

A Critical Review of Gerard Manley Hopkins's Select Works: A Study

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Abstract

Although Gerard Manley Hopkins was born and died in the nineteenth century, Hopkins is generally referred to as a twentieth-century poet because to his shocking and distinctive style rather than the fact that his poems weren't released until 1918. It has been argued that Hopkins was a Victorian in the sense that he was serious, meticulous, diligent, and set high standards for himself, but he was ahead of his time in his astounding poetic creations. Although he had a strong sense of duty and believed in self-sacrifice, his poetry was misunderstood, underappreciated, and unrecognised during his lifetime. He also had an independent spirit, which is apparent in his work. He did not write for a readership or adhere to current literary trends. Hopkins "is continuously more concerned with conveying across his perceptions than with obeying conventional expectations of language," claims Robert Bernard Martin. Most devoted readers of his poems come to learn to let go of their typical demands of linguistic convention in order to experience a wider poetic process than would otherwise be feasible.

Keywords: Hopkins, Poetry sprung rhythm, style, Victorian.

Introduction

Although being composed in the nineteenth century, his poetry had a profound impact on poetry of the twentieth century. It wasn't so much that other poets copied Hopkins, but rather that they were given the freedom to cultivate and discover their own uniqueness. His fashion was vibrant, uninhibited, and dazzlingly unique. (!) Hopkins was friends with and a contemporary of Britain's Poet Laureate Robert Bridges (both were born in 1844). In 1918, Bridges published Hopkins's poetry for the first time in book form. An early reviewer of the poetry noted that while the verses can be difficult to

read, they are nonetheless compelling and that at times the language has "an impact almost of idiocy, of speech without sense and prolonged only by echoes." However, in 1919, the same reviewer asserted that Hopkins' poetry featured "genuine fragments that we believe even when they bewilder us."

He always maintained that things are more beautiful when they are in motion, such as when a kingfisher is flying, weeds are being shot, a wind is hovering, Felix Randal is working an iron, or a mountain stream is "His roll rock highroad screaming down." And he cherished the uniqueness of each; each must be what it is, as in the song "As Kingfishers catch fire." He cherished things' individuality and distinctiveness. He referred to this trait as INSCAPE. Hopkins stated to Bridges in a letter, "It's what makes a building, room, or inscape stand out from the others. He then used another principle, that of INSTRESS, to explain his understanding of the energy that enabled this uniqueness. It can be summed up as follows, according to Michael Schmidt, in his book *Lives of the Poets*: "Inscape is evident, instress divine, the immanent presence of the divine in the thing."

Hopkins is a poet who awakens your senses, according to Seamus Heaney. The noises also fit the tone and atmosphere of the poem while also allowing the reader to experience the "hereness-and-nowness" of the moment. According to Hopkins, "my poetry is more to be heard than read...it is oratorical, that is the beat is so."

Hopkins was completely absorbed in what he saw when he looked at nature, but it was never a celebration of nature for its own sake. Hopkins believed that the splendour of God could be seen

everywhere in nature. His love of God and God's creation serves as the inspiration for his poetry. He writes poetry with astounding highs. He is a poet who can write the grimmest poetry about the depths of misery in *The Terrible Sonnets*, but his imagination soars in a poem like "The Windhover."

The Falck Laws had expelled a number of Roman Catholic clerics from Germany in 1875. Five exiled nuns travelled on the *Deutsch land* in the winter of that year, but the ship capsized close to the Kentish shore of England due to a snowstorm. Many lives, including those of the crew members, were lost when the ship eventually broke apart in the open seas. Their remains were transferred to England for formal funeral rites, and the entire incident received extensive press coverage. Theology was being studied at St. Bueno's College in Wales at the time by Gerard Manley Hopkins. He read the news stories, and a lot of the information in his poetry is pulled straight from the sources. He seems to have paid close attention to the story of how the tallest of the five nuns stood out from the crowd right before she died, pleading for Christ to come to her before she joined the others in the freezing waters below. Hopkins suggested that a poem be written about this terrible tragedy after discussing it with his rector. Hopkins saw that comment as a directive, broke his poetry fast, and started writing again. His mind was grabbed by the tall nun's experience just before she passed away. Being on the deck of the wrecked ship must have been terrifying and horrible. She was, nevertheless, a devout Catholic who served God. How could God punish her so severely? As she screamed out after Christ to save her from the crashing waves, what did she mean?

The Wreck of the Deutschland

As a poem, "The Wreck of a Deutschland" presents considerable difficulty. Hopkins' elegy is more skewed, fragmented, and confusing than Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1850). In 1918, when Robert Bridges released Hopkins's first poetry collection, the poet himself pleaded with readers to stay with the collection and not move on to Hopkins' more

accessible later works. He compared "The Wreck of the Deutschland" to a large dragon that was waiting at the entrance. But the text can be interpreted to fit the theme of the event. The poem is a memorial to the five Franciscan girls who drowned on Dec 7, 1875, as a result of the Falck Laws between midnight and dawn, gives the reader some context. The story continues, mainly following to newspaper accounts of the events, if readers jump to verse 12. Stanza 12 tells the story of how 200 passengers left Bremen for the United States without realising that 25% of them would die on the voyage. In verse 13, the *Deutschland's* entry into the winter storm is detailed. The ship hit a sandbank, as described in stanzas 14 as well as 15, and people began to drown. A sailor who attempted to save a woman and was slain does the good deed mentioned in verse 16, and his body is left hanging on a rope in front of the helpless people for several hours. The tall nun is the subject of stanzas 17 through 23. The author contrasts his own easy manner of living with 1/13/23, 7:05 PM in stanza 24. According to the critical essays of Gerard Manley Hopkins, the sisters' final fight took place on the turbulent sea when they were under a safe roof in Wales. Although the tall nun is currently in the process of dying, he is pain- and trial-free. She rises up amidst the wreckage and death and exclaims, "O Lord, Christ, come soon." The events of that day are examined in Stanzas 25 through 35, which also seek to answer the question of what, exactly, she was attempting to say when she yelled. What was the purpose of her existence, in its entirety? Thus, the poem can be divided into the following three sections: The first ten lines are a prologue or invocation, the next twenty-five describe the shipwreck and the tall nun, and the final ten lines examine the importance of the event. The shipwreck and the tall nun's cries are described in a very straightforward middle section of the passage. Most of the confusing parts in this section are explained in the annotations of Gerard Manley Hopkins' *Poems*, Fourth Edition, Revised Edition. However, there are certain more viewpoints that are useful in understanding the entire work.

