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# Gerard Manley Hopkins Maker Of Music, Singer Of Songs

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## Abstract

This study explores the deep intertwining of music and poetry in the works of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Beginning with his early education, the research traces Hopkins' lifelong engagement with music and how it influenced his poetic compositions. The analysis highlights Hopkins' unique blending of linguistic elements with musical principles, creating a distinctive prosodic style characterized by innovative rhythms, compound phrases, and melodic structures. The article further examines how Hopkins' experiences with various musical forms, including Gregorian chant and classical Greek modes, informed his aesthetic theories and poetic practice. By analyzing both Hopkins' musical compositions and his poetry, the study highlights the centrality of sound and musicality in his literary oeuvre.

**Keywords**: Gerard Manley Hopkins. Musicality in Poetry. Prosody. Gregorian Chant. Classical Greek Modes. Rhythmic Innovation. 19th-century British Poetry. Aesthetic Theory.

## Introduction

Reading a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins for the first time is an experience like no other: strange word combinations crash around you, and you can' t tell whether they' re nouns, verbs, adjectives, or some unusual amalgam of all those things. Overlapping meanings expand in unexpected ways. Tight little spaces appear where articles and relative pronouns are missing, and distorted meanings rise up where those spaces were.

So you think: why are these strange word combinations considered poetry? what kind of unusual person wrote them? how can I understand what they mean? why do they sound like music?

### Early Music Studies

Answers to some of those questions—the ones about poetry and music—may come more readily from the life of the man who wrote the poems than we might at first expect. Let' s work our way back from the impression we have that many of the poems " sound like music." Gerard Manley Hopkins (GMH) loved music during his brief time in this world, a mere 47 years. That love began with traditional Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Irish folk songs he sang with his family while he was growing up (Graves, 1963, p. 146). He soon began writing songs of his own, songs that his sister Grace harmonized for him (Lahey, as quoted in Waterhouse, 1947, p. 437), and like many people who love music, he tried learning to play several musical instruments: first the violin (Graves, 1963, p. 146), and after he had entered the Jesuit novitiate, the piano. Learning to play such instruments without any help, though, presents huge problems, and GMH eventually gave up, feeling that he had failed (Waterhouse, 1947, p. 230), (Hopkins, 1874, p. 62).

In spite of his presumed failures, GMH eventually began studying music theory and counterpart, again on his own, at the same time composing various kinds of music popular during that time, like canon and fugue (Waterhouse, 1947, p. 231). At first, the poet submitted his compositions for critical feed-back to a music specialist recommended by his friend J.P. Bridges. Later, he began formal study of

music theory with a professor of music at Dublin University: Sir Robert Stewart. GMH made the usual mistakes that beginners make-- " motionless parts, great gaps between alto and tenor, hidden octaves, and even strange confusion of scales"—but his instructor commented that he displayed a certain inventiveness and " enthusiastic enterprise." That resourcefulness eventually led to GMH' s rejection of counterpoint and the substitution of his own system of harmonic modulation (Graves, 1963, p. 231). The poet tells us that " I took to counterpoint not for itself but as the solid foundation of harmony. But I soon began to suspect it was only an invention of theorists and a would-be or fancy music, for what is written in it? Not even the preludes to Bach' s fugues (GMH, quoted in Waterhouse, 1947, p.232)." Was this an early clue to what would later happen to traditional British verse in his hands? I think so. Perhaps you' ll agree after you hear the rest of the story.

## Lifelong Focus: Human Voice

Every single song GMH wrote, he wrote for the human voice, which he considered the most natural and glorious of musical instruments. Most critics think those songs reflect the same talent for melody as his poems do. GMH wrote the same number of songs as the number of poems he wrote: twenty-seven (Graves, 1963, p. 148). Why did he prefer the human voice to another musical instrument like the violin or the piano? Well, remember that the first music he had ever listened to was the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Irish songs his family had sung. Then, when he began composing, he had wanted to create songs similar to sixteenth-century madrigals, which did not involve musical instruments. Another thing was the Gregorian chant he learned when he was studying to become a Jesuit priest. The third thing that made him write songs was the Greek and Latin literature he studied and eventually taught, especially theoretical treatises about music written by the Greeks.

In 1884 GMH created a madrigal setting for three verses of " The crocus, while the days are dark" from The Year, written by Patmore. Hopkins described the second and third verses as a " kind of wilderness of unintelligible chords" but insisted that the first verse was " very good." He gave this music to an Oxford music professor, Rev. Sir Frederick A. Gore Ousley, to comment on (Gardner, 1969, p. 384). In 1888 GMH composed a canon that he considered a major success. He was so ecstatic about his achievement, in fact, that he believed it had determined his entire future: " I see a whole world of canon and fugue before me. I do not say I am going there. But one madrigal in canon I will finish and then I hope one in fugue. No accompaniments; and the human voice is immortal (Hopkins, as quoted in Gardner, 1969, pp. 384-385)." He was smart enough to realize, though, that composers of his time could no longer write simple songs without complicated harmonic accompaniment. (Hopkins, as quoted in Gardner, 1969, p. 384).

During GMH' s day, people were listening enraptured to Romantic music like the concertos, preludes, and etudes of Frederick Chopin, and the Hungarian rhapsodies of Franz Liszt. Hopkins, though, contrasted the ephemeral beauty of Romantic harmonies with the eternal earthliness of Gregorian chant—"When I hear one of Chopin' s fragmentary airs struggling and tossing on a surf of accompaniment what does it matter whether one or even half a dozen notes are left out of it? Its being and meaning lies outside itself in the harmonies; they give the tonality, modality, feeling, and all (Hopkins, as quoted in Gardner, 1969, p. 387)." Strangely enough, the poet was struggling then to produce his own harmonies with " a mystery and ' mystical' value (Gardner, 1969, p. 387)." His struggles, which are described in his 1884 reference to " some music, Gregorian, in the natural scale of A, to Collins' s Ode to Evening," produced a unique harmonic treatment of modal music: " What came out was very strange and wild and (I thought) very good..harmony well in keeping with that strange mode (which, though it is, as far as notes go,

the same as the descending minor, has a character of which the word minor gives you little notion) was so delightful that it seems to me…as near a new world of musical enjoyment as in this old world we could hope to be (Hopkins, as quoted in Gardner, 1969, p. 385).” Critics have described GMH as moving musically in the same direction that Debussy later followed, and at least one critic has suggested that GMH with his strange wild chords may have “ blundered upon the challenging atonal world of Schonberg and Hindemith (Gardner, 1969, p. 385).” We readers of what might seem his “ strange wild” poems could probably have expected that to happen as he pursued his creative inspiration in music.

