THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Pattern of Language:

A Consideration of his Writings in the Light

of some Modern Formalist and Structuralist

Theories of Language and Poetry

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of

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Summary   Summary of Thesis submitted for Doctor of Philosophy Degree

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on

Gerard Manley Hopkins and the

Pattern of Language

Hopkins's work is better comprehensible as a unity if considered
as anticipating Structuralist views of language and associated attitudes
to poetic structure. Hopkins's investigations of "inscape" emphasize
systemic organization and the ontological priority of patterns of
relationship over individual phenomena. His writings on language reveal
a comparable inclination, inviting a special interpretation of his
phrase "inscape of speech".

Hopkins's attitude to poetic language centres on a notion of
poetry as "metalingual" activity, and is illuminated by reference to
earlier and subsequent recurrences of the idea, particularly Formalist-
Structuralist variations such as Jakobson's. This discussion clarifies
general questions about the functions of poetic structure. Like some
Formalists, Hopkins saw versification as creative "deformation" of
language, parallelism in his verse working most typically to this end
and also emphasizing the interrelated wholeness of the language-system.

By this stage the notion in Hopkins's work of a "language of nature"
seems more than a vague metaphor. In two particular late poems,
Hopkins's "framing" of language becomes (in a specially defined sense)
"iconic" of his world-view, the principle of this correspondence being
the notion of a system whose components (words or things) only exist or
have meaning in terms of the whole.

Formalist notions of literary evolution help us better to appreciate consistency of development in Hopkins's own style,and the nature of his critical attitudes(especially to Victorian poetry). His concern was for the maintenance of creative tension between form and language. His own experiments, often counter-productive, led to an exemplary revitalization of the sonnet.

Further implications of the relationship in Hopkins's thought between linguistic and natural organization may now be explored. His cosmology (particularly where it involves "inscape" and "instress") is clarified by further reference to Structuralism and to Gregory Bateson's "ecology of mind".

But when the issue is to put into language something
which has never yet been spoken, then everything depends
on whether language gives or withholds the appropriate
word. Such is the case of the poet. Indeed, a poet
might even come to the point where he is compelled —
in his own way, that is, poetically — to put into
language the experience he undergoes with language.

MARTIN HEIDEGGER [1]

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

The following abbreviations are used for the standard editions of Hopkins's works. Poems are referred to by number (e.g. Poems, No. 23) and prose writings by page-number (e.g. J, 129).

Poems   The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. W.H. Gardner and N.H. MacKenzie, 4th ed., reprinted with corrections (London : Oxford Univ. Press, 1970).

J   The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. Humphrey House, completed by Graham Storey (London : Oxford Univ. Press, 1959).

S   The Sermons and Devotional Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. Christopher Devlin, S.J. (London : Oxford Univ. Press, 1959).

LB   The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges, ed. Claude Colleer Abbott (London : Oxford Univ. Press, 1935).

CD   The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon, ed. Claude Colleer Abbott (London : Oxford Univ. Press, 1935).

FL   Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins : Including his correspondence with Coventry Patmore, ed. Claude Colleer Abbott (London : Oxford Univ. Press, 1956).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Intentions

The argument of this thesis is that Hopkins's poetic and other writings contain, in embryo, a theory of language corresponding in several important respects to Saussure's theory, which is the main foundation of modern structural linguistics. Thus considered, the poet's writings become more clearly unified, more illuminating of one another, as well as offering partial solutions to some general problems in poetic theory.

The phrase "in embryo" is to be stressed. Even though Hopkins was an accomplished classical scholar, and although much of his poetic experimentation draws upon a considerable knowledge of the history of his own tongue, it would be erroneous to suggest that he came near to making any important general linguistic formulations. He was not particularly well-informed about the philological advances which were being made in his time, and his etymological speculations (the best-documented aspect of his language-studies) seem to have been for the most part rather unsystematic. What I shall discuss is, in the terms of the passage from Heidegger which forms the epigraph to this study, an "experience ... with language". Hopkins's theoretical statements on language, and his theory and practice of the poetic organization of language, point towards a characterization of language in its entirety, language as such. This characterization, once made explicit, is more like a twentieth-century account of the phenomenon than a nineteenth-century one.

Although this poet's understanding of language remained largely "unconscious" or "intuitive", it can nevertheless be regarded as having exercised the same kind of influence on his writing as would a coherent pattern of explicit principles. An intuitive grasp of an astonishingly complex logical system underlies everyone's use of language. A linguistic system, or even a number of such systems, is absorbed in all essentials by every normal infant. There is a second order of linguistic intuitions, moments when this implicit comprehension comes closer to consciousness, language is seen more clearly as a whole thing, and an originative linguistic thinker advances our understanding of the fundamentals of speech. It would be too much to say that most or even some major poets experience this kind of linguistic insight. But Hopkins is a special case, a poet who was unusually interested not only in language as such, but in the nature of significance in a more general sense. His theory of "inscape" is in great part an attempt to discover the relations between different kinds of meaning. These kinds of meaning include the manner in which eye and brain "make sense" of visual phenomena, and the way in which the philosopher or cosmologist "makes sense" of the totality of phenomena.

This _subjective_ aspect of meaning is crucial. Hopkins was concerned with the fundamental nature of the human ability to _create_ pattern or meaning in experience. It is largely on account of this generalizing tendency that his intuitions about language have the strength of a good general linguist's "hunch", which leads to the formulation of a fruitful hypothesis. Hopkins was a kind of proto-Structuralist, in the sense of Fredric Jameson's statement that Structuralism leads to

> an explicit search for the permanent structures of the
> mind itself, the organizational categories and forms through
> which the mind is able to experience the world, or to

organize a meaning in what is essentially in itself
meaningless.[2]

A grasp of the nature of language generally, an insight into the
very basic principles which pervade and unify the levels of all
linguistic systems, underlies the one rather short book composed by
Ferdinand de Saussure's students and associates from his lectures and
notes, and explains the book's tremendous influence.[3] Saussure's
grasp of language might well be compared to the "catching" of a
Hopkinsian "inscape", and in fact Hopkins once referred to "the inscape
of speech" (J, 289). He did so enigmatically, perhaps rather casually,
but I have thought it worthwhile to explore the possible interpretations
which might be made of that phrase, since the idea of inscape forms
such an important connecting theme in the total range of Hopkins's
speculations. Hopkins's thought on pattern in the natural universe,
in language, in poetry, and in the other arts, form some interesting
new combinations if they are considered as being coordinated by a
"Structuralist" principle, by an interest in the fundamental nature of
structures generally. Saussure's insistence on the priority of the
system over its elements is the essential point of correspondence
between his theory and the theory of inscape.

The treatment of Hopkins's writings in such a context is appropriate
for other reasons. Hopkins went so far as to claim that poetry is
"speech only employed to carry the inscape of speech for the inscape's
sake" (emphasis added) and that language thus framed is "to be heard
for its own sake and interest even over and above its interest
of meaning" (J, 289). Whatever we make of the phrase "inscape of
speech", it is clear that the poet is in some sense anticipating
an important tendency in the later theory and practice of poetry
as in art generally, the tendency to emphasize the "self-reflexive"

or "autoreferential" function of the artwork, to see it as drawing attention to its own artificiality and therefore to the nature and conditions of its medium. Aspects of this wider cultural phenomenon are treated below, particularly where trends in aesthetic theory have the most direct relevance to Hopkins through such writers as his tutor and friend Walter Pater. The principle of self-reflexive reference in the particular case of poetry will be traced back further, largely along the path of the rhetorical tradition. Given this context, close attention will then be given to the details of linguistically-based Formalist and Structuralist theories in modern poetics, especially the work of Roman Jakobson, who cites Hopkins's theoretical statements most enthusiastically whilst developing a poetic theory very thoroughly grounded in Saussurean linguistics. The consideration of this relationship broadens the scope of the study, since the poet's work, whilst being illuminated by the later theories, also reflects some light back upon them, suggesting a rather different application of the Saussurean concepts from that effected by Jakobson. Before giving a more detailed preliminary outline of the argument, I must explain more carefully what I mean by such terms as "Formalism" and "Structuralism".

1.2   On the discrimination of Structuralisms

A. O. Lovejoy remarked in a famous essay that the word "romantic" had come to mean so many different things that it had "ceased to perform the function of a verbal sign", and that, if a man is asked to discuss Romanticism, "it is impossible to know what ideas or tendencies he is to talk about, when they are supposed to have flourished, or in whom they are supposed to be chiefly exemplified".[4] Such might be the case with "Formalism" and "Structuralism", which throughout this study (except, of course, in some quotations) I shall use with initial capitals.

"Formalism" is the easier case. I shall use the term only to refer to the Russian Formalist group of the early revolutionary period, which group is introduced in Chapter Four, section three. Comparable "ideas or tendencies" in earlier poetic theory are discussed in the section before that one, and Chapter Five deals with some relevant recent developments. The explanation of connections between ideas from these different periods is intended to render unnecessary the potentially confusing use of a term "formalism" (with lower-case initial) to designate a broader trend in the history of literary theory. It has also seemed desirable to avoid the use of "stylistics" or any other single term to cover the range of twentieth-century approaches in poetics which, like the work of the Russian Formalists, place a strong emphasis upon linguistic analysis. Strictly speaking, "stylistics" is a branch of linguistics which deals with more than literary style. "Literary stylistics" could imply developments within literary criticism as that field is more narrowly defined, or an area within linguistic stylistics. Different writers will be found referring to "linguostylistics" and "stylolinguistics", terms which I shall avoid, using phrases such as "linguistic analysis of poetry" in an attempt to reduce the possibilities of confusion.

"Structuralism" is more of a problem. It is neither a "school" nor a "discipline", but rather a tendency which has influenced almost every area of modern thought. Many more books will be written about the problem of defining the term. Here I shall simply present the problem in very general terms, and make clear which aspects of the trend are to be emphasized in the present study.

Piaget believes that, although "to define structuralism negatively, in terms of its opposition to other positions" leads only to confusion, yet a "focus on the positive content of the idea of structure" reveals

at least two aspects that are common to all varieties of
structuralism : first, an ideal (perhaps a hope) of intrinsic
intelligibility supported by the postulate that structures
are self-sufficient and that, to grasp them, we do not have
to make reference to all sorts of extraneous elements;
second, certain insights — to the extent that one has
succeeded in actually making out certain structures, their
theoretical employment has shown that structures in general
have, despite their diversity, certain common and perhaps
necessary properties.[5]

Before going on to consider what these general properties are, we might
focus on the idea that structures are "self-sufficient", that they can
be studied as autonomous systems. The Russian Formalists, as we shall
see below (in Chapter Four, section three), reacted against the
"reference to all sorts of extraneous elements" which characterized
literary studies in their time. Some of the Formalists went so far as
to suggest that literary evolution might be explicable almost entirely
in terms of the internal dynamics of the literary "system", and these
views were eventually suppressed by the Soviet authorities, from whose
conceptions of art as a social phenomenon they diverged. The Formalist
conception of literature and literary evolution was not only analogous
to the Saussurean conception of language as an autonomous system, but
in important ways a derivative of that conception of language. The
Formalists relied very heavily on linguistic description, and had amongst
their number linguists of the calibre of Jakobson, who took part in the
development of Saussure's principles from the earliest stages and who
has continued until very recently to extend the work of the Formalists
in literary theory, giving Saussurean linguistic concepts an increasingly
important place in his formulations on literature. These relationships

are what I have in mind when I refer, in the title of this study, to "Formalist and Structuralist theories of language and poetry". The first, and major, connection between the two capitalized terms is the idea of autonomy or self-sufficiency.

The characteristics or properties of structures in general are outlined by Piaget as follows:

> As a first approximation, we may say that a structure is a system of transformations. Inasmuch as it is a system and not a mere collection of elements and their properties, these transformations involve laws: the structure is preserved or enriched by the interplay of its transformational laws, which never yield results external to the system nor employ elements that are external to it. In short, the notion of structure is comprised of three key ideas: the idea of wholeness, the idea of transformation, and the idea of self-regulation. (p.5)

Piaget later cites the work of the Gestalt psychologists whose central principle is the "idea of wholeness", since for them "the first law of perceptual totalities is that the whole, over and beyond its having qualitative features of its own, has a quantitative value different from that of the sum of its parts" (p.56). A simple example of a "perceptual totality" is the melody, which is recognizable in whatever key it is played, since it maintains a "configuration", a pattern of relations. Comparably, as we shall see, Saussure emphasizes the primacy of relations between elements in linguistic systems, which relations can remain essentially the same despite changes in the absolute qualities of the elements.

Piaget seeks to define "common and perhaps necessary properties" of "structures in general", to demonstrate that Structuralism signifies something more than a useful kind of logical or scientific method employable in distinct branches of enquiry. The notion of a general "science of signs", which Saussure was one of the first to postulate, is one of the main Structuralist principles for thus connecting different areas of thought. Saussure used the term "semiologie" (Course, p.16), and French and other European writers tend to prefer this term. The American logician C.S. Peirce, working at about the same time but quite independently of Saussure, preferred "semiotic", and English-speaking writers now tend to use "semiotics" to refer to the new science. For convenience, I shall adopt the latter term in the present study.

Semiotics is, predictably, largely grounded in linguistic theory. Language is the dominant sign-system. As Terence Hawkes explains, the structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss "attempts to perceive the constituents of cultural behaviour ... not as intrinsic or discrete entities, but in terms of the contrastive relationships they have with each other that make their structures analogous to the phonemic structure of a language".[6] More recently, it has become possible for Julia Kristeva to claim that "What semiotics has discovered ... is that the law governing or, if one prefers, the major constraint affecting any social practice lies in the fact that it signifies; i.e. that it is articulated like a language".[7]

Recently, especially in France, the association of Structuralism with semiotics has been established so thoroughly that there has arisen a whole new range of possibilities for confusion over the application of the term "Structuralism". Most of the relevant work in French, which emphasizes "social practice" and is frequently associated with Marxist interpretations of bourgeois civilization, is outside the scope of the present study, although Roland Barthes will be quoted on more

than one occasion.[8] What is to be emphasized is that Structuralist

thought is not now properly comprehensible in its potential wholeness

if the idea of signification is not considered as being at least as

important as any of the common properties of structures. Annette Lavers

claims that Piaget "cast his net too wide" in the study to which I have

been referring. He was "misled by his own polymathy" and "missed what

is specific in recent developments", failing to take sufficient account

of "the study of literature and mass-culture in which many structuralist

models have been evolved and which has largely contributed to bringing

the existence of structuralism to the attention of the public".[9]

The emphasis, nevertheless, can be shifted too far. Lavers refers to

Francois Wahl, who, as editor of Qu'est-ce que le structuralisme?,[10]

"acknowledges on the one hand that the most obvious criterion for

answering [the title-question of the volume] is a new approach to

those sciences which deal not with objects but with their signs, with

'représentance'". On this account, the field of "structural sciences"

can be restricted to linguistics, poetics, anthropology, and psycho-

analysis. But on the other hand, and "despite an early disclaimer

about a rumoured structuralist philosophy", Wahl "shows in his own

essay on Foucault, Althusser and Jacques Derrida, that the new approach

has been reinforced, within each discipline, by an awareness of

convergence and cross-fertilization, whose effects are, strictly speaking,

ideological" (p. 878).

My own employment of the term "Structuralism" is based on an

appreciation of these two major aspects of the trend. Structuralism

places emphasis on systems, wholes, configurations, Gestalten, and tends

to envisage parts or elements of wholes as being systemically

defined rather than being discrete entities which "conglomerate" into

wholes. Structuralism also stresses "représentance", signification,

semiosis, and several important approaches to discovering the "common and perhaps necessary" properties of structures involve close attention to the nature of signs and sign-systems. Hopkins's work is susceptible to an interesting reappraisal in terms of Structuralism because he not only experiences language in its systemic "wholeness" but also sees many other kinds of "wholes" and (largely through thinking about inscapes) explores the relations between the different ways in which we find _meaning_ in experience.

Since the organization of this study reflects an exploratory process, the elaboration of the theoretical context necessitating some rather lengthy digressions from the central discussion of Hopkins, it has seemed appropriate to give, in the following section, an outline of the pattern of the argument. As this summary is simply intended to be an introduction and guide to the whole, I shall withhold annotation of quoted phrases and titles until the beginning of the second chapter. The numbers in parentheses in this next section refer to chapter-sections in the remainder of the text.

1.3   Outline of the argument

(2.1) "Inscape" is an exploratory term, being associated with a group of other special terms whose use together constitutes a flexible hypothesis rather than a fixed theory.

(2.2) At the simplest level, inscape can be interpreted as the basic characterizing and unifying principle of form in a phenomenon. Inscape is sustained by instress, which term refers not only to the pervasive divine creative power but also to the process whereby the human observer is able to engage with inscape. Inscape is, in fact, a kind of signature. It signifies at once the nature of the phenomenon and the

presence of its creator. An artwork, analogously, expresses through
its inscape the creative personality of the artist, and indeed Hopkins
often presents the natural universe as an artwork.

(2.3) Inscape is, generally speaking, an attribute of <u>species</u>
rather than of individuals. In aesthetics, metaphysics and natural
philosophy, Hopkins believes in the existence of "imperishable" and
recurrent forms or principles, which he likens to the fixed notes in
the diatonic musical scale (as opposed to the sliding or transitional
chromatic scale). Hopkins's "diatonism" is opposed to what he calls
"the prevalent philosophy of continuity or flux".

(2.4) The word "inscape" has, in Hopkins's journals especially,
a close relation to the word "law". In exploring this relation we are
confronted with the fact that the "principles of inscape" are very much
principles of <u>perception</u> <u>and</u> <u>thought</u>, laws of distinction and
relationship whereby experience is given form.

(2.5) The inscaped universe is described by Hopkins in highly
<u>dynamic</u> terms. Several striking features of diction and syntax in
Hopkins's journals and poems accord with Fenellosa's principles that
"all truth is the <u>transference of power</u>" and that the study of Chinese
poetry in particular helps us to understand the transitive sentence
as being the primary initiative of language. Hopkins's conception
of the universe as a dynamic system, indeed, has affinities with the
Chinese and other oriental cosmologies which are known to have
interested him. His careful attention to grammatical nuances in
"As Kingfishers Catch Fire ...", "Pied Beauty", and other poems, reflects
his concern to reconcile "organicist" or "pantheist" conceptions with
Christian orthodoxy. A further insight into the psychology of the
experience of <u>dynamic</u> inscape can be gained by considering the use of

the terms "siding", "behaviour" and "stall" in some of Hopkins's accounts of natural phenomena.

(2.6) Inscape can be regarded as a semiotic conception in the sense that Hopkins considers the natural universe as a kind of language, its forms communicative, our understanding of it a matter of "decoding". But the analogy between nature and language is more than a loose metaphor. Using Chomsky's terminology, we might say that Hopkins looks for "kernel" forms from which are "generated", through processes of "transformation", the structures of the rule-governed system of nature. Inscape is a "Structuralist" conception insofar as Hopkins tends to envisage the ontological status of things in terms of their systemic relations, their belonging to larger patterns or processes.

(3.1) Several meanings can plausibly be attached to the phrase "inscape of speech", which phenomenon Hopkins sees as being accentuated in poetry. In the course of surveying these meanings, we can summarize and relate the views of several critics on Hopkins's conception of poetry, and begin elaborating a wider context of relevant aesthetic and linguistic theories.

(3.2) A first approach to the elaborate patterning of Hopkins's verse is to see it as exhibiting a more-or-less gratuitous delight in pure pattern. Here it is appropriate to introduce Pater's ideas about the aspiration of all art to a state of "intransitivity" like that of music. Despite certain implications to the contrary, Pater does not simply suggest that the ideal of art is abstractness, but rather that the arts strive for the same kind of coincidence of "form" and "content" which music exhibits, the success of the aspiration depending upon the fulfilment of the special conditions of each artistic medium. In this respect, Pater owes much to Lessing, whom Hopkins (Pater's student at Oxford) frequently mentions or echoes. Hopkins's comments on "true poetry", like Pater's on the "highest" poetry,

can be interpreted as referring to verse in which the <u>characterizing</u> features of the art are amplified, rather than to the most exalted achievements of the art. It is, however, plausible to suggest that "gratuitous" or "abstract" pleasure in patterns of speech-sounds is an important component of poetic experience, for Hopkins and for other poets and readers, insofar as such fascination is recapitulative of early stages of (individual and historical) language-development. This pleasure in very general or quintessential kinds of aesthetic significance is explored by Suzanne K. Langer, whose further thoughts on the "condition of music" form a useful introduction to other implications of Pater's principles.

(3.3) Patterns of meaning in poetry may be disposed according to "musical"principles of structure. Metrical and other features, although their mimetic or emotionally suggestive import may be as ambiguous or general as musical signification, can be effectively aligned with meaning in suitable contexts. In this sense "poetic inscape" can reflect inscapes in the world. Perhaps more importantly, critics of Hopkins and other poets find that rhetorical effects make important suggestions as to authorial attitude or vocal tone. The "inscape of speech" in Hopkins's verse might be identified with the impression of spontaneity (like that of impassioned speech) which is conveyed by certain rhetorical effects. By means of such effects, the artistic material is impressed with the distinctive stamp of a particular artistic personality (as discussed in Chapter Two, section two).

(3.4) Another approach is to consider Hopkins as having regarded <u>individual</u> <u>words</u> as if they were "inscaped" natural objects. An elaboration of this is E.R. August's view that patterns of related words in Hopkins's poems create "word-inscapes" which are explicable largely in terms of the etymological relationships involved. It is

to be noted at this stage that Hopkins's etymological speculations involved an interest in the "onomatopoetic" theories of linguistic origin and evolution, and he might thus be thought to have believed that there were very direct relationships between "word-inscapes" and features of extra-linguistic reality. But what Hopkins in fact discovered was the degree of conventionality in phonetic symbolism rather than any principles of direct imitation.

(3.5) "Inscape of speech" may, finally, be taken to signify specific characteristics of the English language. This brings up the question of Hopkins's sympathy with the "Germanic purist" trend in contemporary philological thought. Concerned with the "native strengths" of English, Hopkins reveals an interest in the balance between what Saussure was to term "arbitrariness" and "motivation" in earlier and later forms of English. (These terms will be discussed more fully in Chapter Six, section four, which concerns Hopkins's use of parallelism to "analyze" the morphological structures of words.). Furthermore, Hopkins's contemporaries were writing of the "laws" of language, and Hopkins shows a great sensitivity to the possibilities of extending linguistic subsystems such as those which make possible word-formation (particularly the "native" Germanic principle of compounding). And of course "sprung rhythm" is a way of bringing poetry closer to ordinary speech.

(3.6) All these ways of relating the idea of inscape to language and versification are valid, but the notes in which Hopkins uses the phrase "inscape of speech" suggest an alternative interpretation. Although Hopkins's note on "Poetry and Verse" relates "inscape of speech" to parallelism in a rather obscure manner, the accompanying lecture notes clarify the matter somewhat by introducing a principle of contrast or counterpoint between formal patterns and the patterns of ordinary

speech. This will be the key to the remainder of the argument. As
Chapters Five and Six will show, the manner in which Hopkins "frames"
language for contemplation in his poems is, most commonly, to emphasize
its patterns by counterpointing formal structures against them. This
principle is implicit in a great number of Hopkins's comments on poetic
effect and has an interesting relationship to some modern Formalist
theories. Hopkins is particularly interested in what may be termed
the interface of sound and meaning, and his sensitivity to the relation
between phonology and morphology will prove to be the major factor
which makes his poetic presentation of language susceptible to
interpretation in terms of Structuralist linguistic theory.

(4.1) It is necessary to consider the essential principles of the
Formalist conception of poetry as a "self-reflexive" phenomenon, the
earlier occurrence of comparable ideas, and the real extent of
Hopkins's belief that poetry is "about" language.

(4.2) There was a strong tendency in the classical and medieval
rhetorical traditions to conceive of poetry as a language-focussed
activity. In several European poetic traditions, skilful formal
manipulation appears to have become an end in itself. The more extreme
expressions of this attitude to the art are often short-lived, and
might be regarded as pathological. But the idea that an "experience
of language" is an important element in the poetic experience as a
whole is not easily discounted. The implications of this for a theory
of literary evolution will be considered more carefully in my final
chapter, but for the moment it is to be pointed out that elaborate sound-
patterning in poetry (which is the basis of much of the "artificiality"
in question) can be interpreted as an emphasis upon the physical
medium in which language is realized. The Skalds, for example, make
frequent references to language as a tangible reality. Emphasis on
the substantiality of language can be regarded as a "defamiliarization"

of the medium, whereby the mediation of experience through language
is rendered less likely to be taken for granted, less likely to be
envisaged as an automatic translation of thoughts and perceptions or
as a straightforward labelling of an established "reality". This is
in fact one of the basic principles of the Russian Formalist conception
of poetic effect.

(4.3) The Russian Formalists saw the principle of art as a
"making strange", the principle of poetry as a creative "deformation"
of language. Mukařovský of the Prague Linguistic Circle developed
this attitude to poetry into the theory of "foregrounding" or "actualization".
These theorists concentrated on the Differenzqualität whereby artistic
representations diverged from conventional perception. In poetics,
they emphasized the primary divergence of verse from ordinary language
and the secondary divergence of particular poetic usages from prevailing
artistic norms. Later developments of such ideas (in some of the
work of Barthes, for example) suggest that poetry, or at least modern
poetry, is a "problematics of language", a process of reflection
upon the medium and upon the assumptions embodied in its habitual
(autonomized) use. There is a serious difficulty in assessing the
relative significance of "self-reflexive" and "referential" functions
in poetry, and opinion tends to polarize towards or away from the
basic Formalist principles (and their association with linguistic
analysis). This is partly explicable in terms of the overstatements
made by early Formalists, their polemical stance being conditioned
by a particular historical situation. If we make allowances for
all this, we can perceive important connections between Formalism
and other critical trends such as Anglo-American New Criticism.
Furthermore, as the previous section suggested, the idea

of poetry as an "experience of language" is far from new. Formalism
definitely showed signs of developing in such a way as to make possible
a very fruitful assimilation of linguistics to literary criticism.
But there are serious doubts as to whether very much of this promise
has been or is likely to be fulfilled. When we go on to consider the
analytical methods of the Formalists and their successors in
Chapter Five, we must bear in mind that the wider questions concerning
the relation of linguistics to poetics remain open.

(4.4) The extremity of Hopkins's "proto-Formalism" can usefully
be assessed in the light of the above considerations. It has already
been suggested (in connection with Pater's aesthetic theories,
discussed in Chapter Three, section two) that Hopkins was aware of
the need to distinguish between the characterizing features of poetry
(functions of its relation to its particular medium) and the overall
ends or purposes of the art. His apparent overemphasis on the nature
and function of technical aspects can too easily lead us to assume
that, like some of the early Formalists, he mistakenly conflated
the defining principles of "poeticality" with the essence of poetic
experience. He can, alternatively, be seen as placing a corrective
emphasis upon what, in a special sense, he called "rhetoric", which
he thought was the element most lacking in the poetry of his time.

(4.5 and 5.1) The whole field of linguistically- based approaches
to poetry remains fraught with problems. A theory of the proper
relation between "scientific" analysis and "critical instinct" is
devoutly wished for but still unformed. We can perhaps see these
problems more clearly if we consider in some detail the experiments
in theory and analysis of a few key figures in the Formalist-Structuralist
tradition. One of these figures, Roman Jakobson, in fact cites

Hopkins in support of some of his major contentions. I hope to show that what are widely regarded as the inadequacies of his analyses can usefully be interpreted as a misreading of Hopkins, and that the work of Hopkins and the Formalists can be mutually illuminating.

(5.2) Jakobson combines the Formalist principle that poetry is based on metalingual reference with the Saussurean distinction between the two principle types of linguistic organization (associative and contiguous) and Hopkins's "principle of parallelism" to produce a distinctive poetic theory. He believes, basically, that phonetic parallelism has a "paronomastic" or semantic-associative function and that more complex forms of parallelism (such as the "reiteration of the same grammatical concept") are explicable in comparable terms of thematic consolidation. His analytic method can, however, be demonstrated as being over-productive, in that, applying it to the least literary of texts, we can find patterns of parallelism as numerous and as explicable (in semantic and thematic terms) as those discerned by Jakobson and his associates in major poems.

(5.3) The objections to Jakobson's analyses are that the patterns discerned are questionable in their "strikingness" or impact on the reader, and that in any case Jakobson relates them to the thematic structures of poems in a highly unsystematic or impressionistic manner. A tendency to conceive poems as spatial or "quasi-simultaneous" objects determines the work of Jakobson and many other linguistic analysts of poetry, and is the cause of serious distortions. Associated with the spatializing tendency we frequently find an assumption that the relation between thematic elements and stylistic features must be "diagrammatic" or (according to Michael Shapiro's application of C.S. Peirce's term) "iconic".

(5.4) Hopkins, in his later writings on poetry, contradicts most of Jakobson's principles, which were partly framed with reference to Hopkins's undergraduate writings. But Hopkins is in accord with the theories of some of Jakobson's early Formalist associates. Unlike Jakobson, he discriminates between different kinds of parallelism. He defines verse strictly in terms of the simpler types such as metre and rhyme, and he tends in his poetry mainly to employ such types. Using an image which has an interesting correspondence to certain passages from Coleridge and Ruskin, Hopkins compares the relation between metre and language to that between the fixed form of a waterfall or fountain and the water which flows through it. In an undergraduate dialogue, Hopkins had presented the purpose of parallelism as being, in the first instance, simply to provide an artistically stimulating constraint. Several theorists have argued that the primary significance of basic poetic structures can thus be regarded as unspecific whilst still being much more than dispensible "decoration". Tynyanov and Brik, amongst the early Formalists, developed the idea of poetry as "defamiliarized language" in such a direction. They stressed the importance of contrast or tension between abstract formal structures and the linguistic forms which are set within them. Such a conception of verse-structure is further validated by our knowledge of (to take a well-documented example) Keats's manner of composition. A plausible and widely-applicable version of the "defamiliarization" principle can be derived from this conception.

(5.5) Hopkins's employment of the basic parallelistic devices is consistent with his theoretical position as explained in terms of the Formalist principles of "deformation" and "construction". The following chapter will be devoted to the demonstration of this. No insight into the basic reasons for the existence of certain poetic devices is of very much value if it is not applied to the study of

particular poets' <u>exploitation</u> of the devices. Before we return to the question of the more <u>general</u> relevance of Hopkins's theory and practice of poetry, it is necessary for us to immerse ourselves in his <u>particularity</u>.

(6.1) Although precautions have been taken against the assumption that Hopkins's attitudes comport with the more extreme positions taken by modern Formalists, we cannot deny that his own poetry develops rhetorical patterning to an extraordinary degree, and that this elaboration sometimes becomes quite gratuitous, counter-productive in terms of meaning. In the present chapter I shall simply try to demonstrate the <u>consistency</u> of Hopkins's rhetorical approach. I began by suggesting that language cuts a particular figure in Hopkins's work, that the figure is explicable in broadly "Structuralist" terms, that Hopkins tended to conceive of "elements" in terms of their systemic relations, and that the theory of inscape anticipates not only the notion of the "wholeness" of structures but also the notion of "common properties" shared by structures generally. It is necessary at this stage to look more closely at Saussure's conception of language, which is one of the bases of Structuralism.

(6.2) The Saussurean distinction between "paradigm" and "syntagm" is important not only on the "word into sentence" level in terms of which it is explained in one of Jakobson's major papers on poetry. It is the principle of the "articulation" of the entire linguistic system, which concept of "articulation" must be explained very carefully. Saussure claims that "all synchronic facts are identical" in language. He finds the basis of signification in the perception of differences. Hopkins, in his attempt to discover fundamental structures of understanding, made much of the notion of distinction.

Indeed, some of Hopkins's discussions of natural inscape parallel
quite closely Saussure's accounts of the relation between "distinction"
and "articulation" in language. These two aspects of language, as we
shall see, are emphasized by prevalent features of Hopkins's style.
He appears to share with Saussure the realization that words and other
linguistic units only have meaning, only have existence, in relational
or systemic terms.

(6.3) Confirmation of Hopkins's belief in the primarily contrapuntal
relation between abstract and ordinary-language structures is
discovered through a scrutiny of his theory and practice of end-rhyme.
The emphasis on interplay suggests an explanation of the fact that
in Hopkins's verse a freer and more speech-like "sprung" rhythm is
combined with extremely elaborate phonemic parallelism, the latter
producing the "deformation" of language which the user of less regular
metrical patterns must sacrifice.

(6.4) "Deformation" by phonemic parallelism is carried out
extensively within Hopkins's lines. He seeks to increase the
"morphological transparency" of polysyllabic words, and his related
interest in the typology and history of languages (discussed in
Chapter Three, section five) can be further considered in the light
of Saussure's ideas on "arbitrariness" amd "motivation" in different
languages. But, more extensively and more significantly, Hopkins
scrutinizes signs qua signs, "making strange" the processes whereby
linguistic units in general emerge out of the sound-system. He
questions the "individuation" of words, demonstrating that they are not
discrete entities which combine to form a language but products of
systemic relations which, as it were, make words "happen" in particular
contexts. He employs parallelism to intensify the natural constraints
of language, and employs one particular type of parallelism — vocalic

variation within a fixed consonant frame — with notable frequency. Thereby he extends into the syntagmatic sequence the phonological form of paradigmatic series such as strong-verb inflexion and morpho-phonemic derivation, series in which the system's economy of means is most striking. The poems become "more linguistic than language", the language becoming more "pure" in the special sense which was discussed in Chapter Three, section five (It becomes more integrated, more "systematic"). Hopkins's use of homophones stresses the dependence of meaning on context, as does his repetition of individual words. This last device is exploited most fully in the later sonnets.

(6.5) The philosophical preoccupations which relate Hopkins's sense of the "inscape of speech" to his thought as a whole are treated in a most interesting manner in two late poems. In "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" and "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire...", Hopkins expresses disturbance at the fragility of inscape, which depends for its existence on a participating observer. Fascinated as he is by the constructive principle perceptible in the inscaped world, he nevertheless recognizes that there is "something that unmakes or pulls to pieces", a principle of disorder or destruction. There recurs in his poems a symbol of night as a death of meaning, meaning which depends on the human ability to perceive or make distinctions. The most powerful evocation of nightfall in Hopkins's poems occurs in "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves", and in this poem the vision of "unmaking" is partly conveyed through an intensification of the stylistic "deforming" features which have been discussed, that is, through an "unmaking" of language. "That Nature is ... " is based on a comparable vision of dissolution, but, as the very title indicates, a religious consolation is found, "the comfort of the Resurrection". In this poem also, the stylistically-emphasized "inscape of speech" is crucial.

Only in these special cases does the relation between "style" and "theme" become "iconic".

(6.6) Hopkins, then, believes that the principle function of verse parallelism is to constrain the flow of language, imposing a difficulty which is at once an aesthetic stimulus and a means of stressing the conditions of the medium. The "inscape of speech" which emerges, the heightened "character" of language, is as much in accord with the Saussurean conception of language as Hopkins's theory of style is in accord with the Formalist principles of "deformation" and "construction".

(7.1) We have considered the nature and usefulness of linguistic "defamiliarization" in Hopkins's poetic theory and practice, and it has been pointed out that his conception of poetry was not entirely a matter of technicalities. Much of his work, nevertheless, demands an almost hermeneutic approach. The sheer insistence on formal complexity can constitute an obstacle to sympathetic critical responses. "Making strange" may have an undesirable "distancing" effect. The special pleading which was necessary for the establishment of Hopkins's critical reputation has perhaps made him too much of a special case, and caused a certain confusion between explanation and evaluation. The value and influence of Hopkins's work might better be appreciated if we apply a criterion of accessibility more rigorously. We should consider his experiments in terms of development towards a style in which "novelty of mode" (Patmore) is effective without being "obscuring". Then the more general consideration of Hopkins's thought (as a whole and as an interesting episode in the history of ideas) may be concluded.

(7.2) Hopkins's attitude to the poetry of his age cannot properly be understood without further reference to his notions of "Parnassian"

style and of the "heightening" of "current language". Apparent
inconsistencies between his poetic theory and practice can be explained
with reference to Formalist notions of literary evolution which are
connected with those of literary structure. Hopkins's statements
do not, like Gray's and Wordsworth's, suggest an absolutely desirable
relation between poetic and ordinary language. Hopkins is concerned
with the effectiveness of stylistic devices as means of creative
"deformation", and the importance of a sense of immediacy in the
encounter of abstract with ordinary linguistic form. His experiments
lead towards a late style in which "novelty" is greatly reduced. The
last group of sonnets include some of his greatest achievements, and,
especially in respect of their formal integrity, these poems are
those most likely to sustain his reputation and to be the source of
his most positive and lasting influence.

(7.3) Hopkins's explorations of inscape and his poetic
characterization of "inscape of speech" reveal a "proto-Structuralist"
cast of mind and indeed a search for "permanent structures of the mind"
(Jameson). His work bears the further implication that, since
information is the essence of natural organization, the correspondence
between language and nature as systems is very extensive. Hopkins's
thought represents a transitional stage between Romantic and twentieth-
century (scientific) accounts of this matter, and is particularly
interesting because of the theological preoccupations which gave it
such scope and unity. Gregory Bateson's "more mystical phrasing"
of his own developing cosmology (an "ecology of mind" based largely in
information theory) helps us better to appreciate the character of
Hopkins's world-view, particularly the notions of inscape and instress.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MEANING OF INSCAPE

2.1 Introductory

Hopkins was far from completely exact or consistent in his employment
of the special vocabulary which includes the twin-terms "inscape" and
"instress". We must remember that what we designate his "theories" —
of aesthetics and poetics in particular — are in the main inferences
from a range of essays, journals and lecture-notes, many of which were
written in some haste and without revision, and which span a period of
almost twenty-five years. For convenience, I shall employ the phrase
"theory of inscape" from time to time, but I can no more easily give a
brief and accurate definition of inscape than Hopkins could. It was an
exploratory term, used in a great variety of contexts, and qualified by
a large group of related words such as "siding" (J, 130, 155, 211, 267),
"quaining" (J, 170-1, 176, 205-7, 290), and "bidding" (J, 245). It could
be used predicatively as well as substantively, and either of its morphemes
could be replaced to produce the derivatives "inlaw" (J, 130),
"install" (J, 207, 225, 244-5), "outscape" (J,184), "offscape" (J, 207)
and "outstress" (S, 197). The frequent form "scaping" could mean
something very different from true inscape, particularly in a section of
the journals which treats of paintings and in which the further term
"arch-inscape" is introduced (J, 244-7).

2.2 Inscape is a signature

Patricia Ball offers a useful introductory summary of the concept:

> Instress as it operates within the object could be described
> as the determining energy of that object, the force which
> makes the thing itself, creating its design or inscape.[11]

R.K.R. Thornton derives a basic definition from the possible etymology
of the word "inscape":

> If the picture that makes a whole and single thing out of
> an area of land is a landscape, then what makes up a single
> thing out of its inner nature would be its 'inscape'.[12]

W.H. Gardner makes the important point that inscape and instress involve
the human observer, since

> instress is not only the unifying force in the object;
> it connotes also that impulse from the 'inscape' which
> acts on the senses and, through them, actualizes the
> inscape in the mind of the beholder.[13]

Here we have the crucial points. Inscape is a perceived design. It is
sustained by a determining or organizing force which is "in" the object,
but which does not really exist or have meaning apart from the act of
perception. If we can for the moment exclude the connotations of
distance or detachment involved in the terms "sign" and "abstract", we
might say that inscape is a kind of inherent sign, an inbuilt signature.
This sign is not simply a term for what the thing essentially is, but
at the same time a term for what makes the thing comprehensible,
recognizable as itself. By recognizing — or, to use the more active

Hopkinsian terms "catching" or "stalling" — this sign or term, we abstract or distil from our perception the essence of the thing, the form which characterizes it and makes it one. The importance of the beholder's <u>participation</u> in inscape will repeatedly be stressed in the course of this chapter, and in the fifth section the finer nuances of meaning involved in the use of terms such as "stalled" will be considered in more detail.

The energy or stress which sustains inscape is, of course, divine energy. Through the perception of the beauty of inscape, man communicates with the creator. The particular inscapes are in an important sense His signatures or words. The most famous expression of this conception outside the poems is Hopkins's note on bluebells:

> I do not think I have seen anything more beautiful than
> the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty
> of our Lord by it. It [s inscape] is [mixed of] strength
> and grace, like an ash [tree]. (<u>J</u>, 199; Hopkins's brackets)

But the whole world of nature is "charged with the grandeur of God" (<u>Poems</u>, No. 31). Chapter Two, section five, below, which discusses the predominantly <u>active</u> or <u>dynamic</u> qualities of the natural universe as Hopkins conceives it, must be read in the light of this basic theological condition. The point will there be developed, out of a survey of Hopkins's diction, that the divine presence is frequently conveyed by Hopkins through images of human artistry. One aspect of the diction is more appropriately introduced at this early stage. There is in the journal notes a large group of adjectival or passive forms which are suggestive not simply of creative activity but of definite artistry. Oak boughs, for example, are "roughed with lichen, and gracefully and muscularly waved" and their "screen of leaf and all their growth is

slight and charmingly charactered" (J, 146). Rock is "acutely leaved or notched" (J, 180). The inscape of a bluebell, "most finely carried out in the siding of the axes, each striking a greater and greater slant, is finished in these clustered buds" (J, 209). The "slant cords" of lime-trees are "crisply given" (J, 168). Clouds are "formed ... fretted ... exquisitely traced" (J, 27) or "moulded" (J, 137). Others have their "gold etched with brighter gold and shaped in sandy pieces" (J, 193). Another cloudstack is "pencilled with bloom-shadow of the greatest delicacy" (J, 201). Cedars have their flakes "modulated from the horizontal and so taking one another up all along the row" (J, 189). The Monte Rosa range of mountains is "dragged all over with snow like cream" (J, 180). Valleys and fell-sides are "plotted and painted with the squares of the fields and their hedges" (J, 222). "Swells and hillocks" of river-sands and fields are "sketched and gilded out by frill upon frill of snow" (J, 228). A skyline of hills is "flowingly written" (J, 258).

