ELEMENTS OF OLD ENGLISH PROSODY IN THE POETRY
OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

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CHAPTER I

HOPKINS, MAN AND POET

During the half century since the publication of Gerard Manley Hopkins' poetry, numerous scholarly attempts have been made to unravel the enigma of the man and his poetry. The number of critical studies has increased in proportion to the steady growth of Hopkins' fame and his marked influence on modern poetry. Although he now seems assured the rank of a major poet of the nineteenth century,\(^1\) reactions to Hopkins have been varied. As one critic concludes, "Such a poet is clearly an exception to rule, and whether we like him or not, we must acknowledge his work as fundamentally one of the most important phenomena in the world of postwar verse."\(^2\) Frustrations have arisen because scholars cannot label him.

A major task of critics is to classify a poet's work "according to form and subject matter." Most poets align themselves with the literary tradition of their immediate forefathers and are therefore easily identifiable. However, on rare occasions a prodigal leaves the way of his father


and journeys into a far country later to return a wiser man. Gerard Manley Hopkins was such a prodigal, but no one knows exactly where he wandered. 3 "A man's inheritance is thrust upon him, but he chooses his ancestors," 4 and Hopkins chose to differ from the Victorian poets in method, metre, and word choice. 5 The consensus of many critical evaluations of these differences has been that Hopkins was "a naïf poet," that his prosodic techniques are totally unrelated to any poetry in the past. 6 Herbert Read says that "there can be no possible doubt—and it is important to emphasize this—that the rhythm of Hopkins's poems, considered individually, was intuitive in origin . . ." 7 Isidor Schneider writes that Hopkins' originality is bewildering. 8 Cecil Day Lewis finds it so difficult to relate Hopkins with any traditions in the past that he calls Hopkins an "unconscious revolutionary." 9


5 Downey, p. 838.


However, recent critical investigations have led current students of Hopkins' poetry to conclude that his poetry is a "synthesis of the new and the old, the revolutionary and the traditional."\(^{10}\) The position of many Hopkinsian scholars, after closer scrutiny of Hopkins' metre and alliteration, has been that Hopkins' apparent prosodic innovations are, at least partially, derived from the techniques of Anglo-Saxon verse. One of the earliest critics to note the possibility of Anglo-Saxon influence on Hopkins wrote in 1919: "One marvels at his mastery not merely of the Anglo-Saxon form but of the spirit behind the form; and one feels that it must be an innate rather than an acquired mastery."\(^{11}\) W. H. Gardner states more positively that, along with Greek choral and lyrical poetry, Old English alliterative verse "helped to shape the rhythms of Hopkins."\(^{12}\) To avoid distorting or exaggerating either Hopkins' indebtedness to the past or his legacy to the future, however, critical examinations of his life and work "must focus the originality within the indebtedness."\(^{13}\)

\(^{10}\) John Pick, Gerard Manley Hopkins: Priest and Poet, 2nd ed. (New York, 1965), xi.


\(^{12}\) Gardner, Hopkins, I, 255.

Difficulty in substantiating the claim of direct Anglo-Saxon influence on Hopkins arises from the fact that, as yet, there is no adequate biographical study of him; his published papers—notebooks, journals, sermons, and poems—serve as the main source of biographical information.\textsuperscript{14} The crucial question in establishing direct Anglo-Saxon influence is a chronological one: When did Hopkins acquire a knowledge of Anglo-Saxon? In arriving at an answer, the availability of Old English language and poetry must also be considered. A second question of primary importance is whether Hopkins might have learned his alliterative metre indirectly from other sources, perhaps through his "ear for the sound and shudder of his own language."\textsuperscript{15}

Gerard Manley Hopkins' introduction to the flow of language began with his fortunate birth July 28, 1844, into a family of artists on both sides. His mother's brother had left his law practice to paint; his father, Manley Hopkins, had published a volume of poetry in 1843. His artistic education was begun early by his first tutor, his father's sister. When Hopkins was only five or six years old, his aunt, who was living with the family, began to teach him folk songs.\textsuperscript{16} With his quick ear, he was soon "master of

\textsuperscript{14}Bender, pp. 45 and 59.

\textsuperscript{15}Schoeck, p. 77.

the traditional English, Jacobean, and Irish airs." Discerning Hopkins' artistic proclivities, his aunt encouraged her young nephew's interest in music and painting.\footnote{G. F. Lahey, \textit{Gerard Manley Hopkins} (London, 1938), p. 2.} In a letter to Richard Watson Dixon in 1878, Hopkins said that when he wrote "The Wreck of the Deutschland" he recorded on paper a new rhythm that had long been echoing in his mind. He explained that the idea of the rhythm was not "altogether new; there are hints of it in music, in nursery rhymes and popular jingles . . ."\footnote{Claude Colleer Abbott, editor, \textit{The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon}, 2nd rev. impression (London, 1955), p. 114. Subsequent references to this work show the abbreviated title, \textit{Correspondence}.}

In 1854 at the age of ten, Hopkins began his formal education at Highgate Grammar School. At Highgate he read insatiably. In his diaries are competent evaluations of difficult passages in Servius, Oppian, and the \textit{Poetics} of Aristotle, and references to his reading Italian novels.\footnote{Lahey, p. 124.} In 1860 he won the Highgate Poetry Prize for "The Escorial," and in 1863 at the age of nineteen he entered Balliol College, Oxford, on an Exhibition Scholarship.\footnote{Gardner, \textit{Poems}, xviii.} At Oxford, while reading for Greats in Classics, Hopkins was also reading extensively in English, French, and German literature.\footnote{Lahey, p. 124.}
His notebooks provide ample evidence that he was a careful and observant reader in his assigned school work; no doubt the same meticulous method of study carried over into his reading of English poetry. In the notebook entries Hopkins demonstrated his growing interest in metrics as he recorded each of the common metrical feet with explanatory graphic illustrations of each. In these early notes, Hopkins also displayed an interest in etymology.22 In a letter to Dixon in 1883, Hopkins revealed qualities of zeal and persistence in his attitude toward diligent study when he discussed his attempts to teach himself music: "I fumble a little at music, at counterpoint, of which in course of time I shall come to know something; for this, like every other study, after some drudgery yields up its secrets which seem impenetrable at first."23

While it is true that in the 1860's knowledge of Old English and Anglo-Saxon poetry was not easy to acquire,24 it seems highly probable that Hopkins, who displayed an interest in accentual rhythm and etymology in his study notebooks and who graduated from Oxford in 1867 with a double-first in Classical Moderations and Greats, obtained some knowledge of

22Bender, pp. 56-59.

23Correspondence, p. 109.

Anglo-Saxon during his years at Oxford and more than likely "was acquainted ... with both Anglo-Saxon and Middle English metrics by 1873—[25] Although Eduard Sievers' definitive study of Anglo-Saxon metrics was not published until 1885, there was an earlier study on the structure of Anglo-Saxon verse which Hopkins conceivably could have known, for his familiarity with contemporary studies on Greco-Roman verse reveals that he explored current scholarship if his curiosity were aroused. R. C. Trench's Study of Words had been published in 1851, which was early enough "to have stimulated the growth of Hopkins' Sprachgefühl," and Trench's English: Past and Present was published in 1855, one chapter of which is "concerned with the linguistic losses resulting from the Norman invasion and argues for the hypothetical development of Anglo-Saxon vocabulary by compounding, as German has in fact done." Oxford was one of the centers for the linguistic movement advocating a return to the Germanic tradition urged by the Teutonic philologists and historians, such as E. A. Freeman. Joseph Hall, who had first published his Anglo-Saxon dictionary in 1838, became a professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford in 1858, just five years before Hopkins entered Oxford. J. M. Kemble, a lecturer on Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge in the 1830's, published his edition of Beowulf in 1833, and by the

25Schoeck, p. 79. Schoeck feels that Hopkins' acquaintance with Anglo-Saxon and Middle English metrics was probably at second-hand.
time Hopkins attended Oxford other editions of Beowulf were available. William Barnes had published an Anglo-Saxon collection in 1849, which Hopkins never mentioned reading, but he did comment on Barnes' Dorset-dialect poems, which Hopkins read as an undergraduate, as having "more true poetry than in Burns." During the 1850's there had been a revival of interest in Old English poetry with scholars, such as Edwin Guest and G. P. Marsh, who described the advantages of the Anglo-Saxon metrical system. Coventry Patmore's authoritative essay on alliterative, accentual metre, English Metrical Critics, first appeared in 1857. The study of Anglo-Saxon became "something of a vogue" when the nineteenth century Englishman, under the influence of the Teutonizing philologists, tended to de-emphasize his Mediterranean heritage and to overemphasize his Germanic and Nordic ancestry. In view of these facts, it can be concluded that "knowledge of Anglo-Saxon has never been easy to come by, but it was certainly

26 Schoeck, pp. 78-79.
270ng, p. 96.
29 Gardner, Hopkins, II, 158-159.
available to students at Oxford as at Cambridge in Hopkins' day."

After graduating from Oxford in 1867, Hopkins accepted a position as Master at the Oratory School in Birmingham conducted by Dr. John Newman with whom he had consulted in 1866 about his desire to become a Catholic. In 1868 in a letter to Father Ignatius Ryder, Hopkins discussed plans to write for a review an article on William Morris' last poem, "The Earthly Paradise," and on the medieval school of poets. The article was apparently never completed, but his comments in the letter to Father Ryder are important because they reveal that he was not only familiar with but interested in medieval literature and the alliterative revival in Middle English.

During early 1868 Hopkins decided to become a priest, and on September 7, 1868, at the age of twenty-four he entered Manresa House, the Jesuit Novitiate outside London.

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31 Schoeck, p. 79. 32 Gardner, Poems, xx.
33 Claude Collee Abbott, editor, Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins Including His Correspondence with Coventry Patmore, 2nd ed. revised and enlarged (London, 1956), p. 52. Subsequent references to this work show the abbreviated title, Further Letters.
34 Pick, pp. 22-23. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to study the influence of Hopkins' Jesuitical training, the importance of that training with its rigorous mental and spiritual discipline should not be underestimated in evaluating Hopkins' style. An understanding of the Spiritual Exercises is necessary, for they influenced all his poetry and were largely responsible for his hesitancy in writing poetry.
Feeling that writing poetry did not belong to his vocation, he burned all the poems he had written (at least he thought he was doing so) and resolved to write no more verses unless his superiors wished him to. For the five years of his training for the priesthood and for two years thereafter, he wrote no poetry except for "two or three little presentation pieces," which were written for special religious days.35

After two years (1868-1870) as a novice at Manresa House and three years (1870-1873) of philosophical studies at Stonyhurst, Hopkins returned to Manresa House for a year as an instructor of rhetoric,36 a subject in which he included a study of classical literature and prosody. The careful study Hopkins made of verse and rhythm while preparing the lecture notes for the class undoubtedly helped him formulate his theories on prosody and influenced his own poetic technique.37 These notes "fill the gap between his early immature poems and the sudden appearance of sprung rhythm in full theory and practice,"38 and the notes "on the nature of verse, on

35 Correspondence, p. 14.
36 Pick, p. 25.
stress and accent, and on the 'foot'" provide the link between his early essays on metre and his later explanations of sprung rhythm in his correspondence with Bridges, Dixon, and Patmore. During his seven years' silence as a poet he apparently was quietly and deeply pondering questions of prosody and rhythm. The momentous appearance of "The Wreck of the Deutschland" marks the beginning of his mature poetry; it was the harvest of the seven years when his genius was abundantly fed by reading and meditation.

In preparing his notes, Hopkins used G. P. Marsh's Lectures on the English Language, which had been published in 1859. Marsh's arguments for eclectic originality were intended to incite a poet of Hopkins' nature. For example, he said:

The interest which the study of native English, old and new, and of the sister dialects, now so generally excites, prompts the inquiry whether it be not possible to revive some of the forgotten characteristics of English poetry, and thus aid the efforts of our literature to throw off or lighten the conventional shackles which classical and Romance authority has imposed upon it. I propose to illustrate, by specimens original and imitative, the leading peculiarities of Anglo-Saxon and Old-Northern verse, as well as of one or two Romance metrical forms hitherto little if at all attempted in English, and to suggest experiment upon the introduction of some of them into English poetry.

40 Letters, xxv.
41 Gardner, Poems, xxi.
In his lecture on "Accentuation and Double Rhymes," Marsh urged that "we must enlarge our stock [of rhyming words] by the revival of obsolete words and inflections from native sources" or "introduce substitutes for rhyme."\(^{43}\) In the following chapter he discussed alliteration with illustrations from *Piers Plowman*, consonance with illustrations from Icelandic poetry and invented English examples, and assonance. That Hopkins followed Marsh's arguments closely is proved by the fact that Hopkins' quotations of *Piers Plowman* in his lecture notes are from Marsh.\(^{44}\) In discussing rhythm without count of syllable, Hopkins quoted from *Piers Plowman*:

