

Hopkins Modernism And Innovativeness

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Abstract

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 times. 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 of Hopkins is frequently linked with those of Whitman and Lawrence whenever "major influences", in modern poetry are discussed. 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. 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.

Keywords

Modernism, rhythm, imagery, monotony, obscurity.

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Introduction

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 times. He was ahead of the literary age in which he lived and wrote. Before we define the precise nature and scope of Hopkins's influence on modern poetry, and even while we are going to do 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, Rosettee, 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 form 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 Montague 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.

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 free rhythm had helped his friend's in 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" 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.

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 versos fiber or free verse which has arisen since Hopkins's time,*, 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**.

After studying each and every aspect of his poems we examine more closely the influence of Hopkins upon the diction, syntax, and texture of recent poetry, and identify to determine how far he shares this tutelage with Charles Montagu Doughty and others. Hopkins's punctuation is mainly structural but many of the effects produced by Doughty are similar to those achieved by Hopkins in **The Deutschland**, *Harry Ploughman*, and *Tom's Garland*.

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.

Conclusion

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.

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