Hopkins clearly perceives nature as if it were an artwork, the compositional principles of which he attempts to discern. More than this, nature (or its creator) positively invites such discernment. Sometimes it seems that the universe is a code to be deciphered, or a kind of exalted puzzle. Bluebells "baffle you with their inscape" (J, 209). The "spraying" of beechwoods (such substantive use of present participles being another hallmark of Hopkins's style) is both "baffling and beautiful" (J, 171). Of a cloud-rack observed in 1871 Hopkins writes "I made out the make of it" and a little later, referring to the same kind of cloud, he writes that "its make is easily read" (J, 210). "I saw well that work of dimpled foam laps" he reports in the following year (J, 223). In 1864, the young poet had begun a fragment about a rainbow with the line "It was a hard thing to undo this knot" (Poems, No. 100), and though this may recall Keats's regret at an "awful rainbow" being made ordinary by "cold philosophy" ("Lamia", Part II, 11.229-233),[14]

Hopkins is even at this early stage more in accord with Ruskin in believing that the proper perception of nature is simultaneously religious and "scientific".

Inscape, then, is the mark or signature of an artist-creator. In fact, Hopkins's own most straightforward definitions of inscape refer to the appearance of the feature in poetry. At one point he equates inscape with "design, pattern" (LB, 66), and at another with "species or individually-distinctive beauty of style" (FL, 373). In the first of these letters he relates inscape in poetry to melody in music and design in painting, claiming that it is "the virtue of design, pattern, or inscape, to be distinctive" but that it is "the vice of distinctiveness to become queer". Purcell's music, praised in one of Hopkins's sonnets (Poems, No. 45) is individually-distinctive, an example of the "virtue" of inscape. It expresses or actualizes the musician's own very special artistic personality. It is "the rehearsal/Of own, of abrupt self". Looking ahead, we might say that "poetic inscape" or "inscape of speech" is the quality in a poetic style which marks it off as distinctive (expressive of the poet's individuality) without degenerating into queerness, oddity, obscurity.

It is, however, to be noted that Hopkins headed his sonnet on Purcell with the following explanation:

> The poet wishes well to the divine genius of Henry Purcell
> and praises him that, whereas other musicians have given
> utterance to the moods of man's mind, he has, beyond that,
> uttered in notes the very make and species of man as created
> both in him and in all men generally.

The important word is "species", which was in fact offered as an

equivalent for "inscape" in the second short definition by Hopkins mentioned above. Speciation and individuation are philosophical categories which dominate much of Hopkins's thought.. They are central to the Scotist cosmology for which he had a special affinity. The subtleties of the concept of inscape are liable to be misconceived if we do not bear this in mind.

2.3 Inscape is of the species

The words "inscape" and "instress" were first written down, so far as we know, in Hopkins's 1868 notes on Parmenides (J, 127-30). Hopkins is impressed by the philosopher's feeling for the two qualities, and the meaning of "instress" is connected with the concepts of speciation and individuation, with the possibility of deriving general truths from particular experiences:

> His great text, which he repeats with religious
> conviction, is that Being is and Not-being is not —
> which perhaps one can say, a little over-defining his
> meaning, means that all things are upheld by instress
> and are meaningless without it ... without stress we might
> not and could not say / Blood is red / but only / This
> blood is red / or / The last blood I saw was red. (J, 127)

In Hopkins's devotional writings there is a very close connection between "scapes" and "species". In his meditation-notes on Loyola's "First Principle and Foundation" Hopkins states quite clearly that he is "inclined to believe ... that the specific form, the form of the whole species" is in brute nature "nearer to being a true Self than the individual" (S, 128).

In a later meditation, "natures or essences or inscapes" are distinguished

from "selves, supposits, hypostases, or in the case of rational

creatures, persons / which wear and 'fetch' or instance them" (S, 146).

The editor Christopher Devlin points out that at this stage Hopkins is

"accepting Scotus's distinction ... between the nature of man and his

individuality" (S, 293). Inscape is certainly not synonymous, as Peters

contends, with the Scotist _haecceitas_, the individuation-principle.[15]

It is, rather, identified with "nature", the distinctive attribute of

the type or species. Jerome Bump has pointed out that Hopkins's

imagery in such poems as "Pied Beauty" and "As Kingfishers Catch Fire ..."

(_Poems_, Nos. 37 and 57) is "of the species rather than the unique

individual", being characterized by the use of plural nouns such as

"skies" and "dragonflies".[16] Alan Heuser, after a discussion too long

and intricate to be summarized here, points out as a thread in Scotist

philosophy the fundamentally Platonic idea that natural phenomena must

be conceived in their relation to abstract or "ideal" forms or types:

> Only when the existent creature was experienced as one with
>
> its essential nature (the idea created in God's mind,
>
> the underlying type), only then did the resulting experience
>
> equal the _species specialissima_. Here Hopkins came upon the
>
> Scotist equivalent for inscape — the fixed type between
>
> natural form and essential idea.[17]

The notion of "types or species" appears in Hopkins's undergraduate

essay "On the Probable Future of Metaphysics" (J, 118-121), where he

predicts that the "prevalent philosophy of continuity or flux" will

be challenged by the principle that

there are certain forms which have a great hold on the

mind and are always reappearing and seem imperishable,

such as the designs of Greek vases and lyres, the cone

upon Indian shawls, the honeysuckle moulding, the fleur-

de-lys, while every day we see designs both simple and

elaborate which do not live and are at once forgotten;

and some pictures we may long look at and never grasp or

hold together, while the composition of others strikes the

mind with a conception of unity which is never dislodged:

and these things are inexplicable on the theory of pure

chromatism or continuity — the forms have in some sense *or other*

an absolute existence. (J, 120).

Hopkins goes on to predict a general revival of Platonic tendencies in

metaphysics.

The "philosophy of continuity or flux" to which the poet opposes

a more-or-less Platonic idealism can be associated with Pater, who was

Hopkins's tutor in 1866, the year before the above essay was written

(see J, 133). In the conclusion to The Renaissance, published in 1873,

Pater presents physical life as a "perpetual motion" of elements in

"processes which science reduces to simpler and more elementary forces".

The "outline of face and limb", for example, is but "an image of ours"

imposed on the web of forces, "the actual threads of which pass out

beyond it".[18] Our life is "flamelike", being "but the concurrence,

renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on

their ways"(pp.220-21). Pater suppressed this conclusion in the second

edition of the book because he "conceived it might possibly mislead some

of those young men into whose hands it might fall"(p.220, note). These

ideas would not "mislead" Hopkins, who was already settling into a

philosophical stance against "continuity or flux", and expressing his orientation in terms of the distinction (mentioned also in J, 76 and 104-6) between the chromatic and diatonic musical scales. He prefers to think of a "diatonic" universe, because it implies a God who is actively involved in nature to the extent of communicating through it with man. As Pater writes in his essay on Coleridge,

> the suspicion of a mind latent in nature, struggling
> for release, and intercourse with the intellect of man
> through true ideas, has never ceased to haunt a certain
> class of minds.[19]

The "true ideas" of the greater mind conceived by Hopkins are the "types or species" which are crucial to the theory of inscape. They constitute the grammar of the language in which God communicates.

It is also very significant that Hopkins's essay "On the Future of Metaphysics" was written only seven years after the publication of Darwin's Origin of Species. Thirteen years after writing his essay, in the aforementioned meditation on Loyola's "First Principle and Foundation", Hopkins states firmly and simply that, whatever evolutionary theory might prove about sub-human nature, it is theologically inadequate to explain the phenomenon of man:

> For human nature, being more highly pitched, selved, and
> distinctive than anything in the world, can have been
> developed, evolved, condensed, from the vastness of the
> world not anyhow or by the working of common powers but
> only by one of finer or higher pitch and determination
> than itself and certainly than any that elsewhere we see,
> for this power had to force forward the starting or
> stubborn elements to the one pitch required. (S, 122-3)

We may note that Hopkins here writes of "human nature" in general, rather than of individual man. Even when he is discussing the "selving" of that most distinctive of earthly beings, the artist, he refers to it in terms of "species", as we observed in the note on Purcell. Comparably, in a letter to Patmore, following a discussion of William Barnes, Hopkins frames his idea of poetic originality in terms of species:

> 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. (FL,370)

As we shall see in Chapter Two, section five, below, Hopkins's experience of nature did, in important senses, lead him to envision it in terms of "concurrences" of "forces". But the universal dynamism is, for the poet, not a flux of blind or automatic energies. It is a rule-governed system, and it has a place for a personal god.

First of all, however, it is necessary for us to look more closely at the "certain forms which have a great hold on the mind" for Hopkins, and to consider the implications of the term "law" in the theory of inscape.

2.4 Inscape and law

Let us go back to a stage three years before the first recorded use of the term "inscape", to Hopkins's undergraduate dialogue "On the Origin of Beauty" (1865; J, 86-114). The central character, a professor of aesthetics, asked whether the statement that beauty is

"a mixture of regularity and irregularity" adequately summarizes his argument up to this point, replies:

> Complex beauty, yes. But let us inquire a little further.
> What is regularity? Is it not obedience to law? And
> what is law? Does it not mean that several things, or
> all the parts of one thing, are like each other? (J, 90)

I shall not attempt to summarize the argument as a whole, and critics such as Patricia Ball (op.cit) and Alison Sulloway have adequately explained the derivation of many of the concepts employed from Ruskin.[20] It is not remarkable that a Victorian attempt to construct a systematic aesthetic theory should turn on such basic conceptual patterns as regularity and deviation, identity and difference, theme and variation. What is remarkable in Hopkins is the tendency to regard perception as being in some sense constitutive of objects. His search for the principles whereby things are rendered or recognized as beautiful cannot be separated from his urge to discover what it is that makes a phenomenon recognizable at all. We might say that Hopkins is interested in discovering fundamental laws of meaning and significance, the basic strategies of mind whereby we order experience. Aesthetic perception is the quintessence of this ordering, and to explore the origin of beauty is to investigate the very nature of our understanding. Ruskin, as Sulloway explains (pp. 72-4), would deduce from the close consideration of leaves and leaf-sprays such universal laws as those of "generic plentitude" and "specific creation". He would draw "moral lessons about the divine principles of authority and subordination as they apply to human affairs" (pp. 73-4). Although Hopkins's consideration of natural phenomena (and art-works) is no less constantly involved with his religious experience, he does not feel the necessity for such

direct intrusion of ethical-theological abstractions into his accounts.
God has not so much infiltrated into the world of nature hidden
"messages" or "lessons" as He has infiltrated Himself into the very
structure of things. His "stress" sustains them, and the human mind
can become tuned to the frequency of that energy's vibrations. Over
and over again Hopkins "feels" God's "finger" and "finds" Him (cf. Poems,
No. 28, st.1). If a thing is "baffling", a puzzle or riddle, the
"answer" to the divine "question" is not a moral statement. It is,
rather, an expressed recognition of the way in which the thing is made,
in which "stress" makes it hold together or organizes it, makes it
comprehensible.

By far the largest group of recorded occurrences of the word
"inscape" refer to the perception of natural phenomena, discerned with
a painterly eye and often sketched at the time. The second largest
group concerns the perception of visual art-works. I have already
noted Thornton's comment on the relation between "inscape" and
"landscape" and discussed the implication of divine artistry (often
very definitely divine painting) in many of Hopkins's journal-notes
(see Chapter Two, section two, above). Let us now look more carefully
at some analyses of visual phenomena in the journals, so that the
relation of "law" to "inscape" might be seen more clearly.

In the year after the dialogue on beauty was written, Hopkins is
pleased to find the "visible law" in "the composition of the crowd in
the area of the theatre" and this law resides in "the short strokes of
eyes, nose, mouth, repeated hundreds of times" as the heads all look
one way (J, 139). Hopkins remarks that he "could find a sort of beauty
in this, certainly character — but in fact that is almost synonymous
with finding order, anywhere" (J, 139). In the same year (1866) Hopkins
puzzles over some oak-trees:

> Oaks: the organization of this tree is difficult.
> Speaking generally no doubt the determining planes
> are concentric, a system of brief contiguous and
> continuous tangents, whereas those of the cedar would
> roughly be called horizontals and those of the beech
> radiating. (J, 144).

Returning to the oaks he finds that

> the star knot is the chief thing: it is whorled, worked
> round, a little and this is what keeps up the illusion
> of the tree: the leaves are rounded inwards and figure
> out ball-knots. (J, 144-5)

Two days later he has found out

> the law of the oak leaves. It is of platter-shaped
> stars altogether ... All the sprays ... shape out and
> as it were embrace greater circles and the dip and toss
> of these make the wider and less organic articulations
> of the tree. (J, 146)

Here we note a concentration on species — oaks, cedars, and beeches generally — and an urge to find "law", "organization", "determining planes", some "system" representable in simple geometrical terms. In fact, before 1868, the word "law" — usually meaning something like "simple formal principle of visual appearance" — seems to have been used more frequently than any other in Hopkins's notes to clarify the kinds of meaning to which he would later apply his "scape and stress" terminology. For example, soon after finding the "visible law" in the theatre-crowd, Hopkins observes "tretted mossy clouds" which "have their law more in helices, wave-tongues, than in anything else" (J, 142). After

having begun to elaborate the special terminology, he continues to remark upon the same kind of "laws", as in leaves which "fall from the two sides of the branch or spray in two marked planes which meet at a right angle or more" (J, 192). But he now calls the phenomenon "scaping". Comparably, in 1871, he observes the "squareness of scaping" in daffodils (J, 208), and a tree-inscape which is essentially "a single graceful swerve" sustaining the "most simple and beautiful oneness" of the tree (J, 215). Very soon afterwards he discerns a "simple direct instress of trinity" in the way the lancet-windows of a church "dwell upon the eye" (J, 215). The "single curve" principle recurs soon afterwards, when Hopkins reports that he

> caught that inscape in the horse that you see in the
> pediment especially and other bas reliefs of the Parthenon
> and even which Sophocles had felt and expresses in two
> choruses of the Oedipus Coloneus, running on the likeness
> of a horse to a breaker, a wave of the sea curling over.
> I looked at the groin or the flank and saw how the set of
> the hair symmetrically flowed outwards from it to all parts
> of the body, so that, following that one may inscape the
> whole beast very simply. (J, 241-2)

"Inscape" is now used as a verb, and not for the first time. In 1870, for example, Hopkins was looking at the sun and the area of sky coloured by the light of its setting: he "inscaped them together" whereas before they had been "quite out of gauge with each other" (J, 196). Shortly after writing about the "inscape in the horse", Hopkins comments on the leopards in a painting by Briton Rivière: the "flow and slow spraying of the streams of spots down from the backbone" is the feature which makes it possible to "word-in and inscape the whole animal and

even the group of them" (J, 244).

An inscape is not simply received or recognized. It is half-created by the observer. It is a principle whereby the object is grasped or engaged with. Comparably, "law" becomes predicative in an 1872 note on water-patterns and "all the turns of the scaping" therein: Hopkins tries to "law out the shapes and the sequence" (J, 223). At another point, Hopkins finds one of the many "square" scapings, this time in "broken blots of snow in the dead bents of the hedge-banks" (J, 205). The structural law "helped the eye over another hitherto disordered field of things". The laws underlying the inscapes of things are definitely laws of perception.

The laws are not static. The oak-trees, for example, are explaining themselves in two senses. It is the suggested pattern of their growth, their unfolding, which gives them form, unity, inscape. Their construction is presented in such terms as "worked round ... figure out ... shape out", terms suggestive not only of activity but also of the creation of meaning. The word "articulation" is interesting here, since it combines the ideas of developmental order and of speech. I am not suggesting that Hopkins is definitely thinking of language in this instance, but he certainly does see inscape as expressive, communicative. At one point, for example, he writes of "the form speaking" in a budded lime (J, 163). I shall be suggesting later that a more precisely-defined application of the term "articulation" to the phenomenon of language helps us to relate Hopkins's descriptions of natural forms to his poetic exploration of linguistic forms. For the moment, it is necessary to consider more carefully the dynamic nature of the order which Hopkins perceives in nature, and the ways in which he prevents this perception from corroborating a potentially atheistic "philosophy of continuity or flux".

2.5 Inscape and process

James Milroy has noted that "the prose of the later Journals is developed largely for the description of processes" and that, furthermore, it is "characteristic of Hopkins to transfer vocabulary used to describe <u>solid</u> or <u>static</u> objects or substances to <u>mobile</u> or <u>fluid</u> substances, or vice versa".[21] Milroy goes on to say that

> the sense of stress or tension that has been noticed as
> a distinguishing mark of Hopkins's poetry is partly the
> result of his ability to suggest that mobile substances
> are somehow captured, 'stalled', caught up, in a particular
> state, whereas solid stable things have potential motion
> which is restained and under stress. (pp. 165-6)

According to Alfred Mizener, "an actual sense of movement was for Hopkins the heart of reality, and the dramatic balance of movements the thing he responded to most; it was, for him, fulfilment".[22]

The horse-inscape discussed in the previous section was a <u>dynamic</u> principle. The form of the horse unfolds in the consciousness of the observer like a headlong, curling wave. Hopkins, indeed, used the phrase "scapes of motion" in one description:

> Mackerel fishing but not much sport. Besides I was in pain
> and could not look at things much. When the fresh-caught
> fish flounced in the bottom of the boat they made scapes
> of motion, quite as strings do, nodes and all, silver bellies
> upwards. (<u>J</u>, 234)

Elsewhere he writes of "running inscape" in wrought brass gates (<u>J</u>, 255). And, describing the "after-image" effect of a firework (which at first

he thought was a meteor and whose image "seemed to pass this side of the crest of the hill"), he speculates:

> It may be because the eye taking up the well-marked
> motion and forestalling it carry the bright scape
> of the present and past motion (which lasts 1/8 of a
> second, they say) on to a part of the field where the
> motion itself has not or will not come (J, 232)

(The use of the word "forestalling" here may be a key to the understanding of the term "stalled", which is discussed later in this section.)

Reporting his perception of a horned violet, Hopkins writes:

> Even in withering the flower ran through beautiful
> inscapes by the screwing up of the petals into straight
> little barrels or tubes. It is not that inscape does not
> govern the behaviour of things in slack and decay as one
> can see even in the pining of the skin in the old and
> even in a skeleton but that horror prepossesses the mind,
> but in this case there was nothing in itself to shew
> even whether the flower were shutting or opening (J, 211)

But these are only the inscapes which have a more obvious temporal or dynamic aspect.

It is well worth our looking more carefully at the passage, referred to in the previous section, in which the phrase "law out" appears. Here, in an account of scaping in moving water, we find a concentration of several stylistic features which, generally in Hopkins's writings, help to convey the impression of dynamism or force. Hopkins is standing on a "shallowing shore":

> The breakers always are parallel to the coast and shape
>
> themselves to it ... The slant ruck or crease one sees in
>
> them shows the way of the wind ...
>
> About all the turns of the scaping from the break and
>
> flooding of _ wave to its run out again I have not yet
>
> satisfied myself. The shores are swimming and the eyes have before
>
> them a region of milky surf but it is hard for them to unpack
>
> the huddling and gnarls of the water and law out the shapes and the
>
> sequence of the running: I catch however the looped or forked
>
> wisp made by every big pebble the backwater runs over ... then
>
> I saw it run browner, the foam dwindling and twitched into long
>
> chains of suds, while the strength of the backdraught shrugged
>
> the stones together and clocked them one against another ...
>
> It is pretty to see the dance and swagging of the light
>
> green tongues or ripples of waves in a place locked between
>
> rocks. (J, 223)

This passage pulsates with the vitalities of verbs. Apart from the ones

used conventionally, we might note "shrugged" and "clocked" and "shape

themselves to" which imparts an unusual nuance to a verb, "shape" normally

being transitive. There are several verbal nouns and nominally-functioning

participles ("scaping ... break and flooding ... run out ... huddling ...

dance and swagging"). Hopkins conceives solid objects in comparable terms,

and the diction with which he describes them exhibits very frequently

these two main features of, firstly, modification of transitivity, and,

secondly, word-class transference which works against the distinction

between "object" and "process"..

In fact, many of the relevant stylistic habits resemble those of

Keats, who, as Bernard Groom has pointed out, prefers verbal

nouns, agent-nouns, adjectives of participial form, and other forms

which, we may say in summary, tend to insist on verb-energy.[23] Of the
transference-features observable in Hopkins's prose the verbal noun is
possibly the most striking. Thus, elsewhere than in the passages
already quoted, we find "a strange pretty scatter-droop of barley ears"
(J, 144), "soar of the poplar" (J, 144), "droop of firs" (J, 144),
"saddle-curves with dips and swells" (J, 174), "a strew of waving
poppy-leaf" (J, 180), "the slouch and toss-up of the fir-tree head"
(J, 244), "the toss or dance of twig and light-wood" (J, 245) and
"a lace and tangle of jumping sprays" (J, 251) amongst many, many others.

Wherever possible, as we saw in the second section of this
chapter when discussing the "artistry" perceptible in creation, Hopkins
will use a verb-based form rather than a "static" adjective. Thus
"crisped" (e.g., J, 225) is used on several occasions. There are
numerous phrases such as "grotted waves" (J, 23), "branch-pierced
fleeces"(J, 58), "detached stacked clouds" (J, 135). Beech-leaves are
"crisply pinched like little fingered papers" (J, 143), and "a bright
silver-tackled waterfall" is "parted into slender shanks" (J, 176).
Actions appear "frozen" into objects, which are seen as coincidences
of resolved forces rather than of static qualities.

Present participles in Hopkins's prose are frequently nominal in
function, typical instances being "supple curvings in the boughs" (J, 140),
"long flutings" (J, 141), "fine eyebrow crispings" (J, 184), "crisping
and mottling" (J, 154), "texture of branchings" (J, 178) and "white
pearling" (J, 196). As we observed in the passage on the sea-shore
("break and flooding" and "huddling and gnarls") Hopkins has a habit of
combining a monosyllabic verbal noun with a present participial form.
He writes of the "breaks and the packing" of cloud (J, 150),of the
"dressing and toss" of a tree (J, 150), of the "droop and outward
pointing" of leaves (J, 175), of the "swaling or give" of water (J, 189)

and of the "caressed curve and combing" of elm-boughs (J, 239).

All the features of diction mentioned so far are of importance in the poems. Let us consider the fourth stanza of Hopkins's very earliest known poem, "The Escorial" (Poems, No. 1):

> He rais'd the convent as a monstrous grate;
>
> The cloisters cross'd with equal courts betwixt
>
> Formed bars of stone; Beyond in stiffen'd state
>
> The stretching palace lay as handle fix'd.
>
> Then laver'd founts and postur'd stone he mix'd.

Such phrases as "stiffen'd state", "handle fix'd", "laver'd founts" and "postur'd stone" are clearly reminiscent of Keats. We might compare them with the following phrases from "The Eve of St. Agnes" (Poetical Works, pp. 236-48): "sculptur'd dead" (st.II), "carved angels" (st.IV), "wreathed pearls" and "warmed jewels" (st. XXVI), and "poppied warmth" (st. XXVII). In each case full syllabic weight is given to the "-ed" ending, or, if not, the elision is clearly marked. Hopkins left behind the more superficially "Keatsian" effects which are to be found in the earliest poems, but this tendency in adjective-choice, like other "dynamic" aspects of vocabulary, continues, as in the line "Cuckoo-echoing, bell swarmèd, lark-charmèd, rook-racked, river-rounded" (Poems, No. 44).

Verbal nouns begin in the second poem ("the stir and keep of pride", etc.) and are used to great effect in "The Wreck of the Deutschland" (Poems, No. 28) where we find "the hurtle of hell" (st.3), "a smother of sand" (st. 14), "the ride of her keel" (st. 14) and "the burl of the fountains of air, buck and flood of the wave" (st. 16) amongst others. Most significant are such passages as the following in which the psychological dynamics of religious conversion are conveyed in vividly physical terms :

> The swoon of a heart that the sweep and the hurl of thee
>
> trod
>
> Hard down with a horror of height:
>
> And the midriff astrain with leaning of, laced with fire of stress.
>
> (st. 2)

and

> I am soft sift
>
> In an hourglass — at the wall
>
> Fast, but mined with a motion, a drift,
>
> And it crowds and it combs to the fall;
>
> I steady as a water in a well, to a poise, to a pane.
>
> (st. 4)

Rearrangements of grammatical classification are extremely important here. Verb-forms such as "swoon", "sweep", "hurl", "leaning", "sift", "drift", "fall" and "poise" realize nearly all the noun-positions, and "steady" operates unusually as a verb. Comparably, in the sixth and seventh stanzas, the coming of God's "stress" into the world dates from Christ's "going in Galilee" : thence comes the "discharge of it", there its "swelling to be".

The windhover (in Poems, No. 36) is, like so many natural phenomena in Hopkins's work, a poise of forces, sheer energy. The bird is caught "in his riding ... on swing". It is the "hurl and gliding" of the creature that is remarkable, the "achieve of" the thing. Here Hopkins is presenting the vision of self as activity, as confluence and expression of (ultimately divine) energies, which stretches the poet's language to greater extremes in "As Kingfishers Catch Fire ... " (Poems, No. 57).

Before considering that poem in detail, we might note another aspect of the linguistic experimentation begun in the journals. In his

attempt to represent in language the sinuous evolutions of organic force which he feels to underlie phenomena, Hopkins frequently alters the normal transitivity of verbs, and carefully manipulates prepositions in order subtly to change the quality of a verb-idea. Thus "the web of springing green with long curls moulds off the skeleton of the branches" (J, 134), the sky is "breathing open" (J, 147) and elsewhere "working blue-silver" (J, 149). The anther-lashes of honeysuckle are "giving off all round" (J, 167). The poet watches cloud which "shapes in leaf over leaf of wavy or eyebrow texture" (J, 184). Laps of foam "mouthed upon one another" (J, 225). Swifts "round and scurl" (J, 231). Leaves pour down "and in a few minutes a whole tree was flung of them" (J, 239). Balks of grey cloud are "searched with long crimsonings ... dewlaps and bellyings ... great gutterings and ropings" (J, 240, where we see also a typical cluster of nominally-functioning participles).

"As Kingfishers Catch Fire..."is a crucial poem in the working out of Hopkins's cosmology, and offers a good demonstration of the attention to grammatical nuances which I have been discussing. The octave runs as follows:

> As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
>> As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
>> Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
> Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
> Each mortal thing does one thing and the same :
>> Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
>> Selves — goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,
> Crying What I do is me : for that I came.

Hopkins begins with transitive verbs, and in a sense the poem is a meditation on transitivity, insofar as this linguistic feature reflects

ontological conceptions. The substantive "being" becomes here the object of an activity, a dealing-out, rather than a static state. Comparably, in the sonnet on Purcell, Hopkins gives to the abstraction "self" an unusual active sense:

> it is the rehearsal
> Of own, of abrúpt sélf there so thrusts on, so throngs the ear.
>
> (Poems, No. 45)

In "As Kingfishers Catch Fire ..." Hopkins returns to the root "self", seeking to express an ontological nuance which is latent in the language but which must be, as it were, squeezed out of it. His "being" is both an activity and a state. In the complex seventh line Hopkins attempts to convey this by ringing changes on the root "self". The normally substantive (plural) form "selves" becomes an intransitive verb. The reflexive or intensive "itself" is given a curious application in the phrase "goes itself" which, especially as it appears to be appositional to the verb "selves", might be regarded as a new complex verb meaning something like "individuates". Immediately adding "myself" (which has an unusual object-relation to the verbs "speaks" and "spells") Hopkins has exposed within a very small space an unusual number of facets of the concept of selfhood. Together these constitute a new idea, which is, strictly, unparaphrasable. We can to a degree separate out the idea from the precise linguistic forms employed, but then the directness, the compression and clarity of its realization, is lost.

The sestet sustains this kind of grammatical precision and exploration:

> I say more : the just man justices;
>
> Keeps gráce : thát keeps all his goings graces;
>
> Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is —
>
> Chríst. For Christ plays in ten thousand places,
>
> Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
>
> To the Father through the features of men's faces.

Modulation between "state" and "activity" recurs in "the just man justices". "Keeps grace" can be regarded as another complex verb, approximately an intransitive "graces" (with an implication of continuousness). The two words, like "goes itself", might well have been hyphenated.

The equation of "goings" and "graces" continues the blending of action with state or nature. The religious question of authenticity of existence is being explored grammatically. The problem is "solved" through the transformation of "What I do is me" to "acts ... what ... he is — / Christ". The redeemer is the principle whereby individuals are involved in the universe. The creator and the creation are, through the mystery of Christ, distinguishable yet one. Such an intuition of variety-in-unity is of course the essence of the doctrine of the Trinity, but Hopkins extends the principle.

Finally, to return to the question of verb-usage, we might note that the stones are "tumbled" and then "ring", that the string is "touched" then "tells", and that the bell's bow is "swung" and then "flings" its name out. Things are channels of process.

The implications of the stylistic features which we have been considering can in fact be explained in terms of Ernest Fenollosa's findings in The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry.[24] Fenollosa discusses the principles of Chinese poetic composition and suggests analogous principles which might be — and in the best poetry

have been — followed by Western poets. The argument is based on a study of written Chinese and an associated philosophical consideration of language in general. Whilst several of Fenollosa's conclusions are disputable, the correspondence between his main prescriptions and Hopkins's practice is very striking.

Fenollosa argues that there are no "true" nouns or verbs, since "the eye sees noun and verb as one : things in motion, motion in things, and so the Chinese conception tends to represent them" (p.14). "All truth" is in fact "the transference of power" (p.16) and "the form of the Chinese transitive sentence, and of the English (omitting particles) exactly corresponds to this universal form of action in nature" (p.17). The Sanskrit roots which reflect the Indo-European basis of modern Western languages are, like the Chinese radicals, mainly verbs, and it is possible to demonstrate the derivation of all other grammatical forms from verbs (pp.22-5). Sometimes the "inner heat of thought" will "melt down the parts of speech to recast them at will" (p.21). Poetry ought to be characterized by "thousands of active words" (p.32) and, indeed, the power of Shakespeare's verse derives largely from his "persistent, natural, and magnificent use of hundreds of transitive verbs" (p.33).

Hopkins would clearly have assented to much of this. His descriptive vocabulary insists on what Fenollosa calls "the actual and entangled lines of forces as they pulse through things" (p.16), and indeed his vision of this pattern of processes often resembles nothing so much as the Taoist view of nature, which underlies the Chinese and Japanese philosophical and poetic traditions and which did much to determine the distinctive character of ch'an (Japanese zen) Buddhism.[25] An important principle in Taoist philosophy is li, a word which originally referred to the kind of flow-pattern which is perceptible in jade-markings or wood-grain. Alan Watts explains the significance of the sense of li for Chinese art:

Li may therefore be understood as organic order, as

distinct from mechanical or legal order, both of which go by

the book. Li is the asymmetrical, nonrepetitive, and

unregimented order which we find in the patterns of moving

water, the forms of trees and clouds, of frost crystals on

the window, or the scattering of pebbles on the beach sand.

It was through the appreciation of li that landscape painting

arose in China long before Europeans got the point of it,

so that now painters and photographers show us constantly the

indefinable beauty of such lilts as waterfalls and bubbles

in foam.[26]

Hopkins's favourite subjects in the journals are, by and large, those

listed by Watts, the transient patterning of clouds being at least as

interesting to the poet as the more stable forms. Indeed, as Hillis

Miller points out,

some of Hopkins' drawings are startlingly like Chinese paintings.

Their swirling whirlpool patterns seem to manifest an organizing

power sweeping through things and bending them to shape. [27]

It would, however, be inaccurate to say that Hopkins's sense of li

involves a delight in its being "nonrepetitive". He delights in the

repetition of "types or species" and in the possibility of "lawing out"

or "making out the make of" a related class of phenomena. As Miller

puts it:

The instress of being oscillates momentarily at a single

frequency, and flows over a mountain, through the ocean, or

through the shapeless water vapor which is the stuff of clouds.

When it does this it leaves its mark behind in the form of

rows of nearly identical trees, waves, or clouds in
patterned repetition, like a textile design, or like a row
of pots from the same mold.. The random clods and broken
heaps of snow made by the cast of a broom prove that all
the world is full of inscape not because the snow falls into
a single pattern, but because it falls spontaneously into
a repeated pattern of parallel curves. The hand of the
creator works in lavish abundance and produces an
inexhaustible supply of any one species. All these
examples rhyme. (p.293)

A great part of Hillis Miller's excellent essay is intended to
demonstrate how much of Hopkins's thought revolves on the metaphorical
axis of a principle of rhyme, one aspect of which is mentioned in the
extract above. Metaphor itself is a version of rhyme, and Hopkins's
"respect for the idiosyncrasy of each cloud shape is only accomplished
by confession that the cloud, though unlike all other clouds, is like
something else — the cobweb, pillow, or meal to which it is compared"
(p.297). The combination of a love of metaphor and a systematizing urge
(based on a "diatonic" principle of "types or species") relates Hopkins
to the oriental painters in Laurence Binyon's account:

In China and Japan everything was systematised to an
extraordinary extent. There was a way for doing everything,
or rather sixteen, or thirty-six, or some other consecrated
number of ways, each distinct and defined and each with a
name ...

For the landscape-painter there are sixteen ways of
drawing the wrinkles or curvatures of mountains, corresponding
to different types of geological formation, and each way has

its own name. Some wrinkles are like hemp-fibres, others
like the veins of a lotus; others again like impressions of
rain-drops, or like scattered brushwood, or like alum-
crystals. Some are as if cut with a large axe, others as if
cut with a small axe.[28]

But the universal _tao_ which produces such patterns is not a divinity
in the Christian sense, not a personal god. The word _tao_ basically
means road, path or way, and, as Arthur Waley points out, all the
"meaning-extensions" of the Chinese word have European equivalents,
"even including the last : 'I am the Way'".[29] In its wider cosmological
sense, _tao_ eventually "meant 'the way the universe works'" but although
it then came to correspond to "something very like God" it only did so
"in the more abstract and philosophical sense of the term" (p.30).

Hopkins was certainly very interested in oriental cosmologies, in
which the conception of divine immanence passes over into a sense of
the identity of creator and creation, into forms of pantheism. Having
considered Hopkins's experimentation with the word and idea "self", we
can well understand his transcribing (in an unpublished notebook) the
following translation by Max Müller from a Hindu text:

Self is the lord of all things. Self is the king of all
things. As all the spokes of a wheel are contained in the
nave and the circumference all things are contained in this
self. Bráhmin itself is but self.[30]

In "Pied Beauty" (_Poems_, No. 37) Hopkins to an extent solved the problem
of relating his more "oriental" perceptions to Christian orthodoxy.
The penultimate line, "He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change",
is a remarkable achievement in the delicate poise of religious understanding

which it expresses, and the achievement depends on the kind of careful verb-modification which we have observed in other poems and notes. The noun "father" would have been inadequate to Hopkins's purposes. God may beget or create, but then retire from what He has formed. To say, in more active terms, that God "fathers" is still to admit the possibility of separation between creator and creation, whether the verb is used transitively or intransitively. Hopkins wishes to suggest that the divinity passes over into the created world, being actively and continually involved in it. At the same time he wishes to avoid the broadly "pantheist" position, to avoid implying that God is <u>no more than</u> a term for "everything" or "the universe", the sum of things. Hopkins's unique solution is "fathers- forth", significantly hyphenated, a verb with an attached modifier which gives it the precise degree of transitivity required. God <u>constellates into</u> the world. He retains primacy, identity, personality. He remains the father, the gone-before, the precedent. But His creatures are, as it were, transformations of His divine self. He cannot move beyond or exceed Himself, but his creating has the quality of a coming forth or forward, of a giving-out, or, in the terms of "As Kingfishers Catch Fire ...", a "dealing-out".

Before leaving the question of the dynamic aspect of inscape, its involvement with an almost oriental vision of nature as a field of patterned forces, one further point is to be made. By considering Hopkins's use of two or three special terms in accounts of moving or progressive inscapes, we can not only make some estimation of the extent to which, generally speaking, Hopkins's special terms are separately definable : we can also expand a little more on the <u>subjective</u> element in inscape, its dependence on human participation.

In an 1871 note, Hopkins writes:

> A beautiful instance of inscape sided on the slide,
> that is / successive sidings of one inscape, is seen
> in the behaviour of the flag flower from the shut bud
> to the full blowing : each term you can distinguish is
> beautiful in itself and of course if the whole 'behaviour'
> were gathered up and so stalled it would have a beauty of
> all the higher degree. (J, 211)

Milroy cites this as an example of Hopkins's employment of special vocabulary to make possible the description of experiences for which "more conventional general terms" would be inadequate or inaccurate:

> 'If the whole process were gathered up and so fixed'would
> be wrong because Hopkins is not thinking of an abstract
> process that imposes itself on the flower, but of the
> flower itself as being and behaving. It is not a 'process',
> nor is the behaviour gathered up and 'fixed'. I can
> think of no word but stalled that will say what Hopkins
> means to say without suggesting further meanings which
> he does not intend. (p.95)

Milroy is not, half-despairingly, concluding that Hopkins's meanings simply cannot be explained. Considered in the light of Milroy's excellent account of Hopkins's language, the passage demonstrates very well the kind of challenge which that language presents to the reader. Milroy comes to a point where he is tempted to over-paraphrase, but realizes that the meaning will not separate out from the precise linguistic context in which it appears, and which is related to other contexts in the journals. Hopkins's "behaviour" defies simple definition. But then so does the word "process", the possible alternative.

"Process" is a word which we can handle with perfect ease without ever being pressed to define or paraphrase it. Comparably, the words "red" and "green" can only positively be defined in terms of wavelengths of light, or negatively in terms of the mutual exclusiveness of colour-words in English. Any other "definition". such as "the colour of leaves", is simply a telling of the story of how the word was learned. It was learned by recognizing a common factor in the contexts where it was appropriate.

The reader of Hopkins's journals comes to understand "inscape" and other terms in a similar manner. The words, used in special senses or freshly coined, do not quite constitute a consistent technical vocabulary, but rather a net spread to catch meanings which had hitherto slipped through language. The net is broken at times, rewoven in different ways. But the important terms are repeated sufficiently often, and with sufficient consistency, for the language of inscape to be learned. The test of this learning is that which applies to ordinary lexical acquisition : the terms can purposefully be reapplied. And indeed we find a great number of Hopkins's critics — particularly the writers of longer studies — explaining Hopkins by adopting his language, by rearranging and reapplying the special terms, exhibiting and encouraging a familiarity with the new language.

This is not to say that Hopkins should not be interpreted or paraphrased, but that we should recognize the exploratory nature of his special language, and follow his progress to the points at which there was "no word but stalled" or at which "inscape" had to be used in a different way than before (as when it becomes a verb). We can perhaps a little better "acquire" the terms "stalled" and "behaviour" by recalling Hopkins's experience of the firework, mentioned earlier in this section. The eye, "taking up the well marked motion and

forestalling it carries the bright scape of the present and past
motion ... on to a part of the field where the motion itself has not
or will not come" (J, 232). The word "stalled" is more easily
comprehensible in the light of the use of "forestalling" in this
passage, and in view of inscapes such as those of trees which have
been discussed above. Plant-forms in particular are frequently
presented by Hopkins in terms of motions or processes which are suggested
in, which flow into and out of, the configurations that are perceived
at particular moments. It would seem that Hopkins sensed, around
momentary forms, after-images, and indeed "fore-images", of configurations
which developed into and from them. Considering the "behaviour of the
flag flower" in particular, I can think of no better way of clarifying
the meaning of "stalled" than to refer to the cinematic acceleration
of the unfolding of a flower, in which the extended natural process
comes to have the simplicity, the integrity, the near-simultaneity,
and the expressiveness, of a single brief and graceful gesture. In
writing as he does about such "behaviours", Hopkins is suggesting that
we are naturally capable of appreciating such gestures in the dance
of life.

2.6 Summary and transition

We can conclude from the foregoing survey that inscape is in
important respects a semiotic conception. The forms of the world are
conceived as products of communicative divine artifice — or, we might
say, encoding. Instress establishes things, sustains their inscapes,
and carries the inscapes over into the mind of the beholder or
communicant or decoder. Inscapes are God's signs or words. The
forms "speak".

The idea of inscape is closely related to the notion of species or types, of "imperishable" (ideal, abstract, more-or-less "Platonic") forms, and Hopkins analyzes the formal properties of phenomena in terms of simple repeated "laws" which underlie the complexities of the phenomena. In Chapter One, section two, I considered the close association of Structuralism with semiotics. One of the "three key ideas" which Piaget finds in the modern notion of structure is "the idea of transformation", a structure being a rule-governed "system of transformations". One of the best-known applications of the idea of transformation in Structuralist theory is to be found in Transformational-Generative Grammar. Using the terminology of the earlier stages of Chomsky's syntactic theories rather loosely, we might say that Hopkins looks for "kernel" forms which, through processes of "transformation", generate the structures of natural forms.[31]

Only in view of the essential underlying forms or types or laws is Hopkins's universe "diatonic" rather than "chromatic". In invoking this musical analogy and preferring "diatonism", Hopkins is certainly not refusing to acknowledge a chromatic element in the order of things. He presents solid, inanimate objects as confluences of energies, dynamic equilibria, moments of trembling poise. What he challenges is "the theory of pure chromatism or continuity" (J, 120 : emphasis added). He opposes that overemphasis on chromatism which leads to a vision of the universe as an essentially meaningless, accidental or uncoordinated flux of blind and often contradictory forces. Such a universe would not be a system in the terms outlined by Piaget in the passages discussed in Chapter One, section two, above, or by Jakobson when he says:

Any set of phenomena examined by contemporary science is treated not as a mechanical agglomeration but as a structural whole, and the basic task is to reveal the inner, whether static or developmental, laws of this system.[32]

To perceive inscape is to appreciate the ways in which things or elements or particularities partake in patterns greater than themselves. Things are examples of species, specifications of laws, variations on themes, moments in processes, and, ultimately, "modifications and sidings" of universal Being, of the god who "fathers-forth" into the world.[33]

It seems justifiable to regard Hopkins as exhibiting a Structuralist cast of mind, not only in his theological conception of the entire universal order, but also in his tendency to perceive "common and perhaps necessary" properties being shared by different kinds of structures. The philosophical implications of the Structuralist idea of common features in structures generally will be treated in passing throughout the remainder of this study, and particularly in the last chapter. Many of these implications will be seen to depend on the relation between "the order of things" and the conditions of the human capacity to create order out of experience, which relation has been seen to be crucial in the theory of inscape.