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What this mountain beméneth | and this dérke dél
And this féire féld, ful of folk | féire I scháll ow schéwe.
A lovely ladi on leór | in línne lóclothed
Al hou bísy thei bën | aboute the máse?
The moste partí of the peple | that passeth nóu on eórthe . . .
```

Hopkins then commented on the passage:

The beat varies for the most part between anapaest and iambic or dactylic and trochaic but it is so loose that not only the syllables are not counted but not even the number of beats in a line, which is commonly two in each half-line but sometimes three or four. It almost seems as if the rhythm were disappearing and repetition of figure given only by the alliteration.\(^{45}\)

It is significant that Hopkins mentioned *Piers Plowman* often.

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\(^{44}\)Warren, p. 173.

\(^{45}\)House, *Journals*, pp. 277-278.
and that the poem, composed in the late fourteenth century, "preserves enough of the early Old English rhythmic movement to make it a possible source" of Hopkins' sprung rhythm.\(^{46}\)

It is true that in 1880, seven years after preparing the lecture notes and five years after writing "The Wreck of the Deutschland," Hopkins wrote Bridges that he had "not studied Piers Ploughman and so cannot pronounce how far triple time is boldly employed in it."\(^{47}\) And it was not until October 18, 1882, that he wrote in another letter to Bridges that he was reading Piers Ploughman and "coming to the conclusion that it is not worth reading,"\(^{48}\) and it was not until November 26, 1882, that he wrote Bridges he was "learning Anglosaxon and it is a vastly superior thing to what we have now."\(^{49}\) Regardless of these statements, it is difficult to believe with Hopkins' being so interested in utilizing the native elements of the language that he did not study Anglo-Saxon, to some extent, before 1882.\(^{50}\) Perhaps when he wrote that he had "not studied," was "reading," and was "learning," he was speaking of studying, reading, and learning (as Schoeck suggested in relation to his learning Welsh) "in a serious way, at an advanced level,"\(^ {51}\) for in

\(^{46}\) Onig, pp. 96-97.  
\(^{47}\) Letters, p. 107.  
\(^{48}\) Letters, p. 156.  
\(^{49}\) Letters, p. 163.  
\(^{51}\) Schoeck, p. 78.
speaking of sprung rhythm, he said, "So far as I know—I am inquiring and presently I shall be able to speak more decidedly—it existed in full force in Anglo-Saxon verse and in great beauty; . . ." \(^{52}\) Schoeck believes Hopkins "knew a good deal about Old and Middle English versification long before he actually read *Piers*\(^{53}\) and before studying Anglo-Saxon in 1882. In a letter to his mother on Christmas Eve, 1881, Hopkins told her that a friend of Father Richard Clarke, the new editor of the Jesuit magazine, the *Month*, had found a manuscript of the thirteenth century with a hymn to the Blessed Mother in Latin and English and that Father Clarke planned to publish it in the January *Month* with the Latin and English texts carefully reproduced, followed with a modernization of the English "made originally by me but altered since, perhaps not altogether for the better. The footnotes on the old English are mostly by me."\(^{54}\) Further possible evidence that Hopkins had done some studying of Old English prior to 1882 is that in the punctuation of his early diaries, he often used the sign \(\|\), which was also often used to show a medial pause in some of the volumes of the Early English Text Society,\(^{55}\) an organization founded in 1864 by the Teutonizing philologists, such as Furnivall and French, while Hopkins was at Oxford.\(^{56}\)

\(^{52}\) *Letters*, p. 156. \(^{53}\) Schoeck, p. 82. \\
\(^{54}\) *Further Letters*, p. 161. \(^{55}\) *House, Journals*, xxx. \\
\(^{56}\) Warren, p. 174.
Since Hopkins wrote "with less care for the eye than for the ear," he may indirectly have become familiar with Old English techniques of versification through his feeling for the sounds of the language. Dixon early recognized this trait in Hopkins and wrote to Hopkins:

I was much struck with your discovery that his choruses in Samson are "counterpointed": I should never have discovered this, but am sure that you are right & that the discovery is extraordinary, & ought to be made known in justice to the reputation of Milton. I have always admired & wondered at those choruses. You must be gifted with an extraordinarily delicate ear. I have in an uncritical way observed the difference between the versification of Paradise Lost & P. Regained & the Samson, but without making more of it than that there was a difference: though I remember reading a fine essay by Mr. Seeley on Milton, in which this point is made.58

It is not likely that even Hopkins could have named all the sources for his rhythm, but his most definite statement about the source of sprung rhythm (made in 1878) is one that supports the theory that his major source was his own ear:

I had long had haunting my ear the echo of a new rhythm which now I realized on paper. To speak shortly, it consists in scanning by accents or stresses alone, without any account of the number of syllables, so that a foot may be one strong syllable or it may be many light and on a strong. I do not say the idea is altogether new; there are hints of it in music, in nursery rhymes and popular jingles, in the poets themselves . . . . But no one has professedly used it and made it the principle throughout, that I know of. Nevertheless, to me it appears, I own, to be a better and more natural principle than the ordinary system, much more flexible, and capable of much greater effects.59

57Deutsch, p. 286.  
58Correspondence, pp. 16-17.  
59Correspondence, pp. 14-15.
However, in his lecture notes of 1873-74, Hopkins had already constructed a skeleton theory for a rhythm which counted stresses only, without regard to the number of syllables. "His ear had caught a rhythm and he could describe it."

From that point on Hopkins began listening for this rhythm and recording examples of it, "blocking in areas of theory" as he proceeded. He gradually became aware "of the genealogy of his own new rhythm. . . . Hopkins knew sprung rhythm because he heard it in English."\(^{60}\) It is deeply rooted in the language, an outgrowth of the sense-stress alliterative rhythmic tradition that was carried forward from the Old English into Elizabethan times.\(^{61}\)

Although in a letter to Dixon in 1881 Hopkins disclaimed a broad knowledge of English literature, saying, "I feel ashamed to talk of English or any literature, of which I was always very ignorant and which I have ceased to read,"\(^{62}\) he was actually well-read and mentioned his varied reading in several other letters, such as the one to Dixon in 1880 in which he said, "I cannot see what should make me overrate your poems: I had plenty of poetry old and new to compare with them and to guide my taste, I read them of my own choice years before I ever thought of communicating with you."\(^{63}\)

\(^{60}\)Ong, pp. 100-104. \(^{61}\)Ong, pp. 150 and 159. \(^{62}\)Correspondence, p. 87. \(^{63}\)Correspondence, p. 36.
In 1877 he wrote to Bridges, "I do not of course claim to have invented sprung rhythms but only sprung rhythm; I mean that single lines and single instances of it are not uncommon in English and I have pointed them out in lecturing . . ." His observation that "Chaucer properly read is heavier stressed than we think," has been substantiated by John M. Manley and Edith Rickert's study of The Canterbury Tales in which they have related the metre of Chaucer to "the 'rough,' heavy sense-stress rhythms of Old English." There were sense-stress alliterative survivals in Renaissance poetry, such as John Skelton's "Phyllyp Sparrowe," which includes a rhythm like the Old English antithesis, and his "Speke Parrot," which is markedly counterpointed with sense-stress. Hopkins recognized and commented on the use of the Old English half-line in the poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Surrey, saying that "the notion of pause or caesura had come to English versification from two different quarters--from Piers Ploughman and the older native poetry on the one hand, where it is marked by a sort of Greek colon or by a stroke, and from France on the other . . ." Hopkins said that sprung rhythm can be found "in Shakspere's later plays, but as a licence, whereas mine are rather calculated effects . . ." He pointed out

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64Letters, p. 45.  
65Correspondence, p. 78.  
66Ong, pp. 150-154.  
67Letters, p. 108.  
68Correspondence, p. 15.
examples of sprung rhythm in the poetry of Thomas Campbell and Thomas Moore, and then stated that

Greene was the last who employed it at all consciously and he never continuously; then it disappeared—for one cadence in it here and there is not sprung rhythm and one swallow does not make a spring. (I put aside Milton's case, for it is altogether singular). In a matter like this a thing does not exist, it is not done unless it is wittingly and willingly done; to recognize the form you are employing and to mean it is everything.70

By his nature, Hopkins sought individuality, but he recognized that total escape from influence was impossible. He admitted that his poetry "errs on the side of oddness," but he explained that

as air, melody, is what strikes me most of all in music and design in painting, so design, pattern or what I am in the habit of calling "inscape" is what I above all aim at in poetry. Now it is the virtue of design, pattern, or inscape to be distinctive, and it is the vice of distinctiveness to become queer.71

Even so, he exhibited an understanding of the relation between the poet and the past when he said:

I scarcely understand you about reflected light: every true poet, I thought, must be original and originality a condition of poetic genius; so that each poet is like a species in nature (not an individuum genericum or specificum) and can never recur. That nothing and, be old or borrowed however cannot be, and that I am sure you never meant.72

Earlier he had said, "one ought to be independent but not

69 Letters, p. 45. 70 Letters, p. 156.
71 Letters, p. 66.
72 Further Letters, p. 370.
unimpressionable: that wd. be to refuse education."73 In
despite of the fact that Hopkins prided himself on his origi-
nality—"The effect of studying masterpieces is to make me
admire and do otherwise. So it must be on every original
artist to some degree, on me to a marked degree."74—he
realized his indebtedness to the Old English sources,75 for
he said that sprung rhythm "existed in full force in Anglo
saxon verse and in great beauty."76 Hopkins was the first
to recognize that only a slight exposure to a source was
enough to influence one's style. In reply to Bridges' sugges-
tion that his poem "The Leaden Echo and the Golden
Echo" had been influenced by Whitman, Hopkins said:

I cannot have read more than half a dozen pieces at
most.

This, though very little, is quite enough to give
a strong impression of his marked and original manner
and way of thought and in particular of his rhythm. It
might be even enough, I shall not deny, to originate or,
much more, influence another's style: they say the
French trace their whole modern school of landscape to
a single piece of Constable's exhibited at the salon
early this century.77

Every literary period contributes something to a poet's
style, but generally a poet chooses the one or two periods
most appealing to him as an individual and "relatively neglects

73Letters, p. 80.
74Letters, p. 291.
75John L. Bonn, "Greco-Roman Verse Theory and Gerard
Manley Hopkins," Immortal Diamond: Studies in Gerard Manley
76Letters, p. 156. 77Letters, p. 154.
the rest." Anglo-Saxon verse has many qualities which would appeal to Hopkins—"intensity of feeling, an apocalyptic vision, a tragic nobility, and a rhetorical power to carry all these to effective conclusions . . . metrical freedom . . . strong alliteration . . . racy colloquialism . . . flexible rhythms . . . vigorous verse music."\textsuperscript{78} Hopkins' poetry contains many parallels to Old and Middle English alliterative non-syllabic verse, and his style, if not grounded directly on Anglo-Saxon verse, was at least encouraged by the echoes of the Old English stress rhythm as it occurred periodically in the literature through the years.\textsuperscript{79} Style, of course, is the man, his beliefs and temperament,\textsuperscript{80} and it is a tribute to Hopkins' genius that "his Anglo-Saxon investment is merely a part of his poetic capital"\textsuperscript{81} and that to that investment he added his own innovations, which give a perennial freshness to his work.\textsuperscript{82} An examination of the Anglo-Saxon echoes and parallels in the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins clarifies his peculiar style and promotes a greater appreciation of his innovations and contributions to poetry.

\textsuperscript{78}Wells, pp. 12-13 and 323.

\textsuperscript{79}Lees, p. 21.

\textsuperscript{80}Lees, p. 21. The statement, "Le style est l'homme même," originated with George Louis, Comte de Buffon, \\textit{Discours sur le Style}, on admission to the French Academy, 1753.

\textsuperscript{81}Wells, p. 38.

\textsuperscript{82}Gardner, Hopkins, I, 87.
In order to express the inspirations which often came "unbidden and against [his] will"¹ during periods of intense emotional experiences, Gerard Manley Hopkins sought an original mode of expression for his poetry. In doing so, Hopkins rejected the poetic methods of his contemporaries and developed a metre uniquely his own, containing rhythmical "innovations" and "irregularities" which, perhaps more than any other aspect of his technique, make his poetry difficult² and have led critics to conclude that his sprung rhythm was "a new creation to meet the demands of Hopkins' ear and his sense of poetic language . . . a function (so to say) of his troubled spirit."³ Time and more thorough critical studies have corrected the fallacy that his poetry was primarily "experimental" and marred by "tricks." His unique rhythm


is now viewed as being "strictly disciplined" as well as flexible, derivative as well as innovative.4

However, Hopkins' reaction against the prosodic conventions "superimposed upon English poetry" since the sixteenth century was revolutionary.5 He realized that in order to have the more emphatic rhetorical rhythm he sought he would need to stress "the naked thew and sinew of the English language."6 Recognizing that English metrics is not inalterably governed by rules and custom, he utilized the rhythm of speech in his rhythm for poetry.7 He acknowledged that his rhythm was not entirely original when he wrote Dixon that the new rhythm which for sometime had been echoing in his ear he perceived in music, nursery rhymes, and popular jingles and he considered it to be better, more natural, more flexible, and capable of greater effects than the ordinary verse rhythm of his day.8 In another letter written a few months later, he wrote, "For though it is only a step from many popular and many literary cadences now in being to sprung rhythm and nature even without


6Letters, pp. 267-268.

7Downey, p. 842.

that help seems to prompt it of itself, yet the step has never, that I know of, been taken."\(^9\)

Thus, it was only the concept, not the invention, of sprung rhythm that Hopkins claimed as his own.\(^{10}\) The principle of his concept was founded on his understanding that the English language is fundamentally one of stress, not quantity;\(^{11}\) therefore, his rhythm is based on the number of "stresses alone."\(^{12}\) Historically, Hopkins' sprung rhythm, as he suggested in a letter to Bridges,\(^{13}\) has "noble ancestry" in Anglo-Saxon verse generally and in *Piers Ploughman* specifically.\(^{14}\) The fact that sprung rhythm does exist in *Piers Ploughman* confirms Hopkins' assumption that his rhythm existed in songs, and it strengthens the premise that his rhythm is grounded, at least indirectly, on Anglo-Saxon verse. According to G. P. Marsh, a special importance of *Piers Ploughman* is that it conforms more closely to the conventional rules of Anglo-Saxon poetical composition than any of the existing remains of the poetry of that literature . . . . [a fact which] suggests the probability that rhythm and regular

\(^9\) *Correspondence*, p. 21


\(^{12}\) *Correspondence*, p. 14.

\(^{13}\) *Letters*, p. 156.

alliteration, though they had nearly disappeared from written native poetry, may have been kept alive in popular ballads, existing in oral tradition to a greater extent than written records would authorize us to infer. Therefore, sprung rhythm, as a deliberate practice, had simply "fallen into disuse" since the late medieval alliterative revival and was rediscovered by Hopkins, who admitted that "single lines and single instances of it are not uncommon in English . . . . but what I do in the Deutschland etc is to enfranchise them as a regular and permanent principle of scansion." 

Hopkins was perceptively sensitive to the Anglo-Saxon sense-stress rhythm as it had persisted in "out-of-the-way places where the tradition of smoothness in verse was not enforced," such as in songs, weather saws, and nursery rhymes and as it reappeared sporadically in individual writers, such as Green and Milton. In the twelve-hundred-year heritage of English literature, the importance of its native stock--Old English literature--has often been underestimated.

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17Letters, p. 45.


Anglo-Saxon poets of the period extending from the middle of the seventh century to the end of the tenth century created an outstanding body of verse, both in variety and literary excellence. No other early medieval literature of Europe offers such diversity and finish as the Anglo-Saxon verse. Almost all the extant Old English poetry is contained in four volumes; however, in these four books is found a considerable quantity of poetry which expresses remarkably the national and racial genius of the Anglo-Saxons. The poetry, which offers a variety of poetic genres, including the heroic epic, elegiac lays, charms, riddles, and gnomic verse, was written by a people generally regarded as barbaric, yet it reveals qualities of elevation of thought, sustained intensity of poetic feeling, an elaborate form, and a wealth of metaphorical and pictorial ornaments. The poems exhibit a rich and varied vocabulary with many word elements reserved for poetry through long literary tradition, and the general tone of thought and emotion intimate an ancient cultivation of the heart and mind. Yet concomitant with the high degree of sophistication of this poetry is the "childlike love of sound, rhythm, and the fancy that is habitually associated with


untutored people."**22** Undoubtedly, it is this characteristic of Anglo-Saxon verse that first caught Hopkins' ear.

A glance at a few Old English poems, such as "The Wanderer" or "Widsith," will quickly reveal a metre strikingly unlike that of modern poetry. Old English rhythm is essentially accentual and alliterative. The form of Old English verse was a natural outgrowth of the dominant characteristic of the Germanic language—the stressing of the initial syllable of a word, excluding most prefixes. Accompanying this tendency of stress was the inclination to aid the continuity of discourse by the use of initial rhyme, or alliteration. Thus, these two features, intensified or heightened, became the controlling qualities of the Germanic verse pattern.**23**

When stressed accents of the voice occur at regular intervals, even if the intervals between the individual beats vary, the ear readily perceives rhythm in the "regular recurrence of groups of beats." Old English rhythm, based on the Germanic law of accentuation, emphasizes the most important words or parts of words by a strong stress. Quantitative accent, which is concerned with the length of syllables, is subordinated to stress accent, which is based on word

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significance. However, the rhythmic stress, or arsis, naturally falls on a long syllable, that is, a syllable with a vowel long in quantity, or, if short, a syllable closed with a consonant. The stress may fall on a short syllable followed by a second syllable, short or long, provided that it is unstressed so it can combine with the first to produce the equivalent of a long syllable; it is then said to be in "resolution" and is called "resolved stress." The rhythmic stress, or the iotus, generally coincides with the sense emphasis, and the words in Anglo-Saxon verse are normally arranged so as to create a rhythm of four beats to the complete line with those four beats on the four most significant words or syllables of the line. In addition to falling on the primary word-accent, the rhythmic stress may also fall on syllables with secondary word-accent, such as the second half of a compound noun or adjective, and the most important formative syllables. While the number of stressed syllables in Old English verse is regularly four to the line, the number of unstressed syllables, called the thesis, is variable.

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26 Bright, p. 230.

27 Spaeth, p. 181.
The metre of Hopkins' poetry corresponds remarkably with Anglo-Saxon metre. Hopkins' prosodic patterns are based on "the twin principles of alliteration and stress," which were also the controlling qualities of the native prosody. In explaining his new rhythm to Dixon, Hopkins wrote that "it consists in scanning by accents or stresses alone, without any account of the number of syllables" and that "one stress makes one foot, no matter how many or few the syllables." Like Old English rhythm, Hopkins' rhythm used "any number of slack syllables," to create "particular rhythmic effects," but it was "the stress alone" that was essential to a foot. Hence, both Old English verse and Hopkins' sprung rhythm differ from common rhythm, or running rhythm, in counting the stresses only and not the total number of syllables in a line. Another important difference is that the stress in Old English verse and in Hopkins' rhythm is a sense, or interpretative, stress as opposed to that in running rhythm, in which stress is used primarily to set up a fixed rhythmic pattern and does not always correspond to the real stresses of the words. That Hopkins recognized these two essential differences can be seen

28 Ong, p. 135.
30 Correspondence, p. 14. 31 Correspondence, p. 23.
32 Correspondence, pp. 39-40.
in a letter to Dixon in which he wrote:

But there may and mostly there does belong to a foot an unaccented portion or 'slack': now in common rhythm, in which less is made of stress, in which less stress is laid, the slack must be always one or else two syllables, never less than one or fixedly two, but in sprung rhythm, the stress being more of a stress, being more important, allows of greater variation in the slack and this latter may range from three syllables to none at all regularly, so that paeons (three short syllables and one long or three slack and one stressy) are regular in sprung rhythm, but in common rhythm can occur only by ligence; moreover may in the same measure have this range.33

Such comments as these point unmistakably to the fact that Hopkins' rhythm was derived from the number of stresses in a line, stresses which were important to sense; this principle "looked back to Anglo-Saxon usage, with its two stresses to each half line, emphasized by alliteration ..." An examination of some lines from Hopkins and some from the Old English poets will reveal more conclusively "that the rhythms are identified with one another in a surprisingly intimate fashion."35 "Caedmon's Hymn" illustrates well the Anglo-Saxon characteristics of alliteration, of four stresses to the complete line with the stresses on the important words, and of the variable number of slack syllables in the line:

\[
\text{Nu scylun hērgan héfaenricaes uárd, métudāes maecti end his móđgidānc, uérc uuldurfadur, sue he úundra gihúaes,}
\]

33Correspondence, pp. 39-40.
35Ong, p. 120.
At least as early as 1868 in "Lines for a Picture of St. Dorothea," Hopkins tried his hand at stress-metre, which he called a "peculiar beat" in a letter to Bridges. Stanza 3 of the poem, shown below with the stresses as marked by the poet, reveal that his first attempt at sprung rhythm was "marred by a clumsy and artificial allocation of beats," but the origin of his strong use of alliteration and stress can be seen.

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Even if Hopkins found this first attempt at sprung rhythm unsatisfactory, this early rhythmical experiment gave promise of greater flexibility of rhythm in the future. That promise was fulfilled with the sudden appearance in 1875, after seven years' silence, of the fully developed sprung rhythm in "The Wreck of the Deutschland," which serves the dual distinction of marking the beginning of Hopkins' maturity as a poet and of his "career as a poet of undoubted genius." The fact that Hopkins marked the stresses in the poem before sending it to the Catholic magazine, the Month, which rejected it because of its oddness, reveals that the "rhythm as a system of scansion seems to have been uppermost" in his mind. An examination of the first stanza of "The Deutschland" will quickly call to mind the Anglo-Saxon techniques of sense stress and alliteration and the use of four beats to the line, which in this poem occur in lines 3 and 7 of every stanza:

```
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.
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40 Gardner, Hopkins, I, 38 and 41.

41 Gardner, Hopkins, I, 45. The stress marks here are Gardner's. Unless otherwise noted, stress marks hereafter are his.
Even though Hopkins did not use the four-stress line in the majority of his poems as the Anglo-Saxon poets did, he did use the four-beat line successfully in many of them. In 1876 in "The Woodlark" he produced a very effective four-stress sprung rhythm with lines of varying lengths as follows:

To-day the sky is two and two
With white strokes and stains of the blue.
The blue wheat-acre is underneath
And the corn is corded and shoulders its sheaf,
The ear in milk, lush the sash,
And crush-silk poppies aflam,
The blood-gush blade-gash
Flame-rash rudred
Bud shelling or broad-shed
Tatter-tangled and dingle-a-dangled
Dandy-hung dainty head. (11. 16-26)\textsuperscript{42}

In the delightful lyric "Binsey Poplars" Hopkins used sprung rhythm with lines varying "from a norm of four stresses" to two, three, five, and six stresses, as the indentation of the lines indicates:

Where we, even where we mean
To mend her we end her,
When we hew or delve:
After-corners cannot guess the beauty been.
Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve
Strokes of havoc unselve
The sweet especial scene,
Rural scene, a rural scene,
Sweet especial rural scene.\textsuperscript{43}

In 1878 he wrote the thirty stanzas of "The Loss of the Eurydice," using four full stresses in the first, second,

\textsuperscript{42}Gardner, Hopkins, II, 227. The mark on the final syllable of dangled is Hopkins' and indicates /d\textipa{ng}l\textipa{d}/.