At this point, we might wonder what connection Gregorian plain-chant had to what GMH was doing, and why. As a Catholic boy, young man, then priest, this exceptionally musical poet heard plain-chant in many of the Roman Catholic Masses he attended, and in those that he eventually ‘ said’ as a Jesuit priest. Because Gregorian plain-chant consists of a single melodic line, there are no harmonic textures to dilute its effect. Every musical thing that happens, happens in a single-voiced, focused way. For GMH, such a pure melodic line possessed ‘ infinite expressiveness and dramatic richness: “ The putting in or leaving out of a single note in an ‘ alphabetical’ passage changes the emotional meaning: all we admirers of plain chant feel this, the rest of the world…do not (Hopkins, as quoted in Gardner, 1969, p. 387).” For him, plain chant “is a natural development of the speaking, reading, or declaiming voice, and has the richness of nature; the other is a confinement of the voice to certain prominent intervals and has the poverty of an artifice (Hopkins, as quoted in Gardner, 1969, p. 387).” Many musicologists say the same thing: “ Gregorian chant, which has been termed ‘elevated speech,’ adheres probably as closely to natural speech accent and pitch inflection as music is capable of doing by virtue of its avoidance of differentiated, or counted, note values (Graves, 1963, p. 149).”

Hopkins later composed musical settings for poems written by Thomas Campbell and William Barnes. The first contained few modulations, but the second returned to traditional progressions and modulations. The first one was composed for two verses of Campbell’ s poem “ The Battle of the Baltic,” while the others were for poems written by the lyric poet William Barnes. The composer explained his dearth of modulation in “ The Battle of the Baltic” by saying that “ Palestrina and the old madrigal writers and others did produce masterpieces …without modulation, but employing the modes (Hopkins, as quoted in Gardner, 1969, p. 388).” One twentieth-century music critic, while praising the form of the second stanza as a ground bass “ which undergoes skillful rhythmical variation on each of the ten repetitions,” and while admitting that the composition contained many potentially good musical ideas, insisted that “ Hopkins’ s inadequate knowledge of harmony prevented his making really effective use of them (Gardner, 1969, p. 388).” The settings for Barnes’ lyrics, although harmonized with more than enough modulation, seemed less than successful to Hopkins but for reasons unrelated to harmonic progression: “ I can never succeed with piano music, for the piano cannot really execute independent parts, as I make mine; indeed my pianist said to me, your music dates from a time before the piano was invented (Hopkins, as quoted in Gardner, 1969, p. 389).”

In characterizing GMH’ s settings as a throwback, the pianist had indirectly touched upon the third influence central to the flowering of Hopkins’ artistic genius: his immersion in Greek and Latin literature, especially Greek treatises on the art of music. His use of the quarter tone, an interval Western music left behind once it moved beyond Greek culture, probably came from the same sources. Those sources described the “ bardic tradition of the classical poet-musician,” to whose influence Hopkins eventually surrendered by composing three songs: music in plain-chant notation for a “fragment of an ode of Pindar in the

original Greek (Graves, 1963, p. 148)"; an air to Sappho' s Ode to Aphrodite " barred as for Dorian Rhythm (Gardner, 1969, p. 383)"; and music written in the hepta-chord scale to lines from Antigone (Waterhouse, 1947, p. 234). Although the Greek modes seem similar to the ecclesiastical modes of plain-chant, they differ in important ways: Gregorian modes contain, and implicitly suggest, their tonic and dominant tones, but in the Greek modes, it is the middle note of a complete diatonic scale, a mese, whose position determines the chosen mode' s " intrinsic pitch, special character and ethical value (Waterhouse, 1947, p. 234)." Because " modern ears perceive such modes only with the greatest difficulty—for us what Greek listeners heard as distinctly different all fades imperceptibly into ' sixteenth-century Aeolian, our descending minor' (Waterhouse, 1947, p. 235)"—such choices seldom register as really different. That' s why frequent complaints about the monotony of GMH' s musical scores arose, even from the experts, and it also helps explain his struggles to create satisfactory harmonies: " such a system could only have reality, as with the Greeks, in terms of pure melody (Waterhouse, 1947, p. 235)."

All that having been said, GMH' s most successful composition, a melodically beautiful setting for Dixon' s " Fallen Rain," contains only one quarter tone, for which the poet finally gave up trying to provide any accompaniment. It probably strikes 21st-century ears as " only vaguely model (Waterhouse, 1947, p. 235)," but it has received reluctant praise in a later time: " This melody shows Hopkins to have worked with some originality; the curious cross-accents and somewhat unexpected mixture of semi-modal and (for his day) modern type of melodic structure seem to indicate an adventurous mind looking forward to effects in music which were not used on any wide scale until some time later (Gardner, 1969, p. 389)." Composed in 6/8 time, its prevailing three-bar phrase pattern occasionally gives way to a four-bar or five-bar unit. Its basic musical construction is " modified strophic" in three sections approximately parallel in content and length, but musicologists have said that the variations in each section demonstrate " imaginative growth and evolution." For example, the " downward climactic phrase flashed like agony underlines those words' meaning with a touch of tone painting (Gardner, 1969, p. 389)." At least one music critic believed that, had Hopkins been given world enough and time, he might have " turned consistently to his own verse and become a neo-Greek poet-musician, creating simultaneously with the words a bar-less, unaccompanied enharmonic music (Waterhouse, 1947, p. 235)."

## Poetry: Declaimed Structures of Sound

Gerard Manley Hopkins emerges from these experiences with music as a man deeply attracted to the human voice soaring unaccompanied in flights of exquisite melody, a man willing to battle all the externally imposed formal structures which impeded those flights, a man with an ear finely tuned to subtle differences of sound, and to precisely defined details of movement within a melodic line. It would be surprising if those sensitivities had not found parallel embodiments in an artistic medium that shares with music a sensory surface of organized, expressive sound.