What I am mainly concerned to demonstrate, however, is that Hopkins's "sense of language" is strongly influenced by the Structuralist tendency in his thought, if the perception of language as such was not indeed the origin of that tendency. Through his experience of poetry, I shall argue, Hopkins became increasingly sensitive to the systemic relations between words and between other types of linguistic unit. If words, for Hopkins, are like other natural phenomena in being capable of bearing "inscapes", then this is mainly because they have a comparable quality of being systemically defined or constituted.

I shall be going on to suggest that whilst we cannot reasonably attach only one highly specific meaning to the phrase "inscape of speech", we can justifiably interpret the phrase in terms of the main conclusions of the present chapter. The inscape in question will be of the species language (perhaps, "linguistic signs") or at least of English. The inscape will involve relatively simple, basic structures or structural "laws" which are specified, "worn, 'fetched' or instanced", in particular pieces of language, and which are unusually accentuated in the special kind of language which is poetry. Language will be perceived as an active or dynamic system. To stress the subjective aspect again, we may say that the "structural laws" are as likely to be types of mental operation involved in our understanding or production of a piece of language.

In the next chapter, I shall look at some of the interpretations of the concept of linguistic and poetic inscape which lie between the one mentioned earlier in connection with the sonnet on Purcell (poetic inscape being simply the distinctiveness which expresses unique artistic personality) and the Structuralist interpretation which I have begun to elaborate.

THE MEANINGS OF "INSCAPE OF SPEECH"

3.1 Introductory

In this chapter I shall consider the range of meanings which can plausibly be attached to the phrase "inscape of speech". Each projected meaning raises important general questions about the nature of poetry and its relation to other art-forms (particularly music), and the survey allows us to introduce and arrange into broad categories the views of several critics on Hopkins's conceptions of language and poetry. "Inscape of speech" has several aspects, but, as the last section of this chapter suggests, one of them has not been properly investigated. There are reasons for taking the phrase to refer to "speech" in the very general sense of language as such.

3.2 Poetry as abstract art

A first approach is to consider Hopkins as having striven, in his verse, to produce formal patterns which have an intrinsic interest. Donald McChesney writes:

> Some critics, especially earlier ones, have strained at
> a gnat to over-praise Hopkins for descriptive power or
> onomatopoeic skill. True, he possesses both, but his use
> of language goes far beyond such mere utilitarian functions,
> and his poetic purposes stretch beyond these into the

realm of pure 'play', pure pattern, pure energy of spirit.[34]

Jerome Bump feels that, apart from his success in using structural
parallelism "for consolidation, amalgamation and fusion of meaning",
Hopkins also manages to create "a powerful supralogical atmosphere of
harmony", this "phonic harmony" being developed to the point "where
it is itself meaningful, subordinating originality of subject matter to
density of structural interrelationships" (Bump, pp.111-12).

Such an emphasis on the harmonic possibilities of (mainly
parallelistic) structural patterning is inevitably associated with
the ideas of Walter Pater, particularly with his famous statement that
all art "aspires to the condition of music". The idea that poetry can
validly be regarded as having important "supralogical" effects will
be considered further in Chapter Four, particularly in the third section,
which treats the relation between Russian Formalist criticism and
"transrational" or "trans-sense" verse. For the moment we ought to
assess the degree to which Pater can justly be regarded as having
promoted such an extreme form of poetry, and the extent to which Hopkins
can be held to have followed Pater's principles. Here is the kernel
of Pater's argument:

All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music.
For while in the other kinds of art it is possible to
distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can
always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort
of art to obliterate it. That the mere matter of a poem, for
instance, its subject, namely, its given incidents or situation
... should be nothing without the form, the spirit, of the
handling, that this form, this mode of handling, should
become an end in itself, should penetrate every part of the

matter : this is what all art constantly strives after, and achieves in different degrees. (Pater, Renaissance, p.129)

A little later, Pater expands his application of the principle to poetry in a paragraph which must be quoted entirely if Pater's attachment to poetry of the terms "ideal" and "highest" is not to be misconceived:

Poetry, again, works with words addressed in the first instance to the pure intelligence; and it deals, most often, with a definite subject or situation. Sometimes it may find a noble and quite legitimate function in the conveying of moral or political aspiration, as often in the poetry of Victor Hugo. In such instances it is easy enough for the understanding to distinguish between the matter and the form, however much the matter, the subject, the element which is addressed to the mere intelligence, has been penetrated by the informing, artistic spirit. But the ideal types of poetry are those in which this distinction is reduced to its minimum; so that lyrical poetry, precisely because in it we are least able to detach the matter from the form, without a deduction from that matter itself, is, at least artistically, the highest and most complete form of poetry. And the very perfection of such poetry often seems to depend, in part, on a certain suppression or vagueness of mere subject, so that the meaning reaches us through ways not distinctly traceable by the understanding, as in some of the most imaginative compositions of William Blake, and often in Shakespeare's songs, as pre-eminently in that song of Mariana's page in Measure for Measure, in which the kindling force and poetry

of the whole play seems to pass for a moment into an actual strain of music. (Pater, _Renaissance_, p.131)

By "lyrical poetry" Pater seems to mean the most "poetic" of poetry, the poetry in which the defining, characterizing features of the art are developed to an extreme degree. We must note that he qualifies the phrase "highest and most complete" with "at least artistically". We might say that such poetry is highest in literariness, the quality which, as we shall see below, the Russian Formalists set out to analyze. Some Formalists unfortunately seemed to confuse literariness with literary value. We are not justified in assuming that Pater made the same error, even though he expresses himself in a potentially misleading manner. Pater is suggesting that the poems which best exemplify the art's ideal of untranslatability (_coincidence of form and content_) are those in which referential or propositional meaning is minimal, or almost irrelevant to the main effect. His comments on "lyrical" poetry are not necessarily incompatible with the belief that in most very good poetry literariness will have to be suppressed for the sake of meaning or subject. The paragraph begins by acknowledging the importance of poetry which is "addressed ... to the pure intelligence". Although Pater's shift from "pure" to "mere" might imply a higher valuation of the "lyrical" poetry, it could equally well be taken to mean that poetry cannot very frequently become great if it addresses the intelligence or logical faculty alone. Most fine poetry will require a measure of that artistic integrity, that fusion of form and meaning which (at the cost of semantic richness or precision) the more "musical" kinds of poetry take to an extreme.

Pater's later essay on "Style" suggests that his thoughts were tending in this way. There he writes:

If music be the ideal of all art whatever, precisely because
in music it is impossible to distinguish the form from the
substance or matter, the subject from the expression, then,
literature, by finding its specific excellence in the absolute
correspondence of the term to its import, will be but
fulfilling the condition of all artistic quality in things
everywhere, of all good art.

Good art, but not necessarily great art; the distinction
between great art and good art depending immediately, as regards
literature at all events, not on its form, but on the matter.

(Pater, Appreciations, pp. 35-6)

It is the inextricability of content and mode of expression which is the
real value for Pater, and straightforward linguistic precision is a way
of achieving this condition. The poetry of propositional "vagueness" is
"higher" only in its typicality. Great art depends on "matter", meaning,
subject. Pater is very far from believing that poetry ought to resemble
music. He never ceased to affirm the soundness of Lessing's principles,
which he echoes near to the beginning of "The School of Giorgione" :

Each art, therefore, having its own peculiar and untranslatable
sensuous charm, has its own special mode of reaching the
imagination, its own special responsibilities to its material.
One of the functions of aesthetic criticism is to define
these limitations; to estimate the degree in which a given
work of art fulfils its responsibilities to its special material.

(Pater, Renaissance, p.126)

Hopkins is undoubtedly impressed by this principle. As he says in an
essay "On the True Idea and Excellence of Sculpture" ,

The laws of criticism in aesthetics, beyond such first
laws as apply to all the arts together, must follow fr. the
conditions under which each art works... The true artist
will accept and even strengthen his conditions, because Art
shews that perfection is only in this way attainable,
and that man's faculties deliver their strongest blows thus
concentrated; but some men misunderstanding their nature
have been led to struggle with them as though with fetters and
so waste their strength. [35]

I believe, furthermore, that Hopkins is making a similar distinction
to that which Pater made or implied (the distinction between
quintessential or ideal and great poetry) when he comments thus on the
poems of Barnes:

Talking of chronologically impossible and long words
the Rev. Wm. Barnes, good soul, of Dorset-dialect poems
(in which there is more true poetry than in Burns; I do not
say of course vigour or passion or humour or a lot of things,
but the soul of poetry, which I believe few Scotchmen have
got) has published a 'Speech craft of English Speech'
= English Grammar, written in an unknown tongue, a sort of
modern Anglosaxon, beyond all that Furnival in his wildest
Forewords ever dreamed.
(LB, 162)

The "soul of poetry" may, for Hopkins, have much to do with its
responsibilities to its medium. The "truest" poetry for Hopkins, like
the poetry which for Pater is "at least artistically" the highest, is
perhaps written by people like Barnes, who are uncommonly interested in
the nature of their language, its history, its dialects, its native

strengths. (Linguistic "nativism" will be discussed in more detail in the fifth section of the present chapter.) But Barnes lacks qualities which Burns possesses, "a lot of things", qualities which may be necessary to make "true poetry" into great poetry, and which cannot be compensated for by the strengths which derive from extreme concentration on the medium. As I shall try to show in Chapter Four, section four, below, Hopkins's inclination to theorize about principles and systems, and in his own poetry to amplify the defining characteristics of the art, did not exclude a sensitivity to such qualities as "vigour or passion or humour" or to more delicate emotional properties of poetry.

Hopkins, nevertheless, produced poetry of such phonic complexity that critics are tempted to describe its effects as "supralogical". Because of this, the foregoing qualifications of Pater's ideas on ".the condition of music" must constantly be borne in mind. Poetry becomes "musical" not by tending towards abstract schematization (resemblance to music) but by becoming more strikingly linguistic. The conditions of the particular medium are properly to be appreciated, to the extent that the artist might "even strengthen them". A sense of "responsibility" towards the special conditions is conducive to an integration of "form" and "meaning" which is analogous to the perfect fusion exhibited in music.

McChesney says, a little before the passage quoted at the beginning of this section, that Hopkins's poetic patterning is understandable through an analogy with a "craftsman in wood" who, "not content with carving an object, also endeavoured to bring out and even create the arabesques and patterns inherent in the very grain of the wood" (McChesney, p.206). This reminds me of a passage from Heidegger, which seems to summarize much of what has been said in the present section, the subject in this case being a cabinetmaker:

If he is to become a true cabinetmaker, he makes himself
answer and respond above all to the different kinds of wood
and to the shapes slumbering within the wood — to wood as it
enters man's dwelling with all the hidden riches of its
nature. In fact, this relatedness to wood is what maintains
the whole craft. Without that relatedness, the craft will
never be anything but empty busywork, any occupation with it
will be determined exclusively by business concerns. Every
handicraft, all human dealings, are constantly in that danger.
The writing of poetry is no more exempt from it than thinking.[36]

The forms which are "inherent" or "slumbering" within the medium are
largely specific to it, to do with its peculiar "nature". Hopkins's
recognition of this principle, expressed elsewhere even with regard to the
finer distinction between prose and poetry,[37] must be recalled whenever
we feel that by poetic "inscape" he referred to anything but _linguistic_
features. In my sixth chapter I shall investigate some of the ways in
which, as the cabinetmaker expresses his "relatedness to wood", so the
poet expresses his relatedness to language.

Having made these qualifications, it is possible to argue that an
interest in the more-or-less abstract formal properties of speech-sounds
might nevertheless in some way be important to the experience of verse.
That is to say, the composition and enjoyment of "word-music" might be
regarded as a significant recapitulation of early linguistic experience
(where "early" has both individual-developmental and historical implications).
Suzanne Langer suggests that a generally aesthetic, gratuitous or non-
pragmatic kind of fascination with sounds may have given at least as much
impetus to the development of language as any purely practical considerations,
and that such a fascination is a prerequisite of language-acquisition
in the child.[38]

Langer's thought, in fact, leads us to the consideration of other ways in which the experience of poetry and that of music might be understood to share common features. Musical relationships can convey fundamental patterns of consciousness, and the forms of this basic semantic — essentially a matter of dynamic qualities such as tension and release — can be perceived in poetic structure. I have therefore entitled the following section "Poetry and the condition of music" even though the present section has actually centred on crucial passages from Pater. The question of isomorphism between musical and poetic experiences is certainly not settled by discussing the more "abstract" kinds of significance which might be shared by two arts based on temporal sequences of sound. We may now proceed to consider more carefully the kinds of semantics or suggestiveness which can be attributed to patterns of speech-sounds beyond their strictly denotational significance.

3.3 Poetry and the condition of music

Langer gives us yet another account of the manner in which a plastic artist discovers, through the handling of a particular material for representational ends, patterns which might have a more general kind of aesthetic significance. She writes of the primitive artist "whose model is the human body, the tree-trunk, the curled dry leaf floating, the shell or skull or cocoanut from which he drinks".As he copies such models the artist comes to see "the reflection of human feeling, the 'dynamic' laws of life, power, and rhythm" (Langer, New Key, p.213). This quintessential pattern of experience is "easier to grasp" in music than in "the older and more model-bound arts", but this "artistic import" is what all artists "express through" their different representations:

> Its semantic is the play of lines, masses, colors, textures
> in plastic arts, or the play of images, the tension and
> release of ideas, the speed and arrest, ring and rhyme of
> words in poetry ... It is this which so-called 'abstract art'
> seeks to abstract by defying the model or dispensing with
> it altogether.   (Langer, New Key, p.217)

What is significant here is that "tension and release of ideas" is as
important a component as the "ring and rhyme of words" in the poetic
version of the general "artistic import". Langer consolidates the point
a little later:

> The tension which music achieves through dissonance, and the
> reorientation in each new resolution to harmony, find their
> equivalents in the suspensions and periodic decisions of
> propositional sense in poetry. Literal sense, not euphony,
> is the 'harmonic structure' of poetry; word-melody in
> literature is more akin to tone-colour in music.
>
>   (Langer, New Key, p.220)

The Symbolist belief in a poetry which is "musical" in a more naive sense
than this, is widely acknowledged to have been an error. C.M. Bowra writes
of the way in which Mallarmé was "deluded" by the musical analogy,
insofar as he overemphasized the capacity of "sounds and associations"
to "do all the work". Mallarmé himself recognised this:

> Attempts have been made to justify Mallarmé's belief, but the
> facts are against him. His own confession "Mon art est une
> impasse", his failure to write his great poem, the failure of
> his apologists to show that poetry can achieve effects comparable

to those of music, the unalterable truth that words cannot

be divorced from their meanings, all these show that his

doctrine was faulty.[39]

Laurence Lerner points out that, although poetic "music" cannot be

separated from meaning, the musical analogy has some valid aspects:

> For in truth, the 'musicalizing' which Symbolist poetry
>
> accomplishes is not entirely, and perhaps not even mainly,
>
> a matter of sound. This is quite clear in the criticism of
>
> T.S. Eliot. He has confessed his indebtedness to music, and has
>
> called his poems Preludes, Rhapsodies and Quartets; but no one
>
> has ever found him 'musical' in the old-fashioned sense by
>
> which Poe and Swinburne are musical. What he has learned from
>
> music has been a way of disposing the meanings of words as
>
> if they were musical themes.[40]

These opinions might lead us further and further from the belief that

poetic <u>sound</u> has any real significance (beyond the obvious fact that

words are realized in sound). But Eliot himself said that "a 'musical

poem' is a poem which has a musical pattern of sound and a musical

pattern of the secondary meanings of the words which compose it" and

that "these two patterns are indissoluble and one".[41] We must further

question what Lerner calls the "old-fashioned sense" of "musical", as

Northrop Frye does when he stresses that there is much more to poetic

"music" than "pleasant variety of sounds" or the avoidance of "the more

unpronouncable clusters of consonants that abound in Modern English".[42]

Frye points out that music "is concerned not with beauty of sound but

with organization of sound" and that beauty depends on "the form of the

organization". Thus, when we find in poetry such features as "sharp

barking accents, long cumulative rhythms sweeping lines into paragraphs"
and "the bite and grip of heavily stressed monosyllables" then "we are
most likely to be reading a poet who is being influenced by music"
(Frye, p.xiii). On this account, as Frye acknowledges, Browning and
Hopkins are more "musical" poets than Tennyson.

In assessing the manner in which patterns of sound and of meaning
in poetry become "indissoluble and one", we might turn to the thoughts
of writers who have concentrated on metrical effect in verse. Rhythm is
a physical feature that poetry and music definitely share. The Gestalt
psychologist Köhler wrote that "both emotional and intellectual processes
have characteristics which we also know from music ... Crescendo and
diminuendo, accelerando and ritardano are obvious examples".[43] Langer,
in a later book, follows Köhler in saying that structure in music bears
"a close logical similarity to the forms of human feeling — forms of
growth and attenuation, flowing and stowing, conflict and resolution, speed,
arrest, terrific excitement, calm, or subtle activation and dreamy lapses
... Music is a tonal analogue of emotive life".[44] It is reasonable to
suppose that rhythm might carry over from music into poetry such analogues
of "inner events". Furthermore, my account of Hopkins's presentation of
"inscape of speech" refers mainly to his use of phonemic patterning, and,
although the reasons for this emphasis will become clear, my account
would be unbalanced if the importance of metre was not recognized.

D.W. Harding, in one of the most stimulating books to have been
written in recent years on the subject of literary rhythm, points out
"the risk of attributing to rhythm an expressive significance that stems
in reality from other features of language" (such as meaning and
intonation). He says that rhythm has "potential expressive value which
will become effective when other features favour it" and that this

value resides in rhythm's helping "to convey such qualities of action as surprise, hesitancy or conflict, flowing ease, conviction, impetuosity, forceful determination, wavering uncertainty, disengaged lightness of touch, crisp finality".[45] Harvey Gross has a similar attitude to the degree of specificity involved in metrical effect. He opposes Yvor Winters's view that metre is (in Gross's summary) "primarily a means of semantic emphasis" with an insistence that "rhythmic structures are expressive forms, cognitive elements, communicating those experiences which rhythmic consciousness can alone communicate", these experiences being "emphatic human responses to time in its passage" and being identifiable in terms similar to Harding's.[46]

The generality of these experiences of the "rhythmic consciousness" must be stressed. As Langer says, "What music reflects is only the morphology of feeling; and it is quite plausible that some sad and some happy conditions may have a very similar morphology" (Langer, New Key, p.202). It is notable that many critics who have pointed out the mimetic qualities of Hopkins's verse have tended to cite poems in which the qualities of the things "imitated" are closely associated with the (usually extreme) emotional state of the observer. Thus Alan Heuser writes of the way in which, in "The Windhover" and "Hurrahing in Harvest" (Poems, Nos. 36 and 38), Hopkins "used the outride to charge the rhythm with free flights and with sighs of feeling" (Heuser, p.55). In 'The Windhover" particularly, "chime and stress together accounted for expressive imitations in sound-value alone of ecstatic climb, majestic turn, sacrificial plunge" (Heuser, p.56).

Seymour Chatman cites Monroe Beardsley's statement of a position close to Langer's. According to Beardsley, "if we allow that music signifies every mental process to which it is iconic, then since many qualitatively different mental processes may have the same kinetic

pattern, musical signification is bound to be incurably ambiguous".
But, on the other hand, "you could say that musical signification is
not ambiguous but highly general : Bolero denotes any psychological
processes characterized by increasing intensity".[47] Chatman goes on
to say:

> I would call meter a highly general icon in the sense in
> which Beardsley uses the term. But I would add that it is
> less iconic than music precisely by virtue of its more
> meager capacities and its coexistence with a literal message.
> It symbolizes, rather, the general relation between the poet
> and his audience. It is something like the vocal (paralinguistic)
> features that tell us that one man is old, well-educated and
> happy, and that another is young, poorly educated, and
> miserable, even though they might be saying precisely the
> same words.[48]

Walker Gibson finds such a symbolization of the "general relation
between the poet and his audience" in Hopkins's style:

> What I have to say (we can feel the speaker suggesting)
> is felt so passionately, and its logical difficulties are
> so intense, that I cannot address you in any other than this
> most dramatic and tongue-twisting way. The strain I suffer
> in mouthing these conglomerations of noises will suggest to
> you (possibly) the strain I feel in my relation to nature
> and God.[49]

David Sonstroem expresses a similar attitude in commenting on
T. Sturge Moore's "improvement" of Hopkins's poem "The Leaden Echo
and the Golden Echo" (Poems, No. 59), claiming that by "omitting the
fumbling repetitions and the laborious stresses" Moore "has lost the

striving — the strenuous exertions of Hopkins's intense verbal play —
which is the heart of the poem's dramatic effect".[50] Todd K. Bender
writes of Hopkins's style in terms of the classical rhetorical device
known as hyperbaton, whereby poetic word-order reflects the order of
thoughts as they arise in the mind, showing priorities and relationships which
strict grammatical regularity might mask.[51] Brian Vickers, assessing the
attitudes of classical, medieval and Renaissance rhetoricians to the
function of hyperbaton, finds that reference is consistently made to
"states of extreme emotion" such as anger, jealousy and fear.[52]
In Milroy's account, the speaker who is "agitated or uncertain"
(Milroy, p.195) figures very prominently in the range of speech-styles
which Hopkins captures by rhythmical and syntactic means, many poems
giving "the impression of thinking aloud" (Milroy, p.199). In this
sense, "inscape of speech" can be taken as referring very specifically
to speaking — impassioned, urgent, spontaneous, uncorrected speaking.
And, if artistic inscape is primarily the impressing on the artwork
of its creator's distinctive personality, then the characteristically
excited voice which we hear in so many of Hopkins's poems is his
personal "inscape of speech".

Such accounts of Hopkins's purposes, and of our own responses, are
perhaps easier to accept than the accounts of "mimesis" which we find
in some critics. Heuser, for example, claims that "expressive rhythm
and lettering" in Hopkins's interweaving of poems produce "an organic
curvature suiting a vision of linked being" (Heuser, p.55), and Gibson
holds that Hopkins's style "expresses sensuously, by its very sound
on the ear, the abstract proposition that the individual inscapes of
nature are mysteriously, wondrously one" (Gibson, p.99). What the poems
actually "imitate" is, rather, less the forms of the things experienced
than the forms of the poet's experience of them. The windhover's flight

can be "imitated" only insofar as it lends itself so straightforwardly
to analogy with "inner events" or "forms of feeling" through the highly general
iconicity of metrical and other effects. As Jacob Korg has recently
written of certain features of "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" (Poems, No. 61),
"If these effects can be called mimetic, they imitate what has been
envisioned, not observed".[53]

3.4 The word as a natural object

Two further ways in which the idea of inscape may be related to
language involve focussing upon particular words. We may first of all
consider Hopkins to have regarded individual words as if they were
inscaped natural objects. According to Peters, a word for Hopkins
"was just as much an individual as any other thing; it had a self as every
other object, and consequently, just as he strove to catch the inscape
of a flower or a tree or a cloud, he similarly did not rest until he
knew the word as a self" (Peters, pp. 141-2). E.R. August agrees,
saying that for Hopkins "words are like other creatures", having
"inscapes beautiful in themselves", and that "the numerous philological
notes in the journals record word inscapes". Hopkins "tries to bring
into play the whole self of the words he uses".[54] Milroy believes that
"the earliest appearance of the idea of inscape is really in the note
on horn (1863) in which he tries to catch the individuality of that word"
(Milroy, p.73), and points out how thoroughly in that note (J, 4) Hopkins
explores the range of semantic, sound-associational, etymological and
interlingual connections which radiate from the word. Milroy goes on to
relate this concern with the "character" of words to the Germanic purist
movement of Hopkins's time, which will be discussed in my next section.

August connects the idea of what he calls "word inscapes" to the
betokening of the creator which was discussed in section 2.2, above:

> When God spoke the poem of creation, he created inscapes in
> the various 'words' or creatures. These inscapes are
> beautiful to behold or 'listen to', and each of them reflects,
> in its own distinctive way, the Speaker's self...So also
> with words of human language. Human words have inscapes
> composed of their sound and lexical meaning ...Moreover, words
> used well by a speaker provide a glimpse of the speaker's
> self. Thus, words are like other creatures : they have
> inscapes beautiful in themselves, and they reflect the
> speaker's self. (August, p.24)

August proceeds to demonstrate, largely through an exhaustive analysis
of 'The Windhover", that "an accumulation of various levels of meaning"
can "provide us with a glimpse of the poem's inscape" (August, p.50).
The approach is largely lexical and etymological. August cites
dictionaries which Hopkins probably used, other books which the poet
is certain or likely to have read (such as the meditations of Robert
Southwell), the Latin Bible (from which Hopkins preferred to make his
own translations) and a host of other sources. It certainly seems that
the auras of connotation which surround and connect particular words are
blended by Hopkins in astonishingly complex ways. The fact that Hopkins
projected an analysis of "underthoughts" (cohesive patterns of secondary
association) in Greek verse (see FL, 252-3) makes it quite plausible that
he actually contrived such combinations. Hopkins's notes on a chorus of
Aeschylus might corroborate the connection of "word inscapes" with
"underthought", since he there uses the term "inscape" in conjunction
with "thought" to refer to thematic connections between the words of

different speakers:

> For the thought and inscape of this chorus, remark that
> though Eteocles reviles them they express the same thoughts
> as his own...
>
> The asyndeton of the opening seems due to a number of
> single speakers
>
> They have the images of a sea beating on a coast and of
> horses and men as its breakers ...of a storm of rain and
> mountain torrents.[55]

Some of August's conclusions may seem a little far-fetched. In the word "vermilion" of the last line of "The Windhover", for example, he finds a reference via Latin vermis (worm) to the psalm which Christ supposedly repeated on the cross("But I, poor worm, have no manhood left...") and says that this is one of the ways in which the breaking embers of the sestet are related to the idea of Christ's blood. "Vermilion", furthermore, is, because of its sound, "meant to draw the reader's attention back to minion, reminding him that the poor worm and God's minion are the same person" (August, pp. 125-6).

The usefulness of August's study is not, however, seriously diminished by his tendency occasionally to exaggerate either the complexity of the author's intentions or the need for the reader to delve very deeply into the associative background of certain collocations in order properly to understand the poems. Especially useful is August's double definition of verbal inscape, a definition which is unstated but implicit throughout. Whilst words have "inscapes beautiful in themselves", they yet create, in proper combinations, a "poem's inscape", which has a coherence of a higher order. Indeed, the inscape of an individual word is in August's account, as with so many of the inscaped phenomena discussed in my previous chapter, a function of its relatedness to other

entities of the same "species". Milroy's comment about the "idea of inscape" in the note on "horn" is correct insofar as that note reveals Hopkins's interest in finding "sub-species" within the species of words. To use another of Hopkins's own favoured analogies, we might say that "horn" is a kind of "diatonic" note or fixed point in a scale of words, a main reference-point, an essential word. What Hopkins discusses is not so much the word "horn" as a constellation of meanings which seem to centre on or derive from the basic word and meaning. The horn itself (the thing)

> 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. (J, 4)

These different aspects give rise to words as diverse as "grain", "corn", "crown", "crow", "crane", and even "grin". Hopkins would like to believe that the phonetic similarities between the words indicate the persistence of the primary or essential word throughout the complex process of metaphorical development.

This kind of sound-sense relation is, however, rather different from the kind posited by Hopkins in other notes. In these others, Hopkins continues to follow those mid-nineteenth-century philologists who saw linguistic evolution largely in terms of the elaboration of a small stock of monosyllabic root-words. But now he takes up the additional suggestion, made by Frederick Farrar and others, that this evolution is strongly influenced by an "onomatopoetic" principle.[56] The following is a typical note:

    Grind, gride, gird, grit, groat, grate, greet,

κρούειγ, crush, crash, κροτεîν etc.

    Original meaning to strike, rub, particularly together.

That which is produced by such means is the grit, the groats

or crumbs, like fragmentum from frangere, bit from bite.

Crumb, crumble perhaps akin. To greet, to strike the hands

together (?). Greet, grief, wearing, tribulation. Grief

possibly connected. Gruff, with a sound as of two things

rubbing together. I believe these words to be onomatopoetic.

Gr common to them all representing a particular sound. In fact

I think the onomatopoetic theory has not had a fair chance.

Cf. Crack, creak, croak, crake, graculus, crackle. These must

be onomatopoetic. (J, 5)

Now the question of onomatopoeia, or, more broadly, "phonetic symbolism",
is highly complex and far from settled. But a few points can usefully
be made about the strength and persistence of Hopkins's belief in
"imitative" words and the relation of his speculations to modern thought
on the subject.

    Korg, to begin with, remarks on such notes as those quoted above:

> In speculations intended to demonstrate the mimetic precision
> of words by tracing phonetic clues to specific themes,
> Hopkins paradoxically signals their deflection to a non-
> representational status by showing that their meanings depend
> on comparison with other words. (Korg, pp. 978-9)

Although many of Hopkins's notes are devoted to series like "Foot, pes
(ped-is), ποûs (ποδ-ós), pada, pad, pat etc." of which the origin is
supposedly "onomatopoetic, describing sound of foot-fall" (J, 7), at
least as many refer to series such as the interesting "Flos, flower,

blow, bloom, blossom" (J. 13), where it is not contended that any actual imitation of the signified phenomenon occurs. What really interests Hopkins is the manner in which words associate, and the tendency of words (both in etymology and in poetry) to fall into groups in which a common element of meaning becomes associated with a more-or-less definite pattern of sound. Commenting on Tennyson's famous "murmuring of innumerable bees", Dell Hymes has said that the line "certainly does not suggest bee sound if the meaning is slightly changed" but that "in the poem the particular nexus of sound and meaning seems appropriate and effective to English speakers".[57] As Milroy puts it, "Hopkins's 'etymological' series are based on associations that are psychologically real for speakers of the language" (Milroy, p.157). Hopkins in fact seems to have been approaching the modern concept of the phonaestheme, the term having been coined by J.R. Firth and referring to the clustering of associations around a particular sound or sound-group on account of the presence of the sound(s) in series of words which have close semantic relations.[58] One group of researchers refers to the "little boost in habit strength" which can elevate some sound-meaning connections "above the level of arbitrary connections".[59] Dwight Bolinger, who has investigated some English phonaesthemes, refers to such connections as "potential centres of phonesthetic radiation".[60]

There is considerable evidence of the influence of these factors on etymology, but what is perhaps more to the point is their influence in poetry, where established or "potential" phonaesthetic patterns can be manipulated or extended. Tennyson, for example, draws a colourless word like "innumerable" into a suitable context and makes even that word appear to contribute to the "imitative" effect of the line. I have myself approached the problem of literary phonaesthesia through a consideration of the characteristically "sensuous" sound-quality of Keats's verse.

Seamus Heaney has said of the second line of "To Autumn"("Close
bosom-friend of the maturing sun") that it relies "on the amplitude
of vowels" for its "dream of benign, blood-warm growth".[61] I feel
that the effect of sound in the line can be accounted for more precisely
in terms of the features which make it very typical of Keats. The
vowels, for example, are "ample" in the sense that the three stressed
vowels or diphthongs involve high back (extremely lip-rounded) articulatory
positions. There is, furthermore, a highly typical sub-consonance in
the bilabial-labiodental range (involving lip-contact) in the series
/b...m...f...v...m/. These features are prevalent in a great number of
Keats's most famous passages. The vocalic lip-rounding is often further
emphasized by such extreme contrasts between stressed proximate front
(lip-<u>spread</u>) and back vowels as we find in "bosom-friend... maturing".
The sensuous suggestiveness of the lip-contact and movement, which
Keats seems to maximize almost systematically, and which makes his
characteristic <u>sound</u> more of a <u>feel</u>, is obviously appropriate to major
thematic elements in the poems. That <u>correlation</u> is all-important. When
critics refer to the Keatsian tone in terms such as "warm", "soft", and
"drugged", they are nearly always, one feels, thinking about the
quintessential Keats of the odes, or even about particularly memorable
passages, such as the first few lines of "Ode to a Nightingale" or those
of "To Autumn". These poems or passages quite simply contain a lot of
words which <u>refer</u> to warmth, softness, narcosis, and related thematic
elements. What Keats does is to activate latent patterns of "phonaesthetic
radiation". To take the first stanza of "To Autumn" alone, the collocation
"mellow...fruitfulness...bosom...maturing...fruit...fruit...swell...plump
...budding...warm...summer...o'erbrimmed...clammy" (all containing labial
sounds with many lip-rounded vowels in addition) is sufficient to impart
"mimetic" suggestiveness to each word, and perhaps to bring vaguely into
focus or into the "mind's ear" a host of other words connected by sound

and sense ("hum", "murmur", "humid", "mother", "womb" and "burgeon"
for example). But the relevant sound-features have no <u>intrinsic</u>
significance. How different is the effect of "you shall see / The triple
pillar of the world transform'd / Into a strumpet's fool" or "let /
Patient Octavia plough thy visage up / With her prepared nails" or
"poor venomous fool / Be angry" (<u>Antony and Cleopatra</u>, I.i.11-13,
IV.xii.38-9, and V.ii.304-5).[62]

Since, as McChesney says, critics "have strained at a gnat to
overpraise" Hopkins for his "onomatopoeic skill", it is unnecessary to
cite examples. But that skill might better be termed a sensitivity to
<u>phonaesthetic</u> potentialities in English. As far as Hopkins's general
conception of the nature of language is concerned, I think it unlikely
that the "onomatopoetic" theory continued to have as strong an influence
on him as it did when he wrote the early diaries. It does not figure
in the later prose, even in the long series of letters and cards on
etymology which Hopkins wrote to A.W.M. Baillie in 1886-7 (<u>FL</u>, 257-286).
As I shall attempt to demonstrate in the sixth chapter of this study,
Hopkins appears to have become increasingly sensitive to features
of language which are consequences of the essential <u>arbitrariness</u>
or conventionality of the sign. He became increasingly interested
in the <u>relations</u> between words. His conception of "inscape of speech"
was not necessarily centred on a theory that verbal and "natural"
inscapes have a relation of resemblance. We may now proceed
to consider a set of critical approaches to Hopkins which present his
"sense of language" in terms of linguistic <u>systems</u> rather than <u>elements</u>.

3.5   Poetic inscape and the character of English

I have already noted (in the second section of the present chapter) Hopkins's admiration for the poetry and philology of William Barnes. In the letter to Bridges which I then cited, Hopkins continues:

> 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.   In fact I am learning
> Anglosaxon and it is a vastly superior thing to what we have
> now.   But the madness of an almost unknown man trying to do
> what the three estates of the realm together could never
> accomplish!   He calls degrees of comparison pitches of
> suchness : we <u>ought</u> to call them so, but alas!   (<u>LB</u>, 162-3)

Austin Warren writes of other Victorians, certainly known to Hopkins, who "challenged the dominance of Latin and Romance".[63]   These included E.A. Freeman, F.J. Furnival, T.K. Oliphant and R.C. Trench.   The last of these was possibly better known to Hopkins than any other.   Trench in fact devoted a chapter in his <u>English Past and Present</u> to "Diminutions of the English language":

> Those who would gladly have seen the Anglo-Saxon to have
> predominated over the Latin element in our language, even more
> than it actually has done, must note with regret that in many
> instances a word of the former stock has been dropped, and a
> Latin coined to supply its place.[64]

Trench cites such usages as Wiclif's "soothsaw" (for "proverb") and "againbuying" (for "redemption"). Wiclif was Chaucer's contemporary, and in the probable year of Chaucer's birth (1340) Michael of Northgate

had employed comparable compounds in his <u>Ayenbite of Inwit</u>, the very title of which ("again-bite of in-knowledge") is, according to Barbara Strang, "a calque of <u>re-morse</u> of <u>con-science</u>".[65] The two biblical translators of the early sixteenth century, Tindale and Coverdale, produced, on similar principles, "loving kindness", "tender mercy", "blood-guiltiness", "peacemaker" and "long-suffering" amongst others.[66] Hopkins is obviously sympathetic to such coinage. Milroy points out that such compounds as "leafmeal" (<u>Poems</u>, No. 55), "quickgold" (<u>Poems</u>, No. 32), "mealdrift" (<u>Poems</u>, No. 38) and even "inscape" follow patterns specifically recommended by Barnes (Milroy, p.77). It hardly needs to be pointed out how "Old English" in flavour are binominal compounds such as (from "The Wreck of the Deutschland", <u>Poems</u>, No. 28) "womb-life" (st.7), "foam-fleece" (st.16), "sea-romp" (st.17), "Yore-flood" (st.32) and "heaven-haven" (st.35). In "The Loss of the Euridyce" (<u>Poems</u>, No. 41) we find "flockbells" (1.7), "hailropes" (1.27), "heavengravel" (1.28), "deathgush" (1.62) and "starlight-wender" (1.101). These resemble Old English "Kennings" such as "hwaelweg" ("whale-way", sea) and "breōstcearu" ("breast-care", sorrow or anxiety).

As can be seen already, Hopkins's idea of the "inscape" of English, or of what he calls elsewhere the "naked thew and sinew" of the tongue (<u>LB</u> 267-8), certainly cannot be elucidated in simple terms of nostalgia for an old lexicon. It is not paradoxical to assert that Hopkins's <u>conservatism</u> about English (like that of Trench) consists largely in an emphasis on the processes whereby a language <u>changes</u> <u>and</u> <u>develops</u>. What attracts him about Old English is not its possession of an historically "purer" and somehow superior lexicon, but its capacity for <u>internal</u> <u>creativity</u>. As we saw in Chapter Two, section five, Hopkins is fascinated by the power of internal derivation in English, whereby such

a wealth of new meaning is discoverable even through the simple principle of word-class transference. What he laments is what Trench, later in his chapter on "Diminutions of the English Language", calls the "tendency in our own language to drop its forms and renounce its own inherent powers" (Trench, p.105). Trench sees the loss of "powers" or grammatical processes as being less fully offset by "compensating gain" than is the loss of particular words which are superseded by borrowed equivalents. He finds in the earlier stages of a language an important "creative energy" and writes of how the suppression of "grammatical intricacies" involves a "hazard of letting go what had real worth, and contributed to the more lively, if not to the clearer, setting forth of the inner thought or feeling of the mind" (Trench, p.94). He admits that it is "no real wealth in a language to have needless and superfluous forms" (p.95), but feels that in many ways developing languages are "in danger of forfeiting elements of strength, variety and beauty" (p.103). One particular "power" which Trench sees as valuable is the indication of tense by vowel-variation in strong verbs. Such a verb is "strong", according to Trench, on account of "the vigour and indwelling energy of the word, enabling it to form its past tense from its own resources, and with no calling in of help from without" (p.103). Comparably, Trench considers the older way of forming comparatives and superlatives (affixation of -er and -est) to be more "organic" and therefore "more excellent" than the later method involving "more" and "most" (pp.105-6).

Many of Trench's ideas will now be regarded as completely spurious. But what is important is their influence, if only in overall spirit, upon Hopkins. Milroy points out that Hopkins was probably influenced by Victorian comparisons between English and Chinese, which, being so uninflected, is isolative of its root-forms in an extreme degree. Trench's idea of "strength" would well apply to such a system. According to Milroy,

Hopkins seems to feel that "the less grammatical binding a word has, the more its 'selfhood'", and this explains at least some of the occasions in Hopkins's poems where words are "set off independently of the sentence" by various syntactic licences, "so that they can be savoured as themselves" (Milroy, p.59).

The association of the idea of linguistic "inscape" with "nativist" monosyllabism and compounding suggests a further correspondence between Hopkins's ideas and the Chinese poetry discussed by Fenollosa (see Chapter Two, section five, above). When we find such a high concentration of monosyllables (with minimal "grammatical binding") as we do in "The Sea and the Skylark" (Poems, No.35) we might well be reminded of the structure of much Chinese and Japanese verse, in which the suggestiveness of a small group of words is enhanced by the suppression of decisive syntactic connection between them. As A.C. Graham has said of two very different translations of a couplet by Tu Fu, "Neither of the translators can be convicted of saying anything not implicit in the original; they differ so widely because the English language imposes choices which the poet refrained from making".[67] Where Hopkins's first editor, Robert Bridges, found (to his extreme distaste) "a jungle of rough root-words",[68] we might consider Hopkins to have been projecting a kind of proto-language like that described by Rilke in a letter of 1920:

> Jacobsen once wrote that he had not liked calling that remarkable
> story of his that takes place by the Salzach 'Two Worlds' —
> again and again he had felt himself impelled to say 'Two World' :
> thus one often finds oneself at variance with the external
> behaviour of a language and intent on its innermost life, or on
> an innermost language, without terminations, if possible, —
> a language of word-kernels, a language that's not gathered,
> up above, on stalks, but grasped in the speech seed.[69]

Another aspect of linguistic "purity" may be introduced by
Barbara Strang's comments on the effects of the Norman Conquest:

> In the first place there are simply so many new words that old
> habits of WF [word-formation] tend to atrophy ... In the second
> place, the change of emphasis from WF to borrowing as a source
> of new words established what Jespersen ... has called the
> 'undemocratic' quality of cultivated English vocabulary ...
> To a considerable extent (though appearances can be deceptive
> in the matter) the speaker of modern English needs more
> education to be enfranchised in a fair range of English
> vocabulary than the German-speaker to reach a similar level
> in his own language. (Strang, p. 251)

Despite the startling letter of 1871 in which Hopkins confessed that he was
"in a manner ... a Communist", and on account of which the correspondence
with Bridges appears to have ceased for at least two and a half years, it
is unlikely that Hopkins's attitude to the democratizing effect of
language-reform was really based on political egalitarianism.[70] But it is
to be borne in mind that Hopkins was a preacher and evangelist, with
experience of working-class parishes in the expanding industrial centres
of Victorian Britain. English as it "might have been" would have had
advantages for the communication of theology.