\textsuperscript{43}Gardner, Hopkins, II, 271-273. The stress mark on the first syllable of unselve is Hopkins'.
and fourth lines of every quatrain and using only three stresses in the third line. One can almost visualize an Anglo-Saxon scop thrilling his audience with this story of tragedy at sea as he kept time to the beats of a stanza, such as:

She had come from a cruise, training seamen—
Men, boldboys soon to be men:
Must it, worst weather,
Blast bôle and bîom together?44

Since the Old English measures were articulated in units composed of the stressed syllable or word with its adhering slack syllables,45 Old English verse units may be divided into three groups: stressed elements, particles, and proclitics. The stressed words are logically and rhetorically the most important of the line, and they bear stresses regardless of their positions in the line; they most often include nouns, infinitives, participles, adjectives and certain adverbs. The particles are parts of the first thesis and stand before or after the first stressed element; in this position they are unstressed. If the particles are displaced from their normal position, "they acquire a positional stress and are treated in all respects like stressed elements." The particles are comprised of finite verbs, certain adverbs, certain pronouns and conjunctions. Proclitics are positioned

45Ong, p. 125.
"immediately before the stressed element with which they are most closely connected," and in such position are unstressed. However, like the particles, if the proclitic becomes displaced, it too acquires a positional stress and is treated like the stressed elements. The proclitics are prepositions, certain pronouns, and articles. Here is an example of a verse-clause in Beowulf (ll. 109b-110):

\[ \text{Metod for by mane} \quad \text{man-cynne fram} \quad \text{ac he hine feor forwraec} \]

\[ \text{(for he him far drove away from mankind.)} \]

In this example, there are four stressed elements—feor, Metod, mane, and man-cynne. The proclitics for and by precede the stressed element feor. The proclitic fram and the particle forwraec have been displaced and are therefore treated as stressed elements.46

That Hopkins' sprung rhythm was organized in stress units similar to the Anglo-Saxon measures can be seen in Hopkins' explanation to Dixon that sprung rhythm supposes not only that, speaking in the abstract, any accent is equal to any other (by accent I mean the accent of a word) but further that each accent may be considered to be accompanied by an equal quantity of slack or unaccented utterance, one, two, or more such unaccented syllables; so that whenever there is an accent or stress, there there is also so much unaccentuation, so to speak, or slack, and this will give a foot or rhythmic unit, viz. a stress with its belonging slack.47


47 Correspondence, p. 22.
A line from "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" with the scansion developed from Hopkins' own incomplete marks will illustrate his explanation of stress units and will also show the similarity to the Anglo-Saxon stress unit.

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Heart, you round me right} \\
\text{With: our evening's over us; our night's whelms} \\
\text{whelms, and will end us}.\end{align*} \]

Hopkins' placement of stress, as on and in the above-quoted passage, is sometimes enigmatic, but apparently he marked words or syllables that he feared the reader might tend to slur or muffle and thus not understand the meaning he intended.\(^49\)

In further explanation of the sense-stress units, Hopkins wrote Dixon that the rhythmic unit is the stress plus its attending slack:

since there are plenty of accented monosyllables, and those too immediately preceded and followed by the accents of other words, it will come about that a foot may consist of one syllable only and that one syllable has not only the stress of its accent but also the slack which another word wd. throw on one or more additional syllables, though here that may perhaps be latent, as though the slack syllables had been absorbed.\(^50\)

A few months later he wrote to Bridges saying, "Since the syllables in sprung rhythm are not counted, time or equality in strength is of more importance than in common rhythm . . . ."\(^51\)

\(^{48}\)Ong, p. 121.

\(^{49}\)Letters, p. 265.

\(^{50}\)Correspondence, p. 22.

\(^{51}\)Letters, p. 81.
These two statements seem to indicate that Hopkins believed his sprung rhythm was based on the system of isochronous time units. Apparently, Hopkins, through his sensitive ear, his musical training, his study of Milton's and Campbell's rhythms, and his acquaintance with Old English and Welsh rhythms, had come to realize, consciously or unconsciously, that a metrical foot is one unit in a series of "even-time" units. In the "even-time," or isochronous, units the time-lapses within each unit can vary from a single heavily-stressed syllable to four or five syllables. The stress units are woven together "across a rhythmic background," which determines the pattern, or timing, given to the pronunciation of the slacks as they are worked in between the stresses, which are kept at fairly equal distances "except when some special syncopation is desired." In order to maintain the "even-time" units, it is necessary to hover on some syllables, to have complete rests occasionally, and to allow some slacks to receive minor accents—all of this Hopkins regularly did in his poetry. Whitehall has shown that by means of the symbol $S$ to designate a strong stress, an $O$ for no stress, an $L$ for a light stress, and a $p$ for the pause that is necessary between the syllabic junctures of some words, the pattern of

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530ng, pp. 122-123.
Hopkins' lines can be marked to reveal that his rhythm is composed of dipodic lines of four isochronous units.

Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, Not feast on thee;

L 0 | S P L O | S p L 0 | S p 0 | L 0

Not untwist--slack they may be--these last strands of man

0 0 | S p L 0 | S p L p | S 0 | L 0 | S

In me or, most weary, cry I can no more. I can;

0 Lp | Sp P 0 | S p Lp | Sp PO | S 0 | L 0 | SpP

Whitehall maintains that not only Hopkins' poetry but also Old and Middle English poetry was written "in a dipodic rhythm of regularity and strictness," giving examples, such as the following, as evidence for his statement.

scæadugengæ. Sceotend swæsækon,

S p L p | S 0 L 0 | S p L p | S p L (0)

Beowulf (l. 703)

(the shadow-goer gliding. The warriors slept,)

A faire felde ful of folke fonde I there bytwene

0 | S 0 L 0 | S 0 L 0 | S 0 | L 0 | SpL(0)

Piers Ploughman (l. 17)

Whitehall asserts that the relation of Hopkins' sprung rhythm to the Old and Middle English "long line" is obscured by Hopkins' use of the dipodic measure in lines of three or two measures, that is, "'pentameters' of three dipodies and 'tetrameters' of two."54

Whitehall's claim that Old English verse was isochronous is in direct opposition with the nonisochronous theory formulated by Eduard Sievers, who, basing his theory on the observable lift-dip patterns (strong and weak stresses), developed

54Whitehall, pp. 39-41 and 45-47.
his hypothesis of five basic types of metrical patterns consisting of two feet of at least four syllables with a major stress in each foot. He designated these types alphabetically in the order of the frequency of their occurrence as:

- **Type A:** / x/ x
- **Type B:** x /|x /
- **Type C:** x |\ x
- **Type D:** / x x or |\ x x
- **Type E:** \ x x| /

Even without adding the allowable extra dips, the obvious inequality of duration between some feet in these basic verses, unless one exaggeratedly draws out or hurries through the feet in Types D and E, has led to frequent challenges to Sievers' theory by many scholars, among them H. Whitehall, W. E. Leonard, A. Heusler, and J. C. Pope. In his challenge, John Pope achieved something of a revolution in the ideas concerning Old English metrics by developing a new theory. Pope showed that Types B and C would not fit the unifying principle of two quadruple measures to each half line when the line begins with two or three unimportant syllables. By

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recording the rhythm in musical notation, he discovered how natural the rhythm sounded if he substituted a rest for the first beat of a b-verse.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{egs} & \text{ode} \quad \text{éorl} & \text{as} & \quad \text{sy} \text{dd} & \text{an} & \text{ærest} & \text{weard} \\
\text{fésæc} & \text{éæft} & \text{fúndên} & \text{Beowulf} \ (\text{ll.} \ 6-7a) \\
\text{(frightened earls} & \text{since first he was found destitute)}
\end{align*}
\]

With the use of an initial rest the alliteration "was signalized by primary accent, though this belonged to the second measure instead of the first." Extending the theory of an initial rest to Beowulf and other poems, he found that with the initial rest it is possible to include "all the syllables of Germanic verse, together with the stresses that reveal their meaning, within the limits of a strict metre." The problem of the theory, of course, is that while initial rests are easy to hear so long as another verse precedes them, they cannot be heard at the beginning of a poem or in the midst of it after a considerable pause, unless some external means of marking time is employed. The practice of using the harp to accompany the chanting of poetry was believed to have been extinct by the time Beowulf was composed. However, it is Pope's contention that the harp was used and with its keeping regular time the listener was able to hear without any confusion the beat of the first accent omitted by the voice.\textsuperscript{56}

As brilliant as Pope's isochronous theory is, it has been challenged in recent years. In *The Metre of Beowulf*, A. J. Bliss returns to a somewhat modified Sievers' theory and refutes Pope's theory on the grounds that Pope is basing his theory on the unsupported assumptions "that the fundamental structure of Old English verse is the same as that of modern English verse" and "that Anglo-Saxon music, like modern music, was isochronous." Even more recently, Samuel Jay Keyser has developed an expanded theory which is similar in approach to Sievers' theory of Old English prosody, but is more definitive in what Keyser considers to be the two essential components of any theory which aims at distinguishing between a metrical and an unmeterical line—the abstract metrical pattern rules and the realization rules. Keyser disagrees with Sievers on three of Sievers' principles: (1) that the secondary stress is metrically significant in certain environments, (2) that stressed syllables must be phonologically long or long by resolution, and (3) that an eight-syllable line is the minimal line. According to Sievers' standards, there are too many lines in *Beowulf*, for example, which must be emended or declared unmeterical, but which in Keyser's theory are metrical without emendation. Keyser's criticism of Pope's isochronous theory is that it is irrelevant to the question of whether a line is metrical and relevant only to a theory of poetic

57 Bliss, pp. 106-107.
performance based on the belief that each verse of Beowulf should take the same amount of time to read. He says that Pope simply took Sievers' theory of classes of lines and scored those lines for performance, an activity which, in Keyser's opinion, is not pertinent "to the business of prosody." Hopkins' repeated insistence that "what applies to all my verse, that it is, as living art should be, made for performance" and his description of sprung rhythm in his "Preface" suggest that he might very well take sides with Pope in the controversy if he were living today:

Sprung Rhythm, as it is used in this book, is measured by feet of from one to four syllables, regularly, and for particular effects any number of weak or slack syllables may be used. In Sprung Rhythm, as in logaoedic rhythm generally, the feet are assumed to be equally long or strong and their seeming inequality is made up by pause or stressing.

Two licences are natural to Sprung Rhythm. The one is rests, as in music. The other is hangers or outrides, that is one, two, or three slack syllables added to a foot and not counting in the nominal scanning.

In spite of the lack of agreement concerning the Germanic metre, it is true that the vast majority of Old English half-lines falls into one of Sievers' five types. Types A, D, and E are trochaic in quality; only Type B is clearly iambic; and Type C is half-iambic and half-trochaic. Therefore, the

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59 Letters, p. 246.
61 See p. 38 above.
dominant metre in Old English verse appears to be trochaic, a metre which imparts "rapid, aggressive, urgent qualities" to the half-line—qualities which are entirely in keeping with the Germanic temperament and with Hopkins' temperament.

To achieve these metrical qualities in his poetry, Hopkins used, within the sense-stress units, a special device from which he derived the name for his rhythm. He explained to Dixon "that the word Sprung which I used for this rhythm means something like abrupt and applies by rights only where one stress follows another running without syllable between." He also explained in his "Preface" that the monosyllabic foot was one of the types of feet in sprung rhythm.

It has one stress, which falls on the only syllable, if there is only one, or, if there are more, then scanning as above, on the first, and so gives rise to four sorts of feet, a monosyllable and the so-called accentual Trochee, Dactyl, and the First Paeon. And there will be four corresponding natural rhythms; but nominally the feet are mixed and any one may follow any other. . . . so that any two stresses may either follow one another running or be divided by one, two, or three slack syllables.

Examples of Hopkins' use of monosyllabic feet will disclose the cumulative, forceful effect he was able to produce in his poetry with juxtaposed stresses:

The sour scythe cringe, and the blear share come.
"The Wreck of the Deutschland" (stanza 11, 1. 8)
Do, deal, lord it with living and dead.
"The Wreck of the Deutschland" (stanza 28, 1.7)

With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.
"Pied Beauty" (ll. 9-11)

But his own nest, wild nest, no prison.
"The Caged Skylark" (1. 11)

The heart rears wings bold and bolder.
"Hurrahing in Harvest" (1. 13)

In using a single syllable as the complete foot, "Hopkins was Anglo-Saxon in his concept." Both Types C and D in Anglo-Saxon verse have a juxtaposition of two stresses which gives them the same "peculiar" rhythm as Hopkins'. Some of Hopkins' lines bring to mind the Type C verse, such as the following line from Beowulf which includes a combination of a number of slack syllables and of the juxtaposed syllables.

(that which he had with him)

The Anglo-Saxon verse Type D has the same heavy form as do some of Hopkins' lines with juxtaposed syllables.

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65 Gardner, Hopkins, I, 48 and 60; II, 250, 257, and I, 86.
67 Bright, p. 234.
69 Bright, pp. 235-236.
bring gyldenne (Beowulf, 1. 2809b)  
(a golden ring)  
read ænigne (Beowulf, 1. 3080b)  
(any advice)

Hopkins' two successive accents can often be read with the two juxtaposed stresses as almost one prolonged stress, that is, as "a single hovering stress." To obtain this effect Hopkins minimized the syllabic break between words by repeating in the second syllable the sound of the first stressed syllable, as in beakleaved and tool-smooth in the following lines in "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves."

Only the beakleaved boughs drágonish | damask the tool-smooth black light; black,  
Ever so black on it... (ll. 9-10)  

This "special manifestation" of sprung rhythm was also a feature of Old English, as in Beowulf and bring-net and in "The Seafarer":  

síras séogan hú ic geswíncdægum (1. 2)  
(to tell of travels how I in days of hardship).

According to Hopkins another distinctive feature of sprung rhythm is that "feet (and the rhythms made out of them) in which the stress comes first are called Falling Feet and Falling Rhythms, feet and rhythm in which the Slack comes..."

70 Klaeber, pp. 106 and 116.  
71 Long, p. 126.  
72 Long, p. 126.  
The same principle of equal strengths in sense-stress verse led Jacob Schipper to classify Old English half-lines as ascending, descending, and ascending-descending. The rhythm of "The Wanderer" is certainly sprung, as the following passage shows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Falling} & \quad \text{Types A and C} & \quad \text{Rocking} & \quad \text{Types A and B} \\
\text{clyppê ond oysse} & \quad \text{ond on ono lèce} & \quad \text{ondheafod} & \quad \text{swa he hwilum ðer}
\end{align*}
\]
By means of three rhythms and feet, i.e., rising, falling, and rocking (or ascending, descending, ascending-descending), the motions, qualities, and actions described in poems can be imitated by poets who are skillful in handling their language. By varying the number of unstressed syllables the Old English poets were able to modify the tempo of their poems. By creating a rapid line, the poet could suggest movement, as the line

Gewæt 3a ofer wægholm winde gefyssed (Beowulf, 1. 217)
(Went then o'er the wave-sea by the wind carried)
calls to mind the buoyancy of the boat. Whereas, with a slow line, he could suggest weight and dignity, as in the line

Gómban géldan: Ðæt wæs géð cyning! (Beowulf, 1. 11)79
(Tribe paid: that was a good king!)

Evidence that Hopkins, like the Anglo-Saxon poets, was able

78 Gardner, Hopkins, II, 161.

79 Spaeth, pp. 180-182.
to manipulate the rhythms to create metaphorical rhythm can be seen from an examination of his early poem, "A Vision of Mermaids," written when he was only eighteen.  

Some, diving merrily, downward drove, and gleam'd  
With arm and fin; the argent bubbles stream'd  
Airwards, disturb'd; and the scarce troubled sea  
Gurgled, where they had sun, melodiously.  
Others with fingers white would comb among  
The drenched hair of slabby weeds that swung  
Swimming . . .  

(11. 108-114)

The rising rhythm of "the argent bubbles stream'd" expresses the rising of the bubbles, and the lengthened vowel of "stream'd" emphasizes the flowing. The rising movement is replaced by the rocking movement of "airwards, disturb'd" which imitates the sound of the bubbles bursting, and the motion and feel of the "slabby weeds that sway" are caught by the rhythms of the line.

By the time Hopkins wrote "The Wreck of the Deutschland," he had mastered the rhythmic skill of the stress-metre of his sprung rhythm. The motion of the sea with its choppy waves, the gusts of strong wind, and the spirals of snow almost can be felt in the cumulative effect of the rising and falling rhythms in stanza 13. In stanza 14 the dash after the verb expresses the shock of the ship's unexpectedly striking "some unknown substance," and hovering pauses after "reef" and "rock" add to the effect of momentary, questioning disbelief.

80 Robert Boyle, Metaphor in Hopkins (Chapel Hill, 1961), xii-xiii and xv.
81 Gardner, Poems, p. 11. The stress mark is Hopkins'.
"The rush and finality of the third line with its expressive sibilants" bring the questioning to an end as the ship penetrates into the deadly sand. 82

She drove in the dark to leeward,
She struck—not a reef or a rock
But the combs of a smother of sand: night
drew her
Dead to the Kentish Knock:
And she beat the bank down with her bows and the
ride of her keel:
The breakers rolled on her beam with ruinous shock;
And canvas and compass, the whorl and the wheel
Idle for ever to waft her or wind her with, these she
endured. 83

The finer points of sprung rhythm and all its possibilities, or even all Hopkins was able to accomplish with it, have not yet been completely understood by even the most discerning scholars. 84 What has been understood, however, is that Hopkins, with his pioneering daring, strength, and power has greatly "broadened the scope of English rhythms" and has left a "flexible patternization" for any with the courage to follow. 85 Although the existing biographical records are too inadequate to establish the extent of Hopkins' knowledge of Old English verse, he himself acknowledged that his rhythm existed in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Even if he had not admitted

82Boyle, xvii-xviii.
83Gardner, Poems, p. 56
84Gardner, Poems, xi.
85Bonn, p. 92.
the similarities, his sprung rhythm parallels so closely the fundamental techniques of Anglo-Saxon metre that it is apparent Hopkins was influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by the Anglo-Saxon system. Historically Hopkins' success with sprung rhythm with its elements of the robust native stress-metre is important because he has established, finally, that the Anglo-Saxon stress-rhythms are as deserving of recognition as traditional rhythms like the Romance syllabic foot, which only later entered the tradition of English literature in the Chaucerian period.

86 Gardner, Hopkins, II, 369.
CHAPTER III

PARALLELS IN DEVICES OF RHYTHMICAL VARIATION

Sprung rhythm was particularly attractive to Hopkins because he found it "much more flexible and capable of much greater effects" than common rhythm. He believed that rhythm must be "likeness tempered with difference;" otherwise, "bare rhythm would be monotonous." In his lecture notes, prepared in 1873-74, he proposed several devices for avoiding the unpleasant sameness which can occur in the regularity of verse patterns. He said that monotony could be prevented by:

1. the mere change of words . . .
2. caesura . . .
3. the tonic accent of words . . .
4. the emphatic accent of the words . . .
5. smoothness or break of vowel sound . . .
6. all intermittent elements of verse, as alliteration, rhyme . . .