You may think that such an assertion about music and poetry is strange. Until the open mikes of recent times, though, poetry has tended to be private and visual rather than public and aural, and many poetry-lovers like you and me have imbibed hard-and-fast distinctions between two different kinds of language: " semantic (or ' discursive' or ' rational' ) and emotive (or ' imaginative' ) (Berry, 1962)." Although these classifications often help instructors and students distinguish significant differences between poetry and prose, one arts critic asserts that another characterization is more illuminating: 1) language functioning to achieve ends external to itself, like communication of ideas, social solidity, pleasurable diversion, political action; and 2) language as a self-contained structure drawing

attention to itself. Whenever language operates in the first way, or instrumentally, its transmitting vehicle will be transparent and produce an immediate direct connection: external stimulus, external response. Whenever language operates in the second way, as self-referential construct, it will itself function as the stimulus, and any response that occurs will come from its various components operating directly upon our human awareness. Language will be then be perceived as sound, as vocal sensation, as an inner voice whose inflections register upon our inner ear. A good poem, which is almost always a self-referential linguistic structure, will represent—and present—a unique pattern of sounds; the poet' s unique sensation of language will physically affect what he writes during an act of silent composition just as if he had composed aloud, and the voice to which you and I respond will register the various auditory components of any voice: pitch, duration, volume, timbre, intonation, overtones, and register (Berry, 1962).

Perhaps what seems like a strange and unfamiliar comparison about the sensory surface of poetry to you and me remains as true of the way poems really register in our ears, heart, and mind, though, as it was of the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins' time (Berry, 1962). If it is, perhaps the most obviously musical thing about this poet' s works is that we hear them as said, or ' declaimed' by the voice of a man very well-equipped to handle that voice as a musical instrument (Berry, 1962): a voice resonant, flexible, and very pleasing to listen to. For both GMH the poet and GMH the theorist, poetry above else meant sound. Early in his career, he indicated this awareness of sound as mediator of secondary impressions and meanings. He asked over and over again that his poems be read aloud, that their structures be physically as well as imaginatively elaborated: " To do the Eurydice any kind of justice you must not slovenly read it with the eyes but with your ears, as if the paper were declaiming it…Stress is the life of it…Take breath and read it with the ears, as I always wish to be read, and my verse becomes all right (Hopkins, quoted in Sprinker, 1980)." We can look to evidence from diverse phenomena like the phonics/sight-method controversy in the teaching of reading; the obstacle to rapid reading presented by sub-vocalization; and descriptions of the creative activity given to us by poets like Steven Spender and Allen Tate (in Brewster Ghiselin, ed. The Creative Process), because all these things all tell us that when we read GMH' s poems aloud, we are doing the ' right thing.'

When he was still a young poet, GMH had developed a concept about the centrally defining thing about poetry, which he called " continuous parallelism." He described two major kinds" —diatonic, or the kind that clearly marks off the opposition of contiguous elements; and chromatic, or the kind that presents a range or field of contrast—and he insisted that poetry involves just the first kind: " Only the first kind, that of marked parallelism, is concerned with the structure of verse—in rhythm, the recurrence of a certain sequence of syllables, in meter, the recurrence of a certain sequence of rhythm, in alliteration, in assonance and in rhyme." He said that this recurrence usually produced a similar parallelism in the words in our minds, and that replication happened even more with parallelism in language patterns, whatever words they contained and whatever sense the words made. (Hopkins, quoted in Graham Storey, A Preface to Hopkins, p. 69). You and I can recognize that his choice of diatonic and chromatic reflects major differences in patterns of sound that we are familiar with now. We should also remind ourselves of two other important things: 1) it is the single melodic line, or solo voce, which conforms to diatonic contrasts, and transcends them chromatically or enharmonically; and 2) diatonic harmonic progressions are usually established by a chorus of instrumental voices sounding the regular musical pulse of each measure. GMH' s choice allowed him to escape the highly regular metric patterns that produced the smoothness embraced by the 19th century in its post-Spenserian verse.

Because of his concentration on the single singing human voice, he continually waged war against the narrow kind of parallelism characteristic of the traditional forms of poetry and music current in his time (Berry, 1962; Sprinker, 1980).

Later in his career, GMH asked that his poems be read out loud because of what literary critics call their 'oratorical character': " My verse is less to be read than heard…it is oratorical, that is the rhythm is so (Hopkins, letter to Bridges, 21 August 1877, in Gerard Manley Hopkins…, p. 66.) He insisted that performance is the " true and traditional medium of any art," and that way of looking at poetry emphasizes it as primarily an auditory experience: " Every art…and every work of art has its own play or performance. The play or performance of a stage-play is the playing it on the boards, the stage: reading it, much more writing it, is not its performance. The performance of a symphony is not the scoring it however elaborately; it is in the concert room, by the orchestra, and then and then only. A picture is performed, or performs, when anyone looks at it in the proper and intended light. A house performs when it is built and lived in. To come nearer: books play, or perform, or are played and perform when they are read…Poetry was originally meant for either singing or reciting…the darling child of speech, of lips and spoken utterance: it must be spoken; till it is spoken it is not performed, it does not perform, it is not itself (Hopkins, quoted in Storey)." Some critics have said that we can find in GMH' s poems reflections of the natural physical deepening of his voice over time, just like the more somber tone of the mature works of Milton and Shakespeare. That might be challenging—and fun—for us to try, but before we do that, we can just familiarize ourselves with the distinctive sound of GMH' s voice.

## Music of Voice-created Vowels

As you and I listen to GMH reflecting about what makes a poem a poem, we hear him say that objects in the natural world have special patterns, called inscape, and that the best poems about those things share those patterns: " Poetry…is a ' speech framed to be heard for its own sake and interest even over and above its interest or meaning.' " The shape and sound of a poem mattered intensely for him; it was a special kind of speaking This speech demands " stress or emphasis, and pitch or intonation, or single syllables one against another," then a continuous stress " running through the sentence and setting word against word as stronger or as higher pitched (Storey, 1981)." We can see here the keen aural sensitivity that GMH demonstrated as a composer, as well as his determination to create in his poems the flexibility in sound and rhythm that music provides us with: pitch, intonation, stress, and stronger or higher pitched. Although we might be tempted to interpret these terms as metaphors, we need to realize that they apply in some sense literally to language as well as to music, which developed later, and which we both know frees sound from restrictions imposed on it by language. GMH instinctively realized that.

