

HOPKINS AS A MODERN POET

SHOWKAT AHMAD SHEIKH S/O ABDUL MAJEED SHEIKH

LECTURER IN ENGLISH AT G.D.C.FOR WOMEN ANANTINAG

GMAIL:Showkathamdani11@gmail.com

Abstract

When Queen Victoria succeeded to throne in 1837, English Literature seemed to have entered upon a period of lean years, in marked contrast with poetic fruitfulness of the Romantic Age. The entry she made in her diary on that occasion tells us much about the moral earnestness which she lived by and diffused among her subjects during her long reign. Hopkins has been designated as a modern poet because he broke the existing Victorian mould of poetic expression and used his poetic craft to express his ideas and emotions in a radical manner. In terms of themes, language, rhythm, metre, imagery, Hopkins adopted techniques, which were beyond his time's. He was ahead of the literary age in which he lived and wrote.

Key Words: Victorian Age, Queen Victoria, Romantic Age, Techniques, Poetic Expression, Literary Age, Imagery, Cult.

Introduction: Before we discuss Hopkins as a modern poet, it is necessary to understand what modern poetry and how Hopkins qualifies as a modern poet. The main features of modern poetry are related to the reaction against the Victorian poetry which sentimentalized emotions and thought in a manner hardly related to the ground realities of life. Hopkins visualized the impending doom in terms of war and disintegration of social and moral values. In his famous poem, '**Thou art just indeed O lord!**' he questions the justice accorded to honest and righteous people. Such a radical approach to poetry was unthought-of in his times.

The main features of modern poetry are:

- Poetry is objective or impersonal; poetry is not a 'Spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. It is not an expression of Personality; rather it is an escape from personality.
- Poetry should express unified sensibility In intellect and emotion combined as in Donne and other metaphysicals.
- Poetry should be symbolized or indirect In statement, but its Images should be precise and clear-cut, without any vagueness.
- Serious poetry needs to be solemn. To avoid 'high seriousness' it should combine the serious and the comic. Hence the need to counterpoint the formal with the colloquial, and to use all the resources of irony, wit, paradox, song, clowning etc.
- Poetry should be free from the shackles of metrical regularity; the poet is free to write as he chooses, to adapt his verse to the rhythm of his thought¹.

Historically, Gerard Manley Hopkins belongs to the Victorian age. He wrote almost all his poems and sonnets in the Victorian age. But when his first edition of poems was published by his literary executor Robert Bridges in 1918 they seemed at the same time startlingly new and curiously in keeping with the mood and style of the new century. Though chronologically a Victorian, Hopkins rightly belongs to the 'modern' period, that is from 1900 to date. On his first becoming known he was hailed by his preferred admirers as the most original and greatest of

English poets. The 'Hopkins cult' has come full circle. Now and it is possible to take a just and sensible view of his poetry.

Review of Literature: The readers and reviewers and even critics of that age were confronted with the poems of the poet's maturity which were written in a new technique. Hopkins was a major influence on modern poets. When the second edition of poems of Hopkins was published in 1930, the appreciative reviewer of the Times Literary Supplement made the following bold statement on December, 1930."... It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that Hopkins was the most original of the poets of the nineteenth century". Before we define the precise nature and scope of Hopkins's influence on modern poetry, and even while we are going so, it will be necessary take into account, certain other poets of the past, with their marks on modern poetry, those of Hopkins might otherwise be confused. Poets like Tennyson, Browning and Swineburne experimented with various rhythmic forms in English poetry, in addition to the aforementioned poets, Rossette, Francis Thompson also made innovative experiments In English poetry. . But Hopkins' contribution to English verse is indeed remarkable. One of the reviewer says :

"... but no poet writing today feels that he can learn technical secrets from these poets, whereas Hopkins is full of strange powers and unexhausted technical powers which he feels he must assimilate and possess,.