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4 House, Journals, pp. 280-283.
Hopkins' definition of poetry separates the art of poetry into two aspects—the sensory pattern, which is composed of the structural elements, such as rhythm, metre, and rhyme, and the thought content, which the structural elements help to convey and enforce.⁵

Poetry is speech framed for contemplation of the mind by way of hearing or speech framed to be heard for its own sake and interest even over and above its interest of meaning. Some matter and meaning is essential to it but only as an element necessary to support and employ the shape which is contemplated for its own sake.⁶

He believed that by repetition and variation of the structural elements the "impression of beauty" could be created.⁷

(Poetry is in fact speech only employed to carry the inscape of speech for the inscape's sake—and therefore the inscape must be dwelt on . . .) Verse is . . . speech wholly or partially repeating the same figure of sound.⁸

Hopkins felt that the hearer must be able to perceive the rhythmic pattern through its repetition before he could receive pleasure from the variations. He realized that beauty consists of a balanced relation between regularity and variation; the excess of one produces monotony, and the excess of the other leads to lawlessness. By employing sprung rhythm, which readily permitted variation, Hopkins was able to

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⁵Cohen, p. 19.
⁶House, Journals, p. 289.
⁷Cohen, p. 19.
⁸House, Journals, p. 289.
maintain the necessary balance of beauty. His poetry is proof of his premise: "It should be understood that these various means of breaking the sameness of rhythm . . . do not break the unity of the verse but the contrary; they make it organic and what is organic is one." Hopkins' sprung rhythm, then, was more than simply the timing of stressed and slack syllables; in effect it was his "total complex of style," encompassing and at the same time being reinforced by phonal devices (e.g. alliteration, assonance, consonance) and rhythmical devices (e.g. caesura, outrides, overroves).

Hopkins' employment of alliteration has not always been appreciated or understood by his critics. Coventry Patmore, a contemporary poet and regular correspondent of Hopkins during the years 1883 to 1888, criticized some of Hopkins' poems, saying:

It seems to me that the thought and feeling of these poems, if expressed without any obscuring novelty of mode, are such as often to require the whole attention to apprehend and digest them; and are therefore of a kind to appeal only to a few. But to the already sufficiently arduous character of such poetry you seem to me 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

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9Cohen, p. 19.

10House, Journals, p. 283.

words;—any one of which novelties would be startling
and productive of distraction from the poetic matter
to be expressed.\footnote{12}

It is paradoxical that Patmore thought Hopkins' use of
alliteration unprecedented, especially since in Patmore's
essay on \textit{English Metrical Critics},\footnote{13} he had briefly dis-
cussed alliteration in Old English verse and had quoted from
\textit{Piers Plowman}, adding:

Like rhyme, alliteration is no mere 'ornament' of
versification: it is a real and powerful adjunct when
properly employed. If rhyme . . . is the great means
in modern languages of marking essential metrical pauses,
alliteration is a very effective mode of conferring
emphasis on the accent, which is the primary foundation
of metre.

No good ear, when once accustomed to it, can fail
to perceive in this law a fountain of pure and beautiful
metrical character, or at least to absolve it from the
charge of any essential quaintness or oddity.\footnote{14}

In a letter to Patmore, Hopkins had discussed at length his
views on alliteration, to which Patmore replied that at
present he could not see Hopkins' view of alliteration.
Perhaps Hopkins' response to Patmore's comment is explanation

\footnote{12}{Claude Collier Abbott, editor, \textit{Further Letters of
Gerard Manley Hopkins Including His Correspondence with
Coventry Patmore}, 2nd ed. revised and enlarged (London,
1956), p. 352. Subsequent references to this work show the
abbreviated title, \textit{Further Letters}.}

\footnote{13}{W. H. Gardner, \textit{Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Study of
Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition}, 4th
printing (Oxford, 1965), II, 159. Patmore's essay first
appeared in 1857, but Hopkins possibly did not read it until
its reissuance with \textit{Amelia and Other Poems} in 1879.}

\footnote{14}{Gardner, \textit{Hopkins}, II, 159, citing Coventry Patmore,
\textit{Amelia and Other Poems} (1878), pp. 52-63.}
enough of Patmore's blindness, or deafness as the case may be, to the similarities of Anglo-Saxon alliteration and Hopkins' system of alliteration.

As for vowel alliteration, it is clearly not for you to accommodate your ear to mine. Besides if you do not agree with me now, it is likely there is some fundamental difference and we do not hear alike.15

A review of the characteristics of Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse will reveal the extent of the resemblance of Hopkins' verse to that of the scops. The two essential elements of Old English verse are accent and alliteration. The Old English poetic line is divided by a caesura into two half-lines or verses, known as hemistichs, with two major stresses in each half-line. The two half-lines are linked together by alliteration, or initial rhyme. The alliteration always falls on the arsis, or stressed syllables, and any additional alliteration in the thesis, or unstressed syllables, is considered accidental and insignificant to the structure of the line. Any vowel may alliterate with any other vowel or, less commonly, with itself. Initial consonants alliterate with themselves, whatever the following vowel or consonant, except that the consonant combinations sc, sp, and st alliterate only with themselves. Alliteration and stress generally fall on the first syllable of Old English words except for prefixes, which are not significant syllables. Thus, while alliteration in nama and unneah is not apparent,

15Further Letters, pp. 331-332, 334, and 335.
it is real; whereas, in *faran* and *forslēan* the alliteration is apparent, but is not real, because *for-* is not the stressed syllable in *forslēan*.

In the Anglo-Saxon line, the third accent, called the alliterative dominant, is the "rime-giver," for it sets the alliterative pattern for the line and binds the b- or off-verse with the a- or on-verse. In the majority of Old English lines, both the first and second stressed syllables of the first half-line agree with the dominant syllable of the second half-line; however, either of the two may individually alliterate with the third stress. If only one stressed syllable in the first half-line alliterates, preferably it is the first. The fourth accent never alliterates with the third accent. The types of alliterative patterns, arranged according to their frequency of occurrence, are as follows:

1. the first, second, and third accented syllables alliterating:

   Gewāt pā, ofer wægholm, winde gefyxed
   flota fæmigheals, fugle gelícost. (Beowulf, II. 217-218)
   (Went then o'er the wave-sea, by the wind impelled
   The floater foamy-necked, most like a fowl.)

2. the first and third accented syllables alliterating:

   on flódes ōht feor gewítan (Beowulf, l. 42)
   (in the flood's power far to wander)

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(3) the second and third stressed syllables alliterating:
Geseah hē in recēde rinca manige (Beowulf, l. 728)
(He saw in the hall many warriors)

(4) the first and third stressed syllables alliterating
and the second and fourth syllables alliterating,
creating alternating alliteration:
Hildewæpnum ond headowædum (Beowulf, l. 39)
(with brave weapons and battle-clothes)

(5) the first and fourth stressed syllables alliterating
and the second and third syllables alliterating,
creating alternating alliteration:
Wit ðæt geowædon cnihwesende (Beowulf, l. 535)\(^{17}\)
(We two said that as boys).

If the fourth stress alliterates, as in (4) and (5) above, it
is generally regarded as accidental.\(^{18}\)

The art of accentual alliteration began declining toward
the end of the Anglo-Saxon period. In a poem as late as "The
Battle of Maldon," violations of the strict rules of Anglo-
Saxon alliteration can be seen.\(^{19}\) For example, in the follow-
ing line the fourth stressed syllable alliterates with the
third stressed syllable:

\(^{17}\)Spaeth, pp. 179-181. The stress marks are mine.


\(^{19}\)Bright, p. 230.
me sendon to ye seamen an'elle, (l. 29)  
(bold seamen send me to thee).

The use of accentual alliteration declined steadily after the Norman conquest, as the French systems of rhyme and metre gradually entered the English tradition of verse and became, by Chaucer's time, the controlling factors of English prosody. Alliterative verse was revived during the fifteenth century, and alliteration and rhyme were blended. With the passing of years, alliteration became primarily ornamental, but in the nineteenth century the influence of Old English alliterative metre was revived in the structural alliteration of such poets as George Canning, Lord Tennyson, and Richard Stanyhurst.

Like other poets since Chaucer's time, Hopkins found that regular syllabic metre did not reach a peak of rhetorical vivacity without the full and creative exploitation of the overabundance of English consonants. According to Hopkins' lecture notes, he was early aware of the value of alliteration in verse:

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Alliteration was an essential element in Anglo-Saxon or old English verse, as Piers the Plowman, also in Icelandic. As a grace but unessential it is often used in prose and very thickly in Latin verse, more sparing in Greek, thickly in modern English verse: one may indeed doubt whether a good ear is satisfied with our verse without it.\textsuperscript{24}

Hopkins' first experiment with stress-rhythm, "Lines for a Picture of St. Dorothea," contains some alliteration, but, as should be expected, it falls short of the strength he attained with his alliterative patterns in "The Wreck of the Deutschland" and his later mature poems.\textsuperscript{25}

\begin{verbatim}
Ah dip in blood the palmtree pen
And wordy warrants are flawed through.
More will wear this wand and then
The warped world we shall undo.
Proconsul!--Is Saprarius near?--
I find another Christian here. (stanza 7)\textsuperscript{26}
\end{verbatim}

In his mature poetry, the alliterative devices are impossible to ignore. Almost any line chosen at random contains striking alliterative examples:

\begin{verbatim}
Down in dim woods the diamond delves! the elves'-eyes!
"The Starlight Night" (1. 4)

Quelled or quenched in leaves the leaping sun,
"Binsey Poplars" (1. 2)

Beauty's bearing or muse of mounting vein,
"The Handsome Heart" (1. 10)

Take as for tool, not toy meant
"Morning, Midday, and Evening Sacrifice" (1. 13)
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{24}House, Journals, p. 284.

\textsuperscript{25}Gardner, Hopkins, II, 137.

\textsuperscript{26}Gardner, Poems, p. 37. The underlining is mine. The stress mark is Hopkins'.
What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and wildness? Let them be left,
"InversanaId" (ll. 13-14)

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame . . .
No. 57 (1. 1)

Although Hopkins' lines are not restricted to the fixed
Anglo-Saxon rules of alliteration,28 his "use of alliteration
might, to be sure, be derived from Middle English as well as
from Anglo-Saxon, although he makes free with it in the more
generous manner of the older writers."29 Many of his four-
beat lines, however, contain alliterative patterns identical
to the Anglo-Saxon patterns:

(1) the first, second, and third accented syllables
 alliterating:

/Blast bole and bloom together?
"The Loss of the Eurydice"
(stanza 4)

O Deutschland, double a desperate name!
"The Wreck of the Deutschland" (stanza 20)

(2) the first and third accented syllables alliterating:

Nor first from heaven (and few know this)
"The Wreck of the Deutschland" (stanza 6)

Wiry and white-fiery and whirlwind-swivelled snow
"The Wreck of the Deutschland" (stanza 13)

27 Gardner, Poems, pp. 66, 78, 82, 84, 89, and 90.

28 Herbert Read, "The Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins,"
English Critical Essays: Twentieth Century (London, 1956),
p. 367.

29 Henry W. Wells, New Poets From Old: A Study in
(3) the second and third stressed syllables alliterating:

Fast, but mined with a motion, a drift
"The Wreck of the Deutschland" (stanza 4)

What was the feast followed the night
"The Wreck of the Deutschland" (stanza 30)

(4) the first and third, the second and fourth stressed syllables alliterating:

Warm-laid grave of womb-life grey;
"The Wreck of the Deutschland" (stanza 7)

Is it love in her being as her lover had been?
"The Wreck of the Deutschland" (stanza 25)

(5) the first and fourth, second and third stressed syllables alliterating:

Do, deal, lord it with living and dead;
"The Wreck of the Deutschland" (stanza 28). 30

Of these five patterns, Hopkins apparently favored the pattern of the second and third stressed syllables alliterating; that pattern is more numerous than the other four. However, like the Anglo-Saxon poet of "The Battle of Maldon," he did not adhere to strict rules of alliteration, and he wrote lines in which the fourth stressed syllable alliterates with the third, such as:

World's strand, sway of the sea;
"The Wreck of the Deutschland" (stanza 1). 31

Unlike the Anglo-Saxon poets, Hopkins seems to have preferred

30Gardner, Hopkins, II, 264; I, 58, 62, 55, 49; II, 150, and I, 60. Hopkins' pronunciation of initial wh- and initial w- spelling was obviously /w/ for both.

31Gardner, Hopkins, I, 45.
the pattern of first and second stressed syllables alliterating and third and fourth stressed syllables alliterating:

Fáng, or flood' goes Death on drúm,
"The Wreck of the Deutschland" (stanza 11).  

Many examples of this pattern are in his poetry.

An even more surprising resemblance to Anglo-Saxon prosody is Hopkins' theory that any vowel alliterates with another vowel or with itself. He stated in his lecture notes his belief that "any vowels then alliterate but with a soft or imperfect alliteration, but in consonants only the same and those perfectly." And in a letter to Patmore, he explained his belief more fully:

I should like you to reconsider the matter of alliteration in vowels. To my ear no alliteration is more marked or more beautiful, and I used to take it for granted as an obvious fact that every initial vowel lettered to every other before ever I knew that anything of the sort was practised in Anglo-Saxon verse. I cannot agree that this alliteration is destroyed by using the same vowel. No doubt the effect is more beautiful, more artistic, with a change of vowels; still with the same one it is heard. How this alliteration arises is, I know, very hard to say, but to my ear there is no doubt about the fact.

Compare the following examples of Anglo-Saxon vowel alliteration:

33 Ong, p. 135.
34 House, Journals, p. 283.
35 Further Letters, p. 331.
Isig ond ðæfûs, æðþælinges fær; (Beowulf, l. 33)
(Icy and eager to leave, the nobleman's barge;)
Innan ond útan ðænærendum (Beowulf, l. 774)
(In and out bound with iron.)

with Hopkins' very effective vowel alliteration:

And after it almost unmade, what with dread
"The Wreck of the Deutschland" (stanza 1)

Time's tasking, it is fathers that asking for ease
"The Wreck of the Deutschland" (stanza 2)

Earnest, earthless, equal, attuneable, | . .
"Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" (l. 1)37

Hopkins' alliterative patterns were not employed simply as ornamental devices; they were structurally important to the expression of his complex rhythm. He used alliteration imaginatively to give emphasis to his stress metre.38 The native alliteration asserted itself in Hopkins' sprung rhythm just as it had in Old English verse as a natural and necessary aid to heighten stress in order to support a rhythm that was not based on regularly recurring beats.39 Stress rhythm with its variable and often numerous slacks before, between, and after stresses must depend on technical devices, especially alliteration, to "overstress" the strong positions of the

37Gardner, Hopkins, I, 45 and 59; II, 312. The underlining is mine.


39Ong, p. 168.
rhythm\(^40\) and thereby bring out the dramatic interpretation
the poet intends. The overstressing device of alliteration
can be observed in any Old English poem, such as "The
Seafarer":

Mæg ic be me sylfum sodgied wrecan,
siðas seogan hu ic geswinodagum
cerfodhwele oft þrowade
bitre breostceare gebiden hæbbe,
egcunnad in coele cearselda fela,
atol yþa gewealc (ll. 1-6a)\(^41\)

(I can create a true song about myself,
Tell of my journeys how I in troublesome days,
A difficult time often endured
Bitter heart-sorrow I have survived
Have seen from the ship many abodes of sorrow,
A horrible rolling of the waves).

In the second half-line of line 2, alliteration heightens the
stress on swinc. Alliteration and consonant clustering can
be observed throughout Hopkins' poems, for example, in "Harry
Ploughman":\(^42\)

Breathed round; the rack of ribs; the scooped flank; lank
Rope-over thigh; . . . (ll. 2-3)

Here the repetition of the r works to add force to the sense-
stressed syllables. Later in lines 10-11 \(/k/\) and \(/kr/\) allit-
erate, and heavy stress falls on crimson:

\(^40\)Harold Whitehall, "Sprung Rhythm," Gerard Manley
Hopkins, by the Kenyon Critics (Norfolk, 1945), p. 49.

\(^41\)George Philip Krapp and Elliott van Kirk Dobbie,

\(^42\)Ong, pp. 132-133.
In him, all quail to the wallowing o' the plough.

cheek crimson; curls
Wag or crossbridle, in a wind lifted, windlaced ...

The force of these phonal devices is cumulative in Hopkins' poetry just as it is in Old English verse. The more the hearer allows the sounds to echo and amplify, the clearer the sense becomes, the stronger the feeling grows, and the more intensified the rhythmic movement becomes.

In addition to indicating the syllables which should receive stress, alliteration was used by Hopkins and the Anglo-Saxon poets to further develop the meaning intended by the poet. A few lines from "The Battle of Maldon" will illustrate how the alliteration drives home the thought:

Hige sceal þe h̄arthra, heorte þe sænre,
Mōd sceal þe māra þe ūre mægen lýtlæ...

(Mind shall be tougher, heart the keener,
Spirit shall be bolder, as our troop decreases ...)

Hopkins similarly used alliteration for emphasis. Sometimes his alliterative patterns run "like thread through the woof of the poem," suggesting "leit-motifs." For example, in "Harry Ploughman" br (or b ... r ... ) and l appear in those words which point out Harry's two main characteristics—

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43 Gardner, Poems, p. 104.

44 Ong, pp. 132-134.


46 Gardner, Hopkins, I, 15.
strength of physique and grace of action. The "keywords" of the motif of hardiness are broth, barrowy, brawn, beechbole, broad, and bluff. In lines 9 and 10 the motifs of strength and grace are carefully interwoven, with the alliteration partially hidden in middle and final positions and partially by the lack of heavy stress:

He leans to it, Harry bends, look. Back, elbow, and liquid waist
In him, all quail to the wallowing o' the plough. . . .

A corresponding use of b's and l's denotes the strength and beauty of "The Windhover" in the words rebuffed, big, brute beauty, Buckle, billion, level, lovelier, chevalier, and sillion.

In "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" the straining of evening as it becomes night and envelops everything is artfully depicted by the progression of alliteration in the succession of adjectives:

Earnest, earthless, equal, attuneable, vaulty, voluminous . . . stupendous
Evening strains to be time's vast, womb-of-all, home-of-all, hearse-of-all night.
Her fond yellow hornlight wound to the west, her wild hollow hoarlight hung to the height
Waste; her earliest stars, earlstars, stárs principal, overbend us,
Fire-featuring heaven. . . . (ll. 1-5)

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49 Gardner, Hopkins II, 143.
51 Gardner, Poems, p. 97. The stress marks are Hopkins'.
The strong sprung rhythm of "The Wreck of the Deutschland" is imbued with expressional alliteration which takes advantage of a "fuller scale of sounds" than mere identical ones. In the first stanza, the recurrence of b's, v's, and f's and the echo of flesh in afresh fulfill the sensory image.  