To understand these things better, let' s consider what vowels are, because vowels lie at the core of human word-making, whether we speak or sing. Language experts tell us that vowels represent " tone clusters in which every partial tone has its specific pitch and intensity," and because we understand the basic constituents of music, that makes sense to us. According to linguo-physics, " each vowel represents a musical chord in which each component sound has a specific intensity…there is in each vowel one characteristic overtone to which falls the larger part of the energy of the sound…This means that the human ear must be able to perceive the characteristic overtone of each vowel as a distinguishable sound (Lans, 1931, p. 16)." Each of the eight standard vowels of English, then, contains a characteristic frequency, or severely limited range of frequencies, which is the central resonance of our mouth when it is formed to utter this vowel, and this remains remarkably constant no matter what the fundamental pitch may be (Lans, 1931, p. 19). For example, when

we say a short a as in the word tan, we create a sound with a fairly large number of overtones, whereas when we say the sound oo in the word too, nearly all the overtones except one are subdued to almost a zero. The long a sound in the word tape has very few overtones, but the short i sound we make in the words in and pin and inch shows a huge number of fully developed tones. When we say the ee sound in the word we, we create two regions of resonance, but when we pronounce the ah sound in the word father, its characteristic frequency absorbs the larger portion of the energy of the sound just like the oo sound does. To say it again: in every vowel there are one or two overtones that "stand out more prominently than all the others. Those powerful overtones are then considered characteristic of the vowel (Lans, 1931, p. 19)."

So, here' s the fun part, I think: the frequency value of each vowel can be translated into a musical equivalent—for example, a long a corresponding to $D_5$b and oo corresponding to $B_3$b—but we must remember that each equivalent represents a mean value rather than an absolute one. We also have to remember that these vowels are relatively soft and that they don' t last long because language is mostly used for communication—that is, we use it for many good social and practical reasons most of the time—and although spoken vowels lack the purity and volume of musical tones, they do make quasi-musical sounds. As one expert describes human language: "when we speak, these sounds produce a gentle accompaniment to our speech which only lacks the unity of a musical phrase in order to become a melody. It is a continuous flow of subdued musical sounds, a sort of ' infinite melody' …which is gently whispered into our ear by the vanishing vowels. In a very precise and not at all metaphorical sense our vowels produce music. And the specific beauty of a language depends largely on the purity and variability of vowels which when set in motion may produce highly varied musical effects (Lans, 1931, p. 23)."

So, when a poem is performed by a human voice, the music of the spoken sound plays regularly upon our musically trained ears—and the musically trained ear of GMH—through its vowels, although that voice can rarely achieve the purity and single-tone frequency of a violin or piano. From an auditory point of view, though, poetry may acquire something like the two essential characteristics of a melodic line: variation and repetition of tones and phrases. It can also give us listeners the same psychological satisfaction we receive by a return to the original sound, or tonic tone, through skillful manipulation of like and unlike vowels. Unlike singing, though, which achieves relatively pure vowel sounds through temporary release from consonants, the sounds that we speak achieve their vowel identity through simultaneous involvement with consonants. Some language experts claim that a vowel followed by a different consonant probably sounds out-of-tune for people with a sensitive poetic ear and that repetition of a vowel along with the same consonant gives greater musical satisfaction (Lans, 1931, p. 41). This helps explain why poets uses alliteration, assonance, and inner-end rhyme. All these devices helped GMH exercise his poetic sensibilities and his highly sensitive musical ear. Several things had contributed to this complex of influences: 1) his exploration of the sound patterns of closely related English monosyllables that came from his studies about the derivation of words, and 2) his mastery of techniques for handling consonant patterns in Welsh verse. As you and I can agree, these things function systematically and expertly in his poems to produce a highly satisfying texture of sound, sound that contain a lot of " alliteration, chiming of consonants, word repetitions, interior rhymes and partial assonance (Storey, 1981)."

It' s interesting to listen to critics talk about the various possible things GMH wanted to achieve when he used those kinds of rhyme in his poems. J. Hillis Miller argues that Hopkins wanted to establish harmony between words, and through the words, harmony between the things the words represent, so

that his poems re-created the universal harmony saturating all things (Miller, 1947). Graham Storey said that rhyme is just one of many language-intensifying devices that readers can find in the grammar and sounds of GMH' s poems (Storey, 1981, p. 65). Whitehall says that rhyme is one of the " overstress" devices GMH used to emphasize and make us readers expect certain sound combinations (Storey, 1981, p. 71) Whatever reason is accurate, you and I who love music will hear lots of rhyme and assonance in most of the poems. Even more interesting, though, is what several critics have called vowelling, which means an almost scale-like tonal progression through a series of different words whose vowels move in their place of origin and resonance from the back of our mouth to the front. As that happens, those vowels change the frequency of their characteristic overtones, and that makes us hear a different musical pitch (Miller, 1947). For example, in the lines " bow or brooch or braid or brace, face; latch or catch or key to keep/Back beauty," the vowel sound long-o in our pharynx moves forward via the consonants r and ch in the word brooch, to the medial diphthong ae of braid, to the almost pure medial a of brace, to the short palatal a of latch and catch, to the fronted diphthong eah of key, and finally to the almost pure broad e of keep, the farthest forward of all the vowels. The melodic line then returns via the broad palatal a of back to the sound of beauty that resonates in the middle of our mouth.

We can hear a similar vowel progression in the accented vowels of the adjectives in the opening line of " Spelt from Sibyl' s Leaves" : earnest, earthless, equal, attuneable, vaulty, voluminous, stupendous. Here, though, a contrast arises between the forward-moving vowels of the first phrase—the ir of earnest and earthless—and the forward-moving vowels of the second phrase, which begin low in our mouths with the pharyngeal aw of vaulty, then rise farther forward in the ah of voluminous, and arrive at a medial oo in stupendous. The bar-line that we music lovers recognize reinforces the contrast between these two key phrases because we have seen it many times. A similar kind of thing happens in the poem: there is a counterpoint that is brought to a focus in the broad ee of the first word of the poem' s second line: Evening; Evening moves back through vast, womb, and home, to hearse. The side-open, higher-pitched sounds of the first phrase, and the deeper, more enclosed sounds of the second phrase remind us readers of the wide, mind-stretching scenes of a day where the sun clearly illuminates each object it touches, contrasted with the dark places that night creates, where the pale light of the stars and the moon give us just black and white so we cannot easily recognize specific objects.

