

Contribution of Gerard Manley Hopkins to English Poetry: A Study

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Abstract

Hopkins's emergence as a poet was precipitated by the Wreck of the Deutschland. He abandoned the Keatsian wordpainting style of his early work in favour of one that was more concise, dramatic, and unified. After initially being drawn to Keats because of his sensual aestheticism, he eventually became disinterested in the poet in favour of his clearly moral, indeed didactic, speech. Unlike Keats, he did not just enjoy nature for what it was, but instead faced its endless destructive potential. He saw the opportunity for a theodicy in this disaster, a vindication of God's justice that could rebut the rising feeling of God's departure in Victorian society. So, Hopkins's rector's suggestion that someone start writing a poem about the disaster gave him the spiritual credibility he needed to start balancing his artistic and religious callings.

Keywords: Hopkins, religious, spiritual, Victorian, Nature Poetry.

Introduction

In spite of Hopkins's pleading, his friend Robert Bridges refused to reread *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, despite the fact that it was a pivotal moment in the development of sacramentalism, which in turn would create the framework for the great nature poetry of the future. In addition to being rejected by the Jesuit magazine *the Month*, many subsequent readers have had trouble understanding the poem as well, chiefly due to its novel "sprung" rhythm.

Hopkins's sonnets about the scenery around St. Beuno's College, Wales, have been more accessible to readers since they more closely reflect the author's immediate surroundings. Hopkins wrote most plainly about his need to approach God here on earth in an earlier poem titled "Half-Way House," which begins: If I were to catch up to you in the end, "above," then

"under" is where I need to be right now. Hopkins, as evidenced by "The Windhover," "God's Grandeur," as well as other 1877 sonnets, found this centre way not just in the community of wine and bread, especially in the Lake of Clwyd as well as the rural areas close to St. Beuno's. same thing happened to Wordsworth on Mount Snowdon as well as near Tintern Abbey, to John Dyer on Grongar Hill, and to Henry Vaughan (in the Welsh countryside), he had a profound encounter with nature in Wales.

Hopkins' use of sunrises and "sea-sunsets" that, in Wordsworth's words, "give such splendour to the vale of Clwyd," are illuminating images of God's presence in his Welsh poems. In the "furl of new dogrose down," ("The furl with fresh-leaved dogrose down," 1879) was a cherished and distilled image in Hopkins' nature poetry. Plowed fields, clouds, and even their reflections in puddles all sparkle and shine. Moonlight and starlight shimmered like "bright boroughs" and "pearl depths" and "quickgold" on drab lawns as the night sky revealed a wondrous, ethereal world ("The Starlight Night," 1877). Everything of creation was considered a "piece-bright paling" and represented Christ's "residence."

As shown by his most well-known Welsh sonnet, "The Windhover," Hopkins believed that, like the Bible, *The Novel of Nature* had to have a moral lesson for each person. Hopkins wrote throughout his letters to St. Ignatius, "However one globe is speech, appearance, and media stories of God; it is a book

he had written... a poetry of fabulousness: what's it about?" Do I give him the adoration and awe that is rightfully his? Do I follow the prescribed path of service to him? Right now, I don't care about anyone else or the human race; the question is, "DO I DO IT?" Hopkins' "The Windhover" is an attempt to address this issue.

The opening "I" draws the reader's attention to the speaker, but it isn't until the final line of the octave, "My heart in hiding/stirred for a bird," when the lesson from the Book of Nature is explicitly applied to him. According to one possible biography, he was trying to avoid pursuing his dreams of being a renowned artist and poet by hiding. Instead of seeking notoriety in such a brazen manner, he had decided to follow Christ's example and be a "hidden man of the heart" (1 Peter 3:4). For those of us who are doomed to lead lives of anonymity, confinement, and failure, Christ's "hidden life in Galilee is indeed the great assistance to faith," as Hopkins put it.

But the windhover reminded Hopkins of the miraculous deeds Jesus performed after his left Nazareth. The windhover "stirred" in him a desire to "obtain of, mastery over" this magnificent chevalier, in addition to his admiration for the latter quality (control). Towards the beginning of "Il Mystico," Hopkins expresses a desire to be carried away on "Spirit's wings" such that he "may drink the ecstasy/Which to pure souls only might be," referring to a "ecstasy" of the windhover. Hopkins eventually realised he had been trying to avoid the emotional consequences of a complete transformation into a "pure" soul. Hence, the term "hiding" can refer to concealing oneself not just from human society or material aspirations but also from the divine.