Whether at this critics' suggestion or from natural impulse, many poets since 1930, have with varying success taken cuttings from the Hopkins's tree and sought to establish them in their own poetic gardens. Professor Baker Farley and others have recently given Hopkins a 19th century peer. Charles Montage Doughty though he published no poetry before 1900, had been planning it as early as 1860s and like Hopkins himself had been in revolt against the sweetness and monotony of what was in many ways a dying if not already dead tradition. It is the opinion of these critics that the so-called Georgian poets of the present century merely confirmed the death and burial of pale derivative Romanticism, so that in the last ten years new channels of expression have been sought by our younger poets, on lines suggested by Doughty and Hopkins.

The influence of Browning (Georgian Poet) on twentieth-century poets has been adequately demonstrated by Mr. A. Allen Brokington. Browning not only left his unmistakable mark on Doughty, Hopkins

and Bridges but also gave impetus and orientation to poets so diverse as G.K. Chesterton, Walter de la Mare, W. W. Gibson, John Masefield and W.H. Auden, by this we mean that certain qualities developed by these poets were earlier observed in the bold innovation In Browning's poetry.

Hopkins Techniques as a Nature Poet: As the late Sir Henry Newbolt Pointed out, "Browning's technique was important because he had forced new diction into the old meters and thereby brought the everyday moods within the scope of poetry". Moreover Chesterton's shrived remarks on Browning's obscurity are in a large measure applicable also to the obscurity of Mr. T.S. Eliot. Browning, he says, is not obscure, as he is not grotesque, for the reason that he has such new things to say. He sees both these things primarily. Because he likes to express himself in a particular manner. The manner is as natural to him as a man's physical voice, and it is abrupt, sketchy, allusive and full of gaps For the first traces of Hopkins's undeniable influence on modern poetry, we must go back to the 'Georgians'. Sir John Squire has shown that these 'Georgians' did not form a homogeneous School. They were extremely varied, and were united only by a common admiration for the oldest for their number, Dr. Bridges. Apart from the simple and sweet lyric note in the work of Bridges, and the delicate intellectual ingenuity of his sonnets, the main technical influence on the younger men derived from the modified sprung rhythm of **London Snow, The Passer By**, etc. Not only in the rhythm of these poems, but in the diction also we can find the impress of Hopkins, who himself pointed out to his friend a number of unconscious echoes from his own verse. Moreover, he correctly attributed these echoes to the intense and peculiar urgency of sprung rhythm in its first complete manifestation; **The Wreck of the Deutschland**. Hopkins claimed that the freer rhythm had helped his friend's Snow-piece, by making it more original in diction. It is significant, therefore, that when Sir Squire was explaining the change brought by Bridges in the rhythms of certain 20th century poets, he should quote as prototype, a line from **London Snow**:

"stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying"

W.B. Yeats had felt the same need for innovations for in 1922 he wrote: "I had begun to loosen rhythm as an escape from rhetoric"⁸ By which he meant, of course, conventional diction. The result of his loosening as the

movement of his famous lyric, **'The Lake Isle of Innisfree'**, though the rhythm of this poem, like that of Mr. John Masefield's **Cargoes, Sea-Fever**, etc., was rather a development from the more masculine and muscular Sprung rhythm. The authors of 'A Survey of Modernist poetry', quoted the following lines, suggest, the influence of modern music in the readiness with which the monotony of the metrical pattern is varied:

" The huge floor of ocean, unfoamed, shining

Have never Shone, golden, in its wake before."

Such lines can be found in the work of Donne and Cowley and it was probably from the same early 17th century source that Mr. Eliot derived the delicately expressive rhythms of his important poem *The Waste Land* (1922). Many of his lines could be read as sprung rhythm; but the uncertainty of the scansion places the poem rather in the category of freely worried syllabic verse. Bridges did not demonstrate fully the power of sprung rhythm for imitative and deeper expressional purposes; but once Hopkins had become known, there emerges a form of sprung rhythm which was a definite strengthening of that attempt by Bridges.