These lines are music writ large—the vowel melody of that line sings to us in a dramatic and physical way: there are many front vowels in the first phrase, some there naturally and others that are projected forwards by surrounding consonants—fond, yellow, horn, wound, and west. These vowels move backward in the line' s second phrase—wild, hollow, hoar, hung, and height—and their position is heavily emphasized by the two aspirated h' s. GMH reinforces and contrasts this progress of vowel sounds with repetition of syllables in key words—yellow and hollow, and hornlight and hoarlight—so that although we hear different words, at the same time we hear similar sounds. Hopkins contrasts the differences of sound of the phrases wound to the west and hung to the height with their similar grammatical pattern. He then returns to the higher-pitched, open sounds of the first musical phrase in these words: her earliest stars, earlstars/stars principal overbend us,/Fire-featuring heaven. Those treble sounds, though, soon modulate through a series of medial vowels and bleaker images to the lower-pitched final pharyngeal vowels of selfwrung, selfstrong…thoughts against thoughts in groans grind. GMH is here quite literally orchestrating the vowel sounds of the melodic line, and counterpointing vowel sounds with syllabic and grammatical structures to create melodic repetition and variation.

Even non-musical ears can hear the longer vowel melodies of GMH' s works when they register the strong stresses of sprung rhythm. He tells us that " assonance is easily detected…if it is rhythmically stressed, i.e. if it takes place at the end of certain rhythmical units. Such assonances can be heard across several verse lines." He said that human beings naturally enjoy anything rhythmic, so that the final accented vowel in the line of a poem, following a separation between two series of lines that display definite rhythm, stays prominently in our mind. It changes our awareness of the following vowels in the same way that the first stressed tone in a melody modifies perception of the tones yet to come (Gerard Manley Hopkins, as quoted in Storey, op. cit., 67). In the same way, the last vowel in the line of a poem acts like the keynote, or tonic, in the motion of a melodic line: " As human vowels contain definite musical tones, the deviation from the last vowel in the verse line which is rhythmically stressed must act melodically, i.e., must stimulate a desire to return to one of the previously remembered tones (Storey, 49-50)." Except for his one verse play and several other fragments, GMH' s poems utilize a fixed number of line stresses and end rhymes to mark lines as distinct patterns of sound, not just visual ones, and many of those lines are end-stopped. This tells us that he wanted to prevent readers from carelessly running past the rhymes during performance of his works; in fact, he often marked rhymes with special symbols to make sure that the sounds received special emphasis. He said this: " Above all remember what applies to all my verse…that its performance is…with long rests, long dwells on the rhyme (Hopkins, quoted in Elizabeth W. Schneider, The Dragon in the Gate: Studies in the Poetry of G. M. Hopkins (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 79) (Elizabeth W. Schneider, The Dragon in the Gate: Studies in the Poetry of G. M. Hopkins (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 79)."

## Poems: Vocal Music Scores

We musically oriented readers probably earliest sense—and perhaps most deeply feel—how great a percussionist GMH was when we hear the compelling variation of rhythmic pulse so obvious in " Spelt from Sibyl' s Leaves," but characteristic of all his works since " The Wreck of the Deutschland." In this dimension, he achieved two things at the same time: release from the metrical sameness that dominated nineteenth-century English verse, and greater closeness to patterns of human feeling that music allows.

Many different things had contributed to what critics then considered a certain lifelessness in 19th-century poetry: 1) conventional meters had remained pretty much the same between Chaucer' s and Hopkins' times; 2) the language had changed very little since the 16th century; 3) every rhyme except a handful of mostly tri-syllabic rhymes used in comedies and comic poems had been repeated hundreds of times; but 4) demand for poetry had increased because of printing, more people, and more people able to read. Good English poets were meeting the increased demand, but their poetry suffered a serious limitation that created repetition and monotony: its characteristic search for the "universal and permanently meaningful in human experience." Prose rarely suffers this restriction because it finds greater variety from constantly emerging differences in the social situations it deals with (Schneider, 1973, pp. 44– 46). As early as 1859, GMH had suggested the substitution of assonance and half-rhyme for exhausted metrical schemes to his friend Bridges, who was also a poet and literary analyst, and who had also called attention to the problem. Bridges had probably seen in Hopkins' innovations one solution to the problem (Schneider, 1973, p. 45).

While sharing a common sensory surface of organized, pulsating sound, music and poetry differ significantly in the ways they can make that sound expressive of our vast inner life. All language, including poetry, is subject to major restrictions forced upon it because its primary purpose is communication: 1) its vowel sounds exist only

momentarily, so they never acquire the purity of a unique musical frequency; 2) they seldom move beyond an octave' s worth of different pitches; and 3) while varying potentially in volume from softest whisper to loudest scream, they rarely increase dynamically past mezzo forte nor decrease to less than mezzo piano. To overcome these restrictions, poetry has had to utilize many of its referential, or denotative, resources: " …the aura of association of the words, the long or short sequences of ideas, the wealth or poverty of transient imagery that contains them, the sudden arrest of fantasy by pure fact, or of familiar fact by sudden fantasy, the suspense of literal meaning by a sustained ambiguity resolved in a long-awaited key word, and the unifying, all-embracing artifice of rhythm (Langer, as quoted in Davis, 1973, p. 18)." By the time GMH began writing poetry, poets had conventionalized its major metrical feet—iambic, dactylic, trochaic, and spondaic, and certain basic variations of these like the hovering accent and spondaic substitution (Schneider, 1973, p. 51)—it had standardized its usual metrical lines, and it had constructed a variety of stanzaic forms out of them. Variations could shift from rising rhythms to falling and could quicken the pace to create a somewhat different feel, but this represented more a shift of emphasis than anything else.