We can, however, overestimate the degree to which Hopkins preferred
what the tongue "might have been" to English as he found it. In the letter
to Bridges which follows that on William Barnes (see the second section
of the present chapter, and the beginning of the present section) Hopkins
writes:

I agree with you that English compounds do not seem real single words or properly unified till by some change in form or spelling or slur in pronunciation their construction is disguised. This seems in English a point craved for and insisted on, that the words shall be single and specific marks for things, whether self-significant or not; and it is noticeable how unmeaning our topographical names are or soon become, while those in Celtic languages are so transparent — not that their unmeaningness is any virtue, rather a vice; still it shews the tendency. (LB, 165).

Hopkins is here discussing what modern linguists refer to as "motivation" and "morphological transparency", which will be discussed in greater detail in sections 5.5 and 6.4, below. He is saying that it is in the nature of English to obscure the "construction" of words and that it is a "vice". But, later in the letter, Hopkins urges that there are nevertheless certain "aesthetic" criteria which make some compounds preferable to others:

Thimble is singler than thumbstall...but it is a meaner word. The absurdity of 'finger hut' is not in its being a compound but in its impropriety, in the particular trope employed. Fingerhood or indeed fingerstall seem to me to be well enough. Potato is certainly one of the ugliest and most laughable words in the language and cannot well be used in verse, whereas earthapple is stately : potato has one virtue only, the being specific. (LB, 165)

"Purity" is not an absolute value for Hopkins. "Impropriety" can disqualify a native pretender to the place of a less transparent word ("finger hut" for "thimble"); and "thimble" might be preferable to "thumbstall" were it not "meaner". "Potato" is ugly but has the virtue at least of "being

specific". Hopkins recognizes the tendency towards singleness or
specificity for what it is, and realizes that since "the three estates of
the realm together" could never "purify" English, the virtues and beauties
of the mixed language must not be underemphasized. As Leavis points out,
"the peculiarities of his technique appeal for sanction to the spirit of the
language; his innovations accentuate and develop bents it exhibits in
living use and, above all, in the hands of the greatest master who ever
used it".[71] That master positively revelled in the "impurity" of the
tongue. Hopkins himself savours the sounds and connotative auras of such
French words as "minion", "dauphin", "chevalier" and "vermilion" in
"The Windhover" (Poems, No. 36). Although these words are clearly set off
against a host of more "native" (largely monosyllabic) words, they are
certainly not dispensible ornaments, but are crucial to the poem's pattern
of sound and meaning. In his postscript to the letter following the one
on compounds, Hopkins writes:

> It wd. be strange if τέχνη and τύχη together did not
> bring some fine results out of any lot of caleidoscopic elements;
> still to me a pure language seems a finer thing than a mixed
> one — till the mixture becomes imperceptible.   (LB, 166)

Not only may art and chance produce new strengths in a language, but a
mixed language can become as fine as a pure one. Perhaps, in Hopkins's
mind, Shakespeare seemed to practice a superior kind of assimilation of
post-Conquest and even contemporary borrowings into the language,
demonstrating, through his control of "native" strengths, how the mixture
might aspire to becoming "imperceptible", and the loan-words become
organically part of the old language.

Finally, we must recall that Hopkins praised Dryden because "his style and his rhythms lay the strongest stress of all our literature on the naked thew and sinew of the English language" (LB, 267-8; emphasis added). Rhythm is a living thing, and one of the most important of Hopkins's "innovations" is the revival of "sprung" rhythm, which incorporates very fully into poetry the patterns of emphasis which occur in ordinary speech.

Hopkins's sense of the nature of English involves both an awareness of what the language "might have been" and an enthusiasm for what, despite its "impurity", it really is (and could be). In his poetry he is eager to stress the "native" strengths, to employ morphological, rhythmic and syntactic flexibilities which have fallen into relative disuse, and to resurrect dialect words or older forms of words. But he is not an archaist. Therefore he insists :

> I cut myself off from the use of ere, o'er, wellnigh, what time,
> say not (for do not say), because, though dignified, they neither
> belong to nor ever cd. arise from, or be the elevation of,
> ordinary modern speech. For it seems to me that the poetical
> language of an age shd. be the current language heightened,
> to any degree heightened and unlike itself, but not (I mean
> normally : passing freaks and graces are another thing) an
> obsolete one. (LB, 89)

Hopkins's conception of the proper "poetical language of an age" will be considered more carefully in the final chapter of this study, by which stage the meaning of his phrase "heightened and unlike itself" should have become clearer.

3.6 Summary and transition

The cited critical interpretations of Hopkins's "sense of language", and of the manner in which the concept of "inscape" relates to poetry, are all, in their different ways, valid, complementary. In this chapter I have tried to explain some of the hazards of adopting any one of the main classes of attitude too simply or exclusively. In the first place, the idea of poetic speech being designed for the sake of "pure pattern", or in order to achieve any less abstract quasi-musical significance, must be qualified by reference to the "special conditions" of the art and its "responsibilities" to its particular medium. That medium is not pure sound, but a small selection of sounds which are already arranged into a semiotic system. Meaning, in language, is inescapable, and musical analogies are perhaps most usefully applied to patterns of poetic meaning. Indeed, according to August's persuasive account, the idea of linguistic and poetic inscape might be interpretable almost entirely in semantic terms.

I have also attempted, through the arrangement of this chapter, to show that Hopkins's conception of language becomes clearer the more we think in terms of language as a system, unified by pervasive laws, rather than as a conglomeration of elements. When we consider Hopkins's attitude to particular words, we find that their inscape resides not in any qualities which they might be supposed to possess in isolation (such as direct imitative potential) but rather in their relationships. If we take "inscape of speech" to refer to specific strengths of English, we find Hopkins insisting upon the tongue's capacities for creative regrouping and transformation of existing elements, Trench's "powers". When Hopkins says that Old English is a "vastly superior thing to what we have now" he is thinking not of particular words but of ways of making words. He believes that a language should make the most of its own resources, be "pure" in the

sense of being homogeneous, be as completely as possible an independent system. Of course Hopkins is far from despairing about the capacities of Modern English. "Inscape of speech" refers in an important sense to the present. Poetry brings out the inscape of _speaking_, of language as it lives, of "current language". To look back constantly to a more homogeneous language would be unrealistic, and indeed there is the possibility that "mixture" in a language can become "imperceptible". Nevertheless, in considering English as a system, as a pattern of "powers" which antedate a large portion of the lexicon, we are able to incorporate into our interpretation of "inscape of speech" a maximum number of those implications of the term "inscape" which were discussed in the previous chapter.

The idea of a "proto-language" has already seemed pertinent to a consideration of Hopkins. The strengths which, like Trench, the poet values in earlier English are comparable to the features which (as we saw in Chapter One, section two, above) Piaget found to be common to structures in general. These are "wholeness", "transformation" and "self-regulation". For Hopkins, the attraction of Old English is its reliance on its own sub-systems to develop fresh semantic possibilities, its relatively "whole" and closed nature as a system, its creativity in internal "transformation". No widespread language is completely "pure" but certain languages at certain stages carry out developmental "self-regulation" with little borrowing from outside. Such a state of affairs need not imply cultural isolation, as the translations of Latin words by Wiclif and others testify. Shakespeare could do wonders with a very "mixed" language at a period of rapid linguistic change because, although the system was extremely "open", he made the most of the language's "native" strengths, or equilibrating mechanisms, in his blending of old and new elements. The effect of certain of Hopkins's stylistic devices, as I shall attempt to demonstrate in my sixth chapter, is to present English as being more "systematic" than it really is or ever was.

As a preliminary to that demonstration it is necessary to consider, in the fourth and fifth chapters, the implications of the notes on rhetoric which Hopkins made during his lectureship at Roehampton in 1874 (J, 267-88) and of the note on "Poetry and Verse" (J, 289-90) which was almost certainly written at about the same time. In that last note Hopkins writes:

> Poetry is speech framed for contemplation of the mind by the 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. (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. Now if this can be done without repeating it _once_ of the inscape will be enough for art and beauty and poetry...If not/ repetition, _oftening_, _over-and-overing_, _aftering_ of the inscape must take place in order to detach it to the mind and in this light poetry is speech which afters and oftens its inscape, speech couched in a repeating figure, and verse is spoken sound having a repeating figure.) Verse is ...speech wholly or partially repeating the same figure of sound. (J, 289)

The distinction between poetry and verse is not made absolutely clear in these notes. In the passage above, a distinction is noted between "speech couched in a repeating figure" and "spoken sound having a repeating figure". As Hopkins goes on to say that verse can be nonsensical (as in "Hey nonny nonny") we might presume that it is simply the presence of _meaning_, the conversion of "spoken sound" into "speech", which turns verse into poetry. Hopkins is not fully decided whether poetry is a "kind of composition"

distinct from verse or "the virtue or success or excellence" of the kind which is verse (J, 289). But the important points are that poetry has meaning, which Hopkins defines as "grammatical, historical, and logical meaning" (J, 289), that there is nevertheless a significance over and above that meaning ("inscape of speech"), and that this significance has something to do with a "repeating figure".

The figure is of <u>sound</u>. As Hopkins says in the preceding lecture-notes:

> Verse is speech having a marked figure, order/ of sounds independent of meaning ...
>
> That it may be marked it must be repeated at least once ...
>
> Beyond verse as thus defined there is a shape of speech possible in which there is a marked figure and order not in the sounds but in the grammar ... e.g. Foxes (A) have (B) holes (C) and birds of the air (A') have (B — not B' here) nests (C') ... This is <u>figure</u> <u>of</u> <u>grammar</u> instead of <u>figure</u> <u>of</u> <u>spoken</u> <u>sound</u>, which in the narrower sense is verse (J, 267)

Later he writes:

> We may now say of rhythm i.e. verse that it is the recasting of speech into sound-words, sound-clauses and sound-sentences of uniform commensurable lengths and accentuations. (J, 273)

Milroy points out, by the way, that parallelism <u>within</u> the clause or phrase is far more frequent in Hopkins's own verse than the larger-scale parallelisms which are more likely to involve conceptual correspondences (as between grammatical categories) rather than auditory correspondences (Milroy, pp. 208-9).

I shall be going on to suggest that the relation of Hopkins's "sense of language" to his experience as a whole, of "inscape of speech" to inscape more generally, is largely explicable in terms of the interface, in language, between sound and meaning. More precisely, and to introduce a little more of the Structuralist thought which I believe will illuminate Hopkins's thought, Hopkins was fascinated by the quality which Bubrix refers to as "the uniqueness and origin of human language, namely the dichotomy of merely distinctive (phonetic) and significative (grammatical) units".[72] Hopkins's sense of this dichotomy determines much of his theory and practice of versification. His poetry explores the most fundamental conditions for the making of meaning, which begins with the making of distinctions between sounds and the permutation of these sounds into syllables. Hopkins was fascinated by the fact that language does so much with so little, that all the complexity of meaning is realized with such economy of basic materials.

Now Hopkins's contemporary, Max Müller, had remarked in one of his lectures on "the marvellous power of language which out of a few simple elements has created a variety of names hardly surpassed by the variety of nature herself".[73] But there was little in the philology of the time (at least in Britain) to account for the precise means whereby this "variety of names" was made possible. This is largely because the "simple elements" which received most attention were the monosyllabic root-words, in terms of whose combination and elaboration the development of language was largely conceived. Jonathan Culler has written as follows about the development of linguistics in the later nineteenth century:

> The shift of attention from roots to inflectional patterns
> (which had always been the most difficult items for
> philosophical etymologists to deal with) reflects a change
> in the notion of what language is : no longer is it simply

a representation, a series of forms ordered by the rationality they represent and through which one moves to grasp thought and the processes of mind itself. It is a system of forms which are governed by their own law, which possess an autonomous formal pattern. The idea of comparing languages not in terms of the roots which they use to express the fundamental concepts or categories of experience but in terms of the formal patterns of grammatical elements through which words are linked and differentiated is a major step towards the notion of language as a formal and autonomous system.[74]

Baudouin de Courtenay, one of the pioneers of modern linguistics, was dissatisfied with comparative grammar because it worked only "with several dozens of roots" and did not try to "cover entire languages" and gain an "insight into the entire structure" of a particular language.[75]

I believe that is plausible to interpret Hopkins's rather uncoordinated experiments in linguistic and poetic theory as a groping towards a modern conception of the nature of language, a movement away from a preoccupation with "roots" and towards the kind of Structuralist conception outlined by Culler. The general "theory of inscape" is in important respects an ontological meditation on the nature of entities. As Culler points out later in his book on Saussure, almost every area of twentieth-century thought is affected by a radical change in perspective concerning the relation of what were hitherto conceived as fundamental definite units or entities to the larger systems or processes which now come to seem more "real". Culler relates linguistics to physics:

Physics discovered that it was exceedingly difficult to explain electricity and electromagnetic phenomena in terms of discrete units of matter and their movement. The solution seemed

to be to reverse the problem : instead of taking matter as
prime and trying to define the laws governing its behaviour,
why not take energy itself, electrical energy, as prime and
define matter in terms of electromagnetic forces? This change
in perspective leads to the discovery of new scientific
objects : an electron is not a positive entity in the old
sense; it is a product of a field of force, a node in a system
of relations, which, like a phoneme, does not exist
independently of these relations. (Culler, p.115)

Such a sense of the primacy of relations, of the impossibility of conceiving
an entity in total isolation, transpires (as in my second chapter I
attempted to demonstrate) from Hopkins's testing and elaboration of the
hypothetical tool which is the concept of inscape, that testing being
part of the poet's peculiar and complex solution to the ancient
theological problems concerning the relation of individual to universal
being. I shall attempt to demonstrate that Hopkins tended increasingly
to perceive words as products of "fields of force" and "systems of
relations" rather than as "discrete units". His stylistic preferences
and his thoughts about the fundamental principles of versification suggest
an awareness that (if only as a corollary of the high degree of restriction
in the basic materials of language) a coherent and "whole" pattern of
laws must organize and relate different levels of linguistic organization.
Hopkins becomes more interested in types — "species", we might say —
of linguistic units, and in the relations between these types. He may,
in conscious terms, have understood the "laws" only very obscurely. But
several aspects of his style imply a strong intuition of what kind of
system language, in the present century, is seen to be. "Inscape of
speech" can be taken to refer, as the names for many other inscapes refer,
to a quality of a species. The species which is manifested in Hopkins's

words and phrases and sentences is not so much the English language but all language, language as such, language considered in terms of the most basic principles whereby it is capable of making meaning.

Before elaborating these ideas about the precise manner in which language is "framed for contemplation" in Hopkins's poetry, it is worth considering more carefully the implication in Hopkins's note on "Poetry and Verse" that this "framing" is not only the basic characterizing feature of poetry but its primary or even its sole end. This will not only help us more fully to understand Hopkins, but will broaden the scope of the discussion, making it easier for us to assess the wider significance of Hopkins's theory of poetry, its usefulness beyond the clarification of his own peculiar purposes and achievements.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE IDEA OF POETRY AS AN EXPERIENCE OF LANGUAGE

4.1 Introductory

Hopkins's comments on "inscape of speech" appear in notes which he
made whilst lecturing in rhetoric. "The traditional rhetorician" was,
according to Gerald Bruns, "like Valéry, preoccupied with the sounds
and shapes of language, and accordingly it was his inclination to
conceive language not merely as a 'transitive act' but as an object whose
reality it was the purpose of his calling to underscore".[76] Bruns's
statement requires qualification, but his general project of relating
modern ideas on the "intransitivity" or "self-reflexiveness" of poetry
to older traditions proves to be very valuable. Formalist and Structuralist
theorists have developed the notion of a self-referential or "metalingual"
basis in poetry even to the extent of asserting that the drawing of
attention to its own structure and medium is the primary characteristic
of the art. In the third section of the present chapter I shall consider
the major principles of the Russian Formalists and their successors, and
in Chapter Five I shall examine in more detail some of the critical
procedures which have developed from them. However, those principles and
procedures can perhaps be more effectively assessed if we first follow
some connections of the kind made by Bruns, if only to demonstrate that
the idea of poetry being "about language" is not necessarily a very recent
phenomenon. The earlier versions of the idea were, furthermore, in a
sense closer to Hopkins than the contemporary developments (especially
in French poetry) with which he appears to have been in sympathy, and some

of the theoretical consequences of which he would seem to have been anticipating.

By the time Hopkins taught "rhetoric" the character of the subject was very different from that which played such an important part in European education from the Middle Ages through to the eighteenth century, and which then declined in influence as the more unattractive connotations of the word came to prevail. Hopkins, as a classicist, had a good knowledge of ancient rhetorical theory and practice, and would have been more aware than most intellectuals of the influence of the tradition on our culture. He was very well acquainted with poets (particularly Shakespeare) who were more directly influenced by the medieval and Renaissance tradition.[77] As regards Hopkins's sermons and devotional writings, there are interesting correspondences to be explored between the techniques employed in Jesuit meditative disciplines and the "rhetorics of prayer" which Louis Martz discusses in The Poetry of Meditation.[78]

However, the aspect of rhetorical tradition which is most pertinent to the present study is the schematization of the "figures of speech", the more intricate elaborations of the manner of discourse, as distinct from the more conceptual "tropes", the elocutionary and metrical aspects of oratory, the principles of argumentative logic, or those of construction and thematic development. Hopkins's poetry is characterized by a multiplication and emphasizing of the large proportion of reiterative or parallelistic figures contained within the stock of traditional rhetorical devices. The last third of Hopkins's notes headed "Rhythm and other Structural Parts of Rhetoric — Verse" (J. 283-8) concern what he called "lettering of syllables", by which he meant the varieties of rhyme, alliteration and assonance, which "are all a sameness or likeness of some or all of the elementary sounds"(J. 283). Here he gives examples from, or refers to, Old English, Middle English, Modern English, Icelandic,

Spanish, Italian, Greek, Latin, Chinese, Hebrew and Celtic verse. He is particularly interested in the more subtle and elaborate types of "lettering" such as occur in Icelandic Skaldic verse, and we might well begin a brief survey of the technically most elaborate European verse-traditions by looking more carefully at the Skalds.

4.2 An historical trend

The dominant form of versification amongst the Skalds of the tenth and early eleventh centuries was the dróttkvaett (court measure). Each half-line of a poem in this pattern had six syllables, and each full line three stresses (the last of which formed a trochee or down-beat). There were two alliterative syllables in each of the odd-numbered half-lines, one in each of the even, and the latter alliteration always fell on the first syllable of the half-line (which syllable was always accented). Skothending (correspondence of final consonants between words) occurred in odd-numbered half-lines, aðalhending (full rhyme) in even-numbered, both of these rhymings involving the antepenultimate syllables of half-lines. Apart from the requirement of a down-beat at the end of a line, the forepart of a line was predominantly trochaic.[79]

These were not approximate guidelines but rules which a good poet was expected to follow exactly. Such astonishing complexity of formal structure obviously places very severe restrictions on what can actually be said by the poet. Such is the case with Welsh bardic poetry, with which Hopkins became well acquainted after he left his lectureship at Roehampton in 1874 to study theology at St. Beuno's in North Wales. The influence of Hopkins of the Welsh cynghanedd (strict rules for "lettering") and other devices has been demonstrated by several critics.[80]

John Robinson points out that Hopkins is particularly fond of
cynghanedd sain, "a device involving three divisions in the line, of
which the first two have syllables which rhyme and the last two have
syllables which alliterate".[81] An example is the line "Left hand,
off land, I hear the lark ascend" (Poems, No. 35). As Gardner points
out, however, the poet will attempt to approximate more difficult
patterns such as that of cynghanedd draws ("traverse"), as in the line
"To bathe in his fall-gold mercies, to breathe in his all-fire glances"
(Poems, No. 28, st. 23) where six consonants are repeated in almost
exactly the same order (Gardner, Gerard Manley Hopkins, II, pp. 149-50).

The reasons for the development of such technical complexity in
certain cultures and periods may never properly be understood.
E.L. Epstein points out that forms such as the Welsh and Skaldic
"seem to derive their value from their approximation to abstract
phonological schemata, not from their degree of mimetic approximation
to their content". It may be, he writes, that "the most highly valued
forms of poetry were always those which demonstrated mimesis beneath
the lexical level, and that it was the gradual realization of this
that caused the general abstract paradigms of verse making to crumble",
but all this remains "an open question".[82] Indeed, the interconnected
effects of social, religious, philosophical, linguistic and other
developments can hardly be ascertained in any particular case.
Thomas de Quincey, in his essay on rhetoric, posited one or two types
of cultural-historical situation which might favour a highly self-regarding
literature:

> To hang upon one's own thoughts as an object of conscious
> interest, to play with them, to watch and pursue them through
> a maze of inversions, evolutions and harlequin changes, implies

> a condition of society either like that in the monastic ages,
> forced to introvert its energies from mere defect of books ...
> or ... a quiescent state of the public mind, unoccupied with
> daily novelties, and at leisure from the agitations of
> eternal change.[83]

The former factor might go some way to explaining the use of elaborate
forms in the small courts of Norse and Celtic warrior-chieftains, but
in societies where books are more plentiful a state of "leisure" from
"agitation" has hardly seemed to be a prerequisite of similar developments.
Neither does a particular set of historical circumstances necessarily
produce a uniform attitude to versification. Thus, as H.J. Chaytor
points out, there were in medieval France "two poetical schools" found
"in opposition". The first of these favoured "the trobar clus, the
obscure or close, subtle style of composition" and the other "the trobar
clar ... the clear, light, easy, straightforward style". The first style
was characterised by unusual words and expressions, by complex rhyming-
patterns and other "means by which the exponent of the trobar clus
attempted, and often successfully, to hide his meaning from the vulgar
herd".[84] There is a further distinction to be made between trobar clus
and trobar ric. Arnaut Daniel was the master of the latter, and his
impulse seems to have been sheer pride in verbal craftsmanship rather
than a wish to "hide his meaning". Thus he would work on "a stanza of
seventeen lines, the rimes of which did not find an answer until the
succeeding stanzas were reached, while the rimes were of a 'difficult'
character, requiring wide search and ingenuity to find an adequate
supply for five stanzas" (Chaytor, p. 70).

In the age of Baroque all forms of art exhibited what Roy Daniells
calls "the delight in overcoming difficulties and achieving effects by
superb manipulation", which features tended to become "an end in themselves"

in the work of poets such as Crashaw as with countless other artists.[85]
Derek Attridge, writing of the popularity of trick-, figure-, and pattern-
poems in Elizabethan England, suggests that "this aspect of Elizabethan
taste is no doubt related to the widespread admiration of classical metre
and the tendency to disparage the native tradition of versification as
insufficiently 'artificial'". Puttenham's defence of the native tradition
is "largely devoted to a demonstration that it admits of skilful,
'artificial' handling".[86]

The varying popularity of the more "artificial" kinds of poetry will
be largely determined by such factors and by extra-literary processes
in different periods, but it is plausible to assert that the variation
might have a certain inevitability of its own, being a consequence of the
nature of the art, a "self-regulating" mechanism. Wellek and Warren have
even suggested that the entire history of aesthetics "might almost be
summarized as a dialectic in which the thesis and counter-thesis are
Horace's _dulce_ and _utile_ : poetry is sweet and useful".[87]
Giorgio Melchiori assesses Hopkins's "artificiality" in terms of "what
Pater calls, in his _Marius the Epicurean_, Euphuism, widening the terms
of reference of a word defining the first phase of Mannerism in the
English literature of the Elizabethan age".[88] Pater claims that
"the theory of Euphuism" is "manifested in every age in which the literary
conscience has been awakened to forgotten duties towards language,
towards the instrument of expression".[89] The theoretical pitfalls more
recently associated with too extreme a belief in the autonomy of the
literary system, and in the primacy of literature's relation to its
"instrument", will be considered more carefully in the following section.
For the moment we might accept that, although the technical difficulties
which the Skalds and comparable poets impose on themselves are perhaps
pathological developments from a certain kind of poetic impulse, they are

yet <u>developments</u> of the less extreme formal requirements rather than
total aberrations. They are different in <u>degree</u> rather than in kind
from the more modest constraints of a Spenserian stanza or a Shakespearean
sonnet, and the impulse which the "Euphists" follow to extremes might
be important to a far wider range of poetry. Coleridge expressed the
idea of a "middle way", in which the value of Pater's "Euphuism" is
recognized without being exaggerated:

> The words in prose ought to express the intended meaning,
>
> and no more; if they attract attention to themselves, it is,
>
> in general, a fault... But in verse you must do more; —
>
> there the words, the <u>media</u>, must be beautiful, and ought to
>
> attract your notice — yet not so much and so perpetually as
>
> to destroy the unity which ought to result from the whole poem.[90]

Octavia Paz has recently said much the same thing:

> The object of poetic activity is essentially language...
>
> This is not to say that the poetic universe lacks meaning,
>
> or that its meaning is peripheral. I am simply saying that
>
> in poetry meaning is inseparable from words...in poetry every
>
> experience immediately takes on a verbal quality.[91]

Both writers avoid saying that poetry is entirely <u>about</u> language, but
insist that language in the poem becomes more present, more palpable
<u>as such</u>. The poem does not direct our attention away from "the world",
but it draws our attention to the fact that the world is being mediated
through language. "Metalingual" interest can be regarded as a significant
aesthetic category in literature, just as Coleridge related words being
"beautiful" to words attracting "attention to themselves".

"The traditional rhetorician", to recall Bruns's contentions, was
"like Valéry, preoccupied with the sounds and shapes of language "which
he conceived as "an object whose reality it was the purpose of his
calling to underscore" (Bruns, p.14). Valéry indeed points out that
"in practical or abstract uses of language, the form — that is the
physical, the concrete part, the very act of speech — does not last;
it does not outlive understanding".[92] Poetry is a different case.
Suzanne Langer leads us towards an interesting extension of this idea
when she considers the origins of language in terms of the different ways
in which a sign-system might otherwise have been physically realized:

> Another recommendation for words is that they have no
> value except as symbols (or signs); in themselves they are
> completely trivial... A symbol which interests us also as an
> object is distracting... Vocables in themselves are so
> worthless that we cease to be aware of their physical presence
> at all... Our conceptual activity seems to flow through them.
>
> (Langer, New Key, p.73)

The impulse underlying the "rhetorical" presentation of language as an
"object" may be an urge to question this apparent flowing-through of
conceptual activity, to insist that language does not simply transport
prefabricated thoughts but actually partakes in the creation of the
thoughts. Heidegger asks:

> What is it that the poet reaches? Not mere knowledge. He
> obtains entrance into the relation of word to thing. This
> relation is not, however, a connection between the thing
> that is on one side and the word that is on the other.
> The word itself is the relation which in each instance
> retains the thing within itself in such a manner that it "is" a thing.
>
> (Heidegger, On the Way to Language, p.66)

Thoughts, and the species of mental events which constitute "things",
are highly dependent on the conditions of the linguistic system.
A function of poetry is to insist that, as Jakobson puts it, "the sign
is not identical with its referent".[93] A major strategy of poetry is
to emphasize the physicality of the medium, to work against the
triviality of vocables. Interestingly, the Skalds do not only amplify
the physicality of the sign-system through rhetorical "figures"; they
also produce many explicit images of language as a solid thing. Thus
Egil Skallagrímsson boasts:

> My voice-plane
>
> Will polish quickly
>
> the thrilling theme
>
> of Thorir's son.
>
> (Hollander, p.81)

Another poem begins:

> Tardily takes
>
> my tongue to move,
>
> and to stir
>
> the steelyard-of-song.
>
> (Hollander, p.90)

Elsewhere Skallagrímsson refers to the "fane-of-words" from which he will
bring "logs-of-praise/leafy with speech" (Hollander, p.91). For
Einar Helgason, the "flood-of-song" foams on the "tongue-blade".
Thióðólf Arnórsson tells how the "thewful Thor-of-bellows/threw from the
seat of quarrels/jagged jaw-lightnings" and how Geirrod "caught with/
ear-hands that glowing ingot" (Hollander, pp.190-1).

Roman Jakobson might have been thinking specifically of these poets when he wrote that the "poetic function" of language "by promoting the palpability of signs, deepens the fundamental dichotomy of signs and objects".[94] But the "palpability" which poetry promotes is a more complex phenomenon in the conceptions of Jakobson and his associates, as in the following section I shall try to explain.

4.3   Modern Formalism and the "self-reflexive" function

> Habitualization devours works, clothes, furniture, one's
> wife, and the fear of war... And art exists that one may
> recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel
> things, to make the stone <u>stony</u>. The purpose of art is to
> impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not
> as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects
> 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the
> difficulty and length of perception because the process of
> perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.[95]

Thus, in 1917, wrote the major spokesman of the Russian Formalist movement, Victor Shklovsky. A little later, writing more specifically of poetic language, he insists that "we find everywhere the artistic trademark — that is, we find material obviously created to remove the automatism of perception" (pp.21-2). He points out Aristotles's dictum that the language of poetry "must appear strange and wonderful" and the fact that "it is often actually foreign", the intricacies of the "sweet new style" of Dante's contemporaries and the "obscure style" of Arnaut Daniel being "used in much the same way" (p.22). He concludes that

poetic language is characteristically "a difficult, roughened, impeded language" (p.22) and that "we can define poetry as attenuated, tortuous speech", as "formed speech" (p.23).

The Prague Linguistic Circle developed the idea of "foregrounding" (Czech aktualisace) in order to elaborate this basic conception of poetic language as a purposeful distortion of the medium. According to Mukařovský (one of the leaders of the Prague School), "the standard language is the background against which is reflected the esthetically intentional distortion of the linguistic components of the work" and this "violation of the norm of the standard, its systematic violation, is what makes possible the poetic utilization of language".[96] Poetic language executes "the maximum foregrounding of the utterance", foregrounding being "the opposite of automatization" and being necessary because "the more an act is automatized, the less it is consciously executed". In poetry "foregrounding achieves maximum intensity to the extent of pushing communication into the background as the objective of expression and of being used for its own sake; it is not used in the services of communication, but in order to place in the foreground the act of expression, the act of speech itself" (p.19).

In the following chapter I shall treat in more detail of the precise means whereby, in the opinions of particular Formalists and of later theorists, the "foregrounding" of the "act of speech" is achieved. For the moment, it is important to consider the context of Formalism, insofar as that context explains the nature of the terms in which the general principles were presented by Shklovsky, his associates, and writers such as Mukařovský whom they influenced. Typical terms are "impeded", "tortuous", "roughened", "distortion" and "violation", a vocabulary of strain and tension conveying an impression of art as a kind of organized violence. That Formalism originated in the ferment of the Russian revolutionary

period does much to explain the extremity of the positions taken in the earlier polemics. Nevertheless, as Victor Erlich explains in his long and superbly-documented study of the movement, the revolution in aesthetics and poetics was not at all exactly aligned with the mainstream of the political revolution, the Formalists' tendency to conceive of art as an autonomous system leading to their eventual suppression by the Soviet authorities.[97] The Formalists can in fact be associated with broad trends in Western European and American art and aesthetics, the main principle of which is the idea of art as a "self-reflexive" phenomenon. We have seen that this principle has, in different forms, a long history. Even Shklovsky appeals to Aristotle. Erlich (p.179) and Wellek and Warren (p.242) point out that Romantic aesthetics involved an emphasis on innovation and freshness in poetic language. Coleridge, for example, wrote of "the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors [sic.] of the imagination".[98] It is, however, clear that the last century has seen an <u>intensification</u> of beliefs in "autotelic" art. It might be convenient to see the "modern" period of more self-regarding art beginning with the French Symbolist poets. Writing mainly of French literature, Roland Barthes claims that "the whole of Literature, from Flaubert to the present day, became the problematics of language" since "towards the end of the eighteenth century ... literary form develops a second-order power independent of its economy and euphemistic charm; it fascinates the reader, it strikes him as exotic, it enthralls him, it acquires a weight".[99]

We may not wish to set even such approximate dates, preferring rather to see the trend towards the "modern" in terms of what Hopkins called "chromatism", any abrupt changes ("diatonic" fixed points) being illusory. But the characteristic of which Barthes writes is undoubtedly there. And with the "new" literature came a "new" poetics. Whilst the

development of the French "explications de texte" may not have been grounded in any significant redefinition of the nature of literature, yet its increased emphasis on careful attention to structural details is typical of the period.[100] Anglo-American New Criticism is comparable with Russian Formalism in several respects, the connections having recently been explored by Ewa M. Thompson and others.[101] Erlich (p.294) emphasizes the importance of Eliot's shifting of critical emphasis from poet to poetry, of Ransom's insistence on the "esthetic and characteristic values of literature", and of the impetus given to detailed "practical criticism" by Cleanth Brooks and I.A. Richards.

That the Russian Formalist versions of these reorientations were proclaimed in far shriller tones is largely explicable in terms of the critical traditions which they sought to replace. As a precursor of the Formalists, Andrey Bely, wrote in 1910, "While a composer who grapples with the theory of counterpoint is a common sight, a poet engrossed in the problems of style and metrics is looked upon here as a kind of monster".[102] The Formalists opposed the traditional critics' "extreme historicism" (Erlich, p.90), their lack of attention to the intrinsic qualities of literature, and, furthermore, such recent literature as acquiesced in the established conceptions of literary value. The Formalists' enthusiasm for novelty associated them with Futurism and other iconoclastic trends, the most extreme of these being "trans-sense" or "transrational" poetry, wherein the Symbolist belief in phonic suggestiveness (which I discussed in the previous section) was followed as far as it could possibly go.

In aesthetics, the Formalists emphasized a "quality of divergence", which conception was the origin of the principle of "foregrounding" and was referred to as Differenzqualität. "This concept", according to Erlich,

seems to have meant to the Formalist theoreticians three
different things : on the level of the representation of
reality, Differenzqualität stood for the 'divergence' from the
actual, i.e. for creative deformation. On the level of
language it meant a departure from current linguistic usage.
Finally, on the plane of literary dynamics, this catch-all
term would imply a deviation from, or modification of, the
prevailing artistic norm. (Erlich, p.252)

Such aesthetic principles could most easily be elaborated with reference
to the most clearly "divergent" of texts, texts such as Tristram Shandy,
which was the subject of one of Shklovsky's most famous essays.[103]
Now the Formalists were concerned to set criticism in order by rebuilding
it upon a more "scientific" foundation, and, given a background such as
Russian literary scholarship, their emphasis upon writers such as Sterne
can be validated as a temporary, corrective necessity. "The object of
the science of literature", wrote Jakobson in 1921, "is not literature
but literariness — that is, that which makes a given work a work of
literature".[104] Lemon and Reis stress that Jakobson "is not arguing that
literature is unrelated to history, psychology, etc. He is, rather,
insisting that the study of literature, if it is to be a distinct
discipline, must have its own particular subject" (p.107, footnote).
In an essay of 1933, Jakobson claimed that neither Tynyanov, Shklovsky,
Mukařovský nor himself had "declared that art is a closed sphere".
They emphasized, rather, "not the separatism of art, but the autonomy of the
aesthetic function".[105] This position, according to Erlich "implied the
notion of 'literariness' as neither the only pertinent aspect of
literature, nor merely one of its components, but a strategic property
informing and permeating the entire work" (Erlich, p.198). This may
well remind us of Pater's conception of "the form, the spirit, of the

handling" (<u>Renaissance</u>, p.129) which was discussed in Chapter Three
(section two) above. The spirit of the handling unifies the work because
it derives from the artist's proper consideration of the special
characteristics of the medium.

Indeed, Erlich claims that "Structuralism, the final result of
Formalist theorizing, points the way toward a conception of literature
that would do full justice to both the uniqueness and the relevance
of literary art" (p.211). Common to several comparable opinions is an
insistence that detailed linguistic analysis, of the kind which was
largely initiated by the Formalists, can be extremely revealing if it is
applied by someone with "critical instinct", which instinct involves a
sense of the appropriateness of particular kinds of analysis to
particular textual subjects. As Sol Saporta writes,

> Underlying any linguistic analysis of poetry is the hypothesis
> that there will be some significant correlation with the results
> of other, more intuitive methods ... Only rarely do we find
> it necessary to modify our intuitions.[106]

Nils Enkvist points out in a discussion of one of the most famous of
modern stylisticians that

> SPITZER himself was the first to emphasize that he had no
> method that could be precisely described. His approach —
> the SPITZERIAN CIRCLE — was first to spot stylistic stimuli
> by intuition, and then to offer such explanation as brought
> back the argument to its starting-point.[107]

René Wellek recognizes the brilliance of Spitzer, and is, amongst leading
literary critics, one of those most fully prepared to give sympathetic
consideration to Formalist and Structuralist theories. Nevertheless he
points out that

Leo Spitzer's perceptive recognition of an author's

psychological traits observable in his stylistic quirks

does not and cannot establish the aesthetic value of these

works. On the contrary, one feels that Leo Spitzer has

often overrated authors of ephemeral merit ... because he

has been able to establish such links between mind and word.

Similarly, Jakobson overrates poems which lend themselves

to an analysis of their sound-patterns or grammatical

organization or which simply experiment with language.[108]

This objection pinpoints one of the major ways in which a great deal of
stylistic work has failed to overcome the weaknesses of the original
Formalist experiments. Many of the early studies concentrated on a very
limited range of literature, and this tendency was associated with a
philosophical carelessness, on account of which (in Erlich's analysis)
many of the Formalists "glided almost imperceptibly from the postulate
that, for the purposes of literary scholarship, 'art ought to be
regarded as a device' to the ontological statement that art _is_ a device"
(p. 118, footnote).

It may still be argued that linguistic analysis of poetry has not
been given a chance to prove itself, and that methods applied to the
more conveniently experimental or self-conscious kinds of literature will
be refined and made more extensively applicable. But it is now being
asked very seriously whether this apology for stylistics has not been
repeated too often. In an exchange of views with F.W. Bateson, Roger
Fowler gives a version of the apology in response to the charge that
stylistics has failed to match the achievements of other modern critical
schools. He claims that "the corpus of linguistic writings on literature
is as yet miniscule and could hardly be expected to yield riches on this
scale".[109] Bateson finds this no argument at all, and some of his

statements signify very clearly the polarization of opinion which has
occurred in recent years:

> That some knowledge of linguistics, historical and descriptive,
>
> has certain minor uses in literary studies is not to be denied,
>
> but for the native speaker of English this additional
>
> knowledge is, as it were, supplementary — either in eking out
>
> one's birthright by the help available in the O.E.D. for an
>
> unusual word or idiom,or in saving one from incidental errors
>
> outside one's immediate range of linguistic experience.(p.345)

Stanley Fish sees the apology for stylistics as being extended (in an
almost devious or suspicious manner, one feels) into the structure of many
analysts' accounts of particular texts. Fish finds that Milic's work
on the relation between syntactic style and personality (like the work of
Ohmann on the connection between stylistic preferences and "conceptual
orientation") employs "one of the basic manuevers of the stylistics
game". Milic "acknowledges the dependence of his procedures on an
unwarranted assumption but then salvages both the assumption and the
procedures by declaring that time and the collection of more data will
give substance to the one and authorize the other". In this way, "the
suspect nature of his enterprise becomes a reason for continuing in it".[110]

My necessarily cursory survey of this wide-ranging debate has not been
made in the hope of settling any accounts, but in order to give some
idea of how open the general questions remain. It would seem that
detailed linguistic analysis of literature has not found a generally-
acknowledged place in relation to other aspects of criticism, and that
the associated Formalist principles are still, to many minds, inextricable
from a very limited conception of the nature of literature.

I shall proceed in the following chapter to argue that Hopkins's poetic theory, considered in relation to Jakobson's later work, helps us to see more clearly how some early Formalist concepts might more fruitfully have been developed. It is to be stressed, however, that these concepts are valuable only if they are seen in a proper perspective, that is, in the light of the reservations expressed in the present section. Insights into the linguistic dynamics of poetry are, to my mind, more important than critics such as Bateson would accept, but overestimates of the importance of linguistic description have probably produced as many distortions as have underestimates. Some developments of the basic ideas of "defamiliarization" and "foregrounding" can help us to see more clearly the kind of phenomenon that a poem is, the ways in which certain formal structures operate in composition and response, and some of the factors which influence literary evolution. The clarification of these matters, however, does not, at the present stage of our knowledge, provide criteria for assessing literary value.

My main purpose is to demonstrate a certain coherence (not entirely one of conscious purpose) in the work of a poet who had a special kind of interest in the medium of the art and in the conditions imposed by that medium, a poet who was unusually attentive to technicalities and to the explanation of the purposes of poetic techniques. I have already suggested (in Chapter Three, section three) that Hopkins had a sense of the distinction between literature in its totality and "literariness". In the following section I shall expand that observation, since it is possible to misrepresent Hopkins as having seen poetry almost entirely in terms of technique, and therefore as having anticipated not only the concepts of some early Formalists but also their exaggerations.

4.4 Hopkins as a proto-Formalist : some qualifications

Hopkins, as we have seen, defines poetry as "speech framed to be heard for its own sake and interest even over and above its interest of meaning" (J, 289). He might appear to anticipate the Formalist notion of "violation of the norm" since, although he feels that poetic language should be a "heightening" of the "current language", he believes that this heightening should be carried out until the current language is "unlike itself" (LB, 89). Furthermore, as J. Hillis Miller points out, Hopkins's "letters to his fellow-poets, Bridges, Patmore, and Dixon, are full of professional discussions of the craft of poetry", to the extent that he "seems to be more interested in technical questions of rhythm, meter, and form than in questions of content" (Miller, p. 283).