The opening of the sestet is made up of the phrases "here/Buckle," which have multiple meanings depending on the context. Hopkins' hidden heart knew that Christ was descending to

capture it. In the same way that the bird buckled his wings together just to harness its "brute attractiveness," "valour," and "acting" qualities, the speaker recommits to the imitation with Christ and gathers all of his enormous talents in preparation again for combat, grappling, and buckling with the opponent. The Christian must "put on the entire armour of God" to stand against the devil's plans, as instructed by Paul.

A few months before he became a Jesuit priest, Hopkins wrote "The Windhover", and in it he made the decision to give up all of his worldly pursuits. Hopkins thought that a knight with faith should be ready for her pride to break and for a life of "sheer slog" and "blue-bleak" self-sacrifice if that's what it takes, much like Jesus, whose contradictory success is his seeming downfall. The Christian knight, like Christ on the cross, will be galled, gashed, and ultimately killed, but the imagery of "The Windhover" promises that even a fire will break out of his heart at the end. His former self (because fire eats everything) and his adversary, Evil, will find the flames "a billion times far lovelier" than his "heart in hiding," but they will also find them "hazardous."

Hopkins' global poetic aspirations were likewise put in greater peril as the fire grew. Pegasus, the mythical winged horse from Greek legend, is portrayed in "The Windhover" as Hopkins's inspiration. Because of his hubris, Bellerophon was tossed from Pegasus, and this event symbolises the destruction of his former poetic personality. Hopkins believed that poetry must constantly give way, buckle under, to the "greater purpose" of religion, thus he destroyed his poems before joining the Society of Jesus out of fear of his pride in his own poetry. He risked giving up the global stardom that had been promised him as "the star of Balliol" for a life of "sheer drudgery," and his poems ran the risk of never being read by the people they deserved to hear them.

Yet, in "The Windhover," the "plod" makes the plough "shine." In fact, a frequent

mediaeval metaphor for writing was a plough scratching a field, with the furrows standing in for rows of letters. To most of her contemporaries, Hopkins' poems were as obscure as "blue-bleak embers," yet now they have gained a following and thus are ablaze with popularity.

But, most of his contemporaries, who saw nature solely as a resource to be mined, did not know about them. Hopkins decided to write in "God's Grandiosity" that "shod feet also had walked, have trod, acquire trod; and all is set on fire by trade; bleached, encased with toil; and also wears man's smudge also and shares man's smell." Due to the loss of land and also the fact that "aftercomers can't imagine how beautiful it was," Hopkins lamented, "What would the globe be, once bereft/Of damp or wildness?" ("Binsey Poplars"). Leave the wet and wild alone; / Long may the weeds and the unspoiled wilderness thrive ("Inversnaid," 1881).

Hopkins labelled the new suburbs of Oxford "base and brickish" in "Duns Scotus' Oxford" (1879), and similar devastation of natural habitats induced by urbanisation is still happening today. In 1882, Hopkins finished the eight-part poem "Ribblesdale" by showing how God left all of nature there to do "rack or wrong" rather than hovering protectively above nature ("God's Grandeur"). Hopkins believes that the "self-bent" of man is to blame for his desire to "They say that this desire is indeed a direct result of the growing urbanisation of the world ("Ribblesdale").

As a result, Hopkins first completely conveyed his sorrowful vision of environmental ruin in his 1877 work "The Sea and the Skylark," a lengthy comparison between the city and the country. Hopkins's "sordid turbid time" ended with the year's final sea and skylark chirps. There are parallels between his depiction of dust, slime, and filth in his "sordid turbid time" and the writings of Tennyson, Dickens, Ruskin, and other Victorian authors.