So, what solutions arose as time passed? One mid-century approach that was " something like a stampede of anapestic verse" had already caught up many serious poets like Alfred Lord Tennyson, perhaps hugely influenced by Samuel Taylor Coleridge' s poem " Christabell" and the controversy that had erupted because of its meter. Possible use of that single meter eventually exerted great influence upon GMH through the poet then most often associated with anapestic verse: Charles Algernon Swinburne. Under Swinburne' s influence, Hopkins moved from the same-old, same-old of his early years into an entirely new metrical dimension, which fully exploded in his poem " The Wreck of the Deutschland" : lines dominated by anapestic feet that were attached to outrides representing important poetic moments. The rhythm of this poem, though, was only one of its unique aspects. As one critic said: "Hopkins set himself as difficult a task as possible by employing his new rhythm for the first time in a new stanza form of great complexity, in which the lines vary in length from two to six feet and there is no apparent symmetry within the stanza either in the arrangement of the lines or in the rhyme (Schneider, 1973, p. 80)." To other critics, GMH' s metrical experiment in this poem added two new resources to the rhythmic possibilities of English poetry: " For the whole can be roughly described as an anapestic poem in a sprung frame, and it would be hard to find in all the…anapestic verse that nineteenth-century poets were developing a poem…of comparable length and seriousness, in which the tri-syllabic movement is handled with such skill and acquires such dignity—in which its full potentialities, in fact, are demonstrated (Schneider, 1973, p. 82)."

We might expect GMH to move continually forward from " The Wreck of the Deutschland" towards a pure " sprung" metric pattern. That did not happen. In several poems he " carried this rhythm to its theoretical limits, detaching it altogether from conventional meters," but in just as many poems he returned to the old patterns. In the majority of his poems, he explored intermediate rhythms: " It is not so much a uniquely new metrical form that distinguishes this poet' s works and attracts musically oriented readers; it is the rhythmic sense reflected in those works: the poet' s unique ability to accommodate a variety of already available metrical feet, along with his own re-created one, to the emotional demands of a melodic line (Schneider, 1973, p. 83)." At least one important critic tells us that rhythm in music articulates the movement of dynamic human feeling, and that it does the same thing in poetry, an art with which it shares sound organized into regular linear sequences, articulated either imaginatively or physically: " In the arts of time, music and literature, rhythmic forms transmit

certain kinds of information about the nature of our inner life. This is the life of feeling which includes physiological response as well as what psychologists term affect...Rhythm is neither outside of a poem' s meaning nor an ornament to it. Rhythmic structures are expressive forms, cognitive elements, communicating those experiences which rhythmic consciousness can alone communicate: empathic human responses to time in its passage (Langer, 1951, pp. 260– 261)."

The usual variations on the same-old, same-old seem one-dimensional from a musical point of view, and a musical pint of view was one that Gerard Manley Hopkins had grown into early in his life. Like poetry, music had escaped restrictions on the patterns composed and performed in his time to only a slight extent. It varied the durations of its sounds from fractional units of seconds represented by thirty-second, sixteenth, and eighth notes, to the longer units represented by quarter-notes and half-notes, to the even longer periods of time represented by whole notes and tied whole notes. It varied the continuity of its sounds from the extremely detached notes of staccato passages; through the distinct but continuous and connected sounds of legato or portamento vocal renderings, and piano sequences pedaled with damper; to the complete, continuous and connected sounds of a glissando passage on strings or piano, or a heavily slurred vocal passage. It varied the volume of its sounds from the softest pianissimo to the loudest fortissimo. It provided emphasis through an increase in volume, sudden as in szforzando, or gradual as in crescendo; through repetition; through an increase in duration, as in tied notes; through position in a phrase, accentual or tonal; and through the dissonance of melodically unexpected intervals in a tonally established harmonic progression. In terms of larger sound units, phrases or melodic lines, music achieved emphasis by pitting one of these elements against another rhythmically, harmonically, or contrapuntally.

Consequently, music had evolved perhaps no greater a range of basic patterns than had poetry—duple time with its variants: 2/8, 2/4, 4/4, et al; and triple meter with its variants: 3/4, 6/8, 12/8, et al—but it had at its disposal a greater range of devices to create noteworthy variations in tempo and emphasis. By something as simple as counterpointing one legato line against one or two other rhythm-marking accented or staccato lines, music regularly achieved a rhythmic freedom that nineteenth-century poetry achieved only on rare occasions. The difference between the perceived rhythms of Victorian poetry and the perceived rhythms of Victorian music is like the difference between walking and running: the one remains for the most part earthbound, while the other travels across vast spaces and occasionally soars. Finally, the nineteenth-century had not only developed theoretical devices for varying perceived tempi and rhythmic patterns, but its characteristic style of performance encouraged great freedom: " The style of performance that flourished in Hopkins' day would seem to us a wallowing in debased sentimentality; even a distinguished performer would by our standards be thought to luxuriate excessively in a rallentando; and a rubato would license for him almost anything. No other style was current, and to Hopkins, as to others of his day, this was what musical time truly is (Schneider, 1956, p. 103)."

Because Hopkins had encountered music at so young an age, his need to sharpen, to quicken, to make more urgent, to decelerate, is not surprising. The English madrigal, which he sang from childhood and later successfully composed, demanded and demonstrated precisely that kind of rhythmic variation: " But the distinguishing feature of the English art-song during the Renaissance is the kind of rhythmic independence that the vocal line must have in order to set the text well and expressively…Precisely because the minute variations of stress accent in phrase structure account for so much of the rhetorical tone of English speech, precisely because of the ambiguities that accompany the process of getting the actualities of English sentences and phrases into the schemata of

iambic verse, there is a kind of rhythmic richness about English poetry that is hard to find even in verse in Russian… Now, the English madrigal was particularly good at working out all these ambiguities, at meeting the richness of impulse of the text with an appropriately complex array of rhythmic versions. It is just because of the independence of the various parts that it could do so (Hollander, 1973, p. 495)."