This is really an oversimplification. Hopkins's letters on poetry, especially those to Dixon, contain many references to non-technical qualities. He claims, for example, that Tennyson, technically adept though he is, can often show a "want of perfect form in the imagination", especially in longer pieces, and that work such as In Memoriam stands out because "the inspiration is genuine, arising from personal feeling" (CD, 24). Wordsworth, who was in strict technical terms an "imperfect artist" is yet to be judged according to other criteria. On account of his great ode he can be compared to Plato, since "human nature in these men saw something, got a shock" (CD, 147). The power of Wordsworth's greatest verse is the power of his insights and "as his matter varied in importance and as he varied in insight (for he had a profound insight of some things and little of others) so does the value of his work vary"(CD, 148). When Hopkins writes in technical detail about his friends' poems he is frequently concerned not with style as such but with the appropriateness of particular stylistic features to subject-matter or conception. Thus a poem of Dixon's "has the pathos and human sympathy

which so many of these poems express, but the jaunt of the rhythm scarcely suits it" (CD, 63). Bridges' play Ulysses, "noble" though it is, is flawed by "the great severity, the aridity even and joylessness of the lyrics" (CD, 147), for which stylistic mastery cannot compensate. On another occasion, however, Bridges is praised on account of "character, of sincerity or earnestness, of manliness, of tenderness, of humour, melancholy, human feeling" (LB, 96). In the same letter, writing again of Tennyson, Hopkins laments that "his gift of utterance is truly golden, but go further home and you come to thoughts commonplace and wanting in nobility ... In Burns there is generally recognized on the other hand a richness and beauty of manly character ... but there is a great want in his utterance" (LB, 95).

In a letter to Dixon of 1886, Hopkins distinguishes between "poetical insight and inspiration" on the one hand, and "rhetoric" on the other. By "rhetoric" he would be understood to mean "all the common and teachable element in literature, what grammar is to speech, what thoroughbass is to music, what theatrical experience gives to playwrights", and he claims that "the universal fault" of English literature is that "its weakness is rhetoric" (CD, 141). Hopkins's sense of this weakness does much to explain the technical preoccupations of his letters and other prose writings. Generally speaking, he found little fault with the "poetical insight and inspiration" of his correspondents. He is at pains to emphasize to Bridges, after pointing out some faults (such as bad rhymes) in Patmore's verse, that nevertheless "for insight" Patmore "beats all our living poets, his insight is really profound, and he has an exquisiteness, farfetchedness, of imagery worthy of the best things of the Caroline age" (LB, 82). Earlier in this same letter Hopkins introduces his thoughts on a piece by Bridges in typical manner: "The poem you send is fine in thought, but I am not satisfied with the execution altogether"

(LB, 81). The thought, being fine, spoke for itself. It is fair to say that Hopkins wrote so much about technical matters because he felt that they were the most urgently in need of clarification rather than because he held a very narrow view of "art as technique". Rhetoric must be strengthened. Nevertheless, as was mentioned above (Chapter Three, section four), Hopkins was in the later part of his life projecting a treatise on metaphorical structure in Greek poetry.[111]

Another important consideration is that two of Hopkins's main correspondents (Bridges and Patmore) were very serious metrical theorists.[112] Hopkins's desire to be understood by these men led him to explain his metrical experiments in astonishing detail. Being of an extremely scrupulous cast of mind in any case, requiring the security of regulations in art and life alike, he attempted to justify every stress and syllable in lines which, a few decades later, would not seem half so "licentious". His explanations of sprung rhythm, in his "Author's Preface" (Poems, pp. 45-9) and elsewhere, should be considered as attempts to reduce to a system the metrical characteristics of poems which had already been written, as it were, "by ear". Hopkins had "long had haunting his ear the echo of a new rhythm" before he wrote "The Wreck of the Deutschland" (CD, 14). He had also long been poring over the free rhythms of the choruses in Milton's Samson Agonistes. He had decided that they exhibited "counterpointed" rhythm, in which "two rhythms are in some manner running at once" but which has "the disadvantage that he does not let the reader clearly know what the ground-rhythm is meant to be, so they have struck most readers as merely irregular" ("Author's Preface", Poems, p. 47). Sprung rhythm is the next stage after counterpointing, since "if you counterpoint throughout, since only one of the counter rhythms is actually heard, the other is really destroyed" (op.cit.). Hopkins feels that Milton must have understood this but "had reasons for not taking" the final step (CD,15).

Had he been less of a systematist, or less under the influence of
his metrist friends, Hopkins might have decided that Milton was simply
following the dictates of his "ear" in the Samson choruses, and Hopkins
might have felt freer to trust his own ear. Milton, like Hopkins, felt
the need to make prefatory remarks about versification. He wrote that the
"measure of verse used in the chorus is of all sorts, called by the
Greeks monostrophic, or rather apolelymenon" (free from stanzaic patterns),
"or, being divided into stanzas and pauses, they may be called alleostropha"
(consisting of strophes of various forms).[113] Douglas Bush, as Milton's
editor, points out that the verse of these choruses and other passages
"is not 'free verse' in the modern sense" since "the rhythmic units can
be scanned as traditional metrical feet, however boldly manipulated and
combined" (p.516). One may, however, considering the boldness of some
of the combinations, wonder whether scansion in traditional terms has
in this case much point at all. It might justifiably be contended that
the best of "'free verse' in the modern sense" is as highly organized as
Milton's choruses, or, one might add, Shakespeare's later blank verse.
But the organization is simply not explicable in terms of the metrical
foot, which unit seems to represent a rather meaningless notion if the
pattern does not, by repetition, characterize a whole line.

Hopkins, in his "Author's Preface", tries desperately to explain
his rhythms in terms of feet. He writes to Bridges, "I am stricter than
you and I might say than anybody I know" (LB, 44). The reason for this
claim is soon intimated in another reference to the later Milton and
"the fiction of counterpointing" which (Hopkins now feels) hides the
reality of sprung rhythm :

> The want of a metrical notation and the fear of being thought
> to write mere rhythmic or (who knows what the critics might not
> have said?) even unrhythmic prose drove him to this. (LB, 46)

Real sprung rhythm is "little calculated, not more perhaps than prose consciously written rhythmically". It is "the <u>native rhythm</u> of the words used bodily imported into verse" (<u>LB</u>, 46). Hopkins's need to justify such naturalness, to himself and to his poet-friends, explains a large proportion of the references in the letters to "technical questions".

We might turn now from letters and prefaces to poems, and consider whether Hopkins's verse really does exhibit a belief in "art as technique", or whether his comments on the primary importance of "inscape of speech" should not be understood to refer to "the first analysis" (in which the fundamental or characterizing features of the art are discerned).

It might first be said that the sheer volume of scholarly comment stimulated by the <u>ideas</u> in Hopkins's work is sufficient to demonstrate that the poems are not lacking in "interest of meaning", even though the meaning in a few poems such as "Tom's Garland" (<u>Poems</u>, No. 70) is only with great difficulty unravelled. One of the strongest of the impressions which arise from the poet's letters, and from supporting biographical information, is that of poetry as a <u>luxury</u>, scarcely to be afforded, only after great soul-searching to be indulged in at all. Hopkins was the most earnest of men, and seldom could he feel free to work on a poem if he could not believe that it had a purpose, even if he did not expect the poem's message to be broadcast by publication. "The Windhover" (<u>Poems</u>, No. 36), which he felt to be "the best thing he ever wrote" (<u>LB</u>, 85), is dedicated "To Christ our Lord". An ecstatic nature sonnet such as "Hurrahing in Harvest" (<u>Poems</u>, No. 38) might be "the outcome of half an hour of extreme enthusiasm" as Hopkins walks home from a fishing trip (<u>LB</u>, 56), but the expression of that enthusiasm is couched in typically religious terms. Natural beauty is to be "gleaned" for Christ. Four of the "terrible sonnets" of Hopkins's later life "came like inspirations unbidden" (<u>LB</u>, 221) and although they are the most

self-centred of the poet's pieces they might be regarded as extensions of the priest's meditation-notes, dealing as they do with Hopkins's approach to "the dark night of the soul". They are a kind of desperate prayers.

There has recently been an interesting exchange of views in PMLA about the balance between "metalingual" and "referential" interest in Hopkins's poetry. Jacob Korg feels that the two kinds of interest cannot be achieved simultaneously:

> The writer who aims primarily at representation will not
> quarrel with linguistic conventions but will exploit the
> enormous power of consensus they embody, in order to achieve
> the transparency of style that exhibits the subject with
> least interference. (Korg, p.977)

There would, however, appear to be a contradiction between this and Korg's later statement that the "concept of deviation" which he employs "corresponds to the description offered by Riffaterre : an unexpected construction that disrupts a linguistic pattern, projecting its meaning through an effect of contrast with the expected pattern" (p.985, note). On the basis of this, Eleanor Berry challenges Korg, adding that "writing that resists the intelligence almost successfully — as Wallace Stevens said every good poem should — ends by bringing the referent before the reader with exceptional force".[114] Korg, in reply, says that Berry has misunderstood him, that "some confusion has arisen about such terms as 'reference,' 'representation,' and 'mimesis'" which he has 'used more or less interchangeably, to characterize language that alludes to some signified separate from the poem that preexists within the linguistic consensus"[115]. One might wonder how a poet can avoid alluding to "some signified separate from the poem", even if he chooses to discuss mental states rather than sensible external reality. He might be vague, arcane

in diction, extravagant in syntactic elaboration or ellipsis, but as long
as he is using actual words of his language, or recognizable derivatives
of them, he is bound to be writing _about_ something, because the words
have meanings. The aberration of "trans-sense" poetry apart, no deviation
employed by a poet will have any purpose or communicative force if it
does not _imply_ the norm, the "linguistic consensus", from which it is
a deviation.

Here we might recall the discussion (in Chapter Two, section five,
above) of "As Kingfishers Catch Fire ..." (_Poems_, No. 57), particularly
the line in which the root "self" is made to undergo so many and such
unusual transformations:

Selves — goes itself; _myself_ it speaks and spells.

Deviation from linguistic norms could hardly better be exemplified.
We are encouraged to give an uncommon degree of attention to each
syllable of a sequence of several words, and to perceive nuances which
are, as it were, latent in the ordinary forms of the language, yet
unrealized until a particular reordering of the elements is carried out.
It is very difficult, perhaps pointless, to discuss the line as an
example of "sprung rhythm" without referring closely to the interplay
of rhythm with meaning. The syntactic arrangement of the early part of
the line first of all demands a considerable degree of pausing. Let us
recall one of Hopkins's more straightforward accounts of sprung rhythm:

I shd. add that the word Sprung which I use for this
rhythm means something like _abrupt_ and applies by rights
only where one stress follows another running, without
syllable between. (_CD_, 23)

The line in question might be said to be sprung semantically, being "abrupt" in the sense that equally crucial elements of meaning succeed one another "without syllable between". The difficulty of what is being explained invites an almost equal vocal stressing of (at least) the first five syllables, two of which would normally be "slack". The signs are definitely being made more "palpable" than is usual, brought to the foreground of our attention as signs. The process of linguistic understanding becomes uncommonly "strange" or "difficult". To claim, however, that the meaning or interest of the passage is predominantly "metalingual", in that a world of "referents" moves out of focus, would be absurd. Hopkins has something very definite to say about the being of particular things and creatures, about the way in which their simply existing seems to him not a passive condition but an activity, even a communicative gesture ("speaks and spells"). Existence is an essentially joyful and expressive self-performance, as it were. In the sestet Hopkins extends this insight (treating "just" in a similar manner to "self") so as to clarify his vision of humanity's community in Christ. The linguistic cruxes of the poem, the stages at which the medium is most closely scrutinized and its norms distorted, are precisely the points at which discussion of extralinguistic reality is most significantly forwarded. Language does not become the subject of the poem, but the meaning, as Austin Warren says of Hopkins's poems more generally, "hovers closely over the text, the linguistic surface" (Warren, p. 65).

4.5 Summary and Transition

Hopkins's idea of a "language-focussed" poetry can, then, be seen to bear an interesting relation not only to modern Formalist poetics but to developments in poetry and criticism over a long historical period.

Some of these developments approach a pathological extreme, in that a
fascination with technicalities in versification can lead to a very
narrow conception of the nature of literature. But the idea that
poetry is in some important sense "about" language can be compatible
with more moderate views. Despite well-founded doubts about the
effectiveness of much post-Formalist linguistic criticism, some Formalist
and Structuralist theorists have striven to correct the philosophical
drift which, beginning with an overdue reappraisal of rhetorical analysis,
led to an identification of "art" with "device". We can find in the
writings of Hopkins many reasons for believing that he was aware of the
dangers of making this identification, and we can regard him as having
seen rhetorical manipulation as a necessary <u>condition</u> of good poetry
rather than as its <u>raison d'être</u>.

Having made several qualifications as to the place of stylistics
in a total theory of literature, having distinguished between "literature"
and "literariness", we may now proceed to consider more carefully the
strengths and weaknesses of particular methodologies in verse-analysis,
especially those which relate most interestingly to Hopkins's ideas
on the effects of parallelism in poetry.

CHAPTER FIVE

HOPKINS, JAKOBSON, AND THE REASONS FOR RHYME

5.1 Introductory

A great deal of emphasis is placed by modern poetic theorists, as
it was by traditional rhetoricians, on the importance of parallelism
in poetry, and indeed the feature is probably the most ubiquitous and
persistent technical characteristic of the art. Roman Jakobson, a
member of the Russian Formalist movement and one of the central figures
in later Structuralist literary theory, is particularly emphatic in
insisting that parallelism is the major poetic principle, and he finds
support for this contention in the theoretical writings of Hopkins.

The methods and conclusions of Jakobson's analyses have been very
seriously questioned, and what his critics have to say applies equally
well to a great deal of recent linguistic analysis of poetry. Some more
promising theoretical directions are, however, to be found in the writings
of some of Jakobson's earlier associates, and the ideas evolved in these
writings can equally well be supported by selections from Hopkins's
prose. Since these ideas are even more firmly supported by Hopkins's
poetry, as will be seen in Chapter Six, Jakobson's citation of Hopkins
may be regarded as something of a misrepresentation.

5.2 Jakobson and the "principle of parallelism"

The central statement in Jakobson's position is to be found in his 1960 paper on the relation of linguistics to poetics, which I have already (in Chapter Four, section two) quoted in part:

> The set (<u>Einstellung</u>)toward the MESSAGE as such, focus on
>
> the message for its own sake, is the POETIC function of
>
> language ... Poetic function is not the sole function of
>
> verbal art but only its dominant, determining function,
>
> whereas in all other verbal activities it acts as a
>
> subsidiary, accessory constituent. This function, by
>
> promoting the palpability of signs, deepens the fundamental
>
> dichotomy of signs and objects. (Jakobson, "Closing
>
> Statement", p.356)

A little later, seeking the "empirical linguistic criterion of poetic function", Jakobson introduces the Saussurean distinction between associative (paradigmatic) and sequential (syntagmatic) relations. As Saussure's ideas will be important later in the present study, a rather lengthy quotation from Jakobson is justified by a double purpose:

> If 'child' is the topic of the message, the speaker selects
>
> one amongst the extant, more or less similar, nouns like
>
> child, kid, youngster, tot, all of them equivalent in a
>
> certain respect, and then, to comment on this topic, he may
>
> select one of the semantically cognate verbs — sleeps, dozes,
>
> nods, naps. Both chosen words combine in the speech chain.
>
> The selection is produced on the base of equivalence, similarity
>
> and dissimilarity, synonymity and antonymity, while the
>
> combination, the build up of the sequence, is based on contiguity.

> The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence
> from the axis of selection to the axis of combination.
> Equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the
> sequence. In poetry one syllable is equalized with any other
> syllable of the same sequence; word stress is assumed to
> equal word stress, as unstress equals unstress; prosodic
> long is matched with long, and short with short; word boundary
> equals word boundary, no boundary equals no boundary;
> syntactic pause equals syntactic pause, no pause equals
> no pause. Syllables are converted into units of measure,
> and so are morae or stresses. (p. 358)

Considering the effects of the sound-similarities which are the most
obvious manifestation of the principle in most verse, Jakobson claims
that "equivalence in sound, projected into the sequence as its constitutive
principle, inevitably involves semantic equivalence" (p. 368) and that
"two similar phonemic sequences near to each other are prone to assume
a paronomastic function" (p. 371). In this, Jakobson would appear to adhere
closely to the most straightforward interpretation of Hopkins's 1865
statement that "parallelism in expression tends to beget or passes into
parallelism in thought" (J, 85), which statement Jakobson actually quotes.

Jakobson holds, furthermore, that "not only the phonological
sequence but in the same way any sequence of semantic units strives to
build an equation" ("Closing Statement", p. 370). In a later paper, he
writes:

> Pervasive parallelism inevitably activates all the levels of
> language — the distinctive features, inherent and prosodic, the
> morphological and syntactic categories and forms, the lexical
> units and their semantic classes in both their convergences

and divergences acquire an autonomous poetic value.[116]

Even more recently we find Jakobson stating in more definite terms that the problem of parallelism "can hardly be mastered by a scrutiny automatically restricted to the external form and excluding any discussion of grammatical and lexical meanings". He feels that "any noticeable reiteration of the same grammatical concept becomes an effective poetic device", and that an "unbiased, attentive, exhaustive, total description" of the arrangement of "diverse morphological classes and syntactic constructions in a given poem surprises the examiner himself by unexpected, striking symmetries and antisymmetries, balanced structures, efficient accumulation of equivalent forms and salient contrasts". He drives home the point that we should "insist on the strikingness of these devices".[117]

Here Jakobson expresses the main principles of attitude which underlie his two most famous "unbiased, attentive, exhaustive" analyses of particular poems, the first written in conjunction with Claude Lévi-Strauss[118] and the second with L.G. Jones.[119] Paul Werth has provided a useful summary of the method as it appears in the second of these analyses:

(i) establish from the rhyme-scheme and syntactic structure a broad division into strophes; (ii) carry out detailed metrical, phonological, morphological, lexical and syntactic analyses of the poem; (iii) make a rhetorical analysis of the poem (in the limited sense of identifying figures and tropes); (iv) make all possible binary permutations among the strophes of the poem; (v) if possible, make semantic/thematic generalizations for (some of) these binary pairs.[120]

Werth demonstrates in great and sometimes very amusing detail, and without any distortion of the "Jakobsonian method", that the kinds of parallelism discovered in a Shakespeare sonnet can be found in abundance in the most atrocious of William McGonagall's poems, or in a randomly-selected newspaper article on flea-circuses. It is, furthermore, possible to make, with regard to such sub-literary specimens, "semantic/thematic generalizations" at least as plausible as those made by Jakobson and his associates.

Jakobson's insistence on the essentially "paronomastic" or associational function of parallelism can be traced back to the work of his early Formalist associates. Eichenbaum wrote of the poet's "play" with "lateral meanings" which run "afoul ... of habitual verbal associations".[121] Even Tynyanov, whose expression of a rather different attitude to parallelistic effect will be discussed in the fourth section of the present chapter, wrote that if "you will line up in formation disparate, but like-sounding words, they will become cognates".[122] Such semantic associations are obviously important in poetry, and different poets will exploit them to different degrees. As Ants Oras writes, "The fairy-fury, foul-full, fierce-force type of uniformally framed vowels" is in Milton "mostly used to link different lines but with a controlled power of sound and semantic suggestion that goes beyond Spenser".[123] Oras cites the association between "first disobedience" and "forbidden" in the first two lines of Paradise Lost as an example of the purposeful extension of such parallelism between consonant patterns. Such were amongst Hopkins's favourite devices, and there is no reason to question the straightforward semantic explanation of compounds such as "heaven-haven" (Poems, No. 9, title, and No. 28, st. 35).

There is, however, a danger of overestimating the specificity of "semantic suggestion" involved in parallelistic patterning. The

possibilities of discovering "hidden meanings" through linguistic analysis are almost unlimited. Thus, in their analysis of Shakespeare's Sonnet 129, Jakobson and Jones suggest that there are thematically significant associations between sections of the poem which show similar ratios of abstract to concrete nouns, or of finite to infinitive verb-forms, or of one part of speech to another. And these are some of the simpler patterns which emerge from the analysis.

5.3   The objections to Jakobson's analyses

The first main fault that critics find in Jakobson's work on poetry is that his insistence on "the strikingness of these devices" is not validated.[124]   Michael Riffaterre, writing of the strophic divisions made by Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss in Baudelaire's "Les Chats", points out that some of them depend upon "constituents that cannot possibly be perceived by the reader" and insists that "these constituents must therefore remain alien to the poetic structure, which is supposed to emphasize the form of the message, to make it more 'visible', more compelling".[125]   One might add that a great deal of recent linguistic analysis of literature depends on the measuring of statistical frequencies, which process, as Chatman has said, often tends to be "somewhat barren" since "the reader can hardly become aware of the total effect of 'normal curve disruption' when it is diffused over the entire poem; the capacity for eliciting awareness of distributional peculiarities seems essential for a feature to emerge as a literary convention".[126]

It is true that a function of poetic structures such as parallelism is to give integrity to the work. Such features, in Bateson's terms,

"hold the poem together in a single instantaneous whole"[127] in the sense that the reader is helped or encouraged to increase his usual, necessary capacity for grasping larger syntactic units as wholes. There is, furthermore, truth in Michael Shapiro's claim that "The analysis of poetic structure, both traditionally and at the present stage of its development, is deeply grounded in an epistemological strategy which is perhaps most appropriately to be termed the spatialization of the temporal".[128] Bruns writes of the attitude to rhetorical manipulation expressed in Henry Peacham's The Garden of Eloquence (1593) that "the subject is not merely embroidered but transformed, as in Horace's ut pictura poesis, so as to exist no longer in an oral-aural sphere but in the visual field of the imagination" (Bruns, p.21).

There are many positive results of the spatializing strategy. Richard Ohmann writes of these as follows:

> Whatever the encouragement we may get from Gutenburg
> or Ramus, certainly the conceptual models of literature that
> we have kept readiest to hand have been static models.
> Metaphors like 'urn' and 'icon' seem appropriate. We see
> the poem as an artifact, and chart its structure. If it
> contains dynamic impulses, they are held in a tension that
> neutralizes them; I.A. Richards spoke of poetry's checking
> the impulse to action by balancing our 'appetancies'.
> W.K. Wimsatt said that a poem is an act, but that it must be
> hypostatized as 'a thing between the poet and the audience'
> before it becomes available for criticism. And of course
> a brilliant criticism has issued from these premises.[129]

Indeed, visual responses to poetry might have become deeply ingrained in our consciousness. Yeats gives reasons for believing that this might

especially be the case with English, since "Irish poetry and Irish stories were more to be spoken or sung, while English literature, alone of great literatures ... has all but completely shaped itself in the printing-press".[130] Wellek and Warren remind us that "the line-ends of verses, the grouping into stanzas, the paragraphs of prose passages, eye-rhymes or puns which are comprehensible only through spelling, and many similar devices must be considered integral factors of literary works of art" (Theory, p.144).

"Static models" can, however, be distorting. The various terms which can be used to describe the devices which I have been discussing — parallelism, repetition, symmetry, equivalence, affinity — all have different connotations regarding the relation between static and dynamic qualities in poetry. Each corresponds to a different metaphorical predilection in characterizations of the kind of phenomenon that a poem is. Jakobson, it would seem, uses "parallelism" (with associated terms such as "balanced structures" and "symmetries") in an imaginatively definitive manner. His entire poetic theory has a visual, spatial, linear, static emphasis. He is inclined to impose on poems the patterns of diagrams. This is suggested even in his basic formulation about the "projection" of the principle of equivalence from one "axis" to another. In one paper, Jakobson even writes of the "manifestly spatial" disposition of certain substantives in a poem by Blake.[131] Although Blake is in this case being treated specifically as a "poet-painter", the spatializing tendency appears in Jakobson's work more generally. To a degree this is explicable in terms of the importance of painting in the pattern of cultural developments, centred on the notion of "autoreferential" art, which was discussed in my previous chapter. Jakobson makes an interesting observation in his essay "Retrospect":

> Those of us who were concerned with language learned
> to apply the principle of relativity in linguistic operations;
> we were constantly drawn in this direction by the spectacular
> development of modern physics and by the pictorial theory and
> practice of cubism where everything is 'based on relationship'.[132]

Several critics have in different ways echoed W.J. Ong's statement that "the structuralist enterprise has frequently been plagued by its typographical bias, by its failure to consider language primarily as it really is, as sound".[133] This judgement is especially applicable to Jakobson's and to comparable analyses of poetic language. It is now over a quarter of a century since James J. Lynch introduced the influential idea of the "summative word" into stylistic analysis, the notion being traceable through Jakobson's early paper on modern Russian poetry[134] to Saussure's unpublished papers on the use of anagrams in poetry.[135] Lynch's essay demonstrates (and this is his main example) that the word "silent" in Keats's "Chapman's Homer" sonnet "sums up" the "dominant sound-structure" of the poem, as well as being prominent for metrical, syntactic and thematic reasons.[136] The objection that the sounds in "silent" are just about the most frequently occurring in English anyway, would be a sufficient one. But if the analyst thus went off to study phonemic probability-ratios and returned with a "weighted" scale of sounds to continue with the same kind of analysis, the real point would have been missed. The allegedly crucial features in Lynch's account of the poem's "tonality" will only really be striking if underlined on the page. Lynch, as Dell Hymes puts it, "approaches the poem primarily as a quasi-simultaneous object",[137] and the results of this critical manoeuvre do not _in themselves_ constitute an accurate account of poetic structure.

Nor are the negative results of the spatializing tendency avoided even in the recent work of Michael Shapiro, who is at great pains to demonstrate that much of Jakobson's theorizing is invalidated by the misconceived application of spatial concepts to linguistic features.[138] Shapiro goes on to argue that markedness relations, which "constitute the evaluative superstructure inherent in all semiotic oppositions" (p.xi), set up patterns of asymmetry within poems, which patterns can be manipulated by the poet for the sake of thematic consolidation or formal cohesion. The concept of markedness can be exemplified by the phonological relation between /p/ (unmarked) and /b/ (marked), where the second member of the otherwise identical pair has the additional feature of voicing. Shapiro tends to concentrate on the phonological level, and, apart from the dubiousness of some of the connections he makes between markedness patterns and "theme" or "meaning", his data would seem to lack the crucial quality of strikingness which Jakobson's critics mention so frequently. We quite simply remain unconvinced that the revealed patterns are poetically crucial, since their discovery depends not only on detailed linguistic knowledge but on extensive diagrammatic and tabular presentation. The relations of sounds in terms of their nearness or distance in a sound continuum are not properly taken into account.

A further objection frequently made to Jakobson's analyses is that the linguistic patterns discerned are related in a highly unsystematic and impressionistic manner to the thematic/semantic level. Despite all that has been said above, Shapiro introduces this problem with a very useful reference to C.S. Peirce's distinction between "iconic", "indexical" and "symbolic" modes of semiosis.[139] In the simplest summary, a realistic picture iconically represents an object or objects, smoke indexically refers to fire, and a pair of scales symbolically (entirely conventionally) denotes justice. Shapiro points out that

> mere repetition of certain sounds, without any discernible
> and semiotically patterned connection to the other linguistic
> levels of the text, betokens a relation between signans and
> signatum that can be called 'automorphic' ... or, following
> Jakobson, <u>introversive semiosis</u> ... wherein a message signifies
> itself and whereby poetry and music achieve their greatest
> tangency. This notion comports neatly with Jakobson's well-
> known definition ... of the poetic function as 'focus on the
> message for its own sake'. (Shapiro, p.94.)

Nevertheless, in Jakobson's treatment of a great deal of analytical data,

> The purely automorphic function has been attenuated or
> significantly subordinated to what was called ... the <u>iconic</u>
> <u>function</u>, by which is meant specifically the diagrammatization
> of relations obtaining between and amongst units of the
> expression plane on the one hand, and between units of the
> content and the expression plane, on the other. (Shapiro, p.100)

In this more specialized sense, if the results of Jakobson's
"diagrammatization of relations" are any indication, then the idea of
poetry as a "verbal icon" can be extremely misleading. The explanation
of "iconic" relations between expression and content, form and meaning,
is predictably the commonest means of justifying detailed linguistic
analysis of poetry. As Shapiro implies, however, the idea of poetry
as a kind of message which "signifies itself" is left behind. Furthermore,
many of the explanations are very dubious or (what is perhaps worse)
inconsequential.

One of the most famous of these explanations appears in the paper
by Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss on Baudelaire. In this analysis, as
Michael Riffaterre points out, the purely formal metrical and

grammatical categories "masculine" and "feminine" are endowed with "esthetic and even ethical values" (p.197). It is certainly true that "the gender of French nouns does orient the associations they trigger" (p.197), at least where humanization or personification is imaginatively quite a straightforward matter, but the analyst's contention that the use of feminine substantives as "masculine" rhymes suggests the idea of <u>androgyny</u> is, quite simply, ludicrous. As Riffaterre says,

> Only technicians would have thought of it (they have thought
> of it); metalinguistic ratiocination of this sort betrays how
> easily the wariest of analysts slips into a belief in the
> intrinsic explanatory worth of purely descriptive terms. (p.198)

A similar judgement might be made of entire books, such as S.R. Levin's <u>Linguistic Structures in Poetry</u>.[140] Levin, like Jakobson, is attracted by binary structures, which he calls "couplings". Some of the couplings Levin discovers are extremely questionable in their "strikingness". The couplings in Emily Dickinson's line "Or mists the Appenine" are perhaps clearer. We probably hear or feel <u>nasality</u>. But we might wonder whether it is of any significance to say that "the bilabial nasal of <u>mists</u> and the two apical nasals of <u>Appenine</u> are equivalent in their all being voiced nasals" (Levin, <u>Structures</u>, p.44). Overall, Levin has little more to tell us than that couplings "unify the poem" and that "another result of the coupling principle as it is used in poetry is to make the poem memorable" (p.58).

A version of Jakobson's idea that sound-preponderances can signal important "strophic" divisions in poems appears in W.T. Moynihan's book on Dylan Thomas, where he claims that "Thomas's affinitive patterns may differentiate sections or a group of lines from the rest of the poem, thereby clarifying or enhancing the literal meaning".[141] There is a

certain poverty of explanation in the examples given, however. Thus:

> Two examples of phonemic chiasmus from 'In Country Sleep'
> — 'Illumination of music' reversed four lines later as
> 'music of elements' and lulled black-backed/Gull ...' —
> suggest by their innate musicality the beauty and harmony
> which the poet is here trying to evoke. (p.143)

Linguistic analysis based on an "iconic" principle leads to David Masson's astonishing claims for the power of onomatopoeia in Keats, as in the following section of his account of "Ode to a Nightingale":

> Then comes (g) the interchange-progression âth/thruw // ...
> â' - ruwth ('path Through', 'heart of Ruth') in which the
> hollow, remote and brooding syllable /ruw/ is passed by the
> insinuating blade of the interdental th, suggesting the
> perception of the bird's song stealing through the echoing
> vestibule of her ear and the echoing loneliness of her mood
> into the brooding girl's consciousness.[142]

Of such "metalinguistic ratiocination" we may say, with Riffaterre, that "only technicians would have thought of it".

Jakobson's analyses, then, fail to distinguish patterns which are likely to be perceived by readers, and the analyses suffer from certain serious consequences of the tendency to conceive a poem as a "quasi-simultaneous object" in which there is a "diagrammatic" relation between formal and thematic patterns. Many other linguistic approaches to poetry seem to be based on such a conception. Indeed, the problem of "strikingness", and that of explaining the relation between style and meaning in a convincing fashion, would appear to be interconnected.

"Iconic" explanations of poetic effect frequently imply that data resulting from painstaking analysis of the poem on the page represent important aspects of the poet's intention or of the reader's response, a necessary additional implication being that these intentions and responses are somehow "subliminal". Given these assumptions, there is no conceivable limit to what linguistic analysis could be made to "prove" about any but the shortest and simplest poems. As has been noted, the "metalingual" or "automorphic" function of devices such as parallelism tends to be left behind even in the work of Jakobson, who is one of the major proponents of the view that poetry is, at some fundamental level, "about" language.

I shall follow up the objections to Jakobson's analyses by suggesting, first of all, that we can begin to solve the "strikingness" problem if we distinguish clearly between, on the one hand, rhyme (in the broad sense of "phonemic parallelism") and metre, and on the other hand the more complex types of parallelism discussed by Jakobson. Werth points out (with reference to the Jakobson and Jones analysis) that "the majority of statements made at the lexical level concern not simple recurrence but category recurrence, which unlike straight repetition does not bear the presumption of identity" (Werth, p.61) and he suggests later that

> the impact of the repetition varies according to the type
> of repetition (simple, category, semantic) and the type of
> linguistic units (phonological, lexical, syntactic) which are
> in fact interrelated ... For example, simple phonological
> repetition is usually euphonious, though it can be used to
> give emphasis to a higher level repetition (e.g. an antithesis),
> and it may be used for onomatopoeic effects given that the
> semantics of the context allows them. (p.67)

In my next section I shall suggest that phonemic repetition (like metrical periodicity) need be regarded neither as "paranomastic" (Jakobson) nor "euphonious" (Werth) in its predominating effect. An alternative explanation of the basic function of such structures goes some way to solving the problems with which we have seen much linguistic criticism to be beset, and also leads to a quite plausible argument in favour of a modified "metalingual" principle in poetic theory.

5.4 Hopkins and the principle of "construction"

In Chapter Four, section two (above) I discussed the tendency, particularly amongst baroque artists, to become obsessed with what Daniells called "the delight in overcoming difficulties" (p.105). I shall proceed to relate certain thoughts of Hopkins, of some early Formalists, and of other poetic theorists, which together suggest ways in which a "delight in overcoming difficulties" might be regarded as an important element in poetic experience more generally.

I have already referred (in Chapter Three, section six, above) to Hopkins's account of metre as a "recasting of speech into sound-words, sound-clauses and sound-sentences" (<u>J</u>, 273) and to his distinction between parallelisms of <u>sound</u> and those of "thought" (<u>J</u>, 267). A little later in the same set of lecture notes he writes as follows:

> Bare rhythm would be monotonous. Monotony is prevented in the following ways —
>
> (i) By the mere change of the words, like fresh water flowing through a fountain or over a waterfall, each gallon taking on the same shape as those before it —
>
> (ii) By caesura, the breaking of the feet, or in other

words the breaking up of the rhythm into sense-words of
different lengths from the sound-words. (J, 280)

The notion of contrast between sound and sense is hardly to be found
in Jakobson's later work, even though he enthusiastically cites other
statements by Hopkins. Jakobson's analyses of parallelism, as we have
seen, tend in a very different direction. He prefers to refer to
"Wimsatt's illuminating observations on the meaningfulness of rhyme"
("Closing Statement", p 368) and the conclusions drawn by Wimsatt from
these observations are fairly well summarized in his statement that
"verse in general, and more particularly rhyme ... impose upon the
logical pattern of expressed argument a kind of fixative counterpattern
of alogical implication".[143] One might suppose that Jakobson would here
take "alogical implication" to mean something like Eichenbaum's "lateral
meaning". Jakobson might well have cited Empson's claim that rhyme's
most important function "is to connect two words by similarity of sound
so that you are made to think of their possible connections".[144] The
enormous influence of Empson's presentation of poems as structures of
ambiguities and internal associations might have made it unduly difficult
for us to conceive of rhyme as having any other purpose at all.

Nevertheless, even on the following page of Wimsatt's essay on
rhyme, we find an acknowledgement of the importance of contrast between
formal and logical units:

> The smallest equalities, the feet, so many syllables, or
> so many time units, are superimposed upon the linear succession
> of ideas most often without any regard for the equalities
> of logic. Two successive iambs may be two words, or one word,
> or parts of two words, and so on. The larger units, the lines
> also are measured without reference to logically parallel

sections of sense. Even in heavily end-stopped verse,
such as that in Shakespeare's early plays, the complete
phrase of which each line is formed stands in oblique relation
to the lines before and after. The lines do not parallel
one another but spring ahead, one from another, diversely.

(pp. 154-5)

It is interesting that Hopkins applies to this contrastive process an
image of flowing water. A comparable image appears in one of the
notebooks at Campion Hall, as part of a commentary by the young Hopkins
on the Greek "Idea":

The figure shewing how the Idea can be one though it
exists in many is that of the sun in broken water, where
the sun's face being once crossed by the ripples each one
carries an image down with it as its own sun; and these
images are always mounting the ripples and trying to fall
back into one again. We must therefore think wherever we see
many things having one idea that they all are falling back
or wd. fall back but are held away by their conditions, and
those philosophers have very truly said everything is becoming.[145]

In his journals, Hopkins wrote as follows about water-patterning:

In watching the sea one should be alive to the oneness which
all its motion and tumult receives from its perpetual balance
and falling this way and that to its level. (J, 225)

These perceptions of unity-in-diversity bear a clear relation to
certain passages from Coleridge and Ruskin, and although Hopkins may not
have seen any of the letters and notebooks of the former, he certainly
read Ruskin very carefully.[146] All the relevant passages concern moving

water. Coleridge writes in a letter of 1802 of "the continual Change of the Matter, the perpetual Sameness of the Form" in a cataract, which was "like an awful Image and Shadow of God & the World".[147] In his notebooks he records a "White rose of Eddy-foam; where the stream ran into a scooped or scolloped hollow of the Rock in its channel" and remarks "how much of this scene of endless variety in Identity was Nature's".[148] Ruskin writes in Modern Painters of the "irreconcilable mixture of fury and formalism" in the appearance of breakers on an even shore. He goes on to say that "it is when we perceive that it is no succession of wave, but the same water, constantly rising, and crashing, and recoiling, and rolling in again in new forms, and with fresh fury, that we perceive the perturbed spirit, and feel the intensity of its unwearied rage". Elsewhere in the same section he had written of "that which is to all human minds the best embodiment of unwearied unconquerable power, the wild, various, fantastic, tameless unity of the sea".[149]

Certain central themes connect these three writers very closely in their visions of the natural universe, and one of the most important is this stressing of the simultaneity of identity and variety, sameness and change. Ruskin's fidelity to fact, despite the perception of the sea as "embodiment" of a vast power, tends to exclude the sense of divine immanence that we find in Coleridge and Hopkins. Ruskin (as was seen in Chapter Two, section four, above) is more likely to find in the structure of nature the evidence of universal laws, which evidence often has detailed moral implications for humanity. God is, as it were, "read into" the world. Coleridge, on the other hand, might be said to have had an extended lover's quarrel with pantheism. His god is more immediately present in the world. Hopkins's position is somewhere between these other two. He combines the scientific attention of the one with the "pantheist" attitude of the other. Through his vision of inscape and instress, he arrives at the conception of a god who is continually and

actively immersed in the world without being "nothing but" the sum of things. Hopkins's god is not to be _read_ in the world so much as _conversed_ _with_ through it. Hopkins finds in the structure of the world something of the actual structure of the divinity, and this is largely because the problem of identity and difference remains at the centre of his thought. Many different applications of the terminology of inscape depend on the relation between, on the one hand, repeated or abiding themes (laws, inscapes of species, fixed "diatonic" forms in art, and so on) and on the other hand particular things or instances. Even in music, Hopkins was most interested in such types as that in which "the air becomes a generic form which is specified newly in each verse" (LB, 305). Comparably, the god "whose beauty is past change" (in "Pied Beauty") "fathers-forth" into each component of the dappled universe, "specified newly" in each. Religious experience, and the heightened sensory experience which is aesthetic awareness, are structurally the same. Hopkins's attempt to relate such different levels of experience renders more significant — more consistent with his thought as a whole — those comments on versification which compare the unfolding of a poem to a physical process. Hopkins was imaginatively primed to conceive of verse structure in terms of the "fixity and flux" relation. It is completely in character for him to choose (or borrow from Ruskin) the image of moving water to signify this relation.

Hopkins discusses the further aesthetic function of parallelistic constraint in his dialogue on beauty:

> 'Verse and artificial prose then' said the Professor 'are arts using the medium of words, and verse is distinguished from prose as employing a continuous structural parallelism, ranging from the technically so-called parallelism of the Psalms to the intricate structure of Greek or Italian or English verse'. (J, 108)

Hanbury objects that one point has been overlooked:

> 'You seem to think that the difference between the best
> prose, we will say, and the best verse is only that one has
> the advantage of a continuous artificial structure, in fact
> that the advantage of poetry over prose may be expressed
> by the intrinsic value of that structure, that is, of
> verse. But now is it not always assumed that the highest
> literary efforts, creative of course I mean, have been
> made in verse and not in prose?'. (J, 108)

The main point of the Professor's response is as follows:

> 'You see, as others have seen, that genius works more
> powerfully under the constraints of metre and rhyme and so on than
> without, ... that the concentration, the intensity, which is
> called in by means of an artificial structure brings into play
> the resources of genius on the one hand, and on the other brings
> us to the end of what inferior minds have to give us'. (J, 108)

According to E.L. Epstein, the simple impression "that a creator has
risen to an occasion" and "seems to acknowledge his own understanding
of his creation by 'decorating' important structural points either
mimetically or non-mimetically" leads to "a certain degree of dramatic
excitement" (Epstein, p. 46). S.R. Levin feels that we may "separate
out one level of the overall effect, one which we may call the primary
aesthetic response", and that even Jakobson's "projection of paradigmatic
series into the syntagm" may induce this response.[150] The preliminary,
unspecific effect of the setting of language in abstract patterns can
be regarded simply as "framing", whereby the poem is established as an
art-object, set off from the world. As Geoffrey Leech says, "even the
visual signal that a text is verse and not prose, its irregular lineation

on the page, is sufficient to call up in a reader a whole range of
expectations which would otherwise have been absent".[151] Similarly,
I.A. Richards, at the time of writing his Principles, felt that very
artificiality of metre "produces in the highest degree the 'frame'
effect, isolating the poetic experience from the accidents and irrelevancies
of everyday existence".[152]

But the more frivolous connotations of the word "decorating" in
Epstein's analysis might be misleading, as might Levin's comment that
it is "perfectly legitimate ... for the purposes of a particular thesis,
to argue that in the first analysis rhyme carries no cognitive meaning"
("Conventions", p.186). The notion of an overall or generalized effect
of form is important, but some forms are more effective than others, and
their significance is not properly appreciated until we consider their
relation to structures of meaning in particular poems. We have to decide
how, more precisely, "the resources of genius" mentioned by Hopkins are brought
into play by the formal constraints.