Thou mastering me
God! giver of breath and bread;
World's strand, away 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.

In stanza 7, line 3 of "The Wreck of the Deutschland," Hopkins apparently planned the alliterative pattern of "Warm-laid grave of a womb-life grey" to be a chiasmus meaning "Grey grave of a warm-laid womb-life." And in stanza 17, line 8, Hopkins appears to have indulged "in a delicate form of word-play" to give double meaning to his image. Then he reinforced it with alliteration:

A prophetess towered in the tumult, a virginal tongue told.

In the image "a prophetess towered in a tumult," Hopkins

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53 Gardner, Poems, p. 51. The underlining is mine.
54 Gardner, Poems, p. 53.
56 Gardner, Poems, xxxii. 57 Gardner, Poems, p. 57.
perceived the nun rising "like a tower" (i.e., a belfry), her voice like tolling bells. Hence, there is a twofold interpretation for "told-tolled." The alliteration of the t's in the line suggests the tolling of bells and strengthens the image and meaning of the line.58

As the above examples reveal, the alliteration in Hopkins' poems is so important to meaning that, for example, in "The Wreck of the Deutschland," of the two hundred eighty lines of the poem there are only fifty or sixty lines in which seeming difficulties with the rhythm cannot be resolved when the alliterative patterns, in conjunction with the other phonal devices, are considered in relation to the meaning of the lines.59 As Read has said, "In a few of his poems the total effect of alliteration is not much less than in a purely alliterative poem like Piers Plowman. The Windhover is a supreme example."60

I caught this morning morning's minion, kingdom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing, As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of, the master of the thing!

59 Gardner, Hopkins, I, 282. 60 Read, p. 367.
Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle! and the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, 0 my chevalier!
No wonder of it: she'er plód makes plough down sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion. 61

Thus, Hopkins fused what was best in the older orthodox
Teutonic mode of alliteration with his own imaginative uses
of alliteration 62 to create a "sinuous, pervasive thing, not
restricted to the first letters only of the words, but cours-
ing the entire gamut of sound and yielding an almost bewilder-
ing symphony." 63

To his alliterative devices, Hopkins often added the
phonal devices of consonance and assonance to create exquisite
-tonal music in his poems. 64 His use of consonance—the agree-
ment of consonants without regard to the vowels—has often
been attributed to the Welsh influence which Hopkins mentioned
in a letter to Bridges, saying that the sonnet "The Sea and
the Skylark" was written in his Welsh days, his "salad days"
when he was fascinated with cynganedd or consonant-chime. 65

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61 Gardner, Poems, p. 69. The stress marks are Hopkins'.
62 Gardner, Hopkins, II, 162.
63 R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Gerard Manley Hopkins: The
64 Iyengar, p. 174.
65 Claude Collee Abbott, The Letters of Gerard Manley
Hopkins to Robert Bridges, 2nd rev. impression (London, 1955),
p. 163. Subsequent references to this work show the abbrevi-
ated title, Letters.
However, Germanic poetry also employed consonance. In fact, James Travis said that "early Welsh and Germanic consonance is scarcely distinguishable so far as the principles are concerned, from early Welsh and Germanic alliteration . . ."66

In Old English lines, such as the following from The Later Genesis, consonance can be seen in the repetition of the final -d:

_For bonhe hæo his dæd ond word noldon weorðian, forban hæo on wyrse Tæhht under eorðan neðeðan allmhihtig God (11. 309b-311)_67

(Since they his word and deed would not worship, therefore they [were] in worse light on earth below the almighty God).

The same principle of consonance is evident in "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" in the repetition of /-nd/, /t/, and /l/:

_Her fond yellow hornlight wound to the west, her wild hollow hoarlight hung to the height (1. 3)_68

Other phrases with the device of consonance evident are "lush-kept plush-capped," "five-lived and leaved favor,"
"the down-dugged ground-hugged grey," "now burn, new born,"
"heeds, but hides," "bodes but abides," and "blood-gush blade-gash."69 All of these phrases clearly show that

66 James Travis, "Intralinear Rhyme and Consonance in Early Celtic and Early Germanic Poetry," The Germanic Review, XVIII (April, 1943), 137.


68 Gardener, Poems, pp. 97, 54, 59, 60, 62, 177.
Hopkins realized that consonance used in association with alliteration could strengthen his poetry and "render it almost 'explosive.'"\textsuperscript{70}

In conjunction with the devices of alliteration and consonance, Hopkins artfully employed internal assonance to weave his poetic pattern. He loved words; they were more than mere signs for things. Each one was chosen only after he had thought about its various meanings, listened to its sounds, and understood its relation to the sounds of the words around it. He was aware of the word's instress\textsuperscript{71}—"that stress or energy of being by which 'all things are upheld'\textsuperscript{72}—and he captured its inscape—"the outward reflection of the inner nature of a thing."\textsuperscript{73} His skill in the use of assonance is well displayed in "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo."

How to keep—\textit{is there any any, is there none such, nowhere known some, bow or brooch or braid or brace, lace, latch or catch or key to keep Back beauty, keep it, beauty, beauty, beauty, ... from vanishing away? (11. 1-2)\textsuperscript{74}

In these two lines Hopkins concentrated five vowel sounds in different clusters of words. The /i/ sounds in \textit{keep}, which


\textsuperscript{71}Peters, pp. 142-143.

\textsuperscript{72}Peters, p. 14.

\textsuperscript{73}Peters, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{74}Gardner, \textit{Poems}, p. 91. 'The stress marks are Hopkins'.
is repeated three times, and in key; the /ɔ/ is present in
none, such, some, and from; the /æ/ is sounded four times
in braid, brace, lace, and away; the /o/ appears in nowhere,
known, and bow; and /ɔ/ is heard in latch, catch, back, and
vanishing. This poem is an excellent example of how proficient Hopkins was in modulating from one vowel key to another
to create "a poetry of rare concentration" without the choice
of words seeming to be contrived or forced.75 The same skillful blend of alliteration and assonance is present in Old
English poetry, such as "The Wanderer":

Forbon wæt æ þæ sceal his winedryhtnes
lœofes lærcwidum longe forþolian,
þonne sorg ond slæp somod ætæædre
earmne ânhogan oft gebindæn—
Since þæt him on môde þæt hê his mondryhten
clyppe ond cyse, ond on onُ̄ oo lecgæ
honda ond heæfod, swê hê hwîllum ær
in gærdaegum giefstōlas brēac. (11. 37-41)76

(Therefore he knows this who shall lack his lord's
Loving advice for long:
That sorrow and slumber together
Often bind a poor man alone—
He thinks in his heart that his lord
He kisses and clasps and lays on his knee
His hand and his head, as he at times before
In days of yore royal bounty enjoyed.)

Twenty-one times in these lines the Anglo-Saxon poet concentrated on the o's (pronounced here /ɔ/) to help portray the
sorrow of the Wanderer. This Old English poet, like Hopkins,


76 Wyatt, p. 145.
knew how to create "vowel-music and slow grandeur" in the aural patterns of his poems.

The best summary of Hopkins' elaborate and effective use of alliteration, assonance, and consonance and the best argument that the sounds Hopkins created in utilizing these phonal devices are reminiscent of Anglo-Saxon verse are found in the quotation of an example in which an image is forcefully reinforced "by the lettering of the syllables."  

Is out with it! Oh,  
We lash with the best or worst  
Word last! How a lush-kept plush-capped sloe  
Will, mouth to flesh-burst,  
Gush!—flush the man, the being with it, sour or sweet . . .  
"The Wreck of the Deutschland" (stanza 8)  

In these lines, the sharpness of the experience is imparted by the careful linking of alliteration, assonance, and consonance found in the first two stressed syllables, lash and best:

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(1) lash
   /l/ /s/ /z/ /sh/ /f/  
   last lush p-lush f-lush  
   gush

(2) best
   /b/ /f/ /s/ /z/ /sh/  
   being burst worstlast  
   flesh
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The alliteration of /l/, /k/, /b/, and /f/ and the assonance

78 Gardner, Hopkins, II, 141.  
79 Gardner, Poems, p. 54.
of /ɔ/, /ɛ/, and /æ/ are interwoven with the consonance of /-st/ (in best, worst, last, and burst) expressing "the idea of extremity" and of /-ʃ/ expressing violence (lash, Gush, and flash) and richness (lush, plush, flesh, flush) to express, by means of the unique concentration of sounds, the fullness of the spiritual experience.80

Walter Ong has remarked that "among the many points of agreement of Hopkins' verse with Old English, none is more remarkable than the uncanny tendency to fall into similar half-line patterns."81 The Old English line was arranged with antithetical or antiphonal half-lines with two stresses normally in each half-line, but on rare occasions the hemistich contained only one stress or was extended to three, five, six, or even seven stresses.82 The two half-lines were separated by phrasing.83 The caesura, or atempause, was used to mark the phrasing, or to divide the half-line into sense-units or breath groups.84 Patmore commented that "it is very questionable whether English verse has gained by the entire disuse of the caesural dot."85 Hopkins expressed

80Gardner, Hopkins, II, pp. 141-142.
81Ong, p. 128. 82Ong, p. 128.
85Gardner, Hopkins, II, 161, citing Coventry Patmore.
the same thought when, in discussing one of Bridges' poems, he wrote Bridges that as far as he could see "nothing is gained by those amorphous lines without a middle pause . . . ." Hopkins revived the use of the caesural mark in five poems in which he employed the sprung alexandrine (Poems 61, 62, 63, 137, 152). However, the caesural pause never occurred in the middle of a word in Old English as the pause frequently does in Hopkins' poems, such as in line 13 of "That Nature Is a Heraclitean Fire":

Drowned. O pity and idig \\
nation! Manshape, that shone . . .

He also used the caesural mark occasionally in a line in which he apparently wanted the pause carefully regarded, as in "Andromeda," line 14, "The Candle Indoors," line 8, and Poem No. 66, line 4.

Hopkins showed in a letter to Dixon in 1879 his feeling that his sprung rhythm had antiphonal movement. In discussing sprung rhythm with its stresses accompanied by a variable number of slacks, Hopkins explained:

What I mean is clearest in an antithesis or parallelism, for there the contrast gives the counterparts equal stress; e.g. "sanguinary consequences, terrible butchery, frightful slaughter, fell swoop" . . .

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86 Letters, p. 261.

87 Gardner, Hopkins, II, 161.

88 Gardner, Poems, p. 105. The caesural pause mark is Hopkins'.

89 Correspondence, p. 22.
The grammatical parallelisms, which Hopkins realized were a part of the sense-stress units of sprung rhythm, are also evident in every Old English poem, for example, one of the Riddles, "The Nightingale":

(Through my mouth I speak with many voices, I sing melodies, after change
My voice, loudly cry,
Hold my tune. I do not avoid laughter. Old evening-singer, I bring to lords Happiness in the cities, when I stir My flexible voice; quietly in their houses They sit, silent. Tell what I am named, Who, like a female jester, the poet's song Loudly mimic and to men announce Many welcome things with my voice.)

Hopkins particularly favored the alexandrine line in his sonnets because there is "an insuperable tendency to the alexandrine . . . to break after the 3rd foot, cutting the line in equal halves." His desire to emphasize the break in the line can be seen in "To what serves Mortal Beauty?" in which he marked the caesural pause with a virgule:

90Ong, pp. 129-130.
92Letters, p. 203. 93Ong, pp. 128-129.
To what serves mortal beauty | --dangerous; does set dancing blood--the O-seal-that-so | feature, flung prouder form

Than Purcell tune lets tread to? | See: it does this:

keeps warm

Men's wits to the things that are; | what good means--

where a glance

Master more may than gaze, | gaze out of countenance.

(11. 1-5)\textsuperscript{94}

Hopkins' belief that the alexandrine "half-line is by nature a dimereter, two bars or four feet, of which commonly one foot is silent or lost at the pause"\textsuperscript{95} made his alexandrines more closely match the Old English antithesis because he introduced an antiphonal movement into each half-line and removed from his alexandrines the three-beat unit, which was rare in Old English verse. This technique is especially evident in "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves," in which the caesura is carefully marked and carefully observed:\textsuperscript{96}

Off her once skinned stained veined variety | upon, all

on two spools; part, pen, pack

Now her all in two flocks, two folds--black, white; | right, wrong; reckon but, reck but, mind

But these two; ware of a world where but these | two tell, each off the other; of a rack

Where, selfwrung, selfstrung, sheathe- and shelterless, | thoughts against thoughts in groans grind. (11. 11-14)\textsuperscript{97}

Another point of similarity between Hopkins' poetry and Anglo-Saxon verse is that sprung rhythm, like Old English stress-

\textsuperscript{94}Gardner, Poems, p. 98. \textsuperscript{95}Letters, p. 212.

\textsuperscript{96}Paul F. Baum, "Sprung Rhythm," PMLA, LXXIV (1959), 422.

\textsuperscript{97}Gardner, Poems, p. 98. The stress marks and caesural pause marks are Hopkins'.
rhythm, was elastic enough to allow the lengthening of lines by the addition of extrametrical syllables. In Old English verse, Types A and D, both of which began with a stressed syllable, were occasionally preceded by one or two unstressed syllables. These extrametrical syllables are called anacrusis or Auftakt. In these verse types the second breath group is longer than the first breath group, and it appears that the Anglo-Saxon poet used anacrusis in the first breath-group to counterbalance the longer second breath-group. Pope, in his theory of initial harp-struck rests, has shown that Types B and C may also be preceded by anacrusis if the connection between the syllables and the preceding verse is so intimate that they cannot be treated as the up-beat of the first measure following a rest. An example of a Type C verse with anacrusis is found in Beowulf, lines 303b-304a, in which the two unimportant syllables of ofer are closely connected with the preceding verse.

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  Eoforlic sciconon
  ofer hlæorber[ë]an
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(Boar-like they shone over the cheek-guards)

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98Peters, p. 10.
99Bliss, pp. 40 and 43.
100Pope, p. 64.
101Pope, p. 61.
102Frederick Klaeber, editor, Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg (Boston, 1950), p. 12.
An example of anacrusis in Type D is seen in the syllables ne-ge- in line 2628 of Beowulf.103

Ne gemealt him se mōdlefa, . . .104
(The spirit did not melt in him, . . .)

Hopkins also utilized extra syllables to create an extrametrical effect. In his "Preface" he said that the second license of sprung rhythm "is hangers or outrides, that is one, two, or three slack syllables added to a foot and not counting in the nominal scanning."105 The outrides then, like anacrusis, were part of the aesthetic effect of the metre but not part of the counted effect of the metre. Both were based on the same rhythmic principle that certain syllables could be added to the line without being counted in the scansion. The only difference between anacrusis and an out-ride was that anacrusis occurred at the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon phrase and the outride occurred within Hopkins' phrase.106 Like anacrusis, unstressed syllables in the outride were placed before the stressed syllable at the beginning of a foot.107

103Pope, p. 312.
104Klaeber, p. 99.
105Gardner, Poems, p. 48.
107Lewis, p. 172.
Hopkins said in his "Preface" that plenty of outrides would be found in his poetry, and according to C. K. Ogden in his 1936 editorial in *Psyche*, outrides occur in fifteen poems in MSS "B" and "H" (Poems Nos. 31, 36, 38, 39, 43, 44, 45, 48, 53, 64, 71, 141, 142, 143, and 144). Hopkins first used outrides in 1877 in "God's Grandeur" and in three other sonnets of that year—"The Windhover," "Hurrahing in Harvest," and "The Caged Skylark." Examples of Hopkins' outrides can be seen in "The Caged Skylark," in which Hopkins marked five outrides: line 4, "drudgery"; line 8, "barriers"; line 10, "babble and "; line 13, "uncumbered"; and line 14, "footing it."

In some respects Hopkins' outride is similar to the Old English hypermetric verse, which is a verse that has an extra foot added "at the beginning of a rhythmically normal half-line." Hopkins used the outride to create an extrametrical effect. In his "Preface" he defined his outride as being composed of "one, two, or three slack syllables," but in his note preceding "Hurrahing in Harvest," he wrote, "Take notice that the outriding feet are not confused with dactyls or

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109 Gardner, *Hopkins*, I, 284, citing C. K. Ogden, *Psyche* Editorial, 1936. Poem No. 72, which Ogden does not include in his list, also has outrides.
112 Bright, p. 239.
paeons . . . The strong syllable in an outriding foot has always a great stress and after the outrides follows a short pause.\textsuperscript{113} The part of the Old English verse which precedes the regular verse is considered by M. Kaluza to be an extended anacrusis,\textsuperscript{114} which by definition is composed of unstressed syllables, yet in many of the hypermetric verses the first word must be stressed as in

\begin{quote}
\textit{wuldor weroda Dryhtne (Judith, 1. 343a)}\textsuperscript{115}
\end{quote}

\textit{(glory to the Lord of hosts)}.

The frequency of Old English hypermetric verses is comparable to the frequent occurrence of outrides in Hopkins' poetry. By means of the hypermetric line, the Old English line was stretched to more than the usual four stresses. The Old English poem "The Later Genesis" has longer lines than other poems of the period. If the lines of this poem do not actually have six stresses, they do have two additional secondary stresses and "are therefore more easily read as alexandrines."\textsuperscript{116}

\begin{quote}
\textit{ācweæþ hine þa fraþ his hyÝldo on hine on helle wearp, on þa dœope dala, þær hæ to dœdle wearp}. Se þæond mid his gefærum sallum þællon þa úforn of heþnum þurh swa longe swa þreo niht and ðagas (11. 304-307)\textsuperscript{117}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{113}Gardner, Poems, p. 269.

\textsuperscript{114}Max Kaluza, A Short History of English Versification From the Earliest Times to the Present Day, translated by A. C. Dunstan (London, 1911), p. 112.

\textsuperscript{115}Bliss, pp. 88-89. \textsuperscript{116}Gardner, Hopkins, II, 161-162.

\textsuperscript{117}Wyatt, p. 180. The stress marks are Gardner's, Hopkins, II, 162.
(He banished him then from his favor and threw him in hell
Into the deep hollows, where he became a devil.
The fiend with his comrades all fell from heaven above then
For as long as three nights and days.)