So, GMH incorporated that awareness into his writing of his poems. A second type of speech that strongly influenced him was Gregorian plain-chant, which demonstrated tremendous flexibility of rhythm: " It consists of a freely flowing vocal line subtly attuned to the inflections of the Latin text. Gregorian melody is free from regular accent. It embodies what may be called prose rhythm in music, or free-verse rhythm, as distinguished from metrical-poetry rhythm such as we find in the regularly accentual measures of two-four or three-four time (Machlis, 1963, pp. 361-362)." It was this kind of freer metrical form, closer to the less regular rhythms of human speech, a form similar to Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse but more linguistically controlled by " certain strict, concise consonantal and vocalic devices derived from sixteenth-century Welsh metrics (Gardner, 1949, p. 144)," that Hopkins developed during his lifetime. It was the " least forced, the most rhetorical and emphatic of all possible rhythms," and it reproduced emphasis, or stress, close to that of human speech (Storey, 1938, pp. 70-71).

The final factor that led to GMH' s greater rhythmic freedom lay with Greek lyric poetry he immersed himself in and taught, poetry that was closely related to music and whose practitioners "also musicians…revealed in their poetry a musical technique." Much of the musical effect of this poetry came from the " complex or accumulated rhythm" that Hopkins called " individual meters." Uniquely created for each occasion, these meters were made possible by " numerous permutations and combinations" of the basic metric unit, which was a phrase combining " two or more of the seven basic types of quantitative feet (Gardner, op. cit., 101-102)." In the four main types of phrase that had been introduced like leitmotifs by Pindar and the dramatists to express " certain specific moods, actions, and reflections," GMH found the " prototype of his own more complex sprung and logaoedic rhythm": " the full flavor of sprung rhythm emerging most strongly in the " Paeonic phrases of Pindar' s ode, with their undulating (or ' rocking' ) bachii and…their quick, strenuous, poly-syllabic paeons…so suitable for excited, agitated, and dithyrambic utterance (Gardner, 104)."

Hopkins began using metrical units that contained as many as one heavily and three lightly stressed syllables, or as few as one major one. These units made sure that his poems had an emphasis similar to what music did. One critic described what happened as " the juxtaposition of stressed syllables anywhere in the line and as often as is wanted, without loss of force or length in these syllables (Schneider, 1956, p. 51)." The stress pattern that GMH used has been described as the " declamatory rhythm or the interpretive rhythm of English," and it is called sense-stress rhythm. It comes from the " drive that each group of meaningful English words has to make special sense, especially when speakers feel strongly about what they' re saying. The result is a distinctive rhythmic unit, either just that phrase itself or that phrase together with any number of relaxed syllables that come before it or follow it (Ong, 1959, p. 158). As GMH realized, these units could be of " more or less equal weight" at the same time moving in different ways—falling, rocking, or rising—and they could be various lengths (Ong, 1959, p. 159). The best language for ensuring this movement and the accent it provided, was the short everyday words that come from the Anglo-Saxon portion of the English we use, rather than the longer polysyllabic words that come from Latin, usually via Old French. Language experts tell us that although omitting these longer words that come from Latin is

not absolutely necessary to creating sense-stress rhythm—free verse does that all the time—the number of sense stresses in English naturally decreases as its words lengthen. The reason is that most English words, no matter how long they are, really register only one recognizable accent. We can apply our awareness of that to GMH' s poetry: because it is filled with short words that fit it to many sense stresses, his poems pack all these stresses together to create a consolidator that gives each one a super charge (Ong, 1959, p. 159).

All that having been said, my friend, stress rhythm, or sprung rhythm, brings with it several serious problems: 1) in any but the simplest verse, like nursery rhymes, you and I may have a really hard time recognizing the stresses the poet intended or in finding an arrangement of the words that definitively sets the rhythm of the poem; 2) when a poet turns away from a stress-syllabic pattern that you and I recognize, their substituting equal timing or some other substitute for it creates problems that are almost too hard to solve; 3) when a poem has an underlying meter that uses a large number of unstressed syllables, that poem can seem too flimsy and move too fast to deal with serious topics and say serious things about them; 4 ) a group of such poems can all fall victim to misperceived uncomplicatedness that results from an "absence of tension in the texture and an accompanying loss of certain resources of expressiveness (Schneider, 1956, pp. 60-69)." To solves the first of these problems, GMH turned to his musical experience and to the ways it resembled music. In trying to solve the second, he insisted that, although English rhythm comes from the accents of its words rather than how long those words are, poets must still pay great attention to the length of the words they use, and figure out some acceptable rules about that part of poetry that practicing poets can become aware of. GMH solved the third problem by relying on his acute sense of hearing, and by using his skills with words and rhythm (Schneider, 1956, pp. 69-71). However, he never did recognize the last problem involving sprung rhythm.

You and I as musically aware readers probably remember some of the special symbols that music contains so musicians can reproduce the sounds we listen to. GMH used similar kinds of symbols when he wrote his poems. Although he didn' t much like stress marks and other more elaborate symbols, at the same time he acknowledged that they were necessary. He said this: " There must be some marks. Either I must invent a notation throughout, as in music, or else I must only mark where the reader is likely to mistake, and for the present this is what I shall do (Hopkins, quoted in Graves, 1969, p. 99)." He eventually used some twenty-one different recitation marks in his manuscripts (Gardner, 1949, p. 94), justifying what he had done with a comparison called an ' analogue' between performance in arts like music and the performance of poetry: "Every art…and every work of art has its own play or performance. The play or performance of a stage-play is the playing it on the boards, the stage: reading it, much more writing it, is not its performance. The performance of a symphony is not the scoring it however elaborately; it is in the concert room, by the orchestra, and then and then only. A picture is performed, or performs, when anyone looks at it in the proper and intended light. A house performs when it is built and lived in. To come nearer: books play, or perform, or are played and perform when they are read…Poetry was originally meant for either singing or reciting…the darling child of speech, of lips and spoken utterance: it must be spoken; till it is spoken it is not performed, it does not perform, it is not itself. (Hopkins, as quoted in Sprinker, 1980). He also said this: " My meaning surely ought to appear of itself; but in a language like English, and in an age of it like the present, written words are really matter open and indifferent to the receiving of different and alternative verse-forms, some of which the reader cannot possibly be sure are meant unless they are marked for him. Besides, metrical marks are for the

performer and such marks are proper in every art (Hopkins, quoted in Gardner, 1949, pp. 94-95)."