Roger Fowler has written as follows in explanation of the popularity
of the sonnet form:

> Successful sonneteers can at once override the rigid metrical
> structure and at the same time exploit it for rhetorical force.
> Sonnets lend themselves to intense ratiocination, argumentation
> driving towards the logical consummation of the couplet, but
> their simple formal structure will not allow the poet to
> deprive his readers of the consolation of solid, very square
> stability.[153]

The constraint of rhyme, as David Lodge points out,

> is apt to prevent the poet from saying what he originally
> intended to say, and to lead him to say something that he would

not otherwise have thought of saying. This is well known to
anyone who has ever tried to write regular verse, though it is
rarely admitted, as though there were something vaguely shameful
about it. Of course, if the sense is completely controlled by
the exigencies of metre and rhyme, doggerel and nonsense result.
Successful poetry is that which manages to fulfil all the
requirements of a complex, purely formal pattern of sound and
at the same time to seem an utterly inevitable expression
of its meaning.[154]

The notion of _chance_ expressed here — the idea that a significant factor in
composition is the _controlled_ _accident_ — cannot be better illustrated than
by reference to Keats's manner of composition, particularly in the odes, as
analyzed by critics such as M.R. Ridley.[155] The poet seems to start with
a very general idea of what he will say, but at the outset has less of
a definite "message" than an attitude towards the world and a strong urge
to create poetry. A few phrases have already come to mind, a few
particular words that he definitely wants to use. He takes a roughly
appropriate metrical pattern, the flexible pentameter, mixed, perhaps,
with a few shorter lines. The overall rhyme-scheme is not yet fixed,
but he has been exploring the possibilities of making the sonnet less
symmetrical in this respect, and has even written a sonnet in illustration
of some of these possibilities. He begins to experiment, and the process
described by Lodge becomes evident. After a couple of lines, the chosen
rhyme-scheme may already lead Keats to seek a different word from the one
he had had in mind, and the new word may be a better one, leading the
thought in a slightly different direction. An entire stanza may form
itself quite rapidly, but the rhythm at certain points may have become
too regular, or an unsatisfactory echo has appeared, or a really
indispensible word or short phrase has been omitted. Partially or fully-

formed phrases or half-lines remain in the back of Keats's mind, and he will try to fit some of them into several different contexts. He solves some of these problems, others are shelved for a time or forgotten and replaced by new ones. Now, perhaps, the cumulative effect of a whole stanza's rhythm is unsatisfactory. Perhaps the stanza now seems a little too short, or the rhymes at a few points are, as Keats put it, too "pouncing". Perhaps some of the rhyme-words would be better echoed after three lines rather than two, so that there is a greater feeling of space. The repeated formal pattern of the stanzas may not be finalized until several of them have been drafted. By this stage the technical problems have become more complex, the tone and cadence of the whole poem is beginning to emerge, the poet may have to go back twenty lines to make a necessary correction. He moves back and forward between the half-formed thought and the half-formed structure, adapting them both to the combination, finally achieving the balance. The meaning, much of which is discovered in the process of combination, seems "utterly inevitable".

The conception of the effect of poetic form which has been emerging in the present section might provide a sounder basis for linguistic explanations of the more localized effects of parallelism than is afforded by the general formulations of Jakobson. Jakobson and several other writers seem to envisage the poet as (consciously or unconsciously) fitting a preconceived meaning into formal patterns, from which patterns the reader (consciously or unconsciously) extricates the meaning. It is perhaps more plausible to insist on the arbitrariness of the constraints under which the poet works, and to see him as being enabled by this situation to develop an initially rather vague or unexceptional meaning into something really interesting. An important component in the reader's positive response is his awareness of the control with which the difficulty has been overcome or exploited.

The exploitation can take many forms. We might give a very different account of the Shakespeare sonnet (No. 129) whose structure was analyzed by Jakobson and Jones. It could be said that there is a very important poise or tension between the strict, neat, formal pattern of the poem and the kind of message which is contained within it. If we paraphrase the logical meaning of the sonnet we get a rather uninteresting moral position or piece of worldly wisdom. What makes the piece interesting is largely a matter of tone,which the present writer at least finds to be nervous, virulent. The denunciation of lust is presented in general terms, but it seems uncomfortably associated with the writer's own (probably recent) experience. The poem has some of the qualities of a bitter emotional outburst, but the emotion is held in check. It is important that the long sentence which makes up most of the poem strains against the symmetrical pattern. The "meaning" of the poem is not so much the moral message as the conveyed state of mind, the kind of emotional engagement which is made with the problem. The tone is half-created by the poet's having worked successfully within the tight constraint of the sonnet form. An equivalent passage in a looser form could not have quite the same meaning. The language would not be under the same kind of strain.

A comparable tension is perceived in some of Hopkins's late sonnets, which will be discussed in more detail in my next chapter. These poems deal with the edge of despair, with disillusion and failure, self-pity, even self-disgust. And yet they are so tautly controlled that even those which convey most strongly the sense of failure have qualities which make them much more than self-indulgent emotional outbursts. The simple fact that they are sonnets has an extremely important effect on what they actually mean.

To cite such examples, however, is to associate linguistic tension too closely with nervous tension. In far quieter poems, the effect of

formal regularities can be regarded as being essentially the same.
The "sense", as Milton put it, is "variously drawn out from one verse
into another".[156] We experience what Wordsworth described as "continual
and regular impulses of pleasurable surprise from the metrical
arrangement".[157] These are inevitably <u>linguistic</u> surprises, and, on the
analogy of Levin's phrase, we can begin to speak of a "primary
<u>metalingual</u> response". The idea of linguistic defamiliarization need not
necessarily imply the Formalists' vocabulary of violence. It is simply
that our perception of language <u>as such</u> becomes, in the reading of
poetry, more conscious, more considerate than is usual. The flow of the
linguistic sequence need not be <u>extravagantly</u> distorted, nor need the
distortion become an end in itself.

The Formalist Yuri Tynyanov, like Hopkins, appreciated the
importance of tension or counterpoint between two systems in verse, and,
like Hopkins, he stressed the element of movement or dynamism in poetry:

> The form of a literary work must be perceived as a
> dynamic entity.
>
> This dynamism is revealed, first of all, in the concept
> of the constructive principle. Not all aspects of a word are
> of equal value; dynamic form is not the result of uniting or
> merging such aspects (cf. the often-used term 'correspondence'),
> but rather the result of their interaction which enhances one
> group of factors at the expense of another. In the process the
> enhanced factor deforms those subordinated to it. Second, the
> sensation of form in such a situation is always the sensation
> of flow (and therefore of change) of interrelation between the
> subordinating, constructive factor and the subordinated factors ...
> Art exists by means of this interaction or struggle.[158]

As an example of the effect of these processes on literary evolution, Tynyanov refers to the "metrico-tonic" system which was a "constructive factor" in Lomonsov's verse, but which later "merged with a specific system of syntax and vocabulary" so that its "subordinating, deforming role became weaker, the poetic line became automatic, and it required the revolution of Deržavin to break this union and change it once again into interaction, struggle, and form" (Tynyanov, "Rhythm", p.128).

The term "subordinating" in this and other Formalist texts is more commonly translated as "dominant". The noun "dominant" became a key-word, and it was crucial to Mukařovský's later elaboration of the idea of "foregrounding" or "actualization". Tynyanov uses the term elsewhere:

> Since a system is not an equal interaction of all
> elements but places a group of elements in the foreground —
> the 'dominant' — and thus involves the deformation of the
> remaining elements, a work enters into literature and takes
> on its literary function through this dominant.[159]

Erlich points out that "Tynyanov was much less specific as to the nature of the dominanta than he was as to its status" (Erlich, p.200). Mukařovský is rather more specific:

> More concretely : sometimes intonation will be governed by
> meaning (by various procedures), sometimes, on the other hand,
> the meaning structure will be determined by intonation;
> sometimes again, the relationship of a word to the lexicon may
> be foregrounded, then again its relation to the phonetic
> structure of the text.   (Mukařovský, p.21)

A little later he writes:

> Foregrounding brings to the surface and before the eyes of
> the observer even such linguistic phenomena as remain quite
> covert in communicative speech, although they are important
> factors in language. Thus, for instance, Czech symbolism ...
> has brought to the fore of linguistic consciousness the
> essence of sentence meaning and the dynamic nature of
> sentence construction. From the standpoint of communicative
> speech, the meaning of a sentence appears as the total of the
> gradually accumulated meanings of the individual words,
> that is, without independent existence. The real nature of
> the phenomenon is covered up by the automatization of the
> semantic design of the sentence. (Mukařovský, p.29)

Of all the earlier Formalists, it was perhaps Osip Brik who most
effectively elaborated the principle of "construction". Brik's major
essay, "Rhythm and Syntax", is largely an attempt to clarify the idea
that the result of "construction" is not merely a "deformed" ordinary
linguistic system but a new kind of system. Rhythm and meaning in
poetry, according to Brik,

> do not exist separately; they originate simultaneously,
> creating a specific rhythmico-semantic structure different
> from both that of ordinary speech and from that of a trans-
> sense sequence of sounds. [160]

The poetic line, that is to say "has its own rhythmic semantics existing
independently and developing by its own laws" (loc.cit). If we deprive
verse of its semantic value, it "ceases to be a verbal fact". On the
other hand,

by rearranging words we can deprive any line of poetry
of its poetic shape and convert it into a phrase from the
sphere of ordinary speech ... In performing such an operation,
however, we destroy the poetic line as a specific, verbal
structure based on those facets of the word which retreat into
the background in ordinary speech. (loc. cit)

Verse language is neither a kind of music which employs ordinary speech-
sounds as its materials, nor is it merely an ornamented form of
ordinary language. It is erroneous "to approach poetry with generalizations
about rhythm which do not account for the fact that we are not dealing
with neutral material but with elements of human speech"; but it is
equally incorrect to see poetry as ordinary language which has "simply
been externally draped with frills and trim" (Brik, p.125).

This general analysis of the nature of the poem comports very well
with the comments made earlier in the present section about Keats's mode
of composition. The poet does not consistently begin either with the
formal or the ordinary-linguistic elements of the poem, fitting the
second set of elements to the first. He constantly moves back and
forward between "form" and "meaning". The two arise mutually, in
combination.

Perhaps it would clarify matters if we said that verse is "based on"
artificial regularities involving "facets of the word which retreat into
the background in ordinary speech" (Brik, p.124). Systematic alliteration,
for example, "bases" the line on a single phoneme by illogically
regularizing or multiplying the appearances of that sound. English
syllable-stress metre illogically regularizes the feature of stress-
contrast. These features already function in the language, but "retreat
into the background" in the sense of being at the service of meaning,

being components of higher structural levels. Parallelism "foregrounds" such features, intensifying the natural constraints of language. The verse impresses us, we might say, if the "new" system seems to be at least as efficient, semantically, as the old. We are impressed by more-or-less highly-wrought verse in proportion to the degree of compatibility between maximization of formal (transrational) elaboration and maximization of "interest of meaning". This last interest is difficult to define in general terms, but it has to develop, or consolidate itself, and not appear to have been compromised or diluted by formal demands. Hopkins discussed these matters in a letter to Bridges:

> This reminds me that I hold you to be wrong about 'vulgar', that is obvious or necessary, rhymes. It follows from your principle that if a word has only one rhyme in the language it cannot be used in selfrespecting poetry at all. The truth seems to me that a problem is set to all, how to use that same pair (or triplet or any set) of rhymes, which are *invariable, to the finest and most natural effect.* It is nothing that the reader can say / He had to say it, there was no other rhyme: you answer / Shew me what better I could have said if there had been a million ... And is not music a sort of rhyming on seven rhymes and does that make it vulgar? (LB, 169)

The conception of parallelistic effect which has been presented in this section rests on a musical analogy, the idea of counterpoint. Unlike some of the musical analogies discussed in Chapter Three, above, this one does not greatly confuse the question of sound-meaning relationships. The significance of the "abstract" regular structures can be seen to reside not in their intrinsic qualities but in the strain which they

put upon the unfolding of meaningful speech. To recognize the importance of <u>dynamic</u> qualities in poetic construction is, furthermore, to acknowledge an important common factor in our perception of the two arts which are based in temporal sound-sequences and whose nature can be seriously misrepresented if their products are regarded as "quasi-simultaneous".

The notion of "construction" allows us to justify the contention that a metalingual effect, a "making strange" of language, is important to poetry, but the notion need not imply that a focus on particular linguistic structures for their own sake and interest is the primary function of the art. The blank verse of Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth exhibits "construction" as well as the later and more linguistically self-conscious types of poetry do. Milton's and Wordsworth's comments on the "drawing out" of the "sense" and on the "continual and regular" interaction of formal and ordinary-linguistic patterns are perfectly compatible with the Formalist notion of defamiliarization as it appears in the work of Brik and Tynyanov. Brik's point about the "trans-sense" element in verse structure is crucial. The effect of an ode by Keats or a sonnet by Shakespeare depends significantly upon an intrusion of meaningless into language. Because of the difficulty more or less arbitrarily imposed by parallelistic structure, the making of linguistic meaning becomes like a ritual, in the sense that the overt form of a ritual is usually a familiar everyday action which is slowed down, impeded, put on a stage, and therefore made capable of bearing a different kind of meaning.

5.5 Summary and transition

After the foregoing discussion, almost everything remains to be
said about the effects of parallelistic structure in verse. Even the
most regular English pentameter verse, where metrical and ordinary stress
coincide, and where every line is end-stopped, exhibits "deformation",
if only because English has more than two degrees of stress, and because
intonation-patterns are so complex and so dependent on grammar. Such
verse, of course, would be very tedious. A good poet who uses a
symmetrical form will depart from the metrical standard in every line
and with great variety, and the ways in which the "sense" is "drawn out"
from line to line will be as various. A much greater effort of linguistic
description is required to explain, through analysis of particular poems,
the precise means whereby a feature like metre becomes a "constructive"
factor creating a "specific rhythmico - semantic structure" in which
the strain between sense and nonsense makes language more effectively
meaningful. If we have seen a little more clearly the more basic
reasons for the ubiquity of certain verse-structures, the more elementary
reasons why language appears to achieve its greatest power under
constraint, we are still a long way from explaining why some poems are
not simply verse but good poems, or not simply good poems but great ones.

The discussion has, nevertheless, touched on some crucial issues
in poetic criticism. The old problem of the "form and content"
dichotomy is still very much with us. In the last century or so, perhaps
since the Romantics, the more simplistic accounts of that dichotomy
have become questionable. We have become accustomed to the notion that
the two elements form, in the best poetry at least, a kind of indissociable
compound, like a chemical compound whose qualities are quite different
from those of its constituents. Some of the Formalists and their
successors, reacting against an unduly "extrinsic" approach to criticism,

developed the concept of "meaningful form" so far as grossly to exaggerate the importance of poetry's technical and formal basis. Jakobson's experiments might be regarded as an attempt to correct this tendency, by relating the linguistic intricacies of poems more precisely to a "meaning" or "content" which goes beyond "metalingual" reference. However, apart from the particular theoretical moves which have been discussed already, we might say that Jakobson's most basic aesthetic categories are a little old-fashioned. His ideas about "content plane" and "expression plane" resemble the old and problematic dichotomies and constitute no real advance. He does not account for a fusion of forms and meanings.

Other Formalists, like Tynyanov and Brik, seem to have kept more consistently in mind some such image as that of the indissociable compound. The chemical metaphor might in their case be extended, since compounding is now conceived in terms of dynamic equilibria of electrical forces rather than in terms of atomic "building-blocks". These theorists did not, perhaps, explain a great deal about the higher levels of poetic experience, but their approaches to the technical basis remind us that criticism depends on certain "metaphorical" preliminaries. In the foregoing consideration of different images for the kind of phenomenon which a poem is, it has been suggested that there is an important distinction between "diagrammatic" and "dynamic" accounts of verse structure. It will be clear by this stage that the present writer is sympathetic towards the latter kind of account. Winifred Nowottny has expressed a similar view:

> The verse system itself contains highly-differentiated 'events',
> such as the bold inversion of a foot, the delicate balance
> of a line, because it is in itself a system of many components

giving rise to many expectations, many emphases, many crises
and resolutions of pattern; we may perhaps call these 'values',
which we appreciate within the framework of the verse system.[161]

In the present chapter I have attempted to characterize a "technical basis"
which is more or less equivalent to Nowottny's "verse system". Hopkins's
notes towards a theory of versification might be regarded as a comparable
enterprise. Such procedures are to be understood as being preliminaries
to criticism, but they nevertheless do much to determine the course
of criticism at the higher levels.

Discussion of the absolute value of the notion of "construction"
will be resumed in the final chapter of this study. I shall now concern
myself more with the internal coherence of Hopkins's work than with the
general validity of his attitude to verse language. In the present
chapter, it is hoped, Hopkins's theory of versification has been
clarified by being presented as a partial anticipation of the notion
of "construction". In my next chapter I shall attempt to demonstrate
that Hopkins took the principle of dynamic conflict to very great
extremes, and that the consequence of his rhetoric is a highly distinctive
presentation of language as such. A surprisingly detailed correspondence
emerges between Hopkins's accounts of the natural universe and his
poetic "framing" of language, between inscape generally and "inscape of
speech". The basis of this correspondence is the poet's conscious or
instinctive grasp of the principles of systemic organization.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PATTERN OF LANGUAGE IN HOPKINS'S OWN VERSE

6.1 Introductory

The implication of Chapter Four, section four (above)was that

Hopkins's comments about "inscape of speech" referred to a first

analysis, in which are discovered or appreciated fundamental processes

that characterize poetry, underlying rather than constituting poetic

value or success. These "rhetorical" features are, in Hopkins's mind

at least, absolutely necessary for the art. They signify the poet's

craftsmanlike familiarity with his material, and they increase the

expressive potential of the linguistic material by "heightening" it.

This heightening is carried out until the "current language" is "unlike

itself" (LB, 89). It has been pointed out (particularly in Chapter Four,

section four) that we can too easily misrepresent Hopkins as having had

a narrowly technical conception of the nature of poetry. He certainly

did appreciate that a great deal must be added to the framework of good

"rhetoric" before sound versification becomes fine poetry.

This poet was, nevertheless, unusually interested in, and willing

to experiment with, the structure of the linguistic medium as such. To an

uncommon degree he found his poetic meanings through investigating the

conditions of the medium, the conditions according to which language

can be meaningful at all. Hopkins had a more general interest in the

perception of pattern, an interest expressed through his many accounts

of inscape, and he tended to conceive of perception in terms of

communication, regarding the world as a kind of language which, through

inscape, it is possible for us to understand more fully and more as a whole. In the present chapter I shall investigate certain features of Hopkins's versification which not only corroborate what was said in the previous chapter about his view of the functions of parallelism, but which also indicate that the correspondence between Hopkins's perception of language and his perception of other inscaped phenomena might be more exact than has been imagined.

Since I have suggested that Hopkins's "experience ... with language" can usefully be explained in terms of Saussurean linguistic theory, I shall preface my analysis of Hopkins's style with a fuller account of Saussure's principles.

6.2 Saussure and the nature of the sign

It might be misleading if our understanding of the "paradigm-syntagm" relation were restricted to the linguistic level at which Jakobson exemplifies it in the 1960 paper discussed above (in Chapter Five, section two) — that is, the selection of words for combination in the sentence-chain. Saussure's distinction between the two "axes" is the principle whereby all levels of language-structure are seen to be related. A polymorphemic word is itself a "syntagm", composed of morphemes which are syntagmatic combinations of phonemes, which units are further reducible to distinctive articulatory features. Language is an articulated system in the special sense explained as follows by Barbara Strang:

> The word articulated is ultimately derived from Latin
> articulus, diminutive of artus 'joint', and it is here used

to refer to the property in languages of being able to
build up units of one order into units of another order, that
is, not merely something bigger, but something functioning
in quite a different way from its component parts (compare
the difference between single vertebrae and the backbone
they compose). (Strang, p. 5)

M.A.K. Halliday has coined the term "rank-scale" to signify the
hierarchy of these orders of unit in linguistic systems.[162]

Now Saussure's account of syntax is generally acknowledged to be
the weakest part of his work. He simply did not attempt a systematic
account of the higher levels of organization. Neither did he anticipate
the manner in which, like the atom of physics, the phoneme would be
"split" by later theorists into more "elementary particles". But none
of this minimizes the significance of the following statements, which
together summarize quite succinctly one of the central, unifying
principles of his thought:

The arrangement of the subunits of the word obeys the same
fundamental principles as the arrangement of groups of words
in phrases.

In short, although the traditional divisions of grammar
may be useful in practice, they do not correspond to natural
distinctions. To build a grammar, we must look for a different
and a higher principle ...

Morphology, syntax and lexicology interpenetrate because
every synchronic fact is identical. No line of demarcation can
be drawn in advance. Only the distinction established above
between syntagmatic and associative relations can provide a
classification that is not imposed from the outside. (Saussure, p.136)

Saussure finds that the identity of linguistic facts is basically even simpler. His conception of the linguistic sign (signe) is that it is "the combination of a concept and a sound-image" (p. 67). The concept or signified (signifié) and the acoustic image or signifier (signifiant) are related in a purely arbitrary manner. The absoluteness of this principle of arbitrariness has been challenged, notably by Jakobson, who invokes Peirce's distinction between index, icon and symbol. (This distinction was discussed in Chapter Five, section three, above.) Jakobson demonstrates that an iconic or diagrammatic principle of relationship between phonological and grammatical structures is "patent and compulsory in the entire syntactic and morphological pattern of language", and as an example he points out that in various Indo-European languages "the positive, comparative and superlative degrees of adjectives show a gradual increase in the number of phonemes".[163] Nevertheless, as Jakobson writes in another paper, iconicity "plays a vast and necessary, though evidently subordinate part in different levels of linguistic structure".[164] Iconicity must necessarily be subordinate if language is to function as an articulated system of the kind described above. Furthermore, as David Lodge has written,

> This nucleus of arbitrariness at the heart of language is an idea of the greatest importance because it implies that it is the relationship between words, which means in effect the differences between them, that allows them to communicate, rather than their individual relationships of reference to discrete objects or any (totally illusory) resemblance between words and things. (Lodge, p.61)

The perception of this "nucleus of arbitrariness" leads Saussure to state that both conceptual and material aspects of value in language are "made up solely of relations and differences with respect to the

other terms of language" (Saussure, p.117), that signs function "not through their intrinsic value but through their relative position" (p.118). It is not only the phonemes, amongst linguistic units, which "are above all else opposing, relative, and negative entities" (p.119), but in language as a whole "there are only differences without positive terms" (p. 120).

The main purpose of my second chapter was to explain the proposition that inscape is a quality of systems rather than of individual objects. Individuals are comprehensible only in terms of the laws which are specified in them,or of the larger patterns or processes in which they partake. The whole universe is "encoded" according to discoverable general principles. These principles, as they emerge from Hopkins's meditations on natural forms and on our perception of them, bear some resemblance to Saussure's principles in linguistics, particularly the emphasis on relational significance and the notion of systemic articulation.

We might compare Saussure's conception of the making of sentences with Hopkins's perception of the build-up of structures such as those of trees. In the account of oaks (J, 144-6) which was discussed in Chapter Two (section four) Hopkins traces the form of a whole tree from a curled leaf through a "star knot" to "the wider ... articulations" of the tree. The "star knot" — which is "the chief thing", the main formal principle — is analogous to a word in language, since it is built up of lower-order units but is itself an "opposing, relative, and negative" entity in terms of the larger pattern of the tree.

In the discussion of chestnut-trees in Hopkins's dialogue on beauty (J, 87-94) there is disclosed a comparable build-up from leaf-cusp through leaf to fan. It is pointed out that the pattern of projections along the side of a leaf is disordered, meaningless, until it is seen in its symmetrical relation to the other side of the leaf (J, 90).

The leaves themselves are similar in shape but differ in size, and these differences of size along the stem create what might be termed the "syntagm", the higher-order unit, which is the form of the fan. (J, 92-3). In this analysis by Hopkins, it is clearer that the all-important relationship between elements or units "means in effect" (as Lodge puts it) "the differences between them". The professor in the dialogue states quite plainly that "it is not the excellence of any two things (or more) in themselves, but those two things as viewed by the light of each other, that makes beauty" (J, 93).

Hopkins did not go so far as to say that, either in nature or in language, "there are only differences without positive terms". Nevertheless, as Hillis Miller suggests, he can be regarded as having conceived difference to be the foundation of understanding:

> Why is it that God is best known through dappled things? ...
> Man knows only through comparison. Even the uniqueness of
> his self-taste can only be known by seeking similar tastes
> in the world. The need to set two different sensations
> against one another in order to know either one of them is
> the chief mark of man's epistemological limitation, and the
> reason he cannot know God directly. (Miller, p. 304)

Miller is here alluding to Hopkins's meditation-note on

> that taste of myself, of I and me above and in all things,
> which is more distinctive than the taste of ale or alum, more
> distinctive than the smell of walnutleaf or camphor ...
> Nothing else in nature comes near this unspeakable stress of
> pitch, distinctiveness and selving, this selfbeing of my own.
> (S, 123)

More to the point, perhaps, is Hopkins's interesting comment on the idea of difference in Buddhist philosophy, as conveyed to him through his reading of Max Müller:

> The following is _the_ or _a_ recognised Buddhist metaphysic
> — existence is caused by attachment; attachment an object;
> an object perception; perception contact; contact, at least
> sensuous contact (and to this it fairly resolves itself), the
> senses; the senses are only possible by the form, the
> distinctness, the distinction of things; distinction comes
> from ideas, our illusory ideas; these from ignorance of the
> truth : hence ignorance (_avityâ_) is the cause of existence.
> — The seizure of the notion of _distinction_ is the accentual
> and also the interesting and valuable part of this.[165]

As we shall see in the fifth section of the present chapter, the metaphysical implications of this notion of distinction are extremely important in two of Hopkins's late poems (_Poems_, Nos. 61 and 72). Only in these poems do we find a significant degree what Shapiro calls a "diagrammatization of relations" between the "expression plane" and the "content plane". In these poems, particularly the first, the presentation of language as a system appears to "stand for" the conception of reality which is the "logical" meaning of the poems. The characterization in these instances of language _as such_ depends very largely on an intensification of certain kinds of rhetorical pressure, which pressure can be explained as a kind of "construction" (in the Formalist sense which was explained in the previous chapter). This construction is brought about by manipulation of the counterpoint or contrast between formal and linguistic units, which counterpointing is an important characteristic of Hopkins's poems more generally.

Before we discuss the relevant rhetorical processes, and to return
to Saussure's formulations, it is to be pointed out that the conception
of language as an articulated system throws a searching light on the
easy equation of "sign" with "word". The word seems the obvious level
of organization from which to begin any discussion of the linguistic
sign. Even illiterate speakers of any particular language will
instinctively set up the same word-boundaries if questioned, despite
the blurring of these boundaries in speech and the theoretical
difficulties of defining the word precisely as a type of linguistic
unit. Saussure discusses the relation between the word arbor and the
concept indicated by a diagram of a tree when he explains his theory
of the sign (Saussure, p. 67). Jakobson explains Saussure's paradigm-syntagm
distinction, and the derived principle of poetic "equivalence", largely
in terms of the word-unit.

Nevertheless, the word in Saussure's theory is no more the
essence of signification than is the phoneme or the sentence. Indeed,
for "linguistic sign" we ought properly to substitute "linguistic
signification", since meaning is possible only in terms of the total
system. The types of linguistic unit are stages in the process of
articulation whereby each level of organization leads on to the next.
Words can be separated out from the pattern of articulation, but only
"for the purposes of discussion". They cannot contribute to signification
independently of the system. To clarify this, we might take an example.

The syllable /bʌt/, separated out from the pattern of English, can
first be considered as a possible realization of the noun "butt". The
sound-image or signifier, in Saussure's terms, can be related to a
mental image (signified) representable by a diagram of the kind
found in Saussure's discussion of arbor. The verb "butt" requires a
more complicated explanation, but is referential in an equally specific

manner. The syllable /bʌt/ can also constitute or realize the word "but",
which, whilst it is as clearly a word, establishes a logical relation
between parts of a larger syntactic unit and does not lend itself to
the same kind of diagrammatization as the noun or the verb. The syllable
/bʌt/ also appears in the word "rebut". This word has the clear
appearance of being a combination of two morphemes, but in the course
of time they have become thoroughly bound together in the word, so that
the second syllable is not detachable as "trace" is from "retrace".
The syllable /bʌt/ also appears in the word "button", in which it is
merely a segment of a single morpheme.

Contexts, patterns of systemic relationship, make words. Perhaps
we should say that they "make words happen". The syllable /bʌt/ has
a variety of possible functions. The words "butt" (noun or verb) and
"but" only "happen" in certain situations. This aspect of language
fascinated Hopkins. In the remainder of this chapter I shall try to
show how, by various means, Hopkins controls the sound-sense relation
in verse language so as to emphasize that linguistic <u>units</u> are products
of systemic <u>processes</u>. He investigates the ways in which words "happen",
the conditions under which sounds become words, distinction becomes
signification.

6.3 Rhyme as deformation

> Rhyming to the eye in no way helps the rhyme, rather the
> contrary, for there are two elements in the beauty rhyme
> has to the mind, the likeness or sameness of sound and the
> unlikeness or difference of meaning, and the last is lessened
> by any likeness the words may have beyond that of sound.

> For this reason words of like grammatical form make poorer
> rhymes, participles etc, as <u>going</u> and <u>knowing</u>, <u>singest</u> and
> <u>wingest</u>, <u>ever</u> and <u>never</u>, <u>brother</u> and <u>mother</u>, but <u>mother</u> and
> <u>other</u> is a rich rhyme. (<u>J</u>, 286)

Regarding end-rhymes at least, this disposes of a lot of the lexical
category repetitions which are so important to Jakobson. The above
statement by Hopkins is supported by his own most characteristic uses
of parallelism in verse. Jakobson ends a paragraph in his 1960 paper
on linguistics and poetics with the question "What about compound
rhymes (such as Hopkins' 'enjoyment — toy meant' or 'began some — ransom'),
where a word unit accords with a word group?" ("Closing Statement", p.368),
and leaves the matter there. If we look further into Hopkins's
writings, the answer soon presents itself.

"I am sure I have gone far enough in running rhymes ... into the
next line" wrote Hopkins to Bridges in 1887 (<u>LB</u>, 250). He had, since
starting to write again in 1876, occasionally used the device of
completing a rhyme-syllable with the first consonant of the following
line. A good example is "Providence ... of it and / Startle"
(<u>Poems</u>, No. 28, St. 31). The feature occurs most frequently in "The
Loss of the Euridyce" (<u>Poems</u>, No. 41, written in 1878) where the most
striking example is "wrecked her? he / Came ... electric" (11. 23-4).
In an unpublished letter to his brother Everard (cited in <u>Poems</u>, p.243,
note) Hopkins had in 1885 referred specifically to that poem, saying
that the run-on rhymes generally were "experimental, perhaps a mistake"
and that the rhyme to "electric" in particular was definitely "an effect".
The letter to Bridges refers to "some late sonnets you have not seen"
and the sonnets in question (almost certainly the "terrible sonnets"
of the Dublin period) contain no examples of the type of rhyme found
in "The Loss of the Euridyce". They do, however, contain rhymes

achieved by splitting words across line-ends, as in "danc-/ing ...
glance" (Poems, No. 62), "sing ... ling-/ering" (No. 65) and
"hear ... wear-/y" (No. 66). Donne was not averse to using this effect
occasionally, and the single "split-word" rhyme contributes considerably
to the perfection of Campion's little "Sapphic" lyric "Rose-cheekt Lawra".
But such rhymes are distinctly odd in pre-modernist English verse.

The other odd way of making rhymes in Hopkins's poems, the type
mentioned by Jakobson, is also used most extensively in "The Loss of the
Euridyce", which ends with a rhyme that many critics have found hard
to stomach, "burn all" rhyming with "eternal". Milroy (p.124) points
out that many such rhymes, particularly in this poem, are more accurate
than we might at first think (if at first we read them "with the eye").
They show a sensitivity to such linguistic features as the "reduction"
of phonetic forms in normal speech. The rhyming of "of it and / S ...
Providence" involves both "running-on" of the rhyme and the balancing
of word against word-group. It is really quite a precise rhyme if the
verse is read "naturally" since "and" usually has a reduced vowel and
loses its final consonant in speech. For similar reasons the rhyme to
"electric" and others such as "all un- ... fallen" (Poems, No. 41, 11.3-4)
are validated by phonological rules. As Hopkins himself wrote,

> You will grant that there are things in verse which may be
> read right or wrong, which depend for their effect on
> pronunciation. For instance here if I had rhymed drew her
> to to her I should have meant it to be read tó her and not
> to hér ... You will also grant that in drew her, rightly
> read, the h is evanescent. (LB, 180)

"Natural" pronunciation, however, would not easily explain "-ection ... deck shone" or "burn all ... eternal" (the first of which appears in Poems, No. 72, discussed in more detail below). These seem to require, for their accuracy as rhymes, full pronunciation of vowels which would normally be reduced.

Whether or not we find such effects "perhaps a mistake", we know that they are very consciously "experimental" and that the experiment was continued throughout the period of Hopkins's poetic maturity, however much he worried from time to time about going too far. The hypothesis underlying the experiments is the one expressed in the 1874 notes on rhetoric. Sound-units are meant to contrast with sense-units (J, 273). The words flow through the formal patterns (J, 280). The "beauty of rhyme to the mind" depends on combination of phonetic similarity with grammatical difference (J, 286). The strange rhymes are not sporadic oddities but simply the more striking exaggerations of a continual tendency to set up counterpoint or tension between formal regularities and the different ordering of meaningful speech.

Another of Hopkins's devices is "over-reaving", which he explains to Bridges in a letter of 1879 with reference to "The Handsome Heart" (Poems, No. 47). Bridges, it seems, had objected particularly to the first two lines:

> 'But tell me, child, your choice; what shall I buy
>
> You?' — 'Father, what you buy me I like best.'

The line-end must have seemed, to Bridges, to break awkwardly across the natural rhythm of the sentence. But Hopkins has his own ideas about the function of the line-turn:

> You are to know that it has a particular effect, an effect
>
> of climax, and shd. so be read, with a rising inflection,

after which the next line, beginning with the enclitic,
gracefully falls away. And in like manner with proclitics
and so on: if a strong word and its epithet or other appendage
are divided so that the appendage shall end one line and the
supporting word begin the next, the last becomes emphasised by
position and heads a fall-away or diminuendo. These little
graces help the 'over-reaving' of the verse at which I so much
aim, make it flow in one long strain to the end of the stanza and
so forth. (LB, 86)

Furthermore, in a note which Bridges copied out along with the autograph
of "The Wreck of the Deutschland", Hopkins wrote that the proper
reading of such a sprung-verse poem should involve

letting the scansion run on from one line into the next,
without break to the end of the stanza : since the dividing
of the lines is more to fix the places of the necessary
rhymes than for any pause in the measure. (Poems, p. 256)

The principle which leads to this "over-reaving" is precisely that
which permits the "odd" rhymes. To begin with, the line-end (with its
rhyme-syllable) occurs in the middle of a strong rhythmic unit. The
next stage is to split the syllables of a single word between lines, and
the next is to place at the line-end a "sound-word" (such as the
rhyme to "electric") which requires for completion the first phoneme
of the following line.

The end-rhymes are only one element in Hopkins's parallelistic
technique. As in the Old Norse and Welsh Bardic traditions which
fascinated him, there is in Hopkins's poetry a great complexity of
intralinear parallelism. To begin with, in those poems which are less

highly "sprung" (that is, more regular in terms of syllable-numbers)
the "mere change of words" in the rhythmic frame provides contrast
between sound-units and sense-units. But, as Wimsatt and Beardsley
have said of the older metrical patterns which Hopkins sought to revive,

> One of the disadvantages of the old strong-stress meter is
> doubtless its limited capacity for interplay. The stress
> pattern of the meter is so nearly the same as the stress
> pattern of the syntax and logic that there is nothing much
> for the meter to interplay with ... Where such meters gain
> in freedom and direct speech-feeling, they lose in opportunity
> for precise interplay.[166]

Elisabeth W. Schneider writes in similar terms of Hopkins's rhythms,
commenting on the lack of "rhythmic subtlety" which is consequent on
"the absence of counterpoint" and the lack of "expressive subtlety"
which can arise from "the nondescript status of all except indubitably
strong and indubitably weak sounds".[167] Hopkins's presentation of
metrical effect in terms of the poise between speech-flow and formal
pattern does not really apply very well to a great deal of his own
verse. In order to gain in "freedom and direct speech-feeling" he had
to sacrifice the advantages of certain types of constraint. Towards
the end of his life he reverted to a less "sprung" metre in many poems.
In the meantime, he experimented with extravagant elaborations of
phonemic rather than metrical parallelism, and this might be regarded
as a compensatory strategy, an alternative means of contriving
"counterpoint" and "interplay" between sound and sense.

6.4 The individuation of words

Intralinear parallelism in Hopkins's verse takes many forms, and
in the present section I shall mention only a few of the major tendencies
in his use of "chiming". These tendencies appear to result from an
impulse to scrutinize signs as such, bringing attention to what I have
called "the way words happen". Hopkins finds his poetic meanings most
characteristically through a "making strange" of language, in the
process of which the "individuation" of words is questioned. The words
separate out still, but with much greater difficulty than is usual.
Hopkins's basic device for achieving this effect is sound-repetition
or, to put it another way, deliberate reduction of phonetic options.
Such constraint is not, as we shall see, imposed randomly, nor are
the effects of the increase of similarity restricted to the "semantic
equation" function favoured by Jakobson, Empson and others. If semantic
discoveries are made through the verse it is usually not because
interesting "lateral meanings" have been set up between words, but
rather because the nature of the system out of which the words emerge
has been explored in an interesting manner.

It was noted above (in Chapter Three, section five) that Hopkins
found in English a tendency to make words "single and specific" (LB, 165),
the morphological construction of words being fairly rapidly obscured.
It was in such terms that Saussure postulated a typology of languages
based on the ideas of "arbitrariness" and "motivation". He pointed
out that

> with respect to Latin, French is characterized, among other
> things, by a huge increase in arbitrariness. Latin inimīcus
> recalls in- and amicus and is motivated by them; against this,

ennemi 'enemy' is motivated by nothing — it has reverted

to absolute arbitrariness, which is really the prime

characteristic of the linguistic sign. (Saussure, p. 134)

Saussure goes on (pp. 133-4) to distinguish between "lexicological"

languages (which tend towards the morphologically "opaque" kind of

words) and "grammatical" languages (in which words are more "transparent").

The extreme types are Chinese (lexicological) and Sanskrit (grammatical).

English is somewhere in the middle of the range, being more grammatical

than French but less so than German. Individual languages change

and influence each other. An event such as the Norman Conquest leads

to a change in the balance between arbitrariness and motivation, as

Hopkins, in the cited letter to Bridges, is seen to have been aware.

Insofar as he was a "Germanic purist", Hopkins favoured a shifting of

English back towards the grammatical end of Saussure's spectrum. His

idea of a "pure" language (discussed in Chapter Three, section five,

above) is explicable in terms of the more or less "self-sufficient"

or "closed" nature of different linguistic systems when compared to one

another. He seems, we may now say, to have dreamed of a language in

which everything was "motivated", all new formations and extensions of

meaning being contrived out of known elements and retaining their

"transparency".

Stephen Ullmann has written of the way in which, in some poetry,

"formations which had become opaque are 'revitalized' by being placed

in a suitable collocation which will restore their transparency and

enhance their expressiveness".[168] He instances the restoration of

morphological transparency through Eliot's collocation "visions and

revisions" in "Prufrock". Such restoration-work does occur in Hopkins,

and one or two interesting examples will be discussed in the following

section. An effective collocation from the "Deutschland" is "Father and

fondler" (_Poems_, No. 28, st. 9). Here the implication of activity in the first word, its capacity to appear as an agent-noun like "maker" or "creator", is brought out by balancing it against a more "transparent" agent-noun. In the line "To trace some traceless loss of thought again" (Poems, No. 107, sec. iv) the word "traceless" seems to be separating out into its components, an etymological connection being (quite convincingly) suggested between "loss" and the suffix "-less". Such "analyses" of words are, however, few and far between, and they are usually trivial. The process of analysis is as likely to result in a laborious pun such as "Diamonds are better cut; who pare, repair" (_Poems_, No. 95, fragment vii). There is no serious etymological purpose in such echoes as "all I endeavour end" (_Poems_, No. 74) or in the transition from "despair" to "Spare!" at the halfway point of "_The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo_" (_Poems_, No. 59). The possibilities for effective "revitalization" are obviously very limited.

There are, however, other artificial — one might say, mechanical — means whereby a language might be "purified", if your conception of purity involves the notion of systemic closure or self-sufficiency. You may force your language to make more of what Trench calls its "powers". Thus, to begin with, for every foreign or obsolete word which Hopkins incorporated into his poetic vocabulary, he probably constructed, on "native" principles of word formation, half a dozen "Germanic" compounds.

He forced his language in other ways. He forced it to be more of a system than it really was, more than any language ever is. He extended in numerous and very specialized directions the principle of rhyme, making English appear "unlike itself" to the extent of being a kind of proto-language. This may be one possible meaning of "inscape of speech". If an inscape is usually significant of a _species,_ then the inscape of a piece of English poetic language will be somehow significant of _all_ language. In catching this inscape, we will gain some sensation of the

nature of the entire phenomenon. We will have an "experience ... with language". Hopkins's verse contains some "restorations" of "morphological transparency", but on the whole he seems to have been more concerned to render morphology itself transparent. In his poems the most basic linguistic processes, whereby sounds are organized into syllables, and syllables into words, are made difficult, made strange. The "naked thew and sinew" of language as such is laid bare, in the sense that language is ordinarily under severe constraint. Its conditions are those of a system elaborated out of a very simple pattern of basic formal counters. This pattern, and the means whereby it is elaborated, are in a very important sense the conditions of our understanding. Inducing an awareness of this fact seems, for Hopkins at least, to be a primary function of the ritual of highly-wrought verse. If phonetic options are severely reduced, language has more work to do, meanings must be unfolded with greater economy or ingenuity. Thus, whilst complex patterns of "chiming" are in one sense elaboration, they are in an equally important sense simplification. It is as if language were beginning again with more restricted materials. Let us look at some of the ways in which Hopkins makes things difficult for himself, and try to understand the effects of the ritual.