The rhythm of these lines is very similar to the alexandrines of Hopkins' "The Wreck of the Deutschland" and the "St. Winefred's Well" fragment. The arrangement of the syllables and stresses in line 306 in "Genesis B" resembles very closely line 8 of stanza 26 of "The Deutschland":

The treasure never eyesight got, nor was ever guessed what for the hearing?

And line 307 is very much like line 8 of stanza 29 of "The Deutschland":

Tárpéian-fast, but a blown beacon of light.
or like line 8 of stanza 11:

The sour scythe cringe, and the bléar share come.

Thus, the sprung alexandrine is "partly a Teutonic throwback."118 As Ong has said, "The correspondence of hangers or outrides and the Old English long lines can, I think, be pushed closely only at the cost of great subtleties, but it is plain that both Hopkins and Old English poets had here in common at least the practice of varying rhythm by lengthening verses."119

118 Gardner, Hopkins, II, 161-162.
119 Ong, pp. 130-131.
Another affinity of Hopkins' verse with Old English verse was his practice of overreaving lines. In his "Preface," he said:

Remark also that it is natural in Sprung Rhythm for the lines to be rove over, that is for the scanning of each line immediately to take up that of the one before, so that if the first has one or many syllables at its end the other must have so many the less at its beginning; and in fact the scanning runs on without break from the beginning, say, of a stanza to the end and all the stanza is one long strain, though written in lines asunder.120

Overreaving is most evident in stanzas 1 and 2 of "The Bugler's First Communion":

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),

This very very day came down to us after a boon he on My late being there begged of me, overflowing Boon in my bestowing,

Came, I say, this day to it—to a First Communion.121

The repetition of b in lines 1 and 2 is an example of how Hopkins also used alliteration to aid in reaving or joining one line to the next.122 In a like manner, the Old English verses are closely bound together by alliteration and enjambment—the continuation of the sense from one line to the next. This Old English "overreaving" is particularly evident in the riddles,123 for example, "A Storm":

Hwylc is hælca þæs horse ond þæs hygeoræftig
þæt þærne æsegan, hwa mec on siþ wraece,
thonne ic æstige strong, stundum reþe,
þrymful þunie, þragum wraece
fere geond foldan, folcsalo bærne,
raeced reafige? . . .

(What man is there so clever and wise
Who can tell who sends me on my journey
When I rise up strong, at times angry,
Roar loudly; sometimes I drive
Far over the earth, burn people's houses,
Ruin halls?)

It is apparent from Hopkins' use of alliteration, asso-
nance, consonance, caesura, outrides, and overroves that he
was anxious to use whatever device he could to avoid monotony
and to increase the force and richness of his poetry. To
Hopkins, poetic rhythm was more than simple metrics, and in
tracing his literary heritage, one recognizes a poetic texture
like that of Old English poetry.

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125 Read, p. 366.
CHAPTER IV

PARALLELS OF DICTION AND IMAGERY

Even aside from Hopkins' development of stress rhythm and the value of his thoughts, his masterful use of the language would alone qualify him as one of the major poets of English literature. Historically, Hopkins is important because he chose to break away from the literary tradition of his day, which had severed poetic diction from the everyday language of the people. He sought to restore to poetry the fluidity and resourcefulness of the Elizabethans.

In order to write poetry as he defined it—"speech framed to be heard for its own sake and interest even over and above its interest in meaning"—Hopkins was forced to look past contemporary poetic diction and find a new vocabulary for his poetry. He refused to abandon his thought "in a wordlorn

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wilderness." As a result, he delved deeply in the veins of English speech to find the richest possible language for his poetry.

Hopkins' lifelong interest in etymology and the power of words began early in his boyhood years when he became attracted to the popular new science, philology. He was fascinated by word derivations and by dialects. Almost every page of his notebooks contains his observations about the etymologies and linguistic relationships of words. The extent and depth of an early interest in etymology can be seen in his lengthy notations on horn made in an 1863 diary:

The various lights under which a horn may be looked at have given rise to a vast number of words in language. It may be regarded as a projection, a climax, a badge of strength, power or vigour, a tapering body, a spiral, a wavy object, a bow, a vessel to hold withal or to drink from, a smooth hard material not brittle, stony, metallic or wooden, something sprouting up, something to thrust or push with, a sign of honour or pride, an instrument of music, etc. From the shape, kernel and granum, grain, corn. From the curve of a horn, kopwvis, corona, crown. From the spiral crinis, meaning ringlets, locks. From its being the highest point comes our crown perhaps, in the sense of the top of the head, and the Greek képas, horn, and képa, head, were evidently identical; then for its sprouting up and growing, compare

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5 Babette Deutsch, Poetry In Our Time, 3rd printing (New York, 1958), p. 293.


keren, cornu, képas, horn with grow, cresco, grandis, grass, great, groot. For its curving, curvus is probably from the root horn in one of its forms. kopwv in Greek and corvus, cornix in Latin and crow (perhaps also raven, which may have been craven originally) in English bear a striking resemblance to cornu, curvus. So also yépavos, crane, heron, herne. Why these birds should derive their names from horn I cannot presume to say. The tree cornel, Latin cornus is said to derive its name from the hard horn-like nature of its wood, and the corns of the foot perhaps for the same reason. Corner is so called from its shape, indeed the Latin is cornu. Possibly (though this is rather ingenious than likely, I think) grinned may mean to curve up the ends of the mouth like horns. Mountains are called horn in Switzerland; now we know from Servius that herna meant saxum whence the Hernici, Rock-men, derive their name; herna is a horn-like crag. épvos, a shoot, is so called from its horn-like growth. Curiously enough the expression képavv épvos occurs in Oppian, and another word, épvg, in the Poetics of Aristotle. Or it is possible that épvos may be so called from its shooting up as, not in the shape of, a horn. Expressions. He hath raised up a horn of salvation for us. 8

Early he began collecting words with initial velar (/g/ or /k/) + /r/ clusters: "grind, gride, gird, grit, groat, grate, greet ..." or "crook, crank, kranke, crick, cranky." 9 lists which reveal his interest in, and anticipate his later elaborate use of, alliteration and assonance. 10 His admiration for Old English is also manifested early in such fanciful notes as:

The meaning of hernshaw is disputed about. It is variously said to mean sham heron, heronry and heron.

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8 House, Journals, p. 4.
9 House, Journals, p. 5.
the latter probably being the sense in "I know a hawk from a hernshaw", but there is no doubt that shaw is sometimes added to words in sense of sham with which it probably is connected. The meaning may have been concealment, cover, pretence, shield etc. from original sense of shade. Hence hernshaw may also mean a heronry, a herons' shelter, shade, cover. Shaw in old English means shade of trees, cover, underwood etc. With it are connected shadow, shade, shed, shelter, shield.

I do not believe school is from schola viz. σχολή, but the Teuton word meaning assemblage, collection, as shoal, a school of whales shell (in a school of a form).

Than in Macmillan's careful reprint of Bacon's essay written then, while then in old ballads etc. written than. Words identical. "I had rather die than do it" = "I had rather die, then, next after that I would do it." Nor as "better nor that" is old English, for ne were and is written in old ballads etc. sometimes

It is not surprising that Hopkins was greatly interested in etymology, for as a poet and scholar he was naturally attracted to the usages of words and to the fine shades of sense-differences of words. Etymology enabled him to understand more clearly the relationship between words with different meanings when he could establish a mutual root cognate. In many of the word-lists, Hopkins apparently was concerned with words that he believed were connected etymologically, but in others he seemed to have listed words that primarily interested him because of their similarity of form and meaning without regard to their etymologies. Many of the word-lists can be viewed as verbal exercises developing a

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formal theme through the sense-variations of the words. Some of the lists even appear as miniature poems with the meaning common to the individual words forming the poem's subject and the similarity of word forms giving shape to the poem.¹²

These notes on words are especially numerous from September, 1863, to February, 1864, when Hopkins was studying for Moderations. Undoubtedly, these early word-lists later served "as a storehouse of memory" when Hopkins sought "pregnant phrases"¹³ and words rich in sound and meaning for his poetry.¹⁴ That Hopkins did later utilize the word-lists can be seen from the fact that a number of the key words in his diary notations appeared in his poems. For example, his observations on the relationship of meadow, mead, meat, and maid with the meaning strengthening or nourishing¹⁵ are obviously the basis for his uses of those words in many of his lines on the Virgin Mary, such as in "The May Magnificat" (No. 76) and in these lines from "The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air we Breathe":¹⁶

This needful, never spent,  
And nursing element;  
My more than meat and drink, (ll. 9-11).¹⁷

¹³ House, Journals, p. 19.  
¹⁴ House, Journals, xx.  
¹⁵ House, Journals, p. 4.  
After carefully studying Hopkins' word-lists and ascertaining how acute his observations were and how perceptive he was to the meanings of words, a recent critic has commented, "What a philologist he might have made!" But Hopkins' leanings were toward poetry, and behind his philological interests lay his stronger interest in poetry. His sensitive word-consciousness was still evident in early 1868, about six months before he entered the Jesuit Novitiate, when during a period of leisure time after he left his teaching position at the Oratory School at Birmingham and before he had taken another post, his thoughts turned again to language. He wrote an incomplete essay which is actually a collection of his thoughts on the nature and essence of words. Some passages from the essay will reveal how carefully and critically he deliberated on the subject of words:

All words mean either things or relations of things: you may also say then substances or attributes or again wholes or parts. E.g. man and quarter.

To every word meaning a thing and not a relation belongs a passion or prepossession or enthusiasm which it has the power of suggesting or producing but not always or in everyone. This not always refers to its evolution in the man and secondly in man historically.

The latter element may be called for convenience the prepossession of a word. It is in fact the form, but there are reasons for being cautious in using form here, and it bears a valuable analogy to the soul, one however which is not complete, because all names but

18 Ward, p. 507.

proper names are general while the soul is individual. Since every definition is the definition of a word and every word may be considered as the contraction or coinciding-point of its definition we may for convenience use word and definition with a certain freedom of interchange.

A word then has three terms belonging to it, ὠψιν or moments—its prepossession of feeling; its definition, abstractive, vocal expression or other utterance; and its application, "extension", the concrete things coming under it.

It is plain that of these only one in propriety is the word; the third is not a word but a thing meant by it, the first is not a word but something connotatively meant by it, the nature of which is further to be explored.

But not even the whole field of the middle term is covered by the word. For the word is the expression, uttering of the idea in the mind. That idea itself has its two terms, the image (of sight or sound or scapes of the other senses), which is in fact physical and a refined energy accenting the nerves, a word to oneself, an inchoate word, and secondly the conception.20

His definitions in this brief essay are not clear-cut,21 but they do disclose how serious his thoughts on language were and do serve as partial explanation and anticipation of his extremely careful selection of the words of poetry.

As late as 1887, Hopkins was continuing his study of word etymologies. He was still very much interested in Anglo-Saxon words. In a letter to A. W. M. Baillie in April, 1887, he discussed his plans of writing W. W. Skeat, the noted philologist and professor of Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge, about scope. He wrote:

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20House, Journals, p. 125.

21Peters, p. 140.
I have doubts about Skeat's treatment of a whole class of words like scope, cope, scoop, scape, cap. Though some of these words as they stand (not scope) may have come to English from French or low Latin, yet they must before that have got into those same languages from English or some Teutonic one. Escape comes from cape, but cape cannot come from cope the Church vestment: cope the vest must come from cape or from an older uneclesiastical sense of the word cope. Cope probably is a popular or slang word: even now the ritual term in Latin is (in the Roman missal) not cappa but pluviale, and that is itself a slang word; for this very solemn vestment, used in processions and so forth, cannot really have been a "topcoat": that must be an altarboys' term. Clearly casula | hut, from which chasuble, is popular or altarboys' slang. Rochet is from rook--German, and cotta I suppose from coat. I suspect that cope then comes from the root of coop in hencoop | and of shop (=scop).22

Hopkins did write Professor Skeat and received a reply dated February 27, 1888, in which Skeat said:

I can't discuss. I'm much obliged. And I regret to say I'm not convinced abt. scope. All my experience tells the other way. There is no French form; so it's all the more than likely that we took it from Greek. Sorry I'm so stupid.--

No one knows the etymology of cap & cape. Dr. Murray gives it up. Not Gothic.--

I know keeve: quite common.-- I take it to answer to an A.S. *cēfe, variant of cyfe, which is merely Lat. cupa with mutation, just as our coop is Latin cupa without mutation.--23

And later in 1888 he again displayed an interest in Anglo-Saxon as he defended his use of new in "St. Alphonsus Rodriguez" (Poem No. 73) against Bridges' criticism by saying:

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23 Further Letters, p. 431.
It is true continents are partly made by "trickling increment"; but what is on the whole truest and most strikes us about them and mountains is that they are made what now we see them by trickling decrements, by detri-
tion, weathering, and the like. And at any rate whatever is markedly featured in stone or what is like stone is most naturally said to be hewn, and to shape, itself, means in old English to hew and the Hebrew bara/to create, even, properly means to hew.24

Hopkins believed that "a perfect style must be of its age."25 Therefore, a poet was obliged to use the living language of his day and to avoid archaic or artificial language. Hopkins found Victorian language both artificial and affected.26 He explained to Bridges what guidelines he used in creating his own poetic diction:

So also I cut myself off from the use of ere, o'er, well-
nigh, what time, say not (for do not say), because, though dignified, they neither belong to nor ever cd.
aris from, or be the elevation of ordinary speech. For it seems to me that the poetical language of an age shd.
be the current language heightened, to any degree height-
ened and unlike itself, but not (I mean normally: pass-
ing freaks and graces are another thing) an obsolete one. This is Shakespeare's and Milton's practice and the want of it will be fatal to Tennyson's Idylls and plays, to Swinburne, and perhaps to Morris.27

In his efforts to achieve "current language heightened," Hopkins tended to become a purist. He urged Bridges not to

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sion (London, 1955), p. 99. Subsequent references to this work show the abbreviated title, Correspondence.

26Peters, p. 62.

27Letters, p. 89.
use *disillusion* in one of his poems, saying: 28

Disillusion is a bad word; you mean Disenchantment. It is as bad as Or-de-al and Preventative and Standpoint and the other barbarisms. 29

And he pressed the point again a few months later:

"Disillusion" does exist, as typhus exists and the Protestant religion. The same "brutes" say "disillusion" as say "standpoint" and "preventative" and "equally as well" and "to whomsoever shall ask." 30

During the Victorian philological movement, scholars like G. P. Marsh encouraged writers to revive the Anglo-Saxon heritage of the language:

There is at present a very strong tendency to the revival of obsolete English and Anglo-Saxon words, and the effect of an increasing study of our ancient literature is very visible in the style of the best prose, and more especially, poetic compositions of the present day. Our vocabulary is capable of great enrichment from the store-house of the ancient Anglican speech, and the revival of a taste for Anglo-Saxon and early English literature will exert a very important influence on the intellectual activity of the next generation . . . The recovery of forgotten native words will affect English something in the same way, though not in the same direction, as did the influx of French words in the fourteenth century, and of Latin in the sixteenth; and the gain will be as real as it was in those instances. But it is not by an accession of words alone, that the study of Anglo-Saxon and ancient English literature is destined to affect that of the present and coming generations. The recovery of the best portion of the obsolete vocabulary will bring with it, not only new expressiveness of diction, but something of the vigour and freshness of thought and wealth of poetic imagery which usually accompanies the revival of a national spirit in literature. 31

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These qualities of "new expressiveness," "vigour and freshness of thought and wealth of poetic imagery" were the very effects that Hopkins sought in his use of "current language heightened." It is little wonder that his diction is Germanic in tone. Out of his strong interest in etymology he discovered the virtues of Anglo-Saxon which the philologists were extolling, attributes like those Marsh pointed out in 1860:

But when we come to the words which indicate different states, emotions, passions, mental processes, all, in short, that expresses the moral or intellectual man, the Anglo-Saxon vocabulary is eminently affluent. Hence Icelandic paints, while Anglo-Saxon describes and philosophises... The Anglo-Saxon gives utterance to the inward status, and discloses men's thoughts rather than depicts their material shape and their external actions. A better proof of the rich moral expressiveness of Anglo-Saxon than any citation of examples is found in the fact, that those English dramatists and poets, who have most clearly revealed the workings of the heart and thrown most light into the deep abysses of the soul, have employed a diction composed in the largest measure of words legitimately descended from the ancient mother of English speech.

