

A black and white portrait of Gerard Manley Hopkins, a young man with dark hair, wearing a dark sweater over a white collared shirt. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera. The background is a soft-focus landscape with a body of water and distant hills.

***GERARD MANLEY  
HOPKINS***

***POEMS  
OF GERARD  
MANLEY  
HOPKINS***

**Gerard Manley Hopkins**

# **Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins**

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# EDITORIAL

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OUR generation already is overpast,  
And thy lov'd legacy, Gerard, hath lain  
Coy in my home; as once thy heart was fain  
Of shelter, when God's terror held thee fast  
In life's wild wood at Beauty and Sorrow aghast;  
Thy sainted sense tramm'd in ghostly pain,  
Thy rare ill-broker'd talent in disdain:  
Yet love of Christ will win man's love at last.

Hell wars without; but, dear, the while my hands  
Gather'd thy book, I heard, this wintry day,  
Thy spirit thank me, in his young delight  
Stepping again upon the yellow sands.  
Go forth: amidst our chaffinch flock display  
Thy plumage of far wonder and heavenward flight!  
Chilswell, Jan. 1918.

## (1) AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE poems in this book\* (\*That is, the MS. described in Editor's preface as B. This preface does not apply to the early poems.) are written some in Running Rhythm, the common rhythm in English use, some in Sprung Rhythm,

and some in a mixture of the two. And those in the common rhythm are some counterpointed, some not.

Common English rhythm, called Running Rhythm above, is measured by feet of either two or three syllables and (putting aside the imperfect feet at the beginning and end of lines and also some unusual measures, in which feet seem to be paired together and double or composite feet to arise) never more or less.

Every foot has one principal stress or accent, and this or the syllable it falls on may be called the Stress of the foot and the other part, the one or two unaccented syllables, the Slack. Feet (and the rhythms made out of them) in which the stress comes first are called Falling Feet and Falling Rhythms, feet and rhythm in which the slack comes first are called Rising Feet and Rhythms, and if the stress is between two slacks there will be Rocking Feet and Rhythms. These distinctions are real and true to nature; but for purposes of scanning it is a great convenience to follow the (2) example of music and take the stress always first, as the accent or the chief accent always comes first in a musical bar. If this is done there will be in common English verse only two possible feet—the so-called accentual Trochee and Dactyl, and correspondingly only two possible uniform rhythms, the so-called Trochaic and Dactylic. But they may be mixed and then what the Greeks called a Logaoedic Rhythm arises. These are the facts and according to these the scanning of ordinary regularly-written English verse is very simple indeed and to bring in other principles is here unnecessary.

But because verse written strictly in these feet and by these principles will become same and tame the poets have

brought in licences and departures from rule to give variety, and especially when the natural rhythm is rising, as in the common ten-syllable or five-foot verse, rhymed or blank. These irregularities are chiefly Reversed Feet and Reversed or Counterpoint Rhythm, which two things are two steps or degrees of licence in the same kind. By a reversed foot I mean the putting the stress where, to judge by the rest of the measure, the slack should be and the slack where the stress, and this is done freely at the beginning of a line and, in the course of a line, after a pause; only scarcely ever in the second foot or place and never in the last, unless when the poet designs some extraordinary effect; for these places are characteristic and sensitive and cannot well be touched. But the reversal of the first foot and of some middle (3) foot after a strong pause is a thing so natural that our poets have generally done it, from Chaucer down, without remark and it commonly passes unnoticed and cannot be said to amount to a formal change of rhythm, but rather is that irregularity which all natural growth and motion shews. If however the reversal is repeated in two feet running, especially so as to include the sensitive second foot, it must be due either to great want of ear or else is a calculated effect, the super-inducing or mounting of a new rhythm upon the old; and since the new or mounted rhythm is actually heard and at the same time the mind naturally supplies the natural or standard foregoing rhythm, for we do not forget what the rhythm is that by rights we should be hearing, two rhythms are in some manner running at once and we have something answerable to counter-point in music, which is two or more strains of tune going on

together, and this is Counterpoint Rhythm. Of this kind of verse Milton is the great master and the choruses of *Samson Agonistes* are written throughout in it—but with the disadvantage that he does not let the reader clearly know what the ground-rhythm is meant to be and so they have struck most readers as merely irregular. And in fact if you counterpoint throughout, since one only of the counter rhythms is actually heard, the other is really destroyed or cannot come to exist, and what is written is one rhythm only and probably Sprung Rhythm, of which I now speak.

Sprung Rhythm, as used in this book, is measured by feet of from one to four syllables, regularly, and for (4) particular effects any number of weak or slack syllables may be used. It has one stress, which falls on the only syllable, if there is only one, or, if there are more, then scanning as above, on the first, and so gives rise to four sorts of feet, a monosyllable and the so-called accentual Trochee, Dactyl, and the First Paeon. And there will be four corresponding natural rhythms; but nominally the feet are mixed and any one may follow any other. And hence Sprung Rhythm differs from Running Rhythm in having or being only one nominal rhythm, a mixed or 'logaoedic' one, instead of three, but on the other hand in having twice the flexibility of foot, so that any two stresses may either follow one another running or be divided by one, two, or three slack syllables. But strict Sprung Rhythm cannot be counterpointed. In Sprung Rhythm, as in logaoedic rhythm generally, the feet are assumed to be equally long or strong and their seeming inequality is made up by pause or stressing.

