stated that the metrical scheme of the poem follows the alignment, Ogden believes that he may not have realized before he came to edit the poem that the meter was regular. The fact that he printed the first stanza with even alignment in The Spirit of Man, however, seems scarcely to be proof of this, for matters of prosody were not his concern in his collection.

The failure, to which Ogden drew attention, on the part of


84 While aligning incorrectly the stanza he quoted, C. Day Lewis had remarked that the alignment was a clue to the scansion, Cf. above, Chapter IV, p. 104f.
critics and poets to understand the real nature of Hopkins' sprung rhythm was one of the reasons advanced by David Daiches to account for the infelicities in the poetry of some of Hopkins' imitators. G. M. Young traced them to Hopkins' "ignorance of his subject"; Daiches to his imitators' lack of technical knowledge; "Hopkins studied the subject carefully and wrote with a technical knowledge none of the modern poets possesses." When sprung rhythm is adopted with no understanding of its structure the result is only "looseness ad infinitum." Daiches adds other reasons for the differences between Hopkins and those whom he has influenced. He agrees with Edith Sitwell that "no modern poet has Hopkins' tactile and visual sense," that he "stands alone in the intensity of his perceptions." A more important consideration to Daiches, however, than these differences, is that of the reason for the "terrific force of the impact of Hopkins' verse on post-war poetry." This reason, he believes, lies in the fact that "the post-war poets, for differing reasons, came to adopt an attitude to the poetic medium which Hopkins for reasons of his own, had adopted and exploited." Hopkins' use of language was similar

86 Ibid., p. 43.
87 Ibid., p. 24.
to that which modern poets were attempting. In their
eccentricism they had sought models from many ancestors—Donne, Skelton, Rimbaud, LaForgue, Whitman, Yeats, Pound, Eliot—but the "practice of Hopkins came closest to what they were seeking. The attitude to the poetic medium which both Hopkins and the modern exemplify is that of a "strain after directness beyond that allowed by the formal syntactic use of language." Hopkins achieved this directness by dispensing with the barriers which syntax reared against the immediacy of union between subject and object, that is, (as Alec Brown had pointed out earlier) "he allowed the form of his expression to be dictated by an emotional rather than a logical sequence." Here he differed from Donne to whom he has often been compared, in that Donne "intellectualized his passion," whereas Hopkins presented "his feeling and his thought in rapid progression of highly wrought images and ideas set down in words deliberately chosen for their intensity, their concentration, their approximation as it were, to the native fact itself."  

This difference between Hopkins and the metaphysical poets, including Donne, was further emphasized by Harris Downey. It is a difference reflected in the reaction of the reader to the

89 Ibid., p. 27.
90 Ibid., p. 29.
poems. With Hopkins, the reader is drawn right into the poem itself, becomes part of the poem; with Donne he reacts "rather as an auditor experiencing a work of art." The latter experience "is an apprehension. Hopkins presents for the most part the comprehension;"91 In stating, however, that Donne's poetry is intellectual and Hopkins' is emotional, the antithesis must not be given too much emphasis:

a conceit embodies both intellect and emotion; but of the two poets one may note a difference of degree. Hopkins to a great extent lacks a logical framework; Donne may wander into the emotional as far as he wishes, he always has the logic, the intellect, which the reader occasionally loses sight of but which is always there and which is always seen in analysis. The dependence on emotion in Hopkins results in his greater subjectivity, his speedier directness and consequently—his naivety.92

We may add that in Hopkins also "the intellect is always there...and always seen in analysis." And exegesis of almost any one of his poems reveals a strong framework of thought—more of a logical progression than is obvious at first—supporting and justifying the very real and sincere emotion. The emotion is more immediate it is true. But as often as his manner, the tough fabric of his thought causes the "difficulty" associated with his poetry. The thought content is conveyed

92 Ibid., pp. 843-44.
emotionally and passionately but it is the driving force of
the emotion and passion; indeed they cannot be separated. That
the thought progresses in dynamic leaps from image to image
more often than in the close argumentative reasoning of Donne
and the "cerebral" poets ought not to obscure its reality.
This partly due to a difference of degree in conviction. As
Daiches has observed, Hopkins was sure of his content. He
"took for granted that the kind of subject he wanted to write
about was a fit subject for poetry." His concern was with the
means of expressing, of "inscaping" it.

That there are points of similarity between Hopkins and
the metaphysical poets is evident from often-drawn comparisons.
There is a similar condensation, intensity, and accuracy of
expression, and a similar use of the conceit. The abrupt
openings of many of Hopkins' sonnets resemble those of Donne,
and there is a similar slowing up of movement. The "far-fetch-
edness" (as Hopkins designated it) of many of his images also
is reminiscent of Herbert, Crashaw and the other Metaphysicals.

Reference to Hopkins' subjectivity likewise calls for
qualification. Hopkins did not live in his own world of self-
introspection or translate the world outside him into terms of
self or his own private symbols. His subjectivism is not the
same as that of Baudelaire and Proust. His world always remains
the outward world of men and things. To experience the "selves"
of things as far as possible, and to give that experience in
words—this was his discipline. He was always observing how

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.
(No. 34)

Thus, to call him an objective poet, as another critic does,
is to describe accurately the primary strain of his genius:

...where a poet like Shelley was describing
how a skylark went up into the sunlight, was
shooting off all sorts of ideas like fireworks,
about the bird's singing and what it did to
him the poet, Hopkins would be trying to get
into words the skylark itself and the singing
and he would not be bothering about Hopkins
at all. He was... an objective poet... his
eyes blazed outward on things, seeing them
whole and full and deep, after the fashion of,
say, Chaucer.93

The publication of Hopkins' Letters marked a decisive stage
in the growth of his reputation. By setting him against the
background of his own period, they revealed his essential re-
lation to the outlook and thought of his age, and permitted
him to speak for himself in regard to his conceptions of art
and poetry. In clarifying the real nature of his revolt against
current poetic practice they modified to a certain extent the
idea held by many of his revolutionary modernism. At the same
time they presented the most valuable of commentaries on his
own poetic practice, uncovering interests which bore upon his
conception of the art. It is revealing to note, for instance,
that the references to music in the Index to the Letters are

93 Francis MacManus, "Gerard Manley Hopkins, The Return of
exceeded only by those to Hopkins himself, to Bridges, and to Versification. The letters also make known not only the "distinguished naturalness, the sensitive vivacity, the flexibility, and the easy sureness of touch"\(^9\) of his prose but reveal him as a penetrating and independent critic. In general, then, their effect was to expand the boundaries of reference and to open new avenues of approach to the better understanding of the poetry and, above all, of the essentially sincere, single-minded purpose and ideal of the personality behind the poetry.

94 Leavis, *Scrutiny* XII (Spring, 1944), p. 92.
APPENDIX

In the following rearrangement of "The woodlark" the lines in brackets are those supplied by Father Bliss.

_Teevo cheevio cheevio cheevio cheevio cheevio cheevio_
O where, what can that be?

_Weedio-weedio: there again!_
So tiny a trickle of song-strain;
And all round not to be found
For brier, bough, furrow, or green ground
Before or behind or far or at hand
Either left either right
Anywhere in the sunlight.

Well, after all! Ah but hark—
'T am the little woodlark.
The skylark is my cousin and he
Is known to men more than me.
Round a ring, around a ring
And while I sail (must listen) I sing~

Today the sky is two and two
With white strokes and strains of the blue.
The blue wheat-acre is underneath
And the braided ear breaks out of the sheath,
The ear in milk, lush the sash,
And crush-silk poppies aflash,
The blood-gush blade-gash
Flame-rash rudred
Bud shelling or broad-shed
Tatter-tassel-tangled and dingle-a-dangled
Dandy-hung dainty head.

And down the furrow dry
Sunspurge and oxeye
And lace-leaved lovely
Foam-tuft fumitory

I am so very, O so very glad
That I do think there is not to be had
[Anywhere any more joy to be in,
_Cheevio:] when the cry within
Says Go on then I go on
Till the longing is less and the good gone.
But down drop, if it says stop,
To the all-a-leaf of the treestop.
And after that off the bough
[Hover-float to the hedge-brow.]
Through the velvety wind V-winged
[Where shake shadow is sun's-eye-ringred]
To the nest's nook I balance and buoy
With a sweet joy of a sweet joy,
Sweet, of a sweet, of a sweet joy
Of a sweet— a sweet—sweet—joy.
CHAPTER VI

RECEPTION OF THE NOTEBOOKS. REGENT CRITICISM

In the last few years there has taken place what might be loosely described as a "settling" process in the somewhat rambling structure of Hopkins' criticism. This can be traced partly, as has already been indicated, to the effect of the Letters, an effect augmented by the publication of Further Letters (those to Coventry Patmore and others) and The Notebooks and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins; it can be accounted for also by the passage of time. This third phase is not by any means definitive, of course, but its characteristics are distinguishable enough for rough classification. One of the most noticeable shifts is towards the realization of the unity of Hopkins' achievement—and of the true value of that achievement in relation to English literary tradition. We have seen already that as attempts to place him in the sequence of literary history become more frequent, he appears less a poet of our, more a poet for all time. In contrast to the assessments of the early nineteen thirties, we find statements such as the following: "...nor does his work ever strike us with the sudden fresh surprise of modernity that Blake's, for instance, produces in such a piece as An Island of the Moon." In

general, in this third phase of criticism, more attention is devoted to Hopkins' thought, to his aesthetics, practical and theoretical, and to their sources in his philosophical, theological, classical and linguistic studies.

The Notebooks, published in 1937 by Humphry House, opened a veritable mine of information to illuminate Hopkins' aesthetics and his poetry. The Journal particularly, covering the years 1868-1875, was in its way as enlightening as Coleridge's notebooks in uncovering the raw material out of which Hopkins made his poetry, and the resetting and refining process which transmuted his minute observations of nature into poetry of the highest order. Read side by side with the poetry, the Journal is, as one writer remarked, "more enlightening than the most sympathetic critic."2 And indeed, the following juxtaposition of the Notebooks and the Poems3 will prove the truth of the statement. Here we see the garnering of image and epithet which later found its perfection in the "Deutschland."

Notebooks

p. 135.
"the water swung with a great down and up again... the sight was the burly water-backs which heave after heave kept tumbling up from the broken foam."

"Through the cobbled foam-fleece what could he do With the burl of the fountain of air, buck and flood of the wave?" (Stanza 16)


3 These and similar comparisons are to be found in Gardner, Op. cit., pp. 164-68.
"Painted white cobbled-foam tumbling over the rocks and combed away off their backs again."

"And it crowds and it combed to the fall." (Stanza 4)

"flinty waves...In an enclosure of rocks the peaks of the water romped and wandered..."

"The sea flint-flake..." (Stanza 13)

"...rolled with the sea-romp over the wreck." (Stanza 17)

The spontaneous "Hurrahing in Harvest" written in 1877, had its beginnings in Journal entries in 1871.

Notebooks

"A simple behavior of

"what lovely behavior Of silk-sack clouds! has wilder, wilful-wavier meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?"

"silky lingering clouds..."

"the clouds meal white..."

"Later moulding, which brought rain."

Besides the Journal, the Notebooks included extracts from Hopkins' early essays before and during his undergraduate days; his Lecture Notes on Rhetoric and Poetry, probably compiled while he was Professor of Rhetoric at Manresa House, Roehampton; selections from various sermons, and a Commentary on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. Everywhere the Hopkins of the Notebooks and the Hopkins of the poems is seen to be one. The ideas expressed, even in the early essays are clearly related to the later poetry. Commenting on this relationship,
Charles K. Trueblood has stated that

it is seldom one finds a body of ideas
that is, on the one hand, so organic with
the art that developed from it, and on the
other, so fundamentally original, so
immediately a rationale of the abundant
instinctive response of the man to his
world.4

In his essay, "On the Origin of Beauty: A Platonic
Dialogue," written in 1865 Hopkins defines Beauty as the coll­
 ective effect arising out of a work of nature or of art when the
beholder perceives likenesses and differences between the parts
themselves and between the parts and the whole, each part being
seen in the light of the others and of the whole, and the whole
in the light of the parts. That is, Beauty arises from the
perception of design, pattern, or structure, all that Hopkins
called "inscape."

Hopkins applied these ideas to poetry—to inscapes of the
ear, speech framed in likeness—difference patterns of sound.
That these patterns could become very complex is one of the
reasons, as Trueblood observes, why his poetry is "obscure" to
many, why it is an "intellectual" poetry, a packed poetry "in
which no word or syllable is wasted, no word make-believe."5
As the design of "sound-words," "sound- clauses," "sound
sentences" becomes more complex, "the more it penetrates and

276.

5 Ibid., p. 280.
organizes the verbal substance, the more close and elaborate become the comparisons the mind must keep making." This is the reason why Hopkins insisted so often that his poetry be read aloud, and why it shocked those used to reading with the eye. The "supposed obscurity is chargeable...to a generation to whom the reading of poetry is very nearly a lost art."7

To C. Day Lewis Hopkins seemed to have come into English literature by a kind of parthenogenesis, his voice "reminding us of nothing we have heard before."8 Recent critics are finding ancestors for him, without in any way subtracting from his originality, but rather emphasizing it. They are thus vindicating T. S. Eliot's statement that "not only the best, but the most individual parts of a poet's work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously."9

As is well-known, Hopkins was an outstanding Greek scholar. It was natural that critics, impressed by constant references to Greek styles and prosody in his letters and notes, should look for the impress of this interest of his upon his poetry. The purpose of an article by W. B. Stanford was "to show that

6 Ibid., pp. 277-8.
7 Ibid., p. 280.
8 A Hope For Poetry, p. 168.
more than a little of Hopkins' stylistic strangeness is genuinely Aeschylean.\(^{10}\) Noting a similarity between Hopkins' lines,

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. (No. 41)

and a passage from the *Suppliants* (lines 794–97),

A sheer, goat-deserted, unpointed-out
lonely-minded, hanging,
vultury, crag.

Stanford believes that "the brilliant and vivid epithet "lonely-minded" suggested Hopkins' mountains of the mind." He observes also the likeness of figure in

early-stars, stars principal, overbend us,
Fire-featuring heaven. (No. 32)

and the Watchman's description in *Agamemnon*, of the stars, "shining dynasts in the forefront of heaven."

Other Aeschylean properties which are apparent in Hopkins' verse are new-coined, usually compound, epithets, and the accumulation of epithets on a single noun as "a sacrifice, different, lawless, banquetless, kin-builder of quarrels, not-man-fearing." (*Agamemnon*, 11. 151–52) Aeschylus too, favors the adjectives, sheer, deep, towering, dappled, enormous. Syn-aesthetic metaphors, in which one kind of sensation is interpreted in terms of another are also employed by both. Hopkins'\(^{10}\)

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Journal (July 8, 1871), has a passage in which he describes "thunder...like gongs and rolling in great floors of sound." He speaks also of "thunder ringing and echoing round like brass.

In a fragment of The Freeing of Prometheus, Aeschylus describes a "red sea of bronze-thundering-and-lightning." A trumpet-call sets the coast "ablaze" with sound in Perseus (1. 395).

Another Journal passage (Feb. 23, 1872) of Hopkins has this description. "But this sober grey darkness and pale light was happily broken through by the orange of the pealing of Milton bells." Hopkins' "bright wind" in the fifth line of "Heraclitean Fire" finds an exact parallel in Agamemnon (1. 1180-1) 11

Hopkins worked many traditions. Herein lies the reason for the sometimes surprising contradictory statements from critics who try to relate him to one or another tradition—to the romantic, the Metaphysical, the Miltonic, or the alliterative. In a sense he belongs to all traditions; he "learned from—I do not mean merely 'knew'—a greater variety of poets and languages than any poet before him, some of which poets he in certain ways resembles, and others not." 12

11 Gardner, in his Second Volume of Gerard Manley Hopkins (not yet published) shows "how the grammatical structure of Greek and Latin poetry suggested to Hopkins an 'esemplastic' syntax which would combine greater freedom with more compelling unity, concentration, and distinctiveness or 'inscape'. 9 (Op. cit.)

"Philosophically Hopkins is a romantic poet, " is a statement that is true only with qualifications. He would never have subscribed to the romantic heresy which sought perfection in human relationships and in the contemplation of natural beauty. Nor was what critics have called his humanitarianism the humanitarianism of the romantic poets. It proceeded rather from his Christianity, from his ability to read Christ in his neighbor. And it was in this outlook, as Robert Speaight has pointed out, that he returned to an older tradition in English literature, the "medieval tradition of 'Piers Ploughman' and, in part, of Chaucer—and it was continued, and consummated by Shakespeare. It found matter for the highest poetry in the humors of the earth and its humanity. Nor is Hopkins concerned with emphasizing his own personality as were Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats. Rather, in his greatest poetry he reaches out beyond the personal, to the dramatic narrative, as in "The Wreck of the Deutschland." But the difficulty of placing Hopkins' poetry in any one tradition is seen in the following opinion of B. I. Evans:

There is little in Hopkins' verse or in his criticism that can be explained by the classical or romantic contrast....he was in reaction against the romanticism of the later nineteenth century but this did not mean that he was against the

14 Hopkins' Genius and Stature as a Major Poet," Commonweal, Mar. 28, 1941, p. 563.
early nineteenth century or that his own verse or his principles conform to any definition of "classical." He was an advocate of tradition, as is Eliot later, but it is difficult to see that his verse is traditional, in any meaning of the term that will easily admit of interpretation. He may seem to reach back towards Langland, but the verse itself is very unlike Langland's, and their relationship to their audience is very different. 15

It is true that Hopkins' work cannot be circumscribed by these terms used in a narrow sense, limited by the tendencies of any one period. There is a sense, however, in which it is clearly seem to be Classical. Most critics writing at the present moment would probably agree with Gardner that Hopkins' prime intention and general method, "his total complex of style is Classical rather than Romantic." His poetry, that is, achieves its greatest unity and is expressed in the most subtle and dynamic imagery, "when he is handling some deeply felt ethical and human theme."16

The way in which the philosophy of Luns Scotus strengthened and justified to Hopkins his interest in the "inscape" of natural objects, that fundamental concern of his art, was made clearer by the publication of the Notebooks. Hopkins' use of the term appears in his Journal long before he made the acquaintance of the Subtle Doctor, but the discovery when it came.


in 1872 appeared to him almost as a grace from Heaven.