First of all, we frequently find in Hopkins's verse that a word's sound-structure is dispersed amongst neighbouring words, which patterns can often be described in traditional rhetorical terms as "augmentation" and "diminution". In "The Wreck of the Deutschland" (Poems, No. 28), "mined" is largely recapitulated in "a motion, a drift"(st. 4), "wiry" leads to "white-fiery" (st. 13),"tasking" reappears completely in "that asking" (st. 27), "pent in" leads to "penitent" (st. 33). In other poems we come across "Sweet fire the sire of muse" (No. 76), "liar ... lanced fire" (No. 41) and

"f̲lesh-b̲ound when f̲ound at best" (No. 39). If these examples might

be termed "anagrammatic", there are many others which we might call

"kaleidoscopic", longish sequences of words being largely composed

from a small set of sounds, as in "And scarlet wear the spirit of war

there express" (No. 63). The process becomes more explicit in the

elaborate paranomasia of "Five, the finding and sake / And cipher of

suffering Christ ... and the word of it Sacrificed" (No. 28, st. 22).

In the line "Dress his days to a dexterous and starlight order" (No. 48),

repetitions of the three consonants of the first word account for over

half of the total number of consonants in the line, and one other

consonant, /t/, accounts for another quarter of the total. This line

is not as strictly ordered as many which follow Welsh models, but like

a number of those others, it exhibits what Hopkins called "vowelling off",

which is a "changing of vowel down some scale or strain or keeping"

(J̲, 284). In this line the eight different vowels or diphthongs cover

a wide articulatory range, and only /e/ and the very common, unstressed

central vowel /ə/ occur more than once.

Vocalic variation within a fixed consonant frame is the principle

of an extremely common pattern in Hopkins's verse. Out of scores of

examples we may select "felled and furled" (No. 41), "heaven-haven"

(No. 9, title, and No. 28, st. 35), "I wake and feel the fell of dark"

(No. 67), "soft sift" (No. 28, st. 4), and "care-coiled, care-killed"

(No. 59). The pattern is extended, with some loosening, in lines such

as "From life's dawn it is drawn down" (No. 28, st. 20) and sequences

such as "Rhine ... Orion ... ruin" (No. 28, st. 21). The device is

peculiarly effective when sequences of verbs are involved. In No. 59,

for example, we find the following lines:

> Nay, what we had lighthanded left in surly the mere mould
>
> Will have waked and have waxed and have walked with the
>
> wind what while we slept.

The three verbs in the second line, relating a connected sequence of activities, differ hardly more in form than might tense-variants of a single verb. In the "Deutschland" (No. 28, st. 32) God is represented as being

> throned behind
>
> Death with a sovreignty that heeds but hides, bodes but abides.

The formal similarities between the members of each verb-pair are highly appropriate, since in each case the states or activities referred to are complementary, dual aspects of a single mode of being. A comparable case is "Now burn, new born to the world" (No. 28, st. 34). Poem No. 66 ends as follows:

> This to hoard unheard,
>
> Heard unheeded, leaves me a lonely began.

The sense of intellectual and spiritual claustrophobia or impasse is partially conveyed through the sheer obsessiveness of the figure of sound which links four words across the line-division. The man is thwarted systematically, with an inescapable precision like that of grammatical logic. The words, his thoughts, form a circle, come back to the same thing, are a kind of trap.

An interesting development of the "vowelling off" pattern appears in No. 58:

> Thou canst but be, but that thou well dost; strong
>
> Thy plea with him who dealt, nay does now deal,
>
> Thy lovely dale down thus and thus bids reel

Thy river, and o'er gives all to rack or wrong.

Here, the phonological form of the series "dealt ... deal" is extended
into "dale", which has the appearance of a direct derivative (as "dole",
"that which is dealt"). Here we might discern a "verbal icon" of the
dynamic continuity between creator and creation : the god's activity
is directly transformed into a natural phenomenon, or the two are one
and the same.

It is revealing to apply to such passages a test suggested by
Giulio Lepschy:

> It is well known that in English, as in many other languages,
> words written without vowels remain fairly legible — far less
> so if the consonants are deleted (w.rds wr.tt.n w.th..t v.w.ls
> r.m..n f..rl. l.g.bl. — .a. .e.. .o i. ..e .o.s..a... a.e
> .e.e.e.).[169]

Hopkins's fondness for hingeing semantic distinctions on vocalic variation
leads to an opposite situation, reducing the relative redundancy of the
vowels. Thus "hoard unheard, / Heard undeeded" loses a great deal by
notation as "h..rd .nh..rd h..rd .nh..d.d" and the point is made clearer
by phonemic notation as /h.d .nh.d h.d .nh.d.d/.

Here we might recall the speculations upon the influence of
sound-association in etymology which occupy so much of Hopkins's
surviving early diaries. One aspect of language which particularly
interests the young poet is the relation of vowel-sequence to meaning
in series such as "flick ... fleck ... flake" :

> Flick means to touch or stroke lightly ... To fleck is the next
> tone above flick, still meaning to touch or strike lightly
> (and leave a mark of the touch or stroke) but in a broader
> less slight manner ... Flake is a broad and decided fleck ...

the tone above it. (<u>J</u>, 11)

Alan Ward, in his philological notes to the diaries, points out that here

> Hopkins offers an example of what is, in effect, a kind of
> vowel gradation similar to that found in, for example, some
> verbs (such as <u>sing</u>, <u>sang</u>, <u>sung</u>), but different in scope.
>
> (<u>J</u>, 509)

As Ward reminds us, Frederick Farrar, the champion of the "onomatopoetic" theory of language, had written of "broad general laws by which the various degrees of intensity in sound are expressed by the modification of vowels".[170] Regardless of the theoretical validity of Farrar's ideas on onomatopoeia, or of Hopkins's related conjectures, the poet's interest in the <u>form</u> of such series is significant. Milroy draws our attention to evidence in Hopkins's notes of a sensitivity to another function of vocalic variation. This is the "morphophonemic" relation between the long vowels of verbs like "drive" or "cleave" and the short vowels of verbal nouns which are derived from them ("drift" and "cleft"):

> As Chomsky and Halle have observed in their work on
> phonological theory, this kind of vowel relationship is an
> important principle in the phonology of English, and is
> widespread throughout the language. (Milroy, p.54)

Trench, we might recall, writing about the declining "powers" of English, referred specifically to the "strong" verbs in which tense-distinction is conveyed by the more "organic" means of vocalic variation (This was discussed in Chapter Three, section five, above). Hopkins's very extensive use of such patterns in his poems might be interpreted as a rather different kind of "projection" of paradigmatic "equivalence"

from that outlined by Jakobson. What Hopkins "projects" is the actual
phonological form of certain paradigmatic series in which the economy
of the linguistic system is more obvious. As far as possible, it seems,
semantic transitions in the poems are effected as economically as
inflexional and derivational shifts. The restriction of difference
between words to one or two phonemic variables is also found in
groupings of words in which consonants rather than vowels change: "breath
and bread" (No. 28, st. 1), "seared ... bleared, smeared" (No. 31),
"quelled and quenched" (No. 43), "skeined, stained ... veined" (No. 62).
Just as music is "a sort of rhyming on seven rhymes", so a language is
a sort of rhyming on a small number of distinct sounds which have
limited permutational possibilities. This is a corollary of the doctrine
of the arbitrariness of the sign. Through very extreme exaggeration
of the basic restrictions, Hopkins makes his poems (on the analogy of
"more royalist than the king") "more linguistic than language".

To the Saussurean principle that in language "there are only
differences" must be joined the concept of articulation which was
discussed in the second section of the present chapter. Through the
interaction of paradigmatic and syntagmatic modes of combination, there
is built up a hierarchy or "rank-scale" of different types of unit.
We saw in the previous section that the units related by end-rhyme in
Hopkins's verse frequently fail to correspond in rank. A whole word
may be balanced against fragments of other words, words may be split
at line-divisions, and so on. Such contrasts are also brought about
by intralinear parallelism. Let us consider a line from the "Deutschland":

And frightful a nightfall folded rueful a day. (No. 28, st. 15)

The sequence of syllables which share the framework /f.l/ is rather
different from those which have been discussed above. None of the
syllables in this case actually constitutes a word. Three of them are

morphemic components of different words and one of them (the third)
is merely a fragment of a morpheme. Here is another line from the
same poem:

> The keener to come at the comfort for feeling the combating
>   keen? (st. 25)

The "figure of sound" in this case is the syllable-framework /k.m/,
which in the first two appearances contains the same vowel. At first
it is a word, then a non-morphemic component of polysyllabic but
monomorphemic words.

The relationship between "comfort" and "combating" in this instance
is particularly interesting. A major theme of the poem — the martyr-nun's
embrace of the suffering which leads her to union with Christ — is
collapsed into an extremely small linguistic space. The spiritual progress
from combat to comfort is given a quasi-grammatical appearance of
inevitability. We might compare Hopkins's own "loathed for a love"
(Poems, No. 28, st. 21) in which we see a similar apparent radiation
of opposites from a common source, and the paired phrases "poor peace
... pure peace" (No. 51). Such deadly serious wordplay might recall
the early scenes of Macbeth, in which the perversion of moral order
is so disturbingly prepared in the linguistic manipulations of the
protagonists : "Fair is foul and foul is fair" (I.iii.142); "what thou
wouldst highly,/That wouldst thou holily"(I.v. 20-1); "catch/With his
surcease success" (I.vii. 3-4).[171] Language, at such points of intensity,
becomes the subject of poetry. Or, rather, to recall the qualifications
made earlier in this study (particularly in Chapter Four, section two),
the centrality of linguistic distinctions in our experience is emphasized.
Language appears more strikingly creative of a reality, rather than

reflective of it.

A precise "paranomastic" function is, however, only occasionally demonstrable in Hopkins's wordplay. He strives for a more generalized "making strange" of language. In most of the poems we find loose intralinear patterning of little phonemic figures, as in "unforeseentimes ... Betweenpie" (No. 69), "got, nor ... what for" (No. 28, st. 26), "Wind-beat whitebeam" (No. 32), "Somewhere, elsewhere ... well, where!" (No. 59), "dismal limb-dance" (No.152), "more pangs... forepangs" (No. 65) and "meal-drift moulded and melted" (No. 38). Very frequently we are likely to find the pressure of reiteration excessive. In the unfinished poem "On the Portrait of Two Beautiful Young People" (No. 157), for example, appear the following lines :

> None good but God — a warning wavèd to.
>
> One once that was found wanting when Good weighed.

In one of the Dublin sonnets (No. 66), the diphthong /aI/ is echoed obsessively, particularly in the three lines which contain the sequence "I ... I ... I ... idle ... by ... rife ... I ... Ireland ... I". It might be argued that the first person singular (the agony of alienated selfhood) is the subject of the poem, and the justification of the echo. But this device, if device it is, can only be described as a rather crude one. The lines quoted from No. 157 invite no such explanation. Hopkins's fascination with his own hyper-restricted language can degenerate into the composition of tongue-twisters.

One of the "oddities" to which Bridges particularly objected is Hopkins's tendency to draw together the homophones which abound in English.[172] Examples are "piecemeal piece" (No. 51), "feigns ... fain" (No. 63) and, perhaps the most striking, "On ear and ear two noises too old to end" (No. 35). In this last, the poet employs all three of the

English words which can be realized by the syllable /tu:/. We may feel, with Bridges, that Hopkins is being perverse, but in the light of the foregoing discussion we can at least say that Hopkins is being consistent. He likes to show us how dependent a word's existence is upon context. In the particular context of that first line of No. 35, the homophones are unlikely to produce any confusion. Hopkins's "point" — whether or not it is consciously made and whether or not it is overstated — is that language really _is_ like this, that words really _are_ very similar to one another. Hopkins's ritual of parallelism re-enacts, as it were, the emergence of meaningful utterance from inarticulate sound. His style emphasizes the essential arbitrariness, the nonsensicality, of mere sounds considered in themselves. Sometimes, of course, the nonsense, the purely formal or ritual incantation of sounds, comes closer to the surface, and the ritual becomes a kind of parody.

Hopkins also likes to show how different, because of context, can be the meaning of a single word which appears two or more times in a short space. This is another way of making language do more with its resources. One of the most felicitous uses of simple word-repetition is made in "Felix Randal" (No. 53) with the chiasmatic reversal of transitivity in the line

This seeing the sick endears them to us, us too it endears.

Here, as in the first line of No. 35, the /tu:/ homophones are nearly juxtaposed. The rhetorical mechanism is the same, but it is used with far greater finesse. The metrical arrangement, in relation to the pause at the comma, presses the rhetorical device upon our attention, demanding a careful enunciation. But this is a gentle pressure. Language, the medium of expression, is, we may say, being placed in the foreground,

but there is no impression of verbal jugglery being executed for its own sake. The rhetoric contributes <u>directly</u> to the honest, considerate, tenderly serious tone of the poem.

In many of Hopkins's poems, a single word is used in different grammatical functions : "I caught this morning morning's minion" (No. 36); "deeper than divined, /Divine charity" (No. 52); "What while we, while we slumbered" (No. 59); "at once, as once" (No. 28, st. 10). As Peters points out (pp. 151-2), the repetition may involve a shift from literal to metaphorical meaning : "birds build — but not I build" (No. 74); "touch had quenched thy tears, /Thy tears that touched my heart" (No. 53). Single-word repetition is used with particular effectiveness in one late sonnet, the first two quatrains of which run as follows:

> My own heart let me more have pity on; let
>
> Me live to my sad self hereafter kind,
>
> Charitable; not live this tormented mind
>
> With this tormented mind tormenting yet.
>
> I cast for comfort I can no more get
>
> By groping round my comfortless, than blind
>
> Eyes in their dark can day or thirst can find
>
> Thirst's all-in-all in all a world of wet.

> (No. 69)

Here, as at the end of No. 66 ("hoard unheard, / Heard unheeded") linguistic convolutions have direct dramatic effect. The spiritual struggle becomes a confrontation with language. The stylistic strain between sense and nonsense reaches a very high pitch. Towards the end of each quatrain, the sentences begin to run away into the reiteration of incantation. The sequence "all-in-all in all" is a striking and

unusual instance of that disruption of normal rank-correspondences which has been observed in much of Hopkins's word and syllable patterning. Here, rather than a word or syllable, it is a repeated _phrase_ ("in all") which appears first in a "bound" form (as part of an idiomatic phrase) and then in its "free" form.

By various means, then, Hopkins exerts a particular kind of rhetorical pressure upon the English language, amplifying its _systemic_ characteristics. The more he immerses himself in _signs_, the more he appreciates that the real object of inquiry is _signification_. He appears to have sensed what Saussure eventually explained, that a language is not a gathering together of the meanings which reside in particular words, but a totality out of which words and meanings emerge.

As we have seen, Hopkins made a similar analysis of "God's language", the sensible universe. The peculiarity or uniqueness of a natural object is, in this analysis, based on features which are _not_ peculiar to the object. The individual "specifies" a widespread principle or law or form, or else it exemplifies a species, or else it is a manifestation of a larger pattern of forces which is more abiding, more "real". Beyond the object or creature is not only the generic type but the still more complex form of the greater life which moves through everything. For all the "self-taste" of individual men, yet "Christ plays in ten thousand places" (_Poems_, No. 57). Ultimately, the only particularity is the godhead, the originator and co-ordinator of the universal pattern of instress. Wordsworth might have said much the same in general terms, but Hopkins went much further in attempting to analyze his moments of insight "into the life of things". The "catching" of an inscape might be a simple and direct aesthetic experience, but for Hopkins beauty and order were very closely related concepts.

The correspondence between "inscape of speech" and inscape in the world at large acquires a new dimension. Language "stands for" the world not through a one-to-one, mechanical relation of words to things, but because language and the world are the same kind of systems. Alternatively, and since inscape is largely a visual phenomenon, we might say that Hopkins sensed an isomorphism between linguistic understanding and visual understanding. The two human capacities follow similar principles in relating consciousness to whatever is, in any absolute sense, "out there". In my final chapter I shall consider in more detail the interest of this intuition of Hopkins's in the context of the history of ideas. For the moment we may say that the equation of language and the sensible world (as systems) forms a kind of continuous metaphor in Hopkins's work.

This metaphor comes closest to explicit statement in two remarkable late poems. These poems also exhibit an intensification of the "deforming" function of rhetorical patterning.

6.5 Language as metaphor in two late sonnets

Before analyzing the two poems in question, and in order properly to convey their importance to an understanding of Hopkins's thought as a whole, I shall trace through the poet's earlier work some specifications of two related themes, each of which has been introduced already. The first is "the notion of distinction", and the second is the idea of participation of the observer in the creation of inscape (that is to say, the mysterious relationship between the being of a phenomenon and its comprehensibility).

We have seen that Hopkins's cosmological thought frequently returns to the ontological problems which he considered in his early notes on Parmenides, in which notes he began to use the terms "inscape" and "instress". In one of the poems which will receive special attention in the present section, "a great deal of early Greek philosophical thought" is, according to Hopkins himself, "distilled" (LB, 291). Throughout his work, Hopkins concerns himself greatly with distinctiveness, individuation, "selving". Aided by Duns Scotus, Hopkins is able to find ways of explaining (to himself at least) the manner in which things are sustained in their being by instress. The theory of inscape is his "solution" to the ontological problems. The universe is neither a flux of large-scale processes nor a collocation of isolated entities, but something between the two. "Types and species" recur. There are "laws" in the structure of nature, laws not unlike those of language, in which is built up a systematic hierarchy of more and more complex organizational levels. God's language is comprehensible.

Nevertheless, the principle whereby things are sustained in being somehow depends upon human perception. An inscape is only really created in the process of being perceived or "caught". The religious implications of this can of course be a cause for great joy, the kind of joy which is evidenced in so many of Hopkins's poems and notes about the natural universe. Man is at home in that universe, his consciousness is continuous with a greater Mind. The world is full of meaning. However, certain other implications of this subjective aspect of inscape seem to have troubled Hopkins. His disturbance is partly expressed in a series of images involving nightfall and darkness. Darkness, it would seem, represents to Hopkins a death of meaning in the quenching of the human capacity for making distinctions. In an early poem, Hopkins takes pleasure in the fact that

> From nine o'clock till morning light
>
> The copse was never more than grey.
>
> The darkness did not close that night
>
> But day passed into day.
>
> (Poems, No. 21)

In a poem of the same period, darkness does close the night, and it is terrifying:

> Night to a myriad world gives birth,
>
> Yet like a lighted empty hall
>
> Where stands no host at door or hearth
>
> Vacant creation's lamps appal.
>
> (Poems, No. 23)

Hopkins expands the idea later in the same poem, expressing the hopeless insignificance of human attempts to perceive order:

> Deep calls to deep, and blackest night
>
> Giddies the soul with blinding daze
>
> That dares to cast its searching light
>
> On being's dread and vacant maze.

The poet can only hope for a divine word which will allow him to wait patiently "till morn eternal breaks".

A considerable number of poetic fragments from this early period (1864-6) concerns night, the stars, and the coming of dawn.[173] Typical of these is the following, which appears in two variants:

> In more precision now of light and dark
>
> The heightening dawn with milky orience
>
> Rounds its still-purpling centreings of cloud.
>
> (Poems, No. 98, frag.xxx)

Precision, the possibility of making meaningful distinctions, is the quality which makes dawn so appealing.

In the ecstatic nature-poems which Hopkins wrote after "The Wreck of the Deutschland", night is less appalling. Sometimes it has a special, brilliant beauty, with its "fire-folk", its "bright boroughs", its "elves'-eyes", its "quickgold" and "flake-doves" (Poems, No. 32). This pattern of light, this "piece-bright paling", holds "Christ and his mother and all his hallows" (No. 32). The fall of night is alleviated by a comparable religious consolation in "God's Grandeur":

> And though the last lights off the black West went
>
>   Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
>
> Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
>
>   World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.
>
> <div align="right">(Poems, No. 31)</div>

The darkness is, nevertheless, a continually disturbing presence, something to be warded off:

> Some candle clear burns somewhere I come by.
>
> I muse at how its being puts blissful back
>
> With yellowy moisture mild night's blear-all black
>
> Or to-fro tender trambeams truckle at the eye.
>
> <div align="right">(Poems, No. 46)</div>

Night is "mild", but its darkness is "blear-all". Meaning, distinction, is only precariously sustained by the frail candle. In another (unfinished) early poem, the perceiving human eye is the only thing which gives continuity or wholeness to a universe in flux:

> The earth and heaven, so little known,
>
> Are measured outwards from my breast.
>
> I am the midst of every zone
>
> And justify the East and West;
>
> The unchanging register of change
>
> My all-accepting fixèd eye,
>
> While all things else may stir and range
>
> All else may whirl or dive or fly.
>
> (Poems, No. 130)

And yet this "register of change" is not permanent. Men, upon whose participation inscape and all the beauty of the world depends, are mortal. In a letter in which he discusses a poem by Dixon, Hopkins writes:

> The last stanza breathes a lovely touching pathos — 'more make to cease' lingers on the mind. Now is this it? In Nature is something that makes, builds up, and breeds, as vegetation, life in fact; and over against this, also in Nature, something that unmakes or pulls to pieces, what in another place is called Death and Strife. This latter power must be utterly unconscious, blind, and the other not; for if it were otherwise this scene of havoc, strife, and defacement could not go on.
>
> (CD, 53)

For all Hopkins's delight in the way in which things are made — the constant resurgence of growth, development, "articulation" — he is nevertheless aware of the fact expressed in the above quotation and in the conclusion to "The Sea and the Skylark" :

Our make and making break, are breaking, down

    To man's last dust, drain fast towards man's first slime.

                                        (<u>Poems</u>, No. 35)

In "Binsey Poplars", Hopkins appears painfully aware of how the unmaking power can so rapidly cancel a long process of making:

    Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve

        Strokes of havoc únselve

           The sweet especial scene.

                (<u>Poems</u>, No. 43)

This poem was written in 1879, only two years before the letter to Dixon mentioned above. The echo of "havoc" and the relation of "unmake" to "unselve" suggest that Hopkins was very well prepared to catch the perception compressed into Dixon's phrase "more make to cease". Six years before his poem on the poplars, Hopkins had made the following record in his journal:

    The ashtree growing in the corner of the garden was felled.

    It was lopped first : I heard the sound and looking out and

    seeing it maimed there came at that moment a great pang and

    I wished to die and not to see the inscapes of the world

    destroyed any more. (<u>J</u>, 230)

In two long-lined sonnets written during the last five years of his life, Hopkins expresses such fears of the unmaking principle, of darkness and the death of meaning. The first is "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves":

    Earnest, earthless, equal, attuneable, | vaulty, voluminous,

        ... stupendous

    Evening strains to be time's vást, | 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,

Fíre-féaturing heaven. For earth | her being has unbound; her

    dapple is at end, as —

tray or aswarm, all throughther, in throngs; | self ín self

    steepèd and páshed — qúite

Disremembering, dísmémbering | áll now. Heart, you round

    me right.

With : Óur évening is over us; óur night | whélms, whélms,

    ánd will end us.

Only the beakleaved boughs dragonish | damask the tool-

    smooth bleak light; black,

Ever so black on it. Óur tale, O óur oracle! | Lét life, wáned,

    ah lét life wind

Off hér once skéined stained véined varíety | upon, áll on twó

    spools; párt, pen, páck

Now her áll in twó flocks, twó folds — black, white; | right,

    wrong; reckon but, reck but, mind

But thése twó; wáre of a wórld where bút these | twó tell, each

    off the óther; of a rack

Where, selfwrung, selfstrung, sheathe- and shelterless, | thóughts

    agaínst thoughts ín groans grínd.

                          (Poems, No. 61)

Hillis Miller comments perceptively on one particular correspondence
between the linguistic character of this poem and the conveyed vision
of a world in which the distinctness of things is ebbing away:

'Throughther', the dialect form of 'through-other', sounds
like a telescoped form of a complete phrase such as : 'each
interpenetrated through and through with the others.' It is
a perfect mimesis of the events described. The forms of
the collapsed words strain to differentiate themselves, just
as the inscapes crushed into chaos resist desperately the
unbinding of their beings. (Miller, Disappearance of God, p.326)

I shall attempt to demonstrate that such "mimesis" pervades the poem,
that the stylistic tendencies discussed in the earlier sections of
the present chapter appear in uncommon profusion and with uncommon
relevance to thematic arrangement.

The first three lines of the poem present us with parallelisms of
increasing scale. The first involves parallelism of words, the second
of phrases, the third of long half-lines. From the first syntactic
place of the first sentence is extended a "vertical" or paradigmatic
series which, the row of dots might suggest, could extend indefinitely.
We have seen that Hopkins's syntactic sequences are frequently governed
to an unusual degree by associative principles. This is of course true
of a great deal of poetry, particularly that which is in one way or another
"euphonious". In this case there is no syntactic sequence within the
line. There is nevertheless a definite development, according to a
complex pattern of semantic and phonetic links. It is as if the first
word of a sequence has been magnified in order to make perceptible the
processes of selection and exclusion which produced the word — in order,
we might say, to reveal the pattern of "semantic fields" in which each
word exists. Trier's development of the "semantic field" concept stemmed
directly from the Saussurean notion of linguistic units as mutually
defining entities.[174] The collocation in this first line bears an
interesting relation to other co-ordinative word-series in Hopkins's
poems, series which cover a roughly similar range of emotional

implication, expressing creative pride, growth, exultation, rising or expansive movement. These series include "Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume" (No. 36), "The vault and scope and schooling / And mastery in the mind" (No. 49), and "The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation" (No. 76). Here, in No. 61, the power of such collocation is held under pressure. There is an accumulation of ideas of grandeur, magnitude and sonority. The adjectives mass, straining towards the noun as evening strains to be night.

The pressure is released only gradually in the succeeding lines. Very soon we find another "paradigmatic" pattern in "womb-of-all, home-of-all, hearse-of-all.". The triplet is a kind of pseudo-declension. The formal differences between the terms are not as strictly limited as in "heeds ... hides" and other series which were discussed in the previous section, but they are still considerably restricted, and the more strikingly so since the sequence "womb ... home ... hearse" covers such a semantic range.

The closely-paralleled phrases of the third line are balanced with unusual ingenuity. Hopkins seldom uses such large syntactic patterns as his parallelistic unit. The idea of "strain" already having been introduced, mimesis might be discerned in the "effort" of the second half-line to separate out from the first. This separation is, as it were, thwarted by the heavily-stressed "Waste" which, beginning the fourth line, picks up the consonant framework of "west".

In the fourth line, attention to the paradigmatic implications of "earliest" halts once again the progress of the syntagm. Morphological "analysis" detaches "earl" which recombines with "stars", the resultant compound word then being paraphrased in reverse by "stars principal".

"Waste" having already been stated, the idea of "unmaking" is introduced — "her being is unbound" — in line five, "being" and "unbound" perhaps seeming to have the kind of "derivational" relationship which Hopkins's sound-systems frequently suggest.

Deformation of language by agrammatical rhyming begins in earnest with the echo of "stupendous" in "overbend us ... end as-/tray" between lines four and five. The disruption of normal linguistic boundaries is further intensified by the triplet "at end ... as-/tray ... aswarm". The splitting of "astray" at a linguistically "false" point parodies the word boundary of "at end" and contradicts the morphological similarity of "astray" and "aswarm".

Hillis Miller's comment on the "mimetic" appropriateness of "throughther" has already been cited. By this stage (line six) the idea of the dissolution of selves has been very forcibly presented, and the "unbinding" of things, the disruption of boundaries, is being enacted in the verse-structure. Phonemes and syllables drift apart and together again in unpredictable combinations. There is an almost "anagrammatic" similarity of consonant-structure between "steepèd" and "pashed".

In the seventh line we find one of Hopkins's most felicitous uses of parallelism to "analyze" a word. "Disremembering" is collapsed into "dismembering" with the implication that "remember" means "re-member", that is, "reconstitute". We have seen how familiar in Hopkins's writings is the idea that a thing is "made", its inscape created, in the process of being perceived. The relation of "disremembering" to "dismembering" suggests that to lose a mental grip on things, to fail to keep them in consciousness (as when darkness falls) is to partake or helplessly to acquiesce in their unmaking.

In the eighth line further opportunities are taken to connect words in sequence through "paradigmatic" syllabic variation : "evening is over us".

"Whelms" and "will end us" are related in a kind of rhetorical augmentation, as if the first word expanded into the phrase. The end-rhyming syllables complete the extremely agrammatical pattern "-endous ... end us ... -end as- ... end us".

By the ninth line, darkness has almost crept over the scene. Somewhat paradoxically, it is only the intense <u>blackness</u> of the sharp-edged ("beakleaved") outlines of the boughs which sustains what little contrast or distinction remains in the visible world, and holds off the greater, inclusive, "blear-all" blackness of night. The word "black" is emerging from the sequence "beak- ... bleak ... black ... black", consolidating itself.

Hopkins now states the centrality in human experience of such intimations. This is "Our tale, O our oracle!" — a summary and a warning. Then "waned" progresses to "wind", and this is a winding <u>off</u>, an unravelling. The vowel gradation gives the two words an appearance of being forms of the same verb, expressing stages of one process. The dimming of the light is the same thing as dissolution.

There is a final statement, in the eleventh line, of the richness of differences in the world of light. This is expressed in the triplet "skéined stained véined". A parallel alliterated triplet ("párt, pen, páck") introduces the process of reducing all this variety to a binary pattern — "twó spools ... twó flocks, twó folds". All consciousness, all value, all ethics, all meaning, is transformed into a simple opposition. There is nothing left but this basic strategy of mind, and, in its nakedness, it is found to be terrifying. In the twelfth line we find an appropriate "morphological analysis" in "reckon but, reck but". Reckoning, which might involve some estimation of value, reduces to mere recking, noticing, mere elementary awareness.

It is difficult to decide exactly where ethical sense — "right, wrong" — fits into the pattern of Hopkins's thoughts in the last five lines. We are perhaps urged to "ware of a world" in which "these two" have become an obsession, a world in which the basic mental strategy has been magnified and deformed. The guilt of the religious man, it may be, is here presented as a distortion, an unnecessary nightmare. It overcomes the beautiful variety of the world as night does, producing a sense of greater disjunction rather than the consolatory sense of harmony or unification which a moral theology might be expected to generate. Alternatively, we can accept the more straighforward paraphrase by Gardner:

> Beware of the Judgement; anticipate that spiritual world
>
> in which only these two attributes count, each unmistakably
>
> set off by the other. For unless you heed this oracle
>
> your punishment will be total and eternal separation from
>
> God, the unremitting torment of contemplating your own sins.
>
> (Gerard Manley Hopkins, II, p.315)

Whatever detailed interpretation we make of the conclusion, one thing is clear — Hopkins's disturbance at "something that unmakes or pulls to pieces", the operation of which is imitated by the way in which the verse-structure disrupts and disperses the "inscape of speech". As men can "unselve" a scene by removing parts of its inscape-pattern (Poems, No. 43), so the poet can "unselve" language by undermining its system, its pattern of "types and species", of "laws", of orderly and articulated levels of construction. The disruption of language need not be a negative procedure. It can be a process whereby language reveals more clearly what kind of thing it is, and in which new semantic possibilities are discovered. In other poems, however, although

the bringing out of "inscape of speech" is always a kind of violence
to language, the effect is never quite the same as in this sonnet.
At the end of the poem, it might be felt that language collapses under
the weight of rhyme, rather than being stimulated or freshened or
sharpened by it. At the end there is a repeated double-beat of emphasis
upon a hopeless condition — "selfwrung, selfstrung, sheathe - and
shelterless, | thoughts against thoughts in groans grind".

"That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the
Resurrection" (Poems, No.72) also deals with dissolution, with the
eradication of inscape, with the death of meaning. However, a definite
consolation is found, as even the title indicates. We may relate the
basically simple "message" — everything flows away but Christ redeems
and draws all together — to an early journal entry which, like "Spelt
from Sibyl's Leaves", has an evening setting:

> To see the long forward-creeping curls of the newly-leaved
> trees, in sweeps and rows all lodged one with another down
> the meadow edge, beautiful, but distraction and the want of
> the canon only makes these graceful shapes in the keen
> unseasonable evening air to 'carve out' one's thought with
> painful definiteness. (J, 136)

There is beauty in the scene, and it is very much involved with a quality
of salience, of defining, protruded edges, the curls of the trees being
"long" and "forward-creeping". The trees are at a meadow's edge. Here
we might recall the "beakleaved boughs" of the earlier poem. In this
as in the other poem, definiteness becomes painful. Things can be too
particular. A "canon", an embracing, ingathering principle is sought.
The meaning of "canon" to Hopkins is made clearer in an even earlier
journal note, which records that "the warm greyness of the day, the
river, the spring green, and the cuckoo wanted a canon by which to

harmonise them and round them in — e.g. one of feeling" (<u>J</u>, 135).

"That Nature is ..." resolves a vision of disjunction by means of a "canon ... of feeling", by means of "the Comfort of the Resurrection". The unmaking principle is not, in this case, a cancelling darkness. It is, rather, the intrinsic energy of nature, nature which, on a windy, bright-lit morning, becomes more striking in its instability. The wind

> ropes, 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 manmarks | treadmire toil there
> Footfretted in it.

This passage is extremely difficult to enunciate, and this is largely a consequence of consonant-grouping. There are many awkward combinations, but we might note particularly the cluster /stskr/ ("yestertempest's creases"), the doubling of sibilants ("parches/Squandering" and "stanches, starches/Squadroned") and the juxtaposition of dentals ("squeezed | dough, crust, dust"). In the last example the difficulty seems to be emphasized by the caesural break, as other examples are by the line-turn. The "selving" or individuation of words becomes a struggle. Only the most careful pronunciation can prise the words apart at many of these junctures, and the required effort is the greater because the lines are so packed with words, particularly with monosyllabic words which each require some stressing. To "solve" the problem by performing the poem slowly and unexcitedly would of course be wholly inappropriate to the meaning.

The words in this passage are, furthermore, in a complex relationship of the kind which I have called "kaleidoscopic". Apart from the terminal

and internal rhymes, and the closeness in sound of "stanches" to "starches" and of "masks" to "-marks", there is the now-familiar vowel-gradation pattern in "pool ... -peel" and the elaborate figure which connects "Squandering" with "Squadroned" and (through "ooze") with "squeezed".

At this stage man is introduced into the scene. Not only the signs of his physical presence ("manmarks") but also his life of thought ("firedint ... mark on mind") vanishes soon after he does. The world is "full of inscape" but people need to have "the eyes to see it" (J, 221) and most lack such eyes. The unusual and intermittent capacity to perceive or create inscape exerts its feeble power in a world which is, in any case, unstable. We might note the sequence "his firedint, his mark ... is gone!" Milroy, as we have seen, noted that Hopkins's poetry often reveals a sensitivity to the kind of sound-reductions that occur in rapid speech. This makes some of the unusual rhymes at least phonologically "correct". Here, in the repeated and unstressed "his" the aspirate might well be reduced almost to nothing. The word "is" near the end of the line might at first appear to be another "his", and the list of man's achievements or "marks" extendable. But the possibility is suddenly cancelled by the emphatic "gone!".

"Manshape", however, continues to assert itself. There is a great "pity and indig | nation" (line thirteen), and it is notable that in that last word the caesural break is used very tellingly, an indignant (perhaps challenging) tone being strengthened by the slight pause after the run of unstressed syllables that leads up to the break, the caught breath. There follows another "mimesis" of the abolition of boundaries in nature, through the "kaleidoscopic" arrangement of consonants in "vastness blurs and time beats level".

The transition to "the Comfort of the Resurrection" is sudden, and it is introduced by an unusually emphatic use of the "agrammatical" rhyme: "Resurrection ... dejection ... deck shone". The final resolution of the vision involves another such rhyme: "I am and ... diamond". Hopkins is now accepting and going along with the "unbound" being of language, since he has found a religious consolation which allows him to accept the instability of the world:

> This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, ⏐ patch, matchwood, immortal
> diamond,
>
> Is immortal diamond.

Sonstroem points out that this is not the only poem in which "the insight that the poet has been searching for comes to him in the form of a pun" (p. 201). Here we might recall those associations between Hopkins's thought and oriental cosmologies which have been discussed above (particularly in Chapter Two, section five). "To be in harmony with, not in rebellion against the fundamental laws of the universe is", as Waley puts it, "the first step ... on the way to Tao" (Waley, p.55). Hopkins's "Jack" is comparable to certain characters in Taoist tales:

> Older too than Taoism is the idea that pride invites a fall,
> that the axe falls first on the tallest tree. But it was
> Taoism that first welded these ideas together into a system
> in which the unassertive, the inconspicuous, the lowly, the
> imperfect, the incomplete become symbols of the Primal Stuff
> that underlies the kaleidoscope of the apparent universe.
> It is as representatives of the 'imperfect' and the 'incomplete'
> that hunchbacks and cripples play so large a part in Taoist
> literature. (Waley, p. 56)

The oriental philosophers stress the importance of the whole before the part, the individual's need to escape the narrow sense of selfhood and to feel part of a greater self. In a universe so conceived the man, the potsherd, the piece of wood and the "immortal diamond" are identical, in that each is a transient manifestation of a great pattern or system. They have the same ontological status as do words or other units in the universe of language. The pun at the end of Hopkins's poem expresses his exultant acceptance of his condition, of his place in the world-system whose "grammar" he has explored through the theory of inscape.

6.6 Summary and transition

Hopkins's practice of parallelism is, then, explicable in terms of Jakobson's statement that "the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of combination to the axis of selection". But the _result_ of the projection is very different from what Jakobson conceives it to be. The pattern of language tends to be contradicted by formal patterning, and the effect is a laying bare of the processes which "make words happen".

It is perhaps misleading if we say that words are thus "analyzed" or "dissected". The distortions which can result from considering a poem as a "quasi-simultaneous object" have been discussed at some length. A sense of movement, of dynamism, is the essence of Hopkins's conception of verse-structure, and he insisted again and again that poetry is to be spoken and heard, that the marks on the page are a score for a performance. Hopkins's own most characteristic poems leap forward excitedly, and the development of meaning is highly kinetic, often

seeming to spring unexpectedly out of the interaction of words and the friction between rhyme and reason. We might say that Hopkins's verse does not so much _dissect_ language as _vivisect_ it. He emphasizes the fact that words, like other "inscaped" entities, are patterns of poised forces. A word, like such a form as that of a tree, can be "stalled", comprehended in terms of the growth-process which is implicit in its momentary or static form. The growth-process in a natural phenomenon is part of the greater organization of energies which sweeps through everything. By "stalling" words and other linguistic units we grasp something of the greater _dynamic_ pattern of language, its organic interrelatedness. "Inscape of speech", according to this interpretation, is very precisely comparable to inscape in the world at large. The laws of the two systems are in parallel.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HOPKINS IN HISTORY : SOME CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introductory

The stylistic features discussed in the foregoing chapter constitute
Hopkins's personal solution to the problem of "weakness" in "rhetoric"
(CD, 141) which he discerned in the poetry of his age. It has been argued
that Hopkins's emphasis on technicalities arose from a corrective
impulse rather than from a distorted conception of poetry as nothing
but technique. By the same token, it has been argued, the exaggerations
made by some Formalist writers should not blind us to the possibility
that others made genuine discoveries. We have seen that Hopkins partially
anticipates some of the ideas of Brik and Tynyanov, and that a consideration
of the relation between the poet's thoughts and those of the later
theorists helps us considerably in clarifying the general problem of
"the reasons for rhyme" and in finding a middle way between the conception
of form as mere decoration and the conception of it as an end in itself.

All this amounts to a defence of Hopkins on the grounds that he has
something very important to tell us about the nature of poetry, about its
relatedness to its medium. But what value does the poetry have beyond
that of being a significant experiment? Well, many critics have challenged
Patmore's complaint about the "obscuring novelty of mode" in Hopkins's
verse, and Patmore's claim that any one of the many novelties "would be
startling and productive of distraction from the matter to be expressed"
(FL, 352). The defence of Hopkins as a theorist and experimentalist is
supplemented by further evidence that his stylistic novelties were

coherent, purposeful, necessary to the unfolding of a particular world-view. From whatever standpoint Hopkins is investigated — linguistic, theological, psychological, or from the standpoint of the present study — he proves to be fascinatingly explicable.

We are, however, still faced with the problem of Hopkins's accessibility. It is too easy to say that Hopkins as a stylist was ahead of his time, and that people such as Patmore and Bridges were unimaginatively conservative in comparison. After a further century of poetic experimentation, new readers still find in much of Hopkins's work an "obscuring novelty of mode". This is clear to anyone who has tried to introduce the poet's work to young students. Perhaps we ought to be disturbed that, of the great and increasing mass of Hopkins criticism, so much is devoted to basic explanation (in the sense of paraphrase or even translation). Not all of Hopkins's poetry is actually obscure (as is "Tom's Garland", Poems, No. 70), but much of it may seem to constitute, as did the Skalds' art, "a revelling in form, an overemphasis on it, if you will, and not poetry as we are apt to understand it" (Hollander, The Skalds, p. 20).

Seamus Heaney feels that the period of "special pleading" in Hopkins criticism is over, and that the poet's work has been established "as an inevitable and organic part of the structure of the English literary tradition" (Heaney, p. 3). Broadly speaking, this is true. Yet one might wonder whether the earlier need for special pleading has not produced a rather unusual set of conditions for our acceptance of Hopkins. In order to prove that Hopkins was a major poet at all, it was necessary, for theoretical purposes, to proceed as if on the assumption that he was a major poet all the time. Since it was necessary to "justify" his stylistic peculiarities, those peculiarities as such received an attention that was perhaps disproportionate. Critics enjoined the reader to

appreciate that this or that "novelty" was an effective and expressive device, that this or that obscure passage really contained a most subtle thought or density of implication. Leavis and other critics suggested that Hopkins was manipulating English in essentially the same kind of inventive and productive manner as Shakespeare was, that Hopkins belonged fully to the same tradition, that his experiments were not unprecedented, and that his superficially idiosyncratic devices really revealed the inner life or latent powers of the language as these are exhibited "in living use" (Leavis, pp 107-8). Another critic, rather harder pressed to prove that Hopkins is only superficially queer, would devote many pages to "Tom's Garland" and show how fascinating it was, how intrinsically interesting as a compression of meanings. That interestingness was the problem. Evaluative categories were subordinated to explanatory ones. There is so much to be said about "Tom's Garland" that we might forget to point out how patently unsuccessful the poem is, how perversely far away from "poetry as we are apt to understand it". That particular poem is of course exceptionally obscure, and Hopkins was doubtful about it,[175] but the more general point needs to be made that the criterion of accessibility has been seriously underemphasized in many evaluations of Hopkins. Perhaps we do not take the knife to his work as readily as we take it, for example, to Wordsworth's, in order to separate the precious good from the plain bad.