Marsh's statement written about the time the young Hopkins began writing poetry reads like a phenomenal prediction of the poet's mature work. Hopkins' poetry, perhaps more so than that of any other modern English poet, intensely concentrates on the emotions and mental processes, and it reveals quite clearly Hopkins' attraction to the "strong vigorous"

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33 Marsh, p. 94.
Anglo-Saxon language with its stony words which have character. His frequent use of Old English or Teutonic words is often obscured because his vocabulary is so diverse and colorful. However, an examination of his representative poems in comparison with an equal number of poems by Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Arnold, and Meredith discloses that he uses more words of Teutonic derivation than do the other six poets. For example, in No. 34, "In the Valley of the Elwy," Hopkins used a vocabulary in which 80 per cent of the words are of Teutonic origin; in No. 41, "The Loss of the Eurydice," lines 1-18, 81 per cent; in No. 45, "Henry Purcell," 72 per cent; in No. 71, "Harry Plowman," 81 per cent; and in No. 74, "Thou art indeed just, Lord," 82 per cent. He deliberately used native words in passages where most writers would have chosen the Latinate or Romance word. A partial list of the native words in his poetry will illustrate his preference for the homely Old English words over the "learned" words of Latin origin:

never-eldeging for unaging in "The Deutschland," stanza 18
inmate for inhabitant in "In the Valley of the Elwy," 1. 11


35Gardner, Hopkins, I, 113. The poems with their respective percentages are "On His Blindness," 76%; "Upon Westminster Bridge," 81.5%; "Ode to the West Wind," lines 1-28, 71%; "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," 76%; "Shakespeare," 70.5%; and "Modern Love," 71%.
no-man-fathomed for unplumbed in "No worst, there is none," 1. 18
herds-long for countless in "No worst, there is none," 1. 5
rope-over for muscular in "Harry Ploughman," 1. 3
hallows for saints in "The Starlight Night," 1. 14
housel for communion wafer in "The Bugler's First Communion," 1. 12. 36

It may appear at first that Hopkins, through his repeated use of Anglo-Saxon words, failed to follow his own theory that poetic language should be the ordinary speech of the people. However, his belief that poetic diction must be general language intensified forced him to turn to the less used Anglo-Saxon words to find adequate language to express his thoughts. In explaining his preference for Anglo-Saxon, he described the language as "vastly superior to what we have now." He said further, "It makes one weep to think what English might have been; for in spite of all that Shakspere and Milton have done with the compound I cannot doubt that no beauty in a language can make up for want of purity." 37

It was this attitude toward Anglo-Saxon that made the large number of Old English words an integral part of his own individual vocabulary; therefore the native English words in Hopkins' poems never appear to be added ornaments or isolated relics that were forced into the line, but fall into place quite naturally. His desire for language purity had

36Gardner, Hopkins, I, 113.
37Letters, pp. 162-163.
made his ear acutely tuned to Anglo-Saxon, and as a result
Anglo-Saxon elements are "predominant in the language of all
his writings."38

Hopkins found that, in addition to enabling him to
express his thoughts and feelings more effectively and
allowing him to achieve a purer language, Anglo-Saxon words
also supplied a need in his stress rhythm. He undoubtedly
discovered that the short native words were more adaptable
to the large number of sense stresses required in his sprung
rhythm, and by means of a predominant use of Old English
words he was able to pack his stresses closer together to
give "each stress a higher charge than other diction might
do."39 Hence, Hopkins filled his verse with concise old
native words, like hie, ghost, thew, brawn, lade, brine,
fettle, pass, rivel, rive, reeve, wend, heft, shive, barrow,
bole, tuck, burl, buck, and banes.40 A passage from "That
Nature is a Heraclitean Fire" is an excellent example abounding
with heavy alliteration and vigorous Anglo-Saxon words
"which bring back to the reader's mind any impressions of
Anglo-Saxon poetry that he may have."41

38 Peters, pp. 65-66.

39 Walter J. Ong, "Hopkins' Sprung Rhythm and the Life of
Hopkins, edited by Norman Weyand with assistance of Raymond V.

40 Peters, p. 64.

41 Elsie Elizabeth Phare, The Poetry of Gerard Manley
Delightfully the bright wind boisterous
rope, wrestles,
beats earth bare
Of yestertempest's creases;
in pool and rutpeel parches
Squandering ooze to squeezed
dough, crust, dust;
 stanches, starches
Squadroned masks and mammark
treadmire toil there
Footfretted in it. . . .

Although Hopkins is remarkable for combining in his
diction the vigour of early English and the sophistication
of modern-day English, he is considered by some critics to
be even more extraordinary for his "ordering of words," for
which he has been called "the technical forerunner of the
post-war poets, the first 'modern' poet." To write sprung
rhythm, Hopkins needed syntactical freedom and creativity
in order to heighten diction and emphasize stress rhythm.

Thus, to gain the linguistic freedom he sought, he ignored
the strict rules of conventional syntax and took advantage
of whatever device was necessary to realize the exact purpose
of a particular poem.

For his unusual syntactical practices, Hopkins actually
turned to old grammatical devices. His omission of articles,
prepositions, and pronouns, transposition of words, frequent employment of exclamations, and use of ellipses are traits shared with Old English. One of Hopkins' most characteristic syntactical shortcuts was his omission of the relative pronoun:

After-comers cannot guess the beauty [that has] been.
"Binsey Poplars," 1. 20

Save my hero, 0 Hero [that] savest.
"The Loss of the Eurydice," 1. 112

Squander the hell-rock ranks [that] sally to molest him;
"The Bugler's First Communion," 1. 18

... Here! creep,
Wretch, under a comfort [that] serves in a whirlwind ... 
No. 65, 11. 12-13

Anglo-Saxon poetry and medieval ballads have in common with Hopkins' poems another frequent device, that of exclamation. Hopkins used interjections lavishly, but always seriously and convincingly, to express quiet enthusiasm, ecstatic joy, utter hopelessness, or pity. Note these lines:

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, spring--
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.
"God's Grandeur," 11. 11-14

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But ah, but O thou terrible, why wouldst thou rude on me
Thy wring-world right foot rock? . . .
"Carrion Comfort," ll. 5-6

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
No. 65, l. 9

What hours, O what black hours we have spent
No. 67, l. 2

England, whose honour O all my heart woos, . . .
No. 66, l. 5

O I admire and sorrow! The heart's eye grieves
Discovering you, dark trampers, tyrant years.
"On the Portrait of Two Beautiful Young People,"
ll. 1-25

The reader does not have to look past the first word of
Beowulf to find a similar Anglo-Saxon use of the interjection:

Hwaet, wē Gar-dena in geardagum
(Lo, we Danes in days of yore).

Hopkins' "close-packed" sentences with their carefully
chosen specific words and terse, ironical phrases have many
parallels in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Lines, such as

With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
"Pied Beauty," l. 9

Too late; lost; gone with the gale.
"The Loss of the Eurydice," l. 36

are strongly reminiscent of Old English poetry. Compare
the terse irony of the Beowulf poet commenting on what happened

51 Peters, pp. 73-74. In all the quotations, the underlining has been added by Peters.


53 Wells, pp. 41-43.
to Scyld's body after it was set adrift in the treasure-laden boat:

Men ne cunnan
secgan tō sóða, selerǣdenda,
hælē under heofenum, hwā ðæm hlæste onfēng.

(Men cannot
say for sure, neither hall-advisors
nor warriors under heaven, who took that cargo.)

One other obvious syntactical relationship between

Hopkins' poetry and Anglo-Saxon poetry is the use of inversions. Since Old English was highly inflected, syntactic inversions occurred quite frequently, such as in these lines from "The Wanderer":

\[ fleotēndra fērā nō ār fela bringēg \\
ōðra cwidēgiedda; \]

(to the floating soul there come not many familiar songs).

Even though modern English is only slightly inflected, Hopkins rearranged words so that he had inversions similar to the Anglo-Saxon inversions, as in these lines from "Peace":

Your round me roaming end, and under be my boughs? (1. 2)
[end your roaming round me and be under my bough]
To own my heart: . . . (1. 4)
[To my own heart].

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54 Klaeber, p. 3.
55 Gardner, Hopkins, II, 162.
57 Gardner, Poems, p. 85.
With syntactical inversions such as these, Hopkins developed "a kind of 'sprung' syntax" to match his sprung rhythm. 58

The consensus is that the most striking characteristic of Hopkins' poetry is his vocabulary and the most impressive attribute of his vocabulary is the creation of numerous compound words. 59 Hopkins found that to write his strict alliterative stress rhythm he had to be quite resourceful in forming new compounds. 60 He was more than equal to the test. He realized that a slight variation from the normal prose forms compelled the reader to concentrate more directly on the idea which the words emphasized. 61 He admitted to Coventry Patmore that he invented words because he could not do without them. 62 Hopkins believed that words must relate the specific essence of the individual thing the word stood for in order to be effective, and he realized that the best way to make words be specific marks for things was to make new compounds. 63 Shivelight and firedint are probably true inventions, but most of his compounds are combinations of current words. 64

58 Gardner, Poems, xxix. 59 Downey, p. 838.
60 Gardner, Hopkins, II, 155.
61 Gardner, Hopkins, I, 111.
Perhaps more than any other characteristic of his poetry, Hopkins' extensive use of creative compounds points to an Anglo-Saxon heritage. The opening lines of "Duns Scotus's Oxford" reveal Hopkins' ability to create Anglo-Saxon-like compounds. 65

Towery city and branchy between towers;
Cuckoo-echoing, bell-swarmèd, lark-charmèd, rock-racked, river-rounded;
The dapple-eared lily below thee; . . . 66

Even more Anglo-Saxon are the first lines of "The Caged Skylark":

As a dare-gale skylark scanted in a dull cage
Man's mounting spirit in his bone-house, mean house, dwells . . . 67

Bone-house is a modern spelling of Old English banhus, and balancing it is the parallel and original mean house. Descriptive passages of the storm in "The Deutschland," have the full flavor of Anglo-Saxon verse, such as the closing lines from stanza 13: 68

And the sea flint-flake, black-backed in the regular blow,
Sitting Eastnortheast, in cursed quarter, the wind;
Wiry and white-fiery and whirlwind-swivelled snow
Spins to the widow-making unchilding unfathering deeps. 69

Not only is Hopkins like the Anglo-Saxon poets in the art of creating compound words, but he even favored Anglo-Saxon

65Wells, pp. 39-40.
66Gardner, Poems, p. 79. The stress marks are Hopkins'.
67Gardner, Poems, p. 70.
68Wells, pp. 40-41.
69Gardner, Poems, p. 55. The stress mark is Hopkins'.

Other compounds are strongly suggestive of early Northumbrian poetry, such as manwolf (No. 70); hailropes, heavengravel, wolfsnow, boldboys (No. 41); mansex (No. 48); manmarks (No. 72); waterfearers, womb-not-bearing (No. 152); sea-romp (No. 28, stanza 17); wild-worst (No. 28, stanza 24); May-mess (No. 32); knee-nave, sinew-service (No. 71); and earl-stars (No. 61). The compound Yore-flood (No. 28, stanza 32) is reminiscent of the Old English 3gar-dagas and barebill (No. 50) of hildebil or wigbil.  

In addition to the other similarities to Anglo-Saxon compounds, many of Hopkins' words are like Anglo-Saxon kennings, metaphorical compounds of nouns plus adjectives or nouns plus nouns. The Anglo-Saxon poets, like Hopkins, included in descriptive phrases the essence of the thing described, as in "the wolf-hearted king." They created rich striking kennings for those things they cared for most and wished to emphasize, as when they described their second home, the sea, as "gannet-bath," the "swan-road," or the "whale-road." In Anglo-Saxon poetry, which arose from an oral tradition, formulaic and traditional kennings were useful to a poet composing rapidly and extemporaneously. The oral singer would scarcely

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70 Gardner, Poems, xxxi.  
71 Gardner, Hopkins, I, 114 and 125.  
72 Bone, pp. 11-12.
have had time to create all of his own phrases as he proceeded. He had to have a vast reservoir of ready-made formulae to express the ideas he needed in telling his story. An examination of a typical phrase, offer hran-rade, which appears as offer hran-rade in Beowulf and Elene, as on swan-rade in Juliana, and as on segl-rade in Beowulf, reveals how the poets used formulae to aid them in forming the Anglo-Saxon half-line with its limitation of form and space. By varying the first element of a compound like hran-rade, the poet could achieve variety and various alliterative alternates with no difference in metre. Thus, as a result of the nature of the alliterative verse, the kenning was an essential element of Anglo-Saxon poetry. 73

Although Hopkins was not faced with the same limitation of space as the Anglo-Saxon poets, he did have to contend with a strict alliterative stress rhythm. He found that the number of normal alliterating compounds was very limited. As a result, Hopkins coined compounds to fit the needs of stress and alliteration. The list of his compounds is almost endless: fire-featuring; rock-racked; wind-wandering; weed-winding; love-laced; brass-bold; foam-forth; fell-frowning; bead-bonny; foam-fleece; frailest-flixed; foot-fretted; gaygear; girlgrace; wind-beat white-beam; self-wrung, selfstrung; world's-wildfire;

wiry and white-fiery and whirlwind-swivelled; down-dugged,
ground-hugged gray; fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; shivelights
and shadowtackle. These creative compounds of Hopkins are
of the same type as the kennings and tautological compounds
in Old English poetry, such as the following, all from Beowulf:
ofer bord gebræsc, dœofla gedraeg, goldwine gumena, bānhūs,
hronrād, brŷðbūr, œwealmcuma, goldgýfa, heardhyecende, foldbold,
wordhord, gumdrēam ofgef, æðeling ærgōd, ginfaesten gifa.
"Resemblances of vocabulary between Hopkins and medieval poets
are no more accidental than the resemblances in rhythm. If he
and the Beowulf poet show marked stylistic affinities, it is
because—all questions of direct influence apart—the stylistic
pressures were the same for both."74

In conjunction with the kenning, another distinctive
characteristic of Old English epic poetry is the absence of
similes, in sharp contrast with Homeric epics. Even short
similes, such as frequently occur in daily life, occur only
rarely.75 The infrequent use of simile perhaps resulted from
the Anglo-Saxon's ability to bridge the gulf between similar
things or ideas. He did not see an idea as like another; he
saw the two as identical.76 A natural outgrowth of this

74 Whitehall, pp. 52-53.

75 Bernhard Ten Brink, Early English Literature, translated

76 Henry Cecil Wyld, "Diction and Imagery in Anglo-Saxon
Poetry," English Association: Essays and Studies, Vol. XI,
collected by Oliver Elton (Oxford, 1925), p. 83.
assimilation of ideas was the compressing of an image into a descriptive kenning.\textsuperscript{77} Gavin Bone refers to the kenning as the "gripped epithet" because the noun holds another noun or adjective "in a vice, so that it can't get away but shares its life with the noun and forms a compound name." The method of the gripped epithet is used much more extensively in Old English verse than in any other poetry,\textsuperscript{78} that is, until Hopkins' poetry. Hopkins' mind, like his historic and literary ancestor's, the Anglo-Saxon, pushed past the detached comparison of similes and sought the identity of the real essence. He favored the metaphor over the simile because in the metaphor the comparison "is seen as existing in the being."\textsuperscript{79} To Hopkins the likeness of one thing to another was an expression of the essence of the object; its likeness "was part and parcel of its individuality." Therefore, he discarded like and as and created words to express the nature of the likeness, such as rose-flakes, lily-locks, flake-doves, and wolf-snow. And because of his special manner of apprehending similarities, he often added metaphors that had not been introduced and were not enlarged upon:\textsuperscript{80}


\textsuperscript{78}Bone, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{79}Robert Boyle, Metaphor in Hopkins (Chapel Hill, 1961), xii and p. 62.

\textsuperscript{80}Peters, p. 102.
Night roared, with the heart-break hearing a heart-broke rabble,
The woman's wailing, the crying of child without check--
Till a lioness arose breasting the babble
"The Deutschland," stanza 17, ll. 5-7

With a mercy that outrides
The all of water, an ark
"The Deutschland," stanza 33, ll. 1-2

Let me though see no more of him, and not disappointment
Those sweet hopes quell whose least me quickenings lift,
In scarlet or somewhere of some day seeing
That brow and bead of being,
An our day's God's own Galahad...
"The Bugler's First Communion," ll. 36-40

. . . Here! creep
Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind...
No. 65, ll. 12-1361

Hopkins' images become clarified when the reader comprehends
how completely Hopkins' mind made the connection between the
two objects compared. In stanza 4 of "The Deutschland,
Hopkins wrote:82

I am soft sift
In an hourglass...

He was not simply comparing himself to the sifting sand; he was that continuous motion, the sift of sand.84 And in No. 67 he wrote:

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me...

81 Peters, pp. 102-103. The underlining has been added by Peters.
82 Peters, p. 124.
83 Gardner, Poems, p. 52. The stress mark is Hopkins'.
84 Peters, p. 124.
In the metaphor Hopkins is expressing his agony at the realization that he did not have a disease, but that he was the disease. 86

Even in his earliest poems, Hopkins successfully bridged the gap between similar things and created striking epithets, which revealed "a native craftsmanship." 87 His mature poetry is characterized by compound epithets "sounding like survivors from Old English." 88 In Old English poetry, variation, the repetition of an idea in a variety of forms, is frequently used to stress an important concept. 89 A short passage from Beowulf well illustrates the use of variation in Anglo-Saxon poetry: 90

Ond þū Unferþ læt ealde læfe,  
wreōtlice wēgsweord wīdcūðne man  
heardecg habban; (11. 1486-1490a) 91

(And let Unferth, the far-famed man,  
have the ancient heirloom, the ornamental battlesword, the hard edge.)

An examination of the following line from "Sibyl's Leaves" reveals that Hopkins achieved vividness for his ideas by means of variation just as the Anglo-Saxon poets did: 92

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86 Peters, p. 124.  
87 Letters, xxv.  
88 Warren, p. 172.  
91 Klaeber, p. 56.  
Evening strains to be time's vast, womb-of-all, home-of-all, hearse-of-all night. (1. 2)

Since the various elements of his style are very closely related, Hopkins' diction and imagery must be studied in relation to his rhythm. The particular demands of his metre and the unusual manner in which he viewed words often caused him "to fuse, adapt, twist, and sometimes distort the elements of his native language." His coinages and syntactical inversions occasionally create awkwardness and obscurities, but the difficulties disappear when the reader has taken time to master Hopkins' idiom. It is this singular quality of his diction that has led critics to label him a revolutionary. It is clear, however, that Hopkins' diction was formed from a fusing and reshaping of the inherited forms of his language.

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93 Gardner, Poems, p. 97. The stress marks and caesural mark are Hopkins'.
94 Gardner, Hopkins, I, 142.
95 Gardner, Hopkins, II, 377.
96 Lewis, p. 175.
CHAPTER V

HOPKINS' ECLECTIC STYLE

In addition to his techniques of stress rhythm, rhythmical devices, diction, and imagery, the poetry of Hopkins has other less obvious parallels to Anglo-Saxon poetry. One such similarity is mood. Anglo-Saxon poetry is characterized by a dominant mood of solemn dignity and a pensive acknowledgment of the gravity of life. The poetry displays the Anglo-Saxon attitude that one does what one can and must do in this world knowing that one's efforts may not be enough and may lead to tragedy. This sober realism is quite evident in "The Wanderer":

Forbon ic geþencan ne mæg geond þas woruld
for hwan modsefa min ne gesweorce,
þonne ic eorla lif sal geondþence,
hu hi færlice flet ofgeafon,
modge magþeganas. Swa þas middangeard,
eaþra dogra gehwam dreoseȝ ond fealleþ,
forþon ne mæg wæþan wis wer, ær he age
wintra dæl in woruldrice. Wita sceal gepylðig,
ne sceal no to hatheort ne to hæðwyrðe,
ne to wac wiga ne to wanhyðig,
ne to forht ne to fægen, ne to feohgifre
ne næfre gielpes to georn, ær he geare cunne.
Beorn sceal gebidan, þonne he beot spriceȝ.

Therefore I cannot think in the world
why my spirit does not grow dark,
when I men's life all think over,
how they suddenly leave the hall,
brave thanes. Thus this earth
each day declines and falls,
a man may not become wise before he has had
his share of years in the world. A wise man must be
patient,
nor should he ever be too hot of heart nor too hasty
of speech
nor too weak in war nor too rash
nor ever too eager to boast, before he understands
well.
A man must wait, when he speaks a boast,
until proud-minded he knows well
where his mind's thoughts want to go.)