At that time I had first begun to get hold of a copy of Scotus on the Sentences in the Baddely Library and was flush with a new stroke of enthusiasm. It may come to nothing or it may be a mercy from God. But just then when I took in any inscape of sky or sea I thought of Scotus. 17

The relation of Hopkins' thought to the philosophy of the Schoolman has not yet been very thoroughly investigated. The subject will undoubtedly be one of the important fields of study for future critics of the poet. The bond that drew Hopkins to Scotus was undoubtedly their common experience of "form" as the individualizing force in things. Duns Scotus's theory of individuation, which differs from the more commonly accepted theory of St. Thomas Aquinas which places the principle of individuation in "quantified matter," has been briefly indicated by Christopher Devlin, S.J., the first to show the relationship between Hopkins' and Scotus's conceptions:

Each man's nature is the nature of all the world, elemental, vegetative, sensitive, human. But one man differs utterly from another because by his individuality he possesses the common nature in an especial degree. The individual degree is the degree in which he lacks the infinite; it knits together in the one man all his natural activities, animal, rational, etc. and gives them direction God-wards. 18

17 Notebooks, p. 161

Scotus placed the principle of individuation in form because, as he said, matter as such possesses none of the characteristics of individuality and since individuals exist, the principle of individuation must be the form. The human soul, then, in virtue of its essence, "is not simply a soul but this soul, and it is this essential individuality which individualizes the matter of the body and, along with the body, the whole man." 19

We can see why this philosophy would justify to Hopkins his preoccupation with individual things in all their particularity and singularity. It would not be a preoccupation with matter merely, but "with informed being, and this informed being, as being at least was the very seal and facsimile of God's." 20

The exact manner in which Hopkins saw the reflection of God in natural or human "inscapes" is debatable. He believed that the contemplation of them was the guide to God's beauty. Here he followed St. Thomas as well as Scotus and other schoolmen. Hopkins' expression of his experience in statements such as that about the beauty of a bluebell he had been examining, 21 "I know the beauty of our Lord by it. Its inscape is mixed of strength and grace," can give the impression that he really succeeded in finding the true likeness of God through creatures.

21 *Notebooks*, p. 430.
by immersing his mind in the minutiae of their qualities. This, as Little points out in his article on John Pick's treatment of Hopkins and Scotus, would be contrary to St. Thomas's teaching. It is not by immersion in creatures but by abstraction from them that, according to St. Thomas, one arrives at the knowledge of God. The world, in Hopkins' own words is "word, expression, news, of God." When he looks at a leaf, for instance, "the leaf as a leaf is not a resemblance of God. But the being and the beauty of the leaf faithfully and exactly reflect the being and the beauty of God." Thus, the more closely he perceives the details of the inscape, "the richer becomes Hopkins' insight into the meaning of beauty and the fuller his idea of the beauty of God." According to Scotus also, created nature in all its degrees of being was summed up in the highest possible degree in the human nature of Christ. Thus it is not surprising to find Hopkins, in the sonnet in which he particularly celebrates the "selves" of things, ending with

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.
(No. 34)

This aspect of Scotus's doctrine, as critics have pointed out appears in Hopkins' gleanings of Christ in the universe, the

lovely asunder
Starlight, wafting him out of it.
(No. 4, St. 4)

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23 Unpublished Ms. quoted by Pick, p. 49.
the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding shoulder
(No. 14)

Scotus, like other Franciscans, and like their great founder, sought "vestiges" of God everwhere in creation. But in man above all is that image found, Hopkins too saw man as "world's loveliest," acting

in God's eyes what in God's eye he is--
Christ-- (No. 34)

St. Ignatius, of course, presupposed this doctrine of the likeness of God in creatures, but Scotus's teaching fitted in precisely with Hopkins' own instinctive approach to natural beauty. "Inscape," which was to Hopkins, "the very soul of art,"25 that which holds beauty fast in a thing,26 was also that which made it distinctive, individual, a "self." Scotus then, gave Hopkins a philosophic foundation for his aesthetic experience, and taught him how mortal beauty may become for him supernatural,

"God's better beauty, grace." (No. 38)

Hopkins' conceptions of "inscape" and "instress" can also be related to Scotus's theory of knowledge. The experiencing of beauty as "inscape" is an act in which form and its concrete embodiment are grasped as it were simultaneously by

26 Notebooks, p. 250.
both the mind and the senses. Scotus preached a "first act" of knowledge, "wherein sense and intellect are one, a confused intuition of nature as a living whole." Ordinarily, the act of abstraction immediately follows this "glimpse," but if it does not, "if the first act is dwelt on (by "instress") to the exclusion of succeeding abstractions, then you can feel, see, hear, or somehow experience the Nature which is your and all creation's as... 'inscape'." Gardner, following Devlin, believes that "Hopkins probably indentified the Scotist special concept of the singular with his own private concept of inscape (though the latter has a relatively narrow aesthetic connotation) and the primum actum with his own experience of primary instress." A third aspect of Scotist philosophy is evident also in Hopkins' poetry—his doctrine on Will. According to Scotus the "first act" being a spontaneous expression of nature, is good, but neither right or wrong. To make it "right" it must be directed towards God by an act of the will. This, says Devlin, is the whole point of the poem, "On a Piece of Music."

Therefore this masterhood,
This piece of perfect song,
This fault-not-found-with-good,
Is neither right nor wrong.

The necessary volitional act which would direct the natural

27 Devlin, New Verse.
28 Loc. cit.
inspiration Godwards in implied in the stanza

What makes the man and what
The man within that makes:
Ask whom he serves or not
Serves and what side he takes.

Scotus taught that in man will and not intellect, is the expression of individuality, and he laid great emphasis upon the freedom of the will; "there is in each man the individual element—haecclitas, Will, spring of action." Stanza seven of "On the Portrait of Two Beautiful Young People" is cited by Gardner as "almost an epitome of the Scotist concept of the haecclitas, the 'moral pitch' of the Self, as expressed in the Will":

Man lives that list, that leaning in thw will
No wisdom can forecast by gauge or guess,
The selfless self of self, most strange, most still,
Fast furled and all foredrawn to No or Yes.

To what extent Scotus's doctrine on will influenced Hopkins' own will and decisions is of course impossible to determine. He had made his choice of a way of life before he ever became aware of Scotist teaching. It is less probable that his addiction to Scotus supplied a religious as much as an aesthetic need to him. Hence, it is somewhat of an exaggeration to say that he was a Scotist simply because that philosophy supplied "an alembic through which he could transform his Nietzschean passion for wild, untrammelled freedom—for 'all things counter, original, spare, strange,'—into a manly and

noble submission to the teachings of Christ." 32

The better understanding of Hopkins the man, which we have mentioned as a characteristic of recent criticism, is evidenced in several articles. This factor was attributed by Terence Heywood to the effect of the Letters and Notebooks. These, by revealing the man are gradually helping to clear up a major misunderstanding about the effects of his vocation on his poetry, one partly perpetuated by the well-known and several-times reprinted essay by Herbert Read who failed to realize that the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius "formed, for better or for worse, the very stuff and not merely the accidental channel of Hopkins' poems." 33

The wavering between values, and the indecision and doubt postulated by a Richards—Ehmpson criticism were also denied: "there was never any doubt in his mind as to the relative importance of the religious and poetic demands." 34

Several of Hopkins' fellow—Jesuits, we recall, had pointed out the relation of his poetry to his life in the Society. In 1942 the first complete treatment of this relation was attempted. John Pick's whole study, entitled Gerard Manley Hopkins, Priest and Poet, 35 is deliberately limited to an effort to show


35 Oxford University Press.
in what respects life in the Society of Jesus supplied Hopkins with theme and inspiration. Maintaining that "interest in Hopkins the technician has been disproportionately great," and that "a study of his religious thought and development... is essential to an understanding" of his achievement, Pick placed his emphasis upon the influence of the Spiritual Exercises.

Most of Hopkins' critics, whether they deplore or rejoice at the fact, will agree with Pick's opening statement that his entrance into the Jesuit Novitiate in 1868 was the great dividing point of his life. "On one side is the unformed youth, on the other is the Jesuit priest. On the one side is his early verse, on the other is his great poetry." 36

Pick shows how Hopkins early came into contact with the sacramental view of the Universe urged by Duns Scotus, in the "Principle and Foundation" of the Spiritual Exercises. Here too, we may find the source of the ideas Hopkins held concerning the use of his talents. Man, he learned, was created to "praise, reverence, and serve God." All other things were created only in order to aid man in attaining that end. Hence "man ought to make use of them just so far as they help him attain his end." 37

Here is the key to the exhortations in the poetry to "Praise Him"

36 Op. cit., p. 1. W. H. Auden in a recent article makes the same statement—that the Society of Jesus "turned an esthete no better or worse than a dozen bright young men of the sixties and seventies, into a serious and unique artist. ("A Knight of the Infinite," New Republic, August 31, 1944.)

"Laus Deo—the river today and yesterday."38 And "as we drove home the stars came out thick: I leant back to look at them and my heart opening more than usual praised our Lord in whom all that beauty comes home."39 The spontaneous linking of awareness of natural beauty with praise of God in these passages, incidentally, is in itself a refutation of opinions like that of Abbot who stated that "there is something not altogether subdued to the Christian purpose" in Hopkins' delight in earth's beauty; or that of Read concerning his "rationalizing" of his delight in nature.

Hopkins' concern with man's failure to fulfill God's purposes, a concern expressed in "God's Grandeur," "The Sea and the Skylark," "Spring," and "The Valley of the Elwy," is paralleled in his notes on the "Principle and Foundation" of the Spiritual Exercises, wherein, after a comment on the glory which created nature—the sun and moon, birds and thunder—gives to God, without knowing it, he turns to man:

But man can know God, can mean to give him glory... Does man then do it?... No, we have not answered God's purpose, we have not reached the end of our being. Are we God's orchard or God's vineyard? We have yielded rotten fruit, sour grapes, or none... 40

38 Notebooks, p. 135.
39 Ibid., p. 205.
40 Notebooks, p. 303.
Hopkins becomes specific in his description of man's use of creatures in "God's Grandeur,"—"all is seared with trade, bleared, smeared with toil;" in Duns Scotus' Oxford where the "base and brickish skirt there, sours That neighbour—nature thy grey beauty is grounded Best in;" Man's failure is more poignantly felt in the sestet of "The Sea and the Skylark":

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.

Pick juxtaposes the Spiritual Exercises, the Notebooks, and "The Wreck of the Deutschland," to show that the last is the "very epitome of the Spiritual Exercises." The first three stanzas, with their emphasis upon the power of God, His grace and the necessity of cooperating with it, the struggle to say "yes" to the call to self-sacrifice, the soul's surrender to grace are a summary of the first part of the Exercises leading up to the "Election" in which the soul chooses "a state of life which may be most in accord with the will of God. The lines in the second stanza,

and dost thou touch me afresh?
Over again I feel thy finger and find thee.

are illuminated by a passage in Hopkins' Commentary in which he wrote that grace "...is truly God's finger touching the very vein of personality, which nothing else can reach."41

41 Notebooks, p. 337.
The disintegration of the natural life to make way for the supernatural, for grace "lifts the receiver from one cleave of being to another,"\textsuperscript{42} is expressed in the two beautiful "coroets" of the fourth stanza—"I am soft sift....I steady as a water in a well...."

The following stanzas, resulting from the realization of the far-reaching effects of the Incarnation (the Second Week of the Exercises), describe how it is not out of Christ's heavenly life that redemptive grace springs, bringing its invitation to sacrifice, but out of His Incarnation and Passion. The second section, the narrative of the shipwreck, seen as a re-enactment of the Redemption in those who have voluntarily elected to imitate Christ, can be related to the Third Week of the Exercises, the contemplation of the Passion. A parallel to the lines of stanza 29,

\begin{quote}
Wording it how but by him that present and past,
Heaven and earth are word of, worded by?—
\end{quote}

in fact a summary of the thought underlying his most typical nature poems, is found in a passage in his Commentary on the Exercises:

God's utterance of himself in himself is
God the Word, outside himself is the world.
This world then is word, expression, news of God.
Therefore its end, its purport, its meaning,
is God, and its life or work to name and praise him. 43

Pick concludes his commentary on the "Deutschland," briefly outlined herein, with the judgment that it was the combination of Hopkins' experience of the Spiritual Exercises with its emphasis on the dedication of all man's powers to the worship and praise of God, and of Scotist sacramentalism which gave Hopkins' nature poems "their combination of sensitivity to created beauty—a vital awareness even more appealing than his early Keatsian sensuousness—and their intellectual and emotional direction." 44

In the chapter, "Dublin and Desolation," Pick, in a skilful marshalling of the evidence in Hopkins' letters, attempts to clear up some of the problems surrounding Hopkins' last years. Believing that there is little foundation for the opinion that these years saw the culmination of Hopkins' doubt of the wisdom of his choice of a vocation, he emphasizes the importance of realizing the open-eyed, voluntary nature of Hopkins' dedication. The sacrifice of his art involved was a deliberate choice made in the interests of a higher ideal. "My vocation puts before me a standard so high that a higher can be found nowhere else." 45

It was not a sacrifice of composition but of fame: "I shall in my present mind continue to compose, as occasion shall fairly allow...and let what I produce wait and take its chance."46

In regard to the mental suffering of the last five years, Pick agrees with other critics that "by constitution and temperament Hopkins was destined to suffer deeply." He believes that the poems of these years, the seven great sonnets, can be connected with that spiritual state which St. Ignatius and spiritual writers describe as "Desolation." This in Hopkins would be intensified by his own keen self-criticism. "Desolation," as St. Ignatius defines it, is a darkness of soul, disturbance in it, movement to things low and earthly, the disquiet of different agitations and temptations, moving to want of confidence, without hope, without love, when one feels oneself all lazy, tepid, sad, and as if separated from his Creator and Lord. 47

The sonnets, examined closely, substantiate this opinion. Hopkins seemed to recognize that his sadness whatever its cause was a trial from Heaven.

God's most deep decree  
Bitter would have me taste; my taste was me  
(No. 45)

Patience, the virtue which Ignatius counsels his followers

46 Loc. cit.  
to cultivate in time of desolation, is the subject of No. 46.

Patience, hard thing! the hard thing but to pray,
But bid for, Patience is! Patience who asks
Wants war, wants wounds; weary his times, his tasks;
To do without, take tosses, and obey.

Here too Hopkins voices his submission:

We hear our hearts grate on themselves: it kills
To bruise them dearer. Yet the rebellious wills
Of us we do bid God bend to him even so.

In another poem, the attitude is of more than submission; it is
a joyful acceptance, a triumph of faith:

Nay in all that toil, that coil, since (seems)
I kissed the rod,
Hand rather, my heart lol! lapped strength, stole joy, would laugh, cheer.
Cheer whom though? the hero whose heaven-handling flung me, foot trod
Me? or me that fought him? O which one? is it each one? That night, that year
Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God.

What was the result of Hopkins' vocation upon his poetry itself? Pick believes that his poetry gained.

...when he did compose it was because he absolutely had to write and the very qualities which make for the greatness of his poetry and which every critic admires, his absolute honesty, his directness, his passionate personal utterance, his concentrated intensity—are the result of his renunciation. Further, his repudiation of the world allowed him to proceed with amazing independence of conventional standards. 48

Pick's study supplements and completes earlier scattered

essays the aim and achievement of which was to make clearer the truth that Hopkins' poetry cannot be fully understood without some knowledge of the religious experiences of his priestly life. While an animadversion levelled at Pick's work, that it is "not so much disinterested criticism as expository comment," has truth behind it, the judgment disregards the author's primary intention, which was to disclose the motives and dispositions of the priest as they are revealed in the poet. It is true that "partial quotation with general remarks ill serves a poem either in part or in entirety." Yet Pick's partial quotation suffices for his purpose, which was not the inclusion of all the grammatical and language possibilities, desirable as the wider scope undoubtedly is.

Another observation made by a reviewer of Pick's book, that from the point of view of the literary critic it is immaterial whether Hopkins the poet and Hopkins the priest were on terms of amity, is also untenable, for critics of Hopkins


50 In the light of Pick's intention the reaction evidenced in the following comment is surprising: "His small volume, more interpretative than biographical, introduces us to the character of the real poet at times, but is often, probably because the author is not a Catholic, more befuddled in its complexities than the reader." (R. W. Hanlon, in *Newsletter*, Catholic Book Club, X (May, 1943, p. 1) In his reply to this reviewer Pick stated that he had "tried to make my Catholicism the integral basis of the entire study." (Cf. *Newsletter*, June, 1943, p. 2)

51 Ibid., p. 349.

from the beginning have made the relation of consequence to them. The monograph leaves no doubt that the **Spiritual Exercises** and Scotist philosophy supplied not a little of the thought and exercised an integrating influence upon Hopkins' poetry. That the boundaries of his artistic genius embraced a vaster area, that he was the inheritor of the great tradition of his predecessors in English literature as well as the legatee of Loyola is not the direct advertement of the study. One of the conclusions which the evidence presses upon the reader is the essentially, unequivocally Christian nature and direction of Hopkins' art. It epitomizes Christianity as the **Spiritual Exercises** themselves epitomize it. It is not surprising to find other critics after Pick emphasizing this aspect, that he "was from first to last a Christian poet, loving the world God made, aspiring to the vision of God;"53 emphasizing also his uncompromising singleness of vision: "for Hopkins, life was a continuous substantial progress towards perfection. He believed this, he lived this, this is what he wrote."54

The coordination of the study of Hopkins' poetry with the increased knowledge of the springs of his art is exemplified in a number of tributes appearing in reviews and in book form.


which commemorate the Centenary of his birth in 1944.

The best illustration of this equipoised approach, as well as the most complete and valuable investigation which has appeared so far is that of W. H. Gardner in the work which has already been referred to in these pages. In this first of two volumes, subtitled *A Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition*, Gardner treats, in a careful and sensitive analysis, the sources of Hopkins' aesthetics, the prosodic and linguistic, as well as the thematic and imaginative elements in his poetry.

In an introductory chapter, "The Two Vocations," Gardner adopts the terms personality and character as Herbert Read uses them (with reservations, however), to define a "natural dichotomy of being" in Hopkins; "two strains in the man which tend to pull in opposite directions." In Hopkins' submission to the Jesuit discipline, the active personality ("that complex of native faculties, 'wild and self instressed,' which find their highest expression in great works of art") was almost completely subjected to the passive character (the stamp imposed by training, tradition or by the will).

55 In *Form in Modern Poetry* Gardner does not agree that character necessarily thwarts personality.


57 Ibid., pp. 2-3.
One hesitates to characterize as "passive" that making and shaping discipline by which Hopkins formed himself to the ideal held out to him in his vocation. This is why we feel that in his whole living, as well as in his poetry, as one critic puts it, "Hopkins is substantially dramatic, in act according to the language of scholastic philosophy."58 Gardner does stress, however, with Pick, the "very willingness of that self-surrender which opened up a loophole of escape for the personality, so that the very act of renunciation could be at the same time a bold statement of self-possession."59

Gardner's Second Chapter comprises a long comment on "The Wreck of the Deutschland,"60 wherein this poem is given the most complete exegesis thus far received from a critic. Far from being a mere "metrical experiment" as too often critics had designated it, the "Deutschland" is a masterpiece of poetic rhythm. The new rhythm employed in it for the first time was not only a new kind of meter; it included "a new and effective fusion of rhythm and texture or tone-values." For its combined naturalness and markedness of expression Gardner adopts the

60 This chapter is an amplification of an earlier essay on the "Deutschland" which appeared in Essays and Studies of the English Association, XXI (1936).
definition, "expressional rhythm," as signifying "more precisely a vital fusion of the internal rhythm of thought and emotion and the external rhythm of sound."61

Hopkins' great skill in combining the freedom of musical and speech rhythms with exceptional architectonic control, and his calculation and deliberation in bringing about that unification is given its due recognition. His great variety of rhythmic resources is apparent everywhere; no two of the thirty five "alexandrines" which terminate the stanzas of the "Deutschland," for instance, are metrically identical. This variety, combined with Hopkins' creative handling of syntax results in "a unique poetic design, a verbal tapestry of brilliant texture."62 Yet this deliberation never results in an effect of artificiality. No rhythmic device could be more natural, in fact, than the overflow in these lines from stanza 18.

Ah, touched in your bower of bone
Are you! turned for an exquisite smart
Have you! make words break from me here all alone
Do you!—mother of being in me, heart.

In this stanza, says Gardner,

As with a sob, each line stumbles and falters over the threshold of the next, and the regularity of this encroachment sets up a vertical cross current of pure expressional rhythm without disturbing the basic metre. 63

61 Ibid., p. 43.
62 Ibid., p. 48.
63 Loc. cit.
Turning from the rhythmical aspects of the poem to its content, Gardner observes in it a likeness to Donne's Anniversaries. In both works the poet's own religious fervor supplies the emotional tone, the thoughts and imagery, while an external event supplies the motif, the broad framework. In both there is an "imaginative fusion of the impersonal and the personal, the accidental and the fundamental, the particular and the universal which gives the intellectual content a poignancy equalled only by the sustained beauty of the verbal incantation."64

Space does not permit full comment on the masterly exegesis of the four "movements" by which the poem develops from the opening meditation on God's grandeur, through the narration of the Wreck, to the reconciliation, inspired by faith, to God's will and the triumphant hymn of adoration with which it concludes.

The opening invocations seem to indicate, according to Gardner, that Hopkins began the poem in a state of tranquillity which, however, followed a struggle in which "the problem of evil and the Christian doctrine of Divine Love and Omnipotence have been with difficulty reconciled by reason and faith."65

64 Ibid., pp. 50-51.
65 Ibid., p. 50.
Of the "metaphysical" stanza 4, "I am soft sift..." with its double symbol of dissolution and reinforcement, Gardner remarks that the "dichotomy of being, from a religious point of view, has never been more tersely or more poignantly expressed." 66

The sixth and seventh stanzas, Gardner rightly avers, are the most important in the poem. They insist that God's purposes are not always manifested in the peace of "lovely-asunder starlight," but are oftener made known with the sudden violent impact which "storms deliver." This supernatural stress derives from Christ's Passion which was the "discharge into the world of a new ethic—the concept that self-sacrifice is the fundamental principle of perfection." 67

Hardly to be matched in English literature is Hopkins' description of the Wreck with its combined ideality and realism. The "most unprecedented" stanza,

They fought with God's cold—
   And they could not and fell to the deck
   (Crushed them) or water (and drowned them) or rolled
   with the sea-romp over the wreck.

is aptly compared to a series of cinematographic "shots." Apt too, is Gardner's description of the last two lines of the poem which has been censured for the series of genitives:

Pride, rose, prince, hero, of us, high-priest,
   Our heart's charity's hearth's fire, our thought's chivalry's throng's lord.

66 Ibid., p. 56.
67 Ibid., p. 57-58.
In this conclusion, most appropriately, "passion seems to spend itself in the heavily accented rhythm of a protracted roll of drums." 68

Hopkins' most significant contribution to verse-morphology, his variations of the traditional Italian sonnet, is treated in one of the most valuable chapters of Gardner's study. His experiments with the form are so important because of their timeliness. Nineteenth century versifiers had entrenched themselves firmly behind a belief in its inviolable nature. Hall Caine's reception of Hopkins' sonnets was an instance of this. Hopkins also honored in the breach several of the "ten absolutely essential rules" for a good sonnet set down in Sharp's Preface to Sonnets of the Century in 1888. The first of these rules he broke on principle, e.g., that "the sonnet must consist of fourteen decasyllabic lines." This kind of dogmatism which, as Gardner observes, enslaves the critic oftener than it enslaves the true poet, was not confined to the nineteenth century.

The climate of opinion into which Hopkins' sonnets entered in 1918 is apparent in the rules laid down by T. W. H. Crosland in The English Sonnet. 69 Crosland placed further limits on the form even than Sharp in legislating that only the two schemes used by Petrarch were tolerable. Gardner indicates how a

68 Ibid., p. 66.
69 First published in 1917.
breaking away from the following of Crosland's "fixed" rules produced some of Hopkins' best effects:

Full pauses should never be employed after the first word in a line, or at the end of the first, second, third, fifth, sixth or seventh line of the octet, or at the end of the first or fifth line of the sestet.70

Hopkins allows full pauses at all the places enumerated. Significant examples appear in

It gathers to a greatness like the ooze of oil
Crushed.

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride
Plume, here
Buckle!

It is just this placing of the "last word of the image at the beginning of line for the purpose of stress," which is most effective, according to another critic, in causing the image to "bolster the design of the poem." Thus, "crushed" at the beginning of the fourth line of "God's Grandeur," gives "greater force to the grandeur of God."71 "Carrian Comfort" and "The Starlight Night" need only be mentioned as examples of Hopkins breach of another of Crosland's rules, namely: "A sonnet must not be dramatic or exclamatory in its diction; it must not be overburdened with interrogative lines or sentences."72

However, it is Gardner's purpose to prove that Hopkins did not abandon the law entirely in his use of the sonnet form, but

that he found out "that peculiar modification of the law" which best expressed his own genius. He did not reject the essentials of the form. He preserved most carefully the proportion of the octave to the sestet, seeing in that proportion the "real characteristic of the sonnet, illustrating it by a mathematical equation: \((4+4)+(3+3) = 2.4 + 2.3 = 2 (4+3) = 2.7 = 14.73\) The rhyme scheme he cherished also, because it was "founded on a principle of nature and cannot be altered without loss of effect."\(^74\) His own most significant and characteristic innovation, the substitution of counterpointed, outriding, and sprung rhythms for the iambic decasyllable had a solid base in his study of the difference in length between the sonnet in the Italian language and that in the English language. He found that, owing to the slurring of final and initial vowels, that the English decasyllable was really shorter then the Italian, sometimes by three or four syllables. Often in the Italian the syllables themselves were longer. The English sonnet suffered then, as Hopkins expressed it, from a want, "not of comparative but of absolute length."\(^75\) This condition accounts for a certain "lightness" often found in English sonnets where-in lines frequently contain too many short or lightly stressed syllables.

\(^{73}\) Letters II, p. 72.
\(^{74}\) Ibid., p. 71.
\(^{75}\) Ibid., p. 80.
Examples are Wordsworth's

To level with the dust a noble horde
A brotherhood of venerable trees.

and Byron's famous

Eternal spirit of the chainless mind

which contains only three long syllables.

Hopkins overcome this "lightness" either by the use of
Alexandrine lines or by employing extrametrical "outriding" feet. His definition of the latter device is familiar: the
"outride" consists of

one, two, or three slack syllables added to
a foot and not counted in the nominal scanning.
They are so-called because they seem to hang
below the line or ride backward and forward
from it in another dimension than the line
itself. 76

Gardner's elucidation of the last lines of "Hurrahing in
Harvest" illustrates both the nominal scanning and the "riding."

The heart rears wings bold and bolder
And hurls 0 half hurrs earth for him
off under his feet.

Revolutionary as this device appears at first, it is nevertheless not without its precedent in English literary tradition
as Hopkins himself pointed out. Shakespeare used it frequently:

For mine own safeties; you may be rightly just  
(Macbeth IV, iii, 33)

There rich and honorable; besides the gentlemen.  
(Two Gent. III, i, 64)
Other lengthening devices used in conjunction with outrides, Hopkins' "hurried syllables," and his "recitation stress," in which two adjacent syllables are given about equal stress have been indicated already. The last also has precedent in Shakespeare, as Gardner points out:

Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest be hid?  
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back.  
(Sonnet LXV)

Gardner's elucidation of the chronological development of Hopkins' experiments with the sonnet is a valuable charting, the only attempt to categorize that genre as Hopkins practiced it. The results are enlightening and serve to bring out the extraordinary resourcefulness of the poet in employing "ten different variations of the Italian sonnet-form not to mention three minor modifications within two of the major types." The only in his rhythmic devices can Hopkins be compared with Shakespeare, but "these two poets share almost exclusively "the quality which Gardner designates as "wakefulness," that is, "an amazing adroitness in exploiting and adapting all the tried expedients of the language."
Gardner's chapter on "Diction and Syntax" lays out Hopkins' originality in the use of these tried expedients. Two characteristics of Hopkins' diction are foreshadowed in his early essay "Poetic Diction." Here, in a comment on Wordsworth's theory, he maintains, in contradiction to it, that the language of prose and poetry must differ: verse necessitates and en-genders a difference in diction and thought. Its effect is concentration or vividness of idea. Two means of achieving this vividness are: various modes of parallelism; and different modifications of a general type, as, for instance, accenting the last syllable of past participles, a practice never appearing in prose. The first is an important structural characteristic in Hopkins which is sometimes varied by the more primitive device of incantatory repetition. A more characteristic application of the second principle appears in his sudden "deviation from an essentially poetic diction to the prose or colloquial norm, or from a preceded to an unprecedented or ungrammatical arrangement of words." 

Hopkins' coinages are manifold in their origins. Some are simply the employment of nouns for verbs and vice versa: "Let him easter in us"; "the achieve of the thing." Others are metaphorical, the returning of a word to its original meaning as "and the sour scythe cringes" where "cringe" comes from Old

81 Cf. Notebooks, p. 92ff.
English "crincgan," to bend, sink. With Shakespeare, Hopkins favored a use of compounds with "self," a habit connected with his intense interest in the individual. Like Spenser he was partial to native compounds with "fore." Gardner's sensitive analysis of compounds such as "wanwood," "leafmeal," "between-pie," "groundlong," and others prove that in most of them "there is an absolute validity and beauty." Hopkins was looking to Shakespeare and Browning in his hyphenated noun-compounds. He revived verb-and-object compounds—"fall-gold," "blear-all," "rollrock," "wring-world," etc—used occasionally by Shakespeare but very rarely by other poets after him. Altogether Gardner lists fifteen types of compound epithets used with consummate skill by Hopkins.

Hopkins' originality in the employment of archaic terms is also indicated. He considered archaism a "blight" on the whole but in his use of it justified his statement that, "some little flavours, but much spoils." He always imparted new life or new metaphorical meaning in his use of archaic words, as in

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

the obsolete "patch" and the archaic "Jack" and "potsherd" shoulder more common words to increase effectiveness.


84 Letters I, p. 218.
To Hopkins' dislocation of grammar, his strange constructions and ellipses, Gardner applies the name "sprung," or "expressional" syntax, that is, a placing of words where they best express the shape and movement of the individual thought. Thus, the strange constructions of "Harry Ploughman" produce a "sense of dramatic movement, the musical response excited in the poet."85 Hopkins carries ellipsis, a device of speech very common in Elizabethan poetry noticeable also in Browning and Meredith, to its furthest extremes. Sometimes he pares sentences down to three or four key words, as in

Your feast of; that most in you earnest eye
May but call on your banes to more carouse.
Worst will the best. (No. 54)

where "Your feast of;" may be "Your feast of physical beauty, as for instance..." and "Worst will the best," "The worst will always prey upon, vitiate, the best."86 A comparable breaking-up of word-order to secure emphasis is seen in Shakespeare's and Hopkins' practice:

To make the dear loss, have I means much weaker
Than you may call to comfort you. (Temp. V, i, 146)

Those lovely lads once, wet-fresh windfalls of
war's storm,
How then should Gregory, a father, have gleaned
else from swarm-
ed Rome? (No. 38)

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86 Cf. Ibid., p. 141ff.
A study of Hopkins' themes and imagery also discovers him to be deeply rooted in tradition. As his themes were those of a religious poet it will not be a surprise to find his imagery resembling that of other religious poets. Like "Christian poets of all times," Hopkins attaches a moral and "mystical" signifi-
cance "to such objects as the stars, fire, lightning, the plough, the soldier and the rod of chastisement."87 Yet in his love of May-skies, stars, clouds, dawn and sunsets, he is also akin to the Romantic poets. In the dramatic motility of his imagery he is seen to resemble the Shelley of the "West Wind" and "The Cloud." In this aspect he is a contrast to Keats, with whom he has certain affinities, who always connects Beauty with relaxation, sleep and statuesque immobility. The connota-
tion and reference of Hopkins' Romantic imagery is essentially different from that of the Romantic poets. For Hopkins, "Nature had no magic casements opening to nebulous fascinating but otherwise unprofitable faery lands. Beauty, for him, was never a narcotic, but was always a powerful stimulant to his social and numinous emotions."88

87 Ibid., p. 152. The term "mystical" here means merely that the poet attached a religious significance to these objects as symbolizing for him certain spiritual realities or super-
natural truths.

88 Ibid., p. 193.
Contrasting with and modifying the Romantic inheritance in Hopkins' verse, the traditions of Donne, Herbert, Crashaw and Marvell is visible. "Metaphysical" characteristics come to the fore in his comparisons of natural objects to artificial ones: his comparison, for instance, of a good man to a well (No. 4.4), a nun faced with death to an electric bell (Ibid., 31) a singing lark to a winch (No. 11) and a wink of the eye to a meal (No. 37). He resembles the seventeenth century poets also in the preciseness of his observation, his remarking of the fact that air each eye-lash or hair Girdles; in his reconciliation of opposites, as in:

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

Other similarities to earlier poets in imagery and picture, to Francis Quarles, George Herbert, Crashaw and Chaucer are perhaps reminiscences of Hopkins' earlier reading. Gardner brings out a resemblance between the second and third stanzas of the "Deutschland" and certain passages in Quarles' Emblems and Herbert's "The Storm."89 He notes also how the paradoxes of "God's anger and love, the sour-and-sweet of faith, the creature's alternate wrestling with his Creator and meekly accepting his will," are recurrent themes in Herbert.90

89 Cf. Ibid., pp. 170-71.
90 Ibid., p. 171.
Gardner's elucidation of the "Windhover" is a unification of earlier interpretations. With the psychological critics he agrees that it embodies a spiritual conflict between "opposite discordant tendencies in the active personality and the consciously controlled character." The dedication to Christ, however, is the significant fact of the poem. The phrase, "my heart in hiding," which signified to Empson that the more dangerous life is the Windhover's, is to Gardner the statement of the moral theme. His heart is in hiding from the world, not, as Richards had it, from "the life of the senses, of the imagination and emotional risk, from speculation," but "in hiding with Christ, wholly dedicated to His love, praise and service." "O my Chevalier" refers not to the Windhover but to Christ upon whom Hopkins calls for help in "buckling in" or enclosing in rule his own faculties. Gardner gives the following summary of the sequence of the poem:

The Windhover flashes a trail of beauty across the morning sky; but the beauty in action, the inspiration, the glory of Christ (and in a lesser degree, of the plodding, inhibited poet-priest) is far, far lovelier. The taut sweeping windhover is the terror of the air; but the disciplined life of the spirit

91 Ibid., p. 181.
is much more dangerous, because it is menaced
by, and must itself attack and overcome, a far
greater foe—the power of evil....The price,
however, must be paid. How unlike the swoop
of the hawk is the following symbol of "a man
of sorrows," the jaded drudge, the gradual
cooling of youthful vigour and zeal—"blue-
bleak embers"! It is a martyrdom, but the
consolation is there too:

and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.94

In his last two chapters Gardner gives a brief summary of
the significant points brought out by the leading "schools" of
Hopkins' critics, and distinguishes between various influences
in modern poetry which might be mistaken for that of Hopkins.
This last subject will be discussed in conjunction with the
study of Hopkins' influence in the chapter following.

In reference to the body of Hopkins criticism, Gardner's
study is culminating and, in a sense, accumulative. Working with
the advantage of access to all the recent information about

94 Ibid., p. 183. In the masterly exegesis in which he
stresses the relationship between the imagery of the poem and
the Ignatian meditation on "The Kingdom of Christ," R.V. Schoder
S.J., emphasizes this last point: "The very air of triumph in
the rhythmical swiftness and energy of the words 'shine' and
'gold-vermillion' echoes his consolation and his trust." Thus,
it is an "air of joy and triumph, not of depressing renunciation
which dominates the whole." Schoder sees the theme of the
poem to be one of challenge and acceptance: Christ's challenge
to the poet symbolized in the action of the Windhover "a symbol
of the Christian knight valiantly warring against evil," and
Hopkins' acceptance, to dedicate himself more completely to
Christ's service, heedless of the cost. (Cf. "What Does the
Windhover Mean? Immortal Diamond")
Hopkins' life and thought, and to the groundwork criticism of his predecessors, he has utilized his advantages. He has followed up, brought to a conclusion, probed diligently and carefully into the significant observations of earlier critics. His particular contribution would seem to be just this development of often casual hints and comments. It is a contribution based on careful research, a sensitive critical acumen and probity, and an enthusiastic, well-balanced appreciation of his subject. His work presents at first a somewhat eclectic appearance, and the reader feels that a further unification and simplification is to come. This is due partly to the multiplicity of relations, and the wide radius of unsuspected reference which such a thorough study of Hopkins uncovers, partly, probably, to a change in his original plan of publication, necessitated by war conditions.

III

The "varied flavor of Hopkins" is found in the four essays commemorating his Centenary in the Kenyon Review.95 These and other anniversary tributes are indicative perhaps of Hopkins' "academic" status. There is little in them of the surprise of discovery or of the recognition of a spiritual affinity so noticeable even a decade ago. Commenting upon the appeal

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95 Volume VI (Summer, 1944). These essays, supplemented by two others which appear in the following issue (Autumn, 1944) of the Kenyon Review, together with an introductory biographical essay by Austin Warren and the essay by F. R. Leavis, discussed in this chapter, have just been published in book form. (Gerard Manley Hopkins, by the Kenyon Critics New Directions, 1946).
Hopkins had for the young poets of the thirties who felt that his "intensity" was the expression of a moral conflict similar to theirs, Anne Ridler remarks that, "...apart from a rare poem such as 'Tom's Garland,' I do not see that Hopkins was much troubled with the problems which troubled these poets."96 Certain opinions still persist, however. The opening statement of Herbert Marshall McCLuhan's essay, "The Analogical Mirrors," refers to Hopkins' "irrelevant theory of prosody."97 Evidently, the study of Hopkins' verse in relation to his theory cannot permit such dismissal. It may be true, as Herbert Read has argued, that the principles Hopkins contended for on the basis of tradition and scholarship were first based on intuition and feeling:98 "I had haunting my ear the echo of a new rhythm." This opinion is no more than the recognition that his prosody grew out of his thought, antedated the definition of its inherent rules, which as inherent would hardly be irrelevant.99

To connect Hopkins' theory of rhythm with Coventry Patmore's system of isochronous time units is the task Harold Whitehall


97 Kenyon Review, Ibid., p. 322.

98 In Form In Modern Poetry, p. 57.

99 This does not mean that Hopkins' conception of Greek meters upon which he based his theory, was absolutely correct, (Of. "Greco-Roman Verse Theory and Gerard Manley Hopkins," by John Louis Bonn, J.J., Immortal Diamond.) but that his theory accounted (post hoc or propter hoc) for his practice.
undertakes in his essay, "Sprung Rhythm." Hopkins, he begins, "is the almost unique case of a poet who preached what he practiced and practiced what he preached." Nevertheless, he believes, Hopkins did not realize the real nature of his rhythm, or at least, he did not carry his principles through to their conclusions:

His explanations are solely concerned with stress, with the variations of stress pattern, and, particularly, with the occurrence of juxtaposed stresses; he ignores completely the principle of isochronous regularity which underlies the stress variations. He had, unconsciously perhaps, come to realize that a metrical foot represents a unit in a series of even time (isochronous) units, and that once the limits of these units were made clear to the reader (by alliteration, assonance, internal rhyme, word repetition) they could be occupied by anything from a single heavily stressed syllable to four or five syllables.

Patmore, as we have noted already, believed that the function of accent upon which all English metre depends, was "of marking, by whatever means, certain isochronous intervals. The elementary measure, or "integer" of English verse "is double the measure of ordinary prose,—that is to say, it is the space which is bounded by alternate accents;... every verse

100 Kenyon Review, VI pp. 333-354.
101 Ibid., p. 339.
proper contains two, three, or four of these 'metres,' or, as with a little allowance they may be called, 'dipodes.' Patmore is here speaking of iambic verse, the unit of which he makes to be four syllables, (or of the time of four syllables) each portion containing a major and a minor accent. "All English verses in common cadence are therefore dimeters, trimeters, or tetrameters, and consist when they are full, of eight, twelve, or sixteen syllables." Like Hopkins, Patmore took the pause into consideration as part of the meter. His ten-syllable line was not a pentameter but a dipodic trimeter, the measure filled out with a pause equal to two syllables. Hopkins measured sprung rhythm in feet of one to four syllables and assumed the feet to be of equal length. One cannot utter his first paean without a light stress on one of the three "unstressed" syllables. Hopkins' "inability to recognize the time-marking role of secondary stress inevitably confused and thwarted all attempts at explanation." 

In concerning himself only with stress Hopkins ignored the degrees of syllabic juncture of contiguous syllables. He also ignored according to Whitehall, the degrees of stress. There

103 Ibid., p. 242.
104 Loc. cit.
105 Whitehall, Ibid., p. 346.
are two distinguishable degrees of syllabic juncture, the open juncture as in "blackbird," and the close juncture of "washer."

The importance of a realization of the degrees of stress and juncture may be brought out by an examination of a number of English compounds. "Honeysuckle" contains four syllables with strong stress on the first, zero stress on the second and fourth, and light stress on the third. Its stress pattern then is SOL0; its syllabic junctures all close. "Typewriter" has a strong stress on the first, a light stress on the second and third syllables. Examining the words "blackbird," "polyphonic" and "lilactime" in the same way, their patterns are found to be respectively: SL, LOSO, and SOL; the juncture of blackbird is open, those of polyphonic and lilactime all close.

Combine any four of these words and lines of four well-defined sections or measures with a definite rhythmic movement will result,

Honeysuckle, lilactime, typewriter, blackbird
SOL0 / SOL / SOL0 / SOL

Take into count the quantitative value of the open juncture—a pause (p) and the result is a line of four even-time, (isochronous) units.

Honeysuckle lilactime typewriter blackbird
S0L0 / S0lp/ S0pL0 / SpL

As long as the basic isochronous units are maintained the stress pattern can be freely varied.
The oldest English poetry as well as much of modern verse is thus seen to be written in dipodic rhythm of regularity and smoothness.

\[
\text{scri\'an sceadugenga. scestend swaefon}
\]
\[
\text{Sp Lp/ S O L O/ Sp Lp/ Sp L (O) -- (Beowulf, l. 703)}
\]

Dim drums throbbing in the hills half heard
\[
\text{Sp Lp/ S O L O/ Sp Lp/ S}
\]
\[
\text{(Chesterton, "Lepanto")}
\]

Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine
\[
\text{S O Lp / S O L O / Sp Lp / S}
\]

Hopkins' innovations were "confined for the most part to his abrupt non-cadenced fingering of the dipodic measures SpLp, SOLp, SpLo, and SpPp, the so-called truncated dipods."106

As a dare-gale skylark scanted in a dull cage
\[
\text{0 0/ Sp Lp/ Sp Lp / S O L O/ Sp L --}
\]

Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee;
\[
\text{0/ S O L O/ Sp L O/Sp PO/ L O S}
\]
or
\[
\text{L O Sp L O/ Sp L O/ Sp L O/ Sp Lp/ S O L}
\]

Not untwist—slack they may be—these last strands of man
\[
\text{0 0/ Sp L O/ Sp Lp/ S O L 0/ S}
\]

In me or, most weary, cry I can no more. I can; ...
\[
\text{0 Lp/ Sp PO/ SpLp/ SpP0/ S O L 0/SpP--}
\]

Hopkins' individual peculiarities of style, his compounds and syntactic shortcuts, were employed "merely to assure the

106 Ibid., p. 347.
precise ordering of the musical elements in his lines.

Nor do his alliterations, repetitions and internal rhyme, says Whitehall, need a "mystical" explanation like that by which Charles Williams accounted for them; they can be accounted for by Patmore's ruling:

The law of alliteration is the only conceivable intrinsic mode of immediately indicating the right metrical accentuation where the language consists mainly of monosyllables and the verse admits of a varying number of unemphatic syllables, before, between, and after the accented ones.

Hopkins, as is clear from his Letters, was acquainted with Patmore's essay. Whitehall accounts for the fact that neither Hopkins nor Patmore realized how they complemented each other by the fact that Hopkins "was too limited by conventional metrical theory and by concessions to stanzaic form to realize its bearing on his own work." Patmore "was puzzled by the appearance of the poems in Hopkins' manuscript, and was misled by the abrupt juxtaposition of stresses which is Hopkins' chief metrical innovation."

That Hopkins was less unconscious of the isochronous nature of his rhythm than Whitehall supposes, may be suspected from his very concern with music itself, from his markings in his

107 Ibid., p. 353.
manuscripts for "hurried syllables," "dwells," etc. Everything he says to Bridges, "is perfectly weighed and timed," in his "Echoes" poem. He also tells Bridges that "time or equality in strength" is more important for sprung rhythm than for common counted rhythm: "and your times or strengths do not seem to me to be equal enough."110 Yet, too much emphasis should not be placed upon these remarks. Hopkins no doubt agreed with Patmore that "the equality or proportion of metrical intervals between accent and accent is no more than general and approximate, and that expression in reading... requires frequent modifications... of the nominal equality of the spaces."111

The description of Hopkins' conception of nature as "analogist" is not out of keeping with the sacramental view of nature found in Scotus, the Spiritual Exercises and the early Church Fathers. Hence, Marshall McLuhan's approach may appear to some readers an emphasis on the obvious. His definition is based on a passage from Jeremy Taylor wherein the seventeenth century divine compares the "beauteous frame of heaven and earth" to a mirror in which God beholds His wisdom and power:

> For if God is glorified in the Sunne and Moon, in the rare fabric of the honeycombs, in the discipline of Bees... in the curiosity of an eye, being pleased to delight in these little images and reflexes of himself from those pretty mirrours... much rather shall

110 Letters, I, pp. 69-70.

God be pleased to behold himself in the glasses of our obedience...112

In the order of nature Hopkins also sees analogies to the moral, intellectual and supernatural order. These orders are "three traditional mirrors," physical, moral divine, of God's beauty. While in some of his poems he employs only the physical (Pied Beauty), in others he employs all three mirrors. In the "Windhover" the bird "literally" mirrors the physical order of sub-rational valor and act. Analoguously, as "kingdom of daylight's dauphin," it mirrors Christ. The third mirror is Hopkins' own heart, the "hidden mirror of moral obedience which flashes to God...the chevalier image of Christ."113

This mirror analogy applied to the much-interpreted "Windhover" is not too clear. The ambiguous "Buckle" is made to mean "that the 'brute beauty' of the bird as mirror of God's grandeur is to be transferred or flashed to the 'heart in hiding'."114 The poet says, "let us take this mirror (St. Paul's 'armour') and buckle it here in my hidden heart...Christ's fire will burst on and from the second mirror 'a billion times told lovelier' than from the falcon."115 But, as

112 Quoted. Ibid., p. 325.
113 Ibid., pp. 326-27.
114 Ibid., p. 329.
115 Ibid., p. 327.
a mirror of Christ, Hopkins must imitate not only the valor but also the obscure sufferings of his Master. Pladding behind the plough, he must make the "trash and mud of earth shine like diamond." Thus will mortal clay be made "to fructify by the humble service of the plough (the obedient will)."

Hopkins' language, is examined in the light of tradition in Josephine Miles' essay, "The Sweet and Lovely Language." The title refers to "most frequent adjectives, those he used ten times or more a piece," and which place him in the line of the "painter poets of whom Keats is notably one," and Spenser, Collins, Milton and Wordsworth are members. "Sweet" is Hopkins' favorite adjective, "lovely" and "dear" are close seconds. These are "quite like the nineteenth century," and ("lovely" perhaps excepted) like the sixteenth. His other major adjectives, "good" and "bad" are Elizabethan and later, "bright," "dark," and "wild" Romantic. These, together with other less frequent adjectives, "kind," "fond," "sheer," "poor," "tender," "low," "high," "bold," "proud," make him "a properly individualistic Pre-Raphaelite participating, against his other conscience, in the tradition of Keats."  

116 Kenyon Review VI, pp. 355-68.
117 Ibid., p. 356.
118 Ibid., p. 358.
It is true, as Miss Miles states, that Hopkins expressed but little formulated theory on the subject of vocabulary. But that he "was well enough content with vocabulary; he had all his contemporaries' ways and means in it, and did not need to raise any issues," is a statement needing some qualification. Hopkins decried the "poetic" diction of his contemporaries. He was critically severe towards one of Bridges' poems which was "sicklied o'er with too much archaic diction." He himself abjured the use of "ere, "wellnigh," "what time," "say not," — "because they neither belong to nor ever can arise from, or be the elevation of ordinary modern speech." The language of poetry should be the "current language heightened." The absence of this kind of language "will be fatal to Tennyson's Idylls and plays, to Swinburne and perhaps to Morris." In the "Echoes" poem,

words like charm and enchantment will not do: the thought is of beauty as of something that can be physically kept and lost by physical things only, like keys; then the things must come from the mundus muliebris; and thirdly they must not be markedly oldfashioned.

The characteristics of the word-painting or epithetizing

119 Ibid., pp. 358-59.
120 Letters III, p. 212.
121 Letters I, p. 89.
122 Loc. cit.
123 Poems, p. 113.
poets with whom Hopkins is here placed are several; they used more adjectives than verbs, they were fond of participal modifiers, especially past participles, they used compounds, the "y" form of adjectives, were partial to a two-epithet line.

Hopkins certainly has affinities with Keats and the romantics, the epithetizing poets. How much adjectives in themselves help to place him in any direct tradition which excludes other traditions, is problematical. There are more verbs of motion in the first part of the "Deutschland" (to take a random example) than modifiers. "Sweet" appears three times, once describing the taste of a lush-kept sloe, twice giving to an abstract a taste and fragrance—"a lingering-out sweet skill."; "past saying sweet" to describe God's lighting and love. Of the other modifiers few could be classed as specifically Keatsian excepting perhaps "dappled-with-damson" where "dappled" is primarily "Hopkins," or "lush-kept, plush-capped,"
—mastering, lashed, astrain, laced, dovewing, carrier-witted (heart), bold, soft (sift), mined (with a motion), lovely-asunder, felt, dealt, warm-laid (grave), grey (womb-life), dense and driven (Passion) frightful sweat, best, worst, descending (dark), anvil (ding). In these stanzas Hopkins does not appear as "short on straight active verb forms" as Miss Miles would have him to be.124 The action and motion expressed by

124 Ibid., p. 362.
them is particularly noticeable: bound...bones, ...fastened
flesh, touch, trod, whirled, fled, flash, crowds, combs, springs,
swings, rides, waver, lash, gush, flush, wring, forge, melt.
We are reminded of a contrast pointed out by Gardner between
Hopkins' imagery and that of Keats: "Keats's image is contempla-
tive; Hopkins's image is dramatic, informed with all the glow
and movement of a living act." 125

It is of interest to notice merely in passing Shakespeare's
use of the adjective "sweet." In the sonnets we find "sweet
issue" (XIII) comparable to Hopkins' "sweet acions," Hopkins own
"sweet skill" (XVI), "sweet love" (XIX), "sweet brood" (XIX),
"sweet respect" (XXVI), "sweet argument" (XXXVIII), "sweet
flattery" (XIII) and other examples. Hopkins' "lovely lads" may
be compared with "lovely knights" (CVI), "lovely boy" (CXXVI).
"Lovely lad" also appears in the lines Hopkins quotes from
Piers Ploughman in a passage in the Notebooks (p. 235).
Shakespeare uses other favorite Hopkins words—"proud-pied
April" (XCVIII), "saucy jacks" (CXXIX). Hopkins' use of words
places him deep in English tradition as a whole rather than in
any particular current of that tradition. To recall his "wiry
and white-fiery and whirlwind-swivelled snow," "unchilding, un-
fathering deeps," "the down-dugged ground-hugged grey," "Blue-

beating and hoary-glow height," "wring-world right foot" is to realize how much he enriched that tradition.

Sources which may have influenced the non-Keatsian elements in Hopkins' vocabulary are indicated in Austin Warren's study of the movements and institutions from which Hopkins learned. Some time before he began to study Piers Ploughman, which was not until 1882, Hopkins was familiar with the work of George P. Marsh, author of Lectures on the English Language. Marsh urged the revival of obsolete words, of alliteration, assonance and consonance. Other defenders of the past were those "Teutonizers," R. C. Trench and E. C. Furnivall, founders of the Early English Text Society and William Barnes who advocated the purging of the language from romance elements in favor of the stronger native words. The interest which partly accounts for the fact that Hopkins' vocabulary is "glaringly Anglo-Saxon" is shown in his comment upon Barnes's Speech Craft in a letter to Bridges:

It makes one weep to think of what English might have been; for in spite of all that Shakespeare and Milton have done, It cannot make up for want of purity. 127

Besides linguistic renovation, the other movements and establishments affecting Hopkins' formation were, according to Warren, the Ritualistic Movement, Pre-Raphaelitism, Aestheticism,

126 "Instress of Inscape, " Kenyon Review, VI, pp. 369-82.
127 Letters I, p. 162.
England, The Catholic Church. The four "real shapers" of his mind were all "British empiricists—concerned with defending the ordinary man's belief in the reality and knowability of things and persons."128 These were Pater, Newman, Ruskin, and Scotus. Pater's and Newman's defense of the concrete must have appealed to the later formulator of "inscape," especially the former's expression: "Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face, some tone of the hills or sea is chooser than the rest."129 Neither of these influenced Hopkins as much as Scotus with his validation of the individual. There is an echo of Ruskinian political economy in Hopkins' protest against an England seared with trade.

When Warren turns to Hopkins' artistic practice, he sees failure in achievement, a lack of unity between theme and its expression. "The word, the phrase, the local excitement, often pulls us away from the poem."130 It must be admitted that in one's first acquaintance with Hopkins, this is often the impression received. It arises from the very fullness of his communication. It is only with repeated readings that what at first seems diffuseness is in reality compactness of thought, and that the richness and variety


130 Ibid., p. 381
the melody and color are integral to an intense, passionate communication. "I cannot sufficiently stress the importance of approaching Hopkins with all the senses alert," is the warning J. G. Southworth gives. He might have added, "and with the intellect alert." He implies the latter caution in the reason he gives to support his opinion that Hopkins will never be a popular poet. "He cannot be, because he makes too many demands on the reader." He will always be cherished, however, by "those who do not think deep feeling and intellectual exercise are incompatible."132

Warren does not find occasion for much intellectual exercise in Hopkins and this probably accounts for his predication of disharmony. The poet's "content" is to him "thin," his "thinking about beauty, man, and Nature is unimpressive."133 There is no mythic or intellectual vigor in the "Deutschland," "Spelt from Sybil's Leaves," and "Nature is a Heraclitean Fire," to correspond with the "dopious, violent detail therein." This is a view discounted by the majority of critics who have discerned not only profound intellectual content, in these poems but an unusual fusion of content and form—organic unity.

132 Ibid., p. 32.
F. R. Leavis remarked in the "Deutschland" a blending of "inner spiritual emotional stress with physical reverberations, nervous and muscular tensions." The wreck he adds, is "both occasion and symbol," and his whole analysis of this poem and of "Spelt from Sybil's Leaves," supports his insistence upon the organic union of substance and form. He finds that the progression of alliteration, assonance and rhyme in "Spelt" is "associated with, and hardly distinguishable from, the development of meaning." Gardner too, sees in the "Deutschland" a "completeness, an intellectual and emotional unity, a subtlety and variety of verbal orchestration which are unique not only in English but also, we believe, in the literature of the world." One wonders how it is possible to assign lack of intellectual vigor to the distillation of the Greek philosophy of flux, of Christian ontology and doctrine in "Heraclitean Fire. As for the "Deutschland," its meaning, "Christianity integral and absolute," is almost inexhaustible.

This inability on the part of certain critics to perceive or to penetrate the intellectual content of Hopkins' poems is a phenomena existent from the beginning. His letters and notes,

134 New Bearings in English Poetry, pp. 175-76.
135 Ibid., p. 182.
and studies like that of Pick have helped make his themes more intelligible. It may be suspected, however, whether the "willing suspension of disbelief with which those who do not share his beliefs approach him is adequate enough to permit them to grasp the significance of his more doctrinal poems. Hence the inclination to focus attention on his technique, or to explain away his thought by denying its existence. The following opinion probably springs from bewilderment before an experience alien to the critic:

His work has no philosophical or intellectual content; it is purely physical and verbal. He remains always on the sensuous surface of things. Perhaps as a Roman Catholic he was inhibited from conceiving of any since the whole truth, had, once for all, been revealed to mankind. 137

Hopkins' essential humanity and universality are witnessed to in the response given by critics of ideals and experience so widely different from his own, to whom is owing a great part of the current appreciation and understanding of his art. But there remains "a point at which (for all except the Catholic reader) rivers of emotion become suddenly damned and canalized."138 A poem communicates an experience which is its center around which all the other components assemble with which they fuse, and for which they exist. This is surely what is meant

137 W. J. Turner, Spectator, July 14, 1944.
when "organic unity" is predicated. Thus it may be questioned if the central experience, the *raison d'être*, is misconceived or is too alien to the critic's experience for the necessary empathy, whether the proper aesthetic delight in the felicities of form and texture is present in its fulness. The contrast to this opinion, a typically modern heresy, appears in a remark by W. J. Turner:

"...whether there is any particular virtue in the subject matter itself—of poetry or of any other art—is another question, and one which no philosophical or critical writer on aesthetics has as yet ever been able to answer satisfactorily." 139

What Hopkins' answer to this would be appears in a statement in one of his letters to Patmore: "Fine works of art, especially those that are not only ideal in form but deal with high matter as well, are really a great power in the world, an element of strength even to an empire." 140 That Hopkins' subject matter signifies is taken for granted in Leavis's remark that, "Hopkins is the devotional poet of a dogmatic

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140 *Letters III*, p. 218. This does not mean that Hopkins would make art a vehicle for moral indoctrination. He criticised Wordsworth's poetry for the "odious goodness and neckcloth" that crept into so much of it. (*Letters I*, p. 38) The theme of his "On a piece of music" is that art must not be judged on the principle of whether it is "right" or "wrong" as moral actions are judged, but rather on the principle of whether it is true or not true to the scope of the artist. (Cf. the analysis of this poem by Geoffrey Bliss, S.J. "In a Poet's Workshop," *Month* CLXVII, 1936, pp. 160-67.)
Christianity. For the literary critic there are consequent difficulties and delicacies.\textsuperscript{141} His following statement constitutes a refutation of the opinion of Hopkins' intellectual qualities expressed by Warren and Turner: "Hopkins' religious interests are bound up with the presence in his poetry of a vigour of mind that puts him in another poetic world from the other Victorians. It is a vitality of thought, a vigour of the thinking intelligence, that is at the time a vitality of concreteness."

In one more indication of the direction of the last phase of Hopkins criticism, F. R. Leavis endeavors to determine in what respects he was of his age.\textsuperscript{142} His Victorian normality, is shown in general in his bent toward nature and away from urban civilization. More specifically it appears in his themes: "Nature, beauty, transience, with these he is characteristically preoccupied."\textsuperscript{143} Where his distinctiveness comes out is in the radical difference in his treatment of these themes. His concern with beauty was at the farthest remove from the Victorian "religion of Beauty," from Rossetti's evocation of a

\textsuperscript{141} "Gerard Manley Hopkins*, Scrutiny XII (Spring, 1944), p. 85. We are reminded of Hopkins' remark to Dixon that "the only just judge, the only just literary critic is Christ." (Letters II, p. 8.)


\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., p. 85.
romantic Platonism, for instance—"an evocation in which 'significance' is vagueness, and profundity an uninhibited proffer of large draughts on a merely nominal account (Life, love, death, terror, mystery, Beauty...)." Likewise his preoccupation with transience is very unlike that of the Victorians who "cherish the pang as a kind of religiose-poetic sanction for defeatism in the face of an alien external world." Hopkins realized that transience was a "necessary condition of any grasp of the real." Another general difference between his nature poetry and that of Tennyson and Arnold springs from his "radically metaphorical habit of mind and sensibility" which relates him to the seventeenth century. It goes with his habit of seeing things as charged with significance, but again, the significance is not a romantic vagueness, but a "matter of explicit and ordered relations between God, man, and nature."

In his assent "half protestingly" to T. S. Eliot's description of Hopkins as a "nature poet," Leavis notes a significant limitation in his power to transcend the poetic climate of the age. One may question however, if the poet of the "Deutschland" (which Gardner believes takes rank beside the "Nativity Ode," "Lycidas," "Intimations of Immortality," and "The Hound of Heaven") and the Sonnets is correctly described as a "nature poet" merely. It may be suggested also that in those

144 Ibid., p. 86.
145 Ibid., p. 83.
very aspects in which Hopkins' treatment of characteristic themes differed from that of his contemporaries, he perhaps transcended the poetical climate. In passing, it may not be out of place to note Gardner's listing of Hopkins' characteristic themes:

The poetry of Hopkins is par excellence the poetry of death and resurrection, of mutability and recovery, of desolation and consolation. The problem of suffering; the decay of human beauty, moral and physical; the frustration of noble hopes and aspirations—by all these he is moved....

Hopkins' importance as a poet, and the qualities of his complex character and genius have made a definitive biography desirable. It was not unexpected that there should appear, concomitant with the critical evaluations and revaluations of his Centenary, the first "full" biography of the poet. Any biographer of Hopkins faces a difficult and controversial set of problems. Eleanor Ruggles does not try to solve them all. In fact, there is no great attempt to determine the importance of the various themes which she opens up, or their exact relation to one another. The work is "popular" in its nature, confining its discussion of Hopkins' art to its relation with the events of his life. The poems fall into place chronologically, the biographical data illuminating them as much as

possible. There is nothing new in the biography as far as the facts of Hopkins' life are concerned. The novelized style of description makes entertaining reading and has procured for the book a well-merited popularity. However, it does not always have a documentary basis. There is no evidence, for example, for the details describing Hopkins' reaction to Bridges' presence at one of his sermons: "knowledge of his dissenting presence put the speaker in a flurry, he rambled, stammered, then pulled himself together."  

Critics have noted, too, a certain lack of understanding of the nature of religious faith manifested in a number of judgments relating to Newman's and Hopkins' reception into the Church. Newman is described as having "renounced freedom of inquiry and bound his eyes from further searching with the bandage of a final creed." His Apologia revealed him as a man who "clung to the skirts of ecclesiastical authority as to his mother's knee." We are told that Mowbray Baillie fell

148 Significant of this popularity was the lengthy review in Time, Aug. 14, 1944, pp. 99-104.


152 Ibid., p. 56.
into the pit of unbelief when, at Hopkins' death, he was deprived of the influence which had been his sole contact with the irrational."153 Miss Ruggles' own attitude is probably indicated in her statement regarding Pusey's remaining within the Anglican Church: "There are certain fortunate intellects that can stop short, and Pusey's was one of them. Newman's was not, nor was Gerard Hopkins'."154

The author, perhaps wisely, scouts any thorough investigation into the causes of the depression of Hopkins' last years, leaving such questions as "the prerogatives of the individual student." She emphasizes Hopkins' self-sacrifice and his integrity as poet and priest, yet he is represented at the end of his life as still "striving to convince himself once more of a conviction lived by."155

However, the work is coherent and artistic. Miss Ruggles' sketch of the Oxford Movement, her reconstruction of the activities and friendships of Hopkins' student days at Oxford and of the various ramifications of his work as priest and teacher is sympathetic and calculated to lead readers to the investigation of his poetry.

153 Ibid., p. 291.
154 Ibid., p. 54.
155 Ibid., p. 283.
Whether the work is "as good a biography of Hopkins as we are likely to have," as one reviewer says, remains to be seen. A definitive biography would demand a completer integration of his life and writings, a deeper study of the great influences upon his mind and art which a popular study cannot attempt. Mrs. Ruggles' book succeeds in presenting Hopkins to a larger public, and it is indicative of the more widespread interest in Hopkins the man which is one of the results of the publication of his Letters.

CHAPTER VII

A NOTE ON HOPKINS' INFLUENCE

To trace any literary influence is an undertaking fraught with difficulties and snares for the student. To trace a still-working influence is doubly so. The short perceptive must of necessity set constraints around any judgments regarding its nature and extent. Hence, the intent of this discussion is merely to indicate some of the obvious directions of Hopkins' influence as shown in the statements of critics and poets and in "imitations," sometimes not so felicitous, of his style.

Two characteristics of critical pronouncements about Hopkins' influence are immediately noteworthy. The first is the assurance with which they are made; the second, the general, for the most part, rather than particular nature of the attribution.

Except in the case of Bridges, it is safe to say that Hopkins did not exert any direct influence before 1918. The influence begins to receive notice about a dozen years later, concomitant with the new interest roused by the Second Edition of the Poems. Comments are general: "The influence of Hopkins has had, and will have, an integrating effect on modern poetry."1 ...when the history of the last decade of English poetry comes to be written by a dispassionate critic, no in-

fluence will rank in importance to that of Gerard Manley Hopkins. In one or two early declarations the reference was more explicit. Hopkins was described as the "preceptor of Hart Crane in the initiation of a new creative energy in poetry." Stanley Kunitz corroborated this statement and suggested an influence upon James Joyce, E. E. Cummings, and Yvor Winters, adding, "I know of no young poet of talent in this country today whose face is not turned to him." F. R. Leavis, in 1932, made a claim for him "as likely to prove for our time and the future the only influential poet of the Victorian Age." These assertions increased in number, sometimes in specific indications of influence throughout the nineteen thirties. Edith Sitwell lamented the mal-digested influence upon William Empson and Charles Madge. The high point was perhaps reached about the middle of the decade with C. Day Lewis's pronunciamento: "Post-war poetry was born amongst the ruins. Its immediate ancestors are Hopkins, Owens, and Eliot."

2. Herbert Read, Form in Modern Poetry, p. 54.
3 M. D. Zabel, Poetry XXXVII, p. 158.
7 A Hope for Poetry, p. 163.
The statement of a more recent criticism serves to underline those opinions. In his study of modern poetry, J. Q. Southworth includes chapters on Hopkins, Yeats, Lawrence, Mac Neice, Auden, and others. For only two of these does he make claim for greatness, Hopkins and Yeats. His opinion of the importance of Hopkins' influence is as follows:

Since 1918... his influence has widened until one can truly say that he has exerted a powerful influence in straightening the course of the tradition of English poetry. I think the time will come when the publication of the Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins will be looked upon as an important landmark: as important probably as the publication of Spenser's The Shepheards' Calendar, Percy's Religues, and Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads. No young English poet is free of his influence. 8

From his discussion of Hopkins' contemporary influence, W. H. Gardner draws the following two-way conclusion, and points to the nature of the influence when it is assimilated:

One important result of the many imitations of Hopkins has been to familiarize readers with the style of the master and so remove from his work that appearance of queerness and eccentricity which was for so long a barrier to complete appreciation. Certainly the verse of the younger writers is always more significant when there is nothing more than a taut compact style, a direct and resourceful diction, and a form of sprung rhythm which, while rarely approaching the mastery of the original, gives an additional range to the poetic instrument. 9

Before examining some of the statements quoted above a few preliminary observations are perhaps in order. First of all, in regard to their general truth, there can be no doubt of a Hopkins influence on contemporary poetry. This, it may be said, is not surprising when the eclectic nature of much poetry today is considered. Acquaintance with the English poetry being written at present shows immediately, however, that Hopkins' influence is never as pervasive as that of T. S. Eliot, perhaps not as that of Pound. And there are many other currents: from the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century, from the Symbolists of the nineteenth, and from Skelton and Whitman. Where Hopkins' influence appears in some of the newer poets, it is sometimes sifted down from him through others, through Bridges, through Auden and Lewis.

For the first traces of Hopkins' influence, we must go back to the Georgian poets, as Gardner has pointed out. Any discussion of the Georgians leads us to the work of Robert Bridges, and to the influence Hopkins exerted during his lifetime. In his presentation of Bridges as a patron and master of the Georgians, George Gordon gives as evidence Bridges' profound concern with their problems, his belief and his statements, that English syllabic verse had long been at the stage of artistic exhaustion, and that serious rhyme in English verse was

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10 Ibid., p. 247.
worn out...What was wanted was a prosody not syllabic but of stresses, which would admit, to the infinite refreshment of poetic utterance, admit and somehow govern, the whole wealth of the common and natural rhythms of our speech. 11

These statements lead us back through bridges to Hopkins' well-known definitions of Sprung Rhythm, the "native and natural rhythm of speech," "scanning by accents or stresses alone." Hopkins claimed to have discovered "Sprung Rhythm." A careful reading of the letters to Bridges leaves little doubt that Hopkins' concern with, and explanation of, the structure of his verse were the originating forces behind Bridges' experiments with meters. This is, moreover, corroborated by one of Hopkins' critics. "Personal contact with Robert Bridges," writes G. F. Lahey, "has convinced me that he drank deeply from the wells of consolation which Hopkins' personality and poetry gave him, and that he drew not only the idea of the stress system from Hopkins, but also the lines on which it was to be developed. 12 Though at first Bridges' impulse had been to parody the rhythm of the "Deutschland," later he asked Hopkins if he might employ the new meter in his own poems. 13 That the influence of the two poets upon each other was accepted by both is clear in Hopkins' comment:

13 Letters, I, p. 76.
I do not think it desirable that I shd. be wholly uninfluenced by you or you by me; one ought to be independent but not unimpressionable: that wd. be to refuse education. 14

In a note to his Poems (Third series, 1880), Bridges acknowledged his debt to Hopkins for certain poems "written by the rules of a new prosody." He warns the reader, in approaching the poems to put aside the notions:

that all accents in poetry are alternate with unaccented syllables...that when two or more unaccented syllables intervene between two accented syllables, the former must suffer or be slurred over...

The use of feet that correspond to paeons, and the frequent inversions of feet in these new rhythms, render it possible for four or five unaccented syllables to follow upon each other. 15

The stylistic feature of the 1879 and 1880 volumes of Bridges' poetry is a chastened use of sprung rhythm. He was more cautious in his use of it because he lacked Hopkins' immense energy and inventiveness; moreover, as has been pointed out already, he regarded it as opening a pathway to too much license.16 Hopkins tried to convince him of its law-abiding character: "with all my licenses, or rather laws, I am stricter

14 Ibid., p. 86.
15 Quoted by Claude Abbot, Ibid., Notes, p. 310.
16 Cf. Above, Ch. I, p. 11.
than you and I might say than anybody I know." Bridges' theory of variation in poetry given expression later, precludes too manifest a departure from the common norm: "A great deal of our pleasure in beauty", he remarks, "whether natural or artistic, depends on slight variations of a definite form." However, it is doubtful whether Hopkins would go as far as Bridges does in his remark on rhythm in Milton's Prosody:

There is no limit to rhythm, nor can I imagine any kind of effect or any possible colla-cation of syllables in a 'foot,' which might not be well employed in some poetic metre or other. 19

"I daresay our theory is much the same," Hopkins wrote. 20 There are many similarities, as a reading of Bridges' Milton's Prosody discovers, although Bridges emphasized and opposed points which Hopkins did not. There is the similarity of definition (especially in the first edition of 1901), of such terms as "rising and falling" rhythm, "counterpointed," "hanges" "paons" etc. It is perhaps almost superfluous to point out the parallel between Bridges' and Hopkins' description of the counterpointed rhythm of Samson Agonistes. The 'dactylic' and 'trochaic' effects perceived in the choruses, says Bridges, are obtained by 'inversions' and 'elisions, and

17 Letters I, p. 44.
20 Letters I, p. 212.
where the iambic system seems entirely to disappear, it is maintained as a fictitious structure and scansion, not intended to be read, but to be imagined as a time-beat on which the free rhythm is, so to speak, syncopated, as a melody. 21

When the new rhythm says Hopkins, is mounted upon the old...

...since the new or mounted rhythm is actually heard and at the same time the mind naturally supplies the natural or standard foregoing rhythm...two rhythms are in some manner running at once and we have something answerable to counterpoint in music. 22

The parallel is closer still in the first edition of Milton's Prosody, wherein Bridges almost calls the Choruses of Samson "sprung." When the common rhythm is mounted by the stress rhythm, the "units of feet after the classic models" become fictitious, and "There is really no reason at all" for their existence: "only one step was needed, which was to cast them away. He wrote in the Choruses of Samson Agonistes a rhythmical stressed verse and scanned by means of fictions."23 The only difference between this and Hopkins' description is that Hopkins called the result Sprung Rhythm: "...the secondary or mounted rhythm, which is necessarily a sprung rhythm, overpowers the original or conventional one and then this becomes a superfluous and may be got rid of; by taking that last step you reach simple sprung rhythm."24 An examination of these and

21 Milton's Prosody, p. 55.
22 Poems, p. 3.
23 (Offord, 1901) p. 76.
24 Letters II, p. 15. Cf. also, Poems, p. 3.
other comparisons between Bridges' and Hopkins' ideas of Milton's prosody leads to agreement with the opinion that had the two poets "not met, it is certain that Bridges would not have written the most authoritative analysis of Milton's great system of prosody since that master's death in 1674, and that Bridges' poetry would not have developed along the lines that it did."25

Probably the best word to describe Bridges' use of the "new rhythm" is the word "caution." The general impression is one of much greater convention; the effect is more literary, more archaic and traditional. Yet the "loosening" of meter in "London Snow," "A Passer-by," "The Downs," and other poems in "mitigated" sprung rhythm is evident and the effect unusually beautiful in its following of speech rhythms. It did not quite so satisfy Hopkins who found "A Passer By" to read "not much like sprung rhythm as that logocedic dignified-doggerel one Tennyson has employed in Maud and since."26 In general, Bridges' practice is simpler and looser in structure than that of Hopkins, who had a definite rule underlying each syllable, and whose devices of inversion of word order, continuous rhythm, alliteration and internal rhyme etc. counteracted the

25 Lahey, The Prosody of Robert Bridges and Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 36. Cf. the Appendix to this chapter: Bridges' rules for accentual verse.

26 Letters I, p. 71.
scattering tendencies natural to sprung rhythm.

However they be described, the lines of "London Snow" and kindred poems wherein the iambic regularity is freely broken by the inversions and paeanic feet of a speech rhythm, exercised a potent influence upon poets who looked to Bridges as a master. The lines following, with their rush of unstressed syllables, were innovation enough at the time they were written:

When men were all asleep the snow come flying,
In large white flakes falling on the city brown,
Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying,
Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town;
Deadening, muffling, stifling its murrums failing;
Lazily and incessantly floating down and down.

Bridges' innovations were more marked in the "loose Alexandrines" of his later verse wherein, abandoning the stress principle and returning to a syllabic meter, he gave himself almost complete liberty of rhythm within the fixed limits of the twelve syllable line. He found the precedent for this practice in certain verses of the choruses of Samson Agonistes to which Milton imparted great variety of movement by means of inversions, elisions and extrametrical syllables. 27 It was the line

Hopkins used with more calculation, subtle cadence, and characteristic textural devices in "St. Winefred's Well," prophecyng that the "sprung Alexandrines" would be of more use to Bridges than myself—if he likes them. 28


While the meter of *The Testament of Beauty* is a syllabic meter, with some arbitrary classification it can be scanned accentually.

The sky's unresting cloudland that with varying play sifteth the sunlight thru its figured shades, that now stand in massive range, culminated stupendous mountainous snowbillowy up-piled in dazzling sheen.

(I, ll. 277-280)

Here we see an effect of the loosening of rhythm in the admission of new elements of diction, an advantage which Hopkins had pointed out to Bridges. The absence, however, of any norm except variation gives a sense of diffuseness, of undefined intention. In a long poem such as *The Testament of Beauty* with its many moods and methods this is perhaps not a disadvantage. H. L. Binsse found the whole of this poem to be "a monument in its prosody to Bridges' friendship" for Hopkins. 29 In many places there are suggestions of Hopkins in cadence, diction, and here and there a similar use of assonance and inner rhyme.

huge molten glooms
mount on the horizon stealthily, and gathering
as they climb
deep freighted with live lightning, thunder and drenching flood
rebuff the winds. (I, ll. 288-291)

The woodland's alternating hues, the vaporous bloom of the first blushings and tender flushings of spring;

(I, ll. 306-7)

The manner of this magic is purest in music.
(IV, 1. 987)

The influence of Hopkins in regard to diction is evident also in certain "echoes" in Bridges' early poems which Hopkins himself pointed out. The lines in "London Snow."

Or peering up from under the white-mossed wonder, O look at the trees!" they cried, "O look at the trees!"

are reminiscent of Hopkins'

Since, though he is under the world's splendour and wonder ("Deutschland," st. 5)

and the first line of "The Starlight Night,"

Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!

Another section from "The Voice of Nature,"

Ah! if it were only for thee, thou restless ocean
Of waves that follow and roar, the sweep of the tides;
Wert't only for thee, impetuous wind, whose motion
Precipitate all o'errides, and turns, nor abides:

taken with a line from "Disillusion,"

For lack of thee who once wert throned behind
All beauty

discloses a debt for diction and idea to stanza 32 of the "Deutschland"

I admire thee, master of the tide,
Of the Yore-flood, of the year's fall;
The recurb and the recovery of the gulf's sides,
The girth of it and the wharf of it and the wall;
Stanching, quenching ocean of a motionable mind;
Ground of being, and granite of it: past all
Grasp God, throned behind
Death with a sovereignty that heeds but hides, bodes but abides.

30 Letters I, pp. 111-12.
The realization also that the first line of Hopkins' following stanza is "With a mercy that outrides," suggests that the poem which Bridges would "not for money" read again, made a greater impression upon him than he admitted. A. S. Phare has noted also the similarity in theme between Bridges' "Pater Filio" and "The Bugler's First Communion," and other poems in which Hopkins treats of the precarious fragility of youthful innocence and its almost inevitable loss.

In 1890 Bridges had shown Hopkins' poems to the poet Lawrence Binyon then visiting him at his home. To the latter the new rhythms contained in them seemed, as he says, "to promise scope for fresh effects and for admitting a fresh kind of matter into verse, and very soon I ventured on experiments init myself."31 Binyon's practice was, like Bridges', a "mitigated" sprung rhythm. It is noticeable in his "For the Fallen"

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children, England mourns for her dead across the sea
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit, Fallen in the cause of the free. 32

In "The Airman" he mixes it with running rhythm

Now at last voyage a fabulous dominion
Surpassing all the measures of his kind,
He, a free rider of the undulating silences,


Has in himself begotten a new mind;
Made him a companion of the winds of heaven
travelling
Unpaved streets of cloudy golden snows. 33

Gardner also notes the influence of Bridges in Walter
dela Mare's "The Listeners," particularly in the extended feet
and juxtaposed stresses of lines such as

Fell echoing through the shadowiness of
the still house.

It must be emphasized however, that there were other in-
fluences besides that of Bridges working toward a freer
rhythmic structure, and the movement away from traditional
meter would no doubt have taken place without either his or
Hopkins' poetry. There are noticeable in Victorian England,
besides that of Hopkins, other attempts to freshen conventional
rhythm. Charles M. Doughty although he published no verse
until 1900 was writing his Hopkinsslike poetry from the 1860's
onward. Certain effects which resemble those of Hopkins in
modern poetry could conceivably be the result of his influence
had he been as widely known. Meredith, Browning and Arnold
were also forces in modifying the Tennysonian-smooth tradition
of poetry. However, one of the most powerful influences upon
later poetry was that coming from Walt Whitman. His theory
that the length of line in poetry should be determined by the
length of phrase needed to express an idea, his unrelated pro-

gression from image to image, his catalogues and parallels provided precedent for many of the lax and diffuse lines in contemporary poetry.

"Free Verse" as introduced by Ezra Pound and the Imagists is in many respects a development of Whitman's and Arnold's practice. Its most skilful practitioners infused a greater discipline into it, a tautness which Whitman would never have admitted. In the hands of less skilful craftsman it tends to become "prose bewitched," the name Hopkins gave to Whitman's lines. As one of itsponents, Yvor Winters, defines it, the affinity with Hopkins' meter is apparent. The foot which Winters used in his poems in free verse he described as consisting of "one heavily accented syllable, an unlimited number of unaccented syllables, and an unlimited number of syllables of secondary accent." This, he goes on to say, "resembles the accentual meter of Hopkins, except that Hopkins employed rhyme. He appears to have had the secondary accent, or subordinate and extrametrical "foot" in mind, when he spoke of 'hangers' and 'outrides'." The following example, "Quod Tegit Omnia," which Winters cites from his own poems, has two feet to the line. Since for the sake of emphasis he has printed as two lines certain verses which if considered metrically would be single lines, he has placed a cross bar at the end of each complete line.

Earth darkens and is beaded/ with a sweat of bushes and/ the bear comes forth:/ the mind stored with/ magnificence proceeds into/ the mystery of time, now/ certain of its choice of/ passion but uncertain of the/ passion's end.

when/ ...35

The general similarity of Winters' practice in this poem to the one rule ("Every verse contains a predetermined number of accented syllables") to which Father Bliss reduced Hopkins' theory is worth noting. In his aim to make his stanza "wherever possible a single rhythmic unit, of which the line was a part not sharply separate," Winters was guided by "Dr. Williams Miss moore, and Hopkins."36

Other free versifiers have compared their rhythm to that used by Hopkins. Herbert Read, whose use of the medium is freer in form than Winters' remarks that "Sprung rhythm is the rhythm of all genuine vers libre or free verse which has arisen since Hopkins's time."37 His own free verse employs the monosyllabic and paeonic feet, the variations from rising to falling and rocking rhythms of Hopkins. Gardner has drawn attention to the "touches of Hopkinsian richness" in the following lines from "Day's Affirmation."38

35 Ibid., p. 103.
36 Ibid., p. 107.
37 Collected Essays, p. 345.
Morning and the world will be lit
with whitebeam candles, shining and the frail
and tender daring splendour of wild cherrytrees.

Sprung rhythm, that is a rhythm which conforms to Hopkins'
general definition, in which stresses and not syllables are
counted, in which a "foot" may consist of one or of many
syllables, is a basic feature of a large percentage of contemp-
orary verse. It is a rhythm which includes easily every
variety of conversational rhythm, admits scientific and tech-
nical vocabulary. It is logaeodic, allowing sudden changes of
cadence within the line, subtle emotional effects through
counterpoint, reversal of accent and metrical equivalence. It
provides a theoretical basis for lines like Day Lewis's.

You that love England, who have an ear for her music,
The slow movement of clouds in bénédition...

for Spender's

After the first powerful plain manifesto
The black stétement of pistons without more fuss
But gliding like a queen she leaves the station...
(The Express)

Auden's

Which of you waking early and watching daybreak
Will not hasten in heart handsome aware of
wonder
At light unleashed, advancing, a leader of
movement
Breaking on surf on turf on road and roof

Almost any variation could be based on Hopkins' practice in the
final lines of the "Deutschland" stanzas, each of which have
six stresses but no two of which are alike:

Mastery, but be adored, but be adored, King
(st. 10)
Not vault them, the millions of rounds of thy mercy, not reeve even them in?
(st. 12)

Idle for ever to waft her or wind her with, these she endured
(st. 14)

To the man in the tops and the tackle rode over the storm's brawling.
(st. 19)

The distinctive feature of Hopkins' rhythm was the juxtaposition of strong stresses without syllables between them to produce an abrupt effect:

The sour scythe cringe, and the blear share come.
(st. 11)

It is rhythm also found in the poetry of Donne, whose influence on modern poetry coincided with that of Hopkins:

All whome warre, death, age, agues, tyrannies, Despair, law, chance, hath slain...
(Divine Poems No. VII)

Batter my heart, three-personed God; for you As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;
(Ibid., No. XIV)

In Hopkins it is heightened by every variety of alliteration, rhyme, assonance, "sprung syntax" to produce the highly concentrated effects peculiar to his poetry.

Contemporary use of sprung rhythm while undoubtedly influenced by Hopkins, is in general simpler, more elementary, less fastidious than his use of it. Contemporary poets often use "loose iambic feet with simple counterpoint and equivalence which gives something of the effect of sprung rhythm...
without being so technically accomplished or so highly wrought." The general influence, then, is more difficult to detect than that which is apparent in the use of his more "idiosyncratic" practices. The latter are more quickly discovered than the subtler rhythmic effects, although now and then certain cadences are heard which have a Hopkins parentage. Such a cadence "very rare in English poetry," has been pointed out by David Daiches in the conclusion of one of Auden's poems:

The hard bitch and the riding master, 
Stiff underground; deep in clear lake 
The lolling bridegroom, beautiful there.

Daiches compares the last line to Hopkins' "low lays him, listed to a heresy, here," in the "Henry Purcell" sonnet, noting that this sequence of noun, parenthetical adjectival phrase, is fairly frequent in Hopkins.40

Hart Crane has more than once been mentioned in connection with Hopkins' influence. While that of Whitman is more pervasive and powerful, it might well be that the forceful diction owes something to the study of Hopkins. Crane's most ambitious poem, The Bridge, says Isidore Schneider, "shows the present benefits of Hopkins' liberating and enriching experiments."41


40 Ibid., p. 36.

41 Nation, April 16, 1930, p. 456.
In the passages in "Cape Hatteras" describing the flight of the Wright Brothers, the alliteration, the description of movement and the internal rhyme are reminiscent of Hopkins.

Twin brothers in their twinship left the dune;
Warping the gale, the right windwrestlers veered Capeward, then blading the wind's flank, banked and spun...

There is a monosyllabic packing and an abruptness characteristic of Hopkins in the line,

Hell's belt springs wider into heaven's plumed side.

which soon mixes with a Whitmanesque tone in

They cavalcade on escapade, shear Cumulus...
While Cetus-like, O thou Dirigible, enormous Lounger Of pendulous auroral beaches

The use of terminations in midword for the sake of rhyme such as Hopkins' splitting of king-dom in the first line of the "Windhover" is a device also employed by Crane:

Now eagle-bright, now quarry-hid, twist-ing, sink with

Enormous, repercussive list-ings down

There is a Hopkinsian note in the vocalic correspondence as well as in the idea behind

of stars Thou art the stitch and stallion glow ("Atlantic")

and there is something faintly reminiscent of Hopkins' two
sonnets. Nos. 22 and 4642 in these lines from "Quaker Hill":

Yes, whip-poor-will, unhusks the heart of fright
Breaks us and saves, yes, breaks the heart, yet yields
That patience that is armour and that shields
Love from despair—

The occurrence of the words "cipher," "cinquefoil," "swivellings" (Hopkins' swivelled) "dayspring," "buckled," (In "Southern Gross," a phantom, buckled, dropped below the dawn."") "stippled," and others familiar to Hopkins' readers in The Bridge, fortify the other suggestions of influence.

The affinity, however, is very slight. Leaving aside the completely alien spiritual outlook, the ejaculatory, over-excited quality in Crane's verse is very different from the disciplined intensity in Hopkins, and it is often yoked with diffuseness and confusion of intention. He lacks the intellectual subtlety and probity, the precision of Hopkins, as well as the support of tradition. Yet his language is often brilliant, his felling less vague than whitman's. Where his rhythms are tighter and firmer-footed than his master's the influence of Hopkins may perhaps be detected.

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Patience, who asks
wants wars, wants wounds—
We hear our hearts grate on themselves
(No.46)

O surely reaving peace, my Lord should leave in lieu
Some Good! And he does leave patience exquisite
That plumes to peace thereafter.
(No.22)
C. Day Lewis in *A Hope for Poetry*, divides poets into two classes: "those who assimilate a number of influences and construct an original speech from them, and those whose voice seems to come out of the blue, reminding us of nothing we have ever heard before." We are often reminded of something we have heard before in the verse of Lewis himself, of Auden, Spender, Mac Neice, and other contemporaries. Frequently the voice is the voice of Hopkins. Day Lewis shows his admiration for Hopkins in the opening lines of *The Magnetic Mountain* with their bold reminiscence of the "Windhover." The figure of the kestrel or hawk, incidentally, is a favorite symbol with Lewis and his associates.

Not to be with you, elate unshared,
My kestrel joy, O hoverer in wind,
Over the quarry furiously at rest
Chaired on shoulders of shouting wind.

Here, Lewis as he tells us, unites the alliterative sonance of Wilfred Owen with the internal rhyming and vowel modulation of Hopkins. A combination of Hopkins' alliteration and that of the Old English alliterative measure appears in the sprung rhythm of

Void are the valleys, in town no trace,
And dumb the sky-dividing hills:
Swift outrider of lumbering earth
O hasten hiter my kestrel joy!

Modern verse has taken many lessons, from Langland and

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43 p. 168.
earlier English poetry. Without any doubt, some of the experiments based upon this measure and upon simpler ballad and folk measures owe an initial inspiration to Hopkins' "Preface":

They [Auden, Spender, Lewis] have learned as much from Hopkins' theory as from his inimitable practice, returning to the simplicities of the nursery rhyme, to the easy lilt of the ballad...they travel back some six centuries to take lessons from Langland, and find in his homely Anglo-Saxon verse a suitable form for their address to the plowman's modern counterpart.44

The "primary debt," says Henry Wells, of Pound, Eliot, MacLeish, Jeffers, and other representative modern poets, is "through Hopkins and Bridges back to Piers Plowman itself and to Beowulf."45 However, Pound's translation of The Seafarer appeared in 1912, nor must earlier examples of the old poetry, Tennyson's Brunanburh, and Morris's Beowulf be overlooked in this connection.

Lewis once cited the following lines from Auden's "New Country" as an instance of the "mal-digested" influence of Hopkins:46

Me, March, you do with your movements master and rock
With wing-whirl, whale-wallow, silent budding of cell.

lines which almost travesty the powerful verses of "Carrion Comfort."

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45 New Poets from Old (New York: Columbia University, 1940), p. 59.
46 A Hope for Poetry, p. 237.
But ah, but O thou terrible, why wouldst thou 
rude on me 
The wring-world right foot rock?

Lewis's own "assimilation" of Hopkins in *A Time To Dande* is not much of an improvement. The assonantal repetition, the inverted questions an echo of stanza 18 of the "Deutschland,"

touched in your bower of bone
Are you! turned for an exquisite smart
Have you!

in "Moving In" are too characteristic of Hopkins to appear at home in their context.

Is it your hope, hope's hearth, heart's home, here 
at the lane's end?
Deeds are signed, structure is sound though century-old;

Redecorated throughout, all modern convenience, the
Cable extended;
Need grope no more in corners nor cower from dark and cold...

Fear you not ghosts of former tenants, a full visitation
From them whose haunts you have sealed, whose
secrets you haled to light?
Gay as grass are you? Tough as granite? But they
are patient
waiting for you to weaken, awaiting a sleepless night.

You have cut down the yews, say you, for a broader view?
No churchyard
Emblems shall bind or blind, you? But see, the
imperative brow
Frowns of the hills, offers no compromise, means far harder
Visions than valley steeples call to, ...

The shift in the third line above from more poetical lan-

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47 London: Published by Leonard and Virginia Woolfe, 1935
guage to "common speech" is a noticeable characteristic of modern verse which Lewis equates with Hopkins' practice. In a comment upon the blending of incantatory language and common speech rhythm in Hopkins' poems, Lewis goes on to state that in post-war poetry there exists "a tendency to combine these two results, to use common speech rhythms together with a mixture of simplified, superficially un-"poetical" language and highly poetical incantatory language." This juxtaposition of the poetical and the ordinary, of course, is found in the metaphysicals, especially in Donne, but its appearance in contemporary verse is also traceable to the influence of Eliot who uses the device for ironic contrast.

The ghost of the "Deutschland" haunts Lewis's narration of the flight made by Parer and M'Intosh to Australia in their battered airplane.

Plane was their pigeon, no dandy dancer quick-stepping through heaven,
But a craft of obsolete design, a condemned D. H. nine;

Fog first, a wet blanket, a kill-joy, the primrose-of-morning's blight
Blotting out the dimpled sea, the ample welcome of land,
The gay glance from the bright cliff-face behind, snaring the sky with treachery,
Sneering
At hope's loss of height

48 Ibid., p. 171. Cf. above, Ch. IV, p. 103.

49 Loc. cit.
Not only the movement of the verse, but the suggestion of Hopkins' imagery and the diction of the description round out the resemblance.

And now the earth they had spurned rose up against them in anger,
Tier upon tier it towered, the terrible Appenines:
No sanctuary there for wings, not flares nor landing-lines,
No hope of floor and hanger.
Yet those ice-tipped spears that disputed the passage set spurs
To their two hundred and fifty horsepower; grimly they gained
Altitude, though the hand of heaven was heavy upon them,
The downdraught from the mountains: though desperate eddies spun them

Hopkins' idiosyncratic syntax is called into service also.

When the plane catches fire,
   flame streamed out behind
   A crimson scarf of,
The "Million-fueled, nature's bonfire" of the "Heraclitean Fire" sonnet is suggested, and the last line of the same poem, "This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood, immortal diamond," is drawn upon in

   what centuried strata of life
   Fuelled the fire that haled them to heaven, the power that held them
   Aloft? For their plane was a laugh
   A patch, brittle as matchstick, a bubble, a lift for a ghost:

   The voice of his "ancestor" is more subdued in the poems in which Lewis comes under the influence of Auden. The half-rhymes of Wilfred Owen too, which have been taken over as a stylistic note of much contemporary poetry, appear in "The
Mountain," "From Feathers to Iron," and "Transitional Poem."
This final half-rhyme (burn-born; feel-fell) or "shothending"
Hopkins frequently united with alliteration and assonance to
obtain a musical effect. A fusion of Hopkins and Owen appears
in a stanza typical of Lewis in section 25 of "Magnetic
Mountain":

Getters not begetters; gainers no beginners;
Whiners, no winners; no triers, betrayers;
Who steer by no star, whose moon means nothing.

That practice of common speech which Bridges deplored in
Hopkins' verse, the omission of the relative, is a notable
feature of both Lewis's and Auden's poetry. In "From Feathers
to Iron," we find

Beyond the bays of peace, pull up our sweet roots,
Cut the last cord links us to native shore
(Section VIII)

Earth wears a smile betrays
What summer she has in store.
(Section X)

Sometimes it becomes ambiguous:

Hidden the mountain was to steel our hearts
(Magnetic Mountain, Section 26)

Other verbal and syntactic echoes serve to impart to the
"Magnetic Mountain" something of a double personality: "Where
blood ran easy and springs failed not," (Section 8) recalls the
"Where springs not fail" of "Heaven-haven";

But never again will need to ask
Why spirit was flesh-bound.
(Section 12)

makes one think of
Man's spirit will be flesh-bound when found at best. ("Caged Skylark")

"Migrate, chaste my kestrel," (Section 16) and Hopkins' more ambiguous "own my heart" ("Peace") are similar inversions.

The interpolated "O" is not unexpected: Here it is found united with the splitting of words at the end of the line.

Beauty breaks ground, O, in strange places.
Seen after cloudburst down the bone-dry
twatercourses,
In Texas a great gusher, a grain-
Elevator in the Ukraine plain:
To a new generation turns new faces.
("From Feathers to Iron," Section XXVI)

It is frequently used by Auden also:

But watch them, O, set against our size and
timing
The almost neuter, the slightly awkward perfection.
(Schoolchildren")

Hopkins' line, "This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood, immortal diamond," is cited by Day Lewis as an example of his "fluid-image technique." Here an idea "compels to itself a number of objects within its magnetic field, and these objects are related to each other often through an intense alliteration and assonance." This technique Lewis finds in the following passage from Auden:

Crofter, leader of hay, working in sweat
and weathers, tin-streamer, heckler,
blow-room major, we are within a stone's
throw of your prisoned blood.

He sees "the properly assimilated, combined influence of Donne
and Hopkins" in these lines from Louis Mac Neice
The quietude of a soft wind,
Will not recind
My debts to God but gentle skinned
His fingers probes, I lull myself
In quiet in diet and riot in dreams
Till God retire and the door shut.
But
Now I am left in the fire-blaze
The peacefulness of the fire-blaze
Will not erase
My debts to God for his mind strays
Over and under and all ways
All days and all ways.

In a sonnet which partakes of the nature of Donne's and Hopkins' religious sonnets, Auden makes use of Hopkins' manner of addressing God:

Sir, no man's enemy, forgiving all
But will his negative inversion, be prodigal.

The "expressional" rhythm, the closely woven texture of thought and feeling somewhat similar to that in Hopkins' later sonnets appears in Auden's

Not from this life, not from this life, is any
To keep; sleep, day and play could not help there
Dangerous to new ghost, new ghost learns from many
Learns from old termers, what death is where.
("All Over Again")

Though heart fears all heart cries for, rebuffs with mortal beat
Sky fall, the legs sucked under, adder's bite.
("Always in Trouble")

Here the repetitions resemble those of Hopkins in

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes.
(No. 8)

Nine months she then, nay years, nine years she long
Within her wears, bears, cares and combs the same
(No. 51)
Hopkins' voice becomes clearer in the lines,

It is our sorrow. Shall it melt? Ah, water
Would gush, flush, green these mountains
and these volleys.

("Paysage Moralise")

reminiscent of "Gush!—flush the man, the being with it," in
the "Deutschland."

How often the repetition of word and phrase in contemporary
poetry stems from Hopkins' employment of it would be a question
difficult to answer, for it is a distinctive feature of Eliot's
style also (to say nothing of Gertrude Stein's). An interesting
variation upon assonance and rhyme pattern appears in the
Choruses from The Rock which Eliot sometimes strengthens by an
abrupt juxtaposition of stresses in the rhythm:

The great snake lies ever half awake, at the
bottom of the pit of the world curled
In folds of himself until he awakens in
hunger and moving his head to right
and to left prepares for his hour to devour.
But the mystery of iniquity is a pit too deep
for mortal eyes to plumb. Some
Ye out from among those who prize the
serpent's golden eyes
The worshippers, self-given sacrifice of the
snake. Take
Your way and be ye separate.

A verse texture resembling that of Hopkins, although
varied and modified by other influences is of frequent occurrence

51 Gardner has called attention to the Hopkins texture in
these lines, also from the Choruses of The Rock:
Moon light and star light, owl and moth light
Glow-worm glowlight on a grassblade.

(Op. cit., p. 269)
in yearly anthologies of verse and in periodicals. Rarely are the influences assimilated successfully enough to form an individual fusion, a new voice for long at a time. A familiar movement, not as disciplined or musical as Hopkins' is found in Dunstan Thompson's "Images of Disaster," a poem describing the death of a companion:

From siren sweet sung shore
Absent as time, he plunged, boy bold, not moonbeam
So cold, but colder, down, glass meteor of ice,
To doom. Plunged. More silent there than any daydream,
His water wonder without shadow wandered...

This interrupted movement and interpolation of qualifying units between the parts of the sentence (plunged...down...to doom) is one of Hopkins' effective devices for slowing up the movement until everything that is part of the thought "explodes" together at once. An outstanding example, of course, appears in "Tom's Garland," but simpler forms occur often:

When will you ever, Peace, wild woddove, shy wings shut,
Your round me roaming end, and under be my boughs? (No. 22)
Why must
Disappointment all I endeavor end? (No. 50)

A somewhat similar usage is seen in Thompson's

The bright before the morning moon of sorrow53

52 Book of New Poems, Ed. by Oscar Williams, New York; Howell, Soskin, 1944.
53 "Poem: For William Manson," Ibid., 1943.
The alliteration and compound forms, and the repetition of the following lines also remind us of Hopkins:

Naiads...
Shrouded by shells, said nay, said nay,
for no one, no
Would they unwind their glowworm hair.54

Notsleeplight in garden ghostly father...
...gay boy of ghosts, whose eyes, sapphire no longer
Gored, dazzle dagger, God's good-looks...

Alliteration, assonance, internal rhyme are at times overworked by Richard Eberhart, an avowed admirer of Hopkins.55 His punning "Of Truth."56 contains the lines:

O the wicked, winking incidence of truth!
The wicked wink and incidents of truth;
The wink, the flicker, the flight, the snicker,
the flare
The raging actor flying, baring bodkin...

Eberhart now and then indulges in tongue-in-cheek mimicking of his "previous master": His "triptych" contains the lines,

a right
Doleful dingle-dangle state indeed,

and

Fetch me
The past in a basket lined with grass57

55 Cf. Above, Ch. III, p. 71.
56 In The Book of New Poems, 1943.
57 In Poets of the Year (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1943). Cf. the "Tatter-tassel-tangled, dingle-a-dangled" of "The Woodlark." The first line of "St. Dorothea" is "I bear a basket lined with grass."
Hopkins' "wind-wandering, weed-winding bank," (Binsey Poplars)
his compounds, his compression of syntax are suggested in
"World War," although the impressionistic effect is very
different from Hopkins.

Flutesong willow winding weather
Tomorrow lovely undulant today
Glorious bird glide in forest glade,
In meadow golden lissome girl dance...

Grassy twirling boyfoot triumphing
Budding bough drops lovely lording,
Pearling cuckoobrock cool ecstasy

Woven from lucid sunny nest,
World of mellow willow mist...

Gardner has drawn attention to the noticeable Hopkins cast
of Jan Struther's lines in "Portrait":

Those lake-long, wood-ash-grey
thought clouded eyes...
the scrolled,
Bracken-brown, barley-gold,
Curved and curling masses of her
brindelled hair.

This recalls the "gold-wisp, the airy-grey Eye" of "Morning,
Midday and Evening Sacrifice," and the "similative" compounds
of Hopkins—"moth-soft Milky Way," "tool-smooth...light" and
others. Such similarities could easily be accidental and,
especially when isolated, do not necessarily point to Hopkins'
influence. In many cases where resemblances to Hopkins practice

Included in The Glass Blower and Other Poems (New York:
Harcourt Brace, 1941).
are noticeable it would be difficult to prove a direct influence. However, there are a few other instances in Jan Struther's poems which call for remark. In "The Weavers" love is described as "Ice-clear, rock-fast, sea deep," and in "Summer Time Ends" the line

What bone has felt, heart known:

is certainly an echo of

What heart heard of, ghost guessed:

in "Spring and fall," and the general theme, "Leaves...hang brittle now and brown," is similar to the of "Goldengrove unleaving."

Again, while not necessarily deriving immediately from Hopkins, the dynamism which informs the images in Elizabeth Madox Roberts' "I, Adam," as well as the rugged verse may well reflect his influence upon the language:

I named the birds and all the cattle...
Lump-back, web-foot, keel-breast, fish and fowl...
"What is it?" God said, and he set a thing on a stone.
Hooked-beak, have-take, swoop-snatch, and Swift talk
Of a short crooked claw, and I said, "It is the hawk!..."

"What is it?" (God's laughter) A bubble of dark
Re-winded water, wing beat up and over
And I flung, "Hark, hark, the lark"...59

In the last image we are reminded of the "rash-fresh, re-winded, new-skeined score" of Hopkins' skylark. (No. 11)

Certain of Hopkins' peculiar characteristics are discernible among the influences absorbed by W. R. Rodgers, whose recent *Awake and Other Poems* manifests an individual sensibility and a sharp, fresh observation and feeling for nature. In his poems the alliteration, assonance, and inner rhyme suggestive of Hopkins yet employed with original variations and effects, give emphasis and force to a vigorous imagery. Something like Hopkins' colloquial variations—his "so fagged, so fashed, so cogged, so cumbered" etc.—is part of Rodgers' expression. The beauties of his "Ireland"

Are part and parcel of me, bit and bundle,
Thumb and thimble...

He too takes a Hopkinsian delight in soaring birds, in trees, spring; in wind

that speeds the bee and plucks the beeline

Into bows and bends...
that claps and batters

The bent-backed and running roaring waters...
That with hag hands hugs the hooked hawk
down.  61

The monosyllabic movement of Hopkins' "black-backed" sea
("Deutschland," ) is here, and of his "Head, heart, hand, heel,

60 London: Secker and Warburg, 1944.

"London Snow" is felt in Rodgers' description of a snowfall, but the play upon assonantal effects owes something to Hopkins, something to Rodgers' contemporaries:

Out of the grey sky grew snow and more snow
Soundlessly in nonillions of flakes
Commingling and sinking negligently...
Furring the bare leaf, blurring the thorn...
boosting boots and puffing
Big over rims, like boiling milk, meekly
Indulging the bulging hill, and boldly
Bolstering the retiring mole... 62

More of the sheer delight in action, the sudden surprise in beholding the sounds and sights, the variations of natural objects, which are notes of Hopkins' Starlight Sonnet, (Look at the stars! Look, look up at the skies!) or of his "Hurrahing in Harvest" come out in Rodgers' "Stormy Day":

O look how the loops and balloons of bloom
Bobbing on long strings from the finger ends
And knuckles of the lurching cherry tree
Heap and hug, elbow and part, this wild day.

The riding "off forth on swing" of "Windhover" has a picturesque parallel in this poem:

And hovering effortlessly the rooks
Hang on the wind's effrontery as if
On hooks, then loose their hold and slide away
Like sleet sideways down the warm swimming sweep
Of wind.

62 "Snow," Ibid.
Rodgers has none of Hopkins' syntactical idiosyncrasy. The influence is assimilated into his own style for the most part, shown in a free, conversational rhythm, a resourceful Anglo-Saxon diction, and a texture which, while less musical and varied than Hopkins', nevertheless effectively enforces the imagery. The running of the thought over the line unit, a characteristic of Rodgers' verse, is one of Hopkins' habits occurring not infrequently in contemporary poetry. Hopkins, too, often uses alliteration and rhyme as a means of facilitating the mind's movement from one line to another:

We lash with the best or worst
Word last! how a lush-kept plush-capped sloe
Will, mouthed to flesh-burst
Gush!

Rodgers is presumably one of the young poets who, in Gardner's words, "have learnt to look with the eye of Hopkins at the inscape of trees in repose or in movement; at the grace and mastery of a bird's flight." 63 Another who may have learnt, perhaps indirectly, something from Hopkins in this respect, describes the flight of shore-birds in terms which catch their soaring:

Soft-satisfied they wheel and swoop, drift and stoop
To the curling swirling self-echoiling bosom-twist

Of curded foam, space devouring in scouring
The fishing wake of smacks. Bearing up
against it they wing
The wind, effortless the eddies breasting, toil-errant
In unresting quest; ruffled at the turn they coop
Their heads to buffet the blast, wings braced
and laced
Taut, air-winnowed by the catteract high
Over-cliff-top streaming... 64

Another young poet for whom critics have predicated a
Hopkins ancestry is Dylan Thomas. "At his best," Francis Scarfe
remarks, "Thomas reminds us of the Old Testament, James Joyce
and Hopkins all at once... It matters little whether he reads
them: his language partakes of all three."65 Thomas's personal
rhythms sometimes resemble those of Hopkins,

Love and labor and kill
In quick sweet cruel light till the locked
ground sprout out
The black burst sea rejoice...66

as well as his hyphenated modifiers:

When my pinned-around-the-spirit
Cut-to-measure flesh bit. 67

64 Ronald Bottrall, "Terms and Cormorants," The Loosening
and Other Poems, 1931.

65 Auden and After (London: George Routledge and Sons,
1942, p. 104. Cf. also "In Defense of Dylan Thomas," by
Robert Horan, Kenyon Review, VIII (Spring, 1945), 308.


Hopkins' manner in "Man Jack, the man is, (No. 69) and "Soul, self; come, poor Jackself," (No. 47) may be detected in the appellation "Jack Christ," in Thomas's sonnet on the Crucifixion.

Dylan Thomas has been associated with the "New Apocalypse" movement in English poetry, as one of its leaders, together with Henry Treece, Nicholas Moore, and J. F. Hendry. Their aim is to liberate poetry "from a purely objective world"; they are in "reaction against the objective reporting of the 'thirties,' against mass observation...evolved by the followers of Auden."

The "literary ancestors" of the movement are said to be "Revelations, Shakespeare, Webster, Blake, Donne, Hopkins and Kafka." The affinity with Hopkins, however, is very nebulous. Like Thomas, most of the members write a kind of surrealist or personal metaphysical poetry in which the rapid blending of unusually related images and symbols, the mixing of the abstract and the concrete often leads to obscurity and loss of precision. It is an obscurity issuing from a different cause than Hopkins' "obscurity," issuing from a private symbolism and unrelated analyses of emotion. Now and then they take from Hopkins or his later imitators devices such as the omission of the relative—

---


I am the arm thrust candle through the wall. 70

In

I offered her an orchard of trees hung with nails. 71

there is a reminiscence of Hopkins' image in

These goldnails and their gaylinks that hang
along a lime.  (No. 61)

A crowded sprung rhythm running over or backing upon itself

has been chosen by some of Hopkins' admirers to commemorate him.

Here we have the externals of the style, recollections of the

imagery, without the depth of feeling or the textural felicity

of Hopkins.

Through all the fissures of your appalled devotion,
language jetting—surf of afflicted sense
frothing—rush of an ocean of eloquence,
and, as illimitable archetype of that ocean,

Very God, constricted in mind and emotion,
in rote and ritual, yet de viser of all

inscape... 72

The spirit and the shining mind, all sense,
are never stasis in you; O they find
the one commotion which is the world, immense
and mournful, and by the perfect fact so signed

all matter's made dimensionless... 73

A piece of "pure Hopkins" appears in the following poem

probably inspired by "Pied Beauty."

71 Nicholas Moore, "Song" from The Island and the Cattle.
Ibid.
72 William Rose Benét, "Centenary, Gerard Manley Hopkins,
Saturday Review of Literature, Sept. 2, 1944, p. 28.
73 C. A. Milspaugh, "To Gerard Manley Hopkins," Commonweal,
Nov. 13, 1936, p. 68.
Today the wind narrowed; the thunder-black clouds
Are chill-June, and good against the under-sideswept leaves.
And O, for this day and its like—for wind—heaves
That curdle cloy-air...
For things that make dark the sun-white, tart
the sweet.
A snorting stallion, cats jungle—neat—
Glory, glory to the Wonder-Maker of them all.

For these are the things that keep the soul
that spill
Tempests of peace when bright rebellion singes
The lone, inflammable mind, when loud, proud,
The tongue would hail tongue; the will, will...74

Here the derivation is obvious, as it is in several other
even more direct imitations.75 But it would be rash to claim
direct or even indirect influence for every resemblance to
Hopkins' style, for every echo of his manner. Where these
resemblances have been pointed out generally in these pages, it
is with due reservation. It may be remarked, with justice, that
such echoes and resemblances are not indicative of a very pro-
found influence, but rather of a passing vogue, a transitory
popularity, not surprising in a generation of eclectic poets.

Only time will divulge the real nature and extent of
Hopkins' influence. At present it appears to live in the sphere
of rhythm. In drawing attention to the variety and effectiveness
of a stress rhythm, he infused the freedom of twentieth-century
rhythm with a masculine strength and vigor inherent in the
language itself.

75 Cf. The Appendix to this chapter.
It was after Hopkins' poetry became widely known, as Gardner shows, that a rhythm such as that found in Spender's "The Express" emerged:

After the first powerful plain manifesto
a rhythm which was a definite strengthening of Bridges' rhythm which at the same time provided disciplinary checks upon the tendencies toward too great looseness in the "Whitmanesque traditions. More intangible, and merging with other influences is that effect of Hopkins' poetry which is felt "in the heightened sense, characterizing taste and criticism in our time, for what may be called the Shakespearian (as opposed to the Miltonic) potentialities of English." Here undoubtedly his example will be powerful, as will his spiritual influence, radiating from his grasp of "rarest veined" reality and his absolute honesty and integrity in the presentation of his vision of that reality.

77. Leavis, Scrutiny XII, p. 93.
APPENDIX I

BRIDGES' RULES FOR AN ACCENTUAL VERSE

The similarity in definition between Bridges' list of the common stress units or feet and those of Hopkins is notable: 1

1. \( \wedge \)
   The bare stress without any complement.

2. \( \wedge \wedge \)
   The two falling disyllabic feet.

3. \( \wedge \wedge \)
   The two rising disyllabic feet.

4. \( \wedge \wedge \wedge \wedge \)
   Brittanics or mid-stress trisyllabics.
   (Hopkins' "rocking" feet.)

5. \( \wedge \wedge \wedge \wedge \wedge \)
   The falling and rising trisyllabics.

6. \( \wedge \wedge \wedge \wedge \wedge \wedge \)
   The quadrisyllabics. (Paeons)

7. \( \wedge \wedge \wedge \wedge \wedge \)
   The five-syllable foot.

Bridges lays down seven rules which an "accentual or stress verse spontaneously develops in practice." 2

I. The stress governs the rhythm.

II. The stresses must all be true speech stresses.

III. A stress has more carrying power over a syllable next to it, than it has over a syllable removed from it by an intervening syllable.

---


2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 87-105.
(Thus, the common scansion of the line from Bishop Heber's hymn—

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning

according to this rule should be

\[ \text{Brightest and best of the sons of the morning} \]

IV. A stress has a peculiarly strong attraction for verbal unity and for its own proclitics and enclitics.

(Thus, a better scansion of the line above would be

\[ \text{Brightest and best of the sons of the morning} \]

V. A stress will not carry a heavy syllable which is removed from it by another syllable.

(Hence, the following scansion of Bishop Heber's line

Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid

is better than

Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid

because of the heavy "our" and "thine."

VI. A stress will not carry more than one heavy syllable or two light syllables on the same side of it.

VII. In some metres when four, and in any metre when more than four unstressed syllables occur together, they will occupy the place of a stress which may be said to be distributed over them, and a line in which such a collection of syllables occurs will lack one of its stresses.

APPENDIX II

As evidence of the existence of a "school of Hopkins" Gardner cites the following "impersonations." \(^3\)

---

Incomparable treasure, heart's blood spilt
Out of heart's anguish, high heart, all hoping heart,
Child—innocent, clean heart, of guile or guilt,
But heart storm-tried, fire-purged, heaven-chastened

Clear mapped but course sore-battered, when the worst
Skies clashed, light flashed—God visioned, none the less
God terrible—from that too great cloud stress
Came rain, came words at last and falling fast.
And why? To blossom beauty, seeding truth
In stillness thirty years, the saturate earth
Bounty for bounty yielding; tempest ruth
Vindicated (not despair that deals out death.)
No havoc out of all earth's havoc wrought
But only heaven comfort, pilgrim sought. 4

Here the green empty miles lie sweet; branches
random-tangled
Netted, lac'd, trac'd, fretted, silent show
through the blue
Cold-rolled sky; through black pack'd knuckled
twigs a-tangled,
All lies flat, misty, chequered with plump
young bushes fresh and new. 5

Against the stack's rough edge the sky stirs,
cracks
lets ooze light ebb (no flood this) over space
uncharitable; sweeps comfort—shadow grace
of hedgebed by, gleams dew's drip, berry's
wax.
Branches stand out, numb knee asserts,
hurts, slacks
and bends... 6

Leaves, summer's coinage spent, golden
are all together whirled,
sent spinning, dipping, slipping shuffled
by heavy-handed wind,

4 Monk Gibbon, Seventeen Sonnets, 1932.
5 R. P. Hewett, in Poems, 1936.
6 Christopher Lee, Poems, 1938.
shifted sideways, sifted, lifted, and in
swarms made to fly
spent sun-flies, gorgeous tatters, airdrift,
pinions of trees. 7

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing pages an attempt has been made to trace the history of Hopkins criticism and to indicate briefly some of the evidences which point to the existence of a Hopkins influence. These latter indications were necessarily of a somewhat conjectural nature, as has been pointed out, since it is difficult at the present time to separate the influence of Hopkins from other influences producing similar effects in contemporary poetry. It is probably safe to say that Hopkins' influence, apart from a number of imitations of his syntactical devices and a number of coinages and compoundings of words which future ages will probably trace to his impress upon poetical dictation, has been a general influence in the realm of rhythm. That general influence has taken on the nature of a sanction or rationale providing to the contemporary poet a justification for certain boldnesses and freedoms with the conventional English rhythms, that is, for the increasing use of what has been defined as "count of ear" rhythm.

In the progress of Hopkins criticism since the publication of the Poems in 1918, (when for the first time it had something substantial to work on) three periods merging into each other at many points, have been roughly distinguished in this study. The first of these, lasting up into the late twenties although in the process of transformation by that time, was a period greatly influenced by Georgian critical standards and by Robert Bridges'
Preface to the Poems. As a consequence, the earliest reviewers of the Poems emphasized Hopkins' "oddities and obscurities," his grammatical ambiguities, and in general, his departures from convention. These elements were isolated from his total achievement, and represented as faults to be overcome before the rare beauties of the poems could be discovered. Rarely in the first few years was Hopkins' intention realized. We may recall one reviewer of the Poems who found that the verse "survived the great test of verse; it is best read aloud."

Another recognized the functional nature of the rhythms: they endowed Hopkins' line with emphasis or speed, or hesitation, or airiness or clamour." Three years after publication a note which heralded a change in critical outlook appeared in Edward Sapir's confident presentation of Hopkins' work as modern and a standard for modern poets. This championship, through for the moment isolated, was influential, appearing as it did in Poetry, the discoverer and publicizer of the "new" in verse. Five years later the "about-face" in regard to the problem of Hopkins' obscurity was prepared and probably not a little influenced by the comments of I. A. Richards who made a virtue of the poet's difficulty and focussed the rays of psychological criticism upon the personality revealed in the poems.

2. The Tablet, April 5, 1919.
Little more was said in Hopkins' favor before 1930, but the change in opinion manifested then shows that a slow evolution was taking place during the twenties, from an attitude of suspicion towards departures from convention to an acceptance of these departures. This evolution, of course, was part of the spreading dissatisfaction with the "Parnassiansim" of the Georgians and of the experimental movement of post-war poetry which was concerned with forging a new medium to express its resistance to the affirmation and complacency of the older generation.

The break with nineteenth century tradition and the new start which came with "J. Alfred Prufrock" was reaching its apogee in the thirties. Once Hopkins' "difficulty" had been given sanction it is easy to see why it might be exaggerated and how he might come to be regarded as a spokesman for the present generation of poets, not because of what he said as much as because of his manner of saying it. Leavis and others presented him as a poet whose technique, concerned so much with inner division and psychological complexities, had a special bearing on contemporary problems. Young poets began to feel an affinity with this Victorian in name only. He too, they felt, had rebelled against tradition. He was exile, separated like them from national and communal life, confused as to what kind of audience he must address himself to; like them needing, but unable to find hearers. "What I need in order to be
smoother and less singular is an audience," Hopkins had said.

Hopkins' ruggedness, his packed syntax and compression drew the attention of poets whose chief characteristic had become "an absorption in the craft of conveying the utmost density of consciousness in the smallest possible compass of language." Hopkins' more involved style could be made to fit in with definitions of poetry like the following:

Poetry is modern when it is tortured, when it feels as if it had come hard...when it does not worry so much about success in communication as about fidelity to the object presented...when it strikes us instantly as serious, sincere, as if it were the veritable voice of our generation.

With the publication of the first two volumes of Hopkins' Letters in 1935, the third period of criticism may be said to have begun. In the same year Day Lewis was proclaiming Hopkins as one of the ancestors of the contemporaries who were providing a Hope for poetry. In the Letters the voice of the Victorian rang out loud and clear. The picture of Hopkins in his own age was made still more distinct by the appearance of the Notebooks in 1937, and Further Letters a year later. Little by little Hopkins began to be studied in his setting. His discussions of his theories, of his poetry and the poetry of others, the revealing of many new facets of his experience demanded of his critics a closer analysis of his craftsmanship.

of his thought, of all the influences which acted upon him. The result was and continues to be an ever-widening periphery of reference, a realization not only of his bearing upon the present but of his connections with the past. Studies like that of Ogden, Pick, Gardner and those of the Kenyon Critics have done much to clarify the real position of Hopkins without subtracting from his originality.

The change which has taken place in recent years may perhaps be best indicated by a couple of comparisons. In 1935 C. Day Lewis represented Hopkins as "without affinities." His voice seemed "to come out of the blue, reminding us of nothing we have heard before." In a review of Eleanor Ruggles biography of Hopkins, Horace Gregory neatly docketed Hopkins' poetry "between the places reserved for the poetry of John Keats and that of the obscure and still too little known Thomas Lovell Beddoes." Leavis, who had presented Hopkins in the company of Eliot and Pound in 1930 is discovered in 1944 searching out his Victorian themes, Nature, Beauty, Transience. There have been indications of late of a coming reaction against the Victorian reaction, and a revaluation of Victorian poetry seems to be imminent which may further affect Hopkins criticism. Future criticism will undoubtedly find Hopkins his true place in English literary tradition. Whether this place is between Keats and Beddoes remains to be seen.

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

June 12, 1946

Signature of Adviser