The printed text of Hopkins' poem " Spelt from Sibyl' s Leaves" contains forty-three separate metrical marks, which some critics consider " necessary to fix beyond doubt both the rhythm and the sense—without undue loss of time and patience (Gardner, 1949, p. 105)." Although the stresses on less important words like prepositions seems strangely disconcerting to us, if we look more closely, we can sense that they are absolutely ' right-on.' For example, self in´ self (line 6) anticipates the violence of pashed; and (line 8) as a menacing climax; against´ thought (line 14) emphasizes the painful friction, and makes necessary, the metrical stress on in´, though when we actually reading those words, the weight is distributed in this way: in/groans´ grind. A very subtle usage, too, is the repetition of the phrase but these two in line 13, because then the " unstressed part of the first statement is stressed in the second (Gardner, 1949, p. 105)." As we can see, bar-lines help GMH establish accurate phrasing of both the sounds and the meaning in this poem. It moves rhythmically from its initial strong, four-beat, legato line through the rising intensity and vocal suspension of stupendous; through the longer, meditative but finally threatening womb-of-all, home-of-all, hearse-of-all night; to the faster-paced renewal of her fond yellow hornlight wound to the west, which slows in its companion phrase and remains for one awful moment suspended on the word waste. Then, the words move to a necessary breath-taking after that terrible plunge, and to another thematic, rhythmic renewal in the words her earliest stars, earl-stars,/stars principal, overbend us. We experience another breath-taking and then we go on to a long, sequential rendering of earth' s evening transformation, at first confident and measured, then faster and more fear-inducing as words split unexpectedly or unexpectedly fuse. Finally, we come to another terrible terminal line that contains the long, relatively unstressed, almost mumbled Latin-derived words—disremembering, dismembering/all now (insert appropriate accents over dis, mem, and all)—and we move on to an anguished address to a heart which we reach kinesthetically, visually, and psychologically in the intense pace of a three, strong-stress half-line, and another eleven, strong-stress full-line.

The rhythm of the second section of this poem moves more rapidly, and that accelerated pace duplicates for us readers the horror of the successive images of desolation that GMH presents and the feelings that those images bring us: the Manichean duality that has consumed all once-dappled and selved things is echoed in the rhythm of two flocks, two folds and black, white;/right, wrong, while our unsuccessful efforts to preserve a wider awareness is reflected in the several stresses of part, pen, pack and reckon but, reck but, mind/But these two. The poem moves us through these almost heels-dragging disjunctive conjunctions to a final wearisome, emphatic line: where, ' selfwrung, selfstrung, sheathe- and shelterless, thoughts in groans grind. As musically oriented readers, we can agree that this poem " begins with slow legato phrasing in a calm, secure voice evenly paced. At the end the violent syncopations are such that one feels a counterpoint: it is as much as the single voice can do to bring it out without calling for the aid of another voice to carry the cross-rhythms…At the end of the poem the serene pulse of earnest, earthless, equal, attuneable is answered, swallowed up, by the violent counter-rhythms of thought against thoughts in groans grind (Black, 1976, p. 123)."

Although GMH never really perfected his system of metrical notation—many stress-marks overlap in function, while others are nowhere precisely defined (Gardner, op. cit., 95)—a majority of the symbols he used came directly from the musical notation current in his time. For example, two of his marks for non-metrical heavy stress

 and  have been used since at least Chopin' s time to indicate that a tone or chord should be given additional emphasis. Of GMH' s two lengthening symbols—the first meaning to dwell, and the second meaning circumflexion—the first represents a musical fermata, or hold, used either over or under a note  or a bar-line,  or over a double bar  to denote the conclusion of the selection. The second  looks like a musical symbol denoting a turn—one note above the principal note, the principal note itself, one note below the principal note, and finally the principal note again—and dictates a similar rising-falling vocal inflection in the reading of GMH' s poetry. While a circumflex was originally used in Greek over long vowels to indicate this kind of tone — " in Classical Greek…the syllable bears the word accent and is pronounced, according to the ancient grammarians, with a rise and fall in pitch" — and while Hopkins would have encountered it often in his study of Greek lyric poetry, he would probably have met it first in his music studies. Of his non-metrical stress marks,  , meaning crisply or staccato, denotes the same thing in a musical score. Of his phrasing marks, the one for elision and linked rhyme,  , parallels both visually and in meaning the tie sign in music. The hurried-foot sign,  , duplicates the normal inclusive phrasing symbol in musical notation. Additionally, one of GMH' s rest marks,  , looks a little like a bar-line. Finally, Hopkins used musical terminology like rallentando and tempo rubato, which appear regularly in musical scores, for tempo markings (Gardner, op. cit., 94; Schneider, op. cit., 210, f. #11.) His use of parallel symbols reinforces the similarities between the music and poetry; it also reflects GMH' S desire to provide for the voice of the poet the same kind of rhythmic flexibility enjoyed by the singing voice.

**Conclusion**

So, you' ll probably agree now that we readers who sense a unique musicality in Gerard Manley Hopkins' poetry perceive accurately. Our awareness of the musical richness of good poetry may have been asserting itself, because like all sounds, language structures display rhythm and tone. When phrases are spoken, they can move across the entire range of tones that the human voice is capable of, and they can also descend to the sparseness of chant or recitative. Poems can also rise to something very complex rhythmically, very subtle tonally. With GMH' s poems, something different and unusual happens, though, because those lines have very complicated meanings that only come to light in the unique ways his words follow each other. This makes those word patterns very similar to what happens in music. One critic has described that experience in this way: " …these shifts are felt directly as progressions of analogies with sensation: visual, auditory, tactile, kinetic. This is more explicit than music; in fact the directness of the analogies and the referential nature of the meaning (though both are very complex) are what most distinguish verse from music. What links them…is their dependence on performance for full realization (Black, 1976, pp. 123-124)."

Besides knowing that these sounds represent good poetry, though, you and I who hear music in GMH' s works have become aware of a unique fusion of two artistic sensibilities. As the most insightful of his critics has said: "As a poet, Hopkins was a half-musician writing a poetry half-music. From the moment when he first heard the tune he calls sprung rhythm in the Milton choruses, in Campbell, in snatches of older English verse…he tried to circumvent the lack of fluidity so inherent in the rhythms of poetry as compared with the rhythms of music…like Pater, he came to understand that all art strives towards the conditions of music. (Whitehall, 1945, p. 54)." As you and I come finally to understand, in Gerard Manley Hopkins music and poetry fused to create a maker of music, a singer of songs.

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