Sir Henry Newbold said there was the direct influence of Robert Bridges in 1928; between the publication of Bridges' shorter poems (1890) and Hopkins's poems in 1918, a fresh departure from the old standard meters was introduced, mainly by imagists F. S. Flint and Mr. Ezra Pound. Free verse was a natural development from the unmeasured verse of Whitman, Matthew Arnold and W.E. Henley, for the imagists, it seemed the best means of producing new rhythms to express new moods the new rhythm were free from all syllabic constraint, free verse' consists of subtly controlled speech, rhythms.

Mr. Herbert Read, himself one of the best exponent of 'free verse' has identified this medium with sprung rhythm: the latter, he says, **"is the rhythm of all genuine verso fiber or free verse which has arisen since Hopkins's time,"**⁹ and also says in a review of Hopkins's letters, "... before another generation has passed I doubt if any other measure but sprung rhythm will be in use" Altogether Hopkins' poetry is strong, sparse poetry, but still there are important differences between this kind of 'free verse' and sprung rhythm as Hopkins' used it. Hopkins' rhythm is, despite the nominal disclaimer, authentic metre, the lines are measured in time, though the major is often unusually elastic.

Since the name of Hopkins is frequently linked with those of Whitman and Lawrence whenever "major influences", in modern poetry are discussed, it is necessary to underline essential differences. Lawrence's work would have seemed as far below civilized moral standards as his technique was lacking in the astringent qualities of the highest art. Besides the three names mentioned above, the formative influences in modern poetry are Mr. Ezra Pound, Mr. T. S. Eliot, 'Late Yeats', and Wilfred Owen. This is the true group of younger poets, clustered around Mr. W.H. Auden, which used to be called the advance guard. Of the young poets of the 'advanced' school -poets who are acutely aware of the contemporary scene and of the world's out of joint condition the influence of Hopkins is never so fundamental and pervasive as that of Mr. Ezra Pound and Mr. T.S. Eliot. As a polyglot student of many ancient and medieval schools of poetry, Mr. Pound (whose first poetry appeared in 1909) was probably given a fresh orientation by the same prototypes as those which helped to shape the rhythms of Hopkins, namely Greek choral and lyric poetry and Old English alliterative verse. Mr. Pound's translations from Chinese, say Yeats. "created the manner followed with more learning but less subtlety of rhythm by Arthur Waley, so that although the publication of Hopkins's poems in 1918 made sprung verse the fashion and turned the eye of poets from Bridges to the more original master, some impetus to the new mode must have been given by Mr. Pound before that date and by Mr. Waley's widely admired translations from 1919 onwards. In more recent poetry, there are examples of alliterative sprung rhythm which are derived directly from Old English rather than from Hopkins. Mr. Auden, for instance catches the very spirit and cadence of **The Wind hover**.

"There Head falls forward, fatigued at evening,

And dreams of home,

Waving from window, spread of welcome."

The whole poem, chorus from a play, shows a subtle blending of a kind of Greek Logaoedic rhythm and old English stress metre. Bridges claimed that his alexandrines were based on the secure rock of Milton's

prosody. Though in many ways the logical outcomes of his study of Milton and of his experiments in quantitative hexameters, these loose alexandrines of Bridges owe most to the sprung alexandrines of Hopkins's, 'St. Winifred's well'. Hopkins, too, sometimes stressed weak syllables, but the essential differences are that Hopkins's stressing is more calculated, that his rhythm, is more subtle and varied, though many of his lines are of twelve syllables, he sometimes admitted eleven, fourteen, fifteen, and even sixteen. One of the younger poets, Mr. Louis Macneice, once criticized Hopkins for the alleged inconsistent practice of trying his Sprung rhythm to an arbitrary numerical frame, so that every line must have say, five stresses, under the 'wrong assumption' that all five stresses are equal to each other and that any set of five stresses equals any other set of five stresses. We believe with Hopkins, however, that for most poetic purposes even a historical pattern is better than none, and the advantage of his method is that the reader does at least know how many stresses to look for. In the following extracts from a poem mainly in sprung alexandrines but admitting, apparently five stress lines, Mr. Macneice is used presumably showing as how sprung rhythm should be used: **"Just as those who gaze get higher than those who climb**

A paradox unfolds on any who can tamper with time.