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

Two licences are natural to Sprung Rhythm. The one is rests, as in music; but of this an example is scarcely to be found in this book, unless in the *Echos*, (5) second line. The other is *hangers* or *outrides* that is one, two, or three slack syllables added to a foot and not counting in the nominal scanning. They are so called because they seem to hang below the line or ride forward or backward from it in another dimension than the line itself, according to a principle needless to explain here. These outriding half feet or hangers are marked by a loop underneath them, and plenty of them will be found.

The other marks are easily understood, namely accents, where the reader might be in doubt which syllable should have the stress; slurs, that is loops *over* syllables, to tie them together into the time of one; little loops at the end of a line to shew that the rhyme goes on to the first letter of the next line; what in music are called pauses, to shew that the syllable should be dwelt on; and twirls, to mark reversed or counterpointed rhythm.

Note on the nature and history of Sprung Rhythm—Sprung Rhythm is the most natural of things. For (1) it is the rhythm of common speech and of written prose, when



rhythm is perceived in them. (2) It is the rhythm of all but the most monotonously regular music, so that in the words of choruses and refrains and in songs written closely to music it arises. (3) It is found in nursery rhymes, weather saws, and so on; because, however these may have been once made in running rhythm, the terminations having dropped off by the change of language, the stresses come together and so the rhythm is sprung. (4) It arises in common (6) verse when reversed or counterpointed, for the same reason.

But nevertheless in spite of all this and though Greek and Latin lyric verse, which is well known, and the old English verse seen in *Pierce Ploughman* are in sprung rhythm, it has in fact ceased to be used since the Elizabethan age, Greene being the last writer who can be said to have recognised it. For perhaps there was not, down to our days, a single, even short, poem in English in which sprung rhythm is employed not for single effects or in fixed places but as the governing principle of the scansion. I say this because the contrary has been asserted: if it is otherwise the poem should be cited.

Some of the sonnets in this book\* (\*See previous note.) are in five-foot, some in six-foot or Alexandrine lines.

Nos. 13 and 22 are Curtal-Sonnets, that is they are constructed in proportions resembling those of the sonnet proper, namely 6 + 4 instead of 8 + 6, with however a halfline tailpiece (so that the equation is rather  $12/8 + 9/2 = 21/2 + 10\ 1/2$ ).

(7) EARLY POEMS

1

*For a Picture of  
St. Dorothea*

I BEAR a basket lined with grass;  
I am so light, I am so fair,  
That men must wonder as I pass  
And at the basket that I bear,  
Where in a newly-drawn green litter  
Sweet flowers I carry,—sweets for bitter.

Lilies I shew you, lilies none,  
None in Caesar's gardens blow,—  
And a quince in hand,—not one  
Is set upon your boughs below;  
Not set, because their buds not spring;  
Spring not, 'cause world is wintering.

But these were found in the East and South  
Where Winter is the clime forgot.—  
The dewdrop on the larkspur's mouth  
O should it then be quenched not?  
In starry water-meads they drew  
These drops: which be they? stars or dew?

Had she a quince in hand? Yet gaze:  
Rather it is the sizing moon.  
Lo, linked heavens with milky ways!  
That was her larkspur row.—So soon?  
Sphered so fast, sweet soul?—We see  
Nor fruit, nor flowers, nor Dorothy.

2

*Heaven—Haven*

*A nun takes the veil*

I HAVE desired to go  
Where springs not fail,  
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail  
And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be  
Where no storms come,  
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,  
And out of the swing of the sea.

*3 The Habit of Perfection*

ELECTED Silence, sing to me  
And beat upon my whorlèd ear,  
Pipe me to pastures still and be  
The music that I care to hear.

Shape nothing, lips; be lovely-dumb:  
It is the shut, the curfew sent  
From there where all surrenders come  
Which only makes you eloquent.

Be shellèd, eyes, with double dark  
And find the uncreated light:  
This ruck and reel which you remark  
Coils, keeps, and teases simple sight.

Palate, the hutch of tasty lust,  
Desire not to be rinsed with wine:  
The can must be so sweet, the crust  
So fresh that come in fasts divine!

Nostrils, your careless breath that spend  
Upon the stir and keep of pride,

What relish shall the censers send  
Along the sanctuary side!

O feel-of-primrose hands, O feet  
That want the yield of plushy sward,  
But you shall walk the golden street  
And you unhouse and house the Lord.

And, Poverty, be thou the bride  
And now the marriage feast begun,  
And lily-coloured clothes provide  
Your spouse not laboured-at nor spun.

## ***POEMS 1876-1889***

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*THE WRECK  
OF THE DEUTSCHLAND*

To the  
happy memory of five Franciscan Nuns  
exiles by the Falk Laws  
drowned between midnight and morning of  
Dec. 7th. 1875

### **PART THE FIRST**

1

Thou mastering me

God! giver of breath and bread;  
World's strand, sway of the sea;  
Lord of living and dead;  
Thou hast bound bones and veins in me, fastened me flesh,  
And after it almost unmade, what with dread,  
Thy doing: and dost thou touch me afresh?  
Over again I feel thy finger and find thee.

2

I did say yes  
O at lightning and lashed rod;  
Thou heardst me truer than tongue confess  
Thy terror, O Christ, O God;  
Thou knowest the walls, altar and hour and night:  
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.

3

The frown of his face  
Before me, the hurtle of hell  
Behind, where, where was a, where was a place?  
I whirled out wings that spell  
And fled with a fling of the heart to the heart of the Host.  
My heart, but you were dovewinged, I can tell,  
Carrier-witted, I am bold to boast,  
To flash from the flame to the flame then, tower from the  
grace  
to the grace.