Hopkins's reputation as something more than a marvellous freak is likelier to be enhanced by a more rigorous discrimination between his successful and unsuccessful experiments. The success in question is not simply a matter of accessibility, of the intensification or moderation of stylistic "violence" to language in different poems, although the mere degree of "oddness" is perhaps more important than Hopkins's apologists have on the whole contended ever since they began refuting

Bridges and Patmore. The success has also to do with the perceptibility
of development in the poet's style, through the experimental or learning
processes, towards a kind of poem in which the best results of the
experiments could be applied judiciously and in organic combination.
That is to say, Hopkins should be assessed not merely as an inventor of
ways of making phrases and lines (however marvellous these may sometimes
be) but as an evolver of designs for _whole_ poems.

A few final points about Hopkins's notion of literary evolution
and about the evolution of his own poetry will help us to evaluate his
achievement with regard to the foregoing remarks. In the following
section, I shall argue that Hopkins's stylistic experiments constitute
a search for a particular type of balance, that this balance is most nearly
achieved in certain late poems, and that Hopkins's relation to _subsequent_
developments in the English poetic tradition might better be appreciated
if we view the last poems in this light. The subsequent and final
section of this study will resume the main argument, that Hopkins's
thought and writing _in its entirety_ is a fascinating indicator of
major intellectual transitions which were beginning in his time.

7.2 Poetry in evolution

In a letter of 1864, Hopkins announces to A.W.M. Baillie that a
"horrible thing" has happened to him. He has "begun to _doubt_ Tennyson"
and has "composed his thoughts" on the matter because he is "meditating
an essay" on it (FL, 215-16). Hopkins distinguishes between "poetry
proper, the language of inspiration" and what he calls "Parnassian", which
"can only be spoken by poets, but ... is not in the highest sense poetry"
(FL, 216). In a letter to Dixon, Parnassian is defined as "the language

and style of poetry mastered and at command but employed without any fresh inspiration" (CD, 72). Hopkins doubts Tennyson because he realizes that the great poet "uses Parnassian; he is, one must see it, what we used to call Tennysonian" (FL, 219). Wordsworth, indeed, "palls so much ... because he writes such an 'intolerable deal of' Parnassian" (FL, 218). Shakespeare, however, "does not pall, and this is because he uses ... so little Parnassian" (FL, 218).

Now Alison Sulloway points out that "Hopkins's complaints about his fellow poets centred upon their thoroughly outmoded treatment of outmoded subjects", but that his main emphasis was upon "their style, the symbol of spiritual laziness" (Sulloway, p. 4). This connection between laziness and outmodedness is important. Hopkins objected particularly to the uncritical use of archaisms in poetry. He insisted that "the poetical language of an age should be the current language heightened", that such "elevation" is "Shakespeare's and Milton's practice as the want of it will be fatal to Tennyson's Idylls and plays, to Swinburne, and perhaps to Morris" (LB, 89).

Having cited such firm statements, we must be careful to define precisely what "current" and "archaic" meant to Hopkins, since he might well be accused of self-contradiction. As Milroy says, we are faced with the problems of "how to reconcile Hopkins's own use of inversion with his rejection of inversion and how to reconcile his use of apparently obsolete words with his rejection of archaism" (Milroy, p. 14). On the other hand, Hopkins uses sprung rhythm and other devices to make his verse language more "natural", more like common speech. Milroy suggests that "the rejection of archaism really amounts to a rejection of what had become the standard poetic diction, and is bound up with his partial rejection of traditional metre" (Milroy, p. 15). To this we might add that Hopkins's rejection of inversion applied only to such automatized and unproductive syntactic rearrangement as characterized

the standard. Such an interpretation renders more comprehensible Hopkins's statements on Shakespeare and Milton, who are said to use "current language". Those poets actually used Latin and French words (and in Milton's case a "foreign" syntax) but they used them effectively, as a modern poet may justifiably use obsolete or archaic words, for specific purposes. They did not use "oddities" simply as metrical padding or in order to create a vague aura of poeticality. They moulded strange words and forms into the language of the day rather than erecting them into an artificial dialect. When they found themselves slipping into habits (into personal "Parnassian") they reacted against their own styles. Witness the increasing freedom of Shakespeare's later blank verse, and Milton's rejection first (in Paradise Lost) of rhyme and then (in Samson Agonistes) of metrical symmetry.

Hopkins's comments about the relation between poetic and "current" language are really of a different order from Wordsworth's insistence on "the language really used by men"[176] and Gray's principle that "the language of the age is never the language of poetry".[177] Each statement, however conditioned by particular literary-historical circumstances, suggests that there is an absolutely desirable relation between the two languages. If Hopkins's statements are regarded as being of the same type of pronouncements, then he might seem to vacillate erratically between the two extremes. His comment on "current language" might seem to be a Wordsworthian plea for greater "naturalness" in verse. On the other hand, if in most of his verse he practised what he preached, Hopkins might seem to be on the side of Gray, and more interested in the heightening than in the currency.

Hopkins is not, however, making any final statement about the degree of artificiality which is proper to verse language. He is talking about the effectiveness of artificial forms. His view is more like the Formalist

notion of literary evolution, which notion is a corollary of the principle of "construction". Evolution, in this conception, reflects a self-equilibrating mechanism within the literary "system". What is to be overcome, in each age, is the _stultifying_ effect of certain habits. Hopkins did not feel that there was anything _intrinsically_ wrong with syllable-stress metre, syntactic inversion, or any other common feature of Victorian style,but he did feel that they were being used lazily. We require, he seems to be saying, the sensation that form is _meeting_ language, and to some purpose. _Interaction_ is the important principle. Hopkins did not find it paradoxical to assert that poetic language could become more "natural" by becoming more formally elaborate. His own poetry constitutes such an assertion. Poetry, he suggests, should be at a certain _distance_ from ordinary language without being _different_ from it. The ordinary language might in verse be quite extravagantly deformed, but the ordinary language is still a palpable presence as long as the deformation has a quality of freshness or immediacy, rather than seeming to be an established set of rules which govern a special dialect.

In search of means whereby form might "meet" language more productively, Hopkins of course indulged in formal extravaganzas. He threw form and language together like cocks in a pit. It troubled him constantly however, that he could hardly avoid seeming odd to his readers. In the last year of his life he noted very acutely that what his work required "to be more intelligible, smoother, and less singular" was "an audience" (_LB_, 291). He did not find the audience, but in the last decade of his life he did move towards such a more accessible style, and, more specifically, towards a less "deformed" kind of sonnet.

The implication that Hopkins "reverted" to a more "traditional" kind of sonnet must be hedged with certain qualifications. He did not begin to imitate earlier poets or schools, or to approximate the "current" or

poetic language of previous ages. He demonstrated, rather, a grasp

(intuitive or otherwise) of an important component in the English sonnet

tradition. This component might even be regarded as the crucial one for

the historical persistence of the form. Hopkins seems to have recognized

that the form had certain strengths which he was himself particularly

suited to develop, and that his style had in fact been tending to diminish

those strengths in his own work.

When Hopkins borrowed methods from Norse and Celtic court-bards he

did so not because he shared their belief in verse as a kind of ceremonial

dialect or as an exalted decorative craft. He borrowed them, rather,

because they were foreign, in the sense that they were not associated with

particular "automatized" patterns in modern English writing. He believed

that parallelism should be a "constructive" (because a "deforming") factor.

He carried the principle to extremes, and "construction" became self-

defeating. Too much, stylistically speaking, was going on at once. The

energy of "dynamic conflict" was not sufficiently concentrated in many

poems. The new methods, indeed, were capable of becoming another kind

of "Parnassian". (Witness some of the appalling superficial imitations

of Hopkins's style.) Highly-sprung verse, furthermore, whilst "freshening"

or "naturalizing"poetic language in some senses, lacked certain

capacities for interaction (See Chapter Six, section three). Hopkins

eventually realized the need to apply that innovation also in a more

selective or moderated manner.

Amidst all the experimentation, the sonnet-form remained. Hopkins's

stylistic development can largely be described as a lover's quarrel

with the form. He curtailed or expanded the framework, but believed in

its proportions. Eventually the older type of pattern re-emerged, having

been transformed by experiment into a peculiarly effective device. The

culmination is a kind of sonnet in which, whilst being as powerfully and

distinctively _himself_ as ever, Hopkins uses the form in the same _spirit_ as Donne, Milton and Wordsworth did in their best sonnets. One might have mentioned other poets who used the form in a comparable manner, and it is to be stressed that the form has very effectively served other purposes. But a concentration upon these writers will best clarify my idea of a stylistic "tradition". These writers use the sonnet-form more markedly for the purposes of "construction" (in the Formalist sense).

Let us be more specific. In nine of his late sonnets (_Poems_, Nos. 65-69 and 73-76), Hopkins approximates more closely than has been his usual practice to "standard" or "common" rhythm — that is, to syllable-stress pentameter. The syntax tends to be clearer than in many earlier poems. There are obscurities, but there are few archaic or unusual words, and the elaboration of phonetic figures is very controlled, tending towards terseness and compression rather than expansiveness. (For illustration of this last point see the discussion of Nos. 66 and 69, as well as of No. 58, in Chapter Six, section four.) We might say that these poems stand in relation to many other good Victorian sonnets as the sonnets of Donne and Milton do to Shakespeare's. Shakespeare did not _in his sonnets_ use enjambement and caesural variation to produce such a tension between sentence and line as we frequently find in Donne and Milton, even though he came to do something similar in his later blank verse.

There are other differences between the two kinds of sonnet, differences which perhaps derive largely from the variation in the degree of _counterpointing_ exhibited. G.S. Fraser suggests that, despite the greatness of many of Shakespeare's sonnets, it is probably a "common experience" to find oneself having "many of the first quatrains ... by heart, but not the second or third quatrains", and to find that the final couplet often seems "trite and disappointing" when a poem is re-read.[178]

Shakespeare's sonnets tend to fall into four divisions, but we might add that a similar disappointment can arise from a poet's handling of the octave-sestet division. The second part might not seem to develop convincingly out of the first, might seem like a rather forced drawing of a conclusion. Readers of some of Hopkins's earlier sonnets often find this, particularly in poems such as "Spring" (No.33) in which a conventional religious conclusion is drawn from an ecstatic appreciation of nature, somewhat after the manner of a sermon.

Frazer goes on to note that some major poets, notably Milton, often failed to observe the conventional transition in sense between octave and sestet in the "proper" Italian sonnet. This is connected with the fact that "Milton's and Wordsworth's sonnets have greater formal complex unity than Shakespeare's, and if one has any part of them by heart, one probably has them by heart as wholes" (Frazer, p. 68). This could certainly be said of sonnets like Hopkins's fine "Thou are indeed just, Lord ... " (No. 74), in which there is a sentence-break after the first four lines, but running-on of a sentence between octave and sestet. The lineation of the poem is managed with extraordinary dramatic effectiveness. The first two lines contain a good example of rhythmic "over-reaving":

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

The plea (that "sinners' ways prosper" whilst the dedicated religious man is thwarted) is most effectively introduced in such a manner. On account of the over-reaving, the passage has the slight hastiness of a preliminary plea for attention, a half-controlled outburst, quietly challenging. It might be asserted that a poem in such a regular form ought to begin with a more definite establishment of the metrical and

rhyming framework, but, once the first four lines have been taken in, the pattern is sufficiently well established, and the reverse procedure seems to have been justified.

The most effective breaking of sentence against formal symmetry occurs at the octave-sestet division:

> Oh the sots and thralls of lust
> Do in spare hours more thrive than I than spend,
>
> Sir, life upon thy cause.

That word "Sir" is most subtly placed. The bitterness which might seem to be threatening to break out is <u>just</u> kept under control, and the divine master is addressed at once with respect, firmness, and a measure of righteous indignation. The necessary pause after "Sir" also brings great stress to bear upon the word "life", adding weight and dignity to the speaker's statement of the completeness of his service, to the contrast between "hours" and "life". The poem as a whole has a great "formal complex unity", and yet it sounds like a genuine prayer in a real voice. We feel that the pattern of thought is brought to a proper close at the poem's end, that nothing has been unnecessarily repeated and nothing left unsaid. We feel, nevertheless, a sustained tension between the form and the message, and this is largely a consequence of the markedly <u>contrapuntal</u> relation between rhymed line and sentence, which counterpoint is highly varied. The logical closure does not signal the solution of a problem but rather a grasping of its essence. There is a strong sense of "difficulty overcome" throughout this "logically filled space". Some of these late poems, as Thornton says, "are the very process of asserting a structure on unwilling material, a struggle which gives the poems much of their strength" (p. 56). The integrity of these poems may indeed derive largely from the conditions

of their composition. "During his harassed labours in Ireland" as the editor MacKenzie points out in the most recent edition of Hopkins's poems, "Hopkins could often compose only in short jets of activity" (Poems, p. xlii). Of all Hopkins's poems, these are the ones which smell least of the lamp, the ones in which form is meeting language with most immediacy.

Of the last poems, only "Thou art indeed just, Lord ... " follows the syntactic pattern of Miltonic sonnets such as that on his blindness,[179] deliberately and effectively transgressing the octave-sestet division. Nevertheless, the quality of the transitions between sections tends to be of a comparable order. Very generally speaking, a technically "Shakespearian" kind of sonnet (particularly in respect of the couplet) is likely to produce a different impression of authorial control over the material. (The sestet of the Italian sonnet might correspond in logical terms to the summative or generalizing Shakespearian couplet.) Only in rare Shakespearian poems such as "Th'expense of spirit ... "[180] does a formally more "divided" kind of sonnet pattern seem to lend itself well to continuousness or integrity of dramatic movement ("emotional rhythm", we might say) and individual responses to that poem vary enormously. Its couplet might seem to "pounce", to be a tag rather than a final reverberation of an accumulated feeling. A final point may be made about the "asserting" of structure in Hopkins's last poems. Hopkins not only observes the Italian restriction of the octave to two rhymes (invariably a b b a a b b a), he likewise restricts the sestet. This indeed was his consistent practice even in the early sonnets, whereas Milton (probably the major model) frequently introduced a fifth rhyme. The English sonneteer, unlike the Italian, restricts himself to four rhymes at considerable peril. The unifying effect of close rhyming is easily offset because the rhyming may seem forced, at least over-studied,

on account of the relative paucity of perfect rhymes in English. Hopkins certainly avoids this pitfall, and, as with Milton, his ability to do so depends largely on the contrapuntal line-syntax relationship. There is of course much more to the integrity of a good sonnet — continuity in the thought, control of the larger rhythmic patterns (which may embrace several sentences or even the whole poem), and so on. The point which I am making is that these less easily analyzable qualities, which Hopkins's best sonnets certainly possess, could not have their full effect without the poet's consummate exertion of the more basic formal controls.

These last poems, even if they are not Hopkins's most significant achievement, are perhaps those which will prove to have the most lasting influence. The poets who have learned or will learn most from Hopkins are perhaps those who would agree that his style developed in the manner which I have been suggesting. They would agree that he anticipated not only a necessary reaction against symmetrical forms such as the stress-syllable pentameter and the sonnet, but also an equally necessary subsequent realization that such forms have an intrinsic value and appropriateness, that there are some things which can only be done in the tighter forms, that certain types of emotional and tonal and even logical effects require them. The sonnet form can be taken as representative of several patterns which required revitalization in terms of their "constructive" effect. Considerable experimentation in the freer forms has — apart from the great achievements which have been and will be made in those forms — created a situation in which even rhyme is treated with a healthy suspicion. Several features which were once associated with rhyme and the more regular pentameter — certain syntactic inversions, and the use of archaic verb-forms, for example — have become taboo. Our ears have been accustomed to more "natural" and varied, more "sprung" rhythms in verse, but we have not lost the ability to respond to the fruitful "conflict" between speech-rhythm and metrical stability. In

some ways it is more difficult now for the poet to make the forms "grip", to make them exert the pressure whereby language is bent into the required shape. In some ways the effort is more worthwhile.

This sketch of an argument about the persistence of the more constraining types of abstract poetic form is intended to be suggestive rather than contentious. One might cite Eliot's assertion that "the so-called vers libre which is good is anything but 'free'" and that "it can better be defended under some other label".[181] One might attempt to demonstrate that even Eliot's own most "modernist" verse exhibits a relaxation rather than an abandonment of symmetrical forms. Reference could be made to fine sonnets (and other formally comparable poems) by Lowell, Berryman and Snodgrass in America, and by Auden, Empson, Thom Gunn and Roy Fuller in Britain, for example. The argument, even if it could have an end, would be lop-sided. What is one to say about the best "free" poems of Ted Hughes except that he has become capable of "trusting his ear" so fully that traditional methods of metrical analysis are unable to elucidate the structure of his lines, except insofar as the ghosts of pentameters or Langlandian stress-patterns might linger there? What, come to that, could the more "symmetrical" types of analysis tell us about the best late verse of Shakespeare, in which the most disparate lines seem equivalent, balanced, confidently structured, recognizably verse through some subtle combination of stress, vocalic quantity, consonantal patterning, ordinary speech-rhythms, syntactic arrangement, semantic emphasis, and whatever else? We have only scraped the surface of the problem.

Perhaps it is more appropriate simply to mention two major living British poets, one of whom has already been cited as a critic. Both Seamus Heaney and Geoffrey Hill have expressed a special admiration for Hopkins. Each has produced, within the last three years, a book consisting largely of the stricter kind of sonnets.[182] The sonnets do not sound in

any way "old-fashioned" or "Victorian". Neither of the poets sounds, except very occasionally, like Hopkins. More importantly (and this point applies to the other modern sonneteers mentioned above) they do not sound at all like one another. Each poet, it must be stressed, is as much at home in the freer forms, the previous volume by each writer having consisted entirely of prose-poems.[183] Compared in metrical terms with Victorian specimens, the recent sonnets of these poets are fairly well "sprung", or at least demonstrate a great flexibility in counterpoint against the basic iambic and pentameter pattern. That pattern is, nevertheless, clearly perceptible. Many of the rhymes are half-rhymes or assonances, but, considering what was said above about the twentieth-century "defamiliarization" of symmetrical forms, a half-rhyme today might have the structural significance — the "strikingness" — of a full rhyme a century ago. What is important is that the traditional sonnet-framework is in the work of these poets a palpable and aesthetically stimulating presence. The technical ideal underlying them seems to be that of the more "organic" or "unified" sonnets of earlier centuries, particularly the seventeenth. Abstract form and ordinary language are interacting, and the poise between the two is comparable to that achieved in poems such as "Thou are indeed just, Lord ... ". The relatively quiet or constrained voices of Heaney and Hill are filled with a tension which is "Hopkinsian" in manifesting a poetic attitude to language rather than in fulfilling a prescription for a particular type of emotional or dramatic tone. This linguistic tension seems to derive from a fundamental agreement with Hopkins about the primary function of formal regularities in verse, and might in some degree derive directly from reading the Dublin sonnets.

7.3 The nature of language and the language of nature

The main concerns of this study have been Hopkins's expression of his overall experience of language and, more specifically, his theory and practice of the poetic use of language. We have nevertheless seen that these aspects of Hopkins's life of thought are not easily separated out from the thought as a whole. The work seems to have been unified by a certain kind of intuition about the nature of all order or patternment. Hopkins seems to have been, as it were, incubating ideas which would come to permeate and connect many fields of intellectual exploration. His main theoretical material was a curious compendium which included Greek metaphysics, medieval scholastic theology, Ruskinian aesthetics and some rather dubious philological theories. His presentation of his findings was — even after allowances are made for the historical situation — fragmentary and often obscure. Despite all this, a movement towards a synthesis of all his speculations is discernible. The main indicator of this imaginative consistency is the ubiquity within Hopkins's writings of "inscape" and other special terms. It is hoped that the general "theory of inscape" implicit in the writings has been rendered more comprehensible by being presented as an anticipation of the broadly Structuralist cast of mind, if Structuralism is understood not as a specific "school of thought" but as a general scientific and philosophical tendency. Let us recall Jakobson's definition of the broad trend:

> Any set of phenomena examined by contemporary science is
> treated not as a mechanical agglomeration but as a structural
> whole, and the basic task is to reveal the inner, whether static
> or developmental, laws of this system. (Jakobson, Main Trends, p. 11)

And let us now consider, in conclusion, that Hopkins's cosmology might further be clarified if we relate it to some of the wider philosophical implications of the Structuralist approach to systems.

Jameson has written that "all sensory perception already constitutes a kind of language", that a naturalist coming upon a "disorderly undergrowth" sees the plants falling "into order, the peculiar outlines of each type of leaf standing as a visible sign or mark of their determinate species", and that such a kind of perception "is, no doubt, what the German Romantics dimly felt when they developed their mystique of a language of organic nature" (Jameson, p. 151). This certainly seems to have been what Hopkins felt. His explorations of inscape — particularly in respect of their emphasis on "species", types, and laws underlying entire classes of phenomena — reflect a more thoroughgoing or "scientific" search for the grammatical principles of the nature-language than was attempted or even conceivable by any of the Romantics. The correspondences between his structural analysis of natural phenomena and his (mainly poetic) exploration of language suggest a feeling on his part that our seeing and our speaking are very precisely comparable.

Here we might recall a point repeated more than once in this study. In Chapter Two, particularly, it became clear that the structural laws which Hopkins found in nature were equally well described as perceptual laws. The being of things, for Hopkins, was somehow very intimately bound up with their comprehensibility. Often Hopkins's quest seems to become, as Jameson says that Structuralism becomes, "an explicit search for the permanent structures of the mind itself" (Jameson, p. 109). This is especially true of those considerations of both visual perception and language in which Hopkins emphasizes basic patterns of likeness and difference, principles of distinction in which experiences of meaningful order appear generally to be founded (See especially Chapter Six, section two,

above). "Reading" a tree or other phenomenon is for Hopkins like reading (or listening to) language in a very complete sense. Visual and linguistic experience are, as it were, "sidings or modifications" of one experience.

The next stage of such reasoning is to ask whether this similarity between modes of organizing experience is not a necessary consequence of the "systemic wholeness" of the natural (or at least the biological) universe. As Jameson says, the "philosophical suggestion" behind Saussurean linguistics is that

> it is not so much the individual word or sentence that 'stands
> for' or 'reflects' the individual object or event in the world,
> but rather that the entire system of signs, the entire field
> of langue, lies parallel to reality itself; that it is the
> totality of systematic language, in other words, which is
> analogous to whatever organized structures exist in the world
> of reality, and that our understanding proceeds from one whole
> or Gestalt to another, rather than on a one to one basis.
>
> (Jameson, pp. 32-3)

As was noted in Chapter One, above, Piaget does not perhaps place sufficient emphasis upon meaning as a principle of systems and structures. He does not recognize the importance of the relationship between Structuralism and semiotics. Now the idea that "common properties" are shared by very different kinds of structures has recently been developed in one particularly interesting direction. It has become clearer that meaning or information is, in George Steiner's words, "the essence, the underlying structure, of natural forms".[184] Steiner goes on to say that whereas "the natural sciences have, since Galileo and Kepler, been largely concerned with the transmission of force", we now "appear to be moving towards a model in which it is the transmission

of _information_ that matters most". This, according to Steiner, explains "the striking encounters of vocabulary — even allowing that they are metaphorical approximations — between linguistics and biogenetics" and "the conviction that the radical wonder of live matter is not mechanical force but _meaning_" (pp. 180-81). Structuralist linguists like Jakobson would argue that these correspondences are considerably more than "metaphorical approximations" (See Jakobson, _Main Trends_, pp. 40-60). Steiner, indeed, accepts that there might be "a grammar of life-processes, an organic templet from whose sequential organization and genetic activity in man language naturally arises" (p. 67).

Hopkins's reports on nature and its "language" were necessarily closer to Romantic "mystique" than to such explicit modern positions. They bear, nevertheless, a similar kind of "philosophical suggestions" to those of the later views. Hopkins, of course, was faced with the difficulty of accounting for his experiences of order in the terms of the old religion. It was the theological preoccupation, nevertheless, which gave his thoughts their scope, as well as uniting them into a single intellectual and imaginative project. The working out of a theological attitude — such a difficult and often painful process for Hopkins — kept clear in his mind the principle that intelligence somehow pervades the entire universe.

We have seen that, like Coleridge, Hopkins was peculiarly inclined to conceive of "a mind latent in nature" (Pater, _Appreciations_, p. 76). His experiences even led him towards a kind of pantheism, or at least towards a rather "oriental" kind of nature-mysticism, perhaps more like the Taoist attitude than anything else. The entire theory of inscape depends on the notion of an immanent god. But Hopkins's conception of divine immanence was very different from, for example, Ruskin's. For Hopkins, the creator is actively present in the natural universe, sustaining

its forms. It is difficult for Hopkins to express his conviction that this god is, nevertheless, also in some manner transcendent, personal, having an existence over and above the universe. Therefore the poet is forced into such formations as "fathers-forth" (See Chapter Two, section five, above).

With these recollected points in mind, I shall briefly trace some resemblances between Hopkins's theological viewpoint and a modern "cosmology" which is rather more than "a theory of the universe as an ordered whole, and of the general laws which govern it" (O.E.D.), since it involves a kind of religious experience. The experience in question is of the kind associated with the oriental religious traditions which have been discussed. It is, basically, a sense of being incorporated within "the universe as an ordered whole" and of being privileged to comprehend that one's personal selfhood is subsumed in a greater self. Such experiences may be non-theistic and yet involve identical feelings (of exultation, awe, humility, and so on) to those which arise from the conviction that a transcendent deity has been encountered as a person. The non-theistic experiences can generate equally specific ethical imperatives. The particular cosmology which I have in mind is that outlined by Gregory Bateson in his Steps to an Ecology of Mind.[185] That book is an anthology of essays in fields as diverse as anthropology, biomorphology, evolutionary theory, psychology, cybernetics and international relations. Any attempt briefly to summarize Bateson's thought would be fruitless, and I have selected mainly from statements in which Bateson himself attempts to define the larger pattern or direction of his work, its more general "philosophical suggestions".

Introducing his collected essays, Bateson writes of his belief

that such matters as the bilateral symmetry of an animal,
the patterned arrangement of leaves in a plant, the escalation
of an armaments race, the processes of courtship, the nature
of play, the grammar of a sentence, and the contemporary
crises in man's relationship to his environment, can only be
understood in terms of such an ecology of ideas as I propose.

(p. 21)

The meaning of what Bateson calls an "ecology of ideas" or "ecology of
mind" cannot properly be conveyed in the present space. Nevertheless,
as the above introductory statement indicates, that "ecology" is based
in the notion that apparently diverse systems have crucial common
properties or laws. A "more mystical phrasing of the matter", it seemed
to Bateson from an early stage,

lent a certain dignity to any scientific investigation,
implying that when I was analysing the patterns of partridges'
feathers, I might really get an answer or a bit of an answer
to the whole puzzling business of pattern and regularity in
nature. (p. 48)

Reviewing the first part of his collection, Bateson concludes that

in both anatomy and grammar the parts are to be classified
according to the relations between them. In both fields, the
relations are to be thought of as somehow primary, the
relata as secondary. Beyond this, it is claimed that the
relations are of the sort generated by processes of information
exchange.

In other words, the mysterious and polymorphic relation
between context and content obtains in both anatomy and
linguistics. (p. 127)

Although Bateson insists that his essential subject is the effect upon epistemology of "the impact of cybernetics and information theory" (p. 425), it will be clear by this stage that these developments since the second world war can be accommodated within a broad but acceptable definition of the Structuralist enterprise. What makes Bateson particularly interesting as a cosmologist is the interaction of his ideas on "information exchange" with his abiding interest in evolution and the notion of the ecological system. His work on evolution points, in his own summary, to a "correction" of our notion of the "unit of survival". This unit, which was once conceived of as "the breeding individual or the family line or the sub-species or some similar homogeneous set of conspecifics" has gradually become identified with "a flexible organism -in -its -environment" (See pp. 425-6).

Bateson goes on (pp. 426-35) to postulate "an identity between the unit of mind and the unit of evolutionary survival" (p. 435). The demonstration is rather technical, depending on concepts in cybernetic theory, but the essence of the identity between mental and evolutionary structure is a notion which will have become familiar by this stage to the reader of the present study. It is the notion of the articulated system. In the biological universe conceived as having "mental" properties, as in language as conceived by Saussure, "each sub-unit is a part of the unit of next larger scope. And, always in biology, this difference or relationship ... is such that certain differences in the part have informational effect upon the larger unit, and vice versa" (p. 433). Bateson goes on to say:

> This identity between the unit of mind and the unit of evolutionary survival is of very great importance, not only theoretical, but also ethical.
>
> It means, you see, that I now localize something which

> I am calling 'Mind' immanent in the large biological system — the ecosystem. Or, if I draw the system boundaries at a different level, then mind is immanent in the total evolutionary structure. (p. 435)

He would even go so far as to say that "it is of the very nature of the macroscopic world that it exhibit mental characteristics", that mind is not restricted to life but is only "especially complex and evident in those sections of the universe which are alive" (p. 441). All this can lead to a kind of religious or mystical experience:

> A certain humility becomes appropriate, tempered by the dignity or joy of being part of something much bigger. A part — if you will — of God. (p. 436)

As an example of the kind of ethical implications involved in such a theory, Bateson says:

> If you put God outside and set him vis-à-vis his creation and if you have the idea that you are created in his image, you will logically and naturally see yourself as outside and against the things around you. As you arrogate all mind to yourself, you will see the world around you as mindless and therefore not entitled to moral or ethical consideration. The environment will seem to be yours to exploit. (p. 436)

Hopkins's sense "of being part of something much bigger" seems in many ways comparable to Bateson's. Hopkins's analysis of inscape is characterized by a similar combination of scientific curiosity and reverence, and a feeling that the workings of a "greater mind" are gradually being comprehended. Hopkins's sense of similarity or inter-relatedness between natural structure and his own mental experience is

particularly significant in this connection. The "instress" upon which
the experience of inscape depends is, as Gardner points out, "not only
the unifying force in the object" but also "that impulse from the 'inscape'
which acts on the senses and, through them, actualizes the inscape in the
mind of the beholder" (Gardner, ed., Poems and Prose of G.M. Hopkins, p.xxi).
It might be said that inscape and instress are qualities not of the human
mind, the natural object, or nature as a whole, but of the "greater mind"
which includes them all and which, "if you will" may be regarded as "God".

Hopkins's meditations on natural beauty — not only in their overall
spirit but to a surprising degree in the more technical details of his
analyses of experiences — seem frequently to be in accord with a comment
which Bateson makes about aesthetic awareness:

> The 'primrose by the river's brim' is beautiful because we are
> aware that the combination of differences which constitutes its
> appearance could only be achieved by information processing,
> i.e., by thought. We recognize another mind within our own
> external mind. (p. 439)

Hopkins, of course, genuinely believed in a personal god and in the fact
of specific Incarnation (confirmed by the Resurrection) at Bethlehem.
Nevertheless, he can be seen to have had a broader conception of
incarnation. The decisive intervention of God in Christ, whatever its
intrinsic significance as a blessing on mankind, also symbolizes or
typifies the constant "fathering-forth" of a cosmic power or intelligence
into the forms of the world. Therefore the beauty of the Lord is perceptible
not only in people but also in the inscape of the bluebell (See J, 199).

Hopkins, like Bateson, approached such natural phenomena with the
feeling that they would provide him with at least "a bit of an answer to
the whole puzzling business of pattern and regularity". When considering
the patterns of nature more carefully, his inclination, like Bateson's,

was to conceive of "<u>relations</u> ... as somehow primary, the relata as secondary". Hopkins also seems to have been working towards the conclusion, made explicit in the present century, that the phenomenon of language is only properly comprehensible in such terms. He was not in a position to formulate the matter theoretically. To recall the epigraph which precedes the present study, his work in verse is that of a poet "compelled — in his own way, that is, poetically — to put into language the experience he undergoes with language".

NOTES

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[3] Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, trans. Wade Baskin, 2nd ed. (London : Fontana, 1974).

[4] Arthur O. Lovejoy, "On the Discrimination of Romanticisms", PMLA, 32 (1924), pp. 232-3.

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[6] Terence Hawkes, Structuralism and Semiotics (London : Methuen, 1977), p. 34.

[7] Julia Kristeva, "The System and the Speaking Subject", Times Literary Supplement, 12 October 1973, p. 1249.

[8] Hawkes's book (detailed in note 6, above) is an excellent introduction to Structuralism generally, and to recent French developments in particular.

[9] Annette Lavers, "A Mode of Knowledge", Times Literary Supplement, 1 August 1975, p. 878.

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[13] W.H. Gardner, ed., <u>Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins</u> (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1953), p. xxi.

[14] John Keats, <u>Poetical Works</u>, ed. H.W. Garrod, 2nd ed. (London : Oxford Univ. Press, 1958), p.212.

[15] See W.A.M. Peters, <u>Gerard Manley Hopkins : A Critical Essay Towards the Understanding of his Poetry</u>, 2nd ed. (London : Oxford Univ. Press, 1948), p. 23.

[16] Jerome Bump, "Hopkins's Imagery and Medievalist Poetics", <u>Victorian Poetry</u>, 15 (1977), p. 103.

[17] Alan Heuser, <u>The Shaping Vision of Gerard Manley Hopkins</u>, (London : Oxford Univ. Press, 1958), pp. 37-8.

[18] Walter Pater, <u>The Renaissance : Studies in Art and Poetry</u> (1873; rpt. London : Fontana, 1961), pp. 220-24.

[19] Walter Pater, <u>Appreciations : With an Essay on Style</u> (London : Macmillan, 1895), p. 76.

[20] Alison Sulloway, <u>Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Victorian Temper</u> (London : Routledge, 1972), Chapter 2, passim.

[21] James Milroy, <u>The Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins</u> (London : Andre Deutsch, 1977), pp. 94 and 164.

[22] Alfred Mizener, "Victorian Hopkins" in <u>Gerard Manley Hopkins</u>, by the Kenyon Critics (London : Denis Dobson, 1949), p. 111.

[23] See Bernard Groom, <u>The Diction of Poetry from Spenser to Bridges</u> (Toronto : Univ. of Toronto Press, 1955), pp. 188-90.

[24] Ernest Fenollosa, <u>The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry : An Ars Poetica</u>, ed. Ezra Pound (London : Stanley Nott, 1936).

[25] Alan W. Watts, <u>The Way of Zen</u> (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1962), p.47.

[26] Alan Watts (with the collaboration of Al Chung-Liang Huang), <u>Tao : The Watercourse Way</u> (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1979), p. 46.

[27] J. Hillis Miller, <u>The Disappearance of God : Five Nineteenth-Century Writers</u> (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard Univ. Press, 1963), p. 289.

[28] Laurence Binyon, <u>The Flight of the Dragon : An Essay on the Theory and Practice of Art in China and Japan, Based on Original Sources</u> (London : John Murray, 1911), pp. 64-5.

[29] Arthur Waley, <u>The Way and its Power : A Study of the Tao Tê Ching and its Place in Chinese Thought</u> (London : Allen and Unwin, 1934), pp. 30-31.

[30] This extract from Max Müller's <u>Chips from a German Workshop</u> (London : 1867) is transcribed by Hopkins in Campion Hall notebook DV11, p.2. Reference to this and other unpublished manuscripts at Campion Hall is made in accordance with the classification by House and Storey (<u>J</u>, pp.529-36).

[31] See Noam Chomsky, <u>Syntactic Structures</u> (The Hague : Mouton, 1957), particularly p. 80.

[32] Roman Jakobson, <u>Main Trends in the Science of Language</u> (London : Allen and Unwin, 1973), p. 11. Jakobson is here quoting in translation from the official report of the First International Congress of Slavists, in which he participated in 1929.

[33] Hopkins also uses the term "siding" in his note on Parmenides, where he writes of "Being, under its modification or siding of particular oneness or Being, and Not-being, under its siding of the Many" (<u>J</u>, 130).

[34] Donald McChesney, "The Meaning of 'Inscape'", <u>The Month</u>, n.s., 40, Nos. 1-2 (July - August, 1968), pp. 52-63; rpt. in <u>Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Poems : A Casebook</u>, ed. Margaret Bottrall (London : Macmillan, 1975), p. 207.

[35] Campion Hall notebook DV, p. 1.

[36] Martin Heidegger, <u>What is Called Thinking?</u>, trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York : Harper, 1968), pp. 14-15.

[37] In his undergraduate essay "Poetic Diction" (1865) Hopkins stresses the necessity of difference between poetic and prose diction, and writes that "the necessities or conditions of every art are as Lessing shews the rules by which to try it" (J, 85).

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[48] Seymour Chatman, A Theory of Meter (The Hague : Mouton, 1965), p.222.

[49] Walker Gibson, "Sound and Sense in G.M. Hopkins", Modern Language Notes, 73 (1958), pp. 97-8.

[50] David Sonstroem, "Making Earnest of Game : G.M. Hopkins and Nonsense Poetry", Modern Language Quarterly, 28 (1967), p. 197.

[51] Todd K. Bender, _Gerard Manley Hopkins : The Classical Background and Critical Reception of his Work_ (Baltimore : John Hopkins Press, 1966), pp. 97-120.

[52] Brian Vickers, _Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry_ (London : Macmillan, 1970), pp. 103-4.

[53] Jacob Korg, "Hopkins' Linguistic Deviations", _PMLA_, 92 (1977), p.984.

[54] E.R. August, _Word Inscapes : A Study of the Poetic Vocabulary of Gerard Manley Hopkins_, unpublished dissertation (University of Pittsburgh, 1964), pp. 24-5 and 29.

[55] Campion Hall manuscripts, M3. Section M of the unpublished papers consists of a bundle of loose notes, mostly unnumbered and of uncertain date.

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[59] Roger W. Brown, Abraham H. Black and Arnold E. Horowitz, "Phonetic Symbolism in Natural Languages", _Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology_, 50 (1955), pp. 388-93. See also Roger W. Brown, _Words and Things_ (New York : Free Press, 1958), pp. 110-54.

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[62] William Shakespeare, <u>Antony and Cleopatra,</u> ed. M.R. Ridley, 9th ed. (London : Methuen, 1954), pp. 4, 169 and 215.

[63] Austin Warren, "Gerard Manley Hopkins", in his <u>Rage for Order : Essays in Criticism</u> (Ann Arbor : Univ. of Michigan Press, 1948), p. 61.

[64] Richard Chenevix Trench, <u>English Past and Present</u> (1855; rpt. London : Dent, 1927), p. 77. See also Milroy, Chapter 2, passim.

[65] Barbara M.H. Strang, <u>A History of English</u> (London : Methuen, 1970), p. 243.

[66] See Stuart Robertson, <u>The Development of Modern English,</u> 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. : Prentice-Hall, 1954), p. 217.

[67] A.C. Graham, trans., <u>Poems of the Late T'ang</u> (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1965), p. 21.

[68] Robert Bridges, ed. <u>Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins,</u> 2nd ed. (London : Oxford Univ. Press, 1930), p. 99.

[69] Rainer Maria Rilke, as quoted in the introduction to <u>Duino Elegies,</u> trans. J.B. Leishman and Stephen Spender, 4th ed. (London : Hogarth, 1963), p. 20.

[70] Hopkins's "red letter" is to be found in <u>LB</u>, 27-8, and is dated 2 August, 1871. The next letter to Bridges is dated 22 January, 1874 (<u>LB</u>, 29-30) and the first letter which confirms a renewal of the correspondence by Bridges is dated 20 February, 1875 (<u>LB</u>, 30-1).

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[72] D. Bubrix, as quoted in translation from an article in <u>Bjuleten LOKFUN</u> (1930), in Roman Jakobson, <u>Main Trends,</u> p. 44.

[73] Max Müller, <u>Lectures on the Science of Language,</u> first series (London : 1861), p. 249, as quoted in Milroy, p. 55.

[74] Jonathan Culler, <u>Saussure</u> (London : Fontana, 1976), pp. 60-1.

[75] Baudouin de Courtenay, "On the Mixed Character of all Languages" (1901), as quoted in Edward Stankiewicz, Baudouin de Courtenay and the Foundations of Structural Linguistics (Lisse : Peter de Ridder Press, 1976), pp. 18-19. For information on Baudouin's connection with Russian Formalism, see Milka Ivić, Trends in Linguistics (The Hague : Mouton, 1965), pp. 97-100.

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[89] Walter Pater, <u>Marius the Epicurean</u>, 4th ed. (London : 1898), I, p. 68; quoted by Melchiori, p. 138.

[90] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Table Talk" (1835); rpt. in <u>Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism</u>, ed. Thomas Middleton Raysor (London : Constable, 1936), p. 423.

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[93] Roman Jakobson, "What is Poetry?" (1933), as quoted in Victor Erlich, <u>Russian Formalism : History — Doctrine</u>, 3rd ed. (The Hague : Mouton, 1969), p. 181. Jakobson's essay as a whole is not available in English.

[94] Roman Jakobson, "Closing Statement : Linguistics and Poetics" in Sebeok, p. 356.

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[97] See Part I ("History") of Erlich's study, passim.

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[100] See René Wellek, "The Revolt Against Positivism in Recent European Scholarship", in Concepts of Criticism, ed. Stephen G. Nichols, Jr. (New Haven : Yale Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 260-2.

[101] See Ewa M. Thompson, Russian Formalism and Anglo-American New Criticism : A Comparative Study (The Hague : Mouton, 1971); see also Lemon and Reis, p.x.; and Hawkes, pp. 151-60.

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translation of the early sections of Tynyanov's Problems of Verse Language (Leningrad : 1924), which volume has not been translated in its entirety.

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