Where bus encumbers upon bus and fills its slot

Speed up the traffic in a quick motion film of thought till bus succeeds bus so identically sliding through

That you can not catch the fraction of a clink between the

two

**But they all go so fast, bus after bus, day after day, Year after year, that you cannot mark and headway
But the whole stream of traffic seems to crawl Carrying its dead boulders down a glacier wall....."**

The whole poem is interesting, original, bright with a witty imagery.

Now we examine more closely the influence of Hopkins upon the diction, syntax, and texture of recent poetry, and identically to determine how far he shares this tutelage with Charles Montague Doughty and others. Apart from Hopkins and Doughty, few poets of the last two hundred years have followed up hints given by Shakespeare and Milton in the matter of extreme syntactical licence. Moreover, most poets since, Browning have shown an increasing respect for Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction. Doughty's poetry has been praised by such men as Edward Garnet, Lascelles Abercrombie, Edward Thomas, and Herbert Read, though even today opinions about him are sharply divided. But when between 1925 and 1935, Hopkins had become widely known, the poets and critics followed his qualities.

CONCLUSION: Lastly we turn to an even more important aspect of Hopkins's influence the question as to how far he can be held responsible for the persistent obscurity of so much modern verse. Hopkins has taught poets to utilize more completely the resources of the language, it is nevertheless unfair to associate his grammatical licenses (which are usually integral to thought of admirable precision) with the wanton vagueness, the continuous and unexplosive obscurity of much of the verse of Mr. Auden, Mr. Charles Madge and Mr. George Barker. In the most difficult passages of Hopkins, some meaning, some poetic light leaps from the page at once, and lends a fascination to our search for the whole import. But in much of the recent poetry the splendid obscurities of Hopkins are replaced by passages or entire poems in which a genuine intellectual quality is unsupported by sensuous feeling and imaginative glow—that transforming power without which language remains flat and prosaic. In conclusion, we can say that Hopkins exerted a deep influence on the poets writing in the 20th century. Though Hopkins chronologically belonged to the Victorian period, his innovative and inventive style, themes, techniques qualify him as a modern poet. His originality and creativity in playing with words to put them in special contexts makes him radically different from the poets of his age. His final recognition as a modern poet gave him the status that he really deserved.

Reference

1. A Compendious History Of English Literature, Trivedi, R.D.1976, Pp.681-82.
2. Hopkins, Times Literary Supplement, Dec 1930.
3. G. M. Hopkins, Times Literary Supplement, Dec. 1930.
4. Browning and The 20th Century, 1932.
5. New Paths on Helicon (Nelson) Conclusion, P. 207.
6. Essays on Poetry, Robert Bridges, 1930, P.156.
7. Hopkins, G.M. Letters vol. 1. Pp. 111-12, 121-22.
8. The Trembling of the Veil (Autobiographies, Edition of 1926, P. 190
9. English Critical Essays (20th century), the poetry of Hopkins, Gerard Manley, P. 366.
10. Hopkins' New Comment, No 14, (apri11935) P.26.
11. In a comment, New verse, No.5 (Oct. 1933), P.6.
12. In Contemporaries and Snobs (1928), Part III, Hulme,T.E. The New Barbarism and Gertrude Stein
13. Hopkins, Gerard Manley, 1884-1889, Vol.1, Gardner,W.H.1949,P.275.
14. Hopkins, Gerard Manley 1884-1889, Vol.1, Gardner,W.H.1949,P.276.S

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page: <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

Academic conference: <http://www.iiste.org/conference/upcoming-conferences-call-for-paper/>

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