Much of Hopkins' poetry also is dominated by the same profound
mood of grave dignity characteristic of Anglo-Saxon poetry.
This somber mood is particularly obvious in the "terrible"
sonnets written in 1885 (Nos. 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, and 69)
in which Hopkins expressed the depths of mental and spiritual
desolation. Yet, in the midst of the "terrible pathos,"
there is a feeling of strength and stoic acceptance in his
poems. The frustration of the realization that all one's
efforts have not been sufficient is painfully apparent in
No. 74:

Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend
With thee; but, sir, so what I plead is just.

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Why do sinners' ways prosper? and why must
Disappointment all I endeavour end?

Wert thou my enemy, 0 thou my friend,
How wouldst thou worse, I wonder, than thou dost
Defeat, thwart me? Oh, the sots and thralls of lust
Do in spare hours more thrive than I that spend,

Sir, life upon thy cause. See, banks and brakes
Now, leaved how thick! lace'd they are again
With pretty chervil, look, and fresh wind shakes

Them; birds build--but not I build; no, but strain,
Time's eunuch, and not breed one work that wakes.
Mine, O thou Lord of life, send my roots rain.4

Another similarity in Hopkins' poetry to Anglo-Saxon
poetry is the themes and spirit of his poems. "Never a
pedant, since his poetic and personal inspiration clearly came
from within, he indisputably pastured his mind upon the poetry
and philosophy of a distant past. . . . He has in every way
more in common with the patristic age of Cynewulf than with
the more genial age of Chaucer."5 The earliest English
religious poets were familiar with an oral tradition in which
the oral singer did not memorize songs; he learned thematic
material, plot, proper names, and formulae with which he
could compose his own songs. The good singer differed from
a poor one in his ability to make better use of the common
store of formulae.6 These early Christian poets were

4Gardner, Poems, pp. 106-107. The stress marks are
Hopkins'.

5Henry W. Wells, New Poets From Old: A Study in Literary

6Francis P. Magoun, Jr., "The Oral-Formulaic Character of
Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry," An Anthology of Beowulf Criti-
confronted with a problem in singing their praises of God. They did not have a stock of traditional phrases to express their new Christian ideas, yet they still had to contend with the restrictions of the Anglo-Saxon alliterative half-lines.\(^7\)

However, the fusion of pagan vocabulary and Christian themes was facilitated by the formulae of Germanic verse. The religious poets were able to adjust the traditional language to fit the untraditional themes. The Christian themes on which the early singers liked to sing were primarily stories involving extraordinary and exciting adventures of Christian heroes like Andreas, Azarias, Daniel, Elene, Judith, and Juliana. Thus, the singers facilitated the task of adapting traditional language to new thematic material by avoiding subject matter which could not be expressed in the old diction.\(^8\) For this reason, "our first Christian poets made the most of warlike occasions."\(^9\) They used the pre-Christian kennings for rulers and warriors as kennings for God: e.g., "helm wera" (helm of men—Christ, l. 634), "sige-dæman" (triumphant judge—Christ, l. 1060), and "sige-dryhten" (lord triumphant or victorious lord—Christ, l. 1288). The poet was singing to an unlettered audience not yet at home with the language of the Church or its ways of thought.

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\(^8\)Magoun, p. 206.

\(^9\)Sisam, p. 16.
Doubtless he was more relaxed when he could develop his theme in the older ways of poetry, and his audience, familiar with the kennings, could more easily enjoy the poetry and make the right response.\textsuperscript{10}

Hopkins' poetry, like the later Anglo-Saxon poetry, is primarily religious. Its recurrent themes are God, man, and nature; its central problems are suffering, decay of moral and physical beauty, and frustration of aspirations.\textsuperscript{11} Like the early English Christian poets, Hopkins fused religious themes with the native idiom. Just as Cynewulf and Caedmon had been, Hopkins was inspired with Christian fervor to sing the praises of his Lord, and, like them, he too combined his praise of the Lord and his animosity toward the devil and the things of the world with a perceptive sensitivity for the beauty of nature and with an Anglo-Saxon awareness of the terror and danger of the sea.\textsuperscript{12} Hopkins' poetry often reveals the power and glory of God by showing the dynamism of nature, as in these lines from stanza 31 of "The Deutschland":\textsuperscript{13}

Well, she has thee for the pain, for the Patience; but pity of the rest of them!


\textsuperscript{12}Wells, p. 37.

\textsuperscript{13}Gardner, Poems, xxxv.
Heart, go and bleed at a bitter vein for the
Comfortless unconfessed of them—
No not unconforted: lovely-felicitous Providence
Finger of a tender of, O of a feathery delicacy, the
breast of the
Maiden could obey so, be a bell to, ring of it, and
Startle the poor sheep back! is the shipwrack then a
harvest, does tempest carry the grain for thee?\textsuperscript{14}

Hopkins, like the Anglo-Saxon poets, often portrayed
Christ and Christianity by means of "military images." The
view of Christ as a soldier is found in "The Windhover,"
and "St. Alphonsus Rodriguez" and is well developed in these
lines from "The Soldier":\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{quote}
Mark Christ our King. He knows war, served this
soldiering through;
He of all can receive a rope best. There he bides in
bliss
Now and seeing somewhere some man do all that man can
do,
For love he leans forth, needs his neck must fall on,
kiss,
And cry 'O Christ-done deed! So God-made-flesh does
too:
Were I come o'er again' cries Christ 'it should be this'.
\small{(ll. 9-14)}\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Another similarity to Old English poetry in mood and
theme in Hopkins' poems is Hopkins' concentration on death.
"The Deustchland," with its subject of the drowning of five
exiled nuns and forty-five other persons, focuses on the
desolation of death and the consolation of resurrection.
Hopkins used this tragic story as a vehicle to emphasize

\textsuperscript{14}Gardner, Poems, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{15}Gardner, Hopkins, I, 18\textsuperscript{4}.
\textsuperscript{16}Gardner, Poems, p. 99. The stress marks are Hopkins'.
his religious doctrines on death, as these lines from the first stanza of The Second Part of "The Deutschland" reveal:

'Some find me a sword; some
The flange and the rail; flame,
Fang, or flood' goes Death on drum,
And storms bugle his fame.

But we dream we are rooted in earth—Dust!
Flesh falls within sight of us, we, though our flower the same,
Wave with the meadow, forget that there must
The sour scythe cringe, and the blear share come.

In like manner, the Beowulf poet inserted in the middle of a pagan adventure story a very impressive sermon by Hrothgar on the same idea of the folly of not being prepared for death. The above-quoted passage from Hopkins' "Deutschland" is so similar in thought and wording to lines in Hrothgar's speech that one cannot fail to suspect in the Hopkins' passage some specific influence of Beowulf, either the original or a very good translation. In writing of death both poets use the flower metaphor, the words fang (fyres feng in Anglo-Saxon) and flood, and the idea of the sword. This deeply Christian passage in Beowulf could not have failed to impress Hopkins and to have remained in his memory. "The sequence of the same or similar words cannot be accidental." 


18 Gardner, Poems, p. 55. The stress mark is Hopkins'.

(Now there is fame of your strength
for a while; afterwards it will soon happen
that sickness or sword will cut away your strength,
or the grip of fire, or welling of flood,
or attack of sword, or flight of spear,
or horrid old age; or brightness of eyes
diminishes and dims; suddenly it is
that you, warrior, are conquered by death.)

Hopkins' poetry also resembles Anglo-Saxon poetry in its
preoccupation with stories of miracles and martyrdoms and all
the excitement and violence of such stories. 21 While Anglo-
Saxon poets wrote of the extraordinary adventures of early
Judeo-Christian heroes and saints, Hopkins wrote about later
Christian martyrs, such as St. Winefred, who was beheaded
about 650 A.D. and was later restored to life by her uncle
St. Bueno, and St. Dorothea, who was martyred about 303 A.D.

Perhaps an even stronger resemblance to early medieval
English poetry than the similarity of mood, theme, and subject
matter is the fact that Hopkins' poetry, like that of the
Anglo-Saxon scops, is oral. Much of the difficulty in the
rhythm and meaning of his poems arises from the fact that he

20 Frederick Klaeber, editor, Beowulf and the Fight at

21 Elsie Elizabeth Phare, The Poetry of Gerard Manley
wrote for an ideal audience which did not exist in his day and which will probably never exist. His poetry, intended "to be read with the ear and not merely with the eye" reaches its peak of expression only when an accomplished reader, skilled like the Old English gleemen who performed Beowulf, performs it before an audience eager to be entertained and able to appreciate its phonal and rhythmical qualities. An audience like that which listened to Beowulf and poets like those who wrote "The Wanderer" and "The Seafarer" would today have no difficulty in understanding and appreciating Hopkins' poems, but his poetry demands too much effort from modern readers accustomed to generations of easy-to-read poems. Hopkins was aware of the unusual oral quality of his poetry. He admitted to Coventry Patmore that he found prose writing easy but verse writing difficult:

... such verse as I do compose is oral, made away from paper, and I put it down with repugnance ...

Realizing the importance of the oral quality to the understanding of his poetry, he constantly urged Dixon and Bridges

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to read his poetry aloud. He wrote Bridges:

To do the Eurydice any kind of justice you must not slovenly read it with the eyes but with your ears, as if the paper were declaiming it at you. For instance the line "she had come from a cruise training seamen" read without stress and declaim is mere Lloyd's Shipping Intelligence; properly read it is quite a different thing. Stress is the life of it.26

When he sent "Harry Ploughman" to Bridges, he reminded him:

The rhythm of this sonnet, which is altogether for recital, not perusal (as by nature verse should be) is very highly studied.27

In his letter to Dixon in which he enclosed "Tom's Garland" and "Harry Ploughman," he advised him:

They are meant for, and cannot properly be taken in without, emphatic recitation; which nevertheless is not an easy performance.28

And in response to Bridges' criticism and misunderstanding of his poetry, Hopkins explained:

My verse is less to be read than heard, as I have told you before; it is oratorical, that is the rhythm is so. I think if you will study what I have here said you will be much more pleased with it and may I say? converted to it.29

Hopkins realized that his rhythm was oral, "the rhythm of common speech and of written prose, when rhythm is perceived

26Letters, pp. 51-52.
27Letters, p. 263.
29Letters, p. 46.
in them."30 Likewise, Old English poetry was an outgrowth of prose rhythm:

The rhythm of Old English verse grew naturally out of the prose rhythm, by a process of heightening and lowering. . . . The lifts [hebungen, stresses] in a line of verse regularly coincided with syllables which would (or might) take stress if the line were read as prose; in like manner, the drops [senkungen, slacks] coincided with syllables which would (or might) be without prose stress.31

The resemblance of Hopkins' verse and Anglo-Saxon verse is so striking in oral qualities that a recent critic has concluded that the similarity of the two bodies of verse "is deepest in the relation of each to dramatic delivery, to the spoken language."32

Hopkins' verse bears another resemblance to Anglo-Saxon verse in its musical qualities. That Anglo-Saxon poetry was recited to the accompaniment of a harp can be substantiated by the numerous passages which refer to the harp, the "gleewood," or the "gamewood." The speaker of the poem "Widsith" says that he and Scilling sang with a clear voice loud to the harp.33 Bede's account of Caedmon relates Caedmon's embarrassment when he saw the harp coming near him as it was being

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30Gardner, Poems, pp. 48-49.


passed through the banquet hall for each guest to sing a song.\textsuperscript{34} In \textit{Beowulf} (l. 89-90) the poet in describing the revelry in Heorot says:

\begin{quote}
\textit{þær wæs hearpan swæg, swutol sang scopes.}\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

(There was harp music, sweet song of the poet.)

Even though the knowledge of whether the harp was used to accompany the chanting or was plucked only during pauses in the verse is still a debatable question, the balance of evidence indicates it was used in some fashion with Anglo-Saxon verse recitation.\textsuperscript{36}

Hopkins' verse has been criticized by some as being "too far from English and too close to music."\textsuperscript{37} One critic thinks Hopkins conceived of his poems as musical tunes first, that is, that his first impulse was musical and after the cadences of the tune were established mentally, the words probably fell into place exactly. This order of composition would help account for his insistence that understanding

\textsuperscript{34}James W. Bright, \textit{An Anglo-Saxon Reader}, 3rd ed. rev. and augmented (New York, 1894), p. 9 (l1. 3-9).

\textsuperscript{35}Klaeber, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{36}Stanley B. Greenfield, \textit{A Critical History of English Literature} (New York, 1965), pp. \textit{72-73}. The discovery of the remains of a small harp at the Sutton Hoo royal burial mound supports the belief that the harp was used with Anglo-Saxon verse recitation.

would come readily if his verses were read out loud. His knowledge of stress in English and of time-lengths in Greek formed the base of his musical theory. He explained to Coventry Patmore:

The Greek accent was a tonic accent, was tone, pitch of note: it may have included a stress, but essentially it was pitch. In like manner the English accent is emphatic accent, is stress: it commonly includes clear pitch, but essentially it is stress.

It is true that some of Hopkins' most effective rhythms are a fusion of speech-rhythm and of the musical rhythm of sung or chanted words. He expressed his belief to Bridges that he "never saw good poetry made to music unless that music itself had been first made to words." His earlier poems, such as "The Woodlark" and "Binsey Poplars," are quite musical, and his later sonnets, such as "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire," have been described as almost pieces "of modern orchestration." Hopkins wrote to Bridges about "In Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves," emphasizing the musical qualities of the poem:

It is in 8-foot lines and essays effects almost musical.

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41 Letters, p. 223. 42 Letters, xxxiii.

43 Letters, p. 245.
Concerning the same poem, he later wrote Bridges:

Of this long sonnet above all remember what applies to all my verse, that it is, as living art should be, made for performance and that its performance is not reading with the eye but loud, leisurely, poetical (not rhetorical) recitation, with long rests, long dwells on the rhyme and other marked syllables, and so on. This sonnet shd. be almost sung: it is most carefully timed in *tempo rubato*.

And twice he expressed to Bridges his admiration for the chant:

To me the plain chant melody has an infinite expressiveness and dramatic richness.

The only good and truly beautiful recitative is that of plain chant; which indeed culminates in that. It is a natural development of the speaking, reading, or declaiming voice, and has the richness of nature.

He wrote one of his most musical and most beautiful poems, "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo," an excerpt from his incomplete drama on St. Winefred, in the form of a chant or recitative, and he set several poems by Bridges, Dixon, and Patmore to music.

Hopkins' interest in music was not unusual for a Jesuit, in whose training the arts serve to lead men to God. As early as 1873 he displayed an interest in music when he made notes on and described several early musical instruments he had seen in Kensington Museum. However, it was not until

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1880 that Hopkins began composing seriously. His innate musical talent was stimulated as his understanding of the basic principles of all art developed. His formal training in music, however, was limited to his acquaintance with Greek music acquired through his studies of Greek prosody and to his knowledge of ecclesiastical modal systems gained during his Jesuitical training. He frequently complained of not being able to play a musical instrument or to read music fluently, as he did in a letter to Bridges in 1884.\(^49\)

I am sometimes surprised at myself how slow and laborious a thing verse is to me when musical composition comes so easily, for I can make tunes almost at all times and places and could harmonize them as easily if only I could play or read music at sight. Indeed if I could play the piano with ease I believe I could improvise on it.\(^50\)

And in a letter to Patmore in 1886 he wrote:

I have set tunes to two of them [Barnes' poems] which appear to me very suitable to the words and as if drawn out of them and one I have harmonized and got today played; but I can never succeed with piano music, for the piano cannot really execute independent parts, as I make mine; indeed my pianist said to me, Your music dates from a time before the piano was invented.\(^51\)

Hopkins' activities as a composer, which were primarily limited to writing music for poems, reveal that to him music and verse prosody were closely associated.\(^52\) It seems only

\(^{49}\text{Gardner, Hopkins, II, 379-384.}\)
\(^{50}\text{Letters, p. 136.}\)
\(^{51}\text{Further Letters, p. 371.}\)
\(^{52}\text{Gardner, Hopkins, II, 379-384.}\)
natural that Hopkins, who wrote poetry to be heard and who desired "a freer musical time and a stricter verse-prosody," would be attracted to and influenced by the Anglo-Saxon recitative rhythms.

Perhaps if Hopkins had lived longer, he might have begun, as the Anglo-Saxon scops did before him, to arrange simple accompaniments for his own poems. His poetry, as this and the preceding chapters have shown, has all the prosodic prerequisites for chanting. Every major poetic technique of Anglo-Saxon verse is conspicuous in Hopkins, and he himself acknowledged his indebtedness to the Old English scops. Some of the parallels are perhaps more a result of similar purpose than of direct borrowing, but Anglo-Saxon influence cannot be denied even though it can never be measured exactly.

Another fact which a comparative study of Hopkins and the scops reveals is that although Hopkins is often labeled a revolutionary, he did not break with tradition. His verse was revolutionary only in comparison with the verse of his contemporaries, for he was exceptional in his experimentation with traditions. However, he, like most revolutionaries,

53 Letters, p. 120.
54 Wells, p. 43.
did not break completely with tradition; he only broke with the tradition of his day and returned to earlier traditions for inspiration.56

The Anglo-Saxon influence was, of course, only one of many influences. Hopkins' unique poetic style is a result of a remarkable confluence of many traditions,57 especially Jesuitical, classical, Victorian, Celtic, and Anglo-Saxon. He so thoroughly absorbed the varied influences that no single one dominates his poetry.58 One reason for this fact is that the components of his style—thought, diction, imagery, phonal devices, rhythm—are more closely unified in a complete whole than in most poets.59 Another more important reason is that while he was eclectic he was also extraordinarily creative and original.60 If Hopkins had simply imitated Anglo-Saxon stress rhythm, his sprung rhythm would not have been a new rhythm; it would have been "indistinguishable from free verse or poetic prose."61 But Hopkins took as his own the elements of Anglo-Saxon stress poetry

58 Heywood, p. 279. 59 Gardner, Hopkins, I, 142.
60 Gardner, Hopkins, II, 369.
which attracted him—alliteration, heavy sense-stress, vivid language—and fused them with other traditions. Then from the wellspring of his genius emerged a varied, versatile, and original style, a style often called the most influential of modern poetry. Hopkins best exemplifies his own belief that "it will always be possible to find differences, marked differences, between original minds, it will be necessarily so."^63

^62 Iyengar, p. 170.

^63 Correspondence, p. 98.
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