Just one month after being ordained a priest and completing "The Sea and the Skylark" in October 1877, Hopkins started working at

Mount St. Mary's University, Chesterfield, as an assistant minister and teacher. His strength and willpower gradually dwindled in the polluted industrial cities he was sent to till his death. "Living here is as dismal as ditch-water.... My muse grew absolutely sour in the Sheffield smoke-ridden air," he said about Chesterfield in 1878. A Jesuit church on Mount Street in London hired him as its curate in July of that year. He was appointed curate of St. Aloysius's Church in Oxford in the month of December. After writing "Binsey Poplars" or "Duns Scotus's Oxford" at Oxford, he became the interim curate at St. Joseph's Church throughout Bedford Leigh, which is a suburb of Manchester, in October 1879. "very dark.... there are least twelve mills more than, and coalpits well; the air was thick with smoke and wet," he observed. The river was "covered with ugly yellow ice form coast to coast" when he started work as select preacher of St. Xavier's, Liverpool by December 1879. Following the conclusion of his temporary position at St. Joseph's, Glasgow in September 1881, Hopkins reflected on his time there, writing, "My experiences in Liverpool or Glasgow left me with a strong belief in the misery of city life, in the degradation of our race, and in the hollowness of this century's civilization. It sometimes made life hard for me to be reminded every day of the things I saw. In 1884, Hopkins worked at the Royal University of Ireland as a fellow in classics. He taught Greek at National University, Dublin, the following year. He had previously spent his third year as a novice at Roehampton and two years teaching classics at Stonyhurst College. Hopkins said of Dublin, "It is a joyless place, and in my heart, it is as smokey as London." Hopkins died in 1889 from typhoid, which may have been caused by Dublin's unclean water supply, and was buried at Glasnevin.

Although Hopkins wrote nature poems from the time he left Wales in 1877 until his death, his missions in Victorian cities compelled him to shift his attention from nature to man, and and then there was only one man: himself. Since

she can no longer associated with nature and feels like an outsider in her environment, the speaker in Hopkins' "Spelt with Sibyl's Leaves" (1884) describes herself as "sheathe-and shelterless." To make the transition from the external to the internal path to God, he "The Blessed Mother likened to the Air we Breathe" describes how he "strips down to the core self" to focus on creating a "new self and nobler myself."

Even though he was often unhappy and felt that society was getting worse, which he lamented in "Tom's Garland" (1887) in "A Times Are Changing," Hopkins has been successful in his efforts to bring grace and love to urban guy, as "Felix Randal" (1880) reveals," which bears no date. The question "Or what is else?" is the only way out for Hopkins at the end. Your inner world is a micronation where your will is supreme. The Candle Indoors (1879), among his earlier poetry, and his religious writings at Oxford, dealt with "rooting out sin" in the "world within;" nevertheless, in Hopkins's latter years, this theme dominated the majority of his poetry. Acedia, sometimes known as "spiritual laziness" or "desolation," is the subject of most of these poetry. The initial "awful sonnets" were written in 1885 and include "The Carrion Comfort," "There is nothing more awful than this." To R. B., "Seem Somewhat a Stranger," "I Wake up to Feel," "Patience," "Three Additional Poems of 1889," "A Song to You," "A Shepherd's Brow," & "My Own Heart."

Hopkins testified that he suffered from depression throughout his life, Dixon remarked that his "terrible melancholy" was most apparent in these last sonnets, and I agree. Hopkins says that spiritual desolation is "darkness to confusion of heart...doubt with hope however without love, so that [the heart] feels completely lazy, lukewarm, sad, and as if it is far from its Creator or Master" a definition that echoes Saint Ignatius's. This vice, known in Latin as acedia, differs from physical laziness in that the person is aware of his situation, cares about it, and makes efforts to overcome it.

Hopkins' sonnets on desolation, sometimes regarded as his most modern writings, are actually an near repeat of the old treatises on acedia. For instance, in St. John Chrysostom's Exhortations to Stagirus, which was written in the fourth century, acedia is depicted as a crucial factor, and Hopkins' "To look the stranger" serves as an illustrative example. John's tristitia or world-sorrow syndrome of Stagirus is summarised at the beginning of John's sermon on Eutropius, which Hopkins transcribed, which is very similar to Hopkins's own experience. A guy converts, abandons his family and social status, and fights valiantly against tristitia, only to cave in to it more frequently than not.

Conclusion

There are many characteristics of acedia present in Hopkins's religious poetry from the 1860s, but the most prominent is "world sadness," the situation bemoaned in "No worst, there is none" (1885). In this "primary" or "principal" grief, as Hopkins describes it, a wide spectrum of emotions are "herded and crowded" together. Besides from helplessness and world sadness, other symptoms of the acedia syndrome include alienation, isolation, a loss of faith in God, hopelessness, a desire to end one's life, and even suicidal ideation, all of which reoccur in Hopkins's work and life, but peak near the end.

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