Relationship between "The Wreck of a Deutschland" and the Jesuit contemplative practises of "application of a senses" or "composition of location" As a Jesuit, Hopkins incorporated the teachings of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, especially those found in *Ejercicios espirituales* (1548; *The Spiritual Exercises*, 1736). Additionally, he occasionally retreated from society to complete the spiritual exercises during exceedingly arduous month-long retreats during his career. The instantaneous, overpowering feeling of the presence of God in our reality is one goal of spiritual practises. *Spiritual Exercises* instruct the contemplative to use "composition" as a technique. Consider the birth of Christ as an example if you want to feel the divine presence more strongly. To begin, one must carefully and meticulously envision or design the scenario of the Nativity. What kind of animals were in the stable when Christ was born? Where was the holy family when Christ was born? Were they seated or standing? How big was the room? What did the manger look like? The scene is imagined or created there. The contemplative then carefully examines the piece with each of his five senses. What did it feel like, sound like, smell like, taste like, look like, etc.? A very potent perception of the religious experience results from such a projection of the contemplative into the actual environment. Reading "The Wreck of a Deutschland" is like engaging in such a contemplative pursuit. Hopkins is looking to have a spiritual feel for what the sisters' sacrifice meant. The incident where the tall nun passed away is depicted in the middle of the poet's poem. The five senses are applied through systematic construction. Stanza 28 illustrates the poet's struggle to put himself in the nun's shoes, to experience her feelings, to suffer alongside her, and to have the same beliefs. She beheld Christ the King, her Master, as she passed away. In an effort to share her experience, the poet writes. The poem should be read alongside other religious meditation-related works by authors such as George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, & Henry Vaughan. Perhaps the best way to get started with Hopkins is introduced to us by

Louis L. Martz's 1962 book, *The Poetry of Concentration*, a study of seventeenth-century English religious writing.

Complexities of sprung rhythm

The poem contains artistic complexity in addition to religious complexity. Hopkins declared to have invented "sprung rhythm," a brand-new poetry form, which he used in "The Wreck of the Deutschland." Hopkins' measurements have been the subject of extensive scholarly study, but there is still no consensus on what he means when he refers to "sprung rhythm." 1/13/23, 7:05 PM Critical essays on Gerard Manley Hopkins.

There are 35 stanzas in "The Wreck of a Deutschland," each consisting of eight lines of variable length. Whether you count all the syllables inside a line or only the accented ones, the line length of each stanza is nearly the same. Most of the time, there are four or five syllables in the first line. It's consistent throughout the poem that line 8 is much longer than line 1. Why are metrical lines of various lengths?

It is sometimes believed that Hopkins didn't realise what he was doing when he developed strange literary forms because he was sequestered within the Jesuit order. That is ludicrous considering that he was an established literary scholar and a professor of classical literature. It is essential to know what Hopkins' colleagues felt about metre in order to comprehend sprung rhythm. Robert Bridges, a longstanding friend and acquaintance from college who had done extensive research on Milton's iambic pentameter, wrote an important book on Milton's prosody. Iambic feet, which are two-syllable units in which the second syllable is pronounced louder than the first, are thought to have been utilised by Milton, according to Bridges. Because even syllables are emphasized more than the odd syllables, an iambic line has five iambic feet and ten syllables. Bridges offered a few easy adjustments for Miltonic pentameter runs that deviate from this standard format. Bridges' analysis

of Milton seems to be accurate, yet Hopkins obviously does not produce poetry in the same style. His lines have a wide range of unstressed syllable counts, which Bridges demonstrates never occurs in Milton.

Coventry Patmore, another of Hopkins' contacts, was a famous Catholic poet who studied English time-based metrics as they related to hymn prosody. Hopkins' sprung rhythm, as opposed to Bridges' explanation of Milton's accentual-syllabic pattern, seems to better fit this type of musical time-based pattern. Hopkins, who taught classical languages, was aware of the state-of-the-art linguistic study being conducted there. Vowel length was extremely important in Greek poetry since it was meant to be quantitative. When Hopkins was still in school, he had to practise fitting the proper long and short vowels into the appropriate foot when translating an English line into Roman and then Greek poetry (Some of his works in Latin and Greek can be found in Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins.) People are unaware of how crucial these classical lexicons are to Hopkins' English verse patterns because the majority of modern readers are ill-equipped to comprehend them. Drawings of Hopkins' English poems can be found in his unpublished files.

Conclusion

Hopkins' poetry, according to Coventry Patmore, was like "veins of pure gold buried in masses of unexpected quartz," As previously mentioned, Roddy Doyle's book *The Van* features the character Darren studying Hopkins' poetry for the Leaving Cert. As he reads one of the poems, Darren wonders when Tippex was created and comes to the conclusion that "Gerard Manley Hopkins had obviously been